

On the coherence of Yasna: a critical assessment of recent arguments

Amir Ahmadi

Monash University

amir.ahmadi@monash.edu

Abstract

In recent years a number of scholars have proposed more or less detailed schemas of the formation of the Zoroastrian ritual. These schemas offer accounts of the arrangement of the texts in the liturgy, the process of its formation, and even its function from an endogenous perspective. One way or another, they argue that the official Zoroastrian liturgy is an integrated ritual with a coherent text, and that the function of the ritual and the intention behind the arrangement of the texts can be determined by means of philological, literary and comparative analyses. The questions of formation and meaning of the Zoroastrian liturgy these scholars have placed on the agenda are important not only for the study of Zoroastrianism but also for the history of religions and ritual theory. I consider their accounts with respect to the texts they invoke and the methods they use, and show that their arguments suffer from fatal flaws.

Keywords: Zoroastrianism, Yasna, Indo-Iranian religion, Ritual, Comparative method

Students of ancient religions read their texts as “sources” in almost the same way as anthropologists approach their material. This is a relationship different from that of philosophers, theologians or literary critics to their texts. Literary critics would not call the novel or poem they read and interpret a source or evidence. Whether philosophers embrace the “truth” of the text they comment on, they would consider it as part of their task to articulate it in terms they consider more adequate. Anthropologists, on the other hand, always remain external to their object, even when they learn from it. The positivism of “source” is by and large out of place in philosophy or literary criticism, whereas it constitutes the basis of the academic study of religion. This is the reason why it is normal to talk of hypothesis or comparative method in anthropology or mythology but not in philosophy. Such an external relation of the mind to its object is susceptible to becoming manipulative, almost unconsciously. One can see why. The theory must be able to accommodate the relevant sources; that is all. Naturally, one’s allegiance lies with one’s own theory. Thus, the sources *are made* relevant and affirmative of the theory. The more lacunary and abstruse the sources, the more readily they may be “interpreted” in the light of the theory. We do not want to give up asking comprehensive questions like that of the meaning of a ritual. This increases even further our reliance on theoretical schemas. It is thus imperative to be cautious in our treatment of the sources. Even more

importantly, we must ensure the pertinence and probity of our inferences, which perform bear the weight of our demonstration.

Yasna: a complete, coherent text

The theories I examine here are about the coherence of Yasna, the basic sacerdotal ceremony of Zoroastrianism. They attempt to answer the question whether the segments of Yasna follow each other according to a discernible logic. Does Yasna have a describable structure? From the start, however, this question gets tangled up in their accounts with that of the antiquity of Yasna. Coherence and antiquity of a text are separate matters, even if one must allow that the coherence of an oral composition is different from literary coherence, and that the question of coherence cannot be settled without restoring the text to its authentic historical setting. Then the recovery of the context of its formation, its *Sitz im Leben*, would be a necessary preliminary step for dealing with the question of its coherence; it may even point the theorist in the right direction, but it cannot answer that question. The relation between these two issues remains unclarified by the theorists we are considering, and causes confusion in their arguments. The “recitative” of the “long liturgy” is not a patchwork of fragments from the Sasanid Avesta but a “coherent text” that was formed in the context of ritual practice and assumed its definitive shape when Avestan was still a productive language – at the Achaemenid time at the latest. In what manner does the “antiquity” of Yasna prove its “coherence”? Comparison with Vedic *soma* ritual is meant to link the two issues. If it can be shown there is a “structural correspondence” between Yasna and Vedic *soma* ritual, both questions can be settled at once. I question the validity of this approach below.

The priestly Zoroastrian ceremony that Cantera, following Kellens (1998: *passim*), calls the “long liturgy” consists of a “complete, coherent” text recited in the frame of a ritual whose basic design continues the Indo-Iranian ritual tradition. Cantera maintains that these two aspects mutually reinforce each other in the context of an ongoing reflective ritual practice, thanks to which changes in the ritual constituents have been fully integrated. He has formulated this thesis in his recent publications. The more detailed formulations are as follows:

The composition and arrangement of the Yasna is not a late, artificial process, but rather the result of a long process of continuous exegesis of older texts used for similar liturgies and for reflecting upon the nature of the sacrifice (Cantera 2016a: 144).

Sans nier l'évidence que le récitatif actuel est une compilation de textes différents et composés à des époques diverses, on doit signaler que le récitatif de la liturgie longue de même que la performance rituelle de ce récitatif (comment pourrait-on les séparer?) ont déjà acquis leur forme définitive à une époque où on était encore capable de rédiger des textes avestiques . . . je crois qu'on doit considérer le récitatif de la liturgie longue comme une unité textuelle (avec, bien sûr, une longue histoire derrière elle) créée avec des éléments différents dans le cadre d'un processus de production orale de littérature rituelle en langue avestique. La liturgie

longue est une production de littérature rituelle orale et non une composition savante de textes hétérogènes (Cantera 2014: 211).

L'importance de cette découverte n'a été notée que peu à peu, mais elle a des conséquences énormes pour la compréhension des textes avestiques récités dans ces rituels: l'arrangement des textes dans la liturgie n'est pas tardif et secondaire, mais il est bien antérieur à l'époque sassanide. Le texte récité dans la liturgie longue est amalgame des textes rédigés à des époques différentes et peut-être aussi dans des endroits différents, mais ils sont arrangés consciemment pour construire un "texte" (Cantera 2014: 13).

The background to these affirmations is the conception of Zoroastrian liturgy they aim to replace, that is to say, the conception that the texts of the priestly ceremonies are the "residues" or "fragments" of the Sasanid Avesta (Cantera 2014: 313–29).¹ The textual corpus that Cantera calls the "long liturgy" was constituted in ritual practice when Avestan was still productive.²

In fact, during the productive time of the Avestan language there existed not only the conceptual spine of the ceremony, but also its recitative had already taken the form we know today. This recitative is *not* a late patchwork of fragments of the Great Avesta compiled in Sasanian or post-Sasanian times, but in fact goes back to the productive time of the Avestan language, probably still in the Achaemenid period (Cantera 2016b: 62).³

In 1998 Kellens reformulated Spiegel's idea that Yasna and its expanded version (Visperad) existed independently of, and much earlier than, the Late Antique collection of Avestan texts (probably under Khosrow I) that is called the Sasanid or Great Avesta in the literature (Kellens 1998). By way of synchronization with the introduction of the Zoroastrian calendar, whose tutelary gods of the days are listed in the right order in Y 16 and seem to constitute the Young Avestan pantheon, Kellens argued that the Yasna corpus goes back to the Achaemenid period. Cantera finds further textual evidence for the antiquity of the long liturgy, namely Avestan references in the Nērangestān to passages in Yasna, and those that parallel ritual instructions found in the Sāde manuscripts (see Cantera 2016b: 63–6). If the current arrangement of Yasna texts is from a time when priests still produced texts in Avestan, it must be the work of practising priests, and hence one can and indeed must assume an intention behind it. It is a product of design and not chance. In his compte rendu of Kellens's five-volume study of the long liturgy (*Études avestiques et mazdéennes*), Cantera approvingly cites Kellens's programmatic statement from the back cover of the fourth volume:

- 1 Cf. Bailey 1943: 149–94; Hoffmann and Narten 1989: 34–7.
- 2 "L'archétype sassanide est maintenant substitué par un ensemble rituel vivant qu'on a célébré dans d'amples régions d'Iran pendant plus de deux millénaires" (Cantera 2014: 366).
- 3 "The recited text of Long Liturgy adopted its final shape probably before or during Achaemenid times, and the way it was celebrated was probably not radically different to the descriptions in the Nērangestān and the manuscripts" (Cantera 2016a: 177).

En rédigeant le deuxième volume (2007), j'ai pris conscience de la conséquence imparable de notre nouvelle conception de l'Avesta. Puisque le Yasna est une œuvre ancienne et minutieusement concertée, *notre devoir est de chercher à établir le sens que son arrangeur entendait lui accorder* (Cantera 2016a: 149, my italics).

Strategies of integration

Cantera never expresses himself in this way, but it is quite evident from his interpretation of Yasna or the Vīdēvdād that he shares this assumption. He maintains that the long liturgy should be treated as “a textual unity”. Although he acknowledges that the text of Yasna is an “amalgam” of texts from different times and milieus, he nonetheless maintains that “they are purposely arranged in order to construct a ‘text’”. How can the acknowledgement of the composite nature of Yasna be reconciled with the assumption that it is a “coherent text”?⁴ In other words, in what way do the texts of the long liturgy carry a unifying meaning? How did they come to embody this assumed meaning? Given the gradual development of the corpus in the context of an oral ritual tradition, which Cantera himself emphasizes, there are two ways one can imagine that the texts carry the putative meaning. 1) This meaning may have been ascribed to it *ex post facto* by (an) especially authoritative priest(s) or school(s) by way of (a) reinterpretation(s) of the incorporated texts; 2) It could also have been ascribed to the incorporated texts, irrespective of their actual content, based on the circumstance and (presumed) function of the ritual in which they are recited. Or, perhaps more realistically, the ascription of the unifying meaning may have occurred through a combination of these two mechanisms.

Skjærvø's cosmological schematization of Yasna as the recounting of world history from creation to final renovation is an example of the second strategy (ritual-functional unification).⁵ The aim of the daily ritual is to ensure the rise of the sun and to battle against the forces of darkness and chaos. It is a world-preserving action that imitates, and thus partakes of the power of, Mazda's world-creating and renovating actions. There is nothing in the sources Skjærvø uses that suggests the existence of such a scheme. A typical statement in his account is the following: “Y.65 contains a long hymn to the waters, which is *directly* followed by a request for fravashis to come, apparently in their function as conveyors of the birth waters (Y.65.6)” (Skjærvø 2007: 81). The collocation of the waters and *fravašis* in the rite must somehow invoke the latter's cosmogonic role in setting the waters in motion (according to Yašt 13) as a

4 See for instance Cantera 2015: 91–2.

5 In this perspective, the ritual theorist attempts on the basis of pre-existing models and the attending circumstances to describe the achievements of the ritual. These achievements may be deemed “real” by the theorist, as in the arguments put forward in the studies of Greek “reversal” festivals for their socially integrating effects. See, for instance, Versnel 1990. Or, they may be deemed imaginary, as in Plato's dismissal in the *Republic* of the claims of the *orpheotelestai* for their purificatory initiation rites. See Bowden 2010: 137–45; Bremmer 2014: 55–80.

constituent of the world-forming processes and bring to bear the power thereby acquired on the world here and now. The notion of the “birth waters” is Skjærvø’s gloss, coined, perhaps, to drive the point home.

