

# IN THE GARDEN OF THE GODS

MODELS OF KINGSHIP FROM THE  
SUMERIANS TO THE SELEUCIDS



EVA ANAGNOSTOU-LAOUTIDES

# In the Garden of the Gods

Examining the evolution of kingship in the Ancient Near East from the time of the Sumerians to the rise of the Seleucids in Babylon, this book argues that the Sumerian emphasis on the divine favour that the fertility goddess and the Sun god bestowed upon the king should be understood metaphorically from the start and that these metaphors survived in later historical periods, through popular literature including the Epic of Gilgameš and the Enuma Eliš. The author's research shows that from the earliest times Near Eastern kings and their scribes adapted these metaphors to promote royal legitimacy in accordance with legendary exempla that highlighted the role of the king as the establisher of order and civilization. As another Gilgameš and, later, as a pious servant of Marduk, the king renewed divine favour for his subjects, enabling them to share the 'Garden of the Gods'. Seleucus and Antiochus found these cultural ideas, as they had evolved in the first millennium BCE, extremely useful in their efforts to establish their dynasty at Babylon. Far from playing down cultural differences, the book considers the ideological agendas of ancient Near Eastern empires as having been shaped mainly by class—rather than race-minded elites.

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Models of kingship from the  
Sumerians to the Seleucids

**Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides**

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First published 2017  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa  
business*

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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Anagnostou-Laoutides, Evangelia.

Title: In the Garden of the Gods : models of kingship from the Sumerians  
to the Seleucids / by Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides.

Description: Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate,  
2016. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2015046639 (print) | LCCN 2016010497  
(ebook) | ISBN 9781472428684 (hardcover : alkaline paper) |  
ISBN 9781472428691 (ebook) | ISBN 9781472428707 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Middle East—Kings and rulers—History. | Middle  
East—Kings and rulers—Religious aspects—History. | Scribes—Middle  
East—History—To 1500. | Elite (Social sciences)—Middle East—  
History—To 1500. | Power (Social sciences)—Middle East—History—  
To 1500. | Mythology—Political aspects—Middle East—History—To  
1500. | Metaphor—Political aspects—Middle East—History—To 1500. |  
Imperialism—Social aspects—Middle East—History—To 1500. | Middle  
East—Politics and government. | Middle East—History—To 622.

Classification: LCC DS62.2 .A625 2016 (print) | LCC DS62.2 (ebook) |  
DDC 321.609394—dc23

LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2015046639>

ISBN: 978-1-4724-2868-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-58819-3 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman  
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

History as celebrated by Mnemosoune is a deciphering of the invisible, a geography of the supernatural . . . It throws a bridge between the world of the living and that beyond to which everything that leaves the light of day must return. It brings about an “evocation” of the past . . . Memory appears as a source of immortality.

Jean-Pierre Vernant

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Finally, citations and translations of *GE* lines from A. R. George (2003) *The Babylonian Gilgameš Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press are reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press (also individually acknowledged throughout the book).

# Acknowledgements

This book is the result of sheer stubbornness and a bet against myself on self-improvement: I already regret not having tried skating before the age of thirty. So I figured I should try learning Akkadian before I turn forty. As it happens, the completion of my manuscript found me a few months past this marker. The drive that set me on this venture was my conviction that knowledge of the Ancient Near Eastern languages is essential for anyone wishing to examine the cultural agendas of the eastern Mediterranean, especially at the time that Alexander and the Greeks were engineering a new dominant culture. The process of grappling with the grammar of Akkadian and its variants while also becoming familiar with important publications in the various sub-disciplines dedicated to the study of the ANE has enriched my understanding not only of ancient cultural workings but also of the history of the relevant disciplines. In the end, much like Gilgameš, I gained knowledge, or perhaps more accurately, I came to know the limits of my knowledge. All in all, a very humbling and cathartic, at the same time, experience which I highly recommend to anyone turning forty!

This dare-to-do-what-you-preach scenario found numerous supporters including Prof Graham Zanker, Prof David Konstan and Dr David Pritchard. Their encouragement has been phenomenal and a great incentive to keep typing to the end of the bibliography. I would also like to thank Prof David Runia, in whose hands I discovered one Tuesday afternoon, only weeks before finalizing my manuscript, Stephanie Dalley's latest article on "Sacred Groves and the Date Palm Motif," which he kindly let me photocopy there and then. Arthur Houghton was most kind to me, granting me permission to reproduce his photos of Seleucid coins, despite being bombarded with panicky emails. I am extremely thankful for his patience.

I am also grateful to Dr Takayoshi Oshima for his generous advice on my use of his translations and to Prof Bert van der Spek for his prompt and encouraging response to my enquiring about his online prepublication of the *Babylonian Chronicles of the Hellenistic Period*. Furthermore, I would like to extend my thanks to Prof Jerry Cooper, who kindly shared his thoughts with me on the so-called ritual of sacred marriage (as well as a copy of his then unpublished article "Sex and the Temple") and to Alice Donohue, who first made me think seriously about taking up the study of Akkadian when we met in the APA convention in

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2008. I also wish to thank my students, who on numerous occasions allowed me to try my ideas on them (and they have been a demanding audience) and especially Katherine McLardy.

In the end, this work is, as ever, for Costas and our children, Regas and Ralloú, who keep us true to ourselves.

Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides  
Melbourne, October 2015

While revising the manuscript news of Leonard Nimoy's death flooded the media. I just could not resist citing his last comment on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/therealnimoy/status/569762773204217857>), which in many ways summarizes effortlessly the main argument of this book: 'A life is like a garden. Perfect moments can be had, but not preserved, except in memory'.

# Abbreviations

- ABC A. K. Grayson (ed.), *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1975 (also cited in the Bibliography).
- ABD D. N. Freedman (ed.), *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols.), New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- ABRT J. A. Craig, *Assyrian and Babylonian Religious Texts: Being Prayers, Oracles, Hymns [etc.]. Copied from the Original Tablets preserved in the British Museum*, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1895–7.
- AD A. J. Sachs, H. Hunger, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia*, Vienna: Osterreichische Akademie Der Wissenschaften, 1988–2006.
- (A)NE (Ancient) Near East
- ANET J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969 (3rd edition).
- AHw W. von Soden and B. Meissner, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch, 2 M-S*, Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1966–1972.
- AfO* Archiv für Orientforschung
- AOAT Alter Orient und Altes Testament  
-AOAT 34 O. Loretz, W. R. Mayer, and L. W. King, *Šu-ila-Gebete: Suppl. zu L. W. King, Babylonian Magic and Sorcery*, Kevelaer: Butzon und Bercker, 1978.
- ARM *Archives royales de Mari*  
-ARM 1 G. Dossin, *Correspondance de Šamši-Addu et de ses fils*, Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1950.
- BA Beiträge zur Assyriologie
- BBSt Babylonian Boundary Stones
- BCHP Babylonian Chronicles of the Hellenistic Period, I. Finkel and B. van der Spek (eds.), online prepublication (also see bibliography).
- BHLT *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, A. K. Grayson (ed. and trans.), Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975.
- BM Tablets in the British Museum, London
- BMS *Babylonian Magic and Sorcery*, L. W. King, London: Luzac and Co., 1896.
- BNJ Brill's New Jacoby Online
- CAD *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (CAD), Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1956–2010.

- CBS Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. *Catalogue of the Babylonian section*.
- CIG *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, A. Böckh (ed.), Berlin: Berlin Academy of Sciences, 1828–1877.
- CM J.-J. Glassner, *Chroniques Mésopotamiennes*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1993 (translated as *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 2004).
- CT Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum, London, 1896–
- COS *The Context of Scripture*, W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger (eds.), 3 vols., Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002.
- R. H. Beal, “The Ten Year Annals of Great King Muršili II of Hatti,” in W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger (eds.), *The Context of Scripture II: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, 82–90.
- A. P. Beaulieu, “Nabopolassar’s Restoration of Imgur-Enlil, the Inner Defensive Wall of Babylon,” in W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger (eds.), *The Context of Scripture II: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, 307–8.
- G. Beckman, “Plague Prayers of Mursili II,” in W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger (eds.), *The Context of Scripture Volume I: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 1997, 156–60.
- S. Dalley, “Erra and Ishum (1.113),” in W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger (eds.), *The Context of Scripture I: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 404–16.
- W. W. Hallo, “A Neo-Babylonian Lament for Tammuz,” in W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger (eds.), *The Context of Scripture I. Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 419–20.
- A. Livingstone, “An Assurbanipal Hymn for Shamash,” in W. W. Hallo and K. L. Lawson Younger (eds.), *The Context of Scripture I: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 474.
- DD Dumuzi’s Dream
- DDD *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, P. W. van der Horst (eds.), Leiden: Brill, 1999 (2nd edition).
- DI Dumuzi-Inanna
- DPS Diagnostic and Prognostic Series of Tablets [in J. Scurlock and B. Andersen, *Diagnoses in Assyrian and Babylonian Medicine: Ancient Sources, Translations, and Modern Medical Analyses*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005].
- DT Tablets in the *Daily Telegraph* Collection of the British Museum.
- eBHS H. Van Dyke Parunak, R. Whitaker, E. Tov, A. Groves, et al. (eds.), *The Michigan-Claremont-Westminster Hebrew Bible*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft and Westminster Theological Seminary, 1990.
- ED Early Dynastic
- ETCSL J. A. Black, G. Cunningham, J. Ebeling, E. Flückiger-Hawker, E. Robson, J. Taylor and G. Zólyomi, *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian*

- Literature*. Available online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/Oxford>, 1998–2006.
- FGrH F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*, Berlin: Weidmann, 1923–
- GA Greek Anthology  
- W.R. Paton (trans.), *The Greek Anthology*, With an English Translation, vols. I–V, London: W. Heinemann; New York, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1916–1918.
- GAB *Götteradressbuch* of Aššur [in B. Menzel, *Assyrische Tempel*. 2 vols. Studia Pohl: Series Maior 10/I–II. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981].
- GBH *Gilgameš and the Bull of Heaven* (out-of-date edition of Witzel, An. Or.6:45–68; also used in A. George 2003 and 2010 to refer to the Sumerian episodes about Gilgameš).
- GE Gilgameš Epic Standard Version (to be found after the Introduction).
- IGLS Les inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie  
- J.-P. Rey-Coquais, IGLS VI, *Baalbek et Beqa’*, Paris (BAH 78), 1967.
- IGr Inscriptiones Graecae  
- IGr 4 *Inscriptiones graecae ad res romanas pertinentes*, R. Cagnat et al. (ed.), Paris: Leroux, 1906–1927 (reprinted Chicago: Aris, 1975).
- KAR E. Ebeling, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915–23.
- KAT<sup>3</sup> E. Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, edited by H. Zimmern and H. Winckler, Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1903 (3rd edition).
- KTU M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín. *Die Keilalphabetischen Text aus Ugarit einschliesslich der keilalphabetischen Text ausserhalb Ugarits I: Transkription*. AOAT 24. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976.
- KUB Keilschrifturkunden aus Boğasköy, I–LX, Berlin, 1921–.  
-H. Klengel, *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boğasköy*, Heft XL. Hethitische Texte verschiedenen Inhalts. Berlin: Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin; Institut für Orientforschung Akademie Verlag, 1968.
- LB Late Babylonian
- LIMC Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae  
-vol. IV: Eros–Herakles  
-vol. V: Herakles–Kenchrias
- ll. lines (l. line)
- OB Old Babylonian
- OGIS W. Dittenberger, *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*, Leipzig, 1903–5.
- OT Old Testament
- PG J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca et cetera graeca scripta*, Paris, 1857–1866.
- PMG *Poetae Melici Graeci*, D. L. Page (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.
- RAcc F. Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels accadiens*, Paris: Leroux, 1921.
- RC C. B. Welles Royal Correspondence of the Hellenistic Period London 1934.



- RIMA *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods*, Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1987-  
 1: A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC*, 1987  
 2: A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC 1* (1114–859 BC), 1991  
 3: A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC 2* (858–745 BC), 1996
- RIME *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods*  
 -D. O. Edzard, *Gudea and His Dynasty*, RIME 3/1, Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1997.  
 -D. Frayne, *Sargonid and Gutian Periods (2334–2113 BC)* (RIME 2), Toronto, Buffalo, and New York: University of Toronto Press, 1993.  
 -D. Frayne, *Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC)*, *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods*, 4, Toronto, Buffalo, and New York: Toronto University Press, 1990.
- RIA *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie*.  
 -E. Ebeling et al., *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1928- (individual entries also appear in the Bibliography).
- SAA *State Archives of Assyria, Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project*, Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.  
 -A. Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* (SAA 3), 1989.  
 -H. Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings* (SAA 8), 1992.  
 -S. Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies* (SAA 9), 1997.  
 -S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (SAA 10), 1993.  
 -S. W. Cole and P. Machinist, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Priests to Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal* (SAA 13), 1998.
- SAACT *State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts*  
 -S. Parpola (with the assistance of M. Luukko and K. Fabritius), *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgameš* (SAACT 1), 1997.  
 -A. Annus, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzu* (SAACT 3), 2001.
- SAKI F. Thureau-Dangin, *Die sumerischen und akkadischen Königsinschriften*, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1907.
- SB *Standard Babylonian*
- SBH G. A. Reisner, *Sumerisch-babylonische Hymnen nach Thontafeln griechischer Zeit*, Berlin, 1896.
- SC A. Houghton and C. Lorber, *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue: Part I: Seleucus I through Antiochus III. 1 and 2*, New York: American Numismatic Society, 2002.
- SNGFr *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum: Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris, France.

- SNGLevante 1986 E. Levante (ed.), SNG Switzerland I. Levante-Cilicia.  
 SNGLevante 1993 E. Levante (ed.), SNG Switzerland I. Levante-Cilicia Supplement 1.
- STC L. W. King, *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, London: Luzac and Co., 1902 (2 vols.).
- STT *The Sultantepe Tablets*, London/Bradford: Percy Lund, Humphries and Company Ltd.  
 -STT I O. R. Gurney and J. J. Finkelstein, *The Sultantepe Tablets I*, 1957.  
 -STT II O. R. Gurney and P. Hulin, *The Sultantepe Tablets II*, 1964.
- s.v. *sub verso/verbo*
- TCL Musée du Louvre, Département des antiquités orientales, Textes cunéiformes  
 -vols. 15–16 H. de Genouillac, *Textes religieux sumériens du Louvre*, Paris: P. Geuthner, 1930.
- TGrF *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta I*, B. Snell (ed.), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht,<sup>2</sup> 1986.
- TIM Texts in the Iraq Museum  
 -vol. IX J. van Dijk, *Cuneiform Texts; Texts of Varying Content*, Leiden: Brill.
- TuL Tod und Leben (see Bibliography under Ebeling)
- UET Ur Excavations, Texts, London: Oxford University Press for the Trustee of the two Museums.  
 -vols. 6/1 and 6/2 S. N. Kramer and C. J. Gadd, *Literary and Religious Texts*, 1963.
- VAS Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler  
 XXIV: van Dijk, *Literarische Texte aus Babylon*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1987
- VAT Tablets in the Vorderasiatische Collection of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin.
- N.B<sub>1</sub> Classical Sources and Classical Studies journal abbreviations are as per OCD<sup>4</sup> [= *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth, and E. Eidinow (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012].
- N.B<sub>2</sub> Ancient Near Eastern journal abbreviations are as per *SBL Handbook of Style: for Ancient Near East, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* available electronically at <http://www.tms.edu/LibraryAbbreviations.aspx>

# Conventions

1. As regards ancient languages used in the text, Greek and Hebrew are reproduced in their own alphabet; Sumerian and Akkadian appear in standard transliterations. I am aware of the differences between the RIM, CDLI and ePSD transliteration traditions (followed by the *ETCSL*, for example). The majority of the transliterations reproduced here largely follow the RIM tradition (hence, ú and ù instead of  $u_2$  and  $u_3$ ) with minor exceptions such as texts cited from George 2010 and Vanstiphout and Cooper 2003.
2. I have chosen to refer to Bilgameš when discussing the Sumerian episodes of his adventures and revert to Gilgameš when discussing the Akkadian versions of his tales for clarity purposes.
3. I have opted for Latinized versions of transliterated Greek names, preferring c instead of k where applicable – hence, Seleucus and not Seleucos or Seleukos. I also chose to write transliterated names of ANE characters with the emphatic š (hence, Ištar instead of Ishtar) and macros where applicable – hence, Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi. The circumflex appears mainly in the name of Nabû.
4. I cite the transcribed version of ANE texts with minor exceptions when normalized words or phrases appear in my main text in the course of an argument.
5. Ancient texts appear in italics when cited as part of my sentences or in footnotes. Otherwise they are cited in Times New Roman as indented passages.

# Introduction

## Laying the groundwork

To write is to enter into the affirmation of the solitude which fascination threatens.  
Blanchot 1982: 33<sup>1</sup>

This book aims to investigate the theological profile of Ancient Near Eastern kings, particularly their role in shaping death ideologies and the memory of their communities from the early Sumerians to the Seleucids who nominated Babylon as the capital of their empire. By studying the evolution of influential metaphors about kingship down to the Hellenistic times I revisit the question of divine kingship in the ANE and its contribution to the Seleucid model of rule. In the ANE continuous and multilayered interaction among the local populations produced from the earliest times a common cultural substratum,<sup>2</sup> frequently attested in ritual, whose conservative nature is often remarked in scholarship.<sup>3</sup> Of course, cultures and times changed significantly from the Sumerian to the Babylonian and Assyrian periods during which new gods came to prominence and infinite variations of cultic detail emerged.<sup>4</sup> In an attempt to organize the developments in the ANE intelligibly, Jacobsen argued<sup>5</sup> that religion in the fourth millennium BCE was reconstructed around aspects of fertility, in the third around the metaphors of gods as rulers and in the second around the more personal concept of the gods as parents. Such classifications, although useful in highlighting prevalent cultural metaphors, do not offer sufficient insight into the applications of cultural ideas that are rarely as clear-cut and homogenous. Hence, numerous ANE rulers already in the second millennium BCE were depicted in literature and cult as protégés (sons or lovers) of the fertility goddess ostensibly blurring the distinct phases of Jacobsen's scheme.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, in the first millennium BCE the kings invested their profiles with diverse metaphors that reflected their temperament as much as the traditions which influenced them.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, ANE cultures had a formative effect on a number of early Greek mythic narratives and rituals arguably since the Bronze Age.<sup>8</sup> Despite the difficulties in tracing the transmission paths of such widely disseminated traditions<sup>9</sup> and notwithstanding the enduring resistance of classicists to acknowledging a two-way cultural agitation between the Greeks and their eastern neighbours before the Hellenistic era,<sup>10</sup> the zeal with which the Greeks were adapting eastern cults

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and literary traditions already since the Homeric period is increasingly accepted.<sup>11</sup> During the Hellenistic period the practice of *interpretatio*<sup>12</sup> offers scholars definite evidence for the intensive cultural fermentation that took place between the Greco-Macedonian newcomers and Alexander's eastern subjects. Still, the sources are often analysed in current scholarship as evidence for the antagonistic relationship of the Greeks who aspired to the "Hellenization" of the east against local populations who kept resisting the cultural onslaught of their foreign rulers.<sup>13</sup>

The narrow focus of the approaches through which the interface of ancient Greece with its eastern neighbours is typically analysed also reflects the history of the relevant disciplines both of which were thoroughly employed in the colonial debates of the nineteenth century. In the framework of those debates the Greeks posed as the archetypal colonizers on a mission to "civilize" the backward areas they came to rule. The Greeks were promoted as the founders of western civilization, the first advocates of the victory of reason over myth on the antipode of the "Orientals," who were typically portrayed as overwhelmed by their predilection for luxury and superstition.<sup>14</sup> Tellingly, the celebration of Athenian democracy in ancient texts was filtered through Aristotle's view of the "Orientals" as lacking free will.<sup>15</sup> To avoid replicating the errors of modern as well as ancient colonialisms, I shall examine afresh death ideologies in the ANE and their associations to kingship as intercultural phenomena<sup>16</sup> that can be glimpsed synchronically as well as diachronically. It follows, then, that the religious syncretism of the Hellenistic period should be understood as an intense instance of long-standing interaction, especially since the Greeks of Asia Minor had lived under Lydian and Persian rule in relative harmony for a considerable period of time before being "liberated" by Alexander.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, Strabo informs us that already in 331 BCE the Greeks of Didyma and Erythrai were prepared to recognize Alexander's divine parentage (before they were informed of the Siwa episode), which implies that such models of rule were familiar and acceptable to them rather than the imposition of an eastern-type absolute monarchy masterminded by Alexander.<sup>18</sup>

To reach a clearer understanding of Hellenistic models of kingship vis-à-vis their Near Eastern counterparts, I shall combine historical and archaeological evidence with influential literary traditions that debate kingship starting with the narratives relating the adventures of Gilgameš. Gilgameš, whose reign is dated in the First Dynasty of Uruk,<sup>19</sup> had captured the imagination of ANE audiences from early on and, as a result, following the collapse of the Ur Empire at the beginning of the second millennium BCE, a number of his legendary exploits entered the Akkadian literary tradition.<sup>20</sup> Copies of the new literature composed in Akkadian during the OB period were found as far afield as Anatolia and Palestine; the last manuscript of the *GE* discovered so far was written around 130 BCE in Seleucid Babylon,<sup>21</sup> while the *Sumerian King List* was translated in Greek by Berossus under Antiochus I Soter,<sup>22</sup> to whom the Babylonian priest dedicated his work (ca. 281 BCE). In addition, Gilgameš had provided a definitive model for the Greek Heracles,<sup>23</sup> whose political aspects rose anew to prominence in the royal propaganda of Alexander<sup>24</sup> and the successors.<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, both heroes offer crucial insights to the much-debated issue of divine kingship and the teleological

knowledge of kings, that is, their supreme understanding of death ideologies through which they had the unique opportunity to shape the cultural memory of their peoples.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the ethos of leadership which Heracles and his NE counterparts epitomize provided the Seleucids with a universal model of kingship that could appeal to both their Greek and non-Greek subjects. In this context, Seleucid royal ideology appears to have been defined in geographically malleable yet certain terms which give prominence to two kingly attributes valued by their ANE predecessors: first, that kings enjoy divine favour and second, that they are responsible for their subjects' welfare. Regardless of the particular cultural symbols that the Seleucids employed to address their subjects in the various regions of their empire, their ideological platform was underpinned by notions advocated by ANE courts for centuries.

Gilgameš was variously related to the deities involved in New Year festivals and the so-called sacred-marriage ceremonies through which the kings sought to establish their rule by re-affirming divine patronage.<sup>27</sup> In discussing the transmutation of folklore beliefs into historical reality, I stress the socio-performative aspects of the festivals and the metaphorical value of the rulers' claims to divinity,<sup>28</sup> in opposition to the Fraserian model, which interpreted such rituals as magically enhancing fertility<sup>29</sup> and against Hooke's assumption that ANE kingship was conceived systematically around a "cult pattern" encapsulated in the New Year Festival.<sup>30</sup> And although Versnel criticises the "desperate defenders" of Hooke's pattern for being unable to substantiate it across the cultures of the ANE, evoking thus the "disintegration of the pattern due to migration, retouching or theological intervention,"<sup>31</sup> it is precisely this variation that calls for further scholarly attention. To overcome such methodological difficulties, I retrace the *projected* theological profile of the kings, especially their teleological knowledge, and its employment in shaping the consciousness of their subjects along political (rather than racial/ethnic) lines, regardless of whether the king was understood to be the actual incarnation or simply a prominent servant of god.<sup>32</sup> For example, it is accepted that the representation of kings with the *dingir*-sign beside their names is a clear indication of their divinity,<sup>33</sup> as understood by Naram-Sin of Agade (2254–2218 BCE) and Šulgi in the Ur III period (2094–2047 BCE), both of whom arguably tried to reinforce early Sumerian ideas about divine kingship.<sup>34</sup> However, based on the fact that later Babylonian rulers did not establish official cults for themselves in the manner of Naram-Sin or Šulgi, it has been argued that the *dingir* before the kings' names was retained as a traditional, titular representation that did not denote the heavenly status claimed by their Ur III predecessors. In addition, in terms of the scribal traditions that produced the inscriptions and literary accounts exalting the divine status of kings, it is likely that the Ur III language had retained Sumerian literary aesthetics which were gradually modified, subject to historical needs and the kings' personalities. Given that metaphor is a lexicalized way of expression in Sumerian and Akkadian literatures,<sup>35</sup> it could be argued that in the post-Ur III period perceptions of kings as godlike are reduced to literary tools serving the aesthetic sensibilities of royal scribes. However, if divine kingship is a matter of literary aesthetics in later periods, most probably it was never anything

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else even in Sumerian times; after all, as Michalowski argued (see n.34), the cultic dimensions of the phenomenon under Šulgi refer more to the extravagant efforts he had to make to overcome the political adversity he faced after the inglorious death of his father in battle rather than any “real” belief in his divinity.

Furthermore, the sacred nature of Sumerian kingship is allegedly exemplified by the king’s sexual affair (the so-called sacred marriage) with the goddess Inanna; however, the metaphorical value of the king’s affinity with the goddess (alluding to his elevated status) from the earliest times is strikingly advocated by a Sumerian text from *Lugalbanda* II, lines 350–4, where Inanna is represented as addressing the king in the following manner:<sup>36</sup>

su<sub>8</sub>-ba <sup>d</sup>ama-ušumgal-an-na mu-na-ši-bar-<ra->gim  
kù-lugal-bàn-da igi mu-na-ši-bar-re  
dumu-na en-<sup>d</sup>šará mu-na-dé-a-gim  
kù-lugal-bàn-da gù mu-un-na-dé-e.

As she looks at the shepherd Ama-ušumgal-ana,  
she looked at holy Lugalbanda.  
As she speaks to her son, to lord Šara,  
she spoke to holy Lugalbanda.

As the passage indicates, the passionate and sexually explicit affair of the king with the goddess, often pronounced in royal Sumerian poetry<sup>37</sup> and emulated in the royal hymns of Šulgi,<sup>38</sup> could be readily transformed into a maternal one. It seems then that the relationship between the king and the goddess could be expressed in a variety of motifs with amorous ardour representing only one possible alternative; hence, it was probably no more than a stately metaphor about the divine favour and protection with which kingship was invested already in the ED period (2900–2334 BCE).<sup>39</sup> At any rate, the exceptional access of ANE kings to the divine, irrespective of the exact expressions it adopted over the centuries, was a major part of royal rhetoric, and its value seems to lie in its systematic employment by successive generations of kings who appreciated it as a powerful tool for legitimizing their power.<sup>40</sup> As Winter observed,<sup>41</sup> regardless of whether kings were seen as gods manifest on earth or great men who came to enjoy divine favour and regardless of whether the divine determinative (the *dingir*) was written before their names, they

could still be represented verbally and visually as if they occupied a place in society that merited divine attributes, qualities, and status; and furthermore, that the ascription of divine power within the religious system was a necessary component of the exercise of rule, whether or not the ruler was himself considered divine.

Furthermore, the elevated status of ANE kings and their exclusive communion with the divine (regardless of its particular expression) was employed by

subsequent elites in order to create a pseudo-impression of cultural continuity, a trend which clearly should not deceive the historians yet is mostly exciting for scholars of ancient literature and religion. Ritual and religious beliefs re-enacted or reflected in mythic narratives aim to create a reality, to forge a communal identity irrespective of what is often categorized as real in (modern historical) terms. Thus, in discussing the later adaptations of Sumerian poems, including the adventures of Gilgameš, Michalowski reminds us:<sup>42</sup>

Originally conceived as mythological sanction of the present, projected geographically and temporally to a liminal area and an invented remote heroic past, they were successively remodeled, until they were stripped of most of the trappings of historical reference.

Accordingly, instead of focusing our analysis of ancient kingship strictly on the historical evidence, I suggest that we should turn to the history of prevalent cultural metaphors; these metaphors become in the hands of the ruling classes – including the Macedonian/Greek kings of the Hellenistic period – major patterns of hegemony that need to be constantly renegotiated and re-affirmed. The book examines the close relationship of kings with the Sun-god and the fertility goddess as two prevalent metaphors, already at work in the *Epic of Gilgameš*, which continue to advocate the divine patronage of kings in the Seleucid era. I argue that both metaphors, aspects of which survive in the later *Enuma Eliš*, contribute to the latent metaphor of “sharing the garden of the gods.” By being able to traverse the boundaries of the physical *cosmos* and experience the “garden,” ANE kings acquire extrasensory knowledge and can guide securely their subjects toward achieving wellbeing – now and in the afterlife. As I explain in the following section, my perspective is largely post-structural while also employing phenomenological premises. My choice relies on the ability of these approaches to enable meaningful cross-cultural research across a number of historical periods while, also, taking into account the history of the disciplines involved.

### **Theoretical framework**

To begin with, there is no comparative study of ancient teleological beliefs in relation to political power and soteriology before the advent of Christianity.<sup>43</sup> The religious programs of prominent ANE rulers such as that of neo-Assyrian and of various Hellenistic kings have been largely studied independently with references to adaptations of local cults which typically promoted the soteriological aspects of the ruler and the prosperity of his subjects.<sup>44</sup> However, by looking at fragments of the whole picture, we accordingly appreciate only fragments of the ancient traditions on kingship. ANE societies were for centuries imbued with the idea that annual re-establishment of the cosmic order through the “sacred marriage” ceremony and the New Year Festival (regardless of whether the *Enuma Eliš* was actually recited; cf. Chapter 3: p. 104) were pivotal as a means of asserting their cultural



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self-projections and renewing community bonds, a process that was inextricably linked with the maintenance of their natural environment and state order.<sup>45</sup> Hence, it is important for scholars to appreciate both the overarching premises of this cultural development as well as its geographical and diachronic manifestations.

There is no doubt that Fraser's emphasis on the magical efficacy of ritual continues to cause significant embarrassment to modern scholars.<sup>46</sup> The applications of his theory both in the Greco-Roman world (Harrison) and the ANE, including ancient Israel (Hooke),<sup>47</sup> have attracted significant criticism.<sup>48</sup> Yet, the discrediting of this approach has not ameliorated either the tendency of classicists to defend the cultural exclusivity of the Greco-Roman world<sup>49</sup> or the notion of primitivism with which we still approach ANE societies, as Kaufman poignantly observed:<sup>50</sup>

Ancient Oriental Studies as a whole suffers from primitivism in many respects, a primitivism that many people try to remedy – or, perhaps better, try to mask – by hyper-specialization and by recourse to fly-by-night academic fashion instead of broad competency.

Hence, it is imperative to review the difficulties of past theoretical approaches before defending an alternative viewpoint that would render this cross-cultural exercise worthwhile.

According to the Cambridge Ritual Theory, the ritualised drama of a “rising and dying god” – often embodied by the king in historical times – was identified at the core of every religion.<sup>51</sup> James Fraser was the first to coin the term “dying and rising gods”; however, his methodology, based on evolutionary anthropology which had become increasingly popular in the post WWI period, and his comparisons between pagan cults celebrating divine resurrection and aspects of the Christian tradition were deemed rather uncritical.<sup>52</sup> He believed that the evolution of human worldviews from magic through religion to science was a universal, inevitable process rooted in human nature and needs.<sup>53</sup> In other words, the magical and mythological thought of different cultures may be expected to develop along parallel structural lines simply because of a universal “similarity in the working of the less developed human mind” worldwide. In Frankfort's words,<sup>54</sup> Fraser applied this similarity “not only to the mythopoeic thought but to its concrete manifestations in beliefs and institutions.” Hence, institutions such as “divine kingship” or the “dying god” could be found in all cultures because they arose from universal mythopoeic processes of the primitive mind.<sup>55</sup> Unfortunately, one may argue that the criticism levelled at Fraser was as indiscriminate as his very methodology: as a result, the validity of the “comparative approach” in examining ancient civilizations was called into question and, as discussed, the doubt lingers on to this day. This intense interest in methodology during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries gradually gave way to a vague discredit of structuralism altogether whose application – extending from the classical civilizations to the African cultures and those of the Americas<sup>56</sup> – undermined the purpose of cross-cultural research. Consequently, the relation of myth and cult has remained undecided.<sup>57</sup> However, whatever the hierarchy between myth and ritual – if there is one to be discovered<sup>58</sup> – scholars agree that they were often linked in antiquity. Of course, change over

time and across different societies is undeniable, yet the processes of change involve the past in numerous mutations which beg our attention and allow for a more cosmopolitan appreciation of ancient cultures.

Following from Fraser's argument<sup>59</sup> regarding the fluidity of mythic narratives that seek to "reconcile old custom with new reason," Burkert identified the "socializing function" of myth and ritual, raising interest in initiation rites but, also, in ritual and mythic patterns which had travelled to Greece from the ANE.<sup>60</sup> Overall, post-structuralism with its emphasis on the cultural and temporal framework of accepted comparisons has attempted to restore methodology in Classics with noted success. Bremmer<sup>61</sup> specifically examined death ideologies and the theme of resurrection in antiquity in this light. However, although he focused on Orphic and Pythagorean traditions and generally raised awareness of the influences Near Eastern eschatology exercised on Greek afterlife, the role of kings as possessors of eschatological wisdom was not considered,<sup>62</sup> while the association of apocalyptic knowledge with politics was not fully explored despite fleeting references to the role of religion in Near Eastern imperial agendas.<sup>63</sup> Post-structuralism allows for synchronic evolution but still has difficulties with the diachronic transcendence of cultural ideas.

For example, following post-structuralist premises, Mettinger<sup>64</sup> compared, largely from the Biblical scholar point of view,<sup>65</sup> a number of "dying and rising" deities (though rejecting this Fraserian term as inappropriate) whom the kings occasionally embodied. Although Mettinger admitted the existence of such deities whose death was often related to the seasonal cycle and was commemorated in cult (restoring thus some credit to Fraser), he argued that they nevertheless operated in their own cultural spaces; their local traits were far too divergent to encourage a meaningful comparison between them. It could be argued that Mettinger over-applied the post-structuralist perspective and basically superimposed on ancient narratives modern categorizations to allow him to differentiate between dying gods to the point of rendering the classification invalid. In rushing to avoid the Fraserian deductions and the problems arising from them, of which he was undoubtedly too aware, Mettinger offers a rather partial revision of Fraserian methodologies: hence, although he applies great flexibility to his understanding of resurrection, he seems rather restrictive in his perception of divinity. Yet, if resurrection can be conveyed allegorically rather than by strict bodily revival, through a vision, for example, as in the case of El who dreams of Baal's resurrection,<sup>66</sup> then clearly the metaphorical use of "rising and dying gods" and its social repercussions could prove insightful. After all, what counts as divine is culturally debated, and, therefore, we often refer to the "blurring" of boundaries between mortals and gods in the Hellenistic period when gods tend to become cultural heroes and heroic figures acquire divine status, with the kings being the most obvious example.<sup>67</sup> In addition, although Mettinger was careful to distinguish between myths and rituals which may or may not be connected directly,<sup>68</sup> he was more interested in discussing the differences between the various cases he examined rather than the circumstances which allowed certain narratives and rituals to be linked. Crucially, the role of tradition(s) in associating teleology and political power – a connection reflected in myth as well as royal inscriptions, as we shall see in Chapter 1 – was again not investigated.<sup>69</sup>

In the same year as Mettinger published his study of “dying and rising gods,” Assmann published his ground-breaking work on death as a major cultural force. His book focused on ancient Egypt, and although he insisted refreshingly that “mortuary religion . . . was the centre of cultural consciousness,”<sup>70</sup> Assmann did not make the connection between the teleological knowledge of kings and their distinctive afterlife fate. He did, however, draw attention to an important concept which I shall also employ in my work: apart from noting the special relationship of the king with the gods (clearly manifested in the king’s ascent to heaven),<sup>71</sup> he observed that afterlife beliefs are closely linked to the notion of knowledge. Mortals tend to possess too little or too much knowledge, and that is why they either try to compensate for their deficiency by producing culture<sup>72</sup> or they attract divine punishment precisely because they come to possess exceptional knowledge, despite their ephemeral existence.<sup>73</sup> So far, Assmann has only discussed the sadness that the awareness of mortality brought to Gilgamesh, who mourned assiduously the death of his friend Enkidu as well as the prospect of his own death. However, the fact that Gilgamesh was the king of the people who ordained through his exclusive knowledge of afterlife appropriate funerary rites was not considered. Since death produces culture, then the king’s profile as a cultural institutioner focuses on his teleological knowledge. Through this prism, the lamentations for Dumuzi whose sudden and untimely death interrupts his blissful existence in the embrace of the goddess offer an episode in his tradition (not necessarily understood as part of an integrated theology) during which his awareness of his mortal and ephemeral existence is heightened and the temporary nature of political dominion is deliberated, as I shall argue later in the book. Given the impossibility of actual immortality, commemoration becomes crucial.

My work stems from this rigorous research but recognizes the need of myths to evolve in time and in different cultural contexts.<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, I will read myths as narrated metaphors which summarize in illustrative ways important *historical* examples with ethical value in order to serve as blueprints for future political action. In doing so, I draw inspiration from the theory of Assmann, who argues that memory is a social construct ruled by the principles and needs of the communities that shaped it<sup>75</sup> as well as from our appreciation of Greco-Roman historiography as a series of *exempla* which – without focusing necessarily on historical accuracy (that refers to our own sense of objectivity as a fundamental value of historical writing) – reflect the core values of the societies that advocated these models of conduct.<sup>76</sup> Assmann based his mnemohistorical approach on the work of Halbwachs,<sup>77</sup> who first coined the term *collective memory* and who had a deep knowledge of Marxism and its understanding of the collective in socio-economic terms. Marx and his followers relate narratives to the social structures where we acquire our memory.<sup>78</sup> In fact, Marx was struck by the similarities between the model of the social evolutionists such as Fraser and his own account of history.<sup>79</sup> Hence, it could be argued that, just as it happened with social evolutionists, the application of the Marxist approach to history with its focus on identifying basic phases in the evolution of human culture further contributes, from another perspective, to our inherited hesitation towards the results of cross-cultural research.<sup>80</sup>

A case in point is offered by Jameson,<sup>81</sup> who argued that texts are the result of a dialogue between symbolic acts and contemporary social ideologies, and, therefore, they have a substance of their own.<sup>82</sup> Despite its structuralist roots, his model acknowledged the role of historical and social circumstances in shaping cultural output making, therefore, an opening to post-structuralism.<sup>83</sup> Still, in typical Marxist fashion Jameson connected political evolution with economic modes of production and accepted the Marxist notion of modes or “stages” of human society which are identified with certain social ideologies including Oriental Despotism and the oligarchic structure of early Greek city-states. Although Jameson allowed for a dialectic relationship between historical periods, his stratification follows the Hegelian model of cultural advancement in time but, also, from a geographical viewpoint as cultural centres typically shift from the East to the West. Therefore, the notion that during the Hellenistic period (or any period really) the “progressive” Greeks adopted or adapted pre-existing ideologies widely circulated in the East becomes in this context inherently problematic and less convincing.<sup>84</sup>

My study on ancient beliefs about the afterlife as communicated by ritually charged kings challenges this classification based on phenomenological premises. In acknowledging the structures of remembrance and identity formation that ancient rulers negotiated allegedly on behalf of their people,<sup>85</sup> I focus on the capacity of ancient societies to incorporate external elements. Since collective memory is essentially diachronic, then the ways in which past societies dealt with multiculturalism can offer an important example for subsequent generations.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, my methodology needs to be supplemented with a phenomenological perspective according to which symbols function as both expressive *and* referential forms of signification; in other words, symbols, regardless of whether they originate in ritual or are developed in mythic narratives (cf. n.58), can be employed to render new meanings in new circumstances but not necessarily in strict connection with historical reality as we reconstruct it from a scholarly viewpoint (as post-structuralists would argue), since reality is a personal experience.<sup>87</sup> Hence, Ricoeur<sup>88</sup> argues that

[W]hen set in the appropriate literary contexts, symbols pass through a series of “phases”:<sup>89</sup> a first literal phase where we tend to take the characters of the narrative seriously, a second formal phase, where symbols draw from nature an allegorical imagery that renders them “not only pleasing but instructive,”

and a third phase, that of the “symbol as archetype” or else described as intertextuality, where the recurrence of the same verbal motifs “contributes to the unification and integration of our literary experience.” Interestingly, despite being vaguely familiar with his work, Ricoeur agrees on many points with Gramsci, who developed the theory of cultural hegemony beyond the economic determinism of classical Marxism. As Bynum<sup>90</sup> explained, for Ricoeur “meaning is not so much imparted as appropriated in a dialectic process” between the symbol and the user, and so individual users may appropriate the symbol in widely different ways. Meaning is, therefore, always an interpretive rather than normative function. Yet, meaning can be influenced by the elites, who always seek ways of re-affirming

their dominance and eliciting anew the consent of the masses to their political programs. Metaphors inform powerfully the public space or, in Gramscian terms, they create “patterns of hegemony.”<sup>91</sup> By pointing beyond ordinary experience, symbols can transmute as well as reflect social “reality,” or what ancient societies chose to put forward as their reality. Myths may work to reinforce, invert or subvert social practices and ideologies, especially in the hands of influential rulers and their elites, who tend to have produced the majority of our sources about the past. In this framework, art and narratives – being the result of artistic engagement – can be seen as attempts to render death and the fear of death irrelevant by attaching ourselves to eternity.<sup>92</sup> Hence, art can be seen as a response to the fear of death or a manifestation of what Heidegger referred to as “the courage of anxiety.”<sup>93</sup> The fear of death is always collective because it does not refer to “you” or “I,” but to the “one” who dies.<sup>94</sup> Interestingly in the *Epic of Gilgameš*, discussed in Chapter 1, the hero’s fear for Enkidu becomes his own fear of death before being translated to commemoration rites for everyone. Therefore, the isolation of death produces a sense of solidarity, a community of people dead or destined to die.<sup>95</sup> Hence, death and our recorded reactions to it are synonymous with civilization and the role of kings in establishing civilization as we come across it in ANE texts and monuments. My main argument is that the metaphor of having shared the garden of the goddess, of having experienced prosperity and divine favour as a community under a powerful king, emerges as a key-concept suggesting that individuals are saved from anonymity (securing thus a sense of immortality) and are assured of their posthumous wellbeing.

In discussing the gender tensions reflected in ancient eschatological thought,<sup>96</sup> I engage with S.A.L. Butler’s approach to dreams in the ANE giving preference, nevertheless, to J. Butler’s post-modern understanding of gender.<sup>97</sup> Following the latter, I intend to move beyond the gender essentialism of feminist theories and employ gender as a negotiable variable which often serves literary aesthetic purposes.<sup>98</sup> This interpretation affords ancient societies more freedom to define their perceptions of gender and to celebrate deviations, at least in ritual ceremonies and mythic narratives. Expanding on these premises, I argue that cultural symbols survive even through their exclusion;<sup>99</sup> hence, ancient death traditions seen as political property can be equally foreign and own.

When discussing the transmission of traditions in the ANE, one cannot ignore the similarities between Near Eastern texts and the Old Testament, which will also inform some of the discussions in my book.<sup>100</sup> Two major parts of Genesis, the Creation account of Genesis 1:1–2:4a and the Flood account of Genesis 6:1–9:17, have parallel Babylonian poetical narratives: the *Enuma Eliš* for the Creation and the *Gilgameš Epic* for the Flood. For a long time, the debate in this field focused on whether the Babylonian accounts depended on the Hebrew or vice versa or perhaps whether both the Babylonian and the Hebrew traditions derived from a common source. I am aware of the influential work of Gunkel and that of his follower Delitzsch, although the latter’s prejudiced preference of the Babylonian archetype which is “distorted” in the hands of the Jews utterly discredits the approach.<sup>101</sup> Here, the Old Testament is understood as a literary account which occasionally glosses over historical events; therefore, the hierarchical relationships between

texts are discussed when relevant. Furthermore, the role of ancient Jewish communities in the transmission of ANE ideas to the Greeks is examined closely in Chapter 3.

As I was finishing this manuscript I had the chance to read a very interesting volume on Hellenistic culture which utilized the theory of social imaginaries as a more appropriate methodological approach to the cultural agitations of that period.<sup>102</sup> I found the argument very appealing, but its application on ancient cultures flawed on two accounts: to start with, I agree that social imaginaries, the set of ideas promoted in a society about their self-identity and their stance vis-à-vis other cultures, are produced by certain social elites before they become proliferated and established widely among all social strata. However, in explaining the intercultural relations of Hellenistic communities the theory employs contentious criteria for defining their imaginaries such as ethnicity and its role in determining one's cultural identity. The definition of ethnicity in antiquity is very debatable not only because of our own experiences, largely shaped in the wake of nineteenth-century nation-states,<sup>103</sup> but, crucially, because it is the same/similar elite circles that produced both the ancient "ethnic" narratives but also a number of supra-ethnic ideas which facilitated the ruling classes in defending the legitimacy of ancient multi-ethnic empires.<sup>104</sup> The idea that kings enjoyed divine support, manifested in a number of ways in ancient narratives, is one of the imaginaries fostered by ancient ruling elites, and it clearly belongs to a supra-ethnic line of rhetoric. Secondly, even if, taking into account the voices that criticised the Marxist conception of the social imaginaries as deterministic,<sup>105</sup> we agree on referring to a number of elites – not necessarily homogenous in determining and pursuing their priorities – we must still address the prominent role of religion in shaping ancient fantasy identities.<sup>106</sup> The key point here is that polytheistic religious identities are *not* exclusionary on the basis of religion – in fact, ancient rituals despite their strict character are open to *all* members of the community as designated by the gods; hence, although certain cults are open only to men or women, one's racial or religious background does not influence one's ability to participate. Furthermore, as I discuss repeatedly in the book, cultic observances associated particularly with ANE religion such as the "sacred marriage" (which is often fused with the alleged custom of sacred prostitution) are probably subject to a long-standing tradition of misreading Greek texts which begins under the Roman Empire and continues to this day.<sup>107</sup> These considerations underpin my main arguments as sketched out in the Chapters Outline.

## Chapters outline

### ***Chapter 1: Dying kings in the ANE: Gilgameš and his travels in the garden of power***

Chapter 1 examines the mythic traditions of kingship in the ANE investigating some of the early metaphors that associate political power with knowledge of the metaphysical realms. I argue that the king acts as mediator between his subjects and the gods, both heavenly and infernal. Hence, through his association

with the Sun god the king receives divine approval for a just and legitimate rule, while through his affair with the fertility goddess – typically expressed in erotic terms – he negotiates the afterlife of the community by ordaining appropriate funerary rites. Although the love of the goddess for the king can be also expressed in maternal terms, it is the transformative power of sex that affords the king exclusive knowledge of the afterlife. This process follows closely humanity's introduction to civilization and therefore, it also reflects early debates on social hierarchy.

Furthermore, the chapter introduces the notion of the garden where the affair of the king with the goddess is typically consummated as a metaphorical political space that kings employ in order to denote their exclusive communication with the divine. In myth, the king appears as the champion of the divine garden against the threats of death and decay. The adventures of the king in the garden highlight his piety but, also, establish the main path for his acquisition of teleological knowledge; in historical times, kings often built impressive royal gardens which allude to the divine garden. As Xenophon's analysis of the symbolism of Persian paradises indicates, the Greeks were quite aware of the metaphorical value of the king's relationship with the goddess and its role in ancient political propagandas. Xenophon's political thought was extremely influential and offers an important paradigm for the popularity of ANE models of kingship in the Hellenistic period.

### ***Chapter 2: Sacred marriage in the ANE: the collapse of the garden and its aftermath***

This chapter revisits the close relationship of the king with the goddess from the earliest times arguing that the sacred-marriage ceremony, despite its realistic and explicitly erotic references, should be understood as a metaphor. I argue that a number of Sumerian tales including that of Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta as well as the tale of the gardener Šukaletuda (echoed in the Babylonian story of Išullanu) explore precisely the appropriate ways of securing divine approval for a ruler's political program. The idea was also hinted in the writings of the Greek historian Herodotus. As part of the Sumerian New Year Festival, the sacred marriage (which as a distinct rite remains an important way of communicating with the divine) implies not just the renewal of the king's political power but, in essence, a renewal of the cosmos. This renewal became a major preoccupation of kings in the second and first millennia because of widespread political instability. Death, violence and injustice devastated the lives of the people, who regularly appealed to the goddess to forgive their sins and re-admit them to her garden. Despite developing a profile which is distinctly less erotic and more maternal, as evident by the so-called City Laments, the political importance of the goddess is not diminished. On the contrary, the intense religious syncretism that took place in the second millennium between Inanna and other female deities, among which Ištar was the most popular, amplified the pool of metaphors that related the powers of the goddess both at state level and in terms of private religions.

### ***Chapter 3: Renewing the cosmos: garden and goddess in first-millennium ideology***

Here I examine the metaphors employed to promote the close relationship of the king with the gods during the first millennium when notably Marduk rose in prominence and was worshipped as the king of the gods, especially in Babylon. In debating whether a sacred marriage took place during the Babylonian New Year Festival in honour of Marduk, I first discuss the transmission of Sumerian literary lore to later periods. Although a break in scribal tradition is often assumed, evidence from Babylonian scribal schools of the first millennium indicates that a small yet influential number of highly skilled scribes continued to be trained. By reviewing the available evidence from the Babylonian New Year Festival or *akītu* I draw attention to the participation of Zarpanitu, the consort of Marduk, who had been associated with Ištar in the festivities. Although the evidence is far from conclusive regarding the enactment of a sacred marriage in the *akītu*, the role of the goddess is not as liminal as often assumed. In addition, the role of the king in instituting funerary cults, as first exemplified by Gilgameš, remains pronounced in later millennia, a point further stressed by the popularization of the Dumuzi-Inanna hymns outside the framework of formal religion. This movement, which gained pace in the first millennium BCE, facilitated the transmission of the king-and-mistress-passionate-dialogue motif found in the so-called love lyrics and popular Hellenistic cults such as that of Adonis. The latter, addressed in cult as king, was also known for his “gardens,” pots of plants left to wither in the summer heat in reminiscence of his short-lived happiness as lover of the goddess. The cult which was celebrated throughout the Hellenistic east propagated royal ideology inviting all to imagine themselves as kings.

### ***Chapter 4: The Seleucids at Babylon: flexing traditions and reclaiming the garden***

This chapter discusses the appropriation of eastern cults by Seleucus I Nicator and his son Antiochus in their struggle to establish their dynasty. I examine the roles of Zeus and Apollo, the foremost divine protectors of the Seleucids, against Near Eastern royal traditions. I argue that the founding members of the dynasty had an intimate knowledge of Babylonian traditions that celebrated Šamaš, the Sun god, as protector of royal legitimacy and Marduk as warrantor of military supremacy and that they employed these traditions meticulously in order to promote their claim to kingship. By encouraging the identification of Marduk and Nabû with Zeus and Apollo respectively, Seleucus and Antiochus mirrored the father-son relationship of the gods. The Chapter also examines the importance of royal gardens under the Seleucids in connection with “sacred marriage” and *akītu* ceremonies, which the Hellenistic kings evidently embraced enthusiastically. Apart from the Seleucid preoccupation with Apollo, I also revisit the profile of Heracles, another son of Zeus, in Hellenistic propaganda. I argue that the Seleucids employed the myth of the return of the Heraclids to claim that their



dynasty reclaimed and united under their rule the lands promised to the descendants of Heracles. In this context, the Near Eastern associations of Heracles but, also, of Nikephoros (Victorious) Athena, who is now invested with Ištar qualities, promote a concept of cyclical time in which the Seleucid dynasty represents a period of progress and divine support. Heracles's associations with the garden and his surprising relationship with Adonis-like figures in Hellenistic literature is also investigated as a telling example of Hellenistic re-interpretation of ancient myths in light of ANE traditions.

### ***Synthesis: cultivating community memory***

In this section I summarize the poetics of soteriology and kingship in the ANE from Sumerian times to the first millennium. Following my arguments in previous chapters I reiterate the survival of basic metaphors relating the association of kingship with civilization in the ANE down to the Hellenistic period. Despite the variations in the way(s) these metaphors were employed down the centuries, often in relation to cultural tensions, a closer reading of our sources (literary, epigraphic, and historical) indicates that there was never a question about the “readiness” of Alexander and/or his successors to adopt eastern models of kingship. In fact, Hellenistic kings actively engaged in the transmission of eastern lore to the Greeks careful, as they were, to communicate their righteousness to *all* of their subjects.

### **Notes**

- 1 Reproduced with the kind permission of the University of Nebraska Press; see Permissions page for the relevant credit line.
- 2 Smith 1982: 19.
- 3 Bloch 1974: 56, 62–7 and 74–5. Thus, the *akitu* (New Year Festival), celebrated by the Sumerians in the third millennium BCE, was adopted by the Babylonians and the Assyrians and remained important in ANE cult to the end of the first millennium BCE; also Van der Toorn 1990: 10–29; Bidmead 2004: 41–3; cf. Chapter 3: esp. pp. 104–9 and 123–30.
- 4 Noegel 2006: 34.
- 5 Jacobsen 1976: 20–1.
- 6 Iddin-Dagan (ca. 1910–1890 BCE), for example, in a hymn dedicated to Inanna (Reisman 1973: 191, ll.181–92, 197–8), uses the metaphor of having sex with the goddess who bestows favour upon him. Samsu-Iluna (ca. 1749–1712), the son of Ḫammurapi, also addressed a prayer to Inanna; the text (Van Dijk 2000: 119–25) is poorly preserved, yet the overtly erotic description of the goddess and her support for the king are legible enough; cf. Leick 1994: 183. Later, Ḫattušiliš III (ca. 1267–1237 BCE) introduced in his *Apology* the motif of Ištar's guidance (1.5: *SA<sup>a</sup>IŠTAR par-ra-a ḫa-an-da-an-da-tar me-ma-aḫ-ḫi* = I will speak of Ištar's divine guidance; my trans.). Ḫattušiliš stressed his piety by repeatedly referring to the “favour” of Ištar, who “took him by the hand” (1.20; 1.46; 1.55–8; 1.70; 2.45; 2.63 and 2.66; 3.15) and instructed him to take her priestess Puduhepa as his wife (3.1–2). For more examples of ANE kings of all millennia claiming divine parentage, see Patterson 2003: 206–8.
- 7 Hence, Aššurbanipal (685–627 BCE) enjoys the devotion of Ištar in erotic terms; see *SA<sup>A</sup>* 9.9obv.8–15 in George 2003: 503 (cited below, p. 89). Marduk-Apla-Iddina II (722–710 BCE), on the other hand, refers to himself as the son of a number of male

- and female deities; also see Patterson 2003: 207 with Bergman and Ringgren 1975: 147 s.v. “Bēn” discussing the Akkadian words *apil* and *mār* added to royal names to denote divine parentage and protection.
- 8 Noegel (2006: 24) claims that “[I]t is now appropriate to speak of an ‘Asiatic mythological koine’ and its formative impact on the Aegean literatures of the Bronze and Iron Ages”; also see Burkert 1985: 7, 24–8, 182; id. 1992a: 5, 128 and 2004: 291; Graf 2004: 4–11. Piras (2002: 207–8) discussed the continuity of royal ideology in Mesopotamia based on evidence from the Achaemenid period; cf. Rollinger 2001: 252–8, who discusses the presence of Greeks in ANE cuneiform sources of the eighth and seventh centuries BCE.
  - 9 Noegel 2006: 24–5.
  - 10 Graf 2004: 47; Noegel 2006: 21–2 with Lincoln 2004: 658. Generally, scholars tend to agree that full-scale interaction occurred during the Hellenistic period (Kuhrt 1995: 55–7; Linssen 2004: esp.13–4) but remain sceptical about contact during the earlier phases with some classicists maintaining that it was “largely intermittent until the late archaic and classical periods” (see Noegel 2006: 22 with Burkert 1992: 128 and id. 2004: 9–11, arguing that the Greeks for centuries followed the political changes in the ANE as onlookers before entering the scene from the time of the Persian Wars onwards; also Burkert 2005: 292: “[A]mong connections with neighboring cultures already in the Bronze Age, those between Crete and Egypt stand out for intensity and continuity”). ANE scholars (including a few classicists, i.e. Morris 1992: 73–100 and 2001: 425, 428–32; Walcot 1966: esp.81; West 1966: 18–31, 1995: *passim* and 1997: esp.586–630 discussing paths of transmission) argued that the interaction was earlier and more formidable than assumed; see Burstein 1996: 20–1; Dalley and Reyes 1998: *passim*, but esp.97; Naveh 1973: 2–3; Redford 1992: 122, esp.n.128; Talon 2001: esp.268–73.
  - 11 The epics of Homer and Hesiod have been analysed in light of Anatolian, Mesopotamian, and Syro-Canaanite epic traditions; for example, see Burkert 1992: 88–105, 114–19 and 2004: 297–301; Langdon 1990: 416–20; Marinatos 2001: esp.408–11; Noegel 2002: *passim*; Bachvarova 2002: esp.107–20 and 2005: 133–48; cf. n.62 below.
  - 12 See Noegel (2006: 33) on the process of *interpretatio* or translation: “A Hellene could, without any apparent theological dilemma, worship any foreign god that most closely resembled his own native deity. Therefore, Apollo was identified with Baal, Zeus with Amun, Aphrodite with Ištar, Artemis with Anat, Demeter with Isis, and so on.”
  - 13 Oelsner 2002: 189–90; cf. Van der Spek (2009: 112–13), who argues that, although tensions between ethnic groups in Hellenistic Babylon and elsewhere existed, membership to these groups was not based on race. Cf. Antonaccio (2005: 111–12), who adopts the term “hybridity” (rather than Hellenization) to discuss intercultural exchanges in Sicily. Sciortino (2009: 52) discusses the Phoenicians and the scholarly tendency “to separate them from their oriental context and use them as ‘avant-gardes’ of the Western world”; Bernbeck (2012: 88) aptly summarizes the issue in the field of ANE archaeology; cf. Walls (2001: 171) on colonial readings of ANE texts.
  - 14 Dommelen 1997: 306–7; Vesunia 2003: 89–92; Cosden (2004: 8–12) discusses Marx’s view that Europe created the modern world after the downfall of feudalism (cf. Jameson 1981, discussed below); Owen (2005: 6) questions the assumption that ancient colonization has its modern analogues which led to incomplete interpretations of the relations of the Greeks with “others”; Purcell (2005: 120–5) stresses the role of elites in motivating “aggressive opportunisms” in the ancient Mediterranean on occasions that the basically agricultural economies failed.
  - 15 Arist.*Pol.*1285a19–22, 1327b27–29; Bringmann 1993: 8.
  - 16 Pettinato (2002: 197–203) described ideologies as intercultural phenomena that are often revised, glossed over or subverted, to respond to the socio-historical challenges of particular generations and communities; cf. Nissen 2001: 167–79 referring to “spheres of interaction”; Harmanşah 2013: 40–102 and 182–8 and Aubet 2013: 180–1.

16 *Laying the groundwork*

- 17 Villing 2005: 236–38; Ma 2005: 180–81; Potter (2005: 429) refers to the renewed vitality of the discourse.
- 18 Strab.17.1.43 = Callisthenes, *FGrH*124F14a; Parke 1986: 36–7; Hammond 1998: 341. For the role of sacral kingship in the Sassanian period, see Choksky 1988: 35 referring to the notion of the *farr-ī izādī* (glory of God), the necessary prerequisite for the success of any king; cf. Panaino 2000: 44 and 2003: esp.238. As Choksky points out, this concept expanded during the fifth and fourth centuries BCE under the Achaemenid Dynasty with the convergence of the Mesopotamian idea of sacral kingship and Zoroastrian beliefs regarding the divine origins of leadership and social order. Note that Choksky differentiates sacral from divine kingship because a sacred king is only mortal – however, as I argue in Chapter 1, in Mesopotamia the close relationship of the king with the gods should be understood metaphorically. For the association of Persian and Lydian divine kingship, see Munn 2006: 232 as well as his pp. 13–4 on the divine sanction of kingship in Greece.
- 19 *The Sumerian King List* 3.7–17 listed the first five rulers of Uruk as Meskingasher, Enmerkar (who actually built the city), Lugalbanda, Dumuzi(d) and Gilgameš (dated ca. 2750–2660 BCE). Gilgameš poses as divine, the son of a *lillū*-demon; see *The Sumerian King List* 3.17–18; Jacobsen 1939: 90 with n.131. However, in Sumerian literary tradition Gilgameš poses as the son of Lugalbanda (see Kovacs 1989: xviii), an order which agrees with Berossus’s version (*FGrH*680F5a; Eusebius, *Chronicle* 12.17–20 Karst); see Jacobsen 1939: 88 with n.122.
- 20 Leick 1994: 254–5.
- 21 See Rochberg 2004: 228–36; Boiy 2004: 23; however, the most comprehensive edition, found in Aššurbanipal’s library in Nineveh, dates from the seventh century BCE; Tigay 1997: 45–7 (= 1982: 246–8); Leick 1994: 254.
- 22 Berossus, *FGrH*60F3b (Syncellus, *Chronological Excerpts* 30, 40 Mosshammer); according to Tatian (*Oratio ad Graecos* 36 [= Clemens of Alexandria *Strom.* 1.122.1]), Berossus became priest of Belus during the time of Alexander and had an excellent relationship with Antiochus to whom he presented his Babylonian history divided in three books; Tatian adds that the Babylonian priest had also written two books on the history of the Assyrians; cf. Eusebius, *Praep.Evang.* 10.11.8–9. Further on Berossus, see Chapter 3: pp. 121–3.
- 23 Heracles’s similarity with Gilgameš and Ninurta is widely accepted in scholarship; see Frankfort 1934: 2–29; id. 1939: 115–23 and 198 and 1955: 37, 42; Levy 1934: 40–53; Baumgartner 1944: 25; West 1997: 466–8; Annus 2002: 119–21 and 168–71. The richest evidence for an ANE hero resembling Heracles comes from pre-Sargonic cylinder seals (mid-third millennium), although some representations date from the fourth millennium. For an early relief goblet in the British Museum (No: 118465), see Strommenger 1962: pls 24f and 38f. For Heracles and Ninurta, see Brenk 1991: 507–26. West (1997: 461–5) focused on both heroes’ association with lions and their grief-stricken wandering in lion skins, their crossing of the sea in imitation of the Sun/Šamaš and their adventures at a wondrous garden; also see Brundage 1958: 226–8; Burkert 1987: 14–19; Van Dijk 1983: 11, 15, 17–9; cf. Chapter 4: pp. 164–5.
- 24 For Alexander’s emulation of Heracles, see Edmunds 1971: 374–6; cf. Palagia 1986: 137–51. For coins representing Heracles issued by Alexander early in his eastern campaign, see Price 1991: 27–31 and Mørkholm 1991: 42. Cf. Le Rider (1995–6: 831–3, 842–6 and 857–60) arguing that these coins were not issued before 333/2 BCE.
- 25 See Walbank (1984: 85–6) on the Antigonids’s attempt to derive their ancestry from Heracles; for Lysimachus’ association with the hero, see Lund 1992: 159; for Heracles and the Attalids, see Hansen 1971: 157–8, 255, 340–1 and Savalli-Lestradé 2001: 77–91.
- 26 Michalowski 2008: 37: “The unique symbolic status of Gilgameš provided the answer as an ancestor who embodied the central paradox of divine kinship: the inevitable

- death of the king”; for Heracles’s connection with kingship in the Hellenistic times and in earlier Greek tradition which rather focuses on lost kingship, see Menn 1997: 182; cf. Foster (1997: 63–8), who argues that Gilgameš rejects Ištar and immortality in order to embrace the strife for justice and making a name for himself. However, I would subscribe to Michalowski’s view that here the king exemplifies a central part of humanity: sex is knowledge, yet it is not enough to secure immortality; as an imperfect being the king achieves immortality only through remembrance (the *husterophe-mia* of the Greeks). Also see Ackerman (2005: 145–7) discussing the connection of Ištar with Šamhat, the prostitute that introduces Enkidu to civilization.
- 27 Auffarth 1991: 45–55; Maul 1995: 399–401 on kings as lion slayers; cf. Cohen 1993: 420, 426, 431–5 on Ninurta’s role in the *akītu*; Bidmead 2004: 2–4.
- 28 In agreement with Cooper 1993; Sweet 1994; and Steinkeller 1999. Frymer-Kensky (1997: 101–2) discusses *Enuma Eliš* as a royal ritual following the establishment of the imperial states of Assyria and Babylonia. She argues that by the second millennium BCE the kings began to re-enact Marduk in his military and kingly roles as related in the *Enuma Eliš* although the royal sacred marriage did not entirely disappear. The time-honoured cult of Inanna and Dumuzi survived in the first millennium but was no longer state centred, becoming instead a matter for private public worship; cf. Chapter 2: pp. 72–81 and Chapter 3: pp. 123–30.
- 29 Fraser 1890: 1.140; cf. Harrison 1912: 330; also see Segal 1998: 3–4. Note that Cooper 1993: 88–9 undermines the role of fertility in ANE “sacred marriage” ceremonies, perhaps to avoid any association with Fraser’s model.
- 30 Hooke 1958; James 1958; Rogerson 1974; for a criticism of the school, see Auffarth 1991: 38–118 with Versnel 1993: 2.32–3.
- 31 Versnel 1993: 35 esp.n.43.
- 32 Cooper 2008: 261: “kingship in Mesopotamia was always sacred, but only rarely divine,” echoing Winter 2008: 75–6; also see Michalowski (2008: 34–5), who stressed the importance of historical circumstances and political tensions in understanding the urge certain ANE kings felt so to render their divinization more explicit; cf. Bernbeck (2008: 158) arguing that the divinization of the king unites the divine with the mortal world in recreating a golden age. Recently, Charpin (2013: 76) notes, “The question of divine kingship was often stated by scholars using absolute categories . . . However, the vision that the Mesopotamians had of their society, and also of the whole universe was relative.”
- 33 Michalowski (2008: 35n.3) is right in juxtaposing Naram-Sin’s title *DINGIR a-ga-dè<sup>KI</sup>* (= god of Agade, alternating with *LUGAL a-ga-dè<sup>KI</sup>* = king of Agade) with the title *dingir (zi) kalam-ma-na* [= (effective) god of the land] employed by the kings of Ur and Ishbi-Era, the first king of Isin, but as Winter (2008: 76) argues Naram-Sin was also called “*il matim*” (= god of the land); cf. Westenholz 1997: 178 (col.ii, ll.2’–3’). Hence, the use of the *dingir* before the king’s name does not necessarily imply his substance as a “living god” but may well be a(nother) powerful metaphor for royal authority.
- 34 Michalowski (2008: esp.40 with n.16) draws attention to the fact that both Naram-Sin, the fourth ruler of the Dynasty of Agade, and Šulgi of Ur had to painstakingly stage their claims to divinity through which they attempted to respond to the intense political adversity that undermined their throne at the time of their rule; Naram-Sin narrowly escaped a rebellion against his rule, while Šulgi had to overcome the violent death of his father Ur-Namma (ca. 2100 BCE), who left people reeling at the conviction that divine wrath had brought about his demise. Cf. Vacin (2010: 89–109) discussing the deification of Šulgi but also Stol (2000: 85), who raises doubts about the immediate association of divine parentage with divine kingship concluding with Klein’s observation (1981: 31n.44): “The Mesopotamian kings of nearly all periods use similar figures of speech, to express both intimacy with, and dependence upon the gods.”
- 35 Westenholz 1996: 187.

- 36 Text and trans. Black 1998: 109.
- 37 Sefati 1998: *passim*; cf. Cooper 1993: 84–7.
- 38 Sefati 1998: 39–48, 216; for Naram-Sin’s exclusive devotion to Inanna and his allegedly hubristic attitude toward Enlil, see Launderville 2010: 33–6.
- 39 Sweet 1994: *passim* appreciates the “sacred marriage” as a poetic metaphor; cf. Cooper 1993: 91, who sees the rite as an opportunity through which the king develops “personal and social ties to the gods”; also, see Steinkeller 1999: 129–36. Following a popular school of thought in ANE studies, Frymer-Kensky (1997: 104) claims that divine kingship fizzles out after the Sumerian period (but that it *was* practiced during it); at the same time, she notes, Ištar rises in prominence because, angered with her worshippers, she demands appeasement. Also see Westenholz (2007: 339–43), who identifies the reason for the shift of Inanna’s character as the result of continuous political upheaval during the second millennium BCE; cf. n.28 above; also see Chapter 3: p. 107.
- 40 Cooper (2008: 263) examines whether a deified king would be more important to individual worshippers than some of the main gods or even their personal gods. He insightfully remarks that “the changes wrought by deification of the ruler seem purely ideological, designed to bolster the notion of king as god, but changing the practice of kingship little if at all.”
- 41 Winter 2008: 75–6; cf. Waerzeggers 2011: 729.
- 42 See Michalowski 2010: 21; cf. Michalowski 1983: 237–8 and esp.242, where he discusses the idea that supremacy was believed to be short lived and therefore, Mesopotamian cities were expected to claim it in turns, an idea filtered through ANE literature; on the king and his tumultuous relationship with the fertility goddess, cf. Chapter 1: pp. 43–6 and Chapter 2: pp. 69–72.
- 43 Gasparro Sfameni (1985: 30–43) discusses the mystic aspects of the Phrygian rites of Attis and Cybele, emphasizing Attis’s connection with fertility; to avoid criticism for adopting the Fraserian model, she places emphasis on Attis’s quality as a deity subject to vicissitude. Siqueira (2006: 41–5) discusses the doctrine of Creation and its relation to the soteriological considerations of ANE traditions including those of Egypt and particularly Canaan; cf. Lindeskog (1953: 1–22) on the influence of Canaanite cults on the doctrine of the Creation in the Israelite religion. Important work has also been done in the past ten years (see, for example, Harland 2003: esp.44–60, 119–35) on civic associations in Roman Asia Minor, which regularly adopted the apparatus of mystery cults, worshipping the emperors and members of their families as a way of securing imperial benefits. Whether the worshippers imagined their rulers as representations of the god himself or as models of the pious worshipper exclusively favoured by the god, the kings are once more invested with secret knowledge.
- 44 On the divinity of Hellenistic rulers, in general, see Chaniotis 2005: esp.433; Chaniotis introduced the concept of mortal divinity (which we also come across in the ANE during certain periods) and paid attention to the ability of the king to offer protection. Lund (1992: 169–82) discussed the godlike status and cult of Lysimachus of Macedon (360–281 BCE); Holloway (2002: 178–192, 227–34, 320–48) studied the imperial policies of the Assyrian kings and their divine status; Mikalson (1998: 142–5, 157) looked closely at the honours the Athenians heaped on Attalos I after entering in alliance with him in 200 BCE, noting that they shied from ordaining a full cult for him after the fiasco of Demetrius Poliorcetes’s (337–283 BCE) divination. Also see his pp. 160–1 for the divine honours paid to Antigonos Gonatas, Demetrius’s son (319–239 BCE).
- 45 Schmid (1984: 103–5) drew attention to the gift of laws which in the ANE are bestowed upon people in the context of Creation; for the appreciation of Creation in the ANE in terms of the cyclical process of natural renewal, see Lindeskog 1953: 20. Auffarth (1991: 9–15) rejected this view arguing that the people who celebrated these festivals ritually enacted and, therefore, expelled their fear that god [note his use of the singular instead of gods] would withdraw his support from them. Versnel (1993: 32n.36, 120)

- also seems to favour this view; cf. De Bouvrie (2002: 36–7), who discusses the role of the “inversion” of normal natural/social order in symbolic re-enactments; this temporary suspension of social norms would be revoked upon the conclusion of the rites, and order would be emphatically restored; cf. n.82 below.
- 46 Lincoln 1989: 221–222; Jameson 1972: 123.
- 47 Versnel (1993: 32–5) distinguishes between Fraser’s Greco-centric Cambridge Ritual School and Hooke’s Myth and Ritual School “proper,” which focuses on the institution of kingship and its social implications, pointing out Hooke’s vehement criticism of Fraser. However, I here side with Segal’s approach (1998: 7), echoed by Ackerman 2002: 191–2 (cf. series’ editor foreword on p. vii), both of whom refer to the applications of Fraser’s theory.
- 48 See Versnel (1993: 2.41–3), who offers graphic examples of the “emotional criticism” against the School’s followers.
- 49 Chaniotis (2005: 434–8) stressed the readiness of Greek communities to embrace the phenomenon of ruler cult since they used to decree honours to exceptional individuals, mainly posthumous, but even during one’s lifetime as with the Spartan Lysandros in the fourth century BCE (Douris, *FGrH*76F71). Also see Strootman (2007: 15) arguing that “Hellenistic court culture was essentially Greek and Macedonian elite culture imported to Egypt and the Near East.” In his view, the evidence for the Hellenistic courts of the Ptolemies, Seleukids and Antigonids reveals “predominantly similarities with the Argead household in fourth century Macedonia, albeit on a much grander scale and with many ‘eastern’, chiefly Achaimenid, elements integrated in it.” Although the influence of Persian customs on Hellenistic kings cannot be underestimated, it is amply clear that the Macedonians utilized more ancient models of kingship to promote the popular notion of “restoring” legitimate kingship.
- 50 Kaufman 1996: 274; cf. Panaino (2002: 5), who criticises Assyriologists as the “Classicists of Oriental Studies” for their lack of interest in discussions about the Mesopotamian world and its influence produced outside their field. In methodological terms, see Jameson (1981), who, despite rejecting the structuralists in favour of a neo-Marxist reading of ancient narratives in relation to economic modes of production, essentially establishes the dichotomy between primitive East and progressive West, which says more about us and our reading of ancient sources than the sources themselves can ever reveal. Cf. Mieroop (2004: 56–7), who criticises Marxians *and* primitivists for their belief that (p. 57) “capitalism represents a unique historical situation.”
- 51 Fraser 1890: 1.110–11; influenced by Fraser, Campbell (1949: 19–25) analysed ritual dramas in light of Jungian psychology as reflecting deep-seated fears about death which humans try to expel ritually; Ackerman (2002: 194) wrote, “Frazer and the Ritualists were not literary critics; literature was never their primary interest. Rather they were historians of ancient religion who more or less casually, as a byproduct of their main concerns, developed a new way of thinking about literature. Their method was genetic and historical, seeking origins and derivations”; on this, also see Mettinger 2004: 373–6.
- 52 Fraser 1890: 1.237–282, 378, 391; J. Z. Smith 1978: 521 and id. 1990: 97–102, 28; M. S. Smith 1998: esp.310; Ackerman 2002: 46.
- 53 Fraser 1890: 1.vi.
- 54 Frankfort 1951: 5.
- 55 Niehaus (2008: 18–20) discussed the “family likeness” between Fraser and Freud, already picked up by Frankfort, which seems to hint at the social background of their generation adding that Jung shared their anxieties being, of course, Freud’s student.
- 56 Bernal 1991: esp.22–37.
- 57 Segal 1999: 46.
- 58 Jane Harrison and her school supported the primacy of ritual over myth. Victor Turner argued that myth and ritual share the same “paradigms.” For Tylor myth is like science while ritual is compared to technology; hence, myth tries to explain the world, while

ritual is an application of myth. Over the years, scholars in ANE studies often adopted such outdated methods and even spoke of the mythopoeic mentality of practitioners of ancient fertility religions; for example, see Kirk 1970: 1–42 and 84–90; Rogerson 1974: 66–84; Oden 1987: 138–52.

59 Fraser 1890: 1.477.

60 Burkert 1979: esp.45–58; id. 1998: 341–6; cf. Versnel 1993: 51–60. Also see Graf (2003: 5–6), who admitted that Harrison identified the importance of initiation in her writings without pushing the point further, although Murray, her lifelong friend, urged for scholarly attention to the concept in his 1912 *Four Stages of Greek Religion*. Csapo (2005: 180) stresses the affinity of Burkert's early work (*Homo Necans* 1983) with Propp's structuralism. For Burkert's discussion regarding the eastern origins of the myth of Heracles, see id. 1983: 78–88.

61 Bremmer 2002: 41–55; id. 1993: 70–124 and also 1994: 91–3; in addition, see Graf and Johnston (2007: 94–126) discussing the eschatology of the Bacchic gold tablets in light of the Orphic beliefs which inspired them.

62 In discussing ritual Bremmer (2004: 32–3) reminds us that often scholars of ANE cultures have to focus more on the decipherments of texts than on the applications of anthropological meanings on their meanings; still, the connection between ANE forms of kingship and the *basileis* of early Greek epic has been often pointed out in scholarship: hence, Bremmer (2008: 104–6) refers to the *Dios Apatē* episode (*Il.*14.153–353) and the quarrel of Apsu and Tiamat in the *Enuma Eliš* (1.4). He also argues that the *Epic of Gilgameš* influenced Homeric epics (2008: 105n.21) being critical of George (2003: 56–7), who chose to refer to “interrelated cultures” rather than direct contract. Such a transmission path through which songs about Gilgameš, Kumarbi and other ANE mythic figures seem to have influenced the Homeric epics is uncovered by Bachvarova 2002: esp.120–8; cf. West 1997: 15–22 for the Near Eastern substance of Homeric kings; cf. Koenen 1994: *passim*; Kitts (2005: 78–84) discusses similarities between ANE divine loyalty oaths and those of Homeric deities; she argues that the clasping of hands between kings and gods, often depicted in art, acted as an oath symbol; cf. the gesture of “holding the hand” of Marduk during the Babylonian New Year Festival discussed in Chapter 3: pp. 105, 110 and 112 (also cf. n.6 above).

63 See previous note; also Holloway 2002: esp.65–80, 197–216, 320–37. Koenen (1993: 70–81) discussed the importance of dynastic festivals as a way of enhancing territorial control in Pharaonic Egypt.

64 See Mettinger (2001: 7, 60–3) relating how Baal recovers his royal power upon his resurrection; on scholarly ambivalence regarding the comparative approach, see Siqueira 2006: 48.

65 His work responds to J. Z. Smith, who denied that Fraser's fertility deities achieved resurrection, arguing that pagan antiquity should be only studied through the example of Jesus (1987: 521); cf. M. S. Smith 2001: 258–9.

66 See *KTU* 1.6.III.20–21 in Gibson 1978: 78; cf. 1 Kings 18:27 discussed by Mettinger 1988: 84.

67 Potter 2005: 416–9; Chaniotis 2005: 432–3, 439–40; cf. Euhemerus's views of the late fourth century BCE on gods believed to be kings or heroes or benefactors of ancient times and kings being able to achieve apotheosis; on this as well as Euhemerus's friendship with king Cassander of Macedonia, see De Angelis and Garstad 2006: 212, 215 and esp.220.

68 Cf. Livingstone (1986: 162–3), who has questioned the connection of myths to ritual. However, the search for an “one-fits-all” answer to the complicated issue of the incorporation of myth in ritual or the other way round is futile; as the analysis of the *Gilgameš Epic* and the New Year Festivals will show, myth and ritual go hand in hand and often cross over, but no specific guidelines ever existed detailing their interaction. After all, this was a creative process determined by individual imagination as much as contemporary socio-political needs. For more on the background of this debate, also see n.58 above.

- 69 Henrichs 1999: *passim*.
- 70 Assmann 2005: 1 (note that I am using the book's 2005 English translation). Admittedly, Assmann tends to employ Egypt as his exclusive paradigm, which he then superimposes on other ANE cultures, yet his observations on cultural memory remain valid and worth considering.
- 71 Assmann 2005: esp. 144–50, 272, 277, 334–7; cf. Steinkeller 2013: 470–6 with Selz 2014: 65 on the royal Festival of the Heavenly Boat during which Šulgi and Išbi-Erra received apotheosis. On the role of the ship in the myth of *Inanna-K and Enki-g*, see Selz 2014: 64. Inanna-K seems to also have prominent underworld connections; see Steinkeller 2013: 468 and Selz 2013: 235 also cited in Selz 2014: 53n.7; cf. Chapter 2: n.44.
- 72 See Assmann (2005: 2–3) referring to Plato's argument in *Prot.*322a-c; cf. Rosenzweig (1971: 3), who noted, "Philosophy takes it upon itself to throw off the fear of things earthly, to rob death of its poisonous sting, and Hades of its pestilential breath. All that is mortal lives in this fear of death; every new birth augments the fear by one new reason, for it augments what is mortal."
- 73 According to Assmann (2005: 3–4), this idea presents the Near Eastern variation to the Greek way of thinking which tends to place emphasis on mortals as deficient creatures. Assmann discusses the tales of Ea and his son, Adapa, and of Gilgameš as typical of this ideology. However, the distinction seems invalid since the division of nomadism and settled life is prominent in Sumerian mythology, where Enkidu, the wild man, is cast as the opposite of urbanized Gilgameš (*GE* II.34–51). See Pongratz-Leisten (2001: 202–3, 222), who discussed motifs of alterity in ANE poetry, including the juxtaposition of the city and the wilderness experienced by Enkidu in the *GE* (also see n.96 below). As a primitive creature, Enkidu has a special connection with animals but lacks knowledge, which he acquires through Šamhat. His existence is not dissimilar to the early generations of Hesiod, who knew nothing of agriculture and settled life – just as they did not know anything about death. Still, Assmann is right in observing that Gilgameš provokes the anger of the gods by his deep understanding of death. In a way, Gilgameš's failure is necessary: it is the stepping stone to the establishment of piety as the main characteristic of the king who finds a way of perpetuating his memory by relating his god-sent wisdom to his people. This motif is exemplified in the Greek context through the adventures of Prometheus which elaborate on his theft of fire (*Hes. Op.*42–105) and his outwitting of the gods regarding the sacrificial rites at Mekone on behalf of humanity (*Hes. Th.*545–57).
- 74 Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 200.
- 75 Assmann (1988: 11–15) discussed the characteristics of cultural memory noting especially its ability to reconstruct socio-historical realities. Although Assmann understood collective memory along ethnic/racial lines, I will be using his model to indicate how the bureaucratic organization of ancient states and the ritual profile of the king could overcome racial boundaries and accommodate ethnic plurality. On the flexible conception of the world in ANE myth and its inextricable connection to kings, see Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 201 with n.49 citing Sabbatucci 1990: 159ff.
- 76 On the tradition of *exempla* in Roman historiography and its Greek origins, see Rudich 1993: xx, 4–7, 112 and more recently, Mehl 2011: 197–214, esp. 197; also see Santoro L'Hoir 2006: 45 and Gowing 2009: 333–6 discussing the prevalence of this tradition.
- 77 Assmann 1988: 9; also Harth 2008: 86–92; cf. Halbwachs (1992: 38) arguing that memory is only shaped within our societies.
- 78 Jameson 1981: 75.
- 79 Seymour-Smith 1986: 105; cf. Tylor 1871: 1.1. Note that Morgan (1877: 5–6) divided human culture into the stages of savagery, barbarism and civilization, a model which bring to mind Jacobsen's classification discussed above on p. 1.
- 80 Notably, one of the latest methodologies applied to the study of cultural interaction during the Hellenistic period was that of shifting social imaginaries; the theory was developed by Cornelius Castoriadis as a reaction to the deterministic features of



- Marxism; see Stavrianopoulou 2013: 3; for my objections to the application of the theory, see p. 11 above.
- 81 Cf. Assmann (2008: 111), who insists that texts should be separated from historical events. Also see A. Assmann 1999: 86 for her understanding of cultural studies as “a global mix of theories and terminologies.”
- 82 See, for example, De Bouvrie (2002: 31–2), who, based on the work of Ortner 1973, discusses two types of symbols, the *summarizing* and the *elaborating* ones. While the symbols of the first type synthesize or collapse complex experiences and include sacred symbols, those of the second type “are valued for their contribution to the ordering or ‘sorting out’ of experience,” and they are hardly ever sacred. Turner (1967: 27–47, esp. 29) agrees that symbols are employed in rituals in relation to basic human experiences and typically seek to turn “the obligatory into the desirable.” The sacred dramas which are performed in rituals using these symbols often involve transgressions which are meant to moralize and teach the audiences, thus reinforcing the hierarchical structures of societies.
- 83 Jameson 1998: 111.
- 84 See, for example, Calame (2003: 1–25) explaining the semionarrative approach, essentially an elaboration on post-structuralism. Calame refers to mythic isotopies, recurrent motifs based on deep semionarrative structures in which two or more contradictory terms are asserted simultaneously precisely because myth has this power. However, despite deviating from strict poststructuralist premises, intercultural communication in Calame’s theory has a prominent Hellenocentric scope; cf. Lefkowitz and MacLean Rogers 1996: 411; Goff 2005: 15–6.
- 85 See De Bouvrie 2002: 28: “We have to realise that the explanation (‘motivation’) of a symbolic tale *may be part of the tale*, while the real motives remain hidden.”
- 86 For example, Pongratz-Leisten (2001: 216–7) argues that gradually the opposition between city and countryside gave way to the opposition between homeland and enemy; cf. the association of uninhabited desert with enemies and the Underworld in the City Laments in Chapter 2: pp. 73–8.
- 87 Ricoeur 1969: 3–18; cf. Bynum 1986: 15–16; also see n.70 above citing Assmann, who put forward a similar position, although it is clear that his theory focuses on identity formation within a given group – the formation of “we” in opposition to the “others.” Ricoeur, however, seems to go beyond racial or other groupings in his discussion of death and mourning differentiating between the dead and the surviving living in whose memory the dead seek to secure their posthumous existence; cf. Assmann (2011: 19–20) on the desire of the living to keep the dead as members of their community and “to take them into their progressive present.”
- 88 Ricoeur 2009: 31.
- 89 Ricoeur 2010: 17–18.
- 90 Bynum 1986: 9. On his knowledge of Gramsci, see Ricoeur 1986: 86; cf. Erfani and Whitmire 2011: 81n.15.
- 91 Holub (1992: esp. 122–6) rereads Gramsci’s notes on the work of Dante and draws attention to the affinities of phenomenology with the latter’s Marxist cultural theory. Gramsci used the term *hegemony* to denote the predominance of one social class over others, not just in terms of political or economic control (as did the rest of the Marxists discussed above) but in terms of being able to impose their view of the world as “common sense” and “natural.” However, given that our perception of what is common sense and what is regarded as natural is ever changing, the elites need to constantly persuade their subjects of their projections anew. See Gramsci 1971: 170 (on consent), 258, 271 and 350 (on cultural hegemony); cf. Hall 1982: 73; Fiske 1992: 291; I return to the issue of Gramscian hegemony in Synth.: pp. 199–201. Also see De Bouvrie (2002: 19–20) drawing attention to the reception of symbolic phenomena as an integral part of studying and interpreting them.
- 92 See Ricoeur 2010: 143–5.
- 93 Heidegger 1962: 298–9.

