

Unity through Poetry

The Development of *Šurpu* IV¹

FRANK SIMONS (Trinity College Dublin)

Abstract: The ritual and incantation series *Šurpu* ‘Burning’ is one of the longest and most complex magical texts to survive from the ancient world. The present paper offers a close analysis of repetition and parallelism used in Tablet IV of the text, revealing an intricate web of interconnections, both within Tablet IV, and between Tablet IV and the rest of *Šurpu*. Through this sophisticated use of poetic techniques, Tablet IV plays a major role in completely reshaping *Šurpu*, turning it from a plea for help addressed to a wide range of important gods into a ritual focussed almost exclusively on the power of Marduk to help the sufferer.

Keywords: *Šurpu*, magic, poetry, parallelism, repetition, structural devices, creativity, textual development

Contact: fjms708@gmail.com

The ritual and incantation series *Šurpu* ‘Burning’ is preserved in three versions.² These versions differ from one another in several ways, but the major differences between them relate to the way in which the material of *Šurpu* was arranged. All

¹ This article results from research conducted under the auspices of the project REPAC “Repetition, Parallelism and Creativity: an Inquiry into the Construction of Meaning in Ancient Mesopotamian Literature and Erudition” (2019–2024, University of Vienna) that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement no. 803060). Work on the final version of the paper was funded by the Irish Research Council under grant number 21/PATH-A/9412.

My thanks to Nicla De Zorzi, Sophus Helle, Martina Schmidl, Martin Worthington, and the anonymous reviewer for their many improvements to this paper.

² Detailed arguments regarding the existence of three separate versions of *Šurpu* will be given in the writer’s projected new edition of the text. For now, see Simons 2017: 7–23.

In the present paper, the use of the terms ‘version’ and ‘recension’ follows the definitions given by Cooper (2005: 50) – ‘recensions’ are manuscripts or groups of manuscripts showing significant but **minor** variations from other manuscripts, ‘versions’ are manuscripts or groups of manuscripts showing significant and **major** variations from other manuscripts.

three versions seem to have included more or less the same rituals and incantations, but not necessarily in the same order. The only major exception to this is that one version included an extra Tablet.³ This is Tablet IV, which, in its familiar form as published by Zimmern,⁴ Reiner,⁵ and Borger,⁶ consists of a single long incantation chiefly devoted to an invocation of Marduk.

Tablet IV as it is currently known seems to have been compiled from several sources. The last 50 lines of text likely belonged to two originally separate incantations (§§B and C, see below), while the first 58 lines (§A) were probably composed specifically to form a single coherent text with these two older incantations.

The present paper will first detail the evidence for the separate existence of parts of Tablet IV before considering the techniques used to make the text coherent. This discussion will focus first on the internal consistency of §A, and will then address the coherence between §§A and B.

1. Tablet IV preliminaries

Šurpu IV is preserved on 26 manuscripts from at least 7 different sites.⁷ There is small but significant variation between the manuscripts from different sites, though for the most part our sources are not complete enough to reconstruct location specific recensions of the text. The Ur and Uruk recensions are each known from just a single fragment – enough to see that they differ from the text as it is elsewhere preserved, but not enough to delve thoroughly into the specifics. A single, small, fragment from Nippur is known, but not enough is preserved to determine to which recension of the text it belongs. This fragment is nonetheless important, as it is one of just two *Šurpu* fragments known to have been unearthed in the city.

³ In the present paper, Tablet written with a capital T will be used to refer to the internal subdivisions of the text – its chapters – while tablet with a lower case t will be used to refer to individual manuscripts, e.g. Tablet IV, tablet BM 37126.

⁴ Zimmern 1896–1901: 21–25.

⁵ Reiner 1958: 25–29.

⁶ Borger 2000: 56–74.

⁷ Ten fragments from Nineveh, three from Sultantepe, five from Assur, and one each from Nippur, Ur and Uruk, alongside two school tablets of uncertain provenance, two probably from Sippar, and one from Kiš. The majority of these have been edited in Borger (2000: 56–74).

Tablet IV is among the best preserved parts of *Šurpu*, with just two words lost in a lacuna. Only one wholly unpublished new fragment (A 30101 from Nippur) is known to the writer, on which just 8 lines of text survive. Four of the fragments from Assur have not been included in any previous edition of *Šurpu*, though they have been edited previously (Jakob 2018: 88–91; Fadhil 2012: 95–113). Two of these, VAT 10138 and VAT 10872 (Jakob 2018: 88–91) will be discussed below.

Fortunately, two recensions of the text are well attested – that of Nineveh, attested by 9 fragments belonging to 7 separate manuscripts, and that of Assur, attested by 3 fragments from Assur belonging to 2 separate manuscripts, as well as 3 fragments from Sultantepe. There are a number of relatively minor differences between these recensions, and for the sake of simplicity we will here limit ourselves to a discussion of the Nineveh recension.⁸ It is important to note that the line numbers of the Nineveh recension differ from that in Reiner's edition and Borger's partitur, neither of which distinguish between the different versions or recensions. The major difference is the omission of two lines from the Nineveh recension:⁹

34 (33)	<i>ša</i>	<i>uru-šú</i>	<i>ru-u-qu</i>	<i>kaskal-šú</i>	<i>né-sa-at</i>	<i>bu</i> ¹⁰
34a (34)	<i>šal-miš</i>	<i>a-na</i>	<i>uru-šú</i>	<i>a-la-ku</i>		<i>bu</i>
35 (35)	<i>šal-la</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>ka-ma-a</i>	<i>a-na</i>	<i>un-meš-šú</i>	<i>tur-ru bu</i>
35a (36)	<i>ina</i>	<i>igi</i>	<i>un-meš-šú</i>	<i>a-ma-ru</i>		<i>bu</i>

Lines 34a and 35a are found only in the Assur recension of Tablet IV and so will not be considered in the rest of this paper. In addition, lines 80 and 83 in both Reiner and Borger are separate lines on just one manuscript (K. 2333+) and are here considered to belong to their preceding lines and to have been separated on K. 2333+ only for reasons of space. Conversely, line 14 in both Reiner and Borger is written over two lines in the only Nineveh manuscript to preserve this section, and so this is also followed here, making this lines 14–15.

⁸ These differences will be discussed in the writer's projected edition of *Šurpu*. On occasion it has been necessary to restore broken lines from the Assur recension. Since within lines preserved by both recensions variations are chiefly orthographic, this is usually not explicitly marked in the present paper.

⁹ 34 (33) He whose city is distant, whose road is far away, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 34a (34) To go in safety to his city, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 35 (35) To return the prisoner of war and the captive to his people, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 35a (36) To see[?] in the presence of his people, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)

After Reiner (1958: 25). In the interests of clarity, the line numbers of Reiner's edition will be added in parentheses wherever they differ from those used by the present paper.

¹⁰ *bu* is an abbreviation for *bulluṭu šullumu Marduk ittikama* 'To make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and...'. This refrain is discussed at length below (§4)

2. Sections of the text

Tablet IV divides naturally into three somewhat uneven sections. The first section (§A – first line: *ÉN epēš risbi u risibtī* ‘Incantation: The commission of sin or misdeed’) consists of lines 1–58 (Reiner 1958 / Borger 2000: lines 1–60), the second (§B – first line: *ištēn lipṭur Šamaš qurādu* ‘Alone may Šamaš the valiant release’) lines 59–85 (61–88), and the third (§C – first line: *lizzīzzū Anu u Antu line’u murṣu* ‘May Anu and Antu stand by, may they ward off sickness’) lines 86–105 (89–108). These sections are clearly distinguished from one another in several ways, the clearest of which is that the addressee of each section is different – §A is directed solely to Marduk, while §§B and C are directed towards an array of gods. Also salient is the shift from mainly infinitive verbs in §A to almost exclusively precative verbs in §§B and C. The manuscripts are unanimous in placing a ruling between §§B and C.¹¹ A close investigation of the manuscripts reveals good evidence, of two different kinds, that §§B and C could be used independently both of each other and of §A.

