

### GILGAMESH'S DREAMS OF ENKIDU\*)

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#### Introduction

Scott B. Noegel has undertaken the complex task of studying the language and the cultural as well as religious context of dreams in the Ancient Near East. What are the criteria for the inner dependence between a dream or any other ominous sign and its meaning? If dreams are regarded as divine, hidden messages, who interprets them? Are the different types of punning rooted in the magical power of words? Do the dreams and dream omens, once written down, serve to memorize speech acts? And if this applies, should the act of dream interpretation not be connected with rituals of transformation or crisis management?

These issues are discussed in the insightful introductory part of the book (p. 1-55). The following chapters serve as illustrations of how the different forms of punning — homonymy, paronymy, polysemy, paragrams, anagrams, and the semantic wordplay of Janus parallelism — can be detected and used to explain the ancient Near Eastern technique of dream interpretation. The only reservation one might make is the question of how to vindicate a suspected pundit. Noegel expertly demonstrates the manifold layering of meanings that can be deduced from speculative etymology premised on the written word and the script. However, he does not seek to corroborate his interpretations or provides evidence

\*) Review article of Scott B. Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers: The Allusive Language of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, American Oriental Series 89, New Haven 2007. ISBN 978-0-940490-20-8.

whether the ancient audience would have been able to recognize these hidden connotations and appreciated the wordplays. Based on wide research and reading he discusses in Chapter II (p. 57-88) Akkadian text examples including two dreams from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* that foretell the arrival of Enkidu, two further text passages from the same epic, a letter from Mari in which the diviner Addu-duri narrates her dream to king Zimri-Lim, and an ambiguous oracle text from Ishchali. As for the Egyptian material, he analyses in Chapter III (p. 89-106) a passage from the Pyramid Texts (Utterance 580), a section from the Egyptian manual of dreams, and the Dream Stele of Tantamani. A Ugaritic example from the Ba'al cycle, namely El's dream, is found in Chapter IV (p. 107-112). The main emphasis of the book is placed on enigmatic dreams in Israel (p. 113-182); here and in the following Chapter VI (p. 183-189) Noegel shows his expertise in the interpretation and identification of wordplays in biblical passages examining their cultural setting. Chapter V focuses on sections from Jeremiah, Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, Gideon's capacities as dream interpreter, and more particularly on Daniel; and Chapter VI includes pericopes from Job and Jeremiah. Noegel also ventures into the Greek world analyzing Homer and Artemidorus' *Oneirocritica* (Chapter VII, p. 191-233). Finally, the role of oneiro-mancy in Rabbinic culture is discussed in Chapter VIII (p. 235-251)

Noegel concludes that dream interpretation is not universal but is grounded in and determined by the cultural specific framework of the respective interpreters. In Mesopotamia and Egypt punning served to validate dreams as a form of communication with the divine, which explains the importance of the profession of the diviner. Paramount is the conception and formative role of the script in dream interpretation. Interestingly Noegel succeeds in tracing a reciprocal influence between Assyrian and Egyptian oneiromantic techniques in Neo-Assyrian times. Similarly to the Mesopotamian and Egyptian materials, the biblical contexts feature questions of divine justice, which require professional mantic knowledge. He observes that the Mesopotamian evidence possibly influenced the interpretation of enigmatic dreams in Greek and Talmudic texts, though they contain distinctive features which go back to a different attitude towards writing. Scott B. Noegel has produced an impressive account of the manifold ways of how to interpret dreams in the ancient Near Eastern world by bringing the topic of punning into the fore.

The following remarks grew out of a reflection on Noegel's discussion of two dreams in the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic, viz. Gilgamesh's dreams of Enkidu.

