

DEATH AND NETHER WORLD ACCORDING TO THE SUMERIAN LITERARY TEXTS

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FROM the point of view of Sumerian cultural behaviour, the royal tombs excavated at Ur with such care and skill by Sir Leonard Woolley, were of epoch-making significance; they indicate with reasonable certainty that customarily the early rulers of Sumer were accompanied to the grave not only by some of their most precious personal possessions, but by a considerable human retinue as well.¹ Needless to say, immediately upon this rather startling discovery the cuneiformists, and particularly the Sumerologists, began searching the documents for inscriptional verification of one sort or another, but without success. Moreover, in the past two decades, quite a number of Sumerian myths, epic tales, hymns, lamentations, and "historiographic" documents have become available,² and it seemed not unreasonable to hope that one or another of these might shed light on the Sumerian burial customs relating to the royal tombs. But this hope, too, failed to materialise to any significant extent, which is not too surprising in view of the fact that the royal tombs date from about 2500 B.C., while the majority of our available literary documents were probably first composed about 2000 B.C. However, a number of the Sumerian literary works are concerned in one way or another with death and the Nether World, and the invitation to participate in the Woolley *Festschrift* offered an opportune moment to sift, collect, analyse and present the Sumerian ideas about death and "immortality," in honour of the archaeologist who has done so much to make the long dead Sumerians "immortal."

As of today, the only Sumerian literary document which seems to confirm the archaeological evidence that the ancient rulers were accompanied to their graves by a human retinue is UM 29-16-86, a text published and treated in *B.A.S.O.R.* 99, p. 3ff. It is a small tablet inscribed with the last 42 lines of a Gilgameš epic tale, probably the one tentatively entitled "The Death of Gilgameš," of which only fragmentary remains are available at present.³ This text states in poetic phraseology that Gilgameš presented gifts and offerings to the various deities of the Nether World and to the important dead dwelling there, such as the *mabhu*, *entu*, and *pašišu*, for all who "lay with him" in his "purified palace" in Erech: his wife, son, concubine, musician, entertainer, chief valet, and household attendants. As suggested in the above-mentioned publication, it is not unreasonable to assume that the poet pictured these gifts as presented by Gilgameš after he and his retinue had died and descended to the Nether World. If this interpretation should turn out to be

correct, we would here have literary corroboration for the multiple-burial type of royal tomb uncovered by Woolley, especially since, as we now know from the *Tummal* composition, Gilgameš was a contemporary of Mesannepadda, and therefore belongs roughly to the period represented by the tombs.

Another document which sheds no little light on the funerary practices relating to the royal dead is the six-column tablet CBS 4560 inscribed with a unique Ur-Nammu composition belonging to a literary genre as yet unclassifiable.⁴ The first column, which is broken away entirely, may have contained a poetic description of Ur-Nammu's outstanding achievements in war and peace, and of the unfortunate incidents leading to his death. The available text which begins with the second column seems to relate how Ur-Nammu, "who had been abandoned on the battlefield like a crushed vessel" was lying on his bier in his palace, mourned (probably) by his family and kin and by the people of Ur. We next find him in the Nether World—just as in the case of Gilgameš—presenting gifts to its "seven gods," slaughtering oxen and sheep to the important dead, and presenting weapons, leather bags, vessels, garments, ornaments, jewels, and other paraphernalia to Nergal, Gilgameš, Ereškigal(?), Dumuzi, Namtar, Hušbišag, and Ningišzida—each in his own palace; he also presents gifts to Dimpimekug and to the "scribe of the Nether World." Just how Ur-Nammu got to the Nether World with all these rich gifts and offerings is not stated by our poet, unless it should turn out that the "chariots" mentioned in the very obscure lines immediately preceding the "Nether World passage" were utilized for this purpose.⁵ In any case, Ur-Nammu finally arrives at the spot which (probably) the priests of the Nether World have assigned to him. Here certain of the dead are turned over to him, perhaps to be his attendants, and Gilgameš "his beloved brother" explains to him the rules and regulations of the Nether World. But, our poem continues, "after seven days, ten days had passed," "the wail of Sumer" reaches Ur-Nammu. The walls of Ur which he had left unfinished, his newly built palace which he had left unpurified(?), his wife whom he could no longer turn on his lap, his son whom he could no longer fondle(?) on his knee—all these brought tears to his eyes, and he sets up a long and bitter lament. The burden of his outcry seems to be that although he had served well the gods, they failed to stand by him in time of need; now he is dead and his wife and friends and supporters are sated with tears and lamentation. The conclusion of the composition is altogether unknown since the last column is completely destroyed.

