

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Babylonian Topographical Texts
(Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1992)

House Most High: The Temples of Ancient Mesopotamia
(Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1993)

The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming)

THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH

*The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts
in Akkadian and Sumerian*

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Dramatis personae

An acute accent marks the vowel of a stressed syllable. Where such a vowel falls in an open syllable it will often be long (e.g., Humbaaba). In some names the position of the stress is conjectural.

Gilgámesh, king of the city-state of Úruk
Nínsun, a goddess, his mother
Enkidu, his friend and companion
Shámhat, a prostitute of Uruk
Shámash, the Sun God
Humbába, the guardian of the Forest of Cedar
Íshtar, the principal goddess of Uruk
Shidúri, a minor goddess of wisdom
Ur-shanábi, the ferryman of Uta-napishti
Úta-napishti, survivor of the Flood

A comprehensive list of the proper nouns that occur in the texts translated in this book is given on pp. 222ff.

I

The Standard Version of the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: 'He who saw the Deep'

Tablet I. The Coming of Enkidu

Prologue and paeon. King Gilgamesh tyrannizes the people of Uruk, who complain to the gods. To divert his superhuman energies the gods create his counterpart, the wild man Enkidu, who is brought up by the animals of the wild. Enkidu is spotted by a trapper, who lures him away from the herd with a prostitute. The prostitute shows him her arts and proposes to take him to Uruk, where Gilgamesh has been seeing him in dreams.

He who saw the Deep, the country's foundation,
[who] knew . . . , was wise in all matters!
[Gilgamesh, who] saw the Deep, the country's foundation
[who] knew . . . , was wise in all matters!

[He] . . . everywhere . . . 1 5
and [*learnt*] of everything the sum of wisdom.
He saw what was secret, discovered what was hidden,
he brought back a tale of before the Deluge.

He came a far road, was weary, found peace,
and set all his labours on a tablet of stone. 1 10
He built the rampart of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
of holy Eanna, the sacred storehouse.

See its wall like a strand of *wool*,
view its parapet that none could copy!
Take the stairway of a bygone era, 1 15
draw near to Eanna, seat of Ishtar the goddess,
that no later king could ever copy!

Climb Uruk's wall and walk back and forth!
 Survey its foundations, examine the brickwork!
 Were its bricks not fired in an oven? 1 20
 Did the Seven Sages not lay its foundations?

[A square mile is] city, [a square mile] date-grove, a square mile is
 clay-pit, half a square mile the temple of Ishtar:
 [three square miles] and a half is Uruk's expanse.

[See] the tablet-box of cedar,
 [release] its clasp of bronze! 1 25
 [Lift] the lid of its secret,
 [pick] up the tablet of lapis lazuli and read out
 the travails of Gilgamesh, all that he went through.

Surpassing all other kings, heroic in stature,
 brave scion of Uruk, wild bull on the rampage! 1 30
 Going at the fore he was the vanguard,
 going at the rear, one his comrades could trust!

A mighty bank, protecting his warriors,
 a violent flood-wave, smashing a stone wall!
 Wild bull of Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh, the perfect in strength, 1 35
 suckling of the august Wild Cow, the goddess Ninsun!

Gilgamesh the tall, magnificent and terrible,
 who opened passes in the mountains,
 who dug wells on the slopes of the uplands,
 and crossed the ocean, the wide sea to the sunrise; 1 40

who scoured the world ever searching for life,
 and reached through sheer force Uta-napishti the Distant;
 who restored the cult-centres destroyed by the Deluge,
 and set in place for the people the rites of the cosmos.

Who is there can rival his kingly standing, 1 45
 and say like Gilgamesh, 'It is I am the king'?
 Gilgamesh was his name from the day he was born,
 two-thirds of him god and one third human.

It was the Lady of the Gods drew the form of his figure,
 while his build was perfected by divine Nudimmud. 1 50

* * *

A triple cubic was his foot, half a rod his leg. 1 56
 Six cubits was his stride,
 . . . cubits the *front part* of his . . .

His cheeks were bearded like those of . . . ,
 the hair of his head grew thickly [as barley.] 1 60
 When he grew tall his beauty was consummate,
 by earthly standards he was most handsome.

In Uruk-the-Sheepfold he walks [back and forth,]
 like a wild bull lording it, head held aloft,
 He has no equal when his weapons are brandished, 1 65
 his companions are kept on their feet by his contests.

The young men of Uruk he harries without warrant,
 Gilgamesh lets no son go free to his father.
 By day and by night his tyranny grows harsher,
 Gilgamesh, [the guide of the teeming people!] 1 70

It is he who is shepherd of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
 [but Gilgamesh] lets no [daughter go free to her] mother.
 [The women voiced] their [troubles to the goddesses,]
 [they brought their] complaint before [them:]



2 'Like a wild bull lording it, head held aloft'.

'[Though powerful, pre-eminent,] expert [and *mighty*,]
 [Gilgamesh] lets [no] girl go free to [her *bridegroom*.]' 175
 The warrior's daughter, the young man's bride,
 to their complaint the goddesses paid heed.

The gods of heaven, the lords of *initiative*,
 [to the god Anu they spoke] . . . : 180
 'A savage wild bull you have bred in Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
 he has no equal when his weapons are brandished.

'His companions are kept on their feet by his *contests*,
 [the young men of Uruk] he harries without warrant.
 Gilgamesh lets no son go free to his father, 185
 by day and by [night his tyranny grows] harsher.