We can see the first strategy at work in Kellens’s reflections on the relation between the Staota Yesniia and the intercalated Vīdēvdād texts, which are supposed (by him and Cantera) to be an exegesis of the former. The Vīdēvdād tells the history of the world from the beginning to the end as a story of (universal) purification, enacted in the respective ceremony, which “vise clairement à composer un vaste rite de purification du monde”:

Si le Yašt 19 et le Vidēvdād font le récit explicite du cours de l’histoire cosmique selon la doctrine des millénaires, ce n’est pas le cas des Staotas Yesnias, qui, comme corpus constitué, n’ont en principe de rapport avec cette doctrine qu’en vertu d’une exégèse ultérieure (Kellens 2015: 4–5; see also Kellens 2011: 78, 137).

The question would then be: how did the Vīdēvdād exegete come up with the (supposed) narrative account? Kellens tries to show how the “ritual course” of the first Gāthā may lend itself to a millenarian framing.

La Gāthā *ahunauuaitī*, pas plus qu’une autre, n’a pour but de raconter l’histoire du monde. Son discours est essentiellement la composante verbale d’un processus liturgique qui conduit du plus sombre de la nuit aux premières lueurs du jour, qui ouvrent la voie aux deux offrandes indo-iraniennes traditionnelles: la libation de haoma et la crémation de chair. Ce temps a pour rythme le cycle du feu. D’abord trop humble pour être nommé, le feu devient successivement une aide puissante, puis le langage des dieux, enfin un avaleur de chair qui, rassasié, offre sa protection jusqu’à ce que la perfection finale soit instaurée. Ce processus a ceci de commun avec l’histoire qu’il est conçu comme l’intervalle entre un début et une fin: c’est ce que constatent, en encerclement, Y28.1 *paouruuīm* et, d’une certaine manière, Y34.15 *haiθiiēm* (Kellens 2015: 13–4).

The “innovative” transposition of the ritual course into a universal history of perfection could have been “inspired” by other elements from the first Gāthā, too. Kellens mentions “la phase dépréciative du Y32” (Kellens 2015: 14–5). One cannot be sure how much of this “mise en perspective historique” finds conceptual support in the Gāthā.⁶ The first Gāthā recounts the career of the ritual fire, its inception, its rise and protection against the darkness of the night and what this may be assumed to symbolize, and finally its ushering in of the light of the day at the end of the ritual course, where the god is asked to make existence “perfect and permanent”. The narrative form, with a beginning, a middle, and an

6 “L’économie extrême de cet ultime vers [i.e. Y 34.15] ne permet pas de déterminer si l’aspiration à la perfection et à la permanence est vécue dans l’attente d’un grand événement final ou avec la simple satisfaction d’avoir réussi une fois de plus à fixer le monde dans l’éclat de la lumière diurne” (Kellens 2015: 16).

end, weaving in the overcoming of an antagonism (Y 32), plus a number of terms (such as *paouruuia-* or *fraša-* or *haiθia-*) have inspired a (pseudo-)historical transposition of the ritual course. If this is the case, the exegete must have believed that he found this historical meaning in the Ahunauvaitī. In any case, we can see here an attempt to account for the mythic history that, according to Kellens, is found in the Vīdēvdād by the first mechanism I mentioned above, namely ascription of meaning through interpretation (or misinterpretation) of a (supposed) reference text.

The antiquity of Yasna

Now let me give an example of the combination of the two strategies (exegetical reinterpretation and functional framing) based on the assumption of an inherited ritual structure and purpose. The self-same structure provides a unifying frame of interpretation for the organic development of meaning, generation after generation. Following Kellens (2012), Cantera points out the continuing presence in the long liturgy of ritual elements that are mentioned in three Young Avestan texts, “which show the same structure that is found in the long liturgy” (Cantera 2016b: 62). The list that Kellens gives of these elements is: spreading of soft grass, consecration of firewood, investiture of the *zaotar* (officiating priest), preparation of the *haoma* drink, declaration of one’s “choice” in accordance with the *daēnā*, and recitation of an Old Avestan text (for example, the *ahuna vairiia*). According to Kellens, the presence of these elements in both the long liturgy and the supposed sacrifice the composer of the Young Avestan texts (Y 57.2–8; Y 57.19–26; Yt 10.88–94) has in mind proves the continuation of one and the same ritual structure, with the possibility of minor innovations.

Les trois sacrifices divins des Yašt certifient que l’épine dorsale conceptuelle du Yasna était acquise à l’époque même où on rédigeait des textes du type *Yašt* en avestique récent. Bien sûr, il faut se représenter l’élaboration du corpus que nous connaissons comme un processus qui a pu être long ... Tous les réaménagements dans la sélection et la lettre des textes doivent être considérés comme possibles, mais *seulement dans le cadre d’un cursus liturgique bien déterminé*. Le seul espace virtuellement ouvert à une réelle innovation est celui occupé par le Bagān Yašt et le Hōmāst (Y 19–26) (Kellens 2012: 57, my italics).

The integrity of the “ritual course” over time ensures textual stability and an enduring regime of meaning.⁷ “La liturgie longue avec son récitatif aurait acquis sa forme actuelle avant la composition du Nērangestān avestique” (Cantera 2014: 211). In fact, Cantera extends the antiquity of the “structure” of the long liturgy to the common Indo-Iranian times. Referring to Tremblay’s study (2006–07) of the “parallels” between Vedic Agniṣṭoma and the long liturgy, Cantera writes:

7 The “foremost achievement” of Kellens’s five-volume study, according to Cantera, is “its analysis of the Long Liturgy as a coherent text and authentic ritual” (Cantera 2016a: 148).

The close parallels found between the Long Liturgy and the ceremonies of Agniṣṭoma provide definitive proof of the antiquity of the actual structure of the Long Liturgy, and help us to identify the role of its different elements through a comparison with the Vedic sacrifice (Cantera 2016a: 149).

Thus the (supposed) persistence of ritual structure is used to argue for continuity in the emic conception of the “Long Liturgy”. The practical outcome is the assimilation of Zoroastrian liturgy to Vedic Agniṣṭoma, which, as we will see, is problematic in a number of respects. But before examining this assimilation, I would like to consider briefly Kellens’s assertion of the continuity of the “liturgical course” of Yasna on the basis of the ritual elements mentioned in the three Young Avestan texts. Rituals are generally conservative, but not necessarily in their grammar or semantics. A very limited number of elements (such as animal immolation or libation) can produce a relatively large number of ritual schemes thanks to the symbolic nature of the ritual. The specific meaning ascribed to an element in a particular ritual is purely conventional (see Smith 1982). Upon entrance into ritual space an ordinary gesture or object is minutely and rigidly stylized, which is the sign of its differentiation from the profane context.⁸ It is generally not possible to derive the meaning of a ritual from its constituent parts (gestures, words or objects), *even* in the case of elements that are highly indicative.⁹

As for the items on Kellens’s list, we note that in Yt 10.88–92, for example, they do not exhibit *any* particular structure.¹⁰ If one, nonetheless, were to turn the sequence in which they are mentioned in the text into a particular structure, it would still not have the order that the matching items have in Yasna (I just cite the phrases from Yašt 10 that mention the items in question): Miθra is worshipped by Haoma with *barəsmān*, *zaoθra*, and words (88); who Ahura Mazda appointed as *zaotar* (89); who as mortar-priest first presented (*uzdasta*) the heaven-made, star-bejewelled *haoma* stalks (90); fulfilled will be the man who makes offerings to you (Miθra) time and again, firewood in hand, *barəsmān* in hand, milk in hand, mortar in hand, with washed hands, with washed mortar, with laid-out soft grass (*barəsmān*), with prepared (*uzdātāt*) *haoma*, reciting the *ahuna vairiia* (91); in accordance with this *daēnā* Ahura Mazda chose (93). The order of the items in this passage that appear on Kellens’s list is: 1) *barəsmān*; 2) appointment of the *zaotar*; 3) firewood; 4) *barəsmān*; 5) *haoma*; 6) recitation of the *ahuna vairiia*; 7) choosing in accordance with the *daēnā*. Compare this with the order of the matching items in Yasna (according to Kellens): 1) Barsom Yašt (Y 2); 2) consecration of the firewood in Āvid (Y 4); 3) investiture of the *zaotar* (Vr 3–4 intercalated between Y 11.9 and

8 A good example of this is the implements used in ancient mystery cults such as baskets (*kiste*, basket with lid, *liknon*, winnowing basket, *kalathos*, open basket), spintop, or some musical instruments (cymbala and tympanon), etc. See Burkert 1987: *passim*.

9 The so-called Orphic controversy is now a classic example of the difficulties involved in using even highly indicative elements for the purpose of establishing the existence of consistent practices or coherent doctrines across time and space. See Brisson 1991; Edmonds 1999; Bernabé 2002.

10 Cf. Cantera 2016a: 144: “Kellens himself showed that the *ritual structure* of Yasna was already known to the composer of some Yašts” (my italics).

10); 4) preparation of *haoma* (Y 9 to Y 11.10);¹¹ 5) the declaration of choice (Y 12); 6) recitation of Old Avestan texts (Kellens 2012: 56). The items mentioned in Yt 10.91 are presumably the constituents of a basic ritual. Zoroastrian rituals manipulated mortar and *haoma*, milk and firewood, and so on; and they still do today. But one can hardly conclude *from this* the persistence of a self-same “ritual structure”. This may well be true, but is not ascertainable from the continuing ritual use of the same items. What we can know from the Young Avestan text is that ritual use was made of *barəsmān*, for example, *but not* that a section of the ceremony was dedicated to it, and that this (supposed) section appeared in the same relative place in that ceremony as Y 2 does in Yasna. It is clearly the latter knowledge that is required by Kellens’s position. If Yt 10.91 *gaozastō* refers to milk and not sacrificial animal, which is almost certain, then animal immolation is missing among the basic ritual items of Yašt 10. As Kellens and Cantera have themselves argued, animal sacrifice constituted an important, if not the central, part of ancient Zoroastrian ritual. How should we explain its absence from the “ritual structure” allegedly reflected in the Young Avestan text? Yt 10.88 mentions three items in Haoma’s rite in honour of Miθra: *barəsmān*, *zaoθra*, and words. What warrants the differential treatment of these items? If the first one is implicitly understood in Kellens’s argument to represent a “phase” of the supposed ceremony, why should not the second and the third?

