

Nathan Wasserman

Akkadian Love Literature
of the Third and Second Millennium BCE



Sources of Early Akkadian Literature

Harrassowitz

LAOS 4

Leipziger Altorientalistische Studien

Herausgegeben von
Michael P. Streck

Band 4

2016

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Nathan Wasserman

Akkadian Love Literature
of the Third and Second Millennium BCE

2016

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet
über <http://dnb.dnb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet
at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

For further information about our publishing program consult our
website <http://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de>

© Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden 2016
This work, including all of its parts, is protected by copyright.
Any use beyond the limits of copyright law without the permission
of the publisher is forbidden and subject to penalty. This applies
particularly to reproductions, translations, microfilms and storage
and processing in electronic systems.
Printed on permanent/durable paper.
Printing and binding: Hubert & Co., Göttingen
Printed in Germany
ISSN 2193-4436
ISBN 978-3-447-10726-6
e-ISBN PDF 978-3-447-19569-0

To Ada Manuela
asmat kī illūr şēri

Contents

Preface.....	11
--------------	----

Akkadian Love Literature: An Overview

1. The Scope of This Study	15
1.1 The Corpus.....	16
2. Thematic and Temporal Classification of the Corpus	19
2.1 The Problem of the Love Lyrics	19
2.2 Akkadian Love Literature: a Genre?.....	20
2.3 Akkadian Love Literature – between Official Cult and Private Context	20
2.4 Old Babylonian Texts vs. Middle Babylonian/Assyrian Texts.....	21
3. Characterization of the Corpus.....	22
3.1 The Style of Akkadian Love Literature	22
3.2 The Human Realm and the Divine Realm	23
3.3 Personal Names	24
3.4 The Royal Presence	24
3.5 Gender Relations	26
3.6 Social and Familial Setting	29
3.7 Free Love?	31
4. Love and Attraction in the Corpus.....	32
4.1 Love in Akkadian Love Literature.....	32
4.2 Physiognomic Signs of Being in Love.....	33
4.3 Lovesickness.....	34
4.4 Lovemaking and Copulating.....	36
4.5 Sexual Climax.....	38
4.6 Direct and Indirect References to Sexual Organs	38
4.7 Love, Desire and Anger	42
5. Semantic Fields (Other than Love) Typical of the Corpus	43
5.1 Flora.....	43

5.2 Fauna.....	43
5.3 Fabricated Objects.....	44
5.4 Human Body and Body Parts.....	44
6. Key Metaphors and Motifs	45
6.1 Sleep, Dreams and Awakening	45
6.2 Light and Darkness	47
6.3 Birds and the Separated Lovers.....	48
6.4 Looking at the Object of Desire: Another Motif of Separation.....	49

The Corpus

I. The Core Group of Akkadian Love Literature: Dialogues, Monologues, Descriptive Compositions	61
№ 1 The Lightning of Lovemaking Passed upon Me (A 7478)	64
№ 2 My Mood Plunged into the Infesting Heart (CUSAS 10, 8).....	86
№ 3 My Fruits Are Unforgettable (CUSAS 10, 9).....	90
№ 4 I Scorn the Girl Who Does Not Adore Me (CUSAS 10, 10).....	95
№ 5 May There Be No Hindrance for Them (CUSAS 10, 13)	101
№ 6 Where Is My Loved One? (Fs. Renger 192–193).....	104
№ 7 Come In, Shepherd, Ištar's Lover (JAOS 103, 26–27).....	110
№ 8 She Is Luscious like a Flower of the Field (KAL 3, 75).....	115
№ 9 It Is Dumuzi Whom Ištar Keeps Searching (LKA 15)	119
№ 10 Let Me Be Sated with Your Charms (MIO 12, 52–53)	124
№ 11 My Heart Is Awake Though I am Sleeping (The Moussaieff Love Song)	130
№ 12 Celebration Is a Foundation for the City! (Or. 60, 340)	146
№ 13 The Beating of Your Heart – A Pleasant Tune (PRAK 1 B 472).....	150
№ 14a–f The Kiš Fragments Mentioning Šu-Sîn PRAK 2 C 3, PRAK 2 C 30, PRAK 2 C 41, PRAK 2 C 125, PRAK 2 C 134, PRAK 2 C 135	154
№ 14a = PRAK 2 C 3 (AO 10623)	156
№ 14b = PRAK 2 C 30 (AO 10650)	160
№ 14c = PRAK 2 C 41 (AO 10661)	162
№ 14d = PRAK 2 C 125 (AO 10741)	164
№ 14e = PRAK 2 C 134 (AO 10750)	165
№ 14f = PRAK 2 C 135 (AO 10751).....	167

№ 15 The Vigorous Sun Keeps Overcoming Me (YOS 11, 24).....	169
№ 16 I Will Not Change for You a Word! (ZA 49, 168–169).....	175
II. Incipits of Akkadian Love Literature: Catalogues	187
№ 17 Like Pure Oil Your Message Is Sweet (ASJ 10, 18).....	188
№ 18 Stand in the Light of the Window (CUSAS 10, 12).....	190
№ 19 My Love Is the Light that Illuminates the Eclipse (KAR 158)	195
III. Manipulative Compositions Concerning Love and Sex: Incantations.....	235
№ 20 Keep Her Apart! Keep Her Apart! (CUSAS 10, 11).....	236
№ 21 I Am Mating You, Oh Nanāya! (KBo 36, 27).....	239
№ 22 Enki Loves the Love-charm (MAD 5, 8)	242
№ 23 Look at Me! (MS 3062).....	247
№ 24 Like an Orchard Fruit Come Out to Him! (VS 17, 23)	249
№ 25 You Are Fierce! You Are Furious! (YOS 11, 21c).....	250
№ 26 I Raised My Voice to Her (YOS 11, 87).....	252
№ 27 Place Your Mind with My Mind! (ZA 75, 198–204a)	257
№ 28 Be Awake at Night-time! (ZA 75, 198–204b)	261
№ 29 Loved-one! Loved-one! – Whom Ea and Enlil Have Created (ZA 75, 198–204c) ...	262
№ 30 Why Are You Harsh like a Bramble Bush of the Forest? (ZA 75, 198–204d)	264
№ 31 Where Goes Your Heart? (ZA 75, 198–204e)	266
№ 32 Anger, Anger, Keeps Standing in His Heart! (ZA 75, 198–204g)	268
№ 33 Fawn over Me like a Puppy! (ZA 75, 198–204h)	271
№ 34 I Have Opened for You My Seven Gates! (ZA 75, 198–204i).....	273
Bibliography	275
List of Figures	284
Indices	285

Preface

The present monograph is an offshoot of the project *Sources of Early Akkadian Literature* (SEAL),¹ headed by the present author and Michael P. Streck (Leipzig University). From the inception of the joint work on SEAL it was clear that the extensive corpus of Akk. literary texts should be presented in two different and complementary modes: an online database followed by a printed publication. Each of these media has inherent advantages. The internet allows for regular additions, modifications and updates which are unavoidable in the preliminary work on large textual corpora. It is also more open and accessible to the public than printed books. But the ephemeral nature of online databases renders them less suitable for the final publication.

