THE DOOM OF PARADISE: LITERARY PATTERNS IN ACCOUNTS OF PARADISE AND MORTALITY IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Diane M. Sharon

The State of Paradise is always doomed. In every culture all paradise myths must end in doom, since no culture in the world is perfect or without its struggles, and paradise myths account for how this state of events came to be.[1] This is true for paradise myths in the HB and in the literature of the ANE as well.

In the Bible, and in Sumerian and Akkadian literature, analysis reveals a common structural pattern that underlies accounts telling of the end of a state of paradise, or of the inevitability of human mortality. Although other ancient cultures have paradise myths in which an ideal situation is ill-fated, the underlying structural pattern identified in this study is by no means universally present. This pattern is absent, for example, from Greek paradise myths.

The present study, which is part of a larger work,[2] identifies the underlying structural pattern common to biblical and ANE accounts of paradise and mortality, bringing examples from biblical and Near Eastern texts. The evidence suggests a common and long-standing literary convention that underlies these

1. I am indebted to Professor Tamara M. Green, of the Department of Classics and Oriental Studies, Hunter College, CUNY, for this insight, personally communicated, June 1994. Cf. Barbara C. Sproul, *Primal Myths: Creating the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979); and Louis Derousseaux (ed.), *La Création dans L'orient Ancien* (Paris: Cerf, 1987).

2. Diane M. Sharon, 'The Literary Functions of Eating and Drinking in Hebrew Bible Narrative with Reference to the Literatures of the Ancient Near East' (PhD dissertation; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1995).

accounts of the doom of paradise and the inevitablity of human mortality.

Methodology

My method in working with the HB and the literature of the ANE is to approach the text as a literary unit that may be analyzed according to a variety of modern literary theories. The likelihood is that there are oral and other sources of the received texts in each of these cultures; but, since these antecedents are unrecoverable, attention is focused upon literary analysis of the actual texts that have come down to us.

In my larger work, I begin with the proposition that eating and drinking events serve a literary function when they occur in the HB, and I proceed to apply structuralist principles to biblical eating and drinking events as these principles are articulated for folklore and literature by Vladimir Propp and his followers.[3] Jack Sasson and Pamela Milne, among others, have applied this approach to biblical texts.[4]

Propp's intellectual roots are among the philologists, linguists, literary historians and folklorists known as the Russian Formalists.[5] Description of the detailed application of Propp's method to biblical and Near Eastern literature, which is undertaken in the larger work, is beyond the scope of the present study. Here we can do no more than summarize the result of applying this approach.

3. V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (trans. Laurence Scott; Austin: University of Austin Press, 2nd edn, 1968).

4. Jack M. Sasson, *Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Pamela J. Milne, *Vladimir Propp and the Study of Structure in Hebrew Biblical Narrative* (Bible and Literature, 13; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988).

5. Victor Ehrlich, *Russian Formalism: History–Doctrine* (Slavistic Printings and Reprintings, 3rd edn, 1969 [1955]). Also see Milne, *Vladimir Propp*, pp. 26-29; A. Dundes, *The Morphology of North American Indian Folktales* (Folklore Fellows Communications, 195; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia/Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1964), p. 50.

Stated briefly, Propp's literary approach works on the surface structure of a text, on the level of plot. It describes and charts the linear sequence of elements in a text, seeking to recognize sequential patterns of actions in the narrative. Once a morphology of such narrative events is isolated, where they occur in a story and what their function might be can be analyzed and interpreted. One of Propp's great contributions is the insight that the same motif can mean different things, depending on where it occurs in the story: the person falling off a boat at the start of a story is probably the hero, whose adventures are the subject of the tale; the person falling off a boat at the end of a story is probably the villain, whose comeuppance closes the tale.[6] This dependence of significance upon sequence may be self-evident today, but it was revolutionary when Propp first published his findings in 1928.

I have found that when texts in the HB containing eating and drinking events are analyzed according to Propp's method, they frequently appear to exhibit a literary pattern consisting of the core elements of *eating* and *drinking* followed by an *oracle*. This pattern, which is very frequently accompanied by other elements, as we shall see below, appears to underlie and reinforce accounts of the establishment of an entity when the oracle is positive, or the condemnation of an entity when the oracle is negative.

This pattern occurs so often in biblical and ANE literature that I have suggested that it functions as a literary convention. I term the general genre defined by this morphology *patterns of destiny*, and further designate subsets of this category as *foundation patterns* or *doom patterns*, depending upon whether the oracle in the sequence is positive or negative.

Paradise accounts are a particular case within the more general category of doom pattern. When this structural pattern is present in a narrative, the entity that is the subject of the story is condemned or overthrown by divine will. Before looking specifically at paradise stories, it would be productive to examine the structure of this more general pattern of doom.

6. I am grateful to my daughter, Reena E.S. Nadler, who brought this example to my attention in 1993.

Patterns of Destiny: Condemnation

In the larger work, I outline the morphology of foundation patterns as they are found in biblical narrative and in ANE literature.[7] I suggest there that a particular pattern underlies the establishment of a cultural entity that is the subject of such texts. The foundation pattern that I find in Sumerian, Akkadian, Ugaritic and biblical literature appears to consist of an *eating* or *drinking* event, often but not necessarily a banquet, followed by an *encounter* among the main characters in which is embedded a positive *oracle*, or *blessing*, that is later given *affirmation* by the narrator or by subsequent events.

There is a group of narratives within the HB that appears to exhibit a pattern very similar to the one I have suggested for 'foundation accounts', but with a variation so at odds with the category of establishment that it seems to deserve its own classification. The pattern for this variant group of texts appears to consist of the familiar functions in the expected order: *eating/drinking; oracle*; and *affirmation*, with the core constants of *eating/drinking* and *oracle* occurring in sequence, and the other functions often present but not essential to defining the pattern.

However, in this group the pattern seems to exhibit one significant difference: the *oracle* slot within the doom sequence contains neither blessing nor prediction of the establishment of an entity; instead, the *oracle* in this pattern consists of the curse or condemnation of the entity that is the subject of the text. I have identified twenty-two biblical examples and about fourteen in the ANE containing the core pattern of *eating, oracle*. Twenty of the biblical plus seven of the Near Eastern examples contain the fuller pattern of elements—*eating/drinking, encounter, oracle* and *affirmation*.[8]

The Basic Pattern of Doom

An example of the doom pattern I am suggesting for biblical narrative occurs in Daniel 5. This episode recounts the divine

7. See the author's dissertation, *passim*.
8. See the author's dissertation from p. 251 and *passim*.

condemnation of king Belshazzar, heir to the throne of his father Nebuchadnezzar.

To summarize the story, Belshazzar hosts a great banquet at which he gets drunk (*eating/drinking*, 5.1). In his inebriated state, Belshazzar orders the gold and silver vessels that were captured from the Jerusalem Temple to be brought and used by the nobles at his profane feast (5.2-23). The nobles drink from the holy vessels, praising their pagan gods as they do so. Suddenly, the king is alarmed by the appearance of the fingers of a human hand writing on the wall of the King's palace (5.5).

