



McDONALD INSTITUTE CONVERSATIONS

Fierce lions, angry mice and fat-tailed sheep

Animal encounters
in the ancient Near East

Edited by Laerke Recht & Christina Tsouparopoulou



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& Christina Tsouparopoulou

with contributions from

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Published by:

McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research
University of Cambridge
Downing Street
Cambridge, UK
CB2 3ER
(0)(1223) 339327
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McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2021

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ISBN: 978-1-913344-05-4

On the cover: *Shepherd with sheep, palace ruins in background,*
photograph taken by Gertrude Bell at Mashetta, Jordan in March 1900;
A_232, The Gertrude Bell archive, Newcastle University.

Cover design by Dora Kemp and Ben Plumridge.
Typesetting and layout by Ben Plumridge.

Edited for the Institute by Cyprian Broodbank (*Acting Series Editor*).

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Abbreviations and sigla

ABL	Harper, R.F., 1892–1914. <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum</i> , 14 volumes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.	ARM 30	Durand, J.-M., 2009. <i>La nomenclature des habits et des textiles dans les textes de Mari</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 30.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner.
AHw	von Soden, W., 1959-1981. <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> . Wiesbaden.	AUCT 1	Sigrist, M., 1984. <i>Neo-Sumerian Account Texts in the Horn Archaeological Museum</i> . (Andrews University Cuneiform Texts 1.) Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press.
AKA I	Wallis Budge, E.A. & L.W. King, 1902. <i>Annals of the Kings of Assyria: The Cuneiform Texts with Translations and Transliterations from the Original Documents in the British Museum</i> . Vol. I. London: The Trustees of the British Museum.	BabMed	Babylonian Medicine online [no year]: ‘Corpora’, https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/index.html
AMT	Campbell Thompson, R., 1923. <i>Assyrian Medical Texts</i> . Milford, Oxford: Oxford University Press.	BAM	Köcher, F., 1963–1980. <i>Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen</i> , 6 Vols. Berlin: De Gruyter.
AnOr 8	Pohl, A., 1933. <i>Neubabylonische Rechtsurkunden aus den Berliner staatlichen Museen</i> . (Analecta Orientalia 8.) Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum.	BCT 1	Watson, P.J., 1986. <i>Neo-Sumerian Texts from Drehem</i> . (Catalogue of Cuneiform Tablets in Birmingham City Museum I.) Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
AO	Siglum of objects in the Louvre Museum, Paris (Archéologie Orientale).	BIN 1	Keiser, C.E., 1917. <i>Letters and Contracts from Erech Written in the Neo-Babylonian Period</i> . (Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of James B. Nies, vol. 1.) New Haven: Yale University Press.
ARM 2	Jean, Ch.-F., 1950. <i>Lettres diverses</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 2.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner.	BIN 3	Keiser, C.E., 1971. <i>Neo-Sumerian Account Texts from Drehem</i> . (Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of B.J. Nies, vol. 3.) New Haven: Yale University Press.
ARM 9	Biro, M., 1958. <i>Textes administratifs de la Salle 5 du Palais</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 9.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner.	BM	Siglum for objects in the British Museum, London.
ARM 10	Dossin, G., 1978. <i>Correspondance feminine</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 10.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner.	BPOA	Biblioteca del Próximo Oriente Antiguo (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2006ff.)
ARM 14	Biro, M., 1974. <i>Lettres de Yaqqim-Addu, gouverneur de Sagarâtum</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 14.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner.	BPOA 6	Sigrist, M., & T. Ozaki, 2009a. <i>Neo-Sumerian Administrative Tablets from the Yale Babylonian Collection. Part One</i> (Biblioteca del Próximo Oriente Antiguo 6.) Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.
ARM 15	Bottero, J. & A. Finet, 1954. <i>Repertoire analytique des tomes I à V</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 15.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner.	BPOA 7	Sigrist, M., & T. Ozaki, 2009b. <i>Neo-Sumerian Administrative Tablets from the Yale Babylonian Collection. Part Two</i> (Biblioteca del Próximo Oriente Antiguo 7.) Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.
ARM 26	Durand, J.-M. et al., 1988. <i>Archives épistolaires de Mari</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 26.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner.	BRM 1	Clay, A.T., 1912. <i>Babylonian Business Transactions of the First Millennium B.C.</i> (Babylonian Records
ARM 27	Biro, M., 1993. <i>Correspondance des gouverneurs de Qaṭṭunân</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 27.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner.		
ARM 28	Kupper, J.-R., 1998. <i>Lettres royales du temps de Zimri-Lim</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 28.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner.		

