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Margo Kitts

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Not Barren is the Blood of Lambs: Homeric Oath-Sacrifice as Metaphorical Transformation

Not barren is the oath, the blood of lambs, the unmixed libations and the right hands in which we trusted. For indeed, if the Olympian does not fulfill it at once, he certainly will fulfill it later, and with might he will avenge it, with their lives and their wives and also their children (*Iliad* III, 158-162).

Agamemnon's invocation of the punishing power of Zeus for the failed oath-sacrifice of *Iliad* III illustrates a trilogy of themes in the ancient rhetoric of religious violence: gods, vengeance, and sacrifice. Consider, for instance, Tiglath Pileser's claims of bringing Assur's wicked enemies to defeat in battle,¹ of slaughtering them like lambs, flooding the valleys with their blood, establishing the tale of their destruction, and decreeing their city not be inhabited again²; or consider Isaiah's vision of an avenging "sword of the Lord... steeped in blood... gorged with fat, ... for he has a sacrifice in Bozrah, a great slaughter in Edom" (Isaiah 34:5-8). The aetiology for such destruction is commonly the violation of a divine covenant. So Assurbanipal explains:

Every curse, written down in the oath which they took, was instantly visited upon them by Assur, Sin, Shamash, Adad, Bel, Nabu, Ishtar of Nineveh, the queen of Kidmuri, Ishtar of Arbela, Urta, Nergal (and Nusku). The young of camels, asses, cattle and sheep, sucked at seven udders and could not satisfy their bellies with the milk. The people of Arabia asked questions, the one of the other, saying: "Why is it that such evil has befallen Arabia?" ... saying "Because we did not keep the solemn oaths sworn to Assur."³

Equally solemn is the curse sealing the oath between Hittite king Mursilis and Haggana:

Behold to you these words under oath I put: If you ... do not protect them, these sacred oaths of yours, your lives, together with your wives, your children, your brothers, your sisters, your families, your houses, your fields, your cities, your vineyards, your threshing floors, together with your possessions, let them be destroyed! May the oath-gods seize you from the dark earth!"⁴

¹ Section 273 of D.D. LUCKENBILL, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, Vol. I, New York, Greenwood Press, 1968 [copyright 1926], p. 93.

² LUCKENBILL, section 242-243, 84-85.

³ LUCKENBILL, section 828.

⁴ Kbo V 3 IV 36-40. I blame this translation on no one but myself.

In the same vein, Agamemnon's curse above invokes Zeus to destroy the very seed of the Trojans who violated an oath by blood sacrifice.

Recent theories on blood-sacrifice and religious violence tend to neglect the violence in oath-making rhetoric and oath-sacrifice. But why? Oaths and especially oath-sacrifices are explicit and dramatic forms of religious violence. As stagecraft, they would seem on a par with epiphanies of gods marching in battle,⁵ or, nowadays, with those terrorist acts recently described as cosmic dramatizations on a world stage.⁶ It is not enough simply to claim that oath-making violence is "primitive" or Near Eastern in provenance. E.J. Bickerman, focusing on the ancient Mediterranean world in particular, has demonstrated that, far beyond it, oath-making is linked with symbolic acts which are sealing and often life-taking at core.⁷ But even if sacrificing animals to seal oaths were strictly a Near Eastern and Homeric convention (it was certainly not the *only* oath-making convention), it still would be worthwhile to ponder the violence in it. What could be the motivation for such violence and how would the oath-takers understand it to work?

Of the theories which focus on blood-sacrifice as a magnet for human imagination, most commonly applied to Greek sacrifice are those of Girard and Burkert, whose studies illuminate some dire aspects of ritual killing *per se*, and of Vernant and Detienne, who sketch a broad landscape of Greek sacrificial imagery, discerning an implicit tension between *thusia* and *phonē*. Generally speaking, Homeric narratives of oath-sacrifice (*horkia*) elude the grasp of these theorists, whose approaches fail to account for the formal peculiarities of oral traditional literature, of the epic genre, and of entire semantic domains elicited in oath-sacrifice, but ignored in commensal sacrifice.⁸ This paper will approach Homeric oath-sacrificing narratives from a perspective which allows the telescoping of semantic domains. Using principally the theories of Fernandez, Tambiah, and Ricoeur, it will examine Homeric oath-sacrificing narratives as ritual performances which enable the metaphorical transformations of oath-making witnesses to holy defenders of oaths, of perjurers to sacrificial victims, and of casualties of war to casualties of sacrifice.

The ritual-performance-as-metaphorical-transformation theory is uniquely suitable for exploring Homeric oath-sacrifice for at least two reasons. First, despite the obvious hermeneutic problems in deciphering ritual spheres in ancient texts, the metaphorical transformation theory allows the *Iliad* to speak of ritualized violence in its own terms, thus violating the text less than do some grander theories which

⁵ I.e., in the *Iliad*: Ares (V, 594-595), Athene (IV, 515ff; VIII, 384-389; XX, 95 [says Aineas]), Poseidon (XIII, 434-445; XIV, 384-401), Apollo (XV, 306-311); i.e. in Hittite treaties: before Mursilis: the sun goddess of Arinna, the god Tessup, the goddess Mezzula and all the gods ran in front (Annals of Mursilis II Kbo III 4, col. III, 61-63); i.e. in Assyrian annals: before Esarhaddon: Ishtar of Arbela (S. 618, Luckenbill), before Assurbanipal: Ishtar of Arbela (S. 807), Ninlil, Ishtar of Arbela, Irra, etc. (S. 829); i.e. in the Bible: the ark of the Lord before Joshua (Josh. 6-21), Yahweh with Jonathan (I Sam. 14, 12-15) and Saul (I Sam. 14, 43ff) (v. S. NIDITCH, *War in the Hebrew Bible*, New York, Oxford Univ. Press, 1993).

⁶ See, i.e., M. JUERGENSEMEYER, *Terror in the Mind of God*, Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 2000.

⁷ E.J. BICKERMAN, "Couper une alliance", *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* I, Leiden, Brill, 1976, p. 1-32.

⁸ For a critique of those theories as they apply, or fail to apply, to Homeric commensal and oath sacrifice, see M. KITTS, "Sacrificial Violence in the *Iliad*", *Journal of Ritual Studies* 16, 1 (2002), p. 19-39.

impose their own shapes on sacrificial narratives, but which the epic just cannot support.⁹ Secondly, and more controversially, as a bridge between anthropological and literary modes of inquiry,¹⁰ the theory also allows wider questions about the cultural practice of ritual killing to emerge from the text. Because of the subtle interplay between poet and audience in oral traditional composition, one may surmise that ritual scenes must have attracted to the text some symbolic matrices from actual ritual practices in antiquity. Presuming, with Stanley Tambiah¹¹ and Roy Rappaport,¹² that ritual performance is essentially a symbolic mode of communication, one might even read a kind of intertextuality in the interpenetration of the symbolic language of oath-making rituals in practice with the symbolic language of oath-making ritual scenes in epic. The ancient experience of the sticky interface between those languages of ritual practice and epic symbolism is also where the semantic tensions between the *Iliad*'s ritual killings and battlefield killings must have originated. As will be shown, a subtle oath-sacrificing aetiology informs a handful of battlefield killings and dyings in the *Iliad*, and the poetic link between ritual killing and battlefield killing seems to draw its strength from semantic tensions associated with the ritual pattern of oath-sacrifice as symbolic behavior.