As can be seen from the preceding tentative sketch of its contents, it is difficult to classify the literary genre to which the poem belongs; it may be a kind of "historiographic" composition, similar in some respects to the "Curse of Agade,"⁶ in which a Sumerian poet gave vent to his feelings at the sad state of affairs existing in Sumer immediately after the death of Ur-Nammu. In any case, the document sheds considerable light on the "life" of the dead in the world below as pictured by the Sumerian intellectuals. We find once

again the gods which had to be placated, as well as the important dead priests. The newly arrived deceased had a special place assigned to him, and was instructed in the laws of the Nether World, at least if he was a king. Though "dead" the deceased could in some unexplained manner be in sympathetic contact with the world above, could suffer anguish and humiliation, and cry out against the undependable gods. But unlike "The Death of Gilgameš" poem, no mention is made of a human retinue attending the king to the Nether World, indeed, the wife and children are actually described as living in the world above.⁷ It would, therefore, seem safe to conclude that by the time of Ur-Nammu at least, it was no longer customary to have the king accompanied to his grave by any of his family or attendants.

Turning from royalty to more ordinary mortals, there will be published in the near future an hitherto unknown document from the Pushkin Museum in Moscow which is of no little significance for the funerary practices of the Sumerians and their mental image of "life" in the Nether World.⁸ This is a tablet which contains two compositions of unequal size separated by a ruled line. The first and longer of the two consists of 112 lines of text, while the second has only 66 lines. Both of the compositions consist in large part of funeral dirges uttered by a single individual, named Ludingirra. In the first, Ludingirra laments the death of his father Nanna who, if I have understood the relevant passage correctly, had died from wounds received in some kind of physical struggle. In the second dirge, the same Ludingirra bewails the death of his good and beloved wife, Nawirtum by name, who seems to have died a natural death.

In both compositions, the dirges are preceded by prologues which serve to set the scene, as it were. The prologue to the first dirge consists of 20 lines, and is therefore relatively brief compared to the rest of the composition. The prologue to the second dirge, however, consists of 47 lines and is about two-and-a-half times as long as the remainder of the poem. Stylistically, both compositions make use of highly poetic diction characterised by various types of repetition, parallelism, choral refrains, similes and metaphors. The deeds and virtues of the deceased, as well as the grief and suffering of those left behind, are sung in inflated and grandiloquent phrases, a stylistic feature characteristic of funeral songs and orations the world over and at all times.

The prologue to the first composition begins with a relatively prosaic two-line statement which seems to say that a son, who had gone away to a distant land, was called back to Nippur where his father lay mortally sick. There follow six lines, each of which describes the father with some highly flattering phrases and ends with the refrain "(he) had become ill." These are followed by a passage depicting the intensity of the father's illness and suffering, and his eventual death (lines 9-15). News of the catastrophe reaches the son "on a distant journey"; whereupon, we may assume, he returns to Nippur and, overcome with grief, he writes the lament which follows (lines 16-20).

The dirge itself begins by depicting the desperate grief of the deceased's wife, who was presumably Ludingirra's mother (lines 21-32); of an unnamed *luku*-priestess of the god Ninurta (lines 33-39); of an unnamed *entum*-priestess of the god Nusku (lines 40-46); and of the deceased's sons and their brides (lines 47-62). Following what seems to be a brief prayer for Nanna's welfare (63-69), the dirge continues with a description of the mourning for the deceased by his daughters, by the elders and the "matrons" of Nippur, and by his slaves (lines 70-75). Here, rather surprisingly, there seems to be interposed a one-line prayer involving the eldest son of the deceased (line 76). Following which comes a passage containing a number of curses against Nanna's murderer and the latter's offspring (lines 77-84). The dirge concludes with a series of prayers: for the welfare of the deceased in the Nether World (lines 85-98); for his favourable treatment at the hands of his personal god and the god of his city (lines 99-103); and for the well-being of his wife, children, and kin (lines 104-112).

