

Abhandlung

A. R. George*

Enkidu and the Harlot: Another Fragment of Old Babylonian Gilgameš

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Abstract: This article presents a newly deciphered Old Babylonian fragment of the Epic of Gilgameš. The passages of text preserved on it tell of Enkidu's encounter with the prostitute and of his arrival in the city of Uruk, and clarify the relationship between other sources for the same episode. The perceived difference between the Old and Standard Babylonian poems' treatment of Enkidu's seduction disappears. The extant versions can be reconciled in a single narrative, common to all versions, that holds two different weeks of sexual intercourse. The different narrative strategies deployed in describing them are one of the ways in which the poem explores Enkidu's psychological development as he changes from wild man to socialized man.

Introduction

The Babylonian poem of Gilgameš is known predominantly from cuneiform tablets and fragments of the first millennium, which for the most part bear witness to a stable text that can be called the Standard Babylonian version of the poem. The far fewer pieces surviving from the second millennium can be divided into two groups according to time: (a) Old Babylonian tablets and fragments, from roughly the first half of the second millennium, which are the oldest witnesses to the Babylonian poem; and (b) Middle Babylonian tablets and fragments, from the latter part of the second millennium, which fall into the long interval between the Old and Standard versions. Both second-millennium groups record snapshots of the poem's evolution through time and reveal the existence of variant recensions. The publication below of a newly discovered Old Babylonian fragment of the poem of Gilgameš takes to sixteen the number of extant tablets and fragments from the earliest period of the poem's written history.

The Cornell fragment

The fragment CUNES 48-07-173, currently in the Jonathan and Jeannette Rosen Ancient Near Eastern Seminar at Cornell University, was identified as belonging to the Epic of Gilgameš by Alexandra Kleinerman and Alhena Gadotti in February 2015. With great generosity they sent photographs and invited me to publish it.¹ The new piece can be given the siglum OB Gilgameš CUNES. Though small in size, with parts of only sixteen lines preserved, the fragment allows for a better understanding of the narrative structure and content of one of the poem's most appealing chapters, the civilizing of the wild man Enkidu by Šamkatum, a temple prostitute ("harlot"), and his transition from protohuman savage in the uplands to socialized human being in the city of Uruk. Through it we gain greater insight into Enkidu's story, which has rightly been called a "parable of culture, the best-worked out Mesopotamian speculation about ... the First Man" (Gardner/Maier 1984, 15).

¹ I must also thank the former Curator of the Collection, Dr David I. Owen, for his support and hospitality while visiting Ithaca to copy the fragment in August 2016, and staff at the Collection for their invaluable help and advice, especially Laura Johnson-Kelly, Collection Manager and Head Photographer/Conservator in the Rosen Cuneiform Laboratory, and Anna J. Keeton, Preservation Assistant. The text was read with the Yale Cuneiform in September 2016 and with the London Cuneiform in October 2016; fellow readers are here thanked for their constructive engagement and ideas, as too is the journal's editor.

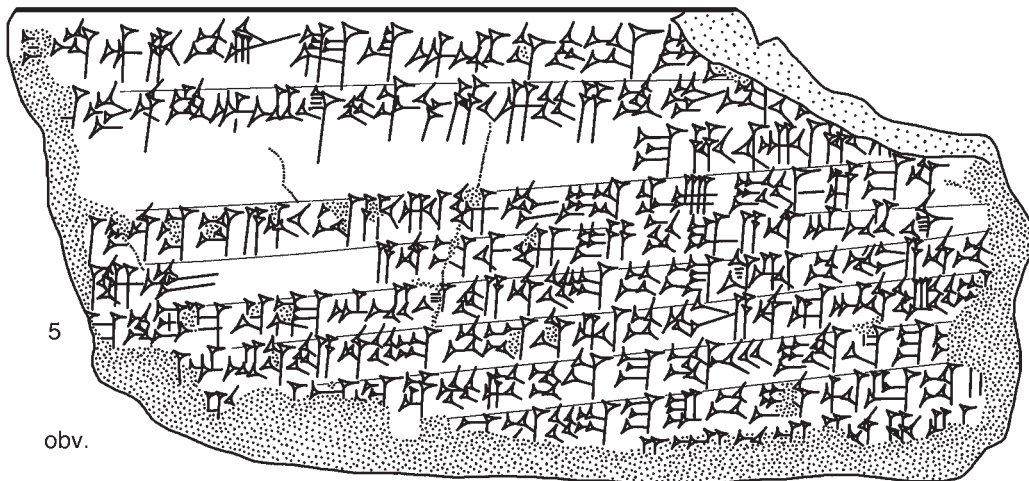
*Corresponding author: Andrew George, School of History, Religions and Philosophies, SOAS University of London; Email: ag5@soas.ac.uk.

The fragment OB CUNES is the top fraction of a large tablet that has been cut down to make it appear whole; it now measures 102×48×34 mm. The losses occasioned by this crude treatment are to be deplored, but it will be seen that even as a small remnant the fragment has much new to offer. The top edge is preserved almost to the left edge, and little is missing from the right edge. What remains of the obverse and reverse surfaces is inscribed, one column per side in carefully ruled lines, in a fine Old Babylonian hand. The script is similar to what F. R. Kraus (1972, xi) called “Rim-Sin-Schrift”, as seen in the written output of Larsa chanceries in the era of King Rīm-Sîn I, and spelling conventions match those of southern Babylonia in that period. The lines of tablet contain text that in a conventional understanding of Babylonian prosody comprise either one or two lines of poetry. Where two lines of poetry are written on the same line of tablet no mark of division is used.

