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J. Cale Johnson

1 Demarcating ekphrasis in Mesopotamia

Abstract: In its original Graeco-Roman context, the term ekphrasis (*ex-* 'out' + *phrazein* 'to explain') was quickly narrowed down to its usual present-day definition, as "a vivid description of a work of art,"[1] but in this contribution I argue that older definitions involving vividness and emotional involvement with the object of description are ideally suited for an extension of the concept to Mesopotamian literary practice. Vividness can already be identified, obliquely, in Irene Winter's contrast between Western "representation" as opposed to Mesopotamian "manifestation," where manifestation necessarily involves direct interaction between a worshiper or ritual specialist and the statue that acts in the stead of the king.

I argue here that this kind of vividness can be redefined, in largely formal terms, as a rhetorical practice in which a typically third person description (aka "representation") is altered so as to give the impression of first or second person direct participation (aka "manifestation"). In Mesopotamia this rhetorical phenomenon is most clearly visible in the so-called Tigi Hymns, particularly when a votive object is directly addressed in the second person (and the ritual contextualization of these acts of direct address in well-defined sections of the hymnic genre).

As part of a broader effort to define the different "descriptive paradigms" that operated within early Mesopotamian scientific thought, the carefully circumscribed type of ekphrastic description that we find in the Tigi Hymns can be contrasted with other descriptive paradigms in cuneiform literature such as physiognomic descriptions and the late *šikinšu* texts. Within these several varieties of descriptivism, however, the particulars of ekphrastic description in the Tigi Hymns and similar materials are distinctive, and this paper concludes with a brief catalogue of ekphrastic descriptions in Classical Sumerian literature.

Keywords: ekphrasis, descriptive paradigm, multimodal configuration, translation, enumeration, lexical lists, Sumerian literature, Tigi Hymns, *Göttertypentext*, physiognomy

Introduction

One of the easiest ways of comprehending the history of ekphrasis in the ancient Near East is to focus on a researcher who resolutely avoided using the term in reference to Near Eastern art. Irene Winter, by far the most important historian of ancient

1 Or more simply: "verbal representation of a visual representation" (Heffernan 2003, 3–4, apud Squire 2013a, 157).

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Near Eastern art of her generation, was preoccupied in so much of her work with the mirroring of narrative or concrete linguistically-mediated textuality in non-written media of one kind or another. In her renowned 1981 paper on "Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative," for example, Winter makes the case that the configuration of the throne room of Assur-naṣir-pal II (ruled 883–859 BC) as well as the scenes depicted on the carved stone reliefs on its walls recapitulate, point by point, the narrative of The Standard Inscription of Assur-naṣir-pal II: the scenes depicted on the walls correspond to the narrative descriptions (with the physical presence of the king himself on the throne corresponding to the first person pronoun in the inscription).[2]

This kind of mapping between a written text (The Standard Inscription of Assur-naṣir-pal II) and a non-linguistic medium (the carefully configured scenes depicted on the wall of the throne room in combination with the ruler himself seated on his throne) was not only a hallmark of Winter's early publications, but also reappears as a central theme in her later investigations of how works of art could be "described" or "aligned" with corresponding statements in Classical Sumerian, in particular the alignment between the sculptural features of the famous gabbro statues of Gudea of Lagash, ca. 2130–2110 BCE, and the corresponding linguistic idioms and turns of phrase that one finds in the Sumerian inscriptions engraved on the statues.[3]

> Height: Gudea's "rightful head made to stand out in the assembly by his personal god Ningišzida" {saĝ-zi ukkin-na pa e_3-a ^{d}nin-ĝiš-zi-da}
>
> Breadth of Chest: Gudea is described as "his life within him abundantly (lit. widely) supplied by (the God) Šulšaga" {zi-$ša_3$-ĝal_2 šu daĝal du_{11}-ga / ^{d}šul-$ša_3$-ga-ke_4}
>
> Full-Muscled Arm: "strength given one of (the God) Nindara" {a_2 sum-ma ^{d}nin-dar-a-ke_4}
>
> Broad-faced; wide-eared: "the *ensi*, a man of wisdom was giving ear" {ensi$_2$ lu_2 ĝeštu$_2$ daĝal-kam / ĝeštu$_2$ i_3-ĝa_2-ĝa_2}[4]

As Winter herself already seems to be suggesting, to speak of this kind of point-by-point alignment as a "description" misses the point: neither the sculptural features in the statute of Gudea nor the linguistic representation of these same features in Sumerian is referring to objective reality. Both of these signaling modalities are highly

2 Winter 1981, 21. Much the same approach is recapitulated elsewhere in her extensive body of work, now collected in Winter 2010.

3 Winter 1989, reprinted in 2010, vol. 2, 151–165.

4 Copyright issues prevent me from including relevant imagery here.

conventional encodings of predefined attributes and – more importantly for our purposes here – neither modality is explicitly encoded as "object" or "description."

Given the alignment between these two modalities (sculptural and textual) as well as the absence of any derivational relationship between them, it should come as no surprise that Winter opts for a purely "semiotic" or "encoding" approach, directly linking the aligned attributes in the two different modalities to the business of maintaining political dominance.

> … we may conclude that the stylistic features described above are not merely formal properties of the works, but rather have been deployed as signs, carrying definite and identifiable value, to accord with the rhetorical ends of the statues. …
>
> Visual attributes, no less than verbal epithets, thus function as part of a signaling code, with "style" very much a carrier of meaning. The particular physical traits represented would be seen in conjunction with the major iconographic signifier of "rule" seen on many of the Gudea statues: the round-brimmed cap associated with kings from Ur-Nammu to Hammurabi.[5]

Elsewhere in her extensive work, Winter identifies clear examples of "descriptions" of artistic prowess, which also mention objects and materials in passing, but that is not what we have here.[6] The Sumerian text is not "describing" the statue, nor is it even "describing" the actual human body of Gudea himself; instead, a pre-existing set of attributes associated with kingship and rule is here instantiated in two distinct modalities: sculptural attributes in stone and linguistic attributes initially pressed into the still malleable surface of a draft clay tablet (and then, later on, cut into the surface of the statue itself).[7]

I would like to suggest, *mutatis mutandis*, that the "vividness" of ekphrastic descriptions, in which the author seeks to "bring the events before the eyes of the spectator" or make "hearers into spectators," corresponds within a distinctively Mesopotamian milieu to Winter's emphasis on the "manifestation" of royal statuary in Mesopotamian ritual practice. If the Graeco-Roman background of traditional definitions of ekphrasis largely focuses on questions of "representation," Winter argues, in contrast, that the dominance of ritual contexts (and in particular the ritual means of animating royal and divine statues through the mouth-opening ritual and the like) means that "manifestation" is more important than "representation" in a Mesopotamian context.

5 Winter 1989, 160–161.

6 Winter 2003 focuses on expressions of artful skill in the crafting and decorating of objects and these materials do occasionally offer non-ekphrastic descriptions of highly crafted objects.

7 The statues on which the Gudea inscriptions are inscribed are referenced in the text of the inscriptions with the term {alam} "image" (as recognized by Winter, for example, Winter 1992, 15), but there is no hint that textually-mediated attributes such as these are referring to attributes of the statues.

> ... through a process of ritual transformation the material form was animated, the representation not standing for but actually manifesting the presence of the subject represented. The image was then indeed empowered to speak, or to see, or to act, through various culturally-subscribed channels. ...
>
> The rituals of consecration, installation, and maintenance that differentiate Mesopotamian (and other) "manifestations" from European (and other) "representations" further intensify three simultaneous representational identities cited above, and underscore the absolute aspect of the image.[8]

There is actually a great deal to unpack in Winter's contrast between "representation" and "manifestation," but the most important of these issues is undoubtedly the manifold possibilities of directly interacting with a properly animated statue of god or king. Since any kind of reified notion of statuary animacy or fetishism will lead us astray,[9] I would like to suggest that we redefine ekphrasis in terms of how the object of description interacts with the person describing it (and any witnesses to the description). Where these interactions are constructed so as to bring about a "presencing" effect — ranging from directly addressing the object of description in the second person to more subtle devices such as the alignment between the first person pronoun and the king himself in Assur-naṣir-pal II's throneroom — we should speak of these descriptions as ekphrastic.[10] The best example of this type of "presencing" rhetorical practice in Classical Sumerian literature is found in a distinctive genre known as the Tigi Hymn.[11]

Textual descriptions of votive objects found in the Tigi Hymns, to which we will turn in detail below, are *not* objective descriptions of the votive object and consequently they were not simply meant to preserve information about the votive object in written form. Instead, these quintessentially ekphrastic texts situate a votive object, whether statue or temple, chariot or boat, in an explicitly described interactional context. In the most interesting and interactive of these contexts, the king speaks directly to the votive object in the second person:[12]

> *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge* (= Šulgi R) 1–4
> 1. O Barge! Enki decreed for you a quay of abundance as (your) fate,
> 2. Father Enlil looked upon you with true benevolence,

8 Winter 1992, 13 and 35.

9 Much the same ground is covered in Böhme 2014, for example, although largely in reference to much later, modern materials.

10 I am borrowing this term from Pongratz-Leisten's 2015 description of "presencing" in first-millennium descriptive texts of one kind or another, but I am attempting to give it a more formalist definition here.

11 The most important overview of the Tigi and Adab hymns is Wilcke 1976, which also represents, as it happens, our most important formalist manifesto for the study of Sumerian literary devices.

