CHAPTER 1

Homeric and Tragic Sacrifice

This chapter is far too brief to attempt a systematic comparison of sacrifice in Homer with sacrifice in tragedy. I will rather, after some preliminary generalisations, discuss the specific case of the famous portent which appeared to the Greeks at Aulis in the epic version on the one hand and the Aeschylean on the other, together with the sacrifice of Iphigeneia which in Aeschylus resulted from the portent. This will lead to a general statement of the positive role which ritual tends to play in Homer as opposed to the negative role it tends to play in tragedy. Many further examples might be given to support this generalisation. But I will confine myself, in the final section, to a single one: Herakles' killing of Lykos and of his own children in Euripides' *Heracles*, which will also illuminate further the puzzling relationship in Aeschylus between portent and sacrifice.

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* tend to exclude homicide within the family.[1] They also exclude imagery drawn from animal sacrifice.[2] These two exclusions go together, for Greek sacrifice is, in contrast to the hunt, of domestic animals.[3] Of the numerous and various similes which embellish military killing in the *Iliad*, not one is drawn from the everyday familiarity of blood flowing from the sacrificial weapon. Animal sacrifices that occur

[1] This has been noted in passing by Griffin 1977: 44 (silence on the killings of Iphigeneia and of Klytaimestra), but never, so far as I know, investigated. Kin-killing is mentioned briefly at *Il.* 2.662, 15.335–6, 16.573; *Od.* 19.522–3, but excluded from certain stories where we expect to find it (*Il.* 4.376–9, 6.130–40, 9.458–61 (cf. Plut. *Quomodo adul.* 26f); *Od.* 11.326–7, 15.247–55), or almost excluded (*Il.* 9.529–99; *Od.* 11.271–80, and the various references to the killing of Agamemnon, in most of which it is performed by Aigisthos, whose kinship with Agamemnon is post-Homeric). It is worth adding that Proclus' account of the (attempted) sacrifice of Iphigeneia in the *Cypria* mentions a plural subject rather than Agamemnon (p. 41.47B = 104.18A). So too Hes. fr. 23a.17 ('the Greeks').

[2] There are, however, three similes of the killing of a domestic animal, of which it is apt that two refer to the killing of Agamemnon and his followers as unsuspecting guests by Aigisthos (*Od.* 4.535, 11.411, 413–15). For battle as sacrifice elsewhere see e.g. Pind. fr. 78.

[3] See e.g. Burkert 1985: 55, 58; Stengel 1920: 123. Homeric accounts of animal sacrifice even omit those elements of the ritual which seem to unite the victim with the participants, as I shall show elsewhere. For recent discussion of Homeric animal sacrifice see Kirk 1981; Petropoulou 1987.

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in the narrative do in fact contrast with killing in battle: the predictable, peacefully ordered process of killing and cooking the animal ends in the joyful concord of the feast, whereas on the battlefield all is uncontrolled violence. This Homeric tendency to exclude kin-killing and sacrificial imagery is reversed by tragedy: tragic killing is within [88] the family, and is almost always described as (perverted) sacrifice. This distinction is worth making, particularly in view of the current fashion for stressing what is tragic in Homer and Homeric in tragedy.[4]