Of course, the probably centuries-long evolution of the oral-poetic text and the doubtlessly shifting forms of ritual practice over those centuries obscure the reflectivity of Homeric oath-sacrificing narratives as mirrors of actual rituals. But application of the metaphorical transformation theory of ritual performance to Homeric oath-sacrifice does not require the text to reflect every detail of authentic ritual practice, only its core structure and semantic domains. One may surmise that the text *does* reflect these, for two reasons. The first is the notably conservative nature of religious rituals *per se*. It is an anthropological truism that rituals tend to hold on to their forms and, to some extent, their semantic fields, over generations. These persisting ritual forms and semantic fields may be exploited in oral traditional performances for poetic purposes, but only to a degree which continues to resonate with audiences. The *Iliad*'s two complete oath-sacrificing scenes happen to be hallowed by a relatively stiff sequence of gestures, prayers, and curses, rendered by a specialized vocabulary and finite verb sequence, all of which supports a claim to the ritual's formalization and relatively persistent semantic fields.

Secondly, and relatedly, the Homeric ritual is invoked to justify the configuration of much later oath-sacrificing practices by Pausanias (V, 24, 9-11), so presumed historical by the ancient Greeks. Although one might attribute Pausanias' invocation of the Homeric prototype to the presence of the *Iliad* as an inscribed text – a kind of Greek Bible providing hallowed models for ritual practice – one also might attribute it to the perduring nature of certain rituals as "liturgical orders," right alongside the text. Anthropologist Roy Rappaport has argued that predominantly oral cultures who know of written texts nonetheless may maintain relatively stiff and orally transmitted

⁹ See note 7.

¹⁰ See J. FERNANDEZ, *Performances and Persuasions: The Play of Tropes in Culture*, Bloomington, Indiana Univ. Press, 1986, for a series of essays which attempt to demonstrate the usefulness of this approach into other arenas of human inquiry.

¹¹ S.J. TAMBIAH, "A Performative Approach to Ritual", *Proceedings of the British Academy* 65, Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1979, p. 113-167; "The Magical Power of Words," *Man* 3, 2 (1968), p. 175-208.

¹² R.A. RAPPAPOORT, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999.

liturgical orders which are regarded as encoded at a primordial stratum of reality, rather than as encoded by an authoritative text or by a guild of performers.¹³ More fastidiously than other rituals, liturgical orders tend to retain form because their sources are canonized as primordial, because their performative speech acts and ritualized gestures establish their commissive and perlocutionary effects,¹⁴ and because their semantic spheres are thereby, in effect, self-perpetuating. Oath-sacrificing rituals in the *Iliad* would seem to qualify as liturgical orders because, (1) they summon primordial sources to witness their terms and avenge their violation, (2) because their dramatic performances are factitive for oaths,¹⁵ establishing their commissive effects for participants and ensuring their perlocutionary effects in the case of oath-violation, and, (3) although it is impossible to be sure that their precise sequence of gestures and speech acts mirrors actual historical practice, one may surmise that at least their core idea clusters are perduring, as the dramatic violence in Pausanias' ritual, its Homeric prototype, and the above-cited Near Eastern *comparanda* arguably illustrate. A fuller discussion of the historical and anthropological contexts for oath-sacrificing ritual symbolism is beyond the scope of this paper, but just this much legitimates the study of ancient oath-sacrifice as a symbolic ritual practice which may have shaped the poetic rendering of certain wartime killings in epic poetry.

Homeric Oath-Sacrifice as a Typical Scene

To appreciate the application of the metaphorical transformation theory of ritual performance to Homeric oath-sacrificing rituals, one first must be familiar with the oral poetic item known as a typical scene or motif sequence. Some recent Homerists have striven to demonstrate that Homeric verse making is not fundamentally different from everyday discourse, except, perhaps, in the density of certain features¹⁶; yet ritual scenes in the *Iliad* retain a certain formalization which legitimates the continued use of the typical scene as an analytical tool. But that tool has changed over the years. Once defined stiffly as aggregates of traditional poetic elements – formulae, phrases, and whole verses – used regularly by a poet to aid in the spontaneous composition of recurrent scenes,¹⁷ typical scenes have been re-envisioned by Michael Nagler and others as originating *Gestalts* which generate families of meaningful details in various arrangements and which disseminate semantic fields into longer narratives, while conducting themes from elsewhere in the

¹³ R.A. RAPPAPOORT, "The Obvious Aspects of Ritual", excerpted from *Ecology, Meaning and Religion*, Berkeley, North Atlantic 1979, p. 175-180, 188-195, 197-200, 208-214, 216-221, and reprinted in R. GRIMES (ed.), *Readings in Ritual Studies*, Upper Saddle River, NJ., 1996, p. 427-440. For a quick summary of arguments about the coextensive presence of literacy and orality in ancient Greece, see J.M. FOLEY, "Oral Tradition and Its Implications", in I. MORRIS, B. POWELL (eds.), *A New Companion to Homer*, Leiden, Brill, 1997, p. 146-173, n.b. 162-165.

¹⁴ RAPPAPOORT, *o.c.* (n. 12). On the early theories of speech acts as performatives with factitive, commissive, and perlocutionary effects, see J.L. AUSTIN, *How to do things with Words*, Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press 1975, p. 106-120.

¹⁵ See note 14.

¹⁶ I.e. E.J. BAKKER, "The Study of Homeric Discourse", in MORRIS – POWELL, *o.c.* (n. 13), p. 284-304; E. BAKKER, F. FABBRICOTTI, "Periphrasal and Nuclear Semantics in Homeric Diction", *Mnemosyne* 44 (1991), p. 63-84; E. VISSER, "Formulae or Single Words?", *WJA* 14 (1988), p. 21-37.

¹⁷ I.e. W. AREND, *Die Typischen Szenen bei Homer*, Berlin, 1933; B. Fenik, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad*, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1968.

epic. They do this through phonemic, semantic and rhythmic resonances with the longer poem,¹⁸ and possible ideational resonances, however filtered, with an extratextual reality,¹⁹ known to oral-traditional audiences but elusive to us. The reach of such *Gestalts* beyond the immediate narrative is due to a synecdochic dimension of audience imagination which John Foley has called "traditional referentiality."²⁰ Traditional referentiality enables the poet to omit or expand elements of the scene according to his desired emphasis, while an audience reared on the tale and its themes will comprehend the larger significance. Despite being some 2000 to 3000 years outside this field of traditional referentiality, we are *not* proscribed from grasping anything at all about the text. Rather, attentive readers may intuit semantic overtones within the poem and possibly without, since, as Ricœur puts it, "[i]f reading is possible, it is indeed because the text is not closed in on itself but opens out onto other things."²¹

The *Gestalt*-oriented picture of poetic dissemination bears on the sacrificial connotations which penetrate certain battle scenes in the *Iliad*, but oath-sacrificing scenes *per se* correspond to the stiffer aggregates, their stiffness possibly a reflection of their hallowed quality. As Leonard Muellner has demonstrated, ritual scenes in Homer are characterized by the use of precise, signifying vocabulary, a multitude of indicative verbs suggesting a series of ritualized microadjustments, and the use of the verb *euchomai*, basically, "to make sacral speech."²² Sacrificial scenes have their own identifying features within this subgenre.