'Yet he is the shepherd of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
 Gilgamesh, [*the guide of the*] *teeming* [*people*.]
 Though he is their shepherd and *their* [*protector*,]
 powerful, pre-eminent, expert [and *mighty*,] 190
 Gilgamesh lets no girl go free to her *bride*[*groom*.]'

The warrior's daughter, the young man's bride:
 to their complaint the god [Anu] paid heed. 193

The stanza which gives Anu's reaction has been dropped in the late edition of the epic, but by good fortune it is preserved as a short extract from an older version of the text, which was written by a student scribe on an exercise tablet found in the city of Nippur:

'[Let] them summon [Aruru,] the great one, MB Ni
 [she it was created them,] mankind so numerous:
 [let her create the *equal* of Gilgamesh,] one mighty in strength,
 [and let] him vie [with him,] so Uruk may be rested!'

The text of Tablet I resumes:

They summoned Aruru, the great one:
 'You, Aruru, created [mankind:] 195
 now fashion what Anu has thought of!

'Let him be a *match* for the *storm* of his heart,
 let them vie with each other, so Uruk may be rested!'
 The goddess Aruru heard these words,
 what Anu had thought of she fashioned within her. 1100

The goddess Aruru, she washed her hands,
 took a pinch of clay, threw it down in the wild.
 In the wild she created Enkidu, the hero,
 offspring of silence, knit strong by Ninurta.

All his body is matted with hair, 1105
 he bears long tresses like those of a woman:
 the hair of his head grows thickly as barley,
 he knows not a people, nor even a country.

Coated in hair like the god of the animals,
 with the gazelles he grazes on grasses, 1110
 joining the throng with the game at the water-hole,
 his heart *delighting* with the beasts in the water.

A hunter, a trapper-man,
 did come upon him by the water-hole.
 One day, a second and then a third, 1115
 he came upon him by the water-hole.
 When the hunter saw him, his expression froze,
 but he with his herds – he went back to his lair.

[The hunter was] troubled, subdued and silent,
 his mood [*was despondent*,] his features gloomy.
 In his heart there was sorrow, 1120
 his face resembled [one come from] afar.

The hunter opened [his mouth] to speak, saying [to his father:]
 'My father, there was a man came [*by the water-hole*.]
 Mightiest in the land, strength [he possesses,]
 [his strength] is as mighty [as a rock] from the sky. 1125

- 'Over the hills he [*roams all day*,]
 [always] with the herd [*he grazes on grasses*,]
 [always] his tracks [*are found*] by the water-hole,
 [I am afraid and] I dare not approach him.
- '[He fills in the] pits that I [myself] dig, I 130
 [he pulls up] the snares that I lay.
 [He sets free from my grasp] all the beasts of the field,
 [he stops] me doing the work of the wild.'
- [His father opened his mouth to] speak, saying to the hunter:
 '[My son, *in the city of*] Uruk [*go, seek out*] Gilgamesh! I 135
 in his presence,
 his strength is as mighty [as a rock from the sky.]
- '[Take the road,] set your face [toward Uruk,]
 [*do not rely on*] the strength of a man!
 [Go, my son, and] fetch [Shamhat the harlot,] I 140
 [*her allure is a match*] for even the mighty!
- '[When the herd comes] down [to] the water-hole,
 [she should strip off] her [raiment to reveal] her charms.
 [He will] see her, and will approach her,
 his herd will spurn him, [though he grew up] amongst it.' I 145
- [*Paying heed*] to the advice of his father,
 the hunter went off, [*set out on the journey*.]
 He took the road, set [his face] toward Uruk,
 before Gilgamesh the king [*he spoke these words*]:
- 'There was a man [*came by the water-hole*,] I 150
 mightiest in the land, strength [he possesses],
 [his strength] is as mighty as a rock from the sky.
- 'Over the hills he roams *all* [*day*,]
 always with the herd [*he grazes on grasses*,]
 always his tracks [*are found*] by the water-[hole,] I 155
 I am afraid and I dare not approach [him.]

- 'He fills in the pits that I [myself] dig,
 he pulls up the snares [that I lay.]
 He sets free from my grasp*all the beasts of the field,
 he stops me doing the work of the wild.' I 160
- Said Gilgamesh to him, to the hunter:
 'Go, hunter, take with you Shamhat the harlot!
- 'When the herd comes down to the water-hole,
 she should strip off her raiment to reveal her charms.
 He will see her, and will approach her, I 165
 his herd will spurn him, though he grew up amongst it.'
- Off went the hunter, taking Shamhat the harlot,
 they set out on the road, they started the journey.
 On the third day they came to their destination,
 hunter and harlot sat down there *to wait*. I 170
- One day and a second they waited by the water-hole,
 then the herd came down to drink the water.
 The game arrived, their hearts *delighting in* water,
 and Enkidu also, born in the uplands.
- With the gazelles he grazed on grasses, I 175
joining the throng with the game at the water-hole,
 his heart *delighting* with the beasts in the water:
 then Shamhat saw him, the child of nature,
 the savage man from the midst of the wild.
- 'This is he, Shamhat! Uncradle your bosom, I 180
 bare your sex, let him take in your charms!
 Do not recoil, but take in his scent:
 he will see you, and will approach you.
- 'Spread your clothing so he may lie on you,
 do for the man the work of a woman! I 185
 Let his passion caress and embrace you,
 his herd will spurn him, though he grew up amongst it.'

