

*BILGAMES AND THE BULL OF HEAVEN: CUNEIFORM TEXTS,
COLLATIONS AND TEXTUAL RECONSTRUCTION*

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In 1997 the late Jeremy Black initiated at the University of Oxford his project on the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL). Since that time it has developed, as he envisaged, into a highly useful tool for those researching and teaching Sumerian literature and into an important resource for those interested in literature generally. The speed with which more than three hundred compositions have been put online in transliteration and translation has been astonishing. To maintain such a pace the project has necessarily relied heavily on existing printed editions. As these editions are revised, improved and replaced, so also the online text will need to be updated. This article makes a slim contribution to the reconstruction of the poem *šul-me₃-kam* ‘Hero in Battle!’, known to modern scholars as *Bilgames (or Gilgames)* and *the Bull of Heaven* or, for short, *GBH*.¹

GBH was first edited on the basis of Heinrich Zimmern’s fine handcopy of a single manuscript in Berlin, the irregularly written VAS 10 196, supplemented by Arno Poebel’s unsurpassable copy of the sole Nippur fragment known at that time (PBS 5 27). Two editions were put out more or less simultaneously by scholars working independently: Father Maurus Witzel and Stephen Langdon (Witzel 1931; Langdon 1932). Witzel’s edition was good for its time but Langdon completely misunderstood most of the text, as Witzel demonstrated in a second article (Witzel 1933). Even his edition soon became obsolete, however, as more fragments from Nippur belonging to the text were published in cuneiform by Edward Chiera in 1934 (SEM 26) and Samuel N. Kramer in 1944 (SLTNi 49). In the middle decades of the twentieth century Kramer and his students identified several more Nippur fragments of *GBH* in Philadelphia and Istanbul. The Istanbul pieces were published in cuneiform by Muazzez Çiğ and Hatice Kızılyay in 1969 (ISET 1) and by Kramer in 1976 (ISET 2). On the basis of all the manuscripts of *GBH* then known, Mark G. Hall prepared a transliteration for the files of the Philadelphia Sumerian Dictionary, but it was never published.

Knowledge of the text of *GBH* was vastly improved by the publication of the tablets from Me-Turan (modern Tell Haddad) by Antoine Cavigneaux and Farouk Al-Rawi, which for the first time allowed a full understanding of the poem’s narrative and plot (Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993). At the same time Cavigneaux took the opportunity to re-edit the previously published material and to complement it with previously unpublished fragments from Nippur. Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi’s publication is the work on which the edition of *GBH* in ETCSL (1.8.1.2) is based. It also provided the essential text for subsequent translations by myself, Douglas Frayne and Herman Vanstiphout (George 1999: 166–75; Frayne 2001: 120–7; Vanstiphout 2001: 184–94).

Since 1993 the work of refining the current understanding of the text has continued, chiefly in the matter of the episodes in which Inanna proposes to Gilgames that he become lord to her lady (George 2003: 471–2); and in which An finds his daughter spurned and weeping, and she pleads with him to give her the Bull of Heaven (George 2002). A problematic line that occurs in *GBH* and

¹ The cuneiform tablets given below are published by kind permission of Drs Erle Leichty and Steven Tinney, Curators of the University of Pennsylvania Museum’s Babylonian Collection. The work of copying them was undertaken during a period as a visiting scholar in the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. It is a pleasure to acknowledge here the generous support of the Institute’s Hetty Goldman Fund. A draft of this article benefited from the comments of Bendt Alster, who was also kind enough to forward me a copy of his edition of the *Gudam* poem when it was unavailable to me. Faults that remain are my own.

in other Sumerian poems of Gilgameš has attracted two very different elucidations (George 2003: 10 n. 29; Marchesi 2001).²

The purpose of the present contribution is threefold: first, to make available cuneiform copies of Nippur manuscripts now in the University Museum in Philadelphia, most of which have hitherto been published in transliteration only; second, to note where I read traces on these pieces differently from Cavigneaux; and third, to offer alternative reconstructions of two passages by combining manuscripts that he transliterated separately or in other combinations. These are matters of detail and in no way detract from Cavigneaux's magnificent achievement in providing the field for the first time with a definitive edition of the text of *GBH* in a substantially complete form.

CUNEIFORM COPIES

There are currently eighteen fragments of *GBH* from Nippur: one of Ur III date, booked as ms. Na in Cavigneaux's list of sigla (Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993: 101), and seventeen Old Babylonian pieces (Cavigneaux's Nb–Nr). The other extant witnesses are ms. A (VAS 10 196) and the two tablets from Me-Turan (Ma and Mb), which all present the text in non-standard orthography. Of the Nippur manuscripts seven had already been published in cuneiform by 1993 (Na, Nb, Nd, Ng, Nj, Nk, Nm), along with one fragment that was subsequently joined to three uncopied pieces (Ni). In addition, cuneiform copies of mss. Nn and Np had been already made by the late Aaron Shaffer, partly from casts, but they remained unpublished, as did a copy of ms. Nl by Claus Wilcke. Copies of mss. Ni, Np and another fragment (No) were published by me as witnesses to the episode of Inanna's weeping (George 2002: 146–7). In the winter of 2004–5 I continued the work of copying the cuneiform of *GBH*, and made copies of all the remaining manuscripts in Philadelphia (Nc, Nf, Nh, Nl, Nn), as well as a new copy of the piece previously published in cuneiform by Chiera as SEM 26 (Nj). These appear here as Figs. 1–7.

This does not complete the publication of *GBH* in cuneiform. Three Nippur fragments from the thirteenth campaign were identified by Miguel Civil and communicated to Cavigneaux in transliteration (Ne, Nq, Nr from the 13 N-T collection). I have not seen these, either in cast (in Chicago) or in the original (Baghdad).³

² i_3 -a LUM.LUM u_3 -lu \dot{h} - $\dot{h}a$ su_3 - su_3 , which I translated 'Ho, hurrah! Tall-grown sapling'. Gianni Marchesi's exposition, that this difficult line means 'O oil-glistening one, adorned with the staff of command', is attractive, though Miguel Civil (2003b: 83) has meanwhile reasserted his view that u_3 -lu \dot{h} - $\dot{h}a$ means not 'sceptre' but 'offshoot'. A further difficulty is the inordinate number of variant writings of i_3 -a LUM.LUM: i_3 -a-lu $_2$ -ulu $_3$, i_3 -a-lul-lu-un, ia-lu $_2$ -ulu $_3$, ia $_4$ -LUM-LUM, ia $_4$ -a-LUM-LUM, ia $_4$ -LUM, a-LUM-LUM, all documented in George 2003: 10 n. 29. This variation demonstrates that ancient scribes often failed to understand the epithet and sought other etymologies; as one of these possibilities I would still propose an ululation **yalulu* related to Akk. *yarūru* (for the phonetic rendering of ululations in Sumerian see Krecher 1966: 148–9; Civil 1976: 90; Attinger 1993: 559). The proposed epithet 'oil-glistening' at the opening of the paean to Gilgamesh is a prominent attribute of the hero as king of Uruk. This begs the question of whether anointment with oil played a part in coronation in Mesopotamia. Biblical and other sources suggest the anointing of kings was predominantly a Levantine and Anatolian practice, perhaps borrowed from Egypt, where vassals and other subordinates were bound to pharaoh's service by anointment (e.g., de Vaux 1973: 102–7). Amorite kings of Mari were anointed on accession, as is clear from Adad of Aleppo's oracle to Zimri-Lim: *šamnam*(i_3) *ša nam-ri-ru-ti-ia ap-šu-uš-ka* 'I anointed you with the oil of my splendid brilliance' (Durand 1993: 45, 4'–5'). Here again the anointment binds the anointed in the service of the anointer. Evidence for the anointment of kings is lacking for southern Mesopotamia, however (Durand 1993: 53), a lack that undermines Marchesi's proposal.

