

# Chiasm in Ugaritic

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The tablets from Ras Shamra, discovered beginning in 1929 in Syria, have opened broad avenues into our reconstruction and understanding of civilization in the Northwest Semitic arena in the central periods of the second millennium B. C. Cultural and linguistic roots of the soon to rise classical Hebrew nation are particularly evident in the literary record left by the people who occupied the site at Ugarit from 1400–1200 B. C., making the study of these texts significant to any understanding of the florescence of the civilization which composed the Old Testament. Although it is perhaps impossible to determine exactly what bearing each cultural group had on another during those early periods in Eastern Mediterranean history, it is clear that the library at Ugarit contains some very early precedents which are either directly related to the Hebrew literature which arose in that vicinity or are at least strongly representative of the cultural strata out of which it arose.

One of the most interesting elements of the literature from Ugarit in this context is its chiasmic component. Chiasmus, once thought to have been characteristically Hebrew in its more complex manifestations, can now be observed in this and its neighboring civilizations at some relatively early dates. Judging by their skillful execution of this and other rhetorical figures, it can certainly be said that these early peoples were attentive to literary constructs and were apparently pleased by the utility and variety which chiasmus gave to their predominantly poetic literature.

Parallelism afforded the fundamental literary technique with which the vivid epics and elegant hymns written at Ugarit were embellished. And thus it is no wonder that a simple turn to chiasmus on all levels--within single verses as well as throughout entire compositions--was found to be an attractive, accessible rhetorical figure in this body of literature. How it is used here, and how successfully, will necessarily enter into the critic's estimation of the levels of literary success achieved by the writers at Ugarit generally. In any case, chiasmus must be seen as part of a much wider epic milieu.

In addition to affording one ground upon which to criticize the literature of Ugarit itself, the presence of chiasmus and similar literary techniques in this body of literature help explain many literary phenomena in succeeding generations. Many have marveled that the literature of the Old Testament -- and one may as well include the epics of Homer too--seem to arise out of nowhere, fully developed and completely conversant with the styles and techniques which they employ from their earliest dawning. No "hesitation or experimentation with form" can be detected in even the earliest sections of these remarkable works. They seem to have perfected a sophisticated form of poetic and narrative expression which can scarcely be explained except by presupposing a long and deliberate familiarity with the medium.<sup>2</sup> It is not unreasonable, therefore, to look now to literature such as that from Ugarit to explain the development and excellence of expression in successive literatures which have inspired Western readers for centuries. To these ends, chiasmus in Ugaritic will be examined first in its simple manifestations and then in its role as a complex structuring device, particularly in reference to the Old Testament.

The frequent occurrence of simple chiasmus in the brief two- and three-beat lines of Ugaritic poetry has been observed and detailed by several scholars, Cyrus Gordon and Mitchell Dahood in particular. Simple chiasmus consists of two lines which are written so that the words in the second line appear in the inverse order of the words in the first. Syntactically this amounts to inverting object-verb to verb-object, as noted by Gordon in 2 Aqht:v:10-1,

The walking of Kothar *indeed he beholds, And he beholds* the fast-gait of Khasis.

Chiasm may also be created by inverting verb-subject to subject-verb, which is the case, for example in RS 24.258:14–5,

*Seated* is El on his r(egal) th(rone) El *sits* (enthroned) at his banquet.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, so prevalent is simple chiasmus in the stylistic composition of Ugaritic literature that Gordon devotes an entire section in his chapter on Syntax in the *Ugaritic Textbook*<sup>4</sup> to displaying instances of such forms as they are created from grammatical elements. Dahood has followed suit with further examples.<sup>5</sup>

Looking beyond grammatically created chiasmus, other simple and compound chiasms can occur in the presentation of lists, catalogues and the like. Such is illustrated in 'nt:V:38–9 (=51:IV:41–3a),

Your command, O El, is wise, Your wisdom sagacity everlasting, A life of good-fortune is your command.

The construction of this passage may be represented as ab:bc:ca, granting that “eternity” and “life” are cognate ideas—as in fact some juxtapositions or collocations might lead us to believe.<sup>6</sup>

Where these simple chiastic verses are compared with the short chiastic verses of the Old Testament, it becomes apparent that stylistically the distance between the two is not great:

(1) Ugaritic and Hebraic grammatical chiasms are similar in that their elements are commonly verb-object or verb-subject.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Genesis 7:11b,

Burst forth all the fountains of the Great Deep, And the sluice-gates of Heaven were opened,

compares well with UT 1003:5–7,

The two tongues lick the heavens, Swish in the sea the two tails.