In the first place, among the very few pre-first millennium manuscripts related to *Šurpu* are two Middle Assyrian manuscripts containing parts of Tablet IV:¹² VAT 10872¹³ contains the opening lines of §C before a break, following several lines which cannot be identified, and with further unidentified material on the reverse; VAT 10318¹⁴ contains lines 1–19 of §B (= ll. 59–77 [60–80]) before a break, which are immediately preceded by a ruling and some unidentified lines of text. It seems likely that these manuscripts represent a pre-serialisation form of the incantations. The fact that these “forerunner” texts are found in contexts apparently unrelated either to *Šurpu* as we know it or to the other sections of Tablet IV is strong evidence that §§B and C were, at some point, independent incantations.

As already mentioned above, three versions of *Šurpu* are known. For convenience, we will refer to these as Long, Medium, and Twisted.¹⁵ The Long version, the sequence of which can be reconstructed only from the catchlines and colophons of *Šurpu* manuscripts, is that in which Tablet IV is found in its entirety.

¹¹ Four manuscripts preserve the transition between §§B and C, all with a ruling. Six manuscripts preserve the transition between §§A and B, none with a ruling.

¹² Neither manuscript was known to Zimmern, Reiner, or Borger.

¹³ Jakob 2019: no. 40, 90–91

¹⁴ Jakob 2019: no. 39, 88–90

¹⁵ These names are provisional. The Long version consists of 10 Tablets of incantations, the Medium version of 9 Tablets – it lacks Tablet IV. The Twisted version seems to consist of the same incantations as the Medium version, but organises the material in a very different way. A detailed treatment of the developmental variation of *Šurpu* is planned within the context of the writer’s projected edition of the text. For now, see Simons 2017: 7–23.

The Medium and Twisted versions are known in part from catchlines and colophons, but are also found in several catalogues of the series, as well as the Ritual Tablet, in which the incantation incipits are given in order, sometimes with Tablet numbers which vary according to version.

The most important catalogue for present purposes is VAT 13613, the so-called ‘Ritual Tablet’ of *Šurpu*.¹⁶ This manuscript in fact preserves two distinct compositions related to different versions of *Šurpu*: a Ritual Tablet for the Medium version and a catalogue of the Twisted version.¹⁷ Disregarding its ritual instructions, the Ritual Tablet section is essentially a catalogue of the incantations of the Medium version, in which the incipit of §C is found alone with an ÉN marker:

Obv. 12 ÉN *li-iz-zi-zu* ^d*A-num u An-tum li-né-²u-u* GI[G]
 ‘Incantation: May Anu and Antu stand by, may they ward off sickness’

According to VAT 13613, this incantation is to be recited between the incantations which respectively form Tablets III and V of the Long version, but there is no mention of either §§A or B. Moreover, the ÉN in this line, marking the incipit of an individual incantation, demonstrates conclusively that §C could be used independently of the other sections of Tablet IV, despite the lack of an ÉN marker in any preserved manuscript of the incantation itself.

In the catalogue section, which details the Twisted version, no part of Tablet IV is listed. This is simply due to the abbreviated nature of the catalogue, however, as can be seen by a comparison of the catalogue with a manuscript belonging to the Twisted version, K. 2390. The relevant section of the catalogue in VAT 13613 reads:¹⁸

5' (6').	[ÉN <i>ma-mitu</i> DÜ.A.B]I	[Incantation: An]y [sanction]
6' (7').	[DUB.II ² .KAM <i>šur-pu</i>	[Second ¹⁹ Tablet of <i>Šurpu</i>
7' (8').	[ÉN <i>āš-ši</i> G]I.IZI.LA	[Incantation: I hold] the torch

In both the Long and Medium versions the basic outline of *Šurpu* is the same, and the incantation *māmītu kalāma* is Tablet III and *ašši gizillā* is found in Tablet I.²⁰ The Twisted version, as the name indicates, orders the ceremony completely differently. Several manuscripts belonging to the Twisted version can be identified

¹⁶ Reiner 1958: 11–12; Ebeling 1953: pl. 91.

¹⁷ Simons 2017: 9–14; Lambert 1959–1960: 122.

¹⁸ After Reiner 1958: 12, rev. i, 6'–8'. For K. 2390 see Borger 2000: 36–42, 73–74.

¹⁹ There is some confusion concerning the Tablet numbers of the Twisted version, so far known only from the catalogue in VAT 13613, which requires collation.

²⁰ The exact organisation of Tablet I in the Long version is not yet certain, but there is no reason to doubt that *ašši gizillā* belongs somewhere within it. The Medium version places it as the second incantation of Tablet I.

with confidence thanks to their unusual organisation, one of which is K. 2390, a substantial fragment from the top left corner of a four column tablet, preserving the beginning of column i and the end of column iv. The obverse contains the first 40 lines of *māmītu kalāma* before breaking off. The reverse has the last three lines of §C followed by a double ruling and the catchline *ašši gizillā*. It is not certain whether §C is an independent incantation in the Twisted version, or simply part of *māmītu kalāma*, but as *māmītu kalāma* is over 180 lines long, there certainly is not space for the rest of Tablet IV on K. 2390.²¹ In both the Medium and Twisted versions, therefore, §C was included without the rest of Tablet IV.²²

3. §A as a new composition

There is, then, good reason to understand §§B and C as recycled incantations given a new context. At the very least, they were separable from the rest of Tablet IV. The same cannot be said of §A, however. There is no manuscript in which §A is preserved alone, and no indication from the catalogues of the series as a whole that it ever had an independent existence. In a forthcoming paper, Feder has noted a number of striking parallels between individual lines belonging to §A and lines from other texts, notably the Namerimburruda series. He argues, partly on the basis of sense, that the lines fit more naturally in the Namerimburruda incantations, and that their use in *Šurpu* seems to have been secondary.²³ Moreover, as will be discussed at length below, scribes seem to have been at pains to blend §§A and B seamlessly, but this is not the case between §§B and C. As far as can be told, there are no changes in either §B or §C between the Middle Assyrian and first millennium versions of the text.

Given that there is no evidence of §A as an independent composition, and that there is good reason to believe that it was composed at least partially through the reorganisation of material drawn from other texts, it is likely that it was composed specifically to form part of *Šurpu* IV. The strong and frequent resonance between §§A and B make this all but certain, as two independent incantations placed side by side could not be expected to fuse so neatly.

With this in mind, we must consider a key difference between the Long and Medium versions of *Šurpu*. The most likely reconstruction of the composition history of *Šurpu* is that the Long version was a development from the Medium

²¹ The fact that the incipit is not listed in the catalogue perhaps suggests that §C was absorbed into the end of *māmītu kalāma*.

²² Recent collation work in Berlin has revealed that another tablet, VAT 9804(+)10843 (+)11624 belongs to the Twisted version as well. Unfortunately, the traces left in column iv are too meagre to be certain that they belong to §C of Tablet IV, but this seems very likely.

