XIX. Homer's Invocations of the Muses: Traditional Patterns

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Invocations of the Muses in the Homeric poems must be considered as traditional elements in the oral poet's equipment. They are building blocks of his language and art along with other units of formulaic composition, from individual formula to repeated motif or stock theme.[1] As such they cannot safely be approached as genuine appeals, but only as the ossified remains of such appeals, their vitality dulled through long continued use by generations of epic singers. Any understanding of them, then, can be founded only in a consideration of the traditional, that is, the persistent or recurring characteristics of their usage as it appears in the poems.

There are, in all, three distinct characteristics associated with invocations of the Muses in Homer. Two of these are found also in the Hesiodic poetry of the mainland and presumably represent an earlier stratum of invocational usage, developed before the migrations to Ionia.[2] First, all the invocations are essentially

[1] Reference is of course to the work pioneered by Milman Parry (bibliography by A. B. Lord, Parry's co-worker and continuator, in *AJA* 52 [1948] 43–44), now more fully worked out and presented by Lord in his *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1960). I regret that this important work appeared too late for me to make the fuller use of it I should have wished. For the place of the study of oral composition in Homeric scholarship generally see Lord, chap. 1, E. R. Dodds, "Homer as Oral Poetry" in *Fifty Years of Classical Scholarship*, ed. M. Platnauer (Oxford 1954) 13–17, and C. H. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1958), chap. 1.

[2] That the practice of Greek oral epic in some form goes back to Mycenaean times is now well established. For the most recent and lucid summary of the evidence see D. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1959) chap. 6. The natural presumption that Hesiodic poetry belongs to the same, or rather a parallel oral tradition, is now confirmed by two independent studies: that of J. A. Notopoulos, reported in an unpublished paper "Is Hesiod an Oral Poet?" delivered before the American Philological Association at Washington, D.C., in December, 1957, and A. Hoekstra, "Hésiode et la tradition orale," *Mnemosyne* 10, 4th ser. (1957) 193–225. For evidence of a strong tradition of catalogue poetry on the mainland and particularly in Boeotia see Page 152.

questions, appeals to the Muse for specific information to which the poet clearly expects an *answer*. Secondly, the information for which the poet asks and which is reflected, however vestigially, in the following "answer" is that of an *ordered enumeration* or catalogue.[3]

The third characteristic of the Homeric invocations is of a very different nature, found only in the epic and apparently a later development of Ionian heroic song itself. It has to do with context and is of special importance for its bearing on broader matters within the poems. It is with this that the present discussion will be chiefly concerned. Briefly stated, its basic principle is this: *all* the invocations introduce a clearly defined sequence-pattern, beginning with an initial *crisis* and leading through a period of *struggle* to final *defeat*; this defeat, furthermore, always falls on *the person or persons in whose behalf the invocation was made*, and these are always the protagonists, that is, for all practical purposes in the *Iliad* at least, Greeks as opposed to Trojans.

This pattern is in a sense only a refinement of a view of the invocations dating from ancient times, the view that they were employed by the poet in contexts of special importance (*megethos*), to inspire confidence and belief in his hearers and focus their attention on what was to follow.[4] This formulation is obviously inadequate as it stands (one thinks immediately of the Achilles-Hector duel or of the slaying of the suitors) and has since been

[3] I do no more than state these propositions here; a detailed demonstration is not essential to the present discussion and is best reserved for separate presentation. The question-answer phenomenon was first pointed out to my knowledge by O. Falter, *Der Dichter und sein Gott bei den Griechen und Römern* (Würzburg 1934): for Homer see 4–5 and in more detail 55–56; it is developed, more enthusiastically than critically, by W. F. Otto, *Die Musen*[2] (Düsseldorf-Köln 1956) 33–34 and Part 3 (71 ff.) *passim*. The association of invocations with catalogue material, most obvious in the Catalogue of Ships in *Iliad* 2 and in the *Theogony*, has been noted from ancient times (see, e.g., Eustathius on *Il.* 2.484); but the perception that the association is an essential one, that a basic function of the Muses, as "daughters of Memory" (i.e. of Mnemosyne), was to supply the poet with such quantity of factual information as would not be easy for him to muster without some external assistance, remained to be stated by Gilbert Murray: see *The Rise of the Greek Epic*[3] (Oxford 1924) 96. This view has been challenged, by G. M. Calhoun, "The Poet and the Muses in Homer," *CP* 33 (1938) 157–66, but only because Murray did not work it out in detail and Calhoun failed to perceive that even the vestigial remains of catalogue material, which can be shown, I believe, to occur with all invocations in Homer (and in Hesiod), are enough to indicate that the original role of the Muses was in some sense much as Murray stated it.

