Ruin Hills at the Threshold of the Netherworld

The Tell in the Conceptual Landscape of the *Ba'al Cycle* and Ancient Near Eastern Mythology*

Matthew J. Suriano

Summary

In the *Ba'al Cycle*'s description of the threshold separating the realms of the dead from that of the living, the key reference point is described as "the two tells (at) the boundary of the netherworld" (*CAT* 1.4 viii, 4). The specific word used to describe both topographical features is *tl*, the tell, an object well known in the archaeology of the Near East. The objects here are significant because they are literally ruin hills; specifically, they represent artificial topographical features. This nuance of the word *tl* distinguishes it from concepts of cosmic mountains shared with other cultures, but relates it to occurrences of the Sumerian cognate in terms such as DU_6 KU_3 ("Sacred Tell") and $SAHAR.DU_6.TAG_4$ (roughly translated as "burial tell"). This paper will begin with an archaeological and philological analysis of the Semitic term *tl*, informed by Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, in order to foreground the mythological valence of the two tells in the Ugaritic epic myth. The meaning instantiated by the word tell, as "ruin" and "hill," allowed it to serve as an embodiment of time and space in the *Ba'al Cycle* and other ancient Near Eastern literatures, demarcating cosmological thresholds and delineating boundaries of competing space.

1. Introduction

At an important moment in the Ugaritic epic-myth known as the *Ba'al Cycle*, the protagonist gives careful instructions to his messengers on how to arrive at the netherworld ruled by Mot. The instructions describe a reference point on the map between the realm of Ba'al and that of Mot (the god "Death"); *tlm ġsr àrṣ* in *CAT* 1.4 viii, 4,[1] translated: "the two tells (at) the boundary of the netherworld." The literary motif of the dual mountains that guard the horizon is common and appears in texts as diverse as the Standard

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1   E. Bordreuil ("La montagne d'après les données textuelles d'ougarit." Res Antiquae 3 [2006]: 181) comments on this line: "Dans ce passage, on trouve la description la plus précise de la littérature ougaritique concernant la géographie de l'enfer."

Epic of Gilgamesh (*māšu* in Tablet IV) and even in the 20th century poetry of Ezra Pound.[2] While this commonality may seem remarkable,[3] and even unexpected,[4] it is important to avoid generalizations based upon superficial similarities. Thus it is necessary to probe deeper into the occurrence of the two mounds in the *Ba'al Cycle* in a way that is attentive to the culture and language of the text. The specific word *tl*, "tell" (i.e., "ruin hill"),[5] which is descriptive of these topographical features, is a well-known object in the archaeology of the Near East. The analyses of this specific term, along with its Sumerian analogue DU_6, will foreground the mythological valence of the two tells in the *Ba'al Cycle*. The *tlm* are significant in *CAT* 1.4 viii, 4 because they are literally ruin hills; in the archaeological sense, they represent the accumulated remains of past (human) activity. This nuance of the word *tl* distinguishes it from concepts of cosmic mountains shared with other cultures,[6] but relates it to occurrences of the Sumerian cognate in terms such as DU_6 KU_3 ("Sacred Tell") and $SAHAR.DU_6.TAG_4$ ("Burial Tell"). In each of these instances the tell ("ruin hill") embodies the seldom recognized categories of time and space.[7] The material evidence of the Near Eastern tell supports the recognition of this embodied sense. Furthermore, Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "chronotope," where time and space are singularly objectified, pro-

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2 See Nicholas Tromp, Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Netherworld in the Old Testament (Biblica et Orientalia), Rome 1969, 54–55, where he quotes Ezra Pound ("And before the hell mouth; dry plain and two mountains." Canto XVI) in his larger discussion of the motif observed in the great epic-myth of the 14th century BCE (*CAT* 1.4 viii, 4).

3 It might seem unexpected to find in a classic example of modernist poetry (Pound) the mythic trope of two mountains bounding the netherworld, yet this image is common in tales of otherworld journeys. For a brief review of examples of this and related motifs, relative to *CAT* 1.4 viii, 4, see T. H. Gaster, Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East, New and rev. ed. Garden City, N.Y. 1961, 184–185. The classic work on the subject of the cosmic mountain in biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature is R. J. Clifford, The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament (Harvard Semitic monographs 4), Cambridge, Mass 1972.

4 Tromp, Primitive Conceptions of Death, 54–55.

5 Throughout this study, the noun will be rendered "tell," as it is a loanword from Arabic. The dictionary definition for English is: "an artificial mound in the Middle East etc. formed by the accumulated remains of ancient settlements [Arab. *tall* hillock]," in J. Pearsall and B. Trumble (eds.), Oxford English Reference Dictionary. 2nd, Revised. Oxford 2002, 1483b.

6 To be sure, the tell can be a type of cosmic mountain, N. Wyatt, Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Near East, Sheffield 2001, 153–154. Yet the complexity of this specific term (tell) extends beyond the normative sense of (most) cosmic mountains.

7 The concepts of space and time are not widely discussed in the study of the ancient Near East. For the few studies devoted to this topic, see J. W. Flanagan, "Finding the Arrow of Time: Constructs of Ancient History and Religion," CR:BS 3 (1995): 37–80; Wyatt, Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Near East; J. Z. Smith, To Take Place: Toward a Theory in Ritual, (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism), Chicago 1987; and J. M. Hutton, The Transjordanian palimpsest: the overwritten texts of personal exile and transformation in the Deuteronomistic history. (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, bd 396) Berlin & New York, 2009. In classical studies, see also A. C. Purves, Space and Time in Ancient Greek Narrative, Cambridge 2010.

vides an explanatory model for the tell's appearance in ancient Near Eastern literature. In such literature, the tell demarcates cosmological thresholds and delineates boundaries of competing space. Thus, the exploration of the specific meaning of the word "tell" will offer new insight into the spatial motifs that are played out in the fourth and fifth tablets of the *Ba'al Cycle.*

2. The Near Eastern "Ruin Hill" (= Tell)

In this study of *CAT* 1.4 viii, 4 the analysis of the mythic motif pivots on the meaning of the word *tl*. The analysis, therefore, requires some initial discussion regarding the word's sense and interpretation. An exhaustive study of the term tell is not possible, however a brief survey of the term's lexical and philological meaning along with its archaeological definition will inform the analysis of the tell's role in the respective literature. This literary interpretation, informed also by Mikhail Bakhtin, will then serve as an interpretive guide for the examination of the terms DU_6 in Sumerian literature, and *tl* in the *Ba'al Cycle.* Large or small, tells are (and were) predominant across much of the Near East. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the word tell held a distinct place in the conceptual landscape of past cultures: specifically, those of Mesopotamia and the Levant.

Early western explorers to the Near East recorded the appearance of tells with much curiosity.[8] The British explorer Claude Reignier Conder even speculated that the Near Eastern tells were the remnants of ancient brick-factories.[9] Yet the nature of the tell was not fully comprehended by modern researchers until the pioneering archaeological work at Tell el-Ḥesi of Sir W. M. Flinders Petrie and the American scholar Frederick Jones Bliss. Although their work was anticipated by Heinrich Schliemann at Troy, the publication of Tell el-Ḥesi's stratigraphy by Bliss in his appropriately titled book *A Mound of Many Cities* established the modern archaeological definition of the tell (see Figure 1).[10] Since this work, the tell has been a major fo-

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8 For instance see the remarks of A. H. Layard, Nineveh and Its Remains, vol. 1, New York 1849, 118; quoted in S. Lloyd, Mounds of the Near East (The Rhind Lectures, 1961–1962) Edinburgh 1963, 15–16.

9 C. R. Conder, Tent Work in Palestine, vol. 2, London 1878, 46–47. To be sure, collapsed mud brick plays an important role in the site-formation process of a tell; see A. M. Rosen, Cities of Clay: The Geoarchaeology of Tells, Chicago 1986, 10–13.

