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## Fantastical Fate: Contemporary Works Depicting Enlil

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# FANTASTICAL FATE: CONTEMPORARY WORKS DEPICTING ENLIL

By Daylen Motamed and Marissa Becher | REL 204 | Chapman University | Dr. Julye Bidmead

## Introduction

It is known that the creation of Gods is prevalent, and almost essential to worldbuilding in fantasy novels. Some examples being the dwarves' Durin in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Djel of the Fjerdans in Leigh Bardugo's grishaverse novels. However, there is one popular god present in many modern fantasy series; the God of fate. In Ancient Mesopotamia, a God of fate was named Enlil. Enlil is known as the king of all Gods, as well as the God of wind and air. He decrees the fates and his word cannot be changed, as Enlil guards the tablets of destinies. Specifically focusing on Enlil's role as the God of fate, we seek to analyze the changing of morals and evolution of our society through the differences to Enlil in similar beings of destiny in the popular Sarah J Maas fantasy series, "A Court of Thorns and Roses" and "Crescent City." These beings are the Mother and her Cauldron and the Goddess Urd, respectively. With this information and evidence of Enlil's role in Mesopotamian lore and society we will compare him to these deities of fate. These evolved portrayals of fate convey women and objects as personifications of the force rather than all-powerful deities whose command cannot be altered. Through this comparison to the ancient God Enlil, we find that our society has moved away from the traditional gender roles of all-powerful men versus weak and passive women.

## Enlil, the Mesopotamian Deity

Enlil, as known within Mesopotamian mythology, is notably a supreme deity with the power to unalterably decree fate for all.

- He had one of the most important temples in Mesopotamia, known as the "Mountain House".



Enlil's Power...

- His ability stretched from the power to create, all the way to having the ability to destroy.
  - This is the most prevalent basis and reason for his undeniable power.
- The concept of ellilutu, known as "Enlilship", which is a term applied to individuals who held "paramount authority"
  - Applied to both gods and humans.
- He was the beholder of the Tablet of Destinies, establishing him as the commander of the world.



Enlil's Appearance...

- Known to be represented in iconography with a horned helmet
  - His horned cap is symbolic of the concept of divinity, and was often worn by other Gods as a referential act of honor.
- Often depicted with a beard.



## A Court of Thorns and Roses

Two almost entwined entities preside over Prythia, the Mother and the Cauldron.