Proferes has argued that *śrauta* rites are the result of a “fundamental reorganization” of the earlier clan-based system.

The reformation of liturgical practice that ended the Ṛgvedic period involved a fundamental reorganization of the institutions responsible for the maintenance of orthopraxy, with custodianship of the rites being removed from the individual lineages and invested in priestly offices (in connection to which the various *śākhās* eventually arose) (Proferes 2014: 200).¹²

According to Proferes, the *praiśas* have preserved the trace of an archaic practice from before the standardization of the *śrauta* system (see Proferes 2014: 211–7). The evidence is in “the *sūktavākapraiśa* pronounced in the animal sacrifice contained within a *soma* rite”. This is the custom of choosing the *hotar* from among a number of contenders, “which has no equivalent in the standardised *śrauta* ritual”. The *yajamāna* is the one who actually chooses the *hotar* priest. The *maitrāvāruṇa* addresses the *hotar*: *tvām adya ... avrñitāyam sunvan yajamāno bahubhya ā saṅgatebhyah* “today this ... *soma*-pressing *yajamāna* chose you ... from the many gathered together”. Now, “in neither the *pravara* nor the *ṛtvigvaraṇa*, as they are known to us from the post-Ṛgvedic *śrauta* texts,

11 In fact, the two positions (the investiture of the priests and the preparation of *haoma*) should be reversed.

12 See also Proferes 2014: 210: “[T]he *nivids* were the product of a redactional enterprise that had as one of its goals the effacement of lineage distinctions in the performance of ritual. A similar effacement of lineage distinctions was promoted through the *praiśas*. . . the Āprī hymns constitute virtually the sole preservation of lineage-based ritual distinctions throughout the classical *śrauta* system”.

is there any indication that appointments to the priestly offices followed a selection from among competing candidates” (Proferes 2014: 217; see also Heesterman 1993: 144–9). The way the officiating priest is “appointed” changed, according to Proferes, following the standardization of the ritual system.

Returning to the passage from Yašt 10, if it is possible and perhaps plausible to think that in saying *yim zaotārəm staiiata ahurō mazdā ašauua*, the composer had in mind a concrete rite of appointment of the *zaotar*, it is impossible to know that this rite was the same as the one we find in Yasna and, even more, that it took the same relative position as the “investiture of the *zaotar*” does in Yasna. In the Visperad, the verb is used not only for “appointing” the (supposed) sacerdotal college (Vr 3.1) but also for “appointing” the members of the three social classes and the heads of the four social circles (3.2), the young man in the various capacities expected of him, the mistress of the house (3.3), and generally the righteous man and woman (3.4). We must then understand the meaning of *āstāiia* “I appoint” in such a way that is equally applicable to all these instances. If Vr 3.1 represents the concrete ritual phase of setting in place the priestly college for the following stages of the ceremony, as it is claimed by Kellens and Cantera, among others, why would the identical Vr 3.2–4 not have the same significance? And if they do, in what capacity or sense are the categories enumerated in these sections involved in the rite? The concrete sense of the verb is not clear; and it is even more unclear that it designates a particular ritual action or phase. The continued use of particular ritual terms does not imply survival of the “liturgical course” to which they may have once belonged, even if the items to which they refer remain the same and are manipulated in more or less the same way.¹³ The ritual that the composer of Yašt 10.88–93 had in mind may or may not be the same as Yasna, but one cannot conclude one way or another from the items he mentions.

The process of formation of Yasna

Cantera has taken up the comparison between the course of Yasna and Vedic Agniṣṭoma proposed by Tremblay.¹⁴ Despite Tremblay’s assertion, however, the parallels are insignificant or specious.

- 13 The term *barəsmān* must have designated in ancient times something like soft grass that was laid to receive the divine guests (and perhaps, from the description in Herodotus, to display the parts of the immolated animal); cf. Jamison and Brereton 2014: 26. At some stage this soft grass was replaced by (e.g. pomegranate) twigs and even metal rods. But the term *fra + star-* “spread out” continues to be used as the ritual term for the deployment of *barəsmān*. It is clear that the term “deployment” refers to two different realities depending on what actual object *barəsmān* designates.
- 14 Subsequent to the completion of this article, Jean Kellens kindly informed me that Philippe Swennen has seen to publication Tremblay’s working notes on the topic (in Swennen 2016). Except for a short addition, I have decided to leave the discussion of his thesis unchanged. Unfortunately, Tremblay never finished his work. There are some differences between the summary presentation of his thesis in the *Annuaire* of the Collège de France (Tremblay 2006–07) and the one published by Swennen, where a detailed synoptic table of “structural correspondences” is accompanied with *notes raisonnées*. There are, however, inconsistencies in the treatment of the issue even within the working notes, which is only in part due to its unfinished status, as Swennen (2016:

Non seulement les actions sont identiques (pressurage d'une liqueur enivrante [*Haoma* = *Soma*], immolation, récitations consistant en deux genres majeurs distincts, l'hymne [*śāstra* ou *ūkthā* (sic.) en Inde, *sāsna* (sic.) ou *uxda* dans les *Gāthās*] et le chant [*stotra* ou *sāman* en Inde, phl. *stōm* en Iran]), mais leur ordre se correspond (en particulier la succession non triviale d'un pressurage du **Sauma*, puis d'un sacrifice sanglant du feu, avec un finale associant eau et feu, l'eau étant donc un troisième élément plus proche du feu que de la liqueur) jusque dans les détails (Tremblay 2006–07: 688).

Animal immolation as such cannot be considered a significant comparative reference since it is an almost universal phenomenon. The process of preparing and ingesting (and offering) of *haoma/soma* is certainly an important inheritance of Indian and Iranian ritual lore, but its presence can hardly indicate similar ritual structures or a shared conception of sacrifice.¹⁵ One must give due consideration to the formation of the *śrauta* system, one of whose aspects was the specialization of the personnel (see Jamison and Brereton 2014: 30). The impact of this process on the design of the more elaborate types of offering, especially the *soma* ritual, was significant. The *śrauta* systematization threshold separates, perhaps even in basic design, the *soma* ritual from the pre-*śrauta* ceremonies (see Heesterman 1993: 59–60). The formation of Zoroastrian ritual system, too, must have been a complex process that introduced more or less significant discontinuities with past conceptions and practices. Tremblay's claim that Yasna and Agniṣṭoma not only share significant ritual elements but also correspond in

17) rightly points out. The version(s) of the thesis found in the published working notes is (are) no more cogent than the one from the *Annuaire*, to which Cantera refers in his publications (Cantera 2016a; 2016b). In my mind, the thesis is fundamentally flawed, as becomes apparent in the next few paragraphs and from the Appendix, where the reader will find a discussion of the premises of Tremblay's approach and a few examples of its result.

- 15 In the working notes, Tremblay calls these similarities “automatic” and “conditioned”, respectively, as opposed to “specific and synthetic coincidences” that are indicative of a shared genetic structure (see Swennen 2016: 77). Tremblay never comments on the fact that there is no oblation of the *haoma* into fire. In fact, he appears to maintain that originally such an oblation took place at the recitation of the Yasna Haptaṅhāitī (see Swennen 2016: 58). According to Heesterman, the *śrauta* systematization introduced a fundamental change in the conception of sacrifice, whereby “the contest was replaced by ritual. The sacrificial contest obviously had its rules and structure ... They were the conventions setting the pattern of the game; they were not the game itself, predetermining its outcome. On the contrary, the outcome [depended] on the moves and countermoves of the parties” (Heesterman 1993: 62). On the pre-*śrauta* importance of “verbal contest”, see Heesterman 1993: 58–79 and Kuiper 1960: 217–42. “The consolidation of the ritual tradition and the creation of the classical forms of the soma rite probably occurred after 1000 BCE, during the period in which the other *saṃhitās* were compiled. The innovations effected by this consolidation not only changed the form of the ritual, but also altered its very nature ... given the changes that occurred after the Ṛgvedic era, we cannot simply project the classical soma rites back into the Rgveda. While many technical ritual terms and elements were passed down from the Rgvedic period to the classical rites, these terms may not have had the same significance for the Rgveda that they do for the classical tradition” (Jamison and Brereton 2014: 28).

order or structure is an impossibly tall order to substantiate.¹⁶ Yasna is a daily morning ritual whereas Agniṣtoma is a prestige sacrifice lasting five days involving 16 priests and usually undertaken in spring.¹⁷ The pressing of the *soma* takes place on the last day (*sutyam ahaḥ*) and comprises animal sacrifice. The sacred drink is prepared, ingested and offered in the morning, midday and evening.

The literary “genres” Tremblay invokes for the Gāthās, two in the *Annuaire* (cited above) and three in the working notes (in Swennen 2016: 37–9), are dubious. No context in the Gāthās gives us to understand that *uxda-* or *sāsnā-* has any formal feature. The former (*uxda-*) seems to mean something like a discourse or a solemn speech that pursues a point. In Y 35.9 it is used in apposition to *vacah-*, apparently referring to the discourse underway: *imā āt uxḍā vacā ahuramazdā ... frauuaoacāmā* “These words now, O Wise Lord, we proclaim as solemn utterances” (Hintze 2007: 95).¹⁸ If so, the utterances in the Yasna Haptaṅhāiti are understood to be an *uxda-*, and this rules out Tremblay’s categorization of the term as “hymne”. *sāsnā-* may have a more specific meaning, but it is hard to be certain from the contexts in which it is used. Its meaning in Y 29.7 and 8 is something like “instruction” or “precept”, which etymologically seems appropriate, too (see Bartholomae 1961: col. 1574). But it is not a literary genre. The two substantive nouns derived from \sqrt{stu} “praise”, *staota-* and *stūt-*, may designate a particular ritual speech. From Avestan texts we cannot say whether it was characterized at some past stage by formal features (but see further below). The Young Avestan incidences of the terms derived from \sqrt{stu} may incline one to think that they have a special affinity with Haoma, simply because they occur relatively more frequently in the section called Hōm Stōm (Y 9.1–11.10) than elsewhere. Obviously, this valence is not found in the Old Avestan texts, where Ahura Mazda is the primary object of the *staota-*.¹⁹ One cannot ignore this fact. In short, none of these terms evince any ascertainable properties other than the Young Avestan use of derivatives of \sqrt{stu} . On the other hand, Vedic terms such as *śāstra* and *sāman* denote, precisely, formal genres.

