

LITERARY CRITICISM, FOLKLORE SCHOLARSHIP, AND UGARITIC LITERATURE

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I. The search for a category in which to place a literary document and for a mode of interpreting ancient literary documents is not a frivolous enterprise. Far from being merely an academic response to classify whatever reaches our hand, the desire to locate a text within a literary category—some might say within a ‘genre’—often permits us to highlight commonly shared themes and allows us to speculate on the extent of literary patterning.¹ More importantly, perhaps, a successful search for a literary genre permits us to delineate an agenda of inquiry that could be posed to individual documents once their literary context is established.

But our first task is certainly to become more precise in what this paper will entertain and hence to be more modest about the goals it seeks to achieve. ‘Folklore scholarship’ is an ambitious heading for what is, at best, a catch-all discipline which has yet to develop theories and perspectives acceptable to the majority of those engaged in its behalf. Moreover, rather than tightening its focus, folklore has witnessed an expansion of interest within the last decade to incorporate approaches and viewpoints derived from anthropology, psychology, sociology, and linguistics.² But as a working definition, we might describe folklore as a discipline which explores and charts the presence of conventions and behavioral manners shared by groups of peoples and often transmitted, orally or in writing, through time and across space. Because in the study of the Ancient Near East evidence comes from moribund civilizations, we can safely avoid those folkloristic avenues that permit an evaluation of the folk-life of contemporaneous societies, and concentrate on those which analyze the literary remains of past cultures. But here we must add that whereas folklore has borrowed much from the approaches of

¹Frye (1957) 247-48.

²See Burns (1977) 109-11.

literary criticism, it differs from the latter in its broader scope of inquiry; whereas the former is interested in the origins, development, and spread of literary traditions, the latter tries to investigate the interrelationship that exists among the tale, the teller, and their audience.³

Similarly, 'Ugaritic literature' is too amorphous an entry in our title. Folklore research has almost nothing to say about the study of political, legal, administrative, and 'scientific' archives. Folklore might contribute marginally to the analysis of cultic, magical, and 'wisdom' documents. But as we shall try to show, it can be insightful in its elucidation of those half-a-dozen or so texts which we consider as belletristic. While we will refer to *Keret*, *Aqhat*, and *Baal*, the main thrust of this paper will be programmatic rather than pragmatic, suggestive rather than illustrative. But two caveats should be inserted at this point:

1. The interpretative tools available to the folklorist can be applied only when Semitic philology has provided tolerably dependable renderings of the Ugaritic narratives. Even as we admit to major failings in comprehending particular passages within the texts at our disposal, it can nevertheless be stated that general scholarly agreement prevails over the contours, outlines, and understanding of large portions of their contents.

2. The narratives at our disposal are, regrettably, 'one-dimensional.' By this I mean that, unlike the situation that obtains in the discovery of other Near Eastern narratives, e.g. Gilgamesh and Etana, no more than one exemplar each of *Keret*, *Aqhat* and *Baal* has so far been recovered. We are, therefore, constrained to consider these Ugaritic narratives only within the archaeological context in which they were found, and to limit our discussion only to the written form in which they have reached us. While this may seem obvious as an initial principle, it will have wide ramifications as we draw other conclusions.

In the past century a number of avenues, delineated by folklorists, have been applied to the interpretation of Biblical as well as ancient Near Eastern societies.⁴ It is generally agreed that the methods advocated by the so-called 'functionalists,' scholars dedicated to uncovering the manner in which myths codify actual beliefs and promote order among the cultists as well as interested in describing the manner in which legends and epics propagate an existing social order, are sustained by an excessive amount of circular reasoning. For it cannot be reasonably maintained that mythological and literary imageries have a basis in

³Max Lüthi (1976) 19.

⁴A useful survey of approaches taken by folklorists, albeit not centered around Biblical and Near Eastern scholarship, is in Richard Dorson (1963) 93-110. An invaluable collection of essays dealing with a wide range of folkloristic topics, with useful bibliographical updating, is in Alan Dundes (1965).

empirical reality as long as that reality is itself often reconstructed on the authority of the literary texts. Another way of airing this criticism is to say that the texts questioned by the functionalists always confirm the explanations they offer, for the simple reason that there is usually nothing in those explanations which was not derived, to begin with, from the texts themselves.⁵

Another approach, advocated most commonly by those on the perimeters of active research in the Ancient Near East, is derived from the symbiosis which occurred between followers of the so-called Cambridge school and advocates of Jungian psychology. While extremely seductive, the elaborate symbolic language, which is meant to psychologically chart primordial 'archetypes' deeply etched in the common consciousness, can be accepted only by those predisposed to a particular interpretation of the complexities of the human psyche.⁶ Lastly I mention an approach that, derived from Scandinavian folklorists, has become best known to Biblical scholarship in the highly refined form elaborated by Hermann Gunkel. Atomistic, this approach tried to isolate brief, tolerably self-contained episodes. These are then compared and placed in parallel with similar ones extracted from other (mostly near Eastern) documents. Criticism of this method is at least twofold. It tends to neglect the contexts from which the various motifs are culled and ignore the motivation which impels the (re)telling of the narrative in which they are set. A more severe criticism, however, can be levelled. It is altogether unclear to me how relevant is a method which compares motifs, albeit similar in shape and content, to the understanding of a literature. The discovery of a set of motifs from two differing tales should barely cause the raising of an eyebrow. Even the identification of a series of such motifs in the same two tales would be merely an interesting discovery. In my opinion, only when sequences of motifs, each of which is important to the development of the plot, are recovered from within two narratives can we begin to profitably assess a literature and usefully apply the tools available to the folklorists. But one who agrees with this observation and sympathizes with the criterion it establishes would no longer be considered as an 'atomist'; rather, he is better located among those espousing 'structuralist' modes of interpretations.

