UGARITIC SPELLING ERRORS
By M. E. J. RICHARDSON

Ilimilku, or Elimelek if his name is Hebraized, was a man who would have commanded our respect, for he was one of the very neat scribes at the city of Ugarit in the thirteenth century BC. We may identify him from his autograph at the end of one of the tablets from the story of Baal:

'The scribe was Ilmlk from Šbn, a pupil of Atnprln, chief priest and chief pastor from Ṯ'y'[1]

He has left his mark on another tablet[2] and Mlle. A. Herdner, who has worked through the collection as a whole, has described his handwriting as 'écriture fine', 'serée', 'menue', or 'soignée'. It is not 'grande' or 'grossière' like that of other scribes.

While his handwriting commands our unqualified respect, his spelling is often questionable. The tablet which he wrote and which has just been cited contained about 310 lines originally. At present only 180 lines are preserved, and some of these are partly damaged, but in the part that is legible at least twenty spelling errors have been observed. In other words, 3% or 4% of the words are spelled wrongly, and this is a disturbingly large percentage. Had mistakes occurred to this extent in the Hebrew Bible they would be found in every third or fourth line of most manuscripts. There is general disagreement about the extent of textual corruption in the Old Testament, but F. Delitzsch discussed over three thousand errors.[3] Although many of these could now be discounted in the light

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* Delivered at Tyndale House, Cambridge, in July 1971.
[1] A. Herdner, *Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques* . . . , Imprimerie Nationale, Paris (1963), 6 vi. 53–56; abbreviated CTA hereafter.
[2] CTA 16 vi. colophon.
[3] F. Delitzsch, *Die Lese- und Schreibfehler im Alten Testament* . . . , de Gruyter, Berlin (1920).

of modern scholarship, in the same light others could very easily be added to the list. So it seems pertinent to examine the supposed scribal lapses at Ugarit in the hope that their significance may shed light in the discussion of similar errors in Biblical manuscripts.

TYPES OF ERROR

As far as the Old Testament is concerned different reasons are given for suggesting an emendation of the text. The emendation may be described as *substantiated* if the preferred reading is found in an alternative Hebrew manuscript, or if it is inferred from an ancient translation. The critic can refer to clear objective factors to support his emendation, having given due consideration to the accuracy of the parallel Hebrew manuscript or to the particular style of the translator in question. When manuscript evidence is not sufficient to warrant emendation an error is described as *conjectural*. Usually the critic is able to use contextual or philological evidence to justify his conjecture, but a conjecture it remains.

As yet no duplicate tablet has been found at Ras Shamra and the one fragmentary ancient translation that is known is extremely paraphrastic.[4] Any supposed error cannot then be substantiated in the way that a biblical error can be. But there is a considerable amount of repetition in Ugaritic literature and within one text a given theme is often restated. It is reasonable to examine such parallel passages for spelling consistency and where they differ to use the one to substantiate the other.

Often a slip of the pen is quite insignificant because the writer's intentions have not been obscured in any way. It is only when ambiguity or misunderstanding arises that an error really becomes important. The difference between the two types can be made plain by using the terms *simple* and *complex*. Many of the letters of the Ugaritic alphabet are distinguished from others by only one wedge so that a slip of the stylus is likely to be a complex error in so far as the reader will read a different Ugaritic letter from the one intended. But for the error to be truly complex it will be necessary that that unintended letter

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[4] RS 17.227 and duplicate RS 17.382-380 and CTA 64; see further M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, *Die Welt des Orients* 3 (1966) 206-245.

in turn forms another Ugaritic word, and that that unintended word is as tolerable in the context of the sentence as the intended word would have been. It is unusual for such a set of circumstances to combine.

