

Literary Onomastics Studies

Volume 9

Article 9

1982

Is Tiamat Really Mother Huber?

John R. Maier

The College at Brockport

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/los>

Repository Citation

Maier, John R. (1982) "Is Tiamat Really Mother Huber?," *Literary Onomastics Studies*: Vol. 9 , Article 9.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/los/vol9/iss1/9>

This Conference Paper is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Literary Onomastics Studies* by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact kmyers@brockport.edu.

IS TIAMAT REALLY MOTHER HUBUR?

John R. Maier

State University of New York
College at Brockport

The Old Babylonian poem,¹ enūma eliš, sometimes called "The Babylonian Creation Epic," is an epic with something for everyone, but it is a poem for only one season: New Year's. It contains dark stories of incest and parricide and the grand account of theogony, the birth of the universe from its elements, and the fashioning of the universe into a cosmos. It contains a political theme of great importance in the Ancient Near East: the emergence from anarchy to forms of "primitive democracy" and thence to monarchy.² In the process that involves mostly the gods, there is a place given to that most eccentric creature: mankind. You will be happy to learn that Mesopotamian civilization seems to have admitted only two truths about mankind. Humans exist to work so that the gods can rest. And humans are not god: they must die, and the fate of the dead is wretched. Both truths are expressed in enūma eliš. It is the story of the exaltation of the god Marduk, city god of Babylon.

The poem was recited in its entirety each year for well over a thousand years on the fourth day of the complex New Year's Festival.³ The section of the long poem we are interested in, from the second tablet, reads in the original:⁴

9 i-[il-li]k-ma maḥ-ru a-bi a-li-di-š̄u an-š̄ar
 10 mi-[im-mu]-ú ti-amat ik-pu-du ú-š̄a-an-na-a a-na š̄a-a-š̄u
 11 a-bi ti-amat a-lit-ta-ni i-zi-ir-ra-an-na-ti
 12 pu-uh-ru š̄it-ku-na-at-ma ag-giš̄ la-ab-bat
 13 iś-hu-ru-š̄im-ma ilāni gi-mir-š̄u-un
 14 a-di š̄a at-tu-nu tab-na-a i-da-a-š̄a al-ku
 15 im-ma-aš̄-ru-nim-ma i-du-uš̄ ti-amat te-bu-ú-ni

16 ez-zu kap-du la sa-ki-pu mu-ša u im-ma
 17 na-šu-ú tam-ḥa-ra na-zar-bu-bu la-ab-bu
 18 unken-na šit-ku-nu-ma i-ban-nu-ú šu-la-a-ti
 19 um-mu ḥu-bur pa-ti-qa-at ka-la-ma
 20 uš-rad-di kak-ku la mah-ru it-ta-lad mušmahhe^{mes}
 21 zaq-tu-ma šin-nu la pa-du-ú at-ta-'-i
 22 im-tu ki-ma^{mes} da-mi zu-mur-šú-nu uš-ma-al-la
 23 ušumgallé^{mes} na-ad-ru-ti pu-ul-ḥa-a-ti ú-šal-biš-ma
 24 me-lam-mu uš-taš-ša-a i-li-iš um-taš-ši-il
 25 a-mi-ir-šú-nu šar-ba-bi-iš li-ih-ḥar-mi-in
 26 zu-mur-šú-nu liš -tah-ḥi-ṭam-ma la i-ni-'u i-rat-su-un
 27 uš-zi-iz-ma ba-áš-mu^d muš-ḥuš^d à^d la-ḥa-mu
 28 u₁-gal-la ur-idim-me à^d girtablullú
 29 u₁-me da-ap-ru-ti ku-lī-lu à^d ku-sa-riq-ku
 30 na-ši kak-ku la pa-du-ú la a-di-ru ta-ḥa-zi
 31 gap-ša te-re-tu-ša la ma-ḥar-ra šin-na-ma
 32 ap-pu-na-ma iš-ten eš-rit ki-ma šu-a-ti uš-tab-ši
 33 i-na ilāni^{mes} bu-uk-ri-ša šu-ut iš-ku-nu-ši pu-uh-ra
 34 ú-ša-áš-qa^d kin-gu ina bir-ri-šú-nu ša-a-šu uš-rab-bi-iš
 35 a-li-ku-ut mah-ru pa-ni um-ma-nu mu-'-ir-ru-tum pu-uh-ru
 36 na-še-e kak-ku ti-iš-bu-tum te-bu-ú a-na-an-tum
 37 [šu-ult ta-am-ḥa-ra ra-ab šik-kat-ú-tum
 38 [ip]-kid-ma qa-tu-uš-šú ú-še-ši-ba^{mes}áš-ši ina kar-ri
 39 [a]d-di ta-a-ka i-na pu-ḥur ilāni^{mes} ú-šar-bi-ka
 40 [ma]-li-kut ilāni^{mes} gim-rat-su-nu qa-tuk-ka [u]š-mal-li
 41 [lu]-ú šur-ba-ta-ma ḥa-i-ri e-du-[ú a]t-ta^d
 42 [li-i]r-tab-bu-ú zik-ru-ka eli kali-šú-nu^d [a-nu]-uk-ki
 43 [id]-din-šu₁-ma ṭup-ši-ma-a-te i-[r]a-tu-uš ú-[šat-m]-ih
 44 [ka]-ta qibit^d-ka la-a [e]n-na-a li-kun ši-it pi-i-ka
 45 [e-ni]n-nu kin-gu šu-uš-qu-u-u a-nu-ti
 46 [a-na] ilāni mārē^{mes} -ša šin-ma-ta iš-ti-mu
 47 [ip-š]ú pi-i-ku-[n]u girru li-ni-ih-ḥa
 48 [im-tuk ina] kit-m[u-r]u ma-ag-šá-ra liš-rab-bi-ib