By contrast, the majority of chiastic lines in Homer are patterns of nouns and adjectives, giving Classical chiasmus a much different flavor from the Semitic.<sup>8</sup>

(2) Incomplete chiasms appear in both Ugaritic and Hebrew texts, but are more characteristic of Ugaritic:

2 Aqht:V:10–1	(ab)c:c(a'b')
2 Aqht:V:31–3	abc:b'ac'
RS 24.258:1–2	abc:cb'
RS 24.258:14–5	(ab)c:(ba)c'

In Hebrew, however, chiasmus often becomes more complete, even within very short verses, e. g., Genesis 9:6a,

Whoso sheds the blood of man, By man his blood shall be shed.

In this case, all three elements participate in the inversion, abc:cba.

(3) While chiasmus is far less common in Ugaritic than in Hebrew, the presentation of parallel word-pairs is at the same time more rigid.<sup>9</sup>

(4) When the length of poetic lines increases in Hebrew or in Ugaritic, so the complexity of chiasmic sections also intensifies, as may be seen first from UT 68:7b–11b,

A Then *spoke Kothar-w-Khasis*: B „Did I not tell you, O Majesty Baal, Nor declare, O Mounter of Clouds?  
C Behold, *your enemies, O Baal*,

*Behold, your enemies*, shall you smite, Behold, you shall annihilate *your foes!* B You shall take your kingship eternal, Your dominion everlasting.” A *Kothar* carved a mace, 10 And *proclaimed* its name.

While often cited as containing a typical Canaanite climactic repetitive tricolon comparable to the one in Psalm 92:10 (KJV 92:9),<sup>11</sup> it should also be noticed that this declaration of Kothar-w-Khasis (AA') begins in a mood of reassurance (B), shifts to its central promissory statement (C), and then resumes the thought of B with two lines proclaiming the exalted reign of Prince Baal (B'). Basically similar is Psalm 3:7–9 (KJV 3:6–8), examined elsewhere herein (p. 10), although the Hebrew is more intricate.

The nature of simple chiasmus, thus far observed, allows us to conclude initially that simple Ugaritic chiasmus resembles Hebraic chiasmus in respect to its components and in its affinity to the general form of parallelism prevalent in both literatures; the Ugaritic forms, however, seem more primitive when judged on the criteria of complexity, completeness, intensification, and length. Simple chiasmus is, to be sure, only a point of departure in anticipation of the identification of more complex structures. Now it is natural to look another step ahead.

A near-chiasmic form in ancient literature is the inclusion or A-B-A pattern. Whether structural chiasmus grew out of the A-B-A symmetry or arose simultaneously with it, it is clear that both are compatible with a literary mentality which enjoyed the well-balanced framing-effect which could be achieved by positioning the central idea of an inscription at the midpoint of its physical configuration, though in some cases emphasis is on the flanks.

Any system, it seems, which is constructed from three parts, such that the first and third are in some significant respect identical to the each other, may be said to exemplify the A-B-A pattern. Needless to say, instances of this phenomenon are not particular oddities, nor are they difficult to discover and verify. Examples may be found throughout this volume in legal texts, epistles, covenant (bond), and literary texts, etc.<sup>12</sup>

Among the literary and religious texts of Ugarit, we encounter an interesting instance of the A-B-A pattern in Text 2. As Gordon observes, this text accompanies a ritual

whereby the women (:10–17 and :27–35) and men (:18–26) of Ugarit atone for their sins by offering sacrifices and libations to the father of the gods (=’Il) and the assembly of the gods via their official attendant(s) Tukamuna-and-Snm.<sup>13</sup>

In A the women’s rituals are presented and in B the men’s. It would appear, therefore, that the climax of the ritual takes place with the central line at 2:18 where the men recite „offer a bull, *msr-msr*, O son of Ugarit:” – a line which has no counterpart in the two female sections.

Gordon has also noted that Text 52, „The Birth of Dawn and Dusk,” employs a ritualistic A-B-A pattern in that the women first address ‘El as his wives, then as his daughters, and finally as his wives again.’<sup>14</sup> Yet we shall find below that the structure of this myth even exceeds the limits of this basic, though central, A-B-A alternation.

Text 49 + 62 of the Baal-‘Anat cycle begins and ends with a contest for the throne,<sup>15</sup> while Gordon mentions a couple of economic texts carefully framed with temporal prepositional phrases.<sup>16</sup> The A-B-A overview, which we can detect in such passages, provides us with strong evidence for a well disciplined yet broad perspective enjoyed by ancient authors as they commanded the execution of their literary works. The counterbalancing shifts in style and subject matter were performed intentionally and served a valuable purpose in unifying and framing the message of the passage as a whole. It would be hazardous to argue that the duplications which occur in the second A passage, or the abrupt shifts which are necessarily found in all such texts are attributable to corruptions,<sup>17</sup> since this would have vast consequences indeed on a large number of solid texts and would have to assume a very unlikely regularity in textual variation. Repetition was, rather, a commonplace in the literature of the second millennium B.C.<sup>18</sup> Stylistically, these repetitions blend well into the many symmetrical, balanced units which have come down to us from this period. The artistic ideal appears to have been to create a text which could frame the body or central purpose of the writing like the border around a tapestry or the wings at the sides of a treptich.<sup>19</sup> Thus the artistic success of the A-B-A technique must be judged in terms of its effectiveness in uniting, circumscribing, and giving a feel of completeness to the encircled text, and by this standard many Ugaritic texts fare impressively well.

