The Akkadian Great Hymns and Prayers
A Critical Edition of the Nabû and Ištar Prayers
and a Study of the Corpus
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5 Rhetorical Devices and Poetic Language of the Great Hymns and Prayers

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5.1 Rhetoric in Ancient Mesopotamia

The classical canons of rhetoric[1] cannot be easily applied to the Mesopotamian context, and the word rhetoric itself might appear to be a misnomer when referred to cuneiform texts. The difficulty in investigating rhetorical features in Sumerian and Akkadian literature is

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[1]   The earliest attestation of the term *rhētorikē* is found in Plato's *Gorgias*, but the first complete treatment of rhetoric has been provided by Aristotle, who considers it as an actual art, which allows the reinforcement of a discourse through persuasive strategies. He defines three forms of rhetoric: *ēthos*, i.e. the speaker's ability to appear credible, *logos*, i.e. the logical strength of the argument, and *pathos*, i.e. the emotional effect on the audience. The first treatise in Latin on the subject of rhetoric is Cicero's *De inventione*, in which the author describes the five canons of rhetoric, namely *inventio* (invention), *dispositio* (arrangement), *elocutio* (style), *memoria* (memory) and *actio* (delivery); the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, was probably written approximately in the same period (first century BCE), and it includes a comprehensive treatment of the rhetorical devices (*Figures*). See MacDonald 2017 for a comprehensive study of the history and development of rhetoric.

due to multiple factors, such as the complex analysis of the metre,[2] the nature of the writing system, the problematic reconstruction of the phonology,[3] the fragmentary nature of many texts, the general anonymity of the author – and the uncertainty involved in determining the author's original purpose – and ultimately the often unknown social context in which the text was used and performed, as well as the unknown audience.[4]

Indeed, while the prevailing definition of rhetoric, namely the one found in most dictionaries and handbooks, describes it as being the 'art of persuasion', formulating a notion of rhetoric that can be universally applicable to all cultures and societies poses a significant challenge.[5] There is no absolute definition of rhetoric, and trying to situate cuneiform literature within the schemes of western cultures can lead to the misinterpretation of textual sources. Discussing rhetoric in a comparative approach, Schiappa remarks:

> 'Rhetoric' is the name of a category that is used in some but not all cultures and some but not all time periods of human history, and used in a highly variable manner when it is used. But there is no timeless essence of rhetoric, and no God's-Eye View of what rhetoric 'really is'. Furthermore, from a historiographical standpoint, we do a disservice to the differences produced in various cultures and times by attempting to reduce them to a unified (typically Greek) set of categories and terms, which is both bad history and bad manners.[6]

Cuneiform sources do not include any theoretical treatise of rhetoric comparable to those by Aristotle or Cicero. Hence, for the aim of this study, we must create a definition of Mesopotamian rhetoric

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2   On the importance of metre in the interpretation of poetry, see Buccellati 1990, 108.

3   See Michalowski 1996, 144-5 on the complexities in recognising Sumerian rhetorical elements caused by the uncertainties in the phonological reconstruction of the language. It remains unclear, e.g. if, how and when the determinatives were pronounced.

4   On the difficulties in conducting a rhetorical analysis of Mesopotamian literary texts (especially Sumerian), and on the different approaches taken by modern scholars, see Black 1998, 20-49. Incidentally, similar problems are encountered by Assyriologists when trying to define genres in the Mesopotamian literature, cf. the introduction, chapter 1, § 1.1.1, cf. also chapter 4, § 4.3.3.

5   Cf. MacDonald 2017, 27 fn. 11, for this 'basic' definition of rhetoric; cf. Piccin 2022, 25-31. See MacDonald 2017, 4-6, regarding the difficulty in defining rhetoric. Moreover, MacDonald (2017, 6) remarks that: "A further difficulty in defining rhetoric is that the meaning of the English word 'rhetoric', like the Greek word *logos,* encompasses both the art of rhetoric and its products (e.g. persuasion, speeches, texts, advertisements, etc.). As a consequence, the terms 'rhetoric' and 'rhetorical' are today used to describe a baffling array of practices and artifacts, so much so that it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of 'rhetorics' than rhetoric".

6   Schiappa 2017, 35.

ourselves. The following definition, although not intended to be absolute or final, aims to be broad and flexible enough to encompass diverse genres and audiences: Mesopotamian rhetoric can be described as the ability to produce written (and possibly oral) texts that are both effective and persuasive, achieved through the deliberate use of specific techniques.[7]

There are, in fact, many indications of a conscious use of rhetorical strategies to enhance the aesthetics and the power of persuasion of the discourse.[8] And, as has often been noted, the lack of a term or systematised theory does not necessarily indicate the absence of a concept.[9] Some sources suggest that rhetorical skills were considered valuable among Mesopotamians; for instance, a Sumerian hymn to the King of Ur Šulgi contains a passage, in which the king himself declares to have taught eloquence to his generals.[10] Numerous Mesopotamian texts of various genres display rhetorical features: letters,[11] incantation texts,[12] royal inscriptions,[13] wisdom compositions (e.g. dialogues or disputation poems, proverbs)[14] and epic all provide examples of rhetoric and poetic language.[15] Also purely

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[7] For a similar wide-ranging definition of rhetoric, see MacDonald 2017, 5, in which rhetoric is described as the "effective composition and persuasion in speech, writing, and other media".

[8] Incidentally, this idea was rejected by Landsberger in his famous essay *Die Eigenbegrifflichkeit der babylonischen Welt* (1926). The author in fact succinctly declared that "Alle Rhetorik ist dem Akkader fremd. Niemals erhebt sich der Geist des Dichters aus der realen eine höhere Welt durch gehobene Sprache. Nur durch gesteigerte Kraft lebenswahrer Darstellung, durch einfaches Anreihen von Bildern von nicht zu übertreffender Plastik wirkt der Dichter".

[9] The idea that, for example, there was no concept of freedom in the Ancient Near East because there appears to be no precise word for it has been proposed by Finley 1985 and challenged by von Dassow 2011. See also Bahrani 2014 on the concept of aesthetics in Mesopotamia and van de Mieroop (2018, 20-1), who argues that a notion of philosophy comparable to that of the Greeks was present in the Mesopotamian culture, although no exact Sumerian or Akkadian term is found. Cf. also the remark by Overland 2008, 656 discussing Hebrew rhetoric: " it is axiomatic that rhetors were capable of tailoring text long before the art donned classifications supplied by Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian".

[10] For this and other examples, see Sallaberger 2007 and Mittermayer 2020, 28-9, who further suggests that eloquence could have been taught in scribal schools through the Sumerian disputation poems.

[11] See, for example, Sallaberger 1999, esp. 149-54 for rhetorical aspects in Old-Babylonian letters.

[12] For poetical features in magic texts, see Michalowski 1981; Cooper 1996; Veldhuis 1999; Schwemer 2014; Wasserman, Zomer 2022.

[13] For rhetorical figures in several Neo-Assyrian inscriptions, see e.g. Ponchia 2000.

[14] See, for example, Vanstiphout 1990 and 1992 for rhetoric in Sumerian debates.

[15] Hallo 2004, esp. 28-34. Sallaberger 1999, 149-54 and 2007, 70. For some remarks on the rhetorical and poetical discourses and how they intertwine, poetics being a part

scholarly texts, as, for instance, commentaries, can exhibit certain traits that might be deemed rhetorical.[16] In addition, religious poetry, i.e. hymns and prayers,[17] also lends itself to a rhetorical analysis, since it employs techniques that aim to persuade and facilitate the communication with a divine agency: the devotee expresses their faith via specific formulations and stock phrases that reflect the dynamics of power between human beings and deities, either showing trust in the divine aid or lamenting their miserable conditions ('negative rhetoric').[18] Nevertheless, there are relatively few Assyriological studies that deal with the rhetorical aspects of cuneiform literature. In contrast to Biblical studies, which has a long tradition of literary and poetical criticism,[19] modern scholarship in Assyriology mostly focuses on the study of the languages and the reconstruction of the texts. With regard to rhetoric, previous Assyriological research has been conducted on the use of specific rhetorical devices, or on the occurrence of rhetorical features within an individual text or corpus.[20]

For instance, several rhetorical devices appearing in both Sumerian and Biblical literature have been investigated by Berlin, who devoted particular attention to parallelism.[21] Building on the work of Berlin (1979, particularly p. 29), Baragli has proposed a new rhetorical figure in bilingual Sumerian literary texts: a distinctive form of chiasmus that is constructed between the Sumerian original and its Akkadian

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of rhetoric, see Walker 2017, 85-96, and *infra* in this chapter.

16   See the study by Wee 2019 on the rhetorical strategies adopted by scholars in the Sa.gig commentary.

17   For a stylistic and rhetorical analysis of hymns and prayers see, for example, Mayer 1976; cf. also Zgoll 2003b; Lenzi et. al. 2011 and Frechette 2012.

18   For the contrast between positive and negative rhetorical expressions, see the study on the persuasive character of language in prayers in Lenzi 2019b, esp. 33 fn. 77; see also Mayer 1976 and see the introduction to the *Nabû Prayer* and to the *Ištar Prayer* (chapter 2, § 2.4.1 and chapter 3, § 3.4.1). Cf. also Abusch 2018, 58 discussing the persuasiveness of prayers: "As a speech, the prayer may contain various rhetorical devices, but it should convey a clear message – one without blatant gaps, inconsistencies, contradictions, etc. No less than a legal speech, a prayer is an address that tries to convince and to make a persuasive case".

19   See for example the works on Biblical poetry by Watson (1986 and 1994) or Schökel 1988; also the scholarship on Ugaritic has taken an interest in rhetorical and poetical features, see for example Pardee 1988; Segert 1983; Watson 1999 and more recently Lam 2019. For further bibliography on both Biblical and Ugaritic contributions on these subjects, cf. also Hallo 2004.

20   The below-mentioned works do not represent a complete list of Assyriological studies on the matters of poetic language and rhetoric, but are meant to provide a general idea of previous writings on this subject. Further bibliography can be found in Hallo 2004; Wasserman 2003; Foster 2005; Lenzi 2019a; Noegel 2021; Piccin 2022.

21   Berlin 1979.

translation.[22] Further writings on parallelism and its different types (e.g. synonymous, antithetic, synthetic) has recently been offered by Streck;[23] additionally, a contribution on the semantic value of parallelism in Akkadian poetry has been published by De Zorzi.[24] Trevor Donald's doctoral thesis, entirely dedicated to parallelism in Akkadian, Hebrew, and Ugaritic, deserves attention, even though it has unfortunately not been published.[25] Vogelzang focused on the device of repetition, analysing passages taken from Akkadian hymns and epic poems.[26] A linguistic and semantic study on metaphor and imagery in Akkadian was provided by Goodnick Westenholz,[27] and more recently by Wasserman, with particular regard to the Old-Babylonian corpus of literary texts.[28] Sumerian literary texts also display similes and metaphors, as shown by Heimpel in his exhaustive study on this subject.[29] Additionally, an interesting contribution on metaphor in Mesopotamian texts was recently provided by Pallavidini and Portuese.[30] Their approach is more closely aligned with recent linguistic theories, such as those of Lakoff and Johnson.[31]

Klein and Sefati observed puns in Sumerian literature,[32] while Kilmer investigated the same phenomenon in Akkadian poetry.[33]

The significant contributions that examined individual texts or group of texts include the analysis of the Sumerian composition labelled as *The Exaltation of Inanna* offered by Hallo and van Dijk, who divided the poem into rhetorical sections ('exordium', 'argument' and 'peroration'),[34] and the study by Hess on the rhetorical techniques used in the Amarna letters.[35]

Following the medieval conception of rhetoric as part of the *trivium* of the seven liberal arts (grammar, rhetoric and logic), Falkowitz

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22 Baragli 2022b.

23 Streck 2007.

24 De Zorzi 2022.

25 Donald 1966.

26 Vogelzang 1996.

27 Goodnick Westenholz 1996.

28 Wasserman 1999.

29 Heimpel 1968, but cf. also the concise survey provided by Black 1998, 9-19, who addressed the same issue within his work on Sumerian poetry.

