

The Role of Authors in the “Uruk List of Kings and Sages”: Canonization and Cultural Contact

SOPHUS HELLE, *Aarhus University**

“Of earlier roses only names remain. We hold naked names.”
- Bernard of Cluny, *De contemptu mundi*¹

Introduction

It was the 16th of May 165 BC, and in the city of Uruk, a scholar named Anu-belshunu sat down to write a list. Meanwhile, his king Antiochus IV was preparing for a military expedition from which he would not return alive. After the king’s sudden illness, the throne would pass to his nine-year old heir, precipitating a period of political instability that would eventually bring about the collapse of Seleucid rule. Anu-belshunu, of course, knew nothing of this, but was preoccupied with the matter at hand: writing out a list of thirty-two famous kings and sages from the long history of cuneiform culture.

Anu-belshunu came from a long line of lamentation priests (*kalû’s*) in Uruk, and had good reason to be proud of this. These priests also worked as astronomers, their calculations allowing them to predict the movements of the planets and thus time their rituals precisely; indeed, Babylonian astronomy

was renowned throughout the ancient world for its accuracy. The grandfather of our scribe, also named Anu-belshunu, had been a prolific astronomer,² but our Anu-belshunu took no interest in this aspect of his trade—not a single mathematical or astronomical tablet has been preserved from his hand. He seems to have been more interested in the history, education, and rituals of the Urukian lamentation priests,³ and perhaps this special interest can help to account for the

² Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “The Descendants of Sin-lēqi-unninni,” in *Assyriologica et semitica: Festschrift für Joachim Oelsner anlässlich seines 65. Geburtstages am 18. Februar 1997*, ed. J. Marzahn and H. Neumann, AOAT 252 (Münster, 2000), 9; Eleanor Robson, “Secrets de famille: prêtre et astronome à Uruk à l’époque hellénistique,” in *Lieux de savoir: Espaces et communautés*, ed. Christian Jacob (Paris, 2007), 440–61; Laurie E. Pearce and L. Timothy Doty, “The Activities of Anu-belšunu, Seleucid Scribe,” in *Assyriologica et semitica*, ed. Marzahn and Neumann.

³ Pearce and Doty, “Anu-belšunu,” 340–41. Other texts written by Anu-belshunu include an unpublished letter, NCBT 1969, that deals with the training of *kalû’s*, and an abbreviated version of the kettledrum ritual, *BaM Beih.* 2, 5, ed. Marc J. H. Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon: The Temple Ritual Texts as Evidence for Hellenistic Cult Practises*, CM 25 (Leiden, 2004), 270–74. Further, Eleanor Robson restores the name Anu-belshunu in the colophon to a fragmentary text dealing with the authorship of Oannes, *BaM Beih.* 2, 89, oracc.org/cams/gkab/P363354 (accessed 24 April 2018). However, this reading is highly uncertain.

* I would like to thank Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, Nicole Brisch, and Claus Ambos for their helpful remarks on the draft version of this article. Further, the anonymous reviewers contributed with many extraordinarily useful suggestions and corrections, for which I am very grateful. All shortcomings remain my own. For the abbreviation CTA, see n. 6 below.

¹ Book 1, l. 952: “stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus.”

uniqueness of the text that he copied (or composed?) on that day in 165 BC.

The list of kings and sages includes a selection of the most famous authors of Babylonian literature. This is, in fact, surprising: given the otherwise predominant anonymity of Babylonian literature, any interest in the authorship of literary texts—let alone the placement of authors alongside mighty kings and mythical sages—represented a fundamental break with the tradition of the time. But this break was, I will argue, motivated by a profound respect for just that tradition, and by a desire to preserve it during an uncertain time. This paper will analyze the role of authorship in this text, the so-called “Uruk List of Kings and Sages.”

Cultural Collapse and the Appearance of Authors

The five centuries leading up to the writing of that text had been a time of dramatic transformation. The two great empires of the cuneiform world, the Neo-Assyrian and the Neo-Babylonian, had crumbled to dust. Babylon had lost its independence, first to Persian and then to Seleucid rule. The hegemony once enjoyed by the Akkadian language and literature had gradually and quietly ended. Supplanted by Aramaic, Akkadian was no longer a living language, but a learned idiom spoken only by the scholars of cuneiform.⁴ Babylonian culture had been brought into intensive contact with all sorts of newcomers—Aramaic, Greek, Persian, and Jewish cultures, to name but a few.

As cuneiform culture began to succumb to such pressures, it was increasingly restricted to a small group of learned scholars. But even as isolated as these scholars were from the society around them, their world was changing as well. Once, their status had depended on an association with the king, but with the loss of political independence, the affiliation of the scholars shifted from palace to temple. At the same time, the academic work of the scholars was also transformed, through what may be called the major paradigm shifts of the first millennium BC. Astrology had shifted from a focus on the interpretation of

⁴ It is probable that this process of language death began later than is usually assumed for Akkadian, but it was almost certainly complete by the second century BC. See Johannes Hackl, “Language Death and Dying Reconsidered: The Role of Late Babylonian as a Vernacular Language,” in *Proceedings of the 53rd Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale (Moscow/Petersburg), Late Babylonian Workshop in Honor of Muhammad A. Dandamaev*, ed. Cornelia Wunsch (Winona Lake, IN, forthcoming).

omens to an interest in mathematical calculation; a vast network of correspondences was established between natural phenomena such as stones, trees, and constellations; speculative theology revived long dead gods while demoting others; and so on.⁵

This paper will focus on another such transformation undergone by cuneiform culture. Beginning with the Late Assyrian period, scholars became interested in *authors*.⁶ Considering the importance today of the figure of the author, the change is remarkable. Cuneiform culture had once before afforded importance to an author, when Enheduana was a legendary figure in Old Babylonian schools; but she had been the exception rather than the rule, and was long forgotten by the first millennium. Never before, in Babylon or elsewhere, had there been an *extensive and systematic interest* in the people lurking behind literary texts. Yet that is exactly what began to happen: a literary tradition dominated for millennia by anonymity was now organized into a catalogue of authors, and scholars began to invoke those authors as mythical family ancestors.⁷ Piotr Michalowski connects this development with the increasingly intense intermingling and irrelevance of the literature thus catalogued—that is, with the “Aramaization of Mesopotamia,” as he puts it, and the death of Akkadian.⁸ In short, as cuneiform culture waned, the figure of the author waxed. The list of authors written by Anu-belshunu should be viewed against this background: as the culmination of a slow cultural shift that eventually gave rise to the author. But before turning to the text itself, I will briefly sketch the historical context in which it was written.

The Hellenistic period was a fragile floruit for the scholars of cuneiform. As Philippe Clancier notes, “la

⁵ See, e.g., David Brown, *Mesopotamian Planetary Astronomy-Astrology*, CM 18 (Groningen, 2000); Nils P. Heeßel, “Stein, Pflanze und Holz: Ein neuer Text zur ‘medizinischen Astrologie,’” *Or NS74* (2005); and Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “Antiquarian Theology in Seleucid Uruk,” *Acta Sumerologica* 14 (1992), respectively.

⁶ See, e.g., Wilfred G. Lambert, “Ancestors, Authors, and Canonicity,” *JCS* 11 (1957): 1–14; “A Catalogue of Texts and Authors,” *JCS* 16 (1962) (=CTA); Piotr Michalowski, “Sailing to Babylon, Reading the Dark Side of the Moon,” in *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-First Century: The William Foxwell Albright Centennial Conference*, ed. J. S. Cooper and G. M. Schwartz (Winona Lake, IN, 1996), 186–87; Erle Leichty, “Guaranteed to Cure,” in *A Scientific Humanist: Studies in Memory of Abraham Sachs*, ed. E. Leichty and M. deJong Ellis, Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 9 (Philadelphia, 1988), 261.

⁷ Lambert, “Catalogue”; Lambert, “Ancestors.”

⁸ Michalowski, “Sailing to Babylon,” 186–87.

culture suméro-akkadienne, bien loin de disparaître avec la fin de l’indépendance mésopotamienne, non seulement survécut, mais encore fit preuve d’un dynamisme brillant.”⁹ The last guardians of this culture were a circle of learned urban notables, a local elite left largely to their own devices by the Seleucid empire. During the third and early second century BC, the temples in Babylon and Uruk enjoyed widespread juridical and economic autonomy, and retained much of their traditional prestige.¹⁰ The priests who constituted the assembly of these temples accordingly held privileged positions in the administration of their cities.

While these positions guaranteed them both influence and affluence, they were also disconnected from society, so much so that the Greeks regarded them as a separate ethnicity, the “Chaldean tribes.” By seeking to preserve their tradition, Paul-Alain Beaulieu argues, they “retreated into the imaginary space provided by the temples and the schools, laying the grounds for the emergence of the Chaldeans as an identifiable community of scholars, astronomers, and diviners.”¹¹ This community was tightly knit: in Uruk it counted no more than half a dozen families interlinked by a network of apprenticeship.¹² Though this secured an exclusive status for the scholars, it also made that status highly precarious. What is striking about them, notes Clancier, “c’est la fragilité du milieu

des notables urbains qui dépendait quasi totalement du bon vouloir des différents pouvoirs s’exerçant sur la Mésopotamie.”¹³

This made the community of priests ever more vulnerable to new social transformations. During the reign of Antiochus IV (175–164 BC), a Greek colony was introduced in Babylon, and so the Babylonian temple assembly now had to share its authority with an assembly of Greek citizens (although it is unclear how sharp the division between the two groups really was, particularly in the subsequent Parthian period).¹⁴ A further shock came in the 160s BC, when the temple assembly began to lose its control over the juridical and economic administration of the city. This change is more clearly documented for Babylon, but a similar process most probably ran parallel in Uruk.¹⁵

For the cuneiform scholars, the economic consequences of this loss of autonomy would have been disastrous. As a result, when their social standing was again upended by the Parthian invasion of 141 BC, and again a decade later by the burning of Bit Resh, the main temple of Uruk, cuneiform began to dwindle definitively, and by 108 BC it had entirely disappeared from the city.¹⁶ Leo Oppenheim likened these final cuneiform scholars to “islands engulfed by a thoroughly changed surrounding,”¹⁷ and indeed the seas of culture had but to shift slightly before those islands were finally submerged.