- 94 Heidegger 1962: 158; cf. Visker 1999: 142: “perhaps the Other is, like myself, primarily a ‘stranger,’ not because he is without those roots that I possess, but because we are both attached to ‘something’ which is too close to leave us indifferent, but not close enough to call our possession. Isn’t it this structure that makes us similar to one another at the very moment that it distinguishes us?”
- 95 This awareness of our common end urges people to share a basic empathy with one another despite other social or ethnic differences; cf. Blanchot (1982: 19–34), who discusses death not just as the fearful demise of the self but, instead, the existential predicament of an “essential solitude,” intensified by the presence of one’s loved ones, all of whom come to represent a kind of (projected) death. Also see Levinas (1987: 92–4), who pursues a line of analysis that runs from death, through sexuality and the “feminine” to “fecundity” and “paternity,” that is, the alteration of the father in the son. Although Levinas insists that his perspective is not phenomenological, his analysis can inform our understanding of the important relationship of the king with the fertility goddess in a novel way – the king’s experience is a powerful projection of the anticipated experience of his community while revealing the correct ways of commemoration.
- 96 For example, Walls (2001: 54) uses the work of S.A.L. Butler 1998 to explain the encounter of Enkidu, the wild man, in the *GE* with Šamhat the prostitute. In my view, the narrative utilizes the transformative power of sex to discuss the transition of humanity from wilderness to settled life; cf. Chapter 1: pp. 30–2.
- 97 See Butler 1988: esp.522–4 and 529–31 and id. 2000: esp.6–24 and 62–82; see contra Elden 2005.
- 98 See Butler 1988: 531: “As a corporeal field of cultural play, gender is a basically innovative affair, although it is quite clear that there are strict punishments for contesting the script by performing out of turn or through unwarranted improvisations.”
- 99 By appropriating cultural traditions we revamp them; see Panaino and Pettinato 2002: v–vii.
- 100 Still, Jameson (1981: 75, 285) does not refer at all to the ancient Jews or the ANE for this matter, limiting himself to the “Asiatic mode of production.” Assmann (1997: 23–54; id. 2009: 8–30), on the other hand, is preoccupied with the Jewish attempt to construct a unique identity versus other pagan communities. However, here I examine the ancient Jewish communities as drawing on the same ideological nexus as their neighbouring cultures, an observation made and subscribed by countless previous scholars, especially with regard to kingship. See Rodríguez (2001: 43–4 and esp.50–1) on the principles of comparative research in the field of Jewish and ANE religions; also see Roberts (1987: 377–97) arguing that ancient Egyptian kingship influenced directly numerous aspects of Israelite monarchy; cf. Cross 1973: 247 and contra Day 1998: 72–90.
- 101 See Gunkel (1998: 99) on the so-called Royal Psalms; cf. Mettinger 1976: 100. On Gunkel’s anti-semitic views, see id. 1916: 3 and Delitzsch 1906: 55–6, both discussed further in Shavit and Eran 2007: 245–8.
- 102 Stavrianopoulou 2013: 4–5.
- 103 Smith (1986: 32) offered a medium solution between the modernists and the primordialists using the term *ethnies* to refer to “human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity” as the precursors of modern nation-states; cf. id. 1991: 25, 33 and 1998: 190–1.
- 104 See Strootman 2013: 73 with n.21 on Greekness as a determining factor of cosmopolitanism in Seleucid east and 86–5 discussing lines of ethnic segregation in Hellenistic Babylon; also see id. 2011: 66 on the encouragement of supranational elite networks in the Seleucid and Ptolemaic courts, yet always from a perspective that recognizes a hierarchical relationship between the conquerors and the conquered; cf. Wright 2012: 15–23. For more on this, see Chapter 4: nn.3, 9, 47 and 134.
- 105 Castoriadis 1988: 226–315.

24 *Laying the groundwork*

- 106 Fassa (2013: 116) argues that Castoriadis's model acknowledges the powerful role of religion in shaping social imaginaries – a point that, in my view, is valid for Castoriadis's time but not antiquity. Hence, Fassa's opinion (p. 135) that the cult of Sarapis was a “religious experiment” seems to me to be informed by our modern appreciation of religion as part of one's cultural identity.
- 107 For example, Saggs 2000: 173 notes: “The third millennium royal ritual concerning sacred marriage of a god and goddess had by the first millennium degenerated into the practice of lower grades of priestess offering themselves to strangers”; cf. esp. Synth: pp. 202–3.

# 1 Dying kings in the ANE

## Gilgameš and his travels in the garden of power

... ἄθάνατος ἂν ἡ ψυχὴ εἴη, ὥστε θαρροῦντα χρῆ ὁ μὴ τυγχάνεις ἐπιστάμενος  
νῦν—τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶν ὁ μὴ μεμνημένος—ἐπιχειρεῖν ζητεῖν καὶ ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι;  
Plato, Meno 86b<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter I will investigate mythic episodes found in ANE traditions discussing the establishment of kingship. Early kings, such as Gilgameš, are represented in myth as having a special relationship with the gods through which, I argue, they get to define human nature (specifically our mortal condition) and culture (understood as our attempt to overcome our physical limitations through commemoration).<sup>2</sup> As mediators between the physical and metaphysical realms the kings retain a special place which is exemplified through two main metaphors: the kings tend to have an extraordinary relationship with the Sun deity,<sup>3</sup> sometimes posing as his sons, and they also enjoy an affair with the fertility goddess. Early myths about kingship employ the relationship of the king with the Sun god in order to refer to justice and legitimate rule and his affair with the fertility goddess to negotiate funerary rites and the appropriate means of commemoration.<sup>4</sup> The evolution of these themes down the centuries and the transmission of Sumerian myths to the later Akkadian and Assyrian empires will be also discussed.

In early myths relating the institution of kingship, kings as the carriers of political authority seem to traverse an extraordinary “liminal” space in which men and gods interact and agree on their interdependence. Here, I argue that this space is mental – as denoted by the fact that heroic kings often communicate with the divine in dreams or dream-like locations/situations<sup>5</sup> – and that it refers to a supra-rational experience which is rendered by heavenly as much as hellish symbols. This space which cannot be on the earth – inhabited by ordinary, mortal men – is metaphorically located either above, in the skies, or below in the Underworld. Both locations are typically under divine jurisdiction, and mythic kings traverse them in the name of their people and their kingship.<sup>6</sup> Their heavenly ascent is often denoted in terms of their “adoption” by the Sun god (which promotes their rule as just), while their descent is typically related in terms of a dangerous relationship with the fertility goddess (which promotes the teleological profile of the king).

**Kingship and culture**

Kingship is negotiated already in the Sumerian period (2900–2340 BCE) during which five tales about Bilgameš (= Mesopotamian Gilgameš) were independently circulated.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, the negotiation of kingship as the utmost social institution coincided with the development of urbanization.<sup>8</sup> In Mesopotamian mythology the origin of the city goes back to divine initiative and hand in hand with the establishment of kingship. Hence, in *Gilgameš and Aga (Akka) of Kish* (30–35:52) we read:<sup>9</sup>

unug<sup>ki</sup> giš-kin-ti-dingir-re-e-ne-ke<sub>4</sub>  
 é-an-na é an-ta e<sub>11</sub>-dè  
 dingir-gal-gal-e-ne me-dím-bi ba-an-ak-eš-àm  
 bàd-gal muru, ki-ús-sa-a-ba  
 ki-tuš-maḥ an-né gar-ra-a-ba  
 sag mu-e-sì za-e lugal-ur-sag-me-en

Uruk, the god's handiwork,  
 and Eanna, a house come down from heaven,  
 whose parts were fashioned by the great gods  
 its great wall, a cloud standing on the ground,  
 the august abode established by An is  
 entrusted to you! You are the king and warrior!

In Sumerian theology,<sup>10</sup> the city of Nippur, host of the temple of Enlil, who legitimized kingship, gains prominence.<sup>11</sup> Another important city was Kish where, according to the *Sumerian King List*, kingship was first established after the Deluge.<sup>12</sup> Kingship, therefore, becomes the primary lens through which to examine civilization and its consequences for mortals; in the later Standard Babylonian version of the *GE*<sup>13</sup> (where some of the original Sumerian episodes were organized into a continuing narrative)<sup>14</sup> Enkidu, the “wild man,” discovers that his introduction to civilization has terrible effects: his pure body is corrupted, his legs stand still and he can no longer run as fast as the wild animals, his hitherto companions (*GE* I.197–201). Yet he realizes that his broad knowledge has increased (*GE* I.202: ù šu-ú i-šī t[é-ma? r]a-pa-áš ḥa-si-sa), a development understood as his compensation for the loss of his innocence. The Akkadian dynasty starting with Sargon (ca. 2334–2279 BCE), who took over the Sumerian cities and unified them with the Akkad people from the north, was heavily indebted to the Sumerian cultural input. At the same time, given that the Sumerian sphere of influence was actually quite limited in geographical terms, the translation of Sumerian literature in Akkadian ensured the proliferation of Sumerian traditions,<sup>15</sup> along with the association of kingship with the dawn of culture.<sup>16</sup> Since civilization brings about knowledge or rather self-awareness, then who would be better positioned to negotiate this knowledge than the king? Accordingly, the temples, palaces and walls that these early cities boasted<sup>17</sup> functioned not just as practicable means for

ensuring the safety of the citizens but also as emblems of the divine benevolence that their powerful kings enjoyed.<sup>18</sup>

In this context, the relationship of Gilgameš, the king, with Enkidu, the “wild man,” deserves closer attention especially since in the Sumerian episodes Enkidu poses as Bilgameš’s servant: he was occasionally referred to as *ku-li*, Gilgameš’s friend (cf. *GE* VII.139: *ibru, talimu*, your friend and brother; also, XII.30 and 88),<sup>19</sup> but most often his status was that of an *ir* (*šubur* = servant; Akkadian *ardu*, XII.54) with Gilgameš clearly named as the *lugal* (= master, Akkadian *belum*, XII.7) of Enkidu.<sup>20</sup> In addition, at first Gilgameš’s regime seems to have been extremely problematic:<sup>21</sup> his tyrannical attitude brought suffering upon his people, with the Sumerian version relating the oppression of widows and orphans, while the Akkadian version refers to the king’s outrageous insistence on taking *ius primae noctis* on newly-wed brides;<sup>22</sup> it was, in fact, Gilgameš’s arrogance that necessitated the creation of Enkidu, and therefore, the initial struggle between Enkidu and Gilgameš seems to have offered the latter a chance to realize his responsibilities as a leader and improve his conduct.

By the time the Sumerian tales found their place in the more canonical OB version of the *GE* (around 1800 BCE) Enkidu was typically termed as a friend and companion of Gilgameš (*ibru, tappu*), his brother (*aḥu*) and his equal (*mašlu, kima*).<sup>23</sup> Scholars have often read in the relationship of the two heroes a story about the king’s growth to maturity, Gilgameš’s attempt to connect to his inner self.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, I would like to suggest that this is a story of political maturity and that the relationship between the two heroes reflects the rapport between the king and his subjects, who, exemplified in the person of Enkidu, abandoned their life in the wilderness to enjoy the benefits of urban life. The *Epic* makes it clear that at the time, the symbols of kingship, that is the crown, the sceptre and the throne, had been already established; but the exact mode of yielding power in early Mesopotamia remains foggy.<sup>25</sup> The preoccupation of the Sumerian Gilgameš tradition with political organization and political ethos is also stressed by the fact that, although *Gilgameš and Akka* has no corresponding episode in the *Epic*, the themes of mercy toward captives and counsel from the city elders were included in the *GE* in the tale of *Ḫuwawa* (*Ḫumbaba*).<sup>26</sup> According to Davenport (2007: 19–20), the so-called *Letter of Gilgameš*, in which the hero appears as an overbearing king making overwhelming demands of a minor king,<sup>27</sup> relates late Babylonian royal ideology that was subsequently used to refer to the “oppressive nature of Assyrian rule.”<sup>28</sup> Although this suggestion is appealing, given that the letter is now considered to belong to the traditional scribal literature of Babylonia, I would be inclined to think that the Bilgameš tradition projects themes about monopolizing political power that were given multiple poetic treatments. Although hints against the Assyrian rule cannot be readily disproved, it seems that this interpretation relies too much on the reputation of the Assyrians as oppressive rulers and overlooks the importance of the king as cultural institutioner. The hints may simply refer to the previous rulers regardless of their racial background. In fact, a supra-ethnic interpretation of

kingship where the new king – posing as the answer to the dissatisfaction of the gods with the impious previous ruler (cf. Cyrus' claims against Nabonidus in Chapter 4: p. 156) – is called to re-establish civilization, and divine order is likely to have suited each wave of conquerors much more than a model imposing racial divisions. In the *GE* the king, having undertaken a journey in the Underworld, having seen the “other side” and having lost the plant of immortality, takes solace in the fact that although he has to die, his memory will be preserved on the walls of Uruk (*GE* XI.321–9). It could be argued that these lines preserve the essence of the Sumerian political tradition, which is about the role of the king in maintaining divine favour and instituting death rites that secure the memory of himself and his community.<sup>29</sup> Hence, a Sumerian poem addressed to the dead king Ur-nammu (2112–2095 BCE) reassures him that his name will be spoken of and that Akkad and Sumer will be summoned to his palace to witness his fortified settlements.<sup>30</sup>

### King and death

The other four Sumerian tales relating Bilgameš's adventures focus on the hero's gradual awareness of death as the core symptom of the human condition. The two main adventures that bring about death as a punishment for Bilgameš and his companion in crime, Enkidu, are known as the *Cedar Forest* episode (tablets II–V in the *GE*)<sup>31</sup> and the *Bull of Heaven* (tablet VI in the *GE*). Although their place in the sequence of episodes has long puzzled scholars,<sup>32</sup> they both debate the limits of mortality forcing the king to revise his relationship with the gods and deal with the issue of death. The tale of *Bilgameš and Ħuwawa*, which survives in two versions, relates the journey of the two heroes accompanied by other city men to trap Ħuwawa, the guardian of the forest. In the *GE* Ninsun, the king's mother, complains to Šamaš, the Sun god, that he gave her son a restless heart, in other words, that it was him who incited Bilgameš to undertake this adventure. Ninsun describes Ħumbaba as a wild thing, repugnant to Šamaš (III.53–4), and we are urged to think that a dispute between Šamaš and the god Enlil is implied here because Ħumbaba is special to Enlil. In the first version of the Sumerian tale, Bilgameš is fearful of death and suggests to Enkidu they undertake this adventure in a bid to secure his posthumous reputation (II.4–7). When they finally capture the beast thanks to trickery and the encouraging voice of Šamaš,<sup>33</sup> the hero-king tries to be merciful to his victim (II.158–60 = II.142–7 in version B), while Enkidu reminds him of how dangerous this could be (II.163–74 = II.148–62 in version B). As Ħuwawa turns in anger against Enkidu, the latter slays him unwittingly (II.178–80). In the second version Bilgameš's preoccupation with teleological questions is further stressed; here, he is presented as overwhelmed by the fact that people die without crossing “the boundary at the final end of life” (II.5–21).<sup>34</sup> The venture he is about to undertake fills him with terror, and he repeatedly calls on his god, Enki, to manifest himself (II.78–115), a manifestation achieved thanks to Enkidu.

In *Bilgameš and the Bull of Heaven* Inanna tries to detain the hero from performing his secular duties, “here epitomized as sitting in judgement.”<sup>35</sup> The goddess wishes Bilgameš to devote all of his energy to her alone but, following his mother’s advice, the hero refuses her advances. The tale seems to comment on a disruption in the good relationship of Inanna and the king, who appears to have slipped to his old arrogant ways – thus, when he hears that the people suffer because of the Bull of Heaven sent by vengeful Inanna Bilgameš does not interrupt his feasting immediately (*GBH* esp.131) but resolves to “go on drinking!”<sup>36</sup>

The beast, sent to kill Bilgameš, was eventually killed by the king and Enkidu, his meat divided among the poor of the city and his horns dedicated to Inanna’s temple.<sup>37</sup> It could be argued that the references to the poor in the text offer the *raison d’être* of the episode – in other words, they refer to Bilgameš’s transformation and his eventual acceptance of his civic responsibilities.<sup>38</sup> The infatuation of the goddess with Bilgameš and his rejection of her is a metaphor for a(ny) king who, having secured his royal status, becomes bitter upon the realization that kingship and divine protection do not last forever; kings must be careful to please the gods and maintain the support they once received while, at any rate, these privileges do not exclude them from their mortal condition. Hence, Bilgameš is now preoccupied with securing his posthumous reputation, an effort during which he determines death rites for himself and his subjects.<sup>39</sup> In Abusch’s words, “[D]eath has been civilized.”<sup>40</sup>

Davenport again drew attention to the differences in the episode between the Sumerian and Akkadian versions,<sup>41</sup> arguing that in the Sumerian version Bilgameš’s refusal of Inanna, which appears otherwise profitable, originates not from a concern with upholding justice but from the king’s interest in “retaining the power that accompanies the right to exercise authority in the temple Inanna.”<sup>42</sup> In submitting to the goddess, the king would be trapped, a threat mirrored in the Akkadian version that refers to the risk of the goddess, who is portrayed as subordinate and inferior to the king. However, Inanna’s interruption of Bilgameš’s civic duties, whether incited by a friction between the king and the local priestly authorities or not, is more likely to refer to the goddess demanding more adulation and complaining about being neglected. In fact, in her proposal Inanna specifically asks the king to allow her to be the lady of E-anna on the side of Bilgameš, who was its lord (*GBH* 38):<sup>43</sup>

<sup>d</sup>bil<sub>3</sub>-ga-mes za-e [u<sub>3</sub>-mu-u]n-bi de<sub>3</sub>-men<sub>3</sub> ga<sub>2</sub>-e ga-ša-an-bi de<sub>3</sub>-men<sub>3</sub>  
 O Bilgameš, may you be its lord, let me be its lady!

In addition, Davenport accepts as reasonable Gilgameš’s rejection of the goddess in the Akkadian version, where he refers to the unreliability of the goddess (MB Emar<sub>2</sub> i.13’–18’ in George 2003: 334–5 = *GE* VI.33–42) and the bad fate of her previous consorts. These include Dumuzi(d) (i.22’–7’, also in George 2003: loc. cit. = *GE* VI.46–50), the lover of her youth, who is depicted as a bird with a broken wing, mirroring thus the Thunderbird in Enkidu’s and Bilgameš’s death



dreams.<sup>44</sup> However, the notion that the goddess brings about ill fate and death for her protégés may already be implied in *Bilgameš and the Bull of Heaven*, where the king is asked to surrender to the goddess. His mother, Ninsun, advises him not to accept the gifts of the goddess:<sup>45</sup>

nig<sub>2</sub>-ba [d]inanna mi-par<sub>3</sub>-zu-še<sub>3</sub> nam-ba-ni-ku<sub>4</sub>-ku<sub>4</sub>  
<sup>d</sup>nin-e<sub>2</sub>-gal a<sub>2</sub> nam-ur-sag-ga<sub>2</sub>-ke<sub>4</sub> tug<sub>2</sub> nam-bi-<sup>r</sup>dul-e<sup>7</sup>

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

Yet, in a hymn where Inanna offers Dumuzi the kingship as a result of their sacred union, she specifically mentions that he will “wear long clothes on [his] body” and will “bind [himself] with the garments of kingship” along with sitting on the lapis lazuli throne, wearing the holy crown, and being “the chosen shepherd of the holy shrine, . . . the faithful provider of Uruk, . . . the light of An's great temple.”<sup>46</sup> Ninsun's advice is notably similar to the recommendations of Bilgameš to Enkidu upon his descent to the Underworld – both warnings are designed to stress the inevitability of an upcoming dramatic twist in the tale, regardless of whether the advice is adhered to. By becoming a king, Bilgameš is forced to deal with his mortality in a conscious, soul-destroying manner.<sup>47</sup> And just like Enkidu will come to blame Šamhat for introducing him to civilization, so Gilgameš blames Inanna for asking him to become the emissary of her civilizing operation. After all, as we shall see (pp. 31–2 below), Šamhat symbolizes the sexual energy of the goddess herself.

The remaining two episodes in the Sumerian tradition are directly linked with death. The first of them to discuss here is *Bilgameš and the Netherworld* (tablet XII in the *GE*); it deals with Enkidu's journey to the Underworld in his attempt to help Bilgameš recover his “toys” made of Inanna's sacred tree, a ball and a mallet (in the Babylonian version these are his drum and drumstick).<sup>48</sup> Enkidu is unfortunately trapped in the Underworld, but, thanks to the intervention of Enlil, Bilgameš is allowed to meet his ghost, which offers him valuable information about the afterlife.<sup>49</sup> In the poem's conclusion (found in a tablet from Ur) Bilgameš realizes that he has been disrespectful to his own forebears and thus “is prompted to fashion statues of his ancestors, to institute mourning rites for them, and to instruct the people in the same rites.”<sup>50</sup> Therefore, in the course of his adventures not only does the hero revise his old ways to become a righteous king – another Dumuzi<sup>51</sup> – but he also sets the example for remembering the past and those who lived in it. The loss of his “toys,” the symbols of his royal power which the goddess had entrusted in his hands, forces Gilgameš to undertake a journey to retrieve them during which he revises his welfare policies. Thus, the king becomes the determining factor for shaping communal memory, since communities are inextricably linked with their king and the vicissitudes of his fate relate the experiences of his subjects.

It could be argued that Gilgameš's agony over Enkidu's fate exemplifies the role of the king as the people's shepherd<sup>52</sup> (cf. n.113 below) and draws attention

to his theological profile.<sup>53</sup> Through his death, Enkidu, the “wild man,” returns to the anonymity of his previous wilderness – in a way, Bilgameš, his friend, is forced to deal with the realities of life outside the community, largely imitating Enkidu’s former existence of roaming aimlessly, before instituting the appropriate rites through which Enkidu will now be incorporated in the community and be remembered as a valuable member.<sup>54</sup> Hence, soon after Enkidu’s death, the king undertakes a journey to the Underworld (this is the Sumerian tale of the *Death of Bilgameš* = tablet XI of the *GE*) in the course of which his own *post mortem* fate is determined against that of his subjects. In the Sumerian version of the tale, the hero dreams of the meeting of the gods, where his fate is decreed and Enlil assures him that, although he has to die, he will be united in the afterlife with his family and Enkidu; furthermore, we know that annual commemoration of the king was ordained during the Festival of Lights.<sup>55</sup> Instituting funerary rites was always an important duty of ANE kings, who typically assumed priestly roles and whose rhetoric aimed at fostering a sense of belonging together for their communities.<sup>56</sup>

### Culture and sex

Enkidu’s decisive input in the evolution of kingship is also hinted in the OB versions of the tale, where the initial fight between Enkidu and Gilgameš is understood as a way of settling the discontent of the people against their arrogant king (2 N-T 79.4 = *GE* I.98):<sup>57</sup>

liš-ta-an-na-nu-ma uruk<sup>ki</sup> liš-tap-š[iḫ]  
 Let them keep fighting, that Uruk may have peace.<sup>58</sup>

Crucially, it is upon his introduction to civilization by Šamhat that Enkidu learns about the dreams of Gilgameš and Ninsun’s interpretation of them (I.243–298). In the first of them, Gilgameš dreams of a huge meteorite that falls to earth (*GE* I.248: *ki-iš-ru ša ḏa-nim*; cf. I.152, 270). Initially, we are told, he is unable to lift or move it until he embraces it as a wife (I.256). In the second dream, Gilgameš sees that an axe appears in a street (*GE* I.278: *haššinnu*). The people gather around the axe, and once more Gilgameš embraces it as a wife. In both instances, Ninsun prophesizes that a comrade will come to Gilgameš; he will save him and she will make him Gilgameš’s equal (*GE* I.266: *ul-tam-ḫiraš-šú*; cf. II.258, 271–2, and 289–90 *ul-tam-ḫi-ra-šú*). Accordingly, Gilgameš is (at first) willing to welcome Enkidu because when Šamhat invites the latter to the city she mentions that the king [*GE* I.214 (P iv.42); cf. I.296–7]:<sup>59</sup>

mu-du-ru<sup>u</sup> lib-ba-šú i-še-’-a ib-ra  
 his heart (now) wise was seeking a friend

The fact that Enkidu’s civilizing is achieved through intercourse with Šamhat, a prostitute variably linked with Inanna’s cult,<sup>60</sup> makes the metaphorical value of

the relationship of the king with the fertility goddess more meaningful: it replicates humanity's introduction to civilization, a development followed by a pronounced awareness of our mortality.<sup>61</sup> As Walls explained,<sup>62</sup>

[A]s a basic form of human knowledge, sexual experience transforms Enkidu from an animal to a human being.

Thus, Enkidu curses Šamhat on his deathbed (*GE* VII.101–31) before being shamed by Šamaš into retracting it (*GE* VII.148–61) precisely on account of her civilizing effect (*GE* VII.130–6).<sup>63</sup> The Middle-Babylonian text *UET* 6/2.394 (= *GE* VII.130–1) reads:<sup>64</sup>

áš-šú ia-a-ši [ella(kù) tu-šam-ṭi]-in-<sup>65</sup>ni<sup>66</sup>  
u ia-a-a-ši ella(kù) [tu-šam-ṭin]-ni ina šēri(edin)-ia

Because [you made] me [weak], me [who was pure!]  
and me who was pure, [you made] me [weak] when I was in the wild.

In his dreams Gilgameš is confronted with a heavy object that he cannot move initially until he is able to pick it up and shower it with affection. The word *habābu* (*GE* I.[256], 267, 271), used here to express Gilgameš's relationship with the object that clearly stands for Enkidu, has been explained as caress/embrace.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, the relationship between Gilgameš and Enkidu has been understood as homosexual (in the way the relationship of Achilles with Patroclus could be interpreted as homosexual from a classical Athenian perspective). Bottéro and Petschow<sup>66</sup> tried to counter-argue that this love reflects the development of civilization here expressed in passionate terms: that Gilgameš loves Enkidu within the brotherhood of civilization that they create together. This view was further corroborated by Hardman,<sup>67</sup> who suggested that the language used in the *Epic* is designed to stress their emotional bond without necessarily implying sexual acts.

It should be noted, however, that the language of the relationship reflects the explicitly erotic terms in which the fertility goddess manifests her favour to the king.<sup>68</sup> If we understand this relationship as a metaphor that places the king right at the start of civilized life, why not extend it to also make it applicable to the relationship of the king with his people? That a people could be compared to a mistress is superbly illustrated by Hosea (2:7, 10), written in the eighth century BCE, where Israel is described as an ungrateful and unfaithful woman determined to go after her lovers. Hence, we read:

... כִּי אָמַרְתָּ אֶל־כֹּה אֶתְרִי מֵאֲהָבִי נָתַנִּי לַחֲמִי וּמִיָּמִי צָמְרִי וּפִשְׁתִּי שְׂמִנִי וְשִׁקְוִי:  
וְהִיא לֹא נִדְעָה כִּי אֲנֹכִי נָתַתִּי לָהּ הַדָּגַן וְהַתִּירֹשׁ וְהַיֶּצֶהָר וְכֶסֶף הַרְבִּיתִי לָהּ וְזָהָב עָשׂוּ לָבָעַל:

For she said I will go after my lovers, who give my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink . . . She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold which they used for Baal.<sup>69</sup>

Metaphors similar to the one cited above belong to a long-standing tradition and were in circulation for centuries in the ANE stressing that the flirtation between a king and the goddess had an essentially political meaning in the sense that the goddess was the mistress of a city whose rule would be eventually entrusted in the hands of her chosen king.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the goddess and her city<sup>71</sup> or city temple<sup>72</sup> were imagined as coextensive. Hence, in the Assyrian *Psalm in Praise of Uruk* the scribe declares (*SAA* 3.9:14 = K 1354):

KI.MIN AG<sub>2</sub> URU.ni-nu-a a-[di <sup>4</sup>NIN].LIL<sub>2</sub>  
I love Nineveh, along with Mulliššu!

where Mulliššu is the consort of Aššur, a goddess identified with Ninlil but also with Ištar.<sup>73</sup> The metaphor is made more poignant when one considers the numerous texts referring to the citizens of ANE cities as their “sons” and “daughters.” Hence, in the prologue of his law code, Lipit-Ištar, the fifth king of the dynasty of Isin (ca. 1870–1860 BCE), presented himself as the “pious shepherd of Nippur,” boasting that he freed the “sons and daughters” of several cities including Nippur, Ur, Isin, and others. In the *Epic of Ištar and Izdubar*, a version of the tale of Gilgameš found in the library of Aššurbanipal and dating from the sixth century BCE, the hero is praised for saving the city of Erech “from her distress, when she did mourn.” Again, not only is the city personified as a woman, but her “sons and daughters,” saved by the grace of Bēl, are also mentioned.<sup>74</sup>

Through his care to establish appropriate funerary rites for his dead friend and himself Gilgameš actually institutes communal welfare, which goes hand-in-hand with his political growth as a just king who “loves” his people.<sup>75</sup> In the process of formulating the performance of commemoration, his own role as the mediator par excellence between the divine forces and his community is highlighted, and thus kingship acquires a central role in the power structure of the societies in question. Since funerary rites involve lamentation, the king’s relationship with the goddess, modelled on the tragically ended affair of Dumuzi and Inanna, becomes crucial in ritual as an intermittent verification not only of the king’s power and divine favour but also of the stance of the community amongst the civilized peoples. Their history and the fate of their king are intertwined.

### “Sons,” “lovers,” “bulls” of divine favour

ANE texts promote the notion of kings as sons or lovers of fertility goddesses who are responsible for their royal appointment. My argument is that all of these relationships should be taken metaphorically as expressions of the divine patronage of kingship. Since we understand the references to the divine parentage of ANE kings as metaphors, then why should we accept that the king’s affair with the goddess was a cultural notion appreciated in more realistic terms to the point of involving actual sex between the Sumerian king and a priestess representing the goddess? Since divine parentage stands for the king’s supreme potential and leadership ability, his affair with the fertility goddess should be understood in

equal terms as placing him at the start of civilization, casting him like another Gilgameš. At the same time, the precarious nature of the goddess's love served as a reminder of the king's ephemeral success/existence. The goddess demands the king's virility, and mastering time/memory is seen as a virile activity (in Levinian terms);<sup>76</sup> just as Gilgameš fashions a splendid statue that encapsulates the physical beauty of his friend, Enkidu, after his death (*GE* VIII.66–72), so the funerary rites the king sets for himself, reflected in myth in the rites that the goddess sets for the untimely death of her lover Dumuzi, achieve the same result of immortalizing his name.

As in myth, so in historical reality, the king understands that his success is temporary and it can, at most, last for a lifetime; therefore, he must continuously seek the reaffirmation of divine favour. Hence, in a hymn of Aššurbanipal (at the colophon of the tablet) the king requests from Ištar-of-Nineveh to *LUGAL-tu<sub>2</sub> li<sup>2</sup>-šar<sup>2</sup>-bi a-na da-ra-a-ti* “exalt (my) kingship forever” (*SAA* 3.3rev.19–20). He considers himself a “creation” (*bi-nu-ut*) of both Emašmaš and Egašankamma (I.10), which are the temples of the goddesses of Nineveh and Arbela respectively,<sup>77</sup> but also refers to himself as “the great seed of Aššur (and) the offspring of Nineveh” (I.9), implying that he was born of Aššur and the goddess of Nineveh.<sup>78</sup> Here, not only do we see the identification of goddesses with the cities in which they preside, but the king seems to have been understood in terms that recall the start of the world (here, of course, made to coincide with the Assyrian rise of power and the “national” god Aššur). The association of the king with the first creation and hence his participation in the cosmogonic forces that brought the world forth, is also reflected in the neo-Assyrian *Mystical Miscellanea*, a text that identifies the deities responsible for the appointment of the king with primeval forces such as Tiamat. The text reads (*SAA* 3.39:19–23):<sup>79</sup>

[<sup>d</sup>] 15' ša URU.dur-na ti-amat ši-i UM.ME.GA.LA.2 ša<sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup>EN ši\*-i\*-ma\*  
 [04 IGI.2]-MEŠ-ša 04 PI.2-MEŠ-ša  
 [AN.TA]-MEŠ-ša <sup>d</sup>EN KI.TA-MEŠ-ša <sup>d</sup>NIN.LIL<sub>2</sub>  
<sup>d</sup>NIN—URU.LI.BUR.NA UM. ʾMEʾ[DA] ša <sup>d</sup>EN ši-i-ma  
 [SARʾ]-MEŠ iš-ru-ka-ši ša<sub>2</sub>-niš an-tum ši-i-ma kis-pa a-na <sup>d</sup>a-num  
 i-kas-si-pu

Ištar-of-Durna (= Nineveh) is Tiamat; she is Bēl's wet nurse.

She has [four eye]s and four ears.

Her upper parts are Bēl; her lower parts are Mulliššu.

The Lady-of-Liburna (= Arbela) is Bēl's mother.

He gave her [ga]rdens;<sup>80</sup> alternatively, she is Antu and they make funerary offerings to Anu.

The fact that the king and Bēl were envisioned by the scribes responsible for *SAA* 3.39 (cf. *SAA* 9.7) as having both a divine mother and a divine wet nurse is indicative of the notion that the divine world is organized around the king.

Accordingly, the main royal duty is one of maintaining the order of the world he was entrusted with by securing its remembrance. Hence, in the second surviving ending for the Sumerian tale of the *Death of Bilgameš* emphasis is given to remembrance: “men past and present live on after death in the memories of those alive” either through votive statues or through one’s family members.<sup>81</sup>

Another pervasive metaphor for ANE kings is that of the bull;<sup>82</sup> kings are imagined as bull-calves, either the sons of powerful divine mothers, who in their ability to bestow abundance are portrayed as cows, or as sexually potent young bulls destined to please Inanna/Ištar. Hence, in Sumerian poetry Bilgameš is often referred to as a bull<sup>83</sup> and his mother Ninsun/Ninsumun is mentioned as the Wild Cow.<sup>84</sup> In fact, Enmerkar, Lugalbanda and Bilgameš – the three legendary kings of Uruk systematically honoured in later legends – were repeatedly praised through bull imagery.<sup>85</sup> Affluent cities were also characterized as bulls: hence, in the *Lord of Aratta* Uruk (known as Kulaba or Unug Kulaba) is referred to as a “majestic bull bearing vigour and great awesome splendour” and its king, the son of the Sumerian Sun god Utu (*dumu<sup>d</sup>utu*, for example, l.68, 104, etc.), born of the “good cow . . . in the heart of the mountains” (ll.179–82), appears as a skilled ox driver (l.206). The tale relates the rivalry of two kings, and both of them are portrayed as bulls: the rival lord of Aratta, who appears to be bellowing like a bull (l.241), was also suckled by the good cow (ll.215–6). The Arattan king portrays his rivalry with Enmerkar in terms of bulls competing with one another (ll.225–8, Vanstiphout and Cooper 2003: 71: “like a bull that does not know the strength of the other bull . . . like a bull that perceives the strength of the other bull”). Lugalbanda, the second king of Uruk after Enmerkar in the *Sumerian King List* and allegedly Bilgameš’s father,<sup>86</sup> was also hailed as a bull in the tales in which he is the protagonist.<sup>87</sup> The bull imagery stressing the overwhelming power of the king, who shares in the nature of the gods, also often described as powerful bulls,<sup>88</sup> seems to carry civilizing as well as teleological significance reaffirming thus the notional triangle among king-culture-death.<sup>89</sup> Of course, historical kings were also addressed as bulls in royal poetry.<sup>90</sup>

Inanna is closely associated with the fortune of Uruk and its legendary kings,<sup>91</sup> and her prominence is particularly obvious in the Enmerkar cycle. Hence, in *Enmerkar and Enšuhkešdanna* she is praised as (l.106) *kù-gal-nin-é-an-na-ke<sub>4</sub>*, “the great holy lady of the Eanna temple,” while Enmerkar is described as her beloved *en* (l.275):<sup>92</sup>

za-e-me-en en-ki-ág-<sup>d</sup>inanna-me-en  
you are the beloved *en* of Inanna.

The substantially longer epic *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* contains similar material.<sup>93</sup> Here Uruk-Kulaba and Eanna are repeatedly associated with Inanna (ll.13–14, 341–2, 383–4) who poses as the divine mistress of Eanna (484 and 624: <sup>d</sup>*inanna nin-é-an-na-ra*; cf. 233: <sup>d</sup>*nin-é-an-na-ka*); Enmerkar is again cast as her chosen *en* (32: *en-šà-ge-pà-da-<sup>d</sup>inanna-ke<sub>4</sub>*).<sup>94</sup> Notably, Inanna is ascribed



Fig. 1.1 Uruk period cylinder; reproduced with the permission of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; cf. Salje 2003: 481; Collon 2005: 174, fig. 807; van Dijk 2011: 198, fig. 18.

a seminal role in the king's establishment in the Lugalbanda cycle too.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, the goddess shares in the bull imagery discussed above in connection with gods and kings not only because she is represented as wearing a horned head-dress in the Warka vase of the Uruk (early dynastic) period<sup>96</sup> but also because her legendary husband Dumuzi is often addressed as "wild bull."<sup>97</sup> The association among bulls, kings, and Inanna seems to hail from the Late Uruk period (3350–3050 BCE), as indicated by a lapis lazuli cylinder seal, now in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin. The cylinder depicts a priest-king in a boat facing a bull which carries a stepped structure on its back [Fig. 1.1].

The function and purpose of the structure is uncertain, but it has been suggested that it may have been a dais for cult statues, an altar or an offering table.<sup>98</sup> Based on the iconography, van Dijk also suggested that this cultic structure implies a connection between the bull and Inanna, especially taking into account that it is surmounted by two ring-posts with streamers which are typically linked to the goddess.<sup>99</sup> Given that the Bull of Heaven is sacrificed to the goddess the argument is appealing.

### Sons or protégés of Utu

Bulls were also associated with the Sun god (Sumerian Utu/Akkadian Šamaš),<sup>100</sup> whose role in the *GE* has already been pointed out. Throughout the first half of the *Epic* the two heroes often bring offerings to Šamaš. Importantly, they do so during their trip to the Cedar Forest and after slaughtering the Bull of Heaven. Following Ninsun's prayer for her son, Šamaš intervenes when Ĥumbaba seems to be getting the better of the two heroes, by launching eight winds that blinded the monster.<sup>101</sup> The gradually more important role of the Sun god as we move from the Sumerian

to the Akkadian versions of the tale has already been pointed out in scholarship,<sup>102</sup> therefore, Tigay observes (1982: 81):

After events in the Old Babylonian period led to a shift in the geographic context in this episode, making Šamaš's original role in the Cedar Mountain episode meaningless, the Old Babylonian version understood his role in accordance with his role in Mesopotamian religion as banisher of baneful forces.

This example is instructive of the way in which old stories were retold; however, the enhanced role of Šamaš may also reflect his establishment by this time as a god of distributing justice and afterlife judgement in connection with the institution of kingship.<sup>103</sup> ANE kings were expected to “establish freedom” (*amar-gi<sub>4</sub>* in Sumerian, *andurārum šakānum* in Akkadian, *kidinnūtam šakānum* in Neo-Assyrian) and “righteousness” (*mēšarum šakānum* in Akkadian).<sup>104</sup> Royal appointments were subject to divine approval<sup>105</sup> and, although this was not the cause of royal legitimacy, it was certainly a powerful expression of it.<sup>106</sup> Hence, a general sense of continuity and tradition was presupposed (or rather encouraged) in the context of which the innovations of specific regimes would be introduced. In Waerzeggers's words:<sup>107</sup>

The good king respected the ancient cult practices. He was the one who “safeguarded the cultic designs” (*muššir ušurāti bītāt ilāni*) and “renewed the temples of the great gods” (*muddiš mähāzi ilāni rabuti*). These and similar epithets put emphasis on the king's duty to transmit the practices of the past unaltered to the future and to renew what had been wronged or undone.

In this context and despite cultural differences vis-à-vis the institution of kingship, ANE monarchs often fashioned themselves as sons or protégés of the Sun god following an particularly enduring royal practice. The precedence of Šamaš over justice became a stable feature of the ancient southern Mesopotamian tradition(s) of kingship at least since the early second millennium and remained popular in the first millennium, during which the piety of the ruler was stressed anew.<sup>108</sup> The theme appears in numerous royal dedications: for example, in the second half of the nineteenth century BCE, Jahdunlim, king of Mari, commissioned the following inscription to the Sun-god:<sup>109</sup>

a-na (il)Šamaš šar ša-me-e ù er-še-ti-im ša-pí-iṭ il i ù a-wi-lu-tim ša me-še-ru-um i-si-ik-šu-ma ki-na-tum a-na še-ri-ik-ti-im ša-ar-ka-šu

to Šamaš, king of heaven and earth, who oversees (the actions of) gods and men whose allotment is *mēšarum* and to whom *kinatum* are given as a gift.

*Mēšarum* and *kittu* (justice and equity) appear as the divine attendants of the Sun god in a trilingual list of gods translated by Pinches,<sup>110</sup> while Ḫammurapi



(1795–1750 BCE) proclaimed himself assertively as *šar mīšarim ša Šamaš kīnātim išrukušum anāku* (king of justice to whom Šamaš has given the law).<sup>111</sup> In the prologue of his famous stela he explained how Šamaš nominated him as the executive hand of justice over the land:<sup>112</sup>

i-nu-mi-šu Ḫa-am-mu-ra-pí ru-ba-a-m na-a'-dam pā-li-iḫ ì-lí ia-ti  
 mi-ša-ra-am i-na ma-tim a-na šū-pí-i-im,  
 ra-ga-am ù še-nam a-na ḫu-ul-lu-qí-im,  
 dan-nu-um en-ša-am a-na la ḫa-ba-li-im,  
 ki-ma <sup>d</sup>Šamaš a-na SAG.GI<sub>6</sub> (šalmat qaqqadim) wa-še-e-em-ma  
 ma-tim nu-wu-ri-im Anum  
 ù <sup>d</sup>EN-LIL a-na šī-ir ni-šī ṭú-ub-bi-im šu-mī ib-bu-ú.

It was then that (me) Ḫammurapi, a pious prince who fears the gods,  
 to make justice appear in the land,  
 to destroy evil and wickedness,  
 to stop the mighty from exploiting the weak,  
 to rise like Šamaš over all humans,  
 to illuminate the land;  
 An and Enlil appointed to improve the welfare of the people.

A few lines later (P4 I: 50–62) Ḫammurapi posed as *rē'um, nibit Ellil, anāku mukammer nuḫšim u tuḫdim* (Enlil's chosen shepherd who heaps up plenty and abundance)<sup>113</sup> and was careful to stress (P7 II: 22–31) that *šar tašimtim, šēmū Šamaš dānum* (he is a prudent king who listens obediently to Šamaš).<sup>114</sup> Much later, the Assyrian king Aššurbanipal (669–627 BCE) prayed to Šamaš about himself similarly:<sup>115</sup>

. . . . li-ir-te-' ba-'-ú-la-ti-ka ša taš-ru-ku-šu ina me-ša-ri  
 May he constantly shepherd over your peoples, whom you [the Sun-god]  
 gave him, in justice.

Surely, the tales of Gilgameš and their lessons on just kingship were looming large in the minds of these rulers with multiple copies of the *GE* being among the acquisitions of Aššurbanipal's famous library.<sup>116</sup> That Aššurbanipal saw himself as another Gilgameš may be suggested by the poem, *The Vision of Kumma*, in which the hero – possibly Aššurbanipal himself<sup>117</sup> – seems to have exceptional knowledge of the Underworld and is thus spared by Nergal in return for spreading his fame among his people.<sup>118</sup> The night vision of Kumma sounds very much like a *katabasis* similar to that attempted by Gilgameš.<sup>119</sup> In the *Epic*, when Enkidu lay stricken with disease (as a result of his killing of Ḫuwawa), the sun god tried to dissuade Enlil from letting him die.<sup>120</sup> Having failed that, he tried to console Enkidu by reassuring him that Gilgameš “will lay [him] down on a magnificent bed” ([i-n]a ma-a-a-al tak-ni-i uš-nā-al-ka-ma, *GE* VII.141).<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, the

poems which the characters of Enkidu and Gilgameš inspired remained to the end of antiquity the greatest evidence that their purpose of immortality had been achieved.

### The search for Utnapištim's garden

The fragmentary remains of the Sumerian *Death of Gilgameš* include a statement according to which the Sumerian king was granted kingship and heroism but not eternal life. In a version of the episode from Meturan (= Tell Haddad) the gods muse over the contributions of Gilgameš focusing especially on his establishment of commemoration rites (ll.57–60):<sup>122</sup>

saġ im-ma-ni-t[i]  
 me ki-en-gi-ra-ke, ki ud ba ĥa-la-me-es  
 â-ag-gâ bi-lu-tâ kalam-ma-as im-ta-a-ni  
 su-luh ka-luh-bi si mu-un-si-sâ-e  
 a-ta?. . . am]a?-ru gû-kin kur-kur-ra rxn [. . .]  
 You brought to the land the *mes* of Sumer,  
 that were forgotten forever,  
 the commandments and the rites  
 Hand washing and mouth washing you put in good order. . . .<sup>123</sup>

Kramer believed that the episode was the source of inspiration for tablets IX–XI of the *GE*<sup>124</sup> where the hero travels to a paradise-like destination,<sup>125</sup> located to the ends of the earth, in order to meet Utnapištim (called Ziusudra in the Sumerian version),<sup>126</sup> the only man to have ever achieved immortality. Under his guidance, Gilgameš hopes to recover the plant of everlasting life. During his adventures the hero comes across numerous characters, including the barmaid Siduri, who knows where the path to cross the sea lies;<sup>127</sup> Gilgameš asks her to (*Gilg.Mi.iii.9–10*):<sup>128</sup>

ki-ib-sa-am ku-ul-li-mi [. . .]  
 šum-ma na-tú tâmta [lu-bi-ir]  
 show (me) the path [. . .]  
 if it be possible, [I will cross] the sea.

In the later versions (*GE* X.73–4 and 150–2 in George 2003: 682–3 and 686–7)<sup>129</sup> Gilgameš asks both Siduri and Uršanabi, the ferryman of Šamaš in his daily course over the sea,<sup>130</sup> to point out to him the way to the garden of Šamaš where Utnapištim lives and affirms his determination to either cross the sea or range over the steppe so long as he will eventually reach him. However, as Clark has noted, although in the Sumerian version of the tale, Ziusudra was immortalized after the Flood in Tilmun, “where the sun rises,”<sup>131</sup> in the Babylonian

version the abode of Utnapištim and the Sun-god's fantastic garden of jewels are described as separated by both the Ocean and the Waters of Death.<sup>132</sup> This has been interpreted to mean that Gilgameš had to travel westwards (allegedly confirmed by the description of darkness and the offer of prayers to the Moon god Sin, *GE IX.8–29*) in order to meet Utnapištim, a detail which the later mythographer drew from the association of the Sun with the Underworld and the cult of deceased ancestors, which was widespread in the Babylonian culture.<sup>133</sup> However, as Woods suggested more recently, Mt. Māšu (*GE IX.37–8*) may well be the location of both the sun's rising and setting (*GE IX.45*) and hence, the hero may be travelling further east beyond the limits of the known world and therefore, beyond the limits of human nature.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, given Utnapištim's assurance that Gilgameš cannot achieve the immortality he is looking for especially given that his adventure has worn him out (*GE X.297–300*) and brought him closer to death, we may infer that the journey is actually about *another* type of immortality, the one secured through commemoration.<sup>135</sup> Interestingly, we are told that when the hero finally met Utnapištim, the latter<sup>136</sup>

challenged Gilgameš by describing him as a king who had been acting like a fool by trying to evade death. Utnapištim emphasized that a king should live a balanced life so that he can both care for the defenceless in his kingdom and tend the sanctuaries of the gods.

Gilgameš, it seems, came full circle, finally accepting the spiritual aspects of royal responsibility; after all, as the text informs us, there was no point in seeking immortality per se since Mammitum, the maker of destiny, fixes every man's fate as unavoidable and secret (*GE X.319–22*).<sup>137</sup> Utnapištim also relates to Gilgameš his own story about the Flood and the ensuing council of the gods which resulted in his immortality (note that Utnapištim was also a king at that time). But Gilgameš has no way of assembling a similar divine council, and he immediately fails Utnapištim's test of forgoing sleep for six days and seven nights. Disillusioned, the hero prepares to return to Uruk in the company of Uršanabi; first, however, Gilgameš must be made to appear more kingly. As they are leaving, Utnapištim finally reveals to Gilgameš the secret of the plant of heartbeat (*šammu nikitti*), which can restore youth (thus secure immortality) and which is inextricably linked with the divine garden that Utnapištim enjoys perpetually. However, Gilgameš fails to acquire it: a snake steals the plant and eats it upon which it sloughs off its skin. At this point, disappointed for a second time, the hero returns to Uruk in the company of Uršanabi, to whom he shows the admirable walls and buildings of the city.<sup>138</sup> This will be the lasting monument that Gilgameš will leave behind, forced to accept his mortality by his very failures in the mythical lands beyond the Waters of Death. As George put it,<sup>139</sup>

By his quest's end what Gilgameš has learnt at first hand, alone among mortals, is this: at the end of life the individual perishes in the passage to death's

realm, but beyond that point in his existence, and necessarily outside his personal experience, stretches the eternal past and future of mankind.

In a nutshell, Gilgameš exemplifies the duties of kingship and the king's role as a medium between gods and humans and expresses the importance of commemoration as the mental, politico-religious space in which human communities fulfil their potential.

Gilgameš's *katabasis* during which he comes across a number of monstrous, otherworldly creatures has the tone of a dream-like experience and seems to elaborate on Enkidu's dream-visit to the Underworld, corresponding to the second of his two dreams which function as death omens.<sup>140</sup> Sumerian poems about the dream and death of the god Dumuzi/Tammuz include long descriptions of his dream, also recognized as a death omen, and its interpretation typically relates how some of the dream elements were eventually realized.<sup>141</sup> In a way, Gilgameš's quest for immortality culminating in his death is also comparable to the descent of the goddess to the Underworld, which seems to have been inspired by a zeal for wisdom, not unlike the zeal of Gilgameš which the OB versions of the *GE* emphasized. Hence, the *incipit* of the *Descent of Inanna* reads<sup>142</sup>

an-gal-ta ki-gal-še<sub>3</sub> ġeštu<sub>2</sub>-ga-ni na-an-gub  
from the Great Above she opened her ear to the Great Below

where the word "ear" in Sumerian also stands for wisdom.<sup>143</sup> The goddess, stripped of her clothes and jewels, as she passes through the seven gates of the Underworld, is struck by her envious sister Ereškigal, ruler of the Underworld, and is "turned into a corpse, a piece of rotting meat, and hung from a hook on the wall,"<sup>144</sup> until rescued and reanimated from the Great Below by her faithful servant, Ninšubur. According to one version, Dumuzi, Inanna's consort, is offered in her stead<sup>145</sup> and, following his descent, his sister, Gestinanna, is desperately trying to raise him from the dead.<sup>146</sup> The only solace for his loss will, of course, be found in annual cult and commemoration.

It has been argued that the Akkadian epic versions of the *Cedar Forest* episode stress the knowledge of Enkidu, who is now portrayed as very different from the wild man of the Sumerian tales; his extraordinary knowledge of the wilderness – though he is no longer portrayed as wild himself – elevates him to a worthy match for Gilgameš, who has a lot to learn from his companion.<sup>147</sup> Overall, however, the adaptation of the Sumerian tales in their epic form indicates a reflective mood in highlighting the impact of Enkidu's death on Gilgameš, who is now cast not so much as a bombastic warrior but rather as a king who has gained immense wisdom through his many adventures and much toiling. As Tigay notes,<sup>148</sup>

it is not precisely a knowledge of death, but of the netherworld and the condition of its inhabitants which is imparted to Gilgameš, a knowledge which seems appropriate in light of his role as king and judge of the netherworld

in Mesopotamian religion. In the Sumerian *Death of Gilgameš*, it is stated, according to one interpretation, that Gilgameš's kingship of the netherworld was a consolation for his failure to attain immortality.

This tendency was marked already in the introduction to the OB version of the *Epic*, which despite beginning with the poet stating his intention to discuss Gilgameš, it almost overlooks the king's heroic adventures *per se*, focusing rather on their outcome, that is, the wisdom which Gilgameš has gained.<sup>149</sup> At the end of this section, the king is said to have engraved a record of "all his toil" in a *narû* inscription and, therefore, it has been suggested that the epic was based on the king's *narû* as a device for achieving immortality – the practice was, after all, widespread all over the ANE, and other royal autobiographical inscriptions specifically urge people to read them and learn from the experiences of past leaders.<sup>150</sup> The second half of the prologue stresses the role of the king as builder of concrete structures as another way of perpetuating his name, as reflected in the *GE* XI.322–8.<sup>151</sup> At any rate, the evolution that the *Epic* undoubtedly went through as it passed down the generations bears witness to the undying interest of audiences in the king's teleological knowledge. Therefore, Jacobsen suggested that the episodes *Death of Gilgameš* and *Gilgameš, Enkidu, and the Netherworld* must have arisen from the hero's role as priest-king embodying the dying fertility-god Dumuzi-Amaušumgalanna, while the tales about *Gilgameš and the Land of the Living*, *Gilgameš and the Bull of Heaven* and *Gilgameš and Akka* arose from his role as military leader.<sup>152</sup> Such a division is not useful, since kings often present their fertility/ritual aspects as overlapping with their military victories – both presented as the result of divine benevolence. A new inscription of Naram-Sin from Uruk corroborates the point (W 4094 col.II<sup>a</sup>, ll.1–8):<sup>153</sup>

ˁNa-ra-amˁ - di<sup>[ngir]</sup>EN.ZU]  
 sipa níg-na[m-šár-ra]  
 ˁUnugˁ<sup>[ki-ga]</sup>  
 lugal <šàˁ?> iri<sup>ki?</sup>-[naˁdu<sub>10</sub>-du<sub>10</sub>(?)]  
 dingir ma-d[aˁ-naˁ]  
 u<sub>4</sub> An <sup>d</sup>Ina[<sup>nna-ke<sub>4</sub></sup>]  
 nam-lugal Unug<sup>ki</sup>-g[a]  
 ˁma-anˁ-sum-m[u-uš-a]  
 u<sub>4</sub>-b[a <sup>giš</sup>tukul k]alag-ˁgaˁ-[gá-ta]  
 ˁídˁˁ U[nug]<sup>ki-gaˁ</sup> [. . . . .](empty space) [. . . . .]

Naram-[Šin], shepherd  
 [who makes] everything [abundant for]  
 Uruk,  
 king [who gladdens] the heart of [his] city,  
 god of [his] land –  
 when An (and) Inanna  
 granted me the kingship of Uruk,

at that time,  
 [by my] mighty [weapon],  
 [I . . .] the canal of Uruk [. . .]

### The garden of the goddess

In *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* (*Gilgameš, Enkidu, and the Netherworld*), the second half of which is appended to Tablet XII of the *GE*,<sup>154</sup> Gilgameš is on good terms with the goddess. In fact, he acts as her gardener, doing pest control on her favourite tree from which he even makes out a throne and a bed for her. In turn, she makes him from the same tree a magical drum and drumstick with which Gilgameš used to summon warriors to battle. The story, which notably conflates the creation of the cosmos with the introduction of civilization, begins with the following lines (ll.4–10)<sup>155</sup>

ud ul níĝ du<sub>7</sub>-e pa è-a-ba  
 ud ul níĝ du<sub>7</sub>-e mí zid dug<sub>4</sub>-ga-a-ba  
 èš kalam-ma-ka ninda šú-a-ba  
 im<sub>3</sub>šu-rin-na kalam-ma-ka níĝ-tab ak-a-ba  
 an ki-ta ba-ta-bad-rá-a-ba  
 ki an-ta ba-ta-sur-ra-a-ba  
 mu nam-lú-u<sub>18</sub>-lu ba-an-ĝar-ra-a-ba

In primeval days, when that which is eminently suitable had become  
 manifest,

In primeval days, when that which is eminently suitable had been well cared  
 for,

When the bread had been consumed in the sanctuaries of the land,

When the ovens of the land had been heated up

When heaven had been separated from the earth,

When the earth had been demarcated from heaven,

When the name of humankind had been established

At that time, Inanna saw a plant and was taken by its beauty. She instantly decided to take it back to Uruk, to “plant this tree in [her] holy garden.”<sup>156</sup> Hence, the *huluppu* flourished in “pure Inanna’s fruitful garden” in the sanctuary at Uruk.<sup>157</sup> Gilgameš is here addressed as Inanna’s “brother.” When a serpent made its home at the root of the tree, the Zû-bird nested at its top and the demon Lilith made her house in the middle of the tree, only Gilgameš was willing to help the goddess recover it with the help of young men from the city. Hence, Gilgameš undertook yet another adventure, this time in honour of the goddess who showered him with divine support. Gilgameš’s adventures in paradise locations, his preoccupation with the plant of immortality and his role in recovering Inanna’s *huluppu* tree seem to promote the idea of the garden as a politico-religious space, a gateway of communicating with the divine which was typically understood as a royal privilege. Having failed to secure life in the everlasting garden of Šamaš, Gilgameš

now turns his energies to his own garden, his city Uruk, where he converses with the gods.<sup>158</sup>

In Mesopotamia, a king was often addressed as “gardener,”<sup>159</sup> with gardening and ploughing being powerful metaphors for civilization. The latter is patently obvious in the passionate exchanges between Dumuzi and Inanna during their so-called sacred marriage that was enacted during the Sumerian New Year Festival (cf. Chapter 2: pp. 71–2). Hence, in an Old Babylonian copy of a Sumerian love poem praising their sacred love Inanna sings of her vulva, her “uncultivated land,” and asks, “who will plow it?” Dumuzi offers himself for the task.<sup>160</sup> Metaphorically, then, the fertile grove is the goddess herself, and the king (who also poses as farmer or shepherd in royal hymns) shares her responsibility for establishing the laws that rule civilized life. In the poem Gilgameš drives away the intruders from the divine tree and uproots it in order to make a throne and bed for the goddess, gifts which exalt her power beyond the threats of death and decay which rule human life. From this point of view, the garden becomes an important politico-religious symbol which exemplifies an ideal state of harmonious communication with the gods, typically achieved through a successful ruler. On the significance of gardens in ancient Mesopotamia, Dalley notes:<sup>161</sup>

The Babylonians and Assyrians planted gardens in cities, palace courtyards, and temples, in which trees with fragrance and edible fruits were prominent for re-creating their concept of Paradise.

A tree, either real or artificial, typically took the central position in palace courtyards.<sup>162</sup> Palace gardens (*kirī ekalim*) were mentioned in Babylon from the reign of Adad-shuma-usur (1218–1189 BCE) onwards, while the concern of the Assyrian Tiglath Pileser I (1115–1077 BCE) for his orchards is well documented.<sup>163</sup> Although it has been argued that Aššurbanipal II (833–859 BCE) was the first ruler to have appreciated the political potential of his royal garden,<sup>164</sup> the notion, as we saw, was already advocated in Sumerian mythology and royal practice. Hence, Sargon I, the founder of the Akkadian-Sumerian Empire, tells us in his birth legend that he was the son of a priestess; abandoned by his mother at a local river, he was rescued and raised by his adoptive father, Akki the irrigator, who set him to become a gardener. Strikingly Sargon explains that his services as a gardener were pleasing to Ištar and that he became king on account of this (*Legend of Sargon*, ll.11–13).<sup>165</sup> His example was emulated by future kings,<sup>166</sup> who portrayed themselves as gardeners by dedicating their energies to building impressive royal gardens.

Hence, Sargon II (722–705 BCE) boasted in an inscription that he built a “park like unto Mount Amanus” by the side of his new capital. Herein, we are told, stood “every tree of the Hittite land and plants of every mountain.” Stronach has argued that a bas-relief found in the northern wing of Sargon’s palace “could very well provide a view of the park in question.”<sup>167</sup> Sennacherib (704–681 BCE) also built a garden in the steps of his father as a means of embellishing his capital, Nineveh. Stronach again argued that another bas-relief found at the palace

of Aššurbanipal may depict the garden of his grandfather Sennacherib,<sup>168</sup> who boasted that he was instructed by Aššur and Ištar as to where to construct it.<sup>169</sup> Babylon's Nebuchadnezzar pushed the concept to new heights by building a magnificent garden of mountainous character in the city for his Median consort, who "longed for mountainous surroundings."<sup>170</sup> The notion was apparently utilized by the Achaemenids<sup>171</sup> and was familiar to the Israelite kings, with Qoheleth (= Solomon) introducing his book on the vanity of pleasures thus (Ecc.2:4–6):<sup>172</sup>

הגדלתי מעשתי בְּבָתֵּי לִי בְּתַיִם נִטְעַתִּי לִי כַרְמִים:  
 עָשִׂיתִי לִי גִּזְוֹת וּפְרָדְסִים וְנִטְעַתִּי בָהֶם עֵץ כָּל־פְּרִי:  
 עָשִׂיתִי לִי בְּרִקְוֹת מַיִם לְהִשְׁקֹת מִתְּהָם יַעַר צֹמֵם עֲצִיִּם:

I multiplied my possessions, I built myself houses and I planted vineyards.  
 I laid out gardens and groves, in which I planted every kind of fruit tree.  
 I constructed pools of water, enough to irrigate a forest shooting up with trees.

Such royal gardens were often created next to palace complexes or temples, and the political message they promoted stressed the harmony between the king and the gods, who showered him with their "affection" (i.e. benevolence). As Turner suggested:<sup>173</sup>

a temple is a part of our world which shares most fully in the heavenly realm and must be fit for the god's presence. It is, as it were, a little piece of heaven on earth, or at least it corresponds to the heavenly original as an earthly replica, a mirror of its model or a microcosm of the cosmos as a whole.

But such a microcosm is never complete without its garden, the portal through which kings converse with the gods. The garden, in fact, resembles the paradise that Gilgameš tries to reach; it has a dream-like quality, similar to the dreams sent directly from the gods.<sup>174</sup> Therefore, the royal garden is an expression of the divine protection that the king enjoys and a symbol of the flourishing of the community under his rule.<sup>175</sup> Since the dead retain (part of) their earthly status in the afterlife, it is crucial for the community to project its happiest phase. Furthermore, in her recent analysis of ANE temple architecture, Dalley argued that the popular motif of the palm tree on temple façades, already since the OB period, is used to

represent groves of trees, in touch with the Underworld, surrounding a high mountain, in touch with the sky.

Interestingly, Dalley suggests that the *GE* may have provided inspiration for such temple façades, since two stone sculptures, discovered at Tell al-Rimah, depict the face of Ḫumbaba bringing to mind Tablet V of the Epic, where Enkidu and Gilgameš approach the wondrous forest in which the monster lives.<sup>176</sup> Ḫumbaba, Dalley reminds us, was appointed by Enlil to guard the forest, which represents



the residence of heavenly gods as well as an entrance to the Underworld. The other garden, of course, associated with Gilgameš's adventures is the sun-filled place which the hero arrives at after travelling through a long, dark tunnel, an otherworldly garden where precious stones replace fruit (*GE IX.170–96* in George 2003: 673–5).<sup>177</sup> Notably, however, the garden is not an aspiration for kings only, but also for every worshipper who aspires to mirror the achievements of legendary kings. As Dalley suggests,<sup>178</sup>

Representations of trees in gemstones, coral, sea-shells, and shining bronze or copper . . . are the . . . inspiration for the jewel-garden which a worshipper might glimpse as he stood on the steps at the entrance to the symbolised temple-forest . . .

Through the king, therefore, the members of a community get to experience divine benevolence, to enjoy the divine garden and even claim a form of immortality realized through remembrance.

### The garden and the Greeks

The Greeks were not indifferent to the ideology of royal gardens, which, as explained above, symbolize unbreakable divine favour and evoke the “sacred marriage” between the king and the goddess.<sup>179</sup> Their appreciation of ANE palace gardens and their symbolic meanings is evident already in Herodotus' description of a beautiful palace at Celaenae in Phrygia (7.26–9), which Xenophon, a fervent admirer of the Persian court, had also visited (*Anab.1.2.7–9*). Furthermore, in his very popular *Cyropaedia* (1.3.14)<sup>180</sup> Xenophon describes how Astyages the Mede offered his grandson Cyrus the privilege of hunting in his paradise as a gesture of recognizing his legitimacy – the boy was destined to become the next king.<sup>181</sup> Xenophon is actually very appreciative of the relationship between kingship and agriculture, as exemplified in the tale of Cyrus the Younger and his paradise at Sardis, which is related in the *Oeconomicus* (4.8–5.20); there, we read that, when Lysander was shown around this magnificent royal garden, he was surprised to realize that the king himself toiled regularly in the garden and was responsible for the impeccable alignment of its rows;<sup>182</sup> the king, as Critobulus, another of Socrates' interlocutors in the treatise, points out, “pays as much attention to husbandry as to warfare” (*Oec.4.12: οὐκοῦν εἰ μὲν δὴ ταῦτα ποιεῖ βασιλεύς, ὃ Σώκρατες, οὐδὲν ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ ἦττον τῶν γεωργικῶν ἔργων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἢ τῶν πολεμικῶν*), to which Socrates responds (*Oec.4.13*) that

ἔτι δὲ πρὸς τούτοις, ἔφη ὁ Σωκράτης, ἐν ὁπόσαις τε χώραις ἐνοικεῖ καὶ εἰς ὁπόσας ἐπιστρέφεται, ἐπιμελεῖται τούτων ὅπως κῆποι τε ἔσονται, οἱ παράδεισοι καλούμενοι, πάντων καλῶν τε κάγαθῶν μεστοὶ ὅσα ἡ γῆ φύειν θέλει, καὶ ἐν τούτοις αὐτὸς τὰ πλεῖστα διατρίβει, ὅταν μὴ ἡ ὥρα τοῦ ἔτους ἐξείργη.

In all the districts he [= the king] resides in and visits he takes care that there are “paradises,” as they call them, full of all the good and beautiful things that the soil will produce, and in this he himself spends most of his time, except when the season precludes it.

Cyrus (*Oec.*4.24)<sup>183</sup> swears by the Sun-god – the kings’ typical patron – that he engages daily in some task of war *or* agriculture (further equating the two activities as royal duties). In response, Lysander concedes that Cyrus deserves his happiness on account of his virtues.<sup>184</sup> At *Oec.*5.2, Socrates explains that the earth – typically identified with the fertility goddess, as we saw, in the sacred marriage context – yields to the cultivators “luxuries to enjoy” (*καὶ ἀφ’ ὧν τοίνυν ἡδυπαθοῦσι, προσεπιφέρει*). Yet at the same time, the earth “stimulates armed protection of the country on the part of the husbandmen, by nourishing her crops in the open for the strongest to take” (*Oec.*5.7: *παρορμᾷ δέ τι καὶ εἰς τὸ ἀρήγειν σὺν ὄπλοις τῇ χώρᾳ καὶ ἡ γῆ τοὺς γεωργοὺς ἐν τῷ μέσῳ τοὺς καρπὸς τρέφουσα τῷ κρατοῦντι λαμβάνειν*). Moreover, she “willingly teaches righteousness to those who can learn; for the better she is served, the more good things she gives in return” (*Oec.*5.12: *ἔτι δὲ ἡ γῆ θεὸς οὖσα τοὺς δυναμένους καταμανθάνειν καὶ δικαιοσύνην διδάσκει: τοὺς γὰρ ἄριστα θεραπεύοντας αὐτὴν πλεῖστα ἀγαθὰ ἀντιποιεῖ*). Xenophon’s observations, ingeniously put in the mouth of Socrates, accurately explain the ideology of the sacred marriage which, as we saw, were often allegorized in ANE myths about good and bad farmers and/or gardeners who please or displease the fertility goddess with their labour. In similar spirit, at *Oec.*5.19–20, Socrates admits to Critobulus that the operations of husbandry no less than those of war are in the hands of the gods.

ἀλλ’ ὦμην ἔγωγέ σε, ὦ Κριτόβουλε, εἰδέναι ὅτι οἱ θεοὶ οὐδὲν ἥττον εἰσι κύριοι τῶν ἐν τῇ γεωργίᾳ ἔργων ἢ τῶν ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ. καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ ὀρᾷς, οἶμαι, πρὸ τῶν πολεμικῶν πράξεων ἐξαρεσκομένους τοὺς θεοὺς καὶ ἐπερωτῶντας θυσίαις καὶ οἰωνοῖς ὃ τι τε χρῆ ποιεῖν καὶ ὃ τι μή: περὶ δὲ τῶν γεωργικῶν πράξεων ἥττον οἶε δεῖν τοὺς θεοὺς ἰλάσκεσθαι; εὔ γὰρ ἴσθι, ἔφη, ὅτι οἱ σῶφρονες καὶ ὑπὲρ ὑγρῶν καὶ ξηρῶν καρπῶν καὶ βοῶν καὶ ἵππων καὶ προβάτων καὶ ὑπὲρ πάντων γε διὴ τῶν κτημάτων τοὺς θεοὺς θεραπεύουσιν.

I thought you knew, Critobulus, that the operations of husbandry no less than those of war are in the hands of the gods. And you observe, I suppose, that men engaged in war try to propitiate the gods before taking action; and with sacrifices and omens seek to know what they ought to do and what they ought not to do; and for the business of husbandry do you think it less necessary to ask the blessing of the gods? Know of a surety that right-minded men offer prayer for fruits and crops and cattle and horses and sheep, aye and for all that they possess.

What more appropriate way of propitiating the goddess than “pleasing her sexually” so she would continue to yield crops for the people and vouch for their safety in enjoying them? And who more appropriate to undertake the task than the king, the dedicated gardener of the goddess?

The image of the king as gardener was certainly appreciated by Seleucus I, who, following divine advice, dedicated his famous garden at Daphne, just outside Antioch,<sup>185</sup> to Apollo and Artemis.<sup>186</sup> The grove, famous for its abundance of shady laurel trees, tall cypresses and perennial fountains [see cover image], was closely associated with the foundation of the Seleucid dynasty and Apollo, their divine patron; its importance in the political propaganda of the Seleucids was further enhanced under Antiochus III the Great and Antiochus IV.<sup>187</sup>

## Conclusion

As we saw, both Enkidu and Gilgameš had been warned about their deaths in dreams. Dream divination was very important in the ANE and typically connected with royal decisions.<sup>188</sup> Message dreams in the ANE commonly appear as divine statements confirming the power of a ruler at a time of crisis.<sup>189</sup> DeJong Ellis has noted that various divinatory signs, including oracles, omens and dreams, were used to legitimate a king since they could thus claim that their power was god sent – much later, Alexander and the successors clearly appreciated similar techniques in advocating their divinely entrusted power.<sup>190</sup> The earliest example of a royal dream message is probably the Stele of the Vultures, where a god reassures the king about the outcome of a war.<sup>191</sup> There are numerous examples of ambitious kings, such as the Hittite Hattušiliš III or the Babylonian Nabonidus, in essence, usurpers who needed desperately to legitimate their power.<sup>192</sup> The *Annals* of the Neo-Assyrian king Aššurbanipal include several references to dreams which fall under this category.<sup>193</sup> From this point of view, dreams in the tradition of Gilgameš represent an important path of communication between gods and mortals designed to lay out not only the glory but, crucially, the responsibilities of the king towards his people, the most important of which is his role in instituting death and commemoration rites. Still, visible ways of promoting the king’s unique stance between gods and humans were always sought, and from the time of the Assyrian kings onwards royal gardens seem to project the dream-like quality of the king’s communication with the divine. Centuries later, Xenophon discusses the importance of paradises in Persian kingship and explains the rudiments of this very important cultural metaphor to his Greek readers with remarkable perceptiveness. Xenophon’s influence on Hellenistic rulers paves a secure, though rarely noted in scholarship, path for the propagation of ANE political ideology<sup>194</sup> among the ambitious generals that vied for the conquests of Alexander following his untimely demise. Although establishing a direct link between literature and historical practice is challenging at the best of times, the tradition of Gilgameš, as it evolved across the ANE, seems to contain, even in a nascent form, the messages that later kings (including Hellenistic kings as we shall see in Chapter 4) chose to exploit in their propagandas.

## Notes

- 1 Text and trans. by Lamb 1952: 320–1: “then the soul must be immortal; so that you should take heart and, whatever you do not happen to know at present – that is, what you do not remember – you must endeavour to search out and recollect?” Also see Faulkner, an American poet known for his use of Platonic ideas, who wrote (1968: 111), “Memory believes before knowing remembers.”
- 2 Assmann 2011: 19–20; also see his pp. 173–4, where he argues about the identification of culture with cosmos: “[T]he conviction that there had been a seamless continuation from creation right through to the present survived even the major upheavals of the first millennium BCE; not only it was not weakened but it was even enhanced to a very special awareness of a unique identity.” Although Assmann discusses our creation of memory within a hierarchical and urbanized environment, he does not quite explain culture as an attempt to overcome our ephemeral nature (cf. Intr.: nn.70–73); also see Smith (1998: 309) discussing Ugaritic traditions about Baal’s “precarious kingship” at divine, human and natural levels and Pongratz-Leisten (2001: 202) on the identification of creation with the introduction of civilization in Mesopotamian traditions.
- 3 See Pongratz-Leisten (2001: 201), who argues that while the power of a city-god “can only be universalized in dependence on the political rulership of a city, it is very easy to postulate an unlimited realm of power for a sun-god.”
- 4 For ritual as a form of language, a performative utterance that enhances collective memory, see Ricoeur 1976: 45–69. For the role of priesthoods in ancient societies as centres of monopolizing religious authority and political power, see Wheatley 1971: 303–4; Wheatley argued that the unstable ecological condition in Mesopotamia produced a system of worship that was preoccupied with deities responsible for the seasonal cycle; cf. Frazer 1890: 1.396: “Thus their views of the death and resurrection of nature would be coloured by their views of the death and resurrection of man, by their personal sorrows and hopes and fears.” Also see Whitehouse 2000: 171–3. Yet cf. Livingstone (1986: 162–3), who questioned the connection of myths to ritual.
- 5 On dreams in the ancient Near East, see Oppenheim 1956: esp.184, where he suggested that in ancient Mesopotamia dreams existed as revelations from a deity that might require interpretation, as reflections of the state of the dreamer and as divinatory signs for the future. Although Oppenheim argued that no samples of the second type have been recorded, Butler (1998: 61) discussed a number of rituals relating to dreams which indicate that people were anxious to prevent ghosts from appearing in dreams or averting bad omens through rituals that propitiated the divine messengers; cf. Butler 1998: 89–95; also Noegel (2007: 66–70), who also discusses the role of punning in dreams.
- 6 Cf. Saggis 1962: 361.
- 7 George 2003: 7–17.
- 8 Postgate 1994: 24–8; Kuhrt 1995: 31–2.
- 9 Text and trans. Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 202. For kingship as divinely sanctioned, see Lambert (1960: 155) citing lines 1–6 of the *Tamarisk and Palm-tree* tale: [*in*]a ú-mi-im ul-lu-tim i-na ša-na-tim ru-qa-tim i-nu-ma [šumûm] ‘iz-zî`-qú ù eršetum mu-ba-tam i-ta-an-ḥu ‘i`-lu a-na ‘a-we`-lu-tim/ x-bu ip-ša-ḥu ù x-du-ši-im nu-uḥ-ša-am da-x-ni/ [a-n]a šu-te-ši-ir ma-tim gu-šu-úr ni-ši uq-bu ša-ra-am/ [x]x am ki ši a-na ša-pa-ri-im ša-al-ma-at qa-qa-di ni-ši ma-da-tim/ [ša-ru-u]m i-na ki-s[al]-li-šu i-za-qa-ap gi-ši-ma-ra-am i-ta-x-x (In former days, in far-off years when / [the Heavens] were grieved and the earth groaned at / evening time, the gods . . . / to mankind, they became appeased and granted them / abundance . . . / To guide the land and establish the peoples they appointed / a king. / [. . .] To rule the black headed, the many peoples / [The king] planted the Palm in his courtyard).
- 10 Postgate 1994: 33.

- 11 Note that this notion is also retained in the Standard Babylonian version of the *GE* where Enkidu acknowledges that Gilgameš governs with Enlil's approval (Tablet II.35–6); also see Annus (2002: 23 with n.60) observing that in the OB version of the *Epic of Gilgameš* (*SACT* 1, *Gilg.*II.104) the god who bestows kingship on Gilgameš is Enlil. For the sources of the Babylonian version and its relationship to its Sumerian originals, see George 2003: 17–27, esp.19, who discussed the dream of doom and the offering of grave goods to the Underworld deities as the main motifs shared by the Sumerian episode on the Death of Bilgameš and Tablets VII–VIII of the *GE* describing the death and funeral of Enkidu. His observation highlights the importance which Sumerian material pertaining to the contribution of Gilgameš and Enkidu to death ideology and funerary rites held for later Babylonian audiences.
- 12 Kuhrt 1995: 29.
- 13 George (2003: 48) argued that the Standard Babylonian version consists of two parts: the first comprises Tablets I–V while the second comprises Tablets VII–XI. Tablet VI connects the two parts and Tablet XII is considered a separate text. Here, I use the abbreviation *GE* for the Standard Babylonian version and George's edition.
- 14 West 1997: 65; Noegel 2005: 240.
- 15 Klein (2000: 204–6) examines bilingual literary texts from Emar and Ugarit in the second millennium BCE arguing that at that time “the Western scribes were trained in Mesopotamian tradition of learning, including the heritage of Sumerian language and literature. . . . the Sumerian literary texts were also usually translated into the more familiar Akkadian.” Of course, the tradition of Gilgameš is prominent among the texts translated.
- 16 Klein (2000: 204–7) and Cohen (2012: 139–40) discuss the *Ballad of Early Rulers* found in Ugarit and preceded by a standard Sumerian version, a syllabically written Sumerian version and a third one in which the Sumerian column is missing. The reconstruction of the text was facilitated by an Emar duplicate written in Standard Sumerian, syllabic Sumerian and Akkadian. The poem, which has a reflective tone on mortal fate, asks [text (obv.11–14 and rev.15–6) and trans. from Cohen 2012: 139; cf. Klein 2000: 206–7 (col.III.11–16)]: (Where is Alulu [who reigned 36,000 years?]/ Where is Entena who went up to [heaven]? / Where is Gil[gameš w]ho [sought] li[fe] like (that of) [Zius]udra? / Where is Ĥu[wawa who . . .] / Where is Enkidu who [*proclaimed*] (his) strength throughout the land? / Where is Bazi? Where is Zizi?) For the close affinity of the *Ballad* with the *Epic of Gilgameš*, see Cohen 2013: 147.
- 17 Therefore, in the *Song of the Hoe* (*TCL* 16:72) or in the *Praise of Nippur and the Ekur* (*UET* 6/1.118 iv.19–30) mankind, immediately after being created, gets the hoe in order to start building work on canals, cities and temples. See Pettinato (1971: 34) arguing that the creation of man and his designation to work are motives closely interconnected in Mesopotamian literature and Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 202, esp.nn.54–6.
- 18 Pollock 1999: 175–6; although Pollock maintains that the work was done in honour of the gods and in aid of the community (see his p. 179), the gods also sanctioned the cities and their kings; cf. George (1999: xlvi) commenting on the building program of Gilgameš in the *Standard Babylonian* version and its importance in establishing his kingship; he draws special attention to later inscriptions that credit to him the building of the walls of Uruk. In a possible Assyrian gloss on the *GE* the walls of Uruk are likely to stress the role of the king as temple builder while propagating Assyrian royal ideology to future kings; Weeks 2007: 81–5. Yet it seems that the importance of royal building was hinted already in an OB inscription of king AN-ām (*SAKI* 222, no.2b; Falkenstein 1963: 18–22), where Gilgameš is recorded as the builder of Uruk's walls. Tigay (1982: 147) also stressed the futility of royal ambition; cf. George 2003: 91, 446, 539 and pp. 39–40 above.
- 19 Cf. Šulgi Hymn O in which Šulgi calls Gilgameš “brother-friend” (*šeš.ku-li*).
- 20 Tigay 1982: 107; Ackerman 2005: 44 with nn.43–4; George 1999: esp.144 (then *passim* to 193), for Enkidu as Gilgameš's servant in the Sumerian episodes. As Postgate

- (1994: 260) argued, political power in Mesopotamia was a complex matter. Hence, the terms applied to rulers were also diverse; also Lambert 1998: 55–6. For the cultic title *en* and the prominent priestly duties of ANE kings, see Kuhrt 1995: 34.
- 21 Davenport (2007: 3–7, esp.7) comments on the differences between the oppressive rule of Bilgameš in the Sumerian version and that of Gilgameš in the Babylonian version, though she notes they both relate “violations of the social norms of society.”
  - 22 Cf. Rubio (2014: 229–30) drawing attention to OB version of Tablet II of the *Epic*, the Pennsylvania tablet (rev.i.25–30), where in his view Gilgameš’s arrogance is especially emphasized; cf. George 2003: 178–9.
  - 23 See Tigay 1977: 217, esp.nn.26–8.
  - 24 See Nortwick 1997: 350; also George (2003: 20) for Enkidu as Gilgameš’s *alter ego*. While the complementarity of the two heroes is beyond doubt, my suggestion need not contradict it; after all, a ruler was to guide his people as a shepherd guides and protects his sheep; Westenholz and Westenholz 2000: 443; George 1999: xvi. But the royal profile was negotiated with the help of his people as we see in the adventures of Gilgameš to the cedar forest, where he seeks the approval of both the elder and the young people of the city.
  - 25 Postgate 1994: 216; starting with Saggs (1962: 37–9) the idea that early Mesopotamian cities were ruled democratically by means of an elected city council was aired – see, for example, Gilgameš asking the approval of the Council of Elders before going to face Humbaba.
  - 26 George 2003: 8–9; the historical aspects of the tale as referring to the conflict between Uruk and Kish are discussed by Katz 1993: 11–15; cf. id. (1987: 106), where she argues that although the text cannot be used for historical reconstruction, “once literary and realistic elements are identified, it becomes possible to trace the process of redaction which the composition underwent.”
  - 27 George 2003: 117–19.
  - 28 Davenport 2007: 20.
  - 29 Davenport (2007: 21) understands the scene as mockery of imperial ambition but misses the fact that the *Epic*, though re-written during the later Babylonian period, was not re-written with one ruler in mind, even if certain references seem to apply to Naram-Sin. Rather, the *Epic* seems to have functioned as an ever-renewed *speculum dominorum*.
  - 30 Tigay 1982: 146–7 with n.23.
  - 31 For the popularity of the tale down to the Babylonian period and the possibility of an independent Akkadian version of the tale, see Fleming and Milstein 2010: 3–5; cf. George 2010: *passim*. For the variation between the Sumerian and Akkadian versions of the tale to suit the political interests of the early second-millennium Ur kingdom, also see Fleming and Milstein 2010: 9–11. The Akkadian versions, the authors claim, portray a much more knowledgeable Enkidu, who “was never a wild man separate from humans.” On this, also cf. p. 41 above.
  - 32 The two heroic episodes appear side by side throughout the second part of the *Epic*. The first mention of the two adventures, originally part of the beginning of Tablet VII, is lost and therefore reconstructed according to the Middle Babylonian fragment (f) from Boğazköy and the Hittite “paraphrase”; see George 2003: 308, 314–15, 478; the importance of the two episodes is stressed through their repetition in Tablets XIII and X. George (2003: 16–17, 23, 99) has pointed out that the death of Enkidu in the *GE* does not seem to necessitate the killing of the Bull of Heaven, as shown by the OB accounts; on this, cf. Ornan 2010: 238–40.
  - 33 See *GE* V iv.7–15 (Heidel); George 1999: 79; Fleming and Milstein (2010: 48–9) noted that the speaking role of the sun god has no counterpart in the Pennsylvania Tablet, but it appears in the Sippar tablet; given that Sippar was the cult centre of the Sun god (for example, see Leick 2002: 172; *KAT*<sup>3</sup>, 533–4, 540), it makes sense that Šamaš was given a greater role in the OB version of the *Epic*.

- 34 Gilgameš also refers to corpses being thrown in a nearly overflowing river, which may allude to the fact that no death rites had been instituted at that time. Hence, his civilizing efforts are especially linked to his introduction of funerary rites.
- 35 George 2003: 11.
- 36 See George 2010: 111–13, and esp. 112 for 1.131 quoted above. In the *Epic* Enkidu angrily hurls the bull’s shoulder at Ištar threatening that he would do the same to her (VI.154–7). Cf. Andersen (1997: 29) for the similarities between this episode and Diomedes’s wounding of Aphrodite in *Il.5.336*. Inanna’s fragile relationship with ANE rulers is further discussed in Chapter 2: pp. 69–72.
- 37 George 2003: 175; cf. his p. 53 for the fate of the horns in the *GE*, where they are dedicated to Lugalbanda, Gilgameš’s personal god.
- 38 Orlin (2007: 104) discusses the immaturity of Gilgameš as seen in his mother’s complaint to Šamaš, discussed above, but also in the response of the elder of the city to Gilgameš’s insistence to undertake the journey to the Cedar Forest (III.v.37): “Child-like, may you attain your wish!” (= OB III.vi.265 in George 2003: 206–7).
- 39 Abusch (1986: 163–6) draws attention to the gradual shift in Gilgameš’s list of the previous, ill-fated lovers of the goddess in *GE* VI.22–79 from wilderness to civilized life. Also see his pp. 167–73, where he argues that the goddess’s proposal caused Gilgameš to undertake a *katabasis* to the Underworld, much in the same way that Dumuzi met his fate because of his affair with her.
- 40 Abusch 1986: 178.
- 41 Davenport 2007: 15 also citing Harris (1991: 164) discusses the inversion of traditional gender roles in this scene where Ištar pursues the king, who is portrayed on the defensive. However, in my view, the text utilizes gender norms not because it intends to negotiate gender issues in ancient Mesopotamia but to point to the political upheaval that Gilgameš’s rejection of Inanna brings about. Other ANE kings who caused the wrath of the goddess also react in “unmanly” ways; for example, Šukaletuda goes into hiding (Chapter 2: pp. 69–70).
- 42 Davenport 2007: 15.
- 43 George 2010: 108.
- 44 In his fourth dream Gilgameš sees a thunderbird described as having a “visage distorted” (*GE* IV, lines supplemented by the OB Nippur 15; George 1999: 35; id. 2003: 242–5). In the dream, a man, whom Enkidu identified with Šamaš “[bound] its wings and took hold of my arm.” Enkidu understands the bird to symbolize Humbaba, whom the two heroes will defeat with the help of the Sun god. In the *GE* VII Enkidu has a similar dream in which the man is described as “frightening” (George 1999: 60) and who seems to be doing the same thing to Enkidu himself; after striking him and turning him into a dove, “[he bound] my arms like the wings of a bird” (George 1999: 61); cf. George 2003: 464–5 and 834 on Dumuzi’s comparison with the *allallu* bird; Davenport 2007: 10–11; Jacobsen 1987: 31 (II.41–2). Also see Mander (1999: 98), who identified the expression “the soul flies from the body of Dumuzi as a hawk flies at another bird” as a common Mesopotamian bird/soul simile; cf. his n.24 pointing out that in the Akkadian *Descent of Ištar* we come across the dead as clothed with feathers like birds (1.10); also Hays 2011: 51. Hence, in the ANE a long-standing tradition was at work according to which the dead were compared to birds or flying insects. Again, cf. Mander (1999: 98 with n.22), who sees in the ephemeral existence of the dragonflies described in *GE* X.312–6 a symbolic allusion to man’s mortality.
- 45 George 2010: 110 (A i.rev.9–10).
- 46 Wolkstein and Kramer 1983: 44–5.
- 47 Sefati (1998: 112) noted the similarity between the excitement of Inanna upon seeing Gilgameš and her reaction upon seeing king Šulgi in *Hymn* X.9–13, where Šulgi plays Dumuzi. Taking the point further, I suggest that the assumption of kingship is understood metaphorically as embarking on a sexual affair with the goddess of cosmic harmony, an aspect of Inanna also reflected in her fertility potency.