In the published notes Tremblay goes further and suggests that the five Gāthās belong to three (inherited) literary “genres” (*uxda-* “hymne”, *staota-* “chant”, and *vaṅta-* “charme”): the first Gāthā constitutes a “hymne”, the second and third, a “chant”, and the fourth and fifth (with some hesitation), a “charme”.

- 16 The “structural correspondence” of the two ceremonies covers, in Tremblay’s words, “la fonction du geste ou de la récitation, la forme qui lui est donnée et le moment où il est accompli dans l’*ordo*” (in Swennen 2016: 83).
- 17 This difference is fundamental and cannot be downplayed. It must be enough to warn us against precipitous comparison. Vedic *soma* rituals involve animal sacrifice. They are elaborate offering rites sponsored by particularly powerful and/or wealthy individuals as *extraordinary events*. Yasna is a daily ritual sponsored by the more or less ordinary faithful. In my mind, the idea that such a *quotidian* rite ever involved animal sacrifice is implausible (see Ahmadi 2017).
- 18 Following Narten, Hintze (2007: 97) interprets *uxda-* as “having a predicative function, qualifying the verb” and as an inherited technical term denoting a “solemn utterance” or “formula”.
- 19 Cf. Y 41.5 *θβōi staotarascā mθranascā ahuramazdā aogəmadaēcā usmahicā vīsāmadaēcā* “we declare ourselves, aspire, and accept to be, O Ahura Mazda, your praisers and prophets”.

Based on this nomenclature, he compares the Gāthās with Vedic *śāstra*, *stotra*, and “récitation de l’Atharvaveda”, respectively. Tremblay does not explain why he classifies, for example, Gāthā Ahunauaitī as an *uxḍa*, but judging from the synoptic table of the (supposed) correspondences between the two ceremonies, the ground for this categorization seems to be the occurrence of the term in that Gāthā – which is in fact two out of a total of fourteen in the Gāthās and Yasna Haptaṅhāiti. Clearly, this record cannot vouch for the nomenclature. In any case, this mechanical procedure is fundamentally flawed. The connection Tremblay makes between the supposed Avestan “genre” of *uxḍa* and Vedic *śāstra* appears to be based on the incidence of the cognate verb \sqrt{sqh} “declare” in Gāthā Ahunauaitī (twice: Y 31.1 and 32.7), which is clearly inapt for the purpose it is made to serve.²⁰ His statement that each “texte vieil-avestique (i.e. chaque Gāthā et le Yasna Haptaṅhāiti) commence par un verbe-étiquette révélant d’emblée son genre” is thus quite puzzling. A similar “reason” is offered for the classification of the second and third Gāthās as *staota*- “genre”, while that of the fourth and fifth as *vanṭa*- is simply stated. Based on the conviction that Yasna is identical in elements and structure with Agniṣtoma, Tremblay subsumes the Gāthās, by the sheer force of nomenclature, under specific “genres”, pairs the artificial appellations with cognate Vedic terms that designate specific genres used in Agniṣtoma, and then invokes the spurious accordance of Indian and Iranian “genres” to assert “structural correspondences”.²¹

The question remains whether terms such as *yasna*- (or *yesniia*-), *staota*- (or *stūt*- or *staoma*- or *staomi*-), *vahma*-, *uxḍa*-, *vacah*-, *vanṭa*-, or the like, designate a type of ritual speech which in one way or another is marked? The marking need not be metric or prosodic, but could be based, for example, on the exclusive or particular association of a text with a specific segment of the ceremony, especially where a verbal refrain is present, such as *yazamaide* “we offer in sacrifice”. There is the further question of whether we actually possess the texts corresponding to the terms which we may plausibly think designate types of speech. In my mind, the only term for which the answer to both these questions is positive is *yasna*-, if in fact it refers to the speech in *yazamaide*, which in the Young Avestan text becomes a litany. One might also think that Hōm Stōm is an instance of the “praise” speech. However, as I mentioned, the valence with Haoma is absent in the Old Avestan texts. We should also recall that, if

20 Tremblay mentions Y 31.1 in the synoptic table (in Swennen 2016: 37). The context of any of the occurrences in the Old Avestan texts leads one to think that the verb might indicate a specific type of ritual speech. In fact, few contexts show that it signifies something like solemn or authoritative declaration (Y 43.6) which may or may not be articulated in verse (Y 46.17, if *afšman*- means “versification”); and from Y 32.6–7, it appears that one can be held accountable for one’s “declaration”.

21 “Ce sacrifice s’accompagne aussi bien en Iran qu’en Inde de la récitation de quatre genres de textes: des hymnes (*uxḍa*- / *ukthá* ou *śāstra*) en vers longs, des chants (*staota*- et non plus *staomāi*- comme pour le Y. 9–11 / *stótra*) en vers plus brefs, des charmes (*vanta*- / quelques vers de l’Atharvaveda lors d’une libation aux Mânes CH §231), et des formules en prose (Yasna / *yajus* récité par les *adhvaryus*; *yājyā* récitées par le *hotṛ* ou ses acolytes). Ces quatre genres sont tous représentés dans le corpus vieil-avestique, qui apparaît comme un ‘quatre veda minimal’, le plus petit canon textuel suffisant pour un sacrifice” (in Swennen 2016: 61). The last sentence is simply astonishing.

Zoroastrian Pahlavi literature refers to Y 9–11 as Hōm Stōm or Stōd, Young Avestan texts (Y 55.6 for example) call the Old Avestan corpus *staota yesniia* “praise-texts belonging to *yasna*”.²² Further, it is not Haoma that Zarathuštra “praises” in the Young Avestan texts, but Aša. There are a number of passages which might suggest that one or the other of our terms referred to particular types of speech. In Y 35.10, *uxda-*, *staota-* and *yasna-* appear to designate, in one interpretation,²³ particular ritual segments. But for every such an affirmative evidence there is as good a negative one. In Y 35.9, for instance, *uxda-* is coupled with *vacah-* to characterize the speech being delivered. Is *vacah-*, too, a type of speech? In Y 41.1, Ahura Mazdā and Aša are offered *stūtō garō vahmāng*. Are these “praises, greetings (and) glorifications” or “praise-texts, greeting-texts, (and) glorification-texts”? Perhaps the former, considering Y 34.2cc’ *pairigaēθē xsmāuuatō, vahmē mazdā + garōibīš stūtqm* “with greeting words of praises at the glorification ceremony . . . in your honor, O Mazdā”.

As for the “nontrivial” correspondence (“down to details”) between Yasna and Agništoma in 1) the “succession” of the pressing of *haoma/soma* and the offering of part of the animal victim into the fire, and 2) the significant association of fire and waters (rather than the latter and *haoma/soma*) – these, too, are untenable. The pressing process in Agništoma is complex and forms the axis of the tripartite ceremony. Each of the three ritual periods is framed by an opening pressing and a concluding libation, and each includes an animal offering (the epiploon, for example) into the fire, followed by the ingestion of *soma* and the sacrificial meal.²⁴ Reduced to an abstract pair of markers (pressing and libation), Agništoma and Yasna have “equivalent structures” – but what is thereby

- 22 It is not surprising that Tremblay does not comment about this appellation. It contradicts his Gāthic “genres”. Cf. “*srauuah-* commence par désigner les hymnes vieil-avestiques dans le corpus gāthique lui-même, plus exactement ceux que Mazdā a approuvés, avant que le mot soit affecté à l’ensemble des textes révélés à Zarathushtra par Mazdā, en ce compris des textes plus récents, les hymnes anciens recevant le nom de *gāθā*, curieusement connu du Yasna et du Vidēvdād, mais pas des Yašt” (in Swennen 2013: 205).
- 23 See Kellens and Pirart 1988: 134: “Tantôt par des louanges . . . quand c’est le temps des louanges, tantôt par une parole quand c’est le temps des paroles, tantôt par une consécration quand c’est le temps des consécrations”. Hintze (2007: 106–110) rejects this interpretation, and (2007: 106) translates the phrase in question: “through these (verses), O Lord, praise now (follows on) from praise, solemn utterance now from solemn utterance, worship now from worship”. The problem with Kellens’s and Pirart’s analysis is that it leaves Y 35.10 without any subject or verb. According to them Y 35.10 is “incomplete”; (see Kellens and Pirart 1991: 136). Hintze analyses *staotāiš* into *staotā āiš* and interprets *staotā*, *uxdā* and *yasnā* as nominative and makes *aibī* the verbal prefix of a verb in ellipsis meaning “follows on”. Would this verb be $\sqrt{dā}$ “set” in the middle voice?
- 24 See Caland and Henry 1906–07: 188–224, 283–9, 344–52. It has been argued that the long liturgy originally involved animal immolation and sacrificial offering into the fire, which took place – this latter – during the recitation of Yasna Haptaṅhāiti, that is, after the ingestion of the *parahaoma*. See Cantera 2016a: 153–4: “In the standard Long Liturgy [i.e. Yasna] as described in the manuscripts, *haōma* is prepared three times: firstly, at the Paragā, before the beginning of the Long Liturgy itself. The result, *parahaōma*, is drunk by the *zaōtar* at the three Ašəm Vohū of Y11.11. Secondly, at the end of the Hōmāst. This is the proper *haōma*. Thirdly and finally, during the recitation of Y31–33”.

asserted, other than the (already acknowledged) common importance of the inherited element? Would the assertion not be simply a tautology? We could not gain even the most elementary knowledge about the respective conceptions of *haoma/soma* unless we ask: in what way is it important (to each)?²⁵ In any case, what is noteworthy in the tripartite ritual of the final day of Agniṣṭoma is *not* that the animal offering into the *āhavanīya* fire follows the pressing – every action does – but that it precedes the ingestion of *soma* and the sacrificial meal. The precedence of the gods in the ceremony shows that Agniṣṭoma is fundamentally conceived as an offering ritual, involving, of course, demand for reciprocation (see, for instance, Scheid 2007).

During in the concluding (desacralizing) bath, an oblation is made into water – “autant que possible, en une place stagnante d’une eau courante” (Caland and Henry 1906–07: 397). Just before the oblation, the *prastotar* intones a song in honour of (ritual) fire. Tremblay sees in this a significant similarity with the contiguity of the sections dedicated to fire (Ātaṣ Niyāyīṣṇ) and water (Āb Zōhr) at the end of Yasna (Tremblay 2006–07: 687–8). The fact that as a part of the desacralizing bath a hymn is sung in honour of Agni just before an oblation into water, however, does not indicate an elective ritual affinity between fire and water, since the oblation is not made for the waters at all. It is made for Agni, or rather for Agni *qua* Apāṃ Napāt, apparently as the sun descends into the waters.