Abbreviations and sigla

	in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan, Part 1.) New York: Privately printed.	HSS 14	Lacheman, E.R., 1950. <i>Excavations at Nuzi V. Miscellaneous Texts from Nuzi, Part 2, The Palace and Temple Archives.</i> (Harvard Semitic Studies 14.) Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard Univ. Press.
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.</i> Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1956–2010.	HW ²	Friedrich, J. & A. Kammerhuber (eds.), 1975–. <i>Hethitisches Wörterbuch. Zweite, völlig neubearbeitete Auflage auf der Grundlage der edierten hethitischen Texte.</i> Heidelberg: Winter.
CBS	Siglum for objects in the University Museum in Philadelphia (Catalogue of the Babylonian Section).	IB	Siglum for finds from Isin (Isan Bahriyat).
CDLI	Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative, https://cdli.ucla.edu	IM	Siglum for objects in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad.
CHD	Goedegebuure, P.M., H.G. Güterbock, H.A. Hoffner & T.P.J. van den Hout (eds.), 1980–. <i>The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.</i> Chicago: The Oriental Institute.	ITT 5	de Genouillac, H., 1921. <i>Inventaire des Tablettes de Tello conservées au Musée Imperial Ottoman. Tome V. Époque présargonique, Époque d'Agadé, Époque d'Ur III.</i> Paris: Édition Ernest Leroux.
CM 26	Sharlach, T.M., 2004. <i>Provincial Taxation and the Ur III State.</i> (Cuneiform Monographs 26.) Leiden: Brill.	KAH 2	Schroeder, O. 1922. <i>Keilschrifttexte aus Assur historischen Inhalts, Heft II.</i> (Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 37.) Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.
CT 22	Campbell Thompson, R., 1906. <i>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in British Museum</i> , vol. 22. London: British Museum.	KBo	<i>Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi</i> (Bd. 1-22 in Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft) Leipzig/Berlin, 1916 ff.
CT 32	King, L.W., 1912. <i>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in British Museum</i> , vol. 32. London: British Museum.	KRI	Kitchen, K.A., 1969–1990. <i>Ramesseide Inscriptions. Historical and Biographical</i> , 8 vols. Oxford: Blackwell.
CT 55	Pinches, T.G. 1982. <i>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum Part 55. Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Economic Texts.</i> London: British Museum Publications.	KUB	<i>Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi</i> , Berlin 1921 ff.
CTH	Laroche, E. 1971. <i>Catalogue des Textes Hittites.</i> Paris: Klincksieck.	LAPO 16	Durand, J.-M., 1997. <i>Les Documents épistolaires du palais de Mari, tome I.</i> (Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient 16.) Paris: Éditions du cerf.
DAS	Lafont, B., 1985. <i>Documents Administratifs Sumériens, provenant du site de Tello et conservés au Musée du Louvre.</i> Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations.	LAPO 18	Durand, J.-M., 2000. <i>Les Documents épistolaires du palais de Mari, tome III.</i> (Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient 18.) Paris: Éditions du cerf.
DMMA	Siglum for objects in the Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques de la Bibliothèque nationale de France.	LD	Lepsius, C.R., 1849–59. <i>Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopen</i> (plates), 6 vols. Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung.
DUL	Del Olmo Lete, G. & J. Sanmartín, 2015. <i>A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition.</i> Translated and edited by W.G.E. Watson. Third revised edition. 2 vols. (Handbuch der Orientalistik 112.) Leiden: Brill.	LKU	Falkenstein, A., 1931. <i>Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Uruk.</i> Berlin: Berlin Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Vorderasiatische Abteilung.
EA	Siglum for the Tell El-Amarna Letters, following the edition of Knudtzon, J. A., 1915. <i>Die El-Amarna-Tafeln.</i> Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.	M	Siglum for texts from Mari.
ePSD	Electronic version of <i>The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary</i> , http://psd.museum.upenn.edu	Moore, Mich. Coll.	Moore, E., 1939. <i>Neo-Babylonian Documents in the University of Michigan Collection.</i> Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
ETCSL	Black, J.A., G. Cunningham, J. Ebeling, E. Flückiger-Hawker, E. Robson, J. Taylor & G. Zólyomi (eds.), 1998–2006. <i>The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature.</i> Oxford, http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/	MSL VIII/I	Landsberger, B., 1960. <i>The Fauna of Ancient Mesopotamia. First Part: Tablet XIII.</i> (Materialien zum Sumerischen Lexikon VIII/1.) Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum. [with the assistance of A. Draffkorn Kilmer & E.I. Gordon].
FM 2	Charpin, D. & J.-M. Durand (ed.), 1994. <i>Recueil d'études à la mémoire de Maurice Birot.</i> (Florilegium Marianum II.) Paris: Société pour l'étude du Proche-Orient ancien.	MVN 8	Calvot, D., G. Pettinato, S.A. Picchioni & F. Reschid, 1979. <i>Textes économiques du Selluš-Dagan du Musée du Louvre et du Collège de France (D. Calvot). Testi economici dell'Iraq Museum Baghdad.</i> (Materiali per il Vocabolario Neosumerico 8.) Rome: Multigrafica Editrice.
Hh	<i>The Series HAR-ra='hubullu'</i> , Materials for the Sumerian lexicon (MSL), 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 & 11. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1957–.	MVN 11	Owen, D.I., 1982. <i>Selected Ur III Texts from the Harvard Semitic Museum.</i> (Materiali per il Vocabolario Neosumerico 11.) Rome: Multigrafica Editrice.
		MZ	Siglum for finds from Tell Mozan.
		NBC	Siglum for tablets in the Nies Babylonian Collection of the Yale Babylonian Collection.

Abbreviations and sigla

NCBT	Siglum for tablets in the Newell Collection of Babylonian Tablets, now Yale University, New Haven.	SAA 11	Fales, F.M. & J.N. Postgate, 1995. <i>Imperial Administrative Records, Part II: Provincial and Military Administration</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 11.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
OIP 99	Biggs, R.D., 1974. <i>Inscriptions from Tell Abu Salabikh</i> . (Oriental Institute Publications 99.) Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.	SAA 12	Kataja, K. & R. Whiting, 1995. <i>Grants, Decrees and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 12.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
OIP 115	Hilgert, M., 1998. <i>Cuneiform Texts from the Ur III Period in the Oriental Institute, Vol. 1: Drehem Administrative Documents from the Reign of Šulgi</i> . (Oriental Institute Publications 115.) Chicago: The Oriental Institute.	SAA 13	Cole, S.W. & P. Machinist, 1998. <i>Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Priests to Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 13.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
OIP 121	Hilgert, M., 1998. <i>Cuneiform Texts from the Ur III Period in the Oriental Institute, Volume 2: Drehem Administrative Documents from the Reign of Amar-Suena</i> . (Oriental Institute Publications 121.) Chicago: The Oriental Institute.	SAA 17	Dietrich, M., 2003. <i>The Neo-Babylonian Correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 17.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
P	CDLI (Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative) number.	SAA 19	Luukko, M. 2012. <i>The Correspondence of Tiglathpileser III and Sargon II</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 19.) Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
PDT 1	Çiğ, M., H. Kizilyay & A. Salonen, 1956. <i>Die Puzris-Dagan-Texte der Istanbul Archäologischen Museen Teil 1: Texts Nrr. 1-725</i> . (Academia Scientiarum Fennica Annales, série B, tome 92.) Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.	SAA 20	Parpola, S. 2017. <i>Assyrian Royal Rituals and Cultic Texts</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 20.) Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
PKG 18	Orthmann, W., 1985. <i>Der alte Orient</i> . (Propyläen Kunstgeschichte 18.) Berlin: Propyläen Verlag.	SAT 2	Sigrist, M., 2000. <i>Sumerian Archival Texts. Texts from the Yale Babylonian Collection 2</i> . Bethesda: CDL Press.
PTS	Siglum for unpublished texts in the Princeton Theological Seminary.	SF	Deimel, A., 1923. <i>Schultexte aus Fara</i> . (Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orientgesellschaft 43.) Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.
RGTC	<i>Répertoire géographique des textes cunéiformes</i> . (Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B.) Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1974–.	SP	Alster, B., 1997. <i>Proverbs of Ancient Sumer</i> . Bethesda: CDL Press.
RIMA 2	Grayson, A.K., 1991. <i>Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114–859 BC)</i> . (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods Vol. 2.) Toronto, Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press.	TCL 12	Conteneau, G., 1927. <i>Contrats Néo-Babyloniens I, de Téglaṯ-Phalasar III à Nabonide</i> . (Textes cunéiformes, Musées du Louvre 12.) Paris: P. Geuthner.
RIME 1	Frayne, D., 2008. <i>Presargonic Period (2700–2350 BC)</i> . (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods Vol. 1.) Toronto: University of Toronto Press.	TCL 13	Contenau, G., 1929. <i>Contrats néo-babyloniens II. Achéménides et Séleucides</i> . (Textes cunéiformes, Musées du Louvre 13.) Paris: P. Geuthner.
RIME 4	Frayne, D., 1990. <i>Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC)</i> . (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods Vol. 4.) Toronto: University of Toronto Press.	TRU	Legrain, L., 1912. <i>Le temps des rois d'Ur: recherches sur la société antique d'après des textes nouveaux</i> . (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études 199.) Paris: H. Champion.
RINAP	The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period; Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus, available at http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/index.html	TU	Thureau-Dangin, F., 1922. <i>Tablettes d'Uruk à l'usage des prêtres du Temple d'Anu au temps des Séleucides</i> . (Musée du Louvre. Département des antiquités orientales. Textes cunéiformes.) Paris: P. Geuthner.
RLA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie</i> .	U.	Siglum for finds from Ur.
RS	Siglum for documents from Ras Shamra (Ugarit).	UCP 9/1,I	Lutz, H.F., 1927. <i>Neo-Babylonian Administrative Documents from Erech: Part I</i> . (University of California Publications in Semitic Philology Vol. 9 no. 1/I.) Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.
SAA 2	Parpola, S. & K. Watanabe, 1988. <i>Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 2.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.	UCP 9/1,II	Lutz, H.F., 1927. <i>Neo-Babylonian Administrative Documents from Erech: Part II</i> . (University of California Publications in Semitic Philology Vol. 9 no. 1/II.) Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.
SAA 7	Fales, F.M. & J.N. Postgate, 1992. <i>Imperial Administrative Records, Part I: Palace and Temple Administration</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 7.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.	UDT	Nies, J.B., 1920. <i>Ur Dynasty Tablets: Texts Chiefly from Tello and Drehem Written during the Reigns of Dungi, Bur-Sin, Gimil-Sin and Ibi-Sin</i> . Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.
SAA 10	Parpola, S. 1993. <i>Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 10.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.		

