

THE POETRY OF UGARIT AND ISRAEL

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The year 1970 marks the fortieth anniversary of the first translation of Ugaritic texts from Ras Shamra. During this period, the increasing numbers of texts have been carefully studied, not only as a subject in their own right, but also in relation to their broader Near Eastern setting. And if interest in the subject may have waned from time to time, then additional stimulus has been provided by fresh finds, either at Ras Shamra or even at sites in Palestine.¹

Since the early years following the discoveries, the value of the Ugaritic texts has been recognized for Old Testament studies² and points of contact have been examined in a number of areas. The topic of this paper is one particular aspect of the larger subject-matter, namely the comparative study of Ugaritic and Hebrew literature. Since the Ugaritic literature in the proper sense is all poetic in form, the topic of the paper may be more closely defined as the comparative study of poetry.³

Comparative literary studies may be conducted with a num-

* Delivered at Tyndale House, Cambridge, July 1970.

In addition to the standard forms of abbreviation, the following abbreviations used in this paper:-

UF. 1 *Ugarit-Forschungen* 1 (1969).

Ug. 5 *Ugaritica* 5 (1968).

UT C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (1965).

CTA A. Herdner, *Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabetiques* (1963).

Note that in most cases, references to the Ugaritic texts will follow CTA, unless the text has been published at a later date, in which case the numbering follows that of the initial publication.

¹ See also Gordon's confident expectations for the future, 'Supplement to the *Ugaritic Textbook*', July 6, 1967.

² See, *inter al.*, the works of J. W. Jack (1935), R. Dussaud (1937), and R. de Langhe (1945). A further indication of the continuing interest is that John Gray's *The Legacy of Canaan*, Brill, Leiden (1957) moved into a second enlarged edition (1965); Professor Gray promises a third edition, enlarged even further and utilizing the new resources of recent campaigns; it is hoped that this will be available in the near future.

³ The comparative study of literature should be distinguished from comparative philology. Comparative philological studies of Hebrew and Ugaritic have also proved to be a fruitful field of research, though reference should be made to the

ber of ends in view. They may be undertaken for aesthetic purposes only, as, for example, the literary evaluation of Old Testament literature in the context of literature from Egypt and Mesopotamia.⁴ But more often, comparative studies of literature have as their focus the matter of literary relationships, which are in turn significant for the larger questions of cultural and religious relationships in a given area. The majority of comparative studies of Hebrew and Ugaritic poetry have had as their objective the clarification of Hebrew dependence on, or relationship to, Canaanite literature (as it is represented by the Ugaritic texts).

Comparative literary studies, when they are conducted for aesthetic purposes, need not be too closely controlled. However, when the comparison is to serve as a basis for cultural and religious observations, then the method of comparison must be carefully evaluated and applied to the sources with some degree of control. A fuller understanding of early Hebrew literature and religion, in so far as it is based on the Ugaritic texts, will carry little conviction unless the nature of the comparison can be considered reasonably reliable in the first place. To this end, the present paper will consider first of all some of the principles of comparative studies which must be employed. Then three test cases will be selected and examined in the light of the general principles. Finally, some observations will be added concerning the nature and extent of knowledge which might be acquired on the basis of the comparative study of Hebrew and Ugaritic literature.

A

PRINCIPLES OF COMPARATIVE STUDIES

The comparative study of literature, as a general area of academic inquiry, is a centre of considerable debate in contem-

cautionary remarks of J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament*, Oxford University Press, London (1968), 92ff. and 111. Although comparative literary studies may have recourse to comparative philology, the frame of reference is broader. Some of the principles stated in the following pages are fairly general; but reference may be made to C. Pichois and A-M. Rousseau, *La littérature comparée*, Librairie Armand Colin, Paris (1967), 96ff. for background information.

⁴ E.g. T. E. Peet, *A Comparative Study of the Literatures of Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia*, Schweich Lectures (5929). Peet's work centres on an assessment of how the three literatures compare with one another in form, content and literary value; he is not interested primarily in the possibility or nature of literary interrelationships.

porary scholarship.⁵ For this reason it is not possible simply to apply certain generally accepted principles of comparative literature to the Hebrew and Ugaritic sources. Furthermore, since the subject-matter of modern studies in comparative literature is for the most part European literature, with some reference to the Classical writings, there may be a tendency to impose modern or Western concepts on the Near Eastern sources. But with this *proviso*, there is some value to be gained from an approach in the general terms of comparative literature. One such value is that it may serve to balance the traditional approach to comparative studies, namely that which was developed under the auspices of form-criticism.⁶ Indeed, the growth of comparative studies was one of the notable contributions of form-criticism to Old Testament studies, but a modification of method is required in view of the somewhat rigid concept of literature and literary forms implied in a rigorous form-critical approach. The following, then, are some general principles of comparative studies which must be taken into account in the conduct of a particular comparison.

There is first the question of the relationship between the two languages, in this case Hebrew and Ugaritic. For purposes of clarity, Hebrew⁷ is taken as the fixed point in this study, so that the problem centres on the relation of Ugaritic to Hebrew. In general terms, the language external to Hebrew may be 'foreign' (that is, a language unintelligible to the average Hebrew: *e.g.* Egyptian) or else a member of the same dialectal group (and therefore presumably intelligible to the average Hebrew: *e.g.* Moabite).⁸ If the latter situation is the case with regard to Hebrew and Ugaritic, there is a dilemma for comparative studies. On the one hand, the likelihood of mutual

⁵ For an introduction to different approaches to comparative literature in modern scholarship, see U. Weisstein, *Einführung in die vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, W. Kolhammer Verlag, Stuttgart (1968); A. Warren and R. Wellek, *Theory of Literature*, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., New York (1956), 46ff.; Pichois and Rousseau, *op. cit.*

⁶ K. Koch has observed, referring to Gunkel's *Schöpfung*, that a reliable method of comparative studies began only with form-criticism: *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: the Form Critical Method*, A. and C. Black, London (1969), 74.

⁷ 'Hebrew' is used for practical purposes, although it is not the terminology of the Old Testament. The designation used of the language of the Israelites is 'Jewish' (*e.g.* 2 Kings 18: 26) or less commonly 'the language of Canaan' (Isaiah 19: 18).

⁸ Cf. E. Ullendorff, 'The Knowledge of Languages in the Old Testament', *BJRL* 44 (1961), 455ff.; M. E. J. Richardson, 'Hebrew Toponyms', *Tyndale Bulletin* 20 (1969), 103f.

understanding increases the potential for Hebrew knowledge of the literature and/or oral poetry of its near relative. On the other hand, the closeness of the two dialects would make more difficult the task of discerning interdependence in a comparative study; the points of similarity might indicate interdependence or might indicate similar development within each dialect. For example, the phenomenon of 'fixed pairs'⁹ in Ugaritic and Hebrew poetic diction may indicate either dependence of Hebrew poetry on Ugaritic, or an earlier common Syro-Palestinian poetic diction, which subsequently developed in each body of poetry, or even an independent development in both Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry without there ever having been an earlier common Syro-Palestinian diction. However, if the former type of relationship were the case, namely that Ugaritic was a 'foreign language' in relation to Hebrew, the dilemma would be obviated to some extent. A comparison may be difficult to substantiate in the first place, but an accumulation of evidence, other factors being equal, would be more likely to indicate interdependence than independent origination.

For these reasons, the nature of the relationship between Ugaritic and Hebrew must be examined briefly. It is a relationship which has been debated at length, but it does seem possible to find some kind of consensus of opinion.¹⁰ Although the broad classification of Northwest Semitic is generally accepted for both languages,¹¹ the debate centres rather on the subclassification of Ugaritic. There are at least three possible subclassifications.¹² The first suggestion is that Ugaritic, along with Amorite, should be taken as belonging to a

⁹ On this topic, see S. Gevirtz, *Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago (1963); *idem*, *JNES* 20 (1961), 41 ff.