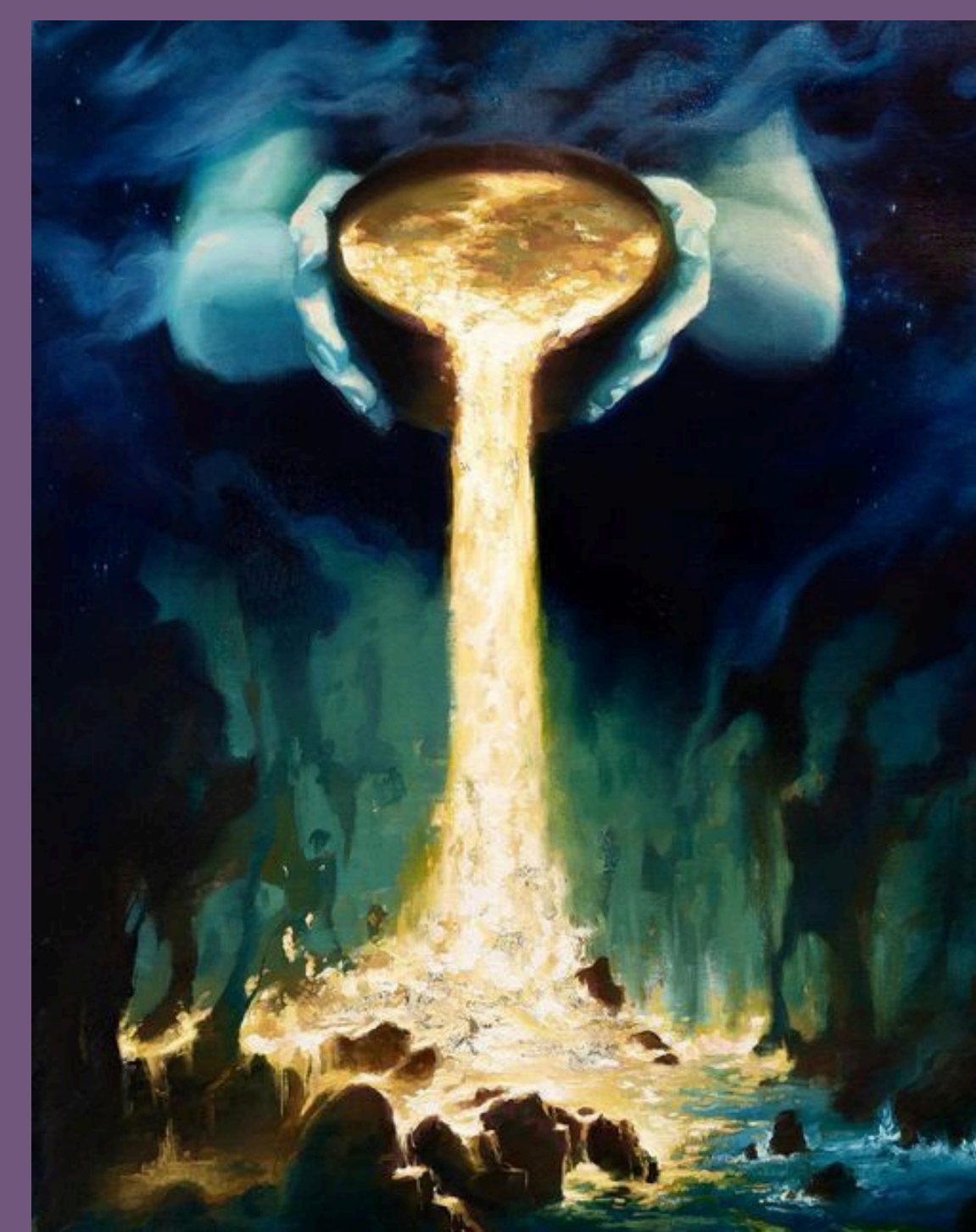
### The Mother

- The Mother is a female deity who is said to have spilled the cauldron to create the known world
- She presides over the force of fate, as well as the world itself.
- She is often used in slang, with characters exclaiming "By the Mother" or "Thank the Mother" to reference events and further display her role as the ruler of destiny



### The Cauldron

- The Cauldron is used in language much in the same way as the Mother, as it holds the same hierarchical status as her
- A physical yet sentient object that has been on the continent Prythia since before time
- It created and continues to create life as well as holds every living thing's fate, yet it does not control or decree them
- Was once warped into something deadly and full of malice and has not been reverted to its original state since
- Capable of a wide variety of magic, including resurrection



## Crescent City

Urd is the known Goddess of Fate on the planet Midgard.

### Urd

- Urd is the known Goddess of Fate of the Crescent City series
- Female and one of five deities who all hold equal hierarchical status
- Known as the Weaver of Fate and Destinies
  - Personification of fate itself
    - This is confirmed by the character of The Under King, as he mentions that she is not a goddess in his world but a force that governs instead
- Likely based on the Norse deity Urðr, who is one of three Norns that decide the fates of the people.
- Has no statues or depictions as it is said that fate takes too many forms to capture into one image
- In the city Lunathion, Urd has her own temple in the district Moonwood, which is described as having a black stone altar in the center as well as a stone throne on a dais at the rear of the building
  - Citizens can come pray to the goddess in hopes that their fate will take a turn for the good



## Conclusion/Analysis

The difference between the Ancient Mesopotamian God Enlil and his modern fictional counterparts clearly displays the societal progression in terms of gender roles over the past thousands of years. The fact that fate is now portrayed as either women or objects rather than an all-powerful masculine entity exhibits the evolution of gender roles in social code. As opposed to Enlil, the absolute paramount ruler of the Mesopotamian pantheon whose decreed fates could not be altered, the feminine entities present in Sarah J Maas' fantasy series hold significantly less hierarchal power. This constitutes a more contemporary view on the roles of women and Goddesses, establishing that women can hold this type of power responsibly and the world does not have to rely solely on men to determine their destiny.

Similarities...

- Both Enlil and Urd have temples, where those who honor their status will be able to worship and/or pray for their wellbeing.
- Enlil, the Mother, and the Cauldron are known to be the creator of the world to those who they created lives for.
- All have very important abilities, each of which meet no end.

Differences...

- Enlil is male, while the Mother and Urd are female
- Enlil controls fate himself, the Cauldron and the Mother preside over it
- Urd does not control fate, rather she is the force itself
- Enlil is the king of all gods, the Mother is equal to the Cauldron and Urd is equal to the other 4 Midgardian deities
- Enlil is a conventionally masculine individual, neither the Mother or Urd have known physical vessels

As shown, in modern fantasy depictions more focus is placed on the reality which is created by fate rather than the creator itself. This further emphasizes key shift from traditional overbearing male roles towards a more diverse depiction of the force behind it all.

## Bibliography

