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THE LEGACY OF APHRODITE:
ANCHISES' OFFSPRING IN THE
HOMERIC HYMN TO APHRODITE

ANDREW FAULKNER



νῦν δὲ δὴ Αἰνεΐαιος βίη Τρώεσσιν ἀνάξει / καὶ παίδων παῖδες, τοί κεν μετόπισθε
γένωνται.

“But now the might of Aineias will rule amongst the Trojans, as will his
children’s children, who will be born in the future.” (*Iliad* 20.307–8)

σοὶ δ’ ἔσται φίλος υἱὸς ὃς ἐν Τρώεσσιν ἀνάξει / καὶ παῖδες παῖδεσσι διαμπερὲς
ἐκγεγάονται.

“And you will have a son who will rule amongst the Trojans, and
children will be born to his children forevermore.”
(*Hymn to Aphrodite* 196–97)

Abstract. The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* has traditionally been understood to pay honour to a family of Aineiadae who once held power in the Troad, but in more recent years some scholars have rejected this view. This article first revisits this controversial issue, suggesting that concentrated attention paid in the hymn to the birth of Aineias and his lineage supports the position that the poem was composed for a group that identified itself with Aineias. It then goes on to consider the view that the *Hymn to Aphrodite* narrates the end of Aphrodite’s mixing gods and mortals in love. It is argued that this reading is not required by the text of the poem.

THESE TWO PROPHECIES OF POSEIDON AND APHRODITE have traditionally been understood to indicate that both the lengthy episode devoted to Aineias in *Iliad* 20.75–352 (including the hero's account of his genealogy to Achilles) and the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (henceforth, *Aphrodite*) were intended to pay honour to a family of Aineiadaï who once held power in the Troad.¹ In more recent years, however, this position has been questioned. Van der Ben first argued that the Aineias-episode in *Iliad* 20 is poetically justified within the narrative and that there is therefore no reason to explain the passage as motivated by external factors.² In a subsequent article,³ he applied this same principle to *Aphrodite*, arguing that, instead of overtly praising Aineias and his descendants, *Aphrodite* is an aetiology of why the gods no longer have love affairs with mortals, which result in semi-divine offspring.⁴ Concurrently, Smith quite successfully showed that the claims of later Greek historians for the existence of a family of Aineiadaï in the Troad are not to be blindly trusted.⁵ Support for the Aineiadaï hypothesis had often been gained from the supposed veracity of these historical accounts, and Smith's article pushed the Aineiadaï firmly into the background. He

¹A useful review of the literature on this topic up until 1980 is found in van der Ben 1980, 41–55. See also the summaries of previous literature by Lenz 1975, 159ff.; van Eck 1978, 69–72; and Clay 1989, 153, n. 3. The most influential article arguing for this interpretation was written by Reinhardt 1956, who believed that *Il.* 20 and *Aphrodite* were written by the same poet. More reasonable positions have since been taken by Hoekstra 1969, 39–40; Càssola 1975, 243–47; and van Eck (*ibid.*), who recognize that the hymn is almost certainly post-Homeric but still accept that both it and *Il.* 20 were composed with the Aineiadaï in mind. Translations throughout are my own unless otherwise noted.

²For van der Ben 1980, Aineias is a literary figure who functions as a contrast to Hektor (71–72); cf. Smith 1981b, 49–52. Van der Ben also suggests that Aineias is in fact not presented in an overly favourable light in the *Iliad*, admitting, however, that “de afweging van de positieve en negatieve kanten aan Aeneas' portret is een subjectieve zaak” (“the weighing of the positive and negative sides of Aeneas' character is subjective”). Indeed, arguments such as the fact that Aineias “doodt niet veel tegenstanders en geen enkele grote naam” (“does not kill many adversaries and not one big name”) in the *Iliad* do not to me seem significant in the face of the overt prophecy uttered by Poseidon and the long account of his genealogy to Achilles.

³Van der Ben 1981.

⁴This interpretation has since been picked up and expanded by Clay 1989, 166–70, and 192–93; it is also recently adopted by Turkeltaub 2003, 75–78.

⁵Smith 1981b. Particularly influential had been the claim of Demetrius of Scepsis (reported by Strabo 13.1.52ff.) that a family of Aineiadaï lived in the city of his name. Smith argues that this and other accounts of Aineiadaï by historians are not to be entirely trusted as evidence for the existence of the Aineiadaï. On the other hand, there is no proof that they are entirely unreliable, even if they do embellish.

himself went on to argue that the juxtaposition of mortal and immortal is the central unifying theme in *Aphrodite* rather than any concern with the lineage of Aineias,⁶ and his work opened the way for alternative theories. Frangeskou has suggested that the poem is concerned essentially with the divine relationship between Zeus and Aphrodite rather than the juxtaposition of mortal and immortal, a story which illustrates that, “if for a while the gods oppose one another, in the end concord and mutuality prevail.”⁷ This redirection of focus has in one respect been healthy; new literary approaches (in particular the work of Smith) have offered many valuable insights. On the other hand, the new theories have brushed aside all too easily the remarkable attention paid to the descendants of Aineias and Anchises by the poem.