10 F. J. Bliss, A Mound of Many Cities: Or, Tell el Hesy Excavated, New York and London 1894. The stratigraphy was published a few years earlier in W. M. F. Petrie, Tell el Hesy (Lachish), London 1891, 32 (see Fig. 1). The book was based on Bliss's pioneering excavation and research with the British Egyptologist Sir W.M.F. Petrie at the southern Levant site of Tell el-Ḥesi. Note however that many scholars see the work of Heinrich Schliemann at the Anatolian site of Hisarlik (ancient Troy) as the beginning of stratigraphic excavations in the Near East. See, for instance, B. G. Trigger, A History of Archaeological Thought, 2nd ed.
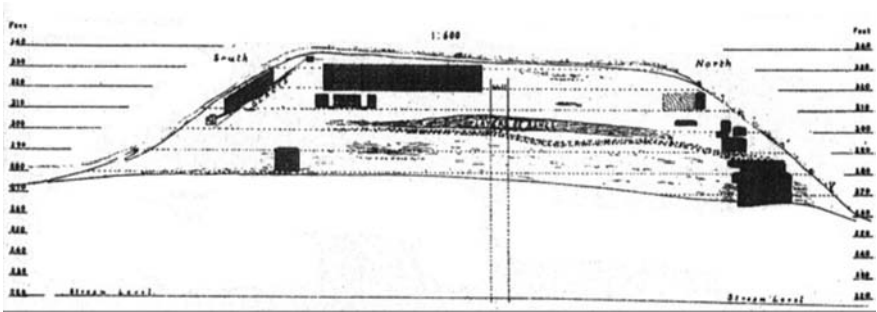
Figure 1: Flinders Petrie's Stratigraphy of Tell el-Ḥesi (published in 1891)

cus of Near Eastern archaeologists, as the mounds themselves represent the largest individual artifact among the material remains of ancient cultures.[11]

In geomorphic terms,[12] a tell is a mound of ruins with a "mesa-like appearance" featuring embankments of up to 40 degree-slopes, that can average in size from 2.5 to 200 acres.[13] Archaeologically, the tell is a locus of settlement activity created through successive occupation (and ruination) and the subsequent accumulation and concentration of material remains. Thus, a long and extensive process of history, not uncommon in the ancient Near East, predicates the existence of the tell.[14] Although the basic essence of the

Cambridge 2006, 197. Trigger cites the foundational work of Schliemann, but credits Petrie for his stratigraphic work at Tell el-Ḥesi.

11 In addition to Rosen (Cities of Clay), see G. E. Wright, "The Tell: Basic Unit for Reconstructing Complex Societies of the Near East," in Reconstructing Complex Societies: An Archaeological Colloquium, ed. C. B. Moore (Supplement to the Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research) Cambridge, Mass 1974, 123–130. See also the typologies of tell settlement in W. G. Dever, "The Tell: Microcosm of the Cultural Process," in Retrieving the Past: Essays on Archaeological Research and Methodology in Honor of Gus W. Van Beek, ed. J. D. Seger, Winona Lake, Ind. 1996, 37–46, and also G. A. London, "Tells: City Center or Home?" in Eretz-Israel: Nelson Glueck Memorial Volume, Jerusalem 1992, 71*–92*. For a modern ethno-archaeological study, see G. W. Van Beek, "A Population Estimate for Marib: A Contemporary Tell Village in North Yemen," BASOR 248 (1982): 61–67.

12 It must be stressed that the tell is not a naturally formed entity (although it could originate at a naturally undulated setting). In this sense, the Semitic word tell differs from other corresponding terms in Middle Eastern languages that can designate ruin hills or the natural landscape, such as *tepe* in Turkish.

13 G. W. Van Beek, "The Excavation of Tells," in Benchmarks in Time and Culture, ed. J. F. Drinkard, G. L. Mattingly, and J. M. Miller, Atlanta, Ga. 1988, 131–167. Although this definition is more appropriate for the southern Levant, it works in principle for the general Near East.

14 By "process of history" this study implies the extended period of human occupation in the Near East. See, for example, the brief discussion of tell formation in the northern Levant during the Neolithic period, found in P. M. M. G. Akkermans and G. M. Schwartz, The Archaeology of Syria, Cambridge 2003, 59–60. While the majority of tells form through gradual accumulation over an extended period of time, some seem to have originated in single

ancient term remains consistent with the modern definition, the nuance of the word tell in the primary sources is complicated and connotes meanings that can be either negative or benign. As such, the semantic range consisted of several uses, all of which are interrelated: the ruination of a settlement, an artificially created foundation for settlement, and a toponymic feature.

The philological study of the word tell (Ugaritic *tl* and cognates) has not been as intense as the archaeological analysis of the tell's physical presence. The term "tell" is widespread throughout the Middle East in contemporary Arabic and Hebrew toponyms,[15] such as Tell el-Ḥesi (Arabic) or Tel Ḥesy (the Hebrew form) and even modern Tel Aviv,[16] yet it is less frequent in Northwest Semitic toponyms of the ancient Near East.[17] The term is more common in Akkadian, as *tillu(m)*, where it clearly corresponds with the Sumerian term DUL (read: DU_6),[18] even if the nature of this association is less certain.[19] Just as archaeologists have explored the origins of tells

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episodes, such as the so-called *Kranzhügel* tells found in the northern Levant that date to the Early and Middle Bronze Ages. Yet, as objects of the past, their enduring presence along the landscape can assume a role similar to the typical tell in local narratives.

15 For the cognates in South Semitic languages, see W. Leslau, Ethiopic and South Arabic Contributions to the Hebrew Lexicon (University of California publications in Semitic philology, 20) Berkeley 1958, 55.

16 Although the correct vocalization of the Arabic term is *tall*, it appears most commonly in the archaeological reports as "tell."

17 For Ugaritic, see G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartín, A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition. Part Two [l-z], trans. W. G. E. Watson, 2nd revised ed. (HdO I: The Near and Middle East, 67) Leiden and Boston 2003, 869 [henceforth = DUL 2]; for Hebrew and northwest Semitic languages see L. Köhler and W. Baumgartner, The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, vol 1. (Study edition) New York and Leiden 2001, 1735–1736; and J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions, Part Two: M–T. (HdO I: The Near and Middle East, 21) Leiden and New York 1995, 1215.

18 The Sumerian/Akkadian correspondence of DU_6 = *tillu(m)* is defined in several lexical lists, not to mention the use of the Sumerian word as a logogram in Akkadian writing; see now CAD *T*, 409. See also *AHw* II, p. 1359b. Hittite offers an interesting perspective, as a trilingual lexical list (KBo I, 42 obv. iii 6) glosses the Sumerian word "hill" (here spelled GU_2.BAL) as Akkadian *tillu* (*te-lu*) and Hittite *ḫapiraš-pupulli* ("city of ruin"; written URU-*aš-p*[*upulli*]); see H. Hoffner, An English-Hittite Glossary, Paris 1967, 88 n. 159. The Hittite gloss at one point was read URU-*aš*-D[U_6] by H.G. Güterbock (however see CHD *p*, 382 s.v. *pupulli*); the Sumerian logogram URU is descriptive of the type of ruin, i.e., a city. M. Weeden, Hittite Logograms and Hittite Scholarship, (Studien zu den Bogazköy-Texten), Wiesbaden 2011, 195–196. Once in the *Apology of Ḫattušiliš* the semantic equivalent to *tillu(m)*, "ruined cities," is written using the Sumerian logograms: DU_6.ḪI.A. See conveniently W. H. Held, W. R. Schmalstieg, and J. E. Gertz, Beginning Hittite, Columbus, Oh. 1988, 98–108.

19 What is unclear is whether *tillu* was borrowed from Sumerian, or if DUL itself was a loanword from an earlier Semitic substrate-language; see I. J. Gelb, Glossary of Old Akkadian, (Materials for the Assyrian dictionary, 3), Chicago 1957, 296. Both words may even reflect an earlier borrowing from another language, G.E. Wright, "The Tell," 124. The form in Akkadian, *tillu*, with the geminated radical, suggests that it was a loan word, although one would expect *ṭillu* (where the voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ is often used to represent the voiced dental plosive /d/; e.g., DUL). To be sure, the link between DUL and *tillu* is etymological, although the Sumerian term (unlike its Semitic counterpart) can also represent a pile of

through excavations and surveys, philologists have analyzed the origins of the word and contemplated its etymology.[20] Yet, neither group of scholars has attempted any synthetic study of the term, leaving aspects of its sense and meaning unexplored. In spite of these shortcomings, one certain principle indexed the term's core meaning (and all related nuances): the Semitic word *tl* stood for an artificial topographical feature.

As an artificial topographical feature the Near Eastern tell represents a unique concept,[21] and close examination of this concept in the literary sources will provide valuable insight into the conceptual boundaries of ancient Near Eastern mythology. The term's occurrence in Akkadian and classical Hebrew literature demonstrates the basic nuance of "artificial hill." Assyrian royal inscriptions draw upon the term's inherently destructive quality in their depiction of conquest and the destruction of cities. Conquered cities can be reduced to a tell, made like a "tell of the deluge" (*til abūbi*),[22] or described (adjectivally) as a ruin that is tell-like (*tillāniš*).[23] The Hebrew Bible includes this same sense where the term תֵּל־עוֹלָם is the resultant product of the חֵרֶם, the "ban," a divinely sanctioned act of violence and total destruction (Deut 13:17; and Josh 8:28). A famous example of the tell in cuneiform literature is found in the "Dialogue of Pessimism," where it serves as an object of reflection:[24] "climb on the ancient tells [written: DU₆.MEŠ-*ni*] and walk about, look at the skulls high and low." The amassed skulls represent the cumulative effect of time, represented in a spatial manner ("climb …

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material, such as grain. Furthermore, recent studies of Sumerian suggest that the auslaut of DU₆ was either an affricate consonant or alveolar tap /-ŕ/(= DUR); see ePSD, s.v., dud [MOUND] where it is written "dudʳ."