¹⁰ For discussions of the problem and additional bibliographical details, see the following: W. L. Moran, 'The Hebrew Language in its Northwest Semitic Background', in G. E. Wright (ed.), *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London (1961), 54-72; C. Brockelmann, 'Die kanaanaïschen Dialekte mit dem Ugaritischen', in *Handbuch der Orientalistik III, Semitistik*, E. J. Brill, Leiden (1964), 45; M. Dahood, 'The Linguistic Position of Ugaritic in the Light of Recent Discoveries', *Sacra Pagina* I, 267-279. The consensus suggested here might still be disputed; see Cohen's remarks in A. Meillet and M. Cohen (eds.), *Les langues du monde*, Paris (1952 edition), *ad loc.*

¹¹ See S. Moscati *et al.*, *Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden (1964), 7ff.

¹² Cf. C. Rabin, 'The Origin of Subdivisions in Semitic', in a W. Thomas and W. D. McHardy (eds.), *Hebrew and Semitic Studies*, Oxford University Press, London (1963), 104-115.

separate group within Northwest Semitic; this position has been argued by Goetze, but has been the subject of severe criticism from W. F. Albright.¹³ The second suggestion (and the most likely one in the writer's view) is that Ugaritic is a Canaanite dialect (North Canaanite) and therefore should be taken to be closely related to Hebrew.¹⁴ The third suggestion, which forms the exception to the general principle stated above, is that Ugaritic is to be connected with Proto-Arabic, which in turn is said to be close to Proto-Semitic;¹⁵ this seems to be the least likely of the possibilities. Without entering into the debate, the second suggestion will be provisionally assumed in the following paragraphs and the first will be kept in mind. If the second suggestion is correct, namely that Ugaritic, along with Hebrew, is a dialect of Canaanite, then the dilemma of dialectal comparisons already referred to must be taken into account in the comparative studies to be examined.

The second principle concerns the chronology of the texts to be compared. In order to evaluate the results of the comparison, the relative dates (or at least the periods) of the texts should be known. In practice, however, the dates may be difficult to determine. Thus, for a given Hebrew passage, it may be difficult to distinguish between the date of its final form in the Old Testament, the date of its supposed written form prior to redaction or compilation, and the date of its oral transmission (if any) prior to its reduction to written form. Similar difficulties relate to the Ugaritic texts. The *Krt*-legend, for example, has in all probability a considerable pre-history, dating to the early part of the second millennium. But owing to the manner of discovery of the Ugaritic texts, the *terminus ad quem* of the texts can be stated with some certainty. Given these limitations, it should be possible to delimit a text, Hebrew or Ugaritic, to a certain chronological period, even if an exact dating cannot be ascertained. A general dating is important, however, in order to ascertain whether the comparison is *diachronic* or

¹³ A. Goetze, 'Is Ugaritic a Canaanite Dialect?' *Language* 17 (1941), 127-137. W. F. Albright, 'The Old Testament and Canaanite Language and Literature', *CBQ* 7 (1945), particularly 14-18. At the time of writing, I have not had access to the article by J. C. Greenfield, 'Amurrite, Ugaritic, and Canaanite', to be published in the *Proceedings of the International Conference in Semitic Studies* by E. J. Brill.

¹⁴ See, for example, W. F. Albright, *The Amarna Letters from Palestine: Syria, the Philistines and Phoenicia* (CAH 51), 47.

¹⁵ Cf. Rabin, *loc. cit.*, for references.

synchronic in nature. In the nature of the evidence, the majority of comparisons of Hebrew and Ugaritic poetry will be diachronic, although there may be some exceptions to this general principle.¹⁶ There are certain correlatives to the chronological type of a given comparison. Thus dependence of the later passage on the earlier one is likely, other factors being equal, in a diachronic study, but in a synchronic study the possibility of *polygenesis* of literary forms and motifs, rather than *monogenesis*, must be taken into account.

The possibility of either polygenesis or monogenesis of literary forms and motifs introduces a third principle of comparative studies, namely the nature of the relationship between literary genres or types from the two bodies of literature. In normal circumstances, monogenesis and subsequent literary dependence is likely in a diachronic comparative study. Conversely, polygenesis is likely in a synchronic study. But neither of these statements can be taken as firm rules; the reverse could be true in either case. There are, in fact, certain factors which make the polygenesis of some literary types a strong possibility, regardless of the date of origin. Thus lyric and epic poetry are both literary types which have their roots in oral poetry. Hence, a general similarity between the lyric and epic poetry of Ugarit and Israel may be largely coincidental, in that the literary form *per se* most probably had an independent origin in each setting.¹⁷ Where the theoretical possibility of polygenesis is strong, as is the case with epic and lyric poetry, this factor must be given serious consideration in a comparative study; general similarities will be insufficient in such a case to establish interdependence.¹⁸ Where the theoretical

¹⁶ The majority of comparisons will be diachronic since the *terminus ad quem*: for the Ugaritic texts is probably to be put in the mid-14th century BC; the fall of the city of Ugarit is somewhat later than this, but the 'Golden Age' of Ugarit is to be dated approximately 1440-1360 BC (E. Jacob, *Ras Shamra et l'Ancien Testament*, Delachaux and Niestlé, Neuchatel (1960), 18). In contrast, the *terminus a quo* for the majority of Hebrew literature, at a conservative estimate, would be the 10th century BC. The possible exceptions to diachronic comparisons might be provided by the remnants in the Old Testament of more ancient Hebrew poetry; e.g. Exodus 15:1-18 (the Song of the Sea), Judges 5 (the Song of Deborah), and parts of Numbers 23-24 (the Balaam Oracles).

¹⁷ Cf. T. E. Peet, *op. cit.*, 128.

¹⁸ If Ugaritic and Hebrew are both Canaanite dialects, interdependence between lyric or epic poetry may be even more difficult to establish, although if Ugaritic is taken to belong to a separate linguistic group (along with Amorite), the difficulty may be reduced to some extent. It should be stressed again, however, that the argument here is not against the likelihood of interdependence. Rather it

possibility of monogenesis is strong, a smaller degree of correspondence may be significant in a comparison intended to establish interdependence.

Up to this point, three basic principles of comparative studies have been noted, relating to linguistic relationships, chronology, and the origin of literary genres¹⁹ respectively. Another such principle would deal with the geographical provenance of the texts to be compared. But this point brings out more clearly an assumption which has already been implicit in the statement of the earlier principles. This assumption is that the Ugaritic texts can be taken as *representative* of Canaanite literature in general. In terms of geography, Ugarit, in the far North of Syria, was a considerable distance from Palestine. Although it should probably be included in the general area denoted by the term 'Canaan',²⁰ the distance of Ugarit from Palestine might be thought to pose a problem for comparative studies.²¹ But if Ugaritic literature is used in comparisons on the basis of its representative nature, the geographical difficulty is removed.²²

These general principles constitute both guidelines and controls for the conduct of comparative studies. But there is one further point to be discussed, namely the interpretation of the evidence. In normal circumstances, the aim of the comparison will be to determine similarities between two passages which indicate some kind of relationship. The similarities will have to be more than general and more convincing than those which might be put down to coincidence.²³ But in addition,

is to point out that with a close dialectal affinity and with a comparison of lyric and epic poetry, the nature of the evidence makes interdependence very hard to establish.

¹⁹ The word *genre* (and also *type*) is used in a broad and general sense at this stage of the discussion.

²⁰ On the use of 'Canaan', and the representative nature of Ugarit for Canaan, see J. Gray, *The Canaanites*, Thames and Hudson, London (1964), 15ff.; S. Moscati, *The Face of the Ancient Orient*, Doubleday and Company, New York (1962), 217ff.

²¹ The difficulty is considerably reduced in the light of Ugarit's position at the crossroads of a number of trade routes, and the cosmopolitan nature of the texts recovered from libraries and archives which have been excavated.

