

THE SWITCH BETWEEN SECOND AND THIRD PERSON ADDRESS IN UGARITIC

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The study of the composition and sources of biblical literature has a long history, both glorious and inglorious. Except when one biblical text is the obvious source of another – as Kings of Chronicles – such sources are, of course, always hypothetical¹.

In a number of Ugaritic texts there is a switch from 2nd to 3rd person, a topic which was discussed recently by Wagner². It occurs in the following letters: KTU 2.4; 2.11³; 2.12⁴; 2.13; 2.16; 2.30; 2.33+ and 2.34 and belongs to epistolary style⁵. It is also to be found several times in the mythological texts. These examples are discussed here in the sequence of KTU⁶.

(a) When Athirat visits El (KTU 1.4 IV 31-32), first he uses the oblique form of address:

<i>ik. mgyt. rbt. aṯr[t. y]m</i>	What! Has Lady Athirat of the Sea arrived?
<i>ik. atwt. qnyt. i[lm]</i>	What! Has the Creator of the gods come?

However, he then proceeds to act the charming host, using direct address (lines 33-39):

<i>rgb. rgbt. wtgt[r]</i>	Are you quite hungry ...
<i>hm. gmu. gmit. w^cs[t]</i>	Or are you quite thirsty, then sup ⁷ .
<i>lhm. hm štym.</i>	Eat or drink!
<i>h[m] btlhnt. lhm</i>	Eat food from the tables,
<i>št bkrpnm. yn.</i>	drink wine from the carafes,
<i>bk. ḥrṣ dm. ṣsm</i>	the blood of trees from cups of gold.

¹ But not unrealistic, once a scribal tradition is established. See the comparative evidence laid out in Tigay 1985.

² A. Wagner, *Dichten und Denken. Zum Verständnis des 'Personenwechsels' in alttestamentlicher, ugaritischer und verwandter Literatur*, in M. Kropp - A. Wagner, eds, *Schnittpunkt Ugarit*, Frankfurt am Main 1999, 271-84.

³ Gordon, UT §13.86.

⁴ Wagner, *Dichten und Denken*, 279; cf. already Gordon, UT §13.86

⁵ Cf. Gordon, UT §13.86 ("Polite Substitutions for Pronouns").

⁶ The example in KTU 1.4 III 5 []x. al. yns, translated «let not [Naharu] escape» by J.C. de Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit*, Leiden 1987, 49, is too uncertain for inclusion here.

⁷ See Mehri 'šy «to have supper»: T.M. Johnstone, *Mehri Lexicon and English-Mehri Word-List*, London 1987, 32.

hm. yd. il mlk yḥssk. Is it the 'hand' of King El which arouses you?
ahbt. tr. t'rrk (Or) the Bull's passion which excites you?

This seems to indicate that when Athirat receives Baal and Anat (KTU 1.4 II 21-24) and first speaks to them politely (in the 3rd person):

ik mgy. aliyn. b' l Why has Mightiest Baal come?
ik. mgyt. b[t]l t' nt. Why has Virgin Anat come?

he then appears to descend to familiar speech in the lines that follow:

mḥsy. hm[. m]ḥs bny. Would you murder me or murder my sons,
hm[. mkly. ṣ]brt aryyl[.] or destroy the band of my brood?

as in a recent translation of the Ugaritic texts⁸. However, this couplet is usually understood as an indirect reference, e.g.:

Have those who would smite me smitten my sons,
 or (have) [those who would finish me off] (smitten) the host of my kin?⁹

(b) In KTU 1.4 V 49-55 (// 1.2 III 6-11) the direct address in the first three lines (imperative forms in the 2nd pers.)¹⁰, is followed by Baal's oblique command (3rd pers. masc. plural verbs)¹¹.