With this in mind, let us look at the portent, the 'sign', which encouraged the Greek expedition gathered at Aulis. This was related in the lost *Cypria*, but also by Odysseus at *Il.* 2.303–30: the Greeks were offering sacrifice at an altar by a spring under a plane tree, on which were the twittering young of a sparrow. A snake emerged from under the altar and went to the tree, where it ate first the young and then the mother, before being turned into stone by Zeus. Kalkhas interprets this to mean that after nine years' fighting the Greeks will capture Troy, for there were altogether nine sparrows. But what interests me is the contrast between the uncontained brutality between the species (snake and bird), and the absolute solidarity within the family of sparrows. The mother sparrow is caught by the snake only because, unwilling to abandon her children, she hovers desperately over them. The references to her wailing for her children (315 ὀδυρομένη φίλα τέκνα) and to her children as νήπια τέκνα (311) have a human connotation. This suggests another way, not mentioned by Kalkhas, in which the 'sign' resembles what it signifies: the *Iliad* (as well as the *Odyssey*) constantly exhibits the same contrast between touching solidarity within the family and uncontained brutality outside it, as for example in the brutality of Akhilleus and the bravery of Priam after the death of Hektor. Against the brutal moral of the fable of the nightingale caught by the hawk, Hesiod offers the reflection that the violent and cruel are punished by Zeus (*Op.* 238–9). But the violence required to sack Troy must be sanctioned by Zeus.[5] The brutality of the snake he sends occurs during a sacrifice, i.e. in a context in which violence is contained as well as divine good will obtained. The portent 'entered' the sacrifice (321 εἰσῆλθε).[6]

The Aeschylean version of the portent at Aulis, in which two eagles devour a pregnant hare (*Ag.* 114–20), is both different and similar to the

[4] E.g. Redfield 1975: chapter 2; Macleod 1982: 7–8; Rutherford 1982; Easterling 1984 (on Sophocles); Herington 1985.

[5] Note how at *Il.* 1.5 'And the plan of Zeus was being accomplished' follows immediately the uncontained violence which denies burial to the enemy; cf. *Il.* 24.209–11.

[6] Cf. the portent of *Il.* 8, where an eagle lets a fawn drop by the sacrificial altar of Zeus (249).

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epic version. Most of the differences are obvious. Different creatures are involved. The devoured young are still unborn. And the narrative context is in two significant respects different. First, the portent does not take place during a sacrifice, as it does in the epic. And second, in the *Cypria* the Greeks embark, after the portent, from Aulis, sack Teuthrania, are scattered by a storm and reassemble at Aulis; Agamemnon then shoots a stag and boasts that he is a better hunter than Artemis, and it is this that angers the goddess and leads to the sacrifice of Iphigeneia as the price for favourable winds. In Aeschylus, on the other hand, there is only one gathering at Aulis, and what angers the goddess is the eagles' feast. This condensation produces a well-known implausibility. Why should Artemis turn against Agamemnon as a result of a portent sent by Zeus? Much of the discussion of this passage has concentrated – without, it seems to me, [89] much success – on finding a motive for Artemis' anger, whether in the brutality of what is symbolised by the portent (the sack of Troy)[7] or in some other unstated motive (e.g. Thyestes' eating of his own children)[8] or, on a more literal reading, in the portent itself.[9] Comparison with the epic version has been relatively neglected, but does I think help to reveal a logic in which the apparent inexplicability of Artemis' angry demand seems unimportant or even appropriate.

In the epic portent, brutality between species contrasts with family solidarity, but is sanctioned, in part by the sacrificial context. The Aeschylean version develops and reverses this idea. The choice of a hare facilitates the link with Artemis,[10] but also allows the young to be devoured while still in the womb: family solidarity takes here an even more extreme, a physical form. The hare is also a characteristic victim of the hunt. She runs, but is caught by the birds of prey, the winged hounds of Zeus (135 πτανοῖσι κυσὶ πατρός).[11] The uncontained violence of the portent is associated by Aeschylus with the uncontained violence of the hunt. There is, unlike in the epic, no sacrificial context. But the eagles do, surprisingly, 'sacrifice' the hare (137 θυομένοισιν). This is significant. For the uncontained violence of the hunt is, like the warfare it here symbolises, antithetical to the sacrifice, in which killing is contained in ritual order[12] and the domestic victim is in

[7] E.g. Peradotto 1969; Neitzel 1979; Bergson 1982.

[8] Whallon 1961 and (more effectively) Furley 1986; or the offence related in the *Cypria* (see Fraenkel 1950: II.97–8).

[9] Lawrence 1976; Sommerstein 1980.

[10] See e.g. Peradotto 1969: 244.

