Conceptions of Transgression and Its Consequences in the Mesopotamian Exorcistic Corpus

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Abstract

My doctoral thesis aims to develop a new approach to Mesopotamian conceptions of transgression and its consequences, in particular according to the first-millennium BC exorcistic corpus (*āšipūtu*). I begin by assessing key ancient terminology and concepts, including those relating to transgression and its punishment. The role of *māmītu*-curse, for example, as a 'self-curse' that punishes transgression has long been recognized in the modern secondary literature. A more in-depth study of the concept of *māmītu*-curse, including newly published and unpublished material, allows me to expand our understanding of its scope and function, as well as recognize that *arratu*-curse formed a complementary concept.

The remainder of the thesis follows a tripartite structure. The first part examines the portrayal of acts of transgression as potential causes of divine punishment, including aspects of this portrayal that problematize the idea of individual responsibility, such as contagion and the demonization of self-curse. In the second part, I investigate how the punishment of transgression manifested in cultic, social, and economic problems, as well as physical and psychological symptoms within the patient. Analogical thinking linking cause and manifestation offer further insights into the conceptualization of transgression and its punishment. In the third part, I assess the methods employed by the exorcist to remove the patient's state of suffering, which offer further insights into how this state and its causes were conceptualized.

Some of the key aspects of Mesopotamian conceptions of transgression that I have identified include the fact that a transgression did not need to be identified to release its consequences, and the role the ideology of divine punishment played in maintaining the balance and structures governing the proper function of the universe and human

society. Overall, my findings provide a significant new approach to the understanding of transgression and divine punishment in late Mesopotamian scholarship. This will have further applications for the study of *āšipūtu* material, as well as for the comparative study of religious thought in Mesopotamia and beyond.

List of abbreviations

See the CDLI list (cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/abbreviations_for_assyriology, accessed 26/02/2021) for general abbreviations. Additional abbreviations and those used frequently in the text of my thesis are given below for reference.

A	Museum siglum for Assur tablets in the Istanbul Archeology Museums
AHw	*Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 1959–1981.
Akk.	Akkadian
AO	Museum siglum for the Louvre
Ar.	Arabic
BM	Museum siglum for the British Museum
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary*. Chicago: Oriental Institute. 1956–2010.
CBS	Museum siglum for the University Museum, Pennsylvania.
CCP	*Cuneiform Commentaries Projects*. Yale University. Online at ccp.yale.edu, accessed 28/02/2021.
CDA	*A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 2000.
CMAwR	T. Abusch, D. Schwemer, M. Luukko, and G. Van Buylaere. *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals*. 4 Vols. Leiden; Boston: Brill. 2011–2020.
CSD	J. Payne Smith ed. *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1903.
CT	*Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum.* London: British Museum. 1986–.
Duden	Duden online. Online at duden.de/woerterbuch, accessed 28/02/2021.
GAG	W. von Soden. *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*.[3] Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico. 1995.
HALOT	L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner eds. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. 5 vols. Leiden; New York; Köln: Brill. 1994–2000.

Heb.	Hebrew
HW	J. Milton Cowan ed. *Hans Wehr. A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Revised 4th edition. Urbana, Ill.: Spoken Language Services, Inc. 1994.
IV R^2	H.C. Rawlinson. *A Selection from the Miscellaneous Inscriptions of Assyria*.[2] The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia, Vol. 4. London: British Museum. 1891.
K.	Siglum for Kouyunjik tablets in the British Museum
KAL	*Keilschrifttexte aus Assur literarischen Inhalts*. Wiesbaden: Harassowitz. 2007–.
KAL 2	D. Schwemer. *Rituale und Beschwörungen gegen Schadenzauber*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 2007.
KAL 7	W. Meinhold. *Ritualbeschreibungen und Gebete II.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 2017.
KAL 10	S.M. Maul. *Bannlösung (nam-érim-búr-ru-da). Die Therapie eines auf eidliche Falschaussage zurückgeführten Leidens*. 2 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 2019.
KAR	E. Ebeling. *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*. 2 vols. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs. 1919–1923.
Ludlul	T. Oshima. *Babylonian Poems of Pious Sufferers:* Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi *and the* Babylonian Theodicy. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. 2014.
MS(S)	Manuscript(s)
MSL	*Materialen zum sumerischen Lexikon*. 17 vols. Rome: Potificium Institutum Biblicum. 1937–1985.
MZL	R. Borger. *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*.[2] Münster: Ugarit-Verlag. 2010.
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*.[3] Online at oed.com, accessed 28/02/2021.
PSD	Å.W. Sjöberg ed. *The Sumerian Dictionary of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia: Babylonian Section of the University Museum. 4 vols. 1984–1992.

RINAP 4 E. Leichty. *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 BC)*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns. 2011.

SAA 2 S. Parpola and K. Watanabe. *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. 1988.

SAA 9 S. Parpola. *Assyrian Prophecies*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. 1997.

SAA 10 S. Parpola. *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. 1993.

SAD Supplement to the Akkadian Dictionaries. Universität Leipzig. Online at altorient.gko.uni-leipzig.de/etymd.html, accessed 28/02/2021.

SP B. Alster. *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer*. 2 vols. Bethesda: CDL Press. 1997.

SpTU I H. Hunger. *Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk*. Vol 1. Berlin: Mann. 1976.

Sum. Sumerian

Syr. Syriac

TUAT 5 B. Janowski and D. Schwemer eds. *Texte zur Heilkunde*. Texte aus der Umwelt des alten Testaments, N.F. Vol. 5. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus. 2010.

UH M.J. Geller. *Healing Magic and Evil Demons: Canonical Udug-Hul Incantations*. Boston; Berlin: De Gruyter. 2016.

VAT Museum siglum for tablets in the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin

Symbols and standards for transliterating cuneiform text follow the practice of CMAwR, for which see Abusch et al. 2020: xix–xx.

1 Introduction

1.1 Research aims

In my thesis, I aim to develop a new approach to conceptions of transgression and its consequences in Mesopotamian thought, primarily from the perspective of the exorcistic corpus and related sources. I shall achieve this by examining how the rituals and incantations of the exorcistic corpus conceptualized the causes, manifestation, and treatment of suffering that was attributed to transgression and divine punishment. I shall assess the extent to which concepts like 'sin' and 'guilt' can be applied to the Mesopotamian material and the ways in which the Mesopotamian exorcist's conceptions of transgression differ from or resemble the models presented in previous secondary literature. The Mesopotamian concepts will therefore be more readily integrated into their wider intellectual context, especially in terms of the position of transgression and divine punishment as one of a number of categories for the various causes of suffering described in the Mesopotamian sources. In this way, my thesis will provide fresh insights into the study of the Mesopotamian exorcistic corpus, especially the theoretical background to what are essentially practical rituals, and into Mesopotamian religious thought more generally. By integrating the primary sources into their wider social and cultural context, I will also assess the implications that the exorcist's conceptions of transgression had for human society in general, including individual fears about transgression and its consequences, one's precarious place within human society, and the often fragile relationship between humans and the gods. The overall aim of my thesis is therefore to produce an overview of emic conceptions of transgression and divine punishment in a defined corpus of Mesopotamian texts, assessed on their own terms while also integrated into their wider intellectual context.

Ideas relating to transgression and its punishment exert a great influence even over our modern lives. On the one hand, society as a whole is often terrified of what it considers to be transgressive behaviour, and notions of sin and its punishment (by non-human forces as much as by humans) are frequently used to control and oppress certain sections of society. At the same time, modern Western culture appears to be obsessed with transgressive behaviours: the number of true crime documentaries produced in recent years betrays a perverse fascination with crimes that we are supposed to find abhorrent, the motivations of the transgressor, and how they are punished. The educated elite of first millennium BC Mesopotamia were also interested in transgression and its consequences, particularly the exorcists who were tasked with identifying transgression and remedying its consequences. The exorcistic sources demonstrate a fear of individual acts of transgression for their capacity to disrupt society and relations with the gods, as well as a pervasive fear of committing any transgression unknowingly. Since the actual offence could have remained unknown, the exorcist sources are also interested in the possible range of transgressions that a person could commit knowingly or unknowingly, insofar as this justifies the effectiveness of the rituals. In Mesopotamia, as in many modern societies, notions of transgression and its punishment were closely connected to both social control and humans' relationship with the gods (see § 3.2.1; § 3.2.3; §§ 4.2.1–4.2.2).

Given its prominence in societies of both ancient Mesopotamia and today, it should come as no surprise that the subject of transgression in the ancient world has frequently commanded the attention of modern scholars. However, perhaps because of the influence that ideas about transgression exert upon us, pre-existing assumptions about how sin and divine punishment should operate are often imposed upon the Mesopotamian material. For historical reasons, the majority of modern scholars of

Mesopotamia were raised in societies influenced by the monotheistic religions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, and each of these religions has a wide range of their own approaches to the question of sin and divine punishment. Because of this, Mesopotamian concepts of transgression and divine punishment are often approached through the lens of neighbouring, although quite different, cultures, or with pre-conceived notions of what is to be found in the Mesopotamian material, even though there is no *a priori* reason to assume that Mesopotamian conceptions of transgression operated in the same way as in other cultures. It is rare, therefore, that the Mesopotamian scholars' conceptions of transgression and divine punishment have been allowed to speak to us on their own terms. Indeed, there have been very few studies of transgression in Mesopotamia from a wholly Assyriological perspective, let alone with an emic approach to the material (§ 1.3.2).

1.2 Methodology, limitations, and structure

Due to limitations of space, I cannot provide an examination of the concepts of transgression and divine punishment in the whole of Mesopotamian intellectual history, but limit myself instead to a defined corpus of texts (§ 1.3.1). I will follow a philological-historical approach, combining close reading of the primary sources with contextual evidence from related textual sources and secondary scholarship in order to access the worldview of the composers of these sources. While I am guided for the most part by the ancient sources themselves in their approach to and categorization of the topic at hand, some divergent conventions will have to be established in terms of structuring the information and translating it into modern English, and such conventions are explained and justified throughout the thesis.

One limitation of my approach is the compositional context of the primary sources: the perspective of the exorcistic corpus is unavoidably that of a class of elite male scholars, working in an urban environment, and catering primarily to other elites, usually male, and including the royal household.[1] This context inevitably imposes upon the primary sources a specific view of the world and, as such, the conclusions reached in my thesis directly apply only to this corpus of texts and the thinking of the restricted group of people that composed and used them. My findings therefore do not necessarily reflect the worldview of Mesopotamian society more broadly. Nevertheless, this is mostly the perspective that survives in the textual record, and the exorcistic material forms a large and relatively understudied corpus. Insights into the topic of transgression therefore have wider applicability for understanding the underlying 'theory' of the exorcists'

[1] Abusch and Schwemer (2011: 4) similarly note that "our main source of information on Mesopotamian witchcraft beliefs is a corpus of texts that, in modern terms, forms part of human medicine and *focuses primarily on male elites*" [emphasis mine].

scholarship (see § 1.4.1.1), and what one might term an 'ideology' of transgression and divine punishment. My findings should therefore provide a foundation for further study into the theoretical background of the exorcistic corpus and into perspectives on transgression and divine punishment found outside of the corpus, both in Mesopotamia and beyond.

Before embarking on the study, I should like to clarify some of the English terminology that will occur throughout. I use terms like 'transgression' and 'offence' to refer to the ultimate source of a person's suffering and 'curse' or 'divine punishment' to refer to the direct consequences of a transgression. Terms like 'transgressor', 'offender', as well as 'patient' and 'sufferer', refer to the complainant, who is the client of the exorcist and the target of healing rituals. The result of the curse and/or divine punishment is described in terms of 'suffering', 'punishment', and as a state of 'reduced existence'. The consequences are also described, when they are perceived as something that can be removed from the sufferer, as an 'impurity', or, when they originate externally to the sufferer, as an 'evil' or 'contagion'. The rituals countering these may be described as 'healing', 'purification', 'release', or 'removal' (see § 2.3 for further discussion on purification and release in exorcistic rituals). These terms are used conventionally in a way that helpfully encompasses the ancient concepts, although these often behave quite differently to comparable modern concepts. The use of certain terms does not necessarily imply that the whole system of thought should be conceived of only in terms of divine punishment or physical impurity, for example. A detailed study of the ancient terminology is undertaken at the beginning of the work (Chapter § 2), and the original Akkadian and Sumerian primary sources are cited throughout, which helps to contextualize the usage of ancient terminology as well as my conventional translations.

The translation of Akkadian and Sumerian terminology has its own challenges, and the conventions I follow will be outlined in Chapter § 2, in which I examine the terminology of transgression and its consequences (§ 2.1), assess the significance of the *libbu*, an internal organ key to understanding the manifestation of divine punishment (§ 2.2), and discuss the verbal roots used to describe the removal of the state resulting from transgression (§ 2.3). The rest of the work will then follow a tripartite structure, divided along similar lines. I begin in Chapter § 3 by looking at transgression as the ultimate source of suffering, examining how the sources categorize and interpret possible transgressive actions (§§ 3.1–3.2), as well as the elements of the portrayal of transgression that problematize a direct connection to an individual's transgressive actions: human ignorance, contagion, and the externalization of the curses punishing transgression (§§ 3.3–3.5). The following Chapter § 4 investigates how the consequences of transgression manifest and are experienced by the sufferer, in general terms (§ 4.1), in terms of his relations with other people and the gods (§ 4.2), and in terms of internal, 'medical' symptoms (§ 4.3), and how these are connected to their ultimate cause. In Chapter § 5, I examine the methods employed by the exorcist to treat his patient, including how the manifestation of suffering could be used to diagnose its cause (§ 5.1), how the sufferer's relationship with the gods was restored (§ 5.2), and how the evil was removed from the patient and disposed of, and what this can tell us about how the consequences of transgression were conceptualized (§§ 5.3–5.4). This tripartite structure is also reflected to some extent in the ancient material: the *Šurpu* ritual, for example, begins with the causes (Tablets II and III), then describes the patient's suffering and appeals to the gods for support (Tablet IV), and thereafter begins the removal of evil (Tablet V–VI) and purification of the patient. Chapters §§ 3–5 each end with a summary of the key findings of that chapter, while the final Chapter § 6 will

bring together these conclusions, demonstrating how they address my overall research aims, summarizing the findings of my research as a whole, and assessing the place of my work within the wider context of scholarship.

1.3 Primary sources and previous scholarship

1.3.1 Key primary sources

The following study concentrates primarily on the portrayal of transgression and divine punishment according to a selection of *āšipūtu* ritual compositions that were directly concerned with transgression and its consequences (see § 1.4.1.1 for the place of transgression within the context of other sources of suffering addressed in the *āšipūtu* corpus). These include the *Šurpu* ritual (§ 1.3.1.1), namerimburruda-rituals that aim to release the effects of *māmītu*-curse (§ 1.3.1.2), including those incorporated into the more complex *Bīt rimki* ritual, and a few related rituals that concern *arratu*-curse (§ 1.3.1.3). Other *āšipūtu* compositions, such as the diagnostic handbook *Sakikku*, are useful for understanding the medical symptoms associated with transgression (see § 4.3.1). Beyond the *āšipūtu* corpus, the composition *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* is a key source for the experience of divine punishment, although its purpose and approach to the theme appear to be somewhat different to the ritual compositions (§ 1.3.1.4; § 1.4.1.3). In order to integrate the conception of transgression into its wider intellectual context, I occasionally draw upon other *āšipūtu* rituals, including *Maqlû* and other anti-witchcraft rituals,[2] the anti-demon ritual Udug-ḫul,[3] and various ritual and therapeutic compositions concerning ghosts.[4] The wider intellectual context of the key primary sources, including conceptions of transgression and divine punishment in compositions outside of the *āšipūtu* corpus, will be discussed further below (§ 1.4.1). Unless otherwise indicated, translations from all primary sources are my own. When translating bilingual texts, I privilege the Akkadian text, due in part to space restrictions

[2] Abusch 2016; Abusch and Schwemer 2011; Abusch and Schwemer 2016; Abusch et al. 2020.
[3] Geller 2016.
[4] Cited according to the editions in Scurlock 2006.

and the inherent difficulties of first-millennium Sumerian and its relation to the Akkadian, but comment where the Akkadian diverges considerably from the Sumerian.

1.3.1.1 *Šurpu*

Šurpu (lit. 'Burning') is a complex ritual that primarily targets *māmītu*-curse as the consequence of having committed an unknown transgression. As it is currently known, the ritual consists of nine or ten tablets containing Akkadian, Sumerian, and bilingual incantations to be recited during the course of the ritual. Additionally, we possess one tablet (LKA 91), which I refer to as the 'Assur Ritual Tablet' (abbreviated to Ass. Rit.), that contains lists of incantation incipits and limited ritual instructions.[5] The incantations describe possible transgressions and appeal to the gods for release from their punishment, but also give insights into the actions of the ritual, which largely revolve around burning representations of the patient's suffering in a censer, hence the ritual's standard name.

Today, around 170 individual manuscripts of *Šurpu* are known: the majority (over 100) were found at Nineveh, with many others originating in Assur, including at least one from the famous house of the exorcists.[6] The remaining manuscripts come from a wide range of sites, including Sultantepe, Khorsabad, Nimrud, Sippar, Kiš, Babylon, Ur, and Uruk.[7] Although the composition of *Šurpu* as a standardized ritual series is generally attributed to the Kassite-period,[8] no manuscripts of the ritual in its standard form can be dated to before the first millennium BC.[9] Nevertheless, isolated parts of the text are

[5] The function of this text as ritual instructions is not secure; it may instead represent an "aide-mémoire" put together for a specific performance of the ritual (Farber 2012: 331).
[6] LKA 91, the Assur Ritual Tablet, is the only manuscript securely associated with the archive in house N4 (cf. Pedersén 1986: 52; 68, No. 405).
[7] Simons 2017: 1.
[8] Cf. e.g. Simons 2017: 1; Reiner 1958: 2.
[9] Farber 2012: 330. The earliest dated manuscript comes from Sultantepe and is dated to 670 BC (Reiner 1958: 2).

attested earlier: some incantations that are later included in *Šurpu* are found in a Middle Assyrian *Sammeltafel* that is otherwise concerned with witchcraft (CMAwR 8.20);[10] and precursors of the Sumerian *Kultmittelbeschwörungen* in Tablet IX are known from the Old Babylonian period.[11] The extensive geographical range of the manuscripts and inclusion in several Babylonian school texts[12] attest to the enduring role of *Šurpu* as a canonical text, presumably alongside the continued performance of the ritual. Additionally, commentaries on *Šurpu* are preserved on three tablets,[13] attesting to interpretative engagement with the text.

The incantation tablets of *Šurpu* were first published together as a single ritual in 1901 by Heinrich Zimmern.[14] In 1958, Erica Reiner published a composite edition of all the manuscripts known up to that point,[15] and Rykle Borger later published the unilingual Akkadian tablets (II, III, IV, and VIII) in a partitur edition.[16] Already in her edition, Reiner recognized that there was some divergence in the ordering of tablets preserved in different sources,[17] and shortly afterwards Lambert noted that the Assur Ritual Tablet preserved two different versions of the ritual series, themselves both different from that of the Nineveh incantation tablets.[18] In addition, the Assur Ritual Tablet and other catalogues of incantations, as well as a mismatched catchline,[19] already pointed to the existence of a 'missing' tablet between Tablets VII and VIII. Frank Simons' recent PhD

[10] Cf. Abusch and Schwemer 2016: 157.
[11] Reiner 1958: 2.
[12] Cf. Gesche 2001: 819.
[13] Two of these tablets (CCP 2.1.C = Reiner 1958: 51 Comm. C; CCP 2.1.D, published in Frahm 2011: 384–296 = Reiner 1958: 50 Comm. A) were found in the house of the exorcists in Assur (cf. Frahm 2011: 121–123) and also preserve commentaries on the rituals *Maqlû* and *Tummu bītu* respectively. The third (CCP 2.1.B = Reiner 1958: 50 Comm. B) is from Nineveh and also contains extracts from a medical composition.
[14] Zimmern 1901: 1–80; pl. II–XIX.
[15] Reiner 1958.
[16] Borger 2000.
[17] Reiner 1958: 4–6.
[18] Lambert 1959–1960.
[19] Noted by Reiner (1958: 59) but without further comment.

thesis reconstructs three different versions of the whole ritual series and the contents of the 'missing' tablet,[20] and offers an edition of Tablet VIII (Tablet IX according to his restructuring) with extensive commentary.[21] Simons' forthcoming edition of the entire series is eagerly anticipated. For the moment, my quotations from *Šurpu* are a composite based on the editions of Reiner 1958, Borger 2000, and Simons 2017, with collations from the original tablets or photographs where possible.[22] Major divergences from these editions, including updated readings, will be explained in my text and footnotes. For the sake of convenience, I follow the older, conventional tablet numbering (as in Reiner 1958 and Borger 2000) and the line numbering of Reiner's edition (Borger 2000 diverges from this in Tablet III, but includes Reiner's line numbers in quotation marks). I reference manuscripts according to Borger's sigla, which take account of joins and tablets not known to Reiner and also reflect the provenance of the tablets. Brackets and half-brackets show what is preserved across all manuscripts. Spellings from Nineveh, and then Assur, will normally be privileged, while major variants to my composite edition will be noted in my text or footnotes.

1.3.1.2 Namerimburruda-rituals, *lipšur*-litanies, and *Bīt rimki*

A number of other, often shorter, rituals and therapeutic instructions that concern *māmītu*-curse have recently been published by Stefan Maul in volume 10 of *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur literarischen Inhalts*.[23] This primarily consists of texts excavated at Assur, as well as a number of related texts from Nineveh and the Nabû temple at Nimrud, and individual tablets from Sultantepe, Sippar, Babylon, and

[20] Simons 2017: 7–23.
[21] Simons 2017: 24–116.
[22] The Covid-19 pandemic has restricted my ability to visit tablet collections in person, but I am extremely grateful to Frank Simons for sharing with me a number of his own photographs of *Šurpu* manuscripts.
[23] Maul 2019. The text editions are henceforth referred to with the abbreviation KAL 10.

Nippur.[24] The texts published in KAL 10 are united by their connection to *māmītu*-curse, with many, although certainly not all, using the Sumerian rubric nam-erim$_2$-bur$_2$-ru-da, literally '(ritual) to release *māmītu*-curse'. This rubric is also applied to parts of *Šurpu* and *Bīt rimki*.[25] These rituals perhaps correspond to those occasionally referred to in scholarly letters from Neo-Assyrian Nineveh with Akkadian calques on the Sumerian rubric.[26] Several of the rituals and incantations designated nam-erim$_2$-bur$_2$-ru-da demonstrate similarities with *Šurpu*, a relationship that is reflected in their positions in the Exorcist's Manual, and that was probably similar to the relationship between the larger anti-witchcraft ritual *Maqlû* and the several smaller rituals referred to as uš$_{11}$-bur$_2$-ru-da, literally '(ritual) to release witchcraft'.[27] The more numerous namerimburruda-rituals often provide useful context for *Šurpu* and are an important additional source for the conceptualization of transgression and divine punishment in the *āšipūtu* corpus, especially since the texts published in KAL 10 encompass not only ritual texts and their incantations but also therapeutic instructions.

The diversity of the namerimburruda-compositions is reflected by the fact that some of them have previously been published in different contexts, often with quite different interpretations. Some of the namerimburruda-rituals now published by Maul were

[24] Cf. Maul 2019: 47–69 for an overview of the manuscripts.

[25] Cf. e.g. *Šurpu* V–VI 172. The relevant parts of *Bīt rimki* are discussed below.

[26] SAA 10 201, rev. 4′–5′: [EN$_2$ ^{d}*e$_2$*]-*a* ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) ^{d}[*asal-lu$_2$-ḫi*] / *ša ma-mit pa-*^{r}*ša*$^{?1}$-[*a-ri*(?)] '[the incantation:] "Ea, Šamaš, [Asalluḫi]", $^{5'}$ of (the ritual) [*to release*] *māmītu*-curse'; SAA 10 371, rev. 8–9: *bīt*(e$_2$) *ri-me-ki* e$_2$-gal-kur-ra / *u$_3$ ma-mi$_3$-i-ti u pa-ša$_2$-a-ri* '*bīt rimki*, *egalkurra*, ^{9} and also "*māmītu*-curse and release".' Despite the textual difficulties, the context suggests that these letters are referring to rituals to release *māmītu*-curse, but we cannot say for sure whether these are supposed to be standard namerimburruda-rituals, *Šurpu*, or something else. One witness to the Exorcist's Manual provides an Akkadian gloss to the entry nam-erim$_2$-bur$_2$-ru-da with a superscript [*ma-mi*]-^{r}*ta*^{1} *a-na pa-ša$_2$-ri* (Geller 2018: 297, 12 A). The variety of forms suggests that there was no standard way to refer to these compositions in Akkadian.

[27] All four of these ritual designations occur together in the Exorcist's Manual, with their positioning perhaps reflecting their relationship to one another (Geller 2018: 297–298, 12–14): uš$_{11}$-ḫul-ĝal$_2$-meš aš-ḫul-ĝal$_2$-meš uš$_{11}$-bur$_2$-da *u* nam-erim$_2$-bur$_2$-ru-da / … uš$_{11}$-bur$_2$-ru-da nam-erim$_2$-bur$_2$-ru-da … / … *ma-aq-lu-u$_2$ šur-pu* … 'evil witchcrafts, evil *arratu*-curses, (rituals) to release witchcraft and (rituals) to release *māmītu*-curse, ^{13} … (rituals) to release witchcraft, (rituals) to release *māmītu*-curse … ^{14} … *Maqlû*, *Šurpu* …' The close relationship between rituals concerning transgression and those targeting witchcraft accords with the various similarities in the portrayal of these two sources of evil (see § 3.2.7).

originally published by Reiner as what she termed *lipšur*-litanies.[28] These incantations, which concern *arnu*-punishment as well as *māmītu*-curse, were collected by Reiner on account of their similarities with *Šurpu*, including their refrains containing precative verbs, one of which is *lipšur* 'may X release'. Another namerimburruda-incantation (KAL 10, Nr. 48–51) had previously been published as a hymn or prayer to Šamaš.[29] While the difference between hymns, prayers, and ritual incantations is largely a modern contrivance, this text is certainly part of a namerimburruda-ritual, but its publication history reflects the importance of Šamaš as divine judge in the context of rituals against transgression (see § 1.4.2.2).

Two other texts published in KAL 10 (Nr. 46–47) were excerpted in Assur and labelled as namerimburruda-incantations, but these also occur as part of the larger *Bīt rimki* (lit. 'House of bathing') ritual that concerns *māmītu*-curse, and that is also preserved in a number of manuscripts from Nineveh.[30] The *Bīt rimki* ritual was a complex ritual series aimed at a variety of sources of evil, including *māmītu*-curse and witchcraft, and it was usually performed for the king, for example during performances of the substitute king ritual.[31] The main action of the ritual took place in seven 'houses' (Akkadian *bītu*), which apparently refer to different stations within the eponymous bathhouse.[32] The part of the ritual concerning *māmītu*-curse, and involving a figurine of the *māmītu*-demon, took place in the third 'house' according to the Nineveh ritual tablet, or in the fifth 'house' according to the unprovenanced Late Babylonian ritual tablet CBS 338 as well

[28] Reiner 1958. Some of the texts published by Reiner as *lipšur*-litanies are now witnesses to the namerimburruda-rituals published as KAL 10, Nr. 16–26; 34–37.
[29] Schollmeyer 1912: 96–100, Nr. 18. A partial translation was published by Foster (1993: 652–653) as an example of 'ritual and devotional poetry' dedicated to Šamaš.
[30] Published in Læssøe 1955: 52–67.
[31] Ambos 2013.
[32] For a summary of the actions performed and incantations recited in each 'house', see Schwemer 2019b: 26–34.

as the colophons of the Nineveh incantation tablets.[33] I follow CBS 338 and the incantation tablets in referring to this part of the ritual as the fifth house.[34] Quotations from the incantations of the fifth house of *Bīt rimki* follow Læssøe 1955 and, for the Assur manuscripts, KAL 10, Nr. 46–47, with updated readings noted where relevant. Quotations from the ritual tablets of *Bīt rimki* follow Daniel Schwemer's recent edition.[35]

1.3.1.3 *Arratu*-rituals

One of the texts published in KAL 10 (Nr. 64), while very similar to rituals concerning *māmītu*-curse in terms of its structure and contents, is instead primarily concerned with *arratu*-curse (see § 2.1.1.2). This is one of only three standalone rituals dedicated to *arratu*-curse that are known to me. The others are the Istanbul text A 185 (with duplicate A 357), which is currently unpublished but whose existence has been noted a couple of times by Stefan Maul.[36] The other is part of VAT 13628+, which is a collection of various rituals of different kinds,[37] and what little remains of obv. col. III has several references to *arratu*-curse that mirror the structure of the other two *arratu*-rituals.[38] This last text is unfortunately too fragmentary to contribute to my study (only a maximum of 14 lines that may relate to *arratu*-curse are preserved), so I will refer to KAL 10, Nr. 64 as the Berlin *arratu*-ritual and A 185 as the Istanbul *arratu*-ritual. All known manuscripts of these rituals were found in House N4 at Assur, the so-called

[33] Schwemer 2019b: 28. Cf. Nin. Rit. 306–311 (Schwemer 2019b: 62–63); CBS 338 20–26 (Schwemer 2019b: 100–101); Læssøe 1955: 59, 96.
[34] This also avoids confusion with the incantations already published as "Das dritte Haus der Series *Bīt Rimki*" (Borger 1967; 1971), which accompanied the king washing over a substitute figurine of himself. These actions occur in the third 'house' according to CBS 338, but the fifth 'house' according to the Nineveh ritual tablet (cf. Schwemer 2019b: 31–33).
[35] Schwemer 2019b.
[36] Maul 1994: 445n.15; 2019: 269. I am grateful to Daniel Schwemer for allowing me to make use of this text in my thesis, and for giving me access to photographs, hand-copies, and his preliminary edition.
[37] Those parts concerning witchcraft are published in KAL 2, Nr. 36 and now CMAwR 7.8; 8.29. The remainder is published in KAL 7, Nr. 11.
[38] Cf. Meinhold 2017: 35–36.

house of the exorcists, and were probably written by the exorcist Kiṣir-Aššur around the 7th century BC.[39]

As a group, these texts may correspond to the rituals referred to in the Exorcist's Manual as aš$_2$-ḫul-ĝal$_2$-meš 'evil curses',[40] which are juxtaposed with rituals termed uš-ḫul-ĝal$_2$-meš 'evil witchcrafts' and contrasted with nam-erim$_2$-bur$_2$-ru-da (correspondingly paired with uš$_{11}$-bur$_2$-ru-da).[41] However, the manuscripts of the *arratu*-rituals do not refer to themselves in this way. The Berlin ritual probably has a rather unusual mixed Sumerian-Akkadian rubric, which is closer in form to the namerimburruda-rubric (KAL 10, Nr. 64, 54):[42] [ka-inim-ma *ar*$_2$]-˹*ra*˺-*tu*$_2$ bur$_2$-ru-da-ke$_4$ '[incantation] of (a ritual) to release *arratu*-curse.' The rubric of the Istanbul *arratu*-ritual is unfortunately broken, but it almost certainly does not correspond to the rubric in the Exorcist's Manual.[43] This evidence, and the mixed language rubric in particular, may suggest that this type of ritual was relatively rare and was perhaps modelled on the more common namerimburruda-rituals.[44] The fact that all the currently known *arratu*-rituals share a findspot may suggest a localized innovation, but this could equally be an accident of discovery and the rituals build on aspects of *arratu*-curse found in other namerimburruda-rituals and *Šurpu*, which includes a short section dedicated to *arratu*-curse (V–VI 42–49, discussed at § 3.1.1). I therefore treat

[39] Cf. Maul 2019: 265–266; Abusch and Schwemer 2016: 247–248. Only the Istanbul ritual preserves a colophon that names Kiṣir-Aššur, including part of his title (A 185 rev. 31): … ˹*ṭup*˺-*pi* ^{m}*ki-ṣir*-[*aš*]-˹*šur* ^{lu2}*šamallê*(šaman$_2$˺.[la$_2$) x (x x)] '… tablet of Kiṣir-Aššur, *šamallû*-apprentice(?) […].' The *šamallû* 'apprentice' stage of Kiṣir-Aššur's career is so far only represented by two other tablets (Arbøll 2021: 99–101) and it may be possible to restore a tur in the break, giving *šamallû ṣeḫru* 'junior apprentice' (cf. Arbøll 2021: 73–98).

[40] Maul 2019: 271.

[41] Cf. Geller 2018: 297–298, 12, cited above at § 1.3.1.2.

[42] See Maul 2019: 270–271 for comment. Other rituals include what may approximate an Akkadian calque on the mixed language rubric (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 11, 7): [… *ana*] *ar-rat u ma-mit pašāri*(bur$_2$)-*ma* '[… in order to] release *arratu*-curse and *māmītu*-curse.' See § 1.3.1.2 for possible Akkadian calques on the namerimburruda-rubric.

[43] A 185 rev. 18 can currently be read: ka-inim-ma x [x x x] aš$_2$-x-˹bi$^{?}$˺-ta˺-[x (x)].

[44] Perhaps the scribe of KAL 10, Nr. 64 was uncomfortable with coining an original Sumerian rubric aš$_2$-bur$_2$-ru-da?

the portrayal of *māmītu*-curse and *arratu*-curse together as complementary concepts that form part of the ideology of transgression (see §§ 2.1.1.1–2.1.1.2).

1.3.1.4 *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*

The composition *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* is an important source for understanding the experience of divine punishment. Approaching the topic of transgression from a different perspective and with different aims to the *āšipūtu* corpus (see § 1.4.1.3), it often goes into more detail than the *āšipūtu* material. *Ludlul* is usually included among a group of Mesopotamian compositions exploring philosophical and theological questions which have been generically labelled 'wisdom literature', a term originating in Biblical studies.[45] The name of the composition is derived from its opening line and can be translated 'let me praise the lord of wisdom'. The composition is thus framed as a prayer to Marduk and describes the suffering of a certain Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan and how he is saved by Marduk.[46] The text is preserved on 66 tablets and fragments, of which 12 are school texts, from Ḫuzirina, Nineveh, Kalḫu, Assur, Sippar, Kiš, and Babylon.[47] Although the earliest dateable manuscripts are from the 7th century BC, like *Šurpu*, the composition of the standard text is generally held to date to the Kassite period.[48]

The whole composition probably consisted of five tablets, and their content can briefly be summarized as follows:[49] Tablet I describes the protagonist's social exclusion and suffering at the hands of fellow humans; Tablet II describes the attack of 'supernatural' forces and the physical suffering that results; Tablet III recounts a series of dreams in

[45] On the applicability of this label to the Mesopotamian material and the nature of compositions included in this 'genre', see Beaulieu 2007.
[46] Lambert 1960: 26.
[47] Oshima 2014: 5–6.
[48] E.g. Oshima 2014: 5; Lambert 1960: 26.
[49] Cf. Oshima 2014: 9–14; Lenzi 2012: 37; Lambert 1960: 22–24.

which Marduk is revealed as the source of the protagonist's suffering and his restoration to physical health is announced; the latter is possibly further related in the extremely fragmentary Tablet IV; Tablet V describes the restoration of the protagonist's social status and his thanksgiving to Marduk. A composite text of *Ludlul* was first published among Wilfred G. Lambert's editions of 'Babylonian Wisdom Literature'.[50] An important new manuscript of the first tablet from Sippar was later published with comments on the text as a whole,[51] and a new edition of the whole composition was recently published by Takayoshi Oshima.[52] Quotations from *Ludlul* are based on the edition of Oshima and translations are my own unless otherwise stated. I propose a few improved readings to this occasionally very difficult text, discussed in my footnotes and collated from photographs wherever possible.

1.3.2 Previous secondary scholarship

The topic of my thesis has received a great deal of attention in modern scholarship, from various perspectives including taboo, ethics, sin, and divine punishment, and often in the context of larger studies on different topics. I address this previous scholarship throughout the work,[53] but in the following section I present an overview of some of the key works of secondary scholarship that focus primarily on the theme of transgression or sin and its consequences in Mesopotamia. What is particularly striking is that almost all of the major monographic studies on the topic of sin in Mesopotamia have been written not be Assyriologists but by scholars with a background in Biblical studies or Judaeo-Christian theology. I therefore assess the effect that this has on the scholars' approaches to the Mesopotamian material and why a study on this topic from

[50] Lambert 1960: 21–62.
[51] George and Al-Rawi 1998.
[52] Oshima 2014: 3–114; 169–342; 376–438. See also Annus and Lenzi 2010.
[53] For approaches framed around taboo and prohibition, for example, see § 3.1.3.

a strictly Assyriological perspective is needed. Since these works were published, much new primary source material has become available, including the namerimburruda-rituals published in KAL 10 (§ 1.3.1.2) and the newly identified rituals from Assur which provides new perspectives on *arratu*-curse (§ 1.3.1.3). In my thesis, I am therefore able to draw upon a greatly expanded repository of information on Mesopotamian conceptions of transgression and its consequences.

Julian Morgenstern's early study on 'The Doctrine of Sin in the Babylonian Religion' examines conceptions of sin in material from the *āšipūtu* corpus. He argues from this that all sin in Mesopotamia was conceived around ritual offences, such as neglecting to make offerings to the gods or making the wrong kinds of offerings. These ritual acts were, to Morgenstern's mind, the only way in which humans could interact with the gods in a 'primitive' religion.[54] The implication is that notions like morality and ethics are only to be found in 'advanced' religions which to the author, as a rabbi and Biblical scholar, were presumably exemplified by Judaism. Morgenstern notes however that what he terms "moral transgressions" are to be found in *Šurpu*, although "no distinction was there made between them and ritual sin."[55] He makes the observation that sickness was a punishment for sin but also, by restricting the sufferer's ability to participate in cult, a form of sin in and of itself.[56] In particular, he notes that "sin, evil, sickness, possession by evil spirits, witchcraft, and misfortune, are all one and the same thing in the Babylonian religion; something material, that has entered the body of the afflicted man. Consequently, the curing of sickness, the expulsion of evil spirits, and the

[54] Morgenstern 1905: 1–2.
[55] Morgenstern 1905: 2n.6.
[56] Morgenstern 1905: 2–3.

expiation of sin, are identical, and must be so treated."[57] These latter observations will in large part be borne out and further developed in my thesis.

The next major work on the topic of sin in Mesopotamia was Karel van der Toorn's 1985 book 'Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia'. Although the author is primarily a Biblical scholar, he shows a great command of the Mesopotamian material, which he employs to examine notions of sin and ethics in ancient Israel in respect of its ancient Near Eastern context.[58] After an introduction to the topic and his methodology, Chapter 2 examines taboos and prohibitions in the two cultures, while Chapter 3 concerns oaths as a social and religious means of enforcing the moral code. Chapter 4 and 5 consider the suffering resulting from transgression, both in term of medical symptoms and social status. Unfortunately, the Mesopotamian material addressed in Chapter 2 is distorted by being forced into a structure based on the Biblical Ten Commandments.[59] Occasionally, the Mesopotamian material is interpreted in ways that are not fully explained but that fit his conclusion that the two cultures' approaches to morality were essentially the same.[60] The author himself often displays discomfort with his categorizations and the suitability of directly comparing Biblical and Mesopotamian material.[61] Ultimately, while it is a wide-ranging and innovative study, the Mesopotamian perspective is diminished insofar as it is primarily employed to support the author's theories about the Biblical material, even if the comparisons are not always so easily made.

More recent studies also approach the Mesopotamian material largely from the perspective of issues and questions more pertinent to Biblical studies. Angelika

[57] Morgenstern 1905: 6.
[58] Van der Toorn 1985: 2.
[59] This is also noted by Machinist in his review (1990: 244).
[60] Van der Toorn 1985: 100.
[61] Cf. Machinist 1990: 241–242; 245.

Berlejung's article on 'Sin and Punishment' in Mesopotamian and the Old Testament begins from a basic assumption that the workings of sin and divine punishment were essentially the same in both cultures.[62] Nevertheless, the author offers useful insights into the Mesopotamian material, particularly the idea that unknown transgressions are used to explain suffering in order to maintain a "Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang".[63] She also recognizes the notions that gods punish transgression in order to maintain order and balance in the world,[64] but her suggestion that the gods were free to decide whether or not to punish transgression according to their will is perhaps closer to the perspective found in the Mesopotamian wisdom literature than the *āšipūtu* corpus (see § 1.4.1.3).

Isabel Cranz's 'Atonement and Purification'[65] is also written by a Bible scholar and examines conceptions of sin and its consequences through the *Šurpu* ritual and Priestly expiation rites from the Hebrew Bible, with a particular focus on ritual theory. She concludes that the two sets of sources have essentially the same perspective on sin, but that neither reflects general conceptions of sin outside of their immediate context.[66] Major differences identified by Cranz include the fact that the Priestly Source is not concerned with illness as a punishment for transgression since it is about collective expiation, in contrast to *Šurpu*'s focus on the individual.[67] Cranz also notes that both use purification to achieve expiation from sins, following on from what she interprets as 'confession' in *Šurpu*.[68] I shall demonstrate, by contrast, that interpretations of *Šurpu* as confessional are not borne out in the evidence provided by the composition itself (§ 3.2), and that purification in *Šurpu* is not connected to the forgiveness of sins but is

[62] Berlejung 2015: 272–273.
[63] Berlejung 2015: 286, with reference to Fink 2012: 88–90.
[64] Berlejung 2015: 287.
[65] Cranz 2017.
[66] While I do not see any evidence for Cranz's claim (2017: 51) that *Šurpu* was a strictly royal ritual, it is nevertheless closely connected with parts of the royal *Bīt rimki* ritual (§ 1.3.1.2).
[67] Cf. Cranz 2017: 144–145.
[68] Cranz 2017: 48–49.

rather a standard method by which the exorcist could remove sources of suffering from the patient (§ 5.3).

A recent Assyriological perspective on the topic is provided by Anne Löhnert's article on 'Sünde' in the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*.[69] The article gives a good overview of the concept of sin from both a theological and legalistic perspective, but is necessarily short and largely takes a lexical approach, without examining the systems of thought behind the terminology. Overall, however, studies on the topic of transgression and its punishment in Mesopotamia are, in general, approached from Biblical perspectives, frequently in order to demonstrate similarities between the two cultures' conceptions of sin and thus place the Biblical material within a wider Near Eastern context. Little work has been done on the Mesopotamian material from an Assyriological perspective, and the Biblical material still exerts a strong influence on interpretations of Mesopotamian conceptions of transgression.

My thesis will fill a gap in the scholarship by examining in detail the conceptualization of transgression and its consequences in Mesopotamia from an emic Mesopotamian perspective. This will comprise an in-depth examination of the terminology of transgression and the systems of thought behind it, and will be guided by the ancient Mesopotamian primary sources, in particular the rituals and incantations of the exorcistic corpus. In the introduction to his book, Karel van der Toorn outlines what he sees as one of the problems with comparing the Biblical world and Mesopotamia: the study of the former has a heritage of thousands of years, while Assyriology is one of the youngest fields in the humanities.[70] With this thesis, I hope to 'mature' the field of Assyriology in regard to our understanding of transgression and its consequences in

[69] Löhnert 2004.
[70] Van der Toorn 1985: 1.

Mesopotamia. I hope thereby to provide a more solid foundation for comparative study, both within Assyriology and with other fields of research, especially Biblical studies, which has already shown a great deal of interest in Mesopotamian perspectives on transgression and divine punishment.

1.4 Intellectual and cosmological contexts

1.4.1 Intellectual contexts

In the following section, I integrate the key primary sources (introduced in § 1.3.1) into their wider intellectual context. First, I examine the various other sources of suffering targeted by rituals of the *āšipūtu* corpus, the portrayal of which sometimes differs from but is often very closely related to transgression. I then assess some of the methodological issues inherent in studying Mesopotamian medical texts, as well as in approaching the exorcistic material from the perspective of medical treatments. Finally, I look beyond the *āšipūtu* corpus at how the topic of human transgression and divine punishment is framed in other areas of Mesopotamian literature.

1.4.1.1 Other sources of suffering in the *āšipūtu* corpus

The Mesopotamian exorcistic corpus, referred to in both ancient and modern sources as *āšipūtu* (i.e. the lore of the *āšipu*), is a largely formalized grouping of texts that serve to assist the exorcist's work in performing rituals and treating their patients.[71] The majority of the rituals that constitute the *āšipūtu* corpus are "defensive in nature",[72] seeking to protect the client from specific evils, including demons, ghosts, witchcraft, curse, divine anger, and evils portended by ominous signs. Transgression and divine punishment are thus just one among a number of categories of possible sources of suffering addressed by rituals of the *āšipūtu* corpus. The sources of evil have been divided into various groupings by modern scholars,[73] and this is reflected to some extent

[71] The formalization of the corpus is expressed, for example, in the standardized list of compositions known as the Exorcist's Manual (Geller 2018). For an in-depth study of the exorcist as a profession and the role of the *āšipūtu* corpus as a body of professional lore, see Jean 2006.
[72] Schwemer 2011: 427.
[73] Geller (2016: 43), for example, divides them into three categories: "guilt", witchcraft, and demons and ghosts. Schwemer (2011: 429), on the hand, suggests that witchcraft and transgression could be grouped because they both ultimately originate in human actions.

in the ancient division into rituals with different labels.[74] One could also divide these into 'external' causes (i.e. witchcraft, demons, and ghosts) and 'internal' causes, separating out transgression as the only one that conceptually begins with the actions of the victim himself, even if, as we shall see, the reality is more complex.

However these categories are divided up, there is plenty of crossover between their portrayal in the *āšipūtu* corpus, and the rituals and incantations concerning them were produced and used by the same group of exorcists. Similarities between compositions targeting different sources of suffering could arise from, on the one hand, common cultural tropes and ways of thinking and, on the other hand, direct contact between different kinds of text.[75] For this reason, although concentrating on transgression, I shall include discussion of the portrayal of other sources of evil where they serve as useful comparanda. This is aided by the fact that, aside from transgression, these sources of suffering have received considerable scholarly attention in recent years, with many of the relevant primary sources having been published (see § 1.3.1) and various monographic studies undertaken.[76] Witchcraft was particularly closely associated with divine anger and therefore rituals concerning divine punishment could also incorporate references to witchcraft and *vice versa*.[77] The portrayal of demons in compositions dedicated to them are often useful since the consequences of transgression could be conceived of in terms of an 'external' demon-like entity (see § 3.5). Finally, rituals against ghosts offer insights into the logic of attributing symptoms to certain sources of suffering and into human relationships with one another and the dead. The similarities between the portrayal of different sources of evil reminds us that, although I am

[74] Schwemer 2011: 427.
[75] Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 17.
[76] E.g. on witchcraft: Thomsen 1987; Schwemer 2007; on ghosts: Scurlock 2006; on demons: Wiggermann 2011; Farber 2014; Heeßel 2002.
[77] Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 17–18.

concentrating on only one aspect of the Mesopotamian exorcist's worldview, all elements of the *āšipūtu* corpus are closely connected and demonstrate mutual influences. Examining these connections allows us to gain access to an overarching, internally consistent theoretical background that was being developed within, and presumably alongside, the more practice-oriented ritual and therapeutic compositions.

1.4.1.2 Medical treatments of suffering: methodological background

Medical treatment was a key part of the remit of the Mesopotamian exorcist, even if these practices at times look more 'magical' or 'religious' to a sceptical modern audience. In the following section, I provide an overview of some of the methodological issues connected to the study of Mesopotamian medicine that have provoked a lot of theoretical literature in recent years. One of the major methodological debates concerns the nature of different kinds of treatment, frequently divided into 'magical' and 'medical', and exemplified by the emic division into two professional streams: the *āšipu*, usually translated 'exorcist', and the *asû*, usually translated 'physician'.[78] Thus, while a distinction is made in the ancient professional terminology, this is primarily for the purpose of categorizing texts rather than reflecting distinctive professional approaches; in practice, the two professions often cooperated and employed practices from each other's theoretical skill sets.[79] Likewise, it is not productive to suggest that the ancient Mesopotamian approach to treating illness can be divided into 'magic' and 'medicine', since neither of these categories has any real relevance in the ancient

[78] Edith Ritter's seminal article (Ritter 1956), which presented the *āšipu* and *asû* as separate but complementary disciplines, is still relevant in this respect. Subsequent attempts to look again at the relationship between the two disciplines (e.g. Stol 1991–1992: 58–62, Avalos 1995: 142–167, Scurlock 1999, Johnson 2018, Steinert 2018b) arrive at more or less the same conclusions.

[79] For example, it was not uncommon for both professionals to be consulted at the same time, and texts from the *asûtu* corpus have been found in the libraries of exorcists (Schwemer 2019a: 39–41).

Mesopotamian worldview.[80] The existence of therapeutic recipes for treating the effects of *māmītu*-curse, for example, rules out any strict adherence to a division into 'medical' and 'magical' treatments for illnesses with 'natural' or 'supernatural' causes respectively.

Another significant area of debate concerns the differing 'realities' of the conceptual categories employed by practitioners of medicine in pre-modern societies versus those of modern Western medical science. Compare, for example, Walter Farber's statement that the more apotropaic or prophylactic elements found in a Mesopotamian medical treatment, "the more likely it will be that we are not looking at a definable disease of natural causes but rather at a general state of ill-health brought about by the destructive force of an evil demon. Such a state could, in modern terms, sometimes be described as a 'syndrome' or even a 'psychosomatic condition', rather than as an individual disease."[81] Thus, what may well have been a perfectly valid symptomatology for an ancient illness classification is reduced to a 'syndrome' or 'psychosomatic condition'. The modern literature of ethnomedicine takes pains to distinguish between what are viewed as scientifically objective 'illnesses' and culturally conditioned 'syndromes', but even this is not unproblematic.[82] Indeed, the latter is arguably all that can be accessed in the study of Mesopotamian medicine, especially in cases where symptoms descriptions are more of a literary elaboration. However, this has not stopped much of the modern secondary literature from attempting to map ancient symptom descriptions onto modern Western illness classifications. This not only falsely assumes that Mesopotamian and modern medical thinking are directly comparable,[83] but it also risks

[80] Schwemer (2011: 419–420) describes 'magic' in the context of Mesopotamian ritual practice as an "(unavoidable) misnomer".
[81] Farber 2007: 138–139.
[82] Rochberg (2016: 56), for example, criticizes the use of terms like ethnomedicine and ethnophysics as "marginalizing".
[83] Cf. Heeßel 2004b: 6–7.

obscuring the ancient systems of classifying symptoms.[84] I therefore concentrate primarily on how the ancient sources describe, categorize, and aetiologize symptoms, rather than attempting to draw any connections with the categories of modern Western medicine. Ultimately, I am interested in the nature of symptoms for what they can tell us about transgression and divine punishment as the ultimate identified cause, rather than any possible pathological causes.

One area of modern medicine that may offer a productive approach to the ancient Mesopotamian sources is the concept of culture-bound syndromes.[85] This concerns psychosomatic responses, often in the face of stressful or frightening situations, that manifest as symptoms conditioned by the cultural context in which they occur.[86] This approach has been suggested for the Mesopotamian material in the context of illness attributed to witchcraft,[87] but I believe it could be even more appropriate for understanding the effects of transgression and its punishment. Instead of relying on the categories of modern Western medicine to explain the suffering described in ancient Mesopotamian sources, we should understand this picture of suffering as a product of contemporary socio-cultural factors, especially in cases where descriptions of symptoms may be more of a literary construction that an objective observation of real-life cases. The internal symptoms of divine punishment can therefore be understood in terms of a culturally conditioned stress reaction to the patient's feeling that his life is going wrong and is out of control. This is not to suggest that such symptom descriptions were always imagined: they could certainly also arise out of actual physical symptoms

[84] Robson (2008b: 460–462) proposes using "premodern symptom-oriented terminology" in translation (e.g. 'ague' instead of 'malaria' for Akkadian *di'u*), but this also involves unhelpful assumptions about both the symptoms described by the Mesopotamian term and the meaning of the 'premodern' term used in translation.
[85] Cf. e.g. Kutalek and Prinz 2011.
[86] For the idea that the manifestation of illness is often a product of the cultural context in which it is experienced, cf. Good 1994: 21–24.
[87] Schwemer 2007: 168–169.

being interpreted in a certain way. For example, cases of abdominal discomfort could have been attributed to transgression, without their needing to be psychosomatic or hypochondriac. The exorcist's rituals, designed to respond to this culturally conditioned reaction, would no doubt have gone a long way towards reassuring the sufferer that his symptoms would be relieved. The effects of transgression and its punishment would therefore provide an ideal case study for integrating the viewpoint of Mesopotamian medical and exorcistic sources into its wider socio-cultural context,[88] especially as the causes of illness in this context ultimately relate to an individual's behaviour within the bounds of this social context.

1.4.1.3 Transgression and divine punishment in other texts

Although I am focussing primarily on rituals of the *āšipūtu* corpus that directly engage with transgression as a source of individual suffering, the theme of transgression and divine punishment is found across a range of Mesopotamian texts, occasionally offering differing perspectives on it. For example, there are a number of other types of incantation and prayer that concern divine anger. Prayers to specific deities, for example, could be used to appeal for release from the consequences of known or unknown transgressions and reflect a more personal connection between an individual and the gods.[89] The prayers known as dingir-ša$_3$-dib-ba 'angry god' were more general, possibly addressed to personal deities, and concerned known or unknown transgressions committed by an individual or his relatives.[90] The performance context of these prayers is not entirely clear, but they are related to *Bīt rimki* and *Ilī ul īde*, an

[88] Robson (2008b: 46), for example, laments the fact that the study of Mesopotamian medicine, despite increasing exponentially in recent years, is largely still focused on the publication of textual sources without fully integrating them into a wider socio-cultural context, and the same can certainly be said of the exorcistic material. Such a study is however beyond the scope of the present work.
[89] E.g. Oshima 2011: 27–28.
[90] Lambert 1974.

incantation itself closely associated with *Šurpu*.[91] A number of prayers aiming to 'appease the hearts of the gods' and composed in the Emesal register of Sumerian were, by contrast, performed on a regular basis, or in the context of certain rituals, to avert potential danger to the king or the whole land.[92]

For its extensive descriptions of individual suffering resulting from divine punishment, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* is a particularly important primary source that can be used in parallel to the *āšipūtu* material.[93] In contrast to the more general applicability of the *āšipūtu* rituals, *Ludlul* has been characterized as an individual act of devotion to Marduk.[94] As is also the case for the *āšipūtu* rituals (§ 3.3), the protagonist of *Ludlul*, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, is ignorant of his transgression that has so angered Marduk.[95] However, while the *āšipūtu* rituals offer a solution to the patient's suffering in spite of his ignorance, the theology of *Ludlul* is more about accepting the will of a god whose actions humans cannot hope to understand. There is understood to be some distance between humanity's understanding of ethics and what offends or pleases the gods, and the gods therefore vacillate between punishing and showing mercy in ways that humans cannot understand.[96] For this reason, the Biblical concept of the 'righteous sufferer' has often been applied to Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan since, although Marduk's will is inscrutable, as far

[91] Lambert 1974: 267–270.
[92] Maul 1988: 25–28; Gabbay 2014: 15–20.
[93] For a summary of its content and composition context, see § 1.3.1.4.
[94] Oshima 2014: 15.
[95] Due to the fragmentary nature of the latter half of the composition, we cannot say whether Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan was able to discover the precise nature of the transgression responsible for his suffering but, as we will see for *Šurpu* and related compositions, this would not have been necessary to secure Marduk's forgiveness. *Pace* Oshima (2014: 12) who claims that "somewhere in Tablet IV, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan finally came to realize that his negligence towards Esagil, the cult centre of Marduk in Babylon, was the reason of his adversity." The following line is cited in support of this thesis, fully preserved only in a commentary to *Ludul bēl nēmeqi* (CCP 1.3, ccp.yale.edu/P394923, accessed 28/01/2020) rev. 38: [*ša*$_2$] *a-na e*$_2$*-sag-il*$_2$ *e-gu-u ina qāti*(šu)*-ia li-mur* 'may whoever is negligent towards Esagil learn from my example (lit. see my hand).' I do not, however, believe that this necessarily reflects the precise nature of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's original offence, especially as the context (if the line is correctly placed) also hints at negligence of personal deities and some other offence, unfortunately broken, against Babylon. Instead, this passage would list various possible offences (and quite unspecific ones at that) that could lead anyone to suffer in the way experienced by Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan.
[96] Oshima 2014: 63.

as he is concerned his sin is unknown.[97] Given the differing conceptions of transgression and individual responsibility, we might question whether this Biblical motif is even applicable to the Mesopotamian material. Nevertheless, the idea that Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan might have considered himself innocent and therefore unfairly punished does not undermine the system of divine justice, but emphasizes the importance of adhering to the system even when it may make little sense from a human perspective.[98] In contrast, the *āšipūtu* rituals suggest that this did not have to be accepted, but that humans could at least try to intervene and influence the gods' decision to lift the punishment.

The approach of *Ludlul* to divine punishment is therefore more 'hands off' than the *āšipūtu* rituals, which instead offer a practical solution to the problem of divine inscrutability. In this respect, the perspective of *Ludlul* has been interpreted as an attempt to justify the exorcist's occasional ritual failure, since they are still subject to the whims of Marduk that are incomprehensible to humans.[99] Indeed, it seems likely that *Ludlul* was composed by an *āšipu* or *mašmaššu*,[100] or at least by someone working within the context of developing the exorcistic canon.[101] This background would explain why the descriptions of symptoms in *Ludlul* are very similar to those found in the *āšipūtu* corpus.[102] In this, however, *Ludlul* again takes a slightly different perspective, often focussing more closely on material losses than ill health,[103] and connecting these losses with the loss of favour at court rather than framing them as a direct consequence of transgression.[104] In the *āšipūtu* corpus, by contrast, material

[97] N. Ziegler 2015: 215–217.
[98] Oshima 2014: 76; Lambert 1960: 27.
[99] Lenzi 2012.
[100] Oshima 2014: 19.
[101] Beaulieu 2007: 13.
[102] See N. Ziegler 2015: 232–240 for a summary of the correspondences.
[103] Oshima 2014: 38–39.
[104] N. Ziegler 2015: 232–233.

losses are much more closely connected with the physical symptoms and general ill health that result from divine punishment (§ 4.2.2). The overall similarities with the *āšipūtu* corpus mean that *Ludlul* nevertheless represents an important source for understanding the manifestation and experience of suffering resulting from transgression. Indeed, *Ludlul* often goes into more detail than the ritual incantations, being related from the perspective of the sufferer himself, and thus offering a more personalized experience of the circumstances in which one might seek the help of an exorcist.

Another group of texts that demonstrate a concern for proper behaviour and the consequences of improper behaviour are the Sumerian proverbs. The proverbs have been understood by their recent editor not to concern higher theological concepts like fate and divine punishment, but instead aiming to instil in students a positive approach to behaviour governing social relations and the proper functioning of human society.[105] However, the idea that the Sumerian proverbs display a "completely secular attitude towards social behavior"[106] has recently been challenged on the grounds that "it would be rather surprising for a society, in which the divine sphere is so intricately interwoven with the mundane, and in which the gods are constantly called upon as judges, that the gods would have had little or no say in questions of morality, manners, and conduct."[107] This observation is also borne out in my study of the *āšipūtu* material where, although many conceptions of transgressions and their punishment revolve around human society and social cohesion, there is always a divine dimension. The Sumerian proverbs

[105] Alster 1997: xxvi–xxvii.
[106] Alster 1997: xxviii.
[107] Matuszak 2017: 360.

occasionally offer useful comparative material, especially their perspectives on what was considered 'taboo' to certain gods (§ 2.1.2.1).

Transgressions also feature in Mesopotamian legal texts. There was no such thing as 'secular law' in ancient Mesopotamia but, like everything else, concepts of law and justice were closely connected to religion.[108] This is exemplified by the terminology shared between terrestrial law and divine punishment and in the crossover between many of the concepts themselves (see § 2.1.3). The epilogue of the Laws of Ḫammurapi, for example, invokes divine punishment as the consequence of what are ostensibly terrestrial, secular offences (§ 2.1.3.2). The idea of *lex talionis*, or eye-for-an-eye punishment, is found in both the legal tradition and in the symptoms of suffering resulting from divine punishment (§ 4.3.1) Aside from the law collections, practical legal texts can also provide insights into the terminology concerning curses as the consequence of transgression, since this terminology often derives from, and remains conceptually closely bound up in, the terminology of oath-taking and broken oaths (§ 2.1.1.1; § 2.1.1.3; § 2.1.4).

1.4.2 Cosmological contexts

Many deities and other divine beings are invoked in the ritual compositions under consideration here. This is especially the case in *Šurpu* (§ 1.3.1.1), where long lists of deities are called upon to stand by the patient in the divine trial and contribute to releasing the effects of *māmītu*-curse. In the namerimburruda-compositions known as the *lipšur*-litanies (§ 1.3.1.2), divinized elements of the natural environment, including many named mountains and rivers, are called upon to help remove the patient's

[108] H. Neumann 2006.

impurities and suffering.[109] This is in keeping with the litanic structure frequently employed in the incantations of these compositions, and the function of the named deities in such contexts may have been to name as many divine beings as feasibly possible, to ensure that the exorcist and patient had sufficient divine support to obtain release from the divine punishment and its effects. For this reason, and due to space constraints, I am unable to consider the identification and role of every divine being invoked in my sources. In the following sections, I shall concentrate on some of the most important deities that appear repeatedly in these rituals and that play an important role in the theology of transgression and its punishment, as well as in the practices of the exorcist more generally. This includes: the patient's own personal deities and other protective spirits (§ 1.4.2.1); the sun god and divine judge Šamaš, as well as other gods of light and fire that feature in the context of the divine trial (§ 1.4.2.2); and the divine exorcists Ea/Enki and Marduk/Asalluḫi who, unsurprisingly, have an important role in many *āšipūtu* rituals (§ 1.4.2.3). The order in which these groups of deities are discussed below reflects to some extent their immediacy from the perspective of the patient and therefore the order in which they usually appear in the rituals: the patient must first be reconciled with his personal deities before being able to make an appeal before the divine judges; the human exorcist then uses the power of the divine exorcists to effectively carry out his healing and purification rituals.

1.4.2.1 Personal deities and other protective beings

The sufferer's personal deities play an important role in the workings of transgression and its punishment and in the process of the subsequent release rituals. They are therefore among the deities most frequently invoked in the accompanying incantations,

[109] On the role of the natural world in release rituals, see § 5.4.2.2.

in which they are usually referred to in one of two ways. In some instances, placeholder signs were used to name the patient along with his personal deities (e.g. *Šurpu* II 3): [*annanna*(nenni)] ⌜*mār*(a) *annanna*(nenni)⌝ *ša*$_2$ *il*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *annanna*(nenni) ^{d}*ištar*(15)-*šu*$_2$ *annannītu*(nenni)^{tu4} '[NN], son of NN, whose god is NN, (whose) goddess is NN.' The exorcist could have, as required, supplied the name of his client and the relevant deities, and we do indeed possess examples of this occurring in practice.[110] The more common way of referring to personal deities is with the terms 'god' (*ilu*) and 'goddess' (*ištaru*), often with the addition of possessive suffixes (e.g. *ilšu* 'his god', *ištarī* 'my goddess', etc.),[111] although whenever an unspecified 'god' or 'goddess' is mentioned in the incantations, this probably signifies the patient's personal deities. The human charge could be referred to as a 'slave' of the personal deity (i.e. *arad ilīšu*, etc.) or, more commonly in the incantations under consideration here, as the 'man' or 'son' or 'daughter' of the deity (i.e. *amēl ilīšu*, *mār ilīšu*, etc.).[112] In this way, the relationship between humans and personal deities mirrors social hierarchies on earth and emphasizes humanity's subservient position in relation to the divine world.[113] Personal deities primarily served three functions: to guarantee good fortune and well-being, to protect against evil forces, and to act as an advocate on behalf of their charge before other gods.[114] Personal deities therefore play an important role in the punishment of transgression as, having been offended or angered by their human's actions, they would abandon their charge or could be made to do so by a higher-ranking deity as part

[110] Vorländer 1975: 31–32, with reference to Ebeling 1953: 16, 14 (Balasî with personal deities Nabû and Tašmētu) and 146, 12–13 (Assurbanipal with personal deities Aššur and Aššurītu). In parallel manuscripts to the first example, we find the placeholder sign NENNI instead of the names, further supporting the idea that these signs would have been replaced in practice. From these examples, it would appear that personal deities consisted of a married pair of gods, and this was probably often the case even if other combinations were possible (Vorländer 1975: 45–46).
[111] Although Löhnert and Zgoll (2009: 312) note that, in some cases, this phraseology can also refer to familial gods, which were different to personal deities.
[112] Vorländer 1975: 27–31.
[113] Frechette 2012: 29; Löhnert and Zgoll 2009: 311.
[114] Vorländer 1975: 68–69.

of the transgressor's punishment.[115] This left the person, now devoid of any divine protection, exposed to further dangers from external sources of evil, but also unable to communicate properly with the divine sphere (see § 4.2.1). It was therefore important that relations with personal deities were restored as part of removal rituals (see § 5.2).

The role of personal deities has attracted a number of interpretations in modern scholarship,[116] but they are usually connected to a person's general wellbeing and fate.[117] This function is also associated with a number of other protective beings that are separate from personal deities but often occur in the same contexts.[118] These include the *lamassu* (lama) and *šēdu* (alad/udug), which have been connected to a person's character traits or "Lebenskraft" and vitality respectively.[119] They represent a person's well-being or good fortune,[120] which exists on a sliding scale, and the protective beings could thus be more explicitly qualified as good or even qualified as evil and perceived as demons.[121] When favourably disposed towards people, these protective beings, like personal deities, were understood to accompany them to protect their health and well-being and thus determined the quality of their life course.[122] The notion that protective spirits and personal deities accompanied their charges is reflected in the names of another class of protective beings, the *mukīl rēš damiqti* 'attendant of good' and *mukīl*

[115] Ambos 2012: 92. External forces of evil, such as witches and demons, could apparently also cause someone to be abandoned by his personal deities (see § 4.2.1).
[116] These include their being an external part of a person's psychological make-up (Oppenheim 1964: 205–206), or a Freudian 'super-ego' that functions as a form of communal conscience (Abusch 1999: 105–107).
[117] Löhnert and Zgoll 2009: 312.
[118] *Pace* Vorländer 1975: 48.
[119] Löhnert and Zgoll 2009: 312; Vorländer 1975: 26; Von Soden 1964: 149–150.
[120] Although we often talk about 'good fortune' in this context, bad things happening in Mesopotamia would not have been considered unlucky but random occurrences, but were rather connected to the presence of evil forces and a lack of protection from one's personal deities and other protective beings (Frechette 2012: 140–141).
[121] Löhnert and Zgoll 2009: 312; Von Soden 1964: 153.
[122] Ambos 2012: 92; Löhnert and Zgoll 2009: 311.

rēš lemutti 'attendant of evil'.[123] Overall, the existence of personal deities and other protective beings contribute to an understanding of why bad things happened to people and offered a more human-scale means of conceptualizing an individual's connection to the divine world. It is therefore to be expected that personal deities played a significant role in conceptualizations of transgression and its consequences.

1.4.2.2 Šamaš and divine justice

While personal deities may have had more immediacy for the individual, higher-ranking deities were also offended by transgression and involved in its punishment, especially the chief divine judge, the sun god Šamaš. With personal deities reconciled to the patient and acting as advocates for their charge, the patient and exorcist could make their appeals to Šamaš for release from punishment, and many elements of these rituals take the form of a divine trial. In the fifth house of *Bīt rimki*, for example, Šamaš is invoked in a long prayer with the incipit *Šamaš dayyān šamê u erṣeti* 'Šamaš, judge of heaven and earth'.[124] This incantation affirms the authority of Šamaš as the highest-ranking divine judge, who provides justice in the human realm and beyond and whose decisions are respected and implemented by the other gods. The patient thereby demonstrates that, in spite of his unknown transgression, he nevertheless recognizes the role of Šamaš as judge and sets out the role of the divine courtroom in the ritual to follow. The function of Šamaš as divine judge is generally understood to originate from the sun's path across the sky during the day, allowing the sun god to see everything happening on earth.[125] His importance in exorcistic rituals has also been attributed to his ability to convene the divine assembly upon his rising at the beginning of the day,

[123] Oppenheim 1964: 204. Vorländer (1975: 20), by contrast, interprets the term *mukīl rēš damiqti* as referring to a person's personal deity, particularly as an ominous sign that they would get better.
[124] Læssøe 1955: 57, 53–69. Cf. also KAL 10, Nr. 46–47, 1–16.
[125] E.g. Maul 1999: 124–125.

setting in motion the process of determining the fates for the day, at which point the exorcist could intervene to secure a favourable fate for his client, or avert an evil one.[126] This has also been used to explain the orientation of temple gateways in such a way that they receive the maximum sunlight and rituals can therefore take place in the direct presence of Šamaš.[127] Extispicy rites could also be framed as a divine trial, with an animal being sacrificed at sunrise in order to read the signs inscribed on its liver that convey the verdict of Šamaš on the question posed.[128]

As the chief divine judge, Šamaš oversees the divine trial, a trope often employed in *āšipūtu* rituals to frame the patient's appeals to the gods and secure a change of fate.[129] In the *Maqlû* ritual, for example, the victim of witchcraft appeals to this divine court in order to establish his innocence and have the witches convicted for their crimes. Since the identity of the witches was often not known, figurines representing them were brought before the divine court, as the defendant had to be present at the trial, but the gods knew their identity and could administer the punishment.[130] The phraseology, structure, and approach of the trial in anti-witchcraft incantations usually comply with the conventions of the terrestrial courtroom.[131] This is necessary for the legitimacy of the process: the divine courtroom, as the ultimate recourse for justice must be a mirror image of the terrestrial courtroom.[132] As well as anti-witchcraft rituals, this juridical framing is also found in rituals concerning divine punishment. In *Šurpu*, for example, having undertaken ritual acts to remove the evil, the patient makes a legalistic appeal to the god Girra (V–VI 197–199): *aš*$_2$*-šum da-a-a-na-ta* [*at*]*-ta-ziz*$^!$ *maḫar*(igi$^!$)*-ka* / *u*$_3$

[126] Polonsky 2000: 95–97.
[127] Shepperson 2012.
[128] Delnero 2016: 130–131.
[129] Cf. e.g. Holtz 2011; Holtz 2017; Abusch 2015.
[130] Holtz 2017: 142, 146; Abusch 2015: 20.
[131] Holtz 2017.
[132] Holtz 2017: 148; Mermelstein and Holtz 2015: 4.

mu-šal-li-ma-[*ta at*]*-ta-na-as-ḫa*ˈ*-rak-ka / de-e-ni di-*[*in*] ⌜*purussâ*⌝([eš].bar)^{a} *purus*(ku$_5$)^{us} 'because you are the judge, I have stood before you, [198] and (because) you are one who makes well, I constantly attend on you, [199] judge my case, render the verdict!' In the case of transgression, there is no obvious legal opponent as in the anti-witchcraft rituals.[133] Moreover, the divine trial is less about whether the sufferer is innocent or not, as the transgression has already been committed and the punishment imposed, but is an attempt to have the 'sentence' reduced.[134] This would take the form of the patient's release from suffering and the restoration of his former good relationship with the gods and his fellow humans.

A number of other gods also participated in the divine trial including, for example, Šamaš' father and sister Sîn and Ištar, identified with the Moon and Venus.[135] As celestial bodies, these gods could act like the watchful Šamaš at night, while he was presiding over judgements in the netherworld. Two other deities that performed a similar function, especially in *āšipūtu* rituals, are the gods of light and fire Girra[136] and Nuska. Girra is associated with the cultic torch (gi-izi-la$_2$ // *gizillû*),[137] and is occasionally described as the 'colleague' (*tappû*) of Šamaš.[138] Nuska is identified with the lamp (*nūru*) that protects the sleeping patient from night-time evils.[139] These two deities become effectively syncretized and, in the context of *āšipūtu* rituals, take on

[133] In some cases, however, the witches are portrayed as having committed a transgression attracting *māmītu*-curse. The victim's appeal to divine justice is therefore to ensure that the *māmītu*-curse is not released and that its punishment is legally enforced (cf. Abusch 2002: 237–245, 255–261).
[134] Maul (1994: 60) terms this "eine *Revision* des Urteils" [his emphasis]. Cf. also Maul 1999: 125–126; Magdalene 2015: 185–186.
[135] Krebernik 2007: 355.
[136] Also equated with Sumerian Gibil (cf. Frankena 1957–1971: 384). A note on spelling conventions: in the transliteration of Akkadian, I follow MZL (469, 313) with *gira*$_2$(GIŠ.BAR) and *gira*$_3$(NE.GI), while in the body text I use the spelling Girra, based on the probable Akkadian form *Girru*, following the convention of e.g. CMAwR (cf. Van Buylaere and Luukko 2020: 160).
[137] Geller 2016: 24–25; Conti 2000: 128.
[138] Michalowski 1993: 156–157.
[139] Abusch 2002: 126–127; Wiggermann 2000: 248; 1992: 112.

many of the epithets and functions of Šamaš as divine judge.[140] This role is exemplified by the above cited incantation from *Šurpu* that invokes Girra, as well as the incantations addressed to both gods in the *Maqlû* ritual, where they are explicitly compared to Šamaš.[141] This association presumably arises because the gods were associated with artefacts providing light, especially in the context of rituals that took place at night or indoors, where Šamaš would not have been visible.[142] The use of torches in *āšipūtu* rituals also allowed a representative of divine justice to have a physical presence close to patient.[143] The power of the imagery of light expelling darkness and therefore also the evils afflicting the patient should not be underestimated. In the context of *Maqlû*, it has been suggested that Girra and Nusku also took on the role of executioner as well as judges, since the figurines of the witches would be destroyed by fire,[144] which is also the case for representations of the evil afflicting the patient in *Šurpu*. This reflects the purifying function of fire, which could be used to destroy or change the form of impurities or substances carrying them (§ 5.4.1.2). The variety of gods and ritual objects involved ensured that the penitent sufferer had access to divine justice regardless of the setting or circumstances of the ritual.

1.4.2.3 The divine exorcists: Asalluḫi/Marduk and Enki/Ea

Another pair of gods who feature prominently in these rituals are the divine exorcists Enki/Ea and Asalluḫi/Marduk. The god Enki's close connection to exorcism is attested

[140] Frankena 1957–1971: 384; Lewy and Lewy 1948: 148–149.
[141] E.g. addressed to Girra (*Maqlû* II 22–24): ⌜*aš*$_2$⌝-*šu at-ta* [*ana ia-a*]-⌜*ši ta*⌝-*az-za-zu-ma* / *ki-ma* ^{d}*Sîn*(30) *u*$_3$ ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *ta*-⌜*din*⌝-*nu di-i-nu* / *de-e-ni di-ni purussâ*(eš.bar)-*a-a pu-ru-us* 'because you are standing (here) [for me] and, [23] like Sîn and Šamaš, you judge cases, [24] judge my case and render my verdict!'; addressed to Nuska (*Maqlû* I 113–114): *ana-ku al-si-ka ki-ma* ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *dayyāni*(di.ku$_5$) / *di-i-ni di-ni purussâ*(eš.bar)-*a-a purus*(ku$_5$)^{us} 'I myself called upon you like Šamaš the judge, [114] judge my case and render my verdict!' For further similar addresses to Girra, cf. also texts published in Scurlock 2006: 352–358 and Zilberg and Horowitz 2016.
[142] Abusch 2015: 11–12; Schwemer 2007: 54–55.
[143] Cf. *Maqlû* II 22, cited above.
[144] Abusch 2015: 9.

from very early in Mesopotamian history.[145] The god Asalluḫi was initially associated with magic as a messenger of Enki who brings Heilmittel from the god to the patient,[146] before becoming more closely associated with exorcism through syncretism with Marduk in the Old Babylonian period.[147] This pair of deities feature most prominently in the 'Ea-Marduk dialogue',[148] a formalized incantation element that becomes a standard part of many bilingual incantations by the second millennium and continues in use into the Hellenistic period.[149] The dialogue features prominently in rituals of the *āšipūtu* corpus when the exorcist is healing the patient and warding off evil, including in Udug-ḫul and, most relevant for the present topic, in *Šurpu* V–VI. The Ea-Marduk dialogue can be summarized as follows:[150] Asalluḫi/Marduk observes the suffering of the patient and relays this to his father Enki/Ea, complaining that he does not know what to do to help the patient; Enki/Ea replies to his son, telling him that he does in fact know what to do, but nevertheless giving him instructions for the healing ritual. This represents the culmination of the exorcist's preparation for the ritual, with the exorcist channelling the powers of Enki/Ea by effectively identifying himself with Asalluḫi/Marduk.[151] This would have inspired confidence in the patient that the exorcist had the necessary skills to cure his suffering, not least because this knowledge has been acquired directly from Enki/Ea.[152] It has also been argued that the recitation of the Ea-

[145] Geller 1985: 13.
[146] Schramm 2008: 19–20.
[147] Sommerfeld 1982: 13–18.
[148] First identified as an incantation type by Adam Falkenstein, who labelled it the "Marduk-Ea-Typ" (Falkenstein 1931: 44–67). For the name used here, cf. e.g. Geller 2016: 28.
[149] Geller (2016: 28) notes that the dialogue is "essentially never abandoned as a standard type of incantation motif", having an almost 3000-year history. The basic structure of the dialogue becomes standardized to the extent that it is sometimes reduced to only the first words of each line (Annus 2020: 2488).
[150] Cf. Mander 2010: 178; Falkenstein 1931: 53–54.
[151] Gabbay 2018: 301–305; Mander 2010: 190; Geller 1985: 14. The exorcist is not merely acting in parallel to Marduk/Asalluḫi as Ea/Enki's messenger, but in one text is even identified as the 'image' (*ṣalmu*) of Asalluḫi (Maul 1994: 41).
[152] Geller 1985: 15. Geller later suggested (2016: 28) that the exorcist is "eavesdropping" on the gods' conversation in order to impress his patient, but this does not fairly reflect the relationship between the human exorcist and his divine counterparts.

Marduk dialogue would allow the patient to undergo a 'religious experience' that would have had a placebo effect and helped with the healing.[153] While the psychological power of invoking certain deities cannot be underestimated in the Mesopotamian context, we should also take account of the power of ritual actions and experiences in their own right. Nevertheless, from personal deities through to divine judges and divine exorcists, a variety of gods are actively involved in the *āšipūtu* rituals concerning transgression. This is perhaps not surprising when, as we shall see, the conceptualization of transgression and its consequences is centred on human relations with the gods.

[153] Annus 2020.

2 Key terminology and concepts

This chapter addresses some key terminology and concepts that are important for understanding and contextualizing the conceptualization of transgression and divine punishment in the *āšipūtu* corpus. I begin by examining not only the concepts of *māmītu*-curse and *arratu*-curse, which will form the main focus of my study, but also a variety of other terminology that is usually understood to fall into the semantic categories of taboo, transgression, and oath. In this brief overview, I concentrate on philological considerations and the treatment and translations of the terminology in modern secondary literature. The precise significance of many of the terms will become clearer throughout the thesis, as their usage in the context of the primary sources will be analysed in detail. I then give a brief overview of the concept of the *libbu*, an anatomical term referring generally to the abdomen and internal organs, but also representing the seat of emotions. These complementary aspects of the *libbu* are important for understanding the symptoms of suffering attributed to various sources of evil, and the reasons why certain symptoms could be connected to transgression in particular. Finally, I examine the terminology used when removing the evil or impurity resulting from divine punishment and when releasing the patient from the state of suffering. I explore the significance of metaphors employed to conceptualize this process and distinguish two categories of terminology that relate to areas of 'exorcism' and 'purification' respectively, which form two complementary strands of the exorcist's work.

2.1 Taboos, transgressions, and punishments

The Mesopotamian exorcistic sources employ a large range of terminology to describe transgressions and their punishment, which are the ultimate cause of the patient's suffering. As is often the case with ancient writings, the variety of terminology is difficult to map onto the vocabulary of modern languages. Modern scholars must therefore either leave such terms untranslated, which is not particularly helpful to the reader unfamiliar with the ancient languages, or settle on a set of conventional translations, which can obscure the precise significance of the ancient terminology. In this respect, terminology relevant to the present study is often represented by modern translations including terms such as 'sin', 'curse', and 'taboo'. The semantic range of these terms, even as they are used in modern English, is usually difficult and can differ from context to context. I therefore assess the particular connotations of the ancient terminology and the suitability of these modern translations, usually settling on my own conventions. It must be remembered that these translations are only conventional and that the overall findings of the following sections should be borne in mind when these terms occur in the primary sources.

The selection of terminology examined in this section is largely guided by the primary sources themselves. The sources occasionally provide long, standardized lists of terms that aim to give the impression of encompassing, at least within the semantic range of transgressions and related concepts, all possible causes of an individual's suffering (e.g. *Šurpu* VIII 79–82):

79 *ikkibu*(nig$_2$.ge$_{17}$) *an-zil-lu ar$_2$-ni šer$_3$-tu$_2$ gil$_2$-la-tu$_2$ ḫi-ṭi-tu$_2$ tur-tu$_2$* ⌜*u*$_3$$^{?}$⌝ [*maš*ʾ*altu*(?)][1]
80 *mi-iḫ-ru la ṭa-a-bu li-is-su-u$_2$ li-re-qu ni-šu ma-mit ar$_2$-ni ḫi-is-sa*<-*at*>[2] *ilī*(dingir)^{meš}

[1] This restoration is not completely secure but follows e.g. *Šurpu* V–VI 77: *ni-šu ma-mit tur-ta maš-al-tu*. Cf. CAD T 491 s.v. *tūrtu* A 2b for further parallels.
[2] In BM 77646 rev. 2′, Borger (2000: 89) reads [xx]-*nu*$^{?}$ ḪI$^{?}$-AŠ-DIŠ-*sa* dingir-meš but collation suggests that what was transliterated AŠ-DIŠ is in fact GIŠ, with the lower horizontal either omitted or written inside the upper horizontal, while the readings *nu* and *ḫi* can be confirmed. This is supported by collation of

81 *šu-kun-ne$_2$-e ili*(dingir) *u* ^{d}*iš$_8$-tar$_2$ lumun*(ḫul) *kiš-pi ru-ḫe-e ru-se-e up-ša$_2$-še-e lemnūti*(ḫul)[^{meš} *ša amēlūti* (?)]
82 *ina u$_4$-mi an-ne$_2$-e lu-u pa-aṭ-ra-nik-ka lu-u pa-aš$_2$-ra-nik-ka lu pa-as-*[*sa-nik-ka*][3]

Ikkibu-transgression, *anzillu*-transgression, *arnu*-crime-punishment,[4] *šērtu*-offence-penalty, *gillatu*-sin-punishment, *ḫiṭītu*-wrongdoing-punishment, 'turning', *and* [*questioning*], [80] unfortunate incident, may they withdraw, may they be far away; *nīšu*-oath, *māmītu*-curse, *arnu*-punishment, invocation of the gods, [81] accusation (concerning) god and goddess, the evil of *kišpū*-witchcraft, *ruḫû*-witchcraft, *rusû*-witchcraft, evil (witchcraft) performances [*of humankind*], [82] on this day, may they be loosened for you, may they be released for you, may they be effaced [for you].

Many of these terms only appear in these formulaic lists, so the question arises whether some of them had any independent relevance for the ritual in question, or whether they are used only to enhance the impression of the ritual's universal applicability. This is especially the case in the listing of various designations for witchcraft, which are not expressly targeted by the *Šurpu* ritual, and for which there are many other dedicated rituals.[5] Several anti-witchcraft rituals also refer to *māmītu*-curse and other transgression-related concepts, so this is likely part of the exorcist's strategy to make various rituals effective against multiple sources of suffering. The use of lists and litanies is also a key part of structuring the incantations and expressing the ideology that informs them (see § 3.1). Their role in litany notwithstanding, many of these terms are attested elsewhere in the *āšipūtu* corpus and in other areas of Mesopotamian

Nin1 rev. 27 which reads … *ma-mit ar$_2$-ni ḫi-*⌜*is*⌝-[…]. The emendation is supported by a parallel line earlier in *Šurpu* VIII (39a in Simons 2017: 37; 44 in Borger 2000: 84):

BM 33855 obv. 29′ [ ]-⌜*is*$^{?}$⌝-*sat* dingir^{meš}
BM 76211+ 22′b *ḫi-ṭi-it-ka gil$_2$-lat-ka ni-iš-ka* ge$_{17}$*-ka ta-ni-iḫ-ka ar$_2$-ni ḫi-*⌜*is*⌝-[ ]

The head of the vertical of a GIŠ may be preserved in BM 338555, but it could also be part of the break. The collations have been made from photographs kindly shared with me by Frank Simons. The sense of *hissatu* 'invocation' is compatible with *šukunnû* 'accusation' in *Šurpu* VIII 81, with the invocation of the gods perhaps occurring in the divine trial context before making accusations.