In a familiar wisdom trope,[9] the king's wise men make a vain effort to decipher the writing, and rich rewards are offered for successful interpretation. Then, at the suggestion of the Queen, Daniel is called and the king charges him with the task. Daniel rejects material gifts and undertakes the interpretation (5.7-17).[10]

Daniel interprets the omen (*oracle*) within the context of Belshazzar's failure to learn from his father's folly—neither father

9. There are many examples of wisdom trope featuring the failure of the king's wise men to perform a task, the offering of a reward, and successful performance by an unanticipated hero. See, for example, the discussions of the biblical episode of Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, beginning on p. 249 of the author's dissertation.

10. On the motifs of the wise man as savior and the subtype 'Disgrace and Rehabilitation of a Minister', especially as it occurs in the Bible and the literature of the ANE, see Donald B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50)* (VTSup, 20; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), pp. 96-97. For an analysis of such stories that takes into account pattern and sequence in addition to shared motifs, see Susan Niditch and Robert Doran, 'The Success Story of the Wise Courtier: A Formal Approach', *JBL* 96.2 (1977), pp. 179-93, in which they rightly criticize the approach of W. Lee Humphreys as set out in 'A Lifestyle for Diaspora: A Study of the Tales of Esther and Daniel', *JBL* 92 (1973), pp. 211-23. Humphreys ignores the importance of sequence in his discussion of isolated motifs in these texts. Cf. Humphreys, 'The Motif of the Wise Courtier in the Book of Proverbs', in John G. Gammie *et al.* (eds.), *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien* (New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1978), pp. 177-90. The motif of a disgraced and rehabilitated minister also occurs in the story of Aḥikar. For the various versions of this tale, see F.C. Conybeare, J.R. Harris and A.S. Lewis, *The Story of Aḥikar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913).

nor son sees the necessity of glorifying the Lord of Heaven; instead, Belshazzar's contempt for the Lord's holy vessels has earned him divine condemnation. Daniel interprets the handwriting on the wall as the doom of Belshazzar and his kingdom (5.18-28).

The text gives no indication that this oracle is taken seriously by the king. Instead, the text underlines with irony the king's frivolity: as though the oracle and its interpretation were part of an elaborate entertainment, Daniel is rewarded for his successful decipherment with what is certainly an ephemeral appointment to the troika of rulership of the doomed kingdom. The chapter closes with a terse *affirmation* of the first part of the oracle: Belshazzar is killed that very night (5.30).[11]

The pattern of this text may be summarized as an *eating/drinking* event, Belshazzar's feast, at which there occurs an *encounter*, signaled by the challenge to God symbolized by profane use of the temple vessels. The encounter contains an *oracle* and its interpretation, here the handwriting on the wall and Daniel's explanation. The final element of the doom pattern is an *affirmation* of the oracle, in our text the statement in Dan. 5.30 that the King has been murdered.

The *oracle* element in patterns of doom is never a blessing; instead, here in Daniel 5 and in the doom pattern throughout the Bible, the oracle consists of a curse or condemnation—condemnation of a person (here, the king), condemnation of an entity (here, Belshazzar's united kingdom), or both.

The relationship of this doom pattern to the foundation pattern is highlighted by the juxtaposition of the two in chs. 18 and 19 of Genesis.[12] I have discussed the foundation pattern underlying Genesis 18, and that text as a paradigmatic example of the 'Foundation Account', in the earlier study.[13] Now let us

11. The next move of the narrative continues in Daniel 6, where the first verse of that chapter affirms the final judgment of the oracle: Darius the Mede receives the kingdom after Belshazzar's demise (6.1).

12. Many scholars have drawn attention to the similarities among the texts discussed here. Cf. Stuart Lasine, 'Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot's Hospitality in an Inverted World', *JSOT* 29 (1984), pp. 37-59, and Robert C. Culley, *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), pp. 52-59.

13. Cf. the author's dissertation, from p. 200.

review the doom pattern underlying the destruction of Sodom in Gen. 19.1-29.

The angels arrive in Sodom and are welcomed by Lot, who invites them to share his hospitality. After some urging they agree, and Lot prepares for them a feast which they eat (*eating*, Gen. 19.1-3). Then follows an *encounter* between Lot, the strangers and the townspeople that is resolved by supernatural means (vv. 4-11). The visitors, who have sufficiently investigated the extent of wickedness in Sodom as suggested in Gen. 18.20-21, announce the impending destruction of the city (*oracle*, 19.12-13). Lot's family does not believe them, and Lot himself delays acting until the visitors bodily remove Lot, his wife and his daughters from the city (*departure*, vv. 14-22). The oracle receives *affirmation* with the annihilation of Sodom once Lot and his family are safe (vv. 23-29).

Keeping in mind the doom pattern I have just defined—an *eating* event followed by an *encounter*, in which is embedded a negative *oracle* that is subsequently *affirmed*—we may now turn to a particular subset of narratives that exhibit this doom pattern: accounts of paradise and mortality in the HB and in the ANE. An examination of these texts reveals an underlying structural pattern common to biblical and ANE accounts of paradise and mortality. The evidence from biblical and Near Eastern texts suggests a common and long-standing literary convention that underlies these accounts of the doom of paradise and the inevitablity of human mortality.

Paradise accounts are a particular case of the more general category of doom pattern I have been discussing. In keeping with the doom pattern I have just identified in Daniel 5, for the doom pattern to be present in texts dealing with paradise and mortality we would expect those accounts to have an *eating* or *drinking* event, at which there occurs an *encounter* in which is embedded an *oracle*. We would also expect the text to close with some *affirmation* of that oracle. Because the state of paradise is always doomed, we would expect that the oracle that is part of this pattern will always be negative—a curse instead of a blessing. It is significant for the present study that the doom of the state of paradise in the HB contains the sequence I have come to associate with the doom pattern.

The Paradise Account in the Hebrew Bible

A pattern of doom appears to close the first episode of the primeval history in Genesis 3. In this text the *eating* event is neither a banquet nor a feast, but concerns the ingestion of a fruit forbidden by God. The *eating* of the fruit of the tree (vv. 1-7) is followed by an *encounter* between Eve, the serpent, God and Adam (vv. 8-13), culminating in an *oracle* dooming the serpent and humankind to mutual enmity, and dooming both men and women to hard labor (vv. 14-19).[14] The oracle receives *affirmation* in the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden (vv. 22-24).