[11] Mazon (in the Budé edition) compares Xen. *Cyn*. 5.14, 9.10 and Arr. *Cyn*. 17, from which it appears that λοισθίων δρόμων (120) may be a technical term from the hunt.

[12] See e.g. Burkert 1983b: 12, 38, 40; Burkert 1985: 58.

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a sense a member of the sacrificing group and consents to its own death.[13] If the eagles' feast is a 'sacrifice' it is a grotesque one, in which the norms of civilised, sacrificial killing have been overthrown by absolute violence. Whereas the violence of the epic portent is contained and sanctioned by its sacrificial context, the eagles' feast, because it is itself a grotesque sacrifice, a sacrifice which has turned into its opposite, reverses this containment. The 'sacrifice' of the hare is itself uncontained savagery. So too the violence at Troy is both a sacrifice and a hunt;[14] and the Greek army is in its capture of Troy like a lion 'that eats raw meat'.[15] [*90*]

Here some clarification is needed of what is meant by the 'uncontained violence' of the hunt and of warfare. Both hunting and warfare may in fact of course be culturally structured, so that their violence is in a sense contained, both in (and by) literature and even in actual practice. But the lethal struggle of warfare or of the hunt may also, in actual practice at least, fall entirely outside the control of culture. Hence the tension in some literary representations of warfare, notably in Homer, between cultural control and the (at least potential) uncontrollability of military hostility. An obvious example is Akhilleus, before fighting with Hektor, rejecting his proposal of a burial pact by saying that there can be no pacts between lions and men or between wolves and lambs, and then speaking, as Hektor dies, of eating him raw; but in the end this threat of the absolute violence that obtains between different species is contained by Hektor's funeral. In tragedy too the uncontrolled violence characteristic of hunting and warfare is in tension with (ritual) cultural control (sacrifice, burial, etc.), but the tension tends to result in the failure or subversion of the rituals.

This perverted or anti-sacrificial quality of the 'sacrifice' of the hare helps to explain why it gives rise specifically to the sacrifice of Iphigeneia.

[13] Burkert 1983b: 3–4; Burkert 1985: 55–8; Burkert 1966: 107 n. 43; Stengel 1920: 108–9. [The idea is questioned by Naiden 2007.]

[14] *Ag*. 65, 357–60, 694–5, 735, and in general Vidal-Naquet 1988. It is from this perspective that we may be able to solve the puzzle of 126–30. Why does Kalkhas, having explained that the Greeks will seize Troy, then immediately single out the destruction of herds 'before the walls'? Herds, as domesticated animals, are normally killed by sacrifice. In the *Iliad* the Trojans sacrifice them outside the walls (8.545–9), a practice to which Kassandra refers at *Ag*. 1168–9, a passage compared by Zeitlin 1965: 470 n. 17 with *Ag*. 126–30, where she suggests that Kalkhas means Trojan sacrifices. But πάντα is against this and so is πρὸς τὸ βίαιον, which implies the struggle and violence characteristic of the hunt. What interests Kalkhas, in view of the portent, is the violent death in war of animals that are normally sacrificed.

[15] *Ag*. 827–8; cf. 735: the lion as a member of the household is an ambiguity, apparently transcending the normal division between the household (men and domestic animals) and the savagery of nature. But the ambiguity is resolved by a sacrifice (735) which brings to the household uncontained violence (730–4).