Sacrificial scenes in the *Iliad* are of two types, commensal or oath-making, each with its own tone and features.²³ The first describes either a convivial sharing of meat around a common hearth, or in larger settings an inclusive dispensing of meat to warriors to demonstrate the magnanimity of Agamemnon as great king. Commensal narratives are conspicuous for their fixed verse sequences describing the preparing and roasting of animal flesh, an occasional toast to the gods, the sating of appetites on meat and bread, and for their silence regarding the actual killing, bleeding, and dying of animals.²⁴

Oath-sacrifices, on the other hand, are somber affairs for which the slicing of the animal's throat is a peak moment. They too feature their own signifying vocabulary and abundance of "microadjusting" indicative verbs, such as the verb *euchomai* plus

¹⁸ M. NAGLER, *Spontaneity and Tradition*, Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1974. See also FENIK, *o.c.* (n. 17); A. THORNTON, *Homer's Iliad: Its Composition and the Motif of Supplication*, Gottingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984; M. EDWARDS, "Composition by Theme", in *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 5:11-23, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991.

¹⁹ I rely on P. Ricœur here: "To summarize, poetic language is no less *about* reality than any other use of language but refers to it by the means of a complex strategy which implies, as an essential component, a suspension and seemingly an abolition of the ordinary reference attached to descriptive language" [emphasis in text], "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling," in M. JOHNSON (ed.), *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1981, p. 228-247, n.b. 240.

²⁰ J. FOLEY, *Immanent Art*, Bloomington, Indiana Univ. Press, 1991, and *l.c.* (n. 13), p. 146-173.

²¹ Reading is "to conjoin a new discourse to the [inscribed] discourse of the text." P. RICŒUR, *Hermeneutics and the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981, p. 158.

²² L. MUELLNER, *The Meaning of Homeric εὐχομαι Through Its Formulas*, Innsbruck, Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck, 1976, p. 32-33.

²³ On the typical scene of commensal sacrifice, see my "Sacrificial Violence," *l.c.* (n. 8).

²⁴ With the exception of the funeral feast in *Iliad* XXIII, a wholly different context.

dative of god as a construction for prayer,²⁵ the *machaira* as the killing implement (oddly ignored in commensal sacrifices²⁶), and the verb *tamnō* – not the commensal *sphazō* – for cutting the victim's throat. Based on the two oath-sacrificing narratives of the *Iliad*, a fuller one in Book III and a compressed one in Book XIX, one may sketch the following outline of the oath-sacrificing typical scene, many features of which are identical in both instances:

(1) The participants stop all other activity and attend to the ritual: in Book III the Achaeans and Trojans sit and lay down their weapons in the plain (77 and 114-115); in Book XIX the Achaeans sit in respectful silence before Agamemnon (255-256).

(2) An animal (or animals) is presented before a crowd of witnesses and held by a herald (III, 268-269; XIX, 250-251); in Book III this is followed by the mixing of wine and washing of hands (III, 269-270).

(3) King Agamemnon draws "with his hands his *machaira*, which always hung by the great sheath of his sword" (III, 271-272; XIX, 252-253);

(4) With the *machaira* he cuts hair from the victim (III, 273; XIX, 254); in Book III the heralds distribute the hairs to "the best of the Achaeans and Trojans" (274);

(5) He prays, holding up his hands to Zeus (III, 275-276; XIX, 254-255);

(6) He invokes a series of divine witnesses, concluding with the Erinyes, either by function: "[those] who toil underground and punish humans, whoever should swear a false oath" (III, 279); or by naming them: the "Erinyes who punish humans, whoever should swear a false oath" (XIX, 259-260);

(7) He gives the terms of the oath.

(8) He curses oath-violators, either before or after the oath-sacrifice. In Book XIX it is before: "Praying, ... 'if I have sworn any of these things falsely, may the gods give to me pains, exceedingly many, as many as they give to anyone who transgresses against them in swearing'" (265-267); in Book III it is after the sacrifice and the libation of wine: "They prayed, 'Whoever first violates the oaths, so may their brains pour onto the ground, as does the wine, and the brains of their children, and may their wives be subdued by others'" (300-301).

(9) He cuts the throat of the victim(s) with the *machaira*: "And so he said, and he cut [*tame*] the throat[s] of the [lambs, boar] with the pitiless bronze" (III, 292; XIX, 266).

(10) In Book III he puts the victims on the ground, where they lie "gasping and emptied of life (*thumos*), for the bronze had taken away their might (*menos*)" (293-294); In Book XIX, the herald hurls the boar into the great "abyss of the sea" (267-268).

In both cases the victim is not eaten, but is disposed of. There is a feast following the oath-sacrifice in Book XIX, but that is a hollow effort on the part of Agamemnon

²⁵ MUELLNER, *o.c.* (n. 22).

²⁶ On the *machaira*, contrast M. DETIENNE, J. SVENBRO, "The Feast of Wolves, or the Impossible City," in M. DETIENNE, J.-P. VERNANT, *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks*, transl. Paul Wissing, Chicago, The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989; p. 148-163; M. DETIENNE, "The Spice Ox", *Gardens of Adonis*, transl. Janet Lloyd, New Jersey, The Humanities Press, 1977, 1994, p. 37-59; R.P. MARTIN, *Healing, Sacrifice and Battle*, Innsbruck, 1983 (*Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft*, 41), p. 87ff. All argue that the *machaira* is a key instrument in commensal sacrifice, and R. MARTIN, of course, argues that it's connotations are toward healing. On the healing theme, see also M. KITTS, "Killing, Healing, and the Hidden Motif of Oath-Sacrifice in Iliad 21," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 13, 2 (1999), p. 42-57.

to engage Achilles in a common spirit. Achilles vows not to eat (161, 205-215, 315-321) until vengeance is paid,²⁷ and it is not the victim of oath-sacrifice which is eaten by everyone else.

Ostensibly promises of death to oath-violators, oath-sacrifices in the *Iliad* have the additional rhetorical effect of stamping the surrounding course of events with a deadly significance. The punishment of death for "the first to violate/who violated oaths" is intoned some six times in the narratives which surround the oath-sacrifice in Book III (at III, 107; IV, 67; 72; 236; 271; VII, 351-352²⁸), and violating oaths is equated with death in nearby passages which lack that precise rhetorical formula (i.e. IV, 155-163; I, 85-90; 233ff). Although the reverberations from Book XIX are more oblique, that ritual killing also may be felt to echo right through the cosmic battle in Book XX into the exaction of *poinë* (retribution) by Achilles' in Book XXI, where Achilles rounds up twelve Trojan youths for human sacrifice and, I have argued elsewhere, seems to kill Lykaon with motions and rhetoric of a mock oath-sacrifice.²⁹ In both cases, the oath-sacrificing scene would seem to attract and disseminate nuance from and into surrounding narratives.

With this picture of the oath-sacrificing ritual scene and its reverberations in mind, we advance to the theories of Fernandez, Tambiah, and Ricoeur.