³ A further manuscript, now in the Schøyen Collection, is expected to appear in a volume of Sumerian literary tablets (see for the moment George 2003: 967 sub SC 2652/2). Another tablet in the Schøyen Collection, MS (= SC) 2652/3, was formerly identified as an Old Sumerian source for *GBH* but without justification (see George 2003: 6). Unfortunately, early misinformation put out on the collection's website has contaminated Bendt Alster's (2004: 33–4 n. 15, 35 n. 20) discussion of the literary history of *GBH*.

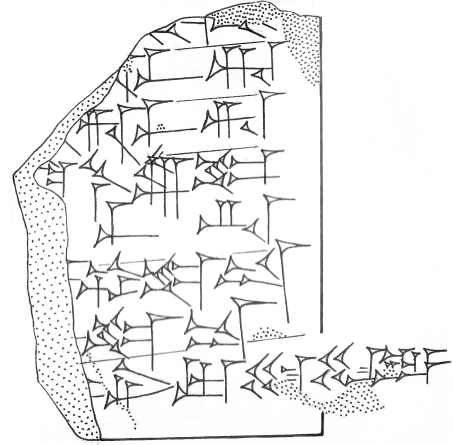
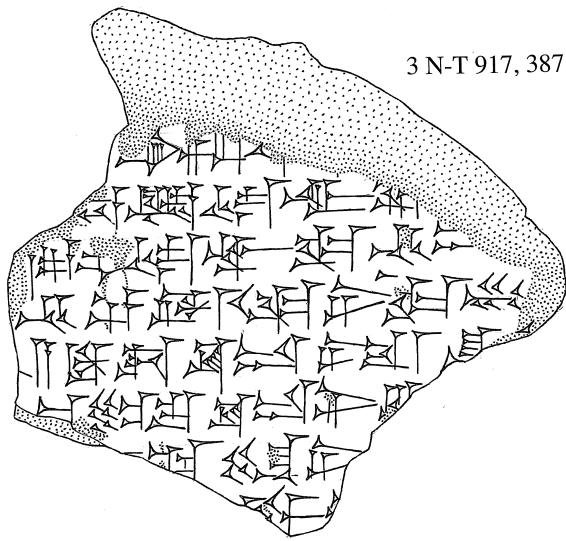


Figure 1: Ms. Nc

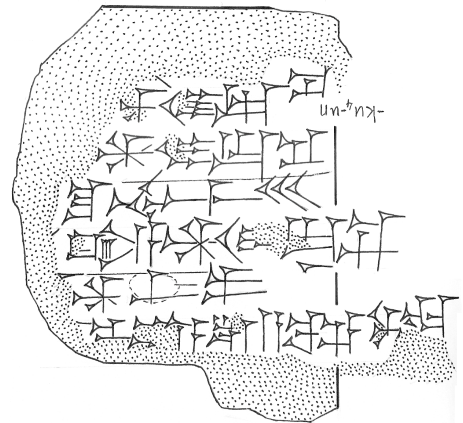


Figure 2: Ms. Nf obverse and reverse

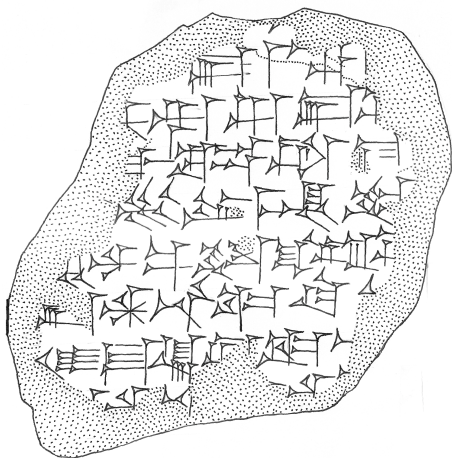


Figure 3: Ms. Nh

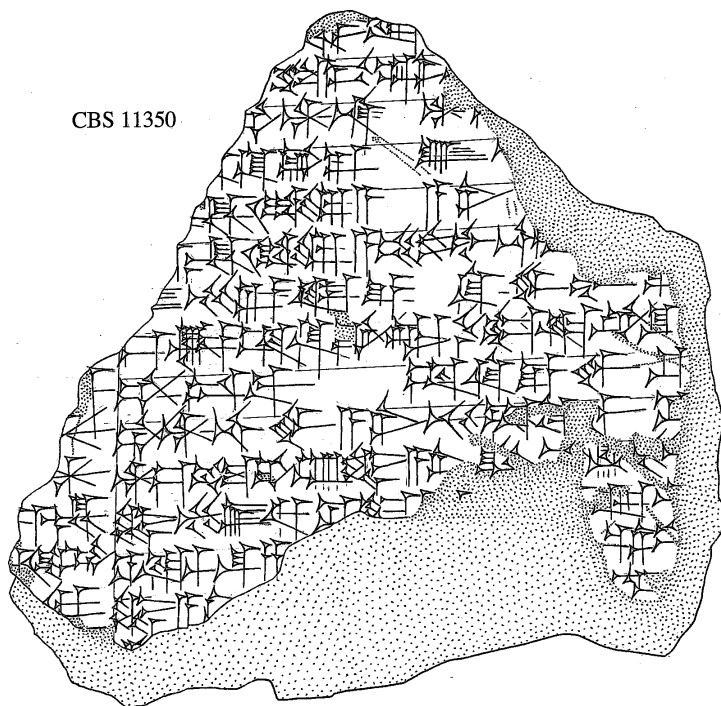


Figure 4: Ms. Nj

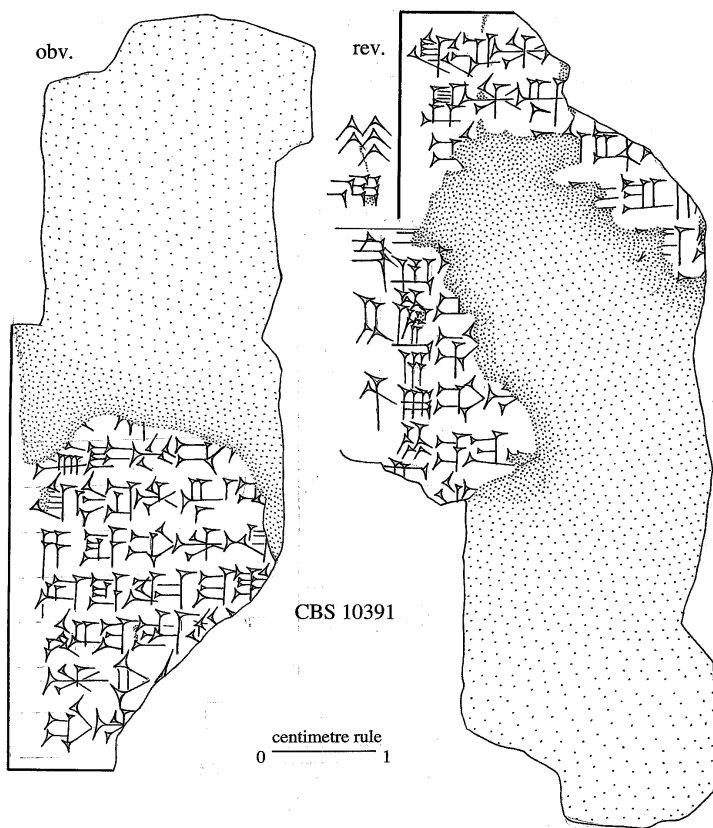


Figure 5: ms. N1 obverse and reverse

COLLATIONS

Collations of mss. A, Ni, No and Np of *GBH* have previously been offered in George 2002 and 2003: 11 n. 47. Further collations of ms. A and notes on the six newly copied pieces follow.

