



McDONALD INSTITUTE CONVERSATIONS

Fierce lions, angry mice and fat-tailed sheep

Animal encounters
in the ancient Near East

Edited by Laerke Recht & Christina Tsouparopoulou



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& Christina Tsouparopoulou

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Published by:

McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research
University of Cambridge
Downing Street
Cambridge, UK
CB2 3ER
(0)(1223) 339327
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McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 2021

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ISBN: 978-1-913344-05-4

On the cover: *Shepherd with sheep, palace ruins in background,*
photograph taken by Gertrude Bell at Mashetta, Jordan in March 1900;
A_232, The Gertrude Bell archive, Newcastle University.

Cover design by Dora Kemp and Ben Plumridge.
Typesetting and layout by Ben Plumridge.

Edited for the Institute by Cyprian Broodbank (*Acting Series Editor*).

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Abbreviations and sigla

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| ABL | Harper, R.F., 1892–1914. <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum</i> , 14 volumes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. | ARM 30 | Durand, J.-M., 2009. <i>La nomenclature des habits et des textiles dans les textes de Mari</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 30.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner. |
| AHw | von Soden, W., 1959-1981. <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> . Wiesbaden. | AUCT 1 | Sigrist, M., 1984. <i>Neo-Sumerian Account Texts in the Horn Archaeological Museum</i> . (Andrews University Cuneiform Texts 1.) Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press. |
| AKA I | Wallis Budge, E.A. & L.W. King, 1902. <i>Annals of the Kings of Assyria: The Cuneiform Texts with Translations and Transliterations from the Original Documents in the British Museum</i> . Vol. I. London: The Trustees of the British Museum. | BabMed | Babylonian Medicine online [no year]: ‘Corpora’, https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/babmed/Corpora/index.html |
| AMT | Campbell Thompson, R., 1923. <i>Assyrian Medical Texts</i> . Milford, Oxford: Oxford University Press. | BAM | Köcher, F., 1963–1980. <i>Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen</i> , 6 Vols. Berlin: De Gruyter. |
| AnOr 8 | Pohl, A., 1933. <i>Neubabylonische Rechtsurkunden aus den Berliner staatlichen Museen</i> . (Analecta Orientalia 8.) Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum. | BCT 1 | Watson, P.J., 1986. <i>Neo-Sumerian Texts from Drehem</i> . (Catalogue of Cuneiform Tablets in Birmingham City Museum I.) Warminster: Aris & Phillips. |
| AO | Siglum of objects in the Louvre Museum, Paris (Archéologie Orientale). | BIN 1 | Keiser, C.E., 1917. <i>Letters and Contracts from Erech Written in the Neo-Babylonian Period</i> . (Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of James B. Nies, vol. 1.) New Haven: Yale University Press. |
| ARM 2 | Jean, Ch.-F., 1950. <i>Lettres diverses</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 2.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner. | BIN 3 | Keiser, C.E., 1971. <i>Neo-Sumerian Account Texts from Drehem</i> . (Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of B.J. Nies, vol. 3.) New Haven: Yale University Press. |
| ARM 9 | Biro, M., 1958. <i>Textes administratifs de la Salle 5 du Palais</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 9.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner. | BM | Siglum for objects in the British Museum, London. |
| ARM 10 | Dossin, G., 1978. <i>Correspondance feminine</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 10.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner. | BPOA | Biblioteca del Próximo Oriente Antiguo (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2006ff.) |
| ARM 14 | Biro, M., 1974. <i>Lettres de Yaqqim-Addu, gouverneur de Sagarâtum</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 14.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner. | BPOA 6 | Sigrist, M., & T. Ozaki, 2009a. <i>Neo-Sumerian Administrative Tablets from the Yale Babylonian Collection. Part One</i> (Biblioteca del Próximo Oriente Antiguo 6.) Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. |
| ARM 15 | Bottero, J. & A. Finet, 1954. <i>Repertoire analytique des tomes I à V</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 15.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner. | BPOA 7 | Sigrist, M., & T. Ozaki, 2009b. <i>Neo-Sumerian Administrative Tablets from the Yale Babylonian Collection. Part Two</i> (Biblioteca del Próximo Oriente Antiguo 7.) Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. |
| ARM 26 | Durand, J.-M. et al., 1988. <i>Archives épistolaires de Mari</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 26.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner. | BRM 1 | Clay, A.T., 1912. <i>Babylonian Business Transactions of the First Millennium B.C.</i> (Babylonian Records |
| ARM 27 | Biro, M., 1993. <i>Correspondance des gouverneurs de Qatṭunân</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 27.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner. | | |
| ARM 28 | Kupper, J.-R., 1998. <i>Lettres royales du temps de Zimri-Lim</i> . (Archives royales de Mari 28.) Paris: Lib. Paul Geuthner. | | |