In script, format and arrangement of text in particular, and in physical appearance generally, the fragment is very similar to a piece in the Schøyen Collection published as OB Gilgameš Schøyen₁ (CUSAS 10, no. 4; ed. George 2003, 219–224). Neither piece has an archaeological provenance but they probably share a similar history. The two fragments cannot be parts of the same tablet, however, for at 102 mm across OB CUNES is nearly fifty per cent wider than the fragment in Norway.

Since the top edge is preserved, the points of beginning and end of this Old Babylonian tablet can be identified. It begins at the moment immediately after Enkidu’s seduction by the prostitute, when he attempts after a week of sexual intercourse to return to the herd of wild animals with which he grew up, only to find that they shy away from him and he has lost the ability to keep pace with them. In this passage the text is very similar to Tablet I of the later, Standard Babylonian text (SB I, ed. George 2003, 535–557; shared lines are indicated in the transliteration below by the citations at the right-hand margin). Some lines in the middle of the passage also occur in another Old Babylonian source, the Pennsylvania tablet (OB II, ed. George 2003, 166–192), but the agreement is not extended across the whole passage.

A long gap then intervenes before the text resumes on the reverse. The tablet ends with Enkidu standing in the street of Uruk, awaiting a confrontation with Gilgameš, while the crowd gathered around him remark on his extraordinary likeness to their king. In this passage the text is very similar to the Pennsylvania tablet. The implications of the sharing of text with other sources, old and late, will be explored after the text of the Cornell fragment is presented.



CUNES 48-07-173

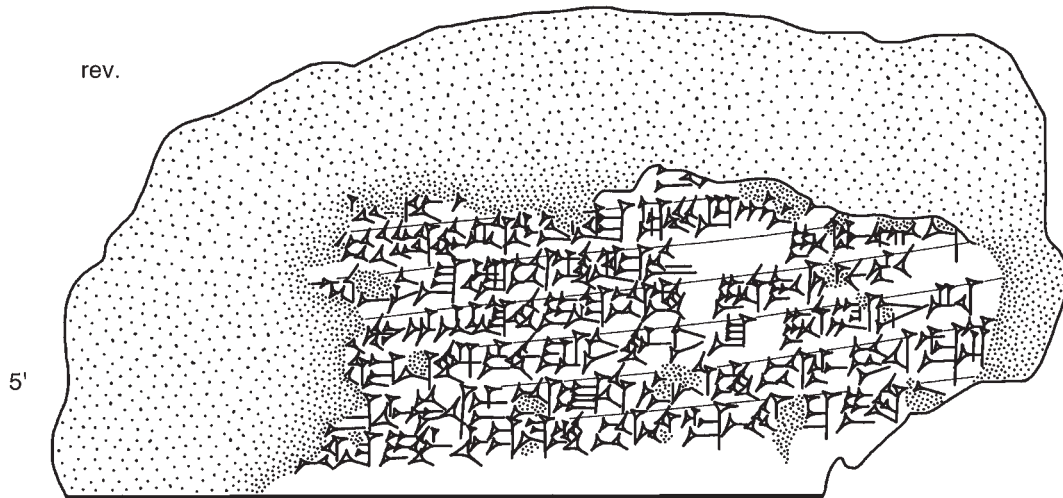


Fig. 1: CUNES 48-07-173, drawing by the author.