[3] The stative verbs in line 82 must have as subjects the nouns in the preceding list, following the sense of the finite verb forms in line 80. This does not, however, explain why they appear in the third person feminine plural form, but this may be influenced by thinking about plural forms of feminine nouns *māmītu*, *arratu*, etc.

[4] I owe the idea of employing these 'double-translations' to communications with Camilla Stahl Jonas. These will be used when the context is ambiguous as to whether the cause or consequence is meant (see discussions below, esp. §§ 2.1.3.1–2.1.3.3). Occasionally, however, the context will demand one translation or the other, although it should be remembered that the Mesopotamian terminology could encompass this whole range of meanings simultaneously.

[5] On the interpretation of terminology relating to witchcraft, see Schwemer 2007: 5–21.

literature. Thus, while they may seem like 'filler', the compilers of the lists have deliberately chosen this terminology, and therefore due consideration must be given to the significance and context of their wider usage.

2.1.1 Oath and curse

2.1.1.1 *māmītu* // nam-erim$_2$ / saĝ-ba

The Akkadian term *māmītu*, and the related Sumerian terms nam-erim$_2$ and saĝ-ba,[6] have proven difficult to define precisely, but they are central to any attempt to understand the conceptualization of transgression and its consequences in the *āšipūtu* corpus. A definition is best arrived at by considering how the terms are used in the primary sources, a study that will be undertaken throughout the thesis. Nevertheless, I begin here with a brief overview of the etymology and semantic development of the terms, and how they have been interpreted thus far in the modern secondary literature.

The Akkadian *māmītu* is ultimately derived from a root *ʾwʾ*, with a range of meanings related to speech.[7] The root appears in a verbal form as *awûm*/*amû* which is attested in the G-stem in Old Assyrian only (meaning 'to argue in court').[8] Derived stems are more common and have various meanings relating to speech.[9] There are at least two prevailing theories on the exact mechanism for the derivation of the noun *māmītu* from this root. Wolfram von Soden places it with deverbal nouns of the *maprast*-pattern, which regularly produces nouns of place or instrument in Akkadian.[10] Bert Kouwenberg, on the other hand, gives *māmītu* as an example of a deverbal noun derived

[6] For the reasons outlined in § 1.3.1, in this chapter the Akkadian terminology will generally be prioritized over the Sumerian.
[7] Lambert 2007: 5.
[8] Cf. e.g. CAD A/2 86.
[9] Cf. e.g. CAD A/2 86ff.
[10] GAG § 56c.

by reduplication from a verb I-w, the verb in question being *wamāʾum*.[11] The verb *wamāʾum* is most commonly used with the meaning 'to swear' in Old Akkadian,[12] but by the Old Assyrian period this is mostly replaced by the by-form *tamāʾum*, which is also attested in Old Akkadian, although less frequently than *wamāʾum*.[13] The later descendant of this by-form, *tamû*, also with the meaning 'to swear (an oath)', is occasionally used in later periods with the nouns *māmītu* or *tāmītu* as its object.[14] In some contexts, this verb appears to function as a verbal complement to the noun *māmītu* in the sense of 'curse', rather than referring to the actual swearing of an oath (see § 3.2.2).

In bilingual and lexical texts, Akkadian *māmītu* corresponds to two Sumerian terms, saĝ-ba, probably to be understood literally as 'on its head', and nam-erim$_2$, occasionally abbreviated nam-rim, which can be interpreted as 'state of evil' or 'evil fate'.[15] These two terms originally had quite separate meanings, the former referring to the idea of 'curse' or 'ban' and the latter to the literal oath, but both of these concepts would come to be incorporated into the meaning of Akkadian *māmītu*.[16] In a parallel development, nam-erim$_2$, like the Akkadian, came to refer to the evil released by the breaking of an oath.[17] This is how it is used in the ritual rubric nam-erim$_2$-bur-$_2$-ru-da, literally '(ritual) to release *namerim*-curse' (see § 1.3.1.2 for discussion of namerimburruda-rituals). Another term for 'oath', Akkadian *nīšu* (Sum. mu),

[11] Kouwenberg 2010: 460.
[12] Hasselbach 2005: 193; 218.
[13] Kouwenberg 2017: 537; 731; 828.
[14] This same verb gives rise to a number of terms with a variety of meanings: the noun *tumāmītu* retains a literal meaning 'oath' (Sandowicz 2012: 9) and is derived from the verb by means of duplicating the second radical (Kouwenberg 2010: 444–445); the noun *tāmītu*, referring to the 'response' to an oracle query, also derives from *tamû* (Lambert 2007: 5).
[15] On the meaning of nam, see discussion of nam-da$_6$ at § 2.1.3.1.
[16] Schramm 2001: 5.
[17] Schramm 2001: 4.

frequently appears in juxtaposition with *māmītu*, and may have undergone a similar development in meaning (see § 2.1.1.3).

As for the interpretation of the term *māmītu* in modern secondary literature, I begin with Erica Reiner's understanding according to her edition and translation of *Šurpu*. In order to do this effectively, I must take account of two factors: first, how she explains the term in her commentary to the text; and second, how she actually translates the term. In a note to the first occurrence of the term *māmītu* in the text of *Šurpu* (III 1), she explains her choice of translation in the following way:[18]

> *Māmītu* has been translated throughout this tablet and wherever else it occurs in *Šurpu* as «oath». This is the first meaning of the word, and is clearly its meaning in the first thirteen lines of the tablet. In its other occurrences in *Šurpu,* as in religious texts in general, *māmītu* means something evil. This meaning can be defined more closely precisely from this tablet which lists various actions and objects known to be connected with taking an oath. We suppose, then, that those *māmītu*'s too whose significance escapes us refers to symbols and symbolic actions accompanying an oath. It was feared, it appears from this tablet, that the numen inherent in these, once invoked, would stay unbound and afflict the person who had sworn the oath.

Such circumspection, although warranted, leads to a situation where, in the first thirteen lines of *Šurpu* III, *māmītu* is translated "oath", while all other instances in the text are translated "'oath'" (i.e. with scare quotes). While it is important to maintain an equivalence with the Akkadian and thus translate all instances of *māmītu* with a single word in English, opting for a translation that one is only certain of in a fraction of cases is, at best, confusing.[19] Reiner's assertion that many of the actions and objects listed in *Šurpu* are related to oath-taking therefore does not reflect the distinction she draws in her translation. Indeed, my review of the secondary literature and analysis of primary sources will show that an association between *māmītu* and literal act of oath-taking cannot be maintained (below and § 3.2).

[18] Reiner 1958: 55.
[19] It should also be noted that, in her edition of the *lipšur*-litanies (Reiner 1956), Reiner consistently translates *māmītu* with "curse".

Other studies that consider the meaning of the term emphasize the broad range of concepts covered by the single Akkadian term *māmītu*. Jean Bottéro, for example, distinguishes between "*LES mamîtu*", that is the various transgressions identified in *Šurpu* as the possible causes of the victim's suffering, and "*LA mamîtu*", which is the result of these transgressions, the 'curse' imposed by the gods, and the quasi-autonomous power of this 'curse'.[20] These should probably be understood as two sides of the same coin, and the translation '*māmītu*-curse concerning …' removes the need for such a distinction. Bottéro understands the latter aspect as a form of "«punition» surnaturel", regulating social order in places where human legal systems cannot reach.[21] According to Bottéro, then, the offences listed in connection with *māmītu* should be understood as "interdits coutumiers", with no real relation to morality or the judicial system, instead governed simply by the arbitrary will of the gods.[22]

Other authors pick up on the idea of 'curse', tracing this back to the term's original meaning of 'oath'. Hayim Tadmor demonstrates that Mesopotamian 'treaties' (*riksū* or *riksātu*) were sanctioned by an 'oath' (*nīšu*), which usually contained an 'imprecation' (*māmītu*), giving rise to the hendiadystic form *riksu u māmītu* and, in the Neo-Assyrian period, *adê* (*u*) *māmītu.*[23] He notes that the use of the *māmītu* 'imprecation' was more common than the standard oath in Assyria and west of the Euphrates and suggests that the importance of this element led to the development in Assyria of the idea that the self-curse was powerful enough to prevent a wider array of transgressions.[24] Anne Marie Kitz similarly interprets *māmītu* as a "conditional curse", rejecting the modern associations of 'oath' as they do not include the concept of self-curse.[25] The self-curse

[20] Bottéro 1977: 133.
[21] Bottéro 1977: 139–140.
[22] Bottéro 1977: 140–142.
[23] Tadmor 1982: 132.
[24] Tadmor 1982: 133–134.
[25] Kitz 2014: 32.

which features in the above authors' understanding of *māmītu* is a calque on the German "Selbstverfluchung", a term coined by Johannes Pedersen to describe what he regarded as an important element common to Arabic and Hebrew oaths.[26] In the Mesopotamian context, it refers to the incorporation of standardized curse formulae into the oath-taking ceremony, directed by the party taking the oath against themselves, in the belief that the ill effects of the curse would be released in the event that the oath was broken.[27]

Other scholars focus more closely on the autonomous power of *māmītu*. Isabel Cranz settles on a definition of *māmītu* as "the autonomous power which haunts the individual who has broken the oath", suggesting that *Šurpu* and related texts provide us with an insight into a Mesopotamian conception of "guilt".[28] Barbara Böck, also referring to *Šurpu*, notes that "the idea would be that of a *māmītu* which takes up residence in animate and inanimate beings once an oath is taken and which becomes alive in the case of violation",[29] reflecting the fact that the verb *ṣabātu* is used of *māmītu* as it is of illnesses or of demons and gods attacking their victim. Indeed, *māmītu* is often portrayed as a demon-like being (§ 3.4).

Bottéro's suggestion that examples of *māmītu* represent 'customary' behavioural sanctions is picked up by Mark Geller, who suggests that such acts were in the past sanctioned by literal oaths but by the time of the standardized *āšipūtu* corpus had come to be regarded as "taboos".[30] Tzvi Abusch has a similar understanding, stating in comments on *Maqlû* that *māmītu* "designates a code of behaviour and … refers to the oath taken and the curse or punishment threatened in support of a set of rules … an agreement or compact that governs relationships, a series of stipulations to which all

[26] Pedersen 1914: 114–118.
[27] Kitz 2004: 315.
[28] Cranz 2017: 68.
[29] Böck 2016: 313.
[30] Geller 1980: 184.

members of society, including the witches, have been bound by oath under the threat of punishment".[31] In his recent doctoral dissertation, Frank Simons objects to the interpretation of *māmītu* as taboo, arguing that the terminology in *Šurpu* is more concerned with the consequences than transgressive actions and their prohibition.[32] The problems of associating *māmītu* with the concept of 'taboo' will also be made clear in my own analysis of the sources describing possible transgressions (§ 3.2).

Some scholars have used related terms from other languages in attempts to unravel the Akkadian term. Herbert Chanan Brichto argues that Hebrew אלה (*ʾālāh*) underwent a similar transformation in meaning to Akkadian *māmītu*, with an original meaning of 'imprecation' coming to encompass also the ideas of 'oath' and 'curse'.[33] Yitzhaq Feder parallels the semantic development of the term *māmītu* with the Hittite term for 'oath' (*lingai*-), which also undergoes transformation in meaning from 'oath with self-curse' to 'curse'.[34] The Hittite term *lingai*- was written logographically as *NĪŠ* DINGIR or *MĀMĪTU*.[35] The two different writings could be an example of 'heterograms' being used to express a semantic difference that did not exist in Hittite.[36] This would further support the idea that *māmītu* had developed a meaning in Akkadian beyond that of a literal 'oath'.

Most recently, in his edition of namerimburruda-rituals, Stefan Maul emphasizes the juridical origins of *māmītu* as a falsely sworn or broken oath.[37] While criticizing the

[31] Abusch 2002: 238.
[32] Simons 2017: 94.
[33] Brichto 1963: 71–72. The Hebrew is rendered in the Targumim with Aramaic *mawmā* or *mawmāṯā*, which are cognate with or perhaps loaned from Akkadian *māmītu*.
[34] Feder 2010: 124.
[35] Cf. Weeden 2011: 594–595; 575.
[36] Kudrinski and Yakubovich 2016: 61–64.
[37] Maul 2019: 9, "In juristischem Zusammenhang steht der Begriff *māmītu* für eine Eidesleistung und gleichzeitig für durch einen Eid entstandene Bindung und die Folgen eines falschen oder aber nicht eingehaltenen Eides … Entstehung und Entwicklung der Krankheit sind aus der Sicht der altorientalischen Heiler auf diese Weise sehr eng mit dem Rechtswesen verknüpft."

narrow semantic range of the modern German 'Fluch' and English 'curse', he settles on the German term 'Bann' to render the ancient terminology.[38] In practice, however, he focuses primarily on the notion of the broken oath when translating the overall concept.[39] It is clear from the various approaches discussed above that *māmītu* has a broader range of meaning than can be encompassed in a single English or German term. The dictionaries settle on translations ranging from 'oath' and 'curse' to 'Bann'.[40] The latter term is particularly common in German scholarly literature, as it encompasses the sense of exclusion from society (understood as the result of breaking a taboo) and has magical connotations that its English cognate no longer has.[41]

As my analysis over the course of the thesis will demonstrate, the Mesopotamian terminology would appear to encompass a concept that consists of several different aspects: both a self-curse (with an implicit underlying 'oath') and an autonomous external curse (and the demonized form of this);[42] the possible transgressive behaviours from which this curse resulted; and the state of suffering caused by the curse, including its conception as a discrete category of illness. These various elements may seem, at least from a modern, Western perspective, to be quite separate concepts.[43] However, the fact that the ancient sources consistently combine these in a single term requires us to understand them as facets of a single idea. Thus, although I have opted for the most widely used conventional English translation 'curse', the broader extent of the concept,

[38] Maul 2019: 1n.1. Farber (2012: 329) combines these two German translations, rendering *māmītu* "Bannfluch".
[39] The work is titled: "Bannlösung (nam-érim-búr-ru-da). Die Therapie eines auf *eidliche Falschaussage* zurückgeführten Leidens" [emphases mine].
[40] E.g. CAD M/1 189: "oath, sworn agreement"; "curse" and AHw II 599: "Eid"; "Bann".
[41] Cf. Duden s.v. 'Bann': "Ausweisung aus seiner Gemeinschaft"; "magische Kraft, Zauber, usw.". The OED gives a sense of the formerly wider range of meanings of the English cognate, particularly s.v. 'ban' III 6: "a curse having, or supposed to have, supernatural sanction and baleful influence".
[42] Although the meaning of *māmītu* in this context is considerably detached from its conceptual origins as a broken oath, it will be shown that this continues to exert an influence on its conceptualization and the use of the term.
[43] Kitz (2014: 32–33), for example, rejects the translation of *māmītu* as 'oath' since the modern, secular understanding of an 'oath' contains no connotations of curse or its divine enforcement.

and therefore ultimately the deficiency of the English terminology, must be borne in mind as I analyse the concept further.

2.1.1.2 *arratu* // aš$_2$

Another term that occurs relatively frequently in the sources under consideration, and often in connection with *māmītu*, is *arratu* (Sumerian aš$_2$). The Akkadian noun *arratu*, and the related term *erretu*,[44] are derived from the verb *arāru* 'to curse', for which there is a cognate in Hebrew.[45] The corresponding phraseology in Sumerian includes the verbal compound aš$_2$ bala/du$_{11}$ (literally 'to turn/speak curse') as well as the equivalent nam ku$_5$ (literally 'to cut fate'), both of which can mean 'to swear (an oath)' and also 'to curse'.[46] The Sumerian terminology therefore has a similarly broad range of meaning to *māmītu*. In general, however, the dictionaries and previous secondary literature have considered the Akkadian term *arratu* to refer to a simple 'curse'.[47] The existence of a small number of standalone *arratu*-rituals (§ 1.3.1.3; § 3.1.2), combined with a reappraisal of the evidence in *Šurpu* (§ 3.1.1), suggests that, at least in specific contexts, *arratu* could behave almost as a synonym of *māmītu*, with a similar conceptual range. It is perhaps not surprising, given that these rituals often aim for universal coverage, that the complexity of the concept of *māmītu* should have been extended to other terms.[48] One element of this aspect of *arratu* that has been at least

[44] It is unclear whether these are variant spellings of the same word or two different words; the former is used in the standardized Neo-Babylonian curse formula (Sandowicz 2012: 110). The form *arratu* is also used in the *āšipūtu* corpus.
[45] Hebrew ארר *'rr* is usually understood as 'curse' (cf. Van der Toorn 1985: 55; Kitz 2014: 111).
[46] Krebernik 2010: 345.
[47] E.g. CAD A/2 304–305 has only "curse"; Van der Toorn (1985: 50) describes it as "a secondary term for curse"; in her edition of *Šurpu*, Reiner translates "curse" without the uncertainty of her translation of *māmītu* as "oath". AHw I 70–71, on the other hand, recognizes "Bann" as a possible translation as well as "Fluch", thus aligning the range of meanings of *arratu* with the concept of *māmītu*.
[48] The same also happens to some extent with *arnu* (see § 2.1.3.1).

partly recognized in the modern literature is its portrayal as a demon-like entity comparable to the demonized *māmītu*.[49]

The usage of the term *arratu* outside of the *āšipūtu* corpus falls into two broad categories.[50] In some cases, it is juxtaposed with other forms of malicious speech (e.g. SB Gilg. VI 73):[51] *ša*$_2$ *ak-ka-lu akal*(ninda)$^{ḫi.a}$ *pi-ša*$_2$*-a-ti u er-re-e-ti* '(am I) one who eats bread of abuses and curses?'[52] The Sumerian aš$_2$ is also used in this sense in some Sumerian proverbs (1.78; 1.80):[53] in-a-ni mu-un-dub$_2$ aš$_2$-a-ni mu-un-ĝal$_2$ 'he hurled his insult, he placed his curse (on) him'; in-na in-bi-im aš$_2$-e aš$_2$-bi-im nam-tar-ta ki-gibil-gibil-la$_2$-bi 'it is an insult (resulting) from an insult, it is a curse (resulting) from curse, it is the constant renewal of fate.' The juxtaposition with terms for 'abuse' or 'insults' suggests that *arratu* // aš$_2$ is being used in these contexts in a figurative sense, in much the same way that we use 'curse' in English today. On the other hand, *arratu*-curse could be invoked to protect against violation of treaties (e.g. SAA 2, 3, 475; 14, 3′): *ar*$_2$*-ra-tu ma-ru-uš-tu ag-giš li-ru-ru-ku-nu* 'may (the gods) curse you furiously with a sickening *arratu*-curse'; *ar*$_2$*-rat la nap-šur iškun*(gar)^{un} *ina* ⌜*pi*⌝-[*i-šu*$_2$*-un*] '*arratu*-curse, not to be broken, (Marduk) placed in [their] mouths.' In such cases, *arratu*-curse functions as a means for punishing the breaking of a sworn oath.[54] In this sense, it already has some similarity with the concept of *māmītu* and this is further suggested by the association with the mouth and the idea that the *arratu*-curse could be

[49] E.g. Sandowicz 2012: 111, although see § 3.5. The portrayal of *arratu* as a demon in *Šurpu* was also recognized in passing by Kitz (2014: 231n.45; 232n.47).
[50] Cf. e.g. CAD A/2 304–305.
[51] George 2003: 622–623.
[52] George (2003: 838) notes possible puns on *bīšu* 'smelly' and *erru* 'spoiled (of grain)'.
[53] Alster 1997: 20. Translation after Alster.
[54] The term *arratu* is likewise consistently employed in the standard curse formulae of Neo-Babylonian legal texts (Sandowicz 2012: 111).

'released' (the N-stem of *pašāru* is used in SAA 2, 14, 3′),[55] which mirrors the language of exorcistic rituals that release the effects of transgression (§ 2.3.1).

In the *āšipūtu* corpus more broadly, the term *arratu* often appears in formulaic lists alongside other speech acts (e.g. complaint, appeal) and transgressions (e.g. *Maqlû* VII 128): *ar*$_2$*-rat ilānī*(dingir)$^{\lceil meš \rceil}$ *mi-ḫir-ti ilānī*(dingir)^{meš} *ta-zi-im-ti* [*ilānī*(dingir)^{meš}] $^{\lceil}$*ni*$^{\rceil}$*-iš ili*(dingir) *ni-iš qātī*(šu)^{min} *ma-mit* '*arratu*-curse of the gods, appeal to the gods, complaint to [the gods], *nīšu*-oath of (my) god, hand-lifting-prayer, *māmītu*-curse.' It is also juxtaposed with other forms of malicious speech and therefore associated with witchcraft (e.g. CMAwR 8.28.1 67–68): ^{u2}*anḫullû*(an.ḫul$_2$) *ša*$_2$ *ina kišādi*(gu$_2$)*-ia*$_5$ *aššakkanu*(gar)^{nu} *mim-ma lemna*(ḫul) *a-a u*$_2$*-šas-ni-qa* / *arrat*(aš$_2$) *lemutti*(ḫul)^{ti3} *egerrê*(inim.gar) *la*$_3$ *dumqi*(sig$_5$) *ana a-ḫi-ti li-is-kip* 'may the *anḫullû*-plant that I am provided with on my neck not allow Any Evil to approach me, [68] may it keep evil *arratu*-curse (and) slander (lit. an unfavourable utterance) away.' This is in common with the connection frequently drawn between witchcraft and malicious speech acts.[56]

In the incantations of *Šurpu*, the term also occurs in the context of similar lists (e.g. IV 57–58): *nīš*(mu) *ilānī*(dingir)^{meš} *šib-sat ilānī*(dingir)^{meš} *me-ḫer-ti ili*(dingir) *ta-zi-im-tu*$_2$ *ma-mit* [*bu*] / *ar-rat abi*(ad) *u ummi*(ama) *aḫi*(šeš) *rabû*(gal)^{u2} *aḫati*(nin$_9$) *rabītu*(gal)^{tu} *bu* '*nīšu*-oath of the gods, anger of the gods, appeal (to) the god, complaint, *māmītu*-curse, [(refrain)], [58] *arratu*-curse of father and mother, older brother, older sister, (refrain).' However, it also appears in *Šurpu* in its own right, in a similar manner to the composition's more widespread use of *māmītu*. The bilingual incantation at the beginning of *Šurpu* V–VI demonstrates an initial focus on aš$_2$ // *arratu* (e.g. 1–2; 7–10),

[55] Kitz (2014: 321) suggests that Esarhaddon may have been trying to prevent the use of such rituals to get around the constraints of his loyalty oath.
[56] Cf. Schwemer 2007: 108–110.

followed by a short list of examples of *arratu* (42–49). However, among these references to aš$_2$ // *arratu* there are still references to saĝ-ba / nam-erim$_2$ // *māmītu* (7–8; 38–39; 58–59) and in the following Akkadian incantations that accompany the ritual acts, *arratu* no longer appears, even in the formulaic lists of evils to be removed (e.g. 67–68). Although *Šurpu* only briefly touches on *arratu*-curse before returning to its main target, *māmītu*-curse, the existence of a number of standalone compositions dedicated primarily to *arratu*-curse suggests that this too could be understood as a relatively independent concept.

2.1.1.3 *nīšu* // mu

Another term that frequently appears in lists in *Šurpu* and related compositions is *nīšu* 'oath', which literally means 'life' and is usually written with Sumerian mu 'name' but also occasionally with zi 'life'.[57] When *nīšu* specifically means 'oath' rather than 'life' more generally, it is qualified by the king or god(s) upon whose life the oath is sworn, a phenomenon that has parallels across the ancient Near East.[58] One explanation proposed for the use of the term 'life' in relation to oaths is that it expresses the belief that divine punishment had no time limits, lasting for the eternal 'lifetime' of the gods.[59] In oath texts, the term *nīšu* never appears unqualified,[60] but it does appear on its own throughout *Šurpu*, often alongside *arnu* and *māmītu* (e.g. *Šurpu* VIII 80).[61] Similarly, *nīšu*-oath could be used along with *māmītu*-curse by both witch and exorcist to attack

[57] E.g. *Šurpu* V–VI 58, cited below.
[58] Sandowicz 2012: 10. Similarly, Sumerian mu is qualified by the king or god(s) upon whose name the oath is sworn.
[59] Sandowicz 2012: 10. This notion is discussed in relation to Hebrew oath terminology by Y. Ziegler 2008: 90–92.
[60] Sandowicz 2012: 10.
[61] The term also appears qualified in *Šurpu* (e.g. III 14, 16, 17, 41, 44, 93, 100). In these cases, the transgression probably relates to some sort of impropriety in the taking of oaths, although what this might be is not always clear from the context. In one instance, the *māmītu*-curse is even called upon to swear a pair of *nīšu*-oaths (*Šurpu* V–VI 58–59): nam-erim$_2$ zi-an-na ḫe$_2$-pa$_3$ zi-ki-a ḫe$_2$-pa$_3$ / *ma-mit niš šamê*(an)^{e} *lu-u ta-ma-ti niš erṣeti*(ki)^{ti3} *lu-u ta-ma-ti* '*māmītu*-curse, may you be adjured by a *nīšu*-oath of the sky, may you be adjured by a *nīšu*-oath of the earth.'

their targets (*Maqlû* V 68): *ina ni-ši u ma-mit tu-qat-ta-in-ni ina ni-ši u ma-mit pa-gar-ku-nu liq-ti* 'you have brought an end to me through *nīšu*-oath and *māmītu*-curse – may your bodies come to an end though *nīšu*-oath and *māmītu*-curse!'

It is possible that *nīšu* had taken on a more abstract meaning in a similar way to *māmītu* and *arnu*, divorced from the literal oath-act and also encompassing the punishment for breaking the oath. The idea that the oath has no time limit would then fit well with the theme of universality expressed in relation to other forms of divine punishment, particularly *māmītu*. However, such an interpretation is difficult to prove, since the term does not occur without qualification outside of formulaic lists, nor is there any explicit evidence for a personified form of *nīšu* in Mesopotamian sources.[62] I therefore retain the basic translation '*nīšu*-oath'.

2.1.2 Taboo and abomination

2.1.2.1 *ikkibu* // $\text{ni}\hat{\text{g}}_2\text{-ge}_{17}$

Akkadian *ikkibu* is usually derived from Sumerian $\text{ni}\hat{\text{g}}_2\text{-ge}_{17}$(GIG) via the Emesal form $\text{a}\hat{\text{g}}_2\text{-}\hat{\text{g}}\text{eb}$.[63] The Sumerian term $\text{ni}\hat{\text{g}}_2\text{-ge}_{17}$ can be interpreted somewhat literally to mean 'something harmful';[64] accordingly, it sometimes corresponds instead to a more direct Akkadian rendering *maruštu*.[65] Similarly, Sumerian $\text{ni}\hat{\text{g}}_2\text{-ge}_{17}$ can also be interpreted as referring to something 'repulsive', in both a literal and transferred sense.[66] In the more literal sense, this is reflected in its use to refer to boundaries that

[62] A possible parallel is the Hittite oath-gods, referred to collectively as *linkayanteš*, the so-called 'ergative' form of *lingay-* 'oath', written logographically as *NÍŠ* DINGIR$^{\text{MEŠ}}$ (cf. Melchert 2011: 162).
[63] E.g. Löhnert 2012: 250. Geller (2012: 394) instead argues for a direct borrowing from Emeĝir into Akkadian. This seems unlikely, since the Indo-European example of variation between labials and velars provided by Geller is a diachronic development rather than a loan, and I know of no other examples of such a sound change between Sumerian and Akkadian.
[64] Cf. e.g. Geller 2012: 394 "sth. which can cause harm"; Löhnert 2012: 250 "schmerzvolle Sache".
[65] Geller 2012: 394.
[66] Böck 2016: 306.

cannot be crossed, such as the upper limit of human lifespan.[67] The term can therefore also refer to items, places, and actions that are off limits in a cultic context.[68] Similarly, it can refers to artefacts that are reserved for use in relation to the gods or other non-human entities.[69] On the other hand, especially in the Sumerian Proverbs, the term niĝ-ge$_{17}$ can refer to actions that are particularly repulsive to specific gods, and therefore out of bounds to humans, including behaviours that violate the established structures of the universe.[70]

A similar range of meanings for Akkadian *ikkibu* is attested in the *āšipūtu* corpus. For example, in *Šurpu*, the term appears among lists of terms for various types of penalty and offence (e.g. VIII 79, quoted at § 2.1). The juxtaposition with *anzillu* (see § 2.1.2) probably points to a cultic meaning in this context. Elsewhere, it occurs qualified with reference to the patient's personal deities, and probably refers to transgressions against something reserved for them or actions abominable to them (e.g. *Šurpu* II 5): *ikkib*(nig$_2$.ge$_{17}$) *ili*(dingir)-*šu$_2$ i-ku-lu ikkib*(nig$_2$.ge$_{17}$) ^{d}*ištari*(15)-*šu$_2$ i-ku-lu* '(who) ate

[67] Böck 2016: 306–307. This usage occurs in a bilingual version of The Tale of Enlil and Namzitarra from Emar (Klein 1990: 58) 23′–24′: mu 2 šu-ši mu-me-eš nam-lu$_2$-u$_{18}$-lu / niĝ$_2$-ge$_{17}$-bi ḫe-a // 2 *šu-ši šanātu*(mu)^{meš} *lu-u$_2$ ik-ki-*˹*ib a-mi-lu*˺*-ut-ti pa$_2$-la*$^{?}$*-ša*$^{?}$ 'twice sixty years (are) indeed the *ikkibu* of humankind, *its term*.' The restoration and translation of the final word are after a suggestion by Klein included in Cohen 2010: 90; 93–94.

[68] C.f. e.g. CAD I/J 55–57: "interdicted, forbidden thing, place, or action"; "sacred, reserved thing, place or actions".

[69] E.g. UH VII 89–90: ^{zi3}ge$_{17}$-ba niĝ$_2$-ge$_{17}$ ˹dingir˺-ra-ke$_4$ ^{zi3}še-muš$_5$ niĝ$_2$-ge$_{17}$ gidim-ma-ke$_4$ // *qe$_2$-em kib-ti ik-kib ilī*(dingir)^{meš} *qe$_2$-em ši-gu-ši ik-kib e-ṭem-me* / da ĝeš-nu$_2$-da-na-ke$_4$ u-me-ni-ḫur // *i-*˹*da-at er-ši*˺*-šu$_2$ e-ṣir-ma* '[90] draw (around) the sides of his bed with [89] wheat-flour, *ikkibu* of the gods, (and) *šigūšu*-barley flour, *ikkibu* of ghosts.' These two types of flour are reserved for offerings to gods and ghosts respectively. This is also reflected in the names of the wheat-flour reserved for the god, ^{zi3}ge$_{17}$-ba // *qēm kib*(*a*)*ti*, which play on niĝ$_2$-ge$_{17}$ // *ikkibu*.

[70] Something that is anathema to a particular god (e.g. SP 26 Sec. A 4, cf. Alster 1997: 278): aš$_2$ a$_2$-zi-ga bal-e-di-˹x˺-[x] dumu-nita e$_2$ ad-da-[na-ta] sar-ra niĝ$_2$-ge$_{17}$ ^{d}nin-urta-[ke$_4$] '[to] curse violently (lit. with raised arm) […] and drive a son [from] his father's house – *niĝge* [of] Ninurta'; (e.g. SP 26 Sec. A 8, cf. Alster 1997: 279): niĝ$_2$ zu a-na-am$_3$ ga-ra-ad-da-be$_2$ niĝ$_2$ nu-zu a-na-am$_3$ lu$_2$ ki-inim ba-ab-e$_3$ niĝ$_2$-ge$_{17}$ ^{d}utu-ke$_4$ 'when a witness comes forward, (saying) "let me tell you what I know" (but) he does not know that – *niĝge* of Utu'; inappropriate behaviour in general (e.g. SP 3.161, cf. Alster 1997: 107): šu nu-luḫ-ḫa ka-e tum$_3$-da niĝ$_2$-ge$_{17}$-ga-am$_3$ 'to put unwashed hands into the mouth is a *niĝge*' (n.b. Alster translates niĝ$_2$-ge$_{17}$ in this case as "disgusting"); violating the natural order of things (e.g. SP 3.14, cf. Alster 1997: 82): am-e niĝ$_2$-ge$_{17}$ ^{ĝeš}apin-na-kam 'a wild bull – it is a *niĝge* of the plough.' Jana Matuszak (2017) understands the use of niĝ$_2$-ge$_{17}$ without reference to a particular god to concern "offense against common decency", especially when it is used of women's behaviour that was considered inappropriate.

ikkibu-transgression of his (personal) god, (who) ate *ikkibu*-transgression of his (personal) goddess.' Especially in *Šurpu* and related compositions, the concept of *ikkibu* is very closely related to other conceptions of transgression. Many of the possible transgressions considered in these compositions represent crossing boundaries of propriety, violations of established order, and incursions upon what should be reserved to the gods.

Akkadian *ikkibu*, when used in this sense, often occurs as the object of the verb *akālu*, literally 'to eat'. The verb *akālu* is also used with other terms for cultic offences, such as *anzillu* and *asakku*. The same verb is used in the context of profane offences that are associated with the mouth, such as *karṣa akālu* 'to slander' (lit. 'to eat something that has been pinched off').[71] This idiom, like similar usages with *asakku* and *nīšu*, possibly has its origins in rites involving eating and drinking that accompanied an oath-taking ceremony.[72] While we cannot say for certain whether such ceremonies were carried out every time an oath was sworn,[73] it seems likely that this mostly represents a metaphorical use of language, in the same way that *māmītu*-curse retains a connection with its conceptual origins in oath-taking. However, an association with eating continues to form part of the conceptualization of taboos and transgressions, particular in terms of abdominal symptoms and the use of emetics and enemas to treat them. In this way, the understanding that transgressions could have been 'eaten' is extended to other concepts (*māmītu*, *arratu*, *arnu*, etc.) which are closely related to the concept of *ikkibu*, but which are not used with the verb *akālu*. This demonstrates some of the commonalities in the underlying thinking behind these concepts, suggesting that

[71] Cf. e.g. CAD K 222–223. That the mouth is the associative element, rather than there being some form of ritual eating accompanying slander, is evidence by the fact that this phrase is replaced by *karṣī qabûm* in the Amarna correspondence (Jaques 2006: 279–280n.577). The term *karṣu* derives from the past participle of the verb *karāṣu* 'to pinch off' (Kouwenberg 2010: 202).
[72] Charpin 1997: 90–94.
[73] Charpin 1997: 95.

overarching theories about the workings of transgression and its punishment had been or were being developed in the context of these various compositions.

The broad range of meanings outlined above argues against a straightforward understanding of the terms nig̃$_2$-ge$_{17}$ and *ikkibu* as equivalent to the modern notion of 'taboo' or to the Biblical concept of 'abomination' (Heb. תועבה *tōʿēbāh*), to which they are occasionally compared.[74] In respect of this latter understanding, Willian W. Hallo distinguishes between 'taboos' as everyday infractions against social expectations and 'abominations' as infractions against God.[75] However, such a distinction could not be applied in the context of Mesopotamian thought, since any transgression against the established order of the universe was also considered a direct offence against the gods. In reference to *Šurpu*, on the other hand, Geller argues that the Akkadian term *ikkibu* refers to "privately committed sins that have not escaped divine notice" and therefore that "since most of these acts are not punishable by law, they can be classified as [taboos]".[76] However, Geller elsewhere acknowledges that the usage of *ikkibu* in *Šurpu* is closely related to the concept of *māmītu*,[77] and my arguments for why 'taboo' is an unsuitable translation for *māmītu* (see § 2.1.1.1) should therefore also apply to *ikkibu*. Given the problems with the translation 'taboo', and in order not to leave the terms untranslated, I have chosen to qualify nig̃-ge$_{17}$ and *ikkibu* with 'transgression', although with reference to the broader range of possible meanings discussed here.

[74] Cf. Hallo 1985; Van der Toorn 1985: 43–44.
[75] Hallo 1985: 38.
[76] Geller 2012: 394.
[77] Geller 1990: 114.

2.1.2.2 *asakku* // azag

Sumerian azag and related Akkadian *asakku*[78] are normally written with the signs KU$_3$.AN, combining the signs for 'pure, shiny' and 'divine', suggesting that that this term may have originally denoted "einen sakralen Gegenstand bzw. Tempelschatz".[79] The range of verbs that take *asakku* as their object, including *šarāqu* 'to steal' and *leqû* 'to take', certainly suggest that it concerned cultic objects, but the term, like *ikkibu*, is also used as the object of the verb *akālu* 'to eat'.[80] In this way, its meaning converges with *ikkibu*, referring generally to anything reserved for the gods, as well as the act and punishment of transgressions against the reserved items.[81]

As a form of punishment for transgressions against the gods, the term *asakku* converges with the demon Asakku (usually written a$_2$-sag$_3$), based on their homophony and perhaps also a demonization of *asakku* // azag as divine punishment,[82] similar to the process by *māmītu*-curse and *arratu*-curse are portrayed as demon-like entities (§ 2.2.4). The Asakku demon thus comes to represent the personification of the punishment that results from *asakku* as a transgression against the gods.[83] As with *māmītu* and *arratu*, there is no reason to distinguish between the disease-bearing demon and the act of transgression that it punishes.[84] Attestations of the term in the *āšipūtu* corpus reflect this semantic scope, especially where it is juxtaposed with other

[78] Löhnert (2012: 250) would have the Akkadian loaned from the Sumerian, but the direction of travel is not entirely clear, especially as the Sumerian is a diri-reading, meaning that this pronunciation is not inherent in the writing.
[79] Löhnert 2012: 250.
[80] On the eating of *asakku* and its possible origins in oath-swearing ceremonies involving food, see Charpin 1997. This suggests that at least food offerings were also included within the range of restricted items, rather than only metal cultic objects (*pace* Geller 2012: 394). However, it is more likely that the term carries the same broad range of meanings as *ikkibu*, and that the use of the verb 'to eat' has become figurative and does not necessarily require anything edible to be involved.
[81] Löhnert 2012: 250.
[82] Cf. Geller 2016: 81n.62.
[83] Bácskay 2013: 4–5.
[84] Charpin (1997: 96) notes, in relation to *asakku*, that "le demon/maladie pourrait bien être à l'origine la même réalité que le tabou, une force maléfique qui s'éveille en celui qui a transgressé un serment."

transgression terminology (e.g. *Šurpu* III 141): *ma-mit ar*$_2$*-ni u a-sak-ki* [u_2] '*māmītu*-curse of *arnu*-crime-punishment and *asakku*-transgression [(refrain)].' The juxtaposition with *arnu* suggest that *asakku* has a similar semantic range, referring to both the sacrilege and its punishment (see § 2.1.3.1). Whether the disease-bearing demon is also meant here is difficult to say, especially as there is no evidence for *arnu* as a demon, but the demonic form of *māmītu*-curse is presumably understood to carry out the punishment of both the other forms of transgression. This ambiguity is also reflected in a commentary on the extispicy series *Multābiltu* (CCP 3.4.10.A.b iv 13′):[85] *marṣu*(ge$_{17}$) *ma-mit asakku*(a$_2$.sag$_3$) *iṣbat*(dab)-*su imât*(ug$_7$) 'the patient, *māmītu*-curse, *asakku* has seized him – he will die.' The spelling of *asakku* here suggests that demon is meant, but it is *māmītu*-curse that is acting as a demon by 'seizing' the patient. Perhaps the terms are instead in apposition, which would provide additional support for my argument that these various terms for transgression and their punishment converge around a common theoretical framework in the *āšipūtu* corpus.

2.1.2.3 *anzillu* // an-zil

Akkadian *anzillu* is probably a loanword from Sumerian an-zil,[86] but the precise meaning of the latter is uncertain. Like *ikkibu*, it is often associated with the concept of 'taboo' and is translated with terms like "abomination",[87] "Abscheu",[88] or "Verbotenes".[89] It appears to have referred originally to an object or substance causing ritual contamination upon contact: in this case, the verb or which it is the object, usually *akālu* 'to eat' or *kabāsu* 'to tread (upon)', may indicate the nature of the substance

[85] Online at ccp.yale.edu/P421750, accessed 22/07/2019. Published in Koch 2005: 245.
[86] E.g. Löhnert 2012: 250.
[87] CAD A/2 153.
[88] AHw I 56.
[89] Löhnert 2012: 250.

involved.[90] The suffering associated with other forms of transgression could also be contracted through contagion (see § 3.4) The term *anzillu*, however, occurs relatively infrequently in the sources examined in my thesis. Exceptions in *Šurpu* include an entry in one of the long, formulaic lists where it occurs alongside *ikkibu* (VIII 79, cited at § 2.1.2), and one instance where it occurs alone (IV 5): *an-zil-lu kub-bu-su pa-ša₂-ru bu* 'to tread on *anzillu*-transgression, to release (it?), (refrain).' The term's association with contagion or ritual contamination is suggested by its juxtaposition with contaminated water in the following *lipšur*-litany (KAL 10, Nr. 27–33, 93): *an-zil-*⌜*la lu*⌝ *ik-bu-us₂ ru-mi₃-ka-ti-šu₂ ana maḫar*(igi) *ili*(dingir)*-šu₂ lu u₂-šer₂-*⌜*di*⌝ [KIMIN(= *lū* du₈^{meš}*-šu₂ lū pa-sa-*⌜*si*⌝)][91] 'whether he trod on *anzillu*-transgression or caused his wash-water to flow in the presence of his god, [may *they* be loosened for him, may *it* be erased *for him*].' It is possible that the second half of the line elaborates upon the first half: the *anzillu* that has been committed (lit. 'trodden on') consists of the serious transgression of bringing contaminated materials into the presence of a god. As with *ikkibu* and *asakku*, due to the problems inherent in the translation 'taboo' as well as the uncertainty in understanding of the term as a literal or figurative form of cultic contamination, I qualify the term *anzillu* only conventionally with 'transgression'.

2.1.3 Sin and punishment

2.1.3.1 *arnu* // nam-da₆

The term *arnu* is another particularly important term relating to transgression that parallels the usage of the terms *māmītu* and *arratu* to some extent, although it has a

[90] Löhnert 2012: 250.

[91] For possible interpretations of the difficult writing of this refrain, see Maul 2019: 174. Later in the same incantation (KAL 10, Nr. 27–33, 93), one MS has a refrain closer to what we would expect in the above case (H ii 2): *lu pašrūnim*(bur₂)^{meš}*-šu₂ lu* ⌜*paṭrūnim*(du₈)⌝[^{meš}*-šu₂*] 'may they be released for him, may they be loosened for him.'

quite different origin to these concepts. Nevertheless, the proximity of the concepts of *arnu* and *māmītu* in particular, and their significance the Mesopotamian exorcist's conceptualization of transgression and divine punishment, is expressed rather clearly in one of the incantations in *Šurpu* (IV 88): *ar*$_2$*-nu ma-mit ša*$_2$ *a-na šu*$^{!?}$(SU)*-uz-zuq*[92] *amēlūti*(nam.lu$_2$.u$_{18}$.lu) *šaknū*(gar)^{nu} '*arnu*-punishment (and) *māmītu*-curse, which are placed as a source of anxiety for humankind.' The terms *māmītu* and *arnu* are used in a complementary way in other areas of Mesopotamian scholarship.[93] One namerimburruda-incantation (KAL 10, Nr. 16–26) contains parallel passages with metaphors for the removal of *arnu*-punishment (18–36) and *māmītu*-curse (37–55), both of which passages appear to be exactly the same other than their object of reference. However, there remain key differences in the usage of the two terms in *āšipūtu* compositions concerning transgression. Most prominently, there is an apparent lack of independent rituals against *arnu*-punishment or any extended lists of examples of *arnu*-punishment, both of which exist for *māmītu*-curse and *arratu*-curse (see §§ 3.1–3.2). Indeed, in contrast to *māmītu* and *arratu*, the term *arnu* is used in a narrower range of contexts and subsequently the origins and interpretation of the term are the object of considerably less discussion in modern scholarship.

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[92] This line is preserved in several witnesses as follows (cf. Borger 2000: 70):

Nin1 rev. 18	*ar*$_2$*-nu ma-mit ša*$_2$ *a-na* SU*-uz-zuq* nam-lu$_2$-u$_{18}$-lu gar*-nu*
Nin3 6′	[ ] *ša*$_2$ *a-na* SU*-uz-zuq* nam-lu$_2$-u$_{18}$-lu gar*-nu*
As1 rev. 33	*ar-nu ma-mit ša*$_2$ *a-na šu-su-uq a-me-lu-ti* ⌜*šak*⌝*-nu bu*
ST1 rev. 15	*ar-ni ma-mit ša*$_2$ E*-zu-qu a-me-lu-tu*$_2$ *ša*$_2$-⌜*kin*⌝ *bu*
ST2 rev. 19	⌜*ar*⌝-[ ]

The spelling in As1 suggests a Š-stem infinitive of *nazāqu* 'to be worried, anxious' (with Assyrian alternation of /z/ and /s/, cf. Luukko 2004: 75–76). Reiner (1958: 28) therefore proposes emending ST1 as follows: … *ša*$_2$ <*a-na šu->un*$^{!}$(E)*-zu-qu* … While the writing SU for *šu* in the Nineveh MSS is problematic, this could be a mistake derived from the same source. Without further evidence, Reiner's emendation and interpretation as *šuzzuq*(*u*) remains the most plausible solution.

[93] Cf. Van der Toorn 1985: 52, citing a catalogue of birth omens (CT 28 29, 2): *mīt*(uš$_2$) *māmīti*(nam.⌜erim$_2$⌝) : *mīt*(uš$_2$) *ar*$_2$*-ni imât*(ug$_7$) 'he will die the death of *māmītu*-curse : death of *arnu*-punishment.'

Akkadian *arnu*, also written *annu*,[94] is of unknown etymology and has no secure Semitic cognates.[95] In bilingual and lexical texts, Akkadian *arnu* corresponds to Sumerian nam.da$_6$(-g), which is also of uncertain etymology.[96] The two terms have been defined, in one sense, as a legal infraction and its punishment.[97] It has been suggested that it should be understood in this sense as a crime of "commission", in contrast to the crime of "omission" signified by *ḫīṭu*.[98] In another sense, *arnu* has been understood as a moral transgression and the consequence thereof.[99] In both senses, *arnu* has a similar semantic range to *māmītu* and other terms for transgressions and crimes, encompassing both the act and the consequences.[100] The modern association of the consequential end of this range with the concept of 'guilt'[101] may explain why rituals such as *Šurpu* have been understood to have a psychiatric purpose.[102]

[94] Cf. GAG § 35d on the assimilation of /r/ to the following consonant. Corresponding examples include *arnabu*/*annabu* 'hare' and *qarnu*/*qannu* 'horn; hem (of a garment)'.
[95] The cognate verb *arānu*, which usually appears in the D-stem, is derived from the noun, and is used in a similar way to other denominative D-stem verbs (Kouwenberg 1997: 310–312). A form *a-ra-na*, which appears in texts from Emar, may represent a West Semitic cognate to Akkadian *arnu*, but this interpretation is far from secure (Fleming 2000: 25).
[96] The first part of the term (nam) is understood as a noun meaning 'state' or 'status' and, by extension, 'fate' (cf. e.g. Jagersma 2010: 118). The second part presents more difficulties. The most common writing, TAG, is probably to be read da$_6$(-g) due to the spelling nam-dag (cf. Attinger 2017 s.v. nam-da$_6$-g, nam-dag). The verb dag 'to rove about' provides no obvious sense, so it is tempting to understand this as a writing of the verb ta$_3$(-g) 'to stretch out, extend'. This verb was originally intransitive, with the transitive meaning 'to touch' and therefore its association with Akkadian *lapātu* arising from causative constructions, especially with šu (cf. Attinger 1993: 721). It would therefore be possible to understand nam-ta$_3$(-g) as 'state of going beyond' or 'transgression', but the spelling with /d/ makes this overall interpretation difficult. See Ludwig and Metcalf 2017: 15–16 for further discussion and bibliography. I am especially grateful to Marie-Christine Ludwig for providing me with these references.
[97] E.g. AHw I 70: "Unrecht" and CAD A/2 294: "wrongdoing, misdeed, offense; crime, punishment".
[98] E.g. Moran 1992: 243–244. It is doubtful whether this interpretation holds up for *Šurpu* as, although *ḫīṭu* and *ḫiṭītu* are used throughout, *arnu* contrasts primarily with *māmītu*, and therefore, as I argue below, should be understood primarily as the consequence rather than the act of transgression. On *ḫīṭu*, see § 2.1.3.3.
[99] E.g. AHw I 70: "Sünde; Schuld" and CAD A/2 294: "guilt". Fink (2012: 50) comments on the "Doppelbegrifflichkeit von *arnu* als „Schuld" *und* „Strafe"." In the Old Assyrian period, the term *arnum* is also used to refer to the 'fine' or 'compensation' that are the legal consequence of a crime (Veenhof 2003: 447; 477n.234).
[100] Cf. Neumann 2006: 34–36.
[101] E.g. Maul (2019: 45) translates *arnu* with "Schuldenlast".
[102] E.g. Kinnier Wilson 1965.

In terms of the scope of the concept of *arnu* and its relation to other forms of transgression, Jean Bottéro believed it to be a sub-category of *māmītu*.[103] Stefan Maul suggests that the transgression represented by *arnu* could instead result in *māmītu*-curse as its punishment.[104] Karel van der Toorn, however, correctly warns against making such assumptions about how the ancients thought.[105] My analysis of *Šurpu* and related compositions will demonstrate that such wariness is warranted. Although the terms describe two closely related concepts, they were probably regarded by the compilers of these compositions as discrete categories, especially as they are often used in parallel, but ultimately contrasting, contexts.[106] In the following chapter, I will show that *arnu* refers in *Šurpu* primarily to the consequence of transgressions against people, especially family members and close social acquaintances (§ 3.2.3).[107] However, whether this can tell us something about the scope of the concept (i.e. that *arnu* is a more mundane counterpart to the supernatural *māmītu*-curse) or instead reflects the limitations of its context (i.e. shorter lists call for a focus on family members, as with the attestations of *arratu*-curse in *Šurpu*), remains uncertain. As there is also no evidence for *arnu* being perceived as an externalized force regulating transgressions (in contrast to *māmītu* and *arratu*, see § 3.5), I adopt the simple translation 'punishment' where its meaning parallels that of *māmītu*, or 'crime-punishment' where the term is understood to encompass the whole spectrum of the transgression and its consequences.

[103] He describes it as "une copie réduite" (Bottéro 1977: 134). This is presumably based on the much narrower range of examples of *arnu*-punishment that are listed at the end of *Šurpu* III (see § 3.1).
[104] Maul 2019: 154. Cf. also Chalendar 2019: 206.
[105] Van der Toorn 1985: 52–53.
[106] As noted already by Geller (1990: 112-113) in his review of Van der Toorn 1985.
[107] This is noted already by Bottéro in his study of *Šurpu* (1977: 134). Takayoshi Oshima (2011: 17–18) also notes that "the majority of the offences which triggered divine wrath against human beings were not unlawful acts (e.g. thefts, murder, adultery) at all, but rather negligence of cult duties and lack of reverence towards the divine beings".

2.1.3.2 *šērtu* // šer$_7$-da

The Sumerian term šer$_7$-da has legalistic origins and is attested in legal texts from the third millennium onwards with a meaning approximating "Verbrechen" or "Übeltat".[108] Over the course of the second millennium, the term underwent a semantic shift towards the sense of a "rechtlich-moralische Sünde" as well as encompassing the consequences of this, reflecting the fact that moral transgressions were usually manifested in their terrestrial or cultic consequences.[109] It is in this sense that the Akkadian *šērtum* is used alongside *arnum* in Atra-ḫasīs, with *šērtum* representing the consequence of *arnum*.[110] In Akkadian legal sources of the second millennium, the term *šērtum* is largely displaced by *arnum*.[111] For example, in the Laws of Ḫammurapi, the term *šērtum* appears only in the curse section of the epilogue (l 47–51):[112] *ar-nam kab-tam / še-re-su$_2$ ra-bi-tam* / *ša i-na zu-um-ri-šu* / *la i-ḫal-li-qu$_2$* / *li-mu-su$_2$-ma* 'may (Sîn) impose upon him a weighty *arnu*-punishment, his great *šērtu*-penalty, which shall not disappear from his body.' In this context, *šērtum* appears to signify the punishment of a moral transgression, since it appears only in the curse section in juxtaposition with *arnum*, representing the legal offence and punishment.[113] Additionally, the phrase *šērtu rabītu* 'great *šērtu*', also attested as the *šērtu* of Sîn or *šērtu kabittu* 'heavy *šērtu*',[114] could refer, particularly in *kudurru* inscriptions, to *saḫaršubbû*-leprosy.[115] Similarly, the *šērtu* of Marduk appears to have signified *agannultillû* 'dropsy'.[116] As used in these

[108] Mittermayer 2013: 33. In this respect it is like nam-da$_6$, although this term relates more to divine legal authority (cf. Löhnert 2012: 249 and § 2.2).
[109] Löhnert 2012: 249.
[110] Mittermayer 2013: 42. Cf. *Atra-ḫasīs* III vi 25 (Lambert and Millard 1969: 100): [*be-el ar*]-⌜*nim*⌝ *šu-ku-un še-re-et-ka* 'impose your penalty on the [criminal] (lit. [possessor] of *arnu*).'
[111] Löhnert 2012: 249.
[112] Cf. Roth 1997: 138.
[113] Löhnert 2012: 250.
[114] E.g. CAD Š/II 325.
[115] Nougayrol 1948: 205–207.
[116] Nougayrol 1948: 207n.12.

examples, the term *šērtu* also reflects the fact that severe illness forms a significant part of the punishment for transgression (see § 4.3.2). This also suggests that its usage in the Laws of Ḫammurapi represents a transgression that goes beyond the sort of terrestrial crimes that the Laws ideally regulate.

In *āšipūtu* compositions concerning transgression, the term *šērtu* does not appear independently but is usually juxtaposed with other transgression-related terminology (e.g. *Šurpu* II 32): *ul i-de šer*$_3$*-ti ili*(dingir) *ul i-de en-net* ^{d}*ištari*(iš$_8$.tar$_2$) 'he does not know the *šērtu*-offence-penalty of the god, he does not know the *ennetu*-wrongdoing-punishment of the goddess.' Here, the terms *šērtu* and *ennetu* presumably encompass both the initial offence *against* the god but also the subsequent punishment *from* the god, playing on the ambiguity of the construct state's ability to form both subjective and objective genitive phrases. In one namerimburruda-incantation, *šērtu* is closely associated with *māmītu*-curse and is perhaps even supposed to have resulted from it (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 45, 3–4): *mi-na-a e-pu-uš-ma še-er-ta*$_5$ *na-ša-ku* / {x} *a-na nūri*(zalag$_2$) *at-ma-ma še-er-ta*$_5$ *na-ša-ku* 'what have I done so that I am bearing a *šērtu*-penalty? [4] I brought a *māmītu*-curse upon myself concerning the light and so I am bearing a *šērtu*-penalty.' The second half of the line is repeated in the following lines with ditto-signs, while the entries in the first half enumerate instances of *māmītu*-curse relating to gods, artefacts, and actions, with all of them apparently leading to *šērtu*-penalty, implied by the conjunctive suffix *-ma*. I have chosen to translate *šērtu* as 'offence-penalty', with these precise English terms employed only for the sake of differentiation given the vast range of transgression-related terminology in the Mesopotamian sources. As with other terms of this kind, I will sometimes translate only as 'offence' or 'penalty' depending on the context, but it should be remembered that

these represent a single Akkadian term that encompasses both ends of the spectrum, and indeed the entire process in between.

2.1.3.3 *gillatu*, *ḫīṭu*, and *ḫiṭītu*

A variety of other terms relating to transgressions and their punishment occur throughout the relevant primary sources. The term *gillatu*, for example, appears in juxtaposition with *arnu* (e.g. *Šurpu* II 34): *a-na ili*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *ar-nu-šu*$_2$ *a-na* ^{d}*ištari*(iš$_8$.tar$_2$)-*šu*$_2$ *gil*$_2$*-lat-su* 'his *arnu*-crime-punishment concerns his (personal) god, his *gillatu*-sin-punishment concerns his (personal) goddess'; and *šērtu* (e.g. *Šurpu* IV 37–38): *ina šer*$_3$*-ti e-ṭe-ru* / *ina gil*$_2$*-la-ti pa-sa-su* 'to save (him) from the *šērtu*-offence-penalty, to erase (from) the *gillatu*-sin-punishment.' The bipartite structure of the above passages suggests that both terms in each pair should be understood to have the same range of meanings, although the consequential aspect of *gillatu* has not been recognized by the dictionaries.[117] A derived verbal form *gullulu* also occurs in one of the *lipšur*-litanies.[118]

Another term that often occurs alongside *arnu* and *gillatu* is *ḫīṭu* or *ḫiṭītu*, both of which I translate 'wrongdoing-punishment'.[119] For example (*Šurpu* IV 72): *gil*$_2$*-la-ti li-is-su-u*

[117] E.g. CAD G 72: "crime, misdeed, sin", AHw I 288: "Unrecht, Sünde", and Löhnert (2012: 250): "Missetat". A semantic range for *gillatu* that extends to the punishment of transgression is also found in the following passage from the Epic of Gilgameš (SB XI 185–186, cf. George 2003: 714–715) *be-el ar*$_2$*-ni* (var. *ḫi-ṭi*) *e-mid ḫi-ṭa-a-šu*$_2$ / *be-el gil*$_2$*-la-ti e-mid gil*$_2$*-lat*-[*su*] '(upon) the criminal (lit. possessor of *arnu*) (var: wrongdoer, lit. possessor of *ḫīṭu*) impose his *ḫīṭu*-wrongdoing-penalty, [186] (upon) the sinner (lit. possessor of *gillatu*) impose his *gillatu*-sin-punishment.' These statements could be interpreted as expressing the wish that the very same kind of offence be inflicted upon the offender or that the offender gets the appropriate form of punishment. Both ideas could be expressed in the same terms in Akkadian, as *emēdu* can mean 'to inflict (something bad)' as well as 'impose (punishment)'. This is similar to the notion of *tūrtu*, which sometimes represents the 'turning back' of evil against its originator (see § 2.1.4).

[118] KAL 10, Nr. 27–33, 82: *lu i-šeṭ lu u*$_2$*-gal-lil* KIMIN(= *lū* du$_8^{meš}$*-šu lū pa-sa-*ˈ*si*ˈ) … 'whether he neglected or he committed a *gillatu*-sin, may *they* be loosened for him, may *it* be erased *for him*…'

[119] Both terms are derived from the verb *ḫaṭû*, which conveys a sense of deficiency or omission (cf. e.g. CAD Ḫ 156–158), and Löhnert (2012: 25) accordingly translates *ḫīṭu* "Nachlässigkeit, Fahrlässkeit, Defizit" and *ḫiṭītu* "Nachlässigkeit, Defizit". The broad sense of deficiency is confirmed by the association in a commentary to *Šurpu* (CCP 2.1.B 6, online at ccp.yale.edu/P395480, accessed 30/08/2019) between *ḫīṭu* and *eʾiltu*, a term that originally carried the meaning of 'obligation, debt' (cf. e.g. CAD E 51–52). The term *eʾiltu* is likewise juxtaposed with *arnu* in an incantation from the second house of *Bīt rimki* (Læssøe 1955: 39, 39): [*ar*]*-ni iʾ-il-ti eli*(ugu)-*ša*$_2$ *mê*(a)[^{meš} *a-ra-muk*] '[I wash] the

ḫi-ṭi-tu li-šal-li-mu ‘may they remove *gillatu*-sin-punishment, may they amend *ḫiṭītu*-wrongdoing-punishment’; (IV 79–81): *tup-pi ar₂-ni-šu₂ ḫi-ṭa-ti-šu₂ gil₂-la-ti-šu₂ ma-ma-ti-šu₂* / *tu-ma-ma-ti-šu₂ ana mê*(a)^{meš} *linnadâ*(šub)^{a} / *ḫi-ṭa-tu-šu₂ lip-tas-si-sa gil₂-la-tu-šu₂ lis-sa-a* ‘[80] may [79] the tablet of his *arnu*-crime-punishments, of his *ḫiṭītu*-wrongdoing-punishments, of his *gillatu*-sin-punishments, of his *māmītu*-curses, [80] of his *tumāmītu*-oaths be thrown into water, [81] may his *ḫiṭītu*-wrongdoing-punishments be effaced, may his *gillatu*-sin-punishments be removed.’ A closely related term, *ennetu*, derived from a verb *enēnu* meaning ‘to sin’ or ‘to punish’,[120] also occurs independently in *Šurpu* (II 32), but a commentary to this line (CCP 2.1.B 5)[121] uses the term *ḫīṭu* to explain *ennetu*. This suggests that, for the ancient commentator at least, the two terms could be understood to refer to corresponding concepts. This is further supported by the fact that, at least in the formulaic lists of transgressions in *Šurpu*, the term *ennetu* never occurs in the same list as the term *ḫīṭu*. The term does, however, occur in juxtaposition with *šērtu* (e.g. *Šurpu* II 32, cited at § 2.1.3.2), suggesting that it too could encompass both offence and punishment. I therefore also translate *ennetu* ‘wrongdoing-punishment’.

2.1.4 Other relevant terminology

Finally, I discuss a few less frequent terms that are also relatively important for understanding the broader intellectual context in which the conceptualization of transgression was developed. They include the terms *tūrtu* ‘turning’ and *maš’altu* ‘questioning’, which often occur together and have parallels in juridical terminology,

water (of) my *arnu*-crime-punishment (and) my deficit over her (the witch).’ Nevertheless, my translation preserves a sense of agency, as we shall see that offences resulting from omission or negligence were considered equally severe transgressions against the gods as those that were committed actively and with purpose (see §§ 3.2–3.3).

[120] Cf. e.g. AHw I 217; CAD E 164.

[121] Online at ccp.yale.edu/P395480, accessed 22/07/2019.

and the verb *šaʾālu* 'to question', which is used in one *Šurpu* incantation in a way that appears to parallel the use of *mašʾaltu*. The term *šukunnû* 'accusation' also has legalistic origins but can have cultic connotations, while the term *miḫru* 'incident' occurs across medical and other exorcistic compositions.

The noun *tūrtu*, derived from the verb *târu* 'to turn (back)', is often used together with its cognate verb in the D-stem and has a variety of meanings including 'restitution', 'reply', and perhaps 'relapse'.[122] In Neo-Babylonian legal texts, the verb *târu*, occasionally also in the D-stem, was used to described 'stepping back' from the process of taking an oath, thereby forfeiting the case but not attracting the risk of divine punishment.[123] Compositions of the *āšipūtu* corpus regularly employ terms and ritual actions with legalistic origins, but the usage of the phrase *tūrtu turru* in the *āšipūtu* compositions perhaps differs from the legalistic meanings outlined above. In *Šurpu*, the term generally appears in formulaic lists and occurs outside of such lists in only one instance (III 96): *ma-mit tur-ta a-na amēli*(lu_2) *tur-ri* u_2 '*māmītu*-curse of 'turning' a 'turning' against a man, (refrain).' Erica Reiner translates "to retaliate against someone"[124] and the CAD translates "turning (evil?) back upon a man".[125] Daniel Schwemer understands *tūrtu* in this context to refer generally to illegitimately lifting

[122] Cf. e.g. CAD T 491.
[123] Sandowicz 2011.
[124] Reiner 1958: 22.
[125] CAD T 491.

the effects of *māmītu*-curse.[126] In relation to *Šurpu* III 96, he suggests that lifting the *māmītu*-curse from oneself could be achieved by turning it against someone else.[127]

The usage of the phrase in a text paralleling a namerimburruda-incantation suggests, by contrast, that the 'turning' is against the patient himself, and apparently committed by an unspecified subject (e.g. BM 99094, 5′–6′):[128] [*ša ina*] ⌜*kaspi*⌝([ku$_3$].babbar) *ḫurāṣi*(ku$_3$.si$_{22}$) *siparri*(zabar) *erî*(urudu) *annaki*(an.na) *abāri*(a.bar$_2$) / [*sar-ta*] ⌜*it*⌝-*ma-ma tur-ta u$_2$-tir-šu$_2$* '[(he) who, concerning] silver, gold, bronze, copper, tin, lead, [6′] brought *māmītu*-curse concerning [falseness] (upon himself) and then a 'turning' was 'turned' against him.'[129] The surrounding passage lists various other materials in place of the precious metals in this line, which are presumably involved in some way with the transgression in question.[130] In the parallel namerimburruda-incantation (KAL 10, Nr. 38–39), the passage is situated between a list of possible transgressions, mostly against various gods, and a litanic section that opens with a formulaic list of sources of suffering before appealing to a long list of gods to release them. Maul understands the

[126] Schwemer 2007: 162. In support of this, he references a passage in Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty (SAA 2 6: 377–380): *šum-ma at-tu-nu tur-tu tu-tar-ra-*[*a-ni*] / *ma-mit ta-pa-šar-a-ni ši-in-ga-te* […] / [*ina*] ⌜*pāni*(igi)⌝*-ni ša$_2$* ⌜*tur*⌝*-tu tur-ri ma-mit pa-ša$_2$-a-ri ta-ḫa-sa-sa-*[*a-ni*] / ⌜*te*⌝*-pa-ša$_2$-a-ni* 'if you 'turn' a 'turning', [378] (and) release *māmītu*-curse, (or) … […], [379] (or), [in] our presence, plan [380] (or) perform (a ritual) [379] to 'turn' a 'turning' (and) release *māmītu*-curse …' This passage suggests that, in this context at least, *tūrta turru* had a meaning relatively close to that of *māmīta pašāru*, which in the letters of Neo-Assyrian scholars may describe the performance of a namerimburruda or similar ritual (see § 1.3.1.2).

[127] Schwemer 2007: 162, "In *Šurpu* III 96 wird wohl darauf Bezug genommen, daß man im Zuge der Aufhebung des eignen Fluches diesen auf einen anderen Menschen lenken konnte." He suggests this in the context of a singular reference to *tūrtu* among designations for witchcraft, but admits that there is so far no other evidence for his tentative suggestion that it might refer to "Gegenzauber aus der Perspektive des Opfers".

[128] Published by Maul 2019: 205–206. It closely parallels the more fragmentary lines in KAL 10, Nr. 38–39, 22′–26′, where the refrain is however slightly different (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 38–39, 22′): ⌜*ša*⌝ [*ina kaspi*(ku$_3$.babbar) *ḫurāṣi*(ku$_3$.si$_{22}$)] ⌜*erî*(urudu)⌝ *siparri*(zabar) ⌜*annaki*(an.na)⌝ [*abāri*(a.bar$_2$) …] ⌜*sar*$^{?}$⌝*-ru tur-tu$_2$ ut-*⌜*tir*⌝-[*šu$_2$*] 'he who [concerning silver, gold], copper, bronze, tin, [lead …] *being dishonest*, a 'turning' was 'turned' against him.' This suggests that the offence involves being false in some way, but the sense of *tamû* in BM 99094 is still ambiguous.

[129] The form *uttīr* is understood as a Dt preterite of *târu*, used as the passive of *turru* (*pace* CAD T 278, where the Dt-stem of *târu* is translated "to be avenged").

[130] According to Maul (2019: 206), these are all materials that the patient would have to procure for use in the release ritual against *māmītu*-curse.

passage to relate to falsely sworn oaths,[131] understanding *sarta* as adverbial, but it could also be the object of *itma* with its transferred meaning 'to bring *māmītu*-curse upon oneself (concerning) …'[132] The use of the conjunctive *-ma* could indicate that *tūrtu* is a consequence of, or a subsequent but unrelated act to, the preceding *māmītu*-curse. The passive Dt-stem suggests that this 'turning' was done by someone other than the subject of *itma*, and therefore Schwemer's understanding that it refers to the lifting of the curse probably does not apply in this context. The act of 'turning' is perhaps in retaliation for the original act of dishonesty, and *tūrtu* may therefore represent a mechanism by which someone could impose *māmītu*-curse on someone else who had wronged them. In another namerimburruda-incantation addressed primarily to *māmītu*-curse, *tūrtu* is also addressed in the second person and described like a demon, suggesting that it could be viewed in parallel to *māmītu*-curse.[133] This and the entry in *Šurpu* III 96 suggest a close relationship between *māmītu*-curse and *tūrtu*. Whether *tūrtu* represents the lifting of one's own *māmītu*-curse or an act of retaliation for wrongdoing by someone else, its inclusion in the list in *Šurpu* III suggests that this 'turning' was in itself an act of transgression that could attract *māmītu*-curse.

The noun *maš'altu*, which often occurs alongside *tūrtu* in formulaic lists of sources of suffering, is derived from the verb *ša'ālu* 'to question' (see below), and is otherwise used in a variety of contexts. The term *maš'altu* is used in legal proceedings of the Late Babylonian period to refer to the 'interrogation' of the accused before the trial in order

[131] For Maul, *tūrtu* represents the refusal even to take the oath out of fear for its consequences, as *târu* is used in Neo-Babylonian legal texts, and he therefore translates it "Vergeltung(sfluch)" (e.g. Maul 2019: 108).
[132] For a parallel with the nominal form of the same root, see *Šurpu* III 12 (*ma-mit kit-ti u sar-ti* '*māmītu*-curse concerning truth and dishonesty'), discussed at § 3.2.4.
[133] KAL 10, Nr. 4–10, 38–40: ⌜*at-ti*⌝ *tur-tu*$_4$ *mu-na-ri-ṭa-at*$_2$ *irti*(gaba) *u še'rānī*(sa)^{meš} / [*attī*] ⌜*nāsiḫat*(zi)$^{?}$⌝ *kim-*⌜*ti*⌝ [*ša*] *annanna*(nenni) *mār*(a) *annanna*(nenni) / *im-ta ta-as-lu-ḫi mi-na-ti-šu*$_2$ 'you, *tūrtu*, who make chest and 'strings' tremble, [39] [you], who *tear out* the family [of] NN son of NN, [40] you sprinkle his limbs with venom.'

to obtain a confession or discover the whereabouts of stolen goods and this could sometimes involve torture.[134] This is likely to be the sense that the term has in the lists of offences, given the context of the divine courtroom, but I translate 'questioning' as this is more neutral than 'interrogation'. This is also how the related verb *šaʾālu*, correspondingly translated 'to question', seems to be used in one part of the *Šurpu* incantations. A form of the verb *šaʾālu* occurs as a refrain in *Šurpu* II 104–128, with reference to various locations, entities, and actions. For example (*Šurpu* II 104–107): *ša*$_2$-*ʾi-il ša*$_2$-*ʾi-*[*il*] / *ina erši*(geš.na$_2$) *ša*$_2$-*ʾi-*⌜*il*⌝ / *ina* ^{geš}*kussî*(gu.za) *ša*$_2$-*ʾi-*⌜*il*⌝ / *ina* ^{geš}*paššūri*(banšur) *ša*$_2$-*ʾi-il* 'he is questioned, he is questioned, [105] concerning the bed he is questioned, [106] concerning the chair he is questioned, [107] concerning the table he is questioned.' Reiner transcribes the verbal form as *šāʾil* and translates "he has asked for a sign",[135] presumably understanding the form as a stative of the G-stem active participle. However, a new variant to the first line has a different form (Nin7 III 5′): *iš-ša*$_2$*-il*. This N-stem preterite 'he was questioned' may suggest that we should understand *ša*$_2$-*ʾi-il* as a passive stative 'he is questioned'. While the referents in *Šurpu* II 104–107 parallel the vectors of contagion listed in the immediately preceding passage (100–103, see § 3.4), the entries modifying *šaʾil* go on to include other examples with no obvious connection to contagion (e.g. *Šurpu* II 118–125):

118 *ina a-ḫi nāri*(id$_2$) *ša*$_2$-*ʾi-il*
119 *ina a-ḫi* ^{geš}*eleppi*(ma$_2$) ^{geš}*rukūbi*(ma$_2$.u$_5$) ^{geš}*makūri*(ma$_2$.gur$_8$) *ša*$_2$-*ʾi-il*
120 *ina ṣi-it* ^{d}*šam-ši u e-reb* ^{d}*šam-ši ša*$_2$-*ʾi-il*
121 *ina ilī*(dingir)^{meš} *ša*$_2$ *šamê*(an)^{e} *parakkī*(bara$_2$)^{meš} *ša*$_2$ *qaq-qa-ri ša*$_2$-*ʾi-il*

[134] Holtz 2009: 285–290. This in contrast to the usage of the cognate verb *šaʾālu* in the same contexts, which denoted the process by which the suspect and witnesses were questioned by officials in order to obtain testimony given under oath (Holtz 2009: 284–285).
[135] Reiner 1958: 55. This is based on the use of *šaʾālu* in a variety of contexts relating to prophecy and omens. For example, Sargonid-era queries to Šamaš use the verb in their standard opening formula: *šamaš bēlu rabû ša ašallūka anna kīna apalanni* 'Šamaš, great lord, answer me with a firm "yes" to what I ask you.' (Starr 1990: xvi) The phrase *eṭemma šâlu* 'to ask a ghost' is attested in the context of necromancy as a means of obtaining ominous signs (Tropper 1989: 74–75.). The participle *šāʾilu* or *šāʾiltu* (lit. 'asker') is a professional designation that appears to have denoted a diviner specializing in dream interpretation (Zgoll 2006: 406–411). In Neo-Assyrian sources, the term *šāʾilu* usually appears alongside other terms designating prophets (Nissinen 1998: 160–161).

122 *ina parakki*(bara$_2$) *bēli*(en) *u bēlti*(gašan) *ša$_2$-ʾi-il*
123 *ina a-ṣe-e āli*(uru) *u e-reb āli*(uru) *ša$_2$-ʾi-il*
124 *ina a-ṣe-e abulli*(abul) *u e-reb abulli*(abul) *ša$_2$-ʾi-il*
125 *ina a-ṣe-e bīti*(e$_2$) *u e-reb bīti*(e$_2$) *ša$_2$-ʾi-*⌜*il*⌝

Concerning/at the bank of the river he is questioned, [119] concerning/at the side of the boat, barge, ferry he is asked, [120] concerning/at sunrise or sunset he is asked, [121] concerning/at the gods of the sky, the shrines of the earth he is asked, [122] concerning/at the shrine of lord or lady he is asked, [123] concerning/while leaving the city or entering the city he is asked, [124] concerning/while leaving the city-gate or entering the city-gate he is asked, [125] concerning/while leaving the house or entering the house he is asked.

My translation aims to reflect the possible ambiguity as to whether the entries denote the place or subject of questioning. All of the entries in this list are modified by *ina* or *ina aḫi*,[136] and almost all could describe places, times, or objects one could be in the presence of. The only possible exception is the 'gods of the sky' (121, *ilī ša$_2$ šamê*), but this could also refer to a location as they are presumably present in the 'shrines of the earth' (*parakkī ša$_2$ qaqqari*), with which they are in apposition. Either way, the intention is to give a sense of universality: the interrogation about the person's transgression could concern anything or could take place anywhere in his day-to-day life. Several of these entries are paralleled in a namerimburruda-incantation, where they are instead modifying the verb *tamû* (KAL 10, Nr. 38–39, 18–21), suggesting that the same entries could be related to a transgression causing *māmītu*-curse. The position of the *Šurpu* passage between a list of possible transgressions (II 5–103) and a list of deities, above all Šamaš, who are called upon to release the consequences of transgression (II 129–192), also suggests that this may represent a kind of 'interrogation' regarding the source of the patient's *māmītu*-curse, preceding the divine trial. The universalizing sense of the list would therefore reflect the possibility that the patient is unaware of the context of his transgression; presumably, the gods know the

[136] A commentary to *Šurpu* II 114, CCP 2.1.C (online at ccp.yale.edu/P470058, accessed 28/02/2021), suggest that this prepositional phrase was not entirely clear to the ancient commentator, although the further explanation is unfortunately broken (25–27): [*ina a-ḫi u$_2$*]-*re-e ša$_2$-ʾi-il* / [*ša$_2$ ina* (?) *u$_2$*$^{?}$-*re*$^{?}$]-*e*$^{?}$ *i-za-zu-u-ni ina libbi*(ša$_3$) *u$_2$-ma-me* / [x x x x] ⌜x⌝ *ki-i an-ni-i* x ⌜x⌝ (x) *ra* ⌜x⌝ '[concerning/at the side] of the stable (means) [26] [*one who*] stands [*in the stable*], in the midst of the animals, [27] [….] … like this …'

sufferer's transgression but must nevertheless go through the standard process of interrogation, a key part of ensuring that he receives a fair trial. Like the use of *maš'altu* in Late Babylonian texts, this could be considered interrogation under torture, since it is the patient's suffering, as a consequence of the transgression, that has led him to admit to the possibility of having committed an unknown transgression and to seek release in the divine trial.

The term *šukunnû* is derived from the verb *šakānu* 'to place' and is occasionally used in legal contexts to refer to something 'placed' upon another person, referring figuratively to an 'accusation' or by extension a 'false accusation'.[137] Another common modern translation 'blasphemy' is presumably derived from contexts where an accusation is being made against the gods or concerning cultic matters.[138] However, according to the term's usage in *Šurpu* (e.g. VIII 81, cited at § 2.1), it is unclear whether the accusation is against the gods or from the gods, because of the ambiguity of the construct state. I therefore retain the basic translation 'accusation', since in these contexts there is no concrete evidence to support a more weighted translation like 'blasphemy'. Whatever their precise significance, the use in *Šurpu* and related compositions of terms which derive from the courtroom context or have legalistic connotations, including *tūrtu*, *maš'altu*, and *šukunnû*, reflects the framing of these rituals as divine trials (see § 1.4.2.2).

Other terminology employed in the ritual incantations, including *tazzimtu* 'complaint' and *meḫertu* 'appeal', also evokes the context of the divine courtroom. The noun *tazzimtu* is derived from a verb *nazāmu* 'to complain' and denotes a complaint usually

[137] E.g. CAD Š/3 232–233, s.v. *šukunnû* B. The AHw (III 1266), however, combines the CAD's two separate entries with the definition "Behandlung, Manipulation (von z.B. Datteln; gegen Menschen oder Gott)".
[138] E.g. CAD Š/3 232 "blasphemy".

addressed to the king or the gods.[139] The term can be written with the Sumerogram i-^{d}utu, literally a vocative expression 'O Utu',[140] reflecting the fact that such complaints were usually addressed to Šamaš. This is noteworthy considering the role that Šamaš plays in many of the exorcistic incantations appealing for release from suffering attributed to transgression. Outside of this context, the term is used in the Epic of Gilgameš, for example, to refer to the complaints made by the inhabitants of Uruk to Anu about the behaviour of Gilgameš (SB Gilg. I 93):[141] *ta-zi-im-ta-ši-na iš-te-nem-me* ^{d}[*a-num*] '[Anu] constantly listened to their complaints.' The *tazzimtu*-complaints thus represent a mechanism by which the people might challenge the highest terrestrial authority, in this case the king, by going directly to the gods, the ultimate cosmic authority.[142] The term is probably also used in this way in a snake omen from Aššur, where it is also associated with the term *arnu* (KAR 384 + 385, obv. 9):[143] [*šumma*] ⌜*ṣērū*(muš)^{meš} *ina bīt*(e$_2$) [*ili*(dingir)] *ir-ta-ka-bu ta-zi-im-tu$_2$ il*(dingir) *bīti*(e$_2$) *ar$_2$-ni iṣabbat*(dab)-*su* '[if] snakes mount each other in a temple: complaint to the god of the temple, an *arnu*-punishment will seize him.' The apodosis of the omen suggests that a valid complaint to the gods about a presumed transgression would result in the appropriate punishment.

The term *meḫertu* is derived from a verb *maḫāru* 'to encounter, come face to face with' and means 'appeal' in the sense of appearing in front of a deity. Many exorcistic rituals involve the patient appearing before the gods and making an appeal for their own innocence or the guilt of their adversary. This often takes the form of incantations, many

[139] E.g. CAD T 302–303.
[140] Cf. Gadotti 2014: 340.
[141] George 2003: 542–543.
[142] Magdalene 2015: 170–171.
[143] Published in Heeßel 2007a: 53–58

of which open with a direct address to a god.[144] This again situates the rituals within a juridical framework, as one would also stand before the judge in a terrestrial courtroom to make one's claims or accusations.

Also derived from the verb *maḫāru* is the noun *miḫru*, literally 'something encountered', which I translate 'incident'. The dictionaries, on the other hand, translate the term *miḫru* with "mishap, unfortunate accident" and "Widriges, böser Zwischenfall".[145] However, the term can occur with specific negative qualification (e.g. *Šurpu* VIII 80: *miḫru lā ṭābu*), suggesting that it was not always necessarily construed as something unfavourable.[146] A composition describing the therapeutic treatment of the symptoms of *māmītu*-curse opens with the term *miḫru* describing what has befallen the patient (KAL 10, Nr. 3, 1): *šumma*(diš) *amēlu*(na) *mi-iḫ-ru ma-ḫi-ir-ma ki-i im-ḫu-ru-šu ul i-*[*de*] 'if (this) man has encountered an incident and he does not [know] that he encountered it.' The editor suggests that this represents a material carrier of impurity,[147] presumably used as a device to understand the process by which *māmītu*-curse could be contracted not from one's own transgressive actions but by transfer from another person (see § 3.4). In *Šurpu*, a *miḫru* refers to something that the patient could encounter without apparent provocation and that could result in *māmītu*-curse (III 125–126): *ma-mit mi-iḫ-*⌜*ru*⌝ *amēlu*(lu_2) *a-ma-ru* [u_2] / *ma-mit mi-iḫ-ru ana* ⌜*maḫar*(igi)⌝ *amēli*(lu_2) *e-*⌜*pe*$^{?}$⌝-[*šu*$^{?}$ u_2] '*māmītu*-curse concerning (this) man seeing an

[144] Examples of such incantations in *Šurpu* include *ilī ul īde* 'O my god, I do not know' and $^{d}gira_3$ abgal kur-ra il_2 'O Girra, *apkallu*-sage, exalted in the land'. The deities addressed in these incantations include Girra, Asalluḫi, and especially Šamaš (see §§ 1.4.2.2–1.4.2.3). Appeals could be made to these higher deities in the case that the patient's relationship with his personal protective deities had been disrupted (Magdalene 2015: 180).
[145] CAD M/2 59; AHw II 641.
[146] The CMAwRo glossary (oracc.museum.upenn.edu/cmawro/cbd/akk/M.html, accessed 22/07/2019) translates *meḫru* as "adversity", but the printed edition has e.g. "evil that I have encountered" (Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 356 13'). In *Maqlû* VII 79a (Abusch 2016: 354), the phrase *amḫur meḫru* is translated "I have encountered an ominous encounter" which, the negative contemporary connotations of 'ominous' notwithstanding, is more neutral.
[147] Maul 2019: 104, "'Unheilsträger' stofflicher Natur".

incident, [(refrain)], [126] *māmītu*-curse concerning [(someone?) *performing*] an incident in the presence of (this) man, [(refrain)].' These entries almost immediately precede the section concerning contagious transmission from other people (*Šurpu* III 128–137, cited at § 3.4).[148] Attestations of the term in anti-witchcraft incantations suggest that *miḫru* could be used by a witch against her victim, and thus could be turned back against the witch by the exorcist (e.g. *Maqlû* VII 70): *mi-ḫir tu-šam-ḫir-in-ni u₂-šam-ḫir-ki* 'the incident that you had me encounter, I shall have you encounter it.' The above references suggest that the term *miḫru* referred to something that could transmit impurity to a person through an encounter with it, whether this was something that happened to appear in the presence of the person or that was deliberately sent by an adversary. As will be demonstrated (§ 3.4), the suffering caused by contagion was considered equivalent to that caused by acts of more active commission or omission, so translations of *miḫru* that convey a sense of misfortune or accident are not entirely appropriate.[149] It is should perhaps instead be understood as a general term for encountered forms of contagion, whether this was a contaminated material, an infectious person, or even a negative omen signalling the patient's suffering.

