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Etana in Eden: New Light on the Mesopotamian and Biblical Tales in Their Semitic Context

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*For Jim Baltimore,
who also raised
from a pit*

This paper proposes an unnoted major link between the Mesopotamian *Etana* legend and Genesis's Garden of Eden story by pointing to parallels between the two stories, apparent at different levels, from the structural to the lexical. Cumulatively these point to a dependence by the Eden story on *Etana*, though it is argued that the appreciation of these matters in tandem, as put forth in this study, serves mutually beneficial purposes. The identification of vestiges of *Etana* in Eden advances our understanding of *Etana* no less than of Eden. Most significantly, perhaps, the reciprocal consideration of *Etana* and Eden sheds light on the manner by which the ancients' reflection on language, respectively Akkadian and Hebrew, provided a key ingredient in the creation of both the Mesopotamian and Biblical tales—in a manner quintessential to the Semitic world.

I

Although its ancient Near Eastern roots are undeniable, the Hebrew Bible is understandably not the obvious choice for the clarification of native and more established traditions stemming from this same soil. As is well known, a legion of questions constitute ever-present challenges to the historical study of the Biblical text; these complicate, almost beyond hope, the possibility of the Bible's employment in the writing of most types of history. And yet it is a fact that the Bible not only continues to proclaim its indebtedness to its ancient Near Eastern ancestry, but on occasion even manages to say something previously unrecognized about the ancestors themselves.¹ From time to time the Biblical text is shown to preserve

Earlier versions of this paper, respectively focusing on the Biblical and Assyriological aspects of what is discussed below, were read at the 15th World Congress of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem, August 2009) and the 220th meeting of the American Oriental Society (St. Louis, March 2010) and benefitted from discussions stemming from those occasions. In addition it is a pleasure to thank Yoram Cohen, Ronnie Goldstein, John Huehnergard, Gianni Marchesi, and Michael Stahl, who made valuable comments on previous drafts.

Abbreviations follow those of *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (CAD)* and/or *The SBL Handbook of Style*. To these we add or emphasize the following, referring to recent editions of the *Etana* legend:

Kinnier Wilson, *Etana* = J. V. Kinnier Wilson, *The Legend of Etana* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1985)

Saporetti, *Etana* = C. Saporetti, *Etana* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1990)

Haul, *Etana-Epos* = M. Haul, *Das Etana-Epos: Ein Mythos von der Himmelfahrt des Königs von Kish* (Göttingen: Seminar für Keilschriftforschung, 2000)

Novotny, *Etana* = J. Novotny, *The Standard Babylonian Etana Epic: Cuneiform Text, Transliteration, Score, Glossary, Indices and Sign List* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001).

For convenience's sake, citation of manuscript sigla and line numbers follows Novotny, *Etana*, unless otherwise specified.

1. For one such example, see S. Parpola, "The Murderer of Sennacherib," in *Death in Mesopotamia: Papers Read at the XXVIe Rencontre assyriologique internationale*, ed. B. Alster (Copenhagen: Akademisk, 1980), 171–82.

fragments from this world, fragments otherwise lost or overlooked, such that—if approached impartially, without blind faith in the dogma of a bygone age—the Bible can continue to open doors onto previously buried Near Eastern foundations.

Such, it is submitted, is the case with respect to the ancient Mesopotamian *Etana* legend. This study aims to demonstrate how an appreciation of this story's *Nachleben* in one of the most celebrated of Biblical traditions actually exposes new perspectives on the earlier Akkadian story. The tradition in question is none other than Genesis's Garden of Eden,² which, as evinced below, at several consequential points builds on materials from *Etana*. These points, once exposed, actually illuminate features of the *Etana* legend itself, particularly with respect to language and the role of language in the generation of literature. But that is not all. The Biblical Eden story also profits from this exchange, with the connections between *Etana* and Eden shedding new light on aspects of the Hebrew tale. Two among these also involve the role of language in the creation of the Hebrew narrative from remnants of the Akkadian substratum.

More broadly, therefore, this study seeks to demonstrate how the philological study of ancient Near Eastern literatures can serve mutually illuminating purposes—again, if undertaken in a manner that does not compartmentalize individual languages and language communities. As a springboard into these larger matters, however, we begin with a small, curious detail from the Eden story (§II) and point to a tradition in *Etana* (upon reviewing the legend's storyline [§III]) that must stand behind it (§IV). From there additional connections between *Etana* and Eden are pointed to (§V), along with their implications for our understanding of both *Etana* (§VI) and Eden (§IX) in terms of their constituents and composition, along with the possible routes responsible for this apparent transmission (§§VII–VIII). A parting observation (§X) concludes our journey.

II

Tucked away in the back end of Genesis's Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:4b–3:24) is a detail that receives scant attention by comparison to this classic tale's more memorable parts. This involves the mention of safeguards against man's return to the Garden, the east side of which, in order to oversee the path to the Tree of Life (3:24), Yahweh Elohim is said to have secured by way of *kērûbîm* and the *lahat haḥereb hammithappeket*, or “flame of the whirling sword.” The precise identification of these items proves difficult. Still, concerning the former—sphinx-like protective figures that are amply attested in the Bible,³ suspected in Canaanite/Israelite iconography,⁴ and with a likely etymological connection to the *kuribu*-genius found in cuneiform sources⁵—things are on relatively sound footing. More perplexing is the second mythologem, the one of interest here. To our knowledge its most recent treatment is that by R. Hendel,⁶ whose sorting of previous opinions was of no small value for the present discussion.

2. Omitted from this study is the other major Biblical reflex of an Eden tradition appearing in Ezekiel 28, a discussion of which in connection to Mesopotamia constitutes a considerable portion of our “Assyriology and Jewish Studies in Tel Aviv: Ezekiel among the Babylonian *Literati*,” forthcoming in *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians, and Babylonians*, ed. U. Gabbay and S. Secunda (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck).

3. Some ninety-one times, on which see briefly T. N. D. Mettinger, “Cherubim,” in *DDD*², 189–92.

4. E.g., on the cultic stand from Ta'anach, for which see O. Keel and C. Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 157–60.

5. *AHw* 510. In fact, according to V. Hurowitz (*JAOs* 122 [2002]: 137), Heb. *kērûb* represents a loan from Akk. *kuribu*. But this suggestion, though intriguing, must be ruled as inconclusive, in part owing to remaining uncertainties about the “Mesopotamianess” of the *kuribu*-genius along with the presumed visual counterpart to its textual attestations; see on which F. A. M. Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RIA* 8 (1993–1997): 224, 243; A. Green, “Mischwesen. B,” *RIA* 8 (1993–1997): 256–57.

6. “The Flame of the Whirling Sword: A Note on Genesis 3:24,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 671–74.

According to Hendel, commentators have followed two basic interpretive lines concerning this item: one naturalistic, according to which the sword refers to a lightning bolt; the other folkloristic, assuming this is a magical weapon of Yahweh. Hendel, however, was dissatisfied with both options since, as he saw it, in either case an asymmetry remains between the (animate) *kērûbîm* and the (inanimate) “fiery sword.” No better was the sword’s understanding as having previously belonged to the *kērûbîm*,⁷ since this ignores the text as it now stands. Against these options, Hendel posited that the image is comprised of a weapon-brandishing (*haḥereb hammithappeket*) minor deity (*lahaṭ*), and rests on a “parallel expression attached to the West Semitic god Rešep, a god of war, pestilence, and fertility, whose name, incidentally, means ‘flame’.”⁸ This expression, *ršp ḥṣ* in Phoenician, he understood as “Rešep of the Arrow,”⁹ and deemed it “precisely parallel to the title of the guardian of the divine garden . . .”¹⁰ Seemingly unperturbed by the absence of “whirling” in his parallel, Hendel merely suggested that this is something sensible for a divine guardian envisaged as a flame.¹¹

Problems, however, linger. First, not one of the proposed parallels—neither a putative deity *lahaṭ* and its connection to Rešep, nor the equation of *ḥereb*, “sword,” with *ḥṣ*, “arrow,” nor its unparalleled “whirling”—is secured in any compelling way. More troubling, however, is the fact that none of the solutions posited appears to have factored the story’s setting into their schemes. To the contrary, commentators seem to have locked onto the Syro-Palestinian world for the visual context of *both* the Cherubim *and* the “whirling sword,” even while a Mesopotamian background to Eden is almost universally acknowledged. And while for reasons already noted the hypothesis of a Canaanite/Israelite background for the Cherubim seems plausible enough,¹² the same cannot be a foregone conclusion in the case of the sword.

One factor for this oversight demands little explanation. The Eden tradition, even if Mesopotamian in background, is nonetheless not clear-cut in terms of its source(s), certainly not like those Primeval History episodes recounting the world’s ordering in Gen. 1 in relation to *Enūma Eliš* and breakdown in Gen. 6–9 with respect to *Gilgameš* and *Atrahasis*.¹³ When it comes to Eden things are considerably more complex, with the scents of distinct Mesopotamian traditions—again *Gilgameš* and *Atrahasis* come to mind,¹⁴ but also various elements

7. P. D. Miller, “Fire in the Mythology of Canaan and Israel,” *CBQ* 27 (1965): 256–61.

8. Hendel, “Whirling Sword,” 673.

9. This understanding, though sensible, is not the sole one proposed; for other options, see *DNWSI* 1, 397–98.

10. Hendel, “Whirling Sword.”

11. Hendel, “Whirling Sword,” 673–74; but cf. 671 n. 6.

12. Plausible, but not certain, for reasons already touched on in n. 5 above. In fact, though by their frequent Biblical attestation alone it seems clear that the idea of Cherubim was familiar in the West, the tradition of these beings’ guardianship of the entryway to Eden—somewhere beyond the natural world—undoubtedly derives from the East, specifically from the rich Mesopotamian lore about the world’s edge at its eastern horizon; see on which C. Woods, “At the Edge of the World: Cosmological Conceptions of the Eastern Horizon in Mesopotamia,” *JANER* 9 (2009): 186–94. To our knowledge, however, nowhere in the Mesopotamian sources do *kurîbus* appear among the various beings protecting the eastern horizon. This supports the supposition that, even if ultimately Mesopotamian, in its Biblical reflex the Cherubim tradition has nonetheless undergone local adaptation.

13. On which, see E. Frahm, *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries: Origins of Interpretation* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2011), 364–68 (Gen. 1+/*Enūma Eliš*); A. George, *The Babylonian Gilgameš Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003), 509–28, esp. 516–18 (Gen. 6–9/*Gilgameš*); J. Klein, “A New Look at the Theological Background of the Mesopotamian and Biblical Flood Stories,” in *A Common Cultural Heritage: Studies on Mesopotamia and the Biblical World in Honor of Barry L. Eichler*, ed. G. Frame et al. (Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2011), 151–76 (Gen. 6–9/*Atrahasis*).

14. Reviewed generally in D. E. Callender, *Adam in Myth and History: Ancient Israelite Perspectives on the Primal Human* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 39–84; T. E. D. Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative: A Literary and Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 2–3* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007).

from the so-called Enki mythology,¹⁵ even *Adapa*¹⁶—detectable in the Biblical garden. And it is likely that further analysis of its potpourri will isolate additional species, some local in origin, but others undoubtedly imported, and with a Mesopotamian provenience. Indeed, what follows represents a case in the latter point.

The source in question is the *Etana* legend, a major belletristic composition from Mesopotamia according to ancient standards like the so-called Catalogue of Texts and Authors, where it appears immediately following *Gilgameš*.¹⁷ Unfortunately, owing to its texts' state of preservation, *Etana*'s full plot remains wanting. For our purposes, happily, its basic outline, at least for the Standard Babylonian (SB) version, seems sufficiently well established.¹⁸ It follows.

III

The story concerns the figure of Etana, whom the gods, having founded the city of Kiš, select for its king. Paradoxically, Etana cannot have an heir, as his wife is smitten with a disease that (seemingly) renders her barren. This motivates him to seek a "plant of birth" (*šammu ša alādi*) of which Etana's wife has dreamt.

A major subplot, which later connects to Etana's quest, is now introduced. It tells of a snake and an eagle who, having settled in a poplar tree's roots and crown, agree to live mutually and hunt together, and swear an oath to this effect—in accordance with limits established by Šamaš. The covenant's transgressor, the parties agree, will suffer consequences: reprisal from Šamaš, along with the denial of entrance to bountiful mountains nearby. Two instruments will ensure this: a "roving weapon" (*kakku murtappidu*) will charge, while "traps" (*gišparrū*) associated with "Šamaš's curse-oath" (*māmīt Šamaš*) will clamp down and catch the guilty party.

