

Why It was Rape: The Conceptualization of Rape in Sumerian Literature

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INTRODUCTION

In an article published in *NIN: Journal of Gender Studies in Antiquity*, Jo Ann Scurlock argues that the encounter between Ninlil and Enlil in the Sumerian composition "Enlil and Ninlil" is not rape, but rather the "ruination of an unmarried woman."¹ She bases her argument on a comparative approach to the study of ancient documents according to which "information drawn from any source may be profitably compared with any other, provided that proper care is taken to avoid decontextualization."²

Scurlock interprets the episode within the framework of Sumerian and ancient Near Eastern law,³ and concludes that there was indeed no rape in the modern sense of the term in the ancient Near East. Rather, "the Sumerian laws on intercourse with married women were intended to punish adultery, not rape . . . [and] [t]he treatment of intercourse between unmarried persons in Sumerian law has even less to do with the crime of rape as we know it."⁴

A somewhat similar conclusion was reached by Gwendolyn Leick in 1994. She states that in texts such as "Enlil and Ninlil," "[t]he concept of rape is inappropriate . . . since these myths are not concerned with social customs and institutions but portray the activities of deities in a world largely devoid of human regulations."⁵

In this study, I submit that the ancient Mesopotamians did have a concept of rape as we understand it and that a better way to interpret the rape of Ninlil is by comparing it with similar episodes in analogous compositions. Therefore, I will discuss Ninlil's deflowering in "Enlil and Ninlil" *exclusively* within the framework of Sumerian literary texts, and re-evaluate it vis-à-vis the descriptions of the rape attested in two other Sumerian literary compositions.

DEFINITION OF RAPE

Before beginning my investigation, I wish to put forward a definition of rape as the act of forcing a woman or a man to submit to sexual intercourse against her or his

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1. J. A. Scurlock, "But Was She Raped? A Verdict through Comparison," *NIN* 4 (2003): 103. For a complete bibliography about the composition "Enlil and Ninlil," see Scurlock, 2 n. 2.

2. *Ibid.*, 61.

3. For an overview of the legal treatment of rape in the ancient world, with emphasis on ancient Near Eastern sources, see S. Lafont, *Femme, Droit et justice dans l'antiquité orientale: Contribution à l'étude du droit pénal au Proche-Orient ancien* (Freiburg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 133–71.

4. Scurlock, 73.

5. G. Leick, *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature* (London: Routledge, 1994), 51.

will.⁶ This definition is extremely broad and stresses the non-consensual element of the sexual act. It is important, however, to clarify my understanding of rape in the context of the present study, because definitions of rape tend to vary not only diachronically, but also synchronically.

RAPE IN SUMERIAN LITERARY TEXTS

At present, clear descriptions of rape are found in two Sumerian literary compositions: "Enki and Ninhursāga," where Enki rapes three of his daughters, and "Inana and Šukale-tuda," in which the goddess Inana is raped by Šukaletuda.

The plots of these compositions are well known, and need not be summarized here; only the pertinent passages will be discussed. In particular, I will focus on the evidence to support the argument that these were rapes, the nature of the participants, and the consequences of the encounter.⁷

"ENKI AND NINHURSAĞA"

The first composition describing rape is "Enki and Ninhursāga."⁸ There is no consensus among scholars concerning the nature of Enki's abnormal sexual behaviors. Whereas there is no doubt that Enki has sexual relations with his daughters, who are all defined as *lu₂-tur* "young one," not all scholars read them as rape.⁹

Enki's first encounter, with the goddess Ninhursāga, is difficult to interpret. There does not seem to have been sexual contact between the two deities, but Ninhursāga becomes pregnant and after nine days Nin-nisig is born. Nin-nisig then becomes the object of Enki's sexual interest, and when she goes out to the marsh, Enki lusts after her and sets out to seduce her, as described in lines 98–101:¹⁰

98. *ĝiri₃-ni l-a ĝi^{is}ma₂-a bi₂-in-gub*
 99. *2-kam-ma bar-rim₄-ma nam-mi-in-gub*
 100. *gaba im-ma-an-tab ne im-ma-an-su-ub*
 101. *den-ki-ke₄ a šag₄-ga ba-ni-in-ri*

6. T. M. Lambert, "Rape, Definitions of," in *Encyclopedia of Rape*, ed. M. D. Smith (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2004), 169–70, points out that "The definition of rape varies by time period, place and gender," although a "common perception of rape is that it involves the nonconsensual penile penetration of the vagina." Nowadays, the broadest definition of rape is the one which was introduced in 1998 by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. According to the Tribunal, rape was defined as "a physical invasion of a sexual nature, committed on a person under circumstances which are coercive" (quoted by Lambert, "Rape," 170).

