DELAYING DEVICES IN UGARITIC VERSE

Wilfred G. E. Watson

The contribution of Professor Oswald Loretz to the study of Ugaritic and Hebrew verse is well known. Here, in his honour, I have chosen a non-controversial topic which will, I hope, lead to a better understanding of these ever-fascinating verse traditions.

INTRODUCTION

In my book on Hebrew Poetry I treated "Delayed Identification" rather briefly[1]. Here I will expand on the same topic, chiefly with reference to Ugaritic, taking into account also recent work by Alster[2], Berlin[3] and Clines[4]. In order to broaden the base of comparison I have also included examples in Akkadian tablets as well as some additional examples in Hebrew.

Since there is a certain amount of confusion in terminology, with descriptions such as "particularising parallelism", "the parallelism of greater precision" and "delayed identification" used almost interchangeably, it seems methodologically sound to begin by setting out passages in Ugaritic verse where some degree of delay is evident and then proceed to finer definitions. For ease of reference these texts are given in the sequence of KTU, tagged by identifying letters.

PASSAGES IN UGARITIC WITH DELAY

a) 1.2 i 34-35

tn. ilm. dtqh.	Hand over, O Gods, the one to whom you render homage,
dtqynh [*hml*]*t.*	the one to whom the crowd renders homage.

tn. b^c*l. w*^c*nnh.*	Give up Baal and his attendants,
bn. dgn. artm. pdh	Dagan's son so I may possess his gold[5].

Baal's identity is not revealed until the third line but the real purpose of this demand only emerges right at the end, in the last two words ("so I may possess his gold").

The reply (11. 36-38) echoes the demand by mentioning the tribute in the last two lines after three set in partially repetitive parallelism.

b) 1.3 i 22ff

ytmr. b^c*l bnth.*	Baal saw his daughters.
y^c*n. pdry bt. ar.*	He spied Pdry, daughter of light,
etc.	etc.

The names of the daughters, already specified as Baal's, are held over to the second and consecutive lines.

c) 1.3 ii 32-35

trhs. ydh. bt[*l*]*t.* ^c*nt*	Virgin Anath washed her hands,
usb^c*th. ybmt. limm.*	the sister-in-law of the peoples, her fingers
[*t*]*rhs. ydh. bdm. dmr*	she washed off her hands warriors' blood,
[*u*]*sb*^c*th. bmm*^c*. mhrm*	off her fingers soldiers' gore.

Although there is some anticipation in 11. 30-31: *ymh bb(!)t. dm. dmr*, "Warrior's blood was wiped from the house", the complete action is not described until the third line[6]. To some degree this corresponds to 11. 23-28 where Anath exults and the reason given for her glee is that she is knee-deep in blood.

d) 1.6 i 39-43

tšmh ht atrt. w.bnh.	Athirat and her sons may celebrate now,
ilt. wsbrt. aryh.	(as can) the goddess and her kinsmen's clan,
kmt. aliyn b^c*l*	for Almighty Baal is dead,
khlq. zbl. b^c*l. ars*	the Prince, the Earthlord has perished !

e) 1.6 iii 18-21

atbn. ank. wanhn.	I myself can sit and relax,
wtnh. birty. npš	my feelings can relax within me, too,
khy. aliyn. b^c*l*	for Almighty Baal is alive,

kiṯ. zbl. b^cl. arṣ   the Prince, the Earthlord exists !

