**The Closing Hymn of the Ugaritic Baal Cycle (*KTU* 1.6 VI 42–54):**

**A Mesopotamian Background?**

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**Introduction**

The Baal Cycle, which tells of the struggle of Baal with his two enemies, Yamm and Mot, has two endings: a narrative ending and a formal one. The first ending, the narrative one, closes the story of Baal’s struggle with Mot by declaring, “Let them place Baal [on the seat] of his kingship, on [the resting place, the throne] of his dominion” (*KTU* 1.6 VI 33–35). These words put things back in order as they were before the struggle between the two combatants, when Baal was sitting in his palace after his victory over his enemies (1.4 VII 27–42). Since the entire cycle deals with the question of power over the gods, this declaration is an appropriate conclusion to the work as a whole.

But the text does not end there. After half a dozen broken lines there appears a hymn that serves as the actual conclusion of the work (*KTU* 1.6 VI 42–54). The subject of the hymn, surprisingly, is not Baal, the main hero of the Baal Cycle, but one of the minor characters, the sun goddess Šapš. This goddess did indeed assist in determining the outcome of the final battle by threatening Mot to leave Baal alone. But she is immeasurably less important than the other heroes of the plot: Baal and his loyal ally Anat, and even El, the father of the gods, in whose name Šapš threatened Mot. In fact, Šapš’ only role in the story of the struggle between Baal and Mot is to issue the above-mentioned threat (cited also in the first part of the cycle in favor of Yamm),[[1]](#footnote-1) and, twice, to find Baal (at Anat’s instructions) — once in the underworld after his death and once in the field after his return to life. The conclusion of the epic with a hymn to Šapš, the sun goddess, is therefore surprising, not only because it adds nothing to the narrative but also because instead of reinforcing the power of Baal, the hero of the story, it praises one of the minor goddesses of the piece.

Scholars have proposed several solutions to this problem, none of them convincing. Some find it difficult to assume that the poem that concludes the work would not praise its chief hero and therefore take it as a hymn to Baal, but this does not fit the straightforward sense of the text.[[2]](#footnote-2) Others do see in these lines a hymn to Šapš, but are unable (or simply do not try) to explain why the formal end of the epic should be a hymn to her, of all gods.[[3]](#footnote-3) The suggested explanations — e.g. a calendric context in which the poem represents the restoration of peace to the universe, an exaggeration of Šapš’ importance in the plot as a whole, or alternatively a diminution of her importance in the hymn — likewise do not fit the straightforward sense of the text.[[4]](#footnote-4) Another solution is therefore needed, one which will fit the contents of the hymn on the one hand and the question of its place at the end of the epic on the other.

**The Hymn to Šapš is an Independent Poem**

A detailed examination of the poem that concludes the Baal Cycle, in relationship to the other tablets of the cycle, shows that we have an independent hymn which was not originally connected to the Baal Cycle — that is, it was not written or edited to be the conclusion of the cycle but rather was “imported” from elsewhere in its finished form.[[5]](#footnote-5) The characters mentioned in it — 1) the *Rpum*, 2) Koṯar-waḪasis, and 3) Tunnan — are evidence of this; some of them are not mentioned at all in the Baal Cycle, while others contradict the descriptions given them there.

1. ***The* Rpum**

The first four lines,[[6]](#footnote-6) which together constitute a quatrain, emphasize the netherworld aspect of Šapš, represented here as the leader of the *Rpum*, the dead heroes who were divinized.[[7]](#footnote-7)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Šapš, the *Rpum* are your subordinates; |  |
| Šapš, your subordinates are the Divine ones. |  |
| Around you are the Divinities; |  |
| Behold, the (divinized) Dead are around you.  |  |

This netherworld aspect of Šapš is known from additional texts, both Ugaritic and non-Ugaritic, which view the sun god as one of the highest-ranking inhabitants of the netherworld, one who descends there every night.[[8]](#footnote-8) The author of the hymn to Baal himself uses this aspect of Šapš in recounting how Šapš found Baal in the netherworld and loaded him onto Anat’s shoulders (1.6 I 8–15).[[9]](#footnote-9) Another cliché used by the author of the Baal Cycle to connect Šapš to Mot, the lord of the netherworld, stems from the same aspect, though this is not fully understood (1.3 V 17–18; 1.4 VIII 22–23; 1.6 II 24).[[10]](#footnote-10)

The *Rpum* too, like the sun goddess, are permanent residents of the netherworld, but they are not mentioned at all in the narratives of the Baal Cycle, only in this concluding poem. The road to the netherworld and within the netherworld is described twice in the Baal Cycle (1.4 VIII 1–14; 1.5 V 11–17), and neither of the times are the *Rpum* mentioned, by that name or any other. It appears, then, that the materials that were used by the author in relationship to the netherworld and its lord, Mot, are different from the ones that were in the hands of the author of the poem. The same holds true when we look in the opposite direction: though Mot is not mentioned with the *Rpum* in other literary texts, the sun goddess who goes down to the netherworld **is** mentioned with them, for example, in the *Royal Funerary Liturgy* (*KTU* 1.161).

