

Prof. Scott B. Noegel
Chair, Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization
University of Washington

Book review:

Mills, Donald H. *The Hero and the Sea: Patterns of Chaos in Ancient Myth.*
Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 2002.

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in the two literary compositions is not unique and corresponds to the semantic relation between the two types of verbal forms found elsewhere. This finding (which goes against earlier studies that dealt with the topic of the ventive in the Epic of Gilgamesh, originating in Landsberger's above-mentioned article) proves that as far as the usage of the ventive in literary compositions is concerned, literary texts (at least the two literary *œuvres* examined) do not differ from nonliterary texts. It appears, therefore, that the rules guiding the use of the ventive in Akkadian are common to the entire Akkadian verbal system and that this morpheme's behavior is indifferent to generic categories.

In sum, the reader of this monograph will benefit from the interesting introduction, from the complete and thorough bibliographical survey, and from the monograph's concluding remarks. A better way of presenting the data, the main body of this study, would have made the book more accessible and easier to use, but even in this form Hirsch's work marks an important point in the long way to a complete comprehension of the elusive ventive morpheme.

NATHAN WASSERMAN

Hebrew University
Jerusalem

The Hero and the Sea: Patterns of Chaos in Ancient Myth. By DONALD H. MILLS. Wauconda, Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2003. Pp. viii + 200. \$29.

This refreshing interdisciplinary book has as its focus an ancient mythic pattern, or "mythologem," that involves heroic struggles with watery forms of chaos. For Mills such a pattern can be found in the Epic of Gilgamesh, Achilles' battle with the River Schamander (*Iliad*), Odysseus's battle with Poseidon (*Odyssey*), and four pericopes from the Hebrew Bible—the Creation, Deluge, Jacob's wrestling match at the Jabbok River, and the Exodus.

Since Mills is interested foremost by what is universal about the mythic pattern, questions of literary or historical influence are not considered. Instead, Mills's methodology is markedly

functionalist and grounded in the comparative study of religion and the field of ritual theory. Thus the observations and influence of Mircea Eliade, Arnold van Gennep, and Victor Turner figure prominently. Eliade informs Mills's understanding of myth as essentially cosmic in import and his conception of time and space as divided into the sacred and profane, a dichotomy that Mills finds at the heart of the "watery chaos" mythologem. Van Gennep and Turner inform his application of the concept of liminality as an expression of the chaotic, and his understanding of rituals as marking transformations in social status, both of which he applies judiciously and with much insight to the characters Gilgamesh, Achilles, Odysseus, and Jacob. Thus, each of these characters represents the liminal; each is situated between the mortal and divine worlds, or in the case of Odysseus and Jacob, are separated from their homelands. Their struggles with watery adversaries represent humanity's struggle with all that is chaotic in the world. In Gilgamesh's case, this watery struggle is experienced vicariously through Utnapishtim's account of the deluge. Their eventual victories over chaos thus serve to (re)define for these characters, and by extension the societies to which they belong, the limits of their own humanity and their roles in their respective societies. Their return and reintegration into their societies mark the end of separation and liminality, of social crisis and grieving, and, consequently, their transitions back to normative society bear ritual dimensions as rites of passage. As such, the mythologem may be read through the lens of ritual theory and understood as a "... symbolic expression of the desire to negate mythically and ritually the perils of social transition and cosmic change" (p. 9). Therefore, these myths not only register the social and cosmic insecurities of the societies represented by these heroes, they function to impose and reify systems of social and cosmic order.

... these mythic narratives give vivid expression to the terrifying experience of the chaotic while providing the conceptual framework by which ancient poets could ritualize, in ways meaningful to their respective communities, the hero's movement from chaos to victory. Because myth and ritual each serve to make intelligible social organization and to clarify a multitude of problematic human relationships, the riddle of the chaotic

lies behind every ancient mythmaker's struggle to express a sense of order in a world where chaos often seems to reign (p. vii).