In the second elegy it is the prologue to the dirge which, as mentioned earlier, takes up the greater part of the poem. It begins with the announcement of Nawirtum's death in a series of parallel-phrased similes and metaphors (lines 113-121), and continues with a description of the ensuing grief on the part of the inhabitants of Nippur (lines 122-131). Following two very obscure passages (lines 132-138 and lines 139-150), the first of which seems to describe the interruption of important religious rites in Nippur as a result of Nawirtum's death, the latter's husband Ludingirra comes on the scene to utter his mournful lament (lines 151-159). The dirge itself may be divided into two parts: a bitter lament for Ludingirra's bereavement, consisting of a succession of parallel clauses, each followed by an identical refrain (lines 160-168); and a series of prayers for the deceased, and for her husband, children, and household (lines 169-178).

So much for the contents of the two dirges. For the purposes of the present study, it is the closing passage in the first dirge (lines 87-112) which is of importance. Line by line it reads:

87. O Nannâ, may your spirit (?) be pleased, may your heart be at rest,
88. Utu, the great lord (?), of Hades,
89. After turning the dark places to light, will judge your case (favourably),
90. May Nanna decree your fate (favourably) on the "Day of Sleep,"
91. [May] Nergal, the Enlil of the Nether World, . . . before (?) it (?),
92. May the bread-eating heroes (?) utter your name, . . . food,
93. [May] the . . . of the Nether World . . . pity . . . ,
94. May (?) the . . . -drinkers [satisfy(?)] your thirst with (?) its (?) fresh water,
95. [May(?)] . . . ,
96. In strength [may(?)] Gilgameš . . . your (?) heart (?),

97. [May] Nedu and Etana [be] your allies,
 98. The gods of the Nether World will [utter(?)] prayers for you,
 99. May your (personal) god say 'Enough!' May he [decree (?)] (favourably) your fate,
 100. May the god of your city . . for you a . . heart,
 101. May he [annul] for you (your) promises (?) (and) debts,
 102. May he [erase] the guilt of the house(hold) [from] the accounts(?),
 103. [May he bring to nought] the evil planned against you . . . ,
 104. May those you leave behind be happy, [may] ,
 105. May the take(?) ,
 106. May the (good) spirits (and) genii [protect(?)] your ,
 107. May the children you begot be written (?) down(?) for leadership(?),
 108. May (all) your daughters marry,
 109. May your wife stay well, may your kin multiply,
 110. May prosperity (and) well-being(?) envelop (them) day in day out,
 111. In your . . . may beer, wine, (and all) good things never cease,
 112. May the invocation(?) of (your(?)) house(hold) be forever the invocation(?) of your (personal) god!"

While, as not unexpected, a good part of the text is fragmentary and obscure, we learn quite a number of hitherto unknown details about the "Sumerian Nether World." Thus we hear for the first time that the Sumerian thinkers held the view that the sun after setting continues its journey through the Nether World at night, turning its night into day, as it were;⁹ and that the moon spends its "day of rest," that is the twenty-eighth or twenty-ninth day of each month, in the Nether World. We learn too, that there was a judgment of the dead by the sun-god Utu,¹⁰ and that the moon-god Nanna, too, "decreed the fate" of the dead. In the Nether World are to be found "bread-eating heroes(?)" and ". . -drinkers" who satisfy the thirst of the dead with fresh (sic.) water. We learn too that the gods of the Nether World can be called upon to utter prayers for the dead; that the personal god of the deceased and his "city"-god were invoked in his behalf, and that the welfare of the family of the deceased was by no means overlooked in the funerary prayers.

The Sumerian document which provides the most detailed information about the Nether World and the "life" going on within its confines is the poem "Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Nether World."¹¹ According to this composition which characterises the Nether World euphemistically as the "Great Dwelling," there was presumably an opening¹² of some sort in Erech leading down to the world of the dead, through which such wooden objects as the *pukku* and the *mikku* could fall, and into which a hand and foot could be placed. Also there was a gate in Erech in front of which one could sit down, and through which