[4] *Scholl. AB* on *Iliad* 2.484 (=*Schol. Townl.* on 485); Eust. *Il.* on 2.484; Quint. 4 prooem. (4), and 10.1.48. See further G. B. Mocker, *De Musis a poetis Graecorum in componendis carminibus invocatis* (Leipzig 1893) 5–6 and 45.

redefined in more useful terms: the invocations occur at *critical* (though not necessarily in themselves important) points in the action. This explanation is admirably suited to the three invocations of the central battle of the *Iliad* and was in fact formulated specifically in connection with them.[5] But if this element of *crisis* can be identified, as it has not been, with *all* the invocations, including those of the proems and the Catalogue where it may be less obvious, it would begin to appear more like a traditional association than the deliberate "artistic" device it has commonly been taken to be. When it is observed, then, that this element forms merely part of a larger, stable sequence-pattern, that outlined above, which appears with all the invocations, the presumption of a traditional origin is hard to ignore.

Of all the attempts to find a rationale behind the invocations in the Homeric poems—and there have not been many in addition to those mentioned above[6]—none to my knowledge has yet faced the problem of why they are distributed as they are. Why for example is there no invocation in the *Iliad* after the first sixteen books, in the area of the poem that coincides precisely with the re-emergence of Achilles? Why does the *Odyssey*, after an invocational proem that summarizes the disasters of the first portion of Odysseus' homeward journey, contain no further invocation in its account of his re-emergence from the isolation of Calypso's island and return to the fellowship of human society? Yet such questions are surely provocative and further suggest, in the context of an epic orally composed against the background of a long

[5] The invocations are 11.218–20, 14.508–10, 16.112–13. The view was apparently first stated in the commentaries on these invocations in the editions of D. B. Monro (in the Clarendon Press Series: *Homer: Iliad*[1], 2 vols. [Oxford 1884 and 1888: frequently revised and reprinted]) and Walter Leaf (*The Iliad*[2], 2 vols. [London 1900–1902]). It has since been enlarged on and given substance in the article of G. M. Calhoun cited above, note 3. Calhoun, intent on refuting Murray's position (see above, note 3) and pointing out his failure to take these three invocations into account, failed himself to extend his observations in any clear-cut way to the other invocations, those of the Catalogue and the proems.

[6] The most important of these is that by O. Falter (above, note 3) 6–7, cf. 34: the invocations are on the whole genuine appeals by the poet to his deity for aid at some point of special difficulty in his song—a difficulty which apart from that of the Greek Catalogue (memory) is not further defined. This applies to the internal invocations; those of the proems show the poet's consciousness that without divine help he cannot give form to "dem grossen Gedanken, der sein Inneres bewegt": *ibid.* 34. A few other rather less solidly based explanations are cited by Calhoun (above, note 3) 162, note 6.

and complex bardic tradition, that there may exist some more far-reaching and at the same time more precise explanation than the momentary whim or artistic purpose of the poet.

Such a rationale is provided by the crisis-struggle-defeat pattern outlined above. The questions asked will be answered, and it will be further shown that within the first sixteen books of the *Iliad* the extant invocations fall in a clearly defined and generally predictable pattern, apparent lapses being filled by more or less clearly recognizable quasi-invocational substitutes.

Of the invocations to be considered all but one occur in the *Iliad*, where they fall into three clearly marked groups: that of the proem itself in which the specific invocational appeals at beginning and end (1.1 and 8) bound and define what we may speak of as a single "proem-invocation," the pair of invocations which frames the Catalogue of Ships (2.484–93 and 761–62), and the three already mentioned which are distributed through the first part of the central battle that occupies the middle books (11.218–20, 14.508–10, and 16.112–13). The other Homeric invocation is of course that of the proem to the *Odyssey* (1.1–10), comparable in pattern to its fellow of the *Iliad*. These invocations, which are all directed to the Muse or Muses, will form the core of the discussion; other formulaic appeals, in which the Muse is not specifically addressed but clearly intended, will be considered at appropriate points.

The contextual pattern of crisis-struggle-defeat is seen most clearly in the three invocations of the central battle of the *Iliad*. These invocations make up a distinct group, closely related to one another in form and disposition. All are brief, with the same formulaic base. All fall within a single clearly marked area of action, the long decline in the Greek fortunes that extends from near the beginning of the central battle in Book 11 to the culminating disaster of the firing of the Greek ships in Book 16. And all are strategically placed within this cycle to mark the three significant crises in its movement: first (11.218–20), the sudden, divinely inspired resistance of the Trojans to Agamemnon's charge, which leads to the withdrawal of the Greek commander and the beginning of the Greek decline; secondly (14.508–10), the only notable success of the Greeks in the whole cycle when aided by Poseidon they push the Trojans out of the enclosure for a time; thirdly

(16.112–13), the decisive moment just before the final withdrawal of Ajax that opens the way to the firing of the ships.[7] Each of these critical phases terminates after a clearly marked episode of *struggle* in a crucial *defeat* for the Greeks: in the first case the defeat of their commander, in the second that of the army as a whole, when Zeus awakes on Mt. Ida and dispatches Apollo against them, and in the third the defeat of Ajax, the "best of the Greeks" after the noncombatant Achilles, and the disaster that follows thereon. Together these "invocation-sequences" of crisis-struggle-defeat define the main outlines of the narrative cycle in which they fall and by underscoring its most crucial setbacks point progressively toward the all-important disaster at the end. In the persistent reappearance of the crisis-struggle-defeat pattern with the invocations through the most varied circumstances of the narrative, it will hardly be possible to avoid seeing the fixity of a traditional bardic practice, supplying the poet with the basic elements of his form.