Only very rarely is the authenticity of a whole sentence called into question. Usually it is a matter of deciding whether a single word, letter or letter-constituent should be omitted or restored. The usual excuses offered for a scribe are concerned with the frequent necessity to repeat an element. If he is copying a repetitive text he will tend to omit an element from time to time (*haplography*), and any supposed errors of addition will be most frequent in a repetitive context too (*dittography*). If the prevailing type of error is dittography the scribe has probably been copying painstakingly, allowing his eyes to dwell on the sign for a long time. But if he is more prone to haplography we may infer that he wrote hurriedly, understanding what he wrote but carelessly omitting elements here and there.

Apart from being on his guard against the dangers of committing haplography or dittography the scribe was beset with the problem of phonetic variation tolerated among the speakers of Ugaritic. It would be quite unreasonable to expect from the ancient scribe a standardized spelling; he would be more likely to write as he spoke. If some variants were transposed into spoken Ugaritic, they would be recognized as dialect differences conforming to the established pattern of phonetic change. The variation could have arisen either from the writer's own speech habits or from those of an assistant who was dictating to him.

For the Bible student, then, these errors are full of interest. The types of mistake that occur in the transmission of clay tablets are essentially the same as those that occur in the biblical manuscripts. It is certainly more difficult to write an afterthought with a stylus on a baked clay tablet than on parchment with pen and ink, but the order in which tablets should be read can be confused as easily as the leaves of a codex can come loose. A cracked tablet is as hard to reconstruct as a perished scroll. It is not surprising that the types of error within the manuscript are also similar.

Perhaps these are not really errors at all. We can make all kinds of excuses for the scribe and in many cases he may well

have intended to write those forms modern critics find strange. Certain spelling inconsistencies are tolerable given that the written language will always vacillate between spelling with some graphemes that represent the contemporary spoken language and with others, phonemically identical, that reflect an older stage of the language. The distinction must be made between *real error*, which the scribe would have corrected if it had been pointed out to him, and *free variation*. The spelling of the latter, he may well have contended, was his prerogative to decide.

THE JOURNEY OF KING KRT

One of the best known Ugaritic texts is the legend of Krt, which is recorded on three separate tablets. The story is about a king who has been left without an heir. As he bemoans his unhappy lot the chief god El appears to him in a vision and gives him detailed directions to set out and capture a beautiful princess from the city of Udm. This vision occupies some one hundred lines of the first tablet (lines 52–153) and afterwards the king sets out on his journey as directed. The narration of the journey to Udm is told in similar detail (lines 154–300) and corresponds very closely indeed to the directions in the earlier speech of El. The sequence of events can be divided into five episodes. Krt is told:

(a) to wash and paint himself red, to eat and drink and make a sacrifice on the pinnacle of the temple tower in preparation for the journey;

(b) to set out with a vast army of people on a seven-day expedition to Udm;

(c) to lie in wait for a further seven days;

(d) to receive a message from Pbl, the king of Udm;

(e) to refuse the bribe which he will offer to him to persuade him to return, leaving the girl behind him.

All the details of the vision are repeated in the narration and two extra events are added.

(f) Krt breaks his seven-day journey on the third day at Tyre to make sacrifices.

(g) On his arrival at Udm a scene in the palace of King Pbl

is described in which he shouts at his wife because (?) he has been disturbed by the siege of his city.

These extra details emphasize two recurring motifs in the story. The first, which may be called the *seven-day motif*, first occurs in episode (b). El tells Krt:

'Travel for a day then another,
a third and a fourth day,
a fifth and a sixth day,
But at evening[5] on the seventh,
when you arrive at the main town of Udm . . .' (lines 106ff.)

A little later, in episode (c) he is told to wait for seven days in similar terms.

'Rest for a day then another,
a third and a fourth day,
a fifth and a sixth day. . . .
Then just at evening on the seventh,
when King Pbl will not be sleeping . . .' (lines 114ff. 119ff.)

In the narration the motif is repeated on both occasions[6] so that it occurs four times in the tablet altogether and this is a deliberate feature in the story-telling style. In disrupting the third occurrence of the motif, episode (f) emphasizes its function.