²² The problem of representativeness will be taken up again in the discussion of particular test cases. But note that in many comparisons, the Ugaritic texts are taken to be representative not only geographically, but also chronologically. Furthermore, the representative nature of the texts would be further established if the Ugaritic language could be definitely described as Canaanite, but there is a danger of entering into a circular argument at this point.

²³ In addition to the possibility of coincidental similarity, it may be that a psychological understanding may have to be applied to certain types of similarity.

since literary borrowings and influences between two cultures, which have their own distinctive religious features, will usually involve adaptation rather than simple borrowing, differences must be examined along with the similarities. A difficulty is introduced at this point, for an attempt must be made to ascertain whether the differences are indicative of adaptation, or whether they are such as to argue against the likelihood of interdependence in the first place. If it can be established with reasonable certainty that the differences are the result of adaptation, then a general principle of interpretation can be applied. The similarities which are discerned will usually indicate a *generic* relationship between the two texts being compared: the dissimilarities will indicate the specific nature of the individual texts.²⁴

With these preliminary remarks, it is now possible to bring more focus to the discussion by examining some particular comparisons. In the evaluation of the comparisons, the general principles adduced in the foregoing paragraphs will be applied to particular cases.

B

THREE TEST CASES IN COMPARATIVE STUDIES

The three comparisons to be examined have been chosen with a particular end in view. Each of them shows the difficulties attendant on comparative studies, but in the evaluation to be offered here, there are three types of conclusion. The first comparison (and the observations based on it) is held to be inadmissible and is therefore termed *negative*. The second comparison (and the hypothesis accompanying it) is problematic, but it has its value as a hypothesis; it is therefore described as *neutral*. The third comparison, in the writer's opinion,

For example, the Ugaritic story of Baal has many points of similarity to mythological stories from elsewhere. The similarity between the Baal myth and the Mesopotamian Marduk-Tiamat account may well be explained in terms of some kind of interrelationship (*cf.* T. Jacobsen, 'The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat', *JAOS* 88 (1968), 104-108). However, the striking similarities between the Baal myth and the mythological description of the conflict between Indra and Vritra in the *Rig Veda* would probably have to be understood in more psychological terms. For an approach to this kind of problem, see M. Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*, Oxford University Press, London (1963).

²⁴ See the remarks of S. H. Hooke in *Myth, Ritual and Kingship*, Oxford University Press, London (1958), 7.

indicates a more convincing approach to the subject and is described as *positive*.

1. *Song of Songs 5:10-16 and RS. 24.245*²⁵

One of the most interesting developments in biblical and Near Eastern scholarship in North America during recent years has been the founding of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity at the Claremont University Center in California.²⁶ Among the various projects which have been undertaken by the Institute is the 'Ugaritic and Hebrew Parallels Project' under the direction of L. R. Fisher. 'The objective of this project is to carry through a comprehensive investigation of the parallels between the literature of Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible.'²⁷ Such a project is indeed to be welcomed by Old Testament and Ugaritic scholars and the full publication of results is awaited with anticipation. In the light of this project, however, the publication of a study by Fisher and Knutson in 1969 takes on particular significance in the present context.²⁸

The study is concerned principally with an examination of one of the newer Ugaritic texts (RS. 24.245; 603 on Gordon's numbering system), which was discovered during the 24th campaign in 1961.²⁹ In the course of the study, a parallel is adduced between a part of the new text (obverse 5-10) and the Song of Songs 5:10-16, and it is this comparison which engages attention at the moment. The Ugaritic text as a whole is classified as a 'descriptive ritual text' and the section which is compared to the biblical passage is a 'descriptive love song' within the larger *Gattung*. Both the Ugaritic and the Hebrew

²⁵ This section of the paper was read at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for Biblical Studies in Winnipeg, June 12, 1970. I am grateful for contributions and advice given at that time. The text RS. 24.245 was also one of a number of passages studied in an Ugaritic seminar held in the Department of Religion, McMaster University during 1969-1970. I would like particularly to express gratitude to my colleagues B. J. Angi, Y. Masaki, and H. Hanson for their many helpful insights in the understanding of this difficult text.

²⁶ Fuller information concerning the Institute has been provided in a report by J. M. Robinson, 'The Institute for Antiquity and Christianity', *NTS* 16 (1970), 178ff.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 290.

²⁸ L. R. Fisher and F. B. Knutson, 'An Enthronement Ritual at Ugarit', *JNES* 28 (1969), 157-167.

²⁹ The text was presented first by C. Virolleaud in *Ug.* 5, 556-559. More recently, the new text has been studied by J. C. de Moor, 'Studies in the new Alphabetic Texts from Ras Shamra, I', *UF.I* 180-183.

passages are love songs in which there is a description of the male³⁰ (which is said to be rare in Near Eastern love songs) and the parts of the male which are described appear in a similar order in both passages. On this basis, it is suggested that the biblical passage, like the Ugaritic, may originally have had a cultic setting. Reference is made to the work of Meek and others who had suggested the cultic origin of some parts of the Song of Songs in a Palestinian manifestation of the Mesopotamian Tammuz cult. 'In the light of our studies,' it is claimed, 'Meek was on the right track but we are not limited at this time to the Tammuz cult or later Jewish tradition for our clues.'³¹

With this brief résumé of the comparison and its implications, it is possible to move to a critique. In applying the principles adduced in the earlier part of the paper, the first one (*i.e.* the linguistic principle) need not be taken up again in detail, but it has an indirect point of reference in the application of the second principle which relates to chronology. In very general terms, the Ugaritic text can be dated around the 14th century BC with some margin on either side. In contrast to this, the Hebrew passage, in its present form at least, should probably be dated around the 5th century BC, although there are grounds for indicating an earlier version of the book around the 9th century BC.³² It is true that archaic survivals have been traced in the Song of Songs by Albright,³³ but the passage under discussion is not evidently archaic: there are no obvious linguistic features to indicate that this is the case. It is clear, then, that the nature of the comparison is *diachronic*, for even at the most conservative estimate, there is a period of several centuries between the passages being compared. Although in diachronic comparisons, the dependence of the later passage on the earlier is likely, it should be noted that the greater the chronological gap between the two passages, the greater is the difficulty of

³⁰ This is only true of the Ugaritic passage if the translation of Fisher and Knutson is accepted; this is discussed more fully below.

³¹ Fisher and Knutson, *op. cit.*, 163.

³² The presence of features indicating both late and early dates makes the dating of the book difficult; it may be that the songs within the book should be dated where possible, rather than the book as a whole. For a discussion of the problem, see A. Robert and R. Tournay (with A. Feuillet), *Le Cantique des Cantiques*, Librairie Lecoffre, Paris (1963), 20ff.; R. Gordis, *The Song of Songs*, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York (1961), 23f.

³³ W. F. Albright, 'Archaic Survivals in the Text of Canticles', in *Hebrew and Semitic Studies*, 1-7

maintaining dependence in the first place. The difficulty of chronology may be reduced from both ends. Thus, if the Ugaritic text is taken to be simply representative or else a prototype of a descriptive ritual text thought to have been extant in Palestine at a later date, then the chronological difficulty is minimized. Likewise, if the present Hebrew text is said to be a late and modified form of an earlier Hebrew descriptive ritual (and this seems to be implicit in the comparison under discussion), then again the chronological difficulty is reduced. But each of these procedures has increased the hypothetical element in the comparison, so that it is almost a comparison of two presumed, though no longer extant, texts. Furthermore, the chronological gap adds to the problems of the linguistic relationship, for in the course of time, the Hebrew language became more distinct from Ugaritic (whichever of the classifications are accepted for Ugaritic in the first place). The point in introducing these somewhat negative aspects into the discussion is in order to emphasize that with such considerable initial difficulties, the nature of the internal evidence of the comparison will need to be all the more convincing.