12 As Squire (2013b, 112) points out, there are shifts into the second person in some limited circumstances in Theophrastus's *Imagines*, but it does not seem to be a normative element.

3. Your lady, Ninlil, ordered your construction,
4. To the faithful provider, to the king Šulgi, she gave instructions concerning you,[13]

Crucially, in the Mesopotamian approach to modeling and instantiating divine objects, the plans for the votive object, namely Ninlil's barge, had been delivered, as it were, to King Šulgi (reigned 2094–2047 BC) beforehand in a dream (see below), and on this basis the experts in the employ of the crown had crafted the object. The Tigi Hymn *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge* (= Šulgi R) not only situates the votive object in an explicitly interactional ritual context, as in these opening lines, but also offers a point-by-point description of the votive object in which each element is paired with a linguistically-formulated epithet or attribute.

Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge (= Šulgi R) 11–15
11. As for your large reed mats, they are daylight, spread widely over the pure countryside,
12. As for your timbers, they are … *muššatur*-serpents, crouching on their limbs,
13. As for your punting poles, they are dragons, sleeping sweetly in their lair,
14. As for your oars, they are *sigsig*-snakes, whose bellies are pressed against the waves,
15. As for your floor planks, they are the currents of the flood, sparkling together in the pure Euphrates,[14]

The somewhat peculiar structure of the Tigi Hymn, as a genre, ensures that the votive object is brought before the eyes of readers, even if, as we will see later on, votive objects are also spoken of in the third as well as the second person. The feature of the Tigi Hymn that makes it so relevant to questions of ekphrasis, however, is its dominant concern with the interactive relationship between the votive object, the ruler who dedicates the object to the gods and, in many cases, the human audience that bears witness to the donation.

13 The original reads:
1. [ma$_2$]-⌜ĝar⌝ ^{d}en-ki-ke$_4$ kar ḫe-ĝal$_2$ nam-še$_3$ ma-ra-ni-in-⌜tar^{ar}⌝
2. [a]-⌜a⌝ ^{d}en-lil$_2$-le igi zi mu-u$_3$-ši-bar^{ar}
3. nin-zu-u$_3$ ^{d}nin-lil$_2$-le u$_3$-tu-zu bi$_2$-in-dug$_4$
4. u$_x$(PA)-a zi lugal šul-gi-da a$_2$-zu mu-da-an-aĝ$_2$

14 The original reads:
11. kid-maḫ-ḫal-zu-u$_3$ u$_4$ a$_2$-dam ku$_3$-ge daĝal-bi si$^{?}$-a$^{?}$ ⌈me⌉-en$_3$
12. ĝiš-šu-dim$_2$-zu-u$_3$ muš-ša$_3$-tur$_3$ sim-dam ak šu-ba nu$_2$ me-en$_3$
13. gi-⌜muš$^{?}$⌝-zu-u$_3$ ušumgal ki-nu$_2$-bi-a u$_3$ dug$_3$ ku$_4$-me-en$_3$
14. ^{ĝiš}mi-ri$_2$-za-zu-u$_3$ muš sig-sig kur-ku ša$_3$ ki tab-ba me-en$_3$
15. ^{ĝiš}eme-sig-zu-u$_3$ a-ĝe$_6$ ^{id2}buranuna ku$_3$-ga teš$_2$-ba gun$_3$-gun$_3$ me-en$_3$

Pardigmaticity and enumeration

One useful way of differentiating types of descriptive practice in the Mesopotamian textual record is to ask if a particular mode of description is based, more-or-less explicitly, on particular sets of lexical items. Throughout the long history of cuneiform writing, lexical lists – lists of words written in cuneiform and organized according to various different principles – were used to bring order to the scribal enterprise. Recent work, in particular Niek Veldhuis's survey of the lexical list tradition (2014), has now demonstrated that older, overwrought interpretations, in which these lists of words were taken as comprehensive models of the cosmos, can be safety disregarded: the primary purpose of lexical lists was, first and foremost, to bring order to the educational program of the Old Babylonian scribal academies. As the doyen of Sumerian literature, Miguel Civil, argued in a well-known contribution to Festschrift Reiner in 1987, the internal structure or logic of sequences of lexical items often served as a predominant means of structuring information in a number of Sumerian literary genres. Civil spoke of this practice as "enumeration" and used passages from Sumerian literary compositions like *Home of the Fish* and the paper's eponymous *Feeding Dumuzi's Sheep* to demonstrate how it operated.

Civil-style Enumeration (*Feeding Dumuzi's Sheep* 11–14)[15]
11. ⌜zi⌝ [k]alam-ma a-ša$_3$-ga ĝal$_2$-[la-ĝu$_{10}$]
12. ⌜u$_2$-ĝu$_{10}$⌝ **isin-na-<ĝu$_{10}$>** udu-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫa-ma-gu$_7$-e
13. ⌜nu⌝-sig$_2$ il$_2$-il$_2$-ĝu$_{10}$ nu-mu-un-su ⌜da-ri⌝-ĝu$_{10}$
14. u$_2$-ĝu$_{10}$ **^{u2}šakira$_3$^{ra}-ĝu$_{10}$** udu-ĝu$_{10}$ udu-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫa-ma-gu$_7$-e
11–12. [$_{frame}$ May my sheep eat my plant,]
[$_{lemma}$ my (barley) ears,]
[$_{comment}$ which, standing in the fields, are life for the country,]
13–14. [$_{frame}$ May my sheep eat my plant,]
[$_{lemma}$ my churn-plant,]
[$_{comment}$ support of the orphan, sustenance of the widow,]
(Translation after Civil)

Here the terms or lemmata in the enumeration ({isin} '(barley) stalk' in line 12 and {^{u2}šakira$_3$} 'churn-plant' in line 14, in **bold** above) are embedded in a literary formula that repeats throughout the enumeration. The "lemma" is sandwiched in between {u$_2$-ĝu$_{10}$} 'my plant' and {udu-ĝu$_{10}$} 'my sheep' and each of these lines ends with the same main verb {ḫa-ma-gu$_7$-e} 'may (the sheep) eat (the plant)' – we might speak of these elements as the "frame". These lines define each entry and give the title to the composition as a whole, namely *Feeding Dumuzi's Sheep*. Each of the lines that

15 Civil 1987, 40.

consist of a lemma and its frame (12 and 14 above) are also preceded, however, by a comment line (lines 11 and 13 above) that provides us with a conventional piece of information about the lemma; its "cultural significance," as it were: the stalk is described, appropriately enough, as "standing in the field" {a-ša$_3$-ga ĝal$_2$-la} and as "the life of the land" {zi kalam-ma}, while the comment attached to the churn-plant {^{u2}šakira$_3$} describes it as "supporter of the orphan" {nu-sig$_2$ il$_2$-il$_2$} and "what sustains the widow" {nu-mu-un-su da-ri}. As Civil goes on to point out, these kinds of comments or conventional epithets are also attested in the few Early Dynastic plant compendia that we have,[16] and the functional similarities between the comments in *Feeding Dumuzi's Sheep* and the comments attached to the individual pieces of the barge in *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge* above should be self-evident.[17]

As always, Civil wisely avoids making any general statements about the generative properties of the process of enumeration, and at least in part, this is due to the fact that we do not have explicit textual precursors that demonstrate this type of derivational process. Stated somewhat differently, for the most part, we do not have the thematically driven lexical lists that would have served as direct written sources for the type of enumerations that Civil hypothesized. This is particularly evident, if we turn to Niek Veldhuis's magisterial edition of *Nanše and the Birds* (2004). Veldhuis provides his readers with a full edition of the Classical Sumerian version of *Nanše and the Birds*, as we might expect, but crucially he also makes available in the same volume editions of the Early Dynastic bird and fish lists as well as a wide variety of Old Babylonian lexical lists, both canonical and extracanonical, that cover much the same territory. Veldhuis recognizes the type of texts described in Civil's 1987 paper (including *Home of the Fish*, *Dumuzi's Sheep* and *Ninurta's Fields*) as well as *Nanše and the Birds* as examples of "compositions . . . structured around a given lexical set (names of fish; names of plants; and names of fields respectively) [that] proceed by describing the individual items of the set and/or by framing them in a standard formula" and describes their internal patterning at some length.[18] The surprising thing about these texts, particularly when we take into consideration the full lexical dataset that Veldhuis makes available in the same volume, is that the sequence of lemmata in an "enumerated" text like *Nanše and the Birds* does not align with the sequence found in the purely lexical sources: the set

16 Civil and Biggs 1966, 8, apud Civil 1987, 38. The clearest example in Civil and Biggs 1966 is in lines 3′-4′ of their text 3 (= CBS 7094 and its Early Dynastic precursors), where the Old Babylonian version has {sum$^{sar.šum}$ tukul$_x$(GIŠ)$^{tu\text{-}ku\text{-}ul}$ mes$^{me\text{-}eš3}$ / gu$_2$ ki am$_3$-la$_2$}, which one might translate as "garlic, the weapon of the youth – he wears it around (his) neck."

17 It should not go unnoticed that in both texts the enumeration is linked through possessive pronouns to the person or entity that is being described. This is largely due to the way that topicalization operates in Sumerian: see Zolyomi 1993 and the somewhat different interpretation in Johnson 2010, 125–136. The fact that the epithet or comment precedes the lemma may be unsettling to some readers, but this is normative in Classical Sumerian literature: see Johnson 2010, 148–150.