Abbreviations and sigla

VA	Siglum for objects in the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (Vorderasiatische Abteilung).		<i>et d'Histoire in Genf</i> . Naples: Istituto orientale di Napoli.
VAT	Siglum for objects/tablets in the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (Vorderasiatische Abteilung. Tontafeln).	YBC	Siglum for tablets in the Yale Babylonian Collection.
VS 1	Ungnad, A. & L. Messerschmidt, 1907. <i>Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der Königlichen Museen zu Berlin</i> . Vol. 1, Texts 1–115, Königliche Museen zu Berlin. Sammlung der Vorderasiatischen Altertümer. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.	YOS 7	Tremayne, A., 1925. <i>Records from Erech, Time of Cyrus and Cambyses (538-521 B.C.)</i> . (Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts, vol. 7.) New Haven: Yale University Press.
VS 16	Schröder, O., 1917. <i>Altbabylonische Briefe</i> . (Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der königlichen Museen zu Berlin 16.) Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.	YOS 8	Faust, D.E., 1941. <i>Contracts from Larsa, dated in the Reign of Rim-Sin</i> . (Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts, vol. 8.) New Haven: Yale University Press & London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press.
VS 17	van Dijk, J. 1971. <i>Nicht-kanonische Beschwörungen und sonstige literarische Texte</i> . (Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der Königlichen Museen zu Berlin 17.) Berlin: Akademie Verlag.	YOS 11	van Dijk, J., A. Goetze & M.I. Hussey, 1985. <i>Early Mesopotamian Incantations and Rituals</i> . (Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts, vol. 11.) New Haven: Yale University Press.
WB	Erman, A. & H. Grapow (eds.), 1971. <i>Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache</i> , 5 vols. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.	YOS 17	Weisberg, D.B., 1980. <i>Texts from the Time of Nebuchadnezzar</i> . (Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts, vol. 17.) New Haven: Yale University Press.
WMAH	Sauren, H., 1969. <i>Wirtschaftsurkunden aus der Zeit der III. Dynastie von Ur im Besitz des Musée d'Art</i>	YOS 19	Beaulieu, P.-A., 2000. <i>Legal and Administrative Texts from the Reign of Nabonidus</i> . (Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts, vol. 19.) New Haven: Yale University Press.

Preface

Augusta McMahon

The chapters in this volume invert traditional approaches to past human-animal relationships, placing animals at the forefront of these interactions and celebrating the many ways in which animals enriched or complicated the lives of the inhabitants of the ancient Near East. The authors embrace insights from text, archaeology, art and landscape studies. The volume offers rich evidence for the concept that ‘animals are good to think’ (Levi-Strauss 1963), enabling humans in categorizing the world around us, evaluating our own behaviours, and providing analogies for supernatural powers that are beyond humans’ control. However, totemism has never fit the ancient Near East well, because most animals had varied and endlessly complicated relationships with their human associates, as these chapters vividly describe. Taboos on eating or handling animals ebbed and flowed, and the same animal could have both positive and negative associations in omen texts. Animals were good (or bad) to eat, good (or bad) to think, good (or bad) to live with (Kirksey & Helmreich 2010) and good (or bad) to be. Through detailed, theoretically informed and well-supported case studies, this volume moves the study of human-animal-environment interactions forward, presenting animals as embedded actors in culture rather than simply objectified as human resources or symbols.

The chapters in the first section emphasize the agency of animals via their abilities to resolve crises for humans and deities and to shift between animal and human worlds. Animals have paradoxical affects: as metaphors for wilderness and chaos, or as valued companions, helpers, or votive sacrifices. The variety of interactions and assumptions cautions us to treat animals, as we do humans, as individuals. Reconstruction of animals in past rituals has a long history, usually focused on animals associated with the gods and/or animals used in formal religious sacrifice. But the chapters in the second section also examine

the impact of lesser-known animals and less formal encounters, e.g., in the landscape or in funeral contexts within the home. The value and meanings of animals could vary with context.

The fascination engendered by hybrid or composite figures is also well represented. The persistence of composite figures in the Near East, from fourth millennium BC human-ibex ‘shamans’ on northern Mesopotamian Late Chalcolithic seals to *lamassu* and *mušhuššu* of the first millennium BC, suggests that the division and recombination of animal body elements fulfilled a human need to categorize powerful forces and create a cosmological structure. The anthropomorphizing of animals is another facet of the flexibility of animal identifications in the past. The authors here also grapple with the question of whether composite images represent ideas or costumed ritual participants.

The chapters also cover the most basic of animal-human relations, that of herd management, use in labour, and consumption, digging deeply into details of mobility, breeding and emic classifications. Economic aspects of the human-animal relationship are currently being rejuvenated through archaeological science techniques (e.g., isotopes, ZooMS), which give us unparalleled levels of detail on diet, mobility, herd management, and species. Matching these insights from science, the issues raised here include the value of individual animals versus that assigned to species, the challenges of pests, the status ascribed to and reflected by different meat cuts, animals as status and religious symbols, and animals’ tertiary products or uses (e.g., transport versus traction, bile). These studies allow a more detailed reconstruction of Near Eastern economy and society, as well as emphasizing the flexibility of the relationships between animals, as well as between human and animal.