Things proceed accordingly, until one day the eagle devours the snake's offspring. The bereft snake turns for justice to Šamaš. Šamaš suggests retribution: he will have a wild bull killed in the mountains in whose carcass the snake will then hide. From there the snake will attack the bird when, inevitably, it opts to feed on the animal's remains. Again events develop as predicted: the snake metes out punishment following Šamaš's instructions, cutting off the wings and painstakingly plucking out every feather from the eagle's body. The eagle, now trapped impotently in a pit, pleads for forgiveness. Šamaš eventually shows mercy,

15. See, e.g., M. Dietrich, "Das biblische Paradies und der babylonische Tempelgarten: Überlegungen zur Lage des Gartens Eden," in *Das biblische Weltbild und seine altorientalischen Kontexte*, ed. B. Janowski and B. Ego (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 281–323; Winitzer, "Assyriology and Jewish Studies."

16. E.g., Mettinger, *Eden*, 107–9, to which add especially M. Liverani, "Adapa, Guest of the Gods," in his *Myth and Politics in Ancient Near Eastern Historiography* (London: Equinox, 2004), 21–23.

17. W. G. Lambert, "A Catalogue of Texts and Authors," *JCS* 16 (1962): 66–67 (VI 10–11). This juxtaposition appears elsewhere, including in another such catalogue, K 13684 + Sm 2137, ll. 4–5, also published by Lambert: "A Late Assyrian Catalogue of Literary and Scholarly Texts," in *Kramer Anniversary Volume: Cuneiform Studies in Honor of Samuel Noah Kramer*, ed. B. Eichler (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1976), 313–18. On the deeper connection between Etana and Gilgameš in Mesopotamian thought, see §VIII below.

18. In addition to the editions cited above, a number of recent studies on *Etana* deserve mention, including W. Horowitz, "Two Notes on Etana's Flight to Heaven," *Or* 59 (1990): 511–17; id., *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 43–66; W. Röllig, "Überlegungen zum Etana-Mythos," in *Gegengabe: Festschrift für Emma Brunner-Traut*, ed. I. Gamer-Wallert and W. Helck (Tübingen: Attempto, 1992), 283–88; G. Selz, "Die Etana-Erzählung: Ursprung und Tradition eines der ältesten epischen Texte in einer semitischen Sprache," *ASJ* 20 (1998): 135–79; S. Izreel, "Linguistics and Poetics in Old Babylonian Literature: Mimation and Meter in Etana," *JANES* 20 (2000): 57–68; M. Haul, "lú an-še ba-e₁₁-dè: Der Mythos von Etana um 2000 v. Chr.," in *2000 v. Chr.: Politische, wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Entwicklung im Zeichen einer Jahrtausendwende*, ed. J.-W. Meyer and W. Sommerfeld (Saarbrücken: SDV, 2004), 237–62; J. V. Kinnier Wilson, *Studia Etanaica: New Texts and Discussions* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2007); M. Streck, "Notes on the Old Babylonian Epics of Anzu and Etana," *JAOS* 129 (2009): 477–86.

and sets Etana to save the bird. In so doing Etana will actually help his own cause, the god explains, since the rescued eagle will fly Etana to the heavens and reveal to him his coveted life-inducing plant. Etana, apparently frightened in flight, does not reach his goal, at least not initially. It remains unclear whether upon additional such attempts he succeeds in his quest, though some assume that he must have,¹⁹ judging by the fact that elsewhere, in the historiographic tradition, he reportedly has a son.²⁰

IV

Of consequence for Eden's whirling sword is the section in SB II 19–22 conveying those safeguards set to enforce the would-be violator's sentence, especially the "roving weapon" (l. 21):

ša itā ša Šamaš [ittiqu]
lissûšû-ma nēre[btašu(?) šadû]
kakku murtappidu elīšu [līšer]
gišparrû māmīt Šamaš libbalkitûšû-ma li[bārûšu]

(As for) the one who [transgresses] the limit of Šamaš–
May [the mountain-land] remove [its] entry[way] from him;²¹
[May] a roving weapon [charge] at him;
May gišparru-traps, the māmītu-curse²² of Šamaš, clamp down and [catch him].²³

Counterparts to this line survive from the OB and MA forerunners:

	OB	OB _s	ka-ak-ku-um	mu-úr-ta-ap-pi-du	e-li-šu	li-še-er
	MA	MA ₁	[GIŠ.TUKU]L	mul- ^r tar-pi ¹ -du ²⁴	UGU-šu	li-šir
21. SB	B ₃		GIŠ.TUKUL	mur-tap-pi-du	UGU-šú	[. . .]

19. E.g., Kinnier Wilson, *Etana*, 13; M. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting* (Groningen: Styx, 2000), 55; but cf. Haul, *Etana-Epos*, 32; W. Henkelman, "The Birth of Gilgameš (AEL. NA XII.21): A Case Study in Literary Receptivity," in *Altertum und Mittelmeerraum: Die antike Welt diesseits und jenseits der Levante: Festschrift für Peter W. Haider zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. R. Rollinger and B. Truschnegg (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2006), 841 and n. 78.

20. In the *Sumerian King List* (= *SKL*), ii 20–22 (J.-J. Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles* [Atlanta: SBL, 2004], 120). Obviously a literary text like *Etana* operates according to different assumptions and conventions from those of a historiographic composition like *SKL*, and thus the mention of Etana's son in the latter cannot settle the case for the former. Moreover, much in *SKL*, including matters of genealogy, is suspect from the standpoint of historicity; on which, see G. Marchesi, "The Sumerian King List and the Early History of Mesopotamia," in *Ana turri gimilli: Studi dedicati al Padre Werner R. Mayer, S.J. da amici e allievi*, ed. M. G. Biga and M. Liverani (Rome: Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, 2010), 231–48 (with important references).

21. The subject, like *lissûšû-ma*, must be plural. Our rendering attempts to accord with the OB version in which the corresponding verb and object are singular (cf. Haul, *Etana-Epos*, 173). The same probably holds for the MA version, whose verbal form could also be taken as a 3pl with a corresponding plural subject, though this seems unlikely in light of the tradition's shared nature (Kinnier Wilson, *Etana*, 72).

22. A word on this translation for *māmītu* is in order. In its early legal sense, this term (Sum. nam.érim) refers to a declaratory oath, which differs from promissory oaths by having an inherent curse component that one calls upon oneself if said oath sworn proves false. In this sense the translation of *māmītu* as "oath-cum-curse" suggested by P. Steinkeller (*Sale Documents of the Ur-III-Period* [Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1989], 77) is undoubtedly correct. And yet the curse characteristic of the *māmītu* developed to the point that, *totum pro parte*, the term came to mean "curse." (For a comparative perspective on this evolution, see M. Geller, "Taboo in Mesopotamia," *JCS* 42 [1990]: 113–14.) This is its sense above, where it appears among the punishments to be meted out to the violator of a previously made agreement.

23. For the parallels in the earlier forerunners, see Novotny, *Etana*, 29.

24. See below and nn. 25–26.

In the OB and SB versions “roving” is conveyed via the Gtn participle *murtappidu*; in the MA by *multarpidu*, perhaps a hapax Št form²⁵ or a variant form of the Gtn.²⁶ Fortunately the issue matters little here, since in either case the form bears an iterative sense.²⁷

The image of a charging, roving weapon may be unique in Mesopotamian tradition. Absent their roving, however, divine weapons appear in mythological literature,²⁸ on one occasion with accompanying traps and relating to Šamaš. This occurs in the *Šamaš Hymn*,²⁹ in a passage describing the sun god’s punishment for the unjust (ca. ll. 83–96), something carried out by the trapping of such figures with *šuškallū*-nets (l. 83) and *gišparrū*- (l. 84), *kippu*- (l. 90), and *huḫāru*- (l. 94) snares or traps. In one bit, along with the looming *kippu*-snare, Šamaš’s very weapon stands set to charge (ll. 90–91):

83. Šamaš, in [your] *šuškallu*-net [. . . *no(t)*];
 84. Fro[m] your *gišparru*-traps [. . .] does not [*escape*].
 85. He who in (taking) a *māmītu*-oath/curse . . .[.];
 86. He who does not fear . . .[.];
 87. Your wi[de] net (*šētkā*) is spread [*over him* . . .].
 88. He who covets his neighbor’s wife,
 89. Will [.] before his appointed day.
 90. An evil *kippu*-snare is prepared for him . . .[. . .];
 91. Your very weapon will charge at him (*išširšu kākkā-ma*); [there will be n]o one saving (him).
 . . .
 94. He will be caught in a copper *huḫāru*-trap that he did not foresee;
 95. You extinguish the “horns” of the one who plots abomination (*ša kāšir anzilli*);
 96. A cunning one, who plans persecution (*ēpiš riddi*³⁰)—his foundation is undermined.

The transgressor in this passage (l. 88) is evidently perceived as challenging the social order, something affirmed in ll. 95–96, where a like-minded figure is described as “planning persecution (*ēpiš riddi*)” and “plotting (to commit) abomination (*ša kāšir anzilli*).” Indeed, with the reference to *anzillu* in l. 95 it is clear that the broader passage draws from the semantic orbit of abominations and taboos, something supported even further by the mention of the *māmītu*-oath’s presumed³¹ infraction in l. 85.

25. So AHw 954b; M. Streck, “Funktionsanalyse des akkadischen Št-Stamms,” ZA 84 (1994): 170–71; Haul, *Etana-Epos*, 152.

26. So CAD M/2, 228, which reads: *mul-tap-pi-du* (assuming *rt* [> *št*] > *lt*? But cf. GAG³ §35c [NB/LB]). The third option, Lambert’s reading apud B. R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*³ (Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2005), 554, of *mul-ta[k-š]i-du*, “oncoming,” is justly rejected by Streck, “Funktionsanalyse,” 171 n. 56, and Haul, *Etana-Epos*, 152 and n. 460, since it does not fit the passive sense for *šutakšudu* (Streck, “Funktionsanalyse,” 168).

27. With AHw 954b; *pace* Streck, “Funktionsanalyse,” 171 n. 56, whose suggested translations (id., 170 and n. 55) maintain this sense, even if secondarily.

28. To be distinguished from actual divine weapons used in the swearing of oaths, for which see R. Harris, “The Journey of the Divine Weapon,” in *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday, April 21, 1965*, ed. H. G. Güterbock and Th. Jacobsen (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1965), 217–24; more recently, J.-M. Durand, “La religion amorrite en Syrie à l’époque des archives de Mari,” in *Mythologie et religion des sémites occidentaux*, vol. I: *Ébla, Mari*, ed. G. del Olmo Lete (Louvain: Peeters, 2008), 331–32 (with references).

29. W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960), 121–36.

30. Lambert’s original reading is confirmed by the near-duplicate line in BM 65472+ ([*e-pi*]*š rid-du ka-pi-du e-ni-nu qaq-¹qar¹-[šu]*), cited in J. Westenholz, “Studying Poetic Language,” *Or* 66 (1997): 188 n. 30; W. Mayer, “Akkadische Lexicographie: CAD R,” *Or* 72 (2003): 239; *pace* AHw 1221; CAD Š/2, 340; B. Groneberg, *Syntax, Morphologie und Stil der jungbabylonischen “hymnischen” Literatur* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1987): 1, 148.

31. The text is broken here, but note the parallel(?) *lā ādir* “one who does not fear” in the following line.

The terms *asakku* (azag), *anzillu* (anzil), and (in part) *ikkibu* (níg.gig) all seem to refer to what modern classification would render as “taboos”: venial transgressions, lesser in standing than sins (*arnu*, *šertu*), that are proscribed and enforced by the *māmītu*.³² The breaking of taboos described as *asakku* or *anzillu*—an issue of considerable consequence for *Etana*, for reasons discussed below—is expressed idiomatically with *akālu* “to eat.” One guilty of this infraction was considered “accursed” (*tamū*) and presumed contagious,³³ conditions demanding remedy by magical-medical means.³⁴ While different deities are connected with taboos, the most notable seems to be Šamaš,³⁵ no doubt owing to his attribute of cosmic judge. The sun god’s prominence in this respect comes through most clearly in the *Incantation to Utu*,³⁶ a composition that contemplates man’s possible fates in his “last judgment” and affirms that absolution from sin is required if one is to be granted the proper cult of the dead.³⁷ For this one must first atone for committed sins, which otherwise are an abomination to the sun god (ll. 148–148a):

148. If your angry heart is not cut off, if the destructive curse is not undone –
148a. It is an abomination to Utu (níg-gig d^rutu¹-ke).³⁸

...