The second motif, which may be called the *bribe motif*, occurs first as an initial response from Krt to El at the theophany:

'Why should I want to own silver or yellow gold,
his estates with slaves for life, or three horses and chariots
from the stable of a slave girl's son?' (lines 52–56)

These words are repeated in the vision when El first tells Krt that Pbl will offer him a bribe (lines 126–129, beginning 'Accept silver . . .') and also when he is told to reject the bribe (lines 137–141). In the narration they occur another three times; when Pbl despatches his messengers (lines 250–254), during the messengers' conversation with Krt (lines 269–273) and when Krt rejects the bribe (lines 282–287). Although the

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[5] The alternative translation 'at dawn' would suppose that the expedition marched at night.
[6] Lines 194ff. +lines 207–210 and lines 218–221.

tablet is broken it would not be unreasonable to assume that
the messengers go on to relay the news of the rejected bribe to
their master. They may even tell his wife too. So this story is
full of parallel passages. Because it is written on one tablet it is
ideally suited to this investigation for it is all the work of one
scribe.

VARIANT READINGS[6a]

Episode a.   The preparation for the journey.

	vision 62–84		narration 156–175	
example 1	amt	63	amth	157
example 2	qḥ.im[r.bydk]		lqḥ,imr.dbḥ.bydh	
	imr.d[bḥ.bm].ymn		lla.klatnm	159ff.
	lla.kl[atn]m	66ff.		
example 3	ʻllẓr.[mg]dl		wʻly.lẓr.mgdl	165f.
	wʻllẓr.[mg]dl	73f.		
example 4	šmm	76	šmmh	168
example 5	bn.dgn	78	bndgn	170
example 6	wyrd	79	yrd	171

The most trivial of these examples is 5, where a word divider
is omitted in the narration. This happens frequently in Ugaritic
especially when it separates two closely related nouns.[7] In this
example the two nouns are in construct relationship. Such an
omission of the word divider may be compared to the sporadic
writing of *maqqeph* in Biblical Hebrew. In example 6 the copula
is omitted without any apparent change of meaning. The
copula may give a slightly softer nuance to the sentence but
the deep structure of the utterance has not been changed and
so the error is a simple one.

In example 1 an /h/ is added. This is another instance of a
change of surface structure without a change in deep structure.
This /h/ may be interpreted in two distinct ways. Either it is a
third person singular masculine pronominal suffix or it may be
a locative /-h/. But in example 4 the variable /h/ with /šmm(h)/
must be construed as locative, which means that the writings
/šmm/ and /amt/ are probably to be construed as adverbial

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accusatives. With these examples it is difficult to resist the conclusion that in Ugaritic locative /h/ is a 'grammaticalization' of the locative function of the accusative, which is a common Semitic usage.[8] It does not seem to be a consonantal bound morpheme but an artificial spelling device to distinguish a special meaning of bound morpheme /ā/.

The other two examples are concerned more with words than with letters. The sentence in lines 66ff. could be described as an extended colon of the pattern abc–bdc–bc.[9] The poet has four ideas to convey:

(1) VERB — take
(2) OBJECT — animal
(3) EPITHET — sacrificial
(4) ADVERB — manually

These four basic ideas are conveyed by the first six words, which contain two semantically synonymous pairs. The OBJECT and the ADVERB are emphasized by their repetition in the third stichos. Later this becomes a bicolon of the pattern xyz–yz, where x = a, y = b + d, z = c. The information and the emphasis are the same; only the poetic structure has changed.

The only error in this episode which is generally recognized as such is example 3. Technically the text may not be at fault for it is possible to translate lines 74f.:

'Go to the top of the tower, yea go to the top of the tower' or
'Go right up to the top of the tower' or
'Go to the top of the tower, and on the top of the tower. . . .'

but such verbatim repetition in parallel cola is rare. In deleting line 73 it is assumed that the scribe has written a dittograph. The position of the /w/ means that it is the first phrase and not the second which is called into question and so we may understand that line 76 is an attempt to correct line 75, which had been written without the /w/. But why the wrong line was not scored away is obscure. Whichever version is preferred, the general meaning of the text is still clear.

