

CREATION AND CHAOS
Myth and Ideology
in the Ancient Near East and the Bible



Submitted for completion of the degree
Doctor in Philosophy

Marten Krijgsman

St Cross College
University of Oxford

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Short Abstract.....	5
Long Abstract.....	7
Introduction.....	12
Scope and limits	13
Preliminary definitions.....	15
A Brief Overview of Major Theories	21
James Frazer	22
Mircea Eliade.....	24
Claude Lévi-Strauss.....	26
Joseph Campbell.....	28
Émile Durkheim	30
Myth, Ideology, and Theology	37
Part 1: Literature review and methodology	42
Theoretical background.....	42
From observation to inference: evolutionary anthropology and religion.....	45
From inference to the supernatural	49
Supernatural templates and concepts.....	53
Counterintuitiveness, memory, and transmission.....	54
From theory to method.....	58
Dataset size	63
MCI vs MXCI in religious narrative	64
Comparing myths: problematic definitions	64
Terminology	67
Case study selection.....	71
Part 2: Mesopotamian Creation Myths	74
(Counter-)intuitiveness in Mesopotamian myth.....	74
The Theogony of Dunnu	75
Summary and analysis	76
Ninurta’s Return to Nippur (An-gim)	87
Summary and structure	87
Ninurta’s Exploits (<i>Lugal-e</i>)	97
Summary.....	99
Analysis	101
<i>Enūma eliš</i>	107
Origin.....	111

<i>Enūma eliš</i> and the Akītu festival.....	114
Assyrian and Babylonian variants	118
Textual examples	122
Conclusion	125
Erra and Išum	126
Summary.....	127
Place and date of composition	129
Textual connections	131
Analysis	133
Part 3: Biblical Creation Myths.....	142
Comparison, adaptation, and parody.....	142
Adaptation, parody, and literary criticism.....	143
Genesis 1:1-2:4a: a Judahite-Babylonian text?	149
Creation and cosmogony in Genesis 1 and <i>Enūma eliš</i>	160
Analysing differences and similarities	162
Yahweh and Marduk: positions of authority.....	162
Sea and sea monsters.....	168
Celestial bodies and divine combat.....	175
The role of heavenly bodies	177
Chaoskampf.....	182
Biblical creation outside Genesis	188
Psalm 29	190
Psalm 74	200
Psalm 104	205
Excursus: Egyptian creation myths	212
Akhenaten.....	213
Memphis	218
Conclusion	222
Bibliography	231
Appendix A: Mesopotamian texts	260
The Theogony of Dunnu	260
Ninurta’s Return to Nippur	265
Ninurta’s Exploits	272
<i>Enūma eliš</i>	291
Appendix B: Parallels between Akhenaten’s Great Hymn to the Sun and Psalm 104 (Day 2013a).....	309

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the result of five long years of work, and would probably never have been finished if it hadn't been for the support of my family, friends, and (academic) colleagues. If your name isn't on the list, it's because my brain is fried as I write this – but I hope everyone who had a part in dragging me across the finish line knows that I tremendously value their support. I would like to thank, in no particular order of importance except my supervisors:

My supervisor, John Barton, for his expert insights, sage advice, and endless support and understanding in difficult times. Coming to Oxford and working with him has been one of the most incredible experiences of my life so far, and it's been an absolute privilege. Apart from his support, I also owe thanks to my second (occasional but no less helpful) supervisor, Katherine Southwood, for asking precisely the difficult questions I hoped she wouldn't, and for pointing me in the right direction when I wasn't sure what to do next.

The Clarendon Fund, whose generous scholarship allowed me to pursue this degree.

My academic friends and colleagues, whose comments and input on my work made it much better than I could have made it on my own: Nathan Oesch (whose advice on methodology was indispensable), Alex Arndt (without whom the methodology wouldn't exist at all), Damar Hoogland (who read and poked holes in practically the whole thing) Inês Torres (who helped out with all things Egyptian), Trevor Pomeroy and Parsa Daneshmand (who helped me solve some tricky cuneiform), Akma Adam (whose eloquence and lucidity on Derrida I can only dream of attaining one day), and Nick Wyatt (whose research was tremendously helpful).

The best friends and family I could wish for, for all their support through thick and thin: Ethan and Nhung, Saher, Marie-Claire, Roeland, Leonard and Enny, my grandparents, Billy (and Fleury), Marten, Liana, Rachel and Alex, Tasha, Sophia, Teele, Martyna, Eli, Kathrin, Michael, Lewis, Thijs-Willem and Sifra (and little Erik), Gydo and Marlisa, Joris, Irina and Ville, Hannah, David, Rowan, Jenny, Marieke, James, Jelena, Rose, Alice, Tom, my colleagues at Staff Immigration and Zoology, the kitchen staff at St Cross, and everyone else.

Short Abstract

This thesis reframes comparative mythological methodology in the context of recent developments in evolutionary anthropology. In doing so, it applies new insights into the origins and function of supernatural concepts in storytelling to biblical, Mesopotamian, Northwest-Semitic, and Egyptian myths.

Part 1 provides a broad overview of past theories and identifies a lack of methodological attention to ideological aspects of myth. It outlines Pascal Boyer's minimal counterintuitiveness (MCI) paradigm and builds on it to arrive at an empirical definition of myth. Expanding further on this definition, a context-specific approach is developed, enabling a broad reading of myths as vehicles for group identity signals. Separately, the agency of mythographers and their original audience is reemphasised against universalist readings; myths are explicitly framed as deliberate and actively-composed texts.

Part 2 applies these insights to the well-preserved Mesopotamian mythical corpus, using the well-preserved creation and chaos myths from Sumerian, Assyrian, and Babylonian contexts as examples. A close reading of these texts against the background of MCI theory demonstrates their authors' (or editors') concern with contemporary politics, and reveals the in-group-specific nature of supernatural concepts utilised. Furthermore, a diachronic analysis of the key text, *Enūma eliš*, and its reception demonstrates that the promulgation of, and engagement with, these supernatural concepts was actively shaped by changing ideological concerns in different political contexts.

Part 3 raises a further methodological complication by introducing Hutcheon's theory of adaptation. Combining MCI theory with this approach, this part considers the effect of adaptation on MCI concepts using several (likely adapted) biblical myths as case studies. In this context, the compositional process of the adaptations (Gen 1; Ps 29; Ps 104) must be

understood as prescriptive, creating a new theological paradigm for its audience, rather than describing an existing one.

Long Abstract

This thesis reframes comparative mythological methodology in the context of recent developments in evolutionary anthropology. Building on the work of Pascal Boyer and Afzal Upal, it draws together empirical and theoretical insights from anthropology, literary criticism, biblical scholarship, and Assyriology to form a novel, multidisciplinary methodology for the comparative study of myth. Drawing on case studies throughout the ancient Near East (Mesopotamia, Judah and Israel, the Northwest Semitic cultural groups, and Egypt) from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives, this study lays the groundwork for an empirically-grounded, political-ideological critique of myth with strong potential for broader application. In doing so, it generates new insights into the origins and function of supernatural concepts in storytelling, as well as new support for existing insights.

Part 1 provides a broad overview of past theories and identifies a lack of methodological attention to ideological aspects of myth. Its initial focus is on four key theorists: James Frazer (1854-1941), Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), Joseph Campbell (1904-1987), and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), whose theories are discussed and critiqued in some detail. A common issue to all of them is identified: a lack of empirical grounding for the way in which myth as a concept is defined. As a result, each approach is limited in its ability to explain myth: Frazer's model is too far removed from real-world data; Eliade's definition relies on the use of myth, not its ontology; Campbell is too prescriptive in what constitutes a myth at all; and Lévi-Strauss's structuralism is based on an outdated understanding of cognition. In addition to these issues, they all lack an engagement with myths as deliberate compositions, because they generally assume that myths arise naturally.

Pascal Boyer's minimal-counterintuitiveness (MCI) theory is then brought in to address this point. Building on experimental research, this theory frames human cognition within the constraints of humanity's original evolutionary environment. In this context, the brain evolved to selectively filter information based on salience, leading cognition to be defined by

heuristic processes that categorise both online (real-world) and offline (narrated) concrete concepts into categories with expected characteristics. Boyer's experimental research demonstrates that violations of these expectations in offline settings, and in specific and limited ways, confers a memory advantage to the concept. This type of violation is termed 'minimally counterintuitive' and can be used to describe supernatural concepts such as ghosts, magical objects, mythical beings, and so on. Boyer's approach, however, fails to account properly for the gap between MCI concepts and sophisticated religion, even when it is empirically convincing and borne out by supporting evidence elsewhere. MCI concepts being fairly basic, the 'absolute' view of counterintuitiveness requires more complex religion – i.e. more complex violations of natural expectations (such as transcendental deities) – to be *less* memorable and thus less likely to be transmitted.

To account for this gap, we turn to Afzal Upal's theory that MCI is contextual, which means counterintuitive concepts can become intuitive over time. In this view, an initial fertile layer of MCI concepts can acquire counterintuitive complexity when they become sufficiently ingrained into a group's cultural vocabulary. Because these more complex ideas are group-specific – not just predicated on the physiology of the human brain – they can be used to demonstrate affinity (or the lack thereof) between groups, analogous to Justin Barrett's group-identity approach to language. Thus, because such concepts are specific to a group, narratives containing them would be expected to serve as markers of group boundaries, since intuitive engagement with them requires sustained exposure to them. Following from this characteristic is an expectation that MCI narratives (which as shorthand can be termed 'myths', although fairy tales, legends, sagas, etc. can fall under the same category) serve as key texts for constructing and maintaining group ideology. In other words: myths, by their nature, are ideological. Furthermore, using effectively a classical historical-critical approach, it is argued that the agency of mythographers and their original audience is significant, and that myths can thus be read as deliberate creations rather than naturally-generated narratives.

Part 2 applies the methodology developed to the well-preserved Mesopotamian corpus of myths, beginning with some of the earliest written texts in Akkadian and Sumerian. A close reading of these texts against the background of MCI theory demonstrates their authors' (or editors') concern with contemporary politics. In the *Theogony of Dunnu*, a local pantheon is exalted above the traditional Sumerian one in a town that could have been founded within living memory of the author's lifetime. The story (insofar it survives) narrates city foundation and calendar, and thus appeals directly to group-significant concepts, which are argued to serve as markers of belonging for an intuitively-engaging audience. In two texts from the Ninurta cycle, the narrative reflects a supernatural reframing of the political struggle between Nippur and other Sumerian cities, where along the expected acts of heroism of warrior god Ninurta various statements of superiority are engrained in the narration. More broadly, and zooming out from a local context, these texts demonstrate an ideological preoccupation with forms of settlement, with clear preference being shown to the author's and audience's urbanised society over and against sedentary or semi-sedentary societies, which are marked clearly as 'other'.

The pivotal text for this thesis overall is *Enūma eliš*, which is analysed at length as the most significant exponent of the Mesopotamian mythical tradition between the 8th and 6th centuries BCE. Apart from its thematic similarity to the Sumerian texts, its extensive use as a political text outside of a purely cultic or literary setting becomes apparent from its adoption with minor changes by the rivalling Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires, demonstrating the attempted use of the text for cultural hegemonic practices. Furthermore, its use in Mesopotamian society as part of the Akītu festival explicitly shows its function as a text that communicates prescriptive and normative ideals to a broader audience. Overall, the text is a case study for the promulgation of, and engagement with, supernatural concepts actively shaped by changing ideological concerns in different political contexts. Finally, an analysis of *Erra and Išum*, a Neo-Babylonian parody of *Enūma eliš*, exemplifies the Mesopotamian

mythographic paradigm through its deliberate recasting of themes of horror in war and the authority of tradition, capping off the in-depth discussion of this corpus.

Part 3, following on from this adapted text, raises a further methodological complexity by introducing Hutcheon's theories of adaptation and parody, which help contextualise the analysis within broader literary criticism on these forms of text. Added to these theoretical considerations is Kynes' expansion of Hutcheon's theory and his application of it to wisdom literature in the Hebrew Bible, which is applied to the biblical myths discussed in this part. Combining MCI theory with this approach, this part considers specifically the nature of certain creation myths in the Bible, but more broadly the dynamics between the process of adaptation and the role of MCI concepts in it. The key text for this part is Genesis 1, which is argued through traditional historical-critical analysis as well as contextual MCI proximity to be a 6th-century BCE text – although the precise dating is not crucial – adapted from the Mesopotamian paradigm in terms of composition and political-ideological concerns. Several narrative elements in the text are analysed as ideological statements, further elucidating the relationship between the biblical and Mesopotamian traditions as well as their respective cultural backgrounds. On the basis of this analysis, the biblical text is argued to be primarily ideological and only secondarily theological, because its theological statements rely in the first place on its ideological requirements. As such, the biblical text is understood as a witness to (and key component of) the complex in/out-group dynamics of the exiled Yahwistic community in Babylon.

The characteristics of mythography in the Yahwistic community are further investigated through another (potentially) adapted text: Psalm 29. The appropriation of MCI characteristics by Yahweh from the Northwest-Semitic Ba'lu (Haddu/Hadad) in this text is argued to be predicated on the fluidity of textual adoption of MCI concepts between groups. The ease with which Yahweh adopts another deity's characteristics here demonstrates from another angle that theology can arise from practical concerns that have little to do with

orthodox beliefs. Psalm 104 demonstrates similarly that the incorporation of MCI concepts from more explicitly ideological texts into the hymnic corpus reinforces the normative function of these texts for the wider in-group. A brief excursus to the corpus of Egyptian creation myths demonstrates that the methodology is more broadly applicable, even to texts that arguably have no direct connection with the other texts under consideration.

In summary, this thesis brings together methodologies from several fields to develop a multidisciplinary and empirical approach to myth. Through case studies from Mesopotamia and Egypt, it is argued that creation myths in this region were composed as primarily ideological texts, and that biblical myths should be read in a similar fashion. Overall, myth is argued to be necessarily ideological through its culture-specific use of supernatural concepts.

Introduction

Much human ingenuity has gone into writing about the origins of the universe and our species, and probably equally much ingenuity has been spent trying to understand the meaning of these accounts. In reading creation myths and the metanarratives surrounding them, we encounter a peculiar quality of humanity: a willingness – which some might even call a compulsion – to engage with this ultimate question that, in greater or lesser detail, demands to know where we come from. And that it is a peculiar quality must be evident from the sheer variety of origin stories known to our species. From a modern perspective, the idea that volcanoes spit lava because a fire-breathing monster is trapped underneath it (as one Greek myth alleges of Mount Etna) will probably be received somewhere on the spectrum between ‘inventive but silly’ and ‘completely preposterous’. Similarly ridiculous to a modern audience – in terms of cosmological accuracy – is the idea that personified farming tools incestuously reproduced and so created the world (from the *Theogony of Dunnu*, discussed below). Equally odd, of course – from our modern, western, scientific perspective – *should* be the idea that women exist because the first one was grown from a man’s rib (Gen 2:21-22), which is probably on a comparable level of strangeness to this man being made out of dust in the first place (Gen 2:7).¹ I emphasise the word ‘should’ here, because when we take a step back from the Garden of Eden story and assess it for its claims about human origins, we ought to find it precisely as credible as any other narrative where humans are brought to life by baking in ovens, or by shaping them out of driftwood, or by carving them out of a dead god. So what is it about this narrative that, at least to me – having grown up in a Judaeo-Christian environment –, makes it stand on a different kind of level, somehow more intuitive, more ‘real’ than Greek or Aztec or Norse stories? It is not, presumably, because it presents a

¹ Of course, modern Christians do not generally regard the Genesis account as literally, historically true – but at the same time, it is not quite surprising (empirical evidence aside) that biblical literalists equally reject the notion that humanity descends from aquatic, lizard-like animals.

more convincing narrative than any of the thousands of other creation myths around; when we read the two biblical creation stories of Gen 1 and 2-3 we encounter very matter-of-fact narratives uninterested in expanding further on the cosmological claims they make. At the same time, of course, some of the claims made by these myths within the same cultural context directly contradict each other, or otherwise do not seem to follow our intuitive sense, prompting the question what it is about these kinds of stories that makes them so pervasive throughout human culture. In order to begin addressing this issue, this thesis introduces a novel methodology grounded in evolutionary anthropology, several case studies from the ancient Near East that have either not been discussed at all (or have not been studied from this angle), and a reframing of myth in the Hebrew Bible as ideological rather than theological.

Scope and limits

Because the sheer amount of available material would make a comprehensive study of *all* ancient Near Eastern myth unmanageable, some restrictions must be placed on the present undertaking in order to work with a representative sample. For this reason, we limit the scope to those biblical texts dealing with creation and chaos, and consider their compositional origins in light of a number of texts dealing with similar issues from the broader ancient Near East. The aim, therefore, is to better understand the nature of biblical myth through analysing the form and function of ancient Near Eastern myth. The approach taken here differs from previous ones in a number of ways. Firstly, the methodology employed here allows for novel approaches to previously-studied material, generating an analysis that foregrounds the ideology of the text instead of the theology. It is no exaggeration to say that our modern understanding of myth in general has been moulded by millennia of theological analysis – let alone our reading of biblical myth. In this thesis, we will reassess this prevalent assumption and consider a reframing of biblical myth as ideological compositions instead of theological ones. Secondly, on a note related but slightly different from the first, this thesis

fundamentally reads biblical myth as a development of existing tradition. Given our much-improved understanding of the language, people, and culture that were formative to the development of Judahite monotheism and its related texts, we are now on more solid ground analysing Mesopotamian material than biblical texts. Thus, our initial focus will be on Mesopotamian texts, analysing the way in which they functioned as myths within their primary (and secondarily adopted) context, and culminating in a detailed discussion of the Babylonian national epic *Enūma elīš*, against which we will contextualise the biblical tradition. Thirdly, there is a significant number of texts that have not been discussed yet in comparative treatments of biblical myths in a Mesopotamian context, which are introduced here to provide a more in-depth overview of the mythical tradition in whose context the biblical one developed. In particular, more obscure creation texts (the *Theogony of Dunnu*), as well as two texts belonging to the Ninurta cycle, form a body of work that remains understudied or entirely ignored by biblical scholarship despite the significant insight they provide into Mesopotamian mythmaking. Not all texts discussed here are exclusively creation myths – or even mention the topic at all – but instead narrate divine combat against a chaotic foe. These texts are relevant because, as we shall see, they function similarly to the creation myths we discuss, and in doing so sideline the ostensible focus (that is, creation or chaos) in favour of other concerns. Taken together, the approaches taken here contribute to biblical scholarship and religious studies by providing novel approaches to understanding the broader phenomenon of myth.

The selection of texts in this thesis is driven broadly by theme and intertextuality. The critical nexus lies between *Enūma elīš* and Genesis 1:1-2:4a, which both deal with creation and chaos and are extremely likely to be related as precursor text and adaptation. At the same time, of course, neither text stands in isolation in its respective literary tradition; as such, in order to show a pattern of ideology, various related texts receive detailed attention. The ancient Near Eastern literary corpus is of sufficient size that discussing all creation material is far beyond

the scope of this thesis, and a selection has been made of texts most closely related to *Enūma eliš*, in various ways. Thus, particularly in view are those texts attesting to contemporary political concerns (either overtly or by allusion) in the context of creation and chaos. In the Hebrew Bible, which is a much smaller corpus, all relevant sections can be discussed; additionally, some further related texts are discussed to illustrate the broader phenomenon of cross-cultural borrowing of mythical tropes for ideological purposes.

Preliminary definitions

When we discuss the Hebrew Bible specifically within the context of myth, the very notion of calling any part of it ‘myth’ might evoke feelings that we reject a certain level of authority: it might suggest that the story is untrue – or worse, misleading. Phrases such as ‘the Bible *as* myth’, ‘the Bible *and* myth’, or ‘myth *in* the Bible’ are all used regularly in academic biblical and religious studies, and seem to be employed to negotiate various levels of this precarious balance in reading as ‘mere myth’ what to some is a sacred text. Mere myths, after all, are not interesting for what they tell you about cosmological or theological truths; they are just stories, or so the general perception goes. It might go too far to state that it is a misconception to see myth as existing on the ‘falsehood’ end of a truth spectrum – after all, in a descriptivist sense, this is exactly how the word is commonly used in English parlance, and how many non-specialists understand the force of the word. However, it seems to me that supernatural stories in general should not be categorised this way – in fact, and to their credit, even early mythologists such as James Frazer would agree with this view. When we treat myth exclusively along the truth-falsehood spectrum, we create a false dichotomy between those stories that are ‘true’, in some authoritative sense, and those that are ‘false’ – misguided at best, deliberately misleading at worst. This in turn then leads us to miss potentially more important aspects of the story, because they get lost in the simple determination of accuracy. With this in mind, I understand mythology as the field that attempts to understand myth in its broadest sense. In virtually all cases, going back to well before mythology arose as an

academic discipline, scholarly approaches on myth have ventured beyond the popular dichotomy of truth or falsehood; this includes not just contemporary secular analyses, but also religious ones. Perhaps surprisingly, some of the earliest Christian commentaries take precisely this view on the text of the Hebrew Bible (which, to them, was of course already part of an ancient inherited tradition!). In the early 3rd century, Origen, in his commentary on Genesis, wrote derisively of those who would read it as literal history:

For who that has understanding will suppose that the first, and second, and third day, and the evening and the morning, existed without a sun, and moon, and stars? and that the first day was, as it were, also without a sky? And who is so foolish as to suppose that God, after the manner of a husbandman, planted a paradise in Eden, towards the east, and placed in it a tree of life, visible and palpable, so that one tasting of the fruit by the bodily teeth obtained life? and again, that one was a partaker of good and evil by masticating what was taken from the tree? And if God is said to walk in the paradise in the evening, and Adam to hide himself under a tree, I do not suppose that anyone doubts that these things figuratively indicate certain mysteries, the history having taken place in appearance, and not literally (*De Principiis*, IV.1.16).

To Origen, the Eden story is ‘true’, in the sense that contained in it are certain truths revealed to us as mystery through an allegorical text. But, as he writes, we should not be “so foolish as to suppose” the text describing literal historical events – in his view, the history has “taken place in appearance”. Origen reads the myth as being indicative of something more than its straightforward description of events, and interestingly does so on appeal to intuition – which we will discuss shortly in much greater detail – by pointing out some of the logical contradictions in the biblical creation accounts. In doing so, he strongly suggests that one *could* read these myths in terms of that truth/falsehood dichotomy, but that one *should not*. However, Origen was not representative for all of Christianity at this point: Basil of Caesarea (*Hexaemeron* 2.9; 9.1) asserts that creation very much spanned six 24-hour days, and John

Chrysostom (*Homilies on Genesis 2 and 10*) broadly shares this sentiment. And indeed, the type of exegetical commentary which starts with the text and tries to make sense of what it teaches, was a hallmark not just of early Christianity but of Judaism before it; it is also attested extensively outside the biblical tradition, as we shall see later. But the entire premise of exegesis is founded on the principle that the text has an authority of its own – in the case of biblical interpretation, because it is divinely-inspired – and that there is a certain fixedness to it. Just as the early church fathers worked with a (broadly) established biblical canon, the rabbinic tradition operated with Judaism as a centuries-old, highly-developed system. In other words: what we find in rabbinic and early Christian exegesis already accepts the authority of the text, must treat it as a given, and thus in some sense is burdened by the necessity of its fixedness. Even so – and we will return later to the question of textual finality – the midrashim and early Christianity readily filled in blanks left by these authoritative texts, and did so as creative compositional enterprises of their own. One rabbinic commentary on Job discusses Leviathan's female partner, who – it claims – was killed by Yahweh for fear of their offspring destroying the world, and it will be served at the banquet celebrating the return of the messiah (b. B. B. 74b). None of this, of course, is in the biblical text – it is an original adaptational composition.

This leads us to another point in considering myth that is nearly inescapable in current-day academia; namely that myth is rarely analysed as something that is grounded in a conscious process of composition. We will discuss them in greater detail below, but very broadly speaking the major theoretical frameworks have tended to approach myth through this lens: that myths through their narrative either express some fundamental psychological truths, or are shaped by these truths. In a recent article, Wyatt puts it thus:

In these respects history certainly differs from myth as commonly conceptualized, for the latter, while obviously also modified over time within a community, will nevertheless always claim, at least implicitly, to be immutable, and a true account of

the Ur-Myth. Indeed, it is this quality of myth which is perhaps its primary function, since it appeals to, and remains, as an archetype or a yardstick by which all other realities are to be evaluated in the religious context. The myth is never questioned. It establishes the paradigm (Wyatt 2008: 164).

In other words, the general approach in modern scholarship is that myths – as opposed to narratives merely communicating history² – are necessarily profound, either because of the human condition that produced them, or because of the transcultural ideas that they contain and communicate. More specifically, there seems to be a broad, unspoken consensus that myths are the narratives that record (often religious or spiritual) human experience, and that they somehow just *arise*; the compositional process underlying the formalised narratives tends to be taken for granted.³ Often, oral culture is assumed to precede the written record of the myth verbatim, so that the person committing the story to text is reduced to being a recorder of tradition rather than an author, composer, or editor. This understanding of myth can be shown to be flawed on several levels: fundamentally because it wrongly assumes that myths are not composed; and empirically because we can (and will) show evidence of myths being formed deliberately out of pre-existing material as new compositions.

Even on a more conceptual level, the very notion that orality must precede – in a chronological sense – the formal, finalised, written texts is mistaken, as Vayntrub (2019) has

² Wyatt himself concludes that the line between myth and historiography is perhaps blurrier than modern scholarship is willing to admit (2008: 171).

³ See, for instance, Tylor's remark that "our attempts to invent new myths or new nursery rhymes" are a useless endeavour and result only in "a feeble, spiritless imitation" (1920: 90). Many other theories implicitly or explicitly assume that 'true' myths can only arise naturally: e.g. Jung's collective unconscious (1960 [1929]); Dundes' focus on universal cultural patterns (1962); Lévi-Strauss' insistence on binary structures even despite his rejection of psychoanalysis (1958). Perhaps strikingly, Assyriology strongly opposes this approach by focusing on the process of composition of myths, the role of scribes, and *reporting on* myths rather than theorising their nature. See, e.g. Lambert (2013), esp. part V; and Vayntrub 2019: 22).

recently convincingly shown, and as demonstrated practically by modern oral versions of written texts, such as Benjamin Bagby's performances of *Beowulf*. As part of the broader discussion of the chronological relationship between oral and written texts, the great deal of work on the relationship between them should also be acknowledged; specifically, in terms of how the most influential theorists in 20th-century literary criticism initially insisted on characterising oral texts as absolutely separate from written texts (e.g. Innis 1951; Havelock 1986; McLuhan 1969, and especially Ong 1979, 1982). Havelock (1986: 44) exemplifies this in his discussion on the introduction of written versions of texts in Greek literature:

[T]he chief source material provided for inspection [of oral traditions] is textual. How can a knowledge of orality be derived from its opposite? And even supposing texts can supply some sort of image of orality, how can that image be adequately verbalized in a textual description of it, which presumably employs a vocabulary and syntax proper to textualization, not orality?

The issue, for Havelock, is that he understands there to be a fundamental gulf between the two phenomena, to the point that he speaks of "contamination by literate idiom" (1986: 44) in academic studies of oral literature, and the "paradox" (1986: 53) of written versions of oral compositions being written down and then *speaking*, in turn, to their audience. Particularly the latter point is worth expanding slightly: for Havelock, orality is necessarily ephemeral – any attempt to record it immediately 'contaminates' it with literacy (or literature, if you will). An oral text can exist only in the mind and be performed; though it can be formalised in a way, it ceases to be orality when it is recorded in any way. Thus, it almost seems that Havelock rejects any possibility of accessing orality from an academic perspective, at least accessing it *as* orality; even recordings represent imperfect copies of oral texts, contaminated by literacy (1986: 45).

An elegant solution for Havelock's paradox comes from Wesling and Slawek (1995), who argue that a distinction exists between orality as such and oral texts. In their approach, oral texts are the *result* of orality, rather than one and the same thing: "orality is not what is spoken, but what allows one to speak" (1995: 159). Thus, for Wesling and Slawek, there is no paradox: because orality underlies oral texts, it is itself the driving force behind composition. Oral texts – whether recorded physically or memorised – are thus always a reflection of orality, because it is their fundamental derivation from orality that makes them oral. This same principle allows Vayntrub (although she does not cite Wesling and Slawek) to view biblical poetry *as speech* even when the form in which it is known to us is written (2019: 218).

Going even beyond this complex interplay between the written text and its oral context (whether orality resulted in the written text or not) in a Bakhtinian⁴ sense it is rarely possible to speak of *the* text of a myth – even when we consider exclusively a written form of the text. The book of Genesis must always, ontologically speaking, be both: in trying to understand it, we bring to the table not just the bare text itself, but also our pre-existing understanding of it, its 'Genesis-ness' over and against its '*Bereshit*-ness', lingering confessional readings, or antipathy against any of these. Moreover, the text itself carries the same baggage, having been construed under similar conditions. Thus, the *Sitz im Leben* of any myth dictates variation in its reception and broader use, and the oral culture arising around the myth in turn continually recomposes it. For the current thesis, the scope will be limited to considering myths as written texts, by which I mean texts that were authoritatively finalised and

⁴ It should be mentioned here that Bakhtin understood myth as being intensely ideological, and in fact understood it as a primary carrier of ideological language; in this capacity, he termed language in myth 'authoritative discourse' (Brandist 1998: 23). For Bakhtin, however, myth was but one of many forms of oppressive discourse, and his literary theoretical considerations were concerned more with *escaping* such dialectical oppression, and less with analysing myths as ideological texts. See Brandist (1998) for an overview.

transmitted as such. We must acknowledge that for, for example, the Judahite reception of *Enūma elīš* during the Babylonian Exile, the national epic had a ‘life’ of its own as told and retold by its Babylonian audience (as opposed to its recitation from clay tablets by the high priest of Marduk during the New Year festival). However, because precious little information is available about the nature of this oral counterpart to the written text (with the exception of glimpses gleaned through lines of commentary; see Frahm 2010; 2011), for our current purposes, the written text will have to serve as the basis of comparison. Furthermore, for the present analysis, the question whether text is written or oral is strictly speaking irrelevant; all that matters is that it is *text*. The question whether Genesis 1 can or should be taken literally within a given system of hermeneutics, and the extent to which it is (construed as) authoritative for its audience – and thus whether it can be considered ideological – is immaterial.

A Brief Overview of Major Theories

The question of what these adaptations signify and how they originated was central to virtually all major comparative theories going back to E. B. Tylor, and at this point it would be prudent to devote some space to these dominant mythological approaches in order to demonstrate where the current work fits in. Mythology, by its very nature, has always been strongly interdisciplinary, drawing on insights from psychology, ethnography, archaeology, classical philology, and so on (Coupe 2009). Although myths themselves, as stories, have been studied from the perspective of many disciplines – particularly Assyriology and classics – its primary theorists have almost exclusively been anthropologists.⁵ Because it would be impossible to discuss every single theory of myth in this thesis, I will restrict our discussion to the four most influential theorists: James Frazer (1854-1941), Mircea Eliade (1907-1986),

⁵ This is not to say that other disciplines have not contributed to the theory of myth, of course: see Coupe (2009) and Segal (2015) for a recent overview. The most influential theories of myth, however, were all written by anthropologists and psychologists.

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), and Joseph Campbell (1904-1987). Broadly speaking, Frazer understood myth as a primitive counterpart to science, and subsumes it under religion, following a cultural developmental approach somewhat reminiscent of Darwin's theory of evolution. Eliade focused on the idea of myth as a story of origins, which served to explain natural phenomena and reinforce culture. Lévi-Strauss similarly was interested in society, though he sought to understand its relation to myth through a structuralist approach, which understands myth as construed through opposing binary pairs of concepts. Campbell, finally, saw myth as the expression of the subconscious, drawing heavily on Jungian psychology. For each of these theorists, my aim is to summarise briefly the key elements of their approach, and to show that none of them adequately deal with ideology. At the same time, it is important to note that I am not suggesting to reject psychoanalytical or structural or cultural-anthropological approaches entirely; rather, my intention here is to show the range of major theories on the nature of myth and how they fall short in terms of being able to deal with ideological matters.

James Frazer

Like many scholars of his time, Frazer's approach was a product of the post-Darwin Victorian academy; this particularly comes to the fore in his magnum opus, *The Golden Bough*, where he outlines what essentially is a cultural-evolutionary approach to human society. His approach reflects the quintessential comparative mythology of equation, assuming that myths are defined by originating from humanity's 'primitive' attempts at controlling its environment, arguing that they thus betray "the essential similarity of man's chief wants everywhere and at all times" (Frazer 2003, ch. 69). From these similarities, he concluded, society went through a fixed trajectory of development: in a primitive society, humans relied on themselves and their ability to manipulate nature through magic – in this stage, there are no myths. When they realised that their spells had no impact on the mechanisms of nature, they abandoned their self-reliance and instead ascribed the fickleness

of nature to supernatural powers. These powers, the gods of humanity's religious phase, became the subject of stories, which became myths. Finally, the gradual realisation that "the succession of natural events is not determined by immutable laws" spurs the development of critical thinking, leading to a renewed ability to be self-sufficient and live with natural phenomena, instead of against them (Frazer 2003, ch. 69). Key to the Frazerian understanding of myth is that it reflects an incomplete or imperfect understanding of nature, a remnant of mankind's 'primitive' phase. He thus saw myth as incompatible with science, and superseded by it, in society's universal progression from the religious phase (where myth originated) to scientific thought. In society, Frazer understood the function of myth as a narrativisation of ritual acts.⁶ Thus, he cites many examples of a death and rebirth cycle in the rituals of various cultures in Russia, India, Australia, Greece, and the Near East, all of which he relates to a rite of renewal in spring (Frazer 2003, ch. 28). The stories were to be used in re-enactments of the death and rebirth of the deity governing vegetation, and were symbols of the annual decay and re-growth of plants.

Frazer illustrates his theory of the tripartite classification of societal development with this example of agricultural practice. In the magical period, he argues, humans would rely on their own ability to plant and govern the growing of crops through the application of magical spells and ceremonies, which would be performed at appropriate times during the year. Through "the slow advance of knowledge," they abandoned their belief in self-reliance, and instead began to worship supernatural beings. These deities followed the same annual patterns as the magical ceremonies once did, and thus, according to Frazer, "a religious

⁶ Frazer was not unambiguous about the relationship between myth and ritual. In a way, ritual precedes myth (since magic involved certain rituals, but deities were required for myths to exist). In *The Golden Bough*, myth and ritual in the formal sense are fundamentally entwined in the religious phase of society; later on – such as in his translation of *Apollodorus* for Loeb (1921) – Frazer echoes the Tylorian view in separating the two contrary to his earlier position.

theory was blended with a magical practice” (2003, ch. 29). In this religious phase, ceremonies would be carried out where humans acted out the role of the dying deity of vegetation, who, by extension, represented the dying vegetation in winter. The re-enactment of that deity's rebirth then completed the ceremony, and brought about the revival of plants in spring. Though he does not describe it in his example of agriculture, the scientific stage would eventually be reached through the realisation that the changing of the seasons happened by itself – through the earth's rotation around the sun – and at this point both myth and ceremony would be abandoned entirely.⁷ Myth, then, for Frazer, is something that does not exist in a scientific society such as ours – it is purely indicative of a more 'primitive' culture. Because of Frazer's focus on comparison, and his debatable definitions, his approach leaves no real room to account for ideological aspects of myth; in fact, because it requires myth to be reflective of universal cultural-developmental principles, the notion that there is any room for authorial creativity – and thus, for ideology in myth – is difficult to fit anywhere in it.

Mircea Eliade

Some room for ideological analysis is present in Eliade's approach to myth, which nonetheless has a completely different focus. Similarly to Frazer – although breaking away from the explanation of myth developing through a deterministic process – Eliade's approach to myth assumes the existence of universal factors to explain its form. For him, every myth told the story of the beginnings of something; in his own words:

Briefly stated, it is my opinion that for members of archaic and traditional societies, myth narrates a sacred history, telling of events that took place in primordial time, the fabulous time of the “beginnings.” Myth is thus always an account of a “creation” of one sort or another, as it tells of how something came into being (Eliade 1976: 22-23).

⁷ Although myth – ‘true’ myth – could not exist in Frazer's understanding of scientific society, religion vestigially remained as ethics.

As opposed to Frazer, then, for whom myth functions as a response to observable realities in nature, Eliade understands myth not merely as a representation of those realities in narrative form, but as their aetiology. Thus, the myth of Adonis would not simply be an anthropomorphised retelling of the annual cycle of seasons, but a narrative that explains why this cycle happens at all. For Frazer, society is in a continuous state of development, with myth reflecting the contemporary situation and casting off previous understandings of nature and culture. For Eliade, on the other hand, each and every myth hearkens back to a primordial, original state of understanding that remains at the heart of every myth told by humankind (Eliade 1963: 20); in other words, myth reflects a 'pure' state of humanity, from which increasing cultural complexity removes us over time. Indeed, he goes even further than that by understanding the act of retelling myth as a way to resurrect that primeval past, in an attempt to enter into divine presence (Segal 2015: 73). Myth thus becomes not only an aetiology, but involves an explicit element of escapism tied in with religious experience: "myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence" (Eliade 1964: 5). By confining myth to the actions of supernatural agents, however, he seems to make a distinction between 'true' myth – the functional, aetiological, primordial narrative tied in with ritual – and 'modern' myth – the remnants of those 'true' myths in the stories of modern-day culture, stripped of their ritual significance. In his thinking, Eliade rejects a purely psychological Jungian approach, even though the 'patterns' he identifies as foundational to myth somewhat resemble Jung's archetypes, and despite the apparent essentialisation of myth to being about origins, analyses myths as complex narratives in their own right. (Allen 2013: 97). While he does not argue for their universality per se, Eliade does hint at the notion that myth derives from a primordial, archetypal 'intuition' – a profoundly spiritual sense of the lost connection between humanity and the cosmos, which stands at the base of the aetiological function of myth: because this intuition persists, mankind seeks to return to that primordial state of unity. This suggests that the Eliadean view leaves little room

for authorial creativity, since myth must reflect – and thus fundamentally be based on – these hypothesised origins to which the author longs to return. Much like Frazer, then, Eliade’s theory of myth is not well-suited for ideological analysis, because it requires the presumption that the text foregrounds a universal sense of aetiology.

Claude Lévi-Strauss

Universality takes somewhat more of a back seat in Lévi-Strauss’s work. As the main contributor to and advocate for the structuralist school of anthropology, he wrote a number of works on the origins and function of myth, intending to provide a radical departure from Eliade or Frazer.⁸ His predecessors were focused mostly on developing universal interpretations of the content of myth: both were interested in fitting myths in a structure that explained them by tying them to a developmentally deterministic framework (environmental engagement and aetiological drive, respectively). Lévi-Strauss was less interested in finding a common denominator of meaning to all myths, and instead developed a more complex methodology. For Lévi-Strauss, each myth represented a piece in a larger puzzle. Like Frazer, he believed these pieces to have come from ancient societies, in which they held a particular kind of truth-value. Like Eliade, he recognised that myths took place in a ‘timeless’ world – in his own words, “a myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place long ago. But what gives the myth an operational value is that the specific pattern described is timeless; it explains the present and the past as well as the future” (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 208). Thus, for Lévi-Strauss, each individual myth represented only a fragment of a much larger framework of meaning, which is multi-layered: on one level, it presents a straightforward narrative that is rooted in antiquity, but might not have direct meaning to its user; on another, the ‘operational

⁸ Lévi-Strauss’s structuralist approach was famously critiqued for not being radical enough by Jacques Derrida in ‘Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences’ (1970). Derrida in fact discusses Lévi-Strauss’s approach to myth in detail in this paper, and uses it as a case study demonstrating his disagreement with structuralism.

value' to its users functions because of certain universal qualities. Through an elaborate system of categorisation, his methodology attempts to uncover these qualities through a tremendously broad comparative analysis. While Frazer and Eliade saw that collection as their goal, it was the starting point for Lévi-Strauss: "If there is a meaning to be found in mythology, it cannot reside in the isolated elements which enter into the composition of myth, but only in the way those elements are combined" (1963:208). If myth was thus a collection of elements strung together by narrative, Lévi-Strauss argues that it is possible to understand their meaning to ancient societies by stripping away the narrative and organising the resulting mythical elements (dubbed 'gross constituent units') in a table. In such a table, the narrative progression can then be found by reading the rows; each column indicates a commonality in meaning. This method of understanding myth allowed Lévi-Strauss – correctly or not – to make sweeping statements about the mythical tradition of ancient societies. For example, he could see the common theme of 'underrating of blood relations' present in the myths of Cadmus, Oedipus, and Antigone, despite their apparent dissimilarity in terms of narrative. Furthermore, in analysing myth as originating from the basic structure of the mind, Lévi-Strauss rejected the intentionality of myth: "Myths have no authors", as he explicitly put it in *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964).

The vital part of his methodology, of course, is deciding how these categories of meaning are determined. Lévi-Strauss appears to take them as arising naturally from the arrangement of the gross constituent units – which then, of course, begs the question how we arrive at the isolation of these units from the rest of the narrative in the first place.⁹ According to Lévi-

⁹ Lévi-Strauss believed that gross constituent units derived from the human mind, because binary thinking is fundamental to his understanding of human cognition. The circularity of this point should be apparent: the appearance of binary pairs in myths is not necessarily evidence that humans think exclusively or even significantly in binary terms, only that humans are capable of considering binary terms. Unless the binary

Strauss, this is done “on the sentence level” by proceeding “tentatively, by trial and error” (1963:210). In other words; close reading rooted in thorough literary criticism. There is little necessarily wrong with this approach, but as before it still assumes that myth is a natural reflection of its author’s Umwelt, and fails to acknowledge the role of literary creativity and response in the texts themselves. In other words: by distilling a myth to its gross constituent units, and reducing it in significance only to the role it plays in the larger schema the text itself is denied investigation. Now, this in itself need not be a problem from a general methodological standpoint, but since the current objective is precisely understanding the specifics of individual myths, rather than the way in which they might fit into a broader overarching scheme, Lévi-Strauss’s approach is unsuitable for this purpose.

Joseph Campbell

Joseph Campbell does not often feature prominently as a theorist of myth, although his work has been tremendously influential in other areas – particularly filmmaking and the creative arts.¹⁰ Arguably his most famous concept is the monomyth, which was heavily influenced by Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious.¹¹ In this approach, Campbell outlines the idea that all¹² myths share a common structure, which he summarises as follows in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*:

structure of the mind can be demonstrated *in the mind* (rather than in analysed narratives that are a *product* of the mind), it remains an unproven axiom rather than an evidence-based observation.

¹⁰ See Vogler (1992), *The Writer’s Journey*.

¹¹ This is not to say that Campbell was a straightforward Jungian: he draws on Freud through Róheim in *Bios & Mythos* (1951), and brings metaphysical aspects of myth to his discussion in the second half of *Hero with a Thousand Faces*. See also Segal (1990).

¹² There is some question to whether Campbell saw all myths as hero myths; if not, the monomyth applies only to those myths that would be considered hero myths. Again, it is somewhat unclear how Campbell understands the difference between them, if any.

“A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.” (2008: 23)

Campbell thus outlines an even more generalising theory of myth than Lévi-Strauss does: while both theorists are concerned with stripping the story of its narrative dimensions and reducing the myth to ‘gross constituent units’, at least Lévi-Strauss leaves open precisely what ideas are propagated by these units. Campbell understands them all as being fundamentally the same, boiling down to the summary cited above. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was precisely this generalising tendency that levied the bulk of scholarly critique on Campbell’s work. As Miller put it, some saw Campbell as exemplifying “the irrelevance of a certain kind of universalizing, archetypal comparativism” (1995:168). It is indeed perhaps difficult to find in Campbell’s work the “concern ... to use the comparative method in order to exhibit and illuminate key differences between mythologies”, especially considering his insistence on the essential archetypal equivalence between the structure of myth (Felser 1996:395). This makes it difficult to use his theory in the cross-cultural study of myth, since the underlying assumption that all myths are fundamentally the same eliminates the relevance of cultural differences to the composition of myth entirely. Against this criticism, however, another key part of Campbell’s work can be raised. For apart from his universalist understanding of the *structure* of myth, he was concerned with the *meaning* of myth on a completely different level. For Campbell, all myths might share a common framework; despite these similarities, however, each myth had a particular set of meanings associated with it, the specifics of which might vary wildly between societies. He outlined four main purposes of myth: metaphysical, cosmological, sociological, and paedagogical, each of which carried their own set of meaning, on multiple levels, for the society that propagated the myth (Felser 1996:395). Three of these purposes, deliberately or not, hark back to the previously

discussed theorists. The metaphysical function of myth is close to Eliade's understanding: it guides the reader to a magical or ultimate reality through the symbolism contained within the myth. Cosmologically seen, myth has virtually the same function as Frazer's primitive stage: it offers an explanation of the natural world, and makes (physical) realities comprehensible to the (psychological) mind. The sociological function of myth chimes with the ideas of Lévi-Strauss, explaining how myth and society are intertwined, and how myth expresses ideas about what society should be like.

Émile Durkheim

On the topic of sociological functions: in order to appreciate more fully the contribution that the proposed methodology brings to the landscape of theory applied previously to myths in the ancient Near East – particularly Genesis 1:1-2:4a – it would be helpful at this point to consider a theoretical approach that is somewhat more closely aligned to the approach taken here than the explicitly mythological theories already discussed. Within sociological approaches to the Bible, Durkheim still features somewhat prominently (eg. Robertson 2014) and, more importantly, quite extensively discusses ideology as a principle. Although past studies have conducted Durkheimian analyses of Genesis (e.g. Leach 1969/1972; Robertson 2014; for an overview, see Carter 1996), to my knowledge no *comparative* analysis of Genesis against its Mesopotamian background has been conducted from this methodological background. Thus, by way of contextualising the current discussion within a closely-aligned sociological approach, some notes on Durkheim are presented here.

A key characteristic of modern sociological approaches to ideology is that it can be understood as voluntaristic or involuntaristic (Berlinerblau 1999). In the voluntaristic approach, the ideas that form ideologies are consciously shaped and propagated by a group, and they belong to that group; an example could be trickle-down economics, which was promoted by the American upper class as a free-market economic model. In the involuntaristic model, ideologies are shared broadly by all groups within society, and they are

generated organically from the values society itself propagates; in this sense, there can be no ‘ideologue’ or conscious, deliberate effort to affect societal ideology as a matter of definition. Durkheim understands ideology in his early work as effectively involuntaristic, approaching ideology within society as the collection of ideas that underpin the means by which the society represents itself (Durkheim 1895; Hirst 1975). He uses the term ‘collective consciousness’ (*conscience collective*), which – somewhat like Jung’s collective *unconscious* – operates on an overarching level rather than an individual one. Durkheim allows for deviations from this general principle, but sees dissenting voices as detracting from the common cause of social stability. (For example, he identifies separation from the collective consciousness as the root cause of suicide in *Suicide* [1897].) Furthermore, for Durkheim, ideology derives very specifically from his approach to how science¹³ functions within society. Because he understands science to be the study of facts or things, and (in his view) concrete facts are readily substituted by ideas or social constructs of those facts, and these social constructs of facts then can be treated by science as *actual* facts, that scientific analysis of socially-constructed fact is what Durkheim calls an ideological analysis (Larrain 1980: 129). Thus, for Durkheim, ideology is necessarily concrete and organic – it is generated from preconceived notions about social facts by society through the collective consciousness, and functions to “harmonise men’s actions with their environment” (Larrain 1980: 130). Unless challenged through very deliberate methodology, ideology cannot normally be affected directly except through innate change. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Durkheim proposes his approach to sociology to be this effective antidote to social science contaminated by ideology. Somewhat less clear is why, even though he seems to construe ideology as ontologically speaking a ‘social fact’, Durkheim insists on treating ideology as a delusion: it is the ‘false science of facts’ contaminated by preconceived notions that derive from the innate need to fit in. This is why sociological method, for him, is so important; without a

¹³ In the sense of *Wissenschaft* or *scientia*, not specifically the natural sciences.

method that is responsibly scientific, it can never study social reality outside those ideological boundaries, only social constructs. Even primitive science (in a Frazerian sense) is contaminated by these same preconceptions, and the natural sciences only escape ideological analysis by shifting their focus away from society itself towards the wider world.

When Durkheim shifts his attention to religion and its function within society in his later work, it is less clear how this understanding of ideology from his early methodological work on sociology feeds into the broader picture. To be sure, for Durkheim, both are generated by fundamental social forces; ideology by the innate drive to generate preconceived notions prior to scientific methodology, and religion as a means through which societal belonging is expressed and mediated (Durkheim 1912; Larrain 1980: 132). However, Durkheim *at the same time* understands religion and science to derive fundamentally from the same societal drive for understanding which tends towards strengthening collectivity,¹⁴ *and* (as we have seen) understands ideology as misguided conclusions about reality derived from pre-scientific notions of society. But these two are hypothetically compatible: if ideology is, in some sense, an imperfect way of explaining (mostly social) facts, it could be seen as fulfilling essentially the same function as religion does (albeit that religion supposedly expresses collective *reality* while ideology expresses collective *illusion*), in the sense that both are superseded in their explanatory function by (proper) science. Furthermore, since Durkheim construes religion as imperfectly expressing facts (even if it is still useful for expressing collective identity), religion clearly shares some crucial characteristics with ideology – namely that both generate an imperfect understanding of reality. Unfortunately, Durkheim does not explain clearly how he understands religion and ideology to interact, perhaps simply because his thinking on ideology had shifted in the twenty years between the two publications. He does, early on in

¹⁴ Per Durkheim: "...perfectionings of method are not enough to differentiate [science] from religion. In this regard, both pursue the same end; scientific thought is only a more perfect form of religious thought" (Durkheim 1912, cited in Larrain 1980: 132).

The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (1912: 4) allude to an ideological understanding of religion that he seeks to rectify, when he discusses “the method which [believers and philosophers] have generally employed” in understanding religion itself as “purely dialectic: they confine themselves to analysing the idea which they make for themselves of religion.” Thus, Durkheim implies that neither adherents to nor scholars of religion actually study religion as such; they study an effigy that they have construed through preconceived notions of what religion *should* be – which effectively is what he argued ideology to be. In other words, Durkheim advanced three forms by which knowledge propagates. First; religion, which functions to represent the individual’s belonging to society as well as explain reality in a flawed sense, and derives from the collective conscious. Second; science, which replaces religion’s explanatory function but not its group signalling function, and like religion derives from the collective conscious. Third; ideology, which is a purely illusory knowledge based on *representations of reality* (rather than reality itself), and derives from the individual or from society individualised as a subject, depending on how one synthesises Durkheim’s approach. As complex and diffuse as Durkheim’s approach to ideology was, his understanding of myth was altogether more straightforward. In his fifteenth lecture (Durkheim 1983 [1915]), he outlines myths rather straightforwardly as primitive science à la Frazer:

“*Myths* have no essentially practical character. In primitive civilisations they are accepted for themselves, and are objects of belief. They are not merely poetic forms. They are groupings of representations aimed at explaining the world, systems of ideas whose function is essentially speculative. For a long time, myths were the means of expression of the intellectual life of human societies. If men found a speculative interest in them, it is because this need corresponded to a reality.”

In other words: the primary function of myths for Durkheim is to serve as explanatory narratives that are generated by society’s inherent need for explanation. Society demands

explanation, and in the absence of the correct methodological tools to arrive at philosophical or scientific – i.e. *actual* – truths, myths serve that need but do so deficiently. In a certain sense, then, they are aligned with Durkheim’s own understanding of ideology – in that they derive from pre-critical preconceptions (or *misconceptions*) about reality; yet they are aligned in that both generate illusory representations of reality. In this sense, Durkheim’s understanding of myth is quite close to Boyer’s and mine: the ideas communicated by myths are normative – they “imposed themselves on men with an obligatory character” (‘Seventeenth Lecture’) – and they survive against philosophical and scientific understandings of the world *because of* their normativity and embeddedness within a culture (‘Nineteenth Lecture’).

However, there are significant issues with Durkheim’s approach. First, his understanding of myth as necessarily cosmological restricts it too rigidly to having the natural world as the primary referent:

“the *mythological beliefs* encountered in primitive societies are cosmologies, and are directed not towards the future but towards the past and the present. What lies at the root of myths is not a practical need: it is the intellectual need to understand.

Basically, therefore, a rationalist mind is present there, perhaps in an unsophisticated form, but nevertheless enough to prove that the need to understand is universal and essentially human” (‘Sixteenth Lecture’).

Thus, in Durkheim’s understanding it is ideology that generates illusory truths about *society*, but myth (or rather, mythology as a system) seems only to interact with society insofar as it imposes normative ideas about the *universe* upon it. Myth is thus always an intellectual phenomenon like philosophy and science, and seemingly by definition cannot be ideological. Second, Durkheim’s rejection of both ideology and mythology as voluntaristic – in that both are generated by society in the form of the collective conscious – significantly limits a study

of myth as something with which deliberate authorial intent can engage. Although, again, it is not quite clear whether Durkheim understands ideology as an individualistic mistake or a collectivist one, what *is* clear is that myth necessarily is generated by society at large, and necessarily stands in opposition to individual composition:

“So far we have seen truth as characterised by its impersonal nature. But should we not keep a place within it for *individual diversity*? As long as mythological truth holds sway, conformity is the rule. Once scientific thought becomes paramount, however, **intellectual individualism** appears” (‘Nineteenth Lecture’; italics in original, bold emphasis mine).

It thus seems that, for Durkheim, it is impossible for myth to be a deliberate composition by an individual acting with ideological goals in mind: intellectual individualism only becomes possible once scientific thought becomes paradigmatic; myth is thus precluded from being composed as such, because mythology is necessarily collectivist.

Where the aim of most of these classic studies was to point out parallels between texts – and, to a lesser or greater degree, aiming to argue for similarities between cultures – my aim here is slightly different. Although my analysis is based on the understanding that these textual parallels exist, it is the follow-up question that to my mind generates much more meaningful discussion: if text A is derived from text B, *why* was it adopted? The similarities are important because they might show a connection between authors, but it is the *differences* that might tell us more about the nature of textual adoption and adaptation. If the text is adopted and changes are made, why are those changes made? If they are changes to particularly significant parts of the precursor text, what might they mean, and what might they tell us about the motivations behind the adoption of the precursor text? Although this is primarily a historical-critical analysis, these kinds of questions are very similar to those asked

in ideological criticism, and this is precisely the aim of this thesis: providing what is essentially a critique of the ideological dimensions of adaptation in the ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible. Naturally, this focus is rooted in an understanding of these texts as fundamentally related to ideology – which as a term will be discussed in greater detail below but is broadly understood as ‘normative identity politics’ – in the sense that they are not merely *descriptive* to some extent, but also significantly *prescriptive* for the people to whom they were authoritative.

Zooming out somewhat and taking into consideration the broader academic field, mythology has slowly moved away from comparison. Part of the reason for this shift is the rejection of the early stages of comparative mythology in the late-19th century, which was often tainted by a (possibly subconscious) desire by scholars to demonstrate the superiority of Western (Christian) culture. Within this context, the growing self-awareness and critical engagement with method within academic circles has been tremendously welcome, not just for the desire to root out racism and other prejudice from its theory and practice, but also because it helped the methodological development of various disciplines. On the other hand, however, it has led to a marginalisation of the comparative method in mythology as a field, and, generally speaking, studies on myth look at supernatural stories only within the context of the culture in which they are used. In biblical studies, comparison is still somewhat more fashionable – particularly intra-biblical (intertextual) comparison and contextualising biblical texts against ancient Near Eastern ones – but studies rarely explicitly bring comparative theory to bear on their cases (Chavalas 2011: 150). Among recent monographs that conduct a straightforward form of comparative analysis, it is difficult to ignore the strong focus on *establishing* comparison, not *understanding* it – what Chavalas (2011: 150) calls the “inventorial approach

to comparisons”.¹⁵ Studies employing intertextuality (e.g. Carr 2012; Fewell 1992; Hays 2008) could be said to adopt a more careful and perhaps more responsible approach, but even then, landmark comparative theories in other fields, such as Hutcheon’s (2006) in literary criticism, have so far found few adopters in biblical studies.¹⁶

The question addressed in this thesis is thus somewhat different from the usual discourse: in attempting to understand how myths relate to one another, the methodology outlined here does not necessarily address why similarities between myths exist – i.e. either because they were borrowed or because they both derive from some universal commonality between human minds – only *why myths exist* in the first place, as well as what they actually are. As we shall see in Parts 2 and 3, the question of similarity between myths is restricted only to those myths for which direct contact (i.e. a diffusionist model) can be demonstrated; whether similarities between myths for which diffusion cannot be established result from independent invention is beyond the scope of the analysis presented here.

Myth, Ideology, and Theology

The motivation for reading myths as ideological texts is not purely speculative, and this is where the other major contribution of the thesis lies. Recent insights from the field of evolutionary anthropology have proven very fruitful in helping us understand a possible neurological basis for supernatural beliefs, and using this to frame our discussion of myth here not only provides an empirical basis for defining it, but will also support our reading of it as ideological. We will introduce minimal counterintuitiveness theory – which provides the direct motivation for reading all myth ideologically – and suggest a methodology to integrate

¹⁵ The most high-profile current debate is probably that over the postulated connection between Ps 104 and the Egyptian *Hymn to the Sun* from Akhenaten’s reign, discussed in greater detail below. See Chavalas (2011) for a bibliography.

¹⁶ Kynes (2011) appears to be the only one in biblical studies at the time of writing; see Part 3 for a more detailed description and discussion.

it into an analysis of ancient texts. Special attention will also be given to several Egyptian and Ugaritic texts, illustrating both the broad spectrum of cultural background information against which the biblical texts were written, as well as some of the same political-ideological ideas that may have motivated aspects of the texts' composition.

A brief note on the definition of 'ideology', which we just broadly defined as 'normative identity politics'. My understanding of how ideology arises from myth is explained in greater detail in Part I, but it might be helpful to expand somewhat on my understanding of the word itself here. I basically follow Wyatt's definition:

“An ideology is simply a system of thought, as regards its structure, which admits of no exceptions to the rule. If no amount of evidence to the contrary convinces the adherent of the falsity of his position, he is in the grip of an ideology.” (2001: 32)

Ideology is normative in this sense – because it admits no exceptions to the rule – and in its normativity prescribes adherence to one or more ideas. Because this prescription occurs on a societal level, I understand this normativity to be political, and because it makes no exceptions to its in-group adherents, I understand it to mould an identity; hence, 'normative identity politics'. Examples of ideological statements from the ancient Near East, which we will discuss further in Part II, include the superiority of urban life against rural life, that of one city over another, and that of one religious approach over another.

A brief note, too, on 'theology'. In its broadest sense, theology can be understood quite simply as the way in which one engages with and understands the supernatural – the *logia* of the *theos*, the way that biology is the *logia* of life, *bios*. In more specific ways, we can look at theology as a historical and/or textual phenomenon (that is, the study of how other people 'did' theology) or as an axiomatically internally-consistent system for use in modern Christianity (as systematic or practical theology). What is key about describing religious ideas as 'theology' – whether they are part of a highly systematised religion like Christianity

or of local folk beliefs – is that this implies a certain deliberateness and consistency (or at least coherence) to those ideas.

Theology, in this sense, is the formalisation or categorisation of religious ideas, whether adherents to those beliefs actually identify these same coherent categories or not. Thus, it is always an abstraction in some sense of concrete principles; in Christianity, we can discuss Trinitarian theology, or the theology of the Cross, or the theology of creation. These considerations take a point of reference (a divine entity, a significant symbol, or a more abstract phenomenon) and systematise supernatural concepts around it into a coherent whole.¹⁷ Of course, in common parlance, the term ‘theology’ tends to be restricted to modern religions, and even then usually to one’s own religion. The notion of Islamic theology may already be a suspect one to lay Christians, or at least one that is ‘inferior’ to Christian theology, but the idea that there can be a theology of indigenous religions (or that indigenous peoples themselves might develop theology) is even less frequently considered. For our purposes, we need only look at the Mesopotamian material under consideration; a cursory search for scholarly work on the theology of Mesopotamian religion yields effectively no results. This can partly be explained by the lack of a need for a practical, systematic theology for adherents, but the old truism that ‘myths are what you call other people’s religion’ may still hold true here. In Assyriology, narratives about the supernatural are virtually without exception termed ‘myths’, and a coherent theology of Mesopotamian religion was only really attempted by Langdon (1914) and restricted to one specific part – the cult of Tammuz and Ištar. More recent work addressing Mesopotamian religion tends to focus on specific parts of it; for example, Lenzi (2011: 2-7), in his introduction on prayers and hymns in the region,

¹⁷ One recent example is Whitney (2019), in which the discipline of psychology is justified through creation accounts in the Christian Bible. By systematising biblical creation accounts (despite their internal contradictions), the author’s ‘theology of creation’ grounds psychology – which as a discipline has little to do with religion – in an abstracted reflection of biblical creation narratives.

spends significant time exploring the definition of ‘religion’, and even briefly mentions dogma and theology, but only does so in the context of similar approaches used in biblical scholarship.

Thus, the way ‘theology’ is used in this thesis responds to the tendency within biblical scholarship that the biblical text expresses theology rather than ideology.¹⁸ This notion takes several forms that this thesis seeks to challenge; for example, that the similarities between biblical and Mesopotamian texts are best explained by the biblical authors, with their existing Yahwistic theology, expressing a cosmology in Genesis 1 that depended on their genuine beliefs about Yahweh (Wright 1950). In this view, the authors’ beliefs about Yahweh are already fully formed when the text was written, and the text is merely a vehicle through which they are recorded. Of course, it is possible that a theological belief includes a normative aspect (as Wyatt [2001: 32-33] actually points out), but I use it here in contrast with ideology: I understand ideology as normative beliefs about society, and theology as genuinely-held beliefs about the supernatural. Of course, I recognise that the two are not necessarily mutually incompatible, but the two terms are useful as shorthand for the way in which these two opposed positions (political versus religious motivation) are assessed throughout this thesis. This thesis proposes the alternative view – discussed more fully in Part III – that the theology that can be ‘distilled’ from the biblical texts is actually secondary to a more primary ideological concern, which is closely connected with the compositional process of myth.

¹⁸ This, itself, is of course an ideological position, because it asserts (not always explicitly) that the biblical text is somehow superior to – or at least in some sense ‘special’ and different from – similar religious texts that are not biblical. This ‘theological’ understanding of biblical texts over and against other texts is most clearly exemplified in the major German commentaries (e.g. Westermann, Von Rad) on especially Genesis. Day, too, in his adoption of the term ‘demythologisation’ to refer to a notion that the biblical text is superior in some sense to the myths from which it borrowed (discussed in greater detail below), represents a recent proponent of this view.

Part I, which follows, outlines the methodology employed here and its theoretical background, which derives from evolutionary anthropology. For this reason – the subject matter likely being unfamiliar to biblical scholars, and in any case the methodological adaptation of the theory being novel – an extensive account is given of both the quantitative-experimental background as well as its possible use in textual studies of myth. Part II then introduces our primary Sumerian and Akkadian case studies, which will also be introduced extensively to establish a firm foundation to ensure familiarity with the subject matter. Part III, finally, introduces a further piece of theory to complete the analysis. First, however, we will turn our attention to the methodology that underpins this thesis.

Part 1: Literature review and methodology

Theoretical background

The theories we have discussed so far range very broadly in their approaches to various possible facets of myth and the context in which myth exists. In the work of the early British anthropologists Tylor (1920) and Frazer (2003), myth was understood as something akin to science in the literal sense of the word – myth, to them, was a processing of knowledge (*scientia*), though one that operated with a restricted understanding of the natural world. Through this lens, they argued, myth could be seen as a ‘primitive’ way of trying to comprehend the nature of the universe, composed deliberately and understood literally. For Freud (1913) and Jung (1966), adopting an approach derived from their background in psychology, myth was the reflection of something primal, a euphemistic way of expressing otherwise inaccessible urges, forms, and shapes of the subconscious. Myth for them was thus understood as an almost accidental narrative, undeliberate in its content, revealing perhaps more about the nature of humanity than about the natural world around us.

However, regardless of whether these approaches are psychological – as we can argue even Lévi-Strauss is, in certain ways – or proto-scientific, the fundamental thing about them is that they are all divergent ways of approaching myth: rarely do they compete or prove each other wrong. Yes, we have seen numerous theorists argue with and against each other, arguing (but rarely proving convincingly) that their own model is superior to another. Campbell (1949) tells us something about the narrative context of many myths across the world, but we need Malinowski (1926),¹⁹ and more recently Whitehouse (e.g. 2015), to understand the ritual

¹⁹ A brief note on Malinowski is warranted here, because his understanding of myth aligns in certain ways quite closely with the understanding advanced in this thesis. Primarily, it is his approach to the *function* of myth within society that aligns; as he puts it, “It is the statement of an extraordinary event, the occurrence of which

context. There is, however, no particular reason that we should insist on *either* Campbell *or* Malinowski being right – there is nothing really that prevents both theories from being functionally complementary. Each model offers us an insight into an *aspect* of myth that another model might not be able to explain. Leaving aside the accuracy of their theories, Frazer can tell us little about the psychological motivations a mythmaker might have, but offers great insight into the role of myth in ancient society; conversely, Freud is less interested in historical-contextual questions (except for his 1939 psychoanalysis of Moses), but begins to address how certain aspects of myth may derive from the mind.

This does not mean that we should assume that, by definition, all these theories are correct and helpful either, and be mindful of the limitations of each approach. *The Hero's Journey* limits the definition of 'myth' to an almost unworkably small dataset, which calls into question the applicability of Campbell's approach to myth as a whole. Freud relies on a psychoanalysis of long-dead authors through the stories they wrote, which will always be contentious at best (leaving aside even the general agreement among psychologists that his assumptions were mostly incorrect). And as each model has its shortcomings, there is one

once for all had established the social order of a tribe or some of its economic pursuits, its arts and crafts or its religious or magical beliefs and ceremonies" (Malinowski 1979: 45). As such, for Malinowski, myth functions as a justification of practice that transcends mere explanation. In other words: rather than a myth simply contextualising a particular practice, the practice is a re-enactment of an Ur-practice that is described in the myth. In this sense, Malinowski echoes Eliade's understanding of myth functioning as a way to reconnect with a primeval time; however, it is the practice whose focus is constantly re-emphasised through the retelling of the myth.

Where Malinowski's approach differs from the argument advanced here is in his understanding of the origins of myth: for him, it arises from (and around) a continued cultural practice, as it does for Whitehouse (2015). Although myth thus has an intensely social function – and in that sense could be said to have an ideological one – the origins of myth for Malinowski are still naturalistic and involuntaristic, leaving little room for authorial creativity and intent. Thus, the focus here is more on myths arising from deliberate composition rather than broad societal agreement.

particular flaw that applies to virtually every single approach to myth: a lack of empirical grounding. By this, I mean not that the various models are detached from whatever corpus or definition one might use, but rather that none of them start from an empirical understanding of myth.

The difficulty with myth is that it has historically been studied from a rather arbitrary point of view. Generally speaking, theorists adopt a definition of myth, assemble the corpus of texts that fit the definition, and then try to find underlying commonalities or obvious surface-level similarities between the various parts of the dataset.²⁰ Several problems can be identified from this general approach to the text. Firstly, choosing a definition is a relatively arbitrary process. There is no particular reason for Eliade (1971) to settle on 'a narrative related to origins' that makes his definition more convincing than Lévi-Strauss's 'a narrative expressing binary oppositions' (1958). In both cases, we can force an interpretation onto our dataset of stories that affirms the definition, but, significantly, there is nothing inherent to either definition for one to be more convincing than the other. Because of the relative arbitrariness of the definition of myth in such an approach, we could see the study process as eisegetical rather than exegetical: by choosing a definition that suits one's preconceptions, it is difficult *not* to force an interpretation onto the dataset. The methodology employed here seeks to prevent an eisegetical approach by establishing an empirically observable phenomenon first, and then drawing its definition of myth from that, instead of defining myth arbitrarily.

Secondly, assembling the corpus is reliant on this definition. If myth is defined as 'a narrative about a deity', then all narratives that are not about a deity are necessarily not myth and will

²⁰ Even Lévi-Strauss, who sought to avoid the pitfall of arbitrary definition through his structuralist approach, cannot deal convincingly with the problem that his binary structures themselves are essentially a restatement of arbitrary qualities – there is nothing particularly essential about them separate from their use in myth. See, e.g., Derrida (2009 [1966]) for a comprehensive critique of Lévi-Strauss's structuralist approach to myth, particularly focusing on its circular nature. Note that Derrida may equally well have disagreed with the approach taken in this thesis given its reliance on an 'empiricist' foundation.

not be studied as such. This means that potentially relevant data might be excluded (and irrelevant data included), once again because of an arbitrary decision of definition. It would be a stretch to include the story of Oedipus into such a definition, given its lack of deities, but Yahweh's dictation in the book of Leviticus would qualify it as a myth.