Ritual Performance as Metaphorical Transformation

James Fernandez

The study of metaphor has a critical history as old as the philosophy of Aristotle, but Fernandez's theory on the metaphorical transformation implemented through ritual performance was advanced in the early 1970s, and is mirrored in Lakoff and Johnson's examination of the metaphorical basis of everyday language, which appeared around the same time. According to Fernandez, metaphors provide organizing images which a ritual brings into effect.³⁰ That is, rituals do not just reinforce a static picture of reality, but tend to effect movement in the way the participant envisions him or herself, in the same way that a metaphor accomplishes movement in the envisioning of one thing in terms of another. The stress on movement coincides with Lakoff & Johnson's observation that metaphors not only provide ways of conceptualizing preexisting reality, but actually create new realities by structuring the kinds of activities we perform based on our conceptual systems.³¹ For ritual, says Fernandez, this metaphorical activity consists of a "strategic predication upon an inchoate pronoun (an I, a you, a we, a they) which makes a movement and leads to performance."³² The strategic predication occurs at a high

²⁷ Cf. Saul's vow to fast until vengeance is paid, in 1 Samuel 14, 24ff.

²⁸ See my "Sacrificial Violence", *I.c.* (n. 8).

²⁹ See my "Killing, Healing...", *I.c.* (n. 26); see also "The Wide Bosom of the Sea", *Literature and Theology* 14, 2 (2000), p. 103-124.

³⁰ J.W. FERNANDEZ, "The Performance of Ritual Metaphors", in J.D. SAPIR, J.Chr. CROCKER (eds.), *The Social Use of Metaphor*, Philadelphia, Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1977, p. 101-102. See also his "Persuasions and Performances: Of the Beast in Every Body ... And the Metaphors of Everyman", *Daedalus* 101, 1 (1972), p. 39-60.

³¹ M. JOHNSON, G. LAKOFF, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980, and "Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language", in JOHNSON, *o.c.* (n. 19), p. 286-328.

³² FERNANDEZ, *I.c.* (n. 30, 1977), p. 102.

level of abstraction, but the semantic movement tends to be from the obscure and inchoate in the subject (often coined the “tenor”) to the concrete and ostensive in the metaphoric predicate (the “vehicle”),³³ a point made also by Lakoff and Johnson, who see everyday metaphor as promoting the understanding of less concrete experiences in terms of more concrete ones.³⁴ According to Fernandez, the schemas imposed on ritual by metaphors tend to be of two types. He characterizes them in various ways, but most straightforwardly as (1) structural/analogic metaphors, wherein the translation between realms is based on some isomorphism of structure or similarity of relationship of parts, and (2) textural metaphors, wherein an assimilation is made on the basis of similarity in feeling tone, contiguities in previous experience, or syntagmatic habit.³⁵ In language study, these two tend to fall into metonymic and metaphoric camps, but that distinction is slight in ritual as well as in human imagination, wherein structural metaphors often enjoy textural undertones and where figures of speech across the board tend to invoke a multidimensional “network of associations” (Fernandez) or “network of entailments” (Lakoff and Johnson), which enhance their figurability in human imagination. For Lakoff & Johnson, a network of entailments highlights different aspects of the domains of experience *Gestalten* or “structured meaningful wholes within experience”) which are brought together in a new way by metaphor.³⁶ Networks of association or entailment perform for everyday experience essentially the same function Fernandez’s *leitmotifs* perform during ritual performance. Fernandez sees *leitmotifs* as effectively thickening and transforming the experience of participants in a ritual. Ritual *leitmotifs* may be penetrated by religious symbols, which are especially “volatile to interpretation” and which “fill out this universe of religious experience giving it resonance, a thick complexity and potency, which the discussion of the paradigm of metaphors – however basic – does not fully capture.”³⁷

As Fernandez sees it, there are two simple, interrelated features of human psychology which facilitate this transformation of personal identity through the enactment of ritual metaphor. One is the inchoateness of the pronomial subject (“[i]n the privacy of our experience we are usually not sure who we really are”³⁸) and its suspension between past and future (“framed between the remembered past and the imagined future with the need to fill the inchoate present with activity ... and to bind the past and the future together”³⁹). The second is our susceptibility to social definition: we crave personal identity and an ability to mark change, and society obliges by imposing metaphorical shapes on us through transformative rituals.

³³ FERNANDEZ, *I.C.* (n. 30, 1977), p. 104.

³⁴ LAKOFF & JOHNSON., *I.C.* (n. 31, 1981), p. 324.

³⁵ FERNANDEZ, *I.C.* (n. 30, 1972), p. 46-47, and *I.C.* (n. 30, 1977), p. 117-118.

³⁶ FERNANDEZ, *I.C.* (n. 30, 1977), p. 104 109, 113, 117. On page 126 he summarizes: “Most metaphoric images potentially imply a set of actions by which they might be realized. The utterance of metaphor itself as well as the actions undertaken to realize it is attended by a set of associations which “belong” to it by reason of contiguities in previous experience. The assertion of metaphor thus provokes a metonymous chain of elements or experiences associated with it as part to whole, cause to effect, or other contiguity in time or space.”

³⁷ FERNANDEZ, *I.C.* (n. 30, 1977), p. 126.

³⁸ FERNANDEZ, *I.C.* (n. 30, 1972), p. 54.

³⁹ FERNANDEZ, *I.C.* (n. 30, 1977), p. 118.

This much may be illustrated in the oath-sacrificing narrative in Book III. The narrative begins with the Achaians and Trojans in the very heat of battle, whereupon Hector, with a single gesture, causes the Trojans to be seated (77-78) and Agamemnon stops the Achaians from aiming at Hector (80-83). Everything comes to a standstill. Hector bids both sides to lay down their weapons in the plain (87-90) and to "cut 'friendship' and trusty oaths" (*philotēta kai borkia pista tamōmen*) (94, cf. 73, 256),⁴⁰ while Paris and Menelaus fight a duel for Helen and her possessions. Hence, for everyone but Paris and Menelaus the purpose of this 10-year war as well as his fighting identity as a foe of the other are momentarily suspended, which establishes the "inchoateness of the pronomial subject" and its suspension in time. The suspension involves a prospective new social configuration of *philotēs*, "friendship," or possibly "alliance," for both sides. On the surface this would appear to be a structural metaphorical switch, from foe to ally. However the structural metaphor is informed by a veritable "network of associations" which add texture to the metaphor, since *philotēs* may be equated also with *xeinia*, or guestfriendship, a rich Greek tradition with divine sanctions. Notably, the two notions are almost interchangeable at III, 351-354, where Menelaus prays that Zeus punish Paris' violation of *philotēs* "so that a person in future generations will shudder before doing evil to a guesthost (*xeinodokos*) who provides friendship (*philotēta*)."⁴¹ It is also notable that the violation of *xeinia*, or guestfriendship – legendarily the very cause of the war (referred to at III, 351-354 and XIII, 622-627) – bears the same ominous consequences as does oath-violation, which is death.

But *philotēs* is not the precise transformation the oath-sacrificing ritual effects, particularly for the Achaians. Rather, the ritual fails, which transforms their identity from profane warriors to sacred ones, at least through Book VII. They start out united behind their king and on a quest for honor, booty, justice and the other reasons for which men go to war, but when the oath-sacrifice fails they become holy defenders of sacred oaths and the cosmic principles behind them, as well as prosecutors of those who violate them. The transformation begins when the "best of the Trojans and Achaians," drawn into a ritual circle, are induced by the heralds to accept cut hairs from the lambs (III, 373-374). For Walter Burkert such an act might signify their preliminary complicity in the ultimate violation of the victim⁴¹; for René Girard it might symbolize the mock combat which leads to an act of ritualized violence⁴²; but for Homer it signifies, minimally, that "the best of the Trojans and Achaians" pledge commitment to the oath's terms, as they accept the lambs' hairs. Second, the Trojans and Achaians are called to be witnesses of oaths, not quite at the level of "Zeus, Helios, the rivers and earth, and those who toiling underneath punish men, whoever swears false oath" (III, 276-79), who are explicitly invoked to be witnesses (*marturoi*) and to defend the trusty oaths (III, 280), but the men pledge themselves to the very same ends. They do so through a series of ritual acts represented mostly by finite verbs (Muellner's ritualized microadjustments). They draw and pour wine (III, 295-296), pray to the "gods who always are" (III, 296) and the warriors say, each of them

⁴⁰ An expression with pan-Mediterranean applications. See M. WEINFELD, "The Common Heritage of Covenantal Traditions in the Ancient World.", in L. CANFORA, M. LIVERANI, C. ZACCAGNINI (eds.), *I Trattati nel mondo antico, forma, ideologica, funzione*, Rome, 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider, 1990, p. 175-191, and "Covenant Terminology in the Ancient Near East and Its Influence on the West", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 93, 2 (1973), p. 190-199.