When the third principle of comparative studies is applied, however, the difficulties are by no means reduced. In general terms, it is clear that both passages are poetic.³⁴ The Ugaritic passage has been described by Fisher and Knutson as a 'descriptive ritual' text, reference being made to an article by Baruch Levine.³⁵ But the reference is misleading, for the text under discussion is quite different in form and style from those discussed by Levine, and it is far from certain that the label 'descriptive ritual' can be used for the Ugaritic text at all.³⁶

³⁴ The Hebrew passage, in its present form, is secular lyric poetry. The poetic nature of the Ugaritic passage is brought out by the use of parallelism; although the section is lyric, its larger setting is considered (by the present writer) to have been within a longer epic cycle.

³⁵ 'Ugaritic Descriptive Rituals', *JCS* 17 (1963), 105-111.

³⁶ There are two types of religious or ritual texts described by Levine: (a) certain texts (*e.g.* *UT* 2 and 5) are liturgies meant for recitation; they are semi-poetic in form and employ characteristic features of epic style; (b) other texts (*e.g.* *UT* 1, 3, 9) do not contain the actual words used in the ritual; they are 'descriptive rituals' using the *yqtl* formation and a formulaic rather than prosaic style. It should be noted, however, that this latter group of texts, according to Levine, is unlike the poetic or semipoetic group of texts and that they describe the acts of cultic personnel and would be unlikely to describe the acts of divine beings (Levine, 106a.) (Unfortunately, there is a certain confusion in Levine's article due to the syntax of the third paragraph and the vague use of 'these texts'.) RS. 24.245 is classified as a 'descriptive ritual' by Fisher and Knutson, but unlike

The classification of the text 'mythological', that is, either a variant form or a short summary of parts of the mythological texts already known from Ras Shamra, seems to be far more satisfactory.³⁷ On the basis of these remarks, two further observations can be made. First, the case for an original cultic setting of the Hebrew passage depended initially on the classification of the Ugaritic text; since this classification is in itself suspect, the suggestion concerning the Hebrew text which was made on the basis of the comparison can carry little weight. Second, on either of the classifications of the Ugaritic text, the comparison is conducted between two different literary genres, for the Hebrew text, in its present form, is neither 'descriptive ritual' nor 'mythological'. Again, the difficulty thus posed can be reduced by referring to an earlier form of the Hebrew text than that which is extant, but this procedure has the effect of increasing the hypothetical nature of the argument.

In view of so many negative preliminary remarks, there must now be an examination of the textual evidence (*i.e.* the points of similarity between the texts *per se*) on which the case depends. The similarities might come under two headings. There is first the common theme of the description of the male. In the second place the order in which the parts of the body are described is said to be similar in each passage; in both cases the description starts with the head, moves down the body, and returns to the mouth. An initial response to these similarities might be to argue that they are not so rare as has been suggested: love poetry is relatively common in the Near East and further parallels might be adduced in an attempt to reduce the significance of the present case.³⁸ But this would be avoiding the critical issue in this particular comparison and it must be admitted that the similarities as stated seem to be striking. The critical issue involved is rather the translation of the Ugaritic text which forms a basis for the comparison. Broadly, the issue

Levine's descriptive rituals, RS. 24.245 *does* employ a poetic style and *does* describe the actions of divine beings. It seems in fact that RS.24.245 is not a ritual text at all, but mythological; the connection with rite is thus moved to the larger field of debate, namely the anthropological interpretation of myth in its relation to ritual.

³⁷ Such a classification is implied in the studies of Virolleaud and de Moor referred to in footnote 28.

³⁸ See the extensive appendix on Near Eastern love poetry in Robert and Tournay, *op. cit.*, 339-421.

may be stated as follows: the Ugaritic text has a number of critical problems making its translation difficult. Not least of these is the fact that the text is broken in such a way as to make even more difficult the translation of the lines which are critical for the comparison (lines 8-10). Each of the three translations offered so far (Violleaud, Fisher/Knutson, de Moor) has gone some distance in helping to elucidate the difficulties of translation, but it is by no means certain that the text has yet been correctly translated. Now the translation offered by Fisher and Knutson is of considerable value; the point of the critique is simply that as the translation is itself still at a preliminary stage (in the writer's opinion),³⁹ it is dangerous to use the translation in a comparison of this nature, and then on the basis of the comparison, to draw conclusions concerning the Song of Songs.

For these reasons, the first test case in comparative studies is described as *negative*. But it should be repeated again in conclusion that the arguments adduced here are directed against the comparison suggested by Fisher and Knutson; their contribution towards the fuller understanding of RS. 24.245 is greatly appreciated.

2. Psalm 29 and its Canaanite Antecedents

In 1935 H. L. Ginsberg first put forward the hypothesis that Psalm 29 was a Phoenician hymn which had found its way into

³⁹ This is not the place to deal in detail with critical problems in the new Ugaritic text, but two points may be made in order to clarify the thrust of the argument. (a) The words *rišh.tply* are important in the argument for describing the lines as love poetry. Violleaud does not translate *tply*, but Fisher and Knutson render, 'his head is wonderful', following W. Johnstone's suggested comparison with Hebrew *plh*; this receives further support (though a different translation) from de Moor. It is not clear from Fisher and Knutson's footnote whether *tply* is taken in a verbal sense or as a noun with preformative *t-* (cf. UT 8.48). If it is verbal, the feminine form is curious, for *riš* is probably masculine (although this too has difficulties since plural forms include *rašm*, *rašt*, and *rišt*; cf. M. Dahood, *Ugaritic-Hebrew Philology*, Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome (1965), 15). An alternative rendering of *rišh.tply* might be 'his head is enmity', forming a parallel to Fisher and Knutson's translation of line 6, 'of hostility speaks his leg'. *tply*, 'enmity', is suggested on the basis of Arabic *tabala*, 'to bear enmity', *tablum*, 'enmity, hostility'. The *-y* is taken to be a nominal suffix (cf. UT 8.55). The etymology involves the equation *b* (Arabic)/*p* (Hebrew), that is the phonetically close voiced and unvoiced bilabial plosives. This is no more than a suggestion, but it does indicate the difficulties involved in the translation of words which are critical for the comparison. (b) It may be noted that another word which was critical for the comparison, *dd* ('beloved'; see Song of Songs 5:16) is translated 'jars' by both Violleaud and de Moor. In summary, with the present state of knowledge on this text, it is likely that the lines continue to describe the prowess of Baal, but it is not at all clear that they are a descriptive love song.

the Hebrew Psalter.⁴⁰ He noticed the presence of 'pagan notions' in the psalm, the main one being the emphasis throughout on the glorification of Yahweh's voice; the evidence indicated, in Ginsberg's view, that the whole psalm originally contemplated the storm god Baal or Hadad. To this evidence was added the Phoenician nature of the topography and the toponymy, and also a linguistic feature of North Canaanite. Finally the concluding verse of the psalm was compared with a 'formula of Baal's triumph' from the Ugaritic texts. All these factors led Ginsberg to posit a Syrian composition for Psalm 29.

Eleven years after Ginsberg's study, T. H. Gaster⁴¹ took the theory further, but broadened its scope by using additional evidence. In Gaster's view, the psalm was a typical 'hymn of laudation' which had been detached from its mythic context and 'Yahwized'. The evidence which was used consisted not only of the Canaanite Baal myth, but also the Mesopotamian and Anatolian counterparts of the Canaanite mythology.

