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MORE THAN A SINGLE TRUTH: POLYVALENCE IN GILGAMESH'S DREAMS OF THE METEORITE AND THE AXE

Eli Tadmor

Near the beginning of the Gilgamesh epic,[1] Gilgamesh, the mighty yet misguided king of Uruk, has one dream, and then another. The first centers around what appears to be a meteorite, the second around an axe. After waking from each, he relates it to his mother, the goddess Ninsun, perfect in knowledge, and she interprets it for him. Both dreams, she says, herald the coming of a mighty companion into the life of Gilgamesh, a beloved comrade, the savior of his friend.[2] This indeed comes to pass with the arrival of Enkidu in Uruk, the mighty friendship he strikes with Gilgamesh, and the adventures they share, in which Enkidu proves to be his comrade's savior several times over. The interpretation offered by Ninsun is thus proven correct, yet it leaves at least two questions regarding the two dreams unanswered: first, if both dreams herald the same event, why are there two of them? And second, how does one account for the specific imagery chosen for each dream – why a meteorite, why an axe? These queries have been discussed by scholars over the decades, most notably A.D Kilmer,[3] building on an idea of Turan Tuman, and Martin Worthington.[4] After reviewing the ideas of Kilmer and Worthington, this article proposes another way to account for the number and nature of the two dreams: that they herald not only the coming of Enkidu, but also the two adventures on which Gilgamesh and Enkidu will embark – the quest to the Cedar Forest and the slaying of the Bull of Heaven. Such polyvalence would cohere with the possible duplicity of Ea's message to Utā-napišti in the flood story given in tablet XI, and also with Sigmund Freud's ideas regarding the weaving of dreams as described in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (*Die Traumdeutung*).[5]

1. For an edition of the epic, see George 2003, from which the normalizations below are adapted.
2. I 268-271, 288-293.
3. Kilmer 1982.
4. Worthington 2012, 204-209.
5. Freud 1900. Translations adapted from Freud 1994.

The Meteorite-Dream

itbēma Gilgāmeš šunata ipaššar izzakkara ana ummīšu
ummī šunata aṭṭula mušītīya
ibšûnimma kakkabū šamê
kīma kiṣru ša Anim imtanaqqutu elu ṣērīya
aššīšūma dan elīya
ultablakkissūma ul ele"i nussu
Uruk mātum izzaz eli[*šu*]
mātu puḫḫurat ina muhhīšu
[*īteppir umm*]*ānu e*[*li ṣ*]*ērī*[*šu*]
[*eṭlūtu uk*]*tammarū elīšu*
[*kī šerri lā*]*'i unaššaqū šēpīšu*
[*arāmšūma kīm*]*a aššate elīšu aḫḫub*
[*aššīšūma a*]*ttadīšu ina šaplīki*
[*u atti tulḫ*]*amaḫḫarīšu*[6] *ittīya*

Gilgamesh arose to solve a dream, saying to his mother,
"My mother, I saw a dream in the course of the night:
The stars of heaven appeared before me
When a lump[7] of Anu was falling toward me,[8]
I tried to lift it, but it was stronger than me,
I kept trying to roll it, but could not dislodge it,
The land of Uruk was standing around it,
The land gathered before it,
[The peop]le [were *jostling*[9] arou]nd it,
[The young men were] piled around it,
[As (though it was) a wee ba]be, they were kissing its "feet".
[I loved it lik]e a wife, I caressed it,
[And you – you made] it my equal".
(I 245-258)

6. This verb is only preserved in George's Manuscript P, where it is spelled [*tul*$_5$-*ḫ*]*a-maḫ-ri-šu*, appearing to produce the form *tultamaḫrīšu*. This form is ungrammatical, however, and one would rather expect either the Preterite Št *tultamḫirīšu* – which is attested as a variant in the parallel line I 285 – or the durative *tultamaḫḫarīšu*, likewise attested as a variant in that line (George 2003, 554). In light of the latter variant, [*tul*$_5$-*ḫ*]*a-maḫ-ri-šu* appears to be a haplography, [*tul*$_5$-*ḫ*]*a-maḫ-*<*ḫa*>*-ri-šu*.
7. According to the CAD, *kiṣru* can have various meanings (CAD K, 436-442) almost all of which have to do with something that is dense, concentrated, or gathered together, e. g. "knot" "contingent of soldiers, troops, team of workmen or experts", "joint of the human or animal body", "structure", "strength", and "possessions, treasures". Importantly, it can also mean a "lump" of metal or stone (see references in CAD K, 441, no. 11. For further references, as well as a discussion of the meaning of *kiṣru*, see comments on I 124-125 in George 2003, 793). It seems most probable that *kiṣru ša Anim* should be translated as "a lump of Anu", and that it refers to a meteorite.
8. This translation follows Worthington 2012, 201-203.
9. On the possible meaning of *īteppir* see George 2003, 790.

