SING, MUSE . . . : THE INTROIT FROM HOMER TO APOLLONIUS[1]

I

This paper attempts to reconstruct the development, from Homer to Hellenistic times, of the prayer for inspiration found at the beginning of Greek epic poems; we may, on a liturgical analogy, call this the 'introit' (I intend to reserve the word 'proem', which is usually applied to these texts, for the hymns that prefaced poetic performances).

I have divided the present study into two parts. The conclusion of this first section is that the introits of written epics composed prior to the classical period largely conserved the prayer's traditional format and its complex amalgam of functions, both of which went back to the era of pre-literate extempore bardic performance, perhaps deep into pre-Hellenic history. The second part will consider the effects of the philosophical and literary innovations of the classical and Hellenistic periods, as well as examining the distinct species of proems.

Bardic ideology

Introits appear to have originated as the pre-performance prayers of bards, and we may begin by examining the ideology of bardship constructed in our earliest texts. Later ancient writers and modern scholars often downplay the importance attributed to inspiration in bardic recitation, claiming that bards were regarded as being at least partners of the Muses.[2] Havelock, for instance, described the Muse as merely 'the symbol of the bard's command of professional secrets';[3] and *Μοῦσα* may be derived from an Indo-European root denoting mental activity.[4]

Homer, however, consistently asserts the supernatural character of bardic recitation. Bards owe their bardship to the gods (*Od.* 8.44–5, 8.496–8, 17.518–20, 22.347–8), and specifically to the Muses (*Od.* 8.62–6, 8.479–81, 8.488). 'L'idée de l'aède comme auteur du chant est en effet "systématiquement" rejetée par Homère', notes Svenbro, discussing Homer's reluctance to describe bards in terms associated with craftsmen.[5] References to bardic inspiration introduce recitations in the *Odyssey*; the phrase ἀοιδὸς ἄειδε, presenting the bard himself as 'auteur', appears only when they are concluding.[6]

[2] Ancient writers: e.g. Euphorio fr. 118 Powell. Doxography of moderns: A. L. Ford, *Homer* (Ithaca, 1992), 32–3.

[3] E. A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Oxford, 1963), 155.

[4] H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1960–72) and P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris, 1968), s.v. give various possible derivations.

[5] J. Svenbro, *La parole et le marbre* (Lund, 1976), 193.

[6] Introductions: *Od.* 8.73–8, 499–503, the latter pericope including the significant phrase ὁρμηθεὶς θεοῦ in a prominent position: the bard's role is passive even though he is consciously responding to a request from Odysseus (cf. 44–5), and the metaphorical use of ὁρμηθείς is striking. Ἀναβάλλέσθαι (*Od.* 1.155–7, 8.266–9, 17.262–3) may mean 'sing an introit' [*LfrgE* s.v. ἀνά (10) includes the definition 'das Singen durch ein Praeludium aufschieben, praeludieren (?)']. Conclusions: *Od.* 1.325–6, 8.83, 8.521.

At *Il.* 2.591–600, in a story of possibly great antiquity, bardship is constructed as binary, either granted or denied by the gods (though mortals clearly decide when to exercise it); and bards carried sceptres, elsewhere closely associated with sacred figures and sacred speech.[7] Admittedly, bardship did not involve possession or μανία: passages such as Plat. *Phaedr.* 245a are unhelpful here. Muse-possession is unknown to Homer—the notion appears first in Democritus (B17f D-K)—and to this extent the scepticism of some critics as to how well-developed the Homeric theology of inspiration was is not unreasonable.[8] Nonetheless, bards are consistently presented as enjoying a unique access to the divine:

[The] language of the gods excels human language both in its power to express events in the world and in its sheer material force. And the voice that poets borrow from them shares in both these sublimities.[9]

This brings us to the point that bards possessed unique objectivity. In Homer and Hesiod, the formula 'Ολύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι often denotes the Muses, and 'Ολύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες the gods in general. The Muses are thus located outside normal human space and their observations lent a superhuman perspective. They seem also to be located outside time: speaking through bards, they present *hic et nunc* data concerning past, present, and future[10] (Homer's use of νῦν in internal invocations—on which *vide infra*—may be intended to point this contrast). Furthermore, the boundary separating form from content was blurred,[11] and inspiration was not restricted to one or the other: both came from "Ολυμπος.

Hesiod seems to profess the same ideology, and it is in the *Theogony* that we first find the familiar motif of the poet's divine investiture. The *locus* in question is the notoriously controversial passage at *Theog.* 22–34 in which the Muses claim the ability to utter at will both ψεύδεα . . . ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα and ἀληθέα.[12] Many have seen Hesiod as suggesting that some bardic song (Homer's?) is potentially deceitful; post-structuralist critics have even seen the passage as problematizing the relationship between ἀληθέα and reality.[13] Yet Hesiod's simple point should not be overlooked: ordination by the Muses guarantees access to divine truth (which is, furthermore, specifically contrasted with human falsehoods[14]). For him, words presented unmediated reality. The Muses nowhere actually admit to lying, and '[the] use of polar

[7] E.g. P. E. Easterling, 'Agamemnon's *skêptron* in the *Iliad*', in M. M. Mackenzie and C. Roueché (edd.), *Images of Authority (Festschrift J. Reynolds)*, PCPS Suppl. 16 (Cambridge, 1989), 105–7; comprehensive references in J. L. Melena, 'En torno al ΣΚΗΠΤΡΟΝ homérico', *Cuad. fil. clás.* 3 (1972), 321–56.

[8] E.g. E. Tigerstedt, '*Furor poeticus*: poetic inspiration in Greek literature before Democritus and Plato', *JHI* 31 (1970), 163–78.

[9] Ford (n. 2), 189, in an interesting discussion of the resonances of θέσπις and αὐδή in Homer and the implications of their juxtaposition (172–97).

[10] Poets and prophets were originally undifferentiated in Indo-European culture (e.g. N. K. Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy* [Cambridge, 1942], 1–14; S. Scheinberg, 'The bee maidens of the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*', *HSPh* 83 [1979], 21–6; G. Nagy, 'Ancient Greek poetry, prophecy and concepts of theory', in J. L. Kugel [ed.], *Poetry and Prophecy* [Ithaca, 1990], 56–9). Homer and Hesiod occasionally recall this primeval unity (*Il.* 1.68–72; *Theog.* 30–2).

[11] E.g. J. Russo and B. Simon, 'Homeric psychology and the oral epic tradition', *JHI* 29 (1968), 494.

[12] Cf. e.g. *Erga* 658–9; Call. frs. 1.21–8 Pfeiffer, *Schol. Flor.* ad fr. 2; Theoc. 7 (if Lycidas represents Apollo).

[13] E.g. P. Pucci, *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry* (Baltimore, 1977), 8–16.

[14] Cf. *Od.* 19.203: Hesiod is deliberately contrasting himself with the lying Odysseus.

opposition to express a god's power is frequent in archaic texts'.[15] Similarly, the phrase εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν is less a hint of dangerous capriciousness than an expression of the goddesses' power.

Originally, ἀληθέα probably denoted scrupulously reported, not simply veracious material, and Hesiod appears to be innovating in linking the term to divine discourse and to prophecy.[16] Nonetheless, throughout Greek literature, the word always refers to *true* utterances. As Pratt argues, Homer appears not to realize that a witness's honesty does not guarantee his or her reliability[17] (nor, we may add, does Hesiod): the Muses, however, are able to recount perfect knowledge perfectly scrupulously. Furthermore, as Adkins showed,[18] attempts to link ἀλήθεια too closely with purely social μνημοσύνη and oppose it simply to λήθη encounter serious objections.[19] Μνημοσύνη was a divine, objective reality, the Muses' mother, and the outstanding characteristic of bardic recitations was their objective truthfulness, as Homer's own characters recognize (e.g. *Il.* 6.354–8; *Od.* 8.579–80, 24.194–202). The 'uniform and dispassionate mode of presentation which the Muse's narrative calls for'[20] discernible in Homer (outside the speeches, which are more obviously subjective) is doubtless a reflex of this ideology.