20 Suggestions include the *t*-preformative formation from *elûm*, "height," implied in AHw II, 1359b (see GAG §56 *k–m*); or relate it to *til'u*, "breast," see Leslau, Ethiopic and South Arabic, 55. These suggestions call for a third-weak root, which is difficult in light of the geminated final radicals of *tillu(m)*.

21 Certainly, the tells exist in the archaeological record of world cultures, yet the specific term "tell" is unique in that in Semitic languages it connotes an artificial hill.

22 The term "tell of the deluge" itself invokes a time-space notion of the primordial past (the deluge/flood) materialized in the present. The term appears in the epilogue of the Codex Hammurapi (see l, 80 in Martha Roth, Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, [SBL WAW, 6], Atlanta 1997], 138). Several examples can be found in Assyrian royal inscriptions; see: *kīma til abūbi aspun* / "and I overwhelmed them [so that they were] like a tell of the deluge." D. D. Luckenbill, The Annals of Sennacherib (Oriental Institute Publications 2) Chicago 1924, §47; and also *adi naphar dādmešu kīma til abūbi ubbit*/ "with all of its towns, I destroyed [so that they were] like a tell of the deluge." (The Nabi Yunus Inscription, *ibid.*, §17.) See the discussion in P. Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah," JAOS 103 (1983): 725–726.

23 The term *tillāniš* is formed with the terminative adverbial suffix *-iš*; see J. Huehnergard, A Grammar of Akkadian, 2nd ed., (Harvard Semitic Studies 45), Winona Lake, Ind. 2005, 341–342.

24 See B. R. Foster, From Distant Days: Myths, Tales, and Poetry of Ancient Mesopotamia, Bethesda, Md. 1995, 372, translated as "ancient ruin heaps." CAD *T*, s.v. *tillu* A, 409, citing W. G. Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, Oxford 1960, 76.

high and low"), which evokes an anonymous history to be contemplated within the sagely discourse.[25] Each example makes explicit a sense of agency, either human or divine, that stands behind the term. Here, historical processes combine and are bound up in a singular object called the tell.[26]

The basic definition of the word tell, "ruin hill," implies notions of space and time.[27] The tell is an elevated feature in a given landscape (a hill), and thus by nature it occupies visible space within its topographical setting. Coincident with this aspect is the tell as the aggregate remains of successive human settlement activity (ruin) where it serves as a monument of time. The concepts of time and space have played an important role in the history of western thought,[28] most prominently in Immanuel Kant's transcendental idealism. Kant's general theory about the representation of space and time in human cognition was the starting point for Mikhail Bakhtin's discussion of what he called a chronotope. Literally "time-space," the term stands for the temporal and spatial relationship in narrative contexts that intrinsically link the two concepts as a singularity. Bakhtin stressed the interdependence of time and space, yet for him these entities were not transcendent, but were subjective to human experience.[29] Time and space were immanent realities that were context specific; rather than taking an active presence at the foreground of recognition, they formed the background for representations of human cognition.[30]

In this sense, the abstract concepts of time and space can be recognized in the archaeological artifact known as the tell,[31] which will in turn provide particular insight into the object's presence in conceptual landscapes. The twin tells mentioned in the *Ba'al Cycle*, as time-space objects, stand at the boundaries of two worlds. Yet this type of object resists easy categorization,

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25 The text continues, and asks of the skulls: "Which was the doer of evil, and which was the doer of good deeds?" See, Foster, From Distant Days, 372.

26 To quote Rosen (Cities of Clay, 10): "Tell formation is, for the most part, a result of cultural activity." In the literature, the term tell can have different (although closely related) applications, such as describing the foundation of a settlement. The examples chosen here, however, exemplify the symbolic meaning of the term tell and how it relates to certain mythological contexts.

27 The dyadic nature of the tell is evident in the manner by which it is typically translated into English, requiring the use of two words in construct: "ruin hill."

28 See H. Stein, "Some Philosophical Prehistory of General Relativity," in Foundations of Space-Time Theories, ed. J. Earman, C. N. Glymour, and J. J. Stachel, Minneapolis 1977, 3–50.

29 G. S. Morson and C. Emerson, Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics, Palo Alto, Calif. 1990, 366–367.

30 To quote Morson and Emerson (Creation of a Prosaics, 369): "Cronotopes are not so much visibly *present* in activity as they are the *ground* for activity."

31 On the materiality of space and time, see D. Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change, Cambridge, Mass. 1989, 204.

such as sacred and profane or center and periphery.[32] If anything, the object here marks the overlapping threshold of multiple centers,[33] and the nuance of the term tell (as examined through historical philological analysis) defines the nature of their intersection in ancient Near Eastern mythology.

3. The Tell (DU_6) in Sumerian Literature

Sumerian literature offers parallels to the special nuance of the word "tell" in the *Ba'al Cycle*, particularly in the term DU_6 KU_3 (DUL KUG; "Sacred Tell"), but also in the phenomenon of the SAḪAR.DU_6.TAG_4. The second term appears specifically in the third millennium, while the first is much more widely attested. The DU_6 is a spatial phenomenon,[34] yet both DU_6 KU_3 and SAḪAR.DU_6.TAG_4 reflect a special sense of space that is time-centered. In their respective literary contexts, both serve as a type of chronotope in a conceptual landscape that is either geo-political (as in the case of the SAḪAR.DU_6. TAG_4), or mythological (as in the DU_6 KU_3, in most cases).[35]

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32 In a famous essay on conceptual boundaries, J. Z. Smith states: "there is nothing that is inherently or essentially…sacred or profane. There are situational or relational categories, mobile boundaries which shift according to the map being employed." The quote comes from a larger discussion of post-Kantian cosmology by which worlds are constructed and organized through processes of recognizing conformity and acknowledging incongruity; J. Z. Smith, Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions, Leiden 1978, 290–294 (the quote is from 291). See also Smith, To Take Place, 26–38, for a discussion of Kant's understanding of space.

33 The tell becomes a marked feature of borderlands. For an application of these ideas to the archaeology of the southern Levant, see R. E. Tappy, "Tel Zayit and the Tel Zayit Abecedary in Their Regional Context," in Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan: The Tel Zayit Abecedary in Context, ed. R. E. Tappy and P. K. McCarter, Winona Lake, Ind. 2008, 10–26. The phrase, "borderland," popularized in the writings of Gloria Anzaldúa, is explained and defined by Tappy (*ibid.*, 1) within a Near Eastern context. With regards to the wider concept of space, and the critical rôle played by the tell, it is important to note the differentiation by Nicolas Wyatt (The Mythic Mind: Essays on Cosmology and Religion in Ugaritic and Old Testament Literature, London 2005, 40–41) of vertical space and horizontal space. The first consists of the division between the heavens, the earth and the netherworld, and the second corresponds to a center and periphery conceptualization. The cosmic mountain is a common feature of the vertical concept of space, while the wilderness typifies horizontal space ("amorphous and featureless desert, bounded by a cosmic ocean" to quote Wyatt [*ibid.*, 40]). Both externally (territorial) and internally (interpersonal) referential in their origin, the "seemingly two-dimensional models" can conform into a "three-dimensional" model. Wyatt uses the waters of the biblical deluge as an example, *ibid.,* 41. The tell represents another means of three-dimensional spatiality, as it stands out on the horizon while (vertically) connecting the land and the sky.

34 The areal sense of the DU_6 as a topographical feature, and a representation of space, is apparent in the term A.ŠA$_3$.DU_6, signifying an agricultural unit. While this areal sense is basic to the term, its origin in time becomes the tell's essence of being in Sumerian literature.

35 In fact, the interpretation of the Sacred Tell as an object of human cognition, projected upon the Sumerian mythological landscape, was anticipated in many ways in the important study of J. A. Black, "The Sumerians in Their Landscape," in Riches Hidden in Secret Places: An-

In each of these two terms, SAḪAR.DU$_6$.TAG$_4$ and DU$_6$ KU$_3$, the operative element is DU$_6$/DUL, a term that is synonymous with Akkadian *tillu*.

3.1. Burial Tell

The DU$_6$ KU$_3$, as a mythological feature, is the best parallel for the *tlm* ("tells") in *CAT* 1.4 viii, 4, however, it is instructive to begin with the SAḪAR. DU$_6$.TAG$_4$. The SAḪAR.DU$_6$.TAG$_4$, which is roughly translated here as "burial tell," occurs almost exclusively in ED IIIb royal inscriptions,[36] although it corresponds with terms found in a text from Ebla,[37] and subsequent inscriptions from the Old Akkadian period.[38] The burial tells appear in royal inscriptions from Lagash, most famously the Stele of Vultures where their construction is graphically depicted.[39] The royal inscriptions claim vic-

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cient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Thorkild Jacobsen, ed. I. T. Abusch, Winona Lake, Ind. 2002, 41–61. Black, however, did not draw from any explicit theoretical model to explain the phenomenon of the Sacred Tell, nor did he relate it to any object found in Ugaritic (or Akkadian) literature.