²³ My thanks to Yitzhaq Feder for allowing me to see a draft copy of this paper.

version, with the apparent aim of amplifying the role of Marduk within the series.²⁴ At several key points in the text, the Long version invokes Marduk where the Medium version invokes a range of different gods. Nowhere is this clearer than in §A of Tablet IV, which is found only in the Long version, and which, as mentioned above, consists of 58 lines of text whose only focus is extolling Marduk's power. It is likely, then, that §A was added in the course of the transformation from the Medium to the Long recension.

4. Coherence of §A

The most obvious characteristic of §A is its use of a refrain at the end of every line:

bulluṭu šillumu Marduk ittikama

‘To make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and...’

This line is written in full only once, after the opening line of the Tablet. In every subsequent line, it is abbreviated to *bu*, where it forms a striking physical feature of manuscripts of this Tablet. This repeated writing of *bu* mirrors the use of a similar refrain in Tablet III of *Šurpu*:

upaššar mašmaš²⁵ ilī Asalluḫi

‘Asalluḫi, exorcist among the gods, will undo’

This refrain is also written only once in full, thereafter being abbreviated *ú* and written at the end of each line. The unusual use of *bu* to indicate the refrain, therefore, immediately ties §A into the series as a whole by making Tablet IV *look* like it belongs with *Šurpu*.²⁶ Indeed, in one unprovenanced school manuscript (BM

²⁴ See for now Simons 2017: 22–23.

²⁵ CAD P: 242b, s.v. *pašāru* understands *maš.maš* to be a logographic writing of *āšip* ‘exorcist’. Either term is possible, and as the distinction between these officials is not well-understood, it makes little difference. There seems no particular reason to assume a logogram here, however, and so we have opted for *mašmaš*, the construct form of *mašmaššu*.

²⁶ This can be seen in photos of the better preserved manuscripts of Tablets III and IV, compare, e.g. K. 2959+ (Tablet III, CDLI: p394748) and K. 2938+ (Tablet IV, CDLI: p394738).

This characteristic is admittedly not completely unique to *Šurpu*. Repeated refrains are found in several magical texts, but in most the refrain is either written out in full each time (e.g. *lippaṭrūnikku : lippašrūnikku* ‘may it be released for you, may it be absolved for you’ on the obverse of the litany text K. 2096 [Fadhil & Jiménez 2020: 240–242]), or abbreviated to MIN / KI.MIN ‘ditto’, (e.g. in Namerimburruda recitation 2 [Maul 2019: 165]). The reverse of K. 2096, and some duplicates, do abbreviate *lip* : *lip* in place of the full refrain (Fadhil & Jiménez 2020: 240–244), but the practice is not uniformly applied.

36481), the scribe mistakenly writes *ú* in place of *bu* throughout, evidently due to confusion with Tablet III,²⁷ and in a Late Babylonian manuscript of Tablet II (IM 76972) *bu* is added to the end of each line despite making no sense, clearly due to contamination from Tablet IV.²⁸

Beyond this connection to the rest of the series, however, the *bu* refrain is used artfully to bring a sense of poetic unity to the whole of §A. A brief excerpt from the text demonstrates the thoroughness and poetic flair with which the composer of the text went about the task.²⁹

14 (14)	<u>ár-ni</u>	šu-us-su- <u>hu</u>								<i>bu</i>
15 (14)	<u>gíl-la-ti</u>	šu-us-su- <u>ú</u>								<i>bu</i>
16 (15)	<u>hi-ti-ti</u>	šul-lu-mu								<i>bu</i>
17 (16)	^{lú} gíg (<u>maršu</u>)	bul-lu-<u>tu</u>								<i>bu</i>
18 (17)	<u>ma-aq-tú</u>	šu-ut-bu-u								<i>bu</i>
19 (18)	<u>qa-at</u> /šu.min	en-ši	ša-ba-tu							<i>bu</i>
20 (19)	šim-ti	hul-ti	šu-pe-lu							<i>bu</i>
21 (20)	lamma	dum-qi	ana	lú	ša-ra-ku					<i>bu</i>
22 (21)	máš.gi ₆ (<u>šunat</u>)	hul-ti	du-um-mu-qu							<i>bu</i>
23 (22)	hul	á.meš	giškim.meš	a-na	lú	nu	te-e			<i>bu</i>
24 (23)	<u>ma-mitu</u>	uk-ku-šu								<i>bu</i>
25 (24)	<u>e-ri-tú</u> /munus.peš ₄	qa-du	ša	ša-ša	šul-lu-mu					<i>bu</i>

In *Šurpu* III and IV, the abbreviations *ú* and *bu* are written uniformly in every manuscript at the end of each line and are therefore far more visually striking.

²⁷ Borger 2000: 62–63, ll. 35–43.

²⁸ Borger 2000: 17–33, ll. 12–38; 136–173.

²⁹ The extracts in the following pages are marked with a variety of underlinings, borders, shading &c. to highlight features important to the discussion. Different colours are a visually clearer way of marking these, but this was not possible for technical reasons.

26 (25)	<i>šu-u'-lu-du</i>	<i>šu-mu</i>	<i>šur-šu-ú</i>	<i>bu</i>
---------	--------------------	--------------	-----------------	-----------

The major point to note is the overwhelming proliferation of the voiceless sibilant phoneme /š/ in these 13 lines of text.³⁰ In the excerpt above, words containing this phoneme are marked with single borders. Arguably, logographic spellings containing the phoneme constitute a different category of parallelism as the word represented would presumably have been spoken in just one language. However, as Crisostomo has pointed out, the use of interlingual phonological analogy was a key technique of ancient scribes,³¹ and so we should not draw rigid lines between orthography and phonetics – the scribes were well aware of the pronunciation of the logograms in both Sumerian and Akkadian. It is assumed here that this knowledge was utilised to create phonetic harmonies in ways that would have

³⁰ 14 (14) To expel sin, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 15 (14) To remove crime, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 16 (15) To make good cultic error, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 17 (16) To restore the sick, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 18 (17) To lift up the fallen, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 19 (18) To take the hand of the weak, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 20 (19) To convert a bad fate, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 21 (20) To bestow a good *lamassu* upon a man, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 22 (21) To make a bad dream propitious, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 23 (22) To avert the evil of omens and signs from a man, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 24 (23) To drive away sanction, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 25 (24) To make the pregnant woman, together with her foetus, healthy, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 26 (25) To grant the birth of a child, to deliver an heir, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 After Reiner 1958: 25.

³¹ Crisostomo 2019a: 154–155. See also Simons 2022: 22. Both papers deal with proverbs rather than incantations, but the principle is plainly more widely applicable. See further Crisostomo 2019b: 113–166.

been difficult or impossible just using Akkadian.³² There is clear evidence of the permeability of bilingualism in Late Babylonian texts belonging to the Bēlrēmānī archive, in which it is evident that the Sumerian readings of logograms were used. Medical and archival texts belonging to this corpus were copied from dictation, and this resulted in unusual “phonetic logograms” – e.g. ŠIM.BI.RI.DU for šimbirida (Ú.KUR.RA) = Akk. *nīnū* ‘(a medicinal plant)’; ZA.BAR-ú-tu for za-bar-ú-tu = Akk. *āšipūtu* ‘the lore of the *āšipu*’. The obvious explanation for these forms is that the Sumerian logogram was read out phonetically, and then written down syllabically by the scribes.³³ This plainly demonstrates that the Sumerian readings of logograms could be read aloud, and it is no great leap to assume that well-trained scribes, accustomed to polyvalency,³⁴ would have taken advantage of this fact in composing poetically oriented texts.