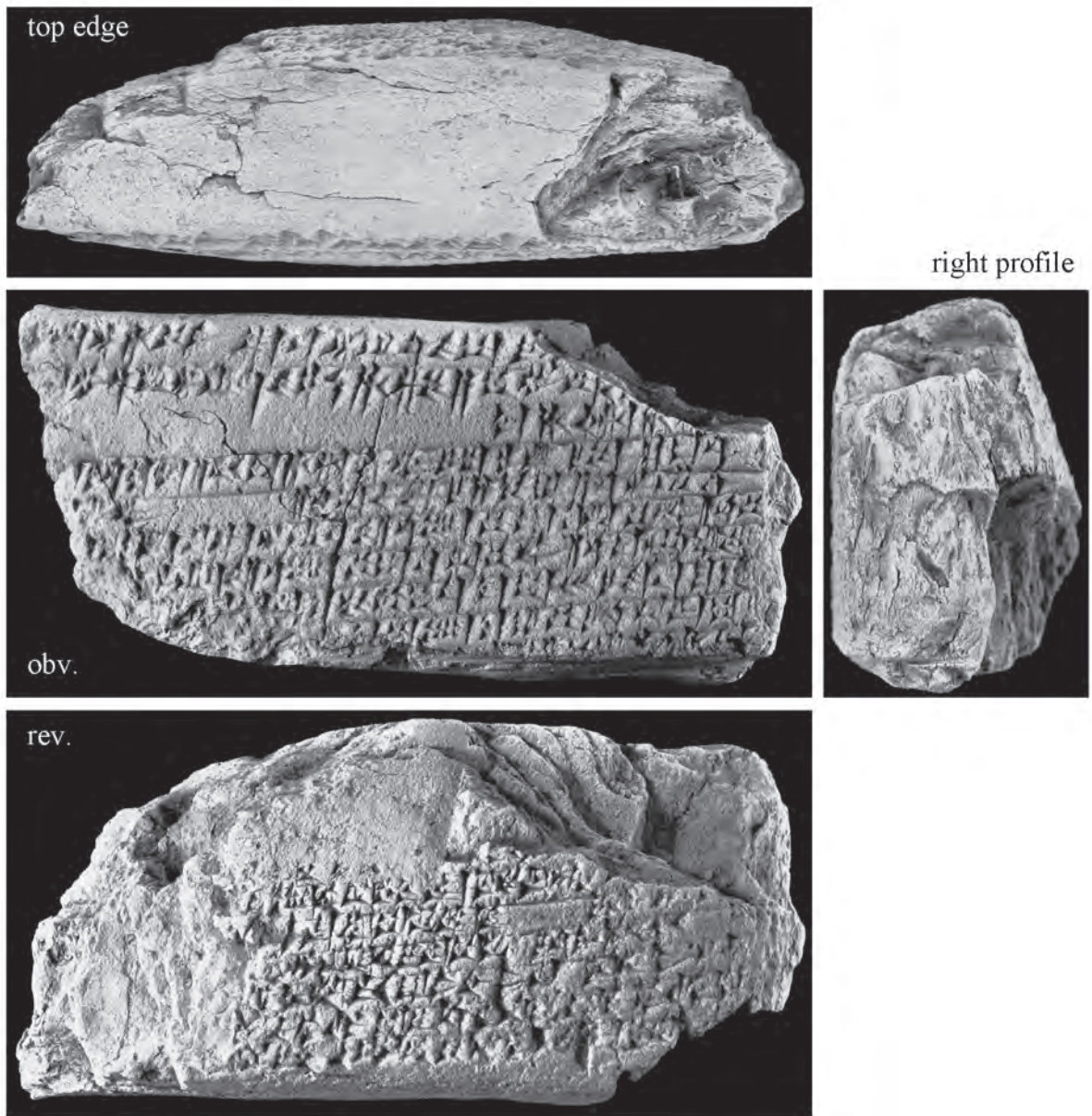


Fig. 2: CUNES 48-07-173, photographs by the Rosen Seminar, Cornell University.

CUNES 48-07-173 = CDLI P332735 (Figs. 1–2)

obv.

1	^l i ^l -ta-an-ḫa bi-ir-ka-šu ^d en-ki-du ₁₀ ša i-l[a-ku bu-ul-šu]	SB I 200
2a	[i-š]u uz ₄ -na-am ^d en-ki-du ₁₀ wa-tar ḫa-sí-sâ-am	202
2b	uk-ta-m[i-is-ma ittašab] / ma-ḫa-ar ḫa-r[i-im-tim]	203
3	^l ù? i-na la ša-a-ti ša ḫa-ri-im-tum i-ta-wu-ú i-še-me-e ez-na-[šu]	204–205
4	[ḫa-r]i-im-tum a-na ša-ši-im i-sâ-qar-ra a-na ^d en-ki-[du ₁₀]	206
5a	[al-k]a-am lu-ur-di-ka ^d en-ki-du ₁₀ a-na li-bi uruk(UNUG) ^{ki} ri-bi-tim	209 // OB II 56–57
5b	a-na bi-[tim el-li-im mu-ša-bi-(im) ša a-nim]	210 // OB II 58
6a	[ti-bé lu-ru-k]a ^d en-ki-du ₁₀ a-na li-bi uruk(UNUG) ^{ki} ri-bi-tim	210a // OB II 59
6b	a-na é-an-na el-li-[im mu-ša-bi-(im) ša iš ₈ -tár]	210b // OB II 60
7a	[a-šar ^d GIŠ g]i ^l -it-ma-la ¹ e-mu-qá-am	211
7b	ki-ma rīmi(AM) ^{mes} i-te-di-qú- ^l ú ¹ [qá-ar-ni?]	212
8a	[i-ta-wa-aš-šum-ma ma-gi-ir qá]- ^l ba-ša ¹	213
8b	li-ba ra-bi i-na ḫu-ur-ša-a-[ni]	(214)
9	[^d en-ki-du ₁₀ a-na ša-ši-i]m! ^l i-sâ-qar-ra ¹ a-na ḫa-ri-[im-tim]	215

rev.

1'	[^d GIŠ lu-ka-a]l- ^l li-im ¹ -k[a. . .] x x[. . .]	MB Priv ₁ rev. 8'
2'a	[. lu-ul]-li-kam	
2'b	ta-wi- ^l iš ¹ -ka lu-mu-ur x x[. . .]	OB II 174
3'	[i-il-la-ak i-n]a ^l pa-ni ¹ -šu ù ša-am-ka-tum i-na ^l wa-ar ¹ -k[i-šu]	175–176
4'a	[i-ru-ub-ma a-na li-bi uruk(UNUG) ^{ki} ri-b]i-tim	177
4'b	^d en-ki-du ₁₀ i-di-ša-am i-na da- ^l an-nu ¹ -ti-[šu]	cf. SB II 101
5'a	[iz-zi-za-am-ma i-n]a sú- ^l qí ¹ -im	OB II 179
5'b	pa-aḫ-ra-ni-im ni-šu i-na še-er-ri-[šu]	181–182
6'a	[a-na-mi ^d GIŠ m]a-ši-il pa- ^l da ¹ -at-tam	183
6'b	^l la-na ¹ -am ša-pi-il-ma e-[še-em-tam pu-ku-ul]	184–185
7'a	[mi-in-de ša i-wa-al-du i-na š]a-di-i-im	186–187
7'b	ši-iz-ba-am ša na-ma-aš-te-e-[m]a i-te-n[i-iq]	188–189

1	Enkidu's legs grew weary, whose [herd was] on [the move;]
2a	Enkidu [had] reason, excelling in understanding.
2b	He squatted [him down and sat] before the [harlot,]
3	and in a manner not (formerly) his, ²
	[his] ears began hearing the harlot's talk:
4	[the] harlot said to him, to Enkidu:
5a	“Come, let me lead you, Enkidu, into Uruk-the-City,
5b	to the [holy house, the dwelling of Anum!]
6a	[Arise, let me take] you, Enkidu, into Uruk-the-City,
6b	to the holy Eanna, [the dwelling of Ištar,]
7a	[where Gilgameš,] superb of strength,
7b	like a wild bull wears [a pair of horns(?).]”
8a	[She talked to him and] what she [said found favour,]
8b	he was stoutest of “heart” in all the uplands.
9	[Enkidu] said [to her,] to the harlot:

² Alternatively by emendation, “as for [her], she was observing(!) him.” See the textual note.