A few scholars have continued to support or admit the possibility of the Aineiadaí hypothesis. Janko, West, and Edwards all maintain that, despite the lack of any reliable corroborative evidence from later historians, the existence of Aineiadaí is a possible conclusion to draw from the prophecies of the two poems.⁸ There is, it must be admitted from the outset, no way to prove this position absolutely. There is, however, good reason to admit it as a strong possibility. In *Iliad* 20, Poseidon’s prophecy that Aineias will be saved in order that the race of Dardanos will not be destroyed, and that his descendants will rule amongst the Trojans for generations to come (vv. 293–308), seems too explicit to be explained away merely as appropriate to the developing narrative. Subjective as

⁶Smith 1981a. Segal 1974 had already drawn attention to the juxtaposition of mortal and divine when examining *Aphrodite* with a structuralist approach; see also Segal 1986 and King 1989.

⁷Frangeskou 1995, 13, who also denies the theory that the poem could have been composed for Aineiadaí. Cf. also the psychological interpretation offered by Bergren 1989, 41.

⁸See Janko 1982, 158, “the *aition* proves knowledge of the Aeneadae, but not performance before them,” and Janko 1991, 13, “*Pace* Clay and others, not only must the Aeneadae have notoriously survived for the prophecy in *HyAphr* to have point, but Homer even links Hector with Scamandrius, co-founder with Ascanius of many cities in the Troad, by giving Astyanax that name (*Il.* 6.402ff.)”; West 2001, 7; cf. 2003, 15: “it is evident from a famous passage in the *Iliad* and a similar one in the *Hymn to Aphrodite* that there was an aristocratic family somewhere in the region that claimed descent from Aeneas and suzerainty over ‘Trojans,’ and that our poet [Homer] was one of a number in contact with this family”; more reserved is Edwards 1991, 301, commenting on *Il.* 20: “It seems most likely that the monumental poet knew of a story that Aineias continued to rule somewhere in the Troad; this does not prove that a royal line of Aineiadaí, perhaps originating in Thrace, survived (or claimed to) in the mid-eighth century, but it is a reasonable hypothesis.” See also Griffin 1992, 200, n. 24.

this statement may be, some extra-textual motivation is at least made possible by the unique nature of the prophecy for which there are no parallels in the Homeric epics. Aineias' recounting of his genealogy to Achilles (vv. 200–58) earlier in the episode recalls the exchange between Diomedes and Glaucus in *Iliad* 6.119–236,⁹ but the two episodes are in some important respects quite different. Not only is the Diomedes/Glaucus episode not followed by any prophecy about future glory, but it also places less attention on a single individual than the Aineias episode. Between the account of his genealogy and the consideration of his fate by Hera and Poseidon, Aineias is remarkably the focus of attention for almost three-hundred lines, in what should properly be the beginning of Achilles' *aristeia*.¹⁰ This is not to say that van der Ben's argument that this passage in *Iliad* 20 is internally coherent should be dismissed. The Aineias-episode is undoubtedly internally coherent, and Aineias does act as a foil to Hector as he suggests.¹¹ But it is false logic to conclude that because something is an effective element in the development of the internal narrative it can have no further external significance.

In itself, the similar prophecy in *Aphrodite* could be explained merely as the result of imitation of the *Iliad* passage.¹² However, the two prophecies are not the only evidence to support the position that *Aphrodite* was written with Aeneiadai in mind. Also significant is the concentrated interest in the birth of Aineias and his lineage throughout the poem. Van der Ben does not agree: he comments, "Aeneas does not occupy an important position in the poem as a whole: the central event, the intercourse between Anchises and Aphrodite, is never motivated by his birth; neither in the proem, nor in the plan of Zeus, nor in the goddess' own account does it receive the slightest mention. Aeneas' birth merely belongs to the aftermath and is a painful reminder to Aphrodite of a love that was not to be."¹³

In what follows I will argue that this is not the case and that there is in fact a great deal of concern shown for Aineias and his family in *Aphrodite*. I will then go on to confront the issue of whether, as some

⁹On the similarities between the two episodes, see Kirk 1990, 171ff.

¹⁰On the interruption of Achilles' *aristeia* proper, see Edwards 1991, 286–87, also his comment (299), "the expansive style of the narration, the relaxed tone of Akhilleus' speeches, and his willingness to listen to his opponent's lengthy discourse, are unexpected."

¹¹On his arguments, see above n. 2; cf. Edwards 1991, 298–99, who recognizes the literary functions of the Aineias episode in Book 20, while at the same time entertaining the Aeneiadai-hypothesis.

¹²Cf. Allen-Halliday-Sikes 1936, 351.

¹³Van der Ben 1986, 22.

have claimed, *Aphrodite* narrates the end of sexual intercourse between men and gods.

THE THEME OF FUTURE OFFSPRING

The birth of the semi-divine Aineias is first foreshadowed in the prologue of the poem, significantly just before the narrative begins. The poet introduces the narrative by telling how Zeus has turned the tables on Aphrodite and made her fall in love with a mortal man in order that she should never boast among the gods:

ὥς ῥα θεοὺς συνέμειξε καταθνητῆσι γυναιξί
καί τε καταθνητοὺς υἱὰς τέκον ἀθανάτοισιν
ὥς τε θεὰς ἀνέμειξε καταθνητοῖς ἀνθρώποις. (Hymn to Aphrodite 50–52)

that she mixed gods in love with mortal women / who bore mortal sons to
the immortals / and that she mixed goddesses with mortal men.