Other ancient cultures have paradise myths in which an ideal situation is ill-fated, but the doom pattern is absent, for example, from Greek paradise myths. The Greek myth of Pandora, as it is told in Hesiod's 'Works and Days', blames the present unpleasant state of the world on female curiosity. No eating/drinking event or oracle accompanies the Pandora story, and our doom pattern is nowhere in evidence.[15]

14. For the oracle of doom see below, esp. nn. 53 and 54.

15. Hesiod, 'Works and Days', ll. 42-107, in H.G. Evelyn-White (trans.), *Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns, and Homerica* (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982 [1914]), pp. 5-10. 'Works and Days' ascribes the creation of Pandora to Zeus's desire to exact from mankind a heavy price for the fire that was brought to them by Prometheus against Zeus's will. Lines 90-93 describe the state of mankind before Pandora's unleashing of the plagues contained in the casket she unwittingly opens: 'For ere this the tribes of men lived on earth remote and free from ills and hard toil and heavy sicknesses which bring the Fates upon men', p. 9. Rather than fitting into a foundation pattern, however, this tale fits into a category defined by a pattern of *interdiction* (men may not have fire)/*interdiction violated* (men secure fire through the intervention of Prometheus)/*punishment* (Pandora is created and presented to mankind along with a casket of plagues that she unsuspectingly unleashes)/*mitigation* (but hope remains). This pattern is suggested by Propp in *Morphology*, pp. 26-28, and discussed further by Dundes, *North American Indian*, pp. 4-72 and *passim*.

An eating event does precede another version of the creation of Pandora in Hesiod's 'Theogony', ll. 536-616, pp. 118-25 in the same Loeb Classical Library volume. Zeus is bested by Prometheus in a trick, explaining why the gods receive the bones and fat of a sacrifice and people may eat

In fact, this and other related Greek myths exhibit a different morphology, an underlying pattern of *interdiction/interdiction violated*.[16] This pattern of *interdiction and violation* also occurs frequently in the HB[17]—for example, in the very story of Adam and Eve that I have just surveyed, where the forbidden fruit of the tree is eaten and punishment follows. This example illustrates the phenomenon of multiple patterns embedded in the same text in the HB—a source of its richness. This study, however, is limited to uncovering and analyzing the pattern of doom in paradise accounts, a pattern that is absent from the Greek myths but occurs often in biblical and ANE literature.

Ancient Near Eastern Accounts of Paradise and Human Mortality

The pattern of doom that I have observed in the biblical paradise story does seem to occur in other Semitic literature. In Akkadian, the epic of Gilgamesh contains several episodes in which a state of paradise is lost, eating events are present and the underlying pattern appears to be a pattern of doom.

The first episode opens in tablet 1 with Enkidu feeding on

the meat. In his anger, Zeus withholds fire from mankind, and Prometheus defies him by bringing the gift of fire to them anyway. Prometheus is punished for bringing fire to mankind by having his regenerating liver devoured daily by an eagle, and mankind's 'price for the blessing of fire' is 'the beautiful evil' of woman, since all women are descended from the beautiful but guileful Pandora (ll. 585-89, pp. 122-23). There is no foundation or doom pattern present in this account either. This episode does, however, exhibit the *interdiction/interdiction violated/punishment* pattern noted for the earlier account of Pandora's creation.

A study of the parallels between the Greek Pandora and Prometheus and the Sumerian Enki may be found in Charles Penglase, *Greek Myths and Mesopotamia: Parallels and Influence in the Homeric Hymns and Hesiod* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 197-229.

16. Cf. Propp, *Morphology*, pp. 26-28, and Dundes, *North American Indian*, pp. 64-72.

17. Cf., for example, Robert C. Culley, 'Five Tales of Punishment in the Book of Numbers', in Susan Niditch (ed.), *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore* (Semeia Studies/Society of Biblical Literature; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), pp. 25-34.

grass and drinking at watering places in the wild (an *eating and drinking* event; Assyrian version, tablet 1, col. 2, ll. 39-41), followed by Enkidu's meeting with the hunter from whose traps he frees his friends, the wild animals of the steppe (an *encounter*). The hunter seeks advice, first from his father and then from Gilgamesh, who advises him that once Enkidu has been seduced by the *ḫarimtu*, a cult prostitute,[18] he will be repudiated by his feral companions and will no longer be a threat to the hunter (this is the *oracle*; Assyrian version, tablet 1, col. 2, l. 42 to col. 4, l. 45). All proceeds as Gilgamesh predicts: Enkidu is seduced and is subsequently rejected by the wild animals who had been his companions (the *affirmation* of the oracle; Assyrian version, tablet 1, col. 3, ll. 46-51; col. 4, ll. 1-29).

For Enkidu, this episode signals the end of his primeval state. The structure underlying this episode, telling of the end of Enkidu's state of paradise, is a doom pattern. He has lost the paradise of his initial feral existence and has not yet become fully human. The Akkadian text is ambivalent about civilization, repeatedly represented in the Gilgamesh epic as a mixed blessing. An examination of the morphology of two other episodes in Gilgamesh will illustrate this point.

First, I examine the episode foretelling Enkidu's demise, in tablets 6 and 7.[19] The background of the sequence I shall examine is that Ishtar is furious that Gilgamesh and Enkidu have killed the Bull of Heaven, sacred to the goddess (tablet 6, ll. 150-65). Gilgamesh, however, jubilantly shows off his trophy and his praises are sung upon his triumphant return to Uruk (tablet 6, ll. 166-83). Our analysis begins as Gilgamesh and his companions feast in celebration (an *eating* event; tablet 6, l. 187). Then they retire for the night.

Enkidu beholds in a dream the gods in council (the *encounter*). Here, in spite of a spirited defense by Shamash, it is determined

18. Two terms are used as synonyms, *ḫarimtu* and *šamḫatu* (sometimes written as *šamkātu*). The second may be the woman's name or her profession. These can mean 'harlot' or 'prostitute', usually connected with temple or cult. See I.J. Gelb in Gelb and E. Reiner (eds.), *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1956–), VI, pp. 101-102; XVII, pp. 311-12.

19. Tablet 6, ll. 150-end, and tablet 7, columns 1-4; see E.A. Speiser, 'The Epic of Gilgamesh', *ANET*, pp. 72-90.

that Enkidu must die for the murder of the Bull of Heaven that the goddess Ishtar had sent down to punish Gilgamesh and his people for the hero's rejection of her advances. Enkidu's condemnation is the *oracle* in this text.[20] The oracle is doubled in a second dream, affirming the negative omen, and Enkidu does sicken and die (*affirmation*; tablet 7, col. 4).

The doom pattern—*eating, encounter, oracle, affirmation*—underlies this account of Enkidu's death. The pattern is reinforced by a variation of the doom pattern that is embedded in a smaller unit within this episode. Let us examine this smaller unit, set into the account of Enkidu's demise, in which Enkidu first comes to realize he is fated for an early death. This text exhibits a reversal within the expected sequence of the doom pattern. Here the *oracle* comes first, followed next by the *encounter* and finally by references to *eating* and *drinking*. The subtle manipulation of the expected pattern may enhance or even counterpoint the message of the text.