2.1.5 Summary

In the preceding section, I surveyed terminology used in the *āšipūtu* corpus to describe conceptions of transgression and its consequences. One of the striking commonalities that has emerged is that many of these terms include within their semantic scope both

[148] The intervening entry is however not entirely clear (III 217): *ma-mit ina gišḫurri*(geš.ḫur) *ma-ḫar* ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *a-ra-*$^{\lceil}$*du*$^{\rceil}$ [*u₂*] '*māmītu*-curse concerning going down into a (flour-)design in the presence of Šamaš, [(refrain)].' It possible that this refers to inappropriate ritual practice or, given the surrounding entries, perhaps instead relates to contagion contracted from the evil trapped within the circle of flour.
[149] It has been suggested in a recent overview of the topic that what might be considered 'fortune' and 'misfortune' in Mesopotamia correspond instead to an individual's 'destiny' and that such concepts "as autonomous, self-generating phenomena, were essentially alien notions to ancient peoples" (Steinkeller 2017: 5).

the original transgressive act and the punishment, including the illnesses and demons that represent manifestations of the punishment. This gives an insight into how the Mesopotamian exorcist might understand notions of cause and effect in relation to transgression. It seems that the commission of the transgressive act and its punishment were inextricably linked, with the latter always guaranteed to result from the former, and therefore effectively indistinguishable. This contrasts with modern legalistic conceptions in which punishment is dispensed after the fact of the crime. In the Mesopotamian view, however, the punishment is inescapable as it represents an inherent part of committing the offence, and this influences other key aspects of the conceptualization of transgression and its consequences that will be explored throughout this thesis. This includes, for example, the use of the divine trial not to profess innocence and therefore avoid punishment but instead to seek forgiveness and have the already incurred punishment lifted (see § 1.4.2.2).

2.2 Internal organs and emotions: the *libbu*

The anatomical term *libbu* is of particular importance for understanding the nature of medical symptoms attributed to transgression and its consequences. Based on its general localization in the inside of the body and its association with emotions, the term *libbu* is often translated conventionally into modern languages with equivalents of 'heart', in addition to other terms referring to interior parts of the body.[150] In what follows I will assess the extent to which such a translation is justified based on the ancient anatomical understanding and extended usage of the term, and assess the implications this has for understanding the mechanics and treatment of internal symptoms considered to result from transgression.

2.2.1 The meaning of *libbu* and its localization in the body

The Akkadian term *libbu* (Sumerian ša$_3$, occasionally lipiš), like its Semitic cognates,[151] refers generally to the central or interior part of something, especially the human body. This is also reflected in a number of other anatomical terms in Akkadian that are at least partially synonymous with *libbu*:[152] *kabattu* 'innards, stomach, liver'; *karšu* 'stomach, abdomen'; *qerbū* 'innards, intestines'. One medical text locates the *libbu* between the ribs and the navel,[153] and the term could also designate the stomach or the womb.[154] As a result of its location in the central part of the body and its function

[150] The dictionaries, for example, translate "heart, abdomen, entrails, womb" (CAD L 164ff.) and "Leib, Inneres; Herz" (AHw I 549ff.).
[151] Cf. e.g. Ar. لب *lubb* 'core, kernel; heart, intellect, reason'; لبة / لبب *labba* / *labab* 'upper part of chest; throat (of animal)' (HW 1002); Heb. לב *leḇ* 'the heart; seat of vital force; one's inner self, etc.' (HALOT 513–515); Syr. ܠܒ / ܠܒܐ *leḇ* / *lebbā* "the heart; the mind; the breast as the set of intellect" (CSD 233).
[152] Cf. Steinert 2012: 133; Jaques 2006: 10.
[153] Attia 2018: 74.
[154] Jaques 2006: 11. The author argues that ša$_3$ // *libbu* also represents the penis in the phrase ša$_3$-zi-ga // *nīš libbi* (lit. 'rising of the *libbu*'), since this term had previously been interpreted as referring to a man's ability to maintain an erection (Biggs 1967: 2–3). Instead, it appear to have been used to refer to sexual arousal or desire more generally (cf. e.g. CMAwR 2.5.1 8′–9′): … *libba*(ša$_3$)-*šu$_2$ sinništa*(munus) *ḫa-šiḫ-*ˈ*ma*ˀ / *sinništa*(munus) *ippallas*(igi.bar)-*ma libba*(ša$_3$)-*šu$_2$ iturra*(gur)^{ra} … '… his *libbu* is desirous of a woman but $^{9'}$ he sees a woman and then his *libbu* turns back …' This is also supported by the fact

as the seat of emotion (§ 2.2.3), the term *libbu* is frequently translated 'heart' in the modern literature. However, the identification of the heart as part of the scope of the *libbu* is problematic, especially as the *libbu* is often associated with gastro-intestinal problems, while at the same time there appears to have been no Mesopotamian medical compositions dedicated to the heart as an independent organ.[155] This has led some modern authors to reject the translation 'heart',[156] while others continue to use it, although often inconsistently.[157] Although the translation 'heart' does reflect the role of the *libbu* as the seat of emotions, since this role is associated with the heart in general English usage, such a translation does not accurately convey the overall anatomical picture of the Mesopotamian term. I have therefore opted for the more general translation 'abdomen' with the understanding that the term encompasses a broad and often vaguely defined area of the body. The use of a relatively general term does not imply that the whole central part of the body was considered a single large organ by the Mesopotamian scholars, and we shall see that they could divide the *libbu* into different parts that operated differently in terms of symptoms and treatments.

The location of the *libbu* means that it is generally identified with the gastro-intestinal tract and is therefore conceptually connected to the processes of eating and digestion. The Sumerian ša$_3$, for example, is included in a number of terms relating to food or hunger, including ša$_3$-gal // *ukullû* 'subsistence, food provisions' and ša$_3$/še-ĝar

that the term ša$_3$-zi-ga could be used of women as well as men: for example, the Assur Medical Catalogue contains an entry ša$_3$-zi-ga-munus-ak-kam$_2$ 'rising of the *libbu* of a woman' (Steinert 2018a: 217, 106). While no texts carrying this rubric are currently known, one ša-zi-ga composition indicates that its treatments could also be used for women (Steinert 2018a: 266).

[155] Steinert 2020: 423–424.

[156] E.g. Scurlock 1995–1996: 251n.12.

[157] E.g. Steinert (2012: 137) initially translates *libbu* "Körperinnere[s]" as well as "Herz", but generally uses "Herz" throughout rest of the work, except in a couple of compound terms where it is translated "Bauch" (Steinert 2012: 529–530, *kīs libbi* "Bauchverschnürung"; *šammi libbi* "Bauchpflanze").

(tuku) // *berû* / *bubūtu* ‘to be hungry’/ ‘famine’.[158] This already hints at part of the reasoning behind the connection between the *libbu* and transgressions, the commission of which could be conceived of in terms of ‘eating’. This connection goes beyond the idiomatic use of the verb *akālu* to describe ‘eating’ a transgression, but leads to further associations between transgressions and eating and the mouth or throat, especially in the diagnostic medical sources. This includes, for example, word-play on another meaning of the verb *akālu* (*Sakikku* XIV iii 58′):[159] ⌜*šumma*(diš)⌝ *bir-ka-šu*$_2$ *ikkalā*(gu$_7$)^{meš}-*šu*$_2$ ⌜*asak*(azag) ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu)⌝ [*īkul*(gu$_7$)] ‘if his knees are afflicting (lit. eating) him: [he ate] *asakku*-transgression of Šamaš.’ Symptoms of the throat could also indicate that one had ‘eaten’ a transgression (*Sakikku* X 28):[160] *šumma*(diš) *ur*$_2$*ud*(gu$_2$.mur)-*su ḫa-niq*$_2$ *ikkib*(nig$_2$.ge$_{17}$) *ili*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *īkul*(gu$_7$) : *uš-te-zeb* ‘if his throat is throttled: he ate *ikkibu*-transgression of his god – he will survive.’ The idea that a transgression could be ‘eaten’ therefore leads to the association between the punishment of transgression and symptoms afflicting the throat and mouth as well as the lower parts of the digestive system (i.e. the *libbu*). It will be shown that this association extends even to the symptoms resulting from types of transgression and punishment, including *māmītu*-curse, that are not otherwise construed with the verb *akālu* ‘to eat’ (see § 4.3.2).

[158] Jaques 2006: 11. The use of ša$_3$ in the latter probably reflects a folk etymology, the original pronunciation having /še/, but this makes its way into ša ĝar // *būru* ‘hunger’ as a reading of GU$_7$, probably influenced by enmen$_2$(NAG) ‘thirst’.

[159] Labat 1951: 140–141; cf. e.g. VAT 14548 2′ (online at geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/diagnostic_handbook/Kapitel-2-_Wenn-du-dich-dem-Kranken-naeherst/14-J-VAT-14548/, accessed 14/09/2020).

[160] Labat 1951: 84–85, cf. AO 6679 28 (online at geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/diagnostic_handbook/Kapitel-2-_Wenn-du-dich-dem-Kranken-naeherst/10-A-AO-6679/, accessed 14/09/2020); K. 3687+ 31 (online at geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/diagnostic_handbook/Kapitel-2-_Wenn-du-dich-dem-Kranken-naeherst/10-B-K_-3687-_-K_-6389-_-Sm_-951/, accessed 14/09/2020).

2.2.2 Symptoms of the *libbu* caused by other sources of evil

In addition to transgression, a number of other sources of suffering could be associated with symptoms of the *libbu*, potentially presenting difficulty if it were necessary to diagnose the precise cause of such symptoms. Witchcraft that had been administered by means of bewitched food and drink was particularly associated with symptoms of the mouth and the digestive system, and therefore witchcraft is more generally associated with symptoms of the *libbu*, including emotional problems and loss of libido.[161] The mouth represents a vulnerable point of entry through which the evil of the witchcraft can enter the victim's body and therefore afflict the victim from the inside. Working its way down from the mouth, the ill effects of witchcraft particularly affect the epigastrium (*rēš libbi*, lit. 'head of the *libbu*'), but also other parts of the victim's internal organs (*libbu*). Symptoms of witchcraft thus appear to have been associated primarily with the mouth, chest, and upper abdomen, and could therefore be treated with salves and medicine administered orally, while symptoms of *māmītu*-curse appear to have mainly affected the lower abdomen, since only these could be treated with enemas.[162]

Symptoms of the *libbu* and *rēš libbi* are also attested in diagnoses of ghost-induced illness but not, as far as I am aware, for other demons.[163] For example (Scurlock 2006: 447–479, No. 199(!), 1–3):

1 *šumma*(diš) *amēlu*(na) *pānū*(igi)^{meš}-*šu$_2$ iṣṣanundū*(nigin)^{du} *u$_3$-a lib$_3$-bi i-qab-bi*
2 *qerbū*(ša$_3$)^{meš}-*šu$_2$ i-ʾa-ru-ru*
3 *rēš*(sag) *libbi*(ša$_3$)-*šu$_2$ it-ta-na-az-qar akla*(ninda) *u šikara*(kaš) *muṭṭu*(lal)

[161] E.g. CMAwR 7.7 47–53.
[162] Cf. Schwemer 2007: 253. Scurlock's rejection of this point (2013: 536) reflects the fact that this is only a general pattern with some exceptions. However, contrary to Scurlock's suggestion, venereal disease associated with witchcraft surely did not affect the same part of the lower body where the symptoms of *māmītu*-curse treated with enemas occurred.
[163] In the Udug-ḫul ritual series, for example, the term *libbu* is never used to refer to the patient's internal organs, instead only referring to gods' emotions or used in prepositional phrases.

If a man, his face is constantly spinning (and) he says, "ow, my abdomen,"[164] [2] his insides are convulsed, [3] his epigastrium constantly protrudes, (his desire for) bread and beer is reduced.

In contrast to the abdominal symptoms associated with transgression and witchcraft, those caused by ghosts could include flatulence and noises emanating from the gastro-intestinal tract (Scurlock 2006: 467–468, No. 191a, 1–2):

1 *šumma*(diš) *amēlu*(na) *qerbū*(ša$_3$)^{meš}*-šu$_2$ ittananpahū*(mu$_2$)$^{meš\text{-}ḫu}$ *ir-ru-šu$_2$ kīma*(gin$_7$) *ša$_2$ urbati*(mar.gal) *ma-gal iltanassû*(gu$_3$.gu$_3$)^{u2}
2 *amēlu*(na) *šū*(bi) *ni-kim-ti šāri*(im) *u ṣēta*(ud.da) *maruṣ*(ge$_{17}$) *šipir*(kin)*-šu$_2$ ilabbir*(sumun)*-ma qāt eṭemmi* (šu.gidim.ma)

If a man, his insides are constantly swollen (and) his intestines are constantly making a lot of noise like (someone suffering from) *urbatu*-worm, [3′] that man is ill (with) pent-up wind and heat; (if) his affliction (lit. sending) is long-standing: [4′] hand of ghost.

The term *urbatu* refers to a kind of intestinal worm and the associated illness,[165] presumably characterized by noises emanating from the intestines. The fact that noises in the abdomen are associated with ghosts in particular probably arises from the fact that ghosts were believed to produce aural disturbances more generally, such as shouting in the victim's house,[166] which use the same verb (gu$_3$ // *šasû* 'to shout, make a loud noise) as that describing the intestinal noises in the above passage.

Therefore, while the *libbu* is associated generally with various sources of suffering, there is a degree of nuance: it is not regarded as a singular organ but is instead a more general term for a larger part of the body. Different sources of suffering could affect quite different parts of the *libbu*, and we should assume that the exorcist was able to distinguish between these and treat them separately where necessary.[167] This is also reflected in the extension beyond physical symptoms of the abdomen to emotional symptoms, which were also part of the Mesopotamian understanding of the *libbu*. In

[164] This can also be a cry of emotional distress (cf. Rochberg 2018: 288), but here probably relates to the physical symptoms of the abdomen described in the following lines.
[165] The *urbatu* (written mar, mar.šur, or as here mar.gal, lit. 'great worm', cf. CAD U/W 212–213) is a kind of worm that caused gastro-intestinal symptoms, including wind, rumbling, and pain in the abdomen (Scurlock and Andersen 2005: 82–83).
[166] Scurlock 2006: 8.
[167] Compare the use of the term *šer'ānu* to refer generically to the various string-like parts of the body (blood vessels, tendons, muscles) that would have been visible to the exorcist in a cursory examination, but that were not necessarily all regarded as one and the same thing (Attia 2000: 49–54).

the case of external sources of evil arising from fears about society and the world, like witchcraft and ghost beliefs, the emotional response is perhaps to be considered the primary symptom, leading to the physical feelings in the abdomen. Similarly, in the case of transgressions, feelings of guilt or fear of punishment could be seen as the primary consequences leading to abdominal symptoms. However, while this may ultimately be the reasoning behind the connection between transgression and symptoms of the *libbu*, the notion of guilt does not work with the idea that one was generally ignorant of the transgressive actions that caused the symptoms (§ 3.3). Nevertheless, this gives an interesting insight into the thinking behind the effects of transgression: what we might understand as feelings of guilt, manifesting in abdominal symptoms and the resultant emotional symptoms, could even be used in Mesopotamia to determine the unwitting commission of an unknown offence, allowing the exorcist to diagnose the unknown source of a person's suffering.

2.2.3 The *libbu* as the seat of emotions

The general localization of the *libbu* in the central, interior part of the body means that, on the one hand, it was associated with vital functions.[168] On the other hand, it was considered the "seat of will and emotions",[169] as well as being associated with the source of one's inner monologue.[170] This could contrast with the head (*muḫḫu*) as the seat of reason (*ṭēmu*),[171] although the Mesopotamians probably had no understanding

[168] Jaques 2006: 11, citing zi-ša$_3$- ĝal$_2$ 'vital breath' and ša$_3$-ti-la 'living ša$_3$' // *balaṭ libbi* 'life of the *libbu*'. This association possibly arises from the movement of the diaphragm leading to the feeling that breath emerged from the lower chest or abdominal area.
[169] Westenholz and Sigrist 2006: 1.
[170] Jaques 2006: 12. Cf. e.g. the Akkadian idioms: *itti libbi dabābu* (lit. 'to speak with the *libbu*') 'to think, ponder' (cf. e.g. CAD D 11); *itti*/*ina libbi atmû* (lit. 'to talk with/to the *libbu*) 'to think, ponder' (cf. e.g. CAD A/II 87); and *ina*/*ana*/*itii libbi qabû* (lit. 'to say to the *libbu*') 'to say to oneself, ponder' (cf. e.g. CAD Q 26).
[171] As part of the head, the ears, in particular, were associated with 'wisdom' and 'understanding' (both the ears and the abstract concepts are referred to with the terms ĝeštu // *uznu*).

of the function of the brain.[172] The association between the abdomen and less rational parts of the self is probably connected to physical feelings in the abdomen that often accompany heightened emotional states, from anxiety to excitement.[173] One emotion associated with the *libbu* is anger, which could be described as 'seizing of the *libbu*' (*ṣibit libbi*) and, especially in the case of divine anger, a 'knot of the *libbu*' (*kiṣir libbi*),[174] in which case terminology related to 'untying' could be used to described the soothing of the anger (§ 2.3.1). As the seat of emotions and irrational thought, the term *libbu* often forms a complementary pair with the term *šīru*/*šīrū* 'flesh', especially in the phrases *lā ṭūb libbi* 'mental unwellness' (lit. 'not-goodness of the *libbu*') and *lā ṭūb šīrī* 'physical unwellness' (lit. 'not-goodness of the flesh'), which are often used in concert to suggest that the patient is suffering throughout his body and inner self (see § 4.3.2 for examples). While these terms could be used to delineate the "physisch-psychische Grenze der Person",[175] the *libbu* was not just the 'psychic' part of a person but also a physical part of the body. The terms *šīrū* and *libbu* therefore distinguish between the physical exterior of the body, including the extremities and the surface of the skin,[176] and the interior of the body, including both physical organs that could be observed when exposed to view and the associated intangible elements that make up the 'psychical' self. For the reason, in formulaic descriptions of the patient's suffering in incantations of the *āšipūtu* corpus, emotional and psychological symptoms are often directly connected to physical symptoms of internal organs.

[172] Westenholz and Sigrist 2006: 6–8. The *libbu* has been termed a "second brain" (Attia 2018; 2019).
[173] In modern English idiom this is represented by the phrase 'to have butterflies in the stomach', which can refer to feelings of fearful or excited anticipation.
[174] This term could also be used to describe a physical condition of the abdomen (Steinert and Vacín 2018: 722–723). Similarly, it could parallel the term *kīs libbi*, literally 'binding of the *libbu*', which refers to stomach pain and possibly indigestion (Scurlock and Andersen 2005: 131–132; Schwemer 2009: 55).
[175] Steinert 2012: 249–250.
[176] Cf. Maul 2019: 244.

One such apparently emotional condition of the *libbu* is what is referred to as *ḫūṣ* (or *ḫuṣṣa*/*i*) *ḫīp*(*i*) *libbi*, literally '*pain*[177] (of) the breaking of the abdomen'. This term seems to describe a state of emotional distress that was probably also characterized by physical symptoms. This condition has been variously interpreted as 'stomach pains',[178] 'crushing pain',[179] 'vice-like heartbreak',[180] 'melancholy',[181] 'depression',[182] 'loss of self-confidence',[183] 'angina pectoris',[184] and 'mental breakdown' or 'neurosis'.[185] In a Late Babylonian text, organizing illnesses according to a novel system in which their origins are attributed to one of four internal organs,[186] the condition *ḫīp libbi* is the first entry in the list associated with the *libbu*.[187] The other conditions associated with the *libbu* include *miqtu* 'epilepsy?' (lit. 'fall'), *qāt ili* 'hand of god', *bennu* 'epilepsy',[188] and *aḫḫāzu* 'jaundice'. This range of conditions demonstrates an association between the *libbu* and particularly debilitating or socially isolating illnesses that were

[177] The interpretation of the term *ḫūṣu*/*ḫuṣṣu* and its function in the phrase remains problematic. Boyd 1983 posits a verb **ḫuṣṣum* "to anger, harass, irritate, trouble", and proposes (247n.2) Semitic cognates including include Ar. غيظ *ġyẓ* (I = II = IV) 'to anger, enrage, infuriate, irritate, exasperate, vex, gall' (HW 809) and Syr. ܚܡܛ *ʿwṭ* 'to provoke, irritate' (CSD 404). However, the correspondence of Akk. *ḫ* to Common Semitic *ġ* remains problematic (Stol 1993: 30). A possible semantic relation of the Akkadian term to a sense of burning pain could be supported by an apparent misunderstanding of the term in a Late Babylonian commentary to *Sakikku* (CCP 4.1.13.B obv. 10, online at ccp.yale.edu/P294665, accessed 20/10/2020): *ḫu-uṣ-ṣa* : *še-mu-u*$_2$ *ša*$_2$ *ka-ba-bu* '"pain" (*ḫuṣṣa*) means "to roast" (*šemû*) as in "to burn" (*kabābu*).' Stol (1993: 30) suggests that, because the variant of *ḫīp libbi* with the addition *ḫūṣu*/*ḫuṣṣu* is only occasionally attested in 'medical' texts and more frequently in 'literary' texts, its inclusion was a matter of style and there was therefore no difference in meaning between the two forms. Attia (2018: 68) suggests that the addition of *ḫūṣu* transforms a colloquial expression into a "technical metaphor". The CAD (Ḫ 260) also suggests that this was originally a hendiadystic construction, but cites a passage where *ḫūṣu* is separated from *ḫīp libbi* by the conjunction *u*.

[178] CDA, p. 123.

[179] Scurlock and Andersen 2005: 710n.14.

[180] Attia 2019: 53.

[181] Stol 1993: 31; N. Ziegler 2015: 238.

[182] Geller 2001–2002: 61; Westenholz and Sigrist 2006: 1n.1; Couto-Ferreira 2010: 32; Van Buylaere 2020: 204. The association with depression is also suggested by the fact that *ḫīp libbi* could be treated with the *azallû*-plant, which is also associated with other forms of depression (Couto-Fereirra 2010: 32).

[183] Maul 2019: 102 translates *ḫīp*(gaz) *lib*$_3$*-bi irtanašši*(tuku.tuku)[^{ši}] as "er immer wieder das Selbstvertrauen verliert". This is followed by "(nämlich): …" suggesting that the editor considers the examples of loss of personal influence in the following lines as symptoms of *ḫīp libbi* (cf. KAL 10, Nr. 3, 5–6, discussed at § 4.2.2).

[184] Adamson 1981: 126–127; Scurlock 1995–1996: 251.

[185] Kinnier Wilson 1965: 291; Westenholz and Sigrist 2006: 1.

[186] Cf. Steinert 2021: 174–176.

[187] Geller 2001–2002: 61, 1: *ul-tu lib*$_3$*-bi ḫīp*(gaz) *lib*$_3$*-bi* 'from the *libbu* – breaking of the *libbu*.'

[188] Translated by Geller (2001–2002: 61) as "hand of Ištar".

understood to be caused by divine punishment. Otherwise, forms of the term *ḫīp libbi* occur in contexts of severe anxiety and fear and it is usually understood to be caused by divine anger.[189] It is therefore to be expected that the condition was also associated with the consequences of transgression.

In non-technical texts, such as the Neo-Assyrian royal letters, the term *ḫīp libbi* is less commonly attested but seems to refer to a 'anxiety' or 'panic' less severe than the condition with which it is associated in the medical sources.[190] It has also been argued that the increasingly widespread association in first-millennium technical literature between emotional and psychological conditions and the *libbu* as a physical part of the body was influenced by the use of the term *libbu* in colloquial expressions of emotion.[191] The condition (*ḫūṣ*) *ḫīp libbi* might also be associated with physical pain in the abdominal area, but this is not always clear. A passage cited by the CAD, for example, to support its translation "physical pain"[192] does not unambiguously refer to physical abdominal pain (BAM 3, 311, 22):[193] 15 *me-eli šumma*(diš) *amēlu*(na) *ḫu-uṣ ḫīp*(gaz) *lib*$_3$*-bi* ⌜*irtanaššu*(tuku)^{meš}⌝*-ši* 'fifteen poultices if a man constantly suffers from *ḫūṣ ḫīp libbi*.' The poultices are not necessarily being used only to treat physical pain in the *libbu*, but could also treat emotional symptoms originating in the *libbu* as a physical part of the body.[194] On the whole, it would appear that the term was associated with a severe emotional state, whether anxiety, depression, fear, anger, or a more

[189] Jaques 2006: 78n.183. An incantation from *Bīt rimki* may suggest that it could also be caused by a demon, although here a form of the verb *ḫepû* is used instead of the usual nominal phrase (Uruk Rit. 68, cf. Schwemer 2019b: 88): *mim-ma lem-nu ša*$_2$ *ina ekalli*(e$_2$.gal)*-ia*$_5$ *ibaššû*(gal$_2$)^{u2} *iḫeppû*(gaz)^{u2} *lib*$_3$*-bi* 'Any Evil, which is present in my palace (and) breaks my abdomen.' In Old Babylonian texts, the N-stem of *ḫepû* is used with *libbu* to describe displeasure as well as physical symptoms of the abdomen (Attia 2019: 54).
[190] Van Buylaere 2020: 213.
[191] Steinert 2020: 458.
[192] CAD Ḫ 260.
[193] Online at geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/BAM-3/BAM-3_-311, accessed 12/10/2020.
[194] The same mechanism works in the opposite direction in the case of bewitched food and drink, which affect the physical *libbu* as part of the digestive system but therefore also produce psychological symptoms (Couto-Fereirra 2021: 269).

serious mental breakdown, possibly accompanied by physical pain in the abdominal area. Given our incomplete understanding of the term, I have opted to employ a very literal translation '*pain* (of) the breaking of the abdomen'.

2.3 Verbs of release and purification

In the following section I provide a brief overview of my approach to the various verbal roots that are used to describe the patient's release from suffering and purification. While these are often considered one and the same thing in terms of the exorcist's methods,[195] it will be shown that a distinction is still maintained between terminology describing 'release' from impurity as a (meta)physical manifestation of evil or an individual's suffering and terminology describing 'cleansing' as the removal of physical impurities, thus encompassing the semantic range of modern notions of 'purification'. While both of these aspects of the exorcist's job share many of the same methods, for example washing with water (see § 5.3.1), some distinctions are still made insofar as two different groups of vocabulary are used in the *āšipūtu* corpus.

2.3.1 Roots of 'release'

A number of verbs are used figuratively to describe the removal of the consequences of transgression and the patient's release from the state of suffering. These verbs usually occur in precative or imperative forms, as the exorcist or the patient himself requests that the gods take action to help the patient, and are often repeated many times as part of the refrains to sections of litany. By far the most commonly used verbs in this context are *pašāru* 'to release' and *paṭāru* 'to loosen', while other less frequently attested verbs include *pasāsu* 'to erase' and various terms that imply physical distancing from the patient. It is probably no coincidence that the two most commonly attested verbs in this context share two of their radicals. This is an example of a common Semitic feature in which several triconsonantal roots sharing a broad semantic category apparently derive from the augmentation of an originally biconsonantal root: in this case, verbal roots

[195] E.g. Robson 2008b: 476.

derived from the basic root *p-r* have a range of meanings relating to or deriving from the notion of 'separation'.[196] While it is unlikely that Mesopotamian scribes were aware of the intricacies of the prehistory of Semitic root formation (indeed this is not well understood by modern scholars), the resulting consonance probably contributed to the frequent use of the verbs *pašāru* and *paṭāru* as a pair. Alliteration of the initial /p/ probably also explains the occasional pairing of *pasāsu* with these verbs.

The verb *pašāru* (Sumerian bur$_2$) 'to release' has a wide range of usages outside of the *āšipūtu* corpus, including to describe the unravelling of strands of rope, the loosening of soil to prepare a field, and release from legal obligations.[197] The ritual use of the Sumerian bur$_2$ is especially apparent in the rubrics of various rituals, including uš$_{11}$-bur$_2$-ru-da '(ritual) to release witchcraft', nam-erim$_2$-bur$_2$-ru-da '(ritual) to release *māmītu*-curse', and nam-bur$_2$-bi 'its release' or perhaps 'release of fate'.[198] The Sumerian verb bur$_2$ and Akkadian verb *pašāru* are also used to describe the recounting and interpretation of dreams,[199] while the derived Akkadian noun *pišru* denotes the quotation and subsequent interpretation of omens.[200] In these two instances, the sense of *pašāru* may be 'to solve' something,[201] but it could also refer to the release of the evil portended by dreams or omina through their interpretation. I have chosen to translate the verb 'release' to reflect both the general sense of its broad range of meanings and also its specific purpose in the *āšipūtu* rituals to describe the release of or from evil and suffering.

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[196] Cf. GAG § 73b. Other examples from Akkadian include: *parāku* 'to lie across, obstruct', *parāsu* 'to cut; to decide', *parāʾu* 'to cut off, slice through; to sprout'; and, at a remove from the original meaning, perhaps also *parādu* 'to be frightened', *pazāru* 'to hide', *šapāru* 'to send'. Cf. also Lipiński 1997: 201–202, with additional examples from Hebrew.
[197] Cf. e.g. CAD P 236ff.
[198] Cf. Maul 1994: 11–12.
[199] Zgoll 2006: 372–378; 383–396.
[200] Nissinen 2019: 665–670; Rochberg 2016: 172–173.
[201] Cf. Rochberg 2016: 173.

The verb *paṭāru* (Sumerian du$_8$) has a similar range of meanings to *pašāru*, but with greater emphasis on acts of physical detachment: the untying of knots or bandages, the breaking of seals, the unyoking of animals, the removal of exta, the dismantling of ritual arrangements, and the release of prisoners.[202] This range of meanings is particularly relevant to the portrayal of the state of suffering as a form of binding, and its removal can therefore be perceived in terms of untying or cutting the binding (see § 5.3.5). Witchcraft is another source of suffering of which the effects are portrayed in terms of binding or knotting,[203] and the same root *pṭr* is used in metaphorical descriptions of the combat against witches in the more literal sense of untying a knot (e.g. *Maqlû* IV 117–118): *ma-rat māti*(kur) *i-rak-ka-sa-a-ni rik-si* / *šeššet*(6) *riksū*(keš$_2$)-*ši-na sebet*(7) *piṭ-ru-u$_2$-a* 'female inhabitants of the land (i.e. the witches) are binding me with bindings; [118] six are their bindings, seven are my loosenings (*piṭrū*).'[204] The verb *paṭāru* is also used in contexts where the release of divine anger (*kiṣir libbi*, lit. 'knot of the *libbu*) can be conceived as the untying of a knot (e.g. *Šurpu* IV 13):[205] *ki-ṣir libbi*(ša$_3$) *ili*(dingir) *u* ^{d}*ištari*(15) *pa-ṭa-ru bu* 'to loosen the anger (lit. knot of the abdomen) of god and goddess, (refrain).' My choice of translation 'loosen' thus intends to convey the sense of untying knots, while avoiding the connotations of reversal implied by a translation like 'undo'. This latter translation would not be appropriate to the context of the use of *paṭāru* in *āšipūtu* rituals: the gods' decision to punish transgression cannot be reversed or undone, only its effects can be released.

[202] Cf. e.g. CAD P 286ff.
[203] Schwemer 2007: 85–86.
[204] The verb *paṭāru* is also used as the opposite of *rakāsu* 'to bind' in the context of dismantling and setting up ritual arrangements.
[205] Cf. also *Šurpu* IV 69: *ki-ṣir lum-ni li-par-ri-ru* 'may they (i.e. the gods) break up the knot of evil.' Note the use of another verb, *parāru* 'to be dissolved, broken up', also based on the biconsonantal root *p-r*.

The verb *pasāsu* ‘to erase’ is also used relatively frequently in the context of transgressions. The root generally means ‘to break, smash’,[206] and this is presumably where the sense of ‘erase’ or ‘annul’ derives from, since these actions can be used to erase writing on clay tablets and therefore (ideally) annul any contracts or oath obligations contained therein. In the sources considered here, the verb *pasāsu* can appear alone in a precative form (sometimes paired with another verb of release) or it can take the transgression as its logical object. Both usages occur in the following passage (*Šurpu* IV 78–81):

78 *še-ret-su lit-ta-bi-ik ina u₄-me an-ni-i lu pa-sa-aš₂-šu₂ lu paṭ-ra-šu₂*
79 *ṭup-pi ar₂-ni-šu₂ ḫi-ṭa-ti-šu₂ gil₂-la-ti-šu₂ ma-ma-ti-šu₂*
80 *tu-ma-ma-ti-šu₂ ana mê*(a)^{meš} *linnadâ*(šub)^{a}
81 *ḫi-ṭa-tu-šu₂ lip-tas-si-sa gil₂-la-tu-šu₂ lis-sa-a*

May his *šērtu*-offence-penalty be poured out, on this day, may it be erased for him, may it be loosened for him! [79] The tablet of his *arnu*-crime-punishments, his *ḫiṭītu*-wrongdoing-punishments, his *gillatu*-sin-punishments, his *māmītu*-curses, [80] his *tumāmītu*-oaths, may it be thrown into the water! [81] May his *ḫiṭītu*-wrongdoing-punishments be erased, may his *gillatu*-sin-punishments be distant!

Whether this is simply a metaphorical description or reflects actual ritual actions accompanying the incantations, the clay tablet, which represents a written record of the sufferer’s punishment for transgression, could be dissolved in water and thereby ‘dissolve’ the evil afflicting the patient (see § 5.4.1.1). The use of the verb *pasāsu* may therefore also be intended to evoke the destruction of a written record and with it the annulment of the sufferer’s punishment, although it is again unclear whether this would have been accompanied by corresponding ritual actions. Other verbs used to describe release from the suffering resulting from transgression imply physical removal or distancing (e.g. *Šurpu* IV 14): *ar₂-ni šu-su-ḫu gil₂-la-ti šu-us-su-u₂ bu* ‘to have my *arnu*-crime-punishment torn out, to make my *gillatu*-sin-punishment be distant, (refrain)’; (IV 23): *ma-mit uk-ku-šu* [*bu*] ‘to drive off *māmītu*-curse, [(refrain)]’; (IV 87): *ina*

[206] Cf. e.g. CAD P 218–220.

ḫi-is-sa-at šumi(mu)*-ku-nu el-li*$_3$ *lis-se lit-ta-kiš li-dap-pir* 'through invocation of your (i.e. the gods') pure name may it (i.e. the *māmītu*-curse) become distant, may it be expelled, may it withdraw.' These descriptions again reflect some of the methods used to remove the patient's suffering and physical impurities associated with it, which were often physically distanced from the patient (see § 5.4.2).

2.3.2 Roots of 'cleansing'

Another category of terms used to describe the removal of impurities are those related to 'purification' in terms of physical cleansing, including forms of the roots *ʾll* and *ʾbb*,[207] These are generally used in contexts where they refer to the physical cleaning of the patient or ritual paraphernalia, but this is often closely connected to the removal of evil of suffering. The physical cleansing of the patient was often simultaneous with the removal of the causes of suffering, often using the same methods, including the washing or scrubbing of the patient's body (see § 5.3.2). The verbs *elēlu* and *ebēbu* and derived adjectives *ellu* and *ebbu* are usually recognized to denote a visual quality rather than anything inherently 'holy' or 'pure' in a religious sense.[208] Thus, these terms generally describe a state of physical, and therefore visual, freedom from imperfections, and can be used to describe precious metals, water, snow, and even clean laundry.[209] This represents cleanliness "not only negatively as the absence of dirt, but also positively as brilliance and luminosity".[210] The sign ku$_3$ is also used to write the names of the 'noble

[207] See Ambos 2012: 90 for examples of the usage of *ellu* and *ebbu* etc., and their relationship to other Akkadian terms denoting ritual defilement or physical dirt.
[208] E.g. E.J. Wilson 1994: 16–17, although the author suggests that the Sumerian terms ku$_3$ and sikil reflect a distinction between "holiness" and "physical purity" respectively (E.J. Wilson 1994: 45–46). Kim Benzel (2015: 98), by contrast, assigns the same range of meanings to both Akkadian *ellu* and Sumerian ku$_3$. Any distinction between the two terms is not however particularly relevant to the present study since, in the sources under consideration, ku$_3$ is usually used as a logogram for or translation of Akkadian *ellu*.
[209] E.J. Wilson 1994: 67.
[210] Van der Toorn 1985: 27–28.

metals'[211] silver (ku$_3$.babbar) and gold (ku$_3$.si$_{22}$), which has led to the suggestion that ku$_3$ // *ellu* further denoted a state that is "inherently pure" in contrast to *ebbu*, which simply denoted physical cleanness.[212]

The idea that these terms primarily denoted 'cleanness' as a physical or visual quality is reflected in their use alongside other terms denoting visual qualities or in reference to physical acts of cleaning, particularly in the standard passage that compares the purification of the patient to the cleaning of vessels (see § 5.3.3). A related term used in this context that implies physical cleanness but above all denotes a visual quality is the verb *namāru* 'to shine', which is associated with the appearance of the sky (UH VII 137): [an-gin$_7$ ḫe$_2$-en-ku$_3$-ga ki-gin$_7$ ḫe$_2$-en-sikil-la ša$_3$-an-gin$_7$ ḫe$_2$-en-dadag-ga] // [*ki*]-ˈ*ma*ˀ *šamê*(an)^{e} *li-lil* [*ki*]-ˈ*ma*ˀ *erṣeti*(ki)^{ti3} *li-bi-ib* [*ki-ma*] ˈ*qe*$_2$ˀ-*reb šamê*(an)^{e} *lim-mir* 'like the sky may he become pure, like the earth may he be cleansed, [like] the centre of the sky may he shine.' The inherent purity of certain parts of the natural environment (here the earth and the sky) contributes to their role in removing and dispersing impurities (see § 5.4.2.2). Taking into account the various interpretations examined above, I have decided to use the conventional translations 'purify' and 'pure' for *elēlu* and *ellu* and 'cleanse' and 'cleansed' for *ebēbu* and *ebbu*.

Other verbs also used in parallel to *elēlu* and *ebēbu* and which can describe the cleaning of vessels are *mesû* // luḫ and *šukkulu* // sub. Akkadian *mesû* is a standard term for washing, and its usage in the context of rituals concerning transgression includes the washing of hands before addressing Šamaš in the 'prophylactic' prescriptions (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 79, 54′; Nr. 81, 22′). In one namerimburruda-incantation, the verb *mesû* is quite unexpectedly used to describe the removal of the consequences of transgression

[211] So called because they do not oxidize and therefore remain shiny (cf. Benzel 2015: 99–100).
[212] Pongratz-Leisten 2009: 432.

(KAL 10, Nr. 27–33, 78): *gil*$_2$*-la-tu-šu*$_2$ *li-ma-sa-a ma-ma-tu-šu*$_2$ *lip-taš-ši-*⌜*ra*⌝ 'may his *gillatu*-sin-punishments be washed (away), may his *māmītu*-curses be released.' The verbs used in such contexts are usually more figurative, as in the use of *pašāru* with *māmītu* (see § 2.3.2), but the use of *mesû* may reflect a more direct connection with the methods used to remove impurities resulting from transgression and its punishment. Another Akkadian verb employed in this context is *šukkulu*, meaning 'to wipe (off/away)', used of tears, of feet as a gesture of humility, and in general in the sense of removing or transferring dirt.[213] It is mostly widely used to describe wiping out the inside of cooking vessels, as in the use of the derived noun *šukkultu* 'dregs, scrapings'.[214] In this sense it is related to the Akkadian verb *kapāru*, also 'to wipe', often used to described the action removing impurities from the patient's body by rubbing it with materials like clay or dough (§ 5.3.2). This root's use in relation to purification is also present in *takpertu*, a purification rite that involves wiping the king clean as part of the *Bīt rimki* ritual.[215] In connection with the standard passage comparing the patient to a vessel being cleaned, the verb *kapāru* is also used to refer to the cleaning of metal cooking vessels by scouring and polishing them.[216] The imagery of cleaning out the inside of soiled vessels for cooking or storing food reflects the idea that physical impurities are to be found within the patient's body, especially in the abdomen (*libbu*).

To summarize, terms derived from the Akkadian roots *ʾll* and *ʾbb* primarily denote a physical quality of 'cleanness', often being used together with terms that have a clear visual quality or in passages that compare the purification of the patient to acts of

[213] Cf. e.g. CAD Š/3 219, with Deller and Watanabe 1980.
[214] Cf. SB Gilg. XII 153 (George 2003: 734–735): *šu-ku-la-at di-qa-ri ku-si-pat a-ka-li ša*$_2$ *ina su-qi*$_2$ ⌜*na*⌝*-da-a ik-kal* 'he eats scrapings from the cooking pot (and) crusts of bread which have been thrown into the street.'
[215] Schwemer 2019b: 17–18; Geller 2016: 304.
[216] Gaspa 2009: 89–92.

physical cleaning. This is in contrast with the more 'metaphysical' cleaning represented by the verbs of release (§ 2.3.1), which are used in descriptions of the removal of impurities and evil and the patient's release from a state of suffering. As a general rule, the 'cleansing' set of terminology is used in the context of removing physical impurities caused by contact with contaminated ritual materials or simply by virtue of being human. On the other hand, the 'releasing' set of terminology refers to the removal of impurities or suffering caused by more metaphysical sources of evil, whether these are 'external' (i.e. witches, demons, ghosts) or 'internal' (i.e. the consequences of transgression). Although a distinction is made in the terminology used to describe these processes, they both form an integral part of the exorcist's function and other employ the same methods, including physical cleaning with water (§ 5.3.1; § 5.4.1.1) and purification with fire (§ 5.4.1.2), taking advantage of the latter's ability to destroy impure materials as well as its brightness, a quality that it shares with the visual senses included in the 'cleansing' vocabulary.

3 Transgression and its punishment as a cause of suffering

In the following chapter, I examine the portrayal of transgression and its punishment as a cause of individual suffering according to the *āšipūtu* corpus, including the nature and scope of transgressions that could be considered the ultimate cause of this suffering. It will be shown, however, that the identification of specific transgressive actions in this context was not entirely the aim of the rituals, since this would not always have been possible and was not necessary to persuade the gods to remove the patient's state of suffering. Nevertheless, I begin by examining the lists of possible transgressions that form part of the incantations accompanying the removal rituals. I assess the overall form and purpose of such lists, before looking at individual entries in order to understand the nature and scope of possible transgressive behaviours, and the ideology expressed through these lists. I then look at three elements of the portrayal of transgression and its punishment that problematize the role of individual responsibility: the theme of human ignorance that is a key part of the portrayal of transgression and divine punishment not only in the *āšipūtu* corpus but also in other areas of Mesopotamian literature; the idea that the suffering caused by transgression could be contagious, like other forms of evil or impurity; and the portrayal of *māmītu*-curse and *arratu*-curse as personified entities that attack their victim like demons as part of the punishment of transgression.

3.1 Structure and purpose of lists of transgressions

I begin by analysing the overarching structures and overall purpose of the lists of possible transgressions included in the incantations of *Šurpu* and related compositions. The significance of individual entries and the smaller scale relations between them is examined in greater detail below (§§ 3.2.1–3.2.7).

3.1.1 Lists of transgressions in *Šurpu*

The possible transgressions described in *Šurpu* are, for the most past, enumerated in two long incantations recited in front of the brazier set up for the central, burning part of the ritual. The first of these incantations contains a list describing various actions that can be understood as potential causes of the sufferer's punishment (II 5–103). The second incantation lists various items qualifying the terms *māmītu* (III 3–174) or, in a few cases, *arnu* (III 176–183). Individual entries in these latter lists are structured as follows: each line begins with the noun in construct state (i.e. *māmīt* …; *aran* … or *arni* …) followed by nouns in the genitive case or an infinitive phrase; each line then ends with a refrain which is generally indicated by writing only the first sign:[1] *u₂-pa-aš₂-ar mašmaš*(maš.maš) *ilānī*(dingir)ᵍᵐᵉš ᵈ*asal-lu₂*ˀ-[*ḫi*] 'the exorcist of the gods, Asalluḫi, shall release (it).' *Šurpu* V–VI contains a short list of *arratu*-curses (42–49), comparable in length and contents to the list of examples of *arnu* at the end of *Šurpu* III. This is unique among the lists in *Šurpu* as it is part of a bilingual incantation. The Akkadian lines are similarly structured to the other lists, with a repeated construct state (*arrat* …), but each line also begins with *lū* 'whether, or' as in some namerimburruda-incantations.[2] Another shorter list of references to *māmītu*-curse appears in *Šurpu* VIII

[1] *Šurpu* III 2, reconstructed from the catchline in the previous tablet (II 193) according to Nin3. Henceforth, the *u₂* at the end of each line will be rendered in translation with "(refrain)".
[2] Cf. e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 48–51, 23–30 for lines beginning with *lū māmīt*.

(48–77), again using the construct state of the noun. All the entries in this list are preceded by the preposition *itti* 'with', as the exorcist appeals for them to be removed along with other sources of suffering.

The list in *Šurpu* VIII has been interpreted by Jean Bottéro as a closing reminder of what is under consideration in the ritual,[3] thus acting as a framing device that maintains the structural unity of the composition. Frank Simons similarly argues that the whole of *Šurpu* VIII functions "as a sort of *Šurpu* in miniature."[4] The fact that some of the examples in *Šurpu* VIII go into greater detail than those in *Šurpu* III suggests that this interpretation does not correspond entirely to the aim of the ancient compilers, and this will be discussed further below. In contrast to the offences listed in *Šurpu* II, the examples of *māmītu*-curse in *Šurpu* III and VIII are generally identified only with a substantive as referent. Where we do have a complete action described, as with many of the entries in *Šurpu* II, it is often unclear to what it refers, or why it should constitute an offence. Some of the instances of *māmītu*-curse described in *Šurpu* III and VIII correspond well with offences described in *Šurpu* II, but others have no apparent relation at all, at least insofar as we understand their frame of reference. The examples of *arnu*-punishment (III 173–180) and *arratu*-curse (V–VI 42–49), on the other hand, all correspond to instances of *māmītu*-curse, and form a smaller, more concrete group of possible offences. While this is true for *Šurpu*, there is some divergence in the lists that appear in incantations dedicated to *arratu*-curse alone (see § 3.1.2).

The grammatical structure of the list of offences in *Šurpu* II suggests that this list was compiled from at least two or three sources.[5] In the first half of the list (II 4–31), verbs

[3] Bottéro 1977: 142.
[4] Simons 2017: 24.
[5] This was noted already by Bottéro, who goes on to suggest that this points to the existence of an independent 'catalogue' of sins from which the examples in *Šurpu* were drawn (Bottéro 1977: 125–127).

are in the subjunctive, to be understood as relative clauses whose referent is the patient named in II 3: [*annanna*(nenni) *mār*(a)] *annanna*(nenni) *ša*$_2$ *il*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *annanna*(nenni) ^{d}*ištar*(15)-*šu*$_2$ *annannītu*(nenni)^{tu4} '[NN, son of] NN, whose (personal) god is NN, whose (personal) goddess is NN.' After an interlude describing some generic offences (II 32), the following lines have verbs in the indicative (II 33–57). The verbs then return to the subjunctive (II 58-81), followed by a refrain (II 82): *lu-u*$_2$ *paṭ-ra ul i-de-ma it-ta-mi* 'may it be loosened – he has unknowingly brought *māmītu*-curse (upon himself).'[6] The list continues with verbs in the indicative until the end (II 83–103). There is no obvious grammatical or hermeneutic reason for these changes in verbal mood and they can therefore be interpreted as evidence that the compilers of the standardized *Šurpu* composition drew on multiple sources, without feeling bound to harmonize the verbal forms.

In spite of this grammatical discord, several features attest to the structural and thematic unity of the *Šurpu* ritual as a whole, although this has sometimes been overlooked.[7] For example, the last line of *Šurpu* II (192: *li-šat-bu-u*$_2$ *ma-mit-su* TU$_6$ EN$_2$ 'may his *māmītu*-curse be lifted! Incantation formula.') provides a transition to the following tablet, which is primarily concerned with *māmītu*-curse.[8] Some of the examples of *māmītu*-curse listed in *Šurpu* VIII refer back to those in *Šurpu* III, reiterating the universality of possible transgressions at the moment of release towards the end of the ritual. While the examples in *Šurpu* VIII contain less detail about the actions involved, a greater variety of individual items are listed than in *Šurpu* III, further emphasizing the universal presence of *māmītu*-curse. Despite all this, the exact nature of the offence is ultimately

[6] For this interpretation of the verb *tamû*, see below.
[7] Bottéro (1977: 116) notes that the subtitle to Reiner's edition ('A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian Incantations') does a disservice to the original compilers of *Šurpu* in this respect.
[8] Also noted by Bottéro (1977: 102).

not particularly relevant to the successful performance of the ritual. The exorcist must simply determine that the patient's suffering is a result of *māmītu*-curse and the patient must, for his part, recognize the possibility of having committed such a transgression. The lists in *Šurpu* thus demonstrate that the range of possible transgressive actions that might have caused the patient's suffering is effectively limitless.

3.1.2 Lists of transgressions in other compositions

Outside of the *Šurpu* incantations, similar listing strategies are employed in other sources concerning *māmītu*-curse and *arratu*-curse, but occasionally with notable differences in structure. One of the *lipšur*-litanies, for example, contains a list of actions that parallels *Šurpu* II except for the fact that each entry is introduced with *lū* 'whether, or' (KAL 10, Nr. 27–33, 81–95). Another *lipšur*-litany begins with a similar list of actions and items that are not however qualified by a noun like *māmītu* (KAL 10, Nr. 38–39, 9–45). Some of the entries relate to contagion and others are actions not performed by the transgressor himself, but every line is followed by the refrain that runs throughout the litany (*lū paṭra lū passa* 'may it be loosened, may it be erased'), suggesting these too have resulted in curse or divine punishment, which the ritual as a whole seeks to remove. Some of these entries use the verb *tamû* in contexts where we might have expected the noun *māmītu* in the construct state (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 38–39, 28): *i-na kinūni*(ki.ne) *gizillî*(gi.izi.la$_2$) *u dipāri*(gi.izi.la$_2$)[9] *it-ta-ma* MIN(= *lū paṭra lū passa*) 'he has brought *māmītu*-curse concerning *kinūnu*-oven, *gizillû*-torch, and *dipāru*-torch (upon himself), may it be loosened, may it be erased.' While such artefacts appear in *Šurpu* with *māmītu* in the construct state, they could also be interpreted as

[9] MS A preserves gi.ᵍizi.[la$_2$ *u di*]-ᵍ*pa*-*ri* suggesting that this is how the Sumerograms more fully preserved in MS B are to be read.

artefacts upon which oaths have been sworn.[10] However, non-artefacts are also referenced with this phraseology (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 38–39, 20–21):[11] *i-na ṣi-it* ^{d}*šam-ši u e-reb* ^{d}*šam-ši it-ta-ma* MIN(= *lū paṭra lū passa*) / [*ina ṣi*]-⌜*it*⌝ *abulli*(abul) *u e-reb abulli*(abul) *it-ta-ma* MIN(= *lū paṭra lū passa*) 'he has brought *māmītu*-curse concerning sunrise and sunset (upon himself), may it be loosened, may it be erased. [21] He has brought *māmītu*-curse [concerning] leaving the city-gate and entering the city-gate (upon himself), may it be loosened, may it be erased.' When meaning 'to swear (an oath)', the verb *tamû* can take a direct object instead of a prepositional phrase, and we also find this idiom when the verb is used in relation to *māmītu*-curse, although in this case in a fragmentary context (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 52: 19–20): *at-mi kinūna*(ki.ne) […] / *at-mi paššūra*(banšur) […] 'I brought *māmītu*-curse (concerning) a *kinūnu*-oven (upon myself), […], [20] I brought *māmītu*-curse (concerning) a table (upon myself), […].' In such contexts, where the verb *tamû* is used in a way that parallels the use of the noun *māmītu* in similar lists, I therefore understand the verb to have a meaning approximating 'to bring *māmītu*-curse (concerning) X upon oneself'.[12] Although there are no clear examples of the noun *māmītu* and the verb *tamû* being used together in such a context,[13] the parallel usage of the noun *arratu* with forms of the verb *arāru* (see below) further supports such an interpretation of the verb *tamû*. It is also in this sense that the verbal

[10] Maul translates "schwören" according to his more literal understanding of *māmītu* as a foresworn oath.
[11] Note that line 21 is not included in one of the two surviving MSS. Its inclusion was likely motivated by the use of *ṣītu* and *erebu*.
[12] Daniel Schwemer adopts a similar interpretation in an unpublished edition of the above text, translating the form *atmi* as 'ich habe einen Tabubruch in Bezug auf … begangen' (personal communication). However, as I shall demonstrate, the understanding of *māmītu* as 'taboo' is not justified, so a slightly different translation is required. In some cases, retaining a more literal translation of *tamû* is appropriate (e.g. *Šurpu* III 34): *ma-mit a-na ib-ri ta-mu-u*$_2$ *u da-ki-šu*$_2$ *u*$_2$ '*māmītu*-curse concerning swearing (loyalty) to a friend but killing him, (refrain).' This is one of the few examples where the transgression resulting in *māmītu*-curse explicitly involves violating an oath.
[13] The following example is a possible exception to this, but does not contain any other referents, so does not exactly parallel the examples with *arratu* and *arāru* (KAL 10, Nr 48–51, 30): *lu ma-mit at-mu-u u la at-mu-u* 'whether *māmītu*-curse that I brought (upon myself) or did not bring (upon myself).' Maul (2019: 244) interprets the second half of this line as referring to transgressions committed by family members rather than the patient himself, but the negation is instead part of a literary strategy to imply universality (see discussion of the phrase *īdû* (*u*) *lā īdû* at § 3.3).

adjective *tamû* can refer to a 'cursed person', someone who is already suffering from a *māmītu*-curse and is therefore potentially contagious to others (see § 3.4).

As I have already noted, the structure of the incantations in rituals dedicated to *arratu*-curse alone is similar to that of the *lipšur*-litanies. The Berlin ritual opens with a list of gods in whose presence the victim might have provoked the curse, using a first-person stative form of the verb *arāru* (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 64, 16–17): ⌜*lu*⌝*-u ina maḫar*(igi) *ili*(dingir) *mim*$_3$*-ma* MIN(= *arrāku*) / ⌜*lu*⌝*-u ina maḫar*(igi) *ilānī*(dingir)^{meš} *mu-ši-ti* MIN(= *arrāku*) 'whether I am cursed (with *arratu*-curse) in the presence of any deity, [17] or I am cursed (with *arratu*-curse) in the presence of the gods of the night.' A list of examples of *arratu*-curse is then given that uses both the noun *arratu* and the same stative form of the verb *arāru*, as well as introducing each entry with *lū* 'whether, or' (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 64, 18–19): *lu-u ar*$_2$*-rat abi*(ad) *ummi*(ama) *aḫi*(šeš) ⌜*rabî*(gal)⌝ *aḫati*(nin$_9$) *rabîti*(gal)^{ti} MIN(= *arrāku*) / *lu-u ar*$_2$*-rat kimti*(im.ri.a) ⌜*nišūti*(im.ri.a)⌝ *u salāti*(im.ri.a) MIN(= *arrāku*) 'whether with *arratu*-curse concerning father, mother, older brother, older sister I am cursed, [19] or with *arratu*-curse concerning family, kith, and kin I am cursed.' The Istanbul text has the same structure, with the addition at the end of each entry of a refrain appealing for release (e.g. A 185 obv. 33): *lu ar-rat ardi*(ir$_3$) *u* ⌜*amti*(geme$_2$)⌝ *bēli*(en) *u bēlte*(nin)^{te} MIN(= *lū arrāku*) MIN(= *Šamaš lipšur*) *lu* ⌜*ar*⌝*-rat še-ʾi še-ʾa-*⌜*at*⌝ [MIN(= *lū arrāku*) MIN(= *Šamaš lipšur*)] 'whether with *arratu*-curse concerning male slave or female slave, master or mistress I am indeed cursed, may Šamaš release (it)! Or with *arratu*-curse concerning male neighbour or female neighbour I am indeed cursed, may Šamaš release (it)!' Overall, while there is a degree of variation in the structure of such lists, they generally consist of enumerations of referents connected to the curse or punishment, sometimes emphasized by the repetition

of a noun or verb referring to the curse or punishment, and often with a refrain appealing for the release of each item in the list.

3.1.3 The purpose of the lists

These lists have the potential to provide useful insights into the Mesopotamian exorcists' conceptions of transgression but, due to their structure, have often been overlooked in this regard, with Jean Bottéro suggesting that this is due to a perception of them as "monotone, obsolète, et «naïve»".[14] Indeed, litanies as a literary form "are not a popular subject in modern Assyriological scholarship, and at times are even regarded judgmentally as representing a somewhat lower or secondary stage of literature."[15] What then can we say about the purpose of these lists and what can this tell us about their compilers' conceptions of transgression and its punishment? Several studies have interpreted the lists as an attempt to include the patient's unknown transgression by recounting every conceivable possibility.[16] Heinrich Zimmern, on the other hand, translated these lines as questions[17] and this has been understood by later scholars to signify his reading of the list as a "questionnaire"[18] or "checklist"[19] from which the exorcist could choose the offence appropriate to the context. It is unlikely, however, that these lists ever existed in an independent, standardized form: while there are close similarities between some compositions (e.g. *Šurpu* VIII and the fifth 'house' of *Bīt rimki*), others diverge to a much greater degree. The descriptive lists of offences in *Šurpu* II, the *lipšur*-litanies, and other standalone namerimburruda-compositions

[14] Bottéro 1977: 149. This is in contrast with the attention afforded to 'wisdom literature' on this topic (see § 1.4.1.3).
[15] Gabbay 2020: 66.
[16] E.g. Reiner 1958: 1; Geller 1980: 182; Van der Toorn 1985: 96–97.
[17] Zimmern 1901: 3ff. E.g. II 5–6: "Hat er seinen Gott beleidigt, seine Göttin beleidigt, gab er statt Zusage Absage, statt Absage Zusage?"
[18] Van der Toorn 1985: 209n.27.
[19] Cranz 2017: 44n.44.

show a great deal of variability, while the lists of examples of *arratu*-curse occasionally contain entries not found in any of the lists relating to *māmītu*-curse. Although such lists also display superficial similarities to lexical lists, there is nowhere any direct correspondence between the items listed in relation to transgression and those found in thematic lexical lists such as *Nabnītu*. This lack of a single, standardized source for the lists of possible transgression suggests that they aim to give a general sense of universality, with entries instead being selected from the wider cultural repository within the bounds of which the compilers were operating.

Rather than having the 'checklist' function often attributed to them in the modern secondary literature, then, the entries in these lists were selected based on Mesopotamian scholarship's wider strategies for categorizing and organizing the world. The result is a list of representative examples, the length according with the demands of its context and that was general enough to reflect the universal, wide-ranging threat posed by inadvertently committing a transgression and the resultant punishment.[20] Moreover, frequent expressions of ignorance (see § 3.3) and the use of literary strategies such as merismus, which allows an entire semantic category to be represented by just two terms,[21] further suggest that the lists were meant to be non-specific and therefore universally applicable. This will become clearer as I discuss individual entries (§§ 3.2.1–3.2.7), as many refer only to general categories or describe actions or situations that are too unspecific or obscure to refer to a specific offence. In this respect, when interpreting the purpose of these lists, it is important to consider their function as examples of litany.[22] As such, their power, at least from the perspective of the patient,

[20] *Pace* Reiner, who stated that "*all possible sins*, ranking from infringements of religious taboos to offences against the moral and social order are enumerated . . . exhaustively" (Reiner 1958: 3, emphasis mine).
[21] On the use of merismus in Mesopotamian literature, see Wasserman 2003: 61–98.
[22] On the use of litany in Mesopotamian, see Gabbay 2020, esp. 64–65 for its role in expressing and developing theological ideas.

derives from the enumeration of many different items accompanied by a repeated refrain. While the patient would surely not remember nor perhaps even pay attention to individual items in the lists (and therefore the idea that they represent proscriptions or taboos is difficult), he would surely remember the refrain as this remains the same throughout. It is therefore no coincidence that the refrains focus on the patient's release from suffering rather than on the transgressions. Nevertheless, the compilers of such lists have made active choices about the individual items included, so it is worth looking at these in detail. In particular, they can offer insights into their ways of thinking about the nature and scope of transgressions that could result in divine punishment.

3.2 Nature and scope of transgressions

In the following section, I examine individual entries in the lists of possible transgressions. I thereby aim to shed light on the compilers' understanding of the nature and scope of transgressive behaviours and actions that could result in an individual's suffering. This section will consider both the unqualified descriptions of transgressive actions and those items that appear as qualifications of *māmītu*, *arnu*, and *arratu* (see §§ 3.1.1–3.1.2). While the items qualifying *arnu* are more limited in scope, those qualifying *arratu* occasionally diverge quite significantly from the examples with *māmītu*. This may be due to the nature of the evidence: only three standalone rituals for *arratu*-curse are currently known to me. Their fragmentary state often hinders interpretation of the more obscure entries that have no parallels in the better attested rituals for *māmītu*-curse, but the general themes appear to be largely the same. Even in the sources concerning *māmītu*-curse, especially *Šurpu*, several examples of possible offences remain fragmentary or difficult to interpret due to a lack of contextual information, and a detailed commentary on *Šurpu*, while a desideratum, is beyond the scope of my thesis.[23]

Nevertheless, I shall examine a representative selection of entries that point to a number of conceptual themes that run through the lists and across various compositions. Common themes include: transgressions relating to the gods and cultic institutions; improprieties in oath-taking and cultic practices; transgressions involving members of the family, household, and other members of society; transgressions relating to dishonesty and malpractice, particularly in public life; and behaviours contrary to the divinely established order of the inhabited and natural world. These themes, when

[23] This is now provided to some extent by the commentary on *Šurpu* VIII in Frank Simons' recent PhD thesis (Simons 2017: 56–137), which also touches on other parts of *Šurpu*.

considered alongside the broader context of the sources, will reveal the role that conceptions of transgression could play in shaping human relations, encouraging social cohesion and discouraging social disruption, and in regulating transgressive behaviours that could fall outside the scope of human legal systems. Appropriate behaviour towards the gods, and the social and cosmic structures established by them, was of paramount importance. The nature of possible transgressions and the themes therein thus provide insights into what was understood to constitute the proper order of things and the importance of respecting and maintaining this. The themes identified also demonstrate a cohesive system of thought underlying the various sources. The categories employed as sub-headings in the present chapter are entirely my own and, while they are useful in structuring the presentation for modern readers, they nevertheless risk obscuring the structure of the ancient texts.[24] I have already discussed the overarching structure of the lists, including the relationship between different compositions (§ 3.1). Throughout the following discussion, I make note of the smaller-scale structural relationships between individual entries and the listing strategies employed by the compilers. This will also contribute to our understanding of how the compilers of the ancient sources sought to structure their conceptualization and categorization of transgressions.

3.2.1 The gods and cultic practices

The nature of the Mesopotamian worldview means that any transgression, as an offence against the divinely established structures of the universe, should be considered an offence against the gods. It is therefore appropriate that the very first offence described in *Šurpu* involves the patient's personal deities (II 5): *ikkib*(nig$_2$.ge$_{17}$) *ili*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *i-ku-lu ikkib*(nig$_2$.ge$_{17}$) ^{d}*ištari*(15)-*šu*$_2$ *i-ku-lu* '(who) ate *ikkibu*-transgression of his god,

[24] Although there is good reason to argue that the ancient compilers themselves considered family and, to a lesser extent, other people as a separate category, for reasons that will be explained below (§ 3.2.3).

who ate *ikkibu*-transgression of his goddess.' The fact that this line is placed at the very beginning of the list of possible offences suggests either that it was considered the most serious transgression or that it was a 'heading' encompassing all or some of the following entries in the list. This is plausible since 'eating *ikkibu*-transgression' of the gods could have involved transgressing bounds set by them or doing something considered anathema to them (§ 2.1.2.1). Comparable lines are also found among the list of transgressions that follows (e.g. *Šurpu* II 11): [*il*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *i-da-ṣu*] ^{d}*ištar*(15)-*šu*$_2$ *i-me-šu*$_2$ '[who disrespected his god,] who scorned his goddess.'[25] A longer 'intermission' occurs at *Šurpu* II 32–34:

32	*ul i-de šer*$_3$*-ti ili*(dingir) *ul i-de en-net* ^{d}*ištari*(iš$_8$.tar$_2$)	He does not know the *šērtu*-offence-penalty concerning the god, he does not know the *ennetu*-wrongdoing-punishment concerning the goddess,
33	*ila*(dingir) *i-da-aṣ* ^{d}*ištara*(iš$_8$.tar$_2$) *im-te-eš*	he disrespected the god, he has scorned the goddess,
34	*a-na ili*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *ar-nu-šu*$_2$ *a-na* ^{d}*ištari*(iš$_8$.tar$_2$)-*šu*$_2$ *gil*$_2$*-lat-su*	his *arnu*-crime-punishment relates to his god, his *gillatu*-sin-punishment relates to his goddess.

The passage begins with the recurrent trope that the sufferer is ignorant of his transgression (see § 3.3), but the following lines suggest at least some agency in offending the gods. Whether line 33 concerns the active commission of offences against the gods or simply omission, negligence, like ignorance, is no excuse when it comes to behaviour towards the gods. The phrasing of line 34 plays on the semantic range of the relevant terminology to suggest that any transgression against the cosmic order is both a direct offence against the gods and that the prerogative for its punishment lies with the same gods. Together, the passages discussed above frame the enumeration of possible transgressions and therefore emphasize the fact that all of them are infractions

[25] Restoration after *Šurpu* II 33, cited below.

against the gods, and that their punishment by the gods is a key source of human suffering.

Later in the list in *Šurpu* II, there are examples of transgression that more directly concern the gods, where negligence or ill-intention towards the gods manifests in cultic malpractice (e.g. *Šurpu* II 73–80):

73	*ina gab-bi ili*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *u* ^{d}*ištari*(iš$_8$.tar$_2$)-*šu*$_2$ *ša*$_2$ *i-me-šu*	Because he scorned his god and his goddess entirely,[26]
74	*ina lib*$_3$*-bi-šu*$_2$ *u pi-i-šu*$_2$ *iq-bu-u*$_2$ *la id-di-nu*	(who) promised in his heart and his mouth (but then) did not deliver,
75	*ina se-er-qi*$_2$[27] *nīš*(mu) *ili*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *i-me-šu*	(who) during an offering scorned the oath of his god,
76	*u*$_2$*-qad-di-šu u*$_2$*-na-az-zi-mu ik-lu-u*	(who) purified (but then) complained and withheld (an offering),
77	*im-i-ru u*$_2$*-ri-iḫ-ḫu i-ku-lu*	(who) *went forward*, set aside (an offering), (but then) ate it,[28]
78	*iš-ru-ru-ma niš qa-ti ir-šu-u*	(who) went ahead and made a hand-lifting prayer,
79	^{geš}*paššūra*(banšur) *kun-na u*$_2$*-saḫ-ḫu-u*	(but then) wrecked the firmly established offering table,
80	*il*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *u* ^{d}*ištar*(iš$_8$.tar$_2$)-*šu*$_2$ *itti*(ki)-*šu*$_2$ *u*$_2$*-za-an-nu-u*$_2$	(who) made his god and his goddess angry with him.

The description in II 80 is perhaps to be understood as a result of committing any of the preceding offences. Some of these misdemeanours roughly correspond to an instance of *māmītu*-curse listed in *Šurpu* III (22): *ma-mit re-ḫe-e-ti na-da-nu u ša*$_2$*-ʾa-a-lu* '*māmītu*-curse concerning donating the leftovers (of a temple offering) but asking (for them back).' Another example of *māmītu*-curse which may relate to improper cultic practice is more obscure (*Šurpu* III 35): *ma-mit immera*(udu.nita$_2$) *ṭa-ba-ḫu u*

[26] Lit. 'because of the totality of his god and his goddess which he scorned'. This translation is based on the sense of the similarly structured previous lines (II 69–72). It is possible that the *ša* picks up the relative clauses found earlier in the tablet (both Reiner and Borger restore a missing *ša* at the beginning of II 4), especially given the subjunctive verbs in the following lines, although we would expect it at the beginning of the line here too. Perhaps the varying grammatical structures have confused the ancient compilers.

[27] Nin1 writes *sur-qi*$_2$, presumably a variant spelling of *serqu* (cf. Maul 2019: 206).

[28] For the interpretation of *im-i-ru* (i.e. *imʾiru*) as a form of (*w*)*arû* 'to advance', cf. e.g. CAD A/2 329 and Eckart Frahm's translation of the source line in Comm. C 28 (CCP 2.1.C ccp.yale.edu/P470058, accessed 23/07/2019). The ancient commentary explains the term as follows: [*im-i-ru*(?)] : *im-ru gi-nu-u nīqu*(siškur) '[*imʾiru*(?)] meaning *imru*, *ginû*-offering, *nīqu*-offering' (restorations my own). The note to this line in CCP suggests that the ancient commentator was influenced by the word's similarity to *immeru* 'sheep' and therefore associated it with two common terms for animal sacrifice. The context of the source line also provides an association with cultic offerings.

niksu(ku$_5$)^{su} *la-pa-tu* '*māmītu*-curse concerning slaughtering a ram but touching the cut of meat.' While the verb *lapātu* can have the sense of 'defiling',[29] the offence here probably lies in touching something that is off limits, having been set aside for a cultic offering.[30] There are also examples of *arratu*-curse that relate to cultic offerings and other ritual practices (KAL 10, Nr. 64, 42–44):

42 [*ina*] x *karānī*(geštin)^{meš} *u šīnāti*(kaš$_3$) *ta-ba-*ˈ*ku ṣi-a-ḫu*˧ MIN(= *arrāku*)
43 [*ina*] ˈ*rabî*(gal)$^{?}$˧ *ina* ˈ*še*˧-*eḫ-ti bīt*(e$_2$) ˈ*ili*(dingir)˧ [*tabāku*?] ˈMIN(= *arrāku*)˧
44 [*ina*] x x (x)ˈ^{meš} *rabûti*(gal)˧^{meš} *ina* ^{e2}*ūri*(ur$_3$) *ka-ma*$^{?}$-[*ru*$^{?}$ MIN(= *arrāku*)]

[(With *arratu*-curse) concerning …] pouring wine and urine (and) laughing (about it) I am cursed, [43] [(with *arratu*-curse) concerning *pouring out great* …] in an incense burner of the temple I am cursed, [44] [(with *arratu*-curse) concerning *piling up*] great … on the roof … [… I am cursed].

The first offence refers to the contamination of cultic offerings with urine; the inclusion of the verb 'to laugh' (*ṣiāḫu*) suggests that the offender is revelling in a deliberate wrongdoing and that this was not a careless mistake. The second offence probably involves placing something inappropriate in an incense burner, thus sullying another form of offering to the gods.[31] The reading of *kamāru* in line 44 is uncertain, but the editor suggests that this entry refers to inappropriately piling up materials on a roof.[32] This could relate to the setting up of ritual paraphernalia and offerings on the patient's rooftop, which is a feature of some rituals including *Bīt mēseri*, and suggests these have been performed inappropriately in some way.[33] Similar references to cult are found in the Istanbul *arratu*-ritual (e.g. A 185 rev. 15): [*ina*] ˈ*bīt*(e$_2$) *ilānī*(dingir)^{meš}˧ ^{zi3}*maṣḫata*(mad.ˈga$_2$) *sa*˧-*la-*ʾ*i* MIN(= *lū arrāku*) MIN(= *Šamaš lipšur*) … '[(with *arratu*-curse) concerning] scattering the temple with *maṣḫatu*-flour I am indeed cursed, may

[29] Cf. e.g. CAD L 82, "to put hands on with evil intentions, to commit a sacrilege".
[30] Pientka-Hinz 2008: 256.
[31] Cf. Maul 2019: 270.
[32] Maul 2019: 270.
[33] The roof has an important function, on the one hand, in protecting the occupants of a house but, on the other hand, it is also a liminal space, allowing people to engage with the world outside the house and communicate with the heavens (cf. Wilburn 2019: 594).

Šamaš release it! …' Again, this presumably relates to malpractice or negligence in making flour offerings.

Other examples of *māmītu*-curse relating to the religious sphere include those referring to specific gods or groups of gods (e.g. *Šurpu* III 72, 104–114, 151–174), minor deities (e.g. III 45), cultic calendars (e.g. III 101–103), and parts of temples (e.g. III 73–74). Several musical instruments used for cultic performances are also named in relation to *māmītu*-curse (e.g. *Šurpu* III 37): *ma-mit ta-pa-li u tim-bu-ut-ti* '*māmītu*-curse concerning the *castanets* or the *timbuttu*-drum.' This is the first of many examples of *māmītu*-curse relating to musical instruments, although this example occurs earlier, separated from the other entries. The others occur together later in the same incantation, where both of the above instruments are repeated along with others (*Šurpu* III 88–91):[34]

88	*ma-mit ma-zi-i u li-li-si* u_2	*Māmītu*-curse concerning *mazû*-drum or kettledrum, (refrain),
89	*ma-mit ḫal-ḫal-la-ti u ta-pa-li* u_2	*māmītu*-curse concerning *ḫalḫallatu*-drum or *castanets*, (refrain),
90	*ma-mit a-le-e pa-lag-gi* u_3 *tim-bu-ti* u_2	*māmītu*-curse concerning *alû*-drum, *balaĝ*, or *timbuttu*-drum, (refrain),
91	*ma-mit* ^{geš}*sammî*(za_3.mi_2) *u ṣi-bat-ti* u_2	*māmītu*-curse concerning lyre or *ṣibattu-harp*, (refrain).

Many of the instruments listed are types of drum, and presumably all had a cultic function like the balaĝ and kettledrum, whose role in cult is well attested.[35] These passages in particular suggest that certain parts of these incantations may have been drawn from a variety of sources: one source (whence III 37) contains a meristic pair representing the whole category of musical instruments; another source (whence III 88–91) goes into more detail, listing many different types of musical instrument. Both

[34] The identification of the instruments, with the exception of *tāpalu* and *ṣibattu*, follows Gabbay 2014: 85–152. The translation of *tāpalu* as 'castanets' is based on a Sumerian lexical equivalent ĞEŠ.PA.PA-e_2-pa-na which refers to "a pair of wooden clackers" (Kilmer 1994: 467). The translation of *ṣibattu* is uncertain but the fact that it is grouped with the lyre (*sammû*) suggests that it is indeed a type of stringed instrument, as both the CAD (Ṣ 155: "(a harp)") and AHw (III 1097: "eine Harfe?") tentatively identify it.

[35] E.g. Gabbay 2014: 87–88.

strategies convey a sense of universality within the possible categories in which a transgression might occur. The later passage (III 88–91) occurs in a general context of cult, following a list of examples of *māmītu*-curse relating to gods and other non-human entities, including demons and ghosts. The earlier line (III 37) has no obvious link to the preceding or following examples, which is in line with the general lack of any overarching patterns in the list.

Also relevant to the sphere of cultic practice are examples of *māmītu*-curse and possible transgressions that refer to various female cult practitioners (e.g. *Šurpu* III 116–117): *ma-mit nadīti*(lukur) *u* ^{munus}*qadišti*(nu.ge$_{17}$) / *ma-mit* ^{d}*ku$_3$-bi* (var. inserts: *u$_3$*) *ugbabti*(nin.dingir.ra) '*māmītu*-curse concerning *nadītu* or *qadištu*, [117] *māmītu*-curse concerning the *kūbu*-demon of (var. or) an *ugbabtu*'; (VIII 69): *itti*(ki) *ma-mit mārat*(dumu.munus) *ilānī*(dingir)^{meš} ^{d}*ku$_3$-bi ša$_2$ ugbabti*(nin.dingir.ra) *nadīti*(lukur) ^{munus}*qadišti*(nu.ge$_{17}$) *u kul-ma-ši-tu$_2$* 'with *māmītu*-curse concerning a 'daughter' of the gods, the *kūbu*-demon of an *ugbabtu*, *nadītu*, *qadištu*, or *kulmašītu*.'[36] Once again, the entries in *Šurpu* VIII are more exhaustive than those in *Šurpu* III and, as with the entries referring to musical instruments, both strategies can give the impression of universality. The potential nature of transgressions against female cult practitioners is found in another *Šurpu* incantation (IV 7): *a-na mārat*(dumu.munus) *ili*(dingir)-*šu la$_3$ īdû*(zu)^{u}

[36] Apart from *kūbu*, these are all terms for female cultic personal who were organized into special groups and who were governed by certain rules (Westenholz 1989: 251). The *nadītu* (lukur) and *ugbabtu* (nin-dingir) were female cult practitioners who was not legally allowed to have biological offspring (Peled 2016: 246). The *qadištu* (nu-ge$_{17}$) was a female member of temple personnel who functioned as a midwife and wet-nurse (George 2011: 281–283; Stol 2000: 172–173). The *kulmašītu* (nu-bar) is often attested with the *qadištu* and the two probably had similar functions (Lecompte 2016: 49, with n.102). The special nature of these functions is reflected in the Sumerian terms: nu-ge$_{17}$ 'one who is sacred' and nu-bar 'one who is set apart' (see Zgoll 1997: 183–184 for discussion of the nu-prefix). The *kūbu* was the demonized form of a stillborn or preterm birth that, having never known its own mother's milk, vengefully caused harm to newborn babies (Römer 1973: 318; Scurlock 1991: 151–152). The nature of the *kūbu*'s relationship to the *ugbabtu* in the passage is unclear. One possibility is that it simply refers to a foetus and therefore describes an impropriety involving impregnating a member of a class of cultic personnel who were not allowed to bear children (Simons 2017: 106–107).

a-la-˹*ku*˺ ‘to have intercourse with a ‘daughter’ of his god unknowingly.’[37] Although the offence is committed without the perpetrator’s knowledge of the woman’s status as a cultic professional, it is still a serious offence against the god concerned. That cultic personnel were considered among the things reserved to their god (i.e. *ikkibu*, see § 2.1.2.1) is supported by a passage in one of the *lipšur*-litanies (KAL 10, Nr. 27–33, 83–84): … *ikkib*(nig$_2$.ge$_{17}$) *ili*(dingir)-*šu$_2$ ina la$_3$ idê*(zu) ˹*lu*˺ [*īkul*(gu$_7$)] / *a-na ugbabti*(nin.dingir) *ili*(dingir)-*šu$_2$ lu i-lik* KIMIN(= *lū* du$_8$^{meš}-*šu$_2$ lū pa-sa-*˹*si*˺)[38] … ‘if he unknowingly [ate] *ikkibu*-transgression of his god, [84] if he had intercourse with an *ugbabtu*-priestess of his god, may *they* be loosened for him, may *it* be erased *for him* …’ The positioning of the refrain in this passage groups the two offences together, suggesting a close relationship between them. The inclusion of the possessive suffix need not suggest that this offence only applied in the case of one’s personal god, but it is a reminder that those who have forfeited the protection of their personal deities are particularly vulnerable to divine punishment (see § 1.4.2.1). The seriousness of sexual offences against cultic personnel is also reflected in the fact that these are some of the few offences that are connected with specific physical symptoms (usually of the genitals) in the diagnostic series *Sakikku* (§ 4.3.1). On the whole, transgressions against offerings and the cultic property and personnel of the gods not only violate their sanctity but also represent a disregard for the structures and hierarchies that control access to elements of the cult and facilitate the relationship between humans and the divine.

[37] The phrase *ana* X *alāku* (lit. ‘to go to X’) is understood as a euphemism for sexual intercourse (cf. e.g. CAD A/1 321).
[38] On the difficult writing of this refrain, see § 2.1.2.3.

3.2.2 Artefacts, actions, and oath-taking

There are several examples of transgression that reference specific artefacts, some of which may be associated with the taking of oaths or other ritual actions. Indeed, impropriety in oath-taking appears to be a relatively frequent concern in relation to *māmītu*-curse in particular, perhaps reflecting a persistent association with its conceptual origins as a broken oath (see § 2.1.1.1). One such artefact is the *ṣarṣaru*-vessel (*Šurpu* III 62): *ma-mit ina ṣar-ṣa-ri mê*(a)^{meš} *ša$_2$-tu-u* '*māmītu*-curse concerning drinking water from a *ṣarṣaru*-vessel.' The *ṣarṣaru* is a water vessel associated with the taking of oaths in a Neo-Assyrian oracle compendium (SAA 9 3 iii 1–15), although it should be noted that this usage is not attested elsewhere.[39] Another example of *māmītu*-curse that is possibly more securely related to oath-taking is described in *Šurpu* III 98: *ma-mit ṣi-bit*$^{!}$(KID) *tu-le-e* […] '*māmītu*-curse concerning seizing of the breast […].' An association between the act of 'seizing the breast' and oath-taking is attested in Esarhaddon's Accession Treaty (SAA 2 6 obv. 155–156):[40] … *ṣi-bit tu-le-e* / <*a-na*> *a-ḫi-iš tu-tam-ma-a-ni* … '[156] you (shall not) take a mutual oath by [155] … (and) the seizing of the breast …' Reiner translates the phrase "drying up of the breast",[41] probably influenced by the previous line which concerns breastfeeding. The connection between the two lines is only the term *tulû*, but this demonstrates one of the possible strategies for organizing entries in the lists of *Šurpu*. In her commentary on the line, however, Reiner does refer to the text KAR 228,[42] a namburbi against *ṣibit tulê* which further helps to contextualize our understanding of the 'seizing of the breast'. In this incantation, the act of seizing the breast is in fact closely associated with *māmītu*-curse

[39] Cf. e.g. AHw III 1086 s.v. *ṣarṣāru* II.
[40] For other examples, cf. e.g. CAD Ṣ 165–166 s.v. *ṣibit tulê*.
[41] Reiner 1958: 22.
[42] Reiner 1958: 57.

(obv. 6–8):[43] … *ṣi-bit ma-mit* / *u ṣi-bit tu-li-ia* $ša_2$ *ru-u-a* / ⌜*it-ba*$^{?}$⌝*-ri iṣ*$^{!?}$*-*⌜*ba*$^{?}$*-tu*$_2$$^{?}$⌝ … '… the seizing by *māmītu*-curse [7] and the seizing of my breast, which a friend, [8] a colleague, *undertook* (lit. *seized*) …' The same incantation makes clear that an oath sworn in such a way could be source of suffering (obv. 14): ⌜*ana*⌝ *lemutti*(ḫul) *ṣi-bit tu-li-ia* 'against the evil of the seizing of my breast.' This namburbi thus aims to prevent the negative consequences of an impropriety in the swearing or breaking of an oath confirmed by such a ritual act, with the fact that both the breast and the victim of *māmītu*-curse are 'seized' providing a further connection. The examples of the *ṣarṣaru*-vessel and *ṣibit tulê* do not by themselves support Reiner's assertion that all of the artefacts and some of the actions described in *Šurpu* III are associated with oath-taking.[44] The understanding of *māmītu* in its abstract sense of 'curse', with no literal oath necessarily implied, still stands, and such examples would therefore relate to improprieties in oath-taking. Nevertheless, the conceptual background of *māmītu*-curse means that the imagery of oath-taking would have remained ever-present in the conceptualization of transgression and its punishment, especially those involving artefacts that might otherwise be associated with oaths.

Other actions described in the lists in *Šurpu* involve artefacts which may have had legal or ritual connotations, although their significance is generally unclear. For example (*Šurpu* VIII 62–63): *itti*(ki) *ma-mit* ^{tug2}*naḫlapta*(gu_2.e_3) *na-ka-su du-di-it-tu*$_2$ *še-be*$_2$*-ru u di-da ba-ta-qu* / *itti*(ki) *ma-mit* ^{tug2}*sissikta*(sig_2) *ba-ta-qu u patra*(gir_2.an.bar) *ša-la-pu* 'with *māmītu*-curse concerning slashing a cloak, breaking a dress-pin, or tearing off a loose garment, [63] with *māmītu*-curse concerning cutting the hem (of a garment) or pulling out a dagger.' These actions could be understood as the breaking of protective

[43] Cf. Ebeling 1955: 144–148.
[44] Reiner 1958: 55.

artefacts, perhaps as part of a physical attack on another person. However, the breaking of the dress-pin also recalls a Sumerian ritual to transition an adulteress to a masculine gender identity.[45] Cutting the hem of a garment is well attested as a symbolic legal act, particularly in the case of divorce, and as a magical act, where the hem acts as a substitute for the target or victim of magic,[46] but its relation to the action with the dagger is unclear. The fact that the verb *šalāpu*, when its object is a weapon, is usually used in the context of battle suggests that this line may refer to an act of violence disrupting the legal process.[47] It is also possible to see the dagger as another gendered symbol, forming a meristic pair with the dress-pin of the previous line and thus implying that such transgressions can relate to all humans regardless of gender identity. We may never know the exact significance of such artefacts and actions, and it is entirely possible that the ancient compilers did not know themselves. The listing of artefacts relating to various areas of life emphasizes that the possibility of committing a transgression is always present, so there may be no further significance to the choice of entries in such lists beyond giving an extensive and representative sample of the artefacts possibly encountered in day-to-day life in Mesopotamia.