36 The compound term is composed of "dust" (SAḪAR), "ruin hill" (DUL/DU$_6$) and "leave behind" ($\sqrt{}$TAG$_4$); see M. J. Suriano, The Politics of Dead Kings: Dynastic Ancestors in the Book of Kings and Ancient Israel. (FAT II). Tübingen 2010, 64–65. The term describes what the conquering ruler heaps up ($\sqrt{}$DUB) in the wake of his victory, and appears in the royal inscriptions of Ur-nanshe, Eannatum and Entemena. Cf. the comments on translation, regarding similar Akkadian terms (*berūtum*, *gurunnu*, *damtum* [see n. 37 below]) in S. Richardson, "Death and Dismemberment in Mesopotamia: Discorporation between the Body and Body Politic," in Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean, (OIS, 3) ed. N. Laneri, Chicago 2007, 194.

37 For instance, 'Enna-Dagan of Mari writes in a letter (found at Ebla) that he heaped up ($\sqrt{}$DUB) DU$_6$ KIRI$_6$ in enemy lands as part of his conquests (*ARET* 13, 04 [TM.75.G.2367]). Piotr Michalowski (Letters from Early Mesopotamia, [SBL WAW, 3] Atlanta 1993, 18) translates the term as "burial mound(s)," no doubt influenced by the ED III Mesopotamian SAḪAR.DU$_6$.TAG$_4$. The DU$_6$ KIRI$_6$ is not explained further in the Ebla texts, although the conceptual parallel (and philological similarities) to the SAḪAR.DU$_6$.TAG$_4$ are apparent in the fact that they were intentional products of warfare.

38 Old Akkadian KI.GAL, discussed by A. Westenholz, "berutum, damtum, and Old Akkadian KI.GAL: Burial of Dead Enemies in Ancient Mesopotamia," AfO 23 (1970): 28–29; cf. I.J. Gelb, "Prisoners of War in Early Mesopotamia," JNES 32 (1973): 73–74, based on the reading of the Old Akkadian period term (from an inscription of Rimush) KI.KAL.BAD > ki guruš ug$_x$ = *karāšum* "slaughter." For a chart of references to burial mounds in cuneiform sources, from the ED IIIb until the Old Babylonian period, see Richardson, "Death and Dismemberment in Mesopotamia," 194, Table 10.1.

39 The vivid portrayal of the dead and their disposal appears on the reverse side of the Stele of Vultures (*FAOS* 05 = Ean 1), at the top-right (register one) and lower-left (register three) of the relief. This reading follows the interpretation found in I. Winter, "After the Battle Is Over: The *Stele of the Vultures* and the Beginning of Historical Narrative in the Art of the Ancient Near East," in Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, ed. H. L. Kessler and M. S. Simpson, Washington 1985, 11–32. For images of the relief, see E. Strommenger and M. Hirmer, 5000 Years of the Art of Mesopotamia, New York 1964, §§66–69; H. Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, 3rd rev., ed. Harmondsworth 1963, Plates 34–35; and A. Parrot, Sumer: The Dawn of Art, New York 1961, Figures 163–166. The depiction at the top is the better-known facet of the relief; the modern name for the stele itself comes

tory for the rulers of Lagash over the armies of Umma,[40] and the creation of these burial mounds created a triumphalist map that testified to Lagash's military achievements.[41] These objects apparently consisted of the compiled mass of corpses; the dead-bodies of Umma's defeated soldiers.[42] As such, the SAḪAR.DU$_6$.TAG$_4$ is a deliberate product of state-sponsored violence, where Umma's dead are used by Lagash to monumentalize their victory and symbolize their territorial gains over and against Umma.[43] The dead are amassed in heaps and covered with debris in order to serve posterity as markers of territory and boundaries of control within a contested landscape.[44] The SAḪAR.DU$_6$.TAG$_4$ appears in royal inscriptions that recount the long-standing border dispute between Lagash and Umma over the area known as the GU$_2$.EDEN.NA ("the bank of the field"), itself a type of borderland.[45] Thus the spatiality of the SAḪAR.DU$_6$.TAG$_4$ signifies questions

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from the vultures seen carrying off human remains. The stele, however, is notable because of its depiction of the construction of an earthen burial mound, which sheds light on the term SAḪAR.DU$_6$.TAG$_4$ (as it occurs in the text of the stele; refer Ean 1, Obv. XI, 14).

40 For a useful overview of the Stele of Vultures, see Z. Bahrani, Rituals of War: The Body and Violence in Mesopotamia, New York 2008, 147–151; and Figure 5.3.

41 In the earliest reference to a SAḪAR.DU$_6$.TAG$_4$, Urnanshe (ca. 2550) names the individuals he killed and buried within the burial tell, which included the defeated Ensi of Umma; see V. E. Crawford, "Inscriptions from Lagash, Season Four, 1975," JCS 29 (1977): 196. The reference is unique because in all other occurrences of the term in royal inscriptions (such as the inscriptions of Entemena) the dead are an anonymous collectivity; see Ent 28, A Obv., Col I, 30; III, 25 and B Obv., Col. I.

42 The depiction of the mass burial begins in the first panel with the naked bodies of the soldiers of Umma heaped en masse beneath the hovering vultures. The naked bodies of the soldiers of Umma are also portrayed in the second register, where the soldiers of Girsu march on top of them. Thus, the motif of fallen soldiers (of Umma) continues from register to register. One study has described the burial scene in the third register as a funeral for Girsu's fallen soldiers, G. Selz, "Early Dynastic Vessels in 'Ritual' Contexts," WZKM 94 (2004): 196–197. This interpretation goes back to Parrot, Sumer, 136, and Frankfort, Art and Architecture, 34. Selz's interpretation, however, is much further developed as it is couched within a wider discussion of funerary rituals. Yet the fact that the dead are unclothed makes this interpretation unlikely.

43 It is useful here to quote Bahrani, in her description of register three: "To the left…is a pile of naked corpses, recalling literary passages that describe creating tells out of enemy corpses. Several men bearing baskets of earth on their heads climb the side of the mound of corpses, to cover the heap with earth and turn it into a tell." Bahrani, Rituals of War, 150. The reference here is to the SAḪAR.DU$_6$.TAG$_4$, although it is never explicitly made.

44 The mass burial depicted in the first panel appears again in the third panel alongside a group of personnel bearing baskets filled with dirt, apparently intended to cover the dead and create a type of tumulus or barrow. The double-lined contour across the top exterior of the heap of corpses represents the earthen debris used to cover this mound. Winter ("After the Battle is Over," 17–18) notes that the depiction of the kilted personnel corresponds with temple-building motifs seen in other reliefs. The mixture of materials (such as clay and stone) in the pile of bodies would have been necessary to maintain the structure and form of the mound, which would otherwise be unstable due to the decomposition of the piled corpses. A burial mound situated along a border would have allowed the people of Umma to visit their dead, but would have also served as a monument marking the extent of Girsu's authority.

45 Richardson, "Death and Dismemberment in Mesopotamia," 195.

of land rights and marks wider territorial conflicts.[46] Yet the essence of the SAḪAR.DU$_6$.TAG$_4$ can be parsed down to DU$_6$, which conveyed a meaning that combined history and place, and localized this meaning within the conflict zone of Umma and Lagash.

3.2. The Sacred Tell

The element DU$_6$ appears in the Sumerian term DUL KUG, which is translated here "Sacred Tell" (the term is often translated "Holy Hill").[47] The term occurs in different types of cuneiform literature,[48] and *The Debate between Sheep and Grain* provides an important starting point. In this myth the Sacred Tell is the primeval location for the birth of the Anunnaku gods.[49] The mythological valence of the Sacred Tell in this story begins with the idea that the early gods originated at this specific place, and includes the concept of the tell as the origin site for activities such as shepherding and agriculture.[50] Located in a primeval (pre-human) past, the Sacred Tell was still associated with human culture, dimly reflecting the artificial qualities of the tell and its origins in the fabric of history.

The association of the Sacred Tell with the Anunnaku, early gods who are later consigned to the netherworld,[51] illuminates the simultaneity of space-time involved in the physical object. The Sacred Tell, as a monument to the

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46 A slightly later (Old Akkadian) field plan from Girsu illustrates this proprietary aspect of the burial tell, showing a circular feature labeled SAḪAR.DU$_6$.TAG$_4$.A (*RTC* 156). The fragmentary field plan (only the upper left-half remains) depicts a triangular parcel of land demarcated by what appears to be a canal along the thick double-lined vertical (represented with wave-like striations within the lines) and a narrow double-lined border along the hypotenuse. At the bottom of the triangle, touching the thick, doubled-lined horizontal is the circular feature that represents the burial tell. Thus, the SAḪAR.DU$_6$.TAG$_4$ sits along the periphery of the field, near the physical boundary (the canal) and positioned in a corner (the triangular parcel).

