

Chapter IV

UGARITIC POETRY

Ugaritic poetry may be divided into two main categories: myth and epic. These terms must be defined because they are used differently by different authors. By a "myth" we mean here a narrative aimed at explaining either a natural phenomenon, such as some basic aspect of fertility (e.g., rain or dew), or a general condition affecting man's welfare (e.g., peace, health, or prosperity). The myth can be used in religion to induce well-being by sympathetic principles. For instance, the myth of Baal's triumph over Mot was invoked to bring on fertility for his devotees. Ritual drama reenacts myth so as to reproduce the beneficial effect attributed to the myth.

"Epic" is the term we shall apply to heroic narratives about people, although the gods are constantly affecting their destiny. The heroes and heroines of the epics are of the ruling class; the epic is not concerned with common people. Continuity of the royal line is of prime interest. The nobility of the crown prince's mother is important because a noble scion should preferably be of noble parentage on both sides, even though paternity (and not maternity) is the determining factor of class membership in a patriarchal society. The people worthy of a place in the epic are greater than life-size. As such they mingle with the gods socially. El is among the guests at King Kret's homecoming with Queen Hurrai. Epics often have a historical kernel; myths are usually devoid of any historical basis.

Both the myths and the epics of Ugarit are written in poetry. The structure of the poetry consists of parallelistic balance, in which two or more units of expression repeat, oppose, or otherwise complement each other. The language of poetry has many words, phrases,

and epithets of its own. Synonymous words and whole expressions are necessitated by parallelism, for the very nature of the poetry requires repetition in different phraseology. If "Baal" is mentioned in one hemistich, the poet can call him "Hadd" or "Dagon's Son" or "the Rider of Clouds" (depending on the length of phrase desired) in the parallel hemistich. There is no requirement to adhere to the same cadence throughout an entire poem. The large variety of traditional cadences offers so many possible combinations of verses and stanzas that Ugaritic (like Hebrew) poetry has much more structural vivacity than dactylic hexameter can provide. There is no need to illustrate the metric variety within any given Ugaritic poem, because the nature of the original Ugaritic (at least its parallelism) carries over into the English translation and can be observed below in this chapter.¹

A large group of texts deal with myths pertaining to Baal and Anath. They can best be discussed in some sequence that supplies a meaningful continuity, provided that we understand that the sequence is ours, and that it has not been prescribed by the poets or priests of Ugarit.² We start with text 129, which tells of the sea god, Yamm, who on winning kingship, has a palace built for him by Kothar-and-Ḥasis. We begin with this fragment because Yamm's kingship and palace precede Baal's, as will appear later.³

[] father [] (129:1
 [] to []
 [Thereupon] he sets face toward El
 At the sources [of the Two Rivers]
 [In the midst of the streams of the Two Deeps].
 [He enters] the abode of El (5

¹ For an analysis of the varieties of Ugaritic prosody with reference to verbal composition, parallelism, and bulk, see *UT*, pp. 130–144.

² A. Herdner groups the texts somewhat differently in her *Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques*, Paris, 1963.

³ In the following translations, words missing or broken away on the tablets are put between brackets. Italics are used to indicate very doubtful translations. Dashes indicate passages which are still untranslatable. The single, double, and triple lines in the texts were drawn by the scribes to mark off sections of the tablets. Words added in translation are in parentheses. The numbers on the right margins refer to the edition of the Ugaritic texts in *UT*.

[Nor up]set [the chair] of thy kingship?

Nor break the scepter of thy government?"

And [] replies:

"[] against me, Thor-El, my father.

As for me, [I have] no house [like] the gods

Nor a court [like the deiti]es!

(:20

To the *womb*, I'll descend

When I'm reborn the Kothars will wash me

In the hou[se] of Sea

In the palace of Judge River."

Thor-El, his father, - - -, Judge []:

"[Judg]e River, thou art King!

[] mayest thou reign!

Lo, there is no wife, [] like

[] Prince Sea

[] Judge River

[] he will send me."