162. After he has crossed over the limit(s) (zag bal) of the gods . . .

He who flouts these matters, the text continues, has crossed the limit(s) (zag . . . bal) of the gods (l. 162). For him anonymity awaits, for his spirit, which in this state cannot enter the netherworld, restlessness, and for those around his spirit, unending bother. Venial then perhaps, but the infraction of taboos demanded redress nonetheless. And to the extent that this text reflects something broader in Mesopotamian religious thought,³⁹ it would seem that a belief in a divine accounting of the sort known in later monotheistic traditions was associated with Šamaš. Small wonder, then, that this feature should be incorporated in the *Šamaš Hymn*—that is, recalled in connection to justice writ large.

What is pertinent about all this with respect to the subject at hand is the connection between Šamaš and taboo on the one hand and our point of origin on the other. For as observed above, in *Etana* Šamaš’s roving weapon does not stand alone; it is accompanied by those traps (*gišparrū*) described as “Šamaš’s curse” (*māmīt Šamaš*). The logic of these items

32. See Geller, “Taboo,” 105–12, 117; W. W. Hallo, “Biblical Abominations and Sumerian Taboos,” *JQR* 76 (1985): 23–24 n. 13. On *māmītu* as oath-cum-curse, see n. 22 above.

33. See, e.g., E. Reiner, *Šurpu: A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian Incantations* (Graz: s.n., 1958), II 98–103.

34. On which, see S. M. Maul, “Die ‘Lösung vom Bann’: Überlegungen zu altorientalischen Konzeptionen von Krankheit und Heilkunst,” in *Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman Medicine*, ed. H. F. J. Horstmanshoff and M. Stol (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 79–95 (with references); W. Sallaberger, “Reinheit. A,” *RIA* 11/3–4 (2007): 298.

35. This is the view of K. van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia: A Comparative Study* (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1985), 43–44, though it may be somewhat overstated. It is clear from the proverb collections that other deities too are connected with particular taboos. See, e.g., the examples of various níg-gig + DN.ak.am statements in the proverb collections in B. Alster, *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer: The World’s Earliest Proverb Collections* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 1997); also id., *Wisdom of Ancient Sumer* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2005), 338. Still, that Šamaš’s place in this respect is significant is beyond question, such that van der Toorn’s comparison of the proclamation *ikkib ša Šamaš* in “secular” contexts to the American “it is a God-damn shame!” (*Sin and Sanction*, 44) seems essentially correct.

36. B. Alster, “Incantation to Utu,” *ASJ* 13 (1991): 27–96; also id., “Corrections and Additions to Incantation to Utu,” *ASJ* 14 (1992): 425; M. Geller, “Very Different Utu Incantations,” *ASJ* 17 (1995): 102–7.

37. For a different interpretation, see Geller, “Very Different,” 106–7, but cf. T. Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Beliefs and Literature* (Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2002), 237 n. 67. The relation between impiety in life and suffering in the Netherworld and the need to remedy the former to avoid the latter is readily apparent in *Gilgameš*, *Enkidu*, and *the Netherworld*.

38. Alster, “Incantation,” 59–60, 87, reading with ms F.

39. So Alster, *ibid.*; Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 236–47.

and their appearance in the legend now seems clear: they are to be understood in the context of the violation of divinely stipulated taboos. Indeed, in *Etana* this appears explicitly later on. Recall Šamaš's retort to the eagle upon the latter's plea for forgiveness and deliverance:

lemnētā-ma kabtāti tušamriš
anzilla ša ilāni asakku tākul
tamātā-ma/tamattā-ma lā asanniḡakka

You are wicked; you have grieved me.

You have committed a taboo, an abomination of the gods.

You are accursed/will die; I will not draw near to you. (SB II 130–32)⁴⁰

The charge leveled against the eagle mentions taboo violation, literally its “eating” (*anzilla/asakka akālu*), which here reverberates with the offense itself. The sun god also declares that he will not approach the bird. The understanding of what precedes, presumably the motivation behind this last declaration, is uncertain: the writing (*ta-ma-ta-a-ma*; extant fully only in ms B₃ [SB]) permits derivatives of both *tamû* (“to swear an oath”) and *mātu* (“to die”); both, in fact, have been proposed.⁴¹ The discussion above throws weight in favor of the first option, since in fact the oath sworn by the parties earlier on is conveyed by *tamû* (SB II 23 // OB_S obv. 4'). But the possibility that this refers to the eagle's mortality cannot be excluded; moreover, in either case Šamaš's expressed intent to maintain distance must be understood in part anthropomorphically, reflecting human fears of contagion from persons in either of these states.⁴² Nor can it be ruled out that this writing reflects a clever attempt to convey both options.⁴³ Whatever the case, there can be no question concerning the mention of the roving weapon and traps early on in the legend, and the recollection of the latter along with the sun god's nets⁴⁴ later on (SB II 47–48, 69–71). These relate to the broader tradition involving Šamaš's handling of those who break social norms and taboos and the instruments by which consequent punishments are meted out.

Already on its own it appears that Šamaš's whirling weapon promises a much-preferred explanation for Eden's sword. The iterative sense of Akk. *murtappidu* is precisely that of the Hebrew Dt(n)⁴⁵ of *mithappeket*. Heb. *ḥereb*, though etymologically unrelated to the Akkadian counterpart, is arguably the most suitable candidate for a Biblical rendering of the generic *kakku*. And an explanation for equating Šamaš with *lahaṭ* is not difficult to posit: the latter may simply reflect a de-mythologized option for the former.⁴⁶

40. The first two lines of this passage are actually uttered by the snake to the eagle earlier on (SB II 12–13), just before the two animals establish their pact. Their appearance there must represent a borrowing from their later setting for reasons to be explained elsewhere; see provisionally Saporetti, *Etana*, 57 n. 22.

41. For an interpretation based on *tamû*, see Foster, *Muses*, 549: “Were you not under oath?” In favor of the more common option, *tamattā* (< *mātu*), see, e.g., CAD S, 135; Haul, *Etana-Epos*, 187, 223.

42. Sallaberger, “Reinheit,” 298.

43. Another possible factor behind Šamaš's declaration, not mutually exclusive of those proposed above, relates to Mesopotamian cosmology. Accordingly, the sun god, who traverses the netherworld at night, states that he will not approach the eagle since, owing to its deed, the latter will be banned from the netherworld upon its death. Two points lend support for this possibility: first, the appearance of *sanāqu* in this context (SB II 132) recalls this verb's employment with respect to the “movement” of astral bodies (CAD S, 136, mng. 1f); second, it is possible that the punishment involving the mountain pass described earlier was meant to resonate with one of the netherworld's designations, viz., *šadûl* kur “mountain” (so, e.g., Haul, *Etana-Epos*, 125 [with references]). For other suggestions, see Haul, *Etana-Epos*, 223.

44. See l. 87 of the *Šamaš Hymn* above.

45. On the Hebrew form, see E. A. Speiser, “The Durative Hitpa'el: A *tan*-Form,” in *Oriental and Biblical Studies: Collected Writings of E. A. Speiser*, ed. J. J. Finkelstein and M. Greenberg (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1967), 506–14.

46. This was essentially Hendel's hunch (“Whirling Sword,” 673 n. 17), albeit concerning Rešep, doorkeeper of the sun god, Šapšu, in Canaanite mythology (ad CAT 1.78 [ed. D. Pardee, *Les textes rituels* (ERC; Paris, 2000), vol. 2, 416–27], ll. 3–4).

It must be stressed, however, that the proposal to connect these mythologems does not assume a simple case of Akkadian-to-Hebrew borrowing. Nor can it. Patently the flaming, whirling sword of Eden differs from Šamaš's *kakku murtappidu*—certainly literally, but also in terms of semantic range. Thus the Hebrew depiction of the sword cannot represent a calque of the Akkadian—not on its own, anyway. If the Biblical image is to be understood as a borrowing of the counterpart in *Etana*, then additional evidence of contact between the broader stories is demanded.

Indeed a startling number of additional parallels between Mesopotamia's *Etana* legend and the Eden tradition in Genesis become apparent upon the stories' concurrent examination. Taken together, these parallels secure the connection of *Etana*'s weapon with Eden's sword. More importantly, however, these make it clear that Genesis's Eden borrows far more than an isolated mythologem from *Etana*. Indeed, in this comparative light the connection between the well-known Biblical story and the Mesopotamian legend begins to feel more systematic, something suggestive of a considerable level of knowledge of one tradition by the other.

V

What, then, are those building blocks identical to the make-up of both *Etana* and Eden? To mention the most obvious: ultimately both stories concern man's struggles with immortality, something achievable in both instances by way of a magical plant; one finds, centrally located in both, a tree that is the focus of a divinely ordained pact concerning the limits of lesser beings; in both stories those beings might have lived on in a sort of idyllic homeostasis had they adhered to simple stipulations; but in both the agreement is violated by an act of eating and involving a snake; in each case this transgression shatters the homeostasis, with the deity in charge informing the guilty party of its accursed status, something that involves corporeal punishment. This punishment, in the case of *Etana*'s eagle and also the Biblical snake, brings both into direct contact with the soil of the earth and suggests that this will be its lone but inadequate source of food.⁴⁷

Most importantly, both stories appear to weave into their storylines a sophisticated and nearly identical wordplay to support—or better, establish—the events that unfold. In the Biblical case this involves the passing of the serpent's outstanding intelligence, lit., 'ārûm "(most) cunning" (Gen. 3:1), to the primordial couple, who, with their new-found knowledge, realize their own "nakedness" 'êrôm/'ārôm (Gen. 2:25; 3:7, 10, 11), and are eventually punished, in part with the pains associated with "conception/pregnancy" hērāyôn⁴⁸ (3:16). In *Etana* this involves the very word for "eagle" erû, with the bird's systematic denuding by the

47. Another likely parallel is too good to pass up, even if it cannot be ascertained owing to the breaks in the beginning of SB III (II. 1–8). Nevertheless, if earlier reconstructions hold up (Kinnier Wilson, *Etana*, 104–5; Novotny, *Etana*, 21; but cf. Alster, *JAOS* 109: 86, and Haul, *Etana-Epos*, 192–93, 223 [ad l. 4]), then this passage concerns the eagle's discussion with Šamaš about bird calls (lit., "the speech of birds" [amī iṣṣūrī; l. 3; see l. 8]). Since these and human speech are not mutually intelligible, the eagle reasons, he and Etana will not understand one another. Hearing this, Šamaš issues a command. The text is broken here, though the only likely possibility involves a transformation of the eagle's speech into a form recognizable to Etana. (A recent suggestion by Kinnier Wilson [*Studia Etanaica*, 25–30], based on his new proposals for the placement of one OB passage [OB_M (= OV-I) rev. vi 1'–9'] before SB III 1 and the reading of its last line (vi 9') would settle this matter if correct. For the moment, however, this idea cannot be confirmed, and Kinnier Wilson's reading of vi 9'—on which much of his reconstruction rests—has reasonably been questioned by Streck ["Notes," 486].)

In other words, *Etana* goes to some length to explain how in this case the speech of an animal becomes comprehensible to a human. The significance of the passage to Eden is obvious. If this reconstruction holds up, then it would seem that this passage contains the background of Eden's talking snake and its recognition as supremely cunning. For further thoughts on these matters, see below.

48. Following MT, which certainly preserves the correct reading.

snake (SB II 120–21⁴⁹) and its eventual instrumentality in the desired conception of Etana's wife.⁵⁰ The Akkadian for "nude/naked" and "to conceive/become pregnant" is a homonym of two independent words *erû*;⁵¹ both are cognates of their Hebrew counterparts, respectively $\sqrt{rw/y}$ and $\sqrt{hrw/y}$.⁵² That these two cases of "wordplay" in the Akkadian and the Hebrew reflects mere coincidence—with both *Etana* and Eden making use of essentially the same pun for related purposes—seems most unlikely.