These lines meditate upon divine-mortal unions and the offspring that result, with the last line ironically referring specifically to unions of goddesses and mortal men. This attention to the issue of semi-divine birth signals what is to be one of the main themes in the narrative: the birth of Aineias. To be more exact, line 50 is followed by a line that specifies that sons result from the union of gods and mortal women. Line 52, which by nature of its similar structure is a counterpart to line 50, is followed immediately by the narrative. The narrative cannot be said to be a direct counterpart to line 51 because it describes the cessation of Aphrodite's boasting rather than being part of it, but, like line 51, it does explain, albeit in a more specific manner, the offspring that result from the union of a goddess and a mortal man. If line 51 and the narrative can be seen as counterparts in this latter respect, the distinction between boasting and the cessation of boasting becomes significant. These lines immediately preceding the narrative are introducing two interrelated themes: the birth of Aineias and the cessation of Aphrodite's boasting. I will return to the latter in the next section of this article, but for the moment it is the concern shown by the poem for the offspring of Aphrodite that I will pursue.

Anchises himself hints rather openly at his future offspring in the prayer that he offers to Aphrodite when she first arrives on the mountain to seduce him. She comes in the disguise of a young Phrygian woman, but he is uncertain what to make of his unexpected (and radiant) visitor.

To be on the safe side, he addresses her in prayer, asking for strong offspring and a long glorious life (vv. 103–5).¹⁴ Anchises' request that his offspring be strong is, on one level, a standard petition in prayer,¹⁵ but for an audience who knew the story of his child, this request must have brought Aineias to mind.

The issue of children arises again before the consummation of the seduction during Aphrodite's long lie to Anchises about her mortal Phrygian origins and her method of arrival on the mountain (vv. 108–42). The disguised goddess claims that she was whisked away from dancing with her young companions by Hermes, who brought her to the mountain and prophesied that she would be his wedded wife and bear him children (v. 127, σοὶ δ' ἀγλαὰ τέκνα τεκεῖσθαι). Out of context, the phrase τέκνα τεκέσθαι ("to bear children") is a standard description of wifely activity,¹⁶ but in the mouth of the disguised Aphrodite it carries a certain irony: she conceives of the prophecy as part of her deception, but it will (to her great shame) in fact come true. Without being explicit (which, given the circumstances of Aphrodite's deception, the poet hardly could be), this mention of children once again foreshadows the ultimate result of the encounter.¹⁷

After the union, a great deal of attention is openly paid to Aineias' future. Apart from the explicit prophecy of his birth at verses 196–97, Aphrodite mentions him as the result of her union with a mortal in verses 252–55.¹⁸ That Aphrodite's love affair with Anchises and the resulting

¹⁴Allen 1898, 25, and Bickerman 1976, 231, argue that Anchises' speech is nothing more than a flattering speech to a mortal woman, just as Odysseus addresses Nausicaa at *Od.* 6.149ff. Smith 1981a, 46–49, thinks that Anchises is uncertain about whether or not his visitor is a goddess, and there is good reason to follow his view. While Odysseus cautiously asks whether Nausicaa is a god or a mortal, Anchises makes no mention of mortality but gives only a long list of possible goddesses; Odysseus likens Nausicaa to Artemis alone. Moreover, Anchises' later promise to build an altar and his requests for long life and good fortune are appropriate only to a goddess; the requests that Odysseus makes of Nausicaa are appropriate to her mortality (cf. de Jong 1989, 16).

¹⁵Cf. Nestor's prayer to Athena at *Od.* 3.380–81: ἀλλ', ἄνασσ', ἴληθι, δίδωθι δέ μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν, / αὐτῶ καὶ παιδεοσι καὶ αἰδοίῃ παρακοίτῃ.

¹⁶Cf. *Od.* 22.324, *h. Dem.* 136, and [Hes.] fr. 31.4.

¹⁷The fact that her claims that she will be called the wife of Anchises and bear children to him in verses 126–27 are presented as a prophecy from the mouth of the god Hermes also serves to mark it out from the rest of her lie; ironically, she will actually bear children to him.

¹⁸Vv. 252–55: νῦν δὲ δὴ οὐκέτι μοι στόμα τλήσεται ἐξονομῆναι / τοῦτο μετ' ἀθανάτοισιν, ἐπεὶ μάλα πολλὸν ἄσθηθην / σχέτλιον οὐκ ὀνομαστόν, ἀπεπλάγχθηθην δὲ νόοιο, / παῖδα δ' ὑπὸ ζώνῃ ἐθέμην βροτῶ ἐννηθείσα.

birth of Aineias are an embarrassment to the goddess is no reason to doubt that the poet is honouring a family of Aineiadaí, as Smith argues.¹⁹ Thetis is not happy with her marriage to the mortal Peleus, but this does not affect the honour of Achilles. Similarly, Zeus is embarrassed about his affairs with mortals (a fact that this poem expands upon), but his offspring (e.g., Heracles, Sarpedon) are all still extraordinary mortals with great honour. The point is that Aineias comes from divine stock, whether Aphrodite is shamed amongst the gods or not. Aphrodite expands upon Aineias further in verses 256–90, where she explains how her son will be raised by mountain nymphs and how, when Anchises sees Aineias for the first time, he is to take him immediately to Troy. This expansion is a continuation of her brief prophecy concerning Aineias at verses 196–97 and occupies a substantial part of the final section of the poem.