⁴¹ I.e. in *Homo Necans*, Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1983.

⁴² I.e. in *Violence and the Sacred*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977.

(note the distributive nuance to the iterative *eipesken* at III, 297), “Zeus most glorious and greatest, and the other immortal gods: whoever first shall violate the oaths, may their brains pour to the ground as does this wine, and also the brains of their children, and may their wives be subdued by others” (III, 298-301).

Besides invoking support from the gods, these ritual gestures and speech acts initiate a transformation in metaphorical identity which becomes more concrete for the Achaians after the Trojans violate the oath, whereby its perlocutionary effects are set in motion. Then a handful of curses and the six-time repetition of the ominous formula “the first who violated oaths” underscore the renewed intensity with which the Achaians, now instruments of divine will, claim they are fighting the Trojans. For instance, Agamemnon exhorts the Argives:

Argives, do not surrender your rushing courage.
For Zeus father will not be a helper to liars,
Rather those who first violated the oaths,
vultures will indeed devour their tender skin
while we lead their wives and little children
to the ships, when we take the citadel (IV, 234-239).

And Idomeneus responds to Agamemnon’s challenge:

But rouse the other flowing haired Achaians
so that quickly we may fight. Since the Trojans poured oaths
with us, to them death and destruction shall follow,
since they first violated the oaths (IV, 267-271).

The repeated formula, “the first who violated oaths,” in these ominous threats and elsewhere (i.e., at III, 107; IV, 67, 72, 155-165), functions as Fernandez’s leitmotif, thickening the experience of the Achaian “holy warriors,” who now see themselves as avenging the transgressions the Trojans have committed against the gods and the cosmic order.

The “network of entailments” which supports this avenging goes beyond the oath-sacrificing rituals of Books III and XIX. There are no fewer than 25 references to oaths in the *Iliad*, and each reference insinuates that perjury shall be punished by death.⁴³ It starts with Achilles’ oath by his own life (and Apollo) to defend the seer Kalchas in Book I (88) and ends with Antilochus eschewing an oath to prove he didn’t cheat, which he did, in a chariot race in Book XXIII (573-585). A number of cosmic enforcers may be invoked to inflict death, including Zeus and the Erinyes,⁴⁴ but the oath is binding even without a divine source: i.e. Achilles swears by his own life above, and Odysseus curses his own head (= life) and his fatherhood of Telemachus in the event he is lying when he threatens Thersites (II, 257-264).⁴⁵ Gods too are bound by oaths in the *Iliad* (i.e., XIV, 270-279; XV, 34-44; XIX, 108-113; XX, 310-317), which is significant because of their whimsical commitments to the other

⁴³ On this theme, see P. STENGEL, *Die griechischen Kultusaltertümer*, München, Oskar Beck, 1920, p. 136-138, and *Opferbräute der Griechen*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972 [1910], p. 78-85; W. BURKERT, *Greek Religion*, Harvard, Harvard Univ. Press, 1985, p. 251.

⁴⁴ See STENGEL, *o.c.* (1910), and A. HEUBECK, “*Erinus* in der archaischen Epik”, *Glotta* 64 (1986), p. 145-165.

⁴⁵ Odysseus doesn’t call this a *horkia*, but the intention is clearly there, demonstrating that curses and oaths have overlapping semantic domains in the *Iliad*.

institutions which bind humans: hence Apollo ignores his debt of hospitality to Hera (XXIV, 55-63), but once Zeus swears an oath, he cannot go back on it (i.e. the births of Eurustheus and Heracles, at XIX, 98-131). Gods too may swear by a number of sources. Hera, for instance, swears by the earth, the heavens, her husband Zeus, their marriage bed, and the River Styx (XIII, 36-42), who, according to Hesiod, sends a perjuring god into a bad sleep and breathlessness (*anapneustos*) (*Theog.*, 797-798), the equivalent of death.⁴⁶ The *Iliad* does not specify what divine perjurers suffer, but gods are fastidious about honoring oaths. Oaths are one of the supports of the universe.

This wider network helps to inform the metaphorical identity not only of the avengers of perjury, who act as agents for the gods, but also of the perjurers themselves, within the terms of the oath-sacrificing ritual. Since Paris (and Pandaros, prompted by Apollo) violated the terms of the duel, it is clearly the Trojans who are expected to suffer as perjurers. As Antenor wisely recognizes in the violation's aftermath, "now we are fighting as those who have lied regarding trusty oaths" (VII, 351-352). Hence the Trojans are to meet the same fate, metaphorically, as the lambs, which is to suffer slit throats by the "pitiless bronze" (symbolically by the "*machaira* which always hung by the great sheath of [Agamemnon's] sword," III, 272-273), and to lie on the ground, gasping (*aspairontas*), deprived of *thumos* and *menos* (III, 293-294). Just as the spilling of wine is stated explicitly to anticipate the spilling of the perjurer's brains, the dying of the lambs is prophetic, and focalized with an ear for the victim's fate. It is at least curious that similar language of gasping and panting is applied to a handful of human dying scenes in the *Iliad*: Asteropaios exhaled (*asthmainonta*) his *thumos* (XXI, 182) when Achilles killed him at the beginning of his fight with the rivergod; Hippodamas exhaled (*aisthe*) his *thumos* like a bull being sacrificed for Poseidon (XX, 403); Thracians gasped (*aspairontas*) when Diomedes slaughtered them in the night (X, 521), Adamas gasped (*espair'*) like an ox dying by human blows (XIII, 571), Medon exhaled (*aisthmainon*) as he was struck in the temple and fell from the chariot (V, 585), and Asios' charioteer did exactly the same (XIII, 396). It is at least intriguing that these victims who die panting like sacrificial lambs are on the Trojan side, given the above arguments for oath-sacrifice and the debt of death for perjury as subtle aetiologies for wartime killing. However, one should remember that Homer focalizes the Trojan plight as a fully human one. Hence the implications from these gasps and deprivations of dying men are not confined to one side. There is a bigger comment on war here. When Trojan Hippodamas falls in battle as a bull slaughtered for Poseidon (XX, 403), the poet is making a new metaphorical predication based on the overlapping networks of entailment from two *Gestalten*, war and sacrifice.

The identification of wartime casualties as sacrificial victims will be developed further in our discussion of Paul Ricœur's theory of metaphor.

⁴⁶ Discussed by, et alia., R. JANKO, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Vol. IV*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992, p. 125, and G. NAGY, *The Best of the Achaeans*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1979, p. 187, fn 16, n 2.