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Kalkhas fears that Artemis may create adverse winds (151) 'in her eagerness for another sacrifice, one without music' (or just possibly 'without law', depending on how you take ἄνομον[16]) 'and without a feast': σπευδομένα θυσίαν ἑτέραν ἄνομόν τιν' ἄδαιτον. I have given the usual translation of ἑτέραν as 'another'. But Aeschylus did not write ἄλλην, as he did for example a little later, in the beacon speech, where one beacon gives rise to another (299 ἄλλην ἐκδοχὴν πομποῦ πυρός). ἕτερος refers to one of a pair or to difference, two closely related senses which may occur together,[17] as they do here: the two grotesque sacrifices form a complementary pair. One difference is made explicit in ἄδαιτος ('without a feast'): Iphigeneia, unlike the hare, will not be eaten.[18] The second sacrifice both differs and arises from the first. The implication is that they form a pair because they are different. In fact they do represent opposite extremes of transgression. In the portent one species of wild creature catches and devours another; there is no community between killer and victim, whereas in the sacrifice of Iphigeneia there is far too much community, for they are not only both humans but even of the same family. Between these two extremes there is the normal animal sacrifice, in which man kills a domesticated animal which on the one hand is in a sense a member of the domestic human group (a [91] membership expressed in the ritual) and on the other hand is in fact an outsider, a member of another species (the ritual also expresses separation of the victim from the human group[19]). The two extremes, paradoxically, take on features of each other. Iphigeneia, unlike the tame victim of a normal sacrifice, has to be bridled (238 βίᾳ χαλινῶν) like an untamed member of another species.[20] And the royal birds are described (137) as αὐτότοκον πρὸ λόχου μογέραν πτάκα θυομένοισιν, words which, it has been pointed out, could by a magnificent ambiguity mean either 'sacrificing the poor trembling hare with her young before birth' or 'sacrificing a poor trembling female, his own child, on behalf of the army'. [21] The ambiguity of αὐτότοκον, one may add, assimilates the closeness of the parent–child relationship in the two horrible sacrifices, between the hare and her

[16] Lloyd-Jones 1953.

[17] Cf. e.g. Aesch. *Ag*. 344.

[18] Whereas Thyestes did eat his children – an event to which the following lines (especially τεκνόποινος) allude, according to Furley 1986.

[19] Notably, the pelting of the victim with barley grains: Burkert 1983b: 4–5.

[20] Cf. 133 στόμιον, of what, according to Kalkhas, the Greeks will impose on Troy. The animal substituted for Iphigeneia in the *Cypria* is (unusually for sacrifice) a wild one (ἔλαφον). A comparable horror is the representation of Klytaimestra's murder of her husband as a viper killing an eagle (Aesch. *Cho*. 247–9) – animals similar to those in the epic portent.

[21] Stanford 1939: 143–4.

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young and between Agamemnon and his daughter,[22] thereby enhancing the fundamental opposition between the two that consists in the fact that, whereas the portent contrasts brutality and family solidarity, Agamemnon brutally kills his own daughter. Compare the *Iliad*, in which Agamemnon says he will kill Trojan children in their mothers' wombs (6.57–8) but there is no mention anywhere of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia.

The elimination of Agamemnon's hunting offence from the narrative leaves Artemis' demand without an obvious motive, but it also puts the sacrifice of Iphigeneia into a more direct relationship with the war. Sacrifice of a maiden as a preliminary to war is a familiar Greek idea,[23] associated by Walter Burkert with an ethnographically widespread phenomenon: male renunciation of sexuality so as to arouse the aggression necessary to hunting and warfare.[24] On this view the fundamental mechanism involved in the sacrifice is not one of exchange: it is not simply that the maiden is given up to the deity in exchange for success. Rather, the aggression required for the group to kill outsiders (the enemy, other prey) is created, sustained or coordinated by the killing of an insider, a female member of the group. The sacrifice serves a state of mind. Whatever the general truth of this, it is worth noting that the Aeschylean Agamemnon does not sacrifice his daughter unwillingly. The pathos of such an act is exploited in other versions,[25] but not by Aeschylus. It is true that the Aeschylean Agamemnon has doubts about what to do. But they are removed by [92] psychological change before the sacrifice. This change is heralded by his words in the textually problematic lines 215–17, where he speaks of a right (θέμις) to desire strongly (ὀργᾶν) or with passionate emotion (ὀργᾷ περιοργῶς or περιόργῳ) the maiden's blood.[26] It seems that the sacrifice is here envisaged as desirable in itself, not as a means to an end. And I believe that the desire which Agamemnon calls justified is his own desire, not the desire of the army.[27] Having reported these words of Agamemnon, the chorus then refer to his internal change (μετέγνω), a kind of madness (παρακοπά).

