Parallelism and Analogical Thought in Babylonian Poetry

Case Studies from *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi,* the Babylonian Theodicy, and the Šamaš Hymn

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Abstract: Based on a series of case studies, this paper investigates aspects of the function of parallelism in Babylonian poetry.[1] The focus is on the semantic interconnections created by the juxtaposition of passages sharing similar or contrasting linguistic features. Seen in this light, parallelism reveals itself as much more than the vector for stylistic creativity as which it has mostly been investigated in Assyriology, it is a crucial means for the construction of meaning. The operative principle behind this meaning being analogical reasoning, poetry in these aspects is revealed to draw on the same repertoire of notions that underlies other branches of Mesopotamian erudition, too – the paper explores in particular the comparable case of divination.

Keywords: parallelism, analogical thought, Babylonian poetry, Babylonian divination.

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1. Parallelism in Babylonian Poetry: State of the Question

Parallelism, as "the repetition of the same or related semantic content and/or grammatical structure in consecutive lines or verses,"[2] is the most discussed feature of early Semitic, especially Hebrew, poetry, beginning in the 18th century with R. Lowth (1710–1787), who first coined the concept of *parallelismus membrorum*, "the correspondence of one verse, or line, with another."

Lowth's work initiated a series of investigations into lexical and semantic parallelisms, in particular word-pairs, in Biblical Hebrew.[3] R. Jakobson's work

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[2] For this definition of parallelism, see Berlin 1992: 154.

[3] See Kuntz 1998, 1999, Watson 2007.

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marked an important watershed in the history of research on parallelism because it significantly widened the vision of the phenomenon: "Pervasive parallelism inevitably activates all the levels of language – the distinctive features, inherent and prosodic, the morphological and syntactic categories and forms, the lexical units and their semantic classes in both their convergences and divergences acquire an autonomous poetic value" (1966: 423).

Among the studies carried out by Biblical scholars under the influence of Jakobsonian structural linguistics and transformational grammar, A. Berlin's study of Classical Hebrew parallelism (1985, second revised edition 2008) is probably the most influential. Methodologically speaking, it is also a benchmark for the study of parallelism in Semitic languages in general. Berlin demonstrated that parallelism works through equivalence (or similarity) and contrast on the lexical, phonological, morphological, grammatical and syntactical level: "By means of these equivalences and contrasts, parallelism calls attention to itself and to the message which it bears. Parallelism embodies the poetic function, and the poetic function heightens the focus on the message" (Berlin 2008: 141). Subsequent research on Biblical poetry has suggested some modifications to terminology and interpretation,[4] but the approach to parallelism as defined by linguistic equivalency and contrast has been essentially maintained.[5]

Biblical studies strongly influenced the investigation of parallelism in other literatures and cultures. It was revealed as a pervasive phenomenon in Ancient Egypt, India, and Mesoamerica as part of crafted registers of speech or text production, including ritual language.[6] In Ancient China, it appears at the centre of erudite production of knowledge.[7] Repetition and parallelism have also been studied profitably by scholars of ethnopoetics.[8]

In contrast, parallelism in Akkadian remains relatively under-researched,[9] although it occurs in all genres of poetic literature, and in some genres, including hymns and the compositions often classified as 'wisdom texts,' such as *Ludlul bēl*

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4 See, e.g., Nel 1992, Weber 2006.

5 See, e.g., Shimasaki 2002, Reymond 2004, 2011.

6 See the overview presented in Fox 2014.

7 See, e.g., Plaks 1988 and 2015, Gentz 2007.

8 See, e.g., Foley 1997: 366–70; Webster 2008.

9 See, e.g., Groneberg 1987: 181–190, Izre'el 2001: 77–81, Foster 2005: 14–15, Streck 2007, Haul 2009: 176–183, Helle 2014, Piccin & Worthington 2015: 118–120; Lenzi 2019: 53–58, De Zorzi 2019. Among discussions of individual texts, Annus & Lenzi (2010: xxx–xxxiv) offer a comparatively extensive discussion of parallelism in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*.

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nēmeqi "I will praise the lord of wisdom" and the Babylonian Theodicy[10] – it is ubiquitous.[11]

The predominant manifestation of parallelism in Babylonian poetry is the couplet, i.e. two successive poetic lines which form a pair. Generally speaking, parallelism in Babylonian poetry, like Classical Hebrew parallelism, operates through the interplay of similarity and contrast of (near-)contiguous textual elements on various textual levels. The nature of the connection that brings one poetic line into some manner of close correlation with another can vary considerably from one case to the next, with respect both to its formation and its implications; it is the main *investigandum* of parallelism studies.

In the following, I will present a series of case studies that elucidate different aspects of the functions of parallelism and at the same time illustrate the insights that can be gained by following the line of reasoning suggested by parallelism. I will start with two examples in which taking full note of parallelism helps resolve a philological crux.

2. Parallelism in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* I 117–118 and the Babylonian Theodicy 16–17

The compositions known as *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* "I will praise the lord of wisdom" and the Babylonian Theodicy[12] are Babylonian meditations on divinely ordained

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[10] For a recent overview of these compositions and a discussion of terminology, see Lenzi 2019: 172–178, who labels them "meditations on human suffering and the divine."

[11] However, comprehensive quantification is still elusive. According to an unpublished dissertation from 1966 around 30% of verses culled from a sample of Akkadian literature are written in "strictly parallel stichoi" (Donald 1966: 315). The percentage, however, seems to vary greatly from text to text: it is very common in 'wisdom poetry' (62 % in the Babylonian Theodicy), and less so in some narrative poems (e.g., a low 20% in *Enūma eliš* IV). In a wider perspective, parallelism is the most frequently attested expression of variant repetition, by which I intend the re-statement of some linguistic feature in a similar form close after its first occurrence. For repetition as a poetic device in Akkadian, a summary paper by Vogelzang (1996) and pertinent remarks by Hecker (1974) remain the principal works of reference. Recently, see Lenzi 2019: 58–60. One of the main objectives of my ERC project REPAC is to investigate the role played by repetition, especially parallelism, as a structuring device in Babylonian poetry and scholarly writing.

[12] The most recent study and critical editions of both compositions are published in Oshima 2014. A new fragment of the Babylonian Theodicy is published in Jiménez 2014: 102–103. For an overview of these compositions and the related secondary literature, see Lenzi 2019: 172–178.

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human suffering. The first tablet of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* is mostly made up of couplets of two parallel lines frequently forming pairs. One such passage is *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* I 117–118:

117. *ušṭīb šaptīa kī daʾīmi ašṭā*
118. *ṭābtiš ātamu napraku nāpalûʾa*

The following translations have been suggested for this couplet:

- George & al-Rawi 1998: 197: "I sweetened my speech, but it was impenetrable as the dark, I talked sharply, my conversation was a hindrance."
- Foster 2005: 398: "My [sweet]-lipped discourse was murky, obscure, [When] I turned a biting comment, my gambit was stifled."
- Annus & Lenzi 2010: 34: "I sweetened my lips, but they were obscure like darkness; I would speak sharply, but my conversation was a stumbling block."
- Oshima 2014: 85: "I sweetened my lips but they were hard as a lance; I spoke *sharply* (lit.: like salt), but my words *became an impediment*."

The first-person narrator is the poem's protagonist, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, who laments his adverse fate. In 117, there are differences in the interpretation of *kī daʾīmi*,[13] but all the above cited translations convey the idea that the sufferer's friendly words do not achieve their objective. In the second parallel line, they all take *ṭābtiš* as an adverb derived from *ṭābtu* "salt," giving a negative sense to the sufferer's words. According to George & al-Rawi (1998: 201), the sufferer's words are "unintelligible (117), so that the manner of his speech works against his interest (118)". The idea that the sufferer should complain in 118 about the inefficacy of his unfriendly words, however, does not fit well with the preceding line and the general tone of the passage, which is about the inversion of the sufferer's past happiness and his complete loss of positive agency.[14]

In fact, the first line gives the clue for the correct understanding of the second: given the parallelism of *ṭābtiš ātamu* and *ušṭīb šaptīa*, it seems more obvious to derive *ṭābtiš* from *ṭābtu* "friendship," i.e., to draw on the same root and idea as

[13] Each of these translations, with the exception of Oshima, derive *da-ʾi-i-mi* from the root of *daʾāmu* "to be/become dark." Oshima (2014: 219) takes the word as *daʾīmu* "spear, lance," following Wiseman 1980: 107 and von Soden 1990: 121. This was rejected by George & al-Rawi 1998: 201, following Foster 1993: 313.