Not long after Gaster's study, a further short note on Psalm 29 was published by F. M. Cross.⁴² Cross considered that Ginsberg had presented 'conclusive evidence' that Psalm 29 was a Canaanite Baal hymn. The new evidence presented in Cross's study was in terms of the prosodic analysis of the psalm, but he also went a step further, for 'Psalm 29 takes on rare new importance for the analysis of Canaanite prosodic canons and their influence on Israelite psalmody'.⁴³

Finally, in more recent years other scholars have continued to work with the view that Psalm 29 was of Canaanite origin. For example, F. C. Fensham⁴⁴ has examined the earlier evidence and adduced newer evidence which seems to substantiate the views of Ginsberg and Cross. Again, M. Dahood⁴⁵ takes the view that Psalm 29 is a Yahwistic adaptation of an older Canaanite hymn to the storm god Baal.

⁴⁰ H. L. Ginsberg, 'A Phoenician Hymn in the Psalter', *XIX Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti*, Rome (1935) 2_ 472-476; see Ginsberg's additional evidence in 'The Rebellion and Death of Ba'lu', *Orientalia* (NS) 5 (1936), 180f.

⁴¹ T. H. Gaster, 'Psalm 29', *JQR* 37 (1946-1947), 55-65.

⁴² F. M. Cross, 'Notes on a Canaanite Psalm in the Old Testament', *BASOR* 117 (1950), 19-21.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁴ F. C. Fensham, 'Psalm 29 and Ugarit', in *Studies in the Psalms*, South Africa (1963), 84-99.

⁴⁵ M. Dahood, *Psalms I*, Anchor Bible, New York (1966), 175ff.

Before evaluating these various studies, it should be noted that the hypothesis, as first presented, was not based simply on the grounds of a comparative literary study in the narrow sense. Ginsberg's case involved various other factors, but with the studies of Gaster and Cross, the hypothesis became more and more literary in its formulation. However, the conclusion of the studies, namely that Psalm 29 was originally (*i.e.* prior to adaptation) a part of Canaanite literature, is of a literary nature and it is on this basis that the hypothesis must be assessed.

If the comparison is now examined in the light of the principles of comparative studies, it may be noted first of all that implicit in the study is one of the three options indicated in the statement of the linguistic principle. That is to say, the view that Ugaritic is a Canaanite dialect, along with Hebrew, is implied in this study. Ginsberg, in fact, described the psalm as a 'Phoenician hymn', but adduced Ugaritic evidence. With the work of Cross and Fensham, further Ugaritic evidence was used to indicate the *Canaanite* form of the original version of the psalm. This procedure is quite legitimate, of course, but it is emphasized because the hypothesis comes to depend more and more on the Canaanite nature of the Ugaritic texts. Although the present writer finds the hypothesis acceptable at this stage, it is likely to hold less conviction for those linguists who would classify Ugaritic, not as a Canaanite dialect, but rather as a part of a separate linguistic grouping within Northwest Semitic languages.

The application of the chronological principle produces similar, though perhaps less acute, difficulties to those which were encountered in the first test case. The comparison is diachronic, but the extent of the chronological gap is difficult to determine, for Psalm 29 cannot be dated with any certainty. There is no *accumulation* of linguistic features to indicate that the psalm should be classified with *early* (*i.e.* pre-monarchic) Hebrew poetry. Ginsberg favours the period of the united monarchy for the influence of Phoenician on Hebrew as indicated in his hypothesis and this view seems not unlikely. Consequently, the chronological gap between Psalm 29 and the Ugaritic parallels is of three or more centuries, and though this may be reduced by similar procedures to those employed

in the first test case, the result, as before, will be to increase the hypothetical nature of the comparison. Thus the hypothesis, insofar as it depends on the Ugaritic texts, is not without difficulties of a chronological nature.

If the chronological basis of the comparison presents difficulties, the principle of literary genres adds even further to the problems. In that some of the points of comparison are concerned with literary form (*e.g.* the prosodic structure), the comparative procedure may be acceptable. However, in terms of specific genres, the two sources employed are different. The Ugaritic sources employed are part of a mythological complex; the Hebrew passage is in the form of a hymn or song. This factor need not invalidate the comparison *per se*, but it does imply the need for a qualification in the conclusion. The point of importance is that there is no definite extant evidence for the genre hymn in Ugaritic literature.⁴⁶ The fact that the Ugaritic passages referred to in the mythological complex are similar to hymns still does not qualify them fully as belonging to the same genre as the Hebrew passage. Therefore, to conclude on the basis of such a comparison that Psalm 29 was originally a Canaanite hymn must be doubtful. To continue to the observation that 'Psalm 29 fills a real gap in the extant Canaanite literature' (Cross, *loc. cit.*) seems to be a rather circular form of argument.

The hypothesis may now be restated in the light of the foregoing critical observations. A literary comparison is undertaken between Psalm 29 and extracts from Ugaritic mythological poetry. Certain lines, phrases and motifs in the Hebrew psalm are similar to those known from the Ugaritic texts; the Ugaritic texts from North Syria are assumed to be representative of Canaanite literature, both geographically and chronologically. The literary similarities are general rather than specific; thus, the extensive passage cited by Gaster has similar motifs to those in Psalm 29,⁴⁷ but there is no detailed line for line comparison with the Hebrew passage. Furthermore, the passages compared come from different genres, even though the con-

⁴⁶ Even the so-called 'Canaanite psalm fragments' in the Amarna Letters are at best only indirect evidence of the presence of the genre in Canaanite literature (*cf.* A. Jirku, 'Kana'anäische Psalmenfragmente in der vorisraelitischen Zeit Palästinas und Syriens', *JBL* 52 (1933), 108-120).

⁴⁷ Gaster, *op. cit.*, 60f.

clusion of the hypothesis is that Psalm 29 originally came from a Canaanite genre which is not otherwise known.

In answer to the hypothesis, it must be admitted readily that it is not impossible. But it must also be stressed, in the writer's opinion, that in view of the number of difficulties in the comparison, the position remains a hypothesis and the evidence is not so conclusive as to establish absolutely the Canaanite origin of Psalm 29. There are other possible interpretations of the evidence which has been produced⁴⁸ and it may be possible to solve the problem in terms of an approach through oral poetry which is indicated in the third test case. For all these reasons, the second test case is described as *neutral*. The hypothesis is one way of interpreting the evidence, but the number of difficulties involved in the comparison make it somewhat uncertain.

3. *Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:1-18) and Canaanite Literature*

The Song of the Sea is one of a small number of passages in the Old Testament which may now be considered as early Hebrew poetry (*i.e.* pre-Monarchy).⁴⁹ In a recent study of F. M. Cross,⁵⁰ an indication has been given of a way in which Canaanite influences in the Song of the Sea can be interpreted. In this third test case, however, a different line of approach is taken from that which was employed in the earlier test cases. Instead of presenting a resume of Cross's position, the principles

⁴⁸ The writer's position will not be given in detail here. In summary, it is that Psalm 29 is a Hebrew victory psalm, probably dating from the earliest time of the monarchy. The similarities to Canaanite literature are acknowledged, but would be interpreted in terms of the hypothesis presented in the third test case (below). The use of language similar to that used of Baal may indicate Canaanite influence and/or may be deliberately employed; Yahweh's victory may be stressed by the attribution to him of some of the characteristics of the god of the defeated enemy. In summary, Canaanite aspects of the psalm are not denied, but the hypothesis that the psalm as a whole was originally a Canaanite psalm is considered to be unlikely.

⁴⁹ Among the most important studies dealing with the early dating of the Song are F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, 'The Song of Miriam', *JNES* 14 (1955), 237-250; D. A. Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry*, Doctoral dissertation, Yale University (1966). The remarks in the following pages will assume an early date and will not enter afresh into the debate over the dating of the Song. However, it should be remembered that there are some scholars who find an early date for the Song unacceptable; see particularly R. Tournay, 'Recherches sur la chronologie des Psaumes', *RB* 65 (1958), 321-357; S. Mowinckel, ' "Psalm Criticism between 1900 and 1935": Ugarit and Psalm Exegesis', *VT* 5 (1955), 13-33.

