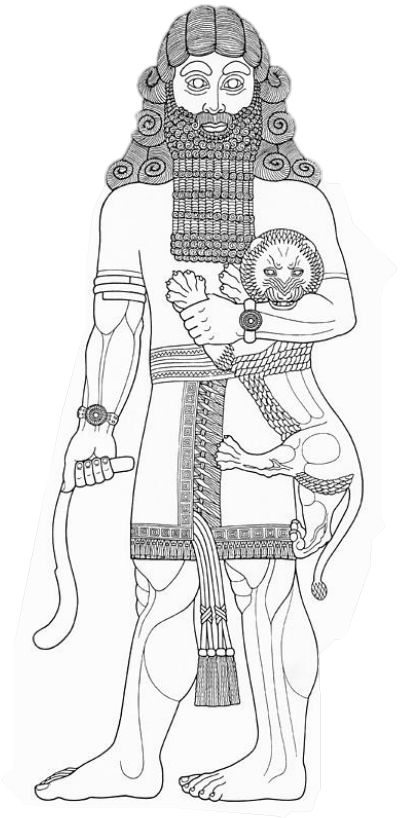
"Mannu Attā Bēlī?"
A Textual Re-Analysis of the *Poor Man of Nippur*



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Abbreviations

AP- Advice to the Prince

CAD- The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary

CD- Cambridge Dictionary

CDLI- The Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative

Ee- Enūma Eliš

E&I- Erra & Ishum

GN- Gimil-Ninurta

N&E- Nergal and Ereškigal

ORACC- The Openly Rich Annotated Cuneiform Corpus

PMN- The *Poor Man of Nippur*

SB Cuth.- The *Standard Babylonian Cuthaean Legend*

SB Gilg.- The *Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh*

SEAL- Sources of Early Akkadian Literature

STT- The Sultantepe Tablets

Final Word Count (excl. title page, table of contents, and abbreviations): 14,939

Cover Image: *Gilgamesh, King of Uruk* (2013) by Photo Researches. Available at: https://pixels.com/featured/gilgamesh-king-of-uruk-photo-researchers.html

1. Introduction[1]

"On ne voit pas rire le Mésopotamien; il semble ne pas connaître le délassement."[2]
-Contenau, G. (1950) *La vie quotidienne à Babylone et en Assyrie*, 309.

Our opening quotation evokes a prevailing notion amongst Assyriologists prior to 1956. From the land between two rivers, a wealth of clay tablets pertaining to administration, religion, and kings seduced earlier scholars into expressing such remarks as above. This was to change. In 1956, O.R. Gurney published his *editio princeps* of a tale he termed, 'The Poor Man of Nippur', found amidst the Anglo-Turkish Sultantepe Excavations of 1951-1952.[3] We include Contenau's remark to recall that *editio princeps*, in which Gurney, too, referred to the same statement.[4] At last, archaeological discovery had proven what one already suspected: then, as now, in ancient Mesopotamian texts, as in all cultures, human beings afforded themselves the chance to smile.

Since 1956, a number of publications have emerged to challenge Contenau's view still further. Today, the modern Assyriologist can reference several texts which have elements we consider 'humorous': *Ninurta-Pāqidāt's Dog Bite* (also known as the *Illiterate Doctor of Isin*); *At the Cleaners*; the *Tale of the Three Ox Drivers from Adab*; or the *aluzinnu*-text.[5] All of the above exhibit different kinds of comedy, be it slapstick, vulgar, burlesque, satiric, or parodic. Yet none have thus far been shown to involve Mock-Heroic Pastiche. Simply put, a 'mock-heroic poem' "[consists] of treating a vulgar subject in a noble style and using the heroic style in general: that is, without specific reference to any particular noble text."[6] We return, then, to the beginning. We return to the *Poor Man of Nippur*.[7]

[1] The idea for this thesis was engendered by an undergraduate Final's Examination sat at the University of Oxford in 2020. There, in a miniature-edition of PMN r.i.4-28, we produced an essay entitled, *''Mannu Attā Bēlī*?': Gimil-Ninurta as Epic Hero in the Poor Man of Nippur'. On intertextual grounds, we argued that Gimil-Ninurta was cast as 'epic-hero' via reference to the *SB Epic of Anzû* and *OB/SB Epic of Gilgamesh*. Constricted to 2000 words, however, and in our naïve approach, considerations of literary theory, methodological concerns, and delicacy when approaching the ancient text were wanting. Yet through further study, and a thorough grounding in Akkadian literature instilled by the Universiteit Leiden, we now attempt to remedy these deficiencies and amend all prior mistakes, ready to make new ones.
[2] Translation: "One does not see the Mesopotamian laugh; it seems he does not know how to relax."
[3] Gurney 1956: 145-164. For a review, see Lambert 1959: 119-138.
[4] As did Foster 1974: 70.
[5] Foster 1974: 69-85; George 1993: 63-75.
[6] Genette 1997: 143.
[7] Hereafter *PMN*.

1.1 Aims

This thesis intends to textually re-analyse the *PMN* in order to argue that it can be classified as a 'Mock-Heroic Pastiche' on a Genettean (i.e., pertaining to Gérard Genette) understanding. By 'textually', we refer to *the way in which* the *PMN* has been written.[8] The three 'ways' and accompanying analyses are subdivided into: 'intertextuality'; 'orthography'; and 'theme and motif'. It will be shown that the cumulative addition of 'noble' imitations results in a 'Genettean Mock-Heroic Pastiche'. By this we mean the genre as discussed by Gérard Genette in his 1982 *Palimpsests*. In short, we apply modern literary theory to the ancient text in the hopes that a greater understanding of the *PMN* can be attained.

We begin with the text-proper and offer an outline of the *PMN* in Chapter 2. Discussion of the scribe, dating, and previous treatments of the text is included.

However, to apply modern literary theory to the ancient *PMN* is not without methodological concerns. Thus in Chapter 3, we provide an overview of Genette's theories concerning Mock-Heroic Pastiche, albeit one situated in ancient Mesopotamian literature. As such, we shall also discuss terms like 'intertextuality', 'genre', and, more broadly, Mesopotamian textual criticism.

Preliminaries concluded, in Chapter 4 we adduce the arguments in favour of reading the *PMN* as Mock-Heroic Pastiche. The first of these is intertextuality, whereby we shall investigate the *PMN*'s engagement with other works of Mesopotamian literature. An orthographic survey then occurs, followed by one of theme and motif.

Lastly, in Chapter 5, we discuss the implications of this thesis, where it will be shown that our results have bearing on the purpose, generic definition, and dating of the text in question. "Then it will be time to conclude and put away our tools, for nights are chilly in this season."[9]

[8] *CD* s.v. 'textual'.
[9] Genette 1997: 30.

1.2 Mesopotamian Humour

Brief note must also be made on Mesopotamian humour. For throughout this thesis, we will refer to the *PMN* and related literature as 'humorous'. With good reason, one might doubt that we can ever *know* what was considered 'funny' by ancient Mesopotamians. For humour is "appreciated and understood only inside the cultural references, and the psychological frame, of a given tradition."[10] We can, therefore, be limited by the geographic and temporal distance between our and their context. Such a view is expressed by D'Agostino: "we cannot know, on the basis of the documentation we possess now, the psychological aspect of their humour... did they feel the tragedy which often finds itself behind a laugh?"[11] Thus immediately we encounter a problem. If we are to argue that the *PMN* is a Mock-Heroic Pastiche, a genre which in all its varied forms conveys some sense of 'comedy', how are we to proceed, ignorant of the Mesopotamian *mens comica*?

Very little scholarship has dedicated itself to this problem. Much of what has been inferred about Mesopotamian humour stems from the texts which we ourselves have deemed 'humorous', risking circular argument.[12] Thus Foster considers the *Rulers of Lagash* a "parody of King-List phraseology", while still admitting that the text could have "some bitterness and inter-city rivalry lurk[ing] behind it."[13] As an original Mesopotamian laugh is irrecoverable, the closest we can come to understanding their humour is in the basic definition of humour itself: "il fatto cioè che ad essa e sempre inscindibilmente legata l'idea dello stravolgimento, dello iato logico".[14]

Where does this leave us with the *PMN*? We note that Mock-Heroic Pastiche encapsulates this idea of comedy, namely, that "humor revels in the inevitable gap between what is and what is supposed to be."[15] The protagonist, or 'vulgar subject' in a Mock-Heroic

[10] D'Agostino 2014: 68.
[11] D'Agostino 1998: 278.
[12] Though cf. Frahm 1998: 147-162, who argues for humour in Assyrian royal inscriptions through a Ciceronian and Freudian framework. Their arguments, however, apply only to a select few moments in royal inscriptions and are narrower, focussing on instances of 'cruel' comedy.
[13] Foster 1974: 82.
[14] D'Agostino 2000: 24 (translation: "the fact that the idea of distortion, of a logical hiatus, is always inseparably linked to it"), who reiterated this in 2014: 68.
[15] Foster 1974: 69.

Pastiche is *supposed* to be lowly, but the text depicts them in a noble manner. Thus Mock-Heroic Pastiche accords with our notion of 'humour' when applied to Mesopotamia, however general our definition of 'humour' may be.

1.3 A Current Trend in Assyriology

To conclude the introduction, we situate this thesis within wider Assyriological research. For much of Assyriology's (relatively) short life, the Assyriologist has been focused on publication of the clay tablet. This is understandable. The wealth of material, coupled with necessary knowledge of obscure, ancient languages, and the process of copy-to-publish has made it inevitable. However, the growth of dictionaries (e.g. *CAD*), online databases (e.g. *ORACC*), and an even greater knowledge of Mesopotamian literature, in all its manuscripts and variants, means that we are now in a position to write on said literature in more nuanced manners.

Thus modernity has dictated new studies which focus on the more abstract, more textual, side to ancient Near Eastern literature, borrowing from the admirable work performed in the field of Classics. Between 2017-2020 we have seen the likes of Jiménez (2017), Wisnom (2019),[16] and Bach (2020) all draw upon ideas involving topics such as 'intertextuality, 'allusion', and 'transtextual poetics', applying them to Mesopotamian literature, and yielding great results. Therefore, there is no better time than now to contribute to Assyriology in the above manner.

[16] In this thesis we reference Wisnom's PhD thesis (2014) as opposed to her published book, hence the difference in dates and page numbering.