The authors implicitly advocate for a posthumanist multispecies ethnography, which incorporates

nonhumans and argues for equal care to be given to nonhumans in the realms of shared landscapes, violence, labour and especially ecology (Kirksey & Helmreich 2010; Kopnina 2017; Parathian *et al.* 2018). This approach advocates for nonhumans' agency in creating shared worlds, in contrast to the traditional approach to animals as symbols or resources in the service of humans. Going forward, the challenge will be to convert the acknowledgement of equal cultural contribution into support for nonhuman species to speak for themselves; this shift from passive subject of research inquiry to genuine active agency in academic writing does not have an easy or obvious path, and many nonhuman animals may be overlooked. Indeed, multispecies ethnography ideally seeks to incorporate plants, microbes, stones and more (Ogden *et al.* 2013; Smart 2014), many of which are ephemeral in the archaeological record and all but omitted in ancient texts. However, ancient texts do support a new approach which questions our modern boundaries between species. Our perpetual struggle to translate terms for different species of equids, to distinguish whether a word refers to rats or mice, or to link zooarchaeological remains to lexical lists, reinforces the complexity and flexibility of these concepts, and the futility of attempts at absolute categorization.

The chapters in this volume should inspire colleagues to grapple with animals, nonhumans and contexts that could not be included here. For instance, the snake has as lengthy a history of human engagement in the Near East as does the lion and had similarly unusual powers. While the lion was an icon of strength, the perfect symbol for the proximity of the emotions of awe and fear, the snake has the sneaky ability to slither

between worlds, to avoid capture, and to deliver an almost imperceptible lethal injury. Fear of the snake conquers awe. Like the fox, the presence or actions of the snake, as listed in *Šumma ālu*, may be positive or negative omens. The snake was present at key moments in both Mesopotamian and Biblical literature; its actions (stealing the plant of immortality, offering the fruit of the tree of knowledge) changed the fate of humans forever. Whether represented coiled and copulating on Late Chalcolithic seals, grasped by Late Uruk 'Masters of Animals' or first millennium BC *lamaštu*, snakes and their paradoxical nature deserve deep scrutiny. There are many other nonhuman animals deserving of similar problematization and integration, and the eclectic and exciting research stream represented by this volume shows us the way.

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Chapter 2

Animal agents in Sumerian literature

Lorenzo Verderame

Animals play a major role in Sumerian literature¹ in the construction of metaphors and similes (Heimpel 1968; Black 1996; 1998; 2000). Bovines are recalled as a comparison for beauty and might, while rampaging bulls, spitting venom reptiles, gaping mouth felines, and other wild animals provide images of danger and fierceness.

(Sud) stood, the object of admiration, like
a magnificent *yellow* cow.

Enlil and Sud A 8

I am (Šulgi) a dreadful-eye *panther*
generated by the dragon ...
I am a gaping-mouth *panther* of Utu ...
I am a mule fit for the road.
I am a horse, whose tail waves on the
highway.
I am a stallion of Šakkan, who loves to
run.

Šulgi A 3, 14, 16–18

Occasionally animals are described as part of the landscape. High quality and exotic animals are mentioned in lists of tributes, sacrifices, and banquets.

Monkeys, mighty elephants, water
buffalo, *exotic* beasts,
Jostle each other in the broad street,
Mixed with dogs, lions, mountain ibexes
(var.: mountain livestock; horses),
and *alum* sheep with long wool.

The Curse of Agade 21–3

Apart from being protagonists of fables, proverbs, and debates (*Heron and Turtle, Grain and Sheep, Bird and Fish*), animals are absent or passive in Sumerian narratives, where gods and humans are the main

actors and share the same space and features, even the grammatical ones. In fact, the Sumerian language distinguishes grammatically two classes instead of two genders. The Animate Class (or Class A) is used for animate beings, namely gods and humans. Animals, plants, things, etc., are marked with element of the Inanimate Class (or Class B), unless they are characters in proverbs and disputes.

In a few cases, animals act in human and divine narratives by playing a minor, though crucial, role. This chapter explores such dynamics of animal intervention in divine and human narratives, as well as the relationships between animals, humans, and deities.

The Fox in *Enki and Ninhursağa*

The text known as *Enki and Ninhursağa* (= ETCSL 1.1.1; Attinger 1984)² is composed of three narrative blocks: the foundation of Dilmun, the chain creation of a series of deities, and the curse of Enki by Ninhursağa and his final recovery. The myth begins with Enki founding and ordering Dilmun. The god gives the site to Ninsikila (Ninhursağa), and then copulates with her. Ninhursağa becomes pregnant and gives birth to NinSAR. Enki sees the new-born goddess and copulates with her. NinSAR gives birth to Ninkura. Again, Enki sees the new-born goddess and copulates with her. Finally, Ninkura gives birth to Uttu. At this point, Ninhursağa advises Uttu; the following passage is fragmentary. It is unclear if the text continued with Ninhursağa giving specific instructions to Uttu on how to act with Enki, or something else happens. After a gap of *c.* 13 lines, the text continues with Uttu asking Enki for fruits (cucumbers, apples, and grapes), which the god obtains from the gardener. Enki goes to the house of Uttu with the fruits and the two gods eventually copulate. However, Ninhursağa intervenes and removes Enki's sperm from Uttu; she then creates

eight plants. Enki sees the plants and decides to taste them and fixes their fate. Ninhursagā then curses Enki: ‘I will never look upon him with an eye of life until he dies!’ (l. 220–21). The text is not explicit, but from what follows it is clear that Enki falls ill and becomes paralysed, while Ninhursagā escapes and hides herself. The great gods (Anunna) are in despair and sit down on the dust.³ The situation of crisis is solved by the Fox. Ninhursagā returns and heals Enki, creating a god for each part of Enki’s healed body.

Apart from the beginning, most of the Fox episode in *Enki and Ninhursagā* (ll. 223–46?) is lost. Soon after Ninhursagā has cursed Enki, the Fox (ka₅-a) offers help to Enlil in exchange for a reward (ni₃-ba). Enlil replies to the Fox that he will erect two *ĝišgana* trees for the Fox and its name will be praised. The following lines are full of gaps. Apparently, the Fox unsuccessfully seeks divine help at the beginning, but succeeds at some point in the gap, for Ninhursagā returns and heals Enki.