All this is not to say that theories of myth are flawed beyond usefulness or applicability, but rather that non-empirical approaches will never be able to explain myth as a phenomenon, but only tell us something about an arbitrarily defined group of stories that have been called myth. What we need, then, is not yet another exegetically informed overarching definition, but one that is rooted firmly in empirical observation.

From observation to inference: evolutionary anthropology and religion

Although anthropology in the 21st century tends to shy away from discussing universals and biologically dictated commonalities between cultures and individuals, the sub-field of evolutionary anthropology has sought to combine a scientific understanding of human cognition, informed by (among other disciplines) neuroscience and psychology, with an interest in explaining aspects of human behaviour from a naturalistic perspective. The result has been a burgeoning and prolific discipline producing much novel insight into the development of human culture that, crucially, is based on experimental evidence and empirical data.²¹ Because it would be impossible (and not particularly relevant) to provide a full overview of the methodologies employed by evolutionary anthropologists, this chapter

²¹ Because the time scale of human evolution is enormous compared to the relatively brief period that has passed between developments in human culture relevant to this study and the current day, it can be assumed that modern human cognition functions in mostly the same way as it did in early humans. Results of experiments carried out across the world and in divergent communities show basically identical results (see below for some examples), making it unlikely that significant divergent development in human cognition at this level has taken place. Finally, for another example of the application of the theory outlined here, see Lisdorf (2004).

will focus on the work of a relatively small group of scholars whose work has been instrumental to understanding the cognitive science of religion.

Arguably the most high-profile scholar in the field has been Pascal Boyer. His 2001 monograph *Religion Explained* provides an accessible starting point to explore the pertinent findings of evolutionary anthropology. Although his book is engaged with religion as a whole, it is the fundamental reasoning behind his understanding of religious cognition that forms the basis of the methodology employed in this thesis.

Unlike the mythologists from various fields discussed in the preceding chapter, Boyer starts his investigation from an empirical perspective. He begins his account by observing that common conceptions about religion – prevalent as much within the academic world as outside it – are not actually supported by research conducted on religious ideas held by people around the world (Boyer 2001:5). Take, for example, the notion that religion developed because it satisfied a desire to explain (at that time) otherwise inexplicable things in the world around us. According to this idea, religion provides the answer to questions such as ‘what is lightning?’ and, to take a more abstract question, ‘why do bad things happen to good people?’ Religion might then have arisen to fill the gaps in our knowledge, to satiate our hunger for a complete comprehension of the universe. Boyer provides several examples to show that this is not a satisfactory way to understand religion. In his own words, “If we say that people use religious notions to *explain* the world, this seems to suggest that they do not know what a proper explanation is” (Boyer 2001: 14; emphasis in original). That is to say: because proper explanations serve to give us a better understanding of something unknown that we encounter, successive iterations of the explanatory mental process would be expected to result in something that eventually results in an accurate description of the unknown thing. Under ordinary circumstances, we would thus expect explanations of lightning to become more like ‘an electrostatic discharge occurring between a charged cloud and the ground’, and not as much ‘an immortal human-like being called Zeus, whom we know for his many love

affairs, throws manufactured bolts from his palace in the sky’ – yet within religions, descriptions like the latter are much more common than ones like the former. Assuming explanation is the reason for religious ideas to arise, supernatural ideas like these would be expected to evolutionarily be selected *against*, not *for*, because they stray further away from a naturalistic explanation (Boyer 2001: 14). Thus, even if religion can inform explanations we apply to the natural world in modern times – because religious beliefs form an important part of culture now – it is difficult to see how religion would have developed as a necessary result of explanatory mental processes in the first place.²² Furthermore, Boyer argues, there is in fact nothing to suggest that humans are innately driven to find explanations for everything, or that unexplained things can force us to understand them. “That assumption [i.e. that a human mind is driven by a general urge to explain] is no more plausible than the idea that animals, as opposed to plants, feel a general ‘urge to move around’” (Boyer 2001: 16). In the same way that animals have external and internal motivations for moving around (rather than doing

²² Recall that, for Tylor and Frazer, this was a central part of their understanding of human culture. A counterpoint to Boyer’s argument might be raised through postmodern philosophical challenges to empiricism as the primary system of knowing. For instance, Irigaray might contend that empiricism has only become that way because of societal power dynamics, and that any other system of knowing is equally productive and acceptable. I do not necessarily disagree with this challenge: certainly it would be ironic, having previously discounted Frazer’s approach to myth for understanding cultural development as a deterministic process towards scientific thought, to frame empiricism as the inevitable apex of human thought. In fact, I would concur that Boyer perhaps too easily dismisses the possibility that non-empirical systems of knowing provide equally satisfying and salient explanations. However, the notion that religion was driven originally by a desire to understand the world, which in turn supposedly gave rise to the supernatural speculations found in myth, would be more convincing if we had evidence that myths survive because they actually function properly *as explanations*. We would then expect supernatural narratives to compete on terms of the extent to which they can account for phenomena successfully, which does not appear to be the case (and I have been unable to find this argued in the secondary literature). Because there is very little evidence that two myths about the same phenomenon – say, the origins of the world – survived on the basis of their success as explanations (as opposed to them surviving for other reasons), Boyer’s argument seems reasonable despite the objection noted above.

it just because it is ‘in their nature’), there must be reasons for our minds to engage with something to explain it.²³ And even then, explanatory mental processes are not monolithic: different cognitive functions are employed when we engage with another human than are when we engage with an inanimate object. We do not *choose* to disregard the emotional state of, say, a pencil; our cognitive capacity for theory of mind is not part of that engagement in the first place (cf. Boyer 2001: 101). This is to say that human minds have what are called *inference systems*, specialised explanatory processes that allow us to engage with our environment through an extensive heuristics-based system. This system lets us assign causal links between various external observations without mentally going through each and every step in the causal chain (Boyer 2001: 17). For example, when in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* Pyramus arrives at Ninus’ grave and sees a bloodied piece of torn fabric next to the lion he finds there, he is able to draw the conclusion that Thisbe had arrived before him, encountered the lion, was eaten by it, and is now dead.²⁴ In this case, ‘bloodied piece of torn fabric’ can mean ‘Thisbe is dead’ because the inference system allows Pyramus to skip a number of causal steps. Leaving aside the decidedly fatal result of Pyramus’s inference, it is relatively straightforward to see how a heuristic system that enables subconscious mental shortcuts between observations and reactions to these observations might aid survival. Because inference systems enable faster decision-making, they allow us to deal with potentially lethal situations (e.g. a predator, unstable footing, or a rotting carcass) without our minds having to

²³ E.g. the mind-body problem discussed extensively in (western) philosophical and anthropological circles since Descartes described it: how can a mind control the physical movement of a body (Searle 1983: ix)? But Boyer points out that “surprisingly enough, it is a problem for nobody else in the entire world. Wherever you go, you will find that people are satisfied with the idea that thoughts and desires have effects on bodies” (Boyer 2001:15).

²⁴ In fact, each step of the inferential process contains a number of nested inferential heuristics: Pyramus believing that Thisbe is dead presupposes that lions eat people; that Thisbe was in a position to be eaten by a wild animal; that the fabric was part of her veil; and so on.

analyse the danger in conscious detail, in the same way that our physical bodies can act autonomously through reflexes without involvement of the brain. Inference systems thus played an important role in allowing the human species to survive, and as a result of this evolutionary development they still form a significant part of our cognition.

Perhaps less obvious is how this all relates to the development of religious thought. Put simply, the same inference systems are employed when we engage with the supernatural. In Boyer's view, "religious thoughts are not a dramatic departure from, but a predictable by-product of, ordinary cognitive function" (Boyer 2003: 119). This is not to say that ideas about the supernatural are a necessarily inevitable result of some special or specialised part of human cognition, but rather that they can be understood as a commonly-occurring side effect of engaging with the world in the way the human brain does (see also Porubanova-Norquist et al. 2013; Pyysiäinen and Hauser 2009; Upal 2010). This is important for the study of religion – because it implies that it can be understood as something that forms a natural part of humanity rather than a divinely-instated one – but also for our understanding of myth, because it provides us with an empirical basis on which to define it. So, as opposed to a definition like Levi-Strauss's (1955), the definition that will be developed here does not start on an aspect that is seen to be *inherent* in myth, but as something inherent to human cognition that *allows for* myth. Such an empirical basis furthermore avoids the speculative nature of virtually all definitions of myth, and frames it slightly differently: understanding what myth is, in the evolutionary-anthropological sense, does not require an exegetical analysis of a dataset, and thus avoids an eisegetical bias, as we saw above.

From inference to the supernatural

As we have seen, inference systems allow our minds to process relevant information quickly, even if that means that some of the causal steps between observation and conclusion are lost to our conscious thought process. Inference systems do more than provide a heuristic for responses to environmental cues: they are part of a larger suite of traits that Barrett calls

intuitive cognition (Barrett 2008: 311).²⁵ One aspect of intuitive cognition lets us make assumptions about the environment without necessarily having ready access to all the relevant data, and this leads us closer towards understanding supernatural ideas. As we have seen, encountering, say, a growling dog can, according to our inference systems, indicate that the dog might bite ('dog growls' – 'growl is a sign of aggression' – 'aggressive dogs may bite'). But intuitive cognition enables more than that. It allows us to make generalised extrapolations about this hypothetical dog, providing access to different data: the dog is an animal, which means that it has nutritional needs, was born rather than manufactured, cannot pass through solid objects, and so on (Barrett 2000: 30). These particular inferences are based on the application of cognitive templates on the things we encounter. Information can be inferred about the dog because it belongs to the ontological category 'ANIMAL', which informs similar generalised information about other kinds of animals. Once, say, a cow is recognised as belonging to the same category, similar assumptions will be inferred – and indeed, cows have nutritional needs, are born, and do not walk through walls (Boyer 2001: 60-61). But we do not have to interact physically with something recognisable as an animal to be able to predict its qualities, as Barrett outlines:

“When explaining the features of a large South American rodent, I need not mention that it moves in goal-directed ways, that it seeks nourishment to survive, that it may die, that its parents and offspring will be of the same species, that it has internal parts that serve the animal’s survival needs, that it is composed of natural materials, that it

²⁵ McCauley and Cohen (2010) term this *maturationally natural*, highlighting that this is the expected way for a human brain to develop. It is perhaps worth noting at this point that all descriptions of mental processes are based on neurotypical brains, and that neurodivergent brains may differ cognitively in certain ways from the statistical average. Neurodivergent conditions such as autism have been instrumental in determining how human cognition functions by providing consistently atypical test cases (e.g. Baron-Cohen *et al.* 1999). 'Intuitive', in this sense, is a technical term meaning simply that a concept conforms to the (neurotypical) categories that human cognition has evolved to expect it might encounter in the natural world.

exists continually in space and time, that it cannot pass through solid walls, that it is subject to gravity, and so forth. All these intuitive expectations come for free.” (2008: 311)

More precisely, the intuitive expectations are activated because this hypothetical rodent belongs to the domain ‘ANIMAL’, and would equally be activated if we described the features of an Australian marsupial or an African equid, which both belong to the same domain.

These kinds of assumptions are referred to as *domain-level expectations*: the domain – i.e. the ontological category abstracted as a template such as ‘ANIMAL’ – is associated with particular expectations about parts of our natural environment with which we engage (Porubanova et al. 2014: 1). Domain-level expectations are engaged when specific inference systems activate in response to incoming information: as mentioned above, we do not stop to consider the intentions of a tennis ball flying towards our face in the way we would with a dog. The reason for this is the way in which information is processed: “Instead of having a complex mental encyclopaedia with theoretical declarations about what animals and artifacts and persons are, all we have are flags that switch on particular systems and turn other systems off” (Boyer 2001: 100). In other words, our engagement with a cat, table, or cousin is mediated by our minds activating the inference systems that together let us understand things as animals, artefacts, and humans. Because, basically speaking, this is the primary way in which humans are able to engage with their environment, it will come as no surprise that the specific expectations tied to inference systems are either inherent (i.e. present at birth) or learned very early on in infancy (Russell and Barrett 1999: 30; see also Harris 2000: 157-178).²⁶ Moreover, as Barrett (2008: 310-11) notes, although culturally-mediated circumstances might affect specific assumptions, the basic process is “not the product of

²⁶ Research is ongoing to determine whether expectations are inherent or acquired (Barrett 2008: 313). For the present purpose, however, a general appreciation for the *process* leading to expectations and their consequences – rather than their precise origin – will be sufficient to build the argument below.

particular cultural conditions, but may be regarded as pan-human.” This means that the cognitive systems underlying domain-level expectations can be understood as holding universally and extrapolatable to the past if they hold true in the present. The resulting domain-level expectations, however, are not restricted to being engaged when an animal, human, or tool is encountered ‘on-line’, i.e. externally, in the physical world: ‘off-line’ conceptualisations of entities trigger the activation of the same cognitive systems (Povinelli and Preuss 1995: 420). This means that, through self-reflection, storytelling, reading, and other mental activity involving entities that are not physically present when they are cognitively processed, the human mind engages with them as if they *were* present.

Thus, to recap briefly, the human mind makes use of a suite of traits termed *intuitive cognition*, which allows us to make predictions about parts of the natural world around us through heuristic processes (*inference systems*). These predictions are manifest in the *domain-level expectations* we project onto the environment, and are dependent on which inference systems are activated when we interact with the natural world. But how does all this relate to religion and our understanding of myth?

Boyer observed that influential religious ideas – i.e. the kinds of supernatural concepts central to religious systems – can all be understood as minor violations of domain-level expectations. Thus, ideas like gods, the souls of ancestors, spirits, and the afterlife can rather straightforwardly be seen as small but specific variations on the ontological categories that our minds apply to the natural world around us. As outlined above, each domain-level category – ‘HUMAN’, ‘ANIMAL’, ‘ARTEFACT’, and so on – is attributed specific characteristics which relate to the expected functionality of things belonging to a category. For ‘HUMAN’ and ‘ANIMAL’, mostly similar inference systems activate; however, theory-of-mind or linguistic capability would be applied to ‘HUMAN’ but not to ‘ANIMAL’; similarly, mortality would be applied to ‘PLANT’ but not to ‘ARTEFACT’ (Barrett 2000: 31). Something can be called supernatural if a domain-level expectation that does not belong to a perceived ontological

category is either activated along with (or in the place of) the usual ones, or if it is not activated at all (Boyer and Ramble 2001: 537). To give some examples of these two possibilities: triffids (a type of walking plant) in John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* in all ways conform to the 'PLANT' category, but with the added domain-level quality of goal-oriented movement.²⁷ The basic concept of a zombie – in Haitian folklore, not necessarily in its various incarnations in cinema and other media – uses the category 'HUMAN', but without the expected quality of cognitive functioning (Boyer 2001: 63). This feature has been termed *minimally counterintuitive* (MCI) to refer to the fact that supernatural ideas violate domain-level expectations, but only to a limited extent (Boyer 1994).

Supernatural templates and concepts

Distinction is made between supernatural *templates* (a domain-level category with an additional, or without a specific, property) and supernatural *concepts* (which adds to the template a lexical label) (Boyer and Ramble 2001: 537). Thus, a supernatural template might be 'HUMAN' + 'does not obey physics', leading to a supernatural concept with the lexical label 'spirit'.²⁸ Additionally, an 'encyclopaedic' entry of *kind-level expectations* is added to the concept, which provides other information about the spirit: it might have a predilection to returning repeatedly to the same place, it might bestow misfortune or good luck to people, and it might be pale-coloured. These encyclopaedic bits of information, unlike the domain-level expectations that form the template, are variable; ghosts haunting European castles are in many ways conceptualised differently from the Arabian jinn or the Roman Lares or Penates. All of them, however, are fundamentally based on the supernatural template 'SPIRIT'.

²⁷ The fact that the inference system for recognising goal-oriented movement is activated can be seen either as an added domain-level quality (since the expectations for 'PLANT' should not involve it in the first place), or as a replacement for the domain-level expectation 'no goal-oriented movement'.

²⁸ Supernatural templates are not assumed to be inherent (i.e. present at birth) but learned. Supernatural concepts are a useful shorthand for us to be able to discuss supernatural templates efficiently, but are not themselves stored in the brain separately.

This allows for a practical cross-cultural examination of how different groups engage with supernatural ideas. As we have seen, because supernatural templates – but not concepts – are dictated by brain function, they can be expected to be universal.²⁹ Thus, comparisons can be made between the ways in which humans in different cultural contexts engage with the same templates and concepts, while kind-level expectations may be regarded as a culturally-mediated response to them.

Linking this back to the domain and kind-levels, we can see that supernatural templates take the form of domain-level categories, functioning for the most part like a regular ontological category, but with the addition or omission of an expectation inappropriate or appropriate to it, respectively. Supernatural concepts, meanwhile, are the kind-level examples of the (domain-level) template: a ghost is to ‘SPIRIT’ as a dog is to ‘ANIMAL’.

Counterintuitiveness, memory, and transmission

Intuitive cognition pertaining to religious ideas can be divided into three different categories. We have already discussed minimally counterintuitive (MCI) ideas, which are slight (one or a few) violations of domain-level expectations. Apart from these, both *intuitive* and *maximally counterintuitive* (MXCI) ideas should be considered briefly. Intuitive ideas are straightforward, conforming entirely to the expected domain-level characteristics. MXCI ideas are on the opposite end of the spectrum, and violate a large number of domain-level expectations. An example could be an icicle (belonging to domain ‘NATURAL INANIMATE OBJECT’) that was born (from ‘ANIMAL’ or ‘HUMAN’), can speak (from ‘HUMAN’), has roots (from ‘PLANT’), is incorporeal (omitting physicality), and so on.

This way of classifying supernatural ideas enables a categorisation of every such concept in a structured, straightforward, and empirically-grounded way. This in itself, of course, is a valuable addition to the study of religion, but there is one more important piece of evidence

²⁹ This again, of course, assumes a neurotypical mind.

to consider. Research has shown that supernatural concepts formed through minimal violations of domain-level expectations possess a significant memory advantage that aids recall when present in a story, while entirely intuitive stories and maximally counterintuitive ones were less likely to be remembered (Barrett 2000: 30; Porubanova et al. 2013: 181).³⁰ As Norenzayan *et al.* (2006: 548) have shown, in a study on counterintuitive elements in the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale collections, MCI stories were more likely to be memorised and transmitted. Furthermore, they showed "evidence that the cognitive features of a folktale ... mediated the relation between minimal counterintuitiveness and cultural success" (Norenzayan *et al.* 2006:548). This means that we can look at supernatural ideas to describe what Dawkins (1976) termed 'memes', described more accurately by Sperber (1996) as an 'epidemiology of representations'. Sperber's terminology refers to the question of the spread of cultural ideas: how should variations in and similarities between various forms of human culture be understood, and is it possible to tell whether similar features are borrowed between groups or arise independently? The MCI effect appears to be an important piece of the puzzle, because it helps account for the tenacity of particular ideas over other ideas. Thus, regardless of its origin, an MCI story is much more likely to be recalled later, and be transmitted between individuals and from one generation to another, than an intuitive or MXCI story. This can help explain why the relatively basic templates of counterintuitive ideas like gods and spirits are so widespread, and why their conceptual (i.e. kind-level) qualities are much more varied.

The implications of these findings are significant. First of all, the mere fact that MCI stories are more likely to survive than other kinds of stories implies that MCI stories will be more likely to play a role in group identity. Research conducted on the role of language in group marking suggests that the basic fact of linguistic diversity is evidence of its role in defining

³⁰ The recall advantage of supernatural ideas raises several questions that will be discussed in greater detail below.

group identity; if basic communication were the only requirement of language, linguistic change over time would be disadvantageous, since it allows for misinterpretation (Dunbar 2003: 230; Labov 2001: 5; cf. Roberts 2013: 620). Specific markers of group belonging, furthermore, are “environmentally acquired rather than genetically determined” (Roberts 2013: 620, citing Halpin 1991: 223). Stories would be expected to contain similar cues, with inter-group story variety expressing group belonging in ways analogous to linguistic variety, and with group pressure shaping the precise form of the story but not its domain-level, counterintuitive, templates. MCI elements within these stories, then, would be expected to occur relatively more often compared to either intuitive or MXCI elements, since they would be selected for rather than against. But the MCI elements themselves are unlikely to signal group membership, since they are fairly universally shared: rather, we would expect the group-specific description (i.e. the kind-level supernatural *concept*) of, say, a deity (i.e. the domain-level supernatural *template*) signal group membership. Thus, an important defining feature of Islam is the *tawḥīd* (oneness) of Allah, while the trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is significant to the Christian God in virtually all denominations. Both religions share the same fundamental supernatural template of their respective gods – ‘HUMAN’ + ‘access to all information’ + ‘immortal’ + ‘does not obey the laws of physics’³¹ – and use the encyclopaedic information that is culturally conditioned (in this case, either oneness or trinity) as a major defining factor of group belonging.

Secondly, the available evidence necessitates an explanation for the complexity of successful religious stories. While individual religious ideas might conform to the MCI effect, many religious stories contain numerous counterintuitive elements. Although MCI folktales and recall show a positive correlation, as mentioned above (Norenzayan *et al.* 2006: 548), MXCI folktales appear to show the opposite. Stories with large numbers of counterintuitive elements

³¹ Other violations of domain-level expectations may be added depending on how the cognitive representation of a god is framed; see Barrett (2008: 328) and the discussion below.

were much less culturally successful relatively to MCI stories, and were recalled more poorly than even folktales that were entirely intuitive (Norenzayan *et al.* 2006: 546). If this is the case, how can the relative success of complex, arguably MXCI stories such as the *Poetic and Prose Edda*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, or Hesiod's *Theogony* be explained? It seems, then, that the MCI effect cannot account for the complexity of myth on its own; although it can help us understand the initial advantage of particular stories (namely those with few counterintuitive elements), another explanation must be found to clarify the form even of some of the earliest known religious narrative. Barrett (2008: 327-28) argues that seemingly MXCI concepts are *cognitively* MCI by reinterpreting complex supernatural ideas: instead of seeing a god as 'HUMAN' modified by numerous domain-level qualities, he proposes that the defining ontological category is actually 'MIND'. Because this category does not come with expectations of physicality or biology – only of psychology – it is more easily modified into the supernatural template 'god'. But this solution seems somewhat contrived, and it is not entirely clear what evolutionary circumstances or pressures would give rise to 'MIND' as an ontological category.³² Upal (2010) suggests a different approach: instead of reframing seemingly MXCI concepts as MCI ones, he proposes that counterintuitiveness might be context-dependent. Citing Bloch (2005: 132-40), Upal points out that, to many people, initially- counterintuitive ideas become intuitive over time; and furthermore, that MCI ideas lose their memory advantage over time (2010: 200). This suggests that counterintuitiveness is dependent heavily on the cultural context in which a given supernatural concept is used, but – perhaps more importantly – that, for an initially MCI concept to become intuitive, it is necessary for that concept to become integral to the way in which a group views the world.

³² For the basic ontological categories discussed here, on the other hand – 'HUMAN', 'ANIMAL', 'ARTEFACT', 'NATURAL OBJECT', and 'PLANT' – it is straightforward to see why they would develop in the natural environment of developing *Homo sapiens*. 'MIND', like other, more abstract, postulated ontological categories, does not readily derive from any natural situation unless it is attached to one of the above categories. See Boyer (1994: 391-411).

The significance of the concept to that group would then take over from the MCI memory advantage as the reason the concept survives through successive generations. Upal's approach is attractive because it harmonises several apparent problems with Boyer's approach.

Finally, within the framework of this study, the implications discussed can only really lead to a definition of myth as *a narrative that contains counterintuitive elements*. As we have seen, it is likely that the origin of myth lies in proto-narratives that are *minimally* counterintuitive, but, as they begin serving as markers of group identity and start playing a more important role in their respective groups, other factors such as elite ideology, literacy, and inter-group competition allow myths to cease relying on memory advantage alone, and become objectively *maximally* counterintuitive while retaining their group marking function. In such a case, we would expect the myths not to survive on the MCI-driven memory advantage alone – since they may lose it if they cease to be counterintuitive – but rely on other reinforcing principles to assure their survival. Thus, going forward to discuss our case studies, the prediction to be tested, flowing from the definition that myths can be understood as narratives containing counterintuitive ideas, is that myths are likely to contain statements that mark group identity.

From theory to method

With the issue of theoretical background out of the way, the next issue we need to deal with is application; that is, how can an anthropological theory like this be applied to a study of ancient Near Eastern (including biblical) myth? There are a number of considerations to address, broadly divided under two major headings or questions: firstly, how can we take a theory grounded in quantitative cognitive science and apply it to qualitative historical-critical analysis; and secondly, in what way can such a theory generate new ways of understanding familiar subject matter? While of course both questions are interconnected, the former is

focused perhaps more on the general question of converting theory to method, whereas the latter regards some more subject-specific issues related to mythology and biblical studies.

Resolving the first question is perhaps more straightforward than the apparent diametric opposition between quantitative and qualitative research might suggest. The purpose of the current study is not to copy evolutionary anthropological approaches directly, as a template on which to base its methodology; rather, the insights provided by those studies shall function as a sort of lens through which we can draw closer to the material we study. Thus, Boyer's approach provides an empirical basis derived from quantitative study on which supernatural stories can be understood from the perspective of human evolution; furthermore, Upal's contribution suggests that culture is formative for, and in turn reinforced or challenged by, myth and its transmission within and between groups. Using these findings as our starting point, we can zoom in further on those particular aspects of myth that are indicative of this hypothesised process: by conducting a qualitative study of myths, and analysing them on a textual level within the broader context of the culture in which they were told and retold, it becomes possible to study the literary representations of, and perhaps reflections on, group identity.³³ Methodologically speaking, close analytical reading – keeping in mind especially rhetorical function and ranges of possible meaning of metaphors and allusions – will make up the bulk of qualitative study here. Not much quantitative analysis will be done, except for some linguistic points related to word frequency and distribution; aside from that, much of the context of the various myths is ultimately based on quantitative archaeological research.

³³ This is not to say that marking group identity is the sole function of myth in a group, but simply that, if we look more closely at myth through the lens of this particular theory, other possible aspects and functions of myth will necessarily receive less attention or be represented in a distorted way. Again, this does not mean that no other aspects of myth exist or may have been significant to an ancient audience, but simply that the focus of this study is on uncovering group identity markers rather than any other aspect of myth: as mentioned before, the current approach is meant to be complementary to existing approaches, not opposed to them.

Of course, this focus presupposes that uncovering ideological information from a myth is possible in the first place, and this in turn requires a solid understanding of both the text³⁴ itself³⁵ and the context in which it was used. For this reason, especially when the object of study is a several-millennia-old text, it is more productive to work with something relatively well-understood and with relatively little scholarly disagreement on features such as function, composition date, and authorship. Although a diachronic analysis complicates this process by necessity – especially if the different time periods studied are very dissimilar – the longevity of a text that makes such a study possible is actually helpful, since more evidence becomes available to compare the text and its use to its context. Thus, one would expect it to be relatively easy to study Mesopotamian myths that are well-attested on numerous clay tablets – in the language in which they were originally composed and dating to the time in which they were used and, sometimes, written – that can be contextualised within a society that, through extensive archaeological and textual research, is relatively well-understood. Somewhat more difficult would be the Ugaritic corpus of myths, examples of which are often attested on only one (damaged) tablet and written in a language that still is relatively poorly understood. Virtually impossible is studying the oral myths of 2nd-millennium Judah and Israel, of which we find at best traces in various biblical books written centuries later, and of which no contemporary textual evidence remains whatsoever. In sum, the better we understand the society whose myths we study, the more likely we are to arrive at interpretations that accurately reflect the way in which the members of that society would have understood the myth. Furthermore, if ideological concerns are part of that original

³⁴ Although it is by no means a given that the object of study survives primarily in written form – after all, many cultures have a purely oral tradition of myth – it is virtually impossible to study oral myths that are no longer actively told without relying on a written record. See below for a more extensive discussion.

³⁵ This means not only that we can read the text in the first place, but also that we appreciate the intricacies of the language in which it was written. In other words: although reading texts in their original language is preferable to any study, it is especially important in this one.

understanding – that is, the way in which the author and a contemporary audience understood it – we are more likely to extract these concerns the more complete an understanding we have of the myth, its author, and its audience.³⁶

Another advantage of approaching this topic from a qualitative perspective is that, when we deal with issues like ideology, it is very difficult (if not impossible) to do textual interpretation through quantitative methods. Such methods might yield a generalised, probabilistic model or a theoretical background – such as, of course, the one on which this study is founded – but they are far less suited to understanding the specific implications of particular aspects of texts themselves. In other words: a quantitative study might tell us what God is called in which parts of the Hebrew Bible, but we must resort to a qualitative approach to understand why this is the case.

The looming disadvantage of a qualitative analysis, of course, is that the prejudices and preconceptions of the scholar are formative to the interpretation of the evidence. While this is principally unavoidable (see Barr 2000: 35-36), a reliance on evidence drawn from as broad a source as possible will minimise the risk of an unfair representation of the data. Barr (2000: 35) draws attention to another charge, in line with this concern and endemic to most theories of myth outlined in the previous chapter: circularity of argument. That is, if part of the definition of myth is that it contains ideological statements, then any myth studied from that same definition will necessarily contain them – as discussed in the previous chapter, this is precisely the problem with virtually all theories of myth. While Barr admits that circular reasoning might always be a potential part of biblical analysis, this is precisely where the proposed synthetic approach shines: the definition of myth adopted here – ‘a story that contains supernatural elements’ – is dependent on inherent and necessary qualities of

³⁶ Again, this is not to say that we will necessarily either find ideological concerns in a myth or, if these concerns are present, that we will be successful in extracting them from the story; all we deal with here is probability.

particular kinds of stories, not on arbitrary features. Myths *become* myths by virtue of possessing MCI elements, and then taking on group identity markers. The prediction that myths are connected to group identity and ideology is thus reliant not on circular reasoning but on the extrapolation of an empirically-established model. This effectively breaks the circular argument: there are reasons external to the exegesis of the story itself that warrant an analysis that seeks to uncover ideology contained in the myth.

In summary, dealing with the question of reconciling a quantitative evolutionary anthropological approach with a qualitative textual approach requires focus on a clear target that can be illuminated from both sides. In this case, the target is markers of group identity. On the quantitative side stands a theory predicting that stories containing supernatural narratives contain such markers, and that they were perpetuated as such by their original audience largely through cultural conditioning. On the qualitative side, close readings of these stories will allow us to appreciate the function of these markers in their specific contexts, and help us understand the dynamic between text and audience.

This already begins to address parts of the second question with which we began: how does this methodology generate new understandings of familiar subject matter? For a start, the notion that ancient Near Eastern and biblical myths are inherently ideological – and perhaps, flowing from this, that theological concerns are secondary to this quality – calls into question some of the most predominant approaches to these texts, at least on the biblical side. Of course, the idea that Mesopotamian religion, in the composition of its myths and the form of its rites, was controlled by the elite of the various empires in the region is largely uncontroversial in Assyriology (e.g. Frahm 2010: 9); that myth in the various Babylonian and Assyrian Empires ought to be seen primarily as a genre driven by ideological concerns is similarly widely accepted. In biblical studies, however, many scholars work with the presumption that the authors of Genesis 1 were recording their own beliefs or that, at the very least, the influence of Mesopotamian (or other) myth on Genesis 1 was grounded in a

theological reassessment of Yahweh's role in Israel's history (e.g. Gunkel 2006 [1895]; Von Rad 1961; Vawter 1977; Day 2013a). The topic is rarely discussed from the perspective of the possibility that the biblical authors, like their Mesopotamian counterparts, may have been operating under a primary motivation to express ideological statements, not theological ones. But this perhaps is getting slightly ahead of the discussion in the following chapters; first, some final methodological issues should be cleared up.

Dataset size

Considering that we are dealing with a theory that has until now only been applied to relatively simple texts and oral narratives, the obvious question at this stage is how we can approach a rich literary tradition containing highly complex texts in similar fashion. Because the total amount of texts analysed closely in the current study is relatively low – two main texts, several supporting ones, and a larger number of fragments – this means that the applicability of the corpus to testing the overarching theory is limited. Furthermore, from the perspective of quantitative analysis it goes without saying that a larger dataset is inherently preferable. Studies conducted on such datasets, such as the Grimm Brothers' fairy tales (Norenzayan *et al.* 2006) or third- to first-century BCE Roman prodigies (Lisdorf 2004), can work with a corpus of comprehensive and thematically similar (and thus easily comparable) texts. This means that trends detected in such a corpus are more likely to be statistically significant.

On the other hand, a smaller dataset can be studied far more in-depth compared to a cursory analysis of a large corpus. Such an approach has much greater potential to reveal cultural and political factors contributing towards the historical impact of the texts studied, and is thus far better suited to analysing the relationship between intertextual and intercultural aspects. This means that this study might not be aimed primarily at putting MCI theory to the test, but rather that the application of the theory can help us understand the text itself better. Here, specifically, the observation that myth and group identity are likely to be closely connected

helps us focus on those elements in the text that help us understand group identity markers in the composition, as well as the role they play for its audience.

MCI vs MXCI in religious narrative

Although several of the shorter fragments discussed here (notably in the Psalms and in most of the Old Babylonian myths) *can* be seen to conform to the MCI model, the texts of *Enūma eliš* and Genesis 1 can in no way be understood as minimally counterintuitive narratives. As such, the analytical study presented here – of both the texts themselves and of the culture in which they arose and became prominent – will serve as a qualitative and descriptive application of Upal’s (2009) interpretation of the MCI effect, even if it is not (and perhaps cannot be) a statistical, quantitative test of it. In this sense, it is important to acknowledge that the application of MCI theory on religious narrative can probably never be falsifiable, although of course MCI theory itself can be.

Comparing myths: problematic definitions

One important problem with the word ‘myth’ in an academic context – certainly, at least, in biblical studies – is that it has acquired an air of falsehood.³⁷ Calling something a myth is virtually synonymous with proclaiming it a lie, and a tenacious one at that. In other fields, such as anthropology, the term is far less controversial. Pascal Boyer understands myth as a product of the interaction between ‘mental systems’: processes in the human brain that enable an understanding of and interaction with our environment. “None of these evolved systems,” he writes, “is about religion. But some of them may be activated, in the context of representing religious agents, in such a way that concepts of such agents have a high probability of transmission” (Boyer 2001:70). In other words, we do not have a ‘religious’ or ‘mythical’ mental system, but rather religion and myth arise from the interaction between a

³⁷ The Oxford English Dictionary gives as one of its definitions, “A widespread but untrue or erroneous story or belief” (2015).

number of them, based on several selection criteria, and are perpetuated in successive generations.³⁸ The most pertinent of these for the transmission of myth has to do with “minimal violations of domain-level conceptual expectations” (Boyer 2001:70). The ‘domain’-concept (‘intentional agent’, ‘man-made object’, ‘living thing’) is opposed to the ‘kind’-concept (‘table’, ‘tree’, ‘tiger’) and contextualises our perception subconsciously: we assume that a living thing grows, attribute material quality differently to man-made objects than to natural objects, and so on (Boyer 2001:71). A talking tree, in Boyer’s example, thus violates the “domain-level expectation” because we assume plants not to be intentional agents; and it constitutes a “minimal violation” thereof because it otherwise conforms to our conceptualisation of plants (such as growth, or being stationary). Experimental evidence suggests that the violation of a domain-concept is more likely to be retained and transmitted than one of a kind-concept (Barrett 2008). From the initial expression of an idea – say, an anthropomorphic entity controlling rainfall³⁹ – cultural evolutionary processes then govern the extent to which these ideas become formalised in religious societal systems; the above idea might give rise to a storm god with associated iconography and narratives. Myths are basically then these narratives: stories that incorporate supernatural ideas.

While Boyer’s theory provides a relatively tidy explanation, it is not wholly satisfactory. The essential definition of myth is a story incorporating supernatural elements obtained through mental processes over which we have no conscious control. In other words: Boyer’s theory prefers myth to arise as a by-product⁴⁰ before reaching a formalised or authorised version. Precisely because of this focus on the subconscious and the natural development of concepts, it fails to account for individual creativity. What do we make of Aristophanes’ *The Clouds*,

³⁸ Boyer gives a number of potential reasons for transmission to occur; see Boyer (2001: 89).

³⁹ A domain-level violation: humans are not supposed to be able to control the weather – at least not in pre-industrial societies.

⁴⁰ I.e. through cultural-evolutionary competition, the outcome of which is not actively controlled by humans.

which incorporates many supernatural elements and discusses religion, but was deliberately composed at a specific point in time? The book of Leviticus provides a different challenge: because it is narrated by Yahweh, it incorporates supernatural elements. However, it is clearly a different *kind* of text from Genesis 1, or the *Theogony*, or the *Rig Veda*. The presence or absence of supernatural elements might thus not be the defining factor in determining whether something is myth. But then what is? For the moment, that question will have to be put aside until we have discussed some practical examples and formulated, if not what myth *is*, at least what myth *does*. More important at this stage is the idea that myth, whatever it is in an ontological sense, is neither exclusively nor necessarily primarily *about* the supernatural elements contained in it.

In trying to understand the origins of myth, part of the problem is our distance in time. Because the stories we analyse are so old, the people who formalised or composed them are long gone, and all we have left is the text or a retelling thereof. This has an effect on our study of comparative myth, too. Commenting specifically on the background of biblical myth, Theodore Mullen writes, “it seems that the possibility of specifying particular ancient Near Eastern traditions upon which the author(s) depended goes far beyond the evidence that we presently possess” (1997:89). This is perhaps too pessimistic a view; however, it is shared by other high-profile scholars. Stephanie Dalley, for example, writes,

“[We] cannot speak of ‘the Mesopotamian view of creation’ as a single, specific tradition, and this in turn shows the futility of claiming a direct connection between genesis [*sic*] as described in the Old Testament and any one Mesopotamian account of creation.” (2008:278)

Dealing with this resistance is of primary importance to any comparative study of biblical texts in context with other material. Because the focus lies on understanding the biblical material against a background of existing cultural and literary expressions, a very careful case

must be made that plausibly shows the influence of those expressions on the Hebrew Bible. Fundamentally, this means we are dealing with a comparative mythological approach that treats the better-attested contextual material of the Hebrew Bible as more primary than the biblical material itself. In other words, our starting point should be the literary corpus of the ancient Near East, a culture of which we know so much and of which we have surviving contemporary texts, and from that position of relative knowledge move towards the biblical material of which we fundamentally know so little.

Terminology

Before we dive into the complex world of ancient Near Eastern myth, I would like to address the question of terminology. There are several types of terms often used in poorly-defined or inconsistent ways, even by well-respected scholars; the most significant of these are the names of gods and the names of people. For this reason, it is probably helpful to spend some time to explain some of these in further detail, particularly because they rely on an interdisciplinary understanding of the material under discussion and draws on insights and conventions from Assyriology, archaeology, and evolutionary anthropology in addition to those employed in biblical studies.

First, a note on ethnicity, nationality, and cultural groups. There is significant inconsistency in the current literature on the terms to be used for these categories, particularly when it comes to the inhabitants of the eastern Mediterranean seaboard. They are usually referred to as ‘Canaanites’, reflecting the biblical distinction between the chosen people of Yahweh and the people they (partially) displace in the conquest narrative of Joshua and Judges. In this capacity, distinction is sometimes made between the ‘Canaanites’ of the land promised to Yahweh’s people and those who live further north (i.e. the kingdoms of Damascus and Ugarit, as well as the Neo-Hittite states), as it is by Mark Smith (2002) and Dennis Pardee (2009); sometimes, the term refers to all peoples living north of Egypt and south of the Hittites (thus including Ugarit in a cultural continuum with the southern Phoenician city

states). A number of objections can be raised against these terminologies, but most boil down essentially to the problem that they reduce the significant and relevant distinctions between these peoples to a lens that is biased by the biblical paradigm. In other words, the term ‘Canaanites’ tacitly concedes the ‘othering’ of non-monotheistic Yahwists and maintains a distinction between cultural groups that, particularly in light of archaeology, is untenable (see, e.g., Dever 2017). As such, I insist on using the specific name of bounded groups (kingdoms, city states, ethnicities) when discussing material or nonmaterial texts from those groups, and the generic term ‘North-West Semitic’ (from the linguistic categorisation of their languages) instead of ‘Canaanite’ or ‘Levantine’. I also understand culture as relatively vague and – even to cultural groups themselves – fluid concept that exists on a spectrum rather than as discrete points. For example, ‘Mesopotamian culture’ may be broadly defined by the broad acceptance of a pantheon in the region, the shared stories between the people living there, their conceptions of cosmology, ritual practices, and so on; however, at the same time it is important to recognise regional variations as well as diachronic changes to all of these traditions and conventions. As such, it is impossible to ‘pin down’ what it means to be a Mesopotamian: that self-definition will change depending on positionality and temporality, and be influenced by characteristics such as ethnic and linguistic background, social class, gender, and age. To reiterate the point made in the introduction, then: this thesis is concerned with the authors of texts and the significance of their ideology *as it is reflected in their texts*, not with blanket statements about the culture to which they ostensibly – but perhaps arbitrarily – belong. Thus, when we discuss texts comparatively, we do so not because they stem from the same cultural background (or because I want to argue that their background is the same), but because there is a specific reason why they can be considered together. We discuss Sumerian texts alongside Assyrian and Babylonian ones not because they are all Mesopotamian, but because we can be reasonably certain that the later scribes had specific access to the earlier texts, and – stemming from this – because we can make a strong

argument that these earlier texts had a direct influence on the composition of the later ones. The Ninurta Cycle is relevant not because it is Mesopotamian like *Enūma eliš*, but because the themes of the former are reflected directly in the latter. Returning to the issue of national, ethnic, or cultural terminology then: the texts under discussion can broadly be separated into Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic. Of the former, we will specifically discuss the Sumerian (esp. the Ur III and Isin-Larsa periods, roughly 2100-1800 BCE), Neo-Assyrian (esp. from Nineveh's establishment as capital around 700 BCE), and Neo-Babylonian periods, with some forays into Kassite Babylonia.

For the North-West Semitic groups, I want to avoid the term 'Israelites' as a blanket term for the authors of and adherents to the Hebrew Bible in particular (again because of the strongly charged biblical bias of the term) and distinguish politically between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. By the former, I mean the one known as the 'Northern Kingdom' in the Bible – not the biblical Davidic kingdom for which barely any archaeological or epigraphic basis exists – which is dissolved and integrated into the Assyrian empire with the destruction of Samaria in 721 BCE. Judah refers to the biblical 'Southern Kingdom' with Jerusalem as its capital, whose elite are exiled to Babylon and probably write, edit, and/or compile most of the Hebrew Bible there.⁴¹ While much of the text was almost certainly formalised in its final form in Mesopotamia, many biblical texts have a pre-exilic Vorlage and some of them most likely existed in some shape resembling that final form (e.g. Josiah's reform in the mid-7th century); however, the oldest parts of the Hebrew Bible – Deborah's Song and possibly hymns like Psalm 29 – derive at the earliest from the 10th century BCE. It is difficult to determine to what extent Israelite – i.e. 'Northern Kingdom' – texts influenced the development of Judahite Yahwism, but either way our focus here is not on the origins of Yahwism but on the way in which the exilic authors reflected ideological concerns in the 6th-century BCE collection of texts that would become the canon of the Hebrew Bible. Thus, our

⁴¹ For a discussion on the influence of Israelite texts on Judahite Yahwism, see Fleming (2012).

biblical texts derive from a relatively limited geographical area originally – all of them from the first millennium BCE, and most of the ones discussed here from roughly the mid-7th until the late-6th centuries BCE – and are then further edited and added to in a completely different location.

Apart from Israel and Judah, the major players in the Northwest-Semitic region are the southern Levantine city states, of which Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Gaza are most significant and continue to exist after the Bronze Age Collapse (BAC) of the early-12th century BCE. The northern city states include Byblos, Sidon, and Tyre – which all survive the BAC too – as well as Ugarit, which did not survive. Unfortunately for our understanding of North-West Semitic religion and myth, the only city from which a significant corpus of texts has been recovered is Ugarit, and as such there is a significant gap between its destruction and the earliest traces of literature in Israel and Judah. Sanchuniathon's treatise on Phoenician religion exists, of course, but is only available to us through Eusebius via Philo, and in fact might not even be contemporary with pre-Hellenistic Phoenician practice. For instance, the reported Phoenician creation myth contains references to what appears to be a mixture of Greek and Egyptian mythological tropes, making it unclear whether Sanchuniathon, Eusebius, or Philo of Byblos mixed in their own Graeco-Roman interpretations of, or projections on, the Phoenician material.

Names of deities are a similarly complicated issue, and generally speaking the rule in this thesis is that as close a rendering of a name will be used as was used in the text under discussion. The most difficult one in terms of reading may be that of the god of the Hebrew Bible. This thesis ordinarily uses 'Yahweh' as the reconstructed phonetic reading of the consonants *yhw*, conforming to scholarly convention, with the acknowledgement that this reading is uncertain.⁴² Occasionally (and significantly in our principal biblical creation text),

⁴² In theophoric names, the reading appears to be /yah(u)/ as in *ḥizkiyah(u)* (Hezekiah). This value is corroborated by the Akkadian rendering of his name, written *ḥa-za-qi-ia-u* or *ḥa-za-qi-a-a-u* (/ḥazāq(i)-ya'u/; it

the word Elohim is used, which in virtually all cases in the final form of the text – as well as probably in virtually all cases in the precursors to the text – refers to Yahweh and is used as his title. When it is clear that Yahweh is meant by Elohim, I will use Yahweh to refer to the deity to emphasise that they are equated. In disputed cases, the range of possible interpretations will be discussed first. On the topic of Yahweh’s name, it will be assumed that the Masoretic reading is correct unless there is a specific reason to assume otherwise.

The choice of ‘Ba^ʿlu’ instead of ‘Baal’, ‘Ba’al’ or ‘Ba’lu’ reflects the common use of the deity’s name instead of his proper name, Haddu/Hadad/Adad. In the same way that the Semitic *q* was separate phonetically from the *k* (unlike in modern Hebrew, but like in modern Arabic), the *ʿayin* was a phonetically distinct guttural from the glottal stop (*aleph*), and the IPA symbol for the consonant is used in Ba^ʿlu’s name to reflect this. Similarly, because there is evidence (discussed further below) that his name was not pronounced as an absolute (i.e. ‘Baʿal’) but with the case ending included, the final *-u* is appended to reflect this practice.

The name of Marduk’s main enemy in *Enūma eliš* is impossible to settle on as either Tiamat or Tiamtu, simply because different cuneiform manuscripts of the same lines often reflect both forms of the name. Minority variant spellings like *ti-a-wa-tu* and *ti-GEME* (with the phonetic value of GEME ‘young woman’ possible as both /amat/ and /amtu/) further frustrate a consistent rendering of her name.

Case study selection

Similar clarifications should briefly be made regarding case study selection: after all – as will be made clear – if myth is ideological in nature, surely it should not particularly matter which myths are chosen as case studies? Furthermore, by making a selection of texts, is not the

is unclear whether the /i/ in *-qi-* represents the /y/ of *yahu* or is a suffixed personal pronoun), and this may have been the pronunciation of the divine name in the 7th and 6th centuries BCE. However, this raises the question where the final *-h* comes from in the final-form text as we have it. This is, however, not the place to discuss this problem extensively.

corpus used here subject to the same charge of arbitrariness levied earlier against previous theorists?

On the choice of specific creation myths for this thesis, it is true that any selection of myths should demonstrate the same point. The choice for creation myths here resulted mostly from their availability: *Enūma eliš* as a text is preserved relatively well and in a variety of contexts, and therefore provides an excellent case study that can be analysed from a number of angles. Its significance to Babylonian and Assyrian society, too, make it particularly open to a depth of analysis that would be impossible with less well-preserved texts. As such, it poses a natural starting point for any analysis into myth, not just an ideological one. Because creation texts similarly form an important part of the biblical corpus, and Genesis 1 in particular is dependent on *Enūma eliš* (as will be shown), additional dimensions of analysis become possible, specifically in a cross-cultural sense. As such – although any selection of texts would indeed suffice – creation texts have been chosen in particular because they are simply the best available case study. These characteristics also underlie the exclusion of the Garden of Eden narrative (Gen 2-3) – insofar as it can be called a *creation* myth – and its reflection in Ezekiel 28:12-19. Because no clear cross-cultural connection can yet be established between the Garden of Eden story and an ancient Near Eastern precursor (*pace* Korpel and De Moor 2014), they do not lend themselves as case studies equally well as the texts selected here.⁴³ Furthermore, the charge of arbitrariness would only really be a concern if the choice of texts were based exclusively on common features between them. Because the definition utilised here is deliberately broad, and based on intrinsic attributes deriving not from the texts but from human cognition, we in essence look at the consequences of a cognitive bias on texts affected by it.

⁴³ Very briefly, it is worth mentioning that Ez 28 is a very strongly political text that employs the Garden of Eden myth as an integral part of its ideology; as such, even at a glance, it fits well with the paradigm established here.

Part 2: Mesopotamian Creation Myths

(Counter-)intuitiveness in Mesopotamian myth

Boyer's ideas suggest that religious narratives, ideas, and structures derive from minimally counterintuitive concepts; i.e., the kinds of stories likely to survive are those containing few counterintuitive ideas, while those containing none or many are much less likely to survive. The problem for this theory is that the bulk of religious narratives from any major religious tradition are not minimally, but rather *maximally* counterintuitive. Assuming that Boyer is right – and, with the large amount of empirical research showing the basic validity of his ideas suggesting that he is – we must account for this somehow. Upal (2009) provides an alternative account that modifies Boyer's model slightly; he suggests that, instead of counterintuitive concepts being assessed cognitively as objectively counterintuitive, ideas over time can become embedded into a cultural context and, in doing so, lose their memory advantages. This suggests that an initially counterintuitive idea, if it becomes embedded in a culture/is taken on by enough members of a group, will eventually cease being counterintuitive and be internalised/normalised as an intuitive idea. To such a contextually intuitive concept, further counterintuitive characteristics can be added so that the idea as a whole becomes objectively maximally counterintuitive, but contextually minimally counterintuitive or even intuitive altogether.

If contextual counterintuitiveness thus accounts for the development of complex cultural and religious ideas, we would expect these ideas to be connected closely to the development of group identity, because only group-specific (i.e. contextually intuitive) counterintuitive ideas would be able to develop into objectively maximally counterintuitive ones. In other words: processing a given counterintuitive idea *as intuitive* becomes a way by which group boundaries are marked, because intuitively understanding complex supernatural ideas –

telling religious or spiritual stories and collectively experiencing rituals – reinforces group cohesion. ⁴⁴ Over time, contextually intuitive (but objectively counterintuitive) concepts can then form the basis on which new MCI elements are added, giving rise ultimately to a highly complex and, to an outsider to the group ‘constructing’ the narrative, maximally counterintuitive myth that, to the group itself, is perfectly acceptable and intuitive.

On a final note before we dive in, it should be emphasised that, as with many texts from the ancient Near East, our understanding is always incomplete at best; there is, until potential future discoveries, no certainty and often fragmentary evidence regarding author, intended audience, composition date, and composition place (Schneider 2011: 34).

[The Theogony of Dunnu⁴⁵](#)

Also known as the *Dynasty of Dunnu* or (incorrectly) the *Harab Myth*, this story narrates the origins of the world through the successive generations of personified tools and natural features, culminating in what appears to be a proclamation of Ninurta’s kingship. The text is significant because it is, with the *Eridu Genesis* and the *Barton Cylinder*, possibly⁴⁶ one of the earliest attested Mesopotamian creation stories. The text in its current form – badly damaged, with at least half of it missing or unintelligible – provides a relatively straightforward, almost formulaic account of the dynasty of its divinely personified characters.

⁴⁴ Of course, this presupposes that memory advantage – the reason that MCI concepts are more likely to be transmitted – is the primary motivator for myths to spread.

⁴⁵ The orthography of the toponym in the extant manuscript is ‘Dunnu’ (^{URU}*du-un-nu*; e.g. ln. 6 and 7 [Lambert and Millard 1965, text 43]), which, as indicated by the lack of mimation, is a late form. I will use ‘Dunnu’ to refer to the city in the text, and ‘Dunnum’ to refer to the historical city.

⁴⁶ The dating of the text is disputed; see below for a discussion.

The characters in the story have been interpreted variously: as Eliadean representatives of calendric-cultic anthropomorphisations (Lambert and Walcot 1965: 68), as connections between “primitive, barbarous licentiousness” and more modern, ordered familial morality (Jacobsen 1984: 17), and as anthropomorphised aspects of the emergence of agriculture (Wiggermann 2000: 202-204). In any case, the most remarkable feature of the text is the recurring theme of incest and parricide, which features in every generation described in the fragmented tablet that remains. It is possible that the cycle is broken at the end of the text, with the imprisonment (rather than murder) of Ḫayyašum’s father Ḫaḫarnum. In this case, the establishment of a less homicidal (though equally incestuous) rulership might mark the beginning of ‘regular’ history (Jacobsen 1978). Jacobsen (1984: 14-15) suggests that the genealogy is followed by “anecdotal matter”, possibly describing the proposal and approval of Ninurta’s kingship, and possibly being disconnected narratively from the theogony entirely. Unfortunately, the text is badly damaged, and it is difficult to ascertain the precise meaning of even the preserved text, let alone the broken sections. In fact, more lines are missing than are legible (see Dalley 2008: 280), so it is not at all inconceivable that the successive generations narrated in this surviving section of the myth serve as the prelude to a conflict or an expanded cosmogonic narrative. The possibility is, of course, speculative, and as it stands, the *Theogony of Dunnu* represents one of very few Mesopotamian cosmogonic myths that is also exclusively a theogony.

The story opens with the familiar formula, “In the beginning...”,⁴⁷ and proceeds to narrate several successive generations of gods. The first deities are Ḫa’in (‘Plough’?)⁴⁸ and Eršet

⁴⁷ Depending how the text is reconstructed, the opening phrase can be read as an independent or a subordinate clause. We would expect *ina rēšti* for the former (cf. CAD, R, ‘rēštu’ 1a), and *ina rēš* + construct state infinitive or noun for the latter (CAD, R, ‘rēšu’ 4a and 4’). Unfortunately, the text is broken from the middle of the word *re-e[š...]* (cf. Jacobsen 1984; *-i[š]* is also possible as per Borger 2006: 238). The parallel with the syntax of

(‘Earth’), who are pre-existent with the world; Eršetu is perhaps the pre-existing world.⁴⁹

Together with their daughter Tiamat (‘Sea’) and son Šakkan,⁵⁰ they build Dunnu to serve as

Genesis 1:1, which is similarly complex, must be attributed to the subject matter – in that both texts deal with beginnings – and has to be coincidental.

⁴⁸ Whether the names of the deities in the myth should be translated or taken as names is somewhat unclear; equally difficult at times are the actual readings of the logogrammatic writing. Dalley (2008: 280) notes in her translation that “[b]y translating them mostly with the English for their main aspect, I have avoided purely technical choices over the supposed pronunciation of logograms.” However, the text gives us some indication that the names were meant to be read according to their Akkadian pronunciation: the goddess Earth in In 10 is written KI-*ta*, which uses the character KI (‘earth’ in Sumerian, read as *eršetum* when reading in Akkadian) with the phonetic complement *-ta* to indicate its grammatical function in the sentence as an object (thus, *eršeta*). If the name was supposed to be read /ki/ – i.e. as the Sumerian form of the name – it would lack this phonetic complement, and thus the name of the goddess Earth must have been understood Akkadian.

The specific name of the first male deity remains difficult. Understandably, given the imagery employed later with regards to his creative and sexual activity, Jacobsen restored the broken second character of his name as RAB to read, straightforwardly, the absolutive ‘Ḫarab’ from *ḫarbu* ‘plough’. Following Lambert (2013: 392), however, this is almost certainly incorrect, and the deity’s name is assumed here to be ‘Ḫa’in’, with uncertain meaning but presumably relating to agricultural activity somehow. See also below, n. 49 and 51, for brief notes on the relationship between the divine names and their domains. For further philological notes on the text, see Appendix A.

⁴⁹ It is not quite clear how Earth is meant by the author to be understood: as a goddess whose domain is the earth, or as the actual earth. A parallel case could be in Greek myth, where Okeanos is the actual divine embodiment of water, while Poseidon governs water as his domain. Perhaps, like Apsû in *Enūma eliš*, the goddess combines both characteristics. A similar question arises for Ḫa’in, who “breaks up the virgin soil of the land” (ln. 3). This suggests that he either is actually plough-like (or a divine embodiment of the plough), or that their sexual union is metaphorically expressed in terms related to their domains. The pun on virgin soil // plough (*ḫarbu* I and II in CAD *H*, resp.; see Dalley 2008: 280) perhaps suggests the latter.

⁵⁰ Identified as the god of wild animals (Jacobsen 1984: 26) but here perhaps the personification of domesticated ones (Dalley 2008: 279).

Ḫa'in's royal city.⁵¹ Ḫa'in becomes Dunnu's ruler, but Earth seduces and marries Šakkan, who in turn murders Ḫa'in. Šakkan then marries his sister, who kills Eršet after the birth of their son Laḫar.⁵² The latter continues the cycle by killing his father Šakkan and marrying his sister River (whose birth is not narrated); both in turn are killed by their son Shepherd, who also marries his own sister, Pasture-and-poplar. Ḫaḫarnum, Shepherd's son, marries his sister Belet-šerri and kills their parents. The cycle finally appears to be broken when Ḫayyašum – who does marry his (unnamed) sister – imprisons rather than kills his father Ḫaḫarnum. From Laḫar onwards, the change in rulership is dated precisely, culminating in Ḫaḫarnum's imprisonment on New Year's day (equivalent to our 1 April).

The origin of the myth, both in temporal and geographical sense, remains somewhat of a mystery, related primarily to the difficulty in identifying where Dunnu was situated. The sole manuscript, CT 46 43,⁵³ was found at Sippar and has been dated to the Late Babylonian period on orthographic and stylistic grounds (Lambert and Walcot 1965: 64). What remains of the colophon provides some additional information in notifying the reader that the tablet

⁵¹ Šakkan is born of the 'furrows', which could simply mean the union between Ḫa'in and Earth. The relevant line (5) reads, "The Furrows, *of their own accord*, begot the Cattle God" (Dalley 2008: 279, italics mine).

Dalley's capitalisation of the word, and the rather odd phrasing 'of their own accord', suggest that perhaps the furrows are a distinct character, the first offspring of the original couple, who then in turn gave birth to Šakkan, the cattle god. Against this interpretation can be raised that the DINGIR character – denoting divine characteristics and most often used as an indication that the following name is a deity – is not present in the text. (It may have been used, but since the beginning of the line is broken it is impossible to tell either way.) The text refers to Ḫa'in as Šakkan's father (ln. 11), which could mean 'ancestor' but more likely is meant literally.

Additionally, the furrows never again show up in the text, as a character or otherwise, meaning that they are most likely meant to be a metaphor for the sexual union of Ḫa'in and Eršet.

⁵² A deity associated with domesticated sheep (Jacobsen and Walcot 1965: 67).

⁵³ Editions of the text are Lambert and Millard 1965 (cuneiform); Jacobsen 1984 (transcription and translation); Lambert 2013 (transcription and translation). For further translations, see Hallo (2000) and Dalley (2008), and Appendix A. All translations used here are mine unless otherwise indicated.

was written “[according to] a tablet, an original of Bab[ylon] and Aššur”; this means that our manuscript was copied from a copy kept in either Babylon or Aššur, which in turn was based on an original tablet, kept in the other city (Lambert and Walcot 1965: 64). The mention of Aššur at least gives us a *terminus ante quem* of 614 BCE, when the city was destroyed (Lambert and Walcot 1965: 64), although it is impossible to know at this point whether the source tablet was indeed the authentic first version of the *Theogony of Dunnu*, a later verbatim copy of it, or an editor’s collation of older material into an original composition. As for a *terminus post quem*, Dalley (2008: 278) dates the text to “at least the early second millennium, when Dunnu was a town of importance.” However, it is unclear whether she assumes this from the fact that Dunnum was apparently important enough to have had its own creation narrative, or whether she has a particular town by that name in mind; several settlements in Mesopotamia with the name Dunnu(m)⁵⁴ are known, but none of them were particularly significant sites on their own (see RIA 2: 239). Hallo (2009: 558) makes a more compelling case when he identifies it with a fortified settlement founded by Gungunum of Larsa, in the twenty-second year of his reign – i.e., the late-20th century BCE (Frayne 1998: 27). The importance of Gungunum’s Dunnum becomes apparent from its later epithet ‘bolt⁵⁵ of Isin’, in a date formula from Rîm-Sîn’s reign, and from its role in Larsa’s conquest of Isin in 1794 BCE (Hallo 2000: 402). Thus, there is a good case to be made that the *Theogony* was

⁵⁴ One in particular is worth mentioning here for its thematic relevance: Dunnu-šā’idi, the ‘fortress of the hunters’, known from at least one other text (Wiseman 1967: 495-497). The epithet given to Dunnu in line 6, *šatu* ‘eternal’ – although it is a common epithet for major cultic sites such as Babylon, Nippur, and Nineveh (Hallo 2009: 558) – could be a corruption of or allusion to *šā’idu* ‘hunter’ (so Röllig 1967: 58-59). However, if the text is indeed related strongly to agricultural themes, why would its central city be named after a decidedly non-sedentary mode of food production?

⁵⁵ The phrase *uru^{ki}-saġ-maḥ* could also be read ‘ancient capital city’, but this would be unusual given the primacy of Isin, which controlled the city in the late 19th and early 18th century BCE, over Dunnum. Jacobsen (1984: 22) prefers to read *saġ-maḥ* as *gāmīru* ‘bolt’ (see CAD, G, 34).

composed in (or for) Gungunum's Dunnum, perhaps even in recognition of the town's contribution to Larsa's victory over Isin. In any case, if the myth does indeed date to the early second millennium BCE, our current text is not only a copy of a copy, but possibly even an Akkadian translation of a Sumerian original.⁵⁶ The fact that scribes possibly translated – and certainly repeatedly copied – the text, and preserved it in both Babylon and Aššur well into the Late Babylonian period, raises the question why it was considered important enough. This is only compounded by the fact that, certainly by the time the extant manuscript was written, Dunnum had lost all vestiges of its previous importance.

The main themes of the myth, as identified by Jacobsen (1984: 10-13) are (incestuous) marriage, parricide, and the assumption of rule. Indeed, the presence of these themes in the text is straightforward enough to identify. Together, according to Jacobsen (1984: 13), they provide an origin narrative for the town of Dunnum. Jacobsen's interpretation of its central meaning, however, is somewhat more contentious. The various themes are introduced briefly here – noting parallels with texts discussed elsewhere – and an alternative interpretation of the text proposed subsequently.

Successive married pairs of deities are a common feature of theogony in the ancient world, and that these marriages are often incestuous is equally well-established.⁵⁷ The norm for these couplings, however, is that they are virtually always between brother and sister; i.e. they do

⁵⁶ The Isin-Larsa period – which ended with Ḫammurāpi's conquest of both cities – was significant linguistically for its gradual shift from Sumerian (both cities' indigenous language) to Akkadian as the predominant written language (Jacobsen 1984: 22). The distinctly Sumerian names of some of the deities in the myth betray a Sumerian background, and perhaps even a Sumerian *Vorlage*.

⁵⁷ The most familiar one will likely be in Greek: Hesiod's *Theogony*, where Gaia and Ouranos – both having emanated from Chaos – give way to Kronos and his sister Rhea as rulers, who in turn are succeeded by Zeus and his sister Hera. *Enūma eliš*, discussed below, similarly begins with three successive pairs from the same generation – Apsū and Tiamat (both pre-existing), their children Laḫmu and Laḫāmu, and finally Anšar and Kišar.

not usually transcend generations. What makes the *Theogony of Dunnu* unusual are the two incestuous mother-son relationships: Šakkan marries Ȝa'in's wife – his mother, Eršet – and Laḥar marries Šakkan's sister-wife, his mother Tiamat. The text provides no explanation for why this happens, and the emphasis on the occurrence at all must make it significant, especially considering that no subsequent generations engage in intergenerational incest. More puzzlingly, there does not appear to be a narrative necessity for Šakkan and Eršet's marriage: Šakkan also takes his older⁵⁸ sister Tiamat as his bride following the murder of Ȝa'in, and it is she – not Eršet – who is Laḥar's mother.⁵⁹ Given the relatively extensive description of Eršet seducing Šakkan in lines 8-10, it may be inferred that their relationship was somehow important; however, the lack of contemporary commentary texts and the unembellished narrative as presented in this myth makes it difficult to determine why.

Similarly opaque are the reasons for each successive generation to murder the previous. If the characters are meant to be envisioned as the actual objects or natural features after which they are named, the myth could narrate a postulated origin of the world – with the obvious caveat that currently we do not know who Ȝa'in is supposed to be. In lines 3-6, Ȝa'in breaks up Earth's clods with a plough to give birth to Sea; the imagery of tilled ground filling up with water is evoked cleverly here. However, how ploughing the earth gives rise to cattle in the form of Šakkan (ln 6) is less clear. Similarly, after this, the birth of the shepherd god Laḥar from cattle makes no obvious sense apart from a general connection between their domain of domesticated animals, nor does the involvement of the sea in this. Furthermore, the

⁵⁸ Neither her birth nor that of Šakkan is narrated, which focuses the narrative on their relationship and succession: evidently these are their only salient characteristics. It is possible that their fictional biographies were known to the myth's intended audience. However, because most of the characters here grace other texts only fleetingly (Šakkan is mentioned by his Sumerian (!) name Sumuqan, for example, in *Gilgameš* I.90), determining what broader role they might have played in contemporary religion and myth is impossible from our current literary and archaeological understanding of the period.

⁵⁹ Laḥar only marries his mother, not also his sister (who is not mentioned, if she exists at all).

succession of generations makes very little sense in a cosmogonic sense. The sea supplanting the earth is the reverse of the more common trope of sea making way for earth (e.g. Tiamat in *Enūma eliš*). Rivers, too, would logically be dependent on there being an earth to exist. On the other hand, it must be granted that the narrative includes all major aspects of urban Mesopotamian civilisation: the central city (Dunnu), built on the earth, presumably near a river, in the Persian Gulf region, with domesticated animals (represented by the shepherd deities) and agriculture for sustenance (the ploughing in ln 4). The narrative structure, however, fits these characteristics in a scheme that does not follow either an intuitive ('natural') order, nor fits with counterintuitive narratives from elsewhere in Mesopotamia. Thus, as with the myths discussed previously, its identification as a cosmogonic myth in the 'proto-scientific' way (as Jacobsen [1984: 17] does) is understandable but must ultimately be rejected.

Taken in an Eliadean, symbolic sense, an analysis of the myth perhaps makes for a more compelling case, particularly where it pertains the succession of rulership. Part of the formulaic nature of the text – which is somewhat reminiscent of the unembellished chronicle stratum of 1 and 2 Kings – is the statement that the next generation usurps the lordship of the previous. Ḫa'in first makes himself ruler of Dunnu, is killed by his son Sumuqan (ln 11) and laid to rest (ln 12), and Sumuqan takes over the lordship (ln 13); Sumuqan is killed by Laḫar (ln 16), laid to rest (ln 17), and Laḫar and Sea become joint rulers (ln 20). Very likely four livestock deities⁶⁰ rule successively over the city, while deified natural features serve as their consorts (and, in Sea's case, joint ruler). With the specific mention of the date of the latter pair's assumption of rule, a calendric element is brought into the succession; it is this aspect that has – understandably – led commentators such as Lambert and Walcott (1965) to suggest

⁶⁰ Again, of course, with the caveat that Ḫa'in and A.U₈ are mysterious, although the latter is likely associated with flocks in some way, given the spelling of his name. See also the footnote on ln 25 in Appendix A, where his name is written.

that it is the main focus of the text. However, as with the cosmological approach, the weakness of this theory is that it cannot account for the entirety of the myth. Specifically, if the focus of the text is supposed to be a calendric-cultic one, why are specific dates only introduced in the fourth cycle of rulership, when the pattern of succession remains virtually identical into the fifth cycle? The text does not indicate that the dates given for the murder of the previous generation are significant beyond just mentioning them; no explicit cultic connection is made. It is, of course, possible that the dates were supposed to be self-evident to the original audience, and that the connection with the deities in question was obvious to them. For example, 16 Kislimu may very well have been the date of a festival to Laḥar (or something related to his domain, such as the ritual sacrifice of livestock) that was somehow also connected with (or even also dedicated to) the divine or actual sea. And indeed, the fact that these dates are mentioned must mean that they held a particular meaning to the original audience, or their mention would be out of place – particularly in a myth structured as tightly as this one. However, the central problem remains that calendric considerations do not feature in the story until ln 20, at the fourth cycle of deities, and that – as far as we can tell from a text this broken – cultic considerations are not part of the narrative at all. Thus, if it indeed was intended to function as an aetiology of or justification for Dunnu’s cultic calendar, the narrative is structured very oddly and introduces its supposed central theme late and unexpectedly.⁶¹ Again, we must acknowledge the possibility that the calendar receives much more attention in the broken second half of the text; but equally so, the surviving two references to it might be the only ones in the text.