2. The Text[17]

We now give an overview of the text in question. We begin with a summary, before detailing the manuscript variants of the *PMN*. Thereafter, we offer a discussion on the date of this composition and the life of the scribe who wrote it. Lastly, we mention the previous approaches to the text.

2.1 Summary of PMN

The tale of the *Poor Man of Nippur* can be separated, following Cooper, into a quinquepartite structure:[18]

(I) Introduction (1-22)
(II) First Contact with the Mayor (23-71)
(III) Second Contact- First Revenge (72-114)
(IV) Third Contact- Second Revenge (115-139)
(V) Fourth Contact- Third Revenge (140-160)

(I) The *incipit* depicts Gimil-Ninurta,[19] our protagonist, as a poor man. He lives in Nippur as a '*mār Nippūr*', a 'citizen of Nippur'. He owns no valuable possessions and no food. Desiring a change of circumstance, GN decides to sell the clothes off his back to buy a sheep. Instead, he buys a three-year-old goat. Eager to throw a party for his friends and family, he realises that the goat is not enough to feed them all. Nor does he have any beer for the feast. Fearing the anger of his relatives, he determines to take the goat to the mayor (*ḫazannu*) of Nippur.

(II) The gatekeeper of the mayor, Tukulti-Enlil, announces GN's arrival to his master. Angry that a citizen should be left waiting, the mayor invites GN inside. The mayor asks why he has brought him a goat. GN explains his circumstances. Fragmentary lines now follow, but when we resume, the mayor has given GN only bones, gristle, and third-rate beer. Expelled from the mayoral dwelling, GN promises threefold revenge to the gatekeeper. The mayor laughs upon hearing this. GN then turns to the palace of the king, in hope of fair judgement.

[17] In this thesis we have largely used Ottervanger's 2016 edition of the text. Mention must be made of Cooper 1975: 163-174 and von Soden 1990: 174-180, the editions of which we also examined. See Ottervanger 2016: xiv for an overview of all editions. When translating the text, we employed Gurney's 1956 hand-copy of Ms A.
[18] Cooper 1975: 164.
[19] Hereafter 'GN'.

(III) GN requests to borrow a chariot from the king for one day in return for a pound of red gold. Without question, the king grants him the chariot and noble clothing. GN next rides back to the mayor's house, capturing two birds on the way and sealing them in a box. The mayor greets GN as if he were nobility. Our protagonist explains, in pretence, that the king has sent him to take gold to Enlil's temple, the Ekur. After treating GN to a feast, the mayor falls asleep. GN now releases the birds. At dawn, the mayor wakes up only to find the box empty, exclaiming that the gold has been taken. In a dramatic display, GN tears his garments and beats the mayor from head to toe. The mayor begs forgiveness, giving GN two pounds of red gold and new clothes. GN then exits, telling the gatekeeper he has enacted one revenge: two remain.

(IV) GN goes to a barber, where he shaves his head and disguises himself as a doctor. Approaching the mayor's house, he tells the gatekeeper that he can cure ailments. Before the mayor, GN outlines the bruises where he had previously beaten him, duping the mayor into thinking he is skilled. GN then makes an excuse: his cures only work in darkness and isolation. With the mayor to himself, GN ties him to the ground and beats him a second time.

(V) GN finds a young man, and, in return for a reward, commands him to stand in front of the mayor's house and shout: 'I am the one of the goat!'. Meanwhile, GN hides under a bridge. Upon hearing this cry, the mayor sends all his personnel in pursuit of the young man. However, left alone outside, GN seizes the mayor and beats him for a third time. GN leaves for the open country; the mayor returns to the city, crawling.

2.2 Manuscripts[20]

The *PMN* is known from four extant manuscripts. Ms A, the most complete version and without which we would not understand the *PMN*, is *STT* 38. This was the basis of the edition by Gurney in 1956. It is in the Neo-Assyrian script, and dates to 701 BC from its colophon. It was excavated in Sultantepe, ancient Huzirina. Since its initial discovery, *corrigenda* and collations have been published by Gurney and George.[21]

Ms B and C are also both in Neo-Assyrian script. The former corresponds to *STT* 39 + 116 and was excavated in Sultantepe. Gurney published these fragments in 1957 and 1964

[20] Overview is indebted to Ottervanger 2016: xvii.
[21] See Gurney 1957: 135-136; Gurney 1958: 245; George 1993: 75.

respectively. They contain lines 72-82 and 152-160 of Ms A.[22] Ms C, however, was found in modern Kuyunjik, ancient Nineveh: the library of Ashurbanipal. It contains lines 1-18 of Ms A in a fragmentary state. Gurney originally published the tablet in 1956, with collations by George in 1993.[23]

Finally, Ms D (N 4022) is written in the Neo-Babylonian script. It is a school tablet, with lines equivalent to Ms A 1-3. It was found in Nippur (modern Nuffar) and was published by Ellis in 1974.[24]

2.3 Date of Composition

Heated debate has taken place concerning the tale's original date of composition. We can separate the arguments of scholars between those who date the composition to the 2nd millennium (early),[25] and those who date it to the 1st (late). In our opinion, stronger arguments have been adduced for a later dating. The first to do so was Finet, who took the archaisms of the tale not to be a sign of dating, but of parody. They situated composition in the Neo-Assyrian period, roughly 100-150 years before the 701 BC dated colophon of Ms A.[26] Ottervanger has since strengthened these arguments. Correspondences between the *PMN* and *SB Gilgamesh* (especially tablet X) and the *Advice to the Prince*, both texts composed or finalised in the late second or early first millennium BC, indicate a date of composition around the same time. Ottervanger thus concludes that the *PMN* was composed around 1000 BC.[27]

However, an important qualification by D'Agostino must be considered which complicates matters further. D'Agostino argued that the *PMN* was an amalgamation of "favole folcloristiche ed umoristiche".[28] The folkloristic background of the *PMN* has been well studied by the likes of Gurney (1972), Jason (1979), and Kločkov (1975). The former two, especially, have demonstrated via ethnopoetic analyses that the *PMN* not only belongs to certain types of

[22] See Gurney 1957: Plate LIII; Gurney 1964: Plate CXLIII.
[23] See Gurney 1956: 148-149; George 1993: 75.
[24] See Ellis 1974: 88-89.
[25] For an OB dating see: Gurney 1956: 158 (on the basis of *tušamma* at *PMN* 17); Gordon 1960: 140 & n. 138 (due to a correspondence between the *PMN* and KAR 174, iv.8-10); Ellis 1974: 88; and Jason 1979: 194 (through analysing the poem as a 'swindler novella'). For an MB dating see: Speiser 1957: 43-44 (through comparison of *Ee* and *PMN*); and Dietrich 2009: 335.
[26] Finet 1992: 102-106.
[27] Ottervanger 2016: x.
[28] D'Agostino 2000: 111-113 (translation: "folkloristic and humorous fables").

folklores (e.g. 'swindler novella'), but that its features can be traced into global folklores of much later dates. Hence Gurney remarked of the *PMN*: "It is a literary product and doubtless had its roots in an oral tradition of immemorial antiquity."[29] The problem with solely taking this view is that we cannot date a folktale. It is impossible to say when such a tale began to circulate orally. Some resolution is thus required.

The *PMN* as we have it now is certainly a tale rooted in the written tradition. We shall see this below. To give a brief example now, however, the survey of visual puns attested by Noegel, in which the *way* a sign has been written is the source of comedy,[30] should suffice to betray how deeply the *PMN* is embedded in a culture of writing. But we cannot ignore the folkloristic background of the poem. As such, this thesis subscribes to the view of D'Agostino. We acknowledge that the poem likely originated at some point in the oral tradition of folklore (Jason may even be right in suggesting that the *PMN* derives from OB Nippur, at least orally).[31] Such is likely the case for many works of Mesopotamian literature. It was, however, committed to writing, and thus composed in this sense, sometime at the turn of the 1st millennium. Its relationship to other works of Mesopotamian literature, many of which were composed or finalised a short time before this, is evidence of the fact. As such, it is reasonable to examine the *PMN* as a piece of writing in its own right, whilst still admitting its oral background.

2.4 The Scribe

Due to reasons given in 3.3, in this thesis we shall focus on Ms A, the only manuscript of the four for which we know the name of the scribe. Now, then, is it appropriate to discuss the person, for it will have implications for our arguments in Chapter 5.

The colophon to Ms A relates that one Nabû-reḫtu-uṣur wrote this tablet for the 'reading' (*tāmartu*) of a Qurdi-Nergal. It was written on the 21st day of Addaru (February/March) in the eponym year of Ḫanani, i.e., 701 BC. Nabû-reḫtu-uṣur is called

[29] Gurney 1972: 157.
[30] Noegel 1996: 177-182. As an example, Noegel (177-178) argues for *PMN* 8 that the sign SAG, used there as 'KAŠ.SAG' ('first-rate beer'), is a visual play. For SAG can be read syllabically as 'riš' or 'šak', and in the same line we find '*i-riš*', followed by *PMN* 9 '*bi-riš*'.
[31] See fn. 23.

šamallû, an 'apprentice scribe', and 'son' (*māru*) of the *bīt mummi*, 'scribal workshop'.[32] This workshop belonged to Nabû-aḫa-iddin, a *šūt rēši* ('one of the head') and thus possible eunuch.[33]

A number of scholars have discussed the organisation and hierarchy of this scribal community according to this colophon and others from Huzirina. Most commentators have concluded that the scribal workshop and library in Huzirina were owned and run by Qurdi-Nergal and his descendants.[34] However, we note that Qurdi-Nergal, as persuasively argued by Ottervanger, was likely still an apprentice scribe when Ms A was written. As such, Nabû-aḫa-iddin appears to be in charge of the scribal workshop at the time of writing.[35] Collating the views above and cross-referencing with the *PNA*,[36] we suggest, along with Ottervanger, that Ms A was written for Qurdi-Nergal's reading "at the instruction of Nabû-aḫa-iddin", perhaps for educational purposes.[37] At a later date, Qurdi-Nergal may have come to own the library with tablets produced in this workshop.

The exact relationships between these scribes is not of primary focus. More important is the fact that the *PMN* appears to have been written for educational purposes. We shall see why this is significant in Chapter 5. Of equal note is the distribution of genres found in this library associated with the scribal workshop, especially "the relatively large percentage of literary works (15%). Over fifty manuscripts of many of the great Akkadian classics...were found here, compared to just a handful in Kalḫu." This, coupled with the "the quality of manuscripts, the rather backwater location and social status of the apprentices", led Robson to conclude that "this was not an establishment of the highest educational standing... but certainly had aspirations and pretensions to cultural roundedness."[38] In essence, the *PMN* seems to have been written with education in mind, and was found amidst a library containing a relatively high percentage of Akkadian literature.