There is also a marked emphasis upon the god-like beauty and stature of Anchises and his lineage throughout the poem. Not only are Anchises and Aineias on several occasions compared to the gods with honorific formulae (Anchises, v. 55, δέμας ἀθανάτοισιν εἰκώς, “like the gods in form” and v. 77, θεῶν ἄπο κάλλος ἔχοντα, “having the beauty of gods”; Aineias v. 279, μάλα γὰρ θεοεἶκελος ἔσται, “for he will be very godlike”), but there is also a long digression during Aphrodite’s final speech about Anchises’ glorious ancestors Ganymede and Tithonus (vv. 200–238), who also had love affairs with gods. The section is introduced with the general statement, ἀγγίθει δὲ μάλιστα καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων / αἰεὶ ἀφ’ ὑμετέρης γενεῆς [Ἀγγίσειω] εἶδος τε φυὴν τε (vv. 200–201, “these mortal men close to the gods in form and beauty always come above all from your family”), and the whole family is again praised when introducing the specific case of Tithonus at verses 218–19, Τιθωνὸν . . . / ὑμετέρης γενεῆς ἐπιείκελον ἀθανάτοισι (“Tithonus . . . of your family, like the immortals”). In addition, the stress that this episode lays upon the family seems particularly remarkable, given that the digression seems unexpected following the conventions of comparable episodes; the goddess would naturally have made her departure after her epiphany and a relatively short speech.²⁰ The general subject matter (divine-mortal love

¹⁹Smith 1981a, 70.

²⁰On epiphanies most frequently coinciding with the arrival or departure of a god, see Richardson 1974, 208. Although it is on a much different scale, cf. the quick departure of Poseidon after his affair with Tyro at *Od.* 11.248–52. Aphrodite’s long final speech (vv. 191–290) includes all the elements that comprise Poseidon’s brief farewell: a) exhortation to take heart, b) announcement of future children, c) instruction/announcement of how the children will be raised, and d) warning not to speak of the affair. One can easily imagine

affairs) is certainly not out of place in the poem, but it is at least possible that the poet of *Aphrodite* added the Ganymede-Tithonus episode to an earlier account of the love affair, in which Aphrodite revealed herself to Anchises, gave a short speech of prophecy and warning, and departed.²¹ Increased praise of Aineias' lineage is one possible motivation for the addition of the episode.

All the above instances in *Aphrodite* that deal with the birth of Aineias and the glory of his race show that his lineage is a theme that is central to the narrative. While it is not possible, based upon this evidence, to conclude definitively that the poet of *Aphrodite* was composing with a group of Aineiadaï in mind or to gain any understanding of exactly what form such a relationship might have taken (the poem could, for example, have been composed for a specific situation such as a festival, or as a piece of court poetry),²² the marked emphasis on the lineage of Aineias in *Aphrodite*, when combined with the explicit prophecies there and in *Iliad* 20, gives considerable support to the hypothesis that the Aineiadaï did exist and that the poet of *Aphrodite* intended to praise them.

SHAMEFUL LOVE: UNIONS BETWEEN GODS AND MORTALS

In laying aside the Aineiadaï-hypothesis, van der Ben and, following him, Clay instead explain *Aphrodite* as an aetiology of why gods no longer have love affairs with mortals and, therefore, why the age of semi-divine heroes has come to an end.²³ Accepting that the poem was written with Aineiadaï in mind certainly does not preclude a concern with literary motifs. Indeed, one need only glance at the poetry of Pindar, or that of the later Theocritus and Callimachus, to see how the two can coexist

earlier versions of the story in which the goddess gives a more simple departing speech upon which the poet of *Aphrodite* has elaborated.

²¹ A scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius reports that Ibycus included an account of how Eos carried off Tithonus when he told of the abduction of Ganymede in his love-poem to Gorgias (*PMG* 289; see Bowra 1961, 259). This could suggest that the two stories were a literary pair. If so, however, this does not take away from the significance of the fact that the poet included them here, nor does it take away from the explicit emphasis which this version places upon the god-like nature of the entire race.

²² See Ballabriga 1996, who suggests that *Aphrodite* is paying homage not to a ruling family in the Troad but to the people of the city of Aineia, in Thrace, who claimed descent from Aineias.

²³ See above, n. 4.

happily. With respect to *Aphrodite*, for example, Smith has successfully shown that there is a recurrent juxtaposition of mortality and immortality in the hymn. This is a common motif elsewhere in early epic,²⁴ and naturally so in this poem as well, in which the boundaries between god and man are quite literally crossed; Aphrodite's disguising herself as a young maiden when she approaches Anchises (see in particular verses 82 and 109–10) itself blurs the distinction between mortal and divine, and the affair closes with the explicit statement that a mortal has slept with a goddess (v. 168, ἀθανάτη παρέλεκτο θεᾶ βροτός, “[Anchises] a mortal lay with the immortal goddess”). The incompatibility of men and gods in love (known also in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*)²⁵ is then later developed in detail in the stories of Ganymede and Tithonus (vv. 202–40), while the elaboration upon the semi-divine Nymphs in verses 257–72 explores the question of life and death.