The god, Ea, is speaking to his father, Anshar, about the great mother, Tiamat:

When he went before his father and begetter, Anshar,
 10 all that Tiamat had plotted he repeated to him:
 "My father, Tiamat--the one who bore us--detests us.
 She has organized the Assembly and is furious with rage.
 All the gods have rallied to her--
 even those you have engendered march at her side.
 15 They throng and rise up beside Tiamat.

Enraged, plotting without rest night and day,
 they are bent on combat, growling, furious.
 A council they have formed to ready for the fighting.

Mother Hubur--the one who fashions all things--
 20 has added weapons without rival, has spawned monster serpents,
 sharp of tooth, unsparing of fang.

With venom for blood she has filled their bodies.

Roaring dragons she has clothed with terrors,
 with awful sheen she has crowned them, making them like gods:
 25 whoever sees them perishes in shock;
 rearing up their bodies--none will twist back their front.

She has raised up the horned serpent, the dragon, and the water-
 the demon-lion, the mad dog, and the scorpion-man; snake;
 the fierce storm, the fish-man, and the bison,
 30 bearing weapons without mercy and without fear in battle.

Weighty are her edicts--they are past understanding.
 Altogether eleven like them she has delivered.

From among her divine offspring--those who formed the Assembly--
 she has elevated Kingu, promoting him chief among them.

35 The leading of the ranks and command of the Assembly,
 the raising of weapons for the clash, advancement of the con-
 in combat the commander-in-chief-- flict,
 she entrusted these to his hands as she seated him in the
 Council:
 'I have cast the spell for you, exalting you in the
 Assembly of the Gods.

40 To counsel all of the gods I have filled you with power.
 You are supreme! You are my only lover!
 Your words prevail over all the ^danukki!'

She has given him the Tablets of Destinies, fastened on his
 breast:

'As for you, your command is unchangeable! Your utterance shall
 endure!
 45 As soon as Kingu was elevated, possessed of the rank of Anu,
 for the gods, her sons, they decreed the fate:

'Your word makes the fire subside.

Your venom, as it collects, humbles the powerful!"⁵

The god who is speaking in this poem has had his problems with women before. Ea tells his old father--actually, his grandfather--Anshar about the threat posed by Tiamat or "Mother Hubur." Behind this is a traditional motif from Sumerian literature: the god Ea (or Enki, in Sumerian) a-da, "contestant." A number of Sumerian "contests" have survived. "Bird and Fish" engage in a dispute. Summer and Winter dispute one another's claims. Sheep and Grain dispute. Individuals argue. There is even a "Disputation between a Schoolboy and his Supervisor" and, horrors, a "Disputation between Two Women."⁶ In disputes Enki/Ea might be considered a protective deity, given his interest in the game and in his cunning. In his own contests, he often finds himself disputing with goddesses. And, as often as not, he meets his match.