Initiated in 2005, SEAL now (Spring 2016) contains almost 690 literary texts of all genres, from the third to the mid-second mill. BCE. Without interrupting the online posting of the texts, it is now time to present the corpus, section by section, in book form. The compositions that deal with love and sex were chosen as the first group of SEAL texts to be published in this way. Other sections of the corpus will follow.

Though the product of a single author, this book owes much to different people. Michael Streck, a colleague with whom I had the luck to start the SEAL project and who has subsequently become a true friend, offered much good advice. His mastery of all aspects of Mesopotamian culture proved crucial. His most important suggestions are mentioned in the text as (MPS). Dominique Charpin, Sophie Démare-Lafont, Eckart Frahm, Stefan Jakob, Leonid Kogan, Jana Matuszak, Piotr Michalowski, and Rony Weinstein, have all contributed to my work and I wish to thank them cordially. Special thanks go to four colleagues. Marten Stol turned my attention to the Chicago text A 7478, sent me his preliminary transliteration of the obverse, and offered valuable comments on my edition. Jakob Klein sent me the photos of the Moussaieff Love Song and made it possible for me to publish this tablet. Andrew George shared his unpublished edition of the love incantation MS 3062 and other relevant material with me. Uri Gabbay discussed the Sumerian incipits in the catalogue KAR 158 and other texts in the book with me. Warm thanks also go to Jon Taylor, Béatrice André-Salvini, Joachim Marzahn, and Walter Farber – the keepers of the cuneiform tablets at the British Museum, the Louvre, the Vorderasiatisches Museum and the Oriental Institute in Chicago, respectively – for their readiness to open their collections to me. Yigal Bloch, Melanie Christina Mohr, Sivan Kedar, Svetlana Matskevich, Juyoung Oh and Shlomit Bechar assisted me in technical matters and deserve my thanks too.

Anastasia Keshman walked by me through these years. I am grateful to her. On the 30th of November 2012 our daughter Ada Manuela was born. I dedicate this book to our daughter, with love.

Jerusalem, October 2016

Nathan Wasserman

¹ The SEAL project (<http://www.seal.uni-leipzig.de/>) was financed by two consecutive three-year grants by the German-Israeli Foundation for Scientific Research and Development (2007–2009 and 2010–2012).

Akkadian Love Literature: An Overview

1. The Scope of This Study

This study aims to present all Akk. literary texts dealing with love and sex from the third to the second mill. BCE. Surprisingly, unlike Sum. love songs which have been collected and discussed,² the corpus of Akk. literary texts dealing with love and sex, though treated separately by various scholars,³ was not collected systematically or addressed as a whole. This monograph aims to fill this gap and to provide a modern edition accompanied by a comprehensive discussion of the corpus.

My approach is philological and literary. While general aspects of love and sexuality in ancient Mesopotamia are treated *en passant*, this monograph does not tackle these topics from the gender or cultural studies perspective.⁴ Although Biblical parallels⁵ and references from Classical sources are occasionally included, this is not a comparative study. Material artifacts and visual representations which bear witness to love and sex in ancient Mesopotamia, best left to sociologists, archaeologists and art historians, are also beyond the scope of this study. Epic and mythic episodes which refer to love (like the encounter between Enkidu and Šamḫat in Gilg. II and Ištar's attempt to seduce Gilgameš in Gilg. VI, the amatory relationship between Nergal and Ereškigal in the myth bearing this name, or the scene of copulation between the husband and the wife described in Atraḫasīs I 300⁶) are omitted or referred to only indirectly. Later texts from the first mill. which concern love and sex – notably the love dialogue of Nabû and Tašmētu (SAA 3, 14), the love ritual mentioning Marduk and his consort Ištar of Babylon (Lambert 1975⁷), the ŠĀ.ZI.GA incantations (Biggs 1967), and the Egalkurra texts (Stadhouders 2013, esp. 309–311) – are referred to briefly in the commentary and discussion, but not treated separately. The omen series which predicts the prospects of a marriage, or how fertile a woman is,⁸ are also not discussed at any length.

Two factors determined the definition of the corpus. The first relates to the project *Sources of Early Akkadian Literature* (SEAL) which provides the foundation for this study. SEAL presently covers the third and second mill. BCE, but not the first (c. 690 compositions). Since I am convinced that any group of texts (e.g. hymns, laments, incantations, etc.) should be treated only after thorough analysis of its entire literary system, it would have been incorrect to go beyond the present scope of SEAL and treat a group within the corpus in isolation. In addition, many of the first mill. texts which thematically belong to the

2 See esp. Sefati 1998 and shortly also Hecker 2005, 167–168.

3 Klein/Sefati's (2008) article offers a succinct summary of the more recent studies on this corpus.

4 The literature on love and sexuality in ancient Mesopotamia is extensive. Wiggermann's 2010 article "Sexualität" in the RIA offers an excellent summary of the subject with a detailed bibliographical survey.

5 All Biblical references lean on the English translation of the New Jewish Publication Society of America Tanakh.

6 Lambert/Millard 1969, 64–65.

7 See also Fincke 2013.

8 See esp. Böck 2000, 59 and *passim*.

literary corpus treated here (ŠÀ.ZI.GA and the Egalkurra texts) come very close to rituals⁹ and medical compendia, which require different treatment than the corpus of third and second mill. texts. In order to avoid further delay in the publication of this monograph, I decided against the inclusion of first mill. material.

1.1 The Corpus¹⁰

The group of Akk. texts dealing with sexual attraction and emotional connection from the third and second mill. BCE contains a few dozen different compositions, comprised of three sub-groups:

Table (1): The core group of some twenty non-homogenous texts: monologues, dialogues, hymnal compositions, as well as descriptive texts.¹¹

Publication	Period (Provenance)	Description
№ 1. A 7478	OB	Monologue/Descriptive: ♀ yearning ♂ absent
№ 2. CUSAS 10, 8	OB	Monologue: ♂ yearning ♀ absent
№ 3. CUSAS 10, 9	OB	Monologue: ♀ yearning ♂ indifferent
№ 4. CUSAS 10, 10	OB	Monologue: ♂ scorning ♀ yearning
№ 5. CUSAS 10, 13	OB	Prayer → Descriptive: ♂ + ♀ uniting
№ 6. Fs. Renger 192–193	Late OB	Monologue: ♀ yearning ♂ absent
№ 7. JAOS 103, 26–27	Late OB - MB	Descriptive: ♂ + ♀ uniting → ♂ absent
№ 8. KAL 3, 75	MA (Assur)	Monologue/Descriptive
№ 9. LKA 15	MA (Assur)	Descriptive: ♀ yearning ♂ absent
№ 10. MIO 12, 52–53	Late OB	Descriptive: ♂ + ♀ uniting

9 On the question of the dependence of love-related compositions on rituals, see Hecker 2005, 176 and Klein/Sefati 2008 (esp. p. 624).

10 The texts are referred to by their name (publication place) and their sequel number in the study (№). These numbers are internal and do not correspond to the number of the texts in the SEAL database.