***2) Koṯar-waḪasis***

The four next lines of the hymn center on the relationship between Šapš and Koṯar-waḪasis, the god of crafts.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Koṯar is your companion,[[11]](#footnote-11) |  |
| And Hasis is your acquaintance. |  |
| In the sea (or: day) are *Arš* and Tunnan;  |  |
| Koṯar-waHasis banishes (them) |  |
| Koṯar-waHasis drives (them) out[[12]](#footnote-12) |  |

In the story of the confrontation between Baal and Mot, described in the second section of the Baal Cycle, Koṯar-waḪasis is entirely missing, but he is mentioned many times in the first section of the cycle (and in other Ugaritic epics) as the god of crafts, the builder of temples and the inventor of objects of various types.[[13]](#footnote-13) Even *KTU* 1.2, which tells of Koṯar-waḪasis’ extraordinary loyalty to Baal, describes Koṯar-waḪasis as the fashioner of Baal’s magical weapons. In the hymn, by contrast, Koṯar-waḪasis’ loyalty is to Šapš, and there is not a single mention of his unique attribute as the god of crafts.[[14]](#footnote-14)

***3) Arš and Tunnan***

The last three lines describe Koṯar-waḪasis as expelling *Arš* and Tunnan from the presence of Šapš. *Arš* and Tunnan are named in the first section of the Baal Cycle in the list of the enemies of Baal who were defeated by Anat (1.3 III 38–46), but are not considered major enemies of Baal, like Yamm and Mot. It is surprising, then, that it is they who are mentioned in the poem that concludes the Baal Cycle, and that their expulsion is attributed specifically to Koṯar-waḪasis — unless the poem was originally an independent work. Moreover, the term *bym*, which appears here, could be understood either as “on the day of,” therefore hinting at an event that is completely unmentioned in the Baal Cycle, or as “in the sea,” in which case it describes the sea as a force of nature in which *Arš* and Tunnan live, in contrast to the anthropomorphic Yamm who fights Baal in the first section of the cycle.[[15]](#footnote-15)

In this light, it appears that the Hymn to Šapš that concludes the Baal Cycle is not in fact part of the cycle itself but a self-standing poem that was attached to the end of the cycle. With regard to its content, the fact that the *Rpum* are mentioned in it tells us that — at least in the part that is extant — the hymn praises Šapš during her journey to the netherworld, that is, after sunset.[[16]](#footnote-16) That even Koṯar-waḪasis is sometimes found in the netherworld, as in our hymn, is evident from *KTU* 1.108, which tells of his participation in the feast of one of the Rephaim: Rapiu the King of Eternity.

The conclusion that the Hymn to Šapš is independent is a first step on the road to solving the riddle of the conclusion of the Baal Cycle, but it is not enough. It is, after all, not the only autonomous source in the cycle. The list of the enemies of Anat in *KTU* 1.3, for example, is similar in that it too is incompatible with the battle between Baal and Yamm. There are additional sources as well that, though slightly worked over, entered the text despite the fact that they contradict other parts of the cycle.[[17]](#footnote-17) We must, therefore, ask once more why the author saw fit to append an unrelated poem as the conclusion of the cycle, and why he chose the Hymn to Šapš, one of the minor goddesses in the story.

A comparison with other Ugaritic epics is not helpful, since we apparently do not have the ends of these epics, and in any case the extant Ugaritic material is quite scanty.[[18]](#footnote-18) But Ugaritic literature did not spring up in a vacuum; its scribes trained by copying Mesopotamian literature, both Sumerian and Akkadian, as part of their transformation into professionals.[[19]](#footnote-19) Examination of the contents and conclusions of Mesopotamian works, as well as identification of the addressees of their conclusions, should therefore aid us in proposing a new solution to the question of the poem that concludes the Baal Cycle.[[20]](#footnote-20)