While it is far from clear that the actual recitation of *Šurpu* or any other magical text would have been performed in a sort of Sumero-Akkadian pidgin, it is here assumed that, at least to some degree, the officiant could alternate between Sumerian and Akkadian readings as he recited the text.³⁵ A further consideration, already noted by Veldhuis,³⁶ is that the principal audience for a magical ritual was the gods. As such, it is perhaps a moot point for present purposes whether the human audience could discern the cleverness of the scribes in making interlingual phonological analogies – the gods would, presumably, have been able to see them, both in written and spoken form. By this logic, both the logographic and the Akkadian readings are relevant, and the more complex and pleasing they could be made, the better. In the present paper, we take a maximalist approach to the question, and so the logographic readings are included on an equal footing with the phonetic ones. The following discussion therefore focusses on whichever elements offer the most phonetically pleasing reading of the text.

There is some support for this approach within the excerpt in the first words of lines 19 – *qa-at* / šu.min ‘hands’ – and 25 – *e-ri-tu* / munus.peš4 ‘pregnant woman’. Both the syllabic and the logographic spellings are found in Nineveh

³² A (relatively) modern version of this practice can be found in the song ‘Paris’ by Flanders and Swann (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSvmbdKHMao>), in which the rhymes are drawn from alternately reading French with English pronunciation and English with French pronunciation, e.g.

You’re still the same/old Notre Dame/Notre-Darm/
Your farm ~ fame will never spoil.

³³ Jursa 1999: 21–22; Finkel 2000: 139. My thanks to Michael Jursa for these references.

³⁴ See, e.g., Michalowski 2010: 195–197.

³⁵ This is an admittedly speculative position. Further research on this question is warranted, but it is far beyond the scope of the present paper.

³⁶ Veldhuis 1991: 58–59.

manuscripts. The logographic spellings *šu.min* and *munus.peš₄* fit into the prevailing tide of /š/, but the syllabic spelling *qāt* is phonetically parallel to *maqtu* ‘fallen’ in the preceding line (underlined above) and *erītu* rhymes with *māmītu*, the first word of the preceding line (underlined above).³⁷ These could be simple orthographic variation – indeed, both writings are common for each word – but the fact that both sets of readings are also productive of phonetically pleasing resonance is striking, especially when considered in light of the fact that these are the only two words in which Nineveh manuscripts vary between logographic and syllabic spellings, apart from in the names of deities.³⁸

Including the logographic spellings, in this excerpt just line 17 lacks a /š/. When read aloud, this makes for a strikingly sibilant succession of sounds, especially when the refrain *bulluṭu šullumu Marduk ittikama* is read in full after each line, as the /š/ in *šullumu* resounds with those in each line. It is an obvious conclusion that the superabundance of /š/ sounds is due to a desire for this sort of consonance with the refrain. This is supported by the fact that line 17, the one line to lack a /š/ includes the word *bulluṭu*, which is also found in the refrain.

In fact, lines 14 to 18 are particularly interesting in this respect, comprising a group of identically structured lines in which the first word is one of a list of ailments (marked with a double border) which is repeated several times in Tablet IV (see below), while the second is a verb which chimes with the refrain with increasing intensity, building from mirroring the /š/ of the refrain (*šussuḥu*; *šussū* ll. 14–15), through quoting whole words from it (*šullumu*;³⁹ *bulluṭu* ll. 16–17 – marked in bold text), to mirroring both /šu/ and /bu/ in a single word (*šutbū* l. 18 – marked with a thick border). Line 18, as the end of the ailment list is a minor climax in the text, and so it is fitting that it has the verb which resounds most harmoniously with the refrain.

³⁷ Note also that *ukkušu* in line 25 resonates with *giškim.meš* in line 24. The /k/ and /m/ phonemes in these words further resonate with two of the principal phonemes of the refrain. Indeed, there is a preponderance of /k/ and /m/ sounds within §A, mirroring that of the /š/ sounds discussed here.

³⁸ There are just 7 instances in the whole of Tablet IV: 19 (18) *qa-at* / *šu.min*; 25 (24) *e-ri-tú* / *munus.peš₄*; 52–54 (53–55) [^{d7}l]*a-maš-tum* / ^dkamad.me; [^{d2}l]*a-ba-ša* / ^dkamad.me.durus; [^{d2}a]*h-ḥa-zu* / ^dkamad.me.LAGAB; 75 (76) ^diš₈-*tár-šu* / ^dXV-*šu*; 88 (91) ^dé-a / ^ddiš.

³⁹ It is worth noting that *šullumu* is an unexpected verb to accompany *hiṭītu* in the present context. While the two words are used together elsewhere, the sense is always one of financial restitution, with *hiṭītu* in the sense of ‘damage, loss, negligence’ (CAD Š/1: 226–228, s.v. *šalāmu* 12a–b). When *hiṭītu* is used in the sense of ‘sin, cultic mistake’, it is accompanied by a range of verbs (CAD H: 209b s.v. *hiṭītu*), but only in Šurpu IV is *šullumu* used in the sense of ‘correcting’ sins.

None of the verbs used elsewhere with *hiṭītu* would have resonated as thoroughly with the refrain, which may explain this unusual phraseology.

The apotheosis of the sibilant set is found in lines 25–26:

<i>munus.peš₄ qadu ša šà-ša šullumu</i>	<i>bulluṭu šullumu Marduk ittikama</i>
<i>šu⁷ludu šumu šuršû</i>	<i>bulluṭu šullumu Marduk ittikama</i>

Obviously, *munus.peš₄* and *šà-ša* should be normalised *erītu* and *libbiša* respectively, but as discussed above, scribes who dealt with this sort of text were accustomed to working interlingually. Taking the signs as written, every word except for *qadu* contains at least one /š/⁴⁰ and in line 25 we find the sequence /ša ša ša šu/. In addition, the /š/ words used resonate particularly strongly with the refrain. As in line 16, the word *šullumu* is used, directly mirroring the refrain, but beyond this, we find both *šu⁷ludu* and *šumu*, which between them use all of the phonemes in *šullumu* and which, along with *šuršû*, have the same vocalic structure as both *šullumu* and *bulluṭu*.

The refrain and its reflections within the body of the text aside, there are a number of smaller scale parallelisms which help to cement §A together. There is not space to detail all of these here, but in the excerpt above it is worth considering lines 20–23 (key words marked with shading above):

<i>šimti lemutti šupêlu</i>	to change a fate of evil ...
<i>lamassu dumqi ana amēli šarāku</i>	to bestow a <i>lamassu</i> of goodness upon a man ...
<i>šunat lemutti dummuqu</i>	to make a dream of evil good ...
<i>lumun idāti ittāti ana amēli lā ṭeḥê</i>	to avert the evil of omens (and) signs from a man ...

The ellipsis at the end of each line marks the *bu* refrain, which is not relevant here but should not be forgotten. Although each line is an independent clause, and not directly related to its neighbour, they use structural parallelism to draw the whole passage together. The lines alternate *ḥul* ‘evil’ and *√dmq* ‘good’ – Marduk will change something evil, give something good, change something evil into something good, and avert something evil. The second and fourth lines are exactly parallel in phrasing – good/evil thing, *ana amēli*, verb. The first and third lines are also structurally parallel – noun, *lemutti*, verb – and the nouns (*šimti* and *šunat*) are phonetically similar to one another. All four lines are also grammatically parallel, each opening with a noun in the construct state followed by a genitive.⁴¹

Beyond this, the passage itself is skillfully interwoven with the surrounding lines. Lines 14–18 are identically structured, each composed of an unpleasant

⁴⁰ It is likely that the plosive /q/ of *qadu* resonated with the /k/ of both *Marduk* and *ittikama* in the refrain.