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| | in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan, Part 1.) New York: Privately printed. | HSS 14 | Lacheman, E.R., 1950. <i>Excavations at Nuzi V. Miscellaneous Texts from Nuzi, Part 2, The Palace and Temple Archives.</i> (Harvard Semitic Studies 14.) Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard Univ. Press. |
| CAD | <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.</i> Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1956–2010. | HW ² | Friedrich, J. & A. Kammenhuber (eds.), 1975–. <i>Hethitisches Wörterbuch. Zweite, völlig neubearbeitete Auflage auf der Grundlage der edierten hethitischen Texte.</i> Heidelberg: Winter. |
| CBS | Siglum for objects in the University Museum in Philadelphia (Catalogue of the Babylonian Section). | IB | Siglum for finds from Isin (Isan Bahriyat). |
| CDLI | Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative, https://cdli.ucla.edu | IM | Siglum for objects in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad. |
| CHD | Goedegebuure, P.M., H.G. Güterbock, H.A. Hoffner & T.P.J. van den Hout (eds.), 1980–. <i>The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.</i> Chicago: The Oriental Institute. | ITT 5 | de Genouillac, H., 1921. <i>Inventaire des Tablettes de Tello conservées au Musée Imperial Ottoman. Tome V. Époque présargonique, Époque d'Agadé, Époque d'Ur III.</i> Paris: Édition Ernest Leroux. |
| CM 26 | Sharlach, T.M., 2004. <i>Provincial Taxation and the Ur III State.</i> (Cuneiform Monographs 26.) Leiden: Brill. | KAH 2 | Schroeder, O. 1922. <i>Keilschrifttexte aus Assur historischen Inhalts, Heft II.</i> (Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 37.) Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung. |
| CT 22 | Campbell Thompson, R., 1906. <i>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in British Museum</i> , vol. 22. London: British Museum. | KBo | <i>Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi</i> (Bd. 1-22 in Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft) Leipzig/Berlin, 1916 ff. |
| CT 32 | King, L.W., 1912. <i>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in British Museum</i> , vol. 32. London: British Museum. | KRI | Kitchen, K.A., 1969–1990. <i>Ramesside Inscriptions. Historical and Biographical</i> , 8 vols. Oxford: Blackwell. |
| CT 55 | Pinches, T.G. 1982. <i>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum Part 55. Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Economic Texts.</i> London: British Museum Publications. | KUB | <i>Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi</i> , Berlin 1921 ff. |
| CTH | Laroche, E. 1971. <i>Catalogue des Textes Hittites.</i> Paris: Klincksieck. | LAPO 16 | Durand, J.-M., 1997. <i>Les Documents épistolaires du palais de Mari, tome I.</i> (Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient 16.) Paris: Éditions du cerf. |
| DAS | Lafont, B., 1985. <i>Documents Administratifs Sumériens, provenant du site de Tello et conservés au Musée du Louvre.</i> Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations. | LAPO 18 | Durand, J.-M., 2000. <i>Les Documents épistolaires du palais de Mari, tome III.</i> (Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient 18.) Paris: Éditions du cerf. |
| DMMA | Siglum for objects in the Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques de la Bibliothèque nationale de France. | LD | Lepsius, C.R., 1849–59. <i>Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien</i> (plates), 6 vols. Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung. |
| DUL | Del Olmo Lete, G. & J. Sanmartín, 2015. <i>A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition.</i> Translated and edited by W.G.E. Watson. Third revised edition. 2 vols. (Handbuch der Orientalistik 112.) Leiden: Brill. | LKU | Falkenstein, A., 1931. <i>Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Uruk.</i> Berlin: Berlin Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Vorderasiatische Abteilung. |
| EA | Siglum for the Tell El-Amarna Letters, following the edition of Knudtzon, J. A., 1915. <i>Die El-Amarna-Tafeln.</i> Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung. | M | Siglum for texts from Mari. |
| ePSD | Electronic version of <i>The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary</i> , http://psd.museum.upenn.edu | Moore, Mich. Coll. | Moore, E., 1939. <i>Neo-Babylonian Documents in the University of Michigan Collection.</i> Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. |
| ETCSL | Black, J.A., G. Cunningham, J. Ebeling, E. Flückiger-Hawker, E. Robson, J. Taylor & G. Zólyomi (eds.), 1998–2006. <i>The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature.</i> Oxford, http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/ | MSL VIII/I | Landsberger, B., 1960. <i>The Fauna of Ancient Mesopotamia. First Part: Tablet XIII.</i> (Materialien zum Sumerischen Lexikon VIII/1.) Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum. [with the assistance of A. Draffkorn Kilmer & E.I. Gordon]. |
| FM 2 | Charpin, D. & J.-M. Durand (ed.), 1994. <i>Recueil d'études à la mémoire de Maurice Birot.</i> (Florilegium Marianum II.) Paris: Société pour l'étude du Proche-Orient ancien. | MVN 8 | Calvot, D., G. Pettinato, S.A. Picchioni & F. Reschid, 1979. <i>Textes économiques du Selluš-Dagan du Musée du Louvre et du Collège de France (D. Calvot). Testi economici dell'Iraq Museum Baghdad.</i> (Materiali per il Vocabolario Neosumerico 8.) Rome: Multigrafica Editrice. |
| Hh | <i>The Series HAR-ra='hubullu'</i> , Materials for the Sumerian lexicon (MSL), 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 & 11. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1957–. | MVN 11 | Owen, D.I., 1982. <i>Selected Ur III Texts from the Harvard Semitic Museum.</i> (Materiali per il Vocabolario Neosumerico 11.) Rome: Multigrafica Editrice. |
| | | MZ | Siglum for finds from Tell Mozan. |
| | | NBC | Siglum for tablets in the Nies Babylonian Collection of the Yale Babylonian Collection. |

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| NCBT | Siglum for tablets in the Newell Collection of Babylonian Tablets, now Yale University, New Haven. | SAA 11 | Fales, F.M. & J.N. Postgate, 1995. <i>Imperial Administrative Records, Part II: Provincial and Military Administration</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 11.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. |
| OIP 99 | Biggs, R.D., 1974. <i>Inscriptions from Tell Abu Salabikh</i> . (Oriental Institute Publications 99.) Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. | SAA 12 | Kataja, K. & R. Whiting, 1995. <i>Grants, Decrees and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 12.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. |
| OIP 115 | Hilgert, M., 1998. <i>Cuneiform Texts from the Ur III Period in the Oriental Institute, Vol. 1: Drehem Administrative Documents from the Reign of Šulgi</i> . (Oriental Institute Publications 115.) Chicago: The Oriental Institute. | SAA 13 | Cole, S.W. & P. Machinist, 1998. <i>Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Priests to Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 13.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. |
| OIP 121 | Hilgert, M., 1998. <i>Cuneiform Texts from the Ur III Period in the Oriental Institute, Volume 2: Drehem Administrative Documents from the Reign of Amar-Suena</i> . (Oriental Institute Publications 121.) Chicago: The Oriental Institute. | SAA 17 | Dietrich, M., 2003. <i>The Neo-Babylonian Correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 17.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. |
| P | CDLI (Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative) number. | SAA 19 | Luukko, M. 2012. <i>The Correspondence of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 19.) Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project. |
| PDT 1 | Çig, M., H. Kizilyay & A. Salonen, 1956. <i>Die Puzris-Dagan-Texte der Istanbul Archäologischen Museen Teil 1: Texte Nrr. 1-725</i> . (Academia Scientiarum Fennica Annales, série B, tome 92.) Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica. | SAA 20 | Parpola, S. 2017. <i>Assyrian Royal Rituals and Cultic Texts</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 20.) Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project. |
| PKG 18 | Orthmann, W., 1985. <i>Der alte Orient</i> . (Propyläen Kunstgeschichte 18.) Berlin: Propyläen Verlag. | SAT 2 | Sigrist, M., 2000. <i>Sumerian Archival Texts. Texts from the Yale Babylonian Collection 2</i> . Bethesda: CDL Press. |
| PTS | Siglum for unpublished texts in the Princeton Theological Seminary. | SF | Deimel, A., 1923. <i>Schultexte aus Fara</i> . (Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orientgesellschaft 43.) Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung. |
| RGTC | <i>Répertoire géographique des textes cunéiformes</i> . (Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B.) Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1974–. | SP | Alster, B., 1997. <i>Proverbs of Ancient Sumer</i> . Bethesda: CDL Press. |
| RIMA 2 | Grayson, A.K., 1991. <i>Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114–859 BC)</i> . (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods Vol. 2.) Toronto, Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press. | TCL 12 | Conteneau, G., 1927. <i>Contrats Néo-Babyloniens I, de Téglaṭh-Phalasar III à Nabonide</i> . (Textes cunéiformes, Musées du Louvre 12.) Paris: P. Geuthner. |
| RIME 1 | Frayne, D., 2008. <i>Presargonic Period (2700–2350 BC)</i> . (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods Vol. 1.) Toronto: University of Toronto Press. | TCL 13 | Contenau, G., 1929. <i>Contrats néo-babyloniens II. Achéménides et Séleucides</i> . (Textes cunéiformes, Musées du Louvre 13.) Paris: P. Geuthner. |
| RIME 4 | Frayne, D., 1990. <i>Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC)</i> . (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods Vol. 4.) Toronto: University of Toronto Press. | TRU | Legrain, L., 1912. <i>Le temps des rois d'Ur: recherches sur la société antique d'après des textes nouveaux</i> . (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études 199.) Paris: H. Champion. |
| RINAP | The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period; Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus, available at http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/index.html | TU | Thureau-Dangin, F., 1922. <i>Tablettes d'Uruk à l'usage des prêtres du Temple d'Anu au temps des Séleucides</i> . (Musée du Louvre. Département des antiquités orientales. Textes cunéiformes.) Paris: P. Geuthner. |
| RLA | <i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie</i> . | U. | Siglum for finds from Ur. |
| RS | Siglum for documents from Ras Shamra (Ugarit). | UCP 9/1,I | Lutz, H.F., 1927. <i>Neo-Babylonian Administrative Documents from Erech: Part I</i> . (University of California Publications in Semitic Philology Vol. 9 no. 1/I.) Berkeley (CA): University of California Press. |
| SAA 2 | Parpola, S. & K. Watanabe, 1988. <i>Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 2.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. | UCP 9/1,II | Lutz, H.F., 1927. <i>Neo-Babylonian Administrative Documents from Erech: Part II</i> . (University of California Publications in Semitic Philology Vol. 9 no. 1/II.) Berkeley (CA): University of California Press. |
| SAA 7 | Fales, F.M. & J.N. Postgate, 1992. <i>Imperial Administrative Records, Part I: Palace and Temple Administration</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 7.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. | UDT | Nies, J.B., 1920. <i>Ur Dynasty Tablets: Texts Chiefly from Tello and Drehem Written during the Reigns of Dungi, Bur-Sin, Gimil-Sin and Ibi-Sin</i> . Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung. |
| SAA 10 | Parpola, S. 1993. <i>Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars</i> . (State Archives of Assyria 10.) Helsinki: Helsinki University Press. | | |