- 48 The toys are called *gis-ellag* and *gis-e-ke<sub>2</sub>-ma* in the Sumerian version and *pukku* and *mukku* in the Akkadian; see Vermaak 2011: 111n.5 citing Klein 2002: 187–201, George 2003: 899, and Rollinger 2006: *passim* (esp.12–13), all appreciating the toys in connection with ball games. Of course, from a classicist’s point of view the connection between sports and politics would be appealing. Yet Vermaak (pp. 120–1 and 130–1) discusses them in connection with board games and the teleological aspects of Ištar. In his view, the decoration of the boards, found in the Royal Cemetery of Ur, and their “geometry” is likely connected with underworld beliefs; comparison with Egyptian board games further indicates that the board likely signified the various stages of the journey of dead souls to the Underworld. This idea is certainly compatible with the Sumerian version of the tale, where Gilgamesh loses his toys when they fall in the Underworld. But while Vermaak discusses the figures of the lion, the tree and the human body, he does not examine the figure of the bull and its death connections. For the connection of bulls with messages about kingship, see McInerney 2010: 41.
- 49 Gadotti 2014b: 84–8 suggests that in the Sumerian version Enkidu returns to life by means of the Sun-god’s gust of wind (*si-si-ig*, GEN 1.243), although the Akkadian redactor who substituted the standard descriptions of Enkidu as Gilgamesh’s “servant” (*ŠAH* = *šubur*) with references to his ghost (*UDUG* = *utukku*) – incited by the revised relationship of the two men in the Akkadian version – understood Enkidu to have died.
- 50 See George 2003: 14; also cf. his pp. 131–2 discussing the “Gate of Gilgamesh” and its association to funerary libations.
- 51 See nn.52 below and Chapter 2: n.24. Aubert (2009: 128–9) questioned Gilgamesh’s role as a good shepherd arguing that Marduk, exalted as “faithful” and “righteous shepherd” (*Epic of Creation* VII.71–5), poses as the Babylonian answer to the Sumerian hero-king.
- 52 The basic role of the king as argued by Van de Mieroop 1999: 119 and Lambert 1998: 57; cf. Hallo (2010: 215) citing hymn B1.13, where Išme-Dagan (ca. 1778–1744 BCE) assumes the role of Dumuzi and is called a “righteous shepherd.”
- 53 See Assmann (2005: 4–5) on Gilgamesh’s adventure to the Underworld. In his view, Gilgamesh exemplifies the oxymoron of too much knowledge equalling too little life.
- 54 Hence, in many ways Enkidu, described as an equal of Gilgamesh in strength and beauty, can be seen as a duplicate of the king; Enkidu and Gilgamesh have parallel journeys: Enkidu comes out of his initial state of wilderness and is introduced to civilized life, and Gilgamesh matures as a ruler to accept his responsibilities toward his subjects. See Wiggermann (1996: 210, esp.n.34, and 212–13) for the association of the steppe (*edin*) with the land of wild animals, barbarian peoples and the dead in clear contrast with the *kalam* (= the homeland); also cf. Forest (2007: 100) for understanding Enkidu as a proto-Adam living in idyllic Eden-like circumstances until expelled from it. On Sumerian death rites, see Katz 2007: esp.170–4.
- 55 George 2003: 15, 126. After his death Gilgamesh became a minor god in the Underworld; in the Sumerian *Death of Gilgamesh*, Enki decrees that despite having a goddess as his mother, Gilgamesh must die, but he would be assigned a special judging role alongside Ningišzida and Dumuzi (Chapter 2: p. 87). Cf. Veldhuis (2001: 113–14, 146), who argued that the repetition of Gilgamesh’s dream in the text symbolizes its realization (i.e. that he died).
- 56 Rituals are essential for the functioning of civilization: see Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 204 also citing Tinney 1996: 125. Cohen (2005: 147–56) examined elite death rituals of Southern Mesopotamia during the ED III period (c.2600–2340 BCE) and concluded that such rituals were a key element in the institutionalization of royal authority; he also hinted at the connection of religion and political power in later periods as exemplified on the visual culture of the Dynasty of Akkade, the archives of the Ur III temple of Inanna at Nippur and the Neo-Assyrian reliefs (see esp. his p. 156 n.12); cf. Suriano (2010: 1–21), who compares Hebrew and Phoenician customs surrounding the death of a king and the introduction of a successor. His argument, influenced by Turner’s discussion of “liminality” (see Turner 1969), is very useful: he understands the death of



- a king as instigating a liminal period of social identity crisis resolved through elaborate funerary rites. Royal death rites reaffirm the bonds of the community while also resulting in the appointment of the new leader. Suriano, however, does not examine the king as a liminal *persona* that can traverse between the world of the living and metaphysical realms.
- 57 Text George 2003: 544 (trans. mine); cf. Tigay 1977: 217–8 with nn.31–2; also see Tigay (1982: 15) on Gilgameš’s persisting reputation as despotic king in omen literature.
  - 58 Here, I take into account Poebel 1939: 32n.2 on the meaning of *lištannanū*, which refers to the heroes’ continual fighting in general terms, although the translation “to fight one another” may be also inferred.
  - 59 Text and trans. George 2003: 550–1, cited by permission of Oxford University Press; cf. Walls 2001: 29 and George 1999: 8. Šamhat’s invitation may be an early hint to man’s political nature, articulated by Aristotle centuries later in his definition of man as a “political animal” (*HA* 487b33–488a13; cf. *NE* 1177b26–1178a14).
  - 60 For Inanna as hierodule, see Hallo (2010: 212–4) citing a hymn to Inanna combined with a prayer for king Išbi-Irra (2018–1985 BCE); George (2003: 11) writes that in some versions Bilgameš reports to his mother how Inanna accosted him at the gate of the city, where prostitutes normally plied their trade. For the association of Ištar with the bride in the *Epic*, see George 2003: 178–9. Also see Davenport (2007: 6) arguing that Gilgameš coupled with the bride *as* with Ištar, a reference she associates with Ištar’s subsequent proposal to the king.
  - 61 The idea is echoed centuries later in the Hesiodic myth that charges Pandora with sapping the power of men and bringing death upon the human race (*Hes.Op.*90–105); notably in Hesiod, Zeus, annoyed with Prometheus about his deception over the sacrificial rites at Mecone and his subsequent theft of fire, decides to punish men by sending Pandora to bring endless toiling, illnesses and strife among men. Hence, the story is about cultural innovation and how it changed human relationships. The fact that the gods who adorned Pandora have to do with smithery (Hephaestus, Athena in *Op.*54–82) brings to mind the Sumerian tale of *Bilgameš and Akka*, where the battle between Uruk and Kish is described. Uruk is here praised as the smithy of the Gods, and the tale has been understood to refer to “cultural innovation, [. . .] a new urban lifestyle”; see De Villiers 2005: Chapter 3 (section 1.2), p. 5.
  - 62 Walls (2001: 19, also citing Foster 1987: 22) focuses on the civilizing role of sex in this episode. On pp. 19–20 she also discusses Šamhat as a stock character associated with the fertility goddess, perhaps as her priestess. Similarly, despite Gilgameš’s failure to recover the plant of immortality by the end of the *Epic*, as Woods (2009: 212) suggests, he *is* successful in terms of attaining knowledge; also see p. 40 and n.129 below.
  - 63 See Walls (2001: 26) citing *GE* I.173, where Šamhat is described as taking away Enkidu’s “life-breath” (*napīšu*), a euphemism for his virility.
  - 64 Text and trans. George 2003: 640–1, cited by permission of Oxford University Press; also in Lambert 1992: 129–31; the Middle Babylonian text from Ur includes both the curse and the subsequent blessing as Walls (2001: 84–5n.34) explains.
  - 65 George 1999: 10–11; id. 2003: 553–7; also see Walls 2001: 11–17 with bibliography.
  - 66 Bottéro and Petschow 1975: 466; cf. Cooper 2002: 74, 81–5 explaining Gilgameš’s (homo)sexual aggression as an indication of his leadership skills.
  - 67 Hardman (1993: 1–8) distinguishes between homoeroticism and homoaffectionism and argues that the latter is important for the evolution of civilization. Walls (2001: 14–15) refers to “the literary portrayal of the intense, homosocial companionship of Gilgameš and Enkidu – sexually realized or not.”
  - 68 For the erotic description of Gilgameš in the *Epic*, see Walls 2001: 17–18; importantly, Šamhat, the embodiment of seductive allure (*kuzbu*) recognizes the same quality in the hero-king (I.237), a point which encourages the connection of Gilgameš with the erotic

- profile of the king as celebrated in ANE “sacred marriage” ceremonies; on the meaning of *kuzbu* as sexual attractiveness, see Winter 1996: 14.
- 69 For the text of the Hebrew Bible, I used Van Parunak, Whitaker, Tov, Groves et al. 1990 (= *eBHS*); cf. Rev.17:5 referring to Babylon, the mother of whores in the New Testament.
- 70 Greeks of the Classical period were not unfamiliar with the metaphor of political actors vying for the attention of the *demos*, which is then understood in an erotic context as a competition between *anterastai*; cf. Aristophanes, *Kn.*732; also see Monson 2000: 86–7.
- 71 The association of ANE cities with particular goddesses who share their core features with Ištar is evident in Neo-Assyrian texts (ca. 900–630 BCE) which differentiate, for example, between Ištar-of-Nineveh and Ištar-of-Arbela. See Porter 2004: 41–4; cf. Groneberg 2007: 322–4. Porter notes that the distinctness of these two goddesses is highlighted by their separate roles in the creation of the king. In Aššurbanipal’s *Hymn to the Ištars of Nineveh and Arbela* the Lady-of-Nineveh is referred to as his birth mother (*um-mu a-li-ti-ia*, “the mother who bore me,” rev.14), while the Lady-of-Arbela is his creator (*ba-[ni]-ti-ia taq-ba-a TI.LA da-ra-a-te*, “my creator who decreed eternal life for me,” rev.14–16). Other hymns and texts suggest that Ištar-of-Nineveh is wet nurse of young Aššurbanipal (*SAA* 3.13rev. 6–8), whereas Ištar-of-Arbela is his nanny (*SAA* 9.7rev. 6b). Porter discusses multiple Ištars named in royal inscriptions and treaties by other kings, including Ešarhaddon and Cyrus of Persia, which indicate that the phenomenon of distinct Ištar-like goddesses extends beyond the one hymn of praise attributed to Aššurbanipal. In her analysis of the relationship of the Akkadian Ištar with Sumerian Inanna, Westenholz (2007: 336) admits that “[T]he supposed history of the syncretism and fusion of the Sumerian Inanna with the Akkadian Ištar is a complex problem” and concedes that “just as there was a plethora of Inanna goddesses of local pantheons, there were such Ištar figures.”
- 72 The close link between a goddess and her temple is exemplified by the fact that her eponym may often include the name of her temple. For example, the Lady-of-Eanna is the goddess of Uruk and the Lady-of-Kidmuri is the goddess of Nineveh. The phenomenon is also common in Hittite texts: thus, in a treaty between Šuppiluliuma I of Ḫatti and Ḫuqqana of Ḫayasa “Ištar, Ištar-of-the-Countryside, Ištar-of-Nineveh, and Ištar-of-[Ḫattarina]” are invoked; see Beckman 1999: 29 (no. 3, §8, A i 48–59); cf. the *GAB* with George 1992: 170–1. Beaulieu (2003: 121) discusses Ištar-of-Babylon and Lady-of-Babylon arguing that they were “functionally equivalent in first millennium theology.” In addition, Ištar-of-Arbela becomes Arbilitu in texts, meaning “the woman from Arbela”; *DPS* III A 15–16; Scurlock and Andersen 2005: 159; equally, Ištar-of-Nineveh is identified with Ninuaṛitu by Šalmaneser I and Tukulti-Ninurta I (*ḏni-nu-a-it-ti*, *RIMA* 1 A.0.77.7:7; *ḏnu-na-i-te*, *RIMA* 1 A.0.78.17:5), and the Assyrian Ištar becomes Aššuritu (*ḏ15-šu ḏaš2-šu-ritu*), “his goddess Aššuritu,” King, *BMS* no.2 n.8) in one copy of a *Prayer to Ninurta*; these connections are pointed out by Allen 2011: 303–4 with Meinhold 2009: 51, 170–1. Cf. Allen (2011: 304 with n.54) for more Ištar-associated goddesses.
- 73 Meinhold 2009: 192–200; Mulliššu was identified with Ištar from Sennacherib onwards; cf. *SAA* 13.126:4; for Mulliššu as the spouse of Enlil, see *RIMA* 3 A.102.14:12 and *SAA* 10.286:3–7; cf. Mylitta in *Hdt.*1.199. Also see George (1987: esp.39), who dates the psalm to Ešarhaddon’s reign and comments on the erotic character of K 1354, which makes it comparable to the Nabû and Tašmetu love-lyrics, discussed in Chapter 3: pp. 124–7.
- 74 Wilson 1901: 40 (col.II); Ziolkowski 2011: 8–16. The latter discusses the discovery of the tablets first by Smith, a self-taught Assyriologist, and the first attempts to edit and translate the text. Notably, according to the text, the hero is struck by misfortune when he is at the height of his power, which encourages the political reading of the tales of Gilgameš as illustrating the challenges a king faces in assuming and maintaining his

- power. From this point of view, Gilgameš shares many similarities with Heracles, who becomes very popular in Hellenistic cult (see Chapter 4: pp. 161–8).
- 75 The episode is treated in the Sumerian tale *The Great Wild Bull is Lying Down*. There we hear that Bilgameš was consecrated after death as a demigod, reigning and giving judgement over the dead. After dreaming about the gods deciding his post-mortem fate, Gilgameš prepares his funeral and offers gifts to the gods. Once deceased, he is buried under the Euphrates. Also see n.55 above.
- 76 Levinas (1987: 81) wrote in discussing the singularity of the self and its place among others: “How can the subject be given a definition that somehow lies in its passivity? Is there another mastery in the human other than the virility of grasping the possible, the power to be able?”
- 77 George 1993: 121 (no. 742) and 90 (no. 351).
- 78 Later in the hymn the king praises Ištar-of-Nineveh as his birth mother (rev.14), whereas he refers to Ištar-of-Arbela as his creator (rev.16). Also cf. the *Enūma Eliš* I.84–6, where Marduk’s mother is Damkina, Ea’s consort, and Marduk is said to have suckled at the teats of the *ištars* (I.85), his “wet nurses who nursed him” (I.86).
- 79 Text and trans. Livingstone 1989 (with a minor modification from me; see the following note); retrieved online through <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/saa03>.
- 80 Here, I follow the translation of Allen (2011: 308–9), also supported by the *Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary*, available at <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd/epsd/e4804.html>, whereas Livingstone translates “vegetables.”
- 81 George 2003: 15–6.
- 82 Woods 2009: 189 clarifies that in ancient Mesopotamian sources the Sun-god is associated with the bison-bull (*gud-alim*), although bovine adjectives (i.e. *gud* = bull and *am* = wild ox) are also widely used to describe the god and his protégés; cf. n.XX below. Note that in *Enki and World Order*, Enki is exalted by employing bull imagery: “Grandiloquent lord of heaven and earth, self-reliant, Father Enki, engendered by a bull, begotten by a wild bull” (ll.1–2, <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.1.1.3>). Given that Enki is in charge of the *mes* which carry the powers of civilization, the king is almost identified with Enki as Enlil’s trustee (cf. Chapter 2: XX–XX); even Enlil is described as a great bull landing on earth in the *Sumerian Debate Between Winter and Summer* (ETCSL 5.3.3, l.3); for Enlil and Ea as bulls, see Rice 1998: 88; Green 2003: 205–11. The closeness of kings with the divine is stressed by the use of common imagery.
- 83 For example, see George (2010: 108) citing *GBH* 33–4: *am-mu mu-lu-me \*de<sub>3</sub>-\*me-en* (tablets: *me-en-de<sub>3</sub>-en*) *šu nu-ri-bar-re-en/ en <sup>d</sup>bil<sub>3</sub>-ga-mes mu-lu-me \*de<sub>3</sub>-\*me-en* (tablets: *me-en-de<sub>3</sub>-en*) *šu nu-ri-bar-re-en*, O my wild bull, *may you be* our man, I shall not let you go! / O lord Bilgameš, my wild bull, *may you be* our man, I shall not let you go!; in *GE* I.35 Gilgameš is called the “wild bull of Lugalbanda”; on this, see George 2003: 2, 34, 197.
- 84 George 2003: 148. In an OB *Eršemma* the goddess Gula is called Gilgameš’s mother; Cohen 1981: 99, 109.
- 85 George 2003: 6.
- 86 In fact, in *Gilgameš and Huwawa* the hero repeats the phrase “By the life of my own mother Ninsun and of my father, holy Lugalbanda”; see version A.90–1, 92, 136–7, 140, 148; version B.21, 86, 99, 109, 138. In my view, the phrase is not to be taken literally, but it reflects Gilgameš’s attempt to become associated with legendary kings of the past. In *Gilgameš and the Bull of Heaven*, Lugalbanda poses as the personal god of the hero-king (see n.XX above). Since Lugalbanda was said to have reigned 1,200 years and yet his name means “young king,” perhaps we should understand the name as a title rather than as referring to a historical person. For the association of Lugalbanda with Hermes in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, see Larson 2005: *passim*.
- 87 See *Epic of Gilgameš* LB 1.351–60. In *Lugalbanda in the Wilderness*, also known as *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave*, the hero, abandoned to die by his brother, is

- reduced to a primitive situation and has to reinvent fire, cooking, and baking. See Vanstiphout and Cooper 2003: 97. Before his successful return to his city he is instructed in a dream to capture a wild goat and a wild bull (351–60) and sacrifice them to the god Zangara; cf. George 2003: 476; also see Black (1998: 89n.227) on translating a reference to bulls (or lions) in *The Return of Lugalbanda*.
- 88 See nn.78, 82 and 97; for storm gods and the Moon god as bulls across Mesopotamia and the Levant, see van Dijk 2011: 158–82; cf. also her pp. 136–7 for horned headdresses representing certain gods such as Anu, Enlil and Ea. Historical kings such as Naram-Sin in his famous victory stela of ca. 2250 BCE (<http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/victory-stele-naram-sin>) and, much later, Marduk-Apla-Iddina I (1171–1159 BCE) and the Assyrian Ešarhaddon (680–669 BCE) also used such headdresses as symbols of divine favour. The author also refers to the association of Aššur (with Waterman 1915: 234) and Marduk with bulls and the connection of the Sun god with the *gud-alim* (bison-bull, with Green 1995: 1867).
- 89 McNerney (2010: 42) argues that “civilization . . . cannot survive the unchanneled ferocity of the bull,” here understood in connection with Gilgameš’s overbearing initial rule and his fight with Enkidu “like bulls” (OB 2.6.218; cf. George 2003: 180–1). Thus, he argues, Enkidu and Gilgameš must undertake further adventures because “if the external has not been victorious upon being brought into Uruk, then the internal must go out.”
- 90 For example, see Šulgi (Hymn C.1) and Lipit-Ištar (*A praise poem to Lipit-Ištar*) in Black et al. 2006: 309.
- 91 As George (2003: 5) noted, the dynasty “was already a source of literary inspiration by the mid-third millennium.”
- 92 Text from Berlin 1979: 58–9 (also available from *ETCSL* 1.8.2.4); note that Berlin translates the phrase as “you are the beloved lord of Inanna”; Noel Weeks pointed out to me that *en* here may only be a regal address; hence, I chose to leave *en* untranslated. Beaulieu 2003: 107 translates the phrase as “you alone are the beloved En-priest of Inanna”; on *en* being a royal title with secular aspects, see Steinkeller 1999: esp.111 and 115; also, see his pages 107–8 for the importance of *enship* both for Uruk’s Enmerkar but also for the rulers of Aratta; cf. Leick 1994: 108–9.
- 93 References from Cohen 1973; text also available from *ETCSL* 1.8.2.3. Also see Kramer 1952: 36 (1.485) and 44 (1.625) as well as 20 (1.234).
- 94 Kramer 1952: 8 (1.34).
- 95 The observation is made by Beaulieu 2003: 107.
- 96 Van Dijk 2011: 131.
- 97 Sefati 1998: 76; cf. Jacobsen 1976: 44. Note that Ištar is often represented as a cow in ANE texts; hence, in a poem dedicated to Iddin-Dagan of Isin (early second millennium BCE), she is described as “the furious wild cow of heaven” (Langdon 1926: 20). In another text she proclaims, “I am father Enlil’s splendid wild cow, his splendid wild cow leading the way!” (cited in Jacobsen 1976: 138). In a text from the time of Aššurbanipal, written as a dialogue between the king and the god Nabû, the latter reminds the king: “You were a child, Aššurbanipal, when I left you with the Queen of Nineveh; you were a baby, Aššurbanipal, when you sat in the lap of the Queen of Nineveh. Her four teats are placed in your mouth . . . two you suck, and with two you spray milk on your face” (cited in Porter 2004: 42 and van Dijk 2011: 199). In the text the goddess is clearly envisaged in her bovine form; cf. Potts (1999: 67–8) on the influence that the priest-kings of Uruk exercised on Elamite culture; although the Assyrians controlled Elamite cities during the times of their dominion in the area, Elamite culture survived to influence the Persians significantly; for more on this, see Chapter 4: n.9.
- 98 Collon 2005: 172 also cited by van Dijk 2011: 198.
- 99 The seal is discussed by van Dijk 2011: 198–9 along with another Uruk period cylinder seal, now housed in the Louvre, which “depicts a reed hut . . . surmounted by

- one ring-post.” He reads the second seal as a variation of the ring-post and, therefore, understands the building in connection with Inanna, probably a reference to her sacred pen.
- 100 In Mesopotamia human-headed bulls, attested in art from the Early Dynastic to the Achaemenid period, were associated with Šamaš. They are identified as *lamassu*, protective figures (Aruz and Wallenfels 2003: 440; Green 1995: 1848). Šilhak-Inšušinak, king of Elam during the second half of the twelfth century, built the temple at Susa and dedicated it to Inšušinak, the city’s patron deity, often invoked in legal documents from Susa as the Elamite Sun god (Leick 1998: 94). The facade of this temple was made of moulded bricks and depicted bull-men and intercession goddesses called *lamas*.
- 101 Notably in the Hittite version of the *GE* (V vi.10–11 in Heidel <sup>2</sup>1949: 48 with Friedrich’s translation 1930: 11–13), Gilgameš prays in tears to Šamaš: “I have followed the heavenly Šamaš / I have pursued the road decreed for me”; for a psychological reading of the hero’s adventure in the Cedar Forest, see Kluger 1991: 93–110.
- 102 Tigay 1982: 77–81, esp.80.
- 103 Levinson 2001: 514–15; Anagnostou-Laoutides 2013: 55–62. For Šamaš’s exclusive relation to justice, see, for example, Reiner 1991: 307–8; Slanski 2000: 105–6; Charpin 2013: esp.68–71. The intensity of investing kings with solar elements varies considerably throughout the ANE, and at times it seems reduced to metaphors which compare the king with the sun or the Sun god; still, the survival of such metaphors over several millennia reveals the shared milieu of ANE kingship. See Launderville 2003: 26–8. Liverani (1995: 2363) stresses the examples set by influential kings such as Sargon and Naram-Sin, who advocated their special connection with Šamaš and were emulated by later rulers; cf. Speiser 1954: 8–15 and Holloway 2002: 226. For the role of the Sun-god in decreeing fates, including that of Gilgameš, see Woods 2009: 186, 199, 203, 207 and 213–7. Also see OB Schøyen<sup>2</sup>, 14–22 (in George 2003: 234–5), where Enkidu interprets a dream of Gilgameš reassuring him of Šamaš’s support in his battle against Huwawa, described on I.18 as the “one of death”; cf. OB Nippur, ll.7–8 in George 2003: 242–3, where Šamaš appears as an old man in Gilgameš’s dream. Notably when Enkidu interprets his friend’s dream, he refers to the sun god as “the mighty god, . . . the one who begot” the king (who is here named Lugalbanda).
- 104 Weinfeld 1982: 493; cf. Ma (2005: 93, 186) on Antiochus’ III boast that he gave Iasos back “its liberty” and his offer to “grant freedom” to Lampsacus.
- 105 See Holloway 2002: 181–2; also cf. his nn.337–43.
- 106 Duchesne-Guillemin 1969: 360; Liverani 1979: 301; cf. Holloway 2002: 50–4.
- 107 Waerzeggers 2011: 729.
- 108 Selz 2007: 277; Waerzeggers 2011: 744–5; Charpin 2013: 66–8.
- 109 Text by Dossin 1955: 12: col. I; trans. mine; cf. Zaccagnini 1994: 268. Also note the “all-seeing” Sun in Homer’s *Iliad* (i.e. 3.277; cf. 8.345), although the epithet was primarily applied to Zeus; Pettazzoni 1956: 155.
- 110 Pinches 1906: 25; also Charpin 2013: 74 also citing id. 2004: 308.
- 111 From Richardson 2004: 124 (E17 = XLVIII:95-XLIX:1); cf. his p. 118 (E1 = XLVIII:1–8) on: *dīnāt mišarim ša Ḥammurapi šarrum lē’ūm ukinnuma* “the laws of righteousness which Ḥammurapi the skilful king established.”
- 112 P3 I:27–49; text from Borger 2006: 5; cf. Richardson 2004: 29–30; trans. mine modelled on Richardson’s; also see Charpin 2013: 71. For justice as a royal prerogative, see Bottéro 1992: 165.
- 113 Charpin (2013: 73) comments on the comparison of the king with a shepherd, which immediately brings to mind Dumuzi, the par excellence shepherd-god. In his view the comparison is meant to highlight the cosmic dimensions of kingship. However, as he notes, “at the beginning of the 2nd millennium, it is Shamash before all who is the

- shepherd who helps shape the royal person.” Although Charpin is aware of the Sun-god’s profile as a shepherd of heavenly *and* netherworld regions (see esp. his p. 74), he does not extend his analysis to the teleological notions associated with Šamaš or the king as his earthly image; on Šamaš as a shepherd of the world above and the Underworld, see *Hymn to Shamash I*, ll.33–4; trans. Seux 1976: 54; cf. nn.120 and 128 below.
- 114 See Richardson (2004: 122–3) for E12 (XLVIII: 20–47); cf. id. for E10 (XLVII: 84–XLVIII: 2), where the king invites justice to shine over his land *ina qibūt Šamaš* (by the command of Šamaš).
- 115 Text from Ebeling 1918: 25, rev.3 [cf. his p. 27 for his trans. (= *KAR* 105)]; English trans. cited above from *COS I:474* (Livingstone, 1.143); cf. Seux 1976: 65 with n.27, where she suggests the reading [*ana du-ur da-rji*] (= continuously) for the damaged part of this verse; also cf. id.: 58, *Hymn to Shamash I*, ll.101–2 (*Le juge consciencieux, qui rend un juste jugement, / Contrôle le palais, sa demeure est la demeure des princes*) again stressing the close connection of Šamaš with kings. Although the solar substance of Aššur has been doubted, Aššur and Šamaš were united in the person of the king; Fischer (2002: 132–3) states: “The connection between king and the Sun god is reflected in the Assyrian custom of writing the word king (*šarru*) as the number twenty, a type of cryptography for the Sun god Utu/Šamaš,” inspired by Mesopotamian ideology. Tukulti-Ninurta was the first Assyrian king to adopt the Babylonian title of “Sun-god of all peoples”; Holloway 2002: xv. Cf. Porter 2000: 237 for Aššur-<sup>d</sup>Dayyāni (Aššur-the-Divine-Judges), a form of Aššur which appropriates the precedence of Šamaš; the adoption of solar ideology by Assyrian kings has been recently studied by Frahm (2013: esp.99–105), who draws attention to the description of Ešarhaddon as *šalmu ša<sup>d</sup>Šamaš šū* (the very image of Šamaš, *SAA* 10.196rev.4–5). Frahm also discusses two royal rituals, the *Bīt-rimki* (house of bathing) and the *mīs pī* (mouth washing), which resemble rituals performed in front of the gods facilitating a more direct comparison of the Sun-god with the king.
- 116 George 2003: 39.
- 117 Ataç (2007: 299–300 with n.6) discusses the vision of the prince, “an episode that should be understood as a unique instance of divine epiphany in Neo-Assyrian literature,” in connection with the Eleusinian *Epoiteia*. At the end of his ordeal the prince exalts the powers of Nergal, the Lord of the Underworld, along with those of his queen Ereškigal, an indication that his role as king and hierophant depends upon his intimate knowledge of the otherworld. Ataç (2007: 304) also mentions an inscription of Ešarhaddon relating that he was given the crown by Anu, the throne by Enlil, his weapons by Ninurta and his “splendour” by Nergal; cf. his n.15 comparing Nergal with the Anunnaki gods in *GE* XI.102–5, who are “carrying torches of fire and scorching the country with brilliant flashes”; trans. George 1999: 91. For Nergal as the negative aspect of Šamaš, see Teissier 1984: 23; on the rise of Nergal in first-millennium royal ideology, see Chapter 4: 166, 168. Cf. Lapinkivi 2008: esp.242 on the mystical associations of Babylonian Ištar.
- 118 Aššurbanipal boasted to have read inscriptions from before the flood, stressing his wisdom, like Gilgameš, whose adventures brought him knowledge instead of immortality. Lambert and Millard 1969: 18–9, 25–6, 135–7. Also see Seux 1976: 364, 366 and 403 citing conjuring prayers which emphasize the sun god’s ability to raise the dead.
- 119 Livingstone 1989: 68–76; George 2003: 325, 500.
- 120 Šamaš had unique access to the Underworld: “Šamaš, your glare reaches down to the abyss so that the monsters of the deep behold your light,” reads a Babylonian hymn from Aššurbanipal’s library; see Lambert 1960: 129, ll.37–8; cf. *GE* X.81–2, where Sidouri says that only Šamaš can cross the waters of death; also see Woods 2009: 187–8; cf. pp. 39–40 above.

- 121 Parpola (1997: 116) reads Nergal, but George (1999: 194) identifies Šamaš as the god who allows Enkidu's ghost to ascend to Gilgameš.
- 122 Text from Cavigneaux and al-Rawi 2000: 27, 31; the text has been edited with the help of insertions from Nippur fragments that narrate the same story; trans. Veldhuis 2001: 141, ll.58–60; cf. George 1999: 198–9; also available from *ETCSL* 1.8.1.3 (Meturan version, section F, ll.15–9).
- 123 Berlejung (1997: 71) notes that at the start of the rite, already at this early time in Mesopotamian history, the statue is addressed as a god form; cf. id. 1999: 110–1. Also see Bahrani 2003: 123–8 on the ANE concept of *šalmu*, which challenges the boundaries between reality, and representation and Frahm 2013: 104–5.
- 124 Kramer 1944b: 16–17.
- 125 Cf. Gen.28:17: “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven.”
- 126 Chen (2013: 169, 172) argues that Utnapištim and Ziusudra were not the same figure but were identified early in the OB period as the *Ballad of Early Rulers* seems to indicate.
- 127 Abusch 1993: 12–16 explains Siduri's advice to Gilgameš to drink and be merry as an attempt to teach him how to cope with uncontrollable grief.
- 128 Text and trans. Tigay 1982: 95; for Šamaš in the Underworld in ANE cultures, see Marinatos 2010: 124. Also see Reiner 1985: 71, 1.33 (also cited in Charpin 2013: 73–4) for a prayer to Šamaš, “the shepherd of the regions below, pastor of the regions above.” According to Babylonian beliefs, the Sun-god goes to the Underworld to care for its gods; see Lambert 1960: 127, ll.31–2. Šapšu, the Ugaritic Sun goddess, is responsible for taking the souls to the Underworld, where she also spreads her light; see *KTU* 1.6 in Wyatt <sup>2</sup>2002: 134. In the *Epic of Baal*, the goddess delivers Baal into the hands of Mot; see *KTU* 1.161 r.15 again in Wyatt <sup>2</sup>2002: 437. For the character of Siduri and her association with teleological knowledge, see Woods 2009: 94 and 213 with n.118.
- 129 As George (2003: 4) noted, the Babylonians referred to the *Epic* as *šūtur eli šarri* (surpassing all other kings), later as *ša naqba imuru* (He who saw the Deep) and as *iškar Gilgāmeš* (the Series of Gilgameš). On *nagbu* as meaning both “depths from which springs of water gush or totality of knowledge,” see Dalley 2013: 154.
- 130 See Abusch (1997: 116) for Uršanabi as a form of Hermes. At this point, the similarity between Gilgameš and Heracles, who borrowed the Sun's cup to travel to the Garden of the Hesperides, comes to mind; the civilizing missions of both heroes were clearly complemented by a *katabasis*; cf. nn.133 below and Chapter 4: n.168.
- 131 Clark (1997: 137) notes that the location of the garden of Šamaš and the dwelling place of Utnapištim present a problem which scholars have tried to harmonize. Hence, Sandars (1972: 97, 105) names Utnapištim's dwelling place, Dilmun, adding that it is “in the garden of the sun” and also “at the place of the sun's transit, eastward of the mountain”; cf. George 2003: 494–7; also Woods 2009: 201–2 with n.72. Also see Dalley 2013: 57–8 on Dilmun as a Mesopotamian concept of Paradise.
- 132 The meeting of Gilgameš and Šamaš in the garden of the jewels survived in the OB version X.i. in *ANET* 89; see George 2003: 276–7 and 499–502 for the location of the garden beyond the Ocean and the Waters of Death; cf. Clark 1997: 145n.43 citing Tablet X (Assyrian version) ii.25, 27, iii.50, iv.1ff. and X (OB) iv.8 in *ANET* 91f. and 507.
- 133 See Clark 1997: 135. Anagnostou-Laoutides (2005: 189–90) discussed the widespread association of the “going-in” of the Sun with the Underworld across ANE cultures and the similarities between Heracles' eleventh adventure during which he crosses the Ocean in imitation of Gilgameš to get to the garden of the Hesperides (located in the west); also see George 2003: 497. On the role of Šamaš as psychopomp, see Hays 2011: 50, 53–4. For the connection of the Sun god with Nergal of the Underworld, see n.117 above. Also see George (2003: 643) commenting on the fact

- that Gilgameš wears animal skins, including a lion skin, while crossing the Ocean, which alludes to the traditional apparel of Heracles. Cf. Annus (2002: 170–1) pointing out a number of parallels between the adventures of Ninurta and Gilgameš’s journey to the Underworld.
- 134 Woods 2009: 196–201. On p. 200 Woods observes: “[T]he idea that immortality and rejuvenation are to be sought in the remote east is . . . a theme central to the Alexander Romance.” The late date of the *Alexander Romance* (third century CE at the earliest) offers a sound example for the transmission of ANE lore to the Greek-speaking world. Cf. Sladek 1974: 61–3, also cited in Penglase 1994: 24, who argued that Inanna travelled eastwards in order to find the entrance to the Underworld.
- 135 Cf. George 2003: 276–7, citing OB VA+BM, i.7’–8’, where Šamaš, worried about the hero, says to him *balāqam ša tashaḥuru lā tutta* (you cannot find the life that you seek, here cited by permission of Oxford University Press); a few lines later (iii.2) Siduri utters the same phrase; cf. George 2003: 507.
- 136 Launderville 2007: 306.
- 137 See Woods 2009: 203, 209–15 (esp. 213–5) and 223–5 for the important role of Šamaš in determining human destinies and the Underworld as the location where destinies are fixed.
- 138 Parpola (1993: 194–6) understands the walls of Uruk as “a metaphor for Tablets I–XI” of the *GE*, which he argues was structured after the Assyrian Tree of Life. In his view, the secret that Gilgameš brings back to his community was a mystical way of achieving Heavenly ascent. Also see below, n.143.
- 139 George 2003: 528; also Chen 2013: 181.
- 140 In the first dream, preserved only in Hittite fragments, Enkidu had seen the gods arguing over his fate; see Butler 1998: 22 and Stefanini 1969: 40. Oppenheim (1956: 196) argued that in the second dream Enkidu’s soul travels to the Underworld to witness his impending fate.
- 141 Jacobsen 1987: 28–46.
- 142 Text from *ETCSL*, <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.1.4.1&charenc=geirc#>; trans. Wolkstein and Kramer 1983: 52. Perera (1981: 17) discusses the tale in connection with the drinking competition of Inanna with Enki, the god of wisdom, who in a drunken state gives to the goddess his fourteen *mes*, the powers that Inanna employs to bring civilization to people. However, the goddess feels that her responsibility is not limited to establishing civilization, since culture only accentuates existential questions and the need for answers. Equally, Gilgameš, her royal protégé, is forced to seek answers to these difficult questions as part of his royal duties. Hence, in a way, Kramer and Wolkstein (1983: 159) are right in pointing out that Enlil and Nanna do not understand the goddess’s reasons for undertaking the journey in the first place. Penglase 1994: 19 argues that Inanna seeks to extend her power. For her descent as a ritual journey to Kutha, see Buccellati 1982: *passim*. Cf. Katz 1995: 229–30, who argues that the Sumerian version of *Inanna’s Descent* focuses on the adventures of the goddess, while the Babylonian version (*Ištar’s Descent*) is more interested in the nature of the Underworld and its conflict with the world of the living.
- 143 Cf. George 2003: 86n.81, who notes that the spelling *GIŠ-TUK-maš* for Gilgameš may have been invented by scribes who wished to allude to the Sumerian word *geštuḡ* (ear, understanding/perceptive, wisdom/wise) and thus to wisdom as the hero’s main pursuit. Parpola (1993: 197) argued that Gilgameš exemplifies the “perfect man”; while I subscribe to his view that Gilgameš acts as a model for his community, I share George’s conviction (2003: 51) that mystical readings of the text were probably a later development.
- 144 Katz (1995: 223–6) argues that Inanna had to appear naked in front of Ereškigal so as not to threaten her position and the established world order.
- 145 Text from Kramer 1980: 299, 304–5 and 307–8 (esp. rev.75–7 and 131); also available from *ETCSL* 1.4.1, ll.354–8, 406–10; cf. ll.288–289. Inanna is infuriated when



- upon her return from the Underworld she discovers Dumuzi enjoying his time totally unconcerned with her terrifying Underworld ordeal. Based on this, Perera (1981: 83) argued that Inanna's resurrection is transformative in the sense that she sheds her masculine definition of femininity; however, the relationship of Inanna and Dumuzi is not necessarily antagonistic but (should be) coextensive so that they can share responsibility toward their people.
- 146 Sladek 1974: 29–34, 225–39; also available from *ETCSL* 1.4.1, ll.33–46, 72–3; cf. Gadotti 2014a: 45–7.
- 147 Fleming and Milstein 2010: 86–8, 111–2; Tigay (1982: 53) noted that in the OB version of the tale the circumstances of Enkidu's death are very different, which he interpreted as an indication that the OB author of the *Epic* drew from a number of Sumerian compositions only themes, not their plots. Yet since we lack the end of the OB version, the interpretation of Tablet XII remains challenging. Also see his p. 34 listing the three elements that make the role of Enkidu more pronounced in the Akkadian epic: his friendship with Gilgameš, Gilgameš's reaction to his death, and the description of Enkidu's beginnings – all already present in the OB version.
- 148 Tigay 1982: 106. Cf Baal's fight against Mot, god of death, in the Ugaritic *Baal cycle*; cf. n.128 above.
- 149 Tigay 1982: 143–4.
- 150 Tigay (1982: 144–6) cites the inscriptions of Idrimi, a Syrian king of the fifteenth century BCE, as well as Naram-Sin; (cf. Jonker 1995: 90–5 on the difference between *narû* inscriptions and literature and also Chapter 4: n.10).
- 151 Tigay 1982: 147–9; cf. n.XX above for Gilgameš as the builder of Uruk's walls.
- 152 Jacobsen 1976: 209–11 with Tigay 1982: 34.
- 153 Text and trans. from Frahm 2009: 87.
- 154 Kramer 1944c: 166n.40; Parpola 1993: 94n.128 argued that the surprising absence of the *huluppu* tree from Tablet XII is precisely meant to draw our attention to it, an idea contested by Cooper 2000: 431.
- 155 Text and trans. Gadotti 2014: 162; Cf. Wolkstein and Kramer 1983: 4; Kramer 1963a: 199–200; Frayne 2001: 130; text also available from *ETCSL* 1.8.1.4. In addition, see Gadotti (2014b: 11, 21), where he argues that the prologue is a literary device for transferring the adventure of the two heroes at the beginning of time.
- 156 Wolkstein and Kramer 1983: 5.
- 157 Kramer 1963a: 200; Shaffer 1963: 30 with n.1; Gadotti 2014b: 48 argued that the *huluppu* tree was not, in fact, a willow tree as often argued but a “type of *Prunus*, specifically the *Prunus mahaleb* L.”
- 158 For the toponym of Uruk as the “garden of Gilgameš,” see George 2003: 125.
- 159 Widegren 1951: 9, 11, 15. Also see Stavropoulou 2006: 6, 9–15 discussing the importance of burying kings in mortuary gardens in the ANE, which I would suggest could be seen as a way of preserving their memory in an ideal status.
- 160 Sefati 1998: 224–5; Leick 1994: 91. Also see Lambert 1987: 27 citing Kramer 1963b: 505. Cf. Cooper 1993: 85 for the passionate exchanges between Dumuzi and Inanna in “sacred marriage” ceremonies. For the gardener Išullanu (Akkadian) or Šukaletuda (Sumerian) and the political dimensions of his profile, see Chapter 2: pp. 69–72.
- 161 Dalley 1993: 1; cf. id. (2013: 67) on a number of ANE temples built so to as resemble a grove. She further explains this argument in id. (2014: 55) arguing that, already at the start of the second millennium, ANE temples had mud-brick façades designed “to show the appearance of a grove of date-palms,” that is, of a sacred grove. Hence, by visiting the temple worshippers imagined themselves as entering a divine garden.
- 162 See Dalley 1993: 2; cf. Gen2:9 and Mos3:9 for references to the tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden. Head and Bradshaw (2012: 18–25) suggested two types of symbolism for sacred trees in the ANE in relation to the investiture panel from Mari: according to the first, the tree symbolizes the king in his ability to bestow abundance under divine protection or even the fertility deities themselves; according to the

- second, the tree symbolizes the veil of the temple sanctuary creating thus a type of “gate” to the unknown, i.e. the underworld. It must be noted that the festival depicted at the Mari panel has been identified as an early New Year Festival; on this, also see Dalley 1984: 136. Also see Stavrakopoulou 2006: 6, 9–15 discussing the importance of burying kings in mortuary gardens in the ANE, which I would suggest could be seen as a way of preserving their memory in an ideal status.
- 163 Stronach 1990: 171.
- 164 Again, Stronach 1990: 171.
- 165 Text and translation from Westenholz 1997: 40–1. The similarities between the birth stories of Sargon I and the biblical Moses (Exodus 2: 1–10) have been long recognized in scholarship.
- 166 See Westenholz 1997: 36–7. The text concludes with the lines: *Šarru-kīn ummatam unahḫad agan[ša]šarrum ša iša[nna]nanni ša anāku attall[a]k[u] šu littallak* (Lo, the king who desires to equal me, let him go where I have gone!). Notably the first three fragments of the text were recovered from Sennacherib’s or Aššurbanipal’s palace.
- 167 Stronach 1990: 172; Dalley 2013: 43–4 and 89.
- 168 Dalley 2013: 80 and esp.103 on him being the builder of the famous hanging gardens of Babylon.
- 169 Dalley 2013: 133; cf. her p. 145 for his address to these two deities in the dedication inscription of the garden.
- 170 Stronach 1990: 174; cf. Diod.Sic.2.10.1, who refers to such a garden built by *τινος ὕστερον Σύρου βασιλέως κατασκευάσαντος χάριν γυναικὸς παλλακῆς* (a later Syrian king to please one of his concubines). Diodorus also mentions that the woman in question was of Persian descent and suffered from longing for “the meadows of her mountains.” See Dalley 2014: 30–41 surveying Greco-Roman sources (including Diodorus) on the famous hanging gardens of Babylon.
- 171 Dalley 2014: 59–60. Tuplin (1996: 88–177, esp.109 onwards) surveys the material and literary evidence on Persian gardens arguing that they were invested with an ideology of wealth and prestige; Tuplin argues that Greek (vegetable) gardens were associated ideologically with sex and education, connections not made in the case of Persian *paradeisoi* (see esp. his pp. 125–6); see also his pp. 69, 74, and 129n.164 on the “gardens” of Adonis whose cult, especially popular in first-millennium popular religion, was modelled on the rites in honour of Ištar and Tammuz. For the importance of Adonis’s cult in the first millennium BCE, see Chapter 3: pp. 123–131. The Greeks were also aware of Lydian and Persian royal *paradeisoi*, which they allegedly despised as symptomatic of their luxurious and unmanly character; cf. Bremmer 2002: 112–19.
- 172 Hurowitz 1992: 18, esp.n.1.
- 173 Turner 1979: 26.
- 174 Hence, the gods often ask the kings to fulfil their role as builders of temples via dreams; for example, Gudea of Lagash is prompted by a dream to build a temple for Ninguršū, a warrior and fertility god; see Black and Green 1992: 138.
- 175 Dalley (2014: 66–7) discussed the palm frond as a symbol of victory thanks to “its association with the goddess Ishtar as war-goddess who played a leading role in supporting the king in battle.” As discussed above, in my view, this association also carried teleological meaning – by celebrating the king’s victory one partakes in the victorious community whose memory is identified with that of the king. Expanding on this notion one could even argue that just like the king is the “face of god” on earth, so each member of the community becomes a reflection of the king.
- 176 Dalley 2014: 71–2; also see id. 2013: 22 on Nebuchadnezzar’s inscriptions at Wadi Brisa, where he chose to portray a ravine in the Cedar Mountains of Lebanon, the region of Gilgameš’s adventure against Ḫumbaba. Nebuchadnezzar explained that this was the place where he had cut down cedar trees for his temple doors, implying that he acted like Gilgameš. He even portrayed himself on the surface of the rock as

- grasping a tree (presumably in order to cut it down) and fighting a lion, again recalling the adventures of the legendary king.
- 177 Dalley 2014: 73–4.
- 178 Dalley 2014: 74. On the importance of carnelian and lapis lazuli funerary offerings and their association to Ištar, see Chapter 3: p. 125 and Chapter 4: p. 171.
- 179 Hence, goddesses represented in Hellenistic art as holding palm fronds exemplify the continuation of ANE ideology and ritual; see Dalley 2014: 68–9; cf. nn.XX and XX.
- 180 Dillery 2004: esp.259–65; on p. 259 Dillery cites Farber (1979: 498), where he argues that “Xenophon’s political thought anticipated Hellenistic political thought”; cf. Azoulay 2004: 157 on the importance of staging royal profiles – a tactic well known to the Persians and well understood by Xenophon.
- 181 Munn 2006: 136, with n.13; cf. *Plut.Alc.24.5*; *Xen.Hell.4.1.15*, 33 and *Anab.1.4.10* for Persian *paradeisoi*.
- 182 Cf. *Xen.Oec.4.23*, where Lysander is surprised to know that Cyrus had been toiling in the garden, which was at odds with τῶν τε ἱματίων τὸ κάλλος ὃν εἶχε καὶ τῆς ὀσμῆς αἰσθόμενος καὶ τῶν στρεπτῶν καὶ τῶν ψελίων τὸ κάλλος καὶ τοῦ ἄλλου κόσμου οὗ εἶχεν (the beauty and perfume of his robes, and the splendour of the necklaces and bangles and other jewels that he was wearing). All translations of Xenophon are by Heinemann 1979; cf. the discussion of this passage in Dalley 2013: 101–2.
- 183 *Xen.Oec.4.24*: ὄμνυμί σοι τὸν Μίθρην, ὅτανπερ ὑγιαίνω, μηπώποτε δειπνήσαι πρὶν ἰδρῶσαι ἢ τῶν πολεμικῶν τι ἢ τῶν γεωργικῶν ἔργων μελετῶν ἢ αἰεὶ ἔν γέ τι φιλοτιμούμενος. (I swear by the Sun-god that I never yet sat down to dinner when in sound health, without first working hard at some task of war or agriculture, or exerting myself somehow).
- 184 *Xen.Oec.4.25*: καὶ αὐτὸς μέντοι ἔφη ὁ Λύσανδρος ἀκούσας ταῦτα δεξιώσασθαι τε αὐτὸν καὶ εἰπεῖν: δικαίως μοι δοκεῖς, ὦ Κύρῃ, εὐδαίμων εἶναι: ἀγαθὸς γὰρ ὢν ἀνὴρ εὐδαιμονεῖς. (Lysander himself declared, I should add, that on hearing this, he congratulated him in these words: “I think you deserve your happiness, Cyrus, for you earn it by your virtues”).
- 185 Cf. Ammianus Marcellinus *RG.19.12.19*, who referred to Daphne as *amoenum illud et ambitiosum Antiochiae suburbanum* (that pleasant and glorious suburb of Antioch). For more references to Daphne in ancient authors, see the list of figures at the start of the book, p. ix.
- 186 Hitti 2002: 302–5; Downey 1961: 82–6.
- 187 Dirven 1999: 142–3; also Strootman 2014a: 71; also see Chapter 4: p. 156.
- 188 On divination and politics, see Sweek 2002: esp.56 and Holloway 2002: 411; Charpin (2013: 68–71) explains the close affinity of the king with Šamaš based on the latter’s profile as the patron of divination. Divination also provided the platform for the understanding of the king as an image of the Sun god on earth.
- 189 Butler 1998: 17; Oppenheim 1956: 185.
- 190 deJong Ellis 1989: 178, 179.
- 191 Husser 1999: 38.
- 192 Husser 1999: 40. See also Oppenheim (1956: 199), who argues that the dreams sent by Ištar to Ḫattušiliš’s enemies were the forerunners of the dream of Gyges of Lydia, which has been recorded in the *Annals* of Aššurbanipal.
- 193 Butler 1998: 17.
- 194 See Brock 2004: 254: “Several of the images which Xenophon deploys [in discussing his political theories] are closer either to ideas which have been thought to be authentically Persian or to Greek versions of such ideas.”

## 2 Sacred marriage in the ANE

### The collapse of the garden and its aftermath

ayyû tēm ilī qereb šamê ilammad  
milik ša (an)zanunzê ihakkim mannu  
ēkâmma ilmadā alakti ilī apāti  
*Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* II.36–8<sup>1</sup>

In the previous chapter we discussed the role of kingship in the establishment of civilized life in ANE literature and the institution of death rites as a crucial part of this endeavour. We also examined some of the metaphors that expressed the special bond of kings with the divine, especially the representation of the king as heir of the Sun-god and the king's relationship with the fertility goddess, often enacted in a garden setting. In this chapter I will follow more closely the development of the king's relationship with the goddess from the third to the second millennium BCE in light of the important socio-political changes that took place during this later period. Although it has been argued that the eroticized relationship of the king with Inanna – often referred to as “sacred marriage” – was replaced in later periods by a more maternal version of the goddess,<sup>2</sup> this classification is no less categorical than Jacobsen's description of the basic stages of religion (Intr.: p. 1). Therefore, starting with the hymns of Enhenduananna, daughter of Sargon I and priestess of Inanna, I argue that the goddess had manifested both her erotic and maternal aspects already during the Sumerian period and that both expressions of her divine protection were conceived metaphorically from the earliest times. Regardless of whether she was worshipped as a maternal figure or as a sexually alluring deity, the goddess continued to pass on vital knowledge about the afterlife to which the kings were privy. As Kertzer observed,<sup>3</sup>

[P]olitical figures use rites to create political reality for the people around them. Through participation in these rites people identify with the larger political forces that can be seen symbolically.

The metaphorical value of the “sacred marriage” is particularly evident in the function of the ritual and its ideology as a *speculum principum*; in the *GE* we have references to Dumuzi and his role as an Underworld judge which seem to reflect

Gilgameš's post-mortem duties and, therefore, to create a parallel between Inanna's consort and the Urukian king. Both Dumuzi and Gilgameš, who used to enjoy the favour/love of the goddess, seem to have been abandoned by her at certain moments in their lives when the goddess felt neglected. Similar messages were promoted by a number of "sacred marriage" hymns that refer to the king as a gardener of the goddess. The gardener, like other potential suitors of the goddess, is here understood as a metonymy for politically ambitious actors who tried to win Inanna's affection. Hence, the "sacred marriage," far from its early understanding as a rite designed to magically induce fertility, was a blueprint for the ideal king, a faithful worshipper of the gods, who would deservedly monopolize Inanna's attention.

### The king and the goddess

The association of Inanna with the institution of kingship that is represented as an essential component of civilized life is well attested from the earliest times. Hence, at least since the early OB period (2000–1800 BCE),<sup>4</sup> the goddess is depicted as invested by Enki, her father, with<sup>5</sup>

nam-ur-sa[g] nam-kal-ga nam-ni-ne-ru nam-  
ni-s[i-sá uru-laḫ<sub>x</sub>-laḫ<sub>x</sub> (DU.DU) i-si-iš gá-gá  
šà-ḫúl<sub>2</sub>-la]

heroism, force, dishonesty, righteousness,  
the plundering of cities, the chanting of lamentations,  
rejoicing,

terms that evoke her political aspects.<sup>6</sup> A few lines later the goddess is invested with further qualities that feature predominantly in ANE royal ideologies:<sup>7</sup>

du<sub>14</sub> (LÚxNE)-[SAR.SAR ù-ma] ad gi<sub>4</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>  
šà-kúš-ù di-[ku ka-aš bar

dispute, triumph, counselling,  
comforting, judging, decision-making

Other powers<sup>8</sup> attributed to Inanna in the poem include, for example, the extinguishing of fire, the art of the carpenter and the leather worker, the pleasure of the gathered family,<sup>9</sup> all closely linked with the introduction of civilization; in this framework the role of the goddess in the establishment of kingship appears more integral and corresponds to the *Sumerian King List*, where kingship is said to have descended from Heaven after the Flood to mark a new existence for humans under divine guidance.<sup>10</sup> But to appreciate the benefits of culture, one must remember the desperate chaos of its absence. Since the situation on earth was perceived to mirror the state of the cosmos,<sup>11</sup> people were mindful of the fragile balance between the forces of creation and those of destruction, which, entangled in an eternal conflict of Empedoclean dimensions, threatened

their wellbeing continually. Once more, the king experienced firsthand these periods of suspension of civilized life and death, typically described in poetry as a breakdown in his relationship with the goddess, who is relentless in her retribution.

Here I suggest that the hymn of *Enki and Inanna* should be read in connection with a hymn ascribed to Enheduanna, the daughter of Sargon (ca. 2300 BCE). The hymn, known as *in-nin me-huš-a* or as *Inanna and Ebiḫ*, celebrates the punitive aspects of the goddess, who appears terrifying in the text and keen to punish the irreverent mountain Ebiḫ for not recognizing her supremacy (II.5–9):<sup>12</sup>

nin gal <sup>d</sup>Inanna<sup>a</sup>) šen-šen-na sá sî-sî-ke gal zu  
kur gul-gul ti á-ta i-ni-bad kur-re á ba-e-ŠÚM  
piriḡ-gin<sub>7</sub> an ki-a še<sub>25</sub><sup>?!</sup> i-ni-ge<sub>4</sub> ùḡ-e su i-ni-sàḡ  
am gal-gin<sub>7</sub> kur ḡú-NE.RU ḡál-la ù-na ba-gub-bé-en  
piriḡ ḡuš-gin<sub>7</sub> EN-na nu-še-ga(-za) zî-za bí-ib-te-en-te-en

great lady Inanna, knowing well how to plan conflicts, you  
destroy mighty lands with arrow and strength and overpower lands.  
In heaven and on earth you roar like a lion and devastate the people.  
Like a huge wild bull you triumph over lands which are hostile. Like  
a fearsome lion you pacify the insubordinate and unsubmitive with your  
gall.<sup>13</sup>

In lines 69–78 of the *Ebiḫ* hymn the goddess, in obvious warrior mode, greets An by acknowledging that he has made her fearful among the gods and enlists some of her other qualities; here her ability to shed blood is combined with her fertility aspects that thrive during peacetime:<sup>14</sup>

ki-gal sî-ke <sup>ḡeš</sup>gu-za suḡuš ge-na  
á nam-šita<sub>4</sub>-a-ke<sub>4</sub> šu ḡá-ḡá mu/ḡeš-BU dub-gin<sub>7</sub><sup>b</sup>) GAM-e  
ṛ<sup>āš<sup>a</sup></sup> lá-e ki ḡa-ḡa-zé<sup>b</sup>)  
ṛumun<sub>7</sub><sup>a</sup>) lá-e ÍB<sup>b</sup>) ḡíd-ḡíd-i  
kaskal gaz-(e) ḡar-ra-an-na zà-šè DU  
lugal<sup>?!</sup>-[bi-ir]<sup>a</sup>) ṛsaḡar-tuḡ<sup>ṛ</sup> an-na-ka iti<sub>6/7</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> è-a  
ti á-ta è-a a-gàr-e ḡ<sup>eš</sup>kiri<sub>6</sub> ter] zú bir<sub>5</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> zi-zi  
[ḡeš-gána-ùr é ki-bala-a sî-ke  
[abulla<sup>a</sup>-ba <sup>ḡeš</sup>si-ḡar sud<sub>4</sub>-dè <sup>ḡeš</sup>ig-bi] ṛx<sup>ṛ</sup> NE<sup>ṛ</sup> KA X X<sup>b</sup>)  
[An lugal šu-ḡu<sub>10</sub> ḡé-em-mu-e-šúm á-bi]<sup>a</sup>) ṛḡé-a<sup>ṛ</sup>/e<sup>ṛ</sup>-ab<sup>ṛ</sup>-tab<sup>ṛ</sup>-ba

To set the socle in position and make the throne and foundation firm,  
to carry the might of the *cita* weapon which bends like a *mubum* tree,  
to hold the ground with the sixfold yoke,  
to extend the thighs with the fourfold yoke,  
to pursue murderous raids and widespread military campaigns,  
to appear to those kings in the . . . of heaven like moonlight,

to shoot the arrow from the arm and fall on fields, orchards and forests like  
 the tooth of the locust,  
 to take the harrow to rebel lands,  
 to remove the locks from their city gates so the doors stand open  
 – King An, you have indeed given me all this . . .

In *in-nin šà-gur<sub>4</sub>-ra* or *Exaltation of Inanna*, a hymn written by Enheduanna, the goddess is said to come “from heaven” (l.104)<sup>15</sup> like kingship itself. In addition, the bellicose nature of the goddess, who is portrayed as determining the fate of the lands under her command, does not seem to be a later development since it is evident from early on.<sup>16</sup> It has been argued, based on later hymns of Enheduanna, who fell from power when a usurper displaced Sargon, that the cult of the goddess – so closely associated with the previous regime – was brushed aside, first at Uruk and then in the rest of the lands that the Akkadians commanded.<sup>17</sup> However, the goddess seems to have retained her importance for kings during the whole of the Sargonic period until the kingship of Naram-Sin who, as we saw (Chapter 1: pp. 42–3), was keen to acknowledge both Enki and Inanna as the gods who bestowed kingship on him.<sup>18</sup>

In Tablet II iv.49–52 of the *Inanna and Enki* hymn the goddess describes the ordaining of her cult at Uruk (Unug Kulaba).<sup>19</sup> The people, we are told, will come out on the streets to celebrate a festival presided over by the king, who shall sacrifice bulls and sheep to the goddess.<sup>20</sup> Following beer libations, wild music will keep the participants entertained. The close connection of the palace with the priests is stressed in II v.1–5,<sup>21</sup> where Inanna is exalted for establishing the offices of the *en* and the *lagar* priests followed by the institution of the crown and royal throne. The symbols of kingship are listed immediately after (II v.6–9):<sup>22</sup>

gidri maḥ ba(-e-TÚM)  
 sibir eškiri ba(-e-TÚM)  
 [túg] maḥ ba(-e- TÚM)  
 na[m-]sipa ba(-e- TÚM)  
 nam-lugal ba(-e- TÚM)

You have brought with you the noble sceptre,  
 you have brought with you the staff and crook,  
 you have brought with you the noble dress,  
 you have brought with you shepherdship,  
 you have brought with you kingship.<sup>23</sup>

The identification of kingship with shepherdship, discussed in Chapter 1 (esp. p. 38 with n.113), also paves the way for the posing of the king as Dumuzi, the shepherd of Inanna, in “sacred marriage” ceremonies.<sup>24</sup> Again, in the hymn of *Inanna and Ebiḥ* (ll.79–81), the goddess exclaims:<sup>25</sup>

[lugal-la<sup>2</sup> zid-da-na]<sup>a)</sup> ʾhé-ni-in-ku<sub>4</sub>ʾ-[re(?) ki-bala gul-gul-lu-dè  
 [kur úr]-ra ʾsur<sub>14</sub>ʾ-dù<sup>mušen</sup>-gin<sub>7</sub><sup>b)</sup> saĝ<sup>c)</sup> ḥu-mu-n[i-túb]-bé

[An lugal] mu-zu zà kalam-ma gu-gin<sub>7</sub> ga-an-ši-bad

You have placed me at the right hand of the king in order to destroy rebel lands:

may he, with my aid, smash heads like a falcon in the foothills of the mountain,

King An, and may I [spread] your name throughout the land like a thread.

It could be argued that the early hymns to Inanna were intended as etiological accounts of her divinity and supreme power both in Heaven and on Earth (a phrase repeated throughout the *Enki and Inanna* hymn),<sup>26</sup> but also as “contracts” with the gods regulating the relationship of humans and deities and at times serving as warnings against possible transgressors of the set limits. Hence, in the hymn of *Inanna and Gudam* we hear of a king who raised a large army to follow him in the streets of Uruk spreading death to the citizens. His overbearing attitude – reflecting the early reputation of Gilgameš as a cruel and indifferent leader<sup>27</sup> – leads him to inevitable destruction; despite her initial support, Inanna soon retracts her favour. This case is not dissimilar to the fate of the last ruler of the Old Akkadian dynasty, Naram-Sin, who proudly exalted the support of the goddess for helping him win nine decisive battles. After his success Naram-Sin sought to be deified:<sup>28</sup> hence, in an inscription found on a socle of a copper statue (depicting a man crouching on a *lahmu* monster), the king declares that the citizens of his city had requested from a number of gods (Ištar in Eanna, Enlil in Nippur, Dagan in Tuttul, Ninhursag in Kesh, Ea in Eridu, Sin in Ur, Šamaš in Sippar and Nergal in Kutha) that he become *like* a god for their city; as a result, a temple was erected to Naram-Sin in the city, and a victory stele portrayed the king as marching proud and tall over a wooden mountain – an unmistakable sign of his arrogance.<sup>29</sup> Soon after, the goddess had a change of heart, and Naram-Sin’s empire came to an abrupt end.

Following the demise of the Old Akkadian Empire under Šarkališarra in 2193 BCE, later kings tried to disassociate themselves from this “cursed” empire of Sargon and Naram-Sin; hence, they chose to validate their authority by claiming continuity with the legendary rulers of Uruk’s distant past, rulers such as Lugalbanda and Gilgameš.<sup>30</sup> Despite, however, choosing another path for promoting their connections to divinity, the kings did not retract from the deeply seated belief that, provided they were pious, they were privy to extraordinary communication with the divine, particularly with the goddess.

### **The impious gardener**

The Sumerian *Hymn of Šukaletuda*, relating the adventures of a would-be gardener who remained popular in later Babylonian tradition, could be read as a warning of Inanna against royal impiety. In the myth the protagonist comes across the goddess while she is asleep under a shady tree and manages to rape her (l. 112–28). In anger the goddess searches for the wrongdoer who desperately tries to hide “among the cities of the people” spreading destruction on her way (possibly



manifested as unclean water given that in the hymn Inanna is said to have filled every water source with blood).<sup>31</sup> When the gardener finally admits to his crime (l.282–9) he is punished by death, but not before a commemorative cult is set up for Šukaletuda and his heinous deed (ll.296–301).<sup>32</sup>

..... mu-zu nam-<sup>ˀ</sup>ba-da-<sup>ˀ</sup>ha-<sup>ˀ</sup>lam-e  
<sup>ˀ</sup>mu-<sup>ˀ</sup>zu èn-du-a hé-gál èn-du hé-du<sub>10</sub>-<sup>ˀ</sup>ge<sup>ˀ</sup>  
 [na]r-tur-e é-gal lugal-la-ka hu-[m]u-ni-in-ku<sub>7</sub>-k[u<sub>7</sub>-dè]<sup>ˀ</sup>  
 s[ip]a-dè du<sub>9</sub>-du<sub>9</sub>, <sup>du<sub>9</sub></sup>šàkir-[r]a-ka-na du<sub>10</sub>-ge-eš hé-e[m-m]i-ib-bé  
 sipa-tur-re ki-udu-lu-a-na mu-zu hé-em-túm-túm-mu  
 é-[ga]l<sup>ˀ</sup>-eden-na é-zu hé-a

Your name, however, shall not be forgotten.<sup>33</sup>

Your name shall exist in songs and make the songs sweet.

A young singer shall perform them most pleasingly in the king's palace.

A shepherd shall sing them sweetly as he tumbles his butter churn.

A young shepherd shall carry your name to where he grazes the sheep.

The palace of the desert shall be your home.

However, the fact that the rape takes place in a garden setting, described superbly by Šukaletuda and repeatedly mentioned in “sacred marriage” ceremonies,<sup>34</sup> as well as the fact that later Gilgameš complains to Inanna's counterpart, Ištar, about the fate of the gardener Išullanu, her lover (*GE* VI.64–78), poignantly stressing the temporary nature of the goddess's affection, indicates that Šukaletuda is not any impious mortal but probably the model of an ambitious usurper or, at the very least, a political actor who tries to force the favour of the goddess.<sup>35</sup>

At this point, it is important to note that although the transmission of Sumerian lore to the later periods has been challenged based on an alleged break in the scribal tradition,<sup>36</sup> as Currie points out in his discussion of the OB version of the *Epic of Gilgameš* and its references to the myth of Šukaletuda – here named Išullanu (*GE* VI.68) – the poetics of allusion in this text “is less the product of a performative poetic tradition than of learned scribal tradition.”<sup>37</sup> Currie argues that as with Homeric tradition we must acknowledge that there were probably techniques in place that allowed members of the ANE audiences to memorize numerous lines of oral literary texts, although, as he admits, we can still get a glimpse of instances when active scribal intervention was at work, typically in the framework of official royal propaganda. Van der Toorn has also contributed major insights in our understanding of the developments in later scribal tradition in the ANE arguing that already in the second millennium BCE, the scribes, always interested in investing their compositions with notions of ancient wisdom handed down exclusively to them, promoted the view that knowledge was the privilege of the gods, who would share it with but a few select mortals. Hence, while previously Gilgameš's adventures were relevant to all members of the community in order to teach them the hardship one must undergo to gain wisdom (see Chapter 1), in later periods knowledge becomes notably esoteric

and beyond reach for the majority of the people.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, van der Toorn argues that instead of looking for the origins of this shift into the socio-political turmoil that more or less characterizes ANE politics perpetually, we may reach safer conclusions by focusing on the need to write down these texts, which in due time subordinates oral tradition to the authority of written texts.<sup>39</sup> In other words, scribes tended to rely from this time onwards on master copies which could be studied and employed for a number of purposes in different contexts (also cf. p. 90 below).

In the hymn of Šukaletuda, mentioned above, additional information stresses the political connotations of the impious gardener. Hence, we hear that Inanna withdrew to the mountains to “detect falsehood and justice, to inspect the Land closely, to identify the criminal against the just”;<sup>40</sup> furthermore, just as she grew tired and decided to fall asleep her thoughts, we are told, were with her shepherd lover, Dumuzi, while when she discovered what had happened to her she avenged herself by making the Sumerian people “drink blood,”<sup>41</sup> in other words by imposing relentless war and death on them and reversing thus the comforts of civilization and peaceful life. Although Šukaletuda poses as a gardener in the tale, when the goddess finally discovers and questions him, he admits that he was no good at this job; hence, although he was supposed to dig a well to water the plants, he had, in fact, dug all of them up (ll.262–81 in Volk 1995: 123, *ETCSL* 1.3.3), destroying the sacred location where the goddess would normally converse with her favourite king. The garden was no more.

Trees and, so, Inanna’s tree in the Gilgamesh episode seem to have been invested with cosmic and political meaning from early on. Every ANE temple attempted to re-recreate this sense of sacred space either by having a tree at its centre or by maintaining a lush garden nearby. Hence, the tree and the garden become co-extensive of the god worshipped<sup>42</sup> as well as the temple in which the god is worshipped. A neo-Sumerian hymn reminds us: “Temple, at its top a mountain, at its bottom a spring.”<sup>43</sup> In addition, the relationship of the goddess with the tree and the garden, the place where her life-giving powers are patently manifest, is echoed in the following Sumerian incantation (*CT* XVI 46, ll.183–98):<sup>44</sup>

Én: Uruduga giš-kín-gê-e ki-el-ta mú-a  
 múš-me-bi <sup>na</sup>za-gín-a abzu-ta (ni)-lá-a (var. e)  
<sup>d</sup>Enki-gè (ki)-du-du-a-ta Uruduga gè-gál sig-ga-ám  
 ki-dur-a-na ki-g̃ilib<sup>6</sup>-ám  
 ki-ná-a itim <sup>d</sup>Engur-ám  
 ê-kug-ga-a-ni-ta <sup>g̃is̃</sup>tir gissu-lá-e šà-bi lù nu-mu-  
 un-da-tu-tu-dè  
 šà <sup>d</sup>Babbar <sup>d</sup>Ama-ušumgal-an-na-gè

In Eridu in a pure place the dark *kiškanu* grows;  
 Its aspect is like lapis lazuli branching out from the *apsû*.  
 In the place where Ea holds sway, in Eridu full of abundance  
 His abode being in the Underworld,

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His chamber a recess of the goddess Engur<sup>45</sup>

In his pure house is a grove, shadow-extending, into whose midst no man  
has entered;

There are Šamaš and Tammuz.

In addition, trees are frequently seen in adoration or worshipper scenes behind the major deity in ANE cylinder seals,<sup>46</sup> and it is reasonable to assume that in his priestly role the king posed as the par excellent tender of the divine garden – ANE royal inscriptions and Xenophon’s record on Cyrus’ understanding of his royal duties certainly confirm this notion.<sup>47</sup> In this context, the political reading of the myth of Šukaletuda/Išullanu seems to be corroborated. Furthermore, the bodies of the goddess and that of nature (her garden) coincide and therefore, the crime of the evil gardener does not only defile the body of the goddess but essentially destroys natural order leaving people to wonder in dismay how long the retribution of the goddess will last (ll.129–38 in Volk 1995: 120, *ETCSL* 1.3.3).<sup>48</sup> Political success relies on acknowledging the divine force of the goddess as indicated by the gardener, who perceived Inanna’s nature as soon as he caught sight of her (“I saw someone who possesses fully the divine powers”),<sup>49</sup> but also on ensuring that the goddess remains satisfied with her royal protégé given that her revenge can be devastating. From this point of view, the passionate language of “sacred marriage” ceremonies as they have survived in early royal hymns and inscriptions should be understood metaphorically as an exaggerated attempt to keep pleasing the tempestuous goddess. Hence, in Šulgi’s (ca. 2094–2047 BCE) *Hymn X*, the goddess is described as preparing her body for the king,<sup>50</sup> who is then invited to please her sexually. However, the goddess’s “pleasure” is clearly part of her pact with the king, as we can infer from her own admission that “when he treats me tenderly on the bed, then I too will treat my lord tenderly.”<sup>51</sup> The imagery of natural abundance<sup>52</sup> that normally accompanies “sacred marriages” (where Inanna compares her nakedness with uncultivated land on the steppe,<sup>53</sup> has her breasts compared to fields which “pour forth grain” and even promises Dumuzi to be his “wet ground”<sup>54</sup>) creates a vision of ideal balance among heaven, earth, and the Underworld – a Golden Age period that can be experienced under a righteous ruler during which the dead receive honours and are remembered as required.<sup>55</sup> Displeased with the gardener Šukaletuda, Inanna demands compensation enlisting the reluctant help of wise Enki who reveals the culprit to her.<sup>56</sup>

### **The loss of the garden**

It has been argued that during the second and first millennia BCE historical developments forged new models of power in which the role of the goddesses

overall tends to be limited – at least in the framework of state religion.<sup>57</sup> In Frymer-Kensky’s words, now

[T]he chief figure of wisdom is Enki/Ea, while Nisaba’s role as goddess of writing and patron of scribal schools was taken over by Nabû. By the later periods in Mesopotamia, only Ištar has any real impact and persona.<sup>58</sup>

This “new” role of the goddess is especially reflected in Sumerian city laments dating from the OB period (ca. 2000–1600 BCE),<sup>59</sup> the laments record the destruction of major cities after the fall of Ur III and can give us good evidence about the ANE association of war and civic disorder with death and the Underworld.<sup>60</sup> The texts emphasize the sense of hopelessness experienced by the people who believed that their cities, abandoned by their angered gods, were now punished by devastating enemy attacks. As Samet put it,<sup>61</sup>

[T]he physical destruction is conceptualized in the City Laments as an expression of the destruction of the mythological infrastructure of the city’s existence. Thus, what is actually being destroyed are the city’s “plans” (*ġišhur*), “rituals” (*ġarza*); and “rational judgement” (*umuš*, *ġalga* or *dim*). Above all, the city loses its *me*, the divine essence which lies at the basis of its cultural, social and religious institutions, and enables its existence.

Accordingly, in the *Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur* (II.207–40) terribly mutilated corpses pile up in the streets, and shocking images of the inhumanity of war are everywhere to be seen: in short, “the judgement of the land has disappeared” (I.230).<sup>62</sup> In the *Lamentation over Sumer and Ur*, we hear (I.62–3) that “Utu took away the pronouncement of equity and justice, Inanna handed over (victory in) strife and battle to a rebellious land,”<sup>63</sup> and again that (I.399–400):<sup>64</sup> “Ur, inside it is death, outside it is death, inside we die of famine.” In the *Nippur Lament* we hear that Enlil, enraged with the city, erased it (I.96–103):<sup>65</sup>

ù-mu-un-bi im-ġul-a šu-bi bí-in-ġi<sub>4</sub>-à[m]  
 urú-bi é-bi in-ġul-ġul-àm  
 úr-bi in-bu-ra-àm ġiš-al-e bí-in-ra-àm  
 dam dumu-bi šà-ba mi-ni-in-ug<sub>5</sub>-ga-àm  
 urú-bi urú-šub-ba im-ma-ni-in-ku<sub>4</sub>-ra-àm  
 [è]m-UL-bi ki-bi bí-in-[X X X]  
 mu-un-ga-bi im-e bí-in-ir-ra-àm  
 urú ġál-la-bi nu-ġál-la mi-ni-in-ku<sub>4</sub>-ra-àm

Its lord has turned it over to the hand of the evil wind,  
 It destroyed that city, that house,  
 Ripped out its foundations, broke it up with the pickaxe,  
 killed its spouses (and) children in its midst,  
 Turned that city into an abandoned city –

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. . . its ancient (?), its place,  
The wind carried off its possessions,  
Turned that existing city *into a non-existing (city)* . . . (my emphasis)

The idea that a cataclysmic storm,<sup>66</sup> sent by the enraged Enlil against his impious enemies, levels their god-forsaken cities making them similar to uninhabited desert<sup>67</sup> is a common pattern in these laments. For example, the motif is repeated throughout the *Lamentation over Sumer and Ur* where in one instance (ll.403–5) we read.<sup>68</sup>

zi-bi murgu-bi-šè ì-ak-e gù-téš-a bí-in-sì-ke-eš  
é-gal a ba-šub-ba šu ba-e-lá-lá <sup>šis</sup>si-gar-bi bí-in-bu-bu-uš  
elam<sup>ki</sup> a-maš è-a-gin<sub>7</sub> gidim im-ma-ni-ib-gar

They *take refuge* behind it (the city walls), they were united (in their fear).

The palace that was destroyed by (onrushing) water has been defiled, its bolt was torn out. Elam, like a swelling flood wave, *left only the ghosts*.

And again in the *Lament for Uruk* (3.1–14) the imagery of the deluge is beautifully combined with the fires of the Underworld.<sup>69</sup>

[x x] ʾxʾ-e im-lá šu mi-ni-in-ʾ(gíd)ʾ-gíd kur-re ní bí-in-te  
<sup>d</sup>en-líl-le huš gal-bi mu-un-tag [gù ba]-an-dé  
a-ma-ru du<sub>6</sub> al-ak-e gù im-ma-ab-zi  
mè [u]gu-bi-šè urudu.šen-dù-àm egir-bi-šè PA+HAR<sup>?</sup>+DIŠ- àm  
síg-hum-ma-bi giš.gán-ùr-ra-àm mu.[mur]gu-bi-šè izi-àm  
sag-ki-bi u<sub>4</sub>-hul-dù-àm ki-an-na dul-lu-dam  
giš.nu<sub>11</sub>-bi nim-gír-re anzu.mušen-gin<sub>7</sub> igi[s]ù-ud-bi bar-re-dam  
ka-bi mir-mir-ra-àm ne-ne-a kur-re sù-sù-ù-dam  
eme-bi ga-an-zé-ir-ra-àm ù-dúb šèg-gá kalam-ma dar-re-dam  
á-bi anzu.mušen-mah du<sub>10</sub> bad-du níg-nam nu-è-àm  
ti-ti-bi níg-za-ra-ak-dam u<sub>4</sub>-zal-gin<sub>7</sub> zal-le-dam  
šab-ba-bi-a á-sàg úru-gul-la níg-kéš-šè mu-un-lá  
háš-gal-bi gír-sur úš-dul<sub>4</sub>-dul<sub>4</sub>-lu ù-mun bal-bal-e-dam  
sa-sa-bi urudu.šum-me šap-dam gir-bi hu-rí-in.mušen-na-àm

he stretched forth his hand; he induced terror in the land.

Enlil struck out with great ferocity. He proclaimed:

“A devastating deluge shall be invoked –

War! In front it shall be a . . . -axe; in back it shall be a . . . ;

Its scales shall be a harrow, its back shall be flames;

Its countenance shall be a malevolent storm that enshrouds heaven and earth.

The glint of its eyes shall be lightning that flashes far like the anzu-bird;  
Its mouth shall be grotesque – a grimace vast as the netherworld (my  
emphasis).<sup>70</sup>

Its tongue shall be an inferno, raining embers, that sunders the country;  
Its wings shall be the wide span of the anzu-bird that nothing can escape;<sup>71</sup>  
Its ribs shall be crowbars that let it pass (inside) like the sun's rays;  
Knotted at both its hips shall be city-destroying slingstones.  
Its great haunches shall be dripping knives, covered with gore, that make  
blood flow;  
Its muscles shall be saws that slash; its feet shall be eagle's (talons).

Another popular motif in the laments is the destruction of the city gardens, which immediately points to the withdrawal of divine favour and the inability of its king to withstand the “storm.” As Samet argued,<sup>72</sup>

[T]he motif of the irrigated orchards filled or flowing with syrup and wine (lal<sub>3</sub> ġeštín) is very common in descriptions of abundance in Sumerian literature.

In addition, as discussed, the garden was particularly associated with the goddess and tales advocating the ideal royal conduct – to which “sacred marriage” hymns ought to be included. Hence, the reversal of the city's fortune is powerfully illustrated in negative descriptions of the gardens. For example, in the *Curse of Agade* (I.174) we read that pu<sub>2</sub>-<sup>ġis</sup>kiri<sub>6</sub> lal<sub>3</sub> ġeštín nu-um-de<sub>6</sub> (the irrigated orchards yielded no syrup or wine), while in another *Hymn* of Šulgi (D 342) we are told that pu<sub>2</sub>-<sup>ġis</sup>kiri<sub>6</sub> lal<sub>3</sub> <sup>ġis</sup>peš<sub>3</sub> mu<sub>2</sub>-a-be<sub>2</sub>-e a-ri<sub>2</sub>-na<sup>sar</sup> bi<sub>2</sub>-i<sub>3</sub>-mu<sub>2</sub> (in their irrigated gardens, where honey and fig trees used to grow, he made weeds grow).<sup>73</sup> The desolate state of the garden highlights the divine abandonment as well as the interruption in the good relationship of the city gods with its king. In this situation the very basic principles of civilization, closely related to the institution of appropriate death rites by the king, are cancelled out; without memory the barriers between the living and the dead are blurred. In the *Lamentation for the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* (II.413–27) we read:<sup>74</sup>

<sup>ġis</sup>nimbar urudu níg-kala-ga á nam-ur-sag-gá  
<sup>ú</sup>numun<sub>2</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> ba-bu <sup>ú</sup>numun<sub>2</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> ba-zé úr-ba ti mi-ni-ib-bal  
sag saġar-ra ki ba-ni-ib-ú-ús lú zi-zi la-ba-tuku  
<sup>ġis</sup>zé-na-bi gú ba-an-gur<sub>3</sub>-uš sag šu bí-in-ġu-ġu-uz  
á-an su<sub>11</sub>-lum-ma-bi pú du<sub>7</sub>-du<sub>7</sub> ba-ra-an-BU.BU-dè-eš  
gi zi NAB<sup>?</sup> kù-ge mú-a šu ba-e-lá-lá  
gú-un gal-gal-e mi-ni-in-gar-re-eš-a kur-re ì-íl-íl  
é-e <sup>ġis</sup>búr maġ-bi ba-šub bàd-si-bi ba-gul  
máš-anše zi-da ġub-bu-ba gú-da lá-a-bi  
ur-sag ur-sag-e gaz-a-gin<sub>7</sub> igi-bi-ta ba-šú  
ušumgal ka duġ-a ug-gá ní ìl-íl-la-bi  
am-dab<sub>3</sub>-ba-gin<sub>7</sub> saman-e bí-in-šub-bu-ri erim<sub>2</sub>-e ba-ab-de<sub>6</sub>

ki-tuš kù <sup>d</sup>nanna tir šim <sup>giš</sup>eren-na-gin<sub>7</sub> ir-si-im-bi ba-gul  
 a-sal-bar-bi kù-sig<sub>17</sub> <sup>na4</sup>za-gín ki x x-da du<sub>11</sub>-ga-a-bi  
 é u<sub>6</sub>-di-bi ià du<sub>10</sub>-ga-ri u<sub>6</sub>-di-bi ba-gul  
 u<sub>4</sub>-gin<sub>7</sub> kur-kur-ra im-si-a an-usan an-na-gin<sub>7</sub> ba-e-dù

The palm tree, (strong) as mighty copper, the heroic weapon,  
 Was torn out like (mere) rushes, was plucked like (mere) rushes, its  
 Trunk was turned sideways,  
 Its top lay in the dust, there was no one to raise it,  
 The midribs of its palm fronds were cut off and their tops were burnt off,  
 Its date clusters that used to fall on the well were torn out.  
 The fertile reeds, which grew in the sacred . . . , were defiled,  
 The great tribute that they had collected was hauled off to the mountains.  
 The great *door ornament* of the temple was felled, its parapet was destroyed  
 (my emphasis),  
 The wild animals that were intertwined on its left and right  
 Lay before it like heroes smitten by heroes,  
 Its open-mouthed dragons (and) its awe-inspiring lions  
 Were pulled down with ropes like captured wild bulls and carried off to  
 enemy territory.  
 The fragrant aroma of the sacred seat of Nanna was destroyed like that of a  
 cedar grove,  
 Its architrave . . . gold, silver, and lapis.  
 The admired temple that used (to receive) first class oil, its admiration was  
 extinguished,  
 Like a storm that fills all the lands, built there like twilight in the  
 heavens. . . .

Describing a destroyed palm tree which perhaps decorated the façade of a temple, the text cited above adds to Dalley's recent argument about the building of ANE temples in the likeness of a sacred grove to which kings had privileged rights.<sup>75</sup> When the tree is no longer standing cosmic balance is overturned – dead and living end up inhabiting the same dimension and community remembrance is interrupted.

Although the City Laments were not copied beyond the OB period, *eršemma* lamentations (meaning the “wail of the tambourine”)<sup>76</sup> and balags (named after the balag instrument, a drum or harp that accompanied their recitation),<sup>77</sup> both written in *emesal*, the language of the *kalu/gala* priests of the goddess (see n.93 below and Chapter 3: n.89), were copied down to the first century BCE and new ones were being composed<sup>78</sup> with the latest redactions of balags dating to the Seleucid period.<sup>79</sup> It could be argued that the increased popularity of lamentations in the ANE is partly symptomatic of the socio-political challenges that the region witnessed during the second millennium: although Hammurapi had pacified the region after the destruction of Ur III, establishing a dynasty that lasted to

the middle of the second millennium, increasing attacks from Hittites and Kassites from 1550 BCE onwards brought anarchy back in ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>80</sup> In addition, the political turmoil continued in the first millennium during which the local populations beheld an impressive succession of rulers from the neo-Assyrians (ca. 912–608 BCE) to the neo-Babylonians (ca. 626–539 BCE) to the Achaemenids (550–330 BCE) to the Macedonians, first under Alexander (336 BCE to his death in 323 BCE) and then under the successors (from 321 to 133 BCE when Attalus III bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans).

