



Smiting Goliath:

Giants as Monsters in the Ancient Near East

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Abstract: This article begins by examining the definition of “monster” as commonly employed in ancient Near Eastern studies with the purpose of revealing that the definitions are constructed in a manner that excludes giants. Through a structural analysis of the David and Goliath story in 1 Samuel 17, I demonstrate that giants do function morphologically as monsters. I conclude by constructing a broader definition of “monster” for ancient Near Eastern studies that necessarily includes giants.

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[1] *The Jewish Encyclopedia* provocatively states that: “The giants of the Bible are not monsters” (“Giants” 656). In fact, a review of the commonly cited definitions of monsters in the ancient Near East reveals that this statement remains generally unchallenged in scholarship. Scholarly work on monsters in the ancient Near East rarely examine the giant. By employing a largely structural approach, I am going to challenge this claim by arguing that Near Eastern giants are, indeed, monsters.

[2] Jeffrey Cohen suggests that one can read a culture from the monsters it engenders (3). On a more specific level, Timothy Beal argues that “We can learn something about a religious tradition by getting to know its monsters” (4). One wonders, then, what we can learn from the giant lurking on the periphery of ancient Israelite religion? If we seek to understand the biblical giant as a monster, and, if, following Cohen, we accept the monster as “pure culture,” then

deconstructing the biblical giant as a cultural construct will expose many cultural assumptions that help create the giant (4).

What Constitutes an Ancient Near Eastern Monster?

[3] Scholars of the ancient Near East have drawn distinctions between the terms “monster” and “demon” as they have been applied to ancient Near Eastern contexts: “Modern interpreters differentiate between two kinds of creatures: monsters and demons. Those that walk on all fours, like animals, are designated as monsters, while those that walk on two legs, like humans, are considered demons” (Westenholz 11). Though appearing in Joan Westenholz’s recently published book, this quote summarizes a long history of theorizing about monsters in the ancient Near East. Black and Green, in their oft-cited reference dictionary entitled *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, use these definitions as an axiomatic starting point: “In modern studies of ancient Mesopotamian art and iconography, the term ‘demon’ had generally been applied to any upright human-bodied hybrid creature, while ‘monster’ has been applied to an animal combination on all fours” (Black and Green 63).

[4] One of the most recognizable facts about ancient Near Eastern monsters is their composite character. It would appear that ancient Near Eastern peoples observed few limits in the creation of their monsters. Virtually any combination was possible, including a goat-fish (Akk. *suhurmašû*), human-headed winged bulls (Akk. *lamassu*), bull-men (Akk. *kusarikku*), the snake-dragon of Marduk (Akk. *mušhuššu*), scorpion-people (Akk. *girtablullû*), lion-demons (Akk. *ugallu*), griffons, griffon-demons (Akk. *bird-apkallu*), and fish men and women (Akk. *apkallu*). All of these monsters are hybrid creatures, combining one or more parts of at least two

different animals. For example, the *suhurmašû* (the forerunner to the capricorn) had the head, neck, and forelegs of a goat and the body and tail of a fish (Westenholz 21).¹ The human-headed winged bull (*lamassu*) is fairly self-explanatory. Surviving as colossal stone sculptures, these statues depict a massive winged bull with a bearded and crowned human head.

[5] Equally eccentric are the *girtablullû*. The appearance of the scorpion people varies greatly, although they all typically have a human head and torso, a distinctive birdlike body with bird legs and talons, and a scorpion's tail. Sometimes scorpion people are depicted with a snake-head penis and with pincers for hands (Westenholz 24). A very prominent monster in Assyrian art is the *bird-apkallu*. Sometimes called griffon-demons, these monsters stand upright on human legs, have a human torso, are well dressed, have very large and distinctive wings, and a bird's head. These creatures are often depicted surrounding the Assyrian Tree of Life, carrying a bucket and cone that was used to purify or fertilize the sacred tree (Westenholz 34).

[6] One of the most recognizable Mesopotamian monsters is Pazuzu. Immortalized in American pop culture as the possessing demon in the 1973 hit movie *The Exorcist*, Pazuzu has a long and illustrious history. Pazuzu is a composite creature. He has a canine face, bulging eyes, scaly body, snakehead penis, bird talons, and wings (Black and Green 147). Despite his frightening appearance and decidedly evil role in modern cinema, Pazuzu is morally ambiguous. It is true that in some instances he was considered evil, but, he was also invoked as a protective entity against the machinations of Lamashtu, one of the few inarguably monstrous representatives of evil in ancient Mesopotamia. Daughter of Anu, this demon-goddess “practiced evil for its own sake-and on her own initiative” (Black and Green 115-116). As a

category-bending creature, her appearance clearly justifies her inclusion as a monster. Lamashtu is a composite monster with the head of a lion, teeth of a donkey, naked breasts, hairy body, hands stained with blood, long fingers and finger nails, and the feet of a bird. Lamashtu attacks people—her favorite victims including unborn and newborn babies. Her method of choice is touching the pregnant woman’s belly seven times in order to kill the baby. Miscarriages were attributed to her handiwork.

[7] Closely related to Lamashtu are the scorpion-tailed wolf monsters known as *lilītu* (female) and *lilû* (male). Like Lamashtu, these demons were dangerous to pregnant women and infants. A striking member of this family, *ardat-lilî* (maiden *lilû*), has the character of “a frustrated bride, incapable of normal sexual activity” (Black and Green 118). Driven mad by desire, *ardat-lilî* attempts to release pent up sexual desire through aggressive sexual behavior toward young men.² One of the side effects of her aggressive sexuality for the young male is impotence and sterility (Black and Green 118).

[8] Another prominent composite monster depicted in Mesopotamian art is the so-called “bull-man.” This creature first appeared in the second phase of the Early Dynastic Period and rose in prominence during the Old Babylonian (2000-1600 B.C.E.) and Kassite (1574-1157 B.C.E.) periods. The bull-man was commonly depicted with a human head and torso, but with a bull’s horns and a bull’s lower body. Even after the “bull-man” lost his association with Shamash, he remained, like many other Mesopotamian monsters, a protective demon (Black and Green 48-49).

[9] The bull-man demonstrates that composite monsters, with the bull composing the central portion, were very popular in ancient Mesopotamia. Another monster that falls into this category is the human-headed winged bull (Akk. *lamassu*). This composite monster had the head of a man attached to the body of a bull with large wings rising from and lying upon the monster's back. This figure was particularly popular in Neo-Assyrian sculpture (911-612 B.C.E.) and adorned the palaces and temples of such illustrious Assyrian kings as Assurnasirpal II (883-859 B.C.E.) and Esarhaddon (680-669 B.C.E.). The locations of the winged-bull sculptures say much about their functions. Most often, these monsters were found outside the gates of palaces and the temples. Like other monsters described above, this has led many scholars to conclude that their function was to guard and protect entrances and buildings.

[10] Another peculiar, but common, monster in Mesopotamian art is the griffon-demon. This monster, with its human torso, bird's head, and wings, first appears on Middle Assyrian (1350-1100 B.C.E.) cylinder seals and subsequently became very popular in Neo-Assyrian (911-612 B.C.E.) art (101). Often understood as a sage in bird disguise, this monster carries a bucket and cone and is placed on either side of the Assyrian Tree of Life (Black and Green 101).³

[11] Examples of the beneficial Mesopotamian monster can be expanded. There are the mermen and mermaids (Akk. *kulullu*), used for protective magic in monumental sculpture and as protective figurines (Black and Green 131-32). There are also numerous forms of the lion-demon, lion-centaurs, and lion-dragons that were thought to fend off attacks and to protect against evil demons and illness (Black and Green 119-21).

[12] The close association of monsters and divinity in the ancient Near East meant that, at times, monsters took on some of the aspects of the divine. As Westenholz argues, sometimes monsters became responsible for natural phenomena, were immortal but vulnerable, and were also the source of misfortune (much like an unhappy god). This association led to the idea that the role of these monsters in the universe was as “mere agents and executors of the will of the gods” (Westenholz 14).