The Uruk List of Kings and Sages

The list I will discuss here was written just as this brittle renaissance was coming to a close, in the immediate aftermath of the reforms that robbed the temple

⁹ Philippe Clancier, “La Babylonie hellénistique. Aperçu d’histoire politique et culturelle,” *Topoi Orient-Occident* 15 (2007): 22; see also Philippe Clancier, “Cuneiform Culture’s Last Guardians: The Old Urban Notability of Hellenistic Uruk,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, ed. K. Radner and E. Robson (Oxford, 2011).

¹⁰ Philippe Clancier and Julien Monerie, “Les sanctuaires babyloniens à l’époque hellénistique: évolution d’un relais de pouvoir,” in *Les sanctuaires autochtones et le roi dans l’Orient hellénistique*, ed. Philippe Clancier and Julien Monerie, *Topoi Orient-Occident* 19 (Berlin, 2014); Robartus J. van der Spek, “The Size and Significance of the Babylonian Temples under the Successors,” in *La Transition entre l’empire achéménide et les royaumes hellénistiques*, ed. P. Briant and F. Joannès, *Persika* 9 (Paris, 2006).

¹¹ Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “Official and Vernacular Languages: The Shifting Sands of Imperial and Cultural Identities in First-Millennium B.C. Mesopotamia,” in *Margins of Writing, Origins of Cultures*, ed. S. L. Sanders (Chicago, 2006), 209; see also Robartus J. van der Spek, “Multi-ethnicity and Ethnic Segregation in Hellenistic Babylon,” in *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity: The Role of Power and Tradition*, ed. T. Derks and N. Roymans (Amsterdam, 2009).

¹² Mathieu Ossendrijver, “Exzellente Netzwerke: die Astronomen von Uruk,” in *The Empirical Dimension of Ancient Near Eastern Studies*, ed. G. J. Selz and K. Wagensonner (Wien, 2011).

¹³ Clancier, “La Babylonie hellénistique”: 58.

¹⁴ Van der Spek, “Multi-ethnicity”; but cf. Clancier and Monerie, “Les sanctuaires,” 215–16; and Roberto Sciandra, “The Babylonian Correspondence of the Seleucid and Arsacid Dynasties: New Insights into the Relations between Court and City during the Late Babylonian Period,” in *Organization, Representation, and Symbols of Power in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 54th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Würzburg 20–25 July 2008*, ed. G. Wilhelm (Winona Lake, IN, 2012), 239–40.

¹⁵ Clancier and Monerie, “Les sanctuaires,” 210–23.

¹⁶ Clancier, “La Babylonie hellénistique”: 59–63. The last cuneiform text that with any certainty can be said to stem from Uruk is an economic tablet written in 108 BC: see Karlheinz Kessler, “Eine arsakidenzeitliche Urkunde aus Warka (W 18568),” *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 15 (1984).

¹⁷ A. Leo Oppenheim, “The Position of the Intellectual in Mesopotamian Society,” *Dædalus* 104 (1975): 44.

assemblies of their autonomy. The text is preserved in only one manuscript, a single-column tablet unearthed in Uruk's Bit Resh temple, part of a cluster of ritual texts belonging to the lamentation priests (an annotated transliteration of the text is included in the appendix):

[In the time] of king Ayyalu: the sage was Oannes.

[In the time] of king Alalgar: the sage was Oannes-duga.

[In the time] of king Ameluana: the sage was Enmeduga.

[In the time] of king Amegalana: the sage was Enmegalama.

[In the time] of king Enmeushumgalana: the sage was Enmebuluga.

[In the time] of king Dumuzi, the shepherd: the sage was An-Enlilda.

[In the time] of king Enmeduranki: the sage was Utu-abzu.

[After the Flood,¹⁸] during the reign of king Enmerkar: the sage was Nungal-pirigal. He brought down [Ishtar] from the heavens into the Eana-temple. [He made] a balag-drum of bronze [together with its "hands"¹⁹] of lapis lazuli by the craft of Ninagal (i.e., of the blacksmith). [On the] holy da[is], the seat of Papsukkal², he established the balag-drum, in Anu's presence.

[In the time of] king² [Gilgam]esh²: the scholar was Sin-leqi-unninni.

[In the time of] king [Nara]m²-Sin: the scholar was Kabti-ili-Marduk.

[In the time of] king [Ishbi]-Erra: the scholar was Sidu, also known as Enlil-ibni.

[In the time of] king [Abi-e]shuh²: the scholars were Gimil-Gula and Taqisha-Gula.

[In the time of] king [. . .]: the scholar was Esagil-kin-apli.

[In the time of] king Adad-apla-iddina: the scholar was Esagil-kin-ubba.

[In the time of] king Nebuchadnezzar: the scholar was Esagil-kin-ubba.

[In the time of] king Esarhaddon the scholar was Aba-Enlil-dari, [whom] the Arameans call Ahiqar. He is [also known] as Achiacharus².

[Tablet] of Anu-belshunu, son of Nidinti-anu, descendant of Sin-leqi-unnenni, [lamentation]

priest of the gods Anu and Antu, an Urukean. By his own hand. Uruk, month Ayyar, day 10, year 147, king Antiochos IV. He who fears Anu will not remove it!

The text consists of four sections separated by horizontal rulings, each corresponding to a major epoch of history. The first section records the mythical time before the Flood; the sages of this section are semi-divine creatures that rose from the sea to lay the foundations of civilization. The following ruling presumably marks the coming of the Flood, and the postdiluvian sage of this section, Nungal-pirigal, is fully human.¹⁸ As recently shown by Claus Ambos, the second section describes a transition in the cult at Uruk, from the original cult of the sky-god Anu to that of the goddess Ishtar, who is brought down from the heavens and into her Urukean temple.¹⁹ The ousted sky-god is appeased by the invention of the balag-drum, and with it, the art of singing lamentation songs to soothe angry gods. The double ruling thus marks a deep division in the history of Uruk, a transition that the Late Babylonian scholars attempted to reverse by restoring the cult of Anu. As Ambos concludes, "for the Hellenistic scholars in Uruk, the rupture caused by this event must have been enormous."²⁰

After this double ruling follows a list of legendary and historical kings. The scholars listed with them are all known from other sources as authors of famous cuneiform texts. The overall structure of the list is strictly symmetrical: there are eight sages before the double ruling and eight scholars after it. The pair of scholars serving together under Abi-eshuh are matched by Esagil-kin-ubba, whose career spans two kings, so as to preserve the symmetry. This structure has not previously been remarked on, since the editions of Jan van Dijk and Alan Lenzi failed to mark the double ruling, and so Nungal-pirigal was grouped with his fellow humans rather than with the semi-divine sages. But in fact, the structure of the text is highly important. The fact that there are precisely eight sages and eight

¹⁸ That Nungal-pirigal is human, unlike the previous sages, is made clear by the incantation in *Bit mēseri*, l. III 28; see Rykle Borger, "Die Beschwörungsserie *Bit mēseri* und die Himmelfahrt Henochs," *JNES* 33 (1974): 192.

¹⁹ Claus Ambos, "The History of the Cult of the Sky-God Anu in Uruk: Philological and Archaeological Evidence," in *The Ritual Sphere*, ed. P. Cotticelli, V. Sadovski, and A. Rizza (Vienna, forthcoming). I thank Claus Ambos for providing me with the proofs of the article before publication.

²⁰ *Ibid.*; see also Beaulieu, "Antiquarian Theology."

human scholars establishes a symmetrical relation between the two groups. The authors are presented as the latter-day mirrors of their mythical predecessors. The list is no random assemblage of cuneiform VIPs, but a programmatic and schematic juxtaposition of kings, demigods, and authors.

The fifth and final section of the text is a colophon, the only place where a scribe faithfully copying a text could leave his personal stamp.²¹ This colophon is particularly interesting, for it notes that the tablet was written not by an apprentice scribe, as would usually be the case at Seleucid Uruk, but by its owner himself: the phrase “by his own hand” is found in only three colophons, all of which belong to Anu-belshunu.²² But what does that mean for our text?