Evidently these two passages correspond and in both cases the second line is expletive in function, providing a brief postponement of the significant third line (echoed in the fourth).

f) 1.6 i 43-55

Now that Baal is dead El demands a successor but we do not know who this is to be until the twelfth line of the section (= line 54) when ^cṯtr is named[7]. Within this dialogue comes an additional delay (ll. 50-52).

g) 1.14 ii 9-26 (// iii 52- iv 6)

Kirta is told by El to make preparation for sacrifice, but the god to whom these actions are directed is not named until the 15th line[8] (ll. 23-24). It is, of course, El himself.

h) 1.14 iii 22-32 (and par.)

qḥ. ksp. wyrq. ḥrṣ   Take silver and yellow gold,

yd. mqmh. w^cbd. ^clm.   etc. (translation difficult)

ṯlt. ssum.mrkbt

btrbṣ. bn. amt

qḥ. krt. šlmm šlmm   Take many peace-offerings, Kirta,

wng. mlk. lbty   AND MOVE AWAY, O KING, FROM MY HOUSE,

rḥq. krt. lḥẓry.   be far, Kirta, from my courts.

al. tṣr. udm. rbt. etc.   Do not besiege Great(er) Udum etc.

The crucial part of king Pbl's message only comes in the sixth line; it is then reinforced (in the next line) by synonymous parallelism.

Kirta's reply (ll. 33-49) also has this delaying component:

i) 1.14 iii 33-49

lm. ank ksp. wyrq. ḥrṣ   What use to me are silver and yellow gold (etc.) ?

yd. mqmh. w^cbd ^clm.

ṯlt. ssum. mrkbt

btrbṣt. bn. amt

pd. in. bbty. ttn   Rather, give me what is not in my house,

tn. ly. mṯt. ḥry etc.   give me the lady Ḥry, etc.

Once again the core of the message comes in the sixth line (and even then it is additionally delayed by the extra line "Rather, give me what is not in my house"). But this is not all. After a poetic description of his wife, Kirta proceeds to explain *why* he needs her back:

wld. šph. lkrt	(so) she shall bear progeny to Kirta,
wǵlm. l^c bd. il	a prince to El's servant[9].

j) 1.14 iv 40-43

hm. hry. bty iqh.	If I should take H. to my house,
aš^c rb. ǵlmt hzry	introduce the girl into my residence,
tnh. k(!)spm atn	(then) twice her (weight) in silver shall I donate,
w.tltth. hrṣm	thrice her (weight) in gold.

The vow, introduced by the solemn formulae of 11. 38-39, is expressed in the third and fourth line here.

k) 1.15 ii 21-25.

att[.tq]h. ykrt.	The wife you take, O Kirta,
att tqh. btk[.]	the wife you take into your house,
[ǵ]lmt. tš^c rb hzrk.	the girl you introduce into your residence,
tld.šb^c. bnm lk	shall bear you seven boys,
wtmm. tttmmm lk.	eight, even, shall she produce for you.
tld. ysb[.]ǵlm	She shall bear the boy Yaṣṣubu etc.

etc.

This segment begins with staircase parallelism, used here to delay the nature of the action predicted of Kirta's wife ("(she) will bear seven sons/children for you"). This is only a partial climax; the real climax comes two lines later when the birth of Yṣb (Yaṣṣubu) is foretold[10].

l) 1.15 iii 17-19.

tbrk. ilm. tity	The gods gave blessing and went,
tity. ilm lahlhm	the gods went to their tents,
dr.il. lmšknthm	El's family (went) to their dwellings.

The destination of the gods is not made clear until the second line. At the same time, generic "the gods" is specified as "the generation of El".

m) 1.17 v 9-13 (and par.)

bnši ^cnh. wyphn.	On raising his eyes he did see him,

bnši ^{c}*nh. wyphn.*   On raising his eyes he did see him,

balp šd. rbt. kmm.   a thousand acres away, ten thousand hectares

hlk. ktr ky^{c}n etc.   Kothar's gait he perceived etc.[11].

It is not immediately clear who it is that Danel has seen since the reference for the pronominal suffix in the first line does not transpire till line 3. Evidently, too, *blp šd rbt kmm* is used as a filler in order to sustain the (mild) suspense.

n) 1.17 vi 20-25

adr. tqbm blbnn.   The finest ash-trees from Lebanon,

adr. gdm. brumm   the finest sinews from wild oxen,

adr. qrnt. by^{c}lm.   the finest horns from mountain-goats,

mtnm b^{c}qbt. tr.   (the finest) tendons from a bull's hocks,

adr bġl il. qnm   the finest reeds from vast cane-brakes,

tn. lktr.whss.   give to Kothar-and-Hasis;

yb^{c}l. qšt. l^{c}nt   he'll make a bow for Anath,

qs^{c}t. lybmt. limm.   arrows for the sister-in-law of the peoples.