**The Doxological Conclusion to Literary Texts in Mesopotamia: An Overview**

In his comprehensive article on the characteristics of writing in Sumerian literature, Claus Wilcke devotes one section to the doxology that ordinarily concludes Sumerian literary works.[[21]](#footnote-21) The two standard formulas for this doxology are “X be praised” and “X, Your praise is sweet,” where X, to whom the doxology is addressed, is the hero of the work. Two genres depart from this pattern. One is the disputation-poems, in which the addressee is never the disputant but (generally) the divine judge mentioned at the end of the poem. The other is the genre describing a stay in the netherworld, like *Inana’s Descent to the Netherworld, Ningišzida's Journey to the Netherworld* and *The Death of Gilgameš*, all of which conclude with a doxology to Ereškigal, the Queen of the Netherworld, and not to the hero of the work.[[22]](#footnote-22) Even though many versions of the doxology appear in works that are missing their subscript, scholars agree that the doxology is not an external addition that identifies a Sumerian work as belonging to a particular genre but an integral part of the work.[[23]](#footnote-23) According to Jeremy Black, the role of the concluding doxology lies in the performative realm, to mark the end of the work: “[The *textbezogen* doxologies are] a literary reflex of the performer-poet's termination of his performance… The implication of regarding the *textbezogen* doxologies as part of the text — part of its structure — is obviously that they would be included in a performance of the poem and would therefore function as a form of ‘flag’ to indicate the approaching end of the composition.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

Black, following Wilcke, correctly differentiates between the doxologies that praise one of the heroes of the work and therefore can be regarded as an integral part of it (=*Textbezogendoxologie*) and the formal doxologies that were added by a scribe who was simply copying a manuscript, classical or otherwise, whose addressee is the goddess Nisaba/Nidaba, the goddess of writing — doxologies that are **not** part of the work itself (=*Schreiberdoxologie*). But in a few cases there are doxologies to Nisaba that **are** considered *Textbezogendoxologie*, and therefore part of the literary work, even when Nisaba is not the heroine of the work or even a minor character in it, but is simply mentioned in its last lines. This, though, should be regarded as a case of the *Schreiberdoxologie* leaking into the *Textbezogendoxologie*, and should not be exaggerated into a literary explanation.[[25]](#footnote-25)

It could be that the short *Textbezogendoxologie* formula — “X be praised” or “X, your praise is sweet” — was used to flag an independent poem that concluded the work when it was performed in public.[[26]](#footnote-26) This admittedly cannot be proven in practice, but it is unquestionably true that the short doxological line often attracts lengthier praises. Thus we find accumulations of praise and description that precede the short conclusion and broaden it, as in *Inana and An*: “Because you are unmatched among the Great Princes, maiden Inana, your praise is magnificent!”[[27]](#footnote-27) The conclusion of *Ninurta's Return to Nibru* provides an additional example: “The warrior, whose heroism is manifest, Ninurta, the son of Enlil, has firmly grounded his greatness in Enlil's sanctuary. Lord who has destroyed the mountains, who has no rival, who butts angrily in that magnificent battle, great warrior who goes forth in his …… might, strong one, deluge of Enlil, Ninurta, magnificent child of E-kur, pride of the father who engendered him, it is sweet to praise you.” In other cases we can find, instead of lengthened descriptions, independent hymns devoted to the hero of the story that are not connected — syntactically or thematically — to the doxological conclusion that comes after them, as for example in *Enlil and Ninlil*. Sometimes an independent poem even concludes the work, as at the end of *Nanna-Suen's Journey to Nibru*, where the heroes of the work are actually those who are giving praise in the hymn, not themselves being addressed.[[28]](#footnote-28) An example from another genre is *Ninurta's exploits*, where an independent hymn to Nisaba, mentioned at the end of Enlil’s blessing of his son Ninurta, the hero of the work, is stuck onto the end. At the end of the hymn, as usual, the standard concluding doxology to Ninurta appears.

So we can conclude by establishing that Sumerian literary works regularly end with a doxological conclusion. Most of the conclusions are short, perhaps because they are meant to flag the performance of an independent poem, but there are also long conclusions, including independent poems. The widespread distribution of these doxologies — to the extent that there is almost no Sumerian literary work that concludes without one — testifies to their role (whether original or *post factum*) as marking the end of the work. We can see an indirect continuation of this phenomenon in the well-known Babylonian literary texts such as *Atraḫasis*, *Enuma eliš*, and *Erra and Išum*, which end with a mention of the hymn to the hero of the story — Enlil, Marduk, and Erra respectively. Here, though, the hymn is to be interpreted as part of the literary work that has just been recited, since in each case the work itself is a hymn of praise to its hero.[[29]](#footnote-29)

And now back to our Ugaritic text, the Baal Cycle. In light of the Mesopotamian works, its conclusion with a hymn is not at all extraordinary. Like them, and perhaps even influenced by them, this conclusion marked the end of the epic.[[30]](#footnote-30)

