

a shift from mundane to personal astrology, and may be in part attributable to this very shift.

Baigent's claim that this change came about as a result of Persian influence cannot be supported, since there is no evidence of personal astrology in the Zoroastrian corpus.⁶⁵

Finally a word on the authors of the corpus we have tried to elucidate: the magicians, diviners and healers of ancient Mesopotamia. On the one hand they were the champions of the theistic system, composing and adapting texts, and educating the public while making house calls; on the other hand they kept lapsing into holistic modes of thought and presentation. A likely explanation for this remarkable ambivalence lies in their position betwixt centre and population. They catered not only to the needs of the state, but also to that of the public, where at least part of their pay and unavoidably some of their ideas came from.

The Poetry of Magic¹

Niek Veldhuis

1 Incantations and the Literary Corpus

One of the Old Babylonian Eduba texts, commonly called 'The Supervisor and the Scribe', consists of a discussion between an ugula ('supervisor') and a pupil of the scribal school. The supervisor is the first to speak, and for almost thirty lines he showers the young scribe with admonitions and good advice. In short, he incites him to be a good, obedient pupil, and to listen carefully to what the ummia says, as he himself, the ugula, had always done when he was young. Then the schoolboy is introduced, ironically, as a humble man of learning:²

29 dub-sar umun-ak sun₃-na-bi ugula-a-ni mu-na-ni-ib-gi₄-gi₄
30 ud mu₇-mu₇-gin₇ ab-šid-dè-en-na-a ba-an-gi₄-bi a-ra-ab-ḥa-za
31 mu-gud-gin₇ i-lu dūg-ga-zu-šè giš i-lá-a-bi
32 lú-nu-zu nam-mu-ni-ib-ku₄-ku₄ diš-àm ga-ra-ni-ib-gi₄

The scribe, the man of learning, humbly replied to his supervisor:
'As to the incantation that you recited, I have its antiphon (ready) for you,
And to your oxen-like sweet moaning its refutation.³
You will not turn me into a nitwit! I will answer you but once'.

¹ This paper gained much from critical and stimulating remarks by Prof. Dr. Tzvi Abusch, Dr. Jan van Ginkel, Femke Kramer, Dr. H.L.J. Vanstiphout, and the participants in the Conference on Mesopotamian Magic. To all I wish to express my sincere thanks.

² Sources for these lines: *SLTN* 114 (Ni 4243) + *ISSET* 2, 84 (Ni 4092); *SRT* 28; *TMH* NF 3, 37; *FS* Hilprecht, 19; *SEM* 59; *ISSET* 2, 84 (Ni 9679); *SLFN* 47 (3N-T 917, 388); *SLFN* 47 (3N-T 906, 231); *SLFN* 47 (3N-T 927, 517). Variants are orthographic in kind, and are disregarded here. On Eduba C see C. Wilcke, *Kollationen zu den sumerischen literarischen Texten aus Nippur in der Hilprecht-Sammlung Jena* (ASAW 65, 4; Berlin, 1976), 34f., with additional sources in *SLFN* 47, and *ISSET* 2, 84. The join of the prism fragments *SLTN* 114 (Wilcke's source B) with *ISSET* 2, 84 (Ni 4092) has not been tested on the actual fragments, but is clear enough from the copies. The lines preceding Eduba C on this prism preserve the end of Schooldays, and must be added to the list of sources for this composition in P. Attinger, *Éléments de linguistique sumérienne. La construction de du₁₁/e/di 'dire'* (OBO Sonderband; Göttingen, 1993), 34. The prism fragment CBS 19826 (one side published in S.N. Kramer, *Schooldays: a Sumerian Composition Relating to the Education of a Scribe* (Museum Monographs; Philadelphia, 1949 =) *JAOS* 69 (1949), 199–215, Plate III; see p.4) may belong to the same piece.

³ Lines 30 and 31 are parallel in construction, sharing one verb (a-ra-ab-ḥa-za). The construction ud ... a (temporal clause) with a second person verbal form in 30 corresponds to mu ... šè ('in exchange for') with a second person possessive pronoun in 31. Giš i-lá-a-bi is interpreted here as a verbal form, corresponding to the fossilized form ba-an-gi₄ (see *PSD* B s.v.), which has the same inanimate possessive -bi. The tentative translation 'refutation' or 'fight' for giš i-lá-a is based on a number of lexical texts: giš-lá-a = *namcaqum* (P-Kagal bilingual; *MSL* 13, 88), giš-lá = *anatum*, giš-lá-lá = *uquntum* (Antagal III, 193f.; *MSL* 17, 157). See moreover *SIG₇-ALAN* 7, 135 (*MSL* 16, 109): giš-giš-lá = *epēšu ša kakki*. I am not aware of any other attestations of a verb giš - lá. It is assumed that the form used here is a playful derivation of the well known noun, in conscious parallelism with ba-an-gi₄. I owe these observations to Dr. H.L.J. Vanstiphout. For another interpretation of giš - lá (and this passage) see Héimpel, *Tierbilder* (Rome, 1968), 157f.

⁶⁵ Cf. Baigent, M., 1994, *From the omens of Babylon: Astrology and ancient Mesopotamia* (Harmondsworth: Arkana / Penguin Books); Mackenzie, D.N., 1964, 'Zoroastrian astrology in the Bundahis', *BSOAS* 27: 511–529; Gordon, R.L., 1975, 'Franz Cumont and the doctrines of Mithraism', in: J.R. Hinnells, (ed.), *Mithraic studies: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

This speech of the *dumu eduba* might be deemed improper, but it is most revealing for the present subject. In order to say 'shut up, you're talking nonsense', the student compares his *ugula* first with someone reciting incantations, and second with a bel-lowing ox.⁴ From the perspective of the *eduba*, the centre of literary learning, reciting incantations amounts to the same thing as bovine mooing. In other words, if we want to incorporate incantation texts into the literary corpus,⁵ we are not likely to receive support from our ancient colleagues. Incantations are not literary texts. Therefore, the recent studies by Michalowski,⁶ Reiner,⁷ Cooper,⁸ and the present writer,⁹ in which incantations are analysed from the poetical point of view, require explicit justification. The perspective under which we analyse and interpret our material, and the labels we use, are important determinants for the outcome of our investigations. Incantations are not meant to entertain, to display verbal virtuosity, or to construct imagined worlds. They are meant to be used in magic rituals, in order to influence the course of events. Bearing this in mind, let us look in detail at a short Akkadian incantation from Ur. This example, as most examples I will use here, is from the Old Babylonian period.¹⁰

⁴ The two images may belong together, since *mu₇-mu₇* is almost onomatopoeic for 'mooing'. That the scribal profession was felt to be higher than that of conjurer is confirmed in Proverb Collection 2 no. 54 (line 1): 'an unsuccessful scribe, he will be an incantation priest' (E.I. Gordon, *Sumerian Proverbs. Glimpses of Everyday Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* (New York, 1968), 211).

⁵ That is, the corpus of literary or poetic texts strictly speaking. This is not to deny that incantations were treated in the *eduba*. Evidence of this use is found in a literary letter, edited by J.J.A. van Dijk, 'Ein spätbabylonischer Katalog einer Sammlung sumerischer Briefe', *Or* 58 (1989), 441–452, and in a number of incantation tablets, which appear to be school copies. See most recently Waetzoldt and Yildiz, 'Eine neusumerische Beschwörung', *OrAnt* 26 (1986), 291–298; edition of an Ur III tablet with an incantation written over an erased business text, probably both exercises. Old Babylonian examples of school copies may be *SLTN* 6; *OECT* V, 55 and *YOS* XI, 68. Michalowski (Review of *OECT* V, *JNES* 37 (1978), 343–346, esp. 345) identified the text on the 'bun' *OECT* V, 55 as an extract from *TIM* IX, 63:17'–20' (*Lamašum*; edition by M.V. Tonietti, 'Un incantesimo sumerico contra la Lamaštu', *Or* 48 (1979), 301–323). According to Westenholz, 'Old Akkadian Schooltexts. Some Goals of Sargonic Scribal Education', *Afo* 25 (1974–1977), 95–110, some of the Old Akkadian incantations should also be related to the school, either as exercises or as example texts, but the point is difficult to prove. The famous Plaque Diorite of Urnanše was interpreted by J.S. Cooper, 'Studies in Mesopotamian Lapidary Inscriptions II', *RA* 74 (1980), 101–110, esp. 103–104, as an exercise on a broken piece of stone, juxtaposing two unrelated texts: an incantation and a building inscription (see Civil in E. Reiner and M. Civil, 'Another Volume of Sultantepe Tablets', *JNES* 26 (1967), 154–211, esp. 211). This interpretation, however, was not accepted by T. Jacobsen, 'Ur-Nanshe's Diorite Plaque', *Or* 54 (1985), 65–72, who treated the text as a unity concerning the erection of a reed hut for incantatory purposes.