Cette oblation se fait, non pas au feu, mais dans l’eau, et, autant que possible, en une place stagnante d’une eau courante. On la fait debout, et, selon quelques autorités, orienté vers le point cardinal dans la direction duquel on est allé à l’eau. L’adhvaryu jette à l’eau un brin d’herbe, et y verse avec le sruva ou, suivant d’autres, avec la juhū, une libation qui remplace l’āghāra de l’iṣṭi ordinaire, en récitant T.S. 1.4.45d: “Le visage d’Agni a pénétré dans les eaux / [en sa qualité d’] Apāṃ Napāt qui protège la majesté des Asuras // dans toutes les demeures, honore [ton] combustible, ô Agni, / et que ta langue s’étire vers le beurre. Svāhā!” (Caland and Henry 1906–07: 397–8).²⁶

There can hardly be any doubt that the recipient of the oblation into water is the figure of Apāṃ Napāt. The assimilation of Apāṃ Napāt to Agni is not well understood (see Magoun 1898; 1900). If the basis for it is the speculative identification of the sun and sacrificial fire, as it appears to be (see Profères 2007: 105–6), then the sun must be the mediating factor, and in particular the setting sun whose reflection in the waters would become the “descendant of the waters”. Tremblay’s assertion that water is “plus proche du feu que de la liqueur” is thus

25 We know, for instance, that in Vedic *soma* rites, the pouring of the sacred drink into the fire (for nourishing the gods) is an important constituent, whereas there is no *haoma* libation into fire in Zoroastrianism.

26 Apāṃ Napāt is *nādyó* “of water” (RV 2.35.1) and *anidhmó dīdayad apsv āntār* “unkindled, shines in the waters” (RV 10.30.4); *apāṃ nāpād ā hy āsthād upāsthām jihmānām ūrdhvó vidyūtam vāsānah* “clothed in lightning, Apāṃ Napāt has ascended their lap, (standing) upright, while they lie across” (RV 2.35.9); *tam ū śucīm śucayo dīdivāmsam apām napātam pari tasthur āpah* “that dazzling, shining Apāṃ Napāt do the gleaming waters surround” (RV 2.35.3).

malapropos. The close connection between Soma and Agni is displayed throughout the *soma* ritual, from its name, Agniṣtoma, to concrete gestures. In the immediate context, for instance, right after the invocation of Agni, two *ājyābhāgas* are made, accompanied by two Rigvedic stanzas (RV 8.43.9 and 1.23.20) containing the word *apsú*, “respectivement anuvākyā pour Agni et anuvākyā pour Soma” (Caland and Henry 1906–07: 398). In the elaborate ceremony of the final day of Agniṣtoma, *soma* and fire are omnipresent and constantly interact. The axis of the ritual treatment of fire is its maintenance and its usage for sacrificial oblation.²⁷ In other words, in the economy of Agniṣtoma the proximity of fire and water during the final bath does not stand out, and certainly does not have the meaning Tremblay ascribes to it.

On the Iranian side, the reason for the contiguity of the sections dedicated to fire and water at the end of Yasna is not clear. Kellens has proposed a ritual explanation of it:

Les eaux . . . abritent un hôte qui est à la fois leur contraire et leur parent le plus intime: *Apām Napāt. Cette association paradoxale est fondée sur la même soumission aux mouvements d’entrée et de sortie du rite. Comme les eaux sont puisées pour servir au sacrifice, le feu est allumé sur l’autel, puis éteint, c’est-à-dire confié aux eaux qui l’éteignent avant d’être rendues au courant . . . Dans l’Avesta, Apām Napāt est, avec les eaux, le *ratu* de l’après-midi. Feu de la cérémonie qui s’achève, il est confié aux eaux qui l’emportent vers la nuit, tandis que le soleil décline et que, paradoxalement, on active les banals feux domestiques. Demain, à la fin de la nuit ou au lever du jour, il sera rallumé pour accomplir un nouveau cycle sacrificiel . . . L’*Ātaš Niyāyišn* et l’*Āb Zōhr* impliquent que le feu était éteint à la fin de la cérémonie et le passage progressif à un feu permanent préservé dans un temple eût fait d’Apām Napāt un dieu sans emploi si une connivence particulière avec Miθra ne lui avait donné un nouveau rôle (Redard and Kellens 2013: 8–9).

Apām Napāt is “le feu éteint du sacrifice”, more precisely, the water-extinguished fire. Further, Kellens suggests that before the establishment of permanent fires at temples the sacrificial fire was extinguished by means of water each day at dusk. This would explain, according to him, the contiguity of the sections dedicated to fire and water at the end of Yasna, and shows, too, why Apām Napāt and the waters were jointly appointed as the *ratu* of the *uzaiieirina* period of the day (i.e. afternoon until sunset). It was imagined that the extinguishing water harboured the fire, which was rekindled on the altar the following morning. As far as I know, there is no evidence for Kellens’s schema in the

27 Note the phrases used to address Agni: “‘O Agni, accompagné des épouses, uni à Tvaṣtar, bois le soma’ . . . ‘Avec eux, ô Agni, va de l’avant et viens [ici], sur le même char [qu’eux], / ou sur des chars différents, car [les] chevaux marchent en sens divers; // les trente-trois Dieux, avec leurs épouses, / amène-les conformément à ta nature, et enivre-toi. . .’” (Caland and Henry 1906–07: 367). Cf. Heesterman 1993: 103: “it is clear that the cult of the fire takes the form of sacrifice and, conversely, that sacrifice is molded by the cult of the fire”.

Avesta or later Zoroastrian Pahlavi literature. The distinction between the hearth and cult fires and their (supposed) interactions are not at all clear in the Avesta.²⁸ Why does Kellens think that before the establishment of fire temples daily sacrificial fires were put out by water at dusk just before domestic fires were “activated”? The association of Apām Napāt with the waters is of course implied in the god’s appellation, “descendant of the waters”. But to what phenomenon does it in fact refer? The major difficulty with Kellens’s theory is that it cannot account for the phenomenology of the god as we know it from Avestan and Vedic sources. In fact, his theory clashes with this evidence. Oettinger explains the god as a deified natural phenomenon. Invoking the description of the *xʷarənah-* in Yašt 19 and comparative Indo-European material, he maintains that it is likely “dass der im Wasser befindliche “Glücksglanz” ursprünglich einmal Teil des unter Wasser feurig glänzenden Wassergottes *Apām Napāt gewesen war” (Oettinger 2009: 193). According to Oettinger, the god originates in the shimmering or glowing rivers and seas. In my mind, this archaeology is basically right. I would add, based on Vedic evidence, that the shimmering is probably the reflection of the afternoon sun. The epithets of Apām Napāt in the Avesta agree with the description of Apām Napāt in the Rīgveda. In the Avesta (Y 65.12, Yt 19.52), the god is characterized as *bərəzant-*, *ahura-*, *xšaθriia-*, *auruuat.aspa-*, *xšaēta-*, *upāpa-* *yazata-*. Apām Napāt resides and shines in water; he is a lofty (*bərəzant-*) lord who drives swift horses. The possession of swift horses seems to connect *Apām Napāt with the sun. In the Rīgveda, Apām Napāt is *āsuhēmā* a “horse-driver” (2.35.1), *yó anidhmó dīdayad apsv antár* “who, unkindled, shines in the waters” (10.30.4), *manojúvo vṛṣaṇo yám váhanti* “whom stallions as quick as thought convey” (1.186.5), *nādyó* “of water” (2.35.1); *sá súkrébhiḥ síkvabhī revád asmé dīdāyānidhmó ghr̥tānirṇig apsu* “he brilliantly shines in the waters, unkindled, with his shimmering mighty limbs, donned in (golden) ghee” (2.35.4), *yó apsv ā súcinā dāivyena r̥tāvājasra urviyā vibhāti* “who shines far-and-wide, with divine flame in the waters, righteous, untiring” (2.35.8); *apām nāpād ā hy ásthād upásthām jihmānām ūrdhvó vidyútam vásānah* “clothed in lightning flash, Apām Napāt has ascended their lap, standing upright, while they lie

- 28 The interaction between cult (*śrauta*) and domestic (*gr̥hya*) fires is explained in a number of Brāhmana texts. The three cult fires of *soma* ritual can be derived from the latter or kindled anew by means of fire drill. The latter method is mostly used when the “fire has inadvertently gone out and in case one goes on an extended journey, or moves to settle elsewhere” (Heesterman 1993: 101). The distinction (and relation) between the hearth and cult fires and the elaboration of the cult of fire are related to the formalization of the *śrauta* system. See Heesterman 1993: 90–110. There is no extinguishing of sacrificial fire by water in Vedic sacrifice, and although the obligation of permanent maintenance equally applies to both hearth and cult fires, in practice it is kept only in respect of the former. “For all the prestige and complexity of the *śrauta* ritual its place of sacrifice is only a temporary installation and not meant to outlast a single sacrifice after which it is abandoned” (Heesterman 1993: 126). I make the point regarding the duration of fire in relation to Kellens’s ambiguous statement about the “activation” of the domestic fire at dusk. The “basic pattern” in both *gr̥hya* and *śrauta* rites is the maintenance of fire, and its employment to prepare food/offerings and to convey sacrificial offerings. The *gr̥hya* fire is used primarily for preparing meals, while the *śrauta* fires are set up for making sacrificial offerings. See Heesterman 1993: 102–8.

across” (2.35.9); *hiraṇyarūpaḥ śá hiraṇyasamdr̥g apām nāpāt séd u hiraṇyavarnah / hiraṇyáyāt pári yóner niśádhyā hiraṇyadā dadaty ánnam asmāi* “golden aspect, gold-like (is) that Apām Napāt, and he is indeed gold in color, having settled down from a golden lap, the gold-givers give food to him” (2.35.10); *tad asyānikam uta cāru nāmāpīcyam vardhate naptur apām / yam indhate yuvatayaḥ sam itthā hiraṇyavarṇam ghr̥tam annam asya* “this face of his grows (strong) and (so does his) lovely secret name of Apām Napāt, whom the young women inflame thus: golden ghee is his food” (2.35.11).