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| VA | Siglum for objects in the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (Vorderasiatische Abteilung). | | <i>et d'Histoire in Genf</i> . Naples: Istituto orientale di Napoli. |
| VAT | Siglum for objects/tablets in the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (Vorderasiatische Abteilung. Tontafeln). | YBC | Siglum for tablets in the Yale Babylonian Collection. |
| VS 1 | Ungnad, A. & L. Messerschmidt, 1907. <i>Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der Königlichen Museen zu Berlin</i> . Vol. 1, Texts 1–115, Königliche Museen zu Berlin. Sammlung der Vorderasiatischen Altertümer. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung. | YOS 7 | Tremayne, A., 1925. <i>Records from Erech, Time of Cyrus and Cambyses (538-521 B.C.)</i> . (Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts, vol. 7.) New Haven: Yale University Press. |
| VS 16 | Schröder, O., 1917. <i>Altbabylonische Briefe</i> . (Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der königlichen Museen zu Berlin 16.) Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung. | YOS 8 | Faust, D.E., 1941. <i>Contracts from Larsa, dated in the Reign of Rim-Sin</i> . (Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts, vol. 8.) New Haven: Yale University Press & London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press. |
| VS 17 | van Dijk, J. 1971. <i>Nicht-kanonische Beschwörungen und sonstige literarische Texte</i> . (Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der Königlichen Museen zu Berlin 17.) Berlin: Akademie Verlag. | YOS 11 | van Dijk, J., A. Goetze & M.I. Hussey, 1985. <i>Early Mesopotamian Incantations and Rituals</i> . (Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts, vol. 11.) New Haven: Yale University Press. |
| WB | Erman, A. & H. Grapow (eds.), 1971. <i>Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache</i> , 5 vols. Berlin: Akademie Verlag. | YOS 17 | Weisberg, D.B., 1980. <i>Texts from the Time of Nebuchadnezzar</i> . (Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts, vol. 17.) New Haven: Yale University Press. |
| WMAH | Sauren, H., 1969. <i>Wirtschaftsurkunden aus der Zeit der III. Dynastie von Ur im Besitz des Musée d'Art</i> | YOS 19 | Beaulieu, P.-A., 2000. <i>Legal and Administrative Texts from the Reign of Nabonidus</i> . (Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts, vol. 19.) New Haven: Yale University Press. |

Preface

Augusta McMahon

The chapters in this volume invert traditional approaches to past human-animal relationships, placing animals at the forefront of these interactions and celebrating the many ways in which animals enriched or complicated the lives of the inhabitants of the ancient Near East. The authors embrace insights from text, archaeology, art and landscape studies. The volume offers rich evidence for the concept that ‘animals are good to think’ (Levi-Strauss 1963), enabling humans in categorizing the world around us, evaluating our own behaviours, and providing analogies for supernatural powers that are beyond humans’ control. However, totemism has never fit the ancient Near East well, because most animals had varied and endlessly complicated relationships with their human associates, as these chapters vividly describe. Taboos on eating or handling animals ebbed and flowed, and the same animal could have both positive and negative associations in omen texts. Animals were good (or bad) to eat, good (or bad) to think, good (or bad) to live with (Kirksey & Helmreich 2010) and good (or bad) to be. Through detailed, theoretically informed and well-supported case studies, this volume moves the study of human-animal-environment interactions forward, presenting animals as embedded actors in culture rather than simply objectified as human resources or symbols.

The chapters in the first section emphasize the agency of animals via their abilities to resolve crises for humans and deities and to shift between animal and human worlds. Animals have paradoxical affects: as metaphors for wilderness and chaos, or as valued companions, helpers, or votive sacrifices. The variety of interactions and assumptions cautions us to treat animals, as we do humans, as individuals. Reconstruction of animals in past rituals has a long history, usually focused on animals associated with the gods and/or animals used in formal religious sacrifice. But the chapters in the second section also examine

the impact of lesser-known animals and less formal encounters, e.g., in the landscape or in funeral contexts within the home. The value and meanings of animals could vary with context.