30 Pallavidini, Portuese 2020.

31 E.g. Lakoff, Johnson 1980.

32 Klein, Sefati 2000.

33 Kilmer 2000.

34 Hallo, van Dijk 1968.

35 Hess 1993 and 2003; cf. also Gewirtz 1973.

stressed on the didactic essence of rhetoric within the Sumerian culture: he understood as 'rhetoric' all the texts belonging to the Old-Babylonian scribal curriculum, as they were meant to teach the scribes how to write well: first by learning the signs and the grammar, and later by studying more complex texts including proverbs, letters and poetry. For this reason, Falkowitz coined the term 'Sumerian rhetorical collection' to define the entire collection of Sumerian proverbs that were part of the scribal curriculum.[36]

Numerous literary devices, especially alliterations, assonances and puns, have been identified by Noegel in the poem of Erra;[37] Mayer investigated the rhetoric and poetic language within the corpus of the Akkadian *šuilla* prayers,[38] and Streck offered a comprehensive study on figurative language in Akkadian Epic compositions.[39]

Wasserman's work stands out among the studies on Mesopotamian poetic language, being a detailed rhetorical analysis of Old-Babylonian literary texts; the author meticulously selected the most relevant rhetorical devices occurring in the corpus of Old-Babylonian literary compositions, i.e. hendiadys, merismus, rhyming couplets, simile, *tamyīz* and *damqam-īnim*.[40]

For the purpose of the present study, an approach similar to Wasserman's will be employed: a selected group of rhetorical devices found within the corpus of the *Great Hymns and Prayers* will be explained and illustrated through several examples borrowed from the texts.

5.2 Rhetorical Devices in the Great Hymns and Prayers

5.2.1 Methodological Premise

The study below can be considered an exercise in rhetorical criticism, meaning, as Overland describes it, "the analysis of a text's compositional artistry with an eye to audience impact", or, more generally, "the interpretive analysis of the persuasive content of a communicative event".[41] The present analysis operates on the assumption that all texts, especially (though not exclusively) literary ones, consist of the inextricable union between content and form, which mutually influence each other: each textual genre tends to display a specific

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36 Falkowitz 1982, esp. 21-30; cf. Hallo 2004, 27.

37 Noegel 2011.

38 Mayer 1976. Cf. also Frechette 2012.

39 Streck 1999.

40 Wasserman 2003.

41 Leeman 2017, 2.

structuring of words and phrases, recurring motifs or formulations, depending on its use and scope,[42] and, therefore, the examination of poetic composition techniques can help understand the essence of a text itself, and not merely its aesthetic surface.[43]

Indeed, looking for particular structures and patterns, specific lexical choices, word-order, puns in meaning, and sounds can help detect elements inherent to the meaning of the text, for instance, its most significant themes and messages. It also helps the reader to grasp the impact that certain rhetorical strategies could produce on the ancient audience; in fact, such a study can contribute to the identification of the audience itself.[44] With respect to the compositions under analysis, their unclear *Sitz im Leben* and the undefined scope (see chapter 1) do not allow us to distinctly recognise their final (or secondary) audience, the primary audience being the addressed deities.[45] However, by means of a rhetorical analysis, it is possible to note the most frequently used strategies to compel the attention of the divine beings, namely the set of techniques constituting the so-called 'religious rhetoric' (see further in the next paragraph), and to shed some light on the secondary audience of these hymns and prayers. Nevertheless, while conducting this study, a necessary caveat should be kept in mind: on the one hand, detecting rhetorical features in Mesopotamian literary compositions may present difficulties, since no Mesopotamian text includes notions of stylistic devices of any kind,

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42 This is not to say, of course, that stylistic differences between texts are always unambiguous, or decisive in determining their literary genres; on the contrary, Mesopotamian literature is quite flexible in nature, to the point that, as has been mentioned previously in this study, it is difficult to define Mesopotamian textual genres according to the traditional western classifications. Indeed, the same rhetorical devices and stylistic traits can be found in genres apparently distant from each other (see for example the prayer-like traits occurring in *Ludlul*, as noted by Lenzi 2010; or the similar phonetic devices employed in incantations and hymns, as remarked by Wasserman 2003; or the literary topoi found in an Old Babylonian letter, see Rozzi 2019). Not to mention, moreover, cases of allusion and intertextuality, where stylistic similarities are the (intentional or unintentional) result of extensive scribal education, see on this Lenzi 2019, 64-7, and Hess 2015, 255-7; cf. chapter 4 for the notion of intertextuality as applied to Mesopotamian texts. However, there are undoubtedly certain formal elements (together with some material characteristics of the tablets, such as the division of the text into couplets or the marking of metrical caesuras, cf. Hess 2015) that are more typical of certain genres than others.

43 Muilenburg 1969, 5.

44 The identification of rhetorical figures, and the analysis of their role and importance in the literary text, represents the key element in rhetorical criticism. On this aspect see Overland 2008, 656 and Muilenburg 1969; cf. the remark by Berlin 1985, 17: "The potential success of rhetorical criticism lies in the fact that the devices and symmetries that are present in a poem are not merely decorations – esthetically pleasing ornaments surrounding the meaning – but are pointers or signs which indicate what the meaning is".

45 Lenzi 2019, 67-9.

therefore, one must rely on definitions borrowed from other literatures (Latin, Greek or Hebrew, for example).[46] On the other hand, over-detection may also pose a risk. To remain truthful to the ancient source, one must be careful not to see what is not there, avoiding a 'wishful subjectivity'.[47]

5.2.2 The *Great Hymns and Prayers*: Religious Rhetoric and Rhetorical Figures

The compositions under study, being religious literary texts, conform to the traditional stylistic traits of 'religious rhetoric', which is a model of discourse whose scope is to communicate effectively with a deity.

Religion and rhetoric are strongly interconnected, to the point that some scholars have observed that religion cannot do without rhetoric, as it expresses itself through a set of concepts, acts, and carefully chosen and codified words to address the gods in the most persuasive way possible.[48] The rhetorical elements that characterise religious language seem to be common across various times and cultures, to such an extent that it has been hypothesised that there are enduring and universal phraseologies and practices in religious rhetoric.[49]

Religious rhetoric can be expressed through various types of discourse, as noted by E. Pernot in his work on the intersections between rhetoric and religion.[50] In accordance with Pernot, four forms of religious discourse can be distinguished: naming (addressing the deities using special names and epithets), narration (recounting the miraculous actions or mythic episodes of the gods), eulogy (describing the divine qualities and prerogatives), and preaching (urging the listeners to worship and praise the invoked deity). These forms of expression can be considered both acts of worship, as they establish a

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46   While the lack of indigenous names for rhetorical devices might be problematic, modern taxonomies have also contributed to make rhetorical analysis of Mesopotamian texts difficult: indeed, scholars have offered a wide variety of different vocabularies and labels, leading to an inconsistent terminology, see Noegel 2021, 1-2.

47   On this see Overland 2008, 657: "Conversely, overdetection may posit persuasive impact when none is warranted. Single devices supported by multiple attestation, boundaries reinforced by form-plus-content intersection, logical arrangements that are redundant and without lacunae-all subjected to peer critique-these disciplines guard against wishful subjectivity". In other words, in analysing the rhetorical strategies used in the compositions under study, on the hand one has to search, for example, for devices attested multiple times, or, on the other hand, for abrupt changes and unexpected variation, which may represent an intentional rhetorical choice, and not a stylistic flaw.

48   Wayne 1991; for the rhetorical aspect of religion, and the connection between language and religion, see Burke 1970.

49   See e.g. the remarks by Pernot 210, 245.

50   Pernot 2010.

direct connection between the worshipper and the divinity, and rhetorical discourse, and thus subject to textual and literary-poetic analysis. The four forms mentioned above are models of discourse *about* the deities, and are commonly observed in hymns. However, forms of religious rhetoric can also include expressions that address the gods directly, as in the case of prayers.[51]

Prayers encompass specific phraseology and frequently adopt a pathetic tone, particularly when making an appeal to pity.[52] Classical studies have standardised typical rhetorical patterns like *da quia dedi* (give, because I have given) and *da quia dedisti* (give because you have [previously] given), serving as arguments in support of the prayer's request. Additionally, these patterns are accompanied by a series of actions or gestures performed during the recitation of the prayer.[53] The performative and ritual gestures occasionally mentioned in the written prayers are physical expressions of devotion and serve as counterparts to verbal expressions.[54] Another form of religious discourse is the speech of the gods, which means when the narrative voice is that of the god itself.[55] The four types of discourse *about* the gods and the discourse model *addressed to* the gods, typical of prayer, often overlap to the point that it is sometimes challenging to differentiate between a hymn and a prayer.[56]

Akkadian hymns and prayers exhibit these general features, and the corpus of texts here studied is no exception. The *Great Hymns and Prayers* include discourse *about* the deities and discourse *addressed to* them, as well as references to actions associated with religious utterances. They comprise, in fact, lists of divine epithets and divine names, persuasive arguments to seek the intervention of the gods, exhortations to praise the invoked deities, and references to religious actions like genuflections and prostrations. In one case (the *Hymn to Gula* by Bullussa-rabi) there is also an example of divine speech, since the deity speaks in the first person. Besides these aspects, which are characteristic of Mesopotamian religious poetry and religious poetry in general, the *Great Hymns and Prayers* exhibit a rich variety of figures of speech, along with numerous lexical peculiarities. The following survey is not intended to be exhaustive,

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51 Pernot 2010, 237-8.

52 Pernot 2010, 239.

53 Pernot 2010, 240-1; Dowden 2007, 326.

54 Commonly, in the rhetoric-religious context, the actions accompanying prayers are referred to as *dromena* (what is done), while the speech accompanying the ritual is termed *legomena* (what is said). For more details about this term pair, see Henrichs 1998, 34, with previous references.

55 Pernot 2010, 239.

56 Furley, Bremer 2001, 3-4.

but rather an overview of the most recurrent and prominent rhetorical figures that appear in the *Great Hymns and Prayers*.

Rhetorical figures are generally regarded by literary critics as a 'deviation' from ordinary language, and are distinguished between tropes and schemes, the former involving changes on the semantic level, and the latter effecting the syntactic level of the language. Schemes are, furthermore, traditionally divided into figures of thought, "that is of the mind, feeling or conceptions"[57] – e.g. rhetorical question or apostrophe – and figures of speech, connected to the collocations of words and their phonetic aspects.[58] Poetry makes use of rhetorical figures to fulfil its persuasive function. In this sense, poetry (and poetics, understood as the study of the poetic features of a text) can be considered closely related to rhetoric.[59] Although there are no rhetorical devices defined by the Mesopotamians themselves, it is possible to identify figures corresponding to those later classified by the classical texts, while some devices appear to be purely Semitic, and also recur in Biblical literature.[60]

The present classification is partially indebted to the model proposed by Plett in his study on literary rhetoric, hence rhetorical figures are divided according to their linguistic level, that is, to the effect they produce on the phonological, syntactical, semantic and morphological level of language. Therefore, I will discuss a number of phonological, syntactic, semantic and morphological figures that can be detected within the poems under consideration:[61]

1. Phonological figures: alliteration, assonance, consonance, homoioteleuton and rhyme.
2. Syntactic figures: parallelism, repetition, enjambement, anadiplosis, anastrophe.
3. Semantic figures: metaphor, simile, hendiadys, merismus, pun, climax and enumeration.
4. Morphological figures: *figura etymologica*, polyptoton, anadiplosis and epanadiplosis.[62]

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57 "id est mentis vel sensus vel sententiarum", Quint. *Inst.* 9.17; cf. Vickers 1988, 316

58 For an accurate and comprehensive description of rhetorical figures, see Vickers 1988, 294-339; cf. the recent treatment of rhetorical figures in Old Babylonian Hymns by Pohl 2022, 68.

59 Culler 1997, 69. For the relationship between rhetoric and poetics, see Walker 2008.

60 Lundbom 2006, 341.

61 Plett classified rhetorical figures by analysing both their linguistic level and their linguistic operation, namely the deviation from the norm of the standard language (which could be either of a reinforcing or violating kind). For the sake of clarity, I take into account only the linguistic planes. See Plett 2010, 65-7. Cf. Plett 1975 and 1985.

