Abstract

A Poem of Rare Design: Elucidating the Erra Epic

Eli Tadmor

2024

This dissertation seeks to contribute to the elucidation of *The Erra Epic*, an ancient Babylonian poem, made up of five tablets, telling of the nearly world-ending wrath of Erra, a god of hatred and violence, who nearly annihilates humanity because he believes that humans do not sufficiently respect his power.

Part I of the dissertation, *The Reader's Guide to Erra*, consists of five chapters: *The Reader's Guide to Tablet I, The Reader's Guide to Tablet II, The Reader's Guide to Tablet III, The Reader's Guide to Tablet IV,* and *The Reader's Guide to Tablet V*. Going tablet by tablet, these chapters highlight interpretive difficulties, summarize past scholarly work, and attempt new solutions.

Part II, consisting of four chapters, contains individual studies. Chapter 6, *What Slaughter, by Whose Hand?*, discusses the possible historical contexts of Erra's composition and of the events described in it. Chapter 7 , *The Agentive Heart,* explores the role of the heart and its ability to influence human behavior in *Erra* as well other Akkadian sources, while incorporating discussion of material from the Hebrew Bible. Chapter 8, *Malignant Narcissism*, explores the role of grandiosity, paranoia, and sadism in the character of Erra, and thus the poem at large. *Chapter 9, Who is King of the World*, endeavors to contribute to a solution of a

longstanding interpretive problem having to do with the poem's first line with the aid of a series of Assyrian amulets invoking the protagonists of the poem.

A Poem of Rare Design: Elucidating the Erra Epic

(Sharable Version)

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of

Yale University

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Eli Tadmor

Dissertation Director: Eckart Frahm

May 2024

Table of Contents

Introduction

...
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!
A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
...

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Kubla Khan*

Pandemic, unrest, war. My years of dissertation writing have been anything but tranquil. Their catastrophes have reaffirmed the relevance of the subject of this work—an ancient poem enigmatic and powerful in equal measure, a song telling of the wrath of Erra, a god of carnage and pestilence, who nearly brings the world to an end in blind and egotistical fury. Broken and buried, entirely forgotten, this text—known in antiquity either by its incipit, *šar gimir dadmē*,

"King of all inhabited regions," or as *iškar erra*, "The series of Erra," and in modern scholarship variously as *The Erra Epic*, *The Poem of Erra*, *The Song of Erra*, and, as has become most common, *Erra and Išum*—has been brought back to life through almost 150 years of scholarly effort. The speaker of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, quoted above, wishes to revive within himself the song of the Abyssinian maid, which tells of a sacred river meandering through five miles of mazy motion and of "a miracle of rare device, a sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice." For nearly a century and a half, Assyriologists have been laboring to revive another song, a poem of rare and intricate design whose plot moves in mazy motion through five tablets, and whose revival, like that wished for by the speaker of *Kubla Khan*, has given birth to deep delight.

This revival began with the 1876 publication of several fragments of the text by one of the most extraordinary figures in the history of Assyriology, George Smith. Though wrong about most details, his remarkably intuitive understanding of Akkadian allowed him to make several key observations concerning the length and subject-matter of the epic. Later treatments of the text have gradually improved understanding of it through the incorporation of new fragments and the utilization of an ever-improving grasp of Akkadian language and literature. Notable among them are those of Gössmann (1955), Cagni (1969), and, more recently, Taylor (2017). Each of these includes a transliteration, translation, and discussion of the text. Gössmann's provides an edition with commentary, and a discussion the epic's structure, historical background, and meaning. In his work, Cagni gives his own edition with detailed philological notes. His book has served as the standard treatment of the text for several decades and has proved invaluable for students and scholars. The number of published manuscripts of the text—hailing from

throughout Assyria and Babylonia and dated at least as far back as the 7th century BCE—has remained almost completely stable since Cagni published his book, with the only major addition being an incomplete copy of tablet II published by Al-Rawi and Black in 1989. This edition was incorporated in Taylor 2017, which is yet unpublished. Taylor introduces the text and discusses the earlier scholarship concerning it, reviews the role of the poem's protagonists in Mesopotamian mythology and literature, offers her own original and sometimes provocative interpretations of the text's plot, meaning, and message, considers its relationship to other Mesopotamian literary texts, and provides a score edition of the poem complete with a detailed philological commentary.

These scholarly efforts have led to the following general understanding of the poem's plot: Erra, a god of violence, plague, and death, resolves to decimate the peoples of the world to remind them of his supreme might and importance. Incensed at the contempt he feels is directed against him by humans, he unleashes destruction upon Babylonia. He would have wiped out humanity entirely were it not for his companion Išum, who soothes the angry god and causes a remnant of the human race to be spared. Erra is appeased and returns to his abode, though the text makes it clear that he will rise again to sate his rage with blood. The poem contains an account of its own creation, whereby a god—most likely Erra himself, though possibly rather the world-saving Išum—reveals the poem to a man by the name of Kabti-ilāni-Marduk in a nightly vision. Erra then blesses the poem, endowing with great amuletic power and declaring it a means of protection even from his own future wrath. Perhaps partly because of the promises of safety and worldly success it makes to all those who honor, ponder, recite, or

simply own it, the text became enormously popular, with more copies of it having been found than the Standard Babylonian edition of the much better-known *Gilgamesh Epic* (Taylor 2017).

Drawing on this understanding of the poem's plot, several scholars have written works solely concerned with the text's meaning and interpretation. To cite three notable examples, Machinist (1983) contends that at the poem's heart lies a conflict between rest and violence, with Erra and Išum alternatingly partaking in both. According to him, the two gods balance and complement each other at any given time, keeping the world from descending into either stale inactivity or climactic destruction. In his discussion of the poem, George (2013), focuses on the theme of war as reflected in the text. Like Machinist, he contrasts the roles of Erra and Išum in the epic. But while the thesis of the earlier paper is that the two gods are essentially interchangeable, George emphasizes the essential contrast between them. Erra, according to him, represents the negative and destructive aspects of war, or "war for war's sake". Išum, in contrast, represents war's protective and life-preserving qualities, or "just war". George thus sees the natures of Erra and Išum as fundamentally opposed. In his analysis, Išum emerges as the true hero of the poem, as the savior of humanity and the embodiment of justified and necessary aggression. A further important analysis of the poem was undertaken by Wisnom (2019), who discusses it in the context of Akkadian literature at large. She specifically focuses on the intertextual links between the epic and other great works of Mesopotamian literature, such as *Anzû*, *Enūma eliš*, *Gilgamesh*, and *Atrahasis*. According to Wisnom, Erra acts as the third in a series of destructive figures who threaten the cosmos, with the first two being Anzû, defeated by Ninurta, and Tiamat, whom Marduk slew. Išum, in contrast, takes the role of the protector

of order and civilization formerly occupied by Ninurta. Erra threatens the cosmos as Anzû and Tiamat did, and even unseats Marduk, the champion of *Enūma eliš*, as ruler of the gods. Išum ultimately stops Erra, but does so not by brute force but persuasion and argument. Crude violence is replaced by rhetoric, and the forces of chaos are kept at bay once again.

The Aims of the Present Work

It is a matter of Assyriological tradition that dissertations should contain editions, the quality of which serves to demonstrate the philological acumen of the candidate. Yet this dissertation does not contain an edition of *Erra*, although philological suggestions regarding specific lines are given throughout. This absence is explained by two facts: that a score edition with extensive archaeological commentary is given in the aforementioned Taylor 2017, and that a much-updated edition is currently under preparation by the *electronic Babylonian Literature* project (eBL)—which is set to incorporate many new manuscripts and greatly add to our knowledge of the poem. For me to embark on the creation of a new edition of *Erra* less than a decade after Taylor's would be unnecessary, and to produce such an edition only for it to be inevitably superseded by that of eBL within a few short years would be futile. In writing this dissertation, therefore, I set out to add to our understanding of *Erra* in other ways, centering on new interpretations rather than updated readings.

The work of philology is the foundation upon which Assyriology rests. Nothing is of greater importance for the field than bringing the unearthed texts of Sumer, Babylonia, and Assyria to renewed life, and of doing so accurately. Yet the road should not end there. Just as no

man is an island, no text is either; its composition and reception are informed by all that is found in the living minds of its author and audience. This is hardly an original observation. Yet it bears reiterating, for it means that although the proper and serious study of Akkadian literature is predicated upon the work of philology stricto senso, it need not consist exclusively of it. For the modern Assyriologist to approximate, however remotely, the contemporaneous understandings of *Erra*, it is necessary to investigate not only the literal, but the cultural, political, and indeed psychological dimensions of the poem—for all of these would have played a part in shaping individual reactions to the text. W.B. Yeat's poem *The Scholars* begins in this way:

> Old heads forgetful of their sins,
> Old, learned, respectable bald heads
> Edit and annotate the lines
> That young men, tossing on their beds
> Rhymed out in love's despair
> To flatter beauty's ignorant ear.

Though the work of editing and annotating the ancient masterpieces is the most essential of all that Assyriologists do, there is also, to utilize Yeats's imagery, room to investigate the despair and the rapture of the love-stricken poets, as well as the emotions felt by the men and women who read and heard the lines born of these poets' pain.

This dissertation aims to add to our understanding of the poem in six ways. First, by improving readings of individual lines. Second, by further elucidating its plot and the motivations of its characters. Third, by outlining possible symmetries in its construction. Fourth, by evaluating proposals regarding its historical context. Fifth, by reconsidering previously proposed interpretations regarding the poem's prologue in light of the broader

Mesopotamian textual record. And sixth, by exploring the possible role of narcissism in Erra's destructive personality and thereby in the poem at large.

The first, second, and third purposes motivate the *Reader's Guide to Erra*. It is made up of five chapters—one for each tablet of the poem—and is devoted to discussing the myriad interpretive problems encountered by its reader, as well as to elucidating the intricacy of its structure—its "rare design" as it were. (This analysis of the structure of *Erra* was inspired by the contributions contained in the recent edited volume Konstantopolous and Helle 2023, and especially by Helle's own contribution in that volume as well as Helle 2023b). The fourth purpose motivates Chapter 6, *What Slaughter, by Whose Hand*. The fifth purpose motivates Chapters 7, *The Agentive Heart*, and Chapter 9, *Who is King of the World?*. These two latter chapters reevaluate, respectively, Gerfrid Müller's (1995) proposal whereby, in the prologue of the poem, Erra's own heart speaks to him directly, urging him to war, and Erica Reiner's (1958) proposal that the god referred to in the poem's first line as "King of all inhabited regions" is Marduk, the Babylonian king of the gods, and the link she makes between this possibility and a group of Assyrian protective amulets. It is important to note that though the two chapters mean to reevaluate the two proposals, their aim is not merely to opine as to old ideas, but to place these ideas in a broader context, and discuss them in greater depth, than they have been previously—the two ideas together have so far garnered discussions whose combined length is less than ten pages, and they have been discussed almost entirely without reference to the broader Mesopotamian cultural record. By rectifying this gap in the literature I aim not only to

better estimate the likelihood of these ideas being correct, but to gain a better understanding of Mesopotamian culture more generally.

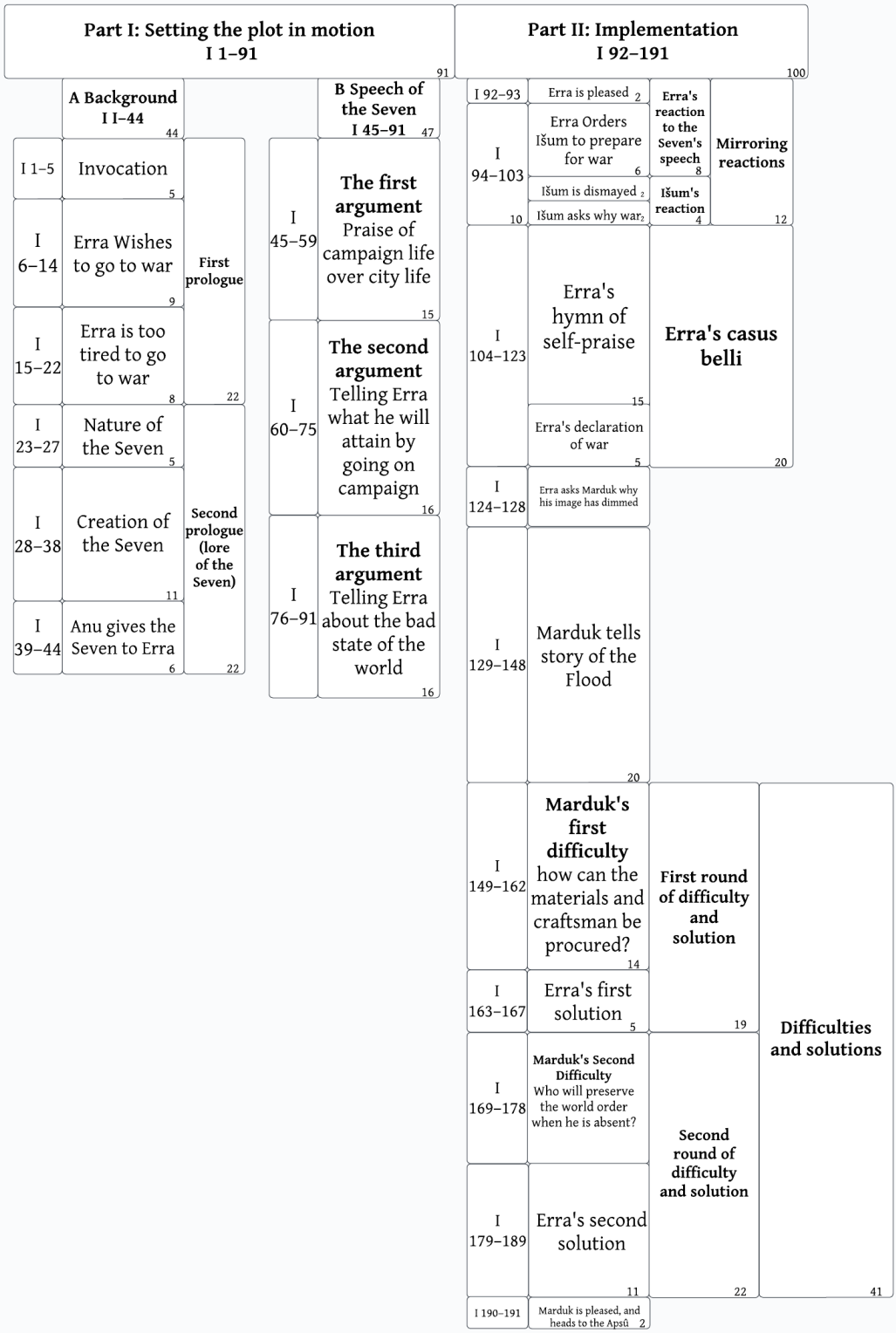
This aim is especially prominent in Chapter 7, which begins, and ends, with a reconsideration of the matter of Erra's speaking heart. One may question the necessity of devoting so extended a discussion to the matter of speaker and referent in the prologue of Erra, over which much ink has been spilled, even less to one that reconsiders an old proposal rather than putting forward a new one, and less still to one that reaches no firm conclusion as to whether or not Müller is correct. Yet the main purpose of the chapter is not to figure out the identities of the speakers and referents of the prologue of *Erra*, nor to settle the question of whether or not Erra's own heart speaks, but to investigate a more general subject, namely the roles and powers of the Mesopotamian heart (Sum. ša_3, Akk. *libbu*). Such a discussion has value regardless of whether or not Müller's specific idea is correct.

The sixth and final purpose of the dissertation, namely to explore the role of narcissism in the poem, motivates Chapter 8, *Malignant narcissism*. In it, I propose that Erra's personality conforms with a personality disorder described in contemporary psychoanalytic writing as combining excessive self-absorption with paranoia and murderess aggression. Such a psychological reading of the poem, I propose, adds to our understanding of the poem's meaning and helps explain its relevance and appeal—whether in the ancient world or in our own time.

Part I: A Reader's Guide to *Erra*

Chapter One

The Reader's Guide to Tablet I


Part I: Setting the plot in motion
I 1–91
91
Part II: Implementation
I 92–191
100
A Background
I 1–44
44
B Speech of the Seven
I 45–91
47
I 1–5
Invocation
5
I 6–14
Erra Wishes to go to war
9
I 15–22
Erra is too tired to go to war
8
First prologue
22
I 23–27
Nature of the Seven
5
I 28–38
Creation of the Seven
11
I 39–44
Anu gives the Seven to Erra
6
Second prologue (lore of the Seven)
22
I 45–59
The first argument
Praise of campaign life over city life
15
I 60–75
The second argument
Telling Erra what he will attain by going on campaign
16
I 76–91
The third argument
Telling Erra about the bad state of the world
16
I 92–93
Erra is pleased
2
I 94–103
Erra Orders Išum to prepare for war
6
Išum is dismayed
2
Išum asks why war
2
10
Erra's reaction to the Seven's speech
8
Išum's reaction
4
Mirroring reactions
12
I 104–123
Erra's hymn of self-praise
15
Erra's declaration of war
5
Erra's casus belli
20
I 124–128
Erra asks Marduk why his image has dimmed
I 129–148
Marduk tells story of the Flood
20
I 149–162
Marduk's first difficulty
how can the materials and craftsman be procured?
14
I 163–167
Erra's first solution
5
First round of difficulty and solution
19
I 169–178
Marduk's Second Difficulty
Who will preserve the world order when he is absent?
I 179–189
Erra's second solution
11
Second round of difficulty and solution
22
Difficulties and solutions
41
I 190–191
Marduk is pleased, and heads to the Apsû
2

1. Narrative Summary of Tablet I

Part 1: Setting the Plot in Motion (I 1–91, 91 ll.)

Unit A: Background (I 1–44, 44 ll.)

Unit A offers background for the events of the epic. This unit (and thus Tablet I as a whole) begins with a hymnic invocation of *šar gimir dadmē*, "king of all habitations" (I 1–5). That this invocation is made up of five lines is conspicuous, as the poem is made up of five tablets. (Curiously in both this and other tablets of *Erra* such *Sections of 5* recur with striking frequency.) The invocation is followed by a section made up of 9 lines describing the desire of Erra—or rather, his heart—to go to war, and the orders Erra issues in preparation for conflict (I 6–14). Yet war does not break out, since Erra is too tired to start one, as we are told in a section of 8 lines (I 15–22). These three sections, running from I 1 to I 22, constitute a prologue for the poem, marked both by subject matter—Erra's unrealized declaration of war—and by the poet's direct address to Išum.

Yet *Erra* does not have only one prologue. The next three narrative sections describe the terrifying and unusual nature of the Seven (I 23–27, 5 ll.), their creation and commissioning by Anu (I 28–38, 11 ll.), and their giving by Anu to Erra (I 39–44, 6 ll.). The creation, commissioning, and awarding of the Seven take place in ages primordial, long before the events of *Erra*. This second prologue, like the first, is made up of 22 lines that can be divided into three sections—thus producing narrative symmetry. The two sections of **Unit A** introduce *Sections of 20*, narrative units of anywhere from 19 to 22 lines that recur throughout the text, forming a key part

of its narrative tempo. These two sections of 22 lines, making up 44 lines, set up the main conflict of the poem, namely Erra's world-threatening rampage.

Unit B: The Seven's Speech (I 45–91, 47 ll.)

The speech of the Seven, which they deliver before Erra to incite him to war, is divided into three sections of nearly identical length. In *The First Argument* (I 45–59, 15 ll.), the Seven extol the virtues of the military life over that of the city; in *The Second Argument* (I 60–75, 16 ll.), they speak of what Erra will achieve should he decide to go to war, namely the awe-struck admiration, and terrified subjugation, of all living beings; and in *The Third Argument* (76–91), they ask Erra once again why he remains in the city, and then speak of all that has gone wrong because Erra has refrained from fighting: the Anunnaki cannot sleep, wild beasts terrorize the herds, the very beasts hold the Seven (and perhaps Erra as well) in contempt, and the Seven have lost their martial power for lack of exercising it. These three arguments of nearly equal length make up 47 lines, a narrative section only three lines longer than the sum of the first two prologues (44 ll.). Thus, the narrative pace is maintained.

Part II (I 92–191, 91 ll.)

Having been convinced by the Seven, Erra orders Išum to join him on his campaign of destruction (I 92–99, 8 ll.). Išum reacts with dismay and asks Erra why he intends evil against gods and men, and has not relented (I 100–103, 4 ll.). The following 88 lines (IV 104–191) have a steady narrative rhythm organized along Sections of 20:

1. Erra's 20-line casus belli, I 104–123, which can be divided into a hymn of self-praise (I 104–118, 15 ll.), and a more succinctly put casus belli, a Section of 5 (I 119–123).
2. A Section of 5 (I 124–128, in which Erra travels to Esagil and asks Marduk why his image has grown dim).
3. A 20-line description of the flood (I 129–148, 20 ll.).
4. Two rounds of problems and solutions regarding the renovation of Marduk's statue, each a Section of 20. In the first, I 149–167 (19 ll.), Marduk, still speaking, changes subject, pointing out a difficulty involved in the possible refurbishment of his image, namely that after the flood he sent the expert craftsman and choice materials needed for the renovation to parts unknown (I 149–162, 14 ll.). Erra replies that he will find suitable replacements (I 163–167, 5 ll.). Marduk points to another difficulty, asking who would take care of the world in his absence (I 168–178, 11 ll.), and Erra replies that he himself will do so (I 179–189, likewise 11 ll.).
5. Marduk is convinced. (I 190–191, 2 ll.)

2. Temporal Location of I 1–22

The (first) prologue of *Erra* seems strangely disconnected from the rest of the poem. Erra's heart desires war, Erra is too tired to indulge it, and the poet says to Išum that, "until you rouse him" (*adi atta tadekkûšu* [I 19]), Erra will be lying in his bed, delighting with his consort, the goddess Mami. But these events are never mentioned again, and they even seem discordant with later happenings in Tablet I: the poet's declaration to Išum is not fulfilled, since it is the Seven, whose creation and commissioning are described immediately after the prologue (I 23–44), who rouse

Erra to war, setting the plot of the poem in motion (I 46). George writes that "… Ishum has the capability of rousing Erra to action and thus initiating warfare … even if he does not do it on this occasion." (George 2013, 52). One may interpret the poet's decision to have not Išum, but the Seven, incite Erra to war "on this occasion" as a skillful misdirection: the reader is led to believe that Išum will rouse Erra, but this expectation is subverted. Things do not happen as they were supposed to, for Erra is not roused for war by temperate Išum, who would surely have chosen the right occasion to do so, but the bellicose Seven, who crave war for war's sake.

Yet this seeming contradiction may be explained by reference to an entirely different argument, advanced by Taylor, whereby the place of the prologue within the text is radically reconsidered:

> I believe the key to making sense of the prologue within the larger context of the poem is the recognition that this passage is not, strictly speaking, part of the episode that unfolds in the bulk of the text that follows and certainly does not describe what occurs at its beginning; the narrative proper only commences in I:46. Rather, as in *Anzû*, the hymnic introduction to the poem proleptically anticipates its conclusion. In other words this passage, a hymn to Išum, describes the stasis situation that prevails after the events in the poem have already transpired: Erra will rest peacefully at home until and unless Išum rouses him. Erra is not exhausted from previous combat, as suggested by Cagni; if anything, he is exhausted from *this* combat. (Taylor 2017, 39–40)

That the beginning of *Erra* is set after the rest of the poem may seem an outlandish proposition. Yet, as Taylor notes, exactly such a structure is found in *Anzû*, in the prologue of which (I 1–14) Ninurta is hailed as *kāšid mupparša anzâ ina kakkīšu*, "vanquisher of soaring Anzû with his weapons" (I 11). That the temporal sequence of *Anzû* is relevant when discussing that of *Erra* is indicated by a curious affinity between them. After the opening hymn to Ninurta, the narrative of *Anzû* switches to describing events in primordial times, introduced by the line

adīna ina igīgī lā ibbanû parakkū, "Until then no daises had been built among the Igigi" (I 15). Likewise, the prologue of *Erra* is immediately followed by an account of the primeval creation of the Seven (I 23). The poet may have modeled this transition on *Anzû*, much as he may have modeled *šar gimir dadmē* on *bin šar dadmē*.[1] He may likewise have set *Erra*'s prologue, like that of *Anzû*, after the events of the poem's plot have transpired. This literary construction would also parallel the hymnic section of the prologue of *Gilgamesh*,[2] in which Gilgamesh's subsequent travails are referred to.[3]

However, the prologue of Erra would still be fundamentally different from those of *Anzû* and *Gilgamesh*. This is because nothing transpires in these. Rather, they speak of things as they are or events that have already happened, praising Ninurta and Gilgamesh by enumerating their attributes (using verbal adjectives or participles) or listing their accomplishments (in the past tense, often in relative clauses introduced by *ša*).[4] Some parts of *Erra*'s prologue, likewise,

---

[1] The possible connection between the prologues of *Erra* and *Anzû* is discussed in Chapter 9 Part 1.

[2] The prologue of Gilgamesh can be divided into three parts. The first part is a hymnic glorification of Gilgamesh (I 1–12); the second is addressed to the reader, inviting him to survey the walls of Uruk and describing the city's dimensions, and then encouraging him to find the tablet of lapis lazuli and read it out (I 13–28); and the third is another hymn to Gilgamesh (I 29-46), introduced by the Old Babylonian incipit of the poem, *šūtur eli šarrī*, "surpassing (all other) kings," which flows into a description of Gilgamesh's nature and his mistreatment of his people, which sets the plot in motion (I 47–75). It is notable how smoothly these three parts flow into each other: Gilgamesh is said to have built the wall of Uruk and the reader is immediately invited to ascend it, and right after the reader is invited to read out the ancient tablet, another hymn to Gilgamesh begins—as if the tablet found by the reader begins exactly at this point.

[3] *ša naqba īmuru išdī māti*, "He who saw the deep, land's foundations" (*Gilgamesh* I 1), *ubla ṭēma ša lām abūbi*/ [*u*]*rḫa rūqta illikamma āniḫ u šupšuḫ*, "He brought (back) a message from before the flood/ He travelled a distant [r]oad, was weary but was granted rest." (*Gilgamesh* I 8–9).

[4] E.g. *ša naqba īmuru išdī māti*, "Who saw the deep, the land's foundations" (*Gilgamesh* I 1), *ša ina ekdūtīšu ikmû šad abni*, "Who, in his fury, bound and fettered the mountain of stone" (*Anzû* I 10).

describe Išum's sublime nature rather than narrating events: he is the bearer of the august scepter, the zealous slaughterer, he who leads the youth and maiden safely, shining like the day. However, what is described in I 6–18—Erra's desire for battle, his summoning of his weapons, of the Seven, and of Išum, his subsequently giving up on fighting and ordering his entourage back to their stations—can only be described as a series of events. These could not happen all at once, and therefore they cannot be straightforwardly construed as a "stasis situation"—although it is conceivable that the use of duratives in I 6-18, i.e. *irrissūma* (I 6), *ītammi* (I 7), *iqabbīma* (I 9), *iqabbi* (I 16), implies that Erra is caught in a perpetual, and therefore static, loop, repeatedly going through the motions of summoning and dismissing his subordinates.[5] Taylor appears to imply something similar:

> Excluding injunctives, all of which occur in direct speech, of the eleven finite verbal forms in the opening passage, all eleven are either unequivocally durative or may be construed as durative. It seems justified, therefore, to read the opening passage as a series of duratives, describing not a discrete succession of events but a general situation." (Taylor 2017, 39–40).

Yet it seems clear that these actions did, in fact, end at some point, for the poet states that what Erra will do until Išum rouses him is make love in his bed to his wife, not repeat any of the things he did in I 6–18. They therefore cannot easily be described as an infinite loop or "general situation."

---

[5] *irrissūma* (I 6), *ītammi* (I 7), *iqabbīma* (I 9), *iqabbi* (I 16). Taylor writes regarding I 1-22, "Excluding injunctives, all of which occur in direct speech, of the eleven finite verbal forms in the opening passage, all eleven are either unequivocally durative or may be construed as durative. It seems justified, therefore, to read the opening passage as a series of duratives, describing not a discrete succession of events but a general situation." (2017, 39–40).

However, that the events of I 6–18 likely constitute discrete events rather than a stasis does not rule out the essential feature of Taylor's proposal, for it is possible that they took place at some point after the plot of *Erra*, and were followed by the stasis of Erra and Mammi's conjugal bliss, set to last until Išum rouses him. This cannot be disproven, yet it also cannot be manifestly demonstrated, for the prologue of *Erra*, unlike those of *Anzû* and *Gilgamesh*, does not reference the rest of the text. One possible connection between the prologue and events set later in the poem is indicated by Taylor's statement, regarding Erra, that "if anything, he is exhausted from *this* combat." By "*this* combat" Taylor refers to Erra's rampage, described later in the poem; yet Erra shows no signs of being exhausted (*anāḫu*) in the parts of the poem known to be set after his murderous campaign. Wisnom, arguing against Machinist (1983), makes a similar point:

> Machinist and Sasson argue that violence can produce rest through the 'cleansing exhaustion' it creates (1983: 224). However, at IV.104ff. Išum reels off a long list of the peoples Erra has devastated, adding: *u*$_3$ *na-ḫa-am-ma ul ta-nu-uḫ*, 'Yet you could not rest at all!' (IV.112). If rest was the aim, it is not achieved. When Erra does eventually relent, it is not because he has been satiated by more killing, but because he is swayed by Išum's last speech. (Wisnom 2019, 199)

There is also no indication that Erra is tired from a previous conflict—as Cagni, Taylor points out, has argued (1969, 133)—or that such a conflict took place. [6] In fact, we are given no indication that Erra can even become tired from fighting, nor is the violence he does in the poem of the poem true combat at all—certainly not one against a foe that would pose a challenge for him. Indeed, Išum's actions could only be world-saving if Erra would never have

[6] Taylor's hypothesis can be seen as compatible with Cagni's, for she agrees with him that Erra is tired from a "una precedenta azione bellica" (Cagni 1969, 133), yet proposes that this conflict is the very one described in the poem.

relented on his own—to suppose otherwise is to detract from Išum's achievement. Therefore, the weariness of Erra's arms in the poem's prologue is not manifestly connected to the rest of the poem. In the absence of such a connection, Taylor's suggestion, like those of Reiner and Müller, cannot, at present, be proven or disproven.

3. The Seven's Rhetoric (I 45–91)

The Seven's terrifying nature is described (I 23–27). Their origins are explained: Anu once copulated with the earth, which gave birth to Seven gods, whom Anu named "the Seven," ordered to terrorize the universe (I 28–38), and gave to Erra to serve as his weapons (I 39–44).

Hungry for combat, they address Erra, seeking to awaken him Erra from his indolent existence in the city. In a speech made up of forty-six lines (I 46–91), which can be divided into three sections, they deliver argument after argument designed to provoke the god into murderous action. Some of their reasoning is pragmatic and practical. Repeating a motif found in the earlier flood story of *Atrahasis*, they say that the netherworld gods cannot sleep because of the noise made by humans, who have grown too numerous through peace and security (I 82).[7] They describe the dire predicament of farmers and shepherds whose herds are terrorized by wolves and lions that fill the steppe because of Erra's reluctance to reduce their numbers (I 84–86). Like veteran warriors grown unfit through inaction, they insist that their weapons are growing too strong for them and will surely overpower them should they abstain from battle

[7] For the observation that the Seven's words echo *Atraḫasis*, Wisnom 2019, 194–195.

any longer (I 87–91). Yet in addition to arguments made to appeal to Erra's reason and sense of responsibility to the world, whether it be to gods, humans, or his own servants, another theme is starkly evident: ego and manly pride. The Seven open their speech by mocking Erra's current peaceful life in the city, which they describe as cowardly and effete, unbecoming of a true warrior.[8] Espousing a vision of violent virility, they insist that the life of a city dweller can never be truly complete and fulfilling, and that the hardships of war are far sweeter than the empty comforts of urban life, which make men soft and weak:

I 45 *šunu ezzūma tebû kakkūšun*
I 46 *ītamû ana erra tebe izizma*
I 47 *minsu kī šībi muqqi tušib ina āli*
I 48 *kī šerri la'î tušib ina bīti*
I 49 *kī lā ālik ṣēri nikkala akal sinniš*
I 50 *kī ša tāḫāza lā nīdû niplaḫa nirūda*
I 51 *alāk ṣēri ša eṭlūti kī ša isinnumma*
I 52 *āšib āli lū rubû ul išebbe akla*
I 53 *šumsuk ina pī nišīšūma qalil qaqqassu*
I 54 *ana ālik ṣēri akî*[9] *itarraṣ qāssu*
I 55 *ša āšib āli lū puggulat kubukkuš*
I 56 *ana ālik ṣēri akī idannin mīna*
I 57 *akal āli lullû ul ubbala kamā*[*n*] *tumri*
I 58 *šikar našpi duššupi ul ubbalu m*[*ê*] *n*[*ā*]*di*
I 59 *ekal tamlî ul ubbala maṣallu ša* [*rē'î*][10]

[8] This was noted by Reiner in a 1967 paper. She writes, "But parallel to… expressions of superiority on the part of the participants of a high-level urban culture there runs an opposite trend, which exalts the freedom of the wandering nomad and despises the effeminate life of the Mesopotamian cities. This trend is most explicit in Assyrian sources and perhaps reflects the more mobile, rough-and-ready, and adventurous way of life of the Assyrians, as opposed to the settled city-dwellers of southern Mesopotamia." She proceeds to cite *Erra* I 45–59 as an example of this trend, and continues: "This way of life seeks its virtues in the manly occupations of war and raids; it boasts of hardships, and finds its reward in the free and unfettered life of the high-ways. The city dweller is no better than a decrepit old man who cannot indulge in the pursuits meant for a man." (Reiner 1967, 118–119).

[9] The reading *akî*, "weak", rather than *akī*, "how", is adopted from eBL (see note on I 54).

[10] On the reconstruction of this line, Taylor 2017, 414.

I 45 They are enraged, their weapons at the ready,
I 46 They say to Erra: "Rise, get on your feet!
I 47 "Why do you stay inside the city, like a feeble old man?
I 48 "Why do you stay at home, like a wee babe?
I 49 "Shall we eat women's bread, like those who do not go to war?
I 50 "Should we quake in terror,[11] as if we know not battle?
I 51 "The venturing into youthful manhood is like that into a festival,[12]
I 52 "A city-dweller, be he a prince, can never eat his fill,
I 53 "His citizens despise him, he is contemptible,
I 54 "He begs the humblest soldier,
I 55 "The city-dweller—be his strength mighty,
I 56 "How could he overpower the humblest soldier?
I 57 "(While) city food may be refined, it does not equal ash-baked bread,
I 58 "The finest honeyed ale does not compare to water from a skin,
I 59 "The terraced palace is inferior to the [shepherd's] sleeping spot.

By denigrating Erra's current lifestyle as weak and effeminate while extolling war, the very thing Erra is not participating in, as the ultimate manly endeavor (to the extent that the battlefield is called "the field of youthful manhood"), the Seven threaten his masculinity. They imply that Erra has become weak from living in the city. They insinuate that he, like the city-dwelling prince, is contemptible, not even worthy enough to beg from a campaigner, and that he is disdained by his people (these, in the case of Erra, would be the human race, and Erra does indeed say, later,

[11] The use of the preterites *niplaḫa* and *nirūda* is unexpected here, and translators have generally amended it. They could, however, be taken as first-person plural cohortatives—as suggested by the eBL (drawing on GAG §81g).

[12] This translation follows Taylor understanding of the line, which she translates as "Going to the 'field of manhood' is like going to the field of a festival." She writes (2017, 412 n. 61), "The translation adopted here assumes the following underlying structure of the verse: *alāk ṣēri ša eṭlūti kī* [*alāk ṣēri*] *ša isinnum-ma*. All translators since Cagni have construed *eṭlūti* not as an abstract form but as the plural of *eṭlu*, "young man." However, the many parallels that involve Sumerian nam-ĝuruš, an undeniable abstract form, make such translations less than optimal." The unexpected *isinumma* is here analyzed as having a locative-terminative *-um-* ending. Intriguingly, while HuzNA1 has *i-sin-nu-um-ma*, NinNA1b (the only other witness to the word), has ⌜*i*⌝-[*s*]*in-nu-im-ma*—as though the Nineveh scribe changed his mind about the case of *isinnu* mid-writing.

that the people are contemptuous, and do not fear his name [I 120-123, quoted below]). Thus, the Seven open their speech with well-aimed threats to Erra's ego.

Wisnom writes of the Seven's speech,

> The concepts and language in this speech are closely comparable to those in Tablet I of *Gilgameš*, which describes the transformation of Enkidu from wild man to civilized man, moving from the steppe to the city… The city is a symbol of civilization… and so Seven's condemnation of city-life, their praise of the wild, and rebuke of Erra for the taming of his violence, together imply that violence is a regressive state, a wildness more suited to beasts than men. The contrast between the ways of the city and those of the steppe pit the two realms against each other, with the uncivilized agents of war firmly placed outside urban territory. (Wisnom 2019, 206–207)

The two episodes contrast in at least three ways: while the female Šamḫat introduces Enkidu to sex and brings him to the city, the male Seven disturb Erra's sexual dalliance in the city to send him to the steppe; Šamḫat enquires why Enkidu does not leave the beasts of the field to go to Uruk,[13] whereas the Seven ask Erra why he remains in the city rather than going on campaign (I 47, 76); and Šamḫat makes Enkidu abandon water for beer,[14] but the Seven encourage Erra to give up beer for water (I 58). The contrasts between the two episodes seem too numerous and specific to be coincidental, suggesting a deliberate subversion of the narrative of Enkidu's seduction by the author of *Erra*. As explored by Frahm (2010, 6–10), *Erra* can be seen as a countertext to *Enūma eliš*, serving as an etiology of Babylonia's disorder and weakness where the earlier text was a charter of its strength. *Erra's* reversal of the ascent from savagery to culture

[13] *Gilgamesh* I 208. For an edition, eBL/Corpus/L/I.4.

[14] OB *Gilgamesh* II 87–105. 87–98 are paralleled in the SB edition by the fragmentary II 44–51 (OB II 99-105 were presumably paralleled by lines in the lacuna from SB I 51–59).

found in *Gilgamesh* would make it a countertext vis-à-vis another masterpiece of Babylonian literature.

After extolling the virtues of the martial life and implying that Erra's strength has been diminished by his overly peaceful existence in the city, the Seven appeal to another facet of his ego: his desire for glory, dominion, and praise. They describe what will happen should Erra go to war: the whole world and its inhabitants, human and divine, even the physical world itself, will submit to him and acknowledge his ultimate sovereignty as the mightiest of gods:

I 60 *qurādu erra ṣīma ana ṣēri turuk kakkīka*
I 61 *rigimka dunnimma lištar'ibū eliš u šapliš*
I 62 *igīgī lišmûma lišarbû šumka*
I 63 *anunnakī lišmûma lišḫuṭ*[*ū*] *zikirka*
I 64 *ilānū lišmûma liknušū ana nīrīka*
I 65 *malkī lišmûma likmis*[*ū*] *šapalka*
I 66 *mātātu lišmûma bilassi*[*na liš*]*šâka*
I 67 *qallū lišmûma ina ramā*[*nīš*]*unu l*[*im*]*ūtū*
I 68 *dannu lišmēma liššur emū*[*q*]*īšu*
I 69 *ḫursānī zaqrūti lišmûma lišpilā rēš*[*ā*]*šun*
I 70 *tâmāti gallāti lišmâma l*[*idd*]*alḫāma liḫalliqā m*[*iš*]*irta*
I 71 *ša qīši danni liktappirū gupnūšu*
I 72 *apu ša nēreba* [*l*]*ā īšû li*[*ḫt*]*aṣṣiṣū qanûšu*
I 73 *nišū liplaḫāma litquna ḫubūrši*[*n*]
I 74 *būlu līrurma litūr ana ṭiṭṭi*
I 75 *ilānū abbūka līmurūma linādū qurdīk*[*a*]

I 60 "O warrior-Erra, go out the field, and make your weapons "clatter,
I 61 "Make loud your cry, and let them quake, above and below,
I 62 "May the Igīgī hear, and magnify your name,
I 63 "May the Annunāki hear, and fear your name,
I 64 "May deities hear, and bow down to your yoke,
I 65 "May sovereigns hear and fall beneath your feet,
I 66 "May (all) lands hear, and bring to you their tribute,
I 67 "May weaklings hear and fall down dead (from fright),
I 68 "May the mighty hear, and let his strength diminish,
I 69 "May the lofty mountains hear, and may their heads be lowered,
I 70 "May the rolling seas hear, and be roiled, and may their produce be wiped out,

I 71 “As for the mighty forest, may its boughs be sheared,
I 72 “The thicket without entry—may its reeds be broken off,
I 73 “May the people grow afraid, and their clamor be corrected,
I 74 “May animals tremble, and return to clay,
I 75 “May the gods, your fathers, see, and praise your valor.”

4. Išum’s Power over the Seven (I 92–99)

The Seven succeed in rousing Erra to battle, and he orders Išum to go on the warpath:

I 95 *minsu šemâtāma qâliš tuš*[*ša*]*b*
I 96 *ṭūda pitēma luṣbat ḫarrā*[*n*]*a*
I 97 *sebettu qarrād lā šanān lupp*[*išū*] *t*[*āḫāz*]*a*
I 98 *kakkī*[*y*]*a ezzūti šūlika idāya*
I 99 *u attā ālik maḫrīya ālik pā*[*nī*]*ya*

I 95 “Why, having surely heard, do you s[i]t silently?
I 96 “Open the way that I may launch a campaign!
I 97 “May the Seven, warriors unrivaled, all d[o] b[att]le,
I 98 “Make [m]y fierce weapons march at my side!
I 99 “And you will be my vanguard, he who goes before me.”

That Erra asks Išum to make the Seven march at his own side is significant. It is possible that Erra has delegated control of the Seven, his personal weapons, to Išum, and that it is Išum, who acts as the Seven’s immediate superior in this divine “chain of command,” who is expected to give them orders. The impression that Išum has power over the Seven is strengthened by I 27, *išum daltumma edil pānu*[*ššu*]*n*, “Išum, (like) a door, is bolted before [the]m (the Seven),”[15] and further reinforced by the events of Tablet IV. When Erra attacks Babylonia (IV 1–113), evidently without Išum’s cooperation, he does so without the Seven. Their absence is curious, yet it may

[15] George writes of this image (2013, 52), “The only figure who stands between the Seven and action is not Erra but Ishum... Ishum is... again identified as an initiator of violence, but the image is a double-edged sword, for doors close as well as open. Ishum, as we shall see, is a force of moderation; he can terminate warfare as well as start it.”

be explained by unwillingness on their part to act against Išum's wishes. Such an explanation would also fit the later events of Tablet IV, for it is only when Išum goes to war himself, against Mount Šaršar, that the Seven fight, following in his wake (IV 137–150).

5. Erra Declares War (I 100–123)

Act According to Whose Heart?

Upon hearing Erra's orders, Išum reacts with dismay:

I 100[16] (A)[*iš*]*mēma īš*[*um annâ*]*qabâ* [(*ša*) *err*]*a*
(B) *īšum annīta* [*ina šemêšu*]
I 101 (A) *rēma irt*[*ašī*(*ma*) *iqt*]*abi* [*aḫūlap*]/
(B) *īpušma pâšu izakkar* [*ana qurā*]*di e*[*rra*]
I 102 (*qurādu erra*) *minsu ana il*[*āni lemu*]*tta takp*[*ud*]
I 103 *ana sapān mātāti ḫulluq* [*nišīšin lemu*]*tta takpudma*
lā t[*atūr ana a*]*rkīka*

I 100 (A) [Iš]um [hea]rd [thi]s speech [(of) Err]a,
(B) Išum, [upon hearing] this,
I 101 (A) He ha[d] compassion, and [sai]d [alas!]
(B) Spoke, saying [to Warrio]r Erra:
I 102 (Warrior Erra) why did you plo[t] [evi]l against the god[s]?
I 103 You have plotted [ev]il, to level the lands and destroy [their peoples],
Will you not turn back?[17]

---

[16] 100–101(A) are taken from VAT. 9162 (AššNA2). 100–101(B) are taken from STT 1, no. 16 (C) (HuzNA1) and NinNA1b.

[17] Taylor translates *lā ta*[*tūr ana a*]*rkīka*, as "and have not turned away," and notes, "In general the classical Old Babylonian prose distinction between *ul* and *lā* is adhered to in this text; this apparent error appears only in copy A (from Sultantepe), a frequently idiosyncratic copy on issues of form" (2017, 425, n. 115). The eBL, implicitly taking *lā* to be correct—and to have its expected (non-indicative) meaning—translates "will you not desist?" This interpretation is followed here.

Erra did not tell Išum that this is what he intends to do. Here, as in later in the epic, Išum is shown to know Erra's very heart. In response to Išum's question, Erra delivers a "casus belli" of sorts, which he begins with a hymn of self-praise, hailing himself as mighty in heaven and earth (I 104–118). Next, Erra says,

I 119 *ilāni napḫaršunu nib[ī]ta šaḫtū*
I 120 *u nišī ṣalmā[t q]aqqadi leq[û] šēṭūtu*
I 121 *anāku aššu lā išḫutūma zikrī*
I 122 *u ša rubê marduk amāssu iddûma eppuš kī libbuš*[18]
I 123 *rubâ marduk ušaggagma ina šubtīšu adekkēma nišī asappan*

I 119 "All the gods fear (my) na[m]e,
I 120 "Yet the bla[ck-he]aded people hol[d] (me) in contempt.[19]
I 121 "I—because they have not feared my name,
I 122 "And have cast off prince Marduk's command—will do as he wishes:
I 123 "I will make Prince Marduk angry, and rouse him from his dwelling, and lay waste to the people.

Before remarking on Erra's stated reasons for going to war, the phrase normalized here as *eppuš kī libbuš* should be discussed. It is preserved in two manuscripts. One (eBL's AššNASch2) has *ip-pu-šu*. In line with the interpretations of Ebeling, Gössmann, Labat, and Bottéro, Taylor (2017, 429) normalizes the phrase as *ippušū kī libbuš*, and understands it to refer to the black-headed people acting as they please. There are two problems with this reading, one grammatical and the other philological. The first is that the phrase would then literally read "They act according to his heart," yet *nišī* is a plural noun, and the black-headed people have many hearts. That the

[18] On the phrase *eppuš kī libbuš*, see below.

[19] Erra saying that the people do not fear his name implies that it is him specifically that they hold in contempt, and that it is his name that the god's fear. As indicated on a note on I 119 in the eBL edition of the tablet, this impression is confirmed by the parallel III 194–195, in which Erra speaks of *nibītī*, *šēṭūtī*, and *zikrī*. Manuscripts IV 113, a line parallel to I 120, yield both *šēṭūtu* and *šēṭūtī*, which suggests that the scribes viewed the forms as interchangeable in this case.

people would be said to have one "heart" would not be irregular, as Taylor demonstrates by quoting Marduk's words in I 134, … *ša kakkabānī šamāmī manzassunu išnīma ul utīr ašruššun*, "…concerning the stars of the sky, their position changed, nor did I return (them) to their place." However, one would still expect a plural suffix to be attached to *libbu* (as is the case with *manzassunu* and *ašruššun*). Taylor writes, "It is possible that the singularity of the object (*libbu*) has influenced the composer of the text to attach a singular suffix . . . with apparent distributive force." This is possible, yet the use of *manzassunu* and *ašruššun* in I 134 shows that this was not a feature of the author's style.

A greater problem, however, is that another manuscript (eBL's HuzNA) has [*i*]*p-pu-uš*.[20] The spelling *ip-pu-šu* can be analyzed as a plural verb, as well as a singular form with an overhanging vowel—this would not be unusual in *Erra*, in which verbs with overhanging vowels are unusually common.[21] Yet [*i*]*p-pu-uš* is unequivocally singular. This favors a second line of interpretation, followed by Cagni and Foster, as well as, more recently, eBL, whereby the phrase should be normalized as *ippuš kī libbuš*.[22] The heart would then be that of Marduk, who would be said to act according to his own inclination, and one would then translate the passage as "I, for they have not feared my name,/ and have cast off Marduk's command—and (or "so") he can act as he wishes—/ will make prince Marduk angry, and make him rise from his dwelling, and lay waste to the people."

---

[20] Taylor transliterates this manuscript as reading [*i*]*p-pu-šu*, yet this does not fit the hand-copy (STT 1 no. 16 ii 55). No photos of the tablet appear to be available.

[21] For a list of 40 such forms in the poem, Taylor 2017, 268 n. 71.

[22] This is implicit from Foster's translation, "so he may act according to his wishes."

Though this reading presents no grammatical problems, it appears to pose two considerable thematic ones. First, Erra's plans do not appear to conform with Marduk's wishes. That Erra speaks of his own destructive plan immediately after saying that Marduk may act as he pleases implies that this plan conforms to Marduk's desire, yet Marduk himself, in his conversation with Erra in Esagil, evinces no wish to harm anyone, and entrusts the universe to Erra with the understanding that he will keep order, not massacre the people. However, new lines of Tablet II, further discussed below, show that Marduk did, in fact, approve Erra's destructive plan. Therefore, that Erra's plan in I 123 would be said to be in accordance with Marduk's wishes in I 122 presents no real difficulty (that Marduk desires the destruction of the people was correctly intuited by Foster [2005, 763], who wrote, concerning I 122, that "Erra will motivate Marduk to act as he really wanted to anyway)." Second, Erra would say that Marduk will act as he wishes, yet in Erra's plan as stated in I 123, and in the actual decimation of the lands, it is not Marduk who acts destructively, but Erra himself. As Taylor notes,[23] such disjunction would also exist on the level of syntax, for "He may do as he wishes," which has Marduk as the subject, would seem disconnected from the rest of the passage, which has to do with the plan Erra is going to put into action, and has Erra as the subject. This can be seen in the eBL's translation, which, in its current form,[24] is ungrammatical: "I—for they have not feared my name,/And have neglected

[23] Of Foster's translation "so he may act according to his wishes," Taylor writes (2017, 429 n. 134), "This essentially unmarked shift in subject and in topic both makes for highly awkward syntax and confused sense."

[24] Accessed on 07/05/2023.

the orders of prince Marduk,/he shall do as he pleases./I shall infuriate prince Marduk, I shall raise him from his throne and devastate mankind."

One may propose a third understanding of the phrase. Reading the IP-sign as *ep*, one could normalize the phrase not as *ippuš kī libbuš*, but *eppuš kī libbuš*, "I (Erra) will act in accordance with his (Marduk's) wishes." The sentence beginning at the start of I 121 with *anāku* would then finish at the end of I 122 with *eppuš kī libbuš*, with the subordinated clause started by *aššu* bracketed in between, creating a pleasing symmetry. Erra declaring *eppuš kī libbuš* does not present the philological and grammatical difficulties posed by *ippušū kī libbuš*, nor does it seem disconnected from the rest of the passage like *ippuš kī libbuš*, but would flow naturally into the description of Erra's in I 123.

An Overdetermined Conflict

Curiously, in his reply to Išum, Erra cites none of the arguments the Seven used to incite him to battle, nor does his answer conform to what Anu told him upon giving him the Seven, *kī nišī dadmē ḫuburšina elīka imtarṣu/ ublamma libbaka ana šakān kamāri… lū kakkūka ezzūtu šunūma lilliku idāka*, "When the clamor of the world's peoples vexes you/and your heart drives you to bring about slaughter… May they be your furious weapons, and march at your side" (I 41–42, 44). Rather than speaking of the virtues of the military life, his desire for glory, or the clamor of the people, Erra puts forward two reasons of his own for going to war: that the people hold him in

contempt, and that they have "cast off Marduk's word."[25] Is Erra telling the truth? His justifications seem to come out of nowhere. Yet one would think that if Erra was lying or mistaken, Išum or the narrator would have said so. This may be a literal argument from silence, yet one is nevertheless inclined to believe the basic truth of Erra's claims regarding the people's attitude and behavior—even if his real motivations for going to war may have more to do with his own bloodlust than any misdeeds on humanity's part.

That the causes for war spoken of by Anu to Erra, those voiced by the Seven to Erra, and those given by Erra to Išum, are all different from one another, may demonstrate the epic's psychological realism. Though Erra's bloodlust was awakened by the Seven, who were themselves given to him by Anu to serve as his weapons, his own reasons for going to war (or specifically those that he chooses to bring up before Išum) may be entirely different from theirs. That forces join in common cause need not mean that they have the same motivations. Moreover, even in modern times, wars are seldom seen to have a single and universally agreed-upon cause. Rather, various motivations may be proposed for the selfsame war, whether it be by those initiating it or those who look back upon it long after. To take a modern example, the causes of the First World War are still debated among historians, with no consensus in sight. That the genesis of Erra's war on humanity is portrayed as overdetermined can therefore be seen as a further example of its realism, and another feature that grants the work current relevance.

[25] It is unclear which "word," or perhaps rather "command," is meant in this case. It can be guessed that the people's casting off of Marduk's word refers to lawless behavior, yet the people's actual misdeeds, apart from holding Erra in contempt, are never specified in the text as it is currently known.

6. What is the Task Erra Spoke of? (I 124–191)

In accordance with his plan, Erra travels to Esagil, the abode of Marduk, king of the gods (I 123). It is possible that Erra could have simply removed Marduk by force. Išum begins his account of Erra's violence in Babylon in tablet IV by saying *qurādu erra ša rubê marduk zikiršu lā tašhuṭ* "O warrior Erra, you did not fear the name of prince Marduk" (IV 1). This line suggests that Erra attacked Babylon in open defiance of Marduk, and that Marduk was unable to stop him. Marduk also utters a lament while Babylon is destroyed by its own citizens (IV 36-44), which, at first glance, seems to imply that he both opposes Erra's destructive actions and is powerless to stop them. However, it is evident from Marduk's ensuing decision to punish the inhabitants of Babylon for their violence (IV 46–49) that he has no intention of saving them, and that, therefore, one should not necessarily deduce from his failure to protect Babylon that he is the weaker party. Then again, later in the same tablet Išum quotes Erra as saying *ana šubat šar ilāni lu'īrma lā ibbašši milku*, "May I enter the dwelling of the king of the gods, so that counsel will exist" (IV 127), implying that Erra intends to remove Marduk by force, and that he has the ability to do so. Indeed, in tablet V Išum explicitly says that no power on earth can oppose Erra in his wrath: *ina ūmi uggatika ali māhirka*, "In the day of your wrath, who is your equal?" (V 19).

In sum, it is probable that Erra, the god of violence himself, could have dispensed with the niceties and overpowered Marduk. Yet Erra prefers to use words instead of weapons to attain his desire. This is in keeping with Wisnom's observation that the epic as a whole extolls the power of words over violence: "The ideal of heroism in this poem is eloquence, countering violence with speech rather than force," (Wisnom 2019, 5). In the same way that Išum calms Erra

down through rhetoric despite his martial prowess (as noted in Wisnom 2019, 161), Erra himself prefers bloodless trickery over brute force.

Erra begins by asking Marduk why his body—that is, his cult image—has become sullied (I 126–127). Marduk prefaces his answer to Erra by saying, *qurādu erra aššu šipri šâšu ša taqbû epēša*, "warrior Erra, as for that *šipru* you spoke of performing" (I 131). There are two possibilities as to what *šipru*, "task," or "work," Marduk is referring to, and therefore what his speech is said to concern. The natural candidate would be the plan Erra stated to Išum in I 123, immediately before departing for Esagil: *rubâ marduk ušaggagma ina šubtīšu adekkēma nišī asappan*, "I will make Marduk angry, and make him rise from his dwelling, and lay waste to the people," and this is how Foster understands it (2005, 882 n. 4). In I 132, the very next line after Marduk declares his speech to concern the *šipru* Erra spoke of, he begins telling the of the *abūbu*, "flood" or "catastrophe," saying, *ultu ullu āgugūma ina šubtīya atbûma aškuna abūba* "long ago I grew angry, and rose from my dwelling, causing the *abūbu*." This line is almost identical in structure to I 123, and, in effect, describes how Marduk fulfilled a version of Erra's tripartite plan entirely of his own volition. This suggests it is this plan that Marduk that is addressing.

However, there is a mismatch between Erra's stated plan and the particulars of Marduk's speech, for large portions of it concern the renovation of Marduk's image, which is not mentioned in I 123. This mismatch is especially clear in the passage beginning in I 149, which Marduk begins by saying *enna aššu šipri šâšu ša taqbû epēša*, "Now, as for that *šipru* you spoke of performing," and immediately continues by speaking about the whereabouts of the sublime tree needed for his refurbishment. Such incongruence argue in favor of the *šipru* being the

renovation itself. Taylor writes of I 131, "Throughout this text the 'procedure' consistently refers to the act of shining Marduk's jewelry and cleaning his outfit." (2017, 432). And indeed, in five of the six occurrences of the word (outside of I 131 and I 149), this is what it seems to refer to.[26] However, the simple fact is that Erra is not known to have spoken of the renovation, though perhaps one should understand that Erra implicitly raised the renovation as a subject through his questions regarding Marduk's dirtied appearance. The exact nature of the *šipru* is, thus, difficult to ascertain, though it is clear it involves Marduk's renovation in some way.

It should be noted that while Marduk speaks in response to Erra's question as to why his image is currently dirty, he never explicitly answers it. He tells Erra that the *abūbu* battered and dirtied his image, and Girra, the fire god, restored it to its former glory (I 140–142). Yet as Taylor notes, Marduk does not explain how it came to be dirty once again in the time since:

> Nothing in the text suggests Marduk's jewelry has become tarnished as a result of neglect specifically; in fact, there seems to have been some awareness that cult statues could deteriorate naturally and might require at least occasional maintenance. It is clear that Erra uses the legitimate necessity of cleaning Marduk's jewelry to remove Babylon's high god from power and then undeniably exploits the dangerous liminal period that prevails while Marduk is absent from his post, but nothing in the text suggests he is invested in punishing humanity specifically for bringing about this state of affairs. We are not told how the situation has come to be, only that it came about previously as a result of the Flood (see *Erra Song* I:140), and the narrative appears uninterested in exploring the current cause: natural deterioration and the need for occasional maintenance may simply form part of the background assumptions on which the plot is founded. (Taylor 2017,201)

[26] The word *šipru* is known to appear seven more times in the epic. The *šipru* mentioned by Marduk in I 142 and I 145 seems to be the renovation of his statue, as does the *šipru* referred to in II 38 and II 40, as well as *šipru šâšu*, the very phrase Marduk used to describe what Erra spoke of, in II 24. The *šipru šâšu* Erra ponders in II 123 (discussed below), may be Marduk's renovation or Erra's destructive plans.

Marduk never says, or even implies, that the dirtying of his image is the fault of anyone in particular. It would make sense for Marduk's statue to become dirty in the time that has passed since the primordial catastrophe. It may also be the case that Marduk's deterioration is a kind of aging, and his restoration in the netherworld signifies a kind of rebirth.[27] Yet this, likewise, is speculation. All that seems to matter for the purposes of Marduk and Erra's conversation is that Marduk has become sullied, and that his restoration would be no simple thing.

After recounting the story of the flood, Marduk offers two objections to the idea that he should have his image refurbished. The first is that the expertise and materials necessary are no longer available (I 147–162). He himself removed the *mēsu* tree, "the flesh of the gods," the only material worthy of making up his body, to an unknown location. He has sent the sublime craftsmen, whose unparalleled skill would be needed for to accomplish his renewal, to the depths of the Apsû. How, then, can the task be completed? Erra's answer (I 163–167) is fragmentary, yet he seems to promise to provide suitable replacements for all things required to restore Marduk's form. Marduk, offering his second objection (I 170–178), says that if he leaves Esagil the world will unravel, and be thrown into chaos. Erra responds by promising to keep the cosmos in order in Marduk's absence (I 181–189). He will issue instructions to gods high and low, and keep the forces of evil at bay. Marduk himself, while being restored, will be guarded by Anu and Enlil. Erra's words please Marduk (I 191–191), and he departs from Esagil (II 1–2).

---

[27] Wisnom makes a similar argument, though it stresses regression rather than renewal: "Regression is represented in a more explicit way by Marduk going back down to the Apsû, his place of birth in *Enūma eliš* I.81. The physical location of his movement corresponds with his loss of power—he moves back to the place where he dwelt before the slaying of Ti'āmtu, and at the same time as he loses his supremacy he moves back to where he came from before he earned it, to infancy and powerlessness" (2019, 211).

This episode presents a curious problem. By convincing Marduk to go down to the Netherworld, Erra fulfills one of the three parts of the plan he expressed in I 123: to make Marduk leave his dwelling (*ina šubtīšu adekkēma*). Yet he does not do this by making Marduk angry, as he said he would do (*rubâ Marduk ušaggagma*). Marduk evinces no wrath in his interaction with Erra in Esagil, and there is certainly no indication that he leaves it in a rage. He expresses no wish whatsoever to harm anyone, as one would expect from an angry god. Erra's use of *ušaggagma* in I 123, therefore, seems inconsistent with Marduk's actual state of mind as he leaves Esagil (though it may also be that in Tablet I Erra simply did not succeed in making Marduk angry).

Chapter Two

The Reader's Guide to Tablet II

1. Marduk's Renovation (II 1–48)

The lines describing the events immediately following Marduk's departure from Esagil are fragmentary, and should be analyzed with caution. That being said, what we currently have of them seems to prove something important indeed: that Erra's promises to keep the world in order—which, as Taylor notes,[28] were hardly in line with his world-threatening intentions—were nothing but lies. In I 170–172, Marduk tells Erra:

I 170 [*ina š*]*ubtēya atebbīma šibīt šamê erṣeti uptaṭṭar*
I 171 [*m*]*û illûnimma iba*ʾʾ*ū mātu*
I 172 *ūmu namru ana daʾummati uta*[*rrū*]

I 170 "(If) I arise [from] my dwelling, the seam of heaven (and) earth will be unraveled.
I 171 "The waters will rise and sweep over the land
I 172 "They will tu[rn] bright day to darkness."