In the last two stanzas (RV 2.35.11–12) the poet apparently refers to the establishment (*ni + √sad*) and maintenance of the ritual fire (Agni), who is identified with Apām Napāt. The “young women” are probably the ten fingers that “inflame” the fire by pouring “golden ghee” in it (it is unlikely that “inflaming” refers to kindling by fire drill, since the fire seems to be already ablaze and because of the conjunctive adverb *itthā* “in this way”). The golden lap or womb perhaps recalls the celestial home of Apām Napāt/Agni (RV 2.35.6 *jānimāsyá ca svār*). Apām Napāt and Agni are certainly distinct gods in the R̥gveda, even if speculatively identified in specific situations. Whether one identifies the “descendant of the waters” as chain lightning amidst pouring rain – as Magoun (1898 and 1900), among others, did over a century ago – or the shimmering reflection of the afternoon sun in seas and rivers (as Oettinger does), the phenomenology of his appearance rules out seeing in the god the water-extinguished ritual fire. Kellens adduces as evidence for his schema the two stanzas I have quoted in full above.

Ce cycle est clairement lisible dans RV 1.35.11–12:²⁹ le feu engendre un embryon, que les eaux abritent et nourrissent, puis qui est retiré des eaux pour être de nouveau allumé naturellement, avec des copeaux (Redard and Kellens 2013: 9).

I do not see how the passage supports Kellens’s schema (“cycle”) and his contention that the “embryo” of the fire is “harbored and nourished by the water” that extinguishes it, unless he assumes what is to be demonstrated, namely that *Apām Napāt is the water-extinguished ritual fire. Kellens’s conception of the relation between the domestic and sacrificial fires in general is at odds with the *śrauta* ritual system, as I argued above. One should note that it is the desacralizing role of water that explains its concluding place in the ritual course of the final day of Agniṣṭoma. The ritual bath takes place in the evening, thus providing the occasion and perhaps the inspiration for a final hymn and oblation to Agni *qua* Apām Napāt, before making the conclusive oblations on the ritual ground and the cremation of the *vedi* (see Caland and Henry 1906–07: 405–11). The only datum in Kellens’s schema is the placement of the afternoon period (*uzaiieirina*) under the protection of the waters and Apām Napāt. Is the schema meant to explain this? If one were to rely on Vedic evidence, the link between the waters and the *uzaiieirina* period would have to be Apām Napāt. There may

29 This is obviously an inadvertent mistake for RV 2.35.11–12.

be a trace of the connection between the sacrificial fire and Apam Napāt in the contest over the *x^varənah-* in Yt 19.45–52, especially if Oettinger is right in his argument that the *x^varənah-* originally was an aspect of Apam Napāt.

Cantera has relied on Tremblay's view about "the close parallels" between Yasna and Agniṣtoma ceremonies to argue that these "parallels": 1) "provide definitive proof of the antiquity of the actual structure of the Long Liturgy"; and 2) "help us to identify the role of its different elements through a comparison with the Vedic sacrifice" (Cantera 2016a: 149). I argued above that the first assertion is untenable, and the second generally abounds in risks, and is misleading in the way Tremblay has executed it. But Cantera has gone further. He suggests that Yasna, currently celebrated in the morning, is the result of the coalescence of three daily rites formerly conducted at dawn, noon, late afternoon, similar, in this respect too, to the final day of Agniṣtoma.

There are certain details that point to an earlier and different timeframe for the celebration of the Long Liturgy that is closer to the three daily pressings of *soma* in the Vedic rituals ... the Yasna is not parallel to a single pressing, but to a complete day's ceremony. This raises the question of whether the Long Liturgy might have been celebrated at a certain time during the whole day (Cantera, 2016a: 168–9).³⁰

Cantera proposes to divide the "Long Liturgy" (or rather the Visperad) into three "parts": Y 1–21; Y 22–59; and from the second Srōš Drōn (before Y 60) to Y 71. His argument, however, is not convincing. He tries to match each of the three parts with one daily *ratu* (*uśahina*, *rapiθβina*, and *uzaiieirina*) via the respective tutelary god(s). For the connection of the Āb Zōhr with the afternoon "as the most appropriate time", Cantera relies on Tremblay's interpretation of the sequence of hymn to fire and (supposed) oblation to the waters during the desacralizing bath in Agniṣtoma and Kellens's view about Apam Napāt, both of which are doubtful. In the "third part" of the "Long Liturgy" (or rather the Visperad), Cantera also includes the Ātaš Niyāyišn and the second Srōš Drōn. The former must, according to his scheme, be allocated to the ceremony of *rapiθβina* whose tutelary gods are Aša and Ātaš. The latter, dedicated to the tutelary god of the *uśahina*, is out of place in the *uzaiieirina* ceremony.

The original duration of the whole ceremony was a whole day: starting at dawn with Srōš Drōn and the Hōm Stōd (with pressing at sunrise?), then Hōmāst and Staōta Yesniia with the animal sacrifice and the meat offering to the fire at noon and, finally, the second Drōn Yašt with the sacrificial banquet and the conclusive libations to the waters in the afternoon. At a later stage, the whole ceremony was compressed and celebrated within a single period of the day (Cantera 2016a: 170).

30 The "three daily pressings of *soma* in the Vedic rituals" is somewhat misleading. In the *śrauta* system, *soma* rituals are prestigious and occasional ceremonies, not "daily" rituals. In Agniṣtoma, the three pressings take place on the final day.

The texts Cantera wants to assign to the three *ratu*s are, thematically and chronologically, too disparate to allow any arguable division of the kind he proposes. Why should Y 16 or Y 19–21, for instance, be part of the *uṣahina* ceremony *as opposed* to the other two? If the tripartite structure corresponds to the three pressings of Vedic *soma* ritual, and thus presumably reflects Indo-Iranian tradition, why are the texts of Cantera’s daily ceremonies topo-chronologically so heterogeneous? And why does the pressing of *haoma* take place in the middle *ratu* yet its ingestion only in the first?³¹ How to account for the stranded Srōš Yašt (Y 56–57)? One could add further objections, but there is no point. Cantera has also suggested using the presence of three particular sections as the marker of a complete ceremony. The sections are litanies in *āiiese yešti*, *āuuāēḍaiiamahī*, and *yazamaide*. Each of the three parts of the long liturgy (erstwhile, the three daily ceremonies) contain all three types of litany. “[T]he Long Liturgy can, indeed, be understood as the threefold repetition of a basic ritual (basically the combination of the *āiiese yešti*-, *āuuāēḍaiiamahī*- and a *yazamaide* section) that is extended in three different ways depending on the ritual moment” (Cantera 2016a: 182). This criterion, however, is rather artificial. These three types of litany plus the *aṣaiia daḍqmi* basically constitute the Srōš Drōn, so they would be missing in the “third part” of Yasna, in which there is no second Srōš Drōn.³² The *yazamaide* form is more ancient than the other three and is not limited to litany; as a type of composition, it probably originated in the Yasna Haptaṅhāiti (see Hintze 2004). The litanies were composed to accommodate older texts that had been preserved and chosen to be recited in the Yasna ceremony.³³ It is not clear at all why the texts that are presently comprised in Yasna

31 “The Srōš Drōn presupposes that the pressing of the *para.haōma* already took place during the Paragnā” (Cantera 2016a: 178).

32 It is not the Visperad, but Yasna that is celebrated daily.

33 See, for instance, Cantera 2016a: 178: “According to Kellens, the fact there is no ritual action during the Hōm Stōd except the drinking of the *para.haōma* at Y11.11 reveals that the Hōm Stōd was composed for a different ritual cursus. This might be true or not, but the fact is that the Srōš Drōn that precedes the Hōm Stōd was composed precisely for the ritual cursus described in the manuscripts, at least concerning the pressing and drinking of the *haōma*. The Srōš Drōn presupposes that the pressing of the *para.haōma* already took place during the Paragnā. In fact, the Hōm Stōd is perfectly well integrated with the previous Srōš Drōn, and constitutes a unity with it. The Hōm Stōd might have a pre-history, but it was integrated in the Long Liturgy to accompany the drinking of the *para.haōma* as the conclusion of a special Hōm Drōn”. Cf. Schwartz 2006. According to Kellens, the “sole space virtually open to a real innovation is the one occupied by the Bagān Yašt and the Hōmāst (Y 19–26)” (Kellens 2012: 57). The Hōmāst alone contains the three types of litany in Cantera’s *rapiθβina* ceremony, and is thus essential for his schema. Tremblay, too, finds it difficult to explain the place and indeed the *raison d’être* of the Hōmāst. According to him, the ancient Hōmāst “probably” consisted of Y 22.1–2, and was originally part of the Hōm Stōm. The Hōmāst (Y 22–27) is a “secondary sacrifice”, a “duplication” of Y 1–7, since the texts commenting on the three prayers (Y 19–21) must have “immediately preceded the Gāthās” in “an earlier state of the ritual”, and since it “has no satisfactory parallel in the Indian ritual”. See Swennen 2016: 57–8. The divergence of the views of the three scholars on the status of the Hōmāst shows the formidable difficulties involved in *any* principled division of Yasna and, indeed, in *any* argument for the coherence of its structure.

were chosen or whether there were significant revisions to the corpus throughout its long history. One must imagine the process of formation of the corpus as one of accommodation of older, disparate texts, rather than as a “threefold repetition of a basic ritual . . . that is extended in different ways depending on the ritual moment”. In any case, this view of the formation of the corpus does not underwrite but contradicts the claim, implied in the comparison with Agniṣtoma, that Yasna is derived in structure and purpose more or less directly from Indo-Iranian ritual lore; or, at least, it is not clear how these two perspectives can be reconciled.³⁴ It is also difficult to see how the tripartite scheme squares with Cantera’s view about the way the Staota Yesniia was understood in the Young Avestan tradition, and with his interpretation of the function and meaning of Vahištō-išṭī Gāthā.³⁵

Conclusion

In conclusion, the attempts made in recent years to argue for the existence of a coherent text and structure in Yasna have not been successful. In particular, comparison with Vedic data that goes beyond well-defined and justified instances must be abandoned, especially if it is used to establish fundamental theses such as those examined above. It stands to reason that recessive myths and ritual themes have a better chance of having comparative value. This is illustrated by Apām Napāt/Apām Napāt. Conversely, elaborated elements and elaborate structures are likely to be specific to each tradition. Thus, contrary to Cantera’s supposition, it is not true that “comparison with the Vedic sacrifice” helps “us to identify the role of [the] different elements” of Yasna. The sequence of the Ātaš Niyāyišn and Āb Zōhr at the end of the “long liturgy”, if it can be explained at all by the “liturgical course” of Yasna, does not appear to have anything to do with the hymn and oblation to Agni *qua* Apām Napāt during the ritual bath at the end of the Agniṣtoma. The ascription of a “ritual course” to Yasna would remain the tautological observation that the sections found in Yasna occur in sequence in Yasna, unless one can show the logic of this sequence.

