Brief presentation of my doctoral project ”Drought, Death and the Sun in Ugarit and Ancient Israel” and my paper for the 2009 OTSEM conference

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The basic questions underlying the dissertation are the following:
How do the concepts of drought, death and the sun relate to each other in the Ugaritic religious literature; how are these concepts used as metaphors to express basic tenets of Ugaritic myth and theology; how do these concepts and their uses survive into the literature and religion of Ancient Israel? How can the identification of these ancient reminiscences help shed light on the interpretation of various difficult passages in the Biblical text and on the relationship between Old Testament theology and that of the surrounding North West Semitic cultures?

The fact that the interplay between drought and fertility plays a large part in the preserved Ugaritic mythology has been noted from the beginning of Ugaritological scholarship. The conflict between Baal and Mot in the Ilimilku version of the so-called Baal Cycle is the most salient example of this, where the temporary defeat of the storm god Baal is heralded by drought and death of vegetation, while his return is accompanied by visions of fertility. In the texts of the Cycle, there are a number of interesting passages linking this “death of the land” through heat and drought to the natural phenomenon most closely associated with it: the sun, manifested as the Ugaritic sun goddess, Shapshu.

A similar perspective has often been seen in the two other major mythological stories from Ugarit, those concerning Kirta and Aqhat: both of these seem to include passages where the death of the hero results in a sympathetic “death” of the land, taking the form of all-encompassing drought. This phenomenon is the focus of the paper I will be presenting at the 2009 OTSEM conference.

The question of whether or not these descriptions of death and drought are to be interpreted as aetiologies for or representations of the changing seasons has been a hotly debated topic for a long time. I am of the opinion that there are definite markers of seasonal imagery in the Ugaritic religious texts that cannot be explained away (repeated references to agriculture, talk of burned olives, drought, lack of rain etc.). However, it must be realized that descriptions of natural phenomena in connection with mythological actions are not to be interpreted in an overly formalist manner. Mechanically applying a “seasonal formula” to the

Ugaritic texts is no necessary result of acknowledging the references to drought and fertility that do seem to occur in them. The classical stance, that these references (and much of the story itself) constitute an *aetiology* for the natural phenomena in question is not the only possible interpretative framework for them: just as in the case of Isaiah 40 (where noone would think of the "wilting flowers" and "parched grass" as an aetiology for the seasons), one could very possibly imagine that the author/redactor used theses themes as a way of metaphorically illustrating the life/death-struggle between Mot and Baal, rather than as a simplistic "explanation of the seasons".

Given the close relationship between the Ugaritic and early Israelite cultures, it is not surprising that a number of reminiscences of the old "drought-death"-mytheme seem to occur in the Hebrew Bible. One very salient example of this is the story of Elijah and the great drought in 1 Kings 17-18. We find other such survivals in Hosea, Mal 3 and in a number of the Psalms, all of which are subjected to thorough analysis during the course of the dissertation. A special case is found in the first chapter of 2 Sam, where a scene occurs quite reminiscent of the "dying hero"-motif found in the Ugaritic legends of Kirta and Aqhat: this is the cursing of Mount Gilboa after the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. This text is of central importance to my paper, not only because of its thematic links with the Kirta and Aqhat texts (heroes dying, causing drought) but also because of a possible direct, textual link discovered by H. L. Ginsberg in 1938 and expanded by myself.

As the paper is a chapter of a larger study, there are cases where larger discussions are only alluded to by refering to other places in the dissertation. This is the case, for example, regarding an in depth analysis of certain verbs in Ps 102. Because of the page constraints I cannot expound these ideas in full in this paper, but I will of course be happy to discuss them during the session if the need arises.

Topics I would like to discuss during the session are:

- The text-critical conundrum of 2 Sam 1:21.
- The greater literary motif of "dying heroes" in the Ancient Near East and their connections to the drought motif.
- The difference in literary and theological views in the connection between death and drought found in the Baal Cycle (the Storm God dying) and the other texts (no divinity dying; more of a metaphorical link). Differences in interpretative framework for modern scholarship (seasonality vs. literary motifs, etc.).

- The interpretation of Danel’s exlamations as curses or calls of woe.

I look forward to seeing you all and discussing the chapter!