The Fox said to Enki:
 ‘(If) I bring back Ninhursagā, what will be
 my reward?’
 Enlil answered the Fox:
 ‘(If) you really bring back Ninhursagā,
 I shall plant two *ĝišgana* trees in my city
 and make your name renown!’
 The Fox first anointed its body,
 First loosed its fur/hair,
 First put kohl on its eyes.
 (four lines fragmentary)
 ‘I went [to Nippur(?)] and Enlil [...],
 I went [to Ur(?)] and Nanna [...],
 I went [to Larsa(?)] and Utu [...],
 I went [to Uruk(?)] and Inanna [...],
 [...] that/who is [...] my life [...].
 (seven lines fragmentary)’
Enki and Ninhursagā 223–46

The Sumerian language does not mark gender grammatically and it is unknown if the Fox is female or male. Even the acts that the Fox performs in ll. 228–30 (anointing the body, loosening the hair/fur, putting kohl over the eyes) cannot be identified as specifically male or female. In this episode, the Fox is not preceded by the divine determinative, but acts as an animate being for the grammatical elements are those of the Animate Class (or Class A).

In Sumerian literature, the fox plays a major role as a cunning and treacherous animal protagonist of proverbs and mentioned in wisdom literature (Vanstiphout 1988; Kienast 2003; Cohen 2017; Verderame 2017a, 396–400). As in other cultures, the eyes and the

tail are the relevant and symbolic parts of the animal. This fame is paralleled in iconography. The fox is often depicted on seals of different periods. Occasionally mid second millennium Babylonian boundary stones (*kudurru*) have the image of a fox or jackal among other gods symbols (Seidl 1989, 143–4) and it may be related to the homonymous Mesopotamian star (MUL.KA₅.A; see Deimel 1914, 81; Kurtik 2007, 239–41), possibly to be identified with Alcor (80 *Ursae Maioris*) and also known as a learned name for the planet Mars (Reynolds 1998, 351–52).

Dumuzi and the Fly

Inanna’s Descent to the Netherworld (= ETCSL 1.4.1; Sladek 1974; Kramer 1980) is another myth where an animal intervenes to solve a crisis by finding a hidden character. Here, Inanna decides to go to the Netherworld. On arriving in the court, the infernal gods address Inanna with a deadly look, an ‘ill body’ word, and an accusing scream. Inanna is sentenced to death and transformed into a corpse. With Enki’s help, the goddess is revived but cannot leave the Netherworld unless she provides a substitute. Inanna returns from the Netherworld to choose a substitute followed by the infernal gendarmes, the *galla*. After having excluded the gods of her circle who have correctly observed the mourning for her ‘death’ (Ninšubur, Šara, Lulal), Inanna chooses her lover Dumuzi as substitute. The *galla* demons who go with Inanna arrest and beat Dumuzi, while Inanna addresses him with a deadly look, an ‘ill internal’ word, and an accusing scream. Dumuzi seeks help from the god Utu, asking him to transform his limbs into those of a reptile (*muš*). Utu grants his request and Dumuzi eventually escapes. In distress, Inanna seeks Dumuzi. The Fly (*nim*) helps the goddess to find Dumuzi, whose deadly fate is then fixed.⁴

The passage of the Fly’s aid is described in few lines. As with the Fox, the Fly asks Inanna for a reward (ni₃-ba). Because of the help the Fly offered to Inanna, the goddess fixes the fate of the Fly.

[The Fly] spoke to holy Inanna:
 ‘(If) I [show] you where your man is,
 what will be my reward?’
 [Holy Inanna] answered the Fly:
 ‘If you show me where my man is, this
 will be your reward:
 I will cover [...]!’
 The Fly [*helped*] holy Inanna.
 The young lady, Inanna, decreed the
 destiny of the Fly:
 ‘In the beer-house, may bronze
 vessels *to drink* for you.

[You will live] like the sons of the wise!
The destiny (decreed by) Inanna [thus]
came to be.

Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld 394–403

Contrary to the lost story of the Fox, the Fly's reward is preserved in the text. Despite the fragmentary passage, it is clear that the destiny decreed by Inanna for the Fly will be that of lord/mistress of the beer-house – as with the case of the Fox, it is not possible to determine the gender of the Fly (see above). In Sumerian literature, most references to the fly are related 'to fly like a fly' (nim-gin₇ ... dal) or to the buzzing produced by the fly (bu, nim). However, in one passage one can find the direct association of the fly with beer. In *The Home of the Fish*, the fish is persuaded to enter his 'house' (trap) describing an idyllic situation, clearly opposite to normal life, 'No flies buzz around in your house where beer is poured out' (e₂ ki kaš de₂-a-zu nim nu-mu-un-bu-bu-bu, l. A 8). The relation of Inanna with the alehouse is well-known, as for example, in *Inanna I A* 16–17, where it is mentioned: 'When I sit in the alehouse, I am a woman, and I am an exuberant young man', or in the *The Song of the Ploughing Oxen* 146–7: 'In the alehouse, the joy,, Inanna a place of relaxation'. Moreover, in the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgameš* (X1) the goddess Ištar appears to Gilgameš as Šiduri, the tavern-keeper (*sābītu*) living by the seashore.

Lugalbanda and Anzu

Lugalbanda and Anzu (= ETCSL 1.8.2.2; Wilcke 1969) is either the sequel to *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave* or is part of the same composition. In *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave*, after the protagonist has departed from Uruk towards Aratta, he falls ill and lies in the cave until he is finally recovered. At the beginning of *Lugalbanda and Anzu*, Lugalbanda is lost in the midst of the mountains. In order to reach his brothers and Uruk's army besieging Aratta, he seeks the help of Anzu, the mythical lion-headed eagle. The episode detailing the meeting of Lugalbanda and Anzu is very long; at two hundred lines, it comprises half of the entire composition, the second part of which describes the siege of Aratta and the Uruk victory. In brief, Lugalbanda finds Anzu's nest and feeds its chicks with fine food, paints their eyes with kohl, and puts *eren's* scent on them. Then he hides, waiting for Anzu to return to the nest.

Lugalbanda is knowledgeable and he
achieves great things.
To (the preparation of) the sweet breads
for the gods

He added carefulness to carefulness.
On the bread *dough* he spreads honey and
he added more honey to it.
He set them before the nest of the Anzu's
chick,
He gave the chick fatty meat to eat. He fed
it sheep's fat.
He placed *nindaidea*-breads into its beak.
He laid down the Anzu's chick in its nest,
Painted its eyes with kohl,
Placed white *eren* onto its head,
Put up a ... of salt meat onto its head.

Lugalbanda and Anzu 50–60

When Anzu arrives, he is pleased with his chick and wants to fix a good fate for the one who did this. Lugalbanda shows himself to Anzu and the mythical bird decrees his destiny. First, Anzu offers him precious metals and piles of grain, apples, and cucumbers with which he can return to Kulaba, but Lugalbanda refuses (ll. 132–41). Second, Anzu offers him magic arrows, but Lugalbanda refuses (ll. 142–8). Third, Anzu offers him mythical weapons (helmet, breastplate, battle-net), but Lugalbanda refuses (ll. 149–54). Fourth, Anzu offers him plenty of milk and dairy products, but Lugalbanda refuses (ll. 155–59).⁵ Finally, Lugalbanda asks for the power of running instead.