62 For names of the figures, see, e.g. Lanham 1991; Sloane 2001 and Lausberg 1998; cf. also Watson 1986 and 1999, for a comprehensive classification of rhetorical devices

5.2.3 Phonological Figures in the Akkadian Sources

Although the phonological reconstruction of ancient languages poses difficulties, and several nuances are destined to be lost to the modern reader,[63] rhetorical figures that involve a deviation from the normative language in terms of sound are well-attested in the Akkadian sources. Alliteration and homoioteleuton (i.e. the repetition of the same consonant at the beginning or at the end of nearby words, respectively),[64] consonance and assonance (the former being the repetition of the same consonant in proximate words, the latter, of the same vowel), can often be found in purely literary texts as well as in incantations and omens.[65] Rhyme, intended as the repetition of words or word endings at the end of lines, occurs less often. Indeed, the identification of rhymes in Akkadian poetry can prove problematic, due to the difficulties in reconstructing the Akkadian metre and the impossibility of ascertaining the exact pronunciation. In Semitic poetic texts, one could argue that rhymes are virtually a mere form of repetition.[66]

Phonological figures are used for both aesthetic and practical reasons, as they not only contribute to the pleasantness of a text, by playing a crucial role with prosody in creating euphony and rhythm, but also serve the purpose of highlighting meaningful aspects of a

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in the Biblical poetry, with comparison to Ugaritic and Akkadian literature.

[63] Mesopotamian poetry was often sung: the actual pronunciation – and the possible varieties in pronunciation between different genres – the musicality and expressivity of the performances are inevitably difficult, if not impossible, for us to reconstruct, cf. Michalowski 1996, 144.

[64] I consider here homoioteleuton and rhyme to be two different devices. For a definition of homoioteleuton, see Lanham 1991, 83-5. For the sake of simplicity, I do not distinguish between cases of homoioteleuton and homoioptoton, cf. the discussion on the difference and the possible overlapping of these two devices in Lanham 1991, 82-5.

[65] Hecker 1974, 139-40; von Soden 1981, 53 and 78; Hurowitz 2000. For some examples of alliteration and consonance in Sumerian literary sources, see Klein, Sefati 2000, 41-54.

[66] Wasserman 2003, 157-9, who points out the close connection between rhyme and meter in Akkadian. Cf. also Helle 2014, 66. Cf. also Watson 1986, 230: "It is generally agreed that rhyme does not play an important part in ancient Semitic poetry". In her study on Akkadian poetry, Vogelzang 1996 defines rhymes as a 'sound repetition', see 172. According to Civil (1993, 1233-4), rhyme is not recurrent in Sumerian literature either: "Alliteration and assonantal rhyme are known, but sparingly used". Cf. Klein, Sefati 2000, 24 fn. 4 and 25 fn. 6. Compare, however, Wilcke 1974, 217-18, who provides several examples of rhymes, assonances and alliteration in Sumerian poetry, observing that phonological figures do occur quite often in Sumerian literary texts, although he considers Sumerian rhyme almost as a "Zeilengrenze überschreitende Form von Alliteration und Assonanz" (Wilcke 1974, 217).

composition.[67] Within incantations and prayers phonological figures help strengthen the effectiveness of the performance;[68] furthermore, they convey an emotional and persuasive tone to the text, thus rendering it more appealing to the addressee.[69] In hymns, rhyming couplets can occur at the end, marking the conclusion of the composition and suggesting a reaction from the audience.[70]

5.2.3.1 Phonological Figures in the *Great Hymns and Prayers*

The following list includes various examples of phonological figures of speech found in the corpus under study. Two compositions in particular have proved to be especially rich in phonological figures, namely the *Šamaš Hymn* and *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, being characterised by a remarkably high number of rhymes and homoioteleuta. Nevertheless, phonological devices appear throughout all the texts: consonance is the most common phonetic figure found within this corpus, while alliteration appears less often. The vast majority of the rhyming couplets that can be observed in the *Great Hymns and Prayers* are grammatical rhymes, that is, rhymes that result from the exact repetition of the same morphemes.[71]

In addition, rhyming couplets are used in the final section of the *Nabû Prayer*, thus leading the audience to the end of the composition: ll. 210-23 contain a combination of 'lyrical repetitions' (ll. 212-15 and 220-3) and rhyming couplets (ll. 210-11 with pattern AA and ll. 216-19 with pattern ABBA), see the complete text in chapter 2.

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67 See for instance Hurowitz 2000, 68-70 for some cases of alliterations producing intratextual allusions within narrative passages. See also Vogelzang 1996, 168-70.

68 The power of phonetic effect can be seen especially in the so-called abracadabra incantations, see Veldhuis 1999, 46-8; Schwemer 2014, 266.

69 Schwemer 2014, 281; cf. also Vogelzang 1996, 169.

70 This practice is more attested in Sumerian compositions, but occurs more sporadically in Akkadian hymns. See Black 1992, 71-5 and Wasserman 2003, 172.

71 Grammatical rhyme is the most common rhyme attested within the corpus under analysis. Besides those here provided (see below), other examples of grammatical rhyme can be seen in: *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 91-3; ll. 116-17, ll. 173-5; *Nabû Prayer*, ll. 200-3; *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, ll. 142-3; 146-7. Although this type of rhyme might be considered weak according to our modern taste, it was widely used in Akkadian literary texts, together with the tautological rhyme, i.e. the exact repetition of the same word (see in the example below, the *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 27-30). The pervasive occurrence of these and other kinds of repetition in the cuneiform literary sources (for instance, the repetition of entire couplets at the beginning of hymns and prayers in both Sumerian and Akkadian, see below § 5.2.4.1.2, sub "Delayed introduction") suggests that such types of identical repetition must have been deemed pleasant by the Mesopotamians, cf. the remarks by Veldhuis 1999, 44-5 with regard to the usage of repetition in magical texts. Cf. Wasserman 2004, 162-7 for more examples of grammatical rhymes in Akkadian. Cf. the definition of grammatical rhyme in Brogan 1993a, 480.

5.2.3.1.1   Alliteration

1. *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 39 (alliteration of the velar phoneme /k/, emphasised by /q/):
    [39][*šad*]*î? kīma qê kasâta kīma imbari katmāta*
    [39]You bind mountains together like a cord, you blanket (them) like a haze[72]

2. *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 180 (alliteration of the nasal phoneme /m/):
    [180]*mukarrû ūmī murrik mušâti* (GI$_6$.MEŠ)
    [180]Who can shorten days, who can prolong nights[73]

3. *Queen of Nippur*, col. iv, l. 37 (alliteration of the sibilant phoneme /š/):
    [37]*šarrat-nippur šaqât u šarrat*
    [37]The Queen of Nippur, she is lofty and she is queen[74]

4. *Marduk2*, l. 12' (alliteration of the dental phonemes /t/ and /ṭ/):
    [12']*tutterraššu ṭāba ša itruru ṭēnšu*
    [12']You made healthy again the one, whose mind has trembled.[75]

5. *Gula Syncretistic*, l. 8 (alliteration of the velar phonemes /k/ and /g/):
    [8]*kullat igīgī kigallašunu* … […]
    [8]The cultic stations of all the Igigi […],[76]

5.2.3.1.2   Consonance

1. *Queen of Nippur*, col. iv, l. 42 (repetition of the velar phoneme /k/):
    [42]*ai ipparku maḫrāki likūn zikrukki*
    [42]May it be recited without cease in your presence, be established at your command.[77]

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[72] Lambert 1960, 128-9; cf. Hurowitz 2000, 67; see Rozzi 2021a for the reconstruction here provided.

[73] Lambert 1960, 136-7; Rozzi 2021a.

[74] Lambert 1982, 202-3; cf. Földi 2021c.

[75] Translation by the Author. Cf. the last edition by Oshima 2011, 232, 246-7.

[76] Bennett 2023a; 2021, 194-5.

[77] Lambert 1982, 204-5; Földi 2021c. Cf. also in the same text iv, 35: *ullât šūturat šaqât u šarrat*, which displays the same kind of alliteration, and adds not only a refined *variatio* in the first hemistich, but also a *homoioteleuton* through the repetition of the ending *-at*. For the *homoioteleuton* see *infra*.

2. *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 128 (the first hemistich contains a repetition of the nasal phoneme /m/, and of the velar phonemes /k/ and /q/ and dental /d/ and /t/ in the second; note also the assonance of /a/ and /u/):
    ¹²⁸[*m*]*anāma* (*u*) *mamma puqqudu qātukka*
    ¹²⁸Every single person is entrusted to your hands.[78]

3. *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 145 (repetition of the labial phoneme /m/):
    ¹⁴⁵*mītu murtappidu eṭemmu ḫalqu*
    ¹⁴⁵The roving dead, the vagrant soul.[79]

4. *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, l. 77 (repetition of the liquid phoneme /l/):
    ⁷⁷ *ilittu elletu ša ninlil*
    ⁷⁷Pure offspring of Ninlil.[80]

5.2.3.1.3   Assonance

1. *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, l. 171 (repetition of the /a/ vowel sound):
    ¹⁷¹*apir agâ ša qarnī karpaṣāti*
    ¹⁷¹His head is covered with a turban of superb horns.[81]

2. *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 43-4 (repetition of the /i/ vowel sound in the first line and of the /a/ in the second):
    ⁴³*ana šiddī ša lā idî nesûti u* (*ana*) *bērī lā man*[*ûti*]
    ⁴⁴*šamaš dalpāta ša urra tallika u mūša tassaḫr*[*a*]
    ⁴³To far-off regions unknown and for countless leagues
    ⁴⁴You persevere, O Shamash, what you went by day you come back at night.[82]

3. *Anūna Prayer*, obv. ii, l. 59 (repetition of the /a/ and the /u/ vowel sound):
    ⁵⁹*ammāš šamnam iprušū īpušū ik*[*kibam*]
    ⁵⁹His parents have withheld the oil, they have committed an ab[omination].[83]

78   Lambert 1960, 134-5; Rozzi 2021a.

79   Lambert 1960, 134-5; Rozzi 2021a.

80   Lambert 1967, 120-1; Földi 2021a.

81   Lambert 1967, 126-7; Földi 2021a.

82   Rozzi 2021a; Lambert 1960, 128-9; cf. Vogelzang 1996, 179.

83   Lambert 1989, 326, 330 and 334.

5.2.3.1.4   Homoioteleuton

1. *Nabû Prayer*, l. 178 (repetition of the adverbial ending *-iš*):
    ¹⁷⁸*aḫrâtaš pisnuqiš lallāriš udašš[ap]*
    ¹⁷⁸With time, what (seemed) pitiable, he swee[tens] like syrup.[84]

2. *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, l. 65 (repetition of the stative ending *-āku*):
    ⁶⁵*mārāku | kallāku || hīrāku | u abarakkāku*
    ⁶⁵I am daughter, I am bride, I am spouse, I am house-keeper.[85]

3. *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 33 (repetition of the plural ending *-āti*):
    ³³*rēʾû šaplâti nāqidu elâti*
    ³³Shepherd of that beneath, keeper of that above.[86]

4. *Gula Syncretistic*, l. 31' (repetition of the stative ending *-at*)
    ³¹'*sāniqat rēʾât āširat muštālat*
    ³¹'She is the one who controls, shepherds, supervises, is thoughtful.[87]

5.2.3.1.5   Rhyme

1. *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 27-30 (tautological rhyme, pattern ABAB):
    ²⁷*tētenettiq ginâ šamāmī*
    ²⁸[*š*]*umdulta erṣeta tabâ' ūmīšam*
    ²⁹*mīli tâmti ḫursānī erṣeta šamāmī*
    ³⁰*kī takkassi ginâ tabâ' ūmīšam*
    ²⁷Regularly and without cease you traverse the heavens,
    ²⁸Every day you pass over the broad earth,
    ²⁹The flood of the sea, the mountains, the earth, the heavens,
    ³⁰You traverse them regularly, every day, as if they were pavement.[88]

2. *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, ll. 115-16 (grammatical rhyme, pattern AA):
    ¹¹⁵*ragga ayyāba ušemmi*¹ *ṭiṭṭiš*
    ¹¹⁶*šuršī kullat lā māgirī iqammi apiš*
    ¹¹⁵The wicked and enemies he turns into clay,
    ¹¹⁶He burns up like reeds the roots of all disobedient.[89]

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84   For this text, see the edition in chapter 2, to which I will refer throughout the present study when discussing this prayer, unless otherwise stated.