Admittedly, in *Etana* this pun is not made explicit—unless, that is, one of Kinnier Wilson's purported additions to the legend (*KAR* 335 [MA]) finds acceptance.⁵³ In that case one could add a fourth homonymous root to this wordplay's Akkadian version, this one occurring in the description of Etana's ersatz *copper* (*erû*) wings.⁵⁴ Yet the likelihood of Kinnier Wilson's join remains doubtful,⁵⁵ and with it this tantalizing prospect, which at present cannot be confirmed.⁵⁶ Still clearly the wings' restoration figured prominently in the story's development, something evident from their prominence in the passage describing the eagle's recovery (*šû-ma iṣabbuba agappīšu* "it (consequently) would spread its wings" [Haul MA-II (VAT 10291 r. 6'–18'), 11', 14', 17']) and in the couple's subsequent flight(s) to heaven (*ina muḥḫi nāṣ kappī[ya šukun kappīka]* "[place your] palms atop [my] wings' feathers!" [SB III 27; also III 29, 118–21]). The (perceived) evolutionary process involving the loss and rejuvenation of the eagle's plumage plays a pivotal role in the story (more on which below). Its analogy to matters of bodily dismemberment and discovery (< *erû* "nude/naked") on the one hand and recovery and sought rebirth (< *erû* "to conceive/become pregnant") on the other cannot be ascribed to coincidence.

Thus the likelihood that *Etana*'s author, like Eden's, made use of a seemingly polyvalent lexeme /*erû*/ in the unfolding of events seems all but unavoidable. And this becomes certain with the aid of the Biblical story, whose nearly identical wordplay serves essentially the same needs as *Etana*'s and in similar contexts bearing additional points of contact. The Hebrew, it now appears, tweaks an originally Akkadian pun and actualizes it in the formation of the Genesis story. This interpretation, with its emphasis on the role of language in the composition of literature, is corroborated by the recognition of additional such findings in both *Etana* and Eden, to which we now turn.

VI

The story of Etana, though hardly conceived as an etiologically based justification for taboo violation, provided Mesopotamians with an escape from their predictable fate nonetheless. At least *in illo tempore*, they held, there existed a virtual exception (and, in the legend of Gilgameš, another like it) to the cosmic order. And yet it was the eagle's story that provided the overall rule

49. Corresponding to ll. 117–18 in Haul, *Etana-Epos*, 184–85, where the text is nicely restored.

50. Regardless of whether or not the hatched plan succeeds.

51. Namely, *erû* "naked" (*CAD* E, 320) and *erû* "to be pregnant" (*CAD* E, 325).

52. Recall that the *mem* in Heb. *ʿêrôm* is part of the adverbial ending **-ālôm*, on which see, e.g., B. K. Waltke and M. P. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 93 (§5.7e), 659 (§39.3.1i).

53. Kinnier Wilson, *Etana*, 8, 70–71.

54. *KAR* 335, l. 4'. The potential of this wordplay was noted already by D. O. Edzard, *ZA* 76 (1986): 136.

55. Cf. the reservations in subsequent literature, e.g., Alster, *JAOS* 109 (1989): 82; Saporetti, *Etana*, 128; Novotny, *Etana*, xxiv; more generally Edzard, *ZA* 76 (1986): 134–35 (but see the previous note). No better is Kinnier Wilson's later try (*Studia Etanaica*, 49–50) to join this fragment to another piece posited by him to belong to *Etana* (*KAR* 327 obv.).

56. However, in this respect the correspondence between the Eden counterpart of *Etana*'s eagle, the snake, Heb. *nāḥāš*, and copper, Heb. *nēḥōšet*, deserves mention. Considering all the connections between the stories, the possibility that this reflects more than mere coincidence cannot be ruled out. See further §IX below.

concerning that insatiable human desire to have it all. In this regard the eagle—in other respects Etana’s obvious doppelgänger⁵⁷—represents a more fitting lesson about the fate of those who transgress established limits. For it, as for Eden’s primordial couple, the story suggests that there existed a chance for harmony. Yet this the eagle ruined by its inability to live within agreed-upon bounds, something conveyed in the story by the act of eating the snake’s offspring.

In this light it seems that this last act is best understood in terms of an enactment of the idiom for taboo violation: *anzilla/asakka akālu*, lit., “the eating of a taboo,” with the text actualizing the metaphor’s literal sense to drive home its point. Significantly, this interpretation finds parallels elsewhere in cuneiform literature. Already in Old Babylonian times one encounters evidence of the enactment of this very idiom, something obviously intended for dramatic effect. A Mari letter to Zimri-Lim tells of an ecstatic who ate from a lamb carcass to illustrate his vision of a forthcoming “devouring,” unless taboo goods were returned:

. . . An ecstati[c of Dagan] came to me and [spoke to me] as follows: “will I [*surely*?] eat of Z[imri-Lim? Give me] one lamb so that **I may eat!** (< *akālu*).” [I gave] (it) to him and **he ate** (< *akālu*) it *while* it was *raw* (*baṭṭūssū-ma*) in front of the city gate. And I (had) gathered the elders in front of the city gate of Saggaratum, and he spoke as follows: “a **devouring** (*ukultum*) will occur! Call on all the cities so that they return the **taboo** (*asak-kam*)!” (ARM 26/1, no. 206, ll. 5–20)⁵⁸

That the ecstatic’s action builds on paronomasia (*akālu* ↔ *ukultu* [< *akālu*]) has been recognized by many who have commented on this text;⁵⁹ fewer, apparently, have noted the correspondence of the act itself to the idiom for taboo violation,⁶⁰ though this is undeniably the case. *Mutatis mutandis*, the Etana legend exhibits the same phenomenon: the idiom, at a considerable remove from its original, non-literal⁶¹ sense, appears to have been understood literally, or at least to have been actualized as such. This interpretation, if correct, would echo something of Max Müller’s theory about the origins of myth in the “disease of language,” that is, in the need to fabricate stories to explain ossified metaphors and other phrases whose original sense was no longer recalled.⁶²

The recognition of another instance where language plays a seminal role in the composition of *Etana* reinforces this interpretation. This involves the very word for eagle in Akkadian, *erû*. A reconsideration of the wordplay involving this lexeme makes it clear that this word itself reflects a popular etymology connecting “eagle” with the homophonous word for “naked.” Philology backs this claim. An assessment of the corresponding Sumerian words

57. So Haul, *Etana-Epos*, 66–67, 71–74.

58. J.-M. Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari* 1/1, ARM 26/1 (Paris: ERC, 1988) (= *AEM* 1/1), 434–35; W. Heimpel, *Letters to the King of Mari: A New Translation, with Historical Introduction, Notes, and Commentary* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 256; M. Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 38–39; also J.-M. Durand, “Religion amorrite,” 444.

59. Already Durand, *AEM* 1/1, 546–47 n. 29; also J.-G. Heintz, “La ‘fin’ des prophètes bibliques? Nouvelles théories et documents sémitiques anciens,” in *Oracles et prophéties dans l’antiquité: Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg 15–17 juin 1995*, ed. J.-G. Heintz (Paris: De Boccard, 1997), 207.

60. E.g., Y. Cohen (personal communication).

61. With Geller, “Taboo,” 111 n. 31; compare *karša akālu* “to slander,” lit., “to eat snippets.”

62. This idea appears in many of Müller’s works involving his “scientific” approach to the study of religion and language. For a brief word on which, see R. Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004), 20. Müller’s point may strike a chord with students of early Biblical interpretation, since this is essentially the motivation behind the creation of a good deal of Midrashic literature. James Kugel is typically elegant in his characterization of those “surface irregularities”—unusual words, spelling of words, turns of phrases, etc.—in the Biblical text that motivate the Rabbinic imagination. He writes (“Two Introductions to Midrash,” *Prooftexts* 3 [1983]: 144–45): “the text’s irregularity is the grain of sand which so irritates the Midrashic oyster that he constructs a pearl around it.” This is the essence of Müller’s idea, which, unfortunately, has been drowned out by the noise from his more fantastic notions about solar myths and the like.

for Akk. *erû* demonstrates that, in terms of their own presumed etymologies, these have nothing to do with nakedness. Nor have those etymologies for Akk. *erû* proposed heretofore (summarized in Table 1) been entirely convincing.

Table 1. Sumerian and Akkadian Writings for ‘Eagle’? and ‘Naked’⁶³

Sumerian	Writings	Midrashic-Type Associations	Akkadian Equivalent	Proposed Modern Etymologies
hurin “imperial eagle”	(giš)hu-ri ₂ -in ^{mušen} , erin ^{mušen} , etc.	eren, “cedar”	<i>urinnu</i>	< * <i>ḥara-</i> + <i>-ēnu/īnu</i> ; cf. Hitt. <i>ḥara(n)</i> ; Gr. <i>ornis</i> ; <i>Kulturwort</i> ?
	(A:)BALAG ^{mušen}	balag, “harp”	<i>erû</i>	< <i>urinnu</i> (reinterpreted, shortened form)? ⁶⁴ < PS * <i>arw/y</i> “lion”; cf. Heb. <i>’ārî/’aryē(h)</i> ? ⁶⁵ < PS * <i>awr /arw/y</i> , “bird of prey?” ⁶⁶
			Ebla: <i>quqiyānum</i> ⁶⁷ ; <i>’iš₁₂’-a-bū</i> ⁶⁸	= Akk. <i>qaqānu</i> ; Syr. <i>qūqāna</i> = Akk. <i>eššebu</i> ? < PS * <i>ḏ’b</i> ? ⁶⁹
			Emar: <i>aḫ-ga-bu</i> ⁷⁰	= Arab. <i>uqāb</i> , “eagle”?
te “eagle, Raptor? ² , buzzard?”	te _g ^{mušen}	á “arm, wing”; “strength”	<i>erû</i> Ebla: <i>a-bar-tum</i>	See above “Feather?” (<i>pars pro toto</i>)? cf. Akk. <i>abāru</i> , “strength”?

And cf.:

suga “plucked, naked”	su/sù-ga	?	<i>erû</i> “naked”	√ <i>rw/y</i>
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63. Unless otherwise noted, this presentation builds on M. Civil, “Early Dynastic Spellings,” *OrAn* 22 (1983): 1–5; V. E. Orel and O. V. Stolbova, *Hamito-Semitic Etymological Dictionary: Materials for a Reconstruction* (Leiden: Brill, 1995) (= *HSED*); M. Bonechi, “Noms d’oiseaux à l’Ébla: Les rapaces,” *Topoi* Suppl. 2 (2000): 251–81; N. Veldhuis, *Religion, Literature, and Scholarship: The Sumerian Composition Nanše and the Birds, with a Catalogue of Sumerian Bird Names* (Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2004); A. Militarev and L. Kogan, *Semitic Etymological Dictionary*, vol. 2: *Animal Names* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2005) (= *SED* 2).

64. So B. Landsberger, “Einige unerkannt gebliebene oder verkannte Nomina des Akkadischen,” *WZKM* 15 (1961): 15 n. 58; Civil, “Spellings,” 3. That, as Civil maintains (*ibid.*), *alerû* was “extracted” from *urinnu* “in order to avoid homonymy with the tree *erīnu*” seems suspect even without the dubious initial *u* > *a/e* shift.

65. E.g., *AHw* 247; dismissed, following earlier opinions, in *SED* 2, 59.

66. E.g., *HSED* 15; *SED* 2, 58–59. Though the first of these biforms seems initially justifiable, it does not accord with the Akk. final-weak form; the second, seemingly exclusive to Akkadian (the Jewish Aramaic biform *’aryā* may be influenced by the Akkadian; see already Landsberger, “Nomina des Akkadischen,” 15 n. 58), is less convincing.

67. Following the collations and normalization in Bonechi, “Noms d’oiseaux,” 264–65 (with references).

68. See Bonechi, “Noms d’oiseaux,” 265, for alternative spellings of this entry.

69. See Bonechi, “Noms d’oiseaux,” 265 (with references).

70. So Veldhuis, *Religion, Literature, and Scholarship*, 254. The entry is read as [a]r-ga-bu by Y. Cohen (“The ‘Second Glosses’ in the Lexical Lists from Emar: West Semitic or Akkadian?” in *Language in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 53^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, vol. 1, ed. L. Kogan et al., *Babel & Bibel* 4; [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010], 815), who wishes to harmonize this occurrence with *MSL* 8/II, 173: 39.