7. An issue which will not be addressed in the present paper is the recognized dichotomy between the male sexuality represented in the Sumerian literary texts, which put emphasis upon the phallus, and the female sexuality of the Love Songs, focused on the vulva. Leick, *Sex and Eroticism*, 48ff. provides ample evidence and bibliography.

8. For edition, see P. Attinger, "Enki et Ninhursaga," *ZA* 74 (1984): 1–52. For interpretation, see B. Alster, "Enki and Ninhursag," *UF* 10 (1978): 15–25. He saw in the composition a set of irregular sexual behaviors, culminating in the sequence of incestual encounters between Enki and his daughters. The last coupling, between Enki and Uttu, is interpreted by Alster as a rape "which did not lead to normal impregnation because the seed was removed from Uttu's womb and planted in the ground instead" (Leick, *Sex and Eroticism*, 36, discussing Alster's interpretation). Note however that for Alster, the main theme of the text is "the creation of the first ordinary males and females" (p. 25), as opposed to the extraordinary ones who have been begotten throughout the composition. For the most recent interpretation, see Leick, 30–41. Leick does not view any of Enki's sexual intercourses as rape, but as incestuous couplings and is inclined to see strong satirical overtones in the composition (esp. pp. 30–31).

9. See previous note and Leick, *Sex and Eroticism*, 30–37, for the various interpretations. Also note that at present the composition is known from only three manuscripts, AO 6724, CBS 4561, and UET 6/1, *contra* Leick, who claims it was well known among Mesopotamians.

10. Line numbers follow Attinger's edition.

98. He put one foot on the boat,
99. He put the other (foot) on the dry land.
100. He grasped her by the chest and kissed her.
101. Enki ejaculated into her womb.

The verb *tab*, "to seize," is employed to describe the rape, followed by the more neutral *ne . . . su-u-b*. The expression *gaba tab* is also used to describe Enki's rape of his daughter, Ninkurra, later in the composition. In "Enki and Ninhursag," force and coercion are used.

The manuscript tradition is, however, not uniform. According to manuscript A (= CBS 4561) from Nippur, Ninkurra becomes pregnant with Uttu. Here the manuscript breaks off, but the narrative is resumed by manuscript C (AO 6724), of unknown provenience. In this version, Ninkurra becomes pregnant with Nin-imma, with whom Enki in turn becomes infatuated (lines 11–14):

11. $\hat{g}iri_2$ -/ni diš-am₃\ma₂-a bi₂-gub
12. min-/kam-ma-am₃\bar-ri₄-ma¹(BA) u₃-bi₂-gub
13. gaba šu im-mi-in-dab₅ ur₂-ra-na nu₂-a
14. lu₂-tur $\hat{g}i\check{s}_3$ im-mi-in-du₄ ne im-ma-ni-in-su-[ub]

11. First he put his foot on the boat,
12. Then, after having put it on the dry land,
13. He seized her by the chest and lying at her loins,
14. He copulated with the young one and kissed her.

In this manuscript, the expected sequence is used in conjunction with the lexicon attested from manuscript A.¹¹ In both cases, however, the notion of force is maintained, thus indicating the non-consensual nature of the encounter.

Enki's sexual encounter with Uttu is radically different from those with his other daughters. First, Ninhursag warns Uttu about Enki's presence in the marshes (lines 128–32). Second, Uttu is instructed on how to behave when Enki ultimately approaches her. The passage is fragmentary and some 10–15 lines are missing, but it is clear that Uttu is advised about a specific course of action, which she duly follows. Third, Uttu's preparation for her encounter with Enki resembles that of a spouse waiting for the groom (lines 147–51):

147. [ukuš₂ sur-ra-na²] de₆-um
148. / $\hat{b}i\check{s}$ hašhur\[gu ul-ul]-ba de₆-um
149. $\hat{b}i\check{s}\hat{g}$ eštin ga-ra-an-ba de₆-um
150. e₂²-a saman₂- $\hat{g}u_{10}$ he₂-dab₅
151. ⁴en-ki-ke₄ saman₂- $\hat{g}u_{10}$ he₂-bi₂-in-dab₅

147. Bring [*pressed cucumbers*],
148. Bring apples in their . . . ,¹²
149. Bring grapes in their bunches,
150. In the house(?) you shall hold my halter!
151. Enki, you shall hold my halter.