85   Lambert 1967, 120-1; cf. Földi 2021a.

86   Lambert 1960, 128-9; cf. Rozzi 2021a.

87   Bennett 2023a; 2021, 200-1.

88   Lambert 1960, 126-7; cf. Rozzi 2021a for the new reading of l. 30.

89   Lambert 1967, 122-3; cf. Földi 2021a.

3. *Queen of Nippur*, col. ii, ll. 13-14 (grammatical rhyme and homoioteleuton between the hemistichs; pattern AA)

    ¹³*ummad rēš*[*ā*]*šu idu šēpīšu*
    ¹⁴*ālšu su*[*ḫḫ*]*uršu pitluhāšu nišāšu*
    ¹³Resting his head beside his feet
    ¹⁴His city shunned him, his people stood aloof from him.[90]

4. *Anūna Prayer*, ll. 155-8 (pattern ABAB)

    ¹⁵⁵[*dami*]*qtam šittam ana nišī apâtim*
    ¹⁶⁰x ri ur *wardum* uḫ₂-x x *ša-tam šumiški*
    ¹⁶¹[   ] x-*at eturkalamma šaqūt ilātim*
    ¹⁶²[   ] *tintir šurbat enukkī*
    ¹⁵⁵[Pleasa]nt sleep to the numerous peoples,
    ¹⁵⁶[…] … slave … at your name.
    ¹⁵⁷[…] of Eturkalamma, lofty one of the goddess,
    ¹⁵⁸[…] Tintir, greatest of the Anunnaki.[91]

5.2.4 Syntactic Figures in the Akkadian Sources

Rhetorical figures that produce an effect on the standard syntactic order of sentences are termed 'syntactic figures'. One of the most important syntactic devices in Mesopotamian literature is parallelism, namely the use of parallel constructions in couplets, strophes, or individual verses. Parallelism can involve various linguistic levels, such as the grammatical, lexical or phonological; it consists of the repetition of a thought, which is amplified, enriched or contrasted through parallel formulations. It is also a typical figure of Hebrew and Ugaritic poetry,[92] and its value lies in both its poetic and noetic character: parallelism allows the building of 'multidimensional' concepts, i.e. concepts that are expressed and developed from different perspectives, through combining multiple elements that expand or contrast each other.[93]

Previous studies, mostly conducted in the Biblical field, have identified different sub-types of parallelism: the main criterion for distinguishing sub-types takes into account semantics (e.g. synonymous, antithetic, synthetic parallelism), though grammatical aspects can

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[90] Lambert 1982, 194-5; cf. Földi 2021c.

[91] Lambert 1989, 328 and 332.

[92] See Wagner 2007; cf. Watson 1986, 114-59 for Hebrew poetry. For Ugaritic sources, see Segert 1983.

[93] On the cognitive and noetic aspect of parallelism, see Wagner 2007, 8-13 and 17-18, cf. Landsberger 1926: "Für den Akkader […], wie für die übrigen Semiten, ist der Parallelismus gleichsam die Stereometrie des Gedankenausdrucks, der stets aufs schärfste geschnitten und auf höchste Prägnanz bedacht ist".

also be considered (e.g. gender match parallelism, verbal parallelism, etc.), as well as the number of verses across which the parallelism stretches.[94]

Parallel lines (or half-lines) can be arranged into chiasm, namely "any structure in which the elements are repeated in reverse, so giving the pattern ABBA";[95] chiastic parallelism[96] can be used to break the monotony of parallel lines, to signal structural changes within the text or to give emphasis to certain elements, e.g. intensifying negations and prohibitions (e.g. in *Queen of Nippur*, col. ii, l. 17 see below, § 5.2.4.1.1), creating suspense, etc.[97]

Repetition is a typical device of the Sumero-Akkadian poetry as well: contrary to parallelism, which includes the reformulation of the same message with some degree of variation, repetition involves the exact (or minimally changed) iteration of individual words or clauses.[98] A special type of repetition, mostly found in Sumerian and Akkadian hymns and prayers, is the delayed introduction of the addressed god, for example, the repetition of two couplets which are identical, except for the introduction of the divine name in the third line.[99]

Repetition can serve to produce intratextual allusions, through linking different parts of the discourse; it can also have a dramatic function, adding force and intensity to the composition.[100]

A further syntactic figure that can be found, though rarely, in Akkadian literary texts, is the enjambement, that is, the disconnection or lack of alignment between the boundaries of a poetic verse and the boundaries of a syntactic unit or sentence.[101] This fracture can create a delib-

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94 For the Mesopotamian sources, see Berlin 1979; cf. 1992; see also Foster 2005, 14-16 and Streck 2007.

95 Preminger, Brogan 1993, 183-4.

96 Although some consider chiasm as a variant of parallelism, see e.g. Watson 1986, 170-81. For a definition of 'chiastic parallelism', see Berlin 1992. See Smith 1980 for a study on chiasm in Sumerian and Akkadian sources; see also Streck 2007, 171. Cf. Hecker 1974, 142 for an example of parallelism with a 'chiastische Wortstellung' in *Gilgameš*.

97 For the possible functions of chiasm, see Watson 1986, 205-6, who distinguished between 'structural' and 'expressive' functions.

98 I consider parallelism and repetition to be different devices, following Foster 2005, 15-16 and more recently Streck 2007, 172. For the use of repetition in Akkadian literature, see also Hecker 1974, 56-65; 154-60; Vogelzang 1996; Foster 2005, 15-16. Cf. Lenzi 2019a.

99 Vogelzang 1996, 65-6 calls this technique 'lyrical repetition'. See also Groneberg 1986, 183 and Metcalf 2015, 22-4 and 59-60; Mayer 1976, 40-1. Cf. chapter 1, § 1.2.3 and chapter 2, § 2.2.

100 Vogelzang 1996, 173-4; cf. Watson 1986, 278-9. See also Foster 2005, 15.16; Lenzi 2019a,

101 For a definition of enjambement, and various types of enjambement (syntactical or morphological), see Plett 2010, 139-40.

erate poetic effect, emphasising certain words or phrases and creating a unique rhythmic pattern in the poem. Since the standard structure of poetry in Akkadian requires that a poetic line be contained within a single line of text,[102] enjambement occurs rarely. However, Groneberg, in her study on the form and style of Akkadian hymns, has already debunked the assumption that a similar phenomenon is never found in Akkadian literary texts.[103] Indeed, she points out that in cases of complex subordination, the predicate may extend over multiple verses.

Finally, another significant poetic technique, which also consists in altering the standard syntax of verses, is anastrophe, here understood as the inversion of the standard syntactic order.[104] This mostly pertains to verbal forms, which are placed in the penultimate position of a line, but more rarely, adjectives and nouns can also be inverted. Another recurring feature, and a special case of anastrophe, is the 'fronting' of the verbal forms, which are placed at the beginning of lines. As noted in chapter 1 (§ 1.2.4) these syntactic figures are characteristic traits of Akkadian literary texts, being also found in other literary genres such as epic poetry, royal inscriptions of the first millennium and incantations.[105]

5.2.4.1 Syntactic Figures in the *Great Hymns and Prayers*

5.2.4.1.1 Parallelism

The *Great Hymns and Prayers* display parallelism within couplets or individual lines, i.e. between the two halves of a verse. Parallelism in tercets or quatrains is also attested, although it occurs more rarely (e.g. see below in *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 97-100).

The present analysis partially follows Streck's survey on the occurrence of parallelism in Old Babylonian hymns. The following examples are meant to illustrate several synonymous, synthetic and antithetic parallelisms found in the corpus under consideration. A brief clarification: given two clauses, the synonymous type of parallelism implies the repetition of the same message, first introduced in the initial clause, and then delivered in different terms in the succeeding one. The antithetic type opposes contrasting concepts, producing an antithesis between the two members of the parallel structure. Synthetic parallelism is more difficult to detect, and can occasionally be

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102 George 2003, 162; cf. also Hess 2015, 262.

103 Groneberg 1982, 176, 184. Cf. Goodnick Westenholz 1997b, 192.

104 Marchese 1978, 20; cf. Plett 2010, 192.

105 George 2003, 434. Cf. Schwemer 2014, 279 for the fronting of verbs in Akkadian incantations.

confused with the first type, as it consists of the expansion or amplification in the second clause of the same thought that has been already expressed in the first.[106] Chiastic parallelism is also very prominent in the *Great Hymns and Prayers*, and has been considered in this analysis. In addition, some examples of the so-called 'interrogative parallelism', namely the pairing of an indicative clause with an interrogative one, are included in the list here provided.[107]

Synonymous Parallelism

1. *Nabû Prayer*, l. 52:
   [52]*ittatil ina nariṭṭi kali ina rušumdi*
   [52]He lies in the marsh, he is held in the mire.

2. *Marduk*1, l. 155:
   [155]*ḫipi qunnabrašu illurtašu puṭur maksīšu*
   [155]Break his shackles and fetters, release his bonds![108]

3. *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, ll. 60-1:
   [60]*amātī ul innenni*
   [61]*ṣīt pîya ul uštapella*
   [60]My word is not altered,
   [61]The utterance of my mouth is not changed.[109]

4. *Nabû Prayer*, ll. 49-50:
   [49]*ina gipiš edê nadī-ma agû elīš itta*[kkip]
   [50]*kibru rūqšu nesîš nābal*[u]
   [49]He is cast out into huge waves, so that the flood cras[hed] over him again and again,
   [50]Far away from him is the shore, distant is the dry la[nd].

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[106]   For the definition of synonymous, synthetic and antithetic parallelism, see Bühlmann, Scherer 1994, 38-41 and Berlin 1979, 13-14 and 1992. See Berlin 1979, 14: "The parallel clauses may both be independent, or one may be dependent on the other. The relationship is usually sequential or descriptive; the succeeding clauses extend the thought or action of the first, or illustrate further some aspect of it".

[107]   For the definition of the interrogative parallelism, which is not listed among the examples provided by Streck, see Berlin 1979, 13-14 and 1992. Berlin considers two parallel interrogative clauses as a synonymous parallelism, see for example ll. 174-5 of the *Šamaš Hymn*: "Which are the mountains not clothed with your beams?/ Which are the regions not warmed by the brightness of your light?" (Lambert 1960, 136-7; cf. Rozzi 2021a).

[108]   Oshima 2011, 154, 166-7; cf. Fadhil, Jiménez 2019, 168 and 171. The translation here follows Fadhil, Jiménez 2019, 171.

[109]   Lambert 1967, 118-19; cf. Földi 2021a.

Antithetic Parallelism

1. *Nabû Prayer*, ll. 185-6:
   ¹⁸⁵*māru ašru sanqu aḫammu zārâšu ikar[rab]*
   ¹⁸⁶*māru lā ašru lā sanqu adi enêšu irrar b[ānīšu(?)]*
   ¹⁸³The obedient, disciplined son, his father giv[es] (him) a special blessing,
   ¹⁸⁴The disobedient, undisciplined son, his b[egetter] curses (him) until he changes.

2. *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 97-100:
   ⁹⁷*dayyāna ṣalpa || mēsera tukallam*
   ⁹⁸*māḫir ṭāti lā muštēšira tušazbal arna*
   ⁹⁹*la ma-ḫir ṭa-'a-ti ṣa-bi-tú a-bu-ti en-še*
   ¹⁰⁰*lā māḫir ṭāti ṣābit(u) abbūt enši*
   ⁹⁷You give the unscrupulous judge experience of fetters,
   ⁹⁸Him who accepts a present and yet lets justice miscarry, you make bear his punishment,
   ⁹⁹As for him who declines a present, but nevertheless takes the part of the weak,
   ¹⁰⁰It is pleasing to Šamaš, he will prolong his life.[110]

3. *Marduk*2, l. 49:
   ⁴⁹*tušteššer išara tušamṭa ragga*
   ⁴⁹You make the righteous man prosper, you diminish the malicious.[111]

Synthetic Parallelism

1. *Queen of Nippur*, col. iv, ll. 10-11:
   ¹⁰[*š*]*unbuṭ nūršu katim gimir dadmē*
   ¹¹*baši namrirrūša ina qereb hursāni*
   ¹⁰Its light is resplendent, covering all habitations,
   ¹¹Its brilliance penetrates the mountain.[112]

2. *Queen of Nippur*, col. iv, ll. 23-4:
   ²³*iḫâṭ ešrētišin kummašin ibarri*
   ²⁴*ana ilī šūt māhāzī u'adda isqa*
   She supervises their shrines, inspecting their living quarters
   She assigns portions to the gods of the cult centres.[113]

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110 Lambert 1960, 132-3; cf. Rozzi 2021a.