⁶¹ The argument here is essentially the same as the one levied against interpretations of Genesis 1 as an aetiology of the Sabbath: while the Sabbath as a trope is certainly inserted into the myth, it is not the entire or even primary focus of it. Similarly, the calendar is a part of the Theogony of Dunnu, but it cannot be said to be its primary focus.

The overarching purpose of the text, therefore, remains somewhat of a mystery, owing in no small part to its severely broken state as well as its unusual themes. Jacobsen (1984) and Wiggermann (2000), as mentioned above, both make commendable attempts, while Lambert (2013) restricts his analysis to the constituent parts of the story. Jacobsen concludes simply that the text provides an origin story for the town of Dunnu. As should be clear from our discussion of the text, this is probably too simplistic: the creation of Dunnu is completed in the first few lines, and the rest of the surviving text does not add anything to the city, only to its rulers. Certainly – and in keeping with our methodology – the creation of Dunnu can be seen to be important, in various ways, to the overall text and its original audience; but it would be overly reductive to restrict the text as a whole to a mere origin story. Wiggermann’s conclusion, similarly, is stimulating but ultimately not satisfying. Agriculture is not directly represented in the text by a deity, and the only act related to farming is Ḫa’in’s ploughing of Earth.⁶²

Let us retrace our steps to our discussion of counterintuitiveness; specifically, how it works and why it is important. The broad analysis of myth seen through this lens suggests that myths are the way they are because they have at their core counterintuitive concepts that become contextually intuitive through repetition and cultural investment, and thus represent easily communicable ideas that help indicate and reinforce group membership. An important aspect of this is that the contents of myth need not be significant in themselves: a myth does not need to be written because the contextually intuitive ideas demand it. The Theogony of Dunnu, therefore, is more likely to contain the specific deities that it does because they were the palette with which the author could paint the scene: they are in the myth because they were important, and then retained their importance by being enshrined in a formalised narrative. What if the Theogony of Dunnu is not an aetiology of Dunnu or its cultic calendar? Granted, it is an aetiology in the sense that, within the narrative, it describes the origin of

⁶² The innuendo was likely not lost on the original audience.

Dunnu and frames particular dates in that restricted timescale. But calling it an aetiology suggests that it is meant to rationalise (or ‘mythologise’?) those themes, as if the author had to write a narrative to solve the burning question of Dunnu’s origins and those of its calendar. Wiggermann’s analysis even assumes the structuralist position that the opposition between agriculture and pastoralism was a large enough cultural conflict that the myth was needed to express this.

So why, then, was the Theogony of Dunnu written, if the above suggestions are inadequate? With the aforementioned caveats in mind, what can we say with some degree of certainty about the text? The first and most straightforward point is that the text undeniably is *about* Dunnu. It sets the stage there and does not even acknowledge any other named location in the world. This alone must be seen as an ideological point: with knowledge of the broader Mesopotamian world and its mythical tradition, the composition of a myth uniquely focused on Dunnu implicitly rejects the authority of similar myths that make competing claims about cosmogony, theogony, and other supernatural principles. This becomes an even greater issue if the author of the text was aware of the chronicle describing the founding of the city, which is a distinct possibility.⁶³ If this was indeed the case, the author wrote a myth containing claims that he knew not to be rooted in historical reality: Dunnu could not have been the first city, because it was founded by the king of another known city. Secondly, the references to the calendar signal that the text assumes audience knowledge of specific, annually-repeating cultural or cultic events. It seems unlikely that the dates in ln 20 and 24 were chosen randomly, yet the text does not elaborate on their significance beyond their possible

⁶³ As we have seen above, Gungunum’s Dunnum is the best candidate to be the Dunnu of the text. The description of its founding may well have survived into the Isin-Larsa period during which the Theogony was likely composed, given the usual proclivity of Mesopotamian scribes to copy historical texts for centuries after their composition. The bilingual nature of scribal practice additionally supports the possibility of Sumerian texts surviving into an Akkadian-dominated society.

association with the deities mentioned in connection to them. Either way, their purpose can be seen as fulfilling an ideological purpose: the text reinforces whatever importance these dates had to the author's society by setting up a supporting narrative that provides additional justification for them. This is an ideological point in the sense that it provides a normative claim about the temporal organisation of society that is maintained through the continuous retelling of the narrative. Furthermore, both arguments support a reading of the text as ideological *instead of* theological. Claiming Dunnu to be the first city, setting up a pantheon excluding major Mesopotamian deities, and connecting specific dates to this pantheon all point towards the author having a political agenda instead of a theological one, even leaving aside the question whether the inhabitants of Dunnu truly believed the first generations of their gods to have engaged in complex incestuous and parricidal relationships.

Ninurta's Return to Nippur (An-gim)⁶⁴

The story of Ninurta's return to Nippur⁶⁵ from a successful campaign against 'rebel lands' is the topic of a *šir-gida* ('long song') to Ninurta (ln. 208). The text is relatively well preserved in both Akkadian and Sumerian, and numerous copies of the text on monolingual and bilingual tablets survive from Nippur and its environs.⁶⁶ Copies were also found in Nineveh, showing the enduring importance of the text – if not for religious or ideological purposes, then at the very least for scholarly ones. We discuss the text here because its main themes are the subordination of noncompliant entities to centralised urban power (here represented by the divine authority of Ninurta and Enlil), the expression of this political power through recurring tropes, and the reinforcement of these statements as politically normative. Thus, the text broadly speaking expresses three ideas: 1) urban settlements control non-urban areas; 2) this control is reinforced in a framework of mythical tropes; 3) it is appropriate for this situation to exist and remain.

Summary and structure

The hymn as we have it opens with an introduction to the god, consisting of a brief genealogical note followed by some biographical details. Ninurta heads out on his campaign against a mountainous region, which is described as GU₂.ERIM₂.GAL₂ 'hostile' and KIBAL 'rebel land'. Unfortunately, almost all lines of the description of Ninurta setting out (18-29)

⁶⁴ Textual sources listed in Cooper (1978). See Appendix A for a translation. All translations are from the ETCSL version (see bibliography under primary texts) unless otherwise indicated.

⁶⁵ Nippur was originally more closely associated with Enlil, which is reflected in the logogrammatic reading of the city, EN.LÍL^{KI} 'Enlil City'. Between Enlil's temple Ekur and Ešumeša, Ninurta's sanctuary, it is difficult to ascertain which one held more prominence at the time of writing. It is also possible that the myth, somewhat sycophantic as it is to Ninurta, does not mean to diminish the importance of Enlil (after all, he is never properly replaced), but only to *also* extol Ninurta's virtues.

⁶⁶ Notably Šuruppak and Abu Salabikh (which may have been the site of Ereš), attesting to interest in, and perhaps even use of, the text in cities other than Nippur.

are broken or unintelligible. On his campaign, he captures a long list of mythical creatures (30-40), many of which are known from other myths.⁶⁷ His return sparks concern with Enlil, residing at the Ekur, his temple in Nippur. Nusku, Enlil's vizier, comes out to relay this to Ninurta, who appears to completely ignore him (83-97). Ninurta demands that Enlil recognise his achievements, and exhaustively lists his feats and attributes of power. The hymn at this point (113 onwards) becomes a catalogue of Ninurta's excellence.⁶⁸ It ends with a short exchange between two deities, as Ninkarnunna – a minor warrior deity – petitions Ninurta to pronounce his blessing over Nippur⁶⁹ and, more importantly, its king.

In analysing the text, we turn first to the first idea noted above, the urban control over non-urban areas. This principle is mostly conveyed through direct statements. These include overarching ones, as in ln 7, where Ninurta is called "sovereign of all the lands"; ones relating to specific actions, as in ln 47, where he "made a corpse of the mountains"; and explicit ones, as in ln 125, where he calls himself "lord of the terraced mountains". In all of these, the mountains are the generalised 'other' against which Sumerian civilisation is measured. As in many other Sumerian texts, the enemies of civilisation are the inhabitants of these mountains, which form the natural eastern border of Sumer – an area difficult to traverse and even more difficult to control. The association between the mountains and dangerous enemies – or, perhaps more strongly, enemies out to upset the civilised order of

⁶⁷ For a comparison of captured monsters, see Annus (2002: 110).

⁶⁸ The laborious praise stretched out over dozens of verses has more to do with the genre of the text than with poor composition; if it was a cultic song of some kind, and recited as part of Ninurta's cult, the incessant praise and near-absence of narrative makes more sense than if it were a literary composition without cultic affiliation.

⁶⁹ Puzzlingly, Ninurta has just done this in ln 168-174. It is possible that the hymn combines multiple sources – e.g., Ninurta's self-praise could be a separate, more general hymn around which the current composition is structured – although there is no obvious break in the way that biblical sources are discernible. As mentioned earlier, it is most definitely based on an older tradition, with its catalogue of plunder deriving from older combat myths.

urbanisation – is employed with reference to both humans and supernatural monsters (as will be shown below). Additionally, part of the list of formulaic titles of praise to Ninurta in In 9-12, consisting of two doublets, reinforce the idea; since they form a key part of his exaltation and a specific pronouncement on the nature of his authority, we will look at them more closely. The lines read as follows:

9. UR-SAG ḪUŠ ME AN-GIM MU-E-IL₂
10. DUMU^DEN-L IL₂-LA₂ ME KI-GIM MU-E- IL₂
11. ME KUR-RA AN-GIM DUGUD-DA-AM₃ MU-E- IL₂
12. ME ERIDU^{KI}-GA KI-GIM MAḪ- AM₃ MU-E- IL₂

9. Fierce warrior, you have taken up the divine power (which is) like heaven;
10. Son of Enlil, you have taken up the divine power (which is) like earth.
11. You have taken up the divine power of the KUR-RA, (which is) heavy like heaven;
12. You have taken up the divine power of Eridu, (which is) huge like the earth.

The final line in particular stands out because it directly references the city of Eridu, associated with the first post-flood kingship in the Sumerian King Lists. Eridu is only mentioned here; no reference is made to how Ninurta obtained its divine powers. This suggests that we can assume that the reader had already internalised this as intuitive. More importantly, however, the fact that Ninurta has apparently taken on the qualities of Enki, Eridu's patron deity and the god of wisdom and crafts, moves him up in the divine hierarchy to basically right-hand man of the head of the pantheon, Enlil. Although this is already quite a statement from the author of the text on behalf of Ninurta given the importance of Eridu to divinely-obtained approval for kingship, a potentially even more significant claim is made in line 11. There are two significantly different translations possible for this line, in turn affecting the overall interpretation of the doublet and of the doublet pair. The crux of

interpretation is the word KUR-RA, which normally refers to either a) the mountains; or b) the underworld.

In its most basic sense, KUR simply means ‘mountain’, but metaphorically came to refer to foreign lands and was particularly associated with danger and chaos.⁷⁰ Cooper (1978: 2) certainly understands the mountains as a metaphorical concept synonymous with ‘rebel lands’; if the intended force of KUR-RA in ln 11 is indeed to allude metaphorically to this danger, the suggestion is that Ninurta has power over it. The uncivilised mountains are then employed to contrast with Eridu, the cradle of civilisation, presenting Ninurta as master of both. In this interpretation, Eridu may be mentioned only because of its association with civilisation, and the author might not have intended to suggest that Ninurta had usurped Enki’s power. Either way, if this interpretation is correct, line 11-12 underlines the superiority of urban civilisation, and states clearly the centrality of the city and its temple.

The second possibility is to understand KUR-RA not as a concrete, mountainous place, but as the underworld. The expression ME KUR-RA occurs nine times in *Inanna’s Descent*, each time referring specifically to the power of the underworld (ln 129ff) and associated closely with Inanna’s sister Ereškigal. It also occurs in the funerary lament for Ur-Namma (ln 99 of the Nippur version), and although there it undoubtedly refers to the power of the underworld, it is too broken to understand more than the two words (Flückiger-Hawker 1999: 93ff).

Cooper (1978: 106) draws attention to the contrast between the ME of the underworld and that of AN GAL, the ‘great heaven’, in *Inanna’s Descent* (ln 190-194). This could mean that, in ln 11-12 of *Ninurta’s Return*, the ME KUR-RA stands in parallel to that of Eridu – whose god Enki was the lord of subterranean waters – and that together they provide Ninurta with

⁷⁰ Cf. the Anzû epic, in which Anzû rules the mountains (KUR) and the rebel lands (KI-BAL) by virtue of its ME. See also Farber Flügge (1973: 111) on Inanna’s acquisition of the ME KUR KI-BAL (there as one unified concept, rather than two separate ones) from Eridu. For an extensive analysis of the Anzû epic, see Wisnom (2014).

‘underworldly’ power in two parallel phrases.⁷¹ This line of reasoning is attractive, particularly because Enki is described elsewhere bestowing ME on Ninurta at Eridu (most prominently STVC 34, *Ninurta’s Journey to Eridu*, ln II.12-13; Reisman 1971: 6).⁷² An objection to this possibility, however, is that ME KUR-RA is described here specifically as being *like* the heavens (ME KUR-RA AN-GIM). While it is by no means certain that the author of *Ninurta’s Return* agreed with the author of *Inanna’s Descent* on the nature of the powers of the underworld, the conceptual alignment of a power from ‘down below’ (the underworld) with one from ‘up high’ (the heavens) is unexpected. Another point is that Eridu’s ME comes from Enki; if the doublet is properly parallel, we would perhaps expect the ME KUR-RA to be embodied in one of the rulers of the underworld, Nergal and Ereškigal, or – like Eridu in ln 12 – in the city containing their temple, Gudua (Cutha).

At this point, the poetic structure of the text itself might give us an indication of the author’s intention, since the four lines allow for a number of interpretations. The lines are divided in two further parallel pairs, schematically represented in table 1: ‘fierce warrior’ (9a) and ‘son of Enlil’ (10a), and ‘ME KUR-RA’ (11a) and ‘ME ERIDU-KI’ (12a).

9	Fierce warrior		ME	like heaven	you have taken up
10	Son of Enlil			like earth	
11	ME	of KUR-RA	like heaven		
12		of Eridu	like earth		

Table 1: schematic representation of ln 9-12

⁷¹ Cooper argues here that the mention of the powers of the underworld means a *contrast*, not a parallel, between ME KUR-RA and ME ERIDU^{KI}, in reference to the frequent conflicts between Inanna and Enki (1978:107). His analysis is somewhat surprising given that Inanna is unable to obtain the powers of the underworld in *Inanna’s Descent*, and so the ME KUR-RA never came to be associated with her.

⁷² Their relationship, however, was not always equally amicable as it is portrayed in *Ninurta’s Journey* (UET 6/1 2; *Ninurta and the Turtle*; Alster 1972: 120-125).

AN and KI are repeated in the same contrasting positions in 9-10 and 11-12. As such, the two doublets almost form a chiasmic structure, since ME is in the second half of 9-10, but in the first half of 11-12. However, because both doublets have the contrasting pair AN // KI in the second half, the ultimate question is which poetic structure takes precedence: the internal contrast of the doublet, or the semi-chiasmic structure. In other words: are ‘KUR.RA ME’ and ‘ERIDU.KI ME’ parallels, like ‘fierce warrior’ and ‘son of Enlil’; or are they opposites, like ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’? Based purely on the structure, the former option works better since it is the less complex – but still coherent – reading. This would suggest that the intended meaning of KUR.RA is indeed the underworld, although we must keep in mind that the objections noted before remain valid.

A third interpretation of ME KUR-RA stems from a late Middle Assyrian recension of the text, which instead reads ME É-KUR-RA, ‘the divine power of the Ekur’ – the Mountain House, the temple of Enlil at Nippur (Cooper 1978: 106-107). It seems incredibly unlikely that this is the intended reading of the original text, since it is only attested in one Middle Assyrian copy from around 1100 BCE, and in none of the Old Babylonian copies from Nippur (ca. 1700 BCE; see Cooper 1978: 52 for a diagram of editions).⁷³ This recension, however, is quite possibly the most intriguing one; that is, not because it helps us understand the intent of the original author, but because it so clearly attests to the imposition of a later interpretation on the text. Perhaps, like our interpretive attempt above, the Assyrian editor similarly struggled with making sense of the Sumerian text, and emended it to be a more straightforward parallel structure. In the Middle Assyrian emendation, the doublet works somewhat differently to the Sumerian original. Instead of a conceptual contrast between civilisation and barbarians, or a parallel between subterranean sources of divine power, in 11-12 now presents a cultic contrast between Enlil’s temple and Enki’s city. The same objection

⁷³ Cooper makes a valiant effort to suggest the possibility of a complex play on words (1978: 107n2) in the OB editions, but this seems rather farfetched.

raised against the imperfect parallelism between the underworld and Eridu can be made here, of course: the points of comparison are temple (Ekur) and city (Eridu). It would have been preferable for the parallelism to have Ekur and E-Abzu (Enki's temple in Eridu) or Nippur and Eridu; however, both options would require much more significant changes to the text than simply adding the É sign. Furthermore, the Assyrian version more closely aligns the second part of ln 11-12: the Ekur was associated with heaven through Enlil. This harmonises the entirety of the two lines, where neither of our options (mountains or underworld) are satisfyingly aligned with heaven. To reiterate: this reading is not indicative of the original text, only of the later Assyrian edit; however, it is also an excellent example of a later reinterpretation of the original Sumerian. Thus, the emended text is not merely an assertion of Ninurta's power at the expense of Enki (since Ninurta appropriates Eridu's ME), but also one at the expense of Enlil (since, in the Assyrian version, he also appropriates the Ekur's ME).⁷⁴ Whether this change was ideological or merely an editorial decision is unclear, although it should be pointed out that the diminished importance of Enlil in the Assyrian pantheon (where Aššur held the supreme position), as well as the Assyrian interest in Ninurta more broadly, fit an ideological motive well.

The opening section of the text thus states quite clearly the superiority of city and temple over uncivilised areas, and in the Assyrian edit additionally supports the superiority of Ninurta over Enlil. Presumably, Ninurta's campaign to the mountains provided further details on this situation, establishing it more clearly, but it is broken in our surviving manuscripts. All the same, the text's intention to convey the idea should be clear from our discussion.

⁷⁴ The edit actually fits rather well with two other parts of the story if extolling Ninurta's virtues is the text's primary objective. The first is the return of Ninurta (ln 80-91), where Nuska commands him not to frighten Enlil, who then gives obeisance to Ninurta. The second is in ln 199-201, where Ninurta is described as having "firmly grounded his greatness in Enlil's sanctuary" – this may simply mean that Enlil supplies, or is the source of, this greatness, but it can also be read in a more adversarial way.

Continuing on to the second idea outlined above, the text supports this idea through a framework of mythical tropes: it does not narrate a campaign of human soldiers to fight rebels in the mountains, but rather a divine campaign against supernatural monsters that represent them. This catalogue of opponents and their defeat is a good example of contextually intuitive ideas being employed in a context of in-group signalling: for the author to be able to refer to them as if his audience knew what he was talking about, they must have already been well-established enough that they expressed meaningful examples. Thus, references to the Anzud bird (ln 62) must have invoked that particular narrative, and the Six-headed Wild Ram (ln 55) must have been a known entity. Thus, the text employs mythical tropes to represent the actors in the struggle between civilisation (as it was conceived by Sumerians, of course) and its uncivilised surroundings.

But the text does more than this straightforward rendering of human actors as supernatural ones: the dynamic between them is represented in mythical terms as well. Moreover, these terms further draw on established counterintuitive ideas, such as when Ninurta's campaign is described in terms of the mythical deluge in ln 73-75:

As the king swept on like the deluge,
as Ninurta – storm of the rebellious land – swept on like the deluge,
he rumbled like a storm on the horizon.

Ninurta is here equated with the storm and the deluge twice (keep in mind that the deluge does not need to refer to a flood of water per se, but can pertain to other catastrophically destructive events) while reiterating his position as LUGAL, 'king' – both associations were originally employed for Enlil himself, and their usage with reference to Ninurta is unlikely to be coincidental.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Enlil, as king of the gods and personification of the storm, famously instigates the flood in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. The use of the word for a divinely-instated catastrophe is older than that, though, and the word used

Finally, the most important aspect of the text for our purposes is its normativity: not only is urban control over rebellious lands reality; it is the way things ought to be. These kinds of statements turn the text from merely descriptive to ideological: they state, and through repetition reinforce, the ideas that the author means to be accepted. The poetic and hymnic nature of the text further aids in this purpose – since they aid in the text’s memorisation and repetition – while the supernatural ideas specifically contextualise it in a shared cultural context. This ideological aspect is expressed throughout the text, most strongly so towards the end:

Let my beloved city, the sanctuary Nippur, raise its head as high as heaven. Let my city be pre-eminent among the cities of my brothers. Let my temple rise (?) the highest among the temples of my brothers. Let the territory of my city be the fresh-water well of Sumer. Let the Anuna, my brother gods, bow down there. Let their flying birds establish nests in my city. Let their refugees refresh themselves in my shade (In 168-174).

The expressed hope for Nippur’s future is here one of supremacy over other cities (“let (it) be pre-eminent among the cities of my brothers”). For Nippur to be the “fresh-water well of Sumer” is to emphasise its position as source of life for humans (who obviously need fresh water), but also more specifically to enable irrigation for agriculture, one of the hallmarks of Sumerian (and more broadly Mesopotamian) civilisation.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Nippur being elevated to the level of heaven might not merely be metaphorical: temples, as connections between heaven and earth, were built tall for good reason.⁷⁷ The Anuna – other gods of

here (AMARU ‘flood’) is attested in this context as early as the mid-3rd millennium BCE (see ePSD, ‘AMARU’).

⁷⁶ For a further discussion of the use of irrigation for ideological purposes, see our discussion of *Lugal-e*.

⁷⁷ This association between height and divine proximity is echoed in the biblical Tower of Babel narrative (Gen 11:1-9), where building up a temple is part of humanity’s united purpose.

Ninurta's generation, and the ones associated with the major sanctuaries of the Sumerian cities – bowing down shows that the author intended Nippur to be the foremost city, a strong ideological statement. This normative idea of Nippur's supremacy is woven throughout the hymn, usually through the proxy of Ninurta. For instance, in Ninurta's return from his campaign, he arrives in Nippur to collect praise from the gods residing there (ln 105-107), again reflecting the other deities' subordination to Ninurta. He calls for the city to be 'pre-eminent among the cities of [his] brothers', suggesting that, by association with Ninurta (who is greater than the other deities), his own city is greater than the other cities. As such, it is an obvious ideological statement from the author, who weaves in a claim about his own city in relation to other cities in the area.

Of course, these normative statements can still be read as purely supernatural ones without necessary reference to the real world. However, towards the end the text clearly indicates that Ninurta's power is not restricted to the mythical realm when Ninkarnunna (a minor deity) petitions Ninurta in ln 186: "Make an enduring favourable pronouncement to her for the king." This line makes explicit what has been running throughout the subtext of Ninurta's boasting: the king himself, who is not mentioned in any other way, is to be confirmed as the rightful ruler of the city. Helpfully for an ideological purpose, the myth works regardless of ruler: it can function as a catch-all narrative to give approval to any ruler of Nippur. The request for this favourable pronouncement is confirmed when Ninurta makes it in ln 198. Reinforcing this idea is the analogous supremacy of Ninurta within the pantheon, and as Nippur is represented by its god, Ninurta, his success represents Nippur's success. Thus, by showing why Ninurta deserves to be king of the gods, analogously Nippur deserves to be king of its fellow city states.

An-gim thus expresses an ideological reinforcement of Nippur's pre-eminence. Firstly, Ninurta tautologically confirms his own city to be the most important city of all the ones in Sumer, and for it to stand as a role model of civilisation against the uncivilised mountain

dwellers (who are perhaps intended to be generic non-city dwellers in contrast to Nippur's citizens). He reinforces his claim through his military might (slaying monsters), wealth (the plunder from his campaign), and rightful rulership ('destined', 'kingship', 'most able' - In 166-167), and on a supernatural level by referencing contextually intuitive entities. On one level, the competition is between Nippur and other cities – there are several cities competing to be the most important one, and Ninurta's achievements show that Nippur deserves to be it. Nippur's role as a bastion of civilisation and seat of governance over that civilisation is thus a key theme of this text – regardless of the actual political status of Nippur in its historical context – and a clear indication of the use of myth for ideological purposes.

Ninurta's Exploits (*Lugal-e*)⁷⁸

Lugal-e, after its opening word meaning 'O King',⁷⁹ more descriptively known as *Ninurta's Exploits*, narrates in grand fashion warrior god Ninurta's fight against mountain demon Asag. Its description is reconstructed in the colophon as a *šir-sud*, another type of hymn – like the *šir-gida* of *An-gim* – the meaning of which is not precisely clear.⁸⁰ As in the case of *An-gim*,

⁷⁸ Textual sources: ETCSL, t. 1.6.1. See Appendix A for a translation. All translations are from the ETCSL version (see bibliography under primary texts) unless otherwise indicated.

⁷⁹ Some tablets omit the vocative case marker and simply read 'LUGAL' as the first word; the vocative was normally only used with proper names (Woods 2000: 322-323). Nonetheless, the text was referred to as 'LUGAL-E' even in its Akkadian translation; cf. the colophon to a Late Babylonian manuscript from Borsippa, BM 48053, written in Akkadian but using the Sumerian title when referring to the text (Mirelman 2017: 160). However, the text used the translated first line (i.e. the title in Akkadian) as its reference for archiving, raising the question of proper referencing in Babylonian archives. Perhaps the situation was analogous to our use of the Greek titles for biblical books, like 'Genesis' for its Hebrew title *Bərešit* (although the Greek, of course, is not a direct translation of the Hebrew incipit).

⁸⁰ The word appears only in this text; provided the reconstruction is correct, the semantic range of the character SUD includes '(to be) distant; (to be) remote, long-lasting; and (to be) profound' (ePSD, 'SUD'). Barring the possibility of some kind of metaphorical meaning for 'distant', the obvious readings are 'long-lasting' (given the

manuscript evidence attests to the text being preserved in monolingual Sumerian and bilingual Sumerian/Akkadian. *Lugal-e*, however, seems to have been even more widespread geographically and temporally: tablets have been found throughout Babylonia and Assyria, and as early as the end of the 3rd millennium BCE through to the 6th century BCE. It is clear that *Lugal-e* was an important text, not just from its consistent preservation in these various contexts, but also from indications that it was consulted regularly. Several bilingual tablets are known that reverse the Sumerian incipit with its Akkadian translation, leaving the line in Akkadian on the top edge of the tablet instead of on the obverse in order to facilitate archival filing – much like titles on the spine of a book in modern libraries (Cavigneaux and Ismail 1998: 6). Furthermore, the colophon of a bilingual copy from Borsippa mandates the reader that *ša innaššūšu ina mišil ūmīšu ana bēlīšu lutēršu*, ‘he who takes it away should return it to its owner in half a day/by midday’ – quite a short timeframe to work on the tablet, and perhaps a testament to its value.⁸¹

The repeated appearance of the Tigris throughout the story has caused many commentators to suggest that the text was perhaps not originally composed in Nippur – situated on the Euphrates, which does not feature in the text at all – but in Lagash or Girsu (Wilcke 1976: 208; Cooper 1978: 10; Black 1992: 86).⁸² This is not entirely convincing, however, given that

considerable length of the text at 725 lines excluding colophon) or ‘profound’ (marking the interpretive significance of the text), although without further evidence it is difficult to determine the correct reading.

⁸¹ It would be interesting to have an overview of library due dates in different collections to see if patterns emerge about the types of tablet on ‘short loan’ (to use a modern library analogy), and whether the half-day loan of this tablet was a typical length for these purposes. I have been unable to find any studies discussing the topic.

⁸² Several features of the text might hint at a non-Nippurian origin apart from this geographical marker. Apart from the Tigris appearing here, the suggestion of Girsu – the capital of the Second Dynasty of Lagash under Gudea (c. 2144-2124 BCE) – is based on other features of the text. Firstly, the name Ningirsu (‘Lord of Girsu’), possibly originally a separate god who is syncretised with Ninurta later, appears in manuscript H instead of Ninurta in ln. 31 and 348. Complicating the matter is that H was found in Nippur, not in Girsu or Lagash.

the area affected by Ninurta's campaign excludes Nippur entirely.⁸³ In fact, Sumer as a whole appears to remain unaffected: Ninurta's attack is directed exclusively at the rebel lands, here mostly indicated by 'the mountains', although (as in ln. 97) urban settlements (IRI.BA) are included as well. Still, the text clearly references real-world locations: it does not site its action in a metaphysical or otherworldly location, but takes place entirely within a geographical setting known to the audience; specifically, of course, largely in Nippur! Unless the text originally featured another city and deity – and we have no evidence at all that a version of the text existed with Nippur replaced by Lagash or Girsu⁸⁴ – it seems unlikely that a myth with such a strong narrative focus on Nippur specifically would be written, if it were not in service of Nippur in some way.

Summary

The story sets the scene with sixteen lines of praise to the god in the form of formulaic descriptions, each alluding to other achievements accomplished by Ninurta not named in this

Jacobsen (1976: 133) and Cooper (1978: 11, n. 3) argue that Ninurta and Ningirsu are simply two names for the same god; against this, Black (1988: 20); Falkenstein (1966: 90-91); and Van Dijk (1983: 4-5) argue that they were originally separate deities. Secondly, the goddess Bau/Baba was the name of Ningirsu's, not Ninurta's, wife – she appears twice in the text in ln. 20 and 671. Feldt (2011: 127, citing Sigrist 1984: 174) raises against this that Baba was venerated in Nippur under this name, and thus may equally have been a regular part of the Nippurian pantheon. Finally, Ninurta calls E-ninnu, which is Ningirsu's temple in Lagash, his own temple in line 477, though this need not be a problem if we understand the two names to refer to the same deity, per the aforementioned scholars.

⁸³ Cf. ln. 77, where Ninurta heads towards the KIBALA (Akkadian *māt nukurti*) 'rebel land', which appears 22 times in this text, and a further 145 times in Sumerian and Old Babylonian texts, to refer to 'not-civilisation'. It is also included in a Gudea Cylinder fragment (8+3+5+4 [E3/1.1.7]) in combination with "hero Ningirsu pushing." Since these same words are used in conjunction with each other in *Lugal-e* (ln. 77-79), royal propaganda and myth can again be seen to be closely related.

⁸⁴ Although, as we will see, evidence certainly exists of this practice in later centuries; particularly, with the case of Enūma eliš in Assyria. See our discussion on this adaptation, below.

text. Despite the expected hierarchy – since Enlil is usually the head of the pantheon – Ninurta is called ‘king’ in the opening word and again in ln 12: “Ninurta, king, whom Enlil has made superior to himself”. At the same time, his authority at least partly derives from supporting Enlil’s kingship (ln 16), suggesting that either the divine roles in the pantheon were relatively fluid, or that Ninurta’s glorification as king in this text has no bearing on the perceived hierarchy of the pantheon in the first place.

The story begins with Ninurta lounging on his throne, enjoying the celebrations in his honour. This could refer to the annual temple festival, or – if this story should be read as a sequel to *An-gim* – perhaps is a result of his triumphant return to Nippur. His magical talking weapon, Šarur, alerts him to a rival to his kingship: Asag, a demon born from the union of heaven and earth, who has set up court in the mountains. The monster has inspired various types of animate stone (including diorite and haematite) to be his courtiers and warriors, and is now a challenger to Ninurta’s position by threatening to steal his divine powers.

The conflict is described in four similarly-structured episodes. In each, Šarur first addresses Ninurta and impresses on him the gravity of the situation. The god then goes out to fight, after which the consequences of the battle are narrated. Thus, in the first episode, Šarur alerts Ninurta to Asag, prompting the god to journey to the mountains to scout the situation. He kills some of the demon’s associates, destroys cities, and wreaks havoc on the environment, and finally sends Šarur to discover the extent of Asag’s power. The second episode begins with Šarur’s report, which calls Asag an enemy far beyond his master’s powers. Ninurta disregards its advice, and prepares for battle. Asag appears to overwhelm Ninurta in single combat, prompting the lament of his father Enlil, who exclaims that without his son he is lost.⁸⁵ Šarur appears before Enlil, who decrees that it is Ninurta’s destiny to defeat Asag. The

⁸⁵ Interestingly, Enlil calls Ninurta ‘the lord, authority of E-kur’; this is Enlil’s, not Ninurta’s, temple. Perhaps the intended meaning is that Ninurta *enforces* the authority of E-kur? It is also possible that his status, as son of Enlil, fits within the broader paradigm by which the sons of major deities become de-facto chief gods

third episode then starts: Šarur returns from Enlil to report to his master, who rejoices at the news and renews his assault on the mountains.⁸⁶ The mountain people lament not having paid homage to Ninurta. In the final episode, Šarur – despite Ninurta’s recent success – once more warns his master of his enemy, and counsels him to retreat. Ninurta, however, continues his attack and destroys Asag.

The second half of the story, from ln 300 onwards, deals with the fallout of the battle in three parts. First, in lines 334-367, irrigation is introduced to the lands of Sumer. Then, Ninurta acts as judge and decrees the destinies of the mountains and of the stones that followed Asag into battle. Finally, he praises his mother, Ninmah, for coming to his aid during battle, exalts her to be equal to An, and renames her Ninḥursaĝ, ‘Lady of the Mountain’. The story concludes with hymns of praise to Ninurta.

Analysis

At its core, the story revolves around the same conflict between civilisation and chaos as is narrated in *An-gim*. Although *Lugal-e* does not appear to have been written as a direct sequel

themselves, as in the case of Ea and his son Marduk in *Enūma eliš*, and Nabû’s elevation over his father Marduk in Neo- and Late-Babylonian times. Either way the appellation EN ‘lord’ is in itself not sufficient to establish absolute rulership. The best example of this is the corpus of Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, particularly those of Esarhaddon, who softened the Assyrian stance on Babylon compared to his father Sennacherib (who had razed Babylon to the ground). In these inscriptions, Assyrian national god Aššur frequently appears in a list together with a *separate* deity Bēl (‘lord’, here referring to Marduk). It is clear in these inscriptions, of course, that Aššur is the head of the gods.

⁸⁶ It is not entirely clear how Ninurta escapes from Asag: he appears to be defeated in the second episode, perhaps even dead. The ‘awesome splendour’ with which Ninurta is enveloped in ln 193 may be that of Asag (ln 289 might support this reading), but the text is too broken to properly understand. In ln 217, someone – presumably Ninurta – is foretold to ‘breathe again’, which can be interpreted metaphorically or literally. Perhaps his defeat is more akin to a loss of morale, and his reinvigoration not a literal revival from death but newfound enthusiasm.

to An-gim, narratively it does seem to be set later given the fact of Ninurta's enthronement. The text, somewhat self-evidently, is written from the perspective of the settled, urban society of Nibru, which prospers under Ninurta's rulership. Straightforward ideological points are easily identified here:

Inspiring great numinous power, he had taken his place on the throne, the august dais, and was sitting gladly at his ease at the festival celebrated in his honour, rivalling An and Enlil in drinking his fill, while Bau was pleading petitions in a prayer for the king, and he, Ninurta, Enlil's son, was handing down decisions (ln. 17-22).

Ninurta, as king in Nippur,⁸⁷ is enjoying celebrations; presumably, as with *Enūma eliš*, the original audience would have identified the festival mentioned here with a specific one. This suggests that the organisation of Nippur's religious rites as described here was accepted as normative – the situation as presented in these opening lines is the civilised order later threatened by Asag. To the reader, the narrative works because it presents a world closely aligned with their own. Specific reference is also made to courtly customs: a senior courtier (here the goddess Bau/Baba) relays messages and petitions to the king (here either Ninurta himself or the human king) from his subjects, and Ninurta acts as judge and ruler like the human king. The boundary between the supernatural court and the human one is somewhat blurred, which again indicates the function of myth in upholding royal ideology as we saw in *Enūma eliš* and An-gim. Ninurta's authority furthermore reflects that of other chief gods at the start of Sharur's address, when he is described as someone "whose orders are unalterable, whose allotted fates are faithfully executed" (ln. 25). This is similar to the function of the Tablet of Destinies in *Enūma eliš*, where it is the mark of control over the future – functionally much like "thy will be done" in the Lord's Prayer – enhancing the deity's power.

⁸⁷ The location of Ninurta's palace is not identified in the opening lines, although the intended place is undoubtedly Nippur. Deliberations regarding the war against Asag are made there (ln 191; although the damage to the section complicates interpretation); it is also the location of Ninurta's judgement over the stones (ln 411).

The narrative almost immediately turns from this idyllic picture to the threat of disruption, introducing the primary conflict of the story. The chaotic forces are represented by Asag and (as in An-gim) they originate in the mountains. The narrative develops somewhat differently here; where in An-gim Ninurta's victory is all but a formality, *Lugal-e* builds tension by leaving Ninurta's defeat a possibility. Unlike the various foes brought back to Nibru in Ninurta's victory parade, Asag receives a lengthy introduction to emphasise its threat (ln 26b-47). His description in many ways exemplifies his nature as antithetical to the ideological norm. He defies expectations of conformation to natural law: he drinks milk without needing to breastfeed, has no real parents (as offspring of here unpersonified heaven and earth), and leads a rebellion of animate stones. The latter is significant because it once more emphasises the opposition between civilisation and chaos; i.e., between settled, urban society and the 'uncivilised' mountain tribes that serve as perennial enemy elsewhere in Mesopotamian literature. The personification of this chaotic threat as literally the types of rock that form the mountains is a clever literary device that both drives home the point and sets up Ninurta's judgement over them later in the text.

Remarkably, the language with which Ninurta's campaign against the rebels is described at first glance more closely resembles chaotic forces than civilised ones.⁸⁸ In a passage reminiscent of the flood tradition, Ninurta whips up a furious storm that destroys everything before him – in the mountains, of course, not in Nippur's environs – with surging water and gale-force winds:

The lord cried "Alas!" so that Heaven trembled, and Earth huddled at his feet and was terrified (?) at his strength. Enlil became confused and went out of the E-kur. The

⁸⁸ See Feldt (2011) for an in-depth discussion of the polysemous nature of Ninurta and Asag. I fully agree with her that "complexity, conceptual playfulness and ambivalence are important parts of *Lugale*", but do not share the opinion that the ambiguity of metaphor employed in the text is necessarily indicative of "cultural subversion and reflection" (Feldt 2011: 149). See below for further discussion.

mountains were devastated. That day the earth became dark, the Anuna trembled (In. 70-72).

Ninurta's rage upsets heaven and earth, and causes the gods to flee – even Enlil, who is responsible for the destruction in the flood tradition, leaves his temple.⁸⁹ An intertextual reading between this text and the Ziudsura narrative suggests that divine rage was considered a terrifying event even for those on the side of the raging deity, although the regret resulting from Enlil's destruction in Ziudsura is absent here. The description continues:

An enormous hurricane, irresistible, went before the hero, stirred up the dust, caused the dust to settle, levelled high and low, filled the holes. It caused a rain of coals and flaming fires; the fire consumed men. It overturned tall trees by their trunks, reducing the forests to heaps, Earth put her hands on her heart and cried harrowingly; the Tigris was muddied, disturbed, cloudy, stirred up (In. 83-89)

Several aspects of Ninurta's campaign jump out here. Firstly, the hurricane – URU₂, rendered in Akkadian as *abubu* 'flood, catastrophe' – is normally more closely associated with Enlil. Its inclusion in Ninurta's arsenal again suggests that Ninurta has taken on Enlil's mantle in more ways than his kingship. Secondly, the fact that it sets people on fire emphasises that it is not just a flood of water, and that the imagery of destructive force extends beyond submersion; perhaps, in light of the hurricane, the intended association is with lightning causing fires. The description of the storm, too, attests to real-world experience with natural disasters in much the same way as flood myths presumably drew on lived experiences of

⁸⁹ *Lugal-e* possibly predates the flood tradition – it is currently impossible to date with more precision than 'sometime after the 22nd century BCE' (Van Dijk 1983; Feldt 2011). More evidence would be required to determine which text influence which, though for our current purposes a resolution to this question is unnecessary.

uncontrolled inundation.⁹⁰ The author's (first- or second-hand) experiential knowledge is again emphasised in the following lines, which synthesises the catastrophic imagery of a surging flood explicitly with Ninurta's attack on the mountains:

The storm flooded out the fish there in the subterranean waters, their mouths snapped at the air. It reduced the animals of the open country to firewood, roasting them like locusts. It was a deluge rising and disastrously ruining the mountains (ln. 93-95).

This summary concludes the part of Ninurta's campaign metaphorically rendered as the URU₂ 'flood, catastrophe', which characterises the deity's onslaught as a natural force. Despite this apparent incongruity between chaotic nature and Ninurta's status as champion of civilisation, it is clear that Ninurta's show of power does not detract from his position: the role he fulfils in the narrative is indisputably and unambiguously against the non-conforming 'other'.

Several sections in the second half of the narrative deserve closer analysis. The majority of these lines is concerned with Ninurta's judgement over the various types of rock that took part in the battle, seemingly randomly divided between those that supported Asag and those that assisted Ninurta. A traditional mythological analysis would likely understand this section as etiological; i.e., that the story attempts to explain the function of each type of rock in the world as the society that produced it understood them. The same could be said for the other two sections, which respectively narrate Ninurta's implementation of irrigation in Sumer and the origin of Ninḫursaĝ's name. Heimpel (1987: 315) explicitly takes this position; Feldt (2011: 128) reiterates it, although she acknowledges that "this interpretation [is] insufficient"

⁹⁰ The irregular nature of the Euphrates and Tigris water supply – being dependent on seasonal glacier melting and rainfall in the mountains – caused catastrophic floods that are geologically and archaeologically attested. The evidence has been used in attempts to find evidence for a specific historical event underlying the mythic tradition (e.g. Raikes 1966; Ryan *et al.* 1997), although the difficulties in precisely dating both the textual composition and the natural disaster mean convincing and specific arguments remain lacking.

when the entire composition is taken into account. Indeed, from a straightforward, ‘historical’ perspective the incongruity of the myth as a whole is striking. The story does not take place in a mythical past but simply in an indeterminable one, and cities, people, and institutions even seem established as if it were set in regular history. In this context, Ninurta’s assigning destinies to types of stone is strange, given that they had apparently not been fulfilling these roles until his decision. Flint, for example, is sentenced in ln 543-553 to be smashed to pieces, used by carpenters and metalworkers, begging the question what these workmen had been using up to that point. Similar questions arise around irrigation, established by Ninurta from ln 334 onwards. Ln 342-344 provide these details:

No one brought (?) offerings to the market. The famine was hard, as nothing had yet been born. No one yet cleaned the little canals, the mud was not dredged up.

Why does a market exist if “nothing had yet been born”? For that matter, is a famine really meaningful if nothing had been born? Who populated the cities that are mentioned elsewhere in the story? For the little canals to require cleaning, presumably they needed to have been constructed first – perhaps by the gods, but then why did they abandon their work? Again, the existence of particular technologies and social institutions is assumed here, even if it does not make narrative sense for them to exist at that time. Very probably, part of the explanation is that the text looks as if it was put together from several sources: a battle narrative between Ninurta and Asag; a story about Ninurta’s invention of irrigation; an account of the origins of the relationship between Ninurta and Ninḫursaĝ, as well as her name; and a catalogue of stones and their functions. In this sense, the author simply collated several origin stories and roughly edited them into a coherent narrative – which in itself, of course, attests to the flexibility of religious narrative and the possibility of changing it in Mesopotamian scribal practice. However, this only explains the form of the text; the content is another issue, and this is where our methodology shines once more. *Lugal-e* ticks practically all the boxes of myth as we would expect it according to the theory and methodology we have been

following: it contains counterintuitive elements (the gods, the animated stones), attests strongly to the sharing of culturally-framed concepts through narrative (specific technologies and political institutions), elaborates on in-group/out-group opposition (conflict between civilisation and rebels), and ends with an explicit pronouncement of a political position (divine approval of the king).

Perhaps the compositional situation of *Lugal-e*, in terms of its inclusion of a catalogue of items, is similar to the editorial history of the laws in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These laws make little sense when given to a nomadic, culturally homogenous people surviving on divinely-sourced food, but as a retrojection of much later laws framed within a (largely) fictional historical narrative, however, their purpose is clear. They establish as ancient and authoritative the norms that were considered important by the author, and generate new justifications to uphold and reinforce ideological points. Of course, the use of particular materials does not have the same normative impact as an entire catalogue of laws, but in the case of *Lugal-e* and Ninurta's judgement we can still detect some of that normativity: the knowledge of the purposes for which specific types of stone are used is culturally bound, and this consensus provides a way for a narrative enumerating them to reinforce these cultural ties.

*Enūma eliš*⁹¹

Having discussed a number of Sumerian and Akkadian myths, at this stage it will be useful to reiterate some of the key points we have discussed so far. The thread running through our analysis has been the inherent ideological quality of myth in Mesopotamia, which was first postulated as part of the more general theory of myth based on minimal counterintuitiveness, then exegetically identified through textual analysis in several major Mesopotamian compositions. In anticipation of a potential objection to the methodology presented here, it is important to re-emphasise that the analysis has been designed specifically *not to be*

⁹¹ See bibliography for editions; all translations are mine unless noted otherwise.

eisegetical: the ideological quality of myth is not an arbitrary feature forced onto the text, but rather one that results from objective characteristics of myth and the identification of major textual features. In other words: I hope the reader will agree that the conclusions regarding ideology drawn from the analyses of the *Theogony of Dunnu*, *An-gim*, and *Lugal-e* have not arisen from my forcing ideological features onto the text. Moving on through our discussion of *Enūma elīš*, its Mesopotamian countertext *Erra and Išum*, and finally applying the insights gained from them to creation texts in the Hebrew Bible, the intention of this thesis is to show both the broad applicability of the methodology to a wide range of texts – many of which have never been considered side-by-side. At the current stage, we have discussed a number of less familiar texts – Mesopotamian myths whose direct relevance to the Hebrew Bible is limited – but the aim so far has been showing the viability of the methodology and the basic principle of the ideological nature of myths. We will zoom in further on our ultimate target from this point onward; to the mid-1st millennium BCE, the height of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, and the composition of biblical creation texts specifically in response to this imperial power.

Enūma elīš is our first step into somewhat more well-known territory: the text has a much longer analytical history, is better attested, and has been compared to Genesis 1-11 extensively. In fact, the first English publication of the first lines of *Enūma elīš* commented briefly on striking parallels to Genesis 1 in a newly found tablet – the fragmentary first tablet of *Enūma elīš* (Smith 1876: 62). Smith’s comments, naturally being influenced by biblical tradition as the best-preserved account of creation from the ancient Near East at the time, show his understandable interest in parallels:

“The fragment of the obverse, broken as it is, is precious as giving the description of the chaos or desolate void before the Creation of the world, and the first movement of creation. This corresponds to the first two verses of the first chapter of Genesis:

1. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
2. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

[...] The name Mummu Tiamatu combines the names Moymis and Tauthe of Damascius. [...] It is evident that, according to the notion of the Babylonians, the sea was the origin of all things, and this also agrees with the statement of Genesis, i. 2. where the chaotic waters are called תְהוֹם, “the deep,” the same word as the Tiamat of the Creation text and the Tauthe of Damascius.” (Smith 1876: 64-65)

Now, leaving aside the inaccuracies in Smith’s analysis – partly due to his unfamiliarity with Hebrew philology,⁹² partly because Assyriology was in its infancy at the time⁹³ – it is clear that his approach is strongly driven by a desire to contextualise the biblical account. He continues his analysis of *Enūma elīš* (having also found parts of tablets V) drawing further parallels between the two texts,⁹⁴ and in fact his attribution of K 3364 (an entirely unrelated tablet) to *Enūma elīš* appears to have been driven entirely by taking the creation account of

⁹² Of course, even Hebrew philologists at the time would not likely have analysed the grammar and syntax of Gen 1:1-2 correctly – the problem seems to have been solved by Holmstedt (2008), but future analyses may find yet other solutions.

⁹³ Although Smith’s analysis is virtually completely outdated now, we really cannot blame him for, for instance, misreading the entirety of line 3 and completely missing Apsû as a primordial deity. Cuneiform studies on the whole had only begun in earnest with Rawlinson in the 1830s, and the number of known texts was miniscule until concerted excavations – conducted, in part, by Smith himself – in the mid-19th century massively expanded the cuneiform library available for analysis. In fact, it is worth mentioning that Smith was entirely self-taught in cuneiform despite not having finished secondary school, making his publications of *Enūma elīš* and, later, of the Gilgamesh epic all the more monumental (Strother 1971).

⁹⁴ The first edition of Wellhausen’s *Prolegomena* would be published two years later, and although the Documentary Hypothesis was by no means the first to suggest that Gen 1:1-2:4a and 2:4a-3 came from separate sources, Smith appears to consider the Genesis creation myths to be a single account.

Genesis 1-3 as a guideline (Smith 1876: 78-80). To reemphasise: at the time, this approach made sense given the relative absence of evidence for creation myths from the ancient Near East, but it is absolutely not tenable anymore. The recontextualisation of biblical creation material within the broader framework of ancient Near Eastern myths at the time had only just begun, and it would be another 60 years before extensive evidence for non-biblical West-Semitic literature would be uncovered at Ugarit. Looking at Smith's approach, which still assumed the primacy of the biblical account to a certain degree, there is perhaps some irony in the fact that our knowledge of historical Mesopotamia now far outstrips our degree of understanding of the historical context in which the Bible was composed. Thus, instead of following the still-prevalent paradigm whereby the Bible serves as the starting point for an appraisal of ancient Near Eastern texts, this thesis approaches the question from the opposite perspective.

As a cautionary preamble, however, it is important to note that the ancient Near Eastern mythical paradigm – and particularly *Enūma eliš* – exists against the background of a sophisticated, centuries-old literary tradition, kept carefully as the virtually exclusive domain of an elite scribal class. The status of Mesopotamian myths as accurately indicative of common religious practice is thus a complicating factor, as Oppenheim is keen to point out (1977: 177):

“All these stories about the gods and their doings, about this world of ours and how it came into being, these moralizing as well as entertaining stories geared to emotional responses represent the most obvious and cherished topics for the literary creativeness of ... Mesopotamia. They form something like a fantastic screen ... which one must penetrate to reach the hard core of evidence that bears directly on the forms of religious experience of Mesopotamian man.”

In other words, the study of *Enūma elīš* is *not* by definition equal to a study of Mesopotamian religion, although the use of religious themes in the text – and their analysis in this thesis – might give that impression. For the current purpose, however, this is not a real problem: the objective is primarily to understand the use of the text in an ideological sense. Thus, Oppenheim's 'fantastic screen', rather than the religious experience behind it, is actually the focus of study.

Origin

The text most likely finds its origins in the second millennium BCE as a hymn of praise to Marduk, the city god of Babylon. It was probably composed after the return of Marduk's statue to the city after a period of occupation, though it is somewhat unclear which particular occasion spurred the composition. Expansive in both composition and subject matter, the seven-tablet epic narrates the time from the infancy of the cosmos to the building of Babylon and the enthronement of Marduk as king of the gods. It became the focus of the Akītu festival, heralding the start of a new year, where it was recited from beginning to end over several days. In order to appreciate the significance of statements made within the text, and of the contextual performative dimension, we will first discuss the background of the text as well as its place within various Mesopotamian societies.

The compositional origins of *Enūma elīš* are virtually impossible to pin down exactly. What is clear from the inescapable attention for Marduk is that the text must be specifically Babylonian. The text could hardly be more explicit in its unconditional praise for Babylon's city god, and, if anything, it must be accepted that the author of *Enūma elīš* wrote the text with specific reference to the glorification of Marduk. It seems obvious, then, that the text was composed in, or at the very least with reference to, Babylon (Kämmerer and Metzler 2012: 16). Many suggest that the return of Marduk's statue to Babylon spurred the composition, for which the successful campaign against the Elamites under Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1104 BCE) provides an oft-cited occasion (Sommerfeld 1982: 174). Two other similar

texts of praise – DT 71 and the *Marduk Prophecy*, esp. III 22'b – from the same period corroborate this dating (Oshima 2006: 115); on the other hand, there is evidence to suggest an even earlier date based on similarities between Tablet VII of *Enūma eliš* and the *An=Anum* list (Litke 1998; Dalley 2008: 229-30). Given Marduk's rise to prominence starting in the Old Babylonian period (Sommerfeld 1982: 27), and the references to *Enūma eliš* in the annals of Sargon II, the text could be dated to anywhere between the mid-second millennium and the eighth century BCE on the basis of Marduk alone.

Looking at the text itself, several philological features in the text hint at particular periods of composition. The use of the terminative-adverbial ending *-iṣ*⁹⁵ has been proposed to indicate a Kassite composition date, between the mid-16th and 12th century BCE (Sommerfeld 1982: 175; Matouš 1961:33). Lambert (1984: 5-6), somewhat curiously, argued on precisely the same grounds that the text should be dated to the subsequent Middle-Babylonian period.

Kämmerer and Metzler, however, warn against using grammatical or orthographic features of the text for the purpose of dating, citing Mesopotamian skill at archaising existing contemporary or even original compositions, and at modernising older text (2012: 16-17).

That same warning must be heeded when considering arguments regarding the use of the perfect tense, raised by Von Soden (GAG 80f; cf. 1933: 95) and Metzler himself (2002: 475-6), since it is unclear whether they reflect genuine Old Babylonian scribal practice, or Neo-Babylonian emulation.

Beyond the issue of textual features, Kämmerer and Metzler (2012: 16) draw attention to the problem surrounding the various forms of the text. They distinguish four different concepts to which '*Enūma eliš*' might refer:⁹⁶

⁹⁵ See Huehnergard (2011: 311).

⁹⁶ These four refer to the question of the original (probably second millennium BCE) compositional form of the text, before it had attained the importance it would enjoy in the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods.

1. the written text as it is preserved on the clay tablets available to us;
2. a hypothetical older version of the written text;
3. a hypothetical older version of the written text, containing similar themes but differing in composition; or
4. a hypothetical older version of the written text, differing in both themes and composition.

It is important to point out that, apart from the first one, no evidence of any other forms of the text is available; and even then, Kämmerer and Metzler are quick to point out that the text “*in seiner jetzigen, einzig sicher greifbaren Gestalt* ist im jungbabylonischen Dialekt des ersten vorchristlichen Jahrtausends gehalten” (2012: 16; italics in original). Frustratingly – even if it is almost certain that *Enūma eliš* provides the rare case where a rough date of composition could be set – we have to manage with a much later copy of the text that may have changed significantly.⁹⁷

There is, however, some good news as well. In certain ways, the above caveats to the text do not matter a great deal for our current purpose: we are here primarily interested in the use of the text in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian times. Ashurbanipal’s copies of the text, from his library in Nineveh, date to precisely this timeframe, meaning we will actually be looking at the text approximately in the form it would have had when it exerted its influence on the biblical authors. Furthermore, by far most editions, including the oldest tablets, show no substantial textual variations that might affect theme or composition – apart from regional (Assyrian or Babylonian) variations in cuneiform characters and orthography⁹⁸ – suggesting

⁹⁷ For biblical scholars, at least, this is familiar terrain. Looking ahead to the comparative analysis with the text of Genesis 1:1-2:4a, the text of *Enūma eliš* as it is available to us will be used, not least because it is these later tablets and their version of the epic that would have formed the literary basis for the biblical authors’ composition.

⁹⁸ With the important exception of the Neo-Assyrian substitution of Marduk’s name for Aššur, discussed below.

that the text remained mostly stable from its early form until its ‘canonical’ mid-first-millennium edition. It is undoubtedly because of its immense importance to Mesopotamian culture – and in particular, to its scribal class and the priesthood – that the text of *Enūma eliš* preserved as well as it did, and in many ways the text can rightly be seen as an analogue to epic poems such as the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Aeneid*. This privileged position of the text in its cultural context means that a great deal of effort went into copying and preserving it. The library of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh yielded several copies of the text in both Assyrian and Babylonian variants, indicating that the Babylonian version of the text was important to at least the scribal class, even in times of Assyrian hegemony. Precisely because of its significance and preservation, a study of *Enūma eliš* can provide an excellent look into the text and its afterlife, as well as into the culture that fostered its development.

Enūma eliš and the Akītu festival

Although both the origins of the Akītu festival and the earliest connections between Akītu and *Enūma eliš* are largely unknown, reference to the festival was made as early as the Old Babylonian period (CAD, A, 267).⁹⁹ The Akītu festival was observed in many cities, and was by no means restricted to Babylon or Aššur: evidence for extensive celebrations exists for Uruk, Dilbat, and Sippar (CAD, A, 269-70). The text itself, finally, indicates the importance of its dissemination to the population in its concluding lines: “Let the wise and knowledgeable ponder [them] together; let the father repeat [them] and make the son understand” (EE vii.146-147; Frahm 2011: 346). From these lines, it becomes apparent that the message of *Enūma eliš* was one worth spreading, further reinforcing the notion that its distribution was not restricted to elite circles.

⁹⁹ This suggests that the festival is much older than the epic – it is possible that *Enūma eliš* was composed specifically with the Akītu festival in mind. Dalley hints at the possibility of composition with ritual in mind when she writes that the style of *Enūma eliš* is “vaguely phrased, *designed* to impress rather than to entertain” (2008: 231; emphasis mine).

Unlike many other ritual texts, *Enūma eliš* is discussed and cited extensively in Mesopotamian chronicles and commentaries, and it is through these accounts that a relatively large amount of information is known about the use of the text in ritual practice (Frahm 2011: 113). For the other texts we have discussed so far we have no direct indication that they were used for the purposes of a specific festival or occasion, although it is highly likely that the categorisation of the Ninurta myths as particular types of songs (see above) suggests that they were recited or chanted as part of temple services. When it comes to *Enūma eliš*, not only do we have direct evidence that they were used in such a context: we know that it was a key text in a major, probably public, performance that formed an integral part of the ritualistic calendar of the Babylonian and Assyrian empires. This performance was part of the Akītu festival, which was held over a period of eleven days and started on the first day of Nisan, in spring.¹⁰⁰ *Enūma eliš* was recited in its entirety on the fourth, according to RA 136, a Seleucid-era tablet most likely going back to Neo-Babylonian times (Thureau-Dangin 1921: 136; corrected transliteration Lambert 2013: 6; translation mine):

280 [arki tar]dinnu ša kīš ūmu *Enūma eliš*

281 [ištu rēš]išu adi qītīšu šešgallu etūša

282 [ana bēl] inašši

¹⁰⁰ Technically speaking, we have evidence of two annual Akītu festivals going back to the Sumerian period: one in spring, the ‘Akītu of cutting barley’, during which *Enūma eliš* was recited; and one six months after it, the ‘Akītu of sowing’ (Van der Toorn 1990: 11). By the Babylonian period, the spring festival had developed into the primary annual celebration, in part because of its connection with the legitimisation of royal power; we discuss this further below. See also Bidmead (2002) for an overview of the various forms of the festival in Mesopotamia more broadly, and for the development of the Akītu festival over time. Van der Toorn (1990: 11) also draws a helpful comparison with the liturgical year in Christian churches, separately from the calendric year, and points out that the Akītu in spring had a far more political character through its mention in royal inscriptions.

280-2 [After the sec]ond course of the evening, the *šešgallu*¹⁰¹ of Etuša¹⁰² recites *Enūma eliš* [from its beg]inning to its end [to Bēl].

The ‘second course’ here refers a meal presumably consumed as part of the festival.¹⁰³ The recitation thus must have taken place, in its entirety, on the evening of the fourth day – with seven tablets to get through, this must have taken a significant amount of time. The question remains in what way this performance was conducted; on this, unfortunately, there is no consensus. Bidmead presents the recitation as a very public event: the “verbal performance ... in the middle of the grand festival would have held ... ideological and sociological impact” (2002: 67). This suggests that the narration directly influenced all the people present, and was thus read out loud before a large audience. Kämmerer and Metzler suggest – although they do not supply any support for it – that rather than a public performance, the text was read “vermutlich unter Ausschluß der Öffentlichkeit” (2012: 42). Although this latter possibility does not completely prevent the dissemination of *Enūma eliš* to the public – and there is no reason to assume the narrative would have been a scribal secret, like the texts mentioned below – it might affect possible ways in which knowledge of the text spread. Elite circles would probably have had excellent knowledge of the text.¹⁰⁴ Dalley suggests that the

¹⁰¹ A type of priest, from the Sumerian ŠEŠ.GAL, lit. ‘elder brother’, evidently a key officiant in the Akītu ritual. For further examples, see *CAD*, Š, vol. 2, ‘šešgallu’ 2a and b; ‘šešgallūtu’.

¹⁰² Another name for Marduk’s temple, Esagil; see Linssen (2004).

¹⁰³ See *CAD*, T, ‘tardennu’ 1 c.

¹⁰⁴ Priests would be present for the annual recitation, scribes would copy it out, and the allusions to the text in royal inscriptions suggest that the highest echelons of society probably had direct access to *Enūma eliš* in its written – or at least verbatim orally transmitted – form. A modern comparison might be the Papal conclave: even though the only people admitted are the elite of the Roman Catholic Church, most people have some idea of the proceedings of their meeting, even if there is no literal record. Thus, even if ordinary citizens had no access to the written text, the importance of *Enūma eliš* to the population of at least Babylon must have been significant, considering its place in the New Year festival.

social elite would attend the recitation (2008: 232), and it seems unlikely that a text of such ritual importance would remain completely outside the frame of reference of the rest of society. The citation above does not conclusively settle the matter. ‘To Bēl’ in In 282 – indicating Marduk – may imply that the text was recited directly in front of the deity’s statue and therefore within the temple with few attendees (so Lambert 2013: 6). On the other hand, the text reads *ana bēl* ‘to Bēl’ here, while in other lines it reads *ina pâni Bēl (u Bēltīya)*,¹⁰⁵ ‘before Bēl (and Bēltīya)’ (lit. ‘to the face of...’). An intriguing example is the prayer listed in In 5-32, which line 33 calls *niširtu esagil* ‘the secret of Esagil’. which with such a title presumably was recited in the privacy of the inner sanctuary, directly before the statues of the god(s). If the difference in description between the two is deliberate in the text – and again, since we are dealing with a Seleucid-era text, copy errors may well have crept in over the centuries – the phrase *ana bēl* may well signal that the recitation took place in a more public location. In this case, the preposition *ana* is perhaps intended to be understood with a more directional meaning, ‘toward, up to’, in the sense of the recitation being *for* Marduk despite not being directed at his statue specifically.

More importantly than the referent being a noncorporeal deity, of course, would be the effect of such a performance on the audience. Although we must acknowledge the uncertainty in whether the recitation of *Enūma eliš* was public; if it was, the text was a prominent part of the cultic year’s most important shared ritual experience.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, because the festival

¹⁰⁵ Bēltīya, lit. ‘my lady’ generally refers to Sarpanītu, Marduk’s wife. The suffixed first person genitive singular pronoun is a stock part of her appellation in this form, and her title *bēltu* ‘lady’ is simply the feminine form (with infix *-t-*) of Marduk’s title *bēl* ‘lord’, cognate with the Hebrew *ba’al* that becomes a stock term for ‘not-Yahweh’. See Part 3 for further discussion.

¹⁰⁶ We must acknowledge a further caveat, which is that the population at large, certainly by the Neo-Babylonian period (the only one for which we have a direct indication that *Enūma eliš* was recited during the Akītu festival), did not speak Akkadian but Aramaic in everyday life. It is less clear how well they would have *understood* it, and given the relative proximity of Akkadian and Aramaic (perhaps along the same lines as

was so strongly connected to legitimising, re-establishing, and emphasising royal power, both the prominence of the text in the festival, as well as references to the text outside it, would likely have evoked similar connotations for the audience. Seen this way, *Enūma eliš* was a powerful ideological text in terms of its content (discussed in more detail below), but it was also explicitly woven into performative ritual contexts in ways no other creation myth was.¹⁰⁷

Assyrian and Babylonian variants

The destruction of Babylon by Sennacherib in 689 BCE seems to have presented the perfect opportunity to revise the story, presumably because no temples remained standing; with no Babylon left to anchor the Babylonian original, Assyrian scribes were free to adapt the text to their own purposes, with Aššur as main character (Frahm 2011: 350). Numerous other examples of this re-working of Babylonian material exist, showing a deliberate Assyrian policy of appropriating Babylonian material to propagate their own political ideology (Frahm 1997: 225-226). Under the auspices of Sennacherib's successor Esarhaddon, however, Babylon was rebuilt, and *Enūma eliš* in its Assyrian reworking was abandoned in favour of the original Babylonian version; this much is evident from the many Late Assyrian manuscripts starring Marduk once again (Talon 2005: xiii-xviii; Frahm 2011: 354). While the surviving manuscripts of *Enūma eliš* together allow us to piece together what we think is the complete text, it is clear at the same time that the unified text we use in modern Assyriology

Italian and Latin in medieval Rome), Akkadian may have been comprehensible to Aramaic speakers. Apart from the linguistic connection, we also have extensive evidence that Akkadian was used at least up until the end of the Neo-Babylonian empire (and even beyond this) in amulets, charms, contracts, records, and other items for personal use (Huehnergard and Woods 2004: 218). (Of course, we have evidence of cuneiform tablets written as late as the 1st century AD, showing its survival as a learned language well beyond this point.) This suggests that a working knowledge of Akkadian may have been more widespread than just the educated (elite) classes.

¹⁰⁷ At least, not that we know: it is possible that texts like the *Theogony of Dammu* were used in a similar way, but we have no evidence that this was the case.

is actually put together from what broadly speaking are two major variant traditions.¹⁰⁸ As a brief reminder, Lambert's standard edition of the text is a majority text – much like the Nestle-Aland edition of the New Testament – which, putting it somewhat uncharitably, pretends that combining all surviving manuscripts together grants us access to the 'actual' original text. (It is precisely for this reason that Kämmerer and Metzler's 2012 edition, which adopts the 'Partitur' approach, is preferred here.) Thus, we must deal with a number of caveats, which have already been outlined above, in the preface to the current textual analysis. Worth reiterating here is the commonly-held – but mistaken – assumption that the majority text is necessarily more authoritative than variants to that majority consensus; in *Enūma eliš*, for instance, none of the surviving Babylonian manuscripts record Marduk's building of Babylon. Instead, this part of the text only remains in the Assyrian manuscripts from Nineveh, where it features the god Aššur establishing the original Assyrian capital (and primary cultic city) of Aššur. Of course, it seems impossible from our knowledge of the Babylonian versions of the text that Aššur featured at all in the original (Babylonian) text.¹⁰⁹ However, the existence of numerous copies of these variant readings suggest that the Aššur-version was also authoritative in some sense – at least to the extent that it was used and disseminated. It remains unclear whether the Akītu festival in other cities than Babylon included a recitation of the text as well – certainly, the construction of Akītu houses in

¹⁰⁸ The differences between the versions are basically restricted to the replacement of the name Marduk with Aššur, whose name is written as ^DAN.ŠAR₂, and thus indistinguishable – in writing, at least – from the god Anšar. Taken at face value, then, the Assyrian version is a wholesale adoption of the Babylonian original, with the exception of the name of the head of the pantheon. For a restored edition of the (fragmentary) Assyrian variant, see Kämmerer and Metzler (2012: 355-360).

¹⁰⁹ Of course, orthographically, Aššur's name was written identically to Anšar's in the Assyrian manuscript. It should be clear, however – if only from the narrative problems arising from the attempt to associate the former with the latter in the Assyrian version – that the Babylonian version at no point included the Assyrian deity.

Nineveh and Aššur under Sennacherib certainly allows for that possibility.¹¹⁰ What is certain, however, is that copies of the Assyrian tradition were kept in Nineveh and Aššur, and were thus circulated and copied for the libraries of the administrative and cultic capitals, respectively.