Theoretically, the extent of the literary corpus is not easy to define. Our own notion of literature and poetry is not likely to be equivalent to that of the ancients (see A. Fowler, *Kinds of Literature. An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford, 1982), especially Chapter 12 on the concept 'Canons of Literature').

⁶ P. Michalowski, 'Carminative Magic', *ZA* 71 (1981), 1–18.

⁷ E. Reiner, 'The Heart Grass', in: *Your Thwarts in Pieces, Your Mooring Rope Cut. Poetry from Babylonia and Assyria* (Ann Arbor, 1985), 94–100.

⁸ J.S. Cooper, 'Magic and M(is)use: Poetic Promiscuity in Mesopotamian Ritual', in: *Mesopotamian Poetic Language: Sumerian and Akkadian* (eds. M.E. Vogelzang and H.L.J. Vanstiphout; Groningen, 1996), 47–57.

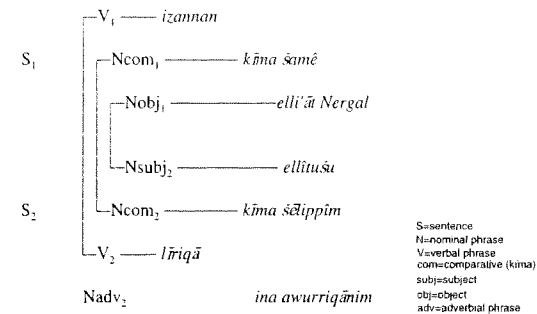
⁹ N.C. Veldhuis, 'The Heart Grass and Related Matters', *OLP* 21 (1990), 27–44; idem, *A Cow of Sin* (Groningen, 1991); idem, 'The Fly, the Worm and the Chain. Old Babylonian Chain Incantations', *OLP* 24 (1993), 41–64.

¹⁰ See A.L. Oppenheim, 'The Seafaring Merchants of Ur', *JAOS* 74 (1954), 6–17, esp. 6 n. 1; B. Landsberger and T. Jacobsen, 'An Old Babylonian Charm against *Merhu*', *JNES* 14 (1955), 14–21, esp. 14 n. 7; B. Landsberger, 'Über Farben', *JCS* 21 (1967), 139 n. 2; E. von Weihar, *Der babylonische Gott Nergal* (AOAT 11; Neukirchen, 1971), 34; M. Stol, 'Babylonische Medische Teksten over Galziekten', in: *Schrijvend Verleden* (ed. K.R. Veenhof; Leiden, 1983), 301–307, esp. 306.

UET 5. 85

1	<i>izannan</i> ² <i>kīma šamē</i>	Like a shower he is raining down
3	<i>elli'āt</i> ^{4a} <i>Nergal</i>	Nergal's saliva.
5	<i>ellītušu</i> ⁶ <i>kīma šēlippīm</i>	Let his saliva because of jaundice
7	<i>līr[iqā]</i> ⁸ <i>ina awurr[iqānim]</i>	turn as yellow as a turtle.
9	<i>šīpat</i> ¹⁰ <i>awurriqān[im]</i>	Incantation against jaundice.

Leaving aside the subscript, this incantation consists of only two sentences. Both sentences contain a comparison, indicated by *kīma*, and both contain the same word for saliva. Both sentences are divided into two, with alternation of three and two beat verses. The three beat verses are those containing the word *kīma*.¹¹ The two sentences, thus connected by both formal and lexical means, are at the same time contrasted on various levels. The subject of the first verb, in the indicative, is the patient: 'he rains down', which is taken to mean here: he drools. This, apparently, is meant to be the actual description of one of his symptoms. The subject of the second verb, in the precative, is 'his saliva' ('may his saliva turn yellow'). The second sentence has an additional element, an adverbial phrase ('by means of the jaundice') by which the incantation is closed. In the first sentence *zanānu* is used transitively, with 'Nergal's saliva' as object. The second sentence is intransitive. However, the subject of *izannan* is only expressed in the verbal form, so that both sentences have (apart from the comparative) only one nominal phrase. The chiasitic structure may be represented as follows:



¹¹ I mention the issue here because of the central place of rhythm and metre in discussions of poetic language, and because the pattern fits so well in our general understanding of the structure of this piece. For the time being, our poor understanding of Akkadian metre hardly goes beyond counting stressed syllables. Therefore, the essential tension between the normal linguistic rhythm and the poetic metre, which is a tension between two simultaneous systems, is lost to us. Poetic rhythm as a 'regulated violation' (Jakobson) or 'deformation' (Y. Tynianov, *The Problem of Verse Language* (tr. M. Sosa and B. Harvey; Ann Arbor, 1981; orig. *Problema stikhovornogo iazyka*; Leningrad, 1924)) of the normal rules for stress in word and sentence is clearly perceptible in enjambment, where a major pause in the poetic rhythm does not coincide with a major syntactic pause. The phenomenon, however, is all-pervasive in verse language and essential to its nature. On this aspect of poetics, see Stephen Rudy's important appraisal of Jakobson's contribution to the study of verse (S. Rudy, 'Jakobson's Inquiry into Verse and the Emergence of Structural Poetics', in: *Sound, Sign and Meaning. Quinquagenary of the Prague Linguistic Circle* (ed. Ladislav Matejka; Ann Arbor, 1976), 477–520). For incantation texts there is the additional problem that standards of metre may differ for 'high' and 'low' literature (e.g. a sonnet as against nursery rhyme).

The relation between $Nobj_1$ and $Nsubj_2$ is lexical (*elliāt Nergal – ellītušu*). ‘Nergal’s saliva’ takes the final position in the first sentence, whereas ‘his saliva’ is put in initial position in the second. The juxtaposition of nearly identical expressions tightly connects the two halves of the incantation.

The two sentences display various linguistic oppositions, expressing the functional opposition between the description and the supplication. The symptoms of the patient are related to the supernatural world by equating his saliva with Nergal’s saliva. To this is then transferred the ‘yellowness’ of the jaundice, and with it the patient will lose the illness. This, at least, is the way that I understand the idea behind the text.

This incantation against jaundice is not a literary text, and does not show any literary pretensions. The choice of the turtle in the comparison works as a rather arbitrary selection from anything green or yellow.¹² The lay-out of the tablet upon which the text is written is clearly not intended to raise the reader’s expectations of literary enjoyment.¹³ The mere fact that application of poetic analysis yields results does not suffice for its justification. Even superficial experience with statistical analysis will make clear that no matter how empty the question is, the computer will always provide an answer. In other words: a good answer is not worth much without a good question. If a literary methodology clearly yields results in analysing an incantation without literary pretensions, what do these results mean, and how are we going to use such results in a broader understanding of magic?

2 Poetics and Persuasive Language

We can turn to Roman Jakobson’s definition of the poetic function of verbal communication.¹⁴ The poetic function is one of the six functions distinguished by Jakobson, among which are the emotive and the referential. Each of the functions is directed at, or focused on, one of the six aspects of verbal communication. Thus the emotive function is directed at the sender of the message, the referential function at the context. The poetic function concentrates on the message itself. In a celebrated formula, Jakobson defined the poetic function as the projection of the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination. ‘I like Ike’, the slogan used in the campaign for Eisenhower’s election, uses a phonemic relation to suggest and enhance a relation of meaning. By choosing other options from the axis of selection we would get ‘We like Ike’, or ‘I want Ike’, or even ‘I want Eisenhower’, which, in certain respects, are all more appropriate than ‘I like Ike’, but clearly less efficacious. Jurij Lotman, working in the same tradition of literary and linguistic research, defined poetic language by the principle of feedback, or repetition. The poetic text breaks the normal linear development of linguistic meaning by referring back to earlier pieces of the message. This is done

by repetitions of all kinds: lexical repetition, syntactic parallelism, rhyme, or related phenomena.¹⁵ Repetition of whatever kind always implies both similarity and contrast. Lotman’s definition focuses on the reception of a poetic message, whereas Jakobson’s can be understood as reconstructing the production of a poetic message. For our purpose the two definitions are equivalent. The advantage of Jakobson’s definition is that he relates the concept of poetic language to a general theory of verbal communication.