A long gap intervenes. When the text resumes the prostitute is talking to Enkidu:

- 1' " [I will] show you [Gilgameš,]
 2'a [I will] come [.]
 2'b I would witness what you have talked about [.]"
 3' [He going] in front and Šamkatum following behind [him,]
 4'a [he went right into Uruk-the]-City.
 4'b Enkidu, individually³ in [his] might, ^{5a} [stood there] in the street,
 5'b the people were gathered together around [him.]
 6'a "In build he is the equal [of Gilgameš,]
 6'b (but) shorter in stature and [sturdier] of [bone.]
 7'a [Surely it is he who was born in the] upland,
 7'b animals' milk is what he used to [suck.]"

Textual notes

obv. 1. The same line as SB I 200, except that *itanhā* occurs where the later text has *ittazizzā* and Enkidu's name divides the two clauses at the caesura.

2a. Again Enkidu's name falls at the caesura, in contrast to SB I 202, which is now to be read *u šū iši u[z-na] rapaš ḥasīsa*.

2b. The pair *uktammisma ittašab* also occurs in SB XI 138. The later version of the present line has instead *ittūramma ittašab ina šapal ḥarimti* "he came back and sat at the harlot's feet".

3. In Old Babylonian letters the phrase *ina lā šāti* means "in a matter that is not his business". Here it conveys the idea of something unaccustomed rather than inappropriate. Instead of the beginning of this line the Standard Babylonian text has *ḥarimtu inaṭṭala pānišu/a* (I 204), which either reports Enkidu's gaze on the prostitute or, more probably, her gaze on him (see George 2003, 551 n. 39, 799). This presents an opportunity for an alternative reading of the sign sequence ¹ū¹ *i-na la ša-a-ti* as (developing an idea of Enrique Jiménez): [*ši-m*]a *i-na-⟨ta⟩-la ša-a-ti* "As for [her,] she was observing him". Although this reading can only be obtained by emendation, in its heavy use of independent pronouns the line would share a stylistic feature with the similar fragment in Norway (George 2003, 220). Additionally, it would have the advantage of turning one line of tablet more convincingly into two lines of poetry, thus matching the later text and making a division of the passage into couplets easier:

*itanhā birkāšu Enkidu ša illaku būlšu;
 išu uznam Enkidu watar ḥasīsam.
 uktammisma ittašab maḥar ḥarimtim;
 šima inaṭṭala(m) šāti.
 ša ḥarimtum itawwū išemmeznašū;
 ḥarimtum ana šāšim issaqqaram ana Enkidu.*

At the end of the present line note the crasis *išemme'ā uznāšu > išemmeznašū*.

4. The line remains unchanged in SB I 206.

5a. The Pennsylvania tablet (OB II 56–57) is identical but lacks Enkidu's name. SB I 209 has synonymous *lutar-rūka* for *lurdika*, and (as usual) *supūri* "sheepfold" instead of *ribitīm* "city", and also lacks Enkidu's name.

5b. The restoration of this line and its repetition (6b) assumes long over-runs of text on to the missing right edge.

6a. Restored from OB II 59; [*lu-ta-ar-ru-k*]a is also possible, after SB I 209.

6b. OB II 60 repeats Anum from II 58, but SB I 210b has only Ištar.

7a. *gitmāla(m) emūqim* is expected (Reiner 1984, 3f. Type 1 or 2); on *damqam-inim* constructions see further Wasserman (2003, 45–60), Mayer (2015, 190). SB I 211 spells *gi-it-ma-lu e-mu-qī* (Nineveh) // *e-mu-qam* (Uruk).

7b. The restoration of *qarnī* "horns" is driven by the context, for wild bulls do not wear anything else. Perhaps a later editor found *iteddiq qarnī* obscure: only *kīma rīmi* "like a wild bull" is shared with the later text. The plural determinative on *rīmi*(AM)^{meš} in the present text is redundant. In the western periphery this determinative gained a new function as an orthographic marker for a logogram. As knowledge now stands such a usage is unexpected in southern Babylonia, but one should not rule it out: not all spelling conventions of the periphery had their origin outside Babylonia.

³ Alternatively by emendation, "Enkidu came forward": see the textual note.

8a. Restored from the SB line.

8b. The expression *libbam rabi* can be added to the like phrases studied by Wasserman (2003, 29–43) as *Tamyiz* constructions; its component parts also occur in a *damqam-inim* construction: see *Inninšagurra* 1 (Sjöberg 1976, 178) *šà-gur₄-ra // ra-bi-tam li-ib-bi* “stoutest of ‘heart’”. Note also an OB omen apodosis (YOS X 42 i 11–12): *li-bi um-ma-ni-im i-ra-ab-bi* “the army’s ‘heart’ will grow stout.” In all three instances *libbum* “heart” conveys desire and appetite, ambition and courage. Enkidu, no longer an unthinking animal, now has these human qualities in heroic proportion. Only *libbum* remains in the Standard Babylonian version of the poem, which replaces this line with (SB I 214) *mūdû libbašu iše’a ibra* “his heart (now) wise was seeking a friend”. The general thrust of both lines is the same: Enkidu’s newly conscious mind opens up to ideas and emotions that were previously meaningless to him.

rev. 1'. The verb *lukallimka* occurs in the fragmentary reverse of the Sealand tablet, in a passage in which the prostitute recommends to Enkidu the attractions of the city (MB Priv₁ rev. 8', ed. George 2007, 68). That also seems to be the context here. The later text contains a similar proposal, using the same verb, but there it occurs much earlier in Enkidu’s relations with the prostitute (SB I 234): *lukallimka Gilgameš ḥaddi'a amēla* “I will show you Gilgameš, the man so merry”.

