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PROLOGUES AND POETS

ON THE OPENING LINES OF THE GILGAMESH EPIC

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In a paper I offer in fond tribute to Gary Beckman, a dear friend for decades now, I inspect versions of the prologues to the Gilgamesh Epic (GE), thereby hoping to uncover their foundation, report on their secrets, and experience their meaning over time. I ask what happens when a piece of literature from antiquity opens on a prologue? Not, mind you, the diversely paced preambles that set a background for an ensuing narrative, examples of which are legion in Akkadian monumental inscriptions. There, the presentation of a historic or a mythological backdrop evokes the past, aiming to sharpen the achievement of the present as well as to warn future desecrators. These types of preambles or preludes can also be deployed in etiologies that explain the inception of objects, institutions, or components of life.¹ A good number of the Sumerian confrontationist literature (often labeled “Disputation” or “Debate” texts) indulge in the production of preambles that are offered in either a positive or a negative mode. When in the latter, the etiology draws attention to what must be reversed before the narrative ends. In so doing, admittedly, it sets a mild expectation about an eventual turnabout.²

1. How a greedy worm came to ache our teeth is a well-known example with such a prelude. Often translated, “The Worm and the Toothache” (Benjamin Foster, *Before the Muses*, 3rd ed. [Bethesda: CDL, 2005], 995), opens on sharply drawn steps leading from the shaping of heaven to the production of a worm by marshes. The same can be said of Atrahasis, a more ambitious example, with a series of etiologies.

2. See also the remarks of Piotr Michalowski in “Negation as Description: The Metaphor of Everyday Life in Early Mesopotamian Literature,” in *Velles Paraulas: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Miguel Civil*, ed. Piotr Michalowski et al., *AuOr Sup 9* (Sabadell: AUSA, 1991), 131–36. To illustrate, let me turn to the falsely labeled “Second Creation” in Genesis (2:4–3). There, a number of etiologies are nestled, like matryoshkas, within sets of brackets, the first of which is quickened by its negative formulation.

Prologues

What interest me here are prologues that foreshadow moments in the narrative. These are not summaries, the “Arguments” that Milton or Ariosto invoked at the opening of chapters.³ Rather, they hint at activities or events that will be more fully developed later on. Brief though they may be, these citations play a role in developing a meaning for the ensuing narrative, adumbrating its major themes and motifs. It can be argued that a prologue as defined above was attached at least to one recension or version of Adapa. Albeit very brief, a fragment from Assurbanipal’s library opens on these words: “. . . [Ea] sharpened his broad wisdom, so as to disclose the rule/design of the land. On him he bestowed wisdom, but not eternal life.”⁴ Whether the recipient of wisdom was Adapa himself or personified humanity, the obtrusiveness of the narrator is striking here. To judge from one of its fragments (D), the first-millennium Adapa has shifted genres, from parable to apotropaic application; still, the loss of opportunity for immortality likely remained a core theme in the retellings. Consequently, to learn at the outset that eternal life will never be in play can interfere with how we react to the tale’s intricate moves—with gains and losses. Removing immortality as an achievement might dampen our curiosity on how matters will fare for Adapa; but it might also lead us to focus on other aspects of the story, such as the interplay among the gods and the staging of Adapa’s appearance before Anu.

Prologues to Gilgamesh

Two openings for the GE are known to us today. At least one of them, the Standard Babylonian (SB) version has been available to us for some

Thus, an earth that does not know rain and has no one to work the land cannot become our home without a reversal of both. Adam is not us until he gets a mate that bears offspring. In the process, death is launched and eternity for two individuals morphs into one for the species. For more on this construction in biblical lore, see Jack M. Sasson, “Time and Mortality: Creation Narratives in Ancient Israel and in Mesopotamia,” in *Papers on Ancient Literatures: Greece, Rome and the Near East*, ed. Ettore Cingano and Lucio Milano, Quaderni del Dipartimento di Scienze dell’Antichità e del Vicino Oriente — Università Ca’ Foscari, Venezia, 4 (Padova: SARGON), 489–509.