[22] This implicitly assimilates Iphigeneia to the unborn hare. Artemis presides over both the physical (birth) and the social (premarital) separation of the girl from her parent, the former as Λοξία. Iphigeneia is πρὸ λόχου also in the sense of 'before giving birth': she is of marriageable age, and her sacrifice is associated here and elsewhere with marriage (Foley 1985: 65–105; Seaford 1987c[13]: 108–9).

[23] See most recently, in relation to Iphigeneia and Artemis, Lloyd-Jones 1983.

[24] Burkert 1983b: 58–72.

[25] E.g. Eur. *IA* 1547–50, and the painting in the House of the Tragic Poet at Pompeii.

[26] παρθενίου θ' αἵματος ὀργᾷ περιόργως ἐπιθυμεῖν θέμις mss., Fraenkel; better is ὀργᾶν, ἅπερ αὐδᾷ περιόργως, θέμις (see Thomson 1966: *ad loc.*).

[27] Dover 1973: 64 argues that this refers to the desire of the army. But (a) we have had no mention of such a desire: at issue is what Agamemnon is to do; (b) a reference to Agamemnon's (mad) desire goes well with the description that follows of his madness; (c) γάρ in 214 might easily introduce

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The ordered violence of sacrifice is possible because the victim is, as a domesticated animal, both an insider and an outsider. The order is possible because the victim belongs in a sense to the human group, and consents to its own death. The violence is possible because the victim is after all also an outsider, an animal, and it is this that makes the killing legitimate. Violence may be directed against one's own or another species, and one's own or another group (e.g. household). At one extreme, hunting is violence directed against a different species and a different group. At the other extreme, the sacrifice of Iphigeneia is the killing of a member of the same species and the same (narrowly defined) group. In between these two extremes is the normal sacrifice (different species, same group). To the remaining category (same species, different group) belong human sacrifice of (powerless) outsiders and warfare, which shares the uncontained violence of hunting and even (as with Akhilleus) resembles violence between species. The middle way of normal animal sacrifice, in which the potentially dangerous aggression of the group is channelled onto a convenient, intermediate victim,[28] is specifically human, and may operate as a symbol of social order.[29] Hence the peculiar horror of its dual inversion in Aeschylus: it is precisely by virtue of the close link between the portent and the sacrifice of Iphigeneia that the civilised practice of sacrifice seems to collapse into both the two opposed extremes it must normally exclude.

The logic by which the sacrificial feast of the royal birds of prey produces the king's sacrifice of his own daughter seems then to be composed of various interrelated elements. (1) The frenzied aggression of warfare expressed in the portent may require a renunciation of sexuality marked by the desire for a girl [*93*] victim. (2) It may also produce a loss of discrimination which is dangerously comprehensive: in becoming the hunter of his own kind a man may also become the killer of his own child. (3) Inversion of the sacrificial sign of civilisation is complete only if it manifests both the extremes between and against which sacrifice is defined. (4) The manifestation of one of the two opposed extremes may seem to require, as if to right an upset balance, the manifestation of the other. (5) The sense

explanation of the implied negative answer to the question in 212–13; (d) Lesky 1966: 84 compares the surprising, passionate desire of Eteokles for fratricide in Aesch. *Sept*. Dover objects that Eteokles (unlike Agamemnon) has good reasons for hating his victim and a real need to kill him. But that is not how Eteokles (or the chorus) envisage the matter: it is an external agency (the curse of Oidipous) that instils a passion, very like Agamemnon's (note especially 678 ὀργή, 692 ἵμερος ἐξοτρύνει … αἵματος), to kill his own kin. Fraenkel 1950: II.126 (on 215ff.) may perhaps be right to say that Agamemnon is deliberately vague, meaning himself and his companions.