11. The sequence attested in manuscript A goes back to a model which omitted the sentence *ur₂-ra-na nu₂-a/lu₂ tur $\hat{g}i\check{s}_3$ im-mi-in-du₄* found in the more complete manuscript C. Alternatively, manuscript C was trying to simplify a concept too convolutedly expressed by A. Be that as it may, it seems likely that in A *$\hat{g}i\check{s}_3$. . . du₄* is implied by both *ne . . . su-u-b* and *a . . . ri*.

12. See Å. W. Sjöberg, "A Hymn to Inanna and Her Self-Praise," *JCS* 40 (1988): 165–86, esp. 174 for a discussion of this problematic line. Attinger, "Enki et Ninhursaga," 74 translates *gu ul-ul-ba* "en leur cordes."

The thematic parallels with the Love Songs, especially those relating the groom entering the bride's abode bearing gifts, are very strong in this section.¹³ Before approaching Uttu's house, Enki assumes the identity of the gardener who had given him the goods he was to bring to Uttu (lines 167–76):

167. ^den-ki-ke₄ igi-ni im-ma-an-sig₇-sig₇ ġigru šu bi₂-in-du₈
 168. ^den-ki-ke₄ ^duttu ġiri₃ im-ma-an-gub¹⁴
 169. e₂-na al-dub₂-dub₂-e ġal₂-u₃ [ġal₂-u₃]
 170. a-ba-me-en za-e-me-en
 171. ġe₂₆-e nu-^{ġi}skiri₆ ukuš₂ ^{ġi}hašhur [^{ġi}ġeštin] he₂-am₃-še₃ ga-mu-ra-ab-šum₂
 172. ^duttu šag₄ hul₂-la-ni-ta ^e₂-e ġal₂ ba-an-taka₄

167. Enki beautified his face and took a staff in his hand.
 168. Enki walked to Uttu's (house).
 169. He knocked at her house: 'Open up! [Open up!]'
 170. 'Who are you?' (Uttu asked).
 171. "I am the gardener. I brought cucumbers, apples, and [grapes] *for your satisfaction!*"¹⁵
 172. Joyfully, Uttu opened the house.

I will return to the *topos* of the gardener later in this essay. Suffice it to say here that I do not believe it a coincidence that Enki assumes this specific identity when he approaches Uttu.¹⁶ From the text, it is clear that Uttu is eager to meet with her suitor, as shown by her eagerness in opening the door of her house. The text is ambiguous as to whether Uttu is aware of the gardener's true identity, but Ninhursag's warnings earlier in the composition suggest that Uttu knows exactly what is happening.¹⁷ However, it is clear that the encounter between Enki and Uttu is not an attempted rape, but rather a failed sexual encounter.

Three different rapes can therefore be identified in "Enki and Ninhursag": they involve Nin-nisig, Ninkurra, and Nin-imma. In each of these cases a father has nonconsensual intercourse with his young and virgin daughters, the rape in this case being aggravated by incest.

There are consequences to be endured for such sexual misconduct. The final section of the composition is devoted to describing the assemblage of illnesses which befall Enki in the aftermath of his actions. Although a definitive link between the incestuous rapes and the illnesses is hard to prove, I suggest that Enki becomes sick as a consequence of his excessive sexual exploits. After all, the plants he eats after having raped his daughters are the products of the sperm with which he was not able to impregnate Uttu. That is, the ingestion of the plants is a kind of alimentary incest.

13. See Y. Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature: Critical Edition of the Dumuzi-Inanna Songs* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan Univ. Press, 1998), 101–4 with references.

14. For ġiri₃—gub, see F. Karahashi, "Sumerian Compound Verbs with Body Part Terms" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2000), 89–92.

15. Following Attinger, "Enki et Ninhursaga," 23, "pour satisfaire ton désir (?)." Note that K. Volk, *Inanna und Šukaletuda: Zur historisch-politischen Deutung eines sumerischen Literaturwerkes* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995), 36 n. 261, suggests "nach Wunsch(?)" for he₂-am₃-še₃.

16. See M. L. Besnier, "Temptation's Garden: The Gardener, A Mediator Who Plays an Ambiguous Part," in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Simo Parpola and R. M. Whiting (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Project, 2002), 59–70.