Developing beyond the simple chiasmic arrangements of lines, or the A-B-A inversion of blocks of composition, Ugaritic literature rises to a final stage of chiasmic complexity. It has been frequently shown that a strong tendency exists in Hebrew literature to place ideas, events, or key phrases around an emphatic centerpoint in an order which ascends to a climax and then descends in the opposite order. It is evident that this pattern is fluently executed in the Ugaritic texts as well. Text 68 – not an intricate text<sup>20</sup> – relates how Baal defeats Yamm and expels him from his dominion through use of a „mace” fashioned by Kothar-w-Khasis. It manifests the following structure:

A ‘Athtart and Baal intend to destroy His Majesty Yamm (68:1–7) B Kothar-w-Khasis assures Baal of victory (7–10) C With the mace named „Expeller,” Baal is unsuccessful (11–8) C’ With the mace named „Driver”, Baal is successful (18–27) B’ ‘Athtart praises Baal (28–30) A’ ‘Athtart declares Baal the ruler instead of vanquished Yamm (31–40).

Despite the fragmentary nature of the beginning and ending of this text, and even apart from debate over whether ‘Athtart is shaming or praising Baal in B,’ the well-balanced structure of this episode is overtly visible through its repetition of thematic material.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, chiasmic parallel structure is a helpful tool here and elsewhere in restructuring mutilated portions of text. In this case, the success of the figure achieves a climactic parallelism at the center, where the god’s initial failure (C) shifts to success on his second assault (C’). The B sections balance each other as speeches by other deities, the second of which speaks in fulfillment of the former promissory statement. This rhetorical arrangement of the text is further established by a constellation of parallel word pairs, a central five of which are shown by Dahood<sup>22</sup> to be standard in both Hebrew and Ugaritic (C/C’). In addition, standard Ugaritic-Hebrew pairs of vocative *lameds* are present only in lines 8 and 28–9 (B/B’). Though this particular example is but one level above the A-B-A pattern observed in Text 2, chiasmus already lends this text strong elements of containment and completeness.

From the foregoing relatively simple chiasmic patterns, much more complex structures also developed. A readily available variation on the chiasmic theme was to be found in the juxtaposing of the issuance of a command against its execution.<sup>23</sup> Ugaritic Text 137 demonstrates a multi-leveled application of this technique.

The outline or format of this myth contains six balanced sections:

- A Baal threatens Yamm (137:1–6)
- B Yamm demands Baal's death (7–11)
- C Yamm instructs his messengers (11–7)
- D The messengers depart (18–21)
- E The gods lower their heads (22–3)
- F Baal rebukes the gods and orders the tablets read (24–5)
- F' Baal commands the gods and accepts responsibility (26–7)
- E' The gods lift their heads (28–9)
- D' The messengers arrive (30–1)
- C' Messengers deliver Yamm's message (31–5)
- B' El declares Baal a captive of Yamm (36–7)
- A' Baal attempts to assault Yamm's messengers and threatens Yamm by message (38–47).

Without examining Text 137 in its entirety,<sup>24</sup> consider the significant semantic parallels which exist between its first and second halves. Yamm's demand in B (7–11) is constructed as a tricolon, the third colon being climactic; so is El's delivery of Baal to Yamm B' (36–37), and in addition the latter contains a chiasm.

May Horan break, O Baal, (137:7–8; cf. 127:54–7) May Horan break your head, May Splendor-of-the-Name-of-Baal, your skull! *Your slave* is Baal, O Yamm, (137:36b–7a; cf. 68:9–10 *Your slave* is Baal, O Yamm, The son of Dagan *your captive*!

This repetition of climactic form is credential enough for itself. It would be hard to discount the claim that this effect was not the product of a conscious literary effort. So too it is difficult to explain the delayed reference to the arrival of the messengers in D' except in terms of its position in the larger design of the episode as a whole; that is, the god's catching sight of the messengers in E is the cause of their lowering their heads, but the arrival and entry of the messengers is withheld until D' in order to balance the messengers' departure in D. In fact, dischronology can be an important clue to the possible presence of chiasmus. Finally, C and C' are easily identified as a pair by the presence, noted by Gordon,<sup>25</sup> of the same chiasmic, elliptical bicolon in each:

The message of Yamm, your lord, (137:17//33–4) Of *your master*, Judge River.