34 Cf. Cantera 2016a: 179: “the Long Liturgy includes and consists of minor rituals”. He has used, for instance, the incidences of the Frauuarāne in the Yasna as division markers of these ‘minor rituals’ (see Cantera 2015). Cantera (2016a: 180) tries to reconcile the two perspectives by asserting that the “Long Liturgy can be understood as a combination and extension of three such celebrations”. But if the daily tripartite ritual is authentic, the particular “extensions” (by means of addition) of the “basic ritual” (i.e. comprising the three litany types) must be thematically or at least ritual-functionally explainable, which is not the case. For instance, if the section Y 3–11.6 “was a coherent ceremony that could also be celebrated independently of the Long Liturgy” (Cantera 2016a: 181), according to what principle(s) were the other texts in Cantera’s *ušahina* ceremony (Y 1–21) added to it? The terms of reference for the tripartite division scheme Cantera has proposed are unstable, artificial and even obscure.

35 See Ahmadi, “Ritual and eschatology in Zoroastrianism” (forthcoming).

References

- Ahmadi, A. 2017. "A gāthic rite? A critique of the cosmological interpretation of the Gāthās", *Iranian Studies* 50, 199–221.
- Bailey, H. 1943. *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bartholomae, C. 1961. *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- Bernabé, A. 2002. "La toile de Pénélope: a-t-il existé un mythe orphique sur Dionysos et les Titans?", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 219, 401–33.
- Bowden, H. 2010. *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bremmer, J. 2014. *Initiation in the Mysteries of the Ancient World*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Brisson, L. 1991. "Damascius et l'Orphisme", in P. Borgeaud (ed.), *Orphisme et Orphée*. Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 157–209.
- Burkert, W. 1987. *Ancient Mystery Cults*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Caland, W. and V. Henry. 1906–07. *L'agniṣṭoma. Description complète de la forme normale du sacrifice de Soma dans le culte védique*. Paris: Leroux.
- Cantera, A. 2014. *Vers une édition de la liturgie longue zoroastrienne: Pensées et travaux préliminaires*. Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes.
- Cantera, A. 2015. "The usage of the Frauuarāne in Zoroastrian rituals", *Estudios Iranios y Turanios* 2, 71–97.
- Cantera, A. 2016a. "A substantial change in the approach to the Zoroastrian Long Liturgy: about J. Kellens's *Études avestiques et mazdéennes*", *Indo-Iranian Journal* 59, 139–85.
- Cantera, A. 2016b. "The 'sacrifice' (Yasna) to Mazdā: its antiquity and variety", in A. Williams, S. Stewart and A. Hintze (eds), *The Zoroastrian Flame: Exploring Religion, History and Tradition*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 61–76.
- Edmonds, R. 1999. "Tearing apart the Zagreus myth", *Classical Antiquity* 18, 35–73.
- Heesterman, J.C. 1993. *The Broken World of Sacrifice: An Essay in Ancient Indian Ritual*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hintze, A. 2004. "On the ritual significance of the Yasna Haptaṅhāiti", in M. Stausberg (ed.), *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context*. Leiden: Brill, 291–316.
- Hintze, A. 2007. *A Zoroastrian Liturgy. The Worship in Seven Chapters (Yasna 35–41)*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
- Hoffmann, K. and J. Narten. 1989. *Der Sasanidische Archetypus*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag.
- Jamison, S.W. and J.P. Brereton. 2014. *The Rigveda. The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*. 3 Volumes. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kellens, J. 1996. "Commentaire sur les premiers chapitres du Yasna", *Journal Asiatique* 284, 37–108.
- Kellens, J. 1998. "Considérations sur l'histoire de l'Avesta", *Journal Asiatique* 286, 451–519.
- Kellens, J. 2007. *Études avestiques et mazdéennes. vol. 2. Le Hōm Stōm et la zone des déclarations*. Paris: De Boccard.
- Kellens, J. 2010. *Études avestiques et mazdéennes. vol. 3. Le long préambule du sacrifice*. Paris: De Boccard.
- Kellens, J. 2011. *Études avestiques et mazdéennes. vol. 4. L'acme du sacrifice*. Paris: De Boccard.

- Kellens, J. 2012. "Contre l'idée platonicienne d'Avesta ou les Considérations revisitées", in A. Cantera (ed.), *The Transmission of the Avesta*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Kellens, J. 2015. "L'exégèse du sacrifice comme principe unitaire de l'Avesta", in *L'exégèse du sacrifice comme principe unitaire de l'Avesta: Leçon de clôture prononcée le 14 février 2014*. Paris: Collège de France: <http://books.openedition.org/cdf/4053>.
- Kellens, J. and É. Pirart. 1988. *Les textes vieil-avestiques. Volume 1. Introduction, texte et traduction*. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Kellens, J. and É. Pirart. 1991. *Les textes vieil-avestiques. Volume 3. Commentaire*. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Kuiper, F.B.J. 1960. "The ancient Aryan verbal contest", *Indo-Iranian Journal* 4, 217–81.
- Magoun, H.W. 1898. "Apām Napāt in the Rig-Veda", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 19, 137–44.
- Magoun, H.W. 1900. "Apam Napat again", *The American Journal of Philology* 21, 274–86.
- Oettinger, N. 2009. "Zum Verhältnis von *Apam Napāt*- und *Xvarənah*- im Avesta", in É. Pirart and X. Tremblay (eds), *Zarathushtra entre l'Inde et l'Iran*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 189–96.
- Profères, T.N. 2007. *Vedic Ideals of Sovereignty and the Poetics of Power*. New Haven: American Oriental Society.
- Profères, T. 2014. "The relative chronology of the *nivids* and *praiṣas* and the standardisation of Vedic ritual", *Indo-Iranian Journal* 57, 199–221.
- Redard, C. and J. Kellens. 2013. *Études avestiques et mazdéennes. vol. 5. La liquidation du sacrifice*. Paris: De Boccard.
- Scheid, J. 2007. "Sacrifices for gods and ancestors", in J. Rüpke (ed.), *A Companion to Roman Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell, 263–72.
- Schwartz, M. 2006. "On Haoma, and its liturgy in the Gathas", in A. Panaino and A. Piras (eds), *Proceedings of the 5th Conférence of the Societas Iranologica Europæa*. Milan: Mimesis, 215–24.
- Skjærvø, P.O. 2007. "The Avestan Yasna: ritual and myth", in F. Vahman and C.V. Pedersen (eds), *Religious Texts in Iranian Languages*. Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Danske Videnskaberne Selskab, 57–84.
- Smith, J.Z. 1982. "The bare facts of ritual", in *Imagining Religion*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 53–65.
- Swennen, P. 2013. "Pourquoi nomma-t-on les hymnes vieil-avestiques Gāthās?", in É. Pirart (ed.), *Le sort des Gāthās*. Leuven and Paris: Peeters, 201–10.
- Swennen, P. 2016. "Xavier Tremblay et la liturgie longue proto-indo-iranienne. Présentation", in É. Pirart (ed.), *Études de linguistique iranienne. In memoriam Xavier Tremblay*. Leuven and Paris: Peeters, 1–87.
- Tremblay, X. 2006–07. "Le Yasna 58 Fšušə Məθra haḍaoxta", in *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 685–93.
- Versnel, H.S. 1990. "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander: myth and ritual, old and new", in L. Edmunds (ed.), *Approaches to Greek Myth*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Appendix: Tremblay's notes on structural correspondences of Yasna and Agniṣṭoma

Philippe Swennen's critical remarks on Tremblay's comparative approach as this appears in his notes are judicious (see Swennen 2016: 1–17). I am more sceptical than Swennen about the general value of the undertaking as such and the basic conception which it brings to bear on the data, especially on the Iranian side. According to Swennen, Kellens's two publications in the late 1990s put on the agenda the task of a systematic comparison of the Indian and Iranian ritual traditions (see Kellens 1996 and 1998).

Dès lors que *l'unité organique* de l'Avesta, appréhendé comme un ensemble de récitatifs liturgiques destinés à être imbriqués les uns dans les autres en fonction de besoins cérémoniels, s'imposait *comme l'hypothèse économique . . . l'évidence de la cohérence* et de l'antiquité du matériel, *rendue palpable par la présence d'un vocabulaire technique visiblement hérité*, appelait une nouvelle confrontation de l'Avesta aux synopsis liturgiques védiques, notamment ceux du Yajurveda. C'est précisément ce dont Xavier Tremblay prit conscience mieux que tout autre (Swennen 2016: 1–2, my italics).

The comparative approach, according to Swennen, should be guided by ritual-technical terms that are common to the two traditions, and it should include “la redoutable question de la permanence du contenu sémantique” of these terms, which implies that *first* the question of the *concrete meaning* of the terms must be posed *within* respective traditions (Swennen 2016: 15). This proviso is important for safeguarding, as much as possible, the probity of the comparisons and their results. But it has been ignored time and again by scholars who have advocated the so-called “védisant” approach, which in too many instances has amounted to an automatic assimilation of the Avesta to Vedic data. Contrary to Tremblay's assumption, for example, Swennen shows that the functions of the inherited term *nivid-* / *niuuāēdaiemi* do not coincide in the two ritual traditions:

En effet, une dérivation verbale équivalente [à *niuuāēdaiemi*] est attestée en sanskrit, mais à partir des commentaires en prose. Son contenu sémantique, que je qualifierai de laïcisé, signifie sans surprise “annoncer” et ne va pas de pair avec le début d'une récitation liturgique en prose (Swennen 2016: 14).