#### *Gilgamesh's dreams*

Among the many fascinating features of the Gilgamesh Epic are the dreams of Gilgamesh that foretell the arrival of Enkidu, his dear fellow and beloved friend. Apparently, also the narrator of the Old Babylonian version of the epic considered the dreams extraordinary and uncommon since they are placed at the beginning of the story as if to arrest the attention.<sup>1)</sup> Differently, the epic's Standard Babylonian ver-

sion incorporates the dreams at a later point, after Gilgamesh himself has been introduced<sup>2)</sup> and after Enkidu's process of humanization has been set in motion, first through the sexual contact with Šamḫat,<sup>3)</sup> then by eating bread and drinking beer,<sup>4)</sup> and last by recognizing Gilgamesh as king.<sup>5)</sup> In contrast to the OB version, which lays its initial emphasis on Enkidu, the attention in the SB version has been shifted to Gilgamesh himself.<sup>6)</sup> Both the dreams envisioning Enkidu and the differences in language between the OB and SB versions have long attracted scholars.<sup>7)</sup> In the first account Gilgamesh sees how something coming from Anu's sky falls down towards him. In the standard version this object is described as "falling down time and again like meteorites/lumps (*kišrū*) of Anu" (SB I: 248), the OB version uses the term *kišrum* in singular (*[k/i-i]š'-rum* OB II "P" i: 7).<sup>8)</sup> Both versions lay emphasis on the fact that this object was too heavy for Gilgamesh to lift or even push it. Only with the help of the young men from Uruk he is able to lift it. In the second dream an axe (*haššinnu(m)*) appears;<sup>9)</sup> its appearance is strange and Gilgamesh feels immediately attracted by it, kissing and embracing it.

The scholarly discussion has focused around two different approaches of how to relate "Anu's lump, meteorite" with "axe", and both with Enkidu: One interpretation departs from the assumption that these connections are based on

<sup>2)</sup> For the different framework of the SB version and the effect of the introduction or prologue see J.H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*, Philadelphia 1982, 140-158; for further case studies of the evolution of the epic see A.R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, Oxford 2003, vol. I 39-47.

<sup>3)</sup> As is well-known Enkidu and Šamḫat spent six days and seven nights together. For the interpretation of this span of time as period of transformation from live to death see Sh. Izre'el, "The Initiation of Adapa in Heaven," in: J. Prosecky (ed.), *Intellectual Life of the Ancient Near East*, Prague 1998, 185. Concerning the present case he suggests that it needed seven nights to alienate Enkidu from his former life in the wilderness. For a study of two different phases of the sexual encounter see T. Abusch, "The Courtesan, the Wild Man, and the Hunter," in: Y. Sefati, P. Artzi, Ch. Cohen, B.L. Eichler & V.A. Hurowitz (eds.), *An Experienced Scribe Who Neglects Nothing*. *Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Jacob Klein*, Bethesda 2005, 413-433.

<sup>4)</sup> See recently I. Márquez Rowe, "Pain, bière et la culture d'Uruk. De Gilgamesh au bol à bord biseauté," in: D.A. Barreyra Fracaroli & G. del Olmo Lete (eds.), *Reconstruyendo el Pasado Remoto – Reconstructing a Distant Past*, Sabadell 2009, 133-141.

<sup>5)</sup> W.L. Moran suggests that Enkidu reaches full humanity only when he has accepted Gilgamesh's kingship, "Ovid's *Blanda Voluptas* and the Humanization of Enkidu," *JNES* 50 (1991) 121-127.

<sup>6)</sup> See J.H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*, 149.

<sup>7)</sup> See especially the studies of J.H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*, 82-90, and J.S. Cooper, "Gilgamesh Dreams of Enkidu: The Evolution and Dilution of Narrative," in: M. deJong Ellis (ed.), *Essays in the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein*, Hamden 1977, 39-44.

<sup>8)</sup> For a re-evaluation of his previous reading *š[i]-e'-rum* in OB "P" i: 7 (*The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, vol. I 182) see now the commentary of A.R. George, "The Civilizing of Ea-Enkidu: An Unusual Tablet of the Babylonian Gilgameš Epic," *RA* 101 (2007) 73. However, N. Wasserman accepts George's older suggestion *širum ša Anim* "flesh of Anu", "The Distant Voice of Gilgamesh: The Circulation and Reception of the Babylonian Gilgameš Epic in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Afo* 52 (2011) 9.