The fascination engendered by hybrid or composite figures is also well represented. The persistence of composite figures in the Near East, from fourth millennium BC human-ibex ‘shamans’ on northern Mesopotamian Late Chalcolithic seals to *lamassu* and *mušhuššu* of the first millennium BC, suggests that the division and recombination of animal body elements fulfilled a human need to categorize powerful forces and create a cosmological structure. The anthropomorphizing of animals is another facet of the flexibility of animal identifications in the past. The authors here also grapple with the question of whether composite images represent ideas or costumed ritual participants.

The chapters also cover the most basic of animal-human relations, that of herd management, use in labour, and consumption, digging deeply into details of mobility, breeding and emic classifications. Economic aspects of the human-animal relationship are currently being rejuvenated through archaeological science techniques (e.g., isotopes, ZooMS), which give us unparalleled levels of detail on diet, mobility, herd management, and species. Matching these insights from science, the issues raised here include the value of individual animals versus that assigned to species, the challenges of pests, the status ascribed to and reflected by different meat cuts, animals as status and religious symbols, and animals’ tertiary products or uses (e.g., transport versus traction, bile). These studies allow a more detailed reconstruction of Near Eastern economy and society, as well as emphasizing the flexibility of the relationships between animals, as well as between human and animal.

The authors implicitly advocate for a posthumanist multispecies ethnography, which incorporates

nonhumans and argues for equal care to be given to nonhumans in the realms of shared landscapes, violence, labour and especially ecology (Kirksey & Helmreich 2010; Kopnina 2017; Parathian *et al.* 2018). This approach advocates for nonhumans' agency in creating shared worlds, in contrast to the traditional approach to animals as symbols or resources in the service of humans. Going forward, the challenge will be to convert the acknowledgement of equal cultural contribution into support for nonhuman species to speak for themselves; this shift from passive subject of research inquiry to genuine active agency in academic writing does not have an easy or obvious path, and many nonhuman animals may be overlooked. Indeed, multispecies ethnography ideally seeks to incorporate plants, microbes, stones and more (Ogden *et al.* 2013; Smart 2014), many of which are ephemeral in the archaeological record and all but omitted in ancient texts. However, ancient texts do support a new approach which questions our modern boundaries between species. Our perpetual struggle to translate terms for different species of equids, to distinguish whether a word refers to rats or mice, or to link zooarchaeological remains to lexical lists, reinforces the complexity and flexibility of these concepts, and the futility of attempts at absolute categorization.

The chapters in this volume should inspire colleagues to grapple with animals, nonhumans and contexts that could not be included here. For instance, the snake has as lengthy a history of human engagement in the Near East as does the lion and had similarly unusual powers. While the lion was an icon of strength, the perfect symbol for the proximity of the emotions of awe and fear, the snake has the sneaky ability to slither

between worlds, to avoid capture, and to deliver an almost imperceptible lethal injury. Fear of the snake conquers awe. Like the fox, the presence or actions of the snake, as listed in *Šumma ālu*, may be positive or negative omens. The snake was present at key moments in both Mesopotamian and Biblical literature; its actions (stealing the plant of immortality, offering the fruit of the tree of knowledge) changed the fate of humans forever. Whether represented coiled and copulating on Late Chalcolithic seals, grasped by Late Uruk 'Masters of Animals' or first millennium BC *lamaštu*, snakes and their paradoxical nature deserve deep scrutiny. There are many other nonhuman animals deserving of similar problematization and integration, and the eclectic and exciting research stream represented by this volume shows us the way.

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Chapter 3

Canines from inside and outside the city: of dogs, foxes and wolves in conceptual spaces in Sumero-Akkadian texts

Andréa Vilela

When reading Sumerian and Akkadian literary texts, it is often possible to observe a strong opposition between the world in which humans live, considered ordered and civilized, and the natural world, the realm of wild animals, but also associated with supernatural entities. This dichotomy can be observed in many texts, as in the epics of Lugalbanda, in which the sick hero has to be abandoned by his peers in the wilderness. The natural world appears there as something threatening and overwhelming, beyond human control, and Lugalbanda's journey is bathed both in awe and fear of what cannot be understood or controlled.¹ This distinction is also indicated in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (tablet I, col IV: 23–6) in which, after being 'civilized' through his encounter with the harlot, the wild-man Enkidu is unable to go back to his old life: the animals among which he had lived peacefully were now afraid of him and ran away (George 2003). The connection with the natural world is depicted as severed once Enkidu had been integrated into the world of humans.

In many texts, the city is often depicted as the perfect incarnation of the human world, the very core of civilization and order. It is as such opposed to the natural world, seen as wild and chaotic. This is of course not a geographical division, but a conceptual one, for many human activities occur outside urban spaces. Roads, fields and pastures, military and nomadic camps, are all as deeply attached to the idea of civilization as the city itself. However, the point of view expressed in written sources is mostly the one of urban populations, thus explaining why most of the attention seems to be focused on the city.

The opposition established between the city and the natural world also facilitates a reference to the conflict between order and chaos. As such, the animal species associated with each of these conceptual spaces can embody the forces of civilization as opposed to

everything that refuses to bend to it. This chapter will focus on three canine species, exploring how dogs, foxes and wolves are depicted as fitting either inside or outside the world associated with humans. While the position occupied by each of those species in this dualistic pattern might seem obvious, things can be more complex than what they seem to be at first sight, with the possibility of establishing a third aspect of this mental space, a form of 'in-between'.

Canines from the 'inside': dogs

While dogs might seem easy to fit in the opposition inside/outside, many sources reveal that this animal is not that easy to classify. This is illustrated by the position of the dog in the lexical list *ĪAR-ra* = *ḫubullu*, in which the dog is not mentioned with domestic animals in tablet XIII, but with wild animals in tablet XIV (Landsberger 1962). However, the dog cannot be fully set apart from the civilized sphere since it lives within the typically human world as a domestic animal. Moreover, many depictions of dogs in texts locate the animal in the very core of the realm of humans, the city. This can be noted in proverbs from the end of the third millennium BC, but also much later, for example in first millennium BC omen collections such as *šumma ālu ina mēlê šakin* – which we will refer to as *ŠA* – in which no less than three tablets focus exclusively on dogs. This animal was then associated with urban space from early periods and remained so.

Its presence is also attested in domestic spaces. Such mentions of the animal can be noted in Sumerian proverbs² such as SP 2.109: 'A sniffing dog enters all houses' (ur si.im.si.im é.é.a ku₄.ku₄) (Alster 1997, 67). Many first-millennium BC omens also mention the presence of dogs in houses, as in *ŠA* tablets 47, 23'–32' (Freedman 2017, 62) and 48, 18–29 (Freedman 2017, 66–7).