⁴¹ Note too that, in Akkadian at least, nearly every consonant in this section is also found in the refrain, which contains just 9 distinct consonants. Only /p/, /q/, and /ḥ/, 4 instances out of a total of 46, are not found in the refrain, and only /b/ is found in the refrain but not the excerpt.

noun and a verb that will alleviate it. The nouns, including the genitive construction in line 19, form two triplets: *arnu*, *gillatu*, *hiṭtu*, all semantically related to ‘sin’, and *marṣu*, *maqtu*, *qāt enši* all semantically related to ‘sickness’. Line 19, through its use of a genitive construction, serves as a bridge between lines 14–18 and the passage in lines 20–23, in which each line begins with such a construction. Line 24 returns to the format of lines 14–18, and emphasises this return by its use of the word *māmītu*, the /ma/ of which resonates with *marṣu* and *maqtu* in lines 17–18, and the meaning of which resonates with the list of ‘sins’ in lines 14–16. The whole group is bracketed by repeated use of the word *šullumu* in lines 16 and 25, which itself forms parallel pairs with the semantically related verbs in lines 15 and 24 – *šussû* and *ukkušu* – both of which basically mean ‘to remove’.

The characteristics highlighted above are not limited to, or even particularly heavily clustered within, this excerpt. They are found throughout §A. A second excerpt shows more or less the same quantity and quality of structural, phonetic, and graphic parallelism, used to draw the text together:

32 (31)	ša	é	ši-bit-ti	šu-šu-u	zalag ₂	kul-lu-mu	bu
33 (32)	ša	ina	tuš-ši	ṣab-tu	ina ka (pī)	gīr (patri)	e-ṭe-ru
34 (33)	ša	uru-šú	ru-u-qu	kaskal-šú	né-sa-at		bu
35 (35)	šal-la	u ka-ma-a	a-na	un.meš-šú (nišēšu)	tur-ru		bu
36 (37)	ina	še-er-ti	e-ṭe-ru				bu
37 (38)	ina	gīl-la-ti	pa-sa-su				bu
38 (39)	ina	gig	šu-ut-bi-i				bu
39 (40)	ina	pap.ḫal (pušqi)	ša-la-pu				bu
40 (41)	ina	ár-ni	ga-ma-li				bu
41 (42)	ina	munus.kalag.ga	šu-zu-bu				bu
42 (43)	ina	ḫa-āš-ti	šu-li-i				bu
43 (44)	ina	ka	ka-ra-ši-i	e-ṭe-ru			bu

As in the previous excerpt, we see a surfeit of sibilants, with /š/ found at least once in all but two lines (marked with a single border).⁴² Beyond this, once again we find words which resonate with the refrain in multiple ways (marked with thick border). The majority, like *šutbû* in line 18, reflect both *šullumu* and *bulluṭu* in containing both /š/ and a labial plosive + u, whether voiced /bu/ or unvoiced /pu/: *šutbû*,⁴³ *pušqi*, *šalāpu*, and *šūzubu*. In line 32 *kullumu* resonates with the entire refrain, despite lacking both /š/ and /b/, echoing the /ull/ of both *bulluṭu* and *šullumu*, as well as the /k/ and /m/ of *Marduk* and *ittikama*.

Along the same lines as the striking appearance given to the Tablet by the *bu* refrain, this excerpt shows the repeated use of a single sign to open groups of

-
- ⁴² 32 (31) To set free the prisoner, to show daylight (to him), to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 33 (32) To rescue, from the point of a dagger, him who is seized by slander, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 34 (33) Him whose city is distant, whose road is far away, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 35 (35) To return the prisoner of war and the captive to his people, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 36 (37) To save from misdeed, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 37 (38) To cancel crime, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 38 (39) To raise from sickness, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 39 (40) To rescue from trouble, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 40 (41) To forgive sin, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 41 (42) To rescue from danger, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 42 (43) To pull out from a pit, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 43 (44) To rescue from the brink of catastrophe, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 After Reiner 1958: 26.

- ⁴³ Written *šu-ut-bi-i* in the only Nineveh manuscript of this section, but *šu-ut-bu-u*, as would be grammatically expected, in the Assur manuscripts. The same unexpected ending is found in lines 40 and 42, where the sole Nineveh manuscript (K. 6443+) writes *ga-ma-li* and *šu-li-i* in place of the expected *gamālu* and *šulû*, as is found in the Assur manuscripts. The same manuscript writes the expected nom. inf. case ending *-u* for the verbs of lines 37, 39, 41 and 43. As a result, the ends of lines 37–43 alternate regularly between *-u* and *-i* in the only known Nineveh manuscript. There is not space here to consider this point further, but it seems unlikely to be the result of indifference regarding case endings.

lines. Lines 32–34 all open with *ša* and 36–43 all open with *ina*. In fact, this extends beyond the current excerpt, with lines 44–54 all opening with */ša/*. Just like the *bu* refrain, these groups lend the Tablet as a whole a physical resemblance to Tablet 3, lines 3–172 of which all open with *ma-mit*. Although the lines in this excerpt are not so overwhelmingly uniform as those of Tablet III, they are still visually striking on the tablet.

More than this, they show several flashes of poetic accomplishment. As has been remarked elsewhere,⁴⁴ it is a common feature of Akkadian poetic lists that the final entry should be longer than those which precede it and we see this in line 35, the climax of the *ša* list, where the opening word is extended to *šal-la*. This does not begin with the same sign, and so the graphic parallelism of the section stops, but the phonetic parallelism continues, and is even enhanced by incorporating */ll/*, which mirrors *bulluṭu* and *šullumu* of the refrain.

In line 33 we find a double use of foreshadowing – the *ša* section giving way to the *ina* section with two subclauses mirroring those used in the later section:

ša ina tušši šabtu ina pī paṭri eṭēru

To rescue, from the point of a dagger,⁴⁵ he who is seized by slander...

The first subclause, *ina tušši šabtu*, mirrors the structure of lines 36–42 – *ina*, an undesirable noun, a non-finite verb. The second, *ina pī paṭri eṭēru* (marked in bold), exactly parallels the final clause of the *ina* section, line 43:

⁴⁴ This was apparently first noted by Ehelolf (1916: 22). My thanks to Sophus Helle for this reference. More recently it has been addressed with regard to magic texts specifically in e.g. Reiner 1985: 97; Veldhuis 1990: 31; Veldhuis 1993: 44.

⁴⁵ Literally ‘the mouth of a dagger’. Our interpretation of this idiom is based on a comparison between this line and line 43. Reiner’s line 33 suffered from a lacuna only filled much later, and so she translated *ina pī* in line 43 ‘in the throes’, understanding ‘in the mouth’ to mean ‘in the middle’. This would be meaningless if applied to a dagger, and so the phrase must rather mean something like ‘on the brink’. CAD (T: 497b s.v. *tuššu*) offers no translation for line 33, considering it ‘uncert.’, though CAD (P: 470b s.v. *pū*) does include two further attestations of the phrase in relation to a dagger. Biblical Hebrew uses the term ‘mouth’ of the sword, apparently referring to the blade (e.g. in Psalm 149: 6 *וְהָרַבּ פִּי־יֵזֶת* *wə-ḥereḇ pīpīyôṭ* ‘and a double-edged sword’). My thanks to the anonymous reviewer for this reference.