Eleanor Robson argues that colophons “sont des seuils paratextuels qui se situent hors du corps principal d’une œuvre, mais servent de trait d’union entre les intentions de l’auteur et la réception du lecteur.”²³ Here the colophon redirects us to Anu-belshunu himself, and if one examines his full name, it is easy to see why: he claims descent from Sin-leqi-unnenni, the author of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the first scholar listed after the double ruling. By both invoking Sin-leqi-unnenni as his ancestor and assigning him this place of honor in the list, Anu-belshunu implicitly underscores the importance of his own identity as scholar and heir to Babylonian culture.²⁴

Indeed, Sin-leqi-unnenni is not the only connection between the text and its owner. In its miniature retelling of Babylonian cultural history, the list is particularly focused on the city of Uruk and on the profession of the lamentation priests. It was said that Oannes, the first of the sages, built the Bit Resh

temple in Uruk where the text was found, and that the seven sages laid the foundation of the walls of Uruk.²⁵ These walls were completed by Gilgamesh, the first king after the double ruling; he, like his predecessor Enmerkar, was king of Uruk. As Ambos argues, the main division of the text and its only narrative section deal with the restructuring of the Uruk cult; Taqisha-Gula was known as the author of *The Exaltation of Ishtar*, a hymn that deals with this elevation of Ishtar above her father Anu; and Esarhaddon, the last of the kings, had rebuilt the Bit Resh temple after millennia of disuse.²⁶ The text thereby participates in the construction of what Kathryn Stevens has called “a locally focused yet transhistorical identity.”²⁷

The emphasis of the list falls not only on the city, but also on its scholars, and specifically on the lamentation priests. The narrative section recalls the invention of their holy instrument, the balag-drum, and with it, their art of soothing angered gods; the author Taqisha-Gula is known from other sources as a lamentation priest.²⁸ Lenzi further interprets the text as a “myth of scribal succession.” The myth entails that by learning the mysteries of cuneiform, scribes entered a line of descent stretching back through famous scholars, semi-divine sages, and all the way to the gods themselves.²⁹ The structure of the list entails that cuneiform scholars were the proper successors to the semi-divine sages that had founded civilization. Further, the list of mythical figures includes the instructor of the three core crafts of cuneiform scholarship: Oannes, the founder of *āšipūtu*, Enmeduranki, the founder of *bārūtu*, and Nungal-pirigal, the founder of *kalūtu*.³⁰

²⁵ See respectively Adam Falkenstein, *Topographie von Uruk: Uruk Zur Selenikidenzeit*, Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft in Uruk-Warka 3 (Leipzig, 1941), 6 (with Jan van Dijk, “Die Inschriftenfunde,” *Vorläufiger Bericht über die . . . Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka* 18 [1962]: 47); and the Standard Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, I. I 21.

²⁶ Ambos, “History of the Cult of the Sky-God Anu.”

²⁷ Kathryn Stevens, “Empire Begins at Home: Local Elites and Imperial Ideologies in Hellenistic Greece and Babylonia,” in *Cosmopolitanism and Empire: Universal Rulers, Local Elites, and Cultural Integration in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, ed. M. Lavan, R. E. Payne, and J. Weisweiler (Oxford, 2016), 74.

²⁸ Lambert, “Catalogue”: 64–65, I. IV 9.

²⁹ Alan Lenzi, “The Uruk List of Kings and Sages and Late Mesopotamian Scholarship,” *JANER* 8 (2008).

³⁰ For Oannes as the founder of *āšipūtu*, see Piotr Michalowski, “Adapa and the Ritual Process,” *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 41 (1980). For Enmeduranki as the founder of *bārūtu*, see Wilfred G. Lambert, “The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners,” in *Festschrift*

²¹ See Hermann Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone*, AOAT 2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1968); Kathryn Stevens, “Secrets in the Library: Protected Knowledge and Professional Identity in Late Babylonian Uruk,” *Iraq* 75 (2013): 212; Erle Leichty, “The Colophon,” in *Studies Presented to A. Leo Oppenheim* (Chicago, 1964), 147.

²² Ossendrijver, “Netzwerke,” 633–35. Besides the present text, one is the letter regarding the education of lamentation priests mentioned in n. 3 above, and the other is the building ritual *TU* 45, edited by Linssen, *Cults*, 283–92, rev. I. 25.

²³ Robson, “Secrets,” 443. For the concept of paratextuality, and the way in which paratexts guide the reader’s interpretation of a text, see Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris, 1987).

²⁴ It is also possible that Anu-belshunu composed the list himself, as no other manuscripts of the text are known and there is no explicit mention of an original in the colophon. However, it is impossible to know for sure.

In short, the text tells a miniature history of the city of Uruk, its gods, temples, and scholars. It functioned as a form of “historical autobiography” for Anu-belshunu, outlining the origins of his professional and local identity—and did so at a point in time when that identity was at its most fragile.

Authors in the Uruk List

But how is the story told? Ambos remarks on the fact that apart from the story of Nungal-pirigal, “the names of important figures are simply listed as keywords, which, however, would no doubt have triggered memories of characteristic Uruk-related events associated with their lives and activities. Thus the text is reduced, for the most part, to the form of a list of personal names.”³¹ In the remainder of this essay, I want to explore exactly that process of reduction, the mechanism by which a cultural history can be reduced to a list of names, and by which these names in turn come to signify a larger cultural sphere. I will argue that a crucial part of this reduction is the metonymic reference that proceeds from the name of authors to the connotations of their texts.

For what does it mean that the scholars listed here were not only signposts in the history of Uruk, or links in a chain of scribal transmission, but also *authors*? All eight scholars, three of the kings, and three of the sages are known from other sources as authors of famous cuneiform compositions, and Table 1 gives the titles of the texts attributed to them. As it shows, most of the attributions come from the Late Assyrian Catalogue of Texts and Authors mentioned above (herein abbreviated CTA),³² while some attributions come directly from within the texts themselves. Note that in the case of Nungal-pirigal and Enmeduranki, it is not a specific text that is attributed to them, but an entire genre of scholarly texts.³³

für Rykle Borger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Mai 1994: *tikip santakki mala bašmu*, ed. S. M. Maul, CM 10 (Groningen, 1998).

³¹ Ambos, “History of the Cult of the Sky-God Anu.”

³² Lambert, “Catalogue.”

³³ It may be argued that in this sense these two fall outside what can reasonably be referred to as an “author.” However, as will become apparent from the following discussion, I am interested in authors not so much as the composers of a given text, but as a principle of textual classification, and in this regard the function of Nungal-pirigal and Enmeduranki is the same. They may perhaps be compared to what Michel Foucault terms “founders of discursivity,” a specific subcategory of the “author-function” described below.

It seems to me highly significant that all the scholars in the list, and a significant proportion of the kings and sages as well, are known from other sources as authors.³⁴ This is unlikely to be an accident. However, previous scholarship has not emphasized the fact that they are authors, mostly discussing them as scholars more broadly. What would it mean for our interpretation of the text if we focused on their role as authors, specifically? It should of course be noted that the idea of the author has changed much over the last two millennia, and the Babylonian ideal of authorship differs in many respects from those that are current today. These ancient figures were not novelists or Romantic poets, but rather learned scholars to whom texts were attributed traditionally.³⁵ Further, many cuneiform authors are presented not as creating their texts out of thin air, but as receiving them from a god and then transmitting them to humanity.³⁶ Yet this characterization leaves much unanswered. What role did authors play in Seleucid Uruk? What was the significance of authorship at this time? What cultural connotations did their names convey?

A methodological digression will be necessary before answering these questions. An oft-noted aspect of cuneiform culture is its lack of explicit meta-discourse. Rather than expressions through abstract discussions, scribes relied on lists of particulars and implicit comparisons. “In Mesopotamia there was no metalanguage” writes Michalowski; rather, “reflexivity was part of the construction of the text itself.”³⁷ Accordingly, the meaning of authorship in this con-

³⁴ Note also that Enmegalama is attested, not as the author, but as the title of *Ur-Ninurta B*. On such blurring between authors and incipits, see William W. Hallo, “On the Antiquity of Sumerian Literature,” *JAOS* 83 (1963): 175–76.

³⁵ Benjamin R. Foster, “On Authorship in Akkadian Literature,” *Annali dell’Istituto universitario orientale di Napoli* 51 (1991); Michalowski, “Sailing to Babylon,” 183–87; Jean-Jacques Glassner, “Être auteur avant Homère en Mésopotamie?,” *Diogenes* 196 (2001).

³⁶ Enmeduranki and Kabti-ili-Marduk are clear examples of this. However, this does not mean that they were not authors. In fact, the figuration of authorship as the transmission of texts received from an original, non-human source is widespread across literary history; think only of Homer receiving the text of the *Odyssey* from his muse. For pre-modern authors as, paradigmatically, textual transmitters rather than original creators, see Sophus Helle, “What is an Author? Old Answers to a New Question,” *Modern Language Quarterly* (forthcoming)."

³⁷ Piotr Michalowski, “Presence at the Creation,” in *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*, ed. T. Abusch, J. Huehnergard, and P. Steinkeller, HSS 37 (Atlanta, 1990), 387.