47 See B. Alster and H. L. J. Vanstiphout, "Lahar and Ashnan: Presentation and Analysis of a Sumerian Disputation," ASJ 9 (1987): 16–17. The short reading DU$_6$ KU$_3$ is also transliterated "Dukug"; see also "Sacred Mound" or Dukug in C. Woods, "At the Edge of the World: Cosmological Conceptions of the Eastern Horizon in Mesopotamia," JANER 9 (2009): 203. Black ("The Sumerians in Their Landscape," 60), who translates the term as "Holy Mound," states that the DUL KUG "…has a unique location only within the world of mythology but is imaginatively derived from widespread features of the everyday landscape."

48 See A. Tsukimoto, Untersuchungen zur Totenpflege (*kispum*) im Alten Mesopotamien, (Alter Orient und Altes Testament) Neukirchen-Vluyn 1985, 201–211; and A. R. George, House Most High: The Temples of Ancient Mesopotamia, Winona Lake, Ind. 1993, 77. In later sources DU$_6$ KU$_3$ was a month name, serving as a logogram for *Tašrītu*.

49 Tsukimoto, Untersuchungen zur Totenpflege (*kispum*); and Black "The Sumerians in Their Landscape," 45–46.

50 Alster and Vanstiphout, "Lahar and Ashnan," 2; see also J. A. Black, A. Green, and T. Rickards, Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary, Austin 1992, s.v., "Du-ku."

51 Tsukimoto, Untersuchungen zur Totenpflege (*kispum*), 208–211.

primordial past that stood out along a distant horizon,[52] had a meaning that could extend to death (i.e., past time and the Anunnaku) and as such it could objectify a specific point connecting the heavens and the netherworld.[53] As an artificial hill created through the accumulation of debris and situated at a single elevated locale, the Sacred Tell could symbolize multiple ideas at once by its mere presence in the landscape. Thorkild Jacobsen suggested that the sacred mountain and the DU_6 KU_3 represented the visible meeting point of both realms along a distant horizon.[54] Jacobsen's suggestion came as a counterpoint to Samuel Noah Kramer's interpretation of the ḪUR.SAĜ KI.BI.DA.KE$_4$ as a *Weltberg*, that is, a sacred mountain that embodied both the netherworld and the heavens at the same time. According to Jacobsen, this distant point was the eastern horizon of the Zagros Mountains, as evident in texts that speak of Shamash rising from the Sacred Tell.[55] Yet the Sacred Tell was the ideal object to mark this horizon point precisely because it could relate to multiple areas while maintaining a singular status that was separate from both.[56] The Sacred Tell, as a type of cosmic mountain, touched the heavens; the Sacred Tell, as a product of time could relate to concepts of

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52 For Black ("The Sumerians in Their Landscape," 60), the focus of the Sacred Tell was its embodiment of time, and this symbolic importance highlighted the "explanatory function" of *Sheep and Grain*. Here, the chronotope is specified through the adjective "holy; sacred," in order to foreground its symbolic significance in the narrative (rather than serving as a background device).

53 Woods, "At the Edge of the World," 203; and also Black, Green, and Rickards, *An Illustrated Dictionary*, s.v., "Du-ku." Jeremy Black glosses DU_6 KU_3 in *Sheep and Grain* as KUR ("mountain"), taking it as component with the ḪUR.SAĜ KI.BI.DA.KE$_4$ ("hill of Heaven-and-Earth") referenced at the beginning of the story; "The Sumerians in Their Landscape," 46 n.13 (see his translation on pages 45–46). The interpretation is acceptable, although the precise reading of lines 40–42 reads Sacred Tell (DU_6 KU_3); see Alster and Vanstiphout, "Lahar and Ashnan," 16–17, as well as the transliteration at ETCSL.

54 T. Jacobsen, "Sumerian Mythology: A Review Article," JNES 5 (1946), 141; reviewing S. N. Kramer, Sumerian Mythology, a Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium, B.C. Philadelphia 1944. See Black, "The Sumerians in Their Landscape," 47 (and n. 16).

55 W. Horowitz, Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography, Winona Lake, Ind. 1998, 315–316; see also Woods, "At the Edge of the World," 203–204. As a boundary marker along the distant horizon to the east, the Sacred Tell could symbolize time. The eastern horizon, with the rising Sun (i.e., Shamash), marked the routine division of time and the borders of night and day. Horowitz (*ibid.*) mentions two examples of the DU_6 KU_3 in an Akkadian text where the term is not translated. In one of the texts, the DU_6 KU_3 is the place "where the destinies are determined" and "where heaven and earth embrace." In the other text, the DU_6 KU_3 is the place where one departs for the middle of the earth. The locality of this object led Horowitz to speculate that it was not the *apsû*, but a distant horizon.

56 The Sacred Tell becomes a boundary marker of two overlapping realms in the cosmic geography of Mesopotamian mythology. Again, for useful remarks on boundaries and borderlands (in the geo-political landscape of the Levant), see Tappy, "Tel Zayit and the Tel Zayit Abecedary," 22–23. Both Jacobsen and Kramer agree that in Sumerian mythology, at a stage of primordial history, the earth and the heavens were not yet separated. So it becomes a question of how the cosmic mountain idea related to this primeval stage, pre-creation. As a chronotope, the Sacred Tell could be reflective of this stage of undifferentiated mat-

the past and thus the realm of the dead.[57] The eastern horizon (the Zagros Mountains) represented a borderland, and the Sacred Tell, as a chronotope, symbolically marked this natural threshold in mythological space.[58] The association of the Sacred Tell with a horizon, situated along a distant border,[59] began with the specific nuance of DU_6 as a "ruin hill," the appearance of which created artificially elevated space(s) within the otherwise flat, alluvial basin of southern Mesopotamia.[60] For example, DU_6 KU_3 is a component of

ter, touching upon both the heavens and the earth; i.e., it could be all things at once as an autonomous symbol of time and space.

57 Indeed, Mesopotamian thought consigned the dead to a preterit existence. The perennial past that the dead experience is expressed through various means, such as the offering of "old-fashion" foods, or the use of archaic-sounding language in invocations; see J. A. Scurlock, "Ghosts in the Ancient Near East: Weak or Powerful?" HUCA 68 (1997): 87–90. In this sense, the tell as a ruin can be easily understood as a settlement for the dead. See, for example, the Akkadian statement: "Dead persons, why do you meet with me – those whose cities are tells (and) they are (nothing but) bones?" Translation from J. A. Scurlock, Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses in Ancient Mesopotamia, Leiden 2006, 8–9 (no. 4:1). Scurlock ("Death and the Maidens: A New Interpretive Framework for KTU 1.23." UF 43 [forthcoming]) has compared this image with CAT 1.23 lines 3–4, *ytnm qrt l'ly* [...] *bmdbr špm yd* [...] / "[the gods] who have provided a city on high, in the steppe, on the barren hilltops." The idea of the netherworld as a city (in relation to *CAT* 1.4 *viii*, 4) is discussed in M. C. Astour, "The Netherworld and Its Denizens at Ugarit," in Death in Mesopotamia, ed. B. Alster (Copenhagen Series in Assyriology 8), Copenhagen 1980, 229.

58 To quote Woods ("At the Edge of the World," 194): "Dukug, the bond of the Upper- and Netherworld, is the location *par excellence* of the eastern horizon."

59 The Sacred Tell, as a marker of distant lands, could be related to concepts of fertility associated with the east. It is important to note, however, that the association of this object with agricultural origins is constituent with the Sacred Tell as a marker of distant (mythic) history. Note the use of the term in the agricultural unit known as the $A.ŠA_3.DU_6$. This term is found in cuneiform literature, primarily Sumerian administrative documents of the Ur III period, but also as a logogram in Old Babylonian texts (see, e.g., *TCL* 17, 4:6 for a specific place near Larsa referenced in an OB letter); for examples, see D. O. Edzard, G. Farber, and E. Sollberger, Die Orts- und Gewässernamen der Präsargonischen und Sargonischen Zeit, (Répertoire géographique des textes cunéiformes, Bd. 1), Wiesbaden 1977, 31. An interesting parallel with the $A.ŠA_3.DU_6$ is found in epigraphic Hebrew sources, where the sense of a "field of the tell" can be compared with the "vineyard of the tell" (כרם התל) listed in several administrative lists found in the Samaria Ostraca (nos. 20, 53, 54, 58, 61, and 73). The Hebrew term is otherwise rarely used as a toponymic element (at least in the first millennium BCE). Both cases reflect the agricultural qualities of the tell, which could provide a source of arable lands due to its mixture of clays and organic matter (often burnt), Lloyd, Mounds of the Near East, 14. See also the brief discussion of the spatial aspect of the *tillu* in Assyrian sources found in F. M. Fales, "The Rural Landscape of the Neo-Assyrian Empire: A Survey," SAAB 4 (1990): 116.