111 Oshima 2011, 226, 242-3.

112 Lambert 1982, 200-1; cf. Földi 2021c.

113 Lambert 1982, 202-3; cf. Földi 2021c.

Chiastic Parallelism

1. *Queen of Nippur*, col. ii, l. 8:
   ⁸[*iramm*]*umšu ūmiš libbatāšu imallā-ma*
   ⁸[She] roared at him like a storm, was filled with anger at him.[114]

2. *Queen of Nippur*, col. ii, l. 17:
   ¹⁷*lā ište'â ašrāša pāniš lā izzizzu*
   ¹⁷Since he did not seek her shrine nor render her service[115]

   Ištar Prayer, l. 79:
   ⁷⁹*emtēš ul īdi šiparraki ēte*[*q*]
   ⁷⁹I have unknowingly disregarded, I have ignor[ed] your instructions (lit. instruction).[116]

Interrogative Parallelism

1. *Marduk*1, ll. 5-6:
   ⁵*ša amāruk šibbu gapaš abūšin*
   ⁶*šašmu ša girri ali māḫirka*
   ⁵Whose stare is a dragon, a flood overwhelming,
   ⁶An onslaught of fire – where is your rival?[117]

2. *Ištar Prayer*, ll. 85-6:
   ⁸⁵*ayyû ina ilī imṣa malāk*[*i*]
   ⁸⁶*lā amra kīma kâti māḫir teslīt*[*i*]
   ⁸⁵Who, among the gods, is as powerful as yo[u]?
   ⁸⁶There has never been seen someone who accepts praye[r] like you.[118]

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[114] Lambert 1982, 194-5; cf. Földi 2021c.

[115] Lambert 1982, 194-5; cf. Földi 2021c.

[116] For this text, see the edition in chapter 3, to which I will refer throughout the present study when discussing this prayer, if not differently stated.

[117] Oshima 2011, 142, 158-9; cf. Fadhil, Jiménez 2019, 167 and 169. The translation here follows Fadhil, Jiménez 2019, 169. Compare also the translation offered by Mayer 1995, 172: "Du, dessen Blicken eine Šibbu-Schlange ist".

[118] For the edition of this text, see chapter 2. Further examples of delayed introduction are found in *Marduk*1 (Oshima 2011, 138-90; cf. also Fadhil, Jiménez 2019, 167 and 169), *Marduk*2 (Oshima 2011, 216-74), *Šamaš Hymn* (Lambert 1960, 121-38; cf. Rozzi 2021a).

5.2.4.1.2   Repetition

The delayed introduction of the divine name is commonly attested within the *Great Hymns and Prayers*. In addition, these texts exhibit further forms of repetition, like the refrain, envelope figure, keyword and ring-composition: the refrain consists of the multiple repetition of the same phrase at the end of a strophe, while keywords are single words (occasionally synonyms) repeated many times within a composition. The envelope figure, on the other hand, implies the repetition of the same phrase or word no more than twice within a text: this figure frames a group of lines, separating them from the rest of the text. All these devices are used for emphasis or allusion.[119]

The *Šamaš Hymn* in particular shows a combination of all these techniques, making extensive use of repeated words and phrases (see below). Furthermore, this long hymn is structured into a circular pattern: the cyclical course of the Sun is represented in the text through the structural device of ring composition. The first section of the hymn, which describes the rising of the Sun-god and his daily journey through the heavens, the earth and the underworld, is mirrored in the concluding section of the poem, in which the god is depicted as coming back to his bedchamber.[120]

Delayed Introduction[121]

1. *Nabû Prayer*, ll. 41-4:
   ^{41}*b[ēl]u palkû mukkalli ešešti*
   ^{42}*rapša uznī āšiš šukāmi*
   ^{43}*Nabû palkû mukkalli ešešti*
   ^{44}*rapša uznī āšiš šukāmi*
   ^{41}O wise L[or]d, mukkallu-priest of knowledge,
   ^{42}Of vast intelligence, who masters the scribal art.

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119   For a definition and some examples of these devices in the Hebrew, Ugaritic and Akkadian poetry, see Watson 1986, 283-99. Cf. also Vogelzang 1996, 174-7. Cf. also Berlin 1979, 24-6, Groneberg 1996, 70-1.

120   With regard to the ring-structure of the *Šamaš Hymn*, and related observations on its poetical implications, see Reiner 1985, 68-84; cf. also Castellino 1976. For more on the structure of this hymn, and other poetic and narrative strategies employed in this text, see Rozzi forthcoming.

121   I borrow this term from Watson 1986, 336, who however uses it in a slightly different sense, describing it as follows: "instead of stating the subject of a verb as soon as grammatically possible, the verb (or verbs) is (are) set out first, no definite identity being provided till the second or even third line of verse". Compare the German term offered by Wilcke in his study on Sumerian literature, in which this phenomenon is defined as "Ornamentale Wiederholung" (Wilcke 1974, 214-17).

[43]O wise Nabû, mukkallu-priest of knowledge,
[44]Of vast intelligence, who masters the scribal art![122]

Refrain

1. *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 100, 106, 119:
   ṭāb eli šamaš balāṭa uttar
   It is pleasing to Šamaš, he will prolong his life![123]

2. *Queen of Nippur,* col. iii, ll. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35:
   mamman ul ile''i
   No one (but she) is able.[124]

Envelope Figure

1. *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 149 and 153:
   [149]*ša ad*[*nā*]*ti šamaš uznīšina tušpatti*
   [150]*pārūka ezza šamra nūrka attā-ma tanaddinšinā*[*ti*]
   [151]*tuštēšer têrētīšina ina nīqî ašbāta*
   [152]*ana šar(ī) erbetti arkassina taparras*
   [153]*(ša) kal seḫep dadmē uznīšina tušpatti*
   [149]You have opened wisdom, O Shamash, to the world,
   [150]You yourself grant people who seek you your fierce and burning light.
   [151]You set straight their omens, you preside over sacrifices.
   [152]You probe their future to the four cardinal points,
   [153]You have opened wisdom to the entire inhabited world.[125]

Key words

1. *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 123, 125, 134, 136, 140, 142, 144, 146, 147, 158, 160, 164, 173 contain different forms of *maḫārum* 'to receive, confront', and its prepositional form *ina maḫrīka* 'before you'. The dominant concept in this portion of the hymn is that all people are indiscriminately subject to the judgement of Šamaš.[126]

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122 For the possible meaning of the *hapax legomenon ešeštum* 'knowledge', see the commentary on this line in chapter 2.

123 Lambert 1960, 132-3; cf. Rozzi 2021a; Vogelzang 1996, 174.

124 Lambert 1982, 196-8; cf. Földi 2021c.

125 Rozzi 2021a; cf. Lambert 1960, 134-5.

126 Vogelzang 1996, 174-5; cf. Lambert 1960, 132-8; cf. Rozzi 2021a.

2. *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, ll. 79, 81, 83, 86 contain different forms of *balāṭu* 'to heal', 'to get better', and one derived substantive (*bulṭu* 'health').[127] Moreover, the hymn contains the epiphoric repetition, i.e. occurring at the end of the verse, of the independent personal pronoun: *anāku-ma* 'Am I', ll. 43, 67, 91, 148, 169, 187. This is another example of a key word.[128]

5.2.4.1.3 Enjambement

Cases of enjambement were observed exclusively in the *Šamaš Hymn*.

1. *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 145-6:
   [145]*mītu murtappidu eṭemmu ḫalqu*
   [146]*Šamaš imḫurūka talteme kalāma*
   [145]The roving dead, the vagrant soul
   [146]They confront you, Šamaš, and you hear all.[129]

2. *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 130-1:
   [130]*tašemme šamaš suppâ sullâ (u) karāba*
   [131]*šukenna kitmusa litḫuša (u) labān appi*
   [130]You observe, Šamaš, prayer, supplication and benediction,
   [131]Obeisance, kneeling, ritual murmurs and prostration.[130]

See also ll. 167-73 in the same text, where a series of relative clauses depend on the implied verb 'to be' in l. 173: *meḫerti nāri ša irteddû šamaš ina maḫrīka*, "The catch of the rivers, *what the rivers bring*, is before you".[131]

5.2.4.1.4 Anastrophe

Verbs in Penultimate Position

1. *Nabû Prayer*, l. 45:
   [45]*bēlu šalbābu **tassabus** eli ardīka*
   [45]O raging Lord, you have become angry with your servant.

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127 See Vogelzang 1996, 177; cf. Lambert 1967, 120-1; Földi 2021a.

128 Lambert 1967, 119-30; cf. Vogelzang 1996, 176-7.

129 Lambert 1960, 134-5; cf. Rozzi 2021a.

130 Lambert 1960, 134-5; cf. Rozzi 2021a.

131 Rozzi 2021a; cf. Lambert 1960, 136-7.

2. *Gula Syncretistic*, l. 56':
   56'*alkakāti mūdât **gummurat** šit[ūlta]*
   56'She knows how to proceed, she has complete mastery of
   deliberation.[132]

Inversion of Noun-Adjective

1. *Queen of Nippur*, col. ii, l. 12, *šīḫa lānšu*, "his lofty stature".[133]

2. *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, l. 58:
   58*šaqû rabû parṣū'a*
   58My ordinances are high and great.[134]

Fronting

1. *Queen of Nippur*, col. ii, l. 15 and 21:
   15***ittanall[a]k** qaddadāniš kamât ālīšu*;
   15He used to walk bent outside his city.[135]
   21***itabbak** ḫurbāša elīšu ana … šakinšu qūlu.*
   21She cast a chill of fear upon him, stupor befell him …[136]

2. *Marduk*1, l. 70:
   70***ibašši** ultu ulli mitluku šitūlu*
   70It is since yesteryear meet to meditate and reflect.[137]

5.2.5   Semantic Figures in the Akkadian Sources

Sumero-Akkadian poetry makes extensive use of figurative language, expressed through the semantic devices of simile and metaphor. The Akkadian simile is characterised by the presence of specific markers, such as the comparative particles *kī* or *kīma* 'like', 'as', or the adverbial suffixes *-iš* and *-āni*, or also *-āniš*. It can display a more or less complex structure: for instance, besides the standard construction which relies on one tenor, one vehicle and a linking component called *tertium comparationis*, similes can involve multiple tenors or vehicles (this type is defined by Wasserman as 'Multi-componential

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132   Bennett 2021, 202; cf. also Bennett 2023a.

133   Lambert 1982, 194-5; cf. Földi 2021c.

134   Lambert 1967, 118-9; cf. Földi 2021a

135   Lambert 1982, 194-5; cf. Földi 2021c.

136   See the new reading of this line in Földi 2021c; cf. Lambert 1982, 194-5.

137   Fadhil, Jiménez 2019, 168-9; cf. Oshima 2011, 148, 162.

simile'), or two *tertia comparationis* ('Multi-verb simile'). Similes can be expressed through complete sentences – Buccellati describes this type of simile as the 'true comparative clause', rarely found in Akkadian texts[138] – or display what Wasserman describes as a more 'cohesive syntactic structure', in which no explicit *tertium comparationis* is used, and the simile-marker functions as the only connecting element between the tenor and the vehicle ('non-explicit simile', see, e.g. in *Marduk*1, ll. 10/12 *ki-i a-bi re-e-muk*, "Your mercy is like that of a father").[139] 'Negative similes', i.e. similes formulated with a negative particle, are also attested in Akkadian.[140]

Metaphors can be distinguished from similes by their lack of a simile particle or a linking *tertium comparationis*; they can be nominal or verbal: metaphors concerning nouns can be structured into a nominal phrase, thus consisting in the mere juxtaposition of two substantives, that act as the vehicle and the tenor of the comparison (e.g. *Nabû Prayer*, l. 21: *lā pādûk girru*, "Your ruthlessness is fire"). This form of comparison is widely attested in Akkadian poetry.[141] Metaphors involving substantives can also be expressed through what Streck calls 'indirekte Identifikation', namely a construction in which the tenor is identified with the vehicle through apposition (e.g. in the *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 18 *mēreš ê napiš*[*ti*] *māti*, "the corn field, life of the land", Lambert 1960, 126-7, cf. Rozzi 2021a. Cf. below § 5.1.5.1.1 for further examples of 'indirekte Identifikation').[142] Furthermore, metaphorical predications can be expressed through genitive constructions (i.e. in the *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 17 *ṣerret šam*[*āmī*] 'the udders of heaven', see below § 5.2.5.1.1).[143]

On the other hand, verbal metaphors use verbs in a metaphorical sense, which changes the meaning of the nouns to which they refer, see, for example, the metaphorical meaning of the verb *zanānu* 'to rain', in a Marduk's epithet: *mušaznin nuḫši*, "the one who lets

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138 The example provided by Buccellati, after Schott 1926, 3, is the following: "The cat was miaowing just like a child would be crying" (Buccellati 1976, 60-1), cf. Wasserman 2003, 148.