- 'Over the hills he [*roams all day,*]
 [always] with the herd [*he grazes on grasses,*]
 [always] his tracks [*are found*] by the water-hole,
 [I am afraid and] I dare not approach him.
- '[He fills in the] pits that I [myself] dig, I 130
 [he pulls up] the snares that I lay.
 [He sets free from my grasp] all the beasts of the field,
 [he stops] me doing the work of the wild.'
- [His father opened his mouth to] speak, saying to the hunter:
 '[My son, *in the city of*] Uruk [*go, seek out*] Gilgamesh! I 135
 in his presence,
 his strength is as mighty [as a rock from the sky.]
- '[Take the road,] set your face [toward Uruk,]
 [*do not rely on*] the strength of a man!
 [Go, my son, and] fetch [Shamhat the harlot,] I 140
 [*her allure is a match*] for even the mighty!
- '[When the herd comes] down [to] the water-hole,
 [she should strip off] her [raiment to reveal] her charms.
 [He will] see her, and will approach her,
 his herd will spurn him, [though he grew up] amongst it.' I 145
- [*Paying heed*] to the advice of his father,
 the hunter went off, [*set out on the journey.*]
 He took the road, set [his face] toward Uruk,
 before Gilgamesh the king [*he spoke these words:*]
- 'There was a man [*came by the water-hole,*] I 150
 mightiest in the land, strength [he possesses,]
 [his strength] is as mighty as a rock from the sky.
- 'Over the hills he roams *all* [*day,*]
 always with the herd [*he grazes on grasses,*]
 always his tracks [*are found*] by the water-[hole,] I 155
 I am afraid and I dare not approach [him.]

- 'He fills in the pits that I [myself] dig,
 he pulls up the snares [that I lay.]
 He sets free from my grasp all the beasts of the field,
 he stops me doing the work of the wild.' I 160
- Said Gilgamesh to him, to the hunter:
 'Go, hunter, take with you Shamhat the harlot!
- 'When the herd comes down to the water-hole,
 she should strip off her raiment to reveal her charms.
 He will see her, and will approach her, I 165
 his herd will spurn him, though he grew up amongst it.'
- Off went the hunter, taking Shamhat the harlot,
 they set out on the road, they started the journey.
 On the third day they came to their destination,
 hunter and harlot sat down there *to wait.* I 170
- One day and a second they waited by the water-hole,
 then the herd came down to drink the water.
 The game arrived, their hearts *delighting in* water,
 and Enkidu also, born in the uplands.
- With the gazelles he grazed on grasses, I 175
joining the throng with the game at the water-hole,
 his heart *delighting* with the beasts in the water:
 then Shamhat saw him, the child of nature,
 the savage man from the midst of the wild.
- 'This is he, Shamhat! Uncradle your bosom, I 180
 bare your sex, let him take in your charms!
 Do not recoil, but take in his scent:
 he will see you, and will approach you.
- 'Spread your clothing so he may lie on you,
 do for the man the work of a woman! I 185
 Let his passion caress and embrace you,
 his herd will spurn him, though he grew up amongst it.'

Shamhat unfastened the cloth of her loins,
 she bared her sex and he took in her charms.
 She did not recoil, she took in his scent: I 190
 she spread her clothing and he lay upon her.

She did for the man the work of a woman,
 his passion caressed and embraced her.
 For six days and seven nights
 Enkidu was erect, as he coupled with Shamhat.

When with her delights he was fully sated, I 195
 he turned his gaze to his herd.
 The gazelles saw Enkidu, they started to run,
 the beasts of the field shied away from his presence.

Enkidu had defiled his body so pure,
 his legs stood still, though his herd was in motion. I 200
 Enkidu was weakened, could not run as before,
 but now he had *reason*, and wide understanding.

He came back and sat at the feet of the harlot,
 watching the harlot, observing her features.
 Then to the harlot's words he listened intently, I 205
 [as Shamhat] talked to him, to Enkidu:

'You are handsome, Enkidu, you are just like a god!
 Why with the beasts do you wander the wild?
 Come, I will take you to Uruk-the-Sheepfold, I 210
 to the sacred temple, home of Anu and Ishtar,

'where Gilgamesh is perfect in strength,
 like a wild bull lording it over the menfolk.'
 So she spoke to him and her word found favour,
 he knew by instinct, he should seek a friend.

Said Enkidu to her, to the harlot: I 215
 'Come, Shamhat, take me along
 to the sacred temple, holy home of Anu and Ishtar,
 where Gilgamesh is perfect in strength,
 like a wild bull lording it over the menfolk.

'I will challenge him, for [*my strength*] is mighty, I 220
 I will vaunt myself in Uruk, saying "I am the mightiest!"
 [There] I shall change the way things are ordered:
 [one] born in the wild is mighty, strength he possesses.'

Shamhat:

'Let [*the people*] see your face, I 225
 that exists I know indeed.
 Go, Enkidu, to Uruk-the-Sheepfold,
 where young men are girt with waistbands!

'Every day [*in Uruk*] there is a festival,
 the drums there rap out the beat. I 230
 And there are harlots, most comely of figure,
 graced with charm and full of delights.

'Even the aged they rouse from their beds!
 O Enkidu, [as yet so] ignorant of life,
 I will show you Gilgamesh, a man happy and carefree, I 235
 look at him, regard his features!

'He is fair in manhood, dignified in bearing,
 graced with charm in his whole person.
 He has a strength more mighty than yours,
 unsleeping he is by day and by night.

'O Enkidu, cast aside your sinful thoughts! I 240
 Gilgamesh it is whom divine Shamash loves.
 The gods Anu, Enlil and Ea have broadened his wisdom.