[32] Ottervanger 2016: 45.
[33] Whether all *šūt rēši* were eunuchs or not is still debated. See, for instance, Nissinen 2017: 231-232; Oppenheim 1973: 333-334.
[34] Lambert 1959: 121-122; Pearce 1993: 186-187; Robson 2013: 48-50.
[35] Ottervanger 2016: 45.
[36] See Baker 2001a: 799 and 2001b: 861.
[37] Ottervanger 2016: 45.
[38] Robson 2013: 48-50.

2.5 Previous Approaches

The *PMN* has been approached in a variety of ways. We have already noted that the tale has been subject to extensive folkloristic analyses. Others, however, have chosen to focus on different aspects of the tale. These range from reading the text as a socio-political commentary on the struggles between the king and local elite,[39] to radically viewing GN as the previous mayor of Nippur.[40] The *PMN* has even been termed a 'human-centred tale' due to its lack of divine presence.[41] In addition, more general analyses of the types of humour on display in the text have been undertaken, either examining sources of 'satire'[42] or wordplay.[43]

Only one critic has come close to suggesting that the poem be read as a 'Mock-Heroic Pastiche'. In 1992, Finet examined instances of intertextuality between, especially, *SB Gilg. X* and the *PMN*. Finet concluded: "The multiplication of these pastiches of "noble" language to report the misadventures of a common character takes care of *vis comica* for the initiates."[44] However, though Finet accords with our reading, we conclude via a more comprehensive account of 'noble' language, focussing on more intertexts, orthography, and theme and motif. We shall also conclude differently to Finet when discussing the implications of such a reading.

Here ends our survey of the *PMN*. It remains to outline the theory we shall employ in this paper, and explain some of our terminology. Let us turn, then, to the theories of Gérard Genette and the concept of intertextuality.

[39] Cooper 1975:167; D'Agostino 2000: 109-116; D'Agostino 2014: 69.
[40] Dietrich 2009: 333-345. Cf. Ottervanger 2016: xi fn. 9.
[41] Ottervanger 2016: xi-xii.
[42] Cooper 1975: 163-174; Cf. Jiménez 2017: 101.
[43] Noegel 1996: 169-186.
[44] Finet 1992: 102.

3. The Theory

Above, we stated that the general aim of this thesis is to apply modern literary theory to ancient text. The task is a daunting one. Engaging with literary theory can be a cumbersome project: "One of the most dismaying features of theory today is that it is endless."[45] Aware, then, that not every reader will be familiar with certain theories, and so as not to write superfluously on the matter, we shall restrict ourselves in this chapter to one theorist, and one theory: Gérard Genette, and his views on 'parody'; and 'intertextuality'. We focus on Genette because of his terminological specificity, so that we can be as precise as possible. Furthermore, the traits he ascribes to Mock-Heroic Pastiche will inform how we proceed in the analyses.

Modern theory, however, is not immediately applicable to an ancient text. Genette can discuss 'author', 'genre', and 'text' as entities we recognise today. To the ancient Mesopotamian, such concepts either do not exist, or are understood so contrastingly, that we must be ready to adapt the modern theory to fit the ancient evidence. This will be attempted in 3.3.

3.1 Genette and Mock-Heroic Pastiche

The *raison d'être* of Genette's theories derives from the inappropriate grouping of certain sub-genres under the title 'Parody'. For today, 'Satire', 'Burlesque Travesty', 'Mock-Heroic Pastiche', etc., are all considered facets of 'Parody', when in fact these sub-genres are engaged in different approaches to the texts they parody.

3.1.1 The 'Inevitable Confusion of Parody'

Consequently, Genette writes that 'Parody' "is the site of a perhaps inevitable confusion".[46] Recalling the Aristotelian definition of the genre, and adding the 18th-19th century sub-genre of 'Burlesque Travesty', Genette shows how texts of these types are, in fact, "completely distinct and not easily reducible" under the title 'Parody'. Instead, they exhibit different relationships with their 'parodied' predecessor, the relationship termed by Genette as *hypertextuality*, i.e., "any relationship uniting a text B [the *hypertext*]... to an earlier text A [the *hypotext*]".[47] These relationships are distinct because of a structural difference: they either

[45] Culler 1997: 15.
[46] Genette 1997: 10.
[47] Ibid. 5.

transform their *hypotext*, or *imitate* the *hypotext*. *Transformation* and *imitation* are both viewed under the lens of 'transformation'. But the former is 'simple transformation'. The latter, though called 'indirect transformation', is a more complex procedure:

> In order to transform a text, a simple and mechanical gesture might suffice (an extreme example would consist of tearing off a few pages...). But in order to imitate a text, it is inevitably necessary to acquire at least a partial mastery of it, a mastery of that specific quality which one has chosen to imitate.[48]

Another Genettean example highlights the difference: "Joyce tells the story of Ulysses in a manner other than Homer's [*transformation*], and Virgil tells the story of Aeneas in the manner of Homer [*imitation*]- a pair of symmetrical and inverse transformations."[49]

Genette then further delineates between the 'moods' of texts. The 'mood' is described as the tone a text takes to its *hypotext*, whether it is 'playful', 'satirical', or 'serious'. The difference between whether a text is 'playful' or 'satirical' lies in how *aggressive*, how mocking the text is *vis-à-vis* its *hypotext*. The 'serious' mood is self-explanatory.

3.1.2 Distinguishing Between Textual Practises

In his attempt to resolve the 'confusion' of 'parody', Genette births a new chart.[50] Its purpose is to allow the critic "to check and focus with greater swiftness and accuracy what it is they are (probably) thinking about when they (haphazardly) utter the word *parody*."[51]

mood / *relation*	playful	satirical	serious
transformation	PARODY	TRAVESTY	TRANSPOSITION
imitation	PASTICHE	CARICATURE	FORGERY

For exposition, let us offer some hypothetical, Assyriological examples. A scribe writes a version of *Gilgamesh*. Except in this variant, Gilgamesh is a vegetable seller, not a heroic

[48] Ibid. 6.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Table from Ibid. 28.
[51] Ibid. 24-28.

king; Enkidu is no longer his heroic companion, but a sobered town drunkard; Humbaba, their monstrous foe, is now a voracious loan-shark. But the scribe, keen to preserve the language of the original *Gilgamesh*, uses the same language from that text. This scribe has just written a 'Parody' of *Gilgamesh*: they have *transformed* the text to a playful end. If, however, the scribe were to keep the protagonists of *Gilgamesh* as they are, but use the colloquial, or vulgar expressions of the day, they have written a 'Travesty': they have *transformed* the style of the noble original for a satiric end.

But if our scribe had just finished reading *Gilgamesh*, and decided to write a completely different piece altogether, using the same language they found in that epic—this time about a poor man from Nippur—no longer are they *transforming* that *hypotext*. Rather, they are *imitating* its language, either for a playful or satirical end.

3.1.3 Imitation: Pastiche, Caricature, and Forgery

The textual relationship we shall argue to exist in the PMN is one of *imitation*. 'Pastiche', 'Caricature', and 'Forgery' all have an *imitational* relationship with their *hypotext*. They do *not transform* them. Nor do they ever *directly allude* to them. In fact, "the author of a pastiche most often has at his disposal a simple scenario—in other words, a "subject", invented or not—which he rewrites directly in the style of his model".[52] Style is the word. An imitator deals in style. Their primary concern is taking the 'style' of what they have chosen to imitate, and applying it to whatsoever they like. A parodist, or travesty writer, deals in text, which is then transformed onto a different stage or into a different style.

What do we mean by style? As Genette writes, "the concept of style must be understood here in its broadest sense: it is a *manner*, on both the thematic and the formal level".[53] 'Style' is thus the typical characteristics, language, motifs, themes, etc., of what one chooses to imitate. To draw upon our *Gilgamesh* example, if a scribe were to *imitate* this text, they might focus upon combat (theme) and epithets (language).

Genette further clarifies what distinguishes these *imitational* sub-genres:

[52] Ibid. 81.
[53] Ibid. 82.

> ...the pastiche is an imitation in the playful mode whose primary function is pure entertainment; caricature is an imitation in the satiric mode whose primary function is derision; forgery is an imitation in a serious mode whose dominant function is the pursuit or the extension of a preexisting literary achievement.[54]

The difference between 'Pastiche' and 'Caricature' is a question of "negative marginal appraisal": a caricature will overtly, though never directly, signal that *it is* an imitation, either through what Genette terms 'paratextual' markers (blurbs, notes, titles, etc.), or superfluous comic and satirical features. The pastiche may still be comic, but not to this extent.

Of 'pastiche' and 'caricature', both involve imitation "*perceptible as such"*,[55] i.e., we must be able to *tell* there is an imitation present, but this will not always be explicitly stated. Genette also writes that these imitations must draw upon a 'famous' author or that which is well known and easily recognised. Further, the 'imitated' (an author, genre, etc.) must exhibit features easily imitable.[56] Finally, frequently we find a "pastiche contract", a clear signal that the author is imitating something else. This can be as explicit as 'I am imitating *x*', but even *tacit pacts* exist, where a certain stylistic choice (e.g. the name of a protagonist, the beginning of a poem) constitute the contract.[57]

3.1.4 Mock-Heroic Pastiche

At last, Genette discusses Mock-Heroic Pastiche and its roots in the *Batrachomyomachia*, the *Battle of Frogs and Mice*, an ancient Greek text of uncertain origin, wherein a battle between the two anthropomorphised creatures is told in Homeric language. Genette describes Mock-Heroic Pastiche as "a particular kind of pastiche, or rather of caricature (because its stylistic traits are both exaggerated and depreciated by an "inappropriate" application and are thus doubly satirized)."[58] It is summarised thus: the "treating [of] a vulgar subject in a noble style and using the heroic style in general: that is, without specific reference to any particular noble text."[59] The remainder of Genette's discussion assumes the difference between this genre and 'Burlesque Travesty'. Yet a couple of remarks are worth recounting here: (1) Mock-Heroic Pastiche "accomplishes its potential *vis comica*... only when it takes aim

[54] Ibid. 85.
[55] Ibid. 87.
[56] Ibid. 96-97.
[57] Ibid. 128-129.
[58] Ibid. 134.
[59] Ibid. 143.

at one noble style in particular, one that we can enjoy identifying and seeing lampooned"; and (2) the success of this *vis comica* lies in an incongruity between subject and style.[60]

We have taken time to outline this theory because it will inform us on how to proceed. No longer will generalisations such as 'Parody' suffice. Instead, we draw upon the specific textual practice of Mock-Heroic Pastiche and Caricature. In doing so, we then analyse the text according to the formalities of that sub-genre. Thus, because a 'mock-heroic poem' imitates a 'noble' style, and 'style' is, under Genette's understanding, an all-encompassing notion of language, motif, etc., the theory encourages us to examine a text for the varying ways that style is conveyed. Hence we employ three analyses. Additionally, since the heroic imitation must be 'perceptible as such', we demonstrate this by the cumulative appearance of pastiches. Because the text has to imitate a particular someone or something famous, we adduce pastiches from Mesopotamian Epic, a genre well-known throughout the ancient Near East. Finally, because a 'mock-heroic poem' imitates the heroic style in general, without specific focus on one noble text, we include a range of 'heroic' texts.