[14] Indeed, it is unlikely that the sufferer would 'admit' to having uttered sharp words, since he does not admit to 'negative' agency anywhere in the poem.

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ušṭīb (*ṭâbu*) in 117. The connection between *ušṭīb* and *ṭābtiš* has not escaped previous commentators,[15] but the two words have always been interpreted as antithetical rather than synonymous.[16] Taking this line of thinking further, a suggestion can also be offered for the difficult *daʾīmu* in 117, which has been taken to mean "lance" or "darkness."[17] In a highly crafted text rich in parallelisms like *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, the parallelism in the first halves of the lines strongly suggests the presence of parallelism also in the second halves. The image in 118b comes from *napraku* "bolt," and hence "obstruction," so it is likely that a similar comparison is made in 117b, based on a different concrete object. The idea in both cases is that attempted suppleness of speech is perceived as the opposite. In light of parallelism and the surrounding semantic context, therefore, we suggest the following new translation for *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* I 117–118:

> 117. "I sweetened my speech, but it came across as unyielding as a lance,
> 118. I spoke courteously, but my conversation was a barrier (to communication)."

A similar argument can be advanced for lines 16–17 of the Babylonian Theodicy (Lambert 1960: 63–91),[18] a debate in alternating stanzas between the "sufferer" and the "friend." The two lines under discussion are read by Lambert (1960: 70–71) as follows:

> 16. *na-ad-nu-ma ab-bu-nu il-la-ku ú-ru-uḫ mu-ú-t*[*u*]
> 17. *na-a-ri ḫu-bur ib-bi-ri qa-bu-ú ul-tu ul-la*

> 16. "Our fathers in fact give up and go the way of death.

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[15] In his commentary to *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* I 118, Oshima (2014: 219), citing George & al-Rawi 1998: 197 n. 16, notes that the expression "to speak like salt" seems to signify "sharp speaking" and suggests a pun with *ušṭīb* in 117.

[16] George & al-Rawi 1998: 201: "The contrast between sweet and sour, *ušṭīb* and *tabtiš*, is highlighted by the alliteration."

[17] The discussion is summarized by Oshima 2014: 219, see note 13 above. Note that *daʾīmu* "darkness" would be a *hapax legomenon*.

[18] My interpretation of lines 16–17 of the Babylonian Theodicy was presented in July 2021 at the 67th RAI in Turin. In April 2022, while completing the bibliographical research for this paper, I came upon a paper by A. Cavigneaux (mentioned in Lenzi 2019: 173 n. 423), which was published in 2014 in an anthropology and cultural history journal. In this paper, Cavigneaux publishes a revised and edited version of a French translation of the Babylonian Theodicy by J. Bottéro (1914–2007), which was discovered posthumously among Bottéro's papers. Three versions of Bottèro's translation were found among his papers: the first version was published in 1977 in a today almost untraceable French publication (Bottéro 1977; see Cavigneaux 2014: 107 n. 1), the other two are unpublished manuscripts. I was delighted to discover that my conclusions regarding the translation of this passage of the Babylonian Theodicy were the same as Bottéro's and Cavigneaux's. Cavigneaux, however, does not discuss the syntactical and semantic parallelism which constitutes the base for the correct interpretation of these two lines.

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17. It is an old saying that they cross the river Ḫubur."

Since Lambert, other authors have presented different translations and interpretations of this passage:

- von Soden 1990: 147: „Hingegeben waren unsere Väter, mussten (immer) den Weg des Todes gehen. ‚Den Chubur-Fluß werde ich überschreiten', sagen sie seit jeher!"
- Foster 2005: 915: "Of course our fathers pay passage to go death's way, I too will cross the river of the dead, as is commanded from of old."
- Oshima 2014: 151: "Our fathers *have been given* (to us), but *they must* go the path of death (before us): "I shall cross the river Hubur," (so) it has been said since ancient time."

The passage is part of the friend's reaction to the sufferer's laments about being orphaned early in life and is to be read as a meditation on mankind's inevitable destiny of death. The general gist of the passage is clear, but its exact meaning remains debated. The main interpretative problem in the first line is represented by the third plural stative *nadnū*. Lambert and von Soden understand it as indicating that "our fathers" (*abbūnu*) are subjected to death ("Our fathers in fact give up," "Hingegeben waren unsere Väter"). Foster gives it an active meaning instead: "Our fathers pay passage to go death's way." According to Oshima (2014: 347), the friend's main message to the orphaned sufferer is that fathers should die before their children: "Our fathers *have been given* (to us), but *they must* go the path of death (before us)."

Furthermore, there is disagreement regarding the interpretation of *ib-bi-ri* in 17. Lambert read it as a third person plural referring to *abbūnu* "our fathers," in parallelism with the preceding line.[19] Von Soden, Foster, and Oshima read *eb-bi-ri* as a first person singular instead,[20] but disagree on the identification of the "I" speaking. In Foster's translation, the first-person voice is that of the sufferer's friend, who declares that the fate of "our fathers" will be his own too. In von Soden's translation, the first-person voice is that of the fathers from the previous line who speak in a direct speech about their fate. Oshima also translates *na-a-ri ḫu-bur ib-bi-ri* as direct speech, but it is not entirely clear whether "I shall cross the river Hubur" in his translation refers to the fathers or, more generally, to mankind ("we").

Different interpretations have also been suggested for *qabû* in 17: von Soden translates it as a stative in the plural with active meaning and "our fathers" as its

[19] See also Ponchia 1996: 73, following Lambert 1960: 71: "Da sempre si dice che attraversano il fiume Khubur."

[20] In his commentary, von Soden 1990: 147 interprets *ib-bi-ri* (*eb-bé-ri*) as standing for *ebber*.

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subject ("sagen sie"), while Lambert ("it is an old saying"), Foster ("as is commanded"), and Oshima ("[so] it has been said") take it as an impersonal sentence.

None of the above cited translations takes into account the syntactical and semantic parallelism between the two lines. From a semantic point of view, *abbūnu* "our fathers" in 16 is implicitly connected with *ultu ulla* "from of old" in 17. Further, *illakū uruḫ mūti* "they go death's way" (16) clearly corresponds, chiastically, to *nār ḫubur ib-bi-ri* (17), suggesting that the latter verb, preserved only in one late Babylonian manuscript,[21] should be interpreted as a third person plural "they cross the river of the dead," as suggested by Lambert, and not a first person singular, as suggested by von Soden, Foster, and Oshima, i.e. the writing *ib-bi-ri* for *ibbirū* should be seen as an example of late orthography. This leaves us with *nadnū* (16) and *qabû* (17), which, following the parallelism between the two lines, should be thought of as equivalents.[22] I suggest taking both as passive stative forms of the third plural, referring to "our fathers." Both verbs render the idea of them being subjected to fate and death. My translation of this passage is thus as follows:

> 16. "Of course our fathers had to submit to go death's way,
> 17. they were ordered from of old to cross the river of the dead."[23]

In this parallelism, the second line echoes the first one, giving us the clue to understand its construction, and, at the same time, introducing a noticeable degree of specification, intensification, figuration, and dramatisation. I will now take up this point and discuss aspects of the functions of parallelism in Babylonian poetry.

3. The 'Stereoscopic' Effect of Parallelism

In both the Babylonian Theodicy 16–17 and *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* I 117–118, the correct understanding of the couplet comes through fully taking into account the parallelism, but in both cases every single line could have been understood in the same way even had it not been accompanied by its twin. The repetition of the

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[21] BM 34733 i 15' (ms. B in Oshima 2014: 441 = ms. a in Lambert 1960: 69–91).