Erra seeks to calm Marduk's fears, saying that he will strengthen the seam of heaven and earth (I 182). Yet in II 6 we are told, *šārī lemnūtu itbûnimma ūmu namru ana da*[*ʾumma*]*ti utte*[*rrū*], "Evil winds rose, and tur[ned] bright day to dar[kness]." Erra told Marduk that he would bind the wings of the evil wind like a bird (I 187: *ša šāri lemni kīma iṣṣūri akassâ idīšu*), yet it appears that he has not done so, for evil winds rise freely and turn the day to darkness, just as Marduk

[28] Taylor 2017, 221 n. 78: "… That Erra intends to unleash chaos all along, rather than approaching Marduk in good faith and then raging out of control once power has been ceded to him, is evident from the bellicose nature of the Divine Heptad's speech that spurs him into action … from Išum's labeling his plan 'plot[ting] evil' ([*lemu*]*tti takpud* in I:102 and I:103), and from Erra's own admission that, having driven Marduk from his throne, he will 'crush the people' (*nišī asappan* in I:123)."

said would happen if the cosmic seam will be unraveled. It follows that it has indeed been unraveled, and that Erra lied when he said he would prevent this catastrophic event. It should be noted that I 182 and II 6 are conspicuously similar to *Gilgamesh* XI 106–107, *ša adad šuḫarassu iba'u šamê*/ [*mi*]*mma namru ana da*[*'u*]*m*[*mati*] *utte*[*rrū*], "The deathly silence of Adad swept across the sky,/ [All] that was bright was turn[ed] to da[r]k[ness]." This may be no coincidence, and the author of *Erra* may have alluded to Ūta-napišti's account of the deluge in his own description of a cosmic collapse.[29]

Other lines at the beginning of Tablet II also seem to describe a breakdown of cosmic order. The light of the sun and moon is dimmed (II 4–5). the Igigi tremble in fear, and likely fly up to heaven (II 8). The Anunnaki shudder in the depths (II 9). The gods leave the shrines and, like the king of Nineveh in the book of Jonah,[30] sit in the dust (II 11). A speech whose speaker is as yet unclear follows, which seems to express hopes for the putting right of the world, and opposition to Erra's plan to lay waste the lands and destroy their peoples (II 12–29). The speech's deliverer speaks of having created humanity (II 26–27). He or she may be Ea, said to have created mankind in *Enūma eliš* (VI 31–38), although he is mentioned by name in the speech

[29] Other possible allusions in *Erra* to accounts of the deluge in *Atraḫasis* and *Gilgamesh* are proposed, and their possible implications analyzed, in Wisnom 2019, 192–201 and 208–211.

[30] *Jonah* 3:6.

itself,[31] and begins a speech of his own immediately following it (II 30). A mother goddess such as Bēlet-ilī or Aruru, said to have created humanity in other works,[32] is another candidate.

In his own speech, Ea speaks of the divine craftsmen, who have gone down to the netherworld. He asks himself how their human counterparts, whom he created, can carry out the cleaning of Marduk's statue:

II 31 *enna ša itbû rubû marduk ša ummânī šunūti elâšunu ul iqbi*
II 32 *ṣalmīšunu ša ina nišī abnû ana er*[*ra addinu*?][33] *ana ilūtīšu ṣīrti*
II 33 *ša ilu lā i'iru iṭeḫḫû mīnu*
II 34 *ana ummânī šunūti libba rapša iddinšunūtīma išdīšunu uktinnu*
II 35 *uznī išrukšunūtīma qātīšunu ulalli*
II 36 *šukutta šâša ušanbiṭūma šumsuqat eli ša maḫri*
II 37 *qurādu erra mūša u urra lā naparkâ uzuz pānuššu*

II 31 "Now, he who has risen (from his dwelling), prince Marduk—he did not command the ascent of these craftsmen.[34]

---

[31] That does not entirely rule out Ea as the speaker of this speech, for Erra speaks of himself in the third person in V 57–58.

[32] Bēlet-ilī is said to have created mankind in OB *Atraḫasis* (I 189–247) and to have given birth to mankind in *Gilgamesh* XI 123. Aruru is likely said to have created mankind in *Gilgamesh* I 95, though the line is partly reconstructed. In *Erra* itself, the goddess Ninmenanna is associated with birth (III 16). As Black and Green remark, by the 2nd millennium all of these theonyms likely came to refer to the same goddess (1992, 133).

[33] This line is attested in four manuscripts (Taylor's C, W, LL, and UU. Score edition in Taylor 2017, 453). It is unclear how many signs, if any, are missing between *èr*-[*ra*] and *ana* DINGIR-*ti*-*šú*." Taylor writes (2017, 453 n. 216), "It is not clear that Erra's name is followed directly by *ana ilūtīšu*, but the amount of space suggests that it is." She therefore translates II 32–33 as "How could their images … come near to Erra, his eminent divinity,/ Which not even a god can approach?" The construction *ana erra and ilūtīšu ṣīrti* would suggest that the divinity in question is that of Erra rather than of Marduk. This in itself is plausible. Yet it would not match the syntax of II 32, for in that case one would not expect a repetition of *ana*, but rather *ana ilūtī ṣīrti ša erra* or *ana ša erra ilūtīšu ṣīrti*. Bottéro and Kramer have "(Je les ai … -ées] à *Erra*." The verb *addinu* is a speculative reconstruction of the missing preterite subjunctive verb. (The verb *apqidu*, "I entrusted," is another option.)

[34] Foster translates *enna ša itbû* as "Even now that noble Marduk has arisen (from his dwelling)." Taylor, similarly, has "Now that prince Marduk has arisen." However, it is more likely that *enna*, rather than

II 32–3 "How could their images, which I created among humankind, [*giving them over to*] to Er[ra], come near to his (Marduk's) sublime divinity, which no god can approach?
II 34 "To those craftsmen he gave broad understanding (lit. heart) and made them expert (lit. made their foundations firm),
II 35 "He bestowed intelligence (lit. ears) upon them, and perfected their dexterity (lit. made their hands splendid),
II 36 "(And so) they have made that image radiant, finer (even) than before.
II 37 "Night and day without ceasing, Warrior Erra is stationed before him."

Who are the *ummânī šunūti*, "those craftsmen"? Foster and Taylor agree in taking the first occurrence of the phrase in this passage (II 31) to refer to the divine craftsmen of old, and the second (II 34) to refer to *ṣalmīšunu*, "Their (the divine craftsmen's) images." They likewise agree that it is these images, not the primordial craftsmen themselves, who are the ones endowed with great powers in II 34–35. They differ, however, when it comes to the nature of *ṣalmīšunu* and the god who did the endowing. Foster understands *ummânī šunūti* in II 36, said by Ea to have been made expert by Marduk,[35] to refer to "those same (human) craftsmen." Taylor, in contrast, understands Ea to be the subject of II 34–35, with these lines being spoken by the narrator rather than Ea himself, and implies that the *ṣalmīšunu* are something more than human, writing, "… it appears that Ea is physically creating images for the carrying out of the 'procedure.'"

---

indicating temporality, is used here to indicate semantic topicality, as it does in I 149, spoken by Marduk, *enna aššu šipri šâšu ša taqbû qurādu erra*, "Now, as for that task of which you spoke, Warrior Erra."

[35] In his summary of the passage, Foster writes, "Ea … reasons that … Marduk authorized reproductions of them to be made that are endowed with wondrous power by Ea at Marduk's command." (2005, 891). Yet this does not exactly match Foster's translation, for it appears to have the perfection of the craftsman as being having been carried out by Marduk alone, without assistance from Ea: "'Ea the king considered and said these words,/ 'Even now that noble Marduk has arisen (from his dwelling), he did not command those craftsmen to c[ome up]./ 'How can images of them, which I made among humankind,/ 'Approach his sublime divinity, where no god has access?/ 'He himself gave those same (human) craftsman great discretion and authority,/ 'He gave them wisdom and perfect dexterity."

Against Foster's interpretation, one could argue that Marduk's renovation could not have been accomplished by human craftsmen in this case, for it takes place in the Apsû, where humans do not venture.[36] Against Taylor, one could point to Ea's statement that he had created the images *ina nišī*, "among the people," and that one would therefore expect them to be human. A problem with both interpretations is that they have Ea reacting to his own rhetorical question in an unusual way, either by immediately answering it (as in Foster), or (as in Taylor) by setting out to rectify the problem his question had indicated, as though he had just realized that something is amiss and springs to action to remedy it. (One may add that there is no indication that Ea's speech ends at II 33, as Taylor assumes, rather than continuing into II 34–35.) Another such difficulty is that Ea would be using *ummânī šunūti* to refer to two distinct groups of artisans within three lines.

One could interpret the passage somewhat differently. As in Foster, *ṣalmīšunu* is here taken to refer to human craftsmen. Yet the implied answer to Ea's rhetorical question (could human images of the mythical craftsmen renovate Marduk's statue?), namely "no," would not be immediately obviated by Ea. Rather, by indicating that earthly craftsman are simply not up to the task of renovating Marduk, Ea would explain why Marduk had to descend to the Apsû in the first place—for it is there, Marduk earlier told Erra, that he sent the divine craftsmen after the flood. (I 147: *ummāni šunūti and apsî ušērid elâšunu ul aqbi*, "I sent those craftsman to the Apsû

[36] In II 2, we are told that Marduk "set [his] face to the dwelling of the Annunaki" (*ana šubat annunakī ištakan pānī*[*šu*). This is where the Annunaki reside, as we know from I 174, in which Erra says to Marduk, *urrad ana apsî annunakī upaqqad*, "I will go down to the Apsû and command the Annunaki."

and did not command their ascent."). Ea would then speak of the supreme skills Marduk had granted the mythical craftsmen, skills that enable them, and them alone, to perform the renovation (thereby implying that Marduk has greater power than Ea, for the images Ea had created cannot equal the originals Marduk has perfected).

Ea then says that Erra stands unceasingly before Marduk (II 37), threatening any who come near with a prolonged and agonizing death.[37] This is striking, for in his conversation with Marduk in Esagil Erra described the activities he would undertake in his proposed tenure as ruler of the cosmos in different terms entirely:

I 181 *rubû marduk adi atta ana bīti šâšu terrubūma*
girra ṣubātka ubbabūma tātura ašrukka
I 182 *adi ulla araddīma šibīt šamê erṣeti udannan*
I 183 *ana šamê ellīma ana igīgī anaddin ûrta*
I 184 *urrad ana apsî anunnakī upaqqad*
I 185 *gallê šamrūti ana kurnugî aṭarradma*
I 186 *kakkīya ezzūti elīšunu ušzazza*
I 187 *ša šāri lemni kīma iṣṣūri akassâ idīšu*
I 188 *ana bīti šâšu ašar terrubu rubû marduk*
I 189 *imna u šumēla ša bābīka ānu u ellil ušarbaṣa kīma alpi*

I 181 "Prince Marduk, until you will have entered that building,
Girra cleansed your outfit, and you returned to your abode—
I 182 "Until that time I will govern, and reinforce the seam of heaven (and) earth:
I 183 "I will go up to heaven, and give order(s) to the Igigi,
I 184 "To the Apsû I will descend and command the Anunnaki,
I 185 "I will chase the vicious demons down to the underworld,
I 186 "I will set my furious weapons against them,
I 187 "As for the evil wind, I will bind its wings like a bird.
I 188 "At that building, the place you will enter, Prince Marduk,
I 189 "To the right and left of your gate, I will post (lit. cause to lie down) Anu and Enlil, like bulls."

[37] II 38–40.

Judging by Ea's words, Erra is doing none of this. No wonder the seam of heaven and earth was unraveled! Erra's conduct is revealing, for it indicates both what he does not care about—the order of the cosmos—and what he cares about in the extreme, namely that Marduk's renovation be carried out under his perpetual and exclusive supervision. (Ea makes no mention of Erra having placed Anu and Enlil at the building's gate, and Erra's promise to kill any god who dares approach the renovation makes it unlikely that he did.) The fragmentary II 42–43 suggest that Ea does not regard Erra's actions favorably:

II 42 [...] *erra ītammâ kīma amēli*
II 43 [...] *rubê išannan*

II 42 [...] "Erra speaks like a man.
II 43 [...] "he rivals the prince."

Line IV 3, over which much ink has been spilled, is discussed in *The Reader's Guide to Tablet IV*. In that line Išum tells Erra, *ilūtka tušannīma tamtašal amēliš*, "You changed your divinity and became like a man." II 42 likewise speaks of Erra being, or rather behaving, like a man.[38] That Erra speaks in this way may indicate rebelliousness on his part, for the next line speaks of him rivaling the "prince," who is most likely Marduk, the only character in the epic who is given that title.[39] It seems that Erra intends to usurp Marduk himself.

[38] The similarity between the two lines is noted by Wisnom (2019, 210 n. 47).

[39] As in II 28, 31, and 53, among others.

2. Marduk's Return (II 49–?)

The likewise fragmentary II 49 is of great importance, for, as Foster notes (2005, 892), it indicates that the renovation is successful, and that Marduk has returned to his dwelling:

II 49 [...] *irtami šubassu*
II 50 [...] *namirtu* [*šakn*]*at*

II 49 [...] he assumed his dwelling.
II 50 [...] radiance was [establish]ed.

If Cagni's restoration of [*šakn*]*at* is correct, then II 50 would likely describe the light emanating from Marduk's crown and filling Esagil upon the god's reentry,[40] thus dispelling the darkness Erra implies in I 127–8, *minsu* .../ *agê bēlūtīka ša kīma ētemenanki ušanbiṭu ēḫalanki pānūšu katmū*, "Why .../ has the face of the crown of your lordship, which made Eḫalanki shine like Etemenanki, dimmed?" That the radiance described in II 50 results from Marduk's return to Esagil is indicated by a parallel in a Hellenistic text describing the marriage of Nabû and Nanaya (VAT 663, edited in Matsushima 1987):

ii 19 *īrumma ana maḫar* ^{d}*bēltīya kali šitkunū ana ḫad*[*aššūtu*]
ii 20 *ina qereb eḫuršaba kīma ūmu išakkan na*[*mirtu*]

ii 19 He (Nabû) entered before Bēlti, everything was set for the ma[rriage].
ii 20 Within Eḫuršaba, like daylight, he established ra[diance].

Tablet II continues:

II 51 [...]A-*šú-nu paḫrū*

[40] Perhaps the light said to fill, not Esagil generally, but specifically Eḫalanki, Zarpanitu's sanctum in Esagil, which is said in I 128 to have been illuminated by Marduk's crown before its darkening.

Foster translates this line as "[All the gods] were gathered.[41] This is likely correct. A break follows. When the text resumes, a speaker, who is probably Erra, appears to flatter Marduk:

II 60 [*zimē*ʔ *bē*]*lūtīka tubbûma gaʾ*[*litʾ niṭilkaʾ*][42]
II 60 The *features* of your [lor]dship are *shining*, *terr*[*ifying is your glare*].

Marduk speaks, likely telling the assembled gods to return to their abode. Based on I 183–184, quoted above,[43] these lines may be tentatively reconstructed:

II 62 [*ana igīgī ûrta ittad*]*inma etellû*[44] *ana šamāmi*
II 63 [*ana annunakī i*]*qtabi ana šubtīkunu tūrāma*

II 62 [*To the Igigi he*] *ga*[*ve an order*], one after another they went up to heaven.
II 63 [*To the Anunnaki he*] said, "Return to your abodes!"

II 66–67 are attested only in one manuscript (W 38'–39'):

II 66 [...] *ni-ši-šin*

---

[41] One would then expect *paḫrū* to be preceded by a word indicating that all the gods were assembled, such as *napḫaršunu*, *gimiršunu*, or *kalīšunu*. Yet the A sign preceding *šú-nu* fits none of these possibilities, and the Tablet, Taylor's Manuscript W (KAR 169), may require collation.

[42] This line can be partially reconstructed based on I 143–144, in which Marduk describes his form as it was after Girra cleansed his form following the flood: *agê bēlūtīya annadqūma ana ašrīya atūru/ zīmūʾa tubbûma galit niṭlī*, "(After) I had put on the crown of my lordship, and returned to my place: my features were *bright*, terrifying was my glare" (On the possible translation of *tubbû* as "bright," Taylor 2017, 435 n. 159. For an interpretation of *tubbûma* as "haughty," note on I 144 in eBL). It may be Marduk's crown specifically that is the referent of *tubbûma*, for in I 128 (quoted above), Erra calls it *agû bēlūtīka*. Following Ebeling's copy (KAR 169 iii 32'), at the end of the preserved portion of the line Cagni transliterates *šit*, and Taylor LAG, yet in light of I 144 it appears likely that the sign is actually a miscopied GA, which would then begin the phrase *galit niṭilka*, "your gaze is terrifying." This would also anticipate III 158, in which Erra says *ša rubê marduk galit niṭilšu*, "Marduk's gaze is terrifying." KAR 169, the only photographs of which are almost seven decades old (Gössman 1955, 108–110), requires further collation.

[43] *ana šamê ellīma ana igīgī anaddin ûrta/ urrad ana apsî anunnakī upaqqad.*

[44] The verb *etellû* in this line is attested only in Taylor's W(A) iii 34', where it is spelled *e-te-lu-u*. It is here understood to be a Gtn preterite, with the stem used in its partitive sense to convey the large number gods ascending to heaven. Another possibility is that *etellû* is an error for the plural imperative *etellâ*, "Ascend (one after another)!"

II 67 [...] [... *t*]*a-tur ana* EGIR-*ka*

II 66 [...] Their (mas.) people,
II 67 [... tu]rned back.

As noted by Taylor (2017, 459, n. 237) and eBL (parallels listed for I 103), II 67 is paralleled by I 103 and III 144.[45] (Taylor, not aware of the new manuscript of Tablet III, lists the latter line as IIIc 37.) These indicate the following reconstruction of II 65–67—and also that II 66–67 are, in fact, two parts of the same line:

II 65 [*qurādu erra minsu ana ili u amēliʾ lemutta takpud*]
II 66 [*ana ana sapān matāti u ḫulluq*] *ni-ši-šin*
[*lemutta takpud ma lā t*]*atūr ana* EGIR-*ka*

II 65 [Warrior Erra, did you plot evil against god and *man*?]
II 66 [To level the lands and destroy] their peoples
[you have plotted evil, will you not tu]rn back?[46]

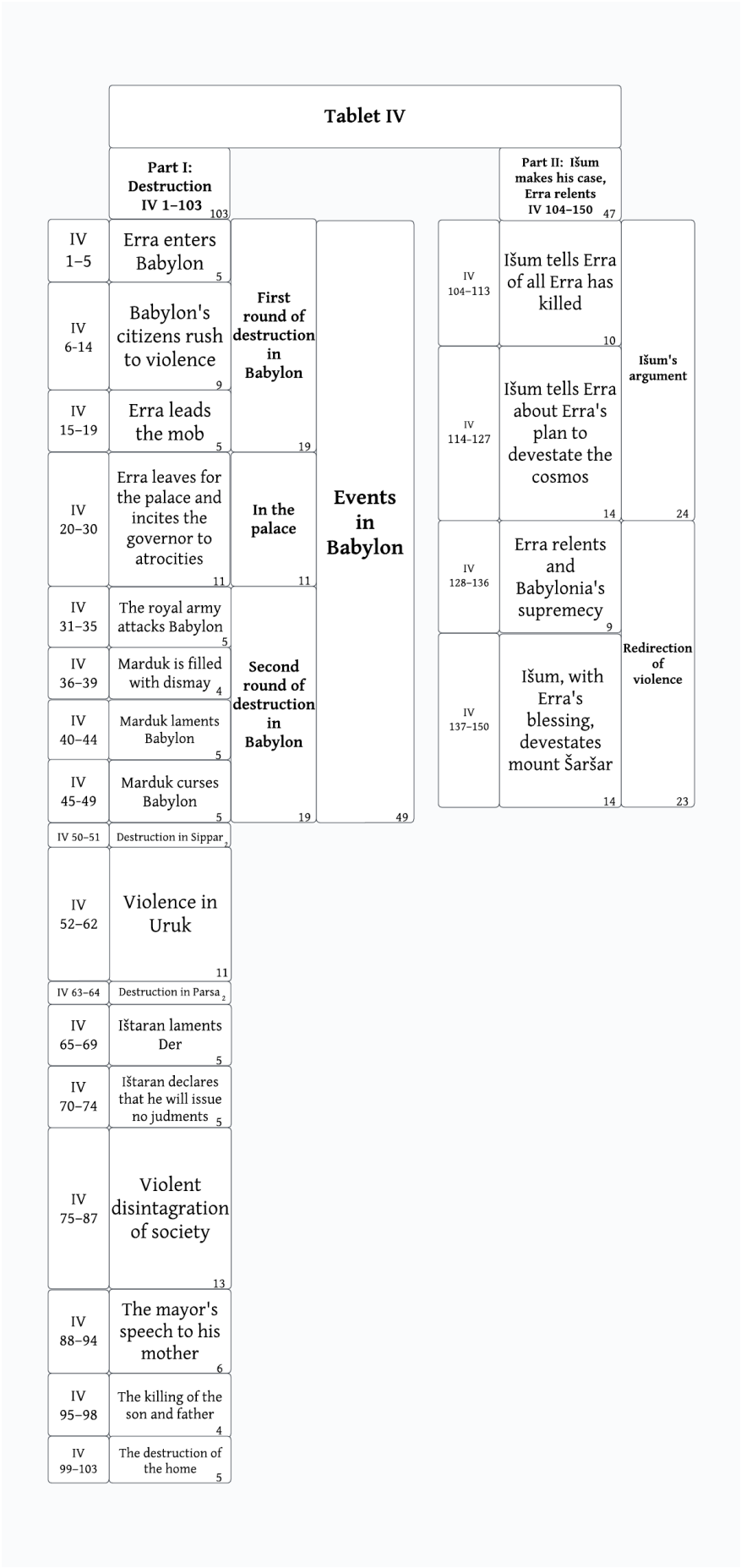
A break of uncertain size follows.

[45] I 102–103: *qurādu* (var. *bēlu*) *erra minsu ana ilāni u amēliʾ lemutta takpud*/ *ana sapān matāti u ḫulluq nišīšin lemutta takpudma ul* (var. *lā*) *tātur and arkī*(*ka*)

[46] This translation, influenced by eBL, of [*lā t*]*atur ana arkīka,* is discussed in a note on I 103, quoted in Chapter 1.

Chapter Four

The Reader's Guide to Tablet IV


Tablet IV
Part I: Destruction IV 1–103 103
Part II: Išum makes his case, Erra relents IV 104–150 47
IV 1–5
Erra enters Babylon 5
IV 6-14
Babylon's citizens rush to violence 9
IV 15–19
Erra leads the mob 5
First round of destruction in Babylon 19
IV 20–30
Erra leaves for the palace and incites the governor to atrocities 11
In the palace 11
Events in Babylon 49
IV 31–35
The royal army attacks Babylon 5
IV 36–39
Marduk is filled with dismay 4
IV 40–44
Marduk laments Babylon 5
IV 45-49
Marduk curses Babylon 5
Second round of destruction in Babylon 19
IV 50–51
Destruction in Sippar 2
IV 52–62
Violence in Uruk 11
IV 63–64
Destruction in Parsa 2
IV 65–69
Ištaran laments Der 5
IV 70–74
Ištaran declares that he will issue no judments 5
IV 75–87
Violent disintagration of society 13
IV 88–94
The mayor's speech to his mother 6
IV 95–98
The killing of the son and father 4
IV 99–103
The destruction of the home 5
IV 104–113
Išum tells Erra of all Erra has killed 10
IV 114-127
Išum tells Erra about Erra's plan to devestate the cosmos 14
Išum's argument 24
IV 128–136
Erra relents and Babylonia's supremecy 9
IV 137–150
Išum, with Erra's blessing, devestates mount Šaršar 14
Redirection of violence 23

1. Erra, God of Estrangement (IV 1–35)

> …
> *The rage-driven, rage-tormented, and rage-hungry troop,*
> *Trooper belabouring trooper, biting at arm or at face,*
> *Plunges towards nothing, arms and fingers spreading wide*
> *For the embrace of nothing …*
>
> —William Butler Yeats, *Meditations in a Time of Civil War*

In the poem, Erra is portrayed as the divine warrior, so much so that he is almost always called "Warrior Erra" (*qurādu Erra*), by both the poet and the epic's characters,[47] as though his very identity is linked to fighting. Yet he seems strangely sparing in demonstrating his renowned martial prowess. Rather than solving every conflict through the use of force, he seems to prefer to use another great power of his: his ability to trick, influence, and inflame the minds of others to his own ends. This is already apparent when he visits Marduk in the Esagil. In the same way that Išum calms Erra down through rhetoric despite his martial prowess likely exceeding that of heroic Erra,[48] Erra chooses to deceive Marduk into leaving his position as king of the gods,

---

[47] See, among others, I 40, I 60, I 76, I 78, I 92, I 101, I 124, I 148, and I 164. He is referred to simply as "Erra" by the narrator (see I 46, among others), in 1 13, possibly by his heart (Müller 1995), and by Išum in III C 66, though the context is fragmentary. He is also called "Lord Erra" (*bēlum erra*) by Išum in I 102.

[48] Wisnom stresses that Išum could have stopped Erra by force, and that his choice to use words was deliberate (Wisnom 2019, 171). To Išum's appellation as *qarrādu* that she cites as evidence for this point, one can add the poet's description of Išum in I 4–5: *išum ṭābiḫu na'du ša ana našê kakkīšu ezzūti qātāšu asmā/ u ana šubruq ulmīšu šērūti Erra qarrād ilānī inuššu ina šubti*, "O Išum, 'zealous slaughterer,' whose hands are suited to brandish his fierce weapons, and at the flashing of whose fierce weapons (maybe: 'axes') Erra, the warrior of the gods, quakes in his seat. That Erra is said to tremble in fear at the flashing of Išum's weapons is paralleled by *Enūma eliš* VI 146, as noted by Taylor (2017, 27): *ana šumīšu ilū lištar'ibū linūšū ina šubti*, "at (the mention of) his (Marduk's) name, may the gods be made to tremble, may they

playing a role more akin to that of a trickster than that of a warrior, and continues to do so throughout the epic (in that, he is a counterpoint to Ea, the benevolent trickster of the flood story). That Erra repeatedly chooses to use rhetoric over brute force, and that his rhetoric is shown to be so effective, is in keeping with Wisnom's observation that the epic as a whole extolls the power of words over violence.[49]

Išum's rhetorical question to Erra, "Is there enmity apart from you, is there battle without you?" can also be interpreted as referring to Erra's unrivaled ability to incite violence wherever he goes. Erra says in III 34, *šarra ušakkarma ippuša tāḫāza*, "I will make the king hostile, and he will do battle." The events of Tablet IV demonstrate that this is no idle claim. At the start of the tablet, Erra enters Babylon and incites violence:

IV 1 *qurādu erra ša rubê ilāni marduk zikiršu lā tašḫut*
IV 2 *ša dimkurkura āl šar ilānī rikis mātāti taptaṭar rikissu*

---

quake in their seats." The poet's assertion that Erra quakes at the flashing of Išum's weapons, suggests that Išum is the stronger of the two. However, as referenced above, Išum rhetorically asks Erra in V 19: *ina ūmi uggatīka ali māhirka*, "In the day of your wrath, who is your equal?" suggesting that it is Erra who is stronger. It is possible that Išum is merely flattering Erra in saying that, yet it is also possible that he meant it in earnest, and that the poem itself is not consistent on the exact balance of power between Erra and Išum.

[49]As Wisnom writes of the epic (2019, 165), "The composition is dominated by speeches, in particular the showdown of words between Erra and Išum that form the real 'battle' of the text: it is through persuasion rather than violence that Išum placates Erra. However, whereas in *Anzû* language is the counter-attacking weapon of the aggressor, and it is neutralized by violence (cutting off Anzû's wings), in *Erra and Išum* we have an inversion: violence is the weapon of the aggressor (Erra) and it is neutralised by language (Išum's speeches). This is another example of the newer text improving on its model, this time by reversing its themes and thereby proposing a very different ideal."

IV 3 *ilūtka tušannīma tamtašal amēliš*
IV 4 *kakkīka tannediqma tēterub qerebšu*
IV 5 *ina qereb bābili kī ša ṣabāt āli taqtabi ḫabinniš*

IV 6 *mārū bābili ša kīma qanê api pāqida lā īšû*
napḫaršunu elīka iptaḫrū
IV 7 *ša kakka lā īdû* *šalip pataršu*
IV 8 *ša tilpānu lā īdû* *malât qašassu*
IV 9 *ša ṣālta lā īdû* *ippuša tāḫāza*
IV 10 *ša abara lā īdû* *iṣṣūriš iša”u*
IV 11 *ḫašḫāšu pētân birki iba”a akû bēl emūqi ikattam*
IV 12 *ana šakkanakki zānin māḫāzīšunu iqabbû šillatu rabītu*
IV 13 *abul bābili nār ḫegallīšunu iskirā qātāšun*
IV 14 *ana ešrēt bābili kī šālil māti ittadû išātu*

IV 1 “O warrior-Erra! You were not afraid of sovereign Marduk’s name.
IV 2 “Dimkurkura, city of the king of the gods, the bond of all the lands—you have undone its bond.
IV 3 “You changed your divinity,[50] and became like a man,
IV 4 “You girded on your weapons, and entered Babylon.
IV 5 “In Babylon’s midst, as if to seize the city, you spoke *angrily*.[51]

IV 6 “The citizens of Babylon, who, like reeds within a thicket, had “no leader, flocked as one around you.
IV 7 “The one who knew no weapon —his sword was drawn,
IV 8 “The one who knew no bow —his bow was nocked,
IV 9 “The one who knew no strife —charged into battle,
IV 10 “The one who knew no wings —swooped down like a bird,[52]

[50] The phrase *ilūtka tušannima* is discussed below.

[51] The word *ḫabinniš*—spelled in all three manuscripts in which it is attested (Taylor’s M, W, RR) as *ḫa-bi-in-niš*—is a hapax (for attempts at an etymology, von-Soden 1990 and Durand 2009).

[52] Tsevat (1987, 184) suggests that *iša”u* in this line refers to flight in the face of danger. In that reading, I 10 would refer to the flight of those threatened by Erra’s violence. Yet no attestation of the verb *šâ’u* in the CAD (Š II, 243–244) appears to refer to flying off, but rather either to flying around (as in STC 2 no. 80:63 and RINAP 5/1 no. 11 viii 86–88)—as befitting the logographic writing of the verb, NIGIN, “circle”—or to swooping down. Examples of attestations with the latter meaning include: *ša ina šarrāni abīya mamma ina qerebšunu la iṭhû qurādīya kīma iṣṣūrū iš’û*, “As for those whom none of my kings, my fathers,

IV 11 “The lame raced past the fleet of foot, the weakling trounced the strong.
IV 12 “They were uttering a great curse against their governor, their shrines’ provider,
IV 13 “Their (own) hands barricaded the gate of Babylon, their stream of plenty,
IV 14 “Like a plunderer of the land, they set the shrines of Babylon aflame.

In this section, Erra uses his powers to incite others to violence. The citizens of Babylon, even those who had never known conflict and war, rally to his side and turn on their own city. Erra acts here less as a warrior than as a divine demagogue who manipulates humans into doing his bidding. Instead of using his supreme prowess as a fighter to destroy Babylon, he uses its own people to do that. It is worth noting that the violence Erra inspires in the citizens is described by the author as very much self-defeating. The governor they are insolent towards is called “their shrines’ provider.” The gate they blockade is “their stream of plenty” and in destroying their city,

---

approached, my soldiers swooped down on them like birds,” (RIMAP 2 A.0.101.1 ll. 63–64,); *ina šipṣi u danāni mundahhiṣīyya kīma anzê elīšunu iš’û*, “My soldiers swooped down on them with power and strength like the Anzû-bird” (RIMAP 2 A.0.101.1:107); and *šumma… surdû bu’ura īpušma bu’uršu ina pīšu iprurma ana pan šarri iš’û* “If… a falcon has hunted, and *holds* its catch in its mouth, and swoops down towards the king,” (CT 39 no. 28:7). One could counter that if *šâ’u* referred to swooping down it could easily refer also to flying off. Yet there is another problem with Tsevat’s interpretation, namely that it does not fit the context of the lines surrounding I 10, all of which describe the sudden thrill of aggression Erra inspires in the Babylonians: in IV 7–9, they arm themselves and rush to battle under his influence, and IV 11 tells of their suddenly increased speed and strength—presumably the result of the thrill caused by the violent adrenaline-rush he inspires in them. A line describing the fearful flight of those threatened by violence rather than the aggression of those perpetrating it seems out of place here. Moreover, I 7–8 (“He who knew no weapon—his sword was drawn/ He who knew no bow—his bow was nocked…”) and IV 11 (“The cripple could surpass the fleet of foot, the weakling could overpower the strong) each contain two statements to the same effect. It would make sense for I 9–10 to also form such a parallelism, with I 9 referring to suddenly battle-crazed citizens swooping down upon their (human) prey like birds.

they act "like plunderers of the land."[53] Erra makes people act against their own interests and destroy things that are important to their well-being.

After unleashing the citizens of Babylon on their own city, Erra springs the trap he set for them. He goes out to the outskirts of the city, and, by his very presence, fills the heart of Babylon's governor (likely a king of Babylon referred to by his title *šakkanakku*)[54] with hate against the city he is charged with protecting:

IV 20 *āla tumašširma tattaṣi ana aḫâti*
IV 21 *zīm labbi taššakimma tēterub ana ekalli*
IV 22 *īmurūkama ummānu kakkīšunu innadqū*
IV 23 *ša šakkanakki mutēr gimil bābili īteziz libbašu*
IV 24 *kī šallat nakiri ana šalāli uma"ara ṣābāšu*
IV 25 *ālik pān ummāni ušaḫḫaza lemuttu*
IV 26 *ana āli šâšu ša ašapparūka atta amēlu*
IV 27 *ila lā tapallaḫ lā taddar amēla*
IV 28 *ṣeḫru u rabâ ištēniš šumītma*
IV 29 *ēniq šizbi šerra lā tezziba ayyamma*
IV 30 *nakma bušê bābili tašallal atta*

IV 20 "You quit the city, and went out to the margins,

[53] As further discussed below, in V 10 Erra says of himself: *kī šālil māti kīna u ragga ul umassa ušamqat*, "Like one who plunders the land (or: "like plunderers of the land), I slay good and evil indiscriminately." Erra inspires the same violence in others as he commits himself.

[54] The title *šakkanak bābili* was one of the titles of the Babylonian kings, being attested for Itti-Marduk-balāṭu (RIMB 2 B.2.2.1:7) and Nebuchadnezzar I (RIMB 2 B.2.4.11:3). It was taken up by Sargon II and his successors when they themselves controlled Babylon, with the exception of Sennacherib (see, among others, RINAP 2 no. 7:1, RINAP 4 no. 1: i 1, and RINAP 5/1. no. 3: i 1). *šakkanak Enlil* is attested for Nebuchadnezzar I (RIMB 2 B.2.4.7:3) and Simbar-Šipak (RIMB 2 B.4.1.1:20). *šakkanaku* as a standalone title is attested for Nebuchadnezzar I (RIMB 2 B.2.3.10:10), Sennacherib (who is called *šakkanakkīšu*, "his (the god Ashur's) governor" in RINAP 3 no. 161 o 8) and Sîn-šarru-iškun (RINAP 5, Sin-šarru-iškun no. 17:11 and no. 2:6').

IV 21 “You donned a lion’s face and went inside the palace,
IV 22 “When the soldiers[55] saw you, they girded on their weapons,
IV 23 “The heart of the governor, Babylon’s champion, became enraged:
IV 24 “He gave his army the command to plunder, as if to pillage foes,
IV 25 “He incited the general to evil:
IV 26 “‘As for that city, to which I’m sending you, you, man,
IV 27 “‘Fear no god, respect no man,
IV 28 “‘Slay young and old alike!
IV 29 “‘Do not Spare a single suckling babe!
IV 30 “You shall carry off the wealth amassed of Babylon!

Erra’s power seems to be greater here than when he incited Babylon’s citizens. Whereas before he inflamed the citizenry using his voice, all that it takes for the army to put on its weapons and for the governor’s heart to become enraged is to see Erra, who says nothing. Hearing has been replaced by sight. The governor is called *mutēr gimil Babili*, “Babylon’s champion.” This epithet is used ironically, since the governor is supposed to protect and act on behalf of Babylon, but now turns on it. Erra has incited him to act against his own city, and thus his own interests, in a fit of self-destructive fury. Although the governor calls Babylon by its name in IV 30, it may be significant that he refers to it as *āli šâšu*, “that city” in IV 26, when he first mentions it, rather than calling it by its name, or even *āli annî*, “this city.” In doing so he strips Babylon of its identity, a distancing tactic of a kind used by soldiers against their enemies in order to make it

[55] Lit: “The army,” yet the plural verbs *īmurūkama* and *innadqū*, as well as the plural possessive suffix on *kakkīšunu*, show that “soldiers” is meant.

easier to kill them. He has become the enemy of the city that he is meant to protect and distances himself from it.[56]

The governor, after having been inflamed by Erra, incites his army to atrocities, and his soldiers proceed to enter Babylon and massacre the very citizens they were charged with protecting.

IV 31 *ummān šarri uktaṣṣirma īterub ana āli*
IV 32 *napḫat tilpānu zaqip patru*
IV 33 *ša ṣābī kidinni ikkib anum u dagān kakkīšunu tazaqqap*
IV 34 *damīšunu kīma mê rāṭi tušaṣbita rebīt āli*
IV 35 *umunnâšunu taptēma tušābil nāra*

IV 31 "The royal troops drew up, and went inside the city,
IV 32 "The bow was strung,[57] the blade was at the ready (lit. upright),
IV 33 "The privileged citizens, sacred to Anu and Dagan—you readied their weapons (lit. made their weapons upright),[58]

[56] However, the governor calls Babylon by name in IV 30, and his calling the city *āli šâšu* may, therefore, not be significant.

[57] The reference to the bow being "swollen" (*napāḫu* meaning 3 [CAD N/1, 265]) is here taken to refer to the bow being strung, and thereby bent from its resting flat shape into its recognizable battle-ready one. In III 35, Erra says *tilpāna anappaḫma ušarkab ūṣa*, "I will *swell* the bow and nock the arrow." While the meaning of "to be swollen" for *napāḫu* is at present only attested in the stative according to the CAD (*napāḫu* meaning 3 [CAD N/1, 265]), it may be that this is the first known attestation of such a meaning in the indicative, one which would presumably be transitive. III 35 implies that the "swelling" was done before the arrow was nocked, which would make sense if *napāḫu* refers in this case to stringing a bow.

[58] Foster, taking *kakkīšunu* to refer to the weapons of royal army, translates the line as "You homed their weapons upon those under special protection." In contrast, the CAD (Z, 53) translates, "You made the privileged citizens … bear drawn arms." Taylor translates *kakkīšunu tazaqqap* as "You aimed the army's weapons," and argues against the CAD's interpretation (2017, 483). She writes of *zaqāpu*, "to set up/erect" (CAD Z, 52–55), "However, the lexicographic evidence cited does not suggest this verb can be used causatively; it typically describes weapons that are drawn or readied." It is true that *zaqāpu* is not

IV 34 “You made their blood flow through the city streets like ditchwater,
IV 35 “You released their lifeblood,[59] and made the river carry it away.”

---

attested as having the meaning “making (s.o) draw weapons.” Yet that need not rule out the CAD’s essential understanding of the line, whereby *kakkīšunu* refers to the weapons of the *ṣābī kidinni* rather than the royal army, and IV 34 as a whole refers to them joining the fray under Erra’s influence. This is because the object of *tazaqqap*, translated here as “You made upright,” is not the *ṣābī kidinni* but *kakkīšunu*, “their weapons,” with “their” conceivably referring either to the *ṣābī kidinni* or the royal army. That it refers to the former rather than the latter can be argued for in at least two ways. First, by noting that *zaqāpu* is not attested in the CAD with the meaning of “to home” (as in Foster) and “to aim” (as in Taylor). Rather, it consistently refers used to refer to making something—such as a person, object, or plant—upright, without the directional sense implied in “to home” or “to aim.” One could counter by arguing that the combination of *ša*, “concerning (the *ṣābī kidinni*)” and “You made their (the soldiers’) weapons upright” implies that Erra readies the soldier’s weapons on account of the *ṣābī kidinni*—thus homing them at the *ṣābī kidinni*. Yet in that case one would not expect *ša*, but rather propositions such as *elīšunu*, “upon them,” or *ina muḫḫišunu*, “towards them.” The second argument in favor of *kakkīšunu* being the weapons of the *ṣābī kidinni* is that *damīšunu* (IV 33) and *umunnâšunu* (IV 34) refer to the blood of the *ṣābī kidinni*, and it would therefore be most straightforward to take *kakkīšunu* to refer to them as well.

[59] Foster translates IV 34 as “You opened their arteries, and let the watercourses bear their blood away.” (Foster 2005, 780). The line has been interpreted similarly by other scholars (among others, Taylor 2017, 374, and Bottéro and Kramer 1989, 243). The translation given here follows the CAD (U/W, 155), which has “You (Erra) released their blood and let the river carry it off.” Such an understanding of IV 34 has two advantages. First, one would not need to supply an implied object, “their blood,” for *tušābil*. Second, two attestations of *umunnû* outside of *Erra* are listed in the dictionaries (CAD U/W 155, AHW 1420), in both of which *umunnû* appears to refer to blood rather than veins. The first is in a line in Sennacherib’s description of the battle of Halulê, *kīma mīli gapši ša šamūtum simāni umunnîšunu ušardâ ṣēr erṣeti šadilti*, “Like a mighty flood of the rains (of) Simānu, I made their blood flow over the broad earth,” (RINAP 3/1 no. 22 vi 3–5. The possible connection between this line and *Erra* IV 35 is noted in Weissert 1997, 196). The second is CT 16 pl. 2:44–45, ù-mu-un ḫul-a su-na mi-ni-in-gar-re-eš/ *umunnâ lemna ina zumrīšu iškunū*, “They (the demons) placed evil blood in his body.” One could object to the translation of *umunnâšunu* as “their blood” by arguing that *petû*, which normally means “to open,” cannot refer to blood. Yet the CAD’s “released” also fits *petû*, for the verb is attested with another fluid, *mû*, “water”, as its object, (c.f. citations in CAD P, 357) and can mean “to start water flowing” (CDA 273). When used in this sense, *petû* seems to refer to removing, or “opening up” impediments to the water’s natural flow, or “making it flow forth.” This is demonstrated in PBS 1/2 no. 33:3, *kālâ lidanninūma mê liptû*, “Let them strengthen the dike and (then) let the water flow.”

George writes of the poem (2013, 47), "There are no named characters at all, only a milling mass in the background, like extras in a Hollywood blockbuster." This statement is not entirely accurate, for the text does have a named human character—Kabti-ilāni Marduk, the author—yet it applies perfectly to all other humans in the text. These are alike to film extras not only in being nameless, but in lacking any narrative agency. This is certainly the case in IV 30–34, in which Erra's power over the minds of men, and his ability to inspire aggression within them, are on full display. After the royal army is roused to violence by the mere sight of him (IV 22), the soldiers enter the city and butcher its citizens at the instigation of Babylon's governor, whose heart was moved to wrath upon seeing the god (IV 23). That it is Erra who is running this show is most apparent in IV 32. The action that line describes is the privileged citizens (*ṣābī kidinni*), sacred to Anu and Dagan, readying their weapons (*kakkīšunu*). Yet the text does not give the *ṣābī kidinni* any agency in making that action, for the subject of *tazaqqap*, "You readied," is Erra himself. Like a boy playing at war with his toys, smashing them against each other, he makes the *ṣābī kidinni* arm themselves and rush against the royal army. Yet what chance could they stand against professional soldiers? In IV 33, the very next line, Erra makes their blood flow through Babylon's streets, then he unleashes it into the river (IV 34), which, ever in charge, Erra charges with bearing it away.

2. Erra's Transformation (IV 3)

Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Eldon, an ermined gown;
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stones as they fell.

And the little children, who
Round his feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.

—Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Mask of Anarchy*

The grammar of IV 3, *ilūtka tušannīma tamtašal amēliš*, "You changed your divinity and became like a man," is clear enough. Yet its sense is less straightforward. In what way does Erra change his divinity and become like a human? Scholars are divided as to whether Erra comes to resemble mortals in his behavior or his physical form. Cagni (1977, 49) understands the statement as a rebuke of Erra behaving "like an insensate mortal." Foster asks (2005, 901 n. 3), "That is, by ravaging sanctuaries?" And Wisnom (2019, 210) proposes to understand IV 3 in light of the opening line of the poem of Atrahasis, *enūma ilū awīlum*, "when the gods were (like) man," writing, "Erra has regressed to the divine equivalent of a primitive state, a state that the gods were in only before the flood … The human-like behavior is probably twofold: the irresponsibility of such an act, and the act of rebellion itself." In contrast, Roberts (1971, 15) and Taylor (2017, 227) understand the line to mean that Erra became like a man in that he assumed human form.

In favor of the positions of Cagni, Foster, and Wisnom, one can cite—as Wisnom does (2019, 210 n. 47)—another instance of mortal-like behavior on Erra's part: the incomplete II 42, [...] *u erra ītammâ kīma amēli*, "[...] And Erra says (or 'speaks') like a man." However, one difficulty with this line of interpretation is that, as the divergence between the translations of the three scholars indicates, it is far from evident in what way, exactly, Erra would be behaving like a man upon entering Babylon. An interpretation whereby Erra assumes human form is, in contrast, concrete and straightforward. Yet the question of how precisely Erra's divine form would differ from his human one is less so.

If one were to go by some Mesopotamian sources, one would conclude that there would be no noticeable difference between the forms of deities and mortals, for in these texts the very gods ask their addressees, point blank, whether they are mortal or divine.[60] In other texts the opposite is implied, namely that the appearance of the gods was different in the extreme from that of mortals. One example of such a text is *Gilgamesh*, in the Old Babylonian version of which Šamhat says to Enkidu, *anaṭṭalka enkidu kīma ilim tabašši*, "I regard you, Enkidu, you are like a god." (II 53). In the Standard Babylonian version she similarly tells him, [*dam*]*qāta enkidu kīma ili tabašši*, "You are [beauti]ful, Enkidu, you are like a god." (I 207). Also in SB *Gilgamesh*, the

[60] For example, in *Inanna's Descent to the Underworld* (ETCSL c.1.4.1) ll. 240–244, Ereškigal asks the kur-ĝar-ra and gala-tur-ra whether they are human or divine, specifying the different boons she would grant them them in each case.

scorpion-man stationed at the gate of the twin mountains can tell from afar that Gilgamesh is more than mortal, and then the scorpion-woman does one better by ascertaining the exact shares of humanity and divinity in Gilgamesh merely from the sight of him (*Gilgamesh* IX 48–51). That the scorpion-man announces the (partial) divinity of the approaching Gilgamesh by saying *ša illikannâši šīr ilāni zumuršu*, "He who has come to us—his body is the flesh of the gods," suggests that what gave Gilgamesh's godliness away was the god-like splendor of his physique.

Another Akkadian composition in which divinity is said to manifest visually is *Ludlul*, whose protagonist, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, describes a dream in this way:

III 31 *ištêt ardatu banû zīmūša*
III 32 *nesîš lā ṭuḫḫât iliš mašlat*
III 33 *šarrat nišī kabitti māti*

III 31 There was a young woman—her features fair,
III 32 While still at a distance, not having come near, she seemed like a god,
III 33 A queen of the people, honored in the land.

Other Mesopotamian texts speak of a different visual attribute distinguishing gods from mortals, namely the radiance that surrounds them, a sublime and terrifying aura referred to as *melammu* (CAD M 1, 9–12).[61] That this radiance was a mark of divinity is most clearly expressed in *Enūma eliš* I 138 (repeated in II 24 and III 28), *melammī uštaššâ iliš umtaššil*, "She (Tiamat)

[61] On *melammu*, Cassin 1968, among others.

armed them (the monsters) with auras, making them like a god." The *melammu* can emanate not only from gods, but also from mortals favored by them (the Assyrian king, for example), and even inanimate objects. It can overwhelm (*saḫāpu*) men, subduing them without need for battle.[62] This is the case in the Assyrian *Underworld Vision* (SAA 3 no. 32), in which the Assyrian prince Kummâya, a figure whose historical referent remains mysterious,[63] beholds none other than Nergal—that is, Erra—himself:

> rev. 11 … *ināya kī adkû qurādu nergal ina kussê šarrūti ašib agê šarrūti apir* rev. 13 … [*ina*] *abūsātīya iṣbatannīma ana maḫrīšu ú-qar-*[*ri*]*-*⌜*ban*?⌝*-ni* rev. 14 [*ā*]*muršu itarrurā išdāya melammûšu ezzūti isḫupûnni šepī ilūtīšu* [*rabī*]*ti aššiqma akmis azziz* …
>
> rev. 11 … When I raised my eyes: Warrior Nergal, sitting on a kingly throne, wearing a kingly crown! rev. 13 … He seized me [by] my forelock, and *dr*[*e*]*w* me towards him. rev. 14 When [I] saw him, my legs (lit. foundations) quaked, his furious radiance overwhelmed me. I kissed the feet of his grea[t] divinity, then came to a kneel and stood up.

If Erra's divinity, like that of the goddess in the dream of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, is apparent from afar, if his divine radiance is, like that of Nergal in the *Underworld vision*, overwhelmingly visible, then Erra could conceivably obscure his divine nature by disguising himself, allowing the interpretations of Roberts and Taylor. Yet how can the phrase *ilūtka tušannīma*, which

---

[62] The (quite literally) overwhelming power of *melammu* is a recurring motif in Assyrian royal inscriptions, appearing, for instance, in Sennacherib's narrative of his third campaign, in which he narrates that the terror induced by his *melammu* overwhelms Hezekiah into delivering vast tribute (RINAP 3 no. 4 ll. 55–58).

[63] This identity of Kummâya, who has often been argued to be Ashurbanipal, will be discussed by Eckart Frahm in an upcoming festschrift. The most recent treatment of this issue is Finkel 2021, 202–219.

appears to refer to Erra changing his divinity, refer to him changing his appearance? There are at least four ways to argue that this is indeed the case.

The First Way: "You Changed Your Divine Self"

The first of these ways hinges on a feature, apparent in the passage just cited, of the word *ilūtu*: that it can be used to denote the person of the god rather than his divine nature. Just as calling the British navy "his majesty's naval service" does not imply that this navy has anything to do with the quality of majesty but simply expresses the monarch's ownership of it, the phrase *šepī ilūtīšu*, rather than implying that the feet in question belong to Nergal's quality of divinity, refers to the divine Nergal's feet. As used in these cases, "majesty" and *ilūtīšu* refer to a personality rather than an abstract quality. This use of *ilūtu* can be found in other Akkadian texts, such as royal inscriptions of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal:

> *libbi ilūtīšu rabîti unīḫma*
>
> "I (Esarhaddon) appeased the heart of his great divinity."
>
> (RINAP 4 no. 57 vii 31–32)
>
> *ana nuḫḫu libbi ilūtīšunu u nuppuš kabattīšunu ṣillīšunu darû itruṣū elīšu*
>
> (I am… Esarhaddon), over whom (the gods), in order to appease the heart of their great divinity and gladden their minds, extended their eternal protection.
>
> (RINAP 4 no. 133 ll. 10–13)
>
> *tayyarat ilūtīša tušadgila punūya*

> "She (the Lady of Uruk) entrusted me (Ashurbanipal) with the return of her divinity (from Elam to Uruk)."
>
> (RINAP 5/1 no. 11 vi 112)

In Tablet II, the *ilūtu* of a deity (most likely Marduk) seems to also be spoken of in this way:

II 31 *enna ša itbû rubû marduk ša ummânī šunūti elâšunu ul iqbi*
II 32 *ṣalmīšunu ša ina nišī abnû ana er*[*ra addinu*$^{?}$] *ana ilūtīšu ṣīrti*
II 33 *ša ilu lā i'iru iṭeḫḫû mīnu*

II 31 "Now, he who has risen (from his dwelling), prince Marduk—he did not command the ascent of these craftsmen.
II 32 "How could their images, which I created among humankind and [*gave*] to Er[ra], come near to his (Marduk's) sublime divinity, which not
II 33 (even) a god can approach?

If *ilūtka* in *ilūtka tušannīma* does not refer to the qualities that make Erra divine, but simply to his person, then *ilūtka tušannīma* could be taken to mean "you changed your (divine) self." Understood in this way, the expected human parallel for *ilūta šunnû* would be *ramāna šunnû*, "to change the self."

The Second Way: "You Disguised Your Divinity"

That phrase *ramāna šunnû* is attested once, in a letter sent by the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal to the people of Nippur (SAA 21 no. 18). In that letter, Ashurbanipal promises them that whoever catches an unnamed fugitive will receive the criminal's weight in gold (on this text, Ito 2013), and then instructs them to monitor the roads and carefully interrogate all passers-by, lest the fugitive escape the Assyrians' grasp:

> *mindēma sartatti ramānšu ušannīma uṣṣâ mamma ša lā ša'āli lā tumaššarāma lā ittiq u kī ina pānī gaṣṣūte ittiqu*
>
> Perhaps he will dishonestly[64] change himself and escape. Do not let anyone go without questioning! (No one) should pass (uninterrogated) even if they should pass through with a *chalky*[65] face!
>
> (SAA 21 no. 18 obv. 19–b.e. 3)

The fugitive's "changing" of his (human) self seems to refer to disguise. In IV 3, Erra could similarly be said to "change" his divine self by assuming a human-like appearance. Yet the parallel between *ilūtka tušannīma* and *ramānšu ušannêma* may point in a different direction, and thus to the second way to argue for the position of Cagni and Taylor. In his 1939 paper, von Soden translates the latter phrase as "sich selbst ‚verändert' (d.h. verkleidet)." If one understands the verb *ušannīma* itself to refer to disguising, then one could translate *ilūtka tušannīma* not as

---

[64] This seems to be the only extant occurrence of the adverb *sartatti*, "dishonestly", derived from *sarārum* (CAD S, 185. On adverbs ending with -atti-, von Soden 1939).

[65] The adjective *gaṣṣūte* is difficult. Deriving it from *gaṣṣu*, "gypsum/whitewash," is tempting: as "a gypsum-colored face" would certainly make sense here, as it would serve, by means of hyperbole, to encompass any means of physical disguise. Yet *gaṣṣu* is not attested as an adjective derived from *gaṣṣu*, "gypsum/whitewash." Rather, it is extant as meaning "furious" (CAD G, 54), which does not fit the context, or "trimmed/hewn" (CAD G, 54, derived from *gaṣāṣu/kaṣāṣu*, "to trim, cut," CAD G, 53). The latter meaning fits the context better, as *pānī gaṣṣūte* could conceivably refer to a "disfigured face." The fugitive could conceivably "change himself" by mutilating his own face to avoid being recognized. That being said, the translation of *pānī gaṣṣūte* as "a white-washed face" may have a parallel, as the adjective *gaṣṣānu*, "calcareous/chalky", is attested in a different Neo-Assyrian letter, discussing the inscription of a foundation stone with the king's name: *ša ušše karāri pūlu paniu ša nupaṭṭirūni gaṣṣānu šū*, "Concerning the laying of the foundation, the former foundation stone that we loosened was (too) calcareous" (SAA 16 n. 125 ll. 5'-7'). Admittedly, the 3rd person masculine plural form of *gaṣṣānu* would be *gaṣṣānūte*, not *gaṣṣūte* as in SAA 21 18, yet that *gaṣṣu* could serve as an adjectival base makes it more likely that *gaṣṣūte* is likewise derived from it.

"You changed your divinity," nor as "You changed your divine self," but as "You disguised your divinity." For Erra to "disguise" his divinity by assuming human form would make sense in context, yet the meaning "to disguise" for *šunnû* is not indicated by sources other than SAA 21 no. 18. This leaves von Soden's translation of *ramānšu ušannīma*, and its implications for *ilūtka tušannīma*, in doubt.

The Third Way: "You Changed Your Divine Appearance"

At times, *ilūtu*, like the English "divinity" can simply mean deity.[66] At other times it refers, as one would expect, to the quality of being divine.[67] At other times still, it refers to a specific quality the god possesses—though what that quality is, exactly, can be difficult to understand. This is the case in a hymn found at Assur and addressed to Marduk, which declares, *sîn ilūtka anu malkūtka dagan bēlūtka*, "Sin is your divinity, Anu your kingship, Dagan your lordship." (KAR 25 ii 3). As further discussed below, it is far from obvious why it is Sin, the moon god, who is declared to be Marduk's *ilūtu*, and what this equation implies regarding the meaning of *ilūtu* in

[66] E.g. *kakki aššur bēlīya ana ilūtīšun aškun*, "I (Sargon) appointed the weapon of Aššur to be their divinity." (RINAP 2 no. 1:99).

[67] E.g. *anāku ana ṣalmāt qaqqadi ilūtki u qurdīki lušāpi*, Let me make manifest your (Ištar's) divinity and heroism to the black-headed people! (BM.26187:102)

this context. At other times still, *ilūtu* seems to refer not to a specific quality of a god, but to his general nature and qualities:

> umun na-ám-dìm-mer-zu an-sú-dam
> a-ab-ba-da-ma-al-la-ní mu-un-gùr-ru-e
> *bē*[*lu*] *ilūtka kīma šamê rūqūti*
> *tâmtim rapaštu* (sic) *puluhta malât*
>
> O lo[rd], your divinity is full of terror
> like the distant heavens and the vast sea.
>
> (*šu-ila* for Nanna-Suen [4R² no. 9 with duplicates]: 14)[68]

It is in this last sense that *ilūtu* is used in its only other occurrence in the poem (I 23), which, curiously, also involves the verb *šunnû*:

I 23 *ša sebetti qarrād lā šanān šunnâta ilūssun*
I 24 *ilittašunu aḫâtma malû pulḫāti*
I 25 *āmiršunu uštaḫḫatma napīssunu mūtumma*
I 26 *nišū šaḫtūma ul irrū ana šâšu*

I 23 The divinity of the seven is something different,
I 24 Their origin is strange,[69] they are full of terror.
I 25 Whoever sees them is terrified and their very breath is death.
I 26 The people are afraid so they do not approach them (lit. him).

[68] For edition of, and commentary on, the text, reconstructed from reconstructed from 4R2 no. 9 (K.2861 + K. 4999 + K. 5086 + K. 5297), K. 5343, K. 8416, and K. 5162, Sjöberg 1960, 167–179.

[69] Note the alliterative use of *ilūtu* and *ilittu* in parallelism.

To judge by the lines following *šunnâta ilūssun*, the Seven's extraordinary divinity manifests both in their unusual origin and in the extreme terror the sight of them inspires in mortals. As Taylor notes (2017, 403 n. 25), a nearly identical phrase occurs in *enūma eliš*:

I 91 *uštāṣbīšumma šunnât ilūssu*
I 92 *šušqû ma'diš elīšunu atar mimmûšu*
I 93 *lā lamdāma nukkulā minâtūšu*
I 94 *ḫasāsiš lā naṭâ amāriš pašqā*

I 91 He (Anu) perfected him (Marduk), so his divinity is extraordinary.
I 92 He is far superior, he surpasses them (the other gods) in every way,
I 93 His form is something too ingenious to understand,
I 94 Impossible to conceive, difficult to look upon.

Marduk's extraordinary *ilūtu* appears to refer to his general superiority over all other gods, an impression strengthened by the parallelism between *ilūssu* and *mimmûšu*, "all of him (lit. his everything)." One might therefore understand *ilūtu* to refer here not to Marduk's quality of being divine, but to the specific and remarkable ways in which Marduk's divine powers manifest themselves. This also seems to be the case in the *Hymn to Ninurta as Sirius*:

13 *ina kullat kala ilī šunnâtu ilūtka*
14 *ina nipiḫ kakkabānī nummurū zīmū*[*ka kīma*] *šamši*

13 Among all the gods your divinity is something different
14 When the stars come out, [your] features shine [like] the sun.[70]

(Burrow's *Hymn to Ninurta as Sirius* pl. II)

[70] Following reconstruction in CAD Š I, 401, translation from Foster 2005, 621. This occurrence was likewise pointed out by Taylor (2017, 403 n. 25).

It may be significant that the authors of *Erra*, *Enūma eliš*, and the *Hymn to Ninurta as Sirius* all went on to remark on the appearance of the deities they describe after declaring that their *ilūtu* is "different": he who catches sight of the Seven is struck with fear; after remarking that Marduk's divinity is remarkable, the author of *Enūma eliš* extolls his incomparable form; and the great divinity of Ninurta manifests in the great brightness of Sirius. Perhaps *ilūtu*, in these contexts, should be understood as referring not to the general idea of "divinity" or "divine nature," but more specifically to the visual trappings of godliness, the fearful and awe-striking form of a god. It may not be coincidental, then, that it is Sin, the radiant moon god, who is referred to as Marduk's *ilūtu* in the above-quoted KAR 25 ii 3 (*sin ilūtka anu malkūtka dagan bēlūtka*). The third way to argue for the positions of Cagni and Taylor is to propose that *ilūtu* in IV 3 refers to Erra's divine appearance, which he disguises by assuming man-like form. Such an argument would cohere with the line's translation by Bottéro and Kramer (1989, 241), "Après avoir modifié tes (apparences-) divines et t'être assimilé à un homme."

The Fourth Way: "They Were the Bird, and You their Decoy"

In arguing for a visual rather than behavioral transformation on Erra's part in IV 3, one may invoke the specific metaphor Išum uses to describe Erra's attack on Babylon:

IV 15 *atta ālik maḫrimma pānuššunu ṣabtāta*
IV 16 *ša imgur-ellil uṣṣa elīšu tummidma ū'a libbī iqabbi*
IV 17 *muḫra rābiṣ abullīšu ina damī eṭli u ardati tattadi šubassu*

IV 18 *āšib bābili šunūti šunu iṣṣūrumma arrašunu attama*
IV 19 *ana šēti takmissunūtīma tabīr tātabat qurādu erra*

IV 15 "You were the vanguard, seizing their lead!
IV 16 "As for Imgur-Enlil—you aimed an arrow at it, "woe, my heart," it cried.
IV 17 "Muḫra, the guardian of its gate—you cast his seat into the blood of youth and maiden.
IV 18 "These inhabitants of Babylon—they were bird, and you their decoy:
IV 19 "You caught them in a net, trapped, destroyed them, warrior Erra!"

In this metaphor Erra is compared to a "decoy" (*arru*), likely a fake bird (or a live and immobilized one) used to attract others of its kind so they could be hunted,[71] and then to a hunter snaring the citizens of Babylon in his net and slaughtering them. These images would perfectly describe a situation in which Erra assumes human form to lure other mortals and then orchestrates their demise: the birds alight to join one who looks alike to them, unaware of the trap set by the hunter, and the Babylonians gather around Erra (IV 5), not knowing that he is, in fact, the god of violence, and that his hateful speeches are nothing more than a means to lure them to their deaths. The metaphor chosen by Išum is thus perfectly fitted to the scenario outlined by Roberts and Taylor, in which Erra disguises his divinity, assuming human form.

Summary

There are thus four ways to argue for understanding *ilūtka tušannīma tamtašal amēliš* to refer to Erra assuming a man-like form. First, by proposing that *ilūtka* refers to Erra's person, and therefore that *ilūtka tušannīma* should be translated "You changed your (divine) self." Second,

[71] For the translation of *arru* as "decoy-bird," Landsberger 1933, 227.

by taking *tušannīma* to mean "You disguised," and *ilūtka tušannīma* as "you disguised your divinity." Third, by taking *ilūtka* to refer specifically to Erra's divine appearance, with *tušannīma* meaning either "to change" or "to disguise." And fourth, by appeal to the metaphor chosen by Išum to describe Erra's slaughter of Babylon's citizens.

3. Narrative Symmetry in IV 1–74

In the account of Babylon's sack (IV 1–49), three symmetries may be observed. First, the two descriptions of Erra's own part in the destruction are each given five lines (IV 1–5, 15–19). Second, the two rounds of destruction in Babylon are each given 19 lines (IV 1–19, 31–49), with the second, like the first, beginning and ending with units of five lines (IV 31–35, 45–49). Third, the royal army's actions are described in five lines, and Marduk's subsequent cursing of Babylon—whereby he deprives it of water on account of the river filling with the blood of those killed by that army—is also described in five lines.