Enkidu begins by cursing the *ḫarimtu* and the blandishments of civilization that lead to his early death (This is the *oracle*; Assyrian version, tablet 7, col. 3). Shamash intervenes (beginning the *encounter*), reminding Enkidu of the pleasures of civilization to which the *ḫarimtu* introduced him. Shamash notes especially the food fit for the gods, the wine fit for kings, the noble garments and the friendship of Gilgamesh. (These are references to eating and drinking [Assyrian version, tablet 7, col. 3, ll. 33-48].)

Enkidu is persuaded by Shamash and transforms his curse into a blessing of the *ḫarimtu*, even though his own mood is still morose (Assyrian version, tablet 7, col. 4, ll. 1-12). Far from being affirmed, Enkidu's first oracle is reversed by means of his own words.

Here, not only is the order of the elements reversed but, in addition, a pattern that begins as a variation of the doom pattern is transformed midway into something positive. The reversal of the expected doom pattern reinforces the reversal in the narrative itself, which moves from curse to blessing.

Here is evidence that the structure underlying a narrative can either reinforce or contradict the surface level of a text,

20. These two functions are found in tablet 7, col. 3, ll. 1-16.

enriching the play of meaning. Is civilization humankind's establishment or undoing? On both the narrative and the structural level, this episode appears to recognize the equivocal nature of human culture.

Patterns of Doom in Tales of Human Mortality

Closely related to questions of why we no longer dwell in paradise is the question of why humankind is mortal, and whether it is possible for ordinary people to attain immortality. The biblical story of the expulsion from Eden explains human mortality, since measures are taken specifically so that humankind will not be able to return to paradise—there, perhaps, to have an opportunity to eat from the tree of life. We have already seen that a doom pattern underlies the biblical narrative. Doom patterns underlie several myths and legends treating the issue of mortality in Akkadian literature as well.

Gilgamesh's search for immortality is the subject of the section of the epic following the death of his boon companion. He finds that one human couple has indeed achieved immortality through divine intervention (Old Babylonian version, tablet 11, ll. 1-7). Gilgamesh, bereft of Enkidu and devastated at the idea that death is inevitable, sets out to find Utnapishtim and his wife. After many trials and an arduous journey, Gilgamesh confronts Utnapishtim and demands to know the secret of immortality.

In tablet 11 of the epic Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh about the great flood and about Enki's role in saving Utnapishtim and his wife. Utnapishtim makes it clear that their immortality is a one-time-only concession from the gods.

In an episode that exhibits an elaboration of the doom pattern, Utnapishtim asks who will call a divine assembly on behalf of Gilgamesh and challenges Gilgamesh to stay awake and defeat sleep, death's poor imitation. This *encounter* contains an *eating* allusion for, as Gilgamesh fails to meet the challenge and sleeps for seven days, the time is marked by fresh loaves of bread placed daily at Gilgamesh's sleeping head. When he awakens Gilgamesh at first denies that he has slept, but is persuaded by the evidence of the seven loaves in progressive states of

decomposition (Old Babylonian version, tablet 11, ll. 197-233). This motif, of food uneaten by the hero, is a foreshadowing of what is to come.

Gilgamesh is mortified by his failure, and demands some consolation. Upon the urging of Utnapishtim's wife, the immortal tells Gilgamesh of a plant that rejuvenates the eater (this is the *oracle*; Old Babylonian version, tablet 11, ll.258-70). Gilgamesh dives into the deep and secures the plant (Old Babylonian version, tablet 11, ll. 271-79), but postpones eating the plant until he has returned to Uruk. This delay proves fatal to his enterprise. Here is another example of food not eaten, echoing Gilgamesh's earlier failure (Old Babylonian version, tablet 11, ll. 280-86).

Sure enough, a serpent sniffs the fragrance of the plant, carries it away and eats it. The serpent sheds its skin, an *affirmation* of the rejuvenation promised by Utnapishtim's *oracle* (Old Babylonian version, tablet 11, ll. 287-89). The hope of Gilgamesh for even the appearance of immortality, for rejuvenation, is usurped by the serpent.

The failure of Gilgamesh to pass the initial challenge to conquer sleep, imitation of death, is reiterated in his failure to eat the plant of rejuvenation, imitation of immortality. The second *eating* allusion, this one also a reversal of expectations, confirms what the reader fears is inevitable. The futility of even this hero's effort to find immortality is reinforced by the underlying structure of the epic, a variation of the pattern of doom. The very structure of these texts reinforces the message that humankind is doomed to eventual aging and death.

One other Akkadian text, the story of Adapa, treats the subject of human mortality.[21] The role of Adapa, who bears the epithet *atraḫasīsa*, 'exceedingly wise', is to provide food offerings for the gods, a reference to *eating* and *drinking* (tablet A, ll. 10-20). One day, when he is out fishing to provide for these offerings, Adapa's boat is capsized by the south wind. Adapa 'breaks the wing' of the south wind in this encounter, preventing it from blowing for seven days. Adapa's action brings him to the attention of Anu, the chief god, who demands that Adapa be summoned before him (*encounter*; tablet B, ll. 1-13). In the *oracle* Enki, Adapa's advisor, predicts what will happen when Adapa

21. See E.A. Speiser, 'Adapa', *ANET*, pp. 101-103.

appears on high and counsels Adapa on his comportment. Enki predicts that Adapa will be offered garments and oil, food and drink. Enki advises Adapa to put on the oil and garments that he will be offered, but warns Adapa to refuse the food and drink (tablet B, ll. 14-34). Thus it comes to pass, and the *oracle* is *affirmed*: Adapa puts on the oil and garments, but refuses the food and drink—an example of *eating* and *drinking* reversed.

The sequence is the pattern we have come to recognize: an *eating* event, an *encounter*, an *oracle* and an *affirmation*. Here, the initial *eating* event is Adapa's provisions for the gods. However, the second *eating* event, Adapa's refusal to eat, is a reversal that foreshadows an unexpected outcome. When Anu demands of him why he has refused what is apparently the food and drink of life that will bestow immortality upon humankind, Adapa must confess that his protector, Enki, has given him misleading advice.[22] Anu, delighted at Enki's success in keeping immortality from humankind, releases Enki's city Eridu (possibly from feudal obligations?). Anu then offers humanity amelioration for their failure to achieve immortality in the form of giving the goddess Ninkarrak the ability to heal certain human maladies (tablet B, l. 66 to the end, and tablet D).[23]

The pattern of doom is found in Sumerian literature as well, along with the element of amelioration. The Sumerian paradise myth of Enki and Ninhursag exhibits on its structural level the doom pattern I have identified in Genesis 3, although on the level of plot it appears to be quite different from the biblical account.[24] The myth takes place in Dilmun, the Sumerian 'Eden', which is filled with sweet water at the command of Enki. There then follows a series of *encounters* in which Enki proceeds to impregnate the goddess Ninhursag, 'mother of the land', who

22. On this tale as it relates to deception see O.H. Prouser, 'The Phenomenology of the Lie' (PhD dissertation; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1991), pp. 177-79.