The standard Hebrew-Ugaritic parallel word-pair configuration here is conclusive evidence, if any doubt remains, and the interesting *hapax legomenon*, *pdh*, studied by Sasson,<sup>26</sup> is included in the symmetrical pattern:

Your lord//your master (137:17) give up!//give up! (18) *his gold* (19) gods//holy-ones (20–1)

their heads//upon their knees (23)

your heads//upon your knees (24–5) your heads//upon your knees (27)

their heads//upon their knees (29) your lord//your master (33–4) give up!//give up! (34–5) *his gold* (35)  
gods//holy-ones (37–8)

Certain patterns seen in Text 137 extend to other texts as well. Note, for example, that an assembly/banquet scene is also central in Text 67, and in the Epic of Kirta:<sup>27</sup>

Tablets A *Threat to throne* due to loss of progeny and wife (Krt:8–34) I            B *El* tells Kirta how to obtain a new wife, and he so acts (Krt: 35–195), C But, makes a *vow to Asherah* en route; (Krt: 196–206) takes a *wife* and returns home (Krt: 207–128:I:8) D Homecoming *feast* (128:II:2–13) E *El* blesses the wedding and *promises* births (128:II:14–III:19) II            E' *Promised* births fulfilled (128:III:20–4) D' Kirta's *wife* conducts a *feast* for him and for the nobles (128:III:25–VI:7), C' But, Kirta falls ill from neglecting his *vow to Asherah* (125:1–120) B *El* intervenes to save Kirta and the land; exorcism by youngest daughter (126:III:1–127:24) III            A' Anticlimax with the eldest son of Kirta *threatening* to assume the *throne* (127:25–58).

Chiasmus makes this epic rich in antithesis and fulfillment. Note that it also makes it possible for the poem to end on an anticlimactic threat to the throne without making that anticlimax the real outcome of the story. Indeed, the climax, turnabout, and „theme of the whole text” is to be found in the center<sup>28</sup> at 128:III:16, the very climax of the promises made by *El* and separated from the other promises by an inclusion lauding Kirta. The second of the three tablets of the epic clearly focuses on this line, suggesting that the „last shall be the first”:

seven//eight (128:II:23–4) *Asherah* (26) the *Virgin*, 'Anat (27) Greatly exalted be Kirta (III:2) Amid the congregation of the land, (3) In the assembly of the tribe of Dotan! (4) And she will conceive and bear (5) She will bear a maid (7–12) Greatly exalted be Kirta, (13) Amid the congregation of the land, (14)

In the assembly of the tribe of Dotan! (15) *I shall make the youngest of them the first-born!* (16) The gods give their blessing as they come, (17) The gods come to their tents, (18) The pantheon of *El* to their dwellings. (19) Then she conceived and bore a son to him, (20)

And she conceived and bore (two) sons to him, (21)? Behold, in seven years, (22) The sons of Kirta were as promised, (23)

Yea, the daughters of Hurriya even so. (24–5) *Asherah* (25–6) the *Goddess* (26) seventy//eighty (IV:6–7)

A careful analysis of this epic discloses a sometimes confusing multistructural array of direct and chiasmic parallels throughout. However, by plotting the occurrence of Ugaritic-Hebrew parallel pairs (and a *hapax legomenon*) in all three tablets, it is possible to say with certainty that the first and third tablets have far more in common with each other than with the second tablet. Some of the pairs most likely indicating chiasmus may be listed as follows:

weep//shed tears (Krt: 26-7; 31-2; 39-40; 60-1) was soaked, poured out? (Krt: 30, *mh*) father//father (Krt: 41-3) raise//*sacrifice* (Krt: 75-6; 167-8) grain//*wheat* (Krt: 81-2; 172-3) solitary//widow (Krt: 96-7; 184-5) *field*//steppe (Krt:104-5;193-4) seven/eight (128:II:23-4) gave birth//gave birth (128:III:7-12) gave birth//gave birth (128:III:20-1) seventy//eighty (128:IV:6-7) father//father (125:5-6) was soaked, poured out? (125:27, *mh*) water . . . tears (125:27-8) *sacrifice*//libation, banquet (125:39-41; 61-2) earth//*field* (126:III:5-8)) *wheat*//spelt (126:III:9-10) weak//fatherless//widow (127:48-50)

Along with the variety of expression here used by the composer, there is an interesting reversal in the order of some of the combinations – though yet in keeping with regular A- and B-word order<sup>29</sup> through a slight change in the combinations.