Structuralists, of course, do not form a homogeneous group, and it would be foolhardy to describe the various enterprises that are launched under its banner. Suffice it to say that at least two interpretive channels

⁵See Kluckhohn (1942) 45-79. Criticisms of this approach are collected by Kirk (1970) 8-31.

⁶See, for example, the survey presented by Fischer (1963) 235-92, and the appended critics of a number of commentators. The approach has been criticized by many folklorists; see Dorson (1963) 105-9.

can be distinguished. The first attempts to gain an insight into the 'deeper' meaning of a text by reallocating contrasting components of a narrative into paradigms of opposites. The other channel confines itself to establishing the literary genre of a given narrative by noting the manner by which plot-motifs are chained sequentially, some might say syntagmatically—to form a whole. It can easily be perceived that while, in the first approach, a presupposed interpretation quickens a redefinition of the structure of a given text, the second avenue is merely descriptive, allowing interpretation to begin only when the literary genre of a narrative is seen to follow a pre-described sequence.⁷

The second approach, sometimes allocated to the 'formalists,' has been championed by slavic scholars. Although much refined and elaborated in recent times, the work of V. Propp is seminal to that enterprise. In his *Morphology of the Folktale*,⁸ Propp moves away from the conventional approach of focusing on characters who fit a type common to a number of narratives (e.g. the wicked stepmother, the evil uncle, etc.), to one in which they are chosen solely on their immediate role in propelling the plot of a particular folktale. These tale-roles, in turn, are seen to influence units, labelled functions, which string themselves to form the whole narrative. Propp thinks that not only are these functions invariable in their location within a tale, but that they are limited in number. With this in mind, Propp defines a folk or fairy tale as any narrative which proceeds from an initial situation either through a hostile act against a hero (or his sponsor) or because of a manifest lack in the fortune of the hero (or his sponsor)—childlessness, famine—which progress through a sequence of proscribed functions, and which ends either in a marriage of the hero (or his sponsor) or in a successful resolution of those lacks. A tale can arise from the skillful arrangement of a series of originally independent folktales, as long as the initial conditions that propelled the first in the series of tales are not satisfied or fulfilled until the last tale within that series. An excellent example of such an occurrence can be noted in the Biblical *Ruth* where Naomi's lacks (no heir, hunger) sets Ruth towards her ultimately successful searches, for food (end of chapter 2), for a husband (end of chapter 3) and, through him, for a redeemer (end of chapter 4).⁹

I believe it can be shown that portions of *Aqhat*, *Keret*, and some segments in *Baal* fit nicely within the sequential scheme developed by Propp. But my objectives here are not merely to establish more precisely than has heretofore been done, the genre to which Ugaritic narratives

⁷Useful introductions to the subject are found in Scholes (1974) and, more relevant to Biblical studies, in McKnight (1978).

⁸Note also the important correctives to the English edition, "The Problem of 'Tale Role' and 'Character' in Propp's Work," in Jason (1979) 311-20.

⁹See Sasson (1979) 203-14, 226.

belong, but to present guidelines for interpretations of these texts once their literary category is recognized. The latter goal is particularly relevant since many scholars, unfamiliar with Propp's presentation, and not infrequently, with folklore methodology, have nevertheless recognized that folkloristic elements lay embedded within our texts. I shall therefore reserve a detailed Proppian analysis of Ugaritic narrative, which would absorb much space, for another occasion and use the remaining pages to offer the following synthesis.

II. Approaches that seek to locate a category for the Ugaritic narratives help us to differentiate between two levels of inquiries, and hence to clarify the demands that we make upon our texts. We might first differentiate between investigations which allow scholarship to critically assess the information available from the perspective of (social) historians, and inquiries that permit speculations on the meaning and purpose of these documents from the perspective of those who wrote and circulated them. When dealing with literary texts, these two levels of inquiries can rarely be satisfied by the same sets of questions.

I begin by discussing the limitations and difficulties confronting the (social) historian as he tackles *Keret*, *Aqhat* and *Baal*, and proceed by outlining the contexts which can be assessed on the basis of folkloristic guidelines.

A. If a narrative is found to fulfill 'formalistic' requirements, and hence, to belong to a folk (or fairy tale) category, then an important limitation would be imposed on the interpreter. Folktales do not ordinarily preserve an accurate memory of a single historical event or that of a particular stage in the development of cultures. All activities contained within are normally levelled and smoothed out to give the appearance of exemplary or paradigmatic behavior.¹⁰ With this point in mind, five assessments can be presented.