11 The text MIO 12, 53–54, published by Lambert in 1966 as love lyric, is better defined as a lament (similarly Hecker 2005, 169).

Publication	Period (Provenance)	Description
№ 11. Moussaieff Love Song	MB - OB origin (Nippur?)	Descriptive: ♂ + ♀ uniting
№ 12. Or. 60, 340	MB (Nippur)	Descriptive: ♂ + ♀ uniting
№ 13. PRAK 1 B 472	Early OB (Ur III?) (Kiš)	Monologue/Descriptive: ♂ + ♀ uniting
№ 14a. PRAK 2 C 3	Early OB (Ur III?) (Kiš)	Descriptive (fragmentary)
№ 14b. PRAK 2 C 30	Early OB (Ur III?) (Kiš)	Monologue/Descriptive (fragmentary)
№ 14c. PRAK 2 C 41	Early OB (Ur III?) (Kiš)	Descriptive? (fragmentary)
№ 14d. PRAK 2 C 125	Early OB (Ur III?) (Kiš)	Monologue/Descriptive (fragmentary)
№ 14e. PRAK 2 C 134	Early OB (Ur III?) (Kiš)	Monologue/Descriptive (fragmentary)
№ 14f. PRAK 2 C 135	Early OB (Ur III?) (Kiš)	Monologue/Descriptive (fragmentary)
№ 15. YOS 11, 24	OB (Larsa)	Descriptive: ♂ + ♀ uniting
№ 16. ZA 49, 168–169	OB (Sippar)	Dialogue: ♂ scorning ♀ yearning → ♂ + ♀ uniting

Table (2): Ancient catalogues listing incipits of love songs, virtually all now lost:

Publication	Period (Provenance)	Description
№ 17. ASJ 10, 18	Late OB	Different incipits
№ 18. CUSAS 10, 12	OB	Different incipits
№ 19. KAR 158	MB/MA (Assur)	Different incipits

Table (3): A dozen incantations which aim to manipulate the will of the beloved and to win over a stubborn or disdainful lover:

Publication	Period (Provenance)	Description
№ 20. CUSAS 10, 11	OB	Historiola; ♂ manipulating ♀
№ 21. KBo 36, 27	MB (Hattuša)	♂ self-encouraging → ♂ + ♀ uniting

Publication	Period (Provenance)	Description
№ 22. MAD 5, 8	OAKk (Kiš)	Historiola; ♂ manipulating ♀
№ 23. MS 3062	OB	♀ manipulating ♂
№ 24. VS 17, 23	OB	♂ manipulating ♀
№ 25. YOS 11, 21c	OB (Larsa?)	♀ manipulating ♂
№ 26. YOS 11, 87	OB (Larsa?)	Historiola; ♂ manipulating ♀
№ 27. ZA 75, 198–204a	OB (Isin)	♀ manipulating ♂
№ 28. ZA 75, 198–204b	OB (Isin)	♀ manipulating ♀
№ 29. ZA 75, 198–204c	OB (Isin)	♀ manipulating ♂ ; ♀ manipulating ♀
№ 30. ZA 75, 198–204d	OB (Isin)	♀ manipulating ♂
№ 31. ZA 75, 198–204e	OB (Isin)	♀ manipulating ♂
№ 32. ZA 75, 198–204g	OB (Isin)	♀ manipulating ♂
№ 33. ZA 75, 198–204h	OB (Isin)	♀ manipulating ♂
№ 34. ZA 75, 198–204i	OB (Isin)	♀ manipulating ♂ → ♂ + ♀ uniting(?)

The data above makes it clear that the textual corpus of Akk. Love Literature is non-homogenous.¹² Furthermore, the present corpus is considerably larger than previously assumed,¹³ not only because it includes the group of love incantations, but also because new texts were added, notably the monologue A 7478 (№ 1) and the dialogue of the Moussaieff Love Song (№ 11), as well as the incantation MS 3062 (№ 23), and the hymnic fragments from Kiš (PRAK 2 C 3; PRAK 2 C 30; PRAK 2 C 41; PRAK 2 C 125; PRAK 2 C 134, and PRAK 2 C 135 = № 14a–f). Another MB love incantation, accompanied by a ritual, was recently discovered by Elyze Zomer (Leipzig) in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin. The text, VAT 13226, will be published in Zomer’s forthcoming dissertation. It was kindly sent to me by her but will not be included in the present study.

The relation between any literary corpus and actual sexual practices in a given society is tricky. Literature is never a direct or impartial mirror of social reality – not where sexual norms and habits are concerned, and certainly not when ancient society is at stake. One must avoid the temptation of writing a history of sexuality based on literary sources alone.

12 On the non-homogeneity of the Akk. corpus of love-related compositions, see also Hecker 2005, 167. See further Klein/Sefati 2008, 618–619: “Compared with the large corpus of Sumerian Dumuzi-Inana love songs, the number of Akkadian love songs preserved is small, and their type and character is rather diverse”.

13 Significantly larger than presented in Hecker 2005 and in Klein/Sefati 2008, 618–619, but similar to that outlined in Wiggermann 2010.

As Ormand (2009, 22) put it in relation to ancient Greek love poetry: “We must take care when using poetry as an indication of sexual practice in the real world”, but he continues “[n]onetheless, this is the evidence that exists, and my strategy is to make the most of it”. This study tries to follow this carefully measured stand.

2. Thematic and Temporal Classification of the Corpus

2.1 The Problem of the Love Lyrics

The Problem of the Love Lyrics was the title of W. G. Lambert’s study of an enigmatic first mill. ritual whose divine protagonists are Marduk, Šarpanītum and Ištar of Babylon (Lambert 1975). The problem, as Lambert put it, was in the philological difficulties presented by the text itself and its general interpretation: “The results, when these problems have been overcome, are often most baffling. In places there is something like the work of those modern poets who try to create word pictures without grammar. Imagery of the boldest kind is commonplace, and the eroticism is the most explicit for ancient Mesopotamia. Parallels are hard to find” (Lambert 1975, 99). For me, the problem of love lyrics resides in the fact that in quite a number of cases the corpus contained in this book does not correspond to the definition “lyric”. Or, in the neat wording of D. O. Edzard (1987, 58): “Ich fürchte, die ‘Love Lyrics’ sind weder sehr lieblich noch sehr lyrisch”. The language of incantations about love and sex, though rich in metaphor and imagery, is straightforward, audacious and rarely refers to emotions; the term “lyric” is accordingly not fitting. In other texts from the core group there are blunt, even caustic phrases, that certainly do not merit the title “lyric”: “You were born the daughter of a substitute, with no dowry! You have a mole on (your) forehead! As long as you show no respect, putting yourself to shame, I shall tell you where your (right) place is! You do not listen to me, you. (By) following your heart, mounting the clouds, you keep chasing lovers away!”¹⁴ or “I despise the girl who does not worship (me). I do not desire for the girl who does not [fawn]. I shall not give her [my love-charm]. Talking in order to disagree why [does it exist?]”¹⁵ Of course, counter-examples exist, as the following expressive descriptions indicate: “The daughters of Anu, the lights of heaven, [*in day-ti*]me(?) purified the sky of Anu. Love came about, twittering over the people; May Love twitter over me!”¹⁶ But the corpus as a whole cannot be labeled “lyric”, unless the term is loosely applied.