The Axe Dream

[*i*]*ppunnā ummā ātamar šanīta šutta*
[*ina sūqi*] *ša Uruk rebītum*
ḫaṣṣinnu nadīma elīšu pahrū
[*Uruk*] *mātu izzaz elīšu*
[*mātu puḫ*]*ḫurat ina muḫḫīšu*
iteppir [*ummā*]*nu eli sērīšu*
[*eṭlūtu u*]*ktammar*[10] *elīšu*
aššāššūma attadīšu ina šaplīki
[*arāmš*]*ūma kī aššāte elīšu aḫḫub*
[*u atti t*]*ultamaḫḫarīšu ittīya*

"[A]gain,[11] oh mother – I have seen a second dream:
[In an alley] of Uruk main-street,
An axe was cast down, they were gathered around it,
The land of [Uruk] was standing around it,
[The land was] gathered before it,
The [peop]le were *jostling* around it,
[The young men were pi]led around it,
I lifted it and threw it at your feet,
[I loved i]t like a wife, I caressed it,
[And you – you] made it my equal".
(I 276-285)

Sexual Hints and Celestial Iron

Kilmer argues that *kiṣru* hints at the *kezru*, a member of the cult of Ishtar, implying that Enkidu's relationship with Gilgamesh would be sexual.[12] Worthington disputes this hypothesis.[13] He notes that Enkidu is called *kiṣir Ninurta*, "Ninurta's knot", in I 104, and that is said about Enkidu multiple times that *kīma kiṣri ša Anim dunnunā emuqāšu*, "his strength is mighty as a rock from the sky".[14] This, Worthington argues, could explain the choice of *kiṣru* for Enkidu's representation of the dream, as

10. This line is only attested in George's manuscript h. That the verb [*u*]*ktammar* is singular appears to be an error, as it should parallel [*uk*]*tammarū* in I 240. However, it is also possible that the plural subject *eṭlūtu*, "young men", takes a singular verb in this case to denote that they were piling around the axe in the dream "as one". Another possibility is that the scribe treated the noun as singular in analogy with [*Uruk*] *mātu*, [*mātu*], and [*ummā*]*nu* of the preceding lines.
11. For the translation of [*i*]*ppunnā* as "when", see George 2003, 805.
12. Kilmer 1982, 264-265. On the possible sexual activities of the *kezru* and *kezertu*, see George 2003, 453-454.
13. Worthington 2012, 204-206.
14. I 125, I 152, I 270, I 193.

would the meteorite symbolizing the clod of clay Aruru cast down on the ground to create Enkidu in the first place.

Regarding the second dream, Kilmer views *ḫaṣṣinnu*, "axe", as no arbitrary stand-in for Enkidu, but as a reference to the *assinnu*, again implying that his relationship with Gilgamesh would have a sexual dimension.[15] In his discussion of the dream,[16] Worthington notes that in his lament for Enkidu in tablet VIII, Gilgamesh calls Enkidu *ḫaṣṣin aḫī*[*ya*], "the axe at [my] side".[17] This, Worthington writes, would refer to Enkidu's role as Gilgamesh's comrade and protector, a function similarly implied by the choice of the axe for the dream-object. He argues that the *ḫaṣṣinnu* also signifies the humanization of Enkidu, as it is, in fact, no ordinary axe, but one fashioned from meteoric iron derived from the *kiṣru* of the previous dream. This interpretation is made more likely by the probable mention of axes made from heavenly iron in Sumerian texts.[18]