⁵⁰ 'The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth', *Journal for Theology and the Church* 5 (1968) 1-25.

of comparative studies will first be applied briefly to the data. Then an interpretation of the evidence will be offered which has its starting-point in the work of Cross, but is different in respect of presentation and interpretation at certain points. The thesis concerning the literary nature of Exodus 15 will be worked out more fully below, but a brief statement must be presented at this point to provide some direction in the application of the principles of comparative studies. In short, the thesis is that the writer or singer of the Song of the Sea made use of literary phrases and motifs which are otherwise known to us on the basis of their occurrence in the Ugaritic texts.

If the chronological principle is applied first to the Hebrew and Ugaritic data, it will be noted that the difficulties are considerably less than those which were experienced in the first two test cases. The *terminus ad quem* for the Ugaritic sources was indicated to lie in the 14th century BC. The *terminus a quo* for the Song of the Sea is complicated by the date of its present form and the date of any written transmission prior to its present written form. In general terms, however, Cross has suggested a date in the late 12th or early 11th centuries BC,⁵¹ Albright has indicated an even earlier date in the 13th to 12th centuries BC.⁵² On this basis the chronological gap between the sources would be approximately two centuries. The process of reducing this gap slightly from both ends (*i.e.* taking into consideration the Ugaritic resources as representative of Canaanite literature and oral poetry at a slightly later date, together with the oral pre-history of the Song of the Sea⁵³) is now more realistic than it has been in previous test cases. It is considered that in this instance there are not major chronological difficulties against undertaking a comparative study.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵² *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, Doubleday Anchor Books, New York (1957 edition), 14.

⁵³ The writer considers it not unlikely that the Song, in oral form at least, dates to very near the event which it describes. Hence, the *terminus a quo* would be related to the debated question of the date of the Exodus. In the light of a possible origin soon after the Exodus, it may be noted that the Baal mythology, now known from the Ugaritic texts, may well have been known in Canaanite settlements in the Delta area; see J. Gray, 'Canaanite Mythology and Hebrew Tradition', *TGUOS* 14 (1953), 47-57.

⁵⁴ The chronological principle has been applied first and it has not been thought necessary to make explicit reference to the linguistic question again. It should be noted, however, that the linguistic criteria for dating the Song early depend to some extent on Ugaritic language and literature rather than on standard Hebrew.

On the question of genres, the comparative undertaking is simplified once again by the nature of the objective. It will be recalled that in the hypothesis concerning Psalm 29, the intent had been to show that the whole psalm was originally Canaanite and that such an objective posed difficulties in the absence of clear evidence for the genre 'psalm' in Canaanite literature. In this case, however, the objective is to show that the singer or poet used lines and phrases in his composition which are familiar from Canaanite literature. In addition, it is claimed that he adapted and used certain motifs from Canaanite mythology. It is not intended to show that the over-all genre of the Song of the Sea is Canaanite in origin, and for this reason the larger difficulties relating to genre do not arise in the present context. With these preliminary remarks, the hypothesis concerning the Canaanite background of the Song of the Sea will be stated, but the principles of comparative studies will be returned to in some concluding observations.

The hypothesis concerning the Song of the Sea is that the singer made use of two types of resources in his composition. First, he had at his disposal poetic lines and literary idiom of a relatively fixed and formulaic type; these were employed where suitable in the composition. Second, he made use of certain motifs which were taken over from Canaanite mythology and adapted radically to his purpose. These two types of resources must now be examined rather more closely.

In the first category, the hypothesis as presented here follows to some extent the type of theory of oral poetry which has been worked out by A. B. Lord and applied to the biblical Psalms by R. C. Culley.⁵⁵ The singer had at his disposal certain poetic *formulae*; that is, 'a repeated group of words, the length of which corresponds to one of the divisions in the poetic structure, such as the line or the smaller divisions within the line created by some formal division such as the caesura'.⁵⁶ In the Song of the Sea, the type of formulae present most probably included

However, the linguistic criteria for dating the Song early (*e.g.* those of D. A. Robertson), although they are dependent on the Ugaritic resources, do not depend absolutely on the classification of Ugaritic as a Canaanite dialect.

⁵⁵ A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, Atheneum, New York (1965); *cf.* Cross's remarks in 'The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth', *op. cit.*, I n. 2. On the application of this approach to the Psalms, see R. C. Culley, *Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto (1967).

⁵⁶ Culley, *ibid.*, 10,

Hebrew formulae, but as the Song is one of the earliest extant pieces of Hebrew poetry, the antecedents of such formulae cannot be discerned. It does seem to be the case, however, that certain lines in the Song were subsequently used in the Psalms.⁵⁷ As well as Hebrew formulae, there seems to be one clear case of the use of an Egyptian expression (verse 4) to convey the mocking of the Egyptians.⁵⁸ But the immediate interest is in the presence of Canaanite formulae in the Song of the Sea and five examples will now be provided. It should be noted again that the argument is not for direct borrowing by the Hebrew singer of the parallel Ugaritic lines; rather, it is suggested that the Ugaritic lines are indicative of the use and perhaps adaptation of general Canaanite formulae to which the Hebrew singer also had access.

(a) *verse 2*

‘My strength and protector is Yah’⁵⁹ עֲזָרִי וְזַמְרָת יְהוָה. The use of עֲזָרִי וְזַמְרָת can be compared directly with an example from one of the newer texts discovered at Ugarit:
RS. 24.252, lines 9-10 (reverse); see also lines 6-7.
 ‘Send your protection, your guard’ (de Moor) ‘*zk.dmrk.l’ak*

(b) *verse 11*

‘Who is like you among the gods, Yahweh?’ בְּאֵלִים יְהוָה מִי כָמֶכָה. Note the similarity of בְּאֵלִים מִי with the following line taken from the Keret legend.
CTA 16.V.10-11.
 ‘Who among the gods will drive out the disease?’ *my]b’ilm.*
 [*ydy.mr.s*]

(c) *verse 15*

‘The chiefs of Edom, the leaders of Moab’ אֱלֹפִי אֲדוֹם אִיְלֵי מוֹאָב. In this instance, there is not a direct Ugaritic parallel. It seems, however, that the Hebrew singer is using the correct

⁵⁷ Exodus 15:1, 2, 18 have parallels in the Psalms; cf. Culley, *ibid.*, 64, 68, 74.

⁵⁸ For details of the hypothesis at this point, see P. C. Craigie, ‘An Egyptian Expression in the Song of the Sea (Exodus XV 4)’, *VT* 20 (1970), 83-86.

⁵⁹ There are a number of difficulties related to the translation of this line: see particularly D. W. Thomas, ‘A Note on Exodus 15: 2’, *ET* 48 (1936-1937); T. H. Gaster, ‘Notes on the Song of the Sea’, *ET* 48 (1936-1937), 45; *idem*, ‘Exodus 15.2’, *ET* 49 (1937-1938), 189; cf. J. Barr, *op. cit.*, 29f.

Canaanite terms for the Canaanite chiefs⁶⁰ and a parallel in principle may be seen in the following lines, also from the Keret legend.⁶¹

CTA 15.IV.17-18

‘She shall bring in to him his dukes’ (lit. ‘bulls’) *lh.trh.tš‘rb*
 ‘She shall bring in to him his barons’ (lit. ‘gazelles’) *lh.tš‘b.*
zbyh.

(d) *verse 17* Note the following phrases:

‘The mountain of your inheritance’ בְּהַר נְהֻלָּתְךָ
 ‘the dais of your throne’ (Cross and Freedman) מְכוֹן לְשִׁבְתְּךָ
 ‘the sanctuary, Yahweh . . . ‘ מִקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנָי

Very similar phraseology is employed in the context of enthronement in the Ugaritic texts:

CTA 3.C.III.27

‘. . . in the sanctuary, in the mountain of my inheritance’
bqdš.bgr.nhly.

RS. 24.245, obverse 1.