23. See also *ANET*, p. 103 n. 13.

24. This text was first published by Samuel Noah Kramer as 'Enki and Ninhursag: A Sumerian "Paradise" Myth', Supplementary Study 1, *BASOR* (1945); see also *idem*, 'Sumerian Myths and Epic Tales', *ANET*, pp. 37-40. Supplementary Study 1, *BASOR* (1945); see *idem*, 'Enki and Ninhursag: A Sumerian 'Paradise' Myth', and 'Sumerian Myths and Epic Tales', *ANET*, pp. 37-40.

gives birth to a daughter whom Enki also impregnates, and who also gives birth to a daughter.

Enki impregnates a total of three or four succeeding generations of his female progeny (depending on the text version; ll. 109-27),[25] but the pattern is finally broken by his great-granddaughter Uttu.

Apparently on the advice of her great-grandmother Ninhursag, Uttu refuses to cohabit with Enki until he brings her cucumbers, apples and grapes (an eating event, ll. 128-67). When he does, under the influence of Ninhursag, the fruit of their union appears to be a group of eight sprouting plants (ll. 165-95).

In an *encounter*, Enki angers Ninhursag by *eating* each of these plants in turn (ll. 196-217), and Ninhursag curses Enki and disappears. The *oracle* is *affirmed* when Enki begins to sicken, and the great gods grieve for his condition. A fox volunteers to find Ninhursag and is promised a reward to bring her back, so that she can heal Enki (ll. 221-49). *Amelioration* of the curse occurs when Enki is healed by Ninhursag in what appears to be his symbolic rebirth, and the healing of each of his affected organs (equal in number to the plants he has eaten) by means of the engendering of newborn deities from his afflicted members (ll. 250-68).

The essential elements of *eating*, *encounter*, *oracle/curse* and *affirmation* associated with the doom pattern are present in this Sumerian myth in the appropriate sequence. However, following the *affirmation* there is an *amelioration* of the curse. We have seen that this element of *amelioration* also occurs in other texts: in Enkidu's curse changed to blessing of the *ḫarīmtu* in the Gilgamesh epic, and in the healing arts given by Anu to Adapa in place of the immortality he missed out on by refusing food and drink.

This element of *amelioration* also occurs in the biblical text in Genesis 3. After the expulsion from Eden God makes garments of skin for Adam and Eve, ameliorating their exposure to harsh daily life.[26] Even without taking the element of *amelioration* into

25. The number of generations depends upon the variant read: see *ANET*, p. 37 n. 5.

26. Gen. 3.21. Cf., for another example, Cain's mark of divine protection after his punishment is pronounced in Gen. 4. For a brief survey of

account, the appearance of the basic elements in the sequence of the doom pattern in the literature of Sumer suggests that we are dealing here with a very old literary form.

Tale Role Analysis

In this study so far, I have been concerned principally with the sequence of action elements in the episodes under consideration. This reflects the major focus of Vladimir Propp, who was primarily concerned with the actions of the characters in the tales he analyzed for patterns.[27] But Propp also recognized the importance of paying attention to the roles played in each tale by a variety of *dramatis personae*,[28] noting especially how the action elements are distributed among the actors in a tale.

The spheres of action that are associated with particular actors in a tale are defined by Propp as 'tale roles'. Tale roles for Propp are more abstract than characters are. A tale role is defined by function, which may be that of hero, villain, donor (of advice or help) and so on. A character, on the other hand, may demonstrate external qualities of infinite variety. A character may be male, female, wealthy, poor, royalty, laborer, old, young and so on, and any of these infinitely varied characters may play any of the limited number of tale roles identified for a particular genre. These external characteristics or attributes, such as age, sex, social status and external appearance, are culturally

the parallels between this Sumerian myth and the biblical paradise narrative cf. Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer: Twenty-Seven 'Firsts' in Man's Recorded History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), pp. 143-49.

27. Propp, *Morphology*, from p. 21.

28. Propp, *Morphology*, p. 79. Propp's distinction between the abstraction of 'tale role' and the concrete variety of characters who take on a 'tale role' at any time in any particular tale was obscured by carelessness in translation from the original Russian, even in the vastly improved 1968 edition of Propp's *Morphology* cited here throughout. Heda Jason and Dimitri Segal attempt to correct these errors in their re-translation from the Russian original, taking care to distinguish the terms 'tale role' and 'character' as Propp does. See their Appendix I in Heda Jason and Dimitri Segal (eds.), *Patterns in Oral Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), pp. 313-20.

determined. The tale roles themselves, however, transcend specific cultural milieus.[29]

The names and attributes of the characters may change, but their basic function in the narrative, their tale role, remains constant.[30] There may be a one-to-one correspondence between tale role and character, or the spheres of action of a tale role may be divided up among several characters. It is also possible that a single character may play more than one tale role.[31] With this as background, let us examine the tale roles played by the characters in the examples discussed in this study.

A character's tale role is defined by his or her function in the narrative.[32] Propp identified seven tale roles for the Russian fairy tale.[33] The number and nature of tale roles for patterns of doom may now be determined, based upon the morphology outlined so far in this study, by analyzing the examples already reviewed. This analysis of the actors in each example and their representative tale roles reflects results similar to Propp's: a wide variety of characters filling a relatively small number of tale roles.

The basic tale roles identified here are hero, villain, helper, donor, mediator and requisite. Let us define these terms. The *hero* is the subject of the tale, the one who is presented with tests or challenges to meet. The hero's success or failure at these trials determines the outcome of the episode, whether reward or punishment follows. The *villain* thwarts the hero's efforts, and may threaten the hero's life and/or well-being. The *helper* assists the hero to accomplish the task or challenge successfully, providing advice, tools or other means to this end. The *donor* is often the one who sets the task or trial, typically to see if the

29. Heda Jason, 'A Model for Narrative Structure in Oral Literature', in Jason and Segal (eds.), *Patterns in Oral Literature*, p. 107. See also David Buchan, 'Talerole Analysis and Child's Supernatural Ballads', in Joseph Harris (ed.), *The Ballad and Oral Literature* (Harvard English Studies, 17; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 60-77, especially pp. 74-75.

30. Propp, *Morphology*, p. 20.

31. Propp, *Morphology*, p. 80.

32. Propp, *Morphology*, p. 88.

33. Propp, *Morphology*, p. 80.

hero is worthy, and frequently also metes out the reward or punishment depending on the outcome.

A *mediator* may be of two types.[34] The first, an information mediator, provides information links among characters or between the narrator and the reader. The second type transports the characters in time, space or state of being. The role of mediators in the narrative is transitional; they do not move the plot forward, although they may enable the characters to take the positions they need in order for the plot to move forward. *Requisites* do not themselves have an active part in the narrative, but serve to modify the characters or enhance the environment. Requisites are clues to social or economic status, or to location or time. They are most often objects—clothing, possessions, tools—but they may be beings as well: retinues of nobles or slaves, family or tribal members, cattle or flocks.[35]

On a more abstract level, the essential tale roles are those of hero and donor.[36] The villain may be seen as a malevolent 'type' of donor, and helpers may be seen as benevolent 'types' of donor. For purposes of our analysis, however, we will retain the distinction among villain, helper and donor, with the understanding that these distinctions are not always absolute.