[28] For the idea of sacrifice as controlling dangerous violence see in particular Girard 1977.

[29] For sacrifice operating as a 'sign of civilisation' in tragedy see Foley 1985.

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that unlimited aggression somehow endangers its successful agent occurs throughout the trilogy, as for instance when Agamemnon will boast, outside the house where he will soon be caught by his own wife in a net, of the Greek army entering Troy like a lion that eats raw meat (827–8). These then are the factors constituting the internal relationship between portent and sacrifice. The obscure necessity of this relationship is expressed, at the narrative level, by the will of a deity. This is not to say that the attempts to explain Artemis' anger merely at the narrative level are worthless; but they cannot entirely dissolve an opacity that derives from the deeper level of structure.

In the epic *Cypria* there was no such opacity: the sacrifice of Iphigeneia was an act of compensation – for Agamemnon's hunting offence. It seems nevertheless to have been performed not specifically by Agamemnon but by the Greeks as a whole. And it turns out to be an animal sacrifice: Artemis substitutes a deer, and makes Iphigeneia immortal. Here, and generally in surviving epic narrative, ritual is, as in life, positive, an expression of order and solidarity in a world of sometimes uncontrollable conflict; and it may also establish narrative closure: the body of Hektor, to take an obvious example, is maltreated by Akhilleus, but finally ransomed by his father and given due funeral ritual by his own people.

In tragedy, on the other hand, ritual very often plays the opposite role. Tragedy tends to convert ritual from an expression of order and group solidarity into an instrument and expression of uncontrollable violence (often within the family).[30] The case of the portent exemplifies a basic opposition between Homer and tragedy. I want now, by way of another example, to compare the Aeschylean passage with the shape that Euripides gives in his *Heracles* to Herakles' revenge killing of Lykos and his subsequent killing of his own children.

On his return to Thebes, Herakles (567–73) says that he will cut off the usurper Lykos' head and give it to the dogs, and that he will also tear apart Lykos' followers and fill the local streams with their blood.[31] As Lykos enters the house 'he will', says Amphitryon, 'be trapped in the sword-carrying meshes of nets' (729–30). The killing of Lykos is followed by the appearance above the house of Iris and Lyssa, sent by Hera to drive Herakles mad. Eventually a messenger emerges to describe Herakles' frenzied slaughter of his own wife and children. Now, despite being imposed by Hera, Herakles' frenzy is also clearly associated by Euripides with the

[30] See e.g. Zeitlin 1965 on corrupted sacrifice in the *Oresteia*, Foley 1985 and Seaford 1985[12].
[31] The water of the Ismenos normally purified (Eur. *Phoen*. 347–8).

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state of mind in which Herakles killed Lykos.[32] [94] After killing Lykos, he begins a purificatory sacrifice (922),[33] but then decides to postpone it so as first to kill Eurystheus and then purify himself of both killings in one ritual. It is as if the aggression aroused in the killing of Lykos needs another victim; and in fact the decision to postpone the sacrifice is an early symptom of Herakles' frenzy. Moreover, a little later (966) Herakles is asked by his father whether it is the killing (of Lykos and his followers) that has put him in a Bacchic frenzy.[34]

But what interests us in particular is the part played in this process by ritual. The messenger begins his account of the purificatory sacrifice by telling us that Herakles has killed Lykos and thrown him out of the house. This juxtaposition of funeral ritual unperformed and impending sacrifice enhances the impression that the violence of Lykos' death, uncontained by one ritual (burial), now bursts through into another (the sacrifice). 'Pour away the water,' says Herakles, 'throw away the (sacrificial) basket. Who will give me my bow?' (941–2).[35] In the Homeric portent at Aulis, sacrifice seems to sanction the violence by which it is interrupted. But the violence of Herakles is neither sanctioned nor purified by the sacrifice it interrupts. Rather, it turns the sacrifice into its opposite, the uncontained violence of the hunt (896 κυναγετεῖ τέκνων διωγμόν), a hunt which occurs by the altar and is called a sacrifice. This grotesque combination of sacrifice and hunt is in the eagles' feast a mere metaphor; Euripides, by the device of Herakles' purificatory sacrifice, makes it into a reality.[36] Moreover, the brutality with which snake and eagles destroy offspring together with their parents, a brutality associated by Aeschylus with a man sacrificing his own offspring, is here in Euripides embodied in the very same act as Herakles'

