

To Ada Manuela  
*asmat kī illūr ṣēri*

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## Preface

The present monograph is an offshoot of the project *Sources of Early Akkadian Literature* (SEAL),<sup>1</sup> headed by the present author and Michael P. Streck (Leipzig University). From the inception of the joint work on SEAL it was clear that the extensive corpus of Akk. literary texts should be presented in two different and complementary modes: an online database followed by a printed publication. Each of these media has inherent advantages. The internet allows for regular additions, modifications and updates which are unavoidable in the preliminary work on large textual corpora. It is also more open and accessible to the public than printed books. But the ephemeral nature of online databases renders them less suitable for the final publication.

Initiated in 2005, SEAL now (Spring 2016) contains almost 690 literary texts of all genres, from the third to the mid-second mill. BCE. Without interrupting the online posting of the texts, it is now time to present the corpus, section by section, in book form. The compositions that deal with love and sex were chosen as the first group of SEAL texts to be published in this way. Other sections of the corpus will follow.

Though the product of a single author, this book owes much to different people. Michael Streck, a colleague with whom I had the luck to start the SEAL project and who has subsequently become a true friend, offered much good advice. His mastery of all aspects of Mesopotamian culture proved crucial. His most important suggestions are mentioned in the text as (MPS). Dominique Charpin, Sophie Démare-Lafont, Eckart Frahm, Stefan Jakob, Leonid Kogan, Jana Matuszak, Piotr Michalowski, and Rony Weinstein, have all contributed to my work and I wish to thank them cordially. Special thanks go to four colleagues. Marten Stol turned my attention to the Chicago text A 7478, sent me his preliminary transliteration of the obverse, and offered valuable comments on my edition. Jakob Klein sent me the photos of the Moussaieff Love Song and made it possible for me to publish this tablet. Andrew George shared his unpublished edition of the love incantation MS 3062 and other relevant material with me. Uri Gabbay discussed the Sumerian incipits in the catalogue KAR 158 and other texts in the book with me. Warm thanks also go to Jon Taylor, Béatrice André-Salvini, Joachim Marzahn, and Walter Farber – the keepers of the cuneiform tablets at the British Museum, the Louvre, the Vorderasiatisches Museum and the Oriental Institute in Chicago, respectively – for their readiness to open their collections to me. Yigal Bloch, Melanie Christina Mohr, Sivan Kedar, Svetlana Matskevich, Juyoung Oh and Shlomit Bechar assisted me in technical matters and deserve my thanks too.

Anastasia Keshman walked by me through these years. I am grateful to her. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2012 our daughter Ada Manuela was born. I dedicate this book to our daughter, with love.

Jerusalem, October 2016

Nathan Wasserman

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<sup>1</sup> The SEAL project (<http://www.seal.uni-leipzig.de/>) was financed by two consecutive three-year grants by the German-Israeli Foundation for Scientific Research and Development (2007–2009 and 2010–2012).

## Akkadian Love Literature: An Overview

## 1. The Scope of This Study

This study aims to present all Akk. literary texts dealing with love and sex from the third to the second mill. BCE. Surprisingly, unlike Sum. love songs which have been collected and discussed,<sup>2</sup> the corpus of Akk. literary texts dealing with love and sex, though treated separately by various scholars,<sup>3</sup> was not collected systematically or addressed as a whole. This monograph aims to fill this gap and to provide a modern edition accompanied by a comprehensive discussion of the corpus.