Rock and Bull, Axe and Cedar

Gilgamesh having two dreams heralding the same event – the coming of Enkidu – is not without parallel, for examples of such "multi-dreaming" can be found both in the epic itself and in at least three other ancient Near Eastern texts. During the journey to the Cedar Forest, Gilgamesh has multiple dreams (likely five),[19] all of which Enkidu interprets as heralding the two heroes' coming triumph over Ḫumbaba. In the third tablet of the poem *Lu͗dlul bēl nēmeqi*, the poem's narrator, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, has four consecutive dreams,[20] all portending his recovery from the brink of death. The biblical story of Joseph contains two pairs of two dreams, each portending the same event:[21] those of Joseph,[22] and those of Pharaoh.[23] The latter pair are especially relevant to our discussion, as Joseph explicitly says that they are אחד, "one (and the same)", with both heralding seven years of

15. Kilmer 1982, 264. Kilmer translates *assinnu*, as "male prostitute", yet the question of whether the role of the *assinnu* involved prostitution, or any kind of sexual activity, has been hotly debated. While the gender-bending aspect of *assinnūtu* is well-evidenced – most explicitly in the *Erra Epic* (IV 52-59) – that related to sexuality is more opaque. For a discussion of the nature of the *assinnu*, see Svärd – Nissinen 2018. After devoting a section to discussing the *assinnu*'s gender and sexuality, they write in the conclusion, "… 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 *assinnu*'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 to us that it was dissimilar to the standard".
16. Worthington 2012, 204-209.
17. VIII 46.
18. See discussion of I 124-125 in George 2003, 793.
19. On the number and nature of these dreams in the different versions of the epic, See George 2003, 464-465.
20. *Lu͗dlul* III 9-46. For an edition of the tablet, see Hätinen 2022.
21. On this series of double dreams, see Grossman 2016.
22. *Genesis* 37.
23. *Genesis* 41.

famine in Egypt. Lastly, a letter written by a hapless and forlorn spy by the name of Nabû-ušallim,[24] most likely composed in 671 and addressed to the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (680-661), reports of two dreams had by Abdâ, the governor of Assur. As argued by Eckart Frahm, both of these dreams likely had a similar, treasonous meaning, and served to legitimate rebellion against Esarhaddon.[25]

These examples indicate that Gilgamesh's double-dreaming, rather than being a peculiarity of the Gilgamesh epic, may reflect a broader Near Eastern motif. This doubling also makes sense within the context of the epic, since, as Ainsley Hawthorne has remarked,[26] pairs and doubles are strikingly common in it. In keeping with Hawthorne's observation, what is hypothesized in this paper is an instance of doubling upon doubling, several times over: the two dreams fulfill a dual function, as they both anticipate the coming of Enkidu, Gilgamesh's double,[27] and mirror the two great exploits the pair will accomplish.

To begin with the second dream, as the adventure it anticipates takes place earlier,[28] the axe appearing in it – the *ḫaṣṣinnu* – symbolizes the quest to the Cedar Forest, on which Enkidu and Gilgamesh bring *ḫaṣṣinnu*-axes.[29] In the Old Babylonian fragment of the epic from Ishchali, Gilgamesh uses both a *ḫaṣṣinnu* and a *namṣāru*, "sword," to kill Ḫumbaba,[30] and in the Standard Babylonian Version he uses the same weapons against wild animals and the Stone Ones.[31] However, it is likely that he only uses a *namṣāru* to slay Ḫumbaba in the standard version, though the passage in question is fragmentary.[32] In any case, as is evident from a passage set after the monster's slaying in Tablet V, the two heroes use *ḫaṣṣinnu* axes to cut down the Cedars:

> *pāšu 2 biltā ḫaṣṣinnātūšunu*
> *nikkas u 15 ubān tirik sunginnīšina*
>
> Hatchets of two talents each were their axes,
> Three and a half cubits long were the woodchips (made by) the stroke (of their axes).[33]
> (V 309-310)[34]