Examples of *arratu*-curse relating to artefacts include a reference to broken shoes (A 185 obv. 56): *ina* ^{kuš}*šēni*(e.sir$_2$) *pa-ṭi$_2$-ir-ti* ⌜*ina*⌝ ^{kuš}*šēni*(e.sir$_2$) *par'i*(nunuz)^{i} ⌜MIN(= *lū arrāku*)⌝ [MIN(= *Šamaš lipšur*)] '(with *arratu*-curse) concerning a loosened shoe, concerning a cut-through shoe I am indeed cursed, [may Šamaš release it!]' Shoes are a relatively essential item of clothing and, if they are broken, they cannot fulfil their intended function. They could even endanger their wearer: treading in contaminated

[45] McCaffrey 2017: 85–87.
[46] Malul 1988: 197–208.
[47] Cf. e.g. CAD Š/1 230. Note, however, that an apparently less violent usage of this verb occurs elsewhere in *Šurpu* (III 69): *ma-mit qanê*(gi) *ina rik-si ša-la-pu* '*māmītu*-curse concerning pulling a reed out of a bundle.'

wash-water, a commonly attested means of contracting impurity, would presumably represent a greater threat with a loose or damaged shoe. Indeed, reference to a damaged shoe can be found among contagious materials in the following *lipšur*-litany (KAL 10, Nr. 16–26, 61–62): *li-qi-it ṣu-up-ri gu-li-bat ša₂-ḫa-ti* / ^{kuš}*šēnu*(e.sir) *pa-te-eḫ-tu me-se-ru par-ʾu* 'nail parings, armpit shavings, [62] a worn-out shoe, a cut-through belt.' The following line mentions a 'sack for witchcraft' (*narūq upšašê*) which also suggests the possibility that these items could be used for harmful magic. The related transgression could therefore consist of carelessly discarding broken items of clothing, thus exposing oneself, through negligence, to the risk of becoming the target of aggressive magic. On the whole, transgressions that relate to artefacts usually represent improprieties in their use, use contrary to their nature, or negligence in their use that could lead to damage or risk of contagion.

3.2.3 The family and social relations

While it is transgressions against gods that begin and frame the list of possible transgressions in *Šurpu* II, the same ritual's list of examples of *māmītu*-curse begins with those relating to members of the family (*Šurpu* III 3–5):

> 3 *ma-mit abi*(ad) *u ummi*(ama) *amēla*(lu₂) *ṣa-ba-*⌜*ti*⌝ *u₂*
> 4 *ma-mit ab*(ad) *abi*(ad) *ma-mit ummi*(ama) *ummi*(ama) *u₂*
> 5 *ma-mit aḫi*(šeš) *u aḫāti*(nin₉) *u₂*
>
> *Māmītu*-curse concerning father or mother seizing (this) man, (refrain), [4] *māmītu*-curse concerning paternal grandfather, *māmītu*-curse concerning maternal grandmother, (refrain), [5] *māmītu*-curse concerning brother or sister, (refrain).

Elsewhere in *Šurpu*, the examples of *arnu*-punishment largely concern family members (III 176–183), with a couple of more general references to wronged people and the living and dead. The list of examples of *arratu*-curse (*Šurpu* V–VI 42–49) also concerns family members, with the exception of the reference to the 'murdererous *arratu*-curse' (see § 3.5). Thus, where *Šurpu* deviates from its primary focus on *māmītu*-curse to

include other forms of transgression and punishment, the shorter lists mostly concern family members. In the standalone rituals dedicated to *arratu*-curse, the comparable lists are much more varied, but those entries concerning family members and other people in the sufferer's immediate social circle still appear at the beginning. Prior to its longer formulaic list, the Istanbul *arratu*-ritual opens with references to family members (A 185 obv. 1–3):

1 ⌜*šum*⌝-*ma amēlu*(lu$_2$) *ar-rat šag-gaš*-⌜*ti*⌝ [*lu ar-rat abi*(ad) *lu ar-rat ummi*(ama)]
2 *lu ar-rat aḫi*(šeš) *lu ar-rat aḫati*(nin$_9$) ⌜*lu*⌝ [*ar-rat … iṣbat*(dab)-*su*]
3 nam.bur$_2$.bi *lumun*(ḫul) *ar*-[*ra-ti šuāti ana pašāri*]

If a man, murderous *arratu*-curse, [whether *arratu*-curse (concerning) father, or *arratu*-curse (concerning) mother], or *arratu*-curse (concerning) brother, or *arratu*-curse (concerning) sister, or [*arratu*-curse (concerning) … seized him]. Namburbi [to release] the evil [of that *arratu*-curse].

This passage probably serves as a sort of brief introduction to the circumstances in which the ritual is required, rather than as an incipit for the incantation provided later in the tablet, and emphasizes the importance of family members when considering the possible circumstances of transgression. The later incantation contains a longer list of instances of *arratu*-curse, but this still opens with family members (A 185 obv. 30–32):

30 ⌜*ri-ša*⌝-*a re-e-ma* ⌜*šum*⌝-*ma ar-rat ša-gal*-⌜*ti*⌝ [*ina*$^{?}$] ⌜*maḫri*(igi)$^{?}$-*ka*[48] *ar-ra-ku lu*⌝ ⌜*ar*⌝-[*rat abi*(ad) *lu*] ⌜*ar-rat*⌝ [*ummi*(ama)]
31 *lu ar-ra-ku* ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *lip-šur* ⌜*lu ar-rat*⌝ *aḫi*(šeš) ⌜*lu*⌝ [*ar-rat*] ⌜*aḫati*(nin$_9$) MIN(= *lu arrāku*)⌝ [MIN(= *Šamaš lipšur*)]
32 *lu ar-rat kim*-⌜*ti ni-šu*⌝-*te u sa-la-ti* ⌜MIN(= *lu arrāku*)⌝ [MIN(= *Šamaš lipšur*)]

Have mercy! If (with) murderous *arratu*-curse [*in*] *your presence* I am cursed, or (with) *arratu*-curse concerning [father, or] (with) *arratu*-curse concerning [mother] [31] I am indeed cursed, may Šamaš release it! Or (with) *arratu*-curse concerning brother or (with) [*arratu*-curse concerning] sister I am indeed cursed, [may Šamaš release it!] [32] Or (with) *arratu*-curse concerning family, kith, or kin I am indeed cursed, [may Šamaš release it!].

The comparable list in the Berlin ritual also begins with family members, as well as other people in the household and social vicinity of the patient (KAL 10, Nr. 64, 18–22). The fact that entries relating to the family occur at the beginning of longer lists or are

[48] Cf. KAL 10, Nr. 64, 16–17: ⌜*ar*⌝-*ra-tu*$_2$ *ša*$_2$ *ina* ⌜*maḫ*⌝-[*ri*]-⌜*ka*⌝ *u ina maḫar*(igi) *ilānī*(dingir)^{meš} *rabûti*(gal)[^{meš}] / ⌜*ša*⌝ *šamê*(an)^{e} ⌜*u erṣeti*(ki)^{ti3}⌝ [*ar*]-⌜*ra*⌝-*ku* … '*arratu*-curse (with) which in your presence and in the presence of the great gods [17] of heaven and earth I am cursed …'

the entries selected when the list is shorter demonstrates their importance among the possible circumstances of transgression. If someone had committed some unknown transgression, it was highly likely that it had happened in the context of the family or close social circle, as these are social groupings one usually spends the most time in and the people with whom one is in close and regular contact. Such relationships, second only to those with the gods, are among the key elements of the proper functioning of societies like those of Mesopotamia, so transgression in this area also has the potential to be the most damaging to the fabric of society. In addition, even though there is no clear overarching structure in the rest of the lists, the important position of entries referring to the family and other social relations suggests that the categorization of transgressions at least begins by working outwards from the sufferer. The use of lists that move outwards from or inwards towards a centre, usually from a human and urban perspective, is a common organizational strategy found throughout the *āšipūtu* corpus.

The possible nature of transgressions involving family members can perhaps be elucidated with reference to entries in *Šurpu* II (20–26):

20	*itti*(ki) *abi*(ad) *māra*(dumu) *ip-ru-su*	(Who) separated son from father,
21	*itti*(ki) *māri*(dumu) *aba*(ad) *ip-ru-su*	(who) separated father from son,
22	*itti*(ki) *ummi*(ama) *mārta*(dumu.munus) *ip-ru-su*	(who) separated daughter from mother,
23	*itti*(ki) *mārti*(dumu.munus) *umma*(ama) *ip-ru-su*	(who) separated mother from daughter,
24	*itti*(ki) *e-me-tu*$_4$ *kal-la-tu*$_4$ *ip-ru-su*	(who) separated daughter-in-law from mother-in-law,
25	*itti*(ki) *kal-la-tu*$_4$ *e-me-tu*$_4$ *ip-ru-su*	(who) separated mother-in-law from daughter-in-law,
26	*itti*(ki) *aḫi*(šeš) *aḫa*(šeš)-*šu*$_2$ *ip-ru-su*	(who) separated his brother from brother.

The chiastic pairs of lines emphasize the fact that familial relationships, like other important relationships within the structure of the universe, rely on balance between two parties, and the possibility of transgression lies in upsetting this balance. Familial relationships are among the most important structures that organize the Mesopotamian

world and damaging these would have had various financial, legal, and religious consequences. After a brief interlude concerning prisoners and gods, the incantation returns to examples concerning senior members of the family, employing almost identical vocabulary to that used for offences against the gods (*Šurpu* II 35–36):[49]

35 *a-na be-en-ni da-ṣa-a-tu*$_4$ *a-na aḫi*(šeš) *rabî*(gal)^{i} *zi-ra-a-ti*
36 *aba*(ad) *umma*(ama) *im-te-eš a-na aḫāti*(nin$_9$) *rabīti*(gal)^{ti} *ug-dal-lil*

Disrespect towards the *paterfamilias*,[50] hostilities against older brother, [36] he scorned father (and) mother, he sinned against older sister.

The verbs *dâṣu* 'to disrespect' and *mêšu* 'to scorn' are used in relation to gods in a previous line (*Šurpu* II 33, cited at § 3.2.1). As with disrespect towards the gods, such behaviour towards family members represents a rejection of one's responsibilities, especially in relation to hierarchical structures. The importance of hierarchy is especially emphasized by the passage's focus on senior members of the family. A similar focus is found in the following examples of *arratu*-curse (KAL 10, Nr. 64, 18): *lu-u ar*$_2$*-rat abi*(ad) *ummi*(amma) *aḫi*(šeš) ⌜*rabî*(gal)⌝ *aḫati*(nin$_9$) *rabīti*(gal)^{ti} MIN(= *arrāku*) 'whether (with) *arratu*-curse concerning father, mother, older brother, older sister, I am cursed.' Just as these relations are senior to the subject in the familial hierarchy, so too are the gods above all humans in the hierarchy of the universe. The use of similar vocabulary and their position in such lists emphasizes the primacy of gods and family members in the hierarchical structures of the Mesopotamian worldview and the seriousness of transgressions against them. Similar examples of *māmītu*-curse refer to other members of the household (*Šurpu* VIII 72): *itti*(ki) *ma-mit aš*$_2$*-ša*$_2$*-ti ḫi-*[*ir*]-⌜*ti*⌝ *ap-lu na-za-ru u na-ka-ru* 'with *māmītu*-curse concerning insulting and being hostile to wife, female spouse, heir'; (VIII 68): *itti*(ki) *ma-mit ardi*(arad) *amti*(geme$_2$) *bēli*(en) *u bēlti*(gašan) *na-za-ru na-ka-ru* 'with *māmītu*-curse concerning insulting (and)

[49] Note the change in grammatical structure from subjunctive verbs to copulative clauses and indicative verbs (see § 3.1).
[50] Cf. AHw I 122, which suggests "Familienältester".

being hostile to male slave, female slave, master or mistress.' Once again, these entries refer to people that one is regularly in close proximity to and whose relationships are governed by strict hierarchies. In this case, those lower down the hierarchy are protected – the mistreatment of wives, children, or slaves still represents a threat to the order and balance of the universe, even if these people were regarded in Mesopotamian society as less important than the male head of the household. Protecting the vulnerable is an ideal frequently expressed in Mesopotamian law collections (see § 3.2.5), so it is unsurprising that this should also be considered within the remit of *māmītu*-curse.

Examples of *māmītu*-curse involving specific members of the family are often followed by references to the wider family (e.g. *Šurpu* III 8): *ma-mit kim-ti u ni-su-tu*$_2$ '*māmītu*-curse concerning close family or distant family.'[51] This entry is paralleled in a namerimburruda-incantation, which includes the following additional line (KAL 10, Nr. 48–51, 26):[52] *lu ma-mit el-la-ti-ia*$_5$ *u*$_3$ *sa-la-ti-ia* 'whether *māmītu*-curse concerning my kinship group or my family by marriage.'[53] The use of meristic pairs suggests that transgressions could apply to anyone, no matter how distantly related, and the order of terms again suggests an outward progression from the sufferer at the centre. Even relations separated from the sufferer in time are to be included here (e.g. *Šurpu* III 6): *ma-mit sebet*(7) *le-e-pi ša*$_2$ *bīt*(e$_2$) *abi*(ad) *amēla*(lu$_2$) *ṣa-ba-tu* '*māmītu*-curse concerning seven generations of the paternal house seizing (this) man.' The term *lēpu* probably refers to generations of ancestors and the offence could therefore be related to proper practice in ancestor cult, but could also be projecting into the future. It has been suggested that this refers to transgressions committed by earlier generations, with the

[51] This interpretation of the term *kimtu* and *nisūtu* is not certain (cf. Nielsen 2011: 241–242).
[52] Cf. also Læssøe 1955: 58, 75.
[53] For *salātu* as "affinal kin", see Nielsen 2011: 242–244.

punishment passing down the family line,[54] but it is unlikely that the gods would wait up to seven generations to punish a transgression, or that a family would wait that long to seek help.[55] The use of the specific number of seven generations is not intended to limit the temporal scope of divine punishment, but is instead a literary trope or magical number that represents an unspecified large quantity.[56] An example of *arnu*-punishment concerns future descendants as well as other people who are perhaps also relations (*Šurpu* III 181–182): *a-ra-an der-ka-ti u te-ni-qi*$_2$ *u*$_2$ / [*a*]-⌜*ra*⌝-*an mīti*(uš$_2$) *u balṭi*(ti) ⁝ *a-ra-an ḫab-li u ḫa-bil-ti u*$_2$ '*arnu*-punishment concerning descendants or newborn child, (refrain), [182] *arnu*-punishment concerning dead or living, *arnu*-punishment concerning wronged man or wronged woman, (refrain).' The first half of line 182 is omitted in all manuscripts except As2 and comparable examples of *māmītu*-curse are also considerably separated in their lists.[57] However, one witness to a namerimburruda-incantation juxtaposes the living and dead with descendants and a newborn child, in this case within a single line,[58] where the surrounding context also concerns familial relations. The other witness has them in close proximity but interposes a reference to a wronged man or woman (KAL 10, Nr. 48–51, 27–29): *lu ma-mit* ^{lu2}*mīti*(uš$_2$) *u balṭi*(ti) / *lu ma-mit ḫab-li* ⌜*u*⌝ [*ḫa-bil-ti*] / *lu-u ma-mit dar-ka-ti u te-ni-qi* 'whether *māmītu*-curse concerning dead or living, [28] or *māmītu*-curse concerning a wronged man or [wronged woman], [29] or *māmītu*-curse concerning descendants or a newborn child.' The placement of these entries among those relating to family suggest that they may refer to living, dead, and wronged members of the family. This suggests that the scope and

[54] Maul 2019: 12.
[55] Nevertheless, there is some evidence for belief in 'inherited sin' in Mesopotamia (Fink 2012: 90–93).
[56] A similar use of the number seven is found in early purification rituals (Cunningham 1997: 26) and the *Šarru* lexical list explicitly recognizes this relationship (CT 18 29–30 obv. ii 19′): imin = *kiš-ša*$_2$*-tu* 'seven = totality' (online at oracc.museum.upenn.edu/dcclt/P346055, accessed 23/07/2019). This is because seven is the first integer that is not a factor of sixty, the base of the earlier Sumero-Babylonian numeral system.
[57] *Šurpu* III 9 (descendants and newborn child); *Šurpu* III 148 (living and dead).
[58] KAL 10, Nr. 48–51, A 29′.

effects of transgression could extend well beyond a single human's lifespan: one must therefore perform one's duties towards dead ancestors, respect living members of one's family, and take care not to commit offences that might adversely affect future generations.

Several possible transgressions refer to social relations outside of the family (e.g. *Šurpu* III 10–11): *ma-mit ib-ri u tap-pe-e* u_2 / *ma-mit ru-u*$_2$*-a u it-ba-ru* u_2 '*māmītu*-curse concerning friend or companion, (refrain), [11] *māmītu*-curse concerning friend or colleague, (refrain).' This includes neighbours (KAL 10, Nr. 64, 21): ⌜*lu*⌝*-u ar*$_2$*-rat* ⌜*še*⌝*-*ʾ*i u* [*še*]*-*⌜ʾ*i*⌝*-ti* MIN(= *arrāku*) 'whether (with) *arratu*-curse concerning male neighbour or female neighbour I am cursed.' These are also people that one would be in regular contact with, increasing the risk of committing a transgression in relation to them. Offences against these people could include general improper behaviour (e.g. *Šurpu* VIII 58): *itti*(ki) *ma-mit aḫi*(šeš) *it-ba-ri ru-u*$_2$*-a tap-pu-u* u_2*-ba-ri mār*(dumu) *āli*(uru) *na-za-ru u na-ka-ru* 'with *māmītu*-curse concerning insulting or being hostile towards 'brother',[59] colleague, friend, companion, stranger, (or fellow) citizen.' In one case, however, we are provided with considerably more detail about possible transgressions that could be committed against a friend (*Šurpu* II 47–50):

47	*a-na bīt*(e_2) *tap-pe-e-šu*$_2$ *i-te-ru-ub*	He entered the house of his companion,
48	*a-na alti*(dam) *tap-pe-e-šu*$_2$ *iṭ-ṭe-ḫe*	he had intercourse with his companion's wife,
49	*dāmē*($uš_2$)^{meš} *tap-pe-e-šu*$_2$ *it-ta-ba-ak*	he spilt his companion's blood,
50	*ṣu-bat tap-pe-e-šu*$_2$ *it-ta-al-ba-aš*$_2$	he put on his companion's clothes.[60]

The second entry is similar to an example found later in *Šurpu* (IV 6): *a-na al-ti ib-ri-šu a-la-ku pu-uz-zu-ru* 'to have intercourse with the wife of his friend in secret.' Such

[59] Meant here in a non-familial sense (cf. CAD A/1 200f. s.v. *aḫu* 2a).
[60] Nin1 has *ṣu-bat tap-pe-e-šu*$_2$ *it-ta-bal* 'he carried off his companion's clothes' (Borger 2000: 21). Both variants support the interpretation of theft, but I would privilege the reading from Nin3 as the sense corresponds with the usurpation of the companion's social position implied by II 47–48. These lines also describe infringements upon the friend's property that are reminiscent of transgressions against divine property (see § 3.2.1).

crimes would presumably have been covered by the human legal system, but the secrecy in the latter case, and the betrayal of a friend's trust to usurp his position in the former, explain why the threat of divine punishment also plays a role. The fact that the offences have been committed against a friend also represents a violation of the expected behaviours and structures that govern social relations. The latter example is juxtaposed with a similar offence against a female cult practitioner (IV 7, discussed at § 3.2.1). In this case, even committing the offence unwittingly is portrayed as equally grave as the purposeful sexual offence involving a friend's wife, demonstrating again how transgressions against the gods and their property were considered the most serious. Other examples of possible transgressions against acquaintances include the following (*Šurpu* III 34): *ma-mit a-na ib-ri ta-mu-u₂ u da-ki-šu*, '*māmītu*-curse of swearing (an oath) to a friend but killing him.' I would suggest that here *māmītu*-curse primarily serves to punish the act of betraying an oath of faithfulness to a friend, or swearing such an oath with false intentions, while the act of murder would, as expected, be punishable through terrestrial legal systems.

Other references to people and institutions of terrestrial power reflect the role divine punishment plays in regulating the structures of human society, which are ultimately set down and maintained by the gods (e.g. *Šurpu* III 147): *ma-mit* ^{geš}*kussî*(gu.za) *u puḫri*(ukkin) '*māmītu*-curse concerning throne or assembly.' This entry encompasses the whole of society's power structure with a meristic reference to the two focal points of political life: the monarch and the popular assembly. Another example from *Šurpu* gives a more comprehensive list of those involved in the administration of the whole universe (VIII 70): *itti*(ki) *ma-mit ili*(dingir) *šarri*(lugal) *kabti*(idim) *u rubê*(nun) *šak-nu ša₂-pi-ru u da-a-a-nu*, 'with *māmītu*-curse concerning god, king, noble or prince, governor, overseer, or judge.' This line emphasizes how earthly power structures,

especially kingship and human legal systems, reflect the greater cosmic power structures governing the relationship between gods and humans. There is again a directionality to this list, progressing from the top to the bottom of the cosmic hierarchy; the potential transgressor would have had less opportunity for direct contact with those higher up the list but transgressions against them would have been increasingly serious. The importance of upholding the fundamental structures of the universe, including those governing human society, is a key part of the Mesopotamian exorcist's conceptualization of transgression. These structures have been laid down by the gods and are essential to the proper functioning of everything, so must be maintained: this is achieved primarily by the threat of divine punishment, but the nature of these structures is reinforced by affirming them through these rituals.

3.2.4 Speech and dishonesty

Transgressions relating to speech, especially dishonest speech, are relatively common, perhaps arising from the conceptual origins of *māmītu*-curse and *arratu*-curse in speech acts.[61] Descriptions of such offences make frequent use of merismus and chiastic constructions to emphasize their damage to the careful balance of truth (e.g. *Šurpu* II 6): [*a-na an*]-˹*na*˺ *ul-la iq-bu-u a-na ul-la an-na iq-bu-u* '(who) said "no" [instead of] "yes", (who) said "yes" instead of "no".' An ancient commentary provides further interpretation of the line (C 41–42):[62] *ma-*˹*a a*˺*-na qa-bi-ti la qa-bi-tu iq-ta-bi* / [(*ma-a*)

[61] The power of speech to commit evil and transgressive actions is also an important aspect of the portrayal of witches (cf. Schwemer 2007: 108–110).

[62] Reiner 1958: 51. These can be interpreted as offences of omission and commission relating to the appropriate times to speak and to stay silent. Frahm's translation of the commentary (CCP 2.1.C, online at ccp.yale.edu/P470058, accessed 23/07/2019) also reflects this interpretation: "this means, he said nothing about things better be spoken of, and he said something [about] things better not be sp[oken of] (?)". A note to the CCP edition points out that this is the only attestation of the noun *qabītu* that is not qualified by *lā*, but it is appropriate to the chiastic structure of the line. The coining of unusual terminology to create balance is also found in the use of nouns gendered in opposition to their normal usage in order to convey universality in regard to the possible identity of witches (cf. Schwemer 2007: 70–79).

a-na] ⌜*la*⌝ *qa-*⌜*bi*⌝*-*[*ti*$^{?}$] *qa-bi-tu iq-ta-bi* 'he spoke no speech instead of speech, (and) he spoke speech [instead of] no speech.' Comparable lines include the following (*Šurpu* II 12–13): [*a-na ba*]-⌜*ni*⌝*-tu*$_4$ *lemutta*(munus.ḫul) *iq-bu-u*$_2$ / [*a-na le*]*-mut-tu*$_4$ *ba-ni-tu*$_4$ ⌜*iq*⌝*-bu-u*$_2$ '(who) spoke evil [instead of] good, [13] (who) spoke good [instead of] evil'; (II 17): *i-du-u*$_2$ *la i-qab-bu-u i-qab-bu-u ut-ta-ru* '(who) does not say (what) he knows (and) exaggerates (what) he says'; and II 38–40: *a-na ia-a*$^{'}$*-nu i-ba-aš*$_2$*-ši iq-ta-bi* / *a-na i-ba-aš*$_2$*-ši* ⌜*ia*⌝*-*[*a*$^{'}$]*-nu iq-ta-bi* / *la a-mir-ti* ⌜*iq*⌝*-*[*ta-bi*] *la sa-niq-*⌜*ti*⌝ *iq-ta-bi* 'he said "there is" instead of "there is not", [39] he said "there is not" instead of "there is", [40] he spoke about something that had not been seen, he spoke about something that had not been verified.' A comparable example of *māmītu*-curse rather more obviously relates to dishonesty (*Šurpu* III 144): *ma-mit sar-ri u sil-la-a-ti* [*u*$_2$] '*māmītu*-curse concerning lies or false accusations, [(refrain)].' While this last example concerns outright lies, the other actions cited above concern, more generally, inappropriateness in relation to speech. Both disrupt the proper order of things, and could potentially contribute to disrupting social relations and financial transactions. The poetic balance of these lines reflects one of the overarching themes behind the conceptualization of transgression: that their avoidance or punishment serves to preserve 'balance' in the cosmic order. Among other examples of *māmītu*-curse, we might assume that the above transgressions are encompassed by the following (*Šurpu* III 12): *ma-mit kit-ti u sar-ti* '*māmītu*-curse concerning truth or dishonesty.' Elsewhere, these two terms frequently occur together in meristic phraseology.[63] In this case, they can be understood to represent the two extremes of a conceptual category (i.e. that of relative true-ness) and therefore everything in between. This is also exemplified by the following line (III 13): *ma-mit ka-bit-ti u qal-la-ti* '*māmītu*-curse concerning gravity or levity.' The key point

[63] Cf. Lämmerhirt 2010: 320; 384.

here is that *māmītu*-curse works to punish transgression at all levels of perceived seriousness. The frequent use of merismus serves to effectively extend the coverage of *māmītu*-curse to whole conceptual categories without the need for exhaustive lists.

Other examples of transgression relating to speech include making false promises or breaking promises (*Šurpu* III 39): *ma-mit qa-be$_2$-e ša$_2$-ʾa-a-lu u na-ka-ru* '*māmītu*-curse concerning promising, asking, and changing'; (III 55): ⌜*ma*⌝*-mit qa-be$_2$-e u e-ne$_2$-e* '*māmītu*-curse concerning promising and reneging (on it).' The following namerimburruda-incantation refers to broken promises, along with other speech-related offences and some apparently unrelated descriptions of animals and a river (KAL 10, Nr. 16–26, 69–71):

69 *aq-bi-ma e-ni u$_2$-tak-kil-ma ul addin*(sum)^{in} *la na-ṭu-ta ēpuš*(du$_3$)^{uš}
70 *la ša-*⌜*lim*⌝*-ta ina pî*(ka)*-ia šakin*(gar)^{in} *la qa$_2$-bi-ta u$_2$-ša$_2$-an-ni*
71 *alpu*(gu$_4$) *ana-ku-ma im-ra-a* ⌜*ul*⌝ *i-de* (var. adds: ⌜*immeru*(udu⌝.[nita$_2$ *anāku*]-⌜*ma pi*⌝-[*šer$_3$-ti apšuru ul īde*]) *mê*(a)^{meš} *nāri*(id$_2$) *ana-ku-ma ašar*(ki) *allaku*(du)^{ku} *ul īde*(zu)

I spoke but I changed (what I spoke), I made a firm promise but I didn't give (what I promised), I committed impropriety, [70] lies were placed in my mouth, I repeated (something) unspeakable. [71] I am an ox and I do not know fodder, (var. adds: [I am] a sheep and [I do not know the release (ritual) that I perform (lit. release)]), I am river water and I do not know where I am going.

The metaphorical descriptions in line 71 are apparently connected to the previous lines by the mouth's role in both speech acts and eating.[64] They seem on the surface to be about ignorance, especially with the refrain *ul īde* 'I do not know'. Just as irrational animals eat instinctively or are sacrificed without awareness, so too do humans commit transgression without knowing what they are doing. Ignorance is a common theme in exorcistic texts concerning transgression (§ 3.3), but ignorance does not absolve one of guilt. The idea that humans cannot help but sin because they are unaware of the gods' values is closer to the theology expressed in wisdom literature (see § 1.4.1.3). Alternatively, this passage could concern elements of the natural world acting against

[64] Maul (2019: 156) suggests that the reference to a *pišertu*-ritual may also be playing on another meaning of the verb *pašāru* as 'to chew'.

their nature and thus not fulfilling their divinely ordained functions. The notion that an ox would not instinctively eat, that one would not sacrifice a sheep for a release ritual, or that a river should not know where it is going, is quite unbelievable and these imagined scenarios therefore represent a significant departure from the established order of things. This would suggest that the ideal nature of humans is to be respectful and keep promises and that the sufferer, by deviating from this state, has transgressed against nature and, above all, the gods. Especially with the conceptual connection to broken oaths inherent in the concept of *māmītu*-curse, all transgression could be perceived as reneging on an unspoken promise, binding all of creation, to respect the order of the universe.

Another namerimburruda-incantation makes reference to dishonesty not in speech, but in writing (KAL 10, Nr. 38–39, 38–42):

38 *qan tuppi* (gi.dub.ba.a) *la kit-ti* ⌜*it-ta*⌝*-ši* MIN(= *lū paṭra lū passa*)
39 ⌜*ša*$_2$⌝*-ṭa-ar la kit-ti iš-*⌜*ta*⌝*-ṭar* MIN(= *lū paṭra lū passa*)
40 [x (x)] ⌜*la*⌝ *kit-ti i-te-pu-*[*uš* MIN(= *lū paṭra lū passa*)]
41 [*i-na ši*]-⌜*iṭ*⌝*-ra-ti it-ta-*[*ma* MIN(= *lū paṭra lū passa*)]
42 [*u*$_2$*-sa*] ⌜*mi*⌝*-iṣ-ra ku-dur*$_2$*-*⌜*ra*⌝ [*uš-te-li* MIN(= *lū paṭra lū passa*)]

He has picked up an untrue stylus, may it be loosened, may it be erased, [39] he has written an untrue (piece of) writing, may it be loosened, may it be erased, [40] he has done an untrue […,[65] may it be loosened, may it be erased], [41] he has sworn [by] (his) writings, [may it be loosened, may it be erased], [42] [he has removed way], boundary, *kudurru*-stone, [may it be loosened, may it be erased].

The 'untrue stylus' (*qan tuppi lā kitti*) probably refers to the stylus that will be used to write the untrue writing referenced in the following lines. The oath in line 41 has presumably been sworn falsely in some way, possibly based on untruthful contracts or legal texts indicated by the surrounding lines. The following line (42) gives an example of where falseness in writing could cause problems: the establishment of legal property boundaries, something that is also referenced a number of times in relation to *māmītu*-

[65] Maul (2019: 200) suggests restoring "Rechtsakt/Kauf o.ä.".

curse (§ 3.2.5). The focus on dishonesty, particularly in relation to one's professional integrity or the law, is a common theme throughout these sources. However, the reference to dishonesty in writing is apparently unique, but of particular interest given its context within a written text. This reflects the importance of the scribe's role in accurately recording and preserving truths ultimately passed down from the gods and, especially in this context, that work to maintain the divinely decreed order. Dishonesty is thus a particularly prominent theme among lists of possible transgressions as it represents a direct affront to these truths.

3.2.5 The judicial system and corrupt practices

A theme closely related to that of dishonesty is corruption, in the judicial system and in business, as well as the wider abuse of positions of power. These represent transgressions against the divine order establishing the hierarchies of human society and guaranteeing the power of terrestrial authorities including judges and kings. Examples of offences in the judicial and political spheres include the following (*Šurpu* II 15): [*la na-ṭa-a*]-⌜*tu*$_4$⌝ *da-a-a-nu u*$_2$-*ša*$_2$-*ḫi-zu* '(who) incited a judge to [impropriety]';[66] (II 81): *ina ši-pa-ri iz-za-az-zu-ma la šal-ma-a-te i-ta-mu-u*$_2$ '(who) stands in the assembly and tells lies.'[67] Even the judges themselves were not immune from divine punishment for their transgressions (*Šurpu* III 24): *ma-mit di-in ṭa-ʾa-ti da-a-*⌜*nu*⌝ '*māmītu*-curse concerning judging a case (involving a) bribe.' While corruption and malpractice by judges are recognized in the law collections,[68] the threat

[66] Restoration based on CCP 2.1.C (online at ccp.yale.edu/P470058, accessed 23/07/2019) 43–44, which offers various synonyms for *lā naṭâtu*: inim.nu.gar.ra : *la qa-*⌜*bi*⌝-[*tu*$_2$] *nu-la-tu*$_2$. For other lexical sources on these terms, see Sjöberg 1973: 142, who translates them "Gemeinheit".

[67] Cf. CCP 2.1.C (online at ccp.yale.edu/P470058, accessed 23/07/2019) 48: *ši-pa-ru* [:] *pu-uḫ-ru* and CCP 2.1.B (online at ccp.yale.edu/P395480, accessed 23/07/2019) obv. i 10: *ši-pa-ri pu-uḫ-ru*.

[68] E.g. Laws of Ḫammurapi § 5: "If a judge renders a judgment, gives a verdict, or deposits a sealed opinion, after which he reverses his judgment, they shall charge and convict that judge of having reversed the judgment and he shall give twelve-fold the claim of that judgment; etc." (Roth 1997: 82).

of divine punishment adds an additional layer of protection and aims to ensure that those who are in a position of power in respect of the law do not act outside of it. It is appropriate, then, that rituals concerning transgression situate themselves within a divine legal system and appeal to the divine judge Šamaš. Such a 'divine courtroom' could also consider cases of abuse of authority by judges or kings, especially when one could not appeal to a higher human authority.[69] A cosmic legal system thus regulates human power structures that have been put in place by the gods in the first place. The mirroring of human and divine power structures is also reflected, for example, in the identity of a number of malicious demons as corrupts elements of a 'cosmic bureaucracy'.[70]

Transgression relating to corruption could extend beyond the courtroom into other forms of abuse of power (e.g. *Šurpu* II 29–31): *ṣab-ta la u_2-maš-ši-ru ka-sa-a la u_2-ram-mu-u* / *$ša_2$ bīt*(e_2) *ṣi-bit-ti la u_2-kal-li-mu nu-u_2-ru* / *a-na ṣa-ab-ti ṣa-bat-su-ma a-na ka-si-i ku-si-šu-ma iq-bu-u* '(who) did not release the captive, (who) did not untie the bound, [30] (who) did not let the prisoner see light, [31] (who) said of the captive "keep him captive!" (and) of the bound "keep him bound!".' This passage relates to the mistreatment of prisoners and indicate that indefinite or inappropriate detention was considered a serious violation of expected norms. In this context, it is significant that the resultant suffering could be described with metaphors of imprisonment and its removal in terms of release from captivity, with some rituals involving the release of actual prisoners (see § 4.1; § 5.3.4.1; § 5.3.5). These metaphors suggest that the state of reduced existence constituting the transgressor's punishment was comparable to the vulnerable state of prisoners and reflects the loss of freedom that both medical and

[69] Cf. Magdalene 2015: 167–171, and § 1.4.2.2.
[70] E.g. Rābiṣu 'Bailiff', Gallû 'Sheriff', and Ḫayyāṭu 'Supervisor' (cf. Geller 2016: 11).

social symptoms could cause (see § 4.3.1 for other examples where the nature of the punishment can reflect the nature of the transgression). Other vulnerable members of society are also protected from harm by the threat of divine punishment against potential wrongdoers (e.g. *Šurpu* II 18): *en-šu*$^{!}$(zu) *ḫab-lu e-niš-tu*$_4$ *da-a-ṣu* 'to disrespect the weak man, the wronged man, the weak woman.'[71] The exact meaning of the following line is unclear, but it certainly relates to a vulnerable member of society (II 19): *al-mat-tu*$_4$ *ina di-ni āli*(uru)*-ša*$_2$ *u*$_2$*-saḫ-ḫi-ru* '(who) turned the widow away from her city's court.' The language employed here is paralleled in the ideals expressed in law collections that the king, as dispenser of justice, should protect above all the most vulnerable members of society.[72] In the same way, the threat of divine punishment would have served to protect vulnerable people, especially in cases where terrestrial legal systems had less reach.

Another area of transgression regarding corrupt practices is in business and commerce. Transgressions of this nature often appear in proximity to more general offences regarding dishonesty, which perhaps reflects some of the ancient considerations for categorizing transgressions. For example (*Šurpu* II 37): *ina ṣe-ḫer-ti it-ta-din ina ra-bi-*⌜*ti*⌝ *im-*⌜*ta*⌝*-ḫar* 'he has given according to the small (measure), (but) has received according to the big (measure)'; (II 42): ^{geš}*zi-ba-nit la kit-ti* ⌜*iṣ-ṣa*⌝-[*bat* ^{geš}*zi-ba-nit kit-ti ul iṣ*$^{?}$]-⌜*bat*$^{?}$⌝[73] 'he has used false weighing scales (and) [did not *use* true weighing

[71] The verb here is difficult as we would expect a finite subjunctive form as in the surrounding lines, but I take it as a subjunctive stative following Borger (2000: 18). As the verb *dâṣu* rarely appears in the stative elsewhere (cf. CAD D 118–119), it is tempting to propose an emendation. This reading is secure in one manuscript from Nineveh: Nin3 has *e-niš-tu*$_4$ *da-a-ṣu*, but Nin1 has [ ] *da-a-ṣu* and collation confirms the presence of a firing hole before *da*, as noted by Borger. On the other hand, the writing *i-da-*⌜*ṣu*⌝ does appear in a later manuscript (Urk2), but this could be an attempted correction.

[72] E.g. in the epilogue of the Laws of Ḫammurapi (Roth 1997: 133–134): "in order that the mighty (*dannum*) not wrong the weak (*enšam*), to provide justice for the impoverished and the widow"; "let any wronged man (*awīlum ḫablum*) who has a case against him come before my statue, king of justice."

[73] The sequence of tenses (perfect → preterite) in this line is unusual, but Borger's convincing restoration (2000: 21) is based on the (admittedly fragmentary) traces of the verbs in the two following lines (II 43–44), where we find *il-te-qe*$_2$ followed by [*il*]-⌜*qe*$_2$⌝, and *it-ta-saḫ* followed by [*u*$_2$]-*kin*.

scales].'[74] The nature of these offences is expanded in a more extensive list of related examples of *māmītu*-curse in *Šurpu* VIII (64–67):

64 *itti*(ki) *ma-mit ina* ^{geš}*sūti*(ban$_2$) *ṣeḫerti*(tur)^{ti} *na-da-nu ina* ^{geš}*sūti*(ban$_2$) *rabî*(gal)^{i} [*sic*!] *leqê*(ti)^{e}
65 *itti*(ki) *ma-mit ina ištēn*(1) *šiqli*(gin$_2$) *ṣeḫri*(tur) *na-da-nu ina ištēn*(1) *šiqli*(gin$_2$) *rabî*(gal)^{i} *leqê*(ti)^{e}
66 *itti*(ki) *ma-mit ina ištēn*(1) *manê*(ma.na) *ṣeḫri*(tur) *na-da-nu ina ištēn*(1) *manê*(ma.na) *rabî*(gal)^{i} *leqê*(ti)^{e}
67 *itti*(ki) ⌜*ma-mit*⌝ ^{geš}*zi-ba-nit la kit-ti ṣa-ba-tu$_2$ kasap*(ku$_3$.babbar) *la kit-ti ta-mu-u leqê*(ti)^{e}

With *māmītu*-curse concerning giving according to the small *sūtu*-measure (but) taking according to the large *sūtu*-measure, [65] with *māmītu*-curse concerning giving according to the small shekel-weight (but) taking according to the large shekel-weight, [66] with *māmītu*-curse concerning giving according to the small mina-weight (but) taking according to the large mina-weight, [67] with *māmītu*-curse concerning using false scales (or) swearing (but) taking non-standard quality silver.

These transgressions represent dishonesty on a basic level and disrespect for others in society, but also threaten the structures of economic and financial systems in Mesopotamia, presumably also established by the gods, by debasing the value of silver and standard weights. Accurate measurement could also be considered part of upholding divine order, since "metrological justice" was administered by the gods and formed part of the literary ideals of kingship, embodied in the concept of the 'rod and ring'.[75] Another example constitutes a variation on this type of offence (*Šurpu* II 43): *ka-sap la kit-ti il-te-qe$_2$ ka-*[*sap kit-ti ul il*]-⌜*qe$_2$*⌝ 'he took non-standard quality silver, (but) [he did not] take [standard quality] silver.' The balance of this line again reflects the aim to encompass a broad range of possible offences. The structure of this section also demonstrates that the compilers of these lists understood transgressions relating to one's heir (usually the eldest son) as primarily economic in nature, rather than familial (*Šurpu* II 44): *apla*(ibila) *kun-na it-ta-saḫ apla*(ibila) ⌜*kun*$^{?}$⌝-[*na ul*(?) *u$_2$*]-*kin* 'he removed the legitimate heir (and) [did *not* establish a (new?) legitimate] heir.' The actions described, if not necessarily considered crimes according to terrestrial legal

[74] These two examples are separated by four lines relating more generally to lying and dishonesty (see § 3.2.4).
[75] Robson 2008a: 118–122.

symptoms, would presumably risk upsetting the distribution of wealth and therefore damage social and economic order. The structure of the above entries also suggests a balance between offences of 'commission' and 'omission': one could commit a transgression by, on the one hand, actively doing something wrong or, on the other hand, neglecting to do what is appropriate. This is a common theme in the portrayal of transgressions and the latter in particular contributes to the possibility of committing a transgression in ignorance.

Other corrupt economic practices relate to land ownership and property boundaries (e.g. *Šurpu* II 45–46): *ku-dur*$_2$*-ru la kit-ti uk-ta-dir ku-*⌜*dur*$_2$⌝*-*[*ru*] ⌜*kit*⌝*-ti ul u*$_2$*-ka-dir* / *u*$_2$*-sa mi-iṣ-ra u*$_3$ *ku-dur*$_2$*-ru* ⌜*uš*$^{?}$⌝*-te-li* 'he set out a false boundary, he did not set out a true boundary, he removed path, border, and boundary.' These are presumably related to the following examples of *māmītu*-curse (*Šurpu* III 54): ⌜*ma*⌝*-mit ku-du-ru u*$_3$ *nu-ku-ru* '*māmītu*-curse concerning establishing a boundary but changing it'; (III 60): *ma-mit ud-de-e mi-iṣ-ri u ku-dur*$_2$*-ru* '*māmītu*-curse concerning defining a border or boundary.' While the other entries clearly reference the illegitimate establishment, changing, or removal of a boundary, the simple act of defining a boundary presumably represents a transgression when done improperly or dishonestly. Another example of *māmītu*-curse that may relate to property is the following (*Šurpu* III 31): *ma-mit kur-ban-ni ḫepû*(gaz)^{u2} *kurbanna*(lag) *a-na mê*(a)^{meš} *nadû*(šub)^{u2} '[*māmītu*-curse] concerning breaking off a clod of earth, (and) throwing the clod of earth into water.' In legal texts from Nuzi and Susa, the breaking of a clod of earth (*kurbānam ḫepûm*) accompanies the severing of ties with members of the family.[76] Throwing a clod into water (*kirbānam ana nārim nasākum*/*nadûm*) is found in a limited number of sale texts involving *nadītu*-women but appears to be a description of the topography of the parcel of land rather

[76] Malul 1988: 79–93.

than a symbolic action.[77] The two actions described in *Šurpu* III 31, however, must be related in some way since they are included in the same line. The confusion may have arisen from the fact that clods of earth, when used in magical contexts as a substitute for the patient, can be dissolved in water to release the patient's impurities.[78] Regardless of the precise circumstances, the scope of these transgressions presumably relates to malpractice in the performance of legal or ritual acts.

3.2.6 The built and natural environment

There are a number of entries in the lists of possible transgressions that allude to built infrastructure inside and outside of cities, as well as elements of the natural environment. As outlined above (§ 1.2), the *āšipūtu* corpus is the product of an elite, city-dwelling class of intellectuals and its conceptions of transgression and other sources of suffering are therefore viewed from a largely urban perspective, with a particular focus on the dichotomy between the urban and non-urban worlds.[79] Nevertheless, since the portrayal of transgression revolves around maintaining order in the entire universe, the natural environment beyond the city also plays an important role, especially given its ability to remove and disperse impurities (§ 5.4.2.2).

Examples of transgression relating to roads and journeys can thus be understood to radiate outwards from the urban focal point and into the steppe beyond (e.g. *Šurpu* III 33): *ma-mit ḫarrāni*(kaskal) *u a-lak-ti* '*māmītu*-curse concerning road or way'; (III 50): [*ma*]-⌜*mit*⌝ *ḫarrāni*(kaskal)^{ni} *amēlu*(lu_2) *ṣa-ba-tu* '*māmītu*-curse concerning a man setting out on a journey.' Even when using ordered, civilized road networks, travelling

[77] Malul 1988: 406–418.
[78] See Butler 1998: 327–329, 15′–23′ for a ritual in which a clod of earth is dissolved to remove the evil of a nightmare. Other materials, such as clay or dough, can be dissolved in water to neutralize impurities they are carrying (§ 5.4.1.1).
[79] Witches and demons especially are associated with the steppe and thereby portrayed as antithetical to civilized urban life.

between cities in Mesopotamian would have been risky due to the dangers lurking in the steppe, including demons or bandits. The transgressions alluded to here may therefore relate to not taking the proper precautions for such a dangerous undertaking, such as travelling on inauspicious days.[80] This is alluded to, for example, by the *Babylonian Almanac* entry for 27 Nisannu:[81] u$_4$ 27 *ḫarrāna*(kaskal) *la*$_3$ *illak*(du)^{ak} 'on the 27th day he should not travel by road.' In close proximity to *Šurpu* III 50, there are three examples of *māmītu*-curse relating to watercourses and associated built infrastructure (*Šurpu* III 47–49): [*ma*]-⌜*mit*⌝ ^{geš}*eleppi*(ma$_2$) *u nāri*(id$_2$) *u*$_2$ / [*ma-mit*] *ka-a-ri u ni-bi-ri u*$_2$ / [*ma*]-⌜*mit*⌝ *pal-gi u ti-tur-ri u*$_2$ '*māmītu*-curse concerning boat or river, (refrain), [48] [*māmītu*-curse] of quay or river-crossing, (refrain), [49] *māmītu*-curse concerning canal or bridge, (refrain).' The nature of these transgressions may again be explained by hemerologies, such as, for example, the *Offering Bread Hemerology* entry for 23 Simānu:[82] u$_4$ 23.kam$_2$ ^{geš}*eleppa*(ma$_2$) *la*$_3$ *irakkab*(u$_5$) / *ṭi*$_2$*-bi* ^{geš}*eleppi*(ma$_2$) *ibissâ*(i.bi$_2$.za) *immar*(igi) 'on the 23rd day he should not ride in a boat: sinking of the boat, he will experience loss,' or the *Babylonian Almanac* entry for 20 Abu:[83] u$_4$ 20 *nāra*(id$_2$) *la*$_3$ *i-bir* 'on the 20th day he should not cross a river.' Rivers, like the steppe, were a particularly dangerous part of the largely untamed non-urban environment but nevertheless vital for the proper functioning of many areas of Mesopotamian society, from agriculture to trade. There was plenty of built infrastructure that sought to make these safer and more useful to humans, representing another way of 'ordering' the universe, but deviation from or disregard for this infrastructure and any attendant measures of safety, such as avoiding inauspicious days, would therefore warrant divine

[80] The performance of actions on inauspicious days could also constitute a transgression according to *Šurpu* (e.g. III 38): *ma-mit ina u*$_4$*-mi e-ṭe-e ša*$_2$*-ʾa-a-lu u na-ka-ru* '*māmītu*-curse concerning asking on a 'dark day' and being hostile.'
[81] Livingstone 2013: 15.
[82] Livingstone 2013: 126–127.
[83] Livingstone 2013: 36–37.

punishment. In these circumstances, this could take the form of demons, bandits, wild animals, or shipwreck.

Other examples of *māmītu*-curse relate to a greater variety of watercourses and other features of the landscape, in this case well beyond the limits of human control over the environment (*Šurpu* III 63–67):

63	*ma-mit nāra*(id$_2$) *ša$_2$-a-nu u nāra*(id$_2$) *ka-a-a u$_2$*	*Māmītu*-curse concerning urinating into a river or spitting into a river, (refrain),
64	*ma-mit sa-li-ḫu u nārāti*(id$_2$)$^{\lceil meš \rceil}$ [*u$_2$*]	*māmītu*-curse concerning *the Saliḫu* or watercourses,[84] [(refrain)],
65	*ma-mit šadî*(kur)^{i} *u ḫar-*$^{\lceil}$*ri*$^{\rceil}$ [*u$_2$*]	*māmītu*-curse concerning mountain or water channel, [(refrain)],
66	*ma-mit re-e-ši u na-*$^{\lceil}$*at*$^{\rceil}$-[*ba-ki* ? *u$_2$*]	*māmītu*-curse concerning peak or [*ravine*, (refrain)],
67	*ma-mit ne$_2$-re-bi u* x[*u$_2$*]	*māmītu*-curse concerning (mountain) pass or … [… (refrain)].

This passage once again demonstrates the directionality of thinking regarding the environment: from human actions, through watercourses that are in the immediate surroundings of cities and therefore exploited by humans, to more distant parts of the world. To a modern audience, urinating and spitting are obviously unhygienic and therefore socially undesirable actions.[85] These actions may not have had quite the same associations for Mesopotamians, but they could have been understood as causing cultic

[84] An ancient commentary to this line suggests that Saliḫu could be the name of a river, CCP 2.1.D (online at ccp.yale.edu/P369075, accessed 23/07/2019) 51′–52′: *ma-mit* ^{id2}*sa-la-ḫa u nārāti*(id$_2$)^{meš} *u$_2$* / *ma-a nārātu*(id$_2$)^{meš} *ša$_2$ māt*(kur) *akkadê*(uri)^{ki} *ši-*[*na*] '*māmītu*-curse concerning *the Salaḫu* or the watercourses, (refrain): that is, they are rivers of the land of Babylonia'. My translation is after the CCP, although the editor admits that the lack of determinative in the source line and a lack of other references to a river named Sala/iḫu make this interpretation uncertain (Frahm 2011: 395). The fact that the commentary could refer equally to both halves of the source line or only the second half does not make an interpretation any easier. Recently, Anna Perdibon (2019: 128n.281) has also accepted that Saliḫu is the name of a river. Frank Simons, on the other hand, reads the source line in the commentary as *nāra*(id$_2$) *salāha* and thus emends the only attestation of the original line (Nin2A) to <*nāri*(id$_2$)> *sa-li-ḫu*, interpreting both as "spattering? a river (with something unpleasant?)". While this recognizes that the ancient commentator may have understood the original line to contain a form of the verb *salāḫu* rather than a proper noun, the need to emend the source line would make such an interpretation highly uncertain. Similarly, the AHw (II 1015) tentatively assigns the line from *Šurpu* to *sāliḫu* "Besprenger", a term which would also make an appropriate epithet for a river. Whatever the interpretation, the ancient commentator clearly understood rivers to be the theme of this passage, and this fits with the context of the line in *Šurpu*.

[85] Spitting in public places was also considered dangerous in Mesopotamia because the saliva could be collected and used in the performance of witchcraft (cf. Schwemer 2007: 90–91).

pollution of the rivers,[86] which were in some contexts regarded as divine.[87] Indeed, this sense is transmitted by Herodotus, who mistakenly attributes this Mesopotamian prohibition to Persian custom.[88]

Other examples of undesirable or inappropriate behaviour towards the natural world include the following (*Šurpu* III 25): *ma-mit šammē*(u$_2$)$^{ḫi.a}$ *ina ṣēri*(edin) *na-sa-ḫu* '*māmītu*-curse concerning pulling up grass in the steppe.' The verb *nasāḫu* can refer to the harvesting of plants for a specific purpose (e.g. culinary or medicinal) or to tearing them up in order to destroy them.[89] The precise meaning intended here is, perhaps deliberately, ambiguous.[90] The following line contains a similar entry, relating instead to reeds (III 26): *ma-mit qanê*(gi)$^{ḫi.a}$ *ina ṣuṣî*(sug) *ḫa-ṣa-bu* '*māmītu*-curse concerning snapping off reeds in a reed-thicket.' Reeds were considered inherently pure, because they were believed to grow directly from the Apsû, and were therefore widely used in ritual.[91] The transgression here may therefore consist of harvesting them improperly or otherwise causing damage to a valuable natural resource. A further entry in this list concerns an act of violence against an animal (III 30): *ma-mit le-et u$_2$-ma-mi ma-ḫa-ṣu* '*māmītu*-curse concerning striking the cheek of a wild animal.' Striking the cheek of a person was considered a serious insult, but the CAD notes that this instance involving

[86] The pollution of rivers is possibly referred to elsewhere in *Šurpu*, although the precise meaning is unclear (III 51): [*ma-mit*] *ra-ʾi-*⌜*zi*ʾ⌝ [*ina* (?)] *nāri*(id$_2$) ⌜*amēlu*(lu$_2$)⌝ *la-pa$_2$-a-*⌜*tu*⌝ '[*māmītu*-curse] concerning a man touching a river (with) a *pitchfork*'. Reiner reads a preserved *ina* but Ebeling's copy (KAR 232) records only traces, and Borger regards this reading as uncertain. We would expect the verb *lapātu* to take a direct object.

[87] Lambert 1990: 127–128. The river involved in the river ordeal, for example, is considered divine (cf. Van Soldt 2003: 126).

[88] Herodotus 1.138.2 (N.G. Wilson 2015: 84): ἐς ποταμὸν δὲ οὔτε ἐνουρέουσι οὔτε ἐμπτύουσι, οὐ χεῖρας ἐναπονίζονται, οὐδὲ ἄλλον οὐδένα περιορῶσι, ἀλλὰ σέβονται ποταμοὺς μάλιστα '(the Persians) will neither urinate into a river nor spit into it, they will not wash (their) hands in it, nor overlook anyone else (doing so), but (instead) they revere the river to the greatest extent.'

[89] Cf. e.g. CAD N/2 6–7.

[90] Simons (2017: 98) has suggested that the offence in pulling up grass in the steppe relates to the fact that this would destroy potentially valuable pasture.

[91] Ambos 2013: 44.

an animal is "exceptional".[92] Ancient Mesopotamians were probably not especially concerned about the mistreatment of animals, especially wild animals, but the scope of the divinely ordered world did not stop with the limits of human civilization. Animals, plants, and the wider natural world, including the hostile steppe, are all parts of the divinely created universe and transgression against elements of the natural world would therefore constitute an offence against the gods.

Another part of this list invokes plants and animals, among other entries, using the natural world to emphasize the all-encompassing scope of possible transgressions and their punishment (*Šurpu* III 119–123):

119	*ma-mit še-um u kaspi*(ku$_3$.babbar)	u_2	*Māmītu*-curse concerning barley and silver, (refrain),
120	*ma-mit* ^{d}*šakkan$_2$ u$_2$-ma-mi*	u_2	*māmītu*-curse concerning Šakkan (and) wild animals, (refrain),
121	*ma-mit* ^{geš}*balti*(nim) *u$_3$ ašāgi*(giši$_{16}$)u_2		*māmītu*-curse concerning *baltu*-plant and *ašāgu*-plant (refrain),
122	*ma-mit ta-pa-li u$_3$ ṣi-bat-ti*	u_2	*māmītu*-curse concerning *castanets* and *ṣibattu-harp*, (refrain),
123	*ma-mit ni-ib-ri-ti u$_3$ dan-na-ti*	u_2	*māmītu*-curse concerning famine and hardship, (refrain).

The first line specifies barley, the most basic foodstuff, and silver, the standard of exchange. Both represent basic economic units, and this line therefore encompasses the urbanized sphere of commerce. The second and third lines concern the natural world: in III 120, Šakkan refers to a category of animals and is, in some cases, associated with the steppe,[93] while *umāmū* refers to wild animals in general. The plants listed in the following line, the *baltu*-plant and the *ašāgu*-plant, frequently occur as a pair in ritual contexts.[94] The pair can be understood as a merismus representing a broad category of

[92] CAD M/1 75.
[93] The remit of Šakkan is a complex issue and all that can be said for certain is that he was connected to quadrupeds, through whether to all or only some and whether to wild or domesticated animals is unclear (Lambert 2013: 513–523).
[94] Cf. Scurlock 2006: 71.

wild flora, or simply the category of thorny plants that grow in the steppe.[95] The wild nature of these plants is implied by a similar example from a later *Šurpu* incantation, in which they are contrasted with trees cultivated in plantations (VIII 74):[96] *itti*(ki) *ma-mit* ^{geš}*balti*(nim) ^{geš}*ašāgi*(kiši$_{16}$) ^{geš}*bīni*(šinig) ^{geš}*gišimmari*(gišimmar) *nasāḫu*(zi)^{ḫu} 'with *māmītu*-curse concerning pulling up *baltu*-plant, *ašāgu*-plant, tamarisk, date-palm.' As mentioned above, the verb *nasāḫu* is inherently ambiguous; all these plants had a variety of ritual and cultic uses so this could refer to transgressions in relation to harvesting them. The instruments in III 122 can similarly be understood as representative of all musical instruments (several other members of this semantic category are found elsewhere in *Šurpu*, see § 3.2.1), especially as there is one each from the groups of percussion and stringed instruments. Finally, the 'famine and hardship' in III 123 can be understood to represent the various difficult experiences of human life, many of which could in fact be attributed to the punishment of transgression.

Just as the above passage uses merismus to suggest the entirety of various categories of possible transgressions, so too can the natural and human worlds be cited together to imply the entirety of the divinely created universe, as in the following namerimburruda-incantation (KAL 10, Nr. 48–51, 37): *ana a-me-lu-ti bu-ul* ^{d}*šakkan*$_2$ *mim-ma šum-šu*$_2$

[95] For a discussion of the possible identification of the *ašāgu*-plant, see Simons 2017: 108–111. Since they bear thorns, both of these plants could be potentially harmful to humans, as evidenced by the existence ghosts of humans who had died in this way (e.g. UH IV 89′: lu$_2$ dalla$_2$ kar-ra ⌜uš$_2$⌝-[a-kam ḫe$_2$-me-en] // *lu-u*$_2$ *ša*$_2$ *ina si-ḫi-il ṣil-le-e im-*[*tu*$_2$*-u*$_2$ *at-ta*] 'whether [you are] (the ghost of) someone who died from the prick of a thorn'). For this same reason, thorny plants could also have a protective function, as in the following anti-ghost ritual where the plants protect figurines from being tampered with (Scurlock 2006: 202, No. 12, ii 14′–15′): … [… *lu ina*] ⌜*ṣilli*(gissu)⌝ ^{geš}*balti*(nim) *lu ina ṣilli* ^{geš}*ašāgi*(giši$_{16}$) / *būrta*(pu$_2$) *tepetti*(bad)*-ma te-qeb-ber-šu*$_2$ … '… $^{15′}$ you open a pit $^{14′}$ [either in] the shade of a *baltu*-plant or in the shade of an *ašāgu*-plant $^{15′}$ and bury it (i.e. the figurine) …' Thorny plants are used alongside other apotropaic actions to repel demons in Udug-ḫul (UH VIII 38): ^{geš}isimu$_2^{sar}$ ^{geš}diḫ$_3$ dili-am$_3$ ^{geš}kak-ta bi$_2$-in-la$_3$ // *pi-ri-i*ʾ *bal-ti et-ti ina sik-ka-ti*$_3$ *a-lul-*⌜*la*⌝ 'I hung the shoot of a lone *baltu*-thorn from a peg.'

[96] The *Dialogue Between the Date-Palm and Tamarisk* opens with a description of the king planting both alongside one another in his palace (cf. Streck 2004: 255). For evidence from the Ur III periods and modern Iraq for mixed date-palm and tamarisk plantations, see Postgate 1992: 170, with 317n.273. For more on these plants' association with purification rituals, see § 5.4.2.2.

ša$_2$ *ṣēri*(edin) *u āli*(uru) ⌜*lu at-ma*⌝ 'whether I brought *māmītu*-curse (upon myself) concerning humankind or the flocks of Šakkan,[97] anything at all of the steppe or the city.' An example of *arratu*-curse is also concerned with domesticated flocks and the boundary between the city and the steppe (KAL 10, Nr. 64, 38): [*ina ṣi-it*] ⌜*būli*⌝([maš$_2$].⌜anše⌝) *u e-*⌜*reb būli*⌝([maš$_2$].⌜anše⌝) MIN(= *arrāku*) '[(with *arratu*-curse) concerning the leaving] of the flocks or the entering of the flocks I am cursed.' This also creates a temporal merismus, by invoking the daily or seasonal departure and return of the flocks (which also uses terms associated with sunrise and sunset), suggesting that one could be cursed at any time. Arable farming is also mentioned in relation to *arratu*-curse (A 185 obv. 55): [*ina*] ⌜*še*⌝-*ʾi* ⌜*na-si*⌝-*ḫi u* ^{d}*a-*⌜*la*⌝-[*la*] *ša-se-e* MIN(= *lū arrāku*) ⌜MIN(= *Šamaš lipšur*)⌝ '[(with *arratu*-curse) concerning] pulling up barley or singing a work-song I am indeed cursed, may Šamaš release it!' This likely refers to some sort of negligence or improper practice in relation to the harvest, and in particular in relation to the work-song accompanying it, which presumably played an important role in organizing the harvesting process. Additionally, the *alala*-work-song is usually, as above, written with a divine determinative, so the recitation of the work-song takes on the character of invoking a deity.[98] Any malpractice or negligence in performing the work-song could therefore also have a cultic dimension, being a direct offence against the harvest deity identified with the work-song.

Another plant mentioned in relation to possible transgressions is a type of cress whose seed, denoted by Akkadian *saḫlû*, was used as a spice (*Šurpu* III 95): *ma-mit ṭabti*(mun) *saḫ-le-e ina išāti*(izi) *qalû*(gibil$_2$)^{u} '*māmītu*-curse concerning roasting salt (or) cress-seed in a fire.' Salt and cress-seed were the most popular spices in Mesopotamia, often

[97] The phrase *būl šakkan* has no difference in meaning to *būlu* alone and is merely a literary flourish (Lambert 2013: 513).
[98] Landsberger and Jacobsen 1955: 20–21.

being mixed together before use.[99] They became a more formalized part of the diet in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, when they were issued in equal amounts as rations for workers.[100] In the annals of Assyrian kings, salt and cress are both scattered over the ruins of conquered territories,[101] which is probably related to their magical use in bringing about infertility.[102] These two items therefore represent some of the most basic foodstuffs used by inhabitants of Mesopotamia, although it is unclear why they are being roasted. It is possible that they form part of an offering or have some other ritual function. The roasting of cereal grains is used as a ritual action in *Šurpu*, the infertility of the roasted seed being a metaphor for the neutralization of the evil within the patient (see § 5.3.2). While the transgression in the above passage in not completely clear, like the ritual actions carried out later in the *Šurpu* ritual (e.g. § 5.1.4), it touches on common elements of everyday life, emphasizing that the possibility of transgression and the threat of divine punishment governed every aspect of life, even down to everyday condiments. The universal remit of transgression and its punishment is emphasized throughout the lists of possible offences with reference to elements of both the civilized, urban environment and the wider natural world, often is a meristic way that implies the entirety of the universe. Indeed, in the context of transgression, the entire universe is of concern, as it has been created and carefully ordered by the gods. Any disruption to this order therefore warrants divine punishment, even if it is committed through omission or ignorance.

[99] Levey 1959: 55.
[100] Stol 1983–1984: 26.
[101] Stol 1983–1984: 28.
[102] Stol 1983–1984: 32.

3.2.7 Witchcraft and *māmītu*-curse

Of the 'external' sources of suffering, witchcraft is particularly closely connected to the conceptualization of transgression, especially in relation to *māmītu*-curse. Rituals concerning transgression and those combatting witchcraft were apparently considered by the compilers of the Exorcist's Manual to form complementary pairs (§ 1.3.1.2). Some anti-witchcraft rituals were also supposed to be effective against *māmītu*-curse,[103] in part because both the *Maqlû* and *Šurpu* rituals employ burning as the primary means of removing evil.[104]

The performance of witchcraft was itself considered a transgression that could be punished by *māmītu*-curse (*Šurpu* II 68): *a-na kiš-pi u ru-ḫe-e qāt*(šu)*-su* u_2*-bi-lu* '(who) set his hand to *kišpū*-witchcraft and *ruḫû*-witchcraft.' In the opening incantations of *Maqlû*, Gilgameš and the netherworld are called upon to ensure that the punishment associated with *māmītu*-curse is carried out against the witch (I 37–38): EN$_2$ *erṣetu*(ki)^{tu4} *erṣetu*(ki)^{tu4} *erṣetum*(ki)^{tum}*-ma* / ^{d}*gilgameš*(giš.gin$_2$.maš) *bēl*(en) *ma-mi-ti-ku-nu* 'Incantation: netherworld, netherworld, netherworld, and [38] Gilgameš, enforcer (lit. lord) of your (i.e. the witches') *māmītu*-curse.' Although the editor interprets this as being aimed solely at dead witches,[105] Gilgameš had been invoked against living witches in his role as judge of the netherworld since at least the Old Babylonian period.[106] It was also believed that witches would try to release themselves from the binding effects of the *māmītu*-curse (*Maqlû* I 41): *mim-mu-u*$_2$ ^{munus}*kaššāpātu*(uš$_{11}$.ZU)^{meš}*-ia*$_5$ *ip-pu-ša*$_2$ *e-ga-a pa-ṭi-ra pa-ši-ra ul*(nu) *irašši*(tuku)^{ši} 'whatever my (female) witches do will not secure someone who overlooks, loosens,

[103] Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 6–7.
[104] Schwemer 2007: 66.
[105] Abusch 2002: 255. See Schwemer 2010: 320–321 and Fink 2012: 74 for critiques of this argument.
[106] Schwemer 2010: 319–320.

releases.' The verbs used here (*paṭāru* and *pašāru*) are the same used throughout the *āšipūtu* corpus to describe the release from the state of suffering caused by various sources of evil, including transgression (§ 2.3.1). Perhaps we are to imagine the witches attempting to undo their self-inflicted *māmītu*-curse with a release ritual like *Šurpu*. However, the *Maqlû* ritual being performed by the exorcist on behalf of their victim ensures that they will be unsuccessful and "are to be punished and excluded from the organized community of humanity."[107] Indeed, while the original identity of the witch could apparently be anyone at all,[108] they are at the same time described as existing outside or on the margins of normal human society.[109] This could be understood as the result of the witch's transgressive behaviours, comparable to the state of 'reduced existence' that characterizes the suffering inflicted upon someone who has committed a transgression.

[107] Abusch 2002: 253.
[108] E.g. *Maqlû* IV 80–91, where a list of possible identities includes friends and colleagues as well as various para-cultic professions (cf. Schwemer 2007: 73–75).
[109] E.g. *Maqlû* V 2: *aš$_2$-bat ina ṣilli*(gissu) *a-ma-ri ša libitti*(sig$_4$) 'she is sat in the shadow of a pile of bricks.' The witch is also said to come from various stereotypically foreign or enemy lands (Schwemer 2007: 79–81).

3.3 Human ignorance and suffering

The ignorance of humans in the face of divine punishment is an important element of Mesopotamian conceptualizations of sin. In wisdom literature, for example, this is portrayed as part of humanity's inherent inability to understand the ways of the gods (§ 1.4.1.3). In rituals of the *āšipūtu* corpus, the notion that the patient is ignorant of his transgression is often expressed through negated forms of the verb *idû* 'to know'. For example (*Šurpu* II 32): *ul i-de šer*$_3$*-ti ili*(dingir) *ul i-de en-net* ^{d}*iš*$_8$*-tar*$_2$ 'he does not know the *šērtu*-offence-penalty concerning the god, he does not know the *ennetu*-wrongdoing-punishment concerning the goddess.' Sometimes the phraseology of the incantations appears to contradict this (*Šurpu* III 150): *ma-mit īdû*(zu)^{u2} *u la*$_3$ *īdû*(zu)^{u2} '*māmītu*-curse that he knows or does not know'; (III 183): [*a*]-˹*ra*˺-*an īdû*(zu)^{u2} *la*$_3$ *īdû*(zu)^{u2} '*arnu*-punishment that he knows (or) does not know.' These lines appear among the lists of possible transgressions, where meristic pairs are often used to give the impression of universality.[110] In this case, the whole spectrum of knowledge is covered but, even if the patient had some awareness of having committed a transgression, it would not need to be acknowledged in order to obtain release from its consequences.

The ignorance of humans stands in contrast to the knowledge of the offended god (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 46–47, 17–19): *šu-tam-ṣa-am-ma ana damiqti*(sag$_{10}$)^{ti3} *ri-*˹*ta*˺*-da-ni* / *aš*$_2$*-šu*$_2$ *murṣi*(ge$_{17}$) *mar-ṣa-ku ilu*(dingir) *at-ta* ˹*īdû*(zu)˺[^{u2}] / *ilu*(dingir) *mam-ma la*$_3$ *īdû*(zu)^{u2} *ana-ku la*$_3$ *īdû*(zu)˹^{u2}˺ 'make an effort to help me and constantly lead me to good (fortune), [18] because of the illness that I am suffering from which you, god, know, [19] (but) any (other) god does not know (and) I do not know.' The emphasis here is on

[110] On the use of positive-negative merismus to express indefiniteness or totality, see Mayer 1989.

the role of the particular deity who has been offended: that deity alone has the power to recognize the offence and therefore relieve its punishment. In some cases, the incantations attempt to provide an excuse for the sufferer's ignorance (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 48–51, 17–19): *meṣ-ḫe-ru-ti la mu-da-ku-ma gul-lul-ti ēpušu*(du$_3$)^{šu2} *ana-ku ul i-de* / *ṣe-eḫ-ra-ku-ma aḫ-ta-ṭi$_2$* / *it-a-a ša$_2$ ili*(dingir)-*ia$_5$ lu e-tiq* 'in my youth I was ignorant and so I do not know the sin that I committed, [18] I was young and so I erred, [19] indeed I crossed the boundaries of my god.' The fact that this is part of a ritual to counter the consequences of transgression suggests that the folly of youth was not considered a mitigating circumstance by the Mesopotamian gods. The idea that the sufferer's offence is ultimately unknowable is further emphasized by the nature of examples listed in incantations, which are often generalizing and need not point to specific actions (§ 3.2).

The victim's ignorance is also a key part of the presentation of other sources of suffering, particularly the witch, which is perhaps unsurprising as these concern evil forces external to the sufferer. In contrast to early modern European parallels, the *āšipūtu* corpus' depiction of the witch is striking for its "absichtsvolle Unschärfe".[111] The incipits of anti-witchcraft rituals sometimes state explicitly that even the exorcist does not know the origin of the patient's suffering (e.g. CMAwR 1.5, 11′): *ana pi$_2$-šer$_3$-ti kiš-pi$_2$ ša la$_3$ tīdû*(zu)^u '(ritual) for the release of *kišpū*-witchcraft that you do not know.' As with transgression, human ignorance can be contrasted with divine knowledge of the witches' identities (*Maqlû* I 87):[112] *ša$_2$* ^{d}*nusku dayyānu*(di.ku$_5$) *ti-de-šu$_2$-nu-ti-ma ana-ku la i-de-šu$_2$-nu-ti* 'whom you, Nusku, judge, know but I do not know.' It has been suggested that the apparent unwillingness to identity the witch is an attempt to protect the patient from the consequences of a false accusation and does not

[111] Schwemer 2007: 69.
[112] On the omission of subjunctive endings in this line, see Schwemer 2017: 78.

necessarily imply that there was no particular target in mind.[113] However, it is consistent with the portrayal of unknown transgressions, and makes the rituals more effective by not restricting them to a single target.[114] Thus, the trope of ignorance not only reflects the real limited extent of the sufferer's knowledge, but it is also useful tool for the exorcist, giving the rituals more universal applicability and thereby removing the danger that selecting the wrong target would render a ritual ineffective.

[113] Scurlock 2004: 608.

[114] Schwemer (2007: 147) notes that this allowed various sources of evil (or, from a more sceptical perspective, various fears about society and the environment) to be combined into a single "rituell kontrolliert[e] Form".

3.4 Contagion as a source of suffering

As well as resulting from an individual's own transgressive actions, the ill effects of transgression could result from contact with a person already suffering from them or with materials contaminated by their impurities. Letters from Mari already demonstrate an understanding that illness could pass from one person to another,[115] and the effects of divine punishment were also understood in terms of illness, so it is not surprising that suffering of this kind could also be passed on by contagion.[116] This does however problematize the connection between transgression and its consequences, especially if an otherwise innocent person could be caused to suffer simply through contact with a cursed person or contaminated materials. Contact with such people and materials is nevertheless listed among examples of actions associated with *māmītu*-curse in *Šurpu* (III 128–137):

128 *ma-mit ta-mu-u₂ amēla*(lu₂) *la-pa-tu*	*Māmītu*-curse concerning a cursed person touching (this) man,
129 *ma-mit ta-mu-u₂ qāt*(šu)*-su ana ili*(dingir) *u* ^{d}*ištari*(iš₈.tar₂) *ta-ra-ṣu*	*māmītu*-curse concerning a cursed person praying[117] to god and goddess,
130 *ma-mit it-ti ta-mi₃-i da-ba-bu*	*māmītu*-curse concerning speaking with a cursed person,
131 *ma-mit akal*(ninda)$^{ḫi.a}$ *ta-mi₃-i a-ka-lu*	*māmītu*-curse concerning eating the food of a cursed person,
132 *ma-mit mê*(a)^{meš} *ta-mi₃-i ša₂-tu-u*	*māmītu*-curse concerning drinking the water of a cursed person,
133 *ma-mit re-ḫe-ti ta-mi₃-i ša₂-tu-u*	*māmītu*-curse concerning drinking the leftovers of a cursed person,
134 *ma-mit it-ti bēl*(en) *ar-ni da-ba-bu*	*māmītu*-curse concerning speaking with a criminal (lit. possessor of *arnu*),
135 *ma-mit akal*(ninda)$^{ḫi.a}$ *bēl*(en) *ar-ni a-ka-lu*	*māmītu*-curse concerning eating the food of a criminal,
136 *ma-mit mê*(a)^{meš} *bēl*(en) *ar-ni ša₂-tu-u*	*māmītu*-curse concerning drinking the water of a criminal,
137 *ma-mit ri-ḫe-et*[118] *bēl*(en) *ar-ni ša₂-tu-u*	*māmītu*-curse concerning drinking the

[115] Farber (2004: 214) notes that "this was surely not based on the observation of pathogenic agents. Instead, it was rooted in the belief that some magical power inherent in the body, belongings and abode of a person who was under the wrath of a god could negatively affect anybody entering into this person's intimate personal sphere."

[116] This could be a way of explaining the experience of infectious disease within the Mesopotamian religious system (Feder 2017: 101).

[117] For the phrase *qāta tarāṣu* denoting a prayer gesture, see CAD T 211.

[118] Variants to these two lines include the spellings [*re*]-*ḫa*-ˈ*ti*ˀ and *re-ḫe-e-tu₂* etc. (cf. Borger 2000: 49–50) which means we should read this as a plural form and therefore understand it as 'leftovers'

138 *ma-mi-it a-bu-ut bēl*(en) *ar-ni ṣa-ba-tu*	leftovers of a criminal, *māmītu*-curse concerning interceding for (lit. seizing fatherhood of) a criminal.

That the opening entry of this part of the list concerns direct physical contact with a cursed person is to be expected, and this was probably one of the easiest ways of contracting suffering contagiously. However, the lack of a corresponding entry for the criminal (*bēl arni*) is conspicuous: why does one only contract *māmītu*-curse through indirect contact with someone suffering from *arnu*-punishment? This may relate to the fact that *arnu*-punishment, unlike *māmītu*-curse, does not appear to have had a demon-like form (see § 3.5), which may be understood to play a role in contagious transfer, just as demons generally transmit illness. Two other entries differ between the 'cursed person' (*tamû*) and the 'criminal' (*bēl arni*): according to line 138, interceding on behalf of a guilty person (presumably whether or not their guilt was known) was considered a transgression attracting punishment by *māmītu*-curse; if we assume that line 129 describes a counterpart to this offence, then it would imply that having an already cursed person interceding with the gods on your behalf also attracted punishment with *māmītu*-curse. These examples could be understood as a form of contagion or offence caused by negligence, by relying on people who have already committed some form of offence, whether or not this was known. Food and drink, on the other hand, are attested throughout the *āšipūtu* corpus as potential vectors for contagion, especially as they can be used to convey the evil effects of witchcraft.[119] There is also an association here with the notion that transgressions were 'eaten' by the person committing them. The entry

(cf. e.g. CAD R 340). This usually refers to leftovers from meals given as offerings to the gods, which could include drinks.

[119] Cf. e.g. Abusch 2007. A Middle Babylonian collection of anti-witchcraft prescriptions (CMAwR 1.1) details the kinds of food and drink that could have been bewitched (e.g. 21′): *a-na* ⌜*pi-še*$_{20}$⌝*-er-ti ki-iš-pi ša i-na šūmī*(sum)^{sar} *šu-*⌜*kul*$_2$⌝ '(ritual) for release of witchcraft that (one) has been caused to eat through garlic.' It has been suggested that this food or drink is contaminated by virtue of its contact with the witch (Worthington 2004: 272), who could be considered *tamû* since witchcraft is a transgression covered by *māmītu*-curse (see § 3.2.7).

in III 138 is the only action mentioned in relation to the criminal (*bēl arni*) but not in relation to the cursed person (*tamû*). This may result from the basic meaning of *arnu* as a criminal act and its punishment (§ 2.1.3.1), with the *māmītu*-curse arising from the act of interfering in the justice system on behalf of a guilty person. The threat of divine punishment for associating with a criminal is one of the many ways in which the system of *māmītu*-curse serves to maintain systems of justice and order. The same possibilities of contagion from a *tamû* or *bēl arni* are described in a *lipšur*-litany (KAL 10, Nr. 27–33, 85–88) and another namerimburruda-incantation (KAL 10, Nr. 38–39, 9–15), but the *arratu*-rituals do not suggest that it could be transmitted contagiously.[120]

Other possibilities for contracting the ill effects of *māmītu*-curse through contagion are described in the following namerimburruda-incantation (KAL 10, Nr. 16–26, 59–64):

59 *sūqa*(sila) *ina ba-ʾi-ia ta-mu-u lu ilput*(tag)*-an-ni*
60 *rebīta*(sila.dagal.la) *ina e-te-qi*$_2$*-ia ru-mi-kat*$_3$ *mê*(a) (var. *ta-me-e*) *la mu-še-ši-ru-tu*$_2$ *lu ak-bu-us*
61 *li-qi-it ṣu-up-ri gu-li-bat ša*$_2$*-ḫa-ti*
62 ^{kuš}*šēnu*(e.sir) *pa-te-eḫ-tu me-se-ru par*$_2$*-ʾu*
63 ^{kuš}*na-ruq upšašê*(nig$_2$.AK.a)^{meš} *ep-qu me-eḫ-ru ša*$_2$ *amēlūti*(nam.lu$_2$.u$_{18}$.lu)^{ti}
64 *eli*(ugu)*-šu*$_2$*-nu lu i-šir*$_3$ *lu paṭrū*(du$_8$)^{meš}*-ni lu pašrū*(bur$_2$)^{meš}-^{r}*ni*^{1}

Whether, while I was crossing the street, a cursed person touched me, [60] or, while I was crossing the main-street, I trod in wash-water (var. of a cursed person),[121] water that has not been drained away; [61] nail clippings, armpit shavings, [62] a punctured sandal, a cut-through belt, [63] a sack of performances (of witchcraft), leprosy, an (unfortunate) incident of humankind, [64] if I have come straight upon (all of) these (things), may they be loosened for me, may they be released for me.

In this passage, the contraction of *māmītu*-curse from contact with an infectious person is positioned alongside other materials that could carry impurities or be used as vectors of aggressive magic. The threat of tainted 'wash-water' (*rumīkātu*) reflects water's

[120] A possible reference to contagious *arratu*-curse can be found in another text. An entry in the *Prostration Hemerology* suggests *arratu*-curse (as well as *māmītu*-curse) could be contracted through the purchase of bread, but that this could be avoided on a certain day (Jiménez and Adalı 2015: 169, 33): DIŠ *ina* ^{iti}*Ṭebēti*(ab) u$_4$ 3.kam$_2$ *ina qāt*(šu) ^{lu2}*nuḫatimmi*(muḫaldim) *em-me-tu*$_2$ *lim-ḫur māmītu*(nam.erim$_2$) *ar*$_2$*-ra-tu*$_2$ *la*$_3$ *iṭeḫḫâ*(te)^{meš}*-šu*$_2$ 'In Ṭebētu, on the third day, he should accept hot (bread) from a cook: *māmītu*-curse and *arratu*-curse will not approach him.' The editors (Jiménez and Adalı 2015: 184) suggest that the reasoning for this entry is based on a pun between *emmetu* and *māmītu*. The inclusion of *arratu*-curse, which is not directly connected with the word play, is further evidence for the close connection between the two concepts.

[121] Given the context, this variant probably arose from confusion between *tamê* and *mê*.

capacity to take on impurities, and it is used in this way to remove the patient's suffering in rituals against transgression (§ 5.3.1). When employed in a ritual context, the exorcist should see to it that the water is disposed of properly, to make sure that the impurities it is carrying are distanced from the patient, but also to ensure that it does not infect others as described in the above passage. Bringing used wash-water into the presence of the gods was considered a transgression akin to an abomination against the gods (KAL 10, Nr. 27–33, 92–93): … *nu-la-tu*$_2$ *ana ili*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *lu-u ub-la* / *an-zil-*⌜*la lu*⌝ *ik-bu-uš ru-mi*$_3$*-ka-ti-šu*$_2$ *ana pān*(igi) *ili*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *lu u*$_2$*-šer*$_3$-⌜*di*⌝ 'whether he brought malicious (speech) to his god, [93] or he trod in *anzillu*-transgression, or he caused wash-water to flow in the presence of his god.' Gods were presumably not susceptible to the dangers of contagion in the same way as humans, but such an act risks contaminating the god's temple, offerings, and personnel, and suggests that the perpetrator does not pay heed to cultic rules and responsibilities. The idea that contagion could be a cause of divine punishment and the attendant suffering raises important questions about the extent to which an individual whose suffering was attributed to such a cause could be considered directly responsible for their situation. Exposing oneself to the possibility of contagion could be regard as carelessness, and we have seen that negligence and ignorance were considered no protection against the threat of divine punishment. This explains why equivalents of concepts like 'blame' and 'responsibility' do not feature in these sources and why they are concerned primarily with the removal of the state of suffering rather than trying to identify the precise circumstances of its ultimate cause.

3.5 Externalization of *māmītu*-curse and *arratu*-curse

The concepts of *māmītu* and *arratu*, as forms of self-curse that regulate transgression by carrying out punishment on behalf of the gods, have their origins in an individual's transgressive actions and may therefore be considered an 'internal' source of suffering.[122] However, they have evolved so far from this origin that they sometimes appear as independent, almost autonomous, entities that can be portrayed as demons acting 'externally' to the sufferer. In this way, they can be imagined as the direct cause of the symptoms of divine punishment, like other demons. The 'hand of *māmītu*' (*qāt māmīti* // šu nam-erim$_2$-ma) is attested as a cause-oriented illness designation, like the 'hands' of gods and other supernatural entities (see § 4.3.1). The existence of a personified, demonic form of *māmītu*-curse allows it to be represented figuratively and therefore figurines in its image can be used in rituals to remove the suffering caused by it (§ 5.3.4.2).

A more developed portrayal of a personified form of *māmītu*-curse is found in a number of incantations from rituals targeting its effects. In the following bilingual *Šurpu* incantation, for example, the personified *māmītu*-curse appears alongside two other beings generally known as disease-bearing demons (*Šurpu* VII 1–8):

1	EN$_2$ ⌜buru$_5$⌝ ša$_3$ abzu-ta im-ta-[e$_3$]-a-na	Incantation: Dimītu came away from the
2	*di-mi$_2$-tu$_4$ ul-tu qe$_2$-reb ap-si-i it-ta-ṣa-a*	midst of the Apsû,
3	nam-erim$_2$ ša$_3$ an-na-ta im-ta-e$_{11}$-⌜de$_3$⌝	Māmītu came down from the midst of
4	*ma-mi-tu$_4$ ul-tu qe$_2$-reb šamê*(an)^e *ur-da*	heaven,
5	du$_3$-du$_3$ u$_2$-šim-gin$_7$ ki-a mu-un-⌜dar⌝	Aḫḫāzu breaks through the earth like
6	*aḫ-ḫa-zu ki-ma ur-qi$_2$-ti er-ṣe-ta i-pe-eṣ-⌜ṣí⌝*	vegetation,
7	IM limmu$_2$-ba me-lam$_2$ šu$_2$-šu$_2$-a-meš izi-gin$_7$ bil-bil-e-⌜ne⌝	(their) *melammu* is spread in all directions (lit. to the four winds), they
8	*a-na ša$_2$-a-ri er-bet-ti me-lam-me saḫ-pu ki-ma i-ša$_2$-ti u$_2$-ḫa-am-ma-⌜ru⌝*	burn up (everything) like fire.