Thus, we are faced with a conundrum: are we dealing with two different but equally ‘valid’ versions arising from the same *Urtext*, or is the Assyrian version to be regarded as nothing but a cheap knock-off? Certainly, by presenting the text in a majority reading and assuming the primacy of the Babylonian version Lambert to some extent suggests the latter. To be clear: this is a legitimate approach to the text that is highly likely to reflect more accurately the original composition as it was before any Assyrian editor amended it, as outlined in our earlier discussion. However, the significance of the existence of the Assyrian variant *tradition* (since it is not just one variant manuscript) should not be overlooked: clearly, there was a deliberate drive in the Neo-Assyrian empire to produce versions of *Enūma eliš* that its scribes must have known to be an adaptation of the Babylonian edition. We can point here to the construction of the *bītī Akīti* ‘Akītu houses’ at Aššur and Nineveh, to replace the one destroyed along with the rest of Babylon by Sennacherib; this conscious relocation of not only the text, but also of physical buildings associated with it and its ideological importance, might actually be one of the strongest examples of the ideological use of myth in the ancient Near East.

At first glance, the existence of both Assyrian and Babylonian versions of *Enūma eliš* forms somewhat of a puzzle: if the text was used in the same way in both areas, why would the Assyrian elite choose to adopt what was quite possibly their archenemies’ most important

¹¹⁰ These buildings were part of the Babylonian festival; thus, if the Assyrian appropriation of the festival was as direct and complete as its appropriation of the text, it presumably would have necessitated the construction of these buildings in Nineveh and Aššur. For further details on variant Akītu festivals, see Cohen (1983) and Sommer (2000).

myth? One relatively straightforward solution is that its status as an authoritative national epic, and the prestige associated with that position in society, made it a prime target for transcultural adaptation.¹¹¹ Even then, the question remains why this would be acceptable – did the significance of *Enūma elīš* as an authoritative text overrule the objection that it was a *Babylonian* authoritative text? Perhaps so, as Frahm (2011: 349) suggests: “its doctrine of absolute power ... seems to have had a tremendous appeal,” which could have been the case even if the main character of the story was Marduk instead of their own chief deity. We even have evidence that this question was asked in Assyria. Surviving copies of several commentary texts dating to that period attempt to harmonise the apparent problem: K 4657+¹¹² and KAR 307,¹¹³ for example, attribute the origin of Marduk’s splendour to the Assyrian goddess Ištar of Nineveh (Frahm 2011: 355), presumably with the aim of appropriating the Babylonian god for an Assyrian audience without requiring the complete replacement of Marduk for Aššur.

Thus, the malleability of the myth shows how powerfully it could serve as a vehicle for its users’ ideological message; it seems that origins and cultural association were superseded by function and potential use, and that sophisticated hermeneutical strategies were utilised to arrive at predetermined conclusions. Moreover, as we have seen, the potential for myths in the ancient Near East to be appropriated and recontextualised by the elite, thanks in part to a

¹¹¹ Even though Assyrian and Babylonian are dialects of Akkadian, which was spoken in both empires before it was replaced (again, in both) by Aramaic, it is worth stressing again that the two cultures were certainly not identical. This should be self-evident, among other things, from the fact that the two empires were distinct entities rather than differently-sited dynasties of the same empire, from their different pantheons, and from the fact that imperial control of the other region was conceptualised as kingship of Assyria and Babylon as distinct entities. For a more extensive discussion of statehood and cultural affiliation, see e.g. Adams (2008); Holloway (2002).

¹¹² Edition in Lambert (2013: 135-144).

¹¹³ Edition in Ebeling (1931).

broadly shared pantheon, was enormous. It should be emphasised at this point that, from the pattern emerging thus far, we should understand this engagement with myth in the ancient Near East as a deliberate strategy, not as an accidental feature. It appears that scribal or elite appropriation of myths

Textual examples

Looking beyond more general features of *Enūma eliš* in terms of its usage, we shall now consider some direct examples from the text in order to illustrate its ideological function. Throughout the text, a variety of statements allude more or less obviously to the view of the authors on matters such as national identity, view on other peoples, imperial power, and theology. As we have seen before, particular assumptions made in the text may well be significant even if they are not presented explicitly as such. Thus, in Tablet I, the theogony Apsu/Tiamat – Laḫmu/Laḫāmu – Anšar/Kišar – Ea (Nudimmud)/Damkina – Marduk presents a specific form of the divine generations that was not universally accepted; for instance, it completely excludes Enlil despite his significance in other texts. Now, the case of Enlil's absence may simply be explained by syncretism or appropriation: Marduk, as the chief Babylonian storm god, may have made Enlil's character obsolete in *Enūma eliš*, since another such deity could have detracted from Marduk's role in the story. There might thus not be a direct political motivation behind Enlil's exclusion. However, the text presents what is clearly intended to be an authoritative theogony while Enlil was still actively worshipped at Nippur; even if his omission from *Enūma eliš* was for stylistic reasons, these same stylistic reasons have a direct ideological effect: the exclusion of Enlil, his affiliated cult, and people accepting his divine kingship from the theology of *Enūma eliš*. As such, the text presents a normative worldview reminding its audience on at least an annual basis of the proper membership of the pantheon. Similar statements to the basic theogony are made throughout Tablets I and II, serving as continual reminders that Marduk belongs at the head of the pantheon. His introduction in I.79-108 sets off a carefully crafted narrative to drive home this

point. Initially, this comes in the form of direct statements addressed to Marduk. He is called by the name of Šamaš, the sun god (who, like Enlil, is otherwise absent from the text) in ln. 102, appropriating yet another deity. After this, the stock nouns associated with divine power are bestowed on him (*melammu* in ln. 103 and *pulḫātu* in ln. 104), followed by the powers of the storm god (ln. 105-108). Marduk having been created literally perfect (ln. 91), the story then turns to setting up an adversary – Qingu – to show off Marduk’s power. This is the end of Tablet I (and is repeated at the start of Tablet II),¹¹⁴ and Qingu is here described as receiving practically the only aspect of the Mesopotamian head of pantheon that Marduk had not attained: the Tablet of Destinies.

Tablet V, which narrates the results of Marduk’s battle with Tiamat, provides probably the best examples of this interconnection of literature and ideology. The story turns to Marduk’s enthronement as king of the gods:

85¹¹⁵ [pa]ḫ-ru-ma ᵀI-GÌ-GÌ ka-li-šú-nu uš-kin-nu-uš

86 [ᵀ]ᵀa ᵀ-nun-na-ki ma-la ba-šú-u ú-na-áš-šá-qu GÌRI.2.MEŠ-šú

87 [in-nen-du]- ᵀma ᵀpu-ḫur-šú-nu la-ba-niš ap-pi

88 [maḫ-ri-š]u i-zi-zu ik-nu-šú an-na-ma LUGAL

¹¹⁴ This is not the only time the narrative repeats direct speech verbatim. For example, the start of Tablet III recaps the start of Tablet II, raising the question whether this was a deliberate strategy to reinforce memorisation. Another possibility is that the recitation was broken up in several parts, and that the repeated lines were there to remind the audience what had happened previously – perhaps somewhat like episodic TV series or serialised comics.

¹¹⁵ Lines 85-89, 115-116, and 124 are from manuscript G, written in Neo-Assyrian cuneiform and found in Sultantepe (Gurney and Finkelstein 1957, cited in Kämmerer and Metzler 2012: 238-241). The significance of the site (the name of which has not been established with certainty, but may have been Ḫuzirina) to the Neo-Assyrian empire is not quite clear, although the inclusion of *Enūma eliš* in its library might suggest that it was used as part of a local Akītu festival; alternatively, it may have been kept as a reference work for local scribes if it was part of the city’s scribal curriculum.

- 85 The Igigi were assembled, all of them bowed down;
 86 The Anunnaki, so many of them present, kissed his two feet;
 87 They gathered in their assembly to submit themselves;¹¹⁶
 88 They stood before him, they bowed, “This indeed is the king.”

The assembly of gods – both Igigi and Anunnaki – collectively recognises Marduk as their king, and expresses their submission to him in four different ways. To remove any doubt that Marduk is indeed their ruler, his kingship is even stated explicitly. Now, on their own, these statements could simply be a fictional description of divine relations. But in the context of the speech following it, the ideology of empire becomes clear:

115 [u]l-tu U₄-mi at-ta lu za-ni-nu pa-rak-ki-ni

116 mim-mu-ú at-ta ta-qab-bu-ú i ni-pu-uš ni-i-ni

115 “From this day on, may you be the provider of our shrines;

116 Whatever you command, we shall do.”

In connection with their previous recognition of Marduk’s rulership, the gods invite him to provide for their shrines; in other words, the author makes not only the intangible gods subject to the god of Babylon, but also their tangible temples, as pars pro toto for the city, to the care of Babylon. This becomes even more apparent when Marduk states his intention to build Babylon as the seat of his kingship:

124 ku-um-mi lu-ud-da-a lu-kín šar-ru- ‘ti’

...

129 lu-[ub-bi-ma šum-šu^{uru}BAL.TI]L^{ki} É.MEŠ DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ

¹¹⁶ Lit. ‘to stroke their noses’ – a symbolic gesture of respect and submission.

124 I shall establish my shrine, and confirm my kingship.

...

129 I will call its name Babylon¹¹⁷, ‘House of the Great Gods’.

Kingship, temple, and city are thus inseparably connected, and moreover seated firmly in Babylon. Considering the concluding lines we have seen above, with the “father [repeating the text] to the son”, the literary reference of Marduk’s kingship over the shrines of other cities is embodied in the Babylonian (or Assyrian) suzerainty over most of the known world.

Conclusion

The cultural and historical background of *Enūma eliš* thus forms a complicated picture, without which a study of the text by itself – and in comparison with others – is a difficult enterprise. The key elements arising from the preceding discussion are the following. *Enūma eliš* was likely composed in the late second millennium BCE as an exaltation poem to Marduk, and arose explicitly in a Babylonian context, probably in response to the resurgent power of Babylon. Against this background, the text came to have an incredibly important role in the ritual calendar of the Babylonian – and later, the Assyrian – empire, where its message of unreserved praise to Marduk was explicitly connected with a political factor expressing the dominance of Babylon. Following the conquest of Babylon, the text was adopted by the rivalling Neo-Assyrian empire under Sennacherib to proclaim largely the same message as the original, only with the chief deity Marduk substituted by Aššur. Marduk regained his title as main deity of *Enūma eliš* under Esarhaddon, Sennacherib’s son, and never lost it until the fall of the Neo-Babylonian empire to the Persians. All these factors contribute to the outstanding position *Enūma eliš* takes in the literary corpus of the ancient

¹¹⁷ G only preserves the first two words and the very last one, and is here supplemented by E+ (Neo-Assyrian, from Nineveh). Because the text is Neo-Assyrian, it records the name of the city as Aššur, not as Babylon. We can reasonably infer that the Babylonian version would have read Babylon instead.

Near East: a text that is both clearly recognisable as a myth, and at the same time inextricably connected with a dimension of political ideology.

To this, we should certainly add that the presence of creation and chaos in the text on their own should not be considered the focus of the text. In other words, we would completely miss the point of the text in its Mesopotamian context if we understood it as merely a creation myth, or merely a *Chaoskampf* one. Creation and chaos feature as narrative excuses to express the actual purpose: narrating Babylonian supremacy through the rise of Marduk to the head of the pantheon. This is not to say that these elements are inconsequential, because they additionally serve as ideological markers to reinforce group identity. By presenting a specific counterintuitive model of the origin of the world through combat between supernatural entities, understanding the deities and monsters mentioned in the myth requires group-specific knowledge that marks membership to those who share the story. The ideological dimensions of the text thus operate through two channels: firstly, the straightforwardly-stated but metaphorically-intended rise of Marduk through the ranks; and secondly, the indirect necessity of being acculturated to the counterintuitive vocabulary of the text.

Erra and Išum¹¹⁸

The poem known as *Erra and Išum* (sometimes the *Erra Epic*) is one of the most remarkable texts from the late period of Akkadian composition. It stands out primarily because of its unusual challenge to the themes one would expect to find in Mesopotamian epic poetry. Virtually all of the texts we have discussed so far, particularly *Enūma elīš* and the Ninurta cycle, exalt violence and – more importantly – those heroes who commit it. Violence is the natural process through which the protagonists resolve conflict in these stories, and strength and bravery in battle are the virtuous qualities that mark their worthiness. Marduk's authority derives strongly from his ability to do combat (EE II.127-152), Ninurta outclasses Enlil

¹¹⁸ All translations mine unless otherwise noted.

because of his prowess in battle (*An-gim*), and both Enmerkar and Lugalbanda are war heroes on campaign with their armies. If adversity ever strikes, it is a temporary obstacle on the way to glory. These ideas, as we have seen, closely connect to the construction and maintenance of Mesopotamian imperial power. They helped reinforce royal ideology by presenting narratives that, in many ways, exemplified in their protagonists the idealised Mesopotamian king and his duty to protect his people – ‘civilised order’ – against threats – ‘disruptive chaos’. The *Erra and Išum* narrative is a remarkable text within this rather straightforward tradition, in that it presents a completely opposite situation. Instead of celebrating what in these myths is the stereotypically glorious outcome of battle, the author focuses on destruction and loss as the inevitable conclusion of violence.

Summary

The three main characters in *Erra and Išum* are Erra, the god of violent death and disorder;¹¹⁹ Išum, a fire deity, who serves as his attendant and close companion; and Marduk, here depicted as a somewhat naïve ruler who is nonetheless instrumental in maintaining the balance of the universe. The story, told mostly in several monologues over the course of five tablets (some more broken than others, leaving some ambiguity of interpretation), relates a power struggle between Erra and Marduk.

At the start of the tale, Erra is listless and prefers staying in bed over performing his proper duty. He is the leader of the Seven, a group of fearsome warrior gods, ordained by Anu to personify various forms of deadly disaster.¹²⁰ They encourage Erra to get up and go on campaign – i.e. to bring death and destruction to Mesopotamia – to prevent the natural

¹¹⁹ He is often considered the god of pestilence or plague, but as Roberts’ analysis (1971: 15) already shows, his primary association is probably not *with* disease although he is invoked *against* it.

¹²⁰ They are described in I.30-38 as terror, fire, wild animals, avalanche, storm, flood/destruction, and venom (Foster 2005: 882-883). Note again that none of the gods under his command are disease-related.

balance of the world from being upset and leading to overpopulation.¹²¹ Erra, concerned about being seen as a weakling, is roused by their speech and, despite Išum's pleas, sets out to Esagila, Marduk's temple in Babylon. There, he challenges Marduk's kingship, pointing out that his cult statue has become dull and should be repaired. Marduk, who mysteriously (perhaps omnisciently, as per Foster [2005:880]) knows Erra's motives, warns him that disaster befell the world when his statue last left Esagila. Moreover, the materials and craftsmen who made the statue are no longer available. Erra promises to provide them, and to guard the temple while Marduk and his statue are away. Somewhat puzzlingly, Marduk agrees.

As soon as Marduk leaves, all kinds of disaster ensue. Erra, however, prevents anyone from entering the building in which the repairs are taking place. The text is fragmentary at this crucial point, and the way in which Erra's control of Marduk is ended does not survive. However, it is clear that Marduk returns to Esagila, and that Erra is berated by the gods. In his anger, he vows revenge by laying everything to waste. He instructs Išum to prepare the Seven for their campaign against the gods for their refusal to recognise his importance. Išum once more begs him to reconsider, and in a long plea attempts to convince him that the mere threat of his campaign is enough to make the gods tremble in fear. Marduk joins him to affirm that Erra's power is supreme: each violent act – all falling under Erra's domain – leads to another in an endless cycle of destruction; because violence is everywhere, Erra's power is a fundamental force. On hearing this, Erra finally relents; in a bit of 'pseudo-prophecy' (see Dalley 2008: 315n52), he foretells the rise of an Akkadian to rule all the lands, then sets off to lay waste to Mount Šaršar.¹²² After his campaign, Erra acknowledges that he was wrong to

¹²¹ The author here probably engages with the Atrahasis epic – see n. 126 for a brief discussion on intertextuality.

¹²² The toponym is not attested in any other text, but possibly refers to the Sutaean (Cagni 1969: 33-34). The reading is uncertain, too.

rebel against Marduk, and returns to his temple, Emeslam, in Kutha. He then pronounces his blessing over Babylon and prophesies its leadership over the world. The text ends with an unusual shift to narration from the author himself, who emphasises the importance of Erra and of the story, and pronounces the text a prophylactic.

Place and date of composition

The prominent role of Babylon in the text suggests a Babylonian origin; indeed, its author, Kabti-ilāni-Marduk,¹²³ seems to have been a member of the prominent Babylonian Dābibi clan (Brinkman and Dalley 1988: 90).¹²⁴ This makes for a rather straightforward identification of Babylon as the place of composition, were it not for the portrayal of Marduk in the text; as Dalley (2008: 283) puts it, he appears a “disgruntled and senile god”.¹²⁵ The

¹²³ The poem itself is *attributed* to Kabti-ilāni-Marduk, whose name is mentioned in association with late-3rd millennium king Ibbi-Sîn in a Babylonian text (Van Dijk 1962: 44-45); however, the text is certainly not that old (see Frahm 2010: 7). It is, of course, possible that Kabti-ilani-Marduk was the actual name of the author, but that the two were not the same person. Foster (2005: 880) and George (2013: 47), agreeing broadly with an 8th-century date, suggest that the author drew on personal experience in his exposition of violence. This is plausible, given the frequency of civil war and rebellion in the Neo-Assyrian empire – particularly in Babylon, which rebelled against Assyrian rule on several occasions. Two particularly notable occasions are the rebellion of Marduk-ibla-iddina II (the Merodach-Baladan who sent Hezekiah get-well gifts in 2 Kings 20:12), which led to Babylon’s complete destruction under Sennacherib in 689 BCE; and the rebellion in alliance with Media that would lead to the fall of the Neo-Assyrian and the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire. If we are to find a historical character in a pseudonymous Kabti-ilani-Marduk, the 8th century rebellion under Marduk-ibla-iddina provides a more likely context, given that it ended in defeat – this would fit well with the final ‘prophecy’ of a resurgent Babylon that is laid low at the time of writing.

¹²⁴ Other members of the clan held high positions in the temples of Babylon and Uruk, suggesting that the author – if it was indeed this Kabti-ilani-Marduk – was well-connected in the upper echelons of Mesopotamian society.

¹²⁵ Though against this, Foster’s characterisation of Marduk as omniscient, mentioned above, may be raised. Unfortunately, the text is broken in crucial places that may shed further light on Marduk’s role in the story: as it

implicit denouncement of Marduk's kingship (and, by extension, the notion that Babylon can hold hegemony) might suggest that the epic is an Assyrian composition, meant to reject the frequent Babylonian revolts in addition to its more general theme of rejecting violence. If this were the case, however, it would mean that an Assyrian author used a real Babylonian person as his pseudonym, which is possible but seems unlikely. Furthermore, an Assyrian seeking to undermine the assumption that Marduk's kingship keeps the world in balance might be expected to shift the position to Aššur, instead of returning it to Marduk. Thus, the composition is unlikely to be Assyrian in origin. Still, the fact remains that *Erra and Išum* presents a pantheon far different from its usual glorious depiction, and that Kabti-ilāni-Marduk had no qualms about writing Marduk as a god looking on powerlessly as his world is ravaged by Erra's destruction. This exemplifies the freedom of creative expression that at least some scribes clearly had, probably more so than any other text we have discussed so far.

In terms of date, the earliest reasonably complete manuscripts are known from Neo-Assyrian Nineveh and date to the mid-7th century BCE (George 2013: 47). The estimates for the original composition range from the 11th to the 8th centuries BCE (Cagni 1969: 37-45; Von Soden 1971: 255-256 and 1987: 66-69). Von Soden in particular is unusually precise in dating the text to 765-763 BCE, based on IV.52-62 and its potential historical basis in the sack of Uruk by the Suteans (cf. Beaulieu 2000: 26; against this Cagni 1977: 79). Fragments of the text have been found at Sultantepe, giving a *terminus ante quem* of the second half of the 8th century BCE based on the stratigraphy of the site (Beaulieu 2000: 25). Furthermore, the epic is cited verbatim (In V.35) in an inscription of Marduk-apla-iddina II, suggesting that the text was popular enough by the time of his rule (722-710 BCE and 703-702 BCE) for it to be cited in a Babylonian royal inscription (see Frame 1995: 136). Smaller fragments, many of them diverging to some degree from their source text but still recognisably from the Epic,

stands, it is unclear whether Marduk truly was imagined as an aging, failing deity, or whether his characterisation was meant to reflect his guile in drawing out Erra's desire to be king and countering it.

have been found on amulets, meaning the explicit function of the text as a prophylactic, in its epilogue, was indeed adopted (Frahm 2010: 8).

Textual connections

The text demonstrates awareness of several other major Mesopotamian compositions; of these, the Akkadian (particularly the Old Babylonian) flood tradition is the most obvious referent. As in the Atrahasis epic, I.41 mentions the clamour of an overpopulated earth as a source of annoyance to the gods (see Dalley 2008: 313, n8).¹²⁶ In the Old Babylonian version of Atrahasis, drought and plague are temporary measures to reduce population (cf. later in *Erra and Išum* in Marduk's speech, I.131-138). The flood in Atrahasis is only a drastic, desperate measure; it is Enki who permanently resolves the problem, increasing human mortality by instating stillbirth, miscarriage, and, in the 26 missing lines, perhaps other forms of population control. The role of the Seven in *Erra and Išum* appears to be similar, given the reference to (human) noise and (animal) overpopulation (I.83-87); the only difference is that they are an established part of the narrative universe. The author may be envisioning a post-deluge world in which Erra and the Seven are tasked with keeping the population in check.¹²⁷ A further reference to the flood tradition is made when Marduk wistfully recalls the time he caused the *abubu*, a cataclysmic destruction, usually by water. While it is elsewhere a planned event resulting in massive flooding, in *Erra and Išum* it is caused by neglect, with Marduk leaving his temple. No texts are currently known portraying Marduk unleashing the *abubu* as a flood at all (Foster 2005: 887, n5), prompting the question why it is attributed to

¹²⁶ This same trope of course also features prominently in *Enūma eliš*, although it is used differently there: it is the gods – not humans – who make too much noise, and from the perspective of the narrator they are justified in doing so. In all three narratives, however, the trope serves as motivation for the plot to move forward.

¹²⁷ Dalley (2008: 313, n8) points out that in *Atrahasis*, it is Enlil who proposes to reduce human numbers initially, while Anu appoints the Seven to their duties in *Erra and Išum*. Furthermore, it is Ea (in *Atrahasis* called by his Sumerian name Enki) who proposes limits to human reproduction, while he only has a small role in *Erra and Išum*.

him here instead of to Enlil, who is usually responsible for it in his capacity as storm god. Given the absence of Enlil in *Erra and Išum* otherwise,¹²⁸ it is possible – given the 1st-millennium tendency to inflate the importance of Marduk or Aššur and to attribute storm god qualities to these deities – that Marduk is conflated with Enlil here (see Wang 2011). In any case, the flood here (*abubu*) is actually a drought, not a deluge.¹²⁹ It is possible that the author conflated the *abubu* of the flood tradition, an actual deluge of water, with the *abubu* that Marduk wields as one of his magical weapons in EE IV.49. Another possibility is that the word is meant to convey the word’s adjectival, figurative meaning here, as “the ultimate of wrath, aggressiveness, and destructiveness” (CAD A, 80, ‘abūbu 2’); indeed, Foster (2005: 887, n5) proposes that “‘Deluge’ may be used here metaphorically for ‘catastrophe’”.

Much more significant than its reference to flood literature, however, is the text’s connection with *Enūma eliš*. Although *Erra and Išum* does not directly cite *Enūma eliš*, the seemingly deliberate contrast between the major themes, and the broad similarities in style in both texts, hint at their close intertextual relationship (Frahm 2010: 7). It is this connection – to which we shall turn shortly – that marks the real importance of the text of *Erra and Išum* to our discussion. The connection between *Enūma eliš* and *Erra and Išum* was identified in some detail by Frahm (2010: 6-8), and discussed extensively by Wisnom (2014).¹³⁰ It is not my

¹²⁸ Except for his mention as Išum’s father in I.2.

¹²⁹ Although the word used for it there is not *abubu*, a drought occurs in *Atrahasis* II.i before the flood itself. In fact, the descriptions of the drought in both texts are virtually identical. In *Atrahasis*, food supplies are cut off, no rain falls, springs dry up, and farm yields drop (II.i). In *Erra and Išum*, heavenly bodies misalign, farm yields drop, springs dry up, food supplies are cut off, and nothing would grow (I.134-138).

¹³⁰ In addition to *Erra and Išum* and *Enūma eliš*, Wisnom discusses connections between these texts and the *Anzû* epic, which in form, narrative, and function resembles the Ninurta cycle discussed previously. Due to word limit constraints, *Anzû* could not be discussed here; however, her analysis of it reflects many of the themes discussed here and is worth consulting for her analysis of textual adaptation strategies in a cross-cultural Mesopotamian context.

intention here to retread the same ground entirely – particularly given Wisnom’s exhaustive commentary on literary and structural connections between the two epics – but rather to highlight some ways in which *Erra and Išum* functions as a countertext against the ideas of *Enūma eliš*. Frahm remarks briefly on these aspects of the former against the latter, although he frames them somewhat differently as genuine reflections of political reality: “*Erra* might have been composed to explain in mythological terms the chaos and destruction that had befallen Babylonia” (2010:7). In other words, in Frahm’s view *Erra and Išum* reframes the political situation of early-1st millennium Babylonia in mythological terms from the paradigm set up by *Enūma eliš*, which in its glorification of Babylon’s supreme power no longer accurately represented reality.

Analysis

The ironic force of *Erra and Išum* becomes apparent from its opening lines. As we have seen from the texts discussed previously, the beginning of the narrative is consistently used to set the scene for action. In *Enūma eliš*, Tiamat’s authority derives partly from her status as creatrix, and her fight with Marduk – arguably the crux of the narrative – is pre-empted by her partner Apsû’s struggle with Ea. Moreover, the direct reason for both struggles is caused by the overabundance of her offspring, an unavoidable result of Tiamat’s and Apsû’s sexual union narrated in ln I.5. *Anzû* similarly opens with praise for Ninurta, confirming from the outset his role in the story as the ultimate hero and to some degree spoiling his eventual victory. After this, the story immediately turns to informing us of the danger that *Anzû* forms to Ninurta and to civilisation, creating some degree of narrative tension without compromising this foregone conclusion of Ninurta’s victory. The setup in *Erra and Išum* is completely different: instead of the anticipation of conflict and violence, we meet the deity embodying these themes in bed, too lazy to get up. Not only does *Erra* not get the usual glorious introduction accorded to Marduk (EE I.79ff), Ea, and Ninurta, his characterisation in the prologue is profoundly negative. Part of this may be explained through the fact that *Erra*

was not nearly as prominent a deity in the Mesopotamian pantheon as the other protagonists,¹³¹ and as far as we know no major literary tradition of any kind was associated with him until the composition of *Erra and Išum*. (Furthermore, as a deity associated primarily with [disruptive] destructive power, it stands to reason that the majority of references to him in cuneiform texts would be on prophylactic amulets and in spells, warding against him.) The main reason for the nature of the prologue, however, lies in the broader nature of the text: in serving as a countertext to the heroic epic tradition of Mesopotamia, it subverts our expectations of how the narrative should develop. In setting up its protagonist as an anti-hero, the story develops to utilise familiar tropes of the heroic epic genre ironically: Erra *should* be a hero like Ninurta, a champion of the gods like Marduk, vanquisher of everything threatening civilised order like Ea. Instead, he rejects his heroic calling by staying in bed, undermines the divine order by dethroning Marduk, and *becomes* a danger to civilised order – first by being an ineffective ruler, and then by threatening to fight the gods.

Erra subverts Marduk's character in several ways throughout the text. Erra's affiliation with the Seven, described as born to Anu and the earth in I.28-29, brings to mind the extensive arsenal of spells and weapons available to Marduk for his fight against Tiamat in *Enūma eliš*. Some of them –terror (*melammu*), storm (*imḥullu*), and flood (*abūbu*) – are virtually identical to the powers that Marduk wields there. Of course, in Marduk's case, they form an essential part of his victory over chaos and grant him the authority to set up Babylon as the centre of

¹³¹ Erra was originally a Semitic deity, whose domain naturally associated him with the Sumerian Nergal, the god of (violent) death. Their syncretism is attested from the Old Akkadian Period (24th-23rd centuries BCE) onwards (Lambert 1973), from which point they are worshipped in the same temple, the Emeslam in Kutha. Cults for Nergal (but not Erra) are known from many major Sumerian cities, including Dilbat, Isin, Larsa, Nippur, Ur, and Uruk (DDD, 'Nergal'). Outside of *Erra and Išum*, Erra is referenced relatively rarely, but appears somewhat frequently in omen texts; his name is also occasionally substituted for Nergal's (e.g. in *Nergal and Ereškigal* iv.7-9). He also appears as a separate deity in a Sumerian hymn to Nergal (ETCSL 4.15.2, ln 36).

civilisation. Erra, on the other hand, leads the Seven as purely destructive forces. Even within the story, they are characterised in negative ways: “Whoever sees them is numbed with fear; their breath is death” (I.25-26). In the epilogue, in which the writer turns to his audience and departs from the main narrative, this is re-emphasised: “The house in which this tablet is placed, *though Erra be angry and the Seven be murderous*, the sword of pestilence shall not approach it” (IV.57-58). Thus, Erra and the Seven themselves in *Erra and Išum* can be seen from the start as embodying the chaos that Marduk fought to defeat in *Enūma eliš* – which nearly comes true in the course of the narrative, only to be averted by intervention of the other gods. Given the eventual resolution of the situation, Dalley’s assessment of Marduk’s role in *Erra and Išum* is probably too negative, though Foster’s – “remote and all-wise” (2005: 880) – does not quite capture his passivity. According to the latter, Marduk fully understands the situation, but decides not to prevent Erra from carrying out his plan.

The opposition between Marduk and Erra becomes clear from the roles they fulfil in the story, too. As in *Enūma eliš*, Marduk governs to maintain stability by consent of the divine council. The same essential story is told in *Erra and Išum*, in that a powerful entity threatens this stability and is ultimately defeated by the gods working together. Of course, Erra *is* the threatening entity here, parallel to Tiamat in terms of his role in the story, although it is his domain of violent death itself that leads to the central conflict: he confronts Marduk with the lack of violence taking place in the world in I.120ff (Foster 2005: 886). Marduk, referring back to the destruction of most of humankind in the flood,¹³² rhetorically asks Erra if he should finish the job that he started, reminding him how awful that decision had been in the first place. Erra does not reply to this point in the text, and instead Marduk continues his line

¹³² In other flood narratives, Enlil is responsible for the actual plan; here, Marduk takes responsibility for it despite his absence in extant flood myths. It is possible that the reference here results from the syncretism between Marduk and Enlil in later periods (as mentioned above; see Wang 2011), or that Kabti-ilani-Marduk had access to a version of Atrahasis or other flood myths in which Marduk took the role of Enlil.

of questioning, asking whether Erra is even able to carry out the tasks required of the divine king. Erra, in return, details the ways in which he will safeguard civilisation, in a speech reminiscent of Marduk's 'testing' by the divine council in Tablet IV of *Enūma eliš*. Erra's failure to fulfil his duties directly afterwards, as Marduk leaves the temple and Erra takes his place, can be explained either by his inability or by his unwillingness to act. Again, the question is whether Marduk had anticipated this and allows Erra to fail spectacularly to teach him a lesson, or whether Marduk was genuinely foolish enough to believe Erra. The latter possibility is an interesting one, since deceitful main characters rarely feature in Mesopotamian myth; in this case, because Erra often describes his own actions and the story is told mostly from his perspective, we can even wonder whether the author experimented with an unreliable narrator here. Marduk's anticipation¹³³ brings us back somewhat more in the direction of the usual Mesopotamian ideology of order, since it suggests that Erra failing to maintain order to teach him a lesson never genuinely threatens civilisation. This reading is also supported by Ištar's speech to the assembly of the gods in II.21'-23':

Do not debate noble Marduk's words, do not pl[ead]

Until the days are drawn to a close, the [appointed time] passed,

The word Marduk speaks is like a mountain [...], he does not change (it)...

Despite the gap of about 5 lines, where Ištar could conceivably qualify her statement, the suggestion is here that Marduk is the king of the gods and that his decision is final and trustworthy. Thus, even when Erra mostly narrates his side of the story, we occasionally step outside of his view and follow events happening elsewhere; and, free from his biased narration, we return to the usual mythical form where his threat to order is clear. At the same time, however, the inefficiency of Marduk's kingship is clear and possibly even conceded by Marduk himself in IV.36-44. Furthermore, Erra's power over the gods becomes apparent in

¹³³ Or omniscience, as mentioned above (Foster 2005: 880).

Marduk's remarks on the destruction of Sippar, Uruk, and Parsa (Dur-Kurigalzu) – apparently undermining the significant power of their deities Shamash, Anu and Ištar, and Enlil.¹³⁴ Thus, the question is whether Marduk, if he wanted to, *could* stop Erra: it is only through Išum's intervention by sweet-talking his master that total ruin is averted. The possibility that Erra would be more powerful than Marduk in such a situation of course goes directly against the ideology that *Enūma eliš* espouses, since Marduk is the undisputed ruler of the world and guardian of global order there. The author here seems to express the contrary opinion that violence like civil war can be more powerful, unless it is redirected to target other people.

Commentators agree that Kabti-ilani-Marduk refers to his contemporary situation in the story (e.g. George 2013: 47; Foster 2005: 800). As mentioned already, disaster strikes as soon as Erra takes the throne and Marduk's statue leaves for repairs, and it seems clear that the author intended this part of the story to reflect a historical reality. Specifically, given the time of composition, it most likely refers to Babylon's political situation under the Assyrian empire, although it is more difficult to identify precisely which period the author had in mind. The impression given by the text is that Marduk, as inefficient ruler, was responsible for a long period of Babylonian decay (Marduk's *laissez-faire* kingship), followed by a period of violence and destruction (Erra's kingship), and finally a promise for a Babylonian resurgence (Marduk's return). George (2013: 47) identifies the background of the story as beginning “with the Aramaean incursions of the eleventh century and [continuing] to the eighth century.” This seems like the only possibility given the likely range for its composition date,

¹³⁴ Dur-Kurigalzu ('Fortress of Kurigalzu') was a city founded on the site of the town of Parsa by Kassite king Kurigalzu I (Clayden 1996: 112); exactly why the author uses the pre-expansion name of the city is not clear. Given the absence of Enlil in the story otherwise, it comes as no surprise that he is not mentioned here either; however, it is not quite clear why the city is invoked here. Perhaps Dur-Kurigalzu, as a major Kassite-founded city, was a paradigmatic example for the decline of Babylonian power.

which must be before Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon (689 BCE) – otherwise a prime candidate to be represented in the story as the period of Erra's kingship – since Marduk-apla-iddina II cites the text in the late-8th century. Thus, even though the worst for Babylon was yet to come, the text ultimately expresses a message of hope: although civil war and foreign incursion had ravaged the country, the “scattered people of Akkad [i.e. Babylonia?]” will once more rise to power and Babylon shall rule (V.24-38).¹³⁵ Remarkably, even in the resolution of the conflict, it is not Marduk's power that ends Erra's threat to civilisation, but Išum's rhetoric. In fact, Marduk more or less fades away in the tail end of the narrative, as though his retaking the throne is sufficient. The compromise between the two gods is that Erra will redirect his power elsewhere – namely to foreign peoples – and specifically towards the Suteans, with whom the author perhaps refers to the invading Aramaeans.

Narratively speaking, the author plays cleverly with the roles of characters; as Foster (2005: 880) puts it, the text is notable for its “willingness by its author to experiment,” representing a departure from more established forms of Mesopotamian composition. Contributing particularly to the ironic force of the text is the unusual relationship between narrator, protagonist, and antagonist. The usual formula represented in hymns of praise to Mesopotamian deities begins by addressing the main character through various epithets and positive descriptions of the deity's power.¹³⁶ These stock phrases are subverted in *Erra and Išum* – where they are present in I.1-5 – because they refer to Išum despite the vast majority of the action focusing on Erra's actions. Erra himself only ever sings his own praises (e.g. I.109ff), and while the narrator and Išum acknowledge Erra's destructive power, the assessment is never an explicitly positive one. Erra thus functions in many ways as the text's

¹³⁵ The similarity between this sections and biblical prophecies regarding the scattered people of Israel and the rise of Jerusalem as capital under Yahweh should be noted here, but falls outside the scope of the current research.

¹³⁶ See, for example, ETCSL 4.06.1, a hymn to Һendursaĝa, with whom Išum is syncretised here.

antagonist – in that his role in the narrative is to break down the established order – although the focus is primarily on him. The reader, meanwhile, is asked by the form of narration (specifically, because the story is told mostly from Erra’s perspective) to identify with Erra’s goal of destabilising Marduk’s rule, although this goes directly against the expected narrative development. Išum – introduced with the aforementioned lines of praise – similarly does not conform to his expected role. Against his glorious introduction, he is completely subservient to Erra’s whims. He makes a token attempt to restrain his master’s plan in I.100-103 but is quickly put in his place by Erra: “Keep quiet, Išum, listen to what I say” (I.106). In that sense, he can be seen to serve as a stand-in for the audience, faced with a main character setting out on a campaign of destruction and disruption, helplessly looking on as the story spirals out of control towards complete chaos. He is, like the audience, powerless to do anything, as he is – and we are – dragged along mercilessly by the plot that creeps ever closer to the antithesis of the desired outcome.

A final point to note about the framing of the narrative is the fact that the author himself announces both his name and his purpose for the story. Scribes being named as authors or compilers is not an unknown feature in Mesopotamian texts – see, for instance, the elaborate acrostic in the *Babylonian Theodicy*, or the colophons appended to Neo-Assyrian texts in Ashurbanipal’s collection at Nineveh – but they rarely form part of the narrative itself. Even in *Enūma elīš*, which features a similar direct instructive speech to the audience at the end, the author is not named. In *Erra and Išum*, it looks to serve as a way to make the narrative more personal. On the one hand, this has the effect of framing the story explicitly outside the accepted canon: it is the author’s take on a myth that subverts some of the standard rules of Mesopotamian mythopoeia. On the other, it emphasises that the message of the story should be taken seriously. The author puts his name on the line and identifies himself extensively (by clan and location) – a Mesopotamian version, perhaps, of the ‘I am x and I approve of this message’ in modern political advertising.

In summary, the analysis here takes a somewhat different approach from Frahm's analysis, which reads *Erra and Išum* essentially as an etiological commentary on (probably) the Assyrian subjugation of Babylon. The impression raised by Frahm is that the author of *Erra and Išum* operated primarily within an authoritative religious paradigm, which shaped the narrative within its constraints. My suggestion is that, conversely, *Erra and Išum* may have been written not to *explain* but to *reflect*. This difference is subtle but important: the suggestion raised in Frahm's analysis is that Kabti-ilani-Marduk was faced with a crisis of faith. The god after whom he was named was no longer the supreme ruler of the universe, his city reduced to a tributary of the Assyrian empire. Within his religious paradigm, he wrote a text to explain why this situation was allowed to happen: Marduk was still king, but his absence – precipitated by divine destructive forces but still operating within Marduk's plan – temporarily inhibited Babylon's supremacy.¹³⁷ My suggestion is that these religious themes originated not in Kabti-ilani-Marduk's faith, but in his literary creativity. In other words: if his theology had been strictly normative, it seems unlikely that it would allow a description of Marduk as an ineffective, aging ruler tricked into surrendering power – or, really, as anything other than his description in *Enūma eliš*. The fact that this description was not only accepted but became part of literary canon in later generations (including the citations from the text on elite-produced amulets and royal inscriptions, as mentioned above) suggests that theological normativity was not a concern. Because the crux of the text appears to be a temporary suspension of Marduk's authority with the promise of his future resurgence – as evident from the epilogue – the text is closer to a political text using theological language than a theological text. Of course, we can see the text as a theological one because of the theological statements contained in it, but the extent to which these statements are normative seems

¹³⁷ This theme might reflect the biblical penchant for writing Yahweh as allowing destruction to come to Israel and Judah, although of course the biblical writers usually link it to human disobedience rather than divine politics.

limited to the narrative requirements of the story. In other words: the theology of *Erra and Išum* is shaped by the constraints of the story – not the other way around. Marduk is an ineffective ruler in the story not because Kabti-ilani-Marduk believed that he was, or because he was eternally, theologically, supposed to be one, but because this description reflected political reality. Seen this way, the text functions as a countertext in that it rejects the ideology resulting from the text of *Enūma eliš*, while its theology is incidental to its author's requirements within his contemporary political paradigm. Furthermore, and with the risk of stating the obvious, we have in *Erra and Išum* most probably the clearest example of a text that cannot have been a pious recording of an ancient mythical tradition. In questioning the efficacy of Marduk's kingship through a variety of sophisticated literary techniques, recording the author's name, and engaging with the contemporary political situation, the text both clearly contradicts a hypothetical normative theology of Marduk at the time of writing, and also presents an original composition that, as far as we can tell, was not based on a pre-existing narrative beyond adapting *Enūma eliš*.

Part 3: Biblical Creation Myths

Comparison, adaptation, and parody

So far, our focus has been almost exclusively on what could be called a semantic analysis of myth in both senses of the word: “how do we define myth?” on the one hand, through our discussion of evolutionary anthropological theory; and “in what way does it facilitate group cohesion?” on the other, through our discussion of case studies from the ancient Near East. We have seen a broad range of examples to address both questions, starting deliberately with some of the earliest available evidence of creation and chaos narratives. Moreover, the extensive case study of *Enūma elīš* and its antecedent *Erra and Išum* has shown that myth, especially national myth, can be seen to function in an ideological way both directly and indirectly. Let us then return to the other major question with which this thesis started: is it possible to use these insights from evolutionary anthropology and psychology, and from Assyriology and archaeology, to shed more light on the form and function of the biblical text of Genesis 1-11?¹³⁸ Perhaps we should ask a different question in light of the text we just discussed, which is: how can *Enūma elīš* and the Mesopotamian tradition from which developed help us understand Genesis? There are, of course, virtually unlimited approaches to this question, and for the present purpose it seems most helpful to further narrow our scope: sticking with the question of ideological motive behind textual composition, we are dealing with a case study that crosses cultural boundaries. The Mesopotamian examples we discussed above – between Assyria and Babylon, and between various Sumerian cities – transgressed specific *political* expectations in shifting around various counterintuitive concepts: Ninurta’s prominence over Enlil fit intuitively into the world view of Nippur and

¹³⁸ All biblical citations use BHQ where available (i.e. Genesis), and BHS otherwise; all English translations are my own, based mostly on HALOT and secondary literature (cited where relevant).

Larsa. Marduk's kingship in *Enūma eliš* even fit into the Assyrian world view, even though Aššur was the king of their pantheon. In other words: the Mesopotamian adaptations between groups were unexpected because they upset certain established political ideas, not because any cognitively counterintuitive concepts were presented. Now that we turn to the adaptive strategy of the biblical material, we are faced with a particular group – the exiled elite of Jerusalem – adopting narratives, centred on deities possessing qualities that would likely have been counterintuitive to them, from a different group. In a way, the uniqueness of the biblical material *precedes* the adoption of the Mesopotamian material, which brought the Judahite biblical conception of Yahweh closer to the Mesopotamian conception of the supernatural.¹³⁹ In other words: in the adoption by the elite of texts from a different group, the question of biblical adaptation from Mesopotamian narrative requires a transcultural adaptation. Specifically, this means that the biblical material transforms counterintuitive concepts specific to one group – i.e. specific ways in which Mesopotamian deities break cognitive template expectations – into concepts intuitive or minimally counterintuitive to the biblical authors. To address this phenomenon, we must first engage with some additional theory on adaptation and parody.

Adaptation, parody, and literary criticism

The primary theoretical treatment of adaptation is Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2013). Through an extensive study of adaptation in its divergent forms, she arrives at a

¹³⁹ Taking into account, of course, that even the pre-Mesopotamian stratum of biblical material had already been influenced in many ways by the common North-West Semitic (NWS) concept of the supernatural – particularly the concept of Ba^llu/Haddu. This is not to say that this stratum contained no unique elements, only that with our limited understanding of NWS religion beyond Ugarit (and, frankly, even *in* Ugarit) it is difficult to determine the extent of material that represented a Judahite innovation versus material that was adopted, adapted, or otherwise inherited from previous conceptions of the supernatural. See Smith (2002) for the currently authoritative discussion on the background of the character of Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible; particularly the first three chapters for his discussion on methodological and evidential limitations.

coherent theory that understands adaptation in various forms. Her theory of adaptation depends not so much on ideas of proximity to or distance from its precursor,¹⁴⁰ but on what adaptation, in its most basic sense, really is. Fundamentally, adaptation according to Hutcheon consists of three principles.

First of all, as “a formal entity or product,” it should be seen as “an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works.” (Hutcheon 2013: 7). The transposition from precursor to adaptation can be virtually anything: a medium shift (such as book to film), genre shift (drama to comedy), or change in perspective (a different protagonist, for example) all qualify as transpositions that indicate an adaptation. The adapted work thus retains a certain number of elements from its precursor, but at the same time modifies some of them. Consider, for example, the afterlife of one of Shakespeare’s most famous tragedies, *Romeo and Juliet* (following examples from Hutcheon 2013). Baz Luhrmann’s film adaptation *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) retains largely Shakespeare’s dialogue, but shifts medium from stage play to film, and setting from Renaissance Italy to 1950s America. Leonard Bernstein’s musical *West Side Story* (1957) retains only the structure and most of the plot of the play, but shifts in focus from personal tragedy to a critical evaluation of broader societal issues. The adapter thus makes a conscious decision to modify the precursor in a particular way, and uses it – for a number of possible reasons – to tell a different story.

Secondly, adaptation as an act is “a process of creation” that involves original composition as well as the reuse of existing ideas, themes, and forms (Hutcheon 2013: 8). Though we can discuss questions of proximity – sometimes known as *fidelity criticism* (see McFarlane [1996: 194]) – adaptations should be seen as inherently creative: though it makes use of (part of) its

¹⁴⁰ This is in contrast with Andrew (1980), Wagner (1975), or Klein and Parker (1981), cited in Hutcheon (2013), who extensively discuss various forms of derivation: borrowing, intersection, transformation, and so on. I follow Kynes (2011) in avoiding the term ‘original’ or ‘target’ to avoid the connotations inherent in using them; ‘precursor’ emphasises the diachronicity of the phenomenon of adaptation.

precursor, an adaptation provides an alternative angle, a different kind of characterisation – something that is both familiar and at the same time novel. The adapter plays a personal role in this, since “the adapter is an interpreter before becoming a creator” (Hutcheon 2013: 84). Intentionality is thus a key component in the creativity of the adaptive process, and the interpretive choices made by the adapter reflect on the adaptation. Looking at our earlier example, recasting the focus of *Romeo and Juliet* in *West Side Story* provides an excellent example of the creative action of the adapter. By using Shakespeare’s play as inspiration, Bernstein completely reworks the force of the narrative, and imposes his own creative ideas – in this case, to address societal issues through this particular story – on the existing text. Thirdly, adaptations function as “palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation”; in other words, the adapted product is strongly intertextual with its precursor, but the hermeneutics of that intertextuality depend largely on our own positionality (Hutcheon 2013: 8). To illustrate this idea, consider Richard Matheson’s *I Am Legend* (1954). It tells the story of the last man on earth, Robert Neville, whose fight against vampire-like infected humans results in his eventual capture. He is executed for having killed scores of the creatures, and shortly before his death realises that he has become the bogeyman in stories parents tell their children, explaining the title: he has, literally, become legend. Francis Lawrence’s 2007 film adaptation makes many changes that, in the intertextual dynamic between precursor and adaptation, require resolution. Minor alterations include changing Robert Neville from the blond, blue-eyed protagonist of German descent in Matheson’s novel, to Will Smith’s African-American hero in the film adaptation.¹⁴¹ A far more radical change is the entire structure of the ending: in the film, Neville sacrifices himself to let two others escape with a cure for the affliction plaguing humanity. His ‘legend’ is thus recast completely: as opposed to the infected humans in the

¹⁴¹ For a more extensive discussion of the portrayal of race in science fiction – written before the film adaptation of *I Am Legend* was released – see Nama (2008), esp. ch. 5 and 6.

book telling the ‘horror story’ of Neville as a monster, humanity is presumed cured in the aftermath of the film, and his legend casts him as a saviour. With knowledge of both versions the reader is forced to resolve the interpretive conflict, and the story of *I Am Legend* ceases to be uniquely, exclusively, or primarily either book or film. Instead, the narrative becomes the palimpsest that is a mixture of both, and re-readings or re-viewings might shift our preference in favour of one version. More importantly, this suggests that the precursor to an adaptation is not necessarily authoritative; similar to viewing the author as a creative agent, the palimpsestic nature of the narrative generates new readings through the interpretive process and the interaction between adaptation and precursor.

As it stands, Hutcheon’s theoretical framework provides a number of useful insights into the phenomenon of adaptation. Certainly, the notion that adaptations are creative works in their own right should appeal to those who insist on the originality of the biblical texts; even if it proves possible to show a direct dependence on Mesopotamian literature and/or culture, the creativity of the authors of the Hebrew Bible plays an important role in the adaptive process. This idea furthermore makes it more likely to identify ways in which the biblical text presents novel ideas: if we were to dismiss it only as derivative and uncreative, we might too easily ignore the unique aspects of the biblical narrative. More significant for the current thesis, however, is the nature of adaptation as a palimpsestic narrative. Because the creativity of adaptation is likely to lead to disagreements between texts, that conflict, and a number of related issues, needs to be resolved. It raises questions regarding authorial intent – which will be discussed in more detail below – and regarding the relationship between precursor and adaptation. The implication is here that an adaptation can be read as a commentary upon its precursor, which provides a natural way into a discussion of political and ideological motivations. Furthermore, as we saw in the previous chapter, the function of myth within society predicts an ideological current to run in myths: the fact that adaptation promotes a

dissemination of ideological motives thus catalyses the situation. In other words: if myth is inherently ideological, an adapted myth will express that ideology even more strongly.

Any mention of ‘reactive’, of course, will likely bring to mind a specific kind of adaptation: parody. Coincidentally, Linda Hutcheon also wrote the primary work on parody as a phenomenon; *A Theory of Parody* (2000). While most standard definitions of parody focus on the humoristic or ridiculing aspect that apparently characterise it,¹⁴² Hutcheon deliberately avoids using only this characterisation in her definition.¹⁴³ The primary element in parody is its reactive nature: the essence of parody is contained in its response to, or imitation of, another text or work (Kynes 2011: 280). Important to these antithetical allusions – to borrow Will Kynes’ terminology (2011: 291) – is that neither humour nor antipathy or subversion are necessarily present in the parody (Hutcheon 1991: 226). Citing Aristophanes’ *The Frogs* as an example, Fred Householder shows that the Athenian playwright’s attitude towards Euripides (whose form he imitated in this play) was not negative – as the common definition of parody would suggest – but rather respectful (1944: 6). In other words, the parody can be antithetical to something else than to its precursor. Alexander Pope’s *Dunciad*, for example, targets contemporary English society in the guise of classical Graeco-Roman epic poetry; although the poem borrows its name from Homeric epic, and in the first edition imitates the opening lines of Virgil’s *Aeneid*,¹⁴⁴ classical tradition is not the target here. Rather, that familiar form is used as a vehicle through which other targets are reached. Hutcheon similarly

¹⁴² OED (2015: ‘Parody’) defines it as follows: “A composition ... in which the characteristic turns of thought and phrase in an author ... are imitated in such a way as to make them appear ridiculous, especially by applying them to ludicrously inappropriate subjects”; See also Markiewicz (1967: 1265).

¹⁴³ Although her discussion focuses mainly on (post-)modern, 20th century art, she uses “examples from other periods to show that there are common denominators to all definitions of parody in all ages” (Hutcheon 2000: 10).

¹⁴⁴ The first line in the first edition read, “Books and the man I sing” to reflect the opening line of the *Aeneid*, “Arma virumque cano”.

cites Shakespearean parodies in *Punch* magazine, arguing that familiar texts can be used to “add to the initial impact and to reinforce the ironic contrast” (2000: 58).

Along the lines of her theory of adaptation, Hutcheon connects intertextuality and authorial intent in the case of parody, when she “underlines the necessary postulating of both inferred encoded intent and decoder recognition in order for the parody ... to even exist as such” (2000: 52). This connection is recognised too by Kynes, who applies Hutcheon’s theory specifically to the Hebrew Bible, and thus provides a useful paradigm on which to base the current discussion. Kynes identifies four forms of parody, divided depending on whether the authority of the text¹⁴⁵ lies with precursor or with its adaptation (2011: 292). If authority lies with the parody, it can be humorous and *ridicule* its precursor; or be serious and *reject* it. If the authority lies with the precursor, the parody can be humorous and *respect* its precursor, or serious and *reaffirm* it. Kynes goes on to analyse convincingly four sections of the Hebrew Bible – from Song of Songs, Psalms, Jonah, and Job – according to these four forms. In his conclusion, he summarises his understanding of parody thus,

The vital hermeneutical question which this paradigm highlights is not whether a text is ... humorous or ... serious ..., but whether ... the parody is asserting its authority over an earlier text, or ... the precursor is being appealed to as an authority itself. (Kynes 2011: 310).

In other words, if we are to apply this understanding of parody to the Hebrew Bible more broadly, including (pseudo-)historiographical and mythical parts of it, the primary question should be in what way precursor and adaptation are related, and, in our specific case, how the adaptation treats the ideological content of the precursor. This in turn helps us understand the

¹⁴⁵ ‘Authority’ refers to the text with which the reader is supposed to take side; as Kynes puts it, “parodies may be intended to ridicule their precursors by subverting their authority, but this is not necessarily the case” (2011: 292). In the case of a text being used as a weapon against another target, as in the case of Pope’s *Dunciad* or Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, the authority lies with the precursor.

nature of the biblical text as an adaptation, and thus provides us with further insight into its ideological nature in terms of how the text may have been used for group identity marking purposes.

Lest we assume that a connection between Genesis and *Enūma eliš* is self-evident, it ought to be established that this understanding is warranted. This means that some form of direct derivation or adaptation must be identified from the precursor – *Enūma eliš* – to its adaptation – Genesis. Applying Hutcheon’s theory to a comparative analysis of ancient literature requires that a direct influence can be established in the first place. This might be relatively straightforward for contemporary work, but – as the enormous quantity of monographs and articles on the topic shows – it can be incredibly difficult for the ancient world. As a result, a number of related questions must be answered first: can a plausible transmission method be shown? If not, are the structural, narrative, and functional similarities strong enough to warrant a comparison based on derivation?

Genesis 1:1-2:4a: a Judahite-Babylonian text?

Whereas *Enūma eliš* provides the rare example of an almost-complete text with a well-defined cultural context – not to mention an extensive array of variants and commentaries – the case of Genesis 1:1-2:4a forms a rather less certain compositional context and background. And though the sheer amount of monographs and articles on Genesis might suggest otherwise, much more is known about the origin and use of *Enūma eliš* than about that of the biblical text. The unfortunate reality is that, until several centuries after its probable composition date, no textual or otherwise physical evidence attests to Genesis in any way. Before considering some recent approaches to the date of Gen 1, it should be reemphasised from the outset that the actual date of composition of the text is largely irrelevant within the ideological paradigm established through our discussion of MCI theory. The point of considering related texts in terms of counterintuitive proximity or distance, conceptual alignment or divergence, and ideological content is that the only crucial thing that

needs to be established is a *connection*. For our purposes, it matters relatively little whether Gen 1 was written during the heyday of the Neo-Assyrian empire in the 9th century BCE, or even as late as the Hellenistic period. The ideology of a myth that was composed as an adaptation of an earlier text can function as a response (and, in that response, function as normative for its audience) as long as its audience understands the references. With that understanding, the parts of the Pentateuch adapted from elsewhere can really have been composed at any reasonable point. Mesopotamia loomed large as the proverbial bogeyman in the Eastern Mediterranean really at any point after the Bronze Age Collapse of the 12th century BCE (Cline 2014). The only requirement for Gen 1 to be an effective response to *Enūma eliš* is that it was composed and distributed at a time when its audience would have known about *Enūma eliš*. Thus, really any point between the early monarchic period and shortly after the end of the Exile would provide a plausible timeframe for the adaptation to function as an ideological response to its precursor.

This is convenient but crucial to our discussion, since even a widely accepted theory such as the Documentary Hypothesis comes at best with significant caveats, and at worst contains insurmountable problems.¹⁴⁶ Dating Gen 1 or the book of Genesis more broadly on internal

¹⁴⁶ Rendtorff (1977; English translation: 1990) provides the most comprehensive critique of the Documentary Hypothesis (DH) as a means of explaining the source history of the Pentateuch. His main point of contention is that understanding sections of the Pentateuch based on their supposed authorship from a particular background (with associated theological, cultural, and ideological baggage) presupposes a) the existence of those discrete and identifiable traditions in the first place; and b) that those various sections taken together form a coherent literary unity (1990: 41). Blenkinsopp (1985) similarly questioned the usefulness of the DH in understanding the Hebrew Bible. In his view, echoing Rendtorff's point a) above, the DH is essentially circular reasoning because we have no way of establishing authorial traditions external to the text. Thus, the mere fact of similarity in what may be an arbitrary feature of the text (e.g. religious legalism as ascribed to P) leads to a grouping of texts under that heading, although they may have these features for reasons other than authorial preoccupation. Whybray (1987) similarly criticised the notion that particular authorial characteristics can be identified in source-critical

criteria, too, has its problems. For example, Rendsburg (1987) applies a structural analysis to the book of Genesis, arguing for its overall integrity (thus including Gen 1), and arriving at a Davidic-Solomonic date for the entire book on the basis of its “epic quality” (p. 116) and its broadly accurate historical situation (p. 113). As Brettler points out (1987: 118), neither of these arguments are convincing; they are borne out of sweeping interpretations of the book that fail to do justice to the complexities of the text. A more carefully-stated position is that of Hendel and Joosten (2018), who base their dating on the characteristics of the linguistic features of early Hebrew versus late texts (and also on other criteria including external texts, but primarily linguistic ones; see pp. 98-99). Genesis 1 is included in what they term Classical Biblical Hebrew (CBH), which they identify as the oldest strand of biblical Hebrew; as a result, they arrive at a broad dating for the Pentateuch somewhere before the exile. While their discussion on the typology of Hebrew is valuable (though somewhat beyond the scope of this thesis), a key issue of Hendel and Joosten’s analysis for our purposes is the relative dating of texts that results from it. In their study, three broad periods of biblical Hebrew are identified: Classical, Transitional, and Late Biblical Hebrew (CBH, TBH, LBH). The latter is

strands, appealing (like Blenkinsopp) to the circular nature of the argument. In particular, Whybray rejected the notion that consistency was necessarily a key feature of the biblical authors’ approach to composing the biblical texts (insofar as these authors could be identified in the first place). Tigay (1975) raised similar objections, pointing particularly at the subjective and non-empirical nature of source criticism at the time.

Various modified models of the DH have since been championed despite these valid criticisms. Friedman (1997) continues in essentially the same vein as his predecessors, and carefully states his source divisions in an attempt to pre-empt the Whybray/Blenkinsopp/Tigay line of criticism. Another solution to the pitfalls of the DH is the Supplementary Hypothesis (SH), championed initially by Van Seters (1992; 1999). Broadly taken, the SH understands the various sources as resulting from successive edits, rather than an editor (or editors) working on the major sources at the same time. Thus, the DH might understand the JE(P) sources to be edited and supplemented by D, but to be originally separate and complete constituent parts. The SH, conversely, (apart from rejecting the existence of E) understands J as the exilic result of edits and supplements in response to the original D, which P then edits in the Persian period to respond to the changed circumstances.

most easily defined relative to the other two on the basis of available manuscript evidence – primarily that from Qumran – and represents the latest stages of biblical Hebrew around the time of the transition into rabbinic Hebrew (when the language essentially fossilises as it is phased out in everyday speech and replaced definitively by Aramaic and Greek). In contrast, CBH is the earliest strand, represented in external textual evidence by inscriptions (e.g. the Judahite *lmlk* shards, the Lachish letters, and fragmentary First Temple-period epigraphy). While it is clear that CBH represents a chronolect that finds its origins in the pre-exilic period, the assertion that “the CBH corpus and the inscriptions are co-eval” (2018: 71) is less self-evident on the basis of the presented evidence. If, for example, the language of the Lachish ostraca is typical of CBH, and “[it] is implausible that this type of language would suddenly disappear immediately afterward” (2018: 71), this suggests by Hendel and Joosten’s own reasoning that biblical Hebrew was not yet in transition mere years before the exile – the Lachish letters were most likely written between 589 and 587 BCE (Bridge 2010: 520). Thus, dating the end of CBH to 600 BCE (Hendel and Joosten 2018: 72) – and thus, the Pentateuch to the pre-exilic period – does not appear to be consistent with the evidence raised by Hendel and Joosten themselves. Another objection to this approach to textual dating can be raised from a scribal-cultural perspective, particularly the significant skill in archaising (with the aim of making a new text sound old) demonstrated in Mesopotamia and Egypt (Frahm 2010; Van der Toorn 2019). As such, little certainty surrounding the dating of the Pentateuch (and specifically Gen 1) can be given, other than that it looks older than Persian-era texts.¹⁴⁷

Similar pitfalls are encountered even in such foundational works as Wellhausen’s and, to a greater extent, Gunkel’s commentaries on Genesis, both of whom rely on a notion of detectable primitivity of writing, which they assumed to have derived from the text’s origins

¹⁴⁷ It should be noted that Hendel and Joosten acknowledge that individual texts have to be considered “on their own merits” (2018: 56), which may mean a section could be dated to a different time than the overarching text in which it is contained; as such it is unfortunate for our purposes that they do not consider Gen 1 specifically.

in oral literature. Their reliance on a pre-existing oral tradition leads them to conclude virtually opposing points of view: where Wellhausen understood the process of oral transmission to result in a relatively disjointed collection of texts being edited into the formalised Pentateuch, Gunkel believed the oral tradition was characterised by “schools of narrators” (2006: 130). Neither Wellhausen nor Gunkel proffered any substantial evidence for these claims, and the role and nature of oral tradition in both theories is, to use Van Seters’ words, “derived entirely from [their] imagination” (1992: 10).¹⁴⁸ We can add to this criticism the insights gleaned from Vayntrub’s recent work (2019), which conclusively demonstrates that oral narration and written text have no specified directionality: narrated texts are not necessarily precursors to written ones, neither does the existence of written texts preclude the generation of further oral traditions, nor are orality and written textuality necessarily mutually exclusive.¹⁴⁹

What does this mean for the dating of Genesis 1:1-2:4a? If dating the text on absolute or even relative terms fails to generate positions that are convincing enough, we are necessarily left with a broad dating to the classical biblical Hebrew period; thus, broadly speaking, probably any time before the Babylonian Exile. Similarly, considering the contributions of the Documentary Hypothesis to notions of dating, we should put aside any expectation of the text as part of that vaguely-defined Priestly tradition – i.e. one concerned with ritual matters; a later edit of, or addition to, an existing J and/or E text; and so on – and focus primarily on what kind of information the text itself can provide us. To that end, a comparative analysis between two or more texts, alike in structure, themes, time, and place, can allow us to

¹⁴⁸ See also Van Seters (1992: 8-22) for a more comprehensive overview of the discussion surrounding the origins of the Pentateuch as a work of history, and the role of oral tradition in the process of formation.

¹⁴⁹ As Vayntrub puts it (2019: 291): “the human voice ... was a significant locus of meaning for the biblical authors”; in other words, the written text did not *supersede* the spoken; rather, the spoken text is embodied in the written and continues to speak through it.

understand more obscure aspects, such as context and authorial ideology, of one text – Genesis – from the perspective of a text whose context is well-established. In a comment echoing Kämmerer and Metzler’s discussion of *Enūma eliš*,¹⁵⁰ Blenkinsopp argues, “we are dealing with a *text*, ... we have access to the realia only through this text, and ... the text must be understood in context” (2011: 12; italics in original). Although *Enūma eliš* (and its direct Mesopotamian context) is naturally a prime candidate to provide this context, for the sake of completeness we should first consider several other possibilities that have received significant attention.¹⁵¹

Because of its revolutionary mono- or henotheistic nature, one of the first sources for the themes of Genesis 1:1-2:4a under consideration was Akhenaten’s cult of Aten in Egypt. Parallels between the Hymn to the Aten – found in the city of Akhetaten in the late 19th century, and probably composed by the pharaoh in the mid-14th century BCE – and creation material in the Hebrew Bible were discussed early on by J. H. Breasted (1912) and, famously, by Sigmund Freud (1939) and C. S. Lewis (1958). Though Freud’s work was found to be of little use to biblical scholarship owing to its uncritical assessment of the Exodus narrative, the idea of a connection existing between the two great examples of monolatry in the ancient Near East has continued to enjoy a degree of popularity in biblical scholarship (most notably John Day, to whose discussion of Akhenaten’s hymn and Ps 104 we shall return shortly). Egyptologists, on the other hand, generally reject such a connection (Lichtheim 2006: 100), as do in fact many biblical scholars (Clifford 1994: 200). Apart from Akhenaten’s hymn, the only surviving text conceptually echoing biblical creation is the cosmogony of Memphis,

¹⁵⁰ See Part 2.

¹⁵¹ It should also be stressed that it is possible that some of the possibilities outlined below form an *indirect* context – for instance, it is impossible to rule out that some remnant of Atenist monotheistic thought informed Yahwism very early on, and that this strand ultimately drove the composition of Gen 1:1-2:4a against the more direct context of Babylonian power. Until future discoveries of that nature is made, however, insufficient evidence currently exists to allow for this line of reasoning to be pursued seriously.

which is difficult to date but is potentially as old as the mid-3rd millennium BCE (Ockinga 2010: 107). Its explicit connection between creation and speech-acts has led several scholars to argue that it influenced biblical creation material directly.¹⁵² The most obvious problem with attributing the inspiration for Genesis to Egypt is its distance in both time and space: Egyptian power in the 8th and 7th century had largely waned in face of the Neo-Assyrian empire, and it seems unlikely that either Akhenaten's hymn (having somehow survived his *damnatio memoriae*) or the Memphis cosmogony would have bridged the gap of centuries that separate the texts. This issue leads us to a brief excursus that should be discussed here with reference to a potential Egyptian background to Genesis 1. Historically speaking, the general methodology when dealing with mythical texts and their adaptations has been based on the assumption that more vividly fantastic texts represent an older, more 'mythological' version, and that later iterations are 'demythologised', removing what are implied to be 'excess' mythical aspects of the text from its core message.¹⁵³ The general consensus remains that of two related texts, the one which is considered less fantastical likely represents a later version, presumably resulting from a more 'mature' philosophical outlook on behalf of the authors. That this position is untenable can easily be shown from a number of closely aligned examples. The most readily available one is basically all of Rabbinic tradition: such discussions as Leviathan's fear of the *kilbith* (b. Shab. 77b) or the serpent's one-time female counterpart that would be served at the Messiah's banquet (b. B. B. 74a) clearly involve more

¹⁵² Most notably Koch (1965: 251-93); Ebach (1979: 35-37); Fishbane (1985: 322-36); and Westermann (1984: 38-40).

¹⁵³ This distinction is observed in two separate ways: Day (2013a: 22) clearly understands 'demythologisation' with reference to the presence or absence of fantastic elements such as Leviathan, where the absence thereof represents a later evolution of the text. But cf. Bultmann's approach to New Testament theology (1989), where 'demythologisation' is employed in connection with exegesis, not with compositional change; in this view, the demythologisation of a text is the process by which its meaning is demystified. See below for further discussion of this theme.

elaborate supernatural themes than the texts to which they refer, and should thus be considered older stories in the currently prevalent paradigm. To consider a brief case study, we can turn to a recent publication by John Day (2013a), in which he argues for an Egyptian background to Psalm 104, which in his view is the source for Genesis 1.¹⁵⁴ That there may be a connection between Ps 104 and Gen 1 is, in my view, not in itself the problem: Day lists numerous parallels in similar order between the two texts (2013a: n21), and these are striking enough to warrant posing the question of direct derivation. However, allowing for a moment that Day is correct, his observation begs the question which text is the older one, and this question is answered in Day's article only by reliance on the demythologisation paradigm, referring to the presence of absence of various mythical elements (*Chaoskampf* [Ps 104:7 // Gen 1:6-10] and Leviathan [Ps 104:26 // Gen 1:21]; see Day 2013a: 22). As we have seen above, the supposed demythologisation of Ps 104 in Gen 1 could equally be interpreted as a 'mythologisation' of Gen 1 in Ps 104, and cannot conclusively show which direction of influence is at play here. Other arguments meant to support the thesis, such as the usage of words that rarely appear outside either text (Day 2013a: 22), do make the connection between the two texts more likely, but again do not independently establish which text is reliant on which.¹⁵⁵ Finally, the connection between Ps 104 and Akhenaten's hymn suffers from the

¹⁵⁴ Day traces the Egyptian source via Ugarit based on their apparent knowledge of Akhenaten's cult, which he considers enough evidence that they may have known the Great Hymn too. This makes Ugarit somewhat questionable as a transmission vector – not to mention that the required further vector from Ugarit to Israel or Judah cannot be substantiated: there is no evidence whatsoever of Ugaritic cuneiform creation texts to begin with, let alone mono- or henotheistic ones. Thus, even if the Great Hymn was known in Ugarit, it is extremely difficult to see how it would have been transmitted further, given Ugarit's destruction in the Bronze Age Collapse, well before Israel and Judah are meaningful political entities.