Finally, we should consider Odysseus' narratives in the *Odyssey*. These have generated considerable scholarly interest: Doherty, for example, sees in the epic a strategy of repetitions which 'links the credibility of the hero to that of the bards portrayed in the poem' and to Homer himself.[21] But Odysseus is an *anti*-bard. His voice is certainly sometimes associated with Homer's;[22] he employs certain bardic motifs, including those associated with the commencement of recitations, and is compared to a bard.[23] He speaks, though, on his own authority (note ἐνίσπω at 9.37–8)—and, obviously, lies. He is subtly measured against and contrasted with genuine, inspired ἀοιδοί.

The form and functions of introits

It was thus not unnatural for bards, beginning their recitations, to invoke their inspiration-source: we may attempt to reconstruct the form of their invocations, both *a priori* and on the evidence of our earliest written introits (which may perhaps not, as we shall see, include those of the vulgate Homer and Hesiod). They probably made their prayers out loud, this being usual among the Greeks;[24] to the Muse(s),[25] whose

[15] G. Ferrari, 'Hesiod's mimetic muses and the strategy of deconstruction', in A. Benjamin (ed.), *Post-Structuralist Classics* (London, 1988), 71, n. 2, with references.

[16] A. T. Cole, 'Archaic truth', *QUCC* N.S. 13 (1983), 7–28.

[17] L. H. Pratt, *Lying and Poetry from Homer to Pindar* (Ann Arbor, 1993), 21–2.

[18] A. W. H. Adkins, 'Truth, κόσμος and ἀρετή in the Homeric poems', *CQ* 22 (1972), 5–18.

[19] 'Early *Alêtheia*', argued Detienne, 'meant neither agreement between a proposition and its object nor agreement between judgments. It was not the opposite of "lies" or "falsehood"' (*The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece* [New York, 1996], 52).

[20] J. Griffin, 'Homeric words and speakers', *JHS* 106 (1986), 46; I. J. F. de Jong, 'Homeric words and speakers: an addendum', *JHS* 108 (1988), 188–9.

[21] L. E. Doherty, *Siren Songs* (Ann Arbor, 1995), 164.

[22] E.g. W. F. Wyatt, 'The intermezzo of *Odyssey* 11', *SMEA* 27 (1989), 241–2; S. D. Goldhill, *The Poet's Voice* (Cambridge, 1991), 66–7.

[23] *Od.* 11.363–9; Ford (n. 2), 72–6, 113.

[24] S. Pulleyn, *Prayer in Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1997), 184–8.

[25] As almost *passim* in later literature. The practice of invoking one particular specified Muse (e.g. Sappho fr. 124 *PLF*; perhaps also fr. 260 *SLG*), post-dates Hesiod, arguably the first poet to differentiate between the individual Muses (M. L.West, *Hesiod: Theogony* [Oxford, 1966], on 76).

genealogy and dwelling-place they may have mentioned;[26] in the imperative, the original verb-form of prayer,[27] perhaps using the verbs ἀειδε(τε) or ἐν(ν)επε(τε),[28] which may have been strengthened by ἄγε or νῦν[29] and accompanied by a pronoun such as μοι;[30] and in verse, like all our extant introits, inspiration not being *necessary* in poetic composition and recitation.[31] They must have specified to the Muse the subject of which they would tell, perhaps beginning with a single noun followed by modifiers,[32] and probably ended by specifying the point at which the succeding recitation was to begin.[33]

West notes certain formal similarities between introits and Near-Eastern poetic openings, which frequently included elements such as an initial noun-phrase followed by modifiers, a reference to the narrator's act of narration and an anticipation of the poem's contents.[34] Near-Eastern influence on Greek introits is quite possible: the shared format is not universal, not appearing even in later European texts emerging from oral traditions such as the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Chanson de Roland* (if it comes from an oral tradition) and *Beowulf*. Nor is the emphasis on the narrator's act of narration universal: the openings of Yugoslavian songs, for instance, may refer to the singers in the plural, as if 'the song has here become all of the audiences who, together with an entire tradition of [bards], have participated in making and remaking the song'.[35]

Why, though, were texts ever given introits? The arresting fact is that the complex cluster of functions of bardic introits may be argued also to have underlain those found in later epic texts, with no fundamental change evident until Hellenistic times.

On one view, the post-Homeric evolution of society and of the social status of language destroyed the old ideology of inspired speech and song: Detienne wrote of the 'decline of the magicoreligious speech that accompanied the old system of thought'.[36] Rulers had previously been accounted inspired like bards (*Theog.* 75–93); the value of words was now, however, determined by their speaker's justification of their employment, not by the status of their pretended source. The introit may have been an originally pious and sincere prayer that later became fossilized.

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[26] Sappho frs. 53, 103.8 *PLF*; Alcman frs. 3 (fr. 1.1ff.), 5 (fr. 2.1.28ff.), 8.9ff., 27 *PMG*; ’Ολύμπια δώματ’ ἔχουσαι occurs in nearly all of Homer's internal invocations (*vide infra*).

[27] Pulleyn questions the extent to which imperative-prayers and optative-prayers were distinguished, at least in classical times ([n. 24], 150–1).

[28] E.g. *Il.* 1.1; *Od.* 1.1, 9.37; ἔσπετε or ἔννεπε in Homer's internal invocations (*infra*); Archilochus fr. 117 *IEG²*. E. Risch argued that ἐν(ν)έπω had retained its Indo-European root's sense of 'kunstvolles und feierliches Berichten' ('Homerisch ἐννέπω, lakonisch ἐφενέποντι und die alte Erzählprosa', *ZPE* 60 [1985], 9). On the two words and their likely periods of use, *vide* G. Nagy, *Pindar's Homer* (Baltimore, 1990), 20–1.

[29] Sappho fr. 118 *PLF*; Alcman frs. 14a, 27 *PMG*; Stesichorus frs. 63, 101 *PMG*; *vide supra* on 'νυν'.

[30] Although B. Marzullo (*Il problemo omerico* [Florence, 1952], 482, n. 2) claimed that invocations cannot originally have contained any first-person forms; *vide* also e.g. K. J. Atchity, *Homer's Iliad* (Carbondale, 1978), 246–7.

[31] At *Il.* 9.189, for instance, Achilles' song is not said to be inspired.

[32] One thinks, naturally, of the canonical Homeric introits. Cf. the similar format of proems' openings (R. Janko, 'The structure of the *Homeric Hymns*: a study in genre', *Hermes* 109 [1981], 9–10).

[33] *Il.* 1.6–7 (if ἐξ οὗ modifies ἄειδε in 1); *Od.* 1.10; *Theog.* 114–15.

[34] M. West, *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford, 1997), 170–3.

[35] J. M. Foley, *Homer's Traditional Art* (University Park, 1999), 47; cf. R. P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes* (Ithaca, 1989), 231–3.

[36] Detienne (n. 19), 104.