Unsurprisingly,<sup>81</sup> unlike the city laments proper, the *eršemmas* do not describe a specific historical event of destruction but maintain a more general lament tone. Although the ritual function of the laments in atoning to the angered gods and urging them to empathize with the people has been discussed in the literature,<sup>82</sup> along with their repetitive style (whose Lydian versions Plato, centuries later, abhorred),<sup>83</sup> the importance of wailing as a means of attuning with the cosmos has been overlooked. However, as our sources indicate, the dissolution of the city is the result of a breakdown between the king and the gods. In the *Lamentation over Sumer and Akkad* (ll.27–8) we read that the gods frowned upon the land, looked favourably on an enemy land and cursed the city “in order to forsake the divine decrees of Sumer, to change (its preordained plans), to alienate the (divine) decrees of the reign of kingship of Urim.”<sup>84</sup> In lines 104–8 the desperate king is described as follows:<sup>85</sup>

lugal-bi é-gal ní-te-na zi im-ma-ni-in-gi<sub>4</sub>  
 ʹi-bí-<sup>d</sup>en.zu é-gal ní-te-na i-si-iš ba-ni-in-lá-lá  
 é-nam-ti-la šà húl-la-ka-na ér gig mu-un-še<sub>8</sub>-še<sub>8</sub>  
 a-ma-ru du<sub>6</sub><sup>(ki)</sup> al-ak-e šu im-ùr-ùr-re  
 u<sub>4</sub> gal-gin<sub>7</sub> ki-a ur<sub>5</sub> mi-ni-ib-ša<sub>4</sub> a-ba-a ba-ra-è

Its king sat immobilised in the palace, all alone.

Ibbi-Sin was sitting in anguish in the palace, all alone.

In the Ennamtila, the palace of his delight, he was crying bitterly.

The devastating flood was levelling (everything),

Like a great storm it roared over the earth, who could escape it?

In this hopeless situation the people no longer retain their identities reversing in the anonymity of our primitive condition marked by the absence of justice and civic order; living dead, resembling more ghosts than real creatures,<sup>86</sup> the people experience a descent into an endless Underworld (a negation of what is considered as norm) that takes over their lives.<sup>87</sup> The very amount of death and violence they witness places them in a liminal position which at the same time prepares them for the journey to reclaiming their identity.<sup>88</sup> The only response the mourners can muster is an attempt to gain control over their existence through ritual,<sup>89</sup> to reaffirm their sense of community and to attempt to reproduce a sense of harmony through wailing, which reflects their broken situation (people are described as



broken potsherds in the *Lament over the Destruction of Ur*, l.211 in Samet 2009: 93; cf. Kramer 1940: 39) and through which they can elicit the desirable divine sign that the out-of-synch cosmos can now start its healing.<sup>90</sup> After all, the Underworld would be the ideal location for the process of rebirth to start, as the goddess illustrates through her own descent.

Interestingly, in the *balags* and *eršemmas*, the liturgical laments, a recurrent stereotypical motif is the mourning for a doomed husband or son<sup>91</sup> which, of course, brings to mind Inanna/Ištar and her mourning over the death of Dumuzi/Tammuz understood by Kramer as a metaphor for the death of the king.<sup>92</sup> It could be argued that on a par with the scribal investment of knowledge with esoteric nuances from the second millennium BCE onwards, the masses are attracted to temple cults through which they enact human suffering and claim spiritual redemption.<sup>93</sup> From this point of view, the goddess is now required to perform the next episode in her extraordinary relationship with the “king,” who can be increasingly identified with the average man. The “sacred marriage” becomes thus a token that assures the king (and by extension every member of the community who can empathize with Dumuzi and his ordeal) of appropriate commemoration. Through these laments the hundreds that remained unburied in the streets or floated in the rivers (as these texts often relate)<sup>94</sup> were offered proper rites. Hence, in her new guise as *mater dolorosa* the goddess sometimes weeps over her destroyed temple and city, while at other times she is overcome with grief over the death of Dumuzi. Therefore, although Westenholz<sup>95</sup> argues that

[I]n this period the character of the goddess shifts from Inanna, the Sumerian troublesome young woman, to Ištar, the queen of heaven as well as the queen of the people,

it seems that such a black-and-white portrayal of reality cannot be accurate, especially since already in the third millennium Enheduanna had composed a prayer to the goddess in order to “cool down” her heart urging her “to stop [her/the] weeping.”<sup>96</sup> At the very least, the goddess was perceived as ready to empathize with the suffering of her people already in the previous millennium.

In addition, all these remarks are made under the assumption that “sacred marriages” during the third millennium involved the king having sex, literally, with a priestess of the goddess, a view revised here based on the metaphorical association of sex with culture and kingship.<sup>97</sup> The “sacred marriage” displays the king’s exclusive privilege to modulating the fertility of the goddess and maintaining the cosmic balance. Since cosmic balance becomes a major preoccupation of the royal and theological tradition of the later millennia, the sexuality of the goddess, inextricably linked with it, must have also remained a major expression of cosmic affluence and of the king’s role in it. In fact, such a development could explain more satisfactorily the double representation of the goddess in the lamentation hymns as both a destructive force siding with the enemies and a mother weeping for the loss of her city and her king. In the *Lament for Eridu* (Green 1978: 138–9

at *kirugu* 6.11.20–4; *ETCSL* t.2.2.6, Version 1, Segment C, 11.21–5) Inanna is said to have destroyed the city, but precisely because the people kept calling her name, she did not abandon it. In addition, now more than ever before, the king was required to foster crucial pacts with the gods in order to ensure the survival of his city.<sup>98</sup> Hence, in trying to understand the changes that took place in the second and first millennia BCE we should not be looking for elements that were rejected but for those who were now being added to widen the spectrum of metaphors from which the kings (and their subjects) could draw suitable images to express their situations. As a result, at least the myths with which the “sacred marriage” was associated, relating the courtship of Dumuzi and Inanna as well as the *Descent of Ištar* to the Underworld, persevered.<sup>99</sup> By the first millennium BCE, the so-called love lyrics, passionate *epithalamia* celebrating the union of the goddess with Tammuz – which in Babylon possibly reflected Marduk’s relationship with Ištar<sup>100</sup> – and dirges lamenting her lover’s premature death further popularized the “sacred marriage” ideology. The “love lyrics” could be included in non-state cults,<sup>101</sup> especially as the cult of the goddess and her unfortunate lover spread in Palestine and Egypt.<sup>102</sup> Thus, we hear in the book of Ezekiel (8:14), written between 593–563 BCE, that the women of Jerusalem were weeping *for* Tammuz.<sup>103</sup> Of course, Tammuz is not identical to Dumuzi, very much in the way that Inanna and Ištar were originally distinct.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, they are invested with the same cultural metaphors, and their mythological episodes are celebrated vis-à-vis the core experiences that define the ephemeral human nature. From this perspective, Ištar was now especially seen as a goddess preoccupied with sexual potency and attraction to whom people addressed their prayers and petitions for help at individual level.<sup>105</sup> In many ways, the “king” exalted and mourned in the liturgical hymns of Inanna and Dumuzi offered a basic range of roles to be impersonated by the average person, who could thus express his/her own claims to the garden of the goddess. Nevertheless, kings could still employ “sacred marriage” rites and the popular songs that accompanied them in order to promote their political agendas, as it is obvious by the “sacred marriages” of Marduk and Zarpanitu as well as Nabû and Nanaya, celebrated in first millennium BCE Babylon, where Marduk and his son were notably associated with royal cult(s).<sup>106</sup> Hence, although Westenholz argues that Ištar’s role as the consort of Marduk at Babylon

symbolized her subordination to an ideology centred politically on Babylon and theologically on the status of Marduk as ruler of the pantheon<sup>107</sup>

the goddess was, nevertheless, still widely worshipped at Babylon, where numerous temples were dedicated to her; notably, the aforementioned “sacred marriages” were performed at her Eturkamma temple.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, under king Nabonidus (556–539 BCE), the Emašdari temple was dedicated specifically to the third-millennium (prototype of) Ištar of Akkad. The dedicatory inscription of the temple puts emphasis on the bellicose nature of the goddess as well as her Underworld connections.<sup>109</sup> In addition, the overwhelming power of the goddess

on Heaven and Earth, as found in the *Inanna and Enki* hymn (see pp. 66–9 above), is stressed:<sup>110</sup>

a-na <sup>d</sup>iš-tar šú-úr-bu-tim  
 ru-um-tim í-li ga-ri-it-tim  
<sup>d</sup>in-nin i-la-at ta-am-ḥa-ru  
 e-bi-šá-at tu-ḵu-un-tim  
 na-mi-ir-ti be-le-et da-ad-mi  
 ša-ḵu-tim i-gí-gí  
 ru-ba-a-tim <sup>d</sup>a-nun-na-ki  
 na-šá-a-[a]t pu-lu-úḥ-tim  
 be-el-tim šá mi-lam-mu-šú  
 šá-mu-ù ka-at-mu  
 nam-ri-ir-ru-šú eršetim<sup>im</sup> rapaštim<sup>im</sup> sa-aḥ-pu  
<sup>d</sup>ištar a-ga-dé<sup>ki</sup> be-let ta-ḥa-za  
 šá-ki-na-at ṣu-la-a-ti  
 a-ši-ba-at ê-máš-da-ri  
 šá ke-re-eb bābili-<sup>ki</sup> bēlti-?ia

To Ištar, the supreme,  
 The heroic mistress of the gods,  
 To Innin, goddess of battle,  
 Who rouses strifes,  
 The radiant mistress of creatures,  
 supreme among the Igigi,  
 conspicuous among the Anunnaki,  
 who is clothed with fear,  
 the mistress whose splendour  
 covers the heavens,  
 Whose light traverses the wide earth,  
 Ištar of Akkade, lady of battle,  
 she who incites hostility,  
 who has her residence in the Emashdari,  
 Which is situated in Babylon, my Lady.

Even if we accept that Nabonidus' reign was unpopular (at least with the Babylonian priesthood),<sup>111</sup> we must still appreciate that our evidence about his impious rule relies on later propaganda under his Persian successors.<sup>112</sup> Hence, despite fluctuations in her popularity the Sumerian goddess was never absent from the minds of the people. Her role in neo-Assyrian prophecies (934–609 BCE) has been extensively discussed by Parpola, who suggested that the goddess continued to have a prominent political role as the “spirit” or “breath” of Aššur.<sup>113</sup> Although his comparison of Ištar to the Biblical spirit of God is unconvincing, the prophecies stress the continuous role of the goddess in advising the king; hence, in *SAA* 9.1, *SAA* 9.5, *SAA* 9.3 the goddess offers assurances of her constant support for the

king, while *SAA* 13.139 refers to the reconciliation among Marduk (the leader of the Babylonian pantheon in the second millennium), Mulliššu and Aššurbanipal. Furthermore, since now the passion that characterizes the goddess is expressed notably in terms of her violent side, she seems to transfer on her chosen kings the power to decide on the life and death of their enemies, a popular topic in neo-Assyrian art where royal hunting scenes, set in magnificent parks that evoke the coveted garden of the goddess, refer to the king's ability to annihilate his enemies and monopolize her favour.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, Hellenistic queens, like Arsinoe II (316–260 at the latest BCE), who staged the Adonia at Hellenistic Alexandria, also appreciated the “sacred marriage” ideology and its metaphorical values (see Chapter 3: pp. 123–131).<sup>115</sup>

### **Sacred marriage as a metaphor**

As mentioned often so far, the affinity of the king with a protecting female deity was typically celebrated in myth and cult as a passionate affair between them and was largely modelled on the divine marriages regularly celebrated in ANE temples.<sup>116</sup> In the so-called sacred marriage<sup>117</sup> ritual the king personified the god Dumuzi in his sexual union with the goddess Inanna;<sup>118</sup> the hymns exalting the affair are full of graphic details of the sexual intercourse between the king and the goddess, which led scholars to assume that at least in the early second millennium BCE the king actually had sex with a priestess substituting for the goddess.<sup>119</sup> However, the passive role of the king in these encounters,<sup>120</sup> along with a better appreciation of these texts as literature,<sup>121</sup> has urged us to accept them as metaphors of the divine–human relationship. As Cooper reminds us,<sup>122</sup>

[T]he culmination of the sexual encounter between the king as Dumuzi and Inanna is the blessing the goddess bestows on the king and his nation

and in many ways it makes sense for this blessing to be expressed in sexual terms which imply the abundance of crops and livestock and progeny that the king's subjects (aspire to) experience as a result of the goddess's sexual energy.

The same metaphor applies when ANE communities reflect on the dreaded opposite situation of divine hostility expressed in terms of infertility, drought and the utter aversion of the Underworld to sexual activity. The metaphor is also obvious in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*;<sup>123</sup> the fact that the goddess's anger is not mainly directed against humans but rather against Zeus (*h.Dem.*91–2) relates the cosmic aspects of the episode in which humans represent only a pitiful note. The episode has been identified as one of the key motifs that transgressed cultural barriers and is compared with the more dramatic aspects of the ANE “sacred marriage” during which the goddess disappears in the Underworld. Although in the past Smith suggested<sup>124</sup> that the rite “invited deliberately” the destructive forces for a staged reconciliation in order to exemplify the temporary effect of death against the ever-triumphal determination of life – resonating thus with Fraser's ideas – by “cosmic” I only wish to refer to the position of man in the world and

man's need to second-guess divine will in order to figure out basic existential questions. In addition, although in the ANE the divine drama did not lead to initiatory rites of the kind we come across later in Greece, it could be argued that the almost exclusive right of the elite and royal court associates to the cult in conjunction with the sacred myth and symbolic gestures involved alludes to initiatory patterns that were enacted on behalf of the people – at least during the third and most of the second millenniums BCE.<sup>125</sup>

The figurative tenor of the language describing “sacred marriage” ceremonies is already highlighted in early Sumerian literature. Hence, in *Enmerkar and Enšuhkešdanna*, Enmerkar taunts a rival king that he is only able to see Inanna in a dream, whilst he gets to actually lie down with her “in sweet slumber” on the “adorned bed.”<sup>126</sup> Accordingly, Enmerkar boasts that<sup>127</sup>

ud nu-um-zal ḡi<sub>6</sub>-[u<sub>3</sub>-na] nu-ru-gu<sub>2</sub>  
 ḡa<sub>2</sub>-e <sup>d</sup>inana-da kaskal danna [X]-<sup>r</sup>am<sub>3</sub> ṽ šu hu-mu-un-da-[niḡin]  
<sup>d</sup>utu suh kug-ḡa<sub>2</sub> igi nu-mu-un-[bar]  
 ḡi<sub>6</sub>-par<sub>4</sub> kug-ḡa<sub>2</sub> ba-e-ši-in-[ku<sub>4</sub>-ku<sub>4</sub>]

And so day does not dawn, night does not pass.  
 I roam with Inanna for the whole journey of [ . . . ] leagues.  
 Utu does not set eyes on my holy crown  
 once she has entered my holy Gipar!

Berlin and more recently Vanstiphout and Cooper interpreted these words as an erotic metaphor. A magic contest between a sorcerer from Aratta and a witch, the Old Woman Sagburru from Uruk, eventually determines the outcome of this rivalry, and the *en* admits that Enmerkar is “the beloved lord of Inanna,” who has truly chosen him for her holy lap.<sup>128</sup> A similar line is pursued in *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, where the latter had made a bed and a house of lapis lazuli for Inanna and even set a golden crown on her head (1.30),<sup>129</sup>

en kul-ab<sub>4</sub><sup>ki</sup>-a-gin<sub>7</sub> nu-mu-na-sag<sub>9</sub>  
 but he did not please her as well as did the lord of Kulab

The lord of Aratta firmly disputes Inanna's indifference avowing that she has (ll.558–62)<sup>130</sup>

iri-ni aratta<sup>ki</sup> šu li-bi<sub>2</sub>-in-dag unug<sup>ki</sup>-e la-ba-an-KA  
 e<sub>2</sub>-za-gin<sub>3</sub>-na-ka-ni šu li-bi<sub>2</sub>-in-dag eš<sub>3</sub> e<sub>2</sub>-an-na-ka ka-ba-an-dug<sub>4</sub>  
 kur me sikil-la-ka šu li-bi<sub>2</sub>-in-dag sig<sub>4</sub> kul-ab<sub>4</sub><sup>ki</sup>-a-ke<sub>4</sub> la-ba-an-dug<sub>4</sub>  
 ḡi<sup>is</sup>nu<sub>2</sub> še-er-kan<sub>2</sub> dug<sub>4</sub> šu li-bi<sub>2</sub>-in-dag ḡi<sup>is</sup>nu<sub>2</sub> gi-rin-na la-ba-an-dug<sub>4</sub>  
 en-ra šu sikil-la-ka-ni šu li<sub>2</sub>-bi-in-dag en unug<sup>ki</sup>-ga en kul-ab<sub>4</sub><sup>ki</sup>-a-ra  
 la-ba-an-dug<sub>4</sub>

Not yet abandoned Aratta to surrender it to Unug!  
 Nor did she abandon her Ezagina to surrender it to Eana;

Nor did she abandon the mountain of the shining powers to surrender it to  
Kulab, the Brickwork;  
Nor did she abandon her sweet bed to surrender it to the flowery bed;  
Nor did she abandon the purity of her lord to surrender it to the lord of  
Unug and Kulab!

The language of these poems, ranging from explicitly erotic to more subtle, intends to highlight the closeness of the king with the goddess. On other occasions, the king may well pose as the brother of the goddess.<sup>131</sup> Leick further draws attention to the office of *en* as a priestly function, which the kings typically fulfil. According to the *Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur*, Nanna chooses an *en* priestess for her *ša-hi-li-a*, which can be loosely translated as “sex-appeal.”<sup>132</sup> The phrase has been also used in *Hymn X* with reference to the selection of king Šulgi by the goddess.<sup>133</sup> The priestly office could be in the service of either Inanna or a male god, who would then choose a female *en* or *entu* (in Akkadian) to pose as his spouse – as we shall see (pp. 84–6 below), the tradition was later employed by Nabonidus, who claimed to have received a dream from the moon-god Nanna “desiring” a priestess.

Nabonidus was known for his systematic attempts to invest his kingship with ancient royal practices that had been allegedly abandoned by his time.<sup>134</sup> In his own account of restoring the office of high priestess, he noted that it “had been forgotten and her characteristic features were nowhere indicated.” In fact, the king, the last neo-Babylonian ruler before the city yielded to the Achaemenids, can only get a glimpse of the high priestess on an “ancient stele of Nebuchadnezzar” (ca. 1126–1105 BCE).<sup>135</sup> The practice of appointing one’s daughter as the high priestess is often linked to Sargon, the founder of the Akkadian Empire (ca. 2334–2279 BCE), although<sup>136</sup>

the *entu*-priestesses are attested as late as the Post-Kassite period (after 1155 BCE), suggesting that at least the office was perpetuated whenever possible.

In the tale of Enmerkar, the king, as we saw, takes pride in residing in the *gipar*, where he “consumes” his relationship with the goddess, while in *Hymn C* of Ur-Nammu (ca. 2112–2096 BCE) the king proclaims that he dresses himself in the *gipar* in linen cloth before lying down “on a bed covered with flowers, on a sweet bed.”<sup>137</sup> Ur-Nammu was an *en* priest of Inanna and hence, here the king employs his union with the goddess to explain the abundance described in lines 76–80 of the text.<sup>138</sup> Discussing Šulgi’s *Hymn X* and his role as an *en* priest, Leick observed that in royal hymns, the assumed erotic relationship that the *en* of Uruk enjoyed with the city goddess Inanna became fused with her traditional association with Dumuzi, who was therefore known as a king of Uruk and the proverbial lover of the goddess.<sup>139</sup> It is possible that an ancient title was reinterpreted during this time to suit contemporary royal ideology. We know nothing about the cultic function of the *en* in ED Uruk, and the portrayal of the ancient Urukian kings in the heroic poems is clearly anachronistic (as well as idealized) to fit the tenor of the

narratives. The royal ideology of the time advocated that the kings of Ur – and their successors at Isin – were closely associated with the national pantheon alluding to a traditional divine handing down of kingship, or they were related by descent to the quasi-ancestral heroes of the ancient Urukian dynasty. In this vein, the sexual relationship of the king with the goddess exemplified not only one’s destiny to become king but also the dangers to which the king had to subject himself given the whimsical nature of the goddess – Gilgameš could illustrate the point perfectly. After all, in the disagreement of Enmerkar with the lord of Aratta, the goddess who was associated with both cities could readily change her mind at any time.<sup>140</sup>

The most widespread model of this relationship is, of course, the courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi (cast as Ištar and Tammuz under the Babylonians), who is forced to go to the Underworld as the substitute of the goddess when she suspects him of unfaithfulness or at least indifference.<sup>141</sup> As a metaphor, such a relationship privileged the king with knowledge of the Underworld through rites that involved a quasi-*katabasis* in emulation of the goddess’s consort. Hence, the king in seeking to renew the favour or “love” of the fertility goddess on a regular basis (typically annual or semi-annual) became the arch-hierophant of her death rites; this is amply manifested in the tale of Gilgameš, who is notoriously suspicious of the goddess Ištar and realizes that while she allegedly offers him love, she is, in fact, proposing his death.<sup>142</sup> In a way, the king presides over his people’s contact with the divine and the process of re-defining the limits of human nature that ensues in the context of (questioning and re-affirming) civilization. The metaphorical use of these myths could also explain the tendency of historical kings to employ traditional hymns belonging to the courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi that nevertheless conclude with references to their own rule.<sup>143</sup> It could be argued that the Sumerian example of Gilgameš, young and immature, wasting his energy in athletic competitions<sup>144</sup> and revelling in his sexual prowess by demanding *ius primae noctis* (both of which probably imply not simply initiation to adulthood but crucially initiation to civilization and the ethical responsibilities that ensue from it as we saw in Chapter 1), could readily replace Dumuzi as the lover of the goddess – and so did the Sumerian kings at least down to the start of the second millennium.

The metaphorical substance of the “sacred marriage” expressions was appreciated by all who shared the ANE lore including the Greek historian Herodotus of Halicarnassus (484–425 BCE) as evident by his description of the ziggurat at Babylon. I here argue that although the text has been often quoted as corroborating evidence for the practice of *actual* “sacred marriages” in the ANE (and the overall disapproval of the Greeks for the practice), a closer reading can reveal that Herodotus does not refer explicitly to sex between a priestess and the god. Once we establish that the “love” of the goddess is metaphorical, then the shift between the millennia becomes primarily an aesthetic one. The text (Hdt. 1.181.5–182.1–2) reads:<sup>145</sup>

ἐν δὲ τῷ τελευταίῳ πύργῳ<sup>146</sup> νηὶς ἔπεστι μέγας· ἐν δὲ τῷ νηῶ κλίνη μεγάλη  
κέεται εὖ ἔστρωμένη, καὶ οἱ τράπεζα παρακέεται χρυσῆ. ἄγαλμα δὲ οὐκ ἔνι  
οὐδὲν αὐτόθι ἐνιδρυμένον, οὐδὲ νύκτα οὐδεὶς ἐναυλίζεται ἀνθρώπων ὅτι μὴ

γυνή μούνη τῶν ἐπιχωρίων, τὴν ἂν ὁ θεὸς ἔλθῃται ἐκ πασέων, ὡς λέγουσι οἱ Χαλδαῖοι ἐόντες ἱερεῖς τούτου τοῦ θεοῦ. φασὶ δὲ οἱ αὐτοὶ οὗτοι, ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐ πιστὰ λέγοντες, τὸν θεὸν αὐτὸν φοιτᾶν τε ἐς τὸν νηὸν καὶ ἀμπαύεσθαι ἐπὶ τῆς κλίνης, κατὰ περ ἐν Θήβῃσι τῆσι Αἰγυπτίῃσι κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον, ὡς λέγουσι οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι· καὶ γὰρ δὴ ἐκεῖθι κοιμᾶται ἐν τῷ τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Θηβαίου γυνή, ἀμφοτέραι δὲ αὐταὶ λέγονται ἀνδρῶν οὐδαμῶν ἐς ὀμίλιον φοιτᾶν· καὶ κατὰ περ ἐν Πατάρουσι τῆς Λυκίης ἢ πρόμαντις τοῦ θεοῦ, ἐπεὶ γένηται· οὐ γὰρ ὧν αἰεὶ ἔστι χρηστήριον αὐτόθι· ἐπεὶ δὲ γένηται τότε ὧν συγκατακλιέται τὰς νύκτας ἔσω ἐν τῷ νηῷ.

And in the last tower there is a large cell and in that cell there is a large bed, well covered, and a golden table is placed near it. And there is no image set up there nor does any human being spend the night there except only one woman of the natives of the place, whomsoever the god shall choose from all the women, as the Chaldeans say who are the priests of this god. These same men also say, but I do not believe them, that the god himself comes often to the cell and rests upon the bed, just as it happens in the Egyptian Thebes according to the report of the Egyptians, for there also a woman sleeps in the temple of the Theban Zeus (and both these women are said to abstain from interacting with men), and as happens also with the prophetess of the god in Patara in Lycia, whenever there is one, for there is not always an oracle there, but whenever there is one, then she is shut up during the nights in the temple within the cell.

Although Herodotus concedes that the god “chooses” the woman (*ἔλθῃται*) and that he “rests” upon the bed (*ἀμπαύεσθαι ἐπὶ τῆς κλίνης*) – implying sleeping with the priestess, in fact, what the priests say, using their usual figurative language,<sup>147</sup> is that the god visits the woman and inspires her during her sleep with one of his oracles. The phenomenon was apparently known, as Herodotus stresses, in Egyptian Thebes and Lycia. Therefore, it could be argued that the practice may well refer to cases of incubation<sup>148</sup> in search for the divine will which was popular throughout the ANE; in fact, it was generally believed that divine dreams could be precipitated by sleeping at the temple of the god,<sup>149</sup> a notion familiar to the Greeks of the Hellenistic period, who believed in therapeutic incubation, especially in connection with the cult of Asclepius.<sup>150</sup> In ANE tradition, the dreams often had to do with legitimizing the king’s rule<sup>151</sup> and were attested from the earliest times: therefore, Edzard cited the early example of Gudea of Lagash (ca. 2144–2124 BCE), inscribed on a cylinder (E3/1.1.7 CylA); according to the text, Gudea seeks a dream from the god Ningiršu which he then aims to relate to his mother, a dream interpreter, for further analysis.<sup>152</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, from the time of Gudea<sup>153</sup> to the time of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244–1208 BCE) building temples became a sign of divine favour and at the same time a way of securing the immortality of the king.<sup>154</sup> In one message dream from Ištar, the message is for Aššurbanipal, but the goddess has sent it through a professional dream interpreter, to pass on to the king. The dream occurs during the war against Elam presumably in the temple; while Aššurbanipal prays, and indeed receives comforting words



from the goddess himself, apparently while awake, the goddess sends a dream to a *šabrû* (a male dream interpreter) with further instructions concerning what Aššurbanipal should do.

Since message dreams can be used to justify political actions, Butler interprets the dreams as “propaganda.” For example, the dream of Gudea explains the motivation behind building a temple (Gudea Cylinder A). Having received an unsolicited dream from the god Ningiršu, Gudea, seeking further help, offers bread and water to the goddess Gatumdug, then sets up a bed next to her statue and sleeps there, having prayed to Gatumdug for a sign, and calling on the goddess Nanše, the interpreter of dreams, to interpret it for him. All the dreams relate to the building of the temple. The Hittites had a similar practice in which the receiver of the dream could be either the king himself or a prophet or a priestess.<sup>155</sup> It is also worth examining here the case of Nabonidus (556–539 BCE), whom Herodotus refers to as Labynetus (Hdt.1.77, 188) and who interpreted a lunar eclipse on the 13th of the month Elul as a celestial sign from the Moon-god who “desired” a priestess, understood to be the god’s “mistress” (*irišu enta*).<sup>156</sup>

Obviously, the question to be asked here is whether any member of the ancient audiences, including Herodotus, understood these reports to imply actual sexual activity between the god and the priestess. The metaphorical understanding of “sacred marriage” ceremonies could ease a number of unresolved debates such as whether a “sacred marriage” was included in the *akītu* festival and whether it was ever found “distasteful” by the Hellenistic kings. Herodotus’ rendering seems to be quite close to the figurative speech found in cuneiform sources, such as the clay cylinder of Nabonidus reportedly from Ur.<sup>157</sup> In addition, Herodotus does not seem to comment specifically on the nature of the relationship between the god and his chosen priestess, probably because he appreciated the allegorical language of the priests.<sup>158</sup> What he doubts, though, is that any actual epiphany took place in this instance or even whether divine epiphanies could be thus achieved.<sup>159</sup> Hence, Herodotus’ objection does not relate to the “sacred marriage” ceremony at all but to the rite’s effectiveness as a means of communicating with the divine. Such reading is compatible with recent evaluations of Herodotus and his employment of religion as a way of explaining the downfall of powerful rulers; it is not the god who is at fault, of course, but the mortal worshippers who fail to interpret the signs correctly.<sup>160</sup> Interestingly a number of texts accuse Nabonidus of cultic innovations that had not been demanded by the gods at all.<sup>161</sup> Nabonidus’ religious piety had already been systematically exaggerated in the autobiography of his mother, Adad-guppi, as a way of legitimizing her son’s claim to power, and hence, the god’s “desire” for Nabonidus’ daughter should be understood in the same light.<sup>162</sup>

## **Gilgameš and Dumuzi**

Given that both Gilgameš and Dumuzi appear in the ante-diluvian list of kings (Intr.: n.19), in this section I will examine possible references in the *GE* and its variants to the ritual of “sacred marriage” arguing that both in literature and ritual the king was promoted as responsible for maintaining the balance between the forces

of life and death. As we saw, the teleological knowledge of the king is exemplified in the adventures of Gilgameš and his futile search for the plant of everlasting life; following that, Utnapištim confirmed death to be the unequivocal fate of all humans, although Gilgameš would be proclaimed an Underworld deity on account of his royal status; his decrees, we are told, would be as important as those of Dumuzi, Inanna's short-lived consort (*Death of Bilgameš*, M 78–83, ll.170–3):<sup>163</sup>

<sup>d</sup>bil.ga.mes gidim.bi.ta ki.ta ug<sub>5</sub>.ga  
 GÌR.NÍTA kur.ra.ḫé.ak.´e´ igi.du gidim.(bi).ḫé.nam  
 di.da mu.un.ku<sub>5</sub>.da ka.aš.bar ´ba?.bar´.re  
 dug<sub>4</sub>.ga.a.zu inim <sup>d</sup>nin.ḡiš.zid.da (<sup>d</sup>)dumu.´zi.da.gin<sub>7</sub>´ (var. ke<sub>4</sub>) ba.e.dugud

Bilgameš, in the form of his ghost, dead in the underworld,  
 shall act as governor of the Netherworld, shall be indeed chief of its shades!  
 He will pass judgement, he will hand over verdicts,  
 what he says (text: you say!) will carry the same weight as the word of  
 Ningišzida and Dumuzi.

Echoing this tradition, the so-called Ur-Nammu composition refers to Gilgameš as “king of the Underworld,” where he pronounces judgement.<sup>164</sup> In this guise, the arrogant Sumerian king continued to play an important role in magical rituals down to the first millennium, and he was invoked in ceremonies during the month of Ab.<sup>165</sup> In an incantation text, in which the dingir is prefixed to his name, the king is addressed as follows:<sup>166</sup>

´én´ <sup>d</sup>GÍŠ-gím-maš šarru(lugal) gít-ma-lu dayyān (di.ku<sub>5</sub>) <sup>d</sup>a-nun-n[a-ki]  
 rubû(nun) muš-ta-lu rap-pu ša nišī(ùg)[<sup>mes</sup>]  
 ḫa-´-iṭ kib-ra-a-ti šatam(šā.tam) eršeti(ki)<sup>tim</sup> bēl(en) šaplāti(ki.ta)[<sup>meš</sup>]  
 dayyāna(di.ku<sub>5</sub>)-ta-ma ki-ma ili(dingir) ta-bar-[ri]  
 ta-az-za-az ina eršeti(ki)<sup>tim</sup> ta-gam-mar di-[na]  
 di-in-ka ul in-nem-ni ul im-meš a-ma[t-ka]  
 ta-šal ta-ḫa-ṭi ta-da-ni ta-bar-ri u tuš-te-š[èr]  
<sup>d</sup>šamaš(utu) šip-ṭa u purussâ(eš.bar) qa-tuk-ka ip-qid  
 šarru(lugal)<sup>mes</sup> šakkanakkū(GÌR.NÍ.TA)<sup>mes</sup> u rubû(nun)<sup>mes</sup> maḫar(igi)-ka  
 kam-su . . .

Gilgameš, perfect king, judge of the Anunnaki,  
 attentive prince, chain-checker of the people,  
 who guards the world regions, governor of the Underworld, lord of the  
 nether regions,  
 you are a judge, you watch like a god,  
 you stand in the Underworld, you hand down final judgement,  
 your verdict is not altered, your word is not ignored.  
 You enquire, you watch over, you judge, you observe and keep things in order;  
 Šamaš entrusted judgement and decision into your hand,  
 kings, governors, and princes bow down before you.

In addition, as mentioned, Gilgameš's troubled relationship with Ištar probably reflects the necessity for kings to be pious and continuously pleasing to the goddess. Despite, however, the usual focus on the king's rejection of Ištar, the goddess's favour seems to have been quintessential in Gilgameš's success, and the king acknowledges so upon his return from the Underworld when, sure in the knowledge that all mortals die, he reflects upon his earthly achievements praising Uruk (*GE* XI.327–8 in George 2003: 724–5, cited by permission of Oxford University Press):

1 šār ālu (uru)<sup>ki</sup> 1 šār <sup>giš</sup>kirātu (kiri<sub>6</sub>)<sup>meš</sup> 1 šār es-su-<sup>u</sup> pi-t[i-i]r bīt (é) <sup>d</sup>ištar  
3 šār ù pit-ru uruk<sup>ki</sup> tam-[šì]-<sup>u</sup>hu<sup>u</sup>

One *šār* is city, one *šār* date-grove, one *šār* is clay-pit, half a *šār* the temple of Ištar:  
three *šār* and a half (is) Uruk, (its) measurement.<sup>167</sup>

Apparently, Uruk's glory – and perhaps its urban substance as the nucleus of human civilization – was closely related to the will of its fiery goddess. Hence, a number of hymns dating from the Sumerian period attest to kings enacting the role of Dumuzi in “sacred marriage” rites,<sup>168</sup> the passionate and sexually explicit language of these hymns<sup>169</sup> should be understood as a metaphor expressing the divine benevolence bestowed upon the king, since Dumuzi was not only the lover of the goddess but also a shepherd who was the king of the city of Bad-tibira.<sup>170</sup> Hence, it seems that the close relationship of the king with the goddess was invested with the sexual passion that characterized the affair of Dumuzi with Inanna, which was in turn incorporated in the royal propaganda of several historical kings. Hence, in this OB epic, Sargon refers to himself as “beloved of Ištar,” probably relating how he came to be crowned king.<sup>171</sup>

a-na-ku Ša-ru-ki-in  
na-ra-am <sup>d</sup>Ištar  
mu-ta<sup>l</sup>-li-ik  
ki-ib-ra-a-at  
er-bi-ti-in  
[x]-mi <sup>ša</sup>-ru-ru <sup>d</sup>[UTU] . . .

I, Sargon,  
beloved of Ištar,  
who roamed  
through all the four quarters,  
. . . radiance of the sun, . . .

Given that in Mesopotamia the structure of the earth had been understood to mirror that of heaven – therefore, the institutions of kingship and temple on the earth reflected parallel institutions in heaven,<sup>172</sup> the expression the “beloved of Ištar,” much in the way the king poses as “Marduk's beloved” during the *akītu* festival,<sup>173</sup>

stresses his legitimacy. This tendency continued down to the neo-Assyrian period, and a surviving prophecy from this period, modelled after Gilgameš's quest to the Netherworld, portrays Ištar as declaring her "love" for King Aššurbanipal (669–627 BCE) in terms that recall her passionate affairs with early Sumerian kings (*SAA* 9.9obv.8–15):<sup>174</sup>

[ba-la]-ta-ka er-ša-ku-ma a-rap-pu-da šēru(edin) [e-]-ṛ-ta-ṛ-nab-bir nārāti-(id)<sup>meš</sup> u tam-tim<sup>meš</sup> ṛ-e-ta-ṛ-na-at-tiq šadê(kur)<sup>meš-e</sup> ḥur-sa-a-ni e-ṛ-ta-ṛ-nab-bir nārāti(id)<sup>meš</sup> ka-li-ši-na e-ṛ-ta-ṛ-nak-kal-a-ni ia-a-ši še-[t]a-a-te sa-rab-a-te il-ta-  
nap-pa-ta ba-nu-ú la-a-ni an-ḥa-[k]u!-ma šá-ad-da-lu-pu-ka la-a-ni-ia

Eager to sustain your life I roam the open country, I keep crossing rivers and seas, I keep passing through mountains and mountain ranges, I keep crossing all rivers. Droughts and rainy seasons keep consuming me, affecting my beautiful shape. I am tired and my body is exhausted for your sake.

In his capacity as divine consort the king was believed to undertake a journey to the Underworld, originally, of course, attempted by the divine consort, while his return, identified with his "resurrection," symbolically renewed the kingship through divine favour and secured the wellbeing of his subjects.<sup>175</sup> However, as the tradition of Gilgameš illustrates, the "sacred marriage" involved a number of risks undertaken by mortal kings prone to failure. Therefore, I would like to suggest that the "marginalization" of "sacred marriage" ceremonies during the second and first millennia – at least as part of the official cult – reflects precisely this need for a more secure, stable path of communication with the divine, exemplified by the rise of Marduk in the Babylonian pantheon. It has accordingly been suggested that the *Enuma Eliš* reflects Ḥammurapi's attempt to promote Marduk, a rather insignificant Sumerian deity,<sup>176</sup> as the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon and the very benefactor of his kingship.<sup>177</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the eroticized association of kings with the fertility goddess from the earliest times to the first millennium BCE using the metaphors of sex and civilization as well as kingship and civilization which were analysed in Chapter 1. I argued that despite the political and theological developments that took place in the ANE during the second and first millennia a close reading of the evidence suggests a refashioning rather than rejection of previous traditions. Having traced the goddess's double profile as a *mater dolorosa* but also as warrior deity in the hymns of Enheduanna, and following the evolution of these patterns in the later periods, I argued that we should understand the shift of focus from Inanna's "love" for the king to her lament for his fate (inextricably linked to the fate of his city) as another facet of her exclusive relationship to him. In the *Lamentation for Sumer and Ur* (ll.366–70) Enlil captures the spirit of the times in terms that recall Utnapištim's response to Gilgameš about his mortality; the people of Ur, now a haunted city (l.361: uru<sub>2</sub> líl-lá) spend their

days in distress, lamenting their pitiful situation. Importantly, the assembly of the gods, we are told, has reached an unrevoked, harsh decision (II.364–5), that the kingship of Ur ought to come to an end:<sup>178</sup>

uri<sup>ki</sup>-ma nam-lugal ḥa-ba-šúm bala da-rí la-ba-an-šúm  
 u<sub>4</sub> ul kalam ki gar-ra-ta zag un lu-a-šè  
 bala nam-lugal-la sag-bi-šè è-a a-ba-a igi im-mi-in-du<sub>3</sub>-a  
 nam-lugal-bi bala-bi ba-gíd-e-dè šà kúš-ù-dè  
<sup>d</sup>nanna-mu na-an-kúš-kúš-ù-dè uru<sup>ki</sup>-zu è-bar-ra-ab

Ur was indeed given kingship (but) it was not given an eternal reign.  
 From time immemorial, since the Land was founded, until the population  
 multiplied,  
 Who has ever seen a reign of kingship that would take precedence  
 (for ever?)  
 The reign of its kingship had been long indeed but had to exhaust itself.  
 O my Nanna, do not exert yourself (in vain), leave your city!

Therefore, while the historical occasions for celebrating the abundance and well-being of the people expressed through “sacred marriage” rites are definitely fewer in the uncertain times that followed the destruction of Ur III, the key metaphors of the king’s union with the goddess remained in place. Among these was the garden as the location where the goddess’s love affair with the king was negotiated; the outcome of this negotiation was directly reflected on the fortune of the king’s city. In addition, later kings such as Nebuchadnezzar II and Nabonidus specifically allude to the grandeur of legendary kings of the past and the goddess’s passion for them, a tendency which did not leave indifferent the neo-Assyrians under Aššurbanipal. Crucially, in the tumultuous second millennium BCE which witnessed the reorganization of power in the ANE, state scribes came to realize the significant role they played in the shaping of social memory – after all, their art encapsulated the creative force of the goddess; hence, as we saw, it was them who first supported the notion of looking back to the examples of past rulers and pointed the ways in which traditional literature could assist later rulers in suggesting links with bygone yet happier times. Hence, regardless of the people’s actual experiences, in terms of royal propaganda, a sense of cultural continuity came to be promoted which reflected the aspirations of the kings to re-establish order – to restore the garden – under divine approval. In this framework, patterns that recall “sacred marriage” ceremonies were typically included in royal poetry and/or inscriptions, and their metaphorical aspects were obvious enough to be understood by educated Greeks of the time of Herodotus.

Furthermore, the lore of the “sacred marriage” was also widely popularized during the later millennia due to the role of Ištar as a personal goddess to whom people could turn when in difficulty: the association of Ištar with erotic magic and healing as well as the proliferation of the cult of Tammuz, her consort, promoted the dominant metaphors associated with her ability to bring about cosmic

harmony in later periods. Not only could the garden be restored annually, often through the medium of powerful queens who presided in the cult, but everyone could now fantasize about being a king in the garden of his beloved. The Greeks who chose to worship Adonis, a Jewish version of Tammuz, as early as the time of Sappho (see Chapter 3: p. 123) were certainly appreciative of the opportunity to renew the goddess's promise that, just like her short-lived consort, all those "loved" by her would still be remembered.

## Notes

- 1 Who knows the will of the gods in heaven? / Who understands the plans of the Underworld gods? / Where have mortals learnt the way of a god? Trans. Lambert 1960: 41. I'm grateful to Martin Worthington for helping me with the normalization of the composite text.
- 2 See Westenholz 2007 and Frymer-Kensky 1992 cited frequently in the following pages.
- 3 Kertzer 1988: 1–2; for the political aspects of Enheduanna's priestly roles, which were meticulously conceptualized by her father, including her role as consort of the male god Nanna, see Steinkeller 1999: 124–9.
- 4 Kramer (1972: 66) sheds some light on the dating of the hymn: ". . . this myth was inscribed as early as 2000 B.C. and [. . .] the concepts involved were no doubt current centuries earlier."
- 5 Text and trans. from Farber-Flügge 1973: 20–1 (I iii.2; NB. I have translated her German into English); also available from *ETCSL* 1.3.1 (segment D, ll.1–2); cf. Kramer 1972: 116.
- 6 Reisman (1973: 186) analyses the hymns composed for the "sacred marriage" of Iddin-Dagan of Isin, who stresses the heroic aspects of the goddess; hence, line 18 reads: "her coming forth is that of a hero"; note that Inanna is also called a heroine in lines 88 and 126, while the whole song is identified as a "song of heroism of Ninsianna" (l.228). Similar expressions stressing the heroism of Marduk were addressed to the god during the *akītu* festival, discussed in Chapter 3: p. 112; see, for example, *DT* 15, ll.25, 27. Note that Iddin-Dagan specifically praises the reliability and trustworthiness of the goddess [ll.10, 21 (reliable), 8, 131, 225 (trustworthy)], which are allegedly questioned in the second millennium when Marduk is promoted as king of gods in the Babylonian sphere of influence.
- 7 Farber-Flügge 1973: 22–3 (I iii.22) (trans. again rendered in English and following closely *ETCSL*).
- 8 Known in Sumerian as *ME*; see Farber-Flügge 1990: 607–10; cf. id. 1973: 97–164; Glassner 1992: 57–73; also Meador (2000: 203–4) on the various translations of the *MEs*.
- 9 Farber-Flügge 1973: 22–3 (I iii.18–21) and 24–7 (I iv.10–36); cf. *ETCSL* c.1.3.1 (segment D, ll.18–21 and E, ll.10–36).
- 10 See *Sumerian King List* (W-B 444), lines 1 and 41 in Chavalas 2006: 82; also *Gilg.*B6–18 translated by Black et al. 2006: 213; cf. MLC1363 ll.14–5: [ša]r-[r]u-tum i-na ša-ma-i-ur-da-am / [. . . . .] x [Ištar?] ([U.DAR]?) [šar]-r[a-am] [i]-ši-[i], [Kingship(?) descended from the heavens. / [. . .] Ištar(?) sought a king(?)].
- 11 The Mesopotamian tendency was to view the world as a state; see Jacobsen 1959: esp.127.
- 12 See Meador 2000: 89–90 and 102–5; text reproduced from Attinger 1998: 168; cf. Jaques 2004: 203, 205; also available from *ETCSL* 1.3.2; trans. Black et al. 2006: 334 (cited by permission of Oxford University Press). On earlier political interpretations

- of the hymn, see Delnero 2011: 136–7, who argues that most likely the hymn was a critique against ambitious rulers in general without referring to particular historical circumstances. Also see his pp. 137–41 discussing the similarities between the hymn and the Sumerian episode of *Gilgameš and the Bull of Heaven*; Delnero examines the argument that the similarities are the result of the scribal curriculum tradition during the second millennium BCE but remains hesitant in his conclusions given our limited evidence (see his p. 146).
- 13 See Reisman (1973: 186), citing Iddin-Dagan’s sacred marriage hymn, especially ll.24 and 32–32a, where Inanna is exalted as follows: “Lordship and kingship he [Enki] placed in her hand; . . . , my lady renders firm judgement of the land, [Inanna (?)] gives firm decision [for] the land.”
  - 14 Text reproduced from Attinger 1998: 172; trans. Black et al. 2006: 336 (cited by permission of Oxford University Press).
  - 15 For this reading, see Sjöberg 1975: 188–9; cf. Penglase 1994: 38–9. In *Inanna and Enki* we read about Inanna’s Heavenly Boat (cf. Selz 2014 and Steinkeller 2013 in n.XX above), while in *Inanna and Ebiḥ* the goddess’s dominion in Heaven and Earth (i.e. *Inanna and Ebiḥ* 1.7: *an ki-a*) is frequently repeated. Also see Reisman (1973: 186) for Iddin-Dagan’s hymn addressed to the goddess, ll.1–3: “To [the one who comes forth from heaven, to the one who comes forth from heaven, I] would say: [Hail!] / To the [hierod]ule who comes forth from heaven, I would say: [Hail!] / To the great [lady] of heaven, Inanna, I would say: Hail!”
  - 16 On the destructive nature of the goddess, see Hallo and van Dijk 1968: 15–19; Sjöberg 1975: 182–3 (ll.37–62); Wolkstein and Kramer 1983: 95; Bruschweiler 1987: 118. Note the description of the mountain in ll.121–6 of the hymn in Attinger 1998: 174, 176: *ḡeš<sup>es</sup>kiri<sub>6</sub> nisi-bi gurun im-lá giri<sub>17</sub>-zal i[m-du<sub>8</sub>-du<sub>8</sub>] / ḡeš<sup>es</sup> maḥ-bi TUN(aga<sub>x</sub>?) an-na ni di u<sub>6</sub> di-[dè ba-gud] / Ebiḥ<sup>ki</sup>-a ḡeš<sup>es</sup> an-dil<sub>x<sub>xy</sub></sub> pa mul-mul-la-ba ug tab-ba mu-in-LU(lug/lu) / ḡeg<sub>9</sub> lu-lim-bi ni-ba mu-un-durun<sup>o</sup> / am-bi ú lu-a mu-un-DU / duraḥ-bi ḥa-šu-úr ḥur-saḡ-ḡá-ke e-ne-sù-ud irh-me* (Fruit hangs in its flourishing gardens and luxuriance spreads forth. / Its magnificent trees are themselves a source of wonder to the roots / of heaven. In Ebiḥ . . . lions are abundant under the canopy of trees / and bright branches. It makes wild rams and stags freely abundant. / It stands wild bulls in flourishing grass. Deer couple among the / cypress trees of the mountain range; trans. Black et al. 2006: 337, cited by permission of Oxford University Press). Here Ebiḥ poses as an early Paradise which defies the law of the goddess and flourishes without end. This is interpreted as arrogance which the goddess must punish confirming thus the necessity of alternating fates: cities that flourish will decline, proud enemies will be crushed, nature (i.e. the mountain) will experience withering; cf. Meador (2000: 85–110) for a comparison of this imagery with the Jewish Paradise.
  - 17 Frankfort 1948: 224–6; Hallo 1996: 152; von Soden 1994: 67–9; but see Steinkeller 1999: 116–29, esp. 126 arguing for cultic continuity between the ED period and that of the Ur III and Isin kings.
  - 18 Wilcke 1993: 45–58; Böck 2004: 23.
  - 19 See Farber-Flügge 1973: 52–3; also *ETCSL* 1.3.1 (segment H, ll.224–8).
  - 20 Selz 2014: 65.
  - 21 See Farber-Flügge 1973: 54–5; also *ETCSL* 1.3.1 (segment I, ll.1–5); cf. Farber-Flügge 1973: 26–9 (I v.17–8) and *ETCSL* 1.3.1 (segment F, ll.17–8), where Enki is said to have placed these offices under Inanna’s jurisdiction.
  - 22 Text from Farber-Flügge 1973: 54–5; also available from *ETCSL* 1.3.1 (segment I, ll. 6–10); trans. from *ETCSL* closely reflecting Farber-Flügge’s German.
  - 23 See Beaulieu 2003: 112–13 for Inanna’s antagonistic relationship with An; cf. his note 65 on the astral aspects of the goddess. Also see Jones 2003: 292 and 295 citing the *Hymn of Iddin-Dagan A* 112–14, where Inanna is described thus: “At night, Anziba, the joy of An, the ornament of broad heaven, appears like moonlight; at noon, she

- appears like bright sunlight.” For the brotherly relationship of Inanna and Utu (often seen as equivalent to that of Artemis and Apollo, Selz 2000: 36), see Leick 1994: 83–5.
- 24 For Marduk as “faithful” and “righteous shepherd,” see the *Enuma Eliš* (Tablet 7); cf. Aubert 2009: 128.
  - 25 Text reproduced from Attinger 1998: 172; trans. Black et al. 2006: 336 (where the verb “spread” is my reworking of Attinger’s “derouler”/éloigner on p. 173 with n.34); cited by permission of Oxford University Press.
  - 26 Selz 2000: 29–30 argues that the name of Inanna means Lady/Queen of Heaven. Also see his pp. 37–8, where he quotes lines 114–23 and 140–56 of the *in-nin šà-gur-ra* as evidence that Inanna “was conceived of as one divine entity, able to embody different, even opposing aspects.”
  - 27 George (2003: 12) discusses the *Gudam* poem in which the conquering king is compared to a bull on a wild rampage in Uruk in connection with the adventures of Enkidu and Gilgameš against the Bull of Heaven. However, as he notes the poem does not refer to Gilgameš; cf. Frayne (2001: 121), who argued that the poem must have been a part of the *Bull of Heaven* episode. Nevertheless, since kings could be compared to proud bulls as we saw in Chapter 1: pp. 33–6, then perhaps the Bull of Heaven could be read as an allegory relating the joint campaign of Gilgameš and Enkidu against a usurper – especially as the bull is Ištar’s response to Gilgameš’s rejection of her. That this notion may deserve some merit is suggested by the poem *Curse of Agade*, where the changeover of kings and the entrustment of kingship to Sargon is compared to the Enlil’s slaying of the Bull of Heaven: “After Enlil’s frown / Had slain Kish like the Bull of Heaven, / Had slaughtered the house of the land of Uruk in the dust like a mighty bull, / And then, to Sargon, king of Agade, / Enlil, from south to north, / had given sovereignty and kingship – / at that time, holy Inanna built / the sanctuary Agade as her grand woman’s domain, / set up her throne in Ulmaš” (II.1–9 in Cooper 1983: 51). Also see Gadotti 2006: 70–81 on the similarities of the tale of *Gudam* with *Gilgameš and the Bull of Heaven* but also the *Uruk Lament*.
  - 28 Franke 1995: 834; von Soden 1994: 67–9.
  - 29 See *RIME* 2: 113–14 (*COS* II:90 Beal 2.16); Westenholz (1997: 264) discusses the Weidner Chronicle, II.32 and 53–4 on which Naram-Sin stands along with Enmerkar accused of the destruction of the inhabitants of Babylon. The subsequent attacks by the Gutians against Naram-Sin were understood as the response of an angry Marduk against the arrogant king. Obviously, Naram-Sin’s reputation must be appreciated more as a result of later propaganda than as a reflection of historical reality; see Westenholz 1997: 249–57 (text); also cf. Michalowski 2008: 33–5.
  - 30 Launderville 2010: 35 citing Cooper 1993: 15; also see Cooper (1983: 11–12), who dated the poem between 2150–2000 BCE albeit noting that there is insufficient data for a more precise date. In the poem Enlil suddenly denied the Akkadian dynasty permission to rebuild Ekur, Enlil’s temple in Nippur. Cooper (1983: 5) speculates that the temple in question was that of Inanna. However, royal statues continued to receive offerings under later dynasties; see, for example, *SAA* 13.Intro, xiv–xv.
  - 31 See Gadotti 2009: 77–8.
  - 32 Text from Volk 1995: 124; trans. Black et al. 2006: 205, cited by permission of Oxford University Press; also see *ETCSL* 1.3.3. Also see Cooley (2008: 64–70), who interpreted the myth vis-à-vis the astral aspects of the goddess and the visibility of the planet Venus from earth. In my view, the behaviour of the planet is likely understood as referring to the turbulent turns of fortune.
  - 33 Cf. Veldhuis (2001: 129), who discusses the happiness of Gilgameš as soon as he realizes that although he has to die, his name will not be forgotten.
  - 34 See Volk 1995: 39; cf. Bottéro and Kramer 1989: 257–76. Hurowitz (1992; cf. Chapter 1: p. 45) discusses gardens in connection with palace complexes and temples erected to gods in the context of royal propagandas. But prominent in such temples was the *bīl akīti*, the smallish temple situated just outside the city gates in which the New Year



Festival would take place. Interestingly in the hymn relating the *Creation of the First Palm Tree and the Garden*, the role of the gardener is taken up by a raven sent by Enki to find a tree “fit for the king’s fields.” Later in the poem the raven is turning into a traitor, and in his reading of the hymn Bottéro comments on the parallelisms between this tale and that of Šukaletuda which, of course, encourages my reading of him as an unworthy or treacherous political contender.

- 35 Harris (2000: 126) interpreted Ištar’s proposal as a case of gender inversion between the goddess and the king. Teppo (2008: 77) summarized Harris’s view of Ištar as “a fundamentally liminal figure, ambiguous, marginal, and androgynous.” By crossing the boundary between genders, Ištar “also defined and protected the norms and underlying structure of society.” Teppo argued that the devotees of Ištar were expected to shed their original gender identity in order to achieve a true union with the goddess. But she does note that “the question whether this shedding of identity was the cause or the effect of their dedication to Ištar is open to speculation.”
- 36 Postgate (1994: 299) wonders: “A great body of unilingual Sumerian literature did not survive this break but most else did. The problem is how? . . . the puzzle is how the cities transmitted their scribal culture to later generations when they were themselves moribund.” Postgate suggested that perhaps this was possible because “not all disruptions were the same or universal.”
- 37 Currie 2012: 573n.157; cf. his p. 564 with n.113 citing Volk 1995: 60 and George 2003: 838–9 (ad 1.78) on the identification of Šukaletuda and Išullanu.
- 38 Kleinerman 2011: 97–8; cf. Lapinkivi 2008: 17–18.
- 39 See Van der Toorn 2007: esp.213–18. The existence of two traditions, an oral and a written one, which eventually becomes dominant, is also compatible with Currie’s remarks discussed above; cf. George 2003: 68. Tigay 1982: 68–71 argued along similar lines in trying to explain the absence of the goddess from the OB version of the *Epic of Gilgameš*. In his view, the antipathy towards Ištar as manifested in her treatment in the *Heaven of the Bull* episode points to a theological or political struggle which nevertheless must have been still ongoing until as late as the Middle Babylonian period.
- 40 Trans. from Black et al. 2006: 198, par.1–8, cited by permission of Oxford University Press; text available from *ETCSL* 1.3.3.
- 41 For this *topos* in OB inscriptions and literature, see Zólyomi (2003: 78–9); his literary examples include the *Cursing of Agade* 2.1.5, ll.172–4, Rim-Sin E 2.6.9.5, ll.78f., and Inanna C 4.0.7.3, 1.33: *iri* <sup>4</sup>*Inanna saġ-ki ba-gid<sub>2</sub>-i id<sub>2</sub>-be<sub>2</sub> a nu-um-de<sub>6</sub> a-gar<sub>3</sub>-be<sub>2</sub> še nu-mu<sub>2</sub>-mu<sub>2</sub>* (If Inanna frowns upon a city, its river shall carry no water, its arable tracts shall grow no grain).
- 42 Widengren 1951: 7–10; cf. Dalley 2013: 80 for temple gardens associated with the goddess Ninlil (located in Tummal, close to Nippur).
- 43 Gragg 1969: 170; also see Dalley (2014: 54) also argues that the ziggurat of ANE temples “was evidently intended to represent a holy mountain.”
- 44 Text and trans. Albright 1919: 163–4; cf. also Dalley 2014: 54, who explains Nin-hursag as “lady-mountain.” As she points out in her n.2, in Sumerian KUR and HUR. SAG both mean mountain, but KUR can also mean underworld. Hence, we could perhaps understand ANE temples as sacred places connecting all three areas of creation, which could further explain why the goddess, often described as roaming the earth and heavens, also attempts to visit the Underworld. For Inanna KUR (Venus of the Underworld), see Selz 2013 and Steinkeller 2013 cited above in Intro: n.71.
- 45 Engur is associated with Abzu (subterranean waters) in the earliest evidence available. The word probably refers to marshy waters. Abzu was in contact with the foundations of temples metaphorically, since temples were understood to have their lower parts placed in Abzu while their higher parts reached the heavens; cf. the Gudea Cylinder A xxii 11–13. For a detailed analysis of Abzu and Engur, see Espak 2006: 15–16.
- 46 *RIA* 4 1975 (York): 270.
- 47 Widengren 1951: 19.

- 48 In DI F, ll.1–2 cited by Sefati 1998: 171–2, Inanna declares that she will meet her beloved “on the greenery.” Cf. Shea (2005: 46–54) on Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a fallen tree explained by Daniel as a sign of the king’s arrogance, which has aroused divine anger. In the dream the tree symbolizes the king.
- 49 Trans. from Black et al. 2006: 204 (par.262–81), cited by permission of Oxford University Press.
- 50 See *ETCSL* t.c.2.4.2.24, ll.14–35 = DI C 3–18, Sefati 1998: 98). For Ur-Nammu, Šulgi, and other early rulers performing the “sacred marriage” ritual, see Lapinkivi 2008: 20–1. Cf. Michalowski 1983: esp.242, who in discussing the ideology of the Isin kings stresses their awareness of the short-lived favour of the goddess and therefore, the brevity of their supremacy as kings.
- 51 See DI F, ll.35–6 in Sefati (1998: 172–3), where the goddess assures her groom that she will “speak gently to him” and she will make him “shine like the *mes*-tree”; for Šusin of Ur III (1972–1964 BCE) being pleasing to the goddess, see Ni2463 = STR23, rev.24–7 in Sefati 1998: 347; on account of his pleasing behaviour toward the goddess the king is proclaimed a “god of his country.” The influence of Naram-Sin’s rhetoric on the kings of this period is obvious, and often this is the only time in Mesopotamian history when we refer to royal deification. Jones (2005: 330) argued that the dingir in front of the name of the kings should be understood as a simile, while Michalowski (2008: 40) argued that after this brief time and although the dingir continued to be written before the name of the king, the deification of kings lost its appeal and remained a gesture. See Introduction, pp. 9–11, for more references on this debate.
- 52 See *Hymn* DI O in Sefati (1998: 210–17) titled *A Blessing of Abundance for the Bridegroom*; cf. his pp. 301–11 for DI D<sub>1</sub>, the *Blessing of Dumuzi on the Wedding Day*, esp.ll.47–59, where the goddess blesses Dumuzi with shepherdship “over the black-headed people”; he is compared to a successful farmer and shepherd whose rule will see “orchards and gardens bear juice and fruit under him,” as well as “wild sheep and goats multiply in the forests.” The hymn concludes with a wish for long life under Dumuzi’s rule. Hence, the competition between the farmer and the shepherd over Inanna (Sefati 1998: 324–43) may refer to cases of political rivalry.
- 53 DI P ii 22–8 in Sefati 1998: 90–1.
- 54 *CBS* 8530, obv.i 23; cf. *ROM* 72, rev.23–4 in Sefati 1998: 91–2; cf. Chapter 1: pp. 43–4.
- 55 For an overview of commemorative rites honouring the dead in ancient Mesopotamia, long after their actual burial, see van der Toorn 2014: *passim*.
- 56 Lines 239–55 in Volk 1995: 122; also Black et al. 2006: 203–4.
- 57 Frymer-Kensky 1992: 70; Westenholz (2007: 339–40) discusses Inanna in *Hymn* F 10–13, *ETCSL* 4.07.6 as an example of the shifting focus of royal propaganda; now the goddess openly admits that it was Enlil, the executive leader of the Sumerian pantheon, that “placed the Heavens on my head as a crown. / he put the earth at my feet as sandals. / he wrapped the holy *ba* garment around my body. / he put the holy sceptre on my hand.” However, as we saw, Inanna already in the earlier Sumerian period acknowledged that the powers were bestowed on her by Enki (see p. 66 above); in addition, although Enlil poses in this period as more prominent than Enki, the latter had admitted already in the Sumerian poem of *Enki and World Order* that it was Enlil who gave him control of the all-important *mes*: “he put the *me* in my hand”; *me šu-ĝu<sub>10</sub>-še mu-un-ĝar* (see *ETCSL* 1.1.3, l.65). In the poem Enki reminds us that Enlil had also granted him control of the decreeing of destinies (“he placed decreeing destiny . . . in my hand”; *nam-tar-ra . . . šu-ĝá mu-un-ĝál*, l.76), an important part of the *akitu* festival discussed in Chapter 3: p. 112), and therefore, it was Enki who determined what happened in heaven and earth, whether good or bad (ll.61–80); see Vanstiphout 1997: 119–20.
- 58 Frymer-Kensky 1992: 71.
- 59 These are the following five lamentations: *The Lamentation over Sumer and Ur* (discussed by Kramer 1963a: 611–19; Michalowski 1989; also more recently, Samet 2009),

- The Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur* (Kramer 1940 and id. 1969: 455–63), *The Eridu Lament* (Green 1978), *The Uruk Lament* (Green 1984) and *The Nippur Lament* (Kramer 1991 and Tinney 1996). The latest date of composition for these laments is agreed to be ca. 1925 BCE (Cohen 1988: 9), while most scholars concur that they were written within fifty years of the city's fall; on the dating of the hymns, see Edzard 1957: 57; Kramer 1983: 69–70; Jacobsen 1987: 447. For an historical overview of Sumerian city laments, see Jacobsen 1941: *passim*; Hallo 1996: 223–8; cf. Kutscher 1975: 1–7.
- 60 Note that in *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* ll.265–70 (Michalowski 1989: 53 and 94 s.v. 267; *ETCSL* c.2.2.3) Dumuzi (or perhaps his statue) is described as being carried off as a prisoner of war. In the badly damaged lines that follow he is urged to “rise up,” to “ride away.”
- 61 Samet 2009: 10. On p. 12 Samet argues that the laments function as sacrificial offerings to the deities, which are thus appeased and eventually persuaded to return to the city; therefore, in the *Lament for Eridu* (*ETCSL* 2.2.6) Enki and his consort, the divine couple of the city, are portrayed as mourning for its fate until Enki is said to return to his people.
- 62 Cf. *Lamentation over Sumer and Ur*, l.439 in Michalowski 1989: 65 (“The throne was not set up at its place of judgement, justice was not administered); also available from *ETCSL* c.2.2.3.
- 63 Trans. from Michalowski 1989: 41; the theme is also explored in ll.150 (“Inanna abandoned Uruk, went off to enemy territory”) and 278 (“Her Majesty, though not the enemy, went to enemy land”) in Michalowski 1989: 45 and 53. Note the repeated identification of the destroyed city with its temple throughout the hymn (i.e. l.277).
- 64 Trans. Michalowski 1989: 61 and *ETCSL* c.2.2.3. The motif is reverberated in the *Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur*, as Kramer 1940: 3 pointed out. See ll.210–27 (famine mentioned on l.227), text and trans. from Kramer 1940: 39–43 and *ETCSL* c.2.2.2; cf. Ni.4566, ll.213–30 published by Samet and Adali (2012: 36–7), where again emphasis is placed on violent deaths and the lack of funerary rites for the victims.
- 65 Text and trans. from Kramer 1991: 6–7 and 16; also available from *ETCSL* 2.2.4.
- 66 See *Lament over the Destruction of Ur*, ll.173–89, 203, 413–14 in Kramer 1940: 34–7, 38–9 and 68–9; cf. his pp. 3–5; cf. Samet 2009: 91–3 (esp.l.206, where the storm is described as a lion attacking the moaning people:  $u_4$   $ug-am_3$   $al-du-du_7$   $u\check{g}_3-e$   $\check{s}e$   $am_3-\check{s}a_4$ ), and 107. Cf. *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, ll.136, 221–4 in Michalowski 1989: 44–5 and 50–1 respectively. Also see Chen 2013: 208–14 on the similarities between the *City Laments* and the Sumerian *Flood Story*.
- 67 Cf. *Lamentation for the Destruction of Ur* ll.283–300 introducing the theme according to which the people of the city are carried off and on its ruins *another* (unrecognizable) city is built. Text and trans. from Kramer 1940: 51–3; cf. Samet 2009: 98–9, esp.l.285 on p. 98, where we read:  $\check{s}ul-\check{g}u_{10}$   $eden$   $ki$   $nu-zu-na$   $tug_2$   $mu-un-dur_7$   $ha-ba-an-ak$  (My young men, in a desert they know not, wear filthy garments); also her comments on translating *eden ki nuzu* as desert on p. 166 s.v. 285.18.
- 68 Text and trans. from Michalowski 1989: 60–1.
- 69 Text and trans. Green 1984: 269–70; also *ETCSL* c.2.2.5 (segment E, ll.1–25). For the use of cataclysmic and desert imagery to describe near-death experiences in the OT and Apollonius Rhodius’ *Argonautica* (written in Ptolemaic Alexandria), see Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2013: 132–6.
- 70 Note that *ETCSL* t.2.2.5 translates here: “a blazing fire that extends as far as the nether world.”
- 71 Also see Chapter 1: pp. 29–30 for the association of the anzu-bird with death imagery; cf. Scurlock 1995: 1887.
- 72 Samet (2009: 162–3 s.v.273) cites the following examples:  $pu_2-kiri_6$   $lal_3$   $\check{g}e\check{s}tin$   $\check{s}um_2-ma-da-ab$ , “give me syrup and wine in the irrigated orchards!” (Nanna-Sin’s *Journey to Nibru* 338);  $pu_2-\check{g}is-kiri_6$   $lal_3$   $\check{g}e\check{s}tin$   $u_3-tud$ , (that the irrigated orchards should bear syrup and wine), (*Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* 505; see further

- Hendursaga A seg. B 42, 45; Nanna K seg. B 9; *Dialogue between Winter and Summer* 138; *Dumuzi-Inanna* D1 57; *Hymn to Ninurta* F 30; Hymn of Išme-Dagan B 47); furthermore, she also notes the negative use of the motif. For more on this, see Grayson (1975: 21, 29–30, 48, 55, 60, 78, 118 and 204), where he cites numerous examples from the political propaganda of first-millennium BCE Assyrian kings such as Salmaneser III and Adad-nārārī, who repeatedly refer to their ability to destroy their enemies’ royal gardens. For Aššurbanipal’s sacking of Susa and his boasting of destroying its sacred groves, see Dalley 2014: 60.
- 73 Samet 2009: 162 with Volk 1995: 189.
- 74 Text and trans. from Michalowski 1989: 62–3.
- 75 Dalley 2014: 58–61.
- 76 Hallo 1995: 1872.
- 77 Cohen 1974: 31–2.
- 78 Hallo 1995: 1873.
- 79 Cohen 1988: 6; Maul 2005: esp.11 discussing the themes of the *eršemma* lamentations down to the first century BCE; on the “canonical” order of balags from the first millennium, see Black 1987: 36–79.
- 80 Black and Green 1992: 13. *The Epic of Erra* became most popular during this period, with several copies detailing how the god of chaos unleashed his powers over Babylon and even replaced Marduk as supreme god for a time. In col.IV.52–6 of the *Epic of Erra* Ištar appears dominant and merciless in a much-quoted text where she turns men into women. Leick (1994: 225) suggested that this may refer to the uncertainty people experienced at the time.
- 81 Cooper (1983: 92–3) refers to these laments as “portraits of destruction”; Cohen 1974: 11.
- 82 Cohen 1988: 11; Jacobsen 1941: 219–24. Also see Black (1991: 28–9) commenting on the pronounced role of the *kalū* in the performance of first-millennium balags and *eršemmas* and his pp. 30–1 on the *eršemmas*’ lack of historical detail; Hallo (1995: 1872) argued that the ritual was employed by the rebuilders of the destroyed cities to signify the start of a new period that was rid of the sins of the past; Green (1978: 309) suggested that the lament was a means of commemorating the completion of the restoration phase; also see Cohen (2005: 52–8), who links professional mourners with elite death rituals as public spectacles reminding us that royal deaths offered to ANE audiences important occasions for reaffirming their sense of community and self-representation.
- 83 For the repetitive style of these laments, see Hallo 1995: 1873. For Lydian music and its negative reception by Plato and Aristotle because it encourages “softness,” see *Pl.Resp.*397–9; *Leg.*802c–e; 812c–e; cf. *La.*188d; also *Ar.Pol.*1341a39–1341b1; cf. Franklin 2007: 195–200 for the influence of Lydian music on Greek traditions; also cf. Franklin 2006: 386–7 and esp.391 with n.69 exploring the idea that music was a symbol of a city’s prosperity and lamentation in times of crisis a way of trying to avert the oncoming disaster by appealing to the gods. Hence, repetition may be understood as a device of “restoring” cosmic harmony and order in the city following its destruction.
- 84 Michalowski 1989: 37.
- 85 Text and trans. from Michalowski 1989: 42–3.
- 86 For the fear of ghosts in the ANE, see Cohen 2005: 15, 24, 79, 107–9. Ghosts were believed to roam the earth for some time following their death, before their destiny in the Underworld was determined. However, once they entered the Underworld they were envisaged to continue their lives as when alive – as we saw in the *GE* friends and family were believed to reunite in the Underworld. Cohen (id., pp. 107–14) also argues that during the second millennium BCE an important elite ancestor cult developed with the intention of investing dead kings with the power to influence the fertility of their land even in death. As a result, communities wrought important remembrance

- mechanisms through funerary lamentation and perceived themselves as partaking in the grandeur of the dead king. Cf. Samet (2009: 110), who stressed the notion that people are reduced to wind/phantoms.
- 87 For the idea of cosmic harmony in Plato, see *Resp.*6161d–17d; cf. 3.412a. Plato referred to philosophy as the “greatest music” (*Ph.*61a). In *Tim.*47c–d music is discussed as the link between the orbits in the soul and the orbits of the cosmos. Halliwell 2011: 309.
- 88 For liminality as the result of near-death experiences, see Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2013: 123–36; cf. n.69 above.
- 89 Cohen 2005: 24–5.
- 90 Franklin 2006: 389.
- 91 Kramer 1982: 141.
- 92 Leick 1998: 31 s.v. Dumuzi also referring to Jacobsen 1985: 45, who argued that the name Dumuzi is better explained “the good young one”; Wiggermann 2010: 330 suggested “True Lover.” Cf. Cohen (2005: 58–66) explaining that the structure of the Royal Tomb Cemetery of Ur III encourages us to think that it functioned as a public stage where death rites were enacted before huge audiences. Cohen argues that through the funerary rites of the elite common people reaffirmed their identity, especially in those liminal times that followed the death of a ruler and the enthronement of his successor; cf. Selz 2004: 209.
- 93 For the performative aspects of the “sacred marriage” and the role of the *galas*, the sexually ambivalent servants of the goddess, see Teppo 2008: esp.84. Apparently, the *galas* had multiple professional options as they could be hired for private funerals, perform at temples, or even (at least during Ur III) belong to the palace personnel.
- 94 Cohen (2005: 79) draws attention to bodies floating on the Euphrates in the *Lamentation over Sumer and Ur*, 1.94 and in the episode of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A*, 26–7. Thus, an experience previously described in connection with the fate of the king only is now relatable to the majority of the people.
- 95 Westenholz 2007: 341; cf. Hallo 1996: 225 and Kramer 1983: 70–5.
- 96 Meador 2000: 79.
- 97 See Lapinkivi 2008: 11–12, esp.12, where he notes: “Clearly, we must correct the distorted view that sacred marriage was only a Sumerian phenomenon.”
- 98 The apotropaic character of these lamentations is noted by Maul 2005: 11; cf. id. 1989: 29–56.
- 99 The Akkadian story, first attested in Late Bronze Age texts, is much shorter than its Sumerian model and presents a much more assertive goddess, who threatens to release the ghosts of the Underworld amongst the living unless she is granted entrance to the nether regions (ll.16–20). As Dalley (1989: 154) notes, the text found in the royal library of Nineveh concludes “with ritual instructions for the *taklimtu*, an annual ritual that took place in the summer month of Dumuzi (Tammuz = June/July) and featured the bathing, anointing, and lying-in-state in Nineveh of a statue of Dumuzi”; cf. Heidel 1949: 120–1. Associated with the myth are also the so-called “Tammuz liturgies,” Sumerian lamentations mourning the fate of Tammuz, who replaces the goddess in the Underworld, and which continued to be sung in later periods (see Chapter 3: pp. 123–4). Hence, a number of psalms unearthed at Assur and dating to mid of the first millennium BCE echo the themes of passionate love and lamentation for the loss of the beloved which were typically found in the liturgies. See Leick 2002: 155–6; cf. Hämeen-Anttila 2002: 96–100 with Green 1992: 147–8; cf. Hallo (1997: 419–20) and id. (2005: 155) referring to a Seleucid lament for Tammuz.
- 100 Leick (1994: 343) suggested that these rites may be understood as travesties of the traditional *haddašutu*-marriage rituals celebrating the harmonious conjugal love of Marduk and Zarpanitu. In a way, Bottéro (1992: 134) was right in pointing out that sex in ANE literature has little to do with marriage (despite us referring to the “sacred marriage”), although I completely disagree with his understanding of it in connection

- with sacred prostitution. In my view, the rite was a metaphor for celebrating the generative powers of the god; see Chapter 3: pp. 116–21.
- 101 See Dandamayev 1996: esp.42 pointing that individuals were not obligated to worship the state gods. On “love lyrics,” also see Rubio 2001: 269 and Nissinen 2001: 94–5.
- 102 For Nanaya and her spouse, see Nissinen 2001: 101–2. The myth of Inanna and Dumuzi or Ištar and Tammuz became very popular among the Greeks, too, who became familiar with the cult through the Jewish rites commemorating the death of Tammuz, appropriately addressed as “adon” (= lord). The Greeks turned this cultic epithet into the god’s name; thus, Sappho referred to the ritually enacted lamentation of Aphrodite for the untimely death of Adonis already in the sixth century BCE (poem 140), while a century later the rites were popular in Classical Athens, especially among the lower classes; see Reed 1995: *passim*. The Adonia festival staged by queen Arsinoe in Theocritus’ Idyll 15 is dated around 270 BCE; the relationship of Adonis with Aphrodite was modelled on the passionate exchanges between Ištar and her lover; see Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008: *passim*.
- 103 Block 1997: 294–5 translates as “weeping the Tammuz”; cf. *θασόμεναι τὸν Ἄδωνιν* (Th.*Id.*15.23) referring to a tableau of Adonis and 15.95 *μέλλει τὸν Ἄδωνιν ἀείδειν* referring to his dirge (Gow <sup>2</sup>1952: 2.275, 292).
- 104 Selz 2000: 32–3; cf. Teppo 2008: 76–7 on the androgynous character of Ištar. Also see n.35 above and Chapter 3: n.33.
- 105 Westenholz 2007: 343.
- 106 Nissinen 2001: 99–101 and 103–5; for Marduk and Zarpanitu, see Lamber 1975: 98–9.
- 107 Westenholz 2007: 342; Beaulieu 2003: 75–9.
- 108 Lapinkivi 2008: 15 with n.67 also citing Lambert 1959 and 1975: 104–5 as well as Leick 1994: 239–46; cf. Boiy 2004: 284. Also see Nissinen 2001: 124 and Beaulieu 2003: 78 with n.26 citing George 1992: 307–8 on the history of Eturkamma, which becomes exclusively the temple of Ištar-of-Babylon in the first millennium BCE.
- 109 The Anunnaki are prominent in the tale of *Inanna’s Descent*; see Leick 1998: 8; cf. the role of Gilgamesh among the Anunnaki who pass judgement in the Underworld on p. 87 above.
- 110 Text from Ehelolf 1926: 136 (I.1–15); trans. mine following closely Ehelolf’s German; also see Westenholz’s English trans. (2007: 343); cf. Allen 2011: 191n.38.
- 111 Smith 1924: 32 also discussed by Moukarzel 2014: 172.
- 112 Moukarzel 2014: 167–9 points out the propagandistic nature of the *Verse Account* of Nabonidus’ rule, which systematically refers to the impiety of the fallen king noting that, in essence, our appreciation of his reign relies largely on Cyrus’ careful political program.
- 113 Parpola 1997: xix–xxi; also see Nissinen 1998: esp.44.
- 114 Ataç 2010: 17–59.
- 115 Reed 2000: 335 speculates that the rite which may have been annual “looks like a mortuary cult of the deified queen; the poem is telling us that she has fulfilled her funerary duties toward her predecessor.”
- 116 Lapinviki (2004: 81–91) discusses the marriages of Aššur and Mulliššu, Marduk and Zarpanitu, Nabû and Tašmetu or Nanaya, as well as Šamaš and Aya, and An and Antu from the first millennium BCE. Such divine marriages were attested as early as the time of Gudea of Lagash (ca. 2100 BC) and continued to be celebrated under the kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur (ca. 2100–2000 BC) and Ur III; see Sallaberger 1993: 1.288–291, also cited by Cooper 2013: 54, who added: “[A]ll of the marriages between gods and their consorts, whether third millennium or first, are assumed to involve images or symbols of the gods; there was sex in the temple in the same way as there was divine presence in the temple.”
- 117 Pongratz-Leisten (2008: 66–8) differentiates among cosmogamy (marriage of heaven and earth), theogamy (divine marriage) and hierogamy (marriage of king and

- goddess). The distinction is useful as a way of moving away from Fraser's association of the rite with fertility, especially in light of Smith's (2008: 93) understanding of it precisely in those terms as "sexual relations between humans as a ritual imitation of sexual relations on the divine plane, designed to promote fertility, or symbolic representation or evocation of these sexual relations."
- 118 Lapinkivi 2008: 22–3 (also see his pp. 9–10); also Oden 1987: 138–47; van der Toorn (1992: 510) rejects the notion of ritual sex, yet she still uses the term "cultic prostitution," as Bird (1997: 39n.8) observed. On our fallacy regarding the practice of "sacred prostitution," see Assante 1998: 10 and again 2003: esp.15–22; also Budin 2006: 83.
- 119 Cooper 1993: *passim*; Lapinkivi 2008: 11.
- 120 Sweet 1994: 101; Jones 2003: 299. Cooper (2013: 56) reminds us that "[I]n other theogamies, the goddess is expected to take advantage of her spouse's post-coital feelings of goodwill to intercede on behalf of king and country." But in those other cases, it is the male god who is the more powerful: Ningiršu, Enlil, Aššur, Marduk, Nabû, Šamaš, Anu; cf. Nissinen 2001: esp.113. Pongratz-Leisten (2008: 58–60) stresses the oracular tradition surrounding Inanna and her role in determining the fate of the king (always identified with that of his country).
- 121 Sweet 1994: 102; cf. Böck 2004: 20; Nissinen and Uro 2008: 3.
- 122 Cooper 2013: 55.
- 123 See Dalley (1989: 154) on the obvious similarity between the *Descent of Ištar* and the myth of Persephone.
- 124 Smith 2006: 121–49; cf. id. 2008a: esp.95; cf. Marsman 2003: 527–31 for divination in dreams and "sacred marriage" rituals in Ugaritic texts.
- 125 See Parrinder (1980: 51) for symbolic intercourse as an important element in many initiation ceremonies; cf. n.117 above.
- 126 See Vanstiphout and Cooper 2003:32–3, ll. 62–3 and 80–1; cf. Berlin 1979 also cited in Leick 1994: 107–8. For evidence pointing to the affectionate relationship between Enmerkar and Inanna, see Lapinkivi 2008: 18–19.
- 127 Text and trans. from Vanstiphout and Cooper 2003: 32–3, ll.87–90; cf. Berlin 1979 (same lines).
- 128 Text and trans. Vanstiphout and Cooper 2003: 44–5, ll.275–6; cf. Berlin 1979 (same lines); Kramer 1952: 22 (l.276).
- 129 Text and trans. Vanstiphout and Cooper 2003: 56–7; Kramer 1952: 8 (l.30).
- 130 Text and trans. Vanstiphout and Cooper 2003: 88–9; Kramer 1952: 40 (ll.559–63) Jacobsen 1987: 315, ll.558–64.
- 131 Leick 1994: 108 with Wilcke 1969: 42.
- 132 Leick 1994: 108 with Jacobsen 1987: 471.
- 133 See Klein 1981: 57, X 1.74 (*šà-hùl-la<sup>a</sup>nin-é-gal-ka zu*: the one who knows her joyful heart); also see his p. 154.
- 134 In his propaganda Nabonidus also imitates Aššurbanipal, who had characteristically claimed to have received divine instructions for building temples in his dreams; see Hurowitz 1992: 147–8; cf. Dalley 2003: 176–8.
- 135 Hurowitz 1992: 170.
- 136 Stuvdent-Hickman 2006: 393–4. For Post-Kassite Babylonia (1158–722 BCE), see Brinkman 1968: esp.86–165.
- 137 See Flückiger-Hawker 1999: 214, ll.73–4; On the *ġipar* and its importance in the sacred marriage rite, cf. Harris 1971: 379.
- 138 Flückiger-Hawker 1999: 210, 37–8.
- 139 Leick 1994: 104–5; cf. Steinkeller 1999: 135–6 and Nissinen 2001: 94.
- 140 Hence, in the poem we hear that skilled workmen had been sent from Aratta to build the shrines of Uruk; Leick 1994: 106–7; also see Westenholz (2007: 338) citing the outcome of the competition in favour of Enmerkar; Enšuhkešdanna of Aratta is then forced to admit: "You are the beloved lord of Inanna, you alone are exalted. Inanna

- has truly chosen you for her lap, you are her beloved. From the south to the highlands, you are the great lord, and I am only second to you” (text and translation from *ETCSL*, no. 1.8.2.4, ll.276–8). Hence, Inanna resolves a political rivalry by employing terms of divine affection.
- 141 Kramer (1963b: 492) describes how upon her return from the Underworld Inanna finds Dumuzi dressed in a “noble robe,” seating “high on a throne”; in other words he is in a celebratory mood and showing little concern about Inanna’s fate.
- 142 Walls 2001: 41.
- 143 Sefati (1998: 39) discusses Šulgi’s famous *Hymn X* where the king plays the role of Dumuzi and Iddin-Dagan’s hymn A, where the king plays the role of Amaušum-galanna, an epithet attributed to Dumuzi. A third song (DI D.) is connected with an anonymous royal figure referred to by epithets such as “lord,” “beloved,” “the beloved husband” and “the king.” Di P and Inanna G relate the adventures of Dumuzi himself. However, it could be argued that these are generic hymns where the king’s name is not crucial, since he embodied Dumuzi.
- 144 In Šulgi C, 129–40 the king poses as another Gilgameš; see George 2003: 169. Yet burials or commemorative festivals were also accompanied by music and athletics; see GDD ll.N1v 6– N1v10: “When in future days (? = humankind’s) (funerary) statues are fashioned the youth and the young men alike, (at) the observation of the New Moon did indeed perform the threshold ritual, when they in public conducted wrestling and athletics, in the month of Ab, at the festival of the spirits, it would not be possible to make light without him (= Gilgameš).”
- 145 Text from Hude <sup>3</sup>1927; trans. based on Macaulay 1890: 89 with my modifications; the text is also discussed by Steinkeller 1999: 134–6, who also understands the “marriage” as purely symbolic; cf. Cooper 1993: 87–9.
- 146 In Ur-Nammu A, Inanna is portrayed as lamenting the king’s death; she praises his charms (*h-li-a-ni*) and refers to her *gipar* as her shrine which “towers up like a mountain”; cf. Lapinkivi 2008: 21. Also see Jones 2003: 292 discussing the festival before the sacred marriage of Iddin-Dagan with the goddess; apparently, in the hymn the abundance effected by the goddess causes the storehouses to be filled, at which point people start sleeping on rooftops. The goddess then appears to them in their sleep; cf. Lapinkivi 2008: 24–5.
- 147 Noegel 2004: 134–5; also id. 2007: 58; Maul 2007: 368; cf. Durand 1988: 455–82.
- 148 For incubation as practised throughout Mesopotamia, see Klm 2011: 27–60.
- 149 Sasson 1984: 285; DeJong Ellis 1989: 136; Gilgameš seems familiar with the practice; see Butler 1998: 224–227. Cf. Moore (1990: esp.78–86) and Ackerman (1992: 194–202) for incubation among the Jews under ANE influence; see Schmidt (1994: 261–3) on the Jewish disapproval of incubation linked with pagan necromancy.
- 150 For an overview of incubation in the ANE, see Klm 2011: 27–58; Cf. Husser (1999: 20–22), who warns against the conflation of the “therapeutic incubation,” popular during the Hellenistic period, and the “oracular” incubation that was mainly practised in the ANE in earlier times.
- 151 DeJong Ellis 1989: 178–9. Note that dreams and prophecies were both ways of communicating with the divine (cf. the role of both the Sun god and Inanna in oracular prophecy, mentioned above, n.120 and Chapter 1: n.188); hence, in a text from Mari we read: “about the dreams (*šuttum*) and prophecies (*igirre<sup>m</sup>*) about which my lord wrote me, before, when he was leaving for war, I wrote to my lord the prophecy I heard and the dream I saw . . .” See Charpin 2001: 26.
- 152 *RIME* 3.1: 69–70. Starting with the Akkadian dynasty of Sargon, ANE kings would often place their daughters as priestesses of the god; see Hallo and Simpson <sup>2</sup>1998: 175.
- 153 Van Buren (1952: esp.293–4 with n.1) draws attention to the king’s sense of duty and obedience to the expressed wish of gods to have new temples built in their honour;



- Gudea, for example, was instructed in a dream to build a new and better Eninnu for Ningiršū, the Amorite Samsuiluna (ca. 1792–1712 BCE) was commanded by Šamaš and Waradsin of Larsa (1770–1758 BCE) by Nannar.
- 154 Hurowitz 1992: 47–8, 153–6.
- 155 Gurney 1981: 143; cf. *COS* I:159 (Beckman 1.60).
- 156 Gadd 1948: 58–9 with Böhl 1939: 162 (i 1.170); cf. Reiner 1985: 1–16, esp.2; Beaulieu 1989: 71–2, 127–32; id. 1994: 39–40 and id. 1995: 974; a liver omen also confirmed the god’s “desire”; *erešum* can actually mean both demand/request and wish/desire, but given that *ērišu*, of the same root, means bridegroom, the erotic connotations of the word cannot be missed. In addition, the passionate language employed in the “sacred marriage” could be seen as influenced by incantations of sympathetic magic where by uttering one’s desire you can make it happen. For reading and writing in Near Eastern magic, see Geller 2010: 165–6. As mentioned above, especially in the first millennium BCE, Ištar was increasingly linked with magic.
- 157 Garrison 2012: 45.
- 158 Herodotus’ work is full of obscure oracles that require careful interpretation; for oracular allegory in Herodotus, see Benardete 1969: 7–9; cf. Hartog (1988: 131–3), where oracles – in the particular example, false oracles, “*pseudomantis*” (Hdt.4.64), exemplify the “otherness” of the Scythians.
- 159 Mikalson (2003: 55–60) argues that regardless of whether the oracles were historical or part of contemporary traditions, not necessarily founded on actual events, one has the impression that Herodotus relates them as part of his storytelling in order to teach his audience through the stories and the mistakes of those who related the oracles to him.
- 160 Harrison (2000: 122–57) argues that Herodotus distances himself from popular religion precisely by referring to cases in which erroneous interpretations of oracles precipitated one’s downfall; cf. Harrison 2003: 247. See Struck (2002: 181–3) for Herodotean oracles as literary forgeries designed to promote political objectives.
- 161 Hurowitz 1992: 162.
- 162 Melville 2006: 390–1.
- 163 Text and trans. George 2003: 128, cited by permission of Oxford University Press; also see his trans. in id. 1999: li and 199; cf. Shields 2007: 139. Text also available from *ETCSL* 1.8.1.3 (segment F, ll. 38–41, Meturan version); Frahm (2005: *passim*) read tablet XII of the *GE* as having been composed in connection with the death of Sargon II and the rites of Dumuzi, which took place during the time of composition. Cohen (2005: 35) argues that the episode of *Gilgameš in the Netherworld* was probably written in connection with the destruction of Ur III – hence, it could be understood in the context of the City Laments discussed above; also see *COS* I: 419–20 (Hallo 1.118) for a Seleucid lament for Tammuz structured as a lament for the destruction of Sumer and Akkad; cf. Chapter 3: n.202.
- 164 Langdon 1917: pls xix:11 and xxi:16–17; Kramer 1944a: 6.
- 165 Tigay 1982: 51n.42, 186–7. Note that the hymnic introduction implied in the OB version by the colophon of *Gilg.P.* raised the question of whether this version was once used in the course of worshipping or honouring Gilgameš. Also see Wiggermann (2010: 342–6) for the development of Dumuzi’s role in first-millennium magic through his assimilation with the South Sumerian god Lulal, later replaced by the Akkadian Lātarāk. In the second millennium BCE the god appeared in incantation rituals along with Ištar; most such incantations are Standard Babylonian, but they clearly had OB (oral) forerunners. Similarly to Gilgameš, in these later periods Dumuzi becomes a prophylactic god against evil.
- 166 Text from George 2003: 134, here cited by permission of Oxford University Press; trans. mine; cf. Ebeling 1931: 127, ll.7–15; also von Soden 1936: 266. Trans. also in Heidel 1949: 5. Also see George 2003: 448 citing *VAS* XXIV, 92.rev.30–6, a late creation account where the goddess is attributed with the creation of man as well as the king.