Holy Lugalbanda replied to him:
'Let the (power of) running be on my
shoulder and that I will never be tired!
Let there be strength in my arms,
Let me stretch my arms wide, let my arms
never become weak!
Like the sunlight, moving, like Inanna,
Like the seven storms, the storms of Iškur,
Let me raise like a flame, blaze like
lightning!
Let me go wherever I look to,
Set foot wherever I raise my eyes,
Reach wherever my heart desires,
And in whatever place my heart has
named to me let me spread my
sandals!'

Lugalbanda and Anzu 167–77

In exchange for the good fate decreed by Anzu, Lugalbanda promises that he will fashion a marvellous wooden statue of Anzu and make his name renowned across Sumer.

When Utu will let me enter my city,
Kulaba,
...

I will make the woodcarvers fashion a
statue of you, and you will stay as an
object of admiration,
Your name will be made manifest
in Sumer
And in the temple(s) of the great gods it
will stay for fitting.

Lugalbanda and Anzu 181–83

Differently from the stories of the Fox and the Fly, Anzu is marked by the Inanimate Class (or Class B) elements, although he speaks and acts as an animate being. Furthermore, the gender of Anzu can be determined by Lugalbanda assertion “‘You shall be my father’ he said’ (za-e ad-da-ĝu₁₀ he₂-me-en bi₂-in-du₁₁) in l. 127, paralleled by the assertion “‘Your spouse shall be my mother’ he said’ (dam-zu ama-ĝu₁₀ he₂-am₃ bi₂-in-du₁₁) in the previous line.

In the story of *Lugalbanda and Anzu*, Lugalbanda’s first act, the care of Anzu’s chick, is a kind of present that facilitates contact with the mythical bird. After four good fates offered by Anzu, all refused by Lugalbanda, the latter asks for a specific power, that of running, which is granted by Anzu. The reward of Anzu is Lugalbanda’s promise to fashion a statue⁶ and make Anzu’s name famous.

Ninurta and the Anzu’s chick

Not Anzu, but his chick acts at the beginning of a myth known as *Ninurta and the Turtle* (= ETCSL 1.6.3; Alster 1972). The story seems to be a sequel to the Akkadian Anzu myth. It begins after the defeat of Anzu by Ninurta. Struck by the god, Anzu drops the MEs, the divine plans (ĝi₃-hur), and the Tablet of destinies which return to the *abzu*. Possibly with the intent of recovering them, Anzu’s chick (amar-anzu^{mušen}) takes Ninurta by the hand and leads him to the *abzu* of Enki, where the rest of the composition takes place.

At [the words (of the chick?)] of Anzu
Ninurta filled with treachery (or: was
silent in treachery).

[Ninme]na gave out a wail:

‘As for me, its divine powers (me) have
not fallen into my hand. Shall I not
exercise their authority?

Shall [I] not live like him *in* the shrine in
the *abzu*?’

Father Enki in the *abzu* knew what had
been said.

The Anzu chick took the hero Ninurta by
his hand

And drew near with him to Enki to the
abzu.

The Anzu chick returned Uta-ulu
(Ninurta) to the *abzu*.

The lord rejoiced for the hero,
Father Enki rejoiced for the hero
Ninurta.

Ninurta and the Turtle B 5–14

In this composition, another animal intervenes, the turtle (ba-al-gu₇). Fashioned by Enki from clay, the turtle is used to ambush Ninurta. It grabs the tendon of Ninurta and draws him down in a pit that it has excavated. The turtle is a creature of Enki, obeying its master’s orders, and has no active role in the development of the story.

Inanna, Šukaletuda, and the Raven

The last example of animal agents can be found in the myth known as *Inanna and Šukaletuda* (= ETCSL 1.3.3; Volk 1995). The myth is composed of two parts with different protagonists. After the description of Inanna’s departure from heaven and various gaps, the text continues (l. 49) with the story of the Raven (uga^{mušen}) and the creation of the date palm (Verderame 2020). The second part contains the story of Šukaletuda, the gardener, who sexually abuses the goddess Inanna who is resting in his garden. Šukaletuda escapes the quest and the rage of the goddess thrice thanks to the help of his father, probably Enki, but Inanna eventually finds him. The goddess punishes Šukaletuda, but at the same time she decrees his future fame.

At the beginning of the story, the protagonist is the Raven, then changes to Šukaletuda. The crucial point that merges the two stories, where the protagonist changes from the Raven to Šukaletuda, is lines 91–2.

[... Šukale]tuda was his name,
[Son] of Igisigsig, the [gardener(?)],
Was to water [garden plots]
And was to build a well [among the
plants].

Inanna and Šukaletuda 91–4

It is generally assumed that Šukaletuda is a new character introduced in these very lines. Considering his activities, the word ‘gardener’ is usually hypothesized in the gap of l. 91 (Volk 1995, 58), being the gardener a main character in the Sumerian and Akkadian literature (Besnier 2002; Rendu Loisel 2013). Igi-sig₇-sig₇ (lit. ‘very green eye/face’), which appears in the following line and who is supposed to be the father of Šukaletuda, is identified as ‘the chief-gardener of An’ in the gods

list *An* = *Anum* ⁽¹⁹²⁾ nu-^{ĝi}8kiri₆-an-na-ke₄). Furthermore, Šukaletuda has been identified with Išullānu, the gardener, lover of Ištar, transformed into a toad in the *Epic of Gilgameš* (Volk 1995, 53–64; see note 7). However, the relationship between the two stories and the change of protagonist in *Inanna and Šukaletuda* has never been properly examined and it is possible that an identification of the Raven with Šukaletuda cannot be excluded *a priori*.

For the purpose here, the story of the Raven is the relevant part of the composition. After a gap in the lines 42–8, Enki calls the Raven and instructs it as follows:

The kohl of/for the Eridu's art of exorcism,
With oil/fat and water in a lapis-lazuli
bowl
Placed in the room of the *agrun*
You ... with the axe and chew.
Then *plant* (it in?) a watered trench (lit.
swamp) for leeks in a vegetable plot;
Then you should [pull out (?) ...].
Inanna and Šukaletuda 51–6

The Raven follows Enki's instruction and something odd happens. From the mix of the 'watered trench for leeks' and the 'vegetable plot', a new and unknown plant grows, the date palm.

A plant growing in a plot like leeks,
An *enemy* standing up (var.: growing
straight) like a leek, who had ever seen
it before?
It *gathered* [...], *continued growing* ...
A bird like the Raven performing the
work of man,
Breaking upward the clod and settling it
downward,
Breaking downward the clod and raising it
upward,⁷ who had ever seen it before?
The Raven raised on the *enemy*
And with a harness climbed up *to the sky*
the date palm.
Inanna and Šukaletuda 66–73

After a fragmentary line where the Raven does something with the kohl (l. 74), follows a description of the date palm, its parts and their uses (ll. 75–84). The passage of the bird performing man's tasks is repeated (ll. 85–7). The story of the Raven ends as it began, with it entering the *abzu*, after which begins Šukaletuda narrative.