[13] The perception of monsters as executioners of divine will creates the impression that some Mesopotamian monsters have a seemingly ambiguous moral character. In the West we tend to think of monsters as embodiments of evil, while only occasionally recognizing that monsters can also be good (e.g., Frankenstein, the Jolly Green Giant, Shrek, E.T.) or that monsters can transform themselves (or be transformed) from bad to good (e.g., Godzilla). In some instances the categories good or evil are difficult to apply to Near Eastern monsters and demons. Since they play a small role in Mesopotamian myth, we know Mesopotamian demons mostly through incantation texts.⁴ In these texts, those demons that we might be tempted to think of as evil are often executioners of the divine will, delivering punishments, such as disease, for the sins of humankind. Likewise, in 1 Samuel 16:14-23, Saul’s ecstatic state is produced by an “evil” spirit sent from the Lord. Of course, the moral standing of the monster or demon is dependent upon perspective. A Mesopotamian afflicted with boils, or a king possessed by a spirit, will not view the afflicting demons as morally ambiguous. On the other hand, Near Eastern demons and monsters do not always act from their own motivations; sometimes the creature is an automaton of the gods.

[14] An interesting example of the morally ambiguous Near Eastern monster is illustrated by the giant Humbaba. In pictorial form, Humbaba is humanoid with lion's claws, a monstrous, coiled face, and long hair. Though grotesque and fierce, Humbaba, as an agent of Enlil, simply performs his duty, regardless of Gilgamesh's desperate efforts to dispatch him. Indeed, Humbaba's death at the hands of Gilgamesh is seen as a threat to the gods, who ultimately punish Gilgamesh by killing his best friend Enkidu. When the gods learn of Gilgamesh's bravado, they decree that "Neither one of them shall outlive His friend! Gilgamesh and Enkidu shall never become old men" ("The Epic of Gilgamesh" 76).

[15] Despite being a rather fierce and terrifying monster, the importance of context is illustrated through later traditions in which Humbaba became a good luck charm. Archaeologists have unearthed many Humbaba masks, dating from the Old-Babylonian (2000-1600 B.C.E.) through the Neo-Babylonian (1000-539 B.C.E.) periods, whose primary function seems to have been preventing evil spirits from entering the home. Humbaba's role as a guardian and protector may have been suggested by his earlier role as guardian of the cedar forests (Westenholz 177). Humbaba also played a role in Mesopotamian divination. For example, if the entrails of a slaughtered animal looked like the face of Humbaba, which was said to resemble coiled intestines, diviners declared that there would be revolution in the state (Black and Green 106).

[16] Divine and human battles against monsters are a common element in ancient Near Eastern myths. According to Westenholz, these battles were "designed to present epic conceptions of cosmic events at the macrocosmic and microcosmic levels" (38). Monsters are an intrusion of chaos into the ordered world. For order to be maintained, the monsters must be

tamed or conquered. Following Eliade's thoughts on the return of chaos, Beal states that "an attack on 'our world' is equivalent to an act of revenge by the mythical dragon, which rebels against the work of the gods, the cosmos, and struggles to annihilate it. Our enemies belong to the powers of chaos" (Beal 9). We may point to Marduk's battle against Tiamat as an illustration of this principle. In this narrative Marduk conquers chaos (embodied in the serpentine form of Tiamat, whose very name means "salt water") and creates the ordered world from her carcass. This narrative is also interesting in that a monster (Tiamat) creates other monsters. Tiamat, faced with the impending war against Marduk, creates an impressive monstrous army:

Mother Hubur, who fashions all things,
Contributed an unfaceable weapon: she bore giant snakes,
Sharp of tooth and unsparing of fang.
She filled their bodies with venom instead of blood.
She cloaked ferocious dragons with fearsome rays
And made them bear mantles of radiance, made them godlike,
Whoever looks upon them shall collapse in utter terror!
Their bodies shall rear up continually and never turn away!
She stationed a horned serpent, a *mušhuššu*-dragon, and a *lahmu*-hero,
An *ugallu*-demon, a rabid dog, and a scorpion-man,
Aggressive *ūmu*-demons, a fish-man, and a bull-man
Bearing merciless weapons, fearless in battle. ("The Epic of Creation" 237).

Marduk's cosmos is not everlasting, however, and must be renewed on an annual basis through the *Akitu* festival.⁵ If the creation is not remade on a regular basis, then chaos (monsters) would once again threaten to overtake the world.

[17] A similar conception is found in the narrative depicting Ninurta's battle with the bird Imdugud (Akk. *Anzû*).⁶ According to the myth, in the days before creation was completed, a giant bird with a lion's head, called Imdugud, is harnessed for his energy by Enlil, "Enlil entrusted him with the entrance to the cella, which he had wrought" ("Anzu, the Bird Who Stole Destiny" I.61). Imdugud covets Enlil's role as ruler of the gods and one day steals the tablet of destinies.⁷ All the gods, except Ninurta, balk at the idea of confronting Imdugud. As Marduk would later do with Tiamat, the destruction of the monster Imdugud means the establishment of the gods' created order. Before the battle, Ninurta demands,

Kill wicked Anzu!

Let Kingship (re-)enter [Ekur],

Let authority [return] to the father who begot you.

Let there be [dais]es to be built,

[Estab]lish your holy places on the four world regions.

("Anzu, the Bird Who Stole Destiny" I.142-146).

[18] Having focused heretofore on a wider Near Eastern context, we may pause to note that the biblical tradition is not without its monsters as well—many of whom are closely related to Mesopotamian counterparts. For instance, the Mesopotamian demon *ardat-lilî* appears to be related to Lilith in Jewish tradition. This impotence-causing and fear-inspiring demon is the subject of Isaiah 34:14, "Surely there Lilith shall repose, and she will find a resting-place." Jack Sasson has suggested that the nocturnal sexual activities of the *ardat-lilî* may be responsible for Boaz's late-night fright at the threshing floor:

When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was pleased, he went in to lie by the edge of the grain heap. Then she [Ruth] went in secretly and uncovered the place of his feet and lay down. And it came to pass at midnight he started up and turned himself and lo, a woman was lying at his feet. (Ruth 3:7-8; Sasson, 76-77).

Though somewhat vague, the sexual setting of the threshing floor and metaphor of uncovering the feet as sexual intercourse, coupled with Boaz's fright, helps to support this interpretation.

[19] The biblical traditions, true to their Near Eastern context, also contain composite monsters. One of the most puzzling, and interesting, composite monsters in the Hebrew Bible is Behemoth (בהמות). According to the biblical description, Behemoth is a unique creature. In Job 40:15-18, God, speaking to Job, says:

Behold now Behemoth, which I made as I made you; he eats grass like an ox. Behold now, his strength is in his loins, and his vigour in the muscles of his belly. He delights in his tail like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are intertwined. His bones are channels of bronze, and his limbs are like wrought iron.

Traditionally, partially owing to a comparison between biblical descriptions and Egyptian iconography, Behemoth is interpreted as a hippopotamus:

Beneath the lotus he lies, in the shelter of the reeds and in the marsh. The lotus covers him with shade; the willows of the stream surround him. Lo, if the river oppresses him, he is not alarmed, he is confident when Jordan bursts forth against his mouth (Job 40:21-23).

Being modeled upon a living creature does not lessen Behemoth's impact as a monster. The category mixing that is evident in the description of Behemoth clearly places him within the realm of the monstrous.

[20] Despite efforts to naturalize (and rationalize) Behemoth, his pairing with Leviathan, as well as comparative evidence from surrounding cultures, seems to indicate that Behemoth is best understood as a mythical chaos monster. Marvin Pope proposed that there is an early version of

Behemoth (Ug. *'gl il 'tk*, bullock of El, or El's calf *Atik*, which seems to be closely related to the Hebrew בַּהֲמוֹת, lit. beast, ox, cattle) in Ugaritic narrative in which this figure is a companion of the sea serpent Lotan (*ltn*).⁸ As Lotan is a prototype of Leviathan, and Behemoth and Leviathan are presented as a pair, it makes sense that Lotan's ox-like companion was also translated into the biblical narrative. Just as *Atik* and the seven-headed dragon are paired in Ugaritic narrative, and defeated by Anat, so are Behemoth and Leviathan paired and defeated by God in the biblical narrative.