IV 40 *ūʾa bābili ša kīma gišimmari qimmatu ušašriḫūšūma ubbilūšu šāru*	I
IV 41 *ūʾa bābili ša kīma terinni šeʾê umallûšūma lā ašbû lallûšu*	
IV 42 *ūʾa bābili ša kīma kirî nuḫši azqupūšūma lā ākula inibšu*	
IV 43 *ūʾa bābili ša kīma kunuk elmēšu addûšu ina tikki anum*	
IV 44 [*ūʾa*] *bābili ša kīma ṭupšīmāti ina qātīya aṣbatūšūma lā umaššarūšu ana mamma*	5
IV 45 [*u kiam iqtab*]*i rubû marduk*	II
IV 46 . . *ultu ūmī pānî* [ ] . . .	
IV 47 *nēber kāri līṣamma . . . . . lībir šēpuššu*	
IV 48 *ašal būru lišpilma ēdu amēlu napištašu lā uballaṭ*	
IV 49 *ina gipiš tâmti rapašti mê ištât meʾat bēru makur bāʾiri lībukū ina parīsu*	5

IV 50	*ša sippar āl ṣâti ša bēl mātāti ina aqār pānīšu abūbu lā ušbi'ūšu*	III
IV 51	*ina balu šamaš dūršu tābutma tattadi samīssu*	2
IV 52	*ša uruk šubat anum u ištar āl kezrēti šamḫāti u ḫarīmāt*[*i*]	IV
IV 53	*ša ištar muta īṭerūšinātīma imnû qātušš*[*a*]	
IV 54	*sutî sutâtu nadû yarūrāt*[*i*]	
IV 55	*dekû eanna kurgarrî isin*[*nī*]	
IV 56	*ša ana šupluḫ nišī inana zikrūssunu utēru ana sinn*[*išūti*]	
IV 57	*nāš patri nāš naglabi quppê u ṣurt*[*i*]	
IV 58	*ša ana ulluṣ kabtat inana ītakkalū a*[*sakka*]	
IV 59	*šakkanakku ekṣu lā bābil pānī elīšunu tašk*[*un*]	
IV 60	*uššissinātīma parṣīšina ītet*[*iq*]	
IV 61	*ištar īgugma issabus eli uruk*	
IV 62	*nakra idkâmma kī šêm ina pān mê imašša' māta*	11
IV 63	*āšib parsâ aššu eugal ša uštalpitu ul unīḫ gerrānu*	V
IV 64	*nakru ša tadkû ul imangur ana sakāpi*	2
IV 65	*ištarān īpula qibīta*	VI
IV 66	*dēr ana namê taltakan*	
IV 67	*nišū ša ina libbīšu kī qanê tuḫtaṣṣiṣ*	
IV 68	*kī ḫubuš pān mê ḫubūršina tubtalli*	
IV 69	*yâši ul tumašširanni ana sutî tattannanni*	5
IV 70	*anāku aššu ālīya dēr*	VII
IV 71	*dīnī kītti ul adân purussê ul aparras*	
IV 72	*ûrta ul anamdimma ul upatti uzni*	
IV 73	*nišū kītta umašširāma iṣbatā parikta*	
IV 74	*<m>īšara*[72] *īzibāma lemutta kapdā*	5

[72] The beginning of IV 74 is not preserved in any manuscript except K.2619, Taylor's P. Taylor construes *i-šá-r*[*a*] in K.2619 ii 30' as a haplography, having *<mi>-i-šá-ra* in her edition. Yet one would not expect the spelling *mi-i-šá-ra* for *mīšara*—no such spelling for *mīšaru* is cited in the word's CAD entry (CAD M/II, 116–119)—but *mi-šá-ra*. A straightforward confusion between *mīšaru* and *išaru*, "straight/just (man)," seems more likely. The scribe of a Koyounjik manuscript of a *Bīt-rimki kiutu* (K.4804. Baragli 2022 no. BR6) seems to have likewise confused the two words: níg-si-sá an gub-ba-me-[en]/ *i-šá-ru ina* AN-*e ka-a-a-ma-nu at-t*[*a*]/ níg-gi-na kur-kur-ra igi gál-me-en/ *kit-tu*$_4$ *bi-šit uz-ni šá ma-ta-a-ti at-ta*, The *išaru*, constant in the sky—you ar[e],/ Truth, the wisdom of the lands,—you are. (ll. 6'–9'). Another manuscript of the *kiutu* has the expected *mi-*⌜*šá-ru*⌝ (CBS.1556 [Baragli's UNB3] obv. 18'), and this is most likely the correct variant. A mix-up between the noun *mīšaru* and the adjective *išaru* would have been easy to make in K.4804, for it makes sense for Šamaš to be called "the just one"—a parallel would be the

IV 40 “Alas for Babylon, whose crown I made as splendid as a palm’s,	I	
but which the wind has scorched,		
IV 41 “’Alas for Babylon, which I filled with seeds like a pinecone,		
but of whose charms I never had my fill		
IV 42 “’Alas for Babylon, which I set up like an abundant garden,		
but whose fruit I never ate,		
IV 43 “’Alas for Babylon, which I set like an amber seal round the neck of Anu,		
IV 44 “’[Alas for] Babylon, which I grasped in my hand like the tablet of destinies,		
relinquishing it to no one.	5	
IV 45 “[And so spok]e Prince Marduk:”	. II	
IV 46 “’. . From distant days [ ] . . .		
IV 47 “’Let one set out the wharf . . . . .[on dry land]. . . . . let his feet pass,		
IV 48 “’Should the well reach down (even) sixty fathoms—		
may not one man be able to sustain his life from it!		
IV 49 “’In the swelling of the broad sea, waters a hundred leagues out,		
may they propel the fisherman’s boat with a punting pole!’”	5	
IV 50 “As for Sipper, the primeval city, over which the lord of lands	III	
..... did not let the flood sweep, out of his favor (for it):		
IV 51 “Against the will of Šamaš		
you wrecked its walls and cast its parapet down!	2	
IV 52 “As for Uruk, dwelling of Anu and Ištar,	IV	
IV 53 “City of harlots, prostitutes, and courtesans, whom Ištar deprived of husbands,		
and reckoned as [*her*] own:		
IV 54 “Sutean men, Sutean women, bawling war cries,		
IV 55 “Evicted (lit. roused) from Eanna the *kurgarrû* and *isin*[*nū*],		
IV 56 “Them whose manhood Ištar changed to woman[hood],		
to strike awe into the people,		
IV 57 “Wielders of blades, wielders of scalpels, flints, and razors,		
IV 58 “Who violate ta[boos], to delight Ištar.		
IV 59 “A governor cruel and heartless you se[t] over them,		
IV 60 “He tormented them and contravened their rites:		
IV 61 “Ištar became enraged and flew into a fury against Uruk,		
IV 62 “She roused the enemy—		
he picked the country clean like grains on the water’s face ..	11	
IV 63 The dweller of Parsâ,	V	
on account of the desecrated Eugal, did not cease lamentation:	V	

description of Ninurta as *išara*, “just one,” (var. *išarī*) in lugal-*e* Line 385 (edition Seminara 2001). The scribe of K.2619 may have likewise understood IV 74 as *išara īzibāma lemutta kapdā*, “(The people) have left the just one, and plotted evil.”

IV 64 “The enemy you roused did not deign to relent!”	*2*	
IV 65 “Ištaran spoke out:”	VI	
IV 66 “’You turned Der to desolation,		
IV 67 “’You snapped the people within it like reeds,		
IV 68 “’You snuffed out their clamor like foam on the water,		
IV 69 “’Me—you did not let me go, but gave me over to the Suteans.	5	
IV 70 “’I myself, on account of my city, Der,	VII	
IV 71 “’Will render no true verdicts, make no judgments,		
IV 72 “’Give no direction, grant no insight,		
IV 73 “’The people have let go of truth, and took up violence,		
IV 74 “’They have abandoned justice, and plotted evil.	5	

These units form a symmetrical, and chiastic, structure:

IV 40–44	I	Marduk laments Babylon	5	a
IV 45–49	II	Marduk curses Babylon	5	a
IV 50–51	III	Destruction in Sippar	2	b
IV 52–62	IV	Destruction in Uruk	11	c
IV 63–64	V	Destruction in Parsâ	2	b
IV 65–69	VI	Ištaran laments Der	5	a
IV 70–74	VII	Ištaran’s decree	5	a

Thus, we have a chiastic aabcbaa construction. There is a further chiasm: whereas Marduk’s lamentation at the beginning of the passage precedes his cursing of Babylon, Ištaran announces his punishment of Der, the withholding of justice, *before* noting its cause, the people themselves having abandoned justice.[73]

[73] That the people’s abandonment of justice precedes Ištaran’s withholding of justice from the land despite being described after it is supported by the grammar of IV 70–74, for Ištaran uniformly declares his intent using durative verbs but describes the people’s misdeeds using three preterite verbs and one stative.

The speeches of Marduk and Ištaran are each ten lines long, with both devoting five lines to lamentation and then five to punishing the very cities they have just lamented.[74] Moreover, both punishments are examples of *lex talionis*—bloody water is punished by drought, and the abandonment of justice by its withholding. The logic guiding divine judgment in both cases is the same, for the citizens of both Babylon and Der have corrupted with violence what they have been given—the river's water and Ištaran's wisdom—and so are deemed unworthy of it. Ištar's punishment of Uruk is also an example of *lex talionis*: the Suteans evict the *kurgarrû and isin*[*nū*] from Eanna (*dekû eanna*), and the governor transgresses their rites (*parṣīšina ītet*[*iq*])—therefore Ištar, in her fury, rouses the enemy (*nakra idkâmma*), who then plunders the land (*imaššaʾ māta*)—an action implying the violation of the land's own borders. An additional symmetry of this passage is that, as in the account of Babylon's sack, a section of eleven lines—the description of events in Uruk—forms the middle point of narrative symmetry. This description, like the 11-line section describing Erra's incitement of Babylon's governor, involves a *šakkanakku* mistreating, at Erra's instigation, those the *šakkanakku* governs.

[74] The equivalence is not exact. While 5 lines are each devoted to Marduk and Ištaran's laments over the destruction of their cities (IV 45–49, IV 65–69), Marduk's cursing of Babylon takes up five lines (IV45–49), while Ištaran describes his punishment of Der in 2 lines (IV 70–71) but devotes 3 lines to describing the cause of his punishment (IV 72–74).

4. The Unknown Destroyer (IV 75–88)

IV 75 *ušatbīma*[75] *ana ištêt māti sebetti šārī*
IV 76 *ša ina* [*qab*]*li lā* [*i*]*mtūtu imât ina šibṭi*
IV 77 *ša ina šibṭi lā imtūtu išallalšu nakru*
IV 78 *ša nakru lā išt*[*allūšu*] *urassabu šarrāqu*
IV 79 *ša šarrāqu lā urta*[*ssi*]*būšu kakki šarri ikaššassu*
IV 80 *ša kakki šarri lā iktaldu rubû ušamqassu*
IV 81 *ša rubû lā uštamqitūšu adad iraḫḫissu*
IV 82 *ša adad lā irtaḫṣūšu šamaš itabbalšu*
IV 83 *ša ana erṣeti ittaṣû išabbissu šāru*
IV 84 *ša īterbu ana ganūnīšu rābiṣu imaḫḫassu*
IV 85 *ša ana mūlê ītelû ina ṣūmi imât*
IV 86 *ša ana mušpali ittardu imât ina mê*
IV 87 *mūlâ u mušpala kī aḫāmiš tagmur*

IV 75 I have levied[76] seven winds against a single land
IV 76 He who has not [d]ied in bat[tle]—dies of plague,
IV 77 He who has not died of plague—the enemy takes captive,
IV 78 He whom the enemy has not taken ca[ptive]—the thief strikes,
IV 79 He whom the thief has not struck—the king's weapon runs down,
IV 80 He whom the king's weapon has not run down—the prince fells,
IV 81 He whom the prince has not felled—Adad drowns,
IV 82 He whom Adad has not drowned—Šamaš carries off,
IV 83 He who went out into the country—the wind thrashes,
IV 84 He who entered his inner chamber—the lurker-demon strikes,
IV 85 He who went up to the highland died of thirst,
IV 86 He who went down to the lowland died by water.
IV 87 Highland and lowland alike you obliterated!

[75] As discussed below, Taylor (2018, 48) proposes to read *bé* instead of *bi*, and to normalize the verb as *ušatbēma*.

[76] Other possible translations of *ušatbīma* are discussed below.

It is here that speaker and referent become difficult to discern, much as they were in the prologue of the poem. IV 75 is an important interpretive juncture. These are the known witnesses for the line, adapted, with one change discussed below, from Taylor's score edition:

P (K. 2619) o ii 31' *ú*-[.....]
RR (IB 212) o ii 35 [...] *šat-*⌜*bi-ma*⌝ *a-na* DIŠ-*et ma-a-ti* IMIN.MEŠ IM.ME

Scholars, combining the two manuscripts, have generally reconstructed the first verb of the line as *ušatbīma*. This verb can be construed as either a 3rd or 1st person verb, i.e. "I have levied" or "he has levied." With Gössmann, Cagni, Bottéro and Kramer, Cagni, Foster, Dalley, and Taylor construing *ušatbīma* as 1st person verb spoken by Ištaran, with all but Taylor taking it as a preterite.[77]

> Yet as Taylor notes,
>
> It is possible this verse should properly be reconstructed "*You mobilized* [*tušatbī-ma*] the seven winds against one country," where Ištarān is accusing Erra ... Such mix-ups in person are common in the history of this text (see I:146 and IV:17), and copy P—the only copy in which the initial sign survives—is beset with errors, whether ancient or modern; observe for example that *mīšara* in IV:74 appears to have lost its initial MI sign.[78] (Taylor 2017, 513 n. 421)

[77] Taylor's understanding of the verb is discussed below.

[78] As discussed in a note on IV 74, quoted above, it is more likely that the scribe confused *išaru* and *mīšaru* than that he inadvertently omitted MI.

For the two lines to which Taylor is referring, I 146 and IV 17, both first and third person shows are attested in the manuscripts:

I 146

A *kakkī*[*y*]*a ušatbâmma uḫallaq rēḫa*
X *kakkīka tušatbīma tuḫalliq rē*[*ḫa*]

A [My] weapon I will raise[79] and destroy the rest
X Your weapon you raised and destroyed the re[st]

IV 17

W *muḫra rābiṣu abul*(*līšu*) *ina damī eṭli u ardati it-ta-di šubassu*
P, AA *muḫra rābiṣu abul*(*līšu*) *ina damī eṭli u ardati ta-ta-di šubassu*

W Muḫra, guardian of (its) gate—in the blood of youth and maiden he cast his seat.

P, AA Muḫra, guardian of (its) gate—in the blood of youth and maiden you cast his seat.

This is also the case in another line in Tablet IV:

IV 31

P, RR *ummān šarri uktaṣṣir īterub ana āli*
W *ummān šarri uptaḫḫir tēterub ana āli*
A *ummān šarri tuktaṣṣir tēterub ana āli*

P, RR The army of the king assembled, it entered the city
W The army of the king gathered, you (Erra) entered the city
A The army of the king you (Erra) gathered, you entered the city

[79] IV 146 presents considerable problems. for not only do its two variants conflict with each other, but both can be construed either as indicative statements or questions. For discussion, Taylor 2017, 436–437 n. 61.

These variants may indicate that ancient scribes, much like modern scholars, found *Erra* a difficult text to understand. One is tempted to amend *ušatbīma* to *tušatbīma*, because a declaration by Ištaran that he levied seven winds against a single land—Der, we might suppose—does not seem to cohere with the rest IV 75–87, for that section ends with the following three lines:

IV 85 *ša ana mūlê ītelû ina ṣūmi imât*
IV 86 *ša ana mušpali ittardu imât ina mê*
IV 87 *mūlâ u mušpala kī aḫāmiš tagmur*

IV 85 He who went up to the highland dies of thirst
IV 86 He who went down to the lowland dies by water
IV 87 Highland and lowland alike you have obliterated

IV 87, preserved only in one copy, IB 212—Taylor's RR—is delivered in the second person, presumably to Erra. This creates a problem. If Ištaran unleashes seven winds against one country in IV 74, then the immediately following IV 75–86 could reasonably be taken to describe the consequences of that unleashing; Cagni (1969), for one, makes it clear that he understands the passage in this way both by ending his translation of IV 75 with a colon ("Io (percio) faro alzare i sette venti sull'unico paese:"), and in his commentary (1969, 237). Yet if the destruction in IV 76–86 is Ištaran's doing, then why is the description of the deaths of those who ascend to the highland or descend to the lowland followed by an accusation against Erra that he obliterated high and low places alike—an accusation indicating that Erra, rather than Ištaran,

is responsible for those deaths? This likewise appears to be a problem in Foster's 1996 translation, which runs:

IV 75 Against (but) one country I raised up Seven winds.
IV 76 He who did not die in battle will die in the epidemic.
IV 77 He who did not die in the epidemic, the enemy will plunder him,
…
IV 85 He who has gone up to the high place will die of thirst,
IV 86 He who has gone down to a low place will perish in the waters!
IV 87 You have obliterated high and low places alike!

It is thus implicit in Foster's 1996 translation—in which Ištaran's speech is taken to begin in IV 65 and end in IV 103—and explicit in Cagni's (1969), that Ištaran heralds IV 76–86 with a line assigning responsibility to himself (IV 75) but follows them with another assigning it to Erra (IV 87).

One can endeavor to resolve the apparent contradiction between *ušatbīma* (in IV 75, as preserved in K.2619), and *tagmur* (in IV 87, as preserved in IB 212) in at least three ways:

1. By understanding the unleashing of the winds by Ištaran in IV 75 to be unrelated to the chaos described in IV 76–86, with that chaos being exclusively Erra's doing. Such an understanding can be argued for in at least two ways:

    a. By following Taylor, who translates IV 76–86 in the present ("he who does not die in x dies in y…); IV 87 as past ("… you have annihilated); and, reading *ú-šat-bé-ma* rather than *ú-šat-bi-ma*, normalizes the verb as *ušatbēma*, taking it as an Assyrian durative

paralleling in tense the verbs in Ištaran's announcement that he will withhold justice from Der (2017, 48). In her translation, therefore, IV 75 would refer to Ištaran's future punishment—"I will unleash (*ušatbēma*) seven winds," but IV 76–68 would concern unrelated chaos in the land. However, IB 212 (Taylor's Manuscript RR)—the only source in which *šat-*⌜*bi-ma*⌝ is attested—is written in Babylonian script and kept in the Baghdad Museum. It is therefore unlikely that its scribe would opt for the Assyrian form of the durative. As Taylor notes (2017, 48 n. 130), Cagni 1977 likewise translates the verb as the future tense, having "faro alzare" (1969) and "I shall stir up" (1977). Yet Cagni's argument is different from Taylor's. He points out that if the verb *u-pat-ti* in IV 72 (*urtâ ul anamdin ul upatti uznī*) refers to Ištaran's present or future actions—as scholars generally agree it does—then the apparently preterite *ú-šat-bi-ma* can likewise be understood present-future in meaning (1969, 237). This is a compelling argument, and opens the way once for Taylor's proposal. Yet as discussed below, it is unclear why Ištaran would choose this specific punishment for his land's particular misdeeds.

b. By following Foster's revised translation of *Erra* (2005), in which he takes IV 75 to be the last spoken by Ištaran, with Išum's own words recommencing in IV 76—with a new episode beginning at that point. However, this second solution would leave IV 75 oddly

isolated within the passage, for the consequences of Ištaran having unleashed the seven winds would be left uncharacteristically undescribed.

2. By emending *ušatbīma* to *tušatbīma*, "You (Erra) have raised." IV 76–86 would be understood as describing the direct consequences of Erra's levying of the seven winds in IV 75 thus there would be no implication that both Erra and Ištaran are responsible for the decimating highland and lowland. And rather than seeming disconnected from the rest of the passage, IV 75, "You (Erra) levied seven winds against a single country," would form a pleasing symmetry with IV 87, "Highland and lowland alike you (Erra) obliterated." The eleven-line section of IV 76–86 would then be bracketed with two summary lines, the first describing the cause of destruction and the second its effect. This approach is followed here.
3. A third and less appealing solution would be to suppose that it is IB 212 that is inferior, with the correct reading being *agmur*, "I (Ištaran) annihilated," rather than *tagmur*, "You (Erra) annihilated."

Leaving the matter of harmonizing *ušatbīma* and *tagmur* temporarily aside, assigning the unleashing of the winds to Ištaran would make IV 75 seem out of place in another way. If Ištaran behaves like Marduk and Ištar in his punishment of Der—that is, according to *lex talionis*—then decimation by winds would seem an odd consequence for the abandonment of justice. Ištaran's withholding of justice from the people on account of their wickedness would, in

contrast, accord with *lex talionis* perfectly. Yet if Ištaran ordained such a fitting punishment for the people's abandonment of righteousness, then why would he also unleash the winds on account of the same offense, and what would be the rationale for him choosing this specific punishment? This difficulty too would be ameliorated by an emendation of *ušatbīma* to *tušatbīma*, "You (Erra) have raised," For Erra does not abide by *lex talionis*, and no punishment is too excessive for him to inflict in his fury.

5. Who Killed the Son and Wrecked the Home? (IV 88–103)

Determining the identity of the speaker only becomes more difficult in the next three sections of this unit:

IV 88 [*ša*]*kin āli ana ālittīšu iqabbi kiam*
IV 89 *ina ūmu tulidīnni lū apparik ina libbī*[*ki*]
IV 90[80] [*napiš*]*tani lū iqtûma lū nimūt it*[*ti*]
[*a*]*ḫ̲ā̲*[*miš*]
IV 92 *aššu taddinīnni ana āli ša dūršu i*[*nnaqru*]

[80] Cagni writes, "Lines 90–91 are evidently a single line … I have kept the distinction … in order to facilitate the verification of citations, especially of the dictionaries. which refer to the numbering now consecrated by use." (1977, 113, n. 142. Cagni makes the same point in 1969, 239). IV 90–91 are only attested in IB 212, a copy of Tablet IV known to have at least 17 such split lines, whose latter, shorter part is always indented so that it ends at the tablet's edge (ll. 33, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 49, 50, 52, 69, 94, 124, 129, 135, 136, 137). Judging by the copies of Gössmann (1955, 105) and Cagni (1969, fig. 5)—I could find no photo of IB 212 more recent than the one contained in Gössmann's 1955 edition—this would match the position of ḪA, the only sign preserved in IV 91. In contrast to Cagni, Taylor takes IV 90–91 to be two separate lines, and writes regarding IV 90 (2017, 516, n. 430), "Cagni reconstructs *ittī*, 'in addition,' yet that term is otherwise unknown from standard Babylonian and awkward in context (since in the first hemistich conveys the meaning of dying it is not actually 'in addition')." Yet this does not correctly characterize Cagni's position, for in taking IV 90–91 to be a single line he has it ending with *itti aḫāmiš*, a phrase commonly attested in 1st-millennium sources (see citations in CAD A/I, 163–168).

IV 93 *nišūšu būlumma māḫiṣu ilūšin*
IV 94 *u ša šētīšu īšša pīqatūma ḫā'irī lā išlupūma imūtū ina kakki*

IV 95 *ša māra uldu mārīma iqabbi*
IV 96 *anna urtabbīma utār gimillī*
IV 97 *māra ušmātma abu iqabbiršu*
IV 98 *arka aba ušmātma qēbira ul īši*

IV 99 *ša bīta īpušu ganūnīma iqabbi*
IV 100 *annâ ētepušma apaššaḫa qerbuššu*
IV 101 *ūm ubtillanni šīmati aṣallal ina libbi*
IV 102 *šâšu ušmāssūma ušaḫraba ganūnšu*
IV 103 *arka lū ḫarbumma ana šanîmma anamdin*

IV 88 The city's [*ma*]*yor*[81] says thus to her who bore him:
IV 89 Had I only been blocked inside [your] womb the day you bore me!
IV 90 Had only our [lives] ended (then), had only we had died to[gether],
IV 92 Because you gave me over to a city whose walls have been [torn down].
IV 93 Its people—cattle, and their god—the hunter,
IV 94 And his net is tightly meshed (lit. its eye is narrow)—*couples* could not escape (from it),[82] but perished by the sword.

IV 95 "He who begat a son, declaring 'this is my son,
IV 96 'Now that I have raised him, he will requite my pains—'
IV 97 "I slay the son, and the father buries him,
IV 98 "Then I slay the father, and he has none to bury him.

IV 99 "He who made a home, declaring 'this is my sanctuary,

[81] This line is only attested in IB 212 (Taylor's man. RR). Gössmann (1955, 31), copies [^{lú}*š*]*á-kìn* (?). Cagni has [$^{lú?}$*šá*?]-*kìn*, and comments (1969, 238), "L'inizio del v. è molto dubbio. La mia copia trova un testo piu deteriorato di quello di Gossmann, che ha visto chiaramente il segno *šá*."

[82] This line is closely paralleled by *Hymn to Ninurta as Savior*, found on eBL (Mitto 2022):

23 *ṣabīt pasuntu iktumūšīma nârat ina gišparri*
24 *… ina qibītukka* (*ṣīrti*) *ina pīqti īnī išallap uṣṣi*

The gazelle that a *web* has covered, prostrate in a net—
… by your (supreme) command, it escapes from its tight mesh, and runs off."

As Mitto remarks in a note on *Hymn to Ninurta as Savior*:24, "Note that also in the parallel in *Erra and Išum*, the verb *šalāpu* G is used intransitively, i.e. 'to escape" rather than 'to pull out.' Because *išallap* is singular, it must refer to the gazelle—thereby indicating that *šalāpu* is intransitive rather than transitive.

IV 100 ‘Now that I have made it, I will repose within it;
IV 101 ‘When fate has carried me off,[83] I will lie down within—
IV 102 “Him I will slay, and wreck his sanctuary,
IV 103 “Then, though it be a ruin, I will give it to another.”

When does Ištaran’s speech stop—or more accurately, when does Išum’s quoting of Ištaran’s words stop? IV 87, “Highland and lowland alike you obliterated,” could conceivably be addressed to Erra by either Išum or Ištaran. We must therefore move further, until we reach a passage that seems *unlike* what at least one of these two gods would say—one may term this process philological differential diagnosis. And IV 95–103 is exactly such a passage, for all translators of the poem agree that it is not spoken by Išum, who could not possibly act with such senseless cruelty. Yet if it is not Išum speaking, who is? Scholars are divided. One wonders if these lines likewise confused the poem’s ancient readers. This is because every verb used in reference to the speaker of the passage from IV 95 up to IV 102—*ušmātma* (IV 97, 98), *ušmāssūma* (IV 102), and *ušaḫraba* (also IV 102)—could be construed both as a 1st and as a 3rd person verb. Only with *anamdin* in IV 103 can the reader know for certain that IV 95–103 are spoken in the 1st person. It would be natural to expect the 3rd person narration of the city ruler’s speech (IV 88–94), introduced by *iqabbi*, “he said,” to have continued; did some of the poem’s ancient readers make this mistake, do a grammatical double-take upon reading *anamdin*, and

[83] As noted by Lambert (1960, 303 n. 9) and Taylor (2017, 518 n. 434), *ubtillanni* is most likely an irregular D Perfect of *babālu*, paralleling *ubtil*, “(fate) carried off,” in *Theodicy*:9 (edition Heinrich 2022).

then immediately reread IV 95–103, now seeing it in a new light? The potential confusion caused by *anamdin* would have been even greater when listening to a performance of the poem, for one does not simply rewind a singer, telling him to perform the passage again just so the audience could hear it with the newly found certainty that is spoken in the 1st rather than the 3rd person. One suspects that this feature of the passage's construction is by no means accidental, and that the poet deliberately used the ambiguity between the 1st and 3rd person in the Akkadian Š stem to startle and surprise.

Three possibilities as to the speaker of IV 95–105 have so far been entertained by scholars. The first is that he is Ištaran, the god of Der. This is the approach taken in Foster 1996, as he includes all lines from IV 66 to IV 103 in Ištaran's speech. It is also argued for by Taylor (2017, 46–51), who, presumably because she consulted Foster 2005—in which Išum's own words resume already in IV 75—does not cite Foster on this point. The second is Erra himself, as in Foster 2005 and George 2013 (2013, 56). And the third is that he is the city's mayor, the [GAR].KUR URU. This is argued for by Müller (1995, 358–359).

The arguments for and against each candidate can be summarized as follows. Išum would most likely not act in such an evil way—much less speak of it to Erra as part of his efforts to calm the raging god—and the last first-person divine speaker we know of is Ištaran. This makes him a natural choice. As Taylor observes (2017, 50), that Ištaran laments Der earlier in the tablet need not mean that he would be unwilling to decimate his city. On the contrary, lamentation

followed by decimation would be perfectly in line with the actions of Marduk regarding Babylon, and Ištar's regarding Uruk (though Ištar did not lament her city, only rage at it and then rouse the enemy to destroy it). Indeed, as described above, Ištaran punishes Der by withholding justice from it, thus following the same pattern of behavior as Marduk. Yet if he indeed acts similarly to Marduk and Ištar, one would expect him to indulge in a single round of destruction, and for that destruction to be related in some way to the city's misdeeds as per *lex talionis*—neither of which be the case if he is the speaker of IV 95–103. One may argue that withholding justice is not destruction per se, and therefore Ištaran still has one punishment to go, as it were—yet such an argument is not sufficient to explain why Ištaran chooses the specific punishments described in IV 95–103, nor why he is given so many lines in the first place. Taylor writes:

> Thus interpreted, Ištarān's speech may run unexpectedly long, considering he is a relatively minor character and Marduk only delivers nine verses where Ištar delivers none. The most plausible explanation for this apparent imbalance is that historical events that affected Dēr particularly negatively lie behind this text. (Taylor 2017, 50)

Yet there is a god whose destructive acts we would most definitely expect to be described here, one who delights in inflicting excessive punishment. That is Erra himself. Such cruelty is so like him! But as Taylor points out (2017, 49), "… nothing in the context allows us to suppose Erra speaks this segment." Indeed, only in IV 114 does Išum state that he is quoting Erra's own words, telling him, *u tātammâ ana libbīka umma leqû šēṭūti*, "And yet you say to your heart, 'they hold

me in contempt.'" However, while it is true that the narrative gives no explicit indication that Erra is the speaker, his candidacy may be hinted at in a more subtle way, namely through the specific terms in which the destruction is described. The mayor says of the city, *nišūšu būlumma māḫiṣu ilūšin*, "Its people—beasts, their god—the hunter" (IV93). Cohen (2013, 17) argues that this line is anticipated by the first hemistich of I 112, part of Erra's self-glorification (I 109–118): *ina būli māḫiṣāku*, "Among the beasts I am the hunter." Could the description of the god as a hunter among the people have served as a tip-off to attentive readers that the god in question is Erra? As Cohen points out, other boasts Erra makes in I 109–118 appear to anticipate actions he performs in Tablet IV; for instance, Erra declares that he is a lion in the land (*ina erṣeti labbāku*), and he puts lion's features before entering Babylon's palace (*zīm labbi tašakkan*, IV 21). Another example Cohen points to is especially pertinent in this context: in I 113 Erra says, *ina api girrā*[*ku*] *ina qišti maššarāku*, "In the canebreak [I am] fire, in the forest I am the *axe*," and in IV 5 Išum says of the citizens of Babylon, "who, like reeds in a thicket, have no leader" (*ša kīma qanê api pāqida lā išû*). Cohen writes of these lines:

> Just as the audience is led to understand what underlies the metaphor of *būlu* "cattle" in 112a, so here the metaphor of the canebrake burnt by fire is resolved when Erra enters Babylon … The simile (*kīma*) resolves the metaphor of line 113. The citizens of Babylon are like reeds; they have no guardian now that Marduk is gone. They will bring destruction upon themselves, as the ensuing lines show, finally burning their own city…" (Cohen 2013, 20)

And is it not Erra who, earlier in the same Tablet, is said by Išum to have caught the inhabitants of Babylon in a net, as "their god" does to the people of his city? Yet that the god's actions are similar to Erra's is no proof that he is Erra, for it is within Erra's power to cause others to behave exactly as he does, to attack and destroy with the rage and fury that is so central to his character. To take one example, in IV 14 it is said that the citizens of Babylon set fire to their sanctuaries "like a one who plunders a land" (*kī šālil māti*), and in V 10 Erra declares, *kī šālil māti kīna u ragga ul umassâ ušamqat*, "Like one who plunders a land, I do not distinguish righteous from wicked, but fell (both)." Therefore, the murderous god in question could just as easily be Ištaran displaying Erra-like behavior as Erra himself.

The third possibility is that IV 95–103 are spoken by the city's mayor, the *šākin āli*. He is, after all, the last-named speaker, being introduced in IV 88. Müller argues that the governor speaks, in the 3rd person, of the destructive actions of Ištaran—with *ušmātma* (IV 97, 98), *ušmāssūma* (IV 102), and *ušaḫraba* (also IV 102) parsed as 3rd rather than 1st person. The verb *anamdin*, in contrast, would be spoken by the mayor, who in Müller's translation declares of the ruined home, "'Danach ist dann ganz und gar eine Einöde, und ich muß es einem anderen geben.'" Yet as Taylor notes, "This only leaves *anamdin*, an unequivocal first-person form in IV:103, stranded." (2017, 49). One may also point out that *arka lū ḫarbumma ana šanîmma anamdin* parallels, both in form and in content, *arka aba ušmātma qēbira ul īši*, and one would therefore expect these two lines to be spoken by the same person. It is also unclear why the governor

would declare that he will give the god-stricken home to another person, or what narrative purpose that would serve.

Yet these problems do not arise if the mayor, rather than quoting Ištaran—or Erra, for that matter—speaks IV 95–103 in the first person, and that it is he who destroys the city. In attacking his own city after lamenting it, the governor's actions would likewise match those of Marduk, for the governor would lament what has been done to his city and then vow to make the situation even worse. Taylor writes of this possibility, "It is clear why an aggrieved individual would address his mother regarding the day of his birth; it is less clear why he would disclose to her his plan to contribute to the general mayhem." (2017, 49–50). Yet by no means does this seeming oddity disqualify his candidacy, and in any case one could construe the governor's violent intentions as being addressed, like Marduk's regarding Babylon (IV 45–49), to no one in particular. Yet Marduk's actions do not truly constitute a precedent for the mayor's potential behavior, for while Marduk had good reason to punish Babylon, namely its turn to violence, the *šākin āli* says nothing negative concerning the conduct of the people of "the city," and therefore has no such cause. That too would not disqualify the mayor, however, since the governor of Uruk oppresses the devotees of Ištar with no good reason whatsoever. Then again, the attack against Uruk launched by its governor—as well as the earlier one by Babylon's governor against Babylon—is directly instigated by Erra, and no comparable instigation seems to occur in this case. Such is the study of *Erra*, a maze of yets, howevers, and then agains. Bearing all of them in

mind, for the *šākin āli* to speak IV 95–103 does seem out of place in *Erra*—although he is by no means ruled out.

6. Išum's Rhetoric (IV 104–127)

IV 104	*qurādu erra kīnamma*	*tuštamīt*
IV 105	*lā kīnamma*	*tuštamīt*
IV 106	*ša iḫṭûkāma*	*tuštamīt*
IV 107	*ša lā iḫṭûkāma*	*tuštamīt*
IV 108	*enu mušaḫmiṭ taklīm ilānī*	*tuštamīt*
IV 109	*gerseqqû mukīl rēš šarri*	*tuštamīt*
IV 110	*šībī ina dakkannī*	*tuštamīt*
IV 111	*ardāti ṣaḫarāti ina uršīšina*	*tuštamīt*
IV 112	*u nâḫamma ul tanūḫ*	
IV 113	*u tātami ana libbīka umma leqû šeṭūtī*	
IV 114	*u kiam ana libbīka taqtabi qurādu erra*	
IV 115	*dannu lumḫaṣma akâ lupalliḫ*	
IV 116	*ālik pān ummāni lunārma ummāni lušasḫir*	
IV 117	*ša ašerti gegunnâša ša dūri kilīlšu lūbutma luḫalliqa bālti āli*	
IV 118	*tarkulla lussuḫma litteqleppâ eleppu*	
IV 119	*sikkanna lušbirma lā immida ana kibri*	
IV 120	*timma lušḫuṭma lussuḫ simassa*	
IV 121	*tulâ lušābilma lā iballuṭ šerru*	
IV 122	*kuppa luḫṭimma nārāti ṣaḫarāti lā ubbalā mê nuḫši*	
IV 123	*erkalla lunīšma lisbu'ū šamāmī*	
IV 124	*ša šulpaea šarūrūšu lušamqitma kakkabānī šamā*[*mī*] *lušamsik*	
IV 125	*ša iṣṣi šurussu lipparīma lā išammuḫa piri'šu*	
IV 126	*ša igāri išissu* var. *lussuḫma* (var. *lūbutma*) *litrurā rēšāšu*	
IV 127	*ana šubat šar ilānī lu'īrma lā ibbašši milku*	

IV 104	O Warrior Erra, the righteous man	—you have put to death,
IV 105	The unrighteous man	—you have put to death,
IV 106	The one who sinned against you	—you have put to death,
IV 107	The one who did not sin against you	—you have put to death,

IV 108 The priest who speeds the offerings
of the gods —you have put to death,
IV 109 The courtier who waits upon the king —you have put to death,
IV 110 The old men at the doorways —you have put to death,
IV 111 The young maidens in their bedrooms —you have put to death,
IV 112 Yet you found not rest at all,
IV 113 Yet you said to your heart, 'They hold me in contempt,"

IV 114 Yet you said thus to your heart, O Warrior Erra:
IV 115 Let me crush the strong and terrify the weak,
IV 116 Let me fell the general and turn the army back,
IV 117 Let me destroy the sanctuary's tower, the wall's parapet—
and wreck the city's pride,
IV 118 I will tear out the mooring poll so that the boat will drift away,
IV 119 I will snap the rudder so that it (the boat) will not reach the shore,
IV 120 I will tear out the mast, I will rip up the rigging.
IV 121 Let me dry up the breast so that the baby will not live,
IV 122 Let me seal up the wellspring so that (even) little channels
will bring no life-sustaining water (lit. water of plenty),
IV 123 Let me shake the netherworld and may the heavens quake,
IV 124 Let me strike down the radiance of Šulpae
and blot out the starts of the sk[y],
IV 125 Let me undo the tree's root so that its branches will not burgeon,
IV 126 Let me tear out (var. destroy) the wall's foundation
so that its top will totter,
IV 127 Let me enter the dwelling of the king of the gods so that no judgment will come into being!

Išum began his speech by speaking of Erra's universal domination (III 200–213). Now, he ends it by showing Erra that the latter's mental state is entirely divorced from reality. Though Erra has murdered the innocent and the guilty, the young and the old, he has found no rest. Though he has massacred multitudes, he still believes that the black-headed people hold him in

contempt. He has greater plans, and even intends to enter Marduk's dwelling—and it seems like that visit would be not be a peaceful one. Išum does not say why it is that Erra still believes that he is held in contempt after murdering as many people as he did. One would think that the people would stop holding Erra in contempt after he had demonstrated his strength so cataclysmically. If they now respect Erra's power but Erra does not realize it, then he is deluded. If the people fail to recognize Erra's power now, then it is they who are mistaken. Whatever the explanation, it is clear from Išum's words that no amount of murder could ever make Erra feel as though he is properly respected. Išum, and Išum alone, can do that. Erra, at long last, calms down. Before, he had devastated Babylonia. Now, he ordains universal strife, to be followed by Babylonia's supremacy. Next, he gives license to Išum to go against Mount Šaršar, the abode of the evil Suteans (on the Suteans, Heltzer 1981):

IV 128 *išmēšūma qurādu erra*
IV 129 *amāt išum iqbû*(*šu*) *kī ulû šamni elīšu iṭīb*
IV 130 *u kiam iqtabi qurādu erra*
IV 131 *tâmta tâmtu subarta subartu aššurâ aššurû*
IV 132 *elamâ elamû kaššâ kaššû*
IV 133 *sutâ sutû gutâ gutû*
IV 134 *lullubâ lullubû mātu māta* (*ālu āla*) *bītu bīta* (*amēlu amēla*)
IV 135 *aḫu aḫa lā*(var. *ul*) *igammilū*(*ma*) *linārū aḫāmiš*
IV 136 *arka akkadû litbâmma napḫaršunu lišamqitma lir'â nagabšun*
IV 137 *qurādu erra ana išum ālik maḫrīšu amāti izzakkar*
IV 138 *alikma išum amāt taqbû miṣi mala libbuk*
IV 139 *išum ana šaršar šadî ištakan pānīšu*
IV 140 *sebettu qarrād lā šanān išappissu arkīšu*
IV 141 *ana šaršar šadî iktašad qurādu*

IV 142 *iššīma qāssu ītabat šadâ*
IV 143 *šadâ šaršar imtanu qaqqaršu*
IV 144 *ša qišti ḫašūri uktappira gupnīša*
IV 145 *kī aḫra ḫaniš ītiqu ēme qīšumma*[84]
IV 146 *ālānī igmurma ana namê ištakan*
IV 147 *šadê ubbitma būlšunu ušamqit*
IV 148 *tâmāti udalliḫma*(var. *idluḫma*) *miširtašina uḫalliq*
IV 149 *api u qīši ušaḫribma*(var. *ušaḫrabma*) *kī gerra iqmi*
IV 150 *būla īrurma utīr ana ṭiṭṭi*

IV 128 Warrior Erra heard him (Išum),
IV 129 The words Išum spoke pleased him like finest oil.
IV 130 And so said warrior Erra:
IV 131 Sea-land(er) sea-land(er), Subartean Subartean, Assyria Assyrian,
IV 132 Elamite Elamite, Kassite Kassite,
IV 133 Sutean Sutean, Gutian Gutian,
IV 134 Lullubean Lullubean, land land, (city city), house house, (man man)
IV 135 Brother brother—They shall not (var. may they not) spare one another, but slay one another!
IV 136 Afterward let the Akkadian rise, and lay low all of them, and shepherd them all!
IV 137 Warrior Erra said a word to Išum, who goes before him:
IV 138 Go forth, Išum, fulfill what you spoke to your heart's content!
IV 139 Išum set out towards Mount Šaršar,
IV 140 The Seven, warrior(s) unrivaled, following close behind him.
IV 141 The hero (Išum) reached Mount Šaršar.
IV 142 He lifted his hand, and destroyed the mountain.
IV 143 He reckoned Mount Šaršar as level ground (lit. he reckoned Mount Šaršar (to be just as) its ground).
IV 144 He cut down the trunks of (its) cypress forest.

---

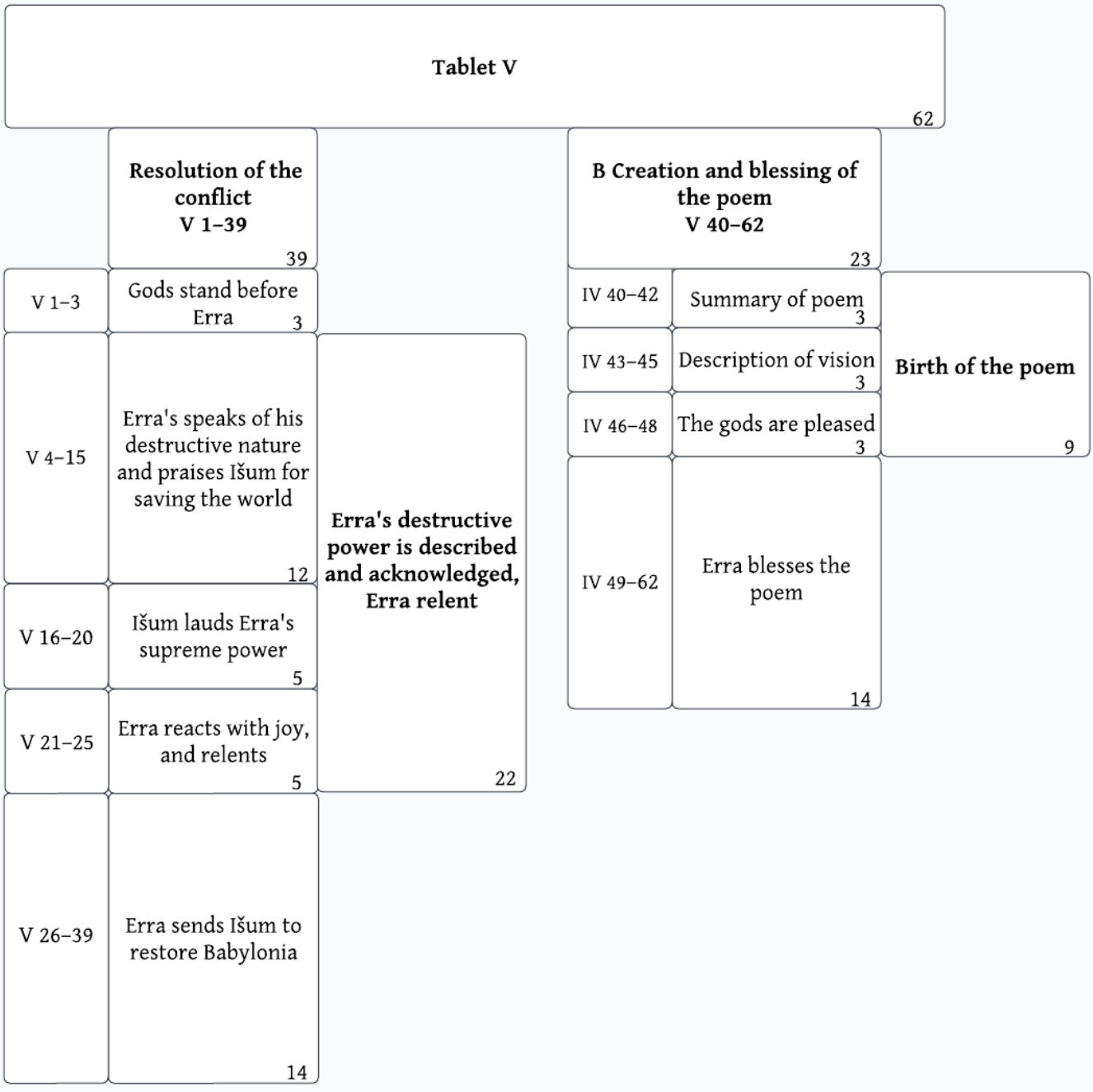
[84] The word normalized here as *qīšum* is attested in two manuscripts. One spells it *qi-i-šum-ma* (P rev. iv 28). The other has *qí-*^{d}*i-šum-ma* (RR rev. ii 145). Taylor judges it "possible, though perhaps not likely" that this spelling is deliberate rather than a mistake (2017, 527 n. 464). However, as she mentions in the same note, such a deliberate spelling would be paralleled by the spelling of *kīma labīrīšu* as ^{d}*lab-*^{d}*èr-ra-*^{d}*i-šum* in STT 2 no. 300 [pls. CCXXVIII–CCXXIX] rev. 21. This indicates that the spelling *qí-*^{d}*i-šum-ma* was intentional.

IV 145 The (state of) the mountain was as if Ḫaniš had just passed through.
IV 146 He finished off (its) cities, and turned them to wasteland.
IV 147 He toppled mountains and felled their wildlife.
IV 148 He roiled the seas and wiped out their increase.
IV 149 He devastated cane-break and forest, burning (them) like fire.
IV 150 He cursed the herds, annihilating (them) (lit. turning (them) into clay).

Contrary to what one might expect from IV 138, there is no place in the poem as it is preserved in which Išum is known to have spoken of destroying Mount Šaršar. Taylor (2017, 54) writes that "Perhaps Išum's original suggestion is lost to a lacuna, or is simply meant to be intuited." Likewise, Erra is not known to have spoken to Marduk about renovating Marduk's statue before Marduk introduces his discussion of this matter by saying *qurādu erra aššu šipri šâšu ša taqbû epēša*, "warrior Erra, as for that *šipru* you spoke of performing" (I 131). In both cases, it may be the case that the matter at hand was "in the air," as it were, even though it was not actually spoken of.

Chapter Five

The Reader's Guide to Tablet V


Tablet V
62
Resolution of the conflict
V 1–39
39
B Creation and blessing of the poem
V 40–62
23
V 1–3
Gods stand before Erra
3
V 4–15
Erra's speaks of his destructive nature and praises Išum for saving the world
12
V 16–20
Išum lauds Erra's supreme power
5
V 21–25
Erra reacts with joy, and relents
5
V 26–39
Erra sends Išum to restore Babylonia
14
Erra's destructive power is described and acknowledged, Erra relent
22
IV 40–42
Summary of poem
3
IV 43–45
Description of vision
3
IV 46–48
The gods are pleased
3
IV 49–62
Erra blesses the poem
14
Birth of the poem
9

1. After the Disaster (V 1–39)

For the most part, the fifth tablet of *Erra* appears reasonably clear. Erra, having calmed down and returned to Emeslam, holds court. He then (V 2–15) speaks of his warlike, uncaring, and destructive nature, and credits Išum with saving the world (V 1–15 are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven Part 9). Išum then flatters Erra, saying that when the latter is wroth, none can withstand him (V 20: *ina ūmi uggatīka ali māḫirka*). Erra is pleased (V 21–22) and is said to enter Emeslam and take up residence there (V 23). This is confusing, because the earlier V 1 is *ultu erra inūḫma irmâ šubassu*, "After Erra had rested and taken up residence." Such doubling may imply that V 1 forms a sort of title for the tablet rather than being part of its plot, similarly to III 1 *erra agugma ul iqâl ana mamman*, "Erra is wroth, and heeds no one," a line both preceded and proceeded by lines spoken by Erra yet itself unlikely to have been spoken by him. Relatedly, it can be noted that each Tablet of Erra after Tablet I introduces the main subject of the tablet (the broader subject of tablets as narrative units is taken up in Helle 2023):

II 1 *ana šubat annunaki ištakan pānīšu*

II 1 "He" (Marduk) set his face towards the dwelling of the Anunnaki.

III 1 *erra agugma ul iqâl ana mamman*

III 1 Erra is wrathful, and heeds no one.

IV 1 *qurādu erra ša rubê marduk zikiršu lā tašḫut*

IV 1 "O Warrior Erra! You were not afraid of sovereign Marduk's name.

V 1 *ultu erra inūḫma irmâ šubassu*

V 1 After Erra had calmed down, and taken up residence.

Erra then ordains that Išum will restore the devastated Babylonia, and pronounces its future supremacy (V 24–39). It is at this point that scholarly contention erupts.

2. The Revelation Scene (V 40–48)

While the majority of Tablet V seems reasonably straightforward, and has been the subject of no great scholarly disagreement, this is not the case when it comes to V 40–48, which contain at least four interpretive cruxes, here set in bold in numbered consecutively:

V 40 *šanāt lā nībi tanittu bēli rabî nergal u qurādu išum*
V 41 *ša erra īgugūma ana sapān mātāti u ḫulluq nišīšin iškunu pānīšu*
V 42 *išum mālikšu unniḫḫūšūma īzib*[*u*] *rēḫāniš*
V 43 *kāṣir* ***kammīšu***[I] *kabtī-ilāni-marduk mār dābibī*
V 44 *ina šāt mūši* ***ušabrīšumma***[II] ***kī ša ina munatti idbubu***[III] *ayyamma ul iḫṭi*
V 45 *ēda šuma ul uraddi ina*(var. *ana*) *muḫḫi*
V 46 *išmē*(*šū*)*ma erra imtaḫar pānīšu*
V 47 ***ša išum***[IV] *ālik maḫrīšu*[V] *iṭīb elīšu*
V 48 *ilānu napḫaršunu inaddū ittāšu*

V 40 Glory (for) years without number (to) the great lord Nergal and warrior Išum:
V 41 That Erra grew angry and set out to level the lands and destroy their peoples,
V 42 (And) Išum, his advisor, calmed him, and he (Erra) spared a remnant!
V 43 The composer of **its/his**[I] text is Kabti-ilāni-Marduk, of the family Dābibī.
V 44 In the night **he (Erra/Išum/K.i.M) revealed (it) to him (K.i.M/Erra),**[II] **and just as/as though he (the god/K.i.M) recited it in the *early morning*,**[III] he did not miss one (line),
V 45 Not one line did he insert into it.
V 46 Erra heard him/it, and it pleased him,
V 47 **As for**[IV] Išum his vanguard, it was pleasing to him/**That of**[IV] Išum his vanguard was pleasing to him.
V 48 All the gods praised his sign.

The dilemma posed by each of the four cruxes can be summarized as follows:

Crux I

Its text or his text?

What is the referent of the possessive suffix on *kammīšu* (V 43)?

Crux II

Who Revealed the Text to Whom?

What are the subject and object(s) of *ušabrīšumma* (V 44)?

Crux III

When, as if, or just as?

What is the meaning of *kī ša ina munatti idbubu* (V 44)?

Crux IV

As for Išum or that of Išum?

What is the grammatical structure of *ša* (IV 47)?

2.1 Crux I: "Its Text" or "His Text"?

Both Foster (1996, 2005) and George (2013, 61 and 2015, 4) translate "its text." All other translators—with the exception of Bottéro and Kramer, who translate *kammīšu* as "cette oeuvre"—take *kammīšu* to be "his composition." I am not aware of a parallel to *-šu-* in *kammīšu* referring to topic rather than a person, and the latter solution is therefore taken up here.

2.2 Crux II: Who Revealed the Text to Whom?

Kabti-ilāni-Marduk to Erra

Foster (2019, 14), translating "He let him see it at night," takes the subject of *ušabrīšumma* to be Kabti-ilāni Marduk, its direct object to be the poem, and its indirect object to be Erra. Yet the

use of *ina šāt mūši šubrû* to refer to a mortal revealing something to a god during the night, rather than a god revealing something to a mortal in a nighttime vision, would be unique among extant sources, for all other attestations of *ina šāt mūši šubrû* speak of the latter (see references in CAD B, 118). Foster's suggestion is therefore unlikely—although it is possible that the poet reworked the motif of divine revelation, inverting it into a description of the revelation of a text by a mortal to a god.

Erra to Kabti-ilāni-Marduk

Taylor argues her case as follows:

> I believe that the correct interpretation of the passage hinges on our construal of two grammatical ambiguities. The first involves the significance of the pronominal suffix *-šu* on the word *kammīšu*, "his composition," in V:43. The most straightforward reading takes this as a simple possessive, picking up the antecedents of the most recent third-person masculine singular pronominal suffixes, "*his* adviser calmed *him* down" (*mālikšu uniḫḫūšū-ma*)—that is, Erra. Theoretically this pronoun could equally refer to Išum or even Kabti-ilānī-Marduk, the two other masculine singular figures who appear in this syntactic environment, but these options are less likely. In the summation statement, Išum is narratively subordinate to Erra: Erra acts and Išum mitigates that action; Erra is central where Išum is "his adviser" (see V:41–42). And if *šu* refers forward to Kabti-ilānī-Marduk, the statement is a near tautology: "The compiler of Kabti-ilānī-Marduk's composition was Kabti-ilānī-Marduk." Erra is the most sensible antecedent. The problematic word in question in the next verse, "he revealed to him" (*ušabrīšum-ma*), involves two unnamed figures, likely the two figures treated in the previous verse: Erra and Kabti-ilānī- Marduk. Since the latter can only be the intended antecedent behind the dative suffix *-šum*, this makes Erra the most probable revelator. (Taylor 2017, 58–5)

In ascribing the revelation to Erra, Taylor returns to Gössmann's interpretation of V 43–44:

> Dem Verfasser seines Gedichtes, dem Kabti-iläni-Marduk, dem Sohn des Dābibī,
> Offenbarte er es um die nächtliche Zeit, und als er es in der Frühe aufsagte, ließ er nichts aus;

Keine einzige Zeile fügte er hinzu.

There are at least nine instances outside of Erra in which divinely inspired dream revelations are described using the verb *šubrû*.[85] All are 1st millennium. To take two examples, all from Ashurbanipal's *Prism A* (RINAP 5/1 no. 11)

> *guggu šar luddi nagû ša nēberti tâmti ašru rūqu ša šarrāni abbēia lā išmû zikir šumīšu nibīt šarrūtīya ina šutti ušabrīšūma aššur bānûya umma šepē aššur-bāni-apli šar māt aššur ṣabatma ina zikir šumīšu kušud nakirīka*
>
> Gyges, the king of Lydia, which lies across the sea, a distant place the mention of whose name the kings, my fathers, had not heard—Aššur, my creator, revealed *my royal name* in a dream, (saying), "Grasp the feet of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, and with the invocation of his name conquer your enemies!"
>
> (RINAP 5/1 no. 11 ii 95–99)
>
> *ištar āšibat arba-ili ina šāt mūši ana ummānīya šutti ušabrīma kīam iqbīšunūti umma anāku allak ina maḫar aššur-bāni-apli šarru ša ibnâ qātāya*
>
> Ištar, who wells in Arebla, revealed a dream to my army, saying to them thus: I myself will go in front of Ashurbanipal, the king whom my hands created.
>
> (RINAP 5/1 no. 11 v 97–101)

I am aware of only one text apart from Erra in which a poetic text is revealed—one that, to my knowledge, has not been incorporated into discussions of *Erra*. That is LKA 36, a small tablet

[85] I) RINAP 5/1 no. 11 ii 95–99, quoted below. II) RINAP 5/1 no. 11 v 97–101, quoted below. III) RINAP 5/1 no. 11 iii 118–123, quoted below. (IV) RIBo Nabonidus no. 47 i 9–14, quoted below V) RIBo Nabonidus no. 27 iii 36–37 VI) RIBo Nabonidus no. 28 i 15–20.

kept in the Istanbul Museum. The edition below follows that of Meinhold (2009, 213 n. 281 and 282), who notes its great similarity to the revelation of *Erra*:

o 1 *ṣa-bi-ta-at a-*⌜*bu*⌝*-tú* ⌜*e*ʾ*-la*ʾ*-ta ina* ŠÀ UKKIN⌝
o 2 *šur-ba-a-*⌜*ta ina* ŠÀ⌝ *mi-il-ki*
o 3 *pa-qi-da-at* d*a-nun-na-ki šá-qa-ta be-lut-sa*
o 4 d*í-gì-gì ša* AN-*e lu-na-*ʾ*i-id la-az-mur*

(empty space)

o 5 *i-na tar-ṣi* mTUKUL-A-É-*šár-ra* LUGAL KUR *aš-šur*ki
o 6 [*la*] ⌜*ḫa*⌝*-as-su* d*šer*$_4$*-ú-a ina šat mu-ši*
o 7 [*ú*]*-šab-ri-šú-ma* MU.MEŠ *an-nu-ti*
r 1 [...] ⌜x⌝ *ina muḫ-ḫi id-*[*bu*ʾ*-bu*ʾ]
r 2 [ITI.x UD]4ʾ.KAM *lim-mu* m*aš-šur*-KALʾⁱⁿ-[*an-ni*]
r 3 ⌜lú⌝GAR.KUR kur*za-mu-a*

o 1 The intercessor (fem.), elevatedʾ in the council,
o 2 Exalted in *discussion*,
o 3 Commanding the Anunnaki, whose sovereignty is supreme
o 4 (Among?) the Igigi of heaven, may I praise (and) sing (of).

(empty space)

o 5 In the reign of Tiglath-Pileser (III), king of Assyria,
o 6 One who knows [not]—Šerūʾa in the nighttime
o 7 [M]ade him see (a vision?), and these lines (alt: made him see these lines),
r 1 [...] *into* he s[pokeʾ]
r 2 [Month x day] 4ʾ, eponimity of Aššur-daʾʾinanni (733),
r 3 Governor of Zamua.

The text of LKA 36 is divided into two parts. The first (o 1–4) contains a short hymn to a goddess, revealed later (o 6) to be Šerūʾa. Its text presents syntactic difficulties—particularly when it comes to o 3–4—yet its general sense is clear enough. The second part (o 5–r 2) appears to

contain a revelation scene whose phrasing is strikingly similar to that of *Erra* V 43–44, though it is different from it in two main respects: that its grammar is clearer, and that it is fragmentary. It is clear that it is Šerūʾa is the one who brought about the revelation, yet the fact that the beginning of o 7 is not preserved means that we cannot be sure whether the object of [*ú*]-*šab-ri-šú-ma* is an implied one—a dream (*šuttu*)—or MU.MEŠ *an-nu-ti*, "These lines" (Meinhold opts for the latter option).[86] Whatever the answer to this question, that Šerūʾa is said to have revealed to a mortal lines praising herself well parallels Erra revealing his own poem of praise to Kabti-ilāni-Marduk. The date of this revelation (733) is also important, for the 8th century is the earliest possible date for the Sultantepe manuscripts of *Erra*—and is also around the dates suggested by von-Soden and Beaulieu for the poem's composition.

Išum to Kabti-ilāni-Marduk

A poem written more than a millennium before LKA 36, *Agušaya*, might offer a parallel to Išum, rather than Erra, revealing the poem. Near the end of the text, Ea addresses Ištar:

r v 23	*u šarrum ša annīam zamāra*[*m*]	And the king who this song,
r v 24	*idat qurdīki*	The sign of your valor,
r v 25	*tanittāki išmûni*	Your praise has heard *from me*,[87]
r v 26	*ḫammurapi* <*ša*> *annīam zamā*[*ram*]	Hammurabi, in whose reign
r v 27	*ina palîšu tanitki* <<*in-né*>>	This song was made (as)

[86] "Zur Zeit Tiglath-Pilesars … hat Šerūʾa den Unwissenden zur Nachtzeit (eine Vision) sehen lassen, und [er hat?] diese Zeilen [aufgeschrieben? und keine (weitere)?] hinzu[gefügt?]" (Meinhold 2009, 213 n. 1281).

[87] For a discussion of this line, Pohl 2022, 174.

r v 28	*innepšu*	Your praise,[88]
r v 29	*lū šutlumšu addar balāṭ*[*u*]	Let eternal life be granted him.
…		
r vi 11	*una"id ištar*	He/I praised Ištar,
r vi 12	*šarratu ilātim*	Queen of goddesses,
r vi 13	*agušaya dunnāša*	Agušaya—her might
r vi 14	*kīma telī*[*ta*]	Equal to (that of) capab[le]
r vi 15	*la'išta ṣaltu*	Formidable Ṣaltu,
r vi 16	*ša aššumīša' ibnūši*	Whom *on her account*
r vi 17	*ea niššīku*	Ea the prince had created.
r vi 18	*idat dunnīša*	The sign of her might
r vi 19	*kala nišī ušešmi*	I/He made all the people hear,
r vi 20	*ubtanni tarbīatāša*	I/He made fair her glorification.

If it is meant that Hammurabi heard the song from Ea himself, and that it is Ea who made all the people hear the sign of Ištar's glorification, then that would parallel a revelation of *Erra* by Išum, for Ea calms Ištar like Išum calms Erra. The composition of the poem itself is, as Foster notes (1991, 24), referred to with a passive verb (*innepšu*, "was made," r v 28). It may be that referring to the poem's creation—or performance—in the passive served to highlight its divine origins, and imply its author and performers to be mere conduits for Ea's words.