In principle, then, one might adopt the theory that *Aphrodite* narrates the end of Aphrodite's willingness to bring about sexual unions between gods and mortals, while at the same time accepting that the poem is principally intended to praise a family of Aineiadai.²⁶ The case, however, for reading *Aphrodite* as an aetiology of why gods no longer have love affairs with mortals has been exaggerated. In what follows, I will revisit the arguments made in support of this reading of *Aphrodite* and suggest that, while a possible implication of the narrative, the end of unions between gods and mortals is neither explicit nor necessarily implicit in the poem. I will also argue that, even if one accepts this as a literary motif in the poem, it is not as prominent a theme as has been claimed.

To begin, Clay suggests that such a reading of *Aphrodite* is supported by something similar at [Hesiod] fragment 204.102–3: ἀλλ' οἱ μ[ε]ν μάκ[α]ρες κ[α]ί[.....]ν ὡς τὸ πάρος περ / χωρὶς ἀπ' ἀν[θ]ρώπων [βίσιον κα]ὶ ἦθεα ἔχουσιν (“But the blessed ones . . . as before should have life and a home

²⁴On the motif in Homer, see Griffin 1980, 162, and *passim*; cf. also Walcot 1991, 140–41, with examples from other hymns.

²⁵See Achilles' lament to his mother at *Il.* 18.86–87 that she ever married Peleus. Also, Calypso complains to Hermes about the hardships of relationships between goddesses and mortal men at *Od.* 5.118ff.

²⁶See, for instance, West 2003, 15: “Previously [Aphrodite] had enjoyed making other gods compromise their dignity by falling in love with a mortal; but by making her fall for Anchises, Zeus has put a stop to that for the future. However, the union that is an embarrassment for the goddess is a matter of glory for the heroic family that issues from it, and this is the real point of the poem.”

apart from men”).²⁷ She cites the interpretation of the fragment by Nagy, who thinks that it narrates the “permanent separation of gods and men” by Zeus (translating μάκαρες as “gods”).²⁸ Given, however, the similarity with *Works and Days*, verse 167 (τοῖς δὲ δίχ’ ἀνθρώπων βίστον καὶ ἦθε’ ὀπάσσας, “to some [Zeus] granted life and a home apart from men”), it seems much more probable that West is correct that the fragment describes Zeus separating the sons of gods (i.e., μάκαρες = semi-divine heroes) from the rest of mankind to live on the island of the blessed.²⁹ The frequent longing in the *Iliad* for an age when men were better certainly implies that the age of heroes is in decline at the time of the Trojan War³⁰ and nostalgia for a time when men and gods interacted more closely is expressed in the Hesiodic *Catalogue*.³¹ But a specific event that brings about the permanent separation of gods and men is not explicitly narrated anywhere in what survives of early literature. Clay also compares *Cypria* fragment 1 for her assertion that *Aphrodite* is narrating the permanent separation of men and gods,³² but there, Zeus’ plan is simply to relieve the earth of too many men with nothing said about their permanent separation from the gods. In fact, the poetic tradition elsewhere has mortal-divine relationships continue past this affair of *Aphrodite* and Anchises. The relative ages of heroes such as Achilles, Aineias, and Sarpedon are not specified anywhere in Homer.³³ If one considers the order in which the two births are presented at Hesiod *Theogony* 1006–10 as indicative of age, Achilles would indeed be older; but in this case the birth of Aineias is followed by Circe and Calypso bearing sons to Odysseus, a generation after the birth of Aineias.³⁴ The lack of a parallel in extant archaic poetry for the narration of the permanent separation of gods and mortals certainly does not preclude this in *Aphrodite*, but nor is there any external support for its existence.

I will now turn to *Aphrodite* itself. Van der Ben and Clay first seek support for their reading in lines 36–39 of the poem. After the prologue of

²⁷ Clay 1989, 167–68.

²⁸ Nagy 1979, 220.

²⁹ West 1985, 119ff. On the description of the island of the blessed in Hesiod, and the meaning of μάκαρες, see, West 1978, 193–94.

³⁰ See Clay 1989, 168–70, and West 1997, 116ff.

³¹ See [Hes.] fr. 1.

³² Clay 1989, 156–57, and 167–68.

³³ Noted by van der Ben 1986, 32.

³⁴ The account of his sons by Circe and Calypso is probably later than the *Odyssey*, where sons are not mentioned at all—see West 1966, 433—but there is no way to exclude that it was known by the poet of *Aphrodite* (certainly post-Homeric; cf. Hoekstra 1969, 39ff.).

the hymn, in which the three exceptions to Aphrodite's universal power, Athena, Artemis, and Hestia, receive mini-hymns, the poet returns to the theme of her universal dominance with the point that she conquers even Zeus in love:

καί τε πάρεκ Ζηγὸς νόον ἤγαγε τερπικεραύνου,
 ὃς τε μέγιστός τ' ἐστὶ, μεγίστης τ' ἔμμορε τιμῆς·
 καί τε τοῦ εὐτ' ἐθέλη³⁵ πυκινὰς φρένας ἐξαποφῶσα
 ῥηϊδίως συνέμειξε καταθνητῆσι γυναιξί. (Hymn to Aphrodite 36–39)

She even leads astray the mind of Zeus who delights in the thunderbolt, / who is the greatest, and receives the greatest honour. / Deceiving his shrewd mind whenever she wants, she easily mixes him in love with mortal women.