This view, however, is problematic: we may doubt whether anyone truly 'believed in' the Muses or divinely authorized speech. The archaic texts themselves do not encourage such doubts,[37] but this in itself proves little. Firstly, we may doubt whether the Homeric anthropomorphic system ever commanded credence: Homer's characters typically employ non-specific terms such as θεός τις and δαίμων in their references to the divine, conceivably suggesting—in so far as generalizations are possible here—an unspecific belief in an overarching supernatural power or body of powers whose supposed actions were conventionally ascribed to the individual categories of 'Apollo', 'Aphrodite', and so forth.[38] Inspiration could slide from one category to another and be attributed to deities other than the Muses.[39]

Furthermore, evidence of conflicting traditions such as *H. Dion.* 1–6 and Demodocus' un-Iliadic first lay makes one wonder whether bardic ideology was ever truly credible; *Theog.* 367–370 attests the existence of (probably variant) local traditions, and conflicts must have been apparent even between individual bards' material. Finally, it would have been obvious that bards had to *learn*, probably by means of long apprenticeships, the technical skills and poetic subject-matter essential to their craft,[40] a fact which Homer suppresses: the description of Phemius as αὐτοδίδακτος at *Od.* 22.347–8, which seems at first sight to tell against this point, probably refers to inborn talent (it is significant, for example, that ἐδίδαξε is applied twice to the Muses' action on Demodocus at 8.479–81 and 487–8).[41]

We may ask, then, precisely what purpose introits had. Clearly, they recalled an ideology of divinely inspired recitation: speculation regarding individuals' precise motives here is unwise,[42] but we may conjecture some general explanations. Firstly, the force of convention may have underlain even bards' use of introits: the burden of the past would certainly have weighed upon later poets, who may also have written introits purely as a literary conceit. Secondly, introits set the tone for the main composition immediately catching an audience's attention (one recalls here Arist. *Rhet.* 1414b on rhetorical προοίμια).

Thirdly, poets may have used them to lend weight to praise of patrons or to the

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[37] *Pace* e.g. P. Pucci's brilliant analysis (*The Song of the Sirens* [Lanham, 1998], 31–48), which depends heavily upon a passage which is probably a late interpolation. De Jong finds only a handful of passages appearing to challenge bardic ideology (*Narrators and Focalizers* [Amsterdam, 1987], 47–9), most of them otherwise explicable.

[38] *Vide*, famously, O. Jörgensen, 'Das Auftreten der Götter in den Büchern ι–μ der *Odyssee*', *Hermes* 39 (1904), 357–82; also F. E. Brenk, 'Demonology in the early imperial period', *ANRW* 16.3 (1986), 2071–82 (with doxography); cf. *Od.* 22.347–8. In fact, the phrase θεός τις merely indicates the speaker's ignorance of the identity of the god whose action he or she is experiencing and does not necessarily imply belief in an 'overarching supernatural power'; the employment of the phrase does, however, highlight how potentially difficult it was (and, arguably, how uncommon) for one to categorize specifically irruptions of the divine into human existence.

[39] E.g. *Od.* 8.487–8; *Theog.* 94–6; *HH. Homm.* 1.17–19, 6.19–20, 10.4–5, 24.4–5, 25.

[40] The uncoupling of poetry and prophecy, both originally associated with intoxication, seems to have effected the breaking of the link between poetic inspiration and intoxication at which later literature hints (Scheinberg [n. 13]; M. Durante, *Sulla preistoria della tradizione poetica greca* pt. 2, *Incunabula Graeca* 64 [Rome, 1976], 169; R. Lamberton, *Hesiod* [New Haven, 1988], 60, who notes that the ancients assumed that Hesiod claimed to have *eaten* the Muses' laurel). It was perhaps then that bards became primarily skilled craftsmen.

[41] *Vide* further W. G. Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Poetry* (Baltimore, 1984), 126–7.

[42] Though it seems reasonable to conclude that the use of introits was probably not consciously *ironic*, at least before Hellenistic times (for a different opinion, *vide* R. J. Rabel *Plot and Point of View in the Iliad* [Ann Arbor, 1997], 30).

propagation of their own or others' ideologies. Scodel has uncovered latent indications in Homer that the distinction between bardic and non-bardic discourse erected by the poet is illusory and points out that the latter can never be entirely objective, since it always occupies a certain set of circumstances.[43] Art does not exist in a social vacuum: Finnegan cautions that oral poetry is frequently controlled by narrow élites,[44] a notion famously discussed by Svenbro.[45] An ideology of divine inspiration would have ratified the *Weltanschauung*—their patrons' or their own—which bards and poets propounded (and would have excused any witting or unwitting lapses). We may note too the ironies in the construction of apparently authoritative Muses as virgins under Zeus' control who speak through male bards.[46]

Fourthly, claiming divine inspiration, whether or not such claims were taken literally, had extra point in competitive poetic environments. Bards were probably competitive both formally and informally from early times,[47] and the motives for encoding a claim of equality with or superiority to one's fellows in references to a supposed special relationship with the Muses were probably always potent. Finally, the practice may have reflected poets' genuine experience in composition. Creators of *Kunstwerke* from numerous times and cultures from Jeremiah to Robert Graves have sensed some sort of inspiration. And, even though belief in specifically theistic inspiration probably became steadily less attractive, we may conjecture that many poets still sensed the θεῖον quality of their poetic abilities[48] and wished to acknowledge or defer to it.

Homer's introits

Our oldest surviving epic introits are those with which the Homeric texts begin. Failure to read the Homeric epics in the light of the probable circumstances of their composition and assembly may fairly be regarded as a weakness of contemporary Homeric scholarship: we must determine exactly when our transmitted introits came into being before attempting an analysis. Our response to this question will depend upon our views concerning the poems' composition.

If we adopt an 'evolutionist' stance, we must conclude that the introits date from the later archaic period, when redactors added them by analogy with those of the authentic improvisional recitations which they could still attend or remember. We may conclude with some confidence that this happened to Hesiod's *Erga*: though the Alexandrians' wholesale suspicions regarding Hesiod's openings seem excessive, the *Erga*'s proem-like introit was, significantly, not regarded as canonical in antiquity.[49] On this view, no Homeric text existed until perhaps the sixth century. Each constituent lay

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[43] R. Scodel, 'Bardic performance and oral tradition in Homer', *AJPh* 119 (1998), 180–92.

[44] R. Finnegan, *Oral Poetry* (Cambridge, 1977), 201–6.

[45] Svenbro (n. 7), 16–35, though he argued that 'le contrôle social s'est trouvé contesté' (73) before Hesiod; cf. C. Segal, *Singers, Heroes and Gods in the Odyssey* (Ithaca, 1994), 145–57 (with reservations). C. Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon* (New York, 1995), 68–84 discusses poetic patronage in Indo-European society.

[46] E.g. M. B. Arthur, 'The dream of a world without women: poetics and the circles of order in the *Theogony* prooemium', *Arethusa* 16 (1983), 108–9; cf., more generally, L. E. Doherty, 'Sirens, Muses and female narrators in the *Odyssey*', in B. Cohen (ed.), *The Distaff Side* (New York, 1995), 81–92 (with some reservations).

[47] E.g. M. Durante, 'Il nome di Omero', *RAL* ser. 8ᵃ 12 (1957), 102–11; Pucci (n. 16), 31–3; Ford (n. 2), 93–9, 110–20.

[48] Cf. Eust. 1.15, 21–3 van der Valk.