17. Besnier, "Temptation's Garden," 61, is uncertain with respect to Uttu's knowledge.

INANA AND ŠUKALETUDA

The second Sumerian literary text describing a rape is "Inana and Šukaletuda."¹⁸ This composition is about the rape of a senior goddess in the form of a grown woman by a mere mortal, and a quite humble one at that.¹⁹ Inana is raped by Šukaletuda after having come to rest under a solitary poplar tree located at the edge of Šukaletuda's plot of land. In this passage, the sexual act is described by two verbs: $\dot{g}i\dot{s}_3$... $\dot{d}ug_4$, "to copulate," and ne ... $su-ub$, "to kiss" (lines 117–25):²⁰

117. $\dot{s}u-kal-le-tud-da\ zag\ sar-ra-/ka\ ni\ igi\ im-ma-ni-/sig_{10}\backslash$
118. $\dot{d}inana-ke_4\ ^{u\dot{g}_2}dar_4\ me\ imin\ gal_4-la-/na\ [...]$
119. $^{u\dot{g}_2}dara_4\ me\ imin\ gal_4-la-na\ [...]$
120. $su_8-ba\ ^{ama-u\dot{s}um-gal-an-na-da\ [...]$
121. $gal_4-la\ kug-ga-na\ lu_2\ SU\ x\ [...]$
122. $\dot{s}u-kal-le-tud-da\ mu-un-du_8-du_8\ da-/ga\ \backslash-[na\ ba-nu_2]$
123. $\dot{g}i\dot{s}_3\ im-ma-ni-in-du_4\ ne-im-ma-[ni-in-su-ub]$
124. $\dot{g}i\dot{s}_3\ ba-ni-in-du_4-/ga\ \backslash[ne\ ba-ni-in-su-ub-ba]$
125. $zag\ sar-ra-ka-ni\ im-ma-si-/in\ \backslash-[gi_4]$

117. Šukaletuda, at the edge of his plot, saw her.²¹
118. Inana... the cloth of the seven mes over her vulva.
119. She... the cloth of the seven mes over her vulva.
120. Together with Amaušumgalanna, the shepherd,...
121. Over her pure vulva...
122. Šukaletuda loosened (the cloth) and [lay down] in the sleeping place,²²
123. He had intercourse with her there and kissed her there.
124. Having had intercourse with her [and having kissed her]
125. He [went back] to the edge of his plot.

That this was not consensual sex is proven by Inana's reaction when she wakes up (lines 126–31 and parallels):

126. $ud\ im-zal\ ^{du}tu\ im-ta-/ed_2-a\ \backslash-ra$
127. $munus-e\ ni_2-te-a-nu\ igi\ im-kar_2-/kar_2\backslash$
128. $kug\ ^{d}inana-ke_4\ ni_2-te-a-ni\ igi\ im-kar_2-kar_2$
129. $ud-ba\ munus-e\ nam\ gal_4-la-na-\dot{s}e_3\ a-na\ im-gu-lu-u_8-a-bi$
130. $kug\ ^{d}inana-ke_4\ nam\ gal_4-la-na-\dot{s}e_3\ a-na\ im-ak-a-bi$
131. $pu_2\ kalam-ma-ka\ u\dot{s}_2\ bi_2-ib-si-si$
132. $pu_2\ \dot{g}i\dot{s}_3\ kiri_6\ kalam-ma-ka\ u\dot{s}_2-am_3\ i_3-tum_3-tum_3$
133. $arad_2\ lu_2-/u_3\ u_2\ il_2-i-de_3\ \dot{g}en-na/u\dot{s}_2\ \backslash-am_3\ i_3-na_8-na_8$

18. Edited by Volk, *Inanna und Šukaletuda*.

19. Leick, *Sex and Eroticism*, 52–53, points out that Inana "is not to be used as an object of phallic impulse," despite her being the goddess of sexuality and love. Indeed, as Leick puts it, "As far as [Inana] is concerned... intercourse during a deep sleep is not what she would call an erotic experience worth having" (p. 53).

20. For a discussion of these two terms, see the bibliography collected by P. Attinger, *Éléments de linguistique sumérienne* (Freiburg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 540–47, and more recently M. Jaques, *Vocabulaire des sentiments dans les textes sumériens: Recherché sur le lexicon sumérien et akkadien* (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2006), 144 nn. 328 and 329.

21. This is a problematic passage, as the verb is not completely preserved in any of the sources.

22. Parallel to "Enlil and Ninlil," 87, as already noted by Volk, *Inanna und Šukaletuda*, 187; $\dot{d}en-lil_2-le\ nam\ lu_2\ abul-la-ra\ da-ga-na\ ba-nu_2$, "Enlil, as the gatekeeper, lay down with her in the chamber."