[32] Bond 1981 in his commentary (on 562–82) protests that 'Heracles' plans are reasonable by fifth-century, let alone heroic, standards', and cites Odysseus in the *Odyssey* hanging his faithless maids, and the revenge massacres in Thucydides. This is to miss entirely the significance of Herakles' substitution of savagery for funeral ritual.

[33] An animal sacrifice: Foley 1985: 153 n. 11.

[34] This suggestion by Amphitryon is surely not included as a mere misconception. In fact, ἐβάκχευσεν is more apt than Amphitryon realises (see below). Moreover, at 571 Herakles says he will tear apart (διαφορῶν) his enemies with his arrows. Bond 1981: *ad loc.* notices the oddity of this ('the word is not elsewhere used of missiles'), and pertinently cites the usages of the verb: of the tearing apart of bodies by maenads (Eur. *Bacch.* 739, 746, 1210; cf. 754), or by dogs and birds (Hdt. 7.10; Ar. *Av.* 338). But his explanation, 'the gruesome sense is characteristic of Euripides' style', is quite inadequate. As so often in tragedy, the oddity is the price paid for a powerful association: the word combines assimilation of Herakles to the dogs who will pull Lykos apart (568) with announcement of the theme of savage Dionysiac madness. And cf. 751–2 with 889–90.

[35] The interruption of the sacrifice is stressed again at 1144–5.

[36] Euripides often makes more explicit the Aeschylean ironic use of ritual: Seaford 1984c[II]: 248.

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sacrificial hunt of his own family, for in doing so Herakles believes he is killing Eurystheus' children as well as Eurystheus himself (936, 982–3).

Despite these and other differences, we can say that in both plays uncontrolled violence between men, as if they were different species, is expressed in the imagery of the hunt, and accordingly involves (despite seeming justified as revenge) the perversion of the specifically human practice of ordered killing contained in ritual. Moreover, this violence is in both plays also associated with a state of madness in which the avenger sacrifices his own children.[37] [95] In this association of uncontrolled violence against enemies, perverted ritual and the frenzied sacrifice of one's own offspring, we have revealed an implicit logic: one of the two opposite extremes which sacrifice must normally exclude gives rise to the other. But at the more superficial level of narrative the child sacrifice is difficult to motivate. Rather, the horror, necessity and inexplicability of the implicit logic is expressed by the intervention of a deity, Artemis in the *Agamemnon*, Hera in the *Heracles*, who have no good and clear motives for their hostility; and even if they had, it might still be impossible to explain, at the level of narrative, why they should have imposed the particular penalty of child sacrifice.

Herakles is asked by his father whether the killing of his enemies has put him in a Bacchic frenzy (966). This is an electrifying dramatic irony, unnoticed by the commentators. Herakles has not yet threatened his children, who are still unaware of the danger they are in. But in myth Bacchic frenzy characteristically makes parents sacrifice their children:[38] the killing of Pentheus by his mother, to take the best-known example, is both a hunt and a sacrifice.[39] The chorus, responding earlier to the noise from within, has already made this very connection: 'he is hunting, pursuing his children. Frenzy will bring her Bacchic revels to completion in [or for] the house' (896–7 οὔποτ' ἄκραντα δόμοισι Λύσσα βακχεύσει).[40] It is above all in Dionysiac myth that we find, among other reversals of the norms

[37] Cf. also Soph. *Aj*. 534, where Ajax, having in his murderous revenge confused animals with humans in a grotesque hunt (297, etc.) which is also a sacrifice (219), says it would have been appropriate (πρέπον … δαίμονος τοὐμοῦ) to have killed his own son, whom his mother in fact preserved from the danger.