The first of these three invocations (11.218–20) marks the critical moment during Agamemnon's *aristeia* when the Trojans have ceased to flee from him and under Hector's urging, close by the very walls of Troy itself, have turned about to take a stand against his furious onslaught:

> *Ἔσπετε νῦν μοι, Μοῦσαι, Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι,*
> *ὅς τις δὴ πρῶτος Ἀγαμέμνονος ἀντίον ἦλθεν*
> *ἢ αὐτῶν Τρώων ἠὲ κλειτῶν ἐπικούρων.*

The importance of this *crisis* is obvious; their commander's success or failure at this moment will have an important effect on the Greeks and the future of the battle. The *struggle* that follows is represented in Agamemnon's conflict with the brothers Iphidamas and Coön. Both are successfully dispatched. But Agamemnon had received a spear-thrust in the arm from Coön before his death, and this leads almost immediately to his forced retirement from the field (283). This *defeat* of Agamemnon marks the first great turning point in the battle.

The line from crisis and invocation through struggle to defeat is here clear and direct. But it is reinforced by an intimation of the end just before, in Zeus' message of encouragement to Hector (11.186–94, 200–9), which had indeed led to his exhortation and

[7] So in essence Calhoun (above, note 3): see especially 160–62.

the Trojan stand in the first place. Here, moreover, the shadow of defeat goes far beyond Agamemnon's immediate misfortune, for Hector is told that the wounding and retreat of the Greek leader is to be only the signal for his own victorious advance against the Greeks until he comes to their ships. This forecast carries the action to exactly that point already marked as concluding this section, the firing of the ships, itself signaled by the third and last invocation of this group.[8]

In a word, this crisis and invocation-sequence of Agamemnon's *aristeia* precipitate and herald the general struggle and final Greek defeat of this entire section[9]; they appear to function as the first member of a *structural* progression of crisis, struggle, and defeat affecting the section as a whole. This second and broader level of patterning will be found to have great importance for the entire first part of the poem. Its effect on the course of the present battle is made clear almost at once, in the successive withdrawals of the other leaders from the battle soon after Agamemnon: Diomedes (399 f.), Odysseus (487 f.), Nestor with the wounded Machaon (516 ff.). All these reinforce the significance of the commander's retirement and mark the first stage in the progression from that initial setback toward the final defeat.

The second invocation of this series (14.508–10) occurs during the *Dios apatê* and introduces the only significant success the Greeks have in this span of the action. It also marks an important larger crisis in its movement. For with Zeus now lulled to sleep on Mt. Ida Poseidon leads the Greeks in a defiant offensive, in which Hector is disabled and forced to withdraw (432), and the Trojans pressed hard. Though deprived of their leader, they resist valiantly for a time. But at the fierce onslaught and menacing boast of the Boeotian Peneleos they finally break and flee before the Greeks:

[8] The message of Zeus does indeed add (11.194, 209) that Hector's supremacy will last until the night falls, an addition that seems meant to include the further period of the fight with Patroclus. This is a transitional period when Hector, though still in the ascendant, is in effect doomed. See further below, note 23.

[9] Cf. the comment of Walter Leaf (above, note 5) *ad loc.* on this invocation: "This appeal to the Muses . . . fitly introduces what is really the turning-point of the poem. For now begins, with the wounding of Agamemnon, the disastrous rout of the Greeks which prevails upon Achilles to relax his anger and send Patroklos to the rescue." Similarly Whitman (above, note 1) 159: "Unlike any other *aristeia*, this one achieves scarcely even a degree of victory, but only the first ironical phase of the long defeat which brings honor to Achilles."

"Εσπετε νῦν μοι, Μοῦσαι 'Ολύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι,
ὅς τις δὴ πρῶτος βροτόεντ' ἀνδράγρι' 'Αχαιῶν
ἦρατ', ἐπεί ῥ' ἔκλινε μάχην κλυτὸς ἐννοσίγαιος.

Poseidon *ekline machên*: here is the specific crisis or turning point of the sequence, directly stated in the invocation itself. The swiftness of the Greek advance is graphically suggested through the precipitous catalogue and catalogue-narrative following the invocation (511–22).[10]

The struggle that should follow and seems about to begin just after the rout, at the opening of Book 15, when the Trojans on recrossing the Greek defenses pause and though "pale with fear" take up some sort of a stand, is immediately transferred (line 4) from the human to the divine plane. Zeus awakes on Mt. Ida and discovers the deception. It is in the turmoil he creates as a result, while moving to restore the situation, that we must look for the element of struggle in the present sequence.[11]

Later (15.262 ff.) as Hector is revived and led with Apollo's help against the Greeks, there is a brief echo of struggle on the human plane once more: for a short period the finest of the Greek warriors fight a delaying action while their comrades retreat to safety. But when Apollo brandishes the aegis and intervenes directly (320 ff.), the Greeks flee in confusion: final defeat. The unity of this sequence is suggested in the fact that its initial *crisis*, central *struggle*, and final *defeat* are all directed by gods: Poseidon, Zeus, and Apollo respectively.