/ Ola Wikander

When Heroes Die: Drought and Death in the Epics of Aqhat and Kirta and their Echoes in 2 Sam 1:21

In this chapter, I shall examine a number of instances (both from the Ugaritic corpus and the Hebrew Bible) where the killing drought seems to be connected to the death of specific heroic individuals. In a number of cases, this occurs in the form of poetic utterances of mourning that predict the sympathetic death of nature.

The "hero's drought" in Aqhat

In the Epic of Aqhat (*CAT* 1.17-1.19), the role of drought as a story element is very conspicuous. Directly following the murder of the young, eponymous hero of the story at the hands of the nomad warrior Yatpan (at the instigation of Anat) the whole land is stricken with a most debilitating drought and lack of fertility. The hero's father, Danel, the one who originally petitioned Baal for a son, and the hero's sister, Pughat, see this terrible state of affairs. In an earlier passage (whose state of preservation is very poor), it seems that Anat herself notes the drought that she has brought on by seeking to take the hero's divine bow by force:

[ʿ]*l ḫṭh . imḫṣh .*	For his staff I slayed him,[1]
kd . ʿl . qš*th . imḫṣh .*	as I slayed him for his bow,
*ʻl . qṣʿth . h*w*t l . aḥw .*	for his arrows I did not let him live.
ap . qšth . l tt*n ly .*	But his bow was still not given to me,
w b*m*th . ḥ*mṣ ṣ*rr	and by his death the sprout is *parched* (??),[2]
prʿ . qẓ .[ ][3]	the first fruits of summer are *withered* (??),
*šbl*t b *ġlph*	the ear of corn in its husk.

[1] The initial ʿ*ayin* is restored with Parker (*UNP*): 67, whose understanding of the line I have followed. The "staff" could be a *double entendre*, refering both to the limbs of the bow and to Aqhat's masculinity, which, it may be assumed, Anat has tried to rob him of (with the bow as its symbol)—cf. the use of the word *ḫṭ* ("staff") for El's penis in *CAT* 1.23:37.

[2] The correct translation of this line is extremely uncertain (as is the very reading of the signs). The interpretation of the words offered here is inspired by Dijkstra & de Moor 1975: 197 and de Moor 1988: 67. This version would provide an excellent parallelism with the following lines. There is, however, no clear reason to regard the lines as specifically "seasonal", as they clearly state that the drought is because of Aqhat's death, a great anomaly which can hardly be regarded as a function of the climate. As will be seen later on in this section, I believe the case is rather the other way around: the death of the hero causes a cosmic and quite "unnormal" cosmic catastrophy, which cannot be explained away as being an aetiology for the seasons (cf. Wyatt 2002: 293, n. 193).

[3] *CAT* reads *y*ḥ. Dijkstra & de Moor (1975: 200) suggested *yb*[*l*], possibly from the root *nbl*, "to whither, dry out".

(*CAT* 1.19 I 13-19)

The action of the story then returns to Danel and Pughat, who find that drought has spread throughout their grounds, and that vultures swoop over their house. They greet this information with ritualistic acts of mourning (tearing of Danel's garment etc.), whereupon he (depending on the interpretation of certain verbs as indicatives or jussives) either adjures the clouds to make rain, but finds that Baal and his rains will stay away for "seven years" (the familiar stock measure of great time) or himself curses the clouds using this very threat. My interpretation is that Danel tries to bring the rains back: as he has not yet heard of the murder of Aqhat, there is really no reason for him to curse the clouds and thus make things worse than they already are.[4] Danel's adjuring of the clouds is described using the following words:

*apnk . dn*il . *mt rpi* .	Then Danel, the man of Rapiu,
yṣly . ʿrpt . b ḥm . un .	prayed to the clouds in the terrible heat:
yr . ʿrpt tmṭr . b qẓ .	"May the clouds give rain in the summer,
ṭl . yṭll l ġnbm	may dew settle on the grapes!"
šbʿ . šnt yṣrk . bʿl .	For seven years he was in need of Baal,[5]
*ṯmn . rkb ʿr*p*t* .	for eight, the Rider of the Clouds—
bl . ṭl . bl rbb	without dew, without downpour,
bl . šrʿ *. thmtm* .	without surging[6] of the double-deeps,
bl ṭbn . ql . bʿl .	without the sweet voice of Baal.