<sup>9)</sup> Note that N. Wasserman, "'Sweeter Than Honey and Wine ...': Semantic Domains and Old-Babylonian Imagery," in: L. Milano, S. de Martino, F.M. Fales & G.B. Lanfranchi (eds.) *Landscapes. Territories, Frontiers and Horizons in the Ancient Near East*, Padova 2000, Part III 192, emphasizes the uniqueness of this comparison "for it is, thus far, the sole comparison of an item from the domain of fabricated objects to a human being."

<sup>1)</sup> Conspicuously, as M.P. Streck, *Die Bildersprache der akkadischen Epik*, Münster 1999, 214 explains, Enkidu is the character in Babylonian literature who attracts most images of comparison, namely a total of 30.

punning. Influenced by the idea of the homoerotic friendship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu,<sup>10</sup> A. Kilmer put forward that *kišru(m)* could be understood as a wordplay on *kezru(m)*, a specific hairdo (lit. “curly”) distinct for a type of male cultic personnel of Ištar in first-millennium Assyria, and *haššinnu(m)*, in turn, would recall the term *assinnu*, a male prostitute related to the cult of Ištar, too.<sup>11</sup> According to this view both dreams would foretell not only the arrival of Enkidu as friend but also as sexual partner. S.B. Noegel follows this approach in his discussion of the dreams.<sup>12</sup> Reflecting on the plausibility and common comprehensibility of world-plays George seeks to corroborate this interpretation and comes to the conclusion “that Kilmer was right”.<sup>13</sup> However, in his commentary on the expression *kīma kišri ša anim dunnunā emūqāšu* (SB I 125, 137, 152, 270, 293; II: 43, 163) “his strength is as mighty as a lump of rock from the sky”, he proposes a symbolic meaning of *kišru(m)* as referring to someone “endowed with superhuman strength”<sup>14</sup>. I shall come back later to still another nuance of the term *kišru(m)*. In the following discussion George associates *kišru(m)* with meteoric iron as a source to manufacture weapons such as the mighty axe of Lugalbanda.<sup>15</sup> Recently, M. Worthington questioned the interpretation of punning and argued for a symbolic interpretation of “meteorite” and “axe”.<sup>16</sup> Very much in the line of George he favors the association of *kišru(m)* with strength. Elaborating further George’s discussion of meteorites as source for weapons he brings both dreams together and suggests to understand them as an illustration of Enkidu’s transformation from beast to man. According to Worthington, Enkidu as a creature living among wild animals is in a pre-human stage comparable to a raw meteorite and once humanized he is like an axe skillfully manufactured from the meteorite. Recalling Tablet VIII in which Gilgamesh mourns Enkidu and speaks of him as an “axe at my side”, Worthington points out, following M.P. Streck, that the axe “symbolises Enkidu’s role as protector of Gilgamesh”.<sup>17</sup>

The alternative interpretation proposed here, also based on associative automatism, is equally probable. I shall start with the axe that appears in Gilgamesh’s second dream. We know from a Sumerian birth incantation that newborn babies received gender or role specific emblems.<sup>18</sup> If the newborn

child was a baby girl, she was given a spindle and a hair-clasp as symbols of her womanhood; in contrast, a baby boy would hold in his hand a weapon and an axe as an image of manhood.<sup>19</sup> The incantation further specifies the axe (<sup>uruda</sup>ha. zi) as a symbol for the “strength of heroism” (**a<sub>2</sub> nam. ur.sağ.ğā<sub>2</sub>**). Accordingly, the axe in Gilgamesh’s dream could well be interpreted as a sign for the birth of a little boy who is endowed with the physical power of a hero proper.

The Akkadian counterpart of the Sumerian expression **a<sub>2</sub> nam.ur.sağ.ğā<sub>2</sub>** is *emūqān qarrādūti*.<sup>20</sup> Both terms *emūqu(m)* “strength” and *qurādu(m)* “hero, warrior” are closely associated with Enkidu and serve as leitmotifs.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Enkidu is said to be the “mightiest in the land” (*māti dān*) and the one who “possesses strength” (*emūqīšu išū* SB I: 124-125 *passim*).