Jakobson insisted that the poetic function is not restricted to poetry. Referential, conative, poetic and other functions are always present, in any verbal communication, but their relative importance varies. Thus the system of different functions is not a matter of exclusively discrete entities, but of the dominance of one function over the others. Consequently, the study of the poetic function should be extended beyond the limits of poetry strictly speaking, and the study of poetics should be extended beyond the limits of the poetic function. Jakobson’s theoretical approach implies that we are justified in analysing the poetic function in any document, even a lexical list. But there may be better uses of time. We have to explore, therefore, the relative importance of the poetic function in incantations, and the place this function has in the pragmatics of magic.

Various authors have discussed the relation between rhetoric and magic, beginning with Gorgias in the fifth century BCE.¹⁶ The common element is the intention not to express one’s feelings, or to communicate a state of events, but to change something, be it the curing of an illness or the opinion of your adversaries. In Jakobson’s terms, not the emotive or referential, but the conative function, directed at the receiver of the message, is central here. A convincing argument can be conceived of as the successful production of relations of meaning by the receiver. This production may be supported by poetic means. We can again cite the ‘I like Ike’ slogan here. The poetic function of language serves to associate sounds, words, or syntactic structures, which are similar, and thus suggests the relation of meaning which is to be communicated. In slogans the poetic function is subservient to the conative function, producing a balance of rhyme and reason.

Poetic language, used in support of an argument, is fairly common in incantations. I will take as an example one of the Old Babylonian childbirth incantations. I cite the first part of this text, with the translation by Jo-Ann Scurlock:¹⁷

1	<i>ina mē nākim</i>	From the fluids of intercourse was
2	<i>ibbanī ešemtum</i>	created a skeleton,
3	<i>ina šīr šīrḫānim</i>	from the tissue of the muscles was
4	<i>ibbanī lillidum</i>	created an offspring.
5	<i>ina mē ayabba šamrūtim</i>	In the turbulent and fearful sea waters,
6	<i>palḫūtīm</i>	

¹⁵ J.M. Lotman, *Vorlesungen zu einer strukturalen Poetik. Einführung. Theorie des Verses* (ed. K. Eimermacher; tr. W. Jochnow; München, 1972; orig. 1964), part. II, esp. 71ff.

¹⁶ On Gorgias see G.E.R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason and Experience. Studies in the Origins and Development of Greek Science* (Cambridge, 1979), 83f., and J. de Romilly, *Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975). Gorgias’ texts have not been transmitted directly; his ideas are known from citations by other ancient authors. The authenticity, however, does not seem to be in doubt.

¹⁷ J.A. Scurlock, ‘Baby-snatching Demons, Restless Souls and the Dangers of Childbirth: Medico-Medical Means of Dealing with some of the Perils of Motherhood in Ancient Mesopotamia’, *Incognita* 2 (1991), 135–183, esp. 141.

¹² From another point of view the turtle may have been relevant if something like turtle shell belonged to the medication.

¹³ The tablet does not fit the typology of Old Babylonian literary tablets. The lay-out is the lay-out of a letter, with no correspondence between lines on the tablet and major syntactic caesurae (even the subscript is divided into two lines, which is very uncommon in Old Babylonian incantations). In the original publication, the text was taken to be a meteorological report, and classified among letters and related texts.

¹⁴ R. Jakobson, ‘Linguistics and Poetics’, in: *Selected Writings*, Volume III (R. Jakobson; The Hague, 1981; orig. in: *Style in Language* (ed. T.A. Sebeok; Cambridge, Mass., 1960)), 18–51.

7	<i>ina mē tiāmtim rūqūtim</i>	in the distant waters of the ocean,
8	<i>ašar šeḫrum kussā idāšu</i>	where the little one's arms are bound,
9	<i>qerbīssu lā ušnawwaru</i>	whose midst the eye of the Sun does not
10	<i>in šamšim</i>	illumine,
11	<i>imuršuma Asarluhi māri Enki</i>	Asalluhi, the son of Enki, saw him.

(YOS XI, 86 1–11)¹⁸

The description of the condition of the baby is skilfully connected with mythological allusions, so as to include the world of the gods into the problem. This is a common device. It is also used, for instance, in the Heart Grass incantations, where the aetiology of a disease is traced back to the Sun god's picking of a forbidden herb (Reiner, 'The Heart Grass', Veldhuis, 'The Heart Grass and Related Matters'). The very invocation of magical means implies that a relation is sought with supernatural forces. The request for help is underpinned by arguing that otherworldly forces had a part in the problem from the start.

In the incantation, poetic means are used to support this argument. The first four clauses begin with *ina*: *ina mē nākim*; *ina šīr šīrhānim*; *ina mē ayabba*; and *ina mē tiāmtim*. The first two of these describe the situation as a natural phenomenon: procreation through intercourse, and the steady growth of the child in the womb of the mother. The second pair describes an awesome, mythic place: the turbulent, fearful waters of the sea, the distant waters of the ocean. The two pairs of clauses are marked as such by numerous similarities. The first two lines are perfectly parallel, using the same verbal form and the same syntactic construction. They intend to describe the same process:

ina mē nākim ibbani ešemtum
ina šīr šīrhānim ibbani lillidum

The second pair is differentiated from the first in syntactic construction and in the extensive use of adjectives. The similarity between these two clauses is semantic, syntactic, and phonemic:

ina mē ayabba šamrūtīm palhūtīm
ina mē tiāmtim rūqūtim

The phonemic similarities are mostly located in the masculine plural adjectives in *-ūtīm*, and, of course, in the repetition of *ina mē*. Generally, in Akkadian poetic language, the second of a pair will be longer than the first. That is the case in the first pair, where *šīr šīrhānim* has one syllable more than *mē nākim*. In the second pair this is not the case, but the exception is only apparent. These are not sentences; they are adverbial expressions introducing two dependent clauses and a main clause. The two dependent clauses again take two perspectives: a natural one and a mythological one. First the child, with his arms bound, and then the sun, who is unable to reach with his light the place of terror.

¹⁸ Edition in J.J.A. van Dijk, 'Une incantation accompagnant la naissance de l'homme', *Or* 42 (1973), 502–507, esp. 503.

The second member of this pair is clearly longer. Only then does the main clause tell us that Asalluhi, the son of Enki, saw the child. The construction of this introduction, with its neat intertwining of natural and mythological references, is working towards a climax. The absence of sunlight makes Asalluhi's observation of the child the more miraculous.

By various lexical and thematic similarities the introduction is linked to later parts of the incantation. The verb *banū*, 'to create', is used later on, again in a pair of sentences, to describe a birth-goddess. Very probably the theme of 'water' is again taken up at the end of the text, where the child is compared with a *dādu*. I prefer to interpret this word as an aquatic animal, more specifically a shell-fish, rather than 'beloved one'. The comparison with a 'beloved one' does not make sense; a comparison implies difference as well as similarity. 'Shell-fish' not only reuses the marine imagery, but has the added advantage of furnishing the idea of a living being hidden inside something.

3 Poetic Language as Materia Magica

To my mind, the comparison between persuasive language and verbal magic is useful but limited in its explanatory power. It does not take into account the specific nature of magic and the magic ritual. In Tambiah's terminology,¹⁹ magic seeks an analogical transfer of a quality or attribute by symbolic means. Incantations are only the verbal part of a more complex ritual. In Trobriand garden magic all kinds of objects are manipulated. These objects may carry different relevant attributes. Some convey the aspect of luxurious growth, others the aspect of being firmly rooted, still others the aspect of being healthy. A whole complex of qualities is thus transferred from various manipulated objects to the garden. The process is accompanied by the recitation of incantations, which identify the relevant aspect. The attributes conveyed may have symbolic connections with other realms of Trobriand life. Thus, the attribute of whiteness is transferred to the garden by the manipulation of white carrots. This whiteness, however, is more generally connected with the symbolism of fertility and pregnancy. In other words: the ritual refers to the symbolic system of Trobriand culture. The structure of the ritual is one of redundancy and cross reference. The same attribute is transferred by various means, and the various attributes transferred are related by the symbolic system.