As can be seen, the Sumerian representations of “eagle” vary, from its likening to a musical instrument (balag “harp”)⁷¹ to an association with “cedar” (eren)⁷² or “strength” (á). The Akkadian data also provides a mixed bag, with some options more appealing than others.⁷³ It soon becomes clear that the search for *the* precise or original etymology for the Akkadian equivalent of “eagle” is a difficult and probably misguided task, since different terms apparently existed early on and may have varied according to different factors (region, taxonomy, etc.). Significantly, however, a connection with “naked” is absent from the early Sumerian options; and even if one were to turn up, still it could not claim exclusivity on the issue, nor could early Sumerian-Semitic contact be ruled out as its etiology. In short, an etymology of Akk. *erû* “eagle” based on the Semitic idea of “nakedness” seems very likely.

Two additional points support this thesis. The first presents itself when one turns to parallel traditions from beyond Mesopotamia. The idea that an etymology for *erû* could relate to “nakedness” seems consonant with widespread beliefs in the ancient world about the regeneration of birds, mythical and real. In the latter category this centered on the most regal of species, the eagle, which was held to molt in a spectacular manner rendering it flightless and then, equally majestically, to regenerate its feathers. The Bible itself provides testimony of this belief and even to its association with the desire for human rejuvenation:

Youths may grow faint and weary,
And young men stumble and fall;
But they who trust in Yahweh shall renew (their) strength
As eagles grow new plumes (*ya‘ălû ‘ēber kannēšārîm*). (Isa. 40:30–31)

Bless Yahweh, O my soul . . .
Who redeems your life from the Pit . . .
Who satisfies you with good things *in the prime of life*,
So that your youth **is renewed like the eagle(’s)** (*tithaddēš kannešer*). (Ps. 103:1–5)

Additional evidence of this point is not in short supply, especially when one recognizes that for many writers the eagle served as the closest approximation of the mythical phoenix.⁷⁴

71. For a possible parallel, see M. Civil, “The *Tigidlu* Bird and a Musical Instrument,” *NABU* 1987/48. Note, however, that in the case of the eagle and harp the association is only at the level of writing; the two words in fact are not homonymous, nor to our knowledge is an eagle’s cry/call ever compared to the harp’s sound.

72. Civil, “Spellings,” 3; more recently id., *ARES III: The Early Dynastic Practical Vocabulary A (Archaic HAR-ra A)* (Rome: Missione archeologica italiana in Siria, 2008), 103. It is probable, however, that the association of tree and bird is due to scribal confusion or play, and not actual etymology, something supported further if Civil’s idea of *hurin as the early writing for cedar (demanding a loss of an initial *h and a shift of u > a/e) is dismissed (so, e.g., J. Bauer, “*hurin = ‘Zeder’?” *Altorientalistische Notizen* 36 [1987]: 4 [no. 36]; and, implicitly, Bonechi, “Noms d’oiseaux,” 265, n. 51).

Interestingly, as R. van den Broek explains (*The Myth of the Phoenix according to Classical and Early Christian Traditions* [Leiden: Brill, 1972], 162), a connection between the mythological phoenix and the pine tree (family) appears in Classical sources too, seemingly owing to the believed perpetuity of both. Could it be then that the writing *eren*^{musen} builds on this bit of cross-cultural folklore, but once more with Semitic providing an added bit of philological “proof”?

73. See nn. 64–66, 72 above. Among these proposals, the one connecting *erû* and PS **arw/y* deserves further consideration, regardless of whether this is *erû*’s “real” etymology. Clearly some ancients thought it was, just as they connected Akk. *nēšu*, “lion” (< PS **naḥaš*), with “snake,” probably rightly (*SED* 2, 210–11), and undoubtedly upon contact with WS lexemes for snake (e.g., Heb. *nāḥāš*, Ugr. *nhš* [< PS **naḥaš*]). This much is evident in *Gilgameš*, whose snake—in other important respects *Etana*’s eagle’s counterpart, as discussed below—is dubbed the “lion of the earth,” *nēšu ša qaqqari* (SB XI 314). And as with *Gilgameš*, so with *Etana*; note, thus, the latter’s depiction of the rejuvenated eagle which, with (proper) “food” (*ukulta* [< *akālu*!]), “has strength like a roaring lion,” *kīma nēšim nā’eri emūqam iṣū* (Haul OB-I vi 3’–4’).

74. See van den Broek, *Myth of the Phoenix*, esp. 161, 172 n. 6, 251–52, 279–80. The Mesopotamian case of Anzû, the mythical bird with eagle-like features, echoes this phenomenon. In the Akkadian myth bearing its name,

That Mesopotamian folklore shared in this belief seems eminently reasonable, as does the possibility that this prompted the depiction of the eagle's tribulations in *Etana*.

The second point dovetails with the first, since at least in the case of Hebrew this belief is backed by what the ancients regarded as proof: etymology. Concerning eagles the connection was *imagined* with a cognate verb whose basic sense is "to fall, drop off," in this case obviously of feathers. The caveat in the preceding sentence is owing to the hesitation by some to connect *nešer* with Hebrew *nāšar*, whose middle radical (< PS *θ) does not correspond to that of *nešer* (< PS *š).⁷⁵ Of course an ancient Hebraist would have been unaware of this, and thus this bit of ancient philology, even if it cannot be squared with its modern counterpart, would have seemed impeccable. This contention finds additional support when one recalls that the etymologies of the names of other birds, including *tinšemet* and *yanšûp/yanšôp*, obviously relate to verbs deemed characteristic of these creatures,⁷⁶ even if their taxonomy remains unclear. Thus it is all but certain that in this instance the word for eagle in Hebrew was believed to relate to the verbal idea of dropping, falling, and molting. The same, it now seems certain, held for East Semitic as well, albeit with a different root, *erû*, and with a focus on the result of these processes.

All this notwithstanding, it must be emphasized that the ancients' belief in the eagle's spectacular molting lacks any (modern) scientific foundation. The biology of the matter is indisputable: if this were the case it would render the bird flightless and unable to hunt; nor would it be able to maintain its body temperature. Either case would lead to its rapid death.⁷⁷ And yet for the ancients the molting of eagles was real and wondrous, something now more appreciable in *Etana*'s folkloristic substratum. Indeed, it appears as if at a basic level this story intended to provide an etiology for the phenomenon in the mythical realm.

An important parallel to this finding backs this point and provides another major (if indirect) connection to Eden.⁷⁸ This occurs in *Gilgameš*, upon the hero's learning that Utnapištim's immortality cannot be conferred upon himself. For a moment things do seem brighter, however: Gilgameš succeeds in raising the magical plant from beneath the sea, the one Utnapištim had said could yield immortality if eaten. Excitedly he sets out to consume it, but stops to bathe first. Just then, the text continues:

A snake smelled the fragrance of the plant,
[silently] it came up and bore the plant off;
as it turned away it sloughed a skin (*ittadi qulipta*). (SB XI 305–7)⁷⁹

Anzû's death is marked by its spectacular loss of wings, with fluttering plumes ushering tidings of a new world order. On this episode and the role of language therein, see B. Studevent-Hickman, "Language, Speech, and the Death of Anzu," in *Gazing on the Deep: Ancient Near Eastern and Other Studies in Honor of Tzvi Abusch*, ed. J. Stackert, B. N. Porter, and D. P. Wright (Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2010), 273–92.

75. E.g., Y. Ahituv and Sh. Ahituv, "*nešer*," *Encyclopaedia Biblica* V (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1968), 976. But even if one accepts the premise that the distinctiveness of PS *θ and *š excludes the possibility of this correspondence, still a connection between *nešer* and a related verb cannot be ruled out entirely, since at least one other verbal root that differs from *nešer* according to a standard sound change (the alternation of sonorants) can be posited. This is PS *nšl, whose G-stem reflexes (e.g., Heb. *nāšal* "to slip, drop off"; Arab. *nasala* "to molt, fall out") make it less likely that it reflects a denominative from *nešer/nasr*. Whether a relationship between this root and *nešer* is to be posited is, of course, difficult to say. The broader problem, it seems, invites reconsideration.

76. Respectively, *nāšam* "to pant" (*BDB*, 675) and *nāšap* "to blow" (*BDB*, 676); observation courtesy Dr. Gila Vachman. Other examples abound in Semitic, whether these develop from conceptual ideas like Heb. *qōrēʿ* (< *qārāʿ*?) "to call"), "partridge," or by onomatopoeia, like Arab. *šūš* "chick" (and *šaušā* "to peep"; reference courtesy Sarah Winitzer).

77. Explanation courtesy Prof. Gary Belovsky, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Notre Dame.

78. Partly anticipated by J. Morgenstern, "On Gilgameš-Epic XI, 274–320: A Contribution to the Study of the Role of the Serpent in Semitic Mythology," *ZA* 29 (1914–15): 292–96.

79. George, *Gilgamesh*, 722–23, also 896 ad l. 306.

Thus Gilgameš is deprived of his last chance for immortality. For the snake, this cameo affords the epic a clever etiology to explain a patently curious and, in this case, real phenomenon: the molting of its skin and consequent (perceived) regeneration. That this factored into the Biblical etiological concern with the snake's loss of legs seems clear,⁸⁰ though the matter is explored in greater detail below (§IX).

What is significant about this in the present instance is this episode's comparison with the one describing the eagle's denuding in *Etana*. For unlike the *Gilgameš* instance, in *Etana* the eagle's loss of plumage is hardly a parenthetical matter. Rather, this occurrence is explained as a consequence of egregious behavior and granted a moral dimension. More importantly, it figures centrally in the story's development and culmination, that is, in Etana's help with the eagle's mending and their flight(s) to heaven. Thus, as basic components of one of *Etana*'s plots, the eagle's punishment and restoration relate to its loss of plumage.

That this is so suggests that the loss-of-plumage tradition was more central to *Etana*'s origins than was the snake's molting for *Gilgameš*. For the latter this is verifiable, since, as is well established, the entire narrative of the hero's travels to Utnapištim and back, in the context of which the snake episode occurs, reflects a relatively late development to the *Gilgameš* tradition.⁸¹ With *Etana* this matter is more complicated, since the earliest (OB) versions of this story—though they exhibit more affinity to the later SB version than is true for *Gilgameš*—are missing or broken at crucial points.⁸²

But from the eagle's place in *Etana* the conclusion seems inescapable that already early on the story turned on this bit of folklore. Moreover, this point appears to have been supported by—perhaps even conceived with—the ancients' sense of the *erû* homonyms. This instance of ancient philology, especially when taken alongside the interest in the idiom for taboo violation proposed above, provides a supreme example of a basic motivation behind the formation of literature in the ancient Semitic world. For in the form by which we meet it the *Etana* legend patently builds on elements particular to the Mesopotamians' encounter with the wonders of Semitic. From this perspective the Akkadian language seems as much a constituent of the story's message as the medium by which it was told.⁸³

80. Even if considerably underappreciated; but see Morgenstern, "On Gilgameš-Epic XI," 292 ad n. 1. Of course the interest in bodily discovery was not abandoned in the Eden tradition. It was simply reversed in terms of direction—viz., from nakedness to covering—and shifted from the snake to the human couple.

81. See George, *Gilgamesh*, 32–33.

82. Especially trying is the following case of the extant OB parallel to SB II 120, the passage describing the snake's removal of the eagle's feathers, which, if intelligible, could presumably settle the matter:

OB Haul OB I rev. v 6' *ut-ta-šI(-)[x . . .]*

SB B₃ II 120 *ú-nak-ki-is kap-pi-šú ab-ri-šú nu-bal-li-šú*

He cut off his wing-, his *abru*-limb⁷, his *nuballu*-feathers⁷

Opinions about the initial word in the OB text vary widely: *ut-ta-zf-[im]* "(Die Schlange) beklagte sich" (< *našāmu* [AHw 772]); *ut-ta-zf-[ik]* "He cut off his wings (*sic*)" (< **uttassik* < *uttakkis*; by metathesis from *nakāsu* [Kinnier Wilson, *Etana*, 38–39, 46; Novotny, *Etana*, 34; but cf. GAG³ §36c]); *ut-ta-si₂₀-[ih⁷]* "Sie 'riss' [seine Flügel aus]" (< *našāhu* [Haul, *Etana-Epos*, 112, 129]); *ut-ta-šer* (< *nuššuru* "to diminish in strength, weaken, cut off?" [Kinnier Wilson, *Studia Etanaica*, 21; but cf. Streck, *JAOS* 129: 485]; and note Sem. **nVšr* "eagle"); *ut-ta-ši(-)* [. . .] (< *wuṣšām* [Streck, *JAOS* 129: 485 (already Langdon, *Babyloniaca* 12: 31; Saporetto, *Etana*, 76), who wonders whether this refers to the act of spreading out, presumably of wings]).