And Athtar replies: []

Text 137 tells of Yamm's demand that Baal be turned over to him. Yamm makes his arrogant request through messengers sent to the convocation of the gods under the presidency of El. Baal, though infuriated by Yamm's insolence, is handed over by El as a slave to Yamm.

[] (137:1

"Thou has arisen against []"

[And] Aliyan Baal [replies]:

"[] (:5

On thy head, Aymr []

[On thy pate Ygrš⁶]!"

[And] Judge River [replies]:

"May [Horon] break, [O Baal]!

[May Horon break] thy head

Astarte-[Name-of Baal, thy pate]!"

[] Staff fall in By[blos]

[] two women [] (:10

[me]ssengers sends Sea []

⁶ Aymr ("Driver") and Ygrš ("Expeller") are the names of war clubs fashioned by Kothar-and-Ḥasis. The first stuns the foe; the second vanquishes him. These clubs are mentioned in text 68, below.

in - - - - - fowl []

- - - break also they.

"Depart, lad[s]!

[Do not sit!]

[Then] ye shall surely set [face]

Toward the Convocation of the Assembly

In the mi[dst of the mountain of Night].

[At the feet of El] do not fall

(:15

Do not prostrate yourselves before the Convocation [of the Assembly]

But declare your information!

And say to Thor, [my] father, [El]!

[Declare to the Convocation] of the Assembly:

"The message of Sea, your lord,

Of your master Ju[dge River]:

"Give up, O gods, him whom you harbor

Him whom the multitude harbor!

Give up Baal [and his partisans]

Dagon's Son, so that I may inherit his gold!" ' "

The lads depart

They do not sit.

[Then] they set [face]

(:20

Toward the mountain of Night

Toward the Convocation of the Assembly.

The gods had not even sat down

The deities to dine,

When Baal stood up by El.

As soon as the gods saw them

Saw the messengers of Sea

The emissaries of Judge River

The gods lowered their heads upon their knees

Yea upon the thrones of their lordships.

Baal rebukes them:

"Why, O gods, have ye lowered

Your heads on top of your knees

(:25

Yea upon the thrones of your lordships?

Let a pair ⁷ of gods read

⁷ Apparently the gods who could read were a pair of divine scribes, even as the divine messengers (and many other deities) came in pairs. See *UT* § 19.126 for *ahd* (*m*), "pair"; the common meaning of "one" is ruled out by the dual/plural verb here.

The tablets of the messengers of Sea
 Of the emissaries of Judge River!
 O gods, lift up your heads
 From the top of your knees
 Yea from the thrones of your lordships!
 And I shall answer
 The messengers of Sea
 The emissaries of Judge River."
 The gods lift their heads
 From on top of their knees
 Yea from the thrones of their lordships.
 After there arrive the messengers of Sea (:30
 The emissaries of Judge River
 At the feet of El they do [not] fall
 They do not prostrate themselves before the Convocation of the As-
 sembly.
 Arise [] they declare their information.
 A fire, two fires!
 He sees a burnished sword!
 [] them.
 They say to Thor, his father, El
 "The message of Sea, your lord,
 Of your master, Judge River:
 'Give up, O gods, him whom ye harbor
 Him whom the [multitudes] harbor! (:35
 Give up Baal and his partisans
 Dagon's Son, so that I may inherit his gold!' "
 [And] Thor, his father, El, [replies]:
 "Baal is thy slave, O Sea!
 Baal is thy slave, [O S]ea!
 Dagon's Son is thy captive!
 He will bring thy tribute like the gods
 He will bring []
 Like the deities, thy gift!"
 But Prince Baal is infuriated.
 [A knife he tak]es in the hand
 A dagger in the right hand.
 To smite the lads ⁸ he flo[urishes them/it].
⁸ I.e., the two messengers of Sea.

[Ana]th seizes [his right hand]

(:40

Astarte seizes his left hand:

“How [canst thou smite the messengers of Sea],

[The emis]saries of Judge River?