Both Enkidu and Gilgamesh are strong and very similar in stature. Enkidu is of wide heavy build, although not as tall as Gilgamesh (*anami gilgameš mašil padattam lānam šapil ešemtam pukkul*, “compared to Gilgamesh himself his physique is similar, he is shorter in stature (and) heavier of bone” OB II “P” v: 183-184). While Gilgamesh is “perfect in mightiness” (*gitmālu emūqi* SB I: 211, 218), Enkidu is said to be “the mightiest in the land, he has strength, his strength is as mighty as the *kišru* of Anu” (*ina māti dān emūqīšu išū kīma kišri ša anim dunnunā emūqāšu* SB I: 124-125, 151-152, 269-270, 292-293; II: 162-163). According to Šamḫat’s description of Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk is stronger than Enkidu, “he has a strength mightier than yours” (*danna emūqa elika išī* SB I: 238). However, when Aruru decides to create a counterpart to Gilgamesh the women of Uruk ask her: “May he counteract his (Gilgamesh’s) emotions,<sup>22</sup> may they vie with each other time and again so that Uruk may come to peace!” (*ana ūm libbišu lū maḥ[ir] lištannanūma uruk<sup>ki</sup> lištapš[ih]* SB I: 97-98). A.L. Oppenheim understood the concept behind the creation as “means of cleverly balancing antagonistic powers”.<sup>23</sup> Both aspects pinpoint the main layers of their strong bond — emotional (as well as homoerotic) and pitting their strength against each other. When Ninsun explains Gilgamesh his dreams, she

*OrNS* 44 (1975) 62-65, and for translations see W.H.Ph. Römer, “Geburtsbeschwörung (Marduk-Ea-Typ),” *TUAT* II/2, Gütersloh 1987, 204-207, and G. Cunningham, ‘Deliver Me From Evil’. *Mesopotamian Incantations 2500-1500 BC*, Roma 1997, 69-75.

<sup>19</sup> For a brief discussion see K. van der Toorn, *Van haar wieg tot haar graf*, Baarn, Ten Have 1987, 16-19, and M. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible. Its Mediterranean Setting*, Groningen 2000, 61, 63.

<sup>20</sup> See CAD E 157a s.v. *emūqu* bil. section; see also lex. section and CAD Q 144a s.v. *qarrādūtu* lex.sec. Note the alternative Akkadian expression *idī qarrādūti*.

<sup>21</sup> Another word which repeatedly appears describing Enkidu is *danānu* “to be strong”; see J.H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*, 87-88.

<sup>22</sup> This translation of *ūm libbišu* follows CAD L s.v. *libbu* 170b; rather poetical translations have been proposed “storminess of his (Gilgamesh’s) heart” (J.H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*, 192) “storm of the heart” (George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, vol. II 545, and *ibid.* note 13 with the variant translation derived from MS n “let his heart be a [match for the storm],” “stormy heart” (B.R. Foster, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, New York – London 2000, 6), “the ardour (?) of his energies” (S. Dalley, *Myths From Mesopotamia*, Oxford 2000, 52), “Herzensungestüm” (W. von Soden, *Das Gilgamesch-Epos*, Stuttgart 1988, 18 II: 31), “Sturm seines Herzens” (S.M. Maul, *Das Gilgamesch-Epos*, München 2005, 49), “[le patron] de l’Ouragan” (J. Bottéro, *L’Épopée de Gilgameš*, Paris 1992, 69), “la fougue de son coeur” (R.J. Tournay & A. Schaffer, *L’Épopée de Gilgameš*, Paris 2003, 49).

<sup>23</sup> “Mesopotamian Mythology II,” *OrNS* 17 (1948) 24.

<sup>10</sup> For a critical view of the alleged plain homosexual relationship see J.H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*, 184 note 22, and J.S. Cooper with reference to previous discussions, “Buddies in Babylonia. Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and Mesopotamian Homosexuality,” in: T. Abusch (ed.), *Riches Hidden in Secret Places. Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Thorkild Jacobsen*, Winona Lake 2002, 73-85.