The underlying pattern here tends to be obscured by the prominence of the Greek victory at its beginning. But in the context of the traditional pattern itself this is precisely comparable to the deceptive and ill-starred victory of Agamemnon over Iphidamas and Coön in the preceding sequence. Still the Greek victory does stand out, and is clearly meant to stand out. It represents the most successful countereffort of the Greek forces in this section,

[10] In spite of the repeated rejection of this invocation-catalogue unit as nonorganic and superfluous by scholars (e.g. Ribbeck, Leaf) of analytic persuasions, the perception of D. B. Monro (above, note 5) in his note on lines 508–22 (p. 293 of vol. 2 in the 4th ed., 1897) must still stand: "The appeal to the Muses in l. 508 and the list of Trojans slain by Greek chieftains are both indications that we have reached an important turning-point in the story." So also Calhoun (see above, note 7).

[11] It may be seen, particularly, in Ares' impetuous move to enter the battle (15.113 ff.), stirred up by some vexed words of Hera, and in Poseidon's initial defiance of Zeus' command to retire from the field (184 ff.).

a daring and crucial defiance of the Will of Zeus, from which the latter appears revitalized and fixed with deadly certainty on its final goal.[12] In its conclusion, especially in Zeus' charge to Apollo to come to Hector's assistance (231 ff.), this sequence picks up and continues the line of defeat initiated by its predecessor, shadowing it ahead to the disastrous battle by the ships.

The final invocation of this group (16.112–13) occurs in the brief vignette of the final struggle by the ships which is inserted into the scene between Patroclus and Achilles at the beginning of that book, and which is decisive for its issue. Here the picture of Ajax doggedly leading the defense of the ships is picked up from the end of Book 15 and intensified: battered, desperate, hardly able to keep his place on the ship, Ajax yet struggles on against overwhelming odds. At precisely this crucial moment comes the invocation:

> *Ἔσπετε νῦν μοι, Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι,*
> *ὅππως δὴ πρῶτον πῦρ ἔμπεσε νηυσὶν Ἀχαιῶν.*

As if in direct answer Hector at once stands up close and lops off the head of Ajax's spear with his sword, whereupon the latter, left weaponless and bowing to the inevitable, retreats out of the range of the missiles. The way is now open for the Trojans to set fire to the ships, and that they immediately proceed to do.

Here the normal sequence of the invocational crisis-struggle-defeat pattern is altered. Invocation and crisis are followed by immediate and precipitous defeat. The element of struggle does indeed appear, but *before* the invocation, in the picture of the struggling Ajax that precedes the moment of crisis. In this final, climactic invocational episode of the *Iliad* the poet has been so bold as to rearrange his traditional pattern in order to intensify the impression of swift and inevitable disaster at the close, a disaster intimated in Zeus' promise to Hector just before the invocation of Agamemnon's *aristeia* opened this cycle of the action.

But the firing of the ships has a greater significance, which serves to justify yet further the emphasis given it by the alteration

[12] The structural importance of this sequence is reflected in the suggestion that the awakening of Zeus here may be taken as representing the *peripeteia* of the epic: see Rhys Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction, and Saga in the Homeric Epics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1946) 82, further elaborated in G. R. Levy, *The Sword from the Rock* (London 1953) 181.

of the invocational pattern here: it is the event which, perceived immediately by Achilles (16.124 ff.), prompts him to send Patroclus into the battle and so set in motion a train of events that alters the whole course of the action and determines its direction for the rest of the poem. This is in fact the central crisis of the epic, and though the careful placement and handling of the invocation in its context here have not been generally commented upon, its appropriateness and significance at this point is widely acknowledged.[13]

In addition to the freedom and artistry with which the poet has manipulated the elements of his traditional pattern there are two other circumstances which contribute to this effectiveness. First, in rearranging the order of his pattern he has placed the invocation itself at the precise center of the "inserted" invocational vignette (102–23), with just ten lines of the scene preceding and ten following, a position in which its import cannot be missed. Secondly, he has again departed from his traditional practice by phrasing the invocation in qualitative, not quantitative terms. That is, instead of the usual *hos tis* ("Tell me, O Muses . . . , *who* first . . .") which leads one to expect some kind of an enumeration, the poet here, uniquely, substitutes *hoppôs* ("Tell me . . . *how* first fire came to fall on the ships of the Achaeans"). He is no longer interested in trying to introduce a dramatic crisis in terms of a formula originally intended to lead into an enumerative account of its participants[14]; the significance of this particular crisis has led him, boldly and probably consciously, to alter his traditional formula accordingly. The result is a kind of impartiality to be found in no other invocation. Preceded and followed by the intensely personal pictures of Ajax and Hector, this invocation stands out with a kind of impersonal detachment, suggesting by contrast the working of some independent force on the firing of the ships. And so there is. The divine Will of Zeus working on