3. Such concise summaries were often set by printers or publishers rather than authors.

4. “In those days, in those years, the sage of Eridu, Ea created him as a *rid-di* among human beings. . . .” cited from Shlomo Izreël, *Adapa and the South Wind: Language Has the Power of Life and Death* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001), 10.

time now, although it has been more fully fleshed out in recent years. It comes from the first millennium, with Assyrian and Babylonian manuscripts overlapping in contents. In commenting, I have relied on Andrew George's herculean edition of the GE to plumb its wealth and on Jeffrey Tigay's pioneering insights to gauge its evolution.⁵ The other version was recovered in 1994 from the house of Urtenu, a major figure in the household of the Queen during Ugarit's last years.⁶ The tablet was edited by Daniel Arnaud in 2007 but profited much from Andrew George's suggestions of the same year.⁷ Although it is important to delve into the possible mistakes of scribes and copyists in philological studies, in this type of literary inquiry I avoid altering readings based on clearer antecedents or successors. Additionally, I will use the terms "narrators" or "poets" for those who are behind the production of a text, whether in fact they composed, redacted, or just copied it. The attached harmony between the versions should ease citation of lines.

The segment that occupies me covers about 50 lines of the SB version, so about one-sixth of the first of twelve tablets that might have totaled around 3,100 lines.⁸ The story proper of Gilgamesh begins at SB47–48: "From the day he was born, Gilgamesh was his name; two-third of him divine and a third human." But if we consider lines SB45 to 46 as pivots because they offer the standard Mesopotamian challenge for any king to match Gilgamesh's deeds, we would be left with the first 43 lines as preamble. The SB poet used its lines to roam widely and we will come back to them.

5. Andrew R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982.)

6. Yves Calvet, "The House of Urtenu," *NEA* 63 (2000), 210–13. See also the 1995–1996 *Oriental Institute Annual Report* of Dennis Pardee <http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/pubs/ar/95-96/is_pardee.html>.

7. Daniel Arnaud, *Corpus des textes de bibliothèque de Ras Shamra-Ugarit (1936–2000) en sumérien, babylonien et assyrien*, *AuOrSup* 23 (Sabadell: AUSA, 2007), 130–34. His study must be read in conjunction with Andrew R. George's "The Gilgamesh Epic at Ugarit," *AuOr* 25 (2007), 237–54. See also the comments of Sara J. Milstein, "Reworking Ancient Texts: Revision through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature," (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2010), chapter 2.C.

8. Statistics in Walther Sallaberger, *Das Gilgamesch-Epos: Mythos, Werk und Tradition* (Munich: Beck, 2008), 18–20.

The Old Babylonian Preamble

It is probably true that a hymn about Gilgamesh, *šūtur eli šarrī*, “surpassing all other kings,” once opened the Old Babylonian (OB) Gilgamesh because we find it as a phrase in its colophons. Yet, because we are missing the first tablet in any of its recensions, we cannot know how much of what follows was original to the OB version. It makes sense that the hymn included SB29 to 36 that told of Gilgamesh’s incomparable pedigree.

The pedigree of SB37 to 44, however, is less clear. A series of participial phrases rehearse achievements for Gilgamesh that include penetrating mountains, crossing vast distances, visiting Utnapištim, reversing damage from the Flood, and inaugurating funerary rites. These attainments, even when they cite Gilgamesh’s search for life, are concrete, the results of deeds worthy of the heroic. They cannot all be linked to what we have left from OB Gilgamesh, but the missing items can be located in the extant Edubba literature about him.⁹ This observation leaves us in a quandary: The sentiments expressed in these lines foreshadow Gilgameshian feats; but while they do not move too far from the standard OB panegyrics attached to kings, they nevertheless do make for an OB prologue of a sort. Yet, the SB poet might have invented them to serve as balancing brackets for thoughts and expressions with which the SB opens. This last notion might find support in what will follow.

The Middle Babylonian Prologue

During the Late Bronze Age, Gilgamesh broke out from his Mesopotamian confines, traveling to wherever cuneiform was practiced. The collision of cultures that marked this period introduced new elements into literature, so we should beware of assessing the distinctive features of Middle Babylonian (MB) Gilgamesh as deviations from either the OB or the SB versions. Too, given the date of their production from the fourteenth to the twelfth centuries, we may need to jettison the scarcely provable hunch that the SB received its character in the MB classroom of Sin-lēqi-unninni.¹⁰ Shadowy Sin-lēqi-unninni may serve nicely Mesopotamian antiquarianism, but he ought not do the same for us.