[4] See, for example, the translation of Parker (*UNP*): 68-69. The translation "pray" or "adjure" fits closer with the meaning of the verb in Akkadian, Aramaic and Arabic, as noted by Ginsberg (1938: 211, n. 6.) For a translation of the other variety (involving cursing instead of praying), see Wyatt 2002:295-296. Wyatt is of the opinion (295, n.200) that Pughat's "weeping in her liver" and other acts of mourning is a sign of her having "spiritual gifts" and thus intuitively knowing that something terrible has occurred. This interpretation is hardly necessary: an awful drought is reason enough for grief.

[5] With Margalit (1989: 374-375), I consider the common translations of the types "Baal is absent" (so for example Parker (*UNP*): 69) or "Baal failed" (so Driver 1956: 59) to be unsatisfactory. Even if one accepts the usual derivation of the verb *yṣrk* from a verb *ṣrk* (cognate with Arabic *ḍaruka* and Aramaic *ṣĕrak*), which Margalit does not, "fail" or "be absent" is too far removed from the basic meaning of the word, which seems to be "be in need of" or "be poor". Margalit tries to solve the problem by following Gordon (1965: 476) in viewing the verb as being from the root *ṣrr* ("to be hostile to; hurt; afflict" etc.) and interpreting the *-k* as a pronominal suffix ("you"), here directed to Danel (the speaker is supposed by Margalit to be a sort of *bat-qôl*, answering Danel that his prayers are for nought—but the lack of an introductory speech formula makes this unlikely). In my mind, the verb may very well be *ṣrk*, but to make sense of it, it ought to be construed as a transitive one, yielding the above translation, which would be much closer to the apparent root meaning of the word. If this translation is correct, Danel's intense "need" of Baal would then be beautifully and parallelistically expressed by the following lines. For a discussion of the phonological history of the root in question, see Halpern 1987: 123.

[6] For *šrʿ* ("to surge up"), see Arabic *saruʿa* ("to hasten", "to rush"), or compare possibly Akkadian *šurrû* (meaning, amongst other things, "to reach the water level"; see Speiser 1950: 378).

(*CAT* 1.19 I 38-46)

The connection with 2 Sam 1:21

Already in 1938, H. L. Ginsberg made a brilliant but audacious connection between this passage and David's curse on Mount Gilboa after the death of Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sam 1:21.[7] If one adopted the intepretation of the above Ugaritic passage as a "curse" (as Ginsberg did), the parallel would be even greater, but even without that, the similarity of these expressed statements of a lack of rain in connection with death or dying is very notable, and probably implies a shared poetical heritage.[8] The Hebrew has *ʾal-ṭal* and *ʾal-māṭār ʿalêkem* ("may no dew, no rain [descend] upon you"), in a way highly reminiscent of the Ugaritic *bl ṭl* and *bl rbb*, and the parallel becomes even more salient if one accepts Ginsberg's (somewhat bold) suggestion to emend the strange and contextually unexplainable expression following these (*ûśĕdê tĕrûmōt*, literally "and fields of offering") to something like *wšrʿ th(w)m(w)t*,[9] which would then be the equivalent of the *šrʿ thmtm* ("surging of the double-deeps") of the Aqhat text. The received text of the MT is quite strange, and some form of correction does seem necessary. Another manuscript reading does exist, the one found as a rare variant in the Lucianic recension of the LXX, ἐπὶ τὰ ὕψη σοῦ, ὄρη θανάτου ("on your heights, o mountains of death!"). The Vetus Latina similarly has *montes mortis*. This reading is a quite possible solution, but it still does not create the beautiful tripartite parallelism and historical connection furnished by Ginsberg's proposition. And I think that there is yet another possiblity pointing in Ginsberg's direction: an easy way of explaining the Lucianic reading with "death" would be to assume that it had as its *Vorlage* a Hebrew expression containing the word *tĕmûtâ*.[10] The

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[7] Ginsberg 1938, and especially p. 213. His suggestion has been both vigorously defended (see e.g. Fenton 1979), partly accepted (so McCarter 1984: 69-71) and argued against (so Dahood 1972: 398). For my part, I find Ginsberg's argument and Fenton's defense thereof to be highly convincing. Note especially Fenton's (p. 165) demonstration of the great paleographic similarity between the versions. Speiser's (1950) connection to a similar expression in the *Atrahasis Epic* is yet another argument in favor of Ginsberg's theory.