‘Baal was seated like the seat of a mountain’ (de Moor)
b‘l.ytb.ktb.gr

(e) *verse 18*

‘Yahweh shall reign . . . ,’ יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ

Although the phrase may be too short for significant comparisons, the following lines may be noted in the Ugaritic texts:

CTA 2.IV.32

‘Baal shall reign’⁶² *b‘lm.yml[^k]*

CTA 6.I.55

‘Let Athtar the terrible reign’ *ymlk. ‘ttr. ‘rz.*

Some of these similarities may be disputed, but it is maintained that there is sufficient evidence here to indicate at least a generic relationship between the literary resources of both the Ugaritic and the Hebrew ‘poets’. It may be that in cases (d) and (e), the relationship is more than purely literary and

⁶⁰ Cf. E. Ullendorff, *op. cit.*, 463; Cross and Freedman, ‘The Song of Miriam’, *op. cit.*, 249.

⁶¹ This parallel is particularly interesting in that the Canaanite lordly titles are also names of animals. In the Hebrew passage, compare אֱלֹפִים with אֱלֹפִים ‘cattle’ and אֵילִי with אֵיל ‘ram’ and אֵיִל ‘deer’.

⁶² Cf. E. Lipinski, ‘Yahweh Malak’, *Biblica* 44 (1963), 425.

that the adaptation of motifs has had as a corollary the use of similar language.

This point introduces the second category of resources believed to have been at the oral poet's disposal, namely the motifs of Canaanite mythology which were adapted to suit the new context. The subject matter at this point is too lengthy to be discussed in detail and only a résumé of the hypothesis can be provided. There are certain prominent motifs in the Baal mythological texts which can be pinpointed by the words *conflict*, *order*, *kingship* and *palace* (or temple) *building*. To illustrate these motifs, there is first of all the *conflict* of Baal and Yamm (who seems to represent the power of chaos); as a result of the strife, Baal is victorious and his *kingship* is acclaimed.⁶³ This conflict may well represent a certain type of creation story, the victory of order over chaos.⁶⁴ Subsequently, it is decided that a *palace* must be built for Baal and on its completion, Baal's authority seems to be assured.⁶⁵ Once again, however, *conflict* arises, this time between Baal and Mot; after an initial defeat at the hands of Mot, Baal is finally victorious⁶⁶ and once again his *kingship* is proclaimed.⁶⁷ It is maintained that these motifs from Canaanite mythology have been adapted for use in the Song of the Sea, but before their significance is discussed, they will simply be listed in the order in which they appear.

(a) *Conflict, order* (vv. 1-10, 12) The initial conflict is between Yahweh, the Warrior, and Pharaoh with his armies. 'Sea' is prominent in these verses (יָם and various synonyms), but it is never personified and made the protagonist of Yahweh, as was Yamm ('Sea') in the Ugaritic texts.

(b) *Kingship* (v. 11) Kingship is not directly expressed here, but as a result of Yahweh's victory, his incomparability is expressed in the form of a rhetorical question: 'Who is like

⁶³ CTA 2. IV. 32.

⁶⁴ Cf. L. R. Fisher, 'Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament', *VT* 15 (1965), 313-324. Certain arguments have been advanced against this view by D. J. McCarthy ('Creation Motifs in Ancient Hebrew Poetry', *CBQ* 29 (1967), 393-406), but the objections seem to have been anticipated and answered by Fisher in his definition and use of the term 'creation'.

⁶⁵ CTA 4. V-VI.

⁶⁶ This is indicated by the concluding line of the battle scene: *mt.ql.b'l.ql*. 'In 'Mot fell down, Baal fell down on him' (CTA 6.VI. 21-22).

⁶⁷ The text becomes increasingly difficult to read, but Mot's fear and Baal's kingship seem to be expressed in CTA 6.VI.30 and 35.

you among the gods, Yahweh?' It is thus an initial expression of Yahweh's supremacy, parallel perhaps to Baal's victory over Yamm.

(c) *Conflict* (vv. 14-16) Conflict is anticipated with the various inhabitants of the land of Canaan. The motif may be parallel at this point with Baal's conflict with Mot.

(d) *Temple* (v. 17) The reference to Yahweh's sanctuary and the mountain of his inheritance indicates the permanent establishment of his sanctuary and authority.

(e) *Kingship* (v. 18) Finally, Yahweh's kingship is openly expressed, parallel to Baal's kingship after a number of conflicts.

The conclusion from this evidence is that there is present in the Song a cluster of motifs⁶⁸ which have a striking similarity to the motifs of the mythological Baal texts. They have been radically adapted to suit the 'singer's' purposes; for example, they have a historical function (in a poetic sense) rather than a mythological function. But a motivation for the adaptation of the motifs in the first place may be the cosmological significance of the Baal mythology. The Baal myth has first a cosmogonic element, the creation of order from chaos (represented by the victory of Baal over Yamm), and subsequently it has a broader cosmological element, the regular maintenance of order against external threats (represented by the final victory of Baal over Mot). Similarly, the Song of the Sea represents what is in effect the creation of the people of Israel⁶⁹ (at the Exodus) and looks forward to the establishment of Israel in the promised land. That is to say, the adaptation of the cluster of motifs in the Song was a useful artistic device for portraying something of the significance for Israel of the event celebrated by the Song of the Sea.

In summary, the Song of the Sea contains evidence of Canaanite resources which have been adapted to the new Hebrew context. It may be possible, of course, to interpret the evidence in a different way from that which was suggested here. In

⁶⁸ 'Motif' in this context refers more to ideas and content than to the external literary form. Further, although there is a certain similarity in the order of the motifs in both contexts, it is the cluster of motifs which has primary significance, rather than the order in which they appear.

⁶⁹ Cf. verse 16: עַם־זוֹ קָנִיתָ, which may be translated 'the people whom thou hast created' (see Cross and Freedman, *op. cit.*, 242).

the over-all purpose of the paper, however, more important than the details of the hypothesis is the fact that the data in the Song of the Sea have presented more viable resources for undertaking a comparative study. Furthermore, it is suggested that Canaanite elements in later Hebrew literature may be explained more easily on some theory of oral poetry than in terms of direct literary relationships. It seems possible that after the breakdown of established Canaanite civilization in Palestine around the 11th-10th centuries, the literature and motifs now known from Ugarit in written form may have continued to exist in the traditions of occasional Canaanite settlements in oral form.⁷⁰

C

COMPARATIVE STUDIES AND ISRAELITE RELIGION

The test cases which have been examined have indicated a variety of factors which may be of importance for Israelite religion. We now attempt to synthesize some of the findings and to formulate a preliminary thesis concerning the religious significance of literary relationships. But first, it is necessary to return briefly to the matter of form-criticism which was mentioned in section A.