Now that tale roles have been defined in general, an examination is possible of the characters who fill these tale roles within doom pattern contexts. In the examples we have examined, the role of wholly successful hero is filled by only one example, that of Daniel in Daniel 5. As we might expect in tales of doom, the failed hero is more frequently represented: Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, Enkidu in the epic of Gilgamesh, Gilgamesh himself in his quest for immortality, and Adapa. Daniel

34. See Jason, 'Model', pp. 104-105 for discussion of the two types of this tale role. Jason terms the types of this tale role 'connectives', distinguishing between information connectives and connectives governing transitions in state, time and place. I use the word 'mediator', since I feel this word, unlike 'connective', refers to the person performing the narrative role, and is in this way more consistent with the terminology for the other tale roles under discussion.

35. Heda Jason, *Ethnopoetry, Form, Content, Function* (Forum Theologiae Linguisticae, 11; Bonn: Linguistica Biblica, 1977), pp. 112-13 and *passim*.

36. Jason, 'Model', p. 106 and *passim*.

5 also contains an example of the failed hero, in the wise men—exorcists, Chaldeans, diviners—who are unable to interpret the handwriting on the wall. Their failed attempt sets the scene for Daniel to succeed in their wake.

In several cases the success of the hero is equivocal. Lot in Genesis 19 succeeds in his personal escape, but his retinue fails to get away: Lot's sons-in-law and married daughters perish in Sodom, as does his wife en route. Enki suffers painfully from the curse of Ninhursag, but his suffering is ultimately ameliorated by her intervention. Enkidu is seduced by the *ḫarimtu* and introduced to the blandishments of civilization—but is this a success or failure? Enkidu himself has trouble deciding, vacillating between curse and blessing, as we have already seen.

Aside from these three faces of the hero—successful, failed and equivocal—there is also the case where two characters share a single tale role. Adam and Eve split the role of hero between them—a fitting circumstance, since they are one flesh until split in Gen. 2.21-24. Both eat the fruit of the tree, both are punished. Eve is the aspect of the hero directly tempted by the villainous serpent in Gen. 3.1-6, but only Adam had been present when the interdiction was given in Gen. 2.16-17—Eve had not yet been created. Together they represent the hero who is tested and fails.

The tale role of villain is also filled by a variety of characters. King Belshazzar is the villain in Daniel 5, flouting all divine warnings and careering heedlessly to his death. The serpent is the villain in Genesis 3 who succeeds in his seduction of Eve, but is ultimately punished by God. A serpent is also the villain in the episode in which Gilgamesh loses the plant of life. In Genesis 19, the townspeople of Sodom are the villains who menace the hero and his family, but are themselves blinded and destroyed.

In Enkidu's seduction the villain is at first Enkidu himself, who threatens the hunter's livelihood, and ultimately the hunter who threatens Enkidu's feral existence. This role shifting between Enkidu and the hunter reflects multiple episodes superimposed on one another, one involving the hunter and his livelihood, in which the hunter is hero and Enkidu the villain, and the next involving Enkidu's introduction to civilization, in which Enkidu is the hero and the hunter is the villain. Propp called these

discrete episodes 'moves' of the tale,[37] and defined them as a tale (or portion of a tale) that has a beginning (villainy or lack) and a conclusion (villainy reversed, lack liquidated).[38] Tales may be composed of one or more moves, and one move does not have to be completed for another one to begin with a new act of villainy or a new lack.[39] Thus, additional moves may be sequential, or they may be wholly or partially 'embedded' in a preceding move. This occurs in the episode of Enkidu and the hunter, an example of the same characters filling different tale roles in different moves.

Ninhursag also fills multiple tale roles. In the first move in the myth of Enki and Ninhursag, she is the requisite spouse of Enki and mother of the daughter born of their coupling. In other moves she is the helper who advises Uttu in securing gifts from Enki, and who rescues Enki from his pain and illness. Most dramatically, she is the villain who curses Enki for eating the eight plants.

In Enkidu's dream of mortality the villain is Ishtar, who calls the gods to council demanding redress for the killing of her Bull of Heaven (tablet 6, ll. 163-65). Ishtar had sent the heavenly bull to destroy Gilgamesh and his people to avenge his rejection of her advances to him (tablet 6, ll. 69-100). She had not expected the mortal heroes, Gilgamesh and Enkidu, to vanquish their divine assailant. Ishtar demands the death of one of the heroes as her due, and Enlil decrees that Enkidu, not Gilgamesh, shall die (tablet 7, ll. 5-10).

For Adapa the first villain is the south wind, which overturns his boat and has its wing broken by Adapa's curse. In the second move, when Adapa is called to an audience with Anu, the villain

37. Propp, *Morphology*, pp. 58-59.

38. On these paired functions marking the beginning and end of a tale, summarized by Propp in the function category Lack/Lack Liquidated and including within it villainy or misfortune/villainy or misfortune liquidated, see Propp, *Morphology*, p. 53.

39. Propp discusses the complexities of multiple moves, embedding, assimilation and other phenomena in Chapter 9 of his study, especially in section A of that chapter, 'The Ways in Which Stories are Combined', *Morphology*, pp. 92-96. See also Jason, *Ethnopoetry*, pp. 74-75, and Jason, 'Model', especially pp. 114-17.

is Enki/Ea,[40] who purports to be Adapa's helper and advisor; but he gives Adapa deceptive advice that causes Adapa and his descendants, all humankind, to miss out on sharing the immortality of the gods. Here is an example of a donor tale role in which the donor is malevolent and, in his function in the narrative, takes on the additional tale role of villain.

Among those filling the tale role of donor are Belshazzar's queen in Daniel 5, who advises the panicky king to ask Daniel to interpret the handwriting on the wall (v. 12). She also fills the tale role of information mediator, when she recounts for Belshazzar's benefit the past deeds that qualify Daniel for the task (vv. 10-11). Gilgamesh is the royal donor of advice to the hunter in Enkidu's seduction. God is the supernatural donor in Genesis 3, setting the task and then punishing the heroes and villain for disobedience.

Males and females fill the tale role of the helper. They may be supernatural (two angels in Genesis 19, Shamash defending Enkidu in his dream, Ninhursag who heals Enki and Ninkarrak ameliorating Adapa's failure), flesh-and-blood (the *ḫarīmtu* in Gilgamesh), immortal (Utnapishtim and his wife in Gilgamesh's search for rejuvenation), and even animal (the fox fills a helper tale role by fetching Ninhursag for Enki's aid).

Mediators of information include the supernatural human hand in Daniel 5 and, as we have already seen, the queen in the same episode. Ilabrat, Anu's vizier in the Adapa text who informs Anu that Adapa is the one who broke the wing of the south wind, is an information mediator. The messenger in the same text, who conducts Adapa to his audience with Anu in heaven, is a mediator of space. So also is the boatman Urshanabi in the Gilgamesh epic, who ferried Gilgamesh from Utnapishtim's domain. The fox who finds Ninhursag and brings her back so she can heal Enki is both a helper and a mediator of space.