'Before you even came from the uplands,
 Gilgamesh in Uruk was seeing you in dreams:
 Gilgamesh rose to relate a dream, saying to his mother: I 245
 "O mother, this is the dream I had in the night –

"The stars of the heavens appeared above me,
 like a rock from the sky one fell down before me.
 I lifted it up, but it weighed too much for me,
 I tried to roll it, but I could not dislodge it. I 250

"The land of Uruk was standing around it,
 [the land was gathered] about it.
 A crowd [*was milling about*] before it,
 [the menfolk were] thronging around it.

"[Like a babe-in]-arms they were kissing its feet, I 255
 like a wife [I loved it,] caressed and embraced it.
 [I lifted it up,] set it down at your feet,
 [and you, O mother, you] made it my equal."

[The mother of Gilgamesh] was clever and wise,
 well versed in everything, she said to her son –
 [Wild-Cow] Ninsun was clever and wise, I 260
 well versed in everything, she said to Gilgamesh:

"The stars of heaven [appeared] above you,
 [like a] rock from the sky one fell down before you.
 You lifted it up, but it weighed too much for you,
 you tried to roll it, but you could not dislodge it.

"You lifted it up, set it down at my feet, I 265
 and I, Ninsun, I made it your equal.
 Like a wife you loved it, caressed and embraced it:
 a mighty comrade will come to you, and be his friend's saviour.

"Mightiest in the land, strength he possesses, I 270
 his strength is as mighty as a rock from the sky.
 Like a wife you'll love him, caress and embrace him,
 he will be mighty, and often will save you."

'Having had a second dream,
 he rose and entered before the goddess, his mother.
 Said Gilgamesh to her, to his mother, I 275
 "Once more, O mother, have I had a dream –

"[In a street] of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
 an axe was lying with a crowd gathered round.
 The land [of Uruk] was standing around it,
 [the country was] gathered about it. I 280

"A crowd *was milling about* before it,
 [the menfolk were] thronging around it.
 I lifted it up and set it down at your feet,
 like a wife [I loved] it, caressed and embraced it,
 [and you, O mother,] you made it my equal." I 285

'The mother of Gilgamesh was clever and wise,
 well versed in everything, she said to her son –
 Wild-Cow Ninsun was clever and wise,
 well versed in everything, she said to Gilgamesh:

"My son, the axe you saw is a friend,
 like a wife you'll love him, caress and embrace him,
 and I, Ninsun, I shall make him your equal. I 290
 A mighty comrade will come to you, and be his friend's saviour,
 mightiest in the land, strength he possesses,
 his strength is as mighty as a rock from the sky."

'Said Gilgamesh to her, to his mother,
 "May it befall me, O mother, by Counsellor Enlil's
 command! I 295
 Let me acquire a friend to counsel me,
 a friend to counsel me I will acquire!"

'[So did Gilgamesh] see his dreams.'
 [After] Shamhat had told Enkidu the dreams of Gilgamesh,
 the two of them together [began making] love. I 300

Tablet II. The Taming of Enkidu

The prostitute takes Enkidu to a shepherds' camp, where he is instructed in the ways of men and becomes the shepherds' watchman. A passing stranger tells him how in Uruk Gilgamesh exercises *droit de seigneur* at wedding ceremonies. Enkidu, shocked by this practice, enters Uruk and interrupts the proceedings. Gilgamesh and Enkidu fight until Enkidu accepts Gilgamesh's supremacy, whereupon the pair become firm friends. In search of fame and glory Gilgamesh proposes an expedition to the Forest of Cedar, ignoring Enkidu's warning of the dangers. They kit themselves out with weapons. Gilgamesh announces his plans to the assembly of Uruk. The elders try to dissuade him.

[Enkidu] was sitting before her, . . . II 1

A lacuna follows the opening line of Tablet II, and when the text resumes the lines are still not fully recovered. The big Old Babylonian Pennsylvania tablet (P) supplies a better-preserved account, though one that partly overlaps with Tablet I:

While the two of them together were making love, P 46
he forgot the wild where he was born.

For seven days and seven nights P 50
Enkidu was erect and coupled with *Shamhat.

The harlot opened her mouth,
saying to Enkidu:
'As I look at you, Enkidu, you are like a god,
why with the beasts do you wander the wild?' P 55

'Come, I will lead you to Uruk-the-Town-Square,
to the sacred temple, the home of Anu!
Enkidu, arise, let me take you
to the temple Eanna, the home of Anu, P 60

'where [men] are engaged in labours of skill,
you, too, like a man, will find a place for yourself.' P 63

* * *

Her words he heard, her speech found favour: P 66
the counsel of a woman struck home in his heart.
She stripped and clothed him in part of her garment, P 70
the other part she put on herself.

The text of Tablet II resumes:

By the hand she took him, like a god [she led him,] II 36
to the shepherds' camp, the site of the sheep-pen.
The band of shepherds was gathered around him,
talking about him among themselves:

'This fellow – how like in build he is to Gilgamesh, II 40
tall in stature, *proud* as a battlement.
For sure it's Enkidu, born in the uplands,
his strength is as mighty as a rock from the sky.'



3 'For sure it's Enkidu, born in the uplands'.

Bread they set before him,
ale they set before him. II 45
Enkidu ate not the bread, but looked *askance*.

Here Tablet II becomes fragmentary again, and the episode is best taken from the Old Babylonian Pennsylvania tablet:

How to eat bread Enkidu knew not,
how to drink ale he had never been shown. P 90

The harlot opened her mouth,
saying to Enkidu: P 95
'Eat the bread, Enkidu, essential to life,
drink the ale, the lot of the land!'