Episode b.   The expedition to *Udm*.

	vision 85–108		narration 176–195 206–211	
example 7	hpt.dbl.spr tnn.dbl.ng	90f.	*omitted*	
example 8	wlrbt	93	wl.rbt	181
example 9	wyṣi	100	wybl	189
example 10	lm.nkr	102	lnkr	191
example 11	mddth	103	mddt	191
example 12	kirby	103	kmirby	192
example 13	km.ḥsn	105	khsn	193
example 14	rbʿym	106	rbʿ.ym	208

The omission of the word divider in 8 and 14 is like example 5, except that here it is the vision which omits them. Examples 10, 12 and 13 show that the prepositions /l/ and /k/ are freely interchangeable with the corresponding two-syllable forms /lm/ and /km/.[10] A similar freedom of usage is seen in biblical Hebrew verse between the inseparable prepositions and their separable counterparts. The omission of the third person masculine singular suffix /h/ in example 11 is interesting for it raises the question of whether the suffix was omitted idiomatically or whether it was a vocalic morpheme and only sporadically written in an essentially consonantal script.

The omission of the two phrases describing the size of the army in example 7 is without great significance. There is nothing to suggest that the army Krt actually took was different from the one described to him by El. This is just the kind of phrase that would suggest to biblical critics the possibility of a later gloss. Such a suggestion would be quite inappropriate here. Similarly the picture of the blind man with his begging bowl is the same in both passages although /ybl/ 'he carried' is used in the narration instead of /yṣi/ 'he held out' according to the vision (example 9). These passages, like example 2, confirm the impression that the scribe is trying to convey the same ideas in both passages but does not feel bound by a particular form of words.

[10] While /l/, /k/, and /b/ may be written as free or bound morphemes, /lm/, /km/, and /bm/ are usually free, so the /kmirby/ (line 192) would have to be examined separately in any study devoted to the word divider.

Episode c. The siege of *Udm.*

vision 107–123		narration 209–227	
example 15	mk.špšm	107	aḫr.špšm	207
example 16	rbm	109	rbt	210
example 17	wgr.nn (word divider)	110	grnn	212
example 18	wgr.nn (copula)	110	grnn	212
example 19	šrn	110	šrnn	213
example 20	ḥtbh	112	ḥtb	214
example 21	bgrnt	112	wbgrnt	215
example 22	bnk	113	bnpk	216
example 23	bbqr	113	wbmqr (copula)	216f.
example 24	bbqr	113	wbmqr (bb⟨bm)	216f.
example 25	ymš	115	ḥmš	220
example 26	whn.špšm	118	mk[.]špšm	221
example 27	ṭigt	120	ṭiqt	223
example 27a	nqht	121	nhqt	224[11]

Here are more errors involving the word-divider (example 17) and the copula (examples 18, 21, 23). It is interesting to observe that the strong energic /nn/ could be written independently (example 17) and that it could alternate with the simple energic suffix /n/ (example 19). There was probably no great difference in word order or meaning whichever form was used. There is another example of the omission of the third person singular pronominal suffix (example 20) and the particles /hn/ and /mk/ appear to be interchangeable (example 26) as do /mk/ and /aḫr/ (example 15).

Two words are spelled unusually in this episode, and three quite wrongly. The omission of /p/ in example 22 has arisen because of the juxtaposition of the two similar signs for /p/ and for /k/ which are both written with two long horizontal strokes (see Figure 1). It should be described as a haplography of the second pair of horizontals. The error is simple because /bnk/ is unintelligible in this context. Example 16 arises from a dittograph of letter constituents, here a vertical stroke. The letter /t/ followed by two word-dividers instead of one has become indistinguishable from /m/ followed by one word-divider. Similarly in example 25 /ḫ/ written twice has become

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[11] This is a misprint in CTA; the transcription and photograph read /nhqt/.

confused with /y/. Neither of these lapses leads to serious misunderstanding of the text and it is unlikely that a scribe who knew Ugaritic would have perpetuated them in any future copy he made from this tablet. Example 27 shows that an emphatic consonant (/q/) in a word may be changed to the corresponding unemphatic voiced counterpart (/g/), and something similar has happened in example 24 where the nasalized bi-labial (/m/) has become a voiced bi-labial (/b/). When such variants can be explained by the usual rules of phonological change, the text in question has probably been composed from memory (or possibly dictation) rather than copied.