The messengers – – – – – []

[] messengers on the shoulders

Word of his lord and []”

But Prince Baal is infuriated.

Fields in []

The messengers of Sea

The [emis]saries of Judge Riv[er]

(:45

I have spoken to Sea, your lord,

[Your] ma[ster, Judge River].

Gmr-Hadd – – – []

[] bow down []

Text 68 relates how Baal vanquishes Yamm and drives him from his sovereignty through the use of two magic clubs fashioned by Kothar-and-Ḥasis for this particular battle.

[] dead []

(68:1

[] alive []

I shall bring them out

Also I shall drive out []

[] and in the sea – – – – –

In the sea two bosoms []

[Judge] River – – – – – there two swords – – – – – I shall kiss [] (:5

“To the earth let *our* mighty one fall

Yea to the dust, *our* strong one.”

[From] his mouth the word had not yet gone forth

Nor from his lips, his utterance

And his voice was given forth

Like a mountain under the throne of Prince Sea.

And Kothar-and-Ḥasis declared:

“Did I not tell thee, O Prince Baal,

Nor declare, O Rider of Clouds?

‘Lo, thine enemies, O Baal,

Lo, thine enemies wilt thou smite

Lo, thou wilt vanquish thy foes

Thou wilt take thine eternal kingdom

(:10

Thine everlasting sovereignty! ”

Kothar brings down two clubs

And proclaims their names.

“Thy name, even thine, is Expeller!

Expeller, expel Sea

Expel Sea from his throne

River from the seat of his sovereignty!

Thou shalt swoop from the hands of Baal

Like an eagle from his fingers!

Strike the shoulders of Prince Sea

’Twixt the hands of [Jud]ge River!”

(:15

The club swoops from the hands of Baal

Like an eagle from his fingers.

It strikes the shoulders of Prince Sea

’Twixt the hands of Judge River.

Sea is strong

He is not vanquished

His joints do not fail

Nor his frame collapse.

Kothar brings down two clubs

And proclaims their names.

“Thy name, even thine, is Driver!

Driver, drive Sea

Drive Sea from his throne

(:20

River from the seat of his sovereignty!

Thou shalt swoop from the hands of Baal

Like an eagle from his fingers!

Strike the head of Prince Sea

’Twixt the eyes of Judge River!

Let Sea sink

And fall to earth!”

And the club swoops from the hands of Baal

Like an eagle from his fingers.

It strikes the head of Prince [Sea]

(:25

’Twixt the eyes of Judge River.

Sea sinks

Falls to earth

His joints fail

His frame collapses
 Baal drags and poises Sea
 Destroys Judge River.
 By name, Astarte rebukes:
 "Shame, O Aliyan Baal,
 Shame, O Rider of Clouds!
 For Prince Sea was our captive
 For Judge River was our captive." (:30
 And there went out B[aal]
 Verily ashamed is Aliyan Baal
 And [Prince] Sea is indeed dead
 So let Baal rei[gn]!
 Heat ⁹ for the — — — — and [and]
 says: "Sea is dead"
 for — — — — and she answ[ers] (:35
 those lords []
 for the — — — — []
 in his head []
 []
 [] his eyes []

The Anath text refers, in column I, to a divine banquet with abundant wine and a minstrel who sings to the accompaniment of cymbals. Column II tells of how Anath's bloodthirsty rampage nearly destroys all of mankind; the massacre found a place in the sacred literature because it symbolizes victory and ends on a note of the blessings of peace that follow victory. Columns III–IV tell how Baal induces Anath to visit him on his holy mountain by promising to reveal to her the secret of nature. She at first fears that the invitation is prompted by some danger threatening Baal, and assures the messengers of Baal who bring the invitation that she is willing to take on any foe of Baal, even as she has vanquished foes of his in the past, to wit, Yamm ("Sea"), Tannin (the dragon Leviathan), Mot ("Death"), and so on. Baal's messengers, Gupan and Ugar, assure her that there is no trouble, but that she should make certain offerings and hasten to Baal, who will reveal his great secret. She obeys and brings with her the blessings of rain, dew, game, and fish.