18 Veldhuis 2004, 56–58.

of lemmata is largely identical but their sequence is not. Veldhuis does allow for the possibility that *Nanše and the Birds* is roughly modeled on the sequence in the Early Dynastic list of fish and birds, but a careful perusal of the sources that Veldhuis has assembled shows definitively that written lists of words were not directly transformed into Civil-style "enumerated" literary texts.[19]

Rather than chasing after seemingly non-existent textual intermediaries I would like to suggest that the driving force behind "enumeration" and other "modalities of paradigmatic description," or more simply "descriptive paradigms," is the adoption of a specific rhetorical or discursive structure for each type of rhetorical practice. For enumeration, as suggested above, the combination of a repetitive frame ("May my sheep eat _____ (plant name), my plant") with a preceding comment on the plant name mentioned in the gap serves as a formal criterion for its identification. Each entry is formulated in the same pattern, some entries adding the type of agricultural or bucolic comments that we might expect from the quintessential shepherd Dumuzi, while others turn metaphoric: wild licorice {^{u2}munzer-ĝu$_{10}$} is described as "dripping with honey" {lal$_3$-ta ḫab$_2$-ba}, while carob-pods {^{u2}ḫarub} are compared to "waterskins hanging from the saddle" {^{kuš}ummu dag-si la$_2$}. These comments arise as part of the descriptive metalanguage of Sumerian littérateurs in the Old Babylonian Tablet House, but entries like "life of the country" in lines 11–12 or "support of the orphan, sustenance of the widow" in lines 13–14 move beyond simple description and allude to the social or symbolic significance of particular plants. These pairs of "lemma plus comment" were then embedded in a literary "frame" in order to give the rudiments of a narrative structure. Although there are important commonalities between "enumerated" texts and the ekphrastic materials that we are preoccupied with here (most importantly the basic paradigmatic structure of each individual "lemma" paired with a specific "comment"), they also regularly differ from each other in the rhetorical devices that define each descriptive paradigm.

If we are to define or identify a new descriptive paradigm under the heading of "ekphrasis," which will hopefully take its place alongside the rhetorical pattern that Civil speaks of as "enumeration," it is important, in my view, that it be identified on the basis of both internal rhetorical features as well as the primary or privileged contexts of use in which it typically appears. Returning to our earlier example of ekphrastic description from *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge* 11–15, we should note, first and foremost, a series of contrasts between the ekphrastic description in *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge* and the enumeration in *Feeding Dumuzi's Sheep*:

11. kid-maḫ-ḫal-zu-u$_3$ u$_4$ a$_2$-dam ku$_3$-ge daĝal-bi si$^?$-a$^?$ ⌜me⌝-en$_3$
12. ĝiš-šu-dim$_2$-zu-u$_3$ muš-ša$_3$-tur$_3$ sim-dam ak šu-ba nu$_2$ me-en$_3$

19 This kind of direct transformation of the lexical list tradition does occasionally pop up in the written sources, but it was presumably seen, in aesthetic terms, as jejune. For one apparent instance of this kind of aesthetic criticism, see Johnson and Geller 2015, 36.

13. gi-⌜muš?⌝-zu-u_3 ušumgal ki-nu_2-bi-a u_3 dug_3 ku_4-me-en_3
14. ^{ĝiš}mi-ri_2-za-zu-u_3 muš sig-sig kur-ku $ša_3$ ki tab-ba me-en_3
15. ^{ĝiš}eme-sig-zu-u_3 a-$ĝe_6$ ^{id2}buranuna ku_3-ga $teš_2$-ba gun_3-gun_3 me-en_3
[$_{frame}$ O Barge! Enki decreed for you a quay of abundance as (your) fate, . . .]
11. [$_{lemma}$ As for your large reed mats,]
[$_{comment}$ they are daylight, spread widely over the pure countryside,]
12. [$_{lemma}$ As for your timbers,]
[$_{comment}$ they are *muššatur*-serpents, crouching on their limbs,]
13. [$_{lemma}$ As for your punting poles,]
[$_{comment}$ they are dragons, sleeping sweetly in their lair,]
14. [$_{lemma}$ As for your oars,]
[$_{comment}$ they are *sigsig*-snakes, whose bellies are pressed against the waves,]
15. [$_{lemma}$ As for your floor planks,]
[$_{comment}$ they are the currents of the flood, sparkling together in the pure Euphrates,]

(Translation after Civil)

Here in an ekphrastic description, the framing element only occurs at the beginning of the entire description, typically in a vocative addressed to the entity or object being described: "O Barge! Enki decreed for you a quay of abundance as (your) fate, . . ." in line 1. The individual entries then follow in sequence, each beginning with the lemma at the beginning of the line. As here the lemmata are modified by a second person possessive pronoun, which refers back to the entity or object addressed in the frame at the beginning of the description. Several aspects of this pattern are different from enumeration, not least, the fact that in an ekphrastic description the frame is not repeated for each unit, as was the case with Civil's examples of enumeration. The use of clause-initial nominal phrases that include a possessive pronoun has been recognized, in somewhat different ways, by the several descriptions of topicalization in Classical Sumerian (see n. 17 above), and here the repeated addition of the copula at the end of each line confirms the topic-comment structure of ekphrastic descriptions like this. In *Feeding Dumuzi's Sheep*, in contrast, each lemma occurs in apposition to the generic term "my plant" {u_2-$ĝu_{10}$} as the direct object of a finite verb and no topicalization is involved.

Thanks to Beate Pongratz-Leisten's recent paper on "Imperial Allegories: Divine Agency and Monstrous Bodies in Mesopotamia's Body Description Texts," we have a ready-made array of first-millennium Akkadian texts that can be easily arrayed in a cline of decreasing ekphrasis, ranging from examples of full-fledged ekphrasis such as the Ninurta hymns to the purely descriptive *Göttertypen* and *Body Description Texts*.[20]

20 It should be kept in mind that Pongratz-Leisten has rather different aims in mind, with her presentation of these different groups of descriptive materials from the first millennium BC, not least an

Like the Classical Sumerian ekphrastic description from *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge*, which we looked at a moment ago, the Ninurta hymns that Pongratz-Leisten summarizes exhibit very much the same rhetorical pattern: direct address to the deity at the beginning followed by a series of body-parts, each bearing a second person possessive pronoun, and a corresponding paradigm of conventional comments attached to each of the lemmata.

Syncretic Hymn to Ninurta, the Warrior Deity 4′, 11′-12′ and 19′-22′
[$_{\text{frame}}$ 4′. O Ninurta, warrior, you . . .]
. . .
19′. [$_{\text{lemma}}$ Your teeth]
[$_{\text{comment}}$ are the Seven (Pleiades), who slay evildoers,]
20′. [$_{\text{lemma}}$ Your cheeks, O lord,]
[$_{\text{comment}}$ are the rising of brilliant stars,]
21′. [$_{\text{lemma}}$ Your ears]
[$_{\text{comment}}$ are Ea and Damkina, sages of wisdom . . .]
22′. [$_{\text{lemma}}$ Your head]
[$_{\text{comment}}$ is Adad, who makes heaven and earth resound like a smithy,]

The key difference between these lines from *The Syncretic Hymn* and the lines that we looked at earlier from *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge* is that here the comments are limited to named deities and their attributes, whereas the comments attached to the items listed in *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge* mostly refer to snakes and serpents, more-or-less mythologized elements of the cosmos and, only at the end, a couple of major deities (the moon-god Nanna and the sun-god Utu) for the major structural members of the boat: "your prow is Nanna . . . fair sky" and "Your stern is Utu . . . at the horizon" in lines 37 and 38.[21]

When we turn to the *Göttertypen* and *Body Description Texts*, however, the content is much the same but the rhetorical structures that involve direct address (and any other means of "presencing" the deity) are gone, replaced with purely descriptive third-person forms that involve no emotion or interaction. The following is an extract from the *Göttertypentext* for Ninurta.

effort to link the regularization of subordinate deities as the comment to the relative agency of the deity being described.

21 The Sumerian for the two lines is as follows: {ma$_2$-saĝ-zu-u$_3$ ^{d}nanna ur$_5$-ra-aš sa$_6$$^{?}$-[ga . . .]-^{r}me-en$_3$$^{\neg}$} and {ma$_2$-eĝir-zu-u$_3$ ^{d}utu an-ur$_2$-^{r}ra$^{?\neg}$ [. . . me-en$_3$]}. The contrast may result from the entities being described, with a votive object like Ninlil's barge only requiring a modicum of divine equations, while the divine body of Ninurta can only be equated with other deities.

Göttertypentext for Ninurta (MIO 1: i 51′–55′ and ii 8–10)[22]
i
51′. The head (carries) a horn and a po[los?]
52′. The face is (the one of) a hum[an being].
53′. The cheek is set (in profile).
54′. He has a *pursāsu*-headdress.
55′. His hands are (the ones of) a hum[an being].
. . .
ii
. . .
8. His left foot is opened in a walking pose.
9. He tramples with his foot on the Anzu bird.
10. His name is Ninurta.

As Pongratz-Leisten reiterates, these texts are probably meant as descriptions of statues, so it is little wonder that they avoid the presencing and other interactive qualities that we might expect of a hymn. Nonetheless, the *Göttertypentext* for Ninurta is particularly important as a comparanda, since its denotational content is necessarily quite similar to the lemmata found in the hymnic text, but it includes no reference to the comments found in the hymn and makes no use of second person addressee-oriented grammatical forms. This avoidance of the ekphrastic dimension is carried even further in the following Body Description Text, where the entity being described is a defeated, monstrous enemy and the order of lemma and comment is reversed.