[22] CAD E: 12 comes to the same translation, but interprets *ib-bi-ri* as a corrupted writing for *ebēra*: "They (mankind) have been ordered from of old to cross the river of the nether world."

[23] For *nadānu* expressing the nuance of having the verb's personal object do something, see CAD N/1: 51–52. Cavigneaux's translation of the passage (see n. 18 above), based on Bottéro's papers, is as follows: "Nos pères ont été astreints à suivre le chemin de la mort: De tout temps ils ont reçu l'ordre de passer le Fleuve-infernal!" (Cavigneaux 2014: 113). Bottéro attempted various translations of *nadnū abbūnu* in line 16: he translated "Il a été donné à nos pères!" in his 1977 translation of the Babylonian Theodicy (Cavigneaux 2014: 107), he corrected this to "ont été assignés," and, finally, "ont été voués" in the latest version of his translation found among his unpublished papers (Cavigneaux 2014: 113 n. 12).

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semantic content of the first part of each parallel pair, however, produces a 'sharpening' effect, introducing a new nuance of meaning and leading to a 'richer' presentation of the principal thought expressed. Parallelistic juxtaposition clearly enhances the main message of both passages.

Elsewhere, the juxtaposition of syntactically similar phrases creates meaning that the parallelism's constituent parts alone would not transmit. Their semantic relation is a function of their juxtaposition in that the juxtaposition forces the reader to see these textual elements as interconnected. For instance, in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* II 84–87 (Oshima 2014: 90–91; Annus & Lenzi: 21 and 37) the sufferer says:

84. *ina pī*[*y*]*a naḫbalu nadīma*
85. *u napraku sekir šaptīya*
86. *bābī edil peḫi mašqûʾa*
87. *arkat bubūtī katim urʾudī*

84. "In my mouth, a snare has been cast,
85. and a bolt locked my lips.
86. My gate was barred, my watering place blocked,
87. My hunger was prolonged, my throat closed up."

The passage is part of a long list of afflictions caused by the action of demons. In the second couplet, which continues the imagery presented in 84-85, the fact that the barred gate and the blocked watering place (86) should be interpreted as metaphors for being unable to eat or drink is elucidated by the following, syntactically parallel line.

Syntactic parallelisms that promote the perception of equivalence between their two parts in the absence of an obvious semantic connection are often found in proverbs. A famous example taken from the Hebrew Bible is *Proverbs* 26: 9: "A thorn comes to the hand of a drunkard, and a proverb to the mouth of fools." Similarly structured proverbs can also be found in Mesopotamian texts:

é en-bi nu-nam *bītu ša lā bēli*
munus níta nu-tuku *sinništu ša lā muti*

"A house without owner
A wife without husband." (Lambert 1960: 229 iv 20–21)

Some scholars have used the metaphor of 'stereophony' or 'stereoscopy' when describing the effect of parallelism, including syntactic parallelism: a metaphor for increased depth of perception resulting from the fusion of separate images. The image goes back to the Sinologist P.A. Boodberg: "Parallelism is not merely a stylistic device of formularistic syntactical duplication; it is intended to achieve a result reminiscent of binocular vision, the superimposition of two syntactical images in order to endow them with solidity and depth, the repetition of the pattern having the effect of binding together syntagms that appear at first rather loosely

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aligned."[24] Parallelism, Boodberg argues, gives us "the satisfaction of experiencing the build-up step-by-step, first viewing the panorama presented by the poet from one syntactical angle, then from another, and fully savoring the stereoscopic after sensation or afterimage."[25] Boodberg sees parallelism as a way more sharply to delineate concepts and ideas by offering multiple, sometimes (partly) similar, sometimes contrasting, viewpoints. The important point is that parallelism is attributed epistemological force, beyond poetic ornamentation.

The image of 'stereophony' or 'stereoscopy' coined by Boodberg in the 1950s for Early Chinese poetry was later adapted for the study of parallelism in Anthropology,[26] and also found its way into Biblical studies.[27] Interestingly, the image was anticipated by Landsberger, who in his famous inaugural lecture at the University of Leipzig in 1926 already describes parallelism as a "stereometry of expression of thought" ("Stereometrie des Gedankenausdrucks").[28] The realisation of the epistemological force of parallelism, therefore, stands at the beginning of the engagement of Ancient Near Eastern Studies with parallelistic structures in poetry and literature. However, while this avenue of research was fruitful in Anthropology and was at least not neglected in the study of Classical Hebrew parallelism, it has never been pursued systematically in Ancient Near Eastern studies. This is in spite of the fact that Babylonian poetry reveals a widespread use of parallelism as a means for the construction and exploration of arguments. As a first example, we take a couplet from Erra which describes Erra's destructive action:

5. *tâmtamma dalḫāta šadê gamrāta*
6. *nišē redâta būlamma reʾâta*

5. "You convulse the sea, obliterate mountains,
6. You guide humankind and herd the livestock." (Cagni 1969: 100, Erra III, Pericope D)

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24 Boodberg 1954–1955a, cited in Jakobson 1966: 402.

25 Boodberg 1954–1955b: 17.

26 The image is mentioned in relation to the study of parallelism, e.g. in ritual Rotinese (Indonesia): see Fox 2014: 32 and 143–144.

27 See, e.g. Tsumura 2009: 168–169. According to Reymond 2004: 18, Boodberg's description is "ironically, one of the best descriptions of the effect of biblical parallelism."

28 "Für den Akkader […], wie für die übrigen Semiten, ist der Parallelismus gleichsam die Stereometrie des Gedankenausdrucks, der stets auf schärfste geschnitten und auf höchste Prägnanz bedacht ist" (Landsberger 1926, cited in Wagner 2007: 11 and Streck 2007: 167). Landsberger does not elaborate much more than this on his description of the effects of parallelism. His description was probably influenced by the development and dissemination of stereoscopy and stereoscopic photography in the 19th century (Wagner 2007: 11–12).

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There is parallelism (perhaps reinforced by the rhymes) within the poetic lines and within the couplet. Furthermore, there is semantic parallelism built around word-pairs (sea-mountain; humankind-livestock) within the lines, and sharp contrast (destruction-caring) between them. The parallelism between the two lines prompts the fusion of the two sentences into a single theological argument: the merismatic structure at its base attributes to Erra characteristics that are polar opposites of each other and thereby states that, essentially, the god is everything. This type of statement is normally made of the head of the Babylonian pantheon Marduk in first millennium Babylonia, for instance in *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* I 9–10:[29]

9. *ša nakbat qātišu lā inaššû šamāʾū*
10. *rittūš rabbāti ukaššu mīta*

9. "Though the heavens cannot bear the weight of his hands,
10. he rescues the dead with his gentle hands." (Piccin & Worthington 2015: 122–123)

The appearance of such a parallelism in Erra, at a point where Erra as it were replaces Marduk, thus emphasises the core of the epic's theological message. In this example, similarity and contrast between repeated contiguous elements was used to construct a theological argument based on analogical reasoning. The premise that attributes extreme and opposing behaviour to Erra leads to the conclusion that the god may also embody the infinite nuances between the merismatic opposites invoked by the text. These phenomena in Babylonian poetry, we will now argue, reflect the culturally engrained belief in the interconnectedness of words, concepts, and things sharing an element of similarity, and the power attributed to analogy which results from this belief.

4. Parallelism and Analogical Thought in Divination and the Babylonian Theodicy 61–64

Parallelistic juxtaposition also creates or enhances equivalence in omen lists. Divination literature's smallest unit, the single omen, is phrased as a conditional clause consisting of protasis and apodosis, linking a sign as antecedent with a prediction as consequent.[30] Omens draw on a schematised set of potential or imaginable phenomena which are interpreted as signs sent by the gods. As ominous signifiers, these are matched, through a link based on similitude, with an equally selected set of signified predictions. The correspondence between signs and predictions in omen lists is based on some likeness between them, on the semantic,

[29] On Marduk's complex character, alternating between wrath and mercy, see Piccin & Worthington 2015. See also Noegel 2016: 615–616 and Noegel 2021: 135–136.