What is striking about MB involvement with Gilgamesh lore is a readiness to be mannerist, to creatively refurbish the older Gilgamesh

9. See George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 92–99.

10. On the arguments see *ibid.*, 28–33.

traditions even as the main outline is kept whole. For example, in a recently published tablet of uncertain provenance there is proximate rehearsal of episodes from Tablet II in which the gods Sin (^d30) and Ea (^d40) replace Gilgamesh and Enkidu, with Ur rather than Uruk (except in one instance) becoming their staging center.¹¹ In Hatti, scribes transfigured Gilgamesh, perhaps prompted by a desire to transmit his adventures through their own language. A creature of the gods no less than is Enkidu, Gilgamesh comes to Uruk and abuses its men, triggering the familiar, albeit abbreviated, sequence of events that seem to end at the home of Ulla, an Utnapištim type of character.¹²

From Ugarit came several Gilgamesh fragments, none as interesting to us as the tablet with its reverse left with much empty space.¹³ Noticeable about this tablet are the lines that cut the text into paragraphs. In none of the preserved OB Gilgamesh in Akkadian, no matter its origins, do we find such lines, except to set off colophons. The SB Gilgamesh uses them, rather sparingly in the first five tablets but quite profusely in the remaining tablets, essentially to bracket direct speech. The fragmentary MB material from Babylonia anticipates the SB; but those from Boğazköy and Emar are more like what we have at Ugarit, in that the lines have a bracketing logic that is not restricted to highlighting speech. Yet, rather than imagining these segments as haphazard extracts from Gilgamesh lore, we might view them as setting the stage for a dramatized Gilgamesh rather than merely a tale observed.

Unlike the SB, where OB *šūtur eli šarrī* sets off an elaborate paean before the actual tale begins, in the MB a doubling of the opening couplet

11. Andrew George, "The Civilizing of Ea-Enkidu: An Unusual Tablet of the Babylonian Gilgameš Epic," *RA* 31(2007), 59–80. George makes a fine case that the tablet comes from the Sealand Dynasty.

12. I follow Gary Beckman's interpretation of the opening lines; see his "Gilgamesh in Ḫatti," in *Studies in Honor of Harry A. Hoffner Jr., on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Gary Beckman, Richard Beal, and Gregory McMahon (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001), 37–57. See also his "The Hittite Gilgamesh," in Benjamin R. Foster, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (A Norton Critical Edition; NY: Norton), 57–168. It is yet possible, however, that the statement "[Gilgamesh] wandered around all the lands. He came to the city of Uruk and he [settled] down" is vestigial of a prologue of sorts, so that Gilgamesh is not coming to Uruk from elsewhere but is in fact *coming back* to Uruk *after* his adventures.

There is also a Hurrian rendition of Gilgamesh, but it is difficult to assess its contents; A. Kammenhuber, "Gilgames-Epos. Die hethitischen und hurritischen Gilgameš-Überlieferungen," *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon* 18 (1992) 46–47.

13. Arnaud, *Corpus des textes de bibliothèque de Ras Shamra-Ugarit*, 130–34.

with slightly different phrasing is embedded within bracket notices on Gilgamesh's humiliations of Uruk. At lines MB12 to 15, he is a stud to its women, a complaint that was likely drawn from the OB version. At lines MB29 to 30, he beats up on its men, a moment that is paralleled in the Hittite version but is not quite as ruthless as occurring in SB67 and 84. In between are lines MB16-19, partly reduplicated phrases that may be all there was to import from the OB opening. If so, it reinforces the suspicion that the SB had creatively shaped much of the hymn at SB31 and following. We might note, in fact, that MB7 to 8 found their way in reverse order into SB42 and 40, possibly indicating that the SB poet stripped some of the thoughts that were part of the MB preamble and used them to give body to what we now construe as the OB hymn. Immediately following in the MB are lines 20 to 28, with sentiments that reappear in the SB version; but here they are treated apostrophically: Gilgamesh is called on to survey his domain and to take stock of the great burden of his office. He is to locate a cedar box from which to extract a tablet.

Who had left this tablet in the container is moot; as the MB Gilgamesh is not known to have written anything and the message it carries only reports on Uruk's antiquity. In fact, Gilgamesh is to learn little from its contents about himself and his adventures; rather, with the MB25 reading *umma* where the SB21 has *šumma*, he is to proclaim the known achievements of his illustrious ancestors. Only superficially, therefore, was this particular scenario inspired by a legend with possible OB antecedence, wherein Naram-Sin places such a box at a shrine in Cutha with advice on how to rule successfully.¹⁴ Gilgamesh's saga begins then, with the hero made aware of the value of ancestry long before circumstances lead him to disregard this insight. In this version, Gilgamesh is fully aware of his fate, but willfully goes forward to challenge it.