134. *geme₂ lu₂-u₃ a si-si-de₃ ġen-na uš₂-/am₃\[im]-mi-ib₂-si-si*
 135. *saġ ġig₂ uš₂-/am₃\i₃-na₈-na₈ zag-bi nu-/un\ -zu*
126. When the day had dawned and Utu had come out,
 127. The woman examines herself.
 128. Pure Inana examines herself.
 129. At that time, what is it that the woman should destroy on behalf of her vulva?
 130. What is it that Pure Inana should do on behalf of her vulva?
 131. She filled the wells of the land with blood!
 132. It was blood that the wells of the orchards of the land yielded!
 133. It was blood that the slave who went to collect firewood drank!
 134. It was blood that the slave girl who went to draw water drew!
 135. It was blood that the Black-Headed people drank! No one knew the end of it!

Inana's reprisal is an indication that the sexual intercourse did constitute an offense against the goddess. In retaliation, she sends three plagues to afflict mankind in order to force them to give up the culprit, who, upon Enki's advice, is hiding among them. The plagues include the filling of the wells with blood (lines 129–35), a terrifying storm which sweeps through the land (lines 187–91),²³ and the blockage of streets (lines 216–18).²⁴ Eventually, Enki reveals Šukaletuda's hiding place. Inana sentences him to death, although his name shall be preserved in songs.

In this case, the rapist uses stealth rather than force, but the result is the same: a male, in this instance a mortal, sexually abuses a female, and a goddess at that. Šukaletuda was aware that Inana was a goddess, as evidenced not only by the fact that he sees her coming clouded in a divine light, but he also recognizes she is wearing the divine *mes*.²⁵

“ENLIL AND NINLIL”

Comparison between the two compositions discussed above and “Enlil and Ninlil” clarifies the nature of the episode described here. Enlil sexually assaults Ninlil, who is consistently referred to as *ki-sikil*, and impregnates her.²⁶ The dynamics are illustrated in lines 46–53 of the composition:

46. *a-ā den-lil₂ MES-ga-e²⁷ dirig-ga-am₃*
 47. *ġiš₃-bi na-mu-un-dug₄ ne-bi na-mu-un-su-ub*
 48. *kiġ₂-kiġ₂-a-na šu-ni ba-an-dab₅*

23. */dunġu\mu-un-u₅ dur₂ im-gub-be₂ gaba im-[...]/tu₁₅-[u₁₈]-lu mar-uru₅ huš igi-še₃ mu-un-[ši/na-ġen]/pi-/li\ -pi-li dal-ha-mun egir-ra-ni-še₃ [im-uš₂]/ab-/ba\ -šu₂-šu₂ inim-kur₂-dug₄-dug₄ ad-ġi₄-ġi₄ [...]/7 a-ra₂ 7 an-ed-en-na mu-un-da-/su₈-su₈\-[ge-eš]*, “She (Inana) mounted a cloud and as she placed a seat (there), . . . The South Wind and a terrible storm proceeded before her. The *pilipili* and a dust storm followed her. Abbašu and Inimkurdug, the advisers, [. . .]. Seven times seven helpers stood beside her in the high plain.”

24. *[umbin]/KA\su-ug-ga diš-am₃ šu im-ma-an-ti/[he]-/en\ -du kalam-ma-ka bi₂-in-/ġi₁₆\-ib/[uġ₃ saġ]-ġig₂ umbin KA su-ug-ga mu-na-ta-ed₂-e*, “She took a single *enlarged* . . . in her hand. She blocked the highways of the land with it. The Black-Headed people were going in/out because of the *enlarged* . . .”

25. See especially lines 103–5 and parallels: *[dgidim dili du-ra igi]/mu-ni\-[in-du₈]/[dingir dili]/du-ra\[\ġiškim mu-ni-in-zu]/me šu du₇-du₇-/da\[\igi bi₂-in-du₈]*, “He [saw a solitary ghost approaching. He recognized her as a solitary deity] approaching. [He saw] one who had the perfect *mes*.”

26. See J. S. Cooper, “Virginity in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East*, 97. In the present context, this is significant vis-à-vis Enki's daughters' designation as *lu₂-tur*.

27. *MES-ga* must be an epithet for Enlil, as already suggested by H. Behrens, *Enlil und Ninlil: Ein sumerischer Mythos aus Nippur* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1978), 126–27, but the reading and meaning escape me.