24. YBC 11382, edited and discussed in Frahm 2010.
25. Frahm 2010, 115-119.
26. Hawthorne 2015, 459.
27. On Enkidu as the double of Gilgamesh, see Hawthorne 2015.
28. The significance of the second dream anticipating the first adventure is discussed below.
29. In the Old Babylonian version, the two heroes cast axes (referred to both as *ḫaṣṣinnū* and *pāšū*) and daggers (*patrū*) before they embark on their quest (OB III 165-170). As is clear from the incomplete II 248-250, they also do so in the Standard Babylonian version, though *patrū* is replaced with *namṣārū*, "swords".
30. OB Ishchali lines 19'-22'.
31. XI 15-18, X 93-94.
32. V 262-265. In depictions of the slaying of Ḫumbaba on cylinder seals, Gilgamesh is shown stabbing the monster with a blade, while it is Enkidu who holds the axe (as in Lambert 1987, Figs. 6 and 8). The same is true for seals depicting the slaying of the Bull of Heaven (for example Lambert 1987, Figs. 25-26). However, judging by what is preserved in tablet VI, in the text of the epic Gilgamesh kills the beast by himself using a *patru* rather than a *ḫaṣṣinnu* or a *namṣāru*, after Enkidu tells him how to do so (VI 139-140).
33. This translation is taken from Al-Rawi – George 2014, 83, as it makes the most sense in this context, yet it should be said that it is a rather free rendering of the line, which literally runs "Three and a half cubits (was) a stroke of their woodchips".
34. These lines are given in Al-Rawi – George 2014.

In the Old Babylonian version of the epic, there may be a second parallel between Gilgamesh's second dream and the expedition to the Cedar Forest. In the description of the dream, found in Tablet II of that version, it is said that the appearance of the axe is strange (*šani būnūšu*).[35] As stated earlier, the axe itself represents Enkidu, yet there is no instance in the epic as it is preserved in which Enkidu is said to be strange-looking, so the significance of this description in regards to him is unclear. Perhaps the axe is described in this way because, as Ninsun tells Gilgamesh, "The axe you saw is a man" (*ḫaṣṣinnu ša tāmuru amēlu*),[36] yet this pronouncement most likely refers to the fact the weapon represents Enkidu, not to its shape being strangely man-like. An alternative explanation may be that the axe's form foreshadows a different character, the mighty Ḫumbaba, about whom the elders of Uruk say, "We hear: *Ḫuwawa* – his features are strange" (*nišemmēma Ḫuwawa šanû būnūšu*).[37] Such a description is applied to no other character in the preserved text. This may mean that while the axe itself anticipates the felling of the trees, its appearance parallels that of the forest's guardian.

The heavenly meteorite of the first dream may stand in not only for Enkidu but for the Bull of Heaven, to which it is similar in two main respects: first, both come down from the sky. Second, the meteorite is called *kiṣru ša Anim*, "a lump of Anu", and the bull belongs to Anu, who gives it to his daughter Ishtar for her to unleash upon Uruk. There are other parallels between the dream and the battle with the bull, as it is described in tablet VI:

ina nipšēšu ša alê šuttātu ippetēm[*a*]
1 *mē eṭlūtu ša Uruk imtaqqutū ina libbi*
ina šanî nipšēšu šuttatu ippetēm[*a*]
2 *mē eṭlūtu ša Uruk* KIMIN
ina šalši nipšīšu šuttatu ippetēma
Enkidu imtaqut adi qabl[*īšu*]
…
Enkidu pāšu īpušma [*iqabbi*]
izakkara and Gilgā[*meš*]
ibrī nuštarri[*ḫ… ina*] *āl*[*īni*]?
kī nippala kamrāti ni[*š*]
…
ištu alâ inārū
libb[*aš*]*u iššún*[*imma*] *ana pān Šamaš ištaknū*

By the snort of the Bull of Heaven, a pit opened up;
One hundred of Uruk's young men fell inside.
By his snort, a pit opened up;
Two hundred of Uruk's young men fell inside.
By his third snort, a pit opened up;

35. OB II 31.
36. I 288.
37. OB III 193.

Enkidu fell up to [his] waist.
…
Enkidu formed his words [(and) spoke],
Saying to Gilgamesh:
"My friend, we have grown pro[ud… in our?] city,
"How shall we answer the piled (up) pe[ople]?
…
After they had killed the Bull of Heaven,
They lif[ted] its heart, and placed it before Šamaš.