[21] It should be evident to the reader that something is missing from this brief tour of monsters in the ancient Near East—namely, scholarship has failed to include the giant in the Near Eastern bestiary. Indeed, one struggles to find a way to fit giants into the schemes outlined above. Are they demons? Not according to the above definitions because many giants, especially the biblical, are not composite creatures. So then, are they monsters? No, because, according to the same definitions, monsters are hybrid creatures, walk on all fours, and generally act like animals. Because they fit into neither definition, we are thus left with the possibility of either creating a new category for ancient Near Eastern giants, or of calling the existing categories and definitions into question. It is my contention that, if one takes ancient Near Eastern giants seriously, nothing less than a reconstruction of the category of “monster” is required for ancient Near Eastern scholarship.

The Monstrous Near Eastern Giant: An Example

[22] To illustrate the role of Near Eastern giants, I have chosen a structural analysis of the David and Goliath narrative in 1 Samuel 17, one of the most complete giant narratives in the Hebrew Bible. A morphological analysis confirms that the narrative in 1 Samuel 17 is closely related to the form of the fairy tale (Rofé 118). However, to stop at that level of analysis fails to fully capture the rich system of symbols at play in the David and Goliath story.

[23] On one level, the David and Goliath narrative is a mediation of the binary oppositions represented by the “old” and the “new”. To mediate these oppositions the narrative works toward the creation of triads. Triads, as defined by Lévi-Strauss, are constructs in the narrative that stand in replacement of the original binary opposition and that have admitted a third term as a mediator between the two. By admitting mediating terms into the oppositions, the narrative attempts to overcome the initial opposition in the text. Lévi-Strauss states, “We need only assume that two opposite terms with no intermediary always tend to be replaced by two equivalent terms which admit of a third one as a mediator; then one of the polar terms and the mediator become replaced by a new triad” (Lévi-Strauss 224). By moving through the triads the myth works toward its mediating terms. In the following chart the initial opposition (old/new) is replaced by analogous terms until a pair surface that allows for the third mediating term. In the David and Goliath narrative, it is through a mediating term that young David overturns the initial opposition.

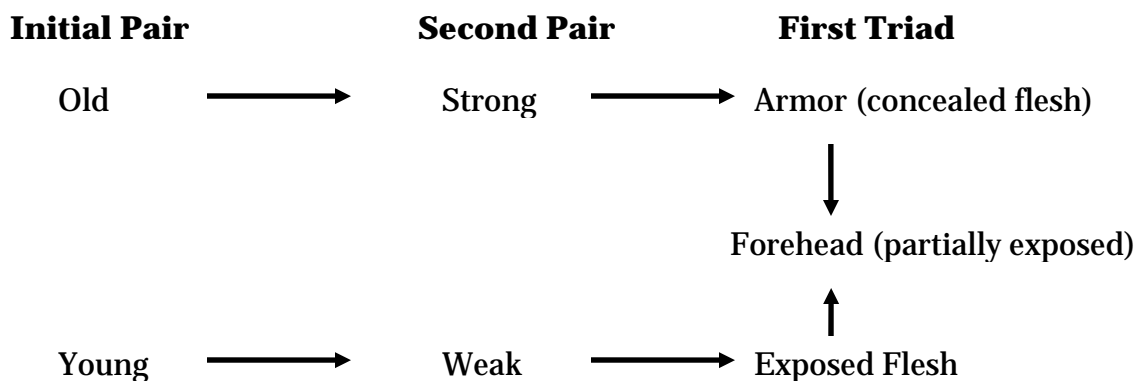


Fig. 1: Structural Oppositions in David and Goliath Narrative

[24] Locating oppositions in a text is a creative act on the part of the scholar because texts do not state in explicit terms the operative binary oppositions. These are teased out through the construction of *gross constituent units* which are then grouped according to similarities. In this process certain patterns are created, for example, the gross constituent units in the David and Goliath narrative reveal that one of the oppositions in the text is between young and old. These terms are represented in a variety of manners, including, David the boy shepherd, Saul the

established king, the new kingdom of Israel, the old kingdoms of Canaan, and the older inhabitants of Canaan.

[25] The initial pair of young and old not only begs the question of how a seasoned warrior falls to an untrained or “green” boy, but also how a younger, weaker nation conquers an older one. Goliath, as a descendant of the Anakim, is a member of the Nephilim (Numbers 13:33). These giants appear as divine-human offspring in the primeval history (Genesis 6:4) and as the inhabitants of the land of Palestine before the arrival of the Israelites from Egypt (Numbers 13:33). As such, they are aboriginal inhabitants against whom the Israelites, emerging from Egypt, had to struggle in order to gain control of the land. In one sense, the giants are the representatives of the old established order in conflict with the new social order of the Israelites.

[26] Goliath’s example suggests an interesting parallel with the relationship between David and Saul. While Goliath is a representative of the old in ancient Canaan, he is also the old among the new, for the Philistines, as one of the so-called Sea Peoples, are newly arrived Late Bronze Age inhabitants of the Levant. This situation mirrors the position of Saul among the Israelites. As the “old” among the “new”, Saul represents the important, but failing, reign of Israel’s first king. In this manner, the relatively new, but already old, regime is crumbling. It is in danger of falling to the boy-hero, David.

[27] The opposition between the “old” and the “young” is represented analogously in the terms “weak” and “strong.” That the gigantic entrenched inhabitants of Palestine were thought of as unusually strong is clearly presented in Numbers 13:32-33. In this narrative the wandering Israelites send spies into the land of Canaan. Their report causes despair among the people:

So they brought forth unto the sons of Israel an evil report of the land which they had spied out, saying “The land that we have passed through as spies is a land consuming its

inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in the midst of it are men of size. There we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are from the Nephilim); and we appeared to ourselves as grasshoppers, and so we appeared to them.

[28] The opposition between “old” and “young” and “strong” and “weak” is played out in further detail in the individuals presented in the David and Goliath narrative. Representative of the old order (and, thus, a strong giant) is Goliath. Representative of the new social order and, thus, a weak youth is David. That these two figures respectively represent the opposition between old (strong) and young (weak) is further supported by the manner in which each is arrayed for battle. Goliath, as a representative of the entrenched social system is presented as heavily armed and armored. Indeed, the author of 1 Samuel 17:5-7 took great pains to express in detailed language exactly how well-armed the Philistine champion was. The entrenched Canaanite social order, with its strong and fortified cities, large population, and strong armies must have appeared just as formidable to a fledgling culture attempting to solidify its position in the land. The youthful David is an appropriate symbol for emerging Israelite culture in that, like the Israelite kingdom, he is young. David enters his battle with Goliath armed only with the simplest of weapons—a sling. David is like a newborn, vulnerable and apparently weak.

[29] When David takes the field against Goliath, he finds a weak spot on the giant’s body. This spot, the forehead, is the point of mediation between the oppositions that David and Goliath represent. As part of the seemingly invincible body of the giant, it is difficult to understand why Goliath’s forehead should be such a weak point. Moreover, the bone that comprises the forehead is one of the strongest bones in the body. It is, nevertheless, a bone covered with flesh, a substance that the heavily armed Goliath clearly views as vulnerable, even when he threatens to feed the flesh of David “to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field” (1 Samuel 17:44). The fleshy forehead is also one of the few parts of the giant’s body that is not armored.

[30] Oddly enough, the significance of Goliath's forehead also lies in the symbolism of the eye. In giant lore, the giants' eyes are subject to a great deal of symbolic work.⁹ A great warrior like Goliath requires the use of his eyes to guide his hands in battle. The stone in the forehead, however, hints at an attack upon a different kind of sight.

[31] The idea of a "third eye," located in the center of the forehead, is common in many religious traditions. In some instances this third eye is literal, while in others it is implied or metaphorical. The Hindu Ajana - the so-called "third-eye chakra" - is located in the center of the forehead between the eyebrows and understood to be the seat of consciousness. It is the site of command, perception, knowledge, and authority. To concentrate upon this chakra, in essence to open this "third eye," is to gain the benefits of these characteristics. In Egyptian myth Horus is depicted with a third eye on his forehead, while Pausanius's descriptions of Greece contain references to Zeus Triopas, the three-eyed Zeus (Anthes 88; Pausanias 2.24.2-4). An Arabian tale entitled "The Afrite in the Pillar," describes a giant apostate angel, with three eyes, trapped in a great black pillar (Donnelly 271-72).