22 Köcher 1953, 66, apud Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 126. The original reads as follows:
51′. SAG.DU S[I] u_3 *š*[*u-ku-su*]
52′. *pa-nu* L[U_2]
53′. *li-ta* GAR-[*in*]
54′. *pur-sa*$_3$-*sa*$_3$ GAR-[*in*]
55′. *ri-it-ta-šu* L[U_2]
. . .
8. GIR$_3$.MIN-*šu* *ša*$_2$ KAB *pu-ri-da pi-ta-at-ma*
9. GIR$_3$.MIN-*šu* ^{d}IM.DUGUD^{mušen} *ka-bi-is*
10. MU.NI ^{d}NIN.URTA

Body Description Text (KAR 307, 1–18)[23]
7. The scorpion is his lip. The whet-stone is his tongue. The leek is the hair of his armpits.
8. The drum is his lower jaw.
9. The lion is his larger intestines. The dog is his smaller intestines. The raven is his mole.
10. The poplar is [his] stature.
11. The kettledrum is his heart. The date palm is his backbone. The reeds are his fingers.
12. Silver is his skull. Gold is his sperm.

This inversion of body-part and its equation in this text, so that the "lion" is equated with the "large intestine" of the defeated deity rather than the parts of the deity being equated with other mythical beings, presumably reflects the well-known trope from *Enuma Elish*, where the slain Tiamat is refashioned into the perceivable cosmos. Pongratz-Leisten wants to see in this series of texts the "presencing and the active process of assigning agency to divine beings," and in the Ninurta hymns above the "major . . . gods were . . . unified into a single divinity, thus maximizing the potential of Ninurta's agency." But she does not carry this program of evaluating each text in terms of its "agency" through to the *Göttertypen* and Body Description Texts, so we can only guess how she might have described the presencing effect and the agency of these texts.[24]

In my view, however, the texts assembled by Pongratz-Leisten offer us an unambiguous cline of decreasing divine presence, in a discursive rather than a theological sense. *The Syncretic Hymn to Ninurta*, though written in Akkadian a millennium or so later, exhibits all of the features of ekphrastic description outlined above and, consequently, represents a full-strength act of divine presencing, while in contrast the blunting and removal of the type of presencing effects that we saw in *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge* and *The Syncretic Hymn to Ninurta* eventually leads to texts such as the

23 Livingstone 1989, 99, apud Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 132–133. The original reads as follows:
7. GIR$_2$.TAB NUNDUN-*su* ^{na4}*mu-ši-el-tu$_2$* EME-*šu$_2$* ^{u2}GA.RAŠ SIG$_2$.UZ$_3$ *su-ḫa-ti-šu$_2$*
8. [^{zabar}]*ma-an-zu-u la-aš$_2$-ḫu* KI.TA-*u$_2$*
9. UR.MAḪ ḪAR.MEŠ-*šu$_2$* GAL.MEŠ UR.GI$_7$ ḪAR.MEŠ-*šu$_2$* TUR.MEŠ ^{u2}UGA$_x$(NAGA)^{mušen} *ki-pil-šu$_2$*
10. ^{giš}ASAL$_2$.A *la-an*-[*šu$_2$*]
11. LILIZ$^{li-li-su}$ ŠA$_3$-*šu$_2$* ^{giš}GIŠIMMAR GU$_2$.MUR$_7$-*šu$_2$* GI.MEŠ ŠU.SI.MEŠ-*šu$_2$*
12. KU$_3$.BABBAR UGU-*šu$_2$* KU$_3$.SIG$_{17}$ *ri-ḫu-su*

24 Pongratz-Leisten's statement in reference to the *Göttertypentext* for Ninurta, to the effect that ". . . through its materialization in the statue, divinity in the scope and spectrum of its agency disclosed itself and came to life in the viewer's mind" (Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 127), is deeply ekphrastic in tone and conceptualization, although she does not use the term. The best overview of these materials, including numerous other Akkadian examples of what I would term ekphrastic description and Civil-style enumeration, is in Livingstone's summary statement (Livingstone 1986, 98–112).

Göttertypen and Description Texts, where no presencing or other vivid involvement seems to be at work. In the terminology I am advocating here, each of these modalities of description (Ninurta hymn, *Göttertypentext,* and Body Description Text) would represent a distinct kind of paradigmatic description, defined by its grammatical and discursive structure and oriented to well-defined contexts of use and audience. And while a broader history of descriptive paradigms in Mesopotamia would demand a literary history of each of these modalities, our focus here is on only one of these types, namely the ekphrastic description, and in particular its instantiation in the Classical Sumerian literature of the Old Babylonian period. With that goal still in mind, let us turn to the best evidence for contexts of use and the role of the audience in Sumerian ekphrastic descriptions, above all in the carefully constructed performative context of the Tigi Hymns.

Year names, votive objects and their ekphrastic context

For much of early Mesopotamian history, the names given to individual years were descriptions of a momentous achievement of the crown that had taken place in the previous year. Some of our best examples of this practice come from the Third Dynasty of Ur, otherwise known as the Ur III period, at the end of the third millennium BCE (ca. 2100–2000 BC). Šulgi's year names are relatively well understood and offer the best context for understanding royal votive offerings, and it is this well-studied context that offers the best possible set of conditions for defining the context of ekphrastic description in Mesopotamia. As Šulgi's year names demonstrate, year names could be based on either "cultic" or what we might call "political" actions such as a specific military campaign. It should be kept in mind, however, that regardless of their seemingly religious, political or military character, the stages on which nearly all of these different royal actions would have come to their conclusion were the temples of the major Mesopotamian gods. Even military campaigns, for example, were meant to acquire booty, much of which would find its way into the temples. There are actually very few non-cultic, non-military events that qualify as the basis for a year name: the construction of an 'ice house' in Šulgi year 13 comes to mind, but some years may have been judged unfit for major cultic dedications.

If we focus on the first half of Šulgi's unbelievably long 48 year reign, however, the majority of the year names in his first two decades are transparently cultic: the restoration of temples, priestly appointments and – crucially for our purposes here – the dedication of votive objects. Here we can see Walther Sallaberger's list of the royal actions commemorated by year names during the first twenty-one years of Šulgi's reign as well as, in a couple of cases, the letter (A, R and B) assigned to a specific Sumerian hymn that was performed alongside the dedication of the votive object in question.

Year	Event	Šulgi Hymn
1	Šulgi enthroned	
2	Dedication of throne for Enlil	
3	Dedication of chariot for Ninlil	
4	Dedication of temple for Ninurta	
5	Restoration of the city of Dēr	
6	Road built to Nippur	
7	**Round trip between Ur and Nippur**	**A**
8	**Dedication of a boat for Ninlil**	**R**
9	Statue of Nanna of Karzid brought into the temple	
10	**The building of the Ehursag palace**	**B**
11	Ištarān of Dēr brought into the temple	
12	Numušda of Kazallu brought into the temple	
13	Building of the royal icehouse	
14	Nanna of Nippur brought into the temple	
15	En-priestess of Nanna chosen by oracle	
16	Dedication of a bed for Ninlil	
17	En-priestess of Nanna installed	
18	King's daughter becomes queen of Marḫaši	
19	Restoration of the city of BAD_3^{ki}	
20	Ninhursag of Nutur brought into the temple	
21	Ninurta gives Šulgi permission to reorganize the empire	

The twenty-first year of Šulgi's reign, at the end of his third heptad, as it were, was special: Šulgi receives permission from the gods to completely overhaul the financial and administrative structure of the Ur III empire, and it seems that nearly all of Šulgi's year names from then on celebrate military campaigns. Moreover, in his first twenty years, we find only a few royal actions that are not directly related to the temples of the great gods: the city of Dēr is restored in year 5, the Ehursag palace is built in year 10, the royal icehouse is built in year 13 and one of the king's daughters is installed as queen in Marḫaši in year 18. Still the vast majority of the events are indeed cultic. More to the point, in no less than four of the year names the highpoint of the preceding year was an event that took place as part of the New Year festivities, namely the dedication of a votive offering by the crown: in year 2, Enlil receives a throne, Ninlil receives a chariot in year 3, a boat in year 8 and a bed in year 16.

In all likelihood each of these dedications was also accompanied by a royal hymn, but to date only a couple of these royal hymns have been identified and matched up with a year name. The alignment of particular hymns with particular year names is somewhat disputed, but of these the most certain is undoubtedly the alignment between the hymn known as *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge*, which we looked at earlier (otherwise known as Šulgi R) and the name of Šulgi's eighth year: "Year: The boat of Ninlil was sealed up," the final stage in the production of a boat. Within the vast textual record of the Ur III period – nearly 100,000 tablets are known from the century or

so it covered – the eighth year of Šulgi's reign is a particularly well-defined and rich context for investigating early Mesopotamian ekphrasis. Largely relying on Hallo's ground-breaking work on votive contexts, Sallaberger notes in his survey of the Ur III period that:

> The three aforementioned types of text for the self-representation of the king, namely (i) year names, (ii) building inscriptions, and (iii) royal hymns, all make use of the same conceptual apparatus.[25]

Put somewhat differently, three different genres of written textuality all speak to historical moments such as Šulgi's dedication of a boat or "barge," as it is usually translated, to the goddess Ninlil in the eighth year of his reign. Hallo, more pointedly, argues that these interlocking genres act as a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, leveraging the talents of the finest practitioners of both the plastic and literary arts in the last century of the third millennium BC.