[30] On the relationship between protasis and apodosis in omens, see Rochberg 2010. See also Koch 2015: 12–15 and Rochberg 2016: 140–144, 156–159, 166–190.

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phonemic or graphic level.[31] For instance, a teratomantic omen from the first millennium BCE divinatory series *Šumma izbu* reads:

> *šumma sinništu ūlidma qaqqad nēši šakin šarru dannu ina māti ibbašši*
>
> "If a woman gives birth and (the creature she gives birth to) has a lion's head – a strong king will arise in the land."[32]

Here, the prediction drawn from the ominous birth which envisages the rise of a strong king in the land is implied by the sum of the signs 'head,' signifying 'high-placed, high-ranking' and 'lion,' signifying the 'king and military strength,'[33] i.e. some semantic content of the antecedent is repeated in the consequent. This partial semantic repetition is strengthened by the syntactic structure. The contiguity of sign and prediction (here: 'lion' – 'king') in an omen phrased as a conditional clause is functionally equivalent to a form of parallelism. In these 'divinatory parallelisms,' the likeness shared by an element of the antecedent with its partial repetition in the consequent has epistemic value: the logic of the omens rests on their similarity-based interconnection.[34] The similarity between the phenomenon described in the protasis and the event in the apodosis is believed to mirror an actual 'entanglement' between the two. This similarity-based 'entanglement' allows the expectation that the appearance of the sign will be followed by the manifestation of the associated event. In the theistic framing of the divinatory compendia, all of this is conceptualized as a reflex of the divine will.[35]

Beyond establishing connections between individual signs and individual predictions, much ingenuity was invested in the vertical axis of divinatory texts, that is, in the careful crafting of sequences of interdependent and partly repetitive omens. The horizontal level of omen production was interconnected with the vertical axis. This complex literary process entails textual expansion founded essentially on the use of similarity and analogy. The various devices employed by the scribes to create complex omen sequences involve opposition, gradation, sym-

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31 See Van De Mieroop 2016: 114–121. Frequently, all these levels are activated at the same time and a phonemic or graphic connection supports what at first may appear to be a rather loose semantic connection between protasis and apodosis.

32 The omen is published in De Zorzi 2014: 393 (Tablet 2, omen 1).

33 These are standard equivalences in teratomantic omens: see De Zorzi 2014: 148–149, 157–158.

34 See also Van De Mieroop 2016: 126–127.

35 In other words, the 'entanglement' is not conceived to be 'operative' without divine volition. This is generally also true for first millennium magic (see below), where the same basic principles are at work (even though a strand of non-theistic magic drawing on analogistic 'entanglement' is extant, especially in the third millennium, as argued in a seminal paper by van Binsbergen & Wiggerman 1999).

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metric patterning, and associations based on the close repetition of sounds (paronomasia) or signs.[36] The final goal was to create a system of knowledge that was, at least theoretically, all-encompassing and fully interconnected.

The scribes' modus operandi in omen lists can be described as a creative process founded on inference, guided by similarity, from one object of knowledge to another, resulting in construction of meaning based principally on analogical reasoning.[37] In 'etic' terms, Mesopotamian thought here reflects, in a culture-specific way, a wide-spread type of ontology called 'analogism:'[38] this implies considering similarity as a meaningful base for analogical reasoning and the construction of persuasive analogies. Entities known to share certain properties are presumed also to share other properties, allowing inferences from one to the other as well as manipulation of one by manipulation of the other.

In 'emic' terms, however, divination's predictive power comes from similarity-based 'entanglement,' as stated above, between words, ideas, and things. The

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[36] For an overview, see Van De Mieroop 2016: 122–126. There are major gaps in our knowledge here, as the sequencing of interdependent and partly repetitive omens was hitherto studied only selectively, especially for Middle Bronze Age extispicy texts: see Winitzer 2017 and Glassner 2019: 55–230. For sequences of teratomantic omens, see De Zorzi 2014: 127–201 and De Zorzi 2017.

[37] Cristostomo (2019) calls this process "analogical hermeneutics." Crisostomo studies lexical lists, in particular the word list Izi, but he considers his findings, *mutatis mutandis*, equally applicable to other spheres of Babylonian and Assyrian scholarship, including divination (Crisostomo 2019: 62–63). He convincingly describes Babylonian and Assyrian analogical hermeneutics as a mode of scholarly interpretation by which a scribe perceives, generates, or imposes through analogical reasoning, associations between two or more epistemic objects (Crisostomo 2019: 52). Most importantly, Crisostomo demonstrates that these hermeneutics are couched in language and writing. For Crisostomo the "elaborate manipulation of the writing system via analogical hermeneutics" is intended to "demonstrate a scribe's knowledge of the writing system and thus his place in the field of scholarship" (Crisostomo 2019: 179). This social aspect of scribal erudition is certainly important, but I argue, with Frahm and others, that the *raison d'être* of their displays of analogistic erudition should not be reduced to it alone, see note 40. On divination and analogical reasoning, see also Rochberg 2016: 157–159.

[38] This is the terminology used by the anthropologist P. Descola (2013). Analogism is one of the four basic ontologies (next to animism, totemism, and naturalism) which Descola uses to describe the self-conception of humans in a particular culture, both in their social relationships with each other and in their relationships with other creatures and to nature. Their respective ontologies also determine how humans gather knowledge. In analogism (Descola 2013: 201), the universe is seen as a "multiplicity of essences, forms, and substances separated by small distinctions," and knowledge is gathered by deciphering the "dense network of analogies that link together the intrinsic properties of the entities that are distinguished in [the system of initial contrasts]."

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universe was seen as an interconnected system. The Diviner's Manual describes this interconnectedness in the following terms: "Heaven and earth are related," lit. "They hold each other" (*itḫuzū*).[39]

The similarity of given entities allowed the perception of a significant, effective nexus between them. Such a 'sympathetic' nexus included the relationship between a word and what it denoted. The written word was attributed the power to reflect the thing it denoted, but also to act on it: the signifier and the signified and thus the entire repertoire of features on which analogical hermeneutics (see above) draw, were seen as inextricably interconnected, at least for erudite scribes in the first millennium BCE.[40] This is relevant for divination but it is also the basis for the Mesopotamian view of the efficacy of imitative magic.

To sum up, the omnipresent divine will is the root-cause of the 'entanglement' of the universe's parts with one another. It might manifest itself in even the most mundane phenomena. These phenomena may thus be an echo, a mirror image of other, possibly more momentous things willed by the gods that can be divined by their correct interpretation. Analogical thinking based on the perception of similarity is the key to following and interpreting the strands of this 'entanglement'.

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39 Oppenheim 1974: 204 line 40.

40 See Frahm 2010: 95 and Selz 2013: 56 and cf. the discussion of Cristostomo 2019: 174–179, who reaches a different conclusion. 'Etically', the scribes obviously invent, create, but 'emically' they discover information about their world by operating with their language and its script in, they would have claimed, a non-arbitrary manner. Language and the cuneiform script and at least some of the erudite compositions that employ them for the purpose of analogical hermeneutics were not seen as historically contingent and hence arbitrary; they were – quite literally – an eternal gift from the gods (explicitly so, in BM 34716: rev. 10–14 (Jursa & Debourse 2020: 274–276)). Divinatory series are conceived as written by the god Ea (Lambert 1962; Geller's suggestion that the divine name in this passage may be a 'nickname' for the human scholar Esagil-kīn-apli is interesting, but, as Geller himself acknowledges, difficult to prove: see Geller 2018: 45 and Worthington 2020: 207 n. 178). Astrologers speak of the "writing of the firmament" (*šiṭir šamê*, *šiṭir burūmê*, see CAD Š/3: 146a and Rochberg 2004: 1) and haruspices call the liver of the sacrificial sheep a "tablet of the gods" (*ṭuppu ša ilī*, see Starr 1983: 30, lines 16–17). While it is true that the scribes' analogical reasoning is often quite adventurous and sometimes clearly ad-hoc (as demonstrated by Crisostomo 2019), it was not conceived as arbitrary by the scribes: associations have to be triggered by context, linguistically or, in the case of magic, ritualistically, to become efficacious in terms of analogical hermeneutics and their underlying similarity-based ontology. In addition, the system was necessarily imprecise. This does not change the fact that similarity-based analogical thinking in divination and magic was considered 'objectively' efficacious well beyond the scope of displays of scribal erudition.