[8] Yet another instance of this heritage can be found in 1 Kings 17:1, at the beginning of the story of Elijah and the great drought. In that verse, Elijah predicts the lack of precipitation using the same combination of *ṭal* and *māṭār*, and it is my view that there, too, the implied reference is to death and the mourning of nature (see further the analysis of this text in section **XXX**).

[9] Or, possibly, following Gordis 1940: 35-36 and McCarter 1984: 71, the similar-meaning *wšdy thmwt* (something on the lines of "or flowing of the deeps", based on the Aramaic verb *šdy*, "pour, flow, empty out").

[10] The explanation of the Lucianic reading proposed by Fincke (2001: 116-117) does not convince me. His initial supposition of a misreading *harê mwt* (*hry māwet*) for *tĕrûmôt* is certainly possible, but his convoluted way of explaining the rest of the Lucianic expression by alleged misreadings of references to Arimathea and its "princes", Jesus and Samuel, as well as to numerous hypothetical glosses being incorporated into the text, does not inspire confidence. Fincke's insistance on the text shared by the MT and the Qumran Samuel scroll forces him to translate the strange *tĕrûmôt* as "first-yields", a vegetational reference that is certainly not self-evident. If

consonantal writing of this word, *tmwth*, could have arisen quite easily as a bungled writing for an original *th(w)m(w)t* ("deeps"). The Lucianic intepretation with "death" could very well be a matter of the adoption of a *lectio simplicior*, as death is very much the question at hand. We must not forget that, if Ginsberg's emendation be correct, we are dealing with an exceedingly ancient poetical formula, the exact meaning of which was probably highly unclear at a later point in Israelite history; note, for example, that no noun *šrʿ* is otherwise attested in Hebrew, a fact that has sometimes been adduced against the emendation.[11] Both the MT and the Lucianic LXX version of the expressions could be viewed as diffrerent attempts to come to terms with an (at the time) unexplainable text.

As Wyatt points out,[12] both the Biblical text and the Aqhat passage would then describe all three natural sources of water (dew, rain and and "swirling of the deeps", i.e. springs) being stopped and hindered as a result of slaying of the heroes. The idea that the slaying of heroes will (and even ought to) bring terrible effects in nature seems to have been very much alive in the North West Semitic cultural sphere, and it is hard not to see a survival of or allusion to such a tradition in the cursing of Gilboa. This would show that the deaths of Aqhat, Saul and Jonathan belong to the same mythological category. After the deaths of both Aqhat and the Hebrew heroes, the places of the killings are cursed (in the Ugaritic text expressed through the long passage where Danel travels from city to city cursing those near which Aqhat was slain), and drought is an implicit effect of the heroes' demise.

The sorrow of the land at the death of a great hero is thus to be viewed as an ancient North West Semitic literary trope. This does of course not in any way mean that the author of the deuteronomistic text borrowed the words from the Aqhat Epic—what it means is that absence of rain as a result of a hero being murdered, and its description using formulae of this type, probably occurred in many epic tellings, of which the Aqhat text and the cursing of Gilboa are but two examples.

Death defined as a main theme by the texts themselves

In the cursing of Gilboa, the question of death is of course explicitly at the forefront. The question of how (or from what perspective) the drought is to be interpreted in the Aqhat Epic is actually answered by the text itself. Aqhat's earlier speech to Anat on how he, too, will

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the *harê māwet* explanation is accepted despite the peculiarities caused to the rest of the expression, one can still see the Ugaritoid expression as the original text underlying *tĕrûmôt* (the strangeness of which Fincke cannot explain away).

[11] So, for example, *HALOT* (s.v. *śāde*).

[12] Wyatt 2002: 296, n. 203.

have to undergo death as much as anyone else actually sets the tone for much of the remaining story, defining that it is one of the major problems of the narrative, one that the narrative will revolve around:

mt . uḫryt . mh. yqḥ	A man—what end does he get,
mh . yqḥ . mt . aṯryt .	what destiny does a man receive at last?
spsg . ysk [l] r*iš .*	Glaze is poured on the head,
ḥrṣ . l ẓr . qdqdy	and quicklime on the skull.
[ap]m*t . kl. amt .*	Yea, the death of all I shall die,
w an . mtm. amt	I too shall certainly die.