Episode d.   The message of King *Pbl*.

	vision 125–136		narration 268–280	
example 28	wng.mlk, lbty.		rḥq[.]mlk[.]lbty	
	rḥq.krt, lḥẓry.	131ff.	n[g.]krt[.]lḥẓ[ry]	279ff.
example 29	wng	131	rḥq (no copula)	279
example 30	ytna	135	y[t]n[t]	277
example 31	ilwušn	135	il[.]ušn (word divider)	278
example 32	ilwušn	135	il[.]ušn (no copula)	278

The omission of the introductory copula (example 29) is the same as before, but the omission of the word divider is unexpected (example 31). There is a definite pause after /il/, because /ušn/ heads a new phrase. Clearly the scribe has been pressed for space, which has led to the omission of this word divider and one in the previous line (line 134 wudmṭrrt). There are sixteen signs in line 134 and fifteen in line 135, whereas the average length of lines in this tablet is twelve signs.

The climax of *Pbl*'s speech is the declaration that *Udm* is a divine gift. This is the one reason he suggests for *Krt* to move off, but in the narration he mentions the divine interest in the city before telling *Krt* to depart, whereas in the *vision* El mentioned it last of all. In lines 131–136 and 275–280 there are three closely inter-linked sentences, and it matters very little in which order they are written, but not only has the one sentence been displaced, there has also been an exchange of its main

verbs in the parallel stichoi (example 28). If the semantic structure of this sentence in the vision passage is described as abc–a'b'c', the narration passage is a'bc–ab'c'. There is no question here of a change of meaning, and it is questionable whether any stylistic effect is achieved, for the passages are well separated in the narrative. It is more probable that the scribe varied his forms of expression naturally, and so the variation is very similar to example 2.

The change of /t/ to /a/ may be described loosely as dittography, but that is not accurate since the sign for /a/ does not contain the element used for /t/ (see Figure 1). It may not be a graphic mistake at all, for it is not certain that the suffixed feminine morpheme /t/ was always pronounced consonantally. If this were so, a scribe who tended to write phonetically may well have written a phonemic vowel /ā/ as /a/ or as /h/ instead of the historically correct spelling with /t/.

Episode e.   *Krt*'s refusal of the bribe.

vision 137–153			narration 282–300	
example 33	btrbṣt	141	btrbṣ	286
example 34	špḥ	144	šbḥ	290
example 35	dk.nʿm	145	dknʿm	291
example 36	tḥgrn [x]dm[x],			
	ašlw.bsp.ʿnh.	148f.	*omitted*	
example 37	lkrt	152	lkrkt	298

In example 33 a feminine noun /trbṣt/ is written instead of the usual masculine /trbṣ/. This should not be considered as strong evidence for the possible silent pronunciation of feminine /t/ in Ugaritic because the regular form is the masculine form without /t/. There are several nouns in Semitic which have both a masculine and a feminine form without any change of meaning.[12] Example 34 shows an interchange of similar consonants, as in examples 23 and 27. One of the 'inseparable' prepositions of Hebrew is separated in example 35, as example 8, and a phrase eligible for dismissal as a gloss is omitted in example 36 as in example 7. The error of 37 has clearly arisen through dittography, but it is a little more complicated. The

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[12] *Cf.* S. Moscati *et al. An Introduction to the comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages*, O. Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden (1964) para. 12.34.