Stanley Tambiah, et al.

Yet Fernandez and Lakoff & Johnson tell us nothing about the speech and symbolic gestures within the ritual. Now we turn to the work of Stanley Tambiah,⁴⁷ supplemented by a handful of other anthropologists, for a finer tuning on the different elements of ritual and to highlight the performative speech acts in Homeric oath-sacrifices. Space prohibits us from treating the social indexing and supranormal communicating functions Tambiah sees in rituals, but his analysis of performative speech acts is especially apt for the poems of Homer because they already are performative speech acts, ostensibly composed through the ritual of bardic *poesis*. Tambiah has noted some of the common features between oral traditional poetry and ritual speech, including redundancy and stereotypy, the use of poetic devices such as parallelism and formulaic composition (adapting basic patterns of meter, word boundary, melody), and the frequent use of metaphor and metonym.⁴⁸ Ritual speech he describes as the “stereotyped stream of repeated words intoned with modulations of speed, loudness, and rhythm, thereby foregrounding them as well as telescoping or fusing them into an amalgam that is given motion and direction by compelling illocutionary words of command and persuasion or declaration.”⁴⁹ Vocalization in special registers, speeds, rhythms, and the like serve to heighten ritual performance and intensify the participatory effect. Not surprisingly, this leads to a kind of metaphorical transformation of the participants. Although we lack aural evidence for Homeric performances, it is well accepted that a masterful bard was expected to transform his audiences by awakening them from their private, quotidian concerns to heroic ones, and by enlisting them to witness a divinely inspired human drama – “that song whose glory reaches the vast heavens” (*Od.* VIII, 74).

Ritual speech is not entirely privileged over other ritual acts, which have their own symbolic capabilities; but “verbal action” does have “the power to invoke images and comparisons, refer to time past and future and relate events which cannot be represented in action.”⁵⁰ Because of this, ritual speech may help to construct a semantic horizon against which the ritual is staged. Of course, not all ritual speech acts are of one type. A number of verbal forms – prayers, curses, songs, expository stories, blessings, etc.– may appear in a single rite. Each form has its own traditional usage and contribution to make to the whole.

Of rituals more generally, Tambiah says they work because they are essentially iconic analogues of creative acts. Citing Lord’s work on Yugoslavian bards, Tambiah compares the oral poet’s creation of an iconic analogue of the primordial recitation, to the ritual performer’s “iconic analogue of the cycles of creations of the cosmic order in their temporal and spatial regularity and cumulative effect.”⁵¹ This is not creation *ex nihilo*, but basically the reinvigoration of primordial events within newer, readjusted, metaphoric domains. Citing Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo’s work on the Ilongot of Northern Luzon, Philippines, Tambiah suggests that the effectiveness

⁴⁷ ST. TAMBIAH, “A Performative Approach to Ritual”, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 65, Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press 1979, p. 113-169, n.b. 122-142.

⁴⁸ See also his “The Magical Power of Words”, *Man* 3, 2 (1968), p. 175-208, n.b. 189-90, and 193.

⁴⁹ TAMBIAH, *l.c.* (n. 47), p. 131-142.

⁵⁰ TAMBIAH, *l.c.* (n. 48), p. 202.

⁵¹ TAMBIAH, *l.c.* (n. 47), p. 137.

of spells, for instance, depends on a certain metaphorical reorganization, wherein images are invoked from diverse areas of experience and "regrouped and organized into small sets of culturally significant and contextually desirable themes."⁵² The "meaning" such rituals communicate is understood not as exposition, but in terms of pattern recognition and configurational awareness: one appreciates a ritual as one might appreciate a work of art.⁵³

To apply these abbreviated insights from Tambiah's rich theory, let us begin with the shared features of ritual speech and ritually composed oral poetry. Based on the witnessing role of Homeric audiences and the parallel witnessing role attributed to the "best of the Trojans and Achaeans" in the oath-making ritual, it would appear that audiences to the Homeric songs are invited to a kind of double witnessing, as witnesses first to the divinely inspired epic drama of the song and second to the divinely sanctioned institution of oath-making, which they accomplish in part by identifying with the actors in the ritual. In a sense, the audience is both witness to the oaths and witness to the witnesses of the oaths, and so is called upon also to judge the ritual actors in their performance and defense of the sacred oaths. The performative speech acts within the oath-sacrificing ritual also are doubly inscribed, essentially ritual speech within ritual speech. Ambiguity and richness in meaning stem from the interpenetration of these layers in ritual speech.

As established above, speakers may employ a multitude of speech forms within a single ritual. The Homeric oath-sacrificing narratives, already subtly expressive in their hexametrical rhythm and oral-compositional style, present at least four different speech forms: (1) the pledge to what is sworn (a commissive, as Austin and Rappaport see it), (2) the exposition on what is sworn, which sets the semantic parameters of the oath-making tradition as well as the background to the particular pledge, and which may include persuasive embellishments such as analogous stories (i.e. the *atē* of Zeus prefacing the reputed *atē* of Agamemnon in Book XIX), (3) prayers soliciting gods to endorse the oath, and (4) curses inviting destruction on violators of the oath – powerful speech acts functioning as "magical missiles"⁵⁴ and contributing to the oath's perlocutionary effects. A fifth kind of articulation within the ritual scene is the poetic narration which circumscribes the ritual speech and describes the ritual acts. This narration includes its own peculiar features, such as the abundance of microadjusting, mostly finite verbs for the precise actions, the verbal construction of *euchomai* plus dative of god,⁵⁵ reference to the *machaira*, formulaically described as a tool of war (the "pitiless bronze"), the iterative-distributive verb for expression of the unanimous curse, and the inclusion of the stock phrases and terms which signal the ritual scene – i.e., "he drew with his hands his *machaira*, which always hung by the great sheath of his sword" (III, 271-272; XIX, 252-53), and "and he cut the throat[s] of the [lambs, boar] with the pitiless bronze" (III, 292; XIX, 266). These ritual features were outlined in my discussion of the typical scene, above. Each kind of speech helps to stage the performative parameters of the

⁵² TAMBIAH, *I.c.* (n. 47), p. 138, citing M.Z. ROSALDO, "It's All Uphill: The Creative Metaphors of Ilongot Magical Spells", in M. SANCHES, B.G. BLOUNT (eds.), *Sociocultural Dimensions of Language Use*, Academic Press, 1975.

⁵³ TAMBIAH, *I.c.* (n. 47), p. 134.

⁵⁴ A notion Tambiah draws from Malinowski (1935, vol. 2, p. 248-249) to discuss the magical power of redundant rhetoric, *I.c.* (n. 47), p. 137.

⁵⁵ Discussed by MUELLNER, *o.c.* (n. 22).

ritual, some help to establish its effects, and the whole narrative is punctuated by the inclusion of richly connotative symbols, such as the *machaira* (the sacrificial knife) and the ominous verb *epiorkon*, used in the self-imprecation, "if I have sworn falsely." Although we lack the aural dimension of the oath-making rhetoric, one might expect that either the poet might supply or the audience might imagine a variation in voice register to accompany these forms, especially for the curses. Based on this variety of speech forms and the richness of symbols within the oath-making ritual, one well might imagine the stimulating effect and enhanced participation of the audience, as well as the rapt attention expected of the witnesses to the oaths within the text.