Consequently, the neutral header *Akkadian Love Literature* (henceforth ALL) was chosen to define the corpus treated here.

14 CUSAS 10, 10: 17–25 (№ 4).

15 ZA 49, 168–169 ii 10–14 (№ 16).

16 CUSAS 10, 11: 2–6 (№ 20).

2.2 Akkadian Love Literature: a Genre?

Given the diversity of the corpus, the question whether ALL really constitutes a genre is pertinent. The problem becomes more complex when we consider that ancient catalogues present a variety of generic terms, like *zamārum*, *elēlum*, *irtum*, *nūrum* and more (see Groneberg 2003 and Shehata 2009), many of which refer to what we somewhat simplistically call “love lyrics” – although no generic subscript which defines ALL exists. This situation differs from Sum. love lyrics, where many, if not all love songs carry the subscript *bal-bal-e*, mostly related to Inanna.¹⁷ In other words, more than in any other area of Akk. literature, emic and etic generic definitions do not apply to ALL.

When looking for internal criteria, one encounters similar difficulties defining texts which belong to ALL by style or by a fixed set of literary devices. In fact ALL is not connected stylistically but purely thematically: texts pertaining to the human or divine realm, whose main topic is emotional connection and sexual desire. Indeed, the corpus of Akk. love-related compositions tends to employ a set of key words and stock phrases (see §§ 5, 6 below), but this is not, in my opinion, sufficient to warrant its being labeled a “genre”. Love-related literature, which extends across the Akk. literary system, cannot be reduced to one specific genre.¹⁸

2.3 Akkadian Love Literature – between Official Cult and Private Context

Klein and Sefati’s conclusion of their important article ‘*Secular*’ *Love Songs in Mesopotamian Literature* (2008, 624) is worth citing *in extenso*:

From the above survey of Mesopotamian love songs, it follows that both in the Sumerian period and later, the scribes did not deem it worthy or important to copy and transmit to future generations popular and “secular” love songs, which were no doubt circulating orally and were commonly sung at weddings and banquets. Thus, all types of love songs known to the present day are connected in one way or another to gods and goddesses, rooted in the cult; or at least they center around the personality of the king and were written down and copied by the scribes for him and his courtly circle.

Although focusing more on Sum. love poetry, the authors also discuss some Akk. love-related compositions (especially the catalogue KAR 158 and the OB dialogue ZA 49, 168–169). Their conclusion, therefore, refers to both Sum. and Akk. literatures, and as such is relevant to this study.

The key terminological distinction employed by Klein and Sefati in their study is between popular or secular (in fact, the authors keep using “secular” with quotation marks) and cultic or cultic-mythological. To my mind, this dichotomy is not applicable to the corpora under discussion. What is the meaning of the adjective secular when referring to

¹⁷ Klein/Sefati 2008, 614.

¹⁸ I am aware that my present position on the matter has changed since my *Style and Form in Old-Babylonian Literary Texts* (Wasserman 2003, 176–179).

ancient Mesopotamian culture? Can one propose a sphere in ancient Mesopotamia which was detached from divine rules, free of religious practice? Can one say with confidence that a love song, sung in the familial setting of a private wedding, is devoid of cultic and even mythological background? The answer to my mind is negative. The difference which is relevant to the material is between texts which were composed for, and performed in, an *official* cult (most likely the royal court), and texts whose inception, impetus, and eventually performance or audience, was *private*.¹⁹ Furthermore, the two types of text are not mutually exclusive. In principle, a text which at first was composed for, and presented at, some official ceremony, could later be used in a private context; inversely, a text whose origin was private could later be re-worked and used in an official setting.

Examining the core group of the corpus of ALL and the catalogues (that is, excluding love incantations which were most probably used in magical circumstances), one can identify a group of texts which belongs to the private sphere: CUSAS 10, 8 (№ 2); CUSAS 10, 9 (№ 3); CUSAS 10, 10 (№ 4); ZA 49, 168–169 (№ 16); and perhaps also A 7478 (№ 1) and the Moussaieff Love Song (№ 11). On the background of everyday situations, these texts describe different amorous wishes, memories and expectations between ordinary men and women. It is hard to see how these texts could have a function in a public or an official setting. The rest of the core group – CUSAS 10, 13 (№ 5); Fs. Renger 192–193 (№ 6); JAOS 103, 26–27 (№ 7); KAL 3, 75 (№ 8); LKA 15 (№ 9); MIO 12, 52–53 (№ 10); Or. 60, 340 (№ 12); PRAK 1 B 472 (№ 13); the Kiš fragments (№ 14a–f) and YOS 11, 24 (№ 15) – may well have been part of a public cultic event.

As for the catalogues, it stands to reason that the compositions listed in ASJ 10, 18 (№ 17) and KAR 158 (№ 19) were mainly composed for, and perhaps performed in, the cultic or palatial context. The catalogue CUSAS 10, 12 (№ 18), however, contains incipits which do not seem to fit an official cult. This Babylonian catalogue collected compositions whose incipits refer predominantly to the private context.

In summation, the corpus of ALL appears to be less homogenous than Klein and Sefati assumed. Unlike the parallel Sum. corpus, Akk. love-related texts are comprised of compositions whose setting is personal and private, and other which seem to be at home in the public and official context.

2.4 Old Babylonian Texts vs. Middle Babylonian/Assyrian Texts

Leaving aside incantations and catalogues pertaining to ALL, OB texts and MB/MA texts can be distinguished by a simple scribal parameter: all four MB/MA texts end with a colophon,²⁰ while only one OB text ends with a colophon – Fs. Renger 192–193 (№ 6), a text which dates to the time of Ammī-ditāna, i.e. to the late OB period. Based on the corpus

19 Even this terminological distinction is not free of problems, as one could rightly claim that there were no truly private arrangements in ancient Mesopotamian society in matters of love and copulation, since these matters were in fact embedded in familial or communal situations.

20 JAOS 103, 26–27 (№ 7), KAL 3, 75 (№ 8), LKA 15 (№ 9), Or. 60, 340 (№ 12). The case of the Moussaieff Love Song (№ 11) is somewhat different. According to my analysis, it is an MB copy of an OB text. It does not contain a colophon.

at hand it seems safe to conclude that this MB/MA group of texts was copied, or composed, by trained scribes and incorporated into the official scribal tradition. The fact that the MB/MA texts, more than those of OB, refer to the court and to royal settings, reinforces this notion.

The OB group of texts, by contrast, is characterized by inventiveness and creativity. Some of the OB texts appear “half-baked”: drafts or exercises at a non-final stage of composition (see YOS 11, 24 = № 15 and perhaps also A 7478 = № 1). Other OB texts, however, are well-structured and carefully written (see MIO 12, 52–53 = № 10), and were no doubt the final products of trained scribes designed to be put down in writing and used on official occasions.