Five lines are devoted to listing the components to be collected, in the sixth Anath is told whom to give them to and only then is the end-product (i.e. the composite bow) actually mentioned[12].

o) 1.18 i 12-14

w[qra] aqht. wypltk   And call Aqht so he may deliver you,

bn [dnil] wy^{c}drk.   Dnil's son and he'll free you

byd. btlt. [^{c}nt]   from the hand of Virgin Anath[13].

The completion of the verbal action (line one, parallel to line two) comes in line three.

p) 1.19 iv 51-52

agrtn. bat. bddk.   Our employer has come into your pavillion,

[ ] bat. bhlm.   [PN] has come into your tent.

The identity of the newcomer, announced to Yatpan, is first given as "she who hired us" and then, presumably, as her name. Whether this is *[pġt]* (as in

ll. 48. 50. 55) or [ᶜ*nt*] because she looks like that goddess is still uncertain.

q) 1.23 50(// 55)

hn.	See !
špthm. mtqtm.	Their lips are sweet,
mtqtm. klrmm[*m*]	sweet as pomegranates.

The simile is delayed slightly.

CLASSIFICATION

Before considering these seventeen examples in Ugaritic it is necessary
to clarify the terminology by setting out some definitions, illustrated by
passages from other ancient Near Eastern traditions.

In "particularizing parallelism" an indeterminate or common noun men-
tioned in one line of verse is more narrowly defined in a later line. For
example, *Ezek* 30:13a:

wh' bdty glwlym	I will destroy idols[14]
whšbty 'lylym mmp	I will wipe out 'gods' from Noph(= Memphis).

The generic term "idols", which could denote any kind of cult objects
is here specified as the gods of Memphis. Another designation for this type
is "delayed identification". A good example is *Sir* 48:1-11 where Elijah's
name is held over until v.4[15].

Other examples are of the type "epithet" // "PN" as in *Sir* 47:12-13:

[*w*]*b*ᶜ*bwrw* ᶜ*md 'hryw*	And because of him (i.e. David) as his suc-
	cessor came
bn mśkyl šwkn lbth	a shrewd son who lived in security.
šlmh mlk bymy šlwh	SOLOMON was king in times of peace
w'l hnyḥ lw msbyb	and God gave him tranquillity all around.

Here the vague epithet *bn mśkyl* is parallel to the personal name *šlmh*[16]. To
this category also belong *Isa* 22:15b (*hškn hzh // šbn'*) and *Isa* 22:20[17]. Si-
milarly, the "city" of *Lam* 1:1 is not named until 1:4 (as Zion) and is refer-
red to as "Jerusalem" only in 1:7.

This type of delay is taken to extremes in Akkadian (Assyro-Babylonian)

poetry. For example, in a neo-Babylonian Lament which runs to 23 lines the blame for depriving Ištar "of her spouse" (line 5), "her beloved spouse" (ll. 13. 23) is assigned to Bel (= Marduk) only in the final line. In fact, as Lambert comments, "the most striking thing about this Akkadian text comes like a hammer-blow at the end, in the very last word"[18]. Similarly, the hero of the Gilgamesh Epic is not actually named until line 26 of the first tablet (col. i)[19]. By contrast, Erra of the Erra Epic is named in line 5 of tablet I, though even there the focus is on Išum, his opposite number[20]. The name Nabu in a prayer to that god occurs first in line 7[21]; in a hymn to Marduk the god is first named in line 8[22]; Ninurta's name is delayed to line 15 in a prayer to him[23] and so on.