If the resumption of the symbols of royal authority, during the New Year festivities, was the primary context for royal votive offerings, it should really come as no great surprise that the most highly skilled artists, in each domain of artistic production, were commanded to contribute to this single event. It was undoubtedly the pinnacle of activity in the royal household each year.

> At the conclusion of the hymn, the king is blessed by the god and takes up [again] the royal insignia, the scepter and the throne. There is no evidence, however, that this event is linked to the beginning of the king's reign. The annual reassumption [of the insignia] at the [New Year's] festival shows that the authority of the king was renewed on an annual basis.[26]

The basic idea is simple enough: the specialists in boatbuilding, metalwork, sculpture and the other mechanical and figurative arts fashioned a royal barge of unsurpassed beauty and quality, and, at the same time, one of the great poets or scholars of the age was tasked with composing a hymn that celebrated the new barge for the goddess Ninlil, both through a panegyric on the individual features or elements of the votive object and also the cultic contexts in which it was dedicated to the deity, here Ninlil.

The two passages from *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge* (lines 1–4 and 11–15) that we looked at earlier are repeated here and formed the bulk of the first major section of this Tigi Hymn, only the rest of the framing text and the full set of lemmata are left out here.

Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge 1–4 and 11–15
[$_{\text{frame}}$ 1. O Barge! Enki decreed for you a quay of abundance as (your) fate,
2. Father Enlil looked upon you with true benevolence,
3. Your lady, Ninlil, ordered your construction,

25 Sallaberger and Westenholz 1999, 144, citing Hallo 1970.
26 Sallaberger and Westenholz 1999, 144.

4. To the faithful provider, to the king Šulgi, she gave instructions concerning you,]
...
11. [$_{\text{lemma}}$ As for your large reed mats,]
[$_{\text{comment}}$ they are daylight, spread widely over the pure countryside,]
12. [$_{\text{lemma}}$ As for your timbers,]
[$_{\text{comment}}$ they are *muššatur*-serpents, crouching on their limbs,]
13. [$_{\text{lemma}}$ As for your punting poles,]
[$_{\text{comment}}$ they are dragons, sleeping sweetly in their lair,]
14. [$_{\text{lemma}}$ As for your oars,]
[$_{\text{comment}}$ they are *sigsig*-snakes, whose bellies are pressed against the waves,]
15. [$_{\text{lemma}}$ As for your floor planks,]
[$_{\text{comment}}$ they are the currents of the flood, sparkling together in the pure Euphrates,]

And on and on it goes for nearly thirty lines. We can be certain that this is an example of ekphrasis, rather than an odd one-sided conversation with a boat, not only because the singer addresses it in the second person, but also because the literary genre in which our hymn was formulated was the favorite genre of Sumerian poets for exploring alternations between first, second and third person forms. It was through these experiments with "presencing" the addressee, and thereby transcending the seemingly recondite barrier between quotidian reality and the realm of the gods, that the Tigi Hymns achieve their most important literary and theological effects.

The Tigi Hymn, as a literary genre, takes its name from a stringed instrument, but the genre is also defined, in terms of textual structure, by a change in the tuning or tension of the strings of the Tigi at the mid-point in the hymn. At the end of the first half of a Tigi, texts belonging to this genre regularly add a subscript that reads {sa gid$_2$-da}, meaning "the string(s) have been lengthened," while at the end of the entire composition we find a similar statement that "the string(s) have been placed or replaced" {sa ĝar-ra}, presumably back to their original level of tension. Specialists in the history of Mesopotamian music such as Anne Daffkorn Kilmer, R. J. Dumbrill, Th. Krispijn or Dahlia Shehata, have written extensively about the different ways in which strings were "tuned" in Mesopotamia, and I will leave to them a precise definition of a what a "lengthened string" {sa gid$_2$-da} manner of playing sounds like. The key passage in the so-called "Old Babylonian retuning text from Ur," in Kilmer's recent 2014 description, reads as follows:

> If the instrument is (tuned) as X, and the (interval) Y is not clear, you tighten the (string) N, and then Y will be clear." The preceding procedures were summed up as "tightening." The second tuning section of the same text is now translated as follows: (lines 13–20) 'If the instrument is (tuned as)

> X, and you have played an (unclear) internal Y, you loosen the string N and the instrument will be (in the tuning) Z. The second section was presumably and logically summed up as "[loosening]".[27]

Now as Kilmer, Krispijn and Mirelman have made fairly clear, the instrument that is being described in these texts is not the Tigi that gives its name to our genre, but the centrality of the tightening and loosening of musical strings, if not already obvious, is actually the central preoccupation of one of the few Sumerian literary texts that actually describe the manipulation of the Tigi.

> Šulgi E 34
> zi-zi šu$_2$-šu$_2$ tigi za-am-za-am-ma-ka ki bi$_2$-zu-zu-a
> That I (= Šulgi) know the points at which to raise and lower the tigi and zamzam songs

As Shehata goes on to point out:

> The oppositional conceptual pair {zi-zi} 'raising' and {šu$_2$-šu$_2$} 'laying down, covering', where {ĝa$_2$-ĝa$_2$} 'setting down, laying down' occasionally replaces {šu$_2$-šu$_2$}, refers to the way in which both the instrumental and voice components of the performance are carried out. As has often been noted previously, both terms correspond to the hymnic rubrics {sa gid$_2$-da} 'long/stretched string (mode)' and {sa ĝar-ra} 'laid down / resting string (mode)' in terms of the way in which the music was performed. This passage therefore refers to the two parts of the [Tigi and Adab] hymns, the sagida and the sagara, at least in terms of the way in which the musical accompaniment was performed.[28]

So the way in which these hymns are performed changes dramatically at the midpoint in the text and, crucially, the written text of these hymns is also organized, so as to fit into the musically defined two halves of the composition.

In run-of-a-the-mill hymns, this contrast between the first half (the{sa gid$_2$-da} section) and the second half (the {sa ĝar-ra} section) is visible in the organization of the hymn into strophes and other purely poetic patterns, but in some Tigi Hymns, and in particular in those that offer ekphrastic descriptions of a votive object, we see a much more dramatic shift: the ekphrastic description of the votive object – addressed to the votive object itself in the second person – occupies the first half (the {sa gid$_2$-da} section), while the second half (the {sa ĝar-ra} section) switches to the third person

27 Kilmer 2014, 94.

28 Shehata 2009, 256. The original reads: "Das oppositionelle Begriffspaar zi-zi „anheben" und šu$_2$-šu$_2$ „niederlegen, abdecken", wobei zuweilen auch ĝa$_2$-ĝa$_2$ „hinsetzen/niederlegen" anstelle des šu$_2$-šu$_2$ treten kann, bezieht sich auf die instrumentale und vokale Aufführungspraxis. Wie bereits mehrfach vermutet, stehen beide Termini aufführungstechnisch in Zusammenhang mit den Liedrubriken sa-gid$_2$-da „lange(r)/gestreckte(r) Saite (Modus)" und sa-ĝar-ra „niedergelegte(r)/ruhende(r) Saite (Modus)". Die zitierte Textpassage bezieht sich damit wohl konkret auf die zwei Teile dieser Lieder, den sagida and saĝara, sowie ihre musikalische Aufführungspraxis."

and offers a description of the use of the object by the gods from the point of view of the audience. Since we looked at the ekphrastic description a moment ago, let's quickly walk through the kind of audience-oriented description that we find in the second half of a text like *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge*.

> *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge* 41–48
> 41. The holy festival and the great rituals
> 42. were put in place by the faithful shepherd Šulgi.
> 43. The great gods bathe in holy water in Nippur.
> 44. He assigns the fates to the places in the city and allocates the right divine powers.
> 45. The mother of the Land, Ninlil the fair, comes out (?) from the house,
> 46. and Enlil embraces her like a pure wild cow.
> 47. They take their seats on the barge's holy dais, the provisions having been lavishly prepared.
> 48. The lofty barge ..., the ornament of the Tigris,
> 49. enters the rolling river ....[29]

Here, in the second half of *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge*, the votive object that was described in the first half is depicted in action, as it carries the divine couple, Ninlil and her spouse Enlil, between the great cities of the Mesopotamian alluvium.

If we then look at the eleven known examples of Tigi Hymns that name a real, historical ruler as the key human figure, it quickly becomes apparent that a number of Tigi Hymns are innovative in the way that they align the shift between the two musical modalities – loose string ({sa gid$_2$-da}) and normal string ({sa ĝar-ra}) styles of playing – with a shift in grammatical person, the perspective of the audience and even the relationship between the mundane world of ordinary experience and the divine realm.