139 Oshima 2011, 142, 158-9; cf. also Fadhil, Jiménez 2019, 167 and 169.

140 For 'non-explicit similes' see Wasserman 2003, 148-9; for 'negative similes', see Wasserman 2003, 149.

141 Mayer 1995, 172; Streck 1999, 38 and 97-117.

142 Streck 1999, 39.

143 Streck 1999, 39; he includes further sub-types of nominal metaphors, for instance the implicit metaphorical relationship resulting from parallel or chiastic structures, or also the combination of metaphors and similes in a single comparative structure, which he calls "Das komplexe Bild" (Streck 1999, 41-2; see 1999, 38-42 for the complete list). For various examples of nominal metaphors, see Streck 1999, 97-117.

abundance rain down".[144] Hence, in verbal metaphors the comparison is implicitly suggested through the use of a verb in the figurative sense.[145] The Mesopotamian imagery is mostly based on the animal kingdom and nature. The semantic fields of similes and metaphors can be related to humans, animals, nature, weather phenomena, physical objects, divine beings and abstract concepts.[146]

Similes and metaphors are not exclusive to literary texts, but also appear in letters, idiomatic expressions (often as 'dead metaphors')[147] and magic texts.

Merismus and hendiadys have also been included in this survey: they are akin, but the former is employed to indicate totality through the use of antipodal word-pairs, while the latter consists of the combination of two separate words, joined by a conjunction and understood as an individual unit.[148] As illustrated by Wasserman in his exhaustive study on this subject, hendiadys in the Akkadian texts serves to express a relationship of inalienability between its constituents; verbal hendiadys, moreover, is used to add certain nuances to the verbs, as it conveys aspectuality. Recent studies have shown that merismus occurs in Akkadian in both literary and non-literary sources; hendiadys – more specifically, verbal hendiadys – on the contrary, appears to be characteristic of literature, especially of the hymnic genre.[149]

Puns are found in Sumerian literature, e.g. hymns, laments and proverbs, and in Akkadian literary and magic texts as well: they can result from a lexical ambiguity caused by two words, identical or similar in sound, though different in meaning (homonymy and paronomasia, respectively), a single word which might have multiple meanings (double entendre), or two or more signs that can have multiple values, and thus allow various readings (polygraphy).[150] In word plays,

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144 Cf. Oshima 2011, 441. The verb *zanānu* (*AHw* III 1509-10; *CAD* Z 41-3) is often used in figurative expressions, as observed by Vogelzang 1996, 185: "Any object, both concrete and abstract, can rain down", cf. Streck 1999, 122.

145 Streck 1999, 40; for various examples of verbal metaphors, see Streck 1999, 117-23.

146 I take Wasserman 2003, 135-46 as a starting point for the list of semantic fields of similes and metaphors. Cf. also Streck 1999, 43-5.

147 Black 1998, 56-7.

148 For an explanation of merismus and hendiadys in general, see Lanham 1991, 59-60 and 82. For the occurrence of merismus and hendiadys in Akkadian, see Wasserman 2003: the author classifies the merismatic pairs on the basis of their semantic class, e.g. Time, Space, Social Groups and Nourishments (Wasserman 2003, 63). For merismus and hendiadys in Hebrew poetry, with comparisons to Akkadian and Ugaritic, see Watson 1986, 21-8; cf. also Watkins 1995, 45 for a general description of merismus in ancient poetry.

149 Wasserman 2003, 27-8 and 97.

150 Cf. Klein, Sefati 2000, 23-6.

sound might be interwoven with meaning:[151] since it can be difficult to perceive phonetic effects in ancient poetry (cf. above § 5.1), certain puns in Sumero-Akkadian sources could be missed by modern readers, or misinterpreted due to subjective interpretation.[152]

To my knowledge, very few Assyriological studies mention the figure of the climax. This figure, known in the Classical Studies as *Gradatio* and termed Sorites in the Biblical scholarship, consists of a series of words or clauses arranged in a progressively increasing order of importance, which results in a final climactic tension. It has been concisely treated by Wilcke in his study on Sumerian literature, in which one example of climax is offered.[153]

The last semantic figure that will be mentioned in the present discussion is poetic enumeration, a sequence of terms inserted in the poetic text. Indeed lists, ubiquitous in the cuneiform sources, were appreciated for their poetic quality, and were also employed in poetry as creative tools.[154] Enumerations in Mesopotamian texts are closely related to lexical lists, and occasionally depend on them (see chapter 4). Poetic enumerations in Akkadian literature are used to convey an idea of totality: the listed terms belong to the same semantic class, and their enumeration produces a sense of completeness, in a similar manner as merismus, which, however, involves the contrast between polar extremities (see above in this paragraph).[155]

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151 Certain puns can produce phonetic effects, for example alliteration or consonance; however, wordplay involves primarily individual words and their meaning, hence I have classified this device as belonging to the semantic figures. Cf. the Noegel 2011, esp. 163, who also treats separately alliteration and punning. Cf. also Plett 2010, 175 discussing the 'ambiguity' of wordplay: "The identity of a word-repetition can be disturbed not only by morphological deviations. The reason is that any word has phonological, graphemic and semantic aspects. If one or more of these aspects change and the others remain constant, then the morphological equivalence contains a wordplay".

152 Cf. Hurowitz 2000, 66.

153 Wilcke 1974, 218. Cf. also Watson 1985, 212-13 for the sorite in Biblical poetry, with one example in Akkadian literature drawn from the poem of Erra. For a definition of the climax, see Lanham 1991, 36 or Lausberg 1990, 84.

154 Cf. Van De Mieroop 2015, 73: "The list format invites an element of play"; cf. also Sadovski 2012, 153-4, commenting on von Soden's false assumption of the alleged superiority of Indo-European poetry, considered to be more complex in respect to the Mesopotamian one, which used lists: in fact, as shown by Sadovski, lists are widely employed in Indo-Iranian ritual poetry as well. More generally, on the poetic nature of lists, their inner structures and multiple facets, see Mainberger 2003. The author analyses what she calls the "enumerative games" ("enumerative Spiele", 7), and explores enumeration in its various functions and uses, not only in literary texts, but also in other genres and fields.

155 For the subtypes and functions of enumeration in Akkadian see Wasserman 2021, 9-11. Incidentally, Umberto Eco interprets lists as an expression of infinity, since they appear open to possible modifications, being therefore unfinished, and that is, 'infinite' in their own structure: "L'artista che tenta anche solo un elenco parziale di tutte le stelle dell'universo vuole in qualche modo far pensare a questo infinito oggettivo.

5.2.5.1 Semantic Figures in the *Great Hymns and Prayers*

5.2.5.1.1 Similes and Metaphors

The compositions under analysis employ the simile-marker preposition *kīma/kī* in the construction of similes, and occasionally display the subordinate clause introduced by *kīma ša*. In addition, they make great use of the adverbial suffix *-iš*, which is characteristic of the hymno-epic dialect, and is used as a simile-marker in comparative clauses. Furthermore, one text contains what appears to be an elsewhere unattested comparative adverbial suffix in *-šan* (see below, in the *Anūna Prayer*).[156]

The metaphor expressed through a nominal phrase, thus simply involving two juxtaposed words, occurs often as well; verbal metaphors are also found (see examples below).

The imagery in these poems accords overall with the standard topoi employed in the description of suffering in the Akkadian penitential prayers and wisdom texts: they often include similes and metaphors taken from the animal kingdom (e.g. the supplicant is likened to a moaning dove, or to a bull being slaughtered), or rely on stereotypical images, such as the sufferer who is compared to a prisoner,[157] or said to be stuck in a morass.[158] Furthermore, some of the figurative images appearing in the texts under study share common traits with the Biblical prayers, especially the Psalms (e.g. what Zernecke calls "the motif of the cessation of praise in death").[159]

For the purpose of this study, the following examples of similes and metaphors have been sorted according to their semantic fields, and further distinguished by their comparative markers.

L'infinito dell'estetica è un sentimento che consegue alla finita e perfetta compiutezza della cosa che si ammira, mentre l'altra forma di rappresentazione di cui parliamo (*sc.* la lista) suggerisce quasi *fisicamente* l'infinito, perché di fatto essa non finisce, non si conclude in forma" (Eco 2019, 17). Cf. also Rubio 2003, 203, who mentions the usage of open enumeration in different ancient literary texts (e.g. in Homer), and its literary implications in Sumerian texts.

156 See Mayer 1995 for a list of occurrences of the adverbial terminative *-iš* used in the comparative sense.

157 See e.g. *Ištar Prayer*, l. 223: [*ana ša bīt ṣibitti*]*m ukallam nūra*, "[To the one who is in pris]on she shows light".

158 See e.g. *Nabû Prayer*, l. 52. On the standard imagery of prayers and 'righteous sufferer' compositions, see Van der Toorn 1985, 65. Cf. chapter 2, § 2.4.1 and chapter 3, § 3.4.1.

159 Zernecke 2014, 35. This motif is found in *Marduk*1, ll. 66-9, cf. Oshima 2011, 147 and 162-3; cf. also Fadhil, Jiménez 2019, 168 and 170.

Similes

Animals

- with *kīma/kī/kīma ša*

1. *Nabû Prayer*, l. 57:
    ⁵⁷[k]*īma lê ša ina naplāqi palqu irammu ši*[*gmiš*]
    ⁵⁷[L]ike a bull who is slaughtered with a butchering knife, he bellows lo[udly].¹⁶⁰

- with suffix

2. *Ištar Prayer*, l. 104:
    ¹⁰⁴*summeš idanammumma* […]
    ¹⁰⁴Like a dove … [h]e [mo]aned and […]

3. *Ištar Prayer*, l. 183 (broken context): *iṣṣūriš*, "like a bird".

Human Beings

- with *kīma/kī/kīma ša*

1. *Marduk*1, l. 133:
    ¹³³*kī lallari qubê ušaṣrap*
    ¹³³Like a mourner, he utters bitter cries¹⁶¹

2. *Anūna Prayer*, l. 99:
    ⁹⁹*īnīššu dimtum iqarrurā kī dāmimi*
    ⁹⁹Tears flow from his eyes like a mourner.¹⁶²

- with suffix

3. *Anūna Prayer*, l. 100 (the suffix *-šan* is elsewhere unattested):¹⁶³
    ¹⁰⁰*dumāmiš ūttaḫaš lā ālittašan*
    ¹⁰⁰He sobs in mourning like a barren woman.¹⁶⁴

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160   This phrase is an example of the so-called 'complete-sentence simile' (see above § 5.2.5).

161   Oshima 2011, 152, 164-5; the translation here follows Lambert 1959-60, 58.

162   Lambert 1989, 328 and 331.

163   Lambert 1989, 335. Cf. Mayer 1995, 185.

164   Lambert 1989, 328 and 331.

4. *Anūna Prayer*, l. 106:
    ¹⁰⁶*mimma ul āmura-ma-an*ˀ *ḫabīliš*
    ¹⁰⁶I have not experienced anything as a criminal.[165]

Nature

• with *kīma/kī/kīma ša*

1. *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 121:
    ¹²¹*kīma mê nagbi dārî zēr*[*šu(nu)*] *dā*[*ri*]
    ¹²¹And like the water of a never failing spring [his] descend-
    ants will nev[er fail].[166]

2. *Marduk*2, l. 80:
    ⁸⁰*bēlum uggukka k*[*ī*] *gapuš abūšin*
    ⁸⁰Lord, your anger is [l]ike a massive delu[ge][167]

3. *Nabû Prayer*, l. 78:
    ⁷⁸*kī taltalti luttaggiš ina k*[*amâti*]
    ⁷⁸"Like the pollen of a date palm, shall I drift about in op[en country]?