[13] Leaf (above, note 5) *ad loc.*: "The appeal to the Muses fitly introduces the great crisis of the Iliad—the climax of Greek defeat on which the plot turns." Ribbeck, quoted in Ameis-Hentze, *Anhang zu Homers Ilias* VI. Heft (Leipzig 1881) 14: "Das letzte Moment, welches den Achill zu augenblicklicher Absendung des Patroklos zwingt, der Anfang der Katastrophe, ist es wohl wert, dass darum die Musen angerufen werden. . . ." See also Mocker (above, note 4) 28, cf. 46. Calhoun (above, note 3) 162, note 6, does have some appreciative and valuable remarks on the strategic placement of the invocation in the middle of this vignette of the final struggle between Ajax and Hector.

[14] See above, note 3.

Achilles' behalf throughout the poem here finds its logical fulfillment, coinciding with the effective termination of the Wrath as Patroclus is dispatched to the field. Twice referred to in the vignette scene itself, in connection with the struggle (103) and then the retreat (120–21) of Ajax, the Will of Zeus may well, as has been suggested, be actually identified with that of Achilles at this moment of firing.[15]

Closely involved with the Wrath from the beginning of the poem, the Will of Zeus and its importance have become increasingly evident throughout the invocation-sequences just examined which chart the high points of this action cycle of the central battle. That these sequences form a progression marking the crucial moments of the cycle should by now be sufficiently clear to justify one further observation, already hinted earlier. The progression-pattern of this larger unit is itself one of crisis-struggle-defeat: each of the three invocational sequences, in addition to having its own pattern, itself epitomizes one of the three elements in the larger pattern. That of Agamemnon's *aristeia* marks the precipitating *crisis* of the entire cycle and is determinative for its issue. The central sequence, of the brief Greek victory, epitomizes the shifting *struggle* of this mid-portion of the action, both in the varying fortunes of the human battle and in the dissension among the Olympians that forms its other face; it is perhaps not without significance that its focus is on large masses of men rather than individuals. The final sequence hardly needs comment: it underscores most effectively the ultimate *defeat* toward which the whole intervening action has been tending. This larger pattern, whatever its appearance of deliberate structure, is ultimately, I believe, also founded in tradition. It has a parallel, less obvious but still discernible, in the earlier portion of the poem.[16]

For the long battle sequence that extends, with no significant break, from Book 2 through the Greek retreat and near disaster of Book 8 is built on a comparable motif of Greek attempt and failure which can be articulated in a similar way into a pattern of crisis, struggle, and defeat marked by invocations. These two

[15] See Whitman (above, note 1) 136 for this ingenious suggestion.

[16] It is interesting in any case to note that this architectonic unit of the central battle is one portion of the poem which has so far resisted "geometric" patterning; it coincides almost exactly with "the five books of the Great Battle [i.e. 11–15] which is the center of the *Iliad*" in which Whitman (above, note 1) 282 finds no "particular system of balances," no "principle of large design."

cycles of battle may be regarded as repetitions of the same thematic motif worked out in different ways in different contexts.[17]

Here the initiating crisis is marked by the elaborate invocation of the Muses in 2.484–93 which introduces the Catalogue of Ships, supplemented by the further brief invocation at its close (761–62) that leads into the short climactic "catalogue" of the "best" of the men and horses. These two invocations with their catalogues must plainly be taken together for the present purpose; they form two related parts of a single whole.[18] The crisis they point up is that implicit in the very marshaling of the host in which this invocation-catalogue complex is set: the need for doing battle for the first time without Achilles. The acuteness of this crisis needs little comment. The difficulties attendant on the marshaling of the men alone make it unmistakable; in addition, the heavy machinery of piled-on similes, extended Muse invocation, and detailed Catalogue at the end contributes with great effectiveness to suggesting the weighty and critical nature of the impending action. Finally, immediately following the major Catalogue, the supplementary invocation and catalogue of "the best of the men and the horses" leads directly and naturally (769 ff.) into a picture of Achilles, the ultimate source of the crisis, in his isolation at the precise moment when the host is advancing without him.

This crisis, like that of Agamemnon's *aristeia*, is determinative for the whole cycle which it initiates. There is moreover a certain parallel between the two: the withdrawals of Achilles here, of Agamemnon there, are similarly decisive in pitting the Achaean forces, without effective leadership, against the Trojans and the Will of Zeus. But there is one formal difference. While the first invocation of the later cycle has a crisis-struggle-defeat sequence of its own, there is nothing comparable here. The massiveness with which this crisis is introduced would indeed make any such slighter sequence superfluous.

The central element of struggle in the present cycle is directly related to a temporary suspension of the Will of Zeus, just as in the later cycle of the central battle. There the *Dios apatê*, here Zeus'

[17] Cf. A. B. Lord in his *The Singer of Tales* (above, note 1) 190, who in analyzing the *Iliad* from the point of view of the "story patterns" of an oral poet speaks of "the story pattern of the wrath . . . [as leading] to the troubles of the Achaeans, even to the *duplication* of those troubles before and after the embassy." (Italics mine.)