In the "parallelism of greater precision" a rather vague expression in the first line is made clearer, more explicit in the second. One of the examples provided by Clines is *Isa* 40:22:

hnwth kdq šmym   who stretches out the heavens like a thin thing,
wymthm k'hl lšbt   and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

As he notes, "the blurred and indefinite image of line A [i.e. *dq*, "something thin"] is brought into focus in line B"[24]. See also *Jer* 5:15 and *Ps* 59:4.

A third kind of delaying device is more dramatic in character and does not seem to have been recognised. In such cases the beginning of an action is described but only later is the reason (or the effect) of the action (or sequence of actions) made clear. For want of a better term I have used the descriptive label "dramatic delay".

For example, in the Babylonian Theodicy seven and a half lines intervene between "I will ask you a question" (line 25) and the question itself "Can a life of bliss be assured ?" (line 33)[25].

Ezek 30:2-3

hylylw   Wail:
hh lywm ky-qrwb ywm   'What a day !' for the day is near,
wqrwb ywm lyhwh   and the day of Yahweh is near,

yum ^{c}*nn* ^{c}*t guym yhyh* etc.   a day of clouds, disaster-time for the nations
will it be[26].

Gen 49:5-7b.14-15; *Ezek* 12:1-6; 27:3b-26 (ignoring prose insert: 10-25;contrast
26:17ff); 28:2b-7; 30:2b-4; *Isa* 40:9-10; *Mic* 1:2ff; *Nah* 2:1; *Prov* 1:11-15. 20-
26; 2:1-5; 9:1-6; *Job* 4:12-17; 27:2-4; 28:1-12; 32:6-33:3 (long introduction);
31:5-6. 7-8. 9-12. 13ff. 16-22. 24-26 (climax). An example in prose is 1 *Sam* 3:
15b.

Once these definitions have been applied to Ugaritic the examples of delay
in various guises and degrees can be assigned to the following slots,though the
lines of demarcation are not always clear.

DELAYED IDENTIFICATION   a), b), i), m), p).

PARALLELISM OF GREATER PRECISION   c), l), o), q).

DRAMATIC DELAY   d), e), f), g), h), i), j), k), n).

The table shows that most of the examples can be assigned to "dramatic
delay". What is not shown is that in many of the examples there is a partial
climax followed by a full dénouement, a double delay as it were. This applies
to a), f), i), k) and n). There are also some mixtures. It can be noted, too,
that examples b) and q) are relatively weak.

As Clines has remarked, in Hebrew the parallelism of greater precision
is related to staircase parallelism, number parallelism, automatism, word-
pairs and ballast-variants[27]. This applies to Ugaritic, too, of course. Ad-
ditional types of delay are introduction to speech[28], riddles[29], rhetorical
questions[30] and distant parallelism[31]. Here, too, can be mentioned the
cumulative simile found in both Hebrew and Ugaritic[32].

The function of these different kinds of delay is not suspense[33] so much as
the carrying forward of the narrative by impelling the reader/listener to pay
attention. Significant, too, is the subordinate role played by parallelism to
the need for sustaining the attention of the audience/reader[34].

A final example, once again from Akkadian (the Story of Adapa)[35], will
show how there can be a succession of different delaying devices in a single
passage:

eṭlu ana manni kâ emâta

^{I}*adapa ana manni karra lubšata*

ina mātini ilū šina ḫalqūma

anāku akana epšeku

mannu ilū šena ša ina māti ḫalqū

^{d}*dumuzi u* ^{d}*gizzida šūnu*

"Young man, for whom have you become like this ?

Adapa, for whom are you garbed in mourning ?"

(First delay: generic *eṭlu* // PN; repeated question).

"From our land two gods have disappeared

and (therefore) I still act in this manner"

(Second delay: identity of gods withheld, forcing the next question).

"Who are the two gods who have disappeared from the land ?"

(Third delay: Adapa's words repeated in the form of a question).

"They are Dumuzi and Gizzida !"

(At last, the answer to the initial question).