29 The original reads:
41. ezen ku$_3$ bi$_3$-lu$_5$-da gal-gal
42. sipa zi šul-gi-re ki^{l}-bi-še$_3$ mu-ĝa$_2$-ar-ĝa$_2$-ar
43. nibru^{ki}-a diĝir gal-gal-e-ne a ku$_3$ mu-tu$_{17}$-tu$_{17}$-u$_3$-eš$_2$
44. iri^{ki}-a nam ki-bi-še$_3$ mu-tar^{ar}-e me zi mu-ḫal-⌜ḫal$^{?}$⌝-[e]
45. [ama] kalam-ma ^{d}nin-lil$_2$ lu$_2$ sa$_6$-ga e$_2$-ta^{l} nam-x [. . . e$_3$]
46. [^{d}en]-lil$_2$-le ab$_2$-šilam ku$_3$-gen$_7$ gu$_2$-da mu-⌜ni⌝-[in-la$_2$]
47. ⌜bara$_2$⌝ ku$_3$-bi dur$_2$ im-mi-in-ĝa$_2$-re-eš$_2$ niĝ$_2$ mi-ni-ib$_2$-⌜gu⌝-[ul]-gu-ul-ne
48. [ma$_2$]-⌜gur$_8$$^{?}$⌝ maḫ [x x] DU ^{id2}idigna-a ḫe$_2$-du$_7$-bi
49. [id$_2$] ⌜ḫal⌝-ḫal-la [i$_3$]-ku$_4$-ru x a mul-mul-la$^{?}$ [x x] x x x [x]

Ruler (Hymn No.)	Person/Perspective ({sa gid$_2$-da})	Person/Perspective ({sa ĝar-ra})
Gudea (#1)	2° (= Bau)	2° (= Bau)
Ur-Namma (#3)	**3° (= Enlil)**	**1°/2° (dialogue)**
Šulgi (#11)	**2° (= barge)**	**3° (audience perspective)**
Šulgi (#14)	2° (= Ninurta)	2° (= Ninurta)
Šulgi (#19)	2° (= Šulgi)	2° (= Šulgi)
Šu-Sîn (#15)	2° (= Ninurta)	2° (= Ninurta)
Ibbi-Sîn (#18)	**3° (= Suʾen)**	**3° (audience perspective)**
Išbi-Erra (#9)	2°/3° (= Nanaya)	2° (= Išbi-Erra)
Išme-Dagan (#4)	**2° (= chariot)**	**3° (audience perspective)**
Išme-Dagan (#20)	3° (= Ninurta)	3° (= Ninurta)
Ur-Ninurta (#2)	2° (= Enki)	2° (= Enki)

Most of the Tigi Hymns operate in the usual way for a hymn, describing the deity that is being addressed in the second person throughout. The hymns in bold, however, including *Šulgi and Ninlil's Barge*, which corresponds to Šulgi #11 above, operate somewhat differently. In Ur-Namma #3, for example, the first half offers a third person description of Enlil, while the second half has a dialogue between god and king, while in Ibbi-Sîn #18 we find a description of the people of the city praising both god and king in the second half. Still the two examples most relevant to us here are the hymns celebrating Ninlil's barge and the description of a chariot dedicated by Išme-Dagan. Both of these ekphrastic hymns address the votive object in the second person in the first half of the hymn, while the second half depicts the social and cultic contexts in which the deity makes use of the votive object.

The alignment of sculptural elements and the terms within each act of ekphrasis would have required a thorough collaboration between the métiers of the different technical specialists. As a number of the Tigi Hymns inform us, the "plans" for these votive objects were regularly vouchsafed to the ruler in a dream (wherein the divine command to construct the votive was issued as well) and it was the responsibility of the ruler, indeed a proof of his "wisdom," that he was able to support and coordinate the different types of craftsmen and poets who produced both the votive object itself and the hymn that accompanies it. The coordination of sculptural features and textual attributes that we saw in the Gudea statues at the beginning of the paper is one of the very few examples in which we have both votive object and ekphrastic description. In contrast, for the far more numerous ekphrastic descriptions in the Tigi Hymns and other types of Sumerian literature, we have no corresponding objects today. Nonetheless we must assume a substantial amount of coordination between the different teams of specialists responsible for different parts of the votive package, and consequently the set of lemmata operative within any given ekphrasis should probably be taken as a kind of checklist of essential elements for the type of votive object in question. No doubt, some votives are more detailed than others and some ekphrastic descriptions are more expansive, but overall the set of lexical items provided by any relatively well

contextualized ekphrastic descriptive should be taken as evidence for an informal, yet culturally real ontology of that type of object within the "space" of Classical Sumerian literature. As it happens, however, ekphrastic description was not a freely available rhetorical mode for any and all objects of description. In order to see this, however, we need to quickly survey the known instances of ekphrastic description in Classical Sumerian literature and the following section offers a relatively compact collection of such examples, arranged in terms of both formal criteria (nouns modified by second person pronouns in line-initial position) and the semantic coherence of the checklist in question.

Surveying ekphrastic descriptions in Classical Sumerian literature

Building on the foregoing definition of ekphrastic description in this paper, I briefly survey below approximately two dozen examples that meet a kind of minimum threshold: at least three second person possessive phrases in sequential lines that form a coherent semantic field. The titles given to these sequences in the following are more-or-less arbitrary, but they do strive to capture both the semantic field that unifies the lemmata and the object that they describe. Since, for our purposes here, the sets of lemmata that define a given instance of ekphrasis are more important than the literary features of any individual occurrence, I have not reproduced the full passages in transliterations or translation. Instead, I have extracted the lemmata that serve as the skeleton for each of these moments of ekphrastic description, listed these lemmata in sequence, and reorganized the list of ekphrastic descriptions into a sequence from least to most complex.

3×

Features of Inanna: (1) 'augustness' {nam-maḫ}, (2) 'opening of the mouth' {ka ba}, (3) 'divinity' {nam-diĝir} (Hammurabi F 7–9)

Features of princely rule: (1) 'word' {inim}, (2) 'command' {a$_2$ aĝ$_2$-ĝa$_2$}, (3) 'princeliness' {nam-nun} (Ur-Ninurta E 34–36)

Features of royal praise: (1) 'praise' {za$_3$-mi$_2$}, (2) 'kingship' {nam-lugal}, (3) 'shepherdship' {nam-sipa} (Iddin-Dagan B 52–54)

Features of royal appearance: (1) 'interior' {ša$_3$}, (2) 'flesh' {su}, (3) 'external appearance' {bar} (Rim-Sîn G 43–45)

4×

Parts of a city: (1) 'interior' {ša$_3$}, (2) 'exterior' {bar}, (3) 'external appearance' {su-bar}, (4) 'location' {ki} (Ishme-Dagan W 57–62)

Parts of a temple: (1) 'gate' {ka$_2$}, (2) 'platform' {gi-ša$_3$}, (3) 'interior' {ša$_3$}, (4) 'offerings' {nidba} (Ur-Namma E 9–16)

5×
Characteristics of a goddess: (1) 'fearsomeness' {ni$_2$}, 'face' {igi}, 'forehead' {saĝ-ki}, 'mouth' {ka}, 'arm' {a$_2$} (Iddin-Dagan D 29–33)
Characteristics of a heroic king: (1) 'heroism' {nam-ur-saĝ}, (2) 'strength' {nam-kalag-ga}, (3) 'seed' {a}, (4) 'birth-mother' {ama ugu$_2$}, (5) 'personal god' {diĝir} (Shulgi D 38–42)

Corpse of the Bull of Heaven: (1) 'corpse' {ad$_6$}, (2) 'intestines' {ša$_3$-maḫ}, (3) 'hide' {kuš}, (4) 'meat' {uzu}, (5) 'horns' {si} (*Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*, segment B 79–83, repeated in segment D 28–32)

Features of the god Numušda: (1) 'arm/strength' {a$_2$}, (2) 'claw' {umbin}, (3) 'authority' {nam-nir-ĝal$_2$}, (4) 'augustness and magnitude' {nam-maḫ nam-gur$_4$}, (5) 'good word' {inim du$_{10}$-ga} (Sin-iqisham A 25–30)

Gathering places for herds, people or deities: (1) 'sheepfolds' {ama}, (2) '(herds of) sheep' {udu}, (3) *giguna*-building {gi-gun$_4$-na}, (4) 'just temple' {e$_2$ zid}, (5) 'the midst of the Anunna deities' {^{d}a-nun-na-ke$_4$-ne ša$_3$} (*Enki and the World Order* 206–209)

7×
The gate of Enki's Temple in Eridu: (1) 'lock' {^{giš}saĝ-gal}, (2) 'bolt' {^{giš}si-ĝar}, (3) 'roof beam' {giš-ur$_3$}, (4) 'reed mat' {^{gi}kid}, (5) 'vault' {nir-gam-ma}, (6) 'door' {ka$_2$}, (7) 'stairway' {kun$_4$} (*Enki's Journey to Nippur* 26–32)

8×
Limbs and body-parts of the Anzu bird: (1) 'hand' {šu}, (2) 'foot' {ĝiri$_3$}, (3) 'wing' {pa}, (4) 'claw' {umbin}, (6) 'spine' {murgu}, (7) 'ribs' {ti-ti}, (8) 'paunch' {ša$_3$-sud} (*The Return of Lugalbanda* 119–124)

10×
Materials for the cult: (1) 'song' {en$_3$-du}, (2) '*tigi*-hymn' {tigi}, (3) 'bull' {gu$_4$}, (4) 'ram' {udu}, (5) 'oil bearer' {i$_3$ gur$_3$-ru}, (6) 'ghee bearer' {ga gur$_3$-ru}, (7) 'temple fish bearer' {šu-peš ku$_6$ gur$_3$-ru}, (8) 'fowler bearing birds' {mušen-du$_3$ mušen gur$_3$-ru}, (9) 'watercourses suitable for barges' {id$_2$ ma$_2$-gur$_8$-ra ba-ab-du$_7$-a}, (10) 'roads built for chariots' {ḫar-ra-an ^{ĝiš}gigir-ra ba-ab-ĝar-ra} (*Ur Lament* 359–368)