14. The conceit is from the first millennium: Text is in Foster, *Before the Muses*, 269–70; discussion is in Tigay, *Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*, 144–45. C. B. F. Walker, however, has argued that it has OB antecedence, “The Second Tablet of *tuššenna pitea*, an Old Babylonian Naram-Sin Legend?” *JCS* 33 (1981) 191–95. The gods are known to keep sealed tablet-baskets that where human aspirations are deeply buried. In “Lugalbanda in the Mountains Cave,” there is a lovely simile about dreams (327–332), “To the liar it talks in lies, to the truthful it speaks truth. It can make one man happy, it can make another man sing, but it is the closed tablet-basket of the gods.” Cited from ETCSL (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?simplesearchword=tablet-basket&simplesearch=translation&searchword=&charenc=gcirc&lists=>). See also Jeremy Black, et al., *The Literature of Ancient Sumer* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 19.

Opening Lines of the MB

I can now come back to the MB's opening lines, with their thrilling revelation that *ša nagba imuru*, "he who has seen the Deep (or all)," has come to open the entire epic centuries before the SB's formulations. We could, as I have done, use its lines to fill in the holes in the SB's version; but it would likely be too much chutzpa to credit the West with their inspiration simply because of antiquity and provenance. Still, given the propensity of scribes to hire their talents beyond their home base, I would not automatically deny peripheral poets the capacity to create in Akkadian. I keep in mind that scribes sold their expertise broadly and applied their pedagogical skills beyond their own native land. Nor would I routinely privilege our sense of structural coherence over poetic individuality recovered through literary means.¹⁵

The MB's design sandwiches two lines from the presumed OB preamble, those dealing with the road to Uttur-napuštīm and with crossing the wide sea (see SB42 and 40), between sentiments that become more familiar to us from the first millennium. There are, however, crucial differences: Gilgamesh is said to be on his journey to these regions rather than back from them so that his fatigue and distress are prompting his voyage rather than are its effect. The adventures that will eventually be recorded are the product of others rather than of Gilgamesh himself.¹⁶ The effect of all this is that poet retains control of all future revelations and leaves us without significant clues about the ultimate result of what will unfold. Let us now go back to the SB version to explore the consequences.

Nostalgia and SB Gilgamesh

The SB's first twelve lines are about achieving the impossible and gathering wisdom from the beyond. In the OB hymn, Gilgamesh remains a figure of the past, with an accent on his triumphs. By contrast the SB prologue is surprisingly nostalgic—in the etymological sense of the word. Its lines tell

15. George ("The Gilgamesh Epic at Ugarit," 247) judges lines 14–15 to be "Babylonian poetry of the highest order." Yet he adds, "We are entitled to suppose that the second line was not an innovation of a peripheral editor but original to a south Mesopotamian version of Gilgamesh. The first-millennium text is badly damaged at this point (SB I 78–80) but clearly differs in what follows the listening goddess (or goddesses). One wonders how the latter half of such a dynamic and beautifully wrought unit of poetry fell by the wayside."

16. See the comments of George, "The Civilizing of Ea-Enkidu," 246–47.

of *nostos* (νόστος), a return homeward, and of *algos* (ἄλγος), the “ache” that follows on the adventures. As such, they are not so much descriptive as emotive. The “ache” is featured in SB9 and 10, where the surge of Gilgamesh achievements is blunted. Taking a long road back, Gilgamesh is *aniḫ*, “exhausted,” but also *šupšuḫ*, “pacified, placated,” perhaps even “resigned.” These stative verbal forms may well be the poet’s comments; more likely, however, they take us into Gilgamesh’s state of mind when setting to writing his *mānaḫtu*, a term that stresses the unattractive side of laboring.