¹⁵⁵ This means, for example, that the usage of *thwm* in both biblical texts does not eliminate Mesopotamia as a source; it only suggests that one may have been based on the other. More importantly, the possibility of Mesopotamian derivation would not be ruled out even if Gen 1 *were* reliant on Ps 104, since it has not otherwise been established that rare Hebrew words must point towards an Egyptian source.

spatial and temporal distance discussed earlier, and should probably (though perhaps unsatisfyingly) be seen as coincidence due to general similarities in creation themes between the two cultures.¹⁵⁶ More important for our discussion of Gen 1, however, is that the supposed Egyptian material only starts after the psalmic description of actual creation has ended, in Ps 104:20 (possibly // Akhenaten 27-37). The parallel verses with Gen 1 in Ps 104 begin at v. 1 (see Day 2013:21-22 for a complete overview). There similarly seems to be little overlap between Gen 1 and Akhenaten's hymn in particular; thus, even if there is an Egyptian background to part of Ps 104, this does not explain what inspired the description of creation in Ps 104:1-19 or Gen 1:1-2:4a. Apart from Akhenaten's hymn, and a very general similarity in the watery origins of the universe found in other creation myths, no parallels to biblical creation myth are known to us from Egypt.¹⁵⁷

That is not to say, however, that a western source for biblical material must be ruled out completely. The fact that some iconography associated with Yahweh¹⁵⁸ has more in common with both literary and archaeological evidence from Syro-Palestine than with that found in Mesopotamia, suggests strongly that some aspects of biblical ideas about divinity and the pantheon derived from their immediate neighbours. In terms of sheer volume of evidence as well as a greater degree of similarity in composition, Ugarit provides the best-attested source for this cultural background. Though the city state reached its apex around the 12th century BCE, and ceased to be a major centre of power and source of literary composition by the 11th, it remains the only ancient West Semitic culture, apart from Judah, from which a significant textual corpus survives. Extensive parallels can be found between both traditions, both within

¹⁵⁶ Indeed, Lichtheim (2006: 100) remarks that the similarities are likely to be a "generic similarity ... A specific literary interdependence is not probable."

¹⁵⁷ See below for further discussion of Day's interpretation of the connections between Akhenaten's Great Hymn, Ps 104, and Gen 1.

¹⁵⁸ The horns on Yahweh's altar (see, for example, Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30; Zech 1:18 [2:1]; for a discussion, see Halpern 1978: 177-8; Petersen 1984: 160-65).

cosmologic narrative and outside it.¹⁵⁹ This suggests that, despite the temporal gap between Ugaritic literary production and biblical composition, certain ideas about the nature of the universe and the pantheon were shared by both cultures to some degree. Many deities mentioned in Ugaritic texts are present – mostly in a negative sense – in the Bible: Athtart, Baʿlu (Haddu), El, and Athirat occur, to varying degrees of importance, in the Baʿlu Cycle, and figure sometimes prominently in biblical texts as foreign deities or in personal names. This is not to say, of course, that the Judahite population of the mid-1st millennium BCE practiced the same religious cult to those deities as late-2nd millennium Ugarit did, but it does show the tenacious survival of names and some ideas associated with them. Smith (2002: 22-23), for instance, lists a number of etymologically related words in Ugaritic and biblical Hebrew that denoted virtually identical kinds of sacrifice. Furthermore, the existence of semantically, but not etymologically, related words in both languages strongly suggests a continuity from Ugaritic to Judahite sacrificial practice (Smith 2002: 23). This does not mean, of course, that similar practices in both cultures equate to an identical meaning and purpose of these acts in their respective contexts.¹⁶⁰ Equally so, the literary evidence on the whole provides a complicated picture. Conspicuously absent from Ugarit in comparison to biblical narrative, of course, is Yahweh, who seems not to have been part of the Ugaritic pantheon at all. Equally striking is the apparent lack of formal creation narrative in the Ugaritic literary corpus, as Pope points out: “There is hardly anything that could be called a creation story or any clear allusion to cosmic creativity in the Ugaritic texts so far exhumed” (1955: 49). Indeed, the Baʿlu Cycle might be the closest text we have to a creation account, although it is concerned primarily with the conflict between Haddu and Yammu, and contains virtually no acts of creation. This focus on *Chaoskampf*, and the utter lack thereof in Genesis

¹⁵⁹ See Fisher et al. (1972-1981) for a comprehensive overview with notes on specific textual parallels, as well as a discussion of more general similarities between Ugaritic and Judahite society.

¹⁶⁰ See also Smith (2002:24, n.18) for the example of cultic prostitution and the evidence thereof relating to etymological similarities.

1, further undermines the likelihood of an Ugaritic background to at least that particular biblical creation account.¹⁶¹

As it stands, it seems that the initial hunch of early Assyriologists looking at Mesopotamian material might have been right after all. Though much of our knowledge has been refined and redefined when it comes to the connection between Mesopotamia and Judah since then, no clearer parallel in form, content, and geographical and temporal proximity has been found to the text of Genesis 1 than *Enūma elīš*. Considering Judah was a vassal state of various Mesopotamian empires for most of the first half of the first millennium BCE,¹⁶² it would have been surprising to find no Mesopotamian influence on Judahite writing at all. This vassalage was not just an obligation to provide money and goods to the suzerain, but in many ways provided constant contact between Judah and Mesopotamian culture. Assyrian troops were garrisoned in Judahite cities, Assyrian officials were installed at the courts, and monumental architecture was erected in recognition of Assyrian rulership (Ehrlich 1996: 102; Radner 2006: 58). The destruction of Jerusalem in 587/6 literally brought the Judahite elite even closer to Mesopotamia as the upper classes – including, presumably, scribes – were forcibly relocated to Babylon. It is therefore important to keep in mind that, at virtually all periods in Judah’s history, the relationship between the smaller country and its imposing overlords

¹⁶¹ Other biblical creation narratives certainly contain stronger traces of Ugaritic (or perhaps simply more generically North-West Semitic) material: for example, Leviathan (Job 3:8, 41:1-34; Amos 9:2; Ps 74:13-24, 104:26; Is 72:1) finds its literary predecessor in Litan/Lotan (CAT 1.5 I 1-3; Smith 2003:33). See also the discussion, below, of Psalm 29, which is likely rooted in a North-West Semitic tradition.

¹⁶² Beginning with Adad-Nirari II in 911 BCE, Judah existed almost continuously as a vassal state to the Neo-Assyrian empire, with brief revolts at various times: possibly in the mid-9th century, during the rule of Shalmaneser III, and certainly against Sennacherib in 701 BCE. The rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire also allowed for a brief period of independence, but the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/6 all but wiped out the kingdom: it would remain a province under Persian and Seleucid rule until the establishment of the Hasmonean kingdom in 140 BCE.

provided little respite from forcible foreign influence and little chance of self-governance. In other words: any Judahite would have had a strong motive to harbour negative feelings towards Mesopotamia in general. Considering the constant presence of Mesopotamian culture, especially when the Judahite elite lived in Babylon, it is no surprise that we can find strong correlations between their written records. Of course, that connection is overtly negative on at least one obvious occasion: the Tower of Babel story in Gen 11:1-9, where Babylon's hubris leads to the dispersion of all people.¹⁶³ In the Noah story (Gen 6-9) we similarly see a clear example of cultural appropriation, although in this case it is specifically textual and does not reflect on foreign culture as directly. It thus appears that the primeval history in Genesis at large is heavily indebted to Mesopotamia, and Genesis 1:1-2:4a is no exception to that trend. This much becomes clear when we keep in mind the close connection – and nature thereof – between the two cultures, and look more closely at the thematic and structural similarities between the first biblical creation narrative and *Enūma eliš*.

Creation and cosmogony in Genesis 1 and *Enūma eliš*

Compared to Ugaritic literature, which as far as we know seems relatively disinterested in the process of cosmogony, Akkadian literature is wrought with creation narrative. Extant texts

¹⁶³ In fact, there are few positive assessments of any foreign cultural group in the Hebrew Bible, apart from perhaps the Persians in Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah, and in Ezra-Nehemiah. In context, the Tower of Babel story is somewhat confusingly framed: the Table of Nations precedes it directly, and by naming each group acknowledges at least the cultural diversity between the numerous descendants of Noah, of which language presumably would have been part. Why these disparate groups would then come back together and build the tower, for their languages to be confused afterwards, is chronologically curious. In line with the wine cultivation narrative in Gen 9, which similarly primes the reader against Canaan, we might expect a language confusion story to be presented here. If, however, the ideological force of the text – that is, the jab at the Babylonians and their perceived hubris – superseded the need for a coherent overarching narrative, we can account for this problem; furthermore, this would reinforce the notion that the ideological nature of myth can override theological and other concerns.

show variety in composition and themes, and it is possible that local city foundation stories like the *Theogony of Dunnu* were common (see Dalley 2008: 278). We can understand *Enūma elīš* as part of this trend, even when it is far more elaborate than the short localised myths we know of otherwise: it does, after all, make the foundation of Babylon a key point in its story (EE V.129). What connects Gen 1 to *Enūma elīš* in particular rather than to this tradition in general, however, is the comprehensive discussion of various cosmological elements which are present in both texts, but mostly absent from other local Mesopotamian creation texts. Even where such elements are discussed (such as in the *Theogony of Dunnu*), they are never all found together in the same text, nor ever presented in the same order. Both narratives start with watery chaos as their beginning (Gen 1:2 // EE I.1-6). A dome is created, separating the waters, (Gen 1:6-7 // EE IV.136) and then called ‘sky’ (Gen 1:8 // EE IV.138). The waters are gathered in one place, creating dry land and sea (Gen 1:9 // EE IV.140). Lights are assigned to the heavens, to mark the seasons and the passing of days (Gen 1:14-15 // EE V.2-7). Larger lights are specified for the separation of day and night (Gen 1:16-18 // EE V.12-22). Mankind is created (Gen 1:26 // EE VI.5-8). Finally, the creator rests from his work (Gen 2:2-3 // EE VI.74-76). An often-heard objection is that the narrative of *Enūma elīš* revolves around the battle between Marduk and Tiamat – a theme that is absent entirely from the Genesis story yet comprises more than three tablets in the Babylonian myth. There is, however, a simple solution for this problem that is overlooked by scholars: there is no need for an adaptation to start at the beginning. There is no reason why the author of Genesis 1 could not have started his reworking of the precursor text around IV:129, with Marduk standing triumphantly over Tiamat’s corpse. This might be reflected in Yahweh’s spirit hovering over the water in Gen 1:2; the watery beginnings of the universe, therefore, may not be Tiamat and Apsû together (as in EE I.1-6), but rather Tiamat’s slain corpse alone (IV:129). This solution furthermore removes the issue of Apsû’s role and his conflict with the Anunnaki – because these would be incompatible with a mono- or henotheistic worldview –

and refocuses the scope of the narrative explicitly to Marduk's creation of the world. Thus, rather than an adaptation of *Enūma elīš* as a whole, Gen 1:1-2:4a may be a reworking of EE IV:129-VI:76.

Analysing differences and similarities

With the cultural and historical background of *Enūma elīš* and Genesis 1:1-2:4a established – at least, to the point where it is plausible to maintain that the biblical text depends on the Mesopotamian text – the next step is to consider the ways in which the adaptation responds to its precursor. In our case, the emphasis will be on the development of a number of themes in Genesis, and specifically how these themes reflect upon *Enūma elīš* and, by extension, on Babylonian power. First of all, the portrayal of chief deities Marduk and Yahweh will be considered. Central in that assessment is the interaction between character, authority, and real world; in other words, how Marduk and Yahweh are portrayed as characters of authority, and how this reflects on the world of the authors. Second is the texts' depiction of cosmology, focusing specifically on the differences between Tiamat in *Enūma elīš* and *tehom* in Genesis 1. Thirdly, the portrayal of secondary characters (or lack thereof) will be assessed. Because the ultimate question pertains to the implications of adaptation, the overarching question is in what way the portrayal of these themes reflects ideological concerns on behalf of the authors.

Yahweh and Marduk: positions of authority

The protagonists of both texts discussed here are easily identified. In the case of Genesis 1, there is only one character; in the case of *Enūma elīš*, he is introduced halfway through the first tablet, but immediately becomes established as champion of the gods and hero of the story. The way in which their authority is established, however, and how this impacts on contemporary concerns outside the realm of fiction, differs in each story. The opening phrase of Genesis 1 contains a clear statement of the author's ideas about the main character of the story: he was the creator of everything. The deity, of course, is only ever referred to by his

title, and it is precisely the title that provides a unique insight into the adaptive process underlying the text. Yahweh – the city god of Jerusalem – presumably stars in this creation myth, but is never called by name explicitly. Instead, throughout the first creation narrative, he is referred to as *ʾlhyim*. The word itself is a plural by-form of the word אֱלֹהִים,¹⁶⁴ the common term for ‘god’, and is used throughout the Hebrew Bible to refer to Yahweh. Despite being grammatically plural, it always takes a third person singular masculine verb, unless it refers to multiple gods.¹⁶⁵ In the case of Genesis 1, too, each verb that has אֱלֹהִים as its subject is a third person singular masculine *br’šyt br’ ʾlhyim*¹⁶⁶ (Gen 1:1). There are several arguments to assume equivalence between the name Yahweh and the title אֱלֹהִים. The second creation story (Gen 2:4b-3) calls the main deity יהוה אֱלֹהִים, confirming at least that Yahweh bore the title אֱלֹהִים in that narrative; afterwards, Genesis 4 exclusively uses the deity’s proper name Yahweh. This suggests that the editor, at least, envisioned אֱלֹהִים as Yahweh: even if the original god behind the title was a different one from Yahweh, the story in the book of Genesis is included as its opening narrative. It seems unlikely that the editor envisioned creation to be carried out by a different god than the one who dominates the rest of the Hebrew Bible, especially not in the mono- or henotheistic outlook that characterises it (see, for example, Deut 4:35-39, 32:39; 2 Sam 7:22; Isa 37:20; 45:5). Furthermore, the reference to characters by their title is commonly employed across the literature of the ancient Near East. The Ugaritic deity Haddu was virtually always referred to as *bāʿlu* ‘lord’, and it is by this title – Hebraised as *ba’al* – rather than his proper name, that he is most well-known to us

¹⁶⁴ For a discussion of the singular El (ʾl) denoting Yahweh, see Segal (1955). The regular plural of ʾl, of course, is *ʾlhyim*, which occurs only rarely; the singular *ʾlwh* for *ʾlhyim* is used primarily in a poetic context.

¹⁶⁵ A good example is the reference to the ‘gods (*ʾlhyim*) of Sodom’ in Isa 13:19, Jer 50:40, and Amos 4:11.

¹⁶⁶ It should be mentioned here that a great deal of discussion has gone into the grammatical purpose of this word, specifically, why it lacks an article where one is expected (see Holmstedt 2008). Of course, the Masoretic tradition is the only reason we are accustomed to omitting the article; without vocalisation, *br’šyt* can morphologically be either a definite or indefinite word.

(Smith 1994). In Mesopotamia, the supreme deity was referred to in a similar manner: depending on the text and its time of composition, *bēl* ‘lord’ can refer to Marduk, Aššur, or (in the Late Babylonian period) even Nabû. Interestingly, the title need not apply to the ‘expected’ deity; the Assyrian Esarhaddon calls his national deity Aššur by name in his annals, but refers to the Babylonian Marduk as *bēl* (RINAP 4, 1.i.5). In the context of the Judahite focus on Yahweh as their only god, *‘lhy*m is thus best understood as a title for Yahweh, not as a different god.

How does this help us understand the relationship between the two texts, and by extension the intercultural dialogue that informed the adaptation? First of all, the text clearly reflects common ancient Near Eastern practice in referring to the chief of the pantheon by a title, not by his proper name.¹⁶⁷ This places the text firmly within the context of other Mesopotamian and Levantine epic hymns and creation myths, suggesting that Genesis 1 takes its cues not just from *Enūma eliš*, where Marduk is mostly called by name, but from a broader traditional practice. Even this very straightforward example, then, shows the importance of a comparative approach: the purpose of calling Yahweh *‘lhy*m can only be uncovered most thoroughly by studying other texts. Secondly, with the usage of the title *‘lhy*m come certain other implications. The titles *bā’lu* and *bēl* both imply that the respective deities held some form of lordship or mastery; since Hadad and Marduk/Aššur were all important deities of powerful cities or nations, the title makes sense. Naming a deity *‘lhy*m goes even further: when an important god is a lord, there can be multiple gods or goddesses with significant roles. *Bēlet-ili*, for instance, governed childbirth and pregnancy, both quite outside the remit of Marduk’s governance. The author of Genesis, however, portrays Yahweh in a much more

¹⁶⁷ It is possible that the title was meant to allude to the name of Enlil (‘Lord Wind’; his Akkadian name was Ellil), who is never mentioned in *Enūma eliš* despite having held an important place in Mesopotamian society; the marginalisation of this god may have spurred the adoption of the title *‘lhy*m by a marginalised group – exiled Judahites – in Babylonian society.

profound manner: if Yahweh's title is 'god', what does that mean for any other deities? Presumably Marduk's lordship meant that there could be no other lord; perhaps Yahweh's title implies that – for the author, at least – there could be no other god. Thirdly, in the context of the Babylonian exile, the text elevates a god – whose city and temple have been destroyed – to the level of creator-god.¹⁶⁸ In common ancient Near Eastern perception, the power of a god was bound closely to his or her sanctuary; its destruction, and the common practice of carrying off the statue of the deity to the city of the conqueror, would have been seen as an earthly victory of the Babylonian army over the Judahite army, but also as a heavenly victory of the Babylonian gods over Yahweh. In this context, composing or using a narrative about Yahweh having not only power, but in fact creating the entire universe is a bold move to say the least. It asserts Yahweh's control over the world, even in the face of massive adversity. Genesis 1 in this respect thus shows a very similar situation as *Enūma elīš*: both were composed in times when the fate of the nation was uncertain – though Babylon, of course, was still standing – yet despite the problems faced by the authors, their composition shows a positive outlook on the future, and the desire for a rise to power.

Setting up the chief deity as the creator of the world and – in the polytheistic context of Mesopotamia – as head of the pantheon can equally be said to be an important objective in *Enūma elīš*. Where Genesis presents itself in the first place as a creation narrative, *Enūma elīš* is a creation text only secondarily. As Kämmerer and Metzler note,

“Uneinigkeit herrscht in der Forschung auch bei der Antwort auf die Frage nach dem inhaltlichen Schwerpunkt des Werkes.” (2012:4)

While they are more careful in assigning the designation “Aufstieg Marduks” to the text, many others readily embrace the narrative as a glorification hymn. Lambert identifies the main aim of the story as “composed to assert and justify the status of Marduk as head of the

¹⁶⁸ This is exemplified in Deutero-Isaiah, specifically 43:10, 44:6-8, 45:5, 45:14-18.

pantheon” (2008:17). Dietrich, too, focuses on the central role of Marduk’s leadership, noting the three main interpretations of *Enūma elīš* as “Suprematie-Hymnus auf Marduk”, “Lehrgedicht für die Entfaltung der Macht Marduks”, and “Lehrgedicht zur Erklärung der Gegebenheiten auf Erden” (2006:136). Seri, finally, argues that “the creation story was thus the means to convey, proclaim, and justify the enthronement of Marduk as Babylon’s main deity” (2006:507). Kämmerer and Metzler argue that putting the focus on Marduk’s supremacy takes away too much attention from the theme of creation (2012:6); however, in support of Seri’s position, it should be noted that creation certainly is an important part of the epic, although the theme appears primarily to be used in service of Marduk’s exaltation. The sixth tablet, for instance, contains only a long list of names of Marduk – his titles, accolades, and so on – suggesting that, since it is the last part of the story, it is the list on which the focus lies, not the creation narrative of the opening lines. Instead of insisting on a distinction between *Enūma elīš* as creation myth and *Enūma elīš* as exaltation of Marduk, a synthesis between the two makes a great deal more sense: while the creation material is unarguably part of the narrative, and has an important role in the myth, it is used here in service of the glorification of Marduk as the head of the pantheon and king of the cosmos. As a logical extension, the enthronement of Marduk over the world reflects not only on Marduk’s role within the Babylonian pantheon, but on the role of Babylon in the ancient political world as well. If Marduk is synonymous with Babylon, then his kingship means that the author of *Enūma elīš* envisioned the same role for Babylon as a political entity. Thus, the portrayal of this divine character in a fictional mythical text can be shown to have a double meaning: the obvious narrative statement that Marduk is king works on a very real, political level as well. We find, then, that the portrayals of both Yahweh and Marduk follow very similar lines. In *Enūma elīš*, the enthronement of Marduk as king of the gods is narrated explicitly, and follows a primeval history that culminates in his successful challenge of Tiamat to rulership over the cosmos. At the same time, the background of creation provides an absolute timeline

that leaves no space for other deities to challenge Marduk's supremacy: by connecting earliest beginnings (in the narrative) to contemporary reality (in the Neo-Babylonian hegemony), the only reasonable conclusion for the audience is that the story proclaims the truth. Marduk is literarily king, but at the same time serves as the persona for Babylon's real power over other nations, which are personified in Tiamat. This theme of starting from the beginning to leave no gaps can be seen to be employed similarly in Genesis 1, where Yahweh is present to create, and by absence of other deities thus holds authority alone. His epithet reinforces this notion, suggesting a henotheistic or monolatrous outlook, even in the absence of an explicit statement to that effect.

In a comparative sense, what conclusions can we draw from this? The simple statement of particular thematic elements – in this case, Yahweh's epithet and the various connotations associated with it – conveys a wealth of information. Having connected the literary strategies of *Enūma elīš* with their real-world implications, we can do the same for Genesis 1. Because the authority of Marduk relies on divine approval after his victory in combat, and – keeping in mind Hutcheon's theory on adaptations as palimpsests – the reliance of Genesis 1 on *Enūma elīš*, reading or hearing about Yahweh's act of creation impacts the reader's interpretation of the Mesopotamian account, and vice versa. Yahweh can thus appropriate the authority bestowed on Marduk through struggle, without requiring a combat sequence to prove himself. At the same time, Yahweh's lack of struggle highlights Marduk's difficulties in obtaining kingship, and elevates Yahweh above earning kingship; he simply *has* it. We can call this the 'strategy of statement': the palimpsestic quality of adaptation invites (or, perhaps, requires) a comparison between the stories simply by stating particular bits of information. Yahweh is never compared explicitly to Marduk, but in light of the connection between the two narratives, a comparison becomes inevitable.

Sea and sea monsters

In a related but somewhat different way, other elements of the text appear to be borrowed and modified, as opposed to simply stated. While in the previous approach ideological statements come to fruition most fully when the reader is aware of the precursor text or culture, it can theoretically stand on its own merit. Understanding the ideological implications of calling Yahweh *'thym* does not absolutely require the knowledge that heads of ancient Near Eastern pantheons were typically referred to as *bā'lu* or *bēl*. What does require in-depth knowledge, however, and what brings us to the bread and butter of Hutcheon's approach to adaptation and parody, are those cases in which actual parts of the precursor text are adopted by and modified in the adaptation. In the case of Genesis 1 and *Enūma eliš*, the most obvious case of this approach at work is probably the function and identity of the primordial sea (*thwm*) and of the personified sea, Tiamat, in both narratives. This choice of comparison will be familiar to the seasoned scholar of Genesis, but nonetheless deserves a fresh look as part of the wider context of adaptation and ideology studied here. To briefly restate the relevant theoretical starting point: this particular strategy of communicating ideology is connected strongly to Hutcheon's first aspect of adaptation (here represented as a shift between similar media, but a transposition or recasting of thematic elements). Furthermore, as a specifically parodic text, Genesis 1 can be understood as 'wielding' the Mesopotamian text with the aim of providing an antithesis to the culture that produced it, not necessarily the text itself.

Watery beginnings form a common thread throughout ancient Near Eastern – including biblical – creation narratives. In a myth from Heliopolis, creation begins with “darkness and endless, lifeless water” called Nu or Nun, from which “a mound of fertile silt emerges” (Gahlin 2007:298). Nun becomes the water of the netherworld in much the same way as Apsû becomes the underground ocean after his death in *Enūma eliš*. Tiamat, of course, is shaped into the earth, but both her name ('sea') and her description cast her as a water-like being

first. In a myth from Hermopolis, the same concept exists (Gahlin 2007:303). In the Ugaritic Ba'al Cycle, the battle between Hadad and Yammu, the sea, shows yet another example of subduing the waters before creation can take place, suggesting that the conquest of water – in a variety of ways – was a common recurring theme in creation narrative in that area. The reason for this is probably an obvious one: humans, generally speaking, do not fare very well on the sea, and need the land for sustenance. Water furthermore causes destruction through torrential rainfall, stormy weather, and flooding. At the same time, however, water is a vital component for crops to grow and for humans and animals to drink. Subjugation of the waters therefore became an intrinsic part of human control over the environment, as evident from archaeology as well as literature.¹⁶⁹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, water management thus also began to serve as an important tool of propaganda: Sennacherib, for example, lavishly describes his garden works at Nineveh in his royal annals (e.g. i.87-91 [RINAP 001]), and had carved reliefs of these gardens put up around the empire. The ability of a Mesopotamian king to impose his will upon the landscape, shaping it to his design as they saw fit, thus became a powerful expression of royal power. It even seems likely that various biblical books respond to this practice, as evident in Isaiah 35 and Ezekiel 47 (see Quine 2014). The codification of this necessity-turned-propaganda into mythical narrative is a logical step that would resonate well with its contemporary audience.

In *Enūma eliš*, the initial state of the universe originates in water: Apsû, the fresh (or brackish) water, and Tiamat, the sea, are there at the beginning of the story (EE i.3-4). Nothing else exists – no dry land to stand on, nor anything apart from these two masses of water. The absence of various cosmological elements is emphasised by the use of recurring

¹⁶⁹ The extensive irrigation works of Mesopotamia and Egypt recur often in literature, as far back as Hammurāpi's laws (e.g. §53-56) and later in the royal inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires (Wilkinson et al., 2005:32). Archaeologically, the physical record of the remains of these works are preserved relatively well, and several iconographic depictions of them survive (See, e.g., Liverani 1996).

stative verbs: heaven and earth (i.1-2) are not named, pastures and reed thickets (i.6) not formed. The gods do not exist either: neither Apsû nor Tiamat belongs to the DINGIR.DINGIR (*ilī*, ‘gods’) of i.7, which are created later.¹⁷⁰ The presentation of the cosmos in these lines, of course, calls attention to the stark opposition between the world of the readers and the primordial world of the story, in which only these two personified masses of water exist. A grammatical feature of the text underlines that the opening of *Enūma eliš* imagines Apsû and Tiamat as existing already; the use of the durative *iḫiqqūma* (i.5) suggests that they ‘were mixing’ their waters together.¹⁷¹ In other words, the first lines introduce the reader *in medias res* to creation.¹⁷² The introduction of the main characters of the epic, as well as the cause for conflict between protagonists (the Anunnaki) and antagonists (Apsû and Tiamat, as well as their various minions), heralds the first battle between Ea and Apsû (i.59-68). Ea’s victory results in the creation of his abode out of Apsû’s corpse (i.71), and introduces the true hero of the epic: Babylon’s national god Marduk. The death of Apsû is the

¹⁷⁰ The absence of the DINGIR-determinative has led some to argue that they should be understood as personified forms of water or are “not deities” (Clifford 1994:140). Their names are spelled ABZU (or ZU_xAB) and *ti-GEME* (or *ti-a-wa-tu*) respectively. Cf. Laḫmu and Laḫāmu, whose names are written ^D*laḫ₃-mu* and ^D*la-ḫa-mu*, respectively. Anšar lacks the determinative as well, although he must be part of the DINGIR.DINGIR as the son of Laḫmu and Laḫāmu; the name of his consort, Kišar, *is* written with the DINGIR-prefix. The most likely reason for this omission is that Anšar’s name begins with the AN-sign (used for the DINGIR-determinative), and that either haplography and/or simply scribal convention caused the eventual deletion of the initial sign. Anu, in older literature, lacks the prefix as well, though in *Enūma eliš* his name is written ^D*a-num*. Taking another example: Gilgameš, of course, is no god, nor is his name theophoric, yet both he and Enkidu are given the DINGIR-determinative. One should probably not lend too much weight to the absence or presence of the prefix for the purpose of ascribing divinity or supernatural essence to a character (see Maier 1997:10).

¹⁷¹ See, however, the notes to EE I.5 in the Appendix: several manuscripts have a stative verb instead of a durative. The consequences of both possibilities are discussed further there.

¹⁷² The U-version of the first tablet has a stative form (*ḫīqūma*), which delays the main clause until I.9 (*ibbanūma*). All other versions, however, read *iḫiqqūma*, making I.5 the first main clause of the text, unless this verb is understood as a subjunctive (<**iḫiqqū-u-ma*).

first step in the overarching plot progressing from chaos to order; in fact, it foreshadows the later conflict between Marduk and Tiamat that forms the turning point of the narrative. As Talon puts it, the deeds of Ea are “a kind of rehearsal of the epic fight between Marduk and Tiamat, but here the protagonists are Apsû and Ea” (2001:266). It is readily apparent that both battles are characterised by a progression from water to land through the subjugation of the personifications of different types of water. Additionally, it is possible that this sequence – first fresh water, then salt water – reflects the mastery over rivers and lakes and highlights the unruly nature of the sea.¹⁷³ Even though Apsû is not mentioned to become dry land, Ea’s sanctuary contains several elements that can suggest the presence of solid matter: a cella (i.79), a bed (i.84), and dust or earth (i.107; the word is *eperu*, see CAD, *E*, 184) – though the latter is probably made by an infant Marduk.¹⁷⁴ Unless these elements are immersed in water, some solid ground must be present to support the bed, and for the dust to exist upon.

Marduk’s subsequent butchering of Tiamat (iv.129-141) is more explicit in the creation of dry land: in iv.141 he makes heaven and *ašratum* ‘arable land’ out of the two halves of her corpse. The prevailing trend is the ‘taming’ of water; the ocean and the Apsû are diminished from their original positions of power, as creators, to mere cosmological structures. We can thus start to see the connection between various concepts that lead to the formulation of ideological statements in the opening of *Enūma eliš*. First, irrigation works are used as a farming tool and come to designate royal power. The creation of (arable) land out of infertile

¹⁷³ While the Euphrates and Tigris were actively rerouted from very early on, there is no evidence that the sea was ever dammed in and dried up in ancient times. Tiamtu’s nature as personification of the sea might thus serve dramatic effect as well as logical analogy.

¹⁷⁴ Kämmerer & Metzler (2012:136) note that “Anu nicht gänzlich auszuschließen ist” as the subject of *ibšim* ‘he created’, however.

ground, or perhaps swamp,¹⁷⁵ forms the conceptual background of this propagandistic expression, and is then exemplified in narrative form in the creation epic as a battle between rightful ruler and chaotic antagonist. Additionally, the idea of a ruler imposing their power over the landscape can be extended to imposing power over people, thus legitimising the expansionistic desire many Mesopotamian rulers carried out towards other contemporary nations.

Comparing this understanding of the role of personified water and its reflection of an ideology of power to the role of the impersonal waters of Genesis 1 shows quite the opposite point of view. The postulated connection between Tiamat and *thwm* has been noted virtually since the earliest publications of the *Enūma elīš* tablets; for example, in Sayce's article from 1905 (p. 2):

“The dragon of chaos [i.e. Tiamat] was a personification of the deep, of that abyss of waters over which the storms sweep, and which, unless checked and restrained, would swallow up the earth and all that it contains.”

If the Genesis account is reliant upon *Enūma elīš*, it might indeed seem likely that *thwm* represents an impersonal, adapted version of Tiamat, and indeed the two words appear to be etymologically related. The name Tiamat is derived from *tiāmtu(m)* (in the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian period written as *tāmtu(m)*), which can refer to bodies of fresh or salt water, but is understood in *Enūma elīš* as the salt sea). The watery beginnings of Genesis seem closely related to this. Apart from the etymological relation, Tiamat and *thwm* fulfil a similar role in their respective stories; both are divided up by the creator god and made into various

¹⁷⁵ See Talon (2001:268), who notes with reference to the watery origins of the cosmos in *Enūma elīš*: “One has the visual impression of the South Iraqi marshes where land, river and sea mingle together in a chaotic environment, and it is perhaps this image that the poet had in mind.”

parts of the earth. However, the linguistic link is somewhat problematic; though Day concedes that there is a philological relationship between the two words,

“it should not be held, however ... that Hebrew תְּהוֹם is actually derived from Akkadian Tiamat. If this were the case ... we should expect the second Hebrew radical to be *ʿ*, not *h*, and the word to have the feminine ending *h*. Rather, both תְּהוֹם and Tiamat are derived from a common Semitic root.” (1985:50)

Furthermore, he argues that the Hebrew word is derived from an older divine name, stemming from what he terms 'Canaanite' (i.e. Ugaritic?) mythology:

'The deep' in Gen. 1:2 is not a divine personality hostile to God; rather it is here used to denote the impersonal watery mass which covered the world before God brought about the created order. At the same time, however, it is probably that the fact that word always lacks the definite article in the Old Testament is a remnant of the time long past when the term did denote a mythical personality (Day 1985:50).

Day thus supposes *thwm* not to be a sentient thing like Tiamat, nor an opponent to Yahweh, but still essentially *like* Tiamat apart from being impersonal, and originally designating such a character. Tsumura, however, disagrees with Day's characterisation of the term as distinctly Ugaritic, stating that "if the Hebrew term is common Semitic, there is no reason why the term should be taken particularly as 'Canaanite'" (Tsumura 1989:62). Furthermore, he argues,

It should be also noted that Hebrew *təhôm* is a morphologically older form than the assumed Ugaritic form, **tahāmu* [i.e. the postulated divine name underlying תְּהוֹם in Gen 1:2]. If the Hebrew term were a loan word from this "Canaanite" divine name and

had been depersonified subsequently, one would expect the Hebrew term to be something like *tāhôm (Tsumura 1989:62).¹⁷⁶

If Day is then right that *thwm* shares a Semitic root with Tiamat rather than being based directly on it, and if Tsumura is right that there is no reason to assume that *thwm* indicates a depersonified deity from Canaan, there are some possible ways of explaining the similarities between both narratives. It could be that there is a common mythical antecedent to all three (biblical, Babylonian, and Ugaritic) traditions - though, if there is indeed one, no such text is currently known. Another – to me more convincing – explanation is that instead of merely depersonifying the Judahite equivalent of Tiamat, the word *thwm* was chosen as a deliberate play on words by the author of Genesis. Paronomasia is well-attested as a literary device in Hebrew poetry and narrative; for example, in Ex 10:10, "see that evil/Ra is before you." Here, the scribe equates the Egyptian sun god with evil by a play on words (Rendsburg 1988:355). If a similar strategy is employed in this text – and the similarity between the two words is such that I think we must accept this interpretation – *thwm* functions as a deliberate, critical reflection on its literary precursor. If this is the case, the biblical text distances itself from the polytheistic outlook of the Babylonian text in favour of a monotheistic¹⁷⁷ narrative, even if the word *thwm* itself does not reflect an older tradition that has since been stripped of its polytheistic origins.

¹⁷⁶ Against Tsumura's point can be raised the objection that we do not categorically know that this was *not* the pronunciation of the word; after all, the Masoretic vowel pointings are not guaranteed to reflect classical Hebrew perfectly, and the writing system theoretically allows for an /ā/ vowel instead of the shewa. However, as remarked in the methodology, we will assume the basic correctness of the Masoretic tradition and accept as limitations the consequences of this decision.

¹⁷⁷ In the strictest sense of the word, at least: regardless of whether the text is supporting true monotheism or just henotheism, only one deity is part of the narration.

The threat Tiamat poses to our world in *Enūma eliš* makes perfect sense from the Babylonian point of view: as the enemy of Marduk, she opposes all that the younger generation of Babylonian gods stand for, and thus embodies anything not dominated by Babylon itself. By publicly reciting the victory of Marduk (i.e. Babylon) over Tiamat (i.e. everything not Babylon), the supremacy of Babylon was expressed to all present, and thus reinforced their sense of superiority.¹⁷⁸ The prevailing outlook of the text of Genesis 1 is thus a parodic adaptation of its Mesopotamian precursor. Tiamat, as the wild demon-spawning water deity, a narrative parallel of all things foreign to Babylon, is overthrown by Marduk, who then establishes his rightful rule. On the other hand, *thwm* not only lacks agency but also, by virtue of its depersonification, lacks the connotations associated with that agency: Yahweh's rule is not contingent on combat. That the biblical term makes reference to Tiamat must be accepted – considering the very close parallels between the structures of both narratives – but by changing her role to a passive, impersonal one, the author is able to repurpose this narrative element into one that espouses a different ideological point.

Celestial bodies and divine combat

The final form of parodic adaptation considered here takes a further step into an interdisciplinary, multifaceted approach to the texts. While the previous form of ideological communication expects the reader of the adaptation to be more or less aware of the contents of the precursor text, the assumption is that the adapted text by and large follows the structure of its precursor. That means that, for most adaptations, the nature of the text *as adaptation*

¹⁷⁸ As an aside, it is striking to note that the role of giving birth to demons and monsters seems to be given to the primordial chaos goddess, and since the defeat of these creatures and of Tiamtu herself by the male head of the pantheon is the central theme in *Enūma eliš*, it could be argued that there is an underlying reinforcement of the patriarchal structure of kingship present in the story. Additionally – though beyond the scope of this study – this same theme may be present in the Garden of Eden narrative, where the woman is responsible for the expulsion from Eden, resulting in a patriarchal structure being imposed on her.

relies on its use of elements present in the precursor. However, it might similarly be possible – again drawing on audience expectation and contextual knowledge – that the ideological statement is constructed not through modification (and retention) of precursor elements, but through the absence thereof. Looking back at Hutcheon’s approach, this reinforces the notion that the parody can wield another text against its target, because such an ‘argument of absence’ probably targets underlying cultural aspects rather than the text itself. This strategy of omitting specific elements can be similar to their repurposing, discussed above; however, omission is a more powerful way of distancing the adaptation from its precursor. In order to see a practical example, we can once again turn to our case studies for two particular omissions: sun and moon, and the *Chaoskampf*.

The celestial bodies formed (and, of course, still form) an important part of everyday life. Both sun and moon, as representatives of the day-night cycle, are used as basis for the calendar of nearly every time-keeping system in the world. It is no wonder, then, that they often occur as personified deities in traditions across the world. In Mesopotamia specifically, Šamaš – the sun god – was additionally god of law and justice, and occurs frequently in literary compositions as an important character (e.g. the *Etana* and *Gilgamesh* epics). Though the cult of Sîn – who is called by his Sumerian name Nanna in *Enūma eliš* for no readily discernible reason – was less associated with practical matters, he governed wisdom¹⁷⁹ and was worshipped in Ur and Harran. Despite being less prominent than Šamaš, Sîn was by no means an obscure deity, appearing in *Enlil and Ninlil*. The fact that his name is often written as D30, referring to the thirty-day month, gives further evidence for his close association with the calendar. Both deities, then, are closely tied in with some very fundamental aspects of life in Mesopotamia. More importantly, however, they both form a significant part of Marduk’s creation in *Enūma eliš*, because they are called to rule over various elements of the organisation of daily life (EE V.1ff). Naturally, the polytheistic outlook of this interpretation

¹⁷⁹ As evident from the characters EN.ZU, literally ‘lord of wisdom’, which together are read as SIN₃.

of times and seasons meant that some change had to take place for the treatment of this element in Genesis 1. Going further than merely using the Hebrew words for sun and moon – *šmš* and *yrḥ* – Genesis 1:16 calls them *hm 'r hggdl* ‘the big light’ and *hm 'r hqqtñ* ‘the small light’ respectively. It seems likely that the author wanted to avoid any confusion regarding the sun, at least: without vocalisation, *šmš* might be read as the name of the deity. The designation of the moon probably followed suit for compositional reasons.¹⁸⁰ The ideology espoused by this small section of the Genesis creation narrative thus shows several layers of propagating ideology through omission. First of all, there is the rejection of other deities than Yahweh controlling the organisation of time: the omission of Šamaš and Sîn denies them a place in the Genesis creation account, and by extension, in the Judahite experience of time. Even the “ruling” of sun and moon over day and night is no more than a rhetorical tool: like *thwm*, they are deprived of all agency, and their motions are still clearly governed by Yahweh. Secondly, and far more powerfully, the omission of the gods of sun and moon should be seen as a rejection of the Mesopotamian world view. More than merely decrying polytheism, the text comments on the Babylonian calendar through the rejection of its gods: religious festivals and observances are thrown out through the wholesale rejection of the calendar, and as an extension, Babylonian concepts of order and organisation.

The role of heavenly bodies

The term 'heavenly bodies' encompasses not merely the lights we see in the sky; though the sun, moon, planets and stars are probably the first things we think of when we hear the term, the narratives that are analysed here attribute a rather more expansive definition to the concept; for example, the sky itself was considered a physical dome as opposed to a gradually thinning atmosphere. For the current purpose it is then probably helpful to consider the structure of the cosmos as a whole. It is quite unclear to what extent the ancient Babylonians

¹⁸⁰ There is an Ugaritic moon deity by name of *yrḥ* (/Yariḥu/?), directly cognate with the Hebrew word, but the Akkadian cognate *arḥu* does not appear to have been used for the deity in Mesopotamia at all.

were aware of the universe outside our solar system, as most heavenly bodies are equated to deities who reside in the upper spheres of the dome constituting the heaven, and outside and above the 'heaven' sphere nothing seems to be considered (Horowitz 1998: xiii).

The divinity of cosmological structures in Babylonian mythology is apparent already on a very basic level: coming from Hebrew, for example, Šamaš is rather easily understood as having to do something with *šmš*, the literal Hebrew word for 'sun.' The Akkadian word is *šamšu*, meaning not just 'sun' but also referring to the god and to daytime (CAD, Š 1, 'šamšu' 1, 3). In *Enūma eliš*, all these meanings are exemplified when Marduk creates the moon and the stars, he commands the moon - identified with Nanna, the moon god - to "shed [its] visibility and begin to wane" when "Šamaš looks at [it] from the horizon" (V.19-20); it shows that the sun-god was conceived of as the sun itself (much like Ra in Egypt and Helios in Greece) and that the cycle of the sun dictated day and night. While the latter statement might seem completely obvious, it is very important to keep in mind that it is instated by divine mandate to be controlled by another deity; as such, the length of days forms an integral part of the order of creation, tying back into the previous theme. Of course, the heavens themselves are created out of Tiamat, which raises the question of what the cosmos consisted of prior to Marduk's victory and the slaughter of Tiamat. Indeed, since - besides Anu's palace, fashioned out of Apsu - nothing really exists apart from the gods, and Marduk only creates mountains, rivers, and cities after he has slain Tiamat, the likely explanation is that there was some dry land. Marduk is described as 'taking to the road' on his chariot to meet Tiamat in battle in IV.59, which lends credibility to this theory. Clifford (1994:89), however, maintains that "the first lines [of the story] describe a water mass. There was no dry land."

While Šamaš only holds reign over the day, it is the moon that properly designates the division of days, weeks, and months. Deified in Nanna (the Akkadian equivalent is Sîn, but

interestingly the moon god is designated with his Sumerian name in this text),¹⁸¹ it is commanded by Marduk to "mark the days" (V.13). A parallel can be found in Israelite (and modern Jewish) tradition, where the day starts at sundown, probably modelled upon the creation narrative where the recurring formula states that "there was evening and there was morning, the *n*th day" (1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). In both cultures, then, the rising moon was indicative of the beginning of the new day, and as with the course of the day, it was a divinely instated and controlled aspect of the cosmos, and through this divine control, an orderly part of it. Thus, as mentioned before, a large part of the creation of heavenly bodies has to do with a further desire to create order, on a level that transcends the mere victory over chaos; it is a very detailed way of ordering everyday life, since the division of weeks and months as described in the first 25 lines of the fifth tablet are all concerned with the establishment of the calendar. This 'fixing' of cosmic order returns when, in line 60-68, Marduk fixes into place the various elements comprising the cosmos: first the sky, then the earth, then his cult and its rites. Because practice in the cult of various gods would be dependent on the calendar - as the calendar would dictate when certain festivals and celebrations would take place - Marduk's creation of various cultic centres is not a creation of heavenly bodies, but certainly one governed by them. Furthermore, even if the temples themselves are not directly personified in a god, like the sun and the moon, their status as residence of a particular deity would blur the distinction between an earthly and a heavenly place. Clifford (1994:92) argues that Marduk being the "patron of [the gods'] sanctuaries (V.115) ... is equivalent to acclaiming his lordship." Again, authority is then established through the supreme god's demonstration of power; unlike the above martial victory over chaos, the creation of heavenly bodies and the things governed by them shows Marduk's

¹⁸¹ Strangely, Dalley (2008:256) translates ^DNanna ('the god Nanna') with 'crescent moon,' whereas she retains the name Šamaš for ^DŠamaš ('the god Šamaš') and does not translate it as 'sun.' No clarification is given on the matter, which could be problematic for the interpretation of the text, as by translating 'crescent moon' the text makes no mention whatsoever of Nanna otherwise.

practical authority as king, a ruler in charge of everyday life rather than just a fierce warrior in battle. Even though the organising of seasons and the calendar is an expression of creating order in chaos, Marduk gains a different kind of authority. Of course, through him, as above, the king would be granted a similar kind of authority, being Marduk's representative in Babylon. Furthermore, it should be added, the temple-building that forms part of the Babylonian creation narrative necessarily has no role in the Genesis account. The establishment of cultic centres holds the purpose of divinely ordaining and ratifying the existence of temples in other cities than Babylon (which has already been created by this point). Because of the Bible's monotheistic ideology, there can necessarily be no temples to other gods apart from the one in Jerusalem designated for God.¹⁸²

Completely differently portrayed is the creation of heavenly bodies in Genesis, not because their role is not the same, but because they are completely depersonified. When we consider the process of creation in both myths, the relatedness of the two are strongly apparent. This is indicated by the fact that both stories - though they do not all contain the same things being created - adhere to the largely same order. It is striking to see that the creation of sun and moon - and it is obvious that 1:16 refers to both - does not mention either the word *šmš* nor the word *yrh*. If, again, Genesis responds to *Enūma eliš* in a way that opposes its expression of polytheism, this is probably the best expression of it. By not mentioning even the common noun indicating the sun and the moon, the author steers clear of any identification with those highly important deities of Babylonian culture, who in *Enūma eliš* control the calendar.

Middleton (2005:211) puts it as follows:

"The sun and the moon are not even named in Genesis 1, further preventing the possibility that the sun ... might be unintentionally identified with the

Babylonian/Assyrian sun-god. [Sun and moon do] not determine human destiny or

¹⁸² And even then, there is considerable archaeological evidence that the temple in Jerusalem was not the only one where God was worshipped. See, for example, Van der Toorn (1993) and Rosenberg (2004).

impinge on human agency in any way. Rather, the luminaries serve humanity by giving light and providing a temporal framework of days and seasons."

Indeed, the bestowing of authority on humans in the Genesis creation narrative plays a very important role, which is to exercise dominion over nature in 1:28-30. As Middleton points out, while the sun and moon rule night and day, they do not rule humanity. As opposed to the Babylonian story, in which humans obey the divinely instated calendar and live by it, under its authority, the Genesis narrative provides no such subjugation. On the contrary, as indicated by O'Brien and Major (1982:43), by using the word *rdh*, mankind takes on royal responsibilities:

"Hebrew *rdh* is often translated 'have dominion' to bring out its royal connotations since the word was frequently used of kings. The human race, then, is to assume a king's responsibility to the rest of creation."

When it comes to other heavenly elements, such as the dome in the sky, which separates the waters, again a remarkable difference can be seen: while Marduk must defeat Tiamat over the course of a lengthy battle prior to finally creating this dome out of her corpse, God simply commands the dome into being. Another difference between the two stories is that *thwm* seems not to be involved in the making of the sky - if the use of the word, as argued before, is a stab at the threat of Tiamat's power, which is not present in Genesis, the play on words is restricted to that one mention of *thwm* in 1:2. The stars, similarly, serve essentially no practical function in the biblical account when they are created in 1:16, while they are an integral part of establishing the calendar in *Enūma elīš* V.2-7.

The creation of heavenly bodies in *Enūma elīš* is therefore yet another expression of authority in essence: it emphasises both Marduk's might as creator god and his authority to bestow rulership over particular aspects of human life. Where the dome of heaven is concerned, it serves as a reminder of Marduk's victory over Tiamat; it is a complete, humiliating victory

("He sliced her in half like a fish for drying," IV.136). None of this is present in the biblical account. All heavenly bodies are made as an expression of God's will: he commands them into being, and they are brought into being. The complete depersonification of the creation of sun and moon - comprehensively so, as even the proper nouns of sun and moon are avoided - indicates the extent to which the biblical account distances itself from the implications of the *Enūma elīš*: that several gods are in charge of human life by arranging it in a way they see fit. The Genesis narrative counters that view by first making the heavenly bodies into simple objects, and then emphasising humanity's supremacy over creation. Thus, we can once again show a connection between the commentary on *Enūma elīš* that is found in Genesis 1, and the simultaneous commentary it provides on the societal reality of its compositional context.

Chaoskampf

The second issue to consider in the context of the strategy of omission is the lack of a *Chaoskampf* in Genesis 1. While the lack of agency of the primordial water has already been noted as a repurposing of the powerful Tiamat of *Enūma elīš*, the wholesale omission of the expected struggle, between the main deity and his primary antagonist, is a glaring absence quite beyond the change of Tiamat into *thwm*. When we once more consider Genesis 1 as part of the broader context of the Hebrew Bible, it becomes readily apparent that biblical creation narrative is heavily invested in a battle with a primordial monster. Isaiah 51:9-10 probably provides the best example:

Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord!

Awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago!

Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon?

Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep;

who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to cross over?

The compositional context of Deutero-Isaiah, of course, places it around the time *and* place of Genesis 1, and thus provides a good parallel to the story: if Isa 51 refers to a battle with a sea monster related to creation, why would Gen 1 lack one? Ostensibly, both texts were composed by Judahite exiles in Babylon – presumably not too large a group – and both present their creation imagery as ‘drying up’ the waters of *thwm*. Thematically, then, one might expect the two to be identical in their representation of creation. Going even further, Anderson (1984:2) notes that “the *Chaoskampf* is a ... ubiquitous motif, indeed one that is not only ancient Near Eastern but one that touches the depths of a mythical apprehension of reality found in ‘archaic’ societies, as Mircea Eliade and others have shown.” The absence of the sea monster – or, indeed, any form of *Chaoskampf* – is then at least surprising.

Several other passages support the inclusion of a battle against an oceanic foe in biblical creation narrative. Psalm 74:13-17 provides a close parallel to Genesis 1, and in fact, the former fills in the omissions made by the latter:

You divided the sea by your might;
you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters.
You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
you gave him as food for the people of the wilderness.¹⁸³
You cut openings for springs and torrents;
you dried up the ever-flowing streams.
Yours is the day, yours is also the night;
you established the lights and the sun.
You have fixed all the bounds of the earth;
you made summer and winter.

¹⁸³ BHS gives a footnote referring to “the sharks of the sea” – BDB suggests that the text is corrupt.

Again, as in Isa 51:9, this passage mentions a battle with a sea monster, Leviathan; this time not cutting her into pieces, as Marduk did to Tiamat and Yahweh to Rahab,¹⁸⁴ but crushing its heads. This again shows that, for biblical creation narrative, a tradition existed in which Yahweh created the world after defeating his oceanic enemy. Moreover, the fact that “the lights and the sun” are mentioned here, as well as the creation of seasons, suggests that this Psalm, at least, is not employing the strategy of omission in the same way as Genesis 1. This shows the specific anti-Babylonian outlook of the Genesis creation myth; as opposed to other creation narratives in the Hebrew Bible, the first account in Genesis comments on its Mesopotamian cultural background by deliberately omitting specific elements from its source.

First of all, let us consider the concept of a progression from chaos to order. The idea that the world was formed out of a chaotic origin by the act of one or more gods is well-attested in the ancient world. Indeed, our word 'chaos' is derived from the Greek *χάος*, meaning 'emptiness, void' and being the name of the primal state of the universe in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Chaos in the *Theogony* was in fact a deity, rather than simply an absence of anything else, as was the idea behind Anaximander's *ἄπειρον*, for example (O'Brien and Major 1982:52). It seems that in the case of the Greek story, Chaos existed alongside the later generation of gods, as suggested by lines 116 ("First of all there was Chaos; and then came broad-breasted Gaia") and 123 ("Out of Chaos, black Erebus and Night were born"). As soon as Gaia bears Ouranos (In 126), the focus shifts from the primordial deities to the generations of gods starting with the offspring of Gaia and Ouranos, and the older gods fade into the background. They serve no further narrative purpose, and are not mentioned again (save Eros, who joins Aphrodite when she is born in In 201). Completely antithetical to this relative lack of interest in the original gods of the universe are both Genesis 1 and *Enūma eliš*. Both stories treat the primordial state in a different way, yet both are significantly concerned with the role it plays

¹⁸⁴ Psalm 89:10 provides another example of Rahab's slaying.

in the story. First of all, then, let us consider this primordial state, and then focus on the way in which this state is made into the world as it was understood by the authors of the respective stories.

The precise method of creation in Genesis 1 has long been a topic of much discussion. As briefly touched upon above, the main interpretation by the Christian church has been and still often is that God created the world out of nothing - *creatio ex nihilo*. Augustine's position - as he was the one most fanatically to advance this interpretation - was that there was nothing before the events of Genesis 1:1. As he writes in his *Confessions* (book XI, chapter 12): "Before God made heaven and earth, he did not make anything at all. For if he did, what did he make unless it were a creature?" He goes on, "if there was no time before heaven and earth, how, then, can it be asked, 'What were you doing then?' For there was no 'then' when there was no time" (chapter 13). In other words, Augustine considers the initial creation of heaven and earth to also be the point at which time was created; functionally, there was nothing before this event but God. The question, of course, is whether the text can support this reading - if it does not, it would be pertinent to find parallels in other ancient Near Eastern narratives. The key passage in this case is Gen 1:1-2. Unfortunately for our straightforward understanding, the Hebrew is rather ambiguous. The NRSV translates the passage as follows:

"¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters."

The key difficulty in translation is the relationship between the first verse and the second; the NRSV provides the following alternative translations in a footnote: "¹In the beginning when God began to create..." and "¹In the beginning God created..." If we are to take the latter alternative, verse 1:2 would become an independent clause. In that case, the text would

distinguish between two different events: 1) God's creation of heaven and earth; and 2) the earth being a formless void, et cetera. That would mean it is possible to interpret the text in a way that would suggest that God created the things summed up in verse 2. Both alternatives, however, seem more strongly to suggest that at the point of the opening of the story God is about to create the heavens and the earth, with verse 2 indicating the initial state of the material with which he will work. All three translations, however, keep the other options open, in that all three can be read in support of Augustine's thesis, and conversely they can also be seen as having little bearing on it; since the text does not seem to conclusively settle on either interpretation, it is difficult to come to a definitive conclusion based on a close reading of the text. A grammatical analysis provides some respite, though it does not really answer the question either. Holmstedt (2008:65) argues that Gen 1:1 "as a whole can serve only one grammatical function: it is a stage-setting prepositional phrase, providing a temporal frame of reference only for what follows," suggesting that the point of 1:1 is not to posit some kind of absolute point of beginning, but rather serve as an introduction to either 1:2 or 1:3 (Holmstedt 2008:65). He argues furthermore that it is quite possible for there to be multiple 'beginnings', meaning that 'the beginning' refers purely to the initial state of things when the story starts, and does not necessarily mean "in the beginning of the cosmos" but something more along the lines of "as we begin telling our story..."

Whether the author of Genesis envisioned God's creation to mark the beginning of time, and that there was nothing before it, or that Genesis 1:1-3 simply indicate the beginning stages of God's craftsmanship on the cosmos; the argument can ultimately not be resolved, since neither side can be affirmed nor disproven. Whichever the case, then, a comparative analysis must rest on the conceptual similarities and differences in the story. The easiest concept to look at, in the case of the theme of chaos to order, is *thwm*, the term denoting part of the state of the cosmos as it was when God started creating. Etymologically, the noun *thwm* - defined in HALOT as 'primaeval ocean, primaeval flood' – may be related to the root *hwm* 'to distract,

make a noise, murmur, destroy' (although HALOT rejects its direct derivation from the verb). This word, used in 1:2 in conjunction with *thw* and *bhw* (both meaning something like 'emptiness,' 'waste,' or 'void'), indicates the primordial state of the earth. It seems that 'earth' (*'rṣ*) does not just mean 'dry land' as that is only created by drying up the waters in 1:9 - even though Yahweh does designate it to be named *'rṣ*. It seems, then, that *'rṣ* in 1:2 refers to what is to become the dry land, and that it is noted for being an empty wasteland. Somewhere, *thwm* is present, but it is not clear whether the empty wasteland *is* in fact *thwm*, or that it exists alongside it. It is also mentioned that there are 'waters' (*mym*) above which hovers a wind from Yahweh, or perhaps Yahweh's spirit (*rwh 'lhym*). Even though the details may not be entirely clear, it seems clear from the text that water forms a large part of the initial state of the cosmos. This is corroborated by the fact that, after the creation of the light in 1:3, the world is created by modification of the water, first by splitting it apart with a dome (forming the sky), and then by pooling up water to create dry land. As such, the initial prevalence of the water with its empty wasteland - an unorganised and thus chaotic whole - is dammed in quite literally to make way for the ordered creation as called into existence through Yahweh's will.

When we compare this to *Enūma elīš*, an ambiguity similar to the initial state of the cosmos is in play (see translation of EE I.1-6, in Appendix A). The story starts at an unspecified time, sometime before the skies and earth were named, when Apsu and Tiamat 'had mixed their waters together' (that is, had sexual relations). It is possible that the two first lines are poetic style indicating the absolute beginning - but, as with the Genesis creation story, there remains the question where Apsu and Tiamat were residing if not in some existing universe; as such, it is possible that they were simply envisaged as being eternal, having always been there. Indeed, apart from these initial few lines, Apsu is mainly seen as a structure, a part of the universe, rather than a deity, as Anu fashions him into his temple in lines 69-78. According to Heise (1995), "Tiamat is the first primeval being, primeval Chaos, a kind of primordial

godlike creature that existed before the gods were created." While according to the text Apsu seems to be identified as the first being (line 3), it does seem to be true that both are considered to be different kinds of deities from the later pantheon. Along the lines of Gaia in the Greek *Theogony*, Tiamat is described as giving birth to all sorts of horrendous monsters in lines 134-146, something none of the other gods do. The fact that no names were yet pronounced nor destinies decreed ties in with the conclusion of the story, in which Marduk names various things (such as Babylon and mankind) and thus calls them into being, and receives the Tablet of Destinies. Previously, Qingu (who was in charge of Tiamat's army of demons) had received the tablet from Tiamat, and was told "Your utterance shall never be altered! Your word shall be law!" (III.105-6); the implication is that Qingu now holds authority to reign over the cosmos as he sees fit. Naturally, Marduk's acquiring the tablet meant that he wielded the same power, this time as 'rightful' ruler by consensus of the gods.

Biblical creation outside Genesis

Genesis, of course, is not the only book in the Hebrew Bible that discusses creation, although it provides a natural starting point for many studies on the topic. Part of this focus on the Genesis creation narratives is undoubtedly predicated on the presumption that they are exemplary of, or representative for, the overall biblical view of creation. This was very likely the aim of the editor responsible for prefacing the Torah with these two narratives, and although we have discussed earlier that absolute consistency is unlikely to have played a major part in the editorial process, we have similarly seen the important role of introduction in guiding the reader's understanding of the text (Milstein 2016). Thus, if we understand Genesis 1 and 2-3 as introductory material within which the subsequent collection of texts is framed, other creation narratives naturally become more marginalised and are likely to be interpreted in the light of this preface. This holds true for modern hermeneutics – in that biblical creation in a Christian context is virtually exclusively rendered through the lens of

Genesis¹⁸⁵ – as much as it does for the original audience of the earliest exilic Yahwistic canon. It is particularly the latter with which we have been concerned thus far, and a number of questions arise from the observations made on biblical creation material that warrant further attention. Firstly, to what extent are Gen 1 and 2-3 representative of the overall Yahwistic view of creation? That is, if Gen 1-11 are based on a Mesopotamian mythological paradigm, do these chapters agree with, or stand in contrast to, the original (pre-exilic) Northwest-Semitic Yahwistic creation paradigm? This leads us to the second question: in what way does the ideological, anti-Babylonian nature of Gen 1-11 impact on the overall biblical view of creation? In other words – assuming Israel and Judah had a NW-S creation tradition – to what extent was this tradition affected by the composition and prefacing role of Gen 1 and 2-3?

In this part, we will discuss a range of additional biblical texts that concern various aspects of creation; this encompasses both actual creative acts (as in Ps 74 and 104) as well as chaotic agents associated with primordial history (e.g. Rahab in Ps 89 and Leviathan in Ps 74 and Is 27). Again, I do not mean to raise the impression that these texts are necessarily reliant on the Genesis myths: on the contrary, I think that many of them reflect a much older tradition that is not rooted in the Babylonian context in which the Genesis texts were composed. However, it seems clear at the same time that the purpose of the authors and editors of Genesis was precisely to marginalise these older strands of tradition for ideological purposes. These strands would, to Judahites outside of Babylon (either remaining after the destruction of Jerusalem or having fled to Egypt in 598 BCE) and perhaps even to Israelites living in various parts of the Empire, probably be contextually intuitive – as opposed to the (minimally?) counterintuitive narratives devised by exiled Judahites in Babylon – and reflect

¹⁸⁵ And then, of course, especially in non-academic and lay settings, often through a harmonised version of Gen 1 and 2-3. In the New Testament John 1 could similarly be cited, and it follows the same pattern by being introductory material ('In the beginning was...') prefacing the author's gospel.

to some extent their religious paradigm prior to the Babylonian exile. For instance, Ps 74, which appears to be inspired by the destruction of Jerusalem and thus likely written in Babylon, contains a Genesis-like creation as well as a nod towards covenantal theology, suggesting it was part of the Babylonian paradigm shift. However, it also makes reference to Leviathan, whose slaughter is not narrated in Genesis and – although slaying the sea monster was also a Mesopotamian trope – whose inclusion by name is probably rooted in Judah’s West-Semitic cultural roots. Similarly, Ps 104 may reflect Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and/or West-Semitic ideas of divine creative action. Ps 29, while not a creation hymn, reflects cosmogonic elements and attests to some degree of cultural continuity in its likely use of a song to Ba’al (specifically probably Hadad), while its erasure of Hadad’s title and attributes in favour of Yahweh show ideological concerns with a non-Babylonian text. Finally, Ps 89 betrays a strong connection between political power and religious text, and frames divine authority explicitly within the context of creation.

A major issue in studying the Psalms is dating, and because it is so important to this study to discern at least a broad timeframe within which the text was likely composed, some of the analysis in this chapter may rest on somewhat more speculative ground than the preceding material. Thankfully, however, most of the texts that will be discussed below provide us with some idea of compositional date. Equally difficult to pin down with certainty is Isaiah 27 – relevant to discuss because of its mention of Leviathan – although it at least contains a *terminus post quem* unlike some of the Psalms.

Psalm 29

The first psalm we will discuss here is – like the Mesopotamian precursors to *Enūma eliš* – most likely an older composition. Psalm 29, as a deceptively straightforward hymn of praise to Yahweh, conceals in its almost formulaic structure a potentially complex intercultural history. There is some disagreement on the question of how it found its way into the Yahwistic psalter, and similarly the precise dynamic of its adoption by Israelite or Judahite

Yahwists has been cause for debate. Because some of the possible interpretations suggest that the origins of the text lie in the background of the polytheistic West-Semitic pantheon, a discussion of the range of possibilities is warranted here. It is also important to emphasise that – contrary perhaps to the reader’s expectation – Ps 29 is neither a creation hymn nor one that extols Yahweh’s victory over chaos. Its relevance to the current thesis lies primarily in its West-Semitic background, providing (as we shall see) an excellent example of early Yahwistic cultural appropriation.¹⁸⁶ The psalm, superscribed as a psalm of David,¹⁸⁷ is structured familiarly in the complex layered doublet form that characterises many other ancient Near Eastern poetry, such as Ištar’s Descent and significant parts of *Enūma elīš*. The recurring poetic device is the voice of Yahweh: throughout the psalm, it is used to exemplify his power, which is reinforced by repeating the same construction.

In their recent, comprehensive analysis of the psalm, De Claissé-Walford *et al.* write that the question of its origin “cannot be solved and is rather uninteresting” (2014:281). On the contrary: the complex background of Ps 29 reveals the rich spectrum of religious tradition in which Yahwism arose, and thus helps us understand more clearly why the exiled Judahite elite might be perfectly willing to adopt elements from other religious systems. A number of features suggest that the hymn finds its origins not in a mono- or henotheistic or monolatrous Yahwistic setting, but rather in a polytheistic context. The first clear indication of this is found immediately in verse 1, which calls on the *bny ‘lym* ‘sons of the gods’ to ascribe glory and strength to Yahweh. Note that the Hebrew uses not the expected *‘lhym* – attested in

¹⁸⁶ I mean ‘appropriation’ here in terms of active or passive agency: the cult of Yahweh held power over the cults of other – and multiple – deities in early Iron Age Israel and Judah. As such, the adoption of non-Yahwistic material for the purpose of reinforcing Yahwistic ideology was part of an unequal power dynamic.

¹⁸⁷ Apocryphally, undoubtedly, but perhaps more likely than any other psalm actually to date to the purported lifetime of David.

combination with *bny* in 4QDeutⁱ (// Deut 32:8)¹⁸⁸ – but instead the rare plural form of *ʾl*. As in other cases where *ʾlym* occurs in the plural (Ps 89:6; Dan 11:36; Ex 15:11), it here presumably indicates gods as distinct from, or subordinate to, Yahweh (see HALOT *ʾl* C 1); or (if the *mem* is enclitic) as the sons of El (or of Yahweh syncretised with El). Although the expression *bny ʾlym* occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible apart from the aforementioned Ps 89:6 – which similarly suggests a polytheistic context – it has a clear precedent in Ugaritic. There, the cognate expression *bn ilm* occurs regularly in various contexts, mostly in mythological and ritual texts. The most common occurrence takes *bn* in construct state singular and *ilm* as an oblique plural (‘son of the gods’), and becomes a stock phrase meaning simply ‘divine being’; that is, a member (metaphorical ‘son’) of the gods. This sense of the phrase is used frequently with specific reference to Motu, the god of death;¹⁸⁹ with reference to Baʿlu it is found only once, in KTU 1.17 VI 29, although it is not clear whether the doublet here is oppositional or complementary.¹⁹⁰ Another reading of the phrase takes *ilm* as ʾIlu’s name (*il*) with an enclitic *–m*,¹⁹¹ understanding it as a specific reference, to ʾIlu’s fatherhood as head of the pantheon.¹⁹² In this case, the phrase emphasises the relationship between the

¹⁸⁸ See Joosten (2007); Crawford, Joosten, and Ulrich (2008).

¹⁸⁹ E.g. in KTU 1.5 II 8-9, which reads *rgm l bn ilm mt / l ydd il* ‘say to **divine being** Motu, to the beloved one of ʾIlu.’ Cf. DUL: *bn* (II) 5.b; *l* (I) 6.b); *mt* (II) 2.a.

¹⁹⁰ *ʿm bn il tspr yrhm / ašsprk ʿm bʿl šnt* ‘With the sons of ʾIlu you will count the months; / I shall make you count with Baʿlu the years.’ The question whether *bn il* here is used in a complementary sense (indicating that Baʿlu is like the sons of ʾIlu), or oppositional (highlighting his dissimilarity to them) is not clear from the text itself.

¹⁹¹ Perhaps used as an emphatic particle here, but the precise function of the enclitic *–m* in Ugaritic is still unclear.