- 167 Šar = square mile; cf. trans. George 1999: 99.
- 168 Lapinkivi 2004: 1.
- 169 Sefati (1998: 86–9) discusses the similes and metaphors found in the hymns relating the passion of Inanna and Dumuzi, who are described as the archetypical bride and groom. Lapinkivi (2008: 38–41) suggests that the Sumerians regarded Inanna as a paragon of the human soul and, as a consequence, that Sumerian sacred marriage texts describe the soul's union with her divine bridegroom, the human king. Also see the review of this work by George (2006: 316–7), who expresses reservations regarding the methodology. Cf. p. 71 above with n.39 (for van der Toorn 2007 and the secrecy with which scribes invested knowledge in the second and the first millennium BCE).
- 170 Westenholz 2007: 339; the list also includes Dumuzid, the king of Kuara, a fisherman who reigned in the years between Lugalbanda and Gilgameš. Also see Gadotti 2006: 70 for the obscure figure of the fisherman who punishes arrogant king Gudam on behalf of Inanna (see p. 69 above). In addition, on her pp. 72–3 Gadotti tries to establish a parallelism between the young fisherman in the tale of Gudam (*šupeš tur*) and Gilgameš – in her view, the association is also reflected in the younger sister of Gilgameš, named Peštur.
- 171 Text and trans. Westenholz 1997: 34–5; Haul 2009: 17–18.
- 172 For ANE temples as reflections of the cosmos, see Ragavan 2013: 3–4 reviewing the association of temple, ritual, and cosmos in the work of Eliade (i.e. 1959: 37–9); also see Jones 2000: 2.349n.36 cited by Ragavan on p. 14n.14. For names of shrines pointing to cosmic locations in mythic and literary texts, see George 1992: 286–91 (also cited by Ragavan 2013: 5n.27).
- 173 For the expression *narām Marduk* (beloved of Marduk) and similar epithets, see Seux 1976: 189–97. For Gilgameš as a king of Ur and “beloved of Marduk,” see *STT* I, 40//42.2–6 cited in George 2003: 119.
- 174 Text from George (2003: 503, here cited by permission of Oxford University Press), who compares the prophecy cited above with the *GE* (II.249–53), where the hero goes on to narrate his wanderings in hope of meeting Utnapištim; cf. Parpola 1997: 41 (*SAA* 9). Trans. mine.
- 175 See, for example, Tallqvist 1932: 94, 100; Cooper 1986: 71; Postgate 1995: 408; Gurney 1977: 27–30; Holloway 2002: 3031, esp. nn.71 and 73. The *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* often relate the peace and prosperity enjoyed by the people under particularly good kings; see Grayson 1975: 65, 228; Niehaus 2008: 58–65.
- 176 *ABD* 4:522–23 (Pleins, s.v. “Marduk”).
- 177 Heidel 1951: 14; cf. Kuhrt 1995: 1.115.
- 178 Text and trans. from Michalowski 1989: 58–9; also from *ETCSL* 2.2.3.

### 3 Renewing the cosmos

#### Garden and goddess in first-millennium ideology

. . . . ša ina su-ka-ka-a-te i-du-lu-u-ni <sup>ina</sup>Bêl  
ú-ka-u'-ma aḫ-ka ša-bit

Langdon 1923: 34 (1.9)<sup>1</sup>

The Sumerian “sacred marriage” celebrated, as already mentioned (Intr.: p. 3), during the New Year Festival is known as *akītu*.<sup>2</sup> However, our evidence points to an interruption of this tradition in later periods and an overall change in royal ideology originating mainly from Babylon, the future capital of the Seleucids, which would become a major gateway for the transmission of ANE cultural input to the Greeks of the Hellenistic period. Although the *GE* with its emphasis on Gilgamesh’s troubled relationship with Ištar remained a popular literary text down to the Hellenistic period, the gradual rise of Marduk as the king of the Babylonian pantheon necessitated the composition of the *Enuma Eliš/Epic of Creation*, which focused on his struggle against the forces of the sea-goddess Tiamat and was now recited, possibly even enacted, during the *akītu* festival. Meanwhile, the erotic relationship of the goddess with her royal consort was now echoed in incantation rituals reserved for the sphere of private religion<sup>3</sup> and the ever-popular seasonal festivals for Dumuzi/Tammuz and similar (though not identical) deities which royal houses often supported; although this development gave rise to the view that the prominence of the goddess in royal political programs is limited in the post-Ur III period, the proliferation of the metaphors expressing her divine favour through the Tammuz or Tammuz-like festivals must be re-evaluated. Hence, this chapter examines the king’s “erotic” disposition and afterlife knowledge in relation to the Babylonian New Year Festival as well as the popular “love lyrics” which propagate, as we shall see, the metaphor of the garden in the Levant and the Greek world.

#### **The politics of cultural continuity**

Although the scanty nature of our evidence precludes any scholarly guessing about the precise relationship between the *GE* and the Babylonian *Enuma Eliš/Epic of Creation* I am interested in pointing out certain similar patterns in both

works as a way of highlighting their preoccupation with civilization and (the teleological aspects of) kingship. In later millennia the task of renewing the cosmos and keeping the forces of evil in check was firmly placed in the hands of Marduk, who posed as a model of everlasting kingship, a claim that mortal kings (even of the calibre of Gilgameš) could hardly ever achieve. Recent studies on the existence of a two-level scribal curriculum in first-millennium Babylon<sup>4</sup> seem to support the view that, while the majority of scribes would be trained in cuneiform in order to simply copy old texts including the standard version of the *GE*, some of them continued their studies and reached a level of competence that allowed them to intervene and nuance traditional texts so as to promote their own goals. In fact, as Beaulieu argued,<sup>5</sup> during the first millennium BCE there was a conflict between this elite class of scribes and kings, with the former trying to put forward a number of “double” lists that matched up legendary kings of the past with famous sages – an effort to allude to the power of their guild, to shape royal propagandas. At the same time, however, by revising traditional texts which advocated long-standing royal ideologies they achieved a sense of continuity between the ante-diluvian and the post-diluvian representations of kingship, and they thus successfully infiltrated the later Babylonian lore with older models of kingship and the metaphors that referred to them. The discovery of numerous bilingual (Sumerian and Akkadian) prayers which were recited during the *akitu* seem to offer an unmistakable clue for the intention of the Babylonian priesthood and palace to stress the long-standing traditions of which they perceived themselves as heirs – among these, Gilgameš’s model of kingship, including his dubious relationship with the goddess, was seminal.<sup>6</sup>

Still, as George has pointed out,<sup>7</sup> nowadays the idea that the Babylonian New Year Festival included a “sacred marriage” ceremony is discredited for lack of evidence. Although the impoverished state of our evidence has not improved, here I argue that the debate on the “sacred marriage” relies on the false and outdated differentiation between “primitive” Sumerian “sacred marriages” which allegedly involved the sexual union of the king with the priestess of Inanna<sup>8</sup> and later “sacred marriage” ceremonies in which human participants were replaced with statues.<sup>9</sup> Pongratz-Leisten summarized this view aptly by arguing that<sup>10</sup>

sexual intercourse between the king and the goddess represented by a priestess was not essential. The contention is supported by the fact that the kings did not see the need to legitimate their alliance with Inanna/Ištar in later times. At a certain point, they stopped tracing their descent back to Dumuzi, with whom they may have been identified in the love songs.

From this point of view, the metaphorical value of the sexual investment of the king’s close relationship with the goddess is divested from its early Frasierian understanding in the context of fertility magic. However, given the time-honoured associations of Inanna with kingship, as discussed in Chapter 2, and the continuing importance of the institution in the cultic revamp of first-millennium BCE Babylon it would be reasonable to assume that the “sacred marriage” metaphor

maintained its popularity as a means of relating the divine power of kings and their teleological knowledge.<sup>11</sup> After all, the scribes who pointed to older models of kingship could not ignore the affection with which the goddess had showered her legendary protégés, so prominent a theme in earlier literature and art. Therefore, my reading of the evidence suggests that the “sacred marriage” ideology remained a staple part of New Year Festivals at state level (after all, Dumuzi had a seat in the Babylonian Esagil along numerous other gods),<sup>12</sup> while at the level of personal religion now everyone could fantasize about being Tammuz, especially following the spread of the cult in the Levant and eventually Greece.

### **New Year Festivals and the Babylonian *akītu***

The *akītu* or ZAG.MU, as the New Year Festival was known in Sumerian (cf. Akkadian *zgmukku* literally meaning *rēš šatti*, the threshold/the beginning of the year),<sup>13</sup> has been associated with important historical changes in the ANE and in the case of Babylon with the rise of Marduk as the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon. It has been regarded as “the most complete expression of Mesopotamian religiosity”<sup>14</sup> through which the king secured the renewal of the cosmos and divine approval for his rule.<sup>15</sup> By studying the Assyrian and Babylonian royal inscriptions and chronicles where the celebration of the festival was recorded we can elicit significant information about the socio-historical changes that affected the communities which celebrated the rite. For example, the festival would not be celebrated if the (statue of the) god or the king was absent from the city, that is, in times of political turmoil: therefore, when Sennacherib carried off the divine statue of Marduk as war booty to Assur in 689 BCE the festival was interrupted for a whole twenty years.<sup>16</sup> Equally, when in the late Babylonian period Nabonidus (556–539 BCE) tried to introduce the cult of the moon god Sîn he (allegedly) neglected the cult of Marduk and refused to celebrate the *akītu*, an instance which has offered a lot of scope for speculation regarding the relationship of the king with the priesthood of Marduk.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, as in the case of the “sacred marriage” rite, we must be careful to note that the structure of the *akītu* varied “from city to city, period to period, from ruling monarch to monarch.”<sup>18</sup> Smith, for example, was careful to distinguish the *akītu* celebrated at Babylon during the Hellenistic period from those celebrated in the much earlier pre-Sargonic period (2700–2350 BCE).<sup>19</sup> Although the relevant rites and hymns probably continued to be performed unchanged as a result of religious formalism, their interpretations varied to accommodate new theological developments.<sup>20</sup>

Hence, in this later period, mythic traditions, typically preoccupied with the creation of humankind, reflect the rising importance of the god Enki, known as Ea in Akkadian,<sup>21</sup> who is responsible for the creation of mankind, but also of the king – although in Babylonian theology the latter task would be soon ascribed to Marduk.<sup>22</sup> The final stage of the creation is described in the *Enuma Eliš*, which, with the establishment of the states of Assyria and Babylonia, became part of a royal ritual.<sup>23</sup> Hence, the *Epic*, which allegedly reflects the “masculinization” of

creation by referring to Ea as Nudimmud (i.e. I.17),<sup>24</sup> the man-creator, was sung during the Babylonian *akītu*.<sup>25</sup> In cult kings began to re-enact the part of Marduk in his fierce encounter with Tiamat, the goddess that contrives evil against the gods and cosmic order. However, as mentioned, the *akītu* includes few and vague references to the rite of “sacred marriage” which has led many scholars to argue that it was by now discarded, at least, from official cult. Among them, Frymer-Kensky suggested that<sup>26</sup>

the later kings took part in a ritual that celebrated stability rather than fertility, order rather than union, monarchy rather than renewal.

However, these changes – far from revealing anything about the social situation of women in ancient Mesopotamia as Frymer-Kensky implies,<sup>27</sup> continued to contribute to the thoroughly “masculine” discussion about the nature of power in the ANE. After all, Sumerian creation stories, including the episode of man’s creation which is not recounted in the *GE*,<sup>28</sup> were no less focused on male generative power, with each known version emphasizing the role of An or Enlil in begetting parts of the world and determining the cosmic order. In these narratives the king’s closeness to a supreme male god is systematically emphasized,<sup>29</sup> reminding us that the ritual investment of kings with otherworldly knowledge was still considered paramount for the wellbeing of their people. In addition, from an archaic Greek point of view this development is reflected a few centuries later (if we accept that the *Enuma Eliš* was likely composed *circa* the twelfth century BCE) in the Hesiodic *Theogony* where masculine deities are portrayed as establishing order over the deadly chaos typically represented by female divine powers.<sup>30</sup>

Westenholz argued that in the second millennium BCE the relationship of the goddess with the king was thoroughly revised:

The emphasis shifts away from the loving relationship between Ištar and the king to a protective one, to Ištar “mistress of battle and warfare” who stands at the sides of kings and smashes their enemies. Her frenzy in battle is constantly mentioned in hymns, both Sumerian and Akkadian.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, even if the kings had to choose more sober – or less “exciting,” less “glamorous” (cf. Frymer-Kensky 1997: 102) – images to represent their power, the “sacred marriage” culture did not disappear,<sup>32</sup> especially given that the rite included lamentation for the goddess’s dead consort and lamentation was, as we saw, a way of restoring cosmic order.<sup>33</sup> From this period, a royal text, written in Sumerian, relates the “sacred marriage” of the king of Isin and Inanna which takes place the morning after the New Year celebration amid joyous festivities in which the *kurgarras* (cultic personnel in the service of Inanna) presided.<sup>34</sup> Another royal ritual describes a “sacred marriage” between the king – perhaps Samši-Addu of Upper Mesopotamia (ca. 1815–1775 BCE) – and Ištar which was celebrated at the goddess’s temple at Mari. According to Westenholz,<sup>35</sup> the participants included the king, Inanna, other deities, various types of priests, courtiers, singers, ecstasies

and craftsmen while games and sports performed by various entertainers gave the festivities a carnival feel.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, although our evidence does not unequivocally relate the “sacred marriage” ritual with the celebrations that marked the New Year Festival, rites alluding to the “sacred marriage” were celebrated by Marduk and Nabû at Babylon as well as other locations in second-millennium BCE Mesopotamia.<sup>37</sup> As Frymer-Kensky writes,<sup>38</sup>

[I]n these later sacred marriages, the king no longer played the part of the god . . . The statues of the gods were brought to a garden (possibly in procession), hymns were sung, and the statues were left there overnight.

Pongratz-Leisten argued that from the second millennium onward the “sacred marriage” was replaced by rites of theogamy, that is, ritual weddings were now celebrated in honour of divine couples.<sup>39</sup> The king was still invested with divine favour, but this was now represented as the result of the harmonious (sexual) relationship of the divine couple. Drawing on the work of Nissinen,<sup>40</sup> Pongratz-Leisten discussed the widespread phenomenon of theogamy in Assyrian first-millennium sources. Two rites seem to have been celebrated at the time of king Aššurbanipal: hence, we know of a love ritual for Mulliššu at the city of Assur which seems to have been originally envisaged as part of the festivities marking the rebuilding of the temple of Ešarra in 679 BCE under Ešarhaddon but was later incorporated into the cultic calendar and was regularly celebrated in the month of Šabatu. Most probably the decision to celebrate the rite on a regular basis was motivated by the opportunity, if offered, to stage a renewal of the divine approval for the king’s building program and his overall fulfilment of his cultic duties. In the same year, Ešarhaddon began the restoration of Marduk’s Esagila temple at Babylon, which was completed under his son Aššurbanipal. Notably in the *Enuma Eliš* (VI.62–4), the temple of Esagil is described as a “replica” of the subterranean palace of Apsu,<sup>41</sup> which connects the heavenly abode of An with the Underworld, a conceptual model which emphasizes the ability of the king, appointed by Marduk, to traverse between cosmic realms. Ešarhaddon commissioned a number of hymns and inscriptions relating the divine love of Marduk and Zarpanitu.<sup>42</sup> The inscription, cited below, dates from 655 BCE and was obviously designed to muster support for the king, who is cast as a pious worshipper of the divine couple and enjoys their common protection.<sup>43</sup>

[a-na ba-laṭ] napš]āti<sup>mes</sup>-ia arki(GÍD) ūm<sup>mes</sup>-ia a-na ši-rik-ti áš-[ruk]  
 [e/i-nu-ma h]a-ša-du i-ša-ka-nu ir-ru-bu bīt ru-'a-a-me  
 [. . .]ia a-na a-ḥa-miš liq-bu-u ilāni<sup>mes</sup> ki-lal-la-an  
 [i-na ṣ]i-it pi-i-šú-nu ellî(KÚ) ša la nakri(KÚR)<sup>ni</sup> lik-ru-bu šarrūti<sup>ti</sup>  
 [ṣ]u-mi-rat libbi(ŠÀ)-ia li-šak-ši-du-in-ni' šá áš-te-'a-a aš-ri-šú-un  
 [lú]nak]r<sup>mes</sup>-ia li-is-pu-nu šá ú-šal-li-mu bi-bil libbi-šú-un . . .

<sup>d</sup>Marduk šar ilāni<sup>mes</sup> ni-iš libbi-šú le-e-ṭi-ir li-ḥal-lik zēr(NUMUN)-šú

<sup>d</sup>Zar-pa-ni-tu<sub>4</sub> i-na ur-ši bīt ḥa-am-mu-ti le-mut-ta-šú lit-tas-qar

[For the sake of] my [li]fe and for the lengthening of my days I gave them  
as a present.  
[When] they perform the ritual of love and enter the house of love,  
may the divine couple talk to each other of my [. . .]!  
May they bless my kingship [by the ut]terance of their pure mouths which is  
not to be countermanded!  
May they make me, who looked for their dwellings, attain my heart's  
desire!  
May they suppress my enemies, (I) who fulfilled their ardent wish. . . .  
May Marduk, king of the gods, weaken his potency and destroy his seed,  
May Zarpanitu pronounce a bad word about him on the bed of her boudoir.

Another “sacred marriage” rite, traced back to the early OB period but celebrated especially under Ešarhaddon and Aššurbanipal in the seventh century BCE, was that performed by a younger generation of gods for the crown prince in the month of Ayyaru.<sup>44</sup> In Assyria the protagonists of the rite were Nabû and Nanaya, while in Babylon the consort of Nabû was Tašmetu. Importantly the Assyrian rite culminated with the visit of the young god to Uruk, to the garden of Anu, his father, who would then confer kingship upon his son. The episode was meant to re-affirm the coronation of the king, the earthly counterpart of Nabû.<sup>45</sup> From Assyrian letters (*SAA* 13.70rev.1–4) we also hear that after his sexual encounter with the goddess, Nabû travelled to the garden where sacrifices were performed. He then continued to the hunting park to kill wild oxen before returning to his temple. In reality the hunting was probably undertaken by the king. In addition, Aššurbanipal's hymn to the divine couple (*SAA* 3.6) describes the monthly encounter between Tašmetu and Nabû that involved a blessing for Aššurbanipal after his ascension to the throne. The hymn makes it clear that the divine couple were to act as intercessors for the king before the national god Aššur.

The trend continued in the Neo-Babylonian period under Nabonidus, who apparently celebrated two love rituals, one for the marriage of Šamaš and Aya in the city of Sippar and one dedicated to the Lady of Sippar, who “probably should be identified as a hypostasis of Ištar, not as Aya.”<sup>46</sup> Given the association of these rites with royal authority and prestige, it is not surprising that a similar ritual was mentioned for Anu and Antu in connection with the New Year Festival in Seleucid Uruk.<sup>47</sup> The “sacred marriage” of Anu and Antu offers us good evidence for the overall religious tendencies of the first millennium BCE during which royal priestly circles strove for consolidation of divine attributes and roles in search of common identifiers.<sup>48</sup> It could even be argued that this was an inevitable result of their systematic engagement with the past aimed at subscribing contemporary rulers to the royal traditions of legendary times. Hence, in the eighth century BCE an attempt was made to establish in the E-anna temple of Uruk the Babylonian Ištar or Zarpanitu, the wife of Marduk – an attempt that was met with considerable hostility.<sup>49</sup> The fact that in seventh-century BCE texts the name Bēltīya, typically applied to Zarpanitu in the ritual



instructions for the *akītu*,<sup>50</sup> occurs in place of Ištar-of-Uruk seems to point to the theological agenda which strove for the assimilation of Zarpanitu to Ištar-of-Uruk and Ištar-of-Babylon.<sup>51</sup> As Westenholz pointed out, despite the fluctuations of Ištar's popularity in first-millennium Uruk<sup>52</sup> and the re-organization of her cult under the Achaemenids and the Seleucids,<sup>53</sup> at a time when local theologians put forward Anu and Antu as the sole patron gods of the city, Antu was once more assimilated to Ištar.<sup>54</sup> Given our knowledge that the "love lyrics" were part of the scribal curriculum in first-millennium BCE Babylonia<sup>55</sup> along with our early to mid-first-millennium evidence for non-state-organized lamentation rites in honour of Tammuz,<sup>56</sup> Ištar's lover, it is rather difficult to determine whether the effort to reclassify the goddesses was necessarily orchestrated by state agents or was also possibly undertaken by common people who were keen to transfer some of the popular aspects of Ištar to the official goddess of their city. Furthermore, the lamentation for the destruction of cities and/or the death of its king bears many unmistakable similarities with the lamentations for Inanna's consort, especially as in both cases the goddess eventually gets to illustrate her compassionate profile either by adhering to the cries of her people or by having a change of heart regarding Dumuzi's punishment.<sup>57</sup>

In addition, numerous copies of the *Exaltation of Ištar*, unearthed in Hellenistic Uruk, as well as a text detailing a procession in honour of the goddess from her temple to the *akītu* temple, accompanied by her cultic servants, the *kurgarru* and *assinnu*, further points to the continuous relevance and celebration of "sacred marriages" in later periods.<sup>58</sup> The ritual has an obvious royal character, as Westenholz noted,<sup>59</sup> indicated by the presence of the king, who takes the goddess by the hand and leads her to her throne in her sanctuary, as well as by the numerous references to the royal sceptre (see obv.II.15–19; 32–3, rev.21–4, 27–9 in Lackenbacher 1977). By re-enthroning the goddess who had in her command all the *mes* (*garza* in Sumerian = *paršu* in Akkadian),<sup>60</sup> that is all the positive and negative aspects of human activity, the king reaffirmed his long-standing, fundamental role in renewing and safeguarding cosmic order. Besides, we also know of a Tašrītu (= beginning) *akītu* celebrated in the late first millennium which seems to have many similarities with the New Year *akītu* and included a "sacred marriage" ceremony.<sup>61</sup> The liturgy text that describes the rite was written by exiles from Raš and was connected to the West Semitic moon god Sachar;<sup>62</sup> accordingly, Bidmead suggested that this is an adaptation of the Babylonian New Year rituals into a West Semitic culture.<sup>63</sup> Yet even if this is the case, we cannot ignore the fact that in Sumerian tradition the "sacred marriage" was part of the *akītu* and at any rate, western Semitic cultures did not find the celebration of the *akītu* incompatible with the "sacred marriage," especially given the metaphorical nuances of the ceremony as a means of renewing divine benevolence and securing positive decrees for the king and his people.<sup>64</sup> After all, a number of the later *akīti* festivals discussed by Bidmead<sup>65</sup> – including that of Palmyra, which flourished firmly under the cultural influence of Babylon<sup>66</sup> – were celebrated in honour of divine couples in imitation of the Babylonian *akītu* for Marduk and Zarpanitu/Ištar.

## The beloved of Ištar or Marduk?

At Babylon during the fourth day of the New Year Festival the *šešgallu* priests recited to the statue of Marduk the *Creation Epic* (*Enuma Eliš*), a composition dated to the late second millennium BCE,<sup>67</sup> copies of which were found in Aššurbanipal's library as well as many other libraries across the ANE.<sup>68</sup> It could be argued that the *Creation Epic* corresponds to the *GE* in that they both debate the issue of kingship, with the gods proudly asserting in the *Epic* IV.25 that "Marduk is king"; however, while Gilgamesh was a king prone to failure and destined to have a mortal fate, Marduk was the powerful god who suited the ambitious rulers of the second millennium BCE.<sup>69</sup> Yingling also suggested that, given that the name "Marduk is King of the Gods" was in existence during the reign of Kudur-Enlil (1254–1246 BCE),<sup>70</sup>

[A]t the earliest, the first solid evidence indicates that *Enuma Eliš* in its entirety was probably composed after Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Elam (1126–1105 BCE) . . . precisely to commemorate Babylon's victory over Elam and to reconfirm their religious preeminence.

Furthermore, as Cohen has argued,<sup>71</sup> the *akītu* festival originated in second-millennium Ur, as a biennial celebration of the arrival of the moon-god Nanna, the city's divine patron.<sup>72</sup> The main festival took place at the autumn equinox; the advent of the god – symbolically identified with the appearance of the new moon – was celebrated with a parade of his statue in the streets of the city.<sup>73</sup> By the late Achaemenid period the festival was dedicated to Bēl (= lord), an epithet of Marduk; in the 11 days that the celebration lasted, the king had to undergo a ritual humiliation before the god (on the fifth day),<sup>74</sup> the destinies of the king and the land were decreed twice and debatably, a "sacred marriage" was celebrated.<sup>75</sup> Although the inclusion of a "sacred marriage" ceremony in the celebration of the *akītu* has been doubted, the rite probably remained a highly effective way of determining the will of the gods, especially given that Enheduanna had explained already in the third millennium BCE that without the goddess "no destiny at all is determined" (*Inninšagurra*, l.114).<sup>76</sup> The work of Enheduanna was widely disseminated in ancient Mesopotamia, and the earliest copies of her work date at least half a millennium after she had lived;<sup>77</sup> in addition, apart from the intense scribal interest in ancient literary samples during the first millennium, it is likely that popular hymns such as Enheduanna's *Exaltation of Inanna* belonged firmly to popular oral tradition, which was enjoyed and memorized by numerous members of ANE audiences.<sup>78</sup>

In addition, Marduk could also be both compassionate and horribly punitive toward his people, sharing thus into the twofold nature of the goddess as it evolved during the second millennium.<sup>79</sup> At first, the New Year Festival was dedicated to Marduk, while his wife Zarpanitu was only of secondary importance. Yet by the first millennium, Ištar, the bellicose goddess who gradually overshadowed Inanna<sup>80</sup> and was worshipped at Babylon for some time as Marduk's consort, was

assimilated to Zarpanitu.<sup>81</sup> That Marduk possibly celebrated a “sacred marriage” during the *akītu* is implied by the statement that the god rushed to the wedding ceremony (*ihiš ana hadaššuti*),<sup>82</sup> but the reference has further divided scholars, with some arguing that the *hieros gamos* was the pinnacle of the *akītu*<sup>83</sup> and others denying that such a small reference could carry any significance at all.<sup>84</sup> However, despite lack of extensive references to a “sacred marriage” ceremony, the prayers sung during the Babylonian *akītu* seem to portray the king as the “beloved” of both Marduk and his esteemed wife. The carefully corresponding prayers, addressed to Marduk and his wife during the *akītu*, promote the idea of conjugal harmony between the divine couple, which was obviously important for the successful completion of the rite. Hence, on the fourth day of the festival the *šešgallu* priest offered a bilingual *šulla* prayer to Bēl (II.225–9 and 243–4), who is addressed as<sup>85</sup>

be-lu kib-rat šar ilāni Marduk mu-kin <sup>is</sup>uṣurti  
 alim nu-za-pa-ām-bi u-e mu-na  
 kab-tu ši-rim ša-qu-u e-til-lu  
 lal-a-ge ušumgal NU-ra a-ri-a  
 na-šú-u šarru-tú ta-mi-iḫ bēlu-tú. . . .  
 mu-šim šimāti<sup>pl</sup> ša ilāni<sup>pl</sup> kâlâma  
 na-din <sup>is</sup>ḥaṭṭi elli-tim ana šarri pa-liḫ-ḫi-šu

lord of the world, king of the gods, Marduk who establishes the decrees,  
 honourable, exalted, lofty, superior,  
 who holds kingship, who owns lordship. . . .  
 who decrees the destinies of all the gods,  
 who gives the pure sceptre to the king who reveres him.

A very similar prayer is also offered on the same day to Zarpanitu, who is addressed as Bēltīya; here, the goddess is portrayed as sharing the “brightness” of Marduk and his ability to outdo his enemies (compare II.231 and 252, 260). She is praised for “grasp[ing] the hands of the fallen” (261), just as Marduk was cast doing in the *Secret of the Esagila* during the second day of the festival<sup>86</sup> (*šabit qātē*, I.29). In addition, she is asked to “grant life” to the people of Babylon, the “protected citizens” (<sup>lú</sup>šāb kidinnū), again just as Marduk did in line 32 of the *Secret of the Esagila*, where we read:<sup>87</sup>

ša mārê<sup>pl</sup> Bâbili<sup>ki</sup> amil šâb ki-din-nu šú-kun šú-bar-ru-šu-nu  
 for the people of Babylon, your subjects, establish the “protected citizens.”

Zarpanitu, who clearly poses as another Ištar in the text, was also connected to the king particularly because she was asked to show her benevolent face “for the king who respects your name, decrees the destinies.”<sup>88</sup> The prayer concludes with a return to Marduk and references to his heroism and his mercy toward the people belonging to the lower strata of life, such as slaves. Earlier (II.261–2), Zarpanitu

was also praised for showing mercy to slaves and captives. Hence, the goddess does not disappear from Babylonian royal ideology, and neither is she marginalized, but, on the contrary, she now holds powers similar to those of Marduk. Although we lack references to the passionate exchange between the king and the goddess that we have witnessed during the Sumerian period, the king seems to be supported in his earthly duties both by the goddess and Marduk, and we do hear that during the second day of the New Year Festival *nārum* and *kalū* priests,<sup>89</sup> typically associated with the goddess (lamentation priests and cultic musicians), performed their rites.<sup>90</sup>

Furthermore, during the third day of the festival instructions were given to local workers to fashion two figurines which most likely had anthropomorphic shape.<sup>91</sup> The statues were to hold in their hands a snake and a scorpion respectively. Although numerous interpretations have been given to these figurines in conjunction with snake and scorpion imagery – including the idea that they were to enact the sacred marriage<sup>92</sup> – it seems that, since the *GE* was always read in Babylon, it would make sense to understand them as inspired by the adventures of the hero-king, that is, as clues to the dangers of the Underworld where Gilgameš dared to travel and to all that lies beyond human grasp. After all, during the days when Marduk was assumed to have left the city both civic and cosmic orders were understood to have been turned on their heads; therefore, we may infer that during that time the destructive powers of Tiamat and the Underworld would have spread in the city until ritually exorcised for another year.<sup>93</sup> Hence, the serpent could represent the lost plant of everlasting life (*GE* XI.305–7 in George 2003: 722–3), and the scorpion may refer to the Scorpion Guardians that Gilgameš had to pass before making his way through the Twin-Peaks (i.e. the Underworld, *GE* IX.42–170 in George 2003: 668–73).

The comparison between Gilgameš and Marduk is further substantiated by the fact that both the Sumerian hero-king and the Babylonian god manage to annoy the gods with their “playthings,” Gilgameš with his drum and stick and Marduk with the winds given to him by Anu.<sup>94</sup> When Gilgameš loses his toys Enkidu offers to retrieve them for him, and the adventure concludes with a tour of the Underworld in which Enkidu remains trapped – in the case of Marduk, Tiamat, we are told, creates for her revenge eleven terrible monsters assigning their leadership to Kingu (cf. n.69). Humans are not created before the murder of Kingu at the hands of the gods.<sup>95</sup> It could be thus argued that the *Creation Epic* explains more fully why men are born with a defective nature while in the *GE* the reader is never given an explicit answer as to why the king and Enkidu keep offending the gods. In addition, rather than having the king negotiating his role directly with the gods, we have Marduk, who is in a position to demand absolute kingship before coming to the aid of the gods (*Creation Epic* III.130; cf. IV.2–7 and 25–30)<sup>96</sup> and who employs humans in order to take care of his creation. In his compassion toward humans, Marduk shares the love of the Greek Prometheus for his ephemeral creatures (Aesch.*PV*123).<sup>97</sup> Crucially, unlike Gilgameš and Prometheus, who find commemoration in their unending suffering, Marduk, we are told, is in a position to “redeem from the pit, raise the dead, show the sufferer light in his death.”<sup>98</sup>

In that, Marduk is once more comparable with Ištar, who holds similar salvific powers.<sup>99</sup> In addition, the interplay between state and private religion continues undiminished during the first millennium, and hence, Marduk's ability to ward off the forces of chaos is also utilized in magical incantations designed to respond to the anxieties of individual members of the society.<sup>100</sup>

In the *Creation Epic* we also come across the idea of the civic body which was only a nascent notion in the *GE*. Although Bidmead finds the reference to the *kidinnu* – members of the elite class who were often given tax privileges, especially under the Assyrians – incompatible with the king's duty to defend the oppressed or less privileged, it could be argued that the *kidinnu* pose as the earthly equivalent of the gods' assembly found in the *Enuma Eliš* and the city lamentations.<sup>101</sup> Hence, although both prayers addressed to Marduk and Zarpanitu include references to slaves and captives, it is the *kidinnu* that possibly acted as the king's advisors, not unlike the group of elders that advised Gilgameš in his adventures. Therefore, they appropriately pray to the god for protection.<sup>102</sup>

Overall, the powerful couple of Zarpanitu and Marduk seem to share a number of similarities with Ištar and Gilgameš; not only was Zarpanitu eventually identified with Ištar, but she also received prayers similar to those addressed to Marduk. The latter shared a number of similarities with Gilgameš and in many ways appears to offer an idealized version of kingship which projected greater equality between the gendered forces whose union was understood to represent cosmic harmony. While the tumultuous relationship of Gilgameš with Ištar was analysed sufficiently in the previous chapters, Marduk seems to enjoy the undisputed favour of the goddess – subsequently, the king is now the protégé of both Marduk and the goddess.

### Renewing the garden

According to Lambert,<sup>103</sup> the last days of the *akītu* included a drama re-enacting the battle between Tiamat and Marduk. As evidence in support of his idea Lambert referred to a relief found in Sennacherib's *akītu* house in Assyria which depicted how Aššur (who replaced Marduk in the Assyrian version of the *Enuma Eliš*) set out to fight Tiamat.<sup>104</sup> Notably, although the Babylonian *akītu* house was rather modest, similar images would decorate much later the Palmyrene temple of Bēl (see n.66). Sommer agrees that this is a plausible explanation but by no means definite,<sup>105</sup> while van der Toorn<sup>106</sup> rejected the idea of a cultic battle along with the interpretation of the ritual as a revival of nature, focusing instead on the social aspects of the *akītu*; in her view, the festival should be understood as a series of rites of passage designed to reaffirm the validity of the political, social and religious values of the Babylonian society.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, the Babylonian king was evidently an important part of Marduk's plan to defend world order against Tiamat and, therefore, the socio-political and theological aspects of the festival must be studied together.<sup>108</sup>

The *akītu* celebration involved a renewal of the cosmos with the king in the role of a cultural hero willing to reaffirm the world order under Marduk's divine

instructions.<sup>109</sup> As Kuhrt noted, for the Babylonians “the celebration of the *akītu* helped reaffirm the corporate identity, the social fabric and the prosperity of the country.”<sup>110</sup> Hence, in a Babylonian version of the *GE* (III.28–34) the hero-king declares his intention to celebrate such an *akītu* festival provided his adventure in the Cedar Forest was successful:<sup>111</sup>

[ú]-<sup>r</sup>sap<sup>r</sup>-pi-ki kur-bi-in-ni-ma lul-li-ki a-n[a-ku]  
 pa-ni-ki lu-mur i-na šul-m[i]  
 lu-ru-ba-am abul (ká.gal) uruk<sup>ki</sup> ina ĥu-ud lib-b[i]  
 [l]u-us-saĥ-ra-am-ma a-ki-tum ina šatti(mu.an.na) 2-šú lu-p[u-u]š  
 lu-pu-uš-ma a-ki-tum ina šat-ti 2-šú  
 a-ki-tum liš-šá-kin-ma ni-gu-tum lib-ši  
 a-lu-ú li-ir-ta-aš-ši-nu i-na maĥ-ri-ki

I hereby beseech you, give me your blessing, so that I may go,  
 so that I may see your face (again) in safety,  
 (and) come in through Uruk’s gate glad at heart!  
 I will return and [perform] the *akītu* festival twice in the year,  
 the *akītu* I will perform [twice] in the year.  
 Let the *akītu* take place and the merriment begin  
 let the drums be beaten in your presence!

Ĥumbaba, as we saw, was a creature close to Enlil who employed the monstrous giant in his conflict against Šamaš (see Chapter 1: p. 28) – hence, in a way, the Ĥumbaba episode could acquire the dimensions of a cosmic battle between the gods in which humans were asked to intervene; Šamaš’s importance for kingship is here stressed by the regular exaltations of his power in hymns to Marduk (i.e. *ETCSL*, 2.8.5.1, 1.12).<sup>112</sup> Equally, the *Bull of Heaven* episode that marks a breakdown in Bilgameš’s relationship with Inanna has the quality of a cosmic battle since again the hero-king secures the support of Šamaš in his quest.<sup>113</sup> Both battles carry terrible consequences for humans – first Enkidu is condemned by the gods to death because of his killing of Ĥumbaba and his aggressive tone against the goddess after killing Inanna’s Bull, then Bilgameš is to follow his fate. Hence, unsurprisingly in later times the king is understood as adhering to divine instructions and as replicating on the earth the cosmic battle now firmly transferred at the start of the universe and the hands of Marduk. In a way the piety that Gilgameš strove to acquire in the Sumerian epic is now an indispensable prerequisite for the king’s successful rule.

Piety seems to be the emphasis of a badly damaged extract from the *Secret of the Esagila*, the prayer recited during the second day of the Babylonian *akītu*<sup>114</sup> and referring to the destruction of Uruk and Nippur, the cities of An and Enlil respectively, who were the main opponents of Marduk in his fight for kingship. The text refers particularly to the destruction of temples and the forgetting of rites (II.69–76), which we may assume indicate a world gone topsy-turvy because of divine vengeance. Marduk’s fiery temperament is often mentioned in the prayers

recited during the *akītu*<sup>115</sup> along with his relentless anger towards his enemies, so these lines probably also functioned as a reminder of the god's political aspects. At the same time, Marduk's character seems to approximate once more the vindictive character of the goddess. The corresponding character of Marduk and the goddess is further illustrated by two texts preoccupied with stabilizing the "bond of heaven and Underworld," the cosmic cable that connects the parts of the universe. In a hymn to Marduk we read:<sup>116</sup>

uk-tin-ma it-muḥ-ma <sup>d</sup>marduk rit-tuš-šú še-er-re[še-er-re[t <sup>d</sup>]i-gì-gì  
<sup>d</sup>annunakkī(600) mar-kas šam[ê u eršetī]

Marduk fixed up and took in his hand the bridle of the Igigi and Anunnaki,  
 the bond of heaven [and Underworld].

In addition, in a broken passage of the *Creation Epic*,<sup>117</sup> understood in relation to Marduk's fixing in position of heaven and the Underworld, we are informed that a *šerretu* (a nose-rope)<sup>118</sup> was used to fasten them together:<sup>119</sup>

ip-ṛte<sup>˘</sup>-eq-ma šamê<sup>e</sup> u eršetim<sup>tim</sup> lu x x  
 [X X] ri-kis-su-nu ma? X [i]š kun-nu-ni  
 iš-tu ṛpil<sup>˘</sup>-lu-de-šu uš-ši-ru ú-ba-ši-mu par-š[i-šu]  
 [šer-r]e-e-ti it-ta-da-a <sup>d</sup>é-a uš-ta-aš bit.

He moulded heaven and Underworld . . . ,  
 [. . .] their bond was twisted like . . . ;  
 After he designed his rites and fashioned his ordinances,  
 He put on the bridles and had Ea take hold of them.

However, in the bilingual *Exaltation of Ištar* it is the goddess who is portrayed as being in control of the same cosmic cable, here also referred to as *šerretu*.<sup>120</sup>

šè-er<sup>e</sup>š.kiri<sub>4</sub> an.KI<sup>D1</sup>.a dil.a.ni a.ba.ni.in.tab  
 lit-mu-uḥ e-diš-ši-šá šer-ret šamê<sup>e</sup> u eršetī<sup>ti</sup>

She alone is to grasp the bridle of heaven and Underworld!

Therefore, as the text indicates, the goddess did retain her prominence in restoring cosmic harmony.

## The death of Marduk

Another long-disputed aspect of the festival was the "death" and "resurrection" of Marduk (coinciding with his absence from the city and his triumphal return), which would create an unmissable parallel between him and Dumuzi and would perhaps shed light to the questionable evidence on "sacred marriage" ceremonies in later *akīti* festivals. In recent days scholars have strongly rejected the earlier interpretation of KAR 143 (VAT9555)/KAR 219 (VAT9538) as referring to Marduk's death<sup>121</sup>

with Sommer arguing that the phrase *tabī Marduk* (the rising of Marduk) simply refers to his “getting up” either to walk in procession from the *akītu* house to Esagila or to leave his throne at Esagila to set out to the *akītu* house.<sup>122</sup> Still, if we accept the allegorical meaning of these rituals and their related myths, then the triumphal procession of Marduk was the reaffirmation of his power, and hence, his “resurrection.” The so-called *Ordeal of Marduk* (*KAR* 143), written in Assyrian, explains the stages of a springtime *akītu* festival in honour of the god,<sup>123</sup> who allegedly experienced a “death” and a subsequent “resurrection.” In line 7 of the text Marduk is said to be held captive at the *ḥursan*,<sup>124</sup>

É šu-ú ina UGU šap-te ša ḥur-sa-an ina ŠÀ i-ša-a<sup>2</sup>-ú-lu-šu,  
that house at the edge of the ḥursan: in (its) midst they question him.

which in the Ninevite recension of the text (*KAR* 219) seems to be identified with the *bit-akīti*, here located in Kutha where a major Sumerian sanctuary was dedicated in honour of the Underworld gods. As Frymer-Kensky observed:<sup>125</sup>

The occurrence of Kutha in the Ninevite version as the name of the place in which Bel is being guarded and the fact that the goddess goes looking for Bel through the gate of the graveyard in line 11 make it likely that the *ḥursan* of this text has something to do with the netherworld.

Marduk’s descent to the Underworld was likely a widespread tradition because it is also mentioned in *TuL* no. 7 (= *KAR* 307), another cultic commentary, where we read (rev.7):<sup>126</sup>

<sup>d</sup>Mes-lam-ta-è-a <sup>d</sup>Marduk šá a-na KI-tim  
E<sub>11</sub>-ú E<sub>11</sub> áš-šú <sup>d</sup>An-šar a-na ḤABRUD ir-du-du-šú-ma KÁ-šú BAD-ú

Meslamtaea is Marduk who went down to the Netherworld.

He went down (or went down to the Netherworld and came up) because  
Angar pursued him into the hole and closed its door.

Citing a number of additional Babylonian texts that associate Marduk’s captivity in the hands of Tiamat during the *akītu* festival, Frymer-Kensky illustrates a connection between the *akītu* house and *ḥursan* – in other words that Marduk’s stay in the *bit-akīti* before his triumphal procession in the city was a liminal period during which the victory of the god was (portrayed as) ambivalent. Frymer-Kensky, following von Soden, suggests that the text should be explained in the context of Sennacherib’s removal of the statue of Marduk from Babylon in 689 BCE and its subsequent return by his son Ešarhaddon, a political manoeuvre that ought to be staged carefully so as to appease the Babylonians without upsetting the Assyrians.<sup>127</sup> The political reading of the text is encouraged by line 23 of the Assyrian recension, where we are told that the city revolted after Bēl went to the *ḥursan*, and is certainly compatible with the celebration of Ešarhaddon’s rebuilding of Babylon and his restoration



of the temple of Esagila in his inscriptions.<sup>128</sup> As a result, Frymer-Kensky insists that Marduk cannot be seen as a Fraserian “dying and rising god.”<sup>129</sup> Nevertheless, it seems that, if we forget the outdated Fraserian model for a minute, the exile (= death) and return (= resurrection) of the god to Babylon constitutes an important political metaphor that borrows from the “sacred marriage” imagery (especially because of the references to lamentation and ritual searching in lines 1–11 of the Assyrian recension) making thus the successful celebration of the *akītu* festival at the start of a king’s reign all the more important.

There is no doubt that the challenging centuries that followed the destruction of the Sumerian cities at the end of the third millennium BCE called for religious innovation already visible in the OB version of the *GE*. There, the hero’s encounter with Ištar (perhaps responding to the devastation of Tiamat in the hands of Marduk)<sup>130</sup> reflects growing anxiety about the unreliable character of the goddess, who is nevertheless included among the gods (along with Šamaš) whom Naram-Sin consults in the extremely popular *Guthean legend* also featuring Tiamat, Enlil, Belet-ili and Ea as the gods who guide the enemy hordes.<sup>131</sup> In the text the enemy is described as the “people with partridge bodies, a race with raven faces” (l.31: *šābu pagri iššūr hurri amēlūta āribū pānūšum*), recalling thus the description of the dead in the *GE* (Chapter 1: pp. 29–30), but also the treacherous raven which poses as Enki’s royal gardener in the *Creation of the First Palm Tree and the Garden*. Hence, it could be argued that in the ANE civic disorder and war were metaphorically understood as a spillover of the powers of the Underworld on earth, an inappropriate fusion of boundaries which only the transformative power of ritual, now dominated by lamentation rites (also an important part of the *akītu* festival), could restore.<sup>132</sup> Notably, in one of the OB versions of the *Epic of Gilgameš* the king, refusing to give up the body of his dead friend for burial, hoped to resurrect him with his cries (OBVA+ BM, ii.rev.7 in George 2003: 278–9, here cited by permission of Oxford University Press; also, cf. Abusch 1993: 5):

ib-ri-ma-an i-t-ab-bi-a-am a-na ri-ig-mi-ia  
Maybe my friend will rise at my cry!

Given that lamentation and joy were such fundamental (and closely alternating) patterns in ANE cult, it is reasonable to assume that Marduk’s adventures would be invested not only with patterns familiar from the *GE* but that he would also be cast as a beloved of Ištar (perhaps accepting the role which Gilgameš so dramatically refused), as another Dumuzi. Marduk’s fertility aspects were explored by Oshima, who discussed the god’s “ability to bring abundance” in connection to his role as the controller of water and water-sources in Akkadian *šulla* prayers. I here cite his example, *BMS* 12, 11–15.<sup>133</sup>

ᵈAMAR.UTU EN [t]uḥ-di ḪÉ.GÁL-li mu-šá-az-nin ḪÉ.NUN  
EN IDIM.MEŠ ša-di-i u [t]a-ma-a-ti ḫa-i-tu ḫur-sa-a-ni  
BAD-ú kup-pi u miṭ-ra-a-ti muš-te-ši-ru ÍD.DIDL

ḫa-a-a-át <sup>d</sup>ás-na-an u <sup>d</sup>la-ḫar ba-nu-u ŠE.IM u qé-e mu-deš-šu-u <sup>u</sup>ŠIM  
ta-ba-an-na NINDA DINGIR u <sup>d</sup>iš-tar ba-nu-u KI.KAL [áš-š]u-me-šú-nu  
at-ta

Marduk, the lord of prosperity and abundance, the one who rains down fertility.

The lord of the deep springs of the mountains and the seas, the one who inspects the mountain regions.

The one who opens cisterns and watercourses, the one who puts the rivers in order.

The inspector of grain and cattle, the one who forms barley and flax, the one who supplies green.

You are creating food for the god and the goddess continuously, you are the creator of the cultivated land on their behalf.

Marduk's ability to provide abundance to men and gods alike was apparently praised already since the eighteenth century BCE, since in one of his inscriptions Hammurapi addresses the god as *nadin hegalli ana ili*, the one who gives abundance to the gods.<sup>134</sup> Marduk's association with water sources and abundance was echoed centuries later in the fifty names attributed to the god in the *Enuma Eliš*,<sup>135</sup> possibly also alluding to his underworld connections.<sup>136</sup> In addition, before the list with the fifty names of Marduk, Ansar addressing the god as Asalluḫi (who poses as a son of Enki in Neo-Sumerian incantations)<sup>137</sup> prays that (*Enuma Eliš* VI.109 and 116–8)<sup>138</sup>

li-kin ana AD.MEŠ-šú nin-da-bé-e ra-bu-tú

.....  
nin-da-bé-e li-in- na-šá-a DINGIR-ši-na <sup>d</sup>iš-tar-šin

a-a im-ma-šá-a DINGIR-ši-na li-kil-la

ma-ti-ši-na liš-te-pa-a pa-rak-ki-ši-na li-tep-šá

May he (Marduk) establish the cereal-offerings for his fathers.

.....  
May the cereal-offerings be carried to their (subjects') god and goddess.

May not their god be forgotten, may they sustain (him).

May he repeatedly bring forth their land, may he repeatedly make their daises.

Marduk's fertility associations, notably linked here with the memory of ancestral gods (and by association that of their communities), assist his comparison with Dumuzi and his tradition; crucially, given the close relation of Marduk to kings, the role of the latter in renewing the physical cosmos – a process relying on the institution of appropriate commemoration rites – is once more emphasized.

Furthermore, it seems that during the second millennium Marduk's character developed in ways that correspond to the changing profile of the goddess during that time. As mentioned above, despite her aspect as *mater dolorosa* in the

*City Laments*, the goddess was increasingly portrayed as bellicose, punitive and angry.<sup>139</sup> However, this evolution seems to stem from the overall conception of the interface between gods and humans during the second millennium, when the idea that the gods react angrily to human transgressions, often by sending a “storm” against their impious subjects, gains pace. In ancient Mesopotamia Marduk was included among the gods associated with *abubu* or *agû*, a devastating type of flood interpreted as the result of divine anger.<sup>140</sup> In the *Prayer to Marduk*, the god’s anger is compared to a massive Deluge (I.82):<sup>141</sup>

ʿd<sup>+</sup>AMAR.UTU ug-gu-uk-ka ki-[i g]a-ʿpa-ʿâš a-bu-b[i]  
Marduk, your anger is lik[e] a [m]assive Delu[ge].

In the same text, Marduk’s anger is also depicted as the *usumgallu*-dragon, which is often identified with the god, and compared with *agû*, “the high wave” (II.43–8):<sup>142</sup>

[k]i-i a-ge-e tam-ḥa-ri A.AB.B[A (x)] ri-mu tu-up-paq gap-šiš  
[k]i-i ʿd<sup>+</sup>GIS.ʿBAR ʿ ez-zi za-ʿ-ʿi-ri ta-šar-rap  
ú-šum-gal-li uz-za-ka ta-kám-mi še-e-ni  
e-piš ka-šir bar-ti te-na-a ta-kaš-šad  
e-ti-iq ŠĀ-bi ar-šá-a-te šá za-ʿ-ri tu-šaḥ-maṭ lum-nam  
tuš-na-ás-saq dam-qu-ti la me-na tu-šad-ma-aq

Like the high wave of the battle in the sea, you make the roar louder in swells.

[L]ike furious Fire-[God (Girra)], you burn up the foe.

The Ušumgallu-dragon is your rage, you overcome the malevolent.

You capture the rebellious one, the one who plots and carries out a revolt.

You burn the evil one, the one who passes through the midst of the uncleanness of the hatred.

You choose the fine ones, you make the one who is not loved? propitious.

As Oshima argued,<sup>143</sup> this aspect of Marduk is also related in the *Enuma Eliš* IV.49, where *iš-ši-ma be-lum a-bu-ba* <sup>gis</sup>*TUKULšú GAL-a* [The Lord (= Marduk) wielded the Deluge, his great weapon]. Besides, Marduk’s anger is related in lamentations, such as this late second-millennium BCE bilingual dirge which relates his destructive sway (*IVR2.26*, II.5–12):<sup>144</sup>

a-ab-ba um-mi-lá ab-ši-ḥu-luḥ-ḥa  
ana tam-ti ú-šar-ma tam-tum ši-i gal-ta-at  
sug-ga um-mi-lá sug-ga še àm-ša<sub>4</sub>  
ana šu-še-e ú-šar-ma šu-šú-u i-dam-mu-um  
a-gi<sub>6</sub>-a <sup>id</sup>buranuna-ke<sub>4</sub> um-mi-lá  
ana a-ge-e pu-rat-ti ú-šar-ma  
e-ne-è<sup>d</sup>asar-lú-ḥi a-sur-bi ab-lù-lù  
a-mat <sup>d</sup>AMAR.UTU a-sur-ra-ak-ku i-dal-la-aḥ

When it (your word) stretches (the net) over the sea, the sea rages.  
When it (your word) stretches (the net) over the swamp, the swamp moans.  
When it (your word) stretches (the net) over the rush of water of the  
Euphrates,  
The word of Asalluḫi/Marduk roils those subterranean waters.

Therefore, given Marduk's association with the infernal powers and the Underworld but also his fertility links which align him on several aspects with Dumuzi, the "death" of Marduk seems to refer metaphorically to the brief period of his absence from his city before the culmination of the New Year Festival and his dramatic return.

In addition, although Wiggermann<sup>145</sup> argued that in the first millennium BCE, autocratic gods such as Marduk and Aššur cared little about agriculture and that under the influence of a new class of scribes their fertility aspects were minimized, the memory of their fertility associations survived in poetry and cult: even if the scribes now firmly belonged to the urban setting which had less regard for the agricultural origins of wisdom and the cosmos, their need to emphasize the crucial role they played in contemporary politics urged them to refer admiringly to their Sumerian predecessors and their texts much in the way the kings always referred to the achievements of legendary rulers. In doing so they continued to engage with Sumerian texts and transfer their lore, as evident from the *Ballad of the Early Rulers*, which survived in the series *Sidu*, an LB commentary on Sumerian proverbs, ascribed to a famous, ancient scribe and lamentation priest from Nippur by this name (*Si-dù*).<sup>146</sup> By the first millennium the aesthetic value of ancient literature was heightened; thus the fertility aspects of kings were employed as metaphors steeped in nostalgia for a great past. Furthermore, given that literature was hardly ever appreciated as a practical source for basic knowledge of the agricultural year, the changes we refer to are likely to be of aesthetic value alone.

### The death of the king

The role of early kings in instituting death rites (again in connection with the fertility cycle of which mortals are a part) was discussed already in relation to the *GE* in Chapter 1; therefore, it could be argued that Marduk's (or Aššur's for the Assyrians) gradually more pertinent death associations – reminiscent in many ways of Dumuzi's prominent role in the Underworld – suited his stance as King of kings. By re-establishing the cosmic order, year after year, Marduk maintained the vital distinction between the living and the dead, between civilization and chaos.<sup>147</sup> Hence, in emulation of Marduk mortal kings were particularly attentive to reinforcing rites for the commemoration of dead ancestors.

At the same time the inextricable link between death rites and civilization remained palpable. Hence, in his *Babyloniaca*, now lost though summarized by many authors, Berossus just before relating a version of the *Enūma Eliš* for his Greek-speaking patrons, the Seleucids, described how (in the beginning) there

was a great crowd of men in Babylonia, and they lived without laws *ἀτάκτως ὥσπερ τὰ θηρία* (disorderly just like wild animals). Then, in the first year, a beast named Oannes appeared from the Persian Gulf. Its entire body was that of a fish, but a human head had grown beneath the head of the fish, and human feet likewise had grown from the fish's tail. It also had a human voice.<sup>148</sup>

τοῦτὸ δε . . . τὸ ζῶον παραδιδόναι . . . τοῖς ἀνθρώποις γράμματων καὶ μαθημάτων καὶ τεχνῶν παντοδαπῶν ἐμπειρίαν καὶ πόλεων συνοικισμοὺς καὶ ἱερῶν ἰδρύσεις καὶ νόμων εἰσηγήσεις καὶ γεωμετρίαν διδάσκειν, καὶ σπέρματα καὶ καρπῶν συναγωγὰς ὑποδεικνύναι, καὶ συνόλους πάντα τὰ πρὸς ἡμέρωσιν ἀνήκοντα βίου παραδιδόναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. Ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ χρόνου τούτου οὐδὲν ἄλλο περισσὸν εὔρεθῆναι . . .

This . . . creature . . . gave to men the knowledge of letters and sciences and crafts of all types; it also taught them how to found cities, establish temples, introduce laws and measure land; it also revealed to them how to plant seeds and then to harvest their crops; in short it taught men all those things conducive to a settled and civilized life. From the time of that beast nothing further has been discovered (. . .).

As Wiggermann argued recently,<sup>149</sup>

Berosos' Oannes is identical with the primeval sage Uanna or Uanna-Adapa, known from the cuneiform tradition. Since the longer version of the name can be re-read as the first line of *Enūma Eliš*, written logographically, the ascription of the cosmogonic poem to the ancestor of scribal art probably predated Berosos by several centuries: when (u) above (an) the heavens (an) did not (na) yet exist (pa.da).

This type of etymological speculation is a typical feature of ancient Mesopotamian scholarship.<sup>150</sup> Crucially, it seems that by the first millennium the intervention of the scribe/sage in defining civilization becomes decisive, expanding, thus, on the traditional view that civilization had come directly from the gods. It could be then argued that the basic distinction between the city and the countryside which we first glimpsed in the *GE* becomes more complicated and now includes praise for urban sophistication (typically monopolized by the scribal class). Wiggermann argued that, while in earlier Sumerian mythology,<sup>151</sup> where Dumuzi posed as the god of domesticated animals, the importance of agriculture was emphasized as a major part of the people's self-projection as civilized versus their nomadic neighbours or enemies, in due time this connection faded away because agriculture was gradually less valued. Hence, although in the third millennium BCE we come across a number of cults dedicated to the so-called dying and rising gods<sup>152</sup> by the first millennium BCE only Dumuzi survived and then not necessarily as a vegetation deity. Still, although Wiggermann is right in

pointing out the urban profile of Marduk and Aššur, their fertility connections remained powerful as metaphors underpinning and further highlighting their salvific aspects. Hence, in the OB period Marduk, often addressed as *muballiṭ mīti* (he who raises from the dead),<sup>153</sup> was assimilated with Underworld deities, particularly Nizanu and his son, Ningišzida, who will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 (p. 168).

In addition, during this time, the kings, as close reflections of Marduk, tend to fervently establish ancestor cults.<sup>154</sup> Caring for the dead was a mark of civilization and a crucial task of the living, who sought to maintain a good relationship with their dead; the latter could be beneficent when remembered and honoured, but, if neglected and angered, they could turn into demons spreading evils and disease among the living.<sup>155</sup> Aware of this, the Sargonid rulers made sure they punished not only their enemies but also their enemies' dead rulers. Thus, Aššurbanipal describes how he desecrated the Elamite royal tombs by carrying off the exhumed bones to Assyria in order to impose restlessness on their ghosts and to deprive them of offerings and libations.<sup>156</sup> Dead rulers could still guide their people post-humously, and necromancy was a widespread practice in the first millennium.<sup>157</sup> At that time the Underworld came to be ruled by Nergal and his queen Ereškigal. Unsurprisingly, Nergal became known as “Marduk of battle.”<sup>158</sup> In addition, Assyrian kings made sure they dedicated a large portion of their royal gardens to their dead ancestors.<sup>159</sup> This was the “garden” they themselves aspired to join upon their death, and upon their successful passing to the garden their whole community would be seen as blessed.

### **Kings for a day: first-millennium BCE renewal rites for individuals**

As Nissinen has argued extensively,<sup>160</sup> the “love lyrics” that accompanied many of the first-millennium “sacred marriages” seem to indicate that the rites in honour of Dumuzi/Tammuz gained increasing popularity spreading thus the cult of the god in the regions west of Babylon – in Syria-Palestine where the Assyrian and later Persian influence was noticeable. Hence, the Neo-Assyrian “love lyrics” about Nabû and Tašmetu, dated *circa* the seventh century BCE, present striking similarities with the Jewish *Song of Songs*,<sup>161</sup> a third-century BCE relic of the dirges typically sung in honour of Tammuz, addressed as Adon (= Lord) by his west Semitic worshippers.<sup>162</sup> This is also the god whose untimely death the Greeks zealously mourned as early as the seventh century BCE with Sappho (poem 140, 1.2 (Lobel-Page) urging her companions to<sup>163</sup>

*καττύπτεσθε κόραι καὶ κατερείκεσθε χίτωνας*  
beat (their) breasts and tear (their) clothes

He is also the Adonis honoured by the Ptolemaic queen Arsinoe with a splendid festival at Alexandria recorded by Theocritus in his *Idyll* 15;<sup>164</sup> and, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>165</sup> he is also the model for Theocritus' Daphnis in his *Idyll* 1,

an unfortunate cowherd pining for his beloved (possibly Aphrodite) on the bank of a local river.

Although clearly in its spread from the ANE to Palestine, Phoenicia and eventually Greece the cult underwent a number of revisions,<sup>166</sup> the popular songs that accompanied the rites propagated Mesopotamian royal ideology and metaphors associated with it – especially the garden metaphor – to their new advocates. The fact that later songs include references to their Sumerian predecessors further points to the metaphorical value of the rite from the very beginning.<sup>167</sup> In what follows I argue that the cultural and ideological continuum between songs employed in “sacred marriage” rites from the Sumerian period to the first millennium does not relate a break in the traditional representation of royal power in the ANE, as often assumed,<sup>168</sup> but, on the contrary, testifies to the propagation of Sumerian metaphors in later periods, especially the king’s blissful existence in the embrace of the fertility goddess.

The first text to examine is an Assyrian hymn (*ABL* 65 = K. 629) celebrating the “sacred marriage” of Nabû, evidently a royal rite since it begins with references to the crown prince praying that both Nabû and Marduk will bless him (ll.3, 5: *a-na mār šarri*; cf. rev.ll.11–12 and 14, 18, 20–1).<sup>169</sup> Soon after, we are told that on the third of Ayyarou in the city of Kalḫu the bed of Nabû will be laid out and the god will enter his bedroom [ll.8–9: *eršu GIŠ.NÁ*] *ša<sup>d</sup>Nabû tak-kar-ra-ar<sup>d</sup>Nabû ina bīt erši er-rab*].<sup>170</sup> On the fourth, his “marriage” will be consummated (l.10: *qur-šu ša<sup>d</sup>Nabû*) and then the god will go out from “the threshing floor of the palace”<sup>171</sup> to the garden (l.17: *ana<sup>gis</sup>kirî*), where a sacrifice will be performed (ll.18–9). The fact that the palace and the garden are described in such proximity prompts me to think that probably the reference here is to the nearby royal gardens, where in all probability the rite would reach its climax.

*TIM* IX 54 (= *IM* 3233) is a late Assyrian hymn relating the “sacred marriage” of Nabû and Tašmetu where the two deities are portrayed as talking to each other similar to the exchanges of Dumuzi and Inanna in the Sumerian “sacred marriage” hymns as well as to the later Jewish *Song of Songs* mourning the absence from the city of a handsome youth referred to as “king.”<sup>172</sup> The Assyrian hymn, sung by a chorus, is divided into sections, again bringing to mind the structure of the *Song*. The comparison of the beloved with a gazelle, fruits full of the juices of life and precious stones<sup>173</sup> all correspond to similar tropes in the Jewish *Song*.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, the ritual search that follows the consummation of the marriage (see rev.9 and 11) has its parallel in the search for the beloved that is described in the *Song*.<sup>175</sup> Crucially, in lines 6–17 of the hymn already a garden setting is described:<sup>176</sup>

a-na ša dūri<sup>177</sup>(BĀD) a-na ša dūri a-na<sup>d</sup>Taš-me-tu<sub>4</sub> qi'-ba'-r-niš'-ši'  
 ṛma'-a ID-ṛri' šī-i-bi i-na bīt(É) pa-pa-ḫe-e  
 i-na pa-ṛrak'-ki lil-li-ku<sup>šemb</sup>burāše (LI) ellūti(KU)<sup>mes</sup>  
 šil<sup>gis</sup>erēni(EREN) šil erēni šil erēni pu-dur(/ṭur) LUGAL  
 šil<sup>gis</sup>surmēni (ŠUR.MĪM) lúGAL<sup>mes</sup>-šu  
 ṛšil kan-ni ṛ ša<sup>gis</sup>burāše pu-dur(/ṭur) ṛNa-bi-um a-ṛa' ṛmi'-lul-a<-ti(??)>  
 ṛTaš-me-tu<sub>4</sub>' ša'-gi-lat ḫurāši ina bur-ki ṛNabû a-a UD LA LA

be-lí an-ša-ab-tu<sub>4</sub> šuk-na-an-ni-ma  
 KI [] 'X X' lu-lal-li-ka-a  
<sup>d</sup>[Nabû be-l]í an-ša-ab-tú šuk-na-an-ni-'ma'  
 []X BA lu-ḥa-ad-di-ka-a  
 []A šemērē (HAR)<sup>mes</sup> sa-an-ti áša-kan(a)-ki

To her of the town walls, to the lady of the town walls, to Tašmetu,  
 they say: "Come down and sit in the sanctuary,  
 let the pure fragrance of juniper rise in smoke in the place of worship.  
 The shade of the cedar, the shade of the cedar,  
 the shade of the cedar is the refuge of the King.  
 The shade of the cypress, is (the refuge) of his cultic servants  
 the shade of a branch of the juniper tree, that is the refuge of Nabû and my  
 games!

Tašmetu, she gets hold of gold  
 on the lap of Nabû.

My lord, put a ring on me<sup>178</sup>  
 let me give you pleasure,<sup>179</sup>

Nabû, my lord, put a ring on me,  
 let me make you happy."

"My wife, I'll give you bracelets of Carnelian. . . ."

The imagery is repeated in lines 15–26 of the reverse:<sup>180</sup>

ʾšu-ʾuḥ-me<sup>2</sup>-e<sup>2</sup>-ni<sup>2</sup> ʾšu-ʾuḥ-me<sup>2</sup>-e<sup>2</sup>-ni<sup>2</sup> ZA<sup>1</sup> NA AT <sup>d</sup>Tašmētu 'X X'  
 []X AḤ ša is-se-ka <sup>d</sup>Nabû-a <-a> a-na <sup>gis</sup>kirî l[a-al-li-kam-ma]  
 a-na <sup>gis</sup>kirî la-al-li-kam-ma a-na <sup>gis</sup>kirî ʾù<sup>2</sup> [<sup>d</sup>EN]  
 []X-a-nu la-al-li-kam-ma a-na <sup>gis</sup>kirî ba-an-ba-nat  
 ina bi-rit ma-lik-a-ni  
<sup>gis</sup>ku[ssû(GU.ZA)<sup>ú</sup>-a-a la id-di-u  
 qa-ta-pu ša in-bi-ka ēnā(IGI.2)-a-a li-mu-ra  
 ša-ab-ru ša iššūrē(MUŠEN)<sup>mes</sup>-[ka] uznâ(GEŠTU.2)-a-a li-sa-am-me-ia U  
 ʾam<sup>2</sup>-mi-i-ša ru-uk-sa: sa-mì-da-a:  
 ʾūmē(U<sub>4</sub>)<sup>mes</sup> ru-uk-sa a-na <sup>gis</sup>kirî ù <sup>d</sup>EN  
 ʾmūšē(GE<sub>6</sub>)<sup>mes</sup> ru-uk-sa a-na <sup>gis</sup>kirî ba-an-ba-nat  
 is-'se-ia<sup>2</sup> <sup>d</sup>Tašmētu-ia a-na <sup>gis</sup>kirî lu tal-li-'ka'  
 ina bi-rit ma-lik-a-ni <sup>gis</sup>kussû<sup>u</sup> DA A ŠI U  
 why? . . . why? Tašmetu . . .<sup>181</sup>

So that I may go with you, my dear Nabû, to the garden.

Let me go to the garden, to the garden and to Bel.

Let me go to the garden of exceptional beauty

In the middle of the counsellors, they did not place my throne.

May my eyes see the harvest of your fruit,

May my ears hear the rustle of your birds.<sup>182</sup>

Over there, bind yourself, harness yourself.



Bind your days to the garden and to the Lord.  
 Bind your nights to the garden of exceptional beauty  
 May my Tašmetu come to the garden with me.  
 Among the advisors . . . throne.<sup>183</sup>

Although there are differences between the “marriage” of Tašmetu and Nabû in Assyria and Babylon, nevertheless both traditions refer to Nabû visiting a garden;<sup>184</sup> in the Assyrian version he does so while driving the chariot of the gods (*ABL* 65, obv.1.21 in Matsushima 1987: 132) and goes on a hunting spree during which he is expected to kill wild bulls (*ABL* 366, rev.11.3–4 in Matsushima 1987: 139) – a reference that brings to mind the adventure of Gilgameš and Enkidu in the Cedar Forest as well as the Achaemenid royal traditions as explained in Xenophon (Chapter 1: pp. 46–8). Soon after sacrifices are offered to both gods and following a procession, a sacrificial meal takes place. In the Babylonian version, dated in the Seleuco-Parthian period, the garden is specified as that of Anu, who is responsible for the enthronement of Nabû. In *SBH* VIII, pp. 145–6 (= *VAT* 663), col.2, lines 15–28 we read:<sup>185</sup>

ᵀNabu šá ḫa-da-áš-šu-tú i-na-an-di-iq te-di-ᵀiq ᵀA-nu-tú  
 ultu qé-ᵀreb ᵀÉzida ina šat mu-ši uš-ta-pa-a nu-an-na-ri-iš  
 ki-ma ᵀŠin(30) ina ni-ip-ḫi-šu ú-nam-mar ek-let  
 ina qé-reb É-ḫur-ša-ba uš-te-šir i-šad-di-ḫu ᵀnam-ᵀriš  
 i-ru-um-ma ana ma-ḫar ᵀBelti(NIN) ka-li šit-ku-nu ana ḫa-d[u-áš-šu-tu]  
 ina qé-reb É-ḫur-ša-ba kīma(GIM) u<sub>4</sub>-mu i-šak-kan na-m[ir-tu]  
 ina ma-a-al-tum mu-ši ṭa-a-bi it-ta-na-a-a-lu ᵀšit-ta ᵀ[tābta]  
 UD.6.KÁM ana qé-rb ᵀḫirᵀ uš-te-sa'-am-ma ú-kal-lam X- []  
 UD.7.KÁM ana É.ME.UR.UR uš-te-šir a-na É-an-na el-[li]  
 a-na ᵀḫirᵀ uš-ša-a: ana ᵀḫirᵀ ᵀA-nim i-ru-um-ma uš-ša-ᵀab  
 áš-šu šarrut<sup>ut</sup> ᵀA-nim il-qu-ú ú-gam-mi-ri X []  
 šipit[ÉN] <sup>lu</sup>āšipi(MAŠ.MAŠ): ḫi-im-ša-at ᵀḫiḫimari(GIŠIMMAR)  
 agâ(AGA) ᵀA-nim i-te-ed-[de-eq]  
 UD.17.KÁM ultu qé-reb É-ḫur-ša-ba ᵀNa-na-ia i-t[e-eb-ba]  
 [ana]<sup>ḫiḫimari</sup> ḫur-sa-an-ᵀnu ᵀ[uš]-te-šir [X X]

Nabû, in his bridegroom status, put on the clothes of supreme divine sovereignty.<sup>186</sup>

From the interior of the Ezida all through the night he shines like a night star.  
 Like Sin in his entire splendor he illuminates the darkness.

From the middle of the Eḫuršaba he advances: in all (his) radiance he proceeds.

He comes before the Lady. Everything is available for the wedding feast.

In the Eḫuršaba he brings the brightness (like that) of daylight.

They lie on the lovely bed for a sweet night sleep.

On the sixth day we brought (him) out to the interior of the garden and he appears.

On the seventh day, he goes to the Emeurur to the holy Eanna,  
he comes out and goes to the garden; he is enthroned in the garden  
of Anu

since he received supreme divine sovereignty.

The refrain of the incantation priest: he puts on palm branch leaves and the  
crown of Anu.

On the seventeenth day Nanaya rises and leaves the interior of the Eḫuršaba.  
She goes to the garden of the mountain.

In the Greek world the “gardens of Adonis” acquired a specific proverbial meaning as referring to the futility and brevity of youth/life,<sup>187</sup> becoming a warning about the often unexpected arrival of death which puts everything into perspective. From this point of view, the function of the festival as community commemoration was still at work. Furthermore, just as historical kings and/or queens<sup>188</sup> were compared to the divine couple in cultic songs of the Hellenistic period, so every member of the community raising the dirge for the short-lived passion of Ištar and her consort could identify with the divine protagonists or, at least, their royal avatars. Like Adonis, Tammuz, and others loved by the goddess for a time, every member of the community would perish leaving behind the memory of their belonging to the group, of having shared the garden.<sup>189</sup>

This notion is most obvious in the representation of the funerary bed of Adonis, the same bed praised in the hymns celebrating his passion for the goddess, the bed placed in the midst or, at least, in the vicinity of the garden where the divine couple consummate their love.<sup>190</sup> In other words, the “garden” is the place for communication with the divine, the place where life is realized to perfection. Therefore, the “garden” represents the ideal state of happiness in which the dead ought to be remembered or, perhaps, the state they aspired to achieve provided they received appropriate commemoration. As Cohen and more recently Miller pointed out,<sup>191</sup> the representations of “flowering and fruiting date palm inflorescences, apples, bulls, stags, gazelles, rams, and rosettes”<sup>192</sup> found in the royal cemetery of Ur are meant to evoke fertility, possibly in connection with the “sacred marriage” ideology. Taking the point further it seems to me that the metaphor of the “sacred marriage” is here used to denote a blissful life that merits an equally untroubled afterlife existence, an idea that is clearly reflected in the *GE* XII.146–7,<sup>193</sup> where Gilgameš asks Enkidu:

ša mu-ti ṛili(dingir)-šúṛ [imūtu(ug<sub>7</sub>) t]a-mur<sup>ṛ</sup>a<sup>ṛ</sup>-ta-ma[r]  
ina ma-a-a-al [ilī (dingir)<sup>me</sup>]<sup>s</sup> ša-lil-ma mē(a)<sup>me</sup>s za-ku-ti i-šat-ti

Did you see the one who [died] a natural death? ‘[I saw (him).]’  
He lies drinking clear water on the bed of the [gods].

Although Assyrian kings tended to bury their dead under the floor of their palaces,<sup>194</sup> the blissful existence of the king in his royal garden continued to be

advocated in artistic representations such as the famous “garden party” relief of Aššurbanipal,<sup>195</sup> [Fig. 3.1] where he is portrayed as reclining in the company of his queen who sits nearby.

After all, Gilgameš himself in the hugely popular *GE* after fashioning a statue in honour of his dead friend, Enkidu, vows to lay him out on a funerary bed (alongside with establishing mourning for him), VIII.84–9; cf. Chapter 1: p. 33):<sup>196</sup>

[uš-na-al-ka-a-ma ina ma-a-ali rabi-<sup>i</sup>]  
 ʾina ma-a-a-ʾ-a[l tak-ni-i uš-na-al-ka-ma]  
 ú-šeš-šeb-ka [šub-ta né-eh-ta šu-bat šu-me-li]  
 ma-al-ku šá qaḳ-qa-r[i ú-na-áš-šá-qu šēpī<sup>min</sup>-ka]  
 ú-šab-kak-ku nišī(ùg) [<sup>meš</sup> šá uruk<sup>ki</sup> ú-šad-ma-ma-ak-ka]  
 šam-ḥa-a-ti nišī(ùg) <sup>m[es</sup> ú-ma-al-lak-ka dul<sub>6</sub>-la

[I shall lay you out on a great bed,  
 On a bed [of honour I shall lay you out].  
 I shall set you [on a restful seat, the seat to (my) left,  
 the princes of the earth [will kiss your feet.]  
 I shall make weep for you the people [of Uruk, I shall make them sob  
 for you:]  
 the people so bonny [I shall fill full of grief for you.]

Furthermore, as Baughan showed in a recent study, in Anatolia and the Levant, where the cult of Tammuz and Adonis continued to thrive to the end of the first millennium BCE and even beyond,<sup>197</sup> under the influence of Achaemenid and Assyrian traditions, the custom of burying the dead on *klinai* tombs was especially long-standing and had attracted Greek curiosity, including that of Alexander and his entourage.<sup>198</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that Theocritus describes

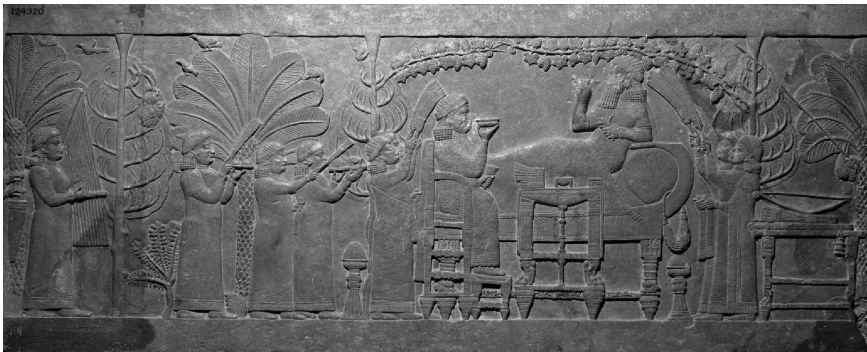


Fig. 3.1 “Garden party” of Aššurbanipal relief, c. about 645 BCE, ME 124920, discovered at Ninevah, Iraq, reproduced with the permission of the Trustees of the British Museum

the Alexandrian Adonis as reclining, more handsome than ever, on his deathbed (Id.15.127):

ἔστρωται κλίνα τῷ δῶνιδι τῷ καλῷ ἄμμιν  
and the couch of handsome Adonis has been laid by us<sup>199</sup>

Bion of Smyrna who wrote bucolic poetry in the spirit of Theocritus in the first century BCE explored the theme further in his *Lament for Adonis* where we read (Il.70–5):<sup>200</sup>

λέκτρον ἔχοι Κυθήρεια τὸ σὸν καὶ νεκρὸς Ἄδωνις.  
καὶ νέκυς ὢν καλὸς ἐστὶ, καλὸς νέκυς, οἷα καθεύδων.<sup>201</sup>  
Κάτθεό νιν μακακοῖς ἐνὶ φάρεσιν οἷς ἐνίαυεν,  
ᾧ μετὰ τευς ἀνὰ νύκτα τὸν ἱερὸν ὕπνον ἐμόχθει  
παγχύσεω κλιντήρι· ποθεῖ καὶ στυμνὸν Ἄδωνιν.  
Βάλλε δέ νιν στεφάνοισι καὶ ἄνθεσι·

Cythereia let Adonis have your couch even if he is dead;  
even as a corpse he is handsome, as if he were asleep.  
Place him in the soft coverlets he used to slumber,<sup>202</sup>  
on that couch of solid gold whereon he would strive every night with you  
against sacred sleep; for the very couch longs for Adonis;  
and garlands and flowers fling upon him;

In my view, the reclining couple of the Jewish *Song* and the reclining Adonis in Theocritus' *Idyll* 15<sup>203</sup> represent the two facets of the “sacred marriage”: the celebration of life's exuberance and its commemoration. From this point of view, the “sacred marriage” offers an opportunity to bring together past and present members of the community; it denotes new beginnings and helps restore the natural order of things – therefore, it is too important a metaphor to be dropped from Babylonian *akīti*, especially since during it Marduk re-establishes the cosmos. As we saw, the Ištar-Tammuz cult retained its connection with royal houses, which is reflected in the very language of the hymns sung during the rites and therefore propagated aspects of ANE royal ideology even when celebrated in non-state organized festivals such as those held in Jerusalem and Greece.<sup>204</sup> Yet despite the private character of the Athenian Adonia,<sup>205</sup> the Hellenistic queen Arsinoe was obviously staging a public spectacle for political reasons.<sup>206</sup> Theocritus implies so through his protagonists in *Idyll* 15, lines 22–5:<sup>207</sup>

Γοργῶ: βᾶμες τῷ βασιλῆος ἐς ἀφνειῷ Πτολεμαίῳ  
θασόμεναι τὸν Ἄδωνιν: ἀκούω χρῆμα καλόν τι  
κοσμεῖν τὰν βασιλίσσαν  
Πραξινόα: ἐν ὀλβίῳ ὄλβια πάντα.

Gorgo: Let's go and see the Adonis in our rich King Ptolemy's  
palace. I'm told the Queen is giving a

fine show.

Praxinoa: Everything's grand in grand houses.

Several lines later (*Id.*15.106–11) Theocritus becomes more explicit:

Κύπρι Διωναία, τὸ μὲν ἀθανάταν ἀπὸ θνατᾶς,  
 ἀνθρώπων ὡς μῦθος, ἐποίησας Βερενίκαν,  
 ἀμβροσίαν ἐς στήθος ἀποστάξασα γυναικός:  
 τὴν δὲ χαριζομένα, πολυώνυμε καὶ πολύνυαε,  
 ἅ Βερενικεῖα θυγάτηρ Ἑλένα εἰκυῖα  
 Ἄρσινóa πάντεσσι καλοῖς ἀτιτάλλει Ἄδωνιν.<sup>208</sup>

Lady of Cyprus, Dione's child, you, changed Berenice from mortal to  
 immortal

as the story goes,

dripping ambrosia into the woman's breast.

And for your sake, Lady of many names and many shrines,

Berenice's daughter, Arsinoe, lovely as Helen,

cossets Adonis with all things good.