[32] Ignatius Donnelly was not the only esoteric to plumb the depths of third-eye symbolism. Madame Blavatsky also wrote extensively on both giants and eye symbolism. Of further interest regarding third-eye symbolism is the gland that some associate with the spiritual third eye (Blavatsky 296-97). About the size of a pea, the pineal gland lies at the center of the brain, roughly centered in the middle of the forehead. Though the complete function of the pineal gland is a recent discovery, mystical speculation about it can be traced to ancient Greece. Plato maintained that this region of the brain was the "eye of wisdom" (McGillion 19-43). René Descartes later maintained that the pineal gland was the seat of the soul (Descartes 59; Blom 78).

[33] Working with the hypothalamus, the pineal plays a role in controlling thirst, hunger, and sexual desire—all of which are prominent elements in giant narratives.¹⁰ With a stone, David

attacks the source of these physical drives, all given over to excess in the giant. He also attacks the seat of the giant's consciousness and source of his authority.

[34] After David strikes the giant in the forehead, an interesting set of inversions occurs. First, David stands over the gigantic fallen body of Goliath. The formerly little person standing in the shadow of the gigantic is himself now the giant standing over the fallen body of his foe. Thus, we have to varying degrees a reflection on the relationships between size and proportion. Susan Stewart, in her monograph *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, argues that the miniature represents the infinite collapsed into the smallest of spaces (39-40). Paradoxically the tiny is able to embody the gigantic. An interesting biblical variation of this phenomenon is the "Parable of the Mustard Seed" in Matthew 13:31-32:

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

The gigantesque motif is easily recognizable; in this instance the tiniest of seeds (mustard) produces a tree completely out of proportion with the size of its fruit. But this symbolic play on proportion is a metaphor for an even larger proportional relationship. Just as the kingdom of heaven may be found in the most unlikely of sources, the tiny mustard seed suggests the infinite.

[35] Stewart argues that the miniature is a microcosm (40-41). In the David and Goliath narrative, Goliath is the symbol through which the ultimate significance of tiny David, as the chosen king of Israel and a man after the heart of God, is realized. We see David in relation to the grotesque bigness of the giant. Goliath is the monster and, as such, he is unnatural. As Timothy Beal has demonstrated, monsters are a threat to God's order. Thus the threatening

monster becomes an enemy of God and is consequently worthy of complete destruction (Beal 6). The enemies of Israel, Beal argues, are chaos monsters (30). Who better than the giant to represent the chaotic enemies of Israel? As chaos monsters, the giants explode categories. In other words, giants are nature perverted and are, therefore, a threat to the ordered world of God.

[36] Susan Stewart states the matter succinctly: “The giant, from Leviathan to the sideshow freak, is a mixed category; a violator of boundary and rule; an overabundance of the natural and hence an affront to cultural systems” (73). The Nephilim of Genesis 6:4 are the result of an unnatural union between divine and human entities. Their form as giants makes sense in so far as they are an affront to the natural order established by God. A similar narrative framework surrounds the efforts of the Israelites as they seek to liquidate the unnatural inhabitants of the Promised Land. As offspring of the ancient Nephilim in possession of the desired land, these unnatural creatures must be liquidated by God, this time working through chosen Israelite warriors, like David.

[37] With Goliath lying on the ground, David has risen to his potential. In the prior relationship, in which the giant stood over miniature David, God’s chosen David represents the cosmos collapsed into the space of the microcosmic. Knocking Goliath to the ground with a blow to the head presents the reader with an inversion. David, no longer in the weaker position, decapitates Goliath and comes to represent the stronger social order. To facilitate this inversion, and in some ways to complete David’s rise to his new position, he must give up the weapons of the simple and the weak and appropriate the weapons of the strong. By decapitating Goliath with Goliath’s own sword (1 Sam 17:50-51), the giant falls by the very thing that made him strong, while David rises by the type of arms he initially rejected in Saul’s tent (1 Sam 17:39).

[38] Not only does David overturn the opposition between old and new as it relates to the inhabitants of Canaan and the emerging Israelite culture, this turn of events brings this

opposition into the structure of Israelite society as well. When David returns to Saul with the head of Goliath (1 Sam 17:57), a shift in power has occurred. Saul, representative of an older generation in Israel, finds himself the weaker party in relation to the newly strengthened David (e.g. 1 Sam 18:7-8). With the killing of the giant, David heralds the end of the reign of Saul by paving the way for his own reign. Therefore, still working with the initial opposition between old and new, we see new oppositional pairs emerge that are eventually mediated and inverted through Goliath's severed head:

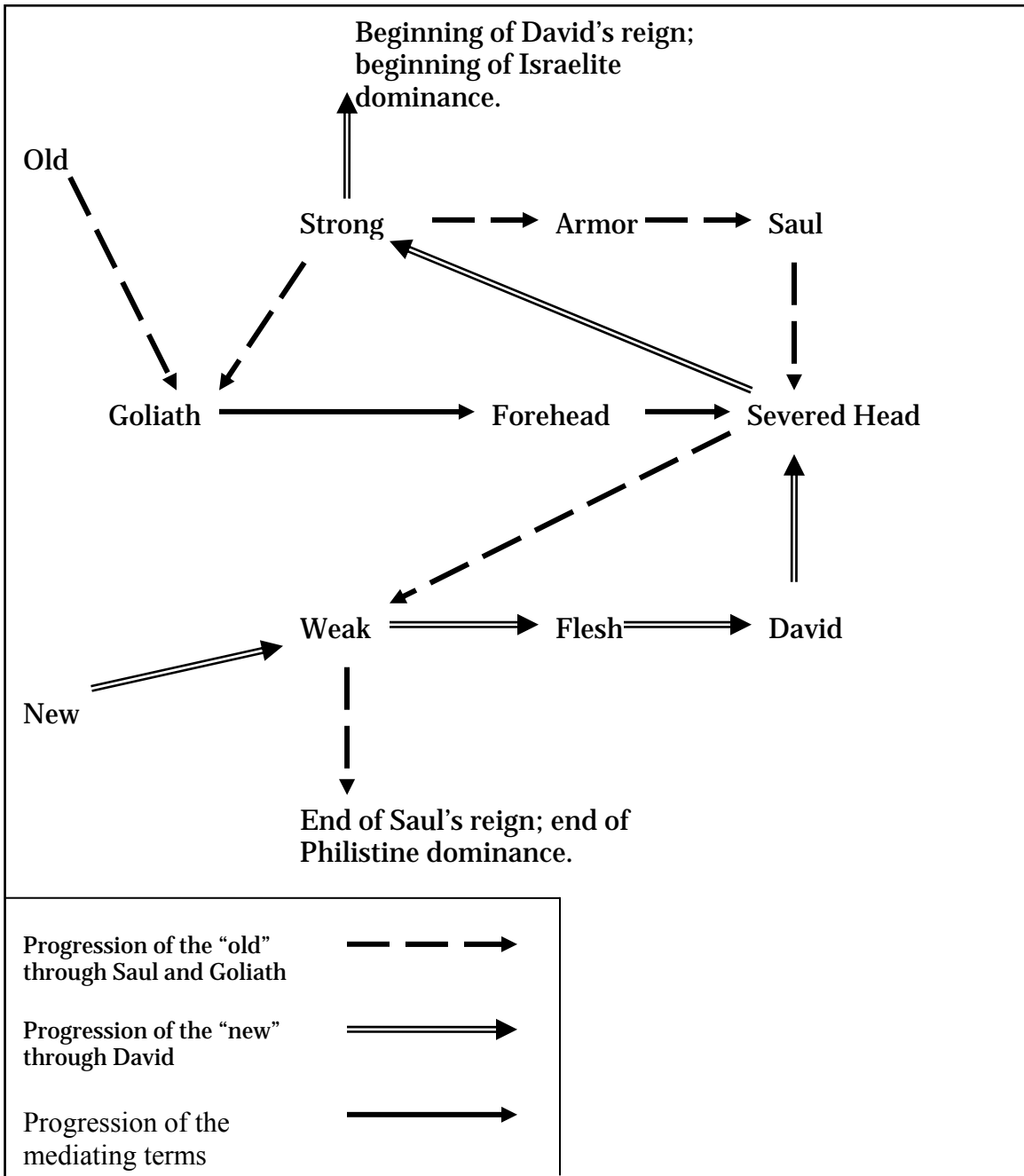


Fig. 2. Progression of Oppositions in the David and Goliath Narrative

[39] In their own idealized past the Israelites depict the early Hebrews as a tribe of wandering nomads (e.g. Deut 26:5). Homeless, in a sense, the ancient Israelites constructed a claim to the land by creating a history in which YHWH promises the land to Abraham (Gen 15:7, 17:8). This early version of “manifest destiny” paved the way for Israelite domination in Canaan. Despite some dislocations caused by the movements of the Aegean “sea peoples” on the cusp of the Iron