15×
Raw materials debased in Akkad: (1) 'clay' {im}, (2) 'barley' {še}, (3) 'wood' {giš}, (4) 'slaughterer of oxen' {gu$_4$ gaz-gaz}, (5) 'sacrificer of sheep' {udu šum-šum}, (6) 'pauper' {ukur$_3$}, (7) 'prostitute' {kar-kid}, (8) 'mother priestess' {ama nu-gig}, (9) 'cultic prostitute' {nu-bar}, (10) 'gold' {ku$_3$-sig$_{17}$}, (11) 'silver' {ku$_3$-babbar}, (12) 'copper' {uruda}, (13) 'powerbroker/strongman' {a$_2$-tuku}, (14) 'choice equids' {^{anše}ni-is-kum}, (15) 'citizens who eat fine bread' {dumu-gi$_7$ ninda sa$_6$-ga gu$_7$-gu$_7$} (*The Curse of Agade* 231–250)

23×
Components of Ninlil's barge: (1) 'woven . . .' {tug$_2$? x sig$_{10}$-ga gu-a tag? -ga}, (2) 'covering reed-mats' {KID.MAḪ-ḫal}, (3) 'timbers' {ĝiš-šu-dim$_2$}, (4) 'punting poles' {gi-muš}, (5) 'strakes(?)' {^{ĝiš}mi-ri$_2$-za}, (6) 'floor-planks' {^{ĝiš}eme-sig}, (7) 'side-planks' {^{ĝiš}u$_3$ ^{ĝiš}ḫar-ra KEŠ$_2$.KEŠ$_2$-ra$_2$}, (8) 'holy . . .' {^{ĝiš}LU ku$_3$}, (9) 'bench' {ĝiš-ḫum}, (10) '. . .' {^{ĝiš}IGI.x}, (11) 'door, facing the sunrise' {ka$_2$ u$_4$ ed$_2$-še$_3$ ĝal$_2$-la}, (12) 'glittering golden sun-disc' {aš-me ku$_3$-sig$_{17}$-ga gun$_3$-a}, (13) 'banner, adorned with the divine powers of kingship' {an-ti-bal me nam-lugal-la-ka še-er-ḫa-an dug$_4$-ga}, (14) 'small reed mats' {KID.ŠU$_2$}, (15) 'carefully tended small gizi reeds with numerous twigs (?)' {gi-zi di$_4$-di$_4$ pa$_{12}$-pa$_{12}$-al il$_2$-la saĝ sig$_{10}$-ga}, (16) 'rudder' {^{ĝiš}zi-ganan}, (17) '. . .' {[. . .]}, (18) 'tow-rope' {eš$_2^{!}$(TUG$_2$) ma$_2$-gid$_2$}, (19) 'mooring pole' {^{ĝiš}targul}, (20) 'longside beams' {^{ĝiš}ad-us$_2$}, (21) 'prow' {ma$_2$-saĝ}, (22) 'stern' {ma$_2$-eĝer}, (23) 'hold(?)' {a$_2$? -bur$_2$?} (*Shulgi and Ninlil's Barge* 10–39)

28×
Components of Enlil's Chariot: (1) '. . .' {[. . .] x x x}, (2) 'furnishings' {^{ĝiš}šu-kar$_2$}, (3) 'pole' {^{ĝiš}ma-dul$_{10}$}, (4) '. . .' {su-din}, (5) 'yoke' {^{ĝiš}eren$_2$}, (6) 'rope-fastened pegs' {^{ĝiš}gag-si$_4$-la$_2$}, (two lines missing), (9) '. . . of the side-poles' {[...]-ka-a sig$_{10}$-ga}, (10) '. . .' {x ^{ĝiš}saĝ-kul-huš-ba}, (six lines missing), (17) 'mud-guard' {saḫar-gi$_4$}, (18) 'front of mud-guard' {saĝ-ki saḫar-gi$_4$}, (19) 'implements' {a$_2$-šita$_4$-a}, (20) 'axle' {^{ĝiš}gag-a}, (21) 'pole-pin' {^{ĝiš}DUB}, (22) 'farings' {gaba-ĝal$_2$}, (23) 'platform' {^{u2}ḫirin}, (24) 'side beams' {gab$_2$-il$_2$}, (25) 'cross-beams' {šag$_4$-su$_3$}, (26) 'side-boards' {da-da}, (27) 'foot-board' {ĝiri$_3$-gub}, (28) 'seat' {^{ĝiš}gu-za} (*Ishme-Dagan and Enlil's Chariot* 9–40)

Though the shorter ekphrastic sequences might conceivably occur in both sacred and secular contexts, as we move into the longer examples of ekphrasis, the objects being described lie exclusively within the domain of the gods: attributes of the deities themselves or their temples, raw and processed materials used in the cult, and not least, major votive objects dedicated to the most important deities. It is, consequently, no accident that the lengthiest examples that we have correspond to votives presented to the chief deities of the pantheon: Ninlil's barge and the chariot of Enlil. Stated somewhat differently, the use of full-form ekphrastic description is not an ideologically uninflected rhetorical choice; it is by its very instantiation a clue that we are concerned with the manifestation of the realm of the gods rather than the quotidian existence of mere mortals. (And in this regard ekphrastic descriptions in Classical Sumerian literature differ fundamentally from the example of Civil's enumeration that we looked at earlier, with their focus on the cataloguing of an entire domain of the natural or social world, ranging from domesticated grasses suitable as fodder to the attributes of birds.)

Even if the ekphrases in *Ninlil's Barge* and *Enlil's Chariot* constitute the most elaborate examples within the originating context of the Tigi Hymns (and other similar genres meant to accompany the votive object itself), the most famous implementation of ekphrastic description in the Classical Sumerian literary corpus occurs in a rather different type of text: the Lugalbanda epics. *The Return of Lugalbanda*, the second of the two epics in which the eponymous hero figures, represents one of our best sources for the creative manipulation of ekphrastic ideals, including the notion – mooted a moment ago – that ekphrastic description is inherently linked to manifestations of the divine in observable reality, otherwise known as a theophany. The story goes something like this: the eighth and youngest of a group of brothers (the other seven modeled in part on the *daimons* later known as the *Sebettu*) goes on a military campaign to the mythical city of Aratta, falls ill on the way, and is left behind in a kind of nest, to live or die as the gods decide. This eighth brother, namely Lugalbanda, not destined to rule and left to die in the mountains on his first campaign, recovers and seeks to win over the Anzu(d)-bird, a mythological being who is able to decide his fate. Lugalbanda secures the blessing from the Anzu(d)-bird and eventually becomes, as we would expect in the epic logic at work here, the king of Uruk.

The way in which Lugalbanda receives the blessing from the Anzu(d)-bird is too involved to present here in full, but in essence Lugalbanda performs a series of kindly and humble ritual actions on behalf of the Anzu(d)-bird's young, still in its nest, and Lugalbanda is then rewarded, first with a theophany of the Anzu(d)-bird itself and later on with a blessing that will make it possible for him to perform the duties of empire. The description itself reads as follows:

The Return of Lugalbanda 115–124[30]
[$_{\text{frame}}$ 115. O Bird with beautiful eyes, born in this *Zwischenraum*!
116. O Anzu(d)-bird with beautiful eyes, born in this in-between-zone!]
117. [$_{\text{lemma}}$ As you bathe in the pools,]
[$_{\text{comment}}$ you frolic,]

30 Vanstiphout 2003, 142–143. The original reads as follows:
115. mušen šu-ur$_2$ SIG$_7$ LAL$_2$.LAGAB-a tu-da
116. anzu^{mušen} šu-ur$_2$ SIG$_7$ LAL$_2$.LAGAB-a tu-da
117. aya$_x$(SUG)-a a tu$_5$-tu$_5$-zu a a-ne du$_{11}$-du$_{11}$
118. pa-bil$_2$-ga-zu nun ḫal-ḫal-la-ke$_4$
119. an šu-zu-še$_3$ ki ĝiri$_3$-zu-še$_3$ mu-un-ĝar
120. pa-zu an-na sa am$_3$-ši-im-la$_2$-la$_2$-en nu-mu [. . .]
121. ki-še$_3$ umbin-zu am kur-ra šilam kur-ra ^{ĝiš}es$_2$-ad^{l}-am$_3$ ba-nu$_2$
122. murgu-zu dub sar-sar-re me-en
123. ti-ti-zu ^{d}niraḫ dar-a me-en
124. ša$_3$-sud-zu kiri$_6$ sig$_7$-ga u$_6$-e gub-ba me-en

118. [$_{lemma}$ Your forebearer, prince of all domains,]
119. [$_{comment}$ placed heaven at your hands and earth at your feet.]
120. [$_{lemma}$ Your wingspan]
[$_{comment}$ is a net stretched across the sky, it cannot . . .]
121. [$_{lemma}$ (On the earth)[31] your talons]
[$_{comment}$ are a trap laid for the wild bulls and cows of the highlands.]
122. [$_{lemma}$ Your spine]
[$_{comment}$ is (straight like) a writer of tablets.]
123. [$_{lemma}$ Your chest]
[$_{comment}$ is Nirah, parting the waters.]
124. [$_{lemma}$ As for your paunch,
[$_{comment}$ it is a verdant garden, a wonder to behold.]