Table 1—Authors and attributed texts

Author	Text attributed to them (with source of attribution)
<i>Sages</i>	
Oannes	Two unknown compositions ^a (CTA)
Enmeduga	Two unknown compositions (CTA)
Nungal-pirigal	The craft of lamentation, <i>kalútu</i> (the Uruk List itself)
<i>Kings</i>	
Enmeduranki	The craft of divination, <i>bārútu</i> (the <i>Legend of Enmeduranki</i> ^b)
Enmerkar	Two unknown compositions (CTA)
[Nara]m-Sin ^c	<i>The Cuthean Legend</i> (by the ending of the legend)
<i>Scholars</i>	
Sin-leqi-unninni	<i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i> (CTA)
Kabti-ili-Marduk	<i>The Epic of Erra</i> (CTA, the ending of the epic)
Sidu, aka. Enlil-ibni	<i>The Series of Sidu</i> (CTA, a catalogue of the <i>Series</i> ^d)
Gimil-Gula	One unknown composition (CTA)
Taqisha-Gula	<i>The Exaltation of Ishtar</i> , two unknown compositions, Tablet 26 of <i>Shumma Ālu</i> (CTA, the colophon of the text) ^e
Esagil-kin-apli	The medical series <i>Sagig</i> and <i>Alamdimmú</i> (the ‘Exorcist’s manual’ and a catalogue of <i>Sagig</i> ^f)
Esagil-kin-ubba	<i>The Babylonian Theodicy</i> (CTA, the acrostic of the poem)
Ahiqar	<i>The Proverbs of Ahiqar</i> (the narrative frame of the proverbs)

^a Oannes seems also to be treated as an author in the highly fragmentary text *BaM Beih.* 2, 89, noted in n. 1 above. Arguably, Berossus depicts Oannes as the author also of *Enuma Elish*; see Geert de Breucker, “Berossos between Tradition and Innovation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, ed. K. Radner and E. Robson (Oxford, 2011), 644. Finally, the *Verse Account of Nabonidus*, V 12’, mentions Oannes as the author of the otherwise unknown series Uskar Anu Enlil, but this may be a satirical jab at Nabonidus’ lack of learning; see Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “Nabonidus the Mad King: A Reconsideration of His Steles from Harran and Babylon,” in *Representations of Political Power: Case Histories from Times of Change and Dissolving Order in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Marlies Heinz and Marian H. Feldman (Winona Lake, IN, 2007), 162–63.

^b See Lambert, “Qualifications.”

^c Note that this is based on a proposed restoration of the text, which was previously read [Ibb]i-Sin.

^d Irving L. Finkel, “On the Series of Sidu,” *ZA* 76 (1986). On Sidu as an author, see Eckart Frahm, “The Latest Sumerian Proverbs,” in *Opening the Tablet Box: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Benjamin R. Foster*, ed. S. Melville and A. Slotsky, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 42 (Leiden, 2010), 168–76.

^e For *Shumma Ālu* 26, which the colophon of KAR 384+ attributes to the joint authorship of Taqisha-Gula and Amel-Papsukkal, see Nils P. Heeßel, *Divinatorische Texte I: Terrestrische, teratologische, physiognomische und oneiromantische Texte*, Keilschrifttexte aus Assur literarischen Inhalts 1, Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 116 (Wiesbaden, 2007), 53–58. Taqisha-Gula is also attested, again together with Amel-Papsukkal, in the unpublished colophon K 8177, and he is mentioned, together with Sidu (see previous note), in a highly cryptic Late Babylonian text which mentions the names of famous figures of cuneiform history, see Wilfred G. Lambert, “A Piece of Esoteric Babylonian Learning,” in *RA* 68 (1974).

^f Markham J. Geller, “Incipits and Rubrics,” in *Wisdom, Gods and Literature: Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W. G. Lambert*, ed. A. R. George and Irving L. Finkel (Winona Lake, IN, 2000), 248; Irving L. Finkel, “Adad-apla-iddina, Esagil-kin-apli, and the Series SA.GIG,” in *A Scientific Humanist*, ed. Leichty and deJong Ellis.

text cannot be fixed by reference to emic abstractions, for such remain unknown to us, but must be derived from the way the texts themselves are constructed, and particularly so in the case of schematic lists.

Compare, for example, the position of Oannes and Ahiqar at the beginning and end of the list, respectively. Oannes was the most important of the sages, and Babylonian culture owed to him its self-perceived antiquity and pride of place among all cultures.³⁸ Ahiqar, by contrast, was no Babylonian at all, but a

folk hero of the Aramaic literature that had replaced Akkadian as the new culture of the land. Ahiqar represented a clear break with the tradition being listed, but was also appropriated into that tradition by his incorporation in this text. The comparison between the two figures illustrates the quandary of Babylonian culture in a Hellenistic world. It was a uniquely ancient tradition, stretching back millennia in time to the mythical Oannes, but it was also in constant contact and interaction with other cultures. The original fusion

³⁸ On the figure of Oannes more generally, see Seth L. Sanders, *From Adapa to Enoch: Scribal Culture and Religious Vision in Judea*

and *Babylon*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Jerusalem 167 (Tübingen, 2017), Chapters 1–2.

of Sumerian and Babylonian culture was constantly supplemented by new additions, such as the Aramaic and perhaps also Greek traditions that the thrice-named Ahiqar represented.³⁹ If Oannes pointed to the unique past of cuneiform culture, Ahiqar pointed to its entangled present. But crucially, these issues were not discussed explicitly in cuneiform sources, but were addressed only through implicit comparisons and positional contrasts such as those between Oannes and Ahiqar.

Given this “implicit reflexivity” in our text, what was then being said about authorship? What discursive position were the authors assigned by such contrasts and comparisons?

Most striking is the propinquity of authors with kings and semi-divine sages. This is a privileged position indeed—short of actual apotheosis, one can scarcely imagine anything higher. There was in fact some precedent for this; some earlier Assyrian king lists included not only the sequence of monarchs, but their chief scholars as well.⁴⁰ However, none of the scholars mentioned there were authors to whom literary works were attributed, while in the Uruk List, the scholars seem to be included not because of any historical association, but rather due to the literary significance of their name. In this text, the political and the cultural aspects are each other’s flip side, as the nostalgically-remembered might of Babylonian and Assyrian kings is placed on equal footing with the medical authority of Esagil-kin-apli and the moral reflections of Esagil-kin-ubba.

If they are “horizontally” juxtaposed with kings, the human authors are also “vertically” juxtaposed

with the sages. As Lenzi argues, this arrangement positions the scholars as heirs to an immense privilege; their descent partakes of the divine. Further, some of the sages, most notably Oannes, were also remembered as authors.⁴¹ The act of authoring literature is thereby retrojected into mythology, implying that the human authors were in fact continuing an activity that had its roots in the beginning of time.

In short, authors play a double role in the text. The position assigned to them highlights their personal importance as heirs to the sages and advisors to the kings, and at the same time, the names of the authors also act as metonyms pointing outside the text to the compositions attributed to them. Just as the name “Shakespeare” is not a personal name like any other, but summons Iago and Yorick in its wake, so too the mention of Kabti-ili-Marduk evokes the *Epic of Erra*. Any importance assigned to the authors is therefore implicitly passed on to the texts to which they allude. The aggrandizements of authors also elevate their works, since their names invoke a larger and implicitly exalted cultural history.

If, as Ambos argues, the list constitutes “the matrix of a chronicle of Uruk,” then this is a strikingly literary chronicle. Indeed, the list’s interest in authors exceeds the limits of the city, as the included authors stem also from Babylon and Nineveh. In what follows, I will focus specifically on the list of authors that is woven into the text’s historical scheme, and argue that the included authors represent not just a random sample of scholars, but a schematic canon purporting to represent cuneiform culture as a whole.

The Author-function and the Canon

The question then becomes how the name of the author came to wield such metonymic power. How did it succeed in assigning a privileged place to literature, and in telling a cultural history through nothing but names? And why did authors acquire that role exactly as the literature and culture thus elevated were on their deathbeds? To answer those questions, I begin by considering the relation between authors and canons.

Michel Foucault provided a new foundation for the study of authorship with his 1969 address, “Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?”⁴² Here Foucault sought to describe

³⁹ Ahiqar is given at least two and possibly three names in the text. See the notes to l. 21 for a discussion of whether Ahiqar was also given a variant of the Greek name Achiacharus.

⁴⁰ The Assyrian king lists mentioning *ummānu*’s are numbers 10, 12, 14, 15, and 17, according to the numbering of A. Kirk Grayson, “Königslisten und Chroniken,” *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 6 (1980–83): 115–25. Thus, for example, Nabu-apla-iddina is mentioned as the *ummānu* of Sennacherib, and Nabu-zeru-lishir Ishtar-shuma-eresh as the joint *ummānu*’s of Esarhaddon (King List 12, iv 1’–13’). In King List 12, the chief scholar is included regularly beginning from the reign of Tiglath-Pileser II (iii 9’–12’), but King List 15 mentions an *ummānu* already for the 14th century king Enlil-narari (5’–6’). However, the evidence for the practice is scanty; the lists are fragmentary, and King Lists 14 and 15 have only one preserved *ummānu* each. See the discussion in Stephen J. Lieberman, “Canonical and Official Cuneiform Texts: Towards an Understanding of Assurbanipal’s Personal Tablet Collection,” in *Lingering over Words*, ed. Abusch, Huehnergard, and Steinkeller, 313.

⁴¹ Lambert, “Catalogue”: l. I 5–7.

⁴² Michel Foucault, “Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?” *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 63 (1969).

the author not as a creative force behind texts, but as a principle by which texts are organized—that is, as an entity operating entirely at the level of discourse. I will give three brief examples of how this principle operates. For one, the name of an author can group texts into oeuvres. The name “Woolf,” for example, connotes a whole corpus of novels, which are thereby brought under a single heading (i.e., as “Woolfian”). For another, the name of an author can define certain texts (such as literature) as “authored,” in contrast to other works (such as letters) which are simply “written.” To use Foucault’s example, the collected works of Nietzsche would not include his laundry bills. And for a third example, an author is retroactively constructed, as we project onto her name the various intentions and meanings, the coherence and contradictions, which we believe ourselves to merely “find” in a text.