At its master's command, the Raven
entered the *abzu*.

Now, what did one say to another?
Did [...] add *a single thing*?

Inanna and Šukaletuda 88–90

The kohl (šembi, šem-bi-zi) deserves further attention. It appears several times in the Raven's story and it may be a link with Šukaletuda. The kohl is used for the eyes and there may be a relationship between the kohl and the episode of Šukaletuda's story when the protagonist complains that the storm wind has struck his eyes with the dust of the mountain (igi-ĝu₁₀ sahar-kur-ra im-mi-ib-ra, l. 146). Furthermore, the name of the supposed father of Šukaletuda, Igi-sig₇-sig₇, is composed of the terms 'eye' (igi) and 'green' (sig₇). Kohl is usually described as 'green' (e.g. šem-bi sig₇-sig₇-ga-bi, *Lugal-e* 636) and, in the lexical lists, Igi-sig₇-sig₇ is equated to *amurriqānu* 'jaundice' (CAD A s.v. 91–2), whose symptoms are often green/yellow (sig₇) eyes or face, and to *sinnurbû* (CAD S s.v. 294), possibly similar to *sinlurmâ* (CAD S s.v. 285), a disease of the eyes; see also *šišû* (CAD Š₃ s.v. 127).

In this composition, the Raven is marked with Animate Class (or Class A) grammatical morphemes and it is not possible to determine its gender. As for the fox, the uga^{mušen}, identified with the raven (Weszeli 2007), is a popular character in literature, particularly in fables and proverbs (Veldhuis 2004, 299–301; Verderame 2017a, 402–3) as well as in divination (Guinan 2018). The bird depicted on *kudurrus* may be a crow or a raven (Seidl 1989, 148–9). The Raven star (MUL.UGA^{mušen}), possibly to be identified with Corvus constellation (Deimel 1914, 47–9; Kurtik 2007, 557–61), is often used as a learned name for Mars, as the Fox star (see above; not mentioned in Reynolds 1998).

A raven makes its appearance in another Sumerian composition, *Enlil and Namzitara*. In this brief composition, Enlil appears to Namzitara disguised as a raven. Notwithstanding Enlil's disguise, Namzitara recognizes the god and receives from Enlil a good fate in reward.

Conclusions: magical helpers and the metamorphosis human-animal

Sumerian literature conveys the idea of a divine-human connection. Civilized humans live in the city, a space ordered and protected by the divine presence in the temple (Verderame 2011); animals are almost omitted in this ideal structure. In divine and human narratives, animals may be listed as objects or, in the case of wild and exotic animals, as a mark of alterity regarding the civilized urban life. Even in Sumerian language, gods and humans are marked by the

same grammatical class (Animate/A), as opposed to the others, including animals, which are marked by another class (Inanimate/B).

In a few cases, animals escape their objectification or anthropomorphizing, which is typical of wisdom literature. The animals acting in the compositions discussed here are not common animals. First, they speak and perform ‘human’ actions. Some are mythical beings such as Anzu, and others act in mythical time and their fate will be fixed as a consequence of their actions (fox, fly). Except for the fly, all the others (fox, raven, Anzu) are important figures in Mesopotamian culture. They either have a position in the pantheon and a role in mythical narrative (Anzu) or are popular animal protagonists in wisdom literature (fox, raven). Apart from their presence in the textual record, they are documented in iconographic sources and their fame is further demonstrated by celestial identification with astral bodies (fox, raven, Anzu⁸).

Two literary motifs can be outlined from the passages discussed above: the animal intervention and the metamorphosis. Firstly, the animal intervenes to solve at a critical moment or impasse. This is the case of the Fox in *Enki and Ninhursagâ* and the Fly in *Inanna’s Descent to the Netherworld*. Both animals help in the quest of a hidden character and ask for a reward (ni₃-ba ‘share’). Thus, the god, Enlil or Inanna, fixes the animal’s fate, the destiny or a feature the animal will have from that moment onward. This theme may be found in relationship to Anzu and his chick as well. In *Lugalbanda and Anzu*, Anzu helps Lugalbanda, who is separated from the rest of the Uruk’s army and lost in the middle of the mountains. In *Ninurta and the Turtle*, Anzu’s chick leads Ninurta to the place where the story will take place, the *abzu*.

In terms of the narrative structure, according to Propp’s folktale analysis, they can be described as magical helpers or donors (Propp 1965, 6; 1977, 179–206).⁹ They help the protagonist in his quest in exchange for a gift. This is the fate rewarded to the Fox, the Fly, and Anzu. This is also true for Anzu’s chick, who becomes a ‘magical helper’ after the hero defeats Anzu. In fact, the story of *Ninurta and the Turtle* begins after Ninurta’s victory over Anzu. As Anzu, most of the defeated ‘chaotic monsters’ become the god’s serfs and assistants. They are lieutenants of the god or appear as guardians of the temple gates. This is the case of Ningirsu/Ninurta’s adversaries (Wiggermann 1992, 151–64; Heimpel 1996), as well as Marduk’s in the later tradition. This can also be the case with the seven assistants of Hendursagâ, described as animals or beings with animal features, which may be the forerunners of the Seven demons

(Verderame 2017a,b). The latter are represented as animal-headed beings in first millennium iconography and are assistants of the god Nergal and help Gilgameš in his travel to the Kur (*Gilgameš and Huwawa*).

The second motif emerges from the story of the Raven in *Inanna and Šukaletuda*, which is different from the other stories. The Raven is the main protagonist of the first part of the story, substituted by Šukaletuda in the second part. It is difficult to determine the relationship between the Raven and Šukaletuda and, particularly, if the animal is identified or becomes human. However, we know that in later traditions, the opposite happens: Šukaletuda is transformed into an animal instead. In the famous list of Ištār’s lovers in the *Epic of Gilgameš* (VI 32–79), Gilgameš holds the list of her doomed partners against the goddess. The list begins with Dumuzi, followed by two animals (the *alallu*-bird and the horse) and two men, Išullānu, the gardener, and the shepherd. Išullānu can be identified with Šukaletuda. The two humans are transformed into animals by the goddess: Išullānu into what is perhaps a toad, the shepherd into a wolf. Metamorphosis is well documented in Mesopotamian tradition. In Sumerian language literature, we may recall the case of Dumuzi animal transformations in order to escape the chasing demons (*Dumuzi’s Dream, Inanna’s Descent to the Netherworld*) or Enlil disguised as a raven in *Enlil and Namzitara* discussed above. The metamorphosis of human into animal bridges the apparent gap or, instead, establishes the boundaries between the two entities and opens a different perspective on the human-animal relationship.¹⁰