1. Proceeding from the contents of the Ugaritic texts, and judging by the mortality of the protagonists, scholars have labelled *Baal* as a 'myth', and *Keret* as an 'epic'. But if a narrative is analyzed on the basis of its structure and form, and categorized on the role the protagonists play in shaping each of its sequences, and if this approach is seen as equally applicable to *Baal* as to *Keret*, then the distinctions that we make between myth, on the one hand, and epic, legend, saga, on the other, would be retained with minimal benefits, as minimal as those obtained by the distinction folklorists make between folktales, which are said to involve humans, and fairy tales, which are said to introduce non-human characters. Blurring this artificial demarcation might, at the very least, resolve the minor difficulty experienced by those who seek a proper

¹⁰Eliade (1963) 196-97.

designation for *Aqhat* whose contents allowed it to span, in the old terminology, the realms of myth and epic.¹¹

2. An often repeated assumption is that *Baal* was 'composed' earlier than either *Aqhat* or *Keret* and that all three are earlier than the archaeological context would suggest. Since linguistic evidence, always difficult to assess even for a vocalized text, are convincingly mustered only rarely, it falls upon an inspection of the contents to buttress this theory.¹² The observation made above, that narratives of this type do not recall a precise moment of the past, would make it unlikely that, on the basis of information currently available, Ugaritic tales can either be 'dated' [except for establishing the *terminus ad quem*] or located within a linear development in literary creativity.

3. Because of the paucity of data from Ugarit, scholars have combined evidence from belletristic literature with those derived from administrative archives to reconstruct diverse aspects of Canaanite culture.¹³ It is perhaps noteworthy that this effort is frequently made by those who would compare Canaanite to Hebrew institutions. The opinion expressed above should warn against an approach which would only result in a composite of partial compatibility with actual occurrences.¹⁴ For example, to resort to *Keret* and *Aqhat* for evidence of Canaanite kingship would, in my opinion, only yield testimony on the most platitudinous of sentiments; for the information on this topic contained within these narratives has been largely harmonized and homogenized to please esthetic, and not historical sensibilities. Furthermore, if it is perceived that not only portions of *Keret* and *Aqhat*, but even of *Baal* fall into a literary pattern which pleases because it nurtures no expectations that are, ultimately, left unfulfilled, then it becomes less likely that any of the texts were destined to function as vehicles for the propagation

¹¹Cf. Kirk's sub-chapter, "the Relation of Myths to Folktales," pp. 31-41 of his *Myth*. Kirk disagrees with Stith Thompson and other folklorists who do not make a clear distinction between myths and fairy tales, though he agrees with the opinion that there is much "mobility from one genre to another" (p. 40). Gibson shares Kirk's perspectives (1975) 63.

¹²The criteria for 'dating' Ugaritic belletristic efforts are of differing merits, and are often promoted with more faith than reason. See the collection of opinions concerning the dating of *Baal* in de Moor (1971) 48-58. Albright (1968), has this to say: "... Baal, Aqhat, and Keret, were put into approximately their extant form between the seventeenth and the fifteenth centuries in the order given ..." (p. 4). See also p. 4, n. 9: "The myths [Baal and Aqhat] are naturally (*sic*) older [than Keret]."

¹³It is especially hazardous to confer an 'early' dating for these texts simply because their contents differ linguistically from those found in the administrative and epistolary archives. [So, Albright (1968) 101-2; Cross (1973) 113, n. 42]. Indeed, one would not expect literatures, so differing in genres and purposes, to be at all stylistically similar.

¹⁴An example of such a method is available in A. Van Selms (1954).

of cultic festivities, to explain seasonal fluctuations, or to celebrate the apotheosis of eponymous ancestors.¹⁵

4. Scholars have recently tested the 'historical' memory of Ugaritic poets and, on the basis of personal and place name, have suggested that Ugarit's dynastic ancestry either had Mitannian roots or could be reconstructed and retrojected to Upper Syria of the Middle Bronze Age.¹⁶ But such conjectures should recall that folk tales as well as fairy tales *do* create protagonists who never existed and *do* assign them tasks that have no historical bases. More commonly however, we either find protagonists with modest actual achievements matched with extraordinarily heroic deeds or the reverse condition: actual deeds assigned to imaginary heroes. Whatever the eventual mix, the tales are then, understandably, loaded with 'historicizing' touches, such as interesting foreign locales, worthy opponents, often drawn from neighboring cultures, and complicated tribal affiliations. Because of their 'one-dimensionality' as well as because of the paucity of confirmations from administrative texts, it becomes hazardous to extract historical information from Ugaritic tales.

5. An important point to consider is that folktales, because they follow a predictable pattern of development, need not be created solely in rural or peasant milieus. Thus, narratives such as *Keret* and *Aqhat*, as well as *Baal*, need not have been elaborated outside of palace temple confines. Since, as it has been dramatically shown by Ruth Finnegan, recourse to formulaicity—stylistic or thematic—repetitions of whole segments of narrative, paronomasia, and, I might add, textual errors, can rarely identify a written from an orally transmitted narrative,¹⁷ we

¹⁵de Moor (1971) 9-28 offers a good history of *Baal* interpretations. His own conclusions include the observation that *Baal* "embodies an early attempt of man to give a comprehensive explanation of the mechanism of the climate in [the Ugaritian's] surroundings" (p. 249).