It is not clear precisely how the dagger idiom relates to slander. Perhaps it means something along the lines of ‘at the last possible moment’. An alternative possibility, suggested by Martin Worthington (personal communication), is that *pī* means ‘mouth/utterance’ and that *paṭri* somehow qualifies it: an utterance like a dagger; or perhaps read *pī zaqti* ‘a sharp mouth/utterance’. It is also possible that both readings are to be understood simultaneously – the prosaic ‘sharp utterance’ punning on the idiomatic ‘mouth of a dagger’.

ina pî karāšî eṭēru

To rescue from the brink of catastrophe...⁴⁶

Line 33 therefore, while belonging to the *ša* section, frames the following *ina* section. This is emphasised further by the use of *eṭēru* again in line 36, opening the *ina* section, and of the phonetically similar *turru* in line 35, closing the *ša* section.

There are also several smaller scale phonetic parallelisms in this excerpt, a selection from which can be briefly mentioned (marked with thick underlining). Lines 34–35 have the phonetically very similar *nesāt* and *nišēšu* in close proximity to one another.⁴⁷ More impressive, the phrases just examined in lines 33 and 43 use interlingual parallelism to achieve the same effect as one another. In line 33, read in Akkadian *pî paṭri eṭēru* – *paṭri* is phonetically a blend of *pî* and *eṭēru*, while in line 43, read logographically, *ka karāšî eṭēru* – *karāšî* combines the /ka/ of the logogram with the /r/ of *eṭēru*, while both /k/ and /š/, as discussed above, reflect two of the dominant phonemes of the refrain.

5. Coherence of §B

The poetic unity of §A is all the more striking when compared with the rest of Tablet IV. Similar techniques of poetic unity are used within §§B and C, but as a brief excerpt from §B shows, there are differences in emphasis:

67 (68)	<u>ra-kis-ta</u>	<u>li-sap-pi-ḥu</u>	
68 (69)	<u>ki-šir</u>	<u>lum-ni</u>	<u>li-par-ri-ru</u>
69 (70)	<u>ka-si-ta</u>	<u>li-ram-mu-ú</u>	<u>ma-mit</u> <u>lip-tu-ru</u>
70 (71)	<u>mu</u> <u>dingir (ili)</u>	<u>lip-su-su</u>	<u>ár-ni</u> <u>li-is-su-ḥu</u>
71 (72)	<u>gíl-la-ti</u>	<u>li-is-su-u</u>	<u>ḥi-ti-tu</u> <u>li-šal-li-mu</u>
72 (73)	<u>mar-šu</u>	<u>lib-luṭ</u>	<u>ma-aq-tu</u> <u>lit-bi</u>

⁴⁶ Reiner (1958: 50) understands the commentary text K. 4320 l. 21 to refer to this line, restoring [*ka-ra-šu-u*] = *qu-bu-ri* ‘[catastrophe] = grave’. Frazer (2018: l. 21) has rejected this suggestion, preferring instead to read [MIN (*ḥa-áš-ti*)] = *qu-bu-ri* ‘[ditto (pit)] = grave’. As she points out (Frazer 2018: fn. 7), this reading has support from lexical texts.

⁴⁷ A very similar paranomasia is found within divinatory literature. Menicatti’s paper in the present volume (p. 233–234, §3.2 [YOS 10 17: 49–51]) includes a discussion of *manzāzu* VI: 37–39, in which the word *nesû* ‘opening’ in the protasis mirrors, and presumably preconditions, the use of *nišūt* ‘family’ in the apodosis.

73 (74) ka-su-ù li-šir šab-tu li-taš-šir

Two points are immediately plain: the *bu* refrain is no longer part of each line, and /š/ is no longer the dominant phoneme.⁴⁸ Indeed, it is found in just three words here (marked in bold text). In place of /š/, /l/ is the dominant phoneme, being found at least twice in almost every line of the excerpt (marked with single borders). This is due to a change in the emphasis of the text – rather than extolling the virtues of Marduk, as in §A, §§B and C are concerned with imploring a whole range of gods for help, which requires extensive use of the precativ case, and therefore results in a preponderance of /l/ phonemes. In the excerpt above, just three /l/ phonemes are found in a word other than a precativ (marked with thick border).

Familiar techniques are also found here, however. The list of ailments already mentioned above (marked with double border) is found here, interspersed between the precativ verbs. This list, or rather, subsets of this list, appear throughout Tablet IV. It is not a refrain, not least because it varies significantly both between and within texts, but the list of ailments, appearing so frequently throughout Tablet IV, through sheer repetition takes on something of a refrain-like quality, and therefore plays a major role in holding the text together.

As in §A, there are smaller scale phonetic parallelisms in the rest of Tablet IV. In the excerpt above we find *rakista*, *kišir*, and *kasīta* in successive lines, which are all built around the consonants /k/, /r/ and /s/ or /š/. In line 73, *kasû* (underlined) reflects the same phonemic range, but belongs within the list of ailments, thereby holding the text together. The key point, as far as we are concerned here, is that the poetic quality of §A is both related to, and distinct from, that of the rest of the Tablet. Similar techniques are used, but there is a subtle difference in emphasis, chiefly revolving around the importance of the *bu* refrain in §A.

6. Inter-sectional Coherence

The survey of three brief excerpts from Tablet IV just presented is by no means exhaustive, and the lines discussed do not represent even half of the Tablet. From just this brief survey, however, the variety and complexity of the composition is clear. While impressive, this is perhaps not unexpected, given that both §§A and

⁴⁸ 67 (68) May they disperse what is tied
 68 (69) May they break the knot of evil
 69 (70) May they loose binding magic, release sanction
 70 (71) May they efface oath by a god, expel sin
 71 (72) May they remove crime, make good cultic error
 72 (73) May the sick get well, the fallen get up
 73 (74) May the fettered go free, the captive be freed
 After Reiner 1958: 27.

B were produced as coherent texts intended to attract the gods' attention and sympathy to the plight of the patient.⁴⁹ What is more remarkable is the degree to which the two sections blend seamlessly and naturally.⁵⁰

This can be seen repeatedly throughout the text. If we return to the excerpts already examined, we find a very clear example:

14 (14)	ár-ni	šu-us-su-ḫu	bu
15 (14)	gíl-la-ti	šu-us-su-ú	bu
16 (15)	ḫi-ti-ti	šul-lu-mu	bu
17 (16)	^{li}gig (maršu)	bul-lu-tu	bu
18 (17)	ma-aq-tú	šu-ut-bu-u	bu
...			
70 (71)	mu dingir lip-su-su	ár-ni	li-is-su-ḫu
71 (72)	gíl-la-ti	li-is-su-u	ḫi-ti-tu
72 (73)	mar-šu	lib-luṭ	ma-aq-tu
			lit-bi

Disregarding, for the moment, the first phrase of line 70, these two excerpts are identical – the same ailments are listed in the same order, with the same verbs attached.⁵¹ The only differences are the case – the lines from §A are mostly, though not entirely, Š-stem infinitives, while those of §B are precatives – and the *bu* refrain.⁵²

⁴⁹ See Veldhuis 1999: 38–48 for a clear and convincing survey of the purpose of, and necessity for, poetry within incantations.

⁵⁰ See §2 above.

⁵¹ 14 (14) To expel sin, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 15 (14) To remove crime, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 16 (15) To make good cultic error, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 17 (16) To restore the sick, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 18 (17) To lift up the fallen, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)
 ...
 70 (71) May they efface the oath by a god, expel sin
 71 (72) May they remove crime, make good cultic error
 72 (73) May the sick get well, the fallen get up
 After Reiner 1958: 25–27.