[122] In contrast to witches, demons, and ghosts which represent forces of evil that are more obviously 'external' to their victim.

The context and nature of the actions described make clear that all three entities are to be understood as disease-bearing demons. The connection between the demon Dimītu and the disease it was believed to cause is possibly indicated by the etymology of its Akkadian name and its spelling in Sumerian,[123] while the demon Aḫḫāzu was usually associated with jaundice.[124] The variety of medical symptoms associated with the demon Māmītu and/or *māmītu*-curse will be discussed in the following chapter (§ 4.3.2). While the descriptions in the above passage evoke destructive demons, and their possession of *melammu* reflects their quasi-divine nature, *māmītu*-curse can also be described afflicting its victim in simpler but equally demonic terms (KAL 10, Nr. 52, 1–4):

1 EN$_2$ *ma-mit ma-mit mi-nu-u*$_2$
2 *ša*$_2$ *ta-at-ta-na-al-la-ki arki*(egir)-*ia*
3 *a-na bu-ʾi-ia-a-ma a-na ṣa-ba-ti-ia*
4 *ta-at-ta-*ˈ*na*ˌ*-al-la-ki arki*(egir)-*ia*

Incantation: *Māmītu*, *māmītu*, what (are you) [2] who constantly walk behind me, [3] in order to seek me out, [4] (who) constantly walk behind me, [3] in order to seize me?

These actions mirror the behaviour of demons who stalk their victims, especially, for example, the Aḫḫāzu demon, whose name literally means a habitual or professional 'Seizer'. This passage also parallels descriptions of witches pursuing their victim like demons.[125] This is one of a number of crossovers between the portrayal of witches and *māmītu*-curse (§ 3.2.7).

The personified *māmītu*-curse also appears in the anti-demon ritual series Udug-ḫul, keeping company with other widely recognized demons, such as the Rābiṣu, Utukku, Alû, Gallû, Lamaštu, and Labāṣu (UH III 23–38).[126] In this passage, *māmītu*-curse is

[123] The Akkadian is derived from the verb *damû*, 'to suffer from convulsions' (cf. e.g. CAD D 143). It is written here in Sumerian with buru$_5$, which Geller (2016: 260) understands as phonetic for buru$_8$ 'vomiting'.
[124] Geller 2016: 260.
[125] Cf. Schwemer 2007: 66.
[126] Cf. Geller 2016: 96–97.

also described as being inside the body of the victim (UH III 38: *ma-mit le-mut-tu*$_4$ *ina zumri*(su)-*šu*$_2$ *ib-šu-u*$_2$ '(since) evil *māmītu*-curse was in his body'), which is a common trope of the portrayal of disease-bearing demons and reflects the physical manifestation of symptoms of *māmītu*-curse within the sufferer's body. In a namerimburruda-incantation, *māmītu*-curse is described as the daughter of Anu and of primordial creation (KAL 10, Nr. 4–10, 65–69):

65 EN$_2$ *mārat*(dumu.munus) ^{d}*a-nim ša*$_2$ *šamê*(an)^{e} [*ellūti*(ku$_3$)^{meš}]
66 *bi-nu-ut ayyabba*(a.ab.ba) *ta-ma-ti rapašti*(dagal)$^{\lceil ti \rceil}$
67 ^{d}*a-num a-bu-ni ib-na-an-na-ši-ma šamû*(an)^{u2} *u erṣetu*(ki)^{tu4} *ib-ba-nu-u*$_2$ *it-ti-*$^{\lceil}$*ni*$^{\rceil}$
68 *u*$_3$ *ma-mit ib-ba-ni it-ti-ni-*$^{\lceil}$*ma*$^{\rceil}$
69 $^{\lceil}$*at*$^{\rceil}$*-ti ma-mit …*

Incantation: Daughter of Anu of [pure] heaven, [66] creation of the ocean, the wide sea. [67] Anu, our father, created us and heaven and earth were created with us, and *māmītu*-curse too was indeed created with us. [68] You, *māmītu*-curse …

The epithet 'daughter of Anu' is more commonly applied to the demon Lamaštu,[127] so its usage here firmly situates *māmītu*-curse among demons that present a serious threat to humankind, and also establishes a divine lineage for the Māmītu-demon. The divinity of the demon is also demonstrated by its being created alongside other gods descended from Anu, Ea and Asalluḫi, Gula, Damu, and Ningirima, who appear to be narrating the incantation.[128] It is interesting to note that the problem (*māmītu*-curse, at least as far as humans are concerned) was created along with the solutions (exorcism and medicine, represented by the gods narrating the passage). This is part of the careful balance of the universe that conceptions of transgression and divine punishment serve to protect. The Māmītu-demon's creation at the same time as heaven and earth not only means that it was created together with the world in which it maintains order, but also suggests that

[127] Wiggermann 2000: 225, with n.40.
[128] Cf. KAL 10, Nr. 4–10, 78–79: *šiptu*(en$_2$) *ul ia-tu-un šipat*(en$_2$) ^{d}*e*$_2$*-a u* ^{d}*asal-*$^{\lceil}$*lu*$_2$$^{\rceil}$*-ḫi* / *šipat*(en$_2$) ^{d}*da-mu u* ^{d}*gu-la šipat*(en$_2$) ^{d}*nin-*$^{\lceil}$*girima*$_3$$^{\rceil}$ [TU$_6$ EN$_2$] 'the incantation is not mine, (it is) the incantation of Ea and Asalluḫi, [79] (it is) the incantation of Damu and Gula, (it is) the incantation of Ningirima. [Incantation formula].' This is a common formula that recognizes that the exorcist's incantations ultimately derive their power from their divine origins (cf. Schwemer 2014: 265; Lenzi 2010).

the *māmītu*-curse was believed to have primordial origins.[129] This strengthens the idea that *māmītu*-curse did not result from any literal oaths prohibiting transgressions, but was something primeval that had been binding for all inhabitants of the universe from the very time that the universe was created.

The power of *māmītu*-curse is also compared with that of Lamaštu in a commentary to the diagnostic series *Sakikku* (SpTU I 27 24′–27′):[130]

24′ … *alpa*(gu$_4$) *burruma*(gun$_3$) *īmur*(igi) *šū*(bi)
25′ [^{d}]ᶠ*lamaštu*(dim$_3$.me)ˀ *iṣbat*(dab)-ᶠ*su*ˀ [:] ᶠ^{d}*lamaštu*(dim$_3$.me)ˀ : *um-mu*
ᶠ*mārat*(dumu.munus)ˀ ^{d}*anim*(60) : me : *um-mu*
26′ [*ina māmīti*(nam.erim$_2$)]-*ša$_2$* {:} *imât*(ba.ug$_7$) : nam [:] *mu-u-tu$_4$* : erim$_2$: *rag-gu* *ḫe-pi$_2$*
27′ [*mu-ut*] ᶠ*rag*ˀ-*gu imât*(ba.ug$_7$) …

… (If) he (i.e. the patient) sees a speckled ox, [25′] Lamaštu has seized him – Lamaštu : fever, daughter of Anu : me = "fever"; [26′] "he will die of her [*māmītu*-curse"] – nam = "death", erim$_2$ = "wicked" [break 27′] he will die [the death of] a wicked man …

Once again, *māmītu*-curse appears in the milieu of other disease-bearing demons and deadly diseases, reflecting the fact that it too could be both. Images of the demonized *mamitu*-curse could also be used as an apotropaion against other demons (UH IX 74′): zi$_3$ saĝ-ba e$_2$-a-ta a-ra-an-ḫur-ḫur-re // *qe$_2$-e-mu ma-mi-ti ina bīti*(e$_2$) *e-ṣir-ka* 'I have drawn (against) you (i.e. the demon) a flour (image) of Māmītu in the house.' The use of an image of *māmītu* as a defence against other demons is also a key part of the ritual series saĝ-ba saĝ-ba, which opens as follows (I 1–2):[131] EN$_2$ saĝ-ba saĝ-ba ĝeš-ḫur nu-bal-e / *ma-mit ma-mit u$_2$-ṣur-tu ša$_2$ la e-te-qi$_2$* 'Māmītu, Māmītu! Drawing that is not to be crossed!' This is not unusual, as another demon, Pazuzu, was used as a "Gegendämon" to counter Lamaštu, raising the question of whether Pazuzu should be considered a 'good' or 'bad' demon.[132]

[129] Maul 2019: 14.
[130] CCP 4.1.1.B (online at ccp.yale.edu/P348448, accessed 23/07/2019), published in George 1991: 146–153. Translation after George 1991: 149.
[131] Schramm 2001: 20–21.
[132] Heeßel 2002: 1. Cf. also Wiggermann 2000: 243–244.

Although *arratu*-curse is less widely attested, it shares many aspects of its portrayal with its counterpart *māmītu*-curse, including personified forms.[133] In *Šurpu*, for example, *arratu*-curse is compared to a demon and appears alongside demonic illnesses (V–VI 1–2; 7–8):

1 EN$_2$ aš$_2$-ḫul gal$_5$-la$_2$-gin$_7$ lu$_2$-ra ba-ni-in-ĝar
2 *ar-rat lemutti*(ḫul)^{ti3} *ki-ma ga-le-e ana amēli*(lu$_2$) *it-taš-kan*

Evil *arratu*-curse has been placed for (this) man like a Gallû-demon.

7 aš$_2$-ḫul saĝ-ba saĝ-ge$_{17}$-ga-am$_3$
8 *ar-rat lemutti*(ḫul)^{ti3} *ma-mit di-iʾ-u*

Evil *arratu*-curse, *māmītu*-curse, *diʾu*-illness.

Another key element of the portrayal of *arratu*-curse that demonstrates a connection with the imagery of demons is its description as 'murderous' (*arratu šaggašti*, lit. '*arratu*-curse of murder'). This epithet occurs at the end of the list of examples of *arratu*-curse in *Šurpu* (V–VI 48–49): aš$_2$-ki-lul lu$_2$-ra nu-un-zu-a / *lu-u ar$_2$-rat šag-gaš-te ša$_2$ amēlu*(lu$_2$) *la$_3$ īdû*(zu)^{u2} 'or murderous *arratu*-curse that (this) man does not know.' In the Istanbul *arratu*-ritual, by contrast, it occurs at the very beginning of the introductory section (A 185 obv. 1): ⌜*šum*⌝*-ma amēlu*(lu$_2$) *ar-rat šag-gaš-*⌜*ti*⌝ … 'if a man (is cursed with) murderous *arratu*-curse …' This must have been considered an important attribute of *arratu*-curse and, while a similar epithet is not used of *māmītu*-curse, it is found in connection with ghosts and other demons. Murderous ghosts (*eṭemmu šaggāšu*, lit. 'ghost-murderer', the second noun being in apposition) are more demon-like than the ghosts of restless family members,[134] and could cause particularly grievous symptoms (e.g. *Sakikku* XII iii 35):[135] *šumma*(diš) *ina*

[133] Even in legal sources, the personification of *arratu*-curse has been read into descriptions of it 'overtaking' (*kašādu*) its victim (Sandowicz 2012: 111). This recalls descriptions of the personified *māmītu*-curse pursuing its victim, but it may simply represent a metaphorical use of the verb and does not necessarily indicate that *arratu*-curse was perceived as a demon-like entity in those sources.
[134] Cf. Scurlock 2006: 5–7.
[135] Labat 1951: 106–107; cf. A 3442 obv. iii 35 (online at geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/diagnostic_handbook/Kapitel-2-_Wenn-du-dich-dem-Kranken-naeherst/12-D-A_-3442/, accessed 15/09/2020); BE 35829 rev. iii 38′–39′ (online at geschkult.fu-

eṣenṣēri(gu$_2$.murgu$_2$)-*šu$_2$* *maḫiṣ*(sag$_3$)-*ma* *isekker*(uš$_2$)-*ma* *manzazī*(ki.gub)-*šu$_2$* *la$_3$* *uṣṣâ*(e$_3$)^a *qāt*(šu) *eṭemmi*(gidim$_7$) *šag-ga-ši* [*imât*(gam)$^?$] 'if he is struck in his spine and so he is blocked up and he cannot make his excrement come out:[136] hand of a murderous ghost [*he will die*(?)].' It has been suggested that this particular type of ghost resulted from a person being murdered,[137] or that the symptoms attributed to them mirrored their cause of death,[138] but it is more likely that the epithet is simply a reflection of the deadly effects that the ghost has on its victims. The name Šaggāšu also seems to have referred to an independent demon and the disease associated with it (distinct from *qāt eṭemmi šaggāši* 'hand of murderous ghost'), and a feminine form Šaggāštu is also attested among lists of demons.[139] While these demons are not to be identified with the murderous *arratu*-curse,[140] the association between *arratu*-curse and murder is clearly part of a demonic trope. The demonization of *arratu*-curse is not unexpected given its proximity to the concept of *māmītu*-curse, which is better attested in its demonic form. The externalization of concepts originally conceived as a form of self-curse, and especially their ability as demon-like beings to act semi-autonomously, initially seems problematic for an understanding of suffering supposedly caused by an individual's own actions. The consequences of such actions, however, were seen as divine punishment, and demons were often responsible for enacting the will of the gods by causing illness in their victims. By committing a transgression, the sufferer had also forfeited the protection of personal protective deities and is therefore particularly vulnerable to attack by demons (see § 1.4.2.1), and not only by the curse-demons

berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/diagnostic_handbook/Kapitel-2-_Wenn-du-dich-dem-Kranken-naeherst/12-E-BE-35829/, accessed 15/09/2020).

[136] See Stol 1993: 92 for this interpretation *contra* Labat.

[137] Scurlock 2006: 7.

[138] Johnson 2018: 57. In this case, perhaps a battle wound in the spine.

[139] Fincke 2013.

[140] Instead, they appear to represent the threat of bandits in the steppe (Fincke 2013: 22).

directly carrying out the punishment, as the passage from *Šurpu* demonstrates. By conceptualizing the process of transgression and punishment by means of a demonic entity, an otherwise intangible process could be embodied in a way that fits within the workings of the Mesopotamian universe. This also creates a more concrete target for the release rituals, which seek to remove the consequences of otherwise abstract or unknown transgressions.

3.6 Summary

In this chapter, I examined lists of possible transgressions that form part of the incantations of many release rituals. I looked at both the overarching structure and purpose of the lists as well as what individual entries reveal about the exorcist's categorization of transgressions. I then analysed elements of the conceptualization of transgression that problematize the idea that there might be a simple, direct relationship between an individual's transgressive actions and their punishment. These include the sufferer's repeated professions of ignorance as to a specific offence, the possibility of contracting the state of suffering by contagious transfer from another person or contaminated materials, and the portrayal of the self-inflicted curse that punishes transgressions as an externalized demon-like entity.

Overall, these problems, combined with the universalizing scope of possible transgressions, suggest that the rituals and the ideology that they externalize are not concerned with identifying real examples of specific transgressions as the ultimate cause of the patient's suffering. Instead, as will be demonstrated in a later chapter (§ 5), the rituals seek to secure forgiveness from the gods, remove the physical manifestations of the patient's suffering, and reintegrate the patient back into normal society. Identifying an ultimate cause in the patient's actions and behaviour was not necessary to facilitate this,[141] and the precise nature of potential transgressions is therefore subordinated to an emphasis on the universal scope for committing transgressions and human ignorance in the face of this. This is further evidenced by the fact that several of the shorter and more therapeutically oriented namerimburruda-rituals, which were

[141] A similar situation obtains in the Mesopotamian medical literature. Compare the objection of the Greek Empiricists and Methodists to Hippocratic medicine, who "argued that the search for causes of disease was a distraction preventing the physician from investigating the proper cure" (Geller 2015: 14).

effective against *māmītu*-curse resulting from transgression, do not contain lists of transgression in the accompanying incantations.

The lists of potential transgressions nevertheless form an important part of the rituals, and this is because they play a role in structuring the world and expressing ideals in relation to those structures. By setting down in writing, and thus having the patient recite, numerous possibilities regarding the nature and scope of transgression, the rituals themselves, and especially the ideology to which they give voice, reflect a desire to maintain the divine order of the world, establish social and cosmic hierarchies, and uphold social norms and standards of behaviour. In this way, these compositions serve not only to transmit ideal structures of the universe and human society, which are both an expression of the exorcists' ideology and a recognition of structures already set down by the gods, but also to consider the many ways in which these structures might be threatened or violated. Thus, while the litanies were not intended to function as lists of commandments, prohibitions, or taboos, they nevertheless serve important practical and ideological functions for the exorcist. On the one hand, the formulaic lists and litany form ensured that many possibilities were covered, allowing multiple forms of suffering to be attributed to transgression and therefore requiring the services of the exorcist. Exorcists had a vested interest in maintaining their role as professional mediators between suffering humans and the gods, so their writings reinforce the layperson's need for their help in this. On the other hand, the lists serve as a written expression of structures governing the proper order of the universe, established by the gods but researched and categorized by the Mesopotamian scholar. Individual entries in these lists may not have been remembered or even noted by the patient during the course of the ritual, but the overarching message and particularly the refrain could have made at least a general impression. This would have reiterated the importance of respecting the

divinely ordained structures and would have provided confidence that the ritual would release the consequences of any transgression, even if it remained unidentified.

4 The symptoms of transgression and its punishment

In this chapter, I examine the manifestation and experience of suffering that resulted from the punishment and other consequences of transgressions discussed in the previous chapter. This experience can be characterized on the whole as a state of 'reduced existence' for the victim insofar as many of the symptoms restrict the patient's participation in normal life, both in human society and in the wider world. Given that the patient was usually ignorant of any transgression that might have ultimately caused the suffering, the symptoms discussed in this chapter would have served as a key indicator that the patient needed the help of an exorcist and had committed a transgression.

I begin with a brief examination of general descriptions of the patient's plight that are included in incantations, often referencing imprisonment, conspiracy, or general hardship. These probably do not reflect specific symptoms of the suffering, but are poetic, metaphorical descriptions reflecting the general experience of the state of reduced existence, and are important for understanding how this was perceived. I then look at the specific symptoms of suffering, dividing them into two broad categories. The first category comprises 'relational symptoms': these are characterized by a breakdown in the sufferer's relationship with the surrounding world, including relations with the gods and other people, and the resultant social, economic, and existential problems. The second category comprises the 'internal symptoms' that manifest as problems within the patient's body and mind, but can also be characterized as resulting from a breakdown in relational structures that govern the proper functioning of the body. The division into these two categories is largely a modern contrivance, and we

shall see that there is frequent crossover between symptoms of both types in the *āšipūtu* sources.[1] It will also become apparent that one could often contribute to the other.

Overall, both types of symptom contribute to the state of reduced existence, whether through exclusion from normal society, physical impairment, or the loss of mental functions. These can all be seen as resulting from disruption to the structures that govern the sufferer's relationship with the gods, other people, and society at large, as well as the structures within the body that ensure its proper functioning. Thus, there is a connection to the portrayal of transgression as the cause of suffering. The creation of imbalance in the world and the disruption of structures governing the proper order of the world through transgression has essentially turned upon the transgressor. Imbalances within the transgressor's social environment and own body, imposed by the gods as punishment, ultimately lead to the state of reduced existence. Offences against the norms of existence are therefore punished by preventing the transgressor from further participation in these norms.[2] This is characteristic of many of the symptoms indicating that the patient is being punished for some unknown transgression.

[1] Ambos (2010: 19) notes that both form part of a unified Mesopotamian conception of illness. Such a division is, however, found in the structure of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, for example: the first tablet largely concerns problems with interpersonal relations while the second tablet concerns internal symptoms (Lambert 1960: 22–23).
[2] Hence *māmītu* is often translated 'Bann' in modern German (see § 2.1.1.1).

4.1 General descriptions of reduced existence

A generalized picture of the experience of reduced experience is expressed in the *Šurpu* incantations through metaphorical descriptions of the patient's suffering. These could be considered symptoms in a 'perceptional' sense, insofar as they describe how the patient's suffering makes him feel. For example (*Šurpu* IV 31–36; 68–75):

31 *ša*$_2$ *bīt*(e$_2$) *ṣi-bit-ti šu-ṣu-u nūra*(zalag$_2$) *kul-lu-mu bu*
32 *ša ina tuš-ši ṣab-tu ina pî*(ka) *patri*(gir$_2$) *e-ṭe*$_2$*-ru bu*
33[3] *ša āl*(uru)*-šu*$_2$ *ru-u-qu ḫarrān*(kaskal)*-šu*$_2$ *ne*$_2$*-sa-tu*$_2$ *bu*
34 *šal-meš a-na* [*āli*(uru)]-⌜*šu*⌝ *a-la-ku* ⌜*bu*⌝
35 *šal-la u ka-ma-a a-na nišī*(ug$_3$)^{meš}*-šu*$_2$ *tur-ru* ⌜*bu*⌝
36 *ina maḫar*(igi) *nišī*(ug$_3$)^{meš}*-šu*$_2$ *a-ma-*⌜*ru*⌝ *bu*

To release the prisoner, to show him the light, (refrain), [32] to save the one seized by malicious gossip from the blade (lit. mouth)[4] of the dagger, (refrain), [33] (in order that) the one whose city is far away, whose road is distant, (refrain), [34] go safely to his [city], (refrain), [35] to return the captive and the bound to his people, (refrain), [36] to see (him?) in the presence of his people, (refrain).

68 *ra-kis-ta li-sap-pi-ḫu*
69 *ki-ṣir lum-ni li-par-ri-ru*
70 *ka-si-*⌜*ta*⌝ *li-ram-mu-u*$_2$ *ma-mit lip-ṭu-ru*
71 *nīš*(mu) *ili*(dingir) *lip-su-su ar*$_2$*-ni li-is-su-ḫu*
72 *gil*$_2$*-la-ti li-is-su-u ḫi-ṭi-tu li-šal-li-mu*
73 *mar-ṣu lib-luṭ ma-aq-tu*$_2$ *lit-bi*
74 *ka-su-u*$_2$ *li-šir ṣab-tu li-*⌜*taš*⌝*-šir*$_2$
75 *ša*$_2$ *bīt*(e$_2$) *ṣi-bit-ti nu-ru li-mur*

May they (i.e. the gods) disperse the conspiracy (lit. binding), [69] may they break up the knot of evil, [70] may they slacken the binding, may they loosen *māmītu*-curse, [71] may they erase (oath by) the life of god, may they tear out *arnu*-crime-punishment, [72] may they remove *gillatu*-sin-punishment, may they make good *ḫiṭītu*-wrongdoing-punishment, [73] may the ill become healthy, may the fallen rise up, [74] may the bound go free, may the captive be released, [75] may the prisoner see the light.

[3] Lines 33–34 are only preserved in full in the Assur MSS. The Nineveh MSS possibly write these two lines as one, since the second half of the line is broken in both, although there is probably not enough space in the break for the equivalent of the entire second line according to the Assur MSS (cf. Borger 2000: 61–62). The writing of the initial *bu* of the refrain at the end of line 33 in the Assur MSS may therefore be a mistake since it interrupts the two lines which make better sense when taken together, and which may have been written as one line in other MSS. Additionally, the surrounding lines end in final infinitives, which does not occur in line 33. This reflects the standardized litanic function of the refrain: it was written at the end of every line even if contrary to the surrounding sense.

[4] For the translation of *pī patri*, cf. CAD P 470 "blade of a dagger"; AHw II 874 "Schneide, Schärfe des Schwertes". *Pace* Bodi (1991: 242–245), who argues that it means to stab up to the hilt, based on the fact that the hilts of swords and daggers were frequently decorated with animals' heads in the ancient Near East.

The frequent imagery of the patient being bound or imprisoned reflects both physical symptoms such as paralysis and how the patient's reduced existence prevents full participation in human society, which is also connected to the social symptoms of suffering (§ 4.2.2). Similar imagery occurs in some of the methods used by the exorcist to remove the impurity, including unbinding threads tied around the patient and releasing prisoners as substitutes for him (§ 5.3.5; § 5.3.4.1). In the same incantation, the patient's difficult circumstances are described in yet more general terms (*Šurpu* IV 39–44):

39 *ina murṣi*(ge$_{17}$) *šu-ut-bi-i* [*bu*]
40 *ina pušqi*(pap.ḫal) *ša$_2$-la-pi* [*bu*]
41 *ina ar$_2$-ni ga-ma-li* [*bu*]
42 *ina dannati*(munus.kala.ga) *šu-zu-bu* [*bu*]
43 *ina ḫa-aš-ti su-lu-u$_2$* ⌜*bu*⌝
44 *ina pî*(ka) *ka-ra-še-e e-ṭe-ru* ⌜*bu*⌝

'To raise him up from illness, [(refrain)], [40] to pull him out of (dire) straits, [(refrain)], [41] to spare him from *arnu*-crime-punishment, [(refrain)], [42] to save him from hardship, [(refrain)], [43] to lift him out of a pit, (refrain), [44] to save him from the throes (lit. mouth) of catastrophe, (refrain).'

The majority of these descriptions can be read as relatively literal, if highly generalizing, reflections of the patient's state of illness and suffering. The pit (*ḫaštu*) could refer to a grave, reflecting the patient's fatal illness, but could equally evoke the imagery of a hunter's trap as a metaphorical description of the general suffering, akin to references to imprisonment.[5] Such descriptions evoke the very real consequences of the patient's suffering: being forcibly excluded from society and facing possible death. Indeed, as we shall see, the extent of the patient's internal symptoms probably also

[5] Cf. CCP 2.1.B (online at ccp.yale.edu/P395480, accessed 26/01/2021) 20–21: ⌜*ḫa-aš$_2$*⌝*-ti* | *šu-ut-ta-tu$_2$* / [MIN(= *ḫašti*)] | *qu-bu-ri* 'pit = pitfall; [21] [pit] = grave.' Reiner (1958: 50) restores [*ka-ra-šu-u*] in the break but the CCP commentary notes that there is no compelling reason to do so. Thus, the image of the pit in the source passage is interpreted by the ancient commentator as relating to a hunter's trap and only with some uncertainty to the grave. Oshima (2014: 317–318), on the other hand, accepts Reiner's restoration and discusses further the association between *ḫaštu* 'pit' and *qabru* 'grave' in lexical material, also suggesting that *pī karašê* refers to a place of slaughter or mass grave (Oshima 2001: 16–17). Similar imagery that does refer to being saved from death occurs in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* (V 7–9, cf. Oshima 2014: 106–107; 429): [*i-na ka-ra*]-⌜*še*⌝*-e id-*⌜*kan*⌝{*-an*}*-ni* / *ina* ^{id2}*ḫu-bur iš-du-da-an-ni* / *ina dan-*⌜*na*⌝*-ti qa-ti iṣ-bat* '(Marduk) lifted me [from catastrophe], [8] he dragged me out of the river Ḫubur, [9] he took my hand in hardship.'

limited his participation in normal society, so the two categories of symptoms are closely related. While the examples above are rather generic descriptions of any person in a position of suffering, the following sections will consider more specific symptoms that are understood to result from transgression, whether they take the form of changes in the sufferer's relations with the gods and other people or changes within the sufferer's own body.

4.2 Relational symptoms

In the following section I examine the effects of impurity on the sufferer's relationship with the world about him. This often begins with a breakdown in the relationship with the gods, provoked by divine anger at the transgression committed. This could result in the victim's personal protective deities abandoning him, potentially leaving him exposed to other dangers, and the appearance of negative omens signalling the victim's ultimate ill fate (see § 1.4.2.1). The loss of divine favour and protection would have led to a number of other problems for the sufferer, including a reduced ability to participate in both cult and human society as well as illness and other symptoms of the body. The consequences of transgression, and indeed of other sources of evil not necessarily provoked by divine anger, could also cause problems for the sufferer's relations with other people and human society at large. This could lead to the loss of social and political influence, even complete exclusion from normal human society, and could also have a negative impact on the victim's economic situation. This is particularly reflected in the damage that could be caused to the sufferer's immediate surroundings, especially his family, household, and livestock holdings, which also suggests that the consequences of transgression were, to some extent, contagious (see § 3.4).

While these relational symptoms are ultimately a form of divine punishment for transgression, they could also be viewed as the direct result of certain transgressive actions. The sufferer's estrangement from society and his hostile treatment by others, for example, while portrayed as punishment from the gods, can also be expected to arise from transgressive behaviours that offend against family, friends, and other members of society (§ 3.2.3). From a Mesopotamian perspective, however, such relational problems may have been considered to be caused by the gods as punishment for transgression rather than resulting directly from the transgressive behaviour. These

relational problems would be an appropriate punishment for many of the possible transgressions discussed in the previous chapter (§§ 3.2.1–3.2.7), which themselves upset the balance in relations between humans and the gods, and between people within human society. Thus, having rejected the divinely ordained structures that govern cultic relations and human society, the transgressor is punished by losing divine favour and the ability to participate fully in human society. The resultant state of reduced existence should have led the sufferer to appreciate the importance of these structures and the value of proper behaviour towards the gods and other people. The internal symptoms discussed below (§ 4.3.2) can also be considered in this light, since some of them are characterized by a state of debilitation or changes to physical appearance that also would have restricted the patient's ability to participate in normal human society. This is particularly reflected in the connections drawn between divine punishment and specific conditions associated with social exclusion.[6] I begin, however, by examining the consequences of transgression that manifest most clearly as disruptions to the sufferer's relations with the gods and human society.

4.2.1 Cultic relations

It can be argued that the most important relationship within the Mesopotamian universe was that between humans and the gods. One of the most significant consequences of transgression, therefore, is a breakdown in the sufferer's relationship with the divine sphere, especially with his personal deities and other protective spirits. Other aspects of the state of reduced existence, including damage to relations with other people and

[6] The curse of Sîn, for example, becomes a formalized punishment for transgression in the form of *saḫaršubbû*, an illness often equated with leprosy (e.g. Scurlock and Andersen 2005: 70–73) and which forced the victim to live outside of human society, losing the benefits this otherwise afforded (Watanabe 1984: 114–115). It should be noted, however, that the presence of leprosy in ancient Mesopotamia is debated and its identification in ancient descriptions of symptoms is not uncontested (cf. Kinnier Wilson 1966).

internal, medical symptoms, can be seen as part of the divine punishment of transgression, and these are therefore also to some extent a result of the breakdown in relations with the gods. Since the gods ultimately control everything, this must be the direction of the chain of causality, but this is not always made explicit in the ancient sources: having lost divine favour and the protection of personal deities, the victim is exposed to a number of other dangers, including hostility from other people, attacks by demons, and affliction by illness, sources of suffering that are not always explicitly sent by the gods. The chain of causality is even more complicated when it comes to external sources of evil since, in some cases, demons and witches appear to be the cause of the loss of divine protection while in other cases it is the loss of divine protection that leaves the victim exposed to their attack.[7] Thus, while it is not always clear which came first,

[7] In a passage from Udug-ḫul, for example, the protective deities of the household appear to flee as soon as the demons enter their victim's house (UH IX 19′–22′):

19′ [udug ḫul a-la$_2$] ⌜ḫul⌝ gidim ḫul gal$_5$-la$_2$ ḫul dingir ḫul maškim ḫul
[*u$_2$-tuk-ku lem-nu*] ⌜*a*⌝*-lu-u lem-nu e-ṭem-mu lem-nu ga-lu-u lem-nu*
ilu(dingir) *lem-nu ra-bi-ṣu* [*lem-nu*]
20′ [e$_2$-a niĝ$_2$-ḫul]-še$_3$ giri$_3$ du.du-a-ta
ina be$_2$-e-ti ana le-mut-ti ina i-tal-lu-ki-⌜*šu*⌝
21′ [dingir e$_2$-a] ⌜nin⌝ e$_2$-a im-ma-an-da-an-ti-eš
il(dingir) *bi-ti* ^{d}*iš-tar bi-ti$_3$ lu ṭar-du-*[*u*]
22′ [^{d}lamma] ⌜e$_2$⌝-[a a$_2$]-⌜ur$_2$ ba⌝-an-dab
la-mas-si bīti(e$_2$) *pu-uz-ra i-ta-*⌜*ḫaz*⌝
23′ [ab-ba um-ma] ⌜tur gal⌝ e$_2$-a-ke$_4$ teš$_2$-bi im-ma-an-da-an-sig$_3$[?]-ge-eš
[*ši-i*]-⌜*ba*⌝ *ši-ib-ta ṣe-ḫer ra-bi ša bīti*(e$_2$) *mit-ḫa-riš i-tar-ru-*[*ru*]

[The evil Utukku], the evil Alû, the evil ghost, the evil Gallû, the evil god, the [evil] Rābiṣu, 20′ as it (sic!) constantly enters the house for evil (purposes), 21′ the household god (and) the household goddess having indeed been driven off, 22′ the Lamassu of the household has taken shelter, 23′ [old man] (and) old woman, young (and) old of the house are all trembling together.

The exact temporal and causal relationship between these actions is not clear from the verb forms in the passage. What is clear is that the lack of divine protection as well as the attack of the demons have thrown the house into distress. Similarly, witches can be described causing personal protective deities to leave their charge (e.g. *Maqlû* I 6; III 16): *il*(dingir)-*i$_{14}$ u$_3$* ^{d}*iš$_8$-tar$_2$-i$_{14}$ u$_2$-šas-su-u$_2$ eli*(ugu)-*ia$_5$* '(since the witch) caused my (personal) god and my (personal) goddess to be distant from me'; *u$_2$-ša$_2$-as-si il*(dingir)-*i$_{14}$ u* ^{d}*iš$_8$-tar$_2$-i$_{14}$ ina zumri*(su)-*ia$_5$* 'she caused my (personal) god and my (personal) goddess to withdraw from my body.' The Š-stem does not necessarily imply that the witch personally chased the gods away, only that their anger at the victim could be attributed to the witch in some way. Divine anger is very closely associated with witchcraft, the two often occurring as complementary diagnoses, and it has been suggested that the gods' anger could have been provoked by the witch's false accusations against her victim (Schwemer 2007: 150–151). A similar idea is expressed in a commentary to *Maqlû* III 50, CCP 2.1.D (online at ccp.yale.edu/P369075, accessed 08/09/2020) 41′–42′: *ka-mi-tu$_4$ ša$_2$ pī*(ka) *ilānī*(dingir)^{meš} / *ma-a ša$_2$ ila*(dingir) *itti*(ki) *amēli*(na) *tu-ša$_2$-za-na* 'the binder of the mouth of the gods, 42′ that is: one who makes a god angry with a man.' Frahm comments (2011: 394) that "the notion that the witch can magically manipulate even a god is interpreted as a reference to her ability to alienate a (personal) deity from his or her client." Thus, the witch does not necessarily use some sort of supernatural power to

any form of suffering, whether it arises internally within the victim's own body or is effected by an external agent, can be connected to having angered the gods in some way, but may not involve such a linear notion of causality.[8] Whether it is a cause or a symptom of suffering, however, it is clear that a breakdown in relations with the gods and a limited capability to participate in cult were an important aspect of the state of reduced existence that resulted from transgression.

Having transgressed against the divinely ordained structures of the universe, the sufferer is bound to attract the wrath of the gods in general, but particularly relevant is the reaction of one's personal protective deities (see § 1.4.2.1). They take particular offence at their charge having committed a transgression and therefore abandon him, withdrawing their protection against the many dangerous evil forces in world. This is reflected in the incantations' requests for their return and reconciliation, especially in *Šurpu* IV (see § 5.2), as well as the framing elements of lists of possible transgressions that serve as a constant reminder that the sufferer has offended or angered his personal god and goddess (§ 3.2.1). The incantations of the *āšipūtu* corpus do not make clear, however, whether the personal deities are themselves angered by the transgression, or whether they abandon the transgressor in order to fulfil the punishment meted out by higher ranking deities, especially Šamaš as the divine judge. In *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, on the other hand, it is implied that Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan is abandoned by his personal deities and other protective spirits at the behest of, and therefore as part of the punishment imposed by, the chief god Marduk (*Ludlul* I 41–46):

persuade the gods to side with her, but there is a recognition that divine anger and witchcraft are closely related. Whether or not the witch was able to chase off or manipulate the gods, such descriptions represent a solution for connecting the two causes of suffering. Indeed, the sources do not make clear the direction of causality, nor do they elaborate on how the witch could chase off or anger personal deities. The attack of witchcraft and the anger of personal deities can therefore be considered parallel causes and effects of the victim's suffering, with neither necessarily being the immediate cause of the other.

[8] I have already demonstrated how divine punishment did not always follow after the offence but was in some way inherent in the offence and therefore simultaneous to it (§ 2.1.5).

41 *iš-tu u₄-mi be-li i-ni-na-an-ni*
42 *u₃ qar-ra-du* ^{d}*marduk*(amar.utu) *is-bu-su itti*(ki)-*ia*
43 *id-da-an-ni il*(dingir)-*i₁₄ ša₂-da-a-šu₂ i-li*
44 *ip-par-ku* ^{d}*iš-ta-ri i-be₂-eš a-ḫi-tu₄*
45 ⌜*is*⌝*-li-it še-e-du du-un-qu ša₂ i-di-ia*
46 *ip-ru-ud la-mas-si-ma ša₂-nam-ma i-še-ʾu-u₂*

From (that) day on which my lord punished me, [42] and the hero Marduk was angry with me, [43] my (personal) god abandoned me (and) disappeared (lit. went up his mountain),[9] [44] my (personal) goddess became inactive (and) stepped aside, [45] the favourable Šēdu of my side deserted (me) [46] (and) my Lamassu became frightened, and so they sought another person.

It is only after Marduk has become angry with Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan and sanctioned him that his personal deities and other protective spirits, the Lamassu and Šēdu, abandon him. It is interesting that the Lamassu is said to have been frightened (46: *iprud*): while the Lamassu would normally protect against terrifying evil entities such as witches and demons, it cannot face down the wrath of one of the highest-ranking gods. This reflects the composition's general focus on Marduk, both as the god administering Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's punishment and in its exploration of his prerogative to be both angry with humans and show mercy to them (see § 1.4.1.3).[10] In the *āšipūtu* incantations, by contrast, the focus of appeals to the gods is primarily on the victim's personal deities, as intermediaries who can communicate with higher-ranking gods, and on Šamaš, as the judge presiding over the divine trial that will determine whether to lift the punishment. Although the precise nature of the transgression in question is not so important in the context of such rituals, they do include examples that relate directly to relations with personal deities and attitude towards cultic duties (e.g. II 33): *ila*(dingir) *i-da-aṣ* ^{d}*iš₈-tar₂ im-te-eš* 'he treated (his) god with disrespect and has scorned (his) goddess.' This particular example could concern a specific act of transgression or it could describe the broader category of offences that follow, since any transgression, whether or not explicitly related to cult, could be considered an offence against the

[9] For the idiomatic meaning of this expression, cf. Oshima 2014: 188.
[10] Cf. Lenzi 2012: 39–43; Oshima 2014: 28–47.

gods, and would therefore anger the personal deities (see § 3.2.1). Regardless, it is apparent that a harmonious relationship with the gods, particularly with one's own personal deities, was considered key to a trouble-free existence. This is why a breakdown in this relationship is a key part of the consequences of transgression.

When abandoned by personal deities and other protective spirits, the sufferer is exposed to further dangers, including the other symptoms of suffering discussed in this chapter. In *Šurpu*, for example, an attack of the disease-demons Dimītu and Aḫḫāzu, together with the demonized Māmītu, is closely connected to the withdrawal of the victim's personal god (VII 17–22):

17 ki $ša_3$-dib-ba dingir-re-e-ne-ke_4 e-ne-ne-ne saĝ-$šum_2$-mu silig-silig-˹ga˺-[a-meš]
18 *a-šar ki-mil-ti ili*(dingir) *šu₂-nu i-ḫi-iš-šu-ma qu-la i-*˹*nam*˺-[*du-šu₂*(?)}]
19 lu_2 dingir-bi an-da-ri-a gaba mu-un-ri-eš tug_2-gin_7 dul-la-[a-meš]
20 *a-me-lu ša il*(dingir)-*šu₂ it-ti-šu₂ is-su-u₂ im-ḫu-ru-ma kīma*(gin_7) *ṣu-ba-ti ik-tu-mu-šu₂*
21 ˹ugu˺-na ba-an-si-eš $uš_{12}$-bi ĝal_2-la-a-meš
22 *e-li-šu₂ i-ši-ru-ma im-tu₂ um-tal-lu-šu₂*

They are wherever there is divine anger, they are hurrying (there) and [they] are casting silence [(upon) him(?)], [20] they confronted the man from whom his god withdrew, and they covered him like clothing, [22] they made straight for him and filled him with venom.

This passage gives the impression that these demons seek out people who have angered the gods, in order to take advantage of the subsequent loss of protection from personal deities. The first symptom caused by the demons is 'silence' (*qūlu*), perhaps to stop any attempt to appeal for help or prayer to the gods to reverse their anger. Being unable to speak would also hinder the victim's ability to participate in human interactions, precipitating the exclusion from society which is an overarching consequence of transgression.[11] Covering him 'like clothing' (20, *kīma ṣubāti*) is another way of isolating the victim from society. Dress is an important expression of self-identity and a key social marker: in this case, the victim is being clothed against his will by the

[11] Cf. Attia (2018: 75), in reference to a medical text associating low morale with mutism: "Not being able or not wanting to communicate was considered as atypical behaviour, even antisocial".

demons, in a 'garment' that will signal his reduced state and lead to his rejection by normal human society. Another passage from *Šurpu* emphasizes that the victim of an attack of the demonized *arratu*-curse has also lost the protection of his personal god and goddess (V–VI 9–14):

9 lu$_2$-u$_{18}$-lu-bu aš$_2$-ḫul udu-gin$_7$ šum-ma
10 *amēla*(lu$_2$) *šu-a-tu$_4$ ar-rat lemutti*(ḫul)^{ti} *ki-ma im-me-ri iṭ-bu-uḫ-šu$_2$*
11 dingir-a-ni su-a-na bad-du
12 *il*(dingir)-*šu$_2$ ina zumri*(su)-*šu$_2$ it-te-si*
13 ama ^{d}inana-a-ni ša$_3$-kuš$_2$-u$_3$ bar-še$_3$ ba-da-gub
14 ^{d}*iš-tar-šu$_2$ muš-tal-tu$_4$ ina a-ḫa-a-ti it-ta-ziz

That man, evil *arratu*-curse slaughtered him like a sheep, [12] his god has withdrawn itself from his body, [14] his (Sum. adds: mother) goddess, advisor, has stood aside.

As personified forms of the self-curse unleashed by the victim's own transgression, the demonized *arratu*-curse and *māmītu*-curse surely do not, like other demons, need to wait for their victim to be abandoned by his personal deities (although they should, due to the transgression). Here, in fact, abandonment by personal deities seems to be a result of the victim being 'slaughtered' by *arratu*-curse. This is probably a metaphorical description of the suffering associated with *arratu*-curse, as it would presumably be too late for a dead victim of divine punishment to seek help from the exorcist. Nevertheless, we might follow the metaphor through to its logical conclusion and assume that the sufferer is abandoned by his personal deities because of the death-like state resulting from transgression.

The sufferer's strained relationship with the divine world has other immediate consequences. These include the appearance of negative omens signalling the victim's now evil fate and loss of good fortune, reflected in requests for these to be reversed or restored (*Šurpu* IV 19–22):

19 *šim-ti lemutti*(ḫul)^{ti3} *šu-pe-lu bu*
20 ^{d}*lamassa*(lamma) *dum-qi$_2$ ana amēli*(lu$_2$) *ša$_2$-ra-ku bu*
21 *šutti*(maš$_2$.ge$_6$) *lemutti*(ḫul)^{ti3} *du-um-mu-qu bu*
22 *lumun*(ḫul) *idāti*(a$_2$)^{meš} *ittāti*(giškim)^{meš} *a-na amēli*(lu$_2$) *la$_3$ ṭeḫê*(te)^{e} *bu*

To exchange an evil fate, (refrain), [20] to bestow a good Lamassu (i.e. good fortune) on (this) man, (refrain), [21] to make favourable an evil dream, (refrain), [22] in order that the evil of omina (and) signs not approach (this) man, (refrain).

Unfavourable omens are also described among symptoms of the victim's suffering in the following namerimburruda-incantation (KAL 10, Nr. 63, 2′–5′):

2′ [ ] ⌜*lu*⌝-*mu-un* ⌜*idāti*(a$_2$)^{meš}-*ia*⌝ *ittāti*(giškim)^{meš}-*ia* ⌜*lemnēti*(ḫul)^{meš}⌝ [*la*$_3$ *ṭābāti*(du$_{10}$.ga)^{meš}]
3′ [*ūmišamma*] *ar-ḫi-šam-ma šat-ti-šam-ma u*$_2$*-ṣab-ba-*[*ta-an-ni*]
4′ [*ir-te-ne*$_2$*-da*(?)]-⌜*an*⌝*-ni u*$_2$*-ḫat-ta-an-ni u*$_2$*-ḫat-ta-ta-an-*⌜*ni*⌝-[*ma*]
5′ [ ] *um-da-na-lu-u*$_2$ …

[…] the evil of my evil, [unfavourable] signs (and) omens [3′] seizes [me daily], monthly, yearly, [4′] [constantly pursues(?)] me, strikes me down, infests me [and] [5′] […] constantly fill (me) …

In this instance, the evil of the negative omens is personified, as the subject of verbs describing its attack on the patient in a similar way to illness and demons. Thus, in this passage, the negative omens are behaving like the physical symptoms of illness, and there is indeed some question as to whether these omens portend the patient's impending suffering or are instead part of the manifestation of it (see § 5.1).

The patient may seek to have these negative signs interpreted or the portended evil averted by the performance of an appropriate ritual but in this case *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* attests to another problem arising from the breakdown in the relationship with the gods. Having been ignored by his personal deities, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan seeks help from various cultic professionals, but they are unable to carry out their duties because the gods appear to be withholding cooperation as part of the sufferer's punishment (*Ludlul* II 4–9):

4 *ila*(dingir) *al-si-ma ul id-di-na pa-ni-šu*$_2$
5 *u*$_2$*-sal-li* ^{d}*iš-tar-ri ul i-šaq-qa-a re-ši-ša*$_2$
6 ^{lu2}*bārû*(ḫal) *ina bi-ri ar*$_2$*-kat*$_3$ *ul ip-ru-us*
7 *ina ma-aš*$_2$*-šak-ka ša*$_2$*-ʾi-li ul u*$_2$*-ša*$_2$*-pi di-i-ni*
8 *za-qi*$_2$*-qu a-bal-ma ul u*$_2$*-pat-ti uz-ni*
9 ^{lu2}*mašmaššu*(maš.maš) *ina ki-kiṭ-ṭe-e ki-mil-ti ul ip-ṭur*

I called out to (my) god but he did not show (lit. give) me his face, [5] I appealed to my goddess (but) she did not raise her head for me, [6] the diviner did not determine the facts through divination, [7] the *šāʾilu*-dream-interpreter did not make my case clear with *maššakku*-powder, [8] I

supplicated the *zaqīqu*-dream-spirit[12] but it did not enlighten me, [9] the exorcist could not loosen the (divine) anger against me with a *kikiṭṭû*-ritual.'

This passage suggests that, no matter what Šubsi-mešrê-Šakkan tried, whether appealing directly to the gods, having divination performed, or having the exorcist perform rituals for him, he was unable to determine the cause of the divine anger against him or have it released. This is in fact part of the punishment, and losing the normal means of recourse for interpreting and reversing suffering should remind him of the importance of following the rules of cult and society. Overall, the committing of a transgression results first and foremost in divine anger. This means that the transgressor's possibilities for interacting with the divine world are disrupted, whether this is a loss of divine protection from other sources of evil, the appearance of negative omens, or the inability to communicate with the gods through the usual channels. As expected, the loss of favourable relations with the gods leads to further problems for the sufferer in the form of social problems and illness.

4.2.2 Social and economic relations

In the previous chapter (§§ 3.2.1–3.2.7), I demonstrated that the various transgressions that could result in divine punishment are largely defined by their opposition to the established order of the universe and the norms of human society, from dishonesty in business to the mistreatment of family and peers. Such transgressions therefore create imbalance in social relations, and it follows that the resultant state of suffering would reflect these imbalances, particularly in terms of disruption to the relational structures of human society. Just as the sufferer's relationship with the gods breaks down as a result of transgression, so too could his relationships with other people, and this could impact upon his standing within the hierarchies of human society as well as his

[12] The term *zaqīqu*, derived from the verb *zâqu* 'to blow (of wind)', refers to the "Traumseele" that allowed humans and gods to communicate through dreams (Steinert 2012: 364).

economic status. Among the various sources of suffering that the Mesopotamian exorcist sought to protect clients against, it was the witch who was especially associated with causing social problems for her victim,[13] probably reflecting the idea that the witch herself represented an archetypal perversion of social norms.[14] In the same way, many examples of possible transgressions revolve around disrupting normal social relations, so it makes sense that their punishment also reflects this.

The following description from a namerimburruda-incantation lists various symptoms associated with *māmītu*-curse, combining what we would consider psychological and physical symptoms with negative effects on the patient's interactions with society (KAL 10, Nr. 3, 4–6):

4 … *ḫīp*(gaz) *lib$_3$-bi irtanašši*(tuku.tuku)[^{ši}]
5 *qabû*(du$_{11}$.ga) *la$_3$ mitguru*(še.ga) *sa-su-u la a-pa-lu i-zi-im-tu$_2$ pī*(ka) *nišī*(ug$_3$)^{meš} *ḫi-a-*⌜*ru*⌝
6 *i-na mayyāli*(ki.na$_2$)-*šu$_2$ iptanarrud*(mud.mud)^{ud} *ri-mu-tu irašši*(tuku)^{ši}
alakta(a.ra$_2$)-*šu$_{13}$*(BI) *ul$_2$ uṭeḫḫe*(te)-*šu$_2$ ana ili*(dingir) *u* ⌜*šarri*(lugal)⌝

… he constantly suffers from 'breaking of the abdomen', [5] to speak without agreement, to shout without response, to choose desire according to the people (i.e. he does not obtain his own desire),[15] [6] he is constantly frightened in his bed, he suffers from *rimûtu*-paralysis, his course does not bring him to god or king.

The symptoms described, including those that concern relations with other people, might at first seem to derive from the psychological state of the patient. Stefan Maul

[13] The victim of witchcraft declares at the beginning of *Maqlû* (I 7): *eli*(ugu) *a-me-ri-ia$_5$ am-ru-ṣu a-na-ku* 'I became sickening to (anyone) who saw me.' For the ventive in *-u* on *amruṣu*, cf. Schwemer 2017: 77. As a result of this, or perhaps in addition to this, the witch causes a breakdown in the victim's relations with people in his immediate social circle (e.g. *Maqlû* III 113): *tap-ru-si itti*(ki)-*ia še-ʾu še-ʾi-tu aḫu*(šeš) *aḫātu*(nin) *ib-ru tap-pu u ki-na-at-tu* 'you cut off from me male neighbour, female neighbour, brother, sister, friend, colleague, and business partner.' Another way in which the witch could affect her victim's relations with other people was to deprive him of physical attractiveness (e.g. *Maqlû* III 8–13). This corresponds to some of the internal symptoms attributed to witchcraft, including the loss of libido and other conditions affecting sexual performance (cf. e.g. Schwemer 2007: 35–36; Abusch 2007: 158–159).
[14] Witches could be portrayed as liminal para-cultic practitioners, as someone who undermined traditional gender roles, or as a stereotypical foreigner (Schwemer 2007: 76–81). Their actions were sometimes portrayed as perverting normal social practices, especially the rites of guest friendship (Schwemer 2007: 87–88, 124–125; Abusch 2002: 84n.23).
[15] For this interpretation, compare the following positive effects attributed to an anti-witchcraft amulet, which parallel the above passage (CMAwR 6.1.1 6–7, cf. Schuster-Brandis 2008: 286, 300, Text 9): … *abnū*(na$_4$)^{meš} *qabê*(du$_{11}$.ga) / *šemê*(še.ga) *u magāri*(še.ga) *i-zi-im-ta-šu$_2$ ana kašād*(*i*)(kur)^{ad2} … '… stones (so that a man may) speak, [7] be heard, and agreed with (so that) he obtains his desire …'

correspondingly understands the use of *ḫīp libbi* here to refer to a 'loss of self-confidence', with the following line expanding upon this with concrete examples.[16] However, the sufferer's changed relations with others is perhaps not to be understood as arising from his own psyche but rather as having been imposed by the gods as punishment. These symptoms reflect the sufferer's new position on the outside of normal society, unable to fully interact with those still on the inside. Shouting without response, for example, mirrors the 'silence' (*qūlu*) that is attested as a symptom of transgression (see § 4.2.1). The above passage nevertheless suggests that internal symptoms could affect the sufferer's ability to participate in society, and both are key elements of the gods' punishment. The condition *ḫīp libbi*, as a form of severe emotional distress (§ 2.2.3), would have impacted upon the patient's interactions with others, while the grouping of symptoms in line 6 may suggest that the patient's lack of sleep and paralysis could also impact on his ability to access the royal court or temple, preventing him from appealing against the punishment.[17] The gods have, of course, already abandoned the sufferer, so it perhaps does not matter that he cannot physically come before them, and this is not the original cause of their anger. Once again, there is no clear chain of causality, but this is largely irrelevant from the perspective of the Mesopotamian sources since all of these symptoms form a single nexus of divine punishment.

While symptoms relating to the sufferer's social relations are not often described in the *āšipūtu* incantations, they form an important part of the descriptions of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's suffering in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*. This perhaps reflects the differing purposes of these two categories of text: the *āšipūtu* compositions usually focus on symptoms that

[16] Cf. Maul 2019: 102, where he translates "er immer wieder das Selbstvertrauen verliert (nämlich): …"
[17] The desire to gain access to the palace and receiving a fair hearing of one's petition is reflected in the widely attested Egalkura-rituals (cf. Stadhouders and Panayotov 2018; Stadhouders 2013; Klan 2007).

the *āšipu* can treat directly, while also appealing for divine forgiveness to release the patient from other aspects of his suffering, while *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* is a more detailed exposition of the extent of the suffering attributed specifically to Marduk's punishment (see § 1.4.1.2). The breakdown in interpersonal relations resulting from Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's transgression leads him to lose influence at court, where he is driven from his formerly favourable position (*Ludlul* I 55–64):

55 *šarru*(lugal) *šīr*(uzu) *ilānī*(dingir.dingir) ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *ša*$_2$ *nišī*(un)^{meš}-*šu*$_2$
56 *lib*$_3$-*bu-uš ik-ka-ṣir-ma pa-ṭa-ru uš-lem-min*$_3$
57 *na-an-za-zu-u tas-li-tu uš-ta-*^{r}*na-ad*^{1}*-da-nu eli*(ugu)-*ia*$_5$
58 *paḫ-ru-ma ra-man-šu*$_2$*-nu u*$_2$*-šaḫ-ḫa-zu nu-ul-la-a-ti*
59 *šum-ma iš-ten*$_2$*-ma na-piš-ta-šu*$_2$ *u*$_2$*-šat-bak-šu*
60 *i-qab-bi ša*$_2$*-nu-u*$_2$ *u*$_2$*-šat-be*$_2$ *ter-tu-uš*
61 *ša*$_2$ *ki-ma šal-ši qip-ta-šu*$_2$ *a-tam-ma-aḫ*
62 *er-ru-ub bi-tuš-šu re-bu-u*$_2$ *i-tam-mi*
63 *ḫa-aš*$_2$*-šu pi-i ḫa-še-e šu-bal-kut*
64 *šeš-šu u se-bu-u*$_2$ *i-red-du-u*$_2$ *še-du-uš-šu*$_2$

The king, flesh of the gods, Sun of his people, [56] his heart has become hardened (against me), and it has made loosening (the punishment) difficult, [57] attendants exchange malicious gossip about me, [58] having assembled, they incite themselves to malicious talk, [59] if one (says) "I shall make him pour out his life," [60] another says "I shall remove (him) from his post," [61] the one who as the third (says) "I shall grab his position," [62] "I shall enter his house" a fourth says, [63] a fifth turned the opinion of fifty (against him) [64] a sixth and seventh pursue (him) like a Šēdu-demon.

The significance of *Ludlul* I 62 may be explained by *Šurpu* II 47–50 (discussed at § 3.2.3), where entering a colleague's house to have intercourse with his wife, steal his property, and therefore usurp his position, is given as an example of transgression. Here, by contrast, the threat of such an attack is being used to punish the transgressor, presumably at the behest of Marduk. In addition to his colleagues at court, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's friends and family begin to treat him badly and the usual power dynamic between master and slave is disrupted (*Ludlul* I 85–92):

85 *a-na lem-ni u gal-le-e i-tu-ra ib-ri*
86 *na-al-bu-bu tap-pu-u*$_2$ *u*$_2$*-nam-ga-ra-an-ni*
87 *ki-na-at-ti a-na na-aq da-mu u*$_2$*-mar-ra-aš*$_2$ *kak-ki*
88 *ru-u*$'_2$*-a ṭa-a-bi u*$_2$*-kar-ra-ṣa na-piš-ti*
89 *šu-piš ina pu-uḫ-ri i-ru-ra-an-ni ar-di*
90 *am-ti-i*$_{14}$ *ina pa-an um-ma-ni ṭa-pil-ti iq-bi*
91 *i-mu-ra-an-ni-ma mu-du-u*$_2$ *ša*$_2$*-ḫa-ti i-mid*
92 *a-na la štīrī*(uzu)^{meš}-*šu*$_2$ *iš-ku-na-an-ni kim-ti*

> My friend has turned into an evil one and a Gallû-demon, [86] a furious colleague is denouncing me, [87] my business partner is defiling weapons to spill (my) blood, [88] my good companion is slandering my life, [89] my male slave publicly cursed me in the assembly, [90] my female slave spoke slander of me before the populace, [91] an acquaintance saw me and took refuge (out of) fear, [92] my family disowned me (lit. made me not of its flesh).

This passage demonstrates how the sufferer's state of reduced existence also damages the hierarchical structures of the highly stratified Mesopotamian society, leading to the especially intolerable situation of the slave-master relationship being undermined. The breakdown in relations with other people also leads the victim to find himself in a state of complete social isolation: not only are family, friends, and peers shunning him, but they are even actively trying to harm him. The descriptions of these people as if they were demons reflects fears about the fragility of the social contract and how easy it is to find oneself completely alone against evil forces in the world. This reflects more generally the isolation of being in a state of illness or impurity, and also reflects the fact that such a state could be contagious. If a person's suffering has the potential to spread to those around him, it is perhaps unsurprising that they would avoid him or even become hostile towards him. The description of a friend behaving like a Gallû-demon recalls a preceding passage in which hostile courtiers act like demons attacking the sufferer (*Ludlul* I 65–72). The courtiers are presumably still human and have not literally become demons, but may be considered 'demonized' in the same way that a witch could be, since they are acting here as agents of evil.[18] However, it is implied that Marduk is employing them in such a way in order to punish the transgressor, and therefore, unlike the witch, they are not being truly transgressive themselves.[19] The trope of demons punishing transgression is also found in the portrayal of *māmītu*-curse and *arratu*-curse as demons that attack their victim (§ 3.5).

[18] On the demonization of the witch, see e.g. Abusch 1989
[19] Oshima 2014: 34.

In addition to, or perhaps as a result of, the breakdown in social relations, the punishment of transgression could also have consequences for the sufferer's prosperity and economic status. The following passage from a namerimburruda-incantation, for example, describes the possible financial effects of *māmītu*-curse, including the loss of property such as livestock and members of the household (KAL 10, Nr. 48–51, 7–10):

7 ^{d}*šamaš*(utu) *aš$_2$-šum ma-mit ša ul-tu ūmē*(u$_4$)^{meš} *ma-a*$^{\prime}$*-du-ti*
8 *arki*(egir)*-ia rak-su-ma la$_3$ paṭru*(du$_8$)^{ru}
9 *ṣi-i-ta ḫul-qu u la$_3$ ṭūb*(du$_{10}$.ga) *šīri*(uzu) *iš-šak-na*
10 *ina a-me-lu-ti bu-ul* ^{d}*šakkan$_2$ mim-ma šum-šu$_2$ u$_2$-na-šir$_3$-an-ni*

O Šamaš, because of a *māmītu*-curse which for many days [8] has been bound to my back, unable to be loosened, [9] financial loss, loss (of property), (and) physical unwellness have been set on me; [10] it cut me off from (my) people, livestock, absolutely everything.

In this passage, it is noteworthy that physical suffering within the victim's body (*lā ṭūb šīri*) is closely linked to material losses. This reflects a general lack of separation between what we would consider medical symptoms and those 'symptoms' that affect the patient's relationship with the world around him. Similar economic problems are attested in another namerimburruda-incantation (KAL 10, Nr. 3, 1–4):

1 *šumma*(diš) *amēlu*(na) *mi-iḫ-ru ma-ḫi-ir-ma ki-i im-ḫu-ru-šu ul i-*[*de*]
2 *ḫul-qu ṣītu*(zi.ga) *ka-a-a-nam irtanaššī*(tuku.tuku)^{ši} *ṣi-i-ti še-am u kas-pi* [ ]
3 *ṣīti*(zi.ga) ^{lu2}*ardi*(ir$_3$) *u amti*(geme$_2$) *alpū*(gu$_4$)^{meš} *sisû*(anše.kur.ra)^{meš} *u ṣēnu*(usduḫa) *kalbū*(ur.gi$_7$)^{meš} ⌜*šahû*(šaḫ)⌝[^{meš}]
4 *u$_3$ amēlūtu*(nam.lu$_2$.u$_{18}$.lu) *mit-ḫa-riš im-da-nu-tu$_2$ ...*

If a man, an incident has been encountered (by him) and he does not [know] how it befell (lit. encountered) him, [2] (and) he constantly experiences loss (of property) and (financial) loss, loss of barley and silver […] [3] loss of male slave and female slave, (and if) oxen, horses and flocks, dogs, pigs, [4] and people constantly die along with (them) …'

This passage reads almost as if it were an economic document, as it lists the property, livestock, and workers lost to the effects of *māmītu*-curse. Barley and silver functioned as basic units of currency and therefore frequently appear together (see § 3.2.6); here they act as a merismus to imply that all of the victim's economic interests are affected. Other examples of death and loss in the sufferer's household are closely connected to his emotional state, but can also be considered damage to his 'property' (KAL 10, Nr. 11, 1–5):

1 *šumma*(diš) ⌜*amēlu*(na) *gi*⌝*-na*<*-a*> *a-dir ur-ra u mu-ša*$_2$ *i-na-*⌜*ziq*⌝
2 ⌜*mu-tu*⌝ *u ḫul-qu it-ti-šu rak-su-ma*
3 ⌜*mārū*(dumu)$^{?\text{⌝meš}}$*-šu*$_2$ *lu rabûtu*(gal)^{meš} *lu ṣeḫrūtu*(tur)^{meš} *in-da-nu-tu*
4 ⌜*ṣi-it*⌝ *ardi*(ir$_3$) *u amti*(geme$_2$) *irtanašši*(tuku.tuku)^{ši} *šum*$_4$*-ma mūtu*(uš$_2$) *a-na bīti*(e$_2$)*-šu sa-*⌜*dir*⌝
5 *ina bīti*(e$_2$)*-*⌜*šu idātu*(a$_2$)⌝^{meš} *ittātu*(giškim)^{meš} *lemnūtu*(ḫul)^{meš} *ibaššâ*(gal$_2$)$^{meš\text{-}a}$

If a man is always ‘dark’, day and night he is worried, [2] death and loss are bound to him and [3] his *children*, whether old or young, constantly die, [4] he constantly suffers from loss of male and female slave. If death is happening regularly for his house(hold), [5] (and) in his house there are evil signs and omens.

On the one hand, the deaths in the sufferer’s household reflect the contagious spread of his suffering to those in his immediate vicinity. On the other hand, the deaths are also an affliction against the patient himself, since they represent damage to his property and prestige, and, in the case of children dying, pose a threat to his future wellbeing. We cannot say for sure whether the suffering of children and slaves would have been regarded as significant in its own right or would have been seen as another symptom of the head of the household’s divine punishment and consequent economic damage. A similar situation is found in another namerimburruda-incantation (KAL 10, Nr. 48–51, 10): *ina a-me-lu-ti bu-ul* ^{d}*šakkan*$_2$ *mim-ma šum-šu*$_2$ *u*$_2$*-na-šir*$_2$*-an-ni* ‘it diminished me in (terms of) people, flocks of Šakkan, absolutely everything.’ In this case, it is interesting that the first-person speaker is still the main focus of the suffering as the direct object of the verb *nuššuru* ‘to cut off from, diminish’, while the people and livestock that are presumably more directly affected, insofar as they are the ones dying, are only indirect objects. This reflects the idea that a particularly effective way for the gods to punish the wealthy, male head of a Mesopotamian household was to target his property as well as his own health.

Similar symptoms are perhaps to be found among the effects of *arratu*-curse according to the Istanbul *arratu*-ritual, although the fragmentary nature of the text and lack of parallels in the other *arratu*-rituals make this passage difficult to interpret (A 185 obv. 22–26):

22 *ina di-ma-ti-šu*$_2$ *i-sa-laḫ bīta*(e$_2$) *na-din aklī*(ninda)^{meš}-⌜*šu*$_2$⌝ *ina ṣabāt*(dab)^{bat} ⌜*lib*$_3$-*bi*⌝ […]
23 *nišū*(un)^{meš} *bīti*(e$_2$)-*šu*$_2$ *ana*$^{?}$ *ku-tal la ṭābū*(du$_{10}$.ga) *rēšū*(sag)⌜^{meš} *pa*$^{?}$⌝-*na la* ⌜*u*$_2$-*ter*$_2$$^{?}$-*ru*$^{?}$⌝ […]
24 ^{lu2}*ikkar*(engar)-*šu*$_2$ *ina eqli*(a.ša$_3$) *kīma*(gin$_7$) *muḫ-ḫi maḫ-ṣi* ^{geš}⌜*epinna*(apin)⌝-*šu*$_2$ *ana* u$_2$ x x x x […]
25 ^{lu2}*rē*$^{'}$*û*(sipa)-*šu*$_2$ *ina ṣēri*(edin) *ina la na-šu*$_2$ *rēšī*(sag)^{meš} ⌜*ner*⌝-*tu*$_2$ *ṣe*-⌜*ni*⌝-*šu*$_2$ *la*$_3$ x x x *u u*$_2$-x […]
26 *u*$_3$ *šu-u*$_2$ *kīma*(gin$_7$) *ḫa-riš*-⌜*ti*⌝ *nadi*(šub)^{di} *ina mayyāli*(geš.na$_2$) …

With his tears, he sprinkles the house, his baker, through anger (lit. seizing of the abdomen), […], [23] the people of his household are not pleasant behind (his) back, the slaves do not (even) *turn* (their) *face(s)* […], [24] his farmer in the field […] his plough … like a smashed skull … […], [25] his shepherd in the steppe, by not (even) raising his head, does not […] the slaughter of his flocks … […], [26] and he himself lies in bed like a woman in confinement …

In spite of the fragmentary state, references to the patient's household, slaves, agricultural workers, and livestock suggest that we are in a similar context to the namerimburruda-incantation discussed above. What is preserved suggests that the victim and people working for him are no longer functioning as they are expected to. I therefore suggest the following tentative interpretations of the passage. His baker, who should provide vital foodstuffs to the household, is angry. The detail of what he does as a result of his anger is broken, but it surely cannot be good. The sufferer's household has become hostile towards him and his slaves are ignoring him. The following lines 24–25 suggest that people working for the victim can no longer be trusted or no longer devote themselves to their work. Something is wrong with the victim's fields or hired farmer, but what exactly the 'smashed skull' refers to remains obscure. The sufferer's shepherd is apparently not paying attention and has allowed his flock to be slaughtered by predators (whether other animals or demons), which again represents economic loss. Meanwhile, the victim himself is emasculated by his physical suffering to the point that he is compared to a woman in a particularly inhibiting vulnerable state. In this debilitated state, the victim is presumably unable to manage the affairs of his household and estate, and his staff are apparently uncapable or unwilling to carry out their work properly anymore. In this way, these elements of punishment, administered by the gods via the *arratu*-curse, represent both economic damage to the victim, but also the

breakdown of social hierarchies and a general loss of control over his people and his life. Overall, the punishment of transgression is characterized in large part by the transgressor's exclusion from participating fully in society, a fitting punishment for a transgression that may have offended against the norms of that very society.

4.3 Internal symptoms

The following section concerns the consequences of transgression that manifest within the sufferer's own body, corresponding to what may be understood as the physical and psychological symptoms of illness. In contrast to the relational symptoms of suffering, which are quite general and could be attributed equally to attack by witches or demons as to the sufferer's own transgressive actions, internal symptoms often demonstrate patterns that correspond to specific sources of evil, whether this was witchcraft, affliction by ghosts, or divine punishment for transgression.[20] This is especially true for demons, with some named demons directly embodying specific illnesses or patterns of symptoms.[21] Whether these patterns result from a scientific medical understanding or are an example of the literary tropes employed by the exorcist, especially in order to ensure that the rituals are effective against many symptoms with different causes, they still provide insights into how transgression and divine punishment were understood to operate and how their effects could therefore be treated. I have already assessed some of the key methodological issues for understanding the *āšipūtu* corpus in terms of medical thought (§ 1.4.1.2). This included the difficulties inherent in attempts to connect ancient and modern symptoms descriptions. I also considered uhe possibility that symptom patterns described in Mesopotamian sources reflect a culturally conditioned means of interpreting generalized suffering, allowing it to be attributed to a cause, in this case transgression, that could be treated by the exorcist.

[20] For an overview of symptoms associated with witchcraft, see Schwemer 2007: 167–170; Abusch 2007: 146–151; for symptoms associated with ghosts, see Scurlock 2006: 11–19; Geller 1982: 192–193.
[21] Cf. Heeßel 2004a: 109, "The sheer endless variety of gods and demons held responsible for sickness seems at first glance to be completely arbitrarily associated with the symptoms, but here, too, patterns can be traced."

I begin this section by examining the symptoms attributed to transgression and divine punishment in the diagnostic series *Sakikku*. The series contains around 30 references to transgression as a cause of illness,[22] often with a focus on the gods causing the illness, which reflects the fact that reconciling with the offended deities was a key part of the healing process (§ 5.2). The relatively small number of references allows me to provide a general picture of the symptoms of transgression according to *Sakikku*, and therefore compare it to the conceptualization found in the ritual texts. This reveals that *Sakikku* generally uses analogical associations to draw connections between specific transgressions and the nature of their symptoms. In the second part of this section, I analyse the symptom descriptions of the ritual texts. These are usually more general than those in the diagnostic series and do not make connections with specific acts of transgression, although analogical associations between symptoms and the conceptualization of transgression are still present. This is in keeping with the broader lack of concern in the ritual and therapeutic texts for identifying a specific act of transgression responsible for the patient's suffering. The highly generalizing nature of these lists of symptoms also points to their role as literary expressions of the general experience of suffering, which were therefore perhaps of little use for establishing a specific diagnosis.[23] However, I shall demonstrate that patterns occur even in these contexts, allowing the internal symptoms of transgression to be identified and

[22] Heeßel 2007b: 126.

[23] Such descriptions are found throughout Mesopotamian literature. Descriptions of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's suffering in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, for example, "depict the physical decay in such a way as to include all possible ailments" (Van der Toorn 1985: 59). This has led to a suggestion that, were he suffering from all of the symptoms described, he would almost certainly not have survived and must therefore be suffering from hypochondria (Scurlock 1995–1996: 251n.11). His symptoms are not imagined, however, but are the very real reflection of the perceived consequences of transgression. Descriptions of the internal symptoms of suffering in eršemmas, dingiršadibbas, and *šigû*-prayers are also highly generalizing, and do not appear to have any specific medical conditions in mind (Van der Toorn 1985: 62–63). While these generalizing descriptions are probably literary abstractions, they nevertheless give a general picture of the possibilities for suffering and, especially in the case of transgression, emphasize the severity of the consequences of one's actions.

distinguished from those caused by other sources of evil, such as witchcraft, demons, and ghosts (§ 5.1).

4.3.1 Symptoms of transgression in diagnostic texts

In contrast to the more generalized picture of the internal symptoms of transgression found in ritual texts (see § 4.3.2), the diagnostic series *Sakikku*, although part of the same *āšipūtu* corpus, draws upon conceptual connections between the nature of specific transgressions and the resultant symptoms. This is often based on an analogical belief that symptoms in a certain part of the body are caused by a transgression involving that part of the body in some way. A similar understanding is demonstrated by examples of *lex talionis* in the law collections. In such cases, the punishment targets the equivalent of the part of the victim's body that was damaged in the crime or the part of the aggressor's body that was used in the commission of the crime.[24] The punishments for transgression imposed by the divine legal system also follow the *lex talionis* logic, with the gods having the power to manifest the punishment as physical symptoms within the transgressor's body.[25] It should be noted however that, with the exception of the association between transgressions and symptoms of the internal organs, arising from the association of certain kinds of transgression with the act of eating, this method of reasoning is rarely found outside of the diagnostic material. As already mentioned, the ritual texts often have quite generalizing descriptions of symptoms that could be attributed to various sources of evil, even when the ritual is primarily concerned with

[24] For example, according to the Laws of Ḫammurapi, if someone blinded someone of equal rank in a fight, broke a bone, or knocked out his tooth, the punishment should consist of blinding the aggressor, breaking his bone, or knocking out his tooth (§§ 196, 197, 200, cf. Roth 1997: 121). In other cases, the punishment does not exactly correspond to the damage done, but this reflects the relative value placed on different people's lives and/or bodies from the perspective of these sources. Examples where the instrument of the crime is targeted include: cutting off someone's hand if he strikes his father (§ 195, cf. Roth 1997: 120); or cutting off a surgeon's hand if he kills or blinds a patient with his blade, presumably wielded in the same hand that is cut off in punishment (§ 218, cf. Roth 1997: 123).

[25] Cf. Van der Toorn 1985: 79, "The link between protasis and apodosis is mostly furnished by the member that, now being the distempered part, is supposed to have been the instrument of wickedness."

transgression, thus allowing for the effective treatment of symptoms regardless of their precise cause. Diagnostic texts, on the other hand, aim to establish the cause of an illness, usually in the form of the god responsible, and therefore demonstrate more concern for establishing direct connections between the cause and the symptoms.

The conceptual connection between the idea of 'eating' transgressions and their resulting in symptoms of the mouth, throat, and internal organs is found in both the ritual texts and as in *Sakikku*. In the diagnostic series, this association is also extended beyond the digestive system, with transgression also afflicting unrelated parts of the body, playing on the fact that the verb *akālu* 'to eat' can also be used of parts of the body causing pain (see § 2.2.1). Similarly, the idea that one could 'tread on' certain kinds of transgression, arising from literally stepping in contaminated material (see § 2.1.2.3), also influences the interpretation of symptoms. Some diagnoses, for example, make a direct connection between symptoms of the foot and the patient having trodden in contaminated water, which could have occurred without his knowledge (K. 67+ i 18; 20–21):[26] [*šumma*(diš) *amēlu*(na)] ⌜*muruṣ*(ge$_{17}$)⌝ *ka*-[*bar*]-⌜*ti*$_3$⌝ *ša mê*(a) *rimki*(tu$_5$) *ik-bu-*⌜*us*⌝ … '[if a man] (is sick with) disease of the *kabartu*[27] (caused by the fact) that he trod in wash-water …'; … *ka-a-am tu-šad-bab*-[*šu*$_2$] / [*ri*]-*im-ki ītû*(zu)^{u2} *la*$_3$ *ītû*(zu)^{u2} *ik-bu-us* '… you have [him] speak thus: [21] knowingly (or) unknowingly he trod in wash(-water).' In this case, there is understood to have been physical contact with the source of contagion, helping to explain the locus of the symptoms. However, similar symptoms can be attributed to forms of transgression with no explicit connection to treading on contaminated materials (e.g. K. 67+ 43):[28] [*šumma*(diš)

[26] Eypper 2016: 12.
[27] The Akkadian term *kab*(*b*)*artu* refers to part of the ankle, disease of which could cause difficulties walking and even death (Adamson 1993: 158–159).
[28] Eypper 2016: 16.

amēlu(na)] ⌜*muruṣ*(ge$_{17}$)⌝ *ka-bar-ti*$_3$ ⌜*maruṣ*(ge$_{17}$)-*ma*⌝ *ši-kin*$_3$ *šīrī*(uzu)^{meš}-*šu*$_2$ *pūṣa*(babbar) *ṣulma*(ge$_6$) *nadû*(šub)^u *murṣu*(ge$_{17}$) *šū*(bi) *māmītu*(nam.erim$_2$) … '[if a man] is sick with disease of the *kabartu* and the appearance of his flesh is covered in white (and) black spots, that disease is *māmītu*-curse …' Symptoms of the foot could even occur when the mechanics of committing the transgression explicitly involve 'eating' rather than 'treading' (K. 67+ i 13):[29] [*šumma*(diš) *amēlu*(na)] ⌜*ka*⌝-*bar-ta maruṣ*(ge$_{17}$)-*ma* […] *asakka*(azag) ⌜*i*⌝-[*ku-ul*] '[if a man] is sick in (his) *kabartu* and […], he [ate] *asakku*-transgression.' Are we to assume that the nature of the transgressions associated with *māmītu*-curse and *asakku*-transgression here is, like the surrounding diagnoses, related to stepping in contaminated materials? If this is the case, the diagnostic series demonstrates a direct connection between the patient's symptoms and the nature of the transgression that was their ultimate cause, something that does not happen in the more expansive symptom descriptions of the ritual texts.

An area of transgression that appears particularly prone to causing analogical symptoms is sexual misdemeanours. Kissing a female cult practitioner, for example, is associated with symptoms of the mouth and is described as an *asakku*-transgression (*Sakikku* VII 19–20):[30] *šumma*(diš) *lišān*(eme)-*šu*$_2$ *ik-ka-ṣir-ma pû*(ka) ⌜*la ip*$^?$*-te*$^?$⌝ […] / : *ugbabti*(nin$^!$.dingir) *ili*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *iš-šiq* ⌜*asak*(azag)⌝ [*ili*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$(?) *īkul*(gu$_7$) …] 'if his tongue is knotted and (his) mouth *does not open* […]: he kissed an *ugbabtu* of his god, [he ate] *asakku*-transgression [of his god (?) …].' In this case, the association with symptoms of the mouth and tongue could have arisen for two reasons: the conception that *asakku*-transgression is 'eaten' (see § 2.1.2.2) and the act of kissing the *ugbabtu*.[31]

[29] Eypper 2016: 10.
[30] Labat 1951: 62–63; cf. K. 2949+ obv. 19–20 (online at geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/diagnostic_handbook/Kapitel-2-_Wenn-du-dich-dem-Kranken-naeherst/07-A-K_-2949-_-K_-12856/, accessed 14/09/2020).
[31] On the terminology of female cult practitioners, see § 3.2.1.

The resultant symptoms, by binding (*kaṣāru*) the tongue and possibly preventing the mouth from opening, represents divine punishment in a way that seeks to prevent the transgressor from committing the offence again. This would therefore function in the same way as cutting off the hand involved in a crime, as stipulated in the Laws of Ḫammurapi. Similarly, the more generalized symptoms of transgression, whether internal or relational, reduce the victim's ability to participate in normal human society, often as a punishment for violating the norms of that society (see § 4.2.2).

Transgressing further by having sexual intercourse with a female cult practitioner could cause symptoms of the genitalia (*Sakikku* XIV ii 62–67):[32]

62 *šumma*(diš) *iškā*(šir)^{min}-*šu$_2$ zi-ra imât*(gam) : *ana ugbabti*(nin.dingir.ra) [*ili*(dingir)-*šu$_2$ iṭḫe*(te)^{ḫe}]
63 *šumma*(diš) *iškā*(šir)^{min}-*šu$_2$ zi-ra lišān*(eme)-*šu$_2$ i-te-nek$_2$-ki-ik*
64 *šaptī*(nundum)^{meš}-*šu$_2$ u$_2$-na*-[*aš-šak* KIMIN(?)]
65 *šumma*(diš) *iškā*(šir)^{min}-*šu$_2$ nap-ḫu na-ḫi-id* : *ana ugbabti*(nin.dingir.ra) [*ili*(dingir)-*šu$_2$ iṭḫe*(te)^{ḫe}]
66 *šumma*(diš) *iškā*(šir)^{min}-*šu$_2$ nuppuḫā*(mu$_2$)$^{meš\text{-}ḫa}$ *išar*(giš$_3$)-*šu$_2$ sik-ka-ta$_5$ mali*(si.a) *ana* ⌜*ugbabti*(nin⌝.[dingir.ra) *ili*(dingir)-*šu$_2$ iṭḫe*(te)^{ḫe}]
67 *šumma*(diš) *ina iškī*(šir)^{min}-*šu$_2$ maḫiṣ*(sag$_3$)^{iṣ} *ana ugbabti*(nin.dingir.ra) *ili*(dingir)-*šu$_2$ iṭḫe*(te)^{ḫe} …

If his testicles are twisted, he will die: [he had sexual intercourse with (lit. approached)] an *ugbabtu* [of his god]. [63] If his testicles are twisted, he constantly *scratches* his tongue, [64] he [chews on] his lips [: ditto(?)]. [65] if his testicles are inflamed (and) he is in a worrying condition: [he had sexual intercourse with] an *ugbabtu* [of his god]. [66] If his testicles are inflamed, his penis is full of *blockage*: [he had sexual intercourse with] an *ugbabtu* [of his god]. [67] If he is struck in his testicles: he had sexual intercourse with an *ugbabtu* of his god …

These apparently transgressive sexual activities are associated primarily with symptoms of the male genitalia, but also mentioned are a couple of symptoms related to the mouth, which, as above, may arise from the idea of the 'eaten' transgression or from the act of kissing. While symptoms of the genitals could be attributed to injuries

[32] Labat 1951: 136–139; cf. K. 2006+ ii 12′–17′ (online at geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/diagnostic_handbook/Kapitel-2-_Wenn-du-dich-dem-Kranken-naeherst/14-A-K_-2006-_-K_-3795-_-K_-4014-_-K_-4083-_-K_-4094a-_-K_-6704-_-K_-11294-_-K_-14000-___-K_-3826-_-K_-16309/, accessed 14/09/2020); VAT 303+ ii 27′–31′ (online at geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/diagnostic_handbook/Kapitel-2-_Wenn-du-dich-dem-Kranken-naeherst/14-C-VAT-303-_-VAT-404-_-VAT-579-_-VAT-589-_-VAT-1751/, accessed 14/09/2020).

during sex or to the contraction of sexually transmitted infections, they would rather have been understood as punishment enacted by the god whose priestess had been violated. The symptoms are such that they would presumably prevent similar transgressions being committed again, while also limiting the victim's ability to participate in normal society. In a similar way, incest could also cause symptoms in the pelvic region: (*Sakikku* XII iv 17):[33] [*šumma*(diš) *ina*] ⌜*rapašti*⌝([ur$_2$].⌜kin⌝)-*šu$_2$ maḫiṣ*(sag$_3$)^{iṣ} *qāt*(šu) ^{d}*šu-lak ana* ⌜*aḫāti*(nin$_9$)⌝-*šu$_2$ iṭḫe*(te)^{ḫe} … '[if] he is struck (with disease) [in] his pelvic region: hand of Šulak, he had sexual intercourse with (lit. approached) his sister.' Again, the physical symptoms have a role in preventing behaviours that violate the divinely sanctioned world order but could also cause severe social problems. The further attribution of the illness to the 'hand of Šulak' perhaps represents another analogical association between symptoms of the pelvis and a god usually associated with toilets.[34] When the ultimate cause of the person's suffering is transgression, the symptoms also represent divine punishment of the transgression, so it is not surprising that the diagnosis refers to the 'hand' of a god as the intermediary cause.