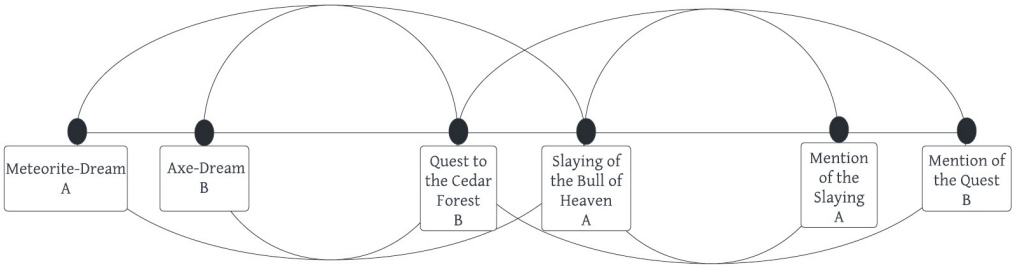
(VI 118-124, 128-131, 147-148)

The dream and the battle are similar in four ways. First, both involve young men (*eṭlūtu*): *eṭlūtu* kiss the "feet" of the meteorite in the dream, and, in the battle, *eṭlūtu* fall into pits made by the bull. Second, both involve the gathering of Urukeans, described using the verb *kamāru*: the young men of Uruk pile ([*u*]*kṭammarū*) around the fallen meteorite,[38] and Enkidu says that the people are piled (up) (*kamrāti*). This could also refer to the young men of Uruk, piled up in the pits made by the bull, or the people of Uruk at large, piled around the bull to witness the spectacle. (though it may be more reasonable to suppose that they would run away from it.)[39] Third, the theme of falling, expressed by the verb *maqātu*, whether in the G or Gtn stem, figures in both: the meteorite falls to earth (*imtanaqqutu*) and the young men of Uruk fall (*imtaqqutū*) into the pits, as does Enkidu (*imtaqut*). Fourth, Gilgamesh carries the meteorite to Ninsun and throws it at her feet,[40] and Gilgamesh and Enkidu carry the bull's heart to Shamash and place it before him.[41]

That the two dreams anticipate the two adventures in reverse order creates a "ring" structure,[42] with the earlier dream foreshadowing the later adventure, and the later dream the earlier one. Such a reversal would be paralleled, and complemented, in Gilgamesh's later lament for Enkidu in Tablet VIII,[43] as well as the account he gives of his adventures to Utā-napišti,[44] in both of which he speaks of the bull's slaying first, and of Ḫumbaba's second.[45] Both of these inversions can be seen as forms of chiastic ABBA constructions, common in Mesopotamian poetry, though operating on the level of

38. I 282, quoted above.
39. VI 131, quoted above.
40. I 283, quoted above.
41. VI 124, quoted above.
42. I owe this observation to Martin Worthington.
43. VIII 53-54: *niṣb*[*aṯ*]*ūma alâ* [*nīnaru*]/ *nušalpiṭu Ḫumbaba ša ina qišti* [*erēni ašbu*], "We si[ez]ed the Bull of Heaven, [(and) killed it]./We destroyed *Ḫumbaba,* who [dwells] in [the Cedar] Forest".
44. X 229-230: *alâ nī*[*ṣbatūma a*]*lâ nīnaru*/[*nuš*]*alp*[*iṭu Ḫumbaba ša ina qi*]*šti erēni ašbu*, "We si[ezed] the Bull of Heaven, (and) killed the bull of [heaven]./ We [des]tro[yed *Ḫumbaba,* who] dwells in the Cedar Forest". Gilgamesh most likely gives an identical account to Šiduri (X 32-33) and Ur-šanabi (X 129-130), though it should be noted that the two lines are almost entirely reconstructed in the case of the former and completely so in the case of the latter.
45. I thank Sophus Helle for bringing this to my attention. On this reversal, see Ornan 2003, 27-32 and Wasserman 2005, 29-30.

plot rather than specific lines or sections. The resulting dual-ring structure can be visualized in this way:



Crafty Gods and Earnest Dreams

It should be noted that the proposed polyvalence of the two dreams does not seem to have a parallel in other Mesopotamian texts about dreams and dreaming. This may mean that it was a feature particular to *Gilgamesh*. A tendency towards imbuing passages with multiple meanings may also be evidenced in another part of the epic. In his recent book,[46] Martin Worthington dissects the message sent by Ea to Utā-napišti in Tablet XI.[47] He argues that this message, which Utā-napišti was to relay to the people of his city, Šuruppak, is "bitextual" (or even "tritextual"), as it can simultaneously be read according to two, and sometimes three, senses, one positive and two negative.[48] What appears to be an innocuous explanation for Utā-napišti's coming departure, followed by a promise of plenty for those living in the city, is actually a proclamation of annihilation, heralding the coming of the deluge with cunning duplicity. This polyvalence, which concerns not only the subtext of Ea's message, which could be understood in at least two ways, but, in the case of its last two lines, the very words the god is speaking, would cohere with, yet be different from, that of the two dreams of Gilgamesh as proposed here. On the one hand, in both cases there is a "surface" reading and a "latent" or hidden one. On the other hand, the surface, positive reading of Ea's message is false, while the negative ones are true, yet both the surface and latent readings of Gilgamesh's dreams are valid. In other words, while Ea's message conceals truths under a lie, Gilgamesh's dreams contain truth upon truth.

Dreams, Real and Literary

The polyvalence of the dreams of Gilgamesh would also parallel Freud's ideas regarding the dreams of people living in fin-de-siècle Vienna, including himself. Before proceeding with an analysis of this possible similarity, it should be said that, like the value of Freud's work as a whole, the issue of whether his ideas are useful in understanding dreams is controversial. This question, however, is irrelevant in the analysis of the dreams in *Gilgamesh*, as they are not those of flesh-and-blood people,

46. Worthington 2020.
47. XI 39-47.
48. For a summary, see Worthington 2020, 232-237.

but of a literary character. The importance of this distinction lies in the fact that literary dreams need not operate according to timeless, "scientific" truths regarding dreaming, but are the products of an author's culturally, historically, and psychologically contingent understanding of the nature of dreams, as well as their specific textual context. It is difficult to prove whether dreams possess deep meaning, whether of the kind hypothesized by Freud or not, but what is important to our discussion is that Gilgamesh's dreams are said by Ninsun herself to signify profoundly important events involving him, both in the past and in the future. This particular understanding of dreams would fit well with Freud's, as he believed dreams may refer to fateful events in a person's life – though only in one's past. It will be argued that the view of dreaming reflected in the two dreams of Gilgamesh also aligns with Freud's in regarding dreams as polyvalent, and that Freud's ideas, whatever their relevance to real dreams, can serve as a useful framework through which to analyze the literary dreams of Gilgamesh.

Uruk and Vienna

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud proposes that dreams are no mere mess of senseless images. Rather, they are meaningful in the extreme, as they are fashioned from the contents of the psyche, and offer a window into its depths. The weave of dreams is made from many threads, such as people and things from the dreamer's waking world, as well as his or her memories, thoughts, and desires. Thus, dreams express a multitude of mental phenomena, though in a very condensed way. By correctly analyzing the contents of a dream (*dream-content*), one may gain insight into the psychic phenomena the dream expresses (*dream-thoughts*), and thus better understand the mind of the dreamer. Freud describes the relation between the dream-content and the dream-thoughts in this way:

> The dream-thoughts and the dream-content present themselves as two representations of the same content in two different languages; or, to put it more clearly, the dream-content appears to us as a translation of the dream-thoughts into another mode of expression, whose symbols and laws of composition we must learn by comparing the origin with the translation.[49]

The translation from the language of dream-thoughts to that of dream-content is not a straightforward one, whereby each dream-thought – whether a memory, a desire, or any other psychic phenomenon – is neatly expressed by a single object in the dream. Instead, each element of the dream is *overdetermined*, that is to say, expresses multiple dream-thoughts at once:

> I perceive the nature of the relation between the dream-content and dream-thoughts in this way: Not only are the elements of the dream determined several times over by the dream-thoughts, but the individual dream-thoughts are represented in the dream by