While it is difficult to establish to what extent dogs were allowed into houses or workplaces, their presence in such spaces does not appear as unusual in texts. However, it is clear that, while being valued as a useful guardian, the dog could also be perceived as potentially troublesome. This is often the case when dealing with its presence in workshops, as in SP 2.112: ‘The smith’s dog couldn’t overturn the anvil, (so) it overturned the water-pot’ (¹ur.simug.ke₄ na₄.šu.mìn.e nu.mu.un.zi, ²pisan₂.dug.a i.im.zi) (Alster 1997, 68). Mentions of dogs in similar situations are also attested in the first millennium BC, as in another proverb quoted by Esarhaddon in ABL 403: ‘When the potter’s dog enters the kiln it will bark at the potter’³ (ABL 403: ⁵ur.gi₇ šá^{1a} baḥar₂, ⁶ina šà udun ki-i i-ru-bu, ⁷a-na šà^{1a} baḥar₂ ú-nam-bàḥ) (Lambert 1996, 281).

Omen collections such as ŠA also inform us that the presence of a dog inside a house was not seen as an ominous sign on its own, but as a regular everyday occurrence. Indeed, when an animal enters a place where it does not belong, its presence alone can be interpreted as an omen and details about its attitude are therefore not necessary (Vilela 2019). Such a situation can be noted on several occasions, such as when a wild animal enters a city, which would be considered as an omen per se, as in ŠA 44, 42’: ‘If a gazelle enters in a city, that city will fall’ (diš maš.dà ana šà uru tu-ba uru bi šub-dī) (Freedman 2017, 35). But when dogs are involved, behavioural descriptions are on the contrary essential to establishing a prediction. This suggests that it was not the presence of the animal itself that was noticeable, but rather its actions, as illustrated by ŠA 47, 30’: ‘If a dog urinates on a man’s bed, severe sickness will afflict that man’ (diš ur.gi₇ giš.ná lú iš-tin lú bi gig pa-áš-qu dib-su) (Freedman 2017, 62). It is here clearly this specific action, which should not happen inside the house, and much less on a man’s bed, that leads to an ominous interpretation.

According to this corpus, the dog is then an animal whose presence in urban and even domestic space is common. But while ŠA omens regarding dogs focus on observations made in a city or a house, there are other texts that depict the animal in a very different environment. For although being introduced as the main location of the human sphere in literary texts, the city is just one aspect of the civilized world. Indeed, every aspect of human society and economy are part of this mental structure, including pastoral activities. It is when it comes to protecting the flocks and assisting the shepherds that the dog comes to embrace its full potential as a manifestation of the forces of civilization. Its usefulness is praised in many texts, turning the dog into a natural shield for pastoral activities.

This can be seen with the role of the dog in the *Fable of the Fox*,⁴ a composition from the first millennium BC in which the dog faces both the fox and the wolf to stop them from endangering the flocks under its protection. In this text, the dog introduces himself in such terms: ‘Their lives (those of the sheep) are entrusted to me as if (to) the shepherd and the herdsman. I guide (them) safely on my regular path (through) the steppe and the water places (...)’ (VAT 13836: ²⁰ki-i-ma sipa^{meš} ù na-qi-di na-piš-ti-ši-na pa-aq-da-a-ni, ²¹[šē]-ra maš-qa-a ka-ia-ma-ni-ia ur-ḥa šu-tu-ra-a-ku) (Lambert 1996, 192–3). He also adds in line 23 ‘At my howls, the panther, the cheetah, the lion (and) the wild cat run away in panic’ (a-na ri-ma-ti-ia ig-ru-ru nim-ru mi-di-nu la-a-bu-ú šu-ra-nu) (Lambert 1996, 192–3).

So, while living outside the city and even in the steppe itself, the dog never ceases to belong to the human world which it comes to embody in literary representations. This aspect is made evident by the fact that it is often the dog, rather than the shepherd, which is depicted chasing away the wild animals threatening the sheep. The dog is then not an emanation of the civilized world in literary texts simply because of its status as a domestic animal nor because it lives among men, but because it is *active* in fighting beings coming from the natural world, such as the wild animals mentioned in the *Fable of the Fox*. The dog’s image then becomes perfectly appropriate for illustrating the conflict between civilization and the chaotic forces threatening it. As such, the dog is able to assume the role of a symbolic guardian against evil beings, which were thought to live in the wilderness, just as wild animals. This transfer of the dog’s usefulness from the natural world to the supernatural one is attested through the use of dog figurines in rituals to keep evil forces at bay.

Some incantations against demons might indeed describe them as living outside the cities, roaming through the steppes, marshes and mountains. This can be seen in an incantation against the demoness Lamaštu,⁵ which clearly indicates that ‘she came down from all the mountains’ (³⁵kul-laṭ kur-i ú-ri-dam-ma) (Farber 2014, 100). A few lines later, she is expelled to her place of origin: ‘Go away to the mountain that you love!’ (⁴¹at-la-ki a-na kur-i šá ta-ram-mi) (Farber 2014, 101). Moreover, a ritual indicates that dog figurines were to be used to chase her (Farber 2014).⁶ The employment of such figurines is attested in other rituals, as in *šēp lemutti ina bīt amēli parāsu*, which concerns evil forces in general (Wiggerman 1992) and clay dog figurines serving this purpose have been found buried under doorways (Wiggerman 1992; Watanabe 2002).

The affiliation of the dog with civilization manifests itself through its role as a guardian against

both natural and supernatural forces coming from the wilderness. It is by fighting wild animals and demons that the dog represents the realm of humans, by opposition with the chaotic forces from the wild (and thus uncontrolled) world. However, this is but one aspect of the dog's complex figure, for the dog is one of the most ambivalent animals appearing in cuneiform literature.

Canines from the 'in-between': stray dogs

This complexity can be explained by the presence of two very distinct categories of dogs. First, we have the dog attached to a master, useful as a guardian, whose aggressiveness is controlled by humans and serves their interests. But there is also another kind of dog: the stray dog, which is an entirely different matter. Those animals were feared and described as dangerous and unpredictable, forming packs and roaming the streets. Many omens concerning stray dogs often insist on their aggressiveness and the verb *šegû* ('to rage, to become rabid') is frequently used in their descriptions, as in ŠA 46, 1: 'If dogs are persistently going wild (...) (diš ur.gi₇.meš it-te-niš-gu-u₂ (...))' (Freedman 2017, 52). Moreover, the verbal form employed is usually that of the Gtn system, with the infix *-tan-* emphasizing the repetitive aspect of the action. This suggests that it was not simply occasional outbursts of aggressiveness that attracted attention, indicating that sporadic hostile behaviour from stray dogs was not considered unusual. It is also interesting to note that the presence of such animals in high numbers was seen as a bad omen, as indicated by ŠA 46, 2: 'If dogs are numerous in a city: trouble for [the city]' (diš ur.gi₇.meš ina uru i-mi-du na-zaq [uru]) (Freedman 2017, 52).