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It allows the decipherment of the messages the gods weave, or, to use an expression well attested in first millennium texts, "write" (*šaṭāru*) into the fabric of the world as an expression of their present and future intentions.[41]

The defining characteristics of divination lie not so much in this worldview – in this sense, Mesopotamia forms part of a wide continuum of cultures – but rather in its text-based nature and in the creative way scribes explored this system through textual means. Babylonian literati discover, through the means of writing, pre-existent information written by the gods into the fabric of the world and thereby generate knowledge of socially recognised validity and efficacy.

In divination, scribal creativity gives shape to a system of knowledge production which draws in a culture-specific way on similarity, parallelistic juxtaposition, and analogy. We suggest that the various forms of repetition, especially parallelism, that are widespread in Babylonian poetry, should also be read against this background. In parallelism, similarity and contrast of contiguous elements are meaningful, and, as we have seen above with the example taken from Erra, they are used by the scribes to construct theological arguments based on analogical reasoning. The important point is that much can be gained by seeing the setting of Babylonian poetry within Mesopotamian 'analogism' in which similarities are, by definition, meaningful and efficacious. Consider lines 61–64 of the Babylonian Theodicy (Lambert 1960: 74; Oshima 2014: 446; see above), which are presented here in Foster's translation:

61. *gēr būli labba ša taḫsusu gana bitru*
62. *gillat nēšu īpušu petâssu ḫāštu*
63. *gīs mašrê bēl pāni ša gurrunu makkūra*
64. *gi-riš ina ūm lā šīmāti iqammēšu malku*

61. "Come, look at that lion you called to mind, the enemy of livestock,
62. For the atrocity that the lion committed, the pit yawns for him.[42]
63. The well-heeled parvenu who treasured up possessions,
64. A king will put him to the flames before his time." (Foster 2005: 916)

The passage is part of the friend's answer to the sufferer's complaints about social injustice. The friend associates the rich parvenu (*bēl pāni*) with the rapacious lion (*labbu*) and describes the punishments that expect them for their crimes. The association conveys the message that the rich parvenu could have obtained his riches only at someone else's expense. The couplets 50–51 and 52–53 thus establish the

[41] On this notion, see Rochberg 2016: 170–173. For the idea that the gods write messages in form of omens on the entrails of the sheep, see Starr 1983: 57. See also Rochberg 2016: 311–312 n. 24.

[42] Alternatively, *gillat* may be taken as the subject of a transitive stative of *petû*: "The atrocity that the lion committed opened a pit for him." I owe this idea to the anonymous reviewer.

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judgmental equivalence between the savage lion that devoured the choicest meat (50: *aggu labbu ša ītakkalu dumuq šīri*) and the rich parvenu whose wealth is multiplied (52: *bēl pāni ša uṣṣubušu naḫāšu*).

In 64, *gi-riš* has been generally interpreted adverbially based on *gīru/girru* "fire(god),", i.e. *gīriš/girriš*.[43] However, the word can equally well be understood as *gērîš* from *gērû*, "like the enemy he is." In 61, the lion is described as *gēr būli* "enemy of livestock." Parallelism suggests that it is for this reason that the lion's human equivalent is burnt *gi-riš.* The word's orthography is – maybe even intentionally – ambiguous, but we argue that analogical reasoning guided by parallelism would have pointed a Babylonian informed reader to the understanding proposed here. This argument based on analogy reflects a worldview that is prepared to read an extra-linguistic ('real-world') relevance into such cases of variant repetition. The fate considered appropriate for the rich parvenu follows from the character of the lion, the "enemy," *gērû*, which the animal shares with its human equivalent. This is exactly the same type of analogical reasoning that underlies divinatory texts. This is by no means an isolated case within Babylonian literature. The central part of the Šamaš Hymn, which we will discuss in the next section, is arguably built around the idea of repetition with variation and is pervaded by structures of analogical thinking and argumentation through similarity.

5. Repetition with Variation in the 'Talionic Section' of the Šamaš Hymn 88–98

The central part of the great Akkadian hymn to the sun-god Šamaš (Lambert 1960: 121–138[44]) contains a long section (lines 83–121) which delves into the god's role as upholder of justice who brings punishment to bear upon the wrongdoer and gives rewards for good conduct. This section takes the form of an enumeration

[43] See Lambert 1960: 75: "Will be burnt at the stake by the king before his time;" Von Soden 1990: 150: "Mit Feuer verbrennt ihn der König an einem ihm nicht (vorher)bestimmten Tage!" (see also Fink 2012: 82, following von Soden 1990); Ponchia 1996: 76: "Prima della sua ora il re lo brucerà sul rogo;" Cavigneaux 2014: 115: "Le roi le brûlera au foi avant son heure!". Differently, Oshima 2014: 155: "Like the Fire-God, the ruler will burn (him) before his time" (see also AHw: 291a s.v. *gīriš*, *gīrāniš* "wie Gira").

[44] Not included in Lambert's edition is a Neo-Babylonian manuscript from Sippar which was published by George & Al-Rawi (1998: 202–203). Copies of six new Neo-Assyrian and Neo- and Late Babylonian manuscripts have recently been published by George & Taniguchi (2019, nos. 128–133; the volume also includes copies of Late Babylonian school-exercise tablets containing extracts from the hymn: nos. 134–142). The most recent discussion of the central section of the Šamaš Hymn is De Zorzi 2019.

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of wicked and virtuous deeds and the punishments or rewards attached to them. It mostly consists of couplets, but groups of three lines are also attested.[45]

The aim of this portion of the hymn is to celebrate the Sun god as god of justice by describing his perfectly 'talionic' retribution of good and evil deeds.[46] The correspondence between the evil deeds envisioned by the text and the compensation meted out by the Sun god is achieved by showing that the consequence resembles the deed. Generally, the punishment relates to the nature of the misdeed. In several cases, 'mirroring punishment' is demonstrated by linking the 'antecedent' (the misdeed) with the 'consequent' (the punishment) through (variant) repetition of lexical items and/or phonetic sequences.[47] This is the same type of argumentation through similarity and analogy which is in evidence in the passage from the Babylonian Theodicy discussed in the previous section.

Importantly, as we will now see in detail in our analysis of lines 88–98, in this central part of the hymn, the theological message, i.e. the perfectly symmetrical consistency of Šamaš's analogy-based justice, resonates in the literary form of the text, which is pervaded by patterns of symmetry, and the literary form emphasizes, and indeed in part creates, the message.

The basic structure of the constituent parts of this section of the Šamaš Hymn is well illustrated by the couplet 97–98 (Lambert 1960: 132–133):

> 97. *dayyāna ṣalpa mēsera tukallam*
> 98. *māḫir ṭa'ti lā muštēšeru tušazbal arna*
>
> 97. "You (= Šamaš) give the unscrupulous judge experience of fetters,
> 98. He who accepts a present and yet lets justice miscarry you make bear his punishment."

The parallelism between the two lines shows how we should imagine the "unscrupulous judge" to act. The hymn refers here to the custom of giving gifts (*ṭa'tu*) to judges as a remuneration for their services, and condemns the judge who accepts a gift from a party, but does not act accordingly in this party's interest.[48] The wrong prompting Šamaš's punishment is thus a lack of reciprocity on the judge's part, which is presented as a failure of morals rather than as a 'simple' illegal

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45 See Lambert 1960: 121–122. For 112–117 as two semantically related triplets, see De Zorzi 2019: 172–178.