A. VAT 6281

VAS 10 196 (ed. Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993: 112–21). Col. i 12' and 13': tur₃-zu and amaš-zu, as in the parallel lines of the Gudam poem (Römer 1991: 367, A rev. 31–2; Alster 2004: 25, 36–7 [= ETCSL 1.3.4]); end of i 14': ga-an-dug₄-e : ga-<bi₂-zu>; i 16': g]u₃ ʾba-an-de₃¹; i 17'–18': [... ^dGIŠ.G]A.BIL₂-mes za-e ma-i-ra-an-dug₄, [... ^dGIŠ.G]A.BIL₂-mes za-ra-ra ma-an-dug₄; ii 5': uš-bi du[g-šakar-gin₇ ...] (// No rev. 6'); ii 18' end: an-nu-rug-gu₃-bi⁴ for an-ur₂-ra u₂-gu₇-bi-(im) (// Nm obv. 2 // Np ii 10'); iii 30': ša₃-ba!(ZU) nu-te-te-en; iii 31' end: im-si-mu-e; iii 38': i₃-na₈-na₈-e [...]; iv 15: mu-un-<da-ni-re₇>-eš

Nc. 3 N-T 917, 387

Figure 1 (ed. Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993: 104). In l. 5', where Ninsun appears to be instructing Gilgameš to bathe in the river, id₂-da e₁₁-ni saḥar šu x [...] is parallel with the Me-Turan manuscript's saḥar-ta a-ni-[x] id₂-da naga-NE (Ma 7). The trace allows šu x [...] to be read ŠU.N[AGA, i.e., t[u₅-bi₂-ib₂] 'wash'.

Nf. 3 N-T 902, 94

Figure 2 (ed. Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993: 113–14). Perhaps part of the same tablet as Nh. The first line has traces which read not -r]i-bar-re (like ll. 2' and 3') but -me-e]n-^rde₃-en¹. Lines 1'–2' thus combine into one line of poetry: [en ^dbil₃-ga-mes am-mu lu₂/mu-lu-me-e]n-de₃-en² [šu nu-r]i-bar-re (l. 2' indented). Lines 6'–7' read in Emesal [^dbil₃-ga-mes za-e u₃-mu-u]n-bi de₃-men₃ ⁷[ga₂-e ga-ša-an-bi] de₃-men₃ (see below). Line 8': the sign NI is clear. Rev. 6: b]a-an-{PA ras.}-pa-{ras.}.

Nh. 3 N-T 906, 227

Figure 3 (ed. Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993: 111–13). Perhaps part of the same tablet as Nf. Line 3' end: the scribe accidentally omitted the sign LA₂ before ^re¹.

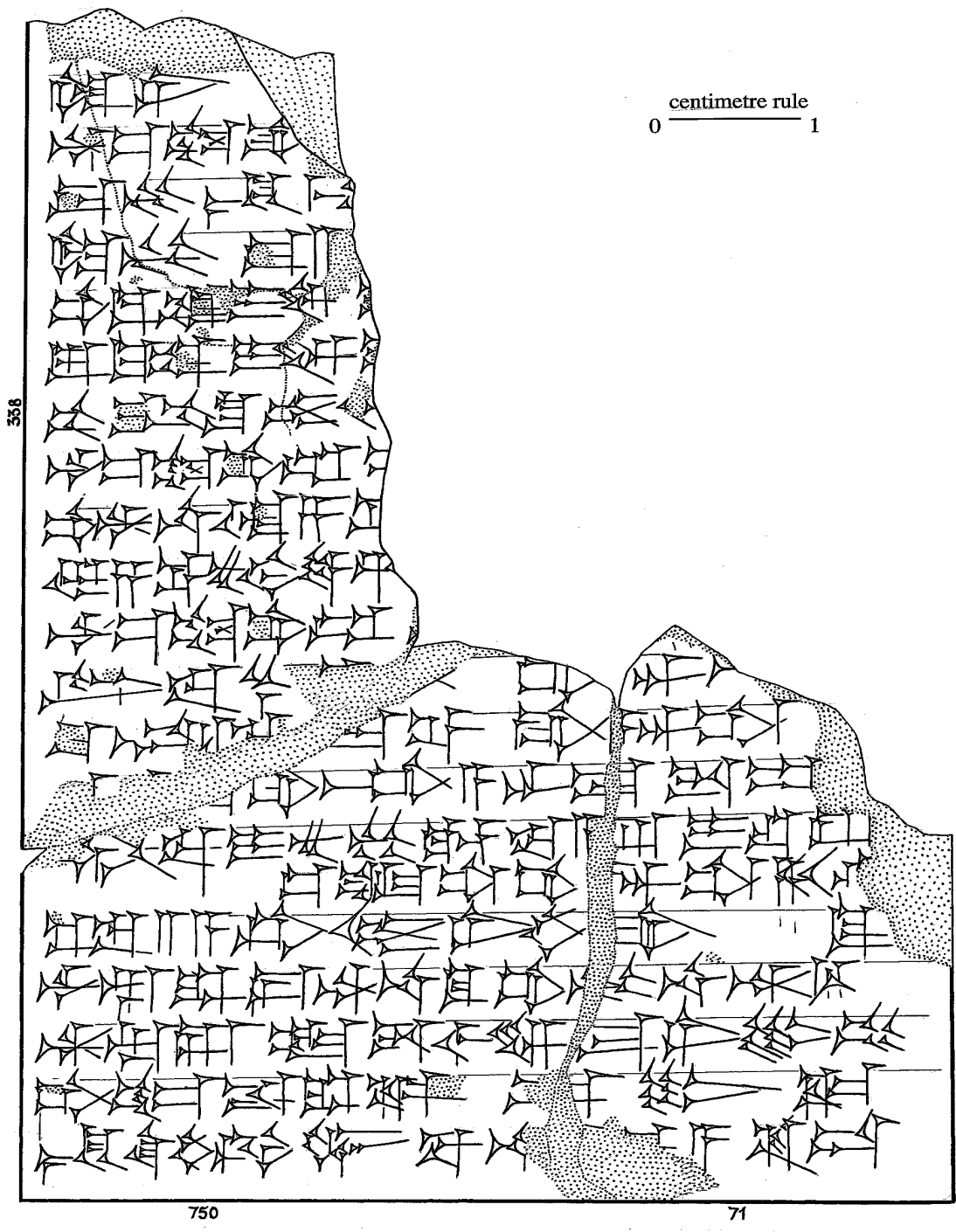
Nj. CBS 11350

Figure 4. SEM 26 (ed. Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993: 117–18). This is a surface flake from the reverse of a tablet probably of four columns. The right-hand column is thus col. iii; the line-ends on the left-hand column are still unplaced (iv 1'–6'). Rev. iii 1'–2' reads [i₃-na₈-na₈-e]n ^ri₃-na₈¹-[na₈-en-še₃ i₃-na₈-na₈-en] ² [en ^db]il₃-ga-mes i₃-n[na₈-na₈-en en-še₃ i₃-na₈-na₈-en]. These lines are also partly preserved on Ni iii 4'–5' // A iii 38'–9' (see further below). Nj iii 6': the last preserved sign is probably i[b₂; iii 7' end: im-su₁₃-^re¹.