3. Characterization of the Corpus

3.1 The Style of Akkadian Love Literature

The style of ALL cannot be described in a general manner. Given the absence of a clear set of stylistic or extra-linguistic criteria (see above), the corpus was instead defined according to theme, that of love and sex. Consequently ALL consists of different sorts of text – monologues, dialogues, hymnal compositions, and incantations – in different styles.

Some literary devices, known from other Akk. literary texts, can be elucidated. MIO 12, 52–53: 9–10 (№ 10) shows repetitions and *parallelismus membrorum*, as e.g.: *Mu’ati duššupū dādūka | dišpa iš[ebbe kuz]ub rāmika*, “Mu’ati, so sweet is your passion, the appeal of your love is sated with honey”. Chiastic constructions are found in CUSAS 10, 8: 7–9 (№ 2): *kīma dišpim tābat | ana appim | kīma karānim eššet*, “She is sweet as honey, she is fresh like wine to the nose”. Other cases of chiasm are in PRAK 1 B 472: i 6’–i 7’ (№ 13): *dādūka tābū | muḥtanbū inbūka*, “How sweet is your lovemaking, your fruits are profuse!” and in MAD 5, 8: 8–9 (№ 22): *kirīšum turdā | turdāma ana kirīm*, “To the garden you came down, indeed came down to the garden!” Alliteration is found, e.g. in the monologue CUSAS 10, 8 (№ 2), where *nāṭil šunātim* (l. 14) and *rigim šinūnūtim* (l. 20) echo each other, and in the love incantation CUSAS 10, 11 (№ 20), where *ḥasāsum*, “to think on, to remember” (l. 8) is echoed by *ḥasāšum*, “to rejoice” (l. 9). More such ornamental literary devices can be found.

But what stylistically singles out a number of texts pertaining to ALL is an unexpected assortment of lyric expressions with vulgarisms. The following example comes not from one composition, but from a sequence of incipits: “Big one(m.), big one, do not arise!”,²¹ “Let me look at you by the light of the window!”,²² “Let us complete the deed of lovemaking!”,²³ and “Let me grow long for the girl!”.²⁴ The first and last incipits in this

21 CUSAS 10, 12: 5 (№ 18): *rabūm rabūm lā tetebbēma*.

22 CUSAS 10, 12: 6 (№ 18): *luppalsakka innūr apātīm*.

23 CUSAS 10, 12: 7 (№ 18): *i nuštaqti nēpeštu rāmimma*.

24 CUSAS 10, 12: 8 (№ 18): *abbuntī luštuḥma*.

sequence refer in a straightforward manner to the erect male member, while the second and the third are sentimental, offering a poetic vision of a romantic meeting.

Another, closely related characteristic of ALL are passages of natural flow of speech. A fine example are the opening lines of the love dialogue ZA 49, 168–169 (№ 16), where the man tells the woman: “Yell! Do not bother to reply! Not so much talking! My decision is made, I will not change for you a word, anything I said”.²⁵ Another example is found in dialogue CUSAS 10, 10 (№ 4), where the man speaks in disdain to the woman who loves him: “To your canal – no one will come near it!”²⁶ (where “canal” stands for the female sex organ). And he goes on: “Do not place (me?) in the salt, your field is all too well known!”²⁷ (again, a disparaging allusion to her sex organ). The continuation is difficult due to the informal and highly idiomatic nature of the speech: “The (fact) that you did not bring for me (good) news from your womb, as a baby of men – should I swallow (that) potsherd? I will release the bitch! One who bolts down a stone in order to release you when would he have his word?”²⁸ It is hard to find such sharp and vivid colloquialisms in other kinds of Akk. text, even epistolary texts. Finally, the corpus of ALL shows a high incidence of hapax legomena²⁹ and rarely used words.³⁰

3.2 The Human Realm and the Divine Realm

The actors in ALL may be human or divine. In contrast to Sum. love lyrics,³¹ in Akk. the two realms are usually kept apart, and only rarely do humans and deities interact amorously with each other. The clearest case for such interaction is Or. 60, 340 (№ 12), where the young men of the city gather by the city-wall and copulate with the insatiable goddess Ištar.³² In KBo 36, 27 (№ 21), an MB love incantation from Hattuša, the male speaker declares that he wants to make love to the goddesses Nanāya and Kilili. In another text, a man is deemed so beautiful that he is *compared* to a god by his admiring female lover: “I

25 ZA 49, 168–169 i 1–4 (№ 16): *šurpī tūrki ezbi lā magal dabābum qabê qabūmma ul enniakkim*.

26 CUSAS 10, 10: 36 (№ 4): *ana pattiki mamman ul iṭeḥḥēši*.

27 CUSAS 10, 10: 38–39 (№ 4): *ina ṭābtīm lā tašakkani<ni?> eḡelki ḥukkum*.

28 CUSAS 10, 10: 40–45 (№ 4): *ša lā tublīm ina sassūriki kīma šīr niši ṭēmam anāku iṣḥilṣam alāt kalbatam uššar lā'im abnim ana wašāriki matī qabāšu liškun*.

29 Newly attested words (not including verb stems attested for the first time): *baZkum*, “quacking (of ducks)”, Moussaieff Love Song rev. 5 (№ 11); *duššuptum*, “sweetness”, CUSAS 10, 9: 8 (№ 3); *emšūtum*, “hunger”, ZA 75, 198–204a: 9 (№ 27); *garāḥum*, “to copulate”, KBo. 36, 27: 15f. (№ 21); *ḥubūšum*, “bulge”, ZA 75, 198–204a: 36 (№ 27); *ḥuttutum*, “to infest”, CUSAS 10, 8: 4–6 (№ 2); *iṣabum*, “earring”, PRAK 1 B 472 i 9 (№ 13); *mukazzibum*, “one who fawns”, CUSAS 10, 10: 2 (№ 4); *muppirum*, “provider”, YOS 11, 87: 9 (№ 26); *nawārtum*, “brightness”, Moussaieff Love Song: 1 (№ 11); *nikurrūm*, “what is denied”, Moussaieff Love Song rev. 11 (№ 11); *piṭirtum*, “loosening”, ZA 75, 198–204d: 61 (№ 30); *šupuktum*, “heap (of grain)”, A 7478 i 15 (№ 1); *taw/mšūtum*, “opening(?)”, Moussaieff Love Song obv. 3 (№ 11). (MPS).

30 Words hitherto only attested lexically: *indūrum*, “waterskin”, KAR 158 ii 53 (№ 19); *mašūm*, “to spend the night”, JAOS 103, 26–27: 1f. (№ 7); *munūm*, “(a type of bed)”, PRAK 1 B 472 i 8 (№ 13).