In a Sumerian story called "Enki and Ninmah," he triumphs over the goddess Ninmah in a match of creating freaks. They reverse roles after creating and then "decreeing the fates" of the odd creatures. Finally Enki creates a being so helpless and so malformed that Ninmah can neither feed it nor find a "fate" for it. Enki then decrees a fate for it and, in the most nakedly chauvinistic gesture in Ancient Near Eastern literature, demands that Ninmah praise his

penis in his victory. Just as often, though, the game takes a different turn. In "Enki and Ninhursag," Enki sleeps with the mother goddess and the daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter in turn until the last one, the "pretty young one," with the help of the old mother of them all is cunning enough to extort gifts from him in return for her sexual favors. He becomes ill after swallowing eight of his offspring by her. The old goddess, Ninhursag, finally relents and creates eight gods for each of the eight parts of his body suffering from illness. The poem ends when Enki, now reconciled with Ninhursag, decrees the fate of the eight gods she has produced for him.⁷

One goddess, Inanna (or as she is known in Akkadian religion, Ishtar), is, however, not one to be bested. In "Inanna and Enki,"⁸ Inanna, the daughter of Enki, uses her sexual glamor--which was, by the way, a numinous quality, a divine attribute in both males and females⁹--and a good bit of beer to get Enki tipsy and joyous at a banquet, whereupon he gives her the divine me, a group of essences or naturesthat organize the universe. It is the greatest of prizes. No sooner does the beery confusion lift, though, when Enki sends creature after creature to recapture the me, which Inanna was carrying off in the "Boat of Heaven" to her temple in the city of Uruk. The creatures fail to recover the me, and Inanna enters her city in triumph. Although the end of the work is rather damaged, it seems clear that Enki and Inanna are finally reconciled--but she

still possesses the divine me.

It is the me (in the form of the Tablets of Destinies, the tup-ši-ma-a-te) that Tiamat, or Mother Hubur, gives to her son and lover, Kingu, when she exalts him in our poem. At least one scholar thinks that incest is a pervasive theme in enūma eliš.¹⁰ The old father, called Apsū[^], objects to son Ea becoming the lover of the great mother, Tiamat! In any case, Ea uses his cunning in what amounts to a match of magical powers with the old man, Apsū[^], and Ea murders the old father. It is the defeat and the destruction of father Apsū[^] and the "noise" of the younger gods after the killing has taken place that stirs up the great mother, Tiamat.

Ea reports Tiamat's activities in forming monster-weapons and in exalting her offspring, Kingu, to Anshar. Anshar apparently then sends Ea out to defeat Tiamat, but the mother's magic is too powerful for him and he fails. The first heroic act in the epic--Ea's defeat of Apsū[^]--turns out merely to be an overture to what happens later. Ea, finding it impossible to defeat Tiamat, resorts to a strategem. In enūma eliš, sons are greater than the fathers. To defeat Tiamat and her monstrous brood, Ea must turn to his son, Marduk. Ea helps him enough so that Marduk knows how to achieve not only the conquest of Tiamat but also kingship over the gods. Marduk defeats Tiamat, slays her, and out of her body creates the universe. Marduk consolidates his power by forming Babylon at the center of the universe and, again with the help of Ea, establishes the gods in their right

places. Marduk and Ea create lullû, "mankind," so that the gods have rest.

Tiamat, Mother Hubur, is still the mother. Her blood flows through the cosmos. In a final twist, the gods decide that her son-lover, the god Kingu, must die, and that it is out of the guilty blood of Kingu that "mankind" is formed. Thus continues to flow through mankind for as long as the creature lasts that old anarchic blood--and that bit of divinity, which for Mesopotamian man constituted the paradoxical creature, lullû^A.

Giving the great mother two names in our poem is an important clue to the structure of a beautifully ordered piece. The variation of "Tiamat" and "Mother Hubur" is one of many variations in a complex design. The design is characteristic of Akkadian poetic technique.