Another text praising Ištar in whose composition Ea appears to have played a role is *Ammiditana's Hymn to Ištar*:

50 *kibrāt erbêm ana šēpīšu*
The four corners (lit. banks) at his feet

[88] For a discussion of r v 27–28, Pohl 2022, 174.

51 *u napḫar kalīšunu dadmī*
And the inhabited regions in their entirety
52 *taṣṣamissunūti annīrīšu*
She (Ištar) harnessed to his yoke.
53 *bibel libbīša zamār lalêša*
Her heart's desire, a song for her pleasure,
54 *naṭûmma ana pîšu siqri ea īpussi*
Is fitting for his mouth. He wrought/performed
for her the speech of Ea,
55 *išmēma tannitāša irīssu*
He heard her praise and rejoiced in him,
56 *libluṭmi šarrašu lirāmšu addāriš*
"May his king live long,[89] may he love him forever!"
57 *ištar ana ammiditana šarri rā'imīki*
O Ištar, to Ammiditana, the king who loves you,
58 *arkam dāriam balāṭam šurkī*
Grant life long and enduring,
59 *libluṭ*
(Long) may he live!

In ll. 54–56, a man, generally taken to be Ammiditana (as implicit in Pohl 2022, 150 and Foster 2005, 87), performs *siqri ea*, "the speech of Ea" before Ea, who rejoices in him. That "speech," presumably the hymn itself, is equated with *tannitāša*, "her (Ištar's) praise." Thus, we have a situation in which a composition in praise of one deity is ascribed to another—as would be the

[89] "His king" (*šarrāšu*) has generally been taken to refer to Ammiditana's "king." The identity of this king is unclear. He is taken by Thureau-Dangin to be "le dieu de la cité [Babylon]" (1925, 177 n. 3) and by Seux to be Anu (1976, 42 n. 26). In light of this uncertainty, it is tempting to take *šarrašu* to refer, rather, to the king of the hymn's performer, with that king being Ammiditana himself. It would then be the performer whose mouth is fitting for Ea's words, who preforms them before Ea (l. 54), in whom Ea rejoices (l. 55), and who is ordained by Erra to be loved by his king forever (l. 56)

case if Išum composed *Erra* for Erra's glorification. However, that Ea, the hymn's ultimate author, blesses the speaker of the hymn after hearing it—"May his king live long, may he love him forever" (l. 56)—would parallel Erra blessing his own poem after revealing it and having it recited back to him.

5.3 Crux III: When, Just as, or As Though?

The phrase *kī ša ina munatti idbubu* presents at least two formidable problems. First, what is the meaning of *kī ša*? And second, who is the subject of *idbubu*? Gössmann took *kī ša* to mean "when," translating "als er es in der Frühe aufsagte," Cagni (1969), similarly, has "quand'egli a al mattino (la) recitò," and Taylor, "when he (Kabti-ilānī-Marduk) recited it back in early morning slumber." This interpretation, however, is contraindicated by the fact that *kī ša*, in its five other attestations in *Erra*, never means "when." These six attestations are as follows:

I 15 *erra kī ša amēli dalpi idāšu an*[*ḫā*]
Erra's arms are tir[ed], like those of a sleepless man.

I 50 *kī ša tāḫāza lā nīdû niplaḫa nirūda*
Should be fear and tremble, as if we know not war?

I 51 *alāk ṣēri ša eṭlūti kī ša isinnumma*
Venturing to the field of youthful manhood is like (that to) a festival.

III 139 *kī ša anpata ana nârīšu ul irammâ idāšu pataršu šalpu*
As if to slay *Anpatu*, his arms are not slack, (but) his sword is drawn.

III 140 *kī ša lemna anzâ ana kamîšu šuparrurā kappāšu*

As if to vanquish evil Anzû, his net is cast.

III 150 (*u*) *kī ša amāt marduk lā tīdû tamallikanni yâši*

(And) you advise me as if you don't know Marduk's word?

In these lines, *kī ša* seems to have one of two general senses: "As if" (I 50, III 139, III 140, III 150) or "Like that (of)" (I 15, I 51). The latter general sense is taken by Foster to apply to *kī ša ina munatti idbubu*, which he has translated as "just as he (the god) had discoursed it" (1991, 20) and "just as he put it into words" (2019, 14). The phrase is translated similarly by Bottéro and Kramer ("et comme il (l')a récitée au matin") and George (2015, 4), "just as he declaimed it while wakeful." The former sense is argued by Zgoll (2022, 299) to apply to *kī ša ina munatti idbubu*. She translates V 44–45 in this way:

[44a] *ina šāt mūši ušabrīšumma*	[44a] At the time of the middle watch of the night he (Erra) revealed it (the song) to him (Kabti-ilāni-Marduk) (in a nocturnal dream) and
[44b] *kī ša ina munatti idbubu*	[44b]—as if he had spoken in a dawn dream of divine revelation—
[44c] *ayyamma ul iḫṭi*	[44c]he (Kabti-ilāni-Marduk) (neglected =) omitted nothing (from it),
[45] *ēda šuma ul uraddi ana muḫḫi*	[45] not a single line did he add in addition (to it).

She then writes:

> The reason for this unusual translation lies in the specific meaning of the Akkadian word *munattu*, which does not mean "awakening", "waking state" or "morning", as is often assumed. Rather, *munattu* is a *terminus technicus* of Mesopotamian dream specialists, who make a precise distinction between dreams from different periods of the night and the beginning of dawn. In particular, a distinction was made between night dreams and *munattu*, the dream in the early hours of the morning, before sunrise, i.e. the dawn dream. Early morning dreams were considered more important than night

> dreams, since dawn dreams were thought to be particularly suitable for receiving divine revelations … A contrast between the dreams of the night and the dreams of the morning, as here in the *Praise Song to Erra*, is well known from tradition: In the song *En-merkara and En-suḫkeše-ana*, En-suḫkeše-ana, the ruler of Arata, says that he converses with Innana during the dawn dream, while the goddess appears to his rival En-merkara only during the (inferior) night dream. Such passages indicate that meeting a deity in a dawn dream is considered to be more important than in a night dream. (Zgoll 2022, 300)

In a note to the statement, "[e]arly morning dreams were considered more important than night dreams," Zgoll writes,

> In the city-state of Mari around 1700, for example, it was assumed that a dream from the first night watch was usually to be regarded as false, i.e. irrelevant to the future. (Zgoll 2022, 299 n. 17)

Against Zgoll, one can note that the sources cited by her as evidence that the dreams of the *munattu* were considered more important than those of the nighttime—*En-merkara and En-suḫkeše-ana* and texts from Mari—all hail from the 2nd millennium, long before the likely date of the composition of *Erra*. Such a view concerning the dreams of *šāt mūši* and *munattu* is not evidenced for the 1st millennium, however. The revelation described in LKA 36 is said to occur *ina šāt mūši*, as does the dream revealed by Ištar to Ashurbanipal's soldiers in *Prism A*. There is no indication that these dreams were thought of as being of a lesser kind, and the same is true for a divinely inspired dream of Nabonidus:

> *ilāni u ištar ana muḫḫīya uṣallû u sîn ana šarrūti imbânni ina šāt mūši šutta ušabrânni umma eḫulḫul bīt sîn ša ḫarran hanṭiš epuš mātāti kalāšina ana qātīka lumallâ*

> The gods and goddess(es) prayed on my behalf, and Sîn called me to kingship. In the night, he revealed a dream to me: "Build Eḫulḫul, the temple of Sîn of Ḫarran, swiftly, and I will put all the lands in your hands!" (RINBE 2 no. 47 i 9–14)

There is one indication, however, that the dreams of the night and *munattu* were thought of as different. In the third tablet of *ludlul,*[90] Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan has at least five dream visions (III 9–16, III 21–28, III 29–39). While the two latter visions are described as occurring during dreams (*šunatu*, III 21, 29), the first is described differently:

III 7 [*u*]*rra u mūša ištēniš anas*[*sus*]
III 8 *šuttu munattu malmališ šumr*[*uṣāku*]
III 9 *ištânu eṭlu atar šikit*[*ta*]
III 10 *minâti šurruḫ lubušta udduḫ*
III 11 *aššu ina munatti īdûšu gatta zuqqur*
III 12 *melammī ḫalip labiš pulḫ*[*āt*]*i*

III 7 [D]ay and night alike did I grown,
III 8 Dream and *munattu*, [I] was equally wretched
III 9 A singular young man, surpassing of appear[ance]
III 10 Magnificent of limb, clad in a cloak,
III 11 Because I perceived him in the *munattu*, he was towering in stature,
III 12 Clad in radiance, clothed in terror[s].

Ludlul III 11–12 are mysterious, yet seem to suggest that sights beheld in the *munattu* had a different quality than those seen at other times. In any case, the most weighty argument against Zgoll's interpretation does not draw on the lack of 1st-millennium evidence for the perceived

[90] For an updated edition of *Ludlul*, incorporating many new manuscripts, Hätinen 2022.

superiority of visions of the *munattu* over those of the night, but a passage in *Enūma eliš*, which, as Foster notes (1991, 21 and 2019, 15), may have inspired the revelation scene in *Erra*:

VII 143 *ina zikri ḫamšā ilānu rabûtu*
VII 144 *ḫamšā šumīšu imbû ušātirū alkassu*
VII 145 *liṣṣabtūma maḫrû likallim*
VII 146 *enqu* (*u*) *mūdû mitḫāriš limtalkū*
VII 147 *lišannīma abu māra lišāḫiz*
VII 148 *ša rēʾî u nāqidi lipattâ uznīšun*
VII 149 *lā iggīma ana enlil ilī marduk*
VII 150 *māssu liddeššâ šū lū šalma*
…
VII 157 *taklimti maḫrû idbubu pānuššu*
VII 158 *išṭurma ištakan ana šemî arkûti*
VII 159 *šīmat marduk ša u*[*ll*]*û ilānu igīgū*
VII 160 *ēma mû iššattû šumšu lizzakrū*
VII 161 *inannamma zamāru ša marduk*
VII 162 *ša tiā*[*mta i*]*kmû*(*ma*) *ilqû šarrūta*

VII 143 By the name “fifty” the great gods
VII 144 Called his fifty names, making his position supreme.
VII 145 May they be kept in memory, may the “first one” reveal them,
VII 146 May wise man and sage ponder them together,
VII 147 May father repeat them, teaching them to son.
VII 148 May they (the names?) make shepherd and herdsman understand:
VII 149 He should not neglect the Enlil of the gods, Marduk,
VII 150 So that his land will flourish, and he himself be well.
…
VII 157 The revelation that the “first one” recited before him,
VII 158 Wrote down, preserved for those coming after to hear.
VII 159 The destiny of Marduk, ex[al]ted by the Igigi—
VII 160 Where water is drunk, may they call his name.
VII 161 Now (ends) the song of Marduk,
VII 162 Who defeated Tia[mat] and took kingship.

This seems to describe a bi-partite, or even tri-partite, process of composition. That *Enūma eliš* VII 157, *taklimti maḫrû idbubu pānuššu*, employs a *bīt ippušu* construction makes it clear that it is the *maḫrû*, taken by Foster (1991, 21 n. 15 and 2019, 15) to be the author of the poem, who recites it before Marduk. This recitation is one step. *Enūma eliš* VII 158 describes the following step, namely the writing down of the *taklimtu* for the benefit of the people of the future. The question of whether the composition process described here is bi-partite or tri-partite hinges on the meaning of *taklimti*, "revelation." Is the revealing in question done by the *maḫrû* to Marduk—or to later generations—or does the *taklimtu* allude to the revelation of the poem to the *maḫrû*, who then recites it before Marduk? Foster seems to have wavered on this question. In his 1991 article, he translates,

> The explanation (of the names) which the "first one"
> discoursed before him (Marduk),
> He wrote down and preserved for those in
> the future to hear,
> ...
>
> (Foster 2019, 22)

Foster then notes that *taklimtu* can mean either "explanation" or "revelation" (1991, 22). In his 2019 article, he writes,

> The author's self-reference in Erra and Ishum was likely inspired by an earlier, comparable one at the conclusion of the Babylonian Epic of Creation, which uses another term for "letting someone see," here translated as "revelation," but the same term for "putting in words," in this case in the presence of Marduk, the chief Babylonian deity and hero of the epic: "The revelation that the first one put in words in his presence, / He wrote it down and established it so that future generations could hear it." The "first one" presumably refers to the unnamed author, the "revelation" to his vision of his

> poem, and "put in words" to its composition, while "established" points to the same understanding of a complete and authoritative text offered in the preceding example, with nothing added or deleted. The primary form of his poem was in writing; there is no sense of an oral original even if later generations "hear it" rather than read it silently, and this is true of most Mesopotamian literary works. (Foster 1991, 15)

This passage of *Enūma eliš* strongly indicates that the subject of *idbubu* in V 44 is Kabti-ilāni-Marduk, not the god. George's analysis of the revelation scene is compelling:

> The line (V 43) that describes the process of the text's delivery has no explicit subjects. My translation follows the general consensus, that Išum was the agent who caused Kabti-ilāni-Marduk to receive the poem (lit. *ušabrīšūma*, "he caused him to see"), and that the latter woke up with the words already on his lips (*idbubu*, "he declaimed") and then set them down in writing without error (V 44).

2.4 Crux IV: As for Išum or That of Išum?

The ways in which scholars have translated *ša išum*, and thus V 47, *ša išum ālik maḫrīšu iṭīb elīšu*, as a whole, fall into two main groups. The first group takes the phrase to refer to something belonging to, or concerning, Išum, with that thing being the poem itself:

Foster:

> What pertained to Išum his vanguard satisfied him

Bottéro and Kramer:

> (Et) la récit de d'*Išum*, son Capitaine, lui fut agréable

The second group takes *ša išum* to mean "as for Išum":

Gössmann:

> Išum, dem Herzog, gefiel es [das Gedicht]

Cagni (1969):

> Piacque [la rivelazione] (anche) a Išum, suo araldo

Taylor argues in favor of the second meaning. Her reasoning is as follows:

> The second grammatical ambiguity concerns the use of *ša* in *Erra Song* V:47. In the view of some translators, *ša Išum ālik maḫrī*(*šu*), "what (concerned) Išum his vanguard" or "what Išum his vanguard (had done)," should be taken as the subject of *iṭīb elīšu*, "it was pleasing to him," where the "him" can only be Erra: Erra approves the poem ("what (concerned) Išum") or Išum's behavior ("what Išum (had done)"), suggesting the poem is by or about Išum.171 In a similar vein, *ša Išum* has been read as "das (Wort) des Išum" or "le récit d'Išum," presumably referring to what Išum has revealed. While theoretically permissible, these readings are highly unlikely. By my count, on only two other occasions in the extant text does *ša* simply govern a substantive alone (excluding its use connecting substantives in a manner paralleling the use of construct chains—which, as it happens, are at least as rare.) In both such cases, *ša* serves as the object of a preposition, making its syntactic function unambiguous. In contrast, there are forty-one occurrences (bracketing the example under discussion) in which *ša* is used to mark topicalization, the so-called *casus pendens*—including anticipatory genitives, which constitute a subset of this category. Compare the following examples: IV:16 *ša Imgur-Ellil uṣṣa elīšu tummid-ma ū'a libbī iqabbi* IV:16 "As for Imgur-Enlil, you piled arrows on him until he cried out: 'Woe, my heart!' V:47 *ša Išum ālik maḫrī*(*šu*) *iṭīb elīšu* V:47 As for Išum, (his) vanguard, it was pleasing to him too. In both passages, the topicalized noun is resumed as the object of the preposition *eli*. Given the conspicuousness of this syntactic peculiarity in this text, if the poet intended *ša Išum*, as a unit, to serve as the subject of the verb *iṭīb*, he or she would risk being misunderstood, to say the least. (Taylor 2017, 59–61)

This is convincing, and fits well with interpretations that take Erra to be the revealer of the poem. There remains the disquiet, however, caused by the impression that Erra's joy in V 46 seems slightly too great to be caused by the recitation of his own words back to him rather than hearing the poem itself for the first time. This unease may be misplaced, for if Ea rejoices in the one who performs his own words, and then blesses him, in the

Ammiditana hymn, then perhaps Erra's reaction would not have been thought out of place in Mesopotamia.

Erra's Blessing

After the revelation and recitation of the poem, the delighted Erra blesses it, granting it power over men and gods—including Erra himself! The poem, Erra ordains, will protect the one who honors, performs, or owns it with safety and good fortune (the amuletic power of *Erra* is discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 9).

Part II: Individual Studies

Chapter Six

What Slaughter, By Whose Hand?

1. Searching for Clues

Erra has the distinction of being the only Babylonian mythological composition that takes place within history. *Enūma eliš* tells of the birth of the gods and the creation of the world as we know it. *Anzû* does not concern itself with the affairs of mortals, but tells of the war between heroic Ninurta and the fearsome Anzû-bird. *Gilgamesh* is the tale of a semi-divine king of giant stature who slays fearsome monsters, outruns the sun in its rising, and meets a man who will never die. These works lie outside of history as experienced by their 1st-millennium audience. In contrast, *Erra* seems to take place not within legend or myth, but in a reality its audience would have found familiar. It appears to refer to historical events, especially in its 4th tablet: the citizens of Babylon set fire to their temples, and their king fills the streets with their blood in his wrath. An evil governor disturbs the holy rites of Ishtar in her beloved Uruk and the furious goddess makes the enemy sweep the land clean "like grain on the water's face."[91] Dur-Kurigalzu (called Parsâ in *Erra*) is ravaged. Der is decimated and its god, Ištaran, is taken captive by the Suteans. These are

[91] IV 61–62: *ištar īgugma issabus eli uruk/ nakra idkâmma kī še'î ina pān mê imašša' māta*, "Ishtar grew angry and became furious at Uruk/she raised the enemy and picked the country clean (lit: ransacked) like grain on the water's face."

not the battles of the gods in mythic time and place, but the slaughter of flesh and blood human beings on earth. But what slaughter? When? And by whose hand? Scholars have offered various answers to these questions, arguing for different visions of *Erra*'s historical background and the circumstances in which the poem was written down. This chapter will review these hypotheses, and offer arguments in support of that put forward by W.G Lambert in 1958.

Possible references to historical events in *Erra* are vague. The poem contains no statement regarding the time in which its plot unfolds, nor are we told the name of the unlucky monarch who presided over the decimation of Babylonia. In fact, no human is singled out by name in the poem except for its author, Kabti-Ilāni-Marduk, to help us date the poem. Without such information, Assyriologists have endeavored to identify events in the poem that may be reflected in other, and more readily datable, sources.[92] Three proposals have thus far seemed most promising:

1. Based on the role of the Suteans in the poem, W.G Lambert (1957–8, 397–398) has argued that *Erra* describes the Sutean invasions of the late 11th century in the reign of Adad-apla-iddina (1064–1043), and that it was composed roughly two centuries later, in the reign of

[92] For a concise review of these, Taylor 2017, 251–254.

Nabû-apla-iddina (c. 880-c. 851) who declared that he defeated the Suteans and avenged the land of Akkad.

2. Referring to a description, given in Tablet IV, of disorders in the city of Uruk involving the wrath of the goddess Ištar, von Soden (1971, 256) dates the poem to the reign of Eriba-Marduk (769[?] –760[?]). He further argues, based on an occurrence of plague in 765, and the lack of any mention in the poem of the total solar eclipse of 763, that its composition could be dated between these two dates — a remarkably narrow time frame. Beaulieu (2001) also dates the poem's composition by reference to disorders in Uruk, yet places those in the reign of Nabû-šuma-iškun (760[?] –748), and, therefore, puts the poem's composition around this time.

3. Gössman offered arguments in favor of a 7th-century date (1955, 88–90). In his view, the decimation of Babylonia described in tablet IV was caused by the Assyrian king Sennacherib (705–681). He further argues that the poem was composed sometime after 689, but before the fall of Assyria, by a Babylonian priestly author who yearned for a reversal in Babylonia's fortunes and its return to hegemony in Mesopotamia. Franke (2014) likewise contends that the poem concerns the destruction of Babylon by Sennacherib, but proposes that it was an Assyrian work of propaganda written under the direction of Esarhaddon (681–669).

1. Sennacherib's Fury

Gössman argues the Babylonian revolt against Sennacherib and his catastrophically violent response to it are the events that lie behind the destruction described in Tablets III and IV (1955, 89–90). The revolt of the citizens of Babylon against their governor (IV 1–19) would then be that of the Babylonians against Sennacherib in 693; the subsequent episode of the massacre of Babylon's citizens by the royal army (IV 20–35) would refer to Babylon's sack in 689; the fragmentary account of the destruction of Nippur (III C 1–10, now known to be III 110–117) to Sennacherib's conquest of it in 693; The destruction in Uruk (IV 52–62) to a Sutean attack on it at an uncertain date, and to the Assyrian capture of it, also in 693; Išum's statement that Erra threw down Sippar's walls (IV 50–51) to its capture by the Elamites in 694,[93] and the decimation of Der (IV 66–69) by the Suteans to the city's conquest, either by the Assyrians or their enemies, some time from 722 to 689.

The strongest evidence in favor of Sennacherib's invasion being the historical background of *Erra* is that his reign saw the removal to Nineveh of both the statue of Ištar of Uruk and that of Ištaran, the god of Der. The "godnapping" of the former deity is openly spoken of in Sennacherib's own inscriptions, in which the king says that his troops raided Uruk and

[93] Gössman references this conquest without explicitly mentioning its date.

transported the "Lady of Uruk" (GAŠAN *ša uruk*) to Nineveh (e.g. RINAP 3 no. 34 ll. 27–35). That of the latter we can deduce from Sennacherib's writing that he conquered Dēr (RINAP 3 no. 18 iv 17') and Esarhaddon stating, in the same inscription speaking of the refurbishment and return of Marduk to Babylon, that he returned Ištaran back to Dēr, along with other gods from that city (RINAP 4 no. 48 rev. 94).[94] Yet the major difficulty in arguing for Sennacherib's decimation of Babylonia to be the historical context of *Erra* is that apart from these godnappings the details of the poem do not seem to match up at all with those of Sennacherib's campaign.

First, if Gössmann is correct, it would mean that the narrative of *Erra* both compresses and distorts the temporal sequence of the events it describes to a great degree. While four years separated the Babylonian revolt against Sennacherib and his brutal sack of the city in 689, in the poem the descriptions of these two events would be set twelve lines apart (IV 19–31). If an attack of Nippur is actually described in Tablet III this would fit the chronology of the Assyrian conquest of Babylon, for the Assyrian conquest of Nippur took place in 693 while that of Babylon occurred in 689. But the conquest of Uruk, which took place a week prior to that of Nippur, would be described after Išum's account of Babylon's woes—as would the destruction of Sippar's walls, which, according to Gössman, would refer to its capture by the Elamites in 694, five years before Babylon's capture.

[94] Gössman likewise connects Ištaran's absence, and his return to Dēr by Esarhaddon, to *Erra* IV, yet takes Ištaran's statue to have been kidnapped by Elam rather than Sennacherib (1955, 89).

Second, the text does not easily conform with the facts of Sennacherib's invasion. Assyrians are never said to have attacked Babylonia in *Erra*, and while Babylonia's attackers are not always named,[95] when an invading force is identified, it is always as Sutean rather than Assyrian or Elamite.[96] The identification of the *ummān šarri*, "royal army," with that of Sennacherib is complicated by the fact that only Babylon is said to have been sacked by it, unlike Uruk, which was also conquered by Sennacherib's forces. In addition, while the revolt of Babylon's citizens in Tablet IV seems to have involved considerable civil strife, such strife is not mentioned in sources regarding Babylonia's 693 revolt. (However, as Gössman notes [1955, 88], violence on the part of rebellious Babylonians against those Babylonians loyal to Assyria may well have accompanied the rebellion.) A different problem is that the governor's palace does not seem to lie, as Sennacherib's did, in faraway Nineveh, but near to Babylon itself, as Erra leaves the city and arrives there within two lines.[97] The royal army, likewise, seems to require no time at all to reach the city, as it assembles in the palace and enters Babylon within the same line (IV 31:

---

[95] In IV 62 and IV 64, the invading force is simply called ^{lú}KÚR, *nakru*, "the enemy."

[96] This is true, as Gössman notes, in the cases of Uruk (IV 54) and Der (IV 69). The Suteans are also singled out as the enemy that *akkadû*, "the Akkadian," will fell once Babylonia's fortunes will be restored (V 27: *akû akkadû danna sutâ lišamqit*, "May weak Akkadian fell mighty Sutean").

[97] After describing the havoc Erra wreaks in Babylon, Išum tells him: *āla tumašširma tāttaṣi ana ahāti*/*zīm labbi taššakimma tēterub ana ekalli*, "You left the city and went out to the outskirts/you put on a lion's features and went inside the palace" (IV 20–21).

ummān šarri uktaṣṣirma īterub ana āli, "The royal army assembled and entered the city"). In addition, while Sennacherib, and later Esarhaddon, narrated how Babylon's conquest in 689 involved the complete leveling of its urban landscape,[98] the description of the violence done to Babylon by the royal army also does not include mention of the destruction of buildings, speaking, rather, of the killing of Babylon's citizens. While Sennacherib gloated about the city's erasure, Erra IV seems to describe its sack. However, the accounts of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon doubtless contain no small component of hyperbole, and the poet may simply have chosen not to describe the leveling of Babylon, and to focus, rather, on the plight of its people. It could be said, however, that the description of the royal army's swift travel, immediate entry, and the ravaging—rather than the destruction—of Babylon does not easily line up with sources describing Sennacherib's infamous attack.

Another difficulty lies in the identification of the governor, whose heart blazes against Babylon, with Sennacherib himself. The arguments offered by Gössman in favor of such an identification are not conclusive. Concerning the brutal orders the *šakkanaku* issues to his general concerning Babylon, "'As for the city to which I send you, you, man/Fear no god (there),

[98] In his Bavian inscription, Sennacherib writes that he destroyed Babylon, threw its bricks into the Araḫtu canal, then flooded the site, wiping out the outline of its foundations, devastating it more completely than the primeval flood, dissolving and making it like a flood-plain (RINAP 3 no. 223, 50–54). In his *Babylon A Inscription*, Esarhaddon writes that after Marduk became angry at Babylonia, the Araḫtu canal flooded Babylon and turned it into a ruin (RINAP 4 no. 104 i 34–43).

respect no man/Slay young and old alike/Do not spare a single suckling babe,'" he writes: "...konnte einen solcher Befehl... nur von ein grausamer assyrischen König geben, und unter diesen widerum nur ein Mann wie Sennacherib" (1955, 89). These horrific commands certainly sound like something an Assyrian king might say when unleashing his army against an enemy city. However, one can imagine Assyrian kings other than Sennacherib, or even Babylonian kings, issuing them, as Sennacherib was far from the only Mesopotamian monarch known for his brutality. Likewise, the command to "fear no god" fits well with the smashing of Babylon's gods by Sennacherib's soldiers, and no other Mesopotamian king is known to have gloated about the destruction of cult images before him.[99] Yet rather than implying that the soldiers should destroy cult images within the city, this order may be more likely interpreted as an injunction by the governor to his troops to have no fear of the divine wrath they would incur should they massacre Babylon's citizens. Indeed, only the carnage of Babylon's people is spoken of in the description of the royal army's attack on the city, and no mention of the destruction of cult images is made.

Other considerations militate against the identification of Sennacherib with Babylon's governor: The *šakkanakku* is never identified as Assyrian, and the epithets *šakkanakku* and

[99] Apart from Sennacherib, only Ashurbanipal writes that he had done so, gloating that he smashed the gods of Elam after conquering Susa during his eighth campaign (on the destruction of cult statues, Zaia 2015, 37–48).

mutēr gimil bābili do not line up with what is known of Sennacherib. He, unlike his father Sargon, does not appear to have assumed Babylonian royal titles, including *šakkanak bābili*,[100] which makes it more unlikely that he would be called *šakkanakku* in the Babylonian-centric *Erra*. He also cannot readily be described as *mutēr gimil bābili*, "Babylon's champion." Indeed, the painful irony of the use of this title in Erra IV 23 likely arises from the juxtaposition of the governor's warm feelings towards Babylon and the violence he is about to do it in his wrath, but Sennacherib's refusal to take Babylonian royal titles upon his ascension to the throne indicates that his feelings towards Babylon were not overly positive to begin with.[101] Such discrepancies between what is known of Sennacherib's campaign of vengeance and the events of Tablets III and IV argue against Gössman's hypothesis.

In her 2014 paper, Franke likewise postulates that it is Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon that lies behind the bloody mayhem described in tablet IV, yet she differs from Gössman in her understanding of the poem's origins, meaning, and purpose. After noting that in texts such as "The Sin of Sargon," the *Fürstenspiegel*, and the fictitious letter of Gilgamesh, a "Historische Kritische Deutung" of past or current events is attempted (2014, 322), she writes:

---

[100] The title *šakkanak Bābili* was one of the titles of the Babylonian kings, attested for Itti-Marduk-balāṭu (1135–1128; e.g. RIMB 2 B.2.2.1:7) and Nebuchadnezzar I (1121–1100; e.g. RIMB 2B.2.4.11: 3). It was taken up by Sargon II (e.g. RIMB 2 no. 7: 1) and Esarhaddon (e.g. RINAP 4 n. 1 i 1) when they controlled Babylon.

[101] For a concise description of Sennacherib's relationship to Babylon, Frahm 2017, 293–294.

> „Erra und Išum" wäre im Gefolge dieser Texte ein Erklärungs- und Rechtfertigungsversuch für die Eroberung und Zerstörung Babylons durch Sanherib und die Wiederaufbaumaßnahmen durch Asarhaddon. Es ist hier nicht Marduk selbst, der die Stadt zerstört, sondern die Zerstörung erfolgt durch Erra, der seine göttliche Natur verraten hat und sich nicht zügeln kann. In einer solchen Interpretation könnte man Sanherib mit Erra gleichsetzen und in der mäßigenden Rolle Išums den Herrscher Asarhaddon sehen, der Babylon eine glückliche Zukunft verspricht. (Franke 2014, 322–323)

Despite the general similarity noted here between the roles of Erra and Išum on the one hand, and Sennacherib and Esarhaddon on the other, vis-á-vis Babylon, the identification between these two pairs does not match the specifics of *Erra* in several ways. First, it fails to account for the first three tablets of the poem: among other events, the account of the creation of the Seven, their role in convincing Erra to go to war against humanity, and Erra's successful effort to convince Marduk to abandon his temple to be restored and to appoint Erra as guardian of the cosmic order in his absence, do not map readily onto events in Sennacherib's reign. To take the example of Marduk's restoration, if, as Franke contends (2014, 324), the restoration of Marduk's statue in the Apsû reflects the historical restoration of the god's image under Esarhaddon, then, following her understanding of the text, the accomplishing of this endeavor would have been brought about by Išum after Babylon's destruction, not by Erra before Babylon was attacked. Second, though Erra does attack Babylon and Sennacherib destroyed it, Erra's methods do not match Sennacherib's. Erra goes into Babylon and incites civil strife, inflaming the people against their governor—a figure whose historical referent would be unclear under Franke's

hypothesis—whereas Sennacherib attacked Babylon at the head of a conquering army. Erra goes on to incite the governor against his own city, influencing him to butcher its citizens, while Sennacherib did not influence someone else to destroy Babylon, but did it himself. That Erra stops his assault only when he is calmed down by Išum, while Sennacherib died before Esarhaddon reversed his Babylonian policy, is another such discrepancy between the details of *Erra* and Franke's hypothesis.

A further problem arises from the assumption that *Erra* is an Assyrian work, written to justify the actions of the Assyrian kings. After Erra calms down, he ordains that:

IV 131 *tâmta tâmtu subarta subartu aššurâ aššurû*
IV 132 *elamâ elamû kaššâ kaššû*
IV 133 *sutâ sutû gutâ gutû*
IV 134 *lullubâ lullubû mātu māta ālu āla*
IV 135 *bītu bīta amēlu amēla aḫu aḫa lā igammilūma linārū aḫāmiš*
IV 136 *u arka akkadû litbâmma napḫaršunu lišamqitma lir'â nagabšu*n

V 131 "The Sealand the Sealand, Subartean Subartean, Assyrian Assyrian,
V 132 "Elamite Elamtie, Kassite Kassite,
V 133 "Sutean Sutean, Gutian Gutian
V 134 "Lullubaean Lullubaean, land land, city city,
V 135 "House house, man man, brother brother — they shall not "spare (each other), let them slay each other!
V 136 "And afterward let the Akkadian rise, and fell the lot, and shepherd all of them."

Such a pronouncement, which promises the violent domination of *akkadû*, "the Akkadian" over peoples far and wide, including *aššurû*, "the Assyrian," does not seem like it could easily have been voiced by an Assyrian author, much less by a stand-in for Sennacherib himself. In Tablet

V, Erra also ordains that "The governors of all and every city will bring their heavy tribute to Šuanna,"[102] a statement conflicting with Assyria's imperial mission, as part of which the lands were required to bring their tribute, not to Babylon, but to the Assyrian heartland. The distinctly pro-Babylonian bent of the poem, almost nationalistic in character, is pointed out by Gössmann in regard to these pronouncements:

> Dieser überraschende Ausbruch eines unbändigen „Nationalismus" mutet fast „modern" an. Hier geht es nicht mehr um eine Stadt und ihren Tempel wie im Schöpfungsepos. Der Dichter des Era-Epos hat schon den Gedanken des Volkes, der Nation vollzogen und sich bewußt zu eigen gemacht. (Gössmann 1955, 84)

Such a bent would be hard to explain if *Erra* is an Assyrian work.

Another difficulty follows from Franke's construal of *Erra* as a work explaining and justifying Babylon's destruction and reconstruction, for Esarhaddon did, in fact, produce just such a text, and it is markedly different from *Erra* (though, intriguingly, it seems to allude to the poem).[103] On various cylinders of Esarhaddon deposited in Babylon,[104] it is not said that Erra attacked Babylon, but that its destruction was caused by Marduk, who made a canal in Babylon run over and flood the city. As scholars have remarked, this account refers to Sennacherib's self-avowed

[102] V 35: *šakkanakkū kal ālāni kalîšunu bilassunu kabittu lišdudū ana qereb šuanna*. As noted below, an inscription of Marduk-apla-iddina II likely alludes to this line.

[103] As noted by Bach (2020, 34).

[104] For example, Esarhaddon's *Babylon A Cylinder* (RINAP vol. 4 no. 104) i 34–ii 1.

flooding of Babylon in 689, yet attributes it to the Babylonian king of the gods, as if Sennacherib had nothing to do with it. Several notable differences between this account and *Erra* stand out: first, unlike Erra's attack on Babylon, which is very much unlike what is known of Sennacherib's, Esarhaddon's account conforms with, yet reframes, Sennacherib's own narrative of the city's destruction. Second, while this propagandistic text is straightforward, with Babylon's destruction explained by reference to a single cause—Marduk's anger—*Erra* is a remarkably complicated text in which cause and effect, mover and moved, are anything but simple. One could add that, on the level of purely subjective observation, *Erra* seems far too complex and polyvalent to have been written as propaganda, which one expects to be straightforward to the point of simplicity, and clearcut enough to leave its audience with no doubt as to who the good and the evil are in the situation it describes. This is indeed the case when it comes to Assyrian texts whose purpose was, in all probability, propagandistic in one way or another, such as the royal inscriptions of the Assyrian kings, *The Sin of Sargon*, and the *Marduk Ordeal*, yet this does not seem to apply at all to *Erra*.

To the discrepancies resulting from Franke's hypothesis, one could add that, as in the case of Gössman's, the dominant role of the Suteans in *Erra* is difficult to reconcile with the circumstances of Sennacherib's invasion of Babylonia, in which the Suteans, or the Arameans more generally, are not known to have participated in a major way. The role of Suteans points toward an earlier date of composition for *Erra*, in a time in which they threatened Babylonia.

While such a threat is not evidenced for the 7th century, it existed, to varying degrees, in the 8th and the 11th — two other centuries put forward by scholars as the period of the poem's composition.

Another consideration arguing for an earlier date of composition than that hypothesized by Gössman and Franke is that *Erra* appears to have been alluded to in two documents. The first to be discussed here—despite being the earlier of the two—is an inscription, inscribed on a cylinder (RIMB 2 B.6.21.1), written by the Babylonian king Marduk-apla-iddina II (721–710, 703), the great enemy of Assyria. In his inscription, Marduk-apla-iddina tells of how he defeated the Assyrians, whom he calls "Subarteans," with Marduk's help (ll. 16–18), and of how he rebuilt the Eanna, the temple of Ištar, making it more glorious than before (ll. 23–29). The king wishes that, by Ištar's command,

33 [LUG]AL.ᶠLUGALᵀ.meš *na-ki-ri-šú nu-ᶠḫušᵀ kib-rat ᶠárᵀ-ba-ᶠʾiᵀ* [*ḫi*]-*ṣib* KUR-*i u tam-tim*
34 [GU]N-ᶠsuᵀ-*nu* ᶠDUGUDᵀ-*ta liš-du-ᶠduᵀ a-*[*n*]*a qé-reb* ŠU.AN.ᶠNAᵀ.KI

33 May all kings hostile to him drag the abundance of the four quarters, the [pro]duce of mountain and sea—
34 their heavy [tri]bute—insi[de] Šuanna (Babylon).

(RIMB 2 B.6.21.1)

As noted by Veenhof (apud Brinkamn 1984, 49, n. 230), Line 34 appears to allude to *Erra* V 35. (That the two lines have almost the same numbering is unlikely to be coincidental.) In V 33–35, Erra says to Išum:

V 33 *šadê ḫiṣibšunu tâmta tušaššâ bilassu*
V 34 *qerbēti ša uštaḫribâ tušaššâ biltu*
V 35 *šakkanakkū kal ālāni kalîšunu bilassunu kabittu lišdudū ana qereb šuanna*

V 33 "You will make the mountains bear their abundance, the sea its yield,
V 34 "You will make the fields that have been lain waste bear their yield,
V 35 "May the governors of each and every city bear their heavy tribute into Šuanna."

Interestingly, this inscription was found not in Babylonia, but in Nimrud. As Hayim Tadmor argues (1995, 333–334), it was likely brought there by the army of Sargon II after it defeated Marduk-apla-iddina. That is was taken to Assyria under Sargon rather than during the reign of a later king is indicated by an inscription of Sargon's (RINAP 2 no. 1 ll. 268–271), which appears to flip the anti-Assyrian rhetoric found in that of Marduk-apla-iddina's on its head—portraying Sargon as Marduk's chosen savior of Babylonia. This, Tadmor argues, is no coincidence but a deliberate subversion, on Sargon's part, of propaganda produced by his defeated enemy. (Curiously, the inscriptions of Sargon likewise contain phrases reminiscent of *Erra*,[105] yet they do not duplicate the poem verbatim as the aforementioned inscription of Marduk-apla-iddina does.)

The second text is an inscription of the Babylonian official Nabû-šuma-imbi (RIMB 2 B.6.14.2001), who held office during the reign of Nabû-šuma-iškun (760[?] –748)—a king who, as

[105] One such phrase is *uqatti rēḫa*, "He (Adad) finished (off) the rest," (RINAP 2 no. 65:146), which, as Chamaza first pointed out (1992, 120 n. 86), is conspicuously similar to *Erra* I 146, *kakkī*[*y*]*a ušatbâmma uḫallaq rēḫa*/ *kakkīka tušatbīma tuḫalliq rēḫa*, a difficult line discussed in Chapter 2 Part 2. That both lines are the 146[th] in their compositions strengthens the likelihood of an allusion.

discussed below, figures prominently in Beaulieu's hypothesis regarding the time of the poem's writing. The inscription is preserved in one copy, a barrel-shaped cylinder published by Lambert (1968). It bears the colophon MU.SAR *šá áš-ruk-ka-ti šá du-ru* É.ZI.DA, "Inscription relating to the storehouse, of (i.e. from) the wall of Ezida." This colophon shows that this is a copy rather than an original—Lambert, basing his opinion on the regular occurrence in the text of the enclitic *-mi-* (rather than *-ma-*), estimates it to be Late-Babylonian (1968, 125).

In the inscription, Nabû-šuma-imbi tells of violence in Borsippa, his city. (The nature of this violence is discussed below.) The passage containing the allusion to *Erra* is found in the section of the inscription devoted to wishes for Nabû-šuma-imbi's future well-being:

27' *ù i-na* [x] x ˹*d*˺*èr-ra šal-ba-bi* DUMU ^{d}EN.LÍL *ra-a-mi ga-á*[*š*(?)-*ru*(?)…]
28' *pat-ri* ˹*šib*˺*-ṭi la* TE-*šú šá-lim-ti lu šá-ak-na-si*

27' And through the […][106] of furious Erra, beloved son of Enlil, the mi[ghty(?)],
28' May the sword of judgment not approach him, may well-being be ordained for him (lit. her).

As indicated by Lambert in his publication of the cylinder (1968, 130)—and further discussed by Taylor (2017, 74–77)—Line 28' appears to contain an allusion to Erra V 58, which regards a house in which a copy of the poem is placed:

V 58 *patar šipṭi ul iṭeḫḫēšuma šalimtu šaknassu*
V 58 "The sword of judgment will not approach it, well-being is ordained for it."

[106] Based on parallels (discussed in Chapter 9 Part 2), the missing word can be hypothesized to be *palê*, "reign (of Erra)," *ukulti*, "devouring (of Erra)," or *dabdê* "massacre (of Erra)."

That *pat-ri* ⌜*šib*⌝*-ṭi la* TE-*šú šá-lim-ti lu šá-ak-na-si* is an allusion to *Erra* is made more likely by the fact that Erra himself is referenced in the previous line, where he is given the alliterative epithet *mār enlil rāmi*—reminiscent of the epithet *apil enlil ṣīru*, "Exalted son of Enlil," given to Erra in II 121*. Erra promises that the house in which a copy of the poem is placed will be protected from the sword of judgment if he grows wrathful once more, and it is therefore fitting that Nabû-šuma-imbi wishes to be spared from Erra's rage. This allusion, like that contained in Marduk-apla-iddina's inscription, makes it less likely that the poem was composed after the 8th century.

2. The Wrath of Ištar

In Tablet IV, as part of his long speech to Erra, Išum narrates how Erra devastated Uruk:

IV 52 *ša uruk šubat anim u ištar āl kezrēti šamḫāti u ḫarīmāt*[*i*]
IV 53 *ša ištar muta īṭerūšinātīma imnû qātušš*[*a*]
IV 54 *sutî sutâtu nadû yarūrāt*[*i*]
IV 55 *dekû eanna kurgarrû isin*[*nī*]
IV 56 *ša ana šupluḫ nišī inana zikrūssunu utēru ana sinn*[*išūti*]
IV 57 *nāš patri nāš naglabi quppê u ṣurt*[*i*]
IV 58 *ša ana ulluṣ kabtat Inana ītakkalū a*[*sakka*]
IV 59 *šakkanakku ekṣu lā bābil pānī elīšunu tašk*[*un*]
IV 60 *uššissinātīma parṣīšina ītet*[*iq*]
IV 61 *ištar īgugma issabus eli uruk*
IV 62 *nakra idkâmma kī šêm ina pān mê imašša' māta*

IV 52 "As for Uruk, dwelling of Anu and Ištar, city of *kezrētu*, *šamḫātu*, and *ḫarīmātu*
IV 53 "City of *kezrētu*, *šamḫātu*, and *ḫarīmātu*, whom Ištar deprived of husbands,

and reckoned as [*her*] own:
IV 54 "Sutean men, Sutean women, bawling war cries,
IV 55 "Evicted (lit. roused) from Eanna the *kurgarrû* and *isin*[*nū*],
IV 56 "Them whose manhood Inana changed to woman[hood],
to strike awe into the people,
IV 57 "Wielders of blades, wielders of scalpels, flints, and razors,
IV 58 "Who violate ta[boos], to delight Ištar.
IV 59 "A governor cruel and heartless you se[t] over them,
IV 60 "He tormented them and contravened their rites:
IV 61 Ištar grew angry, and flew into a fury against Uruk.
IV 62 "She roused the enemy—he picked the country clean like grains on the water's face."

In this fascinating section—which contains the clearest known statement regarding the gender-bending nature of the *kurgarrû* and *asinnu*[107]—the worship of Ištar is disrupted, and the goddess, in her fury, rouses "the enemy" (*nakru*) who then sweeps the land clean. Von Soden (1971, 256), and later Beaulieu (2001), connect this mention of Ishtar's ire to disturbances in her cult in Uruk in the first half of the 8th century, about which we know from several later sources. These involved the removal of Ishtar's cult statue to Babylon, and her replacement, in Uruk, with another goddess.

[107] For a recent discussion of the *assinnu*, Svärd and Nissinen 2018. In their conclusion they write, "The sexuality of the *assinnu* has been a debated topic, the most elaborate recent suggestion coming from Ilan Peled, who has suggested that the *assinnu* was a passive party in a homosexual act. The texts that have been interpreted to attest to this, for instance, omen texts, are difficult to interpret and have raised much discussion. Nonetheless, we see no convincing evidence for the *assinnnu*'s passive sexual role, and the whole term *homosexuality* is a weak analytical tool because of its modern origins. However, the cumulative evidence of the texts presented in this section cannot be explained away. Although we feel it is unwise to present any rigid conclusions regarding the *assinnu*'s sexual role, it seems clear ot us that it was dissimilar to the standard" (Svärd and Nissinen 2018, 397).

We know of these events from four sources, all written centuries later. The earliest among them is an inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II:

> *parṣī rēštāti u pelludê qudmūti ša ištar* (^{d}INANNA) *uruk bēlet uruk elletim utēr ašruššun ana uruk šēdūšu ana eanna lamassa ša damiqtim utēr*
>
> I returned to their places the primordial rites and ancient rituals of Ištar (of) Uruk, the pure lady of Uruk. I returned to Uruk its protective genius, to Eanna a good protective spirit.
>
> (RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II no. C310 ii 2–9)

The second source is the *Istanbul Stela* of Nabonidus:

> *ištar*(^{d}INANNA) *uruk*$^{!}$(ÉŠ×bar.ki) *rubāti ṣīrti āšibat atmanu ḫurāṣi ša ṣandāt* 7 *labbu ša ina palê erība-marduk šarru urukâya šuluḫḫīšu ušpellū atmanšu idkûma ipṭurū ṣimittuš ina uzzi ištu qereb eanna tūṣûma tūšibu lā šubassu lamassi lā simāt eanna ušēšibū ina simakkīšu ištar*(^{d}15) *ušallim atmanšu ukīnšu* 7 *labba simāt ilūtīšu išmissu* ^{d}15 *lā simātu ištu qereb eanna ušēṣīma ištar*(^{d}IN.NIN$_{9}$.NA) *utēr ana eanna kiṣṣīšu*
>
> (As for) Ištar of Uruk, the august princess, she who dwells in a sanctum of gold, harnessing seven lion(s)—she[108] whose purification rites the Urukeans had debased, whose sanctuary they had removed, and whose harnessing they had undone during the reign of king Erība-Marduk, who had gone out in fury from Eanna and dwelt in a place not her own, in whose shrine they (the Urukeans) installed a *protective spirit* unbefitting of Eanna—he (Nebuchadnezzar II) reconciled (that) goddess, (re)installed her sanctuary for her, harnessed for her seven lion(s) befitting her divinity, removed the improper goddess from the midst of Eanna, and returned Ištar to Eanna, her sanctuary.
>
> (RIBo Nabonidus no. 3 iii 11'–39')

[108] Lit. "he." Such apparent confusion of grammatical gender is par for the course for Neo- and Late Babylonian texts.

As Beaulieu writes of the *Istanbul Stela* (2001, 32), "[i]t does not name Nebuchadnezzar as the king who returned Ištar-of-Uruk to the Eanna, but this can easily be inferred from the context."

The third source is the *Uruk Prophecy* (for edition and discussion, Neujahr 2012, 50–57). It speaks of a future king who will remove Ištar of Uruk from her rightful dwelling place, taking her to Babylon and replacing her with a *lamassu* unbefitting of Uruk and its people (rev. 3–5). It later describes a different future king who will return Ištar of Uruk to Uruk and restore the city's religious functioning to its proper state (rev. 11–15). The *Uruk Prophecy* is generally considered a *vaticinium ex eventu*, or prophecy written after the fact. The latter king can be identified as Nebuchadnezzar, who returned Ištar to Uruk. The prophecy says that a son of that future king will rise in Uruk, that he will attain dominion over the four quarters, that he will rule from Uruk's midst, that his dynasty will rule forever, and that the kings of Uruk will rule like the very gods (rev. 16–18). Amēl-Marduk, Nebuchadnezzar's son, had no such reign, but was deposed after two years. The composition of this *ex eventu* prophecy can therefore be dated, as argued by Hunger and Kaufman (1974, 373–4), to within Amēl-Marduk's reign—for the composition of such prophecies can be placed after the fulfillment of those predictions that the author knows to have already come to pass, but before the (usually eschatological) predictions that lie in the author's future, and whose fulfillment he could only hope for.

If one were to go by Nabonidus's account, the king predicted in the *Uruk Prophecy* to remove Ištar's statue from Uruk would be identified as Erība-Marduk. Yet, as Beaulieu argues

(2001, 36), another text, also from Hellenistic Uruk, points in a different direction. This fourth text (RIMB 2 B.6. 14.1) is written on a fragmentary tablet found at a private house in Uruk (W. 22660. On this tablet, RIMB 2, 118), inscribed in late-Babylonian script. It appears to have been copied from an original which was itself in a bad, and deteriorating, state of preservation—this can be inferred from the scribe's use of both *ḫi-pí*, "break," and *ḫi-pí eš-šú*, "new break" to mark damaged sections in the original. The text tells of the many crimes of Nabu-šuma-iškun, a king who ruled immediately following Erība-Marduk. One of the purported crimes of that king is described in this way:[109]

ii 31 [...]⌜*a*⌝-*ši-bat* GIŠ.GU.ZA
II 32 [...]7 *la-ab-bi*
ii 33 [...]⌜*ip*⌝-*ṭur-ma*
ii 34 [...]⌜*ú*⌝-*šak-bi-is*
ii 35 [...*ú*]-*šat*[!]-*miḫ-ši*
ii 36 [...*ú*]-⌜*šá*⌝-*aṣ-mi-is-si*
ii 37 [...]INNIN U[NUG[?ki?]]
ii 38 [...]*ú-šap-ṭir*

ii 31 [...]She who dwells on a throne...
II 32 [...]7 lions...
ii 33 [...]He undid...
ii 34 [...]He trampled...
ii 35 [...He] made her carry...
ii 36 [...He] harnessed to her...
ii 37 [...]The lady of U[ruk]...
ii 38 [...]He caused to be undone...

[109] Transliteration given here of this section is follows Beaulieu 2001, 36.

Beaulieu writes of this passage:

> Only disconnected words are preserved. Yet the allusion to Ištar is clear, and the existence of verbatim correspondences with the Nabonidus stele removes any reasonable doubt that this text is reporting on the abduction of Išar and the introduction of another cultic image in her sanctuary. It seems to make it almost certain that Nabu-šuma-iskun was the author of this sacrilege, and that therefore he, not Erība-Marduk, should be identified as the evil king of the Uruk Prophecy. (Beaulieu 2001, 36)

This fourth text attributes many more misdeeds to Nabû-šuma-iškun: every manner of offense against the gods and men of Babylonia. The following excerpt, taken from the most well-preserved section of the text, is representative:

> *šattišamma dâku ḫabālu šagāšu ṣabitti ilki u tupšikki elīšunu ušātir ina* <1>*-en* u_4*-mi* 16 *kutâya ina abul zababa ša qereb bābili ina išāti iqlu mārē bābili ana ḫatti u elam ana šulmānūti ūbil mārū bābili* [*a*]*ššātīšunu marīšunu u aštapirīšunu ušēṣīma*(È-*ma*) *ina ṣēri u*[*šēšibšunu*](*ú*$^{ḫi\text{-}pí}$)
>
> Every year he increased the (level of) killing, assault, murder, imprisonment, forced labor, and toil imposed upon them. In a single day, he burned (alive) sixteen Cuthaeans at the gate of Zababa in Babylon, dispatched Babylonian citizens to Hatti and Elam as bribes, expelled Babylonian citizens, their [w]ives, their children, and their servants, and [settled them] in the steppe. (RIMB 2 B.6. 14.1 10'–17')

Only one other text describing the reign of Nabû-šuma-iškun is known to us: the aforementioned account of Nabû-šuma-imbi, which also describes violent events occurring during the reign of Nabû-šuma-iškun:

> *iššakanāma ina barsippi āl kitti u mīšari ešâti dalḫāti sīḫī u šaḫmašāti ina palê nabû-šuma-iškun šarru mār dakkūri bābilâya barsippâya āl dutēti kibrat puratti gabbi āl kaldī aramû dilbatâya ūmī ma'adūti ana libbi aḫāmeš kakkīšunu išelli aḫāmeš ursappū u itti barsippâya ina muḫḫi eqlīšunu ippušū ṣūlāti* [...] *nabû-šuma-iddina mār aqār-nabû ērib bīt nabû šatam ezida* [...] *ina ramānīšu ina muḫḫi nabû-šuma-imbi mār ēda-ēṭir šakin*

barsippa iškun ina šāt mūši kīma šarraqiš nakru aḫû ^{lú}*ḫa*[*lqu*$^{?}$] *zāmânû lemnūtu sukkūtu lā šēmîyama eg*[*rūti*$^{?}$ …] *ana ezida utīrma ezida u barsippa iṣbatūma eli āli u ekur rigmi u šis*[*īti*] *iškunūma ippušū ṣūlāti bīt nabû-šuma-*[*imbi mār ēda-ēṭir*] *šakin barsippi ina mūšīšūma barsippâya u* ^{lú}[…] *ša ana rēṣūt aḫāmiš izzizū ilmûma ina tilpāni u* ⌜GIŠ⌝ […*ultu lilāti*] *adi napāḫ šamši ippušū tanūqāti nabû-šuma-imbi mār ēda-ēṭir šakin bars*[*ippi …*] *uṣalli nabû …*

Confusion, turmoil, uprisings, and revolts took place in Borsippa, city of truth and justice. During the reign of King Nabû-šuma-iškun the Dakkurean, the Babylonians, Borsippians, (the people of) the city of Dutēti (which is on) the bank of the Euphrates, all the Chaldeans,[110] Aramaeans, and Dilbateans—many days they honed their weapons (to fight) one another, (then) massacred one another, and did battle with the Borsippians over their fields. […] Nabû-šuma-iddina, son of Aqar-Nabû, one privileged to enter the temple of Nabû, the *šatammu* of Ezida […] By his own initiative set […] against Nabû-šuma-imbi, son of Ēda-ēṭir, governor of Borsippa. In the dead of night, acting like thieves, the enemy, the foreigner, the *fugi*[*tive*]—evil foes, obstinate men who heed me not, *per*[*verse …*] I/he brought back (smth.) to Ezida, and they seized Ezida and Borsippa, raising clamor and ro[ar] over city and temple and doing battle. That night, the Borsippians and […] who came to one other's aid, surrounded the house of Nabû-šuma-[imbi, son of Ēda-ēṭir], governor of Borsippa, with bows and […], and raised battle cries from evening to sunrise. Nabû-šuma-imbi, son of Ēda-ēṭir, governor of Bors[ippa …] beseeched Nabû […] (RIMB 2 B.6.14.2001 i 15'–ii 10)

After reviewing the aforementioned four sources, Beaulieu returns to *Erra*:

Now we come back full circle to our earliest source, *Erra and Isum,* which, like the Nabonidus stele, gives prominence to the theological explanation of Ištar's departure, but within the context of a much more believable scenario. In the first half of the eighth century Babylonia was in turmoil, with bands of pillagers of various ethnic origins marauding throughout the country, while Aramean, Babylonian and Chaldean leaders vied with each other for the throne. To protect their communities, urban elites tried to maintain a fragile equilibrium between these various competing interests. This is precisely the situation described by *Erra and Isum:* marauders turning the Eanna temple upside down, a governor who may have been a native of Uruk and was bent on transgressing rites, an invader who plundered the city, and finally Ištar going into exile.

[110] Lit. "all the city of the Chaldeans."

> The picture seems much more balanced than those provided by any of the other sources, more particularly regarding who was responsible for the cultic disruptions and Ištar's anger. No king seems to have intervened directly. Rather, it appears that local rituals were altered by the inhabitants themselves since Ištar became angry at the city and aroused an enemy to plunder it, although it is conceded that these sacrilegious acts were probably committed at the instigation, or under the pressure of an oppressive governor. Thus the blame is shared by at least three parties, and possibly even four, since we may speculate that the enemy aroused by Ištar to punish Uruk was ultimately responsible for taking the goddess away from her city." (Beaulieu 2001, 38–39)

War, civil strife, a city's people turning against their governor—these events are reminiscent of the events of *Erra* IV, as is Nabonidus's account of the wrath of Ištar of Uruk and her abandonment of her city. Beaulieu's identification of the reign of Nabû-šuma-iškun as the historical background of *Erra* is therefore promising, yet seems far from evident in light of two facts. First, Ištar is not actually said in *Erra* IV to have left her temple, but only to have grown angry—the poet does not state, as he does regarding Ištaran, that Ištar herself was taken away. Yet even if the poet, in composing IV 52–62, did have in mind a real abandonment of Uruk by Ištar—as well as actual periods of disorder and turmoil in Babylonia—this does not necessarily mean that he was thinking of Nabû-šuma-iškun (or Erība-marduk for that matter). This is because of the second fact, namely that neither the divine displeasure Nabonidus speaks of nor the violence described by Nabû-šuma-imbi is an exceptional event in the scheme of Mesopotamian history. There is, however, one feature of the violence described in *Erra* that is unusual from this perspective, namely the Suteans being repeatedly identified as committing it. This may point to a different historical background entirely.

3. Sutean Sacrilege

Lambert writes:

> The attacks on the cities are expressly said to be the work of the Sutû, Aramaean tribes who worked havoc in Babylonia shortly after 1100 B.C. Tablet IV, 54 describes Sutû men and women (hardly either Persian or Assyrian troops!) uttering fierce howls in Uruk. Then the god of Der complains that he, meaning his statue, had been given over to the Sutû (line 69). In Tablet V, 27 Era, when reviewing the whole affair in retrospect, utters what might be termed a prophecy: "Let crippled Akkad throw down the mighty Sutû". (Lambert 1957–58, 397)

We know of these 11th-century Sutean invasions from three sources, which will be reviewed from earliest to latest. The first is RIMB 2 B.3.1.1 (discussion with bibliography in RIMB 2, 72), an inscription of Simbar-šipak (1025–1008) known from two later copies—one (WHM 13.14.1729) dated on epigraphic grounds to sometime between the 7th and 5th centuries (Brinkman 1968, 340) and the other (BM.82953) dated, also on such grounds, to the second quarter of the first millennium (RIMB 2, 72). The inscription, which deals with the return and reinstallation in Nippur of a throne of Enlil, states:

> *kussî ellil ša ekurigigal ša nabû-kudurri-uṣur šarri maḫri īpuš*[m] *ina palê adad-apla-iddina šar bābili nakru aramû u sutû ayyābi ekur u nippur mušalpit duranki ša sippar āli ṣāti šubat dikugal ilāni ušaḫbit mêsīšun išlulūma māt šumeri u akkadî ušamqitu gimir ekurrāti*
>
> (Concerning) the throne of Enlil in (lit. of) Ekurigigal, which Nebuchadnezzar (I), an earlier king, had made: In the reign of Adad-apla-iddina, king of Babylon, the enemy—Aramaeans and Suteans, foes of Ekur and Nippur, desecrator(s) of Duranki—(in) Sippar, the primeval city, the dwelling place of the great judge of the gods, they violated

[m] The form is spelled *i-pu-uš*, without the expected subjunctive.

> their (the Sippareans'[?]) rites, plundered the lands of Sumer and Akkad, and toppled all sanctuaries.
>
> (RIMB 2 B.3.1.1 ll. 10–13)

The second source is the *Sun-God Tablet of Nabû-apla-iddina* (BM.91000). In contrast to the aforementioned inscription of Simbar-šipak, it dates in all likelihood to the actual reign of Nabû-apla-iddina, which lasted at least 33 years, beginning in 890 at the earliest and ending in 851 at the latest—though it was discovered in what is likely a foundation deposit made by Nabonidus around four centuries later.[112] The inscription begins by describing a disruption of the cult of Šamaš in Sippar:

> *šamaš bēlu rabû āšib ebabbar ša qereb sippar ša ina ešâti dalḫāti ša māt akkadî sutû nakru lemnu usaḫḫû uḫalliqū uṣurāti parṣūšu immašûma šikinšu u simātīšu ina qatī ipparšidma lā naṭil manamma*
>
> Šamaš, the great lord, he who dwells in Ebabbar in the midst of Sippar—which, during the disorder and turmoil of the land of Akkad, the Suteans, the evil enemy, made unrecognizable, destroying (its) design—his rites had been forgotten, his appearance and attributes had vanished beyond grasp, out of all sight.
>
> (BM.91000 i 1–12)

The third source is, in fact, two sources—though ones that duplicate each other almost exactly. These are two fragmentary Neo-Babylonian chronicle tablets— Glassner 2004 no. 46 (here A) and no. 47 (here B), which say the following concerning the reign of Adad-apla-iddina (variants between the two tablets are in brackets):

---

[112] Woods 2004, 34–39.

> *adad-apla-iddina apil itti-marduk-balāṭu aramû u šarru ḫammā'i isḫû*(*šū*)[A]*ma māḫāzī kala ša māti ušal*[*pitū*] (*agadê*)[A] *dēr duranki sippar u parsâ iddû sutû itbēma šallat šumeri u akkadî ana mātīšu ušēṣi ašrāt marduk ište'ēma*[113]*libbīšu* (A: *libbi bēl u mār bēl*) *uṭīb parṣīšu*(*nu*)[A] *ušaklil*
>
> (During the reign of) Adad-apla-iddina, heir of Itti-Marduk-balaṭu, Aramaeans and a usurper rebelled (against him)[A], and desec[rated] all the sanctuaries of the land, laid low (Agade)[A], Der, Duranki, Sippar, and Parsâ. The Sutean rose up, and brought out all the plunder of Sumer and Akkad to his own land. He (Adad-apla-iddina) sought the sanctuaries of Marduk and gladdened his heart (A: the heart of Bel and the son of Bel) and perfected his (A: their) rites.
>
> (Glassner 2004 no. 46 ll. 29–34/no. 47 ll. 6'–9')

The major advantage of Lambert's proposal over the two others outlined in this chapter is that it better aligns with the text of the poem. If one were to follow Gössmann and Franke, one would have to explain why the manifest details of the poem are so different from those known of Sennacherib's campaign. If one were to agree with von Soden or Beaulieu, one would need to clarify why the violence of *Erra* seems to be on a much grander scale than that outlined in texts referring to Erība-Marduk's (or Nabû-šuma-iškun's) reign, for these do not speak of cataclysmic invasions, of walls torn down, of the clamor of cities extinguished like foam on the water's face. Yet the Suteans, the great aggressors in *Erra*, play that same role in sources describing the reign of Adad-apla-iddina (albeit alongside *Aramû*, "Aramaeans," more generally). They are also given almost identical monikers: in *Erra* they are called *nakru*, "the enemy," and the inscriptions of Simbar-šipak and Nabû-apla-iddina refer to them as *nakru lemnu*, "the evil enemy."