The section of OB I (OB_M) in which this line appears parallels the SB text rather closely (Haul OB-I rev. col. v 3'-16' // SB II 116–31 [Haul SB II 113–28]); thus it is likely that the difference between the versions is merely lexical. Pace Streck, then, we expect a reference to the wing's removal, though admittedly the matter remains difficult.

83. For an additional word highlighting the legend's Akkadian context, see Haul, "lú an-še ba-e₁₁-dè," 239–40.

VII

The establishment of a major link between the *Etana* and Genesis Eden stories invites reassessment not only of *Etana* but also of Eden. Before doing so, however, a word on some broader concerns is in order. The first involves transmission: what are plausible channels through which this process can be presumed to have taken place? The second concerns content. Supposing that the sought-for channels are unearthed, what, specifically, can be assumed to have been passed on? Can this entail *Etana* itself, that is, not merely sundry tidbits about the antediluvian heroic king but rather the very text that eventually bore his name? And what, finally, may explain the concern with this, comparatively speaking, less-established Mesopotamian composition? Why should it have been honored with so prominent a role in the Biblical etiology among etiologies?

Addressing these questions proves to be a challenging undertaking, especially owing to the complex compositional nature of the Genesis Eden tradition described above, with its distinct external (Mesopotamian) and local (the *kěrûbîm*?) components.⁸⁴ From this it follows that elements comprising the narrative could have derived from different backgrounds—the tradition(s) concerning *Etana* being no exception.

The mythologem of *Etana*'s *Himmelfahrt* is instructive in this respect. As is well known, the image is already ensconced in the *Sumerian King List* (i 39-ii 22):⁸⁵

... After the flood swept over, when kingship had come down (again) from heaven, kingship (was) at Kiš.

At Kiš, Gišur was king; he reigned 1,200 years;

[11 more kings mentioned similarly];

Etana (E-ta-na), the shepherd, the one who went up to heaven (lú-an-še ba-e₁₁-dè),

Who put all the countries in order, was king;

He reigned 1,500 years; Balih, son of Etana, reigned 400 years.

It reappears in the *Ballad of Former Heroes* (ll. 9–14),⁸⁶ where, notably, as in library catalogues and other texts discussed below, *Etana* is juxtaposed with Gilgamesh:

Where is Alulu, the king who reigned 36,000 years?

Where is Etana (ʾen-te-n[a]), the king who ascended to heaven ([lu]gal-e lú an-še bí-in-è-dè)?

Where is Gilgamesh, who, like Ziusudra, sought (eternal) life?

Where is Huwawa, who was caught in submission?

Where is Enkidu, whose strength was not *defeated* in the country?

Where are those kings, the vanguards of former days?

Quite possibly a reflex of this tradition occurs still elsewhere and even earlier, in the frequent image of a human figure riding skyward atop a large bird, likely an eagle, in Old Akkadian glyptic (e.g., Figure 1).⁸⁷ The identity of this scene and its connection to *Etana*—and *Etana*—

84. But see above with n. 3.

85. Glassner, *Chronicles*, 120.

86. Edited most recently in Alster, *Wisdom*, 288–322, with a bibliography through 2005, to which add now D. Arnaud, *Corpus des textes de bibliothèque de Ras Shamra-Ugarit (1936–2000) en sumérien, babylonien et assyrien* (Sabadell-Barcelona: AUSA, 2007), 142–48; and Y. Cohen, “‘Where is Bazi? Where is Zizi?’ The List of Early Rulers in the *Ballad* from Emar and Ugarit, and the Mari Rulers from the Sumerian King List and Other Sources,” *Iraq* 74 (2012): 137–52.

87. Ca. 21–24; tabulated in P. Steinkeller, “Early Semitic Literature and Third Millennium Seals with Mythological Motifs,” *QdS* 18 (1992): 248 n. 10 (with addendum), 273, 276–78 (= pls. 1–3). Another type scene in early glyptic, depicting intertwining snakes and eagles and mentioned in connection with *Etana* (e.g., E. Rova, “The

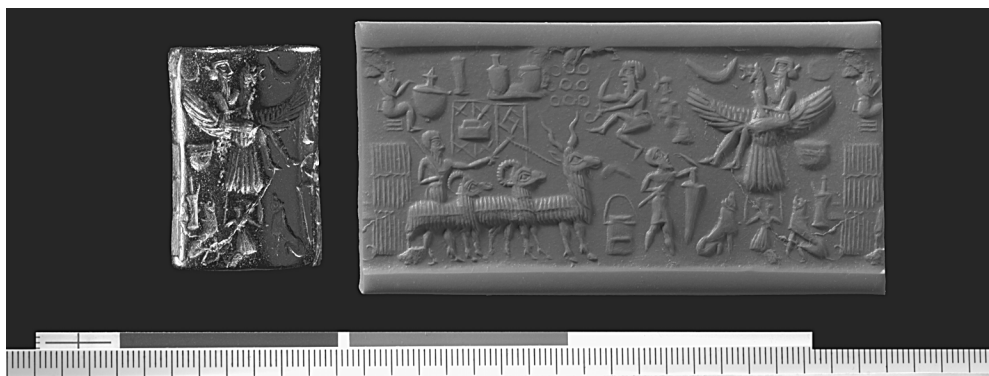


Fig. 1. VA 03456: Etana's *Himmelfahrt*(?).⁸⁸ Reproduced with permission of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin.

has spurred considerable discussion, with many opinions favoring a connection with Etana's skyward journey, though not in the form known from the later legend.⁸⁹

Whatever the verdict, the textual evidence makes it clear that in some form the legend surrounding a supernatural feat of an early king named Etana goes back to the third millennium.⁹⁰ Moreover, in the case of the written testimony this tradition is known to have stretched beyond Mesopotamia. Especially striking in this respect is the case of the *Ballad*, whose enumeration of early legendary Mesopotamian rulers reached Emar and Ugarit in the second half of the second millennium.⁹¹ Naturally, the West's familiarity with Etana's heavenly journey says nothing about its knowledge of the *Etana* legend itself. And yet the possibility cannot be excluded that the West knew this Mesopotamian composition before the first millennium, just as it did others, *Gilgameš* among them.⁹²

But the possibilities for transmission westward are not limited to the Bronze Age. Evidence of the West's familiarity with *Etana* exists from later on as well. This comes from the famous fables attributed to Aesop, a figure whose historicity was already assumed by Herodotus and who allegedly lived even earlier, perhaps in the early sixth century.⁹³ Details of Aesop's biography, especially those preserved in the *Life of Aesop* novel, include a stint at the court of the king of Babylon and are widely acknowledged as originating in the popular

Eagle and the Snake: Remarks on the Iconography of Some Archaic Seals," *KASKAL* 3 [2006]: 1–29), is excluded here owing to that connection's tenuousness.

88. R. Boehmer, *Die Entwicklung der Glyptik während der Akkad-Zeit* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965), no. 1668.

89. See, e.g., Steinkeller, "Early Semitic Literature," 248–55; Haul, *Etana-Epos*, 40–44; id., "lú an-še ba-e₁₁-dè," 251; and cf. Selz, "Etana-Erzählung," 149–54, who is less hesitant to connect the scene to *Etana*, specifically to the story's patent interest in the nature of dynastic kingship.

90. This is almost certainly true for *SKL*, even though in the earliest (Ur III) manuscript of this text the relevant section is broken. Still there is no reason to preclude Etana's presence therein (so P. Steinkeller, "An Ur III Manuscript of the Sumerian King List," in *Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien: Festschrift für Claus Wilcke*, ed. W. Sallaberger, K. Volk, and A. Zgoll [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003], 270).

91. On this text's transmission to the West, see Cohen, "Where is Bazi?" (with references).

92. E.g., *Nergal and Ereškigal*, *Adapa*, and *Atrahasis*. On *Gilgameš* in the West in the second millennium, see George, *Gilgamesh*, 326–47; id., "The *Gilgameš* Epic at Ugarit," *AuOr* 25 (2007): 237–54.

93. See, e.g., B. E. Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus: Newly Edited and Translated into English, together with an Historical Introduction and a Comprehensive Survey of Greek and Latin Fables in the Aesopic Tradition*, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965), xxxv.

story of Aḥiqar.⁹⁴ Thus it should not surprise us to find in Aesop's fables additional evidence of Near Eastern origins, something long noted,⁹⁵ a parade example of which concerns connections between *Etana* and a fable about an eagle and a fox, known in several versions:⁹⁶

An eagle and a fox formed an intimate friendship and decided to live near each other. The eagle built her nest in the branches of a tall tree, while the fox crept into the underwood and there produced her young. Not long after they had agreed upon this plan, the eagle, being in want of provision for her young ones, swooped down while the fox was out, seized upon one of the little cubs, and feasted herself and her brood. The fox on her return discovered what had happened, but was less grieved for the death of her young than for her inability to avenge them. A just retribution, however, quickly fell upon the eagle. While hovering near an altar, on which some villagers were sacrificing a goat, she suddenly seized a piece of the flesh, and carried it, along with a burning cinder, to her nest. A strong breeze soon fanned the spark into a flame, and the eaglets, as yet unfledged and helpless, were roasted in their nest and dropped down dead at the bottom of the tree. There, in the sight of the eagle, the fox gobbled them up.⁹⁷

In another version:

The eagle befriended the fox but he later devoured the fox's pups. Since she had no power over the eagle, **the fox prayed to the god for justice** [in some versions: **Zeus**]. Then one day when a sacrifice was burning upon an altar, the eagle flew down and grabbed the sizzling meat to carry it off to his chicks. The meat was so hot that as soon as the chicks ate it, they died.⁹⁸

The depiction in the first version of a pivotal tree, a pact and its violation by the devouring of the young, and the appeal to the god have persuaded many that Aesop's eagle-and-fox fable draws on *Etana*.⁹⁹ Additionally, Martin West has uncovered new data pointing to contact between the two stories.¹⁰⁰ One piece involves the reference in one version to the eagle's young as *paides*, "sons," something unexpected in Greek for animals but fitting as a calque of Akk. *mārū* ("sons"). Another concerns the appeal to Zeus for justice, which, though "without parallel in Archaic Greek literature," is readily explicable when one admits Šamaš's role in *Etana* into consideration.¹⁰¹

In sum, there is abundant evidence of the wide-ranging knowledge in antiquity of a legend concerning a figure named *Etana*.¹⁰² With this span in history it seems pointless to speculate about when this story or a part thereof made its way westward; such transmission could have taken place on many occasions. And of course there remains the very real—to our mind, more likely—possibility that the (initial?) composition of the Genesis Eden tradi-

94. See, e.g., A. Salvesen, "The Legacy of Babylon and Nineveh in Aramaic Sources," in *The Legacy of Mesopotamia*, ed. S. Dalley (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 146–48.

95. E.g., Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xxviii–xxxiv.

96. On the history of which, see M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 503 and n. 22.

97. G. F. Townsend, *Three Hundred Aesop's Fables: Literally Translated from the Greek* (London: George Routledge, 1867), 187–88.

98. L. Gibbs, *Aesop's Fables* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), no. 155.

99. E.g., Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, xxxiv; West, *East Face of Helicon*, 502–4.

100. West, *East Face of Helicon*, 502–4.

101. West, *East Face of Helicon*, 504–5.

102. See further West, *East Face of Helicon*, 504 n. 24. For another possible faint echo of *Etana*, see B. Böck, "Proverbs 30:18–19 in the Light of Ancient Mesopotamian Cuneiform Texts," *Sefarad* 69 (2009): 268–70. Should Israel's miraculous extrication from Egypt, "on the wings of eagles" (Exod. 19:4), be considered in this respect as well?

tion, like much in the Primeval History, took place on Babylonian soil.¹⁰³ Obviously, in this scenario the nature of Mesopotamian-Biblical contact finds important new possibilities. As with those prophets exposed firsthand to Mesopotamian culture, a Babylonia-based transmission of learned materials in this instance could also be conceivable as having occurred “directly between the heart of one tradition and the heart of another: from centre to centre, core to core.”¹⁰⁴ An exilic setting for the origins of the Eden tradition in Genesis also accords with the broader “Mesopotamian problem” of the Primeval History,¹⁰⁵ that is, this corpus’s engagement with a cultural legacy predating Israel’s and presenting formidable thinking on those questions now entertained by the upstart nation.