a mortal—at least if he was a hero like Enkidu—might descend to the Nether World, although just how this descent takes place is not made clear. There were certain tabus, however, which, according to the author of the poem, any one descending to the Nether World must beware of violating: he must not wear clean clothes, anoint himself with “good” oil, carry a weapon or staff, wear sandals, make a noise, or behave normally towards the members of his family;¹³ if he breaks any of those tabus he will be surrounded by the “stewards” and by the shades inhabiting the lower regions, and will be held fast by “the outcry of the Nether World.”¹⁴ Once seized by this “outcry” it is impossible for a mortal to reascend to the earth, unless one or another of the gods intervenes on his behalf. In the case of Enkidu, it was Enki who came to his rescue—he had Utu open the a b - l à l of the Nether World, and Enkidu reascended to the earth, seemingly “in the flesh” rather than as a ghost.¹⁵ There follows, according to the poem, a heart-breaking colloquy between Gilgameš and Enkidu in which the latter is purported to describe the state of the dead, or rather of a few selected categories of the dead. *A priori* we might have expected this passage to be most revealing, especially for the judgment and treatment of the dead. Actually it tells us disappointingly little; the types of dead selected for mention are not particularly significant, and the sufferings and torments which they are presumed to undergo seem to be no more than superficial reflections of the wishes, hopes, and frustrations of the living.¹⁶

Turning from mortals, ordinary and extraordinary, to the “immortal” gods, the Nether World would seem to be the last place to look for their “undying” presence. Nevertheless we find quite a number of deities¹⁷ there, and while some—Namtar, Dimpikug, Neti, for example—seem to “belong” there from the beginning, as it were, others were originally sky-gods “condemned” to the Nether World by the Sumerian mythographers as a result of theological speculation and storied invention. As of today, however, only a few of the relevant myths have been recovered, and except for one, these all concern the ambitious Inanna and her unfortunate spouse Dumuzi. The one exception is the myth “Enlil and Ninlil: Birth of the Moon-God”¹⁸ which tells how Enlil himself, the most powerful of the Sumerian gods and the chief of the Sumerian pantheon, was banished to the Nether World¹⁹ and followed thither by his wife Ninlil.²⁰ This myth is also significant as the sole source for the Sumerian belief that there was a “man-devouring” river which had to be crossed by the dead, as well as a boatman who ferried them across to their destination, a belief prevalent throughout the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean World.²¹

A highly revealing myth relating to death and the Nether World is “Inanna’s Descent to the Nether World,” which is now available almost in its entirety.²² To judge from this poem, the Nether World is a place to which one descends and from which one ascends—presumably through an opening or a gate situated in Erech, although this is nowhere explicitly stated. In the Nether

World there is a palace described as a "lapis-lazuli mountain," whose locked and bolted gates are guarded by gatekeepers under the supervision of Neti, their chief. The Nether World is governed by divine regulations and rules, among which one of the most important seems to be that its denizens must be stark naked. Another rule, one that proved fatal to Dumuzi, was that no one once in the Nether World, not even a deity, could reascend to the world above, unless a substitute had been found to take its place.²³ Thus, for example, it was to make sure that Inanna, who had been revived through the clever efforts of Enki, would provide a suitable scapegoat to take her place, that the seven *gallé* stuck by her side, until she turned over Dumuzi to them as her surrogate.²⁴

To summarize: the Sumerian ideas relating to death and Nether World, judging from the available literary material, were neither clear, precise or consistent. In general the Nether World was believed to be the huge cosmic space below the earth corresponding roughly to heaven, the huge cosmic space above the earth. The dead, or at least the souls of the dead²⁵ descended into it presumably from the grave, but there also seemed to be special openings and gates in Erech, as well as no doubt in all the important city centres. There was a river which the dead had to cross by ferry, but it is nowhere stated where it was situated in relation to the earth or the Nether World. There was a palace with seven gates where Ereškigal held court, but it is uncertain where it was supposed to be located. The Nether World was ruled by Ereškigal and Nergal who had a special entourage of deities, including seven Anunnaki, and numerous unfortunate sky-gods, as well as a number of constable-like officials known as *gallé*. All these, except the *gallé*, seemed to need food, clothing, weapons, vessels of various sorts, jewels, etc., just like the gods in the sky or mortals on earth. The dead seemed to be arranged in a hierarchy, just like the living, and no doubt the best "seats" were assigned to the dead kings, and high priestly officials who had to be taken care of with special sacrifices by such deceased as Gilgameš and Ur-Nammu. There were all kinds of rules and regulations in the Nether World, and it was the deified Gilgameš²⁶ who saw to it that the denizens of the Nether World conducted themselves properly. Although in general one has the feeling that the Nether World was dark and dreary this would seem to be true only of "daytime"; at "night" the sun brought light to it, and on the last day of the month it was even joined by the moon. The deceased were not treated all alike; there was a judgement of the dead by Utu and to a certain extent even by Nanna, and if the judgement was favourable, presumably the dead man's soul would live in happiness and contentment, and have all its "heart desires." Be that as it may, all the indications are that the Sumerians loved life and clung to it with a dogged tenacity. On the numerous votive objects which they dedicated to the gods, the Sumerians state frankly and openly that they do so for their own life and/or for the life of those dear to them. The royal hymnal prayers practically all contain special pleas for long life. The vain and pathetic quest