Swennen (2016: 11) notes that Tremblay subordinates the linguistic data to the requirements of his structural approach, creating more problems than it solves. This is Swennen's basic objection to Tremblay's method. But, in my mind, the flaw is deeper and has to do with the “védisant” approach. In practice, it has operated within a set of methodological premises that systematically prejudices the study of the Iranian data. Two such methodical treatments are overinterpretation of Avestan texts and pseudo-systematization of Avestan notions in order to make them suitable for comparison with Vedic data and ultimately reveal their Vedic bearing. The Vedic prejudice is at times present even in

Swennen. Referring to Tremblay's notes, Swennen states that he endorses "le caractère hérité de la polarité des racines indo-iraniennes *STU et* ŚAMS, qui doit suffire à établir que l'habillage de l'action sacrificielle par une alterance de chants et de récitations remonte au moins aux cultes publics indo-iraniens communs, le chant jouissant à l'évidence d'une affinité particulière avec le pressurage de *sauma" (Swennen 2016: 11). But where is the evidence for the existence in Avestan tradition of a particular genre comparable to Vedic śāstra? Where is the evidence for the assumption that the ritual speech characterized by the verb \sqrt{stu} had any formal features comparable to Vedic stotra? And finally, where is the evidence for the framing of ritual action in Yasna by an "alteration of recitation and singing"? None has so far been shown for any of these postulations, which are rather sourced from Vedic material.³⁶ We saw this process in the invention of Avestan "genres". The distinction between "recitation and singing" is simply immaterial on the Iranian side.

Tremblay's assumption of the inherited nature of Vedic genres and liturgical roles, as Swennen (2016: 16) observes, stumbles on the process of the canonization of Vedic texts and the standardization of the soma ritual. It is not possible to project back into the Indo-Iranian times the characteristics we find in the classical soma ritual, which is what Tremblay does. In effect, he turns the latter into the model to which Avestan texts must conform, ostensibly because the two traditions share a common past. I pointed out in the article the case of the four Avestan "genres" invented to match the four Vedic genres (the four Vedas) and the four classes of priests. I would now like to give a few examples of Tremblay's tendentious interpretation of Avestan data.

According to Tremblay, an oblation of haoma accompanied the recitation of the Yasna Haptaṅhāiti, as it happens in the Agniṣṭoma with prose formulas (in Swennen 2016: 63 and 79). No evidence has been adduced so far for libation of haoma into fire at any stage of Yasna. Tremblay cites in evidence Vr 9.3, but this is spurious. He asserts that $\sqrt{frā} + \sqrt{yaz}$ "est le verbe technique désignant la récitation du Yasna Haptaṅhāiti" (in Swennen 2016: 53), and, based on this artificial semantics, interprets Vr 9.3: "«nous sommes là» pour attribuer, répartir, presser, extraire, filtrer, bien offrir en sacrifice au cours du Yasna Haptaṅhāiti (sens technique de $\sqrt{frā}^o\sqrt{yaz}$), bien énumérer en litanies les Haomas présents" (in Swennen 2016: 70). The word he translates as "bien offrir en sacrifice au cours du Yasna Haptaṅhāiti" is *hufrāiiaštaiiaēca*, which simply means "for serving as (or in) sacrifice". Kellens translates the phrase: "(Ces haomas), les voici pour ... le sacrifice-solennel" (Kellens 2010: 80). One wonders what is the value of such a result, produced by a method that manufactures categories on one side in order to assimilate it to the other side. Another example of the same procedure is Tremblay's interpretation of Y 15.

36 The idea that immolation in ancient Iranian ritual, when it took place, was accompanied with texts in prose has supporting evidence in a number of Nērangestān passages. Cf. Swennen 2016: 11: "Je m'empresse d'ajouter que je conserverais avec le même enthousiasme les points relatifs à l'ancienneté du recours à la prose, notamment dans le contexte de l'immolation de la victime sacrificielle suivie de l'offrande carnée". But the affirmation can mean nothing more than this: that the immolation did not take place during the recitation of the Gāthās.

La triade *sasti- vanta- rafnah-* est un programme: elle indique que l'office qui suit comprendra des hymnes (= *uxda-*, véd. *ukhá-*: texte du genre Ṛgveda), des charmes (*vanta-* comme au Y 51,22 *yazāi*. . . *vantā* 'je vais offrir un sacrifice par un charme': texte du genre Atharvaveda), des salutations (oblations secondaires: *rap-* est l'équivalent vieil-avestique de *xšnauu-*...), et le Yasna Haptaṅhāiti (*frā^oiiāz* est le verbe technique désignant la récitation du Yasna Haptaṅhāiti). Ne sont pas mentionnés le quatrième genre, les chants (*staomāi-*; védique *sāman*): ce n'est pas un hasard puisque les chants sont plus particulièrement offerts pour l'office de Haoma (in Swennen 2016: 53).

The “programme” of the sacrifice mentions *rafnah-* (the Old Avestan “equivalent” of *xšnauu-*³⁷), which is not one of Tremblay’s “genres”, but does not include the *staota-*. One can see the logic of the interpretation: *vanta-* is a very rare term in the Avesta; and if it is systematically taken to designate a “genre”, it invites the same treatment of other terms with which it happens to be associated where it appears, especially that *sasti-* is derived from \sqrt{sqh} , which according to Tremblay is the “verbe-etiquette” of “hymne”. Thus, *sasti-* must denote a “genre”. Ineluctably, *rafnah-*, too, ends up designating a type of speech (but why the equivalent of *xšnauu-*?). The reason Tremblay gives for the absence of his fourth “genre”, however, does not follow this logic. The major sacrificial operations on the *haoma* follow Y 15, namely its pressing, which takes place at the end of Hōmāst, and (in Tremblay’s schema) its libation and ingestion during the recitation of the YH.³⁸ If “l’office de Haoma” does not mean its pressing and libation, what does it designate?

Pseudo-systematization of Avestan notions and situations thoroughly vitiates the proofs of the “védisant” affirmations. Tremblay’s treatment of *draonah-* in Y 11.7 is an example of this. Since the “major sacrifice” begins with Y 14,³⁹ or rather not until the YH,⁴⁰ how can the god Haoma be offered his share of the sacrifice at Y 11.7? The phrase in question in Kellens’s translation is: “Coupe vite à Haoma (qui vient de parler) si ferme(ment) sa ration de vache” (Kellens 2007: 89). I cite in full Tremblay’s attempt to deal with this quandary.

37 This is a rather strange equivalence since the derivatives of \sqrt{rap} “help” in the Gāthās do not show any tendency towards formulaic usage, let alone as the “equivalent” of *xšnauu-*.

38 On the latter point, see Swennen 2016: 63 and 80–81.

39 “Le Y. 14 marque le véritable début du sacrifice majeur, désormais tous les prêtres, aussi bien les chantres en action depuis le Y. 9,9 que le Zaotar ‘verseur’ et le *frabərətar-* ‘oblateur’ affectés au Vr. 3,1, sont en place” (in Swennen 2016: 53). Y 9.9 is clearly a mistake for Y 10.9. Tremblay does not explain how the *staotar-* can be “in action” since Y 10.9 without being properly appointed, like the rest of the college.

40 “La séquence Y. 16–26 ne constitue donc pas une véritable oblation, mais seulement une préparation à la vraie oblation, qui devait avoir lieu au cours du Yasna Haptaṅhāiti, laquelle préparation fut seulement revêtue de l’apparence d’un sacrifice” (in Swennen 2016: 59–60). The rather strange idea of creating the “appearance of a sacrifice” is forced on Tremblay, since “le Y. 25–6 énonce une offrande effective. Cependant cela est impossible: en effet, le Haoma doit encore être filtré (il ne sera pas encore au Y. 27,6)” (in Swennen 2016: 59).

De fait, Y. 11,7 ne se réfère pas nécessairement à une action accomplie au cours du *Hōm Stōm*, mais peut annoncer qu'ultérieurement, après que l'hostie sera abattue après le Yasna Haptañhāiti, Haoma devra recevoir une part de la viande (la part offerte aux dieux?). Deuxièmement, il n'est pas inévitable que Y. 11,7 affirme que le Haoma doit recevoir de la viande, quoique le zend l'ait compris ainsi: *frā^oθbarəs-* ne signifie pas toujours 'trancher', mais souvent en une acception affaiblie 'créer', et *ā^ofrā^oθbarəs-* de même peut se référer seulement à l'affectation au Haoma d'une préparation. Dès lors que *gauu-* désigne autant le lait que la viande de la vache, Y. 11,7 stipule peut-être seulement qu'il faut réserver au Haoma la part de la vache qui lui revient, i.e. son lait (in Swennen 2016: 49).

Tremblay, of course, knows well that precisely in this passage the verb means "cut", and that in relation to Haoma the "share (*draonō*) of the cow" can only mean the jaws, the tongue and the left eye, as we are told in Y 11.4: "Mon père Ahura Mazda, pour soutenir l'Agencement, a (prélevé) et m'a attribué comme ration [*draonō*], à moi Haoma, les mâchoires avec la langue et l'œil gauche" (Kellens 2007: 87). The reason why he cannot acknowledge the obvious meaning of the phrase is also clear. The texts of Yasna belong to different "genres", each associated with a definite ritual moment and action, which the text accompanies and more or less describes. The "ritual course" determines the content of the text and the meaning of the particular notions occurring therein. Once we decipher the "ritual course", we can generally know what each text must be about. The structural schema is, of course, taken from the Vedic ritual. If in Agniṣṭoma "le pressurage du matin" precedes "le sacrifice sanglant" (in Swennen 2016: 45), Y 11.7 *daonō* cannot mean parts of the sacrificial cow, but milk, since the "sacrificial phase" is supposed to follow the *Hōm Stōm*.⁴¹

The Vedic schematization of Yasna does not help our understanding of the latter. It does not elucidate its structure and content, but obfuscates them. I would like to emphasize the term "schematization", which is what Tremblay by and large has done. I do not at all mean to discount the value of comparing Avestan data with relevant Vedic material, especially on the linguistic level, as Swennen has urged. Along with mythology, ritual phraseology can yield significant comparative data. Tremblay has given us two thought-provoking examples of this in his derivation of Avestan *sraoša-* from the postulated Iranian counterpart of Vedic *śrausaṭ astu*: "un dérivé délocutif de **sraošaṭ* 'qu'on écoute'", and his interpretation of *uruuāxš* "qu'il avance" (the 3rd sing. inj. sigmatic aorist of $\sqrt{\text{uruuaj}}$ "proceed", i.e. take to the road or start the journey) as the "cri rituel" by which the soul of the sacrificial animal is dispatched to the gods (in Swennen 2016: 61 and 69, respectively).

41 Another example of pseudo-systematization is Tremblay's pairing of "genres" with divine entities. To Haoma "louange est due", but "au feu échet un hommage" (see Swennen 2016: 76). Haoma, too, receives *namah-* "hommage" (e.g., Y 10.13, 17), and *staota-* "praise" is not exclusive to Haoma (e.g. Y 30.1). In Y 45.10, they are offered together. In fact, it is likely that *namah-* is not even a type of speech but designates a concrete (ritual) gesture, with the attending state of mind, of course.