Actually Baal's aim is to get Anath to set in motion his request for a

⁹ The heat is apparently destructive heat that withers crops. When a god or hero is slain, nature responds by languishing.

palace. Columns IV–V narrate how Anath extorts by threats of violence El's permission to build the palace. Column VI refers to the delegation sent to Kothar-and-Ḥasis with Baal's request that the Caphtorian god build it.¹⁰

The Anath text closes with a parallel section (duplicating scenes of the offering) and then with a mission to Kothar-and-Hasis (with the request that he come to learn the secret of nature). An additional fragment closes with a ceremony in which El proclaims some divine names at a feast in connection with the construction of a palace.

“Do not lower [] (‘nt:I:1 11
Serve Aliyan Baal

Honor the Prince, Lord of Earth."

He proceeded to prepare (a repast)

So that he might feed him. (5

He put a breast before him

With a keen knife

A slice of fatling.

He began to prepare beverages

So as to give him to drink.

He set a cup in his hand (:10

A goblet in both his hands.

From the mighty *cherub* we — — — — —.

The men of heaven saw not the sacred cup

The women of the goblet eyed not Asherah. (:15

A thousand pitchers he took from the wine

A myriad he mixed with its mixture.

He proceeded to sing and chant

¹⁰ As we have noted above, the myth harks back to the time when Caphtor was the hub of the Northwest Semitic world in Minoan times. When the Mycenaean Greeks conquered the Minoan sphere, the Northwest Semitic sea lords were forced to center their sphere on the Syro-Palestinian coast, at places like Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, Arwad, and Ugarit. Accordingly, in the tenth century B.C., Solomon turned to Tyre for aid in building Yahweh's Temple, even as Ugarit had looked to Caphtor. It is interesting to note that (in accordance with the requirements of monotheism) God absorbed the roles of the various gods in the old pantheon, including Kothar-and-Hasis' role. Note that I Chronicles 28:19 ascribes the plan of Solomon's Temple to Yahweh's architectural design, written in Yahweh's own handwriting. Earlier (*ca.* 2000 B.C.) the Sumerian ruler Gudea of Lagash claimed (in his Cylinder A, col. VI:3-5) that the god Nindub had brought him the plan for building the Eninnu temple.

¹¹ 'nt is the Ugaritic spelling for Anath.

With cymbals in the hands of the Good One
 The lad, good of voice, sang (:20
 About Baal in the heights of Saphon.
 Baal views his girls
 He sees Pidray, girl of light
 Also Tallay, [girl] of rain (:25
 (*four lines missing*)
 Like the fruit of seven daughters (:II:2
 The scent of kids and *anhb*-animals
 Both gates of Anath's house.¹²
 And the lads chance upon the Lady of the Mountain (:5
 And lo Anath smites in the valley ¹³
 Fighting between the two cities
 She smites the people of the s[ea]shore
 Destroys mankind of the sunrise.¹⁴
 Under her are heads like vultures
 Over her are hands like locusts ¹⁵ (:10
 Like thorns of *grmn*, the hands of troops.
 She piles up heads on her back
 She ties up hands in her bundle.
 Knee-deep she plunges in the blood of soldiery
 Up to the neck in the gore of troops. (:15
 With a stick she drives out foes
 Against the flank she draws her bow.
 And lo Anath reaches her house
 Yea the goddess enters her palace
 But is not satisfied.
 She had smitten *it* in the valley
 Fought between the two cities. (:20

¹² The consonantal text permits such a translation. However, the sequence of phrases makes no sense and therefore can not be entirely correct. No part of the translation has been marked as doubtful because each word *by itself* is definable. The difficulty hinges on the lack of vowels, which generally makes it possible for any word, taken *by itself*, to have several different pronunciations and meanings. Certainty of translation comes with clarity of context, which is lacking here, partly due to the preceding lacuna in the tablet.

¹³ The text has *b^emq*, which can mean either "in the valley" or "violently."