Introspection may be helpful to Gilgamesh as he looks back on his exploits; but in sharing these reflections, the poet is no longer alone in omniscience, for we now have access to his own sense of the tale’s ending. Henceforth, the narrative turns proleptic, in that it wants us to treat future events as if they have already happened. Armed with foreknowledge of their consequence, we are in position to intercede, warn, or alert, whenever Gilgamesh takes a turn that cannot profit him. Gilgamesh may well set forth on his voyages with hopes and expectations; but we know ahead of him how these will turn out. The dreams that he will narrate and the explanations that he will receive will fool him; but not us. His victory over Humbaba, his reaction to Ishtar and to her bull (in all senses) might boost his ego; but they will fill us with dread. His surrealistic voyages to the extremity of the earth—with their retelling of tunnels, bejeweled gardens, and deadly waters—might give Gilgamesh hope; but we know otherwise. The enemies he battles in the heart of the night might exhaust him; but we sense them to be demons likely of his own making.¹⁷ In this version, therefore, we are always conscious of Gilgamesh’s fate and cannot expect any reversal for it. This awareness is the *algos*, the pain—for us no

17. I am referring to Gilgamesh having the equivalent of Jacob’s Jabbok experience (Gen 32:23–32). In a dead of night hysteria in which, using the axe and dirk with which he slew Humbaba (OB Išchali, rev. 20’–24’; SB V 263–264) and with which he cuts punting poles for his Waters of Death crossing (OB VA+BM iv [see George, *Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 280–81], SB X 163–166), Gilgamesh battles mysterious objects (“Stone Things”) that pop up at different moments of his trajectory and in different degrees of realism, “[Gilgamesh] lay down. He awoke with a start: it was a dream! [... in the] presence of the moon he grew happy to be alive. He took up his axe in his hand; he drew forth [the dagger from] his belt. Like an arrow he fell among them, he smote the [...] and killed and scattered (them) ...” (SB IX 13–23; see also SB X 92–97). On these objects, see George, *Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 264, 501–2, who collects opinions on what they might have been. In Hittite lore, they are images/statues that allow Uršanabi to cross the waters, perhaps acting as his crew.

less than for Gilgamesh. The *nostos* part, with the return home as theme, comes next.

Eventually, the SB will confirm that after Enkidu's death, Gilgamesh can never return home the same person who had left it. No funeral, however, elaborate, will erase the memory of worms dropping from his friend's nose. The narrator shares this view; and now that he has made us partner in managing Gilgamesh's life, he summons us to celebrate what Uruk is, thus previewing what Gilgamesh will not learn until much disappointment. Unlike the MB that invites Gilgamesh to tour the city he ought to proudly rule, the SB addresses us. Already in 1948, Oppenheim had noticed that a highly calibrated series of four injunctives draw us progressively nearer the object of focus.¹⁸ We look from afar at the walls of Uruk; we draw near to gaze at its parapets; we take hold of the threshold, and we approach its citadel's magnificent temple. Unlike the MB's version, however, at lines SB18 to 23 it is we—and not Gilgamesh—who are invited to admire the majesty of its construction. This is a delicious twist, for when at the close of the eleventh tablet Gilgamesh urges the same tour on Uršanabi, the accent is neither on Gilgamesh's didactic skills nor on his capacity for personal illumination; rather it is in the satisfaction we might draw in having guided Gilgamesh to where we had been all along.

The next batch of lines, from SB24 to 28, displays the poet's willingness to have us alongside as the Gilgamesh story unfolds. Here too the comparison with the MB is superficial, encouraged by the replay of topoi. Both texts describe the recovery of boxes in which a tablet is to be retrieved and read. In the MB, it is Gilgamesh who learns by reading it about his majestic ancestry and its achievement. In the SB, however, the tablet falls into our hands. It is possible, as most commentators suggest, that this tablet is the slab Gilgamesh was said to prepare on his return home. I would rather assign its writing to the narrator who has already demonstrated his capacity to be a resourceful, if not always an empathizing, biographer. We might all be secure, therefore, in the knowledge that what will unfold henceforth will indeed be the true saga of Gilgamesh—warts and all (*kalu marṣāti*). The narrator, no less than Gilgamesh, has earned our trust. We are now ready to sit back and participate in the education of the king who surpassed them all.