[49] Praxiphanes frs. 22a–b Wehrli; Paus. 31.9.4.

of the epics surely had its own introit if any existed at all: yet the transmitted introits clearly introduce each epic as a whole and so cannot predate the first unitary texts.[50]

If, on the other hand, we adopt a 'creationist' stance, the most attractive conclusion is that the canonical introits date from much earlier times, and were composed by Homer himself—that is to say, by the individual(s) principally responsible for composing the texts of the epics in the eighth or seventh centuries. It is, however, possible to argue that introits could not have been written while oral poetry still flourished: introits were metatextual, resembling (for example) African singers' addresses to and references to their accompanists.[51] They ostensibly requested the Muses' assistance in composition and performance, originally a single act. Written introits would therefore have seemed quite out of place to poets familiar with bardic ideology; if anything, 'writing poets' (if they read their texts in performance, which is admittedly another unprovable conjecture) might have been expected to refer in performance to the fact that they were reading texts, like the French jongleurs.[52]

It could further be argued that it was this divorce of composition from performance and the resulting softening of incongruities that led to the appearance of the introit in genres such as choral lyric and to the use appearance of first-person verbs referring to the poet or to the poet and his Muse, seen first in Hesiod (Erga 10, 106–7, 202; Il. 2.484–93 is probably not authentically Homeric—vide infra) and subsequently in numerous later poets, most notably in introductions and introits.[53] Consistent with our conjecture is the absence from the record of any acquaintance with the canonical introits before classical times, though Pigres (fl. early fifth century?) was able to tamper with the canonical Iliadic introit—if the Suda's testimony is to be relied upon, which is admittedly uncertain—and Aeschylus certainly knew of it.[54] It must be emphasized, however, that the down-dating of the canonical Homeric introits (and, by implication, of the Theogony introit) tentatively proposed here is essentially speculative.

Divine assistance was sometimes requested within a poem, and several internal Muse-invocations survive in the Iliad (2.484–93, 2.761–2, 11.218–20, 14.508–10, 16.112–13). These have little in common with introits (though introits may have used the formula ἔσπετε κ.τ.λ. seen in all of them except 2.761–7). They are essentially rhetorical questions like 5.703–4 and 8.273, and most attempts to account for their apparently eccentric distribution remain uncompelling:[55] in general, they throw apparently inappropriate emphasis on the passages they precede (pace the scholia ad locc.). Perhaps significantly, they tend to precede lists—appropriate loci for Muse-invocations, since 'where to begin in such cases is not as self-evident as it is in other situations'.[56] They cannot in general be introits to hypothetical component lays of the Iliad, a superficially attractive hypothesis: there are too few, they neither precede natural opening passages nor succeed obvious closing ones, and they are formally

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[50] Hence the use of the Odyssey's introit to question the unity of Homer (vide most recently R. D. Dawe, The Odyssey [Lewes, 1993], on 1.1–10) seems open to criticism.

[51] I.Okpewho, The Epic in Africa [New York, 1979], 60–1.

[52] P. Nykrog, Les fabliaux, new edn (Geneva, 1973), 37–8.

[53] E.g. frs. adespp. 98 PMG; Pind. P. 2.1–8, N. 9.1–3; Nicander, Ther. 1–4, Alexiph. 1–5.

[54] Suda s.v. Πίγρης; Suppl. 800–1 clearly echoes Il. 1.4–5.

[55] E.g. Minton, 'Homer's invocations of the Muses: traditional patterns', TAPhA 91 (1960), 292–309; A. Thornton, Homer's Iliad: Its Composition and the Theme of Supplication. Hypomnemata 81 (Göttingen, 1984), 41–5; C. A. van Duzer, Duality and Structure in the Iliad and Odyssey (New York, 1996), 46.

[56] E. J. Bakker, Poetry in Speech (Ithaca, 1997), 60 (cf. the request for a starting-point which may have ended bardic introits).

unlike introits. As noted, introits probably specified the subject of the following lay: the request at 16.112–13 is fulfilled in the following ten lines; those at 11.218–20 and 14.508–10 are each fulfilled in the following line. The Catalogue of Ships, however, has often been adjudged an interpolation, and its introduction at 2.484–93 may be a genuine introit (its relatively late date explaining its incongruous first-person forms).

The first written introits

A survey of the earliest surviving introits will enable us to set in context the trans-mitted Homeric openings. The *Erga*'s introduction is a proem rather than an introit, and is probably spurious anyway. *Theog.* 1021–2 is an interpolation, designed to link the *Theogony* with the *Catalogue*, a sixth-century creation;[57] 965–8 is probably an internal invocation, perhaps intended to recall those found in Homer, though it too is conceivably a late addition.[58] The *Theogony*'s introit itself (105–15) seems generally conservative, though its use of the verb κλείετε (105), which seems not to have been a traditional introit verb, is rather surprising. No nouns referring specifically to the Muses are to be seen, though this is clearly to be explained by the fact that the introit immediately follows a hymn to the goddesses.

Our next surviving Muse-invocations are those of Sappho,[59] Alcman,[60] Stesi-chorus[61] and Archilochus.[62] Their doubtless traditional references to the genealogy and home of the Muses have been mentioned; but, while all archaic poetry generally maintains the old ideology of inspiration, the introit's form was developing, and not always for inevitable generic reasons (which explain, for example, the presence of ἐπὶ δ' ἵμερον κ.τ.λ. in Alcman fr. 27 *PMG*). The Muse is usually asked to 'come hither' rather than to speak or to sing (e.g. Sappho frs. 53, 127, 128 *PMG*); and, even admitting a general lack of 'plot' in lyric and elegy, Archilochus and Alcman seem vague when specifying their subject.[63] Sappho invokes her *lyre* (fr. 118), Ibycus consciously distances himself from Homer[64] and Stesichorus' Muse is his *partner* (fr. 33). Solon, too, experiments, beginning fr. 13 *IEG²* with a prayer to the Muse: it is not an introit, however, since the favours that he requests do not include inspiration.

The beginnings of pre-Socratic philosophy had no major consequences for the introit, though arguably theistic inspiration was becoming less credible: Epimenides' pseudo-Hesiodic initiation involved the abstracts Truth and Justice, not the Muses.[65] Empedocles probably began the Περὶ Φύσεως with a proem and an address to his pupil,[66] but an introit may not have followed immediately: εἰ γὰρ at B131.1 cannot be inceptive (and ἐμφαίνοντι [4] confirms that Empedocles has begun without the Muse), while B3 did not precede the whole of the main text. Empedocles recalls the old ideology but does not wholly embrace it.[67] Furthermore, while σοφ- words denote *skill*

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[57] M. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (Oxford, 1985), 130–7. Whatever their date, the *Theogony*'s internal invocations seem unremarkable, asking the Muses' assistance (with the Homeric νῦν at 965 and 1021) and summarising the content of the verse to come.

[58] E.g. G. S. Kirk, *The Structure and Aim of the Theogony. Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* 7 (Geneva, 1962), 75.

[59] Frs. 53, 103, 127, 128 *PLF*.   [60] Frs. 3 (fr. 1), 5 (fr. 2.1.22–3), 8.9ff., 14a, 27 *PMG*.

[61] Frs. 16.7–12, 33, 63, 98a(i), *PMG*; fr. 101 is spurious.

[62] Fr. 117 *IEG²*, Bergk 437–8.   [63] Bergk 437–8; fr. 3 (fr. 1) *PMG*.

[64] Fr. 1a.23–31 *PMG* echoes *Il.* 2.484–92 but contains no invocation.

[65] B1 D–K; cf. Parmenides B1.28–30.

[66] Proem: D. Sedley, 'The proems of Empedocles and Lucretius', *GRBS* 30 (1989), 269–96. Address: B1.

[67] Compare also πιστώματα Μούσης (B4.2) with B40, B57, and B106; *vide* M. Edwards,

in archaic hexameter and Hesiod was self-confessedly *not* σεσοφισμένος (*Erga* 646–9),[68] the Theognidean corpus uses such terms to describe poetic activity (e.g. 19–22, 769–71). Unfortunately, Hesiod fr. 1 Merkelbach–West, which dates from this period and appears to contain an introit at 14ff., scarcely admits of close analysis.