49. $\hat{g}i\check{s}_3$ -bi na-mu-un-du g_4 ne-bi na-mu-un-su-ub
 50. KU²⁸ peš₁₀ tur-ra-še₃²⁹ im-ma-da-ab-nu₂-e
 51. $\hat{g}i\check{s}_3$ -bi im-ma-ni-in-du g_4 ne-bi im-ma-ni-in-su-ub
 52. $\hat{g}i\check{s}_3$ l du g_4 -ga-ni ne l su-ub-ba-ni
 53. a ^dsuen-^daš-im₂-babbar-ra ša g_4 mu-na-ni-ri

46. Father Enlil . . . *sailing* downstream,
 47. He did have intercourse with her, he did kiss her.³⁰
 48. He seized the one he was seeking *by her/with his hand*,
 49. He did have intercourse with her, he did kiss her.
 50. *At the place* on the small riverbank he made her lie down.
 51. He had intercourse with her there and he kissed her there.
 52. In copulating with her once, in kissing her this once,
 53. He ejaculated the seed of Sîn-Ašimbabbar into her womb.

The sexual act is once again described by the verbs $\hat{g}i\check{s}_3$. . . du g_4 and ne . . . su-ub and it takes place along the river Enlil was sailing upon after having boarded a boat in order to more easily seize Ninlil.³¹

That this was not consensual sex is witnessed by Ninlil's refusal, expressed by the goddess when Enlil first approaches her (lines 28–29):

28. [lu g -e $\hat{g}i\check{s}_3$] ga-e-du g_4 mu-na-ab-be₂ nu-un-da-ra-ši-ib-še-ge
 29. [^den-lil₂-le ne ga-e-su-ub mu-na-ab-be₂ nu-un-da-ra-ši-ib-še-ge

28. [The lord] said: "Let me have [sex] with you!" but she would not agree with him.
 29. Enlil said: "Let me kiss you!" but she would not agree with him.

Ninlil's reasons for refusing are given in lines 30–34 and are relevant to the present discussion, since they repeatedly stress how Ninlil is an inappropriate sexual partner:

30. ga l_4 -la- $\hat{g}u_{10}$ tur-ra-am₃ peš₁₁ nu-un-zu³²
 31. šu-um-du-um- $\hat{g}u_{10}$ tur-ra-am₃ še su-ub nu-un-zu
 32. ama- $\hat{g}u_{10}$ ba-zu-zu šu- $\hat{g}u_{10}$ mu-un-sa g_3 -ge
 33. ad-da- $\hat{g}u_{10}$ ba-zu-zu šu sa₂-bi mu-un-e
 34. a-da-lam ma-la-ra du g_4 -ga- $\hat{g}u_{10}$ -uš nu-me-e ba-na-silig-ge-en³³

28. See J. S. Cooper, review of H. Behrens, *Enlil und Ninlil*, JCS 32 (1980): 182, for du r_2 as a possible reading of KU in this context.

29. It is possible that in this line a word-play was meant with line 30 (see below), based on the homophony between peš₁₀ and peš₁₁.

30. For the positive and epistemic function of na- in verbal chains, see now M. Civil, "Modal Prefixes," ASJ 22 (2000 [2005]): 37. For a different interpretation see Cooper, review of Behrens, 182, who suggests a prohibitive nuance for this verbal chain.

31. The episode of the boat is puzzling, as it is not clear why Enlil would need to use a boat to get to Ninlil, who is bathing in the river, but is likely to be close to the bank. Interestingly enough, however, Enki too uses a boat to gain access to his daughters when it is time to have sex with them, as already noted by Cooper, review of Behrens, 179.

32. For the possible ironic overtones of this line, see P. Michalowski, "A Man Called Enmebaragesi," in *Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien: Festschrift für Claus Wilcke*, ed. Walther Sallaberger, K. Volk, and Z. Zgoll (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), 199.

33. This is a problematic line, as already noted by Cooper, review of Behrens, 181, 185. Behrens, *Enlil und Ninlil*, 221, translates "Nun(mehr) wird mich niemand daran hindern, (darüber) mit (meiner) Freundin zu sprechen!" The latter is followed by ETCSL: "But right now, no one will stop me from telling this to my girlfriend!" I am more inclined to see the girlfriend siding with Ninlil's parents rather than with Enlil, although, given the difficulty of the passage, both options remain open.