⁵² It is also worth noting the lines immediately preceding those quoted here. Line 13 (13) begins with the phrase *kišir libbi* ‘anger’, lines 67–69 (68–70), as noted above, open

This is the most extensive use of direct repetition in the text. A subtler, but significantly more intricate, type of repetition is found leading up to line 58, the final line of §A and boundary between §§A and B:

55 (56)

ár-ni

ma-mitu

ḥi-ti-tú

gil-la-tú

bu

56 (57)

mu

dingir-meš

šib-sat

dingir-meš

me-ḥir-ti

dingir

ta-az-zi-im-tú⁵³

bu

57 (58)

ár-rat

ad

u

ama

šeš

gal-i

nin

gal-tu

bu

58 (59)

it-ti-ka

lip-tu-ru

dingir-meš

šur-bu-ti

Several now familiar characteristics can be discerned straight away. The proliferation of /š/ (marked with a single border), though not quite so marked as in the other excerpts from §A so far discussed, is still clear, and in *šurbûti* we find another word that chimes with both *bullutu* and *šullumu*.⁵⁴ The list of ailments is present again (marked with a double border), including *mu dingir-meš*, which is also found, without the *meš*, in line 70 (see above). The *bu* refrain (marked with a dotted border) is also present, though this stops after line 57. Two other elements are worthy of note. In line 56, two ailments are included which are not commonly found in the list of ailments: *miḥirti ili* ‘encounter with a god’ and *tazzimtu* ‘complaint’ (marked with a triple border). This should be compared with an earlier line in §A:

8 *epqu miḥru tazzimtu ...* skin disease, mishap, complaint ...

Here *tazzimtu* is the same word as in line 56, but it is preceded not by *miḥirti ili* but by the phonetically similar but semantically different word *miḥru*. The phrase

with *rakista* ‘tied’, *kišir* ‘knot’, and *kasīta* ‘binding’ respectively. The very narrow phonemic range of these words, revolving around /k/, /t/, and a sibilant (/š/ or /s/), renders lines 13 and 67–69 essentially parallel to one another, which likely influenced the placement of the more completely parallel lines that follow them.

⁵³ There is a chance that *ma-mitu* should be read after *tazzimtu*. It is found in several manuscripts of the Assur recension, and all Nineveh manuscripts are broken at this point, but it fits poorly from a point of view of sense, and is repeated from the preceding line for no apparent purpose. It has been omitted here on the assumption that Nineveh texts did not include it.

⁵⁴ 55 (56) Sin, sanction, crime, cultic error, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)

56 (57) Oath by the gods, wrath of the gods, encounter with a god, complaint, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)

57 (58) Curse of father and mother, elder brother, elder sister, to (make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and)

58 (59) With you may the supreme gods release
After Reiner 1958: 26.

mihirti ili fits well with the rest of line 56, which is composed of phrases in the construct state in which the noun is ‘of the gods’ – *nīš ilī* ‘oath by the gods’ and *šibsat ilī* ‘wrath of the gods’. The word *tazzimtu* ‘complaint’ does not fit obviously with these identically structured phrases, and it seems probable that it was included here because of the phonetic similarity of *mihirti* and *miḫru*, perhaps to tie §A together.

Line 57, excluding the *bu*, is closely paralleled in Tablet V of *Šurpu*:⁵⁵

43	<i>lu-u ár-rat a-bi-šu</i>	Whether the curse of his father,
45	<i>lu-u ár-rat um-mi-šu</i>	or the curse of his mother,
47	<i>lu-u ár-rat ŠEŠ-šu GAL-i</i>	or the curse of his older brother

Like the *bu* refrain, this repetition draws §A into the text of *Šurpu* as a whole.

As just noted, the *bu* refrain, which forms such an important part of §A, stops after line 57, and is not found in the rest of the Tablet.⁵⁶ Line 58, however, belongs to §A, and so it is worth closer consideration.

	<i>bul-lu-tu</i>	<i>šul-lu-mu</i>	^a amar-utu	<i>it-ti-ka-ma</i>
58 (59)	<i>it-ti-ka</i>	<i>lip-tu-ru</i>	dingir-meš	<i>šur-bu-ti</i>
59 (60)	<i>l (ištēn)</i>	<i>lip-tur</i>	^a utu	<i>qu-ra-du</i>

Here we see the refrain, as would have been recited at the end of line 57, followed by lines 58–59 – the boundary between §§A and B.⁵⁷ These three lines would have been recited sequentially, and mark the point where the text ceases to focus exclusively on Marduk. This semantic shift is clearly mirrored in line 58, which is to be understood as a ‘pivot line’ in the text, i.e. it reflects characteristic phraseology and concepts both from the text which precedes it and that which follows it, thereby allowing for a seamless transition between different ideas.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Reiner 1958: 31, l. 43–47. Tablet V has interlinear Sumerian and Akkadian. The Sumerian is not of any great importance for the present point and so has been omitted.

⁵⁶ Manuscripts of the Assur recension continue to write *bu* at the end of each line until the end of §B, and one, VAT 13720, includes it at the end of each line to the end of the Tablet. It makes little sense semantically after line 57.

⁵⁷ To make healthy and to restore rest with you, O Marduk, and
58 (59) With you may the supreme gods release
59 (60) Alone may Šamaš the valiant release
After Reiner 1958: 26–27.

⁵⁸ See Reiner 1985: 95–97; Veldhuis 1990: 30; Veldhuis 1999: 45–47; and other papers in the present proceedings, especially those of De Zorzi and Schmidl, for further examples of this characteristic feature of Akkadian literary texts.

We have already noted that *šurbûti* ‘supreme’ in line 58 reflects the dominant phonemes of the refrain (marked with single and thick borders). This is particularly noteworthy because *šurbûti* is a relatively rare word in this context. Much more common is the related word *rabû* ‘great’,⁵⁹ but *rabû* does not contain a /š/, and this seems almost certain to be behind the use of the word.⁶⁰ We also find direct repetition in the form of *ittika* ‘together with you’, which is immediately preceded by *ittikama* ‘is with you, and...’ in the refrain (marked with underlined text). Similarly, *lipturû* ‘may they release’, is repeated in the following line as *liptur* ‘may he release’ (marked with a single border).

Structurally speaking, 58 blends the forms of the lines on either side. The phonetic structure of the refrain is inverted – *ittika* moves to the beginning of the line, while *šurbûti*, reflecting *bulluṭu* and *šullumu*, moves to the end. The verb *lipturû* in second place parallels the structure of line 59, as does the use of the epithet *šurbûti* in the same position occupied by the epithet *qurādu* in the following line (marked in bold text). Similarly, *ištēn* ‘alone (lit. one)’, the first word of line 59, is the direct opposite of the first word of line 58, *ittika* ‘together with you’, thereby providing a clear contrast of meaning, while maintaining a parallel structure. The same is achieved in the use of gods as the third word of each line – *Marduk*, *ilū*, and *Šamaš* respectively (marked with a double border) – denoting the change of subject from Marduk, while keeping the structure the same.

All of these features give a sense of continuity in what is otherwise a moment of sudden change in the text. Until this point, Marduk has been the sole divine focus of the text, after it he is simply one of the crowd of gods who will help, but as line 58 makes clear, they will help ‘together with’ Marduk, and so his pre-eminent place is not completely lost. The verb *lipturû* in line 58 is the first precativ verb in Tablet IV. From this line forwards, practically every verb in the text is precativ. Line 57 ends with the final recitation of the *bu* refrain, and this is reflected in line 58 with a relatively unusual word, which is also semantically parallel to *qurādu* in the following line.