Nl. CBS 10391

Figure 5 (ed. Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993: 116–18). Obv. 1' has traces that read [e]n ^rd¹[bil₃-ga-mes en ga-mu-un-ug₅-ga]. Rev. traces are as expected: l. 3: gud [unu]g^rki-ga u₂¹ [mu-un-gu₇-e]; 4: [id₂-a]g₂-^ri¹-lu ^ra i₃¹-[na₈-na₈]; 5: ^ru₂¹ [mu-un-g]u₇-^re¹ [ki ...].

⁴ Cavigneaux read an-nu u₂-ku₂-bi, but the third sign is as copied and nothing like U₂; it is a good match for ŠEN. According to the reference lists, the sign ŠEN is not otherwise found with the Akkadian-derived value *rug* before the Middle Babylonian period, but many signs occur with Akkadian-derived values earlier than this.



3 N-T 750 (IM-58678) + 3 N-T 902, 71 + 3 N-T 916, 338 obv.

Figure 6: Ms. Nn obverse

3 N-T 750 (IM 58678) + 3 N-T 902, 71 + 3 N-T 916, 338 rev.

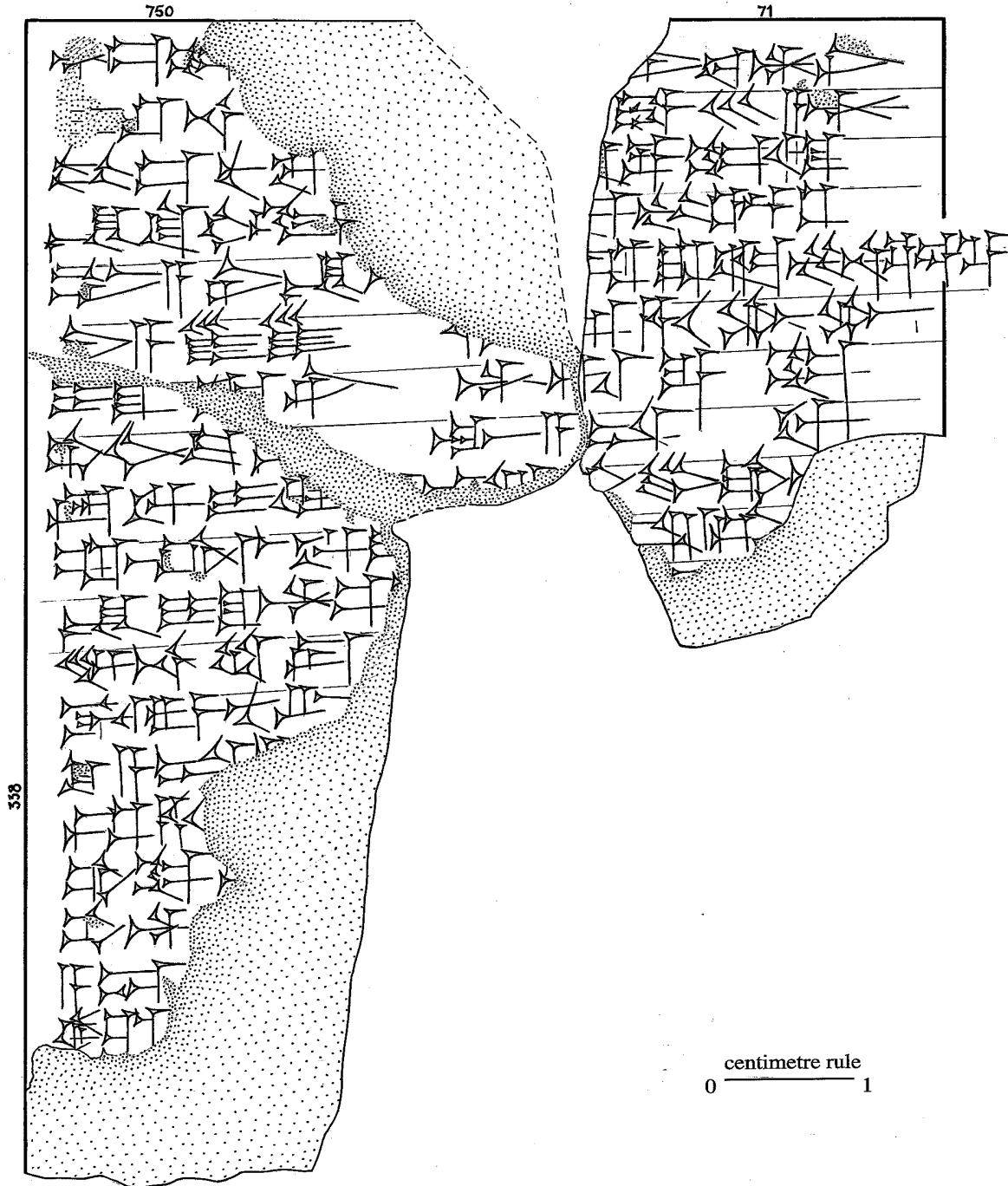


Figure 7: Ms. Nn reverse

Nn. 3 N-T 750 (IM 58678) + 3 N-T 902, 71 + 3 N-T 916, 338.

Figures 6–7; the Baghdad fragment was copied from a cast kept in Philadelphia (ed. Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993: 119–21). Obv. 3': the trace favours reading EN.ME.L[I = ens[i; 12': traces of s[i-g]a are visible. Rev. 9: there seems only space for u₃-[t]u; 11: en dumu-gir₁₅ ^dbi[l₃-ga-mes ...].

TEXTUAL RECONSTRUCTION

Like many Sumerian narrative poems, the text of *GBH* is repetitious. This makes the work of placing small fragments hazardous, since it is not always clear whether the fragment in question witnesses the first appearance of such a passage or a subsequent one. Two repetitious passages of *GBH* pose particular problems of textual reconstruction for the editor: the episode of Inanna's proposal and that of Gilgamesh's drinking bout. These are examined in turn. Philological comments are appended at the end of the section.

Inanna's proposal

The Me-Turan manuscript shows that a repetition occurs in *GBH* in the passage where Inanna proposes to Gilgamesh and he reports what she said to his mother, Ninsun (Ma 22–27 // 34–39). The repeated lines are a speech that begins am-mu-lu-mu im-ma-ni-[ta] and ends with the proposal that the two of them form a pair. The speech can be fully restored in conventional orthography from the several Nippur fragments that are also witness to it:⁵

33 // 45 am-mu mu-lu-me *de₃-*me-en (tablets: me-en-de₃-en) šu nu-ri-bar-re-en
 34 // 46 en ^dbil₃-ga-mes mu-lu-me *de₃-*me-en (tablets: me-en-de₃-en) šu nu-ri-bar-re-en
 35 // 47 e₂-an-na-ka di-kud-de₃ šu nu-ri-bar-re-(en)
 36 // 48 mi-par₃-ku₃-ga₂ ka-aš-bar-re šu nu-ri-bar-re-(en)
 37 // 49 e₂-an-na e₂ an-e ki-ag₂-ga₂ di-kud-de₃ šu nu-ri-bar-re-(en)
 38 // 50 ^dbil₃-ga-mes za-e [u₃-mu-u]n-bi de₃-men₃ ga₂-e ga-ša-an-bi de₃-men₃

'O my wild bull, *may you be* our man, I shall not let you go!
 O lord Bilgames, my wild bull, *may you be* our man, I shall not let you go!
 To pass judgement in the E-anna I shall not let you go,
 to render verdicts in the holy Gipar I shall not let you go,
 to pass judgement in E-anna, the house beloved of An, I shall not let you go!
 O Bilgames, may you be its lord, let me be its lady!'