The description of natural abundance that follows (*Id.*15.112–26) is not, in my view, only a reference to the wealth of the queen or the fertility aspects of her patron goddess – it is also a reference to flourishing beyond the grave, an area over which the goddess presides. Notably Theocritus describes the king as *ὄλβιος*, which can mean “fortunate” as well as “blessed” in which case it would acquire sacral meaning, again pointing to the king's apotheosis.<sup>209</sup> Furthermore, although the most extant reference to the Hellenistic Adonia survives from Ptolemaic Egypt, we should not forget that Seleucus, the focus of my last chapter, spent a number of years in the Ptolemaic court (Chapter 4: p. 165) and that a number of Seleucid queens were also systematically identified with Aphrodite. Hence, we hear that Stratonice I, wife of Seleucus I whom he later passed to his son, Antiochus I upon realizing the youth's passion for her, was worshipped as Aphrodite Stratoniceis at Smyrna.<sup>210</sup> As Kosmin pointed out,<sup>211</sup> Pliny's reference to a painting of Ctesicles (*HN*.35.51) on which the queen was portrayed as fornicating with a fisherman is probably “a misunderstanding of a cult painting that depicted the queen as Aphrodite and perhaps attempted to project Seleucid maritime sovereignty.” The eroticized portrayal of Stratonice does not simply praise the charms of the queen, who is addressed as *bēltu* in the Astronomical Diary<sup>212</sup> – a title typically attributed to Tašmetu in the context of the “sacred marriage” ritual, as we saw – and as *hīrtu* (divine consort) and *šarratu* (heavenly queen) in the Borsippa Cylinder, again titles that point to her divine status as a royal replica of Ištar.<sup>213</sup> In my view, Stratonice's passion for a fisherman is reminiscent of Dumuzi's tradition as a fisherman, the predecessor of Gilgameš from Kuara in the *Sumerian King List* (ll.109–10) for whom Inanna pines away and consequently mourns. In addition, the fisherman poses as one of Dumuzi's best men in the “sacred

marriage” hymns,<sup>214</sup> which would suit perfectly the indecent insinuations of the painting described by Pliny, in the sense that it was Seleucus who arranged for Stratonice’s marriage to his own son. Furthermore, in the myth we are told that the fisherman vied with the farmer for Inanna’s affection, which again would point to the father–son rivalry between Seleucus and Antiochus for Stratonice’s love. Interestingly, the name of the farmer in C1 is Enkimdu, which recalls Enkidu, Gilgamesh’s opponent and eventually friend, very much in the way that Dumuzi asks the farmer to forget their dispute and become his *ku-li* (friend).<sup>215</sup> In other words, the “sacred marriage” tradition, always closely related with the sacred profile of the king, may have influenced the later version of Gilgamesh’s relationship with Enkidu, as a result of a conscious effort to harmonize the various strands of ANE royal ideology, strands which Hellenistic rulers, at both Egypt and Babylon, appreciated and keenly employed in order to advocate their legitimacy. Given the profile of Stratonice as Aphrodite<sup>216</sup> and her mentions in the concluding prayer of the Borsippa Cylinder (ii.26–9) it may be inferred that the “sacred marriage” ideology was employed in the Seleucid court as much as in Ptolemaic Alexandria. Furthermore, the reference to Ezida as *bīt Anūitka* in line ii.8 of the Cylinder is not so much in my view an allusion to the name of Antiochus transliterated as Anti’ikus, but it points to “sacred marriage” texts, such as *SBH VIII*, pp. 145–6, line 15, discussed above, where the kingship of Nabû was described as Anuship (supreme kingship) right at the time of his marriage to the goddess. Ezida, therefore, is cast in the Cylinder as the place where the sexual potency of the god and by extension of his king is realized, the place where he is enthroned as king, most probably following the enactment of his “sacred marriage.”

Furthermore, the lamentation which typically accompanied the “sacred marriage” and was performed by the effeminate followers of the goddess did not seek to “resurrect” the dead but most probably intended to “soothe” them and send them off to their Underworld journey reassured that their memory would not be forgotten.<sup>217</sup> Accordingly, in Theocritus we read (*Id.* 15.143–4):<sup>218</sup>

Ἰλαος νῦν, φίλ’ Ἄδωνι, καὶ ἐς νέωτ’ εὐθυμεύσας.  
καὶ νῦν ἦνθες, Ἄδωνι, καὶ ὄκκ’ ἀφίκη, φίλος ἤξεις.

Happy has your coming found us now, Adonis,  
And when you come again, dear will be your return.

Again, on line 149 Praxinoa, one of the ladies attending the queen’s festival, greets Adonis thus:<sup>219</sup>

χαῖρε Ἄδων ἀγαπατέ: καὶ ἐς χαίροντας ἀφίκευ.  
Farewell, beloved Adonis; and I hope you’ll find us happy when you come  
again.

This could explain why our sources are especially silent when it comes to discussing the “resurrection” of Tammuz and/or Adonis<sup>220</sup> further implying the function

of the rite as a public memorial. In my view, their “rising” is to be understood in terms of evoking their memory and renewing their commemoration rather than in terms of a physical resurrection.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the popularization of the *akītu* festival as the most appropriate way of securing and promoting royal legitimacy during the second millennium, which nevertheless did not erase the myths and rites of Inanna/Ištar. On the contrary, in many aspects, Marduk seems to have undergone a similar character evolution to that of the goddess during the second millennium BCE. In addition, the “sacred marriage,” although not exclusively linked to the *akītu* festival, is very conducive to the purposes of New Year Festivals that seek to reaffirm the cosmic balance. Although our evidence on the celebration of a “sacred marriage” during the Babylonian *akītu* remains slim the prayers addressed to Marduk and Zarpanitu during the festival and her assimilation to Ištar urge me to think that it probably was. My examination of hymns sung during later “sacred marriages” and of the spread of the cult in ancient Israel and eventually the Hellenistic kingdoms led me to the same conclusion.

Marduk’s syncretism with Ištar but also with her consort, Dumuzi, seems to indicate that although agriculture was of secondary order in the urbanized Babylonian culture, the Sumerian metaphors which expressed divine powers in terms of fertility continued to be valued. In fact, in their attempt to stress their long-standing role in ANE politics, second- and first-millennium scribes kept reverting to older compositions about kingship which continued thus to be copied down to the Seleucid era. By the first millennium the ANE had witnessed the successive rise of a number of warrior deities: Ninurta, Ištar, Nergal and Marduk fight by the side of their favourite king and assure him of political success.<sup>221</sup> However, far from a battle of genders or even political/ethnic forces, what we witness here seems to be a battle of memories and of aesthetics: civilization whether glossed in agricultural terms or in terms of a cosmic battle is firmly in the hands of the scribes. Warrior kings and their gods need not carry with them just their bows and arrows:<sup>222</sup> what they needed was a stylus to commemorate the divine support which allowed them to redraw the boundaries of the cosmos projected in the lushness of royal gardens.

This message found enthusiastic recipients in first-millennium BCE Babylon but also in the regions that flourished under its cultural influence including Syria-Palestine. There commemoration and renewal focused on lamentation rites in honour of Tammuz, now addressed by his west Semitic name as Adonis. Through the hymns sung in such festivals Sumero-Babylonian royal ideology spread westwards along with the notion that the “garden” of the goddess held the secret to a blissful life as well as afterlife. The Greeks who had started worshipping Adonis already in the seventh century BCE embraced enthusiastically the cult of Adonis, which during the Hellenistic period inspired their rulers and, of course, their poets. The appeal of Tammuz defied temporal and cultural barriers, and the

garden of the goddess was always ready to be rediscovered and invested with further nuances. The Seleucids who came to rule Babylon after the sudden demise of Alexander the Great were certainly keen to secure a place in it.

## Notes

- 1 Trans. Langdon 1923: 35 [The . . . who in the streets hasten; they seek for Bel (saying), ‘Where is he held captive?’]; cf. Livingstone 1986: 214–5.
- 2 For the Sumerian *akītu*, see Sallaberger 1999: 291–4 and Falkenstein 1959: 147–82; for the Assyrian *akītu*, see von Driel 1969: 162–7 and Cohen 1993: 417–27. Versnel (1970: 221) concedes that the “sacred marriage” was part of the *akītu*, following Zimmern (1906: 2.12–13), who compared the suffering and resurrection of Marduk during the New Year Festival with the Passion of Christ related in the New Testament. Langdon (1923: 50–1) also interpreted Marduk as a type of Dumuzi; Pallis (1926) accepted Zimmern’s and Langdon’s idea that the death and resurrection of Marduk were central to the festival but rejected any Christological references. Generally earlier scholars were convinced that a “sacred marriage” occurred during the *akītu*, with Frankfort (1948: 330) and James (1962: 87) arguing that it probably took place at the Esagila; Pallis (1926: 197–8) also discussed the Etemenanki and the *bīt akīti* as alternative possibilities. Jacobsen (1975: 72–6) associated the *akītu* with a sacred marriage drama but rejected the idea of a cultic battle ritual. Kramer (1969: 49) argued that the rite was celebrated all over the ANE for more than 2,000 years. For textual evidence and representation on cylinder seals, see Klein 1981 and Frankfort 1939. For Iddin-Dagan’s celebration of a “sacred marriage” in conjunction with the New Year Festival, see *BIN* 9: 435, ll.170–91; also see Kramer 1963a: 62–6 and Reisman 1973: 159–60; for Šulgi, see Klein 1981: 32. Bidmead (2004: 25) noted the tendency of recent scholarship to examine the *akītu* for its “political and sociological significance, doing away with the concepts of *hieros gamos*, cultic battle, and the motif of the dying-rising god.” Also see her pp. 102–6 for an analytical discussion of the references cited here. Cf. nn.9 and 64 below (for Black 1981).
- 3 See Wiggermann 2010: 342–6; Halperin (1993: 125 and also 94–7) discusses first-millennium love lyrics vis-à-vis the dangerous sexuality of Ištar, now posing as the mistress of Marduk; cf. Westenholz 2007: 344–5.
- 4 See Gesche 2000: esp.44–57, whose main argument on the existence of two types of school is picked up in Beaulieu 2007a: 140–1; cf. Kleinerman (2011: 75–9 and 98–9) with George (2003: 36), who also elaborates on the scribal tradition in second-millennium BCE Babylon as well as the prominent role of the *GE* in the Babylonian school curriculum during the first millennium BCE.
- 5 Beaulieu 2007a: 163.
- 6 Bidmead (2004: 49) argues that bilingualism relates the “intensity of the emotions” in the recited prayers. Also see Kleinerman (2011: 67–75) discussing the presence of Inanna-Dumuzi songs (often characterized as bal-bal-e songs) in the scribal curriculum of the second millennium BCE. Kleinerman (see his p. 71) is unclear as to the criteria that led to the selection of these hymns for the scribal lists but assumes it may be related to performance categories.
- 7 George 2003: 67–8.
- 8 Cooper (1993: 83) refers to the Ur III-Isin period as the only time when one finds “sure evidence for ritual copulation” between a goddess and a human ruler; also see Lapinkivi 2004: 1.
- 9 Lapinkivi 2008: 20–1 and id. 2004: 14; also see Black 1981: 46–7 and Bidmead 2004: 104.
- 10 Pongratz-Leisten 2008: 50. Although the author distinguished between types of “sacred marriages” (see Chapter 2: n.117), in my view, all these relationships were ruled by the



same principle, according to which a sexual union between gods produced the cosmic harmony necessary for achieving any kind of progress at the human level.

- 11 Pongratz-Leisten 2008: 50–1.
- 12 After the OB period Dumuzi is no longer part of the official cult; nevertheless, his cult remained popular, especially among women; cf. Alster <sup>2</sup>1999, 831; Hallo 1996: 28–9; Marsman 2003: 585 with n.73 citing Mettinger 2001: 149; Kutscher 1990: 44; also see *BM 72999*: rev.11 testifying to the cult of Dumuzi in Neo-Babylonian Sippar and Beaulieu 2003: 335–7 on the cult of Dumuzi in Uruk.
- 13 CAD Z/12, *zagsmukku*; Bidmead (2004: 42–3) notes that in Sumerian times the two festivals were probably separate; in first-millennium Babylon, the New Year Festival was always celebrated at the beginning of the Nisannu. *Akīti* were also celebrated in the month Tašrītu, but they do not necessarily amount to New Year celebrations. Cohen (1993: 431–4, 451; also his p. 7, where he) discusses ANE calendars, which were eventually adjusted to correspond to the solar year marked by the two equinoxes. In this case, *akīti* could have been celebrated both in Nisannu and Tašrītu, though Cohen (1993: 14) argues that “the evidence overwhelmingly indicates a ‘universal’ spring New Year.” Hence, the renewal of the cosmos celebrated in the *akītu* would probably coincide with a renewal of nature.
- 14 Frankfort 1948: 313.
- 15 Pongratz-Leisten (1997: *passim*) focuses on the differentiation of Babylonian and Assyrian *akīti* arguing that the Assyrians adapted the Marduk ideology on their national god, Aššur, but from then on, the festival developed different tropes that suited the political needs of the first-millennium BCE Assyrian empire. As part of this, *akīti* festivals were celebrated for many more deities than ever attested for the celebration of the festival in Babylon, where we only hear about Marduk and Anu. In addition, the Assyrian kings focused on the ritual procession of the king during which he often found the opportunity to parade his captured enemies in a setting reminiscent of Roman triumphs. Interested in displaying their power rather than claiming legitimacy, the Assyrians replaced the king with his special cultic garments whenever he could not actually lead the procession. However, this opinion relies too much on the alleged aggression of the Assyrians and overlooks the possibility that the Assyrians probably utilized elements from other widespread *akītu* traditions. *Akīti* festivals were designed as major occasions for reaffirming the cosmos through the local king; hence a variety of deities should be expected to celebrate the festival, and cultic details could vary accordingly.
- 16 The *Akītu Chronicle*, *BM86379*, II.1–4; for parallel passages, see the *Ešarhaddon Chronicle*, *ABC14.31–4*, and the *Babylonian Chronicle*, *ABC16.34–6*.
- 17 Bidmead (2004: 131–2) records a number of texts relating Nabonidus’ rejection of Marduk; see, for example, the *Nabonidus Chronicle* (= *Chronicle 7* in Grayson 1975: 106–7) confirming that for 10 whole years while Nabonidus had undertaken a sojourn in Arabia, the festival had not been celebrated. Also see Bidmead 2004: 34 with Geller 1997: 55; cf. Green 1992: 145–7 on a festival list from Harran (ca. 363 BCE) that includes a celebration for the mood god and Venus (a local version of Ištar) and bears a strong resemblance to the *akītu* of Šin celebrated during Nabonidus’ reign. On Nabonidus and later propaganda, see Chapter 2: XX.
- 18 Bidmead 2004: 4; for a re-structure of the *akītu* during the neo-Babylonian period, see Bidmead 2004: 39–107; also Sommer 2000: 93 and Cohen 1993: 400–53. George (1992: 155) published the *Nippur Compendium* listing numerous *akīti* for a number of deities including Marduk, Ninurta, Ištar and Sin; also see *ARM 1 50*, II.5–7; 11–15 relating resources needed for the celebration of the *akītu* in Mari; Annus 2002: esp.54, where he notes that “[S]ome of the cultic events at the Babylonian and Assyrian *akītu* festivals may have their antecedents in the royal procedures of Nippur”; also see his pp. 68–9 for “sacred marriage” as one of these events. Also note that in Ugaritic literature, the myth of the death and resurrection of Baal, as a fertility god, celebrating his triumph over Mot and the building of his palace has been connected

- to autumn New Year festivities in Canaan; see de Moor 1971: 21–7, 98, 238 and id. 1972: 1.1–29; cf. Healey <sup>2</sup>1999: 599–600. Hence, apparently New Year Festivals carried teleological connotations.
- 19 Smith 1982: 91–2; Sommer (2000: 85) agrees with Smith.
  - 20 See Somer 2000: 91; cf. Chapter 4: pp. 158–61 on the rise of the cult of Nabû, Marduk’s son, under Seleucus I and his son, Antiochus I.
  - 21 Frymer-Kensky 1997: 99–100.
  - 22 Espak 2010: 184–5.
  - 23 Frymer-Kensky 1992: 76.
  - 24 Frymer-Kensky 1992: 75.
  - 25 Westenholz (2007: 339) draws attention to an OB god list where “[N]ot only does Inanna appear now after her spouse Dumuzi, but all various Inanna manifestations and other female deities are grouped together. Even the consort of Marduk, Zarpanitum, is listed among these Inanna goddesses. Another list, which becomes the basis of the standard Babylonian god list, placed all Inanna manifestations together after the various courts of the male gods”; on the importance of female deities in the Sumerian pantheon in contrast to the pre-eminence of male deities in Akkadian religion, see Steinkeller 1999: 114; according to Steinkeller, the power of male deities in Sumerian religion increased over time, though “never superseding that of goddesses.”
  - 26 Frymer-Kensky 1992: 76 and id. 1997: 102, where she argues that the tradition associated with Inanna and Dumuzi was no longer “state-centered or run” following the OB period but was limited to the sphere of private religion; however, note Hallo’s argument (1987: esp.49–51) that one of the purposes of the “sacred marriage” was to produce a royal heir and to ensure thus the divine authority of kingship [with Stol’s criticism (2000: 85)]. From this point of view, two observations can be made: first, the performativity of the ritual, in accordance with Mesopotamian religious practices, cannot be missed (Bahrani 2002: 19); second, that the second-millennium BCE changes of the ritual elaborate (rather than negate) the king’s closeness with the divine realm. After all, stability is a prerequisite for the realization of fertility.
  - 27 Frymer-Kensky 1992: 79–80.
  - 28 However, the story of the Flood was adapted in tablet XI of the *GE*. Given that in one version of the *Sumerian King List* Atrahasis (= Ziusudra, the exceedingly wise) posed as the king of Šuruppak (Davila 1995: 201), the *GE* is symptomatic of a trend in ANE literature that continuously associated creation with kingship. Regardless of when this association was fostered or added to the canonical *Epic* clearly legendary kings were understood, as argued in Chapter 1, in close connection with the start of civilization.
  - 29 For Enlil’s role in the Sumerian *Debate between Winter and Summer*, see Walton 2009: 34; for An’s role in the Sumerian *Debate between Sheep and Grain*, see Kramer 1963a: 218. Michalowski (1998: 240) and Black (2002: 44) discuss An’s “sacred marriage” to Ninhursag in the Barton Cylinder; more recently, see Pongratz-Leisten 2008: 45–6. For Enki having sex with her in the second part, see Alster and Westenholz 1994: 18–19 (ii.1–15). In the so-called *Eridu Genesis* Ziusudra’s royal cum priestly duties are stressed along with his close relationship with the god Enki who is cast as “saviour of mankind”; Jacobsen 1981: 513; also see his pp. 516, 523, 525, and 528 and Davila 1995: 202–4.
  - 30 Bremmer (2008: 17–18) is keen to point out the differences between the narratives of the *Theogony*, the *Enuma Eliš* and the Biblical Genesis, overlooking, in my view, some crucial similarities. In the same spirit, Bremmer is categorical that Hesiod belongs to the sphere of myth in the long-standing debate between *mythos* and *logos*, although, as I have argued so far, myth seems to function as another manifestation of *logos*.
  - 31 Westenholz 2007: 340.
  - 32 For the celebration of the “sacred marriage” under Nabonidus, the last neo-Babylonian king, see Chapter 2: pp. 83–4; also see Piras (2004: 250–3) discussing two important texts that possibly reflect the influence that Mesopotamian cultures exercised on the

Persian “sacred marriage” ideology, despite the common assumption that the “sacred marriage” was never celebrated by the Persians. The first one is a passage from Plutarch (*Vita Artaxerxis* 3) referring to the Persian Ana(h)ita as a “warlike” goddess (sharing thus Ištar’s warlike qualities), and the second one is an inscription from the temple of Anaitis Barchohara (a Greek rendering of the Iranian *brzi-harā*) that refers to the cultic personnel of the goddess as *hierodulai* – again recalling hierodule Ištar and the dubious sexuality of her cultic personnel (on this, see Teppo 2008: 80–1 and 83–5 summarizing previous bibliography). In addition, Piras examines the eroticized relationship of Zarathustra with Aši, the goddess that functioned as Ahura Mazda’s charioteer, as a metaphor for the mystical union “between different parts of consciousness and levels of soul” (see his pp. 256–7) in Zoroastrian tradition (the idea is compatible with Lapinkivi 2004, who understood the “sacred marriage” as an allegory for the mystical union of the soul with the divine, cf. Chapter 2: n.169).

- 33 Cf. Teppo 2008: 83–4 on the roles of the cultic personnel in the service of Ištar.
- 34 Westenholz 2007: 341; cf. Teppo 2008: 83 with n.51; Bachvarova 2008: 33–4, 44; Leick 1994: 157–69; Henshaw 1994: 288; Groneberg 1986: 33–9. Launderville (2010: 38–9) cites much of the secondary literature on the androgynous nature of Inanna/Ištar mirrored in the ambivalent status of her gala-priests, which are often believed to be eunuchs and/or homosexuals. Also see Limet 1971: 21; Maul 1992: 159–71; George 2000: 270n.21; cf. n.89 below.
- 35 Westenholz 2007: 341.
- 36 Sefati (1998: 46–7 with nn.44 and 46) refers to an annual cultic calendar that refers to Nabû’s “sacred marriage” to Tašmetu that took place on the second day of Ayyaru and was also mentioned in a number of neo-Assyrian letters. However, he concludes that “nowhere in Mesopotamian literature of the first millennium is there a hint of the existence of a king-priestess marriage in the New Year ritual.” Also see Annus 2002: 71–6 arguing that (p. 76) “Ninurta’s *akitu* in Nippur and the ritual of ‘holy marriage’ in the first millennium have a common background and traces of it are found even in the arcane cultic calendar of the Neo-Assyrian empire.” On the association of Ninurta with Marduk in first-millennium Babylon, see Chapter 4: pp. 164–5.
- 37 Frymer-Kensky 1992: 76; cf. id. (1997: 102–3), where she argues that divine kingship disappeared during the OB period, a development probably anticipated in the rejection of Ištar by Gilgameš in the *GE*; in her view (p. 102), Gilgameš now “becomes the paradigm of humanity rather than the stepping-stone to the world of the gods.”
- 38 Frymer-Kensky 1997: 102; also see Cooper 1993: 94; Frayne 1985: 22.
- 39 Pongratz-Leisten 2008: 61.
- 40 Nissinen 2001: *passim*; Pongratz-Leisten 2008: 62–3.
- 41 George 1992: 297; Hundley 2013: 81–2 with n.128.
- 42 Nissinen 2001: 104–5.
- 43 *ABRT* 1, 76–9 (= K 2411 i.18–28); text Matsushima 1988: 101, trans. Nissinen 2001: 104 also cited by Pongratz-Leisten 2008: 62n.66; cf. *ABRT* 1, 23f. (= *SAA* 3.2), where the god is once more asked to bestow longevity on the king. Also see below, n.XX for the royal character of Assyrian “sacred marriages,” which typically include prayers for the king’s health and safety.
- 44 Pongratz-Leisten 2008: 63–5; Nissinen 2001: 99–101.
- 45 Pongratz-Leisten 2008: 64–5; cf. her p. 66 for references to the “sacred marriage” in Assyrian prophecies.
- 46 Pongratz-Leisten 2008: 63.
- 47 Nissinen 2001: 108.
- 48 Beaulieu (2003: 187–9) discusses the association of Nanāya with Ištar under Ešarhaddon, who restored her cella in the E-anna temple complex; to celebrate the occasion Ešarhaddon commissioned two building inscriptions. In *RIMB* B.6.31.17, ll.1–5 (Frame 1995: 186–8) the goddess poses as Anu’s daughter and Nabû’s consort. In addition, the close relationship of the goddess with the king is stressed, with the goddess said to come “to the help of the king who reveres her and prolongs his reign.”

- 49 Beaulieu 2003: 135.
- 50 See Thureau-Dagin 1921: 131, 133–4; 137, 139 and also Linssen 2004: 215–33 (see *GASAN-ia* = Bēltija in, for example, ll.39, 216c, 219, 287, 317–23).
- 51 Westenholz 2007: 342–3; Beaulieu 2003: 117; cf. his pp. 128–9; also see George 1987: 38.
- 52 Westenholz 2007: 343.
- 53 Westenholz 2007: 343 also citing Beaulieu 1992: esp.54–60 and 1995: 190–1 and esp.202–3.
- 54 Cf. Lenzi (2008: 156–60) on the local incentives for introducing the cult.
- 55 Lambert 1975: 100.
- 56 See *STT* II, 360 = *SAA* 3.16 for an Assyrian liturgy lamenting the death of Tammuz (dated between the ninth and sixth centuries BCE); also see Halperin (1993: 123) for the widespread celebration of Tammuz rites across second-millennium BCE Assyria and Babylon in contrast to the situation in the Levant, which seemed to have more intensive relations with Phoenicia and Egypt; cf. Cohen 1988: 6; Hallo 1996: 228–30; Kramer 1963a: 160n.48 and Dijkstra 1996: 99–100.
- 57 Lapinkivi 2004: 190; cf. Kramer 1983: 76–9.
- 58 See Westenholz 2007: 343; cf. Teppo 2008: 83, who stresses the role of the *kurgarrūš* and *assinnus* in times of crisis, including the New Year Festival during which cosmic balance was assumed to be suspended temporarily; cf. Sommer (2000: 85–6) arguing that the *akītu* “restored order by temporarily undermining it”; cf. n.117 below.
- 59 Westenholz 2007: 343.
- 60 Westenholz 2007: 341.
- 61 Bidmead (2004: 34) summarized *Papyrus Amherst 63* thus: “In the ritual the king stops at the gate of an *akītu* chapel, recites a prayer and enters into the courtyard. Similarly to the Uruk *akītu*, he washes his hands and proceeds to the assembly of the gods. The gods bless the king. Incense is burned, sheep are sacrificed, and hymns are sung.”
- 62 See Cohen 1993: 452. Cf. Steiner 1991: esp.362 and id. 1995: 206–7, also cited by Bidmead 2004: 34n.70.
- 63 Bidmead 2004: 34.
- 64 Black 1981: 48 suggested that the “sacred marriage” became metaphorical in historical times.
- 65 Bidmead 2004: 35–7.
- 66 Bidmead 2004: 35 with n.76; cf. Dirven (1999: 44–5 and 146–54) arguing about the strong Babylonian religious influence on first-millennium BCE Palmyra but also discussing the cultic associations of the *Enuma Eliš* and the *akītu* as well as the ability of the rite to be adapted to local circumstances; Drijvers (1980: 64–5) reads the scenes on the temple of Bēl at Palmyra as representing the battle of Marduk against Tiamat, which was the culmination of the *Enuma Eliš*; the temple thus offered an ideal location for the performance of the battle during the festival; also see p. 114.
- 67 The majority of the tablets of *Enuma Eliš* have been dated from 750 to 200 BCE, with four fragmented copies from Assur dating to ca. 900 BCE; on the composition date of the *Epic* [which Foster (2003: 391) followed by Head and Bradshaw (2012: 11) suggested renaming as the *Exaltation of Marduk*], see Jastrow 1901: 622, who argued for a date prior to 2000 BCE; yet the majority of scholars including von Soden (1933: 177–81), Heidel (1951: 13–14), Lambert (1964: 6), and Jacobsen (1976: 165–7) argue for a later date, probably under Nebuchadnezzar I.
- 68 Jastrow 1901: 622; Bidmead 2004: 63.
- 69 Although Marduk is a god competing for supremacy over other gods, in his code Hammurapi presents him as sovereign over all the people as well; see Yingling 2011: 35; cf. the OB Pennsylvania tablet for *GE* II.240 (in George 1999: 16, cf. id. 2003: 180–1, l.239), where Enkidu states: *šar -ru-tam ša ni-ši i-ši-im-kum en-lil* (to be the king of the people Enlil made it your destiny). For correspondences between the *GE* and the *Enuma Eliš*, such as the separation of heaven and earth and the distribution of

- cosmic regions to three gods, see Horowitz 1998: 135. Also see Michalowski (1990: 390), who argued that “the main impetus for the exaltation of Marduk in *Enuma Eliš* is linked to the cultural tension between Babylonia and Assyria”; also see his pp. 291–2 for Assyrian copies of the *Enuma Eliš* in which the name of Marduk is replaced with that of Aššur, an indication that the Assyrians felt at the time that they had to compete culturally with the dominant Babylonian traditions.
- 70 Yingling 2011: 38.
- 71 Cohen 1993: 401–2 also discussed in Sommer 2000: 93–4.
- 72 Cohen (1993: 404) argued that the *akītu* festival focused on Marduk’s exit from and re-entry in his temple in connection with royal succession. Black (1981: 54) argued that the *akītu* exemplified mostly the role of the king as high priest of Marduk rather than a supreme leader; cf. Grayson (1975: 160–70), who pointed out that the recognition of the king as the supreme ruler did not depend upon his participation in the *akītu*.
- 73 Sommer 2000: 94.
- 74 Michalowski (1990: 393) discusses the text of the king’s humiliation in light of his theory that the inscriptions of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244–1208 BCE) and Sennacherib (704–681 BCE), the only Assyrian rulers to have attacked and destroyed Babylon, reveal the tension between powerful Assyria and the cultural centre of Babylon in the second millennium BCE. Both Tukulti-Ninurta and Sennacherib were murdered shortly after their destruction of Babylon, while Ešarhaddon, Sennacherib’s son, was forced to admit that his father’s death was the result of Marduk’s wrath; accordingly, in his humiliation rite Ešarhaddon promised that he *ul ú-ḥu-a]l-liq Bâbila<sup>ki</sup> ul aq-ṭa-bi sapâḥ-šu / [ul ú-r]ib-bi è-sak-kil ul ú-ma-aš paršè-šu* (did not destroy Babylon, did not desecrate Esagila . . . [he] watched out for Babylon, [he] did not smash its walls) (Thureau-Dangin 1921: 144, ll.423–5; 428); also see Pedde 2012: 854; cf. Sommer (2000: 83–5) responding to Smith’s interpretation of the Babylonian *akītu* (1976: 4–5 and 1978: 71–4 cited in Sommer, p. 81n.1) as a rite dedicated to legitimizing the foreign rulers of the city.
- 75 Boiy (2004: 277) discusses the information on *akītu* published by Thureau-Dangin 1921: 149–54, based on a badly damaged ritual text which, nevertheless, preserves the events from the second to the fifth day of the festival.
- 76 Sjöberg 1975: 188–9 (also from *ETCSL* 4.7.3); Black 1981: 47 with n.24 cites a text (K 9876) describing the opening of the temple doors following the decreeing of fates; the text addresses Marduk and his consort thus: “Go forth, Bel! O king, go forth! / Go forth, Our Lady, the king awaits you!” Also see Oshima (2011: 72–3), who discusses the similarities in the roles attributed to Marduk and Inanna/Ištar in the Babylonian pantheon citing Enheduana’s hymn *In-nin šà-gur<sub>2</sub>-ra* (the Proud Lady), esp. ll.114–72. Oshima also draws attention to Marduk and Ištar’s similar healing powers, although he refrains from commenting further on their complex relationship. Bidmead 2004: 101–6 and 115–120; also see Pongratz-Leisten (1997: 249) discussing the *akītu* festivals of Ištar of Niveveh and Ištar of Arba’il during the Assyrian period: as the author points out, during the time of Ešarhaddon and Aššurbanipal both goddesses “share the function of delivering oracles to the king in crucial political moments in addition to their warlike aspect.”
- 77 Sjöberg and Bergman 1969: 6–7; Meador 2000: 69; Binkley 2004: 49 with bibliography.
- 78 Also see Delnero (2012: 198) arguing that scribes first memorized the texts then copied them down.
- 79 Oshima 2011: esp.48–55 (discussing the *Prayer to Marduk* no 1 and *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*). On p. 73 Oshima draws attention to Ištar’s connection with justice and righteousness, an area exclusively monopolised by Šamaš and later Marduk, who is solarized in order to absorb the qualities of the Sun. As evidence, he cites *STC* II, pls.LXXVff.25–6: *di-in ba-ḥu-la-a-ti ina kit-ti u mi-šà-ri ta-din-ni at-ti tap-pal-la-si ḥab-lu u šag-šu tuš-te-eš-še-ri ud-da-kām* (In justice and righteousness, you give

- judgement for the subjects. Daily, you look at the wronged and oppressed and guide him, text and trans. from Oshima); cf. Lenzi 2011: 264–5; also Cooper (1988: esp.87) for a Sumerian *šuiilla* prayer addressed to Marduk, where his destructive aspects are stressed.
- 80 For a discussion of Ištar, who was originally independent to Inanna, see Abusch 2000: 1023. The assimilation of Ištar to Inanna is only symptomatic of the continuing syncretism between gods in the ANE.
- 81 Westenholz 2007: 342.
- 82 Bidmead 2004: 105 with Falkenstein 1959: 163.
- 83 Pallis 1926: 247–8.
- 84 Bidmead 2004: 105–6.
- 85 *DT* 15, 114, I, 1–18 and *DT* 109, I, 1–20 in Thureau-Dangin 1921: 134; trans. Bidmead 2004: 60 with minor modifications; also see Linssen 2004: 218–9 (II.225–9 and 243–4); cf. Maul (2005: 113) citing another *šuiilla* prayer in honour of Marduk, possibly used in coronations ceremonies.
- 86 Bidmead 2004: 48.
- 87 *DT* 15, I.33 in Thureau-Dangin 1921: 130; trans. Bidmead 2004: 48.
- 88 Sonic (2012: esp.393) discusses the tablet of the destinies in the *Enuma Eliš* arguing that by taking possession of them, Marduk excises the female element.
- 89 On the *kalū*, see Cohen 1988: 13–14; Henshaw 1994: 88–96; Rubio 2001: 270–1. They praised the goddess in *emesal*, a Sumerian dialect used to render the speech of women and goddesses in literature; also see, for example, Hartmann 1960: 138; Cohen 1974: 11, 32; Bottéro and Petschow 1975: 465; Sefati 1998: 53–5. The *kalū* wore women’s clothes and even adopted female names; in addition, they were often perceived as passive partners in same-sex dalliances; Gelb 1975: 73; Kramer 1981: 2; Lambert 1992: 150–2; Balch 2000: 170–1. As Bachvarova (2008: 20) argued, it is unlikely that the gala priests were “always homosexual or (primarily) eunuchs in the modern sense of the word.” Yet they were often grouped together with other categories of people of an “irregular sexual nature,” while Inanna’s ability to transgress the gender boundaries is linked with the ability to mourn and raise the dead – which was the primary role of the *kalū* (= gala priests in Sumerian). The goddess’s role in city lamentations then can be understood as an attempt to “resurrect” or restore cities to their former thriving status (cf. Chapter 2: n.82); cf. Teppo (2008: 81–7) discussing the various types of cultic personnel in the service of Inanna. Also see Barrett (2007: 19–21) citing Harris (1991: 266, 272) among others on the profile of the goddess as overseer of liminal transitions; hence, in a way, she was the most suitable of the gods for attempting the perilous journey to the netherworld.
- 90 Bidmead 2004: 48.
- 91 Bidmead 2004: 54–8; also Black 1981: 45.
- 92 Van Buren 1937: 28. Yet as Bidmead (2004: 58) notes we lack information on the gender of the figurines. Still, Radner (2012: 690–3 with bibliography) argues for the close association of the scorpion with Assyrian queens, notably including Tašmetum-šarrat, Sennacherib’s queen; cf. Chapter 4: p. 172 on the relation of scorpion with “sacred marriage.”
- 93 Munn (2006: 206–7) reminds us that the temple of Marduk at Babylon, the Etemenanki was built “on the heart of the *kigallu*,” a word that denotes the netherworld as well as fallow ground; see *CAD* 8: 348–9, s.v. *kigallu*. Also see Dalley 2014: 67 arguing that the representation of Hellenistic deities holding palm fronds and often stepping on submerged or half-submerged creatures is a reference to the victory against Tiamat (cf. Chapter 4: n.208). However, given Ištar’s associations with the palm frond in her role as supporter of the military endeavours of the king, I wonder whether this would imply a greater role for the goddess in a possible representation of Marduk’s battle against the monstrous Tiamat.

- 94 Bidmead 2004: 65.
- 95 The theme is reflected in the Orphic creation of man from the ashes of the Titans; the story is actually attributed to Onomacritus in Paus.8.37.3; cf. *Pl.Leg.*701c; cf. *Eur.Bacch.*99–102, *Diod.Sic.*3.62, *Orph.h.*45.6; *Clem.Al.Protr.*2.16.
- 96 Despite his supremacy, Marduk had to face Kingu, and in his battle against him he is similar to Ninurta, who had to recover the tablets of destinies from Anzu in the *Myth of Anzu*. See Lambert 1986: 58–9. On Ninurta’s close association with Marduk in Babylonian theology, see Chapter 4: p. 164.
- 97 Penglase (1994: 197–229) compared Enki, Marduk’s father, with Prometheus, the trickster of Greek myth. Also note that just like Prometheus was accused in Aeschylus’ *PV*123 for his “exceeding love of humans,” in Akkadian prayers Enki is along with Marduk and Ea one of those *rā'imū amēluti* (who love people).
- 98 Oshima 2011: 62; also see his pp. 161, 209, 247, 264. Marduk can “snatch from the mouth of death and lift the supplicant up from the netherworld” (*Ugaritica* V, no. 162); *BMS* 12, 17–95. For Marduk as the one who “loves to give life,” see *DT* 119+152: Šigû-Prayer to the Lord. In the incantation prayers, Marduk is called “the one who protects life” and “the one who provides health” [*KAR* 69, 1–25 (= *BMS* 9 obv.); cf. *AOAT* 34, 28(+29)], and in *KAR* 26 obv.11–rev.6 as well as Lambert 1968: 131.
- 99 Also see Oshima 2011: 73–4.
- 100 See Launderville 2007: 357–63 on the first-millennium BCE Ea-Marduk incantations; cf. Cunningham 1998: 42–6.
- 101 In a way the existence of a court culture in Ur III (discussed by Cohen 2005: esp.32–5) seems to anticipate the rise of the *kidinnu*, who are first recorded in an OB text from Susa; cf. Bidmead 2004: 51.
- 102 Bidmead (2004: 50–1) argued that this functioned as a warning against new rulers, who ought to treat the divinely sanctioned *kidinnu* favourably.
- 103 Lambert 1963: 189–90 cited by Sommer 2000: 94; also cf. Livingstone 1986: 156–7 and Eliade 1954: 54–8.
- 104 Lambert 1963: 189 with Sommer 2000: 94; cf. Ornan 2005: 80; note that in discussing Sennacherib’s building program, Ataç (2010: 61) and Leick (2002: 216) point out that the *akītu* house, designed to parallel Babylon’s *akītu* (Dalley 2013: 116–18), was furnished with a pleasure garden which, in my view, would provide an obvious location for the enactment of the king’s pursuit of Tiamat. Also see Lenzi (2011: 60) discussing Aššurbanipal’s hymn to Aššur (*ABRT* I 32–4) as a good example “of a hymn in SB Akkadian from the Neo-Assyrian court.” In this hymn Aššur’s name is written as if it were Anšar (AN.ŠÁR), the father of Anu and the great-grandfather of Marduk. Hence, Aššur is equated with a god older than Marduk and comes to replace him as head of the pantheon in Assyrian versions of the *Enuma Eliš* (see rev.6’).
- 105 See Sommer (2000: 94–5 esp.n.69) citing Pongratz-Leisten (1994: 74–5).
- 106 Van der Toorn 1990: 10–29; cf. id. 1991: 331–44.
- 107 Bidmead 2004: 28.
- 108 Sommer 2000: 95.
- 109 Cf. Smith 1976: 7–10 and id. 1978: 68–72; also see Sommer’s reaction (2000: 86) with n.74 above.
- 110 See Kuhrt 1987: 40; cf. van der Toorn (1991: 233), who argued that the rites of the festival functioned as “public confirmation of the social and ideological values of the participants”; also cited in Bidmead 2004: 11–12.
- 111 Text and trans. George 2003: 574–5, cited by permission of Oxford University Press; cf. his pp. 568–9 (II.265–71, where the meaning of these verses is repeated).
- 112 Note that both Šamaš and Marduk are described as merciful in hymns addressed to either god; see Cumming 1934: 139–40. Oshima (2011: 445–53) lists the epithets associated with both Marduk and Šamaš in Akkadian prayers including the following: *dajjanū ša same u eršeti* (the judges of heaven and earth), *dēkū maqtū* (those who

- raise the stricken men) and *ilānu rēmēnūtu* (the merciful gods), all epithets Marduk and Šamaš share with Ea. Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 BCE) also addressed hymns to Marduk and Šamaš, to whom he prays for guidance. Hence, the solar aspects of Šamaš become transferable to Marduk, who appears next to the Sun god as a defender of kingship; also see Jastrow 1898: 296.
- 113 Langdon (1923: 119) understood the reference of the Babylonian *akītu* to the “divine bull, [the] brilliant light which burns the darkness” with which the ceremony concludes (*DT* 15, l.461) as reminiscent of the *Bull of Heaven* episode in the *GE*.
- 114 Bidmead 2004: 49 and 54.
- 115 See Bidmead (2004: 47), who translates *DT* 15, l.6 (*Secret of the Esagila*) thus: “Bel, who in his anger has no rival.”
- 116 *ABRT* I, pl. 31, 8; text and trans. reproduced from George 1992: 256–7; cf. Lawson 2001: 87.
- 117 Sommer (2000: 86) argues that the rebuilding of Esagila, being a part of the Babylonian *akītu*, entails the renewal of the world as a whole (cf. n.13 above). He adds, “This linkage is also reflected in the High Priest’s blessing of the Esagila, which had been recited earlier that day, for in that prayer he had referred to the temple as “image of heaven and earth” (*tamšil same u iršiti*);” cf. van der Toorn (1990: 339), who argued that during the *akītu*, the old order is “momentarily jeopardized, emerges intact, and is reaffirmed.” Cf. *RAcc* 136, l.275 (trans. Cohen 1993: 444); also Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 77–8.
- 118 *CAD* 16: 135–6, s.v. *šerretu*.
- 119 *Enuma Eliš* V.65–8; text and trans. from George 1992: 257; cf. Horowitz 1998: 18.
- 120 Text and trans. George 1992: 257; cf. Hruška 1969: 483, ll.23–4. Besides the slight hints to “sacred marriage,” lamentation rites during the *akītu* marking the disturbance of the cosmic order could also be linked to the goddess; cf. Chapter 2: pp. 74–7.
- 121 Zimmern 1906: 2.3–4; Livingstone 1989: 82–91; von Soden 1955: 157–66; also see Mettinger (2004: 377–9) summarizing previous bibliography.
- 122 Sommer 2000: 93.
- 123 Frymer-Kensky (1983: 133) summarizes the elements that link the text to an *akītu* celebration: “[T]he mention of the *bit-akītu* in ll.38, 40 and 66; of the month Nisan (month 1) in ll.44 and 51, and the reading of the *Enuma Eliš* in ll.34 and 54.”
- 124 Text and trans. from Frymer-Kensky 1983: 138; also see her pp. 131–3 for earlier interpretations of the text.
- 125 Frymer-Kensky 1983: 139.
- 126 Text and translation from Frymer-Kensky 1983: 139.
- 127 See Frymer-Kensky (1983: 139–41) expanding on von Soden 1955. Also see Porter 1993: 146.
- 128 Porter 1993: 95, 100 on Bab.A.
- 129 Frymer-Kensky 1983: 139; Black (1981: 56) also rejects the connection of the *akītu* to “dying and rising” gods.
- 130 See Meador (2000: 11) on Inanna’s affinity with the disorder often associated with Tiamat: “On the cosmic level, Inanna pulls the rug out from under our belief in order and principle. She is the element of chaos that hangs over every situation, the reminder that cultures and rules and traditions and order are constructs of humanity. Society congeals possibility into laws and mores so that we can live together. Inanna reminds us these are but products of the mind. At bottom all is possible.”
- 131 Westenholz 1997: 294–331.
- 132 Beaulieu 2007b: 473–86. Furthermore, lamentation was both a way of bringing about the renewal of a city, as in the second-millennium city laments or the Babylonian *akītu*, but also a way of achieving personal renewal as in the first-millennium BCE lamentations for Tammuz or Adonis.
- 133 Text and trans. reproduced from Oshima 2011: 356–7 with the exception of l.15, which I cite from id. 2006: 83 (there the lines appear as 27–31 and so l.15 = l.31);



- also see Oshima 2011: 399–400, where he cites *BA* 5 no.III, ll.7–8, where Marduk is praised as: *muš-te-šir ÍDIM.MEŠ ÍD.MEŠ BAD-ú miṭ-ra-a-te / EN KUR.MEŠ šar AN-e u KI-tim mu-kám-mir tuḫ-di* (The one who keeps springs and rivers in order, the one who opens the watersources. / The Lord of the lands, the King of Heaven and the Earth, the one who heaps up abundance). I am enormously indebted to Dr Oshima for his kind permission to reproduce his translations and his advice on the readings of the relevant cuneiform texts. Also note that in Akkadian Marduk's name, written as *AMAR.UTU* (= the calf of the sun), is reminiscent of Dumuzi's Sun connections. Hence, in *DD*:165 and *ID*:370 Dumuzi poses as Utu's brother-in-law; see Katz 2006: 107–9.
- 134 Frayne 1990: 354, no. 17, 3–4.
- 135 Oshima (2006: 84) claims that four out of the fifty titles of the god refer to his control of water sources [Enbilulu (VII 57), Epadun (VII 61), Gugal (VII 64), Agilimma (VII 82)], while another five stress his role as provider of plenty [Asarre (VII 1), Asaralimnuna (VII 5), Hegal (VII 68), Sirsir (VII 70), Gil (VII 78), Gilim (VII 80), and Zulum (VII 84)]; on the relationship of Marduk with Asalluḫi, see Oshima 2011: 42–7.
- 136 For the tradition of burying Assyrian kings in lakes, which was apparently known to the Greeks, see Espak 2010: 28 with n.47 citing Strabo *G.* 16. 1. 11 and *Arr.Anab.* 7.22. 1. Espak also finds references to this tradition in the *Death of Gilgameš* (M<sub>1</sub> 241–2) and *GE* 8.212. Also see Katz (2007: 178–9), suggesting that water from rivers was used to “absolve” the dead from their sins so that they would enter the Underworld faultless.
- 137 See Espak 2010: 55 with n.106 for Asalluḫi as son of Enki and 137–40 for the assimilation of Asalluḫi to Marduk in the *Asaluhi A* hymn possibly written at the time of Rim-Su'en.
- 138 Text and trans. from Oshima 2006: 84.
- 139 Westenholz 2007: 340.
- 140 Oshima 2006: 84; also see his pp. 86–7, where he argues that Marduk's role as protector of water sources is the result of his syncretism with Ninurta; from this point of view, Marduk's fertility aspects are expanded as he rises in popularity; see Wiggermann 2011a: esp.674, 680.
- 141 Lambert 1959/60: 61–5; text and trans. from Oshima 2011: 245; cf. id. 2006: 84; also see Cooper 1988: 88.
- 142 Text and trans. from Oshima 2011: 242–3; cf. id. 2006: 85.
- 143 Oshima 2006: 86.
- 144 Text and trans. from Oshima (2011: 308–9 s.v. 7–11 (= ll.40–3); cf. id. 2006: 85); cf. Cohen 1988: 413–17, ll.40–3 (also cited by Oshima).
- 145 Wiggermann 2011a: 683.
- 146 Frahm 2010: 169–75; the series comprised 35 tablets among which *Sidu* 14 is a bilingual version “of the Sumerian *Georgica*, or ‘Farmer's Instructions.’” On the *Ballad* which is *Sidu* 35, see also Alster 2005: 320–22.
- 147 See van der Sluijs (2005: 7–14) discussing the *Erra and Išum* epic ascribed to a neo-Babylonian scribe by the name of Kabit-ilāni-Marduk, dated between the twelfth and seventh centuries BCE. The work discusses the brief taking over of the kingship of Heaven by Erra in terms that refer to astronomical phenomena possibly related to the notion of the Great Year. In his address to Erra, Marduk emphasizes the close association of world order with his decision to remain seated on the throne and reminds him of his adversary during the Deluge – the latter was apparently the result of Marduk's anger and his decision to rise from his throne. See *Erra and Išum* I. 129–44 (5), where Marduk relates how his leaving his throne caused the stars to shake and even the underworld to tremble. Further in the poem, ll.170–4 the god explains that if he were to do something similar again, “a storm will rise up and cover the stars of heaven. An evil wind will blow, and the vision of people and living things will [be obscured (?)].” Sluijs explains (p. 9) that “when Marduk finally went down to the Underworld, darkness fell straightaway,” citing *Erra and Išum* II.5 (6): [The winds (?)] rose up, and

- bright day turned into darkness.” Trans. *COS* II:408 (Dalley 1.113). In his competition with Marduk, Erra identifies himself with Girra, the Sumerian god of fire, Adad, the storm god, and Šamaš, the sun god. The text is important in two ways: first, it corroborates the view that Marduk can go to the Underworld from a source other than *KAR* 143 and second, it illustrates the association of Marduk with cosmic harmony. Finally, it is worth noting Sluijs’s view (his p. 14) that the Babylonian author was “adapting an existing and probably well-known myth to the particular historical conditions of his age, scaling the events down from a cosmic to a local level.”
- 148 *BNJ*680F1b4; trans. from Burstein 1978: 13–14; for the history of the text, see Verbrugghe and Wickersham 1996: 27–31; de Breucker 2013: 20–3. On Berossus’ religious authority, see Potter (2005: 422), who argued following Kuhrt (1987: 32–56) that in his attempt to please his Greek rulers Berossus failed to serve the primary purpose of his composition, i.e. to stress the importance of Babylon in the history of the ANE; yet see de Breucker 2003: 30–2. His work remained of little influence until the first century BCE, when Alexander Polyhistor produced a summary of it; cf. de Breucker 2013: 35. Also note on his p. 423 his discussion of non-Greek, eastern-style temples which apparently continued to be built under the Seleucids, especially the temples of Athena Hippiia and Heracles. As Potter notes, when the temple of Athena was sacked during the Parthian period it was re-dedicated to Parthian deities. On Berossus’s description of Oannes, the first sage, also see Kvanvig 2011: 113; cf. her pp. 116–17 on the subsequent seven sages who maintained the cosmic order as designed by the first one and 249 pointing to the seven sages that build Uruk in the *GE* I.21 and XI.326; also see Haubold 2013b: 32. Note that Berossus popularised in the Greek world the tale of Nebuchadnezzar’s commissioning of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, a present to his homesick Iranian concubine; van der Spek 2008: 311–13.
- 149 Wiggermann 2011a: 671.
- 150 Hallo 1963: 175–6 discussed in Wiggermann 2011a: 671; also see id. 2011b: 306–7 and Kvanvig 2011: 118–9, 129 discussing the relationship between Uanna, the first sage, and Uannadapa, the seventh.
- 151 Wiggermann (2011a: 676) illustrates this notion by citing the tale of the *Marriage of Martu*, where the young bride is to marry a man of the steppe to the horror of her girlfriends.
- 152 See Cohen (1988: 668–703) discussing the Sumerian lamentation in the *Desert by the Early Grass*.
- 153 Hays 2011: 34–56, esp.54.
- 154 See Skiast (1980: 127) also cited in Cohen 2005: 107 with n.46. In other words, kings are increasingly conscious of their ability to shape the memory of their communities.
- 155 Hays 2011: esp.44–6; also see his pp. 47–55 for a summary of Mesopotamian funerary beliefs. Black and Green (1992: 28) remind us that Gilgameš and Enkidu encounter such demons when the former asks his friend about the Underworld; cf. George 2003: 48–52, esp.51 commenting on Parpola 1993 (see Chapter 1: nn.138 and 143).
- 156 Prism A VI 70–6 with Borger 1996: 55 in Stavrakopoulou 2010: 82 with nn.4–5. Also see a stele-inscription of Nebuchadnezzar I (*BBS* 31 col.1:12) arguing that Marduk supported the king to destroy the Elamites.
- 157 Hays 2011: 47–8; also Holloway 2002: 313.
- 158 CT 24:50; K47406 obv.
- 159 Richardson (1999–2001: 145f.) cited in Hays (2011: 159n.143) refers to Aššurbanipal II and the cult of his ancestors, which he had apparently ordained in his royal garden; also see Giovino 2007: 126 with n.329 and Stavrakopoulou 2006: 15–17. Also see George 2003: 112, 125 on the gardens of Gilgameš at Dēr, which is “understood as a date-plantation supplying a cult.”
- 160 See Nissinen 1998 and 2001 cited extensively in the following pages.
- 161 Nissinen 1998: 624.

- 162 Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 149 with n.165 for further bibliography; cf. Smith 2001: 116.
- 163 Also see Sapph.168 (Lobel-Page); cf. Diosc.*AP5.53* and 193; cf. Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 45n.139.
- 164 On the dating of the Adonia circa 272 BCE, see Reed 2000: 319; cf. Gow <sup>2</sup>1952: 2.265.
- 165 Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 130–84; also see Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008: 503–4.
- 166 Reed 1995: 320 and 2000: 324–8, 334 and Foster 2006: *passim* but esp.135–6, 138–9 drawing attention to the Egyptian influences of *Idyll* 15 in the context of Ptolemaic propaganda; cf. Gow <sup>2</sup>1952: 2.262–4; Anagnostou-Laoutides 2004: *passim* and id. 2005: 184–97 discussing the investment of the adventures of Daphnis, Adonis’ counterpart in Theocritus *Id.*1 with Egyptian funerary ideology. Cf. Smith 2001: 118 (with Detienne 1977: 128), who remains hesitant about Adonis’ identification “with any particular Middle Eastern god.” Also see Kutscher (1990: 42–3), who argued that the lamentation festival for Dumuzi, typically celebrated during the summer months, developed later, possibly as a replacement of another festival associated with the “sacred marriage”; in my view, the lamentation is a final episode in the year-long celebration of the various aspects of the relationship and should be understood as a commemoration ritual (see pp. 127–31 above; cf. Lambert 1975: 98 on the “Ritual Tablet,” consisting of badly damaged incipits of texts to be recited in connection to the “sacred marriage” sequence of events, which he appreciated as “one of a series, which presumably covered the whole year.”
- 167 Lapinkivi 2004: 14; for interpreting Theocritus’ *Id.*1 in light of the cult of Inanna and Dumuzi, see Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 156–77 and Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008: 499–516.
- 168 See, for example, Schneider 2011: 110: “as most scholars agree, this early ritual (= “sacred marriage”) ended by the time of Hammurabi of Babylon when there is an influx of a new group to the region, the Amorites. The Sacred Marriage appears to resurface in the first millennium, but in a form that has changed dramatically.”
- 169 Nissinen 2001: 105 also suggested that the primary purpose of the ritual is to “protect the life of the crown prince”; *ABL* 113 transcribed by Matsushima 1987: 136–7 makes it clear that the sacrifices that accompany the celebration of the gods’ “sacred marriage” also serve to secure the safety and longevity of the Aššurbanī, the “great eldest son of the king” (r.1.6: *mār šarri rab]ū*), destined to be crowned king of Assyria as well as of the crown prince of Babylon, his elder brother Šamaš-šum-ukin; cf. *ABL* 366, obv.11.3, 5 also in Matsushima 1987: 139. Cf. Nissinen 1998: 592–5. For the prayer of Antiochus, the Seleucid crown prince, to Nabû, see Chapter 4: pp. 159–60.
- 170 Text from Matsushima 1987: 132; also see Nissinen 2001: 97 with n.37.
- 171 See Nissinen 2001: 99 with n.49 for translating l.16 (*ina libbi adri ekalli*) as the “threshing floor of the palace.”
- 172 Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008: 506, 508; cf. Lambert 1987: 23.
- 173 See rev.5–8: [. . . ša-pu]-la-ki šābitu (*MAŠ.DĀ*) ina šēri(*EDIN*) [] / . . . ki-ša]-la-ki gišhašhūr (*HAŠHUR*) <sup>iii</sup>Si[mānu(*SIG4*)] / . . . ‘a-si’-da!-ki <sup>na4</sup>surru (*ZŪ*) *MA* ‘X X’ [] / . . . mim-mu-ki ṭup-pu <sup>na4</sup>ZA.GIN []X [] [Your thighs are like a gazelle in the desert, . . . your ankles are apples in the month of Simanu . . . your heels are obsidian, . . . all of you are (like) a tablet of lapis lazuli]. Text from Matsushima 1987: 145; my trans. renders closely Matsushima’s French. For the employment of *paralellismus membrorum*, see Nissinen 1998: 621; cf. Lambert 1987: 23–9; Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 168–71 and Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008: 510.
- 174 Nissinen 1998: 610–4, 616–25; Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008: 510.
- 175 See 14 rev.: ‘am’-mi-i-ša šā-al šā-al sa-ni-qa-a sa-ni-qa (over there, search, search, check-out, check-out), from Matsushima 1987: 145; also see Anagnostou-Laoutides

- and Konstan 2008: 503, 505–7 for the motif of searching for the beloved who is assumed to be absent in the *Song of Songs*.
- 176 Text from Matsushima 1987: 144; cf. Nissinen 1998: 587. Trans. mine having consulted both Nissinen and Matsushima’s French.
- 177 See Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008: 508–9 for the motif of meeting the beloved at the walls of the city in the *Song* (3:3–4 and 5:7).
- 178 I opted to translate *anšabtu* as ring, based on CAD I.2, 144.
- 179 Nissinen 1998: 588 adds *qereb kirī* on l.14 and [*qereb bēt tu*]ppi on l.16, therefore translating: “let me give you pleasure in the garden, let me make you happy in the tablet house”; cf. Dalley 2013: 170.
- 180 Again, text from Matsushima 1987: 146; trans. mine modelled on Matsushima’s French.
- 181 Nissinen 1998: 590 reconstructs the verse as *šuh mēni šuh mēnē zānat Tašmetūja* (for what, for what are you adorned, my Tašmetu?)
- 182 The verses are repeated in rev.ll.30–2 in the third person, probably sung by the chorus.
- 183 Nissinen 1998: 590 reconstructs the verse as *ina birit mālikāni kussūja lā iddiū* (They did not place my throne among the counsellors).
- 184 See Matsushima 1987: 162–3; for *ambassu* as a royal hunting park, see Tuplin 1996: 83–5. On the possibility that Assyrian royal gardens were equipped with kiosks used for public feasts, see Oppenheim 1965: 331.
- 185 Text Matsushima 1987: 159; trans. mine modelled on Matsushima’s French; also see Beaulieu 2003: 186 with n.52 adding that we are not certain whether the ritual was performed at Borsippa; however, Lapinkivi 2004: 87 describes Nabû during the second day of the rite as proceeding from the Ezida in Borsippa to Eḫuršaba, to the shrine of Nanaya; cf. Linssen 2004: 66, 70–1.
- 186 Linssen (2004: 66n.302) translated the word as “Anuship.”
- 187 Cf. Detienne 1977: 68–9; Hesychius (Schmidt 1867: 2.37–8) s.v. *Ἀδώνιδος κῆποι* and Suda s.v. *Ἀδώνειοι καρποί* (see entry alpha 514 in Suda online, available at <http://www.stoa.org/sol/list.html>). For more references, see Gow <sup>2</sup>1952: 2.295 ad 113.
- 188 For example, in the Jewish *Song*, the girl – described as the “fairest of women” in 6:1 and, therefore, identified with Aphrodite (as suggested by Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008: 508, 523–4) – compares her lover with king Solomon (6:2). For the cult of Arsinoe-Aphrodite, see Barbantani 2005: 142–52. Cf. her p. 141 pointing out that “[T]he portrayal of the goddess (in *P.Lit. Goodsp.* 2.I-IV) perfectly fits Ptolemaic royal propaganda in III-II BC: the cult of Aphrodite is transformed into a celebration of the harmony of the royal couple, granting dynastic legitimacy and continuity.” Given the hypothesis that the text comprises instructions for a royal ritual (Barbantani, pp. 164–5), it seems to me that the hymn utilizes the “sacred marriage” ideology. Barbantani’s argument that the cult reflects Cypriot traditions does not negate my suggestion given Photius’ (much later) definition of Adonia (Theodoridis 1982: 47, no.401): *ἔστι δὲ τὰ Ἀδώνια ἑορτή, οἱ μὲν φασιν εἰς τιμὴν Ἀδώνιδος ἀγομένη, οἱ δὲ τῆ Ἀφροδίτῃ, ἔστι δὲ Φοινίκων καὶ Κυπρίων* [The Adonia is a festival, held according to some in honour of Adonis, though others (argue) for Aphrodite and it originates from the Phoenicians and the Cypriots, my trans.].
- 189 That everyone could identify with Adonis in the Greek world at least is also suggested by Pind. *Isthm.* 2.4–5: *ὄστις ἐὼν καλὸς εἶχεν Ἀφροδίτας/ εὐθρόνον μνάστειραν ἄδισταν ὀπώραν* (at any boy who was handsome and had the sweetest bloom that woos fair-throned Aphrodite, trans. modelled on that of Race 1997: 147); cf. Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 168 with n.217.
- 190 For example, see Munn 2006: 136. Also see Katz 2007: 168 discussing Sumerian funerary practices as reflected in the mythological lament of Ašgi, where the god instructs his sister that after his death, she “should fetch a bed, set a chair and put a statue on it, place a garment on the chair, and cover the statue.” Also see her pp. 169–70

- associating the statue or effigy of the rite with the statue of Enkidu commissioned by Gilgamesh.
- 191 Cohen 2005: 130 also cited in Miller 2013: 131n.33.
- 192 See Miller (2013: 128) describing the so-called diadem of Queen Puabi.
- 193 Text and trans. George 2003: 734–5, cited by permission of Oxford University Press.
- 194 For example, see Oates and Oates 2001: 65, 68, 79–90, 245; Grayson 1975: 40–1 (on Chronicle 18).
- 195 See Gansell (2013: 180), who associates the “sacred marriage” rituals with Aššurbanipal’s famous “garden-party” relief from his North palace in Nineveh in terms of evoking the king’s sexual prowess; cf. Stavrakopoulou 2006: *passim* on “gardens” as burial places for kings – from this point of view, one could understand the relief as a post-mortem projection of the king’s happy afterlife.
- 196 Text and trans. George 2003: 656–7, cited by permission of Oxford University Press.
- 197 Cyril Alex., *In Isaiah* 3 (= *PG* 70, col.440–41) and Procopius of Gaza, *In Isaiah* 18 (= *PG* 87, 2, col.2140); also see Stavrakopoulou 2006: *passim* stressing the familiarity of Jewish communities with the ANE ideology of royal mortuary gardens.
- 198 Baughan 2013: esp.177–80, 182, 209, 221–2.
- 199 Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008: 513n.54; text from Gow <sup>2</sup>1952: 1.118 with our trans. reproduced from our 2008 article.
- 200 Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 176; Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008: 513–4; text from Edmonds 1912: 390, 391 with our trans. reproduced from our 2008 article (p. 514).
- 201 Cf. Theoc.Id.15.86 referring to “the thrice-beloved Adonis, loved even in the Underworld” (ὁ τριφίλιτος Ἀδωνίς, ὃ κήν Ἀχέρωντι φιλεῖται); also see Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 150.
- 202 Cf. *COS* I:420 (Hallo 1.118, l.20) for a Seleucid lament for Tammuz, where the goddess in grief for his loss asks, “for whom the couch, for whom the coverlet?”
- 203 Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008: 513.
- 204 However, we must bear in mind the OT references (1 Kings 11: 4–5; 2 Kings 22:13) to the introduction of the cult of Astoreth (= Ištar) by Solomon under the influence of his foreign wives which at least implies a loose connection with the royal house.
- 205 Lambert 2001: 91. I owe this reference to Katherine McLardy.
- 206 Foster 2006: 135: “Arsinoe’s festival also serves to advertise the divine status of Ptolemaic ancestors as well as the queen’s service to the goddess who may well engineer Arsinoe’s own future apotheosis.”
- 207 Text and trans. Gow <sup>2</sup>1952: 1.110–11.
- 208 Text and trans. (with my modifications) Gow <sup>2</sup>1952: 1.116–7.
- 209 Nagy 2013: 320–1.
- 210 Kosmin 2014: 186 with n.81 citing *OGIS* 228.3–4 and 229.12, 70, 83; cf. Wright 2012: 64–7 on Seleucid queens as goddesses.
- 211 Kosmin 2014: 186.
- 212 Kosmin 2014: 187 with n.85 citing *AD*-253 Obv. B 6.
- 213 Kosmin 2014: 187 with n.87 citing Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991: 85.
- 214 Sefati 1998: 102, 110, 291 (for C1.23).
- 215 Sefati 1998: 117.
- 216 Again, see Kosmin 2014: 187 with n.86 discussing Del Monte 1997: 42 on the name of Stratonice, which was transliterated in the Borsippa Cylinder as *Astartanikku* (although it is elsewhere transliterated phonetically as *Astartanīqe*) as a possible allusion to the Syrian goddess Astarte. Kosmin (p. 188) associates the *nikku* in the second part of her name with the Akkadian verb *niāku*, “to have sexual intercourse.”
- 217 See Bachvarova 2008: 19: “human lament is efficacious in restoring the god to his desired state” and therefore, I would add, restoring the dead, who are identified with the god, to their desired state; also cf. her pp. 22–4.

- 218 Text and trans. Gow <sup>2</sup>1952: 1.120–1 (with minor modifications from me).
- 219 Text and trans. Gow <sup>2</sup>1952: 1.120–1.
- 220 See Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 168 with further bibliography; notably, Origen, *Sel. Ezec.PG* 13, col. 797; St. Jerome, *Ezec.VIII PL* 25, cd 82, who explicitly refer to the god's "resurrection" are especially late; cf. Spronk (1986: 186, 344), who argues that that Adonis corresponds to Baal, the Canaanite deity that was known to the Israelites for returning annually to escort the spirits of the deified royals to the Underworld.
- 221 Kang 1989: 23–41.
- 222 Stordalen 2000: 95–8, esp.96.

## 4 The Seleucids at Babylon

### Flexing traditions and reclaiming the garden

μη σπευδ' Εὐρώπηνδ'· Ἀσίη τοι πολλὸν ἀμείνων.  
App.Syr.9.56<sup>1</sup>

This chapter investigates the Seleucids' ascent to power and the apparatus of their self-representation in lands culturally distinct from their native Macedon. I argue that the association of Seleucus Nicator (primarily) with Zeus and of his son Antiochus with Apollo should be explained in the context of long-standing NE traditions, facets of which we have examined in the previous chapters and which were preserved at Babylon, the Seleucids' new capital.<sup>2</sup> In this framework, I also revisit the Hellenistic royal rhetoric which promoted Heracles – a figure most prone to religious syncretism and strongly influenced by the tradition of Gilgameš– as the forefather of the Macedonians. I argue that Hellenistic monarchs embraced a universal approach to history, advocated already by Herodotus, and thus they posed as the last Heraclids enthralled in an attempt to reclaim their fatherland, to reclaim the “garden” of divine favour that their predecessors had lost. Hence, following the model of Alexander, Seleucus employed an additional set of beliefs to promote his legitimacy; by propagating a comparison between himself and Heracles, Seleucus re-founded the cities of Asia Minor in the name of their true ancestor. Within the scope of this ideology the ANE connections of Heracles, who is systematically identified with divine patrons of royalty such as Marduk, Melqart and Sandas, will be re-evaluated. His identification with Nergal, the Mesopotamian king of the Underworld, and the increasing resemblance of Nikephoros (Victorious) Athena, the divine patroness of both Heracles and the Seleucids, with Ištar will also inform the discussion.

Furthermore, following the discussion on the widespread celebration of the Adonia festival and its employment by Hellenistic royalty in the previous chapter, I adduce evidence from rarely examined fragments of Hellenistic literature and suggest a so-far-overlooked connection between Heracles and Adonis-like figures as another cultural mutation which diffused the ideologies of the “sacred marriage” and the “divine garden” in the west.

## The rise of the Seleucids

The voices that have long insisted on the continuity of local traditions under the Seleucids<sup>3</sup> seem to find additional support in a number of recent studies on the numismatic and epigraphic evidence from the Seleucid period;<sup>4</sup> however, despite the progress achieved, we still lack an understanding of the ideologies to which Hellenistic kings subscribed and hence, our appreciation of their political choices remains partial.<sup>5</sup> For the most part, the involvement of Hellenistic kings in local traditions is still interpreted as a series of random gestures designed to placate the eastern subjects and facilitate the kings in exacting taxes.<sup>6</sup> This view is in keeping with the general tendency of presenting the conquests of Alexander the Great as the unique achievement of an inspired ruler whose vision crumbled under the rivalry of his successors.<sup>7</sup> Hence, it has been suggested that Alexander's keen interest in the cultures he had conquered, which had reportedly shocked his soldiers,<sup>8</sup> was systematically replaced after his death by campaigns that sought to emphasize the structural similarity of the newly fangled Hellenistic kingdoms with the fourth-century BCE Argead house.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the race for legitimacy and royal authority amid Alexander's successors (in which Macedonian traditions were undeniably utilized) was about showcasing the kings' ability to rule and, therefore, it required a high level of engagement with the cultural contexts in which the kings tried to promote themselves. The very landscapes of the kingdoms which the successors fought for were interspersed with elaborate royal inscriptions and prominent monuments of past rulers, loud demarcations of their political visions, which Alexander's generals were undeniably aware of.<sup>10</sup> Although tracing the successors' "actual" beliefs and sense of identity can never be a fruitful exercise, their systematic employment of ANE policies in their political campaigns indicates that they were at ease with posing as "eastern" rulers and ready to implement the syncretistic spirit of the Hellenistic age from the start of their regime (also see Chapter 3: pp. 123–31). Although there is no denying that the Hellenistic kings were familiar with "eastern" models of kingship through the Persians, the latter had also adapted a number of Mesopotamian royal *topoi* themselves in their attempt to establish a universal empire, as we saw already in the case of the Persian *paradeisoi* (Chapter 1: p. 45 with n.171). Furthermore, the Seleucids – again following long-standing Mesopotamian royal traditions – had reasons to promote their connections with the pre-Persian rulers so that they could pose as the divine answer to the erring Persian conquerors of Babylon (539–331 BCE), whom the locals had grown to dislike (also, see p. 153 below). As O'Brien reminds us,<sup>11</sup>

The Babylonians were the last non-Persians willing to be liberated.

Among the Hellenistic successors, Seleucus was the only one to have nearly united under his rule the conquests of Alexander.<sup>12</sup> When in 324 BCE Alexander ordered a mass wedding ceremony at Susa, Seleucus married Apama, the daughter of the Bactrian ruler Spitamenes, who had already given birth to his son



Antiochus and had accompanied him during the Indian campaign as his mistress (Plut.*Dem.*31.3–4; Arr.*Anab.*7.4.6). Regardless of whether Seleucus was indeed the only Macedonian noble who did not repudiate his wife after Alexander's death, a much-repeated argument whose shaky roots Mairs has recently pointed out,<sup>13</sup> Apama was undeniably an important queen who presented Seleucus with an heir able to appeal to both his Greek and eastern subjects.<sup>14</sup> Seleucus and Antiochus I, his co-regent from ca. 292 BCE to Seleucus' death in 281/280 BCE, seem to have modelled their royal profiles on ANE kings who excelled in justice and piety under the divine guidance of Šamaš (Chapter 1: pp. 36–8). Although during the first millennium BCE Marduk arose as the king of gods in the Babylonian pantheon, he was invested with solar qualities, as we shall see, thus assuming Šamaš's role as the dispenser of divine justice. In the process of figuring out Babylonian theology and establishing their profiles as kings of Babylon the Seleucids promoted the Greek gods Zeus and Apollo as their divine progenitors, identifying Zeus with Marduk and Apollo with Nabû, his son.<sup>15</sup> This was an ingenious adaptation which allowed the filial relationship of Marduk with Nabû to be translated to the bond of Zeus with his son Apollo and was more familiar to their Greek and Macedonian addressees. At the same time, already under Seleucus I, the king was able to suggest an additional parallelism between himself and the family of the gods.<sup>16</sup>

### Shining over Babylon

Although, as Gruen pointed out, “no single model accounts for Hellenistic kingship,”<sup>17</sup> the responsiveness of the Seleucids toward Babylonian traditions and their interest in appealing to their eastern subjects can help us establish the basic principles of their government policies. The Seleucids were undoubtedly aware of Šamaš's exclusive ability to dispense justice and favour by transferring his qualities onto his royal protégés since Babylonian art and literature of that time was still infatuated with these ideas. For example, a copy of (the prologue of) Hammurapi's code (STC I, 216–7) which survived from Hellenistic Babylon is included in the artefacts that would unmistakably propagate ANE royal ideology to any newcomers.<sup>18</sup> In the first millennium the Babylonian king was typically addressed as the “image of Marduk” or “an image of Bēl” (cf. Jer.44:51, Bēl in Babylon).<sup>19</sup> The latter was a cultic title (*bēlu* = West Semitic *baʿlu* = biblical *baʿal*) meaning “lord” or “master,” often associated with storm/weather gods, which came to be closely associated with Marduk,<sup>20</sup> the patron god of the city.<sup>21</sup> Since Marduk has been associated with the rise of Babylon from a city-state to the capital of an empire, he is mostly quoted apropos the king's ability to vanquish his enemies and establish his rule.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, in his preoccupations with justice, Marduk acquired solar connections as exemplified by the Anu god list (= *Anum ša amēli*, the so-called Marduk theology), where Šamaš is referred to as “Marduk of Justice.”<sup>23</sup> In Akkadian prayers one of the epithets attributed to Marduk is *kak-kabu* (star), and the god is also exalted as *kakkab kitti u mēšaru* (the star of justice

and righteousness),<sup>24</sup> which creates a direct parallel with Šamaš's preoccupation with these two concepts; furthermore, in other prayers Marduk is clearly identified with the sun and is called *šamaš/šamšu* or *šamšu nebû* (bright sun) or *šarūru namru* (bright ray) as well as *šašši abbēšu* (the sun of his fathers).<sup>25</sup> The association, already implied in the closeness of Šamaš and Marduk in Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions (cf. Chapter 3: n.112), is also found in the Cylinder of Nabopolassar (625–605 BCE), who refers to himself as *LUGAL mi-ša-ri/re-é-um ni-bi-it* <sup>d</sup>*Marduk* [the king of justice, the shepherd called by Marduk, *COS* II:307 (Beaulieu 2.121)].<sup>26</sup> Later on in the text of his Cylinder, anxious to warn any future king of removing his words, Nabopolassar adds that he “swore Marduk's oath, my lord, and of Šamaš, my god,” thus stressing their overlapping powers. Furthermore, although Marduk was frequently associated in literature with storm iconography, the *Enuma Eliš* which was dedicated to Antiochus during the third year of his reign applies to him solar qualities.<sup>27</sup>

Given Zeus' identification with Bēl Marduk,<sup>28</sup> Seleucus' devotion to Zeus, reflected on his coins and recorded on relevant epigraphic and literary evidence,<sup>29</sup> may reflect his initial need to establish his rule under the auspices of Babylon's divine protector – having also secured the support of his all-important class of priests and scribes (see below pp. 152–3). At the same time Seleucus was also alluding to Zeus' connection to kingship in the Greek cultural context:<sup>30</sup> Zeus, the king of the gods who had claimed supremacy in heaven through long and violent conflicts [cf. *Hes.Th.*453–506 for his usurpation of power from Cronus, followed by the war of the Olympians against the Titans (ll.617–735) and Zeus' duel with Typhoeus (ll.807–900)] appealed greatly to Hellenistic kings, who, following the example of Alexander,<sup>31</sup> employed Zeus to endorse their sovereignty.<sup>32</sup> Zeus' sanction of kingship was powerfully advocated by Callimachus (*h.*1.79–80), who wrote, in striking agreement with Hesiod (*Th.*96), that “kings come from Zeus” (*ἐκ δὲ Διὸς βασιλῆες*) while in the *Iliad* (2.196–7) Homer had Odysseus assert that “great is the anger of kings nourished by Zeus: their honours come from Zeus, and Zeus the Counsellor loves them” (*θυμὸς δὲ μέγας ἐστὶ διοτρεφέων βασιλῶν, τιμὴ δ' ἐκ Διὸς ἐστι, φιλεῖ δὲ ἐμνηστία Ζεύς*; cf. *Il.*1.234, 2.205, 16.386, 9.98 and *Hes.Th.*84–6; 901–2). In staging his *basileia* – associated with Homer's blessed kings rather than the Persian despotism which the Greeks (under Athenian influence) had rejected with vehemence<sup>33</sup> – Seleucus advocated Zeus' ability to bestow military victory as evidenced by his coins featuring Zeus *Nikephoros* and his cultic title *Nicator*.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, the father–son relationship between Zeus and Apollo may well have been in the mind of Antiochus I, who seems to have initiated a conscious shift toward Apollo following the establishment of the dynasty.<sup>35</sup> The solar investment of supreme deities, able to shine their benevolence on earthly kings, had become a widespread phenomenon in the Hellenistic NE, often referred to in scholarship as the “solarisation of cult.”<sup>36</sup> Indeed inscriptions from the Hellenistic kingdoms indicate that numerous temples had been dedicated to the Sun,

and an impressive Heliopolis in Baalbek (modern-day Lebanon) could rival even the famous Egyptian Heliopolis.<sup>37</sup> However, rather than accepting that in all these regions the sun-deity was worshipped, as some type of overarching, global symbol of god, it would seem that these cults probably involved local deities whose supremacy was expressed in solar terms and included gods that were identified with the Greek Apollo *and/or* Zeus (my emphasis).<sup>38</sup> Hence, although Helios had been identified by the Greeks with Apollo already from the end of the classical period, statues of Helios Zeus were erected in a number of Hellenistic cities.<sup>39</sup> The god worshipped at Baalbek was, of course, a Ba'al, whom the Greeks identified with Zeus based on his iconography.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the role of Helios in the Greek concept of justice and the intricate way in which justice was negotiated between Helios and Zeus already in Homer<sup>41</sup> would further encourage the Seleucid employment of Zeus and Apollo in their political program in a complimentary manner which reflects local as much as Greek traditions. From this point of view, we can observe the socio-political changes that were effected during the Macedonian conquest but also the important contribution of long-standing traditions in the formation of the new (inter)cultural mutations which became prevalent in the Hellenistic period. Accordingly, during this period, in which kings show a renewed interest in passing legislation,<sup>42</sup> Zeus, who in Plato teaches King Minos the art of lawgiving,<sup>43</sup> and Apollo, whose (oracular) benefaction kings often recognized in their decrees,<sup>44</sup> were both invested with solar attributes which were duly transferable to their royal protégés. Besides, although both gods were invested with the solar qualities of Babylonian deities – leading to the propagation of a late myth about Apollo being the father of Seleucus (cf. RC 22) – it was their father–son relationship that appealed the most to the early Seleucids.

### **The Seleucids at Babylon: the first generation**

In Tarn's opinion, the Seleucids showed a profound interest in Babylonian religion,<sup>45</sup> possibly in response to the Ptolemaic adoption of Egyptian traditions as a means of legitimizing their claim to rule. In the same vein, Sherwin-White noted:<sup>46</sup>

The Babylonian monarchy was a dynamic mechanism foreign rulers were careful to utilize . . . the kingship and the rituals associated with it gave both the king and his subjects a framework to operate in. The Seleucids actively exploited the system.

In the footsteps of Alexander, the Seleucids seem to have appreciated the political dimensions of their religious profile already since the foundation of their dynasty.<sup>47</sup> Apparently, the considerable role of the Babylonian priests in establishing royal authority was not lost in Seleucus, who tried to appeal to them right from the start.<sup>48</sup> According to Diodorus (19.90.2–4), when Seleucus was about to defeat Antigonos and conquer Babylon and in an attempt to encourage his exhausted soldiers, he confided in them for the first time that the oracle of Apollo

at Branchidae, near Cyme, had assured him of his future as king.<sup>49</sup> This tradition was obviously intended to create a parallel between Seleucus and Alexander, who had also received confirmation of his divinity by the Apolline oracles of Erythrai and Didyma.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, however, Seleucus followed a time-honoured ANE tradition about the divine selection of the king by Šamaš and/or (solarized) Marduk.<sup>51</sup> Although the epigraphic and numismatic evidence<sup>52</sup> indicates that Diodorus propagates a later tradition, formed at the earliest around 281–280 BCE – that is, very close to Seleucus’ death and hence quite probably an initiative of his son, Antiochus – his portrayal of the relationship of the king with the Babylonians and their priests deserves closer attention.

Diodorus (19.90–93) reported that Seleucus was certain of the support of the Babylonians when he was about to claim the city from Antigonos because he had established good relations with them during the 5 years he had been their satrap (320–315 BCE) when he was behaving “as their king.”<sup>53</sup> It is certainly true that the Babylonians had a decisive role in the defeat of Archon, the previous satrap, whom the local population disliked and whom Perdikkas tried to replace with Docimus;<sup>54</sup> and although, as Boiy pointed out,<sup>55</sup> the Greek sources do not explicitly say that the Babylonians or their priests favoured Seleucus<sup>56</sup> (or indeed whether their opinion mattered in his selection), Seleucus seems keen to fulfil his ritual obligations as the satrap of Babylonia.<sup>57</sup> The priests also seem to have acknowledged Seleucus’ authority because, soon after his entering the city in October/November 320 BCE, they asked for his financial aid so that the “dust of Esagila could be removed,” that is, to have the temple of Bēl-Marduk cleaned (*BCHP* 3, obv.25 = *ABC* 10, *CM* 30).<sup>58</sup> Although the reading of the Chronicle in question is unclear as to whether Seleucus granted the requested funds after all, later Seleucids clearly obliged.<sup>59</sup>

Diodorus (19.91.1–2) also related the enthusiasm with which the Babylonian people welcomed Seleucus back to the city. Although his account lacks explicit support from cuneiform documents,<sup>60</sup> Seleucus seems to have been attentive to maintaining the balance of power between the new rulers and temple authorities, because despite being in a dire financial situation following the war with Antigonos, he remained diplomatic in the way he imposed his demands on local temples.<sup>61</sup> Hence, political realities encouraged cultural engagement.

In *BCHP* 3 Seleucus appears as the “satrap of the land of Akkad” (obv.11.22, 25), a title he must have assumed upon his victory against Antigonos in 311 BCE – the title appears on the same line as the aforementioned reference to the cleaning of the Esagila,<sup>62</sup> a duty that later Seleucids duly observed according to the Chronicles.<sup>63</sup> Van der Spek and Finkel<sup>64</sup> are hesitant as to whether the satrap of line 22 is Docimus or Seleucus. But even if the satrap here is Docimus, then Seleucus’ appointment must be mentioned in the intervening lines and hence, as Van der Spek suggests, the satrap of line 25 is most likely Seleucus. Seleucus’ engagement with Babylonian religion is also mentioned in *BCHP* 9, obv.2 (= *ABC* 12, *CM* 33), where reference is made to a “procession road of Bēl.”<sup>65</sup> This is compatible with our surviving neo-Babylonian inscriptions, where the most typical phrase characterizing the king is *zānin Esagila u*

*Ezida* (provider of Esagila and Ezida),<sup>66</sup> which highlights the cultic profile of the king and his close connection with the temple. A most prominent sample of this ideology is a hymn addressed to Nebuchadnezzar II (634–562 BCE), where we are told that in fitting out temples and renewing the cities that contained them, the king obeyed<sup>67</sup>

Marduk bêlu rabu-ú | ra-<sup>2</sup>-i-mu | ša-ar-ru-ú-[us-su]  
 ú-bu-lam-ma lib-ba-šú za-na-a-nu Ê-sag-ila Ê-zi-da ù ú-tê-id-du-šú  
 Ba-bi-i-lu (ki) âlu na-ra-[amšu]

Marduk, the great lord, who loved his royalty,  
 turned his heart to the preserving of Esagila [and] Ezisa, and the renewal of  
 Babylon, the city that he loved . . .

The hymn summarizes the core of Nebuchadnezzar's political program and exemplifies the notion of royal patronage as a divine mandate which the king carried out successfully.<sup>68</sup> Fittingly, the Astronomical Diary of February 187 (= 188 BCE) states that during a ritual ceremony in the Esagil Antiochus III was presented with a 400-year-old robe that belonged to Nebuchadnezzar II<sup>69</sup> – a clear indication of the appeal that Babylonian royal ideology exercised in the Seleucid court. Furthermore, the Seleucids were not indifferent to the portrayal of their ANE predecessors as accomplished gardeners (cf. Chapter 1: p. 48), a metaphor designed to allude to the ability of the king to exercise control (through his communion with the gods) in emulation of Gilgamesh's adventure in the Cedar Forest.<sup>70</sup>

The issue of the ruler cult during the Seleucid period has been long discussed in the bibliography with the (debatable) inference that Seleucus was probably less zealous about his deification, which was mainly organized by Antiochus.<sup>71</sup> Hence, when the Athenians at Lemnos decided to posthumously honour Seleucus and his son Antiochus by building them a temple,<sup>72</sup> they ordained that the former would be worshipped as Soter (a cultic title associated with both Zeus and Apollo)<sup>73</sup> and that in libations Zeus' name would be substituted for that of the king.<sup>74</sup> Zeus Soter was especially associated with Athens (Arist.*Plut.* 1174–5), where he was also linked to Zeus Eleutherios;<sup>75</sup> given that Seleucus was hailed as liberator on this occasion,<sup>76</sup> the cult fits his profile as victorious king under the auspices of Zeus/Marduk, although the input of the ordaining group was probably (more) important on this occasion.

Overall, despite the tradition that claimed Seleucus to be the son of Apollo (i.e. *Just.Ep.* 15.4),<sup>77</sup> the king seems to have differentiated between Apollo and the Sun-god, perhaps in order to facilitate the association of Apollo with his son. Hence, although he had allegedly instituted games at Ilion [*ὡς καὶ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος τελεῖται* (similar to those performed in honour of Apollo, *OGIS* 212.14),<sup>78</sup> who was hailed as the founder of the dynasty (*ἀρχηγὸς τοῦ γένους*),<sup>79</sup> the cult involved sacrifices to Athena (Il. 18, 20), a goddess typically associated with Zeus and Victory. Seleucus' preference for this group of gods is also reflected on his coins,

which often featured heads of the Sun-god (not Apollo) in connection with Nike, Zeus and/or Athena,<sup>80</sup> while opting for Apollo only,<sup>81</sup>

in limited issues . . . most prominently on the gold staters issued in the east, where Antiochus was king.