Aside from these diagnoses referring to specific acts of transgression, *Sakikku* also contains several references to the symptoms of illness related to *māmītu*-curse, including references to *arnu*-crime-punishment (XXII 16–32).[35] The diagnoses include 'hand of *māmītu*-curse' (šu nam-erim$_2$-ma / *qāt māmīti*),[36] 'illness of *māmītu*-curse'

[33] Labat 1951: 108–109; cf. A 3442 iv 17 (online at geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/diagnostic_handbook/Kapitel-2-_Wenn-du-dich-dem-Kranken-naeherst/12-D-A_-3442/, accessed 08/09/2020).
[34] The god Šulak, often referred to with the epithet *rābiṣ musâti* 'lurker of the toilet', is more commonly associated with causing strokes (cf. Krebernik 2012; Scurlock 2003: 106; Stol 1993: 76–77).
[35] Cf. Heeßel 2000: 253–254.
[36] The text differentiates between *qāt*(šu) *ma-mit* and šu(-)nam-erim$_2$-ma, the former referring to the cause of the illness and the latter designating an illness (Heeßel 2000: 49). While other 'hand' illness names have attested syllabic writings of the corresponding Akkadian loanword (e.g. šu dingir-ra //

(*muruṣ māmīti*), and ‘seizing (by) *māmītu*-curse’ (*ṣibit māmīti*). These illness names, like ‘hand’ designations in general, probably do not refer to an illness *per se*, but rather a complex of commonly occurring symptoms connected by and therefore categorized primarily by their causes rather than their pathology.[37] The symptoms described in *Sakikku* are similar to those associated with *māmītu*-curse in ritual texts (§ 4.3.2) and are characterized above all by digestive symptoms, coughing and spitting, and fever (e.g. *Sakikku* XXII 29–32):[38]

29 *šumma*(diš) *libba*(ša$_3$)-*šu$_2$ ēm*(kum$_2$)-*ma akla*(ninda) *ikkal*(gu$_7$)-*ma šikara*(kaš) *išatti*(nag)-*ma u$_2$-gan-na-aḫ rēš*(sag) *libbi*(ša$_3$)-*šu$_2$ u naglabū*(ᵍᵃˢ maš.sila$_3$)^{meš}-*šu$_2$ ikkalū*(gu$_7$)^{meš}-*šu$_2$*

30 *u$_2$-sa-al u$_2$-na-ḫaṭ u rūt*(uḫ$_2$)-*su i-šal-lu amēlu*(na) *šū*(bi) ᵍᵃˢ*māmīt*(nam.erim$_2$)ᵍᵃˢ *u arnu*(nam.da$_6$.ga) *iṣbat*(dab)-*su*

31 *šumma*(diš) *rēš*(sag) *libbi*(ša$_3$)-*šu$_2$ i-kaṣ$_3$-ṣa-su*[39] *libba*(ša$_3$) *ummu*(kum$_2$) ᵍᵃˢ*u$_2$*ᵍᵃˢ*-kal ummu*(kum$_2$) *la ḫa-ḫaš rūta*(uḫ$_2$) *ṣalimta*(ge$_6$) *ittanaddâ*(šub.šub)^{a}

32 *u$_3$ i-ta-nar-ru amēlu*(na) *šū*(bi) *māmīt*(nam.erim$_2$) *iṣbat*(dab)-*su*

If his abdomen is hot and he eats bread and drinks beer but retches (it up again), his epigastrium and his shoulder-blade afflict (lit. eat) him, [30] he coughs, hiccoughs, and casts his spittle: that man, *māmītu*-curse or *arnu*-punishment seized him. [31] If his epigastrium becomes cold (for him), *ummu*-fever afflicts (lit. eats) the abdomen (but) the *ummu*-fever is not burning, he constantly spits black spit, [32] and he constantly vomits: that man, *māmītu*-curse seized him.

Although the diagnostic series generally diverges from the ritual texts by connecting certain symptoms to specific acts of transgression, this passage demonstrates that was nevertheless a common conceptualization of the symptom picture that could be attributed to *māmītu*-curse or *arnu*-punishment.

šudingirakku), the evidence for an Akkadian reading **šunarimmakku* is more problematic (Heeßel 2000: 51–52).

[37] Although Cale Johnson (2017: 72–73) regards these ‘hand’ designations as “frozen technical terms” in the *asûtu* tradition and a hangover of the “etiological models” of the *āšipūtu* tradition, there is evidence for thinking about ‘hands’ as causes in terms of the empirical diagnosis of illness. An Old Babylonian diagnostic omen, for example, refers to a illness having no hand when it has arisen from ‘natural’ causes and therefore no ulterior, supernatural cause is to be found (George 2013: 88 rev. 32′–34′): *šumma*(aš) ᵍᵃˢ*ma*ᵍᵃˢ*-ar-ṣu$_2$ zu-mu-ur-šu mi-it-ḫa-ri-iš e-em* / ᵍᵃˢ*uq*ᵍᵃˢ*-qu$_2$-uq i-na zu-um-ri-šu qa$_2$-tum la i-ba-aš-ši* / *ḫi-mi-*ᵍᵃˢ*iṭ ṣe-e*ᵍᵃˢ*-tim* ‘if the patient, his body all over is hot, [33′] he is tongue-tied, (and) there is no ‘hand’ in his body – [34′] *sunstroke*.

[38] Heeßel 2000: 253–254.

[39] On the interchange of consonants in the forms of the verb *kasāsu*/*kaṣāṣu*, see Heeßel 2000: 267, with references.

4.3.2 Symptoms of transgression in ritual texts

In contrast to the diagnostic series, whose primary function was to determine the cause of symptoms and therefore the focus of treatment, the ritual texts contain more generalizing descriptions of symptoms not attributed to any specific act of transgression. These generalizing descriptions aim to encompass a broad range of symptoms and their possible causes in order to treat them as effectively as possible. Nevertheless, there are recognizable patterns of symptoms attributed to transgression in this context, especially in the association between transgression and abdominal symptoms. This association can be attributed to the kind of analogical thinking demonstrated in *Sakikku*, not usually found in the ritual texts, although the universalizing strategies of the ritual texts means that the connection to abdominal symptoms is extended to transgression in general and not just those kinds explicitly associated with the act of eating. In this way, abdominal and related symptoms become part of a pattern that allowed the exorcist to diagnose transgression as the cause of the symptoms, and my analysis will demonstrate the existence other such patterns. In the face of the patient's usual ignorance of having committed a transgression, it is these patterns of symptoms that can support the exorcist in his identification of the ultimate source of suffering and were often the primary indicator of divine displeasure. The fact that suffering from *māmītu*-curse could cause physical problems for the body was already recognized in advice, relating to the need to keep true to an oath, from a second-millennium proverb collection from Ugarit:[40] *ma-mi-ta*$_2$ *pi*$_2$*-la-ḫe*$_2$*-ma pa-gar*$_3$*-ka šul-lim* 'fear *māmītu*-curse and keep your body healthy!'

[40] Maul 2019: 14, citing RS 15.010 (Arnaud 2007: 139–140, No. 46) 2. See also Sandowicz 2011: 30–31; Wegner 2007: 243–244; Wilhelm 2003. That we would expect an imperative form *pilaḫ* is noted by Huehnergard 1989: 369, but he does not comment on the spelling.

Among the wide range of symptoms attributed to the effects of *māmītu*-curse by *Šurpu* and namerimburruda-incantations, particularly characteristic is a general state of psychological and emotional distress. At the beginning of *Šurpu* II, for example, even before the patient begins to recognize the possibility of having unknowingly committed a transgression, we are given an insight into the state that drove him to seek the exorcist's help (4): [*ša*$_2$ …] ⌜x *mar*⌝*-ṣu nak-du na-as-su šu-ud-lu-pu* '[who is …] … ill, frightened, wretched, (and) troubled.' In later incantations we find more detailed, although sometimes apparently contradictory, descriptions of the mental state of someone suffering from the effects of *māmītu*-curse or *arratu*-curse (e.g. *Šurpu* IV 83–86; V–VI 3–6):

IV 83 *marṣātu*(ge$_{17}$)^{meš}*-šu*$_2$ *lit-tak-ki-ša*$_2$
84 *di-ʾa-a-šu*$_2$ *di-lip-ta-šu*$_2$ *ni-is-sa-su la*$_3$ *ṭūb*(du$_{10}$)^{ub} *šīrī*(uzu)^{meš}*-šu*$_2$
85 *u*$_8$*-a-a-a-um la ṣa-lal-šu*$_3$ *na-zaq-šu*$_2$ *ni-is-sa-su ta-ni-iḫ-šu*$_2$
86 *ina u*$_4$*-me an-ni-i ša*$_2$ *annanna*(nenni) *mār*(a) *annanna*(nenni) *uk-ki-ša*$_2$ *ina zumri*(su)*-šu*$_2$

May his illnesses be expelled – [84] his *diʾu*-headache, his restlessness, his wailing, his physical unwellness, [85] (his) woe, his insomnia, his worry, his wailing, his moaning – [86] on this day expel (them) from the body of NN son of NN!

V–VI 3 niĝ$_2$-me-ĝar lib-ba-ke$_4$ ugu-na ĝar-ra
4 *qu-lu ku-u*$_2$*-ru e-li-šu it-taš-kun*
5 niĝ$_2$-me-ĝar nu-du$_{10}$-ga ugu-na ĝar-ra
6 *qu-lu la ṭa-a-bu e-li-šu it-taš-kun*

Silence, depression (Sum: daze) has been placed upon him, [5–6] an unhealthy silence has been placed upon him.

While the first passage focuses on the patient's restlessness and moaning – his wailing (*nissassu*) is mentioned in two consecutive lines – the second passage emphasizes the patient's silence (niĝ$_2$-me-ĝar // *qūlu*). While these two groups of symptoms may seem to contradict one another, they rather reflect the broad range of suffering that could result from transgression, and are no doubt also part of a literary elaboration to validate the ritual's efficacy against a wide range of possible forms of suffering. Being unable to speak greatly restricts the victim's ability to fully participate in human society, and this is therefore a symptom commonly associated with transgression as

well as demonic attack (§ 4.2.1), and no doubt the opposite symptoms would have a similar effect. In particular, the wailing and moaning are an overt outward sign of the patient's suffering and therefore the fact that he is the victim of divine punishment or some other source of evil. The conditions listed in *Šurpu* IV 84 also occur in Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty, there attributed to a punishment enacted by Anu (SAA 2 6, 418A–418C): ^{d}*a-num šar*(man) *ilānī*(dingir)^{meš} *muruṣ*(ge$_{17}$) *ta-ne$_2$-ḫu di-ʾu di-lip-tu* / *ni-is-sa-tu la ṭūb*(du$_{10}$.ga) *zēri*(numun) *eli*(ugu) *nap-ḫar* / *bītāti*(e$_2$)^{meš} *li-ša$_2$-az-nin* 'Anu, king of the gods, ^{418C} may he place ^{418A} moaning-illness, *diʾu*-headache, sleeplessness, ^{418B} wailing, unwellness of offspring, upon all ^{418C} of (your) houses!' The 'moaning illness' (*muruṣ tānēḫi*) is also attested in *Šurpu* among formulaic lists of symptoms and causes of suffering (e.g. VIII 44). It should also be noted that the 'physical unwellness' (*lā ṭūb šīrī*) of *Šurpu* IV 84 is replaced here by 'unwellness of offspring' (*lā ṭūb zēri*). This reflects that fact that the symptoms of divine punishment could spread among the victim's family and household and even to future generations.

Symptoms of this kind, which modern Western medicine would describe as 'psychological', 'mental', or 'emotional', are often also closely connected in the Mesopotamian sources to physical symptoms of the body, especially in the abdominal area or digestive tract (Akkadian *libbu*), which was the seat of emotions in Mesopotamian thought (§ 2.2.3). For example, while *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* presents a very generalized picture of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's suffering, we also find there, as in the *āšipūtu* material, a close connection between emotional symptoms and abdominal problems (*Ludlul* I 109–114):

109 *i-na bi-tak-ki-i šub-ra-a i-na-a-a*	'My eyes had to see through constant weeping,

110 *haš-šiš i-na di-ma-ti ṣur-ru-pu* u_2*-suk-ka-a-a*	*five times*,[41] my cheeks were burning with tears,
111 *uṣ-ṣal-lim pa-ni-ia a-di-rat* lib_3*-bi-ia*	the sorrow of my heart darkened my face,
112 *šīrī*(uzu)^{meš}*-ia* u_2*-tar-ri-qu pi-rit-tu*$_4$ *u ḫat-tu*$_4$	terror and panic turned my flesh pale,
113 *i-na-a-ti* lib_3*-bi-ia ina gi-tal-lu-ti ir-tu-ba*	my internal organs[42] trembled with constant shuddering,
114 *dan-na ki-ma ṣa-rap i-ša*$_2$*-a-tu*$_4$	they were severe like the burning of fire.'

The burning of the tears on his face (109) looks forward to the burning of his internal organs (114), which perhaps describes fever-like symptoms. Fever often accompanies depression and confusional states,[43] possibly because both of these groups of symptoms were closely associated with the *libbu*.[44] In namerimburruda-incantations, emotional symptoms and general mental unwellness (*lā ṭūb libbi*) are often described in close proximity to physical symptoms, especially in the abdomen (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 48–51, 11–16):

11 *muruṣ*(ge$_{17}$) *du-ul-lu la pa-ša*$_2$*-ḫa mu-ul-la-an-ni*
12 [*la*$_3$] ⌜*ṭūb*(du$_{10}$⌝.ga) *lib*$_3$*-bi šiḫ-ḫat šīri*(uzu) *iš-šak-na*
13 *u ana-ku ur-ra u mūša*(ge$_6$) *la ṣa-la*$_2$*-la*$_2$ *en-de-ku*
14 *ina ṣibit*(dab)^{bit2} lib_3*-bi u la*$_3$ *ṭūb*(du$_{10}$.ga) *šīri*(uzu) *ra-ma-ni uq-ṭa-at-ti*
15 *ad-riš šap-la-ku-ma muttallikāku*(du.du)^{ku}
16 *ina ku-u*$_2$*-ri u nissati*(zaraḫ) *ra-ma-ni u*$_2$*-ta-niš*

It has filled me with the sickness of misery that does not abate; [12] mental [un]wellness (and) wasting of the flesh have been placed for me; [13] I also have insomnia imposed on me day and night; [14] I have brought myself to an end with abdominal pain (or: anger, lit. seizing of the *libbu*) and physical unwellness; [15] I am darkly depressed and I am restless; [16] I have weakened myself with depression and wailing.

[41] This highly uncertain reading is adopted by Oshima (2014: 218) on the basis that the MS I.B writes *ḫa-*, although his reasons for understanding *ḫaššiš* as 'fifty times' are unclear. The two other MSS that preserve the beginning of this line (I.F and I.Q) write TAR, and it therefore seems likely that the writing in MS I.B arises from a misreading of this sign as syllabic *ḫaš*. This interpretation is followed by George and Al-Rawi (1998: 194–197) who propose that TAR-*siš* writes *darsiš* 'like one deposed' (< *darāsu*), also noting that alternative readings such as *ḫaššiš* 'five times' or *ḫassiš* 'like a lettuce' make little sense (George and Al-Rawi 1998: 200). Arguing against this interpretation, however, is the fact that the adjective *darsu* is otherwise only attested in the plural describing gods (cf. e.g. CAD D 115), while the syllabic reading dar_6 for tar is only attested in Old Akkadian (cf. MZL 248). Another possibility is a logographic writing ku$_5$-*siš* for either *parsiš* 'like one separated' (*parsu* is used in this sense of animals, cf. e.g. CAD P 194) or *pirsiš* 'like a weaned child' (cf. e.g. CAD P 412 s.v. *pirsu* B). Admittedly, these terms are not widely attested, but both would fit with the context, especially the image of the crying of a child being weaned.

[42] The writing *i-na-a-ti* is possibly to be read as a variant spelling of *unūtu* 'equipment'; *unūt libbi* means 'internal organs' (cf. e.g. CAD U/W 178 and Oshima 2014: 85). *Pace* George and Al-Rawi (1998: 200) who understand *īnāti libbi* 'springs of the heart' to refer to the ventricles of the heart.

[43] Scurlock 2006: 16.

[44] Aside from the skull (*muḫḫu*) and head *(qaqqadu*), symptoms involving high temperatures were most commonly associated with the abdomen (*libbu*) and epigastrium (*rēš libbi*) (Bácskay 2018: 9).

A number of therapeutic ritual instructions also attribute to *māmītu*-curse problems with digestion and appetite, alongside the typical psychological symptoms (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 76–77, 1–3; Nr. 3, 7–9):

1 *šumma*(diš) ⌜*amēlu*(na)⌝ *māmītu*(nam.erim$_2$) *šaḫ*-⌜*ḫi*⌝-*ḫu maruṣ*(ge$_{17}$) *mim-mu-u i-lem-mu*
2 ⌜*ina*⌝ *libbi*(ša$_3$)-*šu$_2$ la i-na-aḫ ibbalakkat*(bal) *mim-ma-ma ana šuburri*(dur$_2$)-*šu$_2$ u$_2$-tab-bak*
3 *akala*(ninda) *la$_3$ ikkal*(gu$_7$) …

If a man is sick with *māmītu*-curse, the wasting (illness), (so that) anything he consumes [2] does not settle in his abdomen, he turns over and pours everything out to his backside, [3] he cannot eat bread …

7 *lib$_3$-bi-šu$_2$ ma-li mi-na-tu-šu$_2$ ittanašpakā*(dub.dub)$^{ak(sic!)}$[45] *pi-qa la pi-qa i-par$_2$-ru-ud*
8 *ur-ra u mūša*(ge$_6$) *la iṣallal*(na$_2$)^{lal} *šunāti*(maš$_2$.ge$_6$)^{meš} *par$_2$-da-a-ti ittanaṭṭal*(igi.du$_8$.a)^{meš} *ri-mu-tu iraššī*(tuku)^{ši}
9 *akalu*(ninda) *u šikaru*(kaš) *muṭ-ṭu a-mat i-qab-bu-u$_2$ i-maš-ši* …

His abdomen is full, his limbs are constantly limp (lit. poured out), he sometimes becomes terrified, [8] day and night he cannot sleep, he constantly sees terrifying dreams, he suffers from *rimūtu*-paralysis, [9] he has little desire for bread or beer,[46] he forgets what he says …'

Digestive problems, here diarrhoea and a feeling of fullness apparently leading to loss of appetite, are presumably connected to an unsettled *libbu*. The problems described in the first passage, with food passing straight through the patient, apparently lead to malnutrition and the wasting away of flesh. *Māmītu*-curse is therefore given the epithet *šaḫḫiḫu*, an illness designation derived from a verb *šaḫāḫu* 'to disintegrate, waste away'.[47] In the second passage, abdominal symptoms are connected to psychological symptoms, including fear, sleeplessness, and forgetfulness, as well as paralysis. All of these symptoms would have greatly impacted upon the patient's ability to fully participate in normal human society, just as rejecting bread and beer means rejecting not only the means of staying alive but also the hallmarks of civilized society.[48] The digestive problems in both passages point to the notion that abdominal symptoms arise

[45] The phonetic complement *-ak* is possibly a mistake for expected *-ka* (giving a feminine plural form) which is attested in parallel passages (Maul 2019: 105).
[46] On this expression, see Finkel 2018: 257.
[47] Cf. Landsberger 1920: 443, who suggests the translation "Zermürbung".
[48] Cf. SB Gilg. II 44–51 (George 2003: 560–561), where the shepherds offer Enkidu bread and beer, but he doesn't know how to eat them.

from having ‘eaten’ transgression: the curse punishing the transgression was understood to have entered the patient’s digestive tract, from where it could cause a number of internal problems. This includes psychological symptoms because the *libbu* was considered not just the locus of digestion but also the seat of emotions and irrational thought (§ 2.2.3). While these seemingly disparate and sometimes contradictory groups of symptoms could not be ascribed to a single cause from the perspective of modern Western medicine, from a Mesopotamian perspective they could all arise from a transgression, because of the underlying conceptual connection to eating.

Various kinds of paralysis form another group of symptoms closely associated with transgression. In the following passage from *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, these symptoms are described in detail (*Ludlul* II 71–79):

71	*a-lu-u₂ zu-um-ri i-te-de-eq ṣu-ba-ti*	The Alû demon has clothed my body in a garment,
72	*ki-ma šu-uš-kal-li u₂-kat₃-ti-man-ni šit-tu₂*	(and) covered me with sleep like a net,
73	*pal-ṣa-a-ma ul i-na-aṭ-ṭal i-na-a-a*	my eyes were staring but were not seeing,
74	*pe-ta-a-ma ul i-šem-ma-a uz-na-a-a*	my ears were open but were not hearing,
75	*kal pag-ri-ia i-ta-ḫaz ri-mu-tu₂*	*rimûtu*-paralysis has seized my whole body,
76	*mi-šit-tu im-ta-qut eli*(ugu) *šīrī*(uzu)^{meš}*-ia*	*mišittu*-paralysis has fallen on my flesh,
77	*man-gu iṣ-bat i-di-ia*	*mangu*-disease seized my arms,
78	*lu-uʾ-tu₂ im-ta-qut eli*(ugu) *bir-ki-ia*	*luʾtu*-disease has fallen on my knees,
79	*ma-ša₂-a-ma na-mu-ši-ša₂ še-pa-a-a*	my feet have forgotten (how) to move.

Although the symptoms are attributed in this case to the Alû demon, they are similar to those attested for *māmītu*-curse and its demonic form (see § 3.5), and it is Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan’s transgression and the resultant divine anger that has left him exposed to attack by a demon in the first place. Based on the symptoms described here, the Alû demon has been identified as the primary cause of stroke, although similar symptoms are attributed to several other demons, including ghosts.[49] Instead, what connects many of

[49] Kinnier Wilson and Reynolds 2007: 85–90. The term *mišittu*, also used in the above passage (line 76) is sometimes translated ‘stroke’ (e.g. CAD M/II “stroke, paralysis”; AHw II 660 “Schlag(anfall), Herzinfarkt”), but the methodological problem remains that ancient descriptions of symptoms cannot be mapped onto modern categories of illness.

the symptoms, including paralysis and the loss of sight and hearing, is their superficial similarity to the state of a sleeping person. The Alû demon was associated with other medical conditions relating to sleep,[50] and here 'sleep' (*šittu*) is also something apparently wielded by the Alû demon as a weapon.[51] It is unclear why the Alû demon in particular was associated with sleep, but a general association between demons and sleep is perhaps not surprising, as sleep bears a resemblance to death and demons could represent a potentially deadly threat.[52] Sleep is effectively a form of suspended animation that, like many other symptoms of transgression, removes the sleeper from normal human society and places him in a liminal, and potentially dangerous, situation.[53] In the context of transgression and its punishment, the vulnerability of this sleep-like state, especially the inability to see or hear, again creates a situation in which the sufferer is isolated from the world around him. A possible aetiology for the punishment of transgression manifesting as paralysis can be found in an incantation accompanying ritual actions in *Šurpu* (V–VI 135–137, cited and discussed at § 5.3.2). A grain of *maṣḫatu*-flour is burnt while the incantation describes this preventing the seed from germinating within the patient's body and its roots seizing his spine. While the ancient Mesopotamians did not have a complete understanding of the workings of the nervous system, it is possible that this reflects an idea about how transgression could lead to paralysis. The idea that the curse punishing the transgression was causing damage from inside the victim's body is also found in the connection between having 'eaten' a transgression and its affliction of the internal organs.

[50] For further examples, see Guinan 2009: 200.
[51] *Pace* Kinnier Wilson and Reynolds (2007: 85) who translate "the deep sleep (of coma)". The term *šittu* is neutral and can refer to pleasant or unpleasant sleep (cf. e.g. CAD Š/III 141–142).
[52] Cf. Steinert 2010: 249–252; Guinan 2009: 201–202.
[53] Compare the use of a divinely inhabited lamp to protect a sleeping person from demonic attack (see § 1.4.2.2).

The sufferer of divine punishment, in connection with the loss of divine protection, is exposed to attack by a number of demons, and this could include the demonized form of *māmītu*-curse, which operated in a similar way to, and often alongside, other disease-causing demons (§ 2.5). In the following passage, the disease-demons Dimītu and Aḫḫāzu, along with the demonized Māmītu, cause a variety of physical and psychological symptoms in their victim (*Šurpu* VII 23–36):

23 [šu]-na lal$_2$-e-ne ĝir$_3$-na peš$_6$-peš$_6$-e-ne
24 *qa-ti-šu$_2$ uṣ-ṣi-lu še-pi-šu$_2$ ub-bi-ṭu*
25 ⌜su⌝-na im-mi-in-diḫ-eš ze$_2$-ta ba-an-su$_3$-su$_3$
26 [*zu*]-*mur-šu$_2$ il-i-bu-ma mar-ta iz-za-ar-qu-šu$_2$*
27 ⌜mu⌝ sag-ba ad$_6$-bi tab-tab-e-ne
28 *ni-šu ma-mit pa-gar-šu$_2$ uṣ-ṣar-ri-ip*
29 uḫ$_2$-luḫ BAR.ZI.UD gaba-bi ḫu-nu-e (var. ḫu-ḫu-luḫ-ḫa)
30 ⌜*gu*⌝-*uḫ-ḫu su-a-lu i-rat-su u$_2$-tan-niš*
31 [uḫ$_2$] a$_2$-dib-ba ka-bi si-si-e
32 *ru-uʾ-tu$_2$ ru-pu-uš-tu$_2$ pi-i-šu$_2$ im-ta-li*
33 lu$_2$-u$_{18}$-lu-bi u$_3$-di niĝ$_2$-me-ĝar ĝa$_2$-ĝa$_2$-da-na ul$_4$-gal tu-tu-lu-⌜de$_3$⌝
34 *a-me-lu šu-a-tu$_2$ qu-lu ku-ru iš-ša$_2$-kin-šum-ma ma-gal ur-⌜ta⌝-*[*am-mi*]
35 u$_4$-ĝe$_6$-ba al-du$_7$-du$_7$ a-ge$_{17}$-ga suḫ$_3$-a
36 *mu-šu$_2$ u ur-ru i-da-am* (var. [*i*]-⌜*da-mu*⌝-*mu*)[54] *mar-ṣi-iš ul u$_2$-šap-ši-iḫ*

'They paralysed his hands, made his feet swell, [26] they gave his body *liʾbu*-fever, they sprinkled him with bile, [28] *nīšu*-oath, *māmītu*-curse has burned his body, [30] *guḫḫu*-cough, *suālu*-cough, has weakened (Sum. var. frightened) his chest, [32] spittle, phlegm, has filled his mouth, [34] that man, silence, depression, has been placed upon him, he has been greatly weakened, [36] night and day he wanders about (var. howls) and like a sick person he cannot rest (Sum. he is *grievously* worried).[55]

Although ostensibly caused by an external source, the attack of the demons, the symptoms relating to the mouth and chest, coughing and phlegm, suggest a connection to the conceptual origins of *nīšu*-oath and *māmītu*-curse in speech acts, and again to the idea that transgression could be 'eaten'. Some of the symptoms described would have had a particularly visual effect (23–28) – paralyzed hands, swollen feet, the sprinkling

[54] K. 5146 writes a form of *damāmu* 'to howl, wail', which seems to have been frequently confused with *daʾāmu* 'to wander around' (cf. AHw I 146), since both have similar sounding Sumerian equivalents usually written with the same sign, BUR$_2$ read dun$_5$ and du$_9$ respectively, although one suspects that these may be the same lexeme in Sumerian.

[55] Collated from photos. Another witness to this line (KAR 371) reads quite differently (17′–18′): […a]-ge$_{17}$-ga a-⌜x⌝-[(x)] / […] ⌜*mar-ṣi*⌝-*iš i-na*-⌜x⌝. Reiner (1958: 37) restores and translates as a form of a-ge$_{17}$-ga i-i / du$_{11}$ / e // *marṣiš nâqu* 'to wail bitterly, cry in pain' (cf. PSD A/1 30 s.v. a B3; CAD N/1 341 s.v. *nâqu* A). According to Ebeling's copy, the Sumerian verb form is unclear, as is the final Akkadian sign which could be *aq* but could equally be *aḫ*, for example, giving a form of the verb *nâḫu* and therefore a translation 'he rests (only) with difficulty'.

with bile (usually yellow-green in colour), and the burning of the body (presumably manifesting as some sort of rash or redness; the verb *ṣarāpu* can also mean 'to turn red'). Whether or not these symptoms should be ascribed to a specific condition,[56] they are connected by the fact that they affect the patient's external appearance. Further examples of symptoms of the kind associated with *māmītu*-curse are attested in the therapeutic namerimburruda-texts (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 4–10, 1): [*šumma*(diš) *ma*]-*mi*$_3$-*tu*$_4$ *i-na* ⌜*zumur*(su)⌝ *amēli*(na) *īpuš*(du$_3$)-*ma* *rēšā*(sag.du)^{meš}-*šu*[57] *sāmī*(sa$_5$)⌜^{meš} *arqī*(sig$_7$)⌝^{meš} *ittanaddā*(šub.[šub]) '[if] *māmītu*-curse was active in the man's body and so his head constantly produces red and yellow spots.' The appearance of red pustules is associated with *māmītu*-curse in other medical sources.[58] Outwardly visible symptoms could have affected the sufferer's ability to participate fully in society. They would have caused him to be rejected by others, not only because of the repulsive nature of the symptoms, but also because they may have signalled that this was someone being punishment by the gods or afflicted by another, potentially contagious, source of evil. Thus, the divine punishment effectively isolates the transgressor from normal human society, both through others' treatment of the sufferer and the breakdown in interpersonal relations (§ 4.2.2) and through internal symptoms that could signal the sufferer's reduced state or be physically debilitating to the point where the sufferer could not fully participate in society.

[56] One of the demons attacking with Māmītu, Aḫḫāzu, is usually identified as causing jaundice (cf. e.g. Scurlock and Andersen 2005: 138; Adamson 1993: 157).
[57] Cf. Maul 2019: 122 for this as a writing of the dual of *rēšu*, standing for the singular.
[58] Maul 2019: 122.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have examined the manifestation and experience of the state of reduced existence resulting from transgression and its punishment. This is portrayed in the sources in various ways. Metaphorical descriptions of the general experience of the suffering, from the point of view of the sufferer, are often found in the incantations of rituals addressing the consequences of transgression. There are also more specific descriptions of what was understood to be happening to the victim, which often read like symptomatologies. These include relational symptoms that affect the sufferer's relationship with the gods and with the people around him. These are more common in the ritual incantations and especially *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, as these compositions tend to describe the subjective experience of the sufferer, but they are also occasionally found in medical sources. Internal symptoms are the physical and psychological effects of suffering on the patient's body and mind. These are found in medical sources, which concern the objective observation of the patient from an external viewpoint, but are just as common in the incantations of ritual texts, giving an impression of the extent of the suffering the rituals aim to release.

The metaphorical descriptions of suffering, while to some extent a literary elaboration, emphasize the nature of the 'reduced existence' experienced by the victim of divine punishment. These descriptions emphasize the isolation and loss of control experienced by the sufferer. They offer an insight into how the state of suffering may have been perceived by the average person, far removed from the complex patterns of symptoms that the exorcist was looking for. The patient would have had a general sense that something was wrong, that there was imbalance in their world, and the exorcist could justify the possible cause according to his ideology and therefore provide appropriate treatment. The descriptions, being found in incantations addressed to the gods, may also

be designed to present the patient's suffering to the gods in such a way as to evoke pity and contribute to the appeal to have the punishment lifted. They also demonstrate an acceptance on the part of the patient that the causes of his reduced state could be traced back to his own actions, important for securing the return of divine favour (see § 5.2).

I then examined the external symptoms of the state of reduced existence, that manifest in a breakdown in the relationship between the patient and the gods, as well as with other people and human society as a whole. Having committed a transgression that violated the balance of the divinely ordained structures of the world, the sufferer's relationship with the gods is immediately ruptured. This meant that the victim was abandoned by his personal protective deities, which could leave him exposed to further dangers, and it also restricted his ability to interact with the wider divine sphere, even threatening his ability to appeal against the punishment. The anger of the gods resulted in further disruption to the victim's world, particularly by severing his relations with other people, which restricted his ability to fully participate in human society and also affected his social status and financial wellbeing. While this is primarily part of the punishment imposed by the gods, the victim's rejection from human society can also be seen as a consequence of his transgression: having violated the norms of human society, the punishment involves being excluded from that society. This could explain why symptoms of this kind were particularly closely connected to the effects of witchcraft, which by its very nature violated social norms. While these 'symptoms' originated outside of the sufferer and took their form in other people's treatment of him, many internal symptoms of suffering also restricted the victim's ability to participate fully in society.

The internal symptoms of the patient's suffering are those that appear in the mind and body of the sufferer and correspond to what we might term 'medical' symptoms. These

are often presented as long, formulaic lists of symptoms, in part as a literary trope to ensure that a large number of possible symptoms and their causes were covered by the rituals. Nevertheless, patterns of symptoms are apparent that would have allowed the exorcist to attribute the patient's suffering to a particular cause and therefore administer the appropriate treatment. In the case of transgression and its punishment, symptoms of the abdomen and digestive tract occur relatively frequently, along with emotional and psychological symptoms believed to originate in this part of the body. This association arose from the idea that transgressions had their conceptual origins in a broken oath that had been 'eaten' and that the evil unleashed by committing the transgression attacked the victim from the inside. Forms of paralysis and symptoms that hindered communication limited the victim's ability to participate in normal society. Visually conspicuous conditions, like discolouration of the flesh, could cause others to exclude the victim and also served as a warning that the patient was being punished for transgression. Thus, the internal symptoms of divine punishment also reflect a focus on the proper functioning of society and the wider world, by causing anyone violating these structures and norms to be forcibly excluded from them. The range of symptoms attributed to transgression hinders any attempt to connect these symptomatologies to modern Western illness categories, and trying to do so would anyway obscure the ancient Mesopotamian exorcist's strategies for categorizing symptoms and illness. Instead, we might understand the symptoms in the context of culture-bound syndromes, with the interpretation of the manifestation of actual underlying symptoms governed by the cultural context in which they were experienced. This would allow the sufferer to communicate his situation to the exorcist in conventional terms and would allow the exorcist to treat it in a way that convincingly addressed their common understanding of the working of causes and symptoms.

Overall, both relational and internal symptoms are connected by the fact that they ultimately originate from the gods and can be considered the result of imbalance. Relational symptoms reflect imbalance in the structures of the universe that govern relations, above all, between humans and gods, but also between fellow humans. Similarly, internal symptoms can be seen to result from a breakdown in the structures governing the proper function of the body, also resulting from imbalances in the environment of the sufferer.[59] Imbalances that negatively impact upon the life of the sufferer are an appropriate punishment for transgressions that violate the carefully balanced structures of the universe set down by the gods. Because of this, all the patient's suffering ultimately results from divine anger, and it was therefore the exorcist's job to restore balance in the patient's body and surroundings, but especially to restore his relationship with the gods. How this was achieved will be examined in the following chapter, where the nature of the symptoms of divine punishment will also be shown to contribute to how they were treated.

[59] Cf. Heeßel 2004a: 99, "Falling ill was seen as a sign that the patient had lost the equilibrium he ideally lived in." Cf. also Robson (2008b: 465), discussing the curses in the Laws of Ḫammurapi: "Physical, emotional, and sexual well-being is a consequence of a well-ordered life in a well-ordered society, the laws suggest; illness arises as divine retaliation for deliberate (or unwitting) disruption of the natural order."

5 The removal of suffering

Once the causes and consequences of the patient's suffering had been identified as far as was possible and/or necessary, the primary aim of the exorcist's rituals was twofold: to appeal to the gods for mercy and reconcile the patient to them; and to remove the sources of the patient's suffering and treat the symptoms of the suffering. The removal and treatment could take several forms: the physical cleansing of the patient to remove impurities perceived as having a physical manifestation in or on the patient's body; the symbolic removal of the source of suffering, whether this was understood as an external force or internal impurities, from the patient's body or immediate surroundings, by means of destruction or displacement, or through transfer to a ritual substitute; the therapeutic treatment of any remaining symptoms caused by these external forces or internal impurities; prophylactic measures to protect the patient from the return of the source of suffering or from evil portended by ominous signs; and, finally, the patient's symbolic reintegration into normal society and thus out of the state of reduced existence under which he had been languishing.

The therapeutic relief of symptoms by means of potions, salves, bandages, and amulets is often considered the more 'rational' or 'medical' side of *āšipūtu* rituals, and these methods are often treated separately from those practices considered 'magical'.[1] Many of these therapeutic methods have been considered in various treatments of different aspects of the *āšipūtu* material.[2] In the following chapter, I concentrate primarily on the

[1] Cf. e.g. Scurlock 2006: 1. Daniel Schwemer, when considering the methods used to combat witchcraft and its effects, distinguishes between "Heilmittel" (2007: 194–198) and "Ritual" (199–220). The relative weighting of Schwemer's treatments in this case mirrors the situation with transgressions, for which strictly therapeutic treatments occur less frequently in the ancient literature and are more difficult to assess due to the frequent difficulty of identifying the *materia medica* involved.

[2] E.g. Schuster-Brandis 2008 on the use of amulets; Scurlock 2006: 59–71 for treatments against ghosts; Schwemer 2007: 194–198 for treatments against witchcraft. No study has been dedicated to the therapeutic treatment of symptoms caused by transgression, but for *māmītu*-curse and its illness one can refer now to the commentary to relevant texts in Maul 2019.

treatments that make use of symbolic actions and metaphorical speech acts to remove the 'supernatural' causes of suffering, its manifestation as physical impurities, and the effects thereof.[3] These include physical acts of cleansing, destruction, and displacement that could be understood to work either directly on the symptoms, or in a more abstract fashion on the sources of suffering and the manifestation of impurities caused by them. Here, as ever, the modern division into 'magic' and 'medicine' is quite artificial; while there is indeed an emic distinction between 'magical' lore (*āšipūtu*) and the lore of the physician (*asûtu*), this rather reflects a theoretical division of text corpora that was rarely, if ever, maintained in practice (see §1.4.1.2). Furthermore, while some of the treatments I consider here are often categorized as 'medical' in the modern literature, they are nevertheless all included within the exorcistic *āšipūtu* corpus. Both 'magical' and 'therapeutic' treatments will therefore be analysed for their symbolic function and, in particular, for the insights they can provide into the conceptualization of transgression and its consequences. However, many of the contexts in which information about therapeutic treatments for the consequences of transgression is provided take the form of lists of *materia medica* (plants, stones, etc.) used in the treatment. Due to the difficulties with identifying these *materia* and their effects,[4] such passages can contribute little to understanding the conceptualization of transgression and its treatment.

[3] On the division between 'magical' and 'medical' procedures in the corpus of anti-ghost prescriptions, for example, cf. Scurlock (2006: 65):

> In sum, of the three hundred and forty-eight prescriptions for ghost related problems, only thirty-five involved the performance of a nam.búr.bi, libations, the manufacture of figurines, or magic encirclement. … they account for all but two of the offerings and other peripherals, show a disproportionate interest in dealing with ghostly screams and apparitions as opposed to physical problems, and seem to involve a much greater degree of patient participation that other types of procedures. … these procedures were also distinctive in terms of the *legomena* which they contained, leading to the supposition that they might have been more directly concerned with the ghost than with the symptoms which the ghost had produced.

These observations suggest that such a distinction does, to some extent, have an emic basis.

[4] Scurlock (2006: 67–71) discusses similar problems with the over 251 types of *materia medica* used in treatments for ghost-induced symptoms.

Accordingly, one of my main concerns in this chapter is the question of how and why the ritual methods described below were understood to work. On the one hand, I will examine the general mechanics of symbolic and analogical (i.e. 'magical') thinking according to the Mesopotamian sources. The incantations that accompany ritual actions are often useful for understanding what the Mesopotamian actors hoped to achieve by the actions. In some cases, the significance of ritual actions is not stated so explicitly and must therefore be deduced from the intellectual and social context of the ritual.[5] At the same time, I am concerned in particular with why certain ritual methods were considered especially effective against the suffering caused by transgression. The symbols, metaphors, and analogies employed in the rituals and accompanying incantations can help to expand our understanding of the conceptualization of transgression as a cause of suffering, the resultant divine punishment, and the symptoms thereof, and *vice versa*.

The structure of this chapter largely follows that of other studies of ritual practices in ancient Near Eastern sources.[6] I begin with the preliminary steps that must be undertaken before any therapeutic treatment of symptoms or rituals to release the patient from the causes of suffering. First, I consider how the exorcist might have diagnosed the ultimate cause of the patient's suffering, by observing his symptoms and potential omens, as well as possibly seeking confirmation by other forms of divination and oracle. Subsequently, and prior to the ritual undertaking, the gods must be reconciled to the patient by means of prayer and offerings. The patient needs the gods to be favourably disposed in order to ensure success in the divine trial that often formed

[5] Cf. Ambos 2010: 28.
[6] E.g. Maul 1994: 39–106 on the practices of namburbi-rituals; Schwemer 2007: 194–230 and Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 20–24 on the practices of anti-witchcraft rituals; Scurlock 2006: 21–71 on the practices of anti-ghost rituals; Haas 1987–1990 and 2003: 63–139 on the ritual practices attested in Hittite sources, which are often similar to those of Mesopotamia.

part of the ritual, and because it is these gods who ultimately have the power to release the patient from divine punishment thereby and ease his suffering. The exorcist must also have the support of the gods in order for his ritual actions to be effective.

The latter half of the chapter considers the techniques and practices of the rituals themselves, including how the workings of these are explained in the accompanying incantations. This section is divided into two parts, based on two complementary aspects of the conception of impurity in Mesopotamia: first, that impurity can be regarded as a form of physical matter on or inside the patient's body; second, that the impurity cannot be completely annihilated, and its 'destruction' is therefore predicated on changing its state or its location in space. The first part examines the removal of impurities from the patient's body and their transfer into ritual materials or other vehicles and substitutes that could be more easily manipulated. The second part explores how these materials and vehicles, and the impurities contained therein, can subsequently be rendered less dangerous by transforming them from their original state, or removed from the patient and human society by distancing or dispersing them in space. Some of the themes that are considered throughout both parts include: the nature and significance of the *materia magica* used; treatments specific to suffering caused by transgression and how these relate to those used against other sources of evil; the ways in which order can be restored to the world and how the patient, now released from the state of suffering, can safely return into normal human society.

5.1 Diagnosing the causes of suffering

Before undertaking any release rituals, the exorcist may have sought to determine more precisely the source of the patient's suffering. The consequences of a false diagnosis were potentially serious: not only might the patient not recover, but the more complex rituals targeting various sources of evil would have been more expensive and time-consuming than the simpler therapeutic treatments for symptoms not caused in this way. However, the possibility that a precise diagnosis could not always be arrived is remedied to some extent by crossover in the application of rituals between different causes of suffering: witchcraft and transgression, for example, had some similar symptoms and several release rituals could apply equally to both, regardless of the primary target (see § 3.2.7). Expanding the applicability of these rituals through formulaic lists of many possible targets (§ 2.1) was, on the one hand, a common literary trope, but presumably also ensured that a lack of diagnosis or an incorrect diagnosis did not necessarily prevent the patient from receiving the necessary treatment. In some cases, a diagnosis could have been reached from observation of the patient's symptoms. This was particularly important in the case of transgression, since the patient's ignorance of having committed a transgression meant that the resulting suffering was often the only clue to this being the cause.

There are no written accounts describing the process of diagnosing transgression as a source of suffering. However, the possibility that the exorcist might have observed the patient's physical symptoms in order to determine a precise cause of suffering is suggested by the following mythological account from an anti-witchcraft ritual (CMAwR 8.16.1 15–22):[7]

[7] The translation of this difficult text is after Abusch and Schwemer 2016: 142, who in turn rely heavily on the *editio princeps* in Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993.

15	^{d}en-ki eridu^{ki}-ta e$_3$-a-ni	Enki, coming out from Eridu,
15a[8]	lu$_2$ tu-ra igi im-ma-an-si$_3$	saw the patient,
16	saĝ-ĝa$_2$ šu bi$_2$-in-ĝar bar-ra šu bi$_2$-in-ur$_3$	placed (his) hand on (the patient's) head, touched (the patient's) body,
17	ki-ge$_{17}$ nam-lu$_2$-ulu$_3$-ba ni$_2$-te-ni ba-an-zu	he identified the person's illness by himself:
18	ki-ge$_{17}$ bar-šub-ba su lu$_2$-ulu$_3$-ka ĝal$_2$-la	"The illness, *the affliction*, which is in the man's body,
19	a$_2$-sag$_3$ ba-ra-na	it is not the asag-demon,
20	gidim-ta bar-ra-na	it is not (caused) by a ghost,
21	a$_2$ ĝeš-ra-a dingir-ra bar-ra-na	it is not the blow of a god,
22	ḫul-ĝal$_2$ eme nam-lu$_2$-ulu$_3$ ḫe$_2$-a	the evil is in fact the 'tongue of humankind."

The process by which Enki reaches his diagnosis demonstrates an awareness of possible alternative causes of the patient's suffering, reflecting the fact that physical symptoms were sometimes ambiguous as to their cause. The list of possible diagnoses in this passage is perhaps an example of the common strategy of structuring lists by moving outwards from or inwards to a centre point, in this case moving from the most unlikely cause to the most likely. If this is the case, the fact that transgression, represented by the 'blow' (a$_2$ ĝeš-ra-a) of the god responsible for its punishment, appears immediately before the final, correct diagnosis of witchcraft further demonstrates the proximity of these two causes of suffering (see § 3.2.7). The exclusion of causes other than witchcraft does suggest, however, that a more precise diagnosis than some generic evil was not only possible but could also be helpful for the success of the subsequent treatment. Where there was uncertainty, the targeting of more generic evils could also be effective.[9] We can imagine the exorcist following Enki's example by visiting the patient's house and assessing the symptoms in person, as is described in diagnostic texts. While there is much crossover and ambiguity in the symptoms of suffering, there are nevertheless certain patterns of symptoms that could point fairly conclusively to transgression as a cause (see § 4.3.2), so it is feasible that this too could have been

[8] Only in MS d.
[9] This is perhaps best reflected in the existence of the demon representing *mimma lemnu* 'Any Evil' (see Schwemer 2020).

diagnosed from the observation of physical symptoms, to the exclusion of other possible causes such as witchcraft.

Nevertheless, especially given the ambiguity of many outwardly observable symptoms, other means could be used to determine the precise cause of a person's suffering. For example, an exorcist performing a namerimburruda-ritual could confirm that the patient was suffering from *māmītu*-curse by observing signs on the way to the patient's house, by performing extispicy, or by examining the carcass of a sacrificed bird.[10] Witchcraft could also be diagnosed by means of omens, as well as through oracle questions.[11] In *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, the possibility that various diviners could be consulted to diagnose the cause of suffering is suggested by complaints that none of their methods is working (§ 4.2.1). The nature of some unprovoked omens indicating transgression as the cause of suffering is described in the diagnostic series *Sakikku* (II 25–29):[12]

25 … *šumma*(diš) *ṣēru*(muš) *ina rēš*(sag) *marṣi*(ge$_{17}$) *ittanazzaz*(gub)$^{me\text{-}az}$ *asak*(azag) *ili*(dingir)-*šu$_2$ u il*(dingir) *āli*(uru)-*šu$_2$ īkul*(gu$_7$) *šattum*(mu)-*ma imât*(uš$_2$)
26 *šumma*(diš) *ṣēru*(muš) *ina rēš*(sag) *marṣi*(ge$_{17}$) *ina imitti*(15) *ittanazzaz*(gub)$^{me\text{-}az}$ *a-ra-an-šu$_2$ ippaṭṭar*(du$_8$) *itebbi*(zi)^{bi}
27 *šumma*(diš) *ṣēru*(muš) *ina rēš*(sag) *marṣi*(ge$_{17}$) *ina šumēli*(150) *ittanazzaz*(gub)$^{me\text{-}az}$ *asak*(azag) *ili*(dingir)-*šu$_2$ u il*(dingir) *āli*(uru)-*šu$_2$ īkul*(i$_3$.gu$_7$)
28 *šumma*(diš) *ṣēru*(muš) *ina rēš*(sag) ^{geš}*erši*(na$_2$)-*šu$_2$ imqut*(šub)-*ma ana pilši*(bur$_3$)^{ši} *īrub*(ku$_4$)^{ub} *imât*(ba.uš$_2$)
29 *šumma*(diš) *ṣēru*(muš) *ina rēši*(sag)-*šu$_2$ iṣ-lal asak*(azag) *ili*(dingir)-*šu$_2$ u il*(dingir) *āli*(uru)-*šu$_2$ īkul*(i$_3$.gu$_7$)

'… if a snake constantly stands at the head (of the bed) of the patient: he ate *asakku*-transgression of his god and the god of his city; he will die within the year. [26] If a snake constantly stands on the right at the head (of the bed) of the patient: his *arnu*-punishment will be loosened; he will get up. [27] If a snake constantly stands on the left at the head (of the bed of) the patient: he ate *asakku*-transgression of his god and the god of his city. [28] If a snake falls from the head of his bed and enters a crack (in the wall): he will die. [29] If a snake lies down at the head (of) his (bed): he ate *asakku*-transgression of his god and the god of his city.'

[10] Maul 2019: 17.
[11] Schwemer 2007: 167.
[12] Labat 1951: 8–11; cf. e.g. A. 3439 69–73 (online at geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/diagnostic_handbook/Kapitel-1-_Wenn-der-Beschwoerer-zum-Haus-eines-Kranken-geht_/02-A-A_-3439/, accessed 14/09/2020).

While most of these diagnoses relate to *asakku*-transgression, the reference to *arnu*-punishment (26) suggests that these omens are to be situated in the context of a broader range of transgressions. The entry with a prognosis but no diagnosis of the cause (28) probably therefore also relates to some sort of transgression. Whether or not there was some inherent association between snakes and transgression in Mesopotamian thought,[13] their function as negative portents may have something to do with the features they share with other sources of suffering, particular in the way they can invade the home, contaminating it and threatening the inhabitants.[14] In the case of the omen relating to *arnu*-punishment (26), the snake functions not only as an omen signalling the transgression but also as a sign that the patient will recover, as the snake appears on the favourable right side of the patient. This could be a signal that the performance of a ritual aiming to release the patient from divine punishment would be, or had been, successful.

The lists of possible transgressions included in incantations sometimes contain entries that look less like transgressive actions and more like unprovoked omens (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 38–39, 36–38):

> 36 *qan tuppi* (gi.dub.ba.a) *a-na pa-ni-šu₂ iš-te-eb-ru* MIN(= *lū paṭra u lū passa*)
> 37 *qan tuppi* (gi.dub.ba.a) *ina ṣal-ti* ⌜*iš*⌝*-te-eb-ru* MIN(= *lū paṭra u lū passa*)
> 38 *qan tuppi* (gi.dub.ba.a) *la kit-ti* ⌜*it-ta*⌝*-ši* MIN(= *lū paṭra u lū passa*)
>
> They broke a stylus in front of him, may it be loosened and may it be erased, [37] they broke a stylus in a fight, may it be loosened and may it be erased, [38] he has picked up an untrue stylus, may it be loosened and may it be erased.

The breaking of a stylus, whether deliberate or accidental,[15] would hinder a scribe's ability to do their job, while the 'untrue stylus' (38: *qan tuppi lā kitti*) suggests a

[13] It has been suggested that Mesopotamian snake omens, which appear to have parallels in the Talmud (Geller 2000: 3–4), may have influenced the role of the snake in Genesis, where it is also symbolic of transgression (Smith 2015).
[14] Pientka-Hinz 2009: 212.
[15] Cf. Maul 2019: 205, "Es scheint, als habe das (absichtliche oder versehentliche) Zerbrechen eines Schreibgriffels als Unheilszeichen gegolten."

violation of the ethics and aims of the Mesopotamian scholar (see § 3.2.4). The fact that this stylus has been picked up (*našû*) by the victim suggests that either the patient himself has committed a transgression by using the stylus to write untruths (something that the incantation goes on to describe), or that a stylus already used to write untruths is thus contaminated and acts as a vector of contagion. Thus, the actions described in the above passage could represent ominous signs, sources of contagious transfer of suffering or, insofar as other people are committing hostile acts in front of the sufferer, symptoms of the suffering that have manifested in the sufferer's ill treatment by others. This is similar to examples of *māmītu*-curse described in *Šurpu* and namerimburruda-incantations where a *miḫru* 'incident', possibly referring to an unprovoked omen or a source of contagion, has occurred in the sufferer's presence (see § 2.1.4). Thus, the symptoms of suffering, unprovoked omens indicating the suffering, and perhaps also vectors of contagion, are not always clearly differentiated. Indeed, anything bad or ominous happening in the vicinity of someone who has committed a transgression could be taken as a sign or a symptom of their transgression and divine punishment. Overall, then, although there is much ambiguity between the symptoms of different causes of suffering, as well as between what actually constituted a symptom rather than an unprovoked ominous sign, it was apparently possible in some cases to determine a precise cause of suffering, whether by examination of the patient's 'medical' symptoms or through divination. This is reflected in the broad division of rituals with different overall targets: while there is much crossover between rituals targeting witchcraft and transgression, for example, a division between the two is still maintained in the rubrics and overall focus of the rituals.

5.2 Reconciliation with the gods

Another important part of the release rituals, which had to be achieved before the removal of the patient's impurities and suffering, was reconciliation with the gods, particularly those who have been angered by the patient's transgression and the personal deities who act as intermediaries with the other gods. Also important to the success of the ritual is the favour of gods of exorcism, such as Asalluḫi, whose power the exorcist will channel (§ 1.4.2.3), gods closely involved with the ritual actions, such as Girra, the divine fire, and the divine judge Šamaš who will ultimately decide whether the sufferer's punishment should be lifted (§ 1.4.2.2). The gods are naturally already involved, since any transgression against the established order of the universe is also a direct offence against the gods (see § 3.2.1). This notwithstanding, the exorcist needed the support of the gods for any ritual to be carried out successfully, since it is ultimately the gods who give or withhold approval of the ritual's aims and bring about its intended outcome.[16] Thus, even before making the sufferer's case for mercy, the gods' favour must be sought in order to undertake the ritual. The gods' favour could be sought through direct appeal, such as in prayer or incantations that outline the god's role in the universe and recognize their authority. Having effectively challenged the gods' authority with the transgression, this spoken recognition of divine authority would presumably help with the possibility of obtaining mercy. Favour could simultaneously be sought through the provision of offerings which can be seen as a form of hospitality being offered to the gods, to ensure they are well disposed towards the sufferer and to

[16] Cf. e.g. Ambos 2010: 17. The non-collaboration of the gods could be used to explain the failure of rituals (Ambos 2007). Conversely, the gods could collaborate with ritual actions that were not necessarily beneficial from a human perspective: the witch takes advantage of this when she persuades the gods to turn against her victim by means of rites that mirror those of the exorcist (cf. Schwemer 2007: 150–151; 159–161).

show that the hierarchical structures violated by transgression are being actively restored and reinforced.

The need for divine support before undertaking any further ritual actions is particularly underscored by the content and structure of the incantation in *Šurpu* IV. The incantation, addressed to Marduk, begins with a short list of possible transgressions (2–10), thus reiterating the primary focus of the two previous tablets. It then goes on to list desired outcomes of the ritual, describing the patient's release from divine punishment and suffering in both literal and metaphorical terms. As expected, the first entries in this section concern the reconciliation of the patient with his personal deities (11–13): *ilu*(dingir) *u* ^{d}*ištar*(15) *kam-lu a-na amēli*(lu_2) *tu-ur-ru bu* / *ilu*(dingir) *šab-šu* ^{d}*ištar*(15) *ze-ni-tu*$_4$ *it-ti amēli*(lu_2) *sul-lu-mu bu* / *ki-ṣir libbi*($ša_3$) *ili*(dingir) *u* ^{d}*ištar*(15) *pa-ṭa-ru bu* 'to return the angry god and goddess to (this) man, (refrain), [12] to make the angry god and angry goddess peaceful with (this) man, (refrain), [13] to loosen the anger (lit. knot of the *libbu*) of the god and goddess, (refrain).' The position of this passage reflects the importance, first and foremost, of reconciling with personal deities, especially as these would be able to act as intermediaries between the sufferer and any higher-ranking deities that were offended by the transgression in question, or who had an active role to play in the coming ritual.[17] After the descriptions of release from suffering, seven groups of gods are invoked to carry out this release (60–66), with the refrain *lipṭur*(*ū*) 'may X loosen' repeated each time. The importance of reconciling with offended personal deities is then reiterated (76–77): *ša*$_2$ *il*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *u* ^{d}*iš*$_8$-*tar*$_2$-*šu*$_2$ *itti*(ki)-*šu*$_2$ *šab-su ina u*$_4$-*me an-ni-i li-is-li-mu itti*(ki)-*šu*$_2$ / *ki-ṣir lib*$_3$-*bi ili*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *u* ^{d}*ištari*(15)-*šu*$_2$ *ša*$_2$ *annanna*(nenni) *mār*(a) *annanna*(nenni) ⌜*lip*⌝-*paṭ-ra-aš*$_2$-*šu*$_2$ '(he) whose god and goddess are angry with him, on this day may they make peace with him,

[17] Cf. Ambos 2010: 23.

[77] may the anger (lit. knot of the *libbu*) of his god and his goddess, of NN son of NN, be loosened for him.' After more descriptions of the patient's suffering, the incantation closes by requesting that various deities stand by the patient (89–108), repeating the refrain *lizziz*(*ū*) 'may X stand by' at the beginning of each line. These deities should support the patient in the divine trial and ritual to remove his suffering, but they especially serve to defend against any future sources of evil that might threaten the patient.

Thus, *Šurpu* IV serves as a transition between the listing of possible transgressions and the ritual acts that will remove their effects and the suffering resulting from their punishment. Recognizing the likelihood of having committed a transgression is an important first step, allowing the patient to directly appeal to the gods and be reconciled with the divine world. The favourable presence of various deities, especially the patient's own personal deities, would have allowed the patient to appeal for mercy before the divine courtroom and ensured that the subsequent ritual acts would work. The fact that the following part of the ritual (*Šurpu* V–VI) begins with an Ea-Marduk dialogue (see § 1.4.2.3) further emphasizes the idea that the power of the exorcist's rituals ultimately relies on the help and cooperation of the gods.

5.3 Ritual actions for the removal of impurity from the patient

Once the cause of the patient's symptoms had been determined to relate to transgression and the gods had heard the patient's case and appeals for release from his punishment, the exorcist could set about removing the source of the patient's symptoms. This involved first removing the impurity from the patient's body and bringing it into a form that could be further manipulated to displace or destroy the impurities as far as possible. This was achieved primarily through the possibilities afforded by the perception of impurity as a form of physical matter.[18] It could therefore be removed from the patient's body by means of washing, rubbing, and fumigation, among other methods. In this way, the impurity could be transferred to the materials used in these processes or to another carrier, which could be more easily destroyed or dispersed. Other methods do not imagine the impurity as 'dirt' but in another physical form, using the idea that the patient is 'bound' by the impurity to allow for its removal through symbolic unbinding rites. The accompanying incantations often provide insight into the perceived workings of the analogical magic achieved by such actions.[19] The evidence of the incantations and the symbolism of actions derived from the wider social context must therefore be combined to explain the reasoning behind the actions of removal rituals, which will also provide further context for the conceptualization of transgression and divine punishment.

[18] Cf. e.g. Maul 1994: 94; Haas 2003: 48–49; Wright 1987: 41–42.
[19] Bottéro (1988: 218) defines *dromena* as "gestes qui traduisent les paroles" and *legomena* as "paroles qui expliquent les gestes et leur donnent tour leur sens."

5.3.1 Removing impurities with water

Water was considered a particularly potent purifying material, for various reasons that will be discussed further below, and as such was employed in a number of ways in purification rites and release rituals. For example, the water held in the *egebbû*-vessel, a container for 'holy water' often employed in *āšipūtu* rituals, consisted of river-, rain-, or spring-water to which other perfuming and purifying materials had been added, and this is probably what is referred to as *mû ellūtu* 'pure water'.[20] The origin of the water contributed to its purity, emerging from the mountains as spring water, from the Apsû as rivers or oceans, or from the heavens as rain, all of which were considered places of inherent purity (see § 5.4.2.2). The importance of acquiring water from these pure sources, is reflected in the invocation of mountain-based water sources, as well as deities and *Mischwesen* associated with them, in the incantations accompanying water-based purification rites.[21] Using water from the source of rivers or from the sea presumably meant that there was little chance that the water had already been in contact with humans or other sources of contamination. The exorcist could therefore be fairly certain that it was not already carrying any impurities that could potentially endanger the patient. It was also this ability to take on and carry impurities that made washing with water a useful method for removing impurity from a person: the water could take up any impurities that rested like a 'film' on the exterior of the patient's body.[22] There would also have been physical displacement of the impurity via the flowing of the water: the constant flow and ever-renewing nature of water sources also contributed to its perceived purity (see § 5.4.2.2).[23] Water that was carrying impurities had to be

[20] Maul 1994: 94–95.
[21] E.g. *Šurpu* VIII 6–9; 39–40; see also § 5.4.2.2.
[22] Cf. Maul 1994: 72–73 ("Schmutzfilm"); Maul 2019: 21.
[23] The movement of water is invoked in a bilingual incantation against the demon Namtar, in which the demon is requested to drip away like the water with which the patient is purified (K. 4619, cf. Geller

disposed of, to avoid the risk of re-infecting the patient or infecting someone else. This could be achieved by washing the patient over the ground, into which the water would soak, with the impurities being dispersed and rendered inaccessible,[24] or over a substitute figurine or other vehicle that could take the impurity away or itself be destroyed.[25]

As well as removing the patient's impurities, regular washing was an important part of many rituals both to avoid contamination from the materials used in the ritual and because the participant had to be physically clean in order to appear before the gods.[26] In the *Bīt rimki* ritual, for example, physical cleansing of the king took place at regular points throughout the ritual. At the beginning and towards the end of the ritual, the king undergoes a *takpertu* 'wiping' rite for the initial cleansing (Nin. Rit. 18–20; 347, see § 5.3.2). In the middle of the ritual, after the initial libations and prayers and before entering the 'houses' that form the central part of the ritual, the king washes himself with water and puts on clean clothes, probably to prevent contamination across different parts of the ritual (Nin. Rit. 173–174):[27] *kīma*(gin$_7$) *an-na-a te-te-ep-šu$_2$ šarru*(lugal) *mê*(a)^{meš} ⌜*i*⌝-[*ram-muk*] / *ṣubāta*(tug$_2$) *ebba*(dadag) *iltabbaš*(mu$_4$.mu$_4$)^{aš2} *mīs*(luḫ) *qātī*(šu)^{min} *ip-*⌜*pu*⌝-[*uš*] 'once you have done this, the king [washes himself] with water, [174] he puts on a clean garment, he performs a hand-washing (rite).' The changing of clothes can also be seen as a symbolic act reflecting the change in status at this point in the ritual – the king is now physically clean and about to embark on rites to counter the

2009: 361–362) 11′–14′: [nam-tar su lu$_2$-u$_{18}$]-⌜lu⌝-ke$_4$ i$_3$-ĝal$_2$ a-gin$_7$ ḫe$_2$-en-zi-zi / ⌜su⌝-bi ḫe$_2$-en-sur-re / [*nam-ta-ru ša$_2$ ina zu-mur*] ⌜*amēli*(lu$_2$)⌝ *ba-šu$_2$-u$_2$ ina zu-um-ri-šu$_2$ li-in-na-si-iḫ-ma* / ⌜*ki*⌝*-ma me-e li-iṣ-ru-ur* '[13′] [the Namtaru that] is present in the man's [body], may it be torn out of his body and [14′] may it drip away like water.'

[24] Cf. *Šurpu* VIII 89–90, cited below, where the earth is explicitly commanded to take the water and impurities away.

[25] In *Bīt rimki*, for example, the king washes himself over a figurine of the witch (cf. CMAwR 9.1 40–43).

[26] Maul 1994: 40.

[27] Schwemer 2019b: 54–55.

sources of impurities. The body is washed before the clean clothes are put over the top and then the hands are washed again to remove any impurities picked up in the process.

In *Šurpu*, among the Sumerian *Kultmittelbeschwörungen* of Tablet IX, which include prayers to purifying plants such as tamarisk, the alkaline plant *maštakal*, or the *uḫūlu*-soap-plant, one incantation is possible addressed to the very act of washing the patient's hands (*Šurpu* IX 88–95):

88 EN_2 šu-luḫ-ḫa-me-en šu-luḫ-ḫa-me-en
89 šu-luḫ-ḫa-me-en ku_3-ga-me-en šu-luḫ-ḫa-me-en sikil-la-me-en
90 šu-luḫ-ḫa-me-en šen-šen-na-me-en šu-luḫ-ḫa-me-en dadag-ga-me-en
91 šu-luḫ-ḫa ku_3-ga-am_3 šu-luḫ-ḫa sikil-la-am_3
92 šu-luḫ-ḫa šen-šen-na-am_3 šu-luḫ-ḫa dadag-ga-am_3
93 lu_2-u_{18}-lu dumu dingir-ra-na an-gin_7 ḫe$_2$-en-ku_3-ga
94 ki-gin_7 ḫe$_2$-en-sikil-la $ša_3$-an-gin_7 ḫe$_2$-en-dadag-ga
95 eme ḫul-gal_2 bar-$še_3$ ḫe$_2$-im-ta-gub

Incantation: You are the hand-washing (rite), you are the hand-washing (rite). [89] You are the hand-washing (rite) – you are pure. You are the hand-washing (rite) – you are clean. [90] You are the hand-washing (rite) – you are clear. You are the hand-washing (rite) – you are bright. [91] The hand-washing (rite) is pure. The hand-washing (rite) is clean. [92] The hand-washing (rite) is clear. The hand-washing (rite) is bright. [93] May (this) man, son of his god, be pure like the sky, [94] may he be clean like the earth, may he be bright like the midst of the sky, [95] may the evil tongue stand away from him.

Since it is surrounded by *Kultmittelbeschwörungen* that directly address the various kinds of water and plants used in ritual, inviting them to become active participants in the ritual,[28] I tentatively suggest that this incantation, although phrased slightly differently, may be introducing the hand-washing ritual as an active agent in the purification process. Possibly speaking against this would be the bilingual kettledrum incantation cited in Reiner's commentary,[29] which reads as follows (e.g. IV R^2 23, 1 rev. iv 3–4):[30] [šu-luḫ-ḫa-me]-˹en˺ šu-luḫ-ḫa-me-en / [*qa-ti-ka*] ˹*mi*˺-*si qa-ti-ka mi-si*. Here, the Akkadian is an imperative 'wash your hands', but this does not appear to

[28] Cf. Perdibon 2019: 179–180.
[29] Reiner 1958: 61. Nor does this passage support Reiner's translation "your hands are washed" (Reiner 1958: 48).
[30] Cf. Linssen 2004: 277.

correspond exactly with the grammar of the Sumerian,[31] so perhaps cannot at present be of use for explaining the form in the *Šurpu* incantation. However it is to be interpreted, the words of the incantation, especially the repetition, at least emphasize the desired result and must have been felt to increase the power of the hand-washing rites.

Another incantation from *Šurpu*, accompanying the cleansing of the patient with water and other purificatory *materia*, makes clear that when the leftover water is disposed of it is taken down into the earth along with the impurities it is carrying (*Šurpu* VIII 83–90):

83 *u₂-tal-lil u₂-tab-bi-ib ur-tam-mi-ik um-te-es-si uz-*˹*zak*˺*-*[*ki*]
84 *ina mê*(a)^{meš} ^{id2}*idiglat*(idigna) ^{id2}*puratti*(buranun) *ellūti*(ku$_3$)^{meš} *mê*(a)^{meš} *ayyabba*(a.ab.ba) *ta-ma-ti* [*rapšāti*(dagal)^{ti3}]
85 *mê*(a)^{meš} *kaspi*(ku$_3$.babbar) *ḫurāṣi*(ku$_3$.si$_{22}$) *erî*(urudu) *annaki*(an.na) *abāri*(a.bar$_2$) ^{na4}*sāmti*(gug) ^{na4}*uqnî*(za.gin$_3$) ^{na4}*ḫulāli*(nir$_2$) ^{na4}*muššari*(˹muš˺.gir$_2$)
86 ^{na4}*pappardillî*(babbar.dili) ^{na4}*papparmini*(babbar.min$_5$) ^{na4}*ab$_3$-aš-mu* ^{na4}*engisî*(en.gi.sa$_6$) *aban*(na$_4$) ^{d}*lamassi*(lamma) ^{na4}*turminî*(dur$_2$.mi$^{?}$.na$^{?}$)
87 ^{na4}*ayyarti*(pa) ^{na4}*zi-bīti*(e$_2$) ^{geš}*bīni*(šinig) ^{u2}*maštakal*(in.nu.uš) ^{geš}*suḫušši*(gišimmar.tur) ^{gi}*qan šalāli* (šul.ḫi) ^{u2}*sikilli*(sikil) *iṣ*(geš) ˹*pišri*(bur$_2$)˺
88 *ina qi$_2$-bit maš-maš ilānī*(dingir)^{meš} *apkal*(abgal) *ilānī*(dingir)^{meš} ^{d}*Marduk*(amar.utu) *bēl*(en) *ba-la$_2$-*˹*ṭi*˺
89 *it-ti mê*(a)^{meš} *ša$_2$ zumri*(su)*-ka u mu-sa-a-ti ša$_2$ qātī*(šu)^{min}*-ka*
90 *liš-ša$_2$-ḫi-iṭ-ma erṣetu*(ki)^{tu4} *lit-bal* ^{d}*gam-lu$_4$ a-ra-an-ka lip-ṭur*

He is purified, he is cleansed, he is bathed, he is washed, he is cleaned, [84] with the pure water of the Tigris (and) Euphrates, the water of the ocean, the [wide] seas, [85] water, silver, gold, bronze, tin, lead, carnelian, lapis lazuli, *ḫulālu-agate*, *serpentine*, [86] *pappardilû*-agate, *papparminu*-agate, *abašmû*-stone, *engisû*-stone, *lamassu*-stone, breccia, [87] *white coral*, *zibītu*-stone, tamarisk, *maštakal*-plant, palm-shoot, *šalālu*-reed, *sikillu*-plant, 'wood of release', [88] by the command of the exorcist of the gods, sage of the gods, Marduk, lord of life, [89] together with the water of your body and the wash-water of your hands, [90] may it be removed and may the earth carry it off, may the *gamlu*-crook loosen your *arnu*-crime-punishment!

The various materials listed are possibly those that were required for producing an *egubbû*-vessel of 'holy water'.[32] The materials would have been added to the water to

[31] A Boğazköy version of a ki-^{d}utu-kam from *Bīt rimki* parallels the same Akkadian phrase with a clearer Sumerian imperative (Cooper 1972: 75, 30): šu-zu šu-luḫ-ḫe šu-zu dadag-ga // *qa-ti-ka mi-si qa-ti-ka ub-bi-ib* 'wash your hands, cleanse your hands!'
[32] Cf. Walker and Dick 2001: 54–56 and Maul 1994: 41–46. At any rate, it does not seem to list the materials required for the entire *Šurpu* ritual (Simons 2017: 115 *contra* Schuster-Brandis 2008: 438).

increase its purificatory power.[33] Appropriately, one of the plants used was *maštakal*, which was an alkaline plant used like soap, therefore having both chemical and magical cleansing powers.[34] This and the other plants listed belong to the category of 'garden plants' (*šammū kirî*) which were cultivated among date-palm plantations and each had special functions within purification rituals.[35] The pure origins of the water, the addition of further purificatory *materia*, and the recitation of incantations like the above all contribute to the special cleansing power of the water.

After the washing rites, two designated categories of water remain: the 'water of the body' (*mû ša zumri*) and the 'wash-water of the hands' (*musâtu ša qātī*). This possibly reflects a two-step cleansing process, in which the body was washed first and then the hand-washing rite was performed, as in the washing accompanying the changing of the king's clothes in *Bīt rimki* discussed above.[36] The reference to the earth carrying off the water suggests that the leftover water was poured or sprinkled onto the ground. It is easy to imagine that the sight of water being absorbed by the soil could be interpreted as the earth taking on the impurities transferred from the patient via the water, and therefore neutralizing their contagiousness. Whether that water was believed to go down to the netherworld (also denoted by *erṣetu*) or into the Apsû (to where rivers could carry impurities), it is nevertheless heading in the general direction of those places, to which evil could be banished without return. The second half of the final line references the *gamlu*-crook, a tool commonly used by the exorcist by the exorcist for purification and repelling evil,[37] that is mentioned elsewhere in the *Šurpu* ritual. Without precise

[33] Maul 1994: 42–44.
[34] Maul 1994: 64.
[35] Maul 1994: 62–65.
[36] *Pace* Simons 2017: 116 who suggests that the *mû ša zumri* could be urine, since *musâti ša qātī* is to be understood as the water used for washing one's hands after going to the toilet (cf. George 2015: 86). It is unclear why these forms of waste-water would appear at this point in the ritual.
[37] On the *gamlu*-crook, cf. Ambos and Krauskopf 2010: 127–132.

ritual instructions, we cannot say for sure how it was used here, but it seems to have been lifted when in use.[38] The divinization of artefacts used in ritual contexts is not uncommon,[39] but the use of the divine determinative here may suggest that the *gamlu*-crook represents an extension of a divine exorcist (see § 1.4.2.3). In another incantation in *Šurpu*, for example, the *gamlu*-crook and other tools of purification are wielded by two forms of the god Amurru (VIII 41–42): ^{d}*Amurru*($^{\lceil}$mar$^{\rceil}$.tu) ^{d}*Il*(dingir)-*amurru*(mar.tu) *na-aš*$_2$ *gam-li banduddê*(ba.an.du$_8$.du$_8$)^{e} *mul-li-lu muš-ši-pu* / *šamê*(an)^{e} *u*$_3$ *erṣeti*(ki)^{ti3} … 'Amurru, Il-amurru,[40] bearer of the *gamlu*-crook (and) the *banduddû*-bucket, who purifies (and) exorcizes [42] heaven and earth …'[41] In the above passage (*Šurpu* VIII 90), the *gamlu*-crook is therefore likely being used to channel the purifying powers of the divine exorcist Amurru through the human exorcist, in order to ensure that the patient is completely purified after completion of the washing rites.

While washing was an important part of many of the exorcist's rituals, the act of washing in and of itself did not completely annihilate impurities, which could only be transferred elsewhere by using the water as a vehicle. However, contaminated water could be more easily managed than the physical manifestation of impurity present on the body of the sufferer:[42] it could be transferred directly into the ground, dumped

[38] An incantation with the incipit *anašši*(il$_2$)^{ši} ^{d}*gam-li-ia a-paṭ-ṭa-rak-ka* […] 'I am lifting my *gamlu*-crooks, I am loosening you […]' is recited in *Šurpu* (VIII 1–5). This action is also attested in iconography (Ambos and Krauskopf 2010: 130).
[39] Cf. e.g. Rendu Loisel 2015: 219–224.
[40] The gods Amurru and Il-amurru should be regarded as one and the same (cf. Beaulieu 2005: 31–32; Schwemer 2001: 32–33), hence the following singular contrast noun *nāš*. Amurru's association with the *gamlu*-crook probably arose from the object's association with the Amorite people but, in the Neo-Assyrian period, he was also an important divine exorcist and purifier (Beaulieu 2005: 35–36; 43–44).
[41] Simons (2017: 92) understands the last two entries as further tools carried by Amurru. Although the *mullilu* 'purifier' is well attested as a tool of the exorcist, the spelling of the genitives and nominative endings here suggest that these are instead epithets of the god Amurru.
[42] Contaminated wash-water was also a potential vector for the contagious contraction of *māmītu*-curse (see § 3.4).

somewhere at safe distance from the patient,[43] or passed into other vehicles that could then be further manipulated (see § 5.3.4). The effectiveness of water as a purifying material also derived from a number of other factors: for example, the origins of water in inherently pure places, or the power to remove impurities deriving from its flowing, ever-renewing nature.

5.3.2 Removing external impurities

Just as water could be passed over the patient's body to absorb impurities, so too could other materials, such as flour, dough, or bread, be rubbed on the patient's body in order to take up the 'film' of impurity that is upon it.[44] These forms of cleansing rite, which have been referred to as "Schälkur",[45] work in a similar way to other symbolic acts of 'stripping' (e.g. of dates from a frond, or peeling garlic, see § 5.4.1.3). Fumigating the body of the patient could also have allowed smoke to remove impurities from the surface of the patient's body.

Rubbing the patient with flour or grains of cereal is called for in the Assur Ritual Tablet of *Šurpu* (10–11; 22–23):[46]

10 … ^{lu2}*marṣu*(ge$_{17}$) *maṣḫata*(zi$_3$.mad.ga$_2$) *i-sar-aq*$^{!}$(AB)
11 ⌜^{lu2}⌝*išippu*(išib)[47] *ina maṣḫati*(zi$_3$.mad.ga$_2$) *u$_2$-kap-par-ma ina išāti*(izi) *inaddi*(šub)^{di}

[43] In everyday life, the disposal of dirty water could be done via the 'sewage outlet' (*asurrû*) of a house, also evoked in the following wish for the expulsion of witches (*Maqlû* II 179): *ki-ma mê*(a)^{meš} *mu-sa-a-ti a-sur-ra-a u$_2$-ma-al-la-šu$_2$-nu-ti* 'like wash-water, I am filling the sewage outlet with them.'
[44] Apart from specific instances where the material, its rubbing, and its disposal are described in detail, there are also references to a more generic 'wiping' (*takpertu*) purification ritual, which appears to have been used to maintain the cleanliness of people and buildings during the course of other rituals (Guichard and Marti 2013: 82). The same verbal root, *kapāru* 'to wipe', is used in the examples below.
[45] Maul 2019: 21.
[46] Cf. Reiner 1958: 11. Lines 22–23 are restored on the basis of lines 10–11 as well as the accompanying incantation in *Šurpu* V–VI 123–143 (cited above, § 3.2.1).
[47] This text (VAT 13613), the only known manuscript containing ritual instructions for *Šurpu*, consistently refers to the person leading the ritual as ^{lu2}išib(ME). The Akkadian term *išippu* ultimately derives from *āšipu*, being the "akkadisation d'un mot sumérien lui-même emprunté à l'akkadien" (Villard 2001: 327), but rather than being a simple "doublet savant", they appear to have been two separate categories of ritual professional. They both appear together, for example, in a list of cultic professional in an inscription of Esarhaddon commemorating the restoration of Esaĝil (RINAP 4 105 vi 23–27): ^{lu2}*i-šip-pi$_2$* ^{lu2}*āšipī*(ka.pirig)^{meš} / [^{lu2}*kalê*(gala)^{meš} ^{lu2}]*nārī*(nar)^{meš} / *ša$_2$ gi-mir um-ma-nu-tu$_2$* / *ḫa-am-mu uš-ziz* / *ma-ḫar-šu-un* … '[26] I set [27] before them [23] *išippu*-exorcists, *āšipu*-exorcists, [24] [*kalû*-

… the patient strews *maṣḫatu*-flour, [11] the exorcist wipes (him) with the *maṣḫatu*-flour and casts it into the fire.

22 [*zēr*(še.numun) *u₂-pu-un-tu₂* [lu2]⌜*marṣu*(ge₁₇)⌝ *ina up-ni-šu ile ileqqe*(ti)[qe2]*-ma*
⌜*inaqqi*(bal)[?]⌝[*qi*2?]
23 [*ina zēr*(še.numun) *u₂-pu-un*(?)]-⌜*tu₂*[?]⌝ *ra-man-šu₂ u₂-kap-par-ma ina*
⌜*išāti*(izi)⌝ [*inaddi*(šub)[di](?)]

The patient takes [*grain*(*s*) of *upuntu-cereal*] in his cupped hands and [*pours* (*it*) *out as a libation*], [23] [… with the *grain*(*s*) of *upuntu-cereal*(?)], he wipes himself and [casts(?)) it into the fire.

While burning is indeed the *Šurpu* ritual's primary means of transforming impurity-carrying materials (see § 5.4.1.2), the burning of cereal grains, as a form of plant seed, also served to render them infertile. The infertility of the roasted grain or seed was symbolic of the desired impotence of the evil that it represented, a relationship that is explained by the accompanying incantation (*Šurpu* V–VI 130–143):

130 *ki-ma zēr*(še.numun) *maṣḫati*(zi₃.mad.ga₂) *an-ni-i ina išāti*(izi) *iq-*⌜*qal*⌝-[*lu-u*]
131 *mār*(dumu) [lu2]*ikkari*(engar) *ina ṣēri*(edin) *la ir-*⌜*ri*⌝-[*šu*]
132 *ina īki*(e) *u palgi*(pa₅) *la in-nim-me-*[*du*]
133 ⌜*šur*⌝*-šu-šu qaq-qa-ru la i-ṣab-ba-tu*
134 *ḫabbūr*(ḫenbur₂)*-šu la illû*(e₁₁)*-ma* [d]*Šamaš*(utu) *la immaru*(igi)*[ru]*
135 *ma-mit-*⌜*su*⌝ *a-a ib-ba-ni ina lib₃-bi-ia*
136 *šur-šu-*⌜*šu a*⌝*-a iṣ-ba-tu e-ṣe-en-ṣe-ru*
137 *ḫabbūr*(ḫenbur₂)*-šu a-a il-pu-ut šamê*(an)*[e] lib₃-bi-ia*
138 [*ni-šu ma-mit*] *tur-ta maš-al-tu*
139 [*muruṣ*(ge₁₇) *ta-ne-ḫi ar₂-ni šer₃*]*-ti gil₂-la-ti ḫi-*[*ti-ti*]
140 [*murṣu*(ge₁₇) *ša ina zumri*(su)*-ia₅ šīrī*(uzu)][meš]*-ia₅ šer ʾānī*(sa)[[meš]*-ia₅ ibaššû*(gal₂)*[u]*]
141 [*ki-ma zēr*(še.numun) *maṣḫati*(zi₃.mad.ga₂) *an*]*-ni-i* ⌜*li*[i]⌝-[*iq-qa-lu*]
142 *ina* [*u₄-me an-ni-i* [d]]⌜*gira₂*⌝ *qa-*⌜*mu*⌝-[*u liq-mi*]
143 *ma-*⌜*mit*⌝ [*lit-ta-ṣi-ma a-na*]*-ku nūra*(zalag₂) *lu-*⌜*mur*⌝

Just like this grain of *maṣḫatu*-flour which is [burned] in the fire, [131] which the farmer will not sow in the steppe, [132] which will not come into contact with the dyke or irrigation channel, [133] whose roots will not seize the ground, [134] whose shoot will not come up and will not see the sun, [135] (so too) may its *māmītu*-curse not be engendered inside me, [136] may its roots not seize (my) spine, [137] may its shoot not touch the 'sky' of my insides. [138] [*Nīšu*-oath, *māmītu*-curse], 'turning', questioning, [139] [wailing-illness, *arnu*-crime-punishment, *šērtu*-offence-penalty], *gillatu*-sin-punishment, *ḫiṭītu*-wrongdoing-punishment, [140] [the illness which is in my body], my [flesh, my] 'strings', [141] [just like] this [grain of *maṣḫatu*-flour], may [they be burned], [142] on [this day, may] Girra [burn them] completely, [143] [may] *māmītu*-curse [be removed and] may I see the light.

lamentation-priests], *nāru*-singers, [26] who have gathered [25] the whole of (their) expertise. [27] …' As far as *Šurpu* is concerned, Cythia Jean (2006: 87) considers the primary officiant to be the *āšipu*, while the *išippu* "prêtre-purificateur" assists him in what is essentially a purification ritual.