De Langhe (1958) 122-48. See De Vaux's sober, bibliographically rich, pages on this topic (1971) 135-48. De Vaux, however, speculates when he differentiates between the credulity of peasants and that of the Upper Classes (p. 147).

¹⁶Astour (1973) 23-39; de Moor (1976) 324-35; Kitchen (1977) 141-42. Note that W. F. Albright, mostly on the basis of revocalizing Krt as Kirta, attributes Keret to Hurro-Mitannian inspiration (1968) 103 and n. 19; Cf. also Pope (1977b) 179.

¹⁷I would object to the all-too-easily achieved lumping together of the terms 'folklore' and 'oral literature/tradition,' on which see Finnegan (1977) 35-40. To begin with, the first is usually applied to a discipline which is most useful when it suggests *interpretative* avenue, whereas the latter is a term that properly belongs to literary categorization.

A most impressive aspect of Finnegan's book, mentioned in this footnote, is the manner in which she charts the difficulties in assuming the existence of an oral style (chapter 4), and in making distinctions between modes of transmitting 'oral' and written narratives (chapter 5). Her cautionary conclusions (see also her concluding remarks on pp. 272-75) based on a study of societies that have given us evidence from written as well as from spoken sources, should be even more relevant and sobering when applied to cultures known to us solely from written sources.

should not dismiss the possibility that our material from Ugarit was formulated by a scribal intelligentsia, and that it circulated only among the elite circles. Moreover, the fact that our texts are 'one-dimensional,' renders it impossible to make pronouncements on orally transmitted materials and their use in finalizing the versions available to us.

B. While folk or fairy tales are limited to a specific number and order of functions and seem severely impoverished in the tale-roles which shape these functions, it does not follow that their creators were esthetically hamstrung. To begin with, Propp allows for a number of alternatives for each one of his functions. Moreover, despite the pre-determined structure of the folktale, opportunities for inventive and individual touches abound: in describing the characters, their surroundings, and their motivations. A folktale can also be filled with secondary characterizations which do not advance the plot but creatively round the proportions of a given narrative; past actions could be remembered in a manner than might differ slightly from their first appearance. The opportunities for creativity even within a sharply conventionalized literary form, can be (as we know it from the study of Arabic poetry and to a lesser extent from that of acrostically shaped poems) what permits a great storyteller to rise above his colleagues.

If so far I have sought to underscore the manner in which categorizing belletristic literature limits the range of historical pronouncements that could properly be made, I would like to outline the avenues of inquiries that folklore research can open. In particular, I would like to emphasize the interpretive contributions to establishing the contexts, social, cultural, and political, in which this literature is set.¹⁸

Social Context

Under this heading, folklorists try to assess the relationship that exists between the teller and the audience. The brunt of our information must come from the narratives themselves; but, because we are dealing with a society that is no longer extant, because we are dealing with texts that are 'one dimensional,' and because the Ugaritic scribe did not leave us with his own categorizing terminology, our difficulties are increased. Below, I entertain some considerations which, although they may not yet be satisfied by the present state of Ugaritic research, may be applicable to other corpus of Ancient Near Eastern literature.

The nature of the *audience* might be gauged by the following:

¹⁸In outlining the contexts for folkloristic interpretations, I am indebted to Bascom's fine essay, republished in Dundes (1968) 279-98.

TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

a. *The archaeological setting in which the texts were found.* While it may matter that documents are found in a place archive, temple library, or private quarters, a number of other considerations must also be entered: are the texts found with others similar or dissimilar in genre? Can one perceive any systematic arrangements for the tablets found in one setting? Were the segments of a simple narrative dispersed in different parts of a temple, palace or private quarters? Can one, on the basis of archaeological discoveries decide, with some certainty, on the *function* of the room in which the texts were found?¹⁹

¹⁹The following chart may help in locating the find spots whence literary tablets were recovered. It will be noted that despite my chart, precise determinations of these find spots will not be possible. This chart is to accompany the map published in *Ugaritica III*, p. 265, fig. 216 [= Courtois, *Supplement, Dictionnaire de la Bible*, 1175-76; cf. also his comments on the recovery of the texts, 1156-60]. The drawing reproduces the so-called "Library of the High Priest," located between the temples of Baal and Dagan/El. The cardinal points in my chart are given with respect to this building's central courtyard, since no numbering system had been devised for the many rooms found within it. I could not locate the find spots for the tablets uncovered in 1933. The information on color of tablets, handwriting, etc., comes from Herdner's discussions in CTA. I use "lmlk" as a convenient term for a handwriting that is substantially similar.