In order to give a further indication of the complex multistructural elements employed in this long epic, Text 125, which is chiasmic in its entirety, will be outlined here:

Elhu speaks formula A (125:6-10, continued from 2-5) Elhu enters presence of father and weeps (11-3) Elhu speaks formula B (14-23) . . . . your sister, the *Eighth* (29--*Thatmanitu*)

. . . . *vault* of the heavens (35) . . . . the Lady Sun (36) . . . . shining of the light of the myriads (37) . . . . your sister, the *Eighth* (38) Our Kirta is slaughtering a sacrifice (39) The King is holding a banquet (40) Hold your left-hand over your nose, (41) Your right-hand over your throat, (42) etc.

. . . the lad Elhu (46) Grasped his lance in his left-hand (47) His javelin in his right-hand (48) Crisis in which Elhu faces his sister with the bad news of their father's illness (50-3) Is the King sick? (56) Kirta, your lord, ill? (57) . . . the lad Elhu (58) The King is not sick. (59) Kirta, your lord, is not ill. (60) Our Kirta is slaughtering a sacrifice (61) The King is holding a banquet (62) (lacunae, 63-79) How many moons has he been sick? (81)

Three moons has he been sick (84) Four has he been ill (85) . . . fashion a grave (87) Fashion a grave, yea, build a sepulchral *chamber* . . . (88) Like a *treasury* with a gate . . . 89) Even as an enclosure . . . (90) Her brother, *seven* (94) Thatmanitu weeps over her father (96-7) Thatmanitu speaks formula B (98-106) Thatmanitu speaks formula A (106-13)

It is quite possible that we have herein several examples of what Dahood calls "distant parallelism,"<sup>30</sup> e. g., the standard Hebrew-Ugaritic pair, "sun"//"moon," seems to appear in lines 36, 81, 84, a pair present also in the following text.

Text 77, "Nikkal and the Moon," is a brief but charming wedding hymn. It begins and ends with lyrical chiasmic verses, "I sing of *Nikkal-w-lb*" (77:1), "To *Nikkal-w-lb* do I sing." (38). Though the refrain-effect created by this chiasmic repetition caught the eye of Goetze,<sup>31</sup> the influence of chiasmus upon the overall structure of the poem escaped his notice:

X	Chiasmic prologue (77:1-17)	17 lines	Y	The conditions
	of the marriage (18-23)	6 lines	Z	Permission to marry obtained
	(24-30)	7 lines	Y'	The stipulations fulfilled (31-
	36)	6 lines	X'	Poetic epilogue (37-
	50).	14 lines.		

The entire system may be detailed as follows:<sup>32</sup>

X *Poetic Prologue* (77:1–17) I sing of Nikkal-w-lb (daughter of) A Khirikhbi, King of Summer Khirikhbi, King of Autumn B At the setting of the Sun The Moon shines C Will give birth a virgin . . . (5) O Kotharot! (= Songstresses) Daughters of praise, (Swallows)! Behold, a maid will bear a son . . . D Look, lo, for his use . . . . furnish for his flesh, blood, that . . . . And wine as for a betrothal feast, that . . . . (10) Hear, O goddesses Kotharot . . . . for his use . . . . For his lord Grain (Dagan) you give . . . . C' Hear, O Kotharot! (15)

Daughters of praise, (Swal)lows! B' Sends the Moon, Illuminator of Heaven, A' To Khirikhbi, King of Summer: Y *The Conditions of the Marriage* (77:17–24) "Give Nikkal! Moon will bring wedding gifts, That lb may enter his house. And I shall give as her bride-price-dowry to her father (20) A thousand (sheqels) of silver A myriad of gold I'll send gems of lapis lazuli I'll make her fallow-field into a vineyard The field of her love into orchards." Z *Permission Granted* (77:24–30) Then replied Khirikhbi, King of Summer: "O Gracious One among the gods (25) Be a son-in-law of Baal! Offer a bride-price for Pidraya, daughter of light! I'll introduce you to her father, Baal. Will agree 'Athtar To marry off to you Ybrdmy, the daughter of his father (30) The Lion will exchange (her)." Y' *The Conditions Fulfilled* (77:31–6) Then replied the Moon, Illuminator of Heaven, and he answered: "With Nikkal is my wedding!" After Nikkal Moon had wed . . . . Her father set the beam of the scales, Her mother, the pans of the scales, (35) Her brothers arranged the ingots, Her sisters indeed "stone" the scales. X' *Poetic Epilogue* (77:37–50) Of Nikkal-w-lb do I sing Let shine the Moon; And may the Moon shine for you! I sing of the goddesses Kotharot (40) Daughters of praise . . . . Swallows Daughters of the New Moon . . . . Lord of the Sickle Going down among the flowers Among the plants of . . . . To Luzpan, God of Mercy (45) Behold, in my mouth is their number, on my lips, their counting Let her dowry and her trousseau be . . . . with (her) shouts of applause, In the presence of Prbht, The fairest, the youngest of the Kotharot. (50)

Consider just a few of the chiasmic elements of this elegant poem. The relationships between the chiasmic prologue and the poetic epilogue are secured by many links. First, these two sections delicately balance the beginning of this myth with its ending. Simply in terms of length and weight, X and X' form mirror reflections of each other. Second, the predominance of repeated thoughts and formulae in the epilogue bind it of necessity to the prologue.