The nature of flour and its seemingly uncountable grains could also symbolize the patient's potentially innumerable transgressions, punishments, and other sources of suffering, represented by the formulaic list in the second half of the incantation (138–140). Additionally, by being placed in the patient's hands or rubbed on his body, the grains could remove physical impurities from his body before being disposed of.[48]

While the remains of materials wiped on the patient's body are, as expected, disposed of by burning in *Šurpu*, these materials could also be disposed of in other ways. In a namerimburruda-ritual, for example, dough made from the flours of various grains and legumes is wiped on the patient and then fed to animals (KAL 10, Nr. 40–44, 59–68):

59 ⌜zi$_3$ še⌝-muš$_5$ niĝ$_2$-ge$_{17}$ gidim-ma-ke$_4$
qe$_2$-⌜em⌝ še-gu-ši ik-kib e-ṭem$_2$-me
60 ⌜zi$_3$ ge$_{17}$-ba⌝ niĝ$_2$-ge$_{17}$ dingir-re-e-ne-ke$_4$
⌜*qe-em*⌝ [*ki*]-⌜*ba*⌝-*ti ik-kib ilānī*(dingir)^{meš}
61 zi$_3$ [gu$_2$-niĝ$_2$]-ar$_3$-ra zi$_3$ ^{še}in-nu-ḫa šu u-me-ti
⌜*qe$_2$-em*⌝ *kiš-ša$_2$-ni qe$_2$-em in-ni-ni le-qe-ma*
62 [teš$_2$-bi u]-me-ni-ḫe-ḫe : *ištēniš*(1)^{niš} *bu-lul-ma*
63 [lu$_2$-u$_{18}$-lu] dumu dingir-ra-na u-me-ni-te-gur-gur
a-me-lu mār(dumu) *ili*(dingir)-*šu$_2$ kup-pir-ma*
64 [niĝ$_2$-sila$_{11}$]-⌜ĝa$_2$⌝ su gur-gur-ra-bi
li-i-ša$_2$ ša$_2$ zu-mur-šu$_2$ tu-kap-pi-ru
65 [mušen ḫe$_2$]-⌜en⌝-gu$_7$-e ⌜tu⌝-ra-bi he$_2$-en-ba-⌜ba⌝
[*iṣṣūru*(mušen)] *li-kul-ma mu-ru-⌜us⌝-su liš-šur*
66 [ku$_6$ ḫe$_2$-en]-⌜gu$_7$⌝-e tu-ra-⌜bi⌝ ḫe$_2$-en-zi-zi
[*nūnu*(ku$_6$) *li*]-*kul-ma mu-ru-us-su li-is-suḫ*
67 [mušen ḫe$_2$-en]-gu$_7$-e mušen an-na-ke$_4$ nam-tar-bi ḫa-ba-ib$_2$-e$_{11}$-de$_3$
[*iṣṣūru*(mušen)] ⌜*li*⌝-*kul*-⌜*ma*⌝ *nam-ta-ra-šu$_2$ iṣ-ṣu-ru* ⌜*a*$^{?}$-*na*$^{?}$⌝ *šamê*(an)^{e} *li-še-li*
68 [ku$_6$ ḫe$_2$-en]-⌜gu$_7$⌝-e a$_2$-sag$_3$-a-ni ku$_6$ engur-ra-ke$_4$ ḫa-ba-ib$_2$-gid$_2$-⌜gid$_2$⌝
[*nūnu*(ku$_6$) *li*]-⌜*kul*⌝-*ma a-sak-ka-šu$_2$ nu-nu a-na ap-se-e liš-du-⌜ud*⌝

[61] Take [59] *šeguššu*-barley flour, *ikkibu*[49] of the ghost, [60] wheat flour, *ikkibu* of the gods, [61] *kiššanu*-legume flour, *inninnu*-grain flour and [62] mix them together and [63] wipe the man, son of his god, (with them) and [64] (as for) the dough with which you wipe his body, [65] may [a bird] eat it and take away his illness, [66] [may a fish] eat it and tear out his illness, [67] may [a bird] eat it and may the bird carry his fate up *to* the sky, [68] [may a fish] eat it and may the fish drag his *asakku*-demon to the Apsû.

By feeding the dough to both a bird and a fish, the impurities contained within will be distributed widely in the environment: into the sky with the bird and, via the freshwater

[48] Cf. Maul 2019: 155.
[49] On the use of the term *ikkibu* here, see § 2.1.2.1.

which the fish inhabits, down to the Apsû.[50] The simultaneous release of fish and birds is a standard motif found in a variety of ritual contexts.[51] In this case, the impurities are taken far away from parts of the universe inhabited by humans, and can be compared to the use of earth-dwelling animals, and even sometimes humans, to carry impurities away from the urban world into the steppe (see § 5.3.4.1 and § 5.4.2.1). Flour, dough, and bread were especially useful for these 'wiping' rites because they were particularly absorbent.[52] They could also be fundamentally transformed by burning. Flour, once burnt, could no longer be transformed into dough or bread and was therefore rendered relatively useless, while dough, when heated, would have undergone a clear visual transformation. Likewise, the evil contained in the flour should, by analogy, no longer be contagious, while the transformation of the carrier material was believed to reduce the dangerousness of the impurity contained therein. Being edible, such materials could also be transformed or displaced by feeding them to animals.

Sometimes, 'sticky' materials were used as the base of a '*māmītu* salve' (*napšalti māmīti*), presumably to help lift the 'film' of impurity off the patient's body (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 76–77, 19–20): ^{geš}*al-la-nu imbu*ʾ(ka) *tam-ti*$_3$ ^{u2}*azallû*(a.zal.la$_2$) ^{šim}*murru*(ses) *ištēniš*(1)^{niš} *tasâk*(sud$_2$) *ina ḫimēti*(i$_3$.nun) / *dišpi*(lal$_3$) *u*$_3$ *iškūri*(du$_8$.lal$_3$) *ištēniš*(1)^{niš} *taballal*(ḫe.ḫe) *tapaššaš*(eš)-*su nap-šal-ti māmīti*(nam.rim) 'you pound together acorn, algae, *azallû*-plant, (and) myrrh, ^{20} you mix (them) together ^{19} in ghee, ^{20} syrup, and wax, you smear him (with it). (It is) the salve (for) *māmītu*.' Here the use of wax, as well as ghee and syrup, suggest that stickiness may have been the desired property of

[50] For another way in which animals could transform contaminated materials by eating them, see the discussion of *sassatu*-grass at § 5.4.2.2.
[51] Cf. e.g. Schramm 2008: 44–45; 208–111; Cavigneaux and Donbaz 2007: 321–33; Livingstone 2000.
[52] Cf. Haas 2003: 92. It has been suggested that the mixtures of flour and water offered to ghosts might have served as a sort of sticky paste "to literally glue the complaining ghost's mouth shut" (Scurlock 2006: 47).

the *materia* involved.[53] This contrasts with the use of 'slippery' materials, including the heated forms of some of the above materials, to aid the removal of impurity from inside the patient's body (see § 5.3.3).

Fumigation of the patient with incense was another way in which the physical manifestation of impurity on the exterior of the patient's body could be removed.[54] The impurity was probably understood to be absorbed into the smoke and therefore carried up into the sky where it would be dispersed.[55] Incantations against demons and witches often call for their targets to be dispersed like smoke (e.g. UH I 35′): i-bi$_2$-gin$_7$ an-na ḫa-ba-e$_{11}$-de$_3$ 'may you go up to the sky like smoke.' The smell of the incense also provided a tangible sensory experience, through which the patient could more easily envisage the impurity being absorbed into the smoke and carried away into the sky.[56] Incense was also endowed with an inherent purity, since the sources of incense generally grew in the pure mountains (*Šurpu* IX 96–98): EN$_2$ na-de$_3$ kur-ta ri-a kur-ra-ta sig$_7$-ga / na-de$_5$-ga-am$_3$ kur-ra-ta e$_3$-a / $^{\text{šim}}$li $^{\text{šim.geš}}$erin na-de$_3$ kur-ta ri-a 'Incantation: incense, engendered from the mountain, born from the mountain, [97] it is incense, coming out from the mountain, [98] juniper, cedar, incense, born from the mountain.'[57] The smoke of incense and other aromatic plants offered a relatively easy way to have

[53] Syrup could also be used symbolically in mouth-washing rites for its sweetness (see § 5.3.3).
[54] It is therefore no coincidence that the ritual series *Muššuʾu*, concerning the use of salves, and *Qutāru*, concerning the use of fumigants, are considered "companion series" (Finkel 1991: 103–104), as both comprise incantations accompanying therapeutic treatments applied to the exterior of the body.
[55] Smoke going up to the sky as an analogy for something disappearing or perishing is also found, for example, in the Akkadian treaty between Šuppiluliyuma and Šattiwaza (Wright 1993: 481).
[56] *Pace* Rendu Loisel (2013: 250–251), who envisages a 'pure' cloud of smoke blowing away an 'evil' cloud of impurity. Her suggestion (2013: 251) that the censer and torch were used to cause the patient to sweat seems unlikely. The patient would probably have been sweating already because of the illness caused by the source of evil, which can then be commanded to leave the body along with the sweat.
[57] For the translations of ri and sig$_7$, see Schramm 2008: 78–79, 249.

impurities carried into the sky,[58] a pure and remote place where the smoke could be dispersed over a wide area and its contagious potential diminished.

5.3.3 Removing internal impurities

The notion that impurity could manifest in a physical form also within the patient's body, allowed similar methods to be employed to remove it from inside the patient. This was particularly important for the treatment of *māmītu*-curse, as it was often associated with symptoms in the internal organs (see § 2.2 and § 4.3.2). For example, the patient could be forced to expel the evil from his mouth (KAL 10, Nr. 79, 24′): [*ḫīl*(illu)] ⌜*abukkati*(li¹.tur) *ša šadî*(kur)^{i} *tasâk*(sud$_2$) *ina ḫi-iq šikari*(kaš) [*tašaqqi*(nag)]-*šu*$_2$ *ina kappi*(a$_2$) *tu*$_2$-*šap-raš-šum-*⌜*ma*⌝ [*iballuṭ*] 'you pound [resin] of the *abukkatu*-plant of the mountains, [you have] him [drink it] in diluted beer, you cause him to vomit with a feather and [he will get better].' The exorcist presumably tickles the back of the patient's throat with the feather to force him to vomit, but it is the beer-based concoction drunk beforehand that provides a vehicle within which the impurities can pass out of the body. Without mention of vomiting, the drinking of enchanted water or beer could be prescribed to treat the illness associated with *māmītu*-curse (KAL 10, Nr. 53, 13–14): KID$_3$.KID$_3$.BI *lu ana muḫḫi*(ugu) *mê*(a)^{meš} *lu ana muḫḫi*(ugu) *šikari*(kaš.sag) / *šipta*(en$_2$) 3-*šu*$_2$ *tamannu*(šid)^{nu}-*ma tašaqqi*(nag)-*šu* 'its ritual: [14] you recite the incantation three times [13] either over water or over beer [14] and you have him drink it.' The flowing of the liquid means it could physically dislodge impurities, but there is presumably also a magical importance to the fact that the liquid is enchanted.[59]

[58] In contrast perhaps to the expense and difficulties involved in capturing and releasing birds (see § 5.3.4.1). Alasdair Livingstone (2000: 384) argues, however, that the frequency of bird release rituals in the hemerologies meant that "they represent a type of cult which was practised for the benefit of the common man".

[59] This is probably the '*māmītu* drink' (*mašqīt māmīti*) attested in other sources (cf. Maul 2019: 249, with references).

Are we to imagine that the enchanted liquid, aided by the power of the incantation, washes the evil out of the patient's digestive tract, to be passed out in his urine?

Alternatively, the impurities could be expelled using laxatives, administered orally or by enema, recipes for which can be found in prescriptions against *māmītu*-illness (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 70–72, 6–8; 29–31:

6 *ana bulluṭi*(ti)-*šu*$_2$ *zēr*(numun) ^{geš}*kūri*(gi.zu$_2$.lum.ma) *dadāna*(kiši$_{16}$)$^{a-na}$ *šammu*(u$_2$) *mat-qu*
7 *ištēniš*(diš)^{niš} *tasâk*(sud$_2$) *ina karāni*(geštin) *danni*(kala.ga) *taḫaššal*(gaz)
8 *la*$_3$ *pa-tan tašaqqi*(nag)-*šu*$_2$ *ina šuburri*(dur$_2$)-*šu*$_2$ *iššer*(si.sa$_2$)-*ma iballuṭ*(ti)^{uṭ}

In order to heal him: seed of *kūru*-plant, *dadānu*-thorn, 'sweet plant', [7] you pound them together, you crush them in strong wine, [8] you have him drink (this) on an empty stomach. It will pass straight out of his behind and he will get better.

29 *ina šikari*(kaš) *u ṭābāti*(a.geštin.na) *tu-lab-bak ina* ⌜*a-tu*⌝*-gi te-se-ker*
30 [*ina še-ri*$_3$] *tušellâ*(e$_{11}$)^{a} *ta-ša*$_2$-*ḫal dišpa*(lal$_3$) *u šamna*(i$_3$) *ḫal-ṣa ana libbi*(ša$_3$) *taḫaššal*(gaz)
31 *baḫ-ru-su ana šuburri*(dur$_2$)-*šu*$_2$ *tatabbak*(dub)^{ak} *ina šuburri*(dur$_2$)-*šu iššer*(si.sa$_2$)-*ma iballuṭ*(ti)

You soften (the plants) in beer and vinegar, you heat (this mixture) in an oven, [30] [in the morning], you bring it up, you sieve it, you pound honey and filtered oil inside it. [31] While it is still hot, you pour it into his behind. It will pass straight out of his behind and he will get better.

The use of enemas appears to have been restricted to the treatment of *māmītu*-curse since it primarily afflicted the lower part of the *libbu*, in contrast to witchcraft, which generally afflicted the upper part of the *libbu*.[60] Therefore, while on one level this constitutes a strictly medical procedure, in that the enema is intended to ease the physical symptoms of the abdomen, it also has a magical element akin to the use of water for removing impurities (§ 5.3.1).[61] The liquid would absorb any material impurities present in the patient's abdomen and be flushed out with them. The contaminated liquids would then presumably have to be disposed of safely like the

[60] Cf. Schwemer 2007: 253, with § 2.2.2 and § 4.2.2. Enemas seem to have been used for the treatment of witchcraft only when the victim was also afflicted by *māmītu*-curse.
[61] It has been suggested that the "view of illness as an intruder may have favoured the use of emetics, also in case where there was no digestive upset" (Van der Toorn 1985: 69). The idea that *māmītu*-disease was perceived as an intruder is certainly supported by the portrayal of the demonized *māmītu* stalking her victim, even if we do not have vivid descriptions of the *māmītu*-demon entering the victim's home, as other demons are often described.

water used in other cleansing rites. While the identity and medical effectiveness of many of the plants used in the laxative solutions probably cannot be determined, in other cases, *materia* that have physically lubricating properties were added to the mixture (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 76–77, 13–14): *annûti*(šeš) *ištēniš*(1)^{niš} *tasâk*(sud$_2$) *ina šikari*(kaš) *tušabšal*(šeg$_6$)^{šal} *šamna*(i$_3$) *ḫimēta*(i$_3$.nun) *ana libbi*(ša$_3$) *tanaddi*(šub) *baḫrūt*(ne)-*su* / *ana šuburri*(dur$_2$)-*šu*$_2$ *tatabbak*(dub)-*ma iballuṭ*(tin) 'you pound these (aforementioned plants) together, you cook them in beer, you put oil and ghee inside. While it is still hot, [14] you pour it into his behind and he will get better.' The warm oil and ghee are presumably used for their lubricating properties, helping the impurities to slip out of the patient's insides.[62] This contrasts with the use of 'sticky' materials to lift impurities off of the exterior of the body (see § 5.3.2), for which ghee was also used. The use of ghee in both contexts must rely on the fact that it could be in a solid or liquid state when cold or hot respectively.

The idea that such treatments physically cleansed the patient's insides is reflected in the frequent use of similes comparing the purification of the patient to the cleaning of vessels (e.g. *Šurpu* VII 80–83):[63]

80 lu$_2$-u$_{18}$-lu dumu dingir-ra-na ḫe$_2$-en-ku$_3$-ga ḫe$_2$-en-sikil ḫe$_2$-en-dadag
81 *a-me-lu mār*(dumu) *ili*(dingir)-*šu*$_2$ *li*-*lil li-bi-ib li-im-mir*
82 ^{dug}bur-šagan-gin$_7$: *kīma*(gin$_7$) *pu-ur šik-ka-ti lim-te-es-si* : u-me-ni-luḫ-luḫ
83 ^{dug}bur-i$_3$-nun-na-gin$_7$: *kīma*(gin$_7$) *pu-ur ḫi-me-ti liš*-*tak-kil* : u-me-ni-su-ub-su-ub

May (this) man, son of his god, be pure, may he be cleansed, may he shine, [82] like a bowl for oil may he be washed, [83] like a bowl for ghee may he be wiped down.

This passage is a standard closing formula for purification rites, found in a number of other rituals.[64] It is perhaps noteworthy, however, that the vessels are specified as those

[62] A possible parallel can be found in an ancient Greek prescription of egg whites to pregnant women "to make the baby literally slip out" (Scurlock 1995–1996: 251).
[63] On the terminology of cleaning, see § 2.3.2.
[64] E.g. CMAwR 8.15.1 81″–83″; UH IV 192′–195′. Cf. Abusch and Schwemer 2016: 133 and Schwemer 2009: 57, with further references.

for oil and ghee, since these materials were also used in physically cleaning the patient out because of their lubricating properties. This standard formula is found in the Udug-ḫul ritual, where the demons are compared to clay vessels that are to be smashed or the contents of such vessels which are to be poured out.[65] It is possible that the incantation describing the smashing of a pot was accompanied by the very action described.[66] Whether the above incantations would have been accompanied by the physical scrubbing of a vessel, in order to produce an analogous cleansing within the patient's body, is unclear, but perhaps less likely given the formulaic nature of the passage.

5.3.4 Transferring the impurity to a vehicle or substitute

5.3.4.1 Animals and humans as vehicles of impurity and substitutes

In addition to the *materia* discussed above, humans, animals, and figurines could be employed as vehicles or substitutes to carry the impurity away from the patient. As with other *materia*, the impurities could be transferred from the patient to these carriers through direct contact, or using water, dough, etc. as a vector. However, they could also, through symbolic rites and actions, become a substitute for the patient or come to represent the source of impurity, also taking on the patient's impurities in both cases. Arguably the most recognizable instance of using an animal as a substitute is the 'scapegoat', represented in the Mesopotamian context by a number of specially designated ritual goats and sheep which appear to have been used primarily in the treatment of demon-borne illnesses and less commonly with transgressions.[67] In the

[65] UH VI 146′: dug-gin$_7$ ḫe$_2$-en-ta-gaz a-˹gin$_7$˺ [ḫe$_2$]-en-ta-de$_2$ // [*ki-ma*] ˹*kar*˺-*pa-ti li-iḫ-tap-pu-u* [*ki-ma*] *me-e lit-tab-ku* 'may they be broken [like] a (clay) pot, may they be poured out [like] water.'
[66] Geller 2016: 23.
[67] Cf. e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 48–51, 67–76, although this forms part of *Bīt rimki*, so the scapegoat is being used in the context of many different sources of evil, including transgression. Elsewhere in *Bīt rimki*, the palace is described being purified with three animals, the maš$_2$-ḫul-dub$_2$-ba, the maš$_2$-gi-izi-la$_2$, and the udu-ti-la, acting as substitutes (Nin. Rit. 20–23, cf. Schwemer 2019b: 46–47). The maš$_2$-ḫul-dub$_2$-ba rite is described in more detail in an incantation from Udug-ḫul, in which Ea

case of the scapegoat-type rites, the substitute effectively carries out the patient's destiny by dying in his stead.[68] This is a similar process to the ritual killing and burial of figurines (§ 5.3.4.2) and, by dying, the substitutes also take the patient's impurities down to the netherworld, where they can be safely contained. The release of prisoners and animals, on the other hand, works in a slightly different way: they also carry off the patient's impurities but, by releasing them, the hope is that the gods will bestow the same fate upon the patient and release him from his suffering. Indeed, many of the methods for ritual release work on both a literal level, by physically displacing or carrying off impurities, and on an analogical level, by symbolically representing the desired outcome.

As part of the *Bīt rimki* ritual, the king and the exorcist release prisoners and a variety of animals (Nin. Rit. B 6′–7′; 13′–16′):[69]

6′ *šinā*(2) *ša*$_2$ *bīt*(e$_2$) *ṣi-*˹*bit*˺-[*ti umaššar*(bar)^{ar2}*-ma kam iqabbi*(du$_{11}$.ga)]
7′ ˹*ina*˺ *an-ni-šu*$_2$*-nu a-kis-su-nu-ti* [*aṣ-ṣur napšāti*(zi)^{meš}*-šu-nu-ma*]

[(The king) releases] two prisoners [and speaks thus:] 7′ "I saved them from their *annu*-punishments, [I protected their lives]."

13′ *kurkâ*(kur.gi)^{mušen} *tumaššar*(bar)^{ar2}*-ma* ˹EN$_2$˺ [kur-gi^{mušen} kur-ta *tamannu*(šid)^{nu}]
14′ *paspasa*(bibad)^{mušen} *tumaššar*(bar)^{ar2}*-ma* ˹EN$_2$˺ [buru$_5$ a-ab-ba in-tu-ud *tamannu*(šid)^{nu}]
15′ *šittā*(2) *summāti*(tu)$^{mušen.meš}$ *tumaššar*(bar)^{ar2}*-ma* [EN$_2$ ka la$_2$-e-de$_2$ za la$_2$-e-de$_3$ *tamannu*(šid)^{nu}]
16′ *šinā*(2) *nūnī*(ku$_6$)^{meš} *tumaššar*(bar)^{ar2}-˹*ma*˺ [EN$_2$ ku$_6$ a-ab-ba *tamannu*(šid)^{nu}]

You release a goose and [recite] the incantation ["Goose, from the mountains."] 14′ You release a duck and [recite] the incantation ["It bore the prawns."] 15′ You release two doves and [recite the incantation "To bind the mouth, to bind the *man*."] 16′ You release two fish and [recite the incantation "Fish of the sea."]

instructs Marduk in how to treat the patient (UH XII 65–98; 108–110), as well as in *Bīt mēseri* and a number of other rituals. Sumerian incantations referred to by the names of these animals are also known, but they remain unpublished (cf. Borger 1971: 86). Cavigneaux 1995 gives a brief overview of the evidence for these rites, but a detailed study into the nature and scope of Mesopotamian scapegoat rites remains as desideratum.

[68] Verderame 2013: 313.

[69] Schwemer 2019b: 66–67. See Schwemer 2019b: 80–81 for the reconstruction of incantation incipits and their attestations.

Not only does the act of releasing the prisoners and animals mirror the release from suffering that the patient wishes to obtain from the gods, but by releasing a variety of beings, human and animal, the patient's impurities are widely dispersed across different parts of the world (see § 5.4.2.2). In the Uruk version of the ritual instructions, it is specified that fourteen prisoners are released, and the accompanying incantation is given in full (62–72):[70]

62 *rubû*(nun) *sebet*(7) *imitti*(15) *sebet*(7) *šumēli*(150) *maḫar*(igi) ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *ša*$_2$ *bīt*(e$_2$)
ṣib-it-tu$_2$ *u*$_2$*-šeš-šeb-ma kam iqabbi*(du$_{11}$.ga)
63 EN$_2$ *ina an-ni-šu*$_2$*-nu a-kis-su-nu-ti aṣ-ṣur*^{l}(nim) *napšāti*(zi)^{meš}*-šu*$_2$*-nu-ma*
64 *u*$_2$*-kal-lim* ^{d}*šamši*(utu)^{ši} ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *ūmi*(u$_4$)^{mi}*-šam-ma u*$_2$*-ṣur napišt*(zi)*-i*$_{14}$
65 *li-te-diš pa-le-e ina maḫar*(igi) ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *ba-la*$_2$*-ṭi lu da-ar*$_2$
66 *kīma*(gin$_7$) *ḫurāṣi*(ku$_3$.si$_{22}$) *i-dir-ti a-a ar*$_2$*-ši lu šar-ku-nim-ma*
67 *ūm*(u$_4$)^{um} *balāṭi*(ti.la) *arkūti*(gid$_2$.da)^{meš} *maḫar*(igi) ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *ana-ku lul-qe*$_2$
68 *mim-ma lem-nu ša*$_2$ *ina ekalli*(e$_2$.gal)*-ia*$_5$ *ibaššû*(gal$_2$)^{u2} *iḫeppû*(gaz)^{u2} *lib*$_3$*-bi*
69 *ina ši-kin-ti pi-i-ka u qa-be*$_2$*-e-ka*
70 *lu-u*$_2$ *na-aš-kun lu ṭa-rid lu ta-bil*
71 *lu-u*$_2$ *dup-pur lu-u*$_2$ *uk-kuš ina zumri*(su)*-ia*$_5$
72 *rubû*(nun) *uš-taḫ-ḫat-ma ana māt*(kur) *nukurti*(ki.bal) *innezzebū*(tag$_4$)^{meš}*-ni*

The prince sets prisoners before Šamaš, seven on the right, seven on the left, and speaks thus: [63] Incantation: I saved them from their *arnu*-punishments, I protected their lives and [64] showed (them) the sun. O Šamaš, protect my life every day! [65] May my reign constantly renew itself, may my life be everlasting before Šamaš. [66] Like gold, may I have no patina,[71] may [67] long days of life [66] be bestowed upon me, [67] may I receive (this) before Šamaš. [68] Any Evil, which is present in my palace (and) breaks my *libbu*,[72] [69] by decree of your mouth and your command, [70] may it be set (aside), may it be driven out, may it be carried off, [71] may it stay away, may it be expelled from my body. [72] The prince washes himself off and they are released into enemy land.

The king's impurity should be removed as far from his body as possible: the symbolically important number of prisoners and their placement on both sides of the ritual set-up ensure that it is spread widely. The fact that *Bīt rimki* is a royal ritual means that the exorcist would have had sufficient resources at his expense to arrange the release of a number of animals and transport the prisoners to the border of the land, and

[70] Schwemer 2019b: 88–89.
[71] Lit. 'darkening' (< *adāru* 'to become dark'), this also plays on the same term's figurative meaning 'sorrow'.
[72] For this expression, see § 2.2.3.

indeed only the king would have been able to provide prisoners for such a ritual.[73] The expense of the undertaking would have been well worth it, however, as the release of prisoners released impurity from the king's body in several way. The borders of the enemy lands are as far as one could get from the king's body in the royal capitals at the centre of the Mesopotamian world, and also represent the borders of the civilized world, so the prisoners and the impurity which they are carrying are released into the chaotic world beyond where its danger is muted. This simultaneously serves a politically expedient purpose: the impurity carried by the prisoners is now abroad in an enemy land and could potentially infect the enemy.[74]

The release of prisoners is also connected to the divine trial (see § 1.4.2.2) and, by demonstrating his own merciful nature by releasing prisoners, the king is encouraging Šamaš to show mercy towards him and release him from the potential suffering brought on by the various sources of evil that *Bīt rimki* addresses.[75] Indeed, in the accompanying incantation, the king declares that he is saving the prisoners from *arnu*-punishment (Nin. Rit. B 7′; Uruk Rit. 63), a term often used in the context of transgression (§ 2.1.3.1). By upholding his responsibilities as the earthly representative of divine justice, the king is demonstrating that order is maintained and reconciling with important gods that he may have alienated through an inadvertent lapse of responsibility. The restoration of order is an important part of releasing the impurity caused by transgressions, especially since such transgressions are usually framed as violations of the cosmic order. The release of prisoners is also a particularly appropriate

[73] The use of figurines in other rituals would indeed have been a cheaper and more easily accessible alternative to the use of living substitutes (cf. Verderame 2013: 313).
[74] Ambos 2012: 94.
[75] Ambos 2012: 94.

symbolic act, since the state of suffering caused from *māmītu*-curse is often described in terms of imprisonment and its removal in terms of release from captivity (see § 4.1).

Like prisoners, captured animals could also be released as a symbolic act of mercy, as described in the ritual instructions of the Uruk version of *Bīt rimki* (101–106):[76]

101 *šinā*(2) *iṣṣurī*(mušen) *šamê*(an)^{e} *taṣabbat*(dab)-*ma* ⌜*kamkammāt*(ḫar)^{meš}⌝
⌜*ḫurāṣi*⌝([ku$_3$].⌜si$_{22}$⌝) *ina šēpi*(gir$_3$)-*šu$_2$-nu tašakkan*(gar)^{an}-*šu$_2$-nu-ti*
102 *šaman*(i$_3$.geš) *pūri*(bur) *el*-⌜*lu*⌝ [*ana muḫḫi*(ugu) *qaqqadi*(sag.du)(?)]-*šu$_2$-nu*-{*ti*}
tanaddi(šub)^{di}
103 *ina imitti*(15) *u šumēli*(150) [*šarri*(lugal)$^{?}$] ⌜*tanašši*(il$_2$)-*ma*⌝ *šīra*(uzu) *u$_3$* [x] ⌜*ma$^{?}$-la$^{?}$*⌝
104 *ina šīri*(uzu) $^{a\ mu?}$ x x ⌜*šu$^{?}$-a*⌝-*tu$_4$* ⌜*šaknu*(gar)^{nu}⌝ *tušakkal*(gu$_7$)-*šu$_2$*-⌜*nu*⌝-*ti*
105 *um-ma* ⌜*at-ta-ma* ^{d}⌝[*Šamaš*(utu)] *dayyān*(⌜di⌝.ku$_5$) *šamê*(an) *u erṣeti*(ki)^{ti3} *at-ta*
106 ⌜*šarru*(lugal) *iqabbi*(du$_{11}$.ga)-*ma ana*⌝ *erēb* ⌜*šamši*⌝ (⌜^{d}utu⌝.e$_3$) *u ṣīt šamši* (^{d}utu.šu$_2$.a)
šarru(lugal) *umaššar*(bar)-*šu$_2$-nu-ti-ma*

You capture two wild birds (lit. birds of the sky) and you placed gold rings on their feet, [102] you put pure oil from a bowl [*on top of*] their [*heads*], [103] you raise them up on the right and left [of the king] and [104] you feed them [103] meat and […], *as much* [104] *of that … that has been placed* in the meat. [105] You (speak) as follows: "You are [Šamaš], judge of heaven and earth", [106] the king speaks (the same), and then the king releases them to the west and the east.

The release of birds is standard element found in many rituals contexts (see § 5.3.2). Capturing wild birds and then releasing them, rather than hunting and killing them as humans would normally be expected to do, represents another symbolic act of mercy that it is hoped the gods will replicate for the king. Placing gold rings on the birds' feet emphasizes their captivity, and therefore the mercy shown in releasing them, just as the prisoners released at another point in the ritual were presumably bound in chains.

5.3.4.2 Figurines as vehicles of impurity and substitutes

The patient's impurities, or the source thereof, could also be transferred onto figurines, either by physical contact, rituals of association, or direct identification between the figurine and what it represents. Such figurines, constructed by the exorcist, provided even more options for the manipulation of the impurity and its source.[77] These could

[76] Schwemer 2019b: 92–93.
[77] Figurines were frequently used against witches, and were also used by witches against their victims (Schwemer 2007: 90–100; 182–185; 199–203; 209–217). Figurines of ghosts could be destroyed, but were often given burial rites and dispatched to the netherworld (Scurlock 2006: 49–56).

take the form of a figurine representing the patient, which acts as a substitute for him. As a substitute for the patient, the figurine could take on his impurities and either be destroyed along with them or take them down to the netherworld, while also fulfilling the sufferer's ultimate fate which is to die. Figurines could also be produced to represent the source of the evil, in the case of transgression usually representing the personified manifestation of *māmītu*-curse. The patient's impurities could also be transferred to these figurines, allowing the exorcist to destroy both the impurity formerly residing within the patient and the representation of its source at the same time.

The relevant *āšipūtu* rituals contain several references to the production and manipulation of figurines representing the personified or demonized *māmītu*-curse.[78] None of the ritual compositions gives a description of what the *māmītu*-demon was believed to look like; for this we are reliant instead on a single literary reference. In the *Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince*, the *māmītu*-demon features among the various demons and Mischwesen seen by the titular prince on his visit to the netherworld (SAA 3 32, rev. 7): ⌜^{d}*māmīt*⌝([nam].erim) *qaqqad*(sag.du) ^{udu}*enzi*(uz_3) *qātā*(šu)^{min} *šēpā*(gir_3)^{min} *amēlūti*(lu_2)^{meš} 'Māmītu, (whose) head (is that) of a goat, (whose) hands (and) feet (are those) of humankind.' To what extent this description corresponds to the appearance of the figurines produced for rituals, we cannot say.[79]

Whatever they looked like, figurines of *māmītu* are often described as made of clay (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 3, 13): $KID_3.KID_3$.BI *šinā*(2) *ṣalam*(nu) *māmīt*(nam.rim) *ša*$_2$

[78] The figurine is denoted with the writing NU(.)NAM.RI(M), which could be read in Akkadian as a loanword **nunamrimakku* or as a calque *ṣalam*(nu) *māmīti*(nam.rim). Due to the attestation of syllabic spellings like *ṣalam*(nu) *ma-mit*, I have opted for the latter solution (*pace* Maul 2019: 106, who leaves it unresolved).

[79] A drawing on a Late Babylonian ritual tablet was initially identified by the editors as a goat-like depiction of the personified *māmītu* (Zilberg and Horowitz 2016: 182–183). This has since been demonstrated to be based on a misreading of the 'caption' (Jiménez 2018a), while the drawing likely has the head of a bull instead, therefore representing either an evil ghost or the demon Any Evil (Schwemer 2020: 154–157).

zikari(nita) *u sinništi*(munus) *ša tīd*(im) *kullati*(ki.gar) *teppuš*(du_3)^{uš} … 'its ritual: you make two figurines of *māmītu*, male and female, out of clay from a clay-pit …' The process of acquiring clay for the production of the figurine is described as follows (KAL 10, Nr. 3, 22–24):

22 EN_2 ^{d}*ša*$_2$*-maš šar*$_4$ *šamê*(an)^{e} *erṣeti*(ki)^{ti3} *bēl*(en) *kit-te u me-ša*$_2$*-ri a-na eṭēr*(kar)^{er} ⌜*napišti*(zi)⌝[^{ti}*-ia*]
23 *kullata*(ki.gar) *u*$_2$*-qa-diš ši-me* ⌜*kaspa*($ku_3$$^{?}$⌝.[babbar]) ⌜*ad*⌝*-din ina nar*$_3$*-bi ša*$_2$ ^{d}*e*$_2$*-a ina up-ša*$_2$*-še-e ša*$_2$ [^{d}*asal-lu*$_2$*-ḫi*]
24 ⌜*ina*⌝ *kullati*(ki.gar) *ṭīdī*(im)^{meš}*-šu*$_2$*-nu* ⌜*ak-ri*⌝*-iṣ ina maḫar*(igi) *ilutti*(dingir)$^{ut\text{-}ti}$*-ka rabītu*(gal)^{tu2} *ab-ni-šu*$_2$*-nu-ti*

Incantation: Šamaš king of heaven (and) earth, lord of truth and justice, in order to save [my] life, [23] I purified the clay-pit, I gave [*silver*] (as its) price. Through Ea's greatness, through [Asalluḫi's] (magical) performances, [24] from the clay-pit I pinched off their (i.e. for the figurines) clay, in the presence of your great divinity, I fashioned them.

The invocation of Ea recalls the use of clay by the gods to create human beings. In the Sumerian composition *Enki and Ninmaḫ*, Enki, along with the goddess Ninmaḫ and other birth goddesses, creates humanity with clay sourced from the Apsû.[80] In the ritual context, then, we are perhaps to understand that Ea's presence brings the clay of the figurines to life, allowing the figurine to better resemble the living entity that it represents. Other materials used in the production of figurines include wood and reed (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 48–51, 64): DU_3.DU_3.BI *nusagilê*(nu.sag.il_2)^{e} *ša*$_2$ *iṣi*(geš) *u qanê*(gi) *tarakkas*(keš$_2$)[$^{as?}$] (var. *teppuš*(du_3)^{uš} *tušzaz*(gub)^{az}) 'its ritual: you prepare (lit. bind) (var. make (and) stand up) a substitute-figurine of wood and reed.' It is probable that this is a separate figurine from those made of clay, contrary to Maul's suggestion that both refer to a single type of figurine consisting of a wood and reed 'skeleton' coated in clay 'flesh'.[81] It seems unlikely that only half of the materials used to construct the

[80] Cf. Galter 2015: 69. Enki/Ea's association with freshwater and its ability to soften mud and clay leads to "all of his creative, form-giving, fertilizing, cleansing, and distributive (abundance and knowledge) functions" (Galter 2015: 67).
[81] Maul 2019: 244.

figurines would be mentioned in the ritual instructions, and there are other attestations of figurines that are quite purposefully made only of reed.[82]

While figurines made of clay, wood, or reed are relatively common in Mesopotamian ritual, the *Bīt rimki* ritual calls for a figurine representing *māmītu* with a feature that, as far as I am aware, is unique (KAL 10, Nr. 46–47, 47–53):[83]

47 [*ṣalam*(nu) *māmīt*(nam.rim) *ša ṭīdi*(im)] ⌜*teppuš*(du$_3$)⌝^{uš} *libba*(ša$_3$)-*ša$_2$ tu-ḫal-*⌜*la$_2$*⌝*-aš*
48 [(…)*libba*(ša$_3$)-*ša$_2$* (?)] [*da*]-⌜*ma*$^{??}$⌝ *tumalli*(si.a)$^{meš\ lu2}$*marṣu*(ge$_{17}$) *i-na maḫar*(igi) ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu)
49 [*i-na* ^{dug}]⌜*burzigalli*(bur⌝.zi.⌜gal⌝) *i-na qāti*(šu)-*šu$_2$ inašši*(il$_2$)-*ma*
50 [*ina patar*(giri$_2$) ^{geš}]⌜*bīni*(šinig)⌝ *libba*(ša$_3$)-*ša$_2$ i-pat-taḫ šalāši*(3)-*šu$_2$ mê*(a)^{meš}
51 [*šikara*(kaš) *pâ*(ka)-*šu$_2$ imessi*(luḫ)]-*ma ana muḫḫi*(ugu)-*ša$_2$ u$_2$-raq*
52 [*kâm*] ⌜*iqabbi*(du$_{11}$⌝.ga) ⌜*mur*⌝*-ṣi ta-di-ra-ti-ia*
53 [*im*]-*ṭi-a u ta-ne$_2$-ḫi-ia ana muḫḫi*(ugu)-*ki u$_2$-raq*

You make [a figurine of *māmītu* out of clay], you *scrape out* its insides, [48] *you fill* [its insides with blood(?)]. The patient, in the presence of Šamaš, [49] lifts (the figurine) with his hand(s) [in] a *burzigallu*-vessel and [50] pierces its insides [with a dagger] of tamarisk. Three times, with water [51] [(and) beer, he washes his mouth] and spits it out over it (the figurine). [52] He speaks [as follows:] "My illness, my darkened moods, [53] my poison and my wailing, I spit it out over you!"

This passage, together with the parallel passages, provide some interesting details about the production of this figurine representing *māmītu*. The figurine was apparently hollowed out and filled with blood before being stabbed through with a tamarisk dagger.[84] This not only represents the ritual killing of the personified source of the patient's suffering, but the blood pouring out of the figurine must have served as a powerful visual analogy for the impurities and illness leaving the patient's body. The

[82] In one case, a ghost figurine is to be produced from the 'knot' and surrounding parts of a reed, possibly because of its resemblance to a human head and body (Schwemer 1998: 119, with illustration on p. 65). On the array of materials (wood, clay, dough, bitumen, etc.) used to produce figurines for rituals in Mesopotamia, see Schwemer 1998: 64–66.

[83] The restoration in lines 48, 50–51 are not certain, but there are parallels are found in the fifth house of *Bīt rimki* (Læssøe 1955: 59, 96–98): ka-inim-ma *bīt*(e$_2$) *rimki* 5-kam$_2$ *ṣalam*(nu) *ma-mit ša$_2$ libba*(ša$_3$)-*ša$_2$ dāmī*(mud$_2$) ⌜*malû*(si.a)⌝ / ⌜*ina*⌝ *patar*(gir$_2$) ^{geš}*bi-ni ta-pat-taḫ ina mê*(a)^{meš} *u šikari*(kaš) *pâ*(ka)-*šu$_2$ imessi*(luḫ)^{si} / *ana* ⌜*muḫ*⌝*-ḫi u$_2$-raq-ma ina sa-mit* ⌜*dūri*(bad$_3$) *te*⌝*-qeb-bir* 'spoken formula of the fifth (house) of *Bīt rimki*. A figurine of *māmītu*, whose insides are filled with blood, [107] you pierce with a tamarisk dagger, he washes his mouth with water and beer, [108] he spits it out over (the figurine) and you bury it in the revetment of the wall' (collated, cf. also Schwemer 2019b: 78–79).

[84] Compare the use of date-palm thorn to pierce figurines of male and female witches (CMAwR 7.6.4, 7): ^{geš}⌜*ṣilli*(dala$_2$)⌝ ^{geš}⌜*gišimmari*(gišimmar)⌝ *ana muḫḫi*(ugu)-*šu$_2$-nu tu-*⌜*rat*⌝*-ta* … 'you drive a date-palm thorn into their *skull* …' The term *ṣillu* 'thorn' here refers to spine on the leaf and the piercing of figurines with these may be attested in the archaeological record (cf. Schwemer 2007: 211–214; Gasche 1994).

fact that the blood is held in the interior (*libbu*) of the figurine also reflects the association between transgression and its effects within the abdomen (*libbu*). The way the effects of the self-curse were perceived to enter the abdomen via the mouth is perhaps also reflected in the patient's spitting on the figurine to transfer additional impurities to it. The use of tamarisk for the dagger presumably relates to its function both as a purifying plant and as an important source of timber in tree-poor southern Mesopotamia.[85] The rather unique treatment of this figurine therefore not only provides evocative actions with which the patient can be actively involved in the removal rites, but also builds upon other aspects of the conceptualization of *māmītu*-curse and its symptoms.

Separate male and female figurines of *māmītu* could be produced and provisioned with appropriately gendered artefacts (KAL 10, Nr. 3, 13–17):

13 KID$_3$.KID$_3$.BI *ṣalam*(nu) *māmīt*(nam.rim) *ša$_2$ zikari*(nita) *u sinništi*(munus) *ša$_2$ ṭīd*(im) *kullati*(ki.gar) *teppuš*(du$_3$)^{uš} *šum*(mu)-*šu$_2$-nu ina naglab*(maš.sila$_3$) *šumēli*(150)-[*šu$_2$-nu tašaṭṭar*]

14 ^{tug2}*naḫlapta*(gu$_2$.e$_3$) ^{tug2}*ma-ak-lu-lu* ^{tug2}*paršig*(bar.sig) ^{sik2}*takilti*(za.gin$_3$.ge$_6$) {na} *tulabbaš*(mu$_4$.mu$_4$)-*si abnī*(na$_4$)$^{ḫi.a}$ *ina* ⌜*kišādi*(gu$_2$)⌝-[*ša$_2$ tallal*]

15 ^{tug2}*naḫlapta*(gu$_2$.e$_3$) ^{tug2}*ma-ak-lu-lu* ^{tug2}*paršiga*(bar.sig) ^{tug2}*nēbeḫa*(ib$_2$.la$_2$) *ša$_2$* ^{sik2}*itqi*(aka$_3$) *peṣê*(babbar) *ša ūmakkal*(u$_4$.[1.kam$_2$) *tulabbassu*]

16 14 ^{kuš}*tukannī*(dug$_3$.kan)^{meš} *akalī*(ninda)^{meš} *ablūti*(ḫad$_3$.a) *šira*(uzu) *abla*(ḫad$_3$.a) ^{kuš}*šēna*(e.sir) ^{kuš}*mešēna*(da.e.sir) ^{geš}⌜*mušṭa*(ga⌝.[rig$_2$])

17 ^{geš}*pilaqqa*(bal) *šid-de-tu$_2$ ki-ri-is-su* ^{geš}*ši-qa-tu$_2$ samna*(i$_3$) *ṭāba*(du$_{10}$.ga) *tanaddin*(sum)-*ši ṣu-de-e* ⌜*tu*⌝-[*ṣa-ad-da-ši*]

Its ritual: you make male and female figurines of *māmītu* out of clay from the clay-pit, [you write] their names on [their] left shoulder, [14] you dress her in a cloak, a *maklulu*-garment, and a headdress of purple wool, [you hang] stones on [her] neck, [15] [you dress him] in a cloak, a *maklulu*-garment, a headdress, a belt made of white wool, (all of these) for [one] day,[86] [16] fourteen leather-sacks (containing) dried bread, dried meat, shoes, sandals, a comb, [17] a spindle, a *cloth covering*,[87] a hairpin, a flask of fine oil, you give her, you [provide her] with provisions.

[85] On the identity and uses of tamarisk, see Streck 2004: 276–278; Panayotov 2018: 207–208. Tamarisk could also be used to create figurines of apotropaic spirits and is therefore referred to as *eṣemti ilūti* 'bone(s) of divinity' (Wiggermann 1992: 59–60).
[86] For the reading *ūmakkal*, which refers to a "nur zum einmaligen Gebrauch gedachtes Behelfs-Kleid", see Farber 2001: 258. Cf. also Maul 2019: 78.
[87] Cf. CAD Š/2 407–408 s.v. *šiddu*.

The creation of both male and female figurines, even though *māmītu* is grammatically feminine and therefore usually portrayed as a female demon, parallels the depiction of witches who, although stereotypically female, are frequently depicted in the *āšipūtu* corpus with gender-balanced terminology in order to emphasize that the identity of the attacker is unknown.[88] However, the same ritual instructions later suggest that the male figurine is to represent the *māmītu*-figurine's husband, and therefore probably acts as a substitute for the patient (see below). The objects given to the female figurine were highly gendered in Mesopotamian society (e.g. comb, spindle) and therefore further emphasize the symbolism of the figurine's gender.[89] The instruction to write names on the figurines may have simply involved a generic label like *māmītī* 'my *māmītu*-curse' or something similar.[90]

Later in the same ritual, the two figurines are symbolically married to one another. They are therefore given appropriate clothing and offerings, and their respective genders are once again emphasized with balanced phrasing and the use of grammatically gendered deixis (KAL 10, Nr. 3, 25–30):

25 *ṣubāta*(tug$_2$)[^{meš}] ˹*ulabbiš*˺([mu$_4$].˹mu$_4$˺)-*su*˺-*nu-ti* 14 ^{kuš}*tukannī*(dug$_3$.gan)^{meš} *akalī*(ninda)^{meš}
ablūti(ḫad$_3$.a) *šira*(uzu) *abla*(ḫad$_3$.a) *qēm*(zi$_3$) *buqli*(munu$_5$) *abli*(ḫad$_3$.a)
26 *mit-ḫa-riš u$_2$-mal-li-ma na-a-da mê*(a)^{meš} *kaṣûti*(še$_{12}$)^{meš} *a-qi$_2$-su-nu-*˹*te*˺
27 *u$_2$-kab-bi-su-nu-*˹*ti*˺ *u$_2$-šar-ri-iḫ-šu$_2$-nu-ti lu-u zikaru*(nita$_2$) *šu-u an-nu-u ṣalam*(nu)-*šu*
28 *lu-u sinništu*(munus) *ši-i an-nu-*˹*u$_2$*˺ *ṣalam*(nu)-*ša$_2$ aššata*(dam) *šu-ḫu-zu an-ni-tu lu*
aššat(dam)-*su*
29 *mu-tu šu-ḫu-zu* ˹*an*˺*-nu-u$_2$ lu mut*(dam)-*sa an-nu-u lu ḫa-me-ru-um-ma*
30 *an-ni-tu lu ḫi-ir-*˹*tu*˺ ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *bēlu*(en) *šaqû*(lal)^{u2} *mu-du-u$_2$ kiššati*(du$_3$.a.bi)

[I dressed] them in clothes, [26] I filled equally [25] fourteen leather sacks with dried bread, dried meat, flour of dried malt, [26] and I gave them a water-skin (containing) cold water, [27] I treated them with honour, I made them splendid, he (i.e. the patient) is indeed male (and so) this is his image, [28] she (i.e. *māmītu*) is indeed female (and so) this is her image. In order to have (him)

[88] Schwemer 2007: 132.
[89] Making substitutes 'look the part' was a key part of 'activating' their identification with what they represented (cf. Haas 1987–1990: 246).
[90] This is probably also the case with most figurines in anti-witchcraft rituals, although the existence of a separate ritual for when the identity of the assailant was unknown suggests that a specific person could have been targeted by other rituals (in which case their actual name may have been written on the figurine), even if such rituals still contained frequent professions of ignorance as to their identity (Schwemer 2019a: 50).

> take a wife, let this (female figurine) be his wife, [29] in order to have (her) take a husband, let this (male figurine) be her husband. May this (male figurine) be the groom, [30] and may this (female figurine) be the bride, O Šamaš, elevated lord who knows everything.

This recitation emphasizes the respective roles of the figurines, their magical relation to the patient and the cause of his suffering, and their roles in the symbolic marriage rites, and was presumably accompanied by physical actions identifying the respective figurines. The two gendered figurines were therefore able to represent the female *māmītu* and the usually male patient and could therefore be married to one another.[91] This ensured the transfer of impurities from the patient to both of the figurines and essentially inverted the fate of the patient and the *māmītu*-curse-demon that was the source of his suffering. When only a single figurine, representing *māmītu*, was produced, it could be symbolically married directly to the patient himself (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 1–2, 21″): *sissikta*(tug$_2$.sik$_2$) ^{lu2}*marṣi*(gig) *itti*(ki) *sissikti*(tug$_2$.sik$_2$) *ṣalam*(nu) *māmīt*(nam.rim) *tarakkas*(keš$_2$)-*ma* *šipta*(en$_2$) *šalāši*(3)-*šu$_2$* *tamannu*(šid)-*ma* *ta-bat*-[*taq*] 'you bind the patient's hem with the hem of the figurine of *māmītu* and you recite the incantation three times and you cut them apart.' The subsequent cutting of the hem is a ritual action representing divorce,[92] so the patient and *māmītu* are symbolically divorced immediately after their symbolic marriage. With the patient's impurities transferred to the figurine of *māmītu* via the marriage, and in particular through the contact between the hems of their garments, the divorce represents the removal of these impurities from the patient and his permanent separation from the *māmītu*-curse that had been afflicting him.

As an additional part of this ritual marriage, items representing wedding gifts could be offered to the *māmītu*-figurine (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 14–15, 15): ⌜*erša*(geš⌝.na$_2$)

[91] Maul 2019: 60.
[92] Maul 2019: 109.

^{geš}*kussâ*(gu.za) ^{geš}*paššūra*(banšur) ^{tug2}*kīs*(nig.na$_2$) *ūmakkal*(u$_4$.1.kam$_2$) *tanaddin*(sum)^{in} 'you give a bed, a chair, a table, (and) a money-bag for one day.' These items were considered essential for setting up a Mesopotamian household and were usually gifted to each other by newly married couples.[93] In the context of this ritual, they perhaps took the form of clay models, which are well attested in the archaeological record.[94] Not only would these given an extra element of realism and legitimacy to the symbolic marriage rites, but presumably also ensured the consent of the figurine (or the *māmītu*-curse or demon that it represented) to participate in the ritual, by providing it with items to make it feel at home. They perhaps simultaneously served as funerary offerings, since the figurine would subsequently be expected to take the patient's impurities down to the netherworld.[95] The use of marriage and divorce rites reflects the practice of using everyday actions to help the patient better envisage the analogical removal of his impurity and separation from the source of evil (see § 5.4.1.3). Between the creation (i.e. birth) of the figurine, the marriage and divorce rites, and the funerary rites often performed for figurines, we essentially find a full range of life-cycle rituals performed for the representative of *māmītu*-curse-demon, as if to make her live out her whole life and die over the course of the ritual, and therefore take the impurities down to the netherworld with her. Such rites would also have been recognizable and emotionally engaging for the human participants of the ritual.

[93] Maul 2019: 140, with references.
[94] Maul 2019: 140–141.
[95] Scurlock 2006: 53. Cf. Maul 2019: 20, who argues that, by giving the *māmītu*-bride food offerings for her journey to the netherworld, the ritual would at same time be effective against any ghosts who were also afflicting the patient.

5.3.5 Unbinding the patient

Verbal roots with the sense of 'releasing', 'loosening', or 'unbinding' are frequently used as metaphorical expressions of the release from impurity (§ 2.3.1), and parallel imagery could be physically employed in the actions of rituals.[96] The patient could, for example, be bound with thread to recreate his 'binding' by the evil, thereby allowing the exorcist to remove the impurity simply be unbinding the patient or cutting the thread. In a bilingual incantation from *Šurpu*, Uttu, the goddess of weaving, is imagined spinning various threads, representing the victim's fate to suffer from *māmītu*-curse, which bind the victim and which Asalluḫi/Marduk can then tear off in order to also remove the impurities (*Šurpu* V–VI 144–171):[97]

144 EN$_2$ ⌜gu⌝ [^{d}uttu šu]-⌜na⌝ ba-ni-in-[ĝar]
145 *a-na qe$_2$*-[*e* ^{d}*Uttu*(MIN) *qāt*(šu)]-*su iš-ta-*⌜*kan*⌝
146 ^{d}inana-ke$_4$ ⌜gu⌝ [^{d}uttu-da] ⌜si⌝ ba-ni-in-sa$_2$
147 ^{d}*iš*-[*tar qe$_2$-e* ^{d}*Uttu*(MIN)] *uš-te-eš-šir*
148[98] munus dim$_2$-⌜ma⌝ [tun$_3$/ur$_2$-bi ba]-ni-in-tuš
149 *sin-niš-tu$_2$* ⌜*ṭe$_3$*^{ʔ}⌝-[*mi*^{ʔ} *su*^{ʔ}]-⌜*un*^{ʔ}-*šu$_2$*^{ʔ}⌝ *u$_2$-še-šib*
150 siki babbar siki ge$_6$ gu-⌜min-tab⌝-[ba ĝeš]-bal šur-šur-re
151 *ši-pa-a-te pi-ṣa-a-te ši-pa-a-te ṣal*-[*ma-a-te*] *qa-a iṣ-pa ina pi-lak-ki iṭ-me*
152 gu-maḫ gu-gal gun$_3$-a gu [nam]-⌜erim$_2$⌝-ma ba-e
153 *qa-a ṣi-ra qa-a rabâ*(gal)^{a} *qa-a bit-ru*-[*ma qa*]*-a mu-na-aš$_2$-šir ma-mit*
154 i$_5$-ĝar saĝ-ba ḫul nam-[lu$_2$]-u$_{18}$-lu-ke$_4$
155 *ana e-gir-re-e ma-mit lem-ni* [*ša$_2$*] *a-me-lu-ti*
156 aš$_2$-bal-e dingir-re-e-ne-ke$_4$
157 *a-na ar-ra-te ša$_2$ ilāni*(dingir)^{meš}
158 gu nam-erim$_2$-ma ba-e
159 *qa-a mu-na-aš$_2$-šir ma-mit*
160 lu$_2$-u$_{18}$-lu-bi saĝ-bi-na ⌜šu⌝-bi gir$_3$-bi u-me-ni-keš$_2$-keš$_2$
161 *ša$_2$ amēli*(lu$_2$) *šu-a-tu$_2$ qaq-qa-su qa-ti-šu$_2$ še-pi-šu u$_2$-rak-kis*
162 ^{d}asal-lu$_2$-ḫi dumu eridu-ga-ke$_4$ nun-e šu-sikil-a-ni-ta mu-un-na-an-tar-tar-ru-da
163 ^{d}*Marduk*(amar.utu) *mar eri-du$_{10}$ ru-bu-u$_2$ ina qātī*(šu)^{min}-*šu$_2$ ellāti*(ku$_3$)^{meš} *u$_2$-par-ri-*^{ʾ}*i*
164 nam-erim$_2$ gu-bi edin-na ki ku$_3$-ga-še$_3$ ḫa-ba-ni-ib$_2$-e$_{11}$-de$_3$

[96] Similar imagery is found in the context of witchcraft. For example, the name of the type of witchcraft known as *rusû* is likely derived from the verb *russû* 'to bind' (Schwemer 2007: 9–10), and the witch is often described 'binding' (*kasû*, *kussû*, *russû*) or 'knotting' (*kaṣāru*) her victim (Schwemer 2007: 85–86). Consequently, anti-witchcraft incantations can evoke the act of unbinding as a symbol for the victim's release from the effects of witchcraft (e.g. *Maqlû* IV 117–118, cited at § 2.3.1).

[97] Restorations in lines 144–149 are after approximate parallels in K. 2856 + and K. 2437 + (published in Borger 1973).

[98] Although possibly difficult to reconcile with the traces here, the parallels to lines 148–149 read (Borger 1973: 168, ii 45–46): munus dim$_2$-ma tun$_3$(var. ur$_2$)-bi ba-ni-in-[x x] / *sin-niš-ti ṭe-mi su-un-šu$_2$*(var. *ša$_2$*) *u$_2$-ṣab-*⌜*bi*^{ʔ}⌝.

165 *ma-mit qa-a-ša₂ ana ṣe-ri₃ aš-ri el-li li-še-ṣi*
166 nam-erim₂ ḫul-ĝal₂ bar-še₃ ḫe₂-ᵍimᵍ-ta-gub
167 *ma-mit le-mut-ti₃ ina a-ḫa-a-*[*ti*] *li-iz-ziz*
168 lu₂-u₁₈-lu-bi ḫe₂-en-[sikil] ᵍḫe₂ᵍ-en-dadag
169 *a-me-lu šu₂-a-tu li-ᵍlil liᵍ-bi-ib*
170 šu sa₆-ga dingir-ᵍraᵍ-[na-še₃ ḫe₂]-en-ši-in-gi₄-gi₄
171 *a-na qa-at dam-*[*qa-a*]*-ᵍtiᵍ ša₂ ili*(dingir)*-šu₂ lip-pa-qid*

'[Uttu] set her [hand] to the thread, [147] Ištar straightened out [Uttu's thread], [149] the [*skilful*] woman set down [its *trim*], [151] white wool, black wool, double thread, she spun with a spindle, [153] an exalted thread, a great thread, a multicoloured thread, the [thread] that diminishes *māmītu*-curse [155] for the evil utterance of *māmītu*-curse [of] humankind, [157] for the *arratu*-curse of the gods, [159] the thread that diminishes *māmītu*-curse, [161] of that man, she bound his head, his hands, (and) his feet, [163] Marduk, son of Eridu, prince, slices through it with his pure hands, [165] may he remove the *māmītu*-curse (and) its thread to the steppe, the pure place, [167] may the evil *māmītu*-curse stand aside, [169] may that man be pure, may he be shining, [171] may he be entrusted to the hand of goodness of his (personal) god!'

On the one hand, the thread represents the evil and suffering that bind the patient, which can be unbound or cut off from the patient along with the evil.[99] On the other hand, the thread also seems to play an active role in removing the source of the patient's suffering, being described as *munaššir māmīti* 'that which diminishes *māmītu*-curse' (153; 159). Thus, the thread, with its divine origin, is almost personified and plays an active role in the ritual. The patient is said to be bound by the head, hands, and feet, possibly reflecting some of his physical symptoms, which could include paralysis (see § 4.3.2), and can also be connected with the imagery of the victim of divine punishment as a prisoner (see § 4.1). Being reconciled with the gods was important for obtaining the patient's release, especially since Marduk is powerful enough to cut through the thread with his bare hands; the exorcist, on the other hand, would presumably have had to use a tool such as a knife. It is possible that this incantation was accompanied by ritual acts involving binding the patient with thread and subsequently unravelling or cutting it.[100]

[99] Similarly, the term 'thread of evil' (*qê lumni*) refers to the development of an evil fate in the period after it has been announced by an omen, with namburbi rituals seeking to cut this 'thread' (Maul 1999: 124).

[100] *Šurpu*'s Assur Ritual Tablet unfortunately does not preserve any instructions relating to this incantation. The same incantation is, however, cited in the instructions for a namerimburruda-ritual, where the actions described mirror those in the same tablet of *Šurpu*, including the unravelling of a cord by the patient (KAL 10, Nr. 1–2, 10″–11″): [EN₂ gu ᵈ]ᵍuttuᵍ šu-na *ina karpati*(dug) *la₃ ṣaripti*(al.šeg₆.ga) MIN(= [*inaššīši*] vel sim., cf. Maul 2019: 91) *mê*(a)ᵐᵉš *egubbî*(a.gub₂.[ba]) / ᵍ*tattanaddi*ᵍ([šub].ᵍšubᵍ)ᵈⁱ

This is also likely because the thread, and the impurity that has been transferred to it through contact with the patient, is described being expelled to the steppe, reflecting the frequently attested practice of disposing contaminated ritual *materia* in the steppe.

The possibility that complementary ritual actions were carried out by the exorcist alongside the recitation of the above incantation is supported by the instructions for a related namerimburruda-ritual (KAL 10, Nr. 1–2 14″–15″): [EN$_2$] gu ^{d}šakkan$_2^{an}$-na[101] *markas*(dur) *šīpāti*(sik$_2$) *peṣêti*(babbar) *šīpāti*(sik$_2$) *ṣalmāti*(ge$_6$) *taṭammi*(NU.NU) *qaqqad*(sag.du)-*su* *qātī*(šu)^{min}-*šu*$_2$ *u* *šēpī*(gir$_3$)^{min}-*šu*$_2$ ⌜*tu*⌝-[*rakkas*] / ⌜*šipta*(en$_2$)⌝ *tamannu*(šid)^{nu}-*ma tu-bat-taq* '[Incantation:] "Thread of Šakkan." You spin a thread of white wool (and) black wool, you [bind] his head, his hands, and his feet, [15″] you recite the incantation, and you cut (the thread) off.' By spinning a thread from two different colours of twine, with black representing the evil or state of impurity and white representing the patient or the pure state desired, the patient can be symbolically separated from the state of impurity when the thread is unravelled.[102] The incantation's reference to a 'thread of Šakkan' suggests that the material for the thread is of animal origin, and also provides a link with the steppe and its animals which can be used to dispose of impurities (§ 5.4.2.1). Whether this means that the thread was disposed of in

šūmī(sum)^{sar} *ina imitti*(15)-*šu*$_2$ *i-qal-lap pitilta*(šu.sar) *ina šumēli*(150)-*šu*$_2$ *i-pa*-[*šar*] '[incantation:] "Uttu, [the thread] in her hand." In an unbaked clay-vessel *ditto*(= [he raises her, i.e. the figurine of *māmītu*] vel sim.), [11″] you sprinkle [10″] the water of the holy water vessel. [11″] He peels garlic with his right (hand), he unpicks (lit. releases) a cord with his left (hand).' Whether or not the patient has been bound with this cord is not mentioned, but the binding of the patient is described later in the same text (14″–15″, cited below).

[101] Maul (2019: 73; 76) reads ^{d}šakkan$_2$-an-na and translates "Šakkan–des–Himmels", but there are no parallels for such an epithet.

[102] For the association of the colours white and black with good and evil respectively, see the ritual commentary BM 34035 13–14 (Livingstone 1986: 172–173, 1): … *gaṣṣu*(im.babbar) *iṭṭû*(esir) *ša*$_2$ *bāb*(ka$_2$) *bīt*(e$_2$) ^{lu2}*marṣi*(ge$_{17}$) / *ulappatū*(tag.tag)^{meš} *gaṣṣu*(im.babbar) ^{d}*ninurta*(maš) *iṭṭû*(esir) *a-sak-ku* ^{d}*nin-urta a-na a-sak-ku i-rad-da-ad* 'the gypsum (and) the bitumen which [14] they smear [13] on the gate of the patient's house – [14] the gypsum is Ninurta (and) the bitumen is Asakku; Ninurta pursues Asakku.'

the steppe, as in the above passage from *Šurpu* (V–VI 164–165), or it was burnt along with other impurity-carrying materials, is unclear.

5.4 Destruction or displacement of the impurity or the source of impurity

Transferring the impurity into water and other materials, or into substitutes and figurines, allowed it to exist outside of the patient's body in a physical form that could be further manipulated by the exorcist. However, according to Mesopotamian thinking, evil and impurity, even in such forms, could not simply be annihilated but persisted, much like the conservation of energy according to the first law of thermodynamics. It therefore had to be broken up, diluted, transferred to further vehicles, trapped, or dispersed into the natural environment – a sort of 'entropy of evil' that reduced its dangerousness and contagious potential. This idea is neatly summarized by Claus Ambos in the context of royal New Year rituals:[103]

> It is evident that the "illness" that affected the king was considered a physical "thing" that had entered his body from the outside and could be removed physically through washing it away with water, stripping it off with his old clothes, transmitting it to a figurine and into a fermenting vat or sending it away in a miniature boat. It is interesting that according to Ancient Near Eastern belief it was not possible to annihilate evil matter, which could only be removed and sent away with a carrier or vehicle, or fermented into some other state.

The idea that impurities, as the physical manifestation of evil,[104] were always preserved and could therefore not be completely destroyed explains why contaminated materials used in purification rituals had to be safely disposed of after the ritual, and this is reflected in the methods employed by the exorcist to dispose of the patient's impurities. These methods fall into two main categories. On the one hand, the exorcist could change the physical state of the impurity, or the material in which it was contained, into something smaller or more dissolute and therefore less dangerous or more easily dispersed. A visual change in the appearance of contaminated materials could have

[103] Ambos 2010: 27.

[104] Scurlock (2002: 209–210) even claims that the term *lemuttu* is used to refer to the physical manifestation of the abstract concept of evil, insofar as it could be 'torn out' (*nasāḫu*) of the patient's body. In these cases, the term *lemuttu* probably still refers to an abstract concept, with the verb being used figuratively, but impurities could certainly be perceived as manifesting in physical form and could therefore be physically removed.

reassured the patient that the impurity had been rendered more impotent, or its new state could make it easier to dispose of in other ways. On the other hand, the exorcist could simply change the location of the impurity, the materials containing it, or its original source, by physically or symbolically distancing them from the patient, trapping them in some way, or dispersing them into the natural environment.

5.4.1 Change of state

The notion that impurity was conserved meant that materials used to remove it from the patient remained contaminated and therefore potentially contagious. One solution was to change the physical state or appearance of these materials to achieve, by analogy, the neutralization of the impurity contained within or physically diminish its capacity to present a risk of contagion. Water and fire are, as often, particularly useful in this regard, both for their inherent powers of purification and for their ability to readily change the physical form of matter. This also allowed the exorcist to take advantage of particular properties of materials used in the ritual process. Additionally, actions from everyday life that involved breaking or dismantling could be employed, as well as natural processes that involved some sort of change of state.

5.4.1.1 Changing state with water

Aside from taking on the physical traces of impurity through washing, water could also be used to reduce impurity-containing materials through its power to dissolve and rinse away. In *Šurpu*, for example, the sufferer's 'tablet of sins' is imagined being destroyed by dissolving the clay in water (*Šurpu* IV 79–80): *tup-pi ar*$_2$*-ni-šu*$_2$ *ḫi-ṭa-ti-šu*$_2$ *gil*$_2$*-la-ti-šu*$_2$ *ma-ma-ti-šu*$_2$ / *tu-ma-ma-ti-šu*$_2$ *ana mê*(a)^{meš} *linnaddâ*(šub)^{a} 'the tablet of his *arnu*-crime-punishments, his *ḫīṭu*-error-penalties, his *gillatu*-sin-punishments, his *māmītu*-curses [80] his *tumāmītu*-oaths, may it be thrown into the water.' In this context,

it probably does not represent a physical tablet listing the patient's possible transgressions, such as we find in Tablets II and III of *Šurpu*, but a hypothetical divine record of a person's transgressions,[105] or of the resultant punishments, and therefore also represents a written record of the sufferer's fate.[106] Nevertheless, the imagery works because the dissolving of clay in water was employed in ritual contexts as a means of dispersing impurities, taking advantage of the nature of clay as a material and perhaps evoking practices familiar from the world of the scribe.

Figurines, whether made of clay or other materials, could also be dissolved in liquids, as the patient does to a figurine representing himself in the following anti-witchcraft ritual (CMAwR 8.1 67″–70″):

> 67″ *an-ni-tu₂ iqabbi*(du₁₁.ga)-ma
> 68″ *ina erṣeti*(ki)^{ti} *te-qe₂-*⌜*ber*⌝*-šu₂-nu-ti*
> 69″ *ṣalam*(nu)*-šu₂ ina šikari*(kaš.sag) *i-maḫ-ḫa-aḫ-ma*
> 70″ *inašši*(il₂)*-ma ana maḫar*(igi) ^{d}*šamaš*(utu) *ki-am iqabbi*(du₁₁.ga)
>
> He speaks this (incantation) and [68″] you bury them (the figurines) in the ground. [69″] He dissolves his figurine in beer and [70″] and lifts (the beer-vessel) and speaks the following before Šamaš.

The verb *maḫāḫu*, broadly meaning 'to soften in a liquid', is usually used in the context of figurines,[107] and this practice takes advantage of the nature of some of the materials used to produce figurines, such as clay or dough. That this was common practice is evidenced by imagery of the witch perverting it, by dissolving figurines of her victim in urine, rather than the more socially acceptable and ritually potent beer used by the exorcist (CMAwR 8.3, 1 62): KIMIN(= *ṣalmīya īpušūma ina*) *šīnāt*(kaš₃) *ramāni*(ni₂)*-šu₂*(sic!) *im-ḫu-ḫu-ma* [(x x x)] ⌜*a-na e-reb* ^{d}*šamši*(utu)^{ši}⌝ [ ]x-*u₂* 'they made figurines of me and in their (text: his)[108] own urine dissolved (them) and […]

[105] Finkel 1983: 77.
[106] Nabû, as a punishment resulting from his curse, could shorten someone's life according to their *ṭuppi šīmti* 'tablet of fate' (Watanabe 1984: 99).
[107] Cf. e.g. CAD M/1 49f.
[108] See Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 290 for this emendation.

towards sunset.' Just as certain materials, when dissolved in water, would be seen to break up and disperse through the water, the same would have been perceived to happen with the impurities, rendering them less concentrated and therefore less dangerous. The water was then relatively easy to dispose of safely: it could, for example, be poured away into the earth (§ 5.3.1) in a way that could not so easily be done with the original materials and certainly not with the invisible and more or less intangible impurities themselves. Water was also used to extinguish fires in which impurity-carrying materials had been burnt, presumably to ensure that the evil was neutralized as far as possible by washing away any remaining ash or burnt materials that could still be carrying impurities in spite of their physical change of state.

5.4.1.2 Changing state with fire

Fire as a means of combatting evil and impurities is widespread in *āšipūtu* rituals, being used to remove the evil resulting from transgressions, as well as against witches and demons.[109] Indeed, the common names of the two most important rituals against *māmītu*-curse and witches, *Šurpu* and *Maqlû* respectively, are both nominal forms of verbal roots meaning 'to burn' and, for this reason, the two rituals were often placed together in ancient text catalogues (see § 1.3.1.2). Additionally, several other anti-witchcraft rituals were simultaneously effective against *māmītu*-curse, in part because they employ burning as one of the main ritual actions.[110] Fire played an important role in these rituals on two levels. First, the fire's capacity to drastically change the physical state of material meant that it was frequently used for the destruction of contaminated materials, vehicles carrying the patient's impurities, or representation of the source of impurity itself. On another level, Girra, god of fire and light, functioned as a stand-in

[109] In contrast, the divine fire Girra was almost never invoked in anti-ghost rituals (Scurlock 2006: 28).
[110] Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 6.

for the divine judge Šamaš, and could be made present in the ritual in the form of a torch (see § 1.4.2.2). This may explain why the use of fire was largely restricted to those rituals concerned with transgressions or witchcraft: these cases necessitated a divine trial to obtain mercy for the victim at the same time as drawing the gods' attention to the guilt of the witch, while for ghosts it was often simply a case of providing them with the appropriate offerings and sending them back to the netherworld. At the same time, Girra would represent the physically purifying power of fire, with its ability to visibly change the state of impurity-carrying materials.

The *Šurpu* ritual revolves around a brazier, on which carriers and representations of the impurity brought on by the patient's transgressions were burnt over the course of the ritual. The opening of the Assur Ritual Tablet describes the process of setting up and lighting the brazier at the beginning of the ritual (1–9):

1 *e-nu-ma ne₂-pe-še ša₂ šur-pu* ˹*te-pu*˺*-šu₂ nap-pa-ṭa tu₂-ka-ni*
2 *qanê*(gi)^{meš} *kar-tu-ti eli*(ugu) *nap-pa-ta ta-par-rik*
3 *zisurrâ*(zi₃.sur.ra)^{a} *talammi*(nigin)
4 EN₂ ĝa₂-e lu₂ ku₃-ga-me-en *tamannu*(šid)^{nu}*-ma mê*(a)^{meš} *tattanaddi*(šub.šub)^{di}
5 *gizillâ*(˹gi˺.izi.la₂) *išāt*(izi) *kibrīti*(peš₁₀.id₂) *ta-qad-ma* ^{d}gira₃ abgal kur-ra il₂
6 ˹EN₂˺ id₂-lu₂-ru-gu₂-gin₇ mu₂-mu₂-da-bi *tamannu*(šid)*-ma* ^{lu2}*marṣa*(gig) *tu₂-ḫap*
7 [(x)]x *gizillâ*(gi.izi.la₂) *an qāt*(šu) ^{lu2}*marṣi*(gig) *tašakkan*(gar)*-ma išāti*(izi) *ana nap-pa-ṭa inaddi*(šub)
8 [EN₂] ˹*aš₂*˺*-ši gizillê*(gi.izi.la₂) *pu-ṭur lem-nu*
9 [^{lu2}]*marṣa*(gig) *tu-šad-bab* …

When you perform the ritual of burning (i.e. *Šurpu*), you set up the *nappaṭu*-brazier, [2] you lay cut up reeds across the *nappaṭu*-brazier, [3] you surround (it) with a circle of flour, [4] you recite the incantation "I am a pure man" and you sprinkle water, [5] you ignite the torch with fire of sulphur and [6] you recite [5] (the incantation) "Girra, sage, exalted in the land" [6] (and) the incantation "Like the River, which renews itself (lit. grows)" and you purify the patient, [7] you place […] the torch in the patient's hand and he sets fire to the *nappaṭu*-brazier, [9] you have the patient speak [8] [the incantation] "I lifted the torch, release the evil!"

The beginning of the *Šurpu* ritual unfolds as follows:[111] the incantation 'Girra, sage, exalted in the land' is a *Kultmittelbeschwörung* to the divine fire, recited as the torch is lit; 'Like the River, which renews itself' accompanies the fumigation of the patient with

[111] This summary follows Simons 2017: 7.

the smoke from the torch;[112] 'I lifted the torch, release the evil' again invokes Girra and accompanies the lighting of the brazier with the torch. Thus, the opening ritual actions involve the preparation and invocation of the fire by the exorcist, then the purification of the patient by means of the smoke from the fire, and finally the patient's lighting of the brazier with the same fire. It should be noted that the actions of this part of the ritual are shared between the exorcist and the patient, and their respective duties are divided according to their abilities. The exorcist recites the Sumerian incantations, while the patient recites the final Akkadian incantation. It is the exorcist who sets up the ritual arrangement and handles the sulphur, presumably because it is an inherently pure and divine material with which the patient, still not reconciled with the gods, should therefore not come into contact.[113] However, the patient is the one who lights the brazier, possibly representing the fact that it is ultimately the patient alone who can recognize his sins, appeal for the gods' mercy, and thus remove the impurities from within himself. Similarly, the incipit of the incantation contains a first-person singular verb (*aššši* 'I lifted') followed by a second person singular imperative (*puṭur* 'release'), reflecting the fact that while the patient burns the carriers or representatives of his impurity, it is ultimately Girra who will release him from their evil.

[112] Smoke, like the constantly flowing and ever-renewing waters of the divine River, carries off the patient's impurities as it dissipates into the sky (see § 5.3.2).

[113] Especially in anti-witchcraft rituals, sulphur is portrayed as a divine entity and identified as a relation of the divine River (Perdibon 2019: 105). Cf. e.g. *Maqlû* VI 78: EN$_2$ *kibrītu*(ˈkiˈ.a.^{d}id$_2$) ˈKIMIN(= *kibrītu*) KIMIN(= *kibrītu*)ˈ *mārat*(dumu.munus) ^{d}*id*$_2$ MIN(= *kibrītu*) *kal-lat* ^{d}*id*$_2$ 'incantation: sulphur, sulphur, sulphur, daughter of the River, sulphur, daughter-in-law of the River.' In another anti-witchcraft ritual, another type of sulphur (uḫ$_2$.^{d}id$_2$ // *ruʾtītu*, lit. 'spittle of the River' // 'spittle') is specifically associated with the undoing of *māmītu*-curses (CMAwR 7.8.3 46′–49′): EN$_2$ *šaknāku*(gar)$^{na\text{-}ku}$*-ma ruʾtītu*(uḫ$_2$.^{d}id$_2$) *mārat*(dumu.munus) *ilānī*(dingir)^{meš} *rabûti*(gal)[^{meš}] / *ša*$_2$ *ina bibli*(u$_4$.na$_2$.am$_3$) *kiš-pi* / *u*$_3$ *ina nu-bat-ti* u$_4$ 7.kam$_2$ *u*$_2$*-pa-aš*$_2$*-ša*$_2$*-ru* ˈ*ma-ma*ˀˈ-[*ti*] / *ma-mi-tu*$_4$ *ma-mi-tu*$_4$ *ul-lal-ki* ˈ*ma*ˈ*-mi-*ˈ*tu*$_4$ˈ'incantation: I am equipped with *ruʾtītu*-sulphur, daughter of the great gods, [47′] which [48′] releases [47′] witchcraft on the day of the new moon [48′] and *māmītu*-curses in the eve of the seventh day. [49′] *Māmītu*, *māmītu*, I will purify you, *māmītu*!' Sulphur was also believed to be possessed of particularly powerful calming properties, being able even to calm Girra; this has been attributed to possible sedative properties of its smoke (Perdibon 2019: 105–106), although there is no ancient evidence for this.

Later in the *Šurpu* ritual, once the materials carrying the patient's impurity have been cast into the brazier, the exorcist extinguishes it while reciting the following incantation (*Šurpu* V–VI 173–183):

173 EN$_2$ *šangamaḫḫa*(šanga$_2$.maḫ)-*ku-ma at-ta-paḫ i-ša$_2$-ta*
174 *kinūna*(ki.ne) *at-ta-paḫ at-ta-di pi-šer$_3$-tu*
175 *ra-am-ku ellu*(ku$_3$) *ša$_2$* ^{d}*e$_2$-a mār*(dumu) *šip-ri ša$_2$* ^{d}*asal-lu$_2$-ḫi a-na-ku*
176 *kinūna*(ki.ne) *ap-pu-ḫu u$_2$-na-aḫ*
177 *išāti*(izi) *aš$_2$-ru-pu u$_2$-ra-a-ba*
178 ^{d}*nisaba u$_2$-naq-qu-u u$_2$-kab-bat*
179 *kīma*(gin$_7$) *kinūna*(ki.ne) *ap-pu-ḫu u$_2$-na-aḫ-ḫu*
180 *išāti*(izi) *aš$_2$-ru-pu u$_2$-rab-bu-u*
181 ^{d}*nisaba u$_2$-naq-qu-u u$_2$-kab-ba-tu*
182 ^{d}*siraš pa-šir ili*(dingir) *u amēli*(lu$_2$)
183 *ki-ṣir ik-ṣu-ra lip-pa-ṭir*
184 *ki-ṣir lib-bi ili*(dingir)-*šu$_2$ u* ^{d}*ištari*(15)-*šu$_2$ ša$_2$ annanna*(nenni) *mār*(a) *annanna*(nenni) *lip-paṭ-raš-šu$_2$*
185 *še-rit-su lit-ta-bi-ik ina u$_4$-me an-ni-i*
186 *lu pa-as-sa-šu$_2$ lu pa-aṭ-ra-aš$_2$-šu$_2$*

Incantation: I am the *šangamaḫḫu*-priest[114] and I have lit the fire, [174] I have lit the *kinūnu*-brazier, I have thrown in the (materials for) release, [175] I am the washed, pure (one) of Ea, the messenger of Asalluḫi, [176] I am extinguishing the *kinūnu*-brazier that I lit, [177] I am smothering the fire that I ignited, [178] I am dousing the grain that I poured (as a libation), [179] Just as I extinguish the *kinūnu*-brazier that I lit, [180] (and) douse the fire that I ignited, [181] (and) smother the grain that I poured (as a libation), [182] O Siraš, releaser of god and human, [183] (so too) may the knot that they tied be loosened. [184] May the anger (lit. knot of the *libbu*) of his god and his goddess, of NN son of NN, be loosened for him. [185] may his *šērtu*-sin-penalty be poured out on this day, [186] may it be erased for him, may it be loosened for him.

Siraš, a god associated with Ninkasi and the drinking of beer,[115] is invoked here because of the role of beer in relaxing both gods and humans and releasing them from their troubles – the epithet employs the active participle of the verb *pašāru*, which is commonly used to describe the release of impurities and evil (§ 2.3.1). Is Siraš

[114] The *šangamaḫḫu* was a purification priest, but it is used here as a title of the *āšipu*. This title is probably used here because of the god Kusu, the *šangamaḫḫu*-priest of Enlil, who was also associated with the *nignakku*-censer (Simons 2018: 137–145).

[115] Cf. Lambert 1982: 217. Similarly, having the patient visit a pub is attested as part of various namburbi rituals (Maul 1992) and at the end of an anti-ghost ritual (Scurlock 2006: 208–210, No. 15, 25–26): ... *ana bīt*(e$_2$) *sābê*(lu$_2$.kurun$_2$.ᵍna) *irrub*(ku$_4$)ᵍ-*ma* / ᵍ*šikara*(kašᵍ.sag) *ana* ^{d}*Ea*(diš) ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *u* ^{d}*asal-lu$_2$-ḫi inaqqi*(bal)^{qi2} ^{geš}*dalta*(ig) *u* ^{geš}*sikkūra*(sag.kul) *ilappat*(tag)-*ma* [*iballuṭ*(tin)] '… he enters a pub and [26] he pours a libation of beer to Ea, Šamaš, and Asalluḫi. He shall touch the door and the bolt and [he will recover].' The aim of the pub visit is partly to ease the reintegration of the patient, now relieved of his state of reduced existence, back into normal society (cf. Maul 1994: 104, "Der von den Beschwörern verordnete Besuch in der Kneipe ist … als geschickte und psychologisch klug durchdachte Form der Resozialisierung zu werten.") In another namburbi-ritual, the patient's reintegration into society is represented by his receiving bread from a baker and beer from a brewer (Maul 1994: 104n.26; 252, 50–51).

additionally involved because beer was used to extinguish the fire, taking advantage of both its literal form as a dowsing liquid and its metaphorical ability to 'loosen' evil? The metaphor of loosening evil is also picked up by the description of the patient's impurity as a knot being untied, which is also mirrored in the following line by the appeal for release from divine anger (*kiṣir libbi*, lit. 'knot of the *libbu*'). In line 183, the verb *ikṣurā* 'they tied' is a third person feminine plural form – is it the items being burned that are perceived to have tied the knot, insofar as they now represent the evil afflicting the patient, being released through their destruction by burning and subsequent extinguishing? The passage suggests that grain poured as a libation has also been burnt on the brazier and this recalls the burning of cereal grains or flour that have been used to wipe impurities off of the patient's body (§ 5.3.2). The mirrored repetition of the descriptions of ritual actions (176–181), presumably spoken simultaneously with the exorcist performing those very actions, ensures that the analogical 'extinguishing' of impurity is especially effective.

Just as burning grain takes advantage of its subsequent infertility as an analogy for the neutralization of evil (§ 5.3.2), the use of fire could take advantage of the nature of materials commonly employed in the production of figurines. Clay, dough, wax, and tallow, for example, were presumably used both for their malleability and for the extent of their physical transformation when exposed to fire. This is made especially clear in an anti-witchcraft ritual in which figurines of the witches are burnt in specific types of oven appropriate to the material from which they are constructed (CMAwR 8.7.2 8–16):

8 *sebet*(7) *ṣalmī*(nu) *ṭīdi*(im) *sebet*(7) *ṣalmī*(nu) *ṭīd*(im) *kullati*(ki.gar) *ša*$_2$ *ittâ*(esir) *ballu*(ḫe.<ḫe>)
9 *ṣebet*(7) *ṣalmī*(nu) *gaṣṣi*(im.babbar) *ana utūni*(udun) *ta-sad-dir*
10 *sebet*(7) *ṣalmī*(nu) *līši*(nig$_2$.sila$_{11}$.ga$_2$) *ana ti-nu-ri* MIN(= *tasaddir*)
11 ⌜*šeššet*(6)⌝ *ṣalmī*(nu) *agarinni*(agarin$_4$) *šeššet*(6) *ṣalmī*(nu) *bappiri*(bappir) *ana a-du<-gi>*
12 [x *ṣalmī*(nu)] ⌜*ku*⌝*-up-si ana ḫu-lu-pa-qa*
13 [x *ṣalmī*(nu)] *lipî*(i$_3$.udu) *ša*$_2$ *itti*(ki) *saḫ*^{i}*-le-*⌜*e*⌝

14 ⌜*bal*⌝*-lu ana lap-ti*
15 [*sebet*(7)] ⌜*ṣalmī*(nu)⌝ *lipî*(i$_3$.udu) *sebet*(7) *ṣalmī*(nu) *iškūri*(duḫ.lal$_3$) *sebet*(7) *ṣalmī*(nu) *ittê*(esir)
16 ⌜*ana*⌝ *ki-ri ittâ*(esir) *emma*(kum$_2$) *tasallaḫ*(su$_3$)*-šu$_2$-nu-tu$_2$

Seven figurines of clay, seven figurines of clay from the clay-pit mixed with bitumen, [9] seven figurines of gypsum you arrange for the potter's kiln; [10] seven figurines of dough you arrange for the bread-oven; [11] six figurines of beer mash, six figurines of beer bread, for the (brewer's?) oven; [12] [*n* figurines] of sesame pomace for the *ḫuluppaqqu*-censer; [13] [*n* figurines] of tallow [14] mixed [13] with cress seed [14] for the grain-roasting oven; [15] [seven] figurines of tallow, seven figurines of wax, seven figurines of bitumen [16] for the (bitumen-)kiln – you sprinkle them with hot bitumen.