• with suffix

1. *Nabû Prayer*, ll. 178-9:
    ¹⁷⁸*aḫrâtaš pisnuqiš lallāriš udašš*[*ap*]
    ¹⁷⁹*alamittu uḫenša daddariš mā*[*r*]
    ¹⁷⁸With time, what (seemed) pitiable, he swee[tens] like syrup,
    ¹⁷⁹The early fruit of the date-palm is bit[ter] like stinkwort

Inanimate Objects and Abstracta

• with *kīma/kī/kīma ša*

1. *Gula Hymn*, ll. 133-4:
    ¹³³*apir šamê kīma agê*
    ¹³⁴*šēnu erṣeta kīma šēni*
    ¹³³He wears the heavens on his head like a turban,
    ¹³⁴He is shod with the underworld as with sandals.[168]

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[165]   Lambert 1989, 328 and 331. This line is an example of the so-called 'negative simile' (Wasserman 2003, 149), i.e. a simile which contains a negative particle (see above, § 5.2.5).

[166]   Lambert 1960, 132-3; cf. Rozzi 2021a.

[167]   For the new reading of this line, see Jiménez 2022, 200; cf. Oshima 2011, 229, 244-5. This is a case of 'copulative simile' (Wasserman 2003, 148), i.e. a non-explicit simile in which there is no *tertium comparationis* and the simile-marker serves the function of a copula (see above, § 5.2.5).

[168]   Lambert 1967, 124-5. These two similes can be defined as 'similes of *instrumentalis*', i.e. 'similes whose tenor serves as an *instrumentalis*', see Wasserman 2003, 149.

2. *Ištar Prayer*, l. 100:
   ¹⁰⁰*kīma igāri ša iquppu* [*i'abbat*?]
   ¹⁰⁰Like a tottering wall [he will fall down].[169]

Divine Beings

- with *kīma/kī/kīma ša*

1. *Marduk*2, l. 44:
   ⁴⁴[*k*]*ī Girru ezzi zā'ira tašarrap*
   ⁴⁴Like the furious fire-god you burn up the foe.[170]

Metaphors

Animals

- nominal

1. *Marduk*1, ll. 5/7: *ša amāruk šibbu*, "You, whose stare is a dragon".[171]

2. *Marduk*2, l. 45: *ušumgallu uzzaka*, "Your rage is a ušumgallu-snake".[172]

3. *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, l. 29: *rīmu šaqû rēšu*, "The wild bull with lofty head", i.e. Ninurta.[173]

Nature

- nominal

1. *Marduk*2, l. 38'':
   ³⁸*šēpāka nagbu edû qātāka*
   ³⁸Your feet are a spring, your hands are a huge wave.[174]

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169 If my restoration is correct, this is another example of 'complete-sentence' simile (see § 5.2.5).

170 Oshima 2011, 226, 242-3.

171 Oshima 2011, 142, 158 and 159; cf. also Fadhil, Jiménez 2019, 167 and 169; Mayer 1995, 172.

172 Oshima 2011, 226, 242-3.

173 Lambert 1967, 116-17; cf. Földi 2021a. This metaphor construction is in apposition to the name of the god, which appears further in l. 34; apposition is classified by Streck among the subtype 'Indirekte Identifikation' (Streck 1999, 40).

174 Translation by the Author. For the reading of this line, see the recently identified fragment BM 55408 published in George, Taniguchi 2019, no. 126. Cf. Oshima 2011, 238, 250-1.

2. *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 17 (also *Marduk*2, l. 9):[175] *ṣerret šamāmī*, "the udders of Heaven", i.e. the clouds.[176]

• verbal

1. *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, l. 165 (*nalāšu* 'to dew', 'to rain', *AHw* II 724; *CAD* N/1 199):
   [165]*ina šadāhīya kuzbu inalluš*
   [165]When I go in procession, sexuality rains down.[177]

Inanimate Objects and Abstracta

• nominal

1. *Marduk*1, l. 69: *epru mītu*, "dead dust", i.e. a dead man.[178]

2. *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 95: *ša kāṣir anzilli qarnīšu*, "the horns of a scheming villain", i.e. the power.[179]

• verbal

1. *Marduk*1, l. 126 (*reḫû* 'to pour', *AHw* II 969; *CAD* R *252*-4, see 253 mng. 3a):
   [126]*elīšu irteḫḫû* [*i*]*mṭû tanēḫu*
   [126]They have poured upon him depletion and distress.[180]

2. *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, l. 150 (*sakāpu* 'to throw', *AHw* II 1011, sub *sakāpu* I; *CAD* S 70-4 sub *sakāpu* A; *nadû* 'to throw', *AHw* II 705-9 sub *nadû* III; *CAD* N/1 68-100)
   [150]*sākip ṣālti nādû tuqunti*
   [150]Who sets strife in motion, lets loose warfare.[181]

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175 Lambert 1960, 126-7; cf. Rozzi 2021a; for *Marduk*2, see Oshima 2011, 222, 240-1.

176 Cf. Lambert 1960, 127, who translates: "the *vault* of the Heavens", but compare the more recent translation by Foster *apud* Rozzi 2021a. This Akkadian expression is a translation from the Sumerian u b u r a n - n a 'teat of heaven', cf. Hurowitz 1998, 262-3; cf. also Streck 1999, 110. Following Streck, this metaphorical construction can be termed as 'Genitivverbindung' (Streck 1999, 40).

177 Lambert 1967, 126-7; cf. Földi 2021a.

178 Oshima 2011, 148, 162-3. Cf. also Fadhil, Jiménez 2019, 168 and 170.

179 Lambert 1960, 130-1; cf. Rozzi 2021a. The whole verse reads: *ša kāṣir anzilli qarnīšu tuballa*, "You destroy the horns of the scheming villain", cf. Ps. 75:10, "All the horns of the wicked I will cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up" (translation taken from the English Standard Version, 2017).

180 Oshima 2011, 151, 165-5.

181 Lambert 1967, 126-7; cf. Földi 2021a.

3. *Queen of Nippur*, col. ii, l. 21 (*tabāku* 'to pour', *AHw* III 1295-6; *CAD* T 1-10)
   ²¹*itabbak hurbāša elīšu ana … šakinšu qūlu*
   ²¹(the demon Kilili) pours silence over him.[182]

- nominal

1. *Nabû Prayer*, l. 21: [*Adad*(?) *šagi*]*mmuk*, "Your roar is Adad", i.e. 'Your roar is like a storm'.

5.2.5.1.2   Hendiadys

1. *Anūna Prayer*, l. 166 (*riddu/ṭūbu*):
   ¹⁶⁶[   ] x bi/ga *riddī u ṭūbī*
   ¹⁶⁶[   ] … my favourable guidance (lit. my guidance and my favours).[183]

2. *Ištar Prayer*, ll. 182-3 (*nadānu/uzzuzu*; *nadānu/šâbu*)
   ¹⁸²*iddinšumma uzzaza* […]
   ¹⁸³*iddinšumma idammu išâ*[*b* …]
   ¹⁸²He let himself become furious… […]
   ¹⁸³He let himself have convulsions, sha[ke …].[184]

3. *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 126 (*ḫamāṭu/pašāru*)
   ¹²⁶*tušaḫmaṭ ṣīt pîšunu tapaššar attā*
   ¹²⁶In a moment you discern what they say.[185]

5.2.5.1.3   Merismus

1. *Queen of Nippur*, col. ii, l. 3: *eṭlu/ardatu*
   ³[*eṭlu*] *u ardatu isurru i*[*mmellū*]
   ³[Young man] and young woman danced and [made merry][186]

2. *Nabû Prayer*, ll. 176-7: two merismi structured into a chiasmus, *meṣḫeru/šīdītu*; *māru/mārtu*
   ¹⁷⁶*šēr rēṣūtija šuršurrū ḫinzūri*

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182   Lambert 1982, 194-5; cf. Földi 2021c.

183   Lambert 1989, 328 and 331; cf. Wasserman 2003, 12.

184   Cf. Groneberg 1987, II: 47.

185   Lambert 1960, 134-5; cf. Rozzi 2021a. Merismatic pairs usually have a fixed order, in which the male component always precedes the female one. Cf. Wasserman 2003, 92-3.

186   Lambert 1982, 194-5; cf. Földi 2021c.

¹⁷⁷*mesḫēru šī[dītu(?)] | mārtu mār[u]*
¹⁷⁶My morning aid, the fruits of the apple-tree,
¹⁷⁷youth (and) maid[en]/ daughter (and) so[n].[187]

3. *Ištar Prayer*, l. 181: *tappû-rū'u*
    ¹⁸¹*ištīssu tappû ru'û uš[šurūšu?]*
    ¹⁸¹Companions and friends le[ft him] alone.

4. *Anūna Prayer*, l. 66: *immu-mūšu*
    ⁶⁶*ittalak imma u mūša a-*[…]
    ⁶⁶He has run around days and nights.[188]

5. *Ištar Prayer*, l. 228: *ṣit šamši-šalām šamši*
    ²²⁸[*ištu ṣīt šam*]*ši ana šalāmu šamši*
    ²²⁸[From the rising of the] sun to the setting of the sun.

5.2.5.1.4   Climax

1. *Marduk*2, l. 62:
    ⁶²*ašrum-ma paliḫ kitmusu ila ireddi*
    ⁶²Humble, frightful, prostrated, he follows (his) god[189]

2. *Ištar Prayer*, l. 160 :
    ¹⁶⁰*ṣurrup šussuk arim kalā*[*šu*]
    ¹⁶⁰He is burnt, thrown down, completely overwhelmed.

5.2.5.1.5   Pun

1. *Gula Syncretistic*, l. 16:
    ¹⁶*puḫur billi upšāšê rikis nēmeqi* […]
    ¹⁶All the complex magic procedures, the collected wisdom, […]

This line seems to hint at a polysemy: the term *riksu* mostly signifies 'binding', 'bond' or, in particularly in connection with the healing aspect of Gula, 'medical bandage' (*AHw* II 984-5; *CAD* R 347-55); in this line, however, the term *riksu* yields the different, far less common meaning of 'assemblage of knowledge'.[190]

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187   For the meaning of the *hapax legomena mesḫeru* and *šīdītu*, see the commentary on this line in chapter 2.

188   Lambert 1989, 326 and 330; cf. Wasserman 2003, 67.

189   Cf. Streck 2003, 56: "Demütig, ehrfürchtig, tief(?) gebeugt folgt er seinem Gott". Cf. Oshima 2011, 227, 242-3.

190   Bennett 2021, 230.

2. *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, ll. 114-15:
    ¹¹⁴*rēmēnû supî išemmi*
    ¹¹⁵*ragga ayyāba ušemmi*¹⁹¹ *tiṭṭiš*
    ¹¹⁴Merciful, he hears prayer,
    ¹¹⁵The wicked and enemies he turns into clay.¹⁹²

This is a *paronomasia*: the verbal forms *išemme* 'he hears', and *ušemmi* 'he turns' are similar in sound, but different in meaning.

3. *Nabû Prayer*, l. 25:
    ²⁵[*bēlu šibbu*(?) *amā*]*ruk* [*u*]*rpatu nekelmûk*
    ²⁵[O Lord], your [gla]re is [a serpent], your frown is a [dar]k cloud.

If my restoration is correct, this is a double entendre: *a-ma-ruk* can be understood as derived from *amāru* 'to see' (*AHw* I 40-2; *CAD* A/2 4.27) followed by the suffix -*k*(*a*), which would parallel *nekelmû* + -*k*(*a*) 'your frowning' (*AHw* II 775; *CAD* N/2 152-3) in the second hemistich, or as the Sumerian loan word *Emarukku/Amarukku* 'deluge', see *AHw* I 211. Similar word play can be observed in *Marduk*1, ll. 5/7: (*marduk*) *ša amāruk šibbu gapaš abūšin*, "Marduk, whose stare is a dragon, a flood overwhelming".¹⁹³

4. *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 143
    ¹⁴³*muttaḫlilu šarrāqu muṣallû ša šamši*
    ¹⁴³The footpad, the robber are prayerful to the Sun.¹⁹⁴

Or:
    ¹⁴³The prowling robber, the enemy of the Sun.¹⁹⁵

This could represent a further case of double entendre, since the term *muṣallû* can be interpreted in two ways: *muṣallû* can be understood as derived from the verb *sullû/ṣullû*, which means 'to pray' or 'to beseech' (*AHw* III 1056; *CAD* 366-8), and would parallel the verb *maḫārum* in the line immediately following (*muttaggišu imaḫḫarka* 'The bandit confronts you', l. 144). Alternatively, it could also be the rare noun *muṣallû*, found in lexical lists (cf. *AHw* II 678; *CAD* M/2

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191 The main manuscript has a scribal mistake and shows the form *i-šem-mi* also in l. 115, cf. Lambert 1967, 122.