¹⁹² The difference between the two readings could be understood as analogous to the difference in English between ‘son of a god’ and ‘son of God’, the latter indicating a specific deity (and perhaps also a specific son, i.e. Jesus, in a Christian context) while the former has a more Graeco-Roman air to it. In all likelihood, the

god to whom the epithet is applied and 'Ilu, who is frequently described in familial terms as father of mankind (e.g. KTU 1.14 I 37) and of the gods (e.g. of Ba^slu¹⁹³ and 'Anatu in KTU 1.3 V).¹⁹⁴

It should be emphasised that seems unlikely that the psalm derives directly from Ugarit, however: after Ugarit's destruction in the Bronze Age Collapse¹⁹⁵ in the early 12th century BCE, there is a significant gap until the first traces of Israelite and Judahite literacy. Thus, unless the hymn or its themes were transmitted orally directly from Ugarit to the Yahwistic tradition – a possibility explored by Pardee (2009: 115-121) – the “question is *which* Canaanite tradition Psalm 29 drew on” (Smith 2014: 49, emphasis mine). This leads us to a second feature of the text hinting at its non-Yahwistic origin: its potential non-Israelite/Judahite location of composition. Ginsberg, the first scholar to point out the connection between Ps 29 and its wider Northwest-Semitic context, had already argued that the psalm probably traced back to a Phoenician source rather than an Ugaritic one (1938: 472-476); similarly Gaster (1946-1947: 55-65) and Cross (1950: 19-21; 1973: 151-153) support this interpretation, the former even arguing that the psalm was originally and entirely

difference would have been clear to the contemporary Ugaritic audience from context or cultural convention, while the nuances are probably somewhat lost on the modern exegete.

The enclitic *-m* for the name of 'Ilu independently (i.e. without the possibility of it serving a specific grammatical function) is attested in syllabic Ugaritic, where equivalent writings of the same deity are collected: [AN = *ilu*] = *e-ni* = *i-lu-ma* (UF 11 1979: 479, ln 30).

¹⁹³ Ba^slu is normally considered the son of Daganu, not of 'Ilu, so 'Ilu's fatherhood may be adoptive, ceremonial, or otherwise metaphorical other than biological – insofar as we can speak of biology when it comes to gods – here.

¹⁹⁴ Curiously, the catch-all reference to 'Ilu's fatherhood of the gods is *ab bn il* 'father of the sons of 'Ilu' in KTU 1.40 33, which appears rather tautological; it does illustrate perfectly, of course, how deeply ingrained the phrase *bn il* was.

¹⁹⁵ For more details on this cataclysmic event in the Eastern Mediterranean, see Cline (2014); subtitled appropriately, “the year civilization collapsed”) and the discussion on Psalm 104, below.

a Northwest-Semitic, non-Yahwist, composition praising Ba'al in which the storm god's name had been replaced with Yahweh. Fitzgerald expanded this argument of a direct Northwest-Semitic context most ingeniously by showing that the text is much more impressively alliterative if Ba'al is 'reinserted' into the text (1974: 61-63). Given that alliteration was one of the most common features of ancient poetry (in both Northwest-Semitic and Mesopotamian texts), Fitzgerald may either have stumbled on an accidental improvement on the poetic qualities of the psalm, or shown that the text indeed originally was a hymn to a different god from Yahweh. It seems likely to me that Fitzgerald's analysis is sound, not only because the direct substitution of *yhwh* for *b'l* is so elegant in its simplicity, but also because the alliterative device fits too well to be coincidental.

That the text is probably not an original composition to Yahweh becomes most evident from another aspect of the text. This second hint at a non-Judahite compositional context is the specific theophany of Yahweh as the thunderstorm. Given his virtually complete absence in the onomastic and epigraphic North-West Semitic corpus outside of specifically Yahwistic contexts, Yahweh presumably was not originally part of the coastal Levantine pantheon, but introduced into Judah and Israel from elsewhere – probably Edom.¹⁹⁶ It is possible that he was already a storm god before this time, or that he had taken on some characteristics associated with the storm god – as befitting for the head of an ancient Near Eastern pantheon! – in the process of his adoption into the Judahite and Israelite pantheons. Either way, the language used to describe Yahweh's theophany in Ps 29 is so strongly reminiscent of specifically Ugaritic textual material that a western or north-western origin of the psalm seems much more likely than a southern one. The connection between the psalm and the Ugaritic hymnic tradition goes beyond generic stylistic and thematic similarities, however:

¹⁹⁶ If an early date for the Song of Deborah (Jdg 5) is accepted, we have an early textual witness to Yahweh's southern origin; see Albright (1922), Robertson (1972), Globe (1974). Cf. Wong (2007) for a recent argument for a late date.

the Hebrew text uses words whose direct cognates in Ugaritic appear in mythological contexts, particularly in reference to Ba^ʿlu and ʾIlu. More significantly, most of them appear in the Ba^ʿlu Cycle. To give some specific examples: Yahweh’s voice (*qwl*, Ug *ql*) thunders (*rʿm*, Ug. *rʿt/rḡm*) above the waters (29:3) – in both Hebrew and Ugaritic, the deity’s thundering voice is used illustratively for their power (e.g. of Yahweh, Ps 18:13-14 and Isa 30:30; of Ba^ʿlu, KTU 1.4 V 8, VII 29). In Ugaritic, KTU 1.101 even connects the thunder (*rʿt*) with water, as does Ps 29:3. Ps 29:5 continues with Yahweh breaking (*šbr*, Ug *tbr*) trees: in pi’el – and only in the Psalms¹⁹⁷ – the verb frequently denotes Yahweh’s destructive power (Ps 3:8; 46:10; 74:13; 76:4). In Ugaritic (where it only occurs as an active verb in G), it occurs in similar destructive contexts in connection to Ba^ʿlu (KTU 1.19 III 2, 8, 17, 31, 43), and the exact same trope of shaking trees occurs in KTU 9.435. Psalm 29:6 describes an earthquake induced by Yahweh’s voice, closely paralleling KTU 1.4 VII 34. Furthermore, Lebanon and Siryon here are compared to a calf (*ʿgl*, Ug *ʿgl*) and a wild bull (*rʿm*, Ug *rum*) respectively. The calf is used in a mostly negative sense throughout the Hebrew Bible (Ex 32; Deut 9:21; see Hutton 2010) and as an epithet of the monster ʿAtaku (specifically *ʿgl il*) in KTU 1.3 III 44. The wild bull, *rʿm*, occurs only nine times in the Hebrew Bible, in Num 23:22 and 24:8 used as a direct metaphor for Yahweh; in Ugaritic, it is used in reference to several deities, notably Ba^ʿlu himself (KTU 1.6 VI 18), Motu (ibid.), and Anatu and Ba^ʿlu’s son (KTU 1.10 III 36).¹⁹⁸ Although the references to the calf and the bull in Ps 29 are used to describe places, not gods, the choice of metaphorical language is undoubtedly deliberate in relating a divine act (here, the earthquake) to the physical presence of the deity. The use of these particular words further strengthens the notion that Yahweh’s theophany in Ps 29 is

¹⁹⁷ Perhaps also in Isa 63:6, but conjectural; see HALOT.

¹⁹⁸ Ba^ʿlu’s usual title apart from *bn il* is *bn dḡn* ‘son of Daganu’ or *aliyn bʿl* ‘Ba^ʿlu, the Very Powerful’ (*DUL*, ‘bʿl’ (II) 3b). It is ʾIlu who normally holds the title of bull, although the word here is *tr*, not *rʿm* (*DUL*, ‘il’ (I) 2c).

dependent on a North-West Semitic tradition about Baʿlu, rather than being a completely independent composition.

Apart from specific vocabulary shared between Ps 29 and Ugaritic texts, the toponyms used in vss. 6 and 8 – Lebanon, Siryon, and the ‘wilderness of Qadesh’ – provide a third piece of evidence for the non-Yahwistic origin of the text. Lebanon and Qadesh are not actually in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah proper: Lebanon historically was beyond Israel’s northern border, and the wilderness of Qadesh was either on the Egyptian frontier or north of Damascus.¹⁹⁹ Neither place is thus likely to have been considered under Yahweh’s control in the pre-Babylonian paradigm whereby deities were confined to their national boundaries; thus, the notion that these topographical names merely serve to indicate the extent of Yahweh’s power over the region seems unlikely. Siryon is probably an even better example

¹⁹⁹ There are several candidates for the location of the wilderness of Qadesh. One possibility is that it refers to the area around the historic city of Qadesh (or Kadesh), known for the battle fought there between Egyptian and Hittite empires resulting in the famous Treaty of Kadesh (1274 BCE). The city, however, was destroyed during the Bronze Age Collapse and never rebuilt, so this reference only makes sense if the area surrounding the city was still known as such several centuries after its destruction. This is the only possible location near Lebanon and Siryon (Mt Hermon), if the aim of the hymn was to indicate several nearby places instead of a north-south span. The other possibility is that Qadesh refers to an oasis on the Egyptian-Philistine frontier, now known as ‘Ain el-Qudeirat or Kadesh Barnea. The site was occupied by a series of (fortified) settlements from roughly the mid-13th century BCE, although its political affiliation in this period remains unclear. The earliest settlement, existing from ca. 1250 BCE until ca. 1000 BCE, left few remains apart from some Qurayyah painted ware (see Glueck 1967) associated with the Edomite kingdom; this does not prove, however, that the site was controlled by Edom, since Edom as a political entity remains archaeologically and textually elusive. See also Ben-Yosef et al. (2019) for recent – but still circumstantial – evidence for the kingdom of Edom in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages. The later settlements, which more closely resemble the layout of Judahite fortresses nearby, were most likely built as part of the Assyrian border defences during Judah’s vassalage to Assyria and perhaps manned by non-Judahite troops (Na’aman 1991: 48-49; Na’aman 2001: 268; Finkelstein 2010:121-122; cf. Cohen and Bernick-Greenberg 2007:12, who believe that the site was a Judahite administrative centre).

to show the psalm's foreign heritage, however, because it is specifically acknowledged as the Phoenician (Sidonian) name for Mt Hermon in Deut 3:9.²⁰⁰ These two references (Deut 3:9 and Ps 29:6) are also the only two times the word occurs in the Hebrew Bible at all, although Mt Hermon itself of course features much more prominently elsewhere. The use of a Phoenician name for the otherwise significant Mt Hermon, as well as the use of place names to indicate boundaries beyond the control of Israel but within the borders of the Phoenician city states, further supports the hypothesis that the psalm originates with – or at least was mediated to Israel/Judah by – the Phoenician cult of Ba'lu.

With the likelihood of a foreign source for Psalm 29 established as well as is reasonably possible, two big questions remain: first, through what likely method of transmission this Phoenician text entered the biblical psalter; and second, what this means for our understanding of the ideological aspects of biblical texts.

The first question is difficult to tackle because it relies on some inevitable degree of speculation – accordingly, we can only suggest a number of possible vectors of transmission; a definitive solution will have to remain wanting. Nonetheless, a significant number of different ideas have been brought forward by various scholars, which will be helpful to discuss in somewhat more detail than above. We have discussed already the three main suspects: Ugarit, the Phoenician city states, or the Canaanite sphere. To recap the distinction between them: Ugarit existed up until the Bronze Age Collapse (early 12th century BCE) and

²⁰⁰ These two references to the Sidonian name of Mt Hermon are the only two times the word occurs in the Hebrew Bible, although the mountain itself is mentioned much more frequently, and its significance is clear both from the Bible and from other ancient Near Eastern literature. It occurs in the same pair with Lebanon, in fact, in the Gilgamesh Epic during the fight between Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and Humbaba. With reference to Lebanon, Mt Hermon also occurs in the Hebrew Bible in Joshua 11:17, there exclusively to indicate a geographical location. Further topographical mentions (without reference to Lebanon) are found in e.g. 2 Chr 5:23 and Josh 12:4-5. A much later mention of the mountain in a specifically ritual context is found in Enoch 6:6.

was never properly resettled as a city; the Phoenician cities are independent but culturally similar city states from probably as early as the 3rd millennium BCE until their conquest by the Egyptians and Hittites, and subsequently by the Neo-Assyrian empire and its successors; the Canaanite sphere was the broader cultural continuum, shared in part with the Phoenicians and the Philistine cities, from which the Israelite and Judahite kingdoms emerged. Out of the three, Ugarit tends to emerge as the most attractive candidate for many scholars, mostly because the survival of much of their literature enables a broader comparison between their texts and those in the Bible. This is the position Pardee and Pardee seem to take, or at least this is strongly suggested by their textual focus: they agree that the psalm finds its thematic origins in the Northwest-Semitic polytheistic paradigm, but read in it specifically “a familiarity with a significant portion of the Baal story as it is known from the text” (2009: 121). Thus, for Pardee and Pardee, the psalm is more than a text generally influenced by the cult of Baʿlu in the Levant, but rather derives directly from the actual Baʿlu Cycle (or its orally-transmitted form). Smith (2007) takes a slightly more careful approach: although he considers the text reflective of the ideas contained in the Ugaritic Baʿlu Cycle, he looks to the Canaanite sphere as the direct vector of transmission; in particular, the southern-Phoenician region of Lebanon. Smith’s approach certainly avoids a major pitfall of the hypothesised direct Ugaritic connection: how can we account for the several hundred years between the destruction of Ugarit – including, presumably, the textual record of their literature – and the earliest conservative estimates for the composition of Hebrew texts? Now, it is certainly possible that the Ugaritic texts survived in oral form, and that specific phrases made their way from Ugaritic into Hebrew (*bn ilm*, for instance); but it would be impossible for us to determine whether the Hebrew composer of Psalm 29 drew deliberately on the Baʿlu Cycle in writing an original hymn to Yahweh, drew more generally on the cult of Baʿlu in Lebanon, or – following Fitzgerald – simply adapted a popular Baʿlu hymn with minor changes. Given the social history of Israel and Judah, both arising within and fully conversant with a polytheistic

paradigm, and given that even the Bible confirms that the cult of Baʿlu was prominent in both kingdoms until relatively late²⁰¹ – in other words, there was a cultural continuum from Ugarit to Israel and Judah – really any of these possibilities are plausible. Because the literal survival of texts over centuries and across languages (even cognate ones) is on slightly shakier ground, I tend strongly towards Smith’s and Fitzgerald’s positions.

Now, turning to the second question – how this comparative analysis helps us understand the ideological dimensions of the biblical text – rather neatly brings together several strands of analysis that have been discussed so far. One of these is minimal counterintuitiveness: if Fitzgerald is right, it shows the productivity of the counterintuitiveness principle. Several relevant aspects of MCI theory can be applied here. First, the likely adoption of a non-Yahwist hymn for Yahweh’s cult could be evidence that Yahweh’s early (henotheistic) worshippers engaged with Baʿlu’s cult contextually intuitively. After all, if it was so easy to shift a completely different deity’s attributes and associated theophany onto Yahweh, those objectively counterintuitive ideas (when applied to the HUMAN template) are extremely likely to already have been accepted as contextually intuitive by early Yahwists.²⁰² Second, it suggests that expressing a unique theology was perhaps not a primary motivation for attributing this specific theophany to Yahweh, but rather that it was their desire to appropriate group-specific MCI ideas in service of Yahwism. In other words, the Yahwist and the Baʿlist in-groups are virtually indistinguishable, save for the substitution of Baʿlu for Yahweh. In any case, the *success* of the adoption of Baʿlist theology should be understood to arise from the cultural proximity between Yahwists and their surroundings, which means the overlap between their contextually intuitive ideas was most likely quite significant.

²⁰¹ In Judah, certainly until Hezekiah’s reforms (2 Kgs 18); in Israel, Yahweh may never officially have been the sole deity.

²⁰² This follows the broad scholarly consensus on the origins of Yahwism, of course, but provides further theoretical support for it.

Another strand of analysis is the cultural dynamic between early Yahwism and its surrounding polytheistic system. As mentioned already, Psalm 29 simply adopts most aspects of this system: the *bny 'lym* in verse 1 attest to at least an embedded background of a polytheistic pantheon, and Yahweh's theophany is a direct adoption of Ba^lu's. The crucial question is then what explanation can be found for Yahweh's displacement of Ba^lu – i.e. why was this wholesale adoption of a hymn to Ba^lu acceptable to Yahwists? Presumably, if accuracy of belief (i.e. 'correct' theology) was a major point of contention, Yahwists would simply reject the notion that the theophany of their god was suddenly identical to that of another god. Thus, the psalm provides strong evidence that such orthodoxy of theology was not the case, and that instead a deliberate strategy was employed by which Yahweh started taking on Ba^lu's characteristics. Again: if expressing their unique theology was a real concern for early Yahwists – and, perhaps more importantly, if a crucial aspect of Yahwism was its dissimilarity from the theological system or paradigm from which it arose – why would it so readily appropriate ideas integral to that polytheistic paradigm? Thus, even if we follow Cross (1950) on his interpretation of the hymn as a generically Canaanite one that was repurposed for Yahwistic worship – which might explain the form of the psalm, but not why it was acceptable – we must account for the mechanism by which this highly specific, polytheistically-framed theophany became affiliated with Yahweh; and, taking into account the analysis above, the most likely mechanism seems one of deliberate adoption and displacement.

Psalm 74

Unlike much of the rest of the psalter, Psalm 74 is somewhat easier to date; or, at the very least, there are few historical events for which its composition seems appropriate. The text is in essence a lamentation on the destruction of Jerusalem (74:2), and is therefore likely exilic. Vss 3-8 narrate the destruction of the city and the land, followed by lament on the apparent loss of divine guidance (through prophets and Yahweh himself) in vss 9-11. Although the

psalm as a whole isn't a myth whose narrative focuses on divine actions – after all, the emphasis is on the *lack* of divine intervention in the destruction of Jerusalem from a human perspective – supernatural concepts are brought up in vss 12-17. These verses cite Yahweh's mythic victories over specific foes: the sea (*ym*) and the dragons (*tnn*) in v 13, and Leviathan (*lwytn*) in v 14. Vss 15-17 connect this with creative and organising acts to further support Yahweh's control over the cosmos. The final verses continue the author's plea to Yahweh to be brought out of his current, downtrodden position. In this section, we will focus on vss 12-17 because they specifically invoke supernatural language, and furthermore because they are the subject of two recent papers (Tsumura 2015; Greene 2017).

Partially because of the somewhat disjointed insertion of the supernatural material, and partially because of the mention of primordial monsters that do not appear in Genesis at all, the precise nature of vss 12-17 remains a source of disagreement. As mentioned just now, two recent publications take on the question: the first is by Tsumura (2015); the second, responding to it but making a broader point about the text, by Greene (2017). Tsumura's position, in summary, is that these verses do not actually contain a creation motif. He argues that the main verb of vs 13, from the root *pr*, should be translated 'to break, shatter' instead of 'divide', and therefore follows a pattern also found in other *Chaoskampf* myths, such as *Enūma eliš* (Tsumura 2015: 551). He contends, however, that the similarity is coincidental and that the appearance of supernatural monsters in these verses is the result of "common linguistic expressions based on a common literary tradition of ancient warfare" (ibid.: 552). The idea forwarded is that the supernatural sections of the psalm metaphorically invoke the actual warfare that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem. Furthermore, he argues that the apparent mention of created parts of the world in vss 15-17 are not invoked because their creation is recalled, but because Yahweh is their controller (ibid.: 554). He ends by proposing a tripartite distinction between types of supernatural combat: *Chaoskampf* (between deity and chaotic entity), theomachy (between deities), and divine battle (between deity and general

enemies) (ibid.: 555). Greene disagrees substantially with most of Tsumura's points, with the exception of rendering *pr* as 'to break, shatter'. His primary complaint is that Tsumura's position results from an imprecise analysis of the text (e.g. Greene 2017: 91-92), that his application of metaphor to the text is too restrictive (ibid.: 96), and that the evidence for vss 12-17 being inserted into the psalm is unsubstantial (ibid.: 100). In light of our previous discussions on creation myth, two particular points arising from this discussion are worth briefly developing further here: the appearance of monsters in vss 13-14 in relation to the *Chaoskampf* motif in the broader ancient Near East; and the relationship between the creation motif in vss 15-17 and the political *Umwelt* of the author.

The question of *Chaoskampf* has already been addressed in some detail in our discussion of the Ninurta Cycle, and was shown in that context to serve the primary purpose of communicating various ideological concerns, of which urban identity ('civilisation') versus tribal identity ('barbarians') was the most commonly recurring one. Importantly, *Chaoskampf* as such was shown to be a vehicle – a narrative excuse, essentially – through which this idea was communicated, meaning Ninurta's fight against Asag was not *theologically* significant beyond its purpose of expressing ideology. Ninurta fought and defeated Asag to make a point about urban society and its technology, not because the Sumerians believed that irrigation was literally invented by Ninurta. A similar observation could be made here. Greene situates Yahweh's defeat of the monsters mentioned in vss 13-14 within the broader ancient Near Eastern context – which is undoubtedly the correct approach here – but identifies the purpose of the passage as follows:

“by recalling much older creation mythology, the redactor of this psalm re-enthrones the recently dispossessed YHWH by calling upon him to re-enact his battle with his primordial enemies (Greene 2017: 100).

In other words, Greene argues that, by reminding the Yahwistic faithful of Yahweh’s success in past battles against supernatural foes, the author allows Yahweh to regain some of the glory accorded to him through his victories, which in turn precipitates the rebuilding of the temple as Yahweh’s throne. The passage is thus primarily theological in its treatment of supernatural concepts. However, given our discussion and understanding of myth at this point, we can question whether this is actually the author’s endgame, particularly within the context of the exilic development of Yahwism. Would a dedicated Yahwist at this point really deliberately bring back the spectre of polytheistic Yahwism that appears so carefully eliminated in other exilic biblical texts? If we must work with this editorial approach to exilic texts – as was the case with Genesis 1 – but simultaneously contextualise the composition (or final edit) of Psalm 74 in Mesopotamia, we would expect the theological aspects of the text to be secondary to their ideological ones. In this view, the ultimate purpose of the *Chaoskampf* in Psalm 74 is not to “cause [Yahweh] to engage in the battle once again” (Greene 2017: 101), but to invoke Yahweh’s prowess in battle as a shared group identity marker for the exiled Judahites. Put differently, the *Chaoskampf* is probably not there because the author believed that it had ever happened, or because its mention was supposed to embolden a beleaguered deity, but because it reinforced shared, contextually intuitive, notions about the supernatural that helped keep the Judahite people in exile together.

The question of the creation motif of Psalm 74:15-17 follows a similar trajectory in this analysis. Curiously, neither Tsumura nor Greene mentions that the springs and torrents of vs 15a are reminiscent of *Enūma eliš* V.58, although they acknowledge that the psalm has an affinity with Mesopotamian creation material elsewhere. In fact, the other parts of the earth in vss 15-17 have direct parallels in *Enūma eliš* as well, as seen in the following table:

Psalm 74	<i>Enūma eliš</i>
15a: springs and	V. 58: He bored springs for the channeling of cisterns.

torrents	
15b: ever-flowing waters	IV.140: ...with the instruction not to let her waters escape.
16a: day and night	V.12-13: He brought Nannar into being, and entrusted [him] the night. He appointed him [...] of the night, in order to prescribe the day.
16b: stars and sun	V.1-2: He created the stations for the great gods. He established the constellations, the image of the stars.
17a: bounds of the earth	IV.141-142: He crossed over the heavens, examined the sky. He made it (=the earth) equal opposite the Apsû, the dwelling of Nudimmud.
17b: summer and winter	V. 3-6: He appointed the year, drew the boundaries. He set up three stars for twelve months. After he had drawn up the plan for the day of the year, he established the station of Nēberu in order to prescribe their structure.

Table 2: Parallels between Ps 74 and *Enūma eliš*.

This is not to say that the psalm is directly dependent on *Enūma eliš*; Genesis 1 is the more obvious source, as Greene (2017: 92) points out. At the same time, it is possible that the creation language common to all three texts results from a broader engagement of the biblical authors with Mesopotamian mythopoeic strategies. Looking back on our discussion of creation in *Enūma eliš*, it was clear that the topic was used – like the *Chaoskampf* discussed just now – in service of ideological concerns over theological or cosmological ones. In *Enūma eliš*, creation serves as a proxy for Marduk’s control over the universe, which in turn serves as a statement of Babylonian power. Genesis 1 works as a text because it challenges this narrative through the rejection of its precursor, but even in its rejection is equally wrought with ideological concerns. Perhaps in Psalm 74, we have an example of creation

language being employed straightforwardly as it is in *Enūma eliš* – i.e., not in a parodic sense like Genesis 1 – with creation employed to showcase the hypothetical or desired power of Yahweh which, according to the author of Psalm 74, should be embodied in a resurgent Judah. In any case, we have in Psalm 74 another clear example of a text that uses creation myth in order to reflect on a contemporary political situation. Unlike in the Mesopotamian texts, which as far as we know were written from a position of power, the Judahite text reflects on a loss of power and a desire to regain it; as such, it is ideological before it is theological, and fits comfortably in the pattern established thus far.

Psalm 104

Where Psalm 29 is generally accepted to be based on (or in) a polytheistic Phoenician context, and Psalm 74 likely reflects Mesopotamian and North-West Semitic attitudes towards the concept of creation, Psalm 104 probably takes at least some of its inspiration from the south. We have already briefly discussed this psalm in our consideration of the origin of Gen 1, but for methodological reasons that will become apparent, it will be helpful to return briefly to the text. Several significant studies have been conducted on the nature of Egyptian influence on Ps 104, in recent times by Assmann (1991; 1995) and Day (2013b; see also 2013a); Schipper (2014) helpfully summarises most positions but does not include Day. Much like Ps 29, opinion on Ps 104 has been strongly divided: of the aforementioned scholars, Assmann and Day consider the similarities great enough that a direct influence of the Hymn on the psalm must be accepted (though Day argues for mediation via Ugarit), and Schipper completely rejects a direct derivation based on his meta-analysis. The greater part of comparative analysis has focused on the psalm's postulated connection with the Hymn to Aten, composed by 18th-dynasty Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten. We will discuss this further below, because the possibility of the biblical writers adopting a non-native source provides another potential example of an important non-Hebrew text becoming part of the Judahite Yahwist canon.

After its first publication by Davies (1903), Akhenaten's Great Hymn was translated and more widely disseminated by Breasted (1905; 1905-6).²⁰³ To Breasted, who seems to be the first to have written on the similarities between Akhenaten's Hymn and Psalm 104, there appears to be no doubt that Akhenaten's cultic reforms were inspired by the same notion of a sole god (though not, perhaps, the same god) as the author of Psalm 104 was: "[Akhenaten] grasped the idea of a world-dominator, as the creator of nature" (1905: 376). Additionally, he uses the same capitalised word 'God' to refer both to Yahweh and to Aten, reinforcing this suggestion. Since Breasted, as noted above, scholarly consensus has been divided broadly between Egyptologists, who mostly reject any direct connection (e.g. Lichtheim 2006: 100ff.), and biblical scholars, who tend to argue for some degree of derivation (e.g. Clifford 2003: 149-150; Day 2013a; 2013b).

Both the extreme possibilities and the more nuanced hypotheses are equally intriguing. On one end, if the texts are entirely unrelated, two religious groups in relatively close geographical proximity but more remote temporality wrote texts that were seemingly coincidentally similar, featuring their respective, singularly-powerful deities. On the other extreme, a direct derivation would have to account for a potential temporal gap of at least several centuries, and would raise further questions about the connection between Egyptian Atenism and Judahite Yahwism. The various intermediate positions raise similar questions, albeit in slightly different ways: the actual text of Akhenaten's Hymn may have been transmitted indirectly to Judah or Israel via an intermediary, or its translation included into the psalter without the editor's knowledge of the Egyptian text, or the text known but significantly rewritten prior to its inclusion in the biblical canon. For all of these possibilities, we must acknowledge one or several points at which deliberate decisions were made about

²⁰³ Breasted's *History of Egypt from the Earliest Times until the Persian Conquest* should not be confused with his *Ancient Records of Egypt*, which was published between 1905 and 1906 and coincidentally discusses Akhenaten's Hymn on precisely the same page numbers (371ff).

the inclusion of non-Yahwistic material into the canon. In the case of hypothesised direct adoptions of the text, the author of Ps 104 knew that the text was originally Egyptian (or at least non-Yahwist), and despite the differences in theology between the two religious systems decided that the accolades attributed to Aten in the Hymn were appropriate to Yahweh in identical ways. The process envisioned here is one where the author of the psalm had direct access to the text of the Hymn itself – physically or orally, and in Egyptian or translated into Hebrew or a cognate language – and rendered it into Hebrew from this source text. If this was the case, the monotheistic nature of Atenism is likely to have supported its transmission because it was contextually (minimally counter-)intuitive for the Yahwist author, and – as in the case of Ps 29 – the adoption of a hymn to a completely different deity shows that what was considered ‘true’ about Yahweh at this point was still flexible. If, on the other hand, the text was not directly adopted, but translated from an adaptation or intermediary text into Hebrew, the translator was still faced with this same decision to syncretise a non-Yahwist theology into Yahwism. The survival of the text can also still be attributed to contextual (minimal counter-)intuitiveness of the supernatural characteristics of Aten and Yahweh to the transmitters.²⁰⁴

Since we have already discussed issues relating to the deliberate inclusion of non-Yahwistic elements into Yahwistic theology in our discussion of Pss 29 and 74, the analysis here focuses on the questions of derivation and mythological complexity – in particular, methodological approaches to these two issues. Psalm 104 provides a particularly good example of this because of the difficulty in establishing where the supernatural ideas in the psalm come from precisely. Furthermore, the issue has been discussed recently by Day (2013a; 2013b), who argues strongly for an Egyptian derivation of the psalm; furthermore,

²⁰⁴ It is of course possible in this scenario that the initial transmission – say, from Egypt to Ugarit – did not happen because of the contextually-intuitive appeal of the Hymn to the scribe who recorded it, but for some other reason (e.g. intellectual curiosity, political allegiance, migration of Atenists).

his understanding of the relationship between Ps 104 and Gen 1 is based on a particular understanding of supernatural complexity that is worth addressing in greater detail. It seems like a poor use of space here to reiterate the striking parallels between Akhenaten's Great Hymn and Psalm 104.²⁰⁵ That there are parallels should, to my mind, be accepted unreservedly; however, the question of whether they are as significant, or even as direct, as is sometimes claimed is more difficult to affirm. Several points are worth making here.

Firstly, the assertion of direct dependence of the psalm on the Great Hymn relies on the notion that parallels between the two texts can only be explained by the author of the psalm having direct knowledge of the Great Hymn. This point was made earlier in our discussion of the reliance of Gen 1 on *Enūma eliš*, where a likely transmission vector in 6th-century BCE Babylon was discussed; a similar vector could conceivably have existed through the Amarna letters – which demonstrate that the Levant and Akhenaten's Egypt were in regular epistolary contact – although no letters containing the Great Hymn in full have been recovered. Another example through analogy can also be given. There are many instances where entire novels – let alone ten lines – have close parallels in completely different context; for example, the story and setting of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) are strikingly reminiscent of those in Ferdinand Bordewijk's *Blokken* (1931), although the Dutch book was never translated into English and Orwell presumably never read it. Another, more recent example is Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* (2008), whose story is virtually identical to Koushun Takami's *Battle Royale* (1999); Collins has denied that she had ever heard of the Japanese book (Fujita 2012). Both examples demonstrate that overall structure and even specific aspects of a text can closely match as a result of a similar creative starting point, even in different contexts and languages. This is perhaps a result of similar situations giving authors comparable creative inspiration, and this certainly may have been the case with Akhenaten's

²⁰⁵ See Appendix B for the list of parallels based from Day (2013a: 214-217), as well as a more closely matching modification of that list.

Great Hymn and Psalm 104. The nature of the parallel here is effectively a ‘survey of the world’, with several similar (but not identical) parts highlighted in both texts.

Secondly, Day’s particular model is not without its difficulties. While Day argues quite carefully that Ps 104:20-30 are based on Akhenaten’s Great Hymn, he assigns 1-18 to “other motifs originating in the Canaanite storm god” (2013a: 224). However, it is difficult to see how any North-West Semitic storm god would have inspired a creation text, given the complete absence of such narratives from Ugarit. It is possible that creation texts existed but did not survive, although currently no convincing evidence is available to suggest this.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, if Gen 1 were indeed derived from Ps 104, and the psalm in turn from Akhenaten’s Great Hymn, the postulated adaptation means that precisely those parts that are *not* derived from the Great Hymn would be the source of Gen 1 (with the minor overlap of vss 20-23); this seems incredibly unlikely.

Finally, we should banish the spectre of ‘demythologisation’ in the context of biblical texts adapted from other sources, which categorically should not be used to describe myths in relation to one another.²⁰⁷ Bultmann (1941) originally coined the term *Entmythologisierung* as a way of describing a hermeneutical process – specifically, he used it to signify a process of stripping away the layers of supernatural language from the New Testament, which according to him was no longer sufficient to communicate its fundamental truth in the modern world, to arrive at a kerygma for a modern audience (Bourke 1958: 128-129).

²⁰⁶ The only North-West Semitic creation text outside the Hebrew Bible is preserved in Philo of Byblos, quoting a certain Sanchuniathon, but this text is clearly strongly influenced by Hellenistic and Egyptian creation accounts, and it is impossible to tell to what extent Sanchuniathon’s account reflects an authentic late-second-millennium myth.

²⁰⁷ One exception could be made: the retelling of myths as if they confirmed entirely to a non-supernatural (i.e. cognitively intuitive) paradigm, such as interpretations of the Exodus that explain the parting of the Red Sea with the eruption of Santorini (e.g. Perriáñez and Abril 2014).

Bultmann, however, meant this as a *modern* technique developed in response to the modern scientific method; as something theologians and commentators must do. It was never supposed to describe the process of eliminating specific supernatural concepts from adapted texts in the *ancient* world. In the context of Hebrew Bible scholarship, however, the term has come to refer to the hypothesised adaptational process from more richly supernatural narratives into heno- or monotheistic ones, with an editor removing references to superfluous deities and other supernatural entities. Several objections must be raised to the concept as a methodological principle, particularly given its prevalence even in very recent scholarship (most prominently Day 2013a; 2013b), of which perhaps the most important is that there exists a hierarchical relationship between polytheistic systems and those that have fewer or only one god. The implication of demythologisation in this context is that the polytheistic system is the less refined, less truthful, or less sophisticated one, from which the heno- or monotheistic system is a natural and more sophisticated progression. This is objectively untrue, and interestingly rather close to James Frazer's position on religion as primitive science (see the Literature Review in Part 1). In the context of Frazer, the implicit notion of an inexorable development towards monotheism (not to mention its even more implicit superiority) through history lurks in the background as well, and must similarly be strongly rejected.²⁰⁸ Another objection is that the nature of adaptation from precursor texts in the Hebrew Bible and related literature is often not a *demythologisation* but a *remythologisation*: the Flood in Gen 6-9 is virtually identical to the one in Gilgamesh XI, except with Ea and Enlil's roles condensed into the single character of Yahweh. The Rabbinic tradition supplements enormous amounts of supernatural entities to the biblical text. Not naming the *tanninim* 'Leviathan' in Gen 1 does not mean that the audience did not fill them in mentally. In other words: the *amount* of supernatural concepts – or, rather, of minimally or maximally

²⁰⁸ See also Hoffmeier (2015) for a recent critique of this idea, in his assessment (and rejection) of the 'axial age'.

counterintuitive elements in both text – remains the same. Seen in this way, demythologisation as it is used to refer to the conversion of polytheistic myth into heno- or monotheistic myth can perhaps more accurately be described as a readjustment of contextual intuitiveness. The text, in order to conform to the contextual intuition of the group, is realigned with the minimally-counterintuitive inventory available to the group. This way of looking at the concept decisively refutes Day’s principal argument for the derivation of Gen 1 from Ps 104. He writes:

“That it is Genesis 1 which is dependent on Psalm 104, rather than the other way round, is supported, among other things, by the fact that the latter is more mythological.” (Day 2013a: 21-22)

As we have seen just now – but as has been shown consistently throughout this thesis – the notion that a myth is more or less ‘mythological’ is meaningless, unless we understand the term as referring to the extent to which the myth is contextually intuitive to its audience. Arguably, a myth becomes *more* counterintuitive when more and more supernatural attributes or powers are given to a single character, since that character would become more and more (objectively) maximally counterintuitive. Looking at it from this perspective, stacking counterintuitive attributes on Yahweh cannot be called a demythologisation at all, neither in the sense that the myth itself is stripped of supernatural concepts – since most biblical myths are still richly supernatural – nor in the sense that individual supernatural characters can reach a cognitively intuitive state – since they are by definition objectively counterintuitive.

In sum, Psalm 104 offers an intriguing case study of a text that presumably derived from another source, but it is difficult to pinpoint what this source was. It seems to me more plausible that Gen 1 was the source of Ps 104 given the equally close parallels between the psalm and *Enūma eliš*, which – as we have seen – is a far more likely precursor to Gen 1 than Akhenaten’s Great Hymn is to Ps 104, and in Day’s analysis is unacceptably eliminated from

the transmission process entirely. It also gives us an excellent case study on modern biblical scholarship and its surprising reliance on ideas that early anthropology decisively did away with.

Excursus: Egyptian creation myths

I believe it is helpful at this point, having briefly discussed already the connection postulated by John Day (and others) between Ps 104 and Akhenaten's Hymn to Aten, to discuss some selected Egyptian texts on creation. We will discuss two texts in some detail: the actual text of Akhenaten's hymn beyond its relevance to Ps 104; and the Memphis Theology.

Akhenaten's Hymn, of course, is quite possibly the oldest work attesting to monotheistic thought, and deserves a closer look for its unique character. References to the older Heliopolitan and Hermopolitan creation myth are made in the later Memphite Theology, which synthesises a number of existing traditions into a new theogony centred on Memphis. The aim of this excursus is not to show a continuity of ideas between Egypt and its neighbours to the north-east, but rather to show that the composition of myth in Egypt was similarly significantly affected by ideological concerns. Additionally, reiterating the methodological caveat with which we started our discussion of Mesopotamian and biblical creation myth, I do not mean to suggest that these few texts are representative for the whole of Egyptian myth or that they contain no genuine theological elements.²⁰⁹ This excursus thus serves as a way to show that there are high-profile examples of Egyptian myths whose composition appears strongly affected by ideological concerns; in turn, this lends further credence to the idea that the patterns we find in myth relating to ideology are much wider spread than Mesopotamia and its immediate cultural surroundings.

²⁰⁹ In fact, what makes at least the Memphite Theology important for the overall argument presented in this work is its hypothesised origin as a theological treatise that was reused for ideological purposes.

Akhenaten

The unique nature of religion during the Amarna period, as well as its controversial status among later Egyptian dynasties, resulted at its height in the apparent wholesale abandonment by the political and religious elite of traditional Egyptian religion. Under the spirited guidance of Amenhotep IV, who changed his name to Akhenaten to signal his devotion to his newly-developed religion, Egypt's formal system of worship shifted from its previous polytheistic form into the monotheistic cult of Aten, the god of the sun. Three types of text from Akhenaten's reign remain, though they are relatively few in number owing to the abandonment of Akhetaten as the Egyptian capital. The first type of text consists of cultic material in the form of hymns and prayers, which were inscribed in the tombs of Akhenaten's servants during his reign. The second type are proclamatory inscriptions, which survive on boundary stelae around Akhenaten's capital, Akhetaten (modern al-Amarna). The third type are letters to and from Egypt's neighbours during the Amarna period, overwhelmingly in Akkadian. None of these texts are technically creation narratives, in that none of them describe the *process* of creation itself; however, the Great Hymn describes Aten's created world in direct relation to its origin in him, and thus is essentially the same thing.

Since the publication of its transcription (De Garis Davies 1906, plate XXVII) and initial translations, the so-called Great Hymn²¹⁰ has inspired significant scholarly debate (Breasted 1921: 371; Williams 1958: 145; more recently Foster 1995: 1754). This text, found in the tomb of Ay, Akhenaten's vizier and advisor,²¹¹ extols the virtues and achievements of Aten as creator and benefactor of the world. It is likely that the text was used in a cultic and performative ritual context for the purpose of communicating "the theological dogma of the religious revolution" (Hoffmeier 2015: 213). It is clear that Akhenaten had an interest in

²¹⁰ The hymn is called 'Great' to distinguish it from various shorter hymns to Aten, which appear to be derived in some part from the Great Hymn (Sandman 1938: 10-15).

²¹¹ As Hornung calls him, "guru of the young reformer" (1999: 60).

genuinely developing his monotheistic theology, and it furthermore seems likely that a performative text such as the Great Hymn had didactic purposes to achieve this goal. The theological focus of the text is not employed entirely for its own sake, however. We must question here – as we did with the Mesopotamian texts above – what the motivation behind the statements in the text was, and to what extent a case can be made for their ideological background. In other words, the question is whether the form of Akhenaten’s Great Hymn was a necessary result of his monotheistic theology, or whether his theology was informed by political concerns.

Famously, of course, it was Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) that launched Akhenaten’s reforms into the public eye and into a broader academic discussion, making his case that Moses had been an Atenist priest who applied his pharaoh’s monotheistic ideas on the Israelites’ own religion. Although this hypothesis has since been abandoned – largely because the Exodus by broad consensus is not considered historical any longer – the question of whether a connection exists between Akhenaten’s reforms and the latent monotheism of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah is still well alive. In this debate, as we have just discussed, most recently John Day (2014) has argued that Psalm 104 is directly dependent on Akhenaten’s Great Hymn. I will refer back to the previous section for a discussion on Day’s position, but here will discuss some features of the Great Hymn will be highlighted that – although the theological aspects of the text are undeniable – still attest to a significant degree of ideological background to the composition.

The opening section of the hymn contrasts day and night, and in doing so emphasises Aten’s importance to the functioning of his creation:²¹²

Beautiful you appear from the horizon of heaven, O living Aten who initiates life –
for you are risen from the eastern horizon and have filled every land with your beauty;

²¹² All translations by Murnane (1995: 112-116).

[...]

When your movements vanish and you set in the western horizon,

The land is in darkness, in the manner of death.

Here, Akhenaten uses the vivid imagery of sunrise and sunset in analogy to Aten's presence and absence. During the day, the light and the warmth of the sun indicate his direct, real presence, while at night the world crawls to a halt as his nourishing rays depart. The absence of Aten is even further equated with danger, not just lack of growth:

(People), they lie in their bedchambers, heads covered up ...

All their property is robbed, although it is under their heads, and they do not realize it.

Every lion is out of its den, all creeping things bite.

The theological point that understands Aten as the source of benefaction here implicitly serves as a foil against polytheism: while Aten is below the horizon, no other power can prevent bad things from happening. It is only when the sun rises again that life resumes its course:

All flocks are content with their pasturage, trees and grasses flourish,

Birds are flown from their nests, their wings adoring your *ka*.²¹³

All small cattle prance upon their legs.

All that fly up and alight, they live when you rise for them.

Thus, all of creation rejoices at the rising of the sun, and pays homage to Aten's life-giving warmth. This concept of the causal connection between sunlight, its divine origin, and their absolute necessity for life on earth in Akhenaten's reforms was accompanied by the invention of a new classifier²¹⁴ hieroglyph (Goldwasser 2010: 159-165). The form of the character – a

²¹³ The *ka* is the Egyptian concept of the soul, the spark of life inherent to all living things (including the gods).

²¹⁴ These are normally known as 'determinatives' in both hieroglyphs and cuneiform, but have recently convincingly been argued to be better termed 'classifiers' by Selz et al. (forthcoming).

circle with three lines extending from the bottom – is based on Aten’s iconography, a large circle representing the sun with its rays extending in hands. Importantly, this classifier is used exclusively for words associated with the physical characteristics of the sun (e.g. *wbn* ‘rise, shine’, *stwt* ‘rays’), never for Aten himself; as a result, Goldwasser argues, the sun should not be seen as the manifestation of the god itself (ibid., 194). Rather, Aten himself should be understood as “the source of light and power by which he reveals something of his character [i.e., in the form of the sun] to his creation on earth” (Hoffmeier 2015: 225).

This complex and – certainly for its time – advanced theological development is, in my view, inescapably couched in an ideological background. We have already briefly seen the casual erasure of the polytheistic pantheon – necessary as it is, of course, for a monotheistic theology. Apart from this implicit reinterpretation of Egyptian divinity, some examples of syncretism are worth mentioning, attesting an assumption on Aten’s part of the tasks of other deities:

(O you) who brings into being foetuses in women,
who makes fluid in people,
Who gives life to the son in his mother’s womb [...]

The moulding of and life-giving to foetuses was ordinarily attributed to Khnum, whose principal temple on Elephantine will likely be familiar to biblical scholars for its conflict with the temple to Yahweh there (Töpfer 2014: 320; for Elephantine, see Knowles 2006: 41). The scene immediately following it, describing a chick being born from an egg, is reminiscent of the creation of the world in the Heliopolitan Theology and the primary role of Atum as creator deity there (Van Dijk 1995: 1699). The attribution of the annual Nile flood waters to Aten, too, can be seen as a reflection of these precursor traditions in the syncretism of the Great Hymn:

You make the inundation from the underworld,

And you bring it to (the place) you wish in order to cause the subjects to live [...]

In the pre-Amarna period, Hapi was responsible for this event. Aten's appropriation of his duties is here useful because it emphasises once more Aten's life-giving qualities, while simultaneously making Hapi obsolete. Aten's appropriation of established gods' tasks does not stop there, however: far more universal claims, reminiscent of the later developments in Judaism and Christianity, are made in the latter half of the hymn.

Hoffmeier (2015: 140-142) is sympathetic to the idea that Akhenaten's reform was precipitated by a genuine theophany, even citing the example of Paul (Acts 9:1-5).²¹⁵ While this is a possibility – and Hoffmeier admits that “we may never know the impetus for the rise of Akhenaten's religious revolution” – the evolutionary-anthropological model suggests that mid-20th century scholarship may have been on the right track when it came to understanding the ideological-political dimensions of Akhenaten's cultic reforms. For example, Steindorff and Seele (1957; e.g. p. 80) tie in the Atenist movement to the all-too-common power struggles between the priesthood leadership of various other gods. While their focus is on religious differences, it is entirely conceivable that the *form* of disagreement was cast in religious language, while the *essence* of disagreement was not theological but political-ideological. This same idea was advanced more recently by Silverman (1991), who takes the position that the priests of Amun were too politically powerful and that the wholesale erasure of their religious practice from formal public performance under Akhenaten's reforms was motivated primarily by a desire on his part to reduce their power. On the whole, it is this analysis that appears to be most in line with the model and with a close reading of the available evidence. Thus, although Hoffmeier's position is interesting – particularly in light

²¹⁵ He writes, “The suggestion advanced ... is that Akhenaten, very early in his reign, experienced some sort of theophany out of which emerged the didactic name” – i.e. that Akhenaten's development of Aten's complex didactic name in later inscriptions was the result of his own meditations on his experience of theophany (p. 142).

of the comparative biblical evidence he provides – it seems to me tremendously unlikely that the political utility of Akhenaten’s reform was entirely incidental to his theology of Aten.

Memphis

The Memphite Theology²¹⁶ has been debated extensively since its first publication by J. H. Breasted in 1901. Noted for its combination of mythical narrative – featuring arch-enemies Horus and Set after the resolution of their conflict – and theology, it offers a relatively rare window into Egyptian exegesis and philosophical dialectic outside of poetry and proverbs. Indeed, the question whether the text should be treated as a treatise (thus, *inter alia*, Junker [1939; 1941] and Junge [1973]), or as a mythical text (thus Erman [1911] and Sethe [1928]) has never really been settled (see Ockinga 2010: 99). A further complicating factor is the apparent composite nature of the text, which features strong influences from other compositions as well as allusions to both narrative and ritual traditions (*ibid.*).

The text is also known as the Shabaka Stone, after the king on whose orders the text was transmitted from “a work of the ancestors which was worm-eaten” (superscription, ln. 1-2); presumably, Shabaka’s scribes transferred the text from an old papyrus onto the stone.²¹⁷ The stone was set up at the temple of Ptah in Memphis for public display (Lichtheim 1973: 52). Shabaka’s superscription dates the stone to the turn of the 7th century BCE, his reign falling between 705 and 690 BCE. The text itself is heavily damaged, owing mostly to the later use of the stone as a grindstone in a mill, which significantly damaged the text through wear damage and mechanical modification. Luckily, much of the text is legible, and the overall force of the text is comprehensible; it is, however, not clear how precise the alleged copy

²¹⁶ All translations by Lichtheim (2006: 51-57).

²¹⁷ Loprieno (2003: 151) points out that the ‘finding an ancient text’ trope may actually have been part of the original composition process; cf. Josiah finding the Book of the Law in the temple. However also cf.

Ashurbanipal’s genuine conservation efforts for ancient tablets.

is.²¹⁸ Similarly to some of the Mesopotamian texts discussed above, the archaic language of the text misleadingly suggests an early original composition date. Lichtheim (1973: 51) took it to date to the Old Kingdom (3rd millennium BCE), although more recent studies have converged on the conclusion that its themes and hypothesised purpose best fit a post-Amarna (post-14th century BCE) date (Junge 1973: 203; Ockinga 2010: 112). No consensus has yet been reached for a more accurate dating: Schlögl (1980: 70-72) places the date of composition in the 19th dynasty (roughly 13th century BCE), while Tobin (2001: 470) notes that “general opinion now tends to date its composition to the time of the twenty-fifth dynasty”. Von Lieven (2007: 255-257) mentions that the text itself, purely on linguistic grounds, allows for an Old Kingdom date, but does not elaborate the point. Ockinga (2010: 113) argues that, in absence of conclusive linguistic evidence for an old or late date, the thematic content fits the 19th dynasty best. Thus, the two most likely dates of composition are the 19th dynasty, as a theological treatise in response to Akhenaten’s reviled monotheism, and the 25th dynasty, as a faux-archaic original composition under Nubian rule. Either way, the Shabaka Stone dates to the 25th dynasty: the only question is whether it incorporates an older text.

Briefly summarised, the text narrates the union of Upper and Lower Egypt, previously ruled over by Horus and Seth respectively, under sole rulership of Horus at Memphis. It then continues into a complex theological section promulgating an elaborate pantheistic view in which all gods are emanations from Ptah, the god of Memphis. A short theogonic section narrates the creation of the gods by Ptah, after which the supreme authority of Memphis on grounds of cultic significance is established.

Thematically, the Memphite Theology echoes much of what we have discussed already from both Mesopotamia and the Bible. Like in many of the Mesopotamian texts, a single deity – in

²¹⁸ The text notes, in the superscription, “His majesty copied it anew so that it became better than it had been before”, in which ‘better’ may refer purely to textual quality, or alternatively to the actual content of the text.

this case, the divine craftsman Ptah – is responsible for the construction of the world and much of its contents, including the gods. This is similar to Marduk’s role in *Enūma elīš*; of course, the creator god usually is one of the most important gods anyway, since the act of creation in all texts discussed above is reserved for the victor of the conflict or the supreme deity. This appears to be a cross-cultural phenomenon, most likely relating to the subject matter of creation narrative rather than any genealogical textual precursor. Ockinga (2010: 100) helpfully lists various influences on the text, including the Heliopolitan and Hermopolitan creation tradition discussed above, the one surrounding Osiris’ kingship and burial, and the one narrating the conflict between Horus and Seth. In his view (*ibid.*: 101), the Memphite Theology does not stand in opposition to any of these traditions, but rather “skilfully incorporated all the widely known and accepted great traditions into [its] own system.” Thus, the author synthesises a number of significant and authoritative mythical concepts into a unified narrative. This same phenomenon, too, we have seen in the discussion on Mesopotamian literature:

The question, of course, is why the author might have been motivated to write this text in the first place. Junge (1973: 201) connects the themes of the text with Shabaka’s foreign origins: as a Nubian ruler of the 25th dynasty, he would have had a strong interest in attaching himself overtly to the native Egyptian religion. Further evidence of this motivation can be found in his building project at Karnak, where it was Ptah’s temple specifically that he chose for renovation (Thiers and Zignani 2011: 24). Junge additionally hints at a personal devotional interest for Shabaka in addition to his aim of gaining the approval of Egyptian traditionalists (see Ockinga 2010: 112), though it is also possible that Shabaka’s devotion for Ptah was designed precisely with the purpose of pacifying potential devout detractors. This latter option becomes more attractive with the importance of Memphis as a cultic site in mind: as the locus of the union of Upper and Lower Egypt, its symbolic value as a unifying place for Egyptians living under a foreign dynasty must have been a major consideration. Its inclusion

as ‘centre of the world’ in a public inscription, even when Shabaka’s capital was at Thebes instead of Memphis, would likely have been seen as a positive thing. Thus, between the clear use of the text by Shabaka for monumental purposes – similarly to the Assyrian royal inscriptions or, before them, the stelae with Ḥammurāpi’s Code – and the usefulness of the theology itself, I do not think it is possible to read the text in its inscriptional form without taking its ideological utility in consideration.

It should also be stressed that, apart from Shabaka’s ideological use of the text, it seems likely that the Memphite Theology records a genuine theology discussing the pantheistic nature of Ptah. In this view, the superscription is not fictitious, and the Shabaka Stone was indeed copied from an older papyrus containing a theological text responding to the abolition of Akhenaten’s imposed monotheistic cult. As noted above, several scholars, including most recently Ockinga (2010), arrive at this conclusion based largely on the observation that the main body of the text lacks any reference to Shabaka or his reign. This slightly alters our reading of the text, since the theological treatise – i.e., the complex pantheistic exegesis on the nature of Ptah and its surrounding mythological fragments – then originates in a priestly setting rather than a royal one. This forms the basis for Ockinga’s argument, since in his view the subject matter of the Memphite Theology is too far removed from Shabaka’s expected aims for an original ideological composition. As such, he contextualises it in the immediate post-Amarna period, where Egyptian religion – still reeling from the system shock of Akhenaten’s imposed monotheism – reformulated its theology with a striking emphasis on pantheistic ideas. Most of this development, characterised by the reinterpretation of a single god as the originator from whom everything emanates, was centred on the sun god, Amun-Re (Assmann 1979: 38). In much the same way as we find different local creation traditions, as outlined above, in cities like Heliopolis and Hermopolis, the post-Amarna period thus saw the development of both local and universal pantheistic theologies.

Conclusion

The study of myth has been an important subject of interest to scholars throughout history, and the methodologies employed have been nearly as varied as the range of stories being studied. Within this context, it is entirely legitimate to ask (as many have done) why I think there is space for yet another study of comparative material – particularly when some of the stories discussed in this thesis have been the subject of extensive and relatively recent analysis. The straightforward answer to this question is that this thesis grounds its approach to myth in a completely different perspective from past studies in biblical scholarship or Assyriology, and accordingly comes to different conclusions that offer novel insights (or provide novel ways of supporting existing insights) into the phenomenon of myth. In doing so, it challenges the predominant narrative that myth, in some sense, necessarily derives from genuinely-held beliefs and arises out of a general consensus, rather than being composed specifically by a single author.

In this thesis, we have approached the question of what myth is, and how it functions as a genre or type of text within ancient society, from a number of angles. Principally, the definition of myth as a phenomenon has been contextualised within the field of evolutionary anthropology. Following Boyer, we have seen that an empirical grounding of myth can be found by analysing supernatural concepts specifically as domain-level violations of cognitive templates, which under ordinary circumstances simply help us categorise the world around us efficiently. When a template is slightly altered, however, it can result in the concept being significantly more memorable (and thus more likely to be transmitted across generations) – Boyer terms these *minimally counterintuitive* (MCI) concepts. We can understand stories in which these concepts are embedded as myth, and this is the definition with which we work. Furthermore, following Upal, it was hypothesised that cultural conditioning can train people over time to treat MCI concepts as intuitive. Drawing on Upal's hypothesis, it was postulated that this can lead to complex ideas (which would ordinarily be analysed as *maximally*

counterintuitive) over much longer periods of time, by intuiting one MCI idea, adding another, intuiting the result, adding another, and so on. This postulate improved on both Boyer's and Upal's approach to myth by suggesting a process that could be the 'missing link' between the phenomenon of the cognitive bias of MCI and that of counterintuitively complex religions for which textual evidence exists.

This theoretical basis led us to a further observation about the nature of myth beyond its definition: that, seen in this way, we would expect supernatural elements in stories to become engrained in the specific cultural vocabulary of a given society. Or, put differently, that the specific forms of myth as they emerge over time – or as they are composed using contextually intuitive concepts at a given time – function (or start functioning) as markers of group identity. This was the ultimate basis for the approach taken in this thesis: because myth functions as a bearer of group identity markers, by its continued transmission we would expect those markers to be or become normative. We can thus see myth as inherently ideological, understanding ideology broadly as normative group identity.

The notion that myth is ideological was the 'golden thread' running through this thesis, and was the main principle driving the exegesis of texts presented in Parts 2 and 3. The questions posed to the mythical corpus all related to this principle in some way, and could mostly be seen as variations on the question 'how does this (myth/element/variation/adaptation) express ideological statements?' In order to demonstrate the soundness of the hypothesis, a selection of myths about creation and chaos from the ancient Near East were analysed against this question. The specific choice for myths dealing with these topics was made for several reasons: first, they are among the best-preserved texts from the ancient Near East; second, there is a long-attested connection between Mesopotamian and biblical creation myths; third, the threat or initial presence of chaos is often an integral part of creation myths; fourth, ancient Near Eastern creation myths had a reasonably large secondary corpus around them that aids contextualisation; fifth, unlike mythology and biblical studies, Assyriology as a field

has long recognised the ideological nature of the religious texts it analyses. The aim of focusing on Mesopotamian myths primarily (in Part 2) and myths from the Hebrew Bible secondarily (in Part 3) arose from a desire to reframe our understanding of Hebrew Bible texts against the context of contemporary traditions for which qualitatively and quantitatively better evidence exists.

Apart from the primary thread of ideology, a secondary thread discussed in some detail was the phenomenon of adaptation in myth. Arising naturally from the combination of the two concepts was the question of whether evidence exists of myths being composed as adaptations of other myths for ideological purposes. We first discussed this question within the Mesopotamian tradition, analysing the myth of *Erra and Išum* as an adaptation of *Enūma eliš*, specifically with the aim of understanding the way in which the former's nature as an adaptation of the latter comments on, or modifies, specific ideological statements. This was further expanded with a subsequent section on theory of adaptation and parody and the application thereof on the relationship between the biblical text of Genesis 1 and *Enūma eliš*. Several other texts were discussed in this context: an analysis of Psalm 29 and its potential North-West Semitic background, and the complex question of Psalm 104 and Egyptian myth. This latter question led to a brief excursus into the ideological use of myth in 14th- and 8th-century BCE Egypt, leading to similar conclusions as those derived from previous comparisons.

Moving on to the conclusions drawn from specific material, we started Part 2 with a discussion of the *Theogony of Dunnu*, a text probably originally composed in Sumerian and surviving as an Akkadian translation from the library at Sippar. It is an excellent counterpoint to the usual definition critiqued in this thesis due to its (even for mythical standards) unexpected narrative, its origin from a recently-founded city, and its extensive use of deities otherwise acknowledged as being of minor importance. Together, these characteristics suggest that the myth was written for the specific purpose of raising Dunnu's profile, while a

fourth characteristic (specific references to the calendar) reinforce the connection between the text and cultural norms. Both aims can most straightforwardly be described as ideological, with the former targeting an out-group audience for the in-group, and the latter emphasising shared in-group norms.

Similar ideas were discussed with the example of two stories from the Sumerian Ninurta Cycle, *Ninurta's Return to Nippur (An-gim)* and *Ninurta's Exploits (Lugal-e)*. The focus in these stories was shown to be on the expression of certain notions of what constituted 'civilisation' to the author and the audience of the text. In these two texts, we focused on group identity markers expressed in the text through supernatural language. In particular, the pre-eminent status of Ninurta in Nippur over and against other deities was shown to be both assumed and re-emphasised through the narrative in *An-gim*. The narrative of *Lugal-e*, along similar but slightly different lines, was shown to express most strongly the definition, assertion, and affirmation of Sumerian in-group identity as 'civilised' over and against non-urban society. The extensive use of supernatural themes in both myths demonstrates the connection between it and ideology, while the frequent references to real-world locations and contemporary political reality suggest once more that these myths do not necessarily foreground 'eternal truths'.

Our most extensive discussion was on the text of *Enūma eliš*, which was shown to be strongly ideological in nature in several different ways. The text itself, featuring both extensive supernatural ideas and real-world references like the myths discussed previously, attests to the same notion that sharing and reinforcing ideology may have been the principal purpose of the myth. One particular piece of evidence – the existence of both Babylonian and Assyrian editions of the text – lent further credence to this idea, since it showed directly that changing political circumstances had a direct impact on *Enūma eliš*. The dissemination of the myth, primarily through the Akītu festival but also in other ways, additionally demonstrated not just the theoretical intention of the text to be societally significant, but also a practical

example of it being used for this purpose. Furthermore, the productivity of ‘creation myth’ as a category was called into question, since *Enūma eliš* clearly *discusses* creation, but at the same time is not primarily *about* it. By association, similar objections were raised about Chaokampf as a genre of myth – again, because *Enūma eliš* incorporates it too – with similar implications about the identification of myths as ‘Chaokampf myths’.

A final piece of evidence contributing to the ideological significance of *Enūma eliš* was presented through another myth: *Erra and Išum*, which was analysed as a parody of *Enūma eliš*. The critical attitude of the former against the ideology espoused in the latter demonstrated not only yet another case of a myth being concerned primarily with ideology, but also a virtually undisputable example of a myth being written specifically with this purpose in mind. Its continued use in prophylactics and secondary texts furthermore suggests that, even after its direct relevance as a countertext to *Enūma eliš* had waned, *Erra and Išum* was still considered authoritative in some sense. In line with the understanding of myth explored in this thesis, the reason for this continued importance likely relates to its salience in terms of contextually intuitive supernatural concepts.

Our first comparative discussion at the end of Part 2 continued in Part 3 with the introduction of further theoretical considerations – in this case, Hutcheon’s theories of adaptation and parody, augmented by Kynes’ understanding of the latter in the Hebrew Bible. The nature of parody as a potentially ideological genre chimed with our analysis of myth as such up to this point. In particular, we discussed how parodies reflect on their precursor texts and can do so without a necessarily negative attitude towards the precursor. Some brief examples from other Mediterranean religious traditions as well as more modern adaptations and parodies were discussed, among which the case of Vergil’s *Aeneid* and Homeric tradition.

It was with this theory in mind that our analysis of Genesis 1:1-2:4a began. Arguing first for a direct connection between *Enūma eliš* and Genesis 1, it was then demonstrated that the

adaptational context of Genesis 1 is antagonistic against its precursor text. This, in combination with our understanding of myth as ideological in nature, suggests a number of changes to common interpretations of the biblical text are in order: first, that the text is unlikely to reflect a genuinely-held cosmological belief on part of the author; second, that the theological statements in the text are similarly unlikely to have predated the text, but rather arose from the process of adaptation; third, that the adaptation demonstrates the author's sophisticated approaches to ideological rejection and subversion; and fourth, that the text attests to the complexity of ideological conflict between (Judahite) in-group and (Babylonian) out-group at the time of composition. Taken together, these conclusions alone call for a reframing of our understanding of myth in the Hebrew Bible, and more generally for a reassessment of our general assumption that the biblical text was motivated primarily by a desire to enshrine its authors' held values.

The analysis drawn from this complex relationship between precursor text and adaptation continued in our discussion of Psalm 29. In particular, we discussed the likely North-West Semitic roots of the psalm and its use of supernatural themes throughout. The psalm was used to demonstrate not only the willingness of its author to reject rivalling religious narrative through subversion of the out-group's supernatural themes, but also the likely proximity of the Yahwistic supernatural vocabulary to the more general North-West Semitic one by virtue of their expected contextual intuitiveness. Furthermore, the rejection-through-adoption of a rivalling cultural group's supernatural ideas supported the conclusion drawn from the analysis of Genesis 1 that the author's or editor's belief in adopted supernatural concepts likely did not play a large part in the composition and selection of the myth for the early Yahwistic canon.

Psalm 104 offered a similar conundrum, albeit with a slightly more complex derivational history. Although a direct Egyptian connection ultimately had to be rejected, it was suggested that the relatively positive outlook on Egypt by the author of the psalm as a non-Babylonian

group may have driven its composition. Furthermore, the psalm's similarity to Akhenaten's *Hymn to the Sun* as well as Genesis 1 (and therefore, by proxy, *Enūma eliš*) may indicate that the incorporation of these non-Babylonian and anti-Babylonian texts was an act of deliberate ritualisation of this sentiment into the hymnic Yahwistic tradition. With the discussion bringing in Egyptian material already, a brief excursus into Egyptian sources themselves – including Akhenaten's *Hymn* – demonstrated the applicability of the approach taken in this thesis to material beyond the specific Judahite-Mesopotamian dynamic.

As it stands, this thesis addressed several longstanding issues in biblical studies from a novel angle. In doing so, it contributes to biblical scholarship through its novel analysis of familiar material; to Assyriology through its close reading and textual criticism of texts that had previously received only sparse attention; to evolutionary anthropology through its postulated model from the phenomenon of minimal counterintuitiveness to the origins of religion; and to mythology through its development of a multidisciplinary methodology. Furthermore, the research presented here raises a number of questions that will require further attention.

To begin with the theoretical background, many questions remain around the precise nature of minimal counterintuitiveness. It is still poorly understood how the effect functions within the context of human evolution, and what precise criteria activate the memory advantage apparently bestowed on MCI concepts. Although some research has been done in the period between the formulation of this approach and the completion of the thesis, the picture is far from complete. On a related note: as far as I am aware at the time of writing, this is only the second application of MCI theory to a mythical corpus. Further applications are eagerly awaited and will undoubtedly arise from multidisciplinary projects similar to the one presented here. Additionally, there is a potential for MCI theory to be applied to a broader set of questions than just religious ones; one question worth addressing with the toolset developed here is whether popular science is successful because it makes use of the same

cognitive bias as religious narrative does. Again: a question for future research, but one that demonstrates the flexibility and productivity of the methodology.

Secondly, as mentioned before, although the general understanding in Assyriology of myth as an ideological phenomenon is generally well-established, it will be interesting to see what future mythological approaches to Mesopotamian myth will yield. In parallel with the rising acceptance of the group marking nature of language in general, it is possible that future studies will address questions surrounding ideology, writing, and language use in the ancient Near East and beyond more broadly. It will also be fascinating – though completely unpredictable – to see what future discoveries of cuneiform tablets will contribute to our understanding of both myth in Mesopotamia and the specific myths discussed in this thesis. In many ways, the missing links in some of these texts – e.g. the entire second half of the *Theogony of Dunnu* and major sections of *Erra and Išum* – leave larger gaps than the missing links of the fossil record, and any discoveries made in the future will undoubtedly radically alter our perception of some of these texts.

Finally, the approach formulated here (and pioneered by others as acknowledged throughout this thesis) has been designed to have a broad application on the study of the Hebrew Bible. We have really only had space to discuss three texts in some detail (Gen 1, Ps 29, Ps 104), and space constraints meant hugely important texts to the development of Judaism (and Christianity after it), such as the myth of the Garden of Eden, had to be left out and should certainly be addressed in future research. I am certain that similar approaches to other sections of the Hebrew Bible – e.g. the Flood myth in Gen 6-9 or the story of Moses – will yield novel interpretations when seen as deliberately-composed ideological narratives. Furthermore, there is no particular reason for the methodology presented here to be restricted to the Hebrew Bible: as an approach to questions in comparative religious studies, I am convinced it will prove fruitful in comparative analyses – for example – between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament; on the appropriation of both in Islam; and on modern

adaptations of these texts in the Book of Mormon, to name but some obvious candidates for future research.

Ultimately, the question of how ideology is expressed through humanity's most important religious stories can help us understand both the past – because no religion arose or ever existed outside a political context – and the present – because religion continues to play a major role in our everyday discourse, whether we are atheists, believers, or anything in between or beyond. The question of what it all means, and how it actually works, has been part of that discourse since the beginning, and presumably always will be. And so, perhaps, these stories are indeed interesting – not for what they tell you about cosmology, but for what they say about people.

Bibliography

Primary texts by original language

Akkadian

Code of Hammurāpi:

Borger, R. (2006) *Babylonisch-assyrische Lesestücke*, 2 volumes. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum.

Enūma elīš

Lambert, W.G. (2013) *Babylonian Creation Myths*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.

Kämmerer, T.R. and Metzler, K.A. (2012) *Das babylonische Welterschöpfungsepos Enūma elīš*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.

Erra and Išum

Foster, B.R. (2005) *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*. Bethesda: CDL Press.

Nergal and Ereshkigal

Gurney, O.R. (1960) “The Myth of Nergal and Ereshkigal” in *Anatolian Studies* 10, pp. 105-131.