**The Hymn to Šapš in Light of the Mesopotamian Disputation-Poems**

As noted above, though most of the doxological conclusions are devoted to the hero of the work, two groups of Sumerian compositions differ significantly. One of them — the one relevant to our subject — is that called by modern scholars, following the Babylonian scribes, “disputation poems” (Sumerian: a-da-mìn dug4-ga). To this group belong works whose subject is a disputation between two inanimate objects, and whose doxological conclusion is devoted to the judge mentioned in the last lines of the text (and sometimes at the beginning of it), not to the victor in the disputation.[[31]](#footnote-31) We have Sumerian disputation-poems that were copied in the Old Babylonian period, but it is almost certain that some of them were written in the Ur III period (and perhaps even earlier), and Akkadian disputation-poems that were copied beginning from the Old Babylonian period and onward (but which may have been composed earlier). Even though this is a distinctly scribal genre, there is archival evidence for the performance of such works.[[32]](#footnote-32) Some of the Akkadian disputation-poems were taught in scribal schools of the Late Bronze Age outside Babylonia (see below); in later periods, compositions of this kind were composed in the local languages as well: Aramaic, Persian, Greek, and others. Possibly the influence of the disputation-poem genre can already be seen in two Egyptian compositions from the New Kingdom, contemporaneous with the Middle Babylonian and Late Bronze periods.[[33]](#footnote-33) All these testify that this genre in general, and the Mesopotamian examples in particular, were known throughout the cultures of the ancient Near East, or at least in the scribal class of those cultures.

The structure of the Sumerian disputation-poems, the first of this genre to be written down, is threefold: (1) They open with a prologue, sometimes cosmogonic, which presents the combatants and the background to the beginning of the disputation. (2) In the continuation, the arguments presented by each character are cited to the advantage of each, without making a decision possible. In most cases the words of the combatants are cited in alternation, without narrative, but in at least one of the disputation-poems (*Bird and Fish*) the scribe does not stop with presenting the arguments but describes violent actions performed by the combatants against each other, in a format reminiscent of animal tales or fables.[[34]](#footnote-34) (3) Finally the judge intervenes — ordinarily at the invitation of one of the combatants, but sometimes at his own initiative, out of anger at one of the combatants (as in *Hoe and Plough*) — and determines the victor in the disputation. Sometimes this is preceded by the determination that in fact the combatants are equal and that the world cannot continue to exist without both of them. The text ends with this conclusion: “In the disputation between X and Y, X was superior to Y; DN be praised.” So, for example, in *Ewe and Grain*, Enki intervenes and decides in favor of Ewe; the praise is offered to Enki. In *Winter and Summer*, Enlil decides in favor of Winter; the praise goes to Enlil. In *Bird and Fish*, Enki decides in favor of Fish; the praise goes to Enki.[[35]](#footnote-35) Even the competition between Dumuzi and Enkimdu (representing respectively the shepherd and the farmer) for the heart of Inana ends with a conclusion characteristic of the disputation-poems, including praise for the goddess who chose the shepherd: “The dispute between the shepherd and the farmer; maiden Inana, your praise is sweet.” This work differs in many respects from the classic disputation-poems, including its ending like a *balbale*, yet even so it too follows this pattern.[[36]](#footnote-36) Two additional Sumerian works, belonging to the epic cycle of Uruk — *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* and *Enmerkar and Ensuḫgirana* —are described by their authors as disputation-poems, apparently on account of the competition between the kings for Inana’s favor. This definition primarily influenced the end of the composition, which ends with the characteristic conclusion of a disputation-poem.[[37]](#footnote-37)

As noted, we do not have any Sumerian disputation-poems dated to later than the Old Babylonian period, but speakers of Akkadian continued to compose disputation-poems in their own language. These poems have a wider variety of structure and content and are clearly not translations of Sumerian disputation-poems but original creations. The oldest of them known to us, and the most widespread — *Tamarisk and Palm* — was also found in the scribal school in Emar, in Syria.[[38]](#footnote-38) Parts of a composition called *Series of the Fox*, a sort of combination of tale and disputation, were found at Ugarit.[[39]](#footnote-39) Unfortunately, the ends of most of the Akkadian disputation-poems are no longer extant, so we do not know whether they had a judgment scene or who the divine judge was.[[40]](#footnote-40) Nonetheless, from these two compositions — *Series of the Fox* and *The Story of the Poor, Forlorn Wren*, whose first copies come from the Hellenistic period, but whose composition is earlier[[41]](#footnote-41) — it emerges that the sun god Šamaš was the judge between the combatants. *The Story of the Poor, Forlorn Wren* even ends with a hymn to this god, like the complete Sumerian works that are extant. It is almost certain that Šamaš (unlike the usual judges in Sumerian disputation-poems where the poems connect them to creation) was chosen to be the judge between the combatants on account of his standard role in Mesopotamia as the god of justice who sees all. The epithet “righteous judge” applied to him in *The Story of the Poor, Forlorn Wren* (l. 23) fits well with his role in this poem.[[42]](#footnote-42) From all the fragments of Babylonian disputation-poems that have survived, it emerges that to the relatively inflexible pattern of the Sumerian parallels — at the center of which is a dialogue between the combatants — were added many narrative lines. In this respect, it returned closer to the genre of tale or fable which from it perhaps originally sprang.[[43]](#footnote-43)

In light of what we have said, I would like to suggest that, comparable to the influence of the disputation-poems on the Sumerian epics that treat of competition between kings, and in light of what we know about the existence of compositions of this genre in the Levant from the Late Bronze Age and on — first, Akkadian compositions from Babylonia, and afterward original compositions in local languages — we may ask whether the Ugaritic scribe too may have been inspired to compose the end of the Baal Cycle by this so-popular genre of disputation-poems; the last battle between the combatants was decided by the words of Šapš, and the concluding hymn was sung in her honor.