2'b. It is assumed that *ta-wi-iš-ka* is a spelling of *tāwīt-ka*, with spirantization of the /t/ (GAG³ § 29a*); for *tāwītum* “verbal content, wording” see Charpin (1988). In this instance it alludes to the wording of Enkidu’s pledge, as previously articulated to the prostitute, to challenge Gilgameš and change the *status quo* (SB I 220–223). In the Pennsylvania tablet his pledge to do this would have fallen in the lacuna that occurs at the top of col. v, between ll. 165–166, where the stranger’s report of Gilgameš’s behaviour causes Enkidu to whiten with anger, and ll. 175–176, where he makes the journey to Uruk. The broken signs in the first-preserved line of col. v of the Pennsylvania tablet can be reconciled with the new fragment by reading [ta]-¹*wi-it-ka¹ lu-m[u-ur . . .]* (OB II 174).

3'. Where the edition has ¹*[en-ki-du₁₀]* (George 2003, 178), the Pennsylvania tablet can now also be read ¹*[na pa-ni-šu]* (OB II 175).

4'a. Restored from the Pennsylvania tablet.

4'b. This line has no counterpart in the Pennsylvania tablet but shares vocabulary with SB II 101, in a later version of the same passage. SB II 101 is incomplete, but *dannūti* is clearly present in the middle part of the line, following *ibēš* “he parted, moved apart”. However, the first word there is not Enkidu as it is here, and the end of

the SB line is lost, so if Enkidu did go his own way, what he moved apart from is not yet clear. In the present fragment *i-di-ša-am* fills the slot occupied in SB II 101 by *ibēš*. The adverb *idišam* “separately, one by one” belongs to the same broad semantic field as the verb *ibēš* but is not very convincing with a singular agent. There is a temptation to emend to *i-ku!-ša-am* “he came forward” (cf. OB II 144, 200).

5'a. This line lacks the qualification of its counterpart on the Pennsylvania tablet, which continues *ša Uruk ribitīm*.

5'b. This line is a variant of two lines on the Pennsylvania tablet: II 178 *ipḥur ummānum ina šērīšu* and 181–182 *paḥrāma nišu itawwā ina šērīšu*. The doubled /r/ in the last word is an irregular spelling also found in Larsa letters, e. g. CUSAS 36, nos. 102: 16; 184: 8.

6'a–b and 7'a–b. Restored from the Pennsylvania tablet (OB II 183–189), from which the present text differs only in the presence of enclitic *-ma* on *šapil* (co-ordinative) and *nammaštê* (topicalizing).

The significance of OB CUNES for the poem’s content and history

Between the two passages preserved on OB CUNES – Enkidu’s seduction by the prostitute and his entry into Uruk – should have fallen episodes known from other versions of the poem that cover the same ground: the Pennsylvania tablet (OB II, ed. George 2003, 166–192), a tablet from the Sealand I period (MB Priv₁, ed. George 2007), a fragment from Boğazköy (MB Boğ₁ Frag. a obv., ed. George 2003, 310–313), and parts of Tablets I and II of the Standard Babylonian version (SB I–II, ed. George 2003, 535–571). These episodes include Enkidu’s initiation into the ways of men in the shepherds’ camp, his time there as night watchman doing battle with predators from his former world, his encounter with a stranger from whom he learns of Gilgameš’s abuse of power in Uruk, and his resolution to go to the city himself.

The other extant Old Babylonian tablet that gives an account of some of these episodes, the Pennsylvania tablet, is better preserved than OB CUNES, but does not include the opening episode of the present fragment. It begins with Gilgameš telling his mother two dreams that foretell the coming of Enkidu. The line-extent of the Pennsylvania tablet, from the aftermath of Enkidu’s week of sexual intercourse to his confrontation with Gilgameš in Uruk, is 139 lines of tablet (OB II 51–189), comprising no more than one hundred lines of poetry. This calculation

might suggest that the present tablet should have contained roughly the same number of lines, about fifty lines of poetry per side. However, OB CUNES makes many lines of poetry share a line of tablet – the sixteen extant lines of tablet hold twenty-five lines of poetry – and the curvature of the extant fragment suggests that it is a much smaller fraction of the original, certainly no larger than one sixth and probably smaller still. According to its physical format, then, the original tablet should have contained much more text than the hundred lines of poetry that occupy the apparently corresponding part of the Pennsylvania tablet (OB II 51–189). The question then arises, what more did OB CUNES include?

In the matter of reconstructing the length and content of the missing text, there is need for caution, for it is quite possible that the text of OB CUNES diverged significantly from that on the Pennsylvania tablet, and used fewer or more lines in doing so. At first sight the opening passage exemplifies this potential, for its closest counterpart is not the Pennsylvania tablet but Tablet I of the Standard Babylonian version current in the first millennium BC. But this very difference, alongside the discrepancy in line-count noted in the previous paragraph, calls for a re-examination of the narrative episodes in the Pennsylvania tablet and SB Tablet I, and their relationship to each other.