<sup>11</sup> A.D. Kilmer, “A Note on an Overlooked Wordplay in the Akkadian Gilgamesh,” in: G. van Driel, Th.J.H. Krispijn, M. Stol & K.R. Veenhof (eds.), *Zikir Šumim. Assyriological Studies Presented to F.R. Kraus on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, Leiden 1982, 128-132.

<sup>12</sup> *Nocturnal Ciphers: The Allusive Language of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, 64-65.

<sup>13</sup> *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 454.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* vol. II 793.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* vol. II 793 commentary to ll. 124-125 // 151-152.

<sup>16</sup> *Principles of Akkadian Textual Criticism*, Boston – Berlin 2012, 206.

<sup>17</sup> *Principles of Akkadian Textual Criticism*, 208; and see M.P. Streck, *Die Bildersprache der akkadischen Epik*, 186 (1.2.2.3.) who understands the axe as “Bild der Stärke und des Schutzes”.

<sup>18</sup> UM 29-15-367 with the duplicate VAS 17 33. For the edition and study see J.J.A. van Dijk, “Incantations accompagnant de l’homme,”

emphasizes that he will enjoy the company of Enkidu, be happy and laughing (*ittasqūma ipušū rū'ūtam* “they exchanged kisses and formed a friendship” OB III “Yale” i: 18-19; *tahaddu atta* “you will rejoice” OB II “P” 20; cf. *libbaka išāk* “your heart will laugh” MB Priv.<sup>24</sup>) i: 24). As we learn from the first fight, Gilgamesh has found in Enkidu also someone to vent his anger (*ipših uzšašūma* “his anger stilled” OB II “P” vi: 229). There is disagreement about the winner of the fight since the SB version does not preserve its course and outcome. According to the OB version the fight was decided for Gilgamesh.<sup>25</sup> Yet, when the text in the SB version begins again (II: 162, after gap of 49 lines) Gilgamesh introduces Enkidu to his mother with the words “he is the mightiest in the land, he has strength” which suggests that the fight ended in a draw.<sup>26</sup>

When the goddess Aruru brings Enkidu into being by throwing a pinch of clay down into the wild we learn: “In the wild she (Aruru) created Enkidu, the hero, an offspring of silence,<sup>27</sup> knit strong by Ninurta” (*ina šēri enkidu ibtani qurādu ilitti qūlti kišir<sup>d</sup> ninurta* SB I: 103-104).<sup>28</sup> The line summarizes the outstanding features of Enkidu, viz. his role as *qurādu*, the particular circumstances of his birth, and, essentially of his character in the plot, his vigor. Note that Gilgamesh is not addressed as *qurādu* “hero” in the epic, only the gods Šamaš and Enlil share this epithet with Enkidu.<sup>29</sup>

Taking into account the semantic field of *kišru(m)*, which ranges from reinforcement and knot to node, clot and lump,<sup>30</sup> we could assume here the meaning “concentration of power” in figurative and material(ized) sense. The phrase *kišir*

<sup>d</sup>*ninurta* gains an added richness from ambiguity. It refers to Enkidu as someone endowed with the strength specific of Ninurta — the force of battle and power. This energy is one of the god’s characteristics in the praise song *Ninurta’s Return to Nippur* where it is stated that “you, Ninurta, are perfect in (your) strength of heroism” (**a<sub>2</sub> nam.ur.sağ.ġa<sub>2</sub> šu du<sub>7</sub>.a**).<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, *kišir<sup>d</sup> ninurta* anticipates the vision of “lump(s) (falling) from the sky” (*kišru ša anim*) in Gilgamesh’s first dream.<sup>32</sup> Note that in the passage quoted above Enkidu’s strength is said to be “as mighty as the *kišru* of Anu” (*kīma kišri ša anim dunnunā emūqāšu* SB I: 125, 152, 270, 293, II: 163). Finally, because the Sumerian equivalent of *kišru(m)* corresponds to the prenatal stage of an unborn baby, it could also allude to the birth of Enkidu. According to the birth incantation quoted above procreation is imagined as follows: **a ša<sub>3</sub>.ge ri.a ka keš<sub>3</sub>ki.šī.ra<sub>2</sub> lu<sub>2</sub>.ra dumu sum<sub>su</sub>.mu**, “the semen which has been poured into the womb (and) clumped together giving a son to the man.”<sup>33</sup> The term used in Sumerian is **ka keš<sub>2</sub>**, which Akkadian renders *kišru(m)* (and *kašāru(m)*).<sup>34</sup> This interpretation would fit the fact that the young people of Uruk gathered around the “lump” and kissed its feet like the feet of a baby (*eṭlūtum unaššaḳū šēpīšu* “the young men kissed its feet” OB II “P” i: 11; [*kī šerri la*]’i *unaššaḳū šēpīšu* “they (the young men) kissed its feet like a baby’s” SB I: 255).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See A.R. George, “The Civilizing of Ea-Enkidu: An Unusual Tablet of the Babylonian Gilgameš Epic,” 64 ll. 24, 41.