46 See De Zorzi 2019, in particular regarding lines 112–117 of the hymn.

47 For parallels in other works of erudite literature that deal with the topic of retributive justice, see, recently, De Zorzi 2019: 178–179.

48 See Jursa 2021: 155–157, where this passage of the Šamaš Hymn is discussed together with other similar passages in first millennium 'wisdom' texts. These texts do not per se condemn the judge for receiving payment from interested parties, but rather for subsequent inaction or inappropriate action. These payments are not bribes, but fee benefices, i.e. 'Sportelpfründen', in Weber's terminology: Weber 1978: 1032.

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behaviour. Fittingly, Šamaš punishes the crooked judge who takes the fee but does not carry through, failing to do justice to the giver, by making him bear (lit. 'carry') his punishment.[49]

Going backwards towards the beginning of the section, we also move implicitly backwards in time, from completed evil actions (98: *māḫir ṭa'ti lā muštēšeru*) to culpable intent:

95. *ša kāṣir anzilli qarnīšu tuballa*
96. *ēpiš šeṭṭi kāpidu eni qaqqaršu*

95. "You blunt the horns of the one who plots abominations,
96. He who commits negligence intentionally, his foundation is undermined."

There has been much discussion about the interpretation of the word following *ēpiš* in the second line,[50] which has been read either as *šettu/šeṭṭu* "act of negligence" (Borger 1964: 56a, Seux 1974: 57 and n. 54, AHw: 1221b, CAD Š/2: 340a)[51] or as *riddu* "persecution" (Lambert 1960: 130; Frahm 2009).[52] For a long time, this passage was known only from K 3474+ (ms. B in Lambert 1960) ii 15': *e-piš rid-di/šeṭ-ṭi ka-pi-du e-ni qaq-qar-šu*. In Neo-Assyrian orthography, *rid* (= MES) and *šid* (= ŠID) are not clearly distinguished as they are in Neo-Babylonian. Two recently published Neo-Babylonian manuscripts now show that the reading

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49 In Akkadian sources, there is an association between *arnu*, which means both "guilt" and "punishment," and the concept of "load, burden:" note the the expression *bilat arnim* "the burden of guilt," which is used in a recently published Old Babylonian collection of proverbs (Streck & Wasserman 2019: 242, BM 108868 rev. 10).

50 The discussion is summarized by Frahm 2009: 42–44.

51 The exact meaning of *šettu/šeṭṭu* is uncertain, translations vary. E.g., Reiner 1985: 73: "he who covets doing injustice, his firm ground *is shifted*"; Foster 2005: 631: "the perpetrator of a cunning deal is undermined." The dictionaries agree in deriving *šeṭṭu* from *šêṭu* "to be remiss, negligent:" see AHw: 1221b s.v. *šeṭṭu* "Unrecht" and CAD Š/2: 340a s.v. *šettu* (*šeṭṭu*) "act of negligence, error of omission." I follow the CAD here. In any case, the existence of this rare word (cf. Frahm 2009: 43) is now clearly established by two new Neo-Babylonian manuscripts for the passage under discussion (see below).

52 In his edition of the Šamaš Hymn, Lambert (1960: 130) reads, without translating, *ēpiš riddi* ("a zealous …, his foundation is undermined"). In the related commentary, Lambert (1960: 320) notes that *riddu*, a by-form of *rīdu* "what is proper," clearly has a negative connotation in this line and thus seems to be used to indicate the opposite of its usual sense. Arguing in favour of Lambert's *riddu*, Frahm (2009: 44, following CAD R: 324f.) notes that *rīdu*/*riddu* can indicate both "proper behaviour" and "driving, persecution," i.e. the word can also have a negative meaning. In a passage from an inscription of Esarhaddon ('Ninive A' I 23–25: Frahm 2009: 30), *riddu* is used to indicate "persecution" by Esarhaddon's brothers – or rather an urge to persecute ("Verfolgungsgdrang") which moves them to act against Esarhaddon (Frahm 2009: 42–46).

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must be *šettu/šeṭṭu*.[53] Semantically *ša kāṣir anzilli* and *ēpiš šeṭṭi kāpidu* are clearly parallel, with *kāṣir* and *kāpidu* indicating scheming, plotting, and *anzillu-šeṭṭu* falling into the orbit of sins and transgressions causing divine displeasure.[54] Further, *qarnīšu tuballa* and *eni qaqqaršu* are semantically connected, as both express the nullification of the wicked man's harmful potential. The difference of active (*tuballa*) *vs*. passive voice (*eni*) is mirrored by the focus on the 'aggressive' horns in 95 and on the 'passive' foundations of the culpable act in 96. The two phrases are bound by assonance between *qarnīšu* and *qaqqaršu*, and quite likely, on the level of the script, by a learned association linking *tu-bal-la* and *e-ni* through the use of BAL as the central syllable of *tu-bal-la* and as a logogram for *enû* "to shift."

In this parallelistic couplet, the second line does not simply repeat the first one, but enriches it, deepens it, renders it more concrete and vivid. At the same time,

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[53] The two manuscripts in question are BM 65472+ and Si 832 (George & Taniguchi 2019 nos. 128 and 130). Si 832 rev. 4 reads: [*e*]-*piš šet-*⌜*tú*⌝ ⌜*ka*⌝-⌜*pi*⌝-[*du*…], the ms. has a clear ŠID. BM 65472+ obv. 16' reads: [*e-pi*]*š* ⌜*šeṭ*⌝-*ṭù ka-pi-du e-ni-nu qaq-qa*[*r-šu*]. We would prefer the reading ⌜*šeṭ*⌝ to ⌜*rid*⌝ here, even though the sign is slightly damaged in a way that might allow restoring it as RID – a RID that, however, would lack at least one vertical wedge (note that Mayer 2003: 239 cites BM 65472+ obv. 16' and reads *rid-du*; see also Westenholz 1997: 188 n. 30, mentioning a personal communication by Mayer; Winitzer 2013: 446, quoting Mayer's transliteration of BM 65472+, translates the line as follows: "a cunning one, who plans persecution (*ēpiš riddi*) – his foundation is undermined"); the reading *ṭù* of DU, while unexpected, is possible based on von Soden & Röllig 1991: 24. BM 65472+'s *e-ni-nu* may stand for *innenni*, a variant to *e-ni*, unless the scribe thought of the rare verb *enēnu* "to punish," which, however, leads to syntactical and semantical difficulties. My translation "he who commits negligence intentionally" is an interpretative rendering of the two parallel participles *ēpiš* and *kāpidu*, lit. "he who commits … (and) plans." Frahm (2009: 43 n. 73) is surely right in pointing out that *pace* CAD Š/2: 340a *e-pe/iš* should not be taken as an infinitive governed by *kāpidu.* The structure "participle + genitivus objectivus – participle" is repeated two lines later, in 98: *māḫir ṭa'ti lā muštēšeru.*

[54] It is worth mentioning in this context that *šeṭṭu* and *anzillu* also appear together at the beginning of the Old Babylonian composition known as "Man and his God" (AO 4462: Nougayrol 1952: pl. VII–VIII; von Soden 1957: 315–319; Lambert 1987; http://akkpm.org/P492288.html): *še-eṭ i-pu-šu la i-d*[*i*] (obv. 13; status constructus of *šettu / šeṭṭu* as if the word were based on the root *šṭt/štt, as *kak* < *kakku*), *an-zi-il-la-ka* (obv. 14). In this section of the text, the sufferer laments that he does not know what act of negligence he has committed against his god to deserve the suffering he endures (see Zisa 2012: 21–23). The language used in obv. 13–14 is reminiscent of the Šamaš Hymn 94–96: *ul īdi* (94, see below), *anzilli* (95), *ēpiš šeṭṭi* (96). Furthermore, in both compositions, *šeṭṭu* and *anzillu* are associated by contiguity with transgressions that threaten the social order: adultery involving a neighbour's wife (*alti tappêšu*) in the Šamaš Hymn (88–94, see below), slander between friends in the Old Babylonian text (obv. 15: *ka-ar-ṣí ib-ri-im ib-ra-šu la a-*[*ki-il*]).