60 Several uses of the Semitic lexeme, seen for instance in Akkadian and Hebrew, show that the term can be used to describe the elevated foundation of a settlement. See, for example, a Mari letter (ARM 1, 39: 11–12), which states: *tillušu surri eli dūrišu minêtumma* = "Its tell exceeds the limits of its wall [regarding Alatrû]." Cf. also the translation "En ce qui concerne son tell, il ne faudrait pas croire qu'il est élevé: sa muraille est de taille moyenne." J. M. Durand, Les Documents épistolaires du palais de Mari. (Littératures Anciennes du Proche-Orient 17), Paris 1998, 48–49. For a Hebrew example, note the reference to the fortified cities in Josh 11:13, which states: רַק כָּל־הֶעָרִים הָעֹמְדוֹת עַל־תִּלָּם לֹא שְׂרָפָם יִשְׂרָאֵל / "Only all of the cities standing upon their tells Israel did not burn." Compare the parallelism of Jer 30:18,

many sanctuaries in southern Mesopotamia, where several temples include the term in their titles.[61] In these examples, the Sacred Tell of the temple architectonically expresses a notion of time and space, signifying the timeless foundation of the temple as sacred space.[62]

The physicality of the Sacred Tell as an artificial hill that projected into the sky (the heavens) is coupled with its situation upon the ground and its origins in destruction and death. A tangible image of the primeval past, the elevation of accumulated ruination (the DU_6) could serve as a landmark that effectively identified the distant boundaries of the cosmos. In the Sumerian tale known as the *Death of Bilgameš*, the hero and king of Uruk prepares for his death and burial, listing offerings to accompany his entrance into death's realm.[63] These offerings include two references to the DU_6 KU_3 as the location(s) of the Igigi and Anunnakū:

21d. ^{d}A.NUN.NA DU_6 KUG.GA.KE_4.[NE]
    "For the Anunnakū of the Sacred Tell."

22d. ^{d}NUN.GAL.E.NE DU_6 KUG.GA.KE_4.[NE]
    "For the Igigi of the Sacred Tell."

The reference comes at a point that divides the offerings to gods (ending with an offering to Ninhursag), along with the specific deities mentioned (the Anunnakū and the Igigi), and a list of offerings to dead priests and priestesses. Thus, the Sacred Tell marks a transition of sorts, dividing the different groups of chthonic beings. Yet the nature of the two consecutive references to the Sacred Tell is unclear here. Is it a single object that was home to the Anunnakū and the Igigi, transcending multiple realms, i.e., the heavens and the netherworld? Or, does the text reference two Sacred Tells in a way that might parallel the twin tells of the *Ba'al Cycle* (and, similarly *māšu* in the Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh)? In either case, the fact that these objects are involved in the threshold boundaries separating the

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which states: יֵשֵׁב מִשְׁפָּטוֹ־עַל וְאַרְמוֹן הִּלָּהּ־עַל עִיר וְנִבְנְתָה/ "the city will be built upon its tell, and the citadel will sit upon its rightful [place]."

61 Woods, "At the Edge of the World," 203; see the list in A. R. George, House Most High, 77. Woods refers to the Sacred Tell in these instances as reflecting the concept of the temple "as a microcosm of the cosmos" (*ibid.*). It is also reflective of the basic nature of the tell (DU_6), serving as an elevated surface. Note the Akkadian example: *libitti kummiša iššapik tillāniš* "the brickwork of its (the temple's) cella was piled up into a hill of ruins" VAB 4, 98 ii 4 (the temple of Šamaš)," quoted in CAD T, s.v., *tillāniš*, 405.

62 Cf. the statement by Wyatt: "Tower-temples ('ziggurats') in Mesopotamia probably arose naturally, like all tells (ruin-mounds), out of the debris of previous construction. But already by the end of the third millennium BCE it was evident that they were believed to constitute holy mountains." Wyatt, Space and Time, 147.

63 For the text, see Cavigneaux, A., and F. N. H. Al-Rawi. Gilgameš et la Mort. Textes de Tell Haddad VI, avec un appendice sur les textes funéraires sumériens (Cuneiform Monographs, 19), Groningen 2000, 23. See also the text in ETCSL.

living and the dead marks a significant point of comparison with the ruin hills referenced in the *Ba'al Cycle*.

4. The Entrance to the Realm of Mot (*CAT* 1.4 viii, 4)

While the question of the two DU$_6$ KU$_3$ in the *Death of Bilgamesh* cannot be resolved, it is still instructive to compare the passage with the twin tells of the *Ba'al Cycle* that occur at the beginning of the eighth column of the *Ba'al Cycle's* fourth tablet (*CAT* 1.4 viii, lines 1–4).[64]

1. *'iddaka ål tatinā panīma*	Then you shall set [your] face…
2. *'imma ġāri trġzz*	upon Mount TRĠZZ
3. *'imma ġāri ṯrmg*	upon Mount ṮRMG[65]
4. *'imma tillêma ġaṣra årṣi*	upon the two tells (at) the boundary[66] … of the netherworld.

The topographical entities in both texts (the *Death of Bilgamesh* and the *Ba'al Cycle*) describe an entrance to the realm of the dead, and in this sense, both adopt descent-type imagery.[67] This imagery is due to the fact that both

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64 Following the vocalization in M. S. Smith and W. T. Pitard, The Ugaritic Baal Cycle, vol. II. (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 114), Leiden 2009, 703; cf. Clifford, Cosmic Mountain, 79. See the translations in the above sources, as well as D. Pardee, "The Ba'lu Myth," in The Context of Scripture I, ed. W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger. Leiden 1992, 263; cf. N. Wyatt, Religious Texts from Ugarit: The Words of Ilimilku and His Colleagues (Biblical Seminar 53), Sheffield 1998), 112.

65 It is not possible to vocalize, or explain, these two toponyms, which are typically thought to be Hurrian in origin, Pardee, "The Ba'lu Myth," 263, n. 195; and Bordreuil, "La montagne d'après les données textuelles d'Ougarit," 181–182. Bordreuil reads the toponyms as Hurrian divine names Tarḫu and Šarruma (following Gaster, Thespis, 184); for the latter, see Trémouille, RlA 12, s.v. Šarrum(m)a, 82a. For a full history of the attempts to explain these terms (such as the earlier suggestion by Gaster), see M. Tsevat, "Sun Mountains at Ugarit," JNSL 3 (1974) 71–72; Wyatt, Religious Texts from Ugarit, 112, n. 175; Smith and Pitard, Ugaritic Baal Cycle, 711–712; and Bordreuil, "La montagne d'après les données textuelles d'ougarit," 182. Matitiahu Tsevat (*ibid.*, 73–75) thought that the terms were names of Hurrian solar deities (where the /r/ in both is explained as dissimilation, among other reasons [see *ibid.*, 72 ns. 8–9]). Tsevat's reading of *trgzz* in light of the putative *tġzt* (*CAT* 1.24.3, now read as *åġzt*) is no longer accepted; see Smith and Pitard, *ibid.*, 711. The reading Shirmegi (the Hurrian sun-god Shimegi) for *ṯrmg*, however, still remains a possibility; see Wyatt, Religious Texts from Ugarit, 112, n. 175 (who compares it with *ṯmq* in *CAT* 1.22 i, 8).

66 This term (*ġṣr*) has been interpreted as "ruler" (in light of the Hebrew nuances of עֶצֶר) by Tsevat, "Sun Mountains at Ugarit," 73; followed by Wyatt, Religious Texts from Ugarit, 112. Although this reading is possible as a title for Mot, the geographical purview of this and related passages suit the reading *ġaṣru* as "limit, border, edge"; see Smith and Pitard, Ugaritic Baal Cycle, 712–713; and G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartín, A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition. Part One [ʔ(a/i/u)-k], trans. W. G. E. Watson, 2nd revised ed. (HdO I: The Near and Middle East, 67) Leiden and Boston 2003, 327 (= DUL 1).

67 The multiple lines at the end of *CAT* 1.4 viii, 47 may indicate a repetition of the journey taken by Ba'al's envoy, as described elsewhere in the cycle, Smith and Pitard, Ugaritic Baal Cycle,

protagonists interact closely with death in their respective narratives.[68] Interestingly, *CAT* 1.4 viii expresses an idea laden with time and space; that is, travel and encounter. According to Bakhtin, the place of journey (the road) could serve as a chronotopic genre, separate from the chronotopic motif.[69] The essence of the journey, or journeying, implied a changing sense of space and time that could profoundly affect human cognition.[70] In this manner, the descent into the land of Mot could touch upon the anxiety often associated with ancient travel, introduced through the motif of distant ruin hills (the tells). More precisely, however, the two tells stand as chronotopic motifs in the passage, demarking a dangerous threshold.