Duplicated lines, e. g., "Daughters of Praise, Swallows;" (77:5b–6, 77:15, and 77:40b–2a); recurring words, e.g., "Moon" (77:4, 37), "Kotharot" and "goddesses" (77:11, 40), as well as the chiasmic introversion of 77:1 at 77:37–8, work together to effect an intimate interrelationship between this prologue and its epilogue.

The meaning of the prologue, however, must be contrasted with that of the epilogue. At the first, the poet appears to sing of Nikkal's relationship to the Moon: *Her* childbearing, and *her* nurturing of his son (with the help of the seven divine handmaids, the Kotharot) are specifically mentioned. In the epilogue, however, the poet sings of the Moon's blessings to Nikkal: "May Moon shine for you" (77:38c–9), as here *he* places flowers and plants bounteously in her dowry and trousseau. These reciprocal complementary benefactions between Nikkal and Yarikh thus form a delicate scheme.

In the central panels, each stipulation is fulfilled with precision. The request "Give Nikkal, Moon will bring wedding gifts" (17b–18), finds its equivalent response in the affirmative statements, " 'With Nikkal is my wedding!' After Nikkal the Moon had wed" (32b–33). The four lines (20–23) naming the bride-price-dowry stand in contraposition to the four lines (33b–37a) depicting the weighing and receipt of the bride-price-dowry. And in keeping with the full chiasmic structure of the poem, reference is made at the center to the two gods, Baal and Athtar, thus marking



the turning point of the poem. Chiastically arranged are the complementary marriage offers: “Wed Pidrai, daughter of light” (eldest daughter and consort of Baal), and “*Ybrdmy*, daughter of his father” (sister of ‘Athtar, the Lion and morning star god).

The total effect of this poem is very pleasing because of the precision with which, and the full extent to which, chiasmic balances and complements are incorporated into the text. But still, the technique visible here is related to the basic A-B-A pattern (in this case, the sections X-YZY’-X’ appear to be poetic-narrative-poetic) and to the command-response epitaxis. Nevertheless, “Nikkal and the Moon” has achieved a great height of literary sophistication by transferring rudimentary repetition into a very subtle work of artistry.

The ‘Anat section of the Baal-‘Anat cycle is aptly named. For, at the very center of the complex chiasm therein, ‘Anat herself lists her greatest conquests as goddess of war *par excellence*.<sup>33</sup> The formulae and key phrases are laid out here with the Hebrew-Ugaritic parallel pairs in italics:

A *a thousand//ten-thousand* (‘nt:l:15-7) B *gates of the house* (II:3-4)? *house//two-tables* (II:29-30) C She draws some *water* and bathes;/*Dew of heaven, /Fatness of earth*, (II:38-9) D Take away from the *earth* war, Banish from the *soil* all strife; (III-IV:11-2) Pour peace into the midst of the *earth*, Much amity into the midst of the field’s *bosom*; (13-4) Converse of heaven with *earth*, Of the *deeps* with the stars; (21-2) E “What *enemy* has risen against Baal, (34) (What) *foe* against the Cloud-Rider? (34-5) Behold, I crushed El’s beloved, Yamm! (35) I destroyed El’s River, Rabbim. (36) Behold, I muzzled the Dragon, yea, I muzzled him! (37) (Ps 68:23) I did crush the Crooked Serpent, (38) (cf. Isa 27:1) (UT 67:l: 2) Shalyat, the seven-headed. (39) I did crush El’s beloved, Ar. . . . , (40) F Cut off El’s Bullock, ‘Atak. (41) I did crush the Divine Bitch, Fire, (42) Destroyed the daughter of El, Flame, (43) Who fought you and seized the gold; (43-4) Who drove Baal from the Heights of Zaphon, (44) Without frontlet, his ear pierced through; (45) Chased him from his throne of kingship, (46) From the dais, the seat of his dominion. (47) E’ What *enemy* has risen against Baal, (48) What *foe* against the Cloud-Rider? (48) No *enemy* has risen against Baal, (49) No *foe* against the Cloud-Rider! (50) D’ (I’ll) take away from the *earth* war, (I’ll) banish from the *soil* all strife; (52-3; 67; 72-3) Pour peace into the midst of the *earth*, Much amity into the midst of the field’s *bosom*; (54; 68-9; 74-5) Converse of heaven with *earth*, Of the *deeps* with the stars; (60-1) A’ *a thousand//ten-thousand* (82) C’ She draws some *water* and bathes;/*Dew of heaven, /Fatness of earth*, (86-7) B’ No *house* has Baal like the gods’, Nor a *court* like Asherah’s children’s (V:11-2) Unless he give a *house* unto Baal like the gods’, And a *court* like Asherah’s children’s, (46-7) A” *a thousand//ten-thousand* (VI:4-5) *a thousand//ten-thousand* (17)

