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"A Janus Parallelism in the Baal and `Anat Story."

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A JANUS PARALLELISM IN THE BAAL AND ANAT STORY[1]

ABSTRACT

Janus parallelism is a literary device in which a middle stich of poetry parallels in a polysemous manner both the line that precedes it and the line that follows it. Though numerous examples have been discovered in the Hebrew Bible, hitherto, only one example has been proposed in Ugaritic. Though there is reason to reject the previously proposed example, there is sufficient evidence for the device elsewhere in Ugaritic.

1.   THE DISCOVERY OF JANUS PARALLELISM

One of the most sophisticated of all ancient Semitic literary devices is that of "Janus Parallelism". The term describes a literary device in which a middle stich of poetry parallels in a polysemous manner both the line that precedes it and the line that follows it. Since the discovery of Janus parallelism in the Hebrew Bible by C. H. Gordon (1978:59-66), several scholars have continued the search and have found additional examples of the device (e.g., Rendsburg 1980:291-93; Zurro 1981:546-47; and Paul 1992:147-163).[2] More recently, the present writer has discovered the presence of Janus parallelism in Akkadian literature as well (Noegel 1991:419-21; 1994:306-308).

2.   A PREVIOUSLY NOTED EXAMPLE OF JANUS PARALLELISM IN UGARITIC

In 1984 W G E Watson (1984:159) noted the presence of what he believed to be a Janus parallelism in the Ugaritic text KTU 1.3 II:23-26.

23.   *mid tmthsn wt'n*

She fought hard and looked

24.   *thtsb wthdy 'nt*

Anat battled and gazed

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1   I would like to thank Prof. Gary Rendsburg for his helpful comments on this note.
2   However, I do not accept all of Paul's examples.

25.   *tġdd kbdh bṣḥq ymlu*

Her belly swelled with laughter

26.   *lbh bšmḫt...*

Her heart filled with happiness

2.1   *Why Watson's example is not q Janus parallelism*

Watson saw the verb *ḥdy* in line 24 as meaning both "gaze" and "rejoice". As the former, Watson maintained, *ḥdy* parallels *'n* "see" in line 23 and as the latter, it parallels *ṣḥq* "laughter" in line 25. However, Watson's example does not stand up to closer scrutiny, for he has confused two roots in Ugaritic. The root *ḥdy* means only "gaze" and the root for "rejoice" is *ḥdw* (Gordon 1965:394, 400). The roots are never interchanged in Ugaritic, and indeed they have only one root letter in common, the middle radical *d*. Thus, Watson's proposed Janus parallelism should be rejected, though the passage may be an example of paronomasia.

3.   ANOTHER PROPOSED EXAMPLE OF JANUS PARALLELISM IN UGARITIC

Nevertheless, though Watson's example cannot be included among the growing list of polysemous parallels, the texts from Ugarit do contain at least one example of the device, and that in the Baal and Anat cycle, KTU 1.4 III:14-18, where we read:

14.   *yštn aṯrt lbmt 'r*

He sets Asherah on the back of an ass

15.   *lysmsmt bmt pḥl*

On the beautiful back of a donkey

16.   *qdš yuḥdm šb'r*

Qadish seizes, he *šb'r*

17.   *amrr kkbkb lpnm*

Even Amrar like a star before him

18.   *aṯr btlt 'nt*

Marches the virgin Anat

3.1   *Support for the newly proposed Janus parallelism*

Of significance here is *šb'r* at the end of line 16. Gordon (1965:375) suggested that the root *b'r* may "have a double meaning of 'leading (a caravan)' and 'shining (like a star)'".[3] Both meanings are attested. As "lead" we find the root *b'r* in KTU 1.14 IV:27 and KTU 2.31:54; and as "shine" in KTU 1.16 II:18 and KTU 1.3 IV:26. KTU 1.4 III:16 allows for both readings as it provides a context for each. As "lead (a caravan)" *šb'r* parallels the caravan preparations which Qadish-and-Amrar makes in lines 14-15. (This usage is supported also by cognates from Modern South Arabian. See Rendsburg [1987:625].) This connection is strengthened by a paronomasia between *šb'r* and *'r* "donkey" in line 14.[4] As "shines" the polyseme anticipates *amrr kkbkb lpnm* "even Amrar like a star before him" in line 17.[5]

3.2   *How some translators have treated the passage*

The inherent ambiguity of *šb'r* can be seen by the differences in the various translations. Though aware of the possibility of multiple readings, Gordon (1977:93) opts to translate "Qadish begins to light the way". De Moor (1987:52), on the other hand, translates "Qidshu took the lead".[6] Ginsberg (1958:133) likewise translates: "Qadesh proceeds to lead". Dietrich and Loretz (1990:41-54) similarly render the lexeme with "wegzuführen". Van Zijl (1972:95), allowing for both possibilities, reads it: "*Qdš* began to lead (shine)".

4.   CONCLUSION

Thus, though there is reason to reject Watson's example of Janus parallelism in KTU 1.3 II:23-26 there is one clear instance of the device in the Baal and Anat story in KTU 1.4 III:16.

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3   The root also can mean "pillage; turn down; disappoint".

4   Note also the paronomasia between *aṯrt* "Asherah" in line 18 and *aṯr* "marches" in line 18.

5   There may be an additional play on *šb'r* as "pillage" as it immediately follows *yuḥdm* "he seizes" in line 16.

6   Note his note 231 on the same page: "Others: 'took a torch' or 'kindled a torch'".

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