In this thesis one of our analyses to support a mock-heroic reading is 'intertextuality'. It is this system we must turn to next, for no more straightforward is the term than that of 'Parody'.

3.2 Intertextuality

The term 'intertextuality' was coined in Julia Kristeva's 1969 *Semiotics*. Now far removed from her own understanding, it can be summarised, *à la* Wisnom, as:

> ...a system where texts relate to each other. It encompasses all types of text within it, and all the different ways that they can relate, whether by deliberate allusion, quotation, copy-and-paste incorporation, use of stock phrases which are shared by other texts, echoing of a concept, or even just a casual similarity which reminds the reader of something they came across elsewhere.[61]

Each scholar, including Genette, however, has employed this analytical system to their own ends, so that it is necessary now to clarify our own position.

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[60] Ibid. 142.
[61] Wisnom 2014: 3-4.

3.2.1 Approaches Past and Present

Since its *incipit*, intertextuality has now been successfully applied to the field of Classics. Today, as Fowler notes, "We do not read a text in isolation, but within a matrix of possibilities constituted by earlier texts".[62] Thus, when reading the *Aeneid*, its opening, *arma virumque cano* ('I sing of arms and the man),[63] has two intertexts: the *Iliad* (*arma*) and the *Odyssey* (*virum*).

It has been less readily applied to Assyriology. Prior to recent years, a disparate, but still respectable amount of literature has been written on intertextuality in the field.[64] Now, however, Jiménez (2017) and Wisnom (2019) have shown how fruitful it can be. The latter, for example, has shown that *Ee* 'alludes' (the word will be discussed below) to *Anzû*, *Atra-ḫasīs*, and *Lugal-e*, to name a few.[65] And given the lengthy written tradition of the ancient Near East, our field can benefit greatly from such an endeavour. It is also Wisnom's final stance on intertextuality which we subscribe to and will employ in this thesis. In the end, we understand 'intertextuality' to denote, "connections 'between texts'",[66] nothing more, or less.

3.2.2 An Allusive Art

'Allusion', however, is a thornier term. When we write that a text 'alludes' to another, "we are pointing to one specific intertextual connection. By saying this, however, we also implicitly make the poem a bearer of intention."[67] From here stem issues of authorial intent, which, for Mesopotamia, can never be recovered.[68]

Some scholars, nevertheless, are keen to pursue the 'allusive' line of argument. Lenzi suggests that, due to the limited size of the Akkadian literary corpus, coupled with the nature of scribal education and the transmission of literary heritage, "literary allusions in Akkadian texts is an area rich with potential."[69] Though we accord, allusion will not be our concern.

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[62] Fowler 1997: 14.
[63] Virgil, *Aeneid*, I.1.
[64] For an overview most notable works see Wisnom 2014: 11.
[65] Wisnom 2014: 90-207.
[66] Ibid. 4.
[67] Ibid.
[68] See Ibid. 4-8 for an overview of these issues.
[69] Lenzi 2019: 64-67.

3.2.3 Our Understanding

In this thesis, we will never suggest that the *PMN* 'alludes' to another text. This is primarily due to the weight of the word 'allusion'. Consider the three criteria Jiménez proposes for a 'literary quotation': "(1) it is a phrase (not just a word), (2) whose components are distinctive enough... and (3) is attested in only two texts, between which a loan is chronologically possible and contextually likely".[70] The parameters which need to be met in order to proclaim that a line is a quotation are precise and equally applicable to an allusion. But as the survey of Genette has shown, we are not on the hunt for a particular noble text, but general *imitation* of the 'noble' style, from which we will argue that the *PMN* imitates a number of texts. 'Allusion' has entered our discussion only because it has, at times, been used synonymously with 'intertext', when in fact the former is more precise. We will not entertain this fallacy, and leave 'allusion' at this juncture.

'Intertextuality', conversely, will be a central tenet of our analysis. The much vaguer notion of 'connections between texts' seems appropriately similar to the somewhat vague 'imitation of noble style' which Mock-Heroic Pastiche employs. And because we argue that the *PMN* imitates a range of texts 'noble' in style, not one, 'intertextuality' is our term for this system of evocation.

To an extent authorial intent must still be considered. For we argue that the poet of the *PMN* deliberately imitates noble style for their caricature. But as Fowler states (whom Wisnom too cites), "from the intertextualist viewpoint we can see that those debates [of authorial intent] were never really about the (obviously unrecoverable) private mental events of ancient writers but about whether equivalencies between texts (in the Jakobsonian sense) were sufficiently marked within the literary system."[71] It is our hope that the analyses will exhibit convincing enough evidence to determine that the Mock-Heroic Pastiche is authorially intended.

3.3 Mesopotamia and Literary Theory

However, applying such theories to an ancient text is not without issue. As much as one would like to say 'author' of the *PMN*, or the 'text' of the *PMN*, even the 'noble genre', we

[70] Jiménez 2017: 81.
[71] Fowler 1997: 15; Wisnom 2014: 8.

cannot do so without qualification. Otherwise we are not understanding the Mesopotamian text in its context, but anachronistically applying ideas not applicable to this ancient literature. Lastly, then, we apply some of the key features of the theories above to the *PMN*, explaining the problems at each subsection, and how we attempt to solve them.

3.3.1 The Concept of the 'Text'

Normally in Assyriology we deal with 'composite' texts. These texts are the creation of the modern Assyriologist, a combination of manuscripts which all contain, either in its entirety or fragmentarily, the same tale. Multiple manuscripts, too, can exist across diachronic lines. Thus there exists Old, Middle, and Late versions of *Atra-ḫasīs*, none of which are the *same* text though they substantially share in features.[72]

The same is true of the *PMN*. Though we have relatively few manuscripts (4 in total), they have been found in different geographical and (relatively narrow) temporal situations, and in varying degrees of preservation (see Chapter 2). So, what is true for one manuscript might not be true of another. And what might be found in one manuscript could be all together absent from another, smaller tablet, of which the lines have been lost.[73] Herein lies the key problem. When we refer to the *PMN*, do we mean to all manuscripts, differences aside? Or are we referring to a composite, say, of Ottervanger (2016), which is a modern creation, and so to an extent removed from its original context? In short, does there exist a stable, singular, text of the *PMN*?

To keep our analysis free from the issue we will only focus on *one* manuscript: Ms A (*STT* 38). Thankfully, this is the most complete manuscript we have. The three others, which were consulted during research, add very little to the tale as it is told in Ms A. As such, no great deviations in manuscript variants affect our argument. Nevertheless, we must be as precise as possible. Thus, hereafter, when we write '*PMN*', this is a shorthand way of saying, 'the *Poor Man of Nippur* as preserved on Ms A', in a word, *one* text.

[72] Cf. Foster 2005: 228, who notes, admittedly, that "The Late Babylonian" *Atra-ḫasīs*, though "often close to the Old Babylonian" version, still "has some significant differences".
[73] Cf. Worthington 2012: 15.

3.3.2 Authorship

As has been discussed in 2.3, a number of scholars have argued for a folkloric, and thus likely oral background to the *PMN*. Though possible, this argument poses problems to our methodology. For aside from whether the text was finally transmitted to clay at the turn of the 1st millennium, we cannot attribute the whole text to *one* author. Thus, discussing what the poet of the *PMN* intends, or whether they have written a Mock-Heroic Pastiche, entertains the incorrect notion that *one* person is behind the tale, when our evidence suggests otherwise.

This issue is nothing new to Assyriology. Rarely do we know the author of a text.[74] But if we want to apply the ideas presented above to the ancient text, we need some idea of 'authorship'. The solution is as it was in 2.3.1, focussing on Ms A. In doing so, we still acknowledge the likely oral background to the poem, and its transmission to clay c. 1000 BC. But rather than retrospectively apply our ideas to those centuries prior to Ms A, we treat the text *as it exists* in Ms A. That is, our 'poet', 'author', is only the person who wrote Ms A: Nabû-reḫtu-uṣur. Not only should this focus allow for the background of the *PMN* as discussed, but also a degree of flexibility, a notion that the text *could* have changed between its written *incipit* and as it is found in Ms A.[75] Hereafter, then, when writing 'the poet of the *PMN*', we are referring to this scribe in particular: Nabû-reḫtu-uṣur. *In toto* with 2.3.1, when we say, 'the poet of *PMN*', we mean: 'Nabû-reḫtu-uṣur, the scribe of *PMN* as preserved on Ms A'.

3.3.3 Genre

Further problems arise when applying a term like 'genre' to the ancient text. For "The genres and titles assigned to Ancient Near Eastern literary compositions by scholars are primarily modern."[76] Indeed, Mesopotamian literary texts are normally typified by their instrumental accompaniment or first line.[77] It follows that when we argue that the *PMN* employs or imitates the 'style of genre *x*', we are, again, not understanding the text on its own terms, as we group texts according to *our* own definition. In what follows, we give primary focus to Epic.

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[74] Lenzi 2019: 26.
[75] The chances of this are, admittedly, slim, given that the scribe is purporting to copy the tale. However, we need some notion of 'author' to proceed. As such, we still adhere to our argument above, though accept that the concept of 'authorship' in culture of copying will always be problematic.
[76] Holm 2007: 271.
[77] Noegel 2005: 233.