for eternal life was a favourite theme of the Sumerian bard and inspired the most exalted literary work of the Ancient Near East, the Epic of Gilgameš. All of which is hardly compatible with rosy hopes of a blissful life in the Nether World, even if only for the good and deserving. By and large, the Sumerians were dominated by the conviction that in death the emasculated spirit descended to a dark and dreary beyond where "life" at best was but a dismal, wretched reflection of life in earth.

p. 59. ¹ The early Sumerians must have believed therefore that their rulers would continue to live in the world beyond more or less as they lived on earth. It is hardly likely, however, that they thought this matter through very carefully or consistently. What was uppermost in the minds of those who planned and attended the elaborate and costly funeral arrangements—the king and his top officials, no doubt—was the ardent resolve to see to it that their beloved king, leader, and friend take with him to his grave all these personal goods, servants, and attendants which he had treasured most during his life-time. In short, as will be corroborated by the literary evidence discussed in this paper, we learn more about the living than the dead from the Sumerian funerary practices and beliefs.

p. 59. ² For details see my *Sumerian Literature: A General Survey* prepared for the forthcoming *Albright Festschrift*.

p. 59. ³ For details see *Gilgameš: Some New Sumerian Data*, in *Cahiers du Groupe François-Thureau-Dangin-1*, pp. 59–68. The paper begins with an analysis of the newly available text of the first part of the Tummal document, which indicates that Gilgameš was a younger contemporary of Mesanpadda, and continues with a revised sketch of the contents of the epic tales "Gilgameš, Enkidu, and the Nether World," "Gilgameš and the Land of the Living" (two versions), and "The Death of Gilgameš."

p. 60. ⁴ Published in *P.B.S.* X², 6, pl. xvii–xxiv; cf. now G. Castellino's edition of the text in *Z.A.* LVII, 1–57, which presents a fairly adequate translation under the circumstances, except for the attempted restorations of the lacunae which are more than questionable and at times seriously misleading.

p. 60. ⁵ Cf. col. ii, 33–4.

p. 60. ⁶ Cf. for the present S. N. Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer* (= *H.B.S.*), 228–32.

p. 61. ⁷ Cf. col. iii, 24–5 and 39–40.

p. 61. ⁸ The identification and study of the contents of this tablet came about in the course of a two months visit to the U.S.S.R. in the fall of 1957, as a guest of its Academy of Science. Almost half of my Soviet stay was spent in Moscow, and primarily in the Pushkin Museum, which has a cuneiform collection consisting of about 2,000 pieces. In the course of a cursory examination of this collection, made with the kind permission of the Pushkin Museum authorities, I noted a fairly well preserved four-

column tablet inscribed with a Sumerian literary text, catalogued G.1 2b 1725. On closer study, this text was seen to consist of two separate poems, each containing a funeral dirge as its outstanding feature. Since the funeral song or elegy is a literary genre not hitherto found among the numerous extant Sumerian literary compositions, I was naturally eager to make a careful study of this Pushkin Museum tablet, in order to publish an edition of its contents, consisting of a transliteration, translation and commentary. With the generous co-operation of the Pushkin Museum authorities, I therefore devoted a good part of my three-weeks' stay in Moscow to the preparation of a careful transcription of the Sumerian text. As for a full scholarly edition, I soon realized that this would take several months of concentrated effort, and would therefore have to be prepared at leisure in Philadelphia. The Pushkin Museum put at my disposal an excellent set of photographs of the tablet, and after a prolonged study of the text based on the transcription made in Moscow and on the photographs prepared by the Pushkin Museum, I prepared a small monograph which is to be published by the Soviet Academy of Science.

p. 63. ⁹ S. N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* (= *S.M.*), 41–2 are therefore to be corrected accordingly.