However this matter is settled, the proposition that the story, once incorporated into its new environment, was reconfigured according to local needs is to be expected in keeping with the general manner of the transmission of folktales, this one included.¹⁰⁶ But literary adaptation should not be misconstrued as a dabbling in borrowing. The case presented above points to the incorporation of more than an isolated mythologem or a play on homophones common to Akkadian and Hebrew. Rather, it indicates that the Genesis Eden tradition knew and made extensive use of the *Etana* legend as a whole.

VIII

A resolution of the final question posed above proves especially challenging. Whence the invitation of this “very Cinderella of the old Mesopotamian stories”¹⁰⁷ to the most glorious of Biblical balls? *Etana*, after all, does not fare especially well when compared with the likes of *Gilgameš* in terms of prominence outside Mesopotamia. And even within its domains, if the legend’s presence in Mesopotamia’s libraries is an indication of its relative celebrity, clearly this was not the equal of other works held in the same regard.

And yet if its inclusion in tallies of the Mesopotamian “canon” can be taken as a gauge of status, then it is a fact that not only is *Etana* mentioned among reputable company in a number of library catalogues,¹⁰⁸ but, as noted above, more than once it occurs in juxtaposition with the granddaddy among them, *Gilgameš*. Indeed, there is good reason to suppose that in some corners *Etana* was recalled in the same breath as *Gilgameš*, something appreciable

103. This is not the occasion for a discussion of this question or the far broader one concerning the origins of Biblical writings. As is well known, the literature on this, though immense, often bears agendas beyond the scientific. Rather than weighing in on it, we limit ourselves to a basic observation.

Put simply, there exists little mention of Primeval History traditions elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible; indeed, those corpora assumed to be early are almost entirely silent on its traditions. (For a convenient tally of these statistics [subject, however, to debate, e.g., concerning references to the Adam tradition in Job and Ezekiel], see L. Niesiołowski-Spanò, “Primeval History in the Persian Period?” *SJOT* 21 (2007): 110, 125. [However, we dissent from the author’s thesis of a Platonic influence on the Primeval History.]) It is thus only reasonable to entertain the possibility that at least a portion of the Primeval History does not predate the pre-exilic writings. And when one admits their concern—Babylonian traditions, even if under the disapproving scrutiny of a Hebrew pen—then an exilic setting for their genesis seems increasingly sensible.

104. P. Kingsley, “Ezekiel by the Grand Canal: Between Jewish and Babylonian Tradition,” *JRAS* 3/2 (1992): 345. On this point with respect to Ezekiel, see Winitzer, “Assyriology and Jewish Studies.”

105. R. Hendel, “Genesis 1–11 and Its Mesopotamian Problem,” in *Cultural Borrowings and Ethnic Appropriations in Antiquity*, ed. E. Gruen (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2005), 23–36.

106. On which, see Haul, *Etana-Epos*, 75–90; A. Annus, “The Folk-Tales of Iraq and the Literary Traditions of Ancient Mesopotamia,” *JANER* 9 (2009): 87–99.

107. Kinnier Wilson, *Etana*, 1.

108. For another such case, in addition to those cited above (n. 17), see Bezold, Cat. 1627, l. 20.

when *Etana* is compared with the Gilgameš tradition preserved in *Gilgameš*, *Enkidu*, and the *Netherworld* (*GEN*) and its parallels.¹⁰⁹

Consider, for starters, the eagle-and-snake story's opening, which with its tree-side setting recalls a similar scene in *GEN*, one that may well have supplied *Etana* with this folkloristic ingredient. In *GEN* this involves Inanna's transplanted ḫalub-tree, on whose branches the Anzû-eagle perches while a certain succubus makes her home in its trunk and a snake burrows in its roots:

Five years, ten years had gone by, the tree had grown massive; its bark, however, did not split. At its roots, a snake immune to incantations made itself a nest. In its branches, Anzû settled its young. In its trunk, the *Wardat lilî*-demon built herself a dwelling. (Il. 40–44, also 83–87, 127–31)

Gilgameš, who eventually cuts the tree down for Inanna, kills the snake and evicts Anzû (and the demon) in the process:

He killed the snake immune to incantations living at its roots. Anzû living in its branches took up its young and went into the mountains. The *Wardat lilî*-demon living in its trunk left from her dwelling. (Il. 140–42)

This sets off a chain of events that finally lands Enkidu in the Netherworld, wherefrom he reports to Gilgameš on conditions below.

GEN's depiction of the robust tree that accommodates the Anzû-eagle and an ill-fated snake strikes an obvious chord with *Etana*'s eagle-and-snake subplot.¹¹⁰ But in addition a connection with *Etana*'s deeper concern with human mortality may reside in other constituents of this portion of *GEN*. These include the ḫalub-tree itself and the succubus figure, both of which are associated in medico-magical traditions with matters of procreation and childbirth.¹¹¹ It is possible, then, that *GEN*'s initial scene, like the one involving the eagle's and snake's harmonious beginnings in *Etana*, connotes some vision of an Edenic tranquility that preceded complications arising from the development of social institutions and their perceived basis in human insecurity and greed.

But the possibility that a connection between the stories was realized in antiquity is yet furthered when one compares the portrayal of Gilgameš and Enkidu in *GEN* with respect to *Etana*. With Gilgameš, as with *Etana*, this concerns an anxiety about mortality and the desire for knowledge of things beyond the human realm. For this Enkidu serves as an essential vehicle, revealing to Gilgameš the secrets of the Netherworld and offering him precious know-how on its management while still alive.¹¹² This tradition in *GEN* has been recognized as having provided the basis for Enkidu's dream of the Netherworld in tablet VII of the eleven-tablet epic.¹¹³ On the latter occasion an equation between the persons of Gilgameš and *Etana* was in fact made explicit (see below).

And there are other, more direct and even literal parallels between the two stories and traditions. After all, both (SB) *Gilgameš* and *Etana* share the theme of a hero's attempt to reach an otherworldly space wherein the secret to eternal life—in both instances metaphori-

109. For which, see <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk> (no. 1.8.1.4); George, *Gilgamesh*, 743–77 (*GEN* ll. 172ff. and the parallel in SB *Gilgameš* XII), with bibliography, to which add J. Keetman, "König Gilgameš reitet auf seinen Untertanen: Gilgameš, Enkidu und die Unterwelt politisch gesehen," *BiOr* 64 (2007): 6–31.

110. The apparent substitution in SB II 72 of *Anzû* for *anzillu* in the snake's damnation of the eagle to Šamaš is noteworthy in this respect. However, this probably owes to a paronomastically inspired bit of scribal commentary or mix-up (so Saporetti, *Etana*, 69 n. 65) and thus cannot be summoned as evidence of *Etana*'s indebtedness to *GEN*—especially since Anzû's unflattering reference here accords with the bird's image in the Akkadian myth, not its more favorable cameos in earlier Sumerian writings.

111. Böck, "Proverbs 30:18–19," 275–76.

112. On the contrast between the texts' *Höllen*- and *Himmelfahrten*, see Haul, "lú an-šè ba-e₁₁-dè," 255–56.

113. See, e.g., George, *Gilgamesh*, 483–84.

cally as a magical plant—can be obtained. It is not difficult to appreciate how the journeys to these spaces, respectively imagined in heaven and across the sea, captured the Mesopotamian imagination and provided for it fitting outlets with which to explore man's eternal attempts to overcome the human condition. Undoubtedly for this reason the two figures associated with these attempts, Etana and Gilgameš, were recalled side-by-side, whether in the above-mentioned library catalogues or elsewhere, in Mesopotamia and even beyond its shores:

Hymn and Prayer to Utu, ll. 77–79:¹¹⁴

[Gil]gameš, the governor (ensí) of the Netherworld,
Etana, the colonel (nubanda) of the Netherworld,
 Open the (lit. your) door of the Netherworld!

Elegy on the Death of Nannaya, ll. 96–98:¹¹⁵

May the mighty **Gilgameš** [grant] you peace,
 May Bitu (or: Neti) and **Etana** be your helpers,
 May the god of the Netherworld utter prayers for you.

Exorcism formulae, ll. 67–68, 77–80:¹¹⁶

Be exorcized by **Etana, the vizier** (sukkal) of the Netherworld!
 Be exorcized by **Gilgameš, the ' . . . '** of the Netherworld!

. . .

May you swear by the life of **Etana, the great territorial ruler**
 (ensí.gal/iššaku rabû) of the Netherworld!
 May you swear by the life of **Gilgameš, the great governor**
 (šagin/šakkanakku) of the Netherworld!

Aelian, *De Natura Animalium*, XII 21:¹¹⁷

At any rate an Eagle fostered a baby . . . When Seuechoros was king of Babylon the Chaldeans foretold that the son born of his daughter would wrest the kingdom from his grandfather. This made him afraid and . . . he played Acrisius to his daughter: he put the strictest of watches upon her. For all that, since fate was cleverer than the king of Babylon, the girl became a mother, being pregnant by some obscure man. **So the guards from fear of the King hurled the infant from the citadel**, for that was where the aforesaid girl was imprisoned. **Now an Eagle which saw with its piercing eye the child while still falling, before it was dashed to the earth, flew beneath it, flung its back under it, and conveyed it to some garden and set it down with the utmost care. But when the keeper of the place saw the pretty baby he fell in love with it and nursed it; and it was called Gilgames and became king of Babylon.**

Finally, as noted above, the *Gilgameš* epic itself suggests an awareness of this parallel. This occurs when Enkidu relates to Gilgameš his vision of the Netherworld, in which he sees the alter-egos of Gilgameš and himself. For Gilgameš this is none other than Etana:

In the House of Dust I entered,

There sat *en*-priests and *lagar*-priests,

There sat *išippu*-priests and *lumahhu*-priests,

There sat the *gudapsû*-priests of the great gods,

There sat Etana, there sat Šakkan,

[There sat the] queen of the Netherworld, Ereškigal. (SB VII 198–203)¹¹⁸

114. M. Cohen, "Another Utu-Hymn," *ZA* 67 (1977): 14.

115. Å. Sjöberg, "The First Pushkin Museum Elegy and New Texts," *JAOS* 103 (1983): 315.

116. E. Ebeling, "Sammelungen von Beschwörungsformeln," *ArOr* 21 (1953): 388.

117. Ed. A. F. Scholfield, *LCL* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958–59): III, 38–41. For a recent study of this passage and its connections to *Etana* and *Gilgameš*, see Henkelman, "Birth of Gilgameš."

118. George, *Gilgamesh*, 644–45.

In this light it would not surprise us were evidence to be found of the actual coterminous learning or transmission of *Etana* and *Gilgameš*. This supposition is not altogether unfounded. Recall, for instance, the finding of a first-millennium *Sammeltafel* bearing portions of the *Anzû* and *Erra* myths and perhaps *Enûma Eliš*, something taken for evidence of these stories' appreciation as variations on a common theological theme.¹¹⁹ The possibility that in one form or another *Etana* and *Gilgameš* were approached in a similar vein does not seem unreasonable. Of course to base things on what awaits future discovery would constitute a parade example of an *argumentum ex silentio*. For the moment we proceed more cautiously then, but still with the conviction that the parallels outlined above cannot be ascribed to coincidence.¹²⁰

In sum, then, it is evident that the *Etana* legend must be included henceforth in any discussion of the Mesopotamian sources of Genesis's Eden story. Moreover, this new addition cannot be relegated to the sideline of the matter. The association with the "whirling sword" with which this paper set out supplies the key for a significantly broader connection between *Etana* and Eden, a connection visible both thematically and in terms of specific details. How this new piece fits in with the previous pieces of the Eden puzzle, especially the parts deriving from *Gilgameš*, also remains for future discovery, though an initial effort in this direction appears below.