Royal Inscriptions

Novotny, J. (2011–) *The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period*. Philadelphia: The RINAP Project.

Theogony of Dunnu

Jacobsen, T. (1984) “The Harab Myth” in *Sources from the Ancient Near East*, Vol. 2, Issue 3, pp. 1-26.

Dutch

Bordewijk, F. (1932) *Blokken* [*Blocks*]. Utrecht: De Gemeenschap.

Egyptian (all texts)

Lichtheim, M. (2006) *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 2 volumes. Berkeley: University of California Press.

English

Bernstein, L., Laurents, A., and Sondheim, S. (1957) *West Side Story*. First performed at Winter Garden Theatre, New York.

Collins, S. (2008) *The Hunger Games*. Wilkinsburg: Scholastic.

Lawrence, F. (2007) *I Am Legend*. Burbank: Warner Bros.

Luhmann, B. (1996) *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*. Sydney: Bazmark.

Matheson, R. (1954) *I Am Legend*. New York: Gold Medal Books.

Orwell, G. (2004 [1949]) *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. London: Penguin Classics.

Pope, A. (2011) "The Dunciad" in *Poetical Works of Pope*, volume 2. Available online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/9601/pg9601.html>. Last accessed 09/10/19.

Shakespeare, W. (2015 [1595?]) *Romeo and Juliet*. London: Penguin Classics.

Greek

Apollodorus (1921) *The Library, Volume I: Books 1-3.9*. Frazer, J.G. (transl.) Loeb Classical Library 121. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Basil of Caesarea (2007) *Hexaemeron*. Available online at

<https://web.archive.org/web/20070701102157/http://www.mun.ca:80/Ansaxdat/ambrose/exeget/hexam.htm>. Last accessed 09/10/19.

Hesiod (1966) *Theogony* (trans. M.L. West). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

John Chryostom (1986-1992) *Homilies on Genesis*, 3 volumes (trans. R.C. Hill).

Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.

Origen (1885) *De Principiis* (trans. P. Schaff). Available online at

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf04>. Last accessed 09/10/19.

Hebrew

Epstein, I. (1959) *The Babylonian Talmud*, 64 volumes. New York: Rebecca Bennet Publications.

Kittel, R., Elliger, K., Rudolph, W., Weil, G.E., Rüger, H.P., Bardtke, H., and Schenker, A. (eds.) (2012) *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS). Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

Schenker, A. (2004-) *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ). Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

Japanese

Takami, K. (1999) バトル・ロワイアル [*Battle Royale*]. Tokyo: Ohta.

Latin

Augustine. (2014-2016) *Confessions*, 2 volumes (trans. C.J.-B. Hammond). Loeb Classical Library 26-27. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Naso, Publius Ovidius (Ovid) (2004) *Ovid: in Six Volumes* (trans. G.P. Goold). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Sumerian

Enlil and Ninlil

Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Fluckiger-Hawker, E, Robson, E., and Zólyomi, G., (1998-)

The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature. Oxford. Available online at

<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr121.htm>. Last accessed 08/10/19.

Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld

Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Fluckiger-Hawker, E, Robson, E., and Zólyomi, G., (1998-)

The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature. Oxford. Available online at

<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr141.htm>. Last accessed 08/10/19.

Ninurta's Exploits (Lugal-e)

Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Fluckiger-Hawker, E, Robson, E., and Zólyomi, G., (1998-)

The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature. Oxford. Available online at

<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr162.htm>. Last accessed 08/10/19.

Van Dijk, J. (1983) *LUGAL UD ME-LÁM-bi NIR-GAL*, 2 vols. Leiden: Brill.

Ninurta's Return to Nippur (An-gim)

Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Fluckiger-Hawker, E, Robson, E., and Zólyomi, G., (1998-)

The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature. Oxford 1998-. Available online at

<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.6.1#>. Last accessed 08/10/19.

Ugaritic

Smith, M.S. and Pitard, W. (1994-2012) *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 2 volumes. Leiden: Brill.

Reference works

- Biggs, R.D., Brinkman, J.A., Civil, M., Farber, W., Gelb, I.J., Oppenheim, A.L., Reiner, E., Roth, M.T., and Stolper, M.W. (eds.) (1957-2010) *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (CAD). Chicago: The Oriental Institute.
- Black, J.A., George, A.R., and Postgate, J.N. (eds.) (2000) *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* (CDA). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
- Del Olmo Lete, G., and Sanmartín, J. (eds.) (2015) *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, 3rd edition (DUL). Leiden: Brill.
- Ebeling, E., Meissner, B., Weidner, E.F., Von Soden, W., and Edzard, D.O. (eds.) (1928–) *Reallexicon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Huehnergard, J. (2011) *A Grammar of Akkadian*, 3rd edition. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- Huehnergard, J. and Woods, C. (2012) “Akkadian and Eblaite” in Woodard, R. (2004–) *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World’s Ancient Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Koehler, L. and Baumgartner, W. (eds.) (2019) *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (HALOT) (trans. M.E.J. Richardson). Leiden: Brill.
- Oxford University Press (2010-) *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sjöberg, Å.W., Leichty, E., and Tinney, S. (eds.) (1974-2006) *The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary* (ePSD), available online at <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/nepsd-frame.html>. Last accessed 09/10/19.

Van der Toorn, K., Becking, B., and Van der Horst, P.W. (eds.) (1999) *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (DDD). Leiden: Brill/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Von Soden, W. (1995) *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*, 3rd edition (GAG). Analecta Orientalia 33. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum.

Secondary Literature

Adams, R.M. (2008) “An Interdisciplinary Overview of a Mesopotamian City and its Hinterlands” in *Cuneiform Digital Library Journal* 1. Available online at https://cdli.ucla.edu/pubs/cdlj/2008/cdlj2008_001.html, last accessed 06/10/19.

Albright, W.F. (1922) “The Earliest Forms of Hebrew Verse” in *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 2, pp. 69-86.

Allen, D. (2013) *Myth and Reality in Mircea Eliade*. London: Routledge.

Anderson, B. W. (ed.) (1984) *Creation in the Old Testament*. Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press.

Annus, A. (2002) *The God Ninurta in the Mythology and Royal Ideology of Ancient Mesopotamia*. State Archives of Assyria Studies 14. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.

Assmann, J. (1979) “Primat und Transzendenz: Struktur und Genese der ägyptischen Vorstellung eines höchsten Wesens” in W. Westendorf (ed.), *Aspekte der spätägyptischen Religion*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp. 7-42.

Assmann, J. (1991) *Ägypten: Theologie und Frömmigkeit einer frühen Hochkultur*, 2nd edition. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Assmann, J. (1995) *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom: Re, Amun and the crisis of polytheism*. London: Kegan Paul International.

- Baron-Cohen, S., Ring, H.A., Wheelwright, S., Bullmore, E.T., Brammer, M.J., Simmons, A., and Williams, S.C. (1999) “Social Intelligence in the Normal and Autistic Brain: An fMRI study” in *European Journal of Neuroscience* vol. 11, no.6, pp. 1891-1898.
- Barr, J. (2000). *History and Ideology in the Old Testament: Biblical studies at the end of a millennium*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barrett, J.L. (2000). “Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion” in *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 29-34.
- Barrett, J.L. (2008) “Coding and Quantifying Counterintuitiveness in Religious Concepts: Theoretical and methodological reflections” in *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 20, pp. 308-338.
- Barrett, L.F. and Russell, J.A. (1999) “Structure of Current Affect: Controversies and emerging consensus” in *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 8(1), pp. 10-14.
- Beaulieu, P.-A, (2000) “A land grant on a cylinder seal and Assurbanipal’s Babylonian policy” in S. Graziani (ed.), *Studi sul Vicino Oriente antico dedicati alla memoria di Luigi Cagni*. Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, pp. 25–45.
- Beaulieu, P.-A. (2019) “Interactions between Greek and Babylonian Thought in Seleucid Uruk” in C. Proust and J. Steele (eds.), *Scholars and Scholarship in Late Babylonian Uruk*, New York: Springer.
- Ben-Yosef, E., Liss, B., Yagel, O.A., Tirosh, O., Najjar, M., Levy, T.E. (2019) “Ancient technology and punctuated change: Detecting the emergence of the Edomite Kingdom in the Southern Levant” in *PLoS ONE* 14 (9): e0221967. Available online at <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0221967>, last accessed 05/10/19.
- Berlinerblau, J. (1999) “Preliminary Remarks for the Sociological Study of Israelite ‘Official Religion.’” In *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in*

- Honor of Baruch A. Levine*. Chazan, R., Hallo, W.W., and Schiffman, L. (eds.).
Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
- Bidmead, J. (2002) *The Akītu Festival: Religious continuity and royal legitimation in Mesopotamia*. Piscataway: Gorgias Press.
- Black, J. (1988) *Reading Sumerian Poetry*. London: A&C Black.
- Blenkinsopp, J. (1985) "The Documentary Hypothesis in Trouble?" in *Bible Review* 1, pp. 22-32.
- Blenkinsopp, J. (2011) *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation: A discursive commentary on Genesis 1-11*. London: T&T Clark.
- Boyer, P. (1994) *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A cognitive theory of religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Boyer, P. (2001) *Religion Explained*. New York: Basic Books.
- Boyer, P. (2003) "Religious Thought and Behaviour as By-products of Brain Function" in *Trends in Cognitive Science* vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 119-124.
- Boyer, P. and Ramble, C. (2001) "Cognitive templates for religious concepts: cross-cultural evidence for recall of counter-intuitive representations" in *Cognitive Science* 25, pp. 535-564.
- Brandist, C. (1997) "Bakhtin, Cassirer and Symbolic Forms" in *Radical Philosophy* 85.
- Brandt, M.C. (1990) "Nippur: Building an Environmental Model" in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 49, no. 1, pp. 67-73.
- Breasted, J.H. (1901) "The Philosophy of a Memphite Priest" in *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 39.
- Breasted, J.H. (1905-1906) *Ancient Records of Egypt*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Breasted, J.H. (1906) *A History of Egypt from the Earliest Time to the Persian Conquest*.
New York: Scribner.
- Breasted, J.H. (1912) *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*. New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Breasted, J.H. (1921) – see Breasted (1906)
- Brettler, M.Z. (1987) *How to Read the Jewish Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bridge, E.J. (2010) “Polite Language in the Lachish Letters” in *Vetus Testamentum* 60, pp.
518-534.
- Brinkman, J.A. and Dalley, S. (1988) “A Royal Kudurru from the Reign of Erība-Marduk” in
Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie 78, pp. 73-98.
- Bultmann, R. (1941) – see Bultmann 1989.
- Bultmann, R. (1989) *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*. Minneapolis:
Fortress Press.
- Cagni, L. (1969) *L'epopea di Erra*. Rome: Istituto di studi del Vicino Oriente dell'Università.
- Campbell, J. (1951) “Bios and Mythos: Prolegomena to a Science of Mythology” in Wilbur,
N. and Muensterberger, W. (eds.), *Psychoanalysis and Culture*. New York:
International Universities Press.
- Campbell, J. (2008 [1949]) *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (3rd ed.). New York: Pantheon
Books.
- Carr, D.M. (2012) “The Many Uses of Intertextuality in Biblical Studies: Actual and
Potential” in *Congress Volume Helsinki 2010*, *Vetus Testamentum Supplements* 148.
Leiden: Brill.

- Cavigneaux, A. and Ismail, B.K. (1998) “Eine zweisprachige Hymne aus dem Haus des Beschwörungspriesters” in *Acta Sumeriologica* 20, pp. 1-11.
- Chavalas, M.W. (2011) “The Comparative Use of Ancient Near Eastern Texts in the Study of the Hebrew Bible” in *Religion Compass* 5/5, pp. 150-165.
- Clayden, T. (1996) “Kurigalzu I and the Restoration of Babylonia” in *Iraq* 58, pp. 109-121.
- Clifford, R. J. (1994) *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible*. Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America.
- Clifford, R.J. (2003) *Psalms 73-150*. Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Cline, E.H. (2015) *1177 B.C.: The year civilization collapsed*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cohen, M.E. (1983) *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East*. Bethesda: CDL Press.
- Cohen, R. and Bernick-Greenberg, H. (2007) *Excavations at Kadesh Barnea (Tell el-Qudeirat) 1976–1982*. IAA Reports 34. Jerusalem.
- Cooley, J. (2008) “‘I Want to Dim the Brilliance of Šulpae’: Mesopotamian Celestial Divination and the Poem of Erra and Išum,” *Iraq* 70, 179-188.
- Cooper, J.S. (1978) *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur*. Analecta Orientalia 52. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum.
- Coupe, L. (2009) *Myth*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Craig, J.A. (1895) *Assyrian and Babylonian Religious Texts*. Leipzig: Hinrichs.
- Crawford, S.W., Joosten, J., and Ulrich, E. (2008) “Sample Editions of the Oxford Hebrew Bible: Deuteronomy 32:1-9, 1 Kings 11:1-8, and Jeremiah 27:1-10 (34G)” in *Vetus Testamentum* 58, pp. 352-366.

- Cross, F.M. (1950) “Notes on a Canaanite Psalm in the Old Testament” in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 117, pp. 19-21.
- Dalley, S. (2008) *Myths from Mesopotamia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davies, N.G. 1903. *The Rock Tombs of El Amarna*, Volume 1. Archaeological Survey 13–18. London: Egypt Exploration Society.
- Dawkins, R. (1976) *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Day, J. (1985) *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite myth in the Old Testament*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Day, J. (2013a) *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1-11*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Day, J. (2013b) “Psalm 104 and Akhenaten's Hymn to the Sun” in S. Gillingham (ed.), *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- De Claissé-Walford, N., Jacobson, R.A., and Tanner, B.L. (2014) *The Book of Psalms*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Derrida, J. (2009 [1966]) “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” in *Writing and Difference* (trans. Alan Bass). Available online at <http://hydra.humanities.uci.edu/derrida/sign-play.html>, last accessed 05/10/19.
- Dietrich, M. (2006) “Das Enūma eliš als mythologischer Grundtext für die Identität der Marduk-Religion Babyloniens” in M. Dietrich and T. Kulmar (eds.), *The Significance of Base Texts for Religious Identity*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
- Dunbar, R.I.M. (2003) “The origin and subsequent evolution of language” in M. Christiansen and S. Kirby (eds.), *Language Evolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 219–34.

- Dundes, A. (1962) "From Etic to Emic Units in the Structural Study of Folktales" in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 75, No. 296, pp. 95-105.
- Durkheim, É. (1895) *Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique*. Paris: F. Alcan.
- Durkheim, É. (1897) *Le Suicide: Étude de Sociologie*. Paris: F. Alcan.
- Ebach, J., (1979) *Weltentstehung und Kulturentwicklung bei Philo von Byblos: Ein Beitrag zur Überlieferung der biblischen Urgeschichte im Rahmen des altorientalischen und antiken Schöpfungsglaubens*. Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten Testament, Series 6, Vol. 8. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Ebeling, E. (1931) *Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Ehrlich, C.S. (1996) *The Philistines in Transition: A history from ca. 1000-730 B.C.E.* Leiden: Brill.
- Eliade, M. (1963) *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. New York: The New American Library-Meridian Books.
- Eliade, M. (1964) *Myth and Reality* (trans. Willard R. Trask). New York: Harper & Row.
- Eliade, M. (1976) "Myths and Magical Thought" in A. Eliot (ed.), *Myths*. New York, N.Y.: McGraw-Hill.
- Falkenstein, A. (1966) *Die Inschriften Gudeas von Lagaš*, Vol I. *Analecta Orientalia* 30. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum.
- Farber Flügge, G. (1973) *Der Mythos Inanna und Enki Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung der Liste der ME*. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum.

- Feldt, L. (2011) "Monstrous Identities - narrative strategies in Lugale and some reflections on Sumerian religious narrative" in *Narratives of Egypt and the Near East. Literary and Linguistic Approaches*. Orientalia Lovaniensia 189. Leuven: Peeters, pp. 123-163.
- Felser, J.M. (1996) "Was Joseph Campbell a Postmodernist?" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64 (2): 395-417.
- Finkelstein, I. (2010) "Kadesh Barnea: A reevaluation of its archaeology and history" in *Tel Aviv* 37/1, pp. 111-125.
- Fishbane, M. (1985) *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Fisher, L.R. and Rummel, S. (1972-1981). *Ras Shamra Parallels*, 3 volumes. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum.
- Fitzgerald, A. (1974) "A Note on Psalm 29" in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 215, pp. 61-63.
- Fleming, D.E. (2012) *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible: History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Flückiger-Hawker, E. (1999) *Urnamma of Ur in Sumerian Literary Tradition*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Foster, B.R. (2005) *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*. Bethesda: CDL Press.
- Foster, J.L. (1995) "The Hymn to Aten: Akhenaten worships the sole god" in J. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 3. New York: Charles Scribner.
- Frame, G. (1995) *Rulers of Babylonia*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

- Frahm, E. (2010) “Counter-texts, Commentaries, and Adaptations: Politically motivated responses to the Babylonian epic of creation in Mesopotamia, the biblical world, and elsewhere” in *ORIENT* 45, pp. 3-34.
- Frahm, E. (2011) *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
- Frayne, D. (1998) “New Light on the Reign of Išme-Dagan” in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 88, pp. 6-44.
- Frazer, J.G. (2003 [1890]) *The Golden Bough*. Available online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3623/3623-h/3623-h.htm>, last accessed 05/10/19.
- Freud, S. (1913) *Totem und Tabu: Einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker*. Leipzig: Hugo Heller & Cie.
- Freud, S. (1939) *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion*. New York: Knopf.
- Fewell, D.N. (1992) *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Friedman, R.E. (1997) *Who Wrote the Bible?* New York: HarperCollins.
- Fujita, A. (2012) “‘The Hunger Games,’ a Japanese Original?” Available online at <https://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2012/03/the-hunger-games-a-japanese-original>. New York: ABC News Network.
- Gahlin, L. (2007) “Creation myths” in T. Wilkinson (ed.), *The Egyptian World*. London: Routledge.
- Gaster, T. (1946-1947) “Psalm 29” in *Jewish Quarterly Review* 37, pp. 55-65.
- George, A. (2013) *Babylonian Divinatory Texts Chiefly in the Schøyen Collection*. Bethesda: CDL Press.
- Ginsberg, H.L. (1936) *Kitve 'Ugarit*. Jerusalem: The Bialik Foundation.

- Globe, A. (1974) "The Literary Structure and Unity of the Song of Deborah" in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93, pp. 509-512.
- Glueck, N. (1967) "Some Edomite Pottery from Tell El-Kheleifeh" in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 188.
- Goldwasser, O. "The Aten Is the 'Energy of Light': New evidence from the script" in *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 46, pp. 59-65.
- Greene, N.E. (2017) "Creation, Destruction, and a Psalmist's Plea: Rethinking the poetic structure of Psalm 74" in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 136/1, pp. 85-101.
- Gunkel, H. (2006 [1895]) *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton* (trans. K.W. Whitney). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Gurney, O.R. and Finkelstein, J.J. (1957) *The Sultantepe Tablets*. Occasional Publication 3. London: The British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara.
- Hallo, W.W. (2000). "Founding Myths of Cities in the Ancient Near East: Mesopotamia and Israel" in P. Azara, R. Mar, E. Riu, and E. Subías (eds.), *La Fundación de la Ciudad: mitos y ritos en el mundo antiguo*. Barcelona: Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, pp. 31–32.
- Halpern, B. (1978) "The Ritual Background of Zechariah's Temple Song," in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40, pp. 167–90.
- Halpin, Z. (1991) "Kin recognition cues of vertebrates" in P. Hepper (ed.), *Kin Recognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 220–58.
- Harris, P.L. (2000) "On Not Falling Down To Earth: Children's metaphysical questions" in K. Rosengren (ed.), *Imagining the Impossible: The development of magical, scientific, and religious thinking in contemporary society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Havelock, E.A. (1986) *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hays, C.B. (2008) “Echoes of the Ancient Near East?: Intertextuality and the Comparative Study of the Old Testament” in Wagner, J.R. Rowe, C.K., and Grieb, A.K. (eds.), *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, pp. 20-43.
- Heimpel, W. (1987) “The Natural History of the Tigris According to the Sumerian Literary Composition Lugal” in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 46, pp. 309–317.
- Hendel, R. and Joosten, J. (2018) *How Old Is the Hebrew Bible?: A linguistic, textual, and historical study*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hirst, P.Q. (1975) *Durkheim, Bernard and Epistemology*. London: Routledge.
- Hoffmeier, J.K. (2015) *Akhenaten and the Origins of Monotheism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Holloway, S.W. (2002) *Aššur is king! Aššur is king! Religion in the exercise of power in the Neo-Assyrian empire*. Leiden: Brill.
- Holmstedt, R.D. (2008) “The Restrictive Syntax of Genesis i 1” in *Vetus Testamentum* 58, pp. 56-67.
- Hornung, E. (1999) *Akhenaten and the Religion of Light* (trans. D. Lorton). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Horowitz, W. (1998) *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- Householder, F. (1944) “Paroidia” in *Classical Philology* 39, pp. 1-9.
- Hutcheon, L. (1991) “The Politics of Postmodern Parody” in H.F. Plett (ed.), *Intertextuality. Research in Text Theory* 15. Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 225-226.

- Hutcheon, L. (2000) *A Theory of Parody*, 2nd edition. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Hutcheon, L. (2013) *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd edition. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Hutton, J.M. (2010) “Local Manifestations of Yahweh and Worship in the Interstices: A Note on Kuntillet ‘Ajrud” in *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 10, pp. 177-210.
- Innis, H. (1951) *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Jacobsen, T. (1976) *The Treasures of Darkness: A history of Mesopotamian religion*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Jacobsen, T. (1984) “The Harab Myth” in *Sources from the Ancient Near East*, Vol. 2, Issue 3, pp. 1-26.
- Joosten, J. (2007) “A Note on the Text of Deuteronomy xxxii 8” in *Vetus Testamentum* 57/4, pp. 548-555.
- Jung, C.G. (1960 [1929]) “The Significance of Constitution and Heredity in Psychology” in *Collected Works* vol. 8, ¶229–230 (p. 112).
- Jung, C.G. (1966 [1922-41]) *Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Junge, F. (1973) “Zur Fehldatierung des sog. Denkmals memphitischer Theologie oder Der Beitrag der ägyptischen Theologie zur Geistesgeschichte der Spätzeit” in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 29, pp. 195-204.
- Kämmerer, T.R. and Metzler, K.A. (2012) *Das babylonische Welterschöpfungsepos Enūma eliš*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
- Knowles, M. (2006) *Centrality Practiced: Jerusalem in the religious practice of Yehud and the diaspora in the Persian period*. Atlanta: SBL.

- Koch, K. (1965) "Wort und Einheit des Schöpfergottes in Memphis und Jerusalem" in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 62, pp. 251-93.
- Korpel, M.C.A. and De Moor, J.C. (2014) *Adam, Eve, and the Devil: A new beginning*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press.
- Kynes, W. (2011) "Beat Your Parodies into Swords, and Your Parodied Books into Spears: A new paradigm for parody in the Hebrew Bible," *Biblical Interpretation* 19, pp. 276–310.
- Labov, W. (2001) *Principles of Linguistic Change. Volume 2: Social Factors*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Lambert, W.G. (1966) "Divine Love Lyrics from the Reign of Abi-ešuh" in *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 12, pp. 41–51.
- Lambert, W.G. (1973) "Studies in Nergal" in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 30, pp. 355-363.
- Lambert, W.G. (1985) "The History of the muš-ḫuš in Ancient Mesopotamia" in P. Borgeaud et al. (eds.), *L'Animal, l'homme, le dieu dans le proche orient ancien*, Leuven: Éditions Peeters, pp. 89-92.
- Lambert, W.G. (1996) *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lambert, W.G. (2013) *Babylonian Creation Myths*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lambert, W.G. and Millard, A.R. (1965) *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*, part 46: Babylonian Literary Texts. London: Trustees of the British Museum.
- Lambert, W.G. and Walcot, P. (1965) "A New Babylonian Theogony and Hesiod" in *Kadmos* Vol. 4, Issue 1, pp. 64-72.

- Landsberger, B. and Kinnier Wilson, J.V. (1961) "The Fifth Tablet of Enuma Eliš" in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 20/3, pp. 154-179.
- Larrain, J. (1980) "Durkheim's Concept of Ideology" in *Sociological Review* 28/1, pp. 129-139.
- Leeming, D. (2005) "Atum" in *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1958) "The structural study of myth" in T.A. Sebeok (ed.), *Myth: a symposium*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1964) *The Raw and the Cooked*. Paris: Plon.
- Lewis, C. S. (1958) *Reflections on the Psalms*. London: Geoffrey Bles.
- Lewis, T.J. (1996) "CT 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-dragon myths" in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116, no. 1, pp. 28-47.
- Lisdorf, A. (2004) "The Spread of Non-Natural Concepts" in *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 4.1, pp. 151-173.
- Litke, R.L. (1998) *A Reconstruction of the Assyro-Babylonian God-Lists, An: ^dA-nu-um and An: Anu šá amēli*. Bethesda: CDL Press.
- Liverani, M. (1996) "Reconstructing the Rural Landscape of the Ancient Near East" in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 39, pp. 1-49.
- Loprieno, A. (2003) "Views of the Past in Egypt during the First Millennium BC" in J. Tait (ed.), *'Never had the like occurred': Egypt's View of its Past – Encounters with Ancient Egypt* London: Routledge.
- Maier, J. R. (1997) *Gilgamesh: A reader*. Wauconda: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers.
- Malinowski, B. (1926) *Myth in primitive psychology*. London: Norton.

- Malinowski, B. (1979) "The Role of Magic and Religion" in Lessa, W. and Vogt, E. (eds.), *Reader in Comparative Religion*, 4th edition. New York: Harper and Row.
- McCauley, R.N. and Cohen, E. (2010) "Cognitive Science and the Naturalness of Religion" in *Philosophy Compass* 5/9, pp. 779-792.
- McFarlane, B. (1996) *Novel to Film: An introduction to the theory of adaptation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- McLuhan, M. (1969) *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Metzler, K. (2002) "Tod, Weiblichkeit und Ästhetik im mesopotamischen Welterschöpfungsepos Enūma elīš" in S. Parpola and R. Whiting (eds.), *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East*. Helsinki: State Archives of Assyria, pp. 393-411.
- Middleton, J. R. (2005) *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press.
- Miller, D. (1995) "Comparativism in a World of Difference" in S. Scholl (ed.), *Common Era: Best New Writings on Religion*. Ashland: White Cloud Press.
- Mirelman, S. (2017) "A New Manuscript of *Lugal-E*, Tablet IV" in *Iraq* 79, pp. 155-162.
- Milstein, S.J. (2016) *Tracking the Master Scribe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mullen, E.T. (1997) *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: A new approach to the formation of the Pentateuch*. SBL Semeia Studies. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Murnane, W.J. (1995) *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt*. Williston: SBL Press.
- Müller, G.G.W. (1994) "Ischum und Erra" in K. Hecker, (ed.), *Mythen und Epen*, Vol. II (Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments III, 4). Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, pp. 781–801.

- Müller, G.G.W. (1994) “Wer spricht? Bemerkungen zu ‘Išum und Erra’” in M. Dietrich and O. Loretz (eds.), *Vom alten Orient zum Alten Testament: Festschrift für Wolfram Freiherrn von Soden zum 85. Geburtstag* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 240), Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon & Bercker and Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, pp.349–360.
- Na’aman, N. (1991) “The Kingdom of Judah Under Josiah” in *Tel Aviv* 18, pp. 3–71.
- Na’aman, N. (2001) “An Assyrian Residency at Ramat Rahel?” in *Tel Aviv* 28, pp. 260–280.
- Nama, A. (2008) *Black Space: Imagining race in science fiction*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Noegel, S.B. (2017) “God of Heaven and Sheol: The ‘unearthing’ of creation” in *Hebrew Studies* 58, pp. 119-144.
- Norenzayan, A., Atran, S., Faulkner, J., and Schaller, M. (2006) “Memory and Mystery: The Cultural Selection of Minimally Counterintuitive Narratives” in *Cognitive Science* 30, pp. 531-553.
- O'Brien, J. and Major, W. (1982) *In the Beginning: Creation myths from ancient Mesopotamia, Israel, and Greece*. Chico: Scholars Press.
- Ockinga, B.G. (2010) “The Memphite Theology – Its Purpose and Date” in *Egyptian culture and society: studies in honour of Naguib Kanawati*, Vol. 2. Supplément aux Annales du Service des antiquités de l’Égypte 38. A. Woods, A. McFarlane, and S. Binder. (eds.). Cairo: Supreme Council of Antiquities Egypt, p. 99-117.
- Ong, W.J. (1977) “Literacy and Orality in Our Times” in *Profession* 1979, pp. 1-7.
- Ong, W.J. (1982) *Orality and Literacy*. London: Methuen.

- Oppenheim, A.L. (1977) *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a dead civilization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pardee, D. and Pardee, N. (2009) “Gods of Glory Ought to Thunder: The Canaanite matrix of Psalm 29” in Handy, L.K. (ed.), *Psalm 29 Through Time and Tradition*. Oregon: Pickwick Publications, pp. 115-124.
- Periáñez, R. and Abril, J.M. (2014) “Modelling tsunamis in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. Application to the Minoan Santorini tsunami sequence as a potential scenario for the biblical Exodus” in *Journal of Marine Systems*, Vol. 139, pp. 91-102.
- Petersen, D.L. (1984) “Zechariah’s Visions: A theological perspective” in *Vetus Testamentum* 34/2, pp. 195-206.
- Pope, M.H. (1955) *El in the Ugaritic Texts*. Leiden: Brill.
- Porubonova, M., Shaw, D.J., McKay, R., and Xygalatas, D. (2014) “Memory for Expectation-Violating Concepts: The effects of agents and cultural familiarity” in *PLoS ONE* vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 1-7.
- Porubonova-Norquist, M., Shaw, D.J., and Xygalatas, D. (2013) “Minimal-Counterintuitiveness Revisited: Effects of cultural and ontological violations on concept memorability” in *Journal for the Cognitive Science of Religion* vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 181-192.
- Povinelli, D.J. and Preuss, T.M. (1995) “Theory of Mind: Evolutionary history of a cognitive specialization” in *Trends in Neurosciences* 18(9), pp. 418-24.
- Pyysiäinen, I. and Hauser, M. (2010) “The Origins of Religion: Evolved adaptation or by-product?” in *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 104-109.
- Quine, C. (2014) “The Theological Significance of Water in Ezekiel: A brief assessment” in *Bhatter College Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* IV, pp. 2-10.

- Radner, K. (2006) “Provinz: Assyrien” in M.P. Streck (ed.), *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* 11/1-2, Berlin: de Gruyter, pp. 42-68.
- Raikes, R.L. (1966) “Physical Evidence for Noah’s Flood” in *Iraq* 28/1, pp. 52-63.
- Rainer, E. (1973) “New Cases of Morphophonemic Spellings” in *Orientalia* 42, pp. 35-38.
- Rainey, A. F. (1996) *Canaanite in the Amarna Tablets*. Leiden: Brill.
- Rendtorff, R. (1990 [1977]) *The Problem of Transmission in the Pentateuch*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Roberts, J.J.M. (1971) “Erra—scorched earth” in *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 24, pp. 11-16.
- Roberts, G. (2013) “Perspectives on language as a source of social markers.” *Language and Linguistics Compass* 7(12), pp. 619–632.
- Robertson, D.A. (1972) *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry*. Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature for the Seminar on Form Criticism.
- Robertson, W. (2014) *Drought, Famine, Plague and Pestilence: Ancient Israel’s Understandings of and Responses to Natural Catastrophes*. Gorgias Biblical Studies 45. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.
- Rosenberg, S.G. (2004) “The Jewish Temple at Elephantine” in *Near Eastern Archaeology* 67/1, pp. 4-13.
- Röllig, W. (1967) “Review of CT 46” in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 24, pp. 58-59.
- Ryan, W.B.F., Pitman III, W.C., Major, C.O., Shimkus, K., Moskalenko, V., Jones, G.A., Dimitrov, P., Görür, N., Sakıncı, M., and Yüce, H. (1997) “An Abrupt Drowning of the Black Sea Shelf.” *Marine Geology* 138, pp. 119–126.
- Sandman, M. (1938) *Texts from the Time of Akhenaten*. Brussels: Queen Elizabeth Foundation of Egyptology.

- Sayce, A.H. (1905) “The Babylonian and Biblical Accounts of the Creation” in *The American Journal of Theology* 9/1, pp. 1-9.
- Schipper, B.U. (2014) “Egyptian Background to the Psalms” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schlögl, H. (1980) *Der Gott Tatenen. Nach Texten und Bildern des Neuen Reiches*. Freiburg: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht.
- Schneider, T.J. (2011) *An Introduction to Mesopotamian Religion*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Segal, M.H. (1955) “El, Elohim, and Yhwh in the Bible” in *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 46/2, pp. 89-115.
- Segal, R. (1990) *Joseph Campbell: An Introduction*. London: Penguin Books.
- Segal, R. (2015) *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Selz, G.J., Grinevald, C., and Goldwasser, O. (2017) “The Question of Sumerian Determinatives: Inventory, Classifier Analysis, and Comparison to Egyptian Classifiers” in *Lingua Aegyptia* 25, pp. 281-344.
- Silverman, D.P. (1991) “Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt” in B.E. Shafer, *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, myths, and personal practice*. New York: Cornell University Press, pp. 55–58.
- Sigrist, M. (1984) *Les sattukku dans l'Eshumesha durant la période d'Isin et Larsa*. Bibliotheca Mesopotamica 11. Malibu: Undena Publications.
- Smith, G. (1876). *The Chaldean Account of Genesis*. New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co.
- Smith, M.S. (2002) *The Early History of God: Yahweh and other deities in ancient Israel*, 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

- Smith, M.S. (2003) *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, M.S. (2007) "Ugaritic and Akkadian Literature, Part II: Mesopotamian Impact on Biblical Narrative" in *Revue Biblique* 114, No. 2, pp. 189-207.
- Sommer, B. (2000) "The Babylonian Akitu Festival: Rectifying the king or renewing the cosmos?" in *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 27, pp. 81-95.
- Sperber, D. (1996) *Explaining Culture: A naturalistic approach*. New York: Wiley.
- Strother, R.S. (1971) "The Great Good Luck of Mister Smith" in *Saudi Aramco World* 22/1, pp. 6-11.
- Talon, P. (2001) "Enūma Eliš and the Transmission of Babylonian Cosmology to the West" in Whiting, R. M. (ed.), *Mythology and Mythologies: Methodological approaches to intercultural influences*. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- Talon, P. (2005) *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth: Enūma eliš*. State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts 4. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- Thiers, C. and Zignani, P. (2011) "The temple of Ptah at Karnak" in *Egyptian Archaeology* 38, pp. 20-24.
- Thureau-Dangin, F. (1921) *Rituels Accadiens*. Paris: Leroux.
- Tigay, J.H. (1975) "An Empirical Basis for the Documentary Hypothesis" in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94/3, pp. 329-342.
- Tobin, V.A. (2001) 'Myths: Creation Myths' in *Oxford Encyclopaedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. II. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Töpfer, S. (2014) "The Physical Activity of Parturition in Ancient Egypt: Textual and epigraphic sources" in *Dynamis* 34/2, pp. 317-335.

- Tsumura, D.T. (1989) *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: a linguistic investigation*. Sheffield: JSOT.
- Tsumura, D.T. (2015) “The Creation Motif in Psalm 74:12-14? A reappraisal of the theory of the dragon myth” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134/3, pp. 547-555.
- Tylor, E. (1920 [1871]) *Primitive Culture*. New York: J.P. Putnam’s Sons.
- Upal, A. (2010) “On Attractiveness of Surprising Ideas: How memory for counterintuitive ideas drives cultural dynamics” in *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society* 32, pp. 742-747.
- Van der Toorn, K. (1990) “Het Babylonische Nieuwjaarsfeest [The Babylonian New Year Festival]” in *Phoenix* 36/1, pp. 10-29.
- Van der Toorn, K. (1993) “Saul and the Rise of Israelite State Religion” in *Vetus Testamentum* 43/5, pp. 519-542.
- Van der Toorn, K. (2009) *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Van der Toorn, K. (2019) *Becoming Diaspora Jews: Behind the story of Elephantine*. New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press.
- Van Dijk, J. (1962) “Die Tontafeln aus dem rēš-Heiligtum” in H. Lenzen (ed.), *Vorläufiger Bericht über die von dem Deutschen Archäologischen Institut und der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft aus Mitteln der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft unternommenen Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka*, pp. 43-61.
- Van Dijk, J. (1983) *LUGAL UD ME-LÁM-bi NIR-GAL*, 2 vols. Leiden: Brill.

- van Dijk, J. (1995) "Entering the House of Hearts: An addition to chapter 151 in the Book of the Dead of Qenna" in *Oudheidkundige Mededeelingen van het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 75, pp. 7-12.
- Van Seters, J. (1992) *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as historian in Genesis*. Westminster: John Knox Press.
- Van Seters, J. (1999) *The Pentateuch: A social-science commentary, no. 1*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Vawter, B. (1977) *On Genesis: A new reading*. New York: Doubleday.
- Vayntrub, J. (2019) *Beyond Orality: Biblical poetry on its own terms*. London: Routledge.
- Von Lieven, A. (2007) *Grundriß des Laufes der Sterne: Das sogenannte Nutbuch*. The Carlsberg Papyri 8. Copenhagen: The Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies Publications.
- Von Rad, G. (1961) *Genesis: A commentary*. London: SCM Press.
- Von Soden, W. (1971) "Etemenanki vor Asarhaddon nach der Erzählung vom Turmbau zu Babel und dem Erra-Mythos" in *Ugarit-Forschungen* 3, pp. 253-263.
- Vogler, C. (1992) *The Writer's Journey*. San Francisco: Michael Wiese Productions.
- Wang, X. (2011) *The metamorphosis of Enlil in early Mesopotamia*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
- Wellhausen, J. (2013 [1883]) *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.
- Wesling, D. and Slawek, T. (1995) *Literary Voice: The Calling of Jonah*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Westermann, C. (1984) *Genesis 1-11: A commentary* (trans. J.J. Scullion). Minneapolis: Augsburg.

- Whitehouse, H. (2015) "Explaining Religion and Ritual" in K. Almqvist and A. Linklater (eds.), *Religion: Perspectives from the Engelsberg seminar 2014*. Stockholm: Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation, pp. 261-270.
- Whitney, W.B. (2019) "Beginnings: Why the doctrine of creation matters for the integration of psychology and Christianity" in *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 48/1 (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0091647119837024>, last accessed: 03/01/2022).
- Whybray, R.N. (1987) *The Making of the Pentateuch*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- Wiggermann, F.A.M. (1989) "Tišpak, His Seal, and the Dragon mušḫuššu," in O. Haex et al. (eds.), *To the Euphrates and Beyond: Archaeological Studies in Honour of Maurits N. van Loon*, Rotterdam: Balkema, pp. 117-133.
- Wiggermann, F. A. M. (2000) "Agriculture in the Northern Balikh Valley. The Case of Middle Assyrian Tell Sabi Abyad" in R.M. Jas (ed.), *Rainfall and agriculture in northern Mesopotamia. Proceedings of the third MOS Symposium (Leiden 1999)*. MOS Studies 3. Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, pp. 171-231.
- Wilcke, Claus. (1976) *Kollationen zu den sumerischen literarischen Texten aus Nippur in der Hilprecht-Sammlung Jena*. Berlin: Abhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 65.
- Wilkinson, T.J., Wilkinson, E.B., Ur, J., Altaweel, M. (2005) "Landscape and Settlement in the Neo-Assyrian Empire" in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 340, pp. 23-56.
- Williams, R.J (1958) "The Hymn to Aten" in Thomas, D.W. (ed.), *Documents from Old Testament Times*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

Wong, G.T.K. (2007) "Song of Deborah as Polemic" in *Biblica* 88/1, pp. 1-22.

Wright, E.G. (1950) *The Old Testament Against its Environment*. London: SCM Press.

Wyatt, N. (2001) *The Mythic Mind: Essays on Cosmology and Religion in Ugaritic and Old Testament Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wyatt, N. (2008) "The Mythic Mind Revisited: Myth and history, or myth versus history, a continuing problem in biblical studies" in *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 22, pp. 161-175.

Yoder, T.R. (2013) "Ezekiel 29:3 and its Ancient Near Eastern Context" in *Vetus Testamentum* 63/3, pp. 486-496.

Appendix A: Mesopotamian texts

The Theogony of Dunnu

Obverse

- 1 [Ḫa'in?,] in the beginning [married Earth]²¹⁹
- 2 [Famil]y? and lord[ship? . . .]²²⁰
- 3 They helped [one another] and [hitched on] their plough;
- 4 [With the s]troke of their plough, they brought Sea into being.
- 5 [Second]ly, by themselves they bore Sumuqan.
- 6 [Third]ly, the two of them built Dunnu,²²¹ the primeval [city].

²¹⁹ The first and last words of the line are destroyed completely; only *i-na re-e[š . . .]* is legible. The reconstruction of the first deity as Ḫa'in is based on ln 11, which preserves the divine determinative (DINGIR) and first character as ḪA, and ln 7, which preserves the second character as IN (see, convincingly, Lambert and Walcot 1965; Lambert 2013: 392). Jacobsen (1984: 6) reads the second character as RAB; the two cuneiform characters are very similar, and Jacobsen “would rather like to see a slightly variant form of RAB” so that the name of the deity corresponds to the plough through which Sea is produced. Although Ḫa'in is not attested in any other known texts, the fact that Ḫarab is not attested either speaks in favour of Lambert's position and the straightforward reading of the cuneiform text. There is a deity Ḫarbe/Ḫarbu equated with Anu/Enlil in Kassite texts (Balkan 1954), but 1) Jacobsen's argument rests largely on the absolute form of the name here, since the name in this text certainly cannot be read as *ḫa-ar-be/u* or *ḫar-be/u*; and 2) even then, as an apparently local text from a former Sumerian settlement, it seems unlikely that it would refer to a Kassite deity.

²²⁰ The legible characters read BI U₃ EN, which could be [*bīt a*]bi u *bēlû*(EN)[*ta . . .*] (so Jacobsen 1984: 6). Given the complex familial situation and successive usurping of kingship in the lines following, this is a distinct possibility. The reading remains uncertain for the present time, however, since any number of words ending in –*bi* and starting with *en-* could fit respectively before and after the almost certain *u* ‘and’ (*u₃* is usually used for this purpose and unlikely to follow or precede /i/ or /e/ as part of one word).

²²¹ I read URU as place-name determinative, not as Sumerogram for Akkadian *āl* ‘city (of)’, and therefore do not translate it. Apart from the remains of a vertical wedge at the end of the character, the second URU in ln 6 is

7 [Ḫa]in? dedicated the lordship in Dunnu to himself.
 8 [Earth] cast her eyes on Sumuqan, her [s]on,
 9 “C[om]e, let me love you,”²²² she said to him.
 10 Sumuqan married Earth, his mother, and
 11 Ḫa’i[n], his f[ather], he killed, [and]
 12 in Dunnu, the city which he loved, he laid [him] to rest.
 13 Then Sumuqan took the lordship of his father, [and]
 14 married Sea, his elder sister.
 15 Laḫar,²²³ the son of Sumuqan, went [and]
 16 he killed Sumuqan in Dunnu.
 17 In the dwelling²²⁴ of his father he laid him to rest.

actually broken in the text. However, only one character fits the space, and contextually URU seems the only possible reconstruction.

²²² The verb *lurâmka* (root R-‘-M) is a first-person G-stem precative – indicating a wish or indirect command (see Huehnergard 2011: 144) – with a suffixed second-person accusative pronoun. The verb *râmu* can mean ‘to love’ generally – both in platonic and romantic sense (CAD, R, ‘râmu’ A1) – as well as denote the physical act ‘to make love’ (CAD, R, ‘râmu’ A1b). Lambert (2013: 393) renders it ‘let me make love to you’, which assumes that the verb here takes the second meaning; however, this is not necessarily the correct translation from the context. Sumuqan and Earth do marry, but it is not clear whether Earth bears Sumuqan a child; Laḫar’s mother is Sea, not Earth, and no other children of Earth are mentioned in the text. The chosen translation maintains the ambiguity that remains similarly unresolved in Akkadian.

²²³ Jacobsen reads ‘Gaiu’ (based on ^dga¹-a-a-am in ln 25; more correctly Ga’um) for Laḫar and also for his grandson; his explanation (1984: 11) for reading two separate deities with the same name is unconvincing and otherwise unattested. The only other high-profile situation where two separate gods share a name is in the Assyrian version of *Enūma eliš*, where the names of Anšar and Aššur are written the same way. There, however, it is a side-effect of its countertextual nature to the Babylonian original, as explained below.

²²⁴ Jacobsen (1984) reconstructs the broken word as E₂.KI.SE₃.GA, *qubūr* ‘mausoleum (of)’, in parallel to its appearance in ln 23. Based on the cuneiform, the first character is unlikely to be E₂; Lambert (2013) does not attempt to reconstruct the word in this line. My thanks to Trevor Pomeroy and Parsa Daneshmand for pointing

- 18 [Sea], his mother, he married.
- 19 Then Sea murdered Earth, her mother.
- 20 In Kislimu²²⁵ on the 16th day, they took lordship and kingship.
-
- 21 [. . .],²²⁶ son of Laḥar, married River, his own sister.
- 22 Laḥar, his father, and Sea, his mother, he killed, and
- 23 in a tomb he laid them to rest, underworld-like?²²⁷
- 24 [in the month . . .] on the first day, he t[oo]k kingship and lordship for himself.
-
- 25 [. . ., son of] A.U₈?²²⁸ married Ga’um, his sister, [and]
- 26 [. . .] (of the)? earth²²⁹ he made [plentiful]?²³⁰

out that four characters are unlikely to fit in the broken space; and for suggesting a possible alternative reconstruction šu-ba-at (*šubat* ‘dwelling of’), which I have tentatively adopted here.

²²⁵ November/December in the Babylonian calendar; *kislev* in the Hebrew calendar.

²²⁶ Jacobsen (1984) reconstructs the divine name – which it must be, since the divine determinative DINGIR is partially legible – as ‘Gaiu’ based on ln 25 ^dga¹-a-a-am. Ga’um, however, is designated female in that line; thus, this name is unlikely to be the male deity of ln 21.

²²⁷ The word *ka-am-ši-riš*? Is obscure; Lambert (2013: 524) suggests deriving it from Sumerian GANZER or GANŠIR, ‘(entrance to) the underworld’ (see CAD G, ‘ganzir’; ePSD ‘ganzer’) – which is attested in Akkadian as *ga-an-zi₂-ir* and *ka-ni-sur-[ra]* – with an adverbial marker *-iš*, leading to the somewhat awkward ‘underworld-like’. If Lambert is correct, presumably the intended image is that the slain gods are brought to the entrance to the underworld by placing them in a tomb. Furthermore, the Sumerian loanword reinforces the possible Sumerian background or *Vorlage to the text*.

²²⁸ It is unclear whether these two characters form the end of a divine name; given the literary pattern, we would expect this line to mirror ln 21 – hence the reconstructed ‘son of’ – and contain three divine names. The first name (of Laḥar’s grandson) is not preserved at all, although Jacobsen (1984: 7, 21) speculatively reconstructs Kuš, possibly a herdsman god elsewhere associated with Ga’um – it is worth emphasising that there is no text-internal reason for this reading. Thus, the second name (that of Laḥar’s son) may end with, or be, A.U₈, though it is unknown otherwise. U₈, the character read in Akkadian as *immertu* or *lahru*, is the word for ewe; in line 21,

- 27 [. . .]
- 28 [. . .] fathers and [. . .]
- 29 [. . .] . . . for the *tabšit*²³¹ of the gods [. . .]
- 30 [. . .] River, his mother, he killed, [and]
- 31 [. . .] he settled them.²³²
- 32 [in the month . . . on the nth day] he took the lordship and kingship for himself
-
- 33 [. . .] Ningeštinna, his sister, he [married, and]
- 34 [. . .] Ga’um, his mother, he [killed].
- 35 [. . .] he settled [them].
-

it is used to write Laḥar’s name (although, of course, he must be a male deity, given that he marries the goddess River, his sister).

²²⁹ The word here is *er-š[e]-te* ‘earth’, which should probably be analysed as a genitive singular noun, hence the tentative ‘of the’. The form of the word is unusual in that the genitive is normally written *-ti* or *-tim* (CAD, *E*, ‘eršetum’). It is possible to read the sign *ti*₇, although this reading of the character appears to be restricted to the Amarna archive; given that the current text is an Assyrian or Babylonian copy from the 1st millennium BCE, the reading *ti*₇ seems unlikely (Rainey 1996).

The appearance of *eršetum* ‘earth’ in this line is somewhat puzzling, since the goddess Earth is murdered by Sea in ln 19; quite possibly, the earth as ‘the land around Dunnu’ in general is meant here. This may be supported by the text spelling out the word syllabically in this line; when referring to the goddess, the sumerogram KI with phonetic complement *-ta* is used consistently (ln 10, 19; given that ln 8 only has space for two characters at the broken beginning, it presumably had *-tu*).

²³⁰ Jacobsen’s reconstruction (1984: 6-7) is questionable; Lambert does not attempt it. The first two characters are fully legible as U₂.DI, followed by at least one more character.

²³¹ The meaning of this word is unknown, and it is not attested elsewhere.

²³² There is a large (preserved) gap between *ušašībšunūti* ‘he settled them’ (at the end of the line) and the first word (broken completely). This leaves space for three characters at most to indicate the location, assuming the line starts with *i-na* ‘in’. Unfortunately, the parallel ln 35 is broken in the same location, although it matches the gap. This suggests that the lines were identical, and thus that the settling of the deposed deities was somehow significant.

- 36 [in the month ... on the] 16th/29th day,²³³ he took the lordship and kingship.
 37 [. . .] the child²³⁴ of Ḫamurnu [. . .]
 38 [. . .] his own sister he [married]
 39 [. . .] the lordship of his father he took, and [. . .]
 40 [. . .] he killed him, and [. . .]
 41 [. . .] to the city of Šupat²³⁵ [. . .]
 42 [. . .] [life][?] [. . .]

[Possible further lines broken]

Reverse

[1'-4' illegible]

5' Yes²³⁶ [. . .]

²³³ The text itself actually indicates both options in-line, with respectively the number 16 and the number 29. It is unclear why this is the case, and unfortunately – because the text is so poorly preserved from this point onward – the surviving context does not help us much. If we can permit some speculation, perhaps the original text from which this copy was written was also damaged, and the scribe inserted two options he thought were reasonable in context. Other possibilities include that the original text was used in different rituals where each date was correct in context of each ritual; that the scribe of either the original text or a later copy thought one of the dates was incorrect and added the other without wanting to erase the incorrect one; or that this format of writing dates had a specific meaning unknown to us.

²³⁴ *CAD*, 'šīḫru' 2a. The other possibility is 'servant' (*CAD*, 'šīḫru' 3), although 'child' makes more sense within context, and *ardu/wardu* 'servant' could have been used if the distinction was important (i.e. if the succession changed from deities' children to servants).

²³⁵ It is possible that the name of the city consists of further characters, although there is a gap after *šu-pa-at* before the line is broken. *Šupat* on its own could be an absolute form (like Laḫar's name from *laḫru*) of *šupātu*, an alternative orthography of *šipātu* 'wool'. Thematically, of course, this would fit well with the livestock deities, although it is not attested elsewhere.

²³⁶ Or: 'The god *na-am*-[. . .]'.

6' And Ungal-[Nibru]²³⁷

[7'-8' illegible]

9' Ninurta [. . .]

10' and [. . .]

11' Enlil [. . .]

12' Nuska²³⁸ [. . .]

13' in [. . .] [En]lil² [. . .]

14' and [. . .]

15' Enlil [. . .]

16' Ninurta [. . .]

[17'-19' illegible]

20' [. . .] the *alala*-song [. . .]

21' [According to] the tablet, a copy of Babylon and Aššur, written and checked.

22' [. . .] king [. . .]

[Ninurta's Return to Nippur²³⁹](#)

1-6: Page created like An, O son of Enlil, Ninurta, created like Enlil, born by Nintud, mightiest of the Anuna gods, who came forth from the mountain range, imbued with terrible awesomeness, son of Enlil, confident in his strength, my sovereign, you are magnificent -- let your magnificence therefore be praised. Ninurta, you are magnificent -- let your magnificence therefore be praised.

²³⁷ A female deity from Nippur (see Steele 1950: 72).

²³⁸ Enlil's vizier, also called umun.muduru 'lord of the sceptre' in the Sumerian Emesal dialect (Lambert 2002: 58).

²³⁹ Translation from the *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, available at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr161.htm>. Edited for clarity and consistency and provided here for reference.

7-12: Sovereign of all the lands, in your massive might, warrior of Enlil, in your great might, fierce warrior, you have taken up the divine powers which are like heaven, son of Enlil, you have taken up the divine powers which are like the earth, you have taken up the divine powers of the mountains, which are heavy as heaven, you have taken up the divine powers of Eridug, which are huge as the earth.

13-15: You have made the gods prostrate (?) themselves before you. You have made the Anuna salute (?) you. Ninurta, you are made complete by heroic strength.

16-17: The utterance of the sovereign is a storm [...] The word of lord Ninurta is a storm [...]

18-23: To the hostile mountains [...] To the fortress of the rebellious land [...] [1 line unclear]

Lord, frighteningly fierce, [...] Fierce in heaven and earth, [...] [1 line unclear]

24-25: His angry utterance made a corpse of the mountains. His fierce countenance [...]

26-29: Horned wild bull [...] Wild ram and stag [...] The great wild bull of the mountains [...] from its [...] He put his [...], the strength in battle, in his belt.

30-40: The sovereign, with his heroic arms, Ninurta, son of Enlil, in his great might, brought forth the Six-headed wild ram from the shining, lofty house. He brought forth the Warrior dragon from the great fortress of the mountains. He brought forth the *magilum*-boat from [...] his *abzu*. He brought forth the Bison from his battle dust. He brought forth the Mermaid from the limits of heaven and earth. He brought forth the White substance from the soil of the mountain range. He brought forth the Strong copper from the shattered mountain range. He brought forth the *anzud*-bird from the *halub-haran*-tree. He brought forth the Seven-headed serpent from the [...] of the mountains.

41-46: He mustered them all before him [...] He spoke [...] He was unhappy [...] He spoke [...] He seized the axe [...] He took his [...]

47-51: The warrior [...] made a corpse of the mountains. Lord Ninurta, who destroys (?) [...], made a corpse of the mountains. He piled up [...] The sovereign, with his heroic strength, wreaked his vengeance (?). The warrior Ninurta, with his heroic strength, wreaked his vengeance (?).

52-54: On his shining chariot, which inspires terrible awe, he hung his captured wild bulls on the axle and hung his captured cows on the cross-piece of the yoke.

55-63: He hung the Six-headed wild ram on the dust-guard. He hung the Warrior dragon on the seat. He hung the *magilum*-boat on the [...] He hung the Bison on the beam. He hung the Mermaid on the foot-board. He hung the White substance on the forward part of the yoke. He hung the Strong copper on the inside pole pin (?). He hung the *anzud*-bird on the front guard. He hung the Seven-headed serpent on the shining [...]

64-69: Lord Ninurta stepped into his battle-worthy chariot. Ud-ane, the all-seeing god, and Lugal-anbara, the bearded (?) lord, went before him, and the awesome one of the mountains, Lugal-kur-dub, the [...] of lord Ninurta, followed behind him.

70-72: The lion who [...] from the *abzu*, who [...] An's awesomeness and radiance -- the Anuna, the great gods [...]

73-75: As the sovereign swept on like the deluge, as Ninurta, storm of the rebellious land, swept on like the deluge, he rumbled like a storm on the horizon.

76-79: When, at Enlil's command, he was making his way towards E-kur, the warrior of the gods was levelling the Land; and before he had yet approached Nibru from afar, Nuska, the chancellor of Enlil, came forth from the E-kur to meet him.

80-82: He greeted lord Ninurta: "My sovereign, perfect warrior, heed yourself. Ninurta, perfect warrior, heed yourself.

83-86: "Your radiance has covered Enlil's temple like a cloak. When you step into your chariot, whose creaking is a pleasant sound, heaven and earth tremble. When you raise your arm [...]

87-91: "The Anuna, the great gods [...] Do not frighten your father in his residence. Do not frighten Enlil in his residence. May your father give you gifts because of your heroic strength. May Enlil give you gifts because of your heroic strength.

92-97: "O sovereign, shackle of An, first among the gods, seal-bearer of Enlil, inspired by E-kur, O warrior, because you have toppled the mountains your father need send out no other god beside you. Ninurta, because you have toppled the mountains Enlil need send out no other god beside you."

98-101: While these words were yet in Nuska's mouth, Ninurta put the whip and goad away in the rope-box. He leaned his mace, the strength in battle, against the box and entered into the temple of Enlil.

102-107: He directed his captive wild bulls into the temple. He directed his captive cows, like the wild bulls, into the temple. He laid out the booty of his plundered cities. The Anuna were amazed[...] Enlil the Great Mountain made obeisance to him, and Ašimbabbar prayed to him.

108-112: The great mother Ninlil, from within her Ki-ur, spoke admiringly to lord Ninurta: "O wild bull, with fierce horns raised, son of Enlil, you have struck blows in the mountains. Warrior, lord Ninurta, you have [...] You have [...] the rebellious land."

113-118: Lord Ninurta answered her: "My mother, I alone cannot [...] with you [...] Ninlil, I alone cannot [...] with you, for me alone [...] Battle arrayed like heaven -- no one can rival me (?). Like the deluge [...] Smashing the mountains like reed huts [...]

119-124: "My battle, like an onrushing flood, overflowed in the mountains. With a lion's body and lion's muscles, it rose up in the rebellious land. The gods have become worried and

flee (?) to the mountain ranges. They beat their wings like a flock of small birds. They stand hiding in the grass like wild bulls [...] No one can confront my radiance, heavy as heaven.

125-127: "Because I am the lord of the terraced mountain ranges, in every direction [...] Because I have subjugated these mountain ranges of alabaster and lapis lazuli, the Anuna hide like mice.

128-134: "Now I have re-established my heroic strength in the mountains. On my right, I bear my Mows-down-a-myrriad. On my left, I bear my Crushes-a-myrriad. I bear my Fifty-toothed-storm, my heavenly mace. I bear the hero who comes down from the great mountains, my No-resisting-this-storm. I bear the weapon which devours corpses like a dragon, my *agasilig*-axe. I bear my [...]

135-139: "I bear my [...] I bear the *alkad*-net of the rebellious land, my *alkad*-net. I bear that from which the mountains cannot escape, my *šušgal*-net. I bear the seven-mouthed *mušmaḥ* serpent, the slayer, my spike (?). I bear that which strips away the mountains, the sword, my heavenly dagger.

140-145: "I bear the deluge of battle, my fifty-headed mace. I bear the storm that attacks humans, my bow and quiver. I bear those which carry off the temples of the rebellious land, my throwing stick and shield. I bear the helper of men, my spear. I bear that which brings forth light like the day, my Obliterator-of-the-mountains. I bear the maintainer of the people in heaven and earth, my The-enemy-cannot-escape.

146-151: "I bear that whose awesome radiance covers the Land, which is grandly suited for my right hand, finished in gold and lapis lazuli, whose presence is amazing, my Object-of-trust. I bear the perfect weapon, exceedingly magnificent, trustworthy in battle, having no equal, well-suited for my wrist on the battlefield, my fifty-headed mace, I bear the weapon which consumes the rebellious land like fire, my fifty-headed club.

152-158: "Let my father therefore bring in my battle trophies and weapons for me. Let Enlil bathe my heroic arms. Let him pour holy water on the fierce arms which bore my weapons. Let him set up a holy dais in the throne room for me. Let him set my heavenly chariot upon a pedestal. Let him tether my captured warriors there like butting bulls. Let him have my captured kings make obeisance to me there, as to the light of heaven.

159-163: "I am the strong one, unopposed in the mountains, I am Ninurta -- let them prostrate themselves at my name. I am the exceedingly mighty lion-headed one of Enlil, whom he engendered in his strength. The storm of heaven, shackle of the gods, I am the one whom An in his great might has chosen.

164-167: "I am the [...], the creature of Inanna. I am the warrior, destined with Enki to be suited for the fearsome divine powers. Let my kingship be manifest unto the ends of heaven and earth. I am most able among the gods -- let me be imbued with great awesomeness.

168-174: "Let my beloved city, the sanctuary Nippur, raise its head as high as heaven. Let my city be pre-eminent among the cities of my brothers. Let my temple rise (?) the highest [...] among the temples of my brothers. Let the territory of my city be the fresh-water well of Sumer. Let the Anuna, my brother gods, bow down there. Let their flying birds establish nests in my city. Let their refugees refresh themselves in my shade."

175-179: As Ninurta went out from Enlil's temple, the most bright-faced of warriors, Ninkarnuna, having heard the favourable pronouncement of Ninurta, stepped before lord Ninurta and prayed to him:

180-186: "My sovereign, may you be well-disposed towards your beloved city. Lord Ninurta, may you be well-disposed towards your beloved city. May you be well-disposed towards the sanctuary Nibru, your beloved city. When you enter E-šumeša, your beloved temple, alone, tell your wife, young lady Ninnibru, what is in your heart, tell her what is on your mind.

Make an enduring favourable pronouncement to her for the king."

187-194: The content of that prayer of the offspring of a prince, Ninkarnuna, his sprinkling Ninurta's heart with an offering of cool water, and the matter of prosperity about which he spoke were pleasing to Ninurta's heart as he went in procession to E-šumeša to manifest the eternal divine powers. Lord Ninurta gazed approvingly at Ninkarnuna.

195-198: When Ninurta entered E-šumeša, his beloved temple, alone, he told his wife, young lady Ninnibru, what was in his heart, he told her what was on his mind and he made an enduring favourable pronouncement to her for the king.

199-201: The warrior, whose heroism is manifest, Ninurta, son of Enlil, has firmly grounded his greatness in Enlil's sanctuary.

202-207: Lord who has destroyed the mountains, who has no rival, who butts angrily in that magnificent battle, great warrior who goes forth in his [...] might, strong one, deluge of Enlil, Ninurta, magnificent child of E-kur, pride of the father who engendered him, it is sweet to praise you.

208 (colophon): Šir-gida of Ninurta.

1-16: O King, storm of majestic splendour, peerless Ninurta, possessing superior strength; who pillages the Mountains all alone; deluge, indefatigable serpent hurling yourself at the rebel land, Hero striding formidably into battle; Lord whose powerful arm is fit to bear the mace, reaping like barley the necks of the insubordinate; Ninurta, King, son in whose strength his father rejoices; Hero whose awesomeness covers the Mountains like a south storm; Ninurta, who makes the good tiara, the rainbow (?), flash like lightning; grandly begotten by him who wears the princely beard; dragon who turns on himself, strength of a lion snarling at a snake, roaring hurricane; Ninurta, King, whom Enlil has exalted above himself; Hero, great battle-net flung over the foe; Ninurta, with the awesomeness of your shadow extending over the Land; releasing fury on the rebel lands, overwhelming their assemblies! Ninurta, King, son who has forced homage to his father far and wide! (King and Hero are titles of Ninurta)

17-23: Inspiring great numinous power, he had taken his place on the throne, the august dais, and was sitting gladly at his ease at the festival celebrated in his honour, rivalling An and Enlil in drinking his fill, while Bau was pleading petitions in a prayer for the king, and he, Ninurta, Enlil's son, was handing down decisions. At that moment the Lord's battle-mace looked towards the Mountains, the Šar-ur cried out aloud to its master:

24-47: "Lord of lofty station, foremost one, who presides over all lords from the throne dais, Ninurta, whose orders are unalterable, whose decisions are faithfully executed; my master! Heaven copulated with the verdant Earth, Ninurta: she has born him a warrior who knows no fear -- the Asag, a child who sucked the power of milk without ever staying with a wet-nurse, a foster-child, O my master -- knowing no father, a murderer from the Mountains, a youth

²⁴⁰ Translation from the *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, available at

<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr162.htm>. Edited for clarity and consistency and provided here for reference.

who has come forth from [...], whose face knows no shame; impudent of eye, an arrogant male, Ninurta (1 ms. has instead: Ningîrsu), rejoicing in his stature. My Hero, you who are like a bull, I will take my stand beside you. My master, who turns sympathetically towards his own city, who is effective in carrying out his mother's wishes: it has sired offspring in the Mountains, and spread its seeds far and wide. The plants have unanimously named it king over them; like a great wild bull, it tosses its horns amongst them. The *šu*, the *saġkal*, the *esi* (diorite), the *usium*, the *kagina* (haematite), and the heroic *nu*-stones, its warriors, constantly come raiding the cities. For them a shark's tooth has grown up in the Mountains; it has stripped the trees. Before its might the gods of those cities bow towards it. My master, this same creature has erected a throne dais: it is not lying idle. Ninurta, Lord, it actually decides the Land's lawsuits, just as you do. Who can compass the Asag's dread glory? Who can counteract the severity of its frown? People are terrified, fear makes the flesh creep; their eyes are fixed upon it. My master, the Mountains have taken their offerings to it.”

48-56: “Hero! They have appealed to you, because of your father; son of Enlil, Lord, because of your superior strength they are looking to you here; since you are strong, my master, they are calling for your help, saying, Ninurta, that not a single warrior counts except for you! They wanted to advise you about [...]. Hero, there have been consultations with a view to taking away your kingship. Ninurta, it is confident that it can lay hands on the powers received by you in the *abzu*. Its face is deformed, its location is continually changing; day by day, the Asag adds territories to its domain.”

57-69: “But you will force it into the shackles of the gods. You, Antelope of Heaven, must trample the Mountains beneath your hooves, Ninurta, Lord, son of Enlil. Who has so far been able to resist its assault? The besetting Asag is beyond all control, its weight is too heavy. Rumours of its armies constantly arrive, before ever its soldiers are seen. This thing's strength is massive, no weapon has been able to overturn it. Ninurta, neither the axe nor the all-powerful spear can penetrate its flesh, no warrior like it has ever been created against you.

Lord, you who reach out towards the august divine powers, splendour, jewel of the gods, you bull with the features of a wild bull, with a prominent backbone, [...] this fellow is clever! My Ninurta, whose form Enki contemplates with favour, my Uta-ulu, Lord, son of Enlil, what is to be done?”

70-95: The Lord cried “Alas!” so that Heaven trembled, and Earth huddled at his feet and was terrified (?) at his strength. Enlil became confused and went out of the E-kur. The Mountains were devastated. That day the earth became dark, the Anuna trembled. The Hero beat his thighs with his fists. The gods dispersed; the Anuna disappeared over the horizon like sheep. The Lord arose, touching the sky; Ninurta went to battle, with one step (?) he covered a league, he was an alarming storm, and rode on the eight winds towards the rebel lands. His arms grasped the lance. The mace snarled at the Mountains, the club began to devour all the enemy. He fitted the evil wind and the sirocco on a pole (?), he placed the quiver on its hook (?). An enormous hurricane, irresistible, went before the Hero, stirred up the dust, caused the dust to settle, levelled high and low, filled the holes. It caused a rain of coals and flaming fires; the fire consumed men. It overturned tall trees by their trunks, reducing the forests to heaps, Earth put her hands on her heart and cried harrowingly; the Tigris was muddied, disturbed, cloudy, stirred up. He hurried to battle on the boat Ma-kar-nunta-eda; the people there did not know where to turn, they bumped into (?) the walls. The birds there tried to lift their heads to fly away, but their wings trailed on the ground. The storm flooded out the fish there in the subterranean waters, their mouths snapped at the air. It reduced the animals of the open country to firewood, roasting them like locusts. It was a deluge rising and disastrously ruining the Mountains.

96-118: The Hero Ninurta led the march through the rebel lands. He killed their messengers in the Mountains, he crushed (?) their cities, he smote their cowherds over the head like fluttering butterflies, he tied together their hands with *hirin*-grass, so that they dashed their heads against walls. The lights of the Mountains did not gleam in the distance any longer.

People gasped for breath (?); those people were ill, they hugged themselves, they cursed the Earth, they considered the day of the Asag's birth a day of disaster. The Lord caused bilious poison to run over the rebel lands. As he went the gall followed, anger filled his heart, and he rose like a river in spate and engulfed all the enemies. In his heart he beamed at his lion-headed weapon, as it flew up like a bird, trampling the Mountains for him. It raised itself on its wings to take away prisoner the disobedient, it spun around the horizon of heaven to find out what was happening. Someone from afar came to meet it, brought news for the tireless one, the one who never rests, whose wings bear the deluge, the Šar-ur. What did it gather there [...] for Lord Ninurta? It reported the deliberations of the Mountains, it explained their intentions to Lord Ninurta, it outlined (?) what people were saying about the Asag.