Text No. [CTA/UT]	Year found	Place found	Color	Handwriting
<i>Baal & Anat</i>				
1/ ^c nt [IX,X]	1931	S.E.	Beige	lmlk?
2/68-129-137	1931	S.E.	Beige	lmlk
3/ ^c nt	1931	S.E.	Ocre	lmlk
4/51	1930/1931	N.E./S.E.	Ocre	lmlk
5/67	1930/1931	N.E./S.E.	Gray	lmlk
6/49+62	1930/1933	N.E./ ?	Gray	lmlk
7/130+131	?	?	Ocre	large, "grossière"
8/51 frag	1931	S.E.	Gray	large
9/133	1933	?	Brown	"grossière," large
10/76	1931	S.E.	Gray	lmlk? [nice]
11/132	1931	S.E.	Gray	lmlk? [as 10]
12/75	1930	N.E.	Beige	very small
13/6 [Hymn]	1929	N.W.	Gray	"grossière"
<i>Keret</i>				
14/Krt	1930	N.E.	Beige	lmlk
15/128	1930/1931?	N.E./S.E.	Beige	lmlk
16/125-127	1931	N.E.	Ocre	lmlk
<i>Aqhat</i>				
17/2Aqht	1931	S.E.	Beige	lmlk
18/3Aqht	1931	S.E.	Beige	lmlk
19/1Aqht	1931	S.E.	Shaded Ocre	lmlk

These questions will permit speculations on the ease and alacrity with which tablets could be retrieved and brought before an audience, scribal or aural, and can thus allow speculation on the periodicity of such a gathering process. If tablets from the same narrative, especially ones that have so far been found in only one exemplar, have been kept hither and yon, one may assume that storage was expected to last for long periods; or at least that they were not destined for a cultic activity that took place regularly, at brief intervals.

β. *The colophon.* The subscription that is attached to texts is of special importance. We have a rather full colophon at the end of CTA 6 [a text belonging to the *Baal* cycle] which tells us that this text was dated to the time of Niqmad, king of Ugarit, who may have sponsored its inscription. This may mean that the text was available to the elite at Ugarit. Moreover, as reconstructed by *some* scholars, this colophon occurs at an important juncture of the cycle. If this particular reconstruction is adopted, it would indicate that *Baal* aimed to please a *reading* audience, and that it was destined for the desks of scribes, since it is unlikely that the colophon was recited, declaimed, intoned, or sung.

γ. *Rubrics within the texts.* The instructions given to the scribe or the reader are noteworthy. If they urge that one should return to a certain line of the text, and if that line belongs to a different tablet, then a scribal audience might have been involved. If that line to which the attention is drawn occurs at a dramatic juncture, this might indicate that the audience's suspense is being carefully nurtured and this might point to a listening rather than a reading audience. Unfortunately, the rubrics found in Ugaritic texts are rarely easy to interpret and have, so far, not born instruction to return to narrative that is currently available to us.

δ. *Headings and heavily lined separations.* These may be of importance; especially if the last ones occur in the midst of an unbroken narrative. For they might allow us to note the moments that were considered by the composer or scribe to contain logical breaks in the narrative. Again, if we perceive these breaks to have dramatic functions, e.g. to stop at an exciting moment of the narrative, then these may have been introduced to make declaiming or singing more effective.

Rephaim

20/4Aqht=121	1930	N.E.	Beige	ᵐlmlk
21/122	1930	N.E.	Gray	ᵐlmlk
22/123+124	1930	N.E.	Brown	ᵐlmlk

Šaḥar & Šalem

23/52	1930	N.E.	Whitish	peculiarities
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Nikkal

24/77	1933	?	Ocre	heavy hand
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NARRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS. See below.

The nature of the *teller* can be evaluated by the following data:

TEXTUAL EVIDENCE.

α. *The colophon.* A prosopographical study of the personal names found in the colophon might be beneficial. In that of CTA 6, the names of ²*elmlk* and ²*atn prln* [or however one decides to break up this name] might be subjected to such an analysis.²⁰ Likewise, a study of the town of *šbn* (cf. UT #19.2379), its citizenry, and its connection to Ugarit and its palace might yield some information of import.

Unfortunately the connection between ²*elmlk* and the High Priest ²*atn prln*, so crucial to any decision on the transmission and composition of *Baal*, depends on a proper understanding of the terms *spr*, *lmd* and *l^cy*. If one were to adopt the translation 'apprentice' (as I believe it to be the case) for *lmd* rather than the often preferred 'dictated', then the issue of oral transmission of *Baal* becomes more difficult to uphold without further evidence, and we might have to retain the possibility that ²*elmlk*, a student of a High Priest, actually composed (diverse segments of) *Baal*.²¹ As to *l^cy*, Deitrich and Loretz once proposed a rendering 'collated' which would, of course, imply that a master copy existed with ²*elmlk* merely copied.²² However, most scholars either render the term 'sponsor, donor', as applied to Niqmad, or consider it, rightly in my opinion, as an as yet uniquely attested ethnicon, applied to ²*atn prln* (paralleling *šbny*).²³

β. *Handwriting.* It would appear that *Keret*, and *Aqhat* were written or copied by the same scribal hand. *Baal*, however, shows that same hand to be involved only in CTA 1-6. Scholars have had little difficulties in acknowledging that CTA 2-6 belonged to the same cycle. Whether or not CTA 7-9, in a different handwriting, and 10-11, in yet a third manuscript, belonged to that cycle is a matter of discussion.²⁴ This issue is important, for if CTA 7-11 are seen as part of that same cycle, then it

²⁰Cf. Gröndahl (1967) 236, 367, 369-70.