The poem, cast in the form of a speech of Ea to his father Anshar, falls into three major sections. The first, lines 11-19, tells of the primordial mother, Tiamat, as she sets up an Assembly of the gods, her offspring. The second, lines 19-32, describes her "matchless weapons," the monstrous creatures "Mother Hubur" gives birth to, eleven in all. The third, lines 33-48, narrates the elevation of one of her offspring, Kingu, to her lover and commander over the divine Assembly; it includes her magical speech to the Assembly, a spell itself broken up into three sections.

Two poetic features are notable: the careful organization of

the major sections; and the striving after variation wherever possible. The first section, 11-19, is an excellent example of "ring composition," a chiasmic pattern of elaborate balances around a central predication. Schematically, the passage would look like this:

11-14. set up an assembly; prepare to fight

15. throng and march with Tiamat

16-19. set up an assembly; prepare to fight.

If the first few lines suggest a linear advance in the narrative, the last few lines not only retard it; they reverse the first lines in a truly circular manner. The most "advanced" statement in the narrative line comes at the center. Furthermore, the parallels that fall on either side of the central line rigorously avoid exact repetition. In the first and last lines, for example, the great mother is called Tiamat and then Mother Hu-bur. In both cases, the mother is given a parallel epithet: ti-amat a-lit-ta-ni, "the one who bore us" (i.e., all the gods); later, she is um-mu hu-bur pa-ti-ga-at ka-la-ma, "the one who fashions all things."

Similarly, the second and the penultimate lines are balanced by the phrase, "to set up an Assembly." Line 12 opens with pu-uh-ru šit-ku-na-at-ma, "she has organized an Assembly." This is balanced in line 18 with un-ken-na šit-ku-nu-ma, "they have formed a council." The same verb is employed, šakānu, but the term for assembly is varied, as is the form of the verb. The composition is:

- 11 A Tiamat, the one who bore us
 12 B she has set up the Assembly
 13 C the gods have rallied to her
 14 D those brought forth march at her side
 15 E they throng and march beside her
 16 D' they plot
 17 C' they are set for combat
 18 B' they have set up a council
 19 A' Mother Ħubur, the one who fashions all.

Running through these lines are action verbs, especially of "forming" and "giving birth" on the one hand, and "moving," "advancing" on the other. The poet is careful to avoid repetition: in the first group are alādu, šakānu, banû, kapādu, and patāqu--all different terms. Only banû and šakānu are repeated, and then in different forms. Each verb has its own nuances and appropriateness to the phrase in which it appears; yet all are linked together in a well-designed series of synonymous lines. In similar fashion, the verbs of motion range through saḥāru, alāku, naṣāru, tebû, to našû. All fit the phrases in which they occur; but the difference in meaning is not great enough to offset the gain in pleasant variation.

Note also the way the lines are filled with the rage of Tiamat and her brood: "she detests us," "is furious with rage;" they are "enraged, plotting without rest night and day;" they are "growling, furious." Even when the same term is used, e.g., labēbu, "to rage,"

the forms are different. It is a passage both carefully ordered and dense with varied phrasing.

Finally, the poem contains many unusual terms used to heighten the poetic effect. In his study of the dialect of the poem, Wolfram von Soden mentioned a number of words characteristic of the "hymnic-epic" dialect.¹¹ This first section of the poem contains three: gimru ("all" or "totality") in 13; tamhāru ("combat") in 17; and sūlātu ("fighting") in 18. Others occur in later sections of the poem: šarbābiš ("abjectly") in 25; dabru ("fierce") in 29; bukru ("offspring") in 33; anantu ("conflict") in 36; and the magsaru-weapon ("power"-weapon) in 48. The poet has taken care to fill the poem with great variety and with a special "poetic" vocabulary.

Line 19 is interesting in that it both completes the first section, 11-19, and is syntactically part of the next section, 20-32, "Mother Ḥubur, the one who fashions all." What she fashions is the subject of the second section. Her "weapons" include first serpents (20-22) and then dragons (mušmabbē^{meš} and uṣumgalle^{meš}). The monstrous brood is later specified in the catalogue of warrior-weapons in 27-29.