3.1 The Magic Use of Poetics

If we regard the incantation as one element within this multi-faceted symbolism, the first thing that stands out is the homology between the use of *materia magica* and the use of language in the poetic function. The transfer of attributes from the *materia magica* is based on similarity and contrast. Similarity and contrast are the two basic mechanisms for the transfer of meaning in poetic language. Similarity and contrast provide the building blocks of metaphor and simile, but also engender features like rhyme and parallelism. An interesting example is an Old Babylonian incantation against Lamaštu.

¹⁹ See especially S.J. Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action. An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge/Mass., 1985). Trobriand magic is discussed in Chapter 1.

1	<i>Anum ibnīši Ea urabbīši</i>	Anum created her, Ea brought her up,
2	<i>pānī labbatim išīmši Enlil</i>	Enlil destined for her the face of a she-lion.
3	<i>īṣat ritīm arrakat</i>	She is short-handed, but her fingers are
4	<i>ubanātim ṣuprātīm</i>	long and her fingernails
5	<i>arrakat ammāša? ...</i>	are long. Her elbows ...?
6	<i>bāb bīti irrub []-ti</i>	She enters the house through the door []
7	<i>iḫallup ṣerram</i>	she slips in past the door-pivot.
8	<i>iḫlup ṣerram itamar ṣeḫram</i>	Now she slipped in past the door-pivot and saw this child.
9	<i>ina imšišu adi 7 iṣbassu</i>	Seven times she seized him in his belly.
10	<i>uṣḫī ṣupriki</i>	Retract your fingernails!
11	<i>rummī idīki</i>	Loosen your grip
12	<i>lāma ikšudakki</i>	before the expert, sent by Ea, the hero,
13	<i>apkallam šipir Ea qardu</i>	reaches you.
14	<i>rapāški ṣerrum puttā dalātum</i>	The door-pivot is wide enough for you, the doors are open,
15	<i>alkīma atallakī ina ṣēri</i>	go and roam in the desert!
16	<i>epram piki</i>	They will fill your mouth with earth,
17	<i>tarbuḫam pānīki</i>	your face with dust,
18	<i>saḫlê daqqātīm</i>	with seeds of fine cress
19	<i>umallū īnīki</i>	your eyes.
20	<i>utammīki māmīt Ea</i>	I adjure by the curse of Ea
21	<i>u tattallakī</i>	and you will go away!

(BIN 2, 72)²⁰

In this incantation the female demon Lamaštu is introduced in a threefold way: by an aetiology (1–2), a description of her appearance (3–7), and the description of the occasion that necessitated this ritual (8–9). The three elements from which this retrospective part is made up are connected in a sophisticated way by the alternation of similarity and contrast. The aetiology describes Lamaštu's creation by the major gods of the pantheon: Anum, Ea, and Enlil. The three verbal forms are preterites, all containing a long *ī* and the suffix *-ši*: *ibnīši*; *urabbīši*; *išīmši*. The first two sentences are syntactically parallel: *Anum ibnīši Ea urabbīši*. The third line is longer, because it has two objects, a direct and an indirect object. Moreover, the subject is placed at the marked final position: *pānī labbatim išīmši Enlil*. In rhythm, the third sentence, having four beats, counterbalances the first two sentences, which have two beats each. The aetiology is thus a fine example of balance between similarity and contrast on various levels. Moreover, the final sentence provides the transition to the descriptive part of the introduction, where Lamaštu's outward appearance is characterized. It is focused on her arms, including hands and fingernails. The description continues with a description of her known behaviour. The

²⁰ The text was edited by W. von Soden. 'Eine altbabylonische Beschwörung gegen die Dämonin Lamaštum'. *Or* 23 (1954), 337–344. Collations in Farber. 'Zur älteren akkadischen Beschwörungsliteratur'. *ZA* 71 (1981), 51–72, esp. 72. A Dutch translation appeared in Wiggermann, 'Enige Lamaštu-bezweringen uit Oud-babylonische en Nieuw-assyrische tijd', in: *Schrijvend Verleden* (ed. K.R. Veenhof: Leiden, 1983), 294–300, esp. 296.

appearance is described in stative forms, the behaviour in durative forms. The behaviour described is entering a house and slipping through the door-pivot. The two verbs used provide an inner rhyme: *irrub*, *iḫallup*. The description of behaviour fades into the occasion: the last sentence of the description is repeated almost verbatim, but changed into the preterite, to indicate an actual event (indicated in the translation by the use of 'this'):

iḫlup ṣerram itamar ṣeḫram

Now she slipped in past the door-pivot and saw this child.

The introduction, with its individual sections tightly connected, produces a verbal representation of Lamaštu, provided with a history and with various attributes. The verbal symbol is a verbal effigy, which can be manipulated much like a material effigy. A material effigy can be mutilated, destroyed or thrown into the river. A verbal effigy can be manipulated by verbal means. A number of imperatives in the second half of the incantation are aimed at her arms, her fingers, the parts of the body on which the description was concentrated:

Retract your fingernails!

Loosen your grip (literally: loosen your arms).

Other elements of the introduction resumed in the second half are Ea (line 20), one of the gods responsible for her creation, and the pivot of the door (line 14).

In the penultimate sentence Lamaštu is threatened:

They will fill your mouth with earth

your face with dust,

and with seeds of fine cress

your eyes.

The section has one verb, which serves in three syntactically parallel sentences. In each sentence a part of her face is filled with something. It gives a triple repetition of the suffix *-ki*, accompanied by an abundance of *i* sounds: *piki*; *pānīki*; *īnīki*. This threefold *-ki* in the description of her elimination, resumes the threefold repetition of the suffix *-ši* in the description of her creation in the opening lines. The two sets of three lines have much in common, including the conclusion by a longer line, and the placement in this last line of the verb in the unusual penultimate position. Not only here, but in the whole second half of the incantation */ki/* appears as a prominent phoneme combination, mostly as the feminine suffix of the second person. It continues to be used in the concluding sentence:

utammīki māmīt Ea

u tattallakī

Let us pause for a moment to see these elements of rhyme in a wider context. A considerable part of the rhyme in this incantation and in the childbirth text discussed above

depends on morphological or syntactic similarities. This kind of rhyme is considered weak or poor in the poetic systems of modern European languages. The judgement that some types of rhyme are richer than other types implies that rhyme cannot simply be defined in terms of repetition of sounds. The most complete repetition of sounds is the repetition of the same word, but this is hardly considered 'rhyme' to modern taste. The quality of rhyme in some piece of poetry is, therefore, not only judged by the degree of audible similarity, but also by the way this similarity is produced. Rhyme is a device to connect linguistic entities, and is superimposed over the rules of normal syntax. It has a semantic function, and the richness or barrenness of rhyme is measured against this function. As any linguistic device, however, this function may differ in different traditions. Lotman argues that in modern poetry rhyme serves to connect the intrinsically unconnected.²¹ Rhyme words, dissimilar in meaning or grammatical form, are related in the reading process in order to construct new and unpredictable relations of meaning. This novelty and originality belong to the pleasure of reading modern poetry. In medieval aesthetics, on the other hand, the new, unpredicted, or original was not valued in the same way. This is part of what Jauss has called the alterity of medieval literature. The appreciation of a piece of verbal art by a medieval public was not based upon the evocation of a unique, self-sufficient fictitious world, but primarily upon clever variations of well-known patterns. Medieval literature tends to use the 'already known' as stable material for the construction of a new work.²²

Similarly, grammatical rhyme (repeating the same suffix) or even tautological rhyme (repeating the same word) may be used to create strings of lines expressing the same idea in a catalogue-like manner.²³ In other words: rhyme belongs to the prevalent poetic system. Its position within the system and its realisation will differ between individual literary systems. A comparable phenomenon is the wholesale repetition of narrative sections in literary texts. To our conception, this is a poor technique, sometimes explained away by referring to its advantage for memorization. Still, the device is so common that we must conclude that it appealed to Babylonian taste, and was, in fact, part of the poetic system. Its actual use is far more sophisticated and relevant for narrative strategy than is

²¹ Lotman, *Vorlesungen zu einer strukturalen Poetik. Einführung, Theorie des Verses* (ed. K. Eimermacher; tr. W. Jochnow; München, 1992; orig. 1964), 74–86.

²² See H.R. Jauss, 'Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur', in: *Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur. Gesammelte Aufsätze 1956–1976* (München, 1977), 9–47, esp. 14–18. This characterization does not imply, of course, that innovations are absent in medieval poetry or that modern literature is not rooted in tradition. Tradition and innovation necessarily belong together and are inconceivable without each other. The alterity is situated in the relative stress on one of the two poles and the conscious use of the one rather than the other in the literary production (as well as in the less conscious expectations of the public).