Age I period (1250-1050 B.C.E.), the land of Canaan was occupied by strong peoples who lived in heavily fortified cities. In one possible reading of 1 Samuel 17, David and Goliath became embodied representations of a constructed history. David, himself a simple shepherd, represents the idealized Israelite nomadic past, in which the people lack heavy armor and complicated weaponry. In fact, when David shuns the armor of Saul (1 Sam 17:39), this may be taken as an explicit rejection of the technologies of a settled, urban lifestyle. David walks into battle unarmed except for a simple sling, a device used by shepherds to keep predators at bay (1 Sam 17:47). Just as David is a figure representing idealized notions of Israel’s pastoral past, Goliath must embody the opposite. So rather than simply presenting an opposition between nature and culture, this narrative also presents an opposition between two different cultures—the pastoral and the settled.¹¹

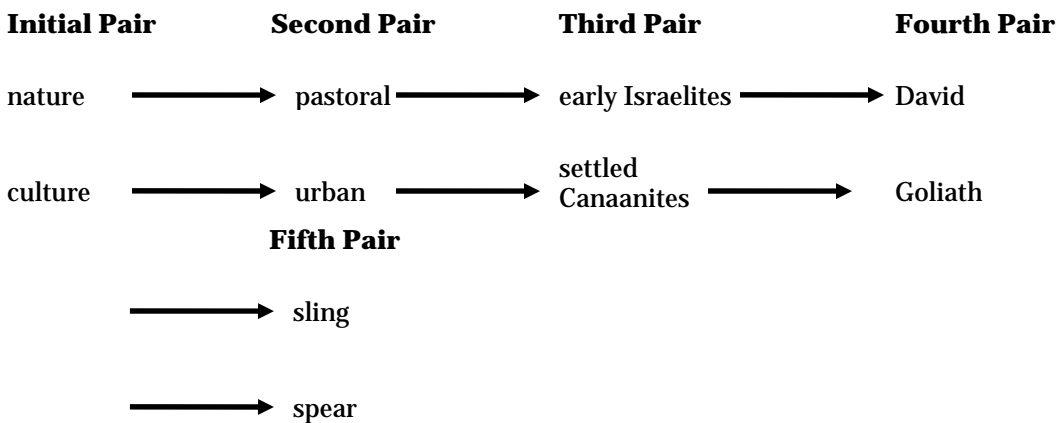


Fig. 3: Further Oppositions in the David and Goliath Narrative

[40] Not only is this a narrative about the opposition between pastoralism and fixed urbanism, it is also a narrative that presents the final transformation of the pastoral Israelite culture into an urbanized Near Eastern monarchy. This transformation occurs in the complex play between the oppositions apparent in the fourth and fifth pairs:

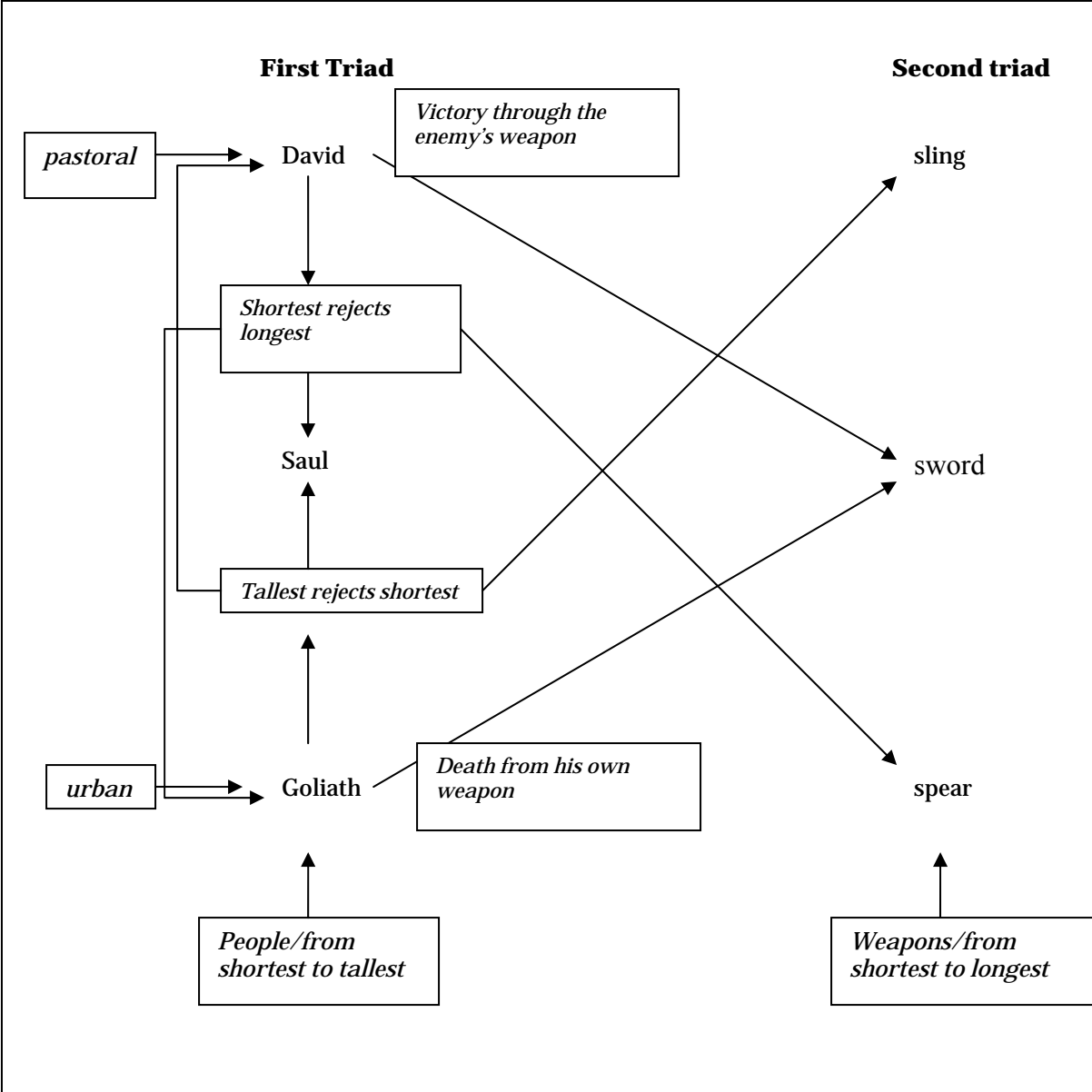


Fig. 4. Structural Analysis of the Pastoral/Urban Oppositions in 1 Samuel 17

[41] For Goliath, the weight of his own culture is his undoing. The fact that Goliath's own system will fail him is hinted at through the failure of his armor to protect him. More explicitly, in the climax of this story, David separates Goliath's neck from his head with Goliath's own sword. The same incident suggests that Israel is a culture in transition. In 1 Samuel, the people declare their wishes for a king. Saul is overthrown in favor of the more capable David. When David grasps the sword of Goliath, he is not only declaring his capability to turn Israel into a

monarchy; he is also making a statement that the simpler, pastoral/nomadic days are disappearing.