The nuance of the term tell allows it to demarcate space in ways different from the typical cosmic mountain motif,[71] and the complex of meaning

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704–705, and 709. If this were the case, it would preclude any description of the messenger's descent into the netherworld. Note also Wyatt's suggestion that the full description of Mot's abode in *CAT* 1.4 viii, 5–14 represents a concave, versus the convex realm of the living that is above. Could this explain how the dual tell marked cosmological borders (or the two Sacred Tells in the *Death of Bilgamesh*)? Jo Ann Scurlock has also suggested to me that the tells here are mirror images, with one in the realm of death and the other in the land of the living. In light of these questions, it is interesting to note the tension that is sometimes observed in Mesopotamian depictions of the realm of the dead involving the Sumerian concept of the distant mountain (KUR) and the Akkadian concept of an underworld (e.g., *erṣetum*); see M. J. Geller, "The Landscape of the 'Netherworld'," in Landscapes: Territories, Frontiers and Horizons in the Ancient Near East, ed. L. Milano. Padova 1999, 41–49.

68 The basic instruction given for this netherworld journey is to maintain some distance from the great and powerful chthonic deity when delivering the royal address (*CAT* 1.4 viii, 14–29). In its essence, however, Ba'al's advice to his servants is similar to Gilgamesh's advice to Enkidu before the hero's faithful companion embarks on his own netherworld journey in *Bilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld* (and Tablet XII of the standard epic). The advice given is a proscription (or series of proscriptions) that instructs the subject what not to do in order to survive the fateful descent. The negative advice in both myths reflects the strict sense of propriety regarding death, and the protocols required when dealing with the dead. Yet the advice is expressed through ideas of spatiality (i.e., distance).

69 According to Bakhtin, the chronotope of the road related directly to the meeting motif (or, encounter); M. M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Austin 1981, 97–98 and 243–245; see Morson and Emerson, Creation of a Prosaics, 375.

70 Flanagan ("Finding the Arrow of Time," 55–56) notes that changing perspectives of space and time accompanied the western world's age of discovery.

71 According to Clifford (Cosmic Mountain, 80), the reference to the enigmatically named hills served to emphasize the distant and foreign nature of Mot's abode, and the description of the entrance indicates that Mot dwells at the base of the mountains (rather than on a mountain like the other gods). The idea of space in this interpretation is instructive, yet the motif of the cosmic mountain differs from that of the ruin-mound in this text (though both motifs are related). Therefore, it is not necessary to see Mot dwelling at the base of the mountains, although this phenomenon does occur in Sumerian mythology, see D. Katz, "Eternal Rest at the Foot of the Mountain," in An Experienced Scribe Who Neglects Nothing: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Jacob Klein, ed. Y. Sefati, et al. Bethesda, Md. 2005, 179–198. Tsevat ("Sun Mountains at Ugarit," 74 n. 22) was cognizant of the meaning of the word *tillu*, and thus objected to the interpretation of this term in *CAT* 1.4 (as "ruin hill") because he felt that it was inappropriate in describing a cosmological landscape. In its place, Tsevat

at work in this word allows it to effectively portray the liminal space that separates the lands of Mot and Baʿal in the *Baʿal Cycle*.[72] The specific location described in *CAT* 1.4 viii, lines 1–6 is revisited in *CAT* 1.5 v, lines 11–14, when Mot forces Baʿal to submit himself to the realm of the dead. Here the enigmatic Mount KNKNY (*ġāri knkny*) in lines 12–13 glosses the two tells of Mount TRĠZZ and Mount ṬRMG.[73] Although it is difficult to explain the terminology (specifically *knkny*), the connection between the two passages is important because the fifth tablet proceeds to describe an area where Baʿal prepares to enter death's realm (v, 18–19), and where his body is later recovered (vi, 28–31). A careful examination of the topographical elements described in these passages shows that they represent a liminal area that bounds multiple realms (the dead and the living).

CAT 1.5 v, 14–17, repeats the portrayal of Mot's realm in 1.4 viii, 7–9, where each example follows a description of the entrance to death's realm. In this passage (*CAT* 1.5 v) Mot directs Baʿal to the netherworld, requiring the storm god (not Baʿal's messengers) to make the journey. This turn of events marks the defeat of Baʿal (although it is not lasting), and in preparation for his fateful journey the storm god copulates with a cow (*CAT* 1.5 v, 17–22). The terms used (in v, lines 18–19) to describe this area of unusual activity are "wilderness" (*dbr*) and the "field of death's realm" (*šd.šḫlmmt*).[74]

    (*ibid.*, 74) read *tlm* as "twin" (based on the Akkadian *talīmu*), comparing it with *māšu* in the Standard Epic of Gilgamesh. The analysis of the tell (*tillu* and DU$_6$) presented in this study represents an answer to Tsevat's initial objection. Furthermore, *talīmu* means "(close or beloved) brother," see CAD *T*, s.v., *talīmu*. While the Akkadian word for "twin," *tūʾamu*, can take the variant form *talīmu*, this reading is extremely rare; CAD *T* (s.v., *tūʾamu*) cites one occurrence in a lexical list.

72 Dennis Pardee ("Baʿlu Myth," 263–264, n. 195) notes that the term *tl* in Ugaritic is rare, yet its sense as a ruin hill makes it an appropriate term for demarking the boundaries the living and the dead. As discussed by Bordreuil ("La montagne d'après les données textuelles d'Ougarit." 182), following Pardee, this realization makes it unnecessary to locate these tells in any one particular direction. See Bordreuil's description of previous attempts to locate the tells to the north of Ugarit, or along the eastern horizzion (*ibid*, 182).

73 This is clear not only from the similar literary pattern of both passages, but also by the fact that the topographical features are given the same description regarding the removal of the mountain (*ġr*) // hill (*ḫlb*) in order to enter death's realm; see *CAT* 1.4 viii, 5–6 and 1.5 v, 13–14. If the term *ġr* is related to the Hebrew term עִיר, the artificial sense of the topographical feature would be synonymous with *tl*; for the suggestion, see W. M. Schniedewind and J. H. Hunt, A Primer on Ugaritic: Language, Culture, and Literature. Cambridge 2007, 202, s.v., *ġr* (*m*) "mountain." Astour's confidence that *knkn* represented a specific type of ceramic vessel built into Ugaritic tombs ("Nether World and its Denizens," 229) is undermined by the established reading *knrt* in *CAT* 1.19 iii, 41, based on the epigraphic study by W. T. Pitard, "The Reading of KTU 1.19:III:41: The Burial of Aqhat," BASOR 293 (1994), 31–38; rf. also W. T. Pitard, "The "Libation Installations" of the Tombs at Ugarit," BA 57 (1994), 29–30.

74 Dennis Pardee ("Baʿlu Myth," 267 n. 234) identifies this area as an "earthly realm" due to the activities that take place there, as well as the adjectives ("pleasant") that describe it. The term *dbr*, translated here as wilderness, can also be translated "steppe"; see Wyatt, Mythic Mind, 46–50. The root frequently occurs in Northwest Semitic texts to signify conceptual borderlands (e.g., Hebrew מִדְבָּר). See, for example the discussion of *mdbr* (translated as "out-

The strange union produces a son (v, lines 22–23), thus the life-giving power of sexual union is not negated in this area of death's realm but instead becomes a necessary part of the journey.[75] Furthermore, this area is encountered again in the epic myth. First, with the discovery and recovery of Ba'al's corpse (*CAT* 1.5 vi, 6–7 and 28–31), and later in Mot's words describing his defeat of Ba'al (*CAT* 1.6 ii, 15–20). Here, the parallel terms for this area are prefaced as "the pleasant earth [*n'my.årṣ*] of the wilderness" and the "beautiful [*ysmt*] field of death's realm."

The wilderness // field of death's realm clearly represents a liminal zone and a type of borderland. The topographical terms invoked in *CAT* 1.5 vi, 6–7 and 26–27 portray a place located in the furthest reaches of the world. In vi, lines 6–7, El's messengers reach this area after seeking the fallen storm god at the "edge of the earth" (*qṣm.årṣ* [partially reconstructed]) and the "limits of the waters" (*ksm.mhyt*). In *CAT* 1.5 vi, 26–27, Anat tracks Ba'al's remains "in every mountain in the thick of the earth" (*kl.ġr.lkbd.årṣ*) // "in every hill in the thick of the fields" (*kl.gb'.lkbd.šdm*). Mot describes this same area again, where he "hunted" and devoured the storm-god (*CAT* 1.6 ii, 15–23). In this peripheral area of contested space and overlapping domains, Ba'al's ability to engage in reproductive activities occurs in the same place where his corpse is later located. The use of positive adjectives, such as *n'my* and *ysmt*, to de-

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back") in M. S. Smith, The Rituals and Myths of the Feast of the Goodly Gods of KTU/CAT 1.23, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 116–118. The classic discussion of this motif is found in S. Talmon, "The "Desert Motif" in the Bible and in Qumran Literature," in Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations, ed. A. Altmann. Cambridge, Mass. 1966, 31–63, where מִדְבָּר is translated as "drift."