The line is not just a work of considerable artistry, therefore, but also fundamental to the sense of the text as a whole. It is the final line of §A, and allows it to blend almost imperceptibly with the older material that follows it, thereby forming the cornerstone of the Long version of *Šurpu*.

7. Conclusion – The development of Tablet IV

In the present paper we have examined a few brief excerpts of Tablet IV of *Šurpu*, focussing on the wide range and high quality of the poetic techniques used in composing the text. These poetic techniques offer us insight into the development of the text as a whole.

⁵⁹ Usually written gal-meš. This is written in the Assur manuscripts of the present line.

⁶⁰ Note that *šurbûti* also resonates with the /r/ of *Marduk* and the /ti/ of *ittikama*.

As we have seen, §§B and C of Tablet IV were independent compositions from at least as early as the Middle Assyrian period. §C remained independent even within *Šurpu*, as a separate and self-contained incantation to be recited in the Medium version of the text. §B does not seem ever to have been a part of *Šurpu* as an independent text. Its non-*Šurpu* context is not known, and within *Šurpu* it seems only to have belonged to the Long version. §A was clearly composed later than §B and (probably) §C. Feder's recent work has uncovered at least one source likely drawn on in the composition of §A, and others could perhaps be found. As Feder points out, the reuse of the lines was not simply the result of mechanical copying, but involved reorganisation and reworking.⁶¹ This is entirely in keeping with the poetic quality of §A, which was clearly the work of a skilled literary mind. In composing §A, the scribe plainly had the text of §B in mind, and, through the use of clever poetic techniques, most notably the pivot line, composed §A in such a way that the original focus of §B – a plea to an array of important gods – was subverted, even while its original text remained unchanged.

It is very likely that the intention behind subverting the text of §B was to create a new text that could be interpolated into the middle of *Šurpu*. This is clear not just from the fact that §§A and B belong to the Long version of *Šurpu*, but also from the various elements of §A which mirror and resonate with other parts of the series, particularly the use of *bu* as an abbreviated refrain. Both §§B and C remained, as far as we are able to judge, unchanged from their earlier forms. They were not blended into one another – there is no pivot line between them, but rather a ruling – a clear sign that they were held to be, to some degree, separate. Nonetheless, the two incantations are thematically similar to one another – they invoke a multitude of gods by means of precatative verbs. As such, simply placed alongside one another they are not jarring in the way that §A, with its focus on Marduk alone, would be without the great deal of poetic craft that lets it meld smoothly with §B. §C follows reasonably naturally from §B, and as such Tablet IV forms a single unified whole.

Tablet IV serves a clear purpose in the text of *Šurpu*. In the Medium and Twisted versions, Marduk is not especially notable. He appears, and is prominent, but no more so than Šamaš, Nusku, Anu, or any of a range of gods. In the Long version, Marduk is overpoweringly present. At every important point in the ritual, Marduk appears, often sidelining other gods.⁶² Tablet IV, and especially §A, represent the pinnacle of this “Mardukisation”. §A contains 58 lines more or less exclusively praising Marduk, explicitly naming him in every line through the use of a refrain which is thoroughly interwoven with the whole text. More than this, however, through the poetic skill of its composer(s), §A forms the basis of the new Tablet which completely absorbed §C, a text which, in the Medium version,

⁶¹ Feder forthcoming.

⁶² See Simons 2017: 22–23 for an example from Tablet VI in which Marduk displaces Girra.

marks a highpoint of the ritual at which a wide array of the major gods are invoked to help the patient.

This paper has focussed on just a few brief excerpts from the text of Tablet IV, and there is significant scope for further investigation. Through its sophisticated use of poetic techniques, §A plays a major role in completely reshaping *Šurpu*. Only through careful examination of such techniques is it possible to see how this was done, and, as *Šurpu* was obviously not the only text to receive such treatment, similar analysis of other texts could lead to a far clearer understanding of the development of ancient literature.

Bibliography

- Borger, R. 2000, “*Šurpu* II, III, IV, and VIII in Partitur” in George, A. R. & Finkel, I. L. (eds.) *Wisdom, Gods, and Literature* (FS Lambert). Oxford. 15–90.
- Cooper, J. 2005, “Right Writing: Talking about Sumerian Orthography and Texts”. *Acta Sumerologica* 22: 43–52.
- Crisostomo, J. 2019a, “Creating Proverbs: The Listing Scholarship of the Sumerian Proverbs Collections”. *KASKAL* 16: 141–157.
- 2019b, *Translation as Scholarship* (SANER 22). Berlin.
- Ebeling, E. 1953, *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur*. Berlin.
- Ehelolf, H. 1916, *Ein Wortfolgeprinzip im assyrisch-babylonischen*. Leipzig.
- Fadhil, A.A. 2012, *Eine kleine Tontafel Bibliothek aus Assur (Ass. 15426)*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Heidelberg.
- Fadhil, A.A. & Jiménez, E. 2020, “Literarische Bruchstücke aus Uruk. Teil 4: Eine Litanei”. *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie* 13: 233–260.
- Feder, Y. forthcoming, “The Transgression List in *Šurpu* Tablet 4 and Its Sordid Moral Implications”.
- Finkel, I. L., 2000, “On Late Babylonian Medical Training” in George, A. R. & Finkel, I. L. (eds.) *Wisdom, Gods, and Literature* (FS Lambert). Oxford. 137–223.
- Frazer, M. 2018, “Commentary on *Šurpu*, Medical text (?) (CCP 2.1.B)” in Frahm, E., Jiménez, E., Frazer, M., & Wagensonner, K. (eds.) *Cuneiform Commentaries Project*, 2013–202; accessed May 10, 2022, at <https://ccp.yale.edu/P395480>. DOI: 10079/v9s4n85.
- Jakob, S. 2018, *Ritualbeschreibungen und Gebete* III (KAL 9). Wiesbaden.
- Jursa, M. 1999, *Das Archiv des Bēl-rēmanni* (PIHANS 86). Leiden.
- Lambert, W.G. 1959–1960, “Two Notes on *Šurpu*”. *Archiv für Orientforschung* 19, 122.
- Maul, S.M. 2019, *Bannlösung (nam-érim-búr-ru-da)* (KAL 10). Wiesbaden.
- Michalowski, P. 2010, “Where’s AL? Humour and Poetics in the Hymn to the Hoe” in Kleinerman, A. & Sasson, J. M. (eds.) *Why Should Someone who Knows Something Conceal It?* (FS Owen). Bethesda. 195–200.
- Reiner, E. 1958, *Šurpu*. Graz.
- 1985, *Your Thwarts in Pieces, Your Mooring Rope Cut – Poetry from Babylonia and Assyria*. Ann Arbor, MI.
- Simons, F. 2017, *Burn your way to success – Studies in the Mesopotamian Ritual and Incantation Series Šurpu*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham. Available at: <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/9545/>.

- 2022, “The Donkey of Anšan: a Rhino in Mesopotamia? – Notes on the Construction of Meaning in a Bilingual Proverb”. *Journal of Ancient Civilisations* 37: 1–31.
- Veldhuis, N. 1990, “The Heart Grass and Related Matters”. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 21, 27–44.
- 1991, *A Cow of Sin* (LOT 2). Groningen.
- 1993, “The Fly, the Worm and the Chain – Old Babylonian Chain Incantations”. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 24, 41–64.
- 1999, “The Poetry of Magic” in Abusch, T. & van der Toorn, K. *Mesopotamian Magic – Textual, Historical and Interpretative Perspectives* (AMD 1). Groningen. 35–48.
- Zimmern, H. 1896–1901, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion*. Leipzig.