Stray dogs differ greatly from their domestic counterpart. While living in the cities, they had to survive by themselves and find whatever food sources they could. Their behaviour was not controlled by humans, but they lived nevertheless in the core of the world associated with the civilized sphere: the city. This put them in a very special situation, in which they had daily interactions with people, while technically being semi-wild animals which did not completely fit the world they inhabited and escaping human authority.

This could lead to several problems, such as the question of their feeding habits. Since they had no master to provide them a regular source of food, they had no choice but to resort to eating any kind of waste they could find. As such, they could be useful, taking care of part of the garbage, but many sources also mention the possibility of them eating human corpses if given the chance. Images of dogs tearing at corpses

were included in several kinds of texts, from myths to royal inscriptions, and used to illustrate frightening and threatening situations.

Unsurprisingly, this aspect of dogs is often mentioned in Assyrian royal inscriptions from the first millennium BC, when kings wanted to threaten anyone who would not respect their will or destroy their inscriptions. It can be seen in a text from Assurbanipal: 'May the dogs tear apart his corpse as it lies unburied!' (SAA 12, 26: 31: lú.úš-šú i-na la qí-bí-ri li-ba-aš-ši-ru ur.gi₇.meš) (Kataja & Whiting 1995, 28) and in Esarhad-don's Succession Inscription: 'May dogs and pigs drag the teats of your young women and the penises of your young men before your eyes through the place of Assur! May the earth not receive your bodies (and) your sepulture be in the stomach of dogs and pigs!' (SAA 2, 6: ⁴⁸¹(...) si-si šá ar-da-te-ku-nu, ⁴⁸²mat-nat šá lú guruš.meš-ku-nu ina ni-til igi.2-ku-nu ur.gi₇ šaḥ.meš, ⁴⁸³ina re-bit aš-šur li-in-da-šá-ru lú úš.meš-ku-nu ki.tim, ⁴⁸⁴a-a im-ḥur ina kar-ši ur.gi₇ šaḥ.meš lu na-aq-bar-ku-nu) (Parpola & Watanabe 1988, 49).

Other compositions refer to this fearsome aspect of the dog. In *Lugal.e*, the description of the effects of the fight opposing the god Ninurta to the monster Asakku uses the image of blood-licking dogs to emphasize the devastation resulting from it: 'The lance was stuck into the ground and the water channels were filled with blood. In the rebel lands dogs licked it up like milk' (²⁵⁹ár-ka-a-tim ina ki-tim iš-tu-ma ḥar-ra da-ma um-tal-li, ²⁶⁰kur nu-kúr-ti ki-ma ši-iz-bi kal-bi uš-te-te-li-') (van Dijk 1983, 83–4).

This is to be related with the fear of being denied funeral rites. In societies in which exposure is considered normal, scavenging animals are not perceived negatively. However, in the Mesopotamian context, the image of dogs tearing human bodies apart is extremely negative and induced fear and disgust. This leads to a negative perception of the stray animal, contrasting with the positive vision of the domestic dog as a protector and a helper. Such a perception of the scavenging aspect of the dog is not exclusive to Mesopotamia and can be observed in other societies. Even in Homer's *Iliad*, when Achilles describes what he plans to do with Hector's body, the image of dogs tearing it apart is called upon: 'Hail, I bid thee, O Patroclus, even in the house of Hades, for even now I am bringing to fulfilment all that aforetime I promised thee: that I would drag Hector hither and give him raw unto dogs to devour (...) (Iliad, XXIII, 19–21; translation from Murray 1963, 495–7).

Cuneiform sources go even further in presenting the danger of starving dogs, portraying them as able to attack and devour living humans as well. However, such mentions remain extremely rare, and

associated with exceptional situations, such as in the description of the fall of Akkad: 'The dogs were gathered in the silent streets. Two men came there. They were both eaten. Three men came. The three of them were eaten' (¹⁸⁵ur sila si.ga ka ba.ni.ib.kéš, ¹⁸⁶ša. ba lú min du téš.e ba.ni.ib.kú, ¹⁸⁷lú eš₅ du téš.e ba.ni. ib.kú) (Cooper 1983, 58).

The mistrust of stray dogs can also be explained by the problem posed by rabies. With so many animals roaming free, this disease could spread quickly and the risk of infecting humans grew higher. The lethal aspect of rabies likely contributed to the development of a negative image of the dog, especially stray animals that were harder to monitor. Many corpora reveal that those dogs were not just despised, but also feared. In literary texts, frightening beings were sometimes compared to rabid dogs, such as the monster Asakku in *Lugal.e*, described as a rabid dog (ur.idim) in line 171 (van Dijk 1983). Omens also consider such animals dangerous, as can be seen in a prediction from *Iqqur ipuš*, which says that 'Dogs will become rabid and bite humanity. The (bitten) men (and) women shall not survive' (*Iqqur ipuš*, 69, 13: ur.gi₇.meš idim.meš-ma nam.lú.u₁₈.lu ka.kud.meš guruš mu[nus n]u.t[i.l]a.meš) (Wu 2001, 36).

The combination of the stray dog's feeding habits, along with its unpredictability and potential aggressiveness, which could be enhanced by rabies, explains how this type of dog ended up being perceived as a physical threat. As such, stray dogs could even be associated with evil entities such as demons. This can be seen in *Hendursaga's Hymn*, in which the god's seven demons are each compared with an animal.⁷ All the species mentioned are either predators or scavengers, which enables them to be associated with the ideas of death and chaos. They are all wild animals, except for the dog. Given that both shepherd dog and watchdog were seen as allies and had a positive image, the dog mentioned in this hymn is most probably a stray animal, which could easily be associated with the ideas of danger and death.

However, even if they were seen as a threat, stray dogs were nevertheless closely related to the world of humans and civilization: they lived in the streets, in the city itself, and interacted with urban populations on a regular basis, contrary to wild species such as foxes and wolves. While being symbolically closer to forces that could be associated with the natural and chaotic world, such as demons, those dogs lived in the core of the civilized world, making it impossible to fully dissociate them from it. As such, stray dogs can be seen as belonging to some sort of in-between zone, a transition between the human world and the wild world.

Canines from the outside: wolves and foxes

Contrary to dogs, foxes and wolves are indeed clearly identified in our sources as animals of the 'outside', coming from the wilderness. They appear in many texts, not just roaming in their natural environment, but also very often trying to intrude in the space belonging to humans. As such, they appear as a potential threat for some economic activities, such as pastoral ones. This also has an impact on their symbolic value, turning them, on some occasions, into manifestations of the forces of chaos, threatening the civilized order.