The relationship of the Old Babylonian and Standard Babylonian episodes telling Enkidu's seduction was last studied by Tzvi Abusch (2005). Working only with the Pennsylvania tablet and SB Tablets I–II, he noted, like Oppenheim (1948) before him, that both versions include a passage relating “Enkidu's seven-day sexual marathon”, but that there are two major differences: (a) in the Standard Babylonian text Enkidu attempts to rejoin his herd but fails, whereas in the Pennsylvania tablet the week of sexual intercourse is prefaced by the statement that Enkidu had forgotten about his former life with them; and (b) in the Standard Babylonian text the narration of Gilgameš's dreams foretelling the coming of Enkidu falls after the week of intercourse, and is reported at second hand by the prostitute, while the Pennsylvania tablet places the dreams in the narrative before the week of intercourse, and apparently in the narrator's voice, not the prostitute's.

The state of preservation of the sources is a major obstacle in the comparison of different versions of Gilgameš. It is important to consider the plausible content of lacunae as well as the content of extant passages. In the present case, Old Babylonian text that might precede the incipit of the Pennsylvania tablet has hitherto been lacking, and the opening twenty-five lines of SB Tablet II are also lost as matters now stand. Abusch (2005, 423) considered it pos-

sible that “Enkidu's pursuit of the animals was recounted at the end of the preceding, presently missing, first tablet of the OB version and that a version of what we have in OB P[ennsylvania tablet col.] ii recurs in the presently broken beginning of SB II”. However, he then rejected this idea. While his reasons for doing so remain valid, the newly discovered presence in OB CUNES of lines retailing Enkidu's attempt to rejoin his herd – or at least the loss of strength that thwarted his endeavour – in text very similar to the Standard Babylonian version, prompts us to reconsider the matter. At the same time, the recension represented by the Sealand fragment (MB Priv₁, ed. George 2007) can inform the argument for the first time.

The fragment of text on the reverse of OB CUNES is a very close match for the Pennsylvania tablet. Of the ten lines of poetry that can be restored there (ll. 2'b–7'b), nine are present in the Pennsylvania tablet (with minor variants), though one is truncated (5'a, which lacks a half-line counterpart to OB II 180). In place of the missing line (OB II 178) OB CUNES has a line reminiscent of, but not identical to, a line of the Standard Babylonian version (SB II 101). The similarity of the text of OB CUNES and the Pennsylvania tablet is thus established. It is accordingly surprising that the text preserved on the obverse of OB CUNES, which tells of the aftermath of Enkidu's week of intercourse, uses very different language from the apparently similar passage in the Pennsylvania tablet (OB II 48–50). It provides instead an Old Babylonian antecedent for the episode of the Standard Babylonian version (I 200–215).

The week of sexual intercourse in the Pennsylvania tablet follows the narration of Gilgameš's dreams; in the Standard Babylonian version, it falls beforehand. Where, then, were these dreams in OB CUNES? It has been suggested above that the original tablet, according to its curvature, must have held much more text than the apparently corresponding lines of the Pennsylvania tablet (OB II 51–189). One way of making up the difference this would be to include the dreams in the missing portion. In this arrangement, the opening lines of OB CUNES would precede the missing dreams and so find their counterpart not in the Pennsylvania tablet, which begins with the dreams, but with text related in a tablet that came before it (a putative OB I in that edition). The logical conclusion of this arrangement of episodes would be that there were two weeks of sexual intercourse in Old Babylonian Gilgameš, one that preceded the dreams and another that followed them.

Turning to the Standard Babylonian version, it has been remarked before that the end of SB Tablet I and the opening of SB Tablet II correspond closely to the Pennsyl-

Table 1: Preservation of episodes across five versions

Episode	Penn.	CUNES	Sealand	Boğaz.	SB
1. P. seduces E., then 1st week of sex	[OB I]	–	–	–	I 167–194
2. E. attempts to rejoin his herds A	[OB I]	obv. 1–2b	–	–	I 195–203
3. P. invites E. to Uruk, 1st instance	[OB I]	obv. 3–9	1–3	–	I 204–243
4. Dreams of Gilgameš	OB II 1–43	[...]	4–42	–	I 244–298
5. E. & P. make love, 2nd week of sex B	44–50	[...]	[i–ii]	–	I 299–II [x]
6. P. invites E. to Uruk, 2nd instance C	51–68	[...]	57–70	1–4	II [x+1]–33
7. P. clothes E., leads him to shepherds	69–86	[...]	71 ff.	5–8	II 34–43
8. E.'s initiation into human customs	87–119	[...]	[...]	9–16	II 44–62
9. E.'s encounter with wedding guest	120–166	[...]	[...]	[...]	II 63–[x]
10. E. enters Uruk to challenge G.	167–189	rev.	[...]	[...]	II [x+1]–108

Key: E. = Enkidu, G. = Gilgameš, P. = prostitute, **A–C** = key lines from Table 2, [OB I] = lost first tablet of an edition of the poem in which the Pennsylvania tablet is Tablet II

Table 2: Key counterpart lines

A (follows 1st week of sex)
CUNES obv. 1 <i>itanhā birkāšu Enkidu ša ill[aku būlšu]</i> // SB I 200 <i>ittazizzā birkāšu ša illaka būlšu</i>
B (introduces 2nd week of sex)
OB II 44 <i>Gilgāmeš šunatam ipaššar</i> // SB I 299 <i>[ultu] šamhat šunāti Gilgāmeš itammā ana Enkidu</i>
OB II 45 <i>Enkidu wašib maḥar ḥarimtim</i> // SB II 1 <i>[Enkidu] ašib maḥarša</i>
OB II 46 <i>urta”amū kilallūn</i> // SB I 300 <i>[urta”]amū kilallān</i>
C (follows 2nd week of sex)
OB II 54–55 <i>amminim itti nammaštê tattanallak šeram</i> // SB II 29 <i>ammini itti n[ammaštê tarappud šera]</i>

vania tablet (SB I 300–II 1 // OB II 45–46 but transposed; SB II 34 ff. // OB II 69 ff.). If the correspondence is maintained in the lacuna that obtains between SB II 1, where Enkidu sits before the prostitute, and 29, where she asks him why formerly he used to roam the wild,⁴ then here, in this lacuna, should be a sexual marathon corresponding to OB II 48–50, and its aftermath. This would be a second week of intercourse, additional to that related in SB Tablet I.