---

[113] A:33: [*iš-te-'e*]-*em*, B:9': K[IN-*m*]*a*.

The following is a schematic comparison between the destruction described in RIMB 2 B.3.1.1 ll. 10–13 (here **Simbar-šipak Inscription**), BM.91000 ii 18–iii 10 (here **Sun-God Tablet**), the two chronicle texts (here **NB Chronicles**), and *Erra* IV:

Simbar-šipak Inscription (RIMB 2 B.3.1.1 ll. 10–13)

Location	***Crime***	***Perpetrator***
Duranki	Desecration	Aramaeans, Suteans
Sippar	Violation of rites	Aramaeans, Suteans

Sun-God Tablet (BM.91000 i 1–12)

Location	***Crime***	***Perpetrator***
Land of Akkad	Disorder and turmoil	Not named
Sippar	Violation of rites	Suteans

NB Chronicles (Glassner 2004 no. 46 ll. 29–34/no. 47 ll. 6'–9')

Location	***Crime***	***Perpetrator***
	Rebellion	Aramaeans and a usurper
All the land	Desecration of shrines	Aramaeans and a usurper
(Agade)	Overthrowing	Aramaeans and a usurper
Dēr	Overthrowing	Aramaeans and a usurper
Duranki	Overthrowing	Aramaeans and a usurper
Sippar	Overthrowing	Aramaeans and a usurper
Parsâ	Overthrowing	Aramaeans and a usurper
Sumer and Akkad	Plundering Suteans	

***Erra* IV**

Location	***Crime***	***Perpetrator***
Babylon	Civil unrest, looting	Erra, Citizens of Babylon
	Massacre of protected citizens	Royal army
Sippar	Casting down walls	Erra
Parsâ	Desecration of Eugal	Not named
Uruk	Evicting of *kurgarrû* and *issinnū*	Suteans
	Oppression and Suppression of cult	Governor

	Looting of the land	"The enemy"
Dēr	Massacre of citizens	Erra
	Kidnapping of Ištaran	Suteans

The cities of Sippar, Parsâ, and Dēr are attacked by Aramaeans—whether Sutean or not—in both *Erra* and in traditions about the reign of Adad-apla-iddina. Disorder and turmoil in the land of Akkad, desecration of shrines throughout the land, and looting of the land by Suteans likewise fit *Erra* well. There are, however, notable differences—most prominently that Uruk is not specifically mentioned as having been attacked by Suteans in Adad-apla-iddina's reign, and that Agade, said in one NB chronicle to have been overthrown, is not mentioned at all in Erra. (While Nippur is not mentioned in Tablet IV, its attack is possibly described at the end of Tablet III, though the passage is hard to understand at present).

Another difference between *Erra* and the sources dealing with Adad-apla-iddina is that they do not mention Babylon, destruction in which the poet describes at great length. Yet that Babylon is not mentioned by name in these sources does not necessarily mean that it does not figure in them—and not only because disorders in the land of Akkad at large would conceivably affect it. Lambert writes,

> The curious phenomenon is the civil war in Babylon while other cities suffer from outside attacks. Adad-apal-iddina was himself an Aramaean usurper. This fact alone could easily lead to friction between the court and the townspeople. The invading Aramaean Sutu may well have regarded him as an ally, so that they spared his city, but the citizens would obviously not stay quiet under a ruler who was abetting barbarous tribes in their pillage of other cities of the country. This explains the rise of the citizens to arms, and why the king was forced to use his troops on them (Tablet IV, 6-35).

Lambert's analysis can be amended in one major way, for Glassner 2004 no. 46, which was not available to Lambert, shows that what is meant in Glassner 2004 no. 45, the text on which Lambert drew in his characterization of Adad-apla-iddina (1957–8, 398), is not that Adad-apla-iddina was an Aramean usurper (*aramû šarru ḫammā'i*), but that Aramaeans and a usurper rebelled against him (Glassner 2004 no. 46 l. 29: *aramû u šarru ḫammā'i isḫûšū*). Yet such a change only strengthens Lambert's argument, for the arising of a usurper against Adad-apla-iddina even better explains the rebellion of Babylon's citizens against their *šakkanakku*, whom they curse greatly (IV 12) before barring the gates of the city, as well as the *šakanakku*'s subsequent attack on them. It is at this point that the enigmatic IV 3, *ilūtka tušannīma tamtašal amēliš*, "You changed your divinity and became like a man," comes into play. Machinist writes of this line:

> … the poem, perhaps unique among the major works of Mesopotamian religious literature, appears to be a transparent "mythologization" of a specific historical event or period. This point is nowhere better illustrated than in Tablet IV:3, where, to describe how Erra caused a civil war and destruction in Babylon, the poet claims: *i-lu-ut-ka tu-šá-an-ni-ma tam-ta-šal a-me-liš,* "You changed out of your divinity and made yourself like a man." (Machinist 1983, 221).

If the period mythologized by *Erra* is the turbulent reign of Adad-apla-iddina, and if IV 3 refers not to Erra behaving like a man but to him assuming human form,[114] then could the poet be implying that it was the form of the *šarru ḫammā'i* that Erra assumed, and that this mortal was

[114] This question is discussed in Chapter 4 Part 3.

an avatar of the god of violence? To my knowledge, such an occurrence would be unique in extant Mesopotamian sources—in which gods are not known to interfere in this specific way in the affairs of mortals. Yet the expression *tamtašal amēliš* is itself without known parallels, and the rarity of the event would therefore appear to be matched by the originality of the poet's phrasing.

The Akkadian

Even if one would be correct in identifying the reign of Adad-apla-iddina as the historical background of the poem, this is no guarantee that it was written down during his reign. Lambert proposes that the poem's composition took place during a later reign, that of the aforementioned 9th-century ruler Nabû-apla-iddina. This proposal draws on a passage in *Sun-God Tablet*:

> *nabû-apla-iddina šar bābili nibīt marduk narām ani u ellil muṭīb libbi zarpanitum zikru qardu ša ana šarrūti asmu nāš tilpāni ezzeti sākip nakri lemni sutû ša šurbû ḫīṭūšun ša ana tūr gimil māt akkadî šūšub māḫāzī nadê parakkī uṣṣur uṣurāti šullum parṣī u pelludê kunni šattukkī šurruḫ nindabê bēlu rabû marduk ḫaṭṭa išarta rē'ût nišī epēši umallû qatuššu*
>
> Nabû-apla-iddina, the king of Babylon, nominated by Marduk, beloved of Anu and Enlil, who gladdens the heart of Zarpanitum, valiant male, who is suited for kingship, bearer of the fearsome bow, vanquisher of the evil enemy—the Suteans, whose sins are great—he whom Marduk, the great lord, entrusted with a just scepter (and) the shepherding of the people, (so that he may) avenge the land of Akkad, settle shrines, found sanctuaries, safeguard cultic designs, fulfill rites and rituals, establish regular offerings, and make splendid the food offerings.

(BM.91000 ii 18–iii 10)

Lambert writes,

> The *terminus a quo* is the Sutu invasions, so c. 1050 B.C. Because the writer looks forward to the rise of Akkad as a world power, the *terminus ad quem* must be placed before the Assyrians had undisputed power under the Sargonids, therefore c. 750 B.C. Within this period there can be no certain dating, but one reign stands out as particularly probable on present knowledge. Nābû-apal-iddina shows exactly the same philosophy to current affairs as the Era Epic. As already quoted, he asserts that he is the avenger of the Sutû, and divinely appointed to rebuild Akkad. He busied himself with editions of literature as well as with material structures. Since he had an active interest literature it is possible – even probable – that the epic was composed at his orders to chronicle the fall and rise of Akkad. (Lambert 1957–58, 400)

Lambert's reasoning regarding the historical background of *Erra*, and the terminus *a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of its composition, are convincing. However, that the poem was composed during the reign of Nabû-apla-iddina specifically cannot be stated with confidence, for it may just as well have been written down during the reign of a different king who reigned between the 11th and 8th centuries—and who may have likewise sought to vanquish the Suteans. Slightly modifying Lambert's proposal, one may speculate that the poem was composed not to "chronicle the fall and rise of Akkad," but rather to chronicle Akkad's fall and prophesy its rise to universal hegemony. As discussed above, the *Uruk Prophecy* was most likely written to predict a godlike rule for Amēl-Marduk and his dynasty, thus serving to legitimize his power. Likewise, Erra's ordainment of the rise of *Akkadû*, "The Akkadian," and of Babylonia's eventual restoration could conceivably have served to justify the campaign of a Babylonian monarch—whether Nabû-apla-iddina or someone else—to accomplish these ends. The existence of an affinity

between *Erra* and texts such as the *Uruk Prophecy*, as well as similar texts such as the *Marduk Prophecy* (Neujahr 2012, 27–40) and the *Šulgi Prophecy* (Neujahr 2012, 41–49), may help explain why *Erra* never names its human characters, for this was likewise not done by these *ex eventu* prophecies.

4. Conclusion

The events of *Erra*, and particularly its fourth tablet, have led scholars to speculate as to the poem's historical background and the circumstances of its composition. Lambert identified the former as the Sutean invasions of the 11th century, and the latter as the 9th-century reign of Nabû-apla-iddina. Von Soden proposed that the poem is based on turmoil during the reign of Erība-Marduk (769? –760?), was likely written between 765 and 763. Modifying von Soden's proposal, Beaulieu has argued the turmoil in question to have occurred during the reign of Nabû-šuma-iškun, the king following Erība-Marduk. Gössmann's estimated the historical background of the poem to be Sennacherib's war with Babylonia (705–689), and the time of the poem's composition to have been between these events and the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire. Franke concurred with Gössmann in viewing Sennacherib's invasion as having inspired *Erra*, yet differed from him in arguing that it is an Assyrian work, written under Esarhaddon, rather than a Babylonian one.

Of these hypotheses, Lambert's best fits the events of *Erra*—for it speaks not of Assyrian aggression, nor of mere turmoil, but of grand Sutean invasions. The similarity between *Erra* IV and the events of the reign of Adad-apla-iddina may go even further than Lambert suggested, for later tradition records the rise of a usurper (*šarru ḫammā'i*) against Adad-apla-iddina, a malignant figure that may, perhaps, be implied by the poet to have been the human form taken by Erra before entering Babylon and manipulating its people into causing their own destruction.

Chapter Seven

The Agentive Heart

The Heart behind its rib laughed out. "You have called me mad," it said,
Because I made you turn away and run from that young child;
How could she mate with fifty years that was so wildly bred?
Let the cage bird and the cage bird mate and the wild bird mate in the wild.
"You but imagine lies all day, O murderer," I replied.
"And all those lies have but one end, poor wretches to betray;
I did not find in any cage the woman at my side.
O but her heart would break to learn my thoughts are far away."

—William Butler Yeats Yeats, *Owen Aherne and His Dancers*

1. Can Hearts Talk?

The first twenty-two lines of *Erra* are an enigma. The majority of them are fully extent, and they contain no significant syntactical or grammatical ambiguities, yet they present problems of interpretation for which no scholar has yet proposed an entirely satisfactory solution. These are the lines as they stand:

I 1 [*ša*]*r gimir dadmē bānû kib*[*rāti*…]
I 2 *ḫendursanga apil ellil rēšt*[*û*…]
I 3 *nāš ḫaṭṭi ṣīrti nāqid ṣalmāt qa*[*qqa*]*di rē'û* [*tenēšēti*]
I 4 *išum ṭābiḫu na'du ša ana našê kakkīšu ezzūti qātāšu asmā*
I 5 *u ana šubruq ulmīšu šērūti erra qarrād ilānī inuššu ina šubti*
I 6 *irrissūma libbašu epēš tāḫāzi*
I 7 *ītammi ana kakkīšu litpatā imat mūti*
I 8 *ana sebetti qarrād lā šanān nandiqā kakkīkun*
I 9 *iqabbīma ana kâša luṣīma ana ṣēri*
I 10 *atta dipārumma inaṭṭalū nūrka*
I 11 *atta ālik maḫrimma ilāni* […]
I 12 *atta namṣārumma ṭābiḫ*[*u*…]
I 13 *erra tebēma ina sapān māti*
I 14 *kī namrat kabtatka u ḫadû libbuk*

I 15 *erra kī ša amēli dalpi idāšu an*[*ḫā*]
I 16 *iqabbi ana libbīšu lutbe luṣlalma*
I 17 *ītammâ ana kakkīšu ummidā tubqāti*
I 18 *ana sebetti qarrād lā šanān ana šubtīkunu tūrāma*
I 19 *adi atta tadekkûšu ṣalil uršuššu*
I 20 *itti mammi ḫīratuš ippuša ulṣamma*
I 21 *engidudu bēlu muttallik mūši muttarrû rubê*
I 22 *ša eṭla u ardatu ina šu*[*l*]*m*[*i*] *ittanarrû unammaru kīma ūmi*

I 1 [Kin]g[115] of all inhabited regions, creator of the la[nds…]
I 2 Ḫendursanga, firstborn[n] son of Enlil […]
I 3 Bearer of the august scepter, shepherd of the black-hea[ded] people, herdsman [of the peoples],
I 4 Išum, zealous slaughterer, whose hands are fit to wield his furious weapons,
I 5 And at the flashing of whose fearsome axes, Erra, warrior of the gods, quakes in (his) abode.
I 6 His heart asks him to do battle,
I 7 He[116] says to his weapons, "Smear yourself with deadly venom!"
I 8 To the Seven, warrior(s) unrivaled: "Gird on your weapons!"
I 9 He says to you, "May I go out to the field!
I 10 "You are the torch, and they will see your light!
I 11 "You are the vanguard, the gods […],
I 12 "You are the sword and the slaughterer […]"
I 13 "Erra, arise! when you lay the land low,
I 14 "Will your mind not be radiant, and joyful your heart![117]"

[115] Though the *šar* in *šar gimir dadmē* is only partly preserved in the manuscripts, the incipit of *Erra* is fully preserved in colophons (for transliterations, Cagni 1969, 130–132).

[116] As discussed below, the subject of *ītammi* could also be *libbašu*, "his (Erra's) heart."

[117] The line *kī namrat kabtatka u ḫadû libbuk* is grammatically difficult. Most translators have understood it similarly to how it is translated here, e.g. Foster's "(So) up Erra, from laying waste the land/ how cheerful your mood will be and joyful your heart." Yet, as both Taylor (2017, 400 n. 14) and the eBL note, *kī*, when used with the declarative meaning "how," does not require subordination. The spelling *ḫa-du-u*, found in both manuscripts in which I 14 is attested, is therefore hard to explain. Taylor takes the stative as an unsubordinated form with an overhanging vowel, yet I am not aware of an instance in *Erra* of

I 15 Erra's limbs are weary, like those of a man lacking sleep,
I 16 He says to his heart, "Shall I rise, shall I sleep?"
I 17 He tells his weapons, "Stand in the corners!"
I 18 To the seven, warrior(s) unrivaled, "Return to your abode!"
I 19 Until you bid him rise, he will be lying in his chamber,
I 20 Delighting with Mami, his consort;
I 21 O Engidudu, the lord who goes about at night, the prince's constant guide,
I 22 Who ever guides the youth and maiden safely, shining like the day!

As may be fitting for a text whose plot is delivered largely through monologues, the main difficulty in understanding this passage is determining the identity of the speaker of each line, and his referents.[118] This quandary resembles a combination of a puzzle and a game of Whack-A-Mole: solving any problem in ll. 1–22 immediately creates others, and all answers come to seem like compromises. As discussed in Chapter 9 Part 1, the identity of the god invoked in the first line, who most likely is either Marduk or Išum, is far from settled. That ll. 2–5 and 19–22,

overhanging vowels being appended to forms that already end with a vowel, nor does Taylor cite any in support of her argument (for a list of forms with overhanging vowels in Erra, Cagni 1969, 130–132). The eBL, in contrast, construes the line as an oath formula (in which subordination would be required) used as a rhetorical question. By the logic of Akkadian oaths, the actual meaning of the line would be the reverse of the statement following *kī*. As the line would literally state "If your mind will be bright and happy your heart…" the meaning implied by the oath formula would be that, in destroying the land, Erra's mind will not, in fact, be bright, and his heart not merry. However, this is the opposite of what one would expect to be said here, and the eBL posits a second reversal, whereby the meaning produced by the oath formula is itself a rhetorical question, "Will your mind certainly not be bright, and your heart not happy?" This rhetorical question would itself be answered in the negative, meaning that Erra will enjoy destroying the land after all. While this solution would fit with the grammar as well as the context, the use of an oath formula as a rhetorical question is, as far as I am aware, unattested. The grammatical problem appears to remain, therefore, unsolved.

[118] For a discussion and evaluation of the various proposals put forward by scholars, Taylor 2017, 21–43.

which begin and end this section, are addressed by the narrator to Išum—who is also referred to by two other names of his, *Ḫendursanga* and *Engidudu*—is more certain.[119] Erra is manifestly the speaker in 16–17. As both Išum and Erra are mentioned in 5, either could conceivably be the referent of *libbašu*, "his heart," in 6. However, if *kâša*, "you," in 9 is Išum, as seems most likely, then the subject of *iqabbīma*, "he was speaking thus," earlier in the line cannot be him. No indication is given of a change of speaker between 7 and I 14, and therefore it may be assumed that if Išum is not the speaker in 9, he isn't the speaker in any of these lines. That Išum is addressed in the vocative in 1-5, in the second person in 19–20, and again in the vocative in 21–22, while the object suffix on *irissūma* (I 6), as well as the verbs *ītammi* (I 7) and *iqabbīma* (I 9), are in the third person, reinforces this impression.[120]

Ascribing I 7–14 to Erra creates a problem, however: why would he address himself in the second person in I 13, saying, *erra tebēma*, "Erra, arise!"? Though Cagni lists it as a possibility (1997, 144), and it is endorsed by both Foster (2005, 759 n. 4) and Taylor (2017, 34–36), such self-

[119] That I 2 invokes Ḫendursanga, another name for Išum (George 2015), strongly suggests that I 1 refers to him as well. The device whereby a god is first addressed only by his epithets, and then also by his name, is found in the opening of other Akkadian literary texts, such as Standard Babylonian *Anzû* I 1–4, and *Ludlul* 1–4.

[120] I 6–8 could conceivably be understood as the continuation of the subordinate clause describing Išum that begins with *ša* in I 4, and includes I 5. However, that *kâša* in I 9 most likely refers to Išum would preclude him from being the subject of *iqabbi* at the beginning of the line, and the subject of *iqabbi* would then be Erra (or, as discussed below, his heart). There is no indication of a change of speaker between I 7 and I 9, and it is therefore more probable that Erra or his heart are the speakers in I 7-8 as well.

address would appear to be unique in Mesopotamian literature. While characters are known to speak of themselves in the third person, as Erra himself does in V 57–58, discussed below, there is no instance of which I am aware of a character addressing himself or herself in the imperative.[121] Yet, if Erra does not attempt to rouse himself to battle I 13, who does? If it is Išum, as argued by Machinist,[122] it would require a change of speaker between I 12 to I 13, though no indication of such a change is given. In addition, if one were to judge by Išum's later role in the epic as the savior of humanity, it would seem out of character for him to urge Erra to war (though there is no requirement that characters should be entirely consistent in their actions). Perhaps, then, it is the narrator who addresses Erra in these lines.[123] Though this cannot be ruled out, it would also be strange for the poem's human narrator to wish for Erra to go to war, for as we know from the rest of the poem, Erra's assault threatens the very survival of mankind.

Yet there is another possibility. In his paper (1995, 349–353), Müller proposed that the key to understanding the passage lies in I 6, *irrissūma libbašu epēš tāḫāzi*, "His heart asks him to do battle." Rather than affixing a full stop or a comma at the end of this line, one could end it with

[121] As discussed below, subjects in Akkadian texts often speak to themselves, whether aloud or in thought. However, they appear never to address themselves in the second person.

[122] Speaking of the introduction to the poem, they write "Išum… is largely pictured as bellicose goading Erra and the Sibitti to war" (I 4–14)" (Machinist 1983, 223).

[123] As considered by Cagni (1969, 144), and argued by Dalley (2000, 313).

a colon; it would then be Erra's own heart that speaks to Erra's weapons, to the Seven, to Išum, and then to Erra himself. This solution has been championed by George, who described it as a "breakthrough" (2015, 51), yet Taylor judges it unlikely, marshaling three arguments against it (2017, 31). According to the first, "It is unclear why Erra and his heart would be at odds, or what has led his heart to prompt him to undertake a campaign where he himself is enervated." The second, "More concerning is the realization that the heart then refers to itself in the third person in I:14 [...] where the parallelism in the verse employs 'heart' as an undeniable synonym for "mood" (*kabtatu*) earlier in the verse, with no indication that the heart, unlike the mood, is here poetically construed as an independent agent (let alone the speaker of the verse)." The third, "The Akkadian term *libbu* is semantically diffuse enough to encompass the meanings 'womb' and 'inclination'; characters certainly address their 'hearts,' but they can also speak *in* their hearts, where "heart" must simply correspond roughly to a reflexive pronoun. I am aware of no passage in Akkadian in which an individual is addressed by his or her heart, let alone in which an individual's heart addresses others... separately from the individual—nor is it clear to me how this would be understood to take place logistically." She concludes, "Given these conventions governing the use of the term, it is likely a native speaker would have excluded 'heart' as a possible subject of the verbs of speaking in I:7 and I:9, and this proposal must therefore be rejected."

Taylor's second argument can be responded to by pointing to the aforementioned V 57–58, in which Erra speaks of himself in the third person alongside the Seven, without giving any hint that he is the speaker, as the heart would do in I 14 according to Müller's idea:

V 57 *ina bīti ašar ṭuppu šâšu šaknu erra līgugma lišgišū sebetti*
V 58 *patar šipṭi ul iṭeḫḫēšuma šalimtu šaknassu*

V 57 "In the house where that tablet is placed, should Erra be angry, and murderous the Seven,
V 58 "The sword of judgment[124] will not approach it, but peace abides upon it."

The other three arguments have to do with the nature and abilities of the *libbu*, translated here as "heart,"[125] and it is a specific role of the *libbu* in Akkadian texts that is the subject of this chapter. That is the *agentive* heart, the heart that functions not only as the seat of thoughts and emotions but seems, as the English "heart" sometimes does, to act as an independent agent with a will of its own. It is the heart that can influence its owner, that wants, speaks, and even interacts with the outside world—as Erra's heart own heart does, according to Müller's proposal. It is argued below that the hearts of the Assyrians and Babylonians, like our own, were thought to speak and to desire, to sway those who think themselves their masters to their wills, to spur them on to love or to destruction.

[124] For the translation of *patar šipṭi* as "sword of judgment," Taylor, 75.

[125] On the various meanings of *libbu*, see below.

This Chapter is divided into Seven sections. The first six analyze the roles of the agentive heart as it is reflected in sources ranging from love songs to medical texts, and written in Akkadian, Sumerian, and Biblical Hebrew. The seventh reevaluates Müller's proposal, and the role Erra's heart plays in the poem, in light of this analysis.

2. The Many Faces of the Heart

If a future scholar, living thousands of years after the passing of the civilizations of the present, were to write about the role of the heart in 21st-century anglophone cultures, he would be faced with a rather confusing set of sources, bearing the mark of conflicting legacies: that of an ancient conception of the heart as the sovereign of the body, the forge and wellspring of thought and emotion, going back at least as far as Aristotle,[126] and that of the medical advancements of the last few centuries.[127] On the one hand, the scholar would learn from medical texts at his disposal that cognition and judgment were thought to reside in the brain, whereas the heart, though considered vital for life, was understood to pump blood throughout the body rather than anger or desire. On the other hand, he would be confronted with substantial lexical evidence implying a different role for the heart, one having to do with personality and feeling. 21st-century people, he might observe, could be said to be "good-hearted," "broken-hearted," and

[126] On the role of the heart in Greek medical and philosophical thought, van der Eijk 2009, 119–136. For the heart in medieval thought, Webb 2010 and Barclay and Reddan 2019.

[127] For the evolution of the role of the heart in Western medical thought between the 17th and 19th centuries, Alberti 2010.

even have a "heart of gold." Expressions such as "to follow one's heart," and "the heart wants what the heart wants," would even seem to suggest that the heart, rather than only being a mechanical pump, has a mind of its own. How would he reconcile the heart of the cardiologists with that of the poets, that of blood with that of passion? How could he bring together the many faces of the heart?

The scholar of ancient Mesopotamia today is faced with a similar problem. The Akkadian word *libbu*, like its Sumerian equivalent šà,[128] figures in virtually all Mesopotamian textual genres, and can have a dizzying array of possible meanings.[129] These include the expected "heart," but also "stomach," "insides," "womb," "interior," and "desire." The *libbu* can be said to feel virtually all emotions, and to occupy a multitude of states,[130] whose implications can be both physical and mental. It can, for example, become "well" (*ṭâbu*) and "sick" (*marāṣu*), "radiant" (*namāru*) and "dark" (*adāru*), "broken" (*ḫepû*), and "burning" (*ṣarāpu*), "low" (*šapālu*) and "knotted" (*kaṣāru*). This polyphony of evidence presents a considerable challenge. No Assyriologist is expert in all the text types and genres in which the *libbu* appears, and it would therefore be extremely difficult for any single scholar to write a satisfactory account of its

[128] On the role of šà in Sumerian emotional language, Jaques 2023.

[129] For the various meanings of *libbu* with textual examples, CAD L, 164–175.

[130] For emotional images and metaphors involving the *libbu*, Steinert 2016.

general role in Mesopotamian thought. Rather, Assyriologists have been undertaking the analysis of the *libbu* "one heart at a time." Scholars specializing in medical texts have, for instance, written on the medical *libbu* (e.g. Attia 2018 and 2019) and those working on the history of emotions have produced a substantial literature on its emotional functions.[131] In exploring the function of the *libbu* as the agentive heart, we can begin with texts in which it does something which one would not expect from a mere organ: it sleeps and wakes.

3. The Heart that Sleeps and Wakes

"I sleep yet my heart is awake" (אני ישנה ולבי ער), declares the female lover in *Song of Songs* 5:1, before speaking of a visit by her beloved—one that may happen in reality, dream, or fantasy. It is a testimony to the longevity of the Near Eastern language of the heart, the images and metaphors in which it figures, that a nearly identical phrase is found in an Old Babylonian composition, *The Moussaieff Love Song*, composed more than a millennium before the likely date of the creation of the Song of Songs:

pīya anaṣṣar katmā [*ināya*] *libbī ēr ṣallā*[*ku i*]*na* <*bu*>*surrātim*/ *i*[*ḫd*]*û*[132] *libbī*

[131] Among others, Steinert 2016, Steinert 2023, Wende 2023, Bach 2023, Gabbay 2023, and Gabriel 2023. These contributions are not devoted to the emotional role of the *libbu* specifically, but discuss emotions in Akkadian sources more broadly.

[132] Wasserman copies the signs as *i*[*ḫ*]-[*d*]*u-ú*.

> "I guard my mouth, my [eyes] are covered over, my heart is awake,[133] [I] am sleeping, my heart rejoiced [i]n happy tidings."[134]
>
> (LAOS 4 no. 3 obv. 6)

There are three more Akkadian texts in which the metaphor of the wakeful heart can be found. Two of them are not love songs, but medical texts. The first is Tablet XXVI of the so-called *Diagnostic Handbook*,[135] a section of which describes an attack of an.ta.šub.ba,[136] a type of epilepsy:

> [*šumma enūma*] *iṣbatūšu kīma ašbūma īnšu iṣappar šaptāšu ippaṭṭar ruʾtāšu ina pîšu illak qāssu šēpšu talammašu ša šumēli kīma immeri ṭabḫi inappaṣ* an.ta.šub.b[a] *šumma enūma iṣbatūšu libbašu ēr innassaḫ* (ZI-*aḫ*) *šumma enūma iṣbatūšu libbašu lā ēr lā innassaḫ* (ZI-*aḫ*)[137]

---

[133] It may be preferable to supply an implicit "though" in this phrase, as Wasserman does: "My heart is awake (though) I am sleeping." As argued below, the medical contexts in which a heart is said to be awake do suggest the metaphor generally connoted consciousness, which would imply a contradiction between sleep and a wakeful heart.

[134] Without the emendation <*bu*>*surrātim*, made by Wasserman, the text appears to read "my heart rejoiced in lies." This is certainly possible, as romantic and sexual relationships often, if not always, involve some degree of deception. However, as the mood of the song as a whole is one of infatuation rather than disillusionment, this change makes sense, even more so because good tidings are often associated with joy through the phrase *bussurāt ḫadê*, "tidings of joy." (See references collected in the CAD entry for *bussurtu*, CAD B, 346–348).

[135] For an edition, Stol 1993, 56–73.

[136] For a discussion of an.ta.šub.ba, a Sumerian term meaning "A thing fallen from heaven," likely known in Akkadian by the synonymous *miqit šamê*, Stol 1993, 7–9.

[137] *Diagnostic Handbook* Tablet XXVI r. 2–3, edited in Stol 1993, 67.

> [If, when] it (the disease) has seized him,[138] as he is sitting, his eye squints, his lip is "loose," his saliva flows from his mouth, his arm, foot, and *torso* on the left (side) thrash (lit: kick) around like a slaughtered lamb: an.ta.šub.b[a]. When it (the disease) has seized him, his heart is awake, it will be resolved (lit: uprooted). If, when it has seized him, his heart is not awake, it will not be resolved.
>
> (*Diagnostic Handbook* XXVI rev. 2–3)

Martin Stol glosses *libbašu ēr* as "conscious" (1993, 8), and indeed, the image of the wakeful heart seems to connote consciousness, and a sleeping heart, unconsciousness. If the patient is lucid and responsive when the disease is upon him, he will be well; if he is unresponsive, he will not improve. This impression is reinforced by another medical text, which, after describing what are likely also symptoms of an epileptic seizure, states:

> …an.ta.šub.ba *šumma enūma iṣbatūšu libbašu ēr itebbe* (ZI-*be*$^{!}$)[139] *šumma enūma iṣbatūšu ramānšu lā īde lā itebbe* (ZI)
>
> (It is) an.ta.šub.ba. If, when it seizes him, his heart is awake, it (the disease) will depart. If, when it seizes him, he does not know himself, it will not depart.

---

[138] Alternatively: "when they seize him."

[139] This verb is attested in two manuscripts, photos of which do not seem to be available: AO 6679 (TDP II pl. XIX–XX) and K 3687 + 6389 + Sm 951 (TDP II pl. XXI–XXIII). The copy of the former reads ZI-*nu*, and that of the latter ZI-[x]-*ma*. Labat normalizes the verb as *kênu*, and translates the phrase as "sa consciense reste lucide." Based on the parallel given above from the Diagnostic Handbook, which has *innassaḫ* (ZI-*aḫ*), Stol translates "it (the disease) will be eradicated," (Stol 1993, 8), yet he does not offer a way to account for the text of TDP 80 as it stands. The CAD transliterates the verb as ZI-*be*$^{!}$ (CAD E 326), and this emendation is adopted here. However, while the CAD translates the verb as "he (the patient) will recover," the parallel passage from the Diagnostic Handbook suggests the subject of *itebbe* is the disease rather than the patient; *tebû* can be used to describe diseases, including a variant of epilepsy, leaving (lit. rising from) a patient (CAD T, 313), and *itebbe*, when used in this meaning, would serve as a counterpart to *innassaḫ*.

(TDP 80:2–3)

Here *libbašu ēr* is helpfully contrasted with *ramānšu lā īde*, "he does not know himself." This excerpt suggests, likewise, that a heart being awake does not connote wakefulness as such, for which the adjective *ēr* would have sufficed, but rather consciousness and lucidity, a capacity to think and to feel. As Steinert writes of this passage,

> Der Ausdruck „sein Herz ist wach' steht im Kontrast zu „er kennt sich selbst nicht" im zitierten Beispiel und bedeutet, daß der Patient bei sich, ansprechbar und bei Bewußtsein ist; d.h. das Herz als Sitz geistiger Aktivitäten und des Selbst ist angesprochen. (Steinert 2012, 264)

Variations of *ramānu edû* figure in several other sources, occurring in TDP 80:5, twice in Tablet XVII of the Diagnostic Handbook,[140] and in an inscription of Esarhaddon. The latter concerns the renovations of the cult statues, among them that of Marduk, whose statue Esarhaddon's grandfather, Sennacherib, had kidnapped to Assyria. In the inscription, Esarhaddon asks the gods:

> *šipir tēdišti itti amēlūti lā šēmêti lā nāṭilti ša ramānša lā tīdû lā parsat arkat ūmēša*
>
> Does the work of renovation (of cult statues) lie with humanity, that sees not, hears not, and does not know itself, and whose future has not been decided?
>
> (RINAP 4 no. 48 rev. 48)

[140] *Diagnostic Handbook* XXVII 20 and 162. The latter mention, which is also explicitly tied to an.ta.šub.b[a], is in a fragmentary context, in which a patient is said not to know himself after a seizure has passed rather than during it as in TDP 80.

In a curious, though unintentional, inversion of biblical invectives against idols, about whom the psalmist wrote "They have a mouth, but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see; they have ears, but do not hear; they have a nose, but do not smell,"[141] Esarhaddon describes humans as deaf and blind, and says about them that they do not know themselves. Yet though the modern scholar may be tempted to understand the knowledge referred to in *ramānša lā tīdû* as self-knowledge in the contemporary (or Greek) sense, the medical use of *ramāna edû* suggests that Esarhaddon meant something different in this inscription. He may not have implied that humans do not truly know their own psyche and character, but, in the same way in which he claimed, hyperbolically, that they do not see or hear, he might rather have meant that they are not truly conscious or cognizant of reality. Like an unresponsive epileptic, humans do not perceive the world around them, and it is not only the physical senses of humanity that are impaired but their mental one—awareness—as well.

A wakeful heart implying consciousness seems inconsistent with the Moussaieff Love Song and the Song of Songs, in which a lover's heart is said to be awake while she is sleeping. And indeed, such inconsistency exists on the concrete, medical level, and may be explicitly expressed in the Song of Songs—which inserts the conjunction ו, "and" or "but"—between "I sleep" (אני ישנה) and "awake" (ער). However, though the lover is asleep, she is the very opposite

[141] Psalm 115:5–6: פה להם ולא ידברו עיניים להם ולא יראו אוזניים להם ולא ישמעו אף להם ולא יריחון, paralleled by Psalm 135:16-17.

of an insensate epileptic, who may seem to have no thought or feeling at all while in the throes of his illness. For her heart, the part of her that feels and loves, is awake, enjoying happy tidings—perhaps a confirmation of a coming rendezvous with her beloved,[142] like that taking place immediately after the mention of the waking heart in the Song of Songs—and desiring him.

That the heart remains awake in sleep is indicated in another Biblical text considered in later tradition to have been authored by Solomon. That is *Ecclesiastes*, but there the heart's continued wakefulness is judged by the author as being overwhelmingly negative:

ב:כג כי כל ימיו מכאבים וכעס ענינו גם בלילה לא שכב לבו גם זה הבל הוא

2:23 For all his (Man's) days are pain, and vexation is his lot. Even at night his heart does not lie down; that too is senseless.

Man's awareness lingers even in sleep, and so he cannot evade suffering. Even in slumber, he cannot escape himself.

The second attestation of which I'm aware of the motif of the unsleeping heart is found in Tablet III of *Gilgamesh*. It, like the *Song of Songs,* implies a connection between the wakeful heart and desire. After Gilgamesh declares his intention to travel to the cedar forest and

[142] Alternatively, the preterite *i*[*ḫd*]*û* may refer to the lover delighting in the "happy tidings" before she went to sleep, as *anaṣṣar*, which describes the lover's silence during sleep, is in the durative. However, that the lover is said to be asleep, and her heart awake, immediately before the statement that it rejoiced in happy tidings, implies a connection between the heart's wakefulness and its delight, and that the former conditions the latter, for it would be strange to refer to the lover's feelings before her slumber after the description of her state of mind during it.

confront its fearsome guardian, Ḫumbaba, Ninsun, the mother of Gilgamesh, asks the sun god Šamaš:

III 46 *ammēni taškun ana mā*[*rīa gil*]*gāmeš libbi lā ṣālila tēmissu*

III 46 Why did you appoint for my son, [Gil]gamesh, (and) impose upon him a sleepless heart?

Ninsun seems to ask Šamaš why he afflicted Gilgamesh, not with a heart that is not content with what it has, but with a restless spirit,[143] ever-desiring. As a lover's heart yearns for her beloved, Gilgamesh's heart yearns for adventure, and it is the relationship between Gilgamesh and his heart that we turn to next.

4. The Heart of Gilgamesh

Gilgamesh is mighty yet misguided, burdened with a heart that does not sleep. At the beginning of the epic he torments the people of Uruk, his own city, and they cry out to the gods, begging for deliverance. The gods accept their pleas, and resolve to create a foil for Gilgamesh. When Anu commissions the birth goddess Aruru to create Enkidu, he tells her:

I 97 *ana ūm libbīšu lū maḫ*[*ir*][144]
I 98 *lišannanūma uruk lištapš*[*iḫ*]

I 97 "May he be equ[al] to the storm of his (Gilgamesh's) heart,

[143] *libbi lā ṣālila* is translated as "restless spirit" by Foster, George, and Helle. Helle writes of the phrase: "with these words, Ninsun effectively explains why Gilgamesh wants to go: it is because of his restless spirit" (2022, 165).

[144] *maš*[*il*], likewise meaning "equal," is also possible (Ebeling 1932, 227).

I 98 “May they vie with each other, and Uruk be calmed.”

Sophus Helle devotes an essay to the heart of Gilgamesh (2022, 164–180), and mentions it elsewhere in his 2021 book. He proposes that the image of the storm in Gilgamesh’s heart refers to “that powerful and obscure desire that had been raging inside him all his life” (2022, 199); he further observes desire is the “key problem” of the epic, driving Gilgamesh the very ends of the earth (2022, 164). Likewise, Karen Sonik writes:

> Gilgamesh’s superabundance, moreover, is not confined to the physical, despite the pride of place of his physique, strength, and vigor in the opening part of the epic and in many of its major episodes. It is evident also in his immediate and unthinking execution of his impulses and desires… and the vast and terrible torrents of his emotions, which are unchecked, following Enkidu’s death, not only by any internal but also by any external restraint or counsel… It is one of the great tragedies—and perhaps also failings—of Gilgamesh that he, for much of the epic, lacks both a capacity for internal moderation *and* any external moderation capable of countering and matching *ūm libbišu*, “the storm of his heart.” (Sonik, 2020, 391)

Indeed, that Gilgamesh is, in effect, the pawn of his own heart is made clear by the elders of Uruk both in the Old Babylonian and Standard Babylonian versions of the epic. In the Old Babylonian version the elders say, after hearing of Gilgamesh’s plan to go to the Cedar Forest and slay Ḫumbaba:

III 191 *ṣeḫrētīma gilgāmeš libbaka našīka*
III 192 *mimma ša tēteneppušu lā tīde*

III 191 “You are young, Gilgamesh, your heart carries you (away).

III 192 "All that you endeavor,[145] you do not understand."

And in the Standard Babylonian version:

II 289 [*ṣ*]*eḫrētīma gilgāmeš libbaka naškā*
II 290 *u mimma ša tātammû*[146] *ul tīde*

II 289 "You are you[ng], Gilgamesh, you heart carries you,
II 290 "All that you say, you do not understand."

The idiom *libbu našû,* "(for the) *libbu* to carry (someone)," of which *libbaka naškā* is a variation, can have two meanings. One has to do with sexual desire and potency,[147] and the other with will and desire more generally, similarly to *libbu abālu*, "(for the) heart to bring (someone)."[148] Both phrases appear to connote an understanding of desire whereby the heart is active, and its owner

---

[145] Lit: "all that you do again and again," with the sense here being that Gilgamesh doesn't understand the magnitude of the thing he is endeavoring to do, trying to kill Ḫumbaba. A similarly general meaning is implied by Gilgamesh's use of an almost identical grammatical construction earlier in OB *Gilgamesh* III lines 142–143 (found in column iv): *awilūtu manû ūmūša/ mimma ša īteneppušū šārūma*, "Mankind—its days are numbered/all that they (humans) endeavor (lit: do again and again) is (that is to say, amounts to) wind."

[146] The verb is spelled *ta-ta-mu-ú*, which could be construed both as a preterite and as durative without explicitly marked gemination. That a variant, in George's manuscript s, has the Durative [*ta-q*]*ab-bu-ú* argues for the latter option, and verb is here taken, albeit cautiously, to also be a Durative (for a discussion of *Gilgamesh* II 289–290, George 2003, 809).

[147] It may be said of a man that *libbašu sinništu ḫašiḫma sinništa immarma libbašu lā naššīšu* (ÍL-*šu*), "His *libbu* desires a woman, and he sees a woman, and his *libbu* does not carry him" (AMT no. 76 1:6) In a šaziga incantation (AMT no. 65 7), a sexual meaning for *libbašu lā naššīšu* is even clearer: *šumma amēlu ana sinništi iṭḫēma* […] *libbašu lā našī*(ÍL)-[*šu*] "If a man approaches a woman […] his *libbu* does not carry [him]." After a man, made impotent by witchcraft, regains his virility through magical means, it is said that *amēlu šū adi balṭu libbašu naššīšu* (ÍL-*šu*) *kišpi ul iṭeḫḫēšu*, "That man—as long as he lives, his *libbu* will carry him, witchcraft will not approach him." (AMD 8/1, no. 2.5 ll. 15'–16').

[148] For attestations, CAD A I, 21–22.

passive, with the former conducting the latter to a desired object. The heart of Nebuchadnezzar is said to carry him to rebuild the Esagil,[149] and the heart a man can carry him to speak.[150] (add examples for *libbu abālu*). Yet the phrasing of *libbaka našīka* is unusual. In every other attestation of *libbu našû* with the meaning of "to desire" gathered in CAD,[151] the heart is said to carry its owner to a specific goal. Yet the elders do not say that Gilgamesh's heart carries him to do anything in particular, but seem to make a more general statement regarding his character, implying more clearly yet than Ninsun did that Gilgamesh is the pawn of his heart, and that, being young, he is always carried by it, controlled by his desire. That sentiment is complimented in the next line of the Old Babylonian version, in which the elders of Uruk say that Gilgamesh does not understand all that he endeavors to do, not just that he is unaware of the risks posed by the expedition to the Cedar Forest, which sets off a series of events ending in Enkidu's death.

Yet, judging by Utā-napišti's account of the flood in Tablet XI, traveling to the Cedar Forest and killing Ḫumbaba are far from the worst decisions for which hearts are said to be responsible in the epic:

---

[149] *ana epēšu* (sic) *esagil našānni libbī*, "My heart carried me to build Esagil." (RIBo Nebuchadnezzar II no. 2 iii 18).

[150] *šumma amēlu… ana dabābi libbašu lā našīšu* (ÍL-*šu*), "If a man… his heart does not carry him to speak" (*Iraq* 22, 224 obv. 28).

[151] As opposed to instances in which it refers to potency *našīšu* only takes a single object.

XI 14 [*an*]*a šakān abūbi ubla libbašunu ilāni rabûti*

XI 14 "The gods' heart carried them [t]o cause the flood."

This use of *libbu abālu*, like that of *libbu našû* by the elders of Uruk, may be deliberate, and imply that the gods, like Gilgamesh, acted hastily and thoughtlessly, and were guided by their impetuous hearts rather than by reason. As Helle notes, "Thoughtless aggression is not only a problem for bored young men; even the ruler of the gods has the same bent" (2022, 170). As Helle further writes (2022, 169), in X 5 Gilgamesh's own heart is said to have been intent upon driving him once more to foolish and shortsighted action. Gilgamesh tells Ūta-napišti, who has just offered a reflection,[152] unfortunately fragmentary, on Gilgamesh's folly, his duties to the world, and the nature of death:

XI 5 *gummurka libbī ana epēš tuqunti*
XI 6 [...] *aḫī nadât elu ṣērīka*

XI 5 "My heart was set on doing battle against you,
XI 6 "[*But*] in your presence my hand is stayed."[153]

For Gilgamesh to initiate a fight with Ūta-napišti would be foolish and pointless. He let his aggression get the better of him before, to his detriment, when he smashed the "Stone Ones," who could have helped ferry him across the waters of death (X 91–106), yet he appears to have finally learned his lesson—though seemingly without realizing it, as he speaks of his belligerent

[152] *Gilgamesh* X 266–293, 293'–322.

[153] On the interpretation of these lines, George 2003, 878, and commentary on eBL.

heart and stayed hand as though he himself does not control them. This is a rare instance of self-restraint on the part of Gilgamesh, who, for much of the epic, acts heedlessly, unable to take cool counsel within himself nor willing to listen to that offered to him by others. As Sonik describes, the importance of counsel is demonstrated repeatedly in the Standard Babylonian Gilgamesh epic. She writes,

> […] the *Gilgamesh Epic* is concerned with elucidating the consequences of overpowering emotion and impulse as drivers of action—of action entered into *without taking counsel*—without the intervention of *reason*, a term we might define as the ability to think, understand, and form judgement through a process of logic and consideration of various possible solutions and/or outcomes. (Sonik 2020, 394)

And, later in her article:

> The SB *Gilgamesh Epic* is the most accessible of the narratives to survive from Mesopotamia, in part because its protagonist, and many of its other characters, are fallible. They make terrible decisions. They do not take counsel. They feel—and yield to—emotions so towering that they obliterate all hope of caution, reasoned judgement, and sensible action. And the devastating consequences of this yielding are then graphically related. (Sonik 2020, 406)

Gilgamesh does not employ *milku*, "counsel," or "judgment," which can serve as the antidote to hasty and misguided decision-making—or, in the terms of this discussion, to the *libbu* and its desires. Taking counsel within oneself, referred to in Akkadian by the Gt stem verb *mitluku*, is exactly what Enlil did not do when he resolved to unleash the deluge on the world.[154] It is as a

[154] *Gilgamesh* XI 170, 184. This is noted by Sonik (2020, 402–403).

māliku, a counselor, that Enkidu was sent to match the storm in Gilgamesh's heart;[155] and the elders of Uruk, who caution Gilgamesh against embarking on his misguided quest to the Cedar Forest, are called *mālikī rabûte*, "great counselors" (I 287). This may indicate that an opposition is set up in the Gilgamesh epic between *libbu* and *milku*, desire and good sense. This, as is explored below, may also be true of *Erra*.

The conflict between *libbu* and *milku* may take place within the mind of individual characters. Enkidu, though he wisely counsels Gilgamesh to refrain from attacking Ḫumbaba, later speaks senselessly, out of anger and hate. In tablet VII, after learning that the gods have decided that he should soon die, he launches into a tirade of curses at a door made from a cedar he and Gilgamesh felled.[156] While he unleashes his ire at insensate wood, Gilgamesh listens in silence, weeping. After Enkidu stops, Gilgamesh tells him:

VII 69 [*ibrī*……] *šūpû*
VII 70 [*ša u*]*znī ṭēmu rašû šanâtima* [*tadbub*ʾ]
VII 71 [*amm*]*īni ibrī idbub libbaka šanâti* […]

VII 69 "[My friend]…… (who is) outstanding,

---

[155] As Gilgamesh says after learning from his mother of Enkidu's coming arrival, *ibrī māliku anāku lurši*, "A friend to me, a counselor, may I acquire." This is also noted by Sonik (2020, 398).

[156] *Gilgamesh* VII 37–64. VII 38 reads *itti dalt*[*i ī*]*ta*[*m*]â *kī* […], "and he (Enkidu) addressed the door like […]. As George remarks, "the conventional restoration is *kī* [*amēli*], 'like a man'" (George 2003, 844). That Enkidu would be said to speak to an inanimate object though it were human would highlight the senselessness and pointlessness of his invective.

VII 70 "[(you), one who] has [wi]sdom and sense, [speak[?]] *strange things*.[157]
VII 71 "[Wh]y, my friend, did your heart speak *strange* things? […]"

This fragmentary passage, which is reminiscent of the words of the friend to the sufferer in the Babylonian Theodicy, contains a curious statement. Gilgamesh asks his friend, to whom he had been listening as he cursed the cedar door, why his heart spoke strange words. Other texts may help elucidate this statement, for this is not the only time in which the heart is said to speak.

5. The Speaking Heart

The author of a Neo-Assyrian letter relates how a group of Assyrian soldiers were conveying sheep and oxen. Setting out from Der, they traveled one league, yet someone whose name has not been preserved—presumably an Assyrian official or military commander—alerted them to the presence of the enemy, and had them return to the city:

[157] The words of Enkidu, implicitly characterized by Gilgamesh as *šanâti*, are hostile indeed, yet it is uncertain whether the word *šanâti* itself connoted speech that was not merely bizarre, but aggressive. The CAD translates *šanītu*, of which *šanâti* is a plural, as "hostile, inimical word or matter" (CAD Š I 388). Yet while the references it lists suggest that *šanītu* is negative, and that it can be spoken or thought of, they do not necessarily point at an aggressive meaning for the word itself. Parallelisms are especially helpful in determining the meaning of words, and the only one containing *šanâti* which I could find is in line the Standard Babylonian version of the *Cuthean Legend* l. 141, in which *šanâti* is in parallelism with *lā kināti*, "untruths" (for an edition of the standard Babylonian *Cuthean Legend*, Westenholtz 1997, 294–331). In the absence of a more definitive understanding of the meaning of *šanâti*, and in light of the basic meaning of *šanû*, "the become different, strange," (CAD Š I, 403), "*strange* things," is adopted here as a tentative translation.

anāku ṣābāni [*x*] *issu annaka assapra nuk* [*lu*]*šētiqūni kaqquru* 1 *bēru* [*issu*] *dēri ittalkūni issapra* [*u*]*saḫḫiršunu mā nakru* [*ina*] *muḫḫīšunu izaqqup ṣābāni*[158] [*it*]*talkū ūmī* 5 *ina D*[*ēr*]*i* [*kam*]*musū adu libbašu iqbâššūni* [*uss*]*ētiqaššunu*

I, the soldiers [x] from here I sent away, saying "[may] they let (them) pass." They went out one league of ground [from] Der. (Then) he wrote to [tu]rn them back, (saying) that the enemy is rising up against them. The soldiers [c]ame back, and [laid l]ow in D[er], until his heart spoke to him, and he [let] them pass."

(SAA 15 no. 37 obv. 10'–18')

The letter-writer does not say that the unnamed official or commander received new intelligence before letting the soldiers continue their journey. Rather, we learn that they laid low in Der "until his heart spoke to him, and he let them pass." As mentioned above, the word *libbu* can mean "stomach" or "insides" as well as heart, and what seems to be spoken of here is a "gut feeling" that it is safe for the soldier's to walk on.

This letter is not the only source in which the heart is said to speak to its owner. In an Old Babylonian love poem, the female lover says to her beloved,

20 *alkam lunnedram kīma libbī iqbâm*/ *i nīpuš*
21 *šipram ša murtâmi kal mūšim ē niṣlal*

20 Come to me! let us embrace as my heart told me;/let us do
21 The work of lovers all night long, let us not sleep.

(LAOS 4 no. 15)

[158] The scribe appears to have erased the ERIN sign in LÚ.ERIN.MEŠ (K.7325 obv. 15'), though its traces are visible. If the erasure was purposeful, one should likely read LÚ.MEŠ for *amēlē*, "men."

Here the heart speaking seems to denote not intuition, but amorous desire. A similar conception of the heart as the font of desire, or rather caprice, is evident in another OB love poem:

o 17 *marāt pūḫi wal*[*dāti*]
o 18 *ina* [*lā*] *širi*[*ktim*]
o 19 *tīšī lipittam* [*ina*] *pūtim*
o 20 *adi tuqallalī ta*[*ab*]*taššī*
o 21 *luqbīkim ša ašrī*[*ki*]
o 22 *ul tešemmênni atti*
o 23 *warku libbīki*
o 24 *upê rakbātīma*
o 25 *rū'ām tuktanaššadī*

o 17 You were *born the daughter of a substitute*,
o 18 With [no] dow[ery].
o 19 You have a mole [on] (your) forehead!
o 20 So long as you scorn (me) you [sh]ame yourself!
o 21 I will tell you of [your] place!
o 22 (But) [you]—you don't listen to me,
o 23 In your heart's wake,
o 24 You ride the clouds,
o 25 Constantly chasing a companion away.

(LAOS 4 no. 4.)[159]

In his commentary, Wasserman writes that this passage "…describes the woman as disrespectful, following her heart thus bringing her man to shame."[160] Yet the passage contains

[159] The normalizations given here are based on the edition of the text given in the online version of LAOS 4 no. 4, which differ somewhat from those given by Wasserman in print.

[160] LAOS 4, 98.

no evidence that the speaker is married to his addressee, nor that she has brought him shame of any kind. It seems more likely that, rather than concerning an already married couple—a thing not often spoken of in love literature—this passage involves a man pursuing a woman who, rather than settling down with him, rejects him repeatedly. By saying that she rides the clouds, following her heart, he may imply that she is proud and willful. Though he is ready and willing to become her *rū'ūm*, "companion,"[161] she thinks too highly of herself to accept his advances, and keeps chasing him away in scorn. That in this text cloud-riding implies arrogance, as opposed to the obliviousness implied by such phrases in English as "having one's head in the clouds," appears likely in light of other sources. In Mesopotamia, gods such as Adad and Marduk were said to ride the storm.[162] In Ugarit, Baal was known as *rkb ʿrpt*, "rider of clouds."[163] Yahweh was likewise a cloud-rider.[164] "Here is Yahweh, riding upon a swift cloud," declares Isaiah.[165] The

[161] Wasserman translates *rū'ām tuktanaššadī* has "you keep chasing lovers away" (LAOS 4, 97). Yet the word *rū'u* does not normally mean "lover," but "friend" or "companion" (CAD R, 439), and appears alongside *ibru* and *itbāru*—which have much the same meaning (see texts quoted in CAD R, 440).

[162] See texts quoted in CAD R, 86.

[163] For attestations of the epithet, Rahmouni 2008, 288–291.

[164] On the possible link between the epithets *rkb ʿrpt* and רכב בערבות (Psalm 68:5), Herrmann 1999, 703–705.

[165] *Isaiah* 19:1: הנה יהוה רכב על עב קל.

psalmist extolls, "Clouds are his mount, who walks upon the wind."[166] And it is said in Deuteronomy, "There is none like the god of Yeshurun: he rides the sky in thine aid, and the heights in his pride (בגאותו)."[167]

In saying that the woman rides the clouds after her heart, therefore, the speaker may sarcastically imply that she believes herself to be as high and mighty as the gods, and that she comports herself as if she, like them, is great enough to act according to her every whim. It would be consistent with such an interpretation that the speaker belittles the woman, saying that she is the "daughter of a substitute," that she has no dowery, and that she has a mole on her forehead. This may serve to bring her down, not from her high horse, but cloudy chariot. Once she has descended back to earth, and realized what "her place" actually is, she might realize that the speaker is, in point of fact, a fitting match for her. However, she must first stop following her heart, which led her to the clouds in the first place.

In a letter to the king of Mari, speaking of a military campaign, the heart is also said to speak:

> *inanna ina harrānim annītim uzanm aškunma yagâtum u mimma ul ibašši ṣūḫumma mellultum*[*ma*] *kīma ina bītātīšunu wašbū libbašunu ṭāb ša ṣirmimma epēš kakkī u dâk nakrimma libbi wardī belīya idabbub*
>
> Now, I have listened around on this campaign—there is no complaint, or anything (else of that nature). Laughter, dancing! As though they were in their very homes, they are

[166] Psalm 104 3: עבים רכובו המהלך על כנפי רוח.

[167] *Deuteronomy* 33:26: אין כאל ישורון רכב שמים בעזרך וגאותו שחקים.

> content. As for the force, the heart of my lord's servants speaks of doing battle and killing enemies.
>
> (ARM 2 no. 118 obv. 13–22)

The soldiers' heart speaking of battle may denote a desire for battle on their part, or simply them thinking of nothing else. As fantasy follows desire, both may be meant. Very similar language is used in *Gilgamesh*. Before entering the Cedar Forest to confront Humbaba, Gilgamesh says to Enkidu,

V 46 [*lidb*]*ub libbaka tuquntu*
V 47 *mūta mišīma balāṭa* [*ḫissas*$^{?}$] [168]

V 46 "May your heart [spea]k (of) battle,
V 47 "Forget death and [*pay heed to*] life."

That the speaking of the heart refers to thinking is indicated most clearly by the balaĝ *Am-e amaš-ana*, *The Bull in His Fold* (Cohen 1988, 152–174) which concerns Enlil:

b+207 i-bí-zu u_6-di-dé nu-kúš-ù
ināka ina barê ul īnaḫā
b+208 gú-zu ki-ma-al nu-g[i_4-gi_4]
kišadka ina qadada ul uštamraṣ
b+209 šà-zu bal-bal èn-šè ì-kúš-ù
libbaka [*i*]*tmê adi matu tatanna*[*ḫu*]

b+207 Your eyes do not weary from gazing,
b+208 Your neck does not turn back (Akk. ache) from bending,

[168] The eBL tentatively reconstructs the latter half of *Gilgamesh* V 47 as *balāṭa* [*še'i*$^{?}$], "[*seek*] life!" The form *še'i* appears in *Gilgamesh* XI 25 as part of a syntactically identical construction, *muššir mešrâmma še'i napšāti*, "spurn property, seek life!" Yet here one would expect, not the opposite of *muššuru*, "to spurn," but of *mašû*, "to forget," from which the imperative *mišīma* derives. This would likely be *hasāsu*, the Gt imperative of which appears in *Gilgamesh* XI 22, *kikkišu šimēma igāru ḫissas*, "Reed hut, listen, wall, pay heed!" The G imperative, *ḫusus*, is also a possibility.

b+209 How long will keep wearyi[ng] yourself by thinking?

The speaking of the heart figures in another textual genre, in which it is not a soldier's heart that speaks, nor that of a commander, nor that of a passionate lover, nor that of a god. Rather, it is that of a patient, whose body and heart are not well.

6. Folly, Falsehood, Fulmination

Among other symptoms of mental disturbance, medical texts speak of a man's heart speaking *nullâtu*, a word whose exact meaning is discussed below:

I *ḫūṣ ḫīp libbi irtanašši nullât*[*i*] *libbašu ītammu*

(If a man) keeps on experiencing anxiety (lit. pain (?) and/of heartbreak),[169] his heart speaks *nullât*[*u*]…

(AWR no. 7.7 ll. 1–2)

II *itti libbīšu iddanabbub libbašu nullâti ītammu ṭēnšu iltanann*[*īšu*]

(If a man) keeps on talking to himself (lit. to his heart), his heart speaks *nullâtu*, [his] thinking is continually disturbe[d]…"[170]

(AWR no. 8.6 ll. 9–10)

III *ḫuṣṣa ḫîp libbi u nissatu irtanašši nullâti libbašu ītammu*

(If a man) keeps on experiencing anxiety (lit. pain [?], heartbreak, and anguish, his heart speaks *nullâtu*…

---

[169] The term *ḫūṣ*(*ṣa*) *ḫīp libbi* seems to refer to anxiety in both its mental and physical manifestations (Al-Rashid 2011, 175). For a discussion, Al-Rashid 2011, 169–218.

[170] The phrase *tēmu šanû* refers to disturbances in thinking and judgment (as discussed in Al-Rashid 2011, 219–267).

(BAM no. 316 iii 23–24)[171]

It appears from these texts that a man's heart speaking *nullâtu* is a symptom of mental dysfunction, yet what, exactly, is meant by *nullâtu*? The CAD translates *nullâti libbašu ītammu* as "his heart ponders foolish things" (CAD N II, 334). Abusch and Schwemer, similarly, translate the phrase as "his heart ponders foolishness,"[172] as does Al-Rashid.[173] Reviewing other occurrences of *nullâtu* in Akkadian texts may help to ascertain the validity of such translations:

I *šarkūš nullâtum ikappudūšu nērti*

…they lavish *nullâtu* upon him, for him they plot murder.

(*Theodicy* l. 284)

II *ina amāt nērti tušši nullâti*

…by a word of murder, slander, and *nullâtu*…

(IM 97692 l. 249)

III *mūtamū nullâti ākil karṣi*
ša arki miḫiršu ubān lemutti itarraṣ[*u*]

He who utters *nullâtu*, a defamer…
Who maligns his equal…[174]

---

[171] Copy given in Köcher 1964, Pl. 90–94, edition and discussion of obv. iii 8'–iv 4 found in Al-Rashid 2011, 212–216.

[172] As in their translation of AMD 8/1 no. 8.6:10, quoted above (AMD 8/1, 329).

[173] As in the translation of BAM no. 316 iii 24, quoted above (Al-Rashid 2011, 214).

[174] Lit. "extends a finger of evil after his equal."

(*Hymn to Ninurta* ll. 6,8)[175]

IV *mūtamū ṭapiltīya šakin ana rēši*
dābib nullâtīya ilu rēṣūšu

He who blabbered slander against me forged ahead,
He who spoke *nullâtu* at me, a god was his helper.

(*Ludlul* I 94–95)

V *ša ikkibšu nullâti anzillāšu surrāti*

(Sîn-šarra-iškun)…whose taboo is *nullâtu*,

(RINAP 5/2 Sîn-šarra-iškun no. 10:9)

VI *nullâtu lā kīnātu ina māti ibaššâ*

nullâtu, untruths, are found in the land.

(1881,0204.204 obv. 19')

In these texts, *nullâtu* does not seem to refer to words of folly, but ones of hostility and untruth. In English, this combination of malice and falsehood is evoked by words such as "libel" and "slander." That *nullâtu* has such a mixed sense is also reflected in lexical equations in which *nullâtu* is found. While in the lexical cited by the CAD, *nullâtu* is equated with *lā qabîtu*, "things not to be said" (LTBA 2 no. 2 iii 55) as well as [*šillatu*]*m*, "[curs]e" (AN IX 100), the author of the commentary on *Theodicy* l. 284, quoted above, explained it as *lā kittu*, "untruth."[176]

[175] An edition of VAT 10610, a bilingual hymn to Ninurta, can be found in BWL, 119.

[176] Quoted in BWL, 88.

Understanding *nullâtu* as hostile and false speech would also better fit another medical text, which specifies the goddess as the target of the *nullâtu* spoken by the heart:

> *izzir pî nišī ma'dāti šakinšu ana ištari libbašu nullâti itammu…*
>
> Calumny out of the mouths of many people is set against him, against the goddess his heart speaks *nullâtu*…
>
> (STT 356, 11–12)

It would make sense that the heart of a man in grave and continual distress would hurl insults at the gods, much as Job accuses God of unjustly punishing him. Such is also the reaction of the sufferer in the *Theodicy*, according to the friend: *litmumma ṣurraka ila tadayyaṣ*, "Your heart is malcontent, so you blaspheme against the god" (l. 255) The moribund Enkidu, spewing *šanâti*, "strange things," at an insensate door, and then at Šamḫat, who did him so much good, can be seen as the literary equivalent of the disturbed patient, whose heart hurls invective at the goddess. Those whose mind is ill often think things that are false and malicious, and, in their torment, may turn against even those who have aided them most.