Requisites without a role in the narrative beyond affirming or enhancing the status of a hero or villain are human or animal, male or female. Requisites in our examples include the two virgin daughters of Lot, his daughters and sons-in-law, the wild

40. Enki, the Sumerian god of craftsmanship and irrigation and special protector of humankind, is known by both names.

animals accompanying Enkidu before his seduction, the daughters engendered by Enki, and the nobles, consorts and concubines at Belshazzar's feast.

In just these few examples, an assortment of characters with a wide variety of characteristics has filled the two tale roles of hero and villain. They are, in various combinations: male (Daniel, Belshazzar, Lot, Enkidu, the hunter, Gilgamesh, Adam, Adapa, Enki); female (Ishtar, Ninhursag, Eve); inanimate (south wind); animal (both serpents); human (Daniel, Enkidu, the hunter, Adam, Adapa, Eve), divine (Ishtar, Ninhursag, Enki) or both (Gilgamesh).[41] The same variety is present in the minor tale roles of donor, helper, mediator and requisite. Male and female characters alike fill benevolent or malevolent tale roles and perform their functions wittingly (Enki, Daniel) or unwittingly (Eve, Adapa).

Tale Role and Gender

Examining tale roles in these texts from the perspective of gender reveals little absolute differentiation. Women, it appears, can fill any of the tale roles in texts showing patterns of doom. However, quantitative criteria may modify this observation somewhat. The sampling of texts in this study is hardly statistically significant, but the anecdotal results are clear: it appears that females in general fill fewer tale roles than male characters; in the tale roles they fill women are more often villains than heroes, and more often fill the minor tale roles of donor, helper or requisite than the major ones of hero or villain. The frequency with which male or female characters fill particular tale role slots is culturally determined.[42] The more abstract tale roles themselves do not demand any particular set of characteristics in the characters that fill them, and are themselves not culturally bound.

An interesting phenomenon that emerges while looking at the culturally bound characters filling the tale roles is that of gender

41. Gilgamesh is two-thirds divine, one-third human. See tablet 1, col. 2, ll. 1-3.

42. Jason, 'Model', p. 107, and Buchan, 'Talerole Analysis and Child's Supernatural Ballads', pp. 74-75.

blurring. Literary allusions appear to suggest a conscious blurring of gender roles in several examples from the ANE texts we have surveyed. In these cases, the male heroes take on qualities or execute tasks usually associated with female qualities and tasks.

The earliest text and most obvious example occurs in the final scene of Enki and Ninhursag. When the fox has brought Ninhursag to cure Enki of his agonizing pain, Ninhursag places Enki in her vulva (l. 250) and asks him where it hurts. Enki proceeds to mention eight parts of his body, of which it is possible to read five: jaw, tooth, mouth, arm, rib (ll. 251-69). For each body part Ninhursag causes the birth of a minor deity, and the pain is healed. Enki's limbs are apparently the incubators for these divine embryos, who were engendered in Enki's body as a result of his earlier eating of the eight plants prepared by Ninhursag from Enki's semen (ll. 184-95). Enki's body has no womb in which to nurture these divine seeds, and no vulva from which to give birth to them. Ninhursag literally and figuratively lends him hers. She is the midwife and surrogate who enables Enki to give birth, even though he is ill-equipped to do so.

The text closes with the giving of their fates to the newborn deities. Obviously, the one who decrees their fate is the one with power over them. It is Ninhursag who is speaking in the passage immediately preceding the fate-giving. Although no shift of speaker is indicated in the text, at least one scholar has suggested that Enki is the one decreeing the fates of the new beings.[43] At best, the identity of the speaker is ambiguous—perhaps purposely so. Who is the powerful fate-giver, Ninhursag or Enki?

Enki's failing is amplified by comparison with the competence of the divine women (earlier in the text), who conceive one generation after another and deliver, apparently effortlessly, in nine days instead of the nine months of human 'womanhood' (ll. 75-127). Tikva Frymer-Kensky has suggested that the role of goddesses in ancient Sumer was gradually marginalized and their functions assumed by male gods, especially Enki.[44] She

43. Speiser, *ANET*, p. 41 n. 55; see ll. 265-78.

44. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York:

suggests that this text may reflect a transitional period before Enki is fully invested with his creator role, a time in which Enki and Ninhursag have struck a balance.[45] I would like to suggest that this text may also be poking a little fun at the male arrogation of the crucial female birth function, asking what it would look like if Enki tried to give birth. After all, Ninhursag is furious with Enki for eating the plants she has fertilized with his semen, and leaves him to take the consequences of his folly. When the fox persuades her to return, it is clear that Ninhursag is the only one who can heal Enki of the pain that is the result of his foolishness. I read this text as a polemic affirming the biological fitness of women for the important task of birth, and the unfitness of men to undertake it, however much they may wish to do so.

In the epic of Gilgamesh Enkidu's gender identity is also blurred, in spite of the feral masculinity of his actions and gestures. In the text of the Gilgamesh epic he is created by the gods in order to distract Gilgamesh from oppressing his people. His gender identity is blurred from the start, when he is described at his creation as being 'endowed with hair like a woman'.[46]

This impression is augmented when Gilgamesh has premonitory dreams of Enkidu's arrival on the scene, in which he first finds a fallen star, then an axe, mysteriously compelling. He goes to his mother Ninsun, a wise woman, for interpretation of the strong feeling he has towards each of these objects: 'I loved it and was drawn to it as though to a woman'.[47] Ninsun reassures him that these feelings are not towards these objects themselves but towards the stout comrade, the friend and counsellor, whose coming the dreams foretell.

Gilgamesh and Enkidu become inseparable after their initial bellicose meeting—a wrestling episode that ends in a draw—and they embark on rugged masculine expeditions together that would appear to be the ultimate in macho male adventure. Yet, for all the manliness of their deeds, when Enkidu finally sickens

Macmillan; Glencoe: Free Press, 1992), pp. 70-72.

45. Frymer-Kensky, *Wake*, p. 72.

46. Speiser's translation in *ANET*, p. 74, tablet 1, l. 35.

47. Speiser's translation in *ANET*, pp. 75-76, Akkadian version, tablet 1, col. 5, ll. 25-47; col. 6, ll. 1-30.

and dies, Gilgamesh weeps for him, 'moaning bitterly like a wailing woman'.[48]

Throughout, the gender blurring imagery sends a double message. On the one hand is the message that the companionship between these two is analogous to—and perhaps better than—the companionship between a man and a woman. On the other hand, the female gender images associated with both Gilgamesh and Enkidu subvert the overt masculinity of their escapades and gestures, feminizing each of them and their relationship to one another, moderating the harsh tone of their brash masculinity. The language of analogy also suggests that in Akkadian culture, loyal companionship is best spoken about in terms of heterosexual coupling, and that strong feeling, especially of grief, is the woman's realm.