31 See Klein/Sefati 2008, 615–617 discussion of the love dialogues mentioning Šu-Sîn.

32 Ištar is the goddess who is most open, even eager, to engage in sexual rapports with (special) men, as seen in the opening of SB Gilg. VI.

saw your face: you are a god! I implore you...”.³³ But these are exceptions. As a rule, humans fall in love and crave other humans, and gods seek and yearn for gods. Ištar and Dumuzi are the amatory divine couple *par excellence* (JAOS 103, 26–27 = № 7; LKA 15 = № 9), but another couple, Nanāya and Mu’ati (MIO 12, 52–53 = № 10), is also attested in the corpus. As stated above, the separation of the human and the divine is a fundamental difference between Sum. love songs and ALL.

3.3 Personal Names

An interesting aspect of the corpus are the personal names attested in it. The fact is that ALL contains more personal and royal names than any other genre in the Akk. literary corpus.³⁴ If we disregard the names of scribes found in colophons, the *only* two (possibly three) personal, non-royal, names in the entire Akk. literary corpus (not including historiographical texts and literary letters) come from texts which concern love: the Isin tablet of love incantations where a woman addresses two gentlemen, a certain Erra-bāni and a certain Iddin-Damu,³⁵ and a fragment from Kiš where a woman called Šāti-Enlil is probably found.³⁶ This tendency towards personalization is complemented by the semantic emphasis on body parts of love-related texts (see below). In fact, this Iddin-Damu is described, perhaps even ridiculed, by his physiognomy: “Big-mouth, curled-ears, Iddin-Damu!...”.³⁷ Love, and especially sexual desire in Akk. literature, is therefore not abstract, but concrete and personalized.

3.4 The Royal Presence

No less significant is the royal presence in the corpus. The king holds a special place in ALL: *šarrum* is mentioned explicitly 14 times,³⁸ and is probably referred to indirectly elsewhere.³⁹ More importantly, six different kings are mentioned by name in ALL: Rīm-Sîn, Hammurāpi(2x), Abī-ešuh, Ammī-ditāna, Ammī-šaduqa, and Shalmaneser.

Recently, an intriguing new name was added to this list of monarchs. While working on the literary material from Kiš, copied by de Genouillac a century ago, I identified a

33 CUSAS 10, 9: 17–18 (№ 3): [p]ānīka āmur ilāt(a) usellēka (see also l. 12), and cf. SB Gilg I 207, when Šamḥat says to Enkidu: *damqāta Enkidu kī ilī tabašši* “You are handsome, Enkidu, you are just like a god!” (Trans. George).

34 As expected, in literary-historiographical compositions, royal names can also be found: Sargon (in OA Sargon Legend), Narām-Sîn (in Erra and Narām-Sîn), Gungunum (in the Gungunum hymn), and Yahdun-līm and Zimrī-līm (in the Zimrī-līm epic). Only two kings are mentioned in non-historiographical compositions that do not belong to love lyrics: Hammurāpi (in the hymn of Agušaya) and Samsu-iluna (in the Nanāya hymn VS 10, 215).

35 ZA 75, 198–204a 30 (№ 27), ZA 75, 198–204h 100 (№ 33), ZA 75, 198–204i 117 (№ 34).

36 PRAK 2 C 3: 3 (№ 14a).

37 ZA 75, 198–204h 100 (№ 33): *rapšam pīm lāwīam uznīn Iddin-Damu*.

38 CUSAS 10, 12: 33 (№ 18), JAOS 103, 26–27: 19 (№ 7), KAL 3, 75 iii 8' (№ 8), KAR 158 i 32', ii 24', ii 43', iii 5', iii 40', iii 42' (№ 19), MIO 12, 52–53: 14, 5', 6' (№ 10), ZA 49, 168–169 iv 6 (№ 16).

39 Note the summary line in KAR 158 viii 24' (№ 19): “12 hymns (for?/of?) the king, Akk.”.

small group of broken fragments as belonging to ALL. Surprisingly, the protagonist in three of these fragments is none other than Šu-Sîn, who can only be the King of Ur. The texts are not in Sum. but in Akk., and the king's name is spelled in a unique way, using the sign “30” for the syllabic value *sin*, unlike virtually all other spellings of this monarch's name which regularly use EN.ZU for *Sîn*.⁴⁰

One of the fragments from Kiš states: “...Šu-Sîn my beloved”,⁴¹ another reads: “Šu-Sîn! *Pla[y with ... As the sun let him shine ...]*”,⁴² and a third fragment, which also mentions Šu-Sîn, begins: “The[y? ...], To[uch my(?) ...], In (my) la[p(?) ...]”.⁴³ Another fragment from this group, in which the name of Šu-Sîn does not appear, reads: [..... y]our light(?) ... My lord... ... *they went far away...* Just like dawn let (*the sun?/light?*) *sh[ine on me(?)]*... My lord (*at*) dawn play [with my(?)...], May the boy..., may he [...], Let me [...] (in my?) *lap [...]*”⁴⁴ (see the full edition of this group of fragments below).

The appearance of Šu-Sîn in a group of Akk. love-related texts is surprising. OB Akk. literary texts do not usually refer to Ur III kings. The only other similar case I know of is the bilingual text PBS 1/1, 11 where Šulgi is mentioned.⁴⁵ But is it in fact so surprising to find Šu-Sîn in an Akk. love-related text? One has to keep in mind that Šu-Sîn has left us three Sum. love compositions in which he in person, and not the divine Dumuzi, is the lover of the goddess Inanna.⁴⁶

Both grammar and orthography of the Kiš fragments are archaic, as can be seen in the syllabic values *ša* and *am*. Epigraphically as well, the fragments show an undisputed archaic hand. I suggest that these fragments come from the earliest layer of OB, or perhaps even earlier, namely that these fragmentary texts are rare remnants of Ur III Akk. literature. The resurfacing of the Akk. tradition of love literature from the Ur III period (be it original, or an OB copy thereof) answers a question which was not adequately addressed: given the rich Sum. love lyric tradition on the one hand and the corpus of Akk. love literature on the other – why do we not have bilingual love-related texts? Or, in other words, was there a textual bridge between the Sum. and Akk. lore of love literature? A partial answer seems possible now: such a bridge did exist, but not – as far as our present data reveals – in the form of bilingual texts, or translation of Sum. texts to Akk., but as parallel traditions: one in Sum. and one in Akk., and that, I venture, already in the Ur III period.

Finally, a word about the place of discovery of these fragments is in order. I do not think that it is mere chance that the Akk. love-related fragments mentioning Šu-Sîn were unearthed in northern Babylonia, in Kiš. It is important to remember that two key pieces of Akk. love lyric also come from Kiš: the Oakk love incantation MAD 5, 8 (№ 22), and the early OB text PRAK 1 B 472 (№ 13).⁴⁷ Turning our attention to the later OB period,

40 More on this spelling, see below in the commentary to the Kiš fragments.

41 PRAK 2 C 134 i 6' (№ 14e): Šu-Sîn(30) *na-ra?-mi*.

42 PRAK 2 C 3 obv. 8'-9' (№ 14a): Šu-Sîn(30) *mé-le-e[l? ...] / ki Šamši(UTU-ši) li-[ip?]-[pu?]-[uḫ?]*.

43 PRAK 2 C 30: 1'-3' (№ 14b): *šu-n[u?...] / lu-pi-[it-ma...] / i-na su?-[ni?..]*.

44 PRAK 2 C 125: 1-7 (№ 14d): [... ...] x *nu?-úr?-k[a ...] / [be]-[li?] x x šu? hu? ir-ti-qù-ma x ...] / ak-ki-ma še-ri-ma li-p[u?-ḫa?-am?...] / be-li! še-ri me-le-e[l ...] / li-[x] x (x) m[a?-ru-um li?-[...]] / lu-ul-[x x x x] x su?-ni [...] / [...] x x [...]*.