p. 63. ¹⁰ To be sure, it was evident from the poem "Gilgameš, Enkidu, and the Nether World," that the dead were not all treated alike in the world below, and this may well justify the inference that there was a judgment of the dead. But the Pushkin Museum tablet is the first to my knowledge, which states this explicitly. Note, too, that according to this document, it is Utu who judges the deceased in the Nether World. It is true that, according to the Ur-Nammu document discussed above it is Gilgameš who seems to act as a judge in the Nether World (cf. col. iii, 16–7), but this probably refers to possible quarrels and "lawsuits" between the denizens of the lower regions, on the analogy of the role of a judge in the world above. Note, too, that there were also "seven judges" of the Nether World known as the Anunnaki (cf. "Inanna's Descent," line 163, *J.C.S.*, V, 8), but these probably limited their judgment to unusual cases—involving deities. Utu's judgment of the dead, however, no doubt had to do with the deeds and misdeeds of the newly deceased and the punishment or reward which they merited, which seems to imply that the Nether World was not all wretchedly hellish (cf. above note 6).

p. 63. ¹¹ Cf. for the present *H.B.S.*, 195-9, and the comments in the paper mentioned in note 3 above. For the Semitic counterpart of the second half of the tablet, cf. Heidel, *The Gilgameš Epic*, 94-102, and Speiser, *A.N.E.T.*, 96-9.

p. 63. ¹² This hole is hardly the *ab-lal* (cf. for a variant rendering of this term, Jacobsen, *J.C.S.*, XII, 187, note 78), through which Enkidu ascended to the earth, since the latter had to be first opened by Utu before it could be entered.

p. 64. ¹³ In his selection of these particular acts as tabus, our author is hardly attempting to be literal or exhaustive. Rather, he is expressing poetically and impressionistically the fundamental idea that anyone wishing to descend unharmed to the Nether World must act like the dead rather than the living, otherwise he will arouse the ire and envy of the departed spirits, and be prevented from returning to earth.

p. 64. ¹⁴ Just what is meant by "the outcry of the Nether World" which is further described as an outcry for the mother of Ninazu (that is, presumably for Ninlil who according to the myth "Enlil and Ninlil: Birth of the Moon-god," followed Enlil to the Nether World and gave birth to Ninazu on the way) is far from clear. Note, too, that further on in the poem, when Gilgameš pleads with Enlil and Enki to bring up his servant to the earth, he says that it is the Nether World which seized him, not "the outcry" of the Nether World.

p. 64. ¹⁵ The Sumerian text reads *š u b u r - a - n i k u r - t a m u - n i - e₁₁ - d è*, "His (that is Gilgameš's) servant ascended out of the Nether World"; note however, that ordinarily Enkidu is described as the *a r a d* not *š u b u r* of Gilgameš.

p. 64. ¹⁶ Cf. *H.B.S.*, 199, and Heidel, *The Gilgameš Epic*, 99-101. The passage containing Gilgameš's questions about the fathers who have from one to seven sons, can now be restored almost entirely; tentatively translated the answers are as follows: (He who has one son) "weeps bitterly by the (clay) nails which had been built into his walls"; (he who has two sons) "sits on two bricks and eats bread"; (he who has three sons) "drinks water out of the water-skin of the young man" (cf. perhaps the lines 110 and 115—repeated in lines 120 and 125—of the myth "Inanna and Bilulu", *J.N.E.S.*, XII, 176); (he who has four sons) "rejoices like him who yokes four asses"; (he who has five sons) "like a kindly scribe he is open-handed (literally "his arm has been opened"), he brings justice into the palace"; (he who has six sons) "his heart rejoices like him who yokes a plow"; (he who has seven sons) "as a companion of the gods he sits on a throne (and) listens to the music of the pipes." Note especially, that here in the Nether World, our poet talks of "rejoicing, bringing justice into the palace, sitting in a throne and listening to music. It may be, however, that the poet is simply transferring his ideas on earth to the Nether World, without noting the inconsistency and bitter irony of his transposition.

p. 64. ¹⁷ Cf. *Z.A.*, 18-9 and *B.A.S.O.R.*, 94, 8. Note, too, that according to the last named text, Enki who is said to be in the Nether World is described as one of Enlil's fathers, a genealogical speculation which is still an enigma.

p. 64. ¹⁸ Cf. for the present *S.M.*, 43-7, and *H.B.S.*, 84-5.