[w]y' n. al[iyn. b' l] And Mighty Baal said:
[hl t]b' c. k[tr wḥss] "[Well g]o, Ko[thar-and-Hasis]!
ḥš bhtm. [t]b[nn] Quickly, [buil]d a mansion,
ḥš. rmm. hk[lm] Quickly, erect a palace.
ḥš. bhtm. tbn[n] Quickly, let them buil[d] a mansion,
ḥš. trmmn. hk[lm] Quickly, let erect a pal[ace]
btk. ṣrrt. ṣpn right in the heart of Saphon!"

Is poetic patterning a factor in the sequence of verbs?

(c) In KTU 1.10 III 32ff. Baal is first addressed in the second person and then the news is given in the third person:

ql. lb' l. ttm She said out loud to Baal
bšrt. il. bšrt b' l "Excellent news¹², good news Baal,
wbšr. ḥtk. dgn yes, good news, scion of Dagan¹³,

⁸ M.S. Smith, *The Baal Cycle* in S.B. Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, Atlanta GA 1997, 79-180 (123).

⁹ D. Pardee. *The Ba'lu Myth (1.86)*, in W.W. Hallo - K. L. Younger, eds., *The Context of Scripture I*, Leiden 1997, 241-74 (257); similarly, TOu I, 199; G. del Olmo Lete, *Mitos y leyendas de Canaan*, Valencia 1981, 196; N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit. The Words of Ilmilku and his Colleagues*, Sheffield 1998, 94.

¹⁰ See E. Verreet, *Modi ugaritici*, Leuven 1988, 87.

¹¹ See D.L. Dobrusin, *The Third Masculine Plural of the Prefixed Form of the Verb in Ugaritic*, JANES 3, 1981, 5-14.

¹² D. Sivan, *A Grammar of the Ugaritic Language*, Leiden 1997, 258.

¹³ The same would apply if *bšr* were construed as passive D (*DLU*, 118b).

k. *ibr. lb* ^c[.] yld for a bull is born to Baal,
 wrum. *lrkb* [.] ^cprt a wild ox to the Cloudrider!¹⁷

Contrast KTU 1.4 V 26ff., which is all in the second person:

tbšr b ^cl *bšrtk. yblt.* You have good news, O Baal, good news to you I bring:
ytn bt. lk. km. aḥk. A house will be given to you like your brothers
whzr km. aryk. and a residence like your kin!

(d) KTU 1.13: Although in places the text is broken and often obscure, there is direct (second person) address from the (extant) opening line¹⁴ up to line 18a. Then comes the following (lines 18b-29a):

trḥš btl ^cnt Let Virgin Anat wash herself,
tpr ^c. *td limm* let the ... of the Nations(?)¹⁵ beautify herself⁶,
t ^cl. ^cm. *il [tr] abh.* and let her go up to [the Bull]¹⁷ Il, her father,
hḫr. p ^clk. *yḥ* and may the residence (of?) your work be fine!

šm ^ck. *larḥ.* May he listen to you, O Cow,
wbn. [] *limm.* and understand, O [beloved?] of the Nations, etc.¹⁸

Here there is an abrupt switch to the second person in line 21b, with *p* ^clk¹⁹, and in lines 29b-36 the third person is used once more. The reasons for these changes remain unknown due to the broken context.

(e) KTU 1.14 I 38-43

mat krt. kybky What ails you²⁰, Kirta, that he should weep,
ydm ^c. *n* ^cmn. *ḡlm il.* that the handsome one, El's (own) lad, should shed tears?

¹⁴ Unless *td* in line 2 means «she is born (etc.)»; cf. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 169, n. 1. J. C. de Moor, *An Incantation against Infertility (KTU 1.13)*, UF 12, 1980, 305-10 (305) translates «may the Dam[sel] bear». If this is the case, then there is an additional 3rd to 2nd person transition in line 3.

¹⁵ «Breast of the Nations» (so de Moor, *An Incantation against Infertility*, 306.308-309) is unattested elsewhere, hence the correction *ybmt limm*, which Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 172, translates «Beloved of the Powerful One». The meaning is incidental to the point at issue here.

¹⁶ Mehri *pr* ^c means both «to be brave», and «to go up», which would be parallel to *wi* ^cl in the following line. See Johnstone, *Mehri Lexicon*, 97.