The Χάριτες had now joined the Muses as the goddesses associated with poetry and song, as numerous *loci* attest.[69] Homer's Χάριτες are the beautiful companions of Aphrodite and grant comeliness, not inspiration (e.g. *Il.* 17.51–2; *Od.* 6.18, 18.192–4) (though they live near the Muses at *Theog.* 64–5). The two colleges may have been linked due to their similarly pleasurable spheres of operation.[70] More specifically, Ritoók argued that the Muses inspired bards to sing lays that were true *and* pleasant:[71] the dual truth-imparting and pleasure-giving function of the Μοῦσαι ἡδυέπειαι (*Theog.* 965–8, 1021–2) made natural their association with the Χάριτες. (Their association with the Νύμφαι is less readily explicable,[72] though the suggestion of Lydian influence found in the scholion *ad* Theoc. 7.92 may have some merit).

In this experimental milieu, then, the canonical Homeric introits were composed. They exhibit parallel formal complexities:

> The theme comes first . . ., next the invocation . . ., then a four-syllable adjective characterizing the theme . . ., expanded by a relative clause . . ., further elaborated by two δέ-clauses. . . . In both the poet refers to the vast possibilities of the theme (μάλα πολλά, πολλῶν δ', πολλὰ δ'/μυρί') and sorrows to be described.[73]

A similar complexity of content is evident.[74] They are, nonetheless, conservative by contemporary standards, asking omniscient Muses with traditional imperatival formulae (including the verb ἔννεπε in the *Odyssey*) to make known καὶ ἡμῖν (*Od.* 1.10) a specific story, which is introduced by a single noun followed by modifiers (though references to the Muses' genealogy and dwelling-place are absent, at least from the opening lines). This suggests a reluctance to introduce conceits or novelties into texts either created generations previously by a magisterial genius or consciously constructed from the material of an ancient and venerable tradition, perhaps for solemn public recitation. Parry showed how the introits contain supposedly oral phraseology found elsewhere in Homer;[75] yet, even discounting coincidences, this means no more than that their authors knew their Homer. After all, the post-Alexandrian *Batrachomyomachia* employs much 'oral' language.

The canonical introits have one particular eccentricity: the opening of the *Odyssey* focuses heavily on the events of Books 5–12 and fails even within these terms to

'Being and seeming: Empedocles' reply', *Hermes* 119 (1991), 288, n. 20. D. Obbink, 'The hymnic structure of the new Simonides', *Arethusa* 29 (1996), 199, fails to stress that bards could not even *begin* recitations without the Muse.

[68] Related words are, indeed, used in relation to the *Muses*: e.g. Ibycus fr. 1a.20–31 *PMG*, *Suda* s.v. Πίγρης.

[69] E.g. Sappho frs. 103.8, 128 *PLF*; Pind. *P.* 9.1–4, *N.* 9.53–5; Eur. *Her.* 673–5; Ar. *Birds*, 781–2, *Eccl.* 973–6; Call. fr. 112 Pfeiffer; on Theoc. 16, *vide* K. Gutzwiller 'Charites or Hieron: Theocritus' *Idyll* 16', *RhM* 126 (1983), 212–38.

[70] E.g. *Theog.* 108–13; Solon fr. 26 *IEG²*; Eur. *Hel.* 1342–5.

[71] Z. Ritoók argues that recitations gave pleasure because they spoke to listeners about themselves ('The views of early Greek epic on poetry and art', *Mnemosyne* 42 [1989], 331–48); cf., from a different perspective, G. B. Walsh, *The Varieties of Enchantment* [Chapel Hill, 1984], 3–21.

[72] E.g. Plat. *Phaedr.* 241e; Theocr. 1.140–1, 7.91–3; cf. Arist. *Peace* 1070–1.

[73] A. Heubeck *et al.*, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford, 1988), vol. 1, *ad* 1.1–10.

[74] E.g. Pucci (n. 37), 11–29, on the Odyssean introit.

[75] M. Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse*, ed. A. Parry (New York, 1980), 301–3.

mention that most of Odysseus' comrades were killed by the Laestrygonians rather than Hyperion. This point is employed, for instance, by Pucci in his reduction of the Muse to a 'faint presence' in the *Odyssey*.[76] Firstly, this under-interprets Ἄνδρα, which declares that the whole poem 'will explore the terms in which an adult male's place in society is determined'.[77] And, secondly, the selection of the Thrinacian episode 'signals that the plot's chief overall trajectory will highlight ethical or moral dilemmas within the broader context of heroic engagements'.[78] There is no need to extend the introit or to hypothesize that the Muse invoked by Homer immediately corrects him.[79] Still less may we contend that the Iliadic introit shares any supposed shortcomings of the *Odyssey*'s:[80] the opening phrase (Μῆνιν . . . Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή 1.1–5, the Διὸς . . . βουλή, *pace* Aristarchus and Aristophanes, not relating specifically to Book 1) poses numerous questions regarding the human condition and the moral order which the epic goes on to explore.[81] The Χάριτες (and Νύμφαι) are absent from epic introits, probably due to a realization that the epic tradition assigned them no inspirational role.

The first alternative *Iliad* introit preserved in the scholia is almost certainly the beginning of a proem, and the second seems unimpressive: μῆνις, for instance, which Homer uses only for the anger of gods and of Achilles, is used casually and clumsily—the author of the striking Μῆνιν . . . Πηλιάδεω was more careful—and the ἕλε metaphor seems un-Homeric. The lines are clearly related to the canonical introit: but *utrum in alterum?* They show 'signs of inept condensation, and in particular the linking of Akhilleus' and Apollo's wrath does justice to neither'.[82] They may conceivably have formed a kind of introit to the *Iliad* internal to the Epic Cycle: ἔσπετε κ.τ.λ. recalls Homer's internal invocations, νῦν those of the *Theogony*.[83]

Let us now turn to the cyclic epics. As with Homer, it is irrelevant when their main text was constructed: since they seem never to have been performed *en bloc* and since they may well have been assembled in order to fill gaps left by Homer, it seems reasonable to suppose that they received their introits after the Homeric epics under the latters' influence. Wackernagel, noting the lateness of the language of the *Iliupersis* and *Cypria* fragments in particular, dated the latter's opening to 'nicht lange vor 500 v. Chr'.[84]

Turning to the text of the introits themselves, the *Epigoni* (fr. 1 *PEG*) identifies the theme with the traditional initial noun-plus-modifier(s), though the first-person ἀρχώμεθα is employed, and νῦν may mean simply 'now that the preceding cyclic poem has finished' (cf. ὁπλοτέρων). The *Ilias Parva* (*Ill. Parvv.* fr. 28 *PEG*[85]) also exhibits the noun-plus-modifier(s) opening and employs ἀείδειν, albeit in the first person; Evelyn-White suggested, *fortasse recte*, that *Ill. Parvv.* fr. 1, which is conventionally

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[76] P. Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos* (Ithaca, 1997), 215.

[77] Goldhill (n. 22), 2.

[78] B. Louden, *The Odyssey* (Baltimore, 1999), 92.

[79] P. V. Jones, *Homer's Odyssey* (Carbondale, 1988), *ad* 1.1–12; V. Pedrick, 'The Muse corrects: the opening of the *Odyssey*', *YClS* 29 (1992), 39–62.

[80] Jones (n. 79).

[81] L. Muellner, for instance, well discusses the resonances of μῆνις (*The Anger of Achilles* [Ithaca, 1996]). The scholia rightly, if jejunely, remark that the opening word serves also to capture our attention.

[82] G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary* (Cambridge, 1985), *ad* 1.

[83] *Il.* 2.484–93, 11.218–220, 14.508–10, 16.112; *Theog.* 965–8, 1021–2.

[84] J. Wackernagel, *Sprachliche Untersuchungen zu Homer* (Göttingen, 1916), 183 (cf. 181–3).