Furthermore, soon after his victory against Antigonus at Ipsos in 301 BCE, Seleucus issued coins with the image of the king (or Alexander) on the obverse wearing a leopard-skin helmet with bullhorn and ear (a nod to Dionysus, the conqueror of India and *another* prominent son of Zeus). The reverse of these coins depicts Nike with a crowning trophy and a head of Helios which could be interpreted in the Babylonian ideology as an indication of divine favour [Fig. 4.1]. The coin is inscribed *ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ*, and given that Seleucus had also struck coins without his royal title, it seems that these coins were designed to stress his newly acclaimed royal status while preserving intact the affinity of his son with Apollo.

In addition, the king had issued tetradrachms as early as 304/305 BCE featuring horned elephants driving the chariot of Athena, while on a few double darics we come across a horseman wearing a horned helmet and riding a horned horse (related either to Seleucus, who was trying thus to allude to Alexander, or Alexander himself).<sup>82</sup> Although the horns could be understood to evoke the Siwan representation of Zeus Ammon<sup>83</sup> or Dionysus<sup>84</sup> or Apollo, the “two-horned” god of Orphic hymns,<sup>85</sup> horned caps of divinity were often worn by Šamaš and his royal protégés in ANE representations,<sup>86</sup> while on Hammurapi’s stela the god is portrayed with both rays and horns.<sup>87</sup> Hence, Seleucus most probably appreciated the Mesopotamian images that had for centuries associated kings with the



Fig. 4.1 Seleucus I coin: Horned Seleucus I (obverse), wreathing Nike (reverse), image kindly provided by Arthur Houghton and reproduced with his permission. Houghton and Lorber 2002: 173.14(pl.10); cf. Mørkholm et al. 1991: 72

horned Šamaš.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, the representation of Marduk with a horn-crown had attracted the attention of the Greeks, and we know that Alexander had generously repaired it in 325 BCE.<sup>89</sup> In this context his closeness to the gods secured him an elevated status in cult from early on,<sup>90</sup> yet the king's investment with supra-human qualities should be probably understood, as in the case of numerous ANE rulers, as a metaphor employed to evoke and renew his relationship with his subjects. Seleucus was prepared to recognize the symbolic values of this metaphor, and his subjects were keen to employ them. This approach could also explain why, despite his devotion to solarized Zeus-Marduk, Seleucus could still pronounce his piety toward Apollo.

Hence, as mentioned in Chapter 1: p. 48, Seleucus dedicated a sanctuary to the god at Daphne near Antioch<sup>91</sup> which was later represented on a special issue of Antiochus IV (215–164 BCE),<sup>92</sup> and he also started rebuilding the famous oracle of Apollo at Didyma.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, his offerings to the temple and to the *θεοῖς τοῖς Σωτήρσι* (the saviour gods) most probably included Zeus Soter.<sup>94</sup> In addition, Seleucus returned to the temple the bronze statue of Apollo that Darius I had removed in 494 BCE<sup>95</sup> in an attempt to replicate Cyrus' return of the statues confiscated by his predecessor Nabonidus, as recorded on his famous Cylinder.<sup>96</sup> According to the text, Cyrus accepted an invitation by the god Marduk who, unsatisfied with Nabonidus' regime, was in search of a righteous king. As a result of divine favour, Cyrus entered the city peacefully and was able to return to its temples statues of gods that Nabonidus had previously removed.<sup>97</sup> Hence, it could be argued that while Seleucus' gesture has been understood as a nod to the particular god, when placed in its wider politico-historical context, it promotes his alliance with kings chosen by Marduk for their piety and sense of justice.

Given the solar associations of Bēl Marduk (pp. 150–1 above) and Seleucus' careful predilection for Zeus, the notion of promoting one god over the other as the result of gradual immersion into local traditions by the time of Antiochus fades away.<sup>98</sup> Rather, Antiochus' association with Apollo proved extremely useful in mirroring the divine father–son relationship of Zeus with Apollo on their royal protégés.<sup>99</sup> Apparently, “Zeus and his son Apollo modelled the world of earthly sovereigns,”<sup>100</sup> in perfect harmony with the royal ideology of first-millennium BCE Babylonia when the task of the king was to create prosperity under divine orders;<sup>101</sup> the Seleucid policy portrays the Hellenistic kings as energetic actors in the cultural interactions of their time, seriously preoccupied with appealing to their subjects while safeguarding the succession process. Hence, an inscription from the reign of Seleucus IV (187–175 BCE) indicates that there was a priest of Seleucus Zeus Nicator together with one for Antiochus Apollo Soter.<sup>102</sup>

### **The Seleucids at Babylon: the next generation**

After Seleucus' death, Antiochus entombed his father's ashes in Seleucia and ordained his veneration as Zeus Nicator.<sup>103</sup> However, as we saw, the path to ruler deification was subtly but surely strewn for Antiochus I, who also received cult at Erythrai, possibly during his lifetime.<sup>104</sup> In turn, Antiochus seems to have held

the city in special esteem, and a surviving decree records privileges that Antiochus (or his son) offered to the city for their loyalty.<sup>105</sup> The king, posing as a close reflection of Apollo Soter (hence Antiochus is surnamed Soter after the god), introduced the coins of the god sitting on the *omphalos* with an arrow.<sup>106</sup>

Ritual offered the Seleucids the opportunity to promote their soteriological aspects which could legitimize their “civilizing” influence in terms of their ability to establish order and prosperity. In the Babylonian context, *BCHP* 6 informs us that shortly after the death of Seleucus, his son, Antiochus I, had been supervising the cleaning of the Esagila; the name of Bēl is mentioned (obv.3) along with an offering made *ina muh-hi ni-ip-lu šá/É.SAG.GÍL* (on the ruin of Esagila) (obv.4–5). Continuing on line 6, Antiochus, we are told (*ina muh-hi ni-ip-lu šá É.SAG.GÍL*) *in-da-qut*, a phrase which Van der Spek<sup>107</sup> translates as (on the ruin of Esagila) “he fell” noting that although the meaning “prostrate” is given to the verb *maqātu* in the Amarna letters, it is always followed by the phrase *ana šēpē* “to the feet of”<sup>108</sup> and that anyway the scribe was more likely to use the verb *šukēnu* (found in contemporary astronomical diaries and chronicles)<sup>109</sup> if he wished to stress the piety of the king. So, he concludes, the king probably “fell on his face” while supervising restoration works at the temple, clearly a bad omen, which could explain why in the next line he appears as sacrificing “in the Greek fashion,” most probably to avert bad luck.<sup>110</sup> The incident is not mentioned anywhere in our Greek sources, although Van der Spek cites as a similar paradigm Plutarch (*Dem.*29.2), who refers to Antigonus and his praying to the gods immediately after he accidentally stumbled and fell down outside his tent. However, the comparison of the two episodes is rather speculative. In addition, the idiom seems to have been “to fall on the face” *ina appi maqātu* (corresponding to the Hebrew *qadad appayim*),<sup>111</sup> which again does not seem to be what our text says. I would be inclined to suggest two solutions, the first of which I find more convincing. It appears that in Middle Assyrian the verb *maqātu* could denote obeisance even when used on its own. In discussing expressions of respect and loyalty in the Amarna corpus Bar-Asher Siegal writes:<sup>112</sup>

In the Amarna letters the verb *šuhēhunu* appears only in the Canaanite letters, while the regular verb with the same meaning is *maqātu* . . . In the Amarna letters it occurs usually with complements in the formula “I fall at the feet of my lord seven times and seven times,” but . . . in the Middle Assyrian formula, it stands alone, probably with the meaning of “I do obeisance.”

From this point of view, the irregularity regarding the choice of verb in the Chronicle probably has to do with the scribe’s appreciation of archaizing expressions, or it may even be intentional so as to disassociate Antiochus from the immediately previous Achaemenid rulers by alluding to ancient, happier regimes.<sup>113</sup>

My second solution is based on a secondary meaning for *maqātu*, “to befall, to happen, to arrive,” which is well attested and may be suitable at this point:<sup>114</sup> it could mean that the king happened to arrive at the temple to perform sacrifices, especially as his presence is not obvious in the admittedly badly damaged previous



lines of the text (the ending – u-nu on l.5 implies third person plural). On lines 7–8 the king, his troops, wagons and elephants remove (*i]d-de-ku-ú*) the debris of Esagila, and they eat on the empty lot of the temple (l.9) – probably a reference to the sacrificial meal. Van der Spek explains the removal of debris as the result of the king’s anger at having fallen down; however, given that the expression to “remove the dust/debris” of the Esagila has been found often in the Hellenistic Chronicles, where it typically denotes engagement in ritual preparations,<sup>115</sup> I am inclined to think that here too it relates Antiochus’ keen interest in carrying out his royal duties, especially given that Alexander had also generously ordered the restoration of the Esagila before embarking on his eastern campaign.<sup>116</sup> This reading is corroborated by line 14, where Antiochus undertakes activity with regard to the Esagila, the Ezida (temple of Nabû), and other sanctuaries.<sup>117</sup> Notably, the month Addaru which appears on line 15 is important for the celebration of the *akītu*, while the 20th of Addaru is mentioned in the Borsippa cylinder, where Antiochus proudly informs us that he has laid the first bricks for the foundation of the Ezida (obv.13, cited below).<sup>118</sup> On line 10 of the Chronicle we also read about a lightning omen (*IZI ŠUB = miqitti išāti = lit. fall of fire*), which had particularly negative meaning in the Babylonian cultic context. This could perhaps explain Antiochus’ (rushed?) appearance and the need for exceptional adulation toward the god.<sup>119</sup>

Antiochus’ interest in his cultic duties is also exemplified in *BCHP* 5 (obv.8–12), where the king is shown as visiting temples, making offerings to the moon god Sin, and ordering the dust cleared from Esagila.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, in the reverse of the tablet, which is badly damaged, we read about dedications to Bēl Marduk, Nabû, and Beltia(?) (ll.12–14). Apart from the temple of Bēl, Antiochus also re-founded the temple of Nabû at Borsippa.<sup>121</sup> In his famous cylinder, dedicated to the god, Antiochus leaves no doubt of the universal aspects of his royal status in line with traditional Babylonian royal ideology which links the king with cosmic order. The text reads (ll.i.1–15):<sup>122</sup>

<sup>1</sup>An-ti-’-ku-us LUGAL GAL-ú  
 LUGAL dan-nu LUGAL ŠÁR LUGAL E<sup>ki</sup> LUGAL KUR.KUR  
 za-ni-in É.SAG.ÍL ù É.ZI.DA  
 IBILA SAG.KAL ša <sup>1</sup>Si-lu-uk-ku LUGAL  
<sup>lú</sup>ma-ak-ka-du-na-a-a LUGAL E<sup>ki</sup>  
 a-na-ku i-nu-ma a-na e-pé-eš<sub>15</sub>  
 É.SAG.ÍL ù É.ZI.DA  
 lib-bi ub-lam-ma SIG<sub>4</sub>.HI.A  
 É.SAG.ÍL ù É.ZI.DA  
 i-na KUR ḫa-at-ti ina ŠU.MIN-ía el-le-ti  
 i-na Ì.GIŠ ru-uš-ti al-bi-in-ma  
 a-na na-de-e uš-šú ša É.SAG.ÍL  
 ù É.ZI.DA ub-bi-il(?) ina ITI ŠE U<sub>4</sub> 20-KAM  
 MU 43-KAM uš-šu ša É.ZI.DA  
 É ki-i-ni É <sup>d</sup>NÀ šá qé-reb bar-sip<sup>ki</sup>

Antiochus, great king,  
 powerful king, king of the world, king of Babylon, king of the lands,  
 provider of Esagil and Ezida,  
 firstborn son of king Seleucus,  
 the Macedonian, king of Babylon,  
 I, when I decided to restore  
 Esagil and Ezida,  
 I moulded bricks  
 for Esagil and Ezida  
 in the land of Hatti with my pure hands,  
 with fine oil,  
 and I brought them for laying the foundations of Esagil  
 and Ezida. On the 20th day of the month Addaru,  
 in the 43rd year (of the Seleucid era [= 27 March 268]), I laid the  
 foundations of Ezida,  
 the proper temple,  
 the temple of Nabû, which is in Borsippa.

Here Antiochus (esp. ll.1–2) clearly subscribes to the Babylonian formula of presenting the king as ruler of the world.<sup>123</sup> On line 28 of his dedication the king prays for victory against his enemies and for a just kingship (*LUGAL<sup>u<sub>3</sub>-tu</sup> mi-ša<sub>2</sub>-ri pa-le-e*) following a long list of Mesopotamian rulers before him.<sup>124</sup> In addition, the king had identified Nabû – despite his gender being either male or female – with Apollo,<sup>125</sup> probably because Nabû was believed to be the son of Marduk.<sup>126</sup> By aligning himself with Apollo/Nabû, Antiochus promotes the idea of Marduk being identified with Seleucus. Therefore, the royal family perfectly replicated the world of the gods, which echoes the ANE affinity of the palace and the cosmos. In the words of Kuhrt and Sherwin-White:<sup>127</sup>

The prayer of Nabû articulates an ideal picture of the king’s socio-political functions: in external relations the conquest of enemies, and enduring superiority, internally, justice, peace, a long reign and a stable succession.

Antiochus’ prayer to Nabû reads (II.ii.3–20):<sup>128</sup>

..... DUMU ru-bé-e  
<sup>d</sup>NÀ IBILA É.SAG.ÍL  
 bu-kúr <sup>d</sup>ASAR.RI reš-tu-ú  
 i-li-ti <sup>d</sup>E<sub>4</sub>.RU<sub>6</sub>.Ú.A šar-rat  
 a-na É.ZI.DA É ki-i-ni  
 É <sup>d</sup>a-nu-ti-ka šu-bat tu-<ub> lib<sup>129</sup>-bi-ka  
 i-na ħi-da-a-tú ù ri-šá-a-tú  
 i-na e-re-bi-ka i-na qí-bi-ti-ka  
 kit-ti ša la uš-tam-sa-ku li-ri-ku u<sub>4</sub>-mi-ia

li-mi-da MU.AN.NA-ti-ia  
 li-kun <sup>gis</sup>GU.ZA-ú-a li-il-bi-ir  
 pa-lu-ú-a i-na <sup>gis</sup>da-ka ši-i-ri  
 mu-kin pal-lu-uk-ku AN-e u KI-ti  
 i-na pi-i-ka el-li liš-tak-ka-nu  
 du-un-qí-ia KUR.KUR-MEŠ TA ši-it <sup>d</sup>UTU-ši  
 a-di e-re-eb <sup>d</sup>UTU-ši lik-šú-đu  
 ŠU.MIN-a-a man-da-at-ti-ši-nu lu-us-ni-iq-ma  
 a-na šuk-lu-lu É.SAG.ÍL  
 ù É.ZI.DA

Son of the prince,  
 Nabû, heir of Esagil,  
 firstborn son of Asari (= Marduk),  
 offspring of queen Erua,  
 when you enter Ezida, the proper temple,  
 temple of your supreme divinity,  
 your favourite residence, in happiness and joy,  
 by your just command,  
 which cannot be annulled, may my days be long,  
 may my years be many;  
 may my throne be secure,  
 may my reign be enduring,<sup>130</sup> by your sublime writing tablet  
 which fixes the boundary of heaven and earth.  
 By your pure mouth may my good fortune be established forever.  
 May my hands conquer the lands from sunrise to sunset.  
 May I gather their tribute  
 and bring it to perfect Esagil and Ezida

Antiochus seems to emulate Aššurbanipal (685–627 BCE), whose stele was found in an area of the temple of Marduk in Babylon.<sup>131</sup> Represented on it as carrying a basket full of bricks in order to lay the foundation of the temple, Aššurbanipal poses on the stele's inscription as<sup>132</sup>

šarru rabû šarru dan-nu šar kiššati šar Aššur  
 [šar] kib-rat irbit-ti šar šarrani  
 rubû la ša-na-an ša ina a-mat Aššur Šamaš  
 û Marduk ul-tu tam-tim ê-lit  
 [a]-di tam-tim šap-lit i-bê-lu-ma  
 [gi]-mir ma-lik u-šak-niš šê-pu-uš-šu  
 [za-nin] Ê-sag-ila ê-kal ilâni  
 [ša ki]-ma ši-ṭir bu-ru-mu u-nam-mir  
 šigar-šu û ša eš-ri-ê-ti ka-li-ši-na  
 hi-bil-ta-ši-na u-šal-lim. . . .

the great king, the mighty king, king of the whole (world), king of Assyria,  
king of the four regions, king of kings,  
the prince without an equal, who at the command of Aššur,  
Šamaš and Marduk from the upper sea  
to the lower sea rules,  
and all princes has subdued under his feet,  
who adorned Esagila the palace of the gods,  
(and) like the (starry) writing of the night sky  
caused its bolts to shine,  
and of the temples all of them  
their breaches restored.

Like Antiochus, he calls upon Nabû to make his “royal throne firm” and finishes with a call to the future rulers of the land to restore and preserve the ruins of the sacred precinct and to protect his monument. There is no doubt that the Seleucids heard his message clearly; nevertheless, this does not mean that they were so infatuated by cultural syncretism or in awe of Babylonian wisdom that they refrained from aggression towards their subjects.<sup>133</sup> The Seleucid expressions of religiosity, carefully designed – often with help from local priests<sup>134</sup> – were a crucial part of their political program which *aimed at creating* a sense of historical continuity,<sup>135</sup> not because they felt they had to defend/promote their ethnic identity but because they could appreciate the political benefits of their religious policy. Accordingly, the question of whether the Seleucids compromised their Macedonian/Greek identity by enthusiastically worshipping Babylonian gods is simply irrelevant when it comes to understanding ancient cultural workings on the macroscopic level. What matters is that the Seleucids did endorse structures which encouraged (elite and non-elite) cultural interaction and which they could dictate to a considerable degree but certainly not control.<sup>136</sup>

### **Heracles and Gilgameš in the Seleucid kingship**

Although the Seleucids emphasized their connection to Apollo,<sup>137</sup> they were certainly not averse to the protection of Heracles, who appears regularly on their early coinage (possibly in imitation of Alexander’s iconography),<sup>138</sup> while (much later) Antiochus I of Commagene (69–34 BCE) is famously portrayed as shaking hands with Heracles in Nemrut Dağ.<sup>139</sup> The increasing association of Apollo with Heracles during the Hellenistic period, especially vis-à-vis their role as protectors of kings, is also reflected in Callimachus (*h.3.143–8*), according to whom Zeus replaced Apollo with Heracles as the gatekeeper of the Heavens.<sup>140</sup> Hence, in this section I will revisit the traditions associated with Heracles on the eve of Alexander’s campaign to the East and trace their development under the Seleucids; my argument is that Heracles’ long-standing connections with royalty are gradually enhanced through his syncretism with numerous ANE deities so that his theological profile is enriched, affording his royal protégés access to divine knowledge and a pathway of ascending to godlike status.

Alexander had eagerly joined the long line of his ancestors who had meticulously utilized traditional mythology to claim a prestigious pedigree that went right back to Heracles as the progenitor of the Argead house.<sup>141</sup> In fact, it was on account of their connection with Argos and Heracles that the Argeads had been granted the right to participate in the Olympic Games.<sup>142</sup> Equally, it was in this spirit that Isocrates presented Heracles as a model for Philip, who drew on the episode of Heracles' attack on Troy to legitimize his own campaign against the Persians, a campaign eventually realized under the leadership of Alexander.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, the Macedonian expedition to the east was promoted as fulfilling Philip's (Heracleian) initiative of avenging the Greeks.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, Alexander was obviously keen to foster a personal relationship with Heracles, to whom he sacrificed after the defeat of the Getae;<sup>145</sup> he also ordered the procession of the Macedonian army (a forerunner of the Hellenistic form of triumph) in honour of Heracles after the fall of Tyre.<sup>146</sup> There Alexander's soldiers identified Heracles with Melqart, the leading Phoenician god known for his prominent chthonic *and* royal associations.<sup>147</sup> As Tarn argued,<sup>148</sup> Callisthenes' story that Alexander wished to visit Zeus Ammon because he had heard that Heracles and Perseus had done so before him may be true; after all, as Curtius claimed, Alexander was *congnoſcendae vetuſtatis avidum* (4.7.3; eager to know about ancient times; cf. Arr.*Anab.*7.28.1: τοῦ θεῖου ἐπιμελέστατος),<sup>149</sup> and in presenting himself as *another* Perseus and *another* Heracles he effectively posed as the last of the Heraclids who was re-claiming kingship under the patronage of father Zeus (of course, in this guise Alexander conveniently also posed as another son of Zeus by a mortal mother).<sup>150</sup> Tarn's arguments focused on distinguishing between facts and propagandistic tales that originated in the Macedonian royal court and, therefore, he drew attention to the tradition according to which Heracles had failed to conquer Aornos (in modern Punjab), a site that attracted the king's interest allegedly because he wished to outdo his famous ancestor.<sup>151</sup> According to Strabo (15.1.9), Caucasus, the place where Prometheus had been traditionally subjected to the torturous punishment of Zeus, was now identified with Aornos in Hindu Kush – Alexander would "liberate" the place in an attempt to rival Heracles who had liberated Prometheus from his torture on the peaks of Caucasus. The veracity of the tale, as Tarn and Edmunds pointed out, had been doubted already since antiquity,<sup>152</sup> but of course this did not inhibit its proliferation in literature.<sup>153</sup>

It is probably in the context of this tradition that Strabo refers to the Dorian populations of Asia as Heraclids (children of Heracles; 14.2.7), while, according to Arrian (*Anab.*2.5.9), Alexander believed himself to be a Heraclid from Argos.<sup>154</sup> This tradition is noticeably compatible with the renewed importance during the Hellenistic period of the legendary founders of Asian Greek communities many of whom pose as descendants of Heracles and/or his sons.<sup>155</sup> As in the case of the Macedonian royal house, a connection with Heracles<sup>156</sup> and/or his descendants afforded those communities both a means of highlighting their Greek ancestry and also a way of suggesting that they were "reclaiming" their fatherlands under the protection of Alexander who set out to "liberate" the Greek cities in the spring of 334 BCE. Therefore, the keen interest of Alexander and his

successors in founding cities did not simply serve the purposes of Hellenising the locals and/or securing army supply lines; equally, it was not solely the result of Alexander's zeal to emulate his NE predecessors in the throne as "king of the world"<sup>157</sup> but was also seamlessly woven into deep-rooted traditions surrounding the Greek settlement of Asia Minor which were possibly utilized already at the time of Philip II. The latter consulted the Delphic Oracle regarding his eastern campaign (designed to take place in 336 BCE but undertaken by Alexander)<sup>158</sup> and, although his enquiry most probably focused on the outcome of his campaign against the Persian king,<sup>159</sup> securing favourable omens by Apollo's priestess was also an essential prerequisite for the leaders of ancient colonizing endeavours,<sup>160</sup> a tradition which the oracle of Apollo at Didyma positively reinforced during the Hellenistic period.<sup>161</sup> Indeed, Pythia's puzzling response may be understood in the context of a colonizing expedition, a parallelism ancient audiences could readily appreciate; according to Diodorus (16.91.2), the priestess allegedly said to Philip:

ἔσπεται μὲν ὁ ταῦρος, ἔχει τέλος, ἔστιν ὁ θύσων.

Wreathed is the bull. All is done. There is also the one who will smite him.

Since thanksgiving sacrifices were due upon arrival to the new colony, we may perceive the defeated Persian king as the sacrificial bull, the token which confirms the divine endorsement of the Macedonian re-foundation of the NE. The portrayal of the king as bull was, as discussed in Chapter 1, quite common across the ANE, and Homer had notably employed it to describe Agamemnon, the ill-fated leader of the Greeks.<sup>162</sup> Therefore, it could be argued that the Macedonian expedition of "avenging" the Greeks was underpinned from the start by the ideology of "reclaiming" territories that had witnessed some of the most glorious episodes in Heracles' career. Greek soldiers prayed to Heracles already since the time of Xenophon, whose men wandered in the regions of Trepizond and Heracleia in the Black Sea before being saved by Zeus under the guidance, nevertheless, of Heracles.<sup>163</sup>

The association of Heracles with Seleucid kingship was also possibly promoted in the work of Megasthenes, the author of the *Indica*, whom Seleucus had employed as his envoy to Maurya, a kingdom in northern India. As Kosmin has pointed out,<sup>164</sup> by means of justifying Seleucus' withdrawal from India, Megasthenes listed all the great kings of the past who were also repelled from conquering India including Nebuchadnezzar II, who became a major royal model for the early Seleucids.<sup>165</sup> In his reference to Nebuchadnezzar, though, Megasthenes did not omit to add that the king was especially esteemed by the Chaldeans on account of his greater bravery and achievements which surpassed those of Heracles.<sup>166</sup>

Besides, Heracles' apotheosis, celebrated already in Hesiod and Sophocles,<sup>167</sup> could further substantiate the soteriological aspects of Hellenistic royal ambition. The hero had travelled on many occasions to the Underworld,<sup>168</sup> each time conquering its forces with the help of Athena<sup>169</sup> and each time returning to reaffirm his dominion.<sup>170</sup> Notably, after instituting lamentation for his dead friend Enkidu, the

grieving Gilgameš also promised to him to (*GE* VIII.90–1 in George 2003: 656–7, cited by permission of Oxford University Press)

ù ana-ku ar-ki-k[a ú-šá-áš-šá-a ma-la]-a pag-ri'  
al-tab-biš-ma mašak(kuš) l[a-ab-bi-(im-ma) a-rap]-pu-ud šēra(edin)

And I, after you are gone [I shall have] myself [bear the matted hair of mourning,]

I shall don the skin of a [lion] and [go roaming the wild.]

Given that Gilgameš vows to put on a lion-skin right when he is about to undertake his final adventure to the otherworld realm of Utnapištim, we are again reminded of the importance of “regulating” the appropriate veneration for our dead kin and establishing a theory of death as the pinnacle of royal, heroic efforts to establish civilization.

Following his apotheosis, Heracles had celebrated a “sacred marriage” to Hebe (Youth), the daughter of Hera<sup>171</sup> – the episode could be understood to correspond to Gilgameš’s promise in the *GE* to celebrate the *akītu* (*GE* II.268–71 in George 2003: 568–9) following his successful return from his adventure to the Cedar Forest, especially if we accept that the residence of the monstrous Ĥumbaba is the meeting point of Heaven and the Underworld.<sup>172</sup> By returning to the regions where his traditions had originally taken shape, Heracles spearheads the *interpretatio Graeca*, fuelling the creativity of kings and poets alike, who rush to respond to what can be termed “people’s longing for belonging.” In this spirit of revisiting old traditions Heracles becomes the par excellent agent of Hellenistic universalism.

Heracles’ similarities with Gilgameš (including their relationship with the Sun),<sup>173</sup> but also with Ninurta, the “strong son of Enlil” and patron of cities such as Girsu and Nippur, have been often noted in scholarship,<sup>174</sup> further explaining the hero’s appeal to Greeks and easterners alike. In Beaulieu’s words:<sup>175</sup>

Ninurta . . . was also endowed with the qualities of kingship and rulership. Starting with the Middle-Babylonian period Assyrian and Babylonian theologians systematically transferred his imagery and titles to their own “king of the gods”: Aššur, Marduk, and finally Nabû. The mythology of Ninurta became, so to speak, an original “blueprint” for divine rulership which continued to flourish alongside the theologies of those major gods.

Notably, although Guillaume argued that the hero’s consort, the goddess Anat,<sup>176</sup>

. . . represents aggressive aspirations for ‘national liberation,’ while Ninurta catalyzes poor people’s yearnings for land and stability necessary for cultivation,

Hellenistic Heracles seems to treat his encounters with the female as challenges for re-affirming his ability to traverse boundaries – of gender, of cultural traditions, of

cosmic awareness (cf. n.216 below). Besides, the universally applicable civilizing effects of Ninurta-Heracles, whose adventures were widely attested down to the Seleucid era,<sup>177</sup> allowed Hellenistic kings to overlay their political ambitions with the idea of a *nostos* (return) to lands promised to them by god. In this setting the initial ethnic tensions could be rendered irrelevant, giving way to a rhetoric about the (re)establishment of kingship and the *cosmos* under virtuous kings obviously favoured by the gods.

This idea was further supported by a thorough revision of Homeric traditions,<sup>178</sup> while Ephorus of Cyme (in Asian Aeolis), a famous historian and contemporary of Philip and Alexander, encapsulated the spirit of the time by writing a universal history in thirty books spanning 750 years from the return of the Heraclids to the Peloponnese to 341 BCE.<sup>179</sup> Ephorus modelled his work on that of Herodotus, who had also discussed the return of the Heraclids (9.26.3–9). In his account, Herodotus specified that a number of the descendants of Dorian Heracles founded several cities in Asia Minor.<sup>180</sup> Zeus' wish to make his illegitimate son king of Greece (or even the entire world; cf. n.86 for Marduk's title of *bēl māṭāti*, king of lands) was in circulation from an early date because it appears already in the *Iliad* (19.95–133) and is subsequently summarized by numerous authors.<sup>181</sup> However, according to myth, Hera arranged for Heracles' birth to be delayed, and therefore he lost his right to kingship to his unworthy cousin Eurystheus, the man who imposed on the hero his twelve labours (cf. Callim.*Aet.*23.19–20; Theoc.*Id.*25.204). Through this divine entrapment and his subsequent suffering in the service of Eurystheus Heracles developed an extraordinary sense of justice, and his worthiness for kingship was often related in ancient sources.<sup>182</sup> During the later Hellenistic period the profile of Heracles as an ideal sage and suffering king who endures the insult of service to an inferior is advocated in the Cynic and Stoic portrayals of the king.<sup>183</sup> His selfless suffering which he turned into boundless benefaction for humanity turned him into a hero and an immortal, and in similar fashion Hellenistic kings now posed as “paragons of exemplarity and virtue . . . [who] attained perfection and immortality.”<sup>184</sup> Their endless ambitions and fighting were now seen as Heracleian labours in the service of humanity and – crucially – an indispensable part of a divine promise for the return of authority to legitimate hands. After the death of Alexander, the Ptolemies rushed to claim the lion-clad hero as their ancestor<sup>185</sup> and so did Seleucus, who had spent three years in Egypt under the protection of Ptolemy (215–213 BCE), where he had the opportunity to observe the workings of political myth making in the early Ptolemaic court.

Hence, Libanius, who ignores the story of Seleucus' descent from Apollo, relates a tradition in which Seleucus poses as a direct descendant of Heracles (*Or.*11.91; cf. n.138):

Κρητῶν καὶ τῶν ἀφ' Ἡρακλέους, οἷς ἦν, οἶμαι, συγγένεια Σελεύκῳ κατὰ τὸν παλαιὸν Τήμενον;

and Cretans who are descended from Heracles, who are, I believe, related to Seleucus by means of ancient Temenos.



As known, Seleucus I produced silver drachms and tetradrachms dominated by iconography that utilized Alexander's familiar coin types. Importantly, the principal type in these coins combined a youthful head of Heracles with a seated mature Zeus holding an eagle (often understood in connection to the famous Pheidian Zeus at Olympia). Later, Seleucus replaced the eagle with a wreath-bearing Nike, perhaps a reference to his victory against Antigonos. However, as Wright pointed out,<sup>186</sup> both Zeus and Heracles

already enjoyed a history of syncretic adoption in Asia where Zeus was associated with the numerous localised Ba'als.

Hence, by the fourth century BCE Heracles was identified with a number of eastern gods such as Melqart in Phoenicia, Sanda/Sandon in Cilicia and Gilgameš in Babylonia.<sup>187</sup> Besides, Heracles' tradition overlaps considerably with Marduk, especially since Marduk was syncretised with Santa/Šanta and related to Kubaba in the Hittite pantheon.<sup>188</sup> This Santa is the Hittite version of the Cilician Sanda/Sandon, whom Laroche described as a Tammuz-Adonis type of god and who was later identified with Heracles.<sup>189</sup> Their identification is facilitated by their royal status, their extraordinary sense of justice and also their common association with Nergal, a god of plague and pestilence who was linked already during the second millennium to Ereškigal, the queen of the Underworld.<sup>190</sup> These identifications do not only relate the importance of Heracles for kings but, crucially, his theological profile. Eastern traditions were readily combined with the Greek tradition of the Heraclids, the long-suffering descendants of Heracles, who were finally able to reclaim their long-promised kingship in the name of divine justice. The soteriological aspects that the eastern worshippers of Marduk had ascribed to him fitted Heracles' reputation effortlessly. Both deities posed as deliverers of mankind from pain and trouble: Heracles-Nergal<sup>191</sup> was called *soter* (saviour) – just like Seleucus' son, Antiochus Soter – as well as the “important sufferer” and the “conqueror of death.”<sup>192</sup> Equally, Nergal was known as the “power of Marduk,” the “lord of peace” and the “lord of the Underworld.”<sup>193</sup> Unsurprisingly, during the Hellenistic period the soteriological aspects of Heracles become increasingly more pronounced.<sup>194</sup>

The Seleucids were clearly perceptive of these religious intersections, because as the satrap of Babylon, Seleucus had minted, already between 311–305 BCE, coins depicting on the obverse a seated Baal holding the royal sceptre while the reverse of these coins featured a walking lion facing left (Fig. 4.2).<sup>195</sup> Although the seated figure evokes references to Alexander and his seated Zeus and the lion on the obverse may be read as a variation of the Heracles/Nemean lion theme, it seems that Seleucus' early Babylonian coins were designed as variants of numerous other issues that depicted local gods standing on lions, particularly the Tyrian Melqart and Shadrafa, a god of Persian origin, who was identified with both Heracles and Apollo<sup>196</sup> and who appeared in a fourth-century BCE inscription from Palmyra as the Lord of the whole world.<sup>197</sup> Furthermore, in Cilician coins the Baal of Tarsus was apparently portrayed as seated and holding

his staff on the right hand, while on the reverse of these coins a lion was shown walking to the right.<sup>198</sup> In other words, Seleucus was aware from early on of the claims to universal lordship that the image of Heracles-Marduk could afford his dynasty.

Based on contemporary Seleucid coinage, Erickson<sup>199</sup> argued that Seleucus' connection to Heracles and Dionysus – with whom Heracles is often associated in myth and cult<sup>200</sup> – is better understood in the context of Seleucus' Indian campaign, although, in my view, Seleucus did not necessarily need a particular historical occasion for associating the two sons of Zeus, whose salvific aspects coincided widely. Apparently, all successors had employed divine attributes in their iconography for some time before their cult appeared,<sup>201</sup> and Seleucus probably did the same in the famous coins issued around 305–295 BCE, where he is depicted with a helmet decorated with panther skin, bull's ears and horns.<sup>202</sup>

Heracleian imagery has been also utilized on the obverse of Seleucus' victory coinage from Susa that shows a horned warrior bust. The warrior wears an Attic helmet rendered so as to represent the skin of a panther or leopard while two legs of a similar animal are wrapped around his shoulders and tied at the front, recalling the lion skin cowl of Herakles on the Alexander-type silver coinage [Fig. 4.3].<sup>203</sup> I concur with Erickson that the figure on the coins is Seleucus, whose iconography is derived from ANE models,<sup>204</sup> a point also corroborated by the choice of Antiochus to advocate his father's apotheosis by commissioning horned portraits of him.<sup>205</sup>

Importantly Antiochus I issued coins which featured Heracles resting after his labours<sup>206</sup> – kingship had been successfully reclaimed and the latest Heraclids had been vindicated.



*Fig. 4.2* Seleucus I coin: seated Baal (obverse), walking lion to the left (reverse), image kindly provided by Arthur Houghton and reproduced with his permission. Houghton and Lorber 2002: 88.8b (312–281 BCE)



Fig. 4.3 Seleucus I coin: Heracles with lion skin (obverse), horned rider (reverse), image kindly provided by Arthur Houghton and reproduced with his permission. Houghton and Lorber 2002: no 203 (pl.11)

### Heracles and Dumuzi in the garden

Heracles' syncretism with ANE deities anticipates his Underworld adventures, as already discussed in connection with some of his labours (see n.168), and puts renewed emphasis on the association of kingship with death ideology during the Hellenistic period. For example, one of the gods identified with Heracles was Nergal, who was at times worshipped under the title Mešlamta-eda (= Warrior who comes forth from the Underworld).<sup>207</sup> Nergal was described as a gruesome warrior who could, nevertheless, be engaged by kings as a powerful ally. As we saw, the Sumerian Ninurta was also associated with Heracles mainly because of his profile as protector of kingship and civilization.<sup>208</sup> Ninurta seems to have acquired his Underworld connections partly through his identification with Ningiršu of Lagash, who was already listed in the OB *TCL* 15.10 along with Dumuzi and Ninazu as an Underworld deity.<sup>209</sup> As Wiggermann argued, these Underworld deities shared their snake connections with Ereškigal. The latter was associated with the Babylonian constellation of Hydra, whose representation survives from a Seleucid clay tablet.<sup>210</sup> The snake-dragon which recalls the labour of Heracles against the Hydra<sup>211</sup> was originally the symbol of the Underworld deities Nizanu and Ningišzida, but from the time of Ḫammurapi onwards they were appropriated by Marduk and his son Nabû.<sup>212</sup> This dragon (*mušḫuššu*) was at first portrayed as a lion with a snake tail, as seen on a late ED seal, but later on in the Old Akkadian period it acquired the talons of a bird of prey (in the place of the hind legs) in connection with the cult of both Ninazu and Tišpak (another warrior deity with similar Underworld connections), which were in due time syncretised with Ninurta.<sup>213</sup> Ninazu was also interestingly linked with Dumuzi in the Sumerian lamentation *Edina-usa<sup>2</sup>ake* (*In the Desert by the Early Grass*), where

a number of third millennium cults concerning dying gods of different origin have coalesced into a hardly integrated whole.<sup>214</sup>

Although, as a result of this intense religious re-organizing, snake-gods seem to fade away sometime in the first half of second-millennium Mesopotamia,<sup>215</sup> they gradually bestow their chthonic powers on gods of the calibre of Dumuzi, a development which paved the way for the growing affinity between Heracles and Dumuzi.<sup>216</sup>

A trajectory of the process of their association may have survived in the writings of Sositheus, a Sicilian writer who eventually joined the Alexandrian court of Ptolemy Philadelphus.<sup>217</sup> Sositheus composed a satyr play inspired by a most surprising and otherwise unattested adventure involving Heracles and Daphnis, Adonis' literary counterpart (Chapter 3: pp. 123, 129–31). According to the plot of the play *Sositheus/Lityerses*, Daphnis, a young cowherd, used to pasturing his flocks in the serene Sicilian countryside where he often engaged in singing competitions with his peers, was forced to undertake a dangerous adventure in order to free his beloved nymph.<sup>218</sup> She had been abducted by pirates and sold into slavery in the court of the Phrygian king Lityerses. At the critical moment Daphnis and the nymph are saved by none other than Heracles! The plot, summarized by Servius, reads as follows:<sup>219</sup>

Alii hunc Daphnin Pimpleam amasse dicunt. quam cum a praedonibus raptam Daphnis per totum orbem quaesisset, invenit in Phrygia apud Lityersem regem servientem, qui hac lege in advenas saeviebat, ut cum multas segetes haberet peregrinos advenientes secum metere faceret victosque iuberet occidi. sed Hercules miseratus Daphnidis venit ad regiam et audita condicione certaminis falcem ad metendum accepit eaque regi <ferali sopito metendi carmine> caput amputavit. ita Daphnin a periculo liberavit et ei Pimpleam, quam alii Thalam dicunt, reddidit; quibus dotis nomine aulem quoque regiam condonavit.

Others say that this Daphnis fell in love with Pimplea. Her when she was abducted by pirates Daphnis sought all over the world, and found her in Phrygia, serving as a slave at the palace of king Lityerses, who was raving against foreigners through this law: so that when he had many crops, he forced the visiting guests to compete with him in gathering the crop and those who were defeated he ordered to be killed. But Heracles taking pity on Daphnis arrived in the area and on hearing the condition of the competition took a sickle for reaping the crop by which he cut off the head of the king – who was lulled to reaping with deadly song. Hence, he freed from danger Daphnis and he gave back to him Pimplea whom others call Thalia; to them he also gifted the kingdom thanks to the need of a dowry.

Importantly Heracles does not simply return Pimplea to her lover but also bestows kingship upon him, stressing the long-standing connection between political ambition and the ability to establish prosperity (abundance). The tale appeared to be unique in its tradition until the Sumerian tale of *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* came to light.<sup>220</sup> The tale, already discussed in Chapters 1 (pp. 35–6) and 2 (p. 82), relates the irrational demands of the Lord of Aratta for ever more grain taxation on the city of Erech, the city of Dumuzi. Unable to reach an agreement,

the kings decide to resolve the matter in a duel between the champions of the two cities. The champion who rescues Erech and Dumuzi from the rapacious Lord of Aratta resembles an archaic prototype of Heracles (ll.577–9):<sup>221</sup>

ur igi-ḡal<sub>2</sub>-la du-a-ni  
<sup>u</sup>2saḡšu gun<sub>3</sub>-a ugu-na i-im-šu<sub>2</sub>  
 tug<sub>2</sub> piriḡ-piriḡ-ṛ ga<sub>2</sub>ṛ zag mu-ni-in-KEŠ<sub>2</sub>

The clever champion, when he came,  
 had covered his head with a colourful turban,  
 and wrapped himself in a lion skin.

The tale, possibly a very ancient antecedent of the tradition on which Sositheus' satyr-drama drew, sheds new light on the connection of Daphnis with Heracles, both of whom were especially worshipped in Sicily,<sup>222</sup> a cultural melting pot of the ancient eastern Mediterranean where Phoenician influence was notable already since the ninth century BCE. In addition, it indicates that the association of kingship with fertility and salvation<sup>223</sup> was still powerful during the Hellenistic period when Greek poets exalted the salvific aspects of kingship in constant dialogue with the ANE lore. Furthermore, the relationship of Daphnis with Pimplea is cast in terms of a "sacred marriage," since thanks to divine intervention the cruel king Lityerses was punished and Nymph Pimplea, whose name means abundance (see n.218 above), was restored to Daphnis, who thus came to "possess" the generative powers of the goddess.

In addition, Heracles' apotheosis could be read in connection to that of Dumuzi, which could also explain the popularity of their cults in the first millennium BCE, when they are both invested with mystic elements.<sup>224</sup> After all, as we have seen, it was the goddess through her profile as *mater dolorosa* who facilitated whole populations in finding new meaning in life after experiencing death and destruction, and it was she who showed people the correct way of commemorating the past. A Sumerian text which associates Inanna with the transition between the living world and the netherworld is *Inanna and Enki*, discussed in Chapter 2 (pp. 66–9) in connection to kingship and its civilizing aspects.<sup>225</sup> However, Glassner argued that the stealing of the *mes* refers mainly to the cult of Inanna<sup>226</sup> and the areas in which she presides such as royalty, sexuality and war. The list of *mes* that she obtains from Enki includes two entries of particular importance: the "going down to the netherworld" (*kur ed3-de3*) and "coming up from the Underworld" (*kur ed3-da*).<sup>227</sup> Furthermore, the goddess's power over the entrance to the Underworld is stressed in *GE VII.97–100*. Here spurned Ištar threatens An, that, if he does not send the Bull of Heaven against Gilgameš, she will destroy the gates of the netherworld and let the dead come up to devour the living.<sup>228</sup>

a-maḥ-[ḡaṣ da]n-ni-<na>? a-ṛ diṛ šubti(ki.tuš)-šú  
 a-šak-[ka]n ṛsa?ṛ-p[a?-nam?] ṛ aṛ-na šap-la-t[ī]  
 ú-šel-lam-ma [mītū] ti(úš)<sup>mes</sup> ik-ka-lu ba[l-t]u-ú-ti  
 eli(ugu) bal-ṛu-ti ú-šam-[a-d]u mītūti(úš)<sup>mes</sup>

I shall smash the *Underworld* together with its dwelling-place,  
I shall *raze* the nether regions to the ground.  
I shall bring up the dead to consume the living,  
I shall make the dead outnumber the living.

According to Barrett,<sup>229</sup> carnelian and lapis lazuli, the precious stones often linked with Inanna, especially in the context of the “sacred marriage,” are often found in funerary contexts as symbols of fertility but, crucially, also as “a metaphor for the new existence of the deceased in the netherworld.”<sup>230</sup> Notably, these precious stones are also found in the fantastic garden of trees that bear carnelian fruit and lapis lazuli foliage,<sup>231</sup> where Gilgameš finds himself at the end of his journey to the Underworld, “twelve double hours out in advance of the Sun” (*GE IX.170–6*). Hence, the carnelian and lapis lazuli found in ANE tombs may well symbolize the otherworldly garden visited by Gilgameš, a garden which was at first exclusive to kings but gradually became available to *all* the devotees of Inanna who could aspire to a better lot after death.<sup>232</sup> Hence, in *GE VIII.68–219* (George 2003: 656–65) lapis lazuli and carnelian are by far the most repeatedly mentioned precious materials (along with gold, ivory, alabaster and obsidian) as funerary offerings chosen by Gilgameš from his treasury in honour of Enkidu. Gilgameš then prays zealously to a number of Underworld deities with Ištar invoked first and asked to “welcome” Enkidu in the afterlife and “walk at his side” (*GE VIII.138*). Gilgameš addresses similarly Namra-šit, Ereškigal, Dumuzi, Namtar and other Underworld deities again in the hope that they would be willing to receive Enkidu kindly.

### **Seleucus and Athena/Ištar**

In the regions that Seleucus annexed, especially Syria and Cilicia, a number of Aramaic and Babylonian gods, worshipped there for centuries, gradually infiltrated the Greco-Macedonian pantheon. Hence, by the first century BCE, eastern gods such as Hadad and Atargatis would stand beside Zeus and Apollo as royal patrons.<sup>233</sup> Although lower Syria and Cilicia do not appear to have been colonized as intensely by Greco-Macedonians, important cultic centres of the region such as Anazarbos (named Caesareia under Augustus) continued to exercise important influence advocating religious syncretism: by the first century CE, the local god Olymbros, who came to pose as the brother of Sandas, was worshipped in the region as Zeus. In an inscription from the “tomb of the eunuch” we also learn that the Theos Kataibates was coupled with Persephone.<sup>234</sup> Zeus was widely worshipped in Cilicia, and two of his most well-known sanctuaries, that of Zeus at Olba and that of Corycian Zeus, were located near the city of Seleucia. Mitford<sup>235</sup> also discussed the existence of a cult centre of Zeus west of the river Calycadnus in Cilicia above Cestrus

doubtless none other than the Luwian sky and weather god, Tarḫu(nt),

Indeed Zeus Olbios (Zeus of Olba) was the Graecized version of this Luwian, god whose name is found incorporated in indigenous names of southern Asia Minor

such as Tarkondimotos, Trokombigremis, Tarkyaris etc. The name of the god, as suggested by Mackay,<sup>236</sup> easily suggests the Greek Teucer, who appears in tradition as the mythical founder of the temple. We know from an inscription dated in the late second or first century BCE from the wall surrounding the temple at Uzuncaburç that τὰς στέγας (the roof) of the temple had been put up by Seleucus Nicator. The assumption used to be that Seleucus had built the existing temple, but now, since the temple has been dated to the second century BCE, it seems that Seleucus provided a stoa at the west side of the enclosure. Seleucus found Seleucia on the Calycadnus, probably between 296 and 280 BCE, and very likely at the time paid his respects to the sanctuary in the mountains behind Seleucia – an act that would evoke Alexander’s sacrifice to the local gods – possibly the equivalents of Zeus, Athena and Heracles – before the battle of Issos. At or by this time the native god was identified with Zeus Olbios, the giver of prosperity, and Ura was called Olba, at least by the priests who adopted Greek customs.<sup>237</sup> Strabo<sup>238</sup> says that the priest became dynast of Cilicia Tracheia, and soon after tyrants took over the country and gangs of pirates were organized. As Bing argued,<sup>239</sup> the Zeus on the coinage from Issus and nearby Tarsus is in fact the Luwian storm-god Tarhunzas. Alexander’s victory signalled that the gods had indeed answered his call. In addition, in the Greek context it was Zeus who typically bestowed victory on kings, often with the help of Athena Nikephoros.<sup>240</sup> Athena, who later acquired a distinctly eastern portrayal (complementing her triple-crested Attic helmet with earrings and necklace, Fig. 4.4), was identified with Tanit/Anat, who is, in turn, identified with the Babylonian Išara.<sup>241</sup>

In Babylon Išara was identified with Ištar and associated with the ritual of the “sacred marriage.” Išara was also mentioned in the OB version of the *GE*, which von Soden understood in connection with a sacred marriage ceremony involving newly wedded brides and Gilgameš as the *en* of Gullab.<sup>242</sup> Although his view was met with scepticism by George given that the details of the cult of Išara and her relationship with Inanna at that time still elude us,<sup>243</sup> the OB Gilgameš texts reveal that Ištar took the name Išara when blessing weddings.<sup>244</sup> In addition, an incantation reads:<sup>245</sup>

ša 4Iš-tar ʿa ʿ-[na] 4Dumu-zi DÙ-u[š]  
 ša 4Na-a-a a-na ḥa-ʿi-ri-ša D[Ù-uš]  
 ša 4Iš-ḥa-ra a-[na] al-ma-ni-šá [DÙ-uš]

What Ištar did for Dumuzi,  
 what Nanaya di(d) for her lover,  
 what Išara (did) for her husband (let me do for my lover!).

Her sacred animal was the scorpion, which explains why in a number of bed scenes scorpions were represented.<sup>246</sup> The cult of the goddess had enjoyed a revival at Babylon during the Persian era, especially under Darius I.<sup>247</sup> Her veneration extended far beyond the boundaries of Babylonia and Assyria. Bronze Age texts from Anatolia and Syria associate Išara, who was closely associated with the king and his legitimacy, with Ištar and Ašerah.<sup>248</sup> For the Hittites she was guardian of oaths and “the Lady of the mountains and rivers of the Hittite land.”<sup>249</sup> Išara



Fig. 4.4 Cilician Athena, reproduced with permission of wildwinds.com and cngcoins.com ([http://wildwinds.com/coins/greece/cilicia/tarsos/SNGFr\\_0367.txt](http://wildwinds.com/coins/greece/cilicia/tarsos/SNGFr_0367.txt)). *SNGFr* 367, Stater, 333–323 BCE (Cilician Athena)

was also worshipped in Cilicia, where a temple was dedicated to her.<sup>250</sup> The Hattusas text Bo. 4889, discussed by Astour and echoed by Bing,<sup>251</sup> lists among other locations granted to local temples Mt Išara,<sup>252</sup>

which might very well be located in the vicinity of Issus itself, possibly the very mountain on which Alexander offered the aforementioned sacrifices.

Hence, the iconographic innovations of Cilician Athena can be explained by her syncretism with Phoenician Anat and Babylonian Išara/Ištar; however, combining martial qualities with those of a guardian of rivers and mountains points once more to the goddess's Underworld connections in agreement with the geographical pointers for the place in the *GE*.<sup>253</sup> So are we to assume that the lady who protected Hattušiliš III (Ištar, whom he frequently addresses as “my lady” in his *Apology*, for example, I.20–1, 36–9 etc.) is in fact the goddess who bestowed victory upon Seleucus? This is quite a possibility given the popularity of Zeus and Athena on Seleucid coins,<sup>254</sup> often driving chariots drawn by elephants, while Antipater<sup>255</sup> refers to an altar made of horns that Seleucus dedicated to Saviour Athena.

Wright<sup>256</sup> argued that the development of the radiate crown during the late Seleucid period as a symbol of the king's divinity is linked with a revival of the “sacred marriage” ceremony under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The Zeus-Hadad, described by Macrobius (*Sat.* 1.23.19) as a radiate deity worshipped in Hellenistic Syria as well as Ba'al Šamin, should be probably understood in connection with Šamaš and his protection of legitimate kingship.<sup>257</sup> Although evidence indicates that Antiochus IV celebrated enthusiastically a number of sacred marriages across the regions under his command,<sup>258</sup> I do not think that this was the result of his living deification. Of course, as Pongratz-Leisten argues,<sup>259</sup>

[T]he marriage between mortal king and goddess finds direct Babylonian precedents and appears to cement the Seleucid king firmly within a Semitic religious context.



But it seems that divine support was especially needed at times when kingship was questioned. To shed light into the intense celebration of sacred marriages under Antiochus Epiphanes one needs to remember the challenges he faced, whether we accept that he was a usurper who murdered his brother out of political ambition or, given that there is no evidence clearly associating him with the murder of Seleucus IV, that he was the remaining ruler who managed to overcome the conspiracy that brought about the demise of his co-ruler and had to face growing distrust in the ability of his dynasty to rule.<sup>260</sup> After all, Antiochus IV lost the territory of Palestine, which was never recovered by the Seleucids. Subsequently, we should also examine his deification and his celebration of “sacred marriages” as a means of highlighting divine protection at a time of peril and uncertainty for the Seleucids. His zealous engagement with old-fashioned rituals seems to follow a time-honoured royal practice which we have witnessed numerous times in the political scene of the ANE. Thus, in terms of their practices, the Seleucids were primarily “kings” and secondarily “Macedonians.”

## Conclusion

The religious policy shaped under Seleucus I and Antiochus indicates not only the interest of the Hellenistic kings in appealing to their eastern subjects while retaining their Macedonian-Greek identity, but it additionally highlights their intense understanding of local traditions. This was especially important during the founding period of the dynasty, and therefore, Seleucus and Antiochus seem to have negotiated between them their royal profiles. While Šamaš, the Babylonian Sun god who sustained his royal protégés through his benefaction, was readily associated with both Zeus and Apollo in the Greek context, in Babylon he was exclusively linked with Marduk, who was identified with Zeus Belos (Lord Zeus). Therefore, from early on, Seleucus, surnamed Nicator, promoted his special relation with Victorious Zeus/Marduk, while Antiochus assumed the role of his son Apollo/Nabû.

Although the picture seems to be complicated by the tradition of Apollo as the father of Seleucus and founder of the dynasty, a closer look at the sources indicates that Seleucus differentiated between the Sun god and Apollo, although the two were inevitably syncretized. This development is perfectly exemplified in the case of the later Seleucid ruler Antiochus I of Commagene (86–38 BCE), who on his tomb at Nemrud Dağ introduced himself as<sup>261</sup>

Βασιλεὺς μέγας Ἀντίοχος Δίκαιος Ἐπιφανῆς Φιλορωμαῖος καὶ Φιλέλληνην  
Antiochos the Great King, eminent and just god, friend of the Romans and  
the Greeks

who had set up (καθιδρυσάμην) godly statues of

Διὸς τε Ὀρομάσδου καὶ Ἀπόλλωνος Μίθρου Ἡλίου Ἑρμοῦ καὶ Ἀρτάγνου  
Ἡρακλέους Ἄρεως . . .  
Zeus-Oromasdes, *Apollo-Mithras-Sun-Hermes*, and Artagnes-Heracles-Ares

Still, the distinction seems to have been retained in Babylon, where Antiochus III the Great (223–187 BCE) celebrated local ceremonies<sup>262</sup> while passing legislation under the guidance of Apollo,<sup>263</sup> not unlike Ḫammurapi, whose laws were inspired by Šamaš.

We also examined the syncretism of Heracles, another important god who posed as the ancestor of Seleucus, with ANE deities that have prominent Underworld associations. I argued that Heracles retained those associations in his profile as Saviour and passed them on to his royal protégés. Heracles' experiences in the Underworld and, crucially, his apotheosis were intertwined with the tradition of Inanna/Ištar and her beloved Dumuzi and offered a loud paradigm for ruler apotheosis. Seleucus could also draw on the tradition of the Heraclids, the descendants of Heracles, to whom Zeus had promised kingship and world dominion. The appeal of Heracles and Ištar during the first millennium seems to extend to individuals but also to whole communities who experience a metaphorical death during times of peril until they can re-identify themselves in political terms. Crucially, the “sacred marriage” imagery remains powerful for conveying the salvific messages of Heracles and his counterparts in the Hellenistic Near East. In this context, even the virginal deity Athena is syncretised with Išara, an “allomorph of Ištar in her capacity as fertility goddess.”<sup>264</sup> Išara, the city goddess of Alalah, was also the personal goddess of the king, as a ritual text from Emar indicates.<sup>265</sup> In choosing to transform the Classical Athena into an ANE fertility goddess, the Seleucids appreciated the royal responsibility of securing the wellbeing of *all* of their subjects. Furthermore, the fact that our evidence refers to the celebration of “sacred marriages” under Antiochus IV does not mean that previous rulers were not deified during their lifetime or that they did not celebrate similar ceremonies. On the contrary, it seems that the “sacred marriage” remained a metaphor which was especially useful at times of political turmoil, during which time-honoured rituals were readily re-discovered in order to enhance the legitimacy of the king.

## Notes

- 1 “Do not hurry back to Europe; Asia will be much better for you”; text and trans. White 1912: 208–9.
- 2 As Strootman (2013: 69) noted, the Seleucids had possibly “singled out the city as a showcase for imperial patronage”; cf. Kuhrt 1996: 44, 49 (yet on p. 52 she observes that royal patronage probably extended beyond Babylon, Borsippa and Uruk). Although Babylon remained the cultural capital of the Seleucid kingdom, the Seleucids built Seleucia-on-Tigris as their “new Babylon”; Sherwin-White 1987: 16–20; Kuhrt 1996: 44; cf. Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 82–3 (re-reading Appian’s *Syr*.58); also see Messina 2011: esp. 157–8, 164 on the political program of the Seleucids which fostered cultural/ethnic co-existence as reflected on the city’s surviving monuments; the second capital of the Seleucids, located in the western part of their dominion, was Antioch-in-Syria (with its port, Seleucia Pieria); Downey 1961: 67–71, 87; Haddad 1949: 10–11; Grainger 1990: 93; cf. Wright 2009/2010: *passim* on numerous instances of coins from Seleucid Syria carrying impressions that utilize local religious iconographies.
- 3 Tarn <sup>3</sup>1952: 128–9; Sherwin-White 1987: 2–5, 9, 14–5, 28–9; Burstein 1994: *passim*; Kuhrt 1996: 47–52; Van de Mierop 1999: esp. 138–9, 147; Austin 2005: 127–31; Strootman (2011: 64–6; cf. 2014: 87) argues for the creation of an elite courtly culture which operated beyond ethnic lines of division; also Boiy and Mittag 2011: 112–19,

- 123–6; Mittag (2014: 173–5) discusses important administrative roles entrusted to members of the elite in Babylon and Uruk, especially that of *šaknu*. Of course, as all the aforementioned scholars acknowledge, this does not mean that Greeks and locals enjoyed similar civic rights from the start or that ethnic tension did not exist; still, Greek and ANE cultural symbols floated among communities, and their meanings could be (re)negotiated. See Dirven 1999: 100–27 on the level of politico-religious syncretism in which the Seleucids operated from early on. Also see Bosworth’s revision (2003: esp. 209–10) of Tam’s argument on Alexander’s “universalism” or cultural fusion policy (1948: 1.110–11, 115–7, 137–8, 145–8), which is, in my view, comparable to Assyrian universalism as discussed by Liverani 1979: 297–9 (cf. id. 1982: 54–8 and Holloway 2002: 174–7 on how Assyrian kings achieved unity through divinely sanctioned adê-oaths; also Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 125 on [comparable] Hellenistic oaths of loyalty sworn by the name of the ruling king and his divine protectors).
- 4 See, for example, Erickson 2009 and id. 2011; also Wright 2010; their work is often cited in this chapter.
  - 5 See Erickson (2011: esp. 53) with Dodds’s 2012 online review (esp. her comment on Erickson’s paper: “More problematically, the author does not explain why Antiochus I would have chosen an image [i.e. the identification of Apollo with Nabû] that would appeal to the Babylonians, but not one of the many other groups within the kingdom”); cf. Kosmin 2014: 173–4.
  - 6 Millar 1987: 129–30: “The Seleucid state . . . was primarily a system of extracting taxes and forming armies,” echoed by Strootman 2013: 68; cf. Sherwin-White 1987: 27. More recently, Seleucid economy has been analysed by Aperghis 2004: 50, 59–116; cf. Ma 2007: 185–6 (on Aperghis); also Waterfield 2011: 159–66.
  - 7 Chaniotis (2005: 439–40) discusses Alexander’s conquests as a unique phenomenon.
  - 8 Olbrycht 2010: 356–7; also Heckel (2011: 46–7) referring to the practice of mixed marriages arranged by Alexander for his generals and soldiers as well as the famous *proskynesis* episode (cf. Curt. 6.6.3; Plut. *Alex.* 45.1).
  - 9 Strootman 2013: esp. 39–44; cf. id. 2007: 15: “The evidence for the courts of the Ptolemies, Seleukids and Antigonids reveals predominantly similarities with the Argead household in fourth century Macedonia, albeit on a much grander scale and with many ‘eastern,’ chiefly Achaemenid elements integrated in it.” The influence of the Persian Empire on Hellenistic rulers has been discussed by Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1993: esp. 38, 46–7, 90. Kuhrt and Sherwin-White (1994: 315–8, 320–5), Briant (2006: esp. 314–20), and Neumann (2007: 124–6) doubt that Alexander and his immediate successors implemented radical changes to the Achaemenid administration system of Babylon; cf. Kuhrt 2007a: 171, 173–4, 177–8 on Cyrus the Great as a supporter of Babylonian cults, although he clearly styled himself as an Elamite (i.e. foreign) ruler; also Root 1979: 1–2, 199–201, 303–9 and 1994: esp. 16, 18–25, 30 on Achaemenid royal ideology utilizing earlier ANE models; cf. Panaino 2000: 36–9 on the influence of Mesopotamian traditions on the representations of Anāhitā and A(h)uramazdā. Tuplin (2008) argued that the Seleucids adopted Babylonian traditions so to differentiate themselves from the Persians *contra* Aperghis (2008); cf. Kosmin 2013: 684–5 on the Seleucids embracing Persian cults.
  - 10 Jonker 1995: esp. 177: “The *cadre matériel* as Halbwachs meant it consisted in Mesopotamia of temples, cities, ruins, landscapes, statues and monuments. There were in addition orally transmitted songs and written songs which made it possible to evoke the past within a cultic context.” As Liverani (1995: 2356–61, 2363–5) points out, royal celebratory monuments kept in temples for centuries and building inscriptions, such as the popular *narû* stelae, which often addressed the future generations (*CAD* N/I, 364–7) allowed ANE kings to determine cultural memory through a sequence of divinely sanctioned kings to which they added their names. On the concept of time and space in the Babylonian culture (as shaped by Sargon I), see Galter 2006: 281–3, 288–91. On Assyrian royal monuments and their ideological context, see Yamada 2000: 273–96; Holloway 2002: 71–9; Harmanşah 2013: 25–8, 72–101. Also see Waerzeggers 2011:

- 739–40 discussing among others the *Prophecy of Uruk*, a text found in Seleucid Uruk and apparently belonging to an extant tradition of texts which survived down to the Hellenistic era and commented on royal conduct – clearly an exercise in showcasing the ability of local priesthood to support royalty.
- 11 O'Brien 2003: 94–5.
  - 12 For example, Waterfield 2011: xi, 210–11.
  - 13 Grainger 1990: 12; Wright (2010: 41–6) stresses the mixed ethnicity of the Seleucids, especially Antiochus, although Mairs (2011: 180) questions the emphasis on this issue; cf. Wright 2012: 17–18. Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 124–8 suggested (hesitantly) that intermarriages may have been a preferred Seleucid practice for fostering alliances with local elites; yet, as Hackl (2010: 15) remarks, Seleucus' descendants showed a consistent preference for Greek/Macedonian brides.
  - 14 See Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 127 on the important role of Apame from the start of the dynasty as indicated by a number of statues and decrees in her honour; cf. Sherwin-White 1987: 7–8 and Mehl 1999: 19–20. Beaulieu (2006: 132) discusses Berossus' surviving fragments and the parallels he possibly tried to create between the Seleucids and the Neo-Babylonian kings, specifically Nebuchadnezzar, whose wife was of Median origin. Cf. Dalley 2013: 145 on important ANE queens to whom buildings (and gardens) were dedicated.
  - 15 Hdt.1.181.2 (Zeus Belos); Agathias cites Berossus *BNJ*680F12; also see Diod. Sic.17.112.3; 6.1.10 and Strab.16.1.5.
  - 16 Erickson (2009: 37–41) argued that Apollo's promotion as the divine ancestor of the Seleucids was more systematic under Antiochus and that Seleucus I associated himself more with Zeus; cf. Wright 2010: 57–9. Recently Beaulieu (2014: 24–9) suggested that through the identification of Apollo with Nabû, as observed in the Borsippa cylinder (discussed below), Antiochus essentially promoted the Greco-Macedonian dynastic cult of Apollo disguised as Babylonian. On p. 29 he also wonders whether the abbreviation of Antiochus' name to AN in scribal tradition, which thus coincides with the name of Anu (who had been syncretised with Nabû), was actually designed as a pointer to the king's divinization. From a similar angle, Kosmin 2014: esp.176 argues that the cylinder was imbued with Seleucid ideology overlaid with Babylonian traditions; cf. his pp. 181–5, esp.185 also discussed below in n.135 below.
  - 17 Gruen 1996: 116.
  - 18 For the text in Hellenistic Babylon, see Lambert 1989: 97 with Boiy 2004: 23; also Neumann 2007: 128. For the king as an image of Šamaš on earth, see Charpin 2013: 71–5; also see Chapter 1: 36–9.
  - 19 See Oshima 2008: 348–52 on the rise of Marduk as king of the Babylonian pantheon during the twelfth century BCE and his appropriation of the epithet Bēl, originally used for Enlil. For neo-Assyrian kings posing as “an image of Marduk/Bēl/Samaš,” see *SA* 8.333rev.2; 10.191rev.6–7; 10.207rev.12–13; 10.228.17–18; 10.196rev.4–5, and 13.46rev.11–13 cited in Holloway 2002: 182n.343 (also accessible through <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/corpus>); cf. Stol 2000: 147–8 with nn.5–6.
  - 20 Schwemer (2008: esp.8–9, 15) argues that Ba'lu of the early dynastic texts from Ebla, Tell Beydar and Tell Abū Salābīh is different from the storm god Ba'lu of second- and first-millennia Syria. The latter developed during the late sixteenth and fifteenth centuries BCE in Syro-Palestine from an epithet of the storm-god Haddu. Still, in the regions that were in contact with Babylon Bēl (-Marduk) was fused with the Syrian Ba'al, acquiring thus the qualities of a storm-god; cf. Dirven 1999: 44–5, esp.n.10. Also see Oshima 2008: 349 on Marduk's long history of assimilating other gods and Michalowski 1990: 395–6 on the role of Babylonian priests in promoting Marduk under the Assyrians through established texts such as the *Enuma Eliš*.
  - 21 Bidmead 2004: 63–4; cf. Oshima 2008: 355–6 on the Esagila as Marduk's main cult centre in Babylon.
  - 22 See, for example, the frequently quoted *BBS* 6, known as the Šitti-Marduk *kudurru*, which relates the victory of Nebuchadnezzar (1126–1105 BCE) against his Elamite rival; also Hurowitz 1992: 39n.1 with bibliography.

- 23 *CT* 24:50, *BM*47406 obv.9; cf. Lambert 1985: 439n.28 on Šamaš as “Marduk of the lawsuit”; also Smith 1990: 38; id. 2008b: 172. See Oshima 2011: 455 on Marduk as *nūr amēlūti* (light of mankind), *nūr kibrāti* (light of the four quarters) and *nūri namri* (bright light); the god’s radiance (*birburrā*) is also praised in Akkadian prayers.
- 24 Frahm 2013: 109 citing Linssen 2004: 220, 229 (l.307).
- 25 Oshima (2011: 455) also lists other epithets for Marduk that highlight the solar imagery associated with him; hence, Marduk is known as *ēbir šamē* (the one who crosses over the heavens), as *muttallik qereb šamāmē* (the one who advances in the midst of heavens), epithets which reflect the daily course of the sun, as well as *munammir ekleti* (the one who brightens the darkness).
- 26 Cf. an inscription of Nebuchadnezzar where, styling himself as the “steadfast heir of Nabopolassar” (l.6), he proclaims that *i-nu* <sup>d</sup>*marduk(amar.utu) bēlu(en) ra-bu-ú / igigal(igi.gál) ilī(dingir)*<sup>mes</sup> *muš-tar-ḫu/ ‘ma’-a-ti ù nišī(ùg)*<sup>mes</sup> / *‘a’-na re’-ú-ti id-dī-na / i-na u<sub>4</sub>-mi-šu é-babbar-ra* (the great lord Marduk, proud sage of the gods, gave to me the land and people to care for as shepherd) (ll.7–10, *MS* 2870/2; text and trans. George 2011: 182–3); cf. Bruce 1900: 182, 185 for an inscription of Nabopolassar (*NoIII*, Col.1.1–9), where he describes himself as *šarru dannu . . . mu-ki-in iš-dī māti / ru-ba-a-am na-’i-dam / ti-ri-iš ga-at / <sup>itu</sup>Nabū u <sup>itu</sup>Marduk / mi-gi-ir Ša-aš-šu* (a powerful king . . . founder of the land, exalted prince, under the guidance of Nabu and Marduk, *the favourite of Shamash . . . my emphasis*). Also see Beaulieu 2006: 120–7, esp.123 on Berossus’ *Babyloniaca*, dedicated to Antiochus I probably in 281 BCE on the occasion of his enthronement; as he argues, the surprisingly accurate information on the reigns of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar indicates the wealth of the Esagil library where Berossus consulted cuneiform sources but also shows the Seleucids as heirs of the Neo-Babylonian rulers.
- 27 Berossus claims to have written the *Babyloniaca* during the third year of Antiochus’ reign; some scholars understand this to mean 290 BCE counting from the time that Antiochus became Seleucus’ co-ruler, while others define it as 278 BCE counting from Seleucus’ death in 280 BCE; Gmirkin 2006: 240–1 with n.2; Breucker 2013: 17. For the solar investment of Marduk in Babylon, see Charpin 2013: 67–8 and 70; Smith (1990: 38) also refers to the characterization of Marduk as “sun god of the gods” in the *Enuma Eliš* 1.101–2 and 6.127 (= *ANET* 62, 69); cf. Charpin 2013: 67–8, 70; also see Beckman 2012: 608 on the royal traditions of the Hittites whose kings apparently adopted both solar and storm-god characteristics.
- 28 Cf. Oshima 2008: 355; Van der Spek (2009: 110–111) argued that since we have found no Greek temple in Babylonia, the Greeks may have used the temple of Bēl, now identified with Zeus, as their main cultic space; Wright (2010: 58) discusses the identification of Zeus with local Baʿals possibly already since the time of Alexander as indicated on his famous coins representing the Pheidian Zeus of Olympia.
- 29 Erickson (2009: 61–8 and id. 2013: esp.118–20) argues that Seleucus Nicator continued to use the image of Zeus on his coins in order to create an impression of continuity from Alexander, while also fostering his own connections with the god.
- 30 See Anagnostou-Laoutides (2011: esp.24–7) on the monarchical ideology of Zeus advocated at Olympia and appreciated even in democratic Athens, especially the god’s command of *Nike* (Victory) and *Zelos* (Competition), the siblings of *Bia* (Violence) and *Kratos* (Power) as per *Hes.Th.*383–5; cf. Mikalson <sup>2</sup>2010: 111–12 on the kings’ promotion of the cult of Olympian Zeus. Also see Houghton and Lorber (2002: 8), who argued that Seleucus’ choice of Zeus Nikephoros on his coins relates both Alexander’s seminal victory at Ipsus but also Zeus’ ability to bestow victory at Olympia. According to Arrian (*Anab.* 1.17.5), Alexander had dedicated an altar to Zeus Olympios at Sardis after conquering the city; see Bosworth 1988: 45 on the co-existence of the cult of Olympian Zeus with that of A(h)uramazdā in Sardis.
- 31 Fredericksmeier (1991: 199nn.1–2) cites the ancient sources on Alexander’s famous visit to the oracle of Zeus Ammon at Siwah arguing that one of his motives was (p. 123)

- “to obtain confirmation of the promise of Zeus *Basileus* at Gordium for his conquest of Asia”; also see his p. 206 citing Arr.*Anab.*3.5.2 on the sacrifices Alexander performed in honour of Zeus *Basileus* at Memphis before embarking on his campaign in the East; cf. Bosworth 1988: 71, 282. Furthermore, Alexander had minted coins that featured an enthroned Zeus holding an eagle and sceptre, probably alluding to Pheidias’ distinctive representation of Zeus at Olympia (Paus.5.11.1–10); cf. Pollitt 1986: 26 esp.nn.17, 49. Toward the end of his life Alexander coined decadrachms on which he posed as Zeus *Keraunophoros* just as in the image of *Apelles* that he dedicated to the temple of the Ephesian *Artemis*; see Plin.*HN.*7.125; also Stewart 1993: 199, esp.n.27.
- 32 Philip II also had a special relationship with Zeus; see Hornblower 1983: 306–7; Bosworth 1988: 281; Badian 1981: 44 and id. 1996: 13. On Zeus *Seleucios*, see Nock 1928: 41–2 and Wilamowitz 1932: 2.263–6. Later Antiochus IV continued the works to the temple of Olympian Zeus at Athens, who had been abandoned after the fall of the *Peisistratids* (Vitr.*De arch.*7.praef.15) and made certain notable dedications to the famous statue of Zeus at Olympia (Paus.5.12.4); see Mørkholm 1966: 58; Pollitt 1986: 283; yet Habicht (2006: 159–60) suggests that it may have been Antiochus III who made the dedications, while Mittag 2006: 139–44 doubts that Antiochus IV promoted the cult of Zeus; still, his coins clearly utilize solar symbols (Mittag 2006: 132; cf. Ehling 2008: 86–8) and given the association of the sun with Zeus-Marduk and other supreme gods in the ANE context Antiochus need not enforce certain religious policies. For the image of the Sun on the coins of Antiochus IV, as possibly inspired by the Rhodian Sun god, see Wright 2010: 124–5. Antiochus IV had struck coins portraying a radiant Zeus which indicates his assimilation with Apollo; Houghton 2012: 241–2. Cf. Iossif and Lorber 2009: 19–25 for the Helios motif in connection to Mithras; cf. their pp. 25–9 discussing the use of Helios in the propaganda of Antiochus III and IV. Eumenes II of Pergamum, who assisted Antiochus IV in his military plans, also favoured the cult of Zeus; also see Dowden 2006: 78 on Zeus’s altar at Pergamum constructed under Attalus I; cf. Paus.5.13.8 comparing the altar with that of Zeus at Olympia.
- 33 For this distinction, see for example Arist.*Pol.*1285b20–30; *Eth.Nic.*8.9.1; cf. Pl.*Resp.*576d; *Grg.*466b–471a.
- 34 Erickson 2009: 62 with Appian, *Syr.*57; Paus.1.16.1 and Hadley 1974: 58–9; on Zeus *Seleucius*, also see Kosmin 2014: 184.
- 35 Zahle (1990: 127–8) argued that the shift indicated the wish of the Seleucids to appeal mainly to their Macedonian-Greek subjects, a view criticised by Erickson (2009: 18); also cf. Erikson 2011: 52, 57–8; more recently, see Kosmin 2014: 184–5 in support of the conscious efforts of the first Seleucids to imply a parallelism between the Babylonian divine family and themselves. Also see Iossif and Lorber 2009: esp.30–1 discussing the portrayal of Apollo as *toxotes* under Antiochus I, which probably reflects the Iranian ideal of the king as an accomplished bowman; while Antiochus was eager to adopt Iranian iconographical motifs, his father was likely more conservative: hence, the statue of Apollo he commissioned for his famous temple at Daphne portrayed the god in a more Greek fashion, as *Citharoedus*; cf. Chapter 1: n.185 and n.91 below.
- 36 See Anagnostou-Laoutides 2013: 70; also Charpin 2013: *passim*.
- 37 See Hajjar 1985: 90–1, 98–100, 223–9; id. 1977: 221–5, 422–62, 528–30. Also Lipiński 1995: 284–7 on the cults of Baalbek and their prominent solar aspects.
- 38 Cf. Lalonde (2006: 82–6, esp.83), who indicated that Zeus and Helios were invoked together in oaths in the Greek context; although outside his research scope, he briefly entertained Farnell’s idea (1896–1909: 1.44 cited by Lalonde 2006: 83n.13) that the association of the two gods was the result of “local or foreign syncretism.”
- 39 On Apollo identified with Helios, see Eur.fr.781N<sup>2</sup> and Ps.-Eratosth.*Cat.*24 noting their identical roles in Orphic theology (cf. *OF.*102, 322). On Stoicism and Zeus’ solarized profile during the Hellenistic period, see Gordon <sup>2</sup>1999: 398; cf. Ferguson 1970: esp.42–3 and 45–6 and Bénatouil 2009: 64; cf. nn.182–4 below.

- 40 Kropp 2010: 231 with nn.7–8 citing *IGLS* 6.2990, “the only Hellenistic inscription” from the site and Seyrig 1954: 89–92, who refers to the portrayal of the god as a Greek bearded Zeus on first century BCE coins; Mulder <sup>2</sup>1999: 183–4; cf. Dowden 2006: 107.
- 41 Segal 1992: 490; cf. Lalonde 2006: 83 discussing *II.3.276–80* and 19.197.
- 42 Jones 1964: 9, 13, 18; cf. Charpin 2013: 72 on the duty of Babylonian kings to issue a redress (*mišarum*) upon their ascension in order to showcase their exclusive right to justice bestowed upon them by Šamaš.
- 43 *Pl.Hp.Mai.* 319a, 320b.
- 44 Hence, when in 346 BCE Philip II successfully ended the Third Sacred War, he posed as Apollo’s champion; Billows 1990: 26. See Parke 1985: 58–60 on kings awarding *asylia* to numerous cities on account of their Apolline oracles; Walbank <sup>3</sup>1993: 145–8; Rigsby (1996: esp.326–8) refers to Carian Alabanda or Antioch of the Chrysaorians, declared *asylous* on account of its cult of Apollo, who is, however, called *ἰσότιμος* (1.22, of equal honour to Chrysaorian Zeus) in the relevant decree; Pounder 1978: 50, 53–4 with *OGIS* 234. Alabanda, like Stratonikeia, founded by Seleucus I or Antiochus I (Cohen 1995: 268–73; cf. Debord 2001: 157–8), hosted a number of indigenous cults which acquired a Hellenized overcoat; cf. Anagnostou-Laoutides 2013: 66n.138.
- 45 Tarn <sup>3</sup>1952: 128; cf. Boiy 2004: 97–8 arguing that royal interest in the city of Babylon declined under Seleucus I, who preferred to establish his own capital cities.
- 46 Sherwin-White 1987: 9; also see Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1993: 38–9.
- 47 Strootman (2007: 20) suggested that the cosmopolitan character of the Hellenistic world is achieved only later when the Hellenistic kingdoms were in decline; however, the rulers seem to have been ready to engage with the Babylonian, at least, culture from early on. Also see Van der Spek (2009: 103, 113), who argued for the existence of a Greek and a Babylonian community with different political organizations in Hellenistic Babylonia. However, he notes, there was no clear dividing line between the two communities, and hence social mobility was not inhibited – especially in the framework of the political alliances that the Seleucids needed desperately at the start of their dynasty; cf. Mehl 2003: 150–3 and 158 arguing that good governance based on state laws took precedent over ethnic divisions in the Seleucid Empire; cf. Mehl 1999: 13.
- 48 Sallaberger (2007: 269–70, 274) and Selz (2007: 277–9) remind us of the inextricable association of politics and religion in first-millennium Babylon and the extraordinary role of the Temple in preserving Babylonian royal ideology, especially after the city’s conquest by Cyrus the Great in 539 BCE; cf. Linssen (2004: 168), who draws attention to the continuity of Babylonian cults and practices during the Hellenistic period. On the seriousness with which Alexander had treated the priests and their divinations, see Van der Spek 2003: esp.336 (citing *Plut.Alex.*75)–9. Yet, Scharrer 1999: 119–23 argued that Alexander did not wish to be called “king of Babylon,” insisting instead on the Achaemenid title Great King.
- 49 See *Strab.* 13.3.2; cf. 13.3.5; *OGIS* 312; *Paus.* 5.7.7–9; Ma 2002: 230; cf. his page 246 arguing that Apollo appears as the founder of the Seleucid dynasty under Antiochus III; cf. Mørkholm 1991: 113, 118; Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1993: 27–8.
- 50 *Strab.* 17.1.43 = Callisthenes, *FGrH* 124 F 14a; Hammond 1998: 341; cf. n.76 below.
- 51 Waerzeggers 2011: 722–5.
- 52 Erickson 2009: 39–46; Wright 2010: 60–2.
- 53 Arrian, as discussed by Erickson (2009: 35–6), reports that Seleucus secured the satrapy of Babylonia following the Triparadisus settlement in 320 BCE (Arrian *FGrH* 156F9, 34–8; *Diod.* 18.39.6 and 19.12.2). Grainger 1990: 74 argued that Seleucus probably secured the support of the Babylonian priests by appealing to them with monetary gifts. Still, he admits (p. 32) that “‘bribery’ is too coarse a term.”
- 54 On Archon’s shadowy election as satrap and his death, see Arrian *FGrH* 156F10A, 3–5 with Grainger 1990: 29 and Boiy 2004: 109 and 117.
- 55 See Boiy 2004: 121–2 discussing Mehl 1986: 64–8. The latter understood *Diod.* 19.91.1–2 referring to the support of the Babylonian people for Seleucus as an

- indication that their priests had sided with Antigonus. However, Billows 1990: 107, esp.n.33 doubts the authenticity of the story. On this, also see Landucci-Gattinoni 2007: esp.35–47.
- 56 Diod.Sic.18.37–9; Appian, *Syr.*57; Just.*Ep.*15.4.11; Mehl 1986: esp.42; yet, note the repeated reference to Seleucus' presence at Babylon as a general in AD 1–308 and 309 covering the troubled years under the reign of Philip III and Alexander IV.
- 57 Cornelius Nepos, *Eum.*5; Mehl 1999: 32–7; Grainger 1990: 33 presented Seleucus' decision to enlist the help of the Babylonian priesthood as a “choice between Macedonian arrogance which could lead to the inevitably crushed rebellion, and . . . an intelligent appreciation of the situation leading to conciliation”; also Sallaberger 2007: 269–70.
- 58 Grainger 1990: 33–4; Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991: 81 nn.44–9; cf. Van der Spek 2006: 265. See Grayson 1975: 283 on Alexander's restoration of Marduk's temple (*Arr.Anab.*3.16.4–5). Bidmead (2004: 144) speculated that the cleaning of the temple may refer to celebrating an *akītu* festival, an idea picked up by Erikson 2011: 59–62.
- 59 For the “removal of the dust of the Esagila” in later Chronicles, see *BCHP* 5, obv.5 (= *ABC* 11, *CM* 32) and *BCHP* 12, obv.3, 4, 6 (= *ABC* 13b, *BM* 35).
- 60 Yet, see Boiy (2004: 134) discussing Geller 1990 and his dating of *BHLT* 28–9 III: 13–23 as contemporary of Seleucus' return to Babylon. The text refers to the aversion of the Babylonian people for Antigonus and his continuing plundering of the land. Also see Joannès 2006: 113–4; cf. Landucci-Gattinoni 2007 also cited in n.XX above.
- 61 See Boiy 2004: 134 for a dispute between the governor of the royal treasury and the temple of Šamaš dated in 308/7 BCE. Probably the royal treasury tried to confiscate the temple estates although eventually a compromise was apparently reached: the estates remained with the temple, although half of the produce was handed over to the state.
- 62 For Alexander's interest in the Esagila, see *Arr.Anab.*3.16.4–5; 7.17.1–3; *Strab.*16.1.5; *Jos.C.Ap.*1.192.
- 63 See Boiy (2004: 136–7), who also explains that although *Plut.Dem.*18.2 relates that Seleucus acted “as king among the barbarians,” this still does not mean that he had accepted the title king of the Babylonians before being called *basileus*; cf. Mehl 1986: 151–2.
- 64 See the commentary on [http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-diadochi/diadochi\\_04.html](http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-diadochi/diadochi_04.html), s.v. 22 = 3', accessed on 21/8/2015.
- 65 As mentioned (n.58 above), Bidmead (2004: 144) suspects an *akītu* celebration, but our evidence is limited.
- 66 Da Riva 2008: 94; cf. Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991: 79, 81; Waerzeggers (2011: 727–9) discusses the profile of neo-Babylonian kings (ca. 700–539 BCE) as patrons of temples; the fortification of Babylon, she argues, was essential not only for securing the city from attacks but also for showcasing the king's ability to warrantee the continuity of cult in the Esagila temple.
- 67 Text and trans. Strong 1898: 158 and 160; also cited by Waerzeggers 2011: 730.
- 68 Waerzeggers 2011: 730 with Shaudig 2001: 51.
- 69 Del Monte 1997: 66–8; Beaulieu 2006: 126. Nebuchadnezzar posed as ideal ruler in Seleucid Babylon; Beaulieu 1993a: 242–3; id. 2006: 126; Waerzeggers 2011: 739–40; cf. Dalley 2013: 23 and 38. For Nebuchadnezzar II as a major political model for Seleucus I, see Kosmin 2014: 190–1. On the Seleucid appropriation of Babylonian royal ideology, see Ma (2005: 179–83), who draws attention not only to the Achaemenid example of running a vast, multi-ethnic empire but also to Greek experiences of “integrating the *polis* within massive, hegemonic formations” (see his p. 181), such as the Athenian hegemony established in the aftermath of the Persian Wars; cf. Austin 2005: 123 on the variety of the political entities forming the Seleucid empire (i.e. *poleis* and temple states).
- 70 See Dalley 2013: 155–7. Also see her pp. 172–4 (on the importance of the garden motif in Assyrian art) and 202 (on the argument that despite the desolate state of



- Sennacherib's palace complex and royal garden in Nineveh, his "new Babylon," later people could still visit the site and appreciate the ideology it advocated).
- 71 Mehl 1986: 95–103; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 22–4, 27–9, 34, 36–7; Kuhrt 1996: 49; Erickson 2011: 51–2, 54–7; Beaulieu 2014: 18–19.
- 72 Phylarch.ap.Athen.*Deipn.*4.254f.
- 73 Fontrose (1988: 135–41) discusses the cult of Zeus Soter at Didyma and his close connection to Apollo, which seems to be replicated in other locations of the Seleucid world (for example, in Miletus); cf. Graf 2008: 101–2 discussing a list of priests from Seleucia in northern Greece administering the cult of Seleucus Zeus Nicator and Antiochus Apollo Soter and Anagnostou-Laoutides 2013: 66–8; also see Mørkholm 1991: 113–4 on coins inscribed ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ; for the use of the title Soter in coins and royal prayers under the Ptolemies (including the Rosetta stone addressing Ptolemy V as the "living image of Zeus" and "son of Sun," "to whom Helios gave the victory"), see Mørkholm 1991: 108–9; cf. Anagnostou-Laoutides 2013: 63–5.
- 74 Wright 2010: 107 with Bevan 1901: 627.
- 75 See Mattingly 1996: 507–9 on Zeus Soter at Athens identified by Fontrose (1988: 141) with Zeus Eleutherios; cf. Raaflaub 2004: 106–10 on the cult of Zeus Soter/ Eleutherios at Athens attested from the second half of the fifth century BCE.
- 76 Note that Alexander was also hailed as liberator by the Greek cities of Asia Minor during his 336 BCE campaign (before he was proclaimed pharaoh in Egypt – cf. Intro: 3); also Anagnostou-Laoutides 2013: 53 with n.36; Hammond 1998: 341 (cf. n.50 above); also see Dahmen 2007: 60 with n.22.
- 77 Wright (2010: 59n.12) argues contra Hadley (1969: 152) that Justin's text was current by 278 BCE. The circulation of this tradition is corroborated by a *paean* to Asclepius from third-century BCE Erythrai, where Apollo is celebrated as the divine progenitor of Seleucus; see Parke 1985: 50–1 and Erickson 2009: 46. For the cult which possibly included later members of the Seleucids, see Ma 2002: 48 also citing Habicht <sup>2</sup>1970: 85. Still, the date of the *paean* ca. 280 BCE points to a posthumous cult ordained by Antiochus; on this, see again Erickson 2009: 211–2.
- 78 Bevan 1901: 627. Although, as argued, the decree may relate to the reign of Seleucus II, nevertheless the traditional earlier date of ca. 281 BCE cannot be dismissed; cf. Erickson 2009: 218–219.
- 79 *CIG* 2, 3595, 28sq discussed by Drijvers (1980: 70) deals with contributions made by Antiochus I to a sanctuary near Troas. Here, Apollo is also mentioned as *archēgos tou genous* (founder of the clan), although Zeus and Nike as gods to whom offerings would be made also appear on the same line of the inscription; cf. Wright 2012: 50–2.
- 80 Houghton and Lorber 2002: nos 165.1a and 1b; 173.16; 177.1b; cf. *OGIS* 215 with n.1 for an inscription from a stele found in Priene recording the erection of bronze statues of Seleucus and Antiochus; it is assumed that the statues were erected close to that of their official Larichus mentioned on line 22 of the decree; the stele detailing the decrees of the *demos* was erected in the temple of Athena Polias.
- 81 Erickson 2011: 51; also see Wright 2012: 37–41 on Apollo imagery issued in the Seleucid east, esp.40 pointing to similarities with Assyro-Persian iconographic traditions.
- 82 Houghton and Lorber 2002: nos. 448–51 issued under Antiochus I and discussed by Wright 2010: 117n.82, who notes: "it seems that the horned helmet imagery was restricted to eastern (Iranian) mints"; cf. Houghton and Stewart 1999: 28–30 on a tetradrachm with similar iconography dated around 295 BCE.
- 83 Stewart 1993: 234.
- 84 Hoover 2011: 201–2.
- 85 In the Greek context horns allude mostly to Apollo, who was worshipped as such in Laconia and Cyrene. For Apollo Cereates in Greece, see Paus.8.34.5; Nonn.*Dion.*108; cf. Hesychios s.v. *karneatai* and *agētēs* (leader) for the emphasis on the leading qualities of horned Apollo in Sparta. Note that Dionysus is also addressed as a "horned-bull" (Eur.*Bacch.*100); cf. Houghton and Stewart 1999: 30 on Dionysos Tauros on Alexander's coins.