[42] On a second historical level, the redactors of this text were actually weaving into their constructed past reflections of their current historical context. If the biblical text was largely composed and redacted in the post-exilic period (after 539 B.C.E. as the minimalists would lead us to believe), then the redactors were themselves in a situation similar to that of David and the fledgling nation just prior to the monarchy. Having been recently returned from exile by Cyrus the Great (558-530 B.C.E.), the Israelites found themselves in a situation in which they had to create a claim to a land from which they had been absent for two generations. A sacral mythhistory filled with generations of ancestors, hero kings, and divine promises would have been a useful tool for solidifying such claims.

[43] The hopes and dreams of the post-exilic Israelites were written onto and into the bodies of David and Goliath. It is more difficult, however, to reconcile the biblical giant with other monsters in surrounding ancient Near Eastern cultures. Scholars have created categories for the monstrous in the ancient Near East that exclude biblical traditions about giants. The current classification of monsters and demons leaves little room for giants who, as destroyers of taxonomic categories, fit the description of monsters in other contexts.

Rethinking Monsters in the Ancient Near East

[44] Let us begin with a statement made by Ambrose Paré in his medical treatise entitled *On Monsters and Marvels* (1573): “Monsters are things that appear outside the course of Nature” (3). Though Paré was speaking of historical “monsters” resulting from birth defects, the same conception may be applied to monsters in myth and folklore. For this reason composite creatures in the ancient Near East are properly considered monsters. The combination of one, two, three,

or even more creatures produces hybrids that do not occur in the natural world. However, typical definitions used in the study of monsters in the Near East fall short on this issue because the categories of “monster” and “demon” are used only for composite creatures as a violation of taxonomic categories. However, it must be accepted that extremes in size, regardless of the physical composition of the creature, are also a violation of the normal “course of nature.” When understood thusly, giants—and even dwarfs—in the ancient Near East should properly be categorized with the monstrous.

[45] In her work entitled *God's Battle with the Monster*, May Wakeman writes: “Monsters in whatever form, in large or small roles, are all ultimately related to the devourer who must be opened” (45). A cursory examination of giant folklore reveals that one of the primary functions of the giant is to devour huge quantities of things and people. A prodigious appetite—and the struggle against it—play with the clash between chaos and order, nature and culture, one’s own culture and an alien or undesired culture, as well as constructions of the in-group and out-groups. For this reason, giant narratives focus upon the grotesque body, with special attention given to the consumptive orifices. This struggle is played out time and again in the many encounters between the hero, or giant killer, and the giant. Gilgamesh imposed the needs of culture on nature by securing the cedar forests guarded by the giant Humbaba while, by removing the head of Goliath, David legitimated a new cultural order, reaffirmed the created order of YHWH, and solidified constructed claims to an occupied land.

[46] Because Near Eastern giants like Goliath and Og are not depicted devouring everything in sight does not negate this participation in these structural oppositions. Concerning monsters, Wakeman further notes: “He [the monster] is the devourer (Vritra, Tiamat) that holds within himself water, the sun, children etc., preventing their differentiation. He must be killed, split open and scattered in pieces, in order that his substance may give rise to life” (39). This is true for giants in many contexts, whose bodies are often split or dismembered. Like other monsters in

the ancient Near East, the Near Eastern giant must also be cut up for the maintenance of order. Only when Ullikummi is defeated by having his feet cut out from under him are the gods able to resume their life-sustaining activities. Similarly, Humbaba and Goliath both have their heads removed, which pacifies the Lebanese wilderness and permits the creation of new political orders.

[47] All these narratives share the notion that cutting up or decapitating the monster is a defeat of chaos. In the case of Goliath, decapitation means that the created order of YHWH is restored. Maintaining the right order by cutting the giant is also a common feature in later giant narratives. In the Lamba tale entitled “How the Children Escaped from the Ogres,” the ogre’s body was cut open with a knife and people sprang out who created new villages. This is also reflected in a Basotho tale in which the midget Mohlonkanyane cuts his way from the stomach of the giant *lefika*. The cutting open of this giant, resembles in some respects the manner in which Tiamat is split, allowing the creation of life and the renewal of culture despite the consuming effects of the opposing giant. Myths about giants are then, in some ways, re-creation myths, or, perhaps more precisely, *recreation myths*. Specifically, the giant’s body is disordered, and, thus, a symbol of chaos. From this disordered giant body, life is created, recreated, or freed.

[48] In the ancient Near East, giants as chaos monsters are also well illustrated in the Hittite Kumarbi Cycle. This collection of myths recounts the struggle between Kumarbi and Teshub for kingship of the gods. Kumarbi, as Hoffner explains, is a netherworld god (grains), whereas Teshub is a god of the heavens (storms) (Hoffner 39).¹² Kumarbi made various attempts to defeat Teshub. The most interesting for our purposes is the creation of the stone giant Ullikummi. Kumarbi, in his effort to “seek evil against Teshub,” strikes upon a plan to create the ultimate weapon:

When Kumarbi [had taken] wisdom [before his mind], he promptly arose from his chair. In his hand he took a staff; [on his feet] he put the swift winds [as shoes]. He set out from the city Urkis and arrived at the Cold Spring.

Now in the Cold Spring there lies a great rock: its length is three miles and its breadth is [. . .] and a half miles. His mind leaped forward upon what it has below [. . .], and he slept with the rock. His penis [thrust?] into her. He “took” her five times; [again] he “took” her ten times (“The Song of Ullikummi,” I.11-20).¹³

The result of this union is Kumarbi’s son, Ullikummi. As the narrative demonstrates, Kumarbi has high hopes for his son:

Henceforth let Ullikummi be his name. Let him go up to heaven to kingship. Let him suppress the fine city of Kummiya. Let him strike Tessub. Let him chop him up like fine chaff. Let him grind him under foot [like] an ant. Let him snap off Tasmisu like a brittle reed. Let him scatter all the gods down from the sky like flour. Let him smash them [like] empty pottery bowls (“The Song of Ullikummi,” I.15-25).

[49] Like other monsters in the ancient Near East, Ullikummi is a composite creature. Born from stone, this giant is made of basalt: “Ellil lifted his eyes and saw the child, standing before the god, his body made of basalt stone” (“The Song of Ullikummi,” I.6-12). Soon thereafter Ullikummi begins his prodigious growth spurt, growing in height every day, and quickly causing alarm among the gods. The sun god notices Ullikummi standing in the ocean and remarks, “What quickly growing deity [stands] there in the sea? His body is unlike that of all the other gods” (“The Song of Ullikummi” I.33-36). Despite their best efforts to prohibit his growth, Ullikummi eventually approaches the heavens in height and interferes with the daily functioning of the gods. The sea laps against Ullikummi’s loin cloth while his head blocks heaven and the

holy temples. This threatens to introduce drought, famine, and death to the land (“The Song of Ullikummi” I.30-39). Such is the situation until the gods strike upon a plan to cut Ullikummi down to size. With the primeval copper cutting tool, the gods agree to “cut off Ullikummi, the Basalt, under his feet, him whom Kumarbi raised against the gods as a supplanter (of Tessub)” (“The Song of Ullikummi” I.48-55). Although the end of the tablet is missing and the story incomplete, we may assume, based upon morphological features, that Ullikummi is ultimately defeated.

[50] This narrative is both interesting and problematic on many levels. First, this myth contains many of the binary oppositions already identified in other giant narratives. The fact that the gods Kumarbi and Tessub respectively represent the earth and the heavens is an opposition between high and low. Note, however, that this distance is bridged by the stone giant Ullikummi. His foundations are in the sea, but his head reaches the heavens. Therefore, there are some ways in which the giant can be viewed as mediating different realms of existence. As a mediator between heaven and earth we must also give some consideration to the fact the Ullikummi may represent an illegitimate king or ruler. Kings in the ancient Near East were representatives of the gods on earth and functioned as mediators between the people and divine forces (Postgate, 395). Just as the Tower of Babel represents an affront to the gods, so, too, is Ullikummi. With his legitimacy in question Ullikummi has his feet cut out from under him in an explicit rejection of his usurped authority.