Unsurprisingly, the wolf is described as the natural enemy of sheep. Its role as a predator of domestic animals is at the core of its symbolic image, to the point that almost every mention of the wolf in literary sources describes it as snatching a lamb or a sheep from the flock. In *Enmerkar and Ensuĝirana*, this image is employed to describe the king's messenger's speed: 'He speeds like a wolf that has caught a lamb' (⁴⁹ur.bar. ra sila₄ šu ti.a.gin₇ ul₄.ul₄.e im.ĝin) (Vanstiphout 2003, 30–1). Later in the same text, when the old woman Sagburru faces the sorcerer Urginunna, she makes a wolf appear magically from the stream, taking away the ewe made by her opponent: 'The sorcerer pulled out an ewe and its lamb from the water. Old Woman Sagburru pulled out a wolf from the river. The wolf took the ewe and dragged (it) to the wide steppe' (²³³maš. maš.e u₈ sila₄.bi a.ta im.ta.an.[è], ²³⁴um.ma sag.bur.ru ur.bar.ra a.ta im.ta.an.[è], ²³⁵ur.bar.ra u₈.e in.kar edin. dagal.šè ba.an(!).ùr) (Vanstiphout 2003, 42–3). Proverbs also seem to focus on this aspect of the animal, with entries such as SP 5 Vers. A 71: 'At a place where the wolf snatches the lamb away, the shepherd does not graze his sheep' (¹ki ur.bar.ra sila₄ in.kar.re, ²sipa.dè udu nu.mu.ni.lu.lu) (Alster 1997, 134).

However, there are almost no mentions of wolves attacking humans. One of the very few examples presenting the wild canine as a danger is in the flood tale from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. On tablet XI, Enki offers several alternatives to diminish the numbers of living humans and avoid having to resort to the flood again in the future. Among the possibilities, the role of predators is mentioned: 'Instead of the Deluge you caused, a lion could arise and diminish the people! Instead of the Deluge you caused, a wolf could arise and diminish the people!' (¹⁸⁸am-ma-ku taš-ku-nu a-bu-ba, ¹⁸⁹ur.maḥ lit-ba-am-ma ùg^{meš} li-ša-aḥ-ḫi-i[r], ¹⁹⁰am-ma-ku taš-ku-nu a-bu-ba, ¹⁹¹ur.bar.ra lit-ba-am-ma ùg^{meš} li-ša-[ḫi-ir]) (George 2003, 714–15).

It is striking to note that the wolf is then, at least according to its description in literary sources, seen as less of a threat to humans than the stray dog. This can be explained by the fact that, since those dogs lived

in the cities and roamed the streets freely, there was a greater risk of being bitten or feeling threatened by one of them than by a wolf. Since those sources express a purely urban point of view, the focus on the dog as the main threat is to be expected.

However, a deeper analysis of the wolf's image suggests that its symbolism is broader than that of a simple predator. Indeed, when attacking the flocks, the wolf also threatens economic activities, hence enabling a perception of it as a danger to the human world in general. Even without being a direct threat to people, the wolf appears as a considerable problem through its impact on pastoral activities. The wolf then becomes a manifestation of wilderness and the chaotic forces inhabiting it, which are seen as constantly threatening the very structure of the world inhabited by humans and gods. As such, it can be used to represent what is out of control and refuses to be integrated into what the texts consider to be the civilized scheme.

Several sources use the image of the wolf to symbolize what, and who, lives outside the system and refuses to bend to its rules. This can be seen in *Naram-Sîn and the Enemy Hordes*,⁸ when the king refuses to follow the instructions given by the gods, claiming: 'What wolf (ever) consulted a dream-interpreter? I will go like a brigand according to my own inclination and I will cast aside that (oracle) of the god(s) (...)' (⁸¹*a-a-ú ur.bar.ra iš-al šá-il-tu*, ⁸²*lul-lik ki-i dumu hab-ba-ti ina me-gir ša-bi-ia*, ⁸³*lu-ud-di šá dingir-ma (...)*) (Westenholz 1997, 317, 348). By refusing to submit to the gods, the king contests the authority of the ordered world, thus becoming similar to creatures of the wilderness. Unsurprisingly, his refusal to follow the gods' orders results in a defeat against the enemy, which is presented in the text as the consequence of the king's hubris and disregard for the established order.

The wolf could thus be described either as a real threat to pastoral activities, or it could symbolically represent those who refuse to bend to the established cultural, social and political scheme, being therefore a threat to the global structure. It is an emanation of 'outside' forces, not only as a predator representing wilderness, but also to make intelligible the refusal to bend to the norm. Just as the wolf, the fox was also seen as a potential problem, though in a different way. Whereas the wolf's temper was almost never mentioned, the fox had a very striking personality. It was depicted as arrogant, untrustworthy and, above all, as a liar that no one should trust. Such a vision of the animal was established quite early, for it is the same logogram that means both fox (ka₅) and liar (lul).

This aspect of the fox's personality is clearly expressed in proverbs, with many entries referring to this animal and its manipulative side. In SP 2.58,

we learn that even gods should be weary of the fox: 'The fox [lies] even to Enlil' (ka₅.a.a ^den.líl lul ba.[e]. [sì(?).ke₄(?)]) (Alster 1997, 56). As for SP 5 Vers. A 71, it depicts the fox bluntly trying to trick a pack of wolves:

Nine wolves caught ten sheep. There was one (more) to place, (so) they couldn't divide their share. Then a fox came to them. 'I want to divide for you: You are nine, (so) there is one [for you?]. I am alone, (so) I take nine. This is the share of my heart (= that I like)', he said (¹*ur.bar.ra 9.bi 10.àm udu.ḫi.a an.[...]*, ²*diš.àm ab.si.àm ḫa.<la>.ne nu.ḫ[a.la.a]*, ³*ka₅.[a] [ugu.b]i.[šè] ù.bí.i[n.DU]*, ⁴*g[á.e ga.m] u.e.ne.ḫa.[la]*, ⁵*za.e.me.en.zé.en diš.à[m ...]*, ⁶*gá.e dili.mu 9 šu ga.[b]a.ab.[ti]*, ⁷*ne.en ḫa.la.[š]à.mu.e.[še]*) (Alster 1997, 132–3).

This last example shows us that, even according to wild standards, the fox was untrustworthy. Its image in proverbs is associated with that of the cunning liar, the trickster with no second thoughts about disrespecting the rules and therefore threatening the order of society.