But the finer point we may draw from Tambiah concerns the ritual as an iconic analogue of a creative act. We have established that rituals do not create *ex nibilio*, but instead create new but familiar configurations out of preexisting semantic domains. Performative speech plays an essential role in this for oath-making rituals. Speech acts not only build up the semantic domains against which the ritual is performed, but the curses, exhortations, and prayers within the ritual also build up the perceived enforcement power. Their ostensible purpose is not to represent but to bind preexisting forces to the oath's intent. The curses and prayers, especially, act as magical subpoenas, summoning divine powers to their task, and thereby effecting basically a reconfiguration of cosmic power, drawing the gods into the human sphere.

Yet it is not the magical words which finally seal the intention of the oath into existence. Rather it is the killing of the victim. The killing stands as the iconic analogue to a creative act. That is, the ritual act of cutting the throat of lambs or boars is the binding moment which seals the new configuration of semantic domains into permanent effect. Hence, ironically, death creates life, or a new configuration of it. This is the peak moment which Adolf Jensen, improving on Frobenius, Huizinga, and Kerenyi, would call *Ergriffenheit*, a seizure by one aspect of reality which obliterates others.⁵⁶ Pierre Smith would call it the central focalizing element of the ritual system, the simulation which inaugurates the magic and turns the ludic dimension back on participants.⁵⁷ For Tambiah it might be compared to his sense of ritual as a "dramatic actualization whose distinctive structure ... has something to do with the production of a sense of heightened and intensified and fused communication."⁵⁸

Why the killing, and not the speech, which finally seals the ritual's effects? Anthropologist Roy Rappaport may help us here. Rappaport points out that physical display in rituals often transmits something more or different than what the corresponding words would say or do say.⁵⁹ There tends to be an inverted relationship in ritual between the weightiness of the words and the weightiness of the acts. That is, when the words spoken in ritual are relatively insubstantial, they

⁵⁶ A.E. JENSEN, *Myth and Cult Among Primitive Peoples*, transl. M.T. Choldin, W. Weissleder, Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1951, 1963, p. 53, 55, 173.

⁵⁷ P. SMITH, "Aspects of the Organization of Rites", in M. IZARD, P. SCHMITT (eds.), *Between Belief and Transgression*, transl. J. Leavitt, Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 103-128, n.b. 104 and 126.

⁵⁸ TAMBIAH, *l.c.* (n. 47), p. 140.

⁵⁹ "For lack of better terminology, it may be suggested that physical display is 'performatively stronger' or 'performatively more complete' than utterances"(RAPPAPOORT, *o.c.* [n. 12], p. 143).

must be made "heavy" by acts; when the words are weighty, the gestures which accompany them are less substantial. Of particular relevance to ritual killing, Rappaport points out that "[c]orporeal representation gives weight to the incorporeal and gives visible substance to the aspects which are themselves impalpable, but of great importance in the ordering of social life."⁶⁰ Oaths surely qualify as greatly important aspects of the ordering of social life, in Homer and in general; yet, consisting of words, they are ephemeral, and easily violated. The ritual gesture of sacrificial killing in Homeric oaths corresponds in semantic weight to the degree of tenuousness which, according to Rappaport, is felt intrinsically to adhere to the sphere of human obligation, world-round.⁶¹ In the *Iliad* this tenuousness may be measured in the Achaian claims about the hybriatic tendencies of Priam's unreliable sons (i.e., III, 105-107), in the cosmic nature of the vengeance felt to result from perjury (i.e., "If I have sworn any of these things falsely, may the gods give to me pains, exceedingly many, as many as they give to anyone who transgresses against them in swearing" (XIX, 265-267)), and in repeated curses calling down divine vengeance on the Trojans after they violate the oath of Book III (i.e., IV, 234-239 and IV, 158-162). Harking back to my earlier claims of intertextuality between the symbolic language of actual ritual performances and of the way they are represented in the *Iliad*, one might impute an enhanced communicational *register* to the killing as a ritual gesture. This enhanced register would seem to measure not only the tenuousness of Trojan promises, but the primordial depths invoked to stand against it, as well as the severe nature of the punishments due for perjury.

Paul Ricœur

But what about the focalization on the gasping and dying of lambs in Book III? We need a higher level of analysis to solve the problem of the human identification with sacrificial victims in the poetic rendering of battlefield killings and the oath-sacrificing spectacle. We will explore this higher level by enlisting three observations from Paul Ricœur's very intricate theory of metaphor.⁶² Ricœur articulates a bridge between a semantic (also called interactive) and a psychological theory of metaphor, setting aside the older understanding of metaphor as a simple matter of substitution at the level of denomination, i.e. "Hippodamas" substituted for "bull" when

[Achilles] stabbed him in the upper back with his spear. Then Hippodamas gasped out his *thumos* and belched, as a bull belches when he is being dragged for the Helikonian lord by young men, and the Earthshaker is happy with them. So as Hippodamas was belching, the manly *thumos* left his bones (XX, 402-406).

The metaphorical deviance in the substitution model would stem from the ordinary assumption that people are not bulls, so we don't die like them. Ricœur's theory enlarges the scope of the semantic clash which obtains in metaphor. Meaning resides not in the substituted word, but in the paradoxical character of the predicative assimilation to the logical subject (i.e. seeing dying Hippodamas as a sacrificed bull). That is, the metaphor brings into view the semantic proximity which

⁶⁰ RAPPAPORT, *o.c.* (n. 12), p. 141.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁶² P. RICŒUR. "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling", in JOHNSON, *o.c.* (n. 19), p. 228-247. Reprinted from *Critical Inquiry* 5, 1 (1978), p. 143-159.

comes to obtain between the preexisting and new semantic fields (dying men and dying bulls; war and sacrifice), and in a sense superimposes them. But the semantic clash remains. "The insight into likeness is the perception of the conflict between the previous incompatibility and the new compatibility. 'Remoteness' is preserved within 'proximity.'" ⁶³ In other words, metaphor generates the "rapprochement" wherein literal incongruence (war is not sacrifice) yields to metaphorical congruence (war is like sacrifice), so that a new kinship between the terms is established (war may be envisioned as sacrifice). But that kinship prevails only as long as the tension between the two heterogeneous fields prevails: "[A]ll new rapprochement runs against a previous categorization which resists, or rather which yields while resisting, as Nelson Goodman says. This is what the idea of a semantic impertinence or incongruence preserves. In order that a metaphor obtains, one must continue to identify the previous incompatibility through the new compatibility." ⁶⁴

This tension between the new semantic compatibility and the previous semantic incompatibility established in metaphor is tied to second point I wish to draw from Ricœur. That is the notion of the split reference, or the phenomenologist's *epoche*, which Ricœur sees exposed in the preambles to fairy tales and in exhortations such as the Majorca storytellers' "It was and it was not" ("Aixo era y no era"). ⁶⁵ His view on this is a direct extension of his view of the sense of a novel metaphor. In metaphor one must *suspend* literal sense in order to allow metaphorical sense to emerge from a figurative use of language, but one must also preserve the literal sense, so as to maintain the ordinary vision in tension with the new one it suggests. ⁶⁶ In this way the metaphorical meaning is fully realized. The *epoche* in reading poetry or, for that matter, in reading ritual, works similarly: "the suspension of the reference proper to ordinary descriptive language is the negative condition for the emergence of a more radical way of looking at things." ⁶⁷ This more radical way is allowed by the negative capability of imagination. Quoting Sartre, Ricœur says "to imagine is to address oneself to what is not." ⁶⁸ Poetic genius is to create fictions from the split reference, so that the ordinary reference of descriptive language gives way to a more primordial reference grounded in our most intrinsic potentialities for feeling and imagining. ⁶⁹ The negative capability of imagination is thus the positive source for the creation of models for reading reality in a new way, which constitutes fiction.