[51] The fact that Ullikummi is made of stone suggests several things. In *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Mircea Eliade outlined several reasons why rocks and stones are hierophanic. Rocks are important because they suggest permanence and strength and an “absolute mode of being” (Eliade, *Patterns* 216). As suggested by their rugged outlines, strength, and lack of motion, stones and rocks have been revered because they represent something other than the human. This stone god represents an attempt to establish permanence. Ullikummi

embodied in stone is a gigantic expansion of common conceptions in the ancient Near East regarding the relationship between *menhirs* and divinity. In many instances, such as the theophany at Bethel and the covenant between God and the Israelites in Joshua 24, stones commemorate a manifestation of God. The Hebrew Bible struggles with the notion that stones may represent a sign of God and an incarnation of God, though the Canaanites and Mesopotamian populations appeared to have fewer problems with such associations (Eliade 230).

[52] We should not be tempted, however, solely to understand Ullikummi as a metaphorical mountain, while disregarding the embodied aspects of the giant. Stone giants are not unique in myth and folklore. In Abenaki mythology, primordial stone giants were defeated by the hero Gluscap.¹⁴ A more interesting example occurs among the Yahgan peoples of Tierra del Fuego. Here, a stone giant is defeated because a hummingbird attacked the soles of his feet, which made the giant's heart explode. Interestingly, this story brings together in the same narrative two of the primary ways of killing a giant—by a blow to the feet and a blow or injury to the head. It is sensible that giants are defeated by blows to the feet (Og, Ojje ben Onogh, Ullikummi) or by removal of, or blow to, the head (Goliath, Polyphemus, Mont-Saint-Michel), as both areas have been symbolically linked with authority and power (Meir 360).¹⁵

[53] Ullikummi, Goliath, and other Near Eastern giants do not fit the typical definition of a Near Eastern monster. According to the standard definitions, in order to qualify as a monster, each would have to be a composite of two or more animals and would have to walk on all fours. In order to qualify as a demon, each would need an animal head, a human body, and would have to walk on two feet.

[54] To redefine the monster in ancient Near Eastern myth and legend so that giants may be included, we must abandon definitions based upon appearance and move to definitions based

upon function. If one works solely on appearance, then Near Eastern giants will remain outside the category, as they are not human/animal hybrids who walk on all fours. However, if one thinks in terms of function rather than appearance, then greater similarities begin to emerge. Setting aside for a later work the question of demons, I propose the following redefinition of monster in the ancient Near East:¹⁶

Monsters in the ancient Near East are creatures who violate taxonomic categories (including spanning the realms of existence, composition, size, color, and shape), whose presence introduces vagueness, uncertainty, and otherness, thus throwing categorical signs into confusion and bringing the threat of chaos into the cultural order; and whose defeat or death at the hands of a hero means the restoration of order.

[55] First, the hybrid creatures (currently defined as monsters) and ancient Near Eastern giants both span categories. This is clearly evident for many of the creatures in the Mesopotamian and Egyptian bestiaries, none of whom are found in nature. However, as I have maintained, bizarreness in form (hybridity) does not exhaust all possibilities for spanning, mixing, or destroying categories. This is the point where the standard definition of monsters in the ancient Near East falls short. While most Near Eastern giants are not hybrid in form, they still violate categories. For giants, these categories are size and proportion while, in some cases, further violations occur between the separation of the profane and sacred. The violation of categories is prevalent in the biblical narratives about giants. Indeed, the genesis of giants in the biblical tradition arises from a violation of categories. The crossing of the boundary between the divine and human by the sons of God results in the creation of unnatural creatures (Gen 6:4; cf. *1 Enoch* 6-12).

[56] The violation of the separation between the sacred and the profane in Genesis reintroduced chaos. This violation tore at the fabric of YHWH's created order, and, thus, all hell

broke loose when the giants were born into the world. The Nephilim brought forbidden knowledge to humankind and society began a quick spiral into disorder and chaos that was only remedied by the flood, (though, as we know, the flood failed to kill all the giants). God himself emerges in this narrative as a giant killer defending his own created order.

[57] To be chaotic is to be outside the created order of God. Thus, in the creation narratives, the created order is re-established through the destruction of the monster. The return of the monster is a threat to the established order that must be promptly handled. In the biblical narratives, when the monstrous becomes a threat to Israel, it also becomes a threat to God's order which must be exterminated (Beal 6). The reappearance of giants among the Canaanite enemies of Israel is a blending of the political and the religious realms. It is an effort to "naturalize" an existing or desired political situation by working those very in-group/out-group relationships into God's creation.

[58] Chaos in the ancient Near East was represented through, among other things, bodies that embodied too much or too little nature. As Wakeman has proposed, the mythological narratives that demonstrate a space-model definition of the monster necessarily involve slitting open the monster. Because the monster is the devourer, it holds within itself undifferentiated natural forms:

His [the monster's] very vagueness of form is expressive of the nature of the monster as the spirit of disorder. Precisely because formlessness is intolerable, he is given a name and physical attributes, but the threat he poses is acknowledged and his (often) composite form which doesn't fit in to any 'natural' category (Wakeman 44-45).

The differentiation of matter can be created out of the roiling mass of the deep cosmic ocean in Genesis 1 or the writhing body of Tiamat in the *Enuma Elish*; similarly, the ordering of cultures can occur out of the severing of the giant's body, another symbol of chaos. As the gigantic suggests the infinite, the gigantic necessarily becomes more difficult to grasp in its entirety. Following Wakeman, in the case of giants this expansion into infinity is an expression of disorder because their very size starts pulling the categories apart. Yet within the undifferentiated mass of the giant's body lie the building blocks of creation ready to be reassembled by the hero.

[59] In some ways monsters like Tiamat embody both too much and too little nature. They embody too little nature because, prior to their destruction, there is no natural order, just undifferentiated forces. On the other hand, one may also argue that Near Eastern monsters embody too much nature precisely because all natural forces exist, in an uncontrolled manner, in a single body. The size of biblical and other Near Eastern giants expresses too much nature.¹⁷ They are indeed chaos monsters because, in their excessiveness, they threaten to bring the whole order of creation down.

Concluding Remarks

[60] Why do people, across vast distances in time and space, tell stories and harbor myths about giants? Based upon the evidence set forth in the previous pages, explaining the existence of giant narratives in terms of power relations goes a long way towards answering this question. Giant narratives reflect power relations at two levels—the macrocosmic and the microcosmic. On the macrocosmic level, giants are another version of the chaos monster that lurks in many of the world's mythological narratives. This assertion is supported by several similarities between the figure of the giant and other well-known chaos monsters, such as Tiamat and Leviathan. First, whether it is the Nephilim, Davanas, the *gigantes*, or the Norse *jotun*, giants are primeval. In the ancient Near East, chaos monsters like Tiamat and Yam already exist at the beginning of

time. So, too, we find numerous references to the existence of giants in the hoary mists of time when the created order was just emerging.

[61] Second, also like traditional chaos monsters, the giant must be defeated for the right order of creation to come into, or, remain in effect. In ancient Mesopotamia, this idea is foundational in the battle between Marduk and Tiamat. In a similar manner, the ancient Israelites depicted YHWH taming sea-serpents like Rahab, Leviathan, Tannin, and Yam. Moreover, as we learn from Genesis 6:4, YHWH is also a giant-killer. As the onset of the great deluge in Genesis suggests, God was compelled to kill the giants so that his order could be preserved. Similar conceptions underlie Gilgamesh's encounter with Humbaba and the destruction of the Hittite giant Ullikummi. Humbaba's defense of the cedars of Lebanon from the encroachment of civilization and Ullikummi's disruption of the sustaining activities of the gods demonstrate that both these monsters are threats to the established order.

[62] As has been well established by Mircea Eliade, chaos monsters return and creation must be renewed on a periodic basis. Thus, in ancient Mesopotamia, the theomachy between Marduk and Tiamat occurred on an annual basis and, in this manner, chaos was kept at bay. Similarly, giants also return and must be destroyed again for creation to be maintained. Though often depicted as a very ancient and formerly populous race, giants manage to creep back into the texts after their supposed demise. For instance, even though biblical narrative strongly hints that the deluge was intended (among other things) to destroy the giants, after this catastrophic event the giants return yet again to plague the Israelites. The return of the biblical giant is the re-intrusion of the chaos monster into the created order of YHWH. It is, therefore, up to Israelite heroes, like Joshua and David, to conquer the chaos monster and to restore the created order of God.