In some literary texts, both foxes and wolves could be described working together and trying to intrude the world of humans, only to be chased away... not by humans themselves, but by dogs. Such a situation is described in the *Fable of the Fox*: 'They were chased away and went (back) to (their) holes. The Fox went to the bottom of (his) hole, the Wolf crouched in the middle of (his) hole. The Dog took position at their entrances and blocked [...]' (VAT 13836: ¹²*it-ṭa-ar-du-ma e-ru-bu ana ḫur-ri tu še-li-bu ana eš-du ḫur-ri*, ¹³*ir-bi-iš bar-ba-ru i-na murub₄ ḫur-ri ša-bit kal-bu ka^{meš}-šu-nu-ma iš-te-ni-`-a x [...]*) (Lambert 1996, 192).

We also have a proverb in which a fox and his wife try to enter the city but end up running away, once again not from humans, but from dogs:

The fox said to his wife: 'Come! Let us crush Uruk with our teeth like a leek. Let us strap Kullab upon our feet like sandals.' Hardly had they come within a distance of 600 *nindan* (=100m) from the city, before the dogs began to howl from the city. 'Slave-Girl-of Tummal, Slave-Girl-of Tummal, come with me to your place! All kinds of evil are howling from the city' (said the fox) (SP 2.69: ¹*ka₅.a.a dam.a.ni an.na.ab.bé*, ²*gá.nu unu^{ki} garaš₃^{sar}.gim zú ga.àm.gaz.e.en.dè.en*, ³*kul.aba^{ki} kuš^e.sír.gim gír.me.a ga.àm.ma.ab.si.ge₄.en.dè.en*, ⁴*uru.šè.géš_xu.GAR.uš*

nu.te.a.ba, ⁵uru.da ur.re sig₁₄ àm.da.gi₄.gi₄,
⁶geme₂.tum.ma.al^{ki} geme₂.tum.ma.al^{ki}, ⁷dúr.
 zu.šè gá.nam.ma.da, ⁸uru^{ki}.da níg.ḫul.e sig₁₄
 àm.da.gi₄.gi₄) (Alster 1997, 59)

The dynamics of the interactions between dogs, foxes and wolves in literary texts is therefore not to be seen just as the reproduction of a natural opposition between watchdog and predators. It must be understood as the symbolic representation of a much broader conflict between what is kept under control and what is not.

Conclusion

Each of the three canine species mentioned in this work can be strongly associated either with the human world, usually symbolized by the city, or to the natural world, seen as out of human reach and control. Those two structures were used to manifest the dichotomy order/chaos, and the species studied here were employed in some texts to express this conflict. Among them, the dog remains the most complex, occupying an ambiguous position. As a guardian whose aggressiveness is controlled by a master and orientated against enemies, it is associated with the civilized world, often living in the city and therefore belonging to what we could call ‘inside’ forces. However, as a stray and uncontrolled animal, it clearly did not belong to the civilized sphere. Yet its presence in the core of urban spaces made it impossible to fully associate the stray dog with the purely wild world, leaving this animal in a mental transitional zone, some sort of ‘in-between’. There is, however, no ambiguity when it comes to the fox and the wolf, both species clearly belonging to the natural world, the ‘outside’. As wild animals and predators, they represent not exactly the natural world itself, but the chaos that inhabits it, which is always threatening the city. As such they are depicted not only roaming outside, but also waiting for an occasion to leap forward.

The opposition civilization/natural world associated with the representation of those animal species is strongly expressed by the fact that it is not even humans that are shown chasing away foxes and wolves, but dogs. The descriptions of those canines in cuneiform sources not only inform us of the relationship humans had with them, but also provide elements for a better understanding of how those urban societies perceived their own relationship with the natural world, which was seen as a dangerous and hostile environment. The duality urban space/wild space became on the mental aspect an opposition between ordered, civilized forces and chaotic forces, each facing the other and with the chaos always threatening to take over, as can be seen

in this last proverb: ‘In the city of no-dog, the fox is overseer’ (SP 2.118: uru^{ki} nu ur.gi₇.ra ka₅.a nu.bànda.àm) (Alster 1997, 17).

Notes

- 1 See *Lugalbanda and the Cave* and *Lugalbanda and Anzu* (Vanstiphout 2003).
- 2 For this collection, see Alster’s edition from 1997. We shall refer to those omens through the abbreviation SP.
- 3 This proverb is mentioned by the king in a letter to those he refers to as ‘the non-Babylonians’ (ABL 403, 2: la^{lu}tin.tir.meš) (Reynolds 2003, 4) who have been complaining to him about his own servants in Babylonia. Esarhaddon replies by threatening them and stating that they are in no position to complain whatsoever. This proverb also has close parallels both in Syriac and Arabic traditions (Lambert 1996, 281).
- 4 This composition, also known as *iškar šēlebi*, remains incomplete for now, so many passages remain obscure. We chose to use the appellation ‘Fable of the Fox’, proposed by W.G. Lambert, since our citations come from tablets edited in *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Lambert 1996).
- 5 Seventh incantation from the second series against Lamaštu (edited in Farber 2014).
- 6 They are mentioned in the seventh ritual of the second series against Lamaštu (edited in Farber 2014).
- 7 For a detailed study about the animals mentioned in this text, see Verderame 2017.
- 8 Also known as the *Cuthean Legend*. For an edition of the text, see Westenholz 1997.

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Fierce lions, angry mice and fat-tailed sheep

Animals have always been an integral part of human existence. In the ancient Near East, this is evident in the record of excavated assemblages of faunal remains, iconography and – for the later historical periods – texts. Animals have predominantly been examined as part of consumption and economy, and while these are important aspects of society in the ancient Near East, the relationships between humans and animals were extremely varied and complex.

Domesticated animals had great impact on social, political and economic structures – for example cattle in agriculture and diet, or donkeys and horses in transport, trade and war. Fantastic mythological beasts such as lion-headed eagles or Anzu-birds in Mesopotamia or Egyptian deities such as the falcon-headed god Horus were part of religious beliefs and myths, while exotic creatures such as lions were part of elite symbolising from the fourth millennium BC onward. In some cases, animals also intruded on human lives in unwanted ways by scavenging or entering the household; this especially applies to small or wild animals. But animals were also attributed agency with the ability to solve problems; the distinction between humans and other animals often blurs in ritual, personal and place names, fables and royal ideology. They were helpers, pets and companions in life and death, peace and war. An association with cult and mortuary practices involves sacrifice and feasting, while some animals held special symbolic significance.

This volume is a tribute to the animals of the ancient Near East (including Mesopotamia, Anatolia, the Levant and Egypt), from the fourth through first millennia BC, and their complex relationship with the environment and other human and nonhuman animals. Offering faunal, textual and iconographic studies, the contributions present a fascinating array of the many ways in which animals influence human life and death, and explore new perspectives in the exciting field of human-animal studies as applied to this part of the world.

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*Published by the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research,
University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge, CB2 3ER, UK.*

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Cover design by Dora Kemp and Ben Plumridge.

ISBN: 978-1-913344-05-4