The second section may not have the tight chiastic patterning of the first section, but it shows evidence of balancing beginning and end. Lines 20-21 on one side and 30-31 on the other provide framing devices using the negative particle la plus a verbal form. The weapons fashioned by Mother Ḥubur are called "matchless" or

"without rival" (la mah-ru) in 20, and the monsters, in a variation, are "unsparing of fang" (la pa-du-ú) in the next line. Later, a slightly different form (la ma-har-ra) in 31 is used to describe the "decrees" or "edicts" of Mother Hubur, meaning "past understanding" in that context, while the "weapons" are called la pa-du-ú, "without mercy" in the previous line. The resulting frame has a scheme: A.B.--B'.A'.

The poem calls the great mother by two names: Tiamat and Mother Hubur. In neither case is the dingir-sign (a silent determinative used in cuneiform writing to indicate the category into which a word falls) prefixed to the names (10, 11, 15, and 19), the usual way of indicating that the figure is a god. Tiamat is the great Sea, tâmtu or tiamtu. On the other hand, hubur is a river, the river of the nether world. The term also refers to the place of the river-ordeal; as a designation of the nether world; and as the name of a deity (sometimes identified in other sources with Tiamat).¹²

The great mother has "added" (redû) the weapons, spawned monsters. The monster-serpents are mentioned in 20 and expanded for two lines. The most significant of their characteristics is the imtu, "venom" instead of blood. The dragons, on the other hand, are characterized by the awe-inspiring sheen they "wear" as a cloak and crown, puluhtu and melammu. While the imtu is most often associated with demons, the puluhtu and melammu are divine "splendors." Little wonder that whoever sees the monsters perishes abjectly, in terror.

The poet then catalogues the monster-weapons for a total of eleven. (The eleven, born of the abyss, are later placed as statues at the gate of the Apsû, Tablet V.73-75.) The figures occur elsewhere in magic as well as myth. The bašmu is a horned serpent, a "viper;" mušhušsu a serpent or dragon; like mušhušsu, ^dla-ha-mu is written with the dingir-sign. (Only the "scorpion-man," ^dgirtablullu, is also marked with the dingir-sign.) The next set of three begins with the lion-demon u₄-gal-la, includes the mad dog, and ends with the "scorpion-man." The third group consists of a creature half man and half fish, kulullu, a mighty lion-demon or "storm" (u₄-me), and a figure sometimes considered a centaur, but usually translated "bison," the kusarikku. Significantly, all but three of the names of the eleven are Sumerian loanwords, and at least one of the three others is likely to be Sumerian.

The marks of the second part of the poem are expansion and specification. It is basically a string of names and epithets full of power and primordial terror. The third section of the poem singles out one figure, ^dkin-gu, and concentrates on the power of the word. The care with which the poet organizes the piece can be seen in the way he anticipates the subject of the third section, the powerful word, late in the second section (31), where the great mother's "edicts" (te-re-tu-ša) are said to be "weighty" and "past understanding."

The third section is divided between narrative, telling what

the great mother did in exalting ^dkin-gu, and direct speech. Artfully, narrative and direct speech alternate in the last section. The speeches are brief, one (44) of only one line, but the organization itself emphasizes the power of the word, the thread that runs through the fabric. The brief one-liner becomes the center from which the speech radiates back and forward: "As for you, your command is unchangeable! Your utterance shall endure!"

The great mother raises one of her brood (bu-ük-ri-ša) to a leadership in the Assembly that combines two functions of great importance. The son, ^dkin-gu, becomes Tiamat's lover (ha-i-ri e-du-ú) and commander-in-chief of the military forces (ra-ab šik-kat-ú-tum). The second function is the subject of the expansion in 34-37. Except for the term bukru, the other "hymnic-epic" terms in the section are poetic terms for battle or weapons. The bukru is exalted in the Assembly called by the great mother. When she begins to speak to ^dkin-gu, she first tells him what she has done (39-40), but then switches to a more powerful way of speaking. She uses the manner of Sumerian and Akkadian incantations: to say it is more than to wish it or even to order it. It has been accomplished in the saying of it. To make it clear enough, Tiamat tells her offspring she has "cast a spell" (ad-di ta-a-ka) for ^dkin-gu.

