The Closing Hymn of the Baal Cycle: A Mesopotamian Background?

The closing hymn of the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, which praises the Sun goddess—a minor character in the cycle—has caused literary difficulties since its publication, due to its exceptional content. While some have suggested to solve this by interpreting the hymn as devoted to Baal despite Baal’s absence therein, others have correctly focused on its independent origin, while leaving the question of its relation to the preceding myth unanswered. Following a close examination of the hymn, its addressee, and origin, this paper suggests looking at the hymn from a wider perspective by studying the literary structure of the common Mesopotamian *Belle-lettres* compositions, with a special focus on the Sumerian and Akkadian disputation poems. The conclusions illustrate the formal role of the closing hymnsin the ancient West Asian texts in general and in the Baal Cycle in particular.