The medical symptom of the heart speaking *nullâtu* has an almost exact parallel in the *Coronation Hymn of Ashurbanipal*, in which it is said:

r 11 *ša ana šarri ina libbīšu ikappudu lemuttu*
r 12 *erra ina šibṭi šaggašti uqa"a rēssu*
r 13 *ša ana šarri ina libbīšu ītammû nullâti*
r 14 *išissu meḫû sissiktāšu ḫāmū*

r 11 He who, towards to king, plans evil—
r 12 Erra, by plague (and) slaughter, will call him to account.

r 13 He who, towards the king, in his heart speaks *nullâti*—
r 14 His foundation is air, his hem chaff. [177]

(SAA 3 no. 11)

In this text, a man is said to speak hostile words within his heart, while in the aforementioned medical text it is the heart itself that speaks malice. The change in speaker does not appear to affect a change in meaning: as in the case of the battle-happy soldiers, for one's heart to speak—*libbu dabābu* or *libbu atmû*—appears, in this context, to mean the same thing as the much more common "to speak within the heart," *ina libbi dabābu* or *ina libbi atmû*. Yet, if that is the case, why do the medical texts opt to refer to the heart speaking, and Ashurbanipal's coronation hymn of a man speaking in his heart? This may be due to the differences of focus between these texts. The healer seeks to divide his patients up, delimiting those parts that are sick in order to best treat them. In such a context, it would make sense for the sick man's hateful heart to be spoken of as though it was separate from its owner, similarly to a malfunctioning hand or foot. That the heart would be described in the same way as any other diseased organ in these texts conforms with Steinert's insight that Mesopotamian medicine does not evince a conception of physical and mental illnesses, and indeed, of the physical and mental aspects of the self, as separate:

[177] That the hem of a man's clothing can stand in for his general condition is also implied in an incantation (K.1363 + K.10239 [P393887]), in which it is said, *ilu sissktāšu lidnin* […], "may the god strengthen his hem" (rev. 5). On the *sissiktu*, Finkelstein 1976 and Malul 1986.

> Bei deskriptiven akkadischen Krankheitsbezeichnungen, welche die Form einer Genitiv-Verbindung von Verb/Nomen + Körperteil aufweisen, kann es sich häufig um ein physisches oder psychisches Leiden handeln, z.B. bei Krankheitsbezeichnungen mit *libbu*. Man gewinnt den Eindruck, daß die mesopotamischen Heiler keine so klare Trennung zwischen physischen und psychischen Krankheitssymptomen vornahmen. In den medizinischen Texten warden zwar Symptome nach den betroffenen Körperteilen geordnet, jedoch werden bei der Beschreibung der Krankheitsbilder neben Beobachtungen des Körpers häufig auch auffällige Verhaltensweisen sowie die psychische und geistige Verfassung des Patienten beschrieben, z.B. Stimmungen, Auffälligkeiten beim Sprechen, Erinnerungsvermögen. (Steinert 2012, 239)

In addition, that the heart is said to speak, rather than the patient, may imply that the latter, not being in his right mind, does not bear full responsibility for his words—much as he would not be responsible for physical ailments besetting other organs. This speech emanates from the part of him that is sick, his very heart, and he himself cannot control it. In contrast, the hymn concentrates on punishment incurred by the wicked men who would dare curse the king in his heart. Since it is he who is struck down for his thoughts, it is fitting that he is spoken of as solely responsible for them.

A connection between the speaking of the heart and a person's lack of control over his mind may also be evinced in a text not written in Akkadian. *Proverbs* 23:31–35 vividly warns against drunkenness:

לא אל תרא יין כי תאדם כי יתן בכוס עינו יתהלך במישרים
לב אחריתו כנחש ישך וכצפעני יפרש
לג עיניך יראו זרות ולבך ידבר תהפכות
לד והיית כשכב בלב ים וכשכב בראש חבל
לה הכני בל חליתי הלמוני בל ידעתי מתי אקיץ אוסיף אבקשנו עוד

31 Do not look to wine though it grow red, though it gleam and go down smoothly;[178]
32 Its effect will bite like a snake, and secrete (venom) like a viper.
33 Your eyes will see strange things (זרות) and your heart will speak perverse things (תהפכות),
34 And you will be like one lying down in the midst of the sea, and like one lying down *in the rigging*:[179]
35 "They hit me, I was not hurt; they struck me, I did not know it; when will I recover (lit. wake)? I will persist, and seek it (the wine) again!"

In the Hebrew Bible, human beings, as well as Yahweh, often speak "in" or "to" their heart.[180] But nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible is the heart explicitly said to speak. Following, among others, Fox (2009, 741), the heart's speaking of perversities (תהפכת) can be understood to refer to a drunkard's distorted thinking, and the eyes' seeing of "strange things" (זרות, equivalent to Akk. *zerâtu*) to likewise refer to the drunkard's warped inner experience—that is, to hallucinations.

Yet such an understanding does not well match the effects of wine, for it is no hallucinogen, and does not typically make one see anything out of the ordinary. It does, however, make the eye wander. Here it is relevant that זרות is a feminine plural noun, and can therefore mean not only "strange things" but "strange women." In fact, this is the apparent meaning of the word זרות

[178] This understanding of this verse follows Fox (2009, 741).

[179] Concerning חבל, Fox writes (2009, 741–742), "The primary meaning of this word is uncertain. As a derivative of *ḥebel* 'rope,' it probably means 'rigging.'"

[180] Examples of speaking "to" one's heart include *Genesis* 8:21 and *1 Samuel* 27:1. Those of "in" include *Genesis* 17:17 and *1 Kings 12:26*.

in its only other appearance in *Proverbs*, namely *Proverbs* 22:14, שוחה עמוקה פי זרות זעום יהוה יפול שם, "A deep pit is the mouth of strange women (זרות), he raged at by Yahweh will fall there!" In light of this, it is more likely that the phrase עיניך יראו זרות refers not to the drunk saying strange things but to him looking at women he should not be looking at. Rashi, for instance, understands the verse in such terms, explaining the phrase as meaning "When you will be drunk the wine will burn within you, and drive you (**ישיאך**, lit. carry you) to look at prostitutes."[181]

Likewise, the problems caused by intoxication do not typically have to do with the particular nature of a drunkard's thoughts, but the fact that he cannot keep himself from voicing them. A second and seemingly more likely interpretation is, therefore, that the speaking of the heart here refers to uncontrollable, filter-free, and all-too-audible speech. Such an understanding likewise has ancient precedent, for the Septuagint, making it clear to the reader that *Proverbs* 23:33 refers to the drunkard's conduct rather than his internal reality, translates it as, οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου ὅταν ἴδωσιν ἀλλοτρίαν τὸ στόμα σου τότε λαλήσει σκολιά, "When your eyes see a stranger (fem.), your mouth will then speak crooked things." (translation adapted from Fox 2015, 319). If the heart's speaking in this verse refers to audible speech, then *Proverbs* 23:33 would

[181] כשתשתכר היין יבער בקרבך וישיאך להביט בזונות.

match up well with Müller's idea, for it would be a case of the heart speaking aloud through its owner—though out of drunkenness rather than murderous rage.

There is one other verse in the Hebrew Bible in which the heart may be said to speak, though its phrasing is more ambiguous on this point than *Proverbs* 23:33, and the heart's possible speech within it does not seem to imply any loss of control on the part of the heart's owner. That is the opening verse of *Ecclesiastes* 5:

ה:א אַל תְּבַהֵל עַל פִּיךָ וְלִבְּךָ אַל יְמַהֵר לְהוֹצִיא דָבָר לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם וְאַתָּה עַל הָאָרֶץ עַל כֵּן יִהְיוּ דְבָרֶיךָ מְעַטִּים

5:1 Do not hasten with your mouth,[182] and may your heart not rush, to bring forth a word before God. For God is in the heavens, and you are on the earth, and therefore your words should be few.

The heart "bringing forth a word before god" can be taken to refer either to thinking or to audible speech motivated by the heart. The latter interpretation is certainly possible; what one should not hasten with one's mouth, and what the heart should not hasten to bring forth, would then both be normal speech. However, in contrast to *Proverbs* 23:33, the alternative interpretation appears more likely, if only because an elegant parallelism would result: the author would first admonish that the mouth should not hasten to utter audible speech before God, and then that

[182] As Seow (1997, 194) writes, "The parallelism of *bhl* with *mhr* suggests that the former does not mean 'be dismayed,' as in earlier Hebrew, but 'be in haste,' as in Late Biblical Hebrew."

the heart should act similarly regarding its own internal and inaudible speech, namely thinking (which God, in his omniscience, is equally aware of).

Returning to the Mesopotamian material, It should be asked whether we should understand the speaking hearts of the commander and lover in the same way—that is, as simply signifying thinking. These two cases are different in that the heart is specifically said to speak to its owner, rather than simply to speak. Such a dialogue between heart and owner seems to imply, not thinking generally, but something more specific. Some mental phenomena—gut feelings, desires—seem to arise outside of a person's control, and thus involve a distinction between that part of the self which is aware, and that which creates thoughts and feeling. In such situations, one may well speak of the heart as speaking to its owner, as the heart of Erra would do according to Müller's proposal. Yet the Mesopotamian heart could do more than speak. Long before the composition of *Erra*, the hearts of deities could be said to act as well as to converse, and to affect the outside world directly.

7. Your Heart, Like the Ocean Rising

The heart of a god is a dangerous thing. In Gudea's *Cylinder A*,[183] the ensi addresses his lord, Ningirsu, thus:

viii 23 šà ab-gim zi-zi-zu
viii 24 iz-zi$_8$-gim g̃á-g̃á-zu

[183] For an edition, RIME 3/1, 68–88.

viii 25 a-è-a-gim gú-nun-di-zu
viii 26 a-ma-ru$_{12}$-gim ú-uru$_{18}$ gul-gul-zu
viii 27 u$_4$-gim ki-bal-še du-du-zu
ix 1 lugal-g̃u šà-zu a-è-a ú-nu-lá-zu
ix 2 ur-sag̃ šà-zu an-gim sù-ra-zu
ix 3 dumu ^{d}en-líl-lá en ^{d}nin-g̃ir-su
ix 4 g̃e$_{26}$ a-na mu-ù-da-zu

viii 23 Your heart, like the ocean rising,
viii 24 Like a wave advancing,
viii 25 Like surging water roaring,
viii 26 Destroying cities(?)like a flood,
viii 27 Advancing against the rebellious land like a storm,
ix 1 My king, your heart—water surging—that cannot be checked,
ix 2 O hero, your heart as distant as the heavens:
ix 3 The son of Enlil, lord Ningirsu,
ix 4 What can I know about you?

The syntax of viii 26, a-ma-ru$_{12}$-gim ú-uru$_{18}$ gul-gul-zu, indicates that it is not Ningirsu himself, but rather his heart, that is said to destroy ú-uru$_{18}$. What ú-uru$_{18}$ refers to, however, is unclear.[184]

[184] A place named uru$_{18}^{ki}$ appears in the inscriptions of Eannatum (among others, RIME 1 E1.9.3.5 iii 17 and vi 18) and one called uru$_{18}$-a^{ki} is found in an inscription of Enmetena (E.1.9.6.28). Frayne, based on previous scholarship, argues that uru$_{18}^{ki}$ and uru$_{18}$-a^{ki} are the same city, one whose name was probably pronounced "Arawa" and that was likely located in the western reaches of Elam (RIME 1, 233). The name uru$_{18}$ appears in a Sargonic administrative text (ITT 5 no. 9289 rev. ii' 2'). The sign uru$_{18}$ appears in a building inscription of Ibbi-Sîn: uru$_{18}$ temen-bi/ ki in-ma-ni-pa$_3$ (RIME 3/2 E3/2.1.5.1:18–19). Klein translates these two lines as "He found place in its (the wall's) footings for foundation deposits" (Klein 2010, 178). In his own translation, Falkenstein has "in$^{?}$ das Fundament legte er die Gründungsurkunde" (Falkenstein 1966, 235 n. 3). The sign appears in l. 540 the monolingual *Proto Ea* (MSL 14, 53, l. 540]), which does not yield a clear meaning for it. It is also found in *Ea* VI (MSL 14, 432 Sec. C 6', 7', 11'$^{?}$), yet its Akkadian translations are missing. One of them is reconstructed as *abūbu,* "flood," by the CAD (A I, 77) and ePSD2, yet while such a meaning would suit a sign made up of water (A) inside a city (URU), it remains unproven (MSL 14 appears to share this uncertainty, as it reconstructs *a-bu-bu*[?] in p. 432 Sec. C 7'). Moreover, even if the reconstruction *abūbu* is correct, it is uncertain whether this value was also in use in earlier periods. Yet, if such a meaning was current in Gudea's time, it would have made it all the more apt that the thing destroyed by Ningirsu's flood-like heart contains a sign which could likewise

It is possible that uru$_{18}$ is meant to stand in for a differently numbered variant of URU (such as uru, "city,"). This is cautiously argued by Attinger, who writes, "Sur la base du contexte, Ú.URUxA est le plus souvent considéré comme une graphie de uru-uru «villes»"(2021, 277–278). A meaning of "cities" or "settlements" for ú-uru$_{18}$ would work well in parallelism with ki-bal, "the rebellious land," and Attinger's idea is therefore tentatively followed here. Yet whatever the exact meaning of ú-uru$_{18}$, it is likely no coincidence that Ningirsu's heart is said to destroy like a flood while the object of his destruction includes a sign which, on the graphic level, is a city (URU) filled with water (A).

Fortunately, our understanding of the next line, whereby Ningirsu's heart is said to advance (literally "go") against the rebel land like a storm, is more secure. The connection between the divine heart and the tempest was long-lived indeed in Mesopotamia: SBH 14,[185] a balaĝ copied in the 164th year of the Seleucid Era (148/7 BCE), states,

o 40 u$_4$-dè šà íb-ba an-gu-la-ri
o 41 *ūmu nugga<t> libbi ša anim rab*[*û*]
o 42 u$_4$ šà ab-ḫul ma-al-la ^{d}mu-líl-lá-re
o 43 *ūmu libbi anim ša lemniš ibbaššû*

o 40/41 The storm is the anger of the heart of grea[t] Anu,

---

mean "flood." For a discussion of uru$_{18,}$ as well as the divine name ^{d}Dumuzi-uru$_{18}$, Sallaberger 1993, 239–240.

[185] For an edition of the balaĝ (am-e bara$_2$ an-na-ra, "for the sitting bull on his dais") with commentary, Cohen 1988, 319–339. In Cohen's edition, these lines are marked a+30–a+31.

o 42/43 The storm is the heart of Anu (Sum: Enlil) that has become ill-disposed (lit. becomes evilly).

Later in *Cylinder A*, Gudea's own heart is said to act:

x 19 é ḫuš ki-ḫuš-ĝu$_{10}$
x 20 muš-huš-gim ki-šúr-ra bí-dù
x 21 ki-bal-ĝa nu-mi-íb-du$_{11}$-ga
x 22 u$_4$ šà-ĝu$_{10}$ um-ši-mi-rí-a
x 23 muš zé guru$_5$-a-gim uš ma-a-ù-ku-e

x 21 A fearsome house, my fearsome abode,
x 22 Like a serpent in a daunting place, I built.
x 23 A land rebelling against me, *unspeakable*,
x 24 When my heart rages against it,
x 25 Like a serpent spitting gall, it produces venom for me.

Gudea's heart, too, is described as an independent agent, producing venom for its owner in its wrath. A conception of the heart as autonomous may also be evinced in a text even older than Gudea's time. In "Lady of the Widest Heart," (*Innin šà gur$_4$-ra*),[186] a hymn to the goddess Inanna attributed to the Akkadian priestess Enheduanna, it is said, though in a fragmentary context,

58 šà gur$_4$-ra-ni dím-dím-a-ni ab-ak…

Scholars have understood this line in two ways. The ETCSL translates, "her great heart performs her bidding," while Foster has "Her haughty heart bids her act as she does" (2016, 338) and Helle, similarly, has "Her vast heart bids her do as she does" (Helle 2022, 28–29). These two ways of understanding the line have in common that they take dím to refer to the Sumerian equivalent of Akkadian *ṭēmu*, rather than one of the other meanings of dím, such as "to create." Yet they

[186] For an edition, Sjöberg 1975 and ETCSL c.4.07.3.

diverge on whether, in this context, dím… ak, "to do… dím," a phrase otherwise unattested in Sumerian sources, means to perform someone's bidding, or to give someone direction. For clues, one may turn to the attestations of the semantically equivalent Akkadian idiom *ṭēma epēšu*—three in OB texts, and one in a MB letter from Hattuša. Yet not only are these attestations centuries later than the likely date of composition of *Innin šà gur₄-ra*, but they point in different directions, implying at least four different meanings for *ṭēma epēšu*—"to make a plan of action," "to make a decision," "to carry out a decision," and "to make common cause."[187]

[187] In one OB economic text from Sippar-Yahrurum, *ṭēmam epēšu* seems to refer to resolving upon a course of action: *erib-sîn u nūr-šamaš tappûtam īpušūma ana bīt šamaš īrubūma ṭēmšunu īpušūma kaspam babtam amtam u wardam ša ḫarrānim u libbi ālim mitḫāriš izūzūma*, "Erib-Sin and Nur-Šamaš established a partnership, entered the temple of Šamaš, and made a plan of action: the silver, the commercial good, the female slave and the male slave of the 'road' and the city-center, they divided equally"(CT 2 pl. 28 obv. 1–8). The author of a letter to Yasmaḫ-Addu writes, regarding a military campaign he is engaged in, *inanna* […] *ṭēm awīlī tukkī* […] *innepe*[*š*] *u ṭēm ḫarrān mātim elītim inneppe*[*š*], "Now… the *ṭēmu* of the men of *the warning cry* is being don[e], and the *ṭēmu* of the campaign to the upper country is being don[e]" (ARM I no. 53 rev. 4'–7'). Here one can understand *ṭēmu nēpušu*, the N stem variant of *ṭēma epēšu*, as "for a decision to be made," (as in CAD E 223), or as "for a decision to be carried out," with the latter seeming more likely. By extension, this would add two more possible meanings for *ṭēma epēšu*, "to make a decision," and "to carry out a decision." An Old Babylonian letter from Susa states, *meḫir ṭuppīni šūbilamma ṭēm ekallīni i nīpušamma i nittalkam*, "Send us a copy of our tablet, so we may do the *ṭēmu* of our palace and leave." (MDP 18 no. 237:20). The CAD understands *ṭēma epēšu* here as "to make a report," (CAD E, 223), but one can also interpret the idiom in this context as to "do the bidding of," that is "to carry out the decision," of the palace. The last attestation of the idiom of which I am aware is found in a letter, found in Hattuša, written by Ramses II to the king of Mira (Kbo 1 no. 24). In it, the Egyptian king speaks of the *ṭēma ṭāba ša šar māt miṣri u šar māt ḫatti īpušū*, "the good *ṭēmu* that the king of Egypt and the king of Hatti have done" (l. 10). The CAD takes *ṭēma epēšu* in this to refer to establishing diplomatic relations (CAD E, 223), and Wouters to forming an alliance (1989, 228). The use of *ṭēma epēšu* in this letter appears to be a different use of the phrase than that attested in OB texts, perhaps denoting something akin to "making (common) cause," with *ṭēmu* being used in its sense of "intent" rather than "decision."

Returning to Sumerian comparanda, it can be noted that the understanding of the ETCSL, whereby Inanna's heart carries out her (presumably violent) designs would yield a sense similar to that of the two passages from *Cylinder A* quoted above, in which hearts are said to act destructively. Yet there would also be a major difference, for the hearts of Ningirsu and Gudea are not said to act in obedience to their owners, but seemingly of their own accord. That it is difficult to imagine Inanna's own heart taking orders, even from Inanna herself, argues in favor of the interpretations of Foster and Helle. The point of l. 58 may then be that Inanna is controlled by her wild and rage-prone heart, much like Gilgamesh is said to be "carried" by his. Yet in the absence of parallels to this line in Sumerian texts, and considering its fragmentary state of preservation, one cannot be too confident in interpreting it.

The power of a god's wrathful heart is also illustrated in a much later text, the Standard Babylonian version of the *Cuthean Legend*.[188] In it, Ištar, in her astral form, says to Naram-Sin of the horde that decimated his kingdom, and forced him to shut himself up behind his walls,

130 *ezib zēr ḫalqātî lā tuḫallaq*
131 *ana arkât ūmē enlil ana lemutti inaššâ rēssun*
132 *ana aggi libbi enlil uqa'ûû rēšu*

130 "Desist! do not destroy the roving breed![189]

[188] An edition of the Standard Babylonian version of the *Cuthean Legend* is found on eBL. For editions of the OB, MB, and SB versions of the composition, with philological notes, Westenholz 1997, 263–330.

[189] It is possible that *zēr ḫalqātî* should be translated not as "roving breed" but rather as "brood of destruction." For discussion of the phrase, Westenholz 1997, 322–323 No. 130 and Adali 2009, 124–128.

131 "In future days, Enlil will call them to account for the evil (they have done),
132 "They will be accountable to Enlil's angry heart."

This passage is ambiguous, for it can be taken to refer both to Enlil summoning the horde to call them to account for their crimes, or to him calling them up to dispatch them to do evil to others.[190] As the destruction of the "city" (*ālu*) of "those troops" (*ṣābi šunūti*) is most likely spoken of in the following lines (133–135), the former interpretation seems more likely. A further ambiguity lies in the exact meaning of *rēšu quʾu*. As the idiom can mean "to call someone to account" (CAD Q, 331), the line *ana aggi libbi enlil uqaʾû rēšu* is here taken to mean that the horde will be accountable to, that is, at the mercy of, Enlil's heart. The destructive powers of the divine heart are also spoken of in an *eršaḫunga*-prayer edited by Maul, in which the worshipper says,

16' dìm-me-er-mu šà-me-er-ra-zu ma[ʔ]-ra[ʔ] mu-un-g[i]g-ga
17' *ilī libbaka ezzu yâti ušamriṣanni*
18' ama-[d]Innin-m[u šà-íb-zu ma[ʔ]-ra[ʔ]] mu-un-tur-tur-e-dè
19' *ištarī* [*libbaki aggu*][191] *yâti ūnīšanni*

16'/17' My god, your furious heart has made me sick,
18'/19' My goddess, [your angry heart] has weakened me.

---

[190] The ambiguity arises from the fact that both *rēšu našû* and *rēšu quʾu* imply proximity between a subordinate and his superior, and that such proximity can have wildly divergent consequences for the subordinate. According to the CAD, *rēšu našû* can mean both "to summon a delinquent" and "to pay attention, to honor, to exalt" (N II, 107–108) Similarly, *rēšu quʾu* is translated by the CAD as "to take care of, to be available, in readiness" as well as "to call to account" (Q, 331).

[191] This restoration, both in the Sumerian and Akkadian, can be made based on Maul 1988 no. 1 obv. 14–15, in which šà-m[e]r-ra-zu/*libbaka ezzu*, is paralleled in the following line by šà-íb-ba-zu/*libbaka aggu*.

(Maul 1988 no. 43)

This worshipper, too, is made to suffer by the divine heart. In another *eršaḫunga*, the separation between god and heart, and the responsibility of the latter for the worshipper's suffering, is evident:

25 ⌜me⌝-na ⌜me-na-še⌝ a-bi dug_4-a-ab
26 *mati adi mati aḫulapšu qibi*
27 ⌜mu⌝-LU íb-⌜ba⌝-zu èn tar-bi umun šà-zu ⌜èn⌝ tar-bi
28 *ša tāgugu šitâl bēlu li*[*b*]*baka šitâl*
29 ⌜kur⌝ gal ⌜a-a⌝ ^{d}mu-ul-lìl èn tar-bi umun ⌜šà-zu èn tar-bi⌝

25/26 When, until when? Speak his deliverance!
27/28 You who have raged,[192] ask![193] My lord, ask your he[a]rt

---

[192] Based on the syntax of the passage, one would expect ⌜mu⌝-LU íb-⌜ba⌝-zu/*ša tāgugu* to be equivalent to umun/*bēlu*, as well as to ⌜kur⌝ gal ⌜a-a⌝ ^{d}mu-ul-lìl. If ⌜mu⌝-LU íb-⌜ba⌝-zu/*ša tāgugu* indeed refers to the "lord," the "great mountain, father Enlil," to whom the worshipper is speaking, "you who have raged" would appear to be a suitable translation. Maul's translation, "Der du zürnest," (1988, 110) would fit with this interpretation. However, the use of *ša tāgugu* in Maul 1988 no. 19b obv. 8', *bēlu ana ardīka ša tāgugu šuqâ* [*rēšīka*$^{?}$], casts doubt upon this reading, for there *ša tāgugu* seems to refer to the worshipper, not the god. It is tempting to translate the line as "Lord, to the servant, at whom you are angry, raise [*your head*]." Indeed, Maul himself understands *ardīka ša tāgugu* in this line as "zu deinem Diener, dem du zürnest" (1988, 153), though he does not explain why he translates *ša tāgugu* differently in No. 43. The same problem is posed by Maul no. 74 obv. 23', [x]*ana ardīki ša tāgugī silmī ittīšu*, likewise translated by Maul as "Mit deinem Diener, dem du zürnest, mit ihm versöhne sich!" (1988, 253). However, one can try to harmonize the three lines while still having *ša tāgugu* in no. 43 refer to Enlil. To do so, one can translate Maul 1988 no. 19b obv. 8' as though it contains a caesura, producing "My lord, to your servant—you who have raged, raise (*your head*)!" Likewise, one can translate Maul no. 74 obv. 26' as "[…]with your servant—you who are angry, make peace!" One can object that such solutions yield inelegant syntax, and another possibility is that *ša tāgugu* is used to refer to Enlil in one attestation, and to the worshipper in two others.

[193] Maul transliterates èn-tar-bi rather than èn tar-bi, and writes in his commentary "èn-tar-bi wurde in der akkadischen Zeile mit einem Imperativ wiedergegeben, obwohl èn-tar-bi als 'pronominale Konjugation'… zu deuten ist" (Maul 1988, 111). However, one can understand èn tar-bi as the imperative form of èn bi-tar, yielding a sense closer to the Akkadian (ePSD 2 likewise transliterates èn tar-bi rather

29 Great mountain, Father Enlil, ask! My lord, ask your he[a]rt!

(Maul 1988 no. 8)

The act of interrogating oneself or others, referred to by the Gt verb *šitûlu*, is associated with calming down in other Akkadian texts, most famously in the opening lines of *Ludlul*:

I 1 *ludlul bēl nēmeqi ilū muštâlu*
I 2 *eziz mūši muppašir urri*

I 1 I will praise the lord of wisdom, the self-questioning god,
I 2 Wrathful at night, relenting at morn.

Questioning one's thoughts and emotions is key to wisdom, and self-reflection often leads to anger's dissipation. If the god should interrogate his heart about its anger, it, like Marduk, may relent. Yet sometimes one's heart makes it hard to give up one's anger, as happens later in *Ludlul*:

I 55 *šarru šīr ilāni šamšu ša nišīšu*
I 56 *libbuš ikkaṣirma paṭāru ušlemmin*

I 55 The king, flesh of the gods, sun of his people—
I 56 His heart became wrathful (lit. knotted) and made relenting (lit. loosening) *unattainable*,[194]

What are we to make of such passages, in which the heart is said to influence its owner, or even the outside world? It seems unlikely that the divine heart would be said to cause destruction

than èn-tar-bi, and translates it as an imperative). However, that in the lexical tradition èn-tar is equated with *šâlu*, not *šitûlu* (see lexical section of *šâlu*, CAD Š I, 274), indicates that the Akkadian version of the line would still be subtly different from the Sumerian one.

[194] As far as I am aware, *ušlemmin* in this line the only attestation of the ŠD of *lemēnu*. Translating it is therefore difficult.

independently, as though it can separate itself entirely from its owner. Rather, as in the excerpt from the *Cuthean Legend* given above, it is the god himself who does the deed. There is an enormous number of texts in which a god's heart is said to be angry, and in which the god himself is then said to destroy. In contrast, texts in which the heart destroys rather than the god seem to be rare indeed, and I could not find any examples other than those given in this section. It may be that the difference between these two sets of sources is merely semantic. However, it is also possible that while both describe the selfsame thing—the god destroying in his wrath—the latter set make explicit what the former illustrate: that gods, like men, are controlled by their hearts, and are the puppets of their wrathful mind. In our own day, the same automobile accident can be described as one car hitting another and also as a driver ramming another vehicle. In the same way, one can speak of the god destroying, or rather ascribe the destruction to the heart that drives him.

8. Erra's Heart Once More

Can the texts cited in this chapter help evaluate the merits of Müller's proposal—referred to in this section as SH ("Speaking Heart") for the sake of brevity—in the face of Taylor's criticism? As mentioned above, that Erra's *libbu* would speak of itself in the third person alongside his *kabtatu* does not rule out SH, for Erra speaks of himself in exactly such a way in V 57-58. Taylor's other three arguments bear restating. The first runs, "It is unclear why Erra and his heart would

be at odds, or what has led his heart to prompt him to undertake a campaign where he himself is enervated" (2017, 32). Yet one need not accept Müller's idea to think that Erra is, in fact, at odds with his heart, for the text is clear in stating that Erra's heart desires (or perhaps "asks") of him the doing of battle (I 15: *irrissūma libbašu epēš tāḫāzi*), but that Erra's arms—here symbolizing his physical strength—are too tired to make war. This internal division in Erra would parallel that of Gilgamesh, whose heart resolved to make war upon Utā-napišti but finds his arm stayed in his presence.[195] On a more general note, It is entirely conceivable for the heart to want things that the rest of the body is too weak to accomplish.

In her third argument, Taylor notes, "The Akkadian term *libbu* is semantically diffuse enough to encompass the meanings 'womb' and 'inclination'; characters certainly address their 'hearts,' but they can also speak *in* their hearts, where 'heart' must simply correspond roughly to a reflexive pronoun. I am aware of no passage in Akkadian in which an individual is addressed by his or her heart, let alone in which an individual's heart addresses others… separately from the individual—nor is it clear to me how this would be understood to take place logistically" (2017, 32). That hearts could address their owners in Akkadian texts is shown by the speaking of the commander's heart (*adu libbašu iqbâššūni*), and that of the desiring lover (*alkam lunnedram kīma libbī iqbâm*). However, there is no source I could find in which the heart is explicitly said

[195] *Gilgamesh* XI 5-6, discussed above.

to address people other than its owner. After listening to Enkidu's tirade, Gilgamesh asks him why his heart speaks strange things, yet Gilgamesh is likely referring to the bizarre thoughts motivating Enkidu's words rather than implying that Enkidu's heart spoke aloud. Likewise, the practitioner using the medical texts quoted above could only have known about the patient's hostile thoughts through his speech, yet it is likely the patient's thoughts, not his words, that are described as having been spoken by his heart (that the treasonous subject in *Ashurbanipal's Coronation Hymn* is said to speak invective against the king *in* his heart—which, one presumes, he does silently—strengthens this impression). The only text cited above in which the speaking of the heart does seem more likely to refer to audible speech is the Biblical *Proverbs* 23:33.

In other words, in Mesopotamian sources there seems to be no smoking gun, no clear parallel to Erra's heart addressing, not its owner, but Erra's weapons, the Seven, and Išum. This argues against SH. However, in texts as diverse as Gudea's *Cylinder A*, a first-millennium *eršaḫunga*, and the Standard Babylonian *Cuthean Legend*, the heart is said, or implied, to affect the outside world in ways much more dramatic than speaking, for Ningirsu's heart batters enemy lands, the god's wrathful heart makes the patient sick, and the monstrous horde will be accountable to Enlil's angry heart. If the heart could do such things, then it does not seem strange for it to speak to others. Yet, as Taylor asks, how would this take place logistically? One could say that, in the same way that it is not the divine heart itself that destroys, but it is rather the god who does violence while under the sway of his heart, the speech of Erra's heart could

refer to words Erra himself speaks out of emotion—in this case, his desire for battle. Therefore, at present it can be said that while SH does not have direct parallels, it appears that in Akkadian texts the heart could be conceptualized as an independent agent, capable of communicating with its owner and affecting the outside world. If it is possible that readers of *Erra*—or, more importantly, the poet himself—had such a conception of the *libbu*, then for Erra's heart to speak does not seem outside the realm of possibility, and SH should not, therefore, be rejected. Though by no means proven, it remains a possible solution to the enigma of *Erra* I 6-14.

Taylor's solution to the problem of the prologue would involve Erra speaking to himself in the second person, which would have no known parallel. Likewise, Müller's solution postulates that Erra's heart speaks to figures in the outside world, something for which there is no known Mesopotamian parallel. There is, however, a solution that would involve neither difficulty, one dividing speech of the prologue in the following way:

I 6 His (Erra's) heart asks him to do battle,
I 7 He (Erra) says to his weapons, "Smear yourself with deadly venom!"
I 8 To the Seven, warrior(s) unrivaled: "Gird on your weapons!"
I 9 He (Erra) says to you (Išum), "May I (Erra) go out to the field!
I 10 "You are the torch, and they will see your light!
I 11 "You are the vanguard, the gods [...],
I 12 "You are the sword and the slaughterer [...]"

Erra's heart speaks to Erra:

I 13 "Erra, arise! when you lay the land low,
I 14 "Will your mind not be radiant, and joyful your heart!"

Narrator's speech resumes:

I 15 Erra's limbs are weary, like those of a man lacking sleep,
I 16 He says to his heart, "Shall I rise, shall I sleep?"
I 17 He tells his weapons, "Stand in the corners!"
I 18 To the seven, warrior(s) unrivaled, "Return to your abode!"
I 19 Until you (Išum) bid him (Erra) rise, he will be lying in his chamber,
I 20 Delighting with Mami, his consort;
I 21 O Engidudu, the lord who goes about at night, the prince's constant guide,
I 22 Who ever guides the youth and maiden safely, shining like the day!

In this way, it would be Erra who orders his entourage to battle, but Erra's heart that speaks to Erra, urging him to war. Yet this solution would involve an unmarked change of speaker between I 12 and I 13—from Erra to his heart—and is therefore problematic.

9. Snatching a Carcass from a Lion's Mouth

The relationship between Erra and his heart is spoken of in other places in the epic. After he finally clams down, Erra holds court in his temple, Emeslam, and delivers a speech to the other gods, who are arrayed reverently before him:

V 6 *mindēma anāku ina ḫīṭi maḫrî aḫsusa lemutt*[*i*]
V 7 *libbī agugma nišī asappan*
V 9 *kī agir ṣēni immer pāni ušellâ ina pitqi*
V 10 *kī lā zāqip ṣippati ana nakāsi ul umāq*
V 11 *kī šālil māti kīna u raggi ul umassâ ušamqat*
V 11 *ina pī labbi nā'iri ul ikkimū šalamtu*
V 12 *u ašar ištēn ra'bu šanû ul imalli*[*kšu*]

V 6 "No doubt, I myself intended evi[l] in a past transgression.
V 7 "(When) my heart is wroth, I lay waste to the people,
V 8 "Like a hireling shepherd, I remove the bellwether from the sheepfold,
V 9 "Like one who does not plant an orchard, I am quick to cut down,
V 10 "Like one who plunders a land, I do not distinguish righteous from wicked, but fell (both).

V 11 “One cannot snatch a carcass from the mouth of a raging lion,
V 12 “And where one is wrathful, another cannot couns[el] him.”[196]

George writes, “The gist of this passage is that it is the very nature of Erra, who nurtures nothing, to destroy without thought, and his excuse is that when he is angry no one can control him” (2013, 59). This passage could also be read more positively, as evincing, on Erra’s part, self-knowledge of a kind he displays nowhere else in the epic. After conceding that he intended evil in the past (V 6), Erra articulates a key insight into his own nature, which is introduced in V 7. In their translations of this line, some scholars construed *agugma* as a 1st person Preterite referring to Erra himself: Foster (2005) translates, “I was angry and wanted to lay waste to the people;” George (2013), “I was in a rage to lay low the people;” Taylor (2017), “I became angry enough in my heart to crush the people;” Bottéro and Kramer (1989), “Pour m’être irrité en mon coeur, j’ai abbatu des populations!” However, it is more likely that *agugma* is a 3rd person masculine Stative whose subject is *libbī*, “my heart,” with *libbī agugma* then meaning “(when) My heart is wroth.” Understood in this way, V 7 would syntactically parallel the repeating line *erra agugma ul iqâl ana mamma*(*n*), “Erra is angry and heeds no one,”[197] and would not concern only Erra’s past transgressions, but his character in general: Erra says of himself that whenever his heart is wroth he lays waste to the people. (This understanding would be in line with Dalley’s

[196] A different interpretation of V 11–12, whereby one translates “dare(s) not” rather than “cannot”, is given below.

[197] II 119 (partially restored), III 1, III 118.

translation [2000], "When I am enraged, I devastate people," yet it should be noted that Erra does not use a 1st person Stative to describe his anger, but specifically speaks of his heart being angry.) It is in keeping with this pronouncement that Erra does not go to war in the prologue, for in it the heart desires of Erra the doing of battle, but is never said to be wrathful.

The following four lines (V 7–10) would further describe how Erra behaves when his heart rages. Out of his mind, berserk in his anger, he annihilates all without any discernment. The phrase *zāqip ṣippati*, "one who sets up a garden," found in V 9, may be notable. Derivations of the verb *zaqāpu* (CAD Z, 52–55), appear three more times in the poem, all in the account of Babylon's sack (IV 1–49). In IV 31 it is said of the royal army—which, because of Erra, enters Babylon to massacre its citizens—*napḫat tilpānu zaqip patru*, "The bow was strung (lit. swollen),[198] the blade was at the ready (*zaqip*, lit. upright)." In the next line (IV 32) Išum says of the *ṣābī kidinni*, the privileged citizens, *kakkēšunu tazaqqap*, "You (Erra) made their weapons readied (*tazaqqap*)." In his lament over the brutalized Babylon, Marduk declares, *ū'a bābili ša kīma kirî nuḫši azqupūšūma lā ākula inibšu*, "Alas for Babylon, which I set up (*ša... azqupūšūma*) like a garden of plenty, but of whose fruit I never ate." (IV 40). The use of *zaqāpu* to describe the actions of both Erra Marduk may have served to bring the differences between the two gods into sharp relief: while Marduk planted Babylon like a life-sustaining garden, Erra, who by his own

[198] See note on IV 31 in Chapter 4 Part 1.

admission in V 9 plants nothing and does not think twice before destroying what others have created, causes death-bringing weapons to be readied—whether indirectly (as in the case of the royal army) or directly (as in that of the privileged citizens). There may also be irony in the fact that these the uses of *zaqāpu* in the account of Babylon's sack may be related, for it is because Erra readied the weapons of the *ṣābī kidinni* that their blood filled the river, frightening Marduk and causing him to lament Babylon.

Those humans that Erra drives mad with aggression act in much the same way as he does: in Erra's presence, the governor's heart becomes angry, and he orders his general to kill young and old, sparing no suckling babe. Marduk, in *Ludlul*, is said to be able to question himself; he can reflect, thereby calming his anger. Erra, in contrast, can do no such thing. When his heart grows angry he goes on the rampage; he does not resist his aggression, but lets it control him completely. Erra's wrath is self-substantial fuel, capable of "running" him forever, and not only does he not have the ability to calm himself, but in V 11–12 Erra implies that, when he is angry, no one can reason with him either: counseling Erra, the *raʾbu*, in his wrath is as dangerous and difficult as prying a carcass from a ravening lion's mouth.

However, it should be noted that Išum did succeed in calming Erra, seemingly contradicting Erra's general statement that "when one is wroth another cannot counsel him." Yet Erra's point may be exactly that Išum has done what is seemingly impossible: in V 13, the very next line after declaring that no one can counsel the wrathful, he rhetorically asks the gods, *<ša> lā išum ālik*

maḫrīya minû bašīma, "<were it> not for Išum, my vanguard, what would exist?" Much as the saving of humanity from the flood could not have been accomplished by any god except Ea,[199] only Išum was up to saving it from Erra's furious *libbu*. Only he could pry the corpse from the lion's mouth. Yet V 11-12 may also be understood in a different and non-paradoxical way. Erra's intended meaning would be not that it is impossible to pry a corpse from a ravening lion's mouth, but that people generally do not dare to try, and that it is a very difficult thing to do. In the same way, a man generally dares not counsel his raging fellow, and that is likewise no easy task. But Išum had both the daring and skill to accomplish it with Erra, and so the world was saved.

10. Conclusion: the Agentive Heart and Mesopotamian Conceptions of the Self

What was the significance of the agentive heart for speakers of Akkadian? In trying to answer this question, it should first be said that Mesopotamian conceptions of the self, in which the *libbu* prominently figures, were different in important ways than that prevalent in the modern West. Steinert writes, in her 2012 study,

> Die mesopotamischen Keilschrifttexte spiegeln eine Auffassung der menschlichen Person wider, die sich in Anlehnung an J. Assmann als „pluralistisch" und zugleich

[199] As Ninurta declares after Enlil realizes that humanity has not been exterminated, *manumma ša lā ēa amāta ibanni*, "indeed, who but Ea could accomplish the task?" (*Gilgamesh* XI 179). This line is similar to *Erra* V 13 both in its phrasing and the context in which it is said, for both lines are spoken immediately after humanity is saved from catastrophe. This may not be coincidental, and it is possible *Erra* draws on *Gilgamesh* here. However, the similarity between the two lines would be diminished if V 13 was not meant to begin with *ša* (for discussion, Taylor 2017 n. 472).

> „holistisch“ bezeichnen läßt. Pluralistisch bedeutet, daß menschliche Personen in Mesopotamien als komplexe Wesen wahrgenommen wurden, die aus einer Vielzahl personaler und transpersonaler Bestandteile zusammengesetzt sind, als „Kompositwesen“… Holistisch nenne ich die mesopotamische Konzeption der Person, weil sie nicht auf dem dualistischen Gegensatz zwischen Körper und Geist (bzw. Leib und Seele) oder zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft (bzw. Selbst und sozialer Rolle) basiert. (Steinert 2012, 121)

In her book, Steinert analyzes such *Bestandteile*: *qaqqadu/rēšu*, "head;" *pūtu*, "forehead;" *qātu*, "hand;" *šēpu*, "foot;" *napištu*, "neck, life, breath;" *zumru/pagru* "body;" *šīru*, "flesh;" *ramanu*, "self;" *eṭemmu*, "(*Toten*)*geist*;" *zaqīqu*, "dream spirit;" *ṭēmu*, "Verstand;" and the related concepts *bāštu*, "worth, honor," and *būštu*, "shame." Of all these, *ṭēmu* is the most closely associated with mental activity, and thus most alike to the *libbu* as the concept is used in the sources cited in this chapter:

> Das Wort *ṭēmu* „Verstand“ bezeichnet den menschlichen Intellekt, der als göttliche Gabe auch „Vernunft“ im Sinn von *social/common sense* bedeutet, als Sinn für soziale Normen und die Fähigkeit zur Unterscheidung zwischen Gut und Böse, Richtig und Falsch. *ṭēmu* trägt somit Charakteristika einer Ego-Seele, die mit Bewußtseinskräften verknüpft wird. *ṭēmu* wird in Verbindung mit kognitiven Prozessen mit dem Kopf (Schädel/Gehirn) assoziiert, aber auch mit dem Herzen/ Körperinneren als Sitz des Selbst, da in Mesopotamien das Körperinnere und der Körper als Ganzes als Sitz des Bewußtseins, von geistigen und emotionalen Prozessen gilt. (Steinert 2012, 516)

To an English speaker, the Akkadian *ṭēmu* (CAD Ṭ, 85–97), in its various senses, may seem closely paralleled by "judgment," which can denote the opinion of an individual as well as the decision of a judge, as well as "discernment" (Steinert's "Fähigkeit zur Unterscheidung;" that the root *ṭ'm* has to do with discernment may explain why its Hebrew iteration, **טעם**, can mean not only

"sense" and "advice" but also "taste").[200] In contrast, in some of the sources cited above, the role played by the *libbu* in the human *Kompositwesen* is associated with desire and emotion, both of which often conflict with discernment and good judgment: the hearts of Gilgamesh and Erra urge them to impetuous action, and *libbu* "carrying" someone can denote both desire and libido. At other times it seems to be associated with thinking more generally, as when a man's heart spews invective against goddess and king. This may seem to be a different function of the *libbu*, yet the separation between desire, feeling, and thought is a largely artificial one, for one seldom occurs without the others. The *libbu* may then be said to be associated with mental activity more generally, as scholars have generally described it.

But such a characterization does not, by itself, explain the significance of the *libbu* acting seemingly of its own accord, carrying its owner, requesting things from him, speaking and destroying. None of the other *Bestandteile* discussed by Steinert acts in this way; even the *ṭēmu*, which, like the *libbu*, is associated with the mind, does not display such agency. That it could be said to do such things may, perhaps, reflect the lack of control our conscious being has over the mental landscape in which it lives: thoughts appear out of nowhere, emotions sweep in without warning, judgments are made, and tastes formed, in a flash. As Milton's devil says, "The mind is its own place," and it is one that we can only mold so much according to our preferences. It may

[200] For attestations of טעם that seem to parallel uses of *ṭēmu*, Tawil 2009, 132–133. Instances in which טעם is used with the meaning "taste" are *Exodus* 16:31, *Numbers* 11:8, *Jeremiah* 48:11, and *Job* 6:6.

therefore be more accurate to say that it is the heart, and not "us", who conjures up mental phenomena. Indeed, such a sentiment would be very much in the spirit of Freud, in whose view the unconscious serves as the wellspring of the mind, with profound implications for human agency: a man may think he is the sovereign of his soul, yet the ego is not master in its own house.[201] Whether the use of the agentive heart carried such implications, as proposed multiple times in this chapter, is an open question. If Erra's heart spoke through him to others, are we meant to understand that Erra himself had little choice in the matter? When the gods' hearts drove them to cause the flood, did they have full control of their actions? Is Gilgamesh, likewise, overpowered by the heart that carries him? Is the god's destructive heart directing its divine owner as it wills? In the absence of living speakers of Akkadian, it cannot be ascertained what significance such phrasing carried. Yet it is tempting to deduce from such language that the Mesopotamian conception of the self was also pluralistic in its assignment of agency, and that it was sometimes believed that it is not a man, but his *libbu*, that is really in charge.

[201] As argued in Freud 1917.

Chapter Eight

Malignant Narcissism

… 'tis worse than murder,
To do upon respect such violent outrage.

—William Shakespeare, *King Lear*

1. A Word on Freud

Before moving on to an analysis of Erra's personality, the relevance to this study of the fraught contemporary standing of Freud, as well as psychoanalysis in general, should be addressed. The death of Freud, who passed away in 1939, is proclaimed anew every few years, the Oedipus complex declared to be a figment of his sex-obsessed imagination, and psychoanalysis deemed quackery and pseudoscience.[202] Yet, ironically, concepts whose formulation and theoretical evolution owe no less to psychoanalysis than the Oedipus complex have become culturally omnipresent, and are also utilized by psychotherapeutic approaches that entirely reject the psychoanalytic understanding of the mind. Narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder—the main concepts employed in the following analysis—are prime examples of this.[203] This is

[202] Critiques of Freud and Psychoanalysis include Crews 1986, 3–114, Crews, 1995, Crews 1998, Crews 2017, Eysenck 1985, Webster 1995, Macmillan 1997, Dufresne 2000, Dufresne 2003, and Dufresne 2008.

[203] On the conceptual history of narcissism and narcissistic personality disorder, Levy, Ellison, and Reynoso 2011. Non-psychoanalytic therapeutic approaches utilizing the concept of narcissistic personality disorder include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Cukowitz, Poindexter, and Joiner 2011) and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (Reed-Knight and Fisher 2011). Another personality pathology first identified by psychoanalysts but diagnosed by clinicians of entirely different orientations is borderline personality disorder, or BPD (or the history of BPD, Hooley and Gironde 2012).

important for this study, for, as illustrated by the fact that self-professed adherents of Freud are fewer by far in number than those who traffic in accusations of narcissism, a rejection of Freud should not, and indeed does not, lead to the rejection of the concept of narcissism—and, by extension, the present diagnosis of Erra as a certain kind of narcissist, namely a malignant one.

2. Oedipus, Narcissus, Erra

Near the beginning of her article "The *Oedipus Rex* and the Ancient Unconscious," the philosopher Martha Nussbaum points out that neither Oedipus himself nor any other character in Sophocles' play claims that the king's downfall is a consequence of sexual wishes of whatever kind, manifest or repressed—including any wish on Oedipus' part to sleep with his mother (1994, 156–157). Put differently, *Oedipus Rex* does not seem to be about the Oedipus complex. To say this, as Nussbaum writes (1994, 157), is to state the obvious. While also making the point that Freud's interpretation of the play is culturally anachronistic, she nonetheless notes that this need not dissuade those who interpret the play as Freud did:

> Now of course if one believes that Freud's theory is correct, and universally so, one will not be much deterred from the Freudian interpretation of Sophocles by the discovery that the Freudian interpretation is culturally anachronistic. For it will seem plausible to suppose that Sophocles' brilliance has put him in touch with truths that other members of his culture were slow to discover. (Nussbaum 1994, 156–157)

To this one could add that, in psychoanalysis, things often appear to be about something while really being about something else entirely. One example of this is Freud's understanding of

dreams as reflected in his book, published in 1900, *Die Traumdeutung* (Eng. *The Interpretation of Dreams*), whereby all dreams are forms of wish-fulfillment. The wishes dreams fulfill are not conscious, but unconscious, and they are often odious, unsavory, and, to polite Viennese society, obscene. While in some dreams the fulfillment of a wish is manifest, in others it is disguised (p. 99). In the latter kind, the content of a dream reflects a compromise between wishes born in the unconscious, which Freud compares to works produced by political authors who have unpleasant truths to say to those in power, and psychic inhibitions, which he likens to the apparatus of state censorship (pp. 99–100).

As a result of this give and take, while dreams may distort the desires they express, they are never entirely unrelated to them. Sophocles' play may be seen as such a compromise, one struck between Oedipal wishes and censorious morality. Yes, Oedipus kills his father, but he does so—all too conveniently—while not being aware of his identity. He sleeps with his mother, yet does not know it at the time. Seen in this way, that *Oedipus Rex* is not manifestly about the Oedipus complex need not contradict Freud's interpretation of it. Yet it is important to note that this is not an argument that Freud himself makes, as for him what is significant in the play is not the particular circumstances by which Oedipus comes to kill Laios and sleep with Jocasta, but the fact that he does. This is reflected in what is included, and what is left out, in Freud's concise statement of his understanding of the myth: "König Oedipus, der seinen Vater Laïos erschlagen und seine mutter Jokasta geheiratet hat, ist nur die Wunsch-erfüllung unserer Kindheit" (1900,

182). It is the deeds of Oedipus, and the phantasies they express,[204] that matter. All else, for Freud, is secondary.[205]

However, an argument whereby the apparent absence of something—such as wishes too terrible to bring to conscious awareness—is merely taken as evidence for its repression or distortion, can lead the scholar (or the analyst) to discover only what he expected to find in the first place. Indeed, certain kinds of psychoanalytic textual and cultural criticism have a reductive quality, whereby all roads seem to lead to Oedipus or other established elements of psychoanalytic theory. This is the case, for example, in an analysis of the Gilgamesh epic published several decades ago (Luke and Pruyser 1982), which construes it as an Oedipal myth. Such a judgment ignores the epic's individual character and themes—love, friendship, fear of death—which lend it its universal relevance and appeal. If one only reads between the lines of *ša naqba īmuru* looking for Oedipus he will inevitably find him, while Gilgamesh himself and all that he went through, his joy and his terror, the wisdom he gained, fade away.

---

[204] In psychoanalytic texts written in English it has become costumery, when referring to a fantasy born in the unconscious, to use the spelling "phantasy," in order to differentiate it from one produced in waking life.

[205] This is evident from Freud's claims regarding the evolution of the theological aspects of Oedipus legend: "Der Traum, mit der Mutter sexuell zu verkehrenn… Er ist wie begriflich der Schlüssel der Tragödie und das Ergänzungsstück zum Traum vom Tod des Vaters. Der Oedipus-fabel ist die Reaction der Phantasie auf diese beiden typischen Träumen… Ihere weitere Gestaltung rührt wiederum von einer missverständlichen secundären Bearbeitung des Stoffes her, welche ihn einer theologisirenden Absicht dienstbar zu machen sucht."

However, that the psychoanalytic analysis of ancient texts is sometimes done badly does not mean it cannot be done well, and this study contends that it can, in fact, enrich our understanding of ancient sources rather than merely serving to project the critic's pre-held theories onto them. Nussbaum writes in her article, regarding her own approach to analyzing *Oedipus Rex*,

> …if we leave to one side the question of psychoanalytic truth, we can still see that setting the play in its cultural context promotes a much more economical and unstrained reading of the text, one that can recognize as salient what the text itself presents as salient, rather than searching for signs of what it nowhere says or implies. (Nussbaum 1994, 158)

Nussbaum's description of her own approach to understanding the text, which privileges its historical context over psychoanalytic orthodoxy, as "one that can recognize as salient what the text itself presents as salient, rather than searching for signs of what it nowhere says or implies," can also be applied to approaches that do not leave psychoanalytic truth to one side, but seek to understand ancient narratives through the prism of contemporary psychoanalytic theory. This requires, however, that these analyses, rather than reading against the grain of the text, stress what the text itself stresses, thereby decreasing the likelihood of projection and forced or overly anachronistic interpretations. Nussbaum rightly implies that Freud's own reading of the Oedipus myth does not recognize as salient what the text itself recognizes as salient. Yet there is an example of a classical myth that can be—and has been—analyzed psychoanalytically

while doing so. That is the myth of Narcissus, whose most well-known version is contained in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The poet writes at the beginning of the story,

> Narcissus now had reached his sixteenth year
> And seemed both man and boy; and many a youth
> And many a girl desired him, but hard pride ruled
> His delicate frame, and never a youth
> And never a girl could touch his haughty heart.
>
> (*Metamorphoses* 3.349–353) [206]

One of Narcissus' failed suitors prays that Narcissus should "love, but never win his love" (3.403). The goddess Nemesis agrees, and Narcissus, who could never love before, becomes besotted with his own image in a pond. Unable to consummate his love for his own image, he lies transfixed, enamored with his beauty, as so many youths and maidens were before. His unfulfillable desire wastes his form away, and only a flower remains where he has been.

While Oedipus is not described by Sophocles as suffering from the Oedipus complex, Ovid's Narcissus seems plainly narcissistic.[207] While the former evinces no desire to kill Laios and sleep with Jocasta, but stumbles, in his ignorance, to the murder of his father and his mother's bed, the death of the latter is explicitly said to be due to his unfulfillable desire for himself. An

---

[206] Taken from A.D Mellville's 1986 translation.

[207] One may say that, from a psychoanalytic perspective, this is only to be expected, for while Oedipal wishes tend to be repressed, revealing themselves only in dreams and myths, Narcissism is often all too manifest. from a more critical perspective, one might argue, rather, that psychoanalysis dreamed up the Oedipus complex but was correct in identifying narcissism.

interpretation of the Narcissus myth centering on the boy's excessive self-love would, therefore, qualify, when contrasted with a Freudian reading of *Oedipus Rex*, as "a much more economical and unstrained reading of the text, one that can recognize as salient what the text itself presents as salient, rather than searching for signs of what it nowhere says or implies." Interpreting the Erra Epic, like the myth of Narcissus, through the lens of narcissism does not involve reading against the text, nor focusing on what it considers unimportant. Rather, it involves stressing what the text itself stresses, for the epic places the blame on Erra's actions not on external circumstances but on the god's reaction to them, molded by his personality and changing mental state. These are the very things a psychoanalyst—and, indeed, a cognitive or dialectical behavioral therapist—would find salient.

3. Narcissism, Benign and Malignant

To say that gods are narcissistic merely means that they appraise themselves realistically. Deities, who by their very nature possess extraordinary qualities and abilities, are, understandably, very fond of themselves. Qualities that in the human world would define a person as narcissistic are typical in gods:

> Narcissistic personalities are usually identified by overt and striking grandiosity: a sense of superiority and self-importance, a tendency to exaggerate talents or achievements, and a belief in being special and unique. Grandiose fantasies of success, power, brilliance, and so forth, serve to expand their sense of themselves. Entitlement—unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment—the need for excessive

> admiration, and arrogant and haughty behavior characterize interactions with other people. (Ronningstam 2005, 75–76)

Such qualities and behaviors are part and parcel of divinity, as gods are superior and special by definition, and haughtiness and entitlement are only to be expected from them. Erra as he is described in the epic, however, does not display the garden-variety narcissism characterizing all deities, but one of a more harmful and destructive sort, colored by the anger and hate that motivate him in his campaign of destruction. This variety of narcissism was described by the psychoanalyst Otto F. Kernberg, who referred to it as malignant narcissism.[208] Malignant narcissists are identified by their extreme aggression and sadism, their antisocial behavior, and their strong tendency towards paranoia.[209] The last identifying feature of the malignant narcissist, at least in some of the descriptions of this personality disorder Kernberg has offered through the decades,[210] is that he retains a limited capacity to feel concern and guilt. As stated regarding the malignant narcissist in a recent monograph co-written by Kernberg:

---

[208] Though Kernberg did not coin the term malignant narcissism, he was the first use it to describe a narcissistic personality characterized by antisocial behavior, sadism, and paranoia (Akhtar 2009, 163).
[209] For the features of malignant narcissism, Diamond Yeomans, Stern, and Kernberg 2022, 357, Kernberg 2020, 13, and Caligor, Levy, and Yeomans 2015, 418.

[210] In his 2004 book, Kernberg writes of patients suffering from malignant narcissism: "In contrast to those with antisocial personality disorder proper, these patients… still have the capacity for loyalty to and concern for others and for feeling guilty" (Kernberg 2004, 56). Such a capacity on the part of malignant narcissists is also referred to by Kernberg and his coauthors in their 2022 book (Diamond, Yeomans, Stern, and Kernberg 2022, 59). However, Kernberg does not include a capacity for guilt and concern as a feature of malignant narcissism in his 2020 article, which seeks to understand the personalities of figures such as Hitler and Stalin through the lens of malignant narcissism. Such a feature,

> Although their capacity for relatedness is limited, they maintain some capacity for emotional investment in a relationship with significant others, and some capacity for experiencing guilt and concern that protects them from total submission to destructive forces. (Diamond, Yeomans, Stern, and Kernberg 2022, 59)

This cluster of characteristics—extraordinary aggression and sadism, antisocial behavior, and strong paranoid features, along with some capacity for remorse and concern for others—form an accurate description of Erra's personality as described in the Erra Epic. Erra's capacity for aggression needs no elaboration, as it is the subject of the poem. His sadism deserves comment, however. That a god causes destruction on a massive scale does not necessarily mean that he enjoys it. This is apparent, for example, in the flood story, in which Enlil causes the flood but shows no indication that he draws pleasure from annihilating humanity. Erra, in contrast, delights in causing death and destruction, as we learn from I 13–16, quoted above, lines whose speaker is uncertain but whose veracity we have no reason to doubt:

I 13 *erra tebēma ina sapān māti*
I 14 *kī namrat kabtatka u ḫadû libbuk*

I 13 "Erra, arise! when you lay the land low,
I 14 "Will your mind not be radiant, and joyful your heart![211]""

Erra, we are told, enjoys destroying the world (and, by extension, its peoples), which is nothing if not sadistic. The question of possible paranoid tendencies on Erra's part, however, is less

---

indeed, can hardly be observed in the personalities of these tyrants, while it may be present in the personalities of the more ordinary patients whom Kernberg's 2004 and 2022 contributions concern.

[211] This grammatically difficult line is discussed in Chapter 7 Part 1.

straightforward. It is clear that the gods fear his name (I 119, III 195 [fragmentary]). Erra twice states that the black-headed people hold him in contempt (I 120, III 196 [fragmentary]). There is little reason to doubt him on this point, yet is not clear why, after decimating the population of Babylonia, Erra still believes the people hold him in contempt. That Erra still thinks this way we learn from Išum:

IV 104	*qurādu erra kīnamma*	*tuštamīt*
IV 105	*lā kīnamma*	*tuštamīt*
IV 106	*ša iḫṭûkāma*	*tuštamīt*
IV 107	*ša lā iḫṭûkāma*	*tuštamīt*
IV 108	*enu mušaḫmiṭ taklīm ilānī*	*tuštamīt*
IV 109	*gerseqqû mukīl rēš šarri*	*tuštamīt*
IV 110	*šībī ina dakkannī*	*tuštamīt*
IV 111	*ardāti ṣaḫarāti ina uršīšina*	*tuštamīt*
IV 112	*u nâḫamma ul tanūḫ*	
IV 113	*u tātami ana libbīka umma leqû šeṭūtī*	

IV 104	O Warrior Erra, the righteous man	—you have put to death,
IV 105	The unrighteous man	—you have put to death,
IV 106	The one who sinned against you	—you have put to death,
IV 107	The one who did not sin against you	—you have put to death,
IV 108	The priest who speeds the offerings of the gods	—you have put to death,
IV 109	The courtier who waits upon the king	—you have put to death,
IV 110	The old men at the doorways	—you have put to death,
IV 111	The young maidens in their bedrooms	—you have put to death,
IV 112	Yet you found not rest all,	
IV 113	Yet you said to your heart, 'They hold me in contempt,"	

It seems that mass murder has not solved Erra's problem, for neither has it brought him rest nor alleviated his conviction that the people hold him in contempt. This, as discussed at greater length in Chapter 4, may be explained in at least two ways. First, Išum may mean that humans—out of obstinance, folly, or some other reason—continue to hold Erra in contempt after he has killed most of them. He may thereby be implying that, as Erra has not succeeded thus far in making the people fear him by massacring them, it follows that this task cannot be at all solved by violent means, but that Erra should learn to accept the people's contempt without inflicting further genocidal violence. Second, it is possible that those humans still alive have long since come to fear Erra's name, but that Erra, in his rage, does not realize it. If this is the case, it would follow that Erra is deluded.

Delusion is, of course, associated with paranoia. and descriptions of paranoid personality disorder (PPD) often include the presence of unfounded ideas on the part of the paranoiac regarding others' supposed malevolence towards him. One may conclude that if Erra is correct in believing that humans hold him in contempt, he does not evince paranoid tendencies, and is therefore not a malignant narcissist. The question of whether Erra is deluded or not has contemporary clinical parallels, for telling whether a real-life patient is truly deluded or merely has "intensely held, idiosyncratic" ideas is not always easy.[212] In much the same way that an

[212] One researcher writes, regarding the differential diagnosis of PPD, "In practice, delusional disorder generally the most problematic differential diagnosis. By definition, people with paranoid personality

overly sensitive chemical test is more likely to return a false positive, it is sometimes difficult to tell excessive sensitivity to, and obsessive concern with, slights from genuine delusions of being slighted. In practice, the distinction may not matter a great deal, for both possibilities may lead to profound, and profoundly unnecessary, misery and aggression.