45 Goodnick Westenholz 2005 (ref. Uri Gabbay).

46 Šu-Sîn A, B, and C (cf. Sefati 1998, 344–352, 353–359, 360–364, respectively).

47 Goodnick Westenholz (1987, 416 n.6) suggested that this fragment could be connected to some of the

Groneberg (1999, 172) has suggested – based on contextual arguments and orthography – that Fs. Renger 192–193 (№ 6), a fragment of a tablet comprising different *irtum* love-related compositions mentioning Ammī-ditāna, was also originally written in Kiš.⁴⁸

Kiš was the center *par excellence* of Akk. culture in the earlier periods of Mesopotamia and the available material reflects this cultural prominence. As such, Kiš seems to have played a crucial role in the development of the Akk. love literature in pre-OB times, deriving directly from its central political position as the birthplace of royal ideology of northern, i.e. “non-Sumerian” kingship.⁴⁹

3.5 Gender Relations

Aware of the risk of “forc[ing] ancient literary characters into anachronistic sexual and social identities by classifying them with modern labels such as homosexual, heterosexual, gay, or bisexual” (Walls 2001, 14), I will use the neutral terms same-sex relations vs. opposite-sex relations.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, it is hard to avoid the impression that the gender-power paradigm of the texts in the ALL corpus is not that different from the main gender-power paradigm in modern times.⁵¹ In other words, as far as the testimony of ALL goes, the sexual norm (and here I do not mean “norm” in the ethical or moral sense, but in the distributional-statistical meaning of the term) in ancient Mesopotamian society is clearly that of opposite-sex relations. In fact, in sharp contrast to love lyrics in other pre-modern literatures, notably in Archaic Greek poetry and to some extent also in early Arabic love poetry, one finds in the corpus of ALL *only* opposite-sex – he/she or she/he – relations.⁵² Reference to homosexual relations in the erotic or amatory context (i.e. not in the legal context, as will be briefly discussed below) are extraordinarily rare in Mesopotamian literature and appear only in the latest phase of this civilization – in texts from the Seleucid

other Kiš fragments treated here.

48 This assumption is accepted by Klein/Sefati 2008, 622.

49 On the central role of Kiš in pre-Sargonic times see recently Steinkeller 2013, 145–151. It appears that its northern location in the Mesopotamian plain spared Kiš from the dramatic political events which took place in the south in the post-Hammurāpi period, and literary texts are written there until the end of the first Babylonian dynasty, when other major cites, such as Nippur, Isin and Larsa, go silent (Groneberg 1999, 172).

50 See also Ormand 2009, 14–20 with more literature on the methodological issues regarding sexuality in the ancient world. In the vast body of literature on sexuality in the ancient world I found Halperin 1998 revealing.

51 A similar opinion regarding ancient Greek myths can be found (Gilhuly apud Holmberg 2009, 316): “There is an implicit assumption that Greek heterosexuality, and the power dynamics that characterized it, were less radically different from our own, less determined by historical factors than homosexuality was”.

52 For the relations between Gilgameš and Enkidu, see below.

and Persian periods.⁵³ These late texts, it is argued persuasively, are infused with Greek and Hellenistic influences, to which homosexual love should be attributed.⁵⁴

Of course, sexual relations between two men are attested in Mesopotamian texts, but not literary ones (with the possible exception of the story of Gilgameš and Enkidu, discussed below).⁵⁵ One needs only look at Middle Assyrian Laws §§ 19–20 and the section dealing with sex omens in the series *Šumma ālu* (Guinan 1997). And still, seen from the perspective of ALL, opposite-sex relations are presented as the only social norm, and same-sex relations are not hinted at in the corpus, not referred to as religiously or socially prohibited, and not even ridiculed. Only once in our corpus does a representative of the “third gender” appear: in one incipit in the catalogue CUSAS 10, 12 (№ 18) we read: “For eternity of years, an eternity, (for) four eons (of years), indeed five (eons of years), I will come out to you(m.), the *kalû*”.⁵⁶

Does this allow us to say that since opposite-sex relations were considered the social norm in ancient Mesopotamia, same-sex relations – notably between two men – were seen as *deviating* from the norm? Or put more sharply – following Foucault’s influential insights regarding sexuality in the ancient world⁵⁷ – was there a sexual *norm* in ancient Mesopotamia at all? Did different sexual practices and preferences *define* a person socially, ethically and morally?

This important and interesting question will have to remain open in this study which is philological by nature. Two remarks, however, will not be out of place. First, one must remember that much of the written evidence in our hands presents the hegemonic view of society, as constructed by scribes who were integrated into the dominant religious and political institutions of ancient Mesopotamia. It is possible that these hegemonic groups purposefully or unintentionally ignored other, non-standard forms of sexuality and silenced them. However, since we are confined by our data, we must accept that very little can be said about the non-hegemonic forms of sexuality. The second remark concerns the way some forms of sexuality were presented by the central cultural mechanisms of ancient Mesopotamia. From the point of view of Mesopotamian hegemony, the otherness of same-sex relations, even their anomaly, as it is perceived through texts, is underscored by the fact that practitioners of same-sex relations are etiologized and mythologized, and are allocated a special role in Mesopotamian hegemonic religion (as the *kalû*,⁵⁸ *pilpilû*,⁵⁹ *assinnu* and *kurgarrû*⁶⁰). Only after being processed by religious and mythological categorization, and becoming constructs of hegemonic ideology, can such sexual practices and practitioners be

53 KI.ĀG NÍTA *ana* NÍTA “love of a man for a man” in the late magico-astral texts (BRM 4, 20: 6 // STT 300, 9) which are listing the appropriate time for the performance of different rituals and spells according to day and month, see Scurlock 2005–2006, 131, Geller 2010, 27, 45, and now Geller 2014, 28 and 33 (refs. Avigail Wagschal).

54 See Scurlock 2005–2006, 125, 131 and *passim*, Geller 2010, 27, 49 and Geller 2014 *passim*.

55 On homosexuality in ancient Mesopotamia, see briefly Cooper 2006–2008, 20 (with previous bibliography).

56 CUSAS 10, 12: 29–30 (№ 18): *ana dār šanātim dār erbēt šār u ḥamšet lūšikum kalû*.

57 On the crucial impact of Foucault’s writings on Classical studies, see recently Ormand 2014.

58 See Gabbay 2008.

59 See Peled 2013.

60 See Peled 2014. On the different classes of effeminate males, see Cooper 2006–2008, 20 (with previous bibliography).

part of the official cultural matrix of ancient Mesopotamia. One should be cautious, therefore, and remember that it is possible that the variance of sexual practices in ancient Mesopotamia was actually much wider than presented in our texts.⁶¹

And still, not only does ALL know virtually only opposite-sex relations, but – as will be discussed – a number of texts in the corpus cannot be understood unless one realizes that their background is formal, legally binding marriage.