From a narrative perspective, the end of the last battle between Baal and Mot reduplicates the ascent of Baal from the netherworld after Anat’s victory over Mot, when he fights his enemies and sits on his throne (*KTU* 1.6 V 1–6). In fact, it is almost certain that in one of its incarnations that is how the story ended, as in the story of the struggle with Yamm and the building of Baal’s temple; then too Baal went forth to fight his enemies and at the end sat down on his throne (*KTU* 1.4 VII 35–42).[[44]](#footnote-44) Nonetheless, the tablet proceeds, after the concluding lines, to an additional, final battle. Its beginning describes Mot’s own return from the dead after seven years.[[45]](#footnote-45) Upon his return, Mot argues with Baal — first blaming him for his death (through which the writer returns to a description of what Anat had done to Mot [*KTU* 1.6 II 31–35]) — and afterwards blaming him for stuffing him into one of his brothers (as happened, in fact, to Baal himself when Mot, in his ravenous hunger, ate him). This is the signal for the beginning of the last struggle between the combatants, which takes place on Mount Zaphon, this time without intermediaries carrying messages and without magical weapons as in the previous scenes.

In this single combat, the competitors’ strength stands them in good stead three times, but the fourth time both of them fall without a victor in the contest.:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| They (=Baal and Mot) eye each other like annihilators,[[46]](#footnote-46) Mot is strong, Baal is strong. |  |
| They butt each other like bulls,Mot is strong, Baal is strong. |  |
| They bite each other like snakes,Mot is strong, Baal is strong. |  |
| They trample[[47]](#footnote-47) each other like runners,[[48]](#footnote-48)Mot falls, Baal falls. |  |

Then Šapš the sun goddess angrily intervenes:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Above, Šapš exclaims to Mot: |  |
| “Hear now, O Mot, son of El, |  |
| How can you fight with Mighty Baal? |  |
| How, then, can hear you the bull, El, your father?  |  |
| Surely, he will remove the support of your throne,  |  |
| Surely, he will overturn the seat of your kingship,  |  |
| Surely, he will break the scepter of your rule.” |  |

The fact that what Šapš says does not precisely match the situation (like their location in *KTU* 1.2 III), shows this to be a well-known text. It is not surprising, therefore, to find parallels to this outside the Baal Cycle as well, as a curse against hostile kings.[[49]](#footnote-49) Mot’s response to the words of Šapš likewise fails to be an appropriate conclusion to the final conflict, which broke out after Baal fed Mot to one of his brothers. But it is an appropriate conclusion to the question of authority among the gods, which is the seed around which developed the previous conflicts with Yamm and with Mot:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mot, son of El, is afraid, |  |
| The beloved of El, the warrior, is scared. |  |
| Mot becomes agitated at her voice,[[50]](#footnote-50) |  |
| H[e raises his voice and exclaims?]: |  |
| “Let them place Baal [on the seat] of his kingship, |  |
| on [the resting place, the throne] of his dominion.” |  |

With this apparently concludes the final conflict between Baal and Mot, and Baal returns to his home. After a few broken lines — which perhaps conclude the narrative, or perhaps begin the hymn — the Hymn to Šapš is quoted, and with that the work as a whole concludes. The end of the composition — the inconclusive battle, the decisive judgment, and the hymn to the judging goddess — do in many aspects match the end of the Mesopotamian disputation-poems, and apparently were consciously influenced by them.

The scholars who sought to understand the role of Šapš here as deciding the battle between Mot and Baal took this as part of her job as royal messenger or compared it specifically to the help given by the sun god to Gilgameš in his war against Ḫumbaba.[[51]](#footnote-51) But though the first explanation is based on nothing but the words of Šapš here, and there is no evidence outside the text for such a distinguished role, in Ugarit and the rest of the cultures of the ancient Near East the second explanation corresponds to two completely separate stories, making it difficult to accept. All the same, in light of the explanation that the work before us was influenced by a common Mesopotamian genre, we may suggest that the role of Šapš may have been given to her through the influence of the standard characteristic of the Mesopotamian sun god as the god of justice, a characteristic mentioned in Mesopotamian texts from Ugarit as well, including the local version of *Gilgameš*.[[52]](#footnote-52) As noted above, even in the Babylonian disputation-poems, which mention the identity of the judge, Šamaš serves in this role. It may be, therefore, that not only the structure of the Mesopotamian disputation-poems but even the choice of Šapš as the one who decides the battle was inspired by Mesopotamian literature. Since that is not her traditional role at Ugarit, the words placed specifically in her mouth were the words of El — he who decides throughout the whole length of the Baal Cycle who shall rule over the gods.