This list of materials and ovens evokes the inventory-like lists of *Šurpu* and related compositions, which also include types of oven.[116] It is unclear whether the figurines were actually placed in the various ovens, which probably could have all been found within the city, or simply in the censer used for the ritual. The materials and their respective ovens nevertheless reference examples of physical transformations that would have been known from light industry, mirroring the transformation of the evil contained in the figurine into less a potent form. While *māmītu*-figurines of *māmītu*, although often made of clay (and in one case possibly wax),[117] do not appear normally to have been burnt,[118] similar materials were used in *Šurpu* to rub impurities off of the patient's body, and these were indeed burnt.

[116] E.g. *Šurpu* VIII 75: *itti*(ki) *ma-mit utūni*(udun) *la-ap-ti ti-nu-ri kinūni*(ki.ne) ki.ud.ba *u nap-pa-ḫa-tu$_2$* 'together with the *māmītu*-curse of potter's kiln, grain-roasting oven, bread-oven, *kinūnu*-brazier, cultic lamp, and bellows.' On the identification of the materials and ovens referenced in the above passage, see Schwemer 2006: 200n.9; Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 23.

[117] KAL 10, Nr. 13, 3 refers to a *ṣalam*(nu) *iškūri*(duḫ.lal$_3$) 'figurine of wax', but the fragmentary state of the tablet means it is not possible to say whether the figurine represented *māmītu* or how it was manipulated. Maul (2019: 135–136) refers to the previously discussed text in the Otago Museum (Zilberg and Horowitz 2016) for evidence of a wax figurine of *māmītu* being burnt, but we have seen that this interpretation is no longer sustainable (see § 5.3.4.2). Figurines of ghosts, at least partially made of wax, are however attested and Scurlock opines as follows on the choice of material (2006: 55): "Since the figurine [of the ghost] was made of tallow and wax as well as of clay, it would have partially melted in the process [of being ignited in a *burzigallu*-vessel], thus separating the 'self' or essence of the ghost (the clay) and the trouble he was causing, represented … by wax and tallow."

[118] Figurines of *māmītu* could be married to the patient, presented with offerings and buried, or filled with blood and stabbed (see § 5.3.4.2).

5.4.1.3 Other means of changing state

Other actions that lead to an irreversible change in the physical state or appearance of the material carrying impurities could also be performed by the exorcist or the patient. This ensured that the threat posed by the evil, which could not be completely annihilated, was diminished by transforming it as far from its original state as possible. In *Šurpu*, for example, the patient dismantles foodstuffs and other everyday items in ways that seem reminiscent of day-to-day household activities. Parallel actions are described in a *lipšur*-litany as metaphors for the removal of impurity from the patient, but it is unclear if these were intended to be accompanied by the same actions as part of the ritual performance.[119] Similar actions are also invoked in metaphors for the removal of the witch's evil.[120] Such actions could also represent the reintegration of the patient back into normal daily life at the same time as removing the evil. Bringing activities from the home into the ritual performance would make the actions, and therefore the perception of their effects, more relatable to people outside of the learned milieu of the exorcist.[121]

These actions are described as follows in the Assur Ritual Tablet of *Šurpu* (13–21):

13 … *šūma*(sum)^{sar} *suluppa*(zu$_2$.lum.ma) ⌜*pitilta*(šu⌝.[sar)]

[119] Cf. e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 16–26, 44–46: MIN(= *māmītu*) *kīma*(gin$_7$) *šūmī*(sum)^{sar} *liq-qal-lip* / *ma-mit kīma*(gin$_7$) *suluppi*(zu$_2$.lum.ma) *liš-ša$_2$-ḫi-iṭ* / MIN(= *māmītu*) *kīma*(gin$_7$) *pitilti*(šu.sar) *lip-pa-šir* 'may the *māmītu*-curse, like garlic, be peeled, [45] may the *māmītu*-curse, like (a bunch of) dates, be stripped, [46] may the *māmītu*-curse, like a cord, be unravelled (lit. released).' Other descriptions in this incantation, for which parallel actions are not found in *Šurpu*, include the comparison of *māmītu*-curse to the sherds of a smashed pot. The refrain *ana ašrīšu ay itūr* 'may it not return to its place' is repeated several times, emphasizing the fact that these actions were believed to bring about irreversible changes in state, just as the evil's separation from the patient was desired to be permanent.

[120] E.g. *Maqlû* V 53–54: *li-in-na-aš$_2$-pu kiš-pu-ša$_2$ ki-ma pê*(in.⌜bubbu) *liq*⌝*-qal-pu ki-ma šūmī*(sum)^{sar} / *liš-ša$_2$-aḫ-ṭu kīma*(gin$_7$) *suluppī*(zu$_2$.lum.ma) *lip-pa-aš$_2$-ru kīma*(gin$_7$) *pitilti*(šu.sar) 'may her *kišpū*-witchcraft be blown away like chaff, may it be peeled like garlic, [54] may it be stripped like (a bunch of) dates, may it be unravelled (lit. released) like a thread.' The blowing away of the chaff also evokes the function of wind as a means of dispersing evil (see § 5.4.2.2).

[121] A similar act of dismantling with more appeal to the scribe is attested in *Bīt rimki* (Nin. Rit. 161–163; Schwemer 2019b: 54–55): *lu ḫe-pu-u$_2$ tup-pu ar-ni-*⌜*ia*⌝ [*lu paṭ-ru*] / *lemnētu*(ḫul)^{meš}*-u$_2$-a lu par$_2$-sa* [*lu pur-ru-sa lu pur-ru-ra*] / *sak-la-tu-u$_2$-a u* ⌜*par$_2$*⌝-[*ka-tu-u$_2$-a*] 'may the tablet of my *arnu*-crime-punishments be broken, [may] [162] my evil (deeds) [161] [be loosened], [162] may [163] my incompetent (actions) and [my unjust (actions)] [162] be separated (from me), [may they be cut off, may they be dispersed.]' *Šurpu* also contains reference to a 'tablet of sins' which is apparently dissolved in water (see § 5.4.1.1).

14 [^{siki}]*itqa*(aka$_3$) *šīpāt*(siki) *enzi*(uz$_3^{I}$(BI)) *šīpāti*(siki) *sāmāti*(sa$_5$) *i*<-*na*> *qātī*(šu)^{min}-*ka* *teleqqe*(ti)^{qe2}-⌜*ma*⌝
15 [*eli*/*ana*?] ⌜^{lu2}⌝*marṣi*(ge$_{17}$) *tu$_2$-ka*-⌜*la*⌝[122]
16 [EN$_2$ aš$_2$]-⌜ḫul⌝ gal$_5$-la$_2$-gin$_7$ *tamannu*(šid)^{nu}-*ma tu$_2$-kap*-⌜*par*⌝-[*šu*(-*ma*?)]
17 [(x) x x] ⌜ri/ar?⌝ *tu-šad*<-*bab*>-*ma* ^{lu2}*išippu*(išib) [(*ina*?)] *qāt*(šu) ^{lu2}*marṣi*(ge$_{17}$) *išakkan*(gar)^{an}-⌜*ma*⌝
18 [*šūma*(sum)^{sar}] ⌜*i*⌝-*qal-lap-ma ina išāti*(izi) *inaddi*(šub)^{di}
19 [*suluppa*(zu$_2$.lum.ma)] ⌜*i*⌝-*šaḫ-ḫaṭ-ma ina išāti*(izi) *inaddi*(šub)
20 [*pitilta*(šu.sar) *i-pa-aš$_2$*]-⌜*šar*⌝-*ma* KIMIN(= *ina išāti inaddi*) : ^{siki}*itqa*(aka$_3$) *i-nap-pa-aš$_2$-ma* KIMIN(= *ina išāti inaddi*)
21 [*šīpāt*(siki) *enzi*(uz$_3$) *i-nap*]-⌜*pa-aš$_2$*⌝-*ma* MIN(= *ina išāti inaddi*) *šīpāti*(siki) *sāmāti*(sa$_5$) *i-nap-pa-aš$_2$-ma* KIMIN(= *ina išāti inaddi*)

… garlic, (a bunch of) dates, a string, [14] a [wool] fleece, goat wool, red wool, you take in your hand and [15] you hold (them) [over/for?] the patient, [16] you recite [the incantation] 'evil [curse] like the Gallû-demon'[123] and you wipe [him] (with these objects) [(and?)] [17] you have him recite […] and the exorcist places (these objects?) [(in?)] the patient's hand and [18] he (i.e. the patient?) peels [the garlic] and throws it into the fire, [19] he strips [the (bunch of) dates] and throws them into the fire, [20] [he loosens the string] and throws it into the fire, he plucks apart the wool fleece and throws it into the fire, [21] [he] plucks apart [the goat wool] and throws it into the fire, he plucks apart the red wool and throws it into the fire.

The impurity transferred into these items will be diffused and weakened by the dismantling and burning of the items into which it has been transferred, while the dismantling also acts a symbolic performance of the patient's separation from the source of his suffering.[124] Burning the already dismantled items adds a further layer of destruction, as the fire itself will later be extinguished, thus ensuring that the power of the evil is diffused and diminished as much as possible. Among the incantations accompanying these actions, the following concerns the peeling of garlic (*Šurpu* V–VI 60–72):

60 EN$_2$ *ki-ma šūmu*(sum)^{sar} *an-nu-u$_2$ i-qal-la-pu-ma ana išāti*(izi) *innaddû*(šub)
61 ^{d}*gira$_3$ qa-mu-u i-qam-mu-u*
62 *i-na mu-sa-re-e la in-ni-ri-šu*
63 *i-na īki*(e) *u palgi*(pa$_5$) *la in-nim-me-du*
64 *šur-šu-šu qaq-qa-ru la i-ṣab-ba-tu*
65 *ḫabbur*(ḫenbur$_2$)-*šu$_2$ la illû*(e$_{11}$)-*ma* ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *la immaru*(igi)^{ru}
66 *a-na nap-tan ili*(dingir) *u šarri*(lugal) *la$_3$ iṭeḫḫû*(te)^{u}

[122] According to Ebeling's hand-copy, the broken sign could be a cursive Neo-Assyrian form of lu$_2$, as used in line 17, but this needs collation from the tablet.
[123] Cf. *Šurpu* V–VI 1–2: EN$_2$ aš$_2$-ḫul gal$_5$-la$_2$-gin$_7$ lu$_2$-ra ba-ni-in-gar / *ar-rat lemutti*(ḫul)^{ti3} *ki-ma gal-le-e ana amēli*(lu$_2$) *it-taš-kan* 'Incantation: an evil curse like a Gallû-demon has been placed for this man.'
[124] It is unclear whether line 17 describes the exorcist taking the patient's hand, or placing the items in his hand, and therefore whether the exorcist or the patient is the subject of the verbs in lines 18–21. I would assume that it is the patient carrying out these actions, based on the perspective of the accompanying incantations in *Šurpu* V–VI, but the Assur Ritual Tablet and incantation may concern different versions of the ritual (see § 1.3.1.1)

67 *ni-šu ma-mit tur-ta maš-al-tu*
68 *muruṣ*(ge$_{17}$) *ta*-[*ne$_2$*]-*ḫi ar$_2$-ni šer$_3$-ti gil$_2$-la-ti ḫi-ṭi-ti*
69 *murṣu*(ge$_{17}$) *ša ina zumri*(zu)-*ia$_5$ šīrī*(uzu)^{meš}-*ia$_5$ šēr ʾāni*(sa)^{meš}-*ia$_5$ ibaššû*(gal$_2$)^{u}
70 *kīma*(gin$_7$) *šūmi*(sum)^{sar} *an-ni-i liq-qa-lip$_2$-ma*
71 *ina u$_4$-me an-ni-i* ^{d}*gira$_2$ qa-mu-u liq-mi*
72 *ma-mit lit-ta-ṣi-ma a-na-ku nūra*(zalag$_2$) *lu-mur*

Incantation: Just as this garlic[125] is peeled and thrown into the fire, [61] (and) Girra will burn it up completely, [62] (and) it will not be cultivated in a vegetable-plot, [63] (and) it will not be placed near the irrigation ditch or channel, [64] (and) it roots will not take hold of the earth, [65] (and) its shoot will not ascend and will not see the Sun, [66] (and) it will not approach the banquet of god or king, [67] (so too) the *nīšu*-oath, *māmītu*-curse, 'retribution', questioning, [68] wailing-illness, *arnu*-crime-punishment, *šērtu*-offence-penalty, *gillatu*-sin-punishment, *ḫiṭītu*-error-penalty, [69] the illness that exists in my body, my flesh, my 'strings', [70] just like this garlic, may it be peeled and, [71] on this very day, may Girra burn it up completely, [72] may the *māmītu*-curse depart and may I myself see the light (of day again).

The normal life cycle of the garlic is set out chronologically in the incantation, from its planting, through its growth, to its eventual arrival at the table of god or king. However, this possible future has been prevented by the burning of the garlic. In the same way, the intervention of the ritual aims to avert a possible future for the patient, the one in which the *māmītu*-curse and its illness continue to develop and eventually kill him, by replacing it with a more favourable future scenario before the evil fate has a chance to materialize. Apart from the descriptions of the accompanying ritual actions, the remainder of each of the incantations in *Šurpu* V–VI is phrased in largely the same way. Repeating similar actions with different vehicles for the impurity would no doubt have increased the efficacy of this part of the ritual.

Common natural processes could also be used to neutralize the harmful potential of impurity-carrying materials, especially by transforming them into a different form. For example, dough that has been rubbed on the patient to take up impurities (see § 5.3.2) could be fed to an animal in order to reprocess it (KAL 10, Nr. 4–10, 75–77):[126] *at-ta*

[125] Reiner translates 'onion', but the term *šūmu* // sum is now generally understood to refer to garlic (*Allium sativum*, cf. e.g. Powell 2003: 20). The CAD's designation of the term as *plurale tantum* (CAD Š/3 298) should be disregarded.
[126] Conversely, the demonic form of *māmītu*-curse could be described as eating its victims, including animals (KAL 10, Nr. 4–10, 61–63): *mi-na-a ia-a-ši ta-aṣ-ba-tin-ni-ma* ⌜*ta-ka-li*⌝-[*in-ni*] / *a-ku-li alpa*(gu$_4$) *ina tar-ba-ṣi a-ku-li immera*(udu.nita$_2$) *ina* ⌜*supūri*(amaš)⌝ / *a-ku-li apa*(geš.gi) *qišta*(tir) *u$_3$*

muḫ-ra-an-ni ^{gu4}*būru*(amar) *itti*(ki) *u₂-kul-li* ˹*a*˺*-kul-ma* / *a-kul ina pi-ka pu-šur ina la-ḫi-ka* / *šu-ṣa-a ina šu-bur-ri-ka liš-*˹*šu*˺*-u* (var. *lik-šu-u₂*) *ka-bu-ut-ta-ka-ma liq-ma-a* ^{d}*gira₂ ez-*˹*zu*˺ 'you, receive it from me! Calf, eat it with your feed! [76] Eat it with your mouth! Release it with your jaw! [77] Let it out from your rump! May they pick up (var. cover over) your dung! May angry Girra burn it!' By eating the dough, the calf appears to transform it into something else entirely – its dung – which is then burnt to transform it further.[127] That the process of changing the physical form of the dough was thought to be instrumental in diminishing its power is reflected in the play on different meanings of the verb *pašāru*, which here means 'to chew into small pieces' but usually means 'to release' in the context of impurities and suffering (see § 2.3.1).[128] This treatment of contagious material takes advantage of the fact that dough is both absorbent, and therefore able to lift impurities off of the patient's body, and edible. Here it is fed to an animal, but contagious impurities, as well as the evil of witchcraft, could also be transmitted to humans via contaminated food (§ 2.2.3.7).

The transformation that materials underwent when digested by animals is emphasized by the detailed description of a sheep digesting *sassatu*-grass in the following passage, which almost reads like an *a capite ad calcem* list of body parts (KAL 10, Nr. 55–62, a+19–a+28):

a+19 *im-mer ri-i-ti it-a-ma* A SU […][129]
a+20 *ik-kal im-mer-tu₂-ma i-*ʾ*a-ra šammī*(u₂)^{meš}
a+21 *pu-u a-na kar-ši kar-ši a-na ri-qi-*[*ti*]
a+22 *ri-qi₂-tu a-na ar-kat₃ i-*˹*nam*˺*-*[*din*]
a+23 *i-ma-qut piqannu*(a.gar.gar)*-ma* ^{u2}*sassatu*(ki.kal) *i-*˹*ma-ḫar*˺
a+24 ^{u2}*sassatu*(ki.kal) *ma-ḫi-rat kal lum-ni*
a+25 *muḫ-ri-in-ni-ma* ^{u2}*sassatu*(ki.kal) *lum-ni tab-li*
a+26 *per*ʾ*ū*(nunuz)^{u2}*-ki lim-ḫu-ru ri-kis lemnūti*(ḫul)^{meš}*-ia*

qanâ(gi) … 'why did you seize me (in particular) and eat [me]? [62] Eat the ox in the stall, eat the sheep in the sheepfold, [63] eat the reedbed, the woodland, and the reed! …'

[127] This is a variation on the act of feeding dough to a fish and bird, who carry it off to the Apsû and the sky in a standard ritual act of release (see § 5.3.2).

[128] Maul 2019: 156.

[129] Maul (2019: 262) tentatively suggests restoring *a-su-*[*rak-ka*/*ku išatti*] 'it drinks the groundwater'.

a+27 *ur-qit ṣēri*(edin) *li-pa-še-ru ru-ḫi-ia*
a+28 *šam-ma mu-pa-še-ru ma-mit lip-šur*

The sheep grazes on the pasture … […], [a+20] the ewe eats and then she regurgitates the grass. [a+21] The mouth (gives it) to the rumen,[130] the rumen (gives it) to the omasum, [a+22] the omasum gives in to the behind. [a+23] The droppings fall (to the ground) and the *sassatu*-grass receives them, [a+24] the *sassatu*-grass, receiver of all evil, [a+25] receive it from me, *sassatu*-grass and carry off my evil! [a+26] May your shoots receive my bond of evil, [a+27] may the greenery of the steppe release my *ruḫû*-witchcraft, [a+28] may the plant that releases release (my) *māmītu*-curse.

This passage provides an aetiology for the purificatory power of *sassatu*-grass, frequently used in rituals against transgression,[131] by noting its apparent ability to take on evil and yet restore itself to its original state. The *sassatu*-grass is a type of salt-grass that was usually found growing along watercourses.[132] It would therefore often be covered in the excrement of grazing animals, thus becoming a dangerous place that could, for example, harbour demons.[133] However, natural process meant that the excrement would appear to disappear, while fresh green grass would grow up in the same place, seemingly as good as new.[134] This apparently ability to 'reprocess' something impure and potentially contagious into a renewed, and inherently pure, form gives the *sassatu*-grass its magical purificatory power. These properties may have contributed to the fact that ripping up *sassatu*-grass is given as an example of a transgression associated with *māmītu*-curse in *Šurpu* (VIII 50): *itti*(ki) *ma-mit* ^{geš}*api*(gi) ^{geš}*qišti*(tir) *qanê*(gi) *qanâ*(gi) *ḫa-ṣa-bu šam-me* ^{u2}*sassata*(KI.KAL) *nasāḫu*(zi)^{ḫu} MIN MIN MIN 'together with the *māmītu*-curse of breaking off a reed (in) the reedbed (or) the reed-forest, (or) tearing out plants (or) *sassatu*-grass, (refrain).' The offence in question

[130] This is a rather abbreviated description of a ruminant's digestive process, but the Akkadian terminology can be quite broad. In this case, the term *karšu* seems to refer to the second stomach (i.e. the 'rumen'), since the grass has already been regurgitated, while the *riqītu* would refer to either the third ('omasum') stomach, or both third and fourth ('abomasum') stomachs (cf. Moran 1967: 178–182).
[131] This incantation, known by its incipit *attī sassatu* 'you, *sassatu*-grass', also formed part of the 'missing' tablet of *Šurpu* (cf. Simons 2017: 14) and is cited in the Uruk version of *Bīt rimki* (Schwemer 2019b: 94, 131) where it is immediately preceded by the incantation *attī māmītu* and followed by the ritual release of a sheep.
[132] Abusch et al. 2020: 476.
[133] Cf. e.g. AHw II 991 s.v. *rubṣu* for association between excrement, *sassatu*-grass, and demons and illness.
[134] Maul 2019: 260; Simons 2017: 16–17.

perhaps relates to negligence when harvesting grass in the steppe, especially given the risk of contagion through contact with animal excrement, or the improper handling of the pure *sassatu*-grass.

5.4.2 Change of location

Since impurity could not be destroyed completely, in addition to changing the state of materials and substitutes carrying impurities, the exorcist could also change their location.[135] This involved distancing the contaminated materials or representations of impurity as far as possible from the patient, either by taking them somewhere, sending the vehicles of impurity away, or dispersing the material into the natural environment. These items could also be trapped or buried in order that the evil or impurities could not escape and return to the patient. As well as ensuring that the impurities were as far removed from the patient as possible, contaminated materials must also be kept away from the civilized, urban world to reduce the risk of contagion to others. Materials leftover from rituals, or that might be contagious for some other reason, therefore had to be disposed of in an appropriate way. Compositions concerning other sources of impurity contain cautionary examples of the possible consequences of not doing so: demons can be described as if they were wash-water or toilet waste that had been improperly disposed of,[136] and one anti-witchcraft ritual apparently takes advantage of improper disposal to lure an unsuspecting person into carrying off the impurities.[137]

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[135] For a summary of the places to which evil and impurities could be sent in Mesopotamian ritual, see Wright 1987: 248–261.

[136] UH XI, section II, 71–79.

[137] CMAwR 8.2 121–122: *ṣalam*(nu) *ṭīdi*(im) *ina bīti*(e_2) *te-qe$_2$-ber* ⌜*ṣalmī*(nu)^{meš} *tanašši*(il_2)⌝[^{ši} *ina ṣēri*(edin) *ana e-reb* ^{d}]*Šamši*($utu^{?}$) *būrta*(pu_2) *tepette*(bad)⌜^{te}*-ma*⌝ / *te-qe$_2$-ber* ^{kuš}*kīsa*(nig_2.⌜dag) *e*$^{?}$⌝*-ti-qu inašši*(il_2)^{ši} … ‘you bury the figurine(s) of clay in the house, [you *pick up*] the (remaining?) figurines, you open a hole [in the steppe, towards the west] and [122] you bury (them in it); a passer-by will pick up the money-bag …’ (translation after Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 267). The intention seems to be that a random passer-by, tempted by the precious metals and stones placed in the money-bag, will pick it up and thereby inadvertently carry off the patient’s impurities that had been transferred to the bag (Abusch and Schwemer 2011: 256).

While in most cases the exorcist would presumably try to ensure that nobody was at risk from the contaminated materials resulting from purification rites, the primary concern was ultimately that they did not immediately re-infect the patient or himself.

5.4.2.1 Distancing the impurity from the patient

The desire that the impurity be distanced from the patient could be expressed by giving measurements of distance or through metaphorical descriptions suggesting an irreversible change of position, as in the following incantation from the fifth house of *Bīt rimki* (Læssøe 1955: 58, 86–89): *lis-si ištēn bēru* (im 1 danna) *ina zumri*(zu)-*ia*$_5$ / *kīma*(gin$_7$) *qut-ri li-tel-li šamê*(an)^{e} / *kīma*(gin$_7$) *imbari*(muru$_9$) *li-ne*$_2$-*ʾa ugār*(a.gar$_3$)-*šu*$_2$ / *kīma*(gin$_7$) ^{geš}*bīni*(šinig) *nasḫi*(zi)^{ḫi} *ana ašri*(ki)-*šu*$_2$ *a-a itūr*(gur) ‘may it be one double-hour distant from my body, [87] like smoke may it constantly go up to the sky, [88] like fog may it disappear (lit. turn back) (from) its field, [89] like an uprooted tamarisk may it not return to its place.’ The double-hour, although in reality a relatively short distance, is here used as a token distance: as long as the impurities are away from the patient, the actual range is not relevant.[138] The remaining metaphorical descriptions refer to irreversible changes of location or state. The use of the Gtn-stem of *elû* in line 97 describes both the motion of the smoke and the desired effect on the impurities it represents: the smoke is constantly rising into the sky and thus the impurities can be perceived as constantly being removed from the patient, at least until the patient is completely free of them. The imagery of an uprooted or felled tamarisk is

[138] In contrast to, for example, the following anti-witchcraft ritual, where the same metaphorical descriptions occur with a considerably larger, but equally symbolic, measure of distance (CMAwR 8.6.1 77′–79′): *lis-si šar*$_2$ *bērī*(danna) *ina zumri*(su)-*a* / ⌜*kīma*(gin$_7$)⌝ *qut-ri li-tel-li ana šamê*(an)⌜^{e}⌝ / ⌜*kīma*(gin$_7$)⌝ [^{geš}*bīni*(šinig)] ⌜*nasḫi*(zi)^{ḫi} *ana ašri*(ki)⌝-*šu*$_2$ *a-a itūr*(gur) ‘may (the evil) be 3600 double-hours distant from my body, [78′] like smoke may it constantly go up to the sky, [79′] like an uprooted tamarisk may it not return to its place.’ Here, the number is not meant to be precise but represents an indefinitely large distance.

frequently invoked as something that can never be restored to its original state,[139] implying that the impurities should never come back to harm the patient. Fog is invoked as something that blankets the fields early in the morning but quickly disappears completely as the sun rises – there may even be a connection to the power of Šamaš to disperse evil.

The desired distance between the patient and his impurities is emphasized in the following namerimburruda-incantation by invoking an impossible situation (KAL 10, Nr. 27–33, 96–97): *kīma*(gin$_7$) *ālu*(uru) *ana āli*(uru) *šadû*(kur) *ana šadê*(kur) *la i-*˹*qer*˺*<-ri>-*˹*bu*˺ *ana annanna*(nenni) *mār*(a) *annanna*(nenni) *namtaru*(nam.tar) *asakku*(a$_2$.zag$_2$) *murṣu*(ge$_{17}$) *la$_3$ ṭābu*(du$_{10}$.[ga]) / *ma-mit* ˹*a*˺*-a iṭeḫḫû*(te)*-šu$_2$ a-a iq-ri-bu*˺-[*šu*] … 'just as a city cannot come close to (another) city (and) a mountain cannot come close to (another) mountain, so too for NN son of NN, may Namtaru, Asakku, unpleasant illness, [97] *māmītu*-curse not approach him, may they not come close [to him] …' The first verb was previously read *i-ger-*˹*ru*˺[140] but, as it is hardly likely that cities could have been expected not to campaign against one another, the recent editor has proposed a convincing emendation to *i-*˹*qer*˺*<-ri>-*˹*bu*˺.[141] Thus, the idea being expressed is that, just as cities and mountains are completely fixed in their location and cannot physically move closer to one another, so too must the evil remain where it has been banished to, far away from the patient. This also reflects the idea emphasized throughout the portrayal of transgression that there is a divinely decreed, fixed cosmic order (it is in the very nature of cities and mountains that they cannot move) that must be maintained, or restored when it has been violated.

[139] E.g. KAL 10, Nr. 40–44, 84: ˹^{geš}˺šinig u$_4$-da (wr. kud-da) ku$_5$-ru-da-gin$_7$ ki-˹bi˺-[še$_3$] ˹na˺-an-gi$_4$-[gi$_4$] // ˹*ki*˺*-ma bi-ni nak-si ana aš$_2$-*˹*ri*˺-[*šu*] *a-a* [*i-tur*] 'like a felled tamarisk (Sum. felled in a storm), may it not [return] to [its] place.'
[140] Cf. Reiner 1956: 136.
[141] Maul 2019: 175.

As in the example involving a passer-by picking up a money bag cited above (§ 5.4.2), unsuspecting strangers could also be used to carry transgression-related impurities away from the patient and his house (e.g. 79-7-8, 71 7′–12′):[142]

7′ [EN$_2$ *at-ti*] *tub-kin-ni* **ma*{*maḫ*$^{?}$}**-ḫi-rat ka-la mim-ma šum-*[*šu*]
8′ [*ni-šu ta*]*-maḫ-ḫa-ri ma-mit ta-maḫ-ḫa-*[*ri*?]
9′ [*tur-ta ta*]*-maḫ-ḫa-ri maš-al-ti ta-maḫ-ḫa-*[*ri*?]
10′ [*li-iʾ-bu*] ⌜*ta*⌝*-ma-ḫa-ru um-ma ta-*⌜*maḫ*⌝-[*ḫa-ri*?]
11′ [*muruṣ*(ge$_{17}$) *ta-ne$_2$-ḫuʾ ar$_2$-ni šer$_3$-ti gil$_2$-la-ti ḫi-ṭi-ti* [*tamaḫḫarī*?]
12′ [*e-ti-qu$_2$-ki lim-ḫu*]-⌜*ru*⌝*-in-ni ka-bi-su-ki li-tin-nu-u* [*itti*(ki)*-ia*]

[Incantation. You] (are) the refuse heap who receives everything, [8′] [you] receive [*nīšu*-oath], you receive *māmītu*-curse, [9′] [you] receive ['turning'], you receive questioning, [10′] you receive [*liʾbu*-fever], you receive *ummu*-fever, [11′] [you receive(?) wailing illness], *arnu*-crime-punishment, *šērtu*-offence-penalty, *gillatu*-sin-punishment, *ḫiṭītu*-error-penalty, [12′] [may whoever passes you] receive (all this) for me, may whoever treads on you change (places) [with me].[143]

This incantation, with the incipit *attī tubkinni* 'You, refuse heap', was the second incantation of the 'missing' tablet of *Šurpu*.[144] The various evils, impurities, and illnesses afflicting the patient are formulaically listed as being received by the refuse heap. This was an obvious place to dispose of contaminated material,[145] but was apparently not entirely secure as this element of the ritual takes advantage of the fact that a passer-by might inadvertently step on the refuse heap and therefore carry the patient's impurities away from his house.

[142] Cf. Van der Toorn 1985: 138–139. Collated from the photograph on CDLI (cdli.ucla.edu/P451822, accessed 28/02/2021).
[143] Restorations in the final line are after a parallel passage in *Bīt rimki* (Læssøe 1955: 58–59, 92–94): *erṣetu*(ki)^{tu} *lim-ḫur-an-ni lid-di-na melamma*(me.lam$_2$)*-ša$_2$-ma lum-ni lit-bal* / ⌜*ka*⌝*-bi-su erṣeta*(ki) *lim-ḫu-ru-nin-ni* / ⌜*e*⌝*-ti-qu erṣeta*(ki) *li-tin-nu-u itti*(ki)*-ia* 'may the earth receive (the impurities) for me, may it give me its *melammu* and carry off my evil, [103] may (anyone) who treads on (this piece of) earth receive (the impurities) for me, [104] may (anyone) who passes (this piece of) earth change (places) with me.'
[144] Cf. Simons 2017: 16. On the frequent confusion in the modern literature between *tubqu* 'corner' and *tub*/*pk*/*qinnu* 'refuse heap', see Biggs 1993. The latter is a deverbal noun derived from *tabāku* 'to pour out' on the *pursen*(*n*)*u* pattern of pejorative diminutives (cf. GAG § 56r), and refers to a refuse heap located in an uninhabited part of a city or outside of the city, usually frequented by dogs, demons, and witches (cf. Greenfield and Schaffer 1983: 125–127).
[145] The refuse heap was also a source of materials that a witch could use to manipulate her victim (*Maqlû* II 186): *ina tub-kin-na-ti u$_2$-laq-qi$_2$-tu ḫu-ṣa-be$_2$-e-a* '(the witch who) gathered my leavings from the refuse heap.'

In a similar way, an apparently unimportant person is used to carry off the leftovers in the Istanbul *arratu*-ritual (A 185 rev. 20–21): *mu-sa-a-ti ša*$_2$ ⌜*qātī*(šu)⌝[^{min}-*šu*$_2$ x] x ⌜ku⌝ x [*it*]-*ti*⌝-*šu*$_2$-*nu ina na-ma-an-di te-si-*⌜*ir*⌝ / *ṣeḫer*(tur) *la ma-*⌜*ma-an*⌝ [*e-si*]-*ip-ma* ⌜*ana nāri*(id$_2$)⌝ *inaddi*(šub)^{di} *a-ra-an-šu*$_2$ *pa-ṭi-*⌜*ir*⌝ 'the wash-water of [his hands] … you enclose together with them (i.e. figurines of *urgulû*-lions and *urigallu*-standards) in a *namandu*-vessel. [21] A child of nobody gathers it and throws it into the river. His *arnu*-crime-punishment is (thereby) loosened.' An alternative ritual procedure, which is more detailed, is provided later in the same tablet (A 185 rev. 27–30):

27 ⌜lu$_2$⌝*ṣeḫer*(tur)⌝ *la ma-*⌜*ma*⌝*-an* ^{geš}⌝*urgulî*(ur.⌜gul) ^{geš}⌝*šu-ši* ^{d}*u*$_2$*-ri-gal-li*$_3$ *u*$_2$*-suḫ u*$_2$*-*⌜*ṭaḫ*$^{?}$⌝*-*[*ḫa*$^{?}$]
28 *amēlu*(lu$_2$) ⌜*pūr*(bur)$^{?}$⌝ *mê*(a) ⌜*emmūti*(kum$_2$)$^{?}$ *qātī*(šu)⌝^{min}*-šu*$_2$ *ana muḫḫi*(ugu) ⌜*imessi*(luḫ)⌝ *mu-sa-at qātī*(šu)^{min}*-šu*$_2$ ^{lu2}*ṣeḫer*(tur) *la ma-ma-an ina* ^{dug}*na-ma-an-*[*di*]
29 *e-si-ip ina ṭīdi*(im) ⌜*u*$_2$⌝*-šal-li* [*nāri*(id$_2$)] *bāb*(ka$_2$)*-šu*$_2$*-nu tepeḫḫi*(uš$_2$)^{ḫi} *a-na nāri*(id$_2$) *inaddi*(šub)^{di} *ana arki*(egir)*-šu*$_2$ *la*$_3$ ⌜*itâr*(gur)^{ar2}⌝
30 *sūq*(sila) *iṣbatu*(dab) *la*$_3$ *iṣabbat*(dab) *ar*$_2$*-ra-tu*$_2$ ⌜*pašrat*(bur$_2$)$^{?}$⌝ ⌜*a*⌝*-ra-an-šu*$_2$ *paṭir*(du$_8$)⌜^{ir}⌝

He brings a child of nobody (instructing him) "Remove the *urgulû*-lions made of liquorice (and) the *urigallu*-standards!" [28] The man washes his hands over (them) *with a bowl of hot water*. The child of nobody [29] encloses [28] the wash-water of his hands in a *namandu*-vessel. [29] He seals their opening with clay from a [river] meadow (and) throws it into the river. (The patient) shall not turn back, [30] he shall not take the route he took (before). The *arratu*-curse is (thereby) *released*. His *arnu*-crime-punishment is loosened.

The 'child of nobody' (*ṣeḫer lā mamman*), referring to an orphan, possibly to a child picked up off the street, is employed to dispose of potentially contaminating materials presumably because the risk of their being harmed was of little concern. The patient must then walk away without looking back or retracing his steps in order to avoid re-infection himself.

Impurities distanced from the patient could also be trapped in some way: a demon, for example, could be trapped inside a pot before being disposed of,[146] while witchcraft

[146] Scurlock 2006: 530–535, No. 226, 36–38: [*ki-a-am tu*]*-šad-bab-šu ana karpati*(dug) *tašakkan*(gar)^{an}*-šu-ma tu-tam-ma-šu* / [*niš erṣeti*(ki)^{ti3} *lu-u ta-ma-ta*$_5$] *niš šamê*(an)^{e} *lu-u ta-ma-ta*$_5$ *niš* ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *lu-u ta-ma-ta*$_5$ *taqabbi*(du$_{11}$.ga)*-ma bāb*(ka$_2$)*-šu*$_2$ *tepeḫḫi*(uš$_2$)^{ḫi} / [x x x x] x x x x *ina ḫar-bi na-du-ti te-qe*$_2$*-*⌜*ber-šu*$_2$⌝ '[you] have him (the patient) speak [thus]. You put it (the figurine of Any Evil) into a (clay) pot and you make it swear an oath. [37] You say "[may you be adjured by the earth], may you be adjured by the sky, may you be adjured by Šamaš" and close (the pot's) opening. [38] […] … you bury it in abandoned wastelands.'

could be called upon to act as trap and snare the very witches responsible.[147] Figurines representing *māmītu*, on the other hand, were often buried, ensuring that the evil was permanently distanced from the patient by sending it down to the netherworld from where it could not return. However, additional measures could be taken to ensure that the *māmītu*-curse represented by the figurine was well and truly trapped. For example, when the figurine was buried in the steppe, the burial site could be protected by magical means (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 3, 77–78): … *ana ṣēri*(edin) *tuṣṣi*(e_{11})*-ma būrta*(pu_2) *tepetti*(bad)*-ma te-qeb-bir abnī*(na_4)^{meš} *te-te-em-mer*ˀ *ina maḫri*(igi)*-šu*$_2$ / ˹*zisurrâ*˺([zi_3.sur].ra)^{a} *talammi*(nigin)^{mi} zi an-na ḫe$_3$-pa$_3$ *kalāma*(du_3)*-šu*$_2$ *tamannu*(šid)^{nu} *ana arki*(egir)*-ka ul*$_2$ *tappallas*(igi.bar) *lemun*(ḫul)*-šu*$_2$ *paṭir*(du_8)^{ir} '… you go out to the steppe and open a pit and bury (the figurine). You bury stones in front of it. [78] You surround it with a circle of flour. You recite the whole of "May it be sworn on the life of heaven". You should not look behind you. Its evil is (thus) loosened.' The prophylactic circle of flour would stop the *māmītu*-curse from escaping the grave, leaving it with no choice but to go down to the netherworld with its evil. It would also protect the burial site from being disturbed by passing people or animals, ensuring that the impurities carried by the figurine were not inadvertently released back into the upper world before they had been taken down to the netherworld.

[147] CMAwR 9.2 33–34: ˹*ep-še*˺*-ti-šu*$_2$*-nu kīma*(gin_7) *giš-<par->ri libbalkitā*(bal)^{meš}-˹*šu*$_2$˺-[*nu-ti*] / *šu*$_2$*-nu-ti li-ba-ru-šu*$_2$*-nu*-[*ti*] 'may their performances (of witchcraft) turn around against [them] like a trap, [34] (and) them, may it catch them!'

5.4.2.2 The role of the natural environment in displacing impurity

The exorcist had to ensure that the impurity, once it had been distanced form the patient, could not easily come back to himself of the patient and that there was no risk of any contagious materials infecting anyone else. Therefore, the impurity should ideally have been removed as far away from the civilized urban core of the Mesopotamian heartlands as possible.[148] This could be achieved by dispatching the impurity or impure materials into the world beyond the urban environment, with the exorcist himself taking it out to the steppe or using animals as vehicles to carry into far and wide into the natural environment. At the same time, elements of the natural environment could be called upon to carry off or trap evil, or otherwise purify the patient. Inherently pure and divine rivers, seas, mountains, and plants, as well as other deities associated with the natural world, are frequently called upon in rituals against transgressions, particularly the *lipšur*-litanies which contain long lists of divine rivers and mountains. Even non-divine elements of the extra-urban environment could be called upon to release the patient from the effects of *māmītu*-curse (e.g. KAL 10, Nr. 16–26, 8–15):

8 *ṣēru*(edin) *u*$_3$ *ba-*ˈ*ma*ˀ*-a-tu*$_2$ KIMIN(= *māmīt lipšurū*)
9 *ugāru*(a.gar$_3$) *u*$_3$ ˈ*qer*ˀ-[*be-e-tu*$_2$ KIMIN(= *māmīt lipšurū*)]
10 *eqlu*(a.ša$_3$) ˈ*u*$_3$ˀ [^{geš}]ˈ*kirû*(kiri$_6$)ˀ KIMIN(= *māmīt lipšurū*)
11 *nāru*(id$_2$) *u*$_3$ [*nābalu*(?) KIMIN(= *māmīt lipšurū*)]
12 *ur-qit* ˈ*ṣēri*(edin) *u*$_3$ˀ *še*ʾ*u*(še.am) *rabbû*(gal)^{meš} ˈKIMIN(= *māmīt lipšurū*)ˀ
13 *ḫur-ša*$_2$*-*ˈ*ni*ˀ [*u*$_3$ *namê*(?) KIMIN(= *māmīt lipšurū*)]
14 *ta-ma-tu*$_4$ *rapaštu*(dagal)^{tu4} *u*$_3$ [… KIMIN(= *māmīt lipšurū*)]

[148] Compare the invocation of boundaries in *Maqlû* to keep the witch away from her victim (V 125–128):

125 ^{id2}*idiqlat*(idigna) *u* ^{id2}*puratta*(buranun)^{ki} *la*ˀ *te-bi-ra-ni*
126 *īka*(e) *u palga*(pa$_5$) *la te-et-ti-qa-ni*
127 *dūra*(bad$_3$) *u sa-me-ti la tab-ba-lak-ki-ta-ni*
128 *abulla*(ka$_2$.gal) *u ne-re-bi-šu*$_2$ *la ter-ru-ba-ni*

'You shall not cross the Tigris and the Euphrates to (reach) me, [126] you shall not cross over irrigation channel and canal to (reach) me, [127] you shall not traverse wall or parapet to (reach) me, [128] you shall not enter the city gate and its entrance to (reach) me.'

The pairs of boundaries get increasingly closer to the patient, going from the edges of the core Mesopotamian "Kulturland" (Maul 1994: 80) right up to the city gate. The desired result would work in the opposite direction to distance the victim from the witch as far as possible: she should be shut out of the urban environment and then even out of the lands of Mesopotamia since, by virtue of her transgressive behaviour, she has forfeited her right to live in the civilized world.

15 *nārātu*(id$_2$)^{meš} *ellētu*(ku$_3$)^{meš} [*u*$_3$ … KIMIN(= *māmīt lipšurū*)]

May steppe and open country release *māmītu*-curse, [9] [may] meadow and [farmland release *māmītu*-curse], [10] may field and orchard release *māmītu*-curse, [11] [may] river and [*dry land* release *māmītu*-curse], [12] may greenery of the steppe and 'great barley' release *māmītu*-curse, [13] [may] the mountains [and *the steppe* release *māmītu*-curse], [14] [may] the wide ocean and [… release *māmītu*-curse], [15] [may] the pure rivers [and … release *māmītu*-curse].

The list is more general than those found in the *lipšur*-litanies, for example, and, while not explicitly invoking any divine elements of the environment, the aim here is to create a sense of universality. This would reassure the patient that the whole world around him was working to remove his impurities, and to ensure that the impurities were dispersed as widely as possible into the environment, in order to diminish any remaining potency.

In the *Šurpu* ritual, several elements of the natural environment are invoked when the brazier is extinguished, being commanded to calm down along with the fire god Girra (V–VI 187–194):

187 EN$_2$ *nu-uḫ* ^{d}*gira*$_2$ *qu-ra-du*
188 *it-ti-ka li-nu-ḫu šadû*(kur)^{meš} *nārātu*(id$_2$)^{meš}
189 *it-ti-ka li-nu-ḫa* ^{id2}*idiqlat*(idigna) *u*$_3$ ^{id2}*purattu*(buranun)
190 *it-ti-ka li-nu-uḫ ayyaba*(a.a.ba) *ta-ma-tu*$_2$ *rapašti*(dagal)^{ti3}
191 KIMIN(= *ittīka linūḫ*) *ḫar-ra-nu mārat*(dumu.munus) *ilāni*(dingir)^{meš} *rabûti*(gal)^{meš}
192 KIMIN(= *ittīka linūh*) ^{u2}*sassatu*(KI.KAL) *bi-nu-ut šam-me*
193 KIMIN(= *ittīka linūh*) *lib*$_3$*-bi ili*(dingir)-*ia*$_5$ *u* ^{d}*ištari*(15)-*ia*$_5$ *ze-nu-ti*
194 KIMIN(= *ittīka linūh*) *lib*$_3$*-bi il*(dingir) *āli*(uru)-*ia*$_5$ *u* ^{d}*ištar*(15) *āli*(uru)-*ia*$_5$ *ze-nu-ti*

Incantation: Become calm, hero Girra! [188] With you may become calm the mountains and rivers, [189] with you may become calm the Tigris and Euphrates, [190] with you may become calm the ocean, the wide sea, [191] with you may become calm the road, daughter of the great gods, [192] with you may become calm the *sassatu*-grass, offspring of plants, [193] with you may become calm the 'abdomen' of my angry god and goddess, [194] with you may become calm the 'abdomen' of the angry god and goddess of my city.

Since this incantation accompanies the extinguishing of the fire in which materials carrying the patient's impurities had been burnt, the natural world is presumably being invoked alongside Girra for its power to 'extinguish' the patient's impurities. By requesting calm throughout the world, the ritual can be brought to a successful conclusion and order returned to the cosmos. This also relates to the mechanical

processes of the ritual since, if the brazier is extinguished with river water, we might expect the flowing water and the earth beneath to absorb and carry away the impurities that remain in the ashes. A similar passage in *Maqlû* appeals to the gods for calm in the surroundings while the victim brings his case against the witches (*Maqlû* I 63–68):

63 *ša₂ šamê*(an)^{e} *qu-la ša₂ erṣeti*(ki)^{ti3} *ši-ma-a*
64 *ša₂ nāri*(id₂) *qu-la-ni ša₂ na-ba-li ši-ma-a* ⌜*pâ*(ka)-*ia*⌝
65 *šāru*(IM) *na-zi-qu tur-ru-uk e tal-lik*
66 *ša₂* ^{geš}*ḫaṭṭi*(gidri) *u* ^{geš}*mar-te-e tur-ru-uk la tal-lak*
67 ⌜*li*⌝*-iz-zi-iz ḫar-ra-nu mārat*(dumu.munus) *ilī*(dingir)^{meš} *rabûti*(gal)^{meš}
68 *a-di a-mat* [^{lu2}]*kaššāpi*(uš₁₁.⌜zu⌝)-[*ia₅*] *u* ^{munus}*kaššāpti*(uš₁₁.zu)-*ia₅ a-qab-bu-u₂*

Those of the sky, pay attention! Those of the earth, listen! 64 Those of the river, pay attention to me! Those of the dry land, listen to my speech! 65 The howling wind is pacified (lit. beaten flat), may you not blow! 66 The one of the sceptre and pole is pacified, you shall not blow! 97 May the road, daughter of the great gods, stand still 68 until I present the case (against) [my male] witch and my female witch.

By requesting that the whole world come to a standstill, this incantation effectively stops time and thereby creates a protected space for the performance of the ritual, particularly so that the witch cannot disrupt it.[149] The subsequent quiet would also make sure that the patient's appeals could be heard by the gods (indicated by the use of the verbs *qâlu* 'to pay attention, be silent' and *šemû* 'to listen'), without the din of the disruptive forces of the non-urban environment.

Contaminated materials or carriers of impurity were often disposed of in the steppe, which is also where some purificatory rituals took place. Most prominently, the *Bīt rimki* ritual took place in a reed structure erected in a remote part of the steppe. The steppe is far from the urban, civilized world but was also considered to possess an inherent purity, often being described as a 'pure place' (*ašru ellu*). In *Šurpu*, for example, seven loaves of bread are used to wipe impurities off of the patient, which he then spits on before the exorcist takes them out to the steppe (VII 64–71):

64 ⌜edin⌝-na ki ku₃-ga :$^{?}$ *a*$^{?}$*-na ṣe-ri aš₂-ri elli*(ku₃) *šu-ṣi-ma* : u-me-ni-e₃
65 [suḫuš] ⌜^{ĝeš}kiši₁₆-a⌝-še₃ : *ina iš-di a-ša₂-gi šu-kun-ma* : u-me-ni-ĝar

[149] Cf. Schwemer 2010: 325–327.

66 [(…) tu-ra] ⌜ĝar⌝-ra-bi su-bi u-me-ni-zi-zi
67 [(…) *muruṣ*(ge$_{17}$) *ša$_2$*]-⌜*ak*⌝-*nu-šu ina zu-um-ri-šu$_2$ u$_2$-suḫ-ma*
68 [^{d}nin-edin]-⌜na⌝ sug-za$_3$-⌜ga-bi-ke$_4$⌝ nam-erim$_2$-a-ni šu⌝(ku) u-me-ni-sum
69 [*ana* ^{d}]⌜*be*⌝-*let ṣēri*(edin) *u ba-ma-a-tu$_2$ ma-mit-*⌜*su*⌝ *pi-qid-ma*
70 [^{d}nin]-⌜kilim⌝ en a-za-lu-lu tu-ra kala-ga-bi niĝ$_2$-ki ki-a šu u-me-ni-te-ĝa$_2$
71 ⌜^{d}MIN⌝ *be-el nam-maš-ti mu-ru-us-su dan-na zer-man-di qaq-qa-ri li-šam-ḫir*

Take (what has been wiped off) out to the steppe, the pure place, and [65] place it at the base of an *ašāgu*-plant, and [67] [(…)] remove from his body [the illness] which has been placed (upon) him, and [69] entrust his *māmītu*-curse [to] Bēlet-ṣēri (lit. mistress of the steppe) and the open country, and [71] may Ninkilim, lord of the animals, present his grave illness to the *worms* of the earth.'

The passage is part of an Ea-Marduk dialogue, so the imperative verb forms are instructions to Marduk but also for the exorcist (see § 1.4.2.3), who must take the contaminated materials out to the steppe and place them at the base of an *ašāgu*-plant.[150] This presumably served to protect against any further contamination since the plant's thorns should ward off passers-by or grazing animals. Nevertheless, deities associated with the steppe and wild animals are invoked to carry off the causes of the patient's suffering. The illness itself is apparently fed to worms, presumably living in the soil at the base of the *ašāgu*-plant, and that can take the impurities further down into the earth as they crawl through it.[151] Mongooses, invoked here as the god Ninkilim, were animals that were otherwise associated with impurity and contamination since demons could be portrayed as mongooses sniffing around the sewage outlet of their victim's house.[152] Ninkilim could also offer divine help in transferring impurities to other animals of the steppe and thus away from areas of human habitation.[153] Similarly, carrion-eating

[150] Parallels are to be found in the burial of ghost figurines in the shade of thorny plants (e.g. Scurlock 2006: 202, No. 12, cited at § 3.2.6).
[151] For the translation of the term *zērmandu* (Sum. niĝ$_2$-ki) as 'worm(s)', see Heimpel 1995: 424. with lexical references in George and Taniguchi 2010: 135.
[152] UH VI 175′: ^{d}nin-kilim-gin$_7$ ur$_2$ e$_2$-gar$_8$-ra-ke$_4$ ir-si-im in-na-ak-e-de$_3$ // *ki-ma šik-ke-e a-sur-ra-a uṣ-ṣa-nu šu-nu* 'they sniff at the sewer outlet (Sum. base of the wall) like the mongoose.' The demons are presumably using the distinctive scent of the open drain to locate a vulnerable point of entry to the victim's house (cf. George 2015: 94).
[153] Wright 1987: 69.

steppe animals could be called upon to break up a dead witch's corpse, thus dispersing her evil about the steppe.[154]

As well as physically removing impurities to the steppe, elements of the natural environment were frequently called upon to partake in purification rituals. In the *lipšur*-litanies, for example, long lists of deified mountains and rivers are invoked as "healing 'other-than-human' persons" who, being named individually along with epithets describing their attributes or powers, are invited to become "active agents" in the ritual, working on behalf of the patient to secure his release from the impurity and suffering.[155] The power of the whole natural environment could therefore be employed in purification rituals, partly for the power of the various divine elements and partly to ensure that the impurities were spread widely throughout the environment.[156] The power of the whole cosmos is invoked in the *Bīt rimki* ritual, for example, by setting up a microcosmic representation of the elements involved (Nin. Rit. 424–431):[157]

424 [*kīma*(gin$_7$)] ⌜*an-na*⌝-*a* ⌜*te-te*⌝-*ep-šu*$_2$
425 ⌜*ištu*(ta)⌝ *bīt*(e$_2$) *rim-ki* ⌜*tuṣṣâ*(e$_3$)⌝^{a}
426 *sebe*(7) *nārāti*(id$_2$)^{meš} *ina* ^{geš}*sikkati*(gag) ⌜^{geš}⌝[*bīni*(šinig)] ⌜*ta*⌝-*ḫar-ri*
427 *sebet*(7) *šadâni*(kur)$^{meš\text{-}ni}$ [*ša*$_2$] ⌜*eperi*(saḫar)⌝$^{ḫi.a}$
428 *tašappak*(dub)^{ak} *sebe*(7) *ḫarrānāti*(kaskal)^{meš} *ša*$_2$ ⌜*qēmi*(zi$_3$) *te*⌝-*ṣer*
429 *nārāti*(id$_2$)^{meš} *šadâni*(kur)$^{meš\text{-}ni}$ *ḫarrānāti*(kaskal)⌜^{meš} *i*⌝-*ša*$_2$-*ir-ma*
430 EN$_2$ ^{d}*Šamaš*(utu) *bēl*(en) *elâti*(an.ta)^{meš} *u šaplāti*(ki.ta)^{meš}
431 *pa*-⌜*šir šamê*(an) *u erṣerti*(ki) *šarru*(lugal)⌝ *idabbub*(du$_{11}$.ga)

[As soon as] you have done this, [425] you leave the bathhouse, [426] you dig seven rivers with a *stake* [of tamarisk], [428] you pour out [427] seven mountains [of] dirt, [428] you lay out seven roads of flour, [429] (the king) steps over the rivers, the mountains, and the roads, and [431] the king recites [430] the incantation: "Šamaš, lord of the upper and lower (worlds), [431] who releases heaven and earth".

[154] *Maqlû* VIII 123‴–127‴.
[155] Perdibon 2019: 61.
[156] Just as the lists of examples of *māmītu*-curse in *Šurpu* and related compositions aim for universality in regard to the circumstances in which the transgression might have been committed, so too do the lists of named rivers and mountains aim for universality in terms of the time and space in which the transgression might have been committed, and they also represent the totality of the world, from which the effects of the transgression are to be expelled (Maul 2019: 21).
[157] Schwemer 2019b: 68–69.

The power of mountains and rivers is harnessed by creating small-scale substitutes for them. Particularly important is their role as boundaries – by crossing over the small replicas, it is hoped that the evils afflicting the king will be trapped on the other side of the full-scale equivalents of these boundaries. Šamaš is invoked in his role as divine judge, but since he is also 'lord of the upper and lower worlds' it makes sense to have powerful elements of the entire cosmos on the side of the patient.

Mountains are one element of the cosmos that could be called upon in purification rituals, and specific mountains are listed extensively in the *lipšur*-litanies (KAL 10, Nr. 27–33, 1–47).[158] Mountains are, on the one hand, inherently pure places: like the steppe, they are frequently denoted as such in incantations.[159] Several purifying *materia magica* are derived from plants that can be found there, including cedar, plant-derived syrups, and various forms of incense.[160] On the other hand, they could be dangerous dwelling places of demons and witches, since the mountains on both horizons were considered gateways to the netherworld, and were therefore a liminal space between the two worlds.[161] As well as invoking individual mountains, the power of mountains could be symbolically employed in ritual actions against evil. For example, when a goose is released as a carrier of impurity in *Bīt rimki* (see § 5.3.4.1), the accompanying incantation emphasizes the bird's association with mountains (Uruk Rit. 111):[162] EN_2 kur-gi^{mušen} kur-ta 'Incantation: Goose, from the mountain.' The goose is presumably supposed to carry the impurities back to the mountains from where it had originally

[158] Cf. Perdibon 2019: 61–63, who divides the named mountains into four groupings according to their epithets: those associated with particular deities; those associated with forests and particular species of tree; those associated with metals and stones; and "famous mountains of the Mesopotamian cultic landscape". Thus, some of the *materia magica* used in the ritual are connected with the mountains from where they originate, and everything is situated in the wider cosmic landscape.
[159] E.g. *Šurpu* IX 42–43: EN_2 ĝeš-erin gal kur gal-ta mu_2-a / kur ki-sikil-la-ta nam-tar-ra 'Incantation: Great cedar, growing from the great mountain, [43] (whose) fate is from the mountain, the pure place.'
[160] Perdibon 2019: 50.
[161] Perdibon 2019: 45.
[162] Schwemer 2019b: 92–93.

come and therefore effectively to the edge of the world. In the following part of the ritual, the king stands on block of basalt, a stone closely associated with mountains (Uruk Rit. 114):[163] [*šarru*(lugal) *ina*] ⌜*muḫḫi*(ugu)⌝ ^{na4}*atbāri*(ad.bar) *izzaz*(gub)-*ma* '[the king] stands [on] top of (a block of) basalt'. Basalt was a very hard stone that often symbolized mountains in ritual contexts, and was therefore also referred to with the epithet *aban šadî* 'mountain stone'.[164] The hardness of basalt, and therefore the solidity and weight of mountains, could be used to physically trap evil. In *Maqlû*, mountains are invoked to cover the witch while a block of basalt is placed on the censer (*Maqlû* Rit. 88′–89′):[165] $_{EN2}$ *šadû*(kur)^{u2} *lik-tum$_3$-ku-nu-ši aban*(na$_4$) *šadî*(kur)^{i} / *ina muḫḫi*(ugu) *nignakki*(nig$_2$.na) *ša$_2$ bāb*(ka$_2$) *ḫuluppaqqi*(nig$_2$.tab.tur.ra) *tašakkan*(gar)⌜^{an}⌝ 'Incantation: "May the mountain cover you." A mountain stone $^{89'}$ you place on top of the *nignakku*-censer (that is on) the opening of the crucible.' The surrounding context of this incantation evokes actions such as trampling on the witches, so the role of the basalt is probably to symbolically crush or trap the witches, representations of whom have already been burnt in the censer. This interpretation is supported by a later part of the ritual (*Maqlû* Rit. 166′): *ṣalam*(nu) ^{munus}*kaššāpti*(uš$_{11}$.ZU) *ša$_2$ ṭīdi*(im) *teppuš*(du$_3$)^{uš}-*ma aban*(na$_4$) *šadî*(kur)^{i} *ina rēš*(sag) *libbi*(ša$_3$)-*ša$_2$ tašakkan*(gar)^{an} 'you make a figurine of the witch from clay and place a 'mountain stone' on her epigastrium.' Trapping the figurine, representing the witch and her evil, under basalt is perhaps supposed to represent the trapping of the witch herself under a mountain. Thus, the witch becomes trapped under something inconceivably heavy, in a fashion comparable to the imprisonment of the giants Typhon and Enceladus under Mount Etna in Graeco-

[163] Schwemer 2019b: 92–93.
[164] Cf. Maul 2019: 95.
[165] Translation after Abusch 2016: 373.

Roman mythology. This also relates to the trope of natural and human-made boundaries being called upon to physically separate evil forces from their victim.

Several rivers are named individually along with epithets in the *lipšur*-litanies (KAL 10, Nr. 27–33, 48–62). One of the several reasons for which rivers were considered a purifying force was that their flowing nature meant that they were constantly renewing themselves (e.g. *Šurpu* I 22′–23′): EN$_2$ ^{d}id$_2$-lu$_2$-ru-gu$_2$-gin$_7$ mu$_2$-mu$_2$-da-bi / ^{d}*id*$_2$ *ed-de-šu-u*$_2$ ‘Incantation: Constantly renewing River (Sum. like the River, which grows).’ This is why river water in particular was used for washing away impurities (§ 5.3.1). Rivers and their waters also derive purity from their origin in the mountains or the Apsû, as expressed in the following *Kultmittelbeschwörung* to the waters (*Šurpu* IX 119–128):

119 EN$_2$ a en-e kur-gal-ta si nam-mi-[sa$_2$]
120 a ^{id2}buranun^{ki} ku$_3$-ga-ta si nam-mi-[sa$_2$]
121 sig$_7$-ga abzu-ta nam-me ba-rig$_7$-[ga]
122 sig$_7$-ga eridu-ga-ke$_4$ RU bi$_2$-in-[da$_6$]
123 ^{ĝeš}erin bi$_2$-in-da$_6$ ^{ĝeš}ḫa-šur-ra bi$_2$-in-[da$_6$]
124 an-na an-na mu-un-da$_6$ ^{d}ki ki mu-un-da$_6$
125 ^{d}en-ki lugal abzu-ke$_4$ sikil-la mu-un-da$_6$
126 lu$_2$-u$_{18}$-lu dumu dingir-ra-na su-na mu-un-da$_6$
127 mu-un-sikil-la mu-un-dadag-⌜ga⌝
128 eme ḫul-ĝal$_2$ bar-še$_3$ ḫe$_2$-[em-ta-gub]

Incantation. Pure waters, [flowing straight] down from the mountains, [120] waters, [flowing straight] out of the Euphrates, [121] born from the Apsû, you bestow the *me*, [122] born of Eridu, you extend (as far as) the …, [123] you extend (as far as) the cedar, you extend (as far as) the *ḫašur*-tree, [124] you have extended (as far as) An of the sky, you have extended (as far as) Ki of the sky, [125] you have extended (as far as) Enki, pure king of the Apsû, [126] you have extended (as far as) the body of (this) man, son of his god, [127] you have purified him, you have cleansed him, [128] may the evil tongue [stand] aside!

Water’s inherent purity, according to this incantation, derives from its ultimate origin in the Apsû, abode of Enki, its pure king (125: lugal abzu-ke$_4$ sikil-la), and enters the earthly realm via the mountains. It has therefore travelled through all three parts of the upper world: the sky (into which the mountains reach), the earth (represented by the

mountains themselves), and the Apsû (the water's ultimate origin).[166] Thus, the waters could in theory carry the patient's impurities into all parts of the upper world, diffusing their danger. Here there is also an emphasis on contact,[167] which is an important part of transferring the patient's impurities into the water in the first place. Once again, the interconnectedness of the cosmos and natural environment is used to the exorcist's advantage by spreading the impurities as far away as possible.

The detailed list of proper names and epithets of river is followed by a short section containing a more generic list of water-related features of the environment, reminiscent of the lists of examples of *māmītu*-curse in the incantations of *Šurpu* (KAL 10, Nr. 27–33, 63–66):

63 *nārātu*(id$_2$)^{meš} *ṣeḫrētu*(tur)^{meš} *a-pu qi-šu iku*(e) *palgu*(pa$_5$) *kup-pu kap-pu*
64 *nam-ka-ru ši-kin-nu ilānī*(dingir)^{meš} *ellūti*(ku$_3$)^{meš} *lip-šu-ru itti*(ki)-*šu-nu*
65 *ayyabba*(a.ab.ba) *elītu*(an.ta) *ayyabba*(a.ab.ba) *šaplītu*(ki.ta) *lim-ḫur mi-ḫir-tu$_4$ ša$_2$ libbi*(ša$_3$) *ki-*⌜*te*⌝-[*e*]
66 *ana ili*(dingir) *ze-ni-i* ⌜d⌝*iš$_8$-tar$_2$ ze-ni-ti ar$_2$-ni-šu$_2$ kuš-ši-da lumun*(ḫul)-*šu$_2$ paṭra*(du$_8$)^{ra}

The small rivers, the reedbed, the reed-thicket, the dyke, the irrigation channel, the spring-pond, the ravine, [64] the irrigation canal, may the oil flasks of the pure gods release (it) with them, [65] may the upper sea (and) the lower sea receive what is inside the linen. [66] For (the sake of) the angry god (and) angry goddess, repel his *arnu*-crime-punishment, loosen his evil!'

We have already seen how rivers and irrigation canals could act as physical boundaries to keep evil at bay. The reference to the upper and lower seas suggests another means of removing evil from this territory: by sending a representative of the evil or impurity-carrying materials (here apparently wrapped in linen) downriver, it will be dispersed into the surrounding ocean, thereby eventually reaching the Apsû.[168] An incantation from *Maqlû* requests that the witchcraft afflicting the patient be dispatched downriver, while the patient himself, in a metaphor for his release from the evil and recovery,

[166] Cf. Perdibon 2019: 108, "The pure waters, pouring from the high mountains, purify and heal everything with their flowing touch, while simultaneously connecting the river, the Euphrates, the city of Eridu, heaven and earth, and trees."
[167] Sum. da$_6$ 'to reach towards' later comes to mean 'to touch' (see § 2.1.3.1).
[168] For the relationship between the upper and lowers seas and the Apsû, see Horowitz 1998: 340–341.

should go in the opposite direction (VIII 22′–23′): ⌜*ša*⌝ munus*kaššāpti*(uš$_{11}$.⌜ZU⌝) *kiš-pu-ša$_2$ lu-u ana qid-*⌜*da*⌝-[*tim-ma*] / ⌜*ana*⌝*-ku lu-*⌜*u*⌝ *ana ma-ḫir-ti* ⌜TU$_6$⌝ [EN$_2$] ‘of the witch, may her witchcraft (go) downstream [and] $^{23'}$ may I (go) upstream. Spoken formula of [the incantation].’ While this is probably intended as a literary figure, witchcraft was literally sent downriver in another part of the *Maqlû* ritual, with figurines of the witches dispatched in a model boat.[169] This is a common element of anti-witchcraft rituals and the implication is usually that the boat should capsize,[170] in order that the evil of the witchcraft be taken down to the Apsû, which was also identified with the depths of the river.[171] The idea that rivers could take impurities down to the Apsû via their depths is expressed in a prayer to the divine river in an anti-witchcraft namburbi (CMAwR 11.3.1 24): [*lemutta*(ḫul) (?) *tab*]-⌜*li*⌝ *id$_2$ šu-rid-di apsûm*(abzu)*-ki id$_2$ lumnu*(ḫul) *ša$_2$-a-šu$_2$ ia-a-ši u bīti*(e$_2$)$^{!}$*-ia$_5$ la i-qar-ru-bu la$_3$ isannaq*(dim$_4$) *la$_3$ ikaššad*(kur)*-an-ni* ‘[carry off *the evil*],[172] River, bring it down in your depths (lit. Apsû), River. That evil shall not approach me or my house, it shall not approach, it shall not overcome me.’ Similarly, in a namerimburruda-incantation, a fish is commanded to the take the patient’s *māmītu*-curse down to the Apsû (KAL 10, Nr. 16–26, 55): *ma-mītī*(BAD)[173] *nūnu*(ku$_6$) *ina apsî*(abzu) ⌜*lu*⌝*-še-*⌜*rid*⌝ ‘may the fish bring my *māmītu*-curse down to the Apsû.’ The release of animals as vehicles for impurities is a standard ritual element (see § 5.3.4.1). They are supposed to return, carrying the impurities, to their natural habitat: in the case of the fish the river and therefore also the Apsû. Overall, the purifying power of rivers and other bodies of water operated on three main levels:

[169] *Maqlû* III 130–133.
[170] E.g. *Maqlû* III 121–124; CMAwR 8.23 40′–56′; 8.24 9′–14′.
[171] Perdibon 2019: 107, referencing Horowitz 1998: 338.
[172] This tentative restoration follows Abusch and Schwemer 2016: 441. Maul (1994: 447) instead restores [*itti mêki* (?) *tab*]-⌜*li*⌝ ‘[carry off with your waters].’ The restoration suggested by Caplice (1970: 135), [*eš-re-e*]-⌜*ta*⌝ ‘you are straight’, is no longer valid.
[173] Cf. spelling ⌜*ma*⌝*-mi-ti* in line 37 (MS E). In other lines of the same manuscript, this is mostly replaced by MIN, although with *ma-mitī*(BAD) written out every few lines.

their flowing nature gave the appearance of constant renewal and the ability to physically displace impure matter; purity was endowed by their origin in the mountains, and their ability to connect different parts of the cosmos; rivers and seas were connected to the Apsû, where the power of Enki would have contained the evil.

Another way in which evil could be dispersed into the environment was by the blowing of the winds, usually invoked as a group of four (e.g. *Šurpu* II 162–163): *kakkabū*(mul)^{meš} ^{IM}*šūtu*(u$_{18}$.lu) ^{IM}*iltānu*(si.sa$_2$) ^{IM}*šadû*(kur.ra) ^{IM}*amurru*(mar.tu) / *šārū*(IM)^{meš} *er-bet-ti li-zi-qu-nim-ma li-paṭ-ṭi-ru ma-mit-*ˈ*su*ˀ ‘the cardinal directions (lit. stars),[174] South, North, East, and West, [163] the four winds, may they blow and so may they loosen his *māmītu*-curse.’ The ‘wind’ of the exorcist could also blow away the evil of witchcraft and demons,[175] and can be compared with the ‘favourable wind’ (*šāru ṭābu*) referenced in hymns and prayers, understood to be the ‘breath’ (also *šāru*) of the gods.[176] By blowing from all four directions, the winds described in *Šurpu* II 162–163 ensure that the sufferer’s *māmītu*-curse and the accompanying impurities are scattered widely across the environment.

[174] On the association of stars or asterisms with particular winds and their cardinal directions, see Horowitz 1998: 198–199. It should be noted that the cardinal winds are here translated in the conventional way, although these four Mesopotamian winds blew along slightly different axes (J. Neumann 1977; Horowitz 1998: 196–198).
[175] Jiménez 2018b: 322.
[176] Jiménez 2018b: 331–334.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I examined the processes by which the exorcist helped his patient to secure the lifting of his punishment for transgression, the removal of attendant impurities and the treatment of internal symptoms, and ultimately his release from the state of reduced existence and return to normal society. First, the exorcist could examine the patient's symptoms and other signs to determine that his suffering resulted from transgression and its punishment. Next, the patient would be reconciled with the gods, particularly his personal protective deities and those gods that would play an active role in the following rituals, through prayer and offerings. Finally, I assessed the ritual methods by which the exorcist could effect the removal of the patient's suffering and physical impurities, and treat the internal symptoms. This involved examining symbolic acts, the explanations of their workings provided by the accompanying incantations, and the nature and power of the *materia* used in the rituals.

Some of the themes that run through the removal rituals, and that were particularly key to their effectiveness, include: the fact that evil and impurities were perceived to manifest in physical form and could therefore be removed by physical means; the notion that these impurities could not be destroyed completely but instead had to have their state or location changed in order to diminish the threat they posed to the patient and other people; and the power of the natural environment to remove these impurities and purify the patient. The removal rituals, particularly through the diagnosis of transgression as a cause of suffering and the treatment of its internal symptoms, also emphasize some of the elements of the portrayal of transgression and its punishment that I have identified in previous chapters. This includes the idea that the self-curse unleashed by transgression could be perceived as residing within the patient's body,

usually manifesting as symptoms in the abdomen (*libbu*) and was therefore treated with enemas and emetics, but also by releasing blood from the inside of a *māmītu*-figurine. Many of these treatments can be understood both to address internal 'medical' symptoms and also to remove physical impurities from the inside of the patient's body. That the self-curse could also manifest in an external, demonic form is reflected in the use of figurines to represent it in a way that could be ritually manipulated. The common trope of ignorance with regard to having committed a transgression is reflected in the ambiguity inherent in diagnosing the patient's suffering and the effectiveness of the rituals against various possible sources of suffering. In particular, there is a great deal of crossover in the symptoms and treatments of transgression and witchcraft.

Overall, the actions and incantations of the removal rituals also express a number of overarching concerns that form part of the portrayal of transgression and its punishment according to the ideology of the *āšipūtu* corpus. Above all, these rites seek to restore order and balance to the universe, that have been disrupted by transgression. This could be expressed by neutralizing evil with analogical rites that disrupted the natural order, such as burning seeds to render them infertile, or by invoking elements of the natural environment to reassert the structures governing the universe. The prayers reconciling the patient with the gods and many of the incantations accompanying ritual actions serve to recognize divine authority. This demonstrates, on the one hand, that the transgressor has accepted their unknown transgression and its punishment and again affirms the divinely ordained structures governing the proper function of the universe. On the other hand, they also help to lift the divine punishment and its effects, which can only be achieved with the cooperation of the gods, whether this was the divine judge Šamaš, the gods who give the exorcist his power, or divine elements of the natural environment that help to disperse impurities and purify the patient. Several of the ritual

actions are taken from everyday life, such as the peeling of garlic to represent the removal of evil or the use of marriage rites to connect the patient to substitutes. These hint at an eventual return to normal society and help the patient to transition out of his state of reduced existence.

6 Conclusions

This thesis aims to understand how transgression and its consequences were conceptualized in Mesopotamia, particularly from the emic perspective of those who compiled and used the rituals of the *āšipūtu* corpus. In the following chapter, I summarize my methods and key findings from the preceding chapters, but reference should also be made to their individual summaries (§ 2.1.5; § 3.6; § 4.4; § 5.5). I then offer an overarching picture of the conceptualizations of transgression found in the *āšipūtu* corpus. This includes the place of transgression within the wider *āšipūtu* corpus and its implications for accessing the theoretical background underpinning the compositions of the corpus.

In my opening Chapter § 1 I began by outlining my research aims (§ 1.1) and methodology (§ 1.2), before introducing the selection of primary sources that my thesis concentrates on (§ 1.3.1). By focusing primarily on rituals of the *āšipūtu* corpus, supplemented by *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, which drew upon the ideology of the *āšipūtu* corpus, I was able to outline a conceptualization of transgression that, although limited to a particular corpus, was based on a well-developed and internally consistent system of thought. An overview of previous secondary literature on the topic (§ 1.3.2) revealed a tendency to approach the Mesopotamian material as a way of explaining Biblical perspectives on sin and thus not allowing Mesopotamian conceptions of transgression to speak on their own terms. Assyriological studies of transgression have either followed a largely lexical approach, without fully appreciating the systems of thought behind the terminology, or have employed frameworks based on taboos or physical impurity that are not applicable to the Mesopotamian material.

I then explored a number of themes that help to situate my topic and primary sources within their wider intellectual and cosmological context. They include: the place of transgression within the wider *āšipūtu* corpus (§ 1.4.1.1); the place of *āšipūtu* practices within the history of medicine (§ 1.4.1.2); the portrayal of transgression and divine punishment in Mesopotamian texts outside of the *āšipūtu* corpus (§ 1.4.1.3); and the role of personal deities, the divine courtroom, and gods of justice, as well as the relationship between the human exorcist and his divine counterparts (§§ 1.4.2.1–1.4.2.3).

In Chapter § 2, I began by examining the important ancient terminology employed in reference to transgression and its consequences and its conceptual background. The range of terminology describing transgression, curse, and punishment revealed rather idiosyncratic conceptualizations of causality in relation to the consequences of transgression (§ 2.1). In this system, the transgression and its punishment were so closely linked that one was essentially the automatic result of the other, explaining why the patient could not seek forgiveness for transgression but only release from the punishment. Especially important was the concept of curse as an autonomous force, within or without the sufferer, that punishes transgression (§§ 2.1.1.1–2.1.1.2). The conceptual origins of *māmītu*-curse in the self-curse unleashed by a broken oath exerted a strong influence on its portrayal. However, its development into a more complex concept is paralleled by the analogous *arratu*-curse, something that had not been fully recognized in previous secondary literature. Some of the other terminology relating to transgression, crime, and punishment demonstrated a connection with eating, which forms a significant part of the conceptualization of transgression. There was also shown to be a degree of crossover between concepts relating to transgression against the gods

and those concerning infractions against terrestrial law, including the use of legalistic terminology in the rituals, which can be connected to the notion of the divine trial.

I then assessed an important concept for understanding the symptoms of transgression, encompassed in the anatomical term *libbu* (§ 2.2). This refers to the internal organs, particularly the abdomen and digestive tract, and was associated with both physical symptoms and, as the seat of emotions, psychological symptoms. Symptoms of the *libbu* are associated with various sources of evil, and can reveal the perceived mechanics connecting causes and manifestation. An assessment of the verbs used to describe removal of the patient's suffering and its causes (§ 2.3) revealed a differentiation in terminology between the removal of (meta)physical causes of suffering, which facilitated release from the state of suffering and a return to normal society, and the physical cleansing of the patient, which primarily prevented contamination from materials used in the rituals and ensured a safe transition between different parts of the rituals. Nevertheless, these two categories of removal could use the same methods and both form a key part of the removal rituals.

Chapter § 3 investigated the portrayal of transgression as the ultimate cause of the patient's suffering. I first examined the structure and contents of the lists of possible transgressions that make up many of the incantations accompanying the rituals (§§ 3.1–3.2). An overarching theme is the universality of possible transgressions, suggesting that identifying a specific transgression committed by the patient was not necessary, and thereby increasing the efficacy of the ritual. Indeed, another common trope of the incantations is the patient's ignorance of having committed a transgression (§ 3.3). This challenges the commonly held idea that the lists in *Šurpu* were intended to be 'confessional'. This is further supported by the fact that several of the shorter or

more therapeutic namerimburruda-rituals, while also effective against *māmītu*-curse, do not include such incantations.

The lists nevertheless play an important role in categorizing transgression and therefore expressing the structures laid down by the gods. The litany form meant that, while individual entries in the lists may not have been noted by the patient, the general themes could have made an impression. In this respect, the refrains repeatedly emphasize the patient's imminent release from the effects of transgression, rather than focusing on the transgression itself. Perhaps more importantly, the incantations are also addressed to the gods and therefore represent the patient's acknowledgement of the possibility of having committed an unknown transgression. They also recognise the authority of the gods to maintain the structures of the universe by punishing transgression and also to release the suffering inherent in that punishment. The question of individual responsibility for transgression is further problematized by the possibility that its effects could be transferred by means of contagion (§ 3.4), and that *māmītu*-curse and *arratu*-curse could also be conceived of as autonomous entities, external to the transgressor and behaving as demons (§ 3.5). An individual's transgressive actions were therefore only part of the overall conceptualization of the workings of transgression and its consequences.

In Chapter § 4, I examined the experience of suffering resulting from transgression and its punishment. Generalized metaphorical descriptions of the state of suffering reflect the sufferer's reduced existence, cut off from the world and unable to participate in normal human society (§ 4.1). There are also many descriptions of the actual experience of suffering, in terms of both relational symptoms which affected the patient's relationship with the gods and other humans (§ 4.2), and internal symptoms that manifested as physical and psychological problems (§ 4.3). The diagnostic series

Sakikku, in keeping with its function of attributing symptoms to causes, generally employs analogical thinking to connect certain symptoms with specific acts of transgression, often following the *lex talionis* logic also found in law collections (§ 4.3.1).

The removal rituals, by contrast, describe a wide range of often quite general symptoms and illnesses attributed to transgression, in keeping with their overall theme of universality, but also to make the rituals effective against suffering of any nature and cause (§ 4.3.2). Nevertheless, there are some patterns that allowed the exorcist to attribute his patient's suffering to transgression. Both the diagnostic series *Sakikku* and removal rituals share some instances of analogical thinking that connect certain symptoms with transgression in general. For example, abdominal symptoms, and related psychological symptoms, were especially associated with transgression, arising from an earlier association between eating and oath-taking. Since the patient was often unaware of having committed a transgression, such patterns of symptoms would have served as an important indicator of the source of suffering.

Both relational and internal symptoms were characterized by imbalance, whether in human society or human-divine relations, or within the patient's own body. This reflects the fact that the original transgression likely disrupted the careful balance of the universe. Both categories of symptoms also reduce the sufferer's ability to participate in normal human society, whether because of how he is treated by others or because of debilitating or repulsive internal symptoms. Again, this reflects the cause of suffering: the person who has rejected the norms of human society by transgressing against them is punished with a reduced ability to participate in that society, thus losing the benefits and protections that it afforded. The punishment for transgression is therefore conceptualized as appropriate to the crime. At the same time, the sufferer is reminded

of the importance of upholding societal norms and the structures of the universe that have been ordained by the gods.

In the final Chapter § 5, I focused on the methods by which the exorcist released his client, the patient, from this state of suffering, which was undertaken in multiple stages. After diagnosing the source of the patient's suffering (§ 5.1), although this was not always necessary since these rituals were often designed to be effective against a number of possible causes and their symptoms, the patient first had to be reconciled with the gods (§ 5.2). This could involve praying and making offerings, in order to recognize the gods' authority to release the patient from his punishment and ensure the success of the exorcist's rituals.

The conceptualization of the consequences of the patient's suffering as a form of physical impurity residing within his body allowed the exorcist to remove it by various means, transferring it into a carrier substance or substitute for the patient (§ 5.3). The idea that the impurity was to be found in physical form within the patient's body reflects another aspect of the conceptualization of transgression: that it had been 'eaten' and that the punishment therefore afflicted the patient from within his internal organs. This explains some of the methods of removal, such as the use of enemas or the piercing of a substitute figurine through its abdomen to release what was inside. These methods often set the treatment of transgression apart from the treatment of symptoms attributed to 'external' sources of suffering.

Nevertheless, the parallel existence of *māmītu*-curse as a demon meant that it could be represented in the form of a figurine and thereby manipulated in a number of ways to diminish its power (§ 5.3.4.2). Once removed from the patient, the impurity could not be completely annihilated, but had to broken down or distanced from the patient in

order to diminish its power (§ 5.4). Water and fire were particularly useful for changing the state of the impurity or impurity-carrying substances (§§ 5.4.1.1–5.4.1.2), and the natural environment was frequently called upon to aid in the destruction or displacement of the impurity (§ 5.4.2.2). This not only took advantage of the power, often divine in nature, of the natural world, which also provided many of the materials used in the rituals, but also served to recognize the divinely ordained structures that governed the universe and humanity's relation to it. Thus, the balance of these structures, which had been disrupted by the transgression, could be restored and divine authority to maintain the proper functioning of the world would be recognized. In addition, many of the ritual actions employed by the exorcist facilitated the patient's safe return from his liminal state of reduced existence back into normal human society.

The overall picture of Mesopotamian conceptions of transgression and its consequences that emerges from my detailed research on the relevant *āšipūtu* material is quite different to that previously described in the modern secondary literature. The focus on transgression as a cause of divine punishment and suffering is not about guilt or confession, since the patient frequently expresses ignorance and the lists of possible transgressions are too generalizing to suggest that they reflect taboos or prohibitions. Indeed, confession or the identification of a specific offence was not necessary for the success of the rituals. The sufferer only had to admit that his suffering resulted from having offended the gods in some way, even if he was entirely unaware of the circumstances of the offence. At the same time, the incantations recognize that committing a transgression was possible in any area of life and disrupted the balance of the divinely ordained structures of human society and the universe at large.

Following this, the proper ritual steps could be taken to appeal to the gods for release from the punishment, often in the context of the divine courtroom, and then to remove

the physical impurities associated with the punishment from the patient's body and treat any internal symptoms. Invocation of the gods, especially those responsible for administering justice, served to recognize the authority of the gods in establishing the structures governing the proper function of human society and the cosmos. It also recognized that the gods alone were able to release the patient from his punishment and, by aiding the exorcist's rites, reduce the patient's suffering. Ultimately, the gods could not forgive transgression, since it represented a threat to their authority by upsetting the balance of the world and rejecting the structures that they had ordained, but they could decide to reduce the attendant punishment. This could happen if the sufferer took the correct steps to recognize his unknown transgression, the importance of the structures and norms governing the universe, and the authority of the gods in maintaining the balance of these structures.

My identification of the existence of a unified and internally consistent conceptualization of transgression and its consequences in my textual corpus has important implications for the wider study of the *āšipūtu* corpus. Together with conceptual connections to other sources of suffering, as demonstrated throughout, my thesis offers insights into the ideological background of the *āšipūtu* corpus. As a corpus of texts with largely practical applications, we do not possess any independent expositions of the underlying theory that Mesopotamian exorcists drew upon to structure their portrayal of the various evils afflicting their patients, and how these could be identified and dealt with. In the absence of such theoretical texts, we must look for commonalities and patterns in the portrayal of topics addressed by the practical ritual texts and other sources. My research has achieved this for the theme of transgression, just as other scholars have previously addressed the portrayal of other sources of suffering, including witchcraft, ghosts, and demons.

My findings, and the connections demonstrated with other aspects of the *āšipūtu* corpus, should provide impetus for further study into the systems of thought underlying the rituals of the corpus. This could provide further insights into how these texts were composed, the relationship between different parts of the corpus, and how individual exorcists might have interacted with one another and with the wider tradition within which they were working. I have demonstrated that conceptions of transgression reflected an ideology seeking to structure and maintain the proper functioning of human society and the wider universe. Further study is needed to understand how the *āšipūtu* corpus, composed and used by a limited group of urban male elites, interacted with everyday life in Mesopotamian society. Having established a new, emic approach to Mesopotamian conceptions of transgression, its consequences, and their resolution, and one that is often quite different to previous scholarship on the subject, I hope that my thesis will be a useful resource for the study of transgression and its punishment within religious systems of thought more generally, both in Mesopotamia and beyond, especially the Biblical world.

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