Enkidu ate the bread until he was sated,
he drank the ale, a full seven goblets. P 100
His mood became free, he started to sing,
his heart grew merry, his face lit up. P 105

The barber groomed his body so hairy,
anointed with oil he turned into a man. P 110
He put on a garment, became like a warrior,
he took up his weapon to do battle with lions.

The text of Tablet II resumes again:

[When at night the shepherds lay sleeping,
[he struck] down wolves, he [chased off lions.] P 60
Sleeping lay the senior shepherds,
their shepherd boy Enkidu, a [man wide] awake.

[A certain] fellow had [*been invited*] to a wedding,
[to] Uruk-the-Sheepfold [*he was going*] for the [*banquet*]. P 64

Here another lacuna intervenes in Tablet II, which the Old Babylonian tablet again helps to fill:

Enkidu was having his pleasure with *Shamhat. P 135
He lifted his eyes, caught sight of the man,
and thus he spoke to the harlot:

*Shamhat, bring the man over: P 140
why he came here, let me *learn* his reason.'
The harlot hailed the man,
went up to him, spoke to him:

'Where do you hurry to, fellow? P 145
What is your journey so toilsome?'
The fellow opened his mouth,
saying to Enkidu:

'I was invited to a wedding banquet,
it is the lot of the people to contract a marriage. P 150
I shall load the ceremonial table
with tempting foods for the wedding feast.

'For the king of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
the *veil* will be parted for the one who picks first; P 155
for Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
the *veil* will be parted for the one who picks first.

'He will couple with the wife-to-be,
he first of all, the bridegroom after. P 160
By divine consent it is so ordained:
when his navel-cord was cut, for him she was destined.'

At the fellow's words his face paled in anger. P 166

* * *

Off goes Enkidu, with *Shamhat following. P 175

He entered the city of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
and a crowd gathered around. P 180
He came to a halt in the street of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
all gathered about, the people discussed him:

'In build he is the image of Gilgamesh,
but shorter in stature, and bigger of bone. P 185
For [sure it's the one who] was born in the uplands,
the milk of the beasts is what he was suckled on.'

In Uruk they held regular festivals of sacrifice,
young men made merry, set up a *champion*: P 190
for the fellow whose features were fair,
for Gilgamesh, like a god, was set up a rival. P 195

For the goddess of weddings the bed was laid out,
 Gilgamesh met with the maiden by night.
 Forward came (Enkidu), he stood in the street,
 blocking the path of Gilgamesh. P 200

The text of Tablet II becomes legible once more:

The land of Uruk was standing [around him,]
 the land was gathered [about him.] II 103
 A crowd was *milling about* before [him,]
 the menfolk were thronging [around him.] II 105

Like a babe-in-arms they were [kissing his feet,]
 already the fellow
 For the goddess of weddings was ready the bed,
 for Gilgamesh, like a god, was set up a substitute. II 110

Enkidu with his foot blocked the door of the wedding house,
 not allowing Gilgamesh to enter.
 They seized each other at the door of the wedding house,
 in the street they joined combat, in the Square of the Land.

The door-jambs shook, the wall did shudder, II 115
 [in the street Gilgamesh and Enkidu joined combat, in the Square
 of the Land.]
 [The door-jambs shook, the wall did shudder.]

Another lacuna intervenes, again partly to be filled by the Old Babylonian
 Pennsylvania tablet:

Gilgamesh knelt, one foot on the ground,
 his anger subsided, he broke off from the fight. P 230
 After he broke off from the fight,
 said Enkidu to him, to Gilgamesh:

'As one unique your mother bore you, P 235
 the wild cow of the fold, the goddess Ninsun!
 High over warriors you are exalted,
 to be king of the people Enlil made it your destiny!' P 240

At this point the Old Babylonian Pennsylvania tablet ends. Its sequel, the Yale
 tablet (Y), is less well preserved. In the first intelligible episode Enkidu is speaking
 to Gilgamesh:

'Why do you desire to do this thing?
 . . . anything . . . do you want so much? Y 15
 Let me ,
 a feat that never was done in the land.'

They kissed each other and formed a friendship.

After another lacuna Tablet II resumes with an episode in which Gilgamesh
 introduces Enkidu to his mother:

'The mightiest [in the land, strength he possesses.] II 162
 [His strength is as mighty as a] rock from the sky,
 he is tall in [stature, *proud* as a battlement.]'

The mother of Gilgamesh [opened her mouth to speak,] II 165
 saying to [her son -]
 Wild-Cow Ninsun [opened her mouth to speak,]
 [saying to Gilgamesh:]

'My son, in his gate ,
 bitterly you ' II 169

* * *

'You hold , II 172
 . . . in his gate

'Bitterly he ,
 Enkidu possesses no [*kith or kin.*] II 175
 Shaggy hair hanging loose
 he was born in the wild and [*has*] no [*brother.*]

Standing there, Enkidu heard [what she said,]
 and thinking it over, he sat [down *weeping.*]
 His eyes brimmed with [tears,] II 180
 his arms fell limp, [his] strength [*ebbed away.*]

They took hold of each other and ,
 they [*linked*] their hands like
 Gilgamesh ,
 to Enkidu he spoke a word, [saying:]

II 185

‘Why, my friend, [did your eyes] brim [with tears,]
 your arms fall limp, [your strength *ebb away*?]’
 Said Enkidu to him, [to Gilgamesh:]
 ‘My friend, my heart is aggrieved . . .