For this is the genre which readily pertains to the 'heroic' and is whence we will draw our analyses.[78]

Defining 'Epic' as a genre is challenging enough. For instance, Martin, drawing on Greek Epic, concluded that the genre was both "pervasive as everyday speech: intimate, simple, potential in any utterance", but equally "a mode of total communication, undertaking nothing less than the ideal expression of a culture."[79] For the ancient Near East, Holm defined it as "focus[sing]... on heroes and heroic events that are foundational to a culture's understanding of its past."[80] However, she treated *Ee* as a 'Mythological Narrative' and thus separate to Epic, when Marduk can be seen as a 'hero' founding Babylocentric culture. Hence Holm offered the *proviso* that "some categories necessarily overlap with each other."[81]

This last quotation is the crux of the problem. Genres in Mesopotamia frequently draw upon others, so that "scholars have begun to see the generic boundaries of Mesopotamian epic, indeed much of Mesopotamian literature, as far more fluid", leading to problems in categorization.[82] As such, the closest we can come to defining Mesopotamian Epic is as Noegel has it: "all poetic narratives that praise the accomplishments of a heroic figure of history or tradition."[83] Thus, when referring to the style of 'Epic', we are noting all texts we have considered under this definition. The generality of this definition does not hinder us, however. It allows us to consider a number of texts which fit such a description. And this is precisely what we shall do now. For with the preliminaries concluded, with an understanding of Mock-Heroic Pastiche, and with the modern theory adapted to the ancient text, we procced to the analyses.

[78] It follows that a text need not have any generic definition to be termed 'noble' in style. But due to the scope of this thesis, it is easiest to first identify which texts are considered 'noble/heroic' by their genre, and then proceed, as opposed to treating each individually.
[79] Martin 2005: 18.
[80] Holm 2007: 278.
[81] Ibid. 270.
[82] Noegel 2005: 244.
[83] Ibid. 233.

4. Analyses

Our analyses are organised in three parts: intertextuality; orthography; and theme and motif. Prior to each analysis, we outline how each tenet has been applied to adduce Mock-Heroic Pastiche. We begin with intertextuality.

4.1 'Mock-Heroic Pastiche' Apropos of Intertextuality

Since its discovery, scholars have commented on similarities between the *PMN* and various texts in particular lines. Following suit, for this analysis we have employed a close reading of the *PMN* and additional Mesopotamian literature, noting where correspondences arise. We focus on Epic texts under the definition proposed in the previous chapter. For these can already be termed 'heroic', or 'noble' in their style from both our generic definition and their contents. In each instance of intertextuality we explain *why* it is there and what purpose it serves. For as Fowler states: "if someone wants to convince... of a particular intertextual relation, they must... make it mean."[84] Generally speaking, all intertexts below 'mean' because they serve to add a 'grandeur' to the *PMN* with a view to create the mock-heroic. The effect is cumulative. Nevertheless, we will also indicate the effects of the particulars, in the hopes of reinforcing our argument that they *are*, indeed, intertexts.

4.1.1 PMN & Miscellaneous Intertexts: A Literary Milieu

Prior to our 'Epic' analysis, we must note that a number of other intertexts have been identified in the *PMN*. And while some could be viewed as 'noble' in style, the disparate representation of genres below obfuscates, rather than aids, our 'mock-heroic' reading. As such, we adduce miscellaneous intertexts only to demonstrate that the *PMN* was written within a literary milieu, which encourages one to consider other instances of intertextuality.

That a literary milieu exists behind the *PMN* has been noted since 1992. Finet writes: "The expression, *amātu zakār*, "to pronounce a word"... is the usual turn of Epic language. Let us add the adverb of direction *kamêtuš* (148) which evokes the lyrical vocabulary, or the archaic

[84] Fowler 1997: 20. By 'mean', Fowler is speaking in the most general terms. We must show that the intertext means something for our reading.

tušamme (17) which fell into disuse during the ancient Babylonian period."[85] Such language exhibits a scribe versed in literary dialects, betraying an awareness and use of prior literature.

The same is true of the varying intertexts previously identified, to which we add one more. Ottervanger noted a parallel between *PMN* 122-3 and the *Gula Hymn of Bulluṭsa-rabi* 79-80.[86] He also compared *PMN* 79 to the *AP* (II.11-13) and *PMN* 85-89 to the *Dialogue of Pessimism* (III, II.17-28).[87] Speiser argued that *PMN* 73, "*uškinma iššiq qaqqaru maḫaršu*" ('He prostrated himself and kissed the ground before him'), was 'copy-pasted' from *Ee* III.69: "*uškinma iššiq qaqqara maḫaršun*" ('He prostrated himself and kissed the ground before *them*'). We ourselves have noted a great similarity in the recurring line, "*Gimil-Ninurta bāba ina aṣîšu/erēbīšu*" ('Gimil-Ninurta, upon his entering/exiting the gate', *PMN passim*) and recurring line of *Nergal & Ereshkigal*, "*bāba ša Ereškigal ina kašādīšu*" ('Upon his arrival at the gate of Ereshkigal', *N&E*, I.17, but *passim*). In addition, *N&E* contains the same line as *PMN* 73 and *Ee* III.69 near-*verbatim*: "*ikmisi iššiq qaqqaru maḫrīša*" ('He knelt (and) kissed the ground before her'). Both *Ee* and *N&E* were found amidst texts excavated in Sultantepe along with the *PMN*,[88] so we can reasonably assume our scribe would have some knowledge of them. The presence of these two intertexts in *PMN* 73, however, dissuades us from agreeing with Speiser entirely. Whilst our scribe might have 'copy-pasted' *Ee*, it seems more likely that the poet intended to mimic language found in these mythological texts. Lastly, two proverbs, KAR 174, IV.8-10 and a Sumerian proverb concerning bribery, have been identified at *PMN* 35-40.[89] Clearly a variety of intertexts lie behind this composition.

It might be doubted whether our scribe knew *all* of these texts, both those above and the 'Epic' intertexts to come, let alone consciously alluded to them. We agree: this can never be answered, though is suspected for some *PMN* lines. Equally, given the lengthy history of Mesopotamian writing prior to the 1st millennium, it may be that one cannot write a later Akkadian text *without* intertextual overlaps with earlier literature. The purpose, rather, of our analysis, is to demonstrate that, cumulatively, a number of texts can be *recognised* in the *PMN*,

[85] Finet 1992: 102. Cf. Jiménez 2017: 101& fn. 271-2: "[The *PMN*] is written in verse, contains a couple of "hymno-epic" forms, and is one of the very rare non-epic texts to feature speech introduction formulae". They add *kabattuš* (*PMN* 7) to the above.
[86] Ottervanger 2016: 40-41. Cf. Lambert 1967 for an edition of the hymn.
[87] Ibid. 35;-36. Cf. Lambert 1960: 112-113 for translation of the *AP* lines. Cf. Lambert 1996 for an edition of the *Dialogue of Pessimism*. The *Dialogue* intertext in the *PMN* was first noted by Gurney 1956: 146; 160.
[88] Lambert 1959: 122.
[89] Gurney 1956: 159; Gordon 1960: 140 fn. 138; Ottervanger 2016: 28.

whether our scribe knew them or not. That this is the case is evident from the intertexts listed in the previous paragraph. The majority of these texts are 'noble' in style. However, it will be shown that it is primarily Epic, the epitome of the heroic, to which the *PMN* pays homage. And in turn, from the sheer number of *PMN* lines or scenes that recall Epic texts, we argue that our scribe was consciously trying to evoke a grander, 'noble' style, and not necessarily one poem or another. Thus we meet the criteria of the mock-heroic poem (3.1.4). Terming these texts as 'intertexts' is a succinct way of referring to the system of evocation below.

4.1.2 *PMN* & *SB Gilgamesh*[90]

By far, the most commented on intertext of the *PMN* is *SB Gilg*.. This should come as no surprise. As the example *par excellence* of Mesopotamian Epic, the influence of Gilgamesh was pervasive. As such, many readers have noted the parallel between the opening of the *PMN* and *SB Gilgamesh* X:

"*eṭlu mār Nippur katû u lapnu* *Gimil-Ninurta zikrāšu lummunu amēlu*" -The *PMN*, 1-2.	"(Once there was) a young man, a citizen of Nippur, needy and poor: Gimil-Ninurta (was) his name, a very unfortunate soul."

Three critics have commented that this *incipit* evokes Gilgamesh in his state of mourning over Enkidu, specifically when he encounters Siduri in Tablet X.[91]. Upon his arrival, Gilgamesh explains that it was he and Enkidu who performed various heroic feats. Doubting this is *the* Gilgamesh, though, Siduri asks:

"*ammēni aklā lētāti quddudu pānūka* *lummun libbāka qatû zīmūka* *ibašši nissatu ina karštīka*" -*SB Gilg*. *X* 40-42.	"(Why are your) cheeks (hollow), your face sunken, Your mood wretched, your features wasted Why is there sorrow in your heart..."

Common to both sections are the adjectives *katû* ('weak') and *lummunu* ('very bad'), as well as the overall descriptions. Both protagonists are, at this stage in their stories, dishevelled and destitute individuals, hence the intertext.

[90] Transcriptions and translations of the *PMN* are our own. All those from *SB Gilgamesh* are by George 2003.
[91] Gurney 1956: 158; Finet 1992: 89; Ottervanger 2016: 22-24.

We can add two additional intertexts found in the *PMN* prologue. The first lies in *PMN* 6: *išpikkūšu zummû ellita Nisaba* ("His grain-bin was deprived of pure 'Grain'). Compare with *SB Gilg*. VII.159 as Enkidu blesses Shamhat before his death: "*ana eṭli ša kunnû kunnūšu išpikkīšu šapku* ("To the man whose household is well-off, whose grain-bin is heaped up'). The parallelism here is clear: one who is considered blessed has no food shortage. Ironically, then, our scribe evokes the *Gilgamesh* line in a context where the protagonist has no food, likely augmenting the humorous opening. The second intertext was identified by Ottervanger. At *PMN* 10 we read: *labišma ša la tenê ṣubātu* ("He was clothed in a garment of no change'). The stative verb *labišma* can also be read *lābišma*, 'like a lion', recalling Gilgamesh's encounter with Siduri: "*u pān labbi šaknātāma tarappud ṣēr*" ('and you roam the wild got up like a lion', X.45). Recourse to the leonine "may also be a reference to the protagonist's miserable mood, with an intertextual hint to the Gilgamesh Epic."[92]

Why evoke Gilgamesh here? The answer has been foreshadowed: humour. Our scribe, keen to make their *PMN incipit* 'heroic' in style, conjures the miserable depiction of Gilgamesh. However, contrary to an expected Epic opening, in which heroes are often described as mighty individuals, the scribe has referred to a part of the Epic where the hero is the *opposite*. It is a fitting intertext. For both protagonists are similar in appearance and mood. But by colouring their *incipit* in Epic verses not typical of an Epic opening, the scribe inverts our expectation. This role reversal is, thus, a sophisticated attempt at humour via intertext. And, equally, it is the first of many instances where an intertext has been taken from that most 'noble' of genres, Epic. Emphatically placed at the beginning, then, our scribe already casts the *PMN* in 'noble' style, entering, we argue, a *tacit pastiche contract*. The mock-heroic has begun.