- 86 See Herring 2013: 154 with n.344 citing Süring 1980: 142–6, figs.10–12b and van Buren 1943: 321 on the horned representation of Šamaš (and Sin, the moon-god). Naram-Sin (2254–18 BCE) appears on his famous Victory Stele as wearing a horned helmet and a neck bead. Michalowski (2008: 35n.3) compares Naram-Sin’s title *DIN-GIR a-ga-de<sup>ki</sup>* (= god of Agade, alternating with *LUGAL a-ga-de<sup>ki</sup>* = king of Agade) with *dingir (zi) kalam-ma-na* [= (effective) god of the land], the title of the kings of Ur and Ishbi-Erra, first king of Isin. As Winter (2008: 76) notes, Naram-Sin was also called *il matim* (= god of the land); cf. Marduk’s title *bēl mātāti* (Lord of the Lands) in Oshima 2008: 352. Selz (2008: 16) claimed that the horned crown, which he associates with fertility, is first found in Mesopotamian iconography. I owe this reference to Johandi 2012: 20n.84.
- 87 Bahrani 2008: 158.
- 88 Note that Marduk is associated with a horned dragon; see Seidl, Hruđa, and Krecher 1971 1957–71: 486. On the depiction of Marduk with horns in ANE art, see Süring 1980: 149–50, figs.16–17, also cited in Herring 2013: 153–5 (with n.343) in his discussion of the ANE artistic substitution of sun rays with horns; cf. Wright 2012: 55–9.
- 89 See Kosmin 184–5 with n.73 and Hoover 2011: 204 and 206–7, where he writes: “It is tempting to suggest that the taurine image may have been introduced initially to advertise the approval of the Babylonian gods for Seleukos’ kingship and his new foundation of Seleukeia.” Also see Hoover’s pp. 198–200 discussing the sources according to which Seleucus, being especially strong, was able to stop a sacrificial bull from escaping with his bare hands (i.e. *App.Syr.*57); cf. Chapter 1: pp. 33–6 on the long-standing association of ANE kings with bulls.
- 90 Kosmin 2014: 181: “In Babylonian religion horned headdresses were an undisputed marker of divine power.”
- 91 *Lib.Or.*11.94; *Just.Epit.*15.4; cf. Erickson 2009: 50; also see her pp. 64–5 for Libanius highlighting the connection of Seleucus with Zeus which indicates that Apollo’s role as divine progenitor of the Seleucids was little known in antiquity; on this, cf. Wright 2010: 59 and n.35 above (on the statue of Apollo at Daphne).
- 92 Mørkholm 1991: 26.
- 93 Grainger 1997: 57–8; Wright 2010: 58–9; also see Bevan (1902: 131), who suggested that Seleucus’ divine ancestry was an invention of the priests at Didyma; cf. *OGIS* 214 and 213.6–9 (confirming that the good relationship between the Seleucids and the priests at Didyma would continue under Antiochus I).
- 94 *OGIS* 214.15 with n.9. Erickson 2009: 212–3; Wright 2010: 59–60. The king appreciated his special association with the oracle and urged the Miletians to use his gifts *ἵνα ἔχητε σπένδειν καὶ χρᾶσθαι ὑγιαίνοντων ἡμῶν καὶ εὐτυχοῦντων καὶ τῆς πόλεως διαμενοῦσης σώας* (so that you can offer libations and consult the oracle about our health and happiness and the safety of the city); cf. Ma 2002: 93 for one Dioscourides, who dedicated a statue of Antiochus the Son before the temple of Apollo Clarius.
- 95 Paus.1.16.3; 8.46.3; cf. Hadley 1974: 58 with n.48; Erickson 2009: 43–4; Wright 2010: 58–9.
- 96 Text and trans. can be found at [http://www.livius.org/ct-cz/cyrus\\_I/babylon05.html](http://www.livius.org/ct-cz/cyrus_I/babylon05.html), accessed on 21/8/2015.
- 97 Bidmead 2004: 139–40; Mehl 1999: 34 with n.48. Note that, according to Hdt1.183, Xerxes carried off a statue of Marduk from Babylon to Sardis – his overall disrespect for the Babylonians and their gods led to a revolt in 479 BCE. Briant 2002: 544–5 and Scharrer 1999: 113–5. Cf. Paus.1.8.5 for Antiochus’ return to the Athenians of statues removed by Xerxes during the Persian Wars but also see, Kuhrt 1996: 47. On Nabonidus’ impiety, cf. Chapter 2: p. 80.
- 98 Erickson 2009: 30, 37–8; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 27.
- 99 Cf. Smith 2001: 54–7 on the importance of the divine family in the Ugaritic concept of the divine council.
- 100 Dowden 2006: 78.
- 101 Vanderhooff 1999: 43; cf. Scurlock 2013: 155.

- 102 Nilsson 1974: 2:167; for Antiochus I Soter as identified with Apollo, see Walbank 1984: 86.
- 103 App.Syr.63; also Chaniotis 2005: 437; cf. n.XX above.
- 104 *OGIS* 222 = Erythrai 504 records the decision of the Ionian League to celebrate the birthday of Antiochus and to dedicate a sacred precinct for the worship of Antiochus and his son; cf. Price 1985: 40; also see Erythrai 37; *JGr* 4.1533 = I. Erythrai 1.132.
- 105 *RC* 15; *OGIS* 223 = Erythrai 31 dated after 261 BCE contains a letter allegedly of Antiochus I towards the citizens of Erythrai. Cohen 1996: 27: “Thus Antiochus II confirmed Erythrai in its status as autonomous and *aphorologetos* (“tribute-free”; *RC* 15.26–27).”
- 106 Wright (2010: 79) suggests that this type of coinage may have had a Persian antecedent; also Erickson 2009: 121–30; cf. Ma 2002: 94 on the case of the Telmessians, who decided to strike coins depicting Apollo as seated on the *omphalos* under Antiochus III. The reverse of these coins showed the Rhodian-inspired head of the god (*BMC Lyc.*86.1), perhaps in recognition of the god’s straddling of the Greek and NE worlds; cf. Mørkholm 1991: 163.
- 107 Van der Spek 2006: 295–6; Haubold (2013a: 133) agrees with Van der Spek; Erikson (2011: 54–5) accepts Van der Spek’s opinion, though he focuses more on the continuing interest of Antiochus in Esagila. See the pre-publication of *BCHP* 6, at [http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-ruin\\_esagila/ruin\\_esagila\\_01.html](http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-ruin_esagila/ruin_esagila_01.html) and the relevant commentary at [http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-ruin\\_esagila/ruin\\_esagila\\_02.html](http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-ruin_esagila/ruin_esagila_02.html), both accessed on 21/8/2015.
- 108 *CAD* Š3, p. 242–3, s.v. *maqātu* 1.c.2; see von Soden (1967: 295–96) for parallels between the Akkadian words *qī’ātu* and *maqātu* and the midweak Ugaritic root \**qy/wl*, where the meaning “to fall” as employed in the Amarna corpus implies obeisance. Also see Porter (1993: 69) for the use of *maqātu* in Ešarhaddon’s inscriptions, where it referred to the collapse of walls and therefore indicated cases of substantial restoration of temples and statues undertaken by the king.
- 109 For example, see *BCHP* 5, also concerning Antiochus (available at [www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-antiochus\\_sin/antiochus\\_sin\\_01.html#TEXT](http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-antiochus_sin/antiochus_sin_01.html#TEXT)), where we read: *DUMJU LUGAL MU-/tim\ uš-kin-nu* (obv.11, the s]on of the king aforementioned prostrated himself); accessed on 21/8/2015.
- 110 See Beaulieu (2014: 28), who suggests that Antiochus’ sacrifice may have been regarded as sacrilegious, although our sources do not support it as he acknowledges.
- 111 Foster 1974: 74.
- 112 Bar-Asher Siegal 2011: 217–8; also see *CAD* M/1 242b (1.c) for *maqātu* meaning “to throw oneself down” – which would allude to a rather theatrical manifestation of religiosity on behalf of Antiochus, but perhaps chosen specifically in order to convey the king’s spontaneous and sincere demonstration of piety in emulation of numerous ANE rulers.
- 113 Cf. Strootman (2014: 73), who points out that the text of the Borsippa inscription is deliberately archaizing so to align Antiochus with the Neo-Babylonian Empire while erasing possible comparisons with the Achaemenids; also see Beaulieu’s portrayal of the Seleucids, discussed in nn.14, 26, 69 above, as continuators of Neo-Babylonian traditions.
- 114 *CAD* M/2 215b s.v. *muquuttu* citing *KAR* 153: 15 *muquuttu eli amēli i maqqut* (a claim for payment will come upon that man); *AHW*: 918b explains the meaning as “to flee, to take refuge”; also note that the noun *maqātu* means “lot” which also encourages the metaphorical meaning of the verb as “to happen, to come by.”
- 115 For example, *BCHP* 3, obv.25; *BCHP* 5, obv.5; cf. *BCHP* 8, rev.22 for references to debris from the procession road of Bēl being removed; also Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991: 81 with nn.44–9; Del Monte 1997: 13–7 (also cited by Kuhrt 2007b: 424n.2); Van der Spek (2003: 300–1) discusses the practice vis-a-vis *BM* 33613, obv.4–5.
- 116 Iossif and Lorber 2007: 351 with n.37 citing Arrian, *Anab.*3.16 and 7.17.

- 117 See Gane (2005: 192, 365) for the use of the verb *kuppuru* to indicate the ritual cleaning of the Esagila and the Ezida on the fifth day of the *akītu* festival (apparently there were two Ezida sanctuaries, one in Marduk's Esagil temple and the other in Nabû's main sanctuary at Borsippa); cf. *Enuma Eliš* V.113–130 and VI.45–81, where Marduk built the Esagila in Babylon after killing Tiamat (Hurowitz 1992: 93), and also *BCHP* 4, ll.9–10, where Alexander announces that he will rebuild the Esagila after entering the city. For the continuing importance of the *Enuma Eliš* in the Hellenistic *akīti* celebrated at Babylon, see Boiy 2004: 293–4.
- 118 Cohen 1993: 340–2.
- 119 See *BM* 36761, obv.7 referring to the Battle of Gaugamela ([http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-alexander/astronomical\\_diary-330\\_03.html](http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-alexander/astronomical_diary-330_03.html), accessed on 21/8/2015); also Pirngruber 2013: 203 with n.34. Van der Spek is hesitant in deciphering the meaning of the omen described in *BCHP* 6, obv.10; see [http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-ruin\\_esagila/ruin\\_esagila\\_02.html#10](http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-ruin_esagila/ruin_esagila_02.html#10); accessed on 21/8/2015); *CAD* U/W 32 s.v. ugāru 1e, 2, however, refers to a prophylactic ritual performed in response to lightning sent by Adad, who demanded more adulation. In the Greek context, of course, lightning was a favourable omen associated with Zeus: see, for example, *Il.*2.349; *Il.*8.132, 140–3 and 17.593; cf. *Plut.Alex.*2.2–3 referring to Alexander's birth.
- 120 Erickson 2011: 54.
- 121 Erickson 2011: 57.
- 122 Text reproduced from Beaulieu 2014: 22; my trans. having consulted Beaulieu's (his p. 23); cf. Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991: 77. Also see Kosmin 2014: 181–2 and 184, where he argues that “the fact that Nabû is related to Marduk as Antiochus to Seleucus . . . serves to legitimize Antiochus' position as son of the founder-king. It also begins to equate Seleucus with Marduk and Antiochus with Nabû.”
- 123 On the central symbolic function of Babylon which constitutes a bond that connects the nether regions and the surface of the earth with the heavens, see George 1997: esp. 127–9; cf. Beaulieu 2008: 10 (cf. Chapter 2: p. 116); also see Bidmead 2004: 143 with Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991: 75–7 and Sherwin-White 1983: 156–9. Kosmin (2014: 188–92) also describes the Seleucids' use of “pre-Hellenistic” ideas as exemplified in the Borsippa cult of Nabû in order to legitimize their rule. Notably, on p. 192 and in discussing the geography of the Borsippa Cylinder he observes that “it is Seleucid, not Babylonian.”
- 124 Bidmead (2004: 143) wrote: “Boasting that he is the caretaker of the temples of Marduk and Nabû, he surely must have celebrated their festivals, including the New Year Festival”; cf. Linszen 2004: 19.
- 125 Drijvers 1980: 72; Erickson 2011: 58–9; cf. Facella 2006: 284. On later Seleucid kings identified with goddesses, see Wright 2012: 67–8.
- 126 Seux 1976: 512–3; for the rising importance of Nabû during the LB period, see Black 1981: 55–6 and van der Toorn 1991: 335–6; Cohen (1993: 441) argued that there may have been two *akīti* festivals that merged in the late first millennium, one for Marduk and one for Nabû; cf. Van der Toorn (1991: 332), who suggested that one of these *akīti* was celebrated in Nisan (the first month) and one in Tašritu (the seventh month). Van der Toorn (1990: 16; cf. id. 1991: 335) also argued that during the Nisan festival the god ought to prove himself worthy by slaying two rival deities represented by small statues, while the king was expected to do the same by surviving the humiliation ritual.
- 127 Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1991: 78.
- 128 Text from Beaulieu 2014: 23 with one exception: on col. ii.14, where I adopt the reading of Stevens 2015: 3–4 for <sup>es</sup>da (writing tablet) instead of ḥaṭ-ṭa (sceptre); my trans. having consulted both Beaulieu 2014 and Stevens 2015. Note that the wording of these lines echoes closely the second half of the first column of the cylinder text (i.16–30). On Nabû's gradual prominence in Babylon and his rivalry with Marduk,

- see Pomponio 1998: 18–9; Millard <sup>2</sup>1999: 607–9; Michel 2001: 552–4. Cf. Beaulieu 1993b: 70–1 on the role of local priesthood in portraying the god as keeper of cosmic order, a development of the Neo-Babylonian period which Antiochus seems to embrace, and their intention to present the king as the earthly representative of the god. On the concluding lines of the prayer and its references to queen Stratonice, see Chapter 3: pp. 130–1.
- 129 Stevens 2015: 4 reads here ša-bi-ka instead of lib-bi-ka and translates the line as “of your heart’s content.”
- 130 Cf. Chapter 3: n.169 above for the prayers about “preserving the life” of the crown prince in the Assyrian “love lyrics” for Nabû.
- 131 Bahrani 2008: 155–8.
- 132 Text and trans. from Strong 1891: 462, 464; Bahrani 2008: 157 cites Luckenbill 1927: 2.375; cf. Craig and Harper 1886: 87–8, ll.1–3 and 5–7 for a very similar inscription of Aššurbanipal from a barrel-cylinder that reads: *šarru rabû šarru dan-nu šar kiššati šar Aššur šar kib-rat irbit-ti / šar šarrani rubû la ša-na-an ša ina a-mat ilâni ti-ik-lê-šu ul-tu tam-tim ê-lit / a-di tam-tim šap-lit i-bê-lu-ma gi-mir ma-lik ú-šak-niš šê-pu-uš-šu; / . . . . . mu-šê-šib BâBili (ki) ê-peš Ê-sag-ila / mu-ud-diš êš-rê-ê-ti kul-lat ma-ha-zê ša ina ki-rib-ši-na iš-tak-kan si-ma-ti / ú sat-tuk-kê-ši-na baṭ-lu-tu ú-ki-nu* (the great king, the powerful king, the king universal, the king of Assyria, the king of the four quarters of the world, the king of kings, the prince without an equal, who by the order of the gods, from the upper sea to the lower sea ruled and brought under his subjection all princes; . . . who caused Babylon to be inhabited, who built Esagila, who repaired the temples of all cities, who adorned their interior, and established their discontinued sacrifices . . .). Attention should be drawn here to Aššurbanipal’s civilizing effects as promoted in his inscriptions *in tandem* with his representation as a pious leader. Again, by exemplifying the god’s power on earth the king clearly acquires an elevated status and approximates divinity; cf. Dalley 2013: 21 for Nabopolassar making his son, Nebuchadnezzar, carry building material along with the workers for the construction of a temple.
- 133 Taylor (2014: esp.224–5) reminds us of the phenomenon of temple despoliation under the Seleucids, which, despite being more systematic than we often assume, was still compatible with the Seleucid dedication to honouring local deities.
- 134 See *BCHP* 6 obv.8, also discussed by Strootman 2014b: 80, which indicates that Antiochus received instructions on ritual performance from “a certain Babylonian”; cf. Van der Spek 2003: 328 and 336 discussing Alexander’s adhering to the instructions of the Chaldeans in order to secure favourable omens for his campaign.
- 135 Strootman (2014: esp.76–7, 87) is critical of the use of the concept of continuity in discussing the Seleucid rule (which somehow is deemed to imply passivity on their behalf), insisting instead (see esp. his pp. 87–90) that the Seleucids were more eager to “manipulate” local traditions in order to establish their rule. Although adopting new methodologies is refreshing (shifting social imaginaries), I do not see how progress is achieved by rejecting the “post-colonial” use of cultural continuity in favour of a return to colonial essentialism; hence, Strootman reassures us that although the Seleucids adopted local customs, they “still preferred Greek cultural forms” (p. 91), and he even adduces information on cultural identities from modern paradigms which indicate that “biculturality is extremely difficult to sustain” (p. 84). For more on this, see Book Conclusion (Synthesis).
- 136 Wright 2012: 80 cites the letter of Antiochus (Antiochus VIII Grypus?) to the priests of Zeus Baitokaike having received a report about the power of the god, responding thus to local religious developments.
- 137 See Diod.Sic.19.90.4; *OGIS* 219.27–8 (=Austin 139); cf. *RC* 22.4–5 and *Just.Ep.* 15.4.2.
- 138 Hence, the much later Libanius in his description of Antioch names Heracles, not Apollo, as the progenitor of the Seleucids (*Or.*11.91, text cited below on p.165);

- Mehl 1986: 7; Errington (1976: 157n.1) dismissed Libanius' account as imaginative, yet Apollo does not appear much on the coins of the Seleucids before 300 BCE. Nawotka (2008: 144–5) argues that Apollo was introduced in Seleucid coinage when the dynasty felt confident to attempt a break with the iconography of Alexander.
- 139 Also note the famous *Bīsotūn* (*Behistun*) relief which was dedicated to Herakles Kallinikos by a Seleucid satrap in 148 BCE. See Kleiss 1970: 145–7.
- 140 See Martinelli 2012: 81 for Heracles and Dionysus as the Guardian gods of the Heracleion in Thasos.
- 141 See Edmunds 1971: 374 (cf. his p. 368–9 arguing that Alexander's religiosity was guided by the belief that by emulating heroes whose virtue had earned them immortality he could share their divine status).
- 142 Hdt.5.22; 7.137–9; Thuc.2.99.3; of course, Philip II did not convince everyone with regard to his descent; see Dem.9.31. Still, his claim advocated his affinity with the divine as an important prerequisite for the acceptance of his rule. Cf. Malkin 1998: 141 with n.103, 144–5.
- 143 Isoc.*Pan.*76–7; also *Phil.*111–15.
- 144 Polyb.5.10.8; Diod.17.4.9; Just.*Ep.*11.2.5.
- 145 Arr.*Anab.*1.4.5.
- 146 Arr.*Anab.*2.24.6.
- 147 For Heracles' identification with the Phoenician Melqart, Brundage 1958: 230; Van Bechem 1967: 77–8, 107–8; Bonnet 1988: esp.47–53, 346–52 and id. 1992: 174–9; Burkert 1992b: 111; Lipiński 1995: 226–34, esp.228–9 (describing Melqart as the Phoenician name of Nergal; cf. Mettinger 2001: 84–5) and Aubet 2001: 147–8 drawing attention to the chthonian aspects of Melqart and his connections with royalty; also see Farnell 1921: 144 on the solar associations of the god, represented as a baetyl “with the sun's rays surmounting it” by way of explaining why the Greeks did not associate the primary god of Tyros with Zeus or Apollo in the first instance; cf. Teixidor 1983: 247–52. On the importance of Heracles in Greek and Phoenician colonization traditions, see Malkin 2005: *passim*.
- 148 Tarn 1948: 2.51–2; for Callisthenes, see Jacoby II124F14 = Strab.17.1.43; cf. Arr.*Anab.*3.3.2.
- 149 Also cited in Edmunds 1971: 368.
- 150 Curt.4.8.3.
- 151 Arr.*Anab.*4.28.4.
- 152 See the views of Eratosthenes as recorded in Arr.*Anab.*5.3.1ff. and Strab.15.1.7–8. Tarn (1948: 2.59) accepts that the tale was probably invented by the Macedonian army who accompanied Alexander to the region. Edmunds 1971: 374 with his n.51.
- 153 Cf. Strab.14.2.13, who reports the name of the Rhodian poet of a *Heracleia* as Peisander, who was Alexander's contemporary and possibly a member of his entourage during his Indian campaign.
- 154 Scheer 2005: 228.
- 155 Scheer (2005: 216–9) emphasizes the renewed interest of Greek cities during the Hellenistic period in tracing their ancestry as far back in history as possible and Alexander's active promotion of this interest. Strabo (14.2.28) describes the phenomenon as the “Hellenization of the barbarians”; cf. Lib.*Or.*11.103, where the verb “to hellenize” appears for the first time with reference to the city-founding policy of Seleucus I; cf. book Conclusion (Synthesis) for the emphasis on the civilizing aspects of Alexander's conquests under the Roman Empire.
- 156 Wright 2012: 25 on Alexander's use of the Zeus and Heracles imagery on his coins.
- 157 Cf. Van der Spek 2003: 295, 297–9, 328, 337–8 for the title “king of the world” attributed to Alexander in the Babylonian astronomical diaries.
- 158 Diod.Sic.16.91.2–3.

- 159 Fredericksmeier 1991: 202. The reference to the Persian king as bull is appropriate not only for the allegorical context of Pythia's responses in which the king stands for the sacrificial victim, but it is also compatible with time-honoured iconography in the ANE as discussed in Chapter 1. The Persians had adopted the symbols of the lion and the bull to refer to royal power from the Lydians. See Naster 1965: 30; Nimchuk 2000: 20–3. The Greeks were familiar with coins struck by Croesus, the Lydian king, which “carried the obverse emblem of the lion and bull”; see Sheedy 2006: 120.
- 160 Malkin 1987: 90–113, esp. 101 and 112. Also see, for example, Hdt.5.42.2–45.1 on the failure of Dorieus to colonize Africa and Sicily and his subsequent visit to the Delphic Oracle, which advised him to build Heracleia in Sicilian Eryx because Heracles himself had allegedly conquered the place for his descendants; cf. Thuc.6.2.3.
- 161 Parke 1985: 11 and Fonterose 1988: 209 discussing Milet I.3.155.15–7 (dated mid-second century BCE), according to which the Miletians *κρατήσαντες δόρατι τῶν ἐνοικοῦντων βαρβάρων κατόρκισαν τὰς τε ἄλλας Ἑλληνίδας πόλεις καὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν καθηγησαμένου τῆς στρατείας Ἀπόλλωνος Διδυμέως* (by subduing the locals with their spears settled both the other Greek cities and ours, with Apollo Didymeus leading the expedition, trans. modified from Fonterose). The inscription is dated in the middle of the second century BCE and was found on Apollonia on the Rhyndakus River, a colony of Miletus that wished to renew its ties with its metropolis; cf. Herda 2011: 77–81 for the close relationship of Apollo Delphinios and Apollo Didymeus as gods sanctioning the colonizing expeditions of Miletus, which is illustrated by the Molpoi inscription of 200 BCE. As Greaves (2002: 128) suggests some of these traditions are likely to be Hellenistic inventions.
- 162 Hom.*Il.*2.483–4 refers to Agamemnon “as a bull, pre-eminent among the grazing cattle”; cf. Aesch.*Ag.*1129, where Agamemnon is described as a bull slaughtered by his adulterous wife.
- 163 In Xen.*Anab.*3.2.9 the Greek soldiers in the service of Cyrus receive an omen by Zeus the Saviour upon which they vow to offer sacrifices to the god; during the sacrifice, however, they invoke Heracles “the leader” (*Anab.*4.8.25; cf. 6.5.24, where the soldiers are urged to follow Heracles the Leader).
- 164 Kosmin 2014: 190–1.
- 165 Kosmin 2014: 189.
- 166 Megasthenes *BNJ* 715Fla = Jos.*AJ*10.227; F11a = Strab.15.16 in Kosmin 2014: 191n.112.
- 167 Hes.*Th.*950–55; also see Soph.*Tr.*1201–1278; Hahnemann 1999: 67. Melqart also celebrated a festival, known as the *egersis* or resurrection of the god, represented on a fourth-century BCE bowl found in Sidon; cf. Bonnet 1988: 104–8; Aubet <sup>2</sup>2001: 154; Barnett 1969: 9–10. The festival focused on restoration by fire, which is reminiscent of Heracles' funeral pyre preceding his apotheosis; West 1997: 465; Burkert 1985: 210; cf. Mettinger (2001: 109–10), who rejects the idea that Melqart was a chthonic god because, like Eshmun, the guardian god of Phoenician Sidon, “the tradition of a death in flames is an outstanding though not exclusive characteristic of Melqart.” However, there is no point in ignoring Heracles' chthonic *aspect*, clearly employed in Arist.*Ran.*108–15, 116–64 or Eur.*Her.*600–20, even though it was not his main characteristic. The point here is *not* to classify gods that the ancient themselves wished to be as fluid as possible but to understand how their additional/added-on aspects served variably a number of communities down to the Hellenistic period.
- 168 In several of his adventures Heracles had to travel to the Underworld, thus acquiring afterlife knowledge; hence, according to myth, Heracles was required to recover Cerberus from the Underworld; Hom.*Il.*8.367–8 and *Od.*11.623–6; Hes.*Th.*310–2, 769–73; Stesich.*PMG*206; Pind.*fr.*249aSM; Eur.*Bacch.*5.56–70; Diod.*Sic.*4.26.1; Apollod.2.5.12; Ov.*Met.*5.534–50; Eur.*HF*612–3; cf. Xen.*Anab.*6.2.2 detailing how his men anchored near the Acherusia Chersonese in the Black Sea, believed to be Heracles' point of entrance to Hades. His adventure in the garden of the Hesperides

- has been also understood as a quasi-*katabasis*; see Hes.*Th.*215–6, 274–5 (cf. *Th.*333–5); Eur.*HF*394–407; Pherec.*FGrH*3F16–17 (cf. scholAp.*Rhod.Arg.*4.1396); Soph.*Tr.*1090–1, 1099–100; Ps-Eratosth.*Cat.*3.4; Paus.6.19.8; Diod.*Sic.*4.26; Lucan 9.360–7; Sen.*HF*530–2 (cf. Ov.*Met.*4.631–2); Apollod.2.5.11. In Euripides’ *Alcestis* Heracles goes to the Underworld once more in order to recover Alcestis, the king’s wife; finally, his association with the Underworld becomes more prominent through his initiation to the Eleusinian mysteries (Xen.*Anab.*6.3.6). See Kerenyi 1967: 83–4; Lloyd-Jones 1967: 216–17; Clinton 2003: 59; for older versions of Heracles’ *catabasis*, see Burnett 1985: 198n.7. Endsjø (2002: 233–4 and 238–45) discusses the term *eschatia* (the furthest part) as a liminal space between the *polis* and Hades which Heracles can traverse and make less unfamiliar; the Greeks of the Hellenistic period do settle in *eschatiae*, yet by labelling their journeys as *nostoi*, they imitate Heracles.
- 169 Hom.*Il.*8.364–9; *Od.*11.623–6; Hes.*Th.*312–8.
- 170 Heracles was worshipped in Cyzicus, Erythrai, Phrygia (Keretapa, Stectorion, Ierapolis, Silvia, Nacoleia, Kibyra), Heracleia Pontice, Heracleia Salvake, Pergamos, Troja, Kilicia (Issos, Tarsus), Pisidia (Ariassos, Prostanna, Amvlada, Konana, Kremna), Lydia (Sardeis, Saitta), Sevastopolis-Herakleipolis in Pontus, Pessinus in Galatia, Tios in Bithynia, Nicaia, Smyrna, Temnos in Aeolida, Chalcedona, Lycia; see *LIMC* volumes IV and V. In Karia, Maussolus had associated his kingship both with Heracles and Zeus Labrandeus already since the middle of the fourth century BCE; Stafford 2012: 146–7; Heracles’ cult at Thasos was, according to ancient sources, similar to the Tyrian cult of Melqart (Hdt.2.44 with Teixidor 1983: 244–5; Martinelli 2012: 82–4; cf. Malkin 2005: 238–47); the island celebrated a Soteria (from about 300 BCE) and a (considerably older) Heracleia festival in honour of its divine patron; Stafford 2012: 189; Bergquist 1973: 27–8, 36–9; the cult of Heracles was also promoted in southern Asia Minor by the Attalids, who later claimed to have descended from Telphus, Heracles’ son; Hansen <sup>2</sup>1971: 157–8. A Soteria festival was also celebrated at Pergamos in honour of Heracles from the second century BCE; Hansen <sup>2</sup>1971: 255; Jones 2000: 9n.36; cf. Heintze 1966/67: *passim* on Heracles and Hermes worshipped together (cf. Callim.*h.*3.143 referring to Hermes in connection with Heracles and Apollo as Zeus’ gatekeepers; also Paus.10.32.4 on the cult of Hermes, Heracles and Apollo at Themisonion in Phrygia). Heracles’ cult at Erythrai also had an allegedly Tyrian origin with Pausanias insisting that the local Heracleion (still unidentified) was extremely ancient (Paus.7.5.5–8); cf. Bonnet 1988: 356–7.
- 171 On Heracles’ apotheosis, see Hed.*Th.*950–55; cf. Callim.*h.*3.149 referring to Hera as Heracles’ *πενθερίη* (mother in law). For the role of Dionysus in Heracles’ apotheosis, see Soph.*Tr.*510–11, Strab.15.1.6. Also Galinsky 1972: 81–2; Schauenburg 1963: esp.117–19; on his “sacred marriage” on Thasos, where he shared a sanctuary with Hera and Hebe, see Stafford 2010: 234; also see her pp. 242–3 discussing Soph.*Phil.*1418–20, where Heracles refers to the immortal virtue he won through his labours, and Eur.*Her.*854–7 (cf. Il.9.10–14), where he reportedly appeared alongside Hebe confirming the tradition regarding his apotheosis; on the possible association of Dionysus and Heracles in Thasos, see Bergquist 1973: 29 (under *Titles of Heracles*) and Bonnet 1988: 349; cf. Martinelli 2012 discussed in n.194 below.
- 172 Dalley 2014: 71–2; cf. Shipp 2002: 153–4.
- 173 On the solar associations of both Heracles and Gilgameš, see Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 189–92 with notes; also cf. Chapter 1: n.130. In referring to the “solar mythology” of these heroes I certainly do not subscribe to Max Müller’s solar theory (see Dorson 1955) but, like throughout this work, I am keen to observe the transmission of cultural symbols and their contribution in new settings.
- 174 Cf. Intr.n.23 for bibliography. As Annus observed (2002: 119n.318), Ninurta is addressed as *aplu dannu ša Enlil* (the strong son of Enlil) in *KAR* 76:9, which parallels Heracles’ address as “the valiant son of Zeus” (*Dios alkimos huios*); cf. p. 29, where he cites *SAACT* 3.130, where Ninurta is named “guardian of the throne of kingship,”



and his pp. 9, 11–12 for Ninurta as the tutelary god of Nippur; also cf. his pp. 52–3 introducing the theme of Ninurta’s identification with Nabû as well as Marduk, which he develops in the rest of his chapter 2. Guillaume (2004: 192–5) follows in detail the widespread tradition of Ninurta in Syro-Palestine from the third millennium BCE to the Seleucid era. The hero possibly found his way in the Bible as Nimrod (Gen 10: 8–12); see van der Toorn and van der Horst 1990: esp.10–15. Seals found in Syro-Palestine and dated from the eighth to the seventh century BCE illustrate the adventures of Ninurta-Nimrod, particularly Ninurta’s fight against the lion. Ninurta was also attested in Ugarit in the late Bronze Age in the Amarna letters and in the Gilgameš fragment from Megiddo; cf. *GE* XI.17, where Ninurta poses as the chamberlain of the gods (*gJuzallâšunu*) in connection with the Deluge episode, a theme further discussed by Annus 2002: 123–33. For Ninurta as the model for Enkidu, see George 2003: 789n.104; cf. Annus 2002: 171.

175 Beaulieu 1993b: 70.

176 Guillaume (2004: 193) refers to Ninurta’s role (in conjunction with Anat) in the overthrow of Egyptian rule and the establishment of the kingdom of Amurru; cf. Artzi 1999: 366–7, also cited by Annus 2002: 148.

177 Guillaume (2004: 193–5) discusses Ninurta’s profile as the victorious hunter of his enemies; after vanquishing them Ninurta founded civilization by introducing royalty, cities, irrigation, ploughing and commerce: he was, after all, *NIN.URTA*, “lord of the arable land.” The tale *Ninurta and the Stones* (LUGAL-E) was very widespread, with more than 200 witnesses spreading from the beginning of the second millennium BCE to the Seleucid period and most probably the source of the works of Heracles. Other very widespread tales of Ninurta included the *ANZU* myth transmitted in Akkadian in a short version (1600 BCE – one witness) and a long one dated before the end of the second millennium (a dozen witnesses). In this tale Ninurta recovers the Tablets of Destinies and returns them to Enlil. He seems to regret this in a subsequent tale titled *Temptation and Punishment of Victorious Ninurta*, a short text from Ur dated in the second millennium BCE. Also see Feldt (2011: 125–6, 131–2, 140–5) discussing the metaphorical meanings of the tale of Ninurta and his monstrous opponent Asag, described as a close match for the king. The story exemplifies the motif of restoring world order after victory against an enemy and its multiple interpretations highlighting the centrality of metaphorical thinking among the Sumerians and their ability to invest narratives with new metaphors according to socio-historical challenges. In my view, there are striking parallels between this tale and the Sumerian episodes of Gilgameš and Enkidu.

178 Cf. Malkin (1998: 247) discussing Alexander’s attempt to imitate Achilles upon embarking on his Asian campaign, an example that the Greeks of his time would have understood in the context of “returning” to the places glorified by the Homeric heroes.

179 Photius (*Bibl.*121a23–36) says that Isocrates had entrusted to Ephorus the treatment of the periods “previous to” those narrated by Thucydides and to Theopompus those that came “after,” subscribing to the idea that it was necessary for the Greeks to have a uniting chronology that goes back to the “Return of the Heraclids.” Darbo-Peschanski 2010: 33–4. Note that Strabo had used both Ephorus (13.3.6; also 12.3.11; 13.1.4) and Pherecydes (i.e. 10.2.4; 10.3.21; 10.5.8; 14.1.3; 14.1.27) and hence, the notion of universality is propagated in later writers.

180 Herodotus claims that the Scythian (4.8–10) and the Spartan kings (6.52, 7.204, 8.131; cf. Diod.Sic.4.58.1–4 and Ps.Apollod.Bibl.2.8.2–3; also Xen.*Hell.*3.3.3 and 7.1.31; *Ages.*1.2 and 8.7) were among the descendants of Heracles. The king of Rhodes was also related to Heracles (Diod.Sic.4.58.7–8) as well as Croesus of Sardis (Ps. Apollod.*Bibl.*2.7.8); also see the later Dio Chrys.*Disc.*1.59–61 for Heracles as the king of the entire world worshipped everywhere from east to west; cf. Ps.Luc.*Cyn.*13 for Heracles as master of land and sea.

- 181 Ps.Apollod.*Bibl.*2.4.5; Diod.Sic.4.9.4–5; Paus.9.11.3; also see Hom.*h.*15; note that Dio Chrys.*Disc.*1.58–60 refutes Heracles' loss of kingship to Eurystheus as an idle tale; Pind.*Od.*9.78–91 and *Nem.*1.33–72 relates the birth of Heracles without references to the loss of kingship. See Apollod.*Bibl.*3.1.1–2 for Belus the Egyptian as Heracles' ancestor; cf. Moyer 2011: 79–81 for Herodotus' distinction between the Egyptian and Greek Heracles (2.44.5) and 107–9 for his use of Egyptian king lists as a historical point of reference from which he could associate the present of the Greeks with a legendary “universal” past; also see West 1997: 464.
- 182 Eur.*HF*798–814. Dio Chrys.*Disc.*1.83–4. Heracles was deemed worthy of an apotheosis because of his efforts to establish divine justice; cf. Isoc.*Or.*5.132; Diod.Sic.4.15.1; Dion.Hal.*Rom.Ant.*1.40.2; cf. Bacch.*Od.*12.13; Pind.fr.169.151; *Nem.*1.62–6; *Ol.*10.13–59. Also note that Heracles was employed by early Stoic philosophers as the ideal advocate of their tenets (cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Zen.*7.29); this trend was immediately embraced by Hellenistic kings who come to pose as dedicated followers of Zeno; see Murray 1915: 45–8. Also cf. Invernizzi 1989: 87–92, 98–9, and 103–6 and Moreno 1984: 140 on the popularity of statue types representing a weary but victorious Heracles resting after his labours, including the famous Heracles constructed by Lysippus, at a time close to Alexander's death; the type, represented by Lysippus as holding the apples of the Hesperides behind his back, was found in many variations throughout the Hellenistic Near East gradually adopting local elements. Note that Antiochus I had minted tetradrachms depicting weary Heracles on the reverse in a pose possibly inspired by Lysippus' Heracles *epitrapezios* (Pollitt 1972: 194; cf. Bartman 1992: 191–2 on the type's derivation from Phoenician *pataikoi*, dwarf figures used as figureheads on ships, which she doubts); see Houghton and Lorber 2002: no 313 discussed in Erickson 2009: 131–2 (= fig. 57 on his p. 270).
- 183 Sedley 1998: 75n.62 argues that the association of Heracles with the Stoics did not eventuate until the first century CE; cf. Epict.*Disc.*3.22 and 26. However, Aratus, who spent some time in the service of Antiochus I in Syria (Mair <sup>2</sup>1960: 187, 189; cf. Plut.*Vit.Ar.*15.1 and Lightfoot 2009: 191n.1) was acquainted with the Stoic Zeno (Mair <sup>2</sup>1960: 188; cf. Plut.*Vit.Ar.*23.6). Regardless of whether we accept that Aratus expresses a solid version of the Stoic dogma (Hunter 1995: 4; contra Gee 2000: 70–84), he was familiar with the intellectual circle in which Stoic ideas about Heracles were formulated (Xen.*Mem.*2.1.21); cf. Billows 1994: 67 with n.26 on the use of Heracles by Cynic philosophers.
- 184 See LaCoste (2010, online) on the convergence of Hellenistic and Jewish traditions on the *Wisdom of Solomon*; on the benefaction of Hellenistic king in association with their divine substance, see Chaniotis 2005: 432–3.
- 185 For example, see Theoc.*Id.*17.26; Gow <sup>2</sup>1952: 1.331.
- 186 Wright 2010: 58.
- 187 Note Scheer (2005: 226–8), who draws attention to the strong interest of numerous cities in Hellenistic Cilicia and Syria in promoting their descent from Argos; although Argos did not feature much in the Greek settlement of Asia Minor, in myth it featured as the homeland of Heracles (Hom.*Il.*2.662; cf. Strab.14.2.6) and his victorious descendant, Alexander.
- 188 Oshima 2011: 206n.8; cf. Pongratz-Leisten 2013: 36; Suter 2000: 96–7.
- 189 Oshima 2011: 47. On the identification of Heracles-Nergal with Marduk and Sandas, see Mastronique 2008: 201–2, 206, 209–12; cf. Laroche 1973: 111: “Sandas serait un Tammuz-Adonis d'Asie Mineure.”
- 190 Nergal was regarded an underworld deity already during the early dynastic period; Lambert 1973: 356. From the OB period onwards he was syncretised with Erra; *RIA* 9 1998–2001 (Wiggemann): 217; Livingstone <sup>2</sup>1999: 622. The god had in his command a number of demons and evil forces that he would unleash against his enemies; Foster 2005: 612–5, 715, 776. His association with demons was known in Babylon, where a

- number of apotropaic amulets have been found bearing Nergal's representation. See Reiner 1960: esp.150. In the myth of Nergal and Ereškigal (Foster 2005: 506–24), the queen of the Underworld is so smitten with Nergal that she eventually makes him her co-ruler; Gurney 1960: 106–7 summarizes the plot; cf. Lambert 1980: 62 and Mastro-nique 2008: 204 with n.17. Dalley 1989: 164 argued that their union reflects an attempt to combine northern and southern Mesopotamian traditions that ascribed rule of the Underworld to Ereškigal and Nergal respectively. Nergal had a prominent role in neo-Assyrian official cult. Also see Hays 2011: esp.51 commenting on parallel passages describing the Underworld in the *GE* and the tale of *Nergal and Ereškigal* by the late Babylonian period.
- 191 As discussed, Heracles and Nergal were identified with Melqart; see Seyrig 1945: 70–1; cf. Bonnet 1992: 180–4; cf. nn.147, 170, 181 above.
- 192 Haider 2008: 196 with n.22 citing Carcopino 1941: 173–7; Brommer 1953: 66; Nilsson 1967: 186, 453–4, 677, 816 and id. 1974: 544; Ritter 1995: 53–5, 99–100, 104–20, 170, 220–30.
- 193 Haider 2008: 196–7 with n.23 citing Von Weiher 1971: 5, 14–5, 68–70, 73, Lambert 1973: 362 and 1990: 44, 47–9, and Livingstone<sup>2</sup>1999: 622 (however, note that Haider cites p. 1171 which does not exist in the *DDD*).
- 194 See n.171 above and nn.200 and 216 below; cf. Lavecchia (2013: 70–5) stressing Heracles' association with Dionysian eschatology as sketched out already in Pindar. Also see Hinge 2003: *passim* discussing the eschatological associations of Dionysus and Heracles in the context of Orphic religious beliefs of which Herodotus was privy. Heracles appears as a pupil of Orpheus in the fourth century BCE; see Alcidas, Odysseus fr.24 (Kern 1922: 123); cf. Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 376. Also see Martinelli 2012: 80–1 drawing attention to the continuous devotion of the Thasians to Heracles and Dionysus, who are nevertheless portrayed differently on tetradrachms of the second century BCE: both gods pose as youths with Heracles appearing almost as an *epebe*. The legend of these coins is dedicated to Heracles Soter of the Thasians (*Ἡρακλέους Σωτήρος Θασίων*), which Martinelli explains as referring to the twofold cult of Heracles as hero and god. Also see her pp. 94–8 discussing the salvific aspects of both gods in Hellenistic Asia Minor and suggesting that Heracles' association with Dionysus at Thasos is likely to have coincided with the circulation of the tetradrachms under influence from nearby Maronea. Archaeological evidence suggests that the Thasian Heracleion was linked to the orgiastic cult of Dionysus Bacchios in the later Roman times (Martinelli, pp. 91–2); however, the cult was already known to Herodotus (4.79).
- 195 Houghton and Lorber 2002: nos. 88–91, 102–4, 144, 184, 187, 220–1 in Erickson 2009: 81 with n.205. On the connection of Tyrian lion with Marduk through Mazaeus' introduction of lion staters in Babylon, see Iossif and Lorber 2007: 351–2.
- 196 Drijvers 1980: 105 for Heracles and Shadrafa; also see his p. 176 with Starcky 1949: 72, fig. 8 for a mythic episode represented on a peristylum from Palmyra, where Shadrafa is represented as fighting a hydra-like monster. See Teixidor 1979: 104 for Shadrafa and Apollo; also see his p. 103 discussing the famous stele from Amrit (Marathus) in Lebanon depicting the god standing on a lion and holding a smaller lion by its hind legs; cf. Jourdain-Annequin 1992 and id. 1993 arguing that under Persian rule the proliferation of artistic representations involving a smiting god with a lion was encouraged. Very recently, see Petrovic 2014: esp.275–89 on Posidippus' promotion of Persian royal ideology by comparing the glamour of Persian kings with the Ptolemaic court (also see her pp. 297–9 on sources that exemplify Greek obsession with Persian court life).
- 197 Teixidor 1979: 104 with Starcky 1949: 68–9.
- 198 Van Alfen 2008: 201–3, 205–7; cf. his pp. 203–5 discussing the ichtymorphic gods of Phoenician cities, which were gradually assimilated to Heracles/Melqart. Perhaps

- then the anchor featured on Seleucid coins, especially in relation to Seleucus I, was a symbol of (Tyrian) Heracles; cf. n.170 above for the tradition surrounding a cult statue of Heracles which allegedly arrived on a raft from Tyre to Erythrai.
- 199 Erickson 2009: 167–8.
- 200 Heracles and Dionysus, both illegitimate children of Zeus by mortal princesses, attracted the rage of Hera, who afflicted both of them with madness; for Heracles' madness, see Callim.*h.Dian.*148–91; Diod.Sic.4.39.2–3. Ps-Apollodorus (*Bibl.*3.5.1) relates the madness of Dionysus, who wandered in Egypt and Syria, before being initiated into mystic rituals by Rhea in Phrygia (τὰς τελετὰς ἐκμαθῶν); cf. Eumelus (fr.11 Bernabé). The story is similar to Heracles' initiation to the Eleusinian mysteries. The affinity of the two deities is cast in comic light in Aristophanes (*Ran.*1–60), where Dionysus undertakes his journey to the Underworld disguised as Heracles. Also note that during the Hellenistic period Dionysus and Heracles were increasingly worshipped by civic associations that held “mysteries” in connection with royal cults, paving thus the way for such practices during the Roman era; see Harland 2003: 100 and id. <sup>2</sup>2013: 24, 28, 30, 34, 37–40, 54–7; cf. n.194 above.
- 201 Erickson 2009: 168–9 with Hoover 2002: 52–5.
- 202 Houghton and Lorber 2002: nos 173–6, 195–9 discussed in Erickson 2009: 71 with n.164. Also see Ehippus of Olynthus, a contemporary of Alexander (*FGrH* 126 fr.5.26–28 = Ath. 12.537e–38b), referring to Alexander's habit of dressing as Hermes and Heracles: ἐν δὲ τῇ συνουσίᾳ τὰ τε πέδιλα καὶ τὸν πέτασον ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ καὶ τὸ κηρύκειον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ, πολλαίκι δὲ καὶ λεοντῆν καὶ ῥόπαλον ὥσπερ ὁ Ἡρακλῆς. (On social occasions he [Alexander] put on the sandals and the petasos on his head, and took the caduceus in his hand. Often he also wore the lion's skin and club just like Heracles); trans. Collins 2012: 377.
- 203 Wright 2010: 116; cf. Erickson 2009: 74–6.
- 204 See App.*Syr.*56 for a tale explaining how Seleucus managed to capture with his bare hands a sacrificial bull that had escaped from his bonds – from where he gained his portrayal with horns. The image was also discussed in the inaccurate description of the foundation of Alexandria in the gamma recension of the *Alexander Romance* (2.28), where Alexander is portrayed as having erected a horned statue of Seleucus to honour his bravery.
- 205 Houghton and Lorber 2002: no. 322 discussed in Erickson 2009: 74 with n.178.
- 206 Erickson 2009: 131–2; cf. Mørkholm 1991: 122 and n.182 above.
- 207 See Wiggermann 1997: 34: “The canonical godlist An-Anum starts its treatment of death deities in tablet V 213 with Ereškigal, the queen of the Netherworld. It continues with five city gods, Ninazu of Enegi and Ešnumma (V 239), Ningišzida (V 250), Tišpak (V 273), Inšušinak (V 286), and Išaran (V 239) . . . [T]he gods that follow are death gods too, but of a different type, the war gods Lugalgitta and Meslamtaea (my emphasis).” On Marduk's identification with Meslamtaea, see Black 2006: 155; Von Weiher 1971: 93–4; on Nergal as “Enlil of the Underworld, see Katz 2007: 182–3; cf. Dalley 2014: 65 on Meslamtaea, who “is associated with the image of a tree bent over, enclosing a deity” – an iconographic detail which brings to mind Adonis, the child born from the myrrh tree; on this, see Ov.*Met.*10.512–3; Apollod.*Bibl.*3.14.4; schol. Theoc.*Id.*1.107; Plut.*Parall.*22; Ant.*Lib.*34.
- 208 Already in the Cylinders of Gudea, dated in the twenty-second century BCE, Ninurta was associated with a number of monsters which he defeated; Suter 2000: 107. His victories were later utilized by gods of war as a symbol of their military supremacy. One of these gods was Marduk, and his Esagil temple at Babylon bore representations of him overcoming such monsters. Wiggermann 1992: 145–6; cf. Beaulieu 2003: 356. Also see the *Enūma Eliš* I.141–6, where Marduk defeats eleven monsters created by Tiamat; West 1997: 467–9; cf. Dalley 2014: 67, who argued that the artistic motif of defeating Tiamat persisted as suggested by representations of Tyche stepping

- on half-submerged, beardless figures found in Dura-Europos and Antioch. Also see Burkert 1985: 209, where Heracles is compared both to Ninurta and Ningiršu; cf. Brenk 1991: *passim*.
- 209 Wiggermann 1997: 34 also discussing an OB list of city-gods from Ur (*UET* 6/2.412: 11ff.).
- 210 Wiggermann 1997: 34.
- 211 See *Hes.Th.*3.13–8; *Paus.*5.17.11; *Peisandr.ap.Paus.*2.37.4; *Alcaeus ap.schol.Th.* LP443; *Eur.HF*419–24, 1274–5; *Simon.PMG*569; *Stes.SLG*15; *Soph.Tr.*573–4; *Diod. Sic.*4.11.5–6; *Ov.Met.*9.69–76; *Apollod.*2.5.2; *Hyg.Fab.*30.
- 212 Wiggermann 1997: 35.
- 213 Wiggermann 1997: 37–8.
- 214 Wiggermann 1997: 38; Smith (2001: 113 with n.79) claims that the liturgy “links the death of Dumuzi with the funerary cult of the Ur III dynasty,” where Ninazu is identified with the deceased king instead of Dumuzi; also see his pp. 115–16 discussing the *egersis* (awakening) of Heracles mentioned twice Josephus (*Ant.*8.5.146 and *Ap.*I.119, which has divided scholars as to whether it refers to a cult celebrating the “resurrection” of Heracles or it simply refers to erecting buildings in his honour.
- 215 Wiggermann 1997: 48.
- 216 Perhaps we should understand Heracles’ adventure in the service of the Lydian queen Omphale in this light; infatuated with the queen, Heracles served her with adulation to the point of wearing her clothes and doing housework reserved for female slaves. For Heracles’ effeminacy in this tale, see Loraux 1995: 35–6; Cyrino 1998: 214; cf. Kampen 1996: 233 and esp.235 (on the Roman association of Omphale with Cleopatra) and Ament 1993: 15–20. Cyrino (1998: 216) interpreted his experience as a kind of ritual which marked his passage from the human to the divine status. Heracles was said to wear the *krokotos*, the saffron tunic appropriate to women, which is closely linked to Dionysus (see n.194 above). In antiquity, a more feminine style of dress was permitted to young men, musicians, actors and devotees of Dionysus; J. Lydus *De magistr.*3.64; *Artemid.*2.3; however, gender bending was also a prominent feature of the cult of Ištar (see nn. Chapter 2: n.93 and Chapter 3: n.89). Cf. West 1997: 465, who understood the story as a warning about the threat female influence may pose to heroes.
- 217 Acosta-Hughes and Stephens 2012: 92.
- 218 The girl has different names in different traditions; for Echenais, see *PMGF*280 (Davies); *Timaeus FGrH*566A83; *Parth.k9Gasel.*335. For Nomia, see *Servius ad Ec.*8.68; *Ov.Met.*4.277. Later, she appears as Thaleia; *Verg.Ec.*6.1–2; *Paus.*9.35.3; *Plut.De mus.*14; *Sosithous* names her *Pimplea*, meaning abundance.
- 219 *Serv.auct.Verg.Buc.*8.68e *S Theocr.* = *TGrF*<sup>2</sup>99F1a (Snell); cf. *TGrF*<sup>2</sup>99F2 (Snell) and *Gow* <sup>2</sup>1952: 2.1. *Trans. mine.*
- 220 See Anderson (1993: 72) for the similarities of the tale of *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* with *Sosithous’* play.
- 221 Text from Vanstiphout and Cooper 2003: 88–9; also see from *ETCSL* 1.8.2.3; for the translation I combined these two sources opting for “clever hero” rendered as “Wise Dog” by Vanstiphout and Cooper 2003 and lion skin instead of “garment of lion skins,” which is the *ETCSL* choice; cf. Cohen 1973: 140 and Anderson 1993: 72.
- 222 *Aelian VH*10.18 discusses *Daphnis* and his Sicilian origin; cf. *Diod.*4.84; *Serv. adVerg.Ec.*5.20. For Heracles’ adventures in western Sicily, see *Paus.*3.16.4–5; *Diod. Sic.*4.23; *Verg.Aen.*1.570; 5.24, 392, 402, 412, 419, 483, 630, 772; *Hyg.Fab.*260. A dedication to Heracles from Selinus reads: *Διὰ τὸς θεὸς τὸσδε νικῶντι τοῖ Σελινόντιοι / διὰ τὸν Δία νικῶμεν καὶ διὰ τὸν Φόβον καὶ / διὰ Ἡρακλέα καὶ δι’ Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ διὰ Ποτ / εἰδάναν καὶ διὰ Τυνδαρίδας καὶ διὰ Πασικ / ράτειαν καὶ διὰ τὸς ἄλλος θεὸς διὰ δὲ Δία / μάλιστα.* *Holloway* 2000: 77 renders the inscription as follows: “Through these gods the Selinuntines are victorious. / We are victorious through Zeus and through Phobos (Ares), / Through Heracles and through Apollo and through / Poseidon and through

- the sons of Tyndareus (Castor and Pollux) and through . . . Pasikrateia (Persephone) / and Through the other gods but especially Zeus.” Also see Holloway 2000: 138, 155 for the early Phoenician presence in Sicily, especially the association of the palm tree with Astarte-Aphrodite of Eryx where Heracles stopped according to tradition to recover a bull from the local king. See Apollod.2.5.10; Diod.Sic.4.83.1–4.
- 223 Interestingly, Dumuzi also experienced deification since in one of the Sumerian texts he poses as a guardian god of Heaven; see Kramer 1989: 114. Also see Penglase 1994: 28: “When Dumuzi rises, and when the lapis lazuli flute and / carnelian ring rise with him / when male and female mourners rise with him / then let the dead come up and smell the incense” (*Descent of Istar*, ll.137–9, trans. Dalley 1998: 160; cf. Winter 1999: 52 also in Barrett 2007: 27; for the text, see Borger 2006: 103). A testimony from Adapa mentioned that Dumuzi also experienced deification, and therefore, the kings who are identified with Dumuzi may also expect to share his fate. Barrett 2007: 19 argues that there were two death traditions in ancient Mesopotamia, a grim one but also one that spoke of a “pleasant afterlife” anticipated obviously by kings but also by ordinary people. Also see Chapter 3: pp. 128–32 on the “resurrection” of Adonis and Tammuz.
- 224 Gasparo 1985: 29–30 with footnotes.
- 225 Alster 1974: 24; Kramer and Maier 1989: 57 and 250; Bottéro 1992: 237–8.
- 226 Glassner 1992: 56–7.
- 227 Black 1998: *ETCSL*, F23–24, J16–21 discussed in Barrett 2007: 22–3.
- 228 Text and trans. George 2003: 624–5, cited by permission of Oxford University Press. For the similarities of this passage with *Istar’s Descent*, see Annus 2007: 33–4; cf. Barrett 2007: 23n.53: “This threat clearly echoes Ereškigal’s words in *Nergal and Ereškigal* (ll.247–50).” Also see her p. 24 citing a hymn known as *Istar Queen of Heaven*, where we find more clues for the association of Istar with the passage of humans between the netherworld and the living world. Barrett cites Foster 2005: 594, ll.27–32 reading: “No one but she [Istar] can bring back the one who revered her. No one but she can revive the dead, restore []. No one but she can grant long life to him who heeds her.”
- 229 See Barrett 2007: 27 also citing Hansen 1998: 48; George 1999: 75; Moorey 1999: 177 and Winter 1999: 52.
- 230 Barrett 2007: 34.
- 231 Dalley 2013: 157 associates Gilgameš’s garden, where carnelian and lapis lazuli are described as bearing foliage and fruit (*GE IX.173–6*), with the Cedar Mountain, a location which belongs to the infernal Anunnaki gods; cf. id. 2014: 73–4.
- 232 Barrett 2007: 30–51 discusses artefacts from (1) the “Royal Tombs” of Ur from the Early Dynastic Period, (2) the “Burney Relief” and related terracotta figurines and plaques from the Isin-Larsa/OB Period, (3) the Middle Assyrian burials at Tomb 45 in Assur, (4) the frit “masks” found in Middle Assyrian tombs at Mari and elsewhere, and (5) the burials of the Neo-Assyrian queens at Nimrud.
- 233 For Hadad and Atargatis, see Drijvers 1980: 76–105; cf. Wright 2012: 94, 99–101.
- 234 Heberdey and Wilhelm 1896: 38 (no. 94 D).
- 235 Mitford 1990: 2146.
- 236 Mackay 1990: 284.
- 237 Mackay 1990: 2087.
- 238 Str.14.5.2.
- 239 Bing 1991: 162; also see van Alfen (2008: 204) admitting that Bing’s identification of Athena with Anat/Išara relies mainly on iconographic evidence from Issian coins. Other than a reference in Curtius 3.8.22 and 3.12.27 our evidence about the cult is extremely slim.
- 240 See pp. 154–5 above. Note that despite being a virginal deity, Athena’s relationship with the Greek heroes she protects, especially Odysseus, was overlaid with sexual tension. See Cohen 1995: 71–2. Athena’s eastern profile is also evident in Eumenes’ II

- temple to Athene the Victorious, where the image of the goddess with *polos* headdress and columnar format was clearly pre-Attalid and linked to the Trojan Palladion which Iliion still claimed to possess at his time. See Kuttner 2005: 156.
- 241 Bing 1991: 163–4; cf. Astour 1965: 138, 248; also see Selz 2000: 37 (with nn.128–9): “Some Cypriot inscriptions in Greek and Phoenician even equate the oriental ‘Anat with the Greek Athena, which is clearly an indication of the high esteem ‘Anat enjoyed at the time.” For the association of the owl, the sacred bird of Athena, with Ištar, see Barrett 2007: 41 with n.97.
- 242 Von Soden 1981: 104.
- 243 George 2003: 190 on OBII, ll. 196–9.
- 244 Gilg OB Pv22, Nin.II 11.44; George 1992: 315.
- 245 Text and trans. from Biggs 1967: 44 (no 25, ll.11–13); cf. Foster 2005: 870.
- 246 See Stol 2000: 118 with n.46; cf. Budin 2003: 218 and Matthiae 2010: 284. It may also explain why the statues associated with the “sacred marriage” ceremony in the context of the Babylonian *akitu* were to hold a scorpion and a snake (see Chapter 3: p. 113); cf. Ornan (2001: esp.250–1) arguing for continuity in Ištar’s character and portrayal between second and first millennium BCE.
- 247 Bing 1991: 164; on Darius’ interest in the goddess also see Plutarch’s *Vita Artaxerxis* 3 referring to the enthronement of the new king as an initiation performed by a Persian priest of a warlike goddess compared to Athena. The temple is located at Pasargadae, and the ritual apparently involves wearing the robe of Cyrus the Elder and eating certain foods.
- 248 For the role of Išara in kingship, see Archi 2002: 27–8 and Matthiae 2010: 284. For the overlap of Išara and Ištar, see Haas 1994: 396–7; Budin (2003: 205–18) argued that the syncretism of the two goddesses took place in second-millennium BCE Alalakh. The city’s proximity to neighbouring Cilicia can explain the importance of Išara in Cilician cult already since the middle of the second millennium BCE; Archi 2001: *passim*; cf. Archi 2013: 5 commenting on the strong Akkadian influence on the region of Kizzuwatna (= Cilicia).
- 249 Schuler 1965: 109–117; also *ANET* 201, 205–6.
- 250 See Goetze 1940: 59–67 also in Bing 1991: 164n.42; also Haas 1994: 394.
- 251 Astour 1965: 28, 43–5; Bing 1991: 164; cf. Laroche 1958: 267–72. The text is listed as KUB 40.2 in Chrzanowska’s 2011 edition, accessed online at <http://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/hetkonk/>.
- 252 Bing 1991: 164.
- 253 For Išara’s underworld connections, see Archi 2002: 31. Also see Woods 2009: 194, 200, 202, 204, 221 for the location of Utnapištim’s garden at the mouth of the river as well as for the association of this Underworld location with the Sun-god and Dumuzi; cf. Dalley 2014: 54, 56–7, 65 and 72 on the trope of building ANE temples so as to resemble a holy mountain surrounded by a forest, similar to the description in the *GE* about the abode of Humbaba in the Cedar Forest. Dalley understands the temple as a symbol of the divine mountain which connects Heaven with the Underworld.
- 254 Hellenistic coins show that Athena became the patron goddess of Seleuceia soon after its foundation; see SNG Levante 1986: 680–90, 702–9, 711–17; SNG Levante 1993: 887–916, 932–51, 953–7, 959–63.
- 255 See *GA* 6.10; cf. Antipater of Sidon *GA* 6.46, where Pherenicus dedicates his trumpet, used in wars and sacrifices, to Athena; cf. *GA* 6.151, where “the flute of Ares” is dedicated to the temple of Ilian Athene; the theme also appears in *GA* 6.194–5.
- 256 Wright 2010: 124–30; also id. 2012: 60–4.
- 257 Ba’al was initially little more than one of the titles of Hadad, but the term subsequently evolved into a pseudonym, see Cook 1940: 945; Teixidor 1989: 84; Van der Toorn 1996: 174; Green 2003: 173–5.

- 258 Granius Licinianus *History of Rome* 28.6 (Diana); Eddy 1961: 141–5 refers to Antiochus' marrying Ištar at Babylon; also see his marriage to Nana at Susa recorded in II Mac.1.13–5; Polybius *Hist.*31.9.
- 259 Pongratz-Leisten 2008: esp.66 summarizing the celebration of “sacred marriage” in Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian sources with Wright 2010: 127.
- 260 It is often assumed that the usurper mentioned in Daniel 11:20 is Antiochus, who is then seen as the murderer of his brother; see Bahrani 2002: 19; cf. Shea 2005: 94.
- 261 *OGIS* 1.383; cf. *LIMC* V.1.386.
- 262 Linssen 2004: 84–5; 125–8; cf. Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 118.
- 263 Ma 2002: 181.
- 264 Van der Toorn 1996: 173.
- 265 Van der Toorn 1996: 175.



# Synthesis

## Cultivating community memory

un édifice occupant, si l'on peut dire, un espace à quatre dimensions – la quatrième étant celle du Temps – déployant à travers les siècles son vaisseau qui, de travée en travée, de chapelle en chapelle, semblait vaincre et franchir, non pas seulement quelques mètres, mais des époques successives d'où il sortait victorieux.

M. Proust, *Du Côté de chez Swann*, vol. 1: 61

This book has argued that despite changes in times and circumstances the peoples of the ANE employed codified ways of reflecting upon culture and death which emphasized the prominence of kingship in negotiating both. Kingship marks the beginning of urbanization and living in politically organized societies which collectively honour the memory of their dead members. Past communities are identified with their king, his successes are their successes and his misfortunes are mirrored in the suffering of his people. Moreover, flourishing communities have the opportunity to renew their remembrance rites regularly, while devastated communities are erased from history; their failure to remember their dead is the result of their world coming crashing down typically under the leadership of a king who has angered the gods. These metaphors were employed extensively already in Sumerian literature and art and exercised a long-standing influence beyond the survival of the Sumerian culture shaping through its Mesopotamian adaptations the founding notions of Hellenistic kingship, including Seleucid kingship.

The association of the king with death – who through his adventures determines the boundaries of mortality and establishes commemoration rites as the only taste of immortality humans may be granted – and his role in maintaining the cosmic balance between the forces of life and death is negotiated through his relationship with the fertility goddess, celebrated in ritual in terms of a “sacred marriage”. As maintained throughout the book, the so-called sacred marriage remained a powerful manifestation of the divine support advocated by kings and should be understood in figurative terms alongside the traditions relating the divine parentage of kings. By assuming the role of the consort of the goddess in art, literature and ritual Sumerian kings and their Akkadian emulators sought to advocate their power by highlighting the affection with which the goddess embraced them and their ability to monopolize her fertility for the

benefit of their people. The tales of kings who failed to please the goddess or did so only for a brief time are proliferated in ANE myth and literature, and it is in this light that we should interpret the famous episode of Gilgameš's disagreement with Ištar. As analysed in the book, the fact that the episode is given more prominence in the OB versions of the *Epic* is indicative of the fact that scribes had by that time realized their major contribution in "writing" history and tried to incorporate as many traditions as possible in texts designed to function as *specula principum*. It would be impossible for the especially popular *Epic of Gilgameš* to not fulfil this role alongside, of course, its other possible readings, which must be acknowledged, since from the time these stories were committed to texts and shelved in royal libraries across the ANE the culture of associating and interpreting them inevitably developed.

One of the most popular metaphors that survived the challenge of time is that of the king as a "gardener" of Inanna. The garden of the goddess appears in early Sumerian texts such as the tale of Šukaletuda and in Tablet XI of the *GE* where Gilgameš travels to the otherworldly garden of Utnapištim in search of the plant of everlasting life. Given the extensive powers of Inanna and her OB counterpart, Ištar, over the Underworld and the fact that lapis lazuli and carnelian, the symbols of the goddess, have been discovered in funerary contexts, I argue that ANE kings referred to their hopes for immortalization (or "astralization") by taking with them in the afterlife tokens of the goddess's eternal garden. That lapis lazuli was a symbol of eternity and cosmic harmony is also indicated by Bēlet-ilī, the mother of the gods, who refers to her lapis lazuli necklace as a token of the idyllic time of her courtship with Anu, in the *GE* XI. 164–7.<sup>1</sup> The goddess wishes to retain a memory of her harmonious union with the god at the start of creation so that the relationship between humans and god can be restored after the Deluge in light of that primal concord. Her comments are made right at the point of receiving sacrifices by Utnapištim and just before he is immortalized. We also know that Dumuzi, in his guise as Amaušumgalanna, had paved the way under the goddess's guidance who leads him over the mountains for a periodic heliacal rise.<sup>2</sup> Notably, we do not hear about physical resurrection in cult but rather about regular remembrance and re-enactment of the mythic episodes relating the death of divine consorts, be it Dumuzi, Tammuz or later Adonis as well as about the goddess's involvement in instituting their rites. A number of motifs relating to royal "sacred marriages" survived through the first millennium BCE "love lyrics," which pass on the motif of the garden as an afterlife aspiration, but also stress the function of weeping in evoking the dead and appeasing them. These motifs are also found in the second-millennium *City Laments*, and although the assumption has been so far that the goddess's profile now changes to that of a *mater dolorosa*, I have argued that her character remains largely unchanged despite the different accentuation of her aspects. Importantly, as both a mistress and a mother, the goddess continues to weep for men – she is still *dolorosa*. The psychological benefits of hosting rites that involve lamentation and joyous festivities are obvious vis-à-vis guiding people through the processes of loss, grief and recovery and are applicable to individuals as well as whole communities. Losing a dear one reduces individuals

to a primitive state similar to Gilgameš's aimless roaming of the earth in search for answers after Enkidu's death. But these are also the times that reaffirm human progress and civilization by fostering the workings of remembrance. Lamentation with its pathetic repetition and raw images is perhaps the most important mnemonic exercise in community building because it does not address our logic, is not interested in facts, but targets our emotions. It is the backbone of the cultural politics of cultivating community spirit. Remembering the examples of legendary kings who experienced the garden of the goddess also encourages the ambition of joining them in the afterlife – remembrance begets remembrance.

However, as far as historical kings are concerned, posing as another Gilgameš or Nebuchadnezzar is not simply an acknowledgement of long-standing traditions on behalf of their communities. In Gramsci's revision of historical materialism,<sup>3</sup> ideologies are the means through which hegemony is sought precisely because our understanding of history can incite political action and because those seeking hegemony wish to (re)write history.<sup>4</sup> Ideas can shape our imagined geography – a concept most important in creating ancient empires,<sup>5</sup> and furnish the canvass for a political ecology that associates tangible locations with the divine sphere. Ideas also permit a regular revision of the borders of the ecological space in which they operate which was geared toward inclusion. Ruling elites, as often stressed in scholarship (Chapter 4: n.3), were primarily interested in augmenting their spheres of influence beyond ethnic lines. Of course, smaller ecologies as well as tensions between communities existed within the borders of ancient empires, but kings represented the connecting link not only across communities but crucially with the world of the gods. These royal avatars, loved and mourned by the goddess, secured cosmic harmony and historical continuity, becoming themselves the pointers for understanding history. Hence, in his reports of local traditions Herodotus, true to the etymological definition of history as learning through enquiry or relating knowledge learnt through enquiry,<sup>6</sup> commits to posterity what people believed and how their beliefs informed their actions. His critical stance toward these beliefs and attitudes is not symptomatic of his Greekness but of his education. Herodotus, much like the ANE scribes, understood the power of ideas at a time when the Greeks were to challenge their own cultural borders.

The first millennium BCE, tumultuous as every period of ANE history, witnessed major political changes which intensified the need of rulers to (re)define their cultural affiliation with the communities under their jurisdiction. The Seleucids engaged in this exercise as enthusiastically as Alexander himself and with great attentiveness to the power of local traditions. In this spirit, royal policies were not designed to be divisive nor intended as a means of defending particular ethnic identities;<sup>7</sup> on the contrary, they were designed in order to highlight the times of prosperity which the communities in question had experienced under past rulers who had (obviously) enjoyed divine support. Each new king was eager to send the message that his military victories were a sign of his divinely entrusted mission to restore justice and prosperity on the conquered lands as the continuator of the glorious kings of the past. By posing as the

legitimate successor of legendary ANE kings each political newcomer sought to add himself to the distinct community of successful rulers (claiming, therefore, their exclusive and effective communication with the gods) while also projecting a promise for the future prosperity of the communities he now ruled. This prosperity was evident in terms of material abundance, but, importantly, also in terms of safeguarding and enabling the rites of remembrance in each community. This notion is perfectly exemplified in queen Arsinoe's invitation to the Alexandrians (*all* of them) to celebrate the cult of Adonis – under her regime the living can pay their respect to the dead.

Rituals, of course, change, and accordingly their interpretations vary, as we saw in the case of New Year Festivals and their gradual disassociation from “sacred marriage” ceremonies which, in my view, represents more of an aesthetic rather than a deeper ideological change. However, the notion of rightful rule and its connection to civilization (as opposed to life in the wilderness and death) proved to be pervasive and continuously useful to ambitious rulers from the times of the Sumerians to the Seleucids. The role of the scribes in propagating these powerful metaphors has been also noted; hence, while Gilgameš was content with the massive walls of Uruk as his contribution to humanity, centuries later Aššurbanipal bequeathed to posterity his library, whose memory, as Beaulieu stated,<sup>8</sup>

as a cultural achievement actually lived on in early Hellenistic Babylonia . . . The Esagil temple fostered considerable scientific activity in the early Hellenistic period, providing the means of living for hundreds of experts in various branches of Babylonian scholarship, including exorcists, lamentations singers, diviners, scribes, and . . . a collegium of fourteen astronomers.

Hence, aspects of the cuneiform literary tradition were preserved in later times, often under royal patronage, infiltrating the intellectual circles that sought to expand their cultural ecologies.<sup>9</sup> The Seleucids were no exception to this tendency, and so Lucian (*De Dea Syria* 17–27) relates the tale of Combabos (possibly a version of Humbaba), the handsome friend of king Seleucus, to whom he entrusted Queen Stratonice during a journey to Hierapolis where she intended to build a temple.<sup>10</sup> To avoid any accusations of misconduct Combabos castrated himself and kept his severed member in a jar, which he duly produced to the king when indeed the queen fell for him and malicious gossip angered the king. Grateful to his faithful servant, Seleucus showered Combabos with presents and built a statue in his honour after his death.<sup>11</sup> As Grottanelli pointed out, the tale seems to rely on the friendship of Gilgameš with Enkidu, albeit clearly elaborated on the basis of other traditions.<sup>12</sup> The Hellenistic attention to ANE traditions becomes especially clear in light of Gramsci's view of “every relationship of hegemony necessarily” as “an educational relationship” which<sup>13</sup>

occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilizations.

Although every attempt to employ a theoretical framework for the study of antiquity is doomed to be anachronistic, my main point is that in appreciating the changes that shaped the history of the ANE, we need to also factor in the existence of influential models of rule which operated at an ahistorical level. These paradigms could be moulded variably to suit the needs of successive rulers.

This mechanism and its cultural dynamic becomes more obvious when one considers the other side of the argument, that is, the ancient voices that praise the civilizing effects of Alexander's conquests which are, in a way, at the root of every modern debate about cultural exchange during the Hellenistic period. In other words, if indeed the tension between rulers and ruled in the Hellenistic period, to use the essentialist terminology, was mainly socio-economic (rather than ethnic/cultural) and was appreciated as such by Alexander and his Successors, why do ancient authors insist on incidents that highlight their protagonists' sense of Greekness against the servile "orientals"? Can we reconcile the alleged dismay experienced by mainland Greeks and Macedonians at the news that Alexander was adopting the behaviour of the Persian Great King, a reviled eastern despot, to the idea that the Seleucids enthusiastically posed as successors of the Babylonian kings? Can we reconcile ancient voices that insisted on the repulsive customs of the "orientals" which notably included "sacred marriages" and their alleged association to sacred prostitution with the metaphorical and positive messages of these practices, as I have argued in the previous chapters?

To answer these questions we should examine more closely the cultural background of the authors who promoted these ideas and evaluate the political challenges that such ideas sought to address. In my view, we cannot ignore the fact that while Xenophon in the fifth century makes little of the custom of the Persian *proskynesis*,<sup>14</sup> the incident is thrown into huge proportions in Plutarch (*Al.* 54.3–6) and Arrian (4.10.5–7; cf. Curt. 8.5.9–12), that is, authors writing under the Roman Empire. Equally, as discussed in Chapter 2 (pp. 85–6), Herodotus' description of the "sacred marriage" of Nabonidus' daughter simply refers to a time-honoured oracular tradition rather than a reproachable "oriental" custom.<sup>15</sup>

Xenophon notably appreciates the importance of political economy in successful governance and the role of kings in pursuing this virtue (*Mem.* 4.2.1).<sup>16</sup> He also understands the analogue between domestic and state economy, and it is in this light that Cyrus' role as the *father* of the Persians (Cyr. 8.1.1; cf. Hdt. 3.89.3) is cast as an important aspect of the caring ruler.<sup>17</sup> As Brock pointed out,<sup>18</sup> Xenophon also uses the metaphor of the king as shepherd dedicated to the happiness of his subjects; hence, in *Cyropaedia* (8.2.14) we read:<sup>19</sup>

καὶ λόγος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀπομνημονεύεται ὡς λέγοι παραπλήσια ἔργα εἶναι νομέως ἀγαθοῦ καὶ βασιλέως ἀγαθοῦ: τόν τε γὰρ νομέα χρῆναι ἔφη εὐδαίμονα τὰ κτήνη ποιοῦντα χρῆσθαι αὐτοῖς, ἢ δὴ προβάτων εὐδαιμονία, τόν τε βασιλέα ὡσαύτως εὐδαίμονας πόλεις καὶ ἀνθρώπους ποιοῦντα χρῆσθαι αὐτοῖς. οὐδὲν οὖν θαυμαστόν, εἴπερ ταύτην εἶχε τὴν γνώμην, τὸ φιλονίκως ἔχειν πάντων ἀνθρώπων θεραπεία περιγίγνεσθαι.

His comment is quoted as saying that the duties of a good shepherd and a good king are similar; for, he said, a good shepherd whom his animals make happy must tend to their needs, that is, the happiness of his flocks, while a king ought to conduct himself likewise making his cities and his people happy. Hence, it is not surprising, given that he held this opinion, that he was zealous to surpass all other people with regard to caring.

Xenophon's model of good governance certainly does not translate into "Hellenization," as later suggested by Libanius (see Chapter 4: n.155) specifically in relation to Seleucid building policy. After all, we must remember that Libanius writes influenced by the memory of a terrifying queen, who, like many of her Hellenistic counterparts, had been identified with the fertility goddess.<sup>20</sup> Cleopatra was thus cast as another Ištar who had to be rejected because she could enslave men instead of giving them the (promised) freedom to rewrite history – Marc Antony was the obvious historical *exemplum* Libanius had in mind.<sup>21</sup>

In summarizing the workings of political power and its associations in the ANE one could glance at Herodotus' most tantalizing representation of Lydian kingship, an episode of conjugal disagreement that he oddly places at the start of his universal history.<sup>22</sup> Possibly drawing on a drama dealing with Gyges' usurpation of the Lydian power,<sup>23</sup> Herodotus relates how the sovereign power of the Heraclid kings fell to the Mermnadae. We are told that Candaules, the last of the descendants of Heracles and king of the Lydians, entrusted to Gyges, his bodyguard, *καὶ τὰ σπουδαιότερα τῶν πραγμάτων* (all his weightiest secrets, 1.8). Candaules held the beauty of his wife in high esteem and wished for Gyges to gaze upon her naked body to further convince him of her beauty since

ᾧτα γὰρ τυγχάνει ἀνθρώποισι ἐόντα ἀπιστότερα ὀφθαλμῶν  
in humans ears happen to be less trustworthy than eyes.

However, by revealing the nature of his wife to Gyges, Candaules sets in motion the end of his political power. The queen discovers the plot and is enraged at her royal husband and the injustice she suffered. She gives Gyges an ultimatum: he must either kill Candaules, restoring thus her honour, or he will be executed for his indiscretion. The naked beauty of the royal consort is thus inextricably linked to the Lydian kingship and the sense of justice it promotes. The punishment, of course, that the queen exacts through Gyges results in the change of the royal dynasty. Candaules dies, and the queen now favours Gyges to become the legitimate king of the Lydians.

The tale exemplifies, I would argue, the pervasive influence of the "sacred marriage" ideology and its metaphorical value as appreciated by ancient authors and readers alike: the fact that in his initial terror at Candaules' suggestion Gyges protests by citing the laws "discovered by human beings," stressing the conventions of civilization with which kingship is closely associated, encourages the reading of the tale in the context of the exclusive relationship of the king with the

goddess. The idea is also corroborated by the fact that the queen's ultimatum to Gyges is placed in the middle of a debate about justice and the offence committed against her. Hence, in relating the tale, Herodotus invites the reader to fantasize about Gyges' political cum erotic desires, stressing the familiar association of sex with good governance and death with political failure. The tale is deeply didactic in two ways: those in possession of power must be ready to honour their responsibilities, while those who dare to get a glimpse of the glory of kingship must be prepared to fight for it. The garden of the goddess comes at a cost.

## Notes

- 1 George 2003: 712–5; cf. Kovacs (1989: 102n.5), who argued that the necklace of lapis lazuli flies symbolized the dead offspring of the goddess.
- 2 Jacobsen (1976: 36) argued that Dumuzi-Amašumgalanna is “a personification of . . . the power in and behind the date harvest.” However, in my view, this could extend to a personification of life. For Dumuzi's heliacal rise, see Foxvog 1993: 106–8. For his implied apotheosis, see Anderson 1993: 73 and Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 184–8 discussing the death of Daphnis in Theocritus in comparison with the traditions about Dumuzi.
- 3 Gramsci revised Lenin's exclusive association of materialism with modes of production (for example, see 1972: 14.14, 22); cf. Jameson 1981: 9.
- 4 Gramsci 1971: 338–91. Note that Gramsci emphasized the notion of struggle between the masses and the elites who needed constantly to re-project their ideology in order to reaffirm the support of their subjects.
- 5 See Harmanşah 2013: 5–9; Shaffer 2007: 141–51.
- 6 See Liddell-Scott, s.v. ἱστορέω.
- 7 Lenzi (2008: 159–60) draws attention to the ethnic tensions between the Seleucid rulers and Urukian scribes, who had their own agendas; however, the introduction of the cult of Anu and Antu does not seem to be an attempt to rival Babylonian Marduk *per se* but rather an effort to revive a cult that by that time was invested with the authority of antiquity. Of course, the cult of a weather god and his earthly consort was not determined by interaction with the Greeks; yet it was determined by the need of the times to “remember” the past and instruct, thus, the new rulers in the ways of kingship.
- 8 Beaulieu 2006: 119; Thomason 2005: 200.
- 9 See, for example, Tigay 1982: 252–3 on Aelian *Nat.An.*12.21, which preserves an account of Gilgamesh's birth, clearly infused with another tradition about extraordinary babies destined to become kings; cf. Goff 2009: esp.33–5 on modes of transmission of motifs found in the *Qumran Book of Giants* and the *GE*, also discussed by George 2003: 2003: 60–4.
- 10 This is the temple at Hierapolis-Bambyce. See Wright 2012: 91.
- 11 See George 2003: 64 citing Grottanelli 2001: 25. For his harsh conclusions against the transmittance of the *GE* after and outside the cuneiform tradition George is criticised by Jean 2014: esp.111.
- 12 Grottanelli (2001: 27) argues that in the Hellenistic and Roman times, “[O]ld ideas were taken over and preserved, but reworked into a completely new literary form which better corresponded to the new social and political order”; also cited in George 2003: 65.
- 13 Gramsci 1971: 350.
- 14 Xen.*Anab.*3.2.13 discussed in Brock 2004: 256.
- 15 On “sacred prostitution” in Herodotus 1.199, see Anagnostou-Laoutides and Charles (in preparation).

- 16 Brock 2004: 248, 255–6.
- 17 Brock 2004: 249.
- 18 Brock 2004: 250.
- 19 Text Miller 1914: 338; trans. mine.
- 20 Wright 2012: 65; also Heyob 1975: 20–1 with n.119; Whitehorne 1994: 129. Cf. McCabe 2008: 23–24.
- 21 Cf. Cooper 1992: 161–2 discussed in Sizgorich 2012: 96. Isis could according to the *Kyme Aretalogy* bestow on her devotees the ability to enslave men. See Diod. Sic. 1.27.1–2.
- 22 White (1969: 47) argues that this episode is a “turning point in Greek fortunes.”
- 23 Lobel 1950 dates it to the first half of the fifth century BCE; also cited by White 1969: 46n.20.



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