There is no real "suspense" since the gods are named in line 24(// 39) and these are the very gods who are asking the questions, but the fact remains that this six-lines exchange assists the thrust of the narrative. Paradoxically, therefore, delaying devices, if skilfully used, do not slow up the linear reading of a text but function instead as part of its dynamic forward impulse.

———

1) W.G.E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: a Guide to its Techniques* (JSOT Suppl. Series 26), Sheffield 1984. 1986^2 11.16, 338-39, also 25 and 34.

2) B. Alster, *Studies in Sumerian Proverbs*, Copenhagen 1975, 55. He notes: "The origin of Sumerian parallelism is obviously the oral technique of composing. Therefore the most common type is the 'adding' parallelism

which makes it easy to expand an idea into two or more lines, while at the same time keeping the listener in suspense about the issue. This is the reason why the persons are usually not introduced by name in the first phrase in a group ... or are introduced first by an epithet". But see note 33 below.

3) A. Berlin, *Shared Rhetorical Features in Biblical and Sumerian Literature*: JANES, 10 (1978), 35-42, esp. 35-37. See also her *Enmerkar and Ensuhkešdanna. A Sumerian Narrative Poem*, Philadelphia 1979, 15, n.24.

4) D.J.A. Clines, *The Parallelism of Greater Precision. Notes from Isaiah 40 for a Theory of Hebrew Poetry*, in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. E.R. Follis (JSOT Suppl. Series 40), Sheffield 1987, 77-100.

5) Translation: MLC 172; cf. glossary, 561, under *yqy*. To his cognates add Akk. *(w)aqû*, "to wait for, await", AHw, 1461-62 (where Ethiopic *wqī*, "keep, preserve" is also cited). Does this explain the PN Aqht ?

6) It looks as if an underlying example of staircase parallelism ($trh\dot{s}$ *ydh btlt* ^{c}nh // $trh\dot{s}$ *ydh bdm drr*) has been expanded by an inserted couplet.

7) See the comment in MLC, 137.

8) Omitting line 20 as dittographical.

9) Here I follow MLC, 296; contrast Gibson, CML^2, 86. The effect is the same in either version.

10) For the overall meaning here cf. D.T. Tsumura, *The Problem of Childlessness in the Royal Epic of Ugarit*, in (T. Mikasa ed.) *Monarchies and Socio-Religious Traditions in the Ancient Near East*, Wiesbaden 1984, 11-20.

11) T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew*, Jerusalem 1985, 158-64 discusses Ug. *k* but he remains sceptical that "the alleged emphatic *k* in Ugaritic is a case of genuinely analogous use (i.e. to emphatic *kî* in Hebrew)". See, too, A. Aejmelaeus, *Function and Interpretation of* כִּי *in Biblical Hebrew*: JBL, 105 (1986), 193-209, esp. 208.

12) For possible corrections to these lines cf. J. Sanmartín, *Zu ug. adr in KTU 1.17 VI 20-23*: UF, 9 (1977), 371-73. For *adr* he prefers the meaning "(the) strongest". On composite bows cf. B. Margalit, *The Ugaritic Poem of AQHT: Analysis and Interpretation, Seminar Papers SBL Annual Meeting 1986* (Scholars Press), 246-61, esp. 250. 259-60. Also R. Miller - E. Mc Ewen - C. Bergman, *Experimental Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Archery: World Archaeology*, 18 (1986), 178-95.

13) Other restorations: $w[t\check{s}al]$; $w[yba]$; $w[\dot{s}h.^{c}m]$; see MLC, 381.

14) It is possible that *glwl* means "stela"; see M. Greenberg, *Ezechiel 1-20*, Garden City 1983, 132 for discussion and bibliography. In support of this meaning cf. *gll*, "stone" in the phrase *tynr' rbh dygll*, "a large flint rock

of unhewn stone" in line 14 of Bowl 13, edited by J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls. Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* , Jerusalem-Leiden 1985, 200-201 (though they do not make the connection with Hebr. *glwl*).