p. 64. ¹⁹ To judge from the Sumerian literary documents as a whole, however, Enlil continued as the active leading deity of the Sumerian pantheon without interruption, and it is difficult to reconcile his banishment to the Nether World with this fact, at least for the present. However, Ninurta and Nergal are sometimes given the epithet "avenger of Enlil" (cf. e.g. Falkenstein, *Z.A.*, XLIX, 132-3) and this too points to the existence of myths according to which Enlil had gotten into serious difficulties, in spite of the fact that he was king of the gods.

p. 64. ²⁰ For the possibility that Ninlil is the deity referred in "Gilgameš, Enkidu, and the Nether World" as the goddess who was lying naked and mourned in the Nether World, cf. *H.B.S.*, 198, and note 14 above.

p. 64. ²¹ The word "descend" is not used in this myth, only such words as "come," "follow," "enter," but this is probably without special significance.

p. 64. ²² Cf. last *J.C.S.*, V, 1-17. Since, the publication of this edition of the myth there has become available a number of additional tablets and fragments belonging to it (three from the Nippur collections of Istanbul and Jena—for the latter, cf. *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller Universität Jena*, V, 162, no. 48—four Ur pieces copied by C. J. Gadd who generously permitted me to study their contents; one piece, B.M.17427, published by Figulla in *C.T.*, XLII, pl. 3). As a result we now have a fairly good idea of the contents of the hitherto largely destroyed passage, lines 222-64, as well as of the missing passage following line 359 (the lines 375-84, however, are still unplaceable). The content of the first mentioned passage may be tentatively sketched as follows: the *k u r g a r r ū* and the *k a l a t u r r u* are instructed by Enki to descend to the Nether World where Ereškigal, "the birth-giving mother" lies sick "because of her children," and where naked and uncovered she keeps moaning "woe my inside" and "woe my outside"; they are to repeat sympathetically her cry and add: "from my 'inside' to your 'inside', from my 'outside' to your 'outside'"; they will then be offered water of the river and grain of the field as a gift, but they must not accept them; instead they are to say "give us the corpse hanging from the nail", and proceed to sprinkle upon it the "food of life" and the "water of life" which he (Enki) had entrusted to them, and thus revive Inanna. The *k u r g a r r ū* and the *k a l a t u r r u* do exactly as bidden (cf. B.M. 17427, rev. 2) and Inanna revives and reascends to the earth above.

The contents of the passage following line 359 may be tentatively sketched as follows: Utu grants

Dumuzi's prayer and changes him into a snake. Thus metamorphosed, Dumuzi carries his soul (his *zi*) to the house of Geštinanna. But the *gallé* do not give up their pursuit. They follow him to Geštinanna's house and torture her to tell them Dumuzi's whereabouts, but to no avail. They then proceed to Geštinanna's "holy stall" and sure enough, there they find Dumuzi. They tie him up hands and arms, and though the text breaks off at this point, we may surmise from the myth "The Death of Dumuzi" (see note 24) that they carry him off to the Nether World.

p. 65. ²³Note, however, that to judge from "Gilgameš, Enkidu, and the Nether World," Enkidu seems to have left the Nether World without producing a substitute to take his place.

p. 65. ²⁴The death of Dumuzi following pursuit and capture by the *gallé* was a favourite theme of the Sumerian mythographers. In addition to "Inanna's Descent to the Nether World" where it takes up much of the second half of the poem, it forms the basic plot of at least two other compositions. The first is a work long known, but still unintelligible in large part, because much of it is written in the Emesal dialect; my sketch of its contents in *J.C.S.*, IV, 207, note 50, should now be modified to read as follows: The actual story begins with the statement that "in those days" the seven *gallé* entered the "holy stall" one after another and, as a result the stall is turned desolate (lines 28-41). The *gallé* then arouse the sleeping Dumuzi, telling him that they have come for him and he must arise and accompany them; that his flocks have been carried off, that he is to take off his crown, royal robe, sceptre, and sandals, and follow them (lines 42-53). Dumuzi thus is forced to leave his stall, never to return (lines 54-5). The passage (lines 56-67) is still obscure; line 61 probably states Dumuzi's determination to ask Utu for help, while line 67 indicates that his purpose is to escape from the *gallé*. In any case, according to lines 68-77, Dumuzi prays to Utu to turn him into a gazelle and Utu grants his request. There follows a consultation among the outwitted *gallé*, who are determined to continue their pursuit (lines 78-93). Dumuzi then seems to go to his mother Turtur and his wife Inanna, perhaps with a plea for help (lines 94-9). The composition closes with a passage (lines 100-109) whose meaning is still obscure, although the translation of the individual lines is relatively assured.