On ms. Ma the speech and its repetition are separated by a fragmentary passage of narrative and direct speech in which Gilgamesh goes to his mother and tells her that something happened at the city wall (Ma 28–33). After the repetition of the speech Ninsun begins to answer (Ma 40–41) but her response is lost as the tablet becomes lacunose.

The manuscript published by Zimmern (ms. A) covers the same episode and holds its continuation, and is therefore important for the poem's reconstruction. However its text is deceptive at this point (as in many other respects), for it collapses the two identical speeches of the episode into a single one. Its narrative describes how the celestial Inanna emerges from the palace of the Abzu, i.e. rising as Venus from below the horizon, and gazes on something (A i 1'–2').⁶

⁵ *GBH* 33–8 (Nd 6'–8' // Ne 7'–12' // Ng 6'–10' // Nh 4'–8' // A i 3'–8') // 45–50 (Nf 1'–5' // No obv. 6'–11' // MS 2652/2 1–6), cf. George 2003: 471–2. The sequential line-numbering of this and other passages of *GBH* given here is derived from a transliteration made for personal use and is cited for orientation only.

⁶ The something is the enigmatic e₂-la₂. Those Nippur sources for this passage that have been published in cuneiform distinguish between the signs (a) E₂ and (b) KID = LIL₂ and unambiguously offer the reading e₂-la₂ (see Nd 3'–5' // Ng 3'–5' // Nh 1'–3'). They discount Thorkild Jacobsen's lil₂-la₂ 'spirit' (1989: 275). The expression e₂-la₂ in this passage is sometimes understood to refer to an awning or similar (Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993: 109 'auvent', ETCSL 'canopy', Vanstiphout 2001: 185 'baldakijn'). In cosmic terms the object of Inanna's gaze should be no architectural detail but all the habitations of men on earth.

Thereby she evidently catches sight of Gilgameš (though his name does not occur at this point), who is freshly groomed, as in the Babylonian version of the story.⁷ Inanna's speech of proposal to the hero immediately follows (A i 3'–8'), next is Ninsun's warning to him not to get involved (A i 9'–10'), and finally come Gilgameš's words on his next encounter with Inanna (A i 11'–14') and her reaction (A i 15' ff.). This manuscript of *GBH* lacks Gilgameš's reaction to Inanna's proposal and his repeating of it to Ninsun (// Ma 28–41).

Whether or not the scribe of ms. A telescoped the text deliberately or by mistake is not the issue here, though one may remark that, like many other manuscripts of *GBH*, ms. A omits lines and longer pieces of text throughout the poem, often, it seems, at random. Repetition being a stylistic feature conspicuous in Sumerian narrative poetry, it can be assumed that as a piece of living literature the poem held the full extent of Inanna's proposal both on the occasion that she spoke it and when Gilgameš reported it verbatim to his mother. In reconstructing *GBH* (and any other Sumerian poem) as a work of literature, one must set aside the abbreviations of individual manuscripts and, without ignoring the separate existence of variant versions, seek to establish as full a text as possible. In this passage ms. Ma gives the lead. The problem confronting an editor is where to place the small fragments from Nippur that are witnesses to Inanna's speech: in its first appearance or in the reportage.

Both manuscripts Nf and No include lines spoken by Inanna to Gilgameš in her attempt to make him lord to her lady. However, they were wrongly placed by Cavigneaux in the speech's first appearance. This can be seen by placing correctly the lines of each fragment that are adjacent to the speech. The opening five lines of ms. No, before Inanna's speech, run parallel, as Cavigneaux suggested, to the five lines ms. Ma 29–33 (or perhaps 30–33). For clarity they are given here in synoptic style:

41	No obv. 1' Ma 30	[^d bil ₃ -g]a-mes ¹⁹ -[e ^d nin-sun ₂ -na-ra gu ₃ mu-na-de ₂ -e] ^d bil ₃ -ga-mes ^d nin-sumun _x (EŠ ₂)-x[... ...]
42	No obv. 2'–3' Ma 31	[x (x) x]x uzu du [...] / [x (x) x n]a/k]i ka sa[g] ama-ugu-mu en ² -gin ₇ uzu x[... ...]
43	No obv. 4' Ma 32	[x (x) x] ka ₂ -gal x[... ...] ^{giš} ig ka ₂ -gal-ke ₄ x[... ...]
44	No obv. 5' Ma 33	[x (x) x]x-gin ₇ [... ...] muš ₃ bad ₃ -ke ₄ [...] gar-gar [...]
45	No obv. 6' Ma 34	[am-mu l]u ₂ me-e[n-de ₃ -en šu nu-ri-bar-re-en] am-mu lu-mu im-ma-ni-[ta ² ... š]u nu-mu-ni-bar-re

Bilgames [spoke to] Ninsun,
 'O mother who bore me, like a *lord* ... [...]
 At the door of the city gate [... ...],
 by the base of the city wall, setting [...] like [... *she said*:]
 "O my wild bull, *may you be* our man, I shall not let you go!"

Broken as they are, these are identifiably the lines of narrative in which Gilgameš tells his mother that he chanced upon Inanna by the city wall. This time the encounter is not conceptualized mythically but cast on a more human level, with Inanna portrayed as a loose woman dallying near

⁷ The first episode of *GBH* tells how Gilgameš, following his mother's instructions, washed in the river, visited a juniper grove and had himself shaved in the *gipar* (Ma 7–17 and parallels). All this would seem to effect a ritual purification; in narrative terms, it is the counterpart of the hero's washing and donning of regalia in the later telling of the story (SB Gilgameš VI 1–5, ed. George 2003: 618).

the city gate on the lookout for clients. The city gate was the place where prostitutes customarily plied their trade (e.g., SB Gilgameš VII 117, and George 2003: 480 n. 122). Such a detail is bound to incite Ninsun's disapproval, but her reaction is also informed by conventional motifs of folklore: the mother jealous of a woman romantically interested in her son, and the enfeeblement of the heroic male in a woman's company. Following the location of the encounter in the mundane world comes Inanna's speech. ms. No obv. 6' ff. is therefore not a source for Inanna's overture to Gilgameš (*GBH* 33–8) but for the repetition of her words by Gilgameš to Ninsun (*GBH* 45–50).