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by adding fresh nuances and bringing in new elements, it works as a bridge to the following section: *ēpiš šeṭṭi kāpidu* "he who commits negligence intentionally," while echoing the "one who plots abominations" (*ša kāṣir anzilli*) in 95 both in form and meaning, introduces the case of "the unscrupulous judge" (*dayyāna ṣalpa*) who accepts a fee but then lets justice miscarry (*māḫir ṭa'ti lā muštēšeru*) in 97–98 (see above), with the participle *ēpiš* having the effect of anticipating the shift from evil plotting (*kāṣir-kāpidu* 95–96) to taking active action (97–98).[55]

The role of 96 is that of 'pivot line', by which I mean a line which displays strong ties to the preceding and following line(s) and has the function of semantic and structural bridge stitching together text parts that may be seen as separate. In general terms, pivot lines draw from the previous line(s), while at the same time propelling the meaning forward. Pivot lines are frequent in Babylonian poetry, but they also play a crucial role in magical and divinatory texts. Their existence has been noticed before, but their manifestations and functions are under-researched.[56]

The connection between 95–96 and 97–98 is further underscored by the fact that in both sections, evil and retribution are presented on the same line – a scheme which is then taken up and expanded in the following sections of the hymn (99ff.), which, however, we will not discuss here.

Going further backwards towards the beginning of the 'talionic' section of the hymn, we encounter the longest section among the enumerations of wicked and virtuous deeds which forms the central part of the Šamaš Hymn (88–94). In this case, the evil deed occupies the first line, while the rest of the section describes its consequences:

88. *ša ana alti tappêšu iššû nīši ī*[*nīšu*][57]
89. *ina ūmi lā šīmāti ušarri mū*[*ssu*][58]

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[55] The interconnection of these lines is also enhanced by syntactic parallelism between 96 and 98, i.e., the repetition of the sequence participle-dependent genitive-participle (see note 53 *in fine*).

[56] Further examples of pivot lines in literature, magic, and divination are described in other papers published in these proceedings. For examples of pivot lines in extispicy texts from the second and first millennium BCE, see Menicatti 2021.

[57] This line is read as follows in Lambert's edition (1960: 130): *šá a-na al-ti tap-pi-šú iš-šu-*⌜*ú*⌝ [*īnē-šú*]. The reading above is based on BM 65472+ obv. 8' and Si 832 rev. 5' (George & Taniguchi 2019 nos. 128 and 130), which preserve some additional text. BM 65472+ obv. 8' reads: *šá a-na al-ti tap-pe-e-šú iš-šu-ú* (ras.) […]; Si 832 rev. 5': [*šá a-na al-ti tap*]-⌜*pe*⌝-*šú iš-*⌜*šu*⌝-⌜*ú*⌝ *ni-ši* ⌜*i*⌝-[*ni-šu*].

[58] This line is read as follows in Lambert's edition (1960: 130): *i-na* u_4*-um la ši-ma-ti ú-šá*-x […] "(A man who covets his neighbour's wife) will […] before his appointed day." The reading above is based on BM 65472+ obv. 9' and Si 832 rev. 6' (George & Taniguchi 2019 nos. 128 and 130). The former reads: *i-na* u_4*-mu la ši-ma-tu*$_4$ *ú-šá-*

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90. *kunnaššu kippu zēra ukabba*[*ssu*][59]
91. *išširšu kakkakama mušēziba ul ī*[*šu*]
92. *ina dīnišu ul izzazza abū*[*šu*]
93. *ina pî dayyāni ul ippalū šunu aḫḫūšu*
94. *ina ḫuḫāri ša erê saḫip ul īdi*

88. "A man who cov[ets] his neighbour's wife,
89. Before his appointed day he will begin [his?] (road to) dea[th].
90. A snare is set up for him, in the field he will step [into it],
91. Your weapon will strike at him, there will be none to save him.
92. [His] father will not stand for his defence,
93. At the judge's command his brothers will not plead.
94. He is caught in a copper trap that he did not foresee.[60]"

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ra mu-ú-[*us-su*]. Note that, based on the available space on the right-end edge of the tablet, also *mu-ú-*[*tu/-ta*] is a plausible reconstruction of the end of the line. However, the seemingly intentional accumulation of sibilants at the end of the lines of this section makes *mu-ú-*[*us-su*] the preferable option. In Si 832 the verb is written with *-ri*: [… *l*]*a ši-ma-ti ú-šá-ri m*[*u-*…]. The x in K 3474+ (ms. B in Lambert's edition) could be the beginning of *-ri* as well.

59 This line is read as follows in Lambert's edition (1960: 130): *kun-na-áš-šu kip-pu zi-ru ú-*x […] "a nasty snare is prepared for him .. […]." The reading above is based on BM 65472+ obv. 10' and Si 832 rev. 7' (George & Taniguchi 2019 nos. 128 and 130). The former reads: [*kun*]-*na-áš-šu kip-pi* še.numun *ú-kab-ba-*[*as-su*], while Si 832 has: […] ˹*kip*˺*-pi* še.˹numun˺ ˹*ú*-[…]. The x in K 3474+ (ms. B in Lambert's edition) could be the beginning of *-kab*. Lambert interprets *zi-ru* as an adjective qualifying *kippu*. See also Reiner 1985: 73 "a twisted snare is readied for him"; while Foster 2005: 631 connects the word with the following verb, which at the time could not yet be restored: "the wicked man will […]." However, the logographic writing še.numun in the Neo-Babylonian manuscripts indicate that their writers interpreted *zīru/zēru* as "field." We therefore take the word as an *accusativus loci* and connect it with the following verb rather than with the preceding one, as this makes for a more symmetrical division of the half-verses (thus also Foster). See below for a semantic rationale behind the reference to the culpable man's "field" here, which also implicitly creates an argument against considering še.numun a misunderstanding on the part of the Neo-Babylonian scribes of the adjective *zīru* in *"the wicked man will step [on it]." Furthermore, by the standards of this composition the latter interpretation would be an uncharacteristically banal follow-up to the first half of the line, without any additional nuance, whereas "in the field" produces some semantic added value. Note finally that the culpable man is otherwise only referred to by suffixes in the passage concerned.

60 We here follow Lambert's translation of the line. Reiner and Foster give a slightly different nuance to this line in their respective translations of the Šamaš Hymn: "he is caught, unwittingly, in a bronze trap" (Reiner 1985: 73); "he is caught unaware in a metal trap!" (Foster 2005: 631). The term *ḫuḫāru* is known from Old Babylonian texts, as an emblem of Šamaš appearing in the context of oath-taking (CAD Ḫ: 225, George 2018: 131; together with *pāštu* "double-headed ax," see CAD P: 266), and fittingly it

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Adultery was considered a grave sin in Ancient Mesopotamia.[61] In this section, the rule of symmetrical retribution is maintained on many levels: culpable intent for future culpable action (88: *iššû nīši ī*[*nīšu*]) corresponds to deferred, future punishment, expressed by *iparras* forms throughout: *ušarra/ušarri* (89), *ukabba*[*ssu*] (90), *išširšu* (91), *ul izzazza* (92), *ul ippalū* (93). The slightly gnomic expression *ušarri/ušarra mū*[*ssu*] or *mū*[*ta*] in 89, literally "he begins (his) death," thus fits the context perfectly: the semantic tension it creates is resolved by the following explanations referencing Šamaš's waiting snare (*kippu*) in 90 and his weapon (*kakkakama*) in 91.[62]

Symmetrically, a break of the social contract – coveting one's neighbour's wife – implies the social contract being broken at the culprit's expense: his relatives will not help when he is faced with Šamaš's punishment. This punishment is conceived of in concrete terms as a trial for adultery in 92–93. Its evocation is symmetrically bracketed by the two lines (90 and 94) referring to Šamaš's symbolic traps that will thus be sprung. The fact that the "trap" is in the culprit's field (90) creates another semantic echo of the nature of the crime in the retribution: both occur in the guilty man's home territory. Furthermore, the contrast between active and passive verbs which we have already seen in 95–96 (*tuballa*/*eni*) highlights the mechanism of retribution in this section of the hymn: the man "who lifts (his eyes)" (88: *iššû nīši ī*[*nīšu*]) is caught in a trap (94: *ina ḫuḫāri ša erê saḫip*), i.e. he is "clamped down upon." Lambert (1960: 130) sees 94 as an independent line, following the parallel couplet 92–93, but the theme of the trap connects it to the preceding lines. Note also the repetition of *ina* at the beginning of 92–94 and the ending *ul īdi* in 94 which recalls *ul īšu* in 91.