192 Lambert 1967, 121-2.

193 Fadhil, Jiménez 2019, 167, 169; cf. Oshima 2011, 142, 158-9.

194 See Rozzi 2021a, translation by Foster.

195 Lambert 1960, 135-5.

241), which bears the meaning of 'liar' or 'evildoer'.[196] The term *muttaḫlilu* could be understood as a noun or as an adjective refer-ring to *sarraqu* (the adjective in the first position agrees with the el-evated language observed in Akkadian poetry).[197]

5. *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 171-3
   [171]*laḫmū šūt tâmti ša malû puluḫta*
   [172]*erib tâmti ša apsâ ibāʾū*
   [173]*meḫerti nāri ša irteddû šamaš ina maḫrīka*
   [171]Monsters from the sea, filled with fearsomeness,
   [172]Denizens of the ocean, who traverse the depths,
   [173]The catch of the rivers, they are what they lead, O Sha-mash, before you.[198]

A third example of double entendre is found in these lines: in fact, *er-bu* in *erib tâmti* can be understood as both *irbu/erbu* 'income' (*AHw* I 233-4; *CAD* I 173-5), thus paralleling with *meḫertu* 'abundance' in the following line, and as *erbu* 'Locust' (*AHw* I 234; *CAD* E 255-7, which would instead parallel the *lahmū*-monsters in the line imme-diately preceding [171]).[199]

5.2.5.1.6   Enumeration

1. *Nabû Prayer*, l. 216:
   [216][*leq*]*e damāṣa balāṣa u utnenšu*
   [216][Ta]ke the prostrating, the bowing and his prayer

2. *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 130-1:
   [130]*tašemme šamaš suppâ sullâ (u) karāba*
   [131]*šukenna kitmusa litḫuša (u) labān appi*
   [130]You observe, Šamaš, prayer, supplication, and benediction,
   [131]obeisance, kneeling, ritual murmurs, and prostration.[200]

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196 Cf. also a Late Babylonian letter, perhaps an exercise, which opens with: lu2IR₃meš-*ka ù mu-ṣal-li-ʿiʾ šá* DIĜIRme, May your servants and the one praying to your gods', see Wagensonner 2020, 203.

197 See George 2003, 424.

198 Rozzi 2021a; cf. Lambert 1960, 136-7.

199 This double entendre was observed by Shalom M. Paul (2005, 253-4), who also identifies a janus parallelism in this set of verses, i.e. a parallelism that involves three stichs, in which a central element provides a pun with both the preceding and the follow-ing stich, see Noegel 2021, 175-6: "Multidirectional polysemy, frequently called 'Janus parallelism' or less often 'pivotal polysemy', is distinguished from unidirectional polyse-my in that it exploits a single word that has two meanings, one of which faces back to a previous line, while the other faces forward to one that follows", with further references.

200 Lambert 1960, 135; cf. Rozzi 2021a.

5.2.6 Morphological figures in the Akkadian sources

This short section contains some examples of four morphological figures – i.e, figures that operate on the morphological level of language – commonly found in Akkadian poetry, namely the *figura etymologica*, the polyptoton, the anadiplosis and the epanadiplosis.[201]

The *figura etymologica* can be defined as "the coupling of a (usually intransitive) verb and a noun derived from the same root (*to sing a song, ein Leben leben*)".[202] The polyptoton, on the other hand, can concern nouns or verbs: the nominal polyptoton consists in the repetition of a word, varied in case, number or gender; in the verbal polyptoton, instead, the alteration mainly involves the conjugations, the tenses, and the plural or singular form of the verbs.[203] Both these figures are used for intensification and emphasis, but also serve the aesthetic purpose of variation.[204]

In addition, the device of anadiplosis, also known as 'terrace pattern' in the Biblical studies,[205] is the repetition of the last morpheme of a verse at the beginning of the following line. It has the function of creating tension, slowing down the pace of the verses and thus capturing the audience's attention.[206] It resembles the device of the epanadiplosis, namely the repetition of the same word or morpheme at the beginning and at the end of a verse or couplet.[207]

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201 These rhetorical devices are often found also in Hebrew and Ugaritic poetry, see e.g. McCreesh 1991, 76 for the usage of polyptoton in Genesis and in the book of Proverbs; see Watson 1986, 239 for the occurrence of the *figura etymologica* in the Biblical poetry, with some examples from Ugaritic and Akkadian; and cf. also Watson 1986, 208-13, 356-9 and 273 for several attestations of anadiplosis in Hebrew and Ugaritic sources.

202 Citation from Plett 2010, 174. Cf. Lanham 1991, 117 and Lausberg 1998, 288.

203 Plett 2010, 173-4. Cf. also Brogan 1993b, 967-8.

204 Cf. Lausberg 1998, 288, with regard to polyptoton: "the contrast between the equivalence of the word and the difference in its syntactic function has an enlivening effect"; cf. also Plett 2010, 175. See Dardano 2019 for a study on the *figura etymologica* and the polyptoton, in addition to other rhetorical devices, in Hittite prayers.

205 Watson 1986, 208.

206 For a definition of the anadiplosis, see also Lanham 1991, 10; cf. also Lausberg 1990, 82-3 sub *reduplicatio*. Compare Watson 1986, 209-10 for other possible functions of the device of anadiplosis in Hebrew, Ugaritic and Akkadian.

207 For a definition of the epanadiplosis, see Marchese 1978, 82.

5.2.6.1 Morphological Figures in the *Great Hymns and Prayers*

5.2.6.1.1 *Figura Etymologica*

1. *Queen of Nippur*, col. iv, l. 16 (*šiāmu/šīmtu*):
   ¹⁶*maḫriš* (|) *itti* (|) *enlil* | *išâm* | *šīmta*
   ¹⁶She decrees destinies in front of Enlil's sign.[208]

2. *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 101 (*diānu/dīnu*):
   ¹⁰¹*dayyānu muštālu ša dīn mīšari idīnu*
   ¹⁰¹A circumspect judge who pronounces just verdicts.[209]

3. *Anūna Prayer*, l. 84 (*anāḫu/inḫu*):
   ⁸⁴*inḫa īnaḫu ušann*[*a*]
   ⁸⁴He repeats the toils he has wearied himself with[210]

5.2.6.1.2 Polyptoton

1. *Šamaš Hymn*, ll. 23-4 (*tapaqqid/paqdāka*):
   ²³*nišī mātāti kullassina tapaqqid*
   ²⁴*ša ea šar malkī uštabnû || kalîš paqdāka*
   ²³You care for all the peoples of the lands,
   ²⁴And everything that Ea, king of the counsellors, had creat-
    ed, is entrusted to you[211]

2. *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, l. 117 (*ašarēd ašarēdī*):[212]
   ¹¹⁷*ninurta ašarēd ašarēdī mār enlil gašru*
   ¹¹⁷Ninurta, foremost of the foremost, mighty son of Enlil.[213]

3. *Queen of Nippur*, col. iv, ll. 47-9 (*nigûti/nigûta*):
   ⁴⁷*ina bīt arḫi isinni tašīlāti nigût*[*i*]
   ⁴⁸*šemî-ma bēltu kabattuk liḫd*[*i*]
   ⁴⁹*līliṣ libbuk līteriš nigû*[*ta*]
   ⁴⁷In the house of the monthly festival, (wherein is) joy and mirth,

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208 Lambert 1982, 202-3; cf. Földi 2021c.

209 Lambert 1960, 132-3; cf. Rozzi 2021a.

210 Lambert 1989, 326 and 330.

211 Lambert 1960, 126-7; cf. Rozzi 2021a.

212 Cf. Schäfer 1974, 148-55, who calls this kind of formulation the "paronomastische Intensitätsgenitiv".

213 Lambert 1967, 122-3; cf. Földi 2021a.

⁴⁸Harken, mistress, that your reins rejoice,
⁴⁹Let your heart be glad and ask for mirth.²¹⁴

5.2.6.1.3   Anadiplosis

1. *Marduk2*, ll. 68-9:
    ⁶⁸*kī ītennu bēlu ištaʾal irēm ušpaššiḫ*
    ⁶⁹*ušpaššiḫ Marduk rēmēnû utār ana dumqi*
    ⁶⁸Once the lord has raged, he reflects, has mercy, and relents,
    ⁶⁹Merciful Marduk relents and turns (his rage) into kindness.²¹⁵

2. *Šamaš Hymn* ll. 55-6:
    ⁵⁵[…] … *ša riksāti kitmusū maḫarka*
    ⁵⁶[*ina maḫ*]*rīka kitmusū raggu u kīnu*
    ⁵⁵[Those who are preparing for] rites kneel before you.
    ⁵⁶[Be]fore you kneel both wicked and just.²¹⁶

5.2.6.1.4   Epanadiplosis

1. *Marduk2*, ll. 32-3
    ³²ʾ*tušpaššaḫ sagiqqa tušnāḫ bubūtīšu*
    ³³ʾ*bušāna tīb nakkapti mušarqida tušpaššaḫ*
    ³²ʾYou soothe the muscular ailment, you ease his boils.
    ³³ʾYou soothe the leprosy, the blow on the brow that makes
    one jump around.²¹⁷

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214 Lambert 1982, 204-5; cf. Földi 2021c.

215 See Jiménez 2021, 162, with further examples of anadiplosis. Cf. Oshima 2011, 228, 244-5.

216 Translation by Foster, *apud* Rozzi 2021a; cf. Lambert 1960, 128-9.

217 Oshima 2011, 248-9. I owe this reference to E. Jiménez.

5.3 Summary

The above survey is a preliminary study on the rhetorical techniques which can be found within the corpus under consideration:[218] as is clear from the previous examples, there is some degree of overlap between the figures, since multiple poetic devices can occur at the same time: for instance, in the *Šamaš Hymn*, l. 39 exhibits both alliteration and homoioteleuton, see above § 5.2.3.1.1; or, in *Gula Bullussa-rabi*, the rhyming couplet formed by ll. 115-16 also constitutes a synthetic parallelism, see § 5.2.3.1.5. Moreover, devices might be interpreted and labelled in different ways: rhyme, for example, might be considered as a form of repetition, or the various sub types of parallelism might appear as only vaguely distinguishable.[219]

As difficult as it is to make a definite distinction between rhetorical figures, and to identify those devices, which may be of particular significance in the outline of a general rhetorical analysis, it seems clear that the *Great Hymns and Prayers* are highly sophisticated poetic compositions. Although it is challenging to determine the exact context in which these texts were used, it is evident, through the analysis of their poetic elements, that the secondary audience of the *Great Hymns and Prayers* comprised highly advanced scribes, who were erudite scholars capable of appreciating the intricate stylistic features we have highlighted.

Following the criteria given by Groneberg in her study on the definition of literary and lyrical texts in Akkadian, it can be observed that the corpus under study contains all the features indicative of 'poeticality'.[220] Indeed, they are occasionally characterised by a visual arrangement, being divided into distichs or strophes by horizontal rulings; they use a specific literary dialect (the hymno-epic dialect), which includes a special vocabulary; and they follow a metrical pattern, which interweaves with other sound effects, such as phonetic

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[218] Several poetic devices have not been included in the present analysis. For instance, cases of ellipsis have been omitted, because they seldom appear in these compositions (for an occurrence of ellipsis, see e.g. *Nabû Prayer*, l. 217, in which the verb *leqû* 'to take', is implied. For the edition of the text and the commentary on this line, see chapter 2). Another device that has not been mentioned in this section is the *enjambement*, which is rarely attested in Akkadian, and also scarcely used within the *Great Hymns and Prayers* (although they do appear in the *Šamaš Hymn*, e.g. ll. 43-4; cf. Groneberg 1987, 1: 184-5). In addition, the hyperbole has not been included here, hyperbolic expressions being typical of hymnic passages, and therefore not deemed as particularly significant for the purpose of this analysis. For hyperbole in hymns, see the introduction of the *Nabû Prayer* and the *Ištar Prayer* in chapter 2 and 3.

[219] Cf. Watson 1986, 131 on the difficulty in the classification of parallelisms.

[220] Groneberg 1996.

devices or puns.[221] Furthermore, they are enriched with imagery, evoked by similes and metaphors.

Each of these components contributes to the final result, which is a combination of sound and rhythm, of intra- and intertextual connections, of implicit allusions or vivid symbolic images: in a word, poetry.

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221 For these particular aspects, i.e. the format of tablets, the language and the metrical system, cf. chapter 1, § 1.2.3 and § 1.2.4.