²³ The technique was described by J.M. Lotman, *Vorlesungen zu einer strukturalen Poetik. Einführung, Theorie des Verses* (ed. K. Eimermacher; tr. W. Jochnow; München, 1992; orig. 1964), 83–84, for Russian medieval poetry. Prof. Dr. Shaul Shaked kindly drew my attention to a similar kind of rhyme found in the piyyuṭim (medieval Hebrew liturgical poetry). For rhyme in the piyyuṭim of Yehudah see W.J. van Bekkum, *The Qedusha 'ot of Yehudah according to Genizah Manuscripts* (Unpublished doctoral thesis; Groningen, 1988), 82–96, with brief discussions of classical and pre-classical piyyuṭim. Grammatical rhyme, based on suffixes, is discussed on pp. 87–89. A good example of a piyyuṭ with rhyme based on the single suffix *-enu* ('our') is 'From Soul to Flesh' by Yannai, edited and translated in *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (ed. and tr. T. Carmi; Harmondsworth, 1981), 215f. See furthermore Hrushovski, 'Notes on the Systems of Hebrew Versification', in: *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (ed. and tr. T. Carmi; Harmondsworth, 1981), 57–72, esp. 61–62.

usually accepted.²⁴ Similarly, grammatical rhyme may turn out to be rich rhyme in Old Babylonian aesthetics, as seems to be the case in the example at hand.²⁵

3.2 The Poetic Use of Magic

The context of an incantation in a magic ritual and in the magic tradition affects the poetic effectiveness. The incantation text is one element of a more complex magic ritual, though for Old Babylonian magic this is often the only element we have. The poetics of the ritual are not confined to the verbal element but extend over the various symbolic systems used in the magical transfer of attributes. The Lamaštu incantation discussed above provides a negative example. Old Babylonian incantations in Akkadian are rarely accompanied by separate ritual instructions. In this incantation some passages clearly refer to the manipulation of symbols. This is especially the case in the section discussed above:

They will fill your mouth with earth,
your face with dust,
and with seeds of fine cress
your eyes.

It may be assumed that the recitation of this part of the text was accompanied by a ritual act on a symbol of Lamaštu's face. This symbol may have been a representation of a lion's face, but not necessarily so. The mechanics of association and symbolization allow the participants to use a symbol that is in some way related to Lamaštu's face or to a lion's face, but may not be readily recognizable as such to us. The assumed object, whatever it was, represented Lamaštu's face. The symbolic relations were not confined to inner textual features, but extended to the other *materia magica*. Since the object is unknown, the implications of this relation for our poetic understanding of the text are unknown as well, and this may explain why the passage affects us as an intrusion, an extrinsic piece.

Texts are part of a tradition, and receive their meaning against the background of that tradition. A text is understood and valued by putting it into relations of similarity and contrast with the rules, the possibilities and impossibilities governing the textual type at a given point in time.²⁶ The position of the *utammika* formula at the end of the incantation works as an enforcement of the following imperative: go! In Old Babylonian Akkadian

²⁴ See H.L.J. Vanstiphout, 'Repetition and Structure in the Aratta Cycle: Their Relevance for the Orality Debate', in: *Mesopotamian Epic Literature. Oral or Aural?* (eds. M.E. Vogelzang and H.L.J. Vanstiphout; Lewiston, 1992), 247–264.

²⁵ The theoretical problem here is similar to the problem of rhythm and metre, discussed in note 11. In order to understand any poetry, its poetics must be known. The problem is no doubt circular, since poetics can only be known from poetry. But this point is a general one, not differing in kind from the problems encountered in understanding poetry of a less remote past.

²⁶ This point was already made by Tynjanov in 1924 (*The Problem of Verse Language*), but was forcefully restated by Jauss in his programmatic article 'Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft' (H.R. Jauss, 'Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft', in: *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970; originally published in 1967), 144–207). The relation between interpretation and the available set of genres and types makes apparent the historical character of interpretation (history of reception).

incantations such formulas are generally placed between a retrospective part, describing the problem, and a prospective part, announcing the elimination of the problem. The transfer of a conventional formula to the end yields a more than average force. Another example of how tradition works is the use of the words *šerru*, 'door-pivot', *šeḫru*, 'child', and *šēru*, 'desert', in this incantation. The phonemic similarities between the three words are exploited throughout the text. Lamaštu is associated with the *šerru*, the door-pivot past which she enters. First this word is used to emphasize the danger for the *šeḫru*: *iḫlup šerram itamar šeḫram*. Later on in the text the same *šerru* is associated with Lamaštu's true homeland: the *šēru*. The poetic procedure is in itself understandable. It gets its true meaning, however, from the place of *šēru* and *šerru* in the general symbolic system within which the incantation is to be located. And this is not irrelevant to the poetic analysis. Along with other liminal images the door-pivot belongs to the stock symbols of Old Babylonian magic. The same holds true for the desert, the non-cultivated, non-human space, where demons roam freely. The associations of *šerru* and *šēru* with *šeḫru* are, therefore, no casual word plays. They are heavily charged with meaning within the system of Mesopotamian magic. Such connotations, determined by the magic tradition, cannot fail to influence the poetic production of meaning.

3.3 'Mumbo-Jumbo' or the Magic Poetics of Gibberish

The verbal parts of a magic ritual obey rules that do not fundamentally differ from those governing the other *materia magica*. The transfer of a property is achieved by the symbolic manipulation of similarities. In most cases, however, the *materia magica* is characterized by more than just some similarity. The objects used must be pure, they must be collected at night, or derive from a strange country. In other words, they must be set apart from ordinary objects. Thus, they are made appropriate for use in a sacred context.²⁷ This is another perspective from which we can discuss the language of incantations.

Magic language is usually distinguished from ordinary language.²⁸ There are, in principle, three ways to achieve such a distinction. The first is to use a sacred language. The second to use poetic, heightened language. These two options are, in fact, available for a large variety of purposes where a text must be marked as other than ordinary. Thus, a large proportion of the scholarly works in classical Greece are written in verse. During a long period of European history the same functional place was occupied by Latin, a language only accessible to the initiated. A third possibility is almost restricted to magic or ritualistic uses of language, and that is Mumbo-Jumbo.²⁹ All three possibilities are used in Mesopotamian magic. We have discussed the poetic use of language in a few

Akkadian incantations. Sumerian incantations of the Old Babylonian period are partly directed against the same illnesses, demons, and animals as the Akkadian ones. There is one sphere where the Sumerian is clearly preferred: the ritual incantation meant for purifying ritual ingredients. There is every reason to believe that this has to do with the place these purifying rituals have in society and religion. Mumbo-Jumbo spells are known from all periods and genres of the Mesopotamian incantation literature. Modern discussion of these texts has in the main been limited to the identification of the language from which they are derived.³⁰ Some are clearly in garbled Sumerian, others seem to be in Hurrian or Elamite, in an unidentified language, or in no language at all.³¹ The example I will discuss here represents the garbled Sumerian type. It is from a first millennium medical handbook, about a millennium later than the other texts discussed. The first tablet of the New Assyrian compendium for diseases of the eyes (*BAM* 510, 513, and 514³²) contains a number of Akkadian incantations, introduced by one or two lines in mock Sumerian:

II 41' EN₂ igi-bar igi-bar-bar igi-bar-ra bar-bar igi-bir igi-bir-bir igi-bar-ra bir-bir
42' [igi]-^Γbar-ná^Λ-a igi-bar-da-a igi-bar-ḫul-a inā abātu inā ašā[*uu*]

(The passage is repeated with minor variants in II 50'–51' and III 8–9.)

III 17 EN₂ igi-bar igi-bar-bar igi-bar-ra bar-bar igi-ḫul igi-ḫul-ḫul igi-bar-ra ḫul-ḫul

III 24 EN₂ igi-bar igi-bar-bar igi-bar-ra bar-bar igi-sūḫ igi-sūḫ-sūḫ igi-bar-ra sūḫ-sūḫ

The three passages repeat the same pattern, which consists of permutations of *igi-bar* with the variable elements *bir*, *ḫul*, and *sūḫ*, much like the Old Babylonian Syllable Alphabets A and B.³³

These passages are not devoid of meaning. The stubborn repetition of *igi-bar* bears the idea of seeing, or observing, which is most appropriate in this context. Each of the variable elements bears a negative meaning: *bir*: to scatter or destroy; *ḫul*: bad or evil; *sūḫ*: to be blurred or troubled. Without proper grammar or syntax, the message is clear enough: there is something diseased, wrong or generally evil connected with eyesight, which the incantation is supposed to heal. The relation between seeing and the illness is reflected in the first passage by the phonemic association of *bar-bir*. *Bir-bir*, moreover, conjures up the words *birratu*, a disease of the eyes, and *birbirū*, terrifying brilliance. The regular repetition of the same or similar syllables is a common phenomenon in

³⁰ See the interesting discussion by van Dijk in the Introduction to *YOS* XI, 3–4.