30. My vagina is small, it does not know how to stretch.
31. My lips are small, they do not know how to kiss.
32. My mother will hear of it and she will slap my hand.
33. My father will hear of it and he will lay hold of me.
34. Then, upon my telling about it to my girlfriend, *she will not speak to me . . . !*

This, in turn, must have played a role in the penalty inflicted upon Enlil.³⁴

In response to Ninlil's refusal, Enlil, like Enki before him, decides to use coercion and force in order to satisfy his desire for her. This is explicit in line 48, where the verb *dab₅* is used to describe Enlil's actions. That these actions were considered extremely severe is evidenced by the fact that he is called *u₂-zug₄*, "ritually unclean, polluter,"³⁵ and that the assembly of the gods orders him to leave Nippur (lines 56–63):

56. *diĝir gal-gal ninni-ne-ne*
 57. *diĝir nam tar-ra-ra imin-na-ne-ne*
 58. *^den-lil₂ ki-ur₃-ra im-ma-ni-in-dab₅-be₂-ne*
 59. *^den-lil₂ u₂-zug₄-ga iri-ta ba-ra-ed₂*
 60. *^dnu-nam-nir u₂-zug₄-ge iri-ta ba-ra-ed₂*
 61. *^den-lil₂ niĝ₂-nam-še₃ nam mu-un-tar-ra-ke₄*
 62. *^dnu-nam-nir niĝ₂-nam-še₃ nam mu-un-tar-ra-ke₄*
 63. *^den-lil₂ i₃-ĝen ^dnin-lil₂ in-us₂*
56. The fifty great gods
 57. And the seven gods who decide the destinies
 58. Had Enlil seized in the Kiur.
 59. Enlil, the impure, abandoned the city,
 60. Nunamnir, the impure, abandoned the city.
 61. Enlil, according to that which he has decided,³⁶
 62. Nunamnir, according to that which he had decided,
 63. Enlil went. Ninlil followed him.³⁷

Enlil's punishment is unusual. According to the Code of Hammurabi, banishment from a city is the prescribed penalty for a father who has sexual intercourse with his own daughter.³⁸ In legal texts, the penalty for rape varies depending on the social position of the victim as

34. Note, however, that those same reasons make Scurlock's case compelling insofar as they suggest Ninlil does not wish to have sex with Enlil because she is a virgin (lines 30–31) and is afraid of familial and societal contempt (lines 32–34) rather than because she is not interested.

35. Scurlock, 63 n. 14, suggests that in "Enlil and Ninlil" the term may indicate that Enlil had become impure because polluted with Ninlil's blood. However, I do not believe this to be the case. He was expelled from Nippur because the actions he had committed were unacceptable. For *u₂-zug₄* (Akk. *musukku*), see also M. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia and in the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting* (Groningen: Styx, 2000), 205–6.

36. See Cooper, review of Behrens, 182, for this line.

37. For variants, see Behrens, *Enlil und Ninlil*, 28 and 142.

38. This was noted by Lafont, *Femme*, 134, with discussion. She refers to CH 154: *šum-ma a-wi-lum dumu-munus-su₂ il-ta-ma-ad a-wi-lam šu-a-ti uru u₂-še-iš-šu₂-u₂-šu*, "If a man knows his own daughter carnally, he shall be banished from the city (or the city shall banish him)." J. S. Cooper, personal communication, suggests that the punishment is unusual in CH 154 because the victim is the perpetrator's own daughter and therefore there is no patriarchal authority (be it a father or a husband) whom he offended. Consequently, the customary punishments are not applicable. Analogically, Enlil's punishment must be seen as punishment for an equally reprehensible case, but without the presence of a patriarchal authority that would otherwise be compensated. This explanation fits nicely with the translation of lines 61–62.

well as the social status of the perpetrator.³⁹ The gravity of Enlil's actions is underlined not only by the fact that Ninlil was a *ki-sikil*, that is, a young virgin, but also by the fact that according to the text he disobeyed the laws he himself had established for the community of gods as the leader of that same community (lines 61–62).

Enlil has intercourse with Ninlil three more times. The dynamics of these meetings, however, differ from the first case, as force is definitely not used. Rather, Enlil assumes the identity of the Netherworld's gatekeeper (*lu₂ a bu l-l a*), "river-man" (*lu₂ i d₂-k u r-r a*), and ferryman (*lu₂ ġi^{is} m a₂-a d d i r-r a*) and seduces Ninlil, who, although at first reluctant, seems eventually to acquiesce. Stealth is therefore the strategy Enlil opts for in his remaining encounters with the pregnant Ninlil. Indeed, it appears that Ninlil voluntarily sleeps with Enlil in order to protect *Sîn-Ašimbabbar*, the child whom she is carrying. Interestingly, when Ninlil points out that she is carrying Enlil's seed, each of her partners states (lines 85–86 and parallels):