However, it is not required that the slights the patient complains of be imagined for a diagnosis of PPD to be made. One description states:

> Paranoid personality disorder (PPD) is characterized by a pervasive mistrust of other people… Other common features of the disorder include quarrelsomeness, hostility, emotional coldness, hypersensitivity to slights or criticism, stubbornness, and rigidly held maladaptive beliefs of others' intents… The prototypical picture is of someone who is preoccupied with real or imagined slights or threats, mistrusts the intentions or motives of others, and rarely trusts the seemingly benign appearance of things. Measures must be taken to protect oneself—by keeping one's distance from other people, not appearing weak or vulnerable, searching for signs of threat even in seemingly innocuous situations, preemptively attacking others who are viewed as threatening, and vigorously counterattacking when threatened or provoked. (Bernstein and Useda 2007, 41)

This aptly describes Erra's personality in the epic. He is indeed quarrelsome, hostile, and (to say the least) preoccupied with slights, and goes almost-apocalyptic length to "protect himself" (or

---

disorder do not display persistent psychotic symptoms, whereas delusional disorder is a condition characterised by persistent non-bizarre delusions in the absence of other features of a psychotic illness. This distinction, however, merely begs the question of how to distinguish delusions from the intensely held, idiosyncratic (sometimes called 'overvalued') ideas of a person with paranoid personality disorder… In practice, mental health clinicians often disagree about specific cases, and the reliability with which individuals manifesting paranoid behaviour can be differentially classified has not been empirically determined" (Carrol 2009, 42).

his pride, rather). Another researcher, writing about the characterization of PPD in psychiatric literature, described it as "a disorder of suspicious, unforgiving, ruminative, and jealous traits," as well as of "excessive self-importance and hostility" (Lee 2017, 2). This, likewise, fits Erra well.

This leaves us with the last identifying characteristic of malignant narcissism—though one that is listed in some, but not all, of Kernberg's descriptions of malignant narcissism—a present, albeit limited, capacity for remorse and concern for others. After being calmed by Išum Erra demonstrates both delivering something resembling an apology at the beginning of tablet V (1–15), benevolently pronouncing the restoration of Babylonia (V 22–36), and even blessing the epic itself, so that those who possess it will be protected from his future wrath (V 48–58). Thus, Erra exhibits all of the features of malignant narcissism as defined by Kernberg. However, it should be noted that Erra's turn for the better came too late for his myriad victims, and was only affected through Išum's intervention. Therefore, his powers of empathy and regret—though mercifully existent—should not be overestimated.

4. Narcissistic Rage

According to the psychoanalytic understanding of narcissism, strongly negative reactions to perceived slights are recognized as a characteristic feature of people with narcissistic

personalities. When confronted with a threat to their ego, they may react aggressively, even violently.[213] The anger of the slighted narcissist was eloquently described by Fromm:

> He (the narcissist) needs to hold on to his narcissistic self-image, since his sense of worth as well as his sense of identity are based on it. If his narcissism is threatened, he is threatened in a vitally important area. When others wound his narcissism by slighting him, criticizing him, showing him up when he has said something wrong… a narcissistic person usually reacts with intense anger or rage, whether or not he shows it or is even aware of it. The intensity of this aggressive reaction can often be seen in the fact that such a person will never forgive someone who has wounded his narcissism and often feels a desire for vengeance which would be less intense if his body or his property had been attacked. (Fromm 1973, 228)

The extreme and all-consuming rage that Fromm refers to, and that others have described in the psychoanalytic literature under the name narcissistic rage,[214] conforms with Erra's behavior and the great anger that motivates him to attack the world, and sets the epic in motion. According to the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut, who originated the term, narcissistic rage is provoked by a *narcissistic injury*—a wound to the narcissist's inflated ego—and gives the narcissist no rest:

> Narcissistic rage occurs in many forms; they all share, however, a specific psychological flavor which gives them a distinct position within the wide realm of human aggressions. The need for revenge, for righting a wrong, for undoing a hurt by whatever means, and a deeply anchored, unrelenting compulsion in the pursuit of all these aims which gives no rest to those who have suffered a narcissistic injury—these are features which are

[213] Ronningstam 2005, 82. On the connection between narcissism and violent reactions to ego threats, Baumeister, Smart, and Boden 1996.

[214] For a recent discussion of narcissistic rage, Krisan and Zohar 2015.

> characteristic for the phenomenon of narcissistic rage in all its forms and which set it apart from other kinds of aggression. (Kohut 1972, 380)

Erra's belief, whether justified or not, that the people do not fear his name, and hold him in contempt, is exactly such a narcissistic injury. After suffering injuries to his ego, Lear commands the elements to strike his daughters, as though he were a god. He then orders destruction on a grander scale:

> …and through all-shaking thunder,
> Smite flat the thick rotundity of the world.
>
> (*King Lear*, Act III Scene 2, 6–7)

Lear is powerless, and commands in vain, yet Erra can, in fact, destroy the world to avenge his wounded pride. Whereas Lear only cries for the world to be flattened, Erra almost succeeds in doing so, after setting out to "level the lands and destroy their peoples." Another difference between the two protagonists is that Lear's wrath eventually burns out, yet Erra's anger, as in Kohut's description, gives him no rest. As Išum tells Erra, after the latter has massacred multitudes, decimating the world's peoples: *u nâḫamma ul tanūḫ*, "And yet you've found no rest at all!"[215]

[215] IV 113, quoted above.

5. Why Diagnose Erra?

Even if it is possible to attach a diagnosis to Erra's destructive personality, there remains the question of its usefulness. What do we gain by identifying Erra as a malignant narcissist, and construing his rage as an example of narcissistic rage? To answer these questions, it may be useful to discuss once more the prototypical myth of narcissism, that of Narcissus himself, as narrated in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the summary of which is given above.

It is more than likely that Ovid and his audience were well aware that the figure of Narcissus typifies real human tendencies, and that there are many people who bear an unfortunate resemblance to him. Indeed, that one can recognize others, or even oneself, in Narcissus, may be the main reason for the story's persistent appeal over the last two millennia. Modern psychoanalytic theoreticians, by defining the features of the narcissistic personality,[216] coined a term for the condition Ovid described, and by naming the concept of narcissism after Narcissus, they acknowledged the universality of Ovid's depiction of him and gave the poet his due. To attach the label of malignant narcissism to Kabti-ilāni-Marduk's portrayal of Erra would do the same in relation to a specific, and particularly destructive, type of narcissism, thereby crediting Kabti-ilāni-Marduk for astutely describing a personality disorder that is found in many cultures, including our own, and that has only recently been given a name. In other words, one may not

[216] On the history of narcissism as a psychoanalytic concept, Ronningstam 2005, 3–30, and Levy, Reynoso, and Ellison, 3–13.

understand Erra better merely by diagnosing him as a malignant narcissist, but doing so would serve to acknowledge the wider human significance of his depiction in the epic, universalizing the text and giving it contemporary relevance. One may even be tempted to propose that, instead of malignant narcissism, this personality disorder should be referred to as "The Erra Complex."

Connecting Erra with narcissism has a further benefit. Kabti-ilāni-Marduk and Ovid did not just depict narcissistic characters, but illustrated the harm pathological self-love can cause. Their insights regarding the dynamics of narcissism are as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago, and we may still learn from them. The fate of Narcissus illustrates narcissism's potential to prevent the narcissist from truly loving others, and shows how being consumed with self-love at the expense of all else is a deeply unsatisfying and unhappy state of affairs.[217] In contrast, Kabti-ilāni-Marduk's depiction of Erra speaks to the connection between narcissism, and especially malignant narcissism, and violence. Whereas the narcissism of Narcissus results only in his own undoing, Erra's dark and violent self-love drives him to attack everyone but himself, and almost leads to humanity's annihilation. That the diagnosis of malignant narcissism has been convincingly applied to 20th-century tyrants who have caused

[217] For an analysis of the psychological significance of the Narcissus myth from a psychoanalytic object-relations approach, Diamond, Yeomans, Stern, and Kernberg 2022, ix–xii. They discuss how the myth accurately captures many of the dynamics of narcissism, and illustrates how narcissism itself can lead to the narcissist's psychic collapse and ultimate undoing.

violence on a horrific scale (Glad 2002 and Kernberg 2020), shows that this connection holds for our own time as much as it did for ancient Babylonia. Yet the similarities, rather than the differences, between the figures of Narcissus and Erra, may be greater yet than they appear, if one goes beyond the level of phenomenology into the inner dynamics of the psyche.

6. Never a Victimless Crime

Across the centuries, artists chose to depict a specific moment in the myth of Narcissus: that in which the beautiful boy stares, transfixed, at his reflection, caught in his own spell. It is then that he is most consumed with narcissism, and then, as he gazes lovingly at his own reflected face without recognizing it, that he is least aware. If one were to look for such a point in the plot of the Erra Epic, one may choose a more extended event: the murderous rampage on which Erra goes in blind and egotistical fury. These two episodes may appear entirely different—Narcissus is hardly a mass murderer, and Erra, in his wrath, is the very opposite of paralyzed—yet they have in common that both are violent. That is all too evident in Erra's case, but not in that of Narcissus. Yet from a psychoanalytic point of view—more specifically, that of the Kleinian school of Psychoanalysis—Narcissus, too, is violent.[218]

[218] For Kleinian discussions of narcissism containing references to earlier literature, Segal and Bell 1991, 51–72 and Blass 2019.

Narcissists, as described throughout psychological literature, are self-absorbed, and tend to lack empathy and true concern for others.[219] Yet according to the specific view of the Kleinians—those analysts whose theoretical work and clinical practice are grounded in the ideas of Melanie Klein (1882–1960)—such self-absorption is not self-created, but is the product of psychic massacre. The narcissist lacks empathy and concern for others because he attacks them in his mind, both consciously and unconsciously, denying their value and disavowing love for them. He does so out of envy of all that is good in others, of resentment of their independent existence, of their separation from himself and their being beyond his control. He is grandiose, believing that all that is good and wise and beautiful lies within himself. He is scornful, denying others' capabilities, virtues, and achievements. The Kleinians believe that both his grandiosity and his scorn defend him from the pain of envy, of interdependence, of the realization of his imperfections and limitations. To spare himself this pain, the narcissist obliterates others in his internal world.

In the myth of Narcissus, narcissism also follows the rejection of other people. As detailed above, at the beginning of Ovid's narrative, Narcissus scorns all those who try to woo him, male and female, mortal and divine. One failed suitor prays to the gods that Narcissus be doomed to love, but never win his love. The gods oblige, and Narcissus' fate is sealed. Thus, the boy's fatal

---

[219] For descriptions of narcissistic personality disorder, Ronningstam 2005, 19–115, Caligor, Levy, and Yeomans 2015, and Pincus and Lukowitski 2010.

self-love results from his refusal to love anyone else. As he looks at the water, Narcissus pays heed to nothing, and no one, but himself. According to the Kleinian view, this narcissistic trance, along with all narcissism, is no innocent state of affairs, and no victimless crime. In this light, the myth of Narcissus can be seen to illustrate the violence the narcissist does to other people in his inner world, much as the myth of Erra does regarding the violence the narcissist commits against others in reality. Thus, the figures of Narcissus and Erra demonstrate the two faces of narcissistic aggression: one covert, the other manifest.

7. Further Benefits of Diagnosis

The diagnosis of malignant narcissism, like all diagnoses, also serves to organize and tie together disparate phenomena. What were before unrelated symptoms become part of a unified narrative of dysfunction, one that can be classified and studied. Accordingly, diagnosing Erra with malignant narcissism would serve to explain the separate characteristics of his depiction in the epic with a single disorder. His grandiosity, his violence, and his preoccupation (whether delusional or simply excessive) with the idea that he is held in contempt when he no longer is, would be understood as manifestations of a single personality disorder. And, in the same way the diagnosis of a disease opens up avenues for its comparative study, this diagnosis would also allow for interdisciplinary research comparing Erra as he is described in the epic to other malignant narcissists, whether fictional or real, in other places and times. As malignant

narcissists can be found in the mythology, history, and literature of various cultures,[220] such research may involve, in addition to Assyriology, fields including psychoanalysis, psychology, classics, history, political science, and comparative literature.

To take an example of such a comparison, Kernberg, in a recent study (2020), writes on the destructive effects modern malignant narcissistic leaders can have on their societies, infusing nations with their own overwhelming aggression and inspiring them to commit horrific, even genocidal, violence. Erra's own power to spread enmity, to turn men against each other, to dissolve civilization into a war of all against all, can be seen as an example of this phenomenon, suggesting that Kernberg's hypothesis may hold some validity even for civilizations much different, and far earlier, than Germany and the Soviet Union in the 20th century.

Kernberg's essay, which describes the potentially explosive combination between times of collective crisis and the leadership of malignant narcissists, is particularly relevant to *Erra*. As discussed above, Erra is notable for his great ability to inspire hate and aggression in others, inciting people to massacre and destruction. Modern malignant narcissistic leaders, such as Hitler and Stalin, were no different, inspiring their peoples to murderous, even genocidal, violence. As Kernberg writes concerning the genocides in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Nazi Germany,

---

[220] King Herod may be one such example (for a study of Herod's personality, Kasher, Witztum, and Gold 2007).

the union between latent animosity, social crisis, and malignant narcissistic leadership can be catastrophic:

> In all three cases a latent animosity existed between social subgroups… Such latent potential social splits became expressed first in all three cases, in a general ideological disposition, an extreme ideology turning one group against the other. That divisive ideology became acute at the time of social crisis… This led to the ascent of leadership by personalities with powerful aggressive, paranoid, and antisocial features, who started out with grandiose leadership aspirations in all three cases. The end result of this process was a totalitarian situation with a socially imposed, ideologically rationalized, leadership[-] supported political program called to exterminate the enemy group. (Kernberg 2020, 20–21)

Erra's murderous powers of incitement may be construed as an early expression of the phenomenon Kernberg describes, and it may be the case the author of *Erra* modeled them upon those of malignant narcissistic leaders in his own time. A description, by the researchers David S. Robins and Jerold M. Post, of the effects of a paranoid leader on his people is also reminiscent of Erra's power:

> When a paranoid leader becomes chief of state, his paranoia infects the nation. The paranoid leader's extraordinary suspicion, hostility, and centrality create a society not simply different in degree but different in kind from any other. Particularly in a totalitarian regime, with all its resources entirely at his disposal, unconstrained by consultation or democratic process, he can shape the society to his psyche's image. The role of any leader is to engender a common ethos in the country he directs. This is no less so with the paranoid leader. (Robins and Post 1997, 244)

Erra, likewise, molds Babylonian society to his psyche's image, inspiring, in the minds of mortals, the same overwhelming aggression and suspicion he feels within himself. For example, As mentioned before, Erra incites Babylon's citizens to act *kī šālil māti*, "like one who plunders

the land," and then says of himself that when he acts in the very same way (V 10). Paranoia is especially evident in the personality of Stalin, about whom Roberts and Post write (1997, 272), "Believing he was surrounded by enemies, Stalin was paranoid to the core". Stalin spent much of his long career eliminating perceived threats by any means necessary, at the cost of millions of lives" (Robins and Post 1997, 270–271). However, though he caused death and misery on a grand scale, he never seems to have found relief from his feelings of persecution. At the end of his life, he was obsessed with the so-called "doctor's plot", and was "in a clinical paranoid state, consumed by paranoid fears, obsessed with conspiracies, trusting no one, fearing everyone" (Robins and Post 1997 275). The paranoid leader's ability to annihilate whole peoples and still feel as insecure as ever is perfectly described by Išum in IV 112-113, quoted above. Yet despite the similarities between the conduct of Erra to that of modern malignant narcissistic leaders, there is a crucial difference between them: real tyrants rarely, if ever, change their ways as Erra does. Erra is lucky to have Išum, who frees him from his murderous rage.

8. Conclusion: The Praise of Self-Restraint

Much as Narcissus is the prototypical narcissist of myth, Erra, in the poem, may be seen to evince a particular, and particularly destructive, type of narcissism: malignant narcissism, that mixes grandiosity with sadism and paranoia. Erra's wrath is likewise narcissistic, for it results from, and is sustained by, alleged affronts to his pride. It is, therefore, Erra's narcissism that threatens humanity, his self-absorption that nearly leads to its extermination. In showcasing

the dangers posed by the self-absorption of the powerful to those at their mercy, *Erra* is not alone among Akkadian literary texts. Other Babylonian compositions likewise concern the damage done by the narcissism and megalomania of gods and men. In *Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh's quest for an eternal name drives him to go with Enkidu to the Ceder Forest, thereby leading to Enkidu's death. Later in the poem, he must get over his deluded quest for eternal life, and return to Uruk to fulfill his duties as king. In *Atrahasis*, Enlil's wish for better sleep nearly causes the end of humanity. In *Agušaya*, Ištar flies into a senseless rage, and likewise poses a threat to the cosmos. And in the *Cuthean Legend*, Naram-Sîn must learn to ignore his desire to protect his people—justified as it may be—and do as the gods want him to, thereby acknowledging the limited nature of his power as a mortal, royal as that mortal may be.

In these compositions, strong emotions lead figures with great, though not absolute, power to impetuous and misguided action. Such action brings, or threatens to bring, pain, death, and disaster, both to those who commit it and those under their control. Yet all is not lost. Eventually, god and king are confronted with the limits of their power—however great that power may be—and come to know the wisdom of moderation and the benefit of self-control. Gaining such wisdom, however, is seldom something a king, or even a god, does all by himself. Rather, in all but one of the aforementioned compositions, his education is facilitated by others of sounder mind. The Akkadian word *ḫasīsu* (Sumerian geštug) can mean "ear" or "hearing" as

well as “wisdom.” It is only fitting, then, that it is dialogue that holds the key to restraining narcissism and averting its manifold threats.

Chapter Nine

Who is King of the World?

> *Isaiam Jeremiam, Ezechielem, et Danielem quis possit vel intelligere, vel exponere? … Tertius principia et finem tantis habet obscuritatibus involuta, ut apud Hebraeos istae partes cum exordio Geneseos ante annos triginta non legantur.*
>
> *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel—who can understand or explain them? … The third (of them)—its beginning and end involve obscurities so great that they, like the commencement of Genesis, are not studied by the Hebrews before the age of thirty.*
>
> —Jerome, *Epistola LIII. Ad Paulinum*

1. The State of the Debate

I 1 [*ša*]*r gimir dadmē bānû kib*[*rāti*…]
I 2 *Ḫendursanga apil ellil rēšt*[*û*…]
I 3 *nāš ḫaṭṭi ṣīrti nāqid ṣalmāt qa*[*qqa*]*di rē'û* [*tenēšēti*]
I 4 *išum ṭābiḫu na'du ša ana našê kakkīšu ezzūti qātāšu asmā*
I 5 *u ana šubruq ulmīšu šērūti erra qarrād ilānī inuššu ina šubti*

I 1 [Kin]g of all inhabited regions, creator of the la[nds…]
I 2 Ḫendursanga, firstborn[n] son of Enlil […]
I 3 Bearer of the august scepter, shepherd of the black-hea[ded] people, herdsman [of the peoples],
I 4 Išum, zealous slaughterer, whose hands are fit to wield his furious weapons,
I 5 And at the flashing of whose fearsome axes, Erra, warrior of the gods, quakes in (his) abode.

Who is the god referred to, in *Erra*'s incipit, by the otherwise unattested title *šar gimir dadmē*, "king of all inhabited regions?"[221] In her 1958 article, Reiner argues that it is Marduk, the chief

[221] One can find similar titles in other texts. As Taylor notes (2017, 22 n. 5), in a Neo-Babylonian hymn to Ištar, the goddess is referred to by the nearly identical title *šarrat kullat dadmē* (STC 2 pl. 65:2). In BMS 6:38, Sin is called *šar kibrā*[*ti*], "king of the world regions," Nabû is called *šar kiššati*, "king of the universe" (KAR 104:7), and Šamaš *šar māti* (KAR 252 ii 44). As discussed below, Enlil is called *šar dadmē* in *Anzû* I 1, and Marduk is called *šar gimri* in *Erra* I 150. That title is also given to Marduk in a kudurru of Nabû-

god of the Babylonian pantheon. She puts forward two arguments in favor of her position.[222] In the first, she notes that Marduk is elsewhere known as king and creator, and that he refers to himself as *šar gimri*, "king of all"—a title similar to *šar gimir dadmē*—in I 150. The latter point is especially compelling, as it draws on the text of the epic itself; that Marduk is called *šar gimri* may appear to be conclusive proof he is also *šar gimir dadmē*. Yet things do not appear so certain if one takes into account an observation made by Taylor: that Marduk is not the only god who is called *šarru* in the poem, as both Ea and Šamaš are also given that title;[223] and that in fact he is not even the only deity given the epithet *šar ilāni*, as Anu is likewise awarded that honor.[224] If

apla-iddina (VA 2663 [edited in Paulus 2014, 693–703] i 4). This would not be the only point of similarity between inscriptions of Nabû-apla-iddina and *Erra*: another inscription of that king (RIMB 2 B.6.21:34) parallels verbatim part of *Erra* V 35 (as noted by Veenhof [Apud 1984, 49 n. 230]), and another inscription of his (RIMB 2 B.6.21:34) may quote from *Erra* V 35. The title *šar gimri* also appears in an inscription of Sargon II (RINAP 2 no. 89:32), though it is unclear whether Marduk or Aššur is meant.

[222] Reiner 1958, 42. The identification of Marduk as *šar gimir dadmē* is also argued by Cavigneaux, citing Reiner (2022, 8). In their translation, Bottéro and Kramer likewise take Marduk to be be *šar gimir dadmē*, albeit tentatively: "[Gloire? a *Marduk?,* le R]oi de l'Univers, le Créateur du Mo[nde]!" (1989, 227). Foster, likewise, writes "Narrator invokes Marduk, chief deity of Babylon, and Ishum, vanguard and companion of Erra" (2005, 881).

[223] "…in *Erra Song*… II:30 Ea is called "king" (*šarru*); in II:48 Šamaš is called "king" (*šarru*)" (Taylor 2017, 22).

[224] "In *Erra Song* I:28, Anu is 'the king of the gods' (*šar ilānī*)" (Taylor 2017, 22).
\

the poet had no qualms about giving gods titles that are not merely similar, but identical,[225] and Marduk, in *Erra*, is but one in a crowd of heavenly kings, then the similarity between *šar gimri* and *šar gimir dadmē* does not necessarily mean that the referent of the former title must also be that of the latter.[226]

Against Reiner's suggestion, one may also note that for Marduk to be *šar gimir dadmē* involves considerable problems. Reiterating and elaborating upon points made by Cagni,[227] one may note that the protagonists of the epic, as implied by the poet's own summary of the events, given in Tablet V,[228] are Erra and Išum, not Marduk, and it therefore seems strange for Marduk

---

[225] As Taylor writes (2017, 22 no. 6), "Not only are the phrases not identical, but even identical epithets are sometimes shared among gods just within this text itself: as we have seen… 'the king of the gods' may be either Anu or Marduk…"

[226] As Taylor writes (2017, 22 no. 6), "Not only are the phrases not identical, but even identical epithets are sometimes shared among gods just within this text itself: as we have seen… 'the king of the gods' may be either Anu or Marduk…"

[227] "I have always doubted such an interpretation… The poem gives relatively little importance to Marduk and does not even mention him in Tablet V: in fact, it is completely dominated by the figures and actions of Erra and Išum … The beginning of the poem has an undoubtedly hymnic character: and according to the pattern of the hymnic *incipit*, when the divinity celebrated is named in the second line (or shortly thereafter), the first line is composed exclusively of epithets referring to that divinity. I maintain, however, that 11. 1–5a are a commemorative invocation of Ḫendursanga/Išum. Nor should it surprise us that the author of the poem addresses him first, because it is due to Išum that Erra placated his own destructive wrath and came to decree the resurgence of the people of Akkad, entrusting the accomplishment of it to Išum himself. (Tab . V)." (Cagni 1975, 85).

[228] *ša erra īgugūma ana sapān mātāti u ḫulluq nišīšin iškunu pānī*[*šu*]/ *išum mālikšu uniḫḫūšūma īzib*[*u*] *rēḫāniš*, "That Erra grew angry and set out to level the lands and destroy their peoples,/(but) Išum, his counselor, calmed him (so that) he left (some) as a remnant." (V 41–42).

to be invoked in the first line. Moreover, if Marduk is invoked in I 1 by an epithet of his then one would expect his actual name to follow, yet I 2–22 are addressed to Išum,[229] while Marduk's name goes unmentioned (unless, as further discussed below, it will turn out that it is contained in the missing part of I 1). It also seems strange for the poet to pivot so suddenly from invoking one god to another,[230] as well as apparently unique in the context of Akkadian literature—which, to my knowledge, contains no other text that opens with an invocation to more than one god.

Such problems would not arise if, as other scholars have argued, *šar gimir dadmē* is Išum.[231] The god who is addressed in I 2, Ḫendursanga, is another theonym of Išum,[232] and the god is likewise invoked in I 4 as *išum ṭābiḫu na'du*, "Išum, zealous slaughterer." This seems to suggest that I 1 refers to him as well, for, as Cagni and Taylor note, the device whereby a protagonist is first addressed only by his epithets, and only called out by name in a later line, appears throughout Mesopotamian literature, both in Sumerian and in Akkadian, and is found in invocations that open other Akkadian literary texts, such as *Ludlul* I 1–4, SB *Anzû* I 1–4, and

[229] The addressee of I 2–22 is discussed below.

[230] As Taylor writes, "Such a hymn would have to be considered unbalanced to the point of incoherence." (2017, 21).

[231] Among others, Cagni (1975, 85), Machinist (1983, 222–223), George (2013, 49), and Taylor (2017, 21–24), and Wisnom (2019, 170).

[232] George 2015, 1 (with textual references).

Gilgamesh I 1–4.[233] However, it should be noted that the structure of *Erra* I 1-4, if they do invoke Išum, would be of a different kind than these three. They are each composed of a couplet of divine epithets, followed by a repetition of that couplet—though with one epithet, always at the beginning of the line, being replaced with the divine name. In contrast, *Erra* I 1-4 would be made up of two couplets, each made up of a line of epithets followed by a line starting with a divine name, without any repetition of the first line in the second, and with the same god being invoked by two different names. One possible explanation for this divergence is that the author of *Erra* had the invocations of compositions such as *Ludlul*, *Anzû*, and *Gilgamesh* in mind when composing his own, yet reworked their structure to suit his own style—which, as shown by the rest of *Erra*, eschewed the neat parallelisms and repetitions common in Akkadian poetry. Indeed, it would be strange for a poem as unique as Erra to begin with an unremarkable invocation.

That *Erra*'s author had the opening of *Anzû* in mind is suggested by content as well as form, for the language of *Anzû* I 1-4 is conspicuously similar to that of *Erra*:

I 1 [*b*]*īn šar dadmē šūpâ narām māmi*

[233] Cagni writes (1977 85), "The beginning of the poem has an undoubtedly hymnic character: and according to the pattern of the hymnic *incipit*, when the divinity celebrated is named in the second line (or shortly thereafter), the first line is composed exclusively of epithets referring to that divinity." Taylor notes (2017, 23), "In classical Mesopotamian 'lyrical' repetition, a poetic couplet is sometimes repeated immediately but with the insertion of a proper name… Although such classical poetic patterns are entirely lacking from the *Erra Song*… it appears nevertheless that the basic principle whereby a proper name is introduced after the first verse of a passage holds true here."

I 2 [*ga*]*šra luzzammur ila bukur* [*el*]*lil*
I 3 *ninurta šūpâ narām māmi*
I 4 *gašra lutta"id ila bukur ellil*

I 1 The [s]on of the king of the inhabited regions, the resplendent one, beloved of Mami,
I 2 The [might]ty one let me sing of, divine son[234] of [En]lil;
I 3 Ninurta, the resplendent, beloved by Mami,
I 4 The mighty one may I repeatedly praise, divine son of Enlil.

According to Wisnom, Išum being referred to as *šar gimir dadmē* is likely an instance of "intertextual competition," whereby Išum, the true hero of *Erra*, is shown to be even greater than Ninurta, the protagonist of *Anzû* (2019, 170). Whereas Ninurta is called [*b*]*īn šar dadmē*, "the son of the king of the inhabited regions," Išum would be *šar gimir dadmē*, the universal monarch himself. And while Ninurta is the son of Enlil (*bukur ellil*), Išum, as we learn from *Erra* II 2, is Enlil's firstborn heir (*apil ellil rest*[*û*]). Thus, the poet would show Išum to be greater than Ninurta.

Yet against such an identification of Išum as *šar gimir dadmē*, one may note that Išum, unlike Marduk, Anu, Ea, and Šamaš, is not given the epithet *šarru* anywhere else in the epic; it appears strange for the poet to call Išum king in the epic's opening line and nowhere else. One

[234] As the CAD notes (B, 310), in contrast to the use of the root *bkr* in other Semitic languages, *bukru* in Akkadian does not mean "eldest son" but simply "son" or "child." This is apparent, for instance, in *Enūma eliš* II 33, in which one finds the phrase *ina ilāni bukrīša*, "among the gods, her (Tiamat's) offspring."

may also argue that Išum's position in the pantheon seems too minor for the poet to have awarded him such a title, as Cavigneaux does:

> "je reste convaincu que l'incipit *šar gimir dadmê bānû kibrāti* ne peut guère – à moins d'une restitution difficilement imaginable – s'appliquer qu'à un dieu suprême, très vraisemblablement Marduk, et non à Išum, malgré toute la sympathie qu'on peut éprouver pour ce dieu qui n'entre en scène, je crois, qu'au vers I 2." (Cavigneaux 2022, 8)

It should be noted that, despite deeming Išum to be too minor a god for him to be called *šar gimir dadmē*, Cavigneaux follows the scholarly consensus in agreeing that Išum, under the name of Ḫendursanga, is the subject I 2, in which he is called "firstborn son of Enlil," as well "shepherd of the black-headed people." Yet these lofty epithets likewise seem discordant with Išum's position in the celestial hierarchy, and one imagines that, had it not been clear that they refer to Ḫendursanga, their attribution to Išum would be similarly, and unjustly, contested. If, despite Išum's minor standing in the pantheon, the poet saw fit to refer to him as Enlil's firstborn and the shepherd of the black-headed people, why would he not also call him *šar gimir dadmē*? Such praise would not be unusual in the context of Mesopotamian hymnic language, in which any god being addressed, whether minor or great, is described in the loftiest of terms.[235]

---

[235] As Bottéro (1998, 82–85) puts it, "…dans chaque adresse à une divinité donnée, celle-ci était volontiers exaltée par-dessus toutes les autres, réputée la première de toutes, la plus importante… On peut ne tenir une pareille attitude que pour un procédé, trop humain, de cette captatio benevolentiae qui sous-tend presque obligatoirement toute prière de demande : flatter celui dont on cherche à obtenir une faveur, pour être sûr de sa bienveillance. Mais il est clair qu'il y faut voir davantage : une nécessité réelle du sentiment religieux de ne point disperser sa force sur une multiplicité d'objets, mais de se projeter

Lovers, in their infatuation, may describe each other in ways that would seem hyperbolic in the extreme to an outsider; the same may have been true of the Mesopotamian worshipper, in the thrall of his devotion, and his god.

Such explanations might account for Išum being called *šar gimir dadmē*. Yet the god would also be hailed as *bānû kibrāti*, "creator of the world," a title attested twice elsewhere—once referring to the Anunnaki, and once to Šamaš.[236] The difference between Išum's prominence in Mesopotamian religion at large, and that implied by calling him *šar gimir dadmē*, is one of degree. Yet the distinction between what is known of Išum from other sources, and his being *bānû kibrāti*, is of kind. While it is true that whichever god is addressed by a worshipper is routinely described as supreme, gods are not often credited with feats that lie entirely outside

---

tout entier sur une personnalité unique, non en principe, mais en fait." Taylor, similarly, writes of such hymnic epithets that they "are flattering supplications, not articulations of a canonical theological system that transcends any particular text." (2017, 22).

[236] In the Old Babylonian version of *Etana*, the Anunna-gods are called *bānû kibrāti* (I 11. For an edition and commentary, Haul 2000, 163–230). Likewise, in the Standard Babylonian version of the composition, the Anunnaki are referred to as [*ba-nu*]-*ú kib-ra-a-ti* (I 11).[236] In *Lamaštu* I 83 (for an edition of the series, Farber 2014), Šamaš is described as *nūr ellâti u šaplāti bānû kibrāti*, "the light of the regions above and below, creator of the world."[236] That both the Anunna/Annunaki and Šamaš are credited with the world's creation demonstrates that this deed was not associated exclusively with any single god in Akkadian sources. This is only to be expected, yet it is more surprising that more than one god can seemingly be given credit for the deed within the same text: three lines earlier in *Lamaštu* (I 80), Ea is referred to as *bān kullati*, "creator of everything." If it was Ea who created everything, how could Šamaš have created the world? Once again, the language of hymnic praise does not seem to align with any consistent "theology," though it is possible that it is simply meant that Ea and Šamaš worked together to fashion the cosmos.

of their spheres of influence. To take one example: as Helle notes, if one read no Sumerian texts but those written by Enheduana, one would conclude that Inanna is the head of the pantheon (2023, 21). Yet Enheduana never claims that Inanna created the world, or fashioned mankind, or marks the months of the year by waxing and waning. These are the domains of other gods, and Inanna takes no part in them. By the same logic, while it would make sense for the poet, who evidently held Išum in the highest esteem, to credit him with supreme power, it is more difficult to account for him referring to Išum—who is not attested as a creator god, whether in the epic itself or in other texts in which he appears—as the creator of the world.[237] Yet this dissonance too may be illusory, for there exists at least one text in which a god not generally known as a creator is described as one. That is a *šu'ila*, known from Kouyunjik, to Nanna-Suen:

15 *bānû māta mušaršidu ešrēti nabû šumēšun*,
15 "Creator of the land, founder of sanctuaries, the one who called them by name."
(4R no. 9 with duplicates)[238]

[237] George writes, "The first four lines of Erra and Ishum constitute a four-line stanza of two balanced couplets (ll. 1–2, 3–4), in each of which the second line is headed by one of the addressee's names. The topic of the first couplet is Ishum's cosmic status: he is invoked as ruler of the world and son of the supreme deity. The second couplet dwells on his functions as first pastor, then warrior. The application of grand cosmic epithets to Ishum, the lowly minister of Erra, has disturbed many scholars, who have sought to place another god's name in the lacuna at the end of l. 1.8 This is unnecessary because, as we shall see later, the poem has good reason, in the particular context of war, to exalt Ishum above all others." (2011, 49). It would indeed make sense for Išum to be exalted by the poet above all other gods, yet George does not explain why Išum would also be described as the creator of the world.

[238] For edition of, and commentary on, the text, reconstructed from reconstructed from 4R no. 9 (K.2861 + K. 4999 + K. 5086 + K. 5297), K. 5343, K. 8416, and K. 5162, Sjöberg 1960, 167–179.

It may also be the case that the poet gave the titles *bānû kibrāti* and *šar gimir dadmē* to Išum on account of his having saved the world, for it could be said that, in protecting the world from Erra's wrath, Išum, in a sense, created it anew, and that in calming Erra down, which no god but him could do, he proved his supremacy over all other deities. This would parallel OB *Atrahasis,* in which the gods award the title *bēlet kala ilī*, "mistress of all the gods," to the goddess Mami after she created mankind (OB *Atrahasis* I 246-247). For Išum to be extolled in the prologue for things he accomplishes later would also parallel the lauding of Ninurta in the prologue of *Anzû* (I 11) as *kāšid mupparša anzâ ina kakkīšu*, "vanquisher of soaring Anzû with his weapons."[239] Yet Whereas Išum, the preserver of the world, could conceivably have been said to create (or recreate) it, the same is not true of Erra, believed by Farber to be *šar gimir dadmē* (2008, 265). For the poet to hail Erra as *bānû kibrāti* would fly in the face of all that is known of the god, for Erra is not a creator but destruction incarnate, and in the epic itself he threatens the cosmos with ruin. In contrast, Marduk is very much a creator god, and therefore appears a better candidate than either Erra or Išum to be *bānû kibrāti*. Yet this obviates none of the interpretive problems, outlined above, involved in Marduk being *šar gimir dadmē*! We seem to have arrived

[239] As discussed above, that the prologues of *Erra* and *Anzû* are both set later in time than the plot of the poems they introduce is argued, with potentially far-reaching consequences, by Taylor, who also cites *Anzû* I 11 (2017, 39-40).

at an interpretive impasse, yet a way out may perhaps be found in Reiner's second argument, to the discussion of which we now turn.

2. Living Through the Reign of Erra

In making her second argument, Reiner writes,

> A further indication of the fact that this epic was addressed and dedicated to Marduk in precedence to either Era or Išum is given by two amulet inscriptions (on those copies of the epic which have amulet shape), both of which invoke Marduk first.[240] (Reiner 1958, 42)

To offer an informed evaluation of this argument, the two amuletic incantations invoked by Reiner, and their broader context, should be discussed. The first is inscribed on LKA 169, which originally contained the entirety of the epic. The second is found on a copy of Tablet V from Nineveh published by King (Bu 91-5-9). These, as Reiner makes clear in her 1960 article, do not stand alone, for the language used in them is paralleled in twelve other known amuletic inscriptions. To these can be added an amulet published in KAL 4 (2011), two more texts edited by Maul in 2016, and one published in copy by George in the same year. This brings the total to eighteen amuletic inscriptions. Fourteen of these inscriptions are found on tablets bearing Neo-Assyrian script: eleven from Assur, two from Nineveh, one from Tell Halaf, and one of unknown provenance. Two of the inscriptions come not from Assyria, but Babylonia, being found on a different letter written by a man named Nabû-aḫḫa-iddina, who most likely lived in Neo-

[240] The copies of *Erra* to which Reiner is referring are KAR 169 and Bu 91-5-9, further discussed below.

Babylonian Uruk. The inscriptions can also be divided according to whether or not they are found on tablets bearing other compositions, and if so, which composition: two of the tablets are standalone amulets; five bear a namburbi-like prayer against witchcraft addressed to Ea, Šamaš, and Marduk, referred to below, after its incipit, as *Ea Šamaš Marduk*; three bear a namburbi against various evils whose incipit is *lumun šunāti*; two are manuscripts of *Erra*; two are letters; and three are in too fragmentary a state to tell whether or not non-amuletic compositions were written on them. All seventeen inscriptions are listed in the following table, and all but one (that on KAR 169, which is of particular importance for this discussion, and will be analyzed later) are then transliterated, along with the geometrical diagrams that accompany nine of them.

		Findspot, Period	Accompanying Composition on Tablet	Gods Invoked	Named Owner	Edition of Composition	Edition of Amuletic Inscription
1	Campbell Thompson 1940 no. 41	Unknown, Neo-Assyrian (script)	none	Marduk, Erra, Išum, the Seven	^{m}?-PA-TI-x		Campbell Thompson 1940, 111; Reiner 1960, 151
2	K 5984	Nineveh, Neo-Assyrian	none	Marduk, Erra, Išum, the Seven	Šumma-Nabû		Reiner 1960, 151
3	KAR 35	Assur, Neo-Assyrian	*Ea Šamaš Marduk*	Marduk, Išum	Bābu-aḫḫa-iddina	BaF 18, 181-184; AMD 8/2, 419–424	Reiner 1960, 151–153; BaF 18, 177; AMD 8/2, 425

4	KAR 261	Assur, Neo-Assyrian	*Ea Šamaš Marduk*	Marduk	Bulālu	BaF 18, 181-184; AMD 8/2, 419–424	Reiner 1960, 151–155; AMD 8/2, 425

5	Maul 2016 no. 1	Assur, Neo-Assyrian	*Ea Šamaš Marduk*	Marduk, Išum	Unspecified	Maul 2016, 137–139	Maul 2016, 138
6	MISC 261	Unknown, Neo-Assyrian (script)	*Ea Šamaš Marduk*	Marduk, Erra	Nabû-zēra-iddina	AMD 8/2, 419–424	AMD 8/2, 425
7	LKA 129 rev. 6-8	Assur, Neo-Assyrian	*Ea Šamaš Marduk*	Marduk, Nabû		BaF 18, 181–184; AMD 8/2, 419–424	Reiner 1960, 154, BaF 18, 182
8	LKA 128	Assur, Neo-Assyrian	*Lumun šunāti*	Marduk, Išum	Nabû-zēra-iqīša	BaF 18, 185–189	Reiner 1960, 151–153; Panayotov 2014
9	KAR 120	Assur, Neo-Assyrian	*Lumun šunāti*	Marduk	Bābu-aḫḫa-iddina	BaF 18, 185–189	Reiner 1960, 151–153
10–11	KAL 4 no. 22 (KAR 37+KAR 282+VAT 11219)	Assur, Neo-Assyrian	*Lumun šunāti*	Inscription 1: Marduk, [Erra], Išum	Bulālu	KAL 4, 51–54	KAL 4, 51–54

				Inscription 2: Marduk, Išum			
12	KAL 4 no. 23	Assur, Neo-Assyrian	Unknown (not preserved)	[Marduk], Išum	Unknown (not preserved)		KAL 4, 54
13	Maul 2016 no. 2	Assur, Neo-Assyrian	Unknown (not preserved)	Marduk, Išum	Unknown (not preserved)		Maul 2016, 139
14	KAR 169	Assur, Neo-Assyrian	*Erra* (entire text)	Marduk, Išum	Unknown (not preserved)	Taylor 2017 Manuscript W	Reiner 1960, 153
15	Bu 91-5-9	Nineveh, Neo-Assyrian	*Erra* V	Marduk	Unspecified	Taylor 2017 Manuscript Q	King 1896, 58 (copy) Reiner 1960, 153
16	Tell Halaf II 2096	Tel Halaf, Neo-Assyrian	Unknown (not preserved)	Marduk, Erra, Išum, Seven	Name left empty		Reiner 1960, 151 n. 5; KAL 4, 53

17	YBC 9087	Uruk, Neo-Babylonian	Economic letter	Marduk	Nabû-aḫḫa-iddina to Nabû-mušētiq-urri, his brother	YOS 3 no. 195 (copy), NBU K 91	Reiner 1960, 154
18	NBC 1092	Uruk, Neo-Babylonian	economic letter	Marduk	Nabû-aḫḫa-iddina to Ibni-Ištar, his father	BIN 1 no. 91, NBU C 195	Reiner 1960, 154

1. Campbell Thompson 1940 no. 41[241] (standalone amulet)

1 ^{d}AMAR.UTU ABGAL DINGIR
Marduk, sage of the god(s),
2 ^{d}*èr-ra qar-rad* DINGIR
Erra, warrior of the gods,
3 ^{d}*i-šum* NIMGIR SILA
Išum, watchman of the street,
4 ^{D}IMIN$^{!}$.BI *qar-rad la šá-na-an*
The seven, warriors unrivalled:
5 *ana-ku* ^{m}?-PA-TI-x DUMU$^{!}$ DINGIR$^{!}$-*šu*$^{!}$[242]
I am… son of his god,
6 ARAD *pa*$^{!}$(Campbell Thompson: Ú)-*liḫ-ku-nu*
Your worshipful servant,
7 *ina di-ʾi šib-bi šib-ṭi*
In disease, illness, pestilence,

[241] I could find no photos of the amulet, which is kept in the Iraq museum, and it does not seem to be on CDLI. Reiner, who produced the transliteration followed here, does not claim to have collated the amulet (1960, 151). Rather, she appears to have amended Campbell Thompson's copy while drawing on the duplicate amulet K.5984, marking the updated values with exclamation marks. These are reproduced here to mark Reiner's divergences from Campbell Thompson rather than to indicate unexpected sign forms.

[242] Campbell Thompson transliterates these signs as ^{m}*Ḫa-pa-ti-ra-tab-ba*(?), which Reiner amends to ^{m}ḪA-PA-TI-x DUMU$^{!}$ DINGIR$^{!}$-*šú*$^{!}$. The phrase DUMU (or A) DUMU-*šú* is only to be expected here, yet a name beginning with ^{m}ḪA-PA-TI seems unlikely: the only name listed in PNA as beginning with ^{m}ḪA-PA is *ḫa-pa-šá-ia*, known from a single attestation from the reign of Sennacherib (PNA 2/I, 458). It is tempting, instead, to take PA and TI as signifying *Nabû* and *balāṭu*, respectively. Assuming that PA(*Nabû*) is the name's first element, PNA 2/II lists four possible parallel names (806-808): *Nābû-balāssu-iqbi*, *Nābû-balāṭu-ēreš*, *Nābû-balāṭu-iddina*, and *Nābû-balāṭu tabanni*. Without collating the amulet, it is impossible to say which of these, if any, is likely.

8 ⌜*ú*⌝-*kul-ti èr-ra*[243] ÚŠ.MEŠ[244]
The devouring of Erra, plague,
9 [BAL-*e*] *èr-ra ka-šú-šú*[245]
[The] reign of Erra, annihilation,
10 *lu* ÁB-*ni-ma*[246] *dá-lí-lí-ku-nu*

[243] Campbell Thompson transliterates these signs as *taš*(?)-*nu-ti èr-ra*, while Reiner has *x-nu-ti èr-ra*. However, it is more likely that they should be read as ⌜*ú*⌝-*kul-ti èr-ra* for *ukulti erra*, "the devouring of Erra," a phrase attested elsewhere and that likely refers to famine or plague (Taylor 2017, 80–82).

[244] A nearly identical litany of disasters to that mentioned in ll. 7-8 is also found in the only manuscript of *Lumun šunāti* which does not bear an amuletic inscription (Goetze 1939 no. 8:14–15, BaF 18, 186 Manuscript D 14–15), though it is too fragmentary to help reconstruct these lines of Thompson 1940 no. 41 or the equivalent lines of the duplicate K.5984.

[245] Campbell Thompson transliterates the line as [d]*Irra ka-šú-šú*, and translates "… Irra, the powerful." In her edition, Reiner has [x x] [d]*Ìr-ra ka-šú-šú*, which she translates as "[…] of the strong Erra (or: the fierce […] of Erra)" (1960, 151). The line can now be reconstructed differently based on an apodosis in *Bârūtu*, BAL-*e* [d]U.GUR *ka-šú-šú*, "The reign of Nergal, annihilation" (CT 20 no. 31:78 [Koch-Westenholz 2000, 306 Text A rev. 15]). The phrase *palê nergal* is found in omen apodoses, and is "associated with social disintegration and enemy attack" (Taylor 2017, 116). The parallel phrase *palê erra* is not attested, yet, as Taylor notes, "Although the phrase 'the reign of Nergal' is applied only to Nergal in surviving omens, the sentiment of these passages would not be at all out of character for Erra" (2017, 116). Such a phrase would belong to the same category as *ukulti erra*, "the devouring of Erra," found in the previous line of this amulet, as well as two phrases discussed by Taylor (2017, 85–86): *ūmē erra*, "the days of Erra," (attested only in K.2279 rev. 4 [transliteration available on eBL]), and *dabdê erra*, "the massacre of Erra," known from an inscription of Ashurbanipal (RINAP 5/2 no. 186:30). It is also possible that the phrase *dabdê erra* appeared in this line of the amulet rather than *palê erra*.

[246]Reiner transliterates *rím-ni-ma*, yet this appears grammatically incorrect, as one would expect the 2nd pl. plural imperative *rīmânni*. Borger lists ÁB as signifying the verb *rêmu*, "to have mercy" (2010, 584. For a discussion of the values of ÁB, p. 396); such a logographic reading for ÁB—as opposed to the conventional *rím* or *réme*—would enable the reading of ÁB-*ni-ma* as the expected *rīmânnīma*. Likewise, it would serve to ameliorate apparent grammatical errors in three names found in Assyrian economic texts, which are transliterated by the CAD (R, 264) as [d]*Marduk-rém-ni* (JCS 7 no. 80 obv. 20), [[d]*Ada*]*d-rém-ni* (JCS 7 no. 83 rev. 2), and [d]*Sin-rém-ni* (ADD 147 [K.347] obv. 3), and in all of which one would expect *rīmânni*. A demonstration of the logographic use of ÁB for another permutation of the root *r'm* is found in Ashurnasirpal's *Standard Inscription* (RIMAP 2 A.0.101.1), in which Ninurta is described as DINGIR ÁB-*ú* (l. 9)—signs which, as Borger notes (2010, 397), should be read *ilu rēmēnû*, "merciful god." Similarly, a

Have mercy on me, and your praises
11 *a-na* UN.MEŠ *ṣal-mat* SAG.DU
To the black-headed people
12 *a-na* EGIR UD.MEŠ *lud-lul*
Till the end of time may I sing.

2. **K. 5984** (Šumma-Nabû, standalone amulet)
o 1 [^{d}AMAR.UTU ABGAL] DINGIR.⌜ME⌝ [247]
[Marduk, sage of the] god(s),
o 2 [^{d}*èr-r*]*a qar-rad* DINGIR.⌜ME⌝
[Err]a, warrior of the god(s),
o 3 [^{d}]⌜*i*⌝*-šum* DIŠ+U SILA
[I]šum, watchman of the street,
o 4 [^{d}IMIN$^{!}$.B]I *qar-*⌜*rad*⌝ *la šá-na-an*
[The seve]n, warrior(s) unrivaled:
o 5 [*ana-ku*] ^{m}*šum*$_{4}$*-ma-*^{d}pa a DINGIR-*šú*
[I am] Šumma-Nabû, son of his god,
o 6 [ARA]D *pa-liḫ-ku-nu*
Your worshipful [servant],
o 7 [*ina d*]*i-ʾi šib-bi šib-ṭi*
[In dise]ase, illness, pestilence,
o 8 [*ú-kul*]*-ti* ⌜*èr*⌝*-ra* ⌜úš.me⌝
[The devour]ing of Erra, plague,
o 9 [BAL-*e*] *èr-ra* [*ka-šú-šú*]
[The reign of] Erra, [annihilation],

---

logographic use, implied by Borger (2010, 397), of ÁB for *rīmūtu*, "gift" (derived from *râmu* B, "to present, to grant"), could help ameliorate instances of apparent *gebrochene Schreibung* in Assyrian texts, such as IGI ^{m}*rím-ut*, understood in SAA 6 as "witness Remuttu" (no. 192 rev. 7') and $^{[m]}$⌜*rém*⌝*-u-tú*, "Remuttu" (SAA 7 no. 1 obv. i 15). In fact, SAA 14 implicitly understands ÁB in this way, as evidenced by the name ^{m}*rém-ti-*DINGIR being rendered in SAA's translation as "Remutti-il" (no. 177 obv. 14). It is possible that ÁB, which can be read as *lītu* or *arḫu*, both meaning "cow," was used to signify both *rêmu* and *rīmūtu* because of phonetic similarity to *rīmtu*, which likewise means "cow;" such a process would parallel the use of ÁB in astronomical texts to mean not *arḫu*, "cow," but the homonymous *arḫu*, "month" (Neugebauer 1955, 467).

[247] Only traces of ME remain.

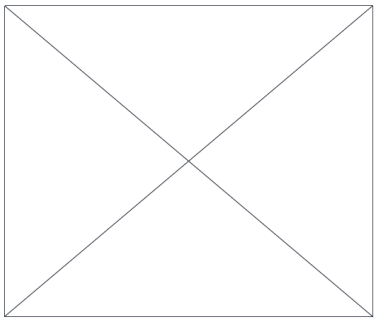
o 10 [*lu* Á]B-⌜*ni*⌝ [traces][248]
[have mer]cy on me…

r 1 [*dá*ʔ-*lí*ʔ]-*lí*ʔ-*ku*ˡ-⌜*nu*⌝
(And) *your praises*

r 2 [*ana*] UN.[MEŠ *ṣal*]-*mat* SAG.DU
[To] the [bla]ck-headed people

r 3 *ana* ⌜EGIR UD⌝.ME
To the end of time

r 4 *lud-lu*[*l*] ÉN
May I sin[g]: Incantation.



LKA 129 (*Ea Šamaš Marduk*)

[DING]IR SILIM.MU UMUN ^{d}A[SA]L.LÚ.ḪI
[The g]od of my wellbeing is lord A[sa]lluḫi.

DINGIR SILIM.MU UMUN ^{d}AMAR.UTU
[The g]od of my wellbeing is lord Marduk.

DINGIR SILIM.MU UMUN ^{d}AG
[The g]od of my wellbeing is lord Nabu.

[248] In her transliteration, Reiner marks this line (obv. 10) as well as the following rev. 1 as single line, "[broken]". However, some signs can be read: the latter half of ÁB is visible, as well as the sign marked as *ku*ˡ in the following line. Traces of other signs can also be discerned. However, it is difficult to map the parallel line in Campbell Thompson 1940 no. 41, *lu* ÁB-*ni-ma dá-lí-lí-ku-nu*, onto what remains in these two lines, and the reading given here is provisional.

Tell Halaf II 2096

ÉN ^{d}ŠÚ ABGAL DINGIR.MEŠ ^{d}*èr-ra* UR.SAG DINGIR.MEŠ ^{d}*i-šum* NIMGIR SILA ^{d}IMIN.BI UR.SAG *la*$^{!}$ *šá-na-an* x ÁB^{me}[249] *a-na* (empty space) *šuk-na* [...]

Incantation: O Marduk, sage of the gods, Erra, warrior of the gods, Išum, watchman of the street, the Seven, warrior[s] unrivaled... have mercy on (empty space) [...]

YBC 9087 rev. 3–4

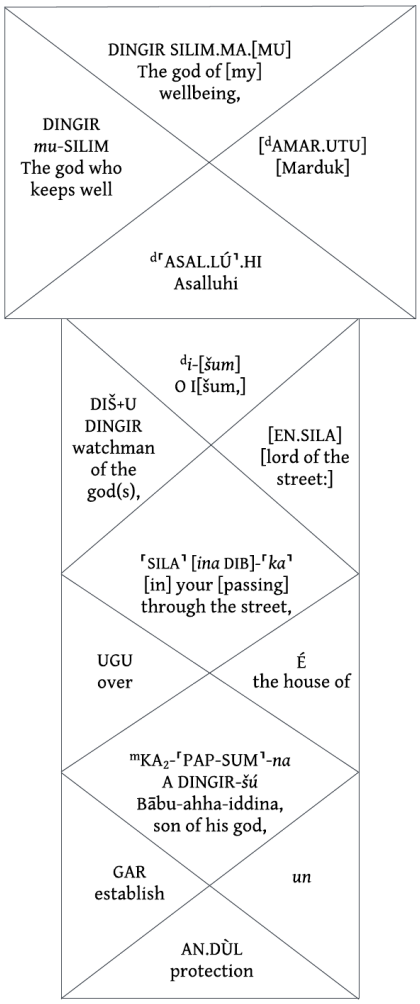
DINGIR SILIM.MU
The god of my wellbeing
^{d}ASAL.LÚ.ḪI
is Asalluḫi.

NBC 1092 rev. 11–12

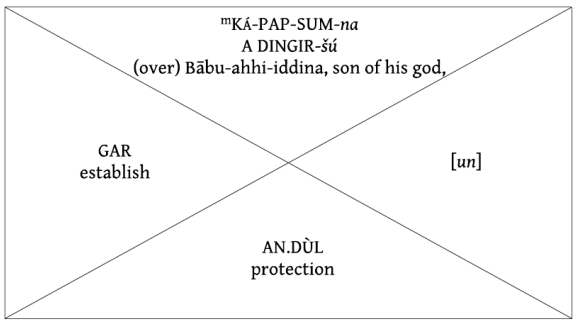
DINGIR SILIM.MU
The god of my wellbeing
^{d}ASAL.ˈLÚ. ḪIˈ
is Asalluḫi.

[249] To be read *rēme* (see note on **Campbell Thompson 1940 no. 41** l. 10 above).

KAR 35 (*Ea Šamaš Marduk*, Bābu-ahha-iddina)



KAR 120 (*Lumun šunāti*, Bābu-ahha-iddina**)**

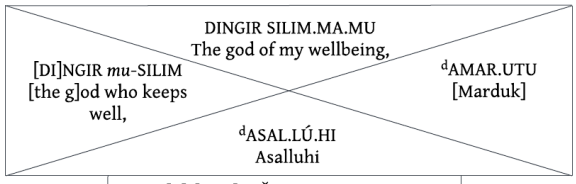


Maul 2011 no. 22 (*Lumun šunāti*, Bulalu) **Inscription 1 (obv. 1'-4')**

[É]N dŠÚ ABGAL DI[NGIR.MEŠ ÈR-RA *qar-rad* DINGIR.MEŠ]
ˀdˀ*i-šum* DIŠ+U [SILA dIMIN.BI *qar-rad la šá-na-an*]
[*ana*]-*ku bul-la-lu* A DING[IR-šú...]
[...] x-*an-ni-ma dà-lí-lí-k*[*u-nu lud-lul*]

[Incan]tation: O Marduk, sage of the go[ds, Erra, warrior of the gods], Išum, watchman [of the street, the Seven, warrior(s) unrivalled,
[I] am Bulālu, son of [his] go[d...]
[...] me, so [I will sing] your praises

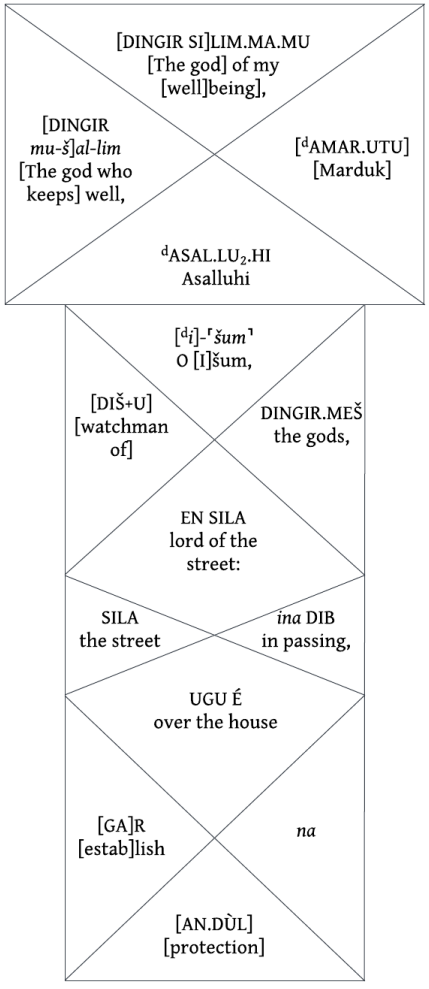
Inscription 2 (rev. 14-20)



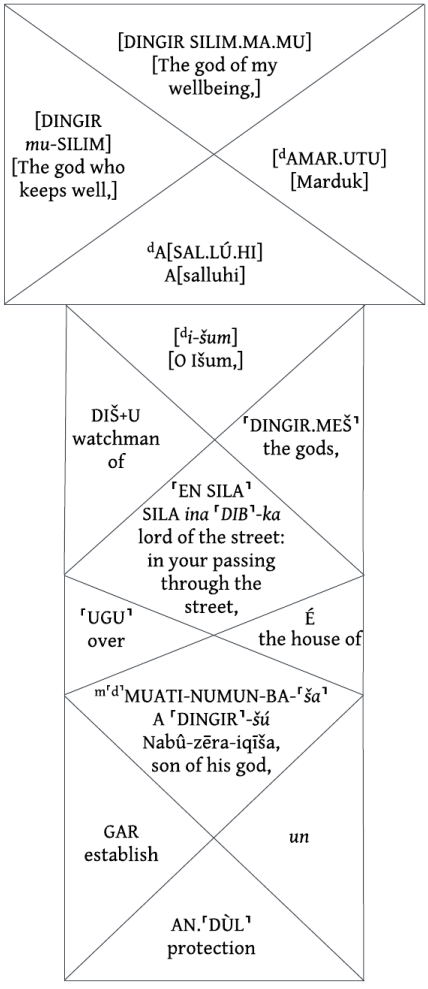
ˀ*i*ˀ-ˀ*šum*ˀ DIŠ+U DINGIR EN SILA
[SILA *ina* DIB]-*ka ša tuš-ba-ʾa*
[UGU É *šá*] m*bu-lu-lu* A DINGIR-*šú*
[GAR]-*un* AN.DUL
O Išum, watchman of the gods, lord of the street:
[the street in] your [passing] what(ever) you make pass, [over the house of] Bulālu, son of his god,
[estab]lish protection

[...]

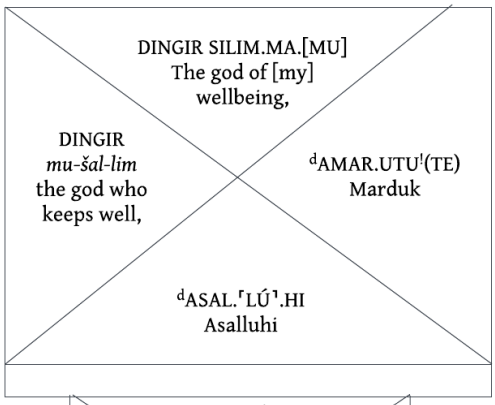
Maul 2016 no. 1 (*Ea Šamaš Marduk*)

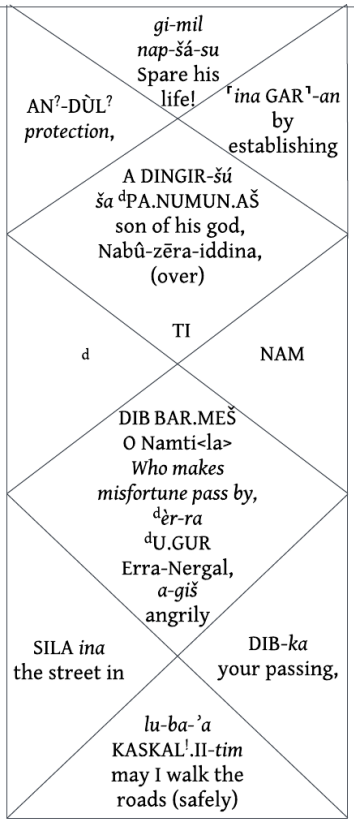


LKA 128 (*Lumun šunāti*, Nabû-zēra-iqīša)

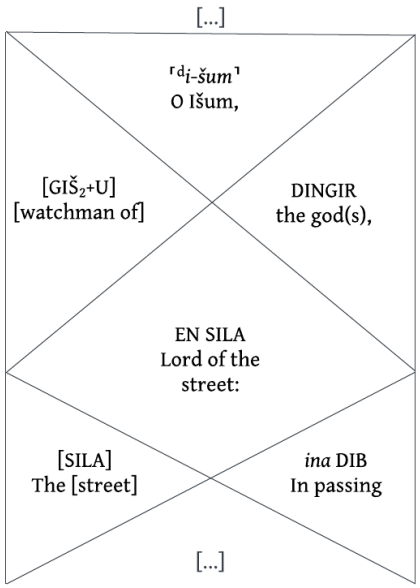


MISC 61 (*Ea Šamaš Marduk*, Nabû-zēra-iddina)

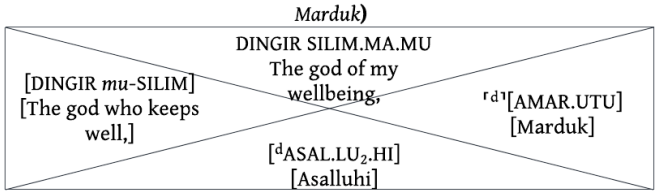




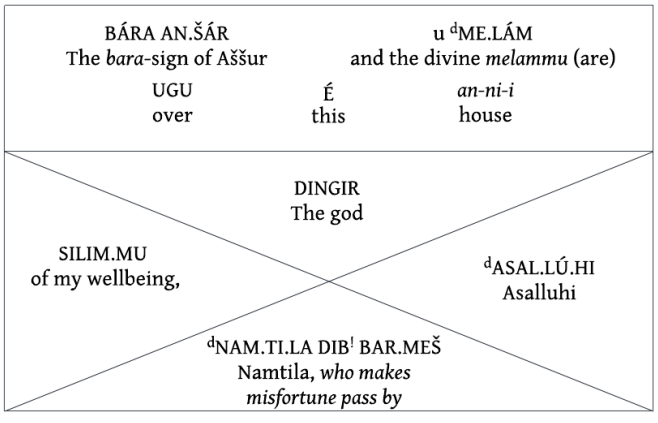
Maul 2016 no. 2



KAR 261 (*Ea Šamaš Marduk***)**



Bu 91-5-9, 174 (*Erra* V Manuscript)



Notes

MISC 61 when viewing the reverse of the tablet, which bears the square containing the invocation to Asalluḫi-Marduk, the signs read here as *ša* ^{md}PA-NUMUN-AŠ ⌜*ina* GAR⌝-*an* AN$^{?}$-DÙL$^{?}$ *gi-mil nap-šá-su* appear "flipped." This means that, while in this diagram it appears as though *ša* ^{md}PA.NUMUN.AŠ should be read before *gi-mil nap-šá-su*, the opposite is true. The god who is here asked to lay his protection upon Nabû-zēra-iddina may be Asalluḫi-Marduk (as understood by Abusch and Schwemer [AMD 8/2, 425]), or ^{d}NAM.TI.<LA>. The latter option may be more likely, as the curious order in which ^{d} NAM.TI.<LA> is spelled—with TI above DINGIR and NAM—requires that the eye go "up" towards *ša* ^{d}PA.NUMUN.AŠ. Whether the god being asked for protection is Asalluḫi-Marduk or ^{d}NAM.TI.<LA> however, the god's name would be written upside down vis-à-vis the request for his protection.