The conclusions of a particular comparison may have been established on the basis of both form and content. Form and content together usually provide the evidence necessary to establish interrelationship, for rarely will similarities of either form alone or content alone be sufficient. Thus a similarity of *form* between a Mesopotamian and a Hebrew oracle is unlikely *per se* to indicate an interrelationship. Likewise, the marked similarity in *content* between certain hymns to Varuna in the *Rig Veda* and certain biblical Psalms ('individual laments') addressed to Yahweh is hardly sufficient evidence to indicate a relationship between the Hebrew and Vedic texts. If it is accepted, then, that an interrelationship is usually based on both form and content, the question arises of whether this factor has particular religious significance. It is here that form-critical issues become relevant, for the form-critic claims that

⁷⁰ There may well have been a continuation in literary form within Phoenician civilization, but evidence is lacking.

his method is one by which 'form and content are studied at one and the same time'.⁷¹ Such a procedure is quite acceptable initially, but it should be noted that it has further implications. A basic assumption of form-criticism is that a *literary type* has a definite sociological setting and function.⁷² The implication of this assumption is that same *types* will have the same *social settings* (*Sitze im Leben*). Now there may be a certain validity in the assumption when the history of a type within one particular cultural tradition is examined. However, it leads to doubtful conclusions when the study of the history of the type crosses national or cultural boundaries. The point of transition will be the comparative study and the often-made assumption is that the similarity of the form or type automatically carries with it a similarity of social setting or function. For example, if text B is related to and dependent on text A, it may be assumed that the social or religious setting which is known for text A will also be that of text B. Although it is not always stated, it may be assumed that literary relationships, either in particular or of type, have as a correlative religious relationships. But it does not follow necessarily that there is such a religious relationship. In general terms, it is true that a *hymn* may have its setting and function in the cult, and a comparative study of two hymns would reasonably assume that both had a cultic setting. But in detail, the cultic settings may have been entirely different, for as soon as a move is made from general to specific terms, words like *hymn* and *cult* have to be more closely defined. The word *hymn*, for example, will usually be a descriptive term applied to a text; sometimes, the text itself may carry the label. But the danger inherent in form-criticism is the tendency to assume that there is a certain regularity, even rigidity, of literary form in the ancient Near East. Max Pieper has noted that there is no such rigidity of form in Egyptian literature and that the 'classification of literature into strict formal types is possible only in those cultures which possessed an aesthetic theory of literature'.⁷³ Now it may be admitted that a descriptive classification of literary types is useful and necessary, but the inherent danger is that

⁷¹ K. Koch, *op. cit.*, 5 n. 3.

⁷² *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁷³ Pieper is referred to by T. O. Lambdin, 'Egypt; its Language and Literature', in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 290.

the descriptive types will then be employed to determine the religious setting of the texts themselves; the descriptive term, in other words, may become a part of the data rather than a tool of criticism.

This danger may be illustrated by reference to Gaster's study of Psalm 29, for although that study is not overtly form-critical, it indicates the tendency which has been described. Referring to the Near Eastern material used in the comparison, Gaster noted that the setting of the ritual hymns of laudation was in the New Year Festival. He cautiously states that although the Hebrew psalm showed a persistence of the form, this did not necessarily mean that the 'pantomime' pertained in Israel. But he continues: 'At the same time, we should not deny that survival often involved more than a mere persistence of forms.'⁷⁴ This careful ambiguity is taken further in Gaster's later writing on the subject,⁷⁵ where the link between the psalm and the ritual pattern is more firmly urged.

There are other points of form-critical procedure which could be discussed, but it would be more constructive at this point to suggest a preliminary thesis concerning the religious significance of literary relationships which are uncovered by means of a comparative study. The assumption will now be made that a comparison has been carried out and that a relationship has been established, either between texts as a whole or between parts of texts. The following three points indicate types of literary relationship and a note is made at each point concerning the religious significance of the type of relationship.

1. *Direct Borrowing*

Although the word 'borrowing' may be used in descriptions of Israelite dependence on foreign literature, it is rarely used in a strict sense. *A priori*, it is unlikely that there would be any direct borrowing by the Israelites of specifically religious literature from their neighbours. Even if such borrowing had occurred, the evidence would be unlikely to survive in the canon, which underwent fairly rigorous editing through the course of history. A possible exception to this general rule might be the Balaam

⁷⁴ Gaster, *op. cit.*, 64.

⁷⁵ T. H. Gaster, *Thespis*, Harper Torchbooks, New York (1966 edition), 442ff.

Oracles for which a foreign provenance is not unlikely;⁷⁶ but if 'borrowing' is the correct word in this instance, the original religious content was probably such as to permit borrowing and incorporation within the Israelite tradition without modification. Into this category might also fall parts of the Song of Songs, for example the passage discussed in section B (above). The secular nature of the Song of Songs allows for direct dependence on an external source, but in the absence of secular love poetry from Ugaritic or Canaanite sources, such a case cannot be established at the present state of knowledge. In principle, however, if the borrowing even of apparently secular literature could be established, it would not be without religious significance;⁷⁷ it might indicate that the Israelite attitude was not at all points so exclusive toward external cultures as their religious polemic would suggest.

2. *Adaptation of Foreign Materials*

If direct borrowing of religious materials is unlikely, adaptation on the contrary is quite likely. The geographical location of Israel was such that it was constantly open to foreign influences, particularly from the Canaanites. The particular and exclusive commitment to Yahweh alone reduced the likelihood of direct borrowing, but could hardly have stopped the spread of foreign influence. Gaster has suggested the analogy that the Israelites were not unlike General Booth of the Salvation Army, who asked: 'Why should the devil have all the best tunes?' The analogy may not be exact, but by whatever means, Israelite literature was bound to have been penetrated to some extent by external influences. Within this category would come Ginsberg's hypothesis concerning Psalm 29. The adaptation involved is described as *Yahwization*, or the substitution of the name 'Yahweh' for 'Baal/Hadad' throughout the psalm. Whether or not the hypothesis is correct in this particular case, a considerable quantity of Old Testament literature could probably be placed in this category. The adaptations might be relatively minor (as indicated for Psalm 29) or might be

⁷⁶ Cf. P. C. Craigie, 'The Conquest and Early Hebrew Poetry', *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1969), 81 n. 19.

⁷⁷ If the principles are applied on a broader basis than Hebrew and Ugaritic literature at this point, then the significance of apparent Hebrew dependence on Egyptian Wisdom literature might be brought into consideration.

more radical, but they would not be so extensive as to remove the evidence of original Hebrew dependence on an external source. The religious significance of adaptation, however, is extremely hard to evaluate. To take one example, if a Canaanite hymn to a storm-god were adapted for use within Israelite religion, how is this adaptation to be interpreted? (a) It might mean that Yahweh was also thought of as a storm-god. (b) It might indicate that Yahweh came to be thought of as a storm-god as a result of the introduction of the hymn into the Israelite cult. (c) It could be that Yahweh was considered to be the lord of all natural phenomena and that therefore there was no difficulty whatsoever for the Israelites in attributing to him the characteristics of a storm-god. (d) The hymn could have been adapted for a number of religio-political purposes; *e.g.* after an Israelite victory over the Canaanites, the adaptation of a foreign hymn to Yahwism shows not only Yahweh's possession of powers which were attributed by the enemy to their own god, but is also a way of mocking the defeated enemy. Further possibilities could be listed, but it is sufficient to note for the present that the religious issues involved in adaptation are complex.

3. Creativity in the Use of the Resources of Oral Poetry

This third category refers to the type of literary relationships indicated in the study of the Song of the Sea. This relationship may have involved adaptation, but it is more than adaptation in its broader context, for it is suggested that the singer or poet was more creative than adaptive in his use of resources. In the Song of the Sea, for example, the use of literary phrases which may have a Canaanite background or origin is not linked closely to the use of motifs; the specifically literary aspects are sometimes illustrated by the Keret legend, but the motifs are known from the Baal myth. It may be thought that this type of approach allows for too much creativity and individuality (although no attempt is made here to identify the creative individual); in answer to such an objection, it can only be claimed that an approach in these terms does seem to indicate a positive means of evaluating the evidence. But having said this much, the religious significance of this type of literary relationship is hard to evaluate once again. It may

be that the religious significance can be assessed largely in terms of the creative end towards which the singer or writer used his materials, but at this point, larger points of interpretation arise which cannot be dealt with adequately here.

In conclusion, the avenues of study opened up by comparative literature constitute, as it were, a prolegomenon to a larger and more significant task, the task of interpretation. The over-all significance of comparative literary studies, not only of Hebrew and Ugaritic literature, but of Hebrew and Near Eastern literature as a whole, may be approached, perhaps, in the manner indicated in this paper, but that significance will only be fully grasped when a move is made to go beyond the comparison in an attempt to grapple with larger issues of Israelite life and faith which were glimpsed in a preliminary manner in this study. It is hoped that this paper may be a small contribution towards understanding some of these larger issues.