[85] Bernabé's hypothesis of multiple *Iliades Parvae* ('¿Más de una *Ilias Parva*?', *EClàs* 26 [1984], no. 87, 141–50) seems unduly speculative.

invocatory (and uses ἔννεπε), was an internal invocation from the *Iliupersis*.[86] The *Thebaid* (fr. 1 *PEG*) also opens with a noun and modifier, and conservatively addresses the Muse with the imperative ἄειδε. The cyclic introits' remains echo the conservatism of the Homeric openings, though their innovations—most notably, the *Cypria*'s introduction launches straight into the narrative, though Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλέ (fr. 1.7 *PEG*) echoes *Il*. 1.5—may reflect the cycle's distinct genesis. The Homeric texts, however they were created, were probably intended to stand as monumental masterpieces of an ancient tradition; the cyclic epics were probably not.

It thus seems that the pre-classical epic introit was remarkably hardy, resisting the substantial innovations which introits saw in other genres and very probably preserving both formal and functional features whose origins are lost in time. This conservatism, however, was not to last, and we shall in the second part of this paper see the revolutionary effect of radically changing perceptions of the Muse, of inspiration, and of literary composition in general.

II

The Classical period

Muse-invocations in non-epic verse continued to display formal innovations. Bacchylides mentions the Muse(s) often, and an apparently conservative introit begins his first epinician ode. The case of Pindar, however, is rather more complex. He refers to and invokes them numerous times, but not in every ode; his invocations, moreover, are often odd: he calls, for instance, on Ἀλάθεια (*O.* 10.3–6) and (most famously) on the [ἀ]ναξιφόρμιγγες ὕμνοι (*O.* 2.1–2). He is un-bardic elsewhere too: though he praises Homer, he *helps* his Muse and famously calls Homer a liar (*I.* 4.37–9; *O.* 10.95–9; *N.* 7.20–3). It seems that Pindar claims inspiration but cannot adequately explain this inspiration according to the traditional ideology.[87] In rather different vein, Simonides seems to undercut the Muse's role to differentiate his own martial narrative from Homer's and to point up the contrast between the circumstances in which he and Homer were composing. He hymns Achilles, including at frs. 11.13–18 *IEG²* a specific reference to Homer, then denies that his verse will proceed from the same source as Homer's Achillean epic. He invokes the Muse, but requests *assistance*, not inspiration: he has *witnessed* the Battle of Plataea and already has his information.[88]

By now, the Muse-invocation was becoming a commonplace. Even some scolia have an introitic form, though drained of invocatory content (*Carmm. Convivv.* frs. 34b–c *PMG*); introits occur also in tragedy, in comedy, and later perhaps in Aristotle's verse.[89] Traditional poetic ideology and all its paraphernalia must have been undermined even as symbols by the ascendancy of the alternative medium of prose, which never claimed

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[86] H. G. Evelyn-White, *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, new and rev. edn (London, 1936), 515, n. 1.

[87] G. Norwood, *Pindar* (Berkeley, 1945), 165–7 is instructive.

[88] A. Aloni, 'The proem of the Simonides elegy on the Battle of Plataea (Sim. frs. 10–18 W²) and the circumstances of its performance', in L. Edmunds and R. Wallace (edd.), *Poet, Public and Performance in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore, 1997), 17–18.

[89] Tragedy: Eur. *Tro.* 511–14. Comedy: e.g. Arist. *Ach.* 665–75, *Peace* 775–96, 815–17. Aristotle: fr. 672 *IEG²*.

inspiration, exhibited considerable scepticism towards poetry and certainly never employed introits.[90]

Furthermore, philosophy was moving in new directions: Gorgias in particular prised λόγος from reality, notoriously arguing that nothing *is*—and, if something *were*, we could not know it or communicate it. Such ideas precipitated a revolution: λόγος was now a manipulatory tool by which the weaker argument could be made to appear the stronger. The inspirational element in poetry-writing was sidelined. It is possible to see Alcman as feeling himself to be writing ὁρμηθεὶς θεοῦ, but scarcely Euripides. The word Μοῦσα was debased and began to denote 'song'/'poetry' generally as much as inspirational goddesses (Soph. *Tr.* 634–43; Eur. *Ion* 757). A reaction, however, tempered this revolution:

What Jacob Burckhardt said of nineteenth-century religion, that it was 'rationalism for the few and magic for the many', might on the whole be said of Greek religion from the late fifth century onwards.[91]

Some writers at least—such as Aristophanes, who lampooned the new intellectuals—surely intended their introits to be seen as reflecting a genuine belief in the Muses (though passages such as *Peace* 775–96 are nevertheless formally innovative). Furthermore, introits had always possessed complex, multilayered functions, and the changes of this period probably saw at most a shift in the balance of their relative importance.

The introits of Antimachus and Choerilus of Samos do not display the formal innovations seen outside epic, probably because of the influence of the Homeric texts. The introit to Antimachus' *Thebaid* is mostly lost: it opens with a reference to the Muses' parentage (fr. 1 Wyss), a familiar if unexciting motif; significantly, the verb ἐννέπετε is employed. Several fragments of Choerilus' *Persica* survive which appear to come from its opening. Fragment 2 *PEG* probably preceded fr. 1, which was perhaps accompanied by some reference to Choerilus' Muse (and her genealogy or dwelling-place?).

The latter fragment seems conservative: an imperative petition to the Muse followed by a description, here incomplete, of the poem's subject-matter. The preceding passage is, as Aristotle says in *Rhet.* 1415a, an address to the audience resembling a forensic speech's preface. Choerilus, however, describes the pre-literate bard as ἴδρις (fr. 2.1 *PEG*), a word meaning 'knowing' (not 'inspired') never before applied to ἀοιδοί. It is as the legitimate successor to these ἀοιδοί that he presents himself—a Μουσάων θεράπων[92] envying them only their broad field of operation; the νῦν echoes Homer, but may merely contrast the bards' time with Choerilus'. Earlier writers such as Pindar and Empedocles had perceived the disjunction between bardic ideology and reality; now, for the first time, a poet describes his vocation in entirely un-bardic terms and seems to equate it with that professed by the bards.

Alexandria and Apollonius

Our final destination is Hellenistic Alexandria, where Timotheus' cry ἀπίτω Μοῦσα παλαιά (fr. 20.5 *PMG*) seems finally to have found its resonant frequency. Poetic

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[90] A. Lenz well compares and contrasts Herodotus' preface with traditional introits (*Das Proöm des frühen griechischen Epos* [Bonn, 1980], 268–80).

[91] E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Cambridge, 1951), 192: the satire of Theophrastus' Δεισιδαιμονία, for instance, must have had some real-life object.

[92] A common description of poets in Greek poetry which first appears at *Theog.* 108–13.

intellectualism reigned: the burden of an unchallengeably great past, the advance of prose, even the political climate militated against the creation of bold, original masterpieces. Some notion of divine inspiration survived: Corinna lays claim to it, the *De Sublimitate* links verbal artistry with ἐνθουσιασμός and the Parian hagiography of Archilochus was inscribed in this period.[93] Yet the Hellenistic scholar-poets' claims to inspiration are generally either conceits or ironies when made at all.

Aratus and Nicander have no introits. At the start of the *Aetia*, after a prologue that is more programmatic than invocatory, Callimachus may have contrasted traditional inspiration-theory with his own,[94] though the poem did contain invocations else-where;[95] his *Hymns* may start with rhetorical questions or apostrophai,[96] never with introits. He privileges τέχνη, rehearses his own erudition when questioning the Muses and implies that even they rely on external sources[97] (in similar vein, Herodas' Muses are perfect *readers*, 3.89–92). Theocritus 16.1–4 is consciously un-Hesiodic,[98] and no introit follows the proem at 17.1–2. Εἶπε, θεά, prays the poet, professing only to 'carry' the Muses' songs (22.116, 223);[99] but the mock-epic 24 and 25 have no introits, and the invocation at 7.148–55 is clearly a conceit. Here and elsewhere, we should not distinguish too readily Apollonius and his μέγα κακόν (to which we must now turn) from his fellows.