(translation after Vanstiphout)

Whereas in the canonical examples that we looked at earlier the ekphrastic description is attached to a votive object that passes from the quotidian world of mankind into the divine realm, here Lugalbanda bears witness to a theophany of the deity and offers an ekphrastic description of this act of divine manifestation. The Anzu(d)-bird is directly addressed in the first two lines, as we have come to expect, and, in the remaining eight lines, we have exactly the same type of piece by piece, body-part by body-part description that we had for the votive objects dedicated by the crown during the New Year's festival. And, not incidentally, just as Šulgi's presentation of Ninlil's boat at the New Year festivities in his eighth year serves as the basis for his reinstatement as king, here as well Lugalbanda's very perception of the theophany seems to legitimate Lugalbanda as a future king of Uruk.

As we learn from Robert Alter's still magisterial exposition in *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, it is often the inversion or transformation of an expected motif or type-scene that truly demonstrates its reality and artistic power. Here as well in the Lugalbanda epics we should probably recognize an inversion of the usual rhetorical expectations associated with a votive offering: rather than the ruler receiving the plans for a votive object in a dream, which he then constructs and offers back to the deity, we have a would-be usurper king lost in the wilderness who provides an ekphrastic description of the theophany of the deity. And then, in yet another reversal, it is Lugalbanda himself who proposes a series of votive offerings for the Anzu(d)-bird:

31 In lengthier ekphrases such as this a midpoint is often marked, as here, by an interruption of the line-initial position of the elements of the ekphrasis. Here in line 121, precisely midway between the first three items in lines 117–120 and the following three items in lines 121–124, {ki-$\check{s}e_3$} is placed at the beginning of the line, even though it could, just as well, have followed {umbin-zu} (the next term of the ekphrasis), thereby allowing the line-initial pattern to continue without interruption. (The apparently anomalous character of line 119 results from the fact that it is actually the comment to line 118 rather than a separate item in the description.)

The Return of Lugalbanda 178–183[32]
178. If Utu allows me to reach my city Kulaba,
179. may those who despise me not rejoice!
180. May those who have a quarrel with me not say, "Come on then!"
181. Then I shall have the sculptors make statues of you, a wonder to behold!
182. Your name shall be revered throughout Sumer,
183. and they (= the statues) will become an emblem in the temples of all the great gods!"

(translation after Vanstiphout)

In his response in lines 195–202, the Anzu(d)-bird repeats the same lines – now in a future perfect rather than a precative mood – and thereby agrees to Lugalbanda's terms. Thus, rather than humbly receiving the deity's design for a votive object, the usurper Lugalbanda has forced a manifestation of the fate-determining deity Anzu(d), through his kind treatment of the Anzu(d)'s young, presented a formally perfect ekphrastic description of the Anzu(d) and then negotiated the right to present votive objects corresponding to this ekphrasis of the Anzu(d) theophany "in the temples of all the great gods." Although various details could be taken and argued differently, Lugalbanda's sequence of actions seems to represent a clear inversion of the usual sequence of actions associated with a votive object and its accompanying ekphrastic description.[33]

Conclusion

So where does this brief survey of ekphrastic descriptions in Classical Sumerian literature leave us? First and foremost, I offer here a formal definition of ekphrastic description in Classical Sumerian literary sources, namely a relatively fixed discursive structure in which an observer first addresses the entity or object being described,

32 Vanstiphout 2003, 144–145. The original reads:
178. ^{d}utu iri-ĝu$_{10}$ kul-ab$_{4}$^{ki}-še$_{3}$ am$_{3}$-ku$_{4}$-ku$_{4}$-de$_{3}$-ne-a
179. lu$_{2}$ aš$_{2}$ du$_{11}$-ga-ĝu$_{10}$ nam ba-e-ši-ḫul$_{2}$-e-en
180. lu$_{2}$ du$_{14}$ mu$_{2}$-a-ĝu$_{10}$ ḫe$_{2}$-du-ĝu$_{10}$ nam-me
181. alan-zu ĝiš-dim$_{2}$-ba um-mi-dim$_{2}$ u$_{6}$-e gub-ba me-en
182. mu-zu ki-en-gi-ra pa e$_{3}$ ba-ni-ak
183. e$_{2}$ diĝir gal-gal-e-ne-ka me-te-aš bi$_{2}$-[x]-ĝal$_{2}$

33 I have dealt with the blessing that Lugalbanda is seeking here, namely the ability to run without tiring, in another forthcoming paper, but in essence this ability allows Lugalbanda to rule over a number of different traditional states in the context of an imperial state: each local pantheon required the local king to be present at cultic occasions defined by the lunar calendar and the ability to run without tiring was taken as a symbolic affordance, making it possible for the ruler to perform his cultic role at more than one major temple on the same day of the lunar calendar.

and then follows this vocative address by a list of lemmata that refer to the key parts, elements or features of the described object. An epithet or short comment or both is appended to each of these lemmata, and somewhat surprisingly these comments do not draw, in a slavish way, on the lexical list tradition, with its plethora of lists, but rather seek to collect a fresh body of paradigmatic equivalencies for the fixed sequence of lemmata that define the object of description. Although this rather specific form of ekphrastic description, which I take as definitive here, lives on into later phases of Mesopotamian literature, as we saw above in the Akkadian *Syncretic Hymn to Ninurta*, I have not attempted to trace out this subsequent development here. In purely formal terms, consequently, ekphrastic description can be clearly contrasted with what Civil termed "enumeration," which modifies the lemmata with a first person possessive pronoun (or none at all) and repeats the framing element in conjunction with each term, as we saw above in examples drawn from *Feeding Dumuzi's Sheep* and *Nanše and the Birds*.

In contrast to the Graeco-Roman forms of ekphrasis described elsewhere in this volume, ekphrastic description in Classical Sumerian literature is used in the relatively circumscribed context of the manifestation of the divine presence in a form visible in the mundane world. The prototypical context for this type of manifestation is the presentation of a votive offering by the crown in the context of the New Year celebrations, where the rule of the king is confirmed and authorized for the coming year. The donation of this kind of votive object counts as a manifestation of the divine in that the command and plan for the votive are communicated beforehand to the ruler who will present the object to the deity and the object will become the property of the deity when it is dedicated, a visible manifestation of the creative wisdom of the gods. As we saw a moment ago, however, this originating literary context also served as a foil for the reuse of the literary convention in the Lugalbanda epics (with an inversion of the usual process of inspiration and production that we see in Tigi Hymns, an inversion that lines up nicely with Lugalbanda's untoward status as a future usurper).

What makes ekphrastic description such a powerful literary device in both of these rather different contexts is its role in "presencing" a deity or object for use by a divine being. Thus, if we think of the mundane world of human existence and the realm of the gods as two distinct ontological zones, the votive offering commanded by the deity and presented back to the deity by the crown moves back and forth between these two zones: the impetus and plan originates in the divine zone, the votive object and the accompanying ekphrastic description are crafted by the leading technical specialists in the mundane workshops and schoolrooms of the royal palace, and finally the votive package as a whole is then (re)presented to the deity who ordered its construction. This movement of the votive object in its different phases of physical manifestation back and forth between these two ontological zones highlights the "presencing" of the divine in the mundane world and, not fortuitously, constructs the royal offering of the votive as the crucial locus for human interactions with the

divine. The ritual context in which the votive passes back into the realm of the gods is often carefully represented in the second half of the Tigi Hymn that accompanies it, and in these instances we have a particularly beautiful *mise en abyme* where the ritual context of the votive package is reiterated in the second half of the hymn that is performed as part of the votive package. As elsewhere in Sumerian literature, the occurrence of a *mise en abyme* is used to signal the key performative moment in the text, what I have elsewhere spoken of as indexical iconicity.[34]

While we have offered a largely formal contrast between enumeration and ekphrastic description in Classical Sumerian literature up to now, it should also be apparent that these two modalities of paradigmatic description – in spite of the fact that they are two variations on the use of possessive pronouns and the framing co-text – are actually used and conceptualized quite differently by the Sumerian literati at the beginning of the second millennium BC. If ekphrastic description is so resolutely focused on manifestations of the divine sphere in the quotidian or interactions between a human audience and the non-quotidian realm of the gods, the examples of enumeration provided by Civil and now supplemented by Veldhuis's extensive work on *Nanše and the Birds* are equally resolute in their focus on the observable variety of certain mundane types, whether the fodder consumed by domesticated animals or the sight and sound of avian life. In light of the stark contrast between these two rhetorical devices, we should probably recognize that each of these devices regularly brought in its wake a set of literary expectations. In my discussion of the creative reuse of literary expectation in the Lugalbanda epics, a moment ago, I referenced Robert Alter's famous discussion of the betrothal type-scene in the first few books of the Hebrew Bible, and it may be worthwhile to reiterate Alter's thesis here:

> A coherent reading of any artwork, whatever the medium, requires some detailed awareness of the grid of conventions upon which, and against which, the individual work operates. It is only in exceptional moments of cultural history that these conventions are explicitly codified, as in French neoclassicism or in Arabic and Hebrew poetry of the Andalusian Golden Age, but an elaborate set of tacit agreements between artist and audience about the ordering of the artwork is at all times the enabling context in which the complex communication of art occurs.

If nothing else, therefore, we should recognize that ekphrastic descriptions in Classical Sumerian literature would have produced an expectation on the part of the reader or hearer that some kind of theophantic manifestation of a deity of deified object is in the offing. And we are not disappointed when we turn from the canonical instantiation of this device in the Tigi Hymns to its creative reuse in the Lugalbanda epics.

34 See Johnson 2013. It is noteworthy that the critical moments in the Lugalbanda epics are each marked by a carefully constructed *mise en abyme* of one kind or another.

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