(*CAT* 1.17 VI 35-38)

The conflict between life and death (and the hero's realistic attitude towards it) here presages the drought that is later shown *in extenso* by the author. It is thus clear—not only from the perspective of expected theological motifs but also because of the basic narratological thrust of the story—that the text views the sympathetic death of the land as a direct consequence of the death of the protagonist. This behaviour is, of course, quite in line with the picture of drought given in the Baal Cycle. As the text clearly associates the lack of moisture and verdure with Baal's absence, the parallel is made quite clear, and even though the god of Death himself is nowhere mentioned in the Aqhat Epic, one could still well say that Baal is in a way "vanquished" (or at least driven away) by Death here as well. More surprising is the role played by Anat in the drama: she is the very one who (indirectly) puts the forces of death to power in the land, thus decreasing the power of her own brother Baal (whether Baal's absence is so to speak "automatic" or provoked by a curse uttered by Danel is not a bearing issue here, although the former alternative does seem more probable, as Danel seems to discover the drought as a matter of fact before he utters his lines concerning the coming absence of Baal).

Drought as a natural result of death rather than as a consequence of a dead Storm God

What is, however, a noteworthy difference between the drought in the Baal Cycle and the one occuring in the Epic of Aqhat is the type of character who has died. In the Baal Cycle, it is the god of fertility, rain and lightning himself who has perished and fallen into the jaws of Death, thus making precipitation impossible in a very concrete way. In the Aqhat Epic, the victim of

death is no god but a mortal hero, one who even rebukes Anat's decieving promises of immortality by refering to the inevitability of dying. Not only is the dying hero Aqhat a mere mortal—he actively rejects divine immortality when it is offered to him.

What this means is that the connection between death and drought, which in the Baal Cycle is completely internally explicable in terms of story (no fertility god is around to give rain), has become a purely symbolic connection in the Aqhat story.[13] It would be quite ludicrous to suggest that the young Aqhat would be necessary for rain to fall in the same way which is described of Baal: rather, we must conclude that drought is a manifestation of death itself, not a natural consequence of the death of the rain-giver. Nature mourns Aqhat just as his father does, and it seems that the powerful (and unnatural) incursion of death in the realm of the living that the murder of the son of a high ranking individual such as Danel constitutes is in itself enough to curtail the powers of Baal (although the text does not clearly state whether or not this is against his will—partly because of the ambiguity of the verb *yṣrk*).

Death and drought thus share an intrinsic symbolic link in the text. This link could quite possibly have its background in tellings such as the Baal-Mot episode, where the giver of precipitation himself is subjected to Death's power, but the correspondance and metaphor seems to have been severed from this "mechanistic" relationship and turned into something deeper. Death means drought: the concepts have become semantically linked to each other, whether or not the dying one is a weather deity. The same is the case in 2 Sam 1:21, where the drought is used almost as a metaphorical consequence of heroic death.

This gives us an indication that interpretations of the Ugaritic literary and religious texts as aetiologies for natural phenomena (such as the dry season in the summer) cannot be taken for granted; of course, there can be no doubt that such interpretations sometimes hit the mark, but we should also be conscious of the fact that drought and death occur together when no such aetiology seems to be intended at all. The two phenomena seem to be linked at a deeper metaphorical level; it would be my guess that the theological ideas such as the narrative described in the later part of the Baal Cycle provided the impetus for this metaphorical association, but this is something we really cannot be certain of. We can, however, say that the drought in the Aqhat Epic cooccurs with the death of the hero without being an aetiology for anything at all. The pairing of the concepts expresses certain ideas the poet (and possibly much of Ugaritic society) had about what death meant and of how the microcosm of human destiny corresponds to the macrocosm of nature.

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[13] Cf. Margalit 1989: 374, who speaks of "innocent blood" having defiled the earth, and thus keeping the rainmaker away.

Yatpan and Pughat as representations of death/drought and life/precipitation

Given the clear role of the drought as symbolic correlate of death in the Aqhat story, it is probably no coincidence that Aqhat's sister Pughat, the one who finally avenges him, is described with the epithet *tkmt my*, "she who rises early [to draw] water". Just as she avenges the murder of Aqhat, and thus presumably, in a sense, reverses the power of death in the story, one of her stock epithets literally means that she is a water-carrier, that is, a dispeller of drought. In this context, it might also be fruitful to note another of her epithets, "she who knows the course of the stars" (*yd^{c}t hlk kbkbm*), as we learn in the Baal Cycle that the stars were thought of as givers of precipitation.[14] Pughat is thus described as an "anti-death" figure from the start.