**Conclusion**

The Hymn to Šapš that concludes the stories of Baal has primarily been studied against the background of the work it concludes, and it has therefore given rise to scholarly controversy. Some scholars think it was directed to Baal, the hero of the work, despite the fact that he is not mentioned there at all; others consider it to have originally been an independent poem but have trouble explaining why it should be there at all. Given the lack of comparable Ugaritic parallels, it has been suggested here that we examine the Hymn to Šapš against the background of Mesopotamian literature, which constituted a significant part of the training of scribes at Ugarit. It is clear that Sumerian works regularly ended with a hymnic conclusion, and in some ways even Akkadian works resembled them. Such a conclusion (as scholars think) was intended to mark the end of a literary work, and this apparently was also the formal role of the poem that concludes the Baal Cycle. The specific choice of a hymn devoted to the goddess who decided the battle between Baal and Mot — and not to the victor in the battle — was clarified against the background of the Mesopotamian disputation-poems which conclude with praise of the divine judge who (like Šapš) decide in favor of one of the combatants. It was suggested tha, the Ugaritic writer composed the end of the cycle under the inspiration of the genre of disputation-poems that was so widespread outside of Mesopotamia,, from the final single combat to the decision of Šapš and, for an ending, the hymn devoted to her.

1. *KTU* 1.2 III, which cites the word of Šapš almost identically to our version, is not directly connected to any of the tablets of the Baal Cycle, and repeats a motley set of quotations from the stories of the heroes on the rest of the tablets of the cycle. It is therefore difficult to use this fragment as evidence for the structure of the plot of the Baal Cycle or the depiction of the characters. In fact, it is almost certain that everything described in this fragment is secondary to the central plot and perhaps not even originally part of it. See Meier 1986; Smith 1994: 22; Ayali-Darshan 2016: XX. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Dijkstra 1974: 67–68; 1986; Margalit 1980: 195; del Olmo Lete 1981: 234; Coogan and Smith 2012: 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Caquot 1959: 100 (Caqout and Sznycer 1974: 269, call it a hymn to Šapš, but with a question mark); Lipiński 1972: 106–111; Watson 1977: 275–277; Gibson 1978: 18–19; Dietrich and Loretz 1980: 399–400; Smith 1986a: 339; Pardee 1997: 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Gaster 1936: 225–226; de-Moor 1971: 243–244; 1972: 7 (and cf. Marcus 1973: 590); Gibson 1978: 19; Smith 1986a: 339; Dijkstra 1986. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. de-Moor 1971: 243–244; 1972: 7; Herr 1995: 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. These lines are preceded by an invitation to an unknown addressee to eat and drink, resembling the introduction that appears in *The Birth of the Gracious Gods* (*KTU* 1.24). On the liturgical context of this introduction, see Dijkstra 1986. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. On the *Rpum* (and their parallels: *ˀIlnym*, *ˀIlm*, *Mtm*) in Ugarit and its surroundings, see the conclusion in Rouillard 1999 and bibliography there. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Cf. Healey 1980; Lewis 1989: 35–46. For the “Sun-goddess of the Earth” in Anatolia, see Lorenz-Link 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The motif of the search for the dead Baal and finding him in the netherworld appears in additional cultures in the ancient Near East, among them Egypt and Mesopotamia, and even in Greece (cf. Gaster 1961: 213–214, 220; 1969: 605–606; Smith 1986b: 313), but only in Ugarit is it connected to the sun god. Perhaps it was on this basis that the parallel motif, unique to Ugarit alone — the finding of the god alive — was written; see Ayali-Darshan 2018: 5–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. For suggestions on how to interpret this, see Rahmouni 2008: 271–274. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Most scholars prefer to explain the expressions *ḥbr/dˁt* to mean “friendship, companionship,” but a few think they actually refer to witchcraft, as in Deut 18:11, where the root חבר refers to “one who casts spells.” They find support for this in the parallelism that appears in the spell *KTU* 1.169, invoking Horon. See Dijkstra 1986: 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The verb *ytr* is explained (from the root *n-t-r*) and translated on the basis of the parallelism with the verb *yd* (from the root *y-d-y*) in the previous line; see Gibson, 1978: 81; Pardee 1997: 273. Other interpreters translate both verbs to mean “traveling” (based on their resemblance to the Hebrew roots *n-d-d* and *t-w-r*), according to which Koṯar-waHasis travels **in** the Sea of *Arš* and Tunnan; see Caquot and Sznycer 1974: 270 and nn. n, o. For additional suggestions, see Wyatt 1998: 145 and n. 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Though the division of the Baal Cycle into three sections has taken root among Ugaritologists, comparison with other literatures of the ancient Near East teaches that the part called “Section 2” (*KTU* 1.3–1.4) — the story of the building of the palace and the feast that followed — belongs to the story of the battle between the storm and the sea, that is, to the first section of the Baal Cycle. The second section of the cycle tells about the confrontation between Baal and Mot, and this is based on completely different traditions. See Ayali-Darshan 2016: XX. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Cf. also Pardee 1997: 273, n. 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. On Yamm in the Baal Cycle as an anthropomorphic being hostile to the storm god, see Loewenstamm 1980: 346–61. For parallels in ancient Near Eastern literature and the secondary nature of the Ugaritic description, see Ayali-Darshan 2016: XX. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Most of the scholars named in nn. 2–4 hold this perspective in various ways. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. For a review of the contradictory traditions in the first section of the Baal Cycle, see Ayali-Darshan 2016: XX. For a review of some of the contradictory traditions in the second section of the cycle, see Ayali-Darshan 2018: 6–11. For a conjecture about how the work developed from various traditions, see Herr 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. We certainly do not have the ending of *Aqhat*; as for *Kirta*, opinions differ. See, e.g., Parker 1989: 145, 203–205. The other literary texts in our hands belong to the genres of historiola or ritual and are therefore not comparable. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. On the Mesopotamian curriculum of the scribal school in Ugarit in particular and in Syria as a whole, see Van Soldt 1995; Fincke 2012; Viano 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Watson 1977: 276 followed a similar path, especially in his assertion, “The use of a hymn to close a book or a large literary unit is not without parallels.” But the comparison he set forth with biblical texts (his n. 35) is intrinsically problematic, since there we are dealing with stratified texts to which concluding hymns were sometimes added, together with other appendices, by later authors. Some interesting examples in this context (which do not appear in Watson’s article, and which might be recognized as primary) are the ends of Genesis, Deuteronomy, Samuel, Proverbs, and perhaps even Habbakuk. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Wilcke 1976: 246–248. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. There is, however, another version of *The Death of Gilgameš* in which the hero, *Gilgameš*, is indeed praised at the end. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. And therefore, as in Širku(g), Balbale, Širgida, the subscript appears after the doxology (in the genres of Balag and Eršema no doxologies have yet been found). For discussion, see Shehata 2009: 238–239 and the earlier bibliography there. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Black 1992: 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. So for example in *Hoe and Plough* (in which can be recognized great influence from *The Song of the Hoe*); compare Vanstiphout 1984; 2014, 238–240. It could be that a similar phenomenon has taken place in *Ninurta's Exploits* and *Enmerkar and Ensuḫgirana*; see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Cf. Black 1992: 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Translations of Sumerian works are cited from ETCSL with minor changes. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Evidence that we are dealing here with an independent poem may also come from *Ur-Namma D*, which cites a nearby passage; see Ferrara 1973: 155–156. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. For the conclusions of another genre of Babylonian works and a brief discussion, see Wasserman 2003: 166, 172. Some think the conclusion of building and display inscriptions as well as Assyrian annalistic texts in a personal prayer to a god is also connected with the same performative literary phenomenon. See Watts: 1992: 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. The question of whether the Baal Cycle was recited publicly in specific circumstances or whether it was written for some other purpose cannot be answered due to the lack of prose data in the text. In any case, its literary language and style may testify to its being a text for recitation or an imitation of such a text. See, e.g., Sasson 1981; Watson 1999. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. For this genre, see Alster 1990; Vanstiphout 1990; 1991; 1992; 2014; Vogelzang 1991; Ponchia 2007; Jiménez 2017; 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Jiménez 2017: 15–16 and bibliography there. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Jiménez 2017: 128–138 and bibliography there. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Cf. Alster 1990: 12–13. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. According to several manuscripts Shulgi is invited to judge, but apparently this is a later insertion; see Jiménez 2017: 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. On the structure of this work and its correspondence to the pattern of the disputation-poems, see Mittermayer 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. So too with regard to *Enmerkar and Ensuḫgirana* (on the doxological conclusion to Nisaba there, see above). The end of *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* has not survived, but the label “adamin” appears in the so-called Spell of Nudimmud. See Ponchia 2007: 73–76. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. For text and bibliography, see Cohen 2013: 177–198. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Arnaud 2007: no. 51 (RS 25.526A); cf. Jiménez 2017: 39–57, 383. In the scholarly literature this text is also known as *The Tale of Fox*. For its designation as “a hybrid of fable and disputation,” see Jiménez 2017: 51 and bibliography there. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The only endings that are still extant are those of *Nissaba and Wheat* and *Series of the Fox*, but neither ends with a decisive judgment between the combatants as the Sumerian examples do. According to Jiménez 2017: 72, the mention of Ereškigal in the last lines of *Nissaba and Wheat* demonstrate that she was the judge of the confrontation, whereas the hymn to Nissaba at the end shows that she was apparently the victor in the confrontation. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Jiménez 2017: 353–354 dates its composition to the New Babylonian period or the Persian/Hellenistic period. Like *Series of the Fox*, this composition too is a combination of fable and disputation. For an up-to-date edition of the two texts with commentary and bibliography, see Jiménez 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Cf. Jiménez 2017: 94–96, 329. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Cf. Alster 1990; Vogelzang 1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. On the unity of this segment, see also Herr 1995: 47–48. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. This theme, which sounds anomalous with regard to Mot, is apparently based on the motif of the absence of Baal. For a seven-year-long absence of Baal, compare also *KTU* 1.12, 44–45; 1.19 I 42–44. As emerges from many places in the Baal Cycle, it may be a function of the Ugaritic author’s love of symmetry: having recounted the death and resurrection of Baal, he does the same with respect to Mot. See Ayali-Darshan 2018: 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Although the root *g-m-r* is common in Semitic languages, it is hard to find a meaning that precisely fits the context here. A meaning something like “superior” (which also matches other contexts in Ugaritic) is used by, e.g., Smith 1997: 162 (“fighters”); Pardee 1997: 272 (“finished [warriors]”); del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2013: 298 (“champions”) (and it is almost certain that this is also the meaning of the biblical name Gemariah and of the verb גמר in Ps 57:3). The problem with this translation is its lack of any simile, despite the “as” that precedes the noun *gmr*, even though the following sentences, which are syntactically the same, do have quite striking similes. For this reason, some have suggested translating *gmr* here as “burning coals” on the basis of Aramaic and Arabic — so for example Gibson 1978: 80; Margalit 1980:188; Wyatt 1998: 142. Another proposal matching the context even better is to understand *gmr* as the name of an animal. This would create a threefold parallelism (or even fourfold; see below) with the following lines. Caquot and Sznycer 1974: 268, n. b suggest translating as “hippopotamus” on the basis of the Ethiopic languages, and even Ginsberg 1969: 141 suggested “camels.” [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. The precise meaning of the root *m-ṣ-ḫ* is also uncertain. Since in Ugaritic it appears in contexts of struggle, and twice in combination with the adverbial phrase “to the ground (*l ˀarṣ*),” apparently it has a range of meanings, or perhaps a specific one, related to the verb *m-ḫ-ṣ* (“to beat, crush”), causing one’s enemy to fall to the ground. See del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2013: 578; Margalit 1980: 189; Pardee 1997: 272, n. 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. On the basis of Akkadian, it is common to explain *lsmm* here with the meaning of “swift.” In light of the preceding lines, it is possible that it refers to a swift animal, like a horse (so, e.g., Margalit 1980: 188–189), or a hunting dog (so, e.g., Gibson 1978: 80); compare also Pardee, 1997: 272 and n. 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Compare the Ahiram inscription, against a king who would profane his sarcophagus (KAI 1:2): תחתספ חטר משפטה תחתספ כסא מלכה, “May his staff of judgement be broken, may the seat of his kingship be overturned”; the epilogue of Hammurabi against any king who would erase his inscription: “May Anu deprive him of the sheen of royalty, may he break his scepter… May Šamaš overturn his kingship… May Sin deprive him of the crown and throne of kingship.” The fact that curses of this sort were also used in ordinary life is demonstrated by the expression in B. Git. 35a, ליהפכוה לכורסיה (“may they overturn his chair”). For citations and bibliography, see Smith 1994: 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Another possibility: “Mot becomes agitated in his fall”; see Del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2013: 687. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. For the argument that one of the roles of the sun goddess at Ugarit was as royal messenger, see Wiggins 1996: 329, 336. For the parallel to *Gilgameš* (SB V, 137–143 in George 2003), see Smith 1994: 18; 1998: 294–295, with the assistance of A. Westenholz. Note that the help of Šamaš in the prayer of Ninsun precedes the going forth to battle. For the version of *Gilgameš* from Ugarit, see the next note. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. E.g., the fragmentary hymns to Šamaš RS 22.219 (Arnaud 2007: no. 29) and RS 20.231 // RS 25.443 (Arnaud 2007: no. 30). The composition *Hear the Advice* (Arnaud 2007: no. 49), ll. 38–45, which perhaps echoes the sentence from *Series of the Fox* (cf. Cohen 2013: 106), and cf. also the fragment from *Gilgameš* (RS 94.2083; Arnaud 1007: no. 45; George 2007: 250–235), where Ḫumbaba begs in tears specifically for the help of Šamaš, calling out, “You, be my lord and judge.” [↑](#footnote-ref-52)