final part of the sign (/r/: three short horizontal strokes) has been inadvertently repeated and appears in the text as an extra /k/ (see Figure 1). But the final letter /t/ is correctly
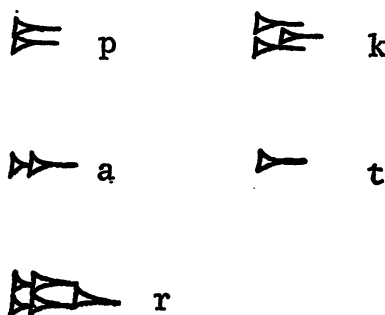

FIGURE I.

written at the beginning of the next line. So the scribe realized his mistake, but did not delete it. In this respect the error is similar to example 2. It is probable that the main reason for this error is the influence of the phrase /šbḥ bkrk/ of line 290, which again suggests the scribe knew this story by heart.[13]

A SERPENT TEXT

Another tablet which is repetitive is a tablet about a serpent.[14] It is written in eleven sections, and each section repeats a formula which is probably an incantation to relieve a snake bite. A different deity is invoked in each section, but the basic formula remains the same. Many words of the formula are spelled differently here and there. The basic formula, which never actually occurs, but is the supposed proto-spelling from which the others derived, can be reconstructed in this way; the translation is a provisional one.

a   tqru. lšpš. umh   Let her call to Shapash her mother

b   špš. um. ql. bl   'Mother Shapash, speak, I pray thee (?)

[13] Since reading this paper, M. Lichtenstein's discussion of CTA 14 in the *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*, 2 (1970) 94–100 has come to my notice. Clearly we have been treading on similar ground.
[14] RS 24.244 edited by C. Virolleaud in C. F. A. Schaeffer *et al. Ugaritica* 5, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale (1968) 564–574.

c ʿm. DIVINE NAME +EPITHET   to DIVINE NAME +EPITHET.
d mnt. nṯk. nḥš   The snake has bitten my limb,
e šmrr. nḥš. ʿqšr   the writhing serpent has
                          poisoned me.
f lnh. mlḫš. abd   May the charmer destroy it
                          for us,
g lnh. ydy. ḥmt   may he rid us of the poison.
h hlm. yṯq. nḥš   If the snake bites him,
i yšlḥm. nḥš. ʿqšr   he shall feed the writhing
                          serpent.
j yʿdb. ksa. wyṯb   Let him bring his chair and sit
                          down.

The variants proper to each section are represented in tabular form on p. 16.

The types of spelling error that occur in this text may be summarized thus:

1 omission of a word	I i	⟨nḥš⟩		
4 omissions of a letter	II j	y⟨ʿ⟩db		
	III a	u⟨m⟩h		
	VI b	qlb⟨l⟩		
	VI i	ʿqš⟨r⟩		
32 omissions of the word-divider	II—three		VII—eight	
	III—one		VIII—five	
	IV—one		IX—three	
	V—one		X—five	
	VI—three		XI—two	
1 addition of a consonant	II d	mnt{y} free variant		
1 addition of the word-divider	VII i	ʿq{.}šr		

The thirty-two errors concerned with the word-divider would be of minimal significance in a repetitive text like this. Every word-divider is correctly written in section I so that every help has been given to the reader for his initial reading. The addition of the word-divider in VII i, /ʿq{.}šr/ is anomalous and bizarre. Where there is a significant change in the text (at I a and XI h–j) it seems to have been made intentionally. The reading /mnty/ at II d involves the writing of a possessive pronoun which is usually omitted. It may be compared with the writings /amth/ (example 1) and /mddth/ (example 11) in

Variant Spellings in the Tablet about a Serpent

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
a	qrit*		uh	tqrulšpš			tqrulšpš	tqrulšpš špšumh		tqrulšpš	tqrulšpš
b		qlbl	bl'm		[q]lbl	qlb	qlbl bl'm	špšum umql	qlbl	qlbl bl'm	qlbl
c		'mb'l									
d		mnty					ntknḥš				
e		'qšrlnh								nḥs'qšr	
f							mlḫšabd	mlḫšabd			
g										ydyḥmt	
h							ytqnḥšy		hlmytq		*omitted**
i	⟨nḥš⟩					nḥš'qš 'qš	yšlḥmnḥš 'q.šr				*omitted**
j		ydb				ksawytb	y'dbksa		y'dbksa		*omitted**

* Intentional variations in the first and last passages.