The place of ms. Nf is similarly fixed in the repetition of Inanna's proposal rather than in its first instance because, following her speech (Nf 1'–5'), the fragment continues not with Gilgameš visiting Ninsun, i.e., the passage just quoted, but with lines that report Ninsun's warning to Gilgameš, his words to Inanna on their next encounter and, finally, her reaction. Before breaking off at the turn of its first column, the big tablet from Me-Turan offers two lines of narrative which are not present in the other manuscripts. Restored after Cavigneaux, these bridge the transition between Gilgameš's report and Ninsun's response and can be interpolated accordingly:

- 51 Ma 40 ama-ugu-ne-ra ur₃-[gi]_{n7} mu-un-na-ab-be₂-^rak²¹-[ka²]
- 52 Ma 41 ama u[gu-ni ^dbil₃-ga-mes-ra (inim) mu-na-ni-ib-gi₄-gi₄]
- 53 Ne 13' [... ^dina[nna]
Nf 6' [... ^dinanna mi-par₃-zu-še₃ nam-b]a-ni-ib-ku₄-ku₄-un
A i 9' ni_{g2}-ba ^rd¹inanna mi-par₃-zu-še₃ nam-ba-ni-ku₄-ku₄
- 54 Nf om.[?]
A i 10' ^dnin-e₂-gal a₂ nam-ur-sag-ga₂-ke₄ tug₂ nam-bi-^rdul-e¹
- 55 A i 11' ^dinanna nin[?] e-sir₂-mu za-e nam-ba-in-kud
Nf 7' [... ..]
- 56 A i 12' gud kur-^rra¹ ga-an-KA ^rtur₃-zu¹ ga-bi₂-su₂
Nf 8' [... .. ga-a]_{m3}-mi-ib-si
- 57 A i 13' udu kur-ra ga-an-KA amaš-^rzu¹ ga-bi₂-su₂
Nf 9' [... .. ga-a]_{m3}-mi-ib-si
- 58 A i 14' ^rku₃¹ na₄-gug NI GAR I sur-sur-meš ga-an-dug₄-e : ga-^rbi₂-su₂¹
Nf 10' [... ..] ŠE₃[?]-šir-me-eš / [...] ga-am₃-mi-ib-si
Ni i 1' [... .. -m]e-eš / [... .. ga-am₃-m]i-ib-si
- 59 A i 15' [in]-nin-e gu₃ ba-an-de₂ KA-ni ba-an-pa-an
Nf 11' [... .. b]a-an-{PA ras.}-pa-{ras.}
Ni i 2' [... .. ba]-an-pa-^ran¹

After he had spoken like this to the mother who bore him,
the mother who [bore him replied to Bilgameš:]

Ninsun: 'You must not permit the gift (of) Inanna to enter your chamber,
Ninegalla must not cover with cloth a warrior's might!'

Bilgameš: 'O Inanna ... , you must not block my path!
Let me *catch* mountain bulls to replenish your folds!
Let me *catch* mountain sheep to replenish your pens!
Let me fill the ... with silver and carnelian!'
The queen spoke, *she uttered a snort* ...

The transition from Ninsun's warning to Gilgameš's second encounter with Inanna is very abrupt as the text is currently reconstructed. The Ur III manuscript has a fragmentary version of ll. 53–4 in which the second-person pronouns are replaced with first-person pronouns. This detail suggests that in the poem's fullest telling the transition was smoother, with Gilgameš repeating Ninsun's advice to Inanna when he rebuffed her (Na edge i–ii; cf. Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993: 102):

[... gi₆]-par₃-ra-/[mu-še₃? ...]-ku₄-ku₄
 [n₂in-e₂-gal-la a₂ na]m-ur-sag-/ga₂-mu / tug₂ nam-i₃-dul-e
 'O Inanna, I shall not let your gifts] enter [my] chamber,
 [Ninegalla] shall not cover with cloth my warrior's [might!]'

In his translation Frayne (2001: 123) expands the text accordingly. Here again, it seems that ms. A has telescoped a repetition; this time the contemporaneous Nippur tradition, represented by ms. Nf, does the same.

Gilgameš's drinking bout

Spurned by the man of her desire, Inanna is found weeping by her father, and persuades him to give her the Bull of Heaven, intending so to wreak vengeance on the 'great bull' of Uruk (A ii 1'–iii 25' and duplicates). Bull will thus be pitted against bull, celestial versus human. Some of the editorial and philological problems in this episode have been addressed in a previous article (George 2002). The Bull of Heaven duly arrives outside Uruk, where its fiery presence is terrible in effect and terrifying to behold (A iii 26'–34' and duplicates). At this point begins a passage, very broken in ms. A and the Nippur manuscripts, concerning Lugalgabangal, Gilgameš's minstrel (A iii 35' nar-a-ni), and the Bull of Heaven. Thereafter the lines describing the destruction wrought by the Bull of Heaven in Uruk are repeated (A iii 40'–44' // 27'–31'). When the Me-Turan manuscript resumes, Gilgameš is telling Lugalgabangal to play on while he continues drinking (Ma 86 ff.).

The editor's problem is how to reconstruct a text bridging the interval between the description of the bull and its repetition, and then the lines immediately following, from the paltry fragments of lines surviving on mss. A iii 35'–44', Np iii 16, Nl 17–18, Nj ii, Nk rev. and Ni iii, all given separately in the printed edition (Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993: 118–19).

A provisional reconstruction was given in my translation for Penguin Classics (George 1999: 172). There I saw that ms. Ni iii 6' ff. held traces of lines repeating the description of the havoc caused by the Bull of Heaven in Uruk, and thus matched ms. A iii 40' ff., and that the right-hand column of ms. Nj, placed by Cavigneaux in the first instance of this description, belonged instead in the repetition. The key to this reconstruction was realizing that the traces in ms. Ni iii concerned first drinking and then the Bull of Heaven's destructive presence, and also that ms. Nj iii 1'–2' did not fit where Cavigneaux placed them (with the laconic acknowledgement 'different'), but were better matched with mss. Ni iii 4'–5' // A iii 38'–39'. The reconstructed translation allowed for a gap between mss. A iii 37' and Ni iii 2', but a further manuscript came to light subsequently to show that there is instead an overlap (A iii 35'–37' // Ni iii 1'–3'). The drinking bout can now be fully recovered as follows.⁸

115–16		[ud-bi-a e ₂ dingir-ra-na kaš i ₃ -na ₈ -na ₈] [en ^d bil-ga-mes-e e ₂ dingir-ra-na kaš i ₃ -na ₈ -na ₈]
	A	om.
	Nl 18'	ud-ba e[n ^d ^d bil ₃ -ga-mes]
	Np iii 16	[... ..]x-še ₃ k[aš ^d x x x x]
117	A iii 35'	nar-a-ni [... ..]
	Ni iii 1'	[... .. li]l ₂ -še ₃ im-t[a-x x]
	Nl 19'	n[ar-a-ni lugal-gaba-gal ₂ ze ₂ -a-ni sur-ra-a-ni lil ₂ -še ₃ im-ma-ra-e ₃ -a]

⁸ The first seven lines are restored from the unpublished tablet (MS 2652/2, ll. 44–50, courtesy M. Schøyen).