<sup>25</sup> See A.L. Oppenheim, “Mesopotamian Mythology II,” 29-30; cf. also J. Keetman, “Der Kampf im Haustor,” 166 (see note 35).

<sup>26</sup> See S.M. Maul, *Das Gilgameš-Epos*, 60.

<sup>27</sup> The phrase has been differently interpreted. A.R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgameš Epic*, vol. II 789 note 104, emphasizes that Enkidu was not born by a human mother, which is the reason why there were no screams at his birth but silence. Also, he remarks that there should be a closer connection between the expression *ilitti qūlti* and *kišir<sup>d</sup> ninurta* since they appear in parallel representing a “nearly synonymous relation”. N. Wasserman focuses on the aspect of name giving. The silence alludes to the circumstance of Enkidu’s birth: his name could not be pronounced in the wilderness, see “Offspring of Silence, Spawn of a Fish, Son of a Gazelle ...: Enkidu’s Different Origins in the Epic of Gilgameš,” 595. Similar to George, St. Anthoz, *L’eau, enjeux politiques et théologique, de Sumer à la Bible*, Leiden – Boston 2009, 421, underlines that the “offspring of silence” should allude to the fact that Enkidu is not born by a woman and proposes that the expression refers to his animal stage. The fact that he is considered an animal is stressed by the description that he lives, eats and drinks with the wild beasts in the steppe. M.P. Streck suggests that *qūltu* should refer to the terrifying aspect of silence and interprets *ilitti qūlti* as “jemand, vor dem man vor Schreck verstummt”, “Beiträge zum akkadischen Gilgameš-Epos,” *Or NS* 76 (2007) 411 (note to l. 104).

S.B. Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers: The Allusive Language of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, 64, suggests a multiple wordplay; however, his interpretation of *zir-ti* (read instead of *qul-ti*) as *serdū* “lament” should be rejected on grounds of spelling and meaning (see *CAD S* 312b s.v. *sirdū* A “pole of a chariot, of a sedan chair”, *AHW* 1037b s.v. *serdū* “eine Art v Vertrag; Sämfenträgerstange”). Also the idea of a paronomastic play between *zir-ti* with *zīru* which Noegel understands as “magic” alluding to the supernatural power of the divine is less likely since the term classifies rather the evil machinations of witches and wizards (see *CAD Z* 136b s.v. *zīru* A mng. 2); see further D. Schwemer’s discussion of the word, *Abwehrzauber und Behexung: Studien zum Schadenzauberglauben im alten Mesopotamien*, Wiesbaden 2007, 14, 151 with note 8.

<sup>28</sup> See George, *ibid.* vol. I 544-545.

<sup>29</sup> For Šamaš see e.g. VII 148, X 81, XII 81, and for Enlil see e.g. XI 16.

<sup>30</sup> See *CAD K* 436b, *AHW* 488b.

<sup>31</sup> See J.S. Cooper, *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur. an-gim dīm-ma*, Roma 1978, 58-59. Note that e.g. the Early Dynastic ruler Eanatum whom Ningirsu himself begot, is called by his divine father “the one with strength” (**a<sub>2</sub> tuku.e**) which fits well into the context of war as described and depicted in the Vultures Stele; for the passage see C. Wilcke, “Familiengründung im alten Babylonian,” in: E.W. Müller (ed.), *Geschlechtsreihe und Legitimation zur Zeugung*, Freiburg – München 1985, 298-303.