They take the aorists ἤγαγε and συνέμειξε as referring to a past situation;³⁶ according to this, Aphrodite coupled Zeus with mortal women once upon a time, but no longer. This is possible, but there is nonetheless good reason to take ἤγαγε and συνέμειξε as “gnomic” aorists, understanding the text as a general condition. This is signaled by the repetition of the particle combination καί τε at the beginning of verses 36 and 38. It is well established that the combination of τε with other particles most often indicates a general proposition or an habitual action.³⁷ Van der Ben tries to dismiss the significance of καί τε here by claiming that it indicates nothing more than climax, but it is far more natural to understand the passage as describing an habitual action of the goddess,³⁸ for

³⁵The subjunctive (ἐ)θέλη is read only by manuscript M (Leiden), while the other twenty-one manuscripts that contain *Aphrodite* all read the optative (ἐ)θέλοι. The reading, however, is not crucial to whether the text is describing an habitual action or not. The subjunctive is more expected in a general condition such as this (cf. *Od.* 7.201–2 and 20.85–86), but the optative could also be used (cf. *Il.* 4.263 and see Chantraine *GH* II, 223 and 259–60). In support of the subjunctive, M often offers the correct reading against the other manuscripts: e.g., v. 114 τρωάς M: τρωός cet. and v. 132 οὐ μὲν γάρ κε M: οὐ γάρ τε cet. (praeter V οὐ γάρ τοι); if on other occasions M is clearly wrong (e.g., v. 30 πείαρ M: πῖαρ cet.), there is at least no reason to discount the subjunctive on manuscript authority.

³⁶Van der Ben 1981, 92–93, and 1986, 4–5; Clay 1989, 163, n. 35.

³⁷See Denniston 1954, 528: “the great majority of cases in which τε is coupled with another particle contain general propositions, or describe habitual action.” Compare *Od.* 20.85–86, where epic τε is combined with a gnomic aorist in the description of a general attribute of Sleep.

³⁸Ruijgh 1971, 913, in his comprehensive study of epic τε, agrees. He notes that ἤγαγε is ambiguous, expressing the nuance of climax (i.e., “she conquers even Zeus”) but

an attributive statement is perhaps also preferable here on structural grounds. After the digression of verses 7–33 (in which the poet expands upon the three exceptions to Aphrodite’s power, Athena, Artemis, and Hestia), the poet returns with ring-composition (v. 33, τῶν οὐ δύναται πεπιθεῖν φρένας οὐδ’ ἀπατήσαι ~ v. 7, τρισσὰς οὐ δύναται πεπιθεῖν φρένας οὐδ’ ἀπατήσαι: “she [Aphrodite] is not able to persuade or deceive the mind of three goddesses”) to the theme which he left off at v. 6: the universal power of Aphrodite (vv. 34–35, τῶν δ’ ἄλλων οὐ πέρ τι πεφυγμένον ἔστ’ Ἀφροδίτην / οὔτε θεῶν μακάρων οὔτε θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων, “of other mortal men and immortal gods, no one escapes Aphrodite”). The switch from the habitual to the strictly historic so abruptly at this point is perhaps made more naturally a few lines later after verses 40–44. These lines move from a general description of Hera as an esteemed wife to the historic description of her birth in preparation for the introduction of the narrative at verse 45, just as the description of birth elsewhere in the *Hymns* acts as a transition between attributive and narrative sections.³⁹ Once again, one cannot rule out altogether that these lines are referring to Aphrodite’s mixing of Zeus with mortal women as a thing of the past, but the presence of the particle combination καί τε and the structure of the prologue speak against it.

The overt focus of the narrative at least seems to lie elsewhere. The narrative is introduced at lines 45ff. by the statement that Zeus made Aphrodite sleep with a mortal man in order that she should not boast amongst the gods (v. 48, καί ποτ’ ἐπευξαμένη εἶπη μετὰ πᾶσι θεοῖσιν, “and never would she boast among all the gods”); nothing is said about stopping her mischief for good. Moreover, as I have argued above, the themes of boasting and semi-divine birth immediately precede the beginning of the narrative in lines 50–52, signaling their interrelated importance for the upcoming narrative.⁴⁰ It is the shame of having been led astray (by Zeus) to sleep with a mortal man and give birth to a semi-mortal son that will end Aphrodite’s pleasurable boasting about such affairs amongst the gods, for Aphrodite will in future be reproached by the gods for her own

nonetheless considers συνέμειξε “gnomic.” Van der Ben 1986, 5, thinks “the idea of climax is present both at 36 and at 38.”

³⁹ See, for example, the mini-hymn to Hestia at *Aphrodite* 21–32; a description of her birth by Kronos leads from an attributive section to a short narrative about the goddess. For the description of birth initiating a narrative, see also the opening lines of *Herm.*, *Hy.* 15, and *Hy.* 28. Conversely, at *Hy.* 7.56–57 the description of Dionysus’ birth acts as a transition from the narrative to the closing farewell.