There is also the matter of Aqhat's assailant. Rather than murdering Aqhat herself (and thus, presumably, "get her hands dirty"), Anat hires (root *$^{\flat}$gr*) a warrior to fight for her, the nomad Yatpan. He described as *mhr št*, which in the past has been translated in a number of ways (one common example is "the warrior of the lady", taking *št* as a cognate of Arabic *sitt*, a dialectal feminine form of *sayyid*), but has been shown by Margalit to be an ethnic designation, Sutean.[15] The Suteans were a well known people of nomadic desert-dwellers, often attested in Egyptian and Akkadian sources (many times, for example, in the Amarna literature). They are possibly also alluded to in the Hebrew Bible (Num 24:17). The nomadic life style of the hired warrior is directly alluded to in the Aqhat text, as Anat is described as meating him at the "tents" (*ahlm*) (paralleled by the unclear word *ḏd*, which also occurs in the Baal Cycle as part of the description of El's abode between the two waters).

It is probably no coincidence that Anat chooses as her agent of violence a person connected with life in the uncultivated desert. Yatpan is a dweller in the verdure-less, dead land, an ideal person to symbolically personify death. The desert is an area outside of the ordered confines of society, outside the realm of the cultivated land. In the desert, drought is always in power, and it therefore becomes, by extension, a symbol of Death. The lack of moisture which is the normal state in Yatpan's home regions is also visited upon the abode of the protagonists as a result of Aqhat's death.

The two central characters of the end of the story as it is preserved to us, Pughat and Yatpan, are therefore polar opposites when seen from the perspective of their relationship to death and drought. One of them is a bringer of water, a knower of astral irrigation and an

[14] See *CAT* 1.3 II 40-41, where Anat washes herself with water that "the stars pour on her".
[15] Margalit 1989: 338

avenger of wrongful death, while the other is dweller in the land of heat and drought, outside the sedentary and agricultural sphere and bringer of wrongful death. The poet has used drought and precipitation as potent symbols or metaphors by which to paint these two characters and their respective roles.

Drought as a consequence the illness of king Kirta

The Epic of Kirta also seems to include a passage where severe drought appears as a result of a contact with death. In this case, the problem is not that Kirta has actually died, but he has entered a death-like state, being stricken with a terrible illness, making him unable to rule his kingdom as he should. It appears that this has the effect of stopping the life-giving rains of Baal from falling, in a way quite reminiscent of what was found in the Aqhat passages.

In *CAT* 1.16 III, a badly damaged column, the preserved text seems to describe how someone (the verb indicates a masculine subject) tells someone else to search earth[16] and sky, and the bounds of the earth for Baal's life-giving rains. Especially interesting in this context is the use of the parallelistic expression *l ksm mhyt* (possibly meaning something like "to the limits of the watery regions",[17] a turn of phrase that closely resembles the description of the liminal "coast plain of Death" in which Baal is found dead in the Baal Cycle. This gives us an inkling that the sphere of death is once again fixed in the author's mind.

The text does not clearly state what the unnamed recipient of the speech is to search for, but it does give an idea. Directly following the order to "search" comes what appears to be a sort of eulogy to Baal's rains, and painful lament over the lack of fertility:

ʿn . tr. arṣ . w *šmm*	'Look and search through earth and sky
*sb . l qš*m . *arṣ*	go round the reaches of the earth,
*l ksm . m*h*yt* .	to the limits of the watery regions!
ʿn l arṣ . mṭr . bʿl	Look to the earth for the rain of Baal,
w l šd . mṭr . ʿly	and to the field for the rain of the Highest One!
*nʿm . l arṣ . mṭr . bʿ*l	Sweet for the earth is the rain of Baal,
w lšd . mṭr . ʿly	and for the field, the rain of the Highest One,
*nʿ*m . *l* ḫṭ*t* . *b* ʿn	sweet for the wheat in the furrow,

[16] Ugaritic *arṣ*, which— as pointed out by Wyatt (2002: 231, n. 250)—could of course just as well mean "underworld"; this would yet again point to the centrality of the realm of death and dying to the passage.
[17] Thus Gibson 1978: 98; a similar rendering is found in Caquot/Sznycer/Herdner 1974: 560. Following them, Wyatt (2002:231) translates "to the edge of the abyss". Dissenting views are given by Driver (1956:43) and Greenstein (*UNP*:35) who both interpret the words as refering to some kind of cereals.