IX

The connections between *Etana* and the Genesis Eden tradition detailed above also provide the Biblical story with important new interpretive possibilities, especially in the manner by which elements of the Mesopotamian story were apparently incorporated in and transformed by their new setting. Some such developments seem sufficiently apparent. These include the condensing of *Etana*'s two plots into Eden's one, the substitution of Eden's snake for *Etana*'s eagle, and, above all, the reconceptualization of *Etana*'s animal friendship pact (*ru'ûtu*) to which no deity is a party as an embryonic form of later Biblical covenants, equipped with stipulations and penalties (Gen. 2:16–17), between the divine realm and the human sphere.

In light of this story's place in Judeo-Christianity—from even its earliest phases¹²¹—a detailed consideration of the matters just outlined would understandably demand an undertaking vastly larger than feasible here. What follows instead reflects merely an initial foray into these interpretive grounds. And this too is undertaken only with respect to the subject that has already received a measure of attention: the role of language in the generation of literature. More specifically, this involves those instances previously considered regarding the idiom for taboo violation and the homophonous *erûs* and their employment in *Etana*.

119. P. Machinist, "Order and Disorder: Some Mesopotamian Reflections," in *Genesis and Regeneration: Essays of Conceptions of Origins*, ed. S. Shaked (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2005), 31–61.

120. Note the careful musings in Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 37, about *Etana*'s suitability in a broken line from the Babylonian *mappa mundi* (BM 92687 obv. 11'). This possibility gains favor when one notes that other figures mentioned in the passage (ll. 10'–11')—Utnapištim, Sargon, and Nūr-Dagan—reflect protagonists in the *Gilgameš* and *Šar Tamhāri* epics, texts studied for their ideas on kingship in the context of the first-millennium elementary school curriculum in Babylon (see P. D. Gesche, *Schulunterricht in Babylonien im ersten Jahrtausend v. Chr.* [Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000], 148–50). That *Etana* was cited in this context, and its hero recalled alongside *Gilgameš*, Sargon, and other legendary kings, seems likely.

121. See G. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001).

How does the Hebrew text receive those matters that, as discussed above, are so integrally comprised of turns of Akkadian phraseology?

Let us consider first the matter of taboo violation. As contended above, the eagle-and-snake story builds on the Akkadian idiom for taboo violation, *anzilla/asakka akālu*, whose literal sense, the *eating* of a taboo, sufficiently intrigued the author of *Etana* to spawn the story around it, including the eagle's devouring of the snake's young. The idea of taboo violation is thereby expressed dramatically, with the result of the act of eating conveying the immediate result of the infraction via the literal sense of *eaten* as *dead*.

The consequences of this for the understanding of Eden are substantial. For when one puts it in the context of the Mesopotamian tale, it becomes obvious that the parallel in the Biblical tradition, the eating of the fruit, represents an act that builds on the established Mesopotamian idiom for taboo violation. And while Eden, like *Etana*, takes seriously the breaking of stipulated instruction, unlike the Mesopotamian instance the reference for this has no comparable *linguistic* grounding in Israel, since taboo violation is not rendered in Hebrew by the metaphor of *eating*. In all likelihood it is for this reason that the primordial couple do not (and cannot) die immediately, "on the (very) day" (2:17) of their transgression—no small challenge to ancient interpreters.¹²² In fact the very opposite occurs, as predicted by the snake (3:4–5), with humanity enlivened forever in at least one consequential sense.

It follows that the Bible's connection of this act to the primordial couple's realization of their sexual knowledge was something secondary that must reflect an interpretation of a foreign idea that boasted no signification in the Hebrew world. Put differently, in Hebrew the metaphor underlying the Mesopotamian idiom became frozen (or dead). Its reconfiguration was motivated by a new metaphor¹²³ relying on the one linking fruit and sex to bring about a new meaning. If so, then we find here another instance of Müller's "disease of language," with a story of considerable renown fabricated in order to explain an unrecognized metaphor in its new host environment.

The second item involves the Hebrew reception of the bit of speculative philology with respect to the homophonous Akkadian words *erû*. To recapitulate, these include the eagle (*erû*) as well as the ideas of nakedness (*erû*) and conception (*erû*).¹²⁴ Eden, it appears, incorporates these ideas wholeheartedly—excluding the eagle, that is, which is absent from the story and whose role, as noted, was replaced with that of the snake. Then again, for its part Eden adds a twist to the Mesopotamian version with the mention of the snake's outstanding craftiness (*ārûm*). In light of the undeniable correspondences between what is effectively a philological exercise common to Akkadian and Hebrew, one cannot but wonder about what may account for these differences. How, if at all, does the preceding discussion shed light on them?

Setting aside momentarily those questions concerning the eagle-to-snake substitution and the reputed craftiness of Israelite snakes outside of Eden, it will surely not be contested that with the snake's introduction into the story the Bible adds another ingredient to the tradition it receives: knowledge. This is the meaning of the snake's craftiness: an otherworldly knowledge that justly professes some understanding of the divine realm. Of course this concern with the faculty of the mind suits ideally the direction in which the Bible wished to steer. The passage of this characteristic to the primordial couple presented the author of Eden with

122. See J. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1997), 67–69.

123. For such developments, see G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), 139–46.

124. Owing to its uncertainty we exclude here the additional homophonous possibility, that of the eagle's substitute copper (*erû*) wings; but cf. n. 56 above.

a creative solution with which to approach the problem of the origins of human knowledge and its perceived proximity to the divine counterpart. A brief comparison of Near Eastern mythological thinking on this very issue—the best example being *Atrahasis* (see below §X)—demonstrates the significance for the ancients of a coherent statement on this matter.

From this angle an explanation of the snake's displacement of the eagle in Eden may perhaps be posited after all. In fact the logic for this appears identical to that concerning the Biblical reception of the Akkadian idiom for taboo violation. Accordingly, once more the Biblical author could find no suitable option to an element in the Mesopotamian story, since *nešer*, the basic Hebrew counterpart of Akkadian *erû* "eagle," does not fit the philological scheme just outlined. But the author of Eden did not need to look far or wide for a substitute. The ideal one must have turned up quickly, and in the perfect source to boot. This was none other than *Gilgameš*'s snake, which, as described above (§VI), deprives the hero of immortality by stealing the magical plant and whose molting, like the eagle's, enchanted the ancients with the prospects of a wondrous worldly regeneration.

But the prospects of a snake in this role of culprit must have tantalized the author of Eden in another important way, one the eagle possibility could not match. The Hebrew for "snake," *nāḥāš*, must have immediately been recognized as a viable option for the sought-for philological connection to knowledge, albeit a form of knowledge that elsewhere the Bible is at pains to paint as illegitimate and fundamentally flawed—in fact as the very opposite of the divine wisdom bestowed unto Israel.¹²⁵ This is *niḥēš* (also *nāḥāš*), a basic term for the practice of divination (cf. 3:4–5). The possibility that a connection between these lexemes was assumed¹²⁶ in Israel finds support in another episode concerning the snake's supernatural powers. Recall Moses's beneficent bronze serpent, *nēḥaš hannēḥōšet* (Num. 21:9; cf. 2 Kings 18:4), concerning which the same sort of philological association underscores the supposition of this figurine's efficacy in countering those previously "bitten" (*nāšûk*). From this angle it is difficult to imagine how the joining of the snake to the Eden story, having fit so seamlessly within its conceptual framework, would not have been taken as proof of its veracity as well.

The preceding makes it clear that Genesis's reception of *Etana* hardly constitutes a case of passive borrowing. While Eden builds on the Mesopotamian story, it does so in ways that in the end must be deemed no less revolutionary than evolutionary (to tax a modern example of philological speculation). The Biblical story radically transforms *Etana*'s animal fable with its stress on the inevitability of both the processes of the natural world and their ramifications (cf. SB II 12–13, 45–51).¹²⁷ In its place Eden presents an innovative statement on the distinctiveness of human choice, something fundamentally opposed to the laws of nature. This difference cannot be overlooked in the final assessment of Eden's reception of *Etana*. The observations of Lévi-Strauss on the transformations of myths from one culture to another seem an especially apt start towards this end:

When a mythical schema is transmitted from one population to another, and there exist differences in language, social organization, or way of life that make the myth difficult to communicate, it begins to become impoverished and confused. But one can find a limiting situation in which, instead of being finally obliterated by losing all its outlines, the myth is inverted and regains part of its precision.¹²⁸

125. For a recent discussion of this point, see A. Winitzer, "The Reversal of Fortune Theme in Esther: Israelite Historiography in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context," *JANER* 11 (2011): 170–218.

126. In this case perhaps correctly, as many have noted, e.g., *BDB* 638.

127. This is not to espouse a triumphalist reading of Eden vis-à-vis *Etana*. As already suggested, the latter conveys a meaningful theological statement in its own right—within its own intellectual-cultural context. For an additional word on which, see Röllig, "Etana-Mythos," 284–85.

128. C. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976), vol. 2, 184.

One often observes . . . that mythological systems, after passing through a minimal expression, recover their original fullness on the other side of the threshold. But their reflection is inverted, a bit like a bundle of light rays entering a *camera obscura* through a pin-point opening and forced by this obstacle to cross over each other. The same image, seen rightside-up outside, is reflected upside down in the camera.¹²⁹

X

The possibility that language could engender creative expression in the way suggested here for both *Etana* and Eden is by no means unique in either Mesopotamian or Biblical literature. Variations of this phenomenon have been observed repeatedly, in virtually all literary genres—legends, epics, and mythic texts being no exception. Without hazarding definitions for these categories, it seems safe to say that, in the pre-Saussurian linguistics of the ancient Near East, language frequently served as the science-bearing arbiter in this world’s mythopoesis. In this capacity language not only articulated the stories, but actively participated in their very creation.

Perhaps the best example of this from the earlier stock of Semitic literature is the case of *Atraḥasis*, where, as many have shown,¹³⁰ to the mixture of blood and clay it was the Akkadian tongue that provided the magic touch in the creation of mankind. And again, this was hardly the matter of mere play. Recall that *Atraḥasis*’s conjoining of *dāmu* (“blood”), *eṭemmu* (“ghost”), and *ṭēmu* (“reason”) ultimately serves a purpose more consequential than that of etiology, be it that of humans or their heartbeat.¹³¹ The matter, further secured by the association of *ilu* (“god”), *wê-ila*? (the rebellious, slaughtered deity used to form man), and *awilum* (“man”),¹³² goes to the heart of what precisely it means to be human, just “a tad less than divine” (Ps. 8:6).

In the case of *Etana* this type of “word science” may initially seem not quite as elaborate, and the underlying concern at first not as lofty. Then again, in the final analysis, this story too, seemingly like all good stories, concerns that quintessentially human struggle with mortality, and the attempt to make sense of humanity’s place in the cosmic order. From the Western perspective Eden stands in the vanguard of this age-old effort, ostensibly minding the doors, like its own Cherubim and whirling sword, against the possibility of any satisfying resolution. And as for *Etana*, with Eden too this process was enabled to a substantial degree by the resort to linguistic aids. Once more then it becomes evident that among the ingredients available towards this goal to the Semitic speakers of the ancient Near East none was more precious than their very language. By it the world they inherited they nonetheless created anew.

129. Ibid., 257–58.

130. E.g., T. Abusch, “Ghost and God: Some Observations on a Babylonian Understanding of Human Nature,” in *Self, Soul, and Body in Religious Experience*, ed. A. I. Baumgarten, J. Assmann, and G. G. Stroumsa (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 363–83.

131. Reviewed by R. Oden, “Divine Aspirations in *Atraḥasis* and in Genesis 1–11,” *ZAW* 93 (1981): 197–216 (with important references).

132. Following ^dWE-*e-i-la* in OB I 223, in the vicinity of which the pun is made. On which, see B. Alster, “*ilū awilum: we-e i-la, ‘Gods: Men’ versus ‘Man: God’: Punning and the Reversal of Patterns in the Atrahasis Epic,*” in *Riches Hidden in Secret Places: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Thorkild Jacobsen*, ed. I. T. Abusch (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 35–40, to which add the important publication by A. R. George and F. N. H. Al-Rawi of the SB *Atraḥasis* texts from Sippar (“Tablets from the Sippar Library VI: *Atra-Ḥasis*,” *Iraq* 58 [1996]: 147–90), with new evidence for and a discussion of the DN’s reading in the later period and, to a lesser extent, already in the OB version (ibid., 149–50).