¹⁷ For the restoration see the references in Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 172, n. 29 and cf. KTU 1.1 II 18; 1.1 III 26; 1.6 IV 10, etc.

¹⁸ The translation in G. del Olmo Lete, *Mitos, leyendas y rituales de los semitas occidentales*, Madrid 1998, 144-45 is as follows: «Se lavó la Virgen Anat, se bañó el 'Seno de los pueblos' y ascendió hacia El[, el Toro], su padre: —¡La casa, hecha para ti, es perfecta! Te escuchó ¡oh novilla!, y prestó atención, ¡oh [Seno de] los pueblos! », etc.

¹⁹ Noted by de Moor *An Incantation against Infertility*, 309. On *hḫr. p* ^clk *yḥ* (line 21b), Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 172, n. 30, comments: «A glossed prayer by the scribe?».

²⁰ I.e. *mḥ at*, as first proposed by H.L. Ginsberg, *The Legend of King Keret, A Canaanite Epic of the Bronze Age*, New Haven 1946, 35 and followed by most scholars, e.g. Sivan, *A Grammar of the Ugaritic Language*, 34.59. The correction to *m*<*h*> *at* proposed in KTU² is unnecessary.

mik[.]tr abh yarš. Does he crave the kingship of the Bull, his father
hm. drk[t] kab. adm or dominion like the Father of Mankind?

Particularly striking here is the use of the third person (*ybk*) immediately after direct address²¹, as discussed in detail by Wagner²² who notes that in KTU 1.14 II 6ff.²³ there is a similar change. De Moor - Spronk comment: «The abrupt transition from the second to the third person may seem strange to us, but it was far from uncommon in oriental poetry»²⁴.

(f) In KTU 1.14 II 25-27 Keret is addressed in the second person:

šrd.b^cl bdbhk. Serve²⁵ Baal with your sacrifice,
bn. dgn bmsdk. Son of Dagan with your sacrifice.

Then there is a switch to the impersonal third²⁶:

wyrd krt. lggt. Then Keret should come down from the roof,
‘db akł. lqryt prepare provisions for the city, etc.

«Again the transition from the second to the third person appears to be rather abrupt if would apply our stylistic standards. However, this would be a grave error. The Ancients appreciated the liveliness of such sudden transitions»²⁷.

(g) In KTU 1.16 V 10-22 the gods are asked seven times (in the 3rd person):

my bilm ydy mṛš Who among the gods will remove the sickness?
gršm zbln (Who) will drive out the disease?

But then in lines 24-25, after none of the gods has responded, El addresses them directly, using the second person plural²⁸:

ib. bny. lmḅtkm Stay sitting on your seats, my sons,
lkḫt. zblk[m.] on your princely thrones,

Is this light contempt at their lack of response and ineptitude? This may be the case, since he then goes on to describe how he will use sympathetic magic to cure Kirta, and uses the first person singular pronoun (*ank*) and a series of verbs in the same person²⁹.

²¹ «The syntax of this line is somewhat awkward»: G.N. Knoppers, *Dissonance and Disaster in the Legend of Kirta*, JAOS 114, 1994, 572-82 (576, n. 26).

²² Wagner, *Dichten und Denken*, 278-79. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 184, n. 31, comments «Keret as subj. requires a 3 p. vb.».

²³ Incorrectly cited as 1.14 i 60/61 and 62ff. in Wagner, *Dichten und Denken*, 279.

²⁴ J.C. de Moor - K. Spronk, *Problematical Passages in the Legend of Kirtu (I)*, UF 14, 1982, 153-71 (158). Likewise Verreet, *Modi ugaritici*, 181: «Der Personenwechsel, der uns bereits häufiger begegnete, ist wieder augenfällig».

²⁵ A jussive according to T.L. Fenton, *Command and Fulfilment in Ugaritic*—“*qtl:yqtl*” and “*qtl:qtl*”, JSS 14, 1969, 34-39 (34).

²⁶ Or an absolute infinitive according to Verreet, *Modi ugaritici*, 176.