³¹ This seems to be the case in the last section of LB 1002 (FM.Th. Böhl, 'Oorkonden uit de Periode van 2000–1200 v. Chr.', in: *Mededeelingen uit de Leidsche Verzameling van Spijkerschrift-inscripties* II (1934), 8): *hu-ub hi-ib ha-ab* etc. But it is not excluded that even this passage will prove to have a background in an existing language. This text was presented to our conference in its entirety by Prof. Dr. K. Veenhof.

³² The lines are reconstructed from the three duplicates. See Köcher in *BAM* VI, pp. IX–XI, and the additions and corrections in Geller, 'Review of Franz Köcher: *Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin* Volumes V and VI', *ZA* 74 (1984), 292–297. The unpublished fragment BM 98942 is known to me from photograph. The pertinent lines were edited and discussed previously in N.C. Veldhuis, 'Comments on IGI-ḪUL', *NABU* 1992/43.

³³ See M. Çiğ, H. Kizilyay, and B. Landsberger, *Zwei altbabylonische Schulbücher aus Nippur* (Ankara, 1959).

²⁷ The 'sacred' as against the 'profane' was redefined by Tambiah in more general terms as two orderings of reality, or orientations on the world. They are opposed by 'participation' as against 'causality'. See S.J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 84–110.

²⁸ For a general discussion, see S.J. Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action. An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), especially Chapter I: 'The Magical Power of Words'.

²⁹ It should be stressed here that Mumbo-Jumbo is not meant as a derogatory term, and is not equivalent to nonsense or emptiness. 'Relevance' is an assumption underlying the interpretation and functionality of all communication, but this relevance is more often than not different from the literal (translatable) meaning of an utterance. For the concept 'relevance' see D. Sperber and D. Wilson, *Relevance. Communication and Cognition* (Oxford, 1986; 1995²).

Mumbo-Jumbo. In language, even in Mumbo-Jumbo, a random string of sounds is inconceivable, since it would be mere noise. The absence of regularity on the levels of syntax and grammar is compensated by other linguistic means through an abundance of repetition.³⁴ The tension between ‘rhythm’ and ‘syntax’, described by Brik as the very essence of poetic language, is almost completely resolved in favour of rhythm (in this case the regular repetition of a word), much like the ‘transrational poets’ who treated semantics as a secondary, or even negligible element of poetry.³⁵ In Jakobson’s terms, the absence of syntax is the neglect of the rules of contagion on the axis of combination. These rules have been taken over completely by the principles of equivalence normally governing the axis of selection. In other words, as far as these passages are effective, it is a poetic effectiveness. The passages discussed use simultaneously all three devices to distinguish their language from the ordinary. They are in poetic Mumbo-Jumbo Sumerian.

With these examples I hope to have demonstrated the existence and the importance of the poetic function in incantations. There is no need to include incantations in the literary corpus to allow for this conclusion. We are still not in the position, except in very impressionistic terms, to judge their poetic quality. I assume this quality cannot compete with the great works of literary art in the Old Babylonian eduba. But I, for one, take ‘oxen-like moaning’ for priggish conceitedness.

Freud and Mesopotamian Magic¹

M.J. Geller

It is a pity that Sigmund Freud knew so little about Mesopotamia. Freud’s library, now housed in the Freud Museum in Hampstead, contains many more books on archaeology and Classical civilization than on psychology, and his collection of antiquities (many of which are presumed to be forgeries) reflects Freud’s keen interest in the ancient world. His seminal work, *Totem and Taboo*, demonstrates that Freud somehow had a good grasp of ancient mentality, and had he had a knowledge of Mesopotamian magic, his analysis could have yielded interesting results.

There may be some point, therefore, in considering the possible psychological impact of Mesopotamian magic, such as the *Utukkū Lemnūtu* incantations which were presumably used in some form of therapy with a patient. *Utukkū Lemnūtu* is a useful compilation to begin with, since in some ways it is just what it purports to be, namely the fullest description of the evil demons from any Mesopotamian text, although without reference to etiology or any philosophy of demonology. *Utukkū Lemnūtu* provides rich accounts of demons and ghosts, replete with metaphors and similes, bringing us closer to a general understanding of demons as the agents which most directly affected a patient’s psyche; the very appearance of the demon inspired fear, and the suggestion of the demon’s presence acted as a threat.² The *utukku* demon is among the most commonly mentioned, and the term *utukku* is virtually generic for ‘demon’. The *utukku* is described as a ghost, then as a ‘herald’, and even as a robber.

The evil *utukku*-demon, who is hostile in appearance, and who is tall in stature,
is not a god – but his voice is great, and his radiance is lofty.
His shadow is dusky, it is darkened, there is no light in his body.
He always slinks around in secret places, he does not come forth brazenly.
Gall is always dripping from his talons, his tread is harmful poison.
His belt cannot be loosened, his arms burn.
He fills the target of his anger with tears, the world cannot restrain a lament.³

³⁴ See Lotman, *Vorlesungen zu einer strukturalen Poetik. Einführung. Theorie des Verses* (ed. K. Eimermacher; tr. W. Jochnow; München, 1992; orig. 1964), 108f. on ‘Außersinn-Sprache’.

³⁵ O. Brik, ‘Rhythme et Syntaxe’, in: *Théorie de la littérature* (ed. T. Todorov; Paris, 1965; orig. in: *Novyj Lef* (1927), 3–6), 143–153, esp. 150–153.

¹ I wish to thank my NIAS colleagues Andrzej Nowak, F.A.M. Wiggermann, and Wim van Binsbergen for advice on Freudian, textual, and anthropological matters, respectively. A more general survey of this material has appeared in *Folklore* 108 (1997), 1–7, by the present author.

² Unfortunately, the descriptions in the texts do not often match up with the artistic representations of demons on cylinder seals and reliefs.

³ *Utukkū Lemnūtu* (hereafter UH) 12:14–20. Since translations of the text are cited here throughout, it might be useful to provide a progress report on the edition of *Utukkū Lemnūtu* incantations. Work began on these incantations some 20 years ago, with some progress made with the edition of the Sumerian forerunners (M.J. Geller, *Forerunners to Uduĝ-hul* [Stuttgart, 1985]). Since then other forerunners have been identified, and we now have OB and MB exemplars of *Utukkū Lemnūtu* for tablets 2–8 and 12. The full bilingual edition of *Utukkū Lemnūtu* consists of approximately 2000 lines of text, compiled by the ancient scribes into a sixteen-tablet series. All of the component tablets have now been identified, although Tablets 1 and 9 are fragmentary. The first two tablets contain an unusual mixture of Akkadian and bilingual texts, while Tablet 11 of *Utukkū Lemnūtu* incorporates the Akkadian incantation known separately as ‘Marduk’s Address to the

ANCIENT MAGIC AND DIVINATION I

Edited by

Tzvi Abusch and Ann K. Guinan

STYX
PUBLICATIONS
GRONINGEN
1999

ANCIENT MAGIC AND DIVINATION I

**MESOPOTAMIAN MAGIC
TEXTUAL, HISTORICAL, AND
INTERPRETATIVE PERSPECTIVES**

Editors

Tzvi Abusch
Karel van der Toorn



STYX
PUBLICATIONS
GRONINGEN
1999

MAIN
012905781

Copyright ©1999 Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn
Copyright ©1999 STYX Publications, Groningen