*bm . nr*t *. ksmm*	for the spelt in the ploughland,
*ʿl . tl*m*k ʿṭrṭr*t	for the crowns (?) in the …'[18]
nšu . r*iš . ḥr*ṯm	The ploughmen raise their heads,
l ẓr . ʿbd . *dgn*	upwards, those who work the corn:
k*ly lḥm* . b mʿdnhm[19] .	Spent is the food their storage,
kly *yn . b ḥmthm* .	spent is the wine in their skins,
k[l]y *šmn b* [...]	spent is the oil in …

(*CAT* 1.16 III 2-16)

It seems not unreasonable to suggest that the thing the speaker wants someone else to search for is signs of rain, precipitation and fertility. The passage would then form a clear parallel to Danel's tour of his grounds in the Aqhat text and possibly also to Shapshu's search of the parched furrows in the Baal Cycle. This sort of "survey" of the stricken land seems to be a sort of *topos* of Ilimilku's stories, and one cannot discount the possibility that this is one of his more personal stylistic touches.

Death as defined as the "villain" in Kirta

A pointer to this "sympathetic natural disaster" being directly connected to the idea of Death is given in column V, where El (unsuccessfully) asks the other gods in the divine council to drive away Kirta's illness. Again and again he puts the question to them: "Who among the gods will drive out the illness / drive off the disease?", and again and again he gets no answer.[20] When all else fails, he decides to solve the problem himself, and creates a female golem-like being out of clay named Shaʿataqat, "she who makes [illness] pass away".[21] El sends his creation towards Kirta, whom she subsequently cures. The words which are of interest to the present discussion occur when El gives Shaʿataqat her mission:

[18] The meaning (and exact reading) of this line is highly unclear. An agricultural reference is plausible, but not certain.
[19] Reading of this word follows Greenstein (*UNP*): 36.
[20] This description of the high god asking for help from his council and not receiving is not a unicum in Ancient Near Eastern poetic storytelling: something quite similar occurs in the second tablet of *Enuma Elish*, when Anshar tries to get someone to go out in battle against Tiamat (see especially lines 120-125).
[21] The word is probably a singular feminine participle of the causative Š-stem of the verb *ʿtq, "to pass away"* (Hebrew *ʿātaq*, Akkadian *etēqu*). For an example of a quite differing interpretation of the name (although based on the same verb), see Dietrich 2007: 116-118, who renders it "[die] Vortreffliche" or "die (alle Götter) übertrifft".

[m]*t . dm . ḫt .*[22]	Mot, be weak!
šʿtqt dt li	Shaʿataqat, be strong!

(*CAT* 1.16 VI 1-2)

Later on (when the actual healing occurs) the same expressions are used:

mt . dm . ḫt .	Mot is weak,
šʿtqt dm . lan .	Shaʿataqat is strong!

(*CAT* 1.16 VI 13-14)

This shows that (in the mind of the author at least) the illness and subsequent problems experienced by Kirta are fixed in the semantic domain of Death. Thus the connection to the drought serves the same theological and narratological purpose as in the Aqhat story. When Shaʿataqat dispels Kirta's disease, the text says that she "opens his throat for eating", using the word *npš*, whose well-known double meaning of "throat" and "life" gives an ideal expression to the victory of the power of Death. The combination of these factors help drive home the message that Death is the problem, thus creating a thematic link with the passage that seemingly describes drought and famine. Once again (just as in the Aqhat episode) the link between drought and Death is here purely a symbolic one. It is suggested that Baal and his rains are absent, but the one subjected to the powers of death is not the Storm God himself but a mere mortal. It is the death theme itself that brings on the drought: the battling weather deity here becomes little more than a symbol. This again reinforces the fact that drought in these texts is more than the result of the action of the Baal Cycle: it is a metaphorical expression of death.

When Kirta's terrible disease is finally vanquished, the words used create another link with a similar text of the Old Testament. The Ugaritic text says of Shaʿataqat:

npšh . l lḥm . tptḥ	She opens his throat for eating,
brlth . lṯrm	his gullet for dining.