[38] For the ease with which kin-killing in tragedy is associated with Dionysiac frenzy see e.g. Aesch. *Ag*. 1235 (read surely Weil's μαινάδ': see Seaford 1989a: 304–5), *Cho*. 698 (spoken by Elektra); Eur. *Or*. 338.

[39] Eur. *Bacch*. 1108, 1114, 1146, etc. Aeschylus had Pentheus killed like a hare at *Eum*. 26, perhaps also in his *Pentheus* (like the Aulis portent, a sacrifice?).

[40] Cf. 1142, which is corrupt, but in which clearly Herakles, realising what he has done, associates destruction of his own house (ἐμόν in emphatic position) with Bacchic frenzy.

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of the polis, precisely our grotesque combination of the uncontained violence of the hunt with the frenzied sacrifice of one's own offspring. At the City Dionysia, in a performance of Dionysiac origin, the polis continued to represent to itself intrafamilial violence expressed in perverted ritual. Whereas the same citizens at the Panathenaia heard, in the recitations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*,[41] heroic poetry from which intrafamilial violence and Dionysiac myth are almost entirely excluded, and in which even in the one example of a Dionysiac narrative, the story of Lykourgos' pursuit of Dionysos and his followers at *Il.* 6.130–140, there is no mention of Lykourgos' frenzied sacrifice of his own family. This generic polarity is worthy, it seems to me, of further investigation.[42]

POSTSCRIPT

On the Homeric background to the Aeschylean sacrifice of Iphigeneia, see J. Heath, 'The serpent and the sparrows: Homer and the parodos of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*', *CQ* 49 (1999), 396–407. On sacrifice in Attic tragedy, see R. Scodel, 'Δόμων ἄγαλμα: Virgin sacrifice and aesthetic object', *TAPA* 126 (1996), 111–28; A. Henrichs, 'Drama and dromena: bloodshed, violence, and sacrificial metaphor in Euripides', *HSCP* 100 (2000), 173–88; J. Gibert, 'Apollo's sacrifice: the limits of a metaphor in Greek tragedy', *HSCP* 101 (2003), 159–206; D. Roselli, 'Gender, class and ideology: the social function of virgin sacrifice in Euripides' *Children of Herakles*', *ClAnt* 26 (2007), 81–169; A. Henrichs, 'Animal sacrifice in Greek tragedy: ritual, metaphor, problematizations', in C. A. Faraone, and F. S. Naiden (eds.), *Greek and Roman Animal Sacrifice: Ancient Victims, Modern Observers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 180–94.

Another study of sacrifice across genres is by C. Segal, 'Sacrifice and violence in the myth of Meleager and Heracles: Homer, Bacchylides, Sophocles', *Helios* 17 (1990), 7–24. On sacrifice in the *Iliad*, see S. Hitch, *King of Sacrifice: Ritual and Royal Authority in the Iliad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

For the representation of ritual in tragedy, see H. Lloyd-Jones, 'Ritual and tragedy', in F. Graf (ed.), *Ansichten Griechischer Rituale* (Stuttgart: Teubner,

[41] Recitations of epic at the Panathenaia seem even as early as the sixth century to have been confined largely or entirely to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: Lycurg. *Leocr*. 102; Pl. *Ion* (*passim*); Xen. *Symp*. 3.5–6; Davison 1955: 13; Friis Johansen 1967: 235–6; Pfeiffer 1968: 44–5, 73; Herington 1985: 14; etc.

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1998), pp. 271–95 (= H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Further Academic Papers of Hugh Lloyd-Jones* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 141–62); S. Gödde, *Das Drama der Hikesie: Ritual und Rhetorik in Aischylos' Hiketiden* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2000); Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, *Tragedy and Athenian Religion* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003).

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