The son is given nothing less than command of the universe. Besides consort of Tiamat and commander-in-chief of the forces

Tiamat has fashioned, d¹kin-gu's word is to prevail over the Annunaki-gods; to be unchangeable and endure forever; to decree the fates of the gods. Tiamat fastens upon him the Tablets of Destinies (43). He achieves the highest rank, taking over the function of the god ~~tra~~ditionally highest in the Mesopotamian pantheon, the creator-god Anu (45). While the last lines of Tiamat's "spell" are directed to power over enemies (d¹girru, "fire," and the "power"-weapon), the mother has conferred upon her son-lover the ultimate powers of the universe.

This poem (except for the introduction, 9-10) is repeated exactly no fewer than four times in enūma eliš, "The Babylonian Creation Epic." It is first narrated, and then repeated (here) by the god Ea to Anshar. Anshar will, in turn, repeat it to his vizier, Gaga (III.15-52), and Gaga will, in turn, recount the tale in exactly the same terms to the old gods, Laḫmu and Laḫamu (III.73-110). The same story is thus told four times. This suggests it was an important set-piece by the Old Babylonian poet. The epic will go on to tell of a hero among the gods, Marduk, who will take upon himself the task of fighting the great mother. Eventually he will succeed where his father, Ea, had failed. And for his effort Marduk will be exalted in the divine Assembly. He will kill Tiamat. Out of her body he will create an ordered world. He will have the rebel, d¹kin-gu, executed. And it will be the guilty blood of d¹kin-gu that will provide a new creature in the universe with living blood: mankind.

The story of enūma eliš has been commented on often since its discovery by George Smith at Nineveh over a hundred years ago.¹³ The epic has a secure place in the cult. It was to be recited "from beginning to end" by a priest in front of the Marduk on the fourth day of the sacred New Year's Festival at Babylonian and at other Mesopotamian cities. The epilogue of the epic indicates that it was a sacred book, to be read and studied by theologians and laymen alike.¹⁴ They must have taken note of the great mother, a figure treated with some respect and compassion in the work¹⁵ even though she must be defeated and slain by the hero, Marduk. The old pattern of the contest between the great goddess and the cunning god, Enki/Ea, remains. But Ea cannot defeat the mother. True, his advice helps Marduk, and he remains a counsellor when the work of ordering the universe is taken up by Marduk. In this Akkadian work, though, the old mother and the young son, Tiamat/Mother Hūbur and Marduk, overshadow the cunning one. The care with which this small section of the epic is ~~treated~~ makes it clear that the cultic and theological interests of the epic were not allowed to obscure the brilliant poetic technique. The two names of the great mother are merely the most obvious marks of the desire to generate as much variety as possible in a carefully-ordered piece.¹⁶

John R. Maier
 State University of New York
 College at Brockport

NOTES

¹The Old Babylonian period is roughly 1900-1600 B.C. For the periods of Mesopotamian literature, see William W. Hallo, "Towards a History of Sumerian Literature," Sumerological Studies in Honor of Thorkild Jacobsen, ed. Stephen Lieberman (Chicago: University Press, 1975), pp. 181-203, and W. G. Lambert, "Introductory Essay: the Development of Thought and Literature in Ancient Mesopotamia," Babylonian Wisdom Literature (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), pp. 1-20.

²Thorkild Jacobsen, The Treasures of Darkness (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 183-193.

³N. K. Sandars, tr. Poems of Heaven and Hell from Ancient Mesopotamia (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971), pp. 11-12.

⁴The transliteration of the Akkadian is after Stephen Langdon, The Babylonian Epic of Creation (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923); P. Antonius Deimel, Enuma Eliš (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1936); and W. G. Lambert and Simon B. Parker, Enuma Eliš (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966).

⁵The translation has been assisted by Langdon, pp. 94-99; E. A. Speiser, in Ancient Near Eastern Texts, ed. James B. Fritchard (Princeton: University Press, 1969), p. 63; and Jacobsen, pp. 173-74.

⁶Samuel Noah Kramer, History Begins at Sumer (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), pp. 132-141.