²⁷ De Moor - Spronk, *Problematical Passages*, 163.

²⁸ This change of person went unnoticed in my previous discussion of this text, *New Examples of the Split Couplet in Ugaritic*, UF 29, 1997, 715-21(715-17).

²⁹ *abšrkm* in KTU 1.19 II 37 remains difficult; cf. Gordon, UT §13.85; Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 302, n. 230.

(h) In KTU 1.18 IV 7-8 Anat addresses Yatipan almost deferentially in the third person:

[tšū gh] wtšb	[She raised her voice] and shouted:
yṭb. yp [mhr št]	«Let Yatip, [the mercenary soldier] remain,
[yṭb] qrt. ablm.	[let him remain] at the town of Abilim,
ablm. [qrt. zbl. yrḥ]	Abilim [the town of Prince Yarikh] etc.».

However, in KTU 1.18 IV 12ff. Yatipan replies using the familiar form of address (2nd pers.):

šm ^c . lbtlt. ^c nt.	Listen, O Virgin Anat.
at. [l. qšth] tmḥšh	You, on [account of his bow] must strike him,
qš ^c th. hwt. lḥ[wy]	<you, on account of> his arrows, should not let him live,

etc.³⁰

At this stage (KTU 1.18 IV 16ff.) Anat addresses Yatipan in the *second* person:

ṭb. yṭp. w[xxx] lk.	Pay attention, Yatip, and [I shall instruct(?)] you,
aštk. km. nšr. bḥb[šy]	I shall place you like a falcon on [my] gaunt[let],

etc.

Furthermore, as in KTU 1.18 IV 7, Anat again uses the familiar, shortened form of *yṭpn*, i.e. *yṭp*, which occurs only in these two texts³¹.

(i) In the set of ritual invocations by Danel, the first couplet (KTU 1.19 II 15-16) is in the third person:

aḥl. an	Oh
bš[ql] yp ^c b. palt.	may this shoot grow in the parched field,
bšql. yp ^c . byglm	may the shoot grow among the wilted plants!

Then he addresses the plant directly (2nd person)³² (KTU 1.19 II 17-18):

ur.	Plant ³³ ,
tispk. yd. aqht. ḡzr.	may the hand of Hero Aqhat harvest you,
tštk. bqrbm. asm	may it put you inside the granary!

Similarly for KTU 1.19 II 22-23 (3rd person) and 24-25 (2nd person)³⁴. The reason may be for dramatic effect.

In conclusion it is evident that in Ugaritic verse there are indeed four cases of a switch from the third to the second person³⁵ and five changes from second to third person verb forms³⁶, though examples are restricted to the Baal Cycle (including KTU

³⁰ See Verreet, *Modi ugaritici*, 109.

³¹ This may have a bearing on *agrtn* in KTU 1.19 iv 51; see Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 311, n. 272.

³² W.G.E. Watson, *Apostrophe in the Aqhat Poem*, UF 16, 1984, 323-26 = *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse*, Sheffield 1994, 460-64.

³³ For a different understanding of *ur* here and in fact of the whole passage, all in the second person, see del Olmo Lete, MLC, 391 (and 390). Cf. also DLU, 46a.

³⁴ In KTU 1.17 vi 26-33 there is also a change from 2nd to 3rd person

³⁵ (b), (c), (e) and (f), all except (c) involving verbs.

³⁶ Examples (a), (d), (g), (h) and (i).

1.10 and 1.13) and to the *Krt* and *Aqht* epics. There appear to be several reasons for such switches but no common denominator is apparent. However, from his study of this phenomenon, Wagner concluded that switching between the second and third person is a component of style and can be compared to parallelism: «Eine Sache wird dargestellt, indem verschiedene Aspekte von ihr thematisiert werden, beim Parallelismus mit einem Zweiklang aus Bildern, begrifflichen Aussagen etc., beim Personenwechsel eben durch den Perspektivenwechsel»³⁷.

³⁷Wagner, *Dichten und Denken*, 283.