The only clear exception to the above are the relations between Gilgameš and Enkidu which come to an emotional climax in Gilgameš's lament over his dead friend. There is no doubt in my mind that the epic depicts the relationship between the two comrades as all-embracing: from suspicious rivalry to official brotherhood (sealed by the adoption of Enkidu by Ninsun), from warrior-like friendship to the intimacy of sharing vulnerabilities, emotions and even corporal love.⁶² In Gilgameš's lament the epic beautifully fuses heroic and erotic imagery: "The axe at my side, in which my arm trusted, the sword of my belt, the shield in front of me, my festive garment, the girdle of my delight (*lalû!*)".⁶³ But note that here too – as in some texts in ALL – the conceptual frame of the powerful relationship between the friends is revealed as legal marriage, for in the first series of dreams Gilgameš sees an axe – Enkidu, of course – to whom he makes love "as to a wife",⁶⁴ and when lamenting his dead friend, Gilgameš is described covering the face of his dead body "as a bride".⁶⁵

What becomes evident, when returning to the texts in our corpus, is that interestingly the dynamic between the sexes in ALL does not focus entirely, nor even primarily, on masculine desire. No less than male, female sexuality and emotional needs find their place in ALL. Another point worth making is the absence of masculine sexual violence, or even threat, as means to attain sexual gratification.⁶⁶ Remarkably, the only direct references to physical violence in the corpus are that of women towards men. In one love incantation the woman addresses a resisting male lover: "I have hit (*maḥāšum*) your head; you keep crawling on the ground like",⁶⁷ and similarly "I have hit your head, I have changed your mood".⁶⁸ A mythical precursor to these aggressive statements can be found. Ištar, the archetypal female figure in Mesopotamian culture is said to have hit (again, *maḥāšum*) her resisting lovers (SB Gilg. VI 76). Clearly, the woman's threat in the love incantations to hit the man, thus overcoming his resistance, mirrors Ištar's mythological aggression.

61 On these questions, from the angle of Hittite texts, see Peled 2010a and 2010b (where further bibliography is found).

62 The literature on this subject is extensive. I will mention only a few discussions which I found interesting and revealing: George 2003, 903, Walls 2001, 17–33, Cooper 2002, and recently also Gadotti 2014, 287.

63 SB Gilg. VIII 46–48 (= George 2003, 655).

64 OB Gilg. II ii 31–33 (= George 2003, 174): *ḥaššinu šani būnūšu āmuršuma aḥtadu anāku arāmšuma kīma aššatim aḥabbub elšu*, "An axe, strange was his appearance; I saw it and was glad (seeing that) I was making love to it as a wife, cuddling it." See also Atraḥasis I 300 (Lambert/Millard 1969: 64–65).

65 SB Gilg. VIII 59: *iktum ibri kīma kallati [pānīšu]* (George 2003, 654). (And note also VIII 35–36, regrettably very broken lines).

66 Walls (2001, 25) stresses the "undertones of potential (male) violence".

67 ZA 75, 198–204i 109 (№ 34): *amtaḥaš muḥḥaka kīma... taptanaššilam qaqqaram*.

68 ZA 75, 198–204a 11 (№ 27): *amtaḥaš muḥḥaka uštanni ṭēmka*.

But these references to female violence must be taken as an upside-down view of Mesopotamian reality, where men dominated women legally and physically. Table XII of Gilgamesh offers a good example of the actual power-paradigm in Mesopotamian patriarchal society. One of the regulations in the Netherworld is said to be: “You must not kiss the wife you love, you must not strike the wife you hate”.⁶⁹ The emotional dependency of the female lover on her man is made plain throughout the dialogue CUSAS 10, 9 (№ 3), and, inversely, in two incipits from the catalogue CUSAS 10, 12 (№ 18): “To slavery I shall not degrade myself before you(m.)”,⁷⁰ and “I shall not serve before my friend”.⁷¹

3.6 Social and Familial Setting

The social background of ALL is not easily defined, as it varies from text to text. One cannot speak of one social setting in this group of texts, each of which has its own *Sitz im Leben*.

In some texts a man is trying to attract an unmarried young woman (YOS 11, 87 = № 26 and perhaps also CUSAS 10, 11 = № 20), perhaps courting a girl in a neighboring area. The backgrounds of other texts, by contrast, seem to be the legally bound conjugal relationship, i.e. the married couple. So, e.g., a man insults his previous lover, saying: “You were born the daughter of a substitute, with no dowry!”,⁷² proving that the woman’s unworthy descent, which prevents her from wedding, is a tenable argument for abandoning her for another woman. In like manner, some texts hint at indirect competition between a female lover and the lawful wife, the *aššatum*. CUSAS 10, 9: 13 (№ 3) reads: “I encircle (you) like a wife, so that (you?) will *not become* ‘stiff’”.⁷³ As I understand this line, the female lover tries to prevent the wife from gaining access to regular sexual relations with the husband – the lover of the female speaker. A man referring in a pejorative way to his wife, while praising the sexual powers of his female lover, may perhaps be found in the love incantation from Hattuša: “Instead of my ‘wailing woman’ – your two openings! Instead of my ‘wailing woman’ – your bed! I will be making love (to you)! oh Kilili! I will have intercourse (with you)! – oh Kilili!”.⁷⁴

A passage from a first mill. love ritual brings a rare echo of the growing erotic fatigue in married couples, which had much to do, I presume, with the rivalry between wives and female lovers: “At night there is no housewife, at night there is no housewife, at night the man’s wife poses no objection”.⁷⁵ If correctly understood, these lines express the man’s frustration at being repeatedly sexually rejected. According to the ritual, apparently, the wife poses no obstacles to sex with the man. Another text which attests to intra-familial sexual and emotional problems is an OB ritual destined to remedy relations between a man and his wife (*aššatum*, again): “Its ritual: you take clay of a licorice’s root, in sun-rise

69 SB Gilg. XII 23–24: *aššatka ša tarammu lā tanaššiq aššatka ša tazerru lā tamahḥaš*.

70 CUSAS 10, 12: 24 (№ 18): *an[a wa]rdūtim ul abā[s]ka*.

71 CUSAS 10, 12: 25 (№ 18): *ul azzaz maḥar ibriya*.

72 CUSAS 10, 10: 17–18 (№ 4): *mārat pūḥi wa[ldāti] ina [lā] širi[ktim]*.

73 CUSAS 10, 9: 13 (№ 3): *asaḥḥur kīma aštim ana [lā] makāki*.

74 KBo 36, 27: 18’–20’ (№ 21): *akkū bakkītiya pittāki akkū bakkītiya mayyālki arām Kilili anāk Kilili*.

75 Lambert 1975, 108: 6–8: *mūšu emūqti lā ibašši mūšu emūqti lā ibašši mūšu alti amēli lā iparrik*.