²¹A full discussion on the term *lmd* is to be found in Hillers and McCall, Jr. (1976) 19-23. Their strictures are very sound and should be consulted. I might only add here that the colophon of the Erra Epic [see lastly Cagni (1977) 60] would confirm the fact that the scribe, Kabti-ilani-Marduk, *composed* the poem, albeit under divine inspiration. That Kabti-ilani-Marduk might have used material that had circulated earlier is possible, but this in no way should prejudice the conclusion that he was indeed the author of *Erra*.

²²1972: 32.

²³See Hunger's discussion (1968) 22. But cf. C. H. Gordon, UT 19.2713, who nevertheless renders "donor (=sponsor)" in his recent (1977) 117. Similar understanding is found in Driver (1956) 151. For discussion of the titles *rb khnm* and *rb nqdm*, see Yamashita (1975) 63-64.

²⁴Discussion on the perimeters of *Baal* is found in de Moor (1971) 36-43 and in Van Zijl (1972) 6-12.

would undermine the likelihood that elmlk was its author; rather, he would have been charged, as did others, with making a new copy of an existing text. This issue is complicated, however, by at least three other features.

1. The handwritings of CTA 7-11 are sensibly less esthetically pleasing than those of elmlk . While one ought not to confuse literary with scribal artistry, it may nevertheless be that CTA 7-11 were the products of students under elmlk 's directions.
2. Whether or not CTA 2 ['Baal vs. Yamm'] is to be separated from other texts of the cycle because it allocates words and columns differently than CTA 1, 3-6, is yet another issue that has to be taken into consideration.²⁵ The handwriting is certainly that of elmlk , but so is that of CTA 1 which many scholars regard to be a separate rendition of many of the themes displayed in the cycle.
3. That a few fragments, some of which were found in 'private' quarters²⁶ and differing in handwriting from the texts mentioned above, may belong to *Baal* is a possibility that has been entertained by some scholars.²⁷

One more datum needs to be taken into consideration under this heading. A list, compiled by Horwitz, gives the occurrences of words that are spread over two lines in the cuneiform alphabetic texts. It is striking that CTA 2-6, clearly the works of elmlk , should contain all the occurrences of that phenomenon available to *Baal*. The same idiosyncrasy is also noticeable in CTA 14-16 [*Keret*] and in 17, 19 [but *not* 18—all belonging to *Aqhat*], texts believed also to display elmlk 's handwriting.²⁸ Since this propensity to split words between two lines seems to be so singularly 'Elemilkian', one might offer the following conjectures: 1. It is likely that a scribe *copying* a text from an 'original' that lies before him would try to avoid such an idiosyncrasy; rather, his eye would permit him to estimate the amount of additional room needed to complete a word, and hence to avoid splitting his vocabulary. 2. It is not likely that dictations, which depend on mouthing *whole* words, if not a full phrase at one time, could account for this idiosyncrasy. For these two reasons, one *might* conclude that elmlk was responsible for putting together, i.e. composing, most of the version of *Baal* that is now

²⁵See A. Van Selms (1970) 251-52.

²⁶Discussion in Van Zijl (1972) 11-12.

²⁷PRU II, p. xlii; PRU V, pp. 1-2.

²⁸W. J. Horwitz (1977) 126 n. 17. Note that CTA 1 and 7-11, commonly regarded as belonging to *Baal*, as well as CTA 20-22 [*Repha'im* cycle], do not display such idiosyncrasies. Except for CTA 1, these are clearly not penned by elmlk . CTA 24 [Nikkal], also note in elmlk 's handwriting, however, does evidence this peculiarity.

at our disposal.²⁹ This of course need not imply that he *created* the contents that were used in that composition.

γ. *Errors*. S. Segert studied scribal errors in literary and non-literary texts from Ugarit.³⁰ His conclusion is that, generally speaking, there seems to be little distinction between the mistakes that are presumed to come from dictation and those that originate from copying.³¹ Cross believes that many errors, including mistransposition of paired formulae, could be ascribed to singing or dictating.³² It should be stated that some of the 'errors' compiled by Segert have received plausible explanations and that others may merely attest to semantic or grammatical variants. More importantly, however, it is almost impossible to determine the reason, cause, or source of an error. To criticize one example cited by Horwitz,³³ only western ears would regard the phonemes ^ʔ*aleph* and ^ʕ*ayin* as indistinguishable when pronounced by a dictating scribe. Additionally, we should also remember that authors of texts commit errors, even as they compose.³⁴

NARRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS. Stylistic evidence permits evaluation on the nature of the audience as well as that of the teller.

α. *Paronomasia*. We should differentiate between 'oral' and 'visual' word-play. While the presence of examples from the first category, which include 'equivocal' [word play that depend on homonymy], 'parosonantic' [play on roots which share two or three radicals], 'etymological', 'assonantic', 'onomatopoeic', and 'antanaclastic' [same word, different meaning in differing contexts] paronomasia can be an indication that oral presentations are at stake, attestations of examples from the second category ('visual') often betray a scribal audience. For it is not likely that this last type of paronomasia, which includes 'gematria', 'notrikon', [acronymic use of single consonants], 'epanastrophe' [last consonant of a word repeated, often in reverse order, in the following word], and 'anastrophe' [upsetting the usual word order to emphasize a play on words], would be readily caught by a listening audience.³⁵ It must be admitted, however, that Ugaritic scholarship has not reached the stage in which paronomastic evidence is clearly recognized.

