Ur-šanabi (*Sursunabu*). The ferryman of Ūta-napišti* in the Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgameš. He and his crew of Stone Ones are attacked by Gilgameš, and he agrees to ferry Gilgameš across the world-encompassing ocean and the Waters of Death to the place where Ūta-napišti and his wife dwell (GE X). Consequently banished from Ūta-napišti’s service he accompanies Gilgameš back to Uruk, where he is addressed in the final verses of the poem as a proxy for the poem’s reader (GE XI). His name is spelled **Ur-šánabi**(40) and **Ur-šánabi**(40) in first-millennium manuscripts of the epic from Nineveh and Babylonia, but **Ur-šu-na-be** in an early Neo-Assyrian manuscript from Kalkhu. In the Hittite paraphrase of the epic his name occurs as **(U)-ur-ša-na-bi** and **dUr-ša-na-bi**. An Old Babylonian tablet, probably from Sippar, gives his name as **Su-ur-su-na-bu**, in which initial /s/ is inexplicable. Outside the epic the name appears in a bilingual list of personal names, **Ur-šánabi! = Amēl(lú)-É-a** (V R 44 iii 48). Names on the pattern Ur-DN/GN are typical of Sumerian anthroponymy, but the element šánabi “two-thirds” is not, and it is likely that the name U. represents a learned coinage of the late Old Babylonian period, deriving from the common Akkadian name Awīl-Ea “Man of Ea”. Another suggestion links the fraction two-thirds with Gilgameš’s constitution as “two-thirds god” (GE I 48) and takes the name U. to mean “servant of Gilgameš” (Fink 2014).


A. R. George