Phonetic associations bind parallel pairs and thus reinforce semantic parallelism. There is assonance between *kunnaššu kippu* "a snare is set up for him" (90) and *išširšu kakkakama* "your weapon will strike at him" (91), and between the chiastically arranged *mušēziba ul īšu* "there will be none to save him" (91) and *ul izzazza abūšu* "his father will not stand" (92). The interconnection between 91 and 92 is further strengthened by the accumulation of 'geminate ballast' (Noegel

stands here (Šamaš Hymn 83–94: see Lambert 1960: 130) in a sequence of words indicating Šamaš's traps and nets, *šētu* (87), *gišparru* (84), *šuškallu* (83).

61 In a bilingual composition from the Middle Assyrian period, adultery is part of a list of transgressions that threaten the social order: "He who has intercourse with (another) man's wife, his guilt (*aranšu*) is grievous." (Lambert 1960: 119 VAT 10610 3).

62 As demonstrated by Winitzer (2013: 445–449), the image of Šamaš's charging weapon (*kakku*) accompanying the god's traps also occurs in Etana SB II 19–22, in a passage reminiscent of Šamaš Hymn 83–96.

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2004) in association with /a/ in the words *kakkakama* (91) and *izzazza* (92).[63] Importantly, as elsewhere in the 'talionic' section of the hymn (see above), phonetic repetition links antecedent and consequent: note the proliferation of labials and sibilants in 88–89, connecting the evil deed to its retribution.[64] This connection is of a type that is frequently encountered in omen sequences – we might call it 'connective paronomasia'[65] – and it reinforces a semantic link between the two poetic lines.

From a structural point of view, the case of the man coveting his neighbour's wife consists of two triplets, 88–90 and 92–94, bound together by 91. The latter works as pivot line (see above): the reference to Šamaš's weapon elaborates on the motive of the trap introduced in the preceding line. The second half verse, *mušēziba ul ī*[*šu*] "there will be none to save him," draws on the topic of death explored in 89 and, at the same time, introduces the topic of the two following lines, which describe the future wrongdoer's lack of family support. By agglutinating in a creative way elements from both the preceding and following lines, 91 binds together the two triplets 88–90 and 92–94 and allows reading the sequence as a coherent whole.

This is a very carefully crafted text, in which unity and correspondence is maintained not only within individual sections, but, as we have seen above in the discussion of the bridging function of 96, also between contiguous sections.

To sum up, variant repetition is the strategy used to structure this 'talionic' section of the Šamaš Hymn and at the same time bind together its constituent parts. In particular, variant repetition of lexical items and/or phonetic sequences is amply used on the horizontal axis, i.e. within poetic lines, as well as on the vertical axis, as a way of strengthening parallelism between adjacent lines (e.g. 88–89, 90–91: see above), and to create connection and equivalence within longer sections of text. An example of the latter is the echoing of *q**arn**īšu tu**bal**la* (95; written *qar-na-šu/šú tu-bal-la*) by the chiastically re-arranged variant *tušaz**bal arn**a* (98), which creates a distant parallelism and further increases the perception

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63 Noegel 2004 discusses several examples of this phenomenon in Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Akkadian. See also Noegel 2021: 286–295.

64 This is linked to several examples of the use of paronomasia to demonstrate *lex talionis*: Noegel 2021: 137–140. For two other examples in the Šamaš Hymn 112–117, see De Zorzi 2019.

65 Noegel 2021 is a comparative study of 'wordplay,' including paronomasia, in Ancient Near Eastern texts. Examples from omen texts are presented on p. 118–121. See also Noegel 2007: 9–26. On the role of paronomasia with regard to the organization of omen sequences, see Winitzer 2017: 438–449. Several examples of sound associations in omen sequences from *Šumma izbu*, both on the horizontal (protasis-apodosis) and on the vertical (sequences of interrelated omens) level, are treated in De Zorzi 2014: 194–199.

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of the interconnection between the structurally and semantically related couplets 95–97 and 97–98 (see above):[66]

95. *ša kāṣir anzilli qarnīšu tuballa*
96. *ēpiš šeṭṭi kāpidu eni qaqqaršu*
97. *dayyāna ṣalpa mēsera tukallam*
98. *māḫir ṭa'ti lā muštēšeru tušazbal arna*

95. "You blunt the horns of the one who plots abominations,
96. He who commits negligence intentionally, his foundation is undermined.
97. You (= Šamaš) give the unscrupulous judge experience of fetters,
98. He who accepts a present and yet lets justice miscarry you make bear his punishment."

The Šamaš Hymn reveals a rich and tightly woven net of interconnections on both the horizontal and the vertical axis. In the passage studied, various symmetrical correspondences – semantic, grammatical, phonetic – are used to convey the notion of Šamaš's perfectly symmetrical justice. The hymn gives us its interpretation of the nature of divine retribution through content *and* form, exploring the transcendental world of the gods through textual means. Read against the background of the preceding discussion of Ancient Mesopotamian 'analogism' as evinced in the divinatory corpus, the textual phenomena described here are arguably an articulation in poetic form of the similarity-based 'entanglement' of the cosmos as a reflection of the divine will. In fact, the constant mirroring of form and meaning in the Šamaš Hymn is a glorifying reflection and celebration of this divinely sanctioned order.[67]

6. Conclusions

Deducing semantic interconnections from the proximity and the syntactical similarity of two phrases is certainly a psychological universal, in particular if this deduction is prompted by similarities on more than one level (phonetic, morphological, syntactical, and so forth). The framing of such deductions is culture-specific, though, and the case studies presented in this paper elucidate different aspects of how parallelism works in Babylonian poetry. The passages from *Ludlul*

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66 Other examples of intra-textual connections of this kind in the Šamaš Hymn are currently under study within REPAC. Within the organizational framework of the text, they seem to have been used to create structural boundaries and to accentuate thematic peaks.

67 A similar strong connection between form and meaning in an Akkadian hymn has been demonstrated by Piccin & Worthington (2015: 118–120) in a study dedicated to the Marduk hymn at the beginning of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*. See also Schmidl 2021: in this paper written within the framework of REPAC, Schmidl demonstrates how structural elements and micro-features such as orthography were used creatively to enhance the message of the Acrostic Hymn of Nebuchadnezzar II.

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bēl nēmeqi (I 117–118) and the Babylonian Theodicy (16–17) are examples of the philological benefits that can be reaped from a careful observation of the power of parallelism, which in this case solves long-standing philological cruxes. Approaching another passage in the Babylonian Theodicy (61–64) in the same vein throws up an argument from symmetry in favour of the fittingness of value judgements expressed by the text (*gērû … gērîš*). By drawing on the way similar word associations are employed to create the nexus between protasis and apodosis in omen texts, we argue that such displays of scribal creativity are, in 'emic' terms, statements or arguments based on a presumed ontological link between entities united by a bond of similarity. Thus, analogical thought or 'analogism' (Descola 2013) is present not in just divination (and magic), but also in the texture of literature. The passage of the Šamaš Hymn (88–98) discussed in the final section of the present paper is a particularly striking example. Šamaš's 'talionic' justice stands in perfect symmetry to the crime it punishes: a symmetry expressed on all levels in this exquisitely crafted passage.

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