My approach is philological and literary. While general aspects of love and sexuality in ancient Mesopotamia are treated *en passant*, this monograph does not tackle these topics from the gender or cultural studies perspective.<sup>4</sup> Although Biblical parallels<sup>5</sup> and references from Classical sources are occasionally included, this is not a comparative study. Material artifacts and visual representations which bear witness to love and sex in ancient Mesopotamia, best left to sociologists, archaeologists and art historians, are also beyond the scope of this study. Epic and mythic episodes which refer to love (like the encounter between Enkidu and Šamḥat in Gilg. II and Ištar's attempt to seduce Gilgameš in Gilg. VI, the amatory relationship between Nergal and Ereškigal in the myth bearing this name, or the scene of copulation between the husband and the wife described in Atraḥasīs I 300<sup>6</sup>) are omitted or referred to only indirectly. Later texts from the first mill. which concern love and sex – notably the love dialogue of Nabû and Tašmētu (SAA 3, 14), the love ritual mentioning Marduk and his consort Ištar of Babylon (Lambert 1975<sup>7</sup>), the ŠÀ.ZI.GA incantations (Biggs 1967), and the Egalkurra texts (Stadhouders 2013, esp. 309–311) – are referred to briefly in the commentary and discussion, but not treated separately. The omen series which predicts the prospects of a marriage, or how fertile a woman is,<sup>8</sup> are also not discussed at any length.

Two factors determined the definition of the corpus. The first relates to the project *Sources of Early Akkadian Literature* (SEAL) which provides the foundation for this study. SEAL presently covers the third and second mill. BCE, but not the first (c. 690 compositions). Since I am convinced that any group of texts (e.g. hymns, laments, incantations, etc.) should be treated only after thorough analysis of its entire literary system, it would have been incorrect to go beyond the present scope of SEAL and treat a group within the corpus in isolation. In addition, many of the first mill. texts which thematically belong to the

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2 See esp. Sefati 1998 and shortly also Hecker 2005, 167–168.

3 Klein/Sefati's (2008) article offers a succinct summary of the more recent studies on this corpus.

4 The literature on love and sexuality in ancient Mesopotamia is extensive. Wiggermann's 2010 article "Sexualität" in the RIA offers an excellent summary of the subject with a detailed bibliographical survey.

5 All Biblical references lean on the English translation of the New Jewish Publication Society of America Tanakh.

6 Lambert/Millard 1969, 64–65.

7 See also Fincke 2013.

8 See esp. Böck 2000, 59 and passim.

literary corpus treated here (ŠÀ.ZI.GA and the Egalkurra texts) come very close to rituals<sup>9</sup> and medical compendia, which require different treatment than the corpus of third and second mill. texts. In order to avoid further delay in the publication of this monograph, I decided against the inclusion of first mill. material.

### 1.1 The Corpus<sup>10</sup>

The group of Akk. texts dealing with sexual attraction and emotional connection from the third and second mill. BCE contains a few dozen different compositions, comprised of three sub-groups:

Table (1): The core group of some twenty non-homogenous texts: monologues, dialogues, hymnal compositions, as well as descriptive texts:<sup>11</sup>

Publication	Period (Provenance)	Description
№ 1. A 7478	OB	Monologue/Descriptive: ♀ yearning ♂ absent
№ 2. CUSAS 10, 8	OB	Monologue: ♂ yearning ♀ absent
№ 3. CUSAS 10, 9	OB	Monologue: ♀ yearning ♂ indifferent
№ 4. CUSAS 10, 10	OB	Monologue: ♂ scorning ♀ yearning
№ 5. CUSAS 10, 13	OB	Prayer → Descriptive: ♂ + ♀ uniting
№ 6. Fs. Renger 192–193	Late OB	Monologue: ♀ yearning ♂ absent
№ 7. JAOS 103, 26–27	Late OB - MB	Descriptive: ♂ + ♀ uniting → ♂ absent
№ 8. KAL 3, 75	MA (Assur)	Monologue/Descriptive
№ 9. LKA 15	MA (Assur)	Descriptive: ♀ yearning ♂ absent
№ 10. MIO 12, 52–53	Late OB	Descriptive: ♂ + ♀ uniting

9 On the question of the dependence of love-related compositions on rituals, see Hecker 2005, 176 and Klein/Sefati 2008 (esp. p. 624).

10 The texts are referred to by their name (publication place) and their sequel number in the study (№). These numbers are internal and do not correspond to the number of the texts in the SEAL database.

11 The text MIO 12, 53–54, published by Lambert in 1966 as love lyric, is better defined as a lament (similarly Hecker 2005, 169).