So understood, all the extant versions of the poem would have the same basic narrative, with broadly the same ten episodes in the same order (Table 1), and sharing

three sets of key lines (Table 2). Because of lacunae in the previously known tablets, this reconstruction has only emerged with the decipherment and placement of the obverse of OB CUNES.

In this reconstruction the missing portion of OB CUNES would correspond to part of the missing tablet that preceded the Pennsylvania tablet, and the first four and a half columns of the Pennsylvania tablet (i. e. OB [I x–y] and II 1–189), and to the corresponding portion of the Standard Babylonian version (i. e. SB I 216–II 104). It is difficult to reckon the lines of poetry thus entailed in the Old Babylonian text, but the episodes account for about 189 lines of poetry in the SB version. Since OB CUNES doubles up many lines of poetry – in the extant passages fitting twenty-five lines of poetry into sixteen lines of tablet – one can reckon that 189 lines would occupy about 121 lines of its text. This missing portion of 121 lines of tablet can be added to the sixteen extant lines, giving a total of 137. By this calculation the original tablet, of which OB CUNES is the surviving fraction, held about seventy lines of tablet per side. Accordingly, the surviving fragment of sixteen

⁴ SB II 29 *tarappud* (restored from SB I 208) is present I/1; its counterpart, OB II 55 *tattanallak* is present, I/3. The present (better durative) is here imperfect, denoting past action which is not certainly completed (GAG³ § 78 f). Abusch (2005, 423 f.) took another position, that *tarappud* conveys Enkidu's behaviour at the time of speaking; for him the similarities between the transition SB I–II and OB II 45 ff. were a matter of “resumptive repetition” made necessary by a supposed displacement of the dream episode. I would maintain that the new evidence of OB CUNES removes the necessity for such a displacement.

lines represents just under one eighth of the whole. This proposition is broadly compatible with the fragment's physical characteristics, as described at the start of this discussion.

In this way, a careful consideration of OB CUNES as a textual source and as an archaeological object makes a strong recommendation for the reconstruction of a common narrative structure, shared by all the extant fragments that are sources for this part of the poem: that there were two separate week-long episodes of sexual congress between Enkidu and the prostitute, and that Gilgameš's dreams fell between them.

Why two weeks of sexual intercourse?

This new analysis begs the question as to why the poets of Gilgameš felt it necessary to embellish their poem with two episodes of sexual intercourse rather than one. This is a matter for a literary-critical response. At the outset it is immediately clear that, while the actual act of intercourse is narrated with an identical couplet on both occasions, the second sexual marathon is much more briefly related than the first. It has long been possible to contrast the narrative style, length and detail of the two episodes (e.g. Oppenheim 1948, 25–27; Bailey 1970, 138–139; id. 1976, 435–437). What can now be identified as Enkidu's first initiation into sexual intercourse is prefaced by a very elaborately narrated seduction scene, repeated over and again in the Standard Babylonian poem; his second has no such preamble and occupies only four lines of poetry. As already noted, his first experience is followed by a vain attempt to revert to the wild, but his second is not, and instead it is stated beforehand that he had forgotten his birthplace. Now that the two episodes of sexual intercourse can be seen both to fit into a single narrative structure, we are in a position to submit that the contrasting content of the two passages can no longer be a matter of the different psychological outlooks of different poet-editors and the superior sophistication of the Standard Babylonian poem, as proposed by Oppenheim (1948, 26. 27 n. 2) and Bailey (1970, 139), nor of the evolution of the text through “centuries of reworking” (Bailey 1970, 137f.), nor even of the conflation of originally independent tales (Abusch 2005). The change in wording and emphasis is a function of the way the story is told, a strategy of storytelling.

At this point one may observe that the differences between the two episodes lie not only in the length and content of the two passages that describe each week of intercourse and indicate Enkidu's corresponding frames of mind. The prostitute's response is also different in each

case. After both weeks she urges Enkidu to go with her to Uruk, but the attractions of Uruk that she bids him consider subtly change. The two passages are carefully constructed according to the same pattern:

ašar Gilgāmeš gitmālu emūqi
u kī rīmi ugdaššaru eli eṭlūti
 SB I 211–212 // 218–219
 Where Gilgameš is perfect in strength,
 and like a wild bull lords it over the menfolk.

ašar šitkunū nēpešētim
u attāma kīma awīlimma(?) taštakkan(?) ramānka
 OB II 61–63
 Where (men) are engaged in labours of skill,
 you, too, like a man, can make a place for yourself.