MISC 61 KASKAL$^{!}$.II-*tim*: this reading, normalized as *ḫarrānāti*, "roads," is adopted from Abusch and Schwemer (AMD 8/2, 425).

MISC 61, Bu 91-5-9: the reading ^{d} NAM.TI.LA (in MISC 61 NAM.TI.<LA>) DIB BAR.MEŠ, to be tentatively normalized as *namtila mušētiq aḫâti*, "Namtila, who makes misfortune pass by," is taken from Abusch and Schwemer (AMD 8/2, 425).

Typology

Twelve of the eighteen amuletic inscriptions listed above can be said to belong to one of two types: Type A, which begins with DINGIR SILIM.MA.MU, and Type B, which begins with MARDUK ABGAL DINGIR.MEŠ. Inscriptions of each type are largely identical. Four of the remaining five are more heterogeneous, both in phrasing and in geographical origin, yet all have in common that they invoke Asalluḫi as DINGIR.SILIM.MU. KAR 169, which is of special importance to this discussion, cannot be said to belong to any of these types and will be discussed below.

Type A (*Elements 1 and 2 preserved*: Maul 2016 no. 1; LKA 128; KAR 35; KAL 4 no. 22 Inscription 2, MISC 61. *Only Element 1 preserved*: KAR 120; KAR 261; KAL 4 no. 23; Maul 2016 no. 2)

1. An invocation of Asalluḫi-Marduk as DINGIR.SILIM.MA.MU and *ilu mušallim*(*u*).

2. An invocation, made in the second person singular, and possibly optional,[250] either of Išum as "the herald of the god(s)" (*nāgir ili/ilāni*) and *bēl sūqi*, "lord of the street," or, in one case (MISC 61), of Erra-Nergal, requesting that he establish protection (*andullu*) over a house when going along the street (*sūqi ina etēqīka*, "when you pass through the street," [lit. "the street in your passing"]. Fittingly, when such a request is made to Erra in MISC 61, it begins with *sūqi aggiš ina etēqīka*, "when you pass through the streets angrily").

Type B (Campbell Thompson 1940 no. 41; K. 5984; Tell Halaf II 2096; KAL 4 no. 2 Inscription 1)

1. Invocations, in the following order, of Marduk as *apkal ilāni*, "the sage of the gods," Erra as *qarrad ilāni*, "hero of the gods," Išum as *nāgir sūqi*, "herald of the street," and the Seven as *qarrad lā šanan*, "warrior(s) unrivaled,"
2. A request, in the second person plural, for these deities to have mercy on the worshipper in the midst of calamity, and the promise of subsequent praise.

Type C (Bu 91-5-9,174; LKA 129; YBC 9087; NBC 1092)

All amulets of this type include an invocation to Asalluḫi as DINGIR SILIM.MU. Otherwise, their phrasing diverges: in Bu 91-5-9,174, the invocation to Asalluḫi is preceded by a house blessing (BÁRA AN.ŠÁR *u* ^{d}ME.LÁM UGU É *an-ni*, "the *bara*-sign of Aššur and the divine *melammu* are over this house"). This inscription also contains an invocation of NAM.TI.LA DIB BAR.MEŠ, "Namtila, who

[250] Four inscriptions of Type A (KAR 120, KAR 261, KAL 4 no. 23, Maul 2016 no. 2) preserve Element 1 but not Element 2. Yet due to the fragmentary state of these inscriptions it cannot be ascertained whether they originally contained both elements, and, by extension whether Element 2 was optional in inscriptions of Type A. As noted above, only one amulet, Bu 91-5-9, 174, is known to have contained Element 1 but not 2. However, it should be noted that this inscription still contained a house-blessing: BÁRA AN.ŠÁR *u* ^{d}ME.LÁM UGU É *an-ni*, "the *bara*-sign of Aššur and the *melammu* (is) over this house." This blessing can be seen as equivalent to Element 2).

makes misfortune pass by" (such an invocation also appears, in addition to elements of Type A, in MISC 61). In the context of the discussion of Bu 91-5-9, 174, one should also mention Bu 91-5-9,186, which is also an amulet-shaped manuscript of *Erra* V and bears identical magical diagrams (however, these were left uninscribed, and this manuscript is therefore not included in the table above).[251] In addition to invoking Asalluḫi as DINGIR.SILIM.MU, the inscription on LKA 129 also refers to him as UMUN, "lord." It is apparently unique among the amuletic inscriptions in invoking Nabu, as well as in invoking gods as UMUN. It is also the only inscription in which Asalluḫi and Marduk are referred to by identical titles.

Two further distinctions between the three types can be noted. First, whereas inscriptions of Type A are always set, whether wholly or partly,[252] within "magical diagrams," those of Type B never employ them (this holds true even when inscriptions of both types are found on the same tablet, as in KAL 4 no. 22).[253] Inscriptions of Type C are sometimes set within magical diagrams

[251] Bu 91-5-9,186 was likewise published by King in copy and transliteration (1896, 56-61), and is listed as Manuscript S in Taylor's edition.

[252] The only section of inscriptions of Type A not fully set within a magical diagram is the latter part of KAL 4 no. 22 Inscription 2.

[253] In addition to an inscription of Type B, Tel Halaf II 2096 contains parts of magical diagrams, which have been left uninscribed. Maul argues that this, combined with the fact that the space for the owner's name in the inscription was left blank, indicates that the tablet was never dedicated to any specific person (BaF 18, 180). However, K.5984, which contains a dedication, likewise contains a blank magical diagram. It cannot be ascertained whether these diagrams were originally meant to contain an

(Bu 91-5-9) and sometimes not (LKA 129; YBC 9087; NBC 1092.) Second, while two inscriptions of Type B are known to appear without any accompanying composition,[254] those of Type A are either known to have been accompanied by one of two compositions—the aforementioned *Ea Šamaš Marduk* or *Lumun šunāti*—or are in too fragmentary a state to know whether or not other compositions accompanied them, and those of Type C are always accompanied by a composition.

Epithets

As far as I am aware, it has not been noted in the literature concerning these amuletic inscriptions that invocation to Marduk-Asalluḫi is paralleled exactly by *Udug-ḫul* III 193:

> dingir silim-ma-mu ^{d}asal-lú-ḫi
> DINGIR *mu-šal-li-mu* AMAR.UTU

This suggests that such invocations in the amulets were taken from this line of *Udug-ḫul*. If so, there are grammatical implications. In the two lines preceding *Udug-ḫul* III 193, an appeal is made to a divine being responsible for a certain aspect of the speaker's wellbeing, udug sig$_5$-ga-mu/*šēdu dumqīya* (III 191) and ^{d}lamma sig$_5$-ga-mu/*lamassi dumqīya* (III 192). If the phrase dingir

inscription of Type A within the magical diagrams, to accompany the Type B inscription, or were intended to be left blank.
]

[254] Campbell Thompson 1940 no. 41 and K 5984. Tel Halaf II 2096 is too fragmentary to tell whether it was accompanied by another text.

silim-ma-mu has the same grammatical structure, then one should presumably translate it, not as "the god who keeps me well," but rather as "the god of my well-being" (which would be paralleled by Akk. *il*(*u*) *šalāmīya*). This translation of dingir silim-ma-mu appears more likely in light of the very next line (III 194), in which Sumerian silim-ma is paralleled by the noun *šalāmu*, as well in that of a different line in the same tablet of *Udug-ḫul* (III 67), in which silim-ma-mu is translated as *šalāmīya*: ^{d}mes.sag.unug^{ki} nímgir kullaba^{ki}-ke$_4$ nam-ti-la silim-ma-mu egir-mu DU.DU-dé/^{d}MIN *nāgir kullabi ana balāṭīya u šalāmīya arkīya littallak*, "may Mes-sag-unug, the herald of Kullaba, follow behind me for my life and well-being." Moreover, in *Udug-ḫul* II 95, which contains the only other known attestation of the participle *mušallimu* in *Udug-Ḫul*, it is paralleled, not by silim-ma, but by an imperfective verbal form: za-e ab-silim-bi me-en/*attāma mušallimšina*, you are the one who keeps it (humanity) well.

All this suggests that the phrases dingir silim-ma-mu and *ilu mušallimu* in *Udug-Ḫul* III 193 may not be grammatically equivalent. If that is indeed the case, and if the invocation to Marduk in inscriptions of *Type A* was taken from *Udug-ḫul* III 193, then one would presumably understand DINGIR.SILIM.MA.MU, as it appears in these amulets, not as "the god who keeps me well," but as "the god of my well-being." The invocation to Marduk-Asalluḫi on amulets on Type A could then be translated as "The god of my wellbeing is Asalluḫi, the god who keeps (me) well is Marduk."

The epithets used for Išum in amulets of type A, *nāgir ilāni* and *bēl sūqi*, find an exact parallel in another incantation series, *Muššu'u*:

> *ša* ^{d}*i-šum* NÍMGIR (var. *na-gir*) DINGIR.MEŠ EN SILA(var. *su-qu*) *šú*
>
> He (the patient) is (under the protection) of Išum, herald of the gods, lord of the street.
>
> (V 80)[255]

A manuscript bearing this line of *Muššu'u* was found at Assur,[256] and it is possible that the authors of the amuletic inscriptions of Type A, many of which were also excavated in Assur, copied these titles of Išum from that incantation series. Similar epithets are given to Išum in other incantations. In a Namburbi, also found at Assur (LKA 115), he is called *bēl sūqi*. In *Udug-ḫul*, Išum is also called nimgir sila-a sìg-ga-ke$_4$/*nāgir sūqi šaqummi*, "herald of the silent street" (V 63), as well as NIMGIR GAL/*nāgiru rabû*, "great herald" (XIII-XV 92), and nimgir gi$_6$ ù-na-ke$_4$/*nāgir mūši šaqummi* "herald of the silent night" (XIII-XV 194). Similarly, in amulets of Type B, Išum is referred to as *nāgir suqi*.

---

[255] For an edition of *Muššu'u*, Böck 2007.

[256] KAV 154, which is listed as Manuscript N in this section of Böck's edition of *Muššu'u* (2007). Taylor implicitly lists KAV 154 as belonging to *Muššu'u*, refering the reader to Böck's edition (2017, 579), yet she also cites the text separately as "Fragmentary God-List," and lists its genre as god-list (2017, 592). However, there is no reason to suppose that KAV 154 is anything but a fragment of *Muššu'u*, rather than a god-list.

That MISC 61 invokes ^{d}*èr-ra* ^{d}U.GUR, "Erra-Nergal," has only one parallel: in the first line of an amulet, likewise published by Reiner, bearing *Erra* III 201–213,[257] Erra is referred to as ^{d}IGI.DU ^{d}*èr-ra*, "Nergal-Erra," where a different manuscript has the expected [*qu-r*]*a-du* ^{d}*èr-ra*.[258] Taylor notes that this is an amulet in which idiosyncratic spellings are common, and writes that its use of ^{d}IGI.DU ^{d}*èr-ra* may have been an error (2016, 110). However, the parallel in MISC 61 indicates that it was deliberate. That the two appearances of such "hyphenated" invocations of Erra and Nergal are found in amulets may imply that such invocations were considered to have greater magical power, as calling on both aspects of the god may have been believed to grant more protection (the same may have been true of the invocation of both Marduk and Asalluḫi in amulets of Type A).

3. The Curious Case of KAR 169

Key to evaluating Reiner's second argument is KAR 169, a tablet believed by scholars to have originally contained the entirety of *Erra*.[259] Reiner's exact wording bears repeating:

> A further indication of the fact that this epic was addressed and dedicated to Marduk in precedence to either Era or Išum is given by two amulet inscriptions (on those copies

[257] BM 118,998, edited in Reiner 1960, 149, and listed in Taylor's edition as Manuscript O.

[258] Taylor's ‚man. Z rev. iv 3'.

[259] Other fragments of the tablet to which KAR 169 belonged, along with line numbers, are listed under Manuscript W in Taylor's edition (2017, 390).

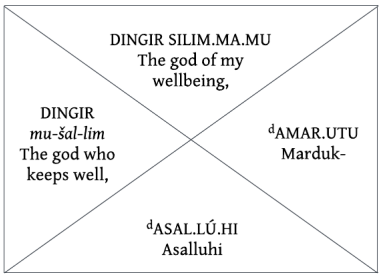
> of the epic which have amulet shape), both of which invoke Marduk first. (Reiner 1958, 42)

First, it should be noted that the statement "both of which invoke Marduk first" is somewhat misleading where Bu 91-5-9,174 is concerned, since Marduk is the only god invoked in the amuletic inscription that tablet bears. That the inscription on KAR 169 is not only found on a copy of *Erra*, but appears to contain invocations to multiple gods—and within which, therefore, it can really be said that Marduk is invoked first—makes it of special importance for this discussion. This is the text of the inscription, based on the copy found in KAR 1:

1 [.....]-˹ŠI˺ AMAR.UTU
2 [.....*n*]*am-gir su-u-qí*
3 [.....].MEŠ GAR-*un* AN.DÙL
4 [.....] *ina* KÁ.MEŠ-*šú*
5 [.....] *pa-liḫ-ka*

This amulet does not fit neatly into the typology outlined above. While it shares the greatest affinity with inscriptions of Type A, it also has one similarity to Type Type B, as well as features not paralleled in amulets of either type. The clearest feature of Type A found here is a request for protection, "GAR-*un* AN.DÙL." This request, which is made with a 2nd mas. sg. imperative, is most likely addressed to Išum, as in other amulets of Type A; yet the epithet used here for Išum, whose name has not been preserved, is [*n*]*amgir sūqi*, which is only given to Išum on amulets of type B (though in this case it is spelled syllabically rather than logographically). If the restoration of ˹ŠI˺ in the inscription's first line is correct, then it seems reasonable to follow

Reiner in reconstructing the line end of the line as [DINGIR *mu-šal*]-ˈ*lim*ˀ AMAR.UTU. Yet if so, this amulet would be the only one in which this invocation of Marduk is not set within a magical diagram. Had such a diagram been present one would have expected it, based on amulets of Type A (e.g. Maul 2016 no. 1 and MISC 61), to look like this:



Reiner (1960, 153) reconstructs Line 1 and the beginning of Line 2 of the inscription as [DINGIR.SILIM.MA.MU DINGIR *mu-šal*]-ˈ*lim*ˀ AMAR.UTU/ [ASAL.LÚ. ḪI....], a reconstruction evidently resulting from reading the diagrams on amulets of Type A as one would a cuneiform text, from top to bottom and left to right. Yet it seems better to follow the structure *Udug-ḫul* III 193, from which this invocation was likely taken, and therefore reconstruct line 1 as [DINGIR.SILIM.MA.MU ASAL.LÚ.ḪI DINGIR *mu-šal*]-ˈ*lim*ˀ AMAR.UTU. How should one reconstruct Line 2? It could not have duplicated exactly any inscriptions of Type A given above, for in all of them Išum is called *nāgir ili/ilāni bēl sūqi*, whereas here he is given the title [*n*]*amgir sūqi*. Still, it seems likely that Išum's name would appear in this line. This would result in the following reconstruction:

1 [DINGIR.SILIM.MA.MU DINGIR *mu-šal*]-˹*lim*˺ AMAR.UTU [……ᵈ*i-šum*….
n]*am-gir su-u-qí*

As can be seen, this reconstruction does not account for much of line 2, and it is possible that, as in inscriptions of Type B, Erra, as UR.SAG DINGIR.MEŠ, "the hero of the gods," was invoked there as well. As for Line 3, one would expect the request for Išum's protection to be preceded, as in Amulets of type A, by SILA *ina* DIB-*ka*, "when you pass through the street." In amulets of Type A the request for Išum's protection is typically preceded by the naming of the worshipper. However, as argued below, in KAR 169 this was likely done in Line 5. The MEŠ sign immediately before gar-*un* AN.DÙL is conceivably a plural marker attached to whatever Išum is implored to protect, perhaps É, "house," paralleling UGU É [GA]R-*na* [AN.DÙL] in Maul 2016 no. 1, or KÁ, paralleling the end of Line 4. The former seems more likely, as one would not expect "gates" to be mentioned twice, yet for Išum to be asked to safeguard many houses, rather than a single house, would be without known parallel.

As ll. 1-3 do not conform entirely with any other amulet, they cannot be confidently reconstructed, especially without the collation of KAR 169, currently published only in Ebeling's copy. Line 4, which ends with KÁ.MEŠ-*šú*, has one possible parallel. K.8414, a text yet to be edited but found, in transliteration, on eBL, contains what seems to be a dialogue between a hunter—the Assyrian king, maybe?—and Nergal, who, among other things, assures the hunter that he will go before him and slay his enemies (ll. 7'–17'). In it, one can find the line [...] KÁ.MEŠ -*šú šá*

šul-me ⌜*i*ʾ⌝ […], which can be reconstructed, perhaps, as [*ina* K]Á.MEŠ-*šú šá šul-me* ⌜*i*⌝-[*ru-ub*…],[260] "[into] his gates of wellbeing [he will enter (*irrub*)/he has entered (*īrub*)]."[261] Such a wish seems appropriate after a request for protection, and a variant of it may have appeared in Lines 3-4 of the inscription on KAR 169.[262] Last, large parts of line 5 can be partially reconstructed more confidently based on two amulets of Type B, Campbell Thompson 1940 no. 41 and K.5984,[263] as containing the name of the worshipper. This produces this general reconstruction:

1 [DINGIR.SILIM.MA.MU ASAL.LÚ.ḪI DINGIR *mu-šal*]-⌜*lim*⌝ AMAR.UTU
2 [……^{d}*i-šum*…. *n*]*am-gir su-u-qí*
3 [SILA *ina* DIB-*ka* UGU…… É$^{?}$/KÁ$^{?}$].MEŠ GAR-*un* AN.DÙL
4 [……] *ina* KÁ.MEŠ-*šú*
5 [……*anāku* PN A DINGIR-*šú* ARAD] *pa-liḫ-ka*

1 [the god of my wellbeing is Asalluḫi, the god who keeps] (me) well is Marduk
2 [……Išum…. he]rald of the street,
3 [When you pass through the street, (over)… *the house*/*gate*]s establish protection,
4 [……] in his gates,
5 [……I am PN, the son of his god, the servant] who fears you (ms. sg.).

---

[260] eBL reconstructs [ana K]Á-MEŠ-*šú šá šul-me* ⌜*i*ʾ⌝-[…].

[261] 2'. Compare *Ludlul* V 44: *ina kasilima šulmāna appaqid*, "In *kasilima* (Sum: gate of wellbeing) I was appoin[ted] well-being.

[262] Perhaps *ina* KÁ.MEŠ-*šú*/ *ša šulme līrub*, "into his gates/ of well-being may he enter."

[263] *ana-ku* ^{m}?-PA-TI-x DUMU$^{!}$ DINGIR$^{!}$-*šu*$^{!}$/ ARAD *pa*$^{!}$(Campbell Thompson: Ú)-*liḫ-ku-nu* (Campbell Thompson 1940 no. 41:5–6, [*ana-ku*] ^{m}*šum*$_4$-*ma*-^{d}PA A DINGIR-*šú*/ [ARA]D *pa-liḫ-ku-nu* (K.5984:5–6). Unlike those two amulets, the worshipper in this inscription would be declaring himself to be "your (sg.) servant," rather than the servant of multiple gods.

4. Conclusion: Back to *Erra*

For Reiner's second argument to work, the structure of the amuletic inscriptions found on copies of *Erra* should be connected in some way to the poem's incipit. Yet the possibility of such a tie is weakened by the gulf separating these amuletic inscriptions—as well as the amuletic inscriptions not inscribed on copies of *Erra*—and *Erra* itself. When it comes to sixteen of the eighteen inscriptions analyzed in this chapter, this gulf was, in part, geographical, for they are found in Assyrian texts while *Erra* was most likely composed in Babylonia. It may also have been temporal. It is impossible to date *Erra* with any degree of certainty beyond assuming that it was composed at some point in the first millennium before the 7th century.[264] The creation of the inscriptions hailing from Assur can be dated, based on archival context, to the 8th or 7th century. K.5984 was excavated at Kouyunjik, yet one cannot say more about its date than that it predates 612. Bu 91-5-9,174 is likewise from Kouyunjik, and is presumably a tablet from Ashurbanipal's library, though it does not preserve a colophon to show this and thereby date the tablet to Ashurbanipal's reign. All this means that not only did the creation of these inscriptions likely occur in a different kingdom than the one in which the composition of *Erra* happened, but centuries may have separated the two events. As for the two inscriptions from Babylonia, while

[264] The dating of Erra's composition is discussed in Chapter 6.

they are closer in space to the poem, they are even more distant in time, having been written in 5th century Uruk. However, the existence of such amuletic inscriptions in Babylonia may indicate that, though those from Assyria are earlier, they reflect a borrowing of a Babylonian tradition, with which the Babylonian author of *Erra* may have been familiar.

In the absence of Babylonian exemplars from before the 7th century, however, this remains mere speculation, and at present, temporal and geographical ties between the inscriptions and *Erra* cannot be securely established, yet it can more confidently be said that they had commonalities of function and form. As scholars have often noted, that *Erra* fulfilled an amuletic function is known from the words of Erra himself, for in V 57-58 he blesses the text, saying, "In the house in which this tablet is placed, though Erra be angry and murderous the Seven, the sword of judgment shall not approach it, safety is appointed for it."[265] That three manuscripts of *Erra* (KAR 169, Bu 91-5-9,174, Bu 91-5-9, 186), as well a small stone tablet bearing an excerpt from it,[266] are of amuletic shape shows that the poem was used in this way (as does the amulet BM 118,998, likewise published by Reiner, which bears *Erra* III 201–213). This similarity in function between *Erra* and the amuletic inscriptions may be paralleled in form, for while the identity of the addressee of I 1 is very much in dispute, the hymnic invocation to

[265] *ina bīti ašar ṭuppu šâšu šaknu Erra līgugma lišgišū* ^{d}*Sebetti/ patar šipṭi ul iṭeḫḫēšuma šalimtu šaknassu.*
[266] BM 118,998, published in Reiner 1960, 149, which bears *Erra* 201–213.

Išum—which starts, at the latest, at I 2 (*ḫendursag apil ellil rēšt*[*û*…])—is delivered, like those made in the amuletic inscriptions (but unlike those in *Gilgamesh, Anzû,* or *Ludlul*) in the second person. This is shown in I 9, *iqabbīma ana kâša luṣīma ana ṣēri*, "He (Erra) says to you, may I go out to the field!", and also in I 19–22:

I 19 *adi atta tadekkûšu ṣalil uršuššu*
I 20 *itti mammi ḫīratuš ippuša ulṣamma*
I 21 *engidudu bēlu muttallik mūši muttarrû rubê*
I 22 *ša eṭla u ardatu ina šu*[*l*]*m*[*i*] *ittanarrû unammaru kīma ūmi*

I 19 Until you bid him rise he will be lying in his chamber,
I 20 Delighting with his consort, divine Mammi,
I 21 O Engidudu, the lord who goes about at night, the guide of princes
I 22 He who leads youth and maiden in sa[fe]t[y], shining like the day.

Lines I 19–20 are taken by Foster to be spoken by Erra, whereas he understands I 21-22 to be spoken by the narrator, and thus to constitute a "second invocation, this time of Išum" (Foster 2005, 758–759). If Erra is the speaker of I 19-20, then he would also be the speaker of the previous six lines (I 13–I 18), as no change of speaker is indicated between them, and this is likewise the way in which the passage is analyzed by Foster. This creates a problem, however, for Erra would then utter lines such as these:

I 15 *erra kī ša amēli dalpi idāšu an*[*ḫā*]
I 16 *iqabbi ana libbīšu lutbe luṣlalma*
I 17 *ītammâ ana kakkīšu ummidā tubqāti*
I 18 *ana sebetti qarrād lā šanān ana šubtīkunu tūrāma*

I 15 Erra's arms are fatigue[ed], like (those) of a man lacking sleep,

I 16 He says to his heart, “Shall I rise or lie down?”
I 17 He says to his weapons, “Stand in the corners!”
I 18 To the Seven, heroes unrivaled, “return to your stations!”

The poet can have had Erra speak of himself in the third person, as the god does so in V 57–58,[267] yet it seems unlikely for the poet to have Erra speak of his own speech, and thus quote himself to Išum in real-time. It is more straightforward to take these lines as spoken by the poet, who would then address Išum directly in I 19-22. This would serve to bookend the invocation to Išum beginning at least as early as I 2, and thus neatly finish the prologue; the next section would then begin with I 23, *ša sebetti qarrad lā šanān šunnât ilūssun*, “As for the Seven, warrior(s) unrivaled, their divinity is different.”

The similarity between amuletic inscriptions of type A and the prologue of Erra may have gone beyond form and use of the 2nd person. Those inscriptions of type A that invoke Išum are made up of two parts, with the invocation to Išum being preceded by one to Marduk. These two invocations are syntactically independent of one another: Marduk is invoked by his epithets and then by his name, then Išum is invoked by name and then epithets, and then addressed in the second person. If the latter half of I 1, which is currently missing,[268] originally contained

[267] *ina bīti ašar ṭuppu šâšu šaknu Erra līgugma lišgišū* ^{d}*Sebetti/ patar šipṭi ul iṭeḫḫēšuma šalimtu šaknassu.*

[268] Two manuscripts bear *Erra* I 1: BM 39531, which is written in Babylonian script, and STT 1 no. 16, a Sultantepe written in Assyrian script. The former fragment is too small to get much of an idea about how

Marduk's name (or even names, for Marduk may also have been called upon as Asalluḫi, much as Išum is also referred to as Ḫendursanga), then the prologue of Erra—when combining the ideas of Reiner and Cavigneaux regarding I 1–2 with the assumption that the poet addresses Išum directly in I 9 and 19–22—could be taken to have exactly such a construction. First, Marduk would be invoked by his epithets and then by name (I 1); then Išum would be invoked by his name and then by his epithets (I 2–3 as well as I 4), and subsequently addressed by the poet in the second person (I 9 and I 19–22).[269] In such a case, it would be apt indeed for the amuletic inscription KAR 169 to appear on a Tablet containing the entirety of *Erra*, for its structure would parallel the epic's prologue exactly. Yet if the latter half of the line did not contain Marduk's name, but something else—Cagni, for instance, proposed (1969, 138), "un terzo epiteto divino, composto di due o tre elementi, che dia al verso lo stesso ritmo ternario dei vv. 3–5"—then the structure of the opening of *Erra* could not be construed as structurally equivalent to that of the inscriptions, and the case for Marduk being *šar gimir dadmē bānû*

much text is missing in I 1, yet based on STT 1 no. 16, which is kept in Ankara and appears to only be available in copy, it appears as though about half of the line is missing.

[269] Taylor writes (2017, 23), "Theoretically the lacuna in I:1 could support a divine name, but since throughout this hymnic prologue the divine names appear at the beginnings, not the ends, of the verses that follow, this seems unlikely." However, for Marduk's name to appear in a different place in the line than that of Išum is exactly what would be expected were the structure of *Erra*'s prologue parallel to that of the amulets. Marduk would be invoked by epithets and then by name in I 1, Išum by name and then epithets in II 2-3 (and again in I 4), and then addressed in the second person.

kibrāti would be considerably weakened, not least because it would be strange for the poet to invoke the god without actually mentioning his name.

In the absence of a manuscript bearing the latter half of I 1, it may be said that for Marduk's name to appear at the end of that line, and thus for him to be *šar gimir dadmē*, would not be strange. For If the opening lines of the epic are viewed as an amuletic invocation, then they need not conform to the logic of narrative poetry, but that of magic. While it is true that Erra and Išum are the protagonists of the epic's plot, and it would therefore make literary sense that one or both of them be invoked in the first line, the invocation of Marduk—who, as Asalluhi, is the sage and exorcist of the gods—would have brought greater protection.[270] It is indeed true that, from a literary perspective, it seems jarringly disjointed for Marduk to be mentioned in the first line only for the poet to praise Išum in the next twenty-one, with Marduk himself going unmentioned for more than a hundred lines after that; yet it is routine for amuletic texts to jump from the invocation of one god to that of another, as done in the amulets given above—the mere mention of the name of Marduk would have been seen as magically potent, and, once invoked, there would have been no requirement that the god himself figure in the following

[270] Taylor writes (2017, 22), regarding the amulets discussed by Reiner, "Marduk's role as Asarluḫi, the god of magic, could also account for his appearing first on an amulet." This, it can be argued, could apply to *Erra* as well!

lines. And although there is no known literary text that opens by invoking more than one god, an invocation of two deities would be positively pithy as incantations go, as they could call upon tens of them.[271] As such, the arguments against Marduk being *šar gimir dadmē* made by Cagni, brought up by Taylor, and elaborated upon above, need not apply if Erra's opening line is a magical formula.

[271] As is the case in *Udug-ḫul* V 45–66, which adjures the demon Asag by 22 gods—one invoked in each line.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this dissertation, six aims were outlined. First, to improve readings of individual lines. Second, to elucidate its plot and the motivations of its characters. Third, to outline possible symmetries in its construction. Fourth, to evaluate proposals regarding its historical context. Fifth, to reconsider previously proposed interpretations regarding the poem's prologue in light of the broader Mesopotamian textual record. And sixth, to explore the possible role of narcissism in Erra's destructive personality and thereby in the poem at large.

The first three aims motivated Chapters 1 through 5. These chapters show, I hope, that with the aid of recent scholarship, as well as newly deciphered material, a good amount of progress can be made in elucidating the facts of the poem and the reasons why its characters act as they do—and also that the poem's structure is of greater intricacy and symmetry than has so far been noted. The fourth aim concerns the poem's possible historical context. Of past scholarly opinions, W.G. Lambert's proposal identifying the inspiration of the poem in 11th-century Sutean invasions, and its composition as occurring some time between the 11th century and the middle of the 8th, has been judged most convincing. The question of who speaks what in the prologue of the poem remains far from resolved, although the idea that it is Erra's heart that urges him to war is shown, in the light of other Near Eastern sources, to be more viable than it may at first seem—and the discussion, occasioned by Müller's idea, of the agentive heart in

the ancient Near East may add to our knowledge of ancient conceptions of human emotion and agency. The role of malignant narcissism has been argued for, and its meaning for the contemporary significance of Erra has been explored. And last, it has been argued that if Erra's opening is understood to operate not according to the laws of poetry, but those of magic, then Marduk's candidacy for *šar gimir dadmē* becomes competitive once again

Abbreviations

4R² Rawlinson, H. 1891: *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia, Volume* IV (Second Edition by T. Pinches), London.

ADD Johns, C. H. W. 1898: *Assyrian Deeds and Documents, Vol. 1: Cuneiform Texts*, Cambridge.

ALL Wasserman, N. 2016: *Akkadian Love Literature of the Third and Second Millennium BCE*, Leipziger Altorientalische Studien 4, Wiesbaden.

AMD 8/1 Abusch, T. and Schwemer, D. 2011: *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals*, Volume 1, Ancient Magic and Divination 8/1, Leiden.

AMD 8/2 Abusch, T. and Schwemer, D. 2016, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals*, *Volume 2*, Ancient Magic and Divination 8/2, Leiden.

AMT Thompson, R. C. 1923: *Assyrian Medical Texts*, Oxford.

ARM *Archives royales de Mari*, 1950-, Paris.

BaF 18 Maul, S. M. 1994: *Zukunftbewältigung: Eine Untersuchung altorientalischen Denkens Anhand der babylonisch-assyrischen Löserituale* (*Namburbi*), Baghdader Forschungen 18, Mainz am Rhein.

BAM Köcher, F. 1963–1980: *Die babylonische-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen* (6 vols.), Berlin.

BIN 1 Keiser, C. E. 1917: *Letters and Contracts from Erech Written in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of James B. Nies, Vol. 1, New Haven.

BWL Lambert, W. G. 1960: *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, Winona Lake, Indiana.

CAD *The Assyrian Dictionary of the University of Chicago*, 1956–2010, Chicago.

CUSAS 32 George, A. R. 2016: *Mesopotamian Incantations and Related Texts in the Schøyen Collection*, Cornell university Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology 32, Bethesda, Maryland.

CT Cuneiform Texts from the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum, London, 1896–.

eBL *electronic Babylonian Library*, https://doi.org/10.5282/ebl/l/2/1.

ePSD2 *electronic PSD 2nd Edition*, http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/epsd2/sux.

ETCSL *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/.

GAG W. von Soden 1995: "*Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik, 3., ergänzte Auflage, unter Mitarbeit von Werner R. Mayer,*" Analecta Orientalia 33, Rome.

IM Museum Siglum of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad.

JCS *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Chicago, 1947–.

K Museum siglum of the British Museum in London (Kuyunjik)

KAL 4 Maul, S. M. and Strauß, R. 2011: *Ritualbeschreibungen und Gebete I, Mit Beiträgen von Daniel Schwemer*, Keilschrifttexte aus Assur literarischen Inhalts 4, Wiesbaden.

KAR Ebeling, E. 1919: *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur Religosen Inhalts* (9 vols.), Leipzig.

LAOS 4 Wasserman, N. 2016: *Akkadian Love Literature of the Third and Second Millennium BCE*, Leipziger Altorientalische Studien 4, Wiesbaden.

LKA Ebeling, E. 1953: *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur*, Berlin.

LTBA Matouš, L. (Band I) and von Soden, W. (Band II) 1933: die lexikalischen Tafelserien der Babylonier und Assyrer, Berlin.

MDP *Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse*, Paris 1900–.

PNA *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, Helsinki, 1998–2011.

RIBo *Royal Inscriptions of Babylonia online* (http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/ribo/pager).

RIMB 2 Frame, D. 1995: *Rulers of Babylonia: From the Second Dynasty of Isin to the End of Assyrian Domination* (1157–612 BC), Toronto.

RIME *The Royal Inscriptions of Ancient Mesopotamia, Early Periods*, Toronto, 1990–1998.

RINAP 2 Frame, G. 2021: *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon II, King of Assyria* (*721–705 BC*), Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 2, University Park, Pennsylvania.

RINAP 3/1 Kirk Grayson, A. and Novotny, J. 2012: *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria* (*704–681 BC*), *Part 1*, Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 3/1,Winona Lake, Indiana.

RINAP 3/2 Kirk Grayson, A. and Novotny, J. 2014: *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria* (*704–681 BC*), *Part 2*, Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 3/2, Winona Lake, Indiana.

RINAP 4 Leichty, E. 2011: *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria* (*680–669 BC*), Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 4, Winona Lake, Indiana .

RINAP 5/1 Novotny, J. and Jeffers, J. 2018: *The Royal Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal* (*668–631 BC*), *Aššur-etel-ilāni* (*630–627 BC*), *and Sîn-šarra-iškun* (*626–612*), *Part 1*, Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 5/1, University Park, Pennsylvania.

SAA *State Archives of Assyria*, 1987–, Helsinki.

SBH Reisner, G. 1896: *sumerisch-babylonische Hymnen nach Thontafeln griechischer Zeit*, Mittheilungen aus den orientalischen Sammlungen X, Berlin.

STT 1 Gurney, O. and Finkelstein, J. 1957: *The Sultantepe Tablets* I, London.

STT 2 Gurney, O. and Finkelstein, J. 1964: *The Sultantepe Tablets* II, London.

TdP Labat, R. 1951, *Traité Akkadien De Diagnostics et Prognostics Médicaux* (2 vols.), Paris.

VAT Museum Siglum of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (Vorderasiatische Abteilung. Tontafeln)

YOS *Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts*, New Haven, 1915–.

Bibliography

Adali, S. 2009: *Ummān-manda and its Significance in the First Millennium B.C.*, PhD diss. University of Sidney.

Akhtar, S. 2009: *Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, London.

Alberti, F. B. 2010: *Matters of the Heart*: *History, Medicine, and Emotion*, Oxford.

Al-Rashid, M. N. 2011: *Mental Symptoms in the Akkadian Diagnostic Handbook: A study of patterns in the description of depression, anxiety, and madness*, Oxford PhD thesis.

Ambos, C. 2004: *Mesopotamische Baurituale aus dem 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, Dresden.

Aro, J. 1958: "Bemerkungen zum Era-Epos," *Studia Orientalia* 23, 24–26.

Attia, A. 2018: "The *libbu* our Second Brain?, Part 1," *Journal des Médicines Cunéiforme* 31, 67–88.

Attia, A. 2019: "The *libbu* our Second Brain?, Part 2," *Journal des Médicines Cunéiforme* 33, 50–92.

Attinger, P. 2021: *Glossaire sumérien-français*, *principalement des textes littéraires paléobabyloniens*, Wiesbaden.

Bach, J. 2023: "Emotions and Assyrian Kingship," in K. Sonik and U. Steinert (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Emotions in the Ancient Near East*, London/New York, 328–358.

Baragli, B. 2022: *Sonnengrüße: die sumerischen Kiutu-Gebetsbeschwörungen*, Ancient Magic and Ritual 19, Leiden.

Barclay, K. and Reddan, B. (eds.) 2019: *The Feeling Heart in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*: *Meaning, Embodiment, and Making*, Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Culture 67, Berlin.

Baumeister, R. F., Smart, L., and Boden, J. M 1996: "Relation of threatened egotism to violence and aggression: The dark side of high self-esteem," *Psychological Review 103*/1, 5–33.

Beaulieu, P.-A. 2001: "The Abduction of Ištar from the Eanna Temple: The Changing Memories of an Event," in T. Abusch, P.-A. Beaulieu, J. Huehnergard, P. Machinist, and P. Steinkeller (eds.), *Proceedings of the XLVe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, Bethesda, 29–40.

Beaulieu, P.-A. 2018: *A History of Babylon: 2200 BC–AD 75*, Hoboken, New Jersey.

Bernstein, D. P. and Useda, J. D. 2007: "Paranoid personality disorder," In W. O'Donohue, K. A. Fowler, and S. O. Lilienfeld (eds.), *Personality disorders: Toward the DSM-V*, 41–62.

Blass, R. 2019: "Freud's view of death and repetition as grounds of a Kleinian approach to Narcissism: Implications for Clinical Practice," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 100/6, 1286–1305.

Black, J. and Green, A. 1992: *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary*, London.

Bodi, D. *The Book of Ezikiel and the Poem of Erra*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 104, Göttingen.

Böck, B. 2007: *Das Handbuch* Muššu'u *"Einreibung": eine Serie sumerischer und akkadischer Beschwörungen aus dem 1. Jt. vor Chr.*, Madrid.

Bodi, D. 1991: *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, OBO 104, Freiburg.

Borger, R. 2010: *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon, Zweite, revidierte and aktualisierte Auflage*, Münster.

Bottéro, J. 1998: *La plus vieille religion En Mésopotamie*, Paris.

Bottéro, J. and Kramer, S. N. 1989: *Lorsques les dieux faisaient l'homme. Mythologie mésopotamienne*, Paris.

Brinkman, J. A. 1984: *Prelude to Empire: Babylonian Society and Politics, 747–646 B.C.*, Philadelphia.

Burrows, E. 1924: "Hymn to Ninurta as Sirius (K 128)," *JRAS* centenary supplement, 33–40, pls. II-III.

Cagni, L. 1969: *L'epopea di Erra*, Studi Semitici 34, Rome.

Cagni, L. 1977: *The Poem of Erra*, Sources and Monographs on the Ancient Near East 1/3, Malibu.

Caligor, E., Levy, K. N., and Yeomans, F. E. 2015: "Narcissistic Personality Disorder: Diagnostic and Clinical Challenges," *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 172/5, 415–422.

Cambell Thompson, R. 1940: "A Selection from the Cuneiform Historical Texts from Nineveh (1927–32)," *Iraq 7*, 85–131.

Carrol, A. 2009: "Are you looking at me? Understanding and managing paranoid personality disorder," *Advances in psychiatric treatment* 15, 40–48.

Cassin, E. 1968: *La splendeur divine*, Paris.

Cavigneaux, A. 2022: "Les lettrés de Babylonie après l'an mil (av. J.-C.) et la vision de Kabti-ilī-Marduk," *Études Mésopotamiennes – Mesopotamian Studies* 2, 5–15.

Cohen, M. E. 1988: *The Canonical Lamentations of Ancient Mesopotamia, Volume 1*, Potomac, Maryland.

Cohen, Y. 2013: "Fearful Symmetry: The Poetic, Genre, and Form of Tablet I Lines 109–118 in the Poem of Erra," in D. S. Vanderhooft and A. Winitzer (eds.), *Literature and Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist*, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1–28.

Cooley, J. 2008: "'I Want to Dim the Brilliance of Šulpae!' Mesopotamian Celestial Divination and Poem of *Erra and Išum*," *Iraq* 70, 179–188.

Crews, F. 1986: *Skeptical Engagements,* Oxford.

Crews, F. 1995: *The Memory Wars: Freud's Legacy in Dispute*, New York.

Crews, F. 1998: *Unauthorized Freud: Doubters Confront a Legend*, New York.

Crews, F. 2017: *Freud*: *The Making of an Illusion*, New York.

Cukrowicz, K. C., Poindexter, E. K., and Joiner, T. E. Jr. 2011: "Cognitive Behavioral Approaches to the Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorder," in W. K. Campbell and J. D. Miller (eds.), *The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder*: *Theoretical Approaches, Empirical Findings, and Treatments*, Hoboken, New Jersey, 457–465.

Dalley, S. 2000: *Myths from Mesopotamia*: *Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*: *Edited and Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Stephanie Dalley, Revised Edition,* Oxford World's Classics, Oxford.

Durand, J. M. 2009: "*habinnu*," *N.A.B.U* 2009, 11–12.

Diamond, D., Yeomans, F. E., Stern, B. L., and Kernberg, O. F. 2022: *Treating Pathological Narcissism with Transference-Focused Psychotherapy*, New York.

Dufresne, T. 2000: *Tales From the Freudian Crypt: The Death Drive in Text and Context*, Stanford.

Dufresne, T. 2006: *Against Freud: Critics Talk Back*, Stanford.

Ebeling, E. 1925: *Der akkadische Mythus vom Pestgotte Era*. Berliner Beiträge zur Keilschriftforschung 2/1. Berlin.

Ebeling, E. 1932–1933: "Review of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* by R. Campbell Thompson," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 8, 226–232.

Eysenck, H. 1985: *Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire*, New York.

Fagles R., and Knox B. 1998 (tr.): *The Iliad* (Homer), New York.

Falkenstein, A. 1966: "Sumerische Bauasdrücke," *Orientlia Nova Series* 35, 229–246.

Farber, W. 2008: "Die einleitende Episode des Erra-Epos," *Altorientalische Forchungen* 35, 262–267.

Finkel, I. 2021: *The First Ghosts: Most Ancient of Legacies*, London.

Foster, B. R. 1991: "On Authorship in Akkadian Literature," *Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli, Annali* 51, 17–32.

Foster, B. R. 1996: *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literatur*e, Bethesda, MD.

Foster, B. R. 2005: *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literatur*e, 2nd edition, Bethesda, MD.

Foster, B. R. 2016: *The Age of Agade: Inventing Empire in Ancient Mesopotamia*, London.

Foster, B. R. 2019: "Authorship in Akkadian Literature," in I. Bernsmeyer, G. Buelens., and M. Demoor (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Authorship*, Cambridge, 13–26.

Fox, M. V. 2009: *Proverbs 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary by Michael V. Fox*, The Anchor Yale Bible 18b, New Haven/London.

Fox, M. V. 2015: *Proverbs: An Eclectic Edition with Introduction and Textual Commentary*, The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Edition 1, Atlanta.

Frahm, E. 2010: "Counter-texts, Commentaries, and Adaptations: Politically Motivated Responses to the Babylonian Epic of Creation in Mesopotamia, the Biblical World, and Elsewhere," *Orient: Reports of the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan* 45, 3–33.

Frahm, E. 2017: "Assyria and the South: Babylonia," in *E. Frahm* (ed.), *A Companion to Assyria*, Hoboken Companions to the Ancient World, Hoboken, NJ, 286–298.

Franke, S. 2014, "Der Zorn Marduks, Erras und Sanheribs Zu Datierung und Funktion von 'Erra und Išum,'" in H. Neumann, R. Dittmann, S. Paulus, G. Neumann, and A. Schuster-Brandis (eds.), "*Krieg und Frieden im Alten Vorderasien: 52e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale International Congress of Assyriology and Near Eastern Archeology, Münster, 17–21 Juli 2006*," AOAT 401, Münster, 315–327.

Freud S. 1900, *Die Traumdeutung,* Leipzig.

Freud, S. 1917: *"Eine Schwierigkeit der Psychoanalyse*," *Imago* 5/1, 1–7.

Fromm, E. 1973: *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, New York.

Gabbay, U. 2023: "Emotions and Emesal Laments: motivations, Performance, and Management," in K. Sonik and U. Steinert (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Emotions in the Ancient Near East*, London/New York, 397–411.

Gabriel, G. 2023: "Emotions and Ritual Laments: The Affective Function of Beer in Mesopotamia," in in K. Sonik and U. Steinert (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Emotions in the Ancient Near East*, London/New York, 412–424.

George, A. R. 2003: *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts*, 2 volumes, Oxford.

George, A. R. 2013: "The Poem of Erra and Išum: A Babylonian Poet's View of War," in H. Kennedy (ed.), *Warfare and Poetry in the Middle East*, London, 39–71.

George, A. R. 2015: "The Gods Išum and Ḫendursanga: Night Watchmen and Street-lighting in Babylonia," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 74/1, 1–8.

Glad, B. 2002: "Why Tyrants Go Too Far: Malignant Narcissism and Absolute Power," *Political Psychology* 23/1, 1–37.

Glassner, J. 2004: *Mesopotamian Chronicles* (ed. B. Foster), Leiden.

Gmirkin, R. E. 2006: *Berossos and Genesis, Manetho and Exodus: Dating the Pentateuch*, New York.

Goetze, A. 1939: "Cuneiform Inscriptions from Tarsus," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 59 no. 1, 1–16.

Gössmann, F. 1955: *Das Era-Epos*, Würzburg.

Grayson, A. K. 1991: "*Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC* I (1114–859 *BC*)," The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Assyrian Periods 2, Toronto.

Hätinen, A. 2022: "Righteous Sufferer (Ludlul bēl nēmeqi) With contributions by Z. J. Földi, A. C. Heinrich, E. Jiménez and T. D. N. Mitto. Translated by Benjamin R. Foster," *electronic BabylonianLibrary*. https://doi.org/10.5282/ebl/l/2/2

Hawthorne, A. 2015: "'You are Just Like Me': The Motif of the Double in Babylonian Literature," *Kaskal* 12, 451–466.

Helle, S. 2021: *Gilgamesh*: *A New Translation of the Ancient Epic*, *with Essays on the Poem, its Past, and its Passion*, New Haven.

Helle, S. 2023: *Enheduana: The Complete Poems of the World's First Author*, New Haven.

Helle, S. 2023b: "Enheduana's Poems: Form and Force," in N. M. Brisch and F. Karahashi, *Women and Religion in the Ancient Near East and Asia*, Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records 30, Berlin, 189–208.

Heinrich, A. C. 2022: "Theodicy. With contributions by E. Jiménez and T. Mitto. Translated by Benjamin R. Foster, Wasim Khatabe and Wadieh Zerkly." *electronic Babylonian Library*." https://doi.org/10.5282/ebl/l/2/1.

Hooley, J. M., Cole, S. H., and Gironde, S. 2012: "Borderline personality disorder," in T. A. Widiger (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Personality Disorders*, 409–436. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199735013.013.0020

Horvath, S. and Morf, C. 2009: "Narcissistic defensiveness: Hypervigilance and Avoidance of Worthlessness," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 45, 1252–1258.

Hunger, H. and Kaufman, A. 1975: "A New Akkadian Prophecy Text," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95, 371–375.

Hunger, H. Pingree, D. 1989: *MUL.APIN: An Astronomical Compendium in Cuneiform.* Beihefte zum Archiv für Orientforschung 24. Horn, Austria.

Ito, S. 2013: "A Letter to Assurbanipal to Enlil-bani and the Citizens of Nippur," *Inter Faculty* 4, 19–34.

Jaques, M. 2023: "Sumerian Emotional Terms," in K. Sonik and U. Steinert (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Emotions in the Ancient Near East*, London/New York, 18–49.

Kernberg, O. F. 2004: *Aggressivity, Narcissism, and Self-Destructiveness in the Psychotherapeutic Relationship*: *New Developments in the Psychopathology of Personality Disorders*, New Haven.

Kernberg, O. F. 2020: "Malignant Narcissism and Large Group Regression," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 89/1, 1–24.

King, L. W. 1896: "New Fragments of the Dibbara-legend on two Assyrian Plague tablets," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 11, 1896, 50–62.

Klein, J. 2010: "Observations on the Literary Structure of Early Mesopotamian Building and Votive Inscriptions," in K. Radner (ed.), *Your Praise is Sweet: A Memorial Volume for Jeremy Black from Students, Colleagues and Friends*, Exeter, 173–182.

Köcher, F. 1964: *Die babylonisch-assyriche Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen*, BAND III: Keilschrifttexte aus Assur 3.

Koch-Westenholz, U. 2000: *Babylonian Liver Omens: the Chapters* Manzāzu*,* Padānu*, and* Pān tākalti *of the Babylonian Extispicy Series mainly from Aššuranipal's Library*, CNI Publications 25, Copenhagen.

Kohut, H. 1972: "Thoughts on Narcissism and Narcissistic Rage," *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 27, 360–400.

Konstantopoulos, G. 2023: *The Divine/Demonic Seven and the Place of Demons in Mesopotamia*, Leiden.

Konstantopoulos, G. and Helle, S. (eds.) 2023: *The Shape of Stories: Narrative Structures in Cuneiform Literature*, Cuneiform Monographs 54, Leiden.

Krizan Z. and Johar O. 2015: "Narcissistic rage revisited," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 108/5, 784–801.

Lambert, W. G. 1957–58: Review of Gössman 1955, *Archiv für Orientforschung* 18, 395–401.

Lambert, W. G. 2013: *Babylonian Creation Myths*, Winona Lake, Indiana.

Lambert, W. G. and Millard, A. R. 1999: *Atra-Ḫasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*, Winona Lake, Indiana.

Landsberger, B. 1933: "Lexicalisches Archiv," (with T. Bauer and W. von Soden), *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 41, 216–236.

Lee, R. 2017: "Mistrustful and Misunderstood: A Review of Paranoid Personality Disorder," *Current Behavioral Neuroscience* 4/2, 151–165.

Levy, K. N., Ellison, W. D., and Reynoso, J. S. 2011: "A Historical Review of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality," in W. K. Campbell and J. D. Miller (eds.), *The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder*: *Theoretical Approaches, Empirical Findings, and Treatments*, Hoboken, New Jersey, 3–30.

Luke, J. T., and Pruyser, P. W. 1982: "The Epic of Gilgamesh," *American Imago* 39/2, 73–93.

Machinist P. 1983: "Rest and Violence in the Poem of Erra," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103, 221–226.

Macmillan, M. 1997: *Freud Evaluated: The Completed Arc*, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

March, J. R. 2014: *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, Oxford.

Matsushima, E. 1987: "Le ritual hiérogamique de Nabû," *Acta Sumerologica* 9, 131–175.

Maul, S. M. 1988: *"Herzberuhigungsklagen", Die sumerisch-akkadischen Eršaḫunga-Gebete*, Wiesbaden.

Maul, S. M. 2016: "Schutz für das Haus des Dūrī-Assur. Vier Bruchstücke von Tontafelamuletten," in P. A. Miglus, K. Radner, and F. Stępniowski (eds.), *Ausgrabungen in Assur. Wohnquartiere in der Weststadt Teil I,* Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 152, Wiesbaden, 135–139.

Meinhold, W. 2009: *Ištar in Aššur: Untersuchung eines Lokalkultes von ca. 2500 bis 614 v. Chri.*, Alter Orient und altes Testament 367, Münster.

Melville, A. D. (tr.): *Metamorphosis* (Ovid), Oxford.

Messer, S. B. and McWilliams, N. 2007: "Insight in Psychodynamic Therapy: Theory and Assessment," in L. G. Castonguay and C. E. Hill (eds.), *Insight in Psychotherapy*, 9–29.

Mitto, T. 2022: "Hymn to Ninurta as Savior. With contributions by A. C. Heinrich, A. Hätinen, E. Jiménez and G. Rozzi. Translated by Werner R. Mayer, Tonio Mitto and Tonio Mitto," *electronic Babylonian Library* https://doi.org/10.5282/ebl/1/3/10.

Müller, G. 1995: "Wer Spricht? Betrachtungen zu 'Išum und Erra'," in M. Dietrich and O. Loretz (eds.), *Vom Alten Orient zum Alten Testament: Festschrift für Wolfram Freiherr von Soden zum 85. Geburtstag am 19. Juni 1993*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 349–360.

Neugebauer, O. 1955: *Astronomical Cuneiform Texts: Babylonian Ephemerides of the Seleucid Period for the Motion of the Sun, the Moon, and the Planets II*, London.

Neujhar, M. 2012: *Predicting the Past in the Ancient Near East*: *mantic Historiography in Ancient Mesopotamia, Judah, and the Mediterranean World*, Brown Judaic Studies 354, Providence, Rhode Island.

Nussbaum, M. C. 1994: "The *Oedipus Rex* and the Ancient Unconscious," in P. L. Rudnytsky and E. Handler Spitz (eds.), *Freud and Forbidden Knowledge*, New York, 42–71.

Panayotov, S. V. 2013: "Who is the client of the namburbi tablet with handle A 114 (LKA 128) in Istanbul?," *N.A.B.U* 13/1, 16–17.

Paulus, S. 2014: *Die Babylonischen Kudurru Inscriften von der kassitischen bis zur frühneubabylonischen Zeit, Untersucht unter besonderer Berücksichtigung gesellschafts- und rechtshistorischer fragegestellungen*, Münster.

Pincus, A. L., Cain, N. M., and Wright, A. G. C. 2014: "Narcissistic Grandiosity and Narcissistic Vulnerability in Psychotherapy," *Personality Disorders*: *Theory, Research and Treatment* 5/4, 1–5.

Pohl, A. 2022: *Die Akkadischen Hymnen der Altbabylonischen Zeit: Grammatik, Stalistik, Editionen*, Leipziger Altorientalische Studien 13, Leiden.

Post, D. 2015: *Narcissism and Politics: Dreams of Glory*, New York.

Reed-Knight, B. and Fischer, S. 2011: "Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorder Symptoms in a Dialectical Behavior Therapy Framework: A Discussion and Case Example," in W. K. Campbell and J. D. Miller (eds.), *The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder*: *Theoretical Approaches, Empirical Findings, and Treatments*, Hoboken, New Jersey, 466–475.

Reiner, E. 1958: "More Fragments of the Epic of Era: A Review Article," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 17/1, 41–48.

Reiner, E. 1960: "Plague Amulets and House Blessings," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 19/2, 148–155.

Reiner, E. 1967: "City Bread and Bread Baked in Ashes," in E. C. Dimock, K. Kazakis, and E. Reiner (eds.), *Languages and Areas: Studies Presented to George V. Bobrinskoy on the Occasion of his Academic Retirement by Members of The Departments of Linguistics of Slavic Languages and Literatures and the Committee on Southern Asian Studies*, Chicago, 117–120.

Roberts, J. J. M. 1971: "Erra: Scorched Earth," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 24, 11–16.

Robins, R. S. and Post, D. 1997: *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred*, New Haven.

Ronningstam, E. 2005: *Identifying and Understanding the Narcissistic Personality*, Oxford.

Sallaberger, W. 1993: *Der kultische Kalender der Ur III-Zeit, Teil 1*, Untersuchungen zur Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie: Ergänzungsbände zur Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie 7/1, Berlin.

Schaudig, H. 2001: "*Die Inscriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros' des Großen*," AOAT 256, Münster.

Segal, H. and Bell, D. 1991: "The Theory of Narcissism in the Work of Freud and Klein," in J. Sandler, E. S. Person, and P. Fonagy (eds.), *Freud's "On Narcissism*: *An Introduction*," Contemporary Freud: Turning Points and Critical Issues, New Haven, 149–174.

Seminara, S. 2001: *La versione accadica del* lugal-e: *la tecnica babilonese della traduzione dal sumerico e le sue regole*, Rome.

Seow, C. L. 1997: *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary by C. L. Seow*, The Anchor Yale Bible 18c, New Haven/London.

Sjöberg, A 1960: *Der Mondgott Nanna-Suen in der sumerischen Überlieferung*, I. *Teil*: *Texte*, Stockholm.

Sjöberg, A. W. 1975: "in-nin šà-gur$_4$-ra, A Hymn to the Goddess Inanna by the en-Priestess Enḫeduanna," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 65, 161–253.

Smith, G. 1876: *The Chaldean Account of Genesis*, London.

Sonik, K. 2020: "Gilgamesh and Emotional Excess: The King without Counsel in the SB *Gilgamesh Epic*," in S.-W. Hsu and J. Llop (eds.), "*The Expression of Emotions in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*," CHANE 116, Leiden, 390–409.

Sonik, K. and Steinert, U. (eds.) 2023: *The Routledge Handbook of Emotions in the Ancient Near East*, Abingdon, Oxon.

Steinert, U. 2012: "*Aspekte des Menschseins im Alten Mesopotamien*: *Eine Studie zu Person und Identität im 2. Und 1. Jt v. Chr.*," Cuneiform Monographs 44, Leiden.

Steinert, U. 2020: "Pounding Hearts and Burning Livers: The 'Sentimental Body' in Mesopotamian Medicine and Literature," in S.-W. Hsu and J. Llop (eds.), "*The Expression of Emotions in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*," CHANE 116, Leiden, 410–469.

Steinert, U. 2023: "Emotion and the Body: Embodiment, Conceptual Metaphor, and Linguistic Encoding of Emotion in Akkadian," in K. Sonik and U. Steinert (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Emotions in the Ancient Near East*, London/New York, 51–87.

Stol, M. 1993: *Epilepsy in Babylonia*, Cuneiform Monographs II, Groningen.

Tawil, H. 2009: *An Akkadian Lexical Companion to Biblical Hebrew: Etymological-Semantic and Idiomatic Equivalents with Supplement on Biblical Aramaic*, Jersey City.

Taylor K. 2017: *The Erra Song: A Religious, Literary, and Comparative Analysis*, Harvard University Doctoral Dissertation.

Tsevat, M. 1987: "Erra IV 7–10," *RA* 81, 194.

van Der Eijk, P. J. 2009: *Medicine and Philosophy in Classical Antiquity*: *Doctors and Philosophers on Nature, Soul, Health, and Disease*, Cambridge.

von Soden, W. 1939: "Die akkadische Adverbialisendung *-atta*(*m*), *-atti*," *Zeitschrift for Assyriologie* 45, 62–68.

von Soden, W. 1971: "Etemenanki vor Asarhaddon nach der Erzählung vom Turmbau zu Babel und dem Erra-Mythos," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 3, 253–263.

Von Soden, W. 1990: "*kīša* und *ḫabi*(*n*)*niš* im Erra-Mythos," *N.A.B.U.* 1990, 40.

Wasserman, N. 2016: *Akkadian Love Literature of the Third and Second Millennium BCE*, Leipziger Altorientalische Studien 4, Wiesbaden.

Webb, H. 2010: *The Medieval Heart*, New Haven.

Webster, R. 1995: *Why Freud Was Wrong: Sin, Science and Psychoanalysis*, Oxford.

Weidner, E. F. 1959–1960: "Ein astrologischer Sammeltext aus der Sargonidenzeit." *Archiv für Orientforschung* 19, 105–113.

Wende, J. 2023: *Akkadian Emotional Terms*, in K. Sonik and U. Steinert (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Emotions in the Ancient Near East*, London/New York, 150–170.

Westenholz, J. G. 1997: *Legends of the Kings of Akkade: The Texts*, Winona Lake, Indiana.

Wiggerman, F. A. M. 1992: "*Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts,*" Cuneiform Monographs 1, Leiden.

Wisnom, S. 2019: *Weapons of Words: Intertextual Competition in Babylonian Poetry: A Study of* Anzû*,* Enūma eliš*, and* Erra and Išum, Leiden.

Wisnom, S. 2023: "Dynamics of Repetition in Akkadian Literature," in S. Helle and G. Konstantopoulos (eds.), *The Shape of Stories: Narrative Structures in Cuneiform Literature*, Leiden.

Woods, C. 2004: "The Sun-God Tablet of Nabû-apla-iddina Reconsidered," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 56, 23–103.

Zaia, S. 2015: State-Sponsored Sacrilege: "'Godnapping' and Omission in Neo-Assyrian Inscriptions," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* 2/1, 19–54.

Zeigler-Hill, V. and Jordan, C. H. 2011: "Chapter 9: Narcissism and Implicit Self-Esteem," in K. Campbell and J. Miller (eds.), *The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder*: *Theoretical Approaches*, *Empirical Findings*, *and Treatments*, Hoboken, New Jersey, 101–116.

Zgoll, A. 2022: "Sacred Texts and the First Myth about the Creation of Writing," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 22, 258–314.