[18] Cf. Calhoun (above, note 3) 159.

submission to Hera's protests and effective withdrawal of his guiding hand from Books 4 through 7, allow something like a real struggle to emerge at the central point. In this case the focal episode comes in the *aristeia* of Diomedes in Book 5, when human and divine contestants intermingle on the field and sway the battle back and forth indeterminately.

With the reactivation of the Will of Zeus at the beginning of Book 8 the final defeat of this cycle is assured. Its decisiveness is reflected in the terror and fear with which the Greeks feel it (e.g. 8.342 ff., 9.1 ff.); and though complete disaster is averted by the coming of "the welcome, the thrice-prayed-for" night (8.488), the depth of Agamemnon's despair, echoing that of his men, leads eventually to the final desperate appeal to Achilles.

Thus the renewal of the Will of Zeus which had precipitated the original crisis in Book 2, through the false dream sent to Agamemnon, is directly responsible for the final defeat of the cycle. The Greek attempt has failed. The unity of the whole is further suggested by the contrast between Agamemnon's feelings here and his earlier high hopes, in particular perhaps by his almost verbatim repetition now in all earnestness (9.17 ff.) of the proposal to flee then made (2.110 ff.) as a test at a time of crisis.[19] In this expression of despair we have come around full circle and more, and as if to underscore its backward reference we are shortly confronted with the other element in that crisis, the withdrawal of Achilles, now significantly pointed up through a decisive and new phase of development, the Embassy.

The pattern of crisis-struggle-defeat in this first great episode of Greek attempt and failure is clear, and generally comparable to that of the later cycle of the central battle. But apart from the invocation-complex that marks the initial crisis, there would seem at first glance to be no other invocations in the entire cycle to help articulate the underlying pattern. If this pattern is truly traditional as I have maintained, there should be at least some trace of them. Closer examination will show that there is.

[19] See Whitman (above, note 1) 157–58 for Homer's skillful exploitation of this motif. For the artistic manipulation of repeated or formulaic elements of oral poetry in the Homeric poems generally, with due regard for Parry's cautioning remarks, see Whitman 249–52, together with the article there cited (350, note 2) of J. A. Notopoulos, "Continuity and Interconnexion in Homeric Oral Composition," *TAPA* 82 (1951) 81–101. It is instructive to note that a third proposal to go home (14.65 ff.),

At appropriate points both in the central struggle (5.703–4) and just before the final defeat (8.273) appear formulaic questions, obviously put by the poet himself, and paralleled only twice elsewhere, which ask for the same sort of enumerative information as invocations and are followed by brief but clear answering catalogues. They have never to my knowledge been identified with invocations of the Muses, for the simple reason no doubt that no name or indication of an addressee appears. But there can be no doubt that that is just what they are; however faded in form, they have the two primary characteristics of *question-answer* and *ordered enumeration*, and as we shall see presently, each also introduces a clear sequence of *crisis-struggle-defeat*, the third and for the present discussion the most important characteristic.[20]

The first of these occurs during the *aristeia* of Diomedes in Book 5, at almost the mid-point of the extended episode in which Hector with the divine help of Ares appears as a significant menace to the Greeks and their champion. Its placement and the decisive turn it initiates in the conflict are well suited to underscore the essential element of *struggle* in this whole battle sequence. At this point the Greeks, under the irresistible advance of the War God as Hector's ally, have found themselves forced to give ground slowly but steadily. Then comes the invocational question (703–4):

Ἔνθα τίνα πρῶτον, τίνα δ'ὕστατον ἐξενάριξαν
Ἕκτωρ τε Πριάμοιο πάϊς καὶ χάλκεος Ἄρης;

In this case, unlike any of the others considered, the invocation is stated in the interest of *Trojans*. Consequently, if the generalization made earlier has any validity, the ultimate defeat here should be that of Hector and the pro-Trojan Ares on whose behalf the invocation is made. And so it turns out.

pointed out by Whitman 158, has only one formulaic line in common with the other two (14.74 = 2.139 = 9.26).

[20] The two examples found elsewhere are 11.299–300 and 16.692–93, both of which have the same essential invocational characteristics as the two here. Each is associated with one of the major invocational episodes of the second cycle (those following the invocations of 11.218–20 and 16.112–13 respectively) in a kind of complementary relationship; for discussion of the second of these, the quasi-invocation of 16.692–93, see further below, note 23. The general conservatism of this "anonymous" type of invocational complex is suggested by the fact that all four examples are followed invariably by a three-line "close" catalogue of names (in this case of men slain), and all (except 8.273, which uses an abbreviated version of the formula) follow the same two-line formulaic pattern.