In the story of Adapa the hero's character is not only blurred from a gender perspective, but this mortal paradigm and progenitor of humankind is also associated literarily with a female divinity. Adapa is summoned to Anu's abode on account of his breaking the wing of the south wind. Adapa's action echoes the imagery Gilgamesh uses in his condemnation of Ishtar when he rejects her advances:

> For Tammuz, the lover of thy youth,
> Thou hast ordained wailing year after year.
> Having loved the dappled shepherd-bird,
> Thou smotest him, breaking his wing.
> In the groove he sits, crying 'My wing!'[49]

The breaking of the wing is the act of the goddess; Adapa's action echoes Ishtar's, identifying mortal man with divine woman.

This association with the female is reinforced later in the Adapa text when Enki advises Adapa to dress in mourning for his journey to Anu's abode, and to gain access to Anu by flattering his gatekeepers, Tammuz and Gizzida, saying that he is mourning for them since they have departed earthly life.[50] We have seen in the Gilgamesh epic that, in Akkadian culture,

48. Speiser's translation in *ANET*, p. 87, Assyrian version, tablet 8, col. 2, l. 3.

49. Tablet 6, ll. 46-50. Translation by Speiser, *ANET*, p. 84.

50. Tablet B, ll. 14-26, 37-46. Cf. *ANET*, pp. 101-102.

mourning is traditionally the woman's role. In the HB as well, one of the abominations shown to Ezekiel in a vision is the women weeping for Tammuz at the gate of the temple (Ezek. 8.14). Adapa, by assuming mourning garb and identifying himself as a mourner for Tammuz, is associating himself with traditional female behavior. It is appropriate that Adapa, as progenitor of humankind, contains aspects of both male and female within himself. All of his descendants, male and female, must bear the consequences of Adapa's failure to win immortality; they also share in the consolation prize, benefiting from the healing arts of the goddess Ninkarrak (tablet D, ll. 11-21).

Adapa's multivalent male/female and divine/human associations are culturally appropriate in the Akkadian milieu. In the Akkadian myth of the creation of man Atraḫasis, the first human being, is created out of the blood of a divinity mixed with earthly clay. The Akkadian conception of humankind is of a mixed nature: part mortal, part divine. This is in contrast to the nature of humankind as depicted in the Bible. Biblical mortals are made exclusively of dust with the breath of God their only link to the divine, and this only lent for the duration of their earthly sojourn. Adapa, in our text, bears the epithet *atraḫasisa*,[51] 'exceedingly wise', alluding perhaps to the Atraḫasis myth and to the dual nature of humankind. Of course, the epithet used of Adapa may also be meant ironically, since Adapa is not wise enough to see through Enki's duplicity.

The biblical progenitors of humankind also share a dual nature, though only of gender and not of divine substance. When Adam is first created, he contains within himself the female aspect that is later literally split off from his body in Gen. 2.21-24. We have already seen that on the narrative level Adam and Eve share the tale role of the failed hero in Genesis 3; and that both must bear the consequences of violating God's interdiction, as must their descendants, though only Adam is warned by God not to eat from the tree (Gen. 2.16). The perception of Adam and Eve as a heroic unit is reinforced on a linguistic level. In her conversations with the serpent, Eve is referred to in the second person masculine plural throughout;[52] and she responds to the

51. Tablet A, l. 8. See Speiser, *ANET*, p. 101 n. 2.

52. In Hebrew, the masculine plural is used when the reference is to a

temptation as though God's interdiction of eating from the tree had been given in the masculine plural (Gen. 3.1-5), although it is reported in Gen. 2.16 in the masculine singular.

Besides being addressed as a joint unit even when they are acting as individuals, the essence of their punishment is identical, though the forms may be different for men and women. The punishment for Eve involves difficult childbirth, and the punishment for Adam is to raise food from the soil with great difficulty. The punishments of both Adam and Eve contain the Hebrew word עצבון, often translated as 'pain' or 'sorrow'. But, in the HB context the term carries a meaning closer to 'very hard work'.[53] Eve's punishment is that from then on giving birth will be possible only with very hard labor—bringing to mind, perhaps, Enki's experience in the Sumerian text—and Adam's punishment is that from then on food will be had only with very hard labor.[54] The consequence of their violation of God's interdiction is the same for both Adam and Eve—continued survival for them and for their descendants will now require hard work.

The cultural message in the biblical text may be read as shared responsibility for the failure of both Adam and Eve to obey God, and joint assumption by both women and men of the double burden of mortality and hard work consequent upon their failure. Frymer-Kensky has seen biblical gender relations as fundamentally egalitarian when stripped of the interpretive overlay of post-biblical exegesis.[55] My reading of the shared hero tale role in the biblical account of the doom of paradise confirms her insight.

mix of male and female, as well as when the reference is to plural males.

53. The word עצבון occurs only three times in the HB, twice in these punishment passages (Gen. 3.16; 3.17) and the third time in Gen. 5.29, when Noah is named in the hope that he would comfort humankind 'from our doings and from the labor [עצבון] of our hands'. The base root עצב may be rendered as 'sadness' (צער) or 'hard labor' (עמל).

54. Gen. 3.16-17. I am indebted for this insight to Dr Stephen A. Geller, Professor of HB and Ancient Semitic Languages at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

55. Frymer-Kensky, *Wake*, p. 120 and *passim*.

Conclusion

We have seen in this study that a particular pattern appears to underlie certain narratives in the HB and in ANE literature. This pattern consists of the elements of *eating* and *drinking, [encounter], oracle, [affirmation]*. This pattern appears to underlie and reinforce accounts of the condemnation of an entity when the oracle is negative. We have also seen examples of these patterns, termed here patterns of doom, appearing to serve similar functions in other ANE literatures.

I suggest that this pattern functions as a literary convention, demonstrating all the versatility of a nuanced literary device. We have seen it in its most common sequence—*eating [encounter], oracle, [affirmation]*—and we have seen elements of the sequence reversed or transposed. We have seen how reversals and transpositions of the expected structural pattern may reinforce or counterpoint the surface message of a text.

I have also analyzed the tale roles associated with these doom patterns, and discovered six basic functions for the *dramatis personae*. The tale roles identified here are hero, villain, helper, donor, mediator and requisite. At the tale role level of abstraction, cultural constraints do not seem to operate—with men and women, rich and poor, animal and inanimate, human and divine characters each taking every role at some point. Cultural factors do come under consideration at the level of character analysis, and I have examined how some of the ambiguities of gender blurring might contribute to the culturally specific message of a text.

The literary convention of doom patterns and the tale roles associated with them occur in the literature of several cultures within the ANE tradition, beginning with the Sumerian, and persists through re-use and transformation into a variety of narratives in the HB. I believe we are dealing here with a widely used and very ancient literary convention of the ANE. The occurrence of these patterns in Homeric literature and in the literature of the New Testament has yet to be thoroughly examined.