Of course, the specific workings of the “author-function,” as Foucault termed it, differ widely between discursive contexts, depending on genre, period, and the system of knowledge operating at the time. Yet such differences reveal exactly that the name of the author is not an ahistorical “fact,” but a discursive function regulating how texts circulate and signify within a specific context. As Foucault puts it, this means that the name of the author

court, en quelque sorte, à la limite des textes, qu’il les découpe, qu’il en suit les arêtes, qu’il en manifeste le mode d’être ou, du moins, qu’il le caractérise. Il manifeste l’événement d’un certain ensemble de discours, et il se réfère au statut de ce discours à l’intérieur d’une société et à l’intérieur d’une culture.⁴³

A striking aspect of this description is how easily it could also be applied to another key concept of literature: the canon. Much like the name of the author, a canon serves to delimit a certain group of discourses, separating texts that are included from those that are left out, assigning a definite form and a specific status to those texts, and so on. This is not to say that assigning an author to a work is the same as canonizing it. Rather, canons and authors can be understood as different but intersecting operations that define the discursive position in which a given text will find its place. Both serve to keep texts *in* that place: a canonical status forbids emendation, while the intention of

the author supposedly dictates which interpretations are possible and which are spurious.

The relation between authors and canons in a cuneiform context is complicated by the contentious history of the latter term in the field of Assyriology.⁴⁴ But this controversy had swirled around a notion of canonicity that belongs specifically to biblical studies, and especially around what is now more often called the *serialization* of certain compositions at the end of the second millennium BC.⁴⁵ Yet applying a notion of the canon influenced more by literary than theological criticism changes the question considerably. Though it is debatable, for example, whether the Babylonian epic *Enuma Elish* was ever canonical in the Biblical sense (stable, unamendable, part of a defined corpus of canonical texts), there can be no question that it was indeed canonical in the broader literary sense (authoritative, influential, highly valued). In much the same way, James Joyce is part of a Western literary canon despite the infamous philological fluidity of his texts.

More recently, Francesca Rochberg has argued that the discussion of whether cuneiform texts are to be regarded as canonical should focus less on fixity, and more on power.⁴⁶ The canon, in Rochberg’s argument, holds discursive force inasmuch as it creates a community of scholars who are bound by its influence and invested in its status. This dovetails with John Guillory’s argument that canons do not enshrine a set of values as much as they render certain texts the standard by which cultural value is measured.⁴⁷ Canons produce cultural capital for those that are given access to it within an institutional setting such as the school.

⁴⁴ Lieberman, “Canonical and Official Cuneiform Texts”; Nils P. Heeßel, “‘Sieben Tafeln aus sieben Städten’: Überlegungen zum Prozess der Serialisierung von Texten in Babylonien in der zweiten Hälfte des zweiten Jahrtausends v. Chr.,” in *Babylon: Wissenskultur in Orient und Okzident*, ed. E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, M. van Ess, and J. Marzahn, Topoi 1 (Berlin, 2011); Francesca Rochberg-Halton, “Canonicity in Cuneiform Texts,” *JCS* 36 (1984); Francesca Rochberg, “Canon and Power in Cuneiform Scribal Scholarship,” in *Problems of Canonicity and Identity Formation in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, ed. K. Ryholt and G. Barjamovic, CNI Publications 43 (Copenhagen, 2016); Niek Veldhuis, “Mesopotamian Canons,” in *Homer, the Bible, and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World*, ed. M. Finkelberg and G. G. Stroumsa, Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 2 (Leiden, 2003).

⁴⁵ Heeßel, “‘Sieben Tafeln aus sieben Städten.’”

⁴⁶ Rochberg, “Canon and Power.”

⁴⁷ John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago, 1993). Compare Veldhuis, “Mesopotamian Canons,” 18.

⁴³ *Ibid.*: 83.

Returning to the Uruk List, we now see more clearly that the list of apparently bare names in fact marshals a larger literary sphere, arranging its works in rank and file. What I provisionally referred to as the author's metonymic power is to be understood more precisely as Foucault's "discursive function," the principle by which an entire cultural field is mapped and managed. The works referred to through the expedient of their authors' names are thereby also separated from other kinds of texts for which such reference is impossible, and grouped together in the elevated space we today call "literature." Then, by its symmetries and juxtapositions, the list makes clear that this space is not like any other: *this* corpus stands on equal footing with kings and demigods. The selection is exclusive, systematic, and mighty. In short, it is a cuneiform canon.

That canon imbued the included texts with a cultural capital that became forceful within Guillory's "institutional setting": in Seleucid Uruk, that meant the temple, what Beaulieu calls the "imaginary space" to which the scholars had retreated. The list tells the story of that temple, how it was founded, transformed, and restored over time. The list further points to the literary and scholarly texts that secured a privileged social standing for the scholars who knew them, and who served at the temple. It carried a double ideological message: these works of literature were important because they were canonical, and the Hellenistic scholars were important because they were the keepers of that canon. The institutional frame thus creates a community that is both (in Rochberg's words) invested in and bound to the power of the canon, which in this text means the power of the author's name (a feature that is its true novelty).

However, we should not think of the canon as ever-stable. It is easy to believe that the texts and the guardians of the canon were assured of the cultural power they held, for that is the image of permanence that canons seek to project. Harold Bloom provides an instructive counterpoint to that illusion, arguing that the canon "does not make us free of cultural anxiety. Rather, it confirms our cultural anxieties, yet helps to give them form and coherence."⁴⁸ Canonical authors are most often ambiguous, uncanny figures, their works suffused by strangeness. As an example of the canon's anxieties, Bloom highlights "the fear of

mortality, which in the art of literature is transmuted into the quest to be canonical, to join communal or societal memory."⁴⁹ In the Uruk List, this anxiety is palpable, as the listed authors were just then slipping out of societal memory.

Rather than dispelling such anxiety, however, the text *arranges* it in a sort of linguistic palimpsest. The Sumerian of the first section is overlaid by the Akkadian of the next, and the progression accelerates in the final lines where one person is given three names: the archaizing Sumerian Aba-Enlil-dari, the explicitly Aramaic Ahiqar, and the Greek form Achiacharus. This sequence is in fact a miniature re-enactment of the linguistic drama that had been playing out over the past millennium, as scholarly Sumerian and Akkadian were first joined and then gradually replaced by Aramaic and Greek.⁵⁰ Though Anu-belshunu could not have known how close the older languages were to being supplanted entirely, it is certainly striking that his overview of cuneiform culture ends not in Akkadian, but in Greek (even if one does not accept my suggestion of taking the name in l. 21 as "Achiacharus," preferring instead the older reading "Nikarchos," this does not change the thrust of the argument here, as this name is also Greek). The list thereby seems to point to the threat of irrelevance, the entanglement of culture, and a looming language death—but crucially, these anxieties are "given form." The canon arranges these fears in a coherent sequence.

To summarize: in the Uruk List, authors came to stand in for a larger cultural system through the discursive operation of their names. Broader questions of cultural antiquity, linguistic succession, political sovereignty, and local and professional identity were condensed into the figures of Ahiqar, Oannes, Sinleqi-unneni, and others. The text offers a canonical selection of literary works, the implicit promise being that these authors were representative of their tradition—that knowing them and their works was to know Babylonian culture, its value, and its fears.

One must tread carefully here. There is no guarantee that this was precisely how the text was read in antiquity, no assurance that the listed authors were indeed seen as representative. Despite the hints given

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁰ Clancier, "Cuneiform Culture's Last Guardians," 769, writes that the scholars "defined themselves through their maintenance of traditional cuneiform culture, including the perpetuation of Akkadian and Sumerian, they spoke Aramaic as their mother tongue and Greek when dealing with the state authorities."

⁴⁸ Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York, 1995), 526–27.

by the structure of the list, we can never fully know the social position of the author reflected in the text. The interpretation of the list of authors as a canon of culture must accordingly be met with a degree of skepticism, but lists of authors functioning as canons of culture are a common phenomenon, not least in the modern world. When asked to summarize the history of Italian literature, for example, we would most likely also produce a list of names—Dante, Manzoni, Carducci, etc. Indeed, this was already the case in the wider Hellenistic world by the end of the third century BC, as the Alexandrian list of classics composed by Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aristarchus of Samos elevated a set of paradigmatic authors from each literary genre—and so also their texts, but only by implication. It was Hesiod and not his *Theogony* that was made a pinnacle of epic poetry.

The Condensation of Culture

Despite these Alexandrian forerunners, creating a list of canonical authors was a profound innovation within the context of cuneiform culture. Even though the Late Assyrian scholars had been the first to study and catalogue attributions of authorship, they had not produced anything resembling a canon of authors. In the following, I will place the change in the role of authors within the context of a broader process of cultural contact and self-definition during the Hellenistic period, and describe the wider consequences of canonization. To explain the novelty of the text, I would like first to place it alongside three contemporaneous compositions: the *Babyloniaca* of Berossus, and two pseudo-historical letters addressed to king Assurbanipal.