‘Through sobbing [my *legs* do] tremble,
 terror has entered my heart.’

II 190

The Old Babylonian Yale tablet fills the gap in the standard version:

Gilgamesh opened his mouth,
 saying to Enkidu:

Y 90

* * *

‘. ferocious *Humbaba,
 . . . [let us] slay him, [so *his power*] is no more!’

Y 97

‘In the Forest of Cedar, [where *Humbaba] dwells,
 let us frighten him in his lair!’

Y 100

Enkidu opened his mouth,
 saying to Gilgamesh:

Y 105

‘I knew him, my friend, in the uplands,
 when I roamed here and there with the herd.
 For sixty leagues the forest is a wilderness,
 who is there would venture inside it?’

‘*Humbaba, his voice is the Deluge,
 his speech is fire, and his breath is death!

Y 110

Why do you desire to do this thing?
 An unwinnable battle is *Humbaba’s ambush!’

Y 115

Gilgamesh opened his mouth,
 saying to Enkidu:
 ‘I will climb, my friend, [*the forest’s*] slopes.’

Y 119

The text of Tablet II resumes:

Enkidu [opened his] mouth [to speak, saying to Gilgamesh:]

II 216

‘[My friend], how can we [go to the home of Humbaba?]
 So to keep safe the cedars,
 Enlil made it his lot to terrify men.

‘That is a journey [which must not be made,]
 [that is a man who must not be looked on.]
 He who guards the [Forest of Cedar, his *reach* is wide,]
 Humbaba, his voice is the Deluge.

II 220

‘His speech is fire, his breath is death,
 he hears the forest murmur at sixty leagues’ distance.
 Who is there would venture into his forest?
 Adad ranks first, and Humbaba second.

II 225

‘Who is there would oppose him among the Igigi?
 So to keep safe the cedars,
 Enlil made it his lot to terrify men;
 if you penetrate his forest you are seized by the tremors.’

Gilgamesh opened his mouth to speak,
 saying [to Enkidu:]

II 230

‘Why, my friend, do you speak like a weakling?
 With your spineless words you [make me] despondent.

‘As for man, [his days] are numbered,
 whatever he may do, it is but wind,
 . . . exists not for me

II 235

‘You were born and grew up [in the wild:]
 even lions were afraid of you, [you experienced] all.
 Grown men fled away [from your presence,]
 your heart is tried and [tested in] combat.

II 240

'Come, my friend, [let us hie] to the forge!'

A short lacuna follows. It can be filled from the Old Babylonian Yale tablet:

'[Let] them cast [us hatchets] in our presence!' Y 162

They took each other by the hand and hied to the forge,
where the smiths were sitting in consultation.

Great hatchets they cast, Y 165
and axes weighing three talents apiece.

Great daggers they cast:

two talents apiece were the blades,
one half of a talent the crests of their handles,
half a talent apiece the daggers' gold mountings. Y 170
Gilgamesh and Enkidu bore ten talents each.

He bolted the sevenfold gates of Uruk,
he convened [the assembly,] the crowd gathered round.
... in the street of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
Gilgamesh [*seated himself on*] his throne. Y 175

[In the street of Uruk]-the-Town-Square,
[the crowd was] sitting before him.
[Thus Gilgamesh] spoke
[to the elders of Uruk]-the-Town-Square:

'[Hear me, O elders of Uruk-the-Town]-Square! Y 180
[I would tread the path to ferocious *Humbaba,]
I would see the god of whom men talk,
whose name the lands do constantly repeat.

'I will conquer him in the Forest of Cedar:
let the land learn Uruk's offshoot is mighty! Y 185
Let me start out, I will cut down the cedar,
I will establish for ever a name eternal!'

The text of Tablet II resumes:

[Then Gilgamesh spoke] II 258
[to the young men of Uruk-the-Sheepfold:]

'Hear me, O young men [of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,] II 260
O young men of Uruk, who understand [*combat!*]
Bold as I am I shall tread the distant path [to the home of
Humbaba,]
I shall face a battle I know not.

'[I shall ride] a road [I know not:]
give me your blessing as I go on my journey, II 265
[so I may see again] your faces [in safety,]
and return [glad at heart] through Uruk's gate!

'On my return [I will celebrate] New Year [twice over,]
I will celebrate the festival twice in the year.
Let the festival take place, the merriment begin, II 270
let the drums resound before [Wild-Cow] Ninsun!'

Enkidu [offered] counsel to the elders,
and the young men of Uruk, who understood *combat*:

'Tell him not to go to the Forest of Cedar!
That is a journey which must not be made, II 275
that is a man [who must not be] looked on,
He who guards the Forest of Cedar, his [*reach*] is wide.

'This *Humbaba*, [his voice is the Deluge,]
[his speech is fire,] his breath is death!
[He hears] the forest murmur [at sixty leagues' distance:] II 280
[who is there would venture] into his forest?

'[Adad ranks first, and Humbaba] second:
[who is there would oppose him] among the Igigi?
[So to keep safe the cedars,]
Enlil made it his lot to terrify men; II 285
if you penetrate his forest you are seized by the tremors.'

The senior advisers rose,
 good counsel they offered Gilgamesh:
 'You are young, Gilgamesh, borne along by emotion,
 all that you talk of you don't understand. II 290

'This Humbaba, his voice is the Deluge,
 his speech is fire, his breath is death!
 He hears the forest murmur at sixty leagues' distance:
 who is there would venture into his forest? II 295

'Adad ranks first, and Humbaba second:
 who is there would oppose him among the Igigi?
 So to keep safe the cedars,
 Enlil made it his lot to terrify men.'