119-121: "Hero, beware!" it said concernedly. The weapon embraced him whom it loved, the Šar-ur addressed Lord Ninurta:

122-134: "Hero, pitfall (?), net of battle, Ninurta, King, celestial mace [...] irresistible against the enemy, vigorous one, tempest which rages against the rebel lands, wave which submerges the harvest, King, you have looked on battles, you have [...] in the thick of them. Ninurta, after gathering the enemy in a battle-net, after erecting a great reed-altar, Lord, heavenly serpent, purify your pickaxe and your mace! Ninurta, I will enumerate the names of the warriors you have already slain: the Kuli-ana, the Dragon, Gypsum, the Strong Copper, the hero Six-headed Wild Ram, the *magilum*-boat, Lord Saman-ana, the Bison bull, the Palm-tree King, the Anzud bird, the Seven-headed Snake -- Ninurta, you slew them in the Mountains."

135-150: "But Lord, do not venture again to a battle as terrible as that. Do not lift your arm to the smiting of weapons, to the festival of the young men, to Inana's dance! Lord, do not go to such a great battle as this! Do not hurry; fix your feet on the ground. Ninurta, the Asag is waiting for you in the Mountains. Hero who is so handsome in his crown, firstborn son whom Ninlil has decorated with numberless charms, good Lord, whom a princess bore to an *en-*

priest, Hero who wears horns like the moon, who is long life for the king of the Land, who opens the sky by great sublime strength, inundation who engulfs the banks [...], Ninurta, Lord, full of fearsomeness, who will hurry towards the Mountains, proud Hero without fellow, this time you will not equal the Asag! Ninurta, do not make your young men enter the Mountains.”

151-167: The Hero, the son, pride of his father, the very wise, rising from profound deliberation, Ninurta, the Lord, the son of Enlil, gifted with broad wisdom, the [...] god, the Lord stretched his leg to mount the onager, and joined the battalions [...]. He spread over the Mountains his great long [...], he caused [...] to go out among its people like the [...]. He reached [...]. He went into the rebel lands in the vanguard of the battle. He gave orders to his lance, and attached it [...] by its cord; the Lord commanded his mace, and it went to its belt. The Hero hastened to the battle, he [...] heaven and earth. He prepared the throw-stick and the shield, the Mountains were smitten and cringed beside the battle legions of Ninurta. When the hero was girding on his mace, the sun did not wait, the moon went in; they were forgotten, as he marched towards the Mountains; the day became like pitch.

168-186: The Asag leapt up at the head of the battle. For a club it uprooted the sky, took it in its hand; like a snake it slid its head along the ground. It was a mad dog attacking to kill the helpless, dripping with sweat on its flanks. Like a wall collapsing, the Asag fell on Ninurta the son of Enlil. Like an accursed storm, it howled in a raucous voice; like a gigantic snake, it roared at the Land. It dried up the waters of the Mountains, dragged away the tamarisks, tore the flesh of the Earth and covered her with painful wounds. It set fire to the reed-beds, bathed the sky in blood, turned it inside out; it dispersed the people there. At that moment, on that day, the fields became black potash, across the whole extent of the horizon, reddish like purple dye -- truly it was so! An was overwhelmed, crouched, wrung his hands against his stomach; Enlil groaned and hid himself in a corner, the Anuna flattened themselves against

walls, the house was full of fearful sighing as of pigeons. The Great Mountain Enlil cried to Ninlil:

187-190: "My wife, my son is no longer here; what is there to support me? The Lord, the authority of the E-kur, the King who imposes the strong shackle for his father, a cedar rooted in the abzu, a crown with broad shade, my son, my security -- he is not here any more: who will take me by the hand?"

191-214: The weapon which loved the Lord, obedient to its master, the Šar-ur [...] for Lord Ninurta to his father in Nibru [...]. The awesome splendour enveloped Ninurta like a garment, [...]. [...] bound him: therefore the Lord [...]. The weapon [...] spoke to Enlil.

215-224: "[...] Ninurta, having confidence in himself; [...] he will be standing; the waters will be dried up as if by the sun's heat; [...] he will breathe again, he will be standing full of joy. I shall cause horrid storms to rise against [...] of the Hero Ninurta [...]. [...] as for him who resisted (?) the Mountains, he has been amazed by his strength. Now I shall give my orders, you are to follow these instructions: [1 line unclear] [...] in the fields, let him not diminish the population. [...] let him not cause a lack of posterity. Let him not cause to perish the name of all the kinds of species whose destinies I, Enlil, have decreed."

225-227: The weapon, its heart [...], was reassured: it slapped its thighs, the Šar-ur began to run, it entered the rebel lands, joyfully it reported the message to Lord Ninurta:

228-243: "My master, [...] for you, Enlil has said: "As the Deluge i.e. Ninurta, before whom the venom has piled up, attacks the enemy, let him take the Asag by the shoulder, let him pierce its liver, let my son enter with it into the E-kur. Then, Ninurta, to the limits of the earth my people will deservedly praise your power." You, Lord who trusts in the word of his father, do not tarry, great strength of Enlil. Storm of the rebel lands, who grinds the Mountains like flour, Ninurta, Enlil's seal-bearer, go to it! Do not tarry. My master: the Asag

has constructed a wall of stakes on an earthen rampart; the fortress is too high and cannot be reached, [...] its fierceness does not diminish. [3 lines unclear] My master, [...].”

244-251: Ninurta opened his mouth to speak to the mace [...]. He aimed the lance at the Mountains [...]. The Lord stretched out an arm towards the clouds. Day became a dark night. He yelled like a storm, [...]. [2 lines unclear]

251-264: The Lord [...] clouds of dust. In his battle he smote the Mountains with a cudgel. The Šar-ur made the storm-wind rise to heaven, scattering the people; like [...] it tore. Its venom alone destroyed the townspeople. The destructive mace set fire to the Mountains, the murderous weapon smashed skulls with its painful teeth, the club which tears out entrails gnashed its teeth. The lance was stuck into the ground and the crevasses filled with blood. In the rebel lands dogs licked it up like milk. The enemy rose up, crying to wife and child, “You did not lift your arms in prayer to Lord Ninurta”. The weapon covered the Mountains with dust, but did not shake the heart of the Asag. The Šar-ur threw its arms around the neck of the Lord:

265-280: ”Hero, ah, what further awaits you? Do not on any account meddle with the hurricane of the Mountains. Ninurta, Lord, son of Enlil, I tell you again, it is made like a storm. It is a blister whose smell is foul, like mucus which comes from the nose it is unpleasant, Lord, its words are devious, it will not obey you. My master, it has been created against you as a god; who can help you? Hero, it falls on the land as a whirlwind, it scrubs it as if with saltwort, Ninurta, it chases the onagers before it in the Mountains. Its terrifying splendour sends the dust into clouds, it causes a downpour of potsherds. In the rebel lands it is a lion striking with savage teeth; no man can catch it. After reducing everything to nothing in the north wind, it [...]. The sheepfolds have been closed by ghostly demons. It has dried up the waters in the ground. In the whirlwind storm, the people are finished, they have no solution (?). From an implacable enemy, great Hero, Lord, turn away,” he said quietly.

281-299: But the Lord howled at the Mountains, could not withhold a roar. The Hero did not address the rebel lands, he [...]. He reversed the evil that it had done [...]. He smashed the heads of all the enemies, he made the Mountains weep. The Lord ranged about in all directions, like a soldier saying “I will go on the rampage”. Like a bird of prey the Asag looked up angrily from the Mountains. He commanded the rebel lands to be silent and [...]. Ninurta approached the enemy and flattened him like a wave (?). The Asag's terrifying splendour was contained, it began to fade, it began to fade. It looked wonderingly upwards. Like water he agitated it, he scattered it into the Mountains, like weeds he pulled it up, like rushes he ripped it up. Ninurta's splendour covered the Land, he pounded the Asag like roasted barley, he [...] its genitals (?), he piled it up like a heap of broken bricks, he heaped it up like flour, as a potter does with coals; he piled it up like stamped earth whose mud is being stirred. The Hero had achieved his heart's desire. Ninurta, the Lord, the son of Enlil, [...] began to calm down.

300-309: In the Mountains, the day came to an end. The sun bade it farewell. The Lord [...] his belt and mace in water, he washed the blood from his clothes, the Hero wiped his brow, he made a victory-chant over the dead body. When he had brought the Asag which he had slain to the condition of a ship wrecked by a tidal wave, the gods of the Land came to him. Like exhausted wild asses they prostrated themselves before him, and for this Lord, because of his proud conduct, for Ninurta, the son of Enlil, they clapped their hands in greeting. The Šar-ur addressed these flattering words aloud to its master:

310-330: ”Lord, great *meš*-tree in a watered field, Hero, who is like you? My master, beside you there is no one else, nor can anyone stand like you, nor is anyone born like you. Ninurta, from today no one in the Mountains will rise against you. My master, if you give but one roar, [...] how they will praise you! [1 line unclear] Lord Ninurta [...].” [7 lines damaged] After he had pulled up the Asag like a weed in the rebel lands, torn it up like a rush, Lord Ninurta [...] his club: [1 line unclear] “From today forward, do not say Asag: its name shall

be Stone. Its name shall be *zalat*-stone, its name shall be Stone. This, its entrails, shall be the underworld. Its valour shall belong to the Lord.”

331-333: The blessing of the club, laid to rest in a corner: “The mighty battle which reduces the Land”. [1 line missing]

334-346: At that time, the good water coming forth from the earth did not pour down over the fields. The cold water (?) was piled up everywhere, and the day when it began to [...] it brought destruction in the Mountains, since the gods of the Land were subject to servitude, and had to carry the hoe and the basket -- this was their *corvée* work -- people called on a household for the recruitment of workers. The Tigris did not bring up its flood in its fullness. Its mouth did not finish in the sea, it did not carry fresh water. No one brought (?) offerings to the market. The famine was hard, as nothing had yet been born. No one yet cleaned the little canals, the mud was not dredged up. Ditch-making did not yet exist. People did not work (?) in furrows, barley was sown broadcast.

347-359: The Lord applied his great wisdom to it. Ninurta, the son of Enlil, set about it in a grand way. He made a pile of stones in the Mountains. Like a floating cloud he stretched out his arms over it. With a great wall he barred the front of the Land. He installed a sluice (?) on the horizon. The Hero acted cleverly, he dammed in the cities together. He blocked (?) the powerful waters by means of stones. Now the waters will never again go down from the Mountains into the earth. That which was dispersed he gathered together. Where in the Mountains scattered lakes had formed, he joined them all together and led them down to the Tigris. He poured carp-floods of water over the fields.

360-367: Now, today, throughout the whole world, kings of the Land far and wide rejoice at Lord Ninurta. He provided water for the speckled barley in the cultivated fields, he raised up the harvest of fruits in garden and orchard. He heaped up the grain piles like mounds. The

Lord caused trading colonies to go up from the Land of Sumer. He contented the desires of the gods. They duly praised Ninurta's father.

368-371: At that time he also reached a woman with compassion. Ninmaḥ was sleepless from remembering the place where she had conceived him. She covered her outside with a fleece, like an unshorn ewe, she made a great lament about the now inaccessible Mountains:

372-386: "The Mountains could not bear the Lord's great strength. The great Hero -- the force of whose rage no one can approach, like heaven itself; the savage storm which walks on earth, spilling poison in the earth's breast; the Lord, the life-breath of Enlil, whose head is worthy of the tiara, [...] who knows nothing of [...]: in triumph he hurried by me, he with whom my husband made me pregnant (?). I bore him for my husband. He was close [...]; but the son of Enlil passed by and did not lift his glance to me. For the good youth" -- thus the good lady said, as she went to him in E-šumeša, his chosen place, --" I will cut the knot. Now I, yes I, shall go to the presumptuous Lord, to gaze upon the precious Lord. I will go directly to him, to my son, Enlil's judge, the great Hero, favoured by his father."

387-389: The lady performed the song in a holy manner. Ninmaḥ recited it to Lord Ninurta. He looked at her with his life-giving looks and spoke to her:

390-410: "Lady, since you came to the Mountains, Ninmaḥ ('Great Lady'), since you entered the rebel lands for my sake, since you did not keep far from me when I was surrounded by the horrors of battle -- let the name of the pile which I, the Hero, have piled up be Mountain (ḥursaḡ) and may you be its lady (nin): now that is the destiny decreed by Ninurta.

Henceforth people shall speak of Ninḥursaḡa. So be it. Let its meadows produce herbs for you. Let its slopes produce honey and wine for you. Let its hillsides grow cedars, cypress, juniper and box for you. Let it make abundant for you ripe fruits, as a garden. Let the mountain supply you richly with divine perfumes. Let it mine gold and silver for you, make [...] for you. Let it smelt copper and tin for you, make its tribute for you. Let the Mountains

make wild animals teem for you. Let the mountain increase the fecundity of quadrupeds for you. You, o Queen, become equal to An, wearing a terrifying splendour. Great goddess who detests boasting, good lady, maiden Ninḫursaĝa, Nintud, [...] approach me. Lady, I have given you great powers: may you be exalted.”

411-413: While the Lord was fixing the destiny of the Mountains, as he walked about in the sanctuary of Nibru, the good lady whose powers excel all powers, Lady-creatrix-of-the-womb, Aruru, Enlil's elder sister, stood before him:

414-415: ”Great Hero whose word like that of his father is unalterable, Lord: you have not fixed the destinies of the warriors that you have slain.”

416-418: The Lord then addressed the u stone. He defined (?) its typical behaviour. The Lord spoke to it in anger in the Land, Ninurta son of Enlil cursed it:

419-434: ”U-stone (emery), since you rose against me in the Mountains, since you barred the way so as to detain me, since you swore to put me to death, since you frightened me, Lord Ninurta, on my great throne; you are powerful, a youth of outstanding strength: may your size be diminished. A mighty lion, confident in its strength, will tear you into pieces, the strong man will fling you in his hand in combat. Young u-stone, your brothers will heap you up like flour. You will lift your hand against your offspring, sink your teeth into their corpses. You, young man, though you may cry out, will end as [...]. Like a great wild bull killed by many people, be divided into portions. U-stone, you will be hounded from the battlefield with clubs, like a dog chased by shepherd boys. Because I am the Lord: since cornelian is polished by you, you shall be called by its name. And now, according to the destiny fixed by Ninurta, henceforth when u stone touches it, there will be pierced cornelian. Let it be so.”

435-437: The Hero addressed the *šu* and *gasura*-stones. The Lord enumerated their characteristics. Ninurta son of Enlil fixed their destiny:

438-447: "Šu-stones, since you attacked against my weapons; *gasura*-stones, since you stood fiercely against me like bulls, since you tossed (?) your horns in the dust at me like wild bulls, you shall be [...] like butterflies. My terrifying splendour will cover you. Since you cannot escape from my great strength, the goldsmith shall puff and blow on you with his breath. You shall be shaped by him to form a matrix for his creations. People shall place the first fruits of the gods on you at the time of the new moon."

448-450: My King stood before the *saġkal*-stone, he addressed the *gulgul* and *saġġar*-stones. Ninurta son of Enlil fixed their destiny:

451-462: "Saġkal-stone, since you flew up against me [...]; *gulgul*-stone, since you sparked lightning against me [...]; *saġġar*-stone, since you shook your head at me, since you ground your teeth at me, the Lord! The *saġkal*-stone will smash you, *saġġar*-stone, young brave, and the *gulgul*-stone will destroy (gul) you. You will be discarded as contemptible and valueless (saġ nukala). Be a prey to the famine (*cagġar*) of the Land; you shall be fed by the charity of your city. You shall be accounted a common person, a warrior among slave-girls. They shall say to you "Be off with you, hurry!", it shall be your name. And now, by the destiny fixed by Ninurta, henceforth you shall be called a bad lot in the Land. So be it."

463-465: My King stood before the *esi*-stone. [...] he spoke in hymnic language. Ninurta son of Enlil fixed its destiny:

466-478: "Esi (diorite), your army in battle changed sides separately (?). You spread before me like thick smoke. You did not raise your hand. You did not attack me. Since you said, "It is false. The Lord is alone the Hero. Who can vie with Ninurta, son of Enlil?" -- they shall extract you from the highland countries. They shall bring (?) you from the land of Magan. You shall shape (?) Strong Copper like leather and then you shall be perfectly adapted for my heroic arm, for me, the Lord. When a king who is establishing his renown for perpetuity has

had its statues sculpted for all time, you shall be placed in the place of libations -- and it shall suit you well -- in my temple E-ninnu, the house full of grace.”

479-481: My King turned to the *na*-stone. He [...] the body from the *na*-stone. Ninurta son of Enlil cursed it:

482-486: ”Stone, since you said, “If only it had been me”; *na*-stones, since you bewitched my powers -- lie down there, you, to be worked on like a pig. Be discarded, be used for nothing, end up by being reduced to tiny fragments. He who knows you shall reduce you to liquid.”

487-488: My King turned to the *el*el-stone. Ninurta son of Enlil fixed its destiny:

489-496: ”*El*el, intelligently you caused terror of me to descend on the Mountains where discord had broken out. In the rebel lands you proclaimed my name among my people who had banded together. Nothing of your wholeness shall be diminished (?). It shall be difficult to reduce your mass to small pieces. My divine ordinances shall be set out in straight lines on your body. You shall be greatly suited to the clash of weapons, when I have heroes to slay. You shall be set up on a pedestal in my great courtyard. The Land shall praise you in wonder, the foreign lands shall speak your praises.”

497-499: The Hero turned to the *kagina* (haematite) stone, he addressed it for its hardness.

Ninurta son of Enlil fixed its destiny:

500-511: ”Young man worthy of respect, whose surface reflects the light, *kagina*, when the demands of the rebel lands reached you, I did not conquer you [...]. I did not notice you among the hostile ones. I shall make room for you in the Land. The divine rites of Utu shall become your powers. Be constituted as a judge in the foreign lands. The craftsman, expert in everything, shall value you as if gold. Young man of whom I have taken possession, because of you I shall not sleep until you come to life. And now, according to the destiny fixed by Ninurta, henceforth *kagina* shall live! So shall it be.”

512-513: The Hero stood before the *ġišnugal* (alabaster) stone. Ninurta son of Enlil fixed its destiny:

514-521: ”*ġišnu*, whose body shines like the daylight! Purified silver, youth destined for the palace, since you alone held out your hands to me, and you prostrated yourself before me in your Mountains, I did not smite you with the club, and I did not turn my strength against you. Hero, you stood firm by me when I yelled out. Your name shall be called benevolence. The treasury of the Land shall be subject to your hand, you shall be its seal-keeper.”

522-524: My King turned to the *algameš*-stone and frowned. The Lord spoke to it angrily in the Land. Ninurta son of Enlil cursed it:

525-527: “What provision did you make to assist my progress? Be the first to go into my forge. *Algameš*, you shall be the regular sacrifice offered daily by the smiths.”

528-533: My King turned to the *dušia*-stone. He addressed the *nir*, the *gug* (cornelian) and the *zagin* (lapis lazuli); the *amaš-pa-ed*, the *šaba*, the *hurizum*, the *gug-gazi* and the *marḥali*; the *egi-zaga*, the *girin-ḥiliba*, the *anzugulme* and the *nir-mušġir*-stones (1 ms.: the [...] and the *gazi-musud* stones). The Lord Ninurta, son of Enlil, fixed their destinies for [...] the waterskin:

534-542: “How you came to my side, male and female in form, and in your own way! You committed no fault, and you supported me with strength. You exalted me in public. Now in my deliberation, I shall exalt you. Since you made yourself general of the assembly, you, *nir*, shall be chosen for syrup and for wine. You shall all be decorated with precious metal. The principal among the gods shall cause the foreign lands to prostrate themselves before you, putting their noses to the ground.”

543-545: My King turned to the *ġir-zu-ġal* (flint), and frowned. The Lord spoke to it angrily in the Land. Ninurta son of Enlil cursed it:

546-553: "Ah, duplicitous *ġir-zu-ġal*, what then? They shall split your horns, wild bull, in your Mountains. Lie down before the [...]. You were not equal to me who supported you. I shall rip you like a sack, and people will smash you into tiny pieces. The metalworker shall deal with you, he shall use his chisel on you. Young man, massive, bearer of hatred: the carpenter, saying "I wish to buy it for my work", shall wet you with water [...] and shall crush you like malt."

554-556: My King turned to the *iman*-stones, he addressed the *alliga*-stones. Ninurta son of Enlil fixed their destiny:

557-565: "*Iman*-stones, in the Mountains you cried out against me. You fiercely uttered battle-yells. I shall enflame you like fire. Like a storm I shall overturn you. I shall strip you like rushes. I shall rip you up like weeds. Who will assist you then? *Iman*-stone: your cries shall not be valued, no attention shall be paid to them. *Iman*-stone, *alliga*-stone: your path shall not lead to the palace."

566-568: My King turned to the *mašda*-stone. He addressed the *dubban* and *urutum*-stones. Ninurta son of Enlil defined (?) their characteristic behaviour:

569-578: "*Mašda*-stone, *dubban*-stone, blazing fires; *urutum*-stone, which nothing resists; when the *gasura*-stone [...] and you were set ablaze, you burnt against me in the rebel lands like a brazier. Since you all stood against me in the land of Saba: *mašda*-stone, they shall slaughter you like a sheep. *Dubban*-stone, they shall crunch you for pulverising. *Urutum*-stone, they shall sharpen you for the battle-mace; with bronze, the arrowheads of the gods, they shall smash you with the axe, stinging with fierce swords."

579-580: My King turned to the *šagara*-stone. Ninurta son of Enlil fixed its destiny:

581-591: "*Šagara*-stone, who smash (?) your head against anyone travelling alone in the desert, in the Mountains when my arms were occupied you tried to trample on me. Since you gluttoned yourself in the battle, the reed-worker shall make the reeds jump with you. You shall

be thrown onto your couch; the appearance (?) of your mother and father who bore you shall be forgotten (?). No one shall say to you, “Get up”, no one shall have the feeling that he misses you, the people shall not complain about your loss. In praise of the eternally-created powers in Ninḫursaĝa's resting place, you shall be discarded on the dais there. They shall feed you on malt, as they do for sheep; you shall content yourself with a portion of scattered flour. This shall be the explanation for you.”

592-593: My King turned to the *marḫuša*-stone, Ninurta the son of Enlil pronounced its destiny.

594-599: “*Marḫuša*, [...] the string in my place, [...] you were taken, since you did not participate in the crimes of your city, [...]; you shall be the bowl under the filter-jug, the water shall filter into you. *Marḫuša*, you shall be used for inlay-work, [...]. You shall be the perfect ornament for sacred brooches. *Marḫuša*, you shall be duly praised in the temples of the gods.”

600-602: The Hero turned to the *ḫaštum*-stone and frowned. In the Land the Lord addressed it angrily; Ninurta the son of Enlil pronounced its destiny:

603-608: “*Ḫaštum*-stone, you cried out against me in the Mountains. You yelled fiercely with wild battle-yells. With your yelling, you fixed a *lila*-demon in the Mountains. Young man, because of your digging, Ditch [*ḫaštum*] shall be your name. And now, according to the destiny of Ninurta, henceforth they shall say ‘*ḫaštum*’. So be it.”

609-610: My King turned to the *durul*-stone. Ninurta son of Enlil fixed its destiny:

611-617: “*Durul*-stone, holy garment of mourning, blinded youth whom people carve, in the Mountains you prostrated yourself before me. Since you said to me, “If only it had been me who broke the bars of the gates, if only I had stood before him, before my King, Lord Ninurta”, your name shall be magnified of its own accord wherever it is mentioned. As the

connoisseur says of precious metal, “I will buy it”, so the foreign nations, like musicians playing the reed-pipe, shall pursue you.”

618-633: My King turned to the *šigšig*-stone, he addressed the *engen* and *ezinum* stones. For the *ug-gun*, the *hem*, the *madanum*, the *saġgirmud*, the [...] and the *mursuh*-stones, Ninurta son of Enlil fixed their destiny: [2 lines unclear] “[...] with ribs drawn in, balancing on the haunches, heart elated, legs bent like a bear, [...]: I shall come to you; now, being an ally, you come forward from all of them; who shall extend the hand to them? You were the club, you stood as the doorway. [3 lines unclear] In the Land, the champion shall always look (?) with favour on you.”

634-637: The Hero turned to the *kurgaranum*-stone. He addressed the *bal*-stone; the Lord Ninurta, son of Enlil, fixed the destiny for the yellow-coloured *šimbi* (kohl):

638-644: “Since you said, “I will bring forth the people”, [1 line unclear] you [...] as if [...] the young man who has obtained (?) glory for you; the young artisan shall sing your praises. You shall be favoured for the festival of spirits of the dead; on the ninth day of the month, at the new moon, the young men shall [...] for you.” He assigned [...] them to the cult of Ninḥursaġa.

645-651: The Hero had conquered the Mountains. As he moved across the desert, he [...]. Through the crowd, he came forth among their acclamations (?), majestically he [...]. Ninurta joyfully went to his beloved barge, the Lord set foot in the boat Ma-kar-nunta-eda. The boatmen sang a pleasant song, for the Lord they sang his praise. They addressed an eternal greeting to Ninurta son of Enlil:

652-661: “God who outstrips the heroes, Lord Ninurta, king of the Anuna gods, holding a cudgel in his right hand, bearded, you fall as a torrent on all enemies; who can rival your great works? Hero, deluge, without equal, the enki and ninki deities do not dare to resist (?)

you. Hero who pillages the cities, who subjugates the Mountains, son of Enlil, who will rise up against you? Ninurta, Lord, son of Enlil, Hero, who is like you?

662-668: “My King: there is a hero who is devoted to you and to your offerings, he is as just as his reputation, he walks in your ways; since he has brilliantly accomplished all that is proper for you in your temple, since he has made your shrine rise from the dust for you, let him do everything magnificently for your festival. Let him accomplish perfectly for you your holy rites. He has formulated a vow for his life. May he praise you in the Land.

669-671: “May An's heart be appeased for the Lord, may the maiden mother Bau shine like the daylight for Ninurta, Enlil's strength.”

672-680: They sang to the Lord in the ceremonial (?) boat. The boat, floating of its own accord, was piled up with riches. The boat Ma-kar-nunta-eda proceeded shiningly. To greet the Hero from the smiting of weapons, the Anuna [...] came to meet him. They pressed their noses to the ground, they placed their hands on their chests. They addressed a prayer and a supplication to the Lord: “May your anger be appeased [...]. Ninurta, King, Utu-ulu, lift your head to heaven”.

681: His father Enlil blessed him:

682-697: “[...], pre-eminent with your great name, you have established your habitation [...]. Chest, fittingly [...], King of battle, I presented the storm of heaven to you for use against the rebel lands. O Hero of heaven and earth I presented to you the club, the deluge which sets the Mountains on fire. King, ahead of your storm the way was narrow. But, Ninurta, I had confidence in your march to the Mountains. Like a wolf (?) set free to seize his prey, in your storm you adventured into the rebel lands from above. The mountain that you have handed over shall not be restored. You have caused its cities to be counted as ruin-mounds. Its mighty rulers have lost their breath before you. A celestial mace, a prosperous and

unchanging rule, eternal life, the good favour of Enlil, o King, and the strength of An: these shall be your reward.”

698-711: Since the Hero had killed the Asag, since the Lord had made that pile of stones, since he had given the order “Let it be called stone”, since he had [...] the roaring dragon, since the Hero had traced the way of the waters [...] down from above, since he had brought them to the fertile fields, since he had made famous the plough of abundance, since the Lord had established it in regular furrows, since Ninurta son of Enlil had heaped up grain-piles and granaries -- Ninurta the son of Enlil entrusted their keeping to the care of the lady who possesses the divine powers which exist of themselves, who is eminently worthy of praise, to Nisaba, good lady, greatly wise, pre-eminent in the lands, her who possesses the principal tablet with the obligations of *en* [high priest] and *lugal* [king], endowed by Enki on the Holy Mound with a great intelligence.

712-723: To the lady, the celestial star, made magnificently beautiful by the prince in the abzu, to the lady of knowledge who gladdens hearts, who alone has the gift of governing, endowed with prudence, [...], who rules the black-headed, who possesses the tablet with all the names (?), from whose suspended nets the birds which are caught do not escape, whose every work accomplished meets with complete success, to her [...] which is not unravelled, to her for whom the days are counted according to the phases of the moon, to her who is unassailable as if a fortress of copper [...], who is [...] in counsels, and wise in all manner of things, [...] who cares for the black-headed, who rules the people justly, [...], the replica of Enlil, to the bright good lady who takes counsel with An -- to Nisaba be praise.

724-725: Enlil's mighty Lord, Ninurta, great son of the E-kur, heroic one of the father who bore him: it is good to praise you.

726 (colophon): Šir-gida of Ninurta.

Tablet I

- 1 When²⁴¹ up above was not named ‘heaven’,
- 2 and down below the earth²⁴² not called by name,
- 3 Apsu, the first,²⁴³ their begetter, [and]
- 4 Creator Tiamat, she who gave birth²⁴⁴ to all of them,
- 5 mingled²⁴⁵ their waters together.

²⁴¹ The Akkadian functions somewhat similarly to the one in Genesis, with a relatively complex grammatical construction. *Enūma* ‘when’ is a temporal preposition introducing a subordinate clause, for which *eliš* ‘above’ (*eli* ‘on, above’ + adverbial marker *-iš*) functions as a locative substantive while being an adverbialised preposition itself. Less elegantly, one might translate ‘When that which is up above...’. For further examples of *eliš* being used as a locative substantive, see CAD *E*, ‘*eliš*’.

²⁴² Noegel’s recent paper (2017: 21-26) contends that *ammatum* (var. *abbatum*) should be understood as the underworld, not the surface of the earth, and applies a similar distinction to the *ha’areš* of Gen 1:1.

²⁴³ The word is written *reš-tu-u₂* (or *-u*), ending in a long /u/, meaning the word must be a nominalised adjective *rēštū* ‘first; old, ancient; preeminent; first quality’ rather than the noun *rēštu*.

²⁴⁴ The word *mu’allidat* is a D-stem feminine active participle, from (*w*)*alādu*, in construct state with *gimrīšun*.

²⁴⁵ The verb here is a third-person plural G-stem from *hīāqu* (or *hāqu*), and can be read as a durative *ihīqūma* (‘they were mixing’, < **ihā’iqū* + *-ma*) or as a preterite *ihīqūma* (‘they mixed’ < **ih’iqū* + *-ma*). The exegetical difference between the two is rather minor, but affects possible interpretations of the text more broadly. In both cases, it serves as the active verb of the main clause, after the relative clauses with stative verbs of ln. 1-2, the noun phrase of ln. 3, and the participle clause of ln. 4. Both readings are possible because cuneiform orthography does not always require a double-length consonant to be written twice. Manuscript *K*, somewhat curiously, has a double-length consonant for the third root letter and reads *i-hi-iq-qu-ma*, as if the verb were a durative of **haqū*, which is otherwise unattested. Manuscript *ee* instead has the remains of what must be another stative (*hi-q[u-...]*) in line with ln. 1-2. This means one out of the eight manuscripts that preserve the line definitely has a variant reading, with the possibility of an additional one depending on our reading of the verb. Thus, the question is whether the verb should be read as a durative in the other six attestations, where the spelling allows for either preterite or durative. As we have seen, the main difference between these possibilities

6 Meadows²⁴⁶ had not been put together,²⁴⁷ reed thickets not formed,
 7 when no gods had been brought forth,
 8 they had not been called by name, destiny was not decreed.
 9 The gods were created in their midst:
 10 Laḫmu and²⁴⁸ Laḫāmu were brought forth, were called by name.
 11 While they grew, increased in stature,

is whether one opts for the *in medias res* rendering with the durative – where we are introduced to Apsû and Tiamtu during their metaphorically-described sexual union – or the retrospective rendering with the preterite, where the union took place in the past before the naming of heaven and earth.

Overall, the issue with these lines is not grammar or semantics but textual organisation: the greater difficulty lies in deciding which lines form complete sentences. Lambert (2013), for example, takes ln. 5 with ln. 6 and reads ln. 3 as a verbless clause with an implied existential verb (which is virtually never explicit in Akkadian, with the exception of *bašû*). An in-depth discussion of interpretive issues around these opening lines can be found above, in Part II.

²⁴⁶ The noun here, *gipārā*, is more commonly a term for the house of the *enu*, the chief priest of a temple; secondarily, it refers to meadows or pastures. It is possible that the word choice deliberately reflects both, given the use of the text in connection with temple festivals; the word is later used in ln. 77 to refer to Ea’s residence in the Apsû. However, the intended meaning in this line – in parallelism with *šuṣā* ‘reed thickets’ – must be the meadow, another natural feature. It seems likely that the author had the southern Babylonian marshlands in mind (see Brandt 1990).

²⁴⁷ The verb is from *kašāru*, mostly attested in G-stem stative, although three tablets have it in D-stem stative. It has a broad range of meaning, including ‘to tie together, join, construct’ but also ‘to assemble, organise (an army)’ and ‘to gather, cluster’. It is here a third-person masculine plural stative, continuing the description of the state of the cosmos that began in ln. 1-2. Lambert (2014) translates ‘had coalesced’, but the broader translation ‘had been put together’ is preferable because it avoids the suggestion that the meadows coalesce of their own accord; the stative indicates “the condition or state resulting from the action of the verb from which it is derived” (Huehnergard 2011: 26). Hence, the translation in English works better with a passive verb or participle.

²⁴⁸ Almost half of the textual witnesses include a separate word *u* ‘and’, while the lack of it in the other versions can be explained by poetic licence.

12 Anšar and²⁴⁹ Kišar were brought forth, were above them.
 13 They increased the days, they multiplied the years:
 14 Anum, their son, was equal to²⁵⁰ his father–
 15 Anšar made Anum, his son, (his) equal–
 16 and Anum begat his equal, Nudimmud.²⁵¹
 17 Nudimmud – of his fathers, he was their champion.²⁵²
 18 Of great wisdom,²⁵³ wise, massively powerful,
 19 Very much stronger than the begetter of his father, Anšar.
 20 He had no equal among the gods, his brothers.
 21 The brothers, the gods, came together.
 22 They confused Tiamat, their noise had surged.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁹ See n. 8, above. Strangely, manuscript *a* has the extra *u* ‘and’ in ln. 10 but not in ln. 12.

²⁵⁰ Or ‘rivalled’ (CAD Š 1, ‘šanānu’).

²⁵¹ Another name for Ea.

²⁵² The word is *šališsunu* (a substantivised G-stem verbal adjective with third-person plural possessive suffix), lit. ‘their authoritative one, he who dominates’, from *šalātu* ‘to dominate, rule, control’ + *–šunu* ‘their’. The expected form of the word would be *šalissunu*, with the consonantal cluster **–tš–* changing to *–ss–* (see Huehnergard 2011: 87). This is one example of the deliberate archaising language employed in *Enūma eliš*, reflecting a more ancient sounding, uncontracted form of the word. This is further discussed in Part 2. In this particular case, it may also be an example of morphographic writing to indicate the possessive suffix (Huehnergard 2011: 173; for a more in-depth discussion of the phenomenon, see Reiner 1973: 35-38).

²⁵³ Lit. ‘wide-open of eyes’.

²⁵⁴ Lambert (2013: 50) reads the verb as *iš-tab-bu* (with variants *iš-tab-bi* and [*iš-ta*]-*ab-bi*), a G-stem third-person plural perfect, as a by-form of *ištappû*, from *šapû* ‘to flare, surge, swell up and down’ (see CAD Š, ‘šapû A’ – NB: the verbal form whose entry continues on the next page, not the adjectival form). Lambert (2013: 470) writes that “CAD is wrong to merge *šapû* of visual phenomena with *šabû/šebû* of auditory phenomena.”

However, Kämmerer and Metzler (2012: 114) simply read the characters with /p/ instead of /b/, which the cuneiform characters allow.

23 It disturbed Tiamat's mood.²⁵⁵
24 With dancing they caused annoyance in Anduruna.²⁵⁶
25 Apsû did not diminish their shouting,
26 and Tiamat was silent in their presence.
27 (Though) their actions were displeasing to her,
28 and their behaviour not good, she spared them.
29 At that time Apsû, begetter of the great gods,
30 called Mummu, his vizier, and said to him,
31 "Mummu, vizier, who makes me happy,²⁵⁷
32 Come, let us first go to Tiamat."
33 They went and sat before Tiamat.
34 They discussed matters regarding the gods, their offspring.
35 Apsû opened his mouth,
36 to Tiamat he went up and spoke,
37 "Their behaviour is displeasing to me,
38 During the day, I cannot sleep; at night, I cannot get rest.
39 I will put an end to their behaviour, frustrate [it].
40 Let silence be had, and us – let us sleep!"
41 Tiamat, when she heard this,
42 raged and [...] to her consort
43 She cried bitterly, she alone was furious,

²⁵⁵ Lit. 'insides'.

²⁵⁶ From Sumerian 'heavenly dwelling', apparently a word for the earliest stage of the universe. See Beaulieu (2019: 245-248) for an extensive etymological and cosmological discussion.

²⁵⁷ Lit. 'well-doer of my insides', *kabattu* metaphorical for 'emotions' or 'thoughts'; see CAD *K*, 'kabattu' 2 a 2'.

- 44 She took the evil to heart (?),²⁵⁸
 45 “How can we destroy that which we created?
 46 Their behaviour may cause us suffering, but let us endure [it] graciously.”
 47 Mummu answered, he advised Apsû,
 48 the disagreeing vizier, his creator’s advice [was this]:²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ The idiomatic meaning is not clear here. The pertinent phrase in Akkadian is *ittadi ina karšiša*, literally ‘she threw [something] in her insides’. CAD *N I*, ‘nadû 2h’ lists it under *nadû* with words meaning ‘insides, mind, heart’ as ‘to assign, consign, to plan’. The translation there, “she made a wicked plan”, makes no sense in context: her grief is about Apsû’s plan, and in ln. 45-46 she counsels patience over punishment. Lambert (2013: 53) translates “she grieved over the (plotted) evil,” which is a possibility. My translation aligns *nadû* as used here with other meanings of the verb, in particular (see CAD *N I*): 2j ‘to accuse’; 2k ‘to inflict’; 4a ‘to become downcast, dejected’.

²⁵⁹ This line poses several semantic difficulties. Lambert (2013: 52) translates “(As from) a rebellious vizier was the counsel of his Mummu”, a somewhat clunky rendering, both for the added ‘as from’ – which is not in the text – and for the translation of *mummīšu* as “his Mummu”. The phrase *šukkallum la māgīru* (with variations *māgīra* and *māgīri*) is analysed straightforwardly enough as a noun plus active participle, ‘the disagreeing vizier’, which characterises his response to Tiamat’s rejection of putting an end to the gods. Furthermore, *ipūlma* ^D*mummu* ‘Mummu answered’ (47a) and *sukkallum la māgīru* ‘the disagreeing vizier’ (48a) are a chiastic parallel: Mummu is the vizier, and his answer is in disagreement with Tiamat. The second part of the line can be understood in two ways: *milik* can be a construct state form of *milku* ‘advice, counsel’ (so Lambert, above), or a stative verb from *malāku* ‘to advise, counsel’ (whence, of course, the noun *milku*), in that case translating to something like ‘he was advisor’. Either way, a crucial interpretive issue is the rendering of *mu-um-mi-šu* (var. – *me-šu*₂ and –*mi-šu*₂). Lambert interprets it as referring to the vizier Mummu, which is surprising given the lack of the divine determinative DINGIR here (other deities, like Tiamat, lack the determinative, but do so consistently; Mummu’s name is written with it consistently throughout *Enūma eliš*). Thus, like the appearance of the word in ln. 4 – there referring to Tiamat as creator – the word here must mean ‘creator’ (other possible meanings of the noun include ‘workshop’, ‘curved stick’, or ‘roar’ – all homophones – but make little sense in context). The question then remains how the phrase should be understood, since the most straightforward translation, “the disagreeing vizier, advice of his creator” is unclear. The sentence structure may help here: if 47a parallels 48a in chiasm, 47b may be chiastic with 48b as well. And indeed, *apsû imallik* (47) parallels *milik*

49 “My father, put an end to the confused behaviour,
50 so that you can sleep during the day, and rest at night.”
51 Apsû rejoiced, his face brightened,
52 because he plotted evil against the gods, his sons.
53 Mummu embraced his²⁶⁰ neck,
54 he sat on his²⁶¹ knees, he kissed him.
55 That which they plotted in their gathering
56 was [...] to the gods, their offspring.
57 They heard [it] and milled around.
58 Silence seized [them] and they sat in quiet consternation.
59 [But] the one supreme in wisdom, the competent builder and very powerful one,
60 Ea, wise in everything; he knew their plot.
61 He created it, established it, the design of everything
62 He skilfully made it supreme, his pure spell.
63 He recited it and made it rest on the waters.
64 Sleep²⁶² poured over him²⁶³ while he slumbered peacefully,
65 He made Apsû slumber while sleep poured over.

mummīšu (48) in chiasm, with the same root, *malāku*, used in both lines. If this is correct, *mummu* here must refer to Apsû, even though he is never explicitly acknowledged as Mummu’s creator, and *milik mummīšu* ‘the advice of [=for] his creator’ refers to Mummu’s advice to Apsû, who is his creator (the genitive construction can be used to express this; see Huehnergard 2011, §31.3).

²⁶⁰ I.e., Apsu’s neck.

²⁶¹ I.e., Mummu’s knees.

²⁶² Lambert (2014: 55) takes *šittu* ‘sleep’ as the object of the phrase, despite the morphological nominative form of the word. While this is a possibility due to the nature of Standard Babylonian grammar, the straightforward reading of the text – in which ‘sleep’ is the subject of the verb ‘poured over’ – is preferred and renders an equally intelligible translation.

²⁶³ I.e., Apsû.

66 Mummu, the advisor, was awake in a daze
67 He loosened his sinews, his crown fell off,
68 He carried off his terrifying radiance²⁶⁴ [and] dressed himself [with it].
69 He bound him – Apsu, he killed him.
70 He confined Mummu, laid on top of him,
71 and then established his dwelling on Apsû.
72 He took hold of Mummu, exercised control over him.²⁶⁵
73 After he bound and slew his enemies –
74 Ea stood in triumph over his foes –
75 he rested well inside his chamber.
76 He called it ‘Apsû’, and appointed the tithe (?).
77 Then he built his residence there, and
78 Ea and Damkina, his wife, sat in grandeur.
79 In the sanctuary of destinies, in the temple of divine plans,
80 the wisest one,²⁶⁶ the sage of the gods, Bēl was conceived.
81 Within Apsû, Marduk was born.
82 Within pure Apsû, Marduk was born.
83 Ea,²⁶⁷ his father, begat him.

²⁶⁴ A divine quality indicative of authority – the word is *melammu*, one of several technical terms for the divine radiance that inspires terror or awe. As shown here, with Ea usurping Apsû’s *melammu* using the verb *edēqu* ‘to dress, clothe’, it is a transferable attribute that can be ‘worn’ like a garment.

²⁶⁵ Lit. ‘held [him] by his nose-rope’.

²⁶⁶ Lit. ‘the wise one of the wise ones’ – the same construction as is used in Hebrew to indicate a superlative.

²⁶⁷ It seems that some Assyrian versions had variant traditions where Ea’s name was replaced with Laḥmu’s (so *H*), and Damkina’s name in the following line with Laḥāmu’s (so *N*). Presumably, this is related to the Assyrian rewrite that put their national god Aššur in place of Marduk. See the relevant section in Part II for further analysis.

- 84 Damkina, his mother, bore him.
- 85 He sucked the breasts of goddesses.
- 86 A nurse reared him, she filled him with awesomeness.²⁶⁸
- 87 His physique was lush,²⁶⁹ the glance of his eyes was twinkling.
- 88 His emergence was manly, he was powerful from the beginning.
- 89 Anum saw him, his father's begetter,
- 90 he rejoiced, he smiled, his heart was full of gladness.
- 91 he [...] him, his divinity [...]
- 92 He made [him] very exalted, very much above them of all.
- 93 His dimensions were incomprehensibly skilfully made:
- 94 not properly knowable, hard to grasp with the eyes.
- 95 Four were his eyes, four were his ears.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Similarly to *melammu* (see fn. 24), this is another technical term associated with the otherworldliness of divinity. The word is *puluḫtu* (here in plural as *pulḫātu*), from the verb *palāḫu* 'to fear', often used in combination with *melammu* – see CAD, *P* 'pulḫu A' and particularly 'puluḫtu' for an extensive list of examples.

²⁶⁹ The verb here, in stative, is *šamḫat*, coincidentally better known as the name of the prostitute who 'civilises' Enkidu in the *Gilgamesh Epic*. The verb *šamāḫu* 'to grow, flourish' can refer to vegetation and other natural features, and is used in both male and female personal names. Though a more general translation can be chosen (e.g. 'magnificent' or 'of extraordinary beauty') the base meaning 'growing' and 'being/becoming lush' perhaps suggests something closer to 'voluptuous', which in English would likely not be applied to male physique. In Akkadian, however, the word was clearly gender-neutral; see CAD *Š*, 'šamāḫu A'. Informal English 'swole' (i.e. 'extremely muscular') or 'thicc' (i.e. 'full-figured') may better cover the force of the word. The former, from 'to swell', even echoes the semantic domain of *šamāḫu*, although it is usually only applied to men. The latter is gender-neutral, but semantically further away.

²⁷⁰ Interestingly, the words for eyes and ears are written in dual in most manuscripts; *t* has the plural IGI.MEŠ-*šu* = *īnāšu* 'his eyes', instead of the dual IGI.II-*šu* = *īnānišu* 'his (two) eyes'. Note that the dual and plural had practically merged by this time, and speakers would likely make no distinction between them: the dual form of most manuscripts would have been read *īnāšu* phonetically, even with orthography in dual. Orthography is

- 96 At the moving of his lips, fire flashed forth.²⁷¹
- 97 His four ears²⁷² grew large,
- 98 And the eyes likewise saw everything.
- 99 Exalted and supreme above the gods was his form.
- 100 His limbs were very long, his pedigree supreme.
- 101 Mari-Utu,²⁷³ Mari-Utu!
- 102 The son,²⁷⁴ the sun, the sun of the gods.²⁷⁵
- 103 He was clothed in the terrifying radiance of the ten gods, he ... at a great height.
- 104 The fifty awes were loaded on him.

additionally the likely reason for the difference between the variant in *t*: the dual is the standard form when referring to a person's external physical features that naturally come in pairs. See Huehnergard 2011: 8.

²⁷¹ Lit. 'Girra was ignited', presumably meant here in a metaphorical sense – Girra is the god of fire.

²⁷² The word here is not *uznu*, as in ln 95, but *ḥasīsu*, which also means 'wisdom'. The author may have been deliberate in his choice of words by suggesting that Marduk's wisdom likewise grew, although the reference here is clearly to his four ears. Additionally, ln 94 has the same word, and also *amārīš* 'with regard to seeing'. Thus, the text has *ḥasīsīš/amārīš* (94), *īnāšu/uznāšu* (95), *ḥasīsa* (97), and *īnān* (98), reinforcing the imagery through repetition.

²⁷³ Another name for Marduk, the literal rendering of his Sumerian orthography ^DAMAR.UTU, *mār Utu* 'calf of Utu/the sun', reading UTU as either the name of the sun god (who was usually called Šamaš in Akkadian, but clearly retains his Sumerian name here) or as the Sumerian word for 'sun' (*šamšu* in Akkadian). It is not entirely clear what the connection between Marduk and Šamaš is – in *Enūma eliš*, Marduk is the son of Ea. It is possible that the sun as non-divine entity is meant, perhaps partially reinforced by Šamaš's lack of involvement in the story despite his importance to the Mesopotamian pantheon outside of *Enūma eliš*. However, manuscript *N* has the DINGIR-sign, suggesting that it reads UTU as the name of the deity, although, as we have seen with the name of Tiamat, this need not be strictly indicative that a proper deity is meant. See also fn. 34.

²⁷⁴ Manuscript *N* has *mār* 'the son of'.

²⁷⁵ All manuscripts put the divine determinative DINGIR sign before the UTU sign, although the intended meaning here must be the sun more generally rather than the sun god specifically, since 'Šamaš of the gods' – given that Šamaš *is* a god – makes little sense in context.

105 Anum created and begat the four winds.
 106 He handed them over [to Marduk]: “My son, [...]”
 107 He formed dust and made the violent storm carry it.²⁷⁶
 108 He brought a wave²⁷⁷ into existence and disturbed Tiamat.
 109 Tiamat was troubled – day and night she wandered around.
 110 The restless gods ...
 111 They plotted evil in their minds
 112 To Tiamat, their mother, they said,
 113 “When they killed Apsû, your spouse,
 114 you did not go by his side, but quietly sat.
 115 They created the four winds of awesomeness,
 116 causing disturbance in your mind, and we cannot sleep.
 117 Your heart was not fixed on Apsû, your spouse,

²⁷⁶ It is not clear which deity is the subject of this phrase or the next. Given that Anu is the creator in ln. 105, he perhaps also creates the dust here. On the other hand, since the ‘four winds’ have been handed to Marduk, he could be responsible for it instead.

²⁷⁷ Or ‘the marsh’ if the southern Mesopotamian marshlands (cf. ln. 6, fn. 5) are meant. CAD (*A*₁, ‘agammu’ and ‘agû B’) and Lambert (2013: 57) take the word to mean ‘wave’ here, which in context makes more sense – after all, a wave can be better envisioned bothering Tiamat than a marsh; it also fits better with the violent storm, if its creator is Marduk, from the previous line. The question here is whether *a-ga-am-ma* (var. *a-ga-a-am-ma*) should be read as an accusative of *agammu* ‘marsh’ or as a by-form of *agû* ‘wave’. CAD, under ‘agammu’, refers to ‘agû B’ for this specific instance. Although the morphological proximity of the two words is obvious, less clear is how *agamma* (var. *agamma*) derives from *agû*. In the variation (manuscript *v*), the contracted vowels are actually indicated by the extra *-a-*, while normally *agammu* ‘marsh’ – probably a loanword from Sumerian AGAM ‘drainage pond for flood water’ – does not have this contraction. Even then, however, we must account for the additional *-mma*. Mimation could explain the *-m*, as another example of the archaizing style of Standard Babylonian. The final *-ma* is more difficult; the normal emphatic *-ma* can normally not be attached to nominal forms, only to verbal and participial ones.

118 or Mummu, who is bound – you sit alone!
119 From today, you will walk around disturbed.
120 And we, the ones who cannot rest – you do not love us!
121 See our burden:²⁷⁸ our eyes are puckered,
122 Cut off our immovable yoke, and let us sleep!
123 Do battle, return them the favour!²⁷⁹
124 Make their [...] to nothingness.”
125 Tiamat listened, she liked the speech.²⁸⁰
126 “Everything you proposed – let us do it today.”
127 The gods assembled inside her.
128 They plotted evil against the gods their creators.
129 [...] ²⁸¹ the side of Tiamat
130 Angrily plotting, not sleeping night and day,
131 Rising to battle, raging furiously,
132 They held assembly, drew up for combat.
133 Mother Ḫubur,²⁸² former of all,

²⁷⁸ So Lambert (2013: 56); the word is *sarma'ūni*, the meaning of which is difficult to pin down; considering that it appears first in Standard Babylonian, it may be a loanword. It appears in an inscription of Cyrus the Great in parallel with *anhūssunu* ‘their tiredness’, and is something Cyrus undoes when referring to captives. ‘Burden’ is a reasonable possibility in this context.

²⁷⁹ In the sense of ‘do unto them as they did unto Apsû’, coincidentally using the same circumlocution as in English. Lambert (2013: 56) translates ‘avenge them’, which is definitely fits with the force of the speakers’ argument; however, because the *-šunu* ‘them’ in the text refers to the younger gods, not to Apsû and Mummu, a translation that retains the same referent is preferable.

²⁸⁰ Lit. ‘the speech was good unto her.’

²⁸¹ The verb here is unknown; see Lambert (2013: 471).

²⁸² Another name for Tiamat.

- 134 added the irresistible weapons and gave birth to the *mušmahhū*.²⁸³
- 135 They were sharp of teeth, merciless,
- 136 She filled their bodies with poison for blood.
- 137 The aggressive *ušumgallū*²⁸⁴ she clothed with awesomeness.
- 138 She [...] terrifying radiance, and made them equal to the gods.
- 139 “Let the viewer collapse impotently!
- 140 Let their bodies attack continually, never relent.”²⁸⁵
- 141 She brought into being the *bašmu*,²⁸⁶ the *mušhuššu*,²⁸⁷ the *laḫāmu*,²⁸⁸

²⁸³ Sum. *mušmaḫ* (MUŠ.MAḪ), lit. ‘great snake’. Technical terms for mythical beings are left untranslated here. Some translators opt to render the name in English translation, but each term would likely have been understood by Akkadian speakers as a name, rather than as the literal or even figurative translation of the Sumerian, and would have evoked the form of the mythical monster instead of the literal meaning of the word. Compare the Greek monster Chimera, lit. ‘she-goat’ (e.g. in *Iliad* 6.179; *Theogony* 322), the literal meaning of whose name was separate from the mythical entity.

²⁸⁴ Sum. *ušumgal* (UŠUM.GAL or U₃.ŠUM.GAL[-LA]), lit ‘great snake, dragon’. The *ušumgallu* was regularly used as an epithet for Mesopotamian kings as well as deities, including references as early as the Code of Ḫammurāpi, where the king is called *ušumgal šarrī* ‘great dragon of the kings’ (ii.55). For an analysis of a potential biblical reference to the *ušumgallu*, see Yoder (2013).

²⁸⁵ Lit. ‘never turn the breast’.

²⁸⁶ This is one of the few words actually written out in Akkadian instead of using the Sumerian logogram. The word is also the term for the horned viper (*C. cerastes*), but in context presumably refers to another type of monster.

²⁸⁷ Sum. *mušhuš* (MUŠ.ḪUŠ), lit. ‘reddish snake’. Depicted as a snake with bird legs, it was regularly associated with Marduk and, before him, with Tišpak, god of Ešnunna. See Lambert (1985: 89-92) and Wiggermann (1989) for an overview; see Lewis (1996) for an analysis of Mesopotamian *mušhuššu* imagery and the divine combat narrative in Ez 32.

²⁸⁸ Lambert translates ‘the Hairy Hero’ based on Akkadian *laḫāmu* ‘to be hairy’ (see CAD L, ‘laḫāmu A’ and ‘laḫmu’). This is most likely a coincidence, however, given that the Sumerian name for the being is ‘laḫama’, unrelated to words meaning ‘hairy’ (e.g. *dilib* and *siki*). The name is spelled identically to the deity in In. 10,

142 The *ugallu*,²⁸⁹ the *uridimmu*,²⁹⁰ the *girtablûlu*,²⁹¹
 143 Fierce *ûmû*,²⁹² the *kulûlu*²⁹³ and the *kusarikku*,²⁹⁴
 144 carrying merciless weapons, fearless in battle.
 145 Proud were here commands, indeed they were not to be resisted.
 146 Moreover, she brought eleven of those into being.
 147 Among the gods, her offspring, the ones whom she held as assembly,
 148 she elevated Qingu; him, she made great among them.
 149 The leadership of the army, command of the assembly,
 150 the carrying of weapons, the campaigning, the stirring up of battle,
 151 The [...] of battle, the position of high army officer,²⁹⁵
 152 she entrusted into his hands, and she put him on a throne.

although the reference must be to a different entity here. They appear in Sumerian texts as benevolent entities associated with the temple (e.g. *The Cursing of Agade*, ln 131 and 229) and with Ea and the Abzu. In Akkadian, they appear more often as demon-like beings, chased off by more powerful deities such as Šamaš (Lambert 1996: 38) or Ištar (Craig 1895: 2, 8 r. i 1). Within context, the latter meaning is presumably intended. See further CAD L, ‘lahmu’.

²⁸⁹ A protective spirit in other texts, the *ugallu*’s name is written with the Sumerian signs UD (or U₄) ‘wind, storm’ and GAL ‘great’. It appears in a list with other benevolent deities (Lambert 1966: 68 ii 52’) and is there described as lion-headed, bearing an axe, dagger, and another object broken from the text.

²⁹⁰ Another human-animal composite, the Sumerian word URIDIM means ‘rabid dog’, although the hybrid appears from iconography to be with a lion. See CAD U, ‘urdimmu’.

²⁹¹ Reference obscure.

²⁹² Lit. ‘storms’ – see CAD U, ‘ûmu 2’.

²⁹³ Reference obscure.

²⁹⁴ The bison? See CAD K, ‘kusarikku’ and A₁ ‘alimbû’. Perhaps, like the *bašmu*, the term for the mythical being referred to another kind of monster.

²⁹⁵ It is clear that the *rab-sikkatûtu* ‘high army officer (?)’ was a senior position in Mesopotamian armies. The word is construed similarly to the two Assyrian titles mentioned in 2 Kgs 18-19, the *rab-šaḳê* (Rabshakeh) and the *rab-ša-rēši* (Rabsaris).

- 153 “I have recited your incantation and made you great in the assembly of the gods.
 154 I have put in your hands the kingship of the gods, all of them.
 155 You have indeed been made great – you are my renowned husband.²⁹⁶
 156 Let your commands be great over all the *anukkū*.”²⁹⁷
 157 She gave him the tablet of destinies and fastened it to his chest.
 158 “Your word shall not be changed – let the utterance of your mouth be established.”
 159 Now Qingu, having been elevated and taken on the highest godhood,²⁹⁸
 160 for the gods his sons decreed destinies:
 161 “May the utterances of your mouths extinguish fire,
 162 May piled-up poison humble strength.”

[colophon]

Tablet IV, 135ff

- 135 Bēl rested, he observed her corpse.
 136 ... the flesh of the monstrous form, he devised a clever plan.
 137 He split her in two like a dried fish.
 138 One of her halves he took and he roofed heaven.²⁹⁹
 139 He stretched the skin and installed a watch.

²⁹⁶ The word for ‘husband’ here, *ḫā’iru*, derives from the verb *ḫi’āru* ‘to choose’ – the word is especially appropriate here given Qingu’s status as Tiamat’s chosen spouse.

²⁹⁷ An alternative spelling of *anunnakū*, the collective term for the gods. Originally, the term referred specifically to the gods of the earth and underworld.

²⁹⁸ The word is *anūtu*, lit. ‘Anu-ship’, i.e. ‘rank/power of Anu’, who was originally generally considered the supreme deity (accounting for specific local traditions in which other deities took the position).

²⁹⁹ Lambert (2014: 95) translates “One half of her he set up and stretched out as the heavens”, which uses *mišlūšša* ‘half of her’ as the object of two separate verbs. The phrase looks like a straightforward parallelism with the pattern object-verb / object-verb, hence the chosen translation here.

- 140 He instructed him not to let her water escape.
 141 He crossed over³⁰⁰ the heavens, examined the sky.
 142 He made it equal opposite the Apsû, the dwelling of Nudimmud.
 143 Bēl measured the form of the Apsû,
 144 and established Ešarra as the likeness of Ešgalla.
 145 In Ešgalla, Ešarra – which he built –, and the heavens,
 146 he made Anu, Enlil, and Ea take up residence of their shrines.

[colophon]

Tablet V

- 1 He created the stations³⁰¹ for the great gods.
 2 He established the constellations, the image of the stars.
 3 He appointed the year, drew the boundaries.
 4 He set up three stars for twelve months.
 5 After he had drawn up the plan for the day of the year,
 6 he established the station of Nēberu in order to prescribe their structure³⁰²
 7 [and] in order that none transgress or be negligent.
 8 He firmly established the stations of Enlil and Ea with it.
 9 He opened gates on both sides
 10 and made strong bolts left and right.
 11 In her belly, he placed the upper world.³⁰³

³⁰⁰ The verb here, from *ebēru* ‘to cross over’, can also mean ‘to stretch out’, and may be a play on words given the ‘roofing’ and ‘stretching out’ verbs in 138-139.

³⁰¹ The word *manzazu*, derived from the verb *izuzzu* ‘to stand’, has a range of meanings; the likely intended meaning here is specifically the position of the stars in the sky, which were identified with gods.

³⁰² I.e. that of the stars mentioned in ln. 2 or 4? Lambert (2013: 99) reads the latter, but the text is ambiguous.

³⁰³ As opposed to the lower world (i.e. the Apsû).

- 12 He brought Nannar into being, and entrusted [him] the night.
- 13 He appointed him [...] of the night, in order to prescribe the day.
- 14 Monthly, without hinder, he exalted him with a crown.
- 15 “At the start of the month, light up the land,
 16 horns shining in order to prescribe the naming of the day.
- 17 On the seventh day, the crown will be half size.
- 18 On the *šapattu*³⁰⁴ you should be in conjunction – the halfway point of the month.³⁰⁵
- 19 When Šamaš sees you on the horizon,
 20 diminish (?) in proper stages (?) and turn back (?).³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Etymologically related to Hebrew *šabbat*, no doubt, although in Akkadian it refers to the fifteenth day of the month instead of the seventh day of the week – comparable, perhaps, to the Latin *ides*.

³⁰⁵ The text is difficult and highly technical here. The Š-stem of the verb *maḥāru*, here in jussive, refers to a conjunction of heavenly bodies. In the broader context of the text – which will shortly turn to the movement of the sun – it seems like the *šapattu* was defined according to its relative position to the sun.

³⁰⁶ Obscure. The verb *šutakšibamma*, a rare Št-stem form of *kašābu* ‘to reduce’, has been interpreted both to mean ‘to diminish’ and ‘to reach fullness’. CAD Š 3 opts for the latter; Lambert (2013: 99) and Kämmerer and Metzler (2012: 231) for the former. The Št-stem is unpredictable in meaning (see Huehnergard 2011: 433-435), meaning a choice for either option really comes down to what seems to make most sense in context. ‘Diminish’ makes sense if the focus here is the point at which the moon starts waning; ‘reach fullness’ is better if the midpoint of the month as apex is intended. The former seems to align closer with the root meaning of the verb, which is why it is chosen here.

‘Proper stages’ is a broken word, reconstructed by Lambert (2014: 98) as *simtu*, which means something like ‘appropriate, proper’. It is usually only found as an adjective to a noun or substantivised verb (*šutakšibamma* is neither), suggesting that it may be a substantivised adjective here if Lambert’s reconstruction is sound.

The final two words of the sentence may indicate the waning moon’s reduced light, but again the phrasing is difficult to understand. Kämmerer and Metzler (2012: 231) translate “wende dich zurück”, reading *pe₂-ni* (from Neo-Babylonian *penû* ‘to turn’), while Lambert (2013: 98) reads *bi-ni* ‘shine’. Both are possible readings of the sign BI.

21 Draw near to the path of Šamaš on the *bubbulum* (?).³⁰⁷
22 [. . .] the thirtieth day, be in conjunction with Šamaš again.

[23-46 broken.]³⁰⁸

47 The phlegm of Tiamat [. . .]
48 Marduk created [. . .]
49 [the phlegm?] he gathered together into clouds, he churned [the waters?].³⁰⁹
50 The rising of the wind, causing the rain to fall, the cold to set in,³¹⁰
51 causing the fog to smoke, heaping up her poison,
52 he assigned to himself, made his hand grasp.
53 He put her head [. . .] he heaped up.
54 The underground water opened, the water was sated.
55 In her two eyes he opened Euphrates and Tigris.
56 He sealed her nostrils, left behind [. . .].
57 He heaped up the distant mountains in her breast.
58 He bored springs for the channeling of cisterns.

³⁰⁷ ‘Day of the disappearance of the moon’ (CAD *B*, ‘bubbulu’ 2).

³⁰⁸ Some lines are partially legible but mostly add little. The exceptions are as follows: in ln. 25, Šamaš is implored to “constrain murder and violence” in line with his role as god of justice. The narrative up to ln. 39 presumably describes the organisation of the day after that of the night in the lines just discussed. Ln. 40-46 describe something related to the year.

³⁰⁹ The phlegm of Tiamtu in ln 47 is presumably what Marduk uses to create the clouds in this line.

Kämmerer and Metzler (2012: 234) reconstruct A.MEŠ ‘the waters’ as the object of *ušasbi*; Lambert (2014: 100) does not and leaves ‘the clouds’ as the object of both verbs in the phrase.

³¹⁰ Kämmerer and Metzler (2012: 234) correct the final sign to A instead of ZA, and read *kašâ* from *kašû* ‘to be cold’ per (convincingly) Landsberger and Kinnier Wilson (1961: 168). Lambert (2013: 100) keeps ZA and reads the word as *kašāša* from *kašāšu* ‘to grind’ and translates it adjectivally as ‘violent’. CAD *K* ‘kašāšu’ understands it as a noun meaning some form of rain.

59 He twisted her tail, wove it into a *durmāḥu*.³¹¹
60 [. . .] the Apsû under his feet.
61 He set her thighs as the fastenings of heaven.
62 Half³¹² of her he put up top, he firmly established earth.
63 [. . .] the work inside Tiamat he churned (?).³¹³
64 He opened his net, made all come out.³¹⁴
65 He shaped the heavens and earth [. . .].
66 [. . .] their joint was made very firm indeed.
67 After he prescribed his cultic rites and created his ordinances,
68 he laid down guide ropes and made Ea hold them.
69 The tablet of destinies, which Qingu had taken, he [Marduk] brought,
70 took it as a special gift³¹⁵ and presented it to Anu.

[71-106 broken or superfluous.]³¹⁶

³¹¹ A type of braided reed rope; see CAD *D*, ‘*durmāḥu*’.

³¹² I.e. the other half, cf. IV.138.

³¹³ The verb is the same here as in ln. 49, but with the first word broken the meaning of the phrase is unclear.

³¹⁴ I.e. Tiamtu’s minions whom he had captured in Tablet IV.

³¹⁵ So Kämmerer and Metzler (2012: 236): “besonderes Begrüßungsgeschenk”. Lambert (2013: 101) translates uncertainly “trophy”, which does not appear to render *rēš*.

³¹⁶ 71-86 are mostly legible or complete but add little; 87-106 are much more broken. Reconstructions and translations available in Lambert (2013: 100-103) and Kämmerer and Metzler (2012: 236-240).

Appendix B: Parallels between Akhenaten's Great Hymn to the Sun
and Psalm 104 (Day 2013a)

Bold words are direct parallels. *Italics* indicate similar but not identical words.

Psalm 104	Akhenaten's Great Hymn
<p>20-21: You make darkness, <i>and it is night</i>, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.</p> <p>The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.</p>	<p>27-37: When you set in the western horizon, <i>The land is in darkness</i>, in the manner of death.</p> <p>They sleep in a room, with heads wrapped up, Nor sees one eye the other.</p> <p>All their goods, which are under their heads might be stolen, but they would not perceive (it).</p> <p>Every lion is come forth from his den; All creeping things, they sting.</p> <p>Darkness is a shroud, and the earth is in stillness, for he who made them rests in his horizon.</p>
<p>22-23: When <i>you cause the sun to rise</i>, they withdraw and lie down in their dens.</p> <p>People go out to their work and to their labour until the evening.</p>	<p>38-45: At daybreak, when <i>you arise</i> on the horizon,</p> <p>When you shine as the Aten by day, You drive away the darkness and give your rays.</p> <p>The Two Lands are in festivity every day,</p>

	<p>Awake and standing upon (their) feet, for you have raised them up.</p> <p>Washing their bodies, taking (their) clothing, Their arms are (raised) in praise at your appearance.</p> <p>All the world, they do their work.</p>
<p>24: O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; <i>the earth is full of your creatures.</i></p>	<p>76-82: How manifold is it, what you have made!</p> <p>They are hidden from the face (of man). O sole god, like whom there is no other!</p> <p>You did create the world according to your desire, whilst you were alone:</p> <p><i>All men, cattle, and wild beasts,</i> <i>Whatever is on earth, going upon (its) feet,</i> <i>And what is on high, flying with its wings.</i></p>
<p>25-26: There is the sea, great and wide, <i>creeping things</i> innumerable are there, living things both great and small.</p> <p>There go the ships, and Leviathan whom you formed to play with.</p>	<p>53-58: The ships are sailing north And south as well, For every way is open at your appearance.</p> <p>The <i>fish</i> in the river Dart before your face;</p> <p>Your rays are in the midst of the great green [sea].</p>
<p>27-28: These all look to you to give them their food in due season;</p> <p>When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they</p>	<p>85-86: You supply their necessities:</p> <p>Everyone has his food, and his time of life is reckoned.</p>

<p>are filled with good things.</p>	
<p>29-30: When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die.</p> <p>When you send forth your spirit, <i>they are created</i>; and you renew the face of the ground.</p>	<p>127-128: When you have risen <i>they live</i>, When you set they die.</p>