The invocation itself marks a turning-point or *crisis* in the conflict, from a slow Greek retreat before Hector and Ares to their precipitous slaughter, represented in the catalogue-list following the invocation. This development at once prompts Hera and Athena to intervene on behalf of the Greeks. Thereupon Diomedes, encouraged by Athena, advances against Ares himself (*struggle*) and with her help succeeds in wounding the War God (*defeat of first antagonist*). With this the Trojan advance collapses and the city itself is so imperiled by the Greek success that Hector is led to withdraw within the walls to seek divine help (6.73–118): so, in effect, if not overtly, is accomplished the *defeat of the second antagonist.*

The second of these invocational episodes marks the final retreat and defeat of the Greeks in Book 8. Though already driven back in accordance with the renewed Will of Zeus, the Greek forces make one final sally outside the wall and ditch. Here Teucer, rather curiously, emerges as the champion; his exploits of archery are introduced by the invocation (273) which marks the *crisis* of this daring counteraction, against which the Will of Zeus is an ever menacing threat:

Ἔνθα τίνα πρῶτον Τρώων ἕλε Τεῦκρος ἀμύμων;

After a three-line catalogue-list of men slain like that following the previous example, Teucer repeatedly but unsuccessfully attempts to shoot down Hector (*struggle*). Finally, as he draws his bow for one more try, he is felled by a boulder from Hector's hand; at this the Trojans immediately rush forward (335 ff.) in the final rout that is interrupted only by the coming of "the thrice-prayed-for" night.

Crisis, struggle, defeat: this same threefold structural pattern, articulated by invocations with their associated episodes, underlies the two great battle cycles of the early part of the *Iliad*, that in Books 2–8 and in 11–16.123 alike. It is probably simply an outgrowth, an extension onto a larger scale, of the similar pattern of crisis-struggle-defeat characteristic of the relatively brief episodes following individual invocations. The poet's instinct for this patterning in association with an appeal to his deity, the Muse, is so deeply ingrained that it makes its impress felt in any sequence, large or small, that is introduced by an invocation, and so flexible

that it can be adjusted easily and naturally to whatever demands his narrative makes.

Just how deep this instinct and its tradition is, even on the larger level of structure, is suggested by further similarities in the patterns of the two large cycles. In both the initial crisis centers about the withdrawal from battle of the foremost Greek warrior of the moment. The central struggle occurs during a period when the Will of Zeus is either wholly or partially inactive and when the interference of divinities on both sides underscores and enlarges the indeterminate character of the strife on the battlefield; in each case a signal success at this point marks the acme of Greek achievement in the cycle. The final defeat in both is dependent on the defeat of a leading Greek champion. It may be no accident that the champion in the first cycle, Teucer, is the lesser brother of the far greater champion, Ajax, whose withdrawal brings on the decisive near catastrophe in the second.[21]

In the context of the *Iliad* generally, then, these two battle cycles, so articulated, emerge as essentially duplicate expressions of the central theme on which the whole first part of the poem is built, namely that of the Will of Zeus working on Achilles' behalf toward the defeat and humiliation of the Greeks.

This brings us to the last and most important invocation, the appeal to the Muse in the proem that introduces the whole work. Now it is a peculiar but inescapable fact that both this proem—or "proem-invocation," for it is both at once—and that of the *Odyssey* outline or forecast only the first part, chronologically, of the tale that follows.[22] In the proem-invocation of the *Iliad* this outline falls naturally into three parts: (1) the *Wrath* of Achilles, (2) its *dire consequences* for the Greeks, and (3) how "the will of Zeus *was accomplished*." It is not difficult to see in this threefold outline a reflection of an over-all pattern of crisis, struggle, and defeat in terms of which the whole first part of the poem, through Achilles' dispatch of Patroclus in Book 16, is conceived, a pattern worked out in practice in two distinct but parallel episodes of

[21] Teucer has been mentioned specifically by name only once previously (6.31; cf. however Page [above, note 2] 236 ff.), and there in a most perfunctory way; his sudden emergence here to the prominence of a significant and crucial *aristeia* is indeed surprising unless it is deliberately meant to mark a correspondence between this (lesser) defeat of the first battle cycle and the far greater one of the second.

[22] See G. E. Duckworth, *Foreshadowing and Suspense in the Epics of Homer, Apollonius and Vergil* (Princeton 1933) 6 and note 15.

Greek attempt and failure. But perhaps even more important to note here is the fact that the Wrath and the Will of Zeus are clearly viewed as concurrent and complementary; and from the time Achilles with the help of Thetis prevails on Zeus to work actively in his support and aid the Trojans until they *drive and pen the Achaeans back against the ships and the shore* (1.409) they are in fact so. The termination envisioned here and implied in the proem occurs with the ultimate defeat by the ships in Book 16. The proem-invocation of the *Iliad* does, in a word, forecast precisely that phase of the action within which invocations of the Muses, with their patterns of crisis, struggle, and defeat, occur, and of which the climactic conclusion is directly heralded by the last specific Muse invocation of the *Iliad*. Thereafter the fortunes of the Greeks steadily improve, and apart from the final "shadow" period of Hector's pre-eminence that lasts till the coming of night and includes the further Greek misfortune of the death of Patroclus, there is no place in the rest of the poem for any defeat-related invocational material.[23]