Note the intensification in the second half.<sup>34</sup> This is due partly (from A’ to A”) to another, smaller chiasmic structure which focuses on a mutilated conversation between El and ‘Anat, which is enclosed by the repeated Hebrew-Ugaritic word-pair, “seven”/“eight” (V:19-20a//34-5).

As asserted above (p. 159), Text 52, “The Birth of Dawn and Dusk,” also exhibits a more substantially complex and complete chiasmic substructure, featuring at its center (52:40-9) a triad of speeches made by the women addressing El: First they speak to him as his wives, but declare him unable to impregnate them; second, they approach him as daughters; and third, they revert to their appeal to him as his wives, whereupon he does impregnate them. Seen in overview, here are the major repetitions and their sequence in this text:<sup>35</sup>

A Initial situation (52:1-15) “food”, “wine” (6), “privation” (9) B Roaming the wilderness in search of the gods’ dwellings (16-22) “roams wilderness” (16), “eight” (19), “seven” (20) C The gods invoked (23-9) “Good Gods . . . who suck at the nipples . . . of Asherah” (23-4) D Mention of the god Shapash (25) E Torches set

up (30–9) “Two Torches” (31, 35) F Women speak as wives (40–3) G Women speak as daughters (44–6)  
 F Woman speak as wives (46–9) E Offspring brought forth (50–8) “Dawn and Dusk” (52–3) D Mention of  
 the god Shapash (54) C The gods announced (58–65) “Good Gods . . . who suck as the nipples . . . (of  
 Asherah)” (58–61) B Roaming the wilderness and arrival at the gods’ dwellings (65–70) “seven” (66), “eight”  
 (67), “roams wilderness” (68) A Final conditions (71–76) food, and wine granted abundantly (71–5).

The structure of this text requires but little further comment.<sup>36</sup> Its complex chiasmus is created by the repetition of certain themes, augmented by the precise recurrence of words and phrases in consecutively corresponding sections. Around the central climactic speeches, the writer has positioned several well-balanced, complementary passages in a perfectly concentric geometric style. The chiasitic structure here is further corroborated by known Hebrew-Ugaritic word-pairs, and this is most appropriate in a text named for the divine pair, Shahar and Shalem. Indeed, here we find a clear instance of reversal<sup>37</sup> of standard A- and B-word sequence:

food//drink; food//wine (52:6) walk//range (16) eight//seven (19–20) heaven//heaven (38) fire//coals (41)  
 fire//coals (44–5) fire//coals (48) heaven//heaven (62) seven//eight (66–7) walk//range (67–8) food//wine;  
 food//drink (71-2)

There is disagreement, however, as to whether this text should be viewed as a fertility text, as a celebration of surfeit following seven years of famine, as an integration text fusing divine and human spheres, or merely as a ritual text for a banquet in honor of the gods Dawn and Dusk. Although this debate cannot be easily resolved, the chiasitic emphasis here on the regeneration of fertile potency would lend credence to the view that the text is fundamentally a fertility text.<sup>38</sup>

In conclusion, the examinations presented here are just a beginning, but they indicate that the literary elements of these early epics and poems are far more progressive than one had previously suspected. Not only is the body of early Canaanite literature formally noteworthy in itself, but extensive roots of the literary techniques which we will next see manifest in the Hebrew Bible clearly find their precedents in this era of ancient Near Eastern composition. What further research at Ugarit or other ancient cultural centers such as Ebla will reveal is impossible to predict. But as the awareness of chiasmus expands, it should at least become ever clearer that the figure itself was extensively employed, making its significance in any given body of literature greater than early twentieth century presuppositions about the composition and transmission of ancient literature ever entertained.

## FOOTNOTES

1 Much of the material appearing here was first presented by the author in *UF*, VI:421–36.

2 Gevirtz, *JNES*, 20:41.

3 Following Margulis’ rendering in *UF*, II:133, 136.

4 *AnOr* 38, 13.117; see also 13.50, 107 (n. 2), 118, 14.4, 17.5–6.

5 *U-HP*, 13.117, 123; *UF*, I:24–6, 32–6.

6 Cf. Gen 3:22, Zech 1:5, Dan 12:2, 7, Neh 2:3, Job 7:16; other parallels may exist here—see Cross, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum alten Testament*, I:262–3, II.2.b; Dahood, *Psalms*, I:xxiii, xxv; Albright, *YGC*, p. 139, and n.75.