Each couplet consists of two clauses, one beginning with the conjunction “where” and a second fronted by a simile. The two passages are thus syntactically parallel, but semantically they are opposed. The prostitute's first attempt at persuasion focuses on Uruk as the home of the magnificent but brutal Gilgameš. After the second week of intercourse she proffers a very different attraction: Uruk will be a place where Enkidu will find a role in human society. The word *awīlum* “man” in this passage (OB II 62), if correctly read, is loaded with allusion, for *awīlum* was the name given in mythology to the creature whom the gods made with the specific purpose of doing the work that formerly they themselves had done (as in the poem of Atram-ḥasis, etc.). For Enkidu, becoming an *awīlum* in Uruk meant participating in mankind's burden, the maintenance of the gods in their temples.⁵

The two couplets contrast tyranny and order, and here again the poem can be read to expose in the characters of Gilgameš and Enkidu two complementary opposites that together make a whole.⁶ Thus it is not only the sexual act itself that changes between the two episodes: there is a broader insight, which focuses on Enkidu's prospects in the city.

What drives the length, content and focus of the two episodes of sexual intercourse and their aftermaths is a masterful exposition of the psychology of Enkidu. At first he is a nervous wild animal, whom it takes all the prostitute's expertise to tame and bring to bed. After the act he still has the instinct to run with the animals. But with

⁵ The prospect of Enkidu's socialization in Uruk is made even more clear in the Sealand tablet, where the prostitute envisages him joining in the communal consumption of meat-offerings, *zibu* (MB Priv₁ ii 69, see George 2007, 74).

⁶ Enkidu has often been identified as Gilgameš's *alter ego*; see further von Weiher (1980, esp. p. 117).

their fellowship denied him through his intimacy with the human enemy, and through his new-found understanding and intelligence, he is intrigued to learn of the violent, bull-like figure of Gilgameš, and responds to the prostitute's suggestion that he go to Uruk by vowing to challenge the tyrant in a test of brute strength. The prospect is raised of two wild bulls locking horns and vying for supremacy.

While the narrator (OB II) or the prostitute (MB Priv., SB I) then relates Gilgameš's dreams, Enkidu makes in this interlude the mental transition from his past to his future, and forgets his origins. This break from his former self is stressed by the prostitute in a line that has given much trouble in the past but can now be confidently rendered (Pennsylvania tablet, OB II 64 // Sealand tablet, MB Priv. ii 70, see George 2007, 66, 74): *abkātīma ina qaqqarī mākrē'im* "You are banished from the regions where there is no shepherd". The verb *abākum* in the active is used of sending someone on a journey.⁷ Enkidu's departure from the uplands is a circumstance forced on him by his exclusion from the herd and so the stative *abkāti* is deployed. His previous home was a region without a shepherd, a phrase that has a dual meaning, being open to both literal and metaphorical readings. The place which Enkidu has left was a remote land beyond even the pastures where the shepherd grazed his sheep and goats, but also a place so lacking in human flock that it fell under the control of no royal shepherd, beyond the reach even of Gilgameš in Uruk.⁸ Enkidu must accept that his time in the ungoverned wild is over, and that he has already taken the first step of the journey that leads to Uruk. And the way he reacts to his new circumstances and knowledge develops accordingly.

Already transformed from unconscious semi-animal to self-conscious man, Enkidu needs no seduction second time around, so the second week of intercourse is more perfunctorily told. More important for the story is that it reinforces his desire to go to Uruk, in response this time to the prospect not of locking horns with Gilgameš but of finding there a role in men's society. The idea introduced here is of Enkidu joining the urban social order that the gods established when they created kings to rule men.

It is a mark of the poem's profundity that the two contrasting futures placed in Enkidu's mind by the prostitute, each after a sexual marathon, are eventually reconciled

in the narrative. In Uruk Gilgameš and Enkidu meet head on like bulls (OB II 219 // 224 *kīma le'im*), and fight each other to a standstill without an apparent winner; but then Enkidu acknowledges Gilgameš's superiority as one predestined to be king by the god Enlil (OB II 238–240), and thereby implicitly accepts his own subordinate position. The moment is again informed by mythological thought: Babylonian folklore held that *awilum* "human being" and *šarrum* "king" were distinct categories, created separately (e.g. VS 24, 92, ed. Mayer 1987). Enkidu's acknowledgement that Gilgameš is the latter kind, and so he himself must be the former, completes the story of his transition from wild man to socialized human, and deftly and perceptively concludes this poet's reflections on the ascent of man.

Recensional complexity is a major feature of the poem's history in all periods. Previous publications of overlapping episodes among tablets and fragments of similar and different dates have demonstrated how the various versions and recensions differ in such matters as vocabulary, line-order, omission etc. (e.g. George 2007). The present fragment offers more insights of the same kind (see the textual notes). Recensional variations have also encouraged hypothetical reconstructions of Old Babylonian Gilgameš poems with a narrative structure markedly different from the Standard Babylonian poem (Abusch 2001, Fleming/Milstein 2010). The Cornell fragment reminds us to think as much in terms of narrative similarity. The present proposal of a reconstructed narrative of the humanizing of Enkidu that is common to various versions of the poem, and includes two separate weeks of sexual intercourse, helps to balance matters. More finds of fragments of this long-lived composition will undoubtedly complicate the picture but they will also further increase our understanding of what lines, passages and episodes different versions of the poem had in common.

⁷ In Old Babylonian poetry see e.g. the Agušaya poem, VS 10, 214 vii 6 (ed. Groneberg 1997, 81): *i-bu-uk-ma ša-al-ta-am* "he sent Strife on her way". Note also the II/1 stem *ubbukum* "to drive" from the throne, "banish".

⁸ This most common trope of royal ideology is repeatedly applied to Gilgameš in SB Tablet I: *šū rē'ūmma ša Uruk supūri* "he who is shepherd of Uruk-the-Sheepfold".

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