Berossus was a priest who composed a history of Babylonian culture, from Creation on up to his own time. This composition, known as the *Babyloniaca*, survives only through fragmentary second- and third-hand citations, but nevertheless the aim of the text seems clear: Berossus sought to inform the new Seleucid kings of Babylonia of the venerable tradition of the land they were now to rule. The *Babyloniaca*, writes Geert de Breucker, “can be considered as a ‘historical canon,’ an introduction to everything the author thought his intended Greek-speaking audience should know about Babylonian history and culture.”⁵¹

It has often been remarked that in writing a history of Babylon, Berossus also departed from Babylonian historiographical customs, in which no such format existed.⁵² Cuneiform history was written through chronicles and king lists, not overarching narratives. But this genre gave Berossus the possibility of doing something not previously attempted in the cuneiform tradition: to tell the story of all Babylonian culture, from its geography through its myths to its sequence of kings. I do not mean to dismiss the existing Babylonian tradition, or to suggest that Berossus somehow improved upon it, but merely to argue that a change in aim took place during this period. Berossus set out to tell the story of not one aspect, but of all Babylonian culture (or more precisely all the audience “needed” to know), building what de Breucker calls a “historical canon.”

The two letters were written around the turn of the first century BC, but purported to be copies of actual historical missives sent five centuries earlier by the scholars of Babylon and Borsippa to the Assyrian king Assurbanipal.⁵³ The scholars allegedly responded to the king’s request to copy all texts available to them and ship them north to Nineveh. But, as first suggested by Eckhart Frahm and argued more fully by Ronnie Goldstein, the letters are in fact pseudo-historical compositions later modified to suit the interests of the times, if they were not entirely invented in the Seleucid period.⁵⁴ According to Goldstein, the scholars used the letters to recall the greatness of Assurbanipal’s library, which for them stood on par with its successor in Alexandria. By telling the story of how the Assyrian king had collected tablets from Babylon and

⁵² E.g., Gerald Verbrugge and John M. Wickersham, *Berosus and Manetho, Introduced and Translated: Native Traditions in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1996), 16; Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “Berossus on Late Babylonian History,” in *Special Issue of Oriental Studies: A Collection of Papers on Ancient Civilizations of Western Asia, Asia Minor and North Africa*, ed. Y. Gong and Y. S. Chen (Beijing, 2006), 143.

⁵³ Grant Frame and Andrew R. George, “The Royal Libraries of Nineveh: New Evidence for King Ashurbanipal’s Tablet Collection,” *Iraq* 67 (2005).

⁵⁴ Eckart Frahm, “On Some Recently Published Late Babylonian Copies of Royal Letters,” *Nouvelles Assyriologiques brèves et utiles* 2005 (2005): 44; Ronnie Goldstein, “Late Babylonian Letters on Collecting Tablets and Their Hellenistic Background—A Suggestion,” *JNES* 69 (2010); see also Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “The Afterlife of Assyrian Scholarship in Hellenistic Babylonia,” in *Gazing on the Deep: Ancient Near Eastern and Other Studies in Honor of Tzvi Abusch*, ed. J. Stackert, B. N. Porter, and D. P. Wright (Bethesda, MD, 2010), 2–3.

⁵¹ De Breucker, “Berossos,” 651–52.

its neighbor Borsippa, the Babylonians emphasized the role of their own cities in the construction of that literary monument.

I want to point to a difference noted by Goldstein between these pseudo-historical letters and the far more prosaic missives concerning the library that we know actually date to Assurbanipal's reign. Only the later copies state the king's desire to build a library containing "*the entire corpus of scribal learning*."⁵⁵ As far as we can tell from contemporaneous evidence, Goldstein argues, the original Assyrian library had no such totalizing ambition. Assurbanipal was certainly a dedicated collector of scribal lore, and probably wanted to gather as many scholarly texts as possible. But the texts that unambiguously date to his reign do not, according to Goldstein, evince a notion that it was possible to physically bring together cuneiform scholarship in its entirety. It was only in the Seleucid period that this idea gained hold—that of gathering *all* of Babylonian learning in one place.

In much the same way, Berossus tells the story of how the god Ea ordered his servant Ziusudra "to bury together all tablets, the first, the middle, and the last" in the city of Sippar to protect them from the coming Deluge.⁵⁶ The classical cuneiform myths of the Flood do not mention this episode.⁵⁷ In both cases, the differences between the Hellenistic texts and their precursors reveal a distinct and new fantasy. It is a dream of collecting all knowledge in one place, of gathering an entire culture in one imaginary locale, be it within a library built of memories, hidden safely underground, or within the structure of the text itself—that is, in the historical canon that tells its readers all they need to know.

The Uruk List of Kings and Sages shares in this same project. It likewise aimed to give a synoptic overview of an entire culture.⁵⁸ With its brevity, metonymy, and symmetry, the text sketched out a miniature version of a far broader tradition. In Ambos' words, it reduced

the history of Uruk, its gods, temples, and scholars, to a list of names. It gathered a string of important works of cuneiform literature into one short, schematic, easily surveyed list. When the name of the authors were put at the service of canonical selection, the result was exactly this: oeuvres were referred to by the shorthand of their authors, a broad cultural complex reduced to a supposedly representative sample.⁵⁹ The transition from the extreme antiquity of Oannes to the present of the colophon played out in just twenty-five lines.

Once again, the difference with respect to earlier works is revealing. The catalogue of authors written in the Late Assyrian period is a far more exhaustive document, including many more authors and the titles of numerous compositions.⁶⁰ The names of authors were no shorthand; they did not stand for but in apposition to their texts. Further, it is not clear by which principle the Late Assyrian text CTA was organized; besides giving pride of place in its first lines to Ea, god of wisdom, and to Oannes, it did not arrange the names of the authors according to any easily recognizable pattern. In short, this earlier catalogue was not synoptic; it was neither brief, metonymic, or schematic. The author's name had not yet acquired the full range of functions attributed to it by Foucault. Only in the Seleucid period did cuneiform scholars find it imperative to gather the wealth of Babylonian culture in one place, to reduce a literary world to a single text.⁶¹

This was certainly not the first time in the history of cuneiform cultures that authorship became important, and the Uruk List does not mark the invention of authorship as such. But it does register a change in the role of authors, which came to not only grant prestige to a single text or family of scholars, but to produce what we may today understand as a

⁵⁵ BM 28825, l. 8: *kullat tuṣṣarrūtu*. See Goldstein, "Late Babylonian Letters on Collecting Tablets": 203.

⁵⁶ Verbrugge and Wickersham, *Berossos and Manetho*, 44 and 49. In the Greek text, the god and his servant are called Kronos and Xisouthros, respectively.

⁵⁷ Though this tradition may be what is hinted at in the *Epic of Erra*, where it is said that Sippar was not destroyed by the Flood (l. IV 47–50).

⁵⁸ Compare Beaulieu, "Berossus," 143, who states that Berossus put together "for the first time a synoptic account of Babylonian traditions."

⁵⁹ It is worth noting that this selection leaves out a vast amount of non-literary cuneiform scholarship especially, including key works such as the omen series *Enuma Anu Enlil* and *Shumma Izbu*.

⁶⁰ Lambert, "Catalogue."

⁶¹ An interesting parallel is found in Christian Schwermann, "Composite Authorship in Western Zhōu Bronze Inscriptions: The Case of the 'Tiānwáng Guī 天亡簋 Inscription,'" in *That Wonderful Composite Called Author*, ed. C. Schwermann and R. C. Steineck (Leiden, 2014), 31, who notes that in the Chinese context, the "first avowal of authorship that is both authentic and elaborate was formulated by Simà Qiān 司馬遷, the co-author of a comprehensive world history." This history, written shortly after the Uruk List in 108 BC, runs from the first mythical emperors to the author's own time. Viewed in light of the Babylonian context, what is striking is the connection between the establishment of an authorial figure and the condensation of a cultural history to a single text.

canon of cuneiform culture. As in previous periods, authors continued to be markers of cultural identity. But unlike the case of either Enheduana or the Late Assyrian period, the culture thus marked was also metonymically condensed into the figure of the author. Of course, it should be stressed that the canon given in the list is not a fair representation of a Babylonian tradition, especially since multiple and contradictory versions of this tradition co-existed at any one time. The text sets out to give a biography of the city of Uruk, and in doing so focuses even more specifically on the profession of the lamentation priests, and on the Sin-leqi-unnenni family. A canon put together by an incantation priest in Borsippa would have looked quite different indeed. But the effect of the text lay exactly in exalting that local selection and transforming it into a supposedly representative sample of all of cuneiform literature.

The comments of both de Breucker and Goldstein suggest that this project was a reaction to a confrontation with Greek rule, the multicultural intermingling of Hellenism, and the threat to the status of the scholars that this brought about. The loss of cultural hegemony must have forced the Babylonian intellectuals to rethink their position. Though Babylon had many times before come under foreign rule, dynasties such as the Amorites and Kassites had time and again adopted cuneiform culture as their own. After 539 BC, however, this was no longer the case. As Benjamin Foster puts it:

Mesopotamian self-consciousness was based on the serene assumption that foreigners, given the necessity and the opportunity, would adapt themselves to Mesopotamian culture. The Persian Empire was the first instance of a ruling people in Mesopotamia who did not, but considered Mesopotamia part of a larger whole that belonged to them.⁶²

Babylon, quite simply, was no longer the center of the world. The project of collecting all culture into one synoptic overview followed from that cultural demotion. Ousted from its previous hegemony, Babylonian literature could no longer be seen as the sum total of all literature, the only literature worth transmitting. It had become *one unity among others*, suddenly only a parallel to Greek, Aramaic, and Per-

sian cultures. As a result, there arose a need to delimit the nature and the extent of this newly non-universal entity. If the Babylonian literary tradition had to compete with other cultures, rather than being simply *the* literary tradition, it needed to be defined. What was special about it? What was part of it, and what was not? What were its highlights, what did one need to know about it?