- 7 Cf. Gen 1:27, 4:4–5, 24, 12:3, 15:4, etc.; Andersen, *Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 120, 127.
- 8 Cf. II 3, 179; 16, 224; 24, 720; Od 3, 310; 24, 340 (which I discuss in a later chapter in this volume).
- 9 Dahood, *RSP*, I, II:Intro 4c, n. 30; more will be said of word-pair order, below.
- 10 See note 21, below.
- 11 Albright, *CBQ*, 7:21; Dahood, *CBQ*, 34:242; cf. also Ps 145:13.
- 12 Treated above are the Sumerian Codex Lipit-Ishtar, the Akkadian Codex Hammurabi, a letter in Akkadian found at Ugarit (Knutson, *RSP*, II, VI:4), while below may be found biblical examples such as Deut 5 – 28 (Knutson, *RSP*, II, VI:2gh), Job, Daniel, II Ki 18 – 23, etc.
- 13 *UL*, p. 108.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- 15 As in the more complex Epic of Kirta and in the Iliad; cf. also Texts 68 and 137.
- 16 UT 1008, and 1009, in *UT*, 13.49–50; Dahood, *RSP*, I, II:209.
- 17 To the contrary, A–B–A or chiasmic patterning can often be used to account for dischronology – cf. Martin, *VTS*, 17:179–86.
- 18 And even earlier in the rhetoric of general hymnal epic dialects – Albright, *JPOS*, 2:69–86; YGC, pp. 4–5, 8–9.
- 19 Such symmetry is present in Ugaritic relief – Gray, *The KRT Text in the Literature of Ras Shamra*,<sup>2</sup> p. 59, 11.26:7.
- 20 Lund, *CNT*, pp. 131–4, suspected chiasmus in this text, but was unable to demonstrate it.
- 21 See Ginsberg's translation in *ANET*,<sup>3</sup> 130–1; cf. Gray, *Legacy of Canaan*,<sup>2</sup> pp. 26–9.
- 22 See his full lists in *Psalms*, III:445–56; *RSP*, I, pp. 71–382 (in collaboration with T. Penar); II, pp. 1–39; III (forthcoming); *Festschrift Joseph Ziegler*, pp. 35–40.
- 23 As in Ex 19:3–8, Josh 24:2–27; Knutson, *RSP*, II, VI:4eo; Welch, *UF*, VI:429.
- 24 For which see *ANET*,<sup>3</sup> 130; cf. Gray, *Legacy of Canaan*,<sup>2</sup> pp. 24–6.
- 25 *UT*, 13.105; cf. Dahood, *RSP*, I, II:120, 264.
- 26 *RSP*, I, III:97.
- 27 *ANET*,<sup>3</sup> 143–9.

28 Gray, *The KRT Text*,<sup>2</sup> pp. 1-2, 4-5, 60, 67; cf. I Sam 16:6-13, with the very same promise at or near the center of the chiasm of I Sam 1-31; cf. also the promise in Ps 89:28 (KJV 89:27), the entire Psalm likewise being chiasmic, Boys, *Key*, pp. 105 ff.; Schoors, *RSP*, I, I:42.

29 See Albright, *JPOS*, 16:17-20; Held, *Leshonenu*, 18:145-8; Boling, *JSS*, 5:221-55; Gevirtz, *JNES*, 20:41-6; „wheat”//„spelt,” while the regular order in Hebrew, may as easily appear in reverse in Ugaritic, Dahood, *RSP*, I, II:177.

30 *Psalms*, III:483; cf. *RSP*, I, II:Intro 6; there is also a hint of the pair „seven”//„eight,” though in reverse (94//29, 38) – cf. Text 52, below.

31 Goetze, *JBL*, 60:354, wrongly considering lines 40-50 as an independent composition (pp. 353-4).

32 Cf. the translations of Gordon, *UL*, pp. 63-5, and of Gray, *Legacy of Canaan*,<sup>2</sup> pp. 248-50.

33 See *ANET*,<sup>3</sup> 135-8; Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath* (esp. p. 137, where he noted the parallel of III:6ff.//IV:52ff.).

34 Lund, *CNT*, pp. 34, 44; cf. Ps 3:7-9.

35 See Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, pp. 120-5.

36 The climactic center of this text is observed by Tsumura in his „The Ugaritic Drama of the Good Gods” (dissertation); parallels between the first (more ritual) part of this text and its second (more mythic) part are also analyzed by Xella, *Il Mito di Shr e Slm*.

37 Cf. Dahood, *RSP*, I, II:Intro 4, and II:538, citing Ps 139:5//9.

38 Accord, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp. 22-4; Schoors, *RSP*, I, I:23h, citing Kosmala.