In the light of all this it is relatively simple to account for the fact that there are no invocations at all in the *Odyssey* after that of the proem itself. For the events outlined there, reflecting at least vestigially a pattern of crisis, struggle, and defeat comparable to that in the proem-invocation and first part of the *Iliad*, are concerned with the first part of Odysseus' Return, up to the final destruction of all his companions and his own isolation on the isle

[23] See above, note 8, for this further period of Hector's supremacy and its transitional character. Here occurs the quasi-invocation of 16.692–93. Though actually *addressed* to Patroclus (who is often so addressed by the poet), it otherwise belongs, in formula and all essential characteristics, to the group of faded or "anonymous" invocations pointed out earlier (see above, note 20, and related text). It introduces a crisis-struggle-defeat sequence coinciding with the final phase of Patroclus' *aristeia*, his assault on Troy and death at the hands of Hector, and so forms an effective complement to the preceding invocation and sequence of 16.112–13 that had led to his entry into battle. The ultimate justification for its late position, in the context of the present argument, lies I think precisely in the fact that it does occur in an ambiguous period so far as invocational material is concerned, when the defeat-progression of the first part of the poem has been apparently terminated, along with the Wrath, in the firing of the ships and the dispatch of Patroclus into the battle, but when the unintended consequences of the Wrath for Achilles and the Greeks have not yet fully worked themselves out in the death of Patroclus. A. B. Lord in *The Singer of Tales* (above, note 1) 190, seeing the Wrath, with all its dire consequences for the Greeks, and the death of Patroclus as belonging originally to two different story patterns, speaks of the transition from one to the other in terms of modulation: this precisely reflects the situation underlying the relationship as I conceive it.

of Calypso—a portion of the tale that is of course reserved for later narration by Odysseus himself.[24] Since Odysseus is plainly no bard, Alcinous' complimentary comparison (11.368–69) notwithstanding, the bardic invocations of the Muses that might have been expected with this material can properly have no place in his account, in Books 9–12, of these earlier events. It is interesting and instructive that though the poet of the *Odyssey* preferred to center his story about the essentially "upward-moving" struggle of Odysseus as Man the Individual to regain his place physically and socially in his world, he still retained in the invocation of his proem the summary of the initial "defeat-related" portion of his traditional tale that we must suppose any invocation of the Muses at that point would have demanded.

* * *

The association of the Muses in the Homeric poems with ultimate defeat is not restricted to invocations. It appears in their maiming of Thamyris (*Il.* 2.594–95), for example, and in their appearance with Thetis and the sea nymphs in *Odyssey* 24 (60 ff.) to sing the *thrênos* for Achilles. That the ultimate defeat dimly shadowed in the invocational patterns was indeed in origin the ultimate defeat of death is further suggested by the fact that the pattern of loss and destruction outlined in the proem-invocation of the *Odyssey* culminated not merely in the destruction of Odysseus' companions, but in his own isolation from mankind on the island of the goddess Calypso, "she who hides," a figure who has been reasonably identified as a death goddess of some antiquity.[25] Though it is no part of the purpose of this discussion to account for ultimate origins, two brief and—it must be emphasized—very tentative observations may be suggestive, neither of which excludes the other: (1) The invocational pattern of crisis-struggle-defeat may reflect an origin in the celebration of the *klea* of a hero on the

[24] The element of *crisis* in this sequence is only implicit in the proem itself; it lies in the circumstances that make this a tale of a man *hos mala polla/ planchthê* (1.1–2): ultimately it would seem the judgement of Zeus (9.38). There are suggestions of crisis both in the conflict between Odysseus and his men in the matter of the Cicones (9.43–44) and in the uncertainty of weather conditions after the storm later (see especially 9.79–81). Odysseus himself sees the hand of Zeus in both the counter-attack of the Cicones and the storm (9.52–53 and 67–69).

[25] See G. R. Levy, *The Sword from the Rock* (London 1953) 151–52. The identification of Calypso is founded in the far-ranging comparative study of H. Güntert, *Kalypso* (Halle 1913).

occasion of his funeral, particularly in an account of his final heroic struggle and death. It is notable that six out of the seven individual invocation-sequences in the *Iliad* (including the "faded" variety) in which such a pattern occurs are built around the *aristeia* of a hero. (2) In its larger manifestation, in the "defeat-related" motif of the first part of the epic tale, the pattern coincides with the first part of the double motif of defeat and recovery, death and return and the like which, from an origin in Mesopotamia, seems to have spread both east (India) and west to exert a profound influence on the themes and pattern of epics of all sorts, among a large variety of peoples.[26] The identification of the Muses, who are uniquely Greek, with the first part of this motif suggests a native expression or adaptation of this portion of the larger epic scheme.

[26] See especially Levy (above, note 25) *passim*. Cf. also A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (above, note 1), especially chap. 9 *init.* (page 186) together with the note *ad loc.* (295, note 1), which cites in addition to Levy the work of É. Mireaux (*Les poèmes homériques et l'histoire grecque* [Paris 1948]); one might note also Lord, 158–59 (and ff.), and in conjunction with that, 120–23.