ISBN 90 5693 033 8

STYX Publications
Postbus 2659
9704 CR GRONINGEN
THE NETHERLANDS
Tel. # 31 (0)50-5717502
Fax. # 31 (0)50-5733325
E-mail: styxnl@compuserve.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	vii
Abbreviations	ix
Contributors	xvii
I. Theoretical Perspectives	
<i>Wim van Binsbergen & Frans Wiggermann</i> Magic in History. A Theoretical Perspective, and its application to Ancient Mesopotamia	1
<i>Niek Veldhuis</i> The Poetry of Magic	35
<i>Mark J. Geller</i> Freud and Mesopotamian Magic	49
<i>Marten Stol</i> Psychosomatic Suffering in Ancient Mesopotamia	57
<i>JoAnn Scurlock</i> Physician, Exorcist, Conjurer, Magician: A Tale of Two Healing Professionals	69
II. Surveys and Studies	
<i>Tzvi Abusch</i> Witchcraft and the Anger of the Personal God	81
<i>Stefan M. Maul</i> How the Babylonians Protected Themselves against Calamities Announced by Omens	123
<i>Alasdair Livingstone</i> The Magic of Time	131
<i>Karel van der Toorn</i> Magic at the Cradle: A Reassessment	139
<i>Eva A. Braun-Holzinger</i> Apotropaic Figures at Mesopotamian Temples in the Third and Second Millennia	149
<i>Shaul Shaked</i> The Poetics of Spells. Language and Structure in Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity	173
<i>Christa Müller-Kessler</i> Interrelations between Mandaic Lead Scrolls and Incantation Bowls	197

BF
1591
M47
1999
MAIN

III. Texts

<i>Irving L. Finkel</i>	
On Some Dog, Snake and Scorpion Incantations	211
<i>Antoine Cavigneaux</i>	
A Scholar's Library in Meturan?	253
<i>William W. Hallo</i>	
More Incantations and Rituals from the Yale Babylonian Collection	277
<i>Wilfred G. Lambert</i>	
Marduk's Address to the Demons	293
Index	297

Preface

This book owes its existence to the co-operation of six specialists in such different fields as Assyriology, History of Religions, and Cultural Anthropology. Invited by the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) at Wassenaar, The Netherlands, they formed a theme group on 'Magic and Religion in the Ancient Near East' during the academic year 1994–95. The group consisted of Tzvi Abusch (Waltham), Wim van Binsbergen (then Amsterdam & Leiden, now Rotterdam & Leiden), Mark Geller (London), Shaul Shaked (Jerusalem), Karel van der Toorn (then Leiden, now Amsterdam), and Frans Wiggermann (Amsterdam). Located in adjoining offices along the same corridor, they worked both on individual and on common projects.

One of the delights of our year was a weekly series of Wednesday evening seminars. These meetings offered members of the theme group the chance to present and discuss their ongoing research projects in an informal framework which was intensely collegial and highly critical at the same time. Several scholars from outside NIAS joined us on occasion; among them were Joris Borghouts (Leiden), Theo van de Hout (Amsterdam), and Henk Versnel (Leiden). The organization of a conference on Mesopotamian magic was one of the common projects of the group. Planned for the end of the ten months' stay at NIAS, the conference was discussed and prepared during a number of the weekly seminars. Some of the contributions to the present book by members of the group grew out of these seminars. Other contributions were not presented in the Wednesday evening meetings, but would never have seen the light of day without them. We feel that the weekly opportunity for debate and exchange of ideas was one of the most rewarding experiences of our year as NIAS fellows.

The conference on Mesopotamian magic was held 6–9 June, 1995, at the premises of NIAS. A group of about fifteen colleagues came to Wassenaar to join the six resident fellows for three days of presentations and discussion on exorcistic texts and practices from Mesopotamia. In addition to the contributors to this book, the late Jan van Dijk and Klaas R. Veenhof read papers at the conference. The meetings gave a central place to interpretation. The organizers felt that the study of Mesopotamian magic had been dominated by philology at the expense of an effort to make sense of the texts from a number of interpretive perspectives. Though several contributors presented new texts at the conference, most participants presented either interpretive surveys of the material or close readings of specific texts.

The emphasis on interpretation is reflected in the division of this book. It opens with a part on 'Theoretical Perspectives'. The contribution by Wim van Binsbergen and Frans Wiggermann is rather unique in that it combines the insights of the anthropologist with the erudition of the Assyriologist. The result is a rich and thought-provoking article on the meaning and development of magic in Mesopotamia. Niek Veldhuis (Groningen) looks at the poetry of magic in an effort to see how words do the work they are supposed to do. Mark Geller has explored the psychological experience that lies buried underneath the surface level of exorcistic texts. Marten Stol (Amsterdam) takes a slightly different approach in an article that tries to assess the psychosomatic nature of the suffering

that magic is designed to combat. JoAnn Scurlock (Chicago) takes up the issue of the distinction between the various specialists of exorcism; although the question is familiar, Scurlock's approach shows that we must reassess the question.

The second part, entitled 'Surveys and Studies', opens with a discussion by Tzvi Abusch of Mesopotamian ideas about 'Witchcraft and the Anger of the Personal God'. He argues that the conjunction of the two supernatural forces is due to the increasing importance of witchcraft beliefs in Mesopotamia and theorizes about socio-religious developments that might explain various features and trends discernible in Mesopotamian magical thought and ritual. His essay thus serves as a bridge between the theoretical and material sections. There follows an examination of the Namburbi texts by Stefan Maul (Heidelberg). In a succinct and lucid manner, he presents his understanding of the nature and significance of the complex body of material. Alasdair Livingstone (Birmingham) presents a survey of the hemerological tradition in Mesopotamia. The contribution by Karel van der Toorn explores the setting of domestic magic on the basis of a new close reading of Old Babylonian baby incantations. Eva Braun-Holzinger (Frankfurt) surveys the evidence for apotropaic figures at Mesopotamian temples, and suggests correspondences between archaeological remains and textual descriptions. Shaul Shaked and Christa Müller-Kessler (Emskirchen), finally, take the reader beyond the confines of Assyriology. Shaked looks at the poetics of Aramaic spells from Late Antiquity, and Müller-Kessler compares Mandaic incantations on lead rolls with the incantations on bowls. Apart from their value as introductions to texts that are unfamiliar to many Assyriologists, the two contributions demonstrate certain continuities between early Mesopotamian magic and Mesopotamian magic in late Antiquity.

The third part of the book is devoted to the presentation and discussion of new texts. Irving Finkel (London) offers a large number of new dog, snake and scorpion incantations; Antoine Cavigneaux (Geneva) publishes important new texts from Tel Haddad, and discusses their significance; William W. Hallo (New Haven) publishes two Old Babylonian texts and a Neo-Babylonian one from the Babylonian collections at Yale; and Wilfred G. Lambert (Birmingham) gives an update on his work on 'Marduk's Address to the Demons', a text that can now be reconstructed almost in its entirety.

The editorial work has been greatly facilitated thanks to Aernold van Gosliga (Leiden) and Frans van Koppen (Leiden), who prepared a final version of the book on computer, to Kathryn Kravitz (Waltham), who helped edit the original submissions, and to Chris Wyckoff (Waltham), who read the volume in proof and prepared the index.

The editors look upon this collection of studies as a means to let other people share in the excitement of the NIAS conference on magic, and – indirectly – in the work of the theme group on magic and religion. We trust that this book will serve its purpose as an introduction to the interpretation of Mesopotamian magic.

Tzvi Abusch
Karel van der Toorn
Waltham and Leiden, July 1997

Abbreviations

A	tablets in the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago
A.	tablets from Mari in the collections of the Aleppo Museum
AA	<i>American Anthropologist</i>
AA(A)S	<i>Annales archéologiques (arabes) syriennes</i> (Damascus)
AAR	American Academy of Religion
AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
AB	tablets in the Bodleian Collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
AB	Anchor Bible
AbB	Altbabylonische Briefe in Umschrift und Übersetzung (Leiden)
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ABL	R.F. Harper, <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Letters</i> (14 vols., London & Chicago, 1892–1914)
ABRT	J.A. Craig, <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Religious Texts</i> (2 vols., Leipzig 1895–1897)
ActAnt	<i>Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae</i>
AEM	Archives Epistolaires de Mari
Afo	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AHW	W. von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> (Wiesbaden, 1965–1981)
AIR	<i>Ancient Israelite Religion</i> . FS F.M. Cross (eds. P.D. Miller <i>et alii</i>)
Akk	<i>Akkadica</i>
ALASP	Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syriens-Palästinas
AIT	D.J. Wiseman, <i>The Alalakh Tablets</i> (London, 1953)
AMT	R.C. Thompson, <i>Assyrian Medical Texts</i>
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament</i> (ed. J.B. Pritchard, 3. ed., Princeton, 1969)
Annuaire	<i>Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études, IV^e section</i> (Paris: Sorbonne)
AnSt	<i>Anatolian Studies</i>
AO	Antiquités orientales (tablets in the Louvre, Paris)
AOS	American Oriental Series
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AoF	<i>Altorientalische Forschungen</i>
ARES	Archivi Reali di Ebla, Studi
ARET	Archivi Reali di Ebla, Testi
ARM(T)	Archives Royales de Mari (Textes)
ArOr	<i>Archiv Orientální</i>
AS	Assyriological Studies (Chicago)
ASJ	<i>Acta Sumerologica</i>
ASOR	The American Schools of Oriental Research

here described as his vizier. With an all-powerful Marduk a discussion on equal terms with his father would be demeaning, so Nabû replaces Enki. But the similarity is not a coincidence. But, as explained above, no description of demonic activity is given in this text, so the conclusion is forced upon us that the compiler has inserted at this point some lines from the middle of a post-Old Babylonian Akkadian incantation. However, the long and carefully constructed *lū ša* section, though paralleled in shorter such listings in bilingual incantations,³ is clearly an original construction of merit.