Gilgamesh heard the words of the senior advisers, II 300
 he looked with a [laugh at] Enkidu . . . :
 ['Now, my friend, how frightened I am!]
 [In fear of him shall I change my mind?']

The rest of Tablet II, perhaps twenty lines containing Gilgamesh's reply to his counsellors, is lost.

Tablet III. Preparations for the Expedition to the Forest of Cedar

The elders give Gilgamesh and Enkidu advice for their journey. The two heroes visit the goddess Ninsun, who enlists the help of the Sun God, Shamash, and the aid of his wife, Aya. Ninsun adopts the orphan Enkidu. Gilgamesh gives instructions for the governing of Uruk in his absence. The heroes depart.

[The elders of Uruk-the-Sheepfold] II end
 [spoke to Gilgamesh:]

'To Uruk's [quay come back in safety,] III 1
 do not rely, O Gilgamesh, on your strength alone,
 look long and hard, land a blow you can count on!

'“Who goes in front saves his companion,
 who knows the road protects his friend.” III 5
 Let Enkidu go before you,
 he knows the journey to the Forest of Cedar.

'He is tested in battle and tried in combat,
 he shall guard his friend and keep safe his companion,
 Enkidu shall bring him safe home to his *wives!* III 10

(To Enkidu)

'In our assembly we place the King in your care:
 you bring him back and replace him in ours!
 Gilgamesh opened his mouth to speak,
 saying to Enkidu:

'Come, my friend, let us go to the Palace Sublime, III 15
 into the presence of the great Queen Ninsun.
 Ninsun is clever and wise, well versed in everything,
 she will set our feet in steps of good counsel.'

Taking each other hand in hand,
 Gilgamesh and Enkidu went to the Palace Sublime. III 20
 Into the presence of the great Queen Ninsun,
 Gilgamesh rose and entered before [her.]

Said Gilgamesh to her, to [Ninsun:]
 '[I shall tread,] O Ninsun, bold as I am,
 the distant path to the home of Humbaba, III 25
 I shall face a battle I know not,

'I shall ride a road I know not:
 I beseech you, give me your blessing for my journey!
 Let me see your face again in safety,
 and return glad at heart through Uruk's gate. III 30

'On my return I will celebrate New Year twice over,
I will celebrate the festival twice in the year.
Let the festival take place, the merriment begin,
let the drums resound in your presence!'

[Wild-Cow] Ninsun listened long and with sadness III 35
to the words of Gilgamesh, her son, and Enkidu.
Into the bath-house she went seven times,
[she bathed] herself in water of tamarisk and soapwort.

[She donned] a fine dress to adorn her body,
[she chose a diadem] to adorn her breast. III 40
Having put on [her cap,] she donned her tiara,
. the harlots . . . the ground.

She climbed the staircase and went up on the roof,
on the roof she set up a censer to Shamash.
Scattering incense she lifted her arms in appeal to the Sun
God: III 45
'Why did you afflict my son Gilgamesh with so restless a spirit?

'For now you have touched him and he will tread
the distant path to the home of Humbaba.
He will face a battle he knows not,
he will ride a road he knows not. III 50

'During the days of his journey there and back,
until he reaches the Forest of Cedar,
until he slays ferocious Humbaba,
and annihilates from the land the Evil Thing you abhor,

'each day when [you travel] the circuit [of the earth,] III 55
may Aya the Bride unfearing remind you:
"Entrust him to the care of the watches of the night!"'
At eventide . . . III 58

* * *

'You opened, O [Shamash, *the gates* for] the herd to go out,
for . . . you came forth for the land.
The uplands [*took shape,*] the heavens grew [bright,] III 65
the beasts of the wild . . . your ruddy glow.

* * *

'At the coming forth [of your light] is gathered the crowd,
the divine Anunnaki await [your brilliance.]
May [Aya the Bride] unfearing [remind you:]
"[Entrust] him to [the care of the watches of the night!]" III 75

* * *

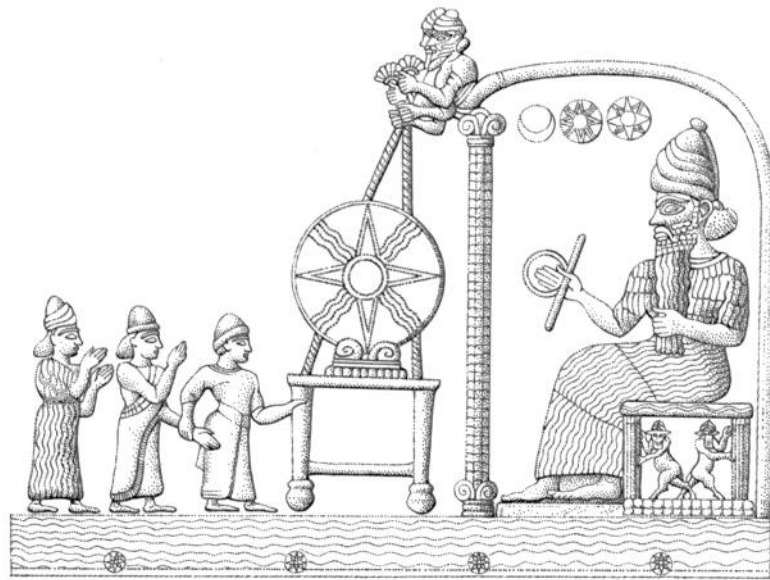
'Also III 80
while Gilgamesh travels to the Forest of Cedar,
let the days be long, let the nights be short,
let his loins be girt, let his *stride* [be sure!]