We can then adduce further instances of *SB Gilg*. in the *PMN*. Between *PMN* 20-22 we read:

"*kimtu u sallatu izennû ittīya*
lulqīma ana bīt ḫazanni lubil immera
ṭāba u damqa luṣammera ana karšīšu"
-The *PMN*, 20-22.

"Kith and kin will be angry with me.
Let me take a goat and bring it to the mayor's house,
Let me plan (something) good and sweet for his stomach(/mind)."

[92] Ottervanger 2016: 23.

Finet noted the same phrase *kimtu u sallatu* in *SB Gilg*. XI.85 in the 'Flood' narrative: "*ušteli ana libbi eleppi kaka kimtīya u salltīya* ('All my kith and kin I sent aboard the boat').[93] Furthermore, Ottervanger saw in line 22 a parallel with *SB Gilg*. X.42 (above).[94] These intertexts betray the scribe's use of terminology and phraseology which appear in Epic.

Similarly at *PMN* 58-9 (+ 61-2) we find: "*idiššuma ana mār eṣentu u gīdu | šišīšuma ina kukkibīka šikar šalulte*" ('Give to the citizen of Nippur the bone and gristle | Let him drink third-rate beer in your flask'). Compare the moment when Utnapišti addresses Gilgamesh near the end of Tablet X: "*nadnaššu ana lilli šuršumme šikari kīma ḫimēti... | tuḫḫi u kukkuša ša kīma...*" ('What is given to the fool are the dregs of beer instead of... butter | [he chews] bran and grist instead of...'). Our scribe might have employed the intertext here to echo the sentiment of the *SB Gilg*. line, i.e., Gimil-Ninurta was a fool to think anything good could have come of his visit to the mayor. In the grander scheme, though, this is yet another instance of Epic language, and thus 'noble' style.

Next, we turn to *PMN* 71. This oft discussed line reads: "*ina ṭēmi šarru rubû u šakkanku iparassū dīn kitti*" ('By reason, the king, prince, and governor will make a true decision'). The line is, as Ottervanger notes, "not intrinsically connected to the sequence of Gimil-Ninurta's actions", leading the commentator to suggest that "The superficially loyal statement... turns out to be a satirical sting" since the king will show no interest in rendering any decision, let alone one of 'truth'.[95] However, the incongruence has not been explained *apropros* of intertextuality. For in *SB Gilg*. Tablet VI.16, we read, as Ishtar attempts to seduce Gilgamesh: "*lū kamsu ina šaplīka šarrū kabtūtu u rubû*" ('Kings, courtiers, and nobles shall be bowed down beneath you'). Crucially, both lines use the Sumerograms 'LUGAL' and 'NUN' for 'king' and 'prince/noble' respectively.[96] The incongruity, we argue, results from our scribe employing the Gilgamesh intertext. Its purpose is straightforward: in a line concerning the crown and nobility, the choice to employ an Epic intertext adds weight to the phrase.

As GN requests, and receives, the insignia of a nobleman from the king (*PMN* 71 ff.), the Gilgamesh intertexts burgeon. We suggest this happens because, at this point in the

[93] Finet 1992: 90.
[94] Ottervanger 2016: 25-26.
[95] Ibid. 33.
[96] A similarly formulated line occurs at *SB Gilg*. VII.153.

narrative, GN is acting as a nobleman. The scribe, keen to add to this façade, uses Gilgamesh to imbue the pretend-nobleman with an aura of the 'heroic' and thus contribute to the act further. Indeed, between lines 82-100 four *SB Gilg*. intertexts can be identified.

The first occurs at *PMN* 82: "*isiḫūša nēbeḫam eššu simat... ša*" ('They girt him in a new sash...'). Three scholars have compared this line to *SB Gilg*. I-226-227, as Shamhat addresses Enkidu: "Go, Enkidu, to Uruk-the-Sheepfold, *ašar eṭlūtu uzzuḫū nēbeḫī*" ('where the young men are girt with waistbands').[97] The Gilgamesh lines occur amidst an aggrandising description of Uruk as a noble town. So, its application to GN who is dressed as a nobleman is fitting and imbues the character with an Epic grandeur.

PMN 82-83 then also recalls *SB Gilg*. XI.258 (and 267), when, prior to Gilgamesh's return to Uruk, Utnapishti tells Ur-šanabi the ferryman: "*tediqi lū labiš ṣubat baltīšu*" ('Let him be clad in a royal robe, the attire befitting his dignity'). Not only is the *SB Gilg*. language here reminiscent of the *PMN* opening (4-5: "He had no silver, the *simat nišīšu* ('symbol of his people'), he had no gold, the *simat ba'ūlāte*" ('symbol of mankind')). Its sentiment, too, that of clothing Gilgamesh in robes symbolic of his heroism and nobility, accords well with the *PMN* context of dressing GN as a nobleman.

We add *PMN* 95, when both GN and the mayor fall asleep: "*ḫazannu ša manaḫtēšu raḫi šittu*" ('The mayor, in his weariness, was doused in sleep'). The phrase *reḫû šittu*, 'to overflow with sleep', is common enough in literary texts, but the same three critics compare the *PMN* line to, especially, *SB Gilg*. XI 232: "*annimiš šittum irḫû elīya*" ('No sooner than sleep spilled over me').[98] The intertext here appears to contribute to the already superfluous presence of *SB Gilg*. in these lines, accentuating the mock-heroic.

Lastly of the first deception, we read at *PMN* 100: "*Gimil-Ninurta ina nissat libbīšu ušarṭa lubušēšu*" ('Gimil-Ninurta tore his clothing in the grief of his heart'). Here our protagonist is acting: for the mayor has just discovered the 'gold' GN pretended to bear as missing. The phrase *ina nissat libbīšu* parallels a line we have already seen above: *SB. Gilg*. X.42 (and X.8). The intertext here reinforces what commentators already suspected from the

[97] Gurney 1956: 160; Finet 1992: 95; Ottervanger 2016: 35.
[98] Gurney 1956: 160; Finet 1992: 96; Ottervanger 2016: 37. The last commentator notes the same phrase occurring in multiple *SB. Gilg*. lines.

PMN incipit: our scribes preoccupation with *SB Gilg*. Tablet X. It also strengthens the mock-heroic characterisation of GN in these lines.

GN's second deception also contains, though to a lesser extent, *SB Gilg*. intertexts. At 130, having convinced the mayor to be medically treated, GN the 'doctor' leads the mayor to a secluded room, "*ašar ibrī u tappū lā iraššûšu rēmu*" ('Where friend and companion would not show him mercy"). We can compare *SB Gilg*. III.9 (and 4-5): "*Enkidu ibri liṣṣur tappa lišallim*" ('Let Enkidu protect (his) friend and keep safe (his) comrade!'), said by the elders to Gilgamesh before travelling to the Cedar Woods of Humbaba.

The notion of seclusion, of separation from friends, which surrounds this line in the second deception, and, indeed, plays a crucial role in allowing GN to assault the mayor, can be equally paralleled from the same *SB Gilg*. tablet above. Consider the following:

"*bēlī ina eklēti išallimū bulṭūya*
ašar šēpē parsat ukkulat alakta
ušeribšūma... bīt ašar la arî
ašar ibrī u tappū la iraššûšu rēmu"
-The *PMN*, 127-130

"'My lord, in darkness do my remedies heal,
Where the foot is separated and the path is dark.'
He made him enter a secluded room,
Where friend and companion would not show him mercy."

If one then compares *SB Gilg*. III.1-32, parallels emerge in the elders' advice to Gilgamesh before fighting Humbaba: trusting in friends (4-5) and knowing the way/path (6-7). The dangers of not doing so are expounded by Ninsun to Shamash roughly 15 lines later. For at 46f. we note Ninsun's anxiety over Gilgamesh not knowing the battle, nor route he is to face (49-50). The intertext here adds humour. Since the advice expressed by the elders and Ninsun, adhered to in the Gilgamesh story, is referenced but ultimately ignored in the *PMN*.

The second deception then contains one last Gilgamesh intertext, noted by Ottervanger.[99] In order to beat the mayor, GN acts thus (132): "*irṭīma ina dunni qaqqari ḫamaš sikkāti*" ('He drove five pegs into the hard ground'). Having bound him, GN can then attack the mayor. Ottervanger compares this to *SB Gilg*. X.100-101, when the hero fights with Ur-šanabi, the ferryman: "But he, Gilgamesh, struck his head... | he seized his arm and... *irtēšu* ('pinned him down')". The intertext here casts GN in a more heroic light, by characterising him as a Gilgamesh in battle.

[99] Ottervanger 2016: 42.

The last *SB Gilg*. intertext occurs at the *PMN*'s end. The final line of the poem reads (*PMN* 160): "*ḫazannu pašalatti eterub ana āli* (URU)" ('The mayor, crawling, entered the city'). *SB Gilg*. Tablet XI, considered by George to be the ending of the epic proper,[100] has Gilgamesh exhort Ur-šanabi, who has accompanied him back to Uruk, to survey the city (322-327). Here the city becomes a symbol that mankind's fate is collective, not individual.[101] This most poignant moment at the end of *SB Gilg*. is, thus, evoked at the end of the *PMN*. Both conclude with the city. Our scribe employs the intertext to signal that his 'mock-epic' is over, doing so in the 'noble' style. But we might also read a little wit in this choice. For it is not GN who returns to the city, but the mayor. And so, while Gilgamesh returns to his city, wiser as to humanity and destiny, the *PMN* protagonist ventures into the steppe (*PMN* 159), seemingly having learnt nothing, but, as Gilgamesh, victorious.