[63] As the entire concept implies, chaos monsters are monstrous because they defy, confuse, or shatter taxonomic categories. In fact, as chaos monsters, their function is precisely to throw

categories into confusion and to threaten order. As Mary Wakeman indicates, this is why the bodies of many chaos monsters must be split to allow for the separation of undifferentiated forces. Like other chaos monsters, giants also threaten categories. By virtue of their size alone they defy readily observable proportional categories. Their size suggests infinity, which also defies comprehension. Like other chaos monsters, giants must be split or cut so that the proper categories can be maintained. For many giants, like Humbaba and Goliath, this splitting is in the form of decapitation—for it is the giant's head that is the most feared symbol of chaos. Removing the head negates the giant's destructive orifices. The open maw of the giant is the feared consumer of life, those who enter into the mouth of the giant descend into the netherworld of the giant's stomach to confront the chaos represented in the digestive system. Through removal of these orifices humanity is protected from this all-consuming power.

[64] On a microcosmic level the giant as chaos monster provides an easy transition into a discourse about the in-group and the out-group. At this level the discourse as a reflection of power relations becomes most apparent. We must place the creation of giants into a larger discourse on the creation of the monstrous "other." This is a social and political act in which the in-group attempts to describe themselves as morally right and as the natural agents of good against the out-group, who are depicted as unnatural and evil.

[65] Political power struggles often arise over disputed territories that are subsequently associated with, or inscribed upon, the giant's body. Herein are the most ancient of the giant narratives, those that present autochthonous giants in possession of the land at the beginning of time. There are numerous instances of this motif. In the Hebrew text, giant Nephilim populated the land in primeval times and their descendants (Rephaim and Anakim), though diminished, were a force that had to be overcome so that the land could be occupied. Imagining the inhabitants of the disputed territory as unnatural monsters creates a discourse in which their destruction is easily justified. Thus, for the ancient Israelites, giants came to stand for the

Canaanite and Philistine populations (populations, incidentally, accused of all sorts of unnatural and monstrous acts) and their destruction was therefore imperative. In ancient Hindu epic, there were great conflicts with giants called Davanas. Norse giants were among the most primeval beings in creation and are often depicted as striving against the younger Norse gods.

[66] Giants are also found in power relations that are worked out on even smaller microcosmic levels. Among these stories are those that present struggles within the family, often in the form of the son versus the father, as in the struggle of Zeus against his father Kronos, or in the Lamba narrative of the giant *lefika*, the father of Thakané.

[67] In other cases, narratives transpose the father figure onto the older generation and the protagonist hero onto a younger generation. At this level the microcosmic narrative of inter-familial struggle touches upon the macrocosmic power relations over possession of the land. This is a very common type of giant narrative which is also found in the Hebrew texts. Many times the younger generations, represented by a Moses or David or Joshua, personally challenge the older generation represented by Og or Goliath. In some ways this is the narrative of son-versus-father in which the son attempts to wrest his birthright from the father. For the younger generation to wrest the birthright from the older one, an inversion must occur in which the younger and the older generations actually switch roles in the narrative. A splendid example of this process is the fall of Goliath (which is also the fall of the Philistines and the demise of Saul) and the rise of David (which also represents the ascendancy of the Israelites). When viewed in these terms, it is fitting that the older generation is symbolized by the giant. Specifically, giants, like fathers, are older, taller, stronger, more powerful, and dangerous. It appears that at its most specific level the giant narratives of the father versus the son, or the older generation versus the new, almost literally become stories about children versus adults. These are the narratives in which the childlike midget or dwarf challenges the giant.

[68] It has become clear that the giant is a multivalent symbol. So when Don Quixote states, “I tell thee they are giants, if thou art afraid, go aside,” he is, in fact, tapping into a universe of symbols. In his own quirky way, Don Quixote attunes us to the threat of the monstrous, for giants are not just large figures that lumber through our myths and legends. They embody fears of disorder, chaos, and uncontrolled nature and, as such, are symbols of what we need to dispatch if we are to live in peace and plenty.

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¹ Descriptions and images of all the ancient Near Eastern monsters discussed in the following paragraphs can be found in Westenholz. This reference work is a Bible Lands Museum catalog of a recent exhibition of monster images in the ancient Near East.

² The resemblance here to the succubus is striking. These monsters are linguistically related to the *lilî* of Isaiah 34:14. She also has a great deal in common with later Jewish legends about Lilith. See Jack Sasson, *Ruth: A New Translation with Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation*, 2d ed. Biblical Seminar (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 1989). The *ardat-lilî* also closely resembles the Moroccan she-devil ‘A’isha Qandisha. ‘A’isha Qandisha has both a beautiful and ugly aspect and, in the words of Vincent Crapanzano, is “libidinous, quick-tempered, and ready to strangle, scratch, or whip anyone who insults her or does not obey her commands.” She is well-known for entering into marriage by seducing men before they are aware of her identity. See Crapanzano, 145.

³ Ibid. The stylized tree is common in Neo-Assyrian art.

⁴ Moreover, since images of demons were thought to be dangerous, they are rarely depicted in art.

⁵ For a detailed look at periodic regeneration and conceptions of circular time, see Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return*, 51-92.

⁶ Ninurta is one of the most ancient Mesopotamian deities. He was imagined as the son of Enlil and his cult center was in the Sumerian city of Nippur. Ninurta is very warlike and is often depicted fighting Sumer's enemies as well as the monstrous foes of order and civilization. In contrast to his warlike nature, Ninurta is also a farmer god, giving advice on farming techniques. The warlike Assyrians readily adopted the cult of Ninurta and erected a temple to him in Kalhu.

⁷ The Tablet of Destinies is a source of authority in Mesopotamia.

⁸ The sea serpent as chaos monster is well established in the ancient Near East. For example, to this list one could add Tiamat, who was also imagined as a great sea serpent.

⁹ The classic example is Odysseus' encounter with the giant Cyclops Polyphemus.

¹⁰ As represented by the hungry giant in the Jack narratives or the raping giant of Mont- Saint- Michel in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*.

¹¹ It is important to note, however, that such starkly drawn dichotomies are rarely singular in perspective. In the Hebrew texts one can find a range of perspectives on the relationship between pastoralists and sedentary farmers. For instance, scholars such as Albrecht Alt, whose theories on Israel's nomadic past still influence scholarship, read passages about Cain (farmer) and Abel (pastoralist) and the movements of the patriarchs as an indication of an idealization of a nomadic desert past. See Alt, 173-221. Other passages, including those of the P source, present a settled life in which humankind has dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:27-28). Theodore Hiebert

maintains that the wandering of the patriarchs are etiologies rather than reflective of a nomadic past and that the focus of the J narrative is very agricultural, reflected in (among other things) Noah's planting of a vineyard after the flood and God's revelations through nature. See Hiebert, 73-74; 94.

¹² Many readers know this cycle of myths as a precursor to those contained in Hesiod's *Theogony*. As in the *Theogony*, the Kumarbi cycle recounts the generational struggles between the gods. A great father/son struggle (cf. Kronos and Zeus) occurs between Kumarbi and his son Teshub (who was conceived in Kumarbi after he bit off the genitals of Anu.)

¹³ "The Song of Ullikummi" I.11-20. The spilling of semen before a stone is an example of Eliade's "sexualization of the mineral kingdom." Because they are marked by a spiritual presence and suggestive shapes, stones have long been associated with fertility rites. See Eliade, *Patterns*, 220-223.

¹⁴ The Abenaki were an east coast Native American tribe.

¹⁵ The reverence for, and power of, the foot is well established in the ancient Near Eastern. For biblical examples see Judges 20:43; Joshua 10:24; and 1 Kings 5:3. See also Dalley, "Epic of Gilgamesh," 57 and Meir, 360.

¹⁶ The reader will note that this definition is indebted to Jeffery Cohen's cultural role of the monster in the Middle Ages and Mary Wakeman's ideas about vagueness outlined below.

¹⁷ Similarly, 2 Samuel 21:15-22 relates an encounter between David's army and a "man of great size" in Gath, a giant with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, another example of physical excess.