Finally, "poetic feeling"—the "psychological" dimension of Ricœur's theory—enriches our grasp of metaphors. According to Ricœur, poetic feeling responds to the illocutionary force of the metaphor as speech act, by allowing self assimilation into what is seen in the metaphor: "We feel *like* what we see *like*." ⁷⁰ To feel, says Ricœur,

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁶⁹ I believe I am "translating" Ricœur's observation from page 242: "The poet is this genius who generates split references *by* creating fictions. It is in fiction that the 'absence' proper to the power of suspending what we call 'reality' in ordinary language concretely coalesces and fuses with the *positive insight* into the potentialities of our being in the world which our everyday transactions with manipulatable objects tend to conceal" [emphases in text].

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

is to make ours what objectifying thought would put at a distance.⁷¹ Poetic feeling inserts us within the world in a nonobjectifying manner.⁷² Poetic feeling is thus an intentional structure.⁷³ In other words, it is because of poetic feelings that we are able to grasp the metaphorical transposition of semantic domains and insert ourselves in the new predication. We stand in the new predication while simultaneously straddling the new and the old.

In applying Ricœur's theory to Homer, it is clear that to comprehend the metaphorical switches effected in the ritual of oath-sacrifice, one must hold on to two predications at once. Everyone knows the sacrificial lambs in Book III are not humans and yet when they are described as lying on the ground, gasping and experiencing the loss of *thumos* and *menos*, just like men dying in battle, the question of similarity is posed. From this semantic incongruence, a range of possible congruences emerges. Not only do humans dying in battle come to seem similar to animals dying in sacrifice, but humans dying in battle may seem similar to humans dying in sacrifice, animals dying in sacrifice may seem similar to animals dying in battle, and animals dying in battle may even seem similar to humans dying in sacrifice, (i.e. when Sarpedon slays the horse Pedasos, who exhaled (*aisthon*) his *thumos*, brayed (*brache*), and fell in the sand (XVI, 468-469)). These symbolizations are rendered denser by the striking hunter/prey and predator/prey similes in the *Iliad* (i.e. V, 541-560, XIII, 471-477; XVI, 352-356; XVII, 540-542; XXI, 22-26; 29; XXII, 94-97; 139-142), and by other focalizations on humans who die as animals who die (i.e., XIII, 571; XX, 403) and especially on humans who grieve as animals who grieve (i.e. Achilles as a bearded lioness grieving her lost cub (XVIII, 316-323); Menelaus as a mother cow circling the fallen Patroklos (XVII, 4-5)). All these images are "bound" to the metaphorical switch between animal victims of sacrifice and human victims of battle, to the extent that they deepen and enrich the picture of killing in battle as killing in sacrifice, and vice versa.⁷⁴ But at the same time, the strength of the metaphor of animal sacrifice as applied to human beings who fall in battle derives from the perceived violation of the victims' humanity. By custom humans are not supposed to be sacrificial victims, whereas animals are.

As for the split reference and the feeling intentionality which enables our profound grasp of a metaphor, it seems that not only the audience but the warriors themselves are expected to perceive both the paradoxicality and the aptness of the sacrificial analogies in the oath-sacrificing ritual. As for the oath-sacrifice, so also for the eucharist or any other ritual: there is a tension between the symbolic event the ritual enacts and the real event it suggests, but for most of us they are not the same, except perhaps fleetingly so. Hence the chill in Trojan Antenor's exhortation to return Helen and her possessions "since now we are fighting as those who have lied regarding the trusty oaths. I see no other profit to come out of this for us, unless we do so" (VII, 350-353). Antenor doesn't commit himself to the notion that the Trojans

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁷³ A second-order intentional structure, according to S. STRASSER, *Das Gemut*, Freiburg, 1956, cited by Ricœur on page 243.

⁷⁴ Ricœur refers to bound images as the concrete representations aroused by the verbal element and controlled by it. "[t]he meaning is not only schematized but lets itself be read on the image in which it is inverted. Or, to put it another way, the metaphorical sense is generated in the thickness of the imagining scene displayed by the verbal structure of the poem." Ricœur, *I.c.* (n. 62), p. 237, relying on M.B. HESTER, *The Meaning of Poetic Metaphor*, The Hague, 1967.

are to be sacrificed as lambs, but implicit in his comment seems to be an awareness of the chilling potentiality embedded in the symbolic actions of the oath-sacrifice. Antenor may comprehend Agamemnon's ominous warning that in no way barren is the oath or the blood of lambs (IV, 158ff), even if he doesn't believe in Zeus Horkios. This comprehension is reminiscent of what Pierre Smith learned from the Bedik of eastern Senegal: the theatricality of the rite seems to have its own truth; the rite has more effect than any independent belief in it.⁷⁵ One wouldn't want to claim that the Greeks and Trojans didn't believe in their gods or that they doubted that divine punishment was due for perjury, but as a focalizing event for narration and a vehicle for conferring metaphorical identity, the oath-sacrificing ritual by itself is a powerful shaper of interpretation. Acting as a metaphor, it creates the persuasive fiction that dying lambs have a lot in common with dying humans, even for people who seem blind to that similarity when lambs are sacrificed for food. The self-assimilation of the audience into the experience of the gasping lambs is a response to the poetic illocution, consequent to Ricœur's "feeling intentionality." "We feel *like* what we see *like*,"⁷⁶ which is dying lambs.

Conclusion

The theory of ritual performance as metaphorical transformation opens up an intricate view of what happens in Homeric oath-sacrifice and certain battlefield killings by, among other things, highlighting the fictional capacity of human imagination and its response to ritualized speech acts and gestures. This fictional capacity of imagination is responsive not only to ritual practice but to oral poetry representing ritual practice, both of which may be understood as symbolic modes of communication and which interpenetrate in Homer's *Iliad*. Because the interactive poetic practice thought to constitute oral traditional composition allows the symbolic language of ritual experience to emerge through the text, one may expect to find "ritual fictions," if I may coin a phrase, not only in ritual narratives but in other kinds of narratives whose semantic spheres overlap with rituals. Hence oath-sacrifice generates its own ritual fictions which may be exploited in Homeric narratives of ritual killing and also battlefield killing. These ritual fictions are supported by symbolic acts as well as utterances within the oath-sacrificing narratives, and are enhanced by a larger network of poetic images which effectively impress animal figures on human figures and vice versa. This network includes similes and an array of semantically weighty expressions for dying, grieving, suffering, etc. The paradoxical predicative assimilation of animal figures to human figures in such "ritual fictions" is surely not limited to the *Iliad*, but lies beneath a seemingly pan-Mediterranean sensibility about the consequences of perjury and about war as sacrifice. As it is in the Near Eastern war rhetoric cited at the outset of this essay, the ritual killing of oath-sacrifice is exploited in the *Iliad* as a poignant metaphor for wartime brutality as sanctified violence.

Margo KITTS

9 Pandora Drive
Groveland, MA 01834
USA
e-mail : mkitts@merrimack.gts.net

⁷⁵ SMITH, *l.c.* (n. 57), p. 106.

⁷⁶ See note 71.