And so, we have demonstrated numerous instances where the *PMN* scribe evokes *SB Gilg*. We have argued that the vast majority of these intertexts are entirely fitting to their context, and in some way contribute to the narrative in the *PMN*. Where they appear inappropriate, we include them as proof of our overarching argument: that is, the cumulative incursion of *SB Gilg*. colours the lowly subject of the *PMN* in an Epic style, and thus imbues it with the 'noble'. However, despite it being the most prominent, *SB Gilg*. is by no means the only Epic intertext in the *PMN*.

4.1.3 *PMN* & *Erra and Ishum*[102]

Less overt, though still to be found, are intertextual parallels between the *PMN* and *Erra and Ishum*. The latter, disputed *vis-à-vis* date of composition, though attributed to a time in and around the 1st millennium, and found with the *PMN* in Sultantepe,[103] has one striking similarity to the *PMN*. We read at *PMN* 105-106: "*bēlī mār Nippur la tuḫalqa | dām kidinni ikkib Enlil qātēka la talpat*" ('My lord, do not destroy a citizen of Nippur: | it is a sin against Enlil to lay your hands upon a *kidinnu*-citizen!'). In his *editio princeps*, Gurney compared this to *E&I* III.c.3-4 (and IV.33):[104] *ša ṣābī kidinni ikkib Anum u Dagān kakkīšunu tazaqqap/tazzaqap*"

[100] George 2003: 528.
[101] Ibid. 2012: 227-242.
[102] All transcriptions and translations of *Erra and Ishum* have been taken from Taylor (2017). We follow their system of line numbering. Hereafter *E&I*.
[103] George 2013: 47; Lambert 1959: 122.
[104] Gurney 1956: 160.

('You aimed the army's weapons at the kidinnu-citizens, the taboo of Anu and Dagān'). The specific phraseology, and especially the use of *kidinnu* and *ikkibu*, recall in the *PMN* that Epic poem. But what of its significance? Spoken by Ishum to Erra, the latter line conveys the destruction caused by the god. For the mayor of the *PMN*, then, to deliver an intertextual line of this sentiment, casts GN as the god Erra, in all his might. Though superficially pejorative, GN's acquiescence to the mayor's plea should dissuade us from reading the intertext negatively. Rather, it serves to depict GN in an Epic light, continuing the Mock-Heroic Pastiche.

A number of more minor intertexts then emerge in the PMN when we bear *E&I* in mind. For example, Ishum's statement to Erra, that the "heart of the governor... became angry" ('*ša šakkanakki... īteziz libbāšu*', *E&I* IV.23), recalls the mayor's anger with Tukulti-Enlil the gatekeepr: "*ḫazannu izenni itti atî Tukulti-Enlil*" ('The mayor became angry with the gatekeeper Tukulti-Enlil'). Or Marduk's warning to Erra that "Bright daylight will turn to darkness" ('*ūmu namru ana da'ummati itâr*', *E&I* I.173), followed by Ishum's description of Erra in Tablet III, "I will rouse the bandit and cut off the highway" ('*ḫabbātu adekkēma aparrasu alakta*', *E&I* IIIa.13), evoke the *PMN* second deception, especially lines 127-130 (above). We might even be generally reminded of the whole *PMN* tale in *E&I* II.150-155: "In the dwelling of the prince I will settle the rogue... I will allow beasts of the steppe... to walk in the city square", remembering that GN will go out to the steppe at the *PMN* conclusion, and, throughout the narrative, acts as a 'rogue' in the dwelling of the mayor. These intertexts are more casual than those above. We include them to demonstrate that the *PMN* is, to some extent, engaged in dialogue with other Epic works, not just *SB Gilg*.

4.1.4 *PMN & SB Anzû*[105]

SB Anzû is another Epic fittingly found in the *PMN*. For *Anzû*'s protagonist, Ninurta, was a favourite of the Assyrian kings due to his warlike nature,[106] and the tale "resonated with Assyrian court scholars".[107] Given what we have argued, then, for the date of the *PMN*'s composition, considering *SB Anzû* a candidate for intertextuality is reasonable.

[105] The following intertexts were identified in a paper previously submitted during an undergraduate final examination (see introduction). However, since then, we have refined our approach, so that fewer intertexts will be considered than before, but in the hope that they provide better examples.
[106] Assurnaṣirpal II bult the first temple in Kalḫu to Ninurta.
[107] Robson 2015: np. Both points were originally made in the previously submitted examination.

Both intertexts are to be found in the *PMN* second deception. Consider the following lines of *SB Anzû*:[108]

"*gallâniš lištannû būnūka* *šūṣi imbara zīmūka â u'addi...* *â ippuḫa Šamaš elīšu* *ūmu namru ana da'ummati litūršu*" -*SB Anzû*, II.11-12; 15-16.	'Let your features become changed like a *gallû*-demon, Send out fog, so that he may not distinguish your face... Let the sun not shine on him, Let the bright day turn to darkness for him".

The words of Belēt-Ili to her son Ninurta accord precisely with the means of deception GN will employ in the guise of doctor. He will change his features by shaving his hair (*PMN* 115-116), and seclude the mayor in darkness (*PMN* 127-130), depriving him of light and prohibiting him from recognising the face of GN. In essence, GN appears to have planned his deception according to the advice of Belēt-Ili. We can then read *PMN* 132 again (above). The Sumerogram for *sikkatu*, 'peg', is ^{giš}GAG. But alternatively, the same Sumerogram can be read as *ūṣu*, 'arrow'. If we then substitute one letter of *qaqqari*, 'earth', so that it reads *qaqqadi*, 'head', the *PMN* line now reads: "He drove into his solid head five arrows". Bearing Belēt-Ili's words in mind, *PMN* 132 now evokes Ninurta piercing Anzû with his arrows. *PMN* 132 thus contains two intertexts: *SB Gilg*. and *SB Anzû*.

The significance of this latter intertext is to characterise GN as the warrior-god and hero Ninurta; his foe, Anzû, is the mayor. It conveys a heroism to the actions of the poor man: his fight with the mayor is now on par with the cosmically significant struggle on display in the Epic poem. The content of both scenes is thus parallel, with an incongruency between persons. In turn, the mock-heroic is augmented.

4.2 Mock-Heroic Pastiche Apropros of Orthography

For this analysis, our research is indebted to Worthington's *Principles of Akkadian Textual Criticism*. Two tenets are central to this work: the means of textual change through transmission and "rationales of cuneiform orthography". Worthington connects the two because "it is necessary to understand the logic of spellings before attempting to gauge whether they attest to errors" and "spelling patterns hold the clue to a surprisingly broad range of questions

[108] Translation by Dalley 2000.

about textual change and related issues."[109] We have taken up their arguments and applied a select few which we think applicable to the Mock-Heroic.

When examining a manuscript orthographically, we analyse the text according to accepted spelling and writing conventions to see if there are any patterns, and, following, deviations from the norm. When deviations arise, we examine them. But before attributing them to the grave of errors, we can suggest more intriguing and reasonable facets as to why the deviation occurred. Our analysis of the *PMN* has discounted all restorations or partially broken signs, as well as the text's colophon. Thus our focus is empirically rooted on the original text, Ms A. In general, we noted a reasonable degree of orthographic consistency: correctly formed genitives and accusatives are the norm; some words are only ever spelt logographically; and, for some words, rules of spelling apply. Nevertheless, some quirks *do* arise.

Due to scope, we concentrate on one of Worthington's principles: honorific nominatives. We add to this Sumerograms. Before each, we explain why they can add a 'nobility' of style to the *PMN* and their respective rationales.

4.2.1 Sumerograms

We suggest that a Sumerogram can be a deliberate attempt by the scribe to employ archaising language. For Sumerian, long since dead by the 1st millennium as a spoken language, was both an old and academic tongue at the time of the *PMN*'s composition. And while not all instances of a Sumerogram indicate a desire for the archaic and haughty (most are common nouns or words faster to write Sumerographically), there is one noteworthy case.

At *PMN* 13, we read: "*ina rebīt alīya* (URU.MU) *Nippur* (EN.LIL^{ki}) *immera* (UDU.NITA$_2$) *lušâm*" ('in the thoroughfare of my city I will buy a sheep'). These are the words of GN as he decides to buy a sheep and host a feast. 'URU.MU' is a combination of Sumerograms: 'URU', 'city'; and 'MU', the 1st person possessive. It is a relatively uncommon means of writing 'my city' in Akkadian and occurs twice in the *PMN*: here and at line 44 which repeats this line. Its occurrence in a line which contains three Sumerograms (high frequency), conveys the direct speech of GN, and refers personally to the speaker, leads us to argue that the scribe intended to make GN talk in a deliberately archaising and hence 'noble' tone.

[109] Worthington 2012: 2.

4.2.2 Honorific Nominatives

As for the honorific nominative, Worthington writes that on manuscripts with mostly correct grammar, "Titles, epithets, and divine names standing in a case other than the nominative occasionally nonetheless display the nominative ending *-u*... so that there seems to be a conscious drive to use the nominative ending", and, it follows, "confer an absolute and unvarying quality to the epithet or title".[110] This phenomenon can, therefore, reasonably be seen as writing in 'noble style'.

Grammar in the *PMN* is largely correct. However, there are some instances when nominatives in place of genitives and accusatives *do* occur, though not always for titles or epithets. "*ṣubatūya*", for example, appears at *PMN* 12 as GN states: "Let me strip off my garment without change!". For no obvious reason, the nominative has replaced the accusative.

Yet between 70-84, when GN meets the king (above), the theory *does* apply: *malku* replaces *malki* at *PMN* 70; *šakkanku* appears in place of *šakkanki* at 71; and *mallku* again replaces *malki* at 72. Likely the scribe, in an attempt to complement the 'royal' content of these lines, has opted for the honorific nominative. In turn this betrays a keenness for 'noble' style.

4.3 Mock-Heroic Pastiche Apropos of Theme/Motif

Our final analysis comments upon one theme and one motif of the *PMN*. We argue that they are paralleled in 'nobler' literature, especially the Epic genre. Thus, despite situated in the world of the 'vulgar', we find that our protagonist acts akin to those heroes of the past, creating a 'noble' style and, thus, the mock-heroic.

4.3.1 Wisdom/Cunning

The cunning and wise hero is a theme attested from the earliest Mesopotamian Epic. Alster notes how Gilgamesh employs the trick of offering his sister in marriage, in exchange for Humbaba removing his armour, in the Sumerian *Gilgamesh and Humbaba*. Equally, the same scholar emphasises the motif of 'wisdom is better than force' in Sumerian Epic.[111]

[110] Ibid. 190.
[111] Alster 1995: 2324-2325.