- 118 A iii 36' igi il₂-a-ni [... ..]
Ni iii 2' [igi il₂-la-ni gud-an-na i]gi im-ma-ni-[in-dub]
- 119 A iii 37' gurum-gurum-ma-ni [... ..]
Ni iii 3' [gurum-gurum-ma-ni] ^re₂¹-še₃ ba-ni-[in-ku₄]
- 120 A iii 38' i₃-na₈-na₈-e [i₃-na₈-na₈-e en-še₃ i₃-na₈-na₈-e]
Ni iii 4' [... .. -n]a₈-na₈-en en-[... ..]
Nj iii 1' [... -e]n ^ri₃-na₈¹-[... ..]
- 121 A iii 39' en ^dbil₃-ga-[mes i₃-na₈-na₈-e en-še₃ i₃-na₈-na₈-e]
Ni iii 5' [... ..] i₃-na₈-na₈-e[n]
Nj iii 2' [en ^db]il₃-ga-mes i₃-n[a₈-]
- 122 A iii 40' ^dinanna gud-an-na [... ..]
Ni iii 6' [... .. a]n-ta ^rim¹-x[... ..]
Nj iii 3' [ku₃ ^dinanna-ke₄ g]ud-an-na an-t[a im-e₁₁-de₃]
- 123 A iii 41' gud unug^{ki}-[... ..]
Ni iii 7' [... ..] ^ru₂¹ m[u-]
Nj iii 4' [gud unu]g^{ki}-ga-ke₄ u₂ m[u-gu₇-e]
- 124 A iii 42' id₂-a-gi₆-lu [... ..]
Ni iii 8' [... ..]
Nj iii 5' [id₂-e]n-gig-lu-a a i₃-[na₈-na₈]
- 125 A iii 43' id₂-a-gi₆-lu danna-t[a-am₃]
Ni iii 9' [... ..]-bi [... ..]
Nj iii 6' [i]d₂-en-gig-lu-a gaba danna^{na} i[b₂-si ša₃-bi nu-si-si²]
- 126 A iii 44' u₂ mu-^rgu₇-e¹ x[... ..]
Ni iii 10' [... ..]-e ^rki¹ [... ..]
Nj iii 7' ^ru₂¹ mu-un-gu₇-e ki im-su₁₃-^re¹
- 127 Ni iii 11' [... ..] al-k[ud-]
Nj iii 8' ^{giš}gišimmar unug^{ki}-ga al-kud-de₃ ka-bi-še₃ [i₃-gur-gur]
Nk rev. 1' [... ..] x x x x
- 128 Ni iii 12' [... ..] unug^k[ⁱ]
Nj iii 9' gud gub-ba unug^{ki}-e im-si
Nk rev. 2' [... ..] x-si
- 129 Nj iii 10' gud-an-na ni₂-a-ni kul-^raba^{ki} im¹-si
Nk rev. 3' [... ..] kul-a]ba^{ki} ^ri₃¹-im-si
- 130 Nj iii 11' ^dbil₃-ga-mes nar-a-ni lugal-^rgaba-gal₂ mu¹-n[a-]
Nk rev. 4' [nar-a-ni lugal-ga]ba-gal₂ / [^dbil₃-ga-me]s-e mu-na-ni-ib-gi₄-gi₄
- 131 Nj iii 12' nar-mu sa-zu si-^rbi₂-ib¹ [a ga-a]n-na₈-n[a₈¹-an]
Nk rev. 5' [nar-mu lugal-gaba-g]al₂ sa-zu¹ si-i₃-ib a ga-an-na₈-na₈-an
Ma 86 nar-mu lugal-gaba-gar en₃-du-zu da-ga-ab sa-a-z[u si₃-bi-ib]
- 115 At that time [he was drinking ale in the house of his god,]
the lord [Bilgames was drinking ale in the house of his god.]
His minstrel, [Lugalgabangal, who had gone out] into the open [puking his bile,]

- lifting his eye, [caught] sight of [the Bull of Heaven.]
 Crouching down very low, he [went back] inside.
 120 ‘You drink, you drink, how [long will you drink?]
 O lord Bilgames, you drink, [how long will you drink?]
 [Pure] Inanna has brought the Bull of Heaven [down] from the sky!
 In Uruk the bull is [devouring] the grass,
 in the Angilu canal it [is drinking] the water,
 125 one league [*it reached*] along the Angilu canal, [its appetite was not sated.]
 It devours the grass, it lays the earth bare,
 it snaps the date-palms of Uruk, [bending them] to its mouth.
 The bull, just standing there, fills (all of) Uruk,
 the bull, on its own, it fills (all of) Kullab.’
 130 Bilgames answered Lugalgabangal, his minstrel:
 ‘O my minstrel, strum your strings, I’ll go on drinking!’

Gilgameš’s reaction to his minstrel’s report falls in with the folklore motif of the hero who while at leisure receives news of a terrifying assault and, amid the panic of others, pays it no attention until he has finished enjoying himself. Another example is Sir Francis Drake, who according to legend continued a game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe as the Spanish Armada hove into view. It remains to observe that the man whose life and work are commemorated in this book was equally unflappable in a crisis and, like Gilgameš, would certainly prefer, over a precipitant response, calm reflection aided by music and beer.

Comments on lines of passages quoted above

- 33–34 // 45–46. Mss. A, Ne and Nh have lu₂ for ES mu-lu. For the interpretation of mu-lu-me-en-de₃-en given here (corrupt for *mu-lu-me de₃-men₃, with the possessive pronoun in the ‘plural of ecstasy’) see George (2003: 472 n. 100). Thorkild Jacobsen (1989: 275) read mu-lu me-en ne-en, etc., and translated ‘such I am not relinquishing to you’; he supposed that Inanna was turning down Gilgameš’s prior request for ‘jurisdiction over Eanna’, but now more of the text has come to light his exegesis is no longer tenable. Instead it seems that Inanna waylays Gilgameš, wanting to keep him all to herself, with the result that he will not be able to go about his official duties. ms. Ma has perhaps ‘O my wild bull, O my man’, then corrupt.
- 44 Others have taken muš₃ to be part of the wall’s superstructure (Cavigneaux and Al-Rawi 1993: 122 ‘creneaux(?)’, Frayne 2001: 122 ‘crest’, Vanstiphout 2001: 191 ‘de top van de stadsmuur’, ETCSL ‘crenellations’, reading suḥ₁₀ with Attinger 1992: 129 n. 10). I think it more suited to Inanna’s role in the episode that she be waiting for clients in the lee of the wall, rather than standing on its parapet. For muš₃ ‘base’ see the *Collection of Sumerian Temple Hymns* 23 and *passim*, where the word denotes the emplacement on which a temple stands. As such it is discussed by Åke Sjöberg in Sjöberg and Bergmann (1969: 55–6); note in addition the equation of muš₂ (MUŠ₃-*gunū*) and *uššu* as the ‘base’ of a structure grounded in the Apsū in a bilingual liturgical text (quoted by George 1992: 318).
- 56–7 Bendt Alster (2004: 34) reads these lines on ms. A as gud kur-ra ga-an-du₁₁ tur₃-ba ga-bi₂-lu, etc., taking du₁₁ as phonetic for TUKU = du₁₂ ‘to provide’ and lu as ‘to make numerous’, following the parallel lines of the Gudam poem [ETCSL 1.3.4] 37–8 (ed. Alster 2004: 25):

gud kur-ra ga-mu-ra-ab-šum₂ ṽtur₃¹-zu ga-mu-ra-ab-lu
 udu kur-ra ga-mu-ra-ab-šum₂ amaš-zu ga-mu-ra-ab-lu

To my eyes the last signs on ms. A i 12’ and 13’ were correctly copied by Zimmern on VAS 10 196 and are better ZU than LU; I therefore take them as phonetic for the Nippur tradition’s clear si ‘to fill’. In the absence of evidence from Nippur the first verb of these

lines is less certain and I have translated ad hoc; Douglas Frayne (2001: 123) renders it as ‘I myself will call’. The *Gudam* poem offers ga-mu-ra-ab-šum₂ ‘let me present to you’. Finally, Cavigneaux and Alster both read tur₃-ba and amaš-ba; in both cases there is damage and, since the animal pens are Inanna’s, better sense is obtained by reading the pronouns in the second person, tur₃-zu and amaš-zu (as in *Gudam* 37–8).