One influence other than Alexandrianism is particularly evident in Apollonius. The shifting negotiation of the interrelationships of poet, audience, characters, and Muse seen in the *Argonautica* inevitably recall Gorgias and the Sophists. Apollonius exhibits their influence in other ways too: in Book 3, he associates the experience of love not only with both poetry-writing, recalling bardic ideology, but also with poetry-*hearing*, directly recalling Gorgias.[100] Viewed in this light, 3.179–90 echoes the *Encomium* as much as the *Odyssey*, and even the πεῖρα of Book 2 acquires new significance. Philosophy had overtaken the Muses; contemporary literary trends made irresistible the temptation to assign them a new role in erudite verse.

The *Argonautica*, like the vulgate Homer, opens with mention of a god, a compound adjective, and a relative clause; like Homer and the bards, Apollonius will tell of the κλέα φωτῶν (1.1). Several apparently formulaic phrases follow (1–4), εὔζυγον . . . Ἀργώ specifically echoing *Od*. 13.116–21 and 17.286–9. At 22, Apollonius conservatively asks for general guidance from the Muse (not the Χάριτες or anything else): we now appear to have passed normally from a proem (albeit one reluctant to focus on its divine subject) to the introit. In 20–2, we even have an Homeric νῦν.

Unlike Homer, however, the poem begins with an address to *Apollo* (chosen because of the importance of his oracle, or perhaps in allusion to the *Aetia* opening; a link with the first alternative *Iliad* opening is conceivable). Also, after this address, we seem to enter the narrative proper at line 5: lines 20–2 are unexpected, and ἐγώ . . . μυθησαίμην asserts Apollonius' un-bardic self-view. Ἀρχόμενος (1.1) is characteristic of proems, not invocations (*pace* the scholia)—similar expressions begin nine *Homeric Hymns*. We

[93] Corinna fr. 2.1–5 *PMG*; *Subl.* 15.1; Arch. test. 4 Tarditi.
[94] M. A. Harder, 'Between "prologue" and "dream" (Call.fr. 1a 19ff)', *ZPE* 96 (1993), 11–13.
[95] Frs. 76, 86 Pfeiffer; the latter may have been the introit to Book 4.
[96] *Hymn to Zeus*, 1–3; *Hymn to Delos* 1–2.
[97] Fr. 1.17–18 Pfeiffer; *Schol. Flor.* 29–35 (Pfeiffer 1.13) and fr. 3, fr. 43.23–55; fr. 75.74–7.
[98] K. Gutzwiller 'Charites or Hieron: Theocritus' *Idyll* 16', *RhM* 126 (1983), 218–19.
[99] C. R. Beye, incidentally, contrasts Theocritus' and Apollonius' attitudes towards the Muses (*Epic and Romance in the Argonautica of Apollonius* [1982], 15).
[100] R. V. Albis, *Poet and Audience in the Argonautica of Apollonius* (Lanham, 1996), 67–92; cf. notably Gorg. *Enc Hel.* 8–9.

also find μνήσομαι, which begins or concludes twelve *Hymns*. One ingenious, if admittedly uncertain, suggestion is that the entire *Argonautica* turns out to be a proem: its ending may with some plausibility be seen as hymnic, especially 4.1773–5, which recalls the petitions and promises of future song closing many of the *Homeric Hymns*.[101] Until 1.20, then, we believe that the narrative has started; until 4.1773–5, that we are reading a self-contained epic. Furthermore, scholars' quarrels have highlighted the ambiguity of ὑποφήτορες at 22 (cf. Theoc. 16.25–33, 17.115), which could make the Muses anything from Apollonius' inspirers to his intermediaries.[102] He is not presented simply as their mouthpiece.[103]

We should avoid interpreting this mixture of traditional and novel elements as highlighting a supposed rejection of the past on Apollonius' part. He does sometimes oppose himself to Homer,[104] but he, like Protagoras, may well have seen himself to a considerable extent as Homer's scion (Plat. *Protag.* 316d): certainly, his colleagues considered themselves competent to athetize numerous Homeric lines for ἀπρέπεια. Poems such as *Anth. Pal.* 7.55, 9.64, and 11.24 are not simply uncomplicatedly nostalgic evocations of a poetic golden age, and the Alexandrians did not necessarily view themselves simply as innovators.

Apollonius' construction of his inspiration is ironic throughout the poem. The Muses could not have inspired passages such as 1.122–3, 1.135–8, 1.919–21, and 4.247–50; they are credited with granting second sight, but shortly afterwards they *interrupt* a traditional κλέος-giving narrative (2.511–12; 2.844–9); and, at 2.854, φάτις is the poet's only information-source. An invocation to the Muse of ἔρως begins Book 3, employing the traditional forms ἄγε, νῦν, and ἔνισπε (1–3). Yet this first invocatory introit is conspicuously delayed until half of the action is over,[105] and before Erato has fulfilled her commission another unexpectedly begins Book 4.[106] Furthermore, Hunter has pointed out that Apollonius' use of παρά θ' ἵστασο (3.1) 'allots an "equal" role to his Muse',[107] and has elsewhere noted the high frequency of authorial pronouncements, especially in Book 4.[108]

Echoes of Homer open Book 4: θεά, ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα (1–2); νῦν is also Homeric. Apollonius already knows two alternative stories (2–5): the Muse has merely to choose between them (as, perhaps, also at 552–6). In this book particularly, he explores his relationship with characters and Muses: he 'constantly transgresses the boundary between narrator and character',[109] apologizes to the Muses before narrating the

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[101] S. D. Goldhill, *The Poet's Voice* (Cambridge, 1991), 294–5.

[102] Doxographies: J. J. Clauss, *The Best of the Argonauts* (Berkeley, 1993), 17; P. Green, *The Argonautika* (Berkeley, 1997), ad loc.

[103] Significantly, Orpheus is never referred to as inspired either: on him and Apollonius, *vide* Goldhill (n. 22), 297–8.

[104] For a good example of this, *vide* Clauss (n. 102), 20–1.

[105] *Contra:* e.g. A. Gercke 'Alexandrinische Studien', *RhM* 44 (1889), 135–6; G. Zanker, 'The love theme in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*', *WS* 13 (1979), 70–1; S. A. Natzel, *ΚΛΕΑ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΩΝ* (Trier, 1992), 203. Interestingly, Callimachus appears to undertake the *Aetia's* *second* half alone.

[106] Erato is perhaps implicitly attacked at 4.445–9. The invocation starting Book 3 may also be seen as ironic, depending upon whether one regards 1.18–22 as referring to the whole *opus*, a controversial question that does not admit of detailed discussion here.

[107] Hunter, *Argonautica Book III* (Cambridge, 1989), ad loc. (*contra:* M. Campbell, *A Commentary on Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica III 1–471* [Leiden 1994], ad loc.).

[108] Hunter, *The Argonautica of Apollonius* (Cambridge, 1993), 101–19.

[109] Albis (n. 100), 120.

offensive (982–7),[110] and refers to them as a disclaimer before narrating the incredible (1381–92). Lines 450–1 are merely a rhetorical question, and at 451 Apollonius yet again asserts his control over the narrative with the first-person ἡμῖν (presumably referring to himself alone). Such self-confidence, even whimsy, would have been inconceivable in Homeric verse, or even in Choerilus or Antimachus.