'Let him pitch at nightfall a camp for the night,
[let] nighttime III 85
May Aya the Bride unfearing remind you:
"The day Gilgamesh and Enkidu encounter Humbaba,

"O Shamash, rouse against Humbaba the mighty gale-winds:
South Wind, North Wind, East Wind and West Wind,
Blast, Counterblast, Typhoon, Hurricane and Tempest, III 90
Devil-Wind, Frost-Wind, Gale and Tornado.

"Let rise thirteen winds and Humbaba's face darken,
let the weapons of Gilgamesh then reach Humbaba!"
After your very own *fires* are kindled,
at that time, O Shamash, turn your face to the *suppliant!* III 95

'Your fleet-footed mules shall [*bear*] you [*onwards.*]
A restful seat, a bed [for the night] shall be [*what awaits*] you.
The gods, your brothers, shall bring food [*to delight*] you,
Aya the Bride shall wipe your face dry with the fringe of her
garment.'



4 'O Shamash, turn your face to the supplicant!'

Again Wild-Cow Ninsun made her bequest before Shamash: III 100

'O Shamash, will not Gilgamesh . . . the gods?
Will he not share the heavens with you?
Will he not share with the moon a sceptre and crown?

'Will he not grow wise with Ea of the Ocean Below?
Will he not rule with Irnina the black-headed people? III 105
Will he not dwell with Ningishzida in the Land-of-No-Return?

'Let me make him, O Shamash, . . . ,
lest he . . . , lest he . . . in the Forest of Cedar.'

* * *

After Wild-Cow Ninsun had charged Shamash thus, III 116

[Wild-Cow] Ninsun was clever [and wise, well versed in
everything,]

[the mother of] Gilgamesh
She smothered the censer and came [down from the roof,]
she summoned Enkidu and declared her will: III 120

'O mighty Enkidu, you are not sprung from my womb,
but henceforth your brood will belong with the votaries of
Gilgamesh,
the priestesses, the hierodules and the women of the temple.'
She put the symbols on Enkidu's neck.

'The priestesses took in the foundling, III 125
and the Divine Daughters brought up the foster-child.
Enkidu, whom [I love,] I take for my son,
Enkidu in [brotherhood,] Gilgamesh shall favour him!'

'Also III 130
while [you] travel [together] to the Forest of Cedar,
let [the days be] long, let the nights be short,
[let your loins be girt, let] your stride [be sure!]

'[At nightfall pitch a camp for the] night,
let . . . protect'

After another lacuna there follows an episode in which Gilgamesh and Enkidu
apparently perform rituals in aid of a safe journey, but it remains very badly
damaged:

Gilgamesh III 147

His
[to] the Gate of Cedar
Enkidu in the chapel III 150
and Gilgamesh in the chapel of
Juniper, incense,
members of the . . . were present . . .

* * *

'By the command of Shamash you will attain [your desire.] III 166

In the Gate of Marduk
on the breast of the water
The back
in the Gate of Cedar not III 170
Gilgamesh

and Enkidu

At twenty leagues [*you should* break bread!]

After a long lacuna, Gilgamesh gives instructions for the running of the city in his absence:

‘[During the days of our journey there and] back, III 202
[until we reach the Forest of] Cedar,

‘[until we] slay [ferocious Humbaba,]
[and annihilate] from [the land the Evil Thing Shamash
abhors,] III 205

.
may you acquire no

‘[*The officers*] must not assemble young men in the street.
Judge the lawsuit of the weak, seek out . . . , III 210
while we attain our desire like babes-in-arms,
and plant our [weapons] in Humbaba’s gate!’

The officers stood there wishing him well,
the young men of Uruk ran behind in a mob,
and the officers kissed his feet:
‘To Uruk’s quay come back in safety! III 215

‘Do not rely, O Gilgamesh, on your strength alone,
look long and hard, land a blow you can count on!
“Who goes in front will save his comrade,
who knows the road shall [guard] his friend.”

‘Let Enkidu go before you, III 220
he knows the journey to the Forest of Cedar.
He is tested in battle and [tried] in combat,
through the mountain passes [*he often has journeyed.*]

‘He shall [guard] his friend [and keep safe his companion,]
[Enkidu shall bring him safe] home to his *wives!* III 225

(To Enkidu)

In our assembly [we place the King in your care:]
you bring him back and replace [him in ours!]

Enkidu [opened] his mouth [to speak,]
saying [to Gilgamesh:]
‘My friend, turn back, III 230
do not [*pursue*] this journey’

The rest of Tablet III, perhaps ten lines, is missing. The departure of the heroes is described in the Old Babylonian Yale tablet, though the text becomes increasingly fragmentary:

Enkidu opened his mouth, Y 272
saying to Gilgamesh:
‘Where you’ve *set your mind* begin the journey,
let your heart have no fear, keep your eyes on me!

‘[In the] forest I knew his lair, Y 275
[and the ways, too,] that *Humbaba wanders.
Speak [*to the crowd*] and send them home!
.

‘. [they should not] go with me, Y 280
. to you.’
. . . The crowd with happy heart,
. . . they [heard] what he had said.

The young men *made a fervent prayer* . . . :
‘Go, Gilgamesh, let
May your god go [before you!] Y 285
May [Shamash] let you attain [your goal!]

Gilgamesh and Enkidu *went forth* . . .