- 117 The reading lil₂-še₃ is assured from the unpublished source. The translation of lil₂ is not a matter of consensus: the meanings usually proposed are (a) phantom, (b) haunted place, (c) wind and (d) ‘nothingness’, i.e., something intangible (for discussion see, inter alia, CAD Z 60, Krecher 1966: 179–80; Michalowski 1989: 98; Jacobsen 1989; Attinger 1993: 709–10; Tinney 1996: 129–30; Michalowski 1998: 240–1; Steinkeller 1999: 114 n. 36; Edzard 2003b). This understanding relies heavily on equations in lexical texts with Akkadian *šāru*, the ordinary word for ‘wind’, and *zaqīqu*, which signifies variously ‘puff of air’, ‘phantom’ and the god of dreams. The scholarly debate has been much concerned with the etymology and meaning of the name of Enlil; but I shall not be diverted here, where the aim is to determine what is meant by lil₂-še₃—e₃ in the line under comment.

It is not widely acknowledged that the noun lil₂ also conveys the notion of ‘open air’, ‘outdoors’. This is most clearly seen in the compounds ub-lil₂-la and tug₂-lil₂-la₂. The former, translated by Akkadian *ibratum*, was unquestionably a simple shrine open to the street and can be rendered literally as ‘niche of the open air’ (George 1992: 369; Edzard 2003b: 181). A tug₂-lil₂-la₂ was a warm rug for use outdoors, typically made of felt. In *Urra* XIX 276–7 it is glossed with Akkadian *tahapšu* (literally ‘felt’), a blanket typically used on horses, and accompanied by tug₂-an-dul₃ = *taktīmu* ‘wrap’ (see recently Postgate 2000: 216; Edzard 2003b: 181); tug₂-lil₂-la₂ can be rendered literally as ‘outdoor blanket’. The meaning of lil₂ in these compounds and elsewhere is given formal expression in OB Proto-*Lu* 824–5 (*MSL* 12 63), where lil₂ is glossed *še-ru-um* ‘open country, “steppe”’, as well as *zi-qī₄-qum*, and in *A* IV/4 195 (*MSL* 14 387), where ^{ga2-lil2-la2}GA₂×LIL₂+LA₂ ‘house of the lil₂’ is translated *bī(E₂) še-ri* ‘tent’. In connected context note the description of the nomad in a hymn to Išme-Dagan (*Enlildiriše* 271–2, Sum. after Römer 1965: 53 [= ETCSL 2.5.4.01] 266–7): mar-du₂ e₂ nu-zu uru^{ki} nu-zu lu₂ lil₂-la₂ ħur-sag-ga₂ tuš-a ‘the Mardu, who knows neither house nor town, a man of the open air who lives in the uplands’. The late Dietz Otto Edzard (2003b: 180) rightly observed of this line: ‘Hier ist wohl nicht Gespenstiches impliziert’, though he translated with slightly different nuance: ‘der aus der Leere, der im ansteigenden Land wohnt’.

The present line, read from the unpublished source, describes how Lugalgabangal is taken ill at a drinking party: the verb sur means ‘to squeeze out’, of juice and other liquids. It is new with ze₂ ‘bile’ but occurs with another bodily fluid in a—sur(-sur) ‘to pass urine; expel semen’ (PSD A/1 167; see further *Urra* X 335 (*MSL* 7 94): dug-a-sur-ra = *karpāt šīnāti* ‘chamber pot’ and in LB commentaries the explanations sur = *šitennu* ‘to keep urinating’ and sur = *tabāku ša šīnāti* ‘to pass urine’, quoted in CAD Š/1 409); the phrase ze₂—sur thus means literally ‘to expel bile’, i.e., ‘to vomit’. Thus impelled by nature’s urge, Gilgameš’s minstrel went out lil₂-še₃, saw the Bull of Heaven wreaking havoc in the midst of Uruk and, still bent double, staggered back inside to alert his king. Here lil₂ will hardly mean a ‘haunted place’, even less a ‘phantom’; it simply means ‘outdoors, the open air’. The expression lil₂-še₃ is thus close in meaning to bar-še₃ ‘outside’. The difference between lil₂ and bar is that the latter is the tangible surface of an object or being; lil₂ is empty space. Nevertheless, the two words appear in parallel in a line of the *Uruk Lament* that describes the god’s departure from the city (2, 26’, Sum. from Green 1984b: 268 [= ETCSL 2.2.5 Segment D 26]): ħur-sag-ga₂ bar im-ma-an-dab₅(var. dib)-be₂-eš edin-lil₂-e ba-ab-[...] ‘they went outside into the uplands, [fleeing] to the open plain’.

The influential idea, that lil₂ with reference to ‘nothingness’ and deserted localities (e.g., ‘haunted place’) derives from a meaning ‘phantom’ (e.g., CAD Z 60), to my mind has the

matter the wrong way round: the semantic evolution was more probably nothingness → open air → uninhabited waste → abandoned place → haunted place. Looking at the bilingual evidence again, where in lexical texts *lil*₂ is commonly equated with Akkadian *šāru* ‘wind’ and *zaqīqu* ‘puff of air’, one notes that both Akkadian words are metaphors for ‘nothing, emptiness’. The metaphorical uses of *lil*₂ and *zaqīqu* for the ghosts of men, a demonic wraith (Akk. *lilû*), and a god responsible for bringing dreams, are explained by the fact that spectres and dreams are empty air, neither seen nor grasped.

There are many instances in Sumerian literature where *lil*₂-*la*₂ (i.e., *lil*₂.ak) has been translated ‘haunted’ but would just as well be served by a translation from the other end of the word’s semantic range. Accordingly, the common expression *edin-lil*₂-*la*₂ can be rendered ‘open plain’; as the fate of many a city in lamentations this means an uninhabited waste. Similarly the *sug/ambar lil*₂-*la*₂ where nets are stretched out in *Uruammairrabi XXI 34* (ed. Volk 1989: 197) is ‘empty marshland’ visited only by huntsmen. A more specific and instructive example is a line of the hymn *Inninšagurra*: *ki i[b₂-dug₄²-ga²-n]i-še₃ uru^{ki} du₆-du₆-da e₂ ¹e₂²-*lil*₂-*la*₂-[še₃] uzug e₂-ri-a-še₃ i₃-gal₂ ‘Wherever she [*gives the command*,] cities become ruin mounds, houses become empty shells, sanctuaries become ruinfields’ (Sum. after Sjöberg 1975: 178 l. 16 [= ETCSL 4.07.3]). The parallelism of *du*₆, *e*₂-*lil*₂-*la*₂ and *e*₂-*ri*-*a* in this passage speaks for itself (and occurs in other texts, e.g., the *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur 346–9*, ed. Michalowski 1989: 58 [= ETCSL 2.2.3]). Haunting seems an inessential embellishment.*

- 131 Ms. Ma 86 can be translated ‘O my minstrel, *sing* your song, [strum] your strings!’, with Cavigneaux. As Cavigneaux noted, the line is closely related to *Gudam 15* [= ETCSL 1.3.4 Segment C 9]: *nar-e en₃-du-a šu i-ni-in-gi₄ sa šu-na bi₂-in-šub*, on which see now Alster (2004: 32).