The historical narrative of Berossus and the fantasy of Assurbanipal’s library did exactly this: they gathered all there was to know about their culture into one place, so that it could be surveyed and delimited. The same was true for the Uruk List, in that it gave a concise and schematic overview of a literary culture. This also explains why the notion of “canonicity” relevant for this period is so different from that applicable to the previous millennium. A canon assembles a group of texts into a distinguished discursive unity, and in doing so presupposes that this literary unit is a subset of all literature. In this period, that realization had become particularly acute. No longer identical with literature *tout court*, Babylonian literature had to be redefined, and the name of the author served perfectly to carry out that function: to select, condense, and organize texts.

To be clear, I am not arguing that the canonization of Babylonian culture was an effect of Greek influence as such, or a product of Hellenistic cross-pollination. I view it as a specifically Babylonian development, but one that took place as a reaction to cultural contact and subsequent changes in the scholars’ social standing. It was a counter-current brought about by new hegemonies and threats of the Hellenistic period, which forced these scholars to stake out a claim for cultural superiority in order to preserve their status. In order to do so, they had to define, delimit, and exalt the scholarly tradition they wanted to protect, and on which their social standing relied. In short, they had to produce a canon.

Conclusion

It may well be that “cultural identity” is always retroactive, always a reconstruction of what is effectively already lost.⁶³ A flourishing culture is perhaps too

⁶² Benjamin R. Foster, “The Person in Mesopotamian Thought,” in *Oxford Handbook*, ed. Radner and Robson, 132.

⁶³ I owe this point to a discussion with Markus Stachon. See also Piotr Michalowski, “Mesopotamian Vistas on Axial Transformation,” in *Axial Civilizations and World History*, ed. J. P. Árnason, S. Eisenstadt, and B. Wittrock (Leiden, 2004), 175–79.

cacophonous, too proliferate, too eagerly splintering into genres, groups, and subcultures to be reduced to one identity in any meaningful sense. But a culture either on the brink of death, in deep turmoil, or confronted with an Other against which it needs to define itself, not only can but *must* be reduced to something singular. For example, Niek Veldhuis has shown that the Old Babylonian schools assembled a Sumerian literary heritage to be imparted to the Babylonian students just as Sumerian culture and language had died out. Gonzalo Rubio further insists that there was no such thing as a “Sumerian identity” before that time—“Sumerian” in the singular was an invention of Old Babylonian scribes, manifesting itself in the canonization of the school curriculum.⁶⁴ In short, cultural identity arrived *ex post facto*.

The canon, writes Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, is “a complexity-reducing mechanism,”⁶⁵ and as such, it inevitably brings about a diminution of the culture it seek to amplify. So when, for example, Berossus sought to promote Babylonian culture, showcasing its antiquity and its proud tradition, he thereby also reduced it to something whose entire history could be told in a single text.⁶⁶ In much the same way, the Uruk List is so very short and schematic, but still presents a history of the city and its gods from primordial times to the present, reduced to a set of memory-triggering names of authors. It thus achieves the condensation of culture exactly by the metonymic power of the author’s name.

This article has argued that such a reduction was motivated by a cultural anxiety about the place of cuneiform scholarship in a Hellenistic world. This anxiety should not be understood as a concrete fear:

⁶⁴ Niek Veldhuis, *Religion, Literature, and Scholarship: The Sumerian Composition Nanše and the Birds, with a Catalogue of Sumerian Bird Names*, CM 22 (Leiden, 2004), 75; Gonzalo Rubio, “The Inventions of Sumerian: Literature and the Artifacts of Identity,” in *Problems of Canonicity*, ed. Ryholt and Barjamovic, 246–52. Rubio notes that this is a “specific variety of canonization” (n. 36), because it lacks one defining characteristic of the canon: the focus on authors.

⁶⁵ Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, *Kanoniske konstellationer: om litteraturhistorie, kanonstudier og 1920’ernes litteratur* (Odense, Denmark, 2003), 49 (“en kompleksitetsreducerende mekanisme”); Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 33

⁶⁶ Note also that before the Persian period, there had not been a single term for southern Mesopotamia and its inhabitants. The term “Babylonian” meant a citizen of Babylon, only in this period did it come to signify a broader cultural collective as a single entity; see Beaulieu, “Official and Vernacular Languages,” 205–206.

while we today know that cuneiform would disappear completely from Uruk only sixty years after the writing of this text, we cannot impute such prescience to Anubelshunu. Rather, the anxiety was of a more general sort, a question of whether there could be a place for cuneiform culture in the Hellenistic world once the importance of its temples began to ebb away. The loss of the juridical and economic autonomy of the temple assemblies in 160s BC may have been a final straw for the Urukian scholars, but it was only the culmination of a long, gradual process of cultural demotion. The brief renaissance enjoyed by cuneiform scholarship at Uruk during the Seleucid period ended in a string of cultural shocks, the last and most definitive of which would come with the Parthian invasion in 141 BC.

Appendix – Transliteration of the “Uruk List of Kings and Sages”

First published by Jan van Dijk in 1962,⁶⁷ the tablet is currently in the Baghdad Museum and bears the excavation number W 20030,7 (= UVB 18, BAK 101B, *BaM Beib.* 2, 89). It is written in a slanting Late Babylonian hand, and contains a number of odd writings (LU for lú in l. 18, a perhaps erroneous MI in l. 20, etc.), as well as learned ones (such as *l̄im-il-šū* for Kabti-ili-Marduk in l. 13). Its choice of words is also occasionally archaic, such as *balaggu* for the *lilissu*-drum, and *ahlamú* for the Arameans.⁶⁸

Obverse

- 1 [*ina tar-š̄i*] *i¹a-a-lu šarru* (lugal) : *¹um-^{d+}60 apkallu* (abgal)
- 2 [*ina tar-š̄i*] *i¹a-lá-al-gar šarru* (lugal) : *¹um-^{d+}60-dùg-ga apkallu* (abgal)
- 3 [*ina tar-š̄i*] *¹am-me-lu-an-na šarru* (lugal) : *¹en-me-dùg-ga apkallu* (abgal)
- 4 [*ina tar-š̄i*] *¹am-me-gal-an-na šarru* (lugal) : *¹en-me-galam-ma apkallu* (abgal)
- 5 [*ina tar-š̄i*] *¹en-me-ušumgal-an-na šarru* (lugal) : *¹en-me-bùlug-gá apkallu* (abgal)
- 6 [*ina tar-š̄i*] *¹dumu-zi rē’ú šarru* (sipa lugal) : *¹d+60-en-líl-da apkallu* (abgal)
- 7 [*ina tar-š̄i*] *¹en-me³-dur-an-ki šarru* (lugal) : *¹ù-tu-abzu apkallu* (abgal)

⁶⁷ van Dijk, “Inschriftenfunde”: 44–52, pl. 20a–c and 27.

⁶⁸ See Uri Gabbay, “The Balaḡ Instrument and Its Role in the Cult of Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *Music in Antiquity: The Near East and the Mediterranean*, ed. J. G. Westenholz, Y. Maurey, and E. Seoussi, Yuval 7 (Berlin, 2014), 137; and Beaulieu, “Afterlife of Assyrian Scholarship,” 16.

- 8 [ar^{ki} abūbi (egir² mar-uru²) ina] palē (bala-e) ¹en-me-
kar šarru (lugal) : ¹nun-gal-piri-gal apkallu (abgal)
- 9 [^d15 iš-t]u šamē (an-e) ana é-an-na ú-še-ri-du balagga
siparra (balag zabar)
- 10 [it-ti qātā]tīšu uqnāti ([š]u.ʳII^{mes}-šú^{na4}za-gin-na) ina
ši-pir^dnin-á-gal
- 11 [i-puš ina pa]rakki ([bá]ra) elli (kù) ašar(ki) šu-bat
^dpap^{2(lu)}-sukkal balagga (balag) ina mah-ri¹60 ú-kin-nu
-
- 12 [ina tar-ši ^dgiš²-gí]m²-maš¹ šarru (lugal) : ¹sin-lēqi-
unninni (^d30-ti-ér) ^{lu}um-man-nu
- 13 [ina tar-ši ^dna²-ra]m²-^d30 šarru (lugal) : kabti-ilī-
marduk (¹idim-il-^dšú) ^{lu}um-man-nu
- 14 [ina tar-ši ¹iš-bi]-^dèr-ra šarru (lugal) : ¹si-dù šá-niš^{1d+}en-
lil-ibni (dù) um-man-nu
- 15 [ina tar-ši ¹a-bi-e]-¹šú-ub¹ šarru (lugal) : gimil-gula
(¹šu-^dme-me) u ¹ta-giš¹³-gula (^dme-me) um-man-nu^{mes}
- 16 [ina tar-ši x x] šarru (lugal) : ¹é-sag-gíl-ki-i-ni-apli
(ibila)
- (on edge) um-man-nu