For Mills, the struggle to achieve a sense of order in a chaotic world is not limited to antiquity but is a timeless universal, paralleling the most recent advances in the field of chaos theory—a subject to which he turns in depth in the final chapter. Here Mills argues that recent scientific discoveries of well-defined and often predictable patterns and processes in chaotic occurrences represent the modern equivalent of ancient mythmakers' attempts to make sense of the coexistence of order and chaos in the world around them.

This dynamic model of a universe as a chaotic system, neither random nor deterministic, has much in common with the mythic worldview of the ancient storytellers, who similarly saw the cosmos infused with chaotic elements yet also working in a predictable and orderly fashion (p. 177).

We are thus, inextricably linked to the ancients by our desire to establish systems of order in a seemingly chaotic universe.

This work is clearly the result of a long period of contemplation, both on the meaning of the respective myths and on ritual theory. It is erudite but easy to read, and it makes accessible and useful much theory on the nature of myth and ritual that too often escapes the attention of scholars working on these ancient texts. To be sure, not every scholar will find everything in the book convincing. The chapter on the Epic of Gilgamesh is particularly in need of greater dialogue with current scholarship,¹ and, at any rate,

¹ For example, Mills's discussion of Ishtar's advances to Gilgamesh (pp. 32–40) should be read in consultation with Tzvi Abusch, "Ishtar's Proposal and Gilgamesh's Refusal: An Interpretation of *The Gilgamesh Epic*, Tablet 6, Lines 1–79," *History of Religions* 26 (1986): 143–87, which in turn would provide even closer parallels to the myth of Odysseus and Calypso as Mills understands it (pp. 107–8, 124). I also note that *Enuma Elish* might have provided Mills with a clearer example of the "watery chaos" mythologem, since while Gilgamesh indeed struggles with thoughts of his own mortality, a struggle defined in part by Ut-napishtim's account of the chaotic deluge, he nowhere struggles directly with a watery adversary.

like the chapter on the biblical myths, does not offer the kind of linguistic depth found in the chapters on the Greek myths (Mills is a Classicist by training). In addition, Mills appears unaware of previous applications of van Gennepp's theories to Assyriological texts.² The book also does not integrate the historical contexts of these myths, despite that in some cases the historical contexts might support the author's understanding of the narrative as serving to ameliorate or mediate a period of social crisis. These criticisms notwithstanding, Mills offers scholarly and lay readers alike a number of provocative insights into the meaning and function of these myths and in so doing also makes a subtle, but powerful, argument for the value of studying ancient texts in the modern world.

SCOTT B. NOEGEL

University of Washington

² See, for example, the treatment of the Adapa myth by Piotr Michalowski, "Adapa and the Ritual Process," *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 41 (1980): 77–82, and by Shlomo Izre'el, "The Initiation of Adapa in Heaven," in Jiri Prosecky, ed., *Intellectual Life in the Ancient Near East: Papers Presented at the 43rd Rencontre assyriologique internationale, Prague, July 1–5, 1996* (Prague, 1998), pp. 183–87, and of Gilgamesh by William L. Moran, "The Gilgamesh Epic: A Masterpiece from Ancient Mesopotamia," in Jack M. Sasson, ed., *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York, 1995), pp. 2327–36.

The Pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period. By PAUL-ALAIN BEAULIEU. Cuneiform Monographs 23. Leiden and Boston: Brill/Styx, 2003. Pp. xxvi + 424 + 29 pls. \$118.

This is a major contribution to the study of ancient Mesopotamia. I consider the several days it took me to read it from cover to cover to be time well spent.

The principal deities residing in the Eanna temple were Ištar, Nanaya, Bēltu-ša-Rēš, Ušur-amāssu, Urkayītu, Gula, and ^dIGI.DU, in this order of importance.

A good bit of space is given to discussions of the clothing ceremony, the dates of which at Uruk do not coincide with dates for it at Sippar,