18. A. Leo Oppenheim, "Mesopotamian Mythology II," *OrNS* 17 (1948) 18.

Polychrome Harmony of GE Prologues

STANDARD BABYLONIAN (composite, 7–8c)	MIDDLE BABYLONIAN (Ugarit, 13th century)
1 [He who saw the Deep/all], the foundation of the land,	1] He who saw the Deep/all, the foundation of the land,
2 [who knew the ways,] is aware of all.	who knew the ways, is aware of all.
3 [Gilgamesh who] saw the Deep/all, the foundation of the land,	=====
4 [who] knew [the ways,] is aware of all.	Bilgamesh, who saw the Deep/All, the foundation of the land,
5 [He inspected] thoroughly [the sanctuaries].	who knew the ways, is aware of all.
6 He [knew] all the wisdom of everything.	=====
7 He saw the secret and uncovered the hidden,	5] He inspected thoroughly the shrines.
8 He brought back tidings from before the flood.	He knew all of the wisdom of everything.
9 He took a distant road back (<i>illikam</i>), exhausted (<i>anilū</i>) but pacified (<i>šupšuh</i>),	He who walked the distant road of Uttur-napuštīm,
10 [He] set (<i>šakin</i>) down on a stele all (his) travail (<i>mānaḥti</i>).	He who crossed the wide sea to the rise of the sun.
11 He built the wall of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,	He brought back tidings from before the flood,
12 Of holy Eanna, the pure storehouse.	10] He took the distant road (<i>illik</i>), tired (<i>anilū</i>) and troubled (<i>šupšuk</i>).
13 See (<i>amur</i>) its wall with gleam like bronze,	Steles were set up for him (<i>šaknūšumma</i>), with all his travail.
14 Gaze at (<i>itaplas</i>) its parapet which nobody can replicate!	Bilgamesh would not release the young bride to her husband.
15 Grasp (<i>šabat</i>) the threshold, there of old,	=====
16 Draw near (<i>qitrub</i>) to Eanna, the seat of Ištar,	He, their wild bull; they the cows.
17 that no later king can replicate, not one.	Ishtar kept hearing their complaint.
18 Go up <i>eli</i> on to the wall of Uruk and walk about (<i>itallak</i> ²),	15] A troubled cry kept reaching the heavens of Anu
19 inspect (<i>ḥīt</i>) the substructure, scrutinize (<i>šubbu</i>) the brickwork—	Surpassing any (<i>šūtur ana</i>) illustrious king, lordly of figure,
20 if (<i>šumma</i>) the brickwork (is) not baked,	Warrior born in Uruk, [butting ³] wild bull.
21 (and if) the Seven Counselors (<i>muntalkū</i>) not lay its foundations!	Gilgamesh, illustrious, lordly of figure
22 [One <i>šār</i> is] city, [one <i>šār</i>] date-grove, one <i>šār</i> is clay-pit, half a <i>šār</i> the temple of Ištar:	Warrior born in Uruk, butting wild bull.
23 [three <i>šār</i>] and a half (is) Uruk, (its) measurement. ¹	=====
24 [Open ²] the tablet-box (<i>tupšenna</i>) of cedar;	20] Go up (eli) Bilgamesh, on the wall of Uruk
25 [Release] its clasps (<i>ḥargallī</i>) of bronze!	walk about (<i>itallak</i>), check out (<i>hīt</i>) the foundations, inspect (<i>šuppi</i>) the brickwork.
26 [Open] the lid, with its secret;	Open (<i>pite</i>) the box (<i>tubnimma</i>) of cedar,
27 [Pick up] the tablet of lapis lazuli and read out (<i>šitassi</i>)	Release (<i>puṭṭer</i>) the bronze lock.
28 Whatever Gilgamesh went through, all the misfortunes!	Pick up the tablet of lapis lazuli and proclaim (<i>tišassi</i>)

1. = XI: 323–328.

29 Supreme over (*šūtur eli*) all kings,
illustrious, lordly of figure,
30 brave native of Uruk, butting wild bull!
31 Going at the fore he was the leader,
32 going also at the rear, the trust of his
brothers!
33 A mighty bank, the protection of his
troops,
34 a violent flood-wave that smashes a stone
wall!
35 Wild bull of Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh,
perfect of strength,
36 suckling of the exalted cow, Wild-Cow
Ninsun!
37 Gilgamesh so tall, perfect and terrible,
38 who opened passes in the mountains;
39 who dug wells on the hill-flanks,
40 and crossed the ocean, the wide sea, as
far as the sunrise;
41 who scoured the world-regions ever
searching for life,
42 and reached by his strengths Uta-napišti,
the Far-Away;
43 who restored the cult-centers that the
Deluge destroyed,
44 and established the proper rites for the
human race!
45 Who is there that can be compared with
him in kingly status,
46 and can say like Gilgamesh, 'It is I am
the king?'
47 Gilgamesh was his name from the day he
was born,
48 two-thirds of him god but a third of him
human.
49 Belet-ill drew the shape of his body,
50 Nudimmud brought his form to
perfection.
51 [] was majestic []
52 [] in stature, 11 cubits [is his height]