<sup>32</sup> See George, *ibid.* vol. II 789, commentary to l. 104, and N. Wasserman, “Offspring of Silence, Spawn of a Fish, Son of a Gazelle ...: Enkidu’s Different Origins in the Epic of Gilgameš,” “*An Experienced Scribe Who Neglects Nothing*”, *Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Jacob Klein*, Bethesda 2005, 594.

<sup>33</sup> I have quoted the Old Babylonian version, *VAS* 17 33 obv. 4. The first seven lines of the text have been discussed by T. Jacobsen, “Notes on Nintur,” *OrNS* 42 (1973) 279-280; for a complete edition see J.J.A. van Dijk, “Incantations accompagnant de l’homme,” *OrNS* 44 (1975) 62-65. The Ur III text, *UM* 29-15-367 obv. 4 is slightly different: [**a ša<sub>3</sub>.ga ri.a ka.keš<sub>2</sub>.re lu<sub>2</sub>.ra dumu šum<sub>2</sub>.mu**]; for the edition see J.J.A. van Dijk, *ibid.* 53-62. My reading **dumu** follows Th. Jacobsen, *ibid.*, and H. Behrens, *Enlil and Ninlil. Ein sumerischer Mythos aus Nippur*, Rome 1978, 133-134. Note that J.J.A. van Dijk, *ibid.* 53 note 7 insists “le signe est clairement: i et non pas: dumu. J’ai marqué le signe sur ma copie de VAT 8381, *VAS* 17, 33, l. 4 avec un signe d’exclamation, parce que là aussi le signe me paraissait être plutôt: i.” He suggests a reading **isim<sub>3</sub>**, “offshoot, fruit” which is followed by W.H.Ph. Römer, “Geburtsbeschwörung (Marduk-Ea-Typ),” *TUAT* II/2, Gütersloh 1987, 205, and G. Cunningham, “*Deliver Me From Evil*”, *Mesopotamian Incantations 2500-1500 BC*, Roma 1997, 70-71. However, on the basis of the photo van Dijk provides *ibid.*, tab. V the sign seems to be a clear **dumu**. Note that van Dijk did not copy the small vertical wedge. As for the Old Babylonian copy, see the variants of **dumu** given by C. Mittermayer, *Altbabylonische Zeichenliste der sumerisch-literarischen Texte*, Fribourg – Göttingen 2006, no. 393 (on p. 155) which agree well with the sign that appears in *VAS* 17 33 obv. l. 4.

<sup>34</sup> For the meaning of **ka keš<sub>2</sub>** as clumping together referring to the growth of the fetus see K. Volk “Vom Dunkel in die Helligkeit,” in: V. Dasen (ed.), *Naissance et petite enfance dans l’Antiquité*, Fribourg – Göttingen 2004, 81 with note 69 referring to the Ur III incantation. See also the discussion of M. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible*, 9-11.

<sup>35</sup> I follow George’s interpretation that the kissing is a sign of fondling; differently, J. Keetman interprets kissing the feet as a gesture of submission. “Der Kampf im Haustor. Eine der Schlüsselszenen zum Verständnis des Gilgameš-Epos,” *JNES* 67 (2008) 166 with note 28. See also M.P. Streck, *Die Bildersprache der akkadischen Epik*, 74 who interprets the kissing as an act of obeisance. Yet he does not exclude the alternative interpretation of fondling.

The interpretation of Gilgamesh's dreams and the relation between the two visions and Enkidu, as suggested here, is based on the cultural context in which the terms *kišru(m)* and *ḥašinnu(m)* appear. Both words are used as a metonymy for strength; the former possibly also alludes to the prenatal stage of unborn babies and the latter is the symbol of the manhood of a baby boy. Ancient Babylonians associated masculinity with the "strength of heroisms". Consequently, Gilgamesh's vision of a *kišru* would refer to the making of Enkidu. As stated in the birth incantation UM 29-15-367, procreation is structured in three phases: Conception by pouring semen into the womb of a woman, forming a "lump" or "clumping together" (**ka keš<sub>2</sub>**), and birth. The creation of Enkidu parallels this tripartite process: unlike a human being he is not conceived by pouring semen into the womb of a woman but created within Aruru at the behest of Anu (SB I 100 *zikru ša anim ibtani ina libbīša* "he fashioned within her Anu's command"). Once conceived, Aruru forms him by pinching off a lump of clay, which corresponds to the moment of "clumping together". Following this scheme, throwing the clay into the wild (SB I 102) should be equivalent to giving birth.