Proems

Before concluding, we must give some attention to the curious genre of pre-performance hymns, or proems. Poetic recitations given by bards and rhapsodes appear often to have been prefaced by hymnic preludes: though arguably developing from introits, these form a discrete, unified genre.[111]

The *Homeric Hymns* include numerous proems: Thuc. 3.104 describes the *Hymn to Apollo* as a προοίμιον; closing formulae portending further recitation end thirteen hymns (e.g. *H. Dem.* 495, *H. Hom.* 9.9); and the ἀρχ- beginnings indicate *opening* pieces. That many hymns exhibiting such features are late is irrelevant: not *all* are, and those that are presumably reflect earlier practice. Wolf's suggestion that proems prefaced formal public recitations—at festivals and competitions, for instance—seems persuasive,[112] though private recitations perhaps also employed them. The god hymned would perhaps be one figuring prominently in the succeeding recitation (cf. Pind. *N.* 5.22–39), or maybe simply one whose praise was generally appropriate to the circumstances,[113] though Pindar's remark that the Homeridae's recitations would begin Διὸς ἐκ προοιμίου is slightly disconcerting (*N.* 2.1–5): it was perhaps common practice to hymn Zeus alone regardless of the recitation's content or context. Hymns perhaps also concluded performances (the notion seems 'degna di essere considerata'[114]), but this too may have been a late development.

Eighteen *Hymns* have first-person openings. While introits *request*, the *Hymns'* openings generally *announce* (ten have introits, but presumably developed them analogously). Since the ostensible purpose of Muse-invocations was to gain inspiration in making present objective truth, one might expect proems, the purpose of which was to praise their subject-divinities, to have had introits too, since praise essentially means relaying favourable truth, and it is curious that they do not.

An examination of the *Theogony's* multiple introductions discloses another important fact. As has long been recognized, the first two (1–35 and 36–104) are hymnic:[115] only after these do we reach the introit (105–15), following the χαίρ- familiar from 26 *Homeric Hymns* and the request for pleasing song familiar from three of the *Homeric Hymns'* conclusions. The *Theogony* proems, however, differ from the *Hymns* in that

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[110] Fränkel, *Noten zu den Argonautika des Apollonios* (Munich, 1968), *ad* 984 has the best discussion.

[111] Although W. H. Race distinguished 'rhapsodic' from 'cultic' openings: 'How Greek poems begin', *YClS* 29 (1992), 19–31.

[112] *Proleg.* 1.25. Cf. Clearchus of Soli ap. Athenaeus 275B; Plat. *Ion* 530A; Thuc. 3.104; [Plut.] *Mor.* 1133c. *H. Hom.* 26.12 refers to an annual festival and 6.19–20 to a contest.

[113] N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford, 1974), 2. We may also note, following A. L. Ford (*Homer* [Ithaca, 1992], 24–6), that proems, being free (unlike introits) from an ideology of absolute objectivity, gave singers a unique opportunity to set a recitation in its context.

[114] F. Càssola, *Inni omerici* (Florence, 1975), xxii.

[115] For similar but distinct treatments, *vide* Minton, 'The proem-hymn of Hesiod's *Theogony*', *TAPhA* 101 (1970), 357–77 (though Minton regards the introit as part of the proems) and R. Janko, 'The structure of the *Homeric Hymns*: a study in genre', *Hermes* 109 (1981), 20–2.

they were clearly written specifically for their text.[116] Parallels to the *Theogony*'s structure abound elsewhere. Hesiod frs. 1.1–13 Merkelbach–West may preserve a proem that originally began the *Catalogue*; Simonides' Battle of Plataea elegy seems to have had one (fr. 11.1–20 *IEG²*), as does Empedocles' Περὶ Φύσεως,[117] while Pindar sometimes proceeds to a reference to the Muse from praise of or prayer to a deity at the start of a poem[118] and Aratus began his *Phaenomena* by hymning Zeus, addressing the Muses only at 16–18. Interestingly, Callimachus' *Aetia ends* with a proem (fr. 112 Pfeiffer), perhaps to Callimachus' Muse, though it does also function as the *Iambi*'s opening. Addresses to pupils or dedicatees may have links with the proem genre.[119]

The *Theogony* apparently reflects an original practice of writing proems for specific works: introits, originally foreshadowing the recitation to come, may gradually have evolved into hymns to the deities to be mentioned therein,[120] losing their primarily invocatory character and eventually becoming detached, requiring the insertion of new introits. This need for recapitulation explains why introits succeeded proems, which never apparently evolved far enough to acquire as a matter of course introits of their own. Proem-introits may before their detachment have resembled *Erga* 1–10,[121] which is invocatory but of tangential relevance to the main text. The presence in longer poems, arguably straightforward hymns, of lines such as *H.Dem.* 495 suggests that the term προοίμιον—like our 'prélude'—came eventually to denote stand-alone compositions,[122] though longer proems too may have prefaced recitations.[123]

Interestingly, proems appear on occasion to have assumed the functions of introits in post-bardic recitations of epic texts (the tradition of poetic performance was slow to lose its vigour—Nagy claims that Homeric performances exhibited considerable textual fluidity as late as *c.* 150 B.C.[124]) and to have included requests for inspiration.[125] They sometimes even displaced introits, to which they were seen as an alternative.[126] Thus, ironically, the Muse-invocation's importance in oral recitation declined while introits prospered in written verse.

The epic introit, then, has seen the ancient conventions surrounding its form, which had hitherto endured since bardic times in spite of the novelties seen in the other

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[116] E.g. E. M. Bradley, 'The relevance of the prooemium to the design and meaning of Hesiod's *Theogony*', *SO* 41 (1966), 29–47.

[117] D. Sedley, 'The proems of Empedocles and Lucretius', *GRBS* 30 (1989), 269–96.

[118] *O.* 3.1–6, *Paean* 9.1–40 (also *Paean* 4.1–13, if 11–13 is suitably emended).

[119] Examples: Empedocles B1, B112 D-K; Nicander, *Alexiph.* 1–11. *Vide* Obbink on the juxtaposition of addresses to gods and to mortals in ancient literature (D. Obbink, 'The hymnic structure of the new Simonides', *Arethusa* 29 [1996], 197–9, with reservations regarding Empedocles). Interestingly, encomia of human *laudandi* were sometimes regarded as hymns (Theoc. 17.7–8; fr. 416 *Supp. Hell.*).

[120] And/or to the Muses themselves: *vide* the *Theogony* proems, *H.Hom.* 25 and the first alternative *Iliad* opening.

[121] Which R. Lamberton well analyses (*Hesiod* [New Haven, 1988], 106–9).

[122] T. W. Allen *et al.*, *The Homeric Hymns²* (Oxford, 1936), xcv.

[123] Also, some shorter *Hymns* may be abridged versions of longer ones (e.g. R. Parker, 'The Hymn to Demeter and the Homeric Hymns', *G&R* 38 [1991], 14, n. 3).

[124] G. Nagy, *Poetry as Performance* (Cambridge, 1996), though the testimonia cited in his discussion of Homeric performance-traditions (153–86) notably fail to mention recitations of non-Homeric epics.

[125] E.g. *HH.Homm.* 1.17–19, 6.19–20, 10.4–5, 24.4–5; cf. the *contaminatio* at *Argonautica* 3.1–5 and in Callimachus' *Hymn to Artemis*.

[126] Schol. Pind *N.* 2.1 (discussing the Homeridae).

genres into which introits were borrowed, decisively challenged. Functionally, the introit's Muses—valued, even revered (as a symbol, at least) for centuries—have become participants in the Alexandrians' revolutionary transformations of Greek poetry. Soon, in Roman verse, the programmatic introit will join the invocatory.[127] *Sacra non iam facit vates.*

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[127] G. B. Conte, 'Proems in the middle', *YClS* 29 (1992), 147–59, though he arguably exaggerates the extent to which the Alexandrians employed programmatic openings.