So while sections (b) and (c) are highly original as literary compositions, one is left with the problem that the composite nature of the whole is less successful as literature. Nothing fundamentally new is offered for exorcism: it is assumed that demons and shades of the dead exist and trouble the living, and that Marduk with the help of other gods in sections (d) and (e) can overcome them. However, the *Sitz im Leben* is the outstanding question. No doubt the author/compiler had some specific purpose in view when he composed this text. Its 260 lines were too formidable for recitation whenever demonic activity required the services of an exorcist. Also the appearing of Marduk in person within the major part of the text surely presumes a very special occasion. But here there is no shred of evidence to suggest an answer. No rubric gives instructions on when and how to perform the text. Of course, even if we knew what the author/compiler intended, that would not necessarily give us the truth. The author/compiler may have had a particularly important occasion in mind, but others may have prevented its being so used, and it might have been employed on occasions to which its content was not specially suited. One can only hope that future discoveries will give us at least some information of this kind.

Index of Passages

References by Publication:

- Afo*
 11, 366f.: pp. 270–271
 12, 41: pp. 270–271
 17, 310–321: pp. 291–296, passim
 18, 289f., 11–15: p. 61
 19, 114–119: pp. 291–296, passim
 35, 14: p. 53
- AMT*
 67, 3: pp. 268–269
- Anzu*
 ii, 62–65: p. 22
- AS*
 16, 285: p. 267
- BAH*
 16, 60ff., pls. 4, 5, 1: p. 157
 23, 141ff., pl. 37: p. 157
- BAM*
 205, 7–10: pp. 58–59
 231, 1–15: p. 66
 234: p. 65
 1–10a: p. 85
 315: pp. 101–102, 103
 iii, 1ff.: p. 101
 1–7: pp. 61–62
 1–16: pp. 87, 89, 95, 97–100, 101–102
 316, ii: pp. 96, 97, 99, 101
 5'–10': p. 62
 5'–25': pp. 87–89, 118, 120
 9'–10': p. 59
 9'–13': p. 97
 11': pp. 99, 120
 14'–16': p. 96
 28': p. 64
 v, 4–6: p. 64
 319, obv.: pp. 58–59
 323, 8–13, 36, 38: p. 71
 482, iii, 7–9: pp. 70–71
 510, ii, 41'–42': pp. 47
 iii, 17, 24: pp. 47
 513, iii, 17: pp. 47
 514, iii, 24: p. 47
- Bauer, *Assurbanipal*
 2, 77, rev., 8: pp. 24
- BID*
 56, 6–12: pp. 64–65
 64, 6–12: pp. 64–65
 227, 1–14: pp. 58–59
 236, 1–14: pp. 58–59
 236, 29: p. 59
 238, 17': p. 59
 244, 80–83: p. 60
- BIN*
 2, 72: p. 42
- Borger, *Asarhaddon*
 § 27, Ep 22, Fass. B, 41–45: p. 158
- CT*
 23, 10–11: 26–28: p. 267
- Erra*
 iv, 99–101: p. 145
- ArOr*
 9, 84–106 (= Text K): p. 191
- Incantation to Utu
 151–152: p. 145
- KAR*
 70, 6–10: p. 58
 11–14: p. 58
 80, obv. 1–5: p. 67
 rev. 1–10: p. 67
 rev. 26–29: p. 67
 rev. 31–33: p. 67
- Krebernik, *Beschwörungen*,
 77: p. 132
 86: pp. 131–132
- MAD*
 5, 8: pp. 269–270
- MARI*
 3, 45–47: p. 156
- Maqlû*
 i, 4–8: p. 86
 ii, 83–88: p. 93
 ii, 86–88: p. 86
 ii, 97–102: p. 93
 iii, 13–16: p. 86
 vii, 23–30: pp. 266–267
- Montgomery, *Incantation Texts*,
 no. 8: pp. 180–183, 189–190
 no. 9: pp. 176, 188
 no. 26: pp. 186, 194

³ See W.G. Lambert, *Afo* 17 (1954/6), 310.

Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*,
 B5: pp. 183–184, 191
 Römer, *Königshymnen*,
 133, 171–175: p. 133
 SBTU
 1, 9, 5–7: p. 58
 1, 9, 19–21: p. 58
 2, 9, rev.: p. 267
 2 22: pp. 97, 101–102, 103, 114, 115
 i, 16'–25': p. 114
 i, 16'–38': pp. 114, 115
 i, 26'–34': pp. 115, 117
 i, 39'–46': pp. 87, 89, 95, 100–102, 103,
 114–117
 i, 46': p. 97
 ii, 8–16: pp. 60–62
 Šurpu
 41, viii, 42–47: pp. 133–134
 “The Supervisor and the Scribe”
 29–32: p. 35
 Stol, in *Natural Phenomena*,
 252: p. 136
 STT
 95, 130–134: p. 62
 95 + 295 iii, 130-iv: pp. 87, 95–97, 101
 256: pp. 62–63
 275 obv. i, 3'–13': p. 116, fn. 92
 TCS
 2, 17: 12ff.: pp. 30–31
 2, 46: p. 58
 2, 69, 9: 1–2: p. 58
 3, 19–20: p. 54
 TIM
 9, 73, rev., 4–10: pp. 264–265
 UET
 5 85, 1–9: p. 37
 Udug.hul
 5, 11–19: p. 51
 8, 10–13: p. 51
 12, 14–20: p. 49
 BSOAS
 39, 425–427: p. 190
 YOS
 11, 2: pp. 265–266
 11, 32, 4: pp. 230–241
 11, 86, 1–11: pp. 39–40
 ZA
 71, 61–63: p. 141
 75, 204: 114–116: p. 265

References by Museum Number:

A
 704: p. 214
 30606 (= 5N T65): pp. 231–232
 AB
 217: p. 215
 AUAM
 73, 2416: pp. 214–215
 BM
 28944: pp. 219–221
 61471: pp. 237–239
 62889: pp. 236–237
 64174, 1–5: p. 62
 7: p. 96
 1–8: pp. 87, 95–97, 101
 1–17: pp. 117–121
 64354: pp. 239–241
 79125 (= Bu 89–4–26, 422): pp. 215–218
 79938: pp. 218–219
 79949: pp. 230–231
 91710: pp. 184–186, 193
 91724: pp. 204, 207
 91777: pp. 205, 206–207
 132168: p. 206
 132947: pp. 199–200, 206
 132954: pp. 200–202
 Bu 91–5–9
 214: pp. 87, 89, 95, 97–100, 103
 CBS
 3833 + 3835: p. 229
 7005: pp. 223–229
 Fitzwilliam Museum
 E. 2–1907: pp. 202–204, 206
 FM
 22878: p. 235
 H
 72: pp. 258–264
 HS
 1526: pp. 232–234
 IM
 51292: pp. 226–229
 51328: pp. 226–229
 61749: pp. 234–235
 K
 3365: p. 126
 LB
 2001: p. 214
 MLC
 1614: pp. 278–279
 Moussaieff Collection
 Bowl 2: p. 192

5: pp. 194–195
 11: pp. 188–189
 Schøyen Collection
 MS 1928/47: pp. 193–194
 U
 30501: pp. 235–236

30655: pp. 221–223
 VAT
 8355: p. 214
 YBC
 8041: pp. 276–278
 9863: pp. 278–285