²⁹Horwitz (1977) 127, uses the same evidence to conclude the opposite.

³⁰Segert (1958) 193-212; (1959) 23-32. A Pioneering study on this topic is F. Rosenthal (1939) 215-25.

³¹See also Segert (1971) 415.

³²1973: 117, n. 18.

³³1977: 124 n. 10 (on *pḥr mʔd / mʕd*).

³⁴On this, see Segert (1971) 415, n. 7.

³⁵On the terminology, see *IDB Supplement*, pp. 968-70.

β. *Rhetorical devices*. As used by Biblical scholars, this heading conveys two markedly different approaches. The first deals mostly with stylistic devices (inclusio, ambiguity, chiasmus, stereo-typed phrases, (fore)shadowing, *leitwortstil*, repetition, rhetorical questions, etc.) a number of which are expounded by James Muilenburg and his students.³⁶ The goals, but not necessarily the forms, of their enterprise are shared in Europe by Alonso-Schökel and Wolfgang Richter.³⁷ The second approach tries to reactivate Aristotelian concepts in order to evaluate the manner in which an audience is persuaded by a writer/speaker.³⁸

The scholarly literature on these topics, when it comes to evaluating Ugaritic documents, is conspicuously small. Yet, successful discussions on these points might well reveal the type of audience that welcomed *Baal*, *Keret* and *Aqhat*. While it cannot be ruled out that declaimed or orally presented literature can be well stocked with rhetorical examples, the fact that these rhetorical devices are essentially the product of skillful and learned expositors *might* be an indication that a scribal audience, rather than a listening one, was involved.³⁹ To concentrate on one example, the difference that occurs in the repetitions found in the so-called ABA pattern, that is those that occur when large segments of a narrative are taken up once more (by messengers, by the undertaking of a mission as per instruction, command, etc. . . .), are well worth noting since they might include variations, often imperceptible to a listening audience, which would delight a copyist or a reader.⁴⁰ Were we to possess a complete text for the Ugaritic belletristic creations, on the other hand, we might decide whether a repeated section (A) is made to cut into the flow of narration (B) in such a manner as to heighten expectation of an audience by delaying the resolution of a particular sequence.

γ. *Performance*. We have alluded already to the rubrics as possible sources for information on this topic. From Ugarit, only CTA 23 [*Šahar and Šalem*] provides us with obvious indications that a dramatic performance was at stake.⁴¹ But this text, it is interesting to note, falls outside the category of folk/fairy tales. It is possible that the ratio of dialogue to descriptive narrative within a given text might be used to

³⁶Cf., conveniently (1969) 1-18 and the essays assembled by Muilenburg's students, in Jackson (1974).

³⁷Alonso-Schökel (1965); Richter (1971).

³⁸Gitay (1978). For a bibliography on the issues, see p. 71-72 and nn. 186-87.

³⁹Welch (1974) 421-34, and especially 424-25. On the ABA pattern, Welch states, "[it] 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" (p. 427).

⁴⁰Note also Welch's (1974) 427, good injunctions against claiming textual corruption on the basis of differences in the repeated portions of a narrative.

⁴¹The point has been made by almost every commentator who dealt with this text.

recover the performability of a narrative. Although a dialogue can be imbedded within ancient narrative only *seriatim*, it could nevertheless be investigated for contents which gain dramatically by the accompaniment of gestures. Many of the exchanges between Aqhat and Anat, preserved in *Aqhat*, as well as those between Yatpan and Anat—even the soliloquies of the bereaved Danel—could be accentuated by bodily movements and by voice modulations.

Cultural Context

Under this heading, folklorists evaluate evidence which witnesses the relationship between narratives and the cultures that produce them. One of these concerns is the documentation of the manner in which a literary text mirrors a particular culture, preserving information on values, attitudes, behavior, sanctions, which might be shared by a people. However, any conclusion that is entertained must take into consideration the startling and disturbing realization that characters in folktales are often made to act in a manner that defies conventions, that is often despised, even prohibited in daily practice. This is so because folk narrative often becomes a vehicle in which society alludes to taboos, sexual and otherwise, which are normally suppressed in more 'elevated' writings.⁴²

With this in mind, the problems that confront the analyst are at least twofold: *a.* how does one recognize the distinguish between sanctioned and prohibited mores? and, *b.* how does one explain the inclusion, within a narrative, of prohibited activities? Although they are concerned with separate issues, these two questions can be broached simultaneously. Below, I shall but touch on these:

a. In approaching the first of these queries, it might be best to pursue two separate avenues. Returning to the concept of 'function' as delineated by Propp, one can begin by isolating those episodes in the narrative which seem to contain individual 'scenes'; that is, sequences which describe an activity that begins, develops, and ends even as it initiates another sequence. However hyperbolically stated, many of these episodes will be seen to reflect activities that are either commonplace or unlikely to challenge our conceptions of normative human enterprises; hence, these will be judged to require no further elucidation. If however, the sequence that is isolated is deemed to contain quaint, esoteric, preposterous, obscene, or unusual practices we might subject it to further analysis by testing its contents against the evidence of non-literary documentation. If the last procedure offers no confirmation or support from that documentation, then the activity, found within a

⁴²Bascom in Dundes (1965) 285-98.

sequence, might be ranged among those that a society discouraged in actual life.