⁴⁰ See p. 5.

affair. The realization of Zeus' plan to stop her boasting is then confirmed later by Aphrodite's own words to Anchises:⁴¹

αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ μέγ' ὄνειδος ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν
 ἔσσειται ἤματα πάντα διαμπερές εἵνεκα σεῖο,
 οἳ πρὶν ἐμοὺς ὀάρους καὶ μήτιας, αἷς ποτε πάντας
 ἀθανάτους συνέμειξα καταθνητῆσι γυναιξί,
 τάρβησκον· πάντας γὰρ ἐμὸν δάμνασκε νόημα.
 νῦν δὲ δὴ οὐκέτι μοι στόμα τλήσεται ἐξονομήναι
 τοῦτο μετ' ἀθανάτοισιν, ἐπεὶ μάλα πολλὸν ἀάσθη
 σχέτλιον, οὐκ ὄνομαστόν, ἀπεπλάγχθη δὲ νόοιο,
 παῖδα δ' ὑπὸ ζώνῃ ἐθέμην βροτῶ εὐνηθεῖσα. (*Hymn to Aphrodite* 247–55)

For me there will be a great reproach amongst the gods for all time because of you, [the gods] who before feared my whisperings and clever plans, with which at some point I mixed all gods with mortal women; for my purpose tamed them all. But now my mouth will no longer dare to mention this among the immortals, since I have been greatly led astray, terribly, unspeakably, and gone out of my mind, and have a child under my girdle having slept with a mortal man.

Van der Ben argues that Aphrodite has essentially lost the power to bring about love affairs between gods and mortals because she will no longer, for fear of reproach for her own actions, mention such unions to the gods.⁴² This is a possible implication of lines 249–51; the gods previously feared her plans, with which she mixed them all in love, for her will in the past tamed them all. But van der Ben goes too far in suggesting that “the tenses and temporal adverbs [Aphrodite] uses leave no doubt that such contacts belong definitively to the past.”⁴³ In fact, the only thing that clearly belongs exclusively to the past according to the goddess is the gods' fear of her whisperings and clever plans. The use of the past tense with the indefinite adverb ποτε in the parenthesis of lines 249–50 (αἷς ποτε πάντας / ἀθανάτους συνέμειξα καταθνητῆσι γυναιξί, “[clever plans] with which at some point I mixed all gods with mortal women”) is not indicative of an activity that is exclusive to the past; Aphrodite did “at

⁴¹ Many scholars have understood Zeus' victory to be nothing more than the end of Aphrodite's boasting; see the useful summary of scholarship following this view given by Clay 1989, 166, n. 43, and 193, n. 137).

⁴² Van der Ben 1981, 90–91, and 1986, 30–33; cf. Clay 1989, 192–93; the gods “previously” (πρὶν, v. 249) feared her plans but no longer do.

⁴³ Van der Ben 1981, 90–91, and 1986, 30–33.

some point” couple all gods with mortals, and she might well do so again.⁴⁴ On the other hand, the temporal adverb πρίν in verse 249 refers only to the fear of the gods, a point that is emphasized by the striking enjambement of τάρβεσκον in verse 251 after a parenthesis of more than a line. The implication that her activity is at an end in fact depends upon the qualifying phrase of the latter half of verse 251 “for my purpose tamed them all” (πάντας γὰρ ἐμὸν δάμνασκε νόημα);⁴⁵ one possible interpretation of this phrase is, as van der Ben has suggested, that, if the gods previously feared Aphrodite’s plans “because” (γάρ) she tamed them all, they are not afraid anymore because she will no longer make them sleep with mortals. Even here, however, an outright halt to Aphrodite’s mixing of gods and men is not necessarily implied. The first word of the phrase places stress upon the fact that her purpose tamed “all” (πάντας) gods, an emphasis that builds upon her use of πάντας in verse 249. Aphrodite is not saying that the gods previously feared her simply because she made them sleep with mortals but because she was successful in taming them “all” in this respect. The reason for the change in their fear could, therefore, be the result not of an outright halt to her activity but of diminished freedom in such activity, brought about by her own personal embarrassment with Anchises; the gods were previously afraid because she tamed “all” gods whereas now her will is more constrained for fear of reproach. Again, this does not necessarily imply an end to such activity altogether.

But however one understands the implication of these lines, Aphrodite’s speech seems rather to focus upon her shame and the cessation of her boasting. Aphrodite’s words at lines 252–53 (οὐκέτι μοι στόμα τλήσεται⁴⁶ ἔξονομῆναι / τοῦτο μετ’ ἀθανάτοισιν, “my mouth will no longer dare to mention this among the immortals”) again do not make it explicit that her plans are at an end. What she says is that she will no

⁴⁴See, for example, the prayer of Chryses at *Il.* 1.39–41: εἴ ποτέ τοι χαρίεντ’ ἐπὶ νηὸν ἔρεψα, / ἢ εἴ δὴ ποτέ τοι κατὰ πίονα μηρὶ ἔκηα / ταύρων ἠδ’ αἰγῶν, τότε μοι κρήνην ἐέλωρ; Chryses has “at some point” made sacrifices to Apollo, but there is certainly no implication that he will not do so again in the future. See the translation of West 2003, 179: “at one time or another.”

⁴⁵This clause also adds emphasis to the idea that “all” the gods were subject to her will, following from πάντας / ἀθανάτους συνέμειξα in lines 249–50.