85. a lugal-ġu₁₀ an-še₃ he₂-du a-ġu₁₀ ki-še₃ he₂-du

86. a-ġu₁₀ a lugal-ġa₂-gin₇ ki-še₃ he₂-du

85. My master's seed can go upwards, while my seed shall go downwards!

86. May my seed go downwards instead of my master's seed!

It may be the case, as Scurlock suggests, that these three children—that is, Nergal, Ninazu, and En-bililu—were to be sacrificed in order to ransom Enlil and the already-pregnant Ninlil from the Netherworld.⁴⁰

As the composition ends in an abrupt manner, with a eulogy to father Enlil *and* mother Ninlil immediately following the fourth intercourse between the divine couple, this hypothesis cannot be proved. It is, however, not too farfetched to suggest that Enlil was restored to his rightful place in Nippur, with Ninlil in her traditional position as his wife.⁴¹

DISCUSSION

The data presented here are evidence that the cases discussed above were all rapes, according to the definition laid out at the beginning of the paper. This is clearly illustrated by the following elements: first, the victim clearly does not consent to the intercourse and as a consequence force (and, in "Inana and Šukaletuda," stealth) is used. This is aggravated in both "Enlil and Ninlil" and "Enki and Ninhursagā," where the victims are defined either as *ki-sikil* (*tur*) or *lu₂-tur*, stressing that they were young and sexually inexperienced, thus making Enlil and Enki's actions even more reprehensible. Moreover, in all cases, the culprit is punished, although the punishment varies depending on the text. Enlil is exiled, Enki becomes sick, and Šukaletuda is sentenced to death.

In addition, I would tentatively suggest that Sumerian literary texts had specialized language to describe rape, represented by the couplet *ġi š₃ . . . du g₄*, "to copulate" and *ne . . .*

39. Lafont, *Femme*, 133. Lafont concludes (p. 171) that "l'écart entre les penalties [between the rapist of a married or betrothed woman and an unmarried one, free or slave] est remarquable: la mort, ou parfois le versament d'une rançon, dans le premier cas; l'indemnité ou l'amende, éventuellement assortie d'un talion et d'un mariage réparateur, dans le second cas."

40. Scurlock, 66. This interpretation neither addresses nor solves the matter of Nanna-Suen's conception, which is a problem in itself.

41. For Ninlil, see M. Krebernik, "Ninlil," *RLA* 9 (2001): 452–61. The couple was paired as early as the Fara Period (see Krebernik, "Ninlil," 453).

su-u b, "to kiss." The two verbs have a basic, neutral meaning, and at least for the latter it is hard to imagine a scenario in which kissing is considered harmful. From the evidence discussed above, however, it emerges that this couplet can assume negative nuances depending upon the context.⁴²

"Enlil and Ninlil" does not exist in a vacuum. The dynamics of Enlil and Ninlil's sexual encounters can be better understood when compared with both "Enki and Ninhursag" and "Inana and Šukaletuda." Upon closer examination, it emerges that these compositions not only share a topic, namely rape, but that they also clearly have access to similar pools of ideas and expressions concerning the larger background of the story. Most notably, when Enlil and Enki are intent on seducing rather than raping their victims, they do so in disguise. Enlil assumes three different personas to seduce Ninlil, whereas Enki dresses up like a gardener when it is time to meet with Uttu. As I noted above, all these are cases of consensual sex. I do not believe this to be a coincidence. It is likely that "Enlil and Ninlil" and "Enki and Ninhursag" go back to a common source. Whether that is the case is at present impossible to prove, but it remains true that the two compositions echo each other.

"Inana and Šukaletuda" is different, however. The human element is represented by the rapist, Šukaletuda, and the consequences of his actions have a strong impact upon the fellow human beings among whom he finds asylum. However, that Šukaletuda's chosen profession is that of a gardener cannot be a coincidence. This is precisely the persona Enki chooses to assume when he sets out to seduce Uttu. Here too, the contamination among the stories is clear. And as Enlil and Enki, Šukaletuda too has to hide his true identity once the offense is committed. In his case, the dynamics are different, because he, a man, finds refuge and shelter among men, his fellows. But the deception is maintained.

Further investigation is needed in order to highlight the broader ramifications of the motif of rape within the larger landscape of Sumerian literary texts. I hope the observations presented here provide a starting point from which to begin such an investigation.

42. In CU §§6 and 8, quoted in Lafont, *Femme*, 467, the terminology used to describe this action is niĝ₂-a-gal₂-še₃ . . . AK, followed by a . . . gi₄. The focus of these laws is on the woman's virginity, which is treated as a commodity. For niĝ₂-a₂-gar-še₃ . . . AK, see also P. Attinger, "A propos de AK «faire» (II)," ZA 95 (2005): 241.

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