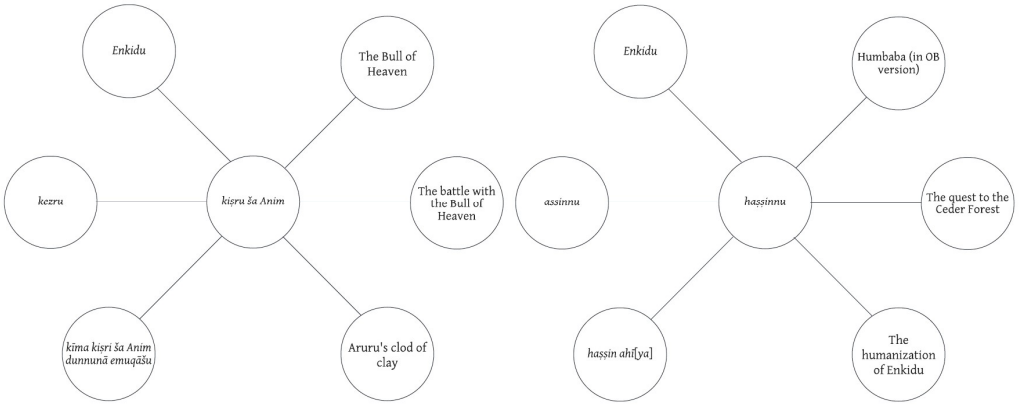
49. "Traumgedanken und Trauminhalt liegen vor uns wie zwei Darstellungen desselben Inhaltes in zwei verschiedenen Sprachen, oder besser gesagt, der Trauminhalt erscheint uns als eine Übertragung der Traumgedanken in eine andere Ausdrucksweise, deren Zeichen und Fügungsgesetze wir durch die Vergleichung von Original und Übersetzung kennen lernen sollen" (Frued 1900, 190).

> several elements. Starting from an element of the dream, the path of the association leads to a number of dream-thoughts; and from a single dream-thought to several elements of the dream.[50]

The idea that each dream-element holds multiple meanings simultaneously well describes the interpretation offered above of the two dreams of Gilgamesh. A further insight offered in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in the context of the analysis of a particular dream, may be useful in integrating the thesis of this paper with those of Kilmer and Worthington:

> The impression derived from this first investigation is that the elements… were taken up into the dream-content because they were able to offer the most numerous points of contact with the greatest number of dream-thoughts, and thus represented nodal points at which a great number of the dream-thoughts met together, and because they were of manifold significance in respect of the meaning of the dream.[51]

The meteorite and the axe can likewise be described as nodal points, connected to multiple dream-thoughts simultaneously. Indeed, they may have been chosen by the author(s) of *Gilgamesh* precisely because they contained multiple meanings within the context of the epic. Drawing on the ideas presented by Kilmer and Worthington, as well as in this article, the network of six dream-thoughts emanating from each of two symbolic dream-elements can be visualized in this way:



50. "Ich sehe also, welcher Art die Beziehung zwischen Trauminhalt und Traumgedanken ist: Nicht nur die Elemente des Traumes sind durch die Traumgedanken mehrfach determiniert, sondern die einzelnen Traumgedanken sind auch im Traume durch mehrere Elemente vertreten. Von einem Element des Traumes führt der Assoziationsweg zu mehreren Traumgedanken; von einem Traumgedanken zu mehreren Traumelementen" (Freud 1900, 195).
51. "Aus dieser ersten Untersuchung holt man sich den Eindruck, daß die Elemente… darum in den Trauminhalt Aufnahme gefunden haben, weil sie mit den meisten Traumgedanken die ausgiebigsten Berührungen aufweisen können, also Knotenpunkte darstellen, in denen sehr viele der Traumgedanken zusammentreffen, weil sie mit Bezug auf die Traumdeutung vieldeutig sind" (Freud 1900, 194-195).

Thus, Freud's understanding of the dreams as outlined in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and the concept of overdetermination in particular, serve as a useful theoretical framework through which to analyze the two dreams of Gilgamesh.

Conclusion

The dreams of the meteorite and the axe do not have a single solution, but a variety of meanings. Not only do they herald the coming of Enkidu – and, according to Kilmer and Worthington, encode truths concerning Enkidu's origin, character, and future relationship with Gilgamesh – but also anticipate the two great adventures on which the heroes will embark. This polyvalence parallels both the duplicity of Ea in the flood story in Tablet XI, and Freud's ideas concerning the meaning of dreams, which offer a productive paradigm through which the dreams of Gilgamesh can be understood. That the mythical dreams of a king of Uruk, found in a Babylonian epic, parallel the insights of a neurologist who lived thousands of miles and at least three millennia away, may not be a coincidence. Rather, it may attest to the fact that dreams, by nature, contain more than a single truth.

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