⁴⁶στόμα τλήσεται printed above is the conjecture of Martin 1755; cf. στόματ’ ἔσσειται (Clarke 1740) and στόμα χείσεται (Matthiae 1800). Van der Ben 1981, 90, and 1986, 33, proposes reading γάμον ἔσσειται on the analogy of *Od.* 6.66: θαλερὸν γάμον ἔξονομῆναι. But this involves a more radical departure from the στοναχίσειται of the manuscripts and also requires the emendation of τοῦτο μετ’ in the next line to τοῦτον ἐν (where there is no variance in the transmission of τοῦτο μετ’).

longer “mention ‘this’ (τοῦτο) amongst the gods.” Even if τοῦτο here could be referring to her νόημα (“purpose”) in the previous line, intending that she will no longer exercise that will amongst the gods, it most naturally refers to the entire description of her mixing gods and mortals given in the previous three lines, intending nothing more than that she will no longer laugh and boast about such affairs. This is supported by the language of the passage: these words of Aphrodite contain an echo of the language used to describe Zeus’ intention to end her boasting at line 48 (εἶπε μετὰ πᾶσι θεοῖσιν ~ ἐξονομήναι / τοῦτο μετ’ ἀθανάτοισιν, “boast among all the gods”—“mention this among the immortals”). Moreover, a fear of reproach for her folly is from the outset the central concern for Aphrodite in this passage. She begins her discussion of the consequences of her union with Anchises by mentioning the “great reproach” (μέγ’ ὄνειδος) that she will suffer amongst the gods for all time because of Anchises. Concentrated attention is then given to her shame also at the end of the passage in lines 252–55; emphasis is produced here by the repetition across two lines on the theme of her folly (vv. 253–54, ἐπει μάλᾳ πολλὸν ἀάσθην / σχέτλιον, οὐκ ὀνομαστόν, ἀπεπλάγχθην δὲ νόοιο, “since I have been greatly led astray, terribly, unspeakably, and gone out of my mind”), which is “unspeakable” (οὐκ ὀνομαστόν).⁴⁷

Zeus has in the end been successful, and the laughing, boasting Aphrodite presented in the lines immediately preceding the narrative has been humbled and shamed. The poignant irony of Zeus’ victory should not be overlooked here for the outcome represents a very real aspect of sexual love; Aphrodite, the physical embodiment of love, must at times suffer painful shame and remorse, just as countless lovers have done and will continue to do.

Importantly, this motif is known elsewhere in early epic. Aphrodite’s shame amongst the gods is also a consequence of her affair with Ares recounted by Demodocus in *Odyssey* 8. When Hephaestus’ chains trap Aphrodite in bed with Ares, all of the gods stand around and laugh at her (*Od.* 8.321ff.). This is an episode that the poet of *Aphrodite* probably knew; *Aphrodite* 58–63, while formulaic, are largely identical to *Odyssey* 8.362–65, while the description of Tithonus’ inability to move his limbs at *Aphrodite* 234 is very similar to the line that describes the inability of Ares

⁴⁷The mss. here read the meaningless ὀνομαστόν; Martin 1755 conjectures οὐκ ὀνομαστόν “unspeakable,” while Clarke 1740 suggests οὐκ ὀνομαστόν “not to be made light of.” The former seems preferable, as the latter requires the usual sense of “blame” to be stretched (see Kamerbeek 1967, 393, and van Eck 1978, 87). However, for the present argument, either supports the idea that Aphrodite is afraid of her affair being talked about.

and Aphrodite to move their limbs under Hephaestus' chains at *Odyssey* 8.298. There, too, Hephaestus, like Zeus, is getting his revenge against Aphrodite, and the goddess of love suffers shame before the gods.

CONCLUSION

The position of van der Ben and Clay that the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* provides an *aition* for why gods no longer sleep with mortals is possible but not certain. Opinions as to what is implied in the poem will undoubtedly continue to differ, but the case for the poem narrating the end of unions between gods and mortals has at least been overstated. It is not explicitly announced at any point before the beginning of the narrative, nor, as has been claimed, is it necessarily implicit in lines 36–39, where there are good linguistic and structural reasons to favour Aphrodite's power over Zeus being described as an eternal characteristic rather than a thing of the past. Even in lines 247–55, it is neither explicitly stated nor necessarily implied that Aphrodite will no longer be willing to bring about unions between gods and mortals. The emphasis in Aphrodite's speech upon her previous power over "all gods" (πάντας, vv. 249 and 251) makes it equally possible that what is implied is that her power has been diminished because of her own shame but not entirely stopped. In any case, the central concern of the passage and the narrative as a whole seems to be Aphrodite's shame and the cessation of her boasting, the successful outcome of Zeus' intention announced in lines 45ff. The theme of Aphrodite's shame before the gods is one that is known elsewhere in early epic and itself provides an important comment upon the nature of sexual love: sexual unions often end in shame for one or more individuals. Above all, however, these literary themes, no matter how one chooses to rate their prominence, should be understood as working alongside the concentrated attention given to Aeneias and his descendants in the poem rather than as competing interpretations.⁴⁸

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⁴⁸An earlier form of this article was given as a paper in May 2005 at the CAC conference in Banff, Alberta. I am particularly grateful to Dr. N. J. Richardson, who read and commented upon a final version, and to the anonymous referees for their helpful comments and criticism.

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