25] saying (umma), "Is its brickwork not
baked?
Did the Seven Counselors not lay its
foundations?
One šar is city, one šar is orchard, one šar
is clay pit, ½ šar is the temple of Ishtar.
Three šar and a half is Uruk."
Bilgamesh wrestled (?) with 50 friends,
daily, he would finish off the
young men.
[Rev. 30] He kept causing the young men of
Uruk to fear...
=====
The strands of his hair were sprouting like
Nisaba's,
his teeth, gleaming like the sunrise.
His hair was like lapis-colored wool.
11 cubits tall was his height,
35] 4 cubits wide was the distance between
his breasts
A triple cubit were his feet and a rod the
length of his legs.
A triple cubit the whiskers (?) of his cheeks.
To...the hair of his face.

After Daniel Arnaud, *Corpus des textes de bibliothèque de Ras Shamra-Ougarit (1936–2000) en sumérien, babylonien et assyrien*, AuOrSup 23 (Sabadell: AUSA, 2007), 130–34.

Andrew R. George, "The Gilgamesh Epic at Ugarit," *AuOr* 25 (2007) 237–54.

<p>53 [4 cubits] the distance between [his breasts,] 56 A triple cubit was his foot, half a rod his leg. 57 Six cubits was [his] stride, 58 [x] cubits the whiskers² of his cheeks. 59 His cheeks were bearded like lapis material, 60 the locks of his hair growing [thickly as Nissaba's.] 61 [As] he grew up he was perfect in [his] beauty, 62 by human standards [he was] very handsome. 63 He goes [about] in the sheepfold of Uruk, 64 lording it like a wild bull, [head] held high. 65 He has not any equal, [his] weapons being ready, 66 [his] companions are kept on their feet by the ball. 67 The young men of Uruk are wrongfully vexed, 68 Gilgamesh lets no son go free to [his] father. 69 Day and night he behaves with fierce arrogance, 70 [King] Gilgamesh, [who guides the numerous people,] 71 he who is shepherd of Uruk-the-Sheepfold! 72 [Gilgamesh] lets no [daughter go free to her] mother: 73 [the women . . .] their [] soon, 74 [their] complaint [] before [them:] 75 “[powerful, pre-eminent,] expert, [. . .], 76 [Gilgamesh] lets [no] girl go free to [her bride-groom.] 77 The warrior's daughter, the [young man's bride.]” 78 The goddesses were listening to their complaint.</p> <p>After Andrew R. George, <i>The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic</i>, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 540–43.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>HITTITE GILGAMESH (prose)</u></p> <p>§1 [Of Gilgamesh], the hero, [I will sing his praises . . .]</p> <p>§2 The hero [Ea? fashioned] the frame of the creature Gilgamesh. [The great gods] fashioned the frame of Gilgamesh. The Sun-god of Heaven lent him [manliness]. The Storm-god lent him heroic qualities. The great gods [created] Gilgamesh: His body was eleven yards [in height]; his breast was nine [spans] in breadth; his . . . was three [. . .] in length.</p> <p>§3 He wandered around all the lands. He came to the city of Uruk and he [settled] down. Then every day he overpowered the [young] men of Uruk. And the Mother-goddess [. . .] Then she [. . .] in the winds(?) of Gilgamesh. The Mother-goddess saw [. . .], and she [became angry] in her heart [. . .]</p> <p>[Colophon in 1 ms: “Tablet 1 of The Song of Gilgamesh”]</p> <p>After Gary Beckman, “The Hittite Gilgamesh,” in <i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i>, Benjamin R. Foster (A Norton Critical Edition; NY: Norton, 2001), 157–68. See Gary Beckman, “Gilgamesh in Hatti,” in <i>Studies in Honor of Harry A. Hoffner Jr., on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday</i>, ed. Gary Beckman, Richard Beal and Gregory McMahan (Winona lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 37–57.</p>
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