75 As Jo Ann Scurlock has pointed out to me, the purpose of this union that occurs inside the liminal region is to produce a living substitute for the one that is about to go to death's realm. The motif is famously described in *Inanna's Descent into the Netherworld*, where the goddess is forced by Ereshkigal to find a substitute in order to escape the netherworld. The substitute, of course, was Dumuzi/Tammuz. This same phenomenon occurs in the Sumerian myth *Enlil and Ninlil*, where Ninlil follows Enlil to the netherworld. There she is seduced by Enlil in disguise at successive stages of the descent and, as a result, bears three children who become substitutes for Enlil, Ninlil, and their son Suen. Conversely, the three children left behind in the netherworld become chthonic deities (Nergal, Ninazu, and Enbilulu). See J. A. Scurlock, "But Was She Raped? A Verdict through Comparison," NIN 4 (2003), 65–66. The sense of otherworldly substitution through procreation is apparent in Scurlock's rendering of Ninlil's statement, repeated three times at the threshold of the netherworld (*ibid.*, 64–65): "Let my master's semen go to heaven, let my semen go to the netherworld. Let my semen go to the netherworld instead of my master's semen." The comparison is much more obvious, however, in the tradition of the moon god Suen impregnating a cow, which is found in exorcism texts dealing with difficult childbirth; see J. A. Scurlock, "Baby-Snatching Demons, Restless Souls and the Dangers of Childbirth: Medico-Magical Means of Dealing with Some of the Perils of Motherhood in Ancient Mesopotamia," Incognita 2 (1991), 145–147. With regards to sex and the netherworld, in the "Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Crown Prince" there is also the simile of the flatulent boar in coitus used to describe the condition of the main character following his return from the otherworldly journey; S. L. Sanders, "The First Tour of Hell: From Neo-Assyrian Propaganda to Early Jewish Revelation," JANER 9 (2009), 156.

scribe the wilderness // field of death's realm may have also contributed to the area's sense of liminality. In this manner, complicated imagery describes the region, portraying it in a host of terms that are both good and bad, involve birth and death, and ultimately produce a borderland of overlapping boundaries.[76] Furthermore, the polysemic sense of the term *årṣ* is important in these passages and reflects the area's liminality, as *årṣ* can signify the netherworld in addition to its basic meaning of land.[77] The translation of the term is obviously based on its syntactical arrangement and literary context. Yet, the tendency to render the various nuances of the term in different ways masks the literary style of the Ugaritic text. In their recent edition of the *Baʿal Cycle*, Mark Smith and Wayne Pitard observe that the term's multivalence is not only indicative of the extent and reach of Mot's power, but also marks an aspect of competition between Baʿal and Mot.[78] In *CAT* 1.4 viii, the use of the term seems specific to Mot's domain, yet the sense of *årṣ* in line 4 in reference to boundaries (*imma tillêmi ġaṣrê årṣa*) alludes to the conceptual thresholds at work in the passage.[79]

The complicated essence of the tells in the *Baʿal Cycle* is comparable with the subtle nuances of the Sumerian term DU_6; first as a ruin that could serve as a tangible image of the primeval past, and second as a landmark that could effectively identify the distant boundaries of the cosmos. Like the $SAHAR$. DU_6. TAG_4, the twin tells of the *Baʿal Cycle* mark the boundaries of competing centers, a borderland shared by the realms of Mot and Baʿal. Unlike the Sumerian burial tell, the Ugaritic tells were not objects created in a contest of power; the tells known as Mount TRĠZZ and Mount ṮRMG were simply pre-existing aspects of the cosmic topography. Their existence stood as testament to a primeval sense of otherworldly boundaries that are enacted and affirmed throughout the *Baʿal Cycle*. In this sense, the Ugaritic tells are much like the sacred tell (DU_6 KU_3) of Sumerian mythology. In all of these exam-

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76 It is helpful to compare this statement with Wyatt's translation here of "paradise … land // delight … steppe," see Wyatt, Religious Texts from Ugarit, 126. Wyatt (*ibid.*, 126 n. 50) notes that "paradise is the intersection of two realms." See also *idem.*, Myths of Power: A Study of Royal Myth and Ideology in Ugaritic and Biblical Tradition (Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur, Bd. 13), Münster 1996, 56–70; *idem.*, "Le centre du monde dans les littératures d'Ougarit et d'Israël." JNSL 21 (1995): 123–142.

77 See del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín, DUL 1, 106–107.

78 In other words, the multivalent term *årṣ* is representative of a type of borderland, Smith and Pitard, The Ugaritic Baal Cycle, 710–711. Commenting on the nuances of the term *årṣ*, they state (*ibid.*, 710): "there was some haziness about where the boundary between the upper and lower worlds actually occurred." The haziness represents the liminality of this border zone, and the overlapping sense of boundaries is reflected in the terminology. Again, to quote Smith and Pitard (*ibid.*, 711): "Thus the multivalent meanings of the word *årṣ* are used in this poem to indicate the ambiguity of the extent of Baal and Mot's domains."

79 Smith and Pitard, Ugaritic Baal Cycle, 711, also observe the possibility that *årṣ* covers multiple meanings in *CAT* 1.4 viii, 4.

ples, the tell (*tl* or DU$_6$) serves as an object of time and space, corresponding to Bakhtin's chronotope.

5. Conclusion

The idea of cosmic mountains guarding distant boundaries is a common motif in literature, and as such, the tell can serve as a type of cosmic mountain. Yet the word's nuance represents a much more complex set of meanings, and it is necessary to recognize this in the literature. In the *Ba'al Cycle*, the tell demarks certain cosmological thresholds, yet it can only do so because of the unique sense of time-space that is built into the word. It is an object realized in a topographically determined historical formation. That is to say that the tell is materialized history, and as such it is easily recognized in the archaeological remains of the ancient Near East, but poorly understood in its literary occurrence. The written sources clearly indicate that the tell (*tl* and Sumerian DU$_6$) was a constructed object, yet the artificial nature of this specific topographical form does not preclude its appearance in primeval accounts. The mythic past is filled with objects that are both created (the natural landscape) and constructed (tells, temples and other structures such as Ba'al's house) through a process of divine history that is often called cosmogony. Yet this process emulates the profane experience of humanity, it is what Bakhtin called "historical-inversion" where objects of the present facilitated the narrative account of a distant past.[80]

As an object, the tell represents a perspective that is different from western concepts of time and space. It is not surprising that the time-space significance of the tell, and its role as a chronotope in ancient literature, has hardly been recognized. This is exemplified in C. R. Conder's brick-factory explanation. Conder was certainly aware of the deep antiquity of the Holy Land, yet the purpose of his expedition was to apply western definitions of space (a grid referenced map) to a non-western environment through his Survey of Western Palestine (with H. H. Kitchener).[81] The essence of the tell was not understood until the development of modern archaeological tech-

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80 Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, 146–151; Morson and Emerson, Creation of a Prosaics, 397–398.
81 C. R. Conder and H. H. Kitchener, The Survey of Western Palestine, Volumes 1–3. London 1883. The modern city of Tel Aviv represents an interesting exception to western notions of time and space in the Middle East, as both Shalom Holtz and Omer Sergi have discussed with me. The polyvalence of the toponym's history begins with the reference to the community of Judean exiles living in תֵּל אָבִיב (Ezek 3:15), a place name that corresponds with the Assyrian *til abūbi*, M. Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20, (AB 22), Garden City, N.Y. 1983, 71; and W. Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1. Trans. R. E. Clements (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1979, 139. The place name was chosen in light of Nahum Sokolow's translation of Theodor Herzl's *Altneuland*; see H. Ram and S. Gilboa, "Tel Aviv–Jaffa," in vol. 19 of Encyclopaedia Judaica,

niques that would probe beneath the mound's visible exterior. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that modern (and post-modern) concepts of time and space are influenced and shaped by industrial forces that introduce change at intervals never before experienced in human history.[82] This, of course, contrasts greatly with the configuration of time and space in the ancient world. Yet the common appearance of the tell, as time-space monuments to past cultures, is as recognizable in Near Eastern sources (whether Sumerian or Ugaritic) as they are in the Middle Eastern landscape today.

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ed. F. Skolnik. Detroit 2007, 591. Thus, the timeless and utopian ideal of Herzl's political thought, as expressed in his concept of "old new land," became rendered Tel Aviv.

82 See for example the words of Harvey (Condition of Postmodernity, 204): "Since capitalism has been (and continues to be) a revolutionary mode of production in which the material practices and processes of social reproduction are always changing, it follows that the objective qualities as well as the meanings of space and time also change."