Notes

- 1 For overviews and introductions to Sumerian literature see Krecher 1978, Edzard & Röllig 1987, Rubio 2009, Verderame 2016. Most of the Sumerian literature is available on the *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (= ETCSL, <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk>); an updated bibliography of Sumerian literature is presented by Attinger 2019. In this article the reconstruction of the main text as well as line numbering follows ETCSL’s, while translations in English from Sumerian are mine.
- 2 For the interpretation of the myth, see Kirk 1970, 91–9; Rosengarten 1971, 7–38; Civil 1973; Alster 1978; Dickson 2007; Rodin 2014; Ceravolo 2019.
- 3 This is an act of affliction often accompanied by interjection of woe. The expression ‘the lord said “Oh!” and sat in the dust’ (en-e u₈ bi₂-in-du₁₁ sahar-ra ba-an-da-tuš/ba-da-an-tuš) is used for Gilgameš after the encounter with the ghost of Enkidu in *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld* A 253 and for Lugalzagesi in *Sargon and Ur-Zababa* C 7. However, it is also used specifically as part of mourning. After Inanna descends

to the Netherworld, Ninšubur, Šara, and Lulal 'sat in the dust and clothed himself in a filthy garment' (sahar-ra im/ba-da-an-tuš tug₂-mu-dur₇-ra ba-an-mu₄, *The Descent of Inanna to the Netherworld* 308, 331, 341); see in general Alster 1983, and in a comparative and anthropological perspective, De Martino 1958. This interpretation fits perfectly with the state of death or non-life of Enki decreed by a negation of life meant in Ninhursaga's curse. Note that also the passage of *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld* A 253 refers to a mourning contest as may well be the case for *Sargon and Ur-Zababa* C 7, but because it is fragmentary we do not know the news brought by the messenger to Lugalzagesi that cause his distress.

- 4 In the *The Dream of Dumuzi*, it is the friend who betrays Dumuzi revealing where the god hides, after the *galla* have offered him 'a river of water' and a 'field of grain' and he accepted them (ll. 142–43).
- 5 The second, third, and fourth presents of Anzu are related to the gods Šara, Ninurta, and Dumuzi introduced in the very first line of the section: 'Like Šara, beloved son of Inanna, shoot forth with your barbed arrows like a *sunbeam*'⁽¹⁴²⁾ dšara₂ dumu-ki-aĝ₂-^dinana-gin₇¹⁴³ ti zu₂-zu-a u₄-gin₇ e₃-i₃); 'May Ninurta, the son of Enlil, cover your head (lit. skull) with the helmet "Lion of Battle"'⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ dnin-urta dumu-^den-lil₂-la₂-ke₄¹⁵⁰ tu^gsaĝ₃šū piriĝ-me₃-a ugu-za he₂-eb-dul); 'The plenty of Dumuzi's holy butter churn ...'⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ he₂-ĝal₂ du^gšakir ku₃-^ddumu-zi-da-[ka-ka]).
- 6 For images of Anzu in Mesopotamian temples, see Pongratz-Leisten 1995.
- 7 These lines have been translated differently by Volk 1995, followed by ETCSL, who hypothesizes that the 'lump' (lag) is the counterweight of a *shadouf*, thus the Raven would move upward and downward the watering tool to irrigate the date palm; see the discussion in Volk 1995, 53–64. Volk's hypothesis is suggestive and may be right, but I have preferred to give a more direct translation of the Sumerian text. Note that in the history of Išullānu (see below) the gardener is transformed into an animal, possibly the toad, 'who cannot go up ... who cannot go down ...' (*ul e-lu-ú mi-ih-ha ul a-rid da-l(u(-) x x x x*), *Epic of Gilgamesh* VI 78), the same movement performed by the Raven in *Inanna and Šukaletuda's* passage⁽⁷⁰⁾ lag an-še₃ saĝ₃-ge-da ki-še₃ tuš-u₃-da⁷¹ lag ki-še₃ saĝ₃-ge-da an-še₃ e₃-de₃-da).
- 8 For the Anzu star, see Deimel 1914, 79, and Kurtik 2007, 219–21; as the Fox star and the Raven star, Anzu star is known as a learned name for Mars, see Reynolds 1998, 355.
- 9 The role played by the animal in these cases may recall that of the *deus ex machina* or ἀπὸ μηχανῆς θεός of the Greek tragedy, who intervenes and solves a seemingly unsolvable situation. However, some relevant differences must be drawn between the cases here discussed and the *deus ex machina*. First, the *deus ex machina* is a scenic trick and its context is that of the tragedy. Second, the agents that intervene to solve the impasse are gods. This is the case of Homeric compositions as well, where the gods influence human events by helping their

human protégés. I am grateful to Roberto Nicolai for his observations on this point.

- 10 For an overview of the sources, see Sonik 2012; an article on metamorphosis in Sumerian and Akkadian literature is in preparation by Andrea Rebecca Marocchi Savoi and the present writer.

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Fierce lions, angry mice and fat-tailed sheep

Animals have always been an integral part of human existence. In the ancient Near East, this is evident in the record of excavated assemblages of faunal remains, iconography and – for the later historical periods – texts. Animals have predominantly been examined as part of consumption and economy, and while these are important aspects of society in the ancient Near East, the relationships between humans and animals were extremely varied and complex.

Domesticated animals had great impact on social, political and economic structures – for example cattle in agriculture and diet, or donkeys and horses in transport, trade and war. Fantastic mythological beasts such as lion-headed eagles or Anzu-birds in Mesopotamia or Egyptian deities such as the falcon-headed god Horus were part of religious beliefs and myths, while exotic creatures such as lions were part of elite symboling from the fourth millennium BC onward. In some cases, animals also intruded on human lives in unwanted ways by scavenging or entering the household; this especially applies to small or wild animals. But animals were also attributed agency with the ability to solve problems; the distinction between humans and other animals often blurs in ritual, personal and place names, fables and royal ideology. They were helpers, pets and companions in life and death, peace and war. An association with cult and mortuary practices involves sacrifice and feasting, while some animals held special symbolic significance.

This volume is a tribute to the animals of the ancient Near East (including Mesopotamia, Anatolia, the Levant and Egypt), from the fourth through first millennia BC, and their complex relationship with the environment and other human and nonhuman animals. Offering faunal, textual and iconographic studies, the contributions present a fascinating array of the many ways in which animals influence human life and death, and explore new perspectives in the exciting field of human-animal studies as applied to this part of the world.

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*Published by the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research,
University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge, CB2 3ER, UK.*

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Cover design by Dora Kemp and Ben Plumridge.

ISBN: 978-1-913344-05-4