[22] The verb *ḫtt* could quite possibly be a *Nebenform* of *ḫtʾ*, the verb used in the Refrain of the Burning Sun to describe Mot's crushing of his victims while swallowing them, in which case the present attestation could very well constitute a piece of intertextual play with that text. Note also how both passages use forms of the verb *lʾy* (albeit in seemingly opposite senses). If these connections are correct, this snippet of text where El adjures Mot to be weak and Shaʿataqat to defeat him can be viewed as a sort of magical apotropaism intended to ward off the very effects normally associated with Death when he is, so to speak, in his prime.

(*CAT* 1.16 VI 11-12)

Here, the defeat of the disease is associated with the return of the ability to consume food. The connection between inability to eat and death-like states is also found in Ps 102:5 (discussed in sections **XXX** and **XXX** of this book). Ps 102 is a text that very clearly uses the motifs of dryness, drought and hotness to describe the rule of death, and thus such a combination (drought/heat and lack of appetite) is an element which Kirta and Ps 102 have in common.[23] The burning/wilting/parched state of death implies lack of the appetite needed to eat and gives yet another metaphorical background to the text's earlier talk of the food being used up, etc. Instead of symbols of life (food, water, rain, wine), Kirta gets those of death: heat, drought and lack of appetite, in much the same way as does the supplicant in Ps 102.

On an interesting side-note, Ps 102 is also one of the two occasions in the MT where the word *tĕmûtâ* occurs (in verse 21, which speaks of *bĕnê tĕmûtâ*, "the children of death" or "those who are condemned to die"). This may, as we have seen, have been the word used in the *Vorlage* of the Lucianic text of 2 Sam 1:21. It is not impossible that this word was thought to be somehow conceptually connected to this sort of description of a death-like state, facilitating its introduction into the text of 2 Sam.

The association between the sun and Death is also alluded to in the Kirta Epic. Much earlier in the text, the warriors of Hubur (symbolically referred to as "bulls" and "gazelles") predict the coming illness of the king and talk of his death, stating that Kirta will "reach the sunset" (*CAT* 1.15 V 18-20).[24] This is used as a metaphor for dying. Thus the Kirta text shares with the Baal Cycle the combinations of the themes sun-drought-death, and again the heat and the underworld (both connected to the sun) are used as combined symbolic representations of dying.

In Kirta and Aqhat, as well as in the Biblical texts here discussed, the drought sets in as a result of the power of Death—not only because he has swallowed and brought the weather god under his sway, but because drought was seemingly associated with his very being. There is no god to die and rise in these texts, but the killing heat remains and can be "avenged" by as

[23] If my analysis of Ps 102:5 and its use of the verb *škḥ* to mean "be hot, parched" (see the excursus on p. **XXX**) is accepted, this combination occurs *within a single poetic line*—and the "hotness" in question is in fact shown to be the very reason for the Psalmist's inability to consume his food.

[24] A similar literary usage may be present in *CAT* 1.16 I 36-37, where sunset also is given as the appropriate time at which to announce the feast that is to "cover up" Kirta's illness.

human a figure as the hero's sister. Drought and the death of a great hero seem to be intrinsically connected on a both literary and ideological level.[25] The line between literary technique and theology seems here to be a thin one indeed.

ABBREVIATIONS

CAT	Dietrich, Manfried, Loretz, Oswald & Sanmartín, Joaquín,*The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places (KTU: second, enlarged edition)*. Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syrien-Palästinas und Mesopotamiens 8. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag 1995
UNP	*Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. Simon B. Parker. SBL Writings from the Ancient World 9. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press 1997

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[25] Yet another instance of this connection may perhaps be found in the sixth tablet of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, where Ishtar demands (and is granted) the Bull of Heaven to be used against Gilgamesh because the young king has slighted her in love. The description of the Bull in lines 104-111 (the land of Uruk having to live on empty husks or chaffs for seven years, etc.) have led some (e.g. King 2009: 23) to see the terrible monster as some sort of personification of drought itself. When the Bull is subsequently killed, Enkidu is sentenced to die by the gods, thereby, of course, causing the death of a hero. If this example does indeed belong here, the order between the drought and the hero dying seems to be reversed: killing the drought-monster leads to the death of a hero.

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