Evaluation of the religious contents of Ugaritic texts would profit by this approach. Above, we criticized the tendency to promote a cultic or a seasonal application for the whole cycles of *Baal* and *Aqhat* because, in our opinion, these particular narratives were meant to satisfy literary, rather than religious, sensibilities. But one can, nevertheless, isolate a particular sequence from within these narratives, one which retains the terminology for a specific cultic act or rituals (e.g. terms for sacrifice, vows, prayers, incubation, etc.) and evaluate it in the light of attestations available in the non-literary tablets.⁴³

b. Locating the activities which might be at odds with the established norms of a given society can, admittedly, be a highly speculative enterprise. This is especially so since many of these activities are, in the Ugaritic texts, attributed either to superhuman or to divine protagonists. Despite the difficulties that are encountered, the undertaking might yet be worthwhile, above all because it might permit a balanced appreciation of Canaanite culture, an appreciation that has been marred, in modern scholarship, by unflattering comparison with Hebraic civilization. It may matter enormously, for example, whether or not we take the sexual relationship between Anat and Baal at face value. For if we do so, we not only risk accusing the Canaanites of tolerating incestual cohabitation—a union which, incidentally, has never been documented outside of literary texts—but of glorying in an excess of libido that has, repeatedly, been invidiously compared with the behavior of the Hebrews. Similarly, an appreciation of the fact that folkloristic texts do retain, and do refrain from condemning, activities that were prohibited in a living society, might prevent facile generalizations on Canaanite practices such as bestiality, human sacrifice, covetousness, cruelty, and immorality: before such occurrences can be attributed to them, it might be best to parallel the documentation in non-literary contexts.

'Educational' and Political Contexts

This very broad category provides us with an umbrella under which we can consider the various benefits that accrue to a society when it is shown that a particular literary text is put in circulation. Certainly any piece of literature fulfills an educational need. On the one hand, it forces the composer/creator to probe his heritage and to test his learning even as he presents his audience with satisfying works. On the other hand, it permits the audience to glory in the activities of ancient heroes, to share

⁴³That the enterprise can be beset with difficulties can be gathered by the discussion that Baruch Levine offers on the term *šlmm* (1974) 13-20.

vicariously in the drama of changing fortunes, to gather lessons from worthy behavior, and to accept the consequences of ill-starred ventures. If there is any evidence that the material is also destined to justify religious institutions and to explain cultic activities, it is within this category that it is best understood; for this perspective narrows down the usefulness of functionalist interpretations, criticized above, to the point where they would no longer be regarded as establishing, scientifically and objectively, chapters in the history of West Semitic religions, but rather, where they would be considered as revealing to us the perception that a particular folk, living at a specific time, had of the meaning of its faith and the origin of its rituals.

One other need is fulfilled by folk narratives. It permits the listener, as well as the teller, to indulge in propagandistic activities, with consequences that are of benefits not only to the permanence of an established dynasty, but also to the health of the city-state. I shall lightly touch upon this by considering *Keret*.

While, above, we disputed the likelihood that *Keret* could inform the modern historian on the activity of Middle Bronze Age West Semites, this heading allows us to speculate on the meaning that it had for those that were acquainted with its contents. For, however, historical, historicizing, or fictitious we judge its various episodes to be, we might yet consider them to afford the Ugaritian a paradigm on the persistence (and probable triumph) or a dynasty despite the succession of devastating blows. It should be noted that such lessons could be learned even if the heroes are not regarded as immediate ancestors of the folk that is benefitting from their experience. (An example that comes to mind to sustain this observation is Gilgamesh, a native of Uruk, whose exploits were celebrated in many cities and among differing cultures.)⁴⁴ This perspective might make it reasonably clear why *Keret* fails to link its hero to Ugarit, a city which, nevertheless, enjoyed and partook of his fame.

But it will not suffice to stop here! To adequately probe the political advantages gained by circulating *Keret*, I suggest that we might have to supplement the interpretive guidelines that are derived from studying the manner in which a dynasty actualizes itself through the activities of a paradigmatic hero. *Keret* seems also to belong to a genre of literature which one might call 'political biographies'. Whether quickened by actual events (e.g. 'the Apology of Hattushilish', the story of Idrimi, possibly, the story of Sinuhe) or inspired by verisimilitude (e.g. the Biblical Joseph), these accounts play a role, in the propaganda of

⁴⁴Or, to take a Biblical example, note how the story of Job, a man from Uz, was used by the Hebrews to teach important lessons.

individual cultures, which can be profitably investigated. But in order to do so, it would be very useful to first establish a syntax and a morphology of such biographies. But that, obviously, is a charge that must be taken on another occasion.