15) Contrast the Greek text with Ελιας in the first line.

16) This reverses the standard PN_1 // *bn* PN_2 sequence; see *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 133. It is here that Mesopotamian verse diverges from West Semitic tradition. In Sumerian and Akkadian verse a generic epithet (or occasionally no epithet, i.e. 0) is matched by the name of a god or person in the corresponding slot of the parallel line in what has been termed "substitution parallelism". In Ugaritic and Hebrew the personal or proper name comes first, with an epithet as its equivalent in the next line. In effect, these are forms of antonomasia.

17) A. Berlin, *Shared Rhetorical Features*, 37 cites *Deut* 32:9; *Pss* 29:5 and 89: 4.

18) Text and translation: W.G. Lambert, *A Neo-Babylonian Tammuz Lament*: JAOS, 103 (1983), 211-15; his comment is on 214.

19) Text and translation: D.J. Wiseman, *A Gilgamesh Fragment from Nimrud: Iraq*, 37 (1975), 157-63 on 160-61. This would correspond to the second line of the *narû* tablet presumed to begin in line 25. According to J.H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*, Philadelphia 1982, 140-44 this is a later addition.

20) Cf. P. Machinist: JAOS, 103 (1983), 223, n.15.

21) M.-J. Seux, *Hymnes et prières aux dieux de Babylonie et d'Assyrie*, Paris 1976, 265-66.

22) *Ibid.*, 128-31.

23) *Ibid.*, 314ff.

24) Clines, *Parallelism of Greater Precision*, 79.

25) W.G. Lambert, BWL, 72-73. Also, Ee IV 123-26 (cited by Lambert: JAOS, 103 [1983], 214 n.4) and add IV 119-22.

26) W. Zimmerli, BKAT XIII/2, 723 translates: "[Heulet :] Ha, der Tag ! Ja, nahe ist ein Tag, 'nahe' ist der Tag Jahwes, ein Tag des Gewölks, (Gerichts-)Zeit der Völker wird er sein".

27) Clines, *Parallelism of Greater Precision*, 87-93. On climax in number parallelism cf. G. del Olmo Lete: *Biblica*, 67 (1986), 68-74, esp. 70 where he remarks "el último [miembro de la serie] es siempre climático".

28) See W.G.E. Watson, *Introductions to Discourse in Ugaritic Narrative Verse*:

AuOr, 1 (1983), 253-61. Note, in Hebrew, *Deut* 32:1-3 (8 lines); *Joel* 1:2-3. 5. 8. 11. 13; 2:1; 3:9.

29) E.g. *Prov* 23:29(-30).

30) E.g. *Isa* 60:9; *Mic* 6:6-7; see my *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 338-42.

31) An example is Ee IV 138 and V 62, which describes what happened to the two halves of Tiamat's body.

32) Examples in *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 259 and add *Prov.* 26:2. An example of delay in a prose text (KTU 5.9) is discussed by D. Pardee and R.M. Whiting: BSOAS, 50 (1987), 10-11.

33) Berlin, *Shared Rhetorical Features*, 36 n.6 denies there is an element of suspense in the particularizing stanza as Alster proposed (see above note 2). On delay and suspense cf. S. Ullmann, *Language and Style*, Oxford 1966, 105. 106 and 188. Also, W. Weaver, *Probability, Rarity, Interest and Surprise*: *Scientific Monthly*, 67 (1948), 290-92 and the remarks by C. Osgood and G.M. Miller, in T.A. Sebeok(ed.), *Style in Language*, Cambridge. Mass. 1960, 100 and 394-95 respectively.

34) If delay is the superordinate then the feature "parallelism" shared by the different types of parallelism in general may only superficially be a common component.

35) Text and translation: S.A. Picchioni, *Il poemetto di Adapa*, Budapest 1981, 116-17 and 118-19 (= Frammento B 26-31 // rev. 51-56).