

repetitive parallelism

- the nature of Mesopotamian poetry is to repeat verses in couplets
- but often verses have slight variations in language
- *Enuma Elish* 4.3-6 (the Babylonian poem of creation):

You are the most important among the great gods;

Your destiny is unequaled, your command is Anu.

Marduk, you are the most important among the great gods,

Your destiny is unequaled, your command is Anu.

repetitive parallelism

- all in all, repetitive parallelism is part and parcel of the “oral nature” (i.e. story-telling) of Ancient Near Eastern poetry

progressive specification

- a more complex form of repetitive parallelism
- the second line paraphrases or recasts the first line
- *Enuma Elish* 1.1-2

When **above, the heaven** had not been named,

Below, the earth had not yet been called by name, . . .

incremental repetition

- a different form of repetitive parallelism
- the second line adds an element (or elements) to the first line
- *Enuma Elish* 1.42-3
<Tiamat> was angry and cried out to her husband;
She cried out and raged furiously, **she alone**.

The Old Testament

- the scriptures of the ancient Hebrews arise from the same general culture as Ancient Near Eastern literature
- the verses of the Bible also use repetitive parallelism
- *Psalms* 111.7-8

The works of His hands are truth and justice;
all His commandments are sure.

They stand fast for ever and ever,
done in truth and uprightness.

nephilim

- “sons of God” mentioned in Bible
- Genesis 6:4

There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the **sons of God** came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.

nephilim

- but the *nephilim* misbehave, which induces God to precipitate the Deluge
- cf. *Gilgamesh* I.67-8, 71-72

The young men of Uruk he harries without warrant,
Gilgamesh lets no son go free to his father . . .

It is he who is shepherd of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
but Gilgamesh let no daughter go free to her mother.

nephilim

- the *nephilim* character/s in both *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and the Bible are semi-divine being/s
- both overstep their bounds and disobey the commandments of heaven
- cf. the motif of the “fallen angel,” e.g. Satan in the Bible and Prometheus (the fire-bringer) in Greek myth

Cedars of Lebanon

- an enormous and daunting forest in the area of modern Lebanon
- in antiquity, destroyed by deforestation and ecological mismanagement
- felling these cedar trees serves as a test of valor for Assyrian and Babylonian kings, even as late as the first millennium BCE

Cedars of Lebanon

- *Isaiah* 14:8-9, the cedars sing a clever mocking dirge of a recently deceased Babylonian king:

The whole earth is at rest and is quiet:

they break forth into singing.

Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying,

‘Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us.’

Aruru

- mother-goddess who creates Enkidu from clay
- cf. the creation of Adam in *Genesis* 2:7:

And the Lord God formed man of **the dust of the ground**

- also, cf. *Job* 33:6:

Behold, before God I am as you are; I too was formed from **a piece of clay**.

adom

- the Hebrew word for “clay”
- thus, Adam’s name is a Hebrew pun on *adom* (or *adamah*, “dirt”)

adom

- Biblical theme: humans are as fragile as clay, but also fired with the spark of divinity
- likewise in Mesopotamian literature, Enkidu is “what Anu had thought of” (*Gilgamesh* I.100)
- cf. *Genesis* 1:26-7: “God made man in his own image”

Acculturation of Man

- is the most comprehensive parallel between *Gilgamesh* and the Bible
- the wild man Enkidu is tamed and becomes human (mortal)
- cf. Adam who becomes mortal after eviction from Eden

Acculturation of Man

- Shamhat's food
- Enkidu's clothes
- his rejection by wild animals
- Uruk
- fruit of the tree of Good and Evil
- fig leaves
- eviction from the Garden of Eden
- Enoch (Cain's city)

Genesis 5.17: . . . and (Cain) builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.

walls of Uruk

- *Gilgamesh XI.324-7*

Go up, Urshanabi, walk on the ramparts of Uruk.

Inspect the base terrace, examine its brickwork,
If its brickwork is not of burnt brick,

And if the Seven Wise Ones laid not its foundation.

- *Psalms 48:12-13*

Walk about Zion (Jerusalem), and go round about her:
count her towers,

Mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces;
that you may tell it to the generation following.

Dominant Theme of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

- a man's immortality rests upon his accomplishments and the monuments he leaves behind
- e.g. the structures or cities he builds