The *kišru(m)* is said to be too heavy for Gilgamesh alone to lift (OB II "P" i: 8-9; SB I 249-250). The weight signifies in all likelihood might and strength which resists Gilgamesh's power since he cannot move it by pressing his front against it (OB II "P" i: 12). This image agrees well with the petition of the young women from Uruk to Aruru, namely that the counterpart of Gilgamesh should be strong enough to withstand him (SB I 98). Indeed, Gilgamesh alone is unable to overpower the *kišru* as he will be unable to beat Enkidu. The element of strength is central to Gilgamesh's second dream, too. Here it is the axe, which symbolizes the gender and power of the companion-to-be. The dream is more straightforward: the axe signifies the birth of a boy as someone endowed with the "strength of heroism." It also implies that the first meeting of Enkidu and Gilgamesh is imminent because Gilgamesh makes contact with the axe and puts it on his side (OB P "P" i: 33-35). The OB version still distinguishes between the difference in affection Gilgamesh displays towards *kišrum* and *ḥašinnu(m)*. The people of Uruk kiss the "lump's" feet; only the axe receives Gilgamesh's caresses and is loved like a wife (*arāmšūma kīma aššatim aḥabbub elšu* OB II "P" i: 33; [*arāmšūma kīm*]a *aššati elīšu aḥbub* SB I: 256).<sup>36</sup> Although when Gilgamesh and Enkidu meet their initial encounter is not dominated by tender affection but driven by strife and vying, they become intimate and inseparable friends who love each other. In the SB version this difference is blurred; in both dreams Gilgamesh exchanges kisses with the object and embraces it (SB I 256, 284). The making and birth of Enkidu and his meeting with Gilgamesh are set on the same emotional level. According to the OB version Gilgamesh behaves emotionally rather indifferently towards the *kišrum*, though not unconcerned because he carries the "lump" to his mother (OB II "P" i: 14; SB I

257).<sup>37</sup> Only when Enkidu has reached his height in power, symbolized by the axe, Gilgamesh takes him as his life partner which is anticipated in his dream by kissing the axe as if it would be a wife<sup>37A</sup>). It appears that *kišru(m)* in Gilgamesh's first dream refers to Enkidu's creation and birth, while *ḥašinnu(m)* in the second vision forebodes the meeting of Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Both terms have the connotation of power, might and physical energy, which is precisely the aspect of Enkidu for which he will be remembered: indeed, in *The Ballad of Early Rulers* he is depicted as the one "whose strength was not defeated (?) in the land" or "who made (his) strength in the land ...".<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> M.P. Streck brings into consideration that the comparison *kīma aššatim* does not necessarily need to belong to the verbal form *arāmšūma* but could refer to the expression in the second meter, *aḥabbub/aḥbub elšu*. "Beiträge zum akkadischen Gilgameš-Epos," *OrNS* 76 (2007) 406. Accordingly, we could translate "I loved it (and) caressed it as if it would be a wife".

<sup>37</sup> Differently, J. Keetman, "Der Kampf im Haustor," 166 note 28, interprets the first dream as a nightmare and the second as positive.

<sup>37A</sup> W.G. Lambert reminds that when loving for sexual pleasure is meant Babylonians would "love a woman" but not necessarily "love a wife"; see "Prostitution," in V. Haas (ed.), *Aussenseiter und Randgruppen*, Xenia 32, Konstanz 1992, 156.

<sup>38</sup> For the text edition and study see B. Alster, *Wisdom of Ancient Sumer*, Bethesda 2005, 288-322, (quoted is l. 13 on 302).