¹⁴ The pair of opposites (seashore = west, and sunrise = east) indicates totality, as antonymic pairs frequently do. The meaning is that Anath is decimating all of mankind.

¹⁵ I.e., the air is full of the heads and hands she is hacking off her victims.

She hurls chairs at the troops
 Hurling tables at the soldiers
 Footstools at the heroes.
 Much she smites and looks
 Fights and views.
 Anath gluts her liver with laughter (:25
 Her heart is filled with joy
 For in Anath's hand is victory.
 For knee-deep she plunges in the blood of soldiery
 Up to the neck in the gore of troops.
 Until she is sated ¹⁶ she smites in the house
 Fights between the two tables (:30
Shedding – – – – the blood of soldiery
 Pouring the oil of peace from a bowl.
 The Virgin Anath washes her hands.
 The Progenitress of Heroes,¹⁷ her fingers.
 She washes her hands in the blood of soldiery
 Her fingers in the gore of troops. (:35
 [Arran]ging portions by the chairs
 Tables by the table(s)

¹⁶ Note that the style calls for duplicating the battle scene. In line 19 above it is stated that Anath was not satisfied with the bloodshed in the first foray. Accordingly she sallied forth on another battle and this time she was satisfied. This feature of the literature is of the greatest importance in understanding Hebrew and Greek literatures. The usual approach to such duplications is to assume that two sources have been combined by a later editor. For example, in Judges 21, it is generally held that two separate stories, from different sources, tell how the decimated Benjaminites captured wives, first from Jabesh-Gilead and then from Shiloh, to assure the survival of the Tribe. That both incidents belong together is indicated by the statement that after capturing the girls from Jabesh-Gilead, the Benjaminites had still not found enough wives (v. 14), whereupon they captured more girls from Shiloh and so found the requisite number of wives (v. 23). As long as the Bible was approached mainly from the standpoint of a theory of documentary analysis, it appeared reasonable enough to assume that two sources had been clumsily stitched together. Ugaritic literature shows that the ancient style calls for the climactic parallelism of the two scenes; we are not dealing with a casual editor who conflated a "Jabesh-Gilead source" with a "Shiloh source." The Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh scenes are two halves of one whole. The first is the prelude, the second, the climax. Neither half is, or ever was, a separate entity.

¹⁷ This epithet of Anath (*ybmt limm*) is not yet clear. "Widowed Sister-in-Law of Nations" has also been suggested on the basis of Hebrew cognates. Our present interpretation is prompted by the fact that Anath was regarded as the mother of certain warriors (cf. Judges 3:31; 5:6).

Yea the whisper of the stone
 The murmur of the heavens to the earth
 Of the deeps to the stars.
 I understand the lightning which the heavens do not know
 A matter that men do not know
 Nor the multitudes of the earth understand. (:25
 Come and I shall show it
 In the midst of the mountain of me, god of Saphon, in the sanctuary
 In the mountain of mine inheritance, in the good place
 In the Hill of Power." ' ' '

As soon as Anath sees the gods,
 On it the feet stamp (:30
 On the plain she breaks the back
 Above, her face sweats
 The joints of her back fail
 Her vertebrae are agitated.
 She lifts her voice
 And shouts:
 "Why have Gupan and Ugar come?
 What enemy has arisen against Baal
 Or foe against the Rider of Clouds? (:35
 Did I not crush El's Darling, Sea?
 Nor destroy River, the great god?
 Nor muzzle Tannin full well?
 I crushed the crooked serpent
 The mighty one of seven heads.
 I crushed the darling of the earth gods (:40
 Even Mot, the calf of El, - - -
 I crushed Fire, the bitch of the gods
 I destroyed the daughter of the El-Zebub
 I fought and got the gold
 Of the one who drove out Baal from the heights of Saphon (:IV:45
 Ousting like a bird of - - - -
 Who drove him out from the seat of his kingship
 From the dais, from the throne of his sovereignty.
 What enemy has arisen against Baal
 Or foe against the Rider of Clouds?"