This theme continues into the Akkadian Epics of later millennia. In *SB Anzû*, Ninurta must use cunning in cutting off Anzû's wings, so that, when Anzû summons them with the Tablet of Destinies, the feathered arrows of Ninurta also strike the bird. *SB Cuth.*, too, emphasises how a ruler must heed and understand divine will in order to avoid failure, exhorting us to learn, and thus become more wise, from the example of Narām-Sîn. But there is no better example of the emphasis on wisdom and cunning in Mesopotamian Epic than *SB Gilg*. It is well noted that the SB version of the tale contains a different *incipit* to the *OB* version: "*ša naqba īmuru*" ('He who saw the Deep') as opposed to "*šūtur eli šarrī*" ('Surpassing all other kings'). This has led George to suggest that the *OB* version is a "hymn to heroism and kingly might", the *SB* tale a "sombre meditation... [holding] much in common with what we call 'wisdom literature'".[112]

The *PMN* also employs the theme of wisdom over might. Only by his three deceptions does GN gain access to the mayor whereby he can beat him. Furthermore, GN uses experience to his advantage: disguised as a doctor, he can point out where the mayor is injured precisely because he was the one who inflicted the beating. And aware that the mayor will be on the lookout, the use of a decoy in the third deception represents a cunning *coup de grâce*. In addition, GN demonstrates his superior wisdom when, pretending that his 'gold' is missing, he wrangles two pounds of gold from the mayor: one to pay back the king, but the other for himself. Thus we find that the *PMN* employs as its central theme one which finds its place in many other works of Mesopotamian literature, but especially Epic.

4.3.2 Light into Darkness

Lastly, the motif of 'light into darkness' is paralleled between the *PMN* and many other Mesopotamian compositions. What do we mean by 'light into darkness'? In a significant number of battle narratives between hero and foe, comment is made as to a change from light into dark. We find it in *E&I* I.173: "Bright daylight will turn to darkness". In *SB Anzû*, too, we read: "let the bright day turn to darkness for him" (II.16). And *Sargon the Conqueror* contains, prior to battle: "It imposed darkness on the light of the heavens (60-61).[113] The symbolism is clear: impending doom corresponds to the extinguishment of light.

[112] George 2003: 28-33.
[113] We refer to the text and translation as found on the *SEAL* catalogue.

The *PMN* is no different. In the second deception, in order to beat the mayor, GN leads his prey into a darkened room. For the mayor light will become darkness. His impending assault is foreshadowed. It is a minor, yet still significant example of the *PMN* employing the motifs of Mesopotamian Epic to colour its narrative in 'noble' style.

5. Implications

We have argued that the *PMN* can be read as Mock-Heroic Pastiche on the grounds of intertextuality, orthography, and theme and motif. We now consider the implications of this thesis: what changes when we read the *PMN* as Mock-Heroic Pastiche? Our conclusions include: dating the composition of the *PMN*; the purpose of the *PMN*; and the possibilities of a new sub-genre to consider.

5.1 Date of Composition of the PMN

Under 2.3, we noted the more persuasive later dating of the *PMN*'s composition: in and around the 1st millennium BC. This was due to the arguments of Ottervanger *et al*, who saw similarities between the *PMN* and texts composed, or finalised, at the same time. We find that our intertextual analysis strengthens that argument. We not only considered the two texts which Ottervanger mentions (*SB Gilg*. and *AP*), but have added others of a similar dating. *SB Anzû*, for example, is dated to the first millennium.[114] *E&I*, though disputed, is thought to have been composed between 1050-750 BC.[115] And though not discussed at length, the *Gula Hymn*, again of uncertain origin, can generously be estimated to belong between 1400-700 BC.[116] Thus nearly all material we have considered in the intertextual analysis belongs to the latter half of Mesopotamian history. And if our intertexts are accepted, then the scribe can be argued to show some awareness of later Mesopotamian literature, which concurs with the dating of Ottervanger.

5.2 Purpose of the PMN

More important, however, is the bearing our thesis has on the purpose of the *PMN*. In the introduction, we referenced another comedic tale: *The Illiterate Doctor of Isin*. In this story, Ninurta-pāqidāt visits the renowned doctor Amēl-Baba. Upon being cured, the former invites the doctor to his house in Nippur for a reward, instructing him to ask a vegetable seller for directions. But when confronted with her, the doctor fails to understand any of the Sumerian she speaks, leading to his being chased from the city by local school students. D'Agostino

[114] Dalley 2000: 203.
[115] George 2013: 47.
[116] Lambert 1967: 109.

interprets thus: “This is a unique example of humor used for didactical purposes... to let the students memorise how to write the complicated Sumerian names of the tale”.[117]

Returning to the *PMN*, we know from the colophon that the text was written by a junior scribe, Nabû-reḫtu-uṣur, on the instruction of a teacher, Nabû-aḫa-iddin, for the reading of another apprentice, Qurdi-Nergal. *Prima facie*, the *PMN* belongs in an educational context. This is confirmed by the Neo-Babylonian fragment published by Ellis, which is a school tablet.[118] In addition, we have argued that the text shows an awareness of literary works *also* found in Sultantepe next to the *PMN*: *Ee*; *Gilg*.; *E&I*; and *N&E*.[119] From the above, then, we argue that the *PMN* was written as a Mock-Heroic Pastiche so that the junior scribe, before progressing to the longer, more complex classics of Mesopotamian literature, could become accustomed to the language, style, spelling, motifs, and themes of those larger works. This is in accordance with what we know about the scribal curriculum: “As students continued their education, they would copy advanced sign lists... and various lexical lists... They would also copy excerpts of selected compositions to acquire knowledge of the language’s grammar. The difficulty of these lists and texts increased as students advanced through the curriculum.”[120] The argument also accords with Robson’s summary of Huzirina, that students “were given a thorough grounding in the literary classics of their culture.”[121]

The humorous nature of the tale, much like the *Illiterate Doctor*, is a didactic catalyst: superficially the junior scribe writes about a poor man who gets his revenge; in actuality he is employing the language found in advanced Akkadian literature. No wonder, then, that the *PMN* exhibits a relationship with *SB Gilg*. or *E&I*. These were texts a scribe could be expected to write. No surprise, either, that we find almost exactly the phraseology from the *PMN* appear in the Sultantepe *N&E* concerning arrival at a gate (4.1.4).

Our principal argument, then, is that the *PMN* is an educational piece. This is nothing new. What *is* new, however, is the form of that didacticism. The school text takes the form of a Mock-Heroic Pastiche because it was intended to prepare a junior scribe for those truly heroic

[117] D’Agostino 2014: 69-70. Cf. George 1993: 63-72 for a different, though not mutually exclusive interpretation of the tale and its humour.
[118] Ellis 1974: 88-89.
[119] Lambert 1959: 122.
[120] Lenzi 2019: 23.
[121] Robson 2019: 138.

texts to come in their curriculum. And, as has been shown via the numerous intertexts, orthographic flourishes, and motifs and themes of the tale, a rigorous preparation it was.

5.3 A New Sub-Genre?

We also hope that this thesis suggests the existence of a sub-genre little studied in Assyriology. We noted in the introduction that a number of humorous Akkadian texts have been described as 'parodic', 'satiric', but none, thus far, as 'mock-heroic' explicitly.

However, Alster has written on the Sumerian tale, *Ninurta and the Turtle*, that "this story was told by literates who could make use of older stories and combine them in unexpected ways... and did not hesitate to make their heroes appear in comical situations." Though Alster shies away from labelling the text a 'parody' outright, let alone a Mock-Heroic Pastiche, they do note that "relevant for the issue of divine parody" are several other Sumerian works: Inanna texts; *Ninurta and the Turtle*; and aspects of *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*.[122] It would appear that some Sumerian texts, then, exhibit features we attribute to the mock-heroic.

If elements of the genre can be attested as early as Sumerian literature, and our thesis is correct in labelling the *PMN* as 'mock-heroic', then perhaps an awareness of this sub-genre can help us better understand other works of Mesopotamian literature. Aspects of the *aluzinnu*-text, *Dialogue of Pessimism*, and *Rulers of Lagash* come to mind.[123] More prominent in our thoughts are: (1) two NA texts "that parody well-established genres in order to lampoon a man named Bel-etir", a possible Assyrian rebel, with the first of the two making reference to the *SB Cuthaean Legend*;[124] and (2) the fictitious *Letter of Gilgamesh* (found, interestingly, at Sultantepe) which requests materials from another king "in quantities which are completely fantastic and absurd".[125]

5.4 Conclusion

This thesis has argued that the *Poor Man of Nippur* is a Mock-Heroic Pastiche as explained by Gérard Genette: that is, to treat the 'vulgar' subject in a 'noble' style. To prove

[122] Alster 2006: 33-34.
[123] See Foster 1974: 74-79.
[124] Lenzi 2019: 188-189.
[125] Gurney 1957: 127.

this point, we textually re-analysed the tale via intertextuality, orthography, and theme and motif. We discovered that the *Poor Man of Nippur* engages with other, 'noble' works of Mesopotamian literature, that it exhibits an orthography consistent with 'noble style' at times, and that it employs themes and motifs found in Mesopotamian Epic. This has led us to label the tale a Mock-Heroic Pastiche. In doing so, a number of implications have emerged. Some were minor: that the 'mock-heroic' might be present in other texts. But others have great bearing on the *Poor Man of Nippur*. For by reading the text as above, we have confirmed the dating suspected of the text, and described *how* it would be used as a didactic, as well as humorous, piece of literature.

We entitled this thesis, "*mannu attā bēlī*", 'who are you, my lord?'. These are the words of the gatekeeper, Tukulti-Enlil, to Gimil-Ninurta as the latter arrives in disguise as a nobleman, equipped with chariot, sash, robes, and a box of 'gold'. There, Gimil-Ninurta truly was mock-noble. The question of the gatekeeper, however, was more loaded than once thought. For when asking, 'who are you, my lord', we can, and *should* expect a myriad of answers, changing dependent on where we are in the tale. We imagine, at its *incipit*, that Gimil-Ninurta would answer: 'I am Gilgamesh, wandering the wild, mourning my friend!'; in his first beating of the mayor, 'I am Erra, that destructive god!'; and in the second deception, 'I am Ninurta, piercing Anzû with my arrows!'. For us the reader, however, the same question, first and unwittingly posed in 1956, has hopefully been answered: 'who are you my lord?'

'I am the mock-hero', replies Gimil-Ninurta.

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