⁷See Carlos A. Benito, "Enki and Nimmah" and "Enki and the World Order" (Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1969).

⁸Gertrud Farber-Flügge, Der Mythos "Inanna und Enki" unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Liste der me (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973).

⁹Elena Cassin, La splendeur divine (The Hague: Mouton, 1968).

¹⁰A. Leo Oppenheim, "Mesopotamian Mythology I," Orientalia, N.S. 16 (1947), 210.

¹¹Wolfram von Soden, "Der hymnisch-epische Dialekt des Akkadischen," Zeitschrift für Assyriologie 40 (1931), 163-227, and 41 (1933), 90-183.

¹²See The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary 6, 219, and Akkadisches Handwörterbuch, 1353.

¹³George Smith, The Chaldean Account of Genesis (New York: Scribner's, 1880), pp. 107-114.

¹⁴Oppenheim, pp. 236-38.

¹⁵Jacobsen, p. 187.

¹⁶For the onomastician, of course, the pull of Mother Hūbur is simply too strong to resist. Could she be the ancestress of our beloved Mother Hubbard? Not likely, given the state of our knowledge, since about 1600 years separate the two figures (not to mention languages and geography). Like Mother Goose, Dame Trot,

and Mother Bunch, Mother Hubbard has a long, if checkered, history. The 19th Century--A.D., now--knew her well in the toy-book form, The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog (see Lina Eckenstein, Comparative Studies in Nursery Rhymes [London: Duckworth, 1906], pp. 38-44), which appeared in 1806. J. Harris, who produced it, had already done Whimsical Incidents, or the Power of Music, a poetic tale by a near relation of Old Mother Hubbard--a near relation no doubt, but one who had completely ignored the dog. The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard was a great success with its references to the old mother going to the cupboard, going for bread, for tripe, for beer, wine, fruit, a coat, a hat, a wig, shoes, hose, linen--even a coffin. The story usually ends with:

The dame made a curtsy, the dog made a bow,

The dame said, "Your servant," the dog said, "Bow-wow."

This is a far cry from the powerful creatrix of eleven growling monsters, but we can understand if some editions have Mother Hubbard going for a fish!

(At one point in the tradition, Mother Hubbard and the Old Woman Who Lived In A Shoe converge. One couplet has of Mother Hubbard:

She went to the undertaker's to buy him a coffin,

When she came back the poor dog was laughing.

The lines are very close to the Old Woman's in Infant Institutes (1797).

Of course we are interested in pressing matters back to earlier ages. My own interest was sparked by the earliest and best literary treatments, by that prince of poets, Edmund Spenser. Spenser's "Prosopopoeia or Mother Hubberd's Tale" (1579-1580) of the fox and the ape is a great delight. (This is not to be confused with an early spin-off, Thomas Middleton's 1604 Father Hubburd's Tale, or the Ant and the Nightingale, another satire.)

The origin of "Hubbard" is a cupboard of earthly delights for the onomastician, but perhaps as evanescent. It goes back in a rather straightforward line to the Old Germanic "bright heart," Hugubert, like the Old English Hygebeorht. We know it better as Hubert. Indeed, it has been suggested (for almost a hundred years now) that Mother Hubberd became a woman and mother in a rather curious way. It appears a wag mistook a long-haired picture of St. Hubert--I should rather say a picture of the long-haired St. Hubert--for a woman. The dog was already in the picture. After all, St. Hubert, Bishop of Liege (d. 727 A.D.), was long known as the patron saint of the chase. The story has it that St. Hubert was converted, much like St. Eustace, while he was on a Good Friday hunt. The story was productive of many a shaggy dog invention, but is probably to be dismissed as apocryphal. The real event in the good bishop's life is that he was hurt in a fishing accident. He died some fifteen days after a boat accident on the Meuse.

Fish for the cupboard? A fishing incident? Smells like a bit

of revenge by our old Near Eastern river-goddess, Mother Hubur. I leave further connections to abler onomasticians. It is hard to ignore such a confluence of creatures, chases, searches, delicacies, and, of course, rivers. Only about 1600 years now separate the Hubur and the Hubbard of fame! (Do we dare add that wonderful Khabur River still flowing after all these years through northern Syria?)