The second composition concerned with the theme of Dumuzi's capture by the *gallé* and his ensuing death, is a poem first discussed by Thorkild Jacobsen in *J.C.S.*, XII, 165-7 (for the dream-passage in the composition, cf. Jacobsen's translation in Oppenheim, *Dreams and their Interpretation*, 246); since then I have identified 21 additional pieces (the majority are very small fragments) belonging to the poem, and as a result almost the entire text of approximately 240 lines can now be restored. As expected, however, the translation is far more difficult than the reconstruction of the Sumerian text, and the following

condensed résumé of its contents is to be taken as a preliminary effort. The poignant and melancholy mood of the poem is established at the outset by its introductory first 14 lines, in which the poet tells us that Dumuzi saddened by the intuition of his imminent death, goes forth into the *edin* and cries out to it to set up a lament among the crabs and frogs, while his mother too is to "utter the word". He then lies down in the *ul* and dreams a terrifying dream. Upon awakening he has his sister Geštinanna brought before him and she interprets the dream as bctokening his death and the desolation of his stall. When she further informs him that it is the *gallé* who will bring about his death, he hides among the plants, large and small, and in the ditches of *arali*. But to no avail; the *gallé* catch up with him, tie up his hands and arms, and are all set to drag him down to the Nether World. Whereupon Dumuzi prays to Utu to turn him into a gazelle so that he can escape the *gallé* and carry off his soul to some (unknown) place described in one text as $\text{\textcircled{?}} - \text{NAM}^{\text{m}} \text{u}^{\text{d}} \text{š} \text{e} \text{n} - \text{a} - \text{m} \text{u} \text{g} (\text{?}) - \text{a} - \text{ḫ} \text{u} - \text{u} \text{n}$ and in a variant text as $\text{\textcircled{?}} - \text{b} \text{i} - \text{r} \text{i} - \text{l} \text{á} - \text{a} - \text{š} \text{é} - \text{r} \text{i} - \text{a} - \text{r} \text{i} - \text{e} (\text{?}) - \text{B} \text{U} \text{R} (\text{?})$. Utu grants his request and Dumuzi carries off his soul to the place he had chosen. But the *gallé* follow in hot pursuit and again catch up with him and put fetters on his hands and arms. Whereupon Dumuzi again addresses himself to Utu pleading with him to turn him into a gazelle so that he might carry off his soul, this time to the house of $\text{u} \text{m} \text{m} \text{a} - \text{d} \text{b} \text{e} - \text{l} \text{i} - \text{l} \text{i}$ (cf. line 73 of "Inanna and Bilulu", *J.N.E.S.*, XII, 174, and my comment *ibid.*, 187-8). Once again Utu grants his request, and Dumuzi carries off his soul to the house of Belili. But as soon as Belili leaves her house, the *gallé* reappear and put Dumuzi in fetters. Dumuzi now turns for the third time to Utu with the same plea; this time he will carry off his soul to the "holy stall" of his sister Geštinanna. Utu grants his request a third time, but to no avail. The *gallé* catch up with him a third time, turn the "holy stall" into a ruin and Dumuzi dies.

p. 66. ²⁵It will be noted that Dumuzi's soul remained immutable and indestructible in spite of the fact that his body was changed into a snake or a gazelle (cf. notes 22 and 24). It is not unreasonable to conclude, therefore, that it was not the body, but the soul of the dead, which continued to exist in the Nether World. Just how the poet and mythographer picture the soul is not known, they may have thought of it as having the form of the man's shadow. In any case, the soul could walk, talk, feel, weep, rejoice, etc.; that is, it could do practically everything the deceased did on earth, except perhaps have sexual intercourse and beget offspring, although even these acts may have been envisaged as possible by the author of the "Death of Gilgameš," to judge from the fact that several of Gilgameš's wives were buried with him.

p. 65. ²⁶This indicates of course that many, if not most of the Sumerian ideas about the Nether World found in the literary texts, postdate Gilgameš and his times.