Reverse

- 17 [ina tar-ši] adad-apla-iddina šarru (¹dim-¹ibila¹-mu-
sum lugal) : ¹é-sag-gíl-ki-i-ni-ub-ba um-man-nu
- 18 [ina tar-ši] nabū-kudurrī-ušur šarru (¹ag-níg-du-ùru
lugal) : ¹é-sag-gíl-ki-i-ni-ub-ba ^{lu}um-man-nu
- 19 [ina tar-ši] i aššur-aḫa-iddina šarru (¹an-šár-šeš-mu
lugal) ¹a-ba-^d50-da-ri um-man-nu
- 20 [šá ¹ab-la-«mi»-mu-ú i-qab-bu-ú ¹a-ḫu-u²-qa-a-ri
- 21 [šá-ni-i]š¹iá²-qa-qu-ru šu-ú
-
- 22 [im ¹]^d60-en-šú-nu a šá ¹níg-sum-mu-^d60 a ¹d30-ti-ér
- 23 [^{lu}gal]a ^d60 u an-tum unu^{ki}-ú gāt ní-šú
- 24 [unu]^{ki} ⁱⁱⁱgu₄ u₄-10-kam mu-147-kam ¹an-ti-²i-ku-su
- 25 pa-līb^d60 nu tùm-šú lugal

Notes to the text

9: This surprising passage has close parallels in a bilingual text published by Erica Reiner, where the sage is called Nun-pirigaldim, and in an incantation from *Bit mēseri*, where he is called Nungal-pirigaldim.⁶⁹

10: The proposed restoration was first made by Amar Anus, based on a parallel to the ritual commentary text O. 175, l. 16,⁷⁰ which lists the names of the seven “hands” (šu.

⁶⁹ Erica Reiner, *Your Thwarts in Pieces, Your Mooring Ropes Cut: Poetry from Babylonia and Assyria* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1985), 4; Borger, “Beschwörungsserie *Bit mēseri*”: 192; see also SpTU 2, 8 obv. i 14–15.

⁷⁰ Most recently edited in Alisdair Livingstone, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works of Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (Oxford, 1986), 187–96.

II^{mes}) of the bronze *lilissu*-drum. Though the nature of these “hands” is unclear (are they handles? drumsticks?), this is the only word known to me referring to a part of the ritual kettledrum that fits the preserved traces.

11: This line has proven very thorny indeed. Lenzi already suggested that the sign LUḪ might be read sukka, but rejected this because it lacked contextual sense.⁷¹ However, I would propose that the sequence DINGIR-LU-LUḪ might be read ^dpap^{2(lu)}-sukkal, though it is befuddling to see the very simple sign PAP replaced by LU (might it be a mistake by phonetic similarity or “dictée intérieure,” writing *dap* for /pap/?). But what is, then, “the place of Papsukkal”? As noted by Beaulieu, Papsukkal is associated with the cult dais (*parakku*) in all rituals from Bit Resh that mention his name.⁷² Accordingly, I restore [bá]ra in the beginning of the line, and the new database *Late Babylonian Signs* (LaBaSi)⁷³ provides us with parallel attestations of the sign that bear a striking similarity to the preserved traces—see, e.g., YOS 19, 61, l. 13 and BM 28918, l. 5. For the association between the *balag*-instrument and the cult dais at Seleucid Uruk, see the eclipse ritual BRM 4, 6:43' // BM 134701:2'.⁷⁴

L. 12: The sign lugal seems to have been erased by the scribe, though there is no obvious reason why this should be the case.

L. 13: Van Dijk restored this name as [Ibbi]-Sin, but the traces indicate that the last sign ended in a vertical wedge. Instead, I cautiously propose to read [^dna²-ra]m²-^d30. The Old Akkadian king may in fact fit rather well in the context. He is listed just after Gilgamesh, and both were regarded as authors of “*narū*-literature”—a royal third-person autobiographical account. The association between Naram-Sin and Kabti-ili-Marduk likewise makes sense, as both dedicated the authorship of the composition attributed to them to the god Erra: see the *Cuthean Legend* (Late Version, l. 151) and the *Epic of Erra* (l. V 39–46), respectively. Finally, several texts attest to an antiquarian fascination with Naram-Sin, most famously by Nabonidus.⁷⁵

L. 15: The second scholar in this line must be Taqisha-Gula: his name is well-attested as a family ancestor in this period, and he is known as the author of the *Exaltation of Ishtar* from the *Catalogue of Texts and Authors*, section 4, l. 9'. However, the spelling of his name in the text is quite

⁷¹ See Lenzi, “Uruk List of Kings and Sages”: 140, fn. 8 for an overview of previous attempts.

⁷² Beaulieu, “Antiquarian Theology”: 31.

⁷³ For LaBaSi, see <http://labasi.acdh.oew.ac.at/browsing/glyphs/?identifier=&sign=84>, accessed 25 July 2018.

⁷⁴ See Uri Gabbay, *Pacifying the Hearts of the Gods: Sumerian Emesal Prayers of the First Millennium BC*, Heidelberg Emesal Studien I (Wiesbaden, 2014), 6, n. 6, with references.

⁷⁵ See Benjamin R. Foster, *The Age of Agade: Inventing Empire in Ancient Mesopotamia* (New York, 2016), Chap. 11.

- strange, ¹ta-ah^{-d}me-me. According to the lexical lists, both ah⁻kaskal and kaskal-ah⁻ can be read *ki-ši* (*MSL* 14, p. 400, ll. 112–13), yielding *kiši*₁₃ and *kiši*₁₅ respectively.⁷⁶ One may thus emend a <KASKAL> either before or after the ah⁻ to give a new but not impossible reading *qiš* 13/15.
- L. 16–18: This sequence of kings and scholars has been much discussed; as for the restoration of the king's name in l. 16, see van Dijk's remark that the break is very short here, indeed, there is space for no more than two short signs.⁷⁷
- L. 18: For the emendation of LU to the determinative lú, see Lenzi, "Uruk List," 141, n. 10.
- L. 21: Van Dijk proposed to read the somewhat cryptic sequence ¹ni-qa-qu-ru-šu-ú as "Nikarchos," emending šU to *su'*, and leaving the first three signs of the line unrestored. Lenzi followed this reading and proposed a plausible rationale for how Nikarchos came to be included in this text, though this proposal is, by Lenzi's own admission, tentative.⁷⁸ Here I would like to propose an alternative (if no less tentative) reading. Van Dijk had originally dismissed the restoration of the first three signs as [¹šú-ni-i]š (in parallel to l. 14) because "das würde bedeuten, daß Ahīqar auch noch einen griechischen Namen hätte."⁷⁹ But in fact, Ahīqar *does* have a Greek name, as attested in Strabo's *Geography*, 16.2.39, where he is called Ἀχάικαρος. He bears a similar name in the Book of Tobit, which variously calls him Achicarus, Acharus, Ἀχείχαρος, Ἀχάχαρος, אַחִיקָר, אַחִי אַחָר, etc.

⁷⁶ Rykle Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*, 2. edition, AOAT 305 (Münster, 2010), 103 and 170.

⁷⁷ See, e.g., Finkel, "Adad-apla-iddina," 144; Nils P. Heeßel, "Neues von Esagil-kin-apli: Die ältere Version der physiognomischen Omenserie 'alamdimmú,'" in *Assur-Forschungen*, ed. S. M. Maul and N. P. Heeßel (Wiesbaden, 2010), 163; Paul-Alain Beau-lieu, "The Social and Intellectual Setting of Babylonian Wisdom Literature," in *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel*, ed. R. J. Clifford, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 36 (Atlanta, 2007), 13–14 with n. 32; van Dijk, "Inschriftenfunde": 51.

⁷⁸ Lenzi, "Uruk List of Kings and Sages": 163–65.

⁷⁹ van Dijk, "Inschriftenfunde": 52.

How then to harmonize this name with our text? One possibility is to take NI as *ià*, though such a reading is all but unattested outside lexical lists—see especially *MSL* 14, p. 214, l. 10. The lexical list in question is the same as the one discussed for l. 15, so it is significant that three fragments of it stem from Seleucid Uruk. The reading is also employed in the writing of the divine name Haya as ⁴ha-ià, including in a manuscript of *Šurpu* from Seleucid Uruk.⁸⁰ Note also that the sign NI was known as *ia'u*, so the association might not have been so far-fetched after all.⁸¹ Yet even if such a reading is possible, this would still leave the question of how well it fits with the other writings of the name. The initial *y-* may be the result of an Aramaic origin, and the Hebrew form ⁴gyqr is intriguingly close to my postulated *Yaqaquru*.

The difficulties involved are many, and so the proposal must remain tentative. Note, however, that the previous reading of the name as Nikarchos would by no means preclude the interpretation proposed above. Thus, a reading of the list as a miniature canon of authors does not run counter to the interpretation developed by Lenzi, since both view the list as a response to the social and cultural pressures faced by the Urukian scholars at the time.

The sign lugal is written directly beneath ¹an-ti-²i-ku-su, presumably because the scribe forgot to write it in the previously line and so added it at the end of the text instead.

L. 25: The sign lugal is written directly beneath ¹an-ti-²i-ku-su, presumably because the scribe forgot to write it in the previous line and so added it at the end of the text instead.

⁸⁰ Rykle Borger, "Šurpu II, III, IV und VIII in 'Partitur,'" in *Wisdom, Gods and Literature: Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W. G. Lambert*, ed. A. R. George and I. L. Finkel (Winona Lake, IN, 2000), 33, l. II 176.

⁸¹ Yushu Gong, *Die Namen der Keilschriftzeichen*, AOAT 268 (Münster, 2000), 165.