CTA 14.[15] The other five errors involve the omission of a letter or a word, but cannot be explained readily as haplography.

This text seems to have been written by a scribe who was not very careful. He appears to have been tired when he came to write the middle sections of the tablet, but was more vigilant for the last three sections. Still, he never perpetuated an error from one section to another, and none of his errors can be explained by visual carelessness. We can safely assume that the text was written from memory, or perhaps dictation.

THE DESTRUCTION OF MOT

Finally, let us return to CTA 6, the tablet autographed by the very careful Ilimilku. On two occasions this tablet repeats itself, but not to the same extent as in the *Krt* text. The first passage concerns the details of the destruction of *Mot* by the goddess Anat. She ripped him open with a sword, she winnowed him in a sieve, she burned him with fire, she ground him with millstones, and then she sowed him in a field. In the parallel passage, Mot complains of the treatment he has received before Baal. These are the relevant texts:

CTA 6 ii. 30–35	CTA 6 v. 13–19
Anat's destruction of Mot	Mot's complaint to Baal

a	bḥrb.tbqʻnn.	
b	bḫṭr.tdry,nn.	a′ ʻlk,pht.dry.bḥrb
c	bišt.tšrpnn.	c′ ʻlk,pht.šrp.bišt,
d	brḥm.tthnn.	d′ ʻlk.[pht.tḥ]n.brḥm.
e	bšd,tdrʻnn	b′ ʻ[lk.]pht[.dr]y.bkbrt.
		e′ ʻlk.pht.[x]l[x]bšdm.
		e″ ʻlk.pht,drʻ.bym.

These passages are clearly parallel, but just because the second does not follow the first exactly it is rash to emend the text.[16] In fact Mot complains of Anat's actions in a slightly confused way. He never claims to have been ripped (/bqʻ/) with the sword but to have been winnowed (/dry/) with it. He also claims to have been winnowed with a sieve (/kbrt/) but Anat actually winnowed him with a different sort of sieve

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[15] According to the first suggested interpretation.
[16] One such suggested reconstruction is to be found in G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh (1956) 112.

(/ḫtr/). It is, of course, hard for us to understand how a sieve could be used like a sword. But the meaning does not depend on these words. The verb /dry/, like Hebrew /zrh/, means not only 'to winnow' but also, pregnantly, 'to shred and scatter'. This is the usage in the first line of Mot's complaint and the basic meaning of the word occurs in the fourth line of the quotation.

Now the parallelism becomes clear. The burning and grinding actions are described similarly in lines c and d. The couplet about shredding and scattering (lines a and b) is interrupted in Mot's speech by the burning and grinding. The sowing, described originally in one line, is described by Mot in a couplet. Although these lines are broken it is clear there is no serious attempt by Mot to describe Anat's actions in terms any different from those under which they were conducted. Too much should not be made of the different order of events according to Mot's version. It raises the question of whether his shredded flesh or the burned ashes of his body was scattered, but if precise details are to be recovered, the event would have to have been recorded in prose not verse. This is another example of the freedom of oral tradition at Ugarit.

The second occasion on which the tablet repeats itself is after death of Mot in a passage announcing that Baal is alive.[17] There are two couplets describing the appearance of Ltpn and the heavy rains. These couplets are repeated and Bauer has suggested that one of the passages should be deleted.[18] It would be a case of *homoio-teleuton* and clear evidence that the scribe was copying or that a colleague, who was dictating, allowed his eye to slip. Although the context is damaged most modern commentators have preferred to retain the text. This is a moment of climax in the story and would be just the kind of place for a formulaic repetition. There are no other variants in these few lines.

THE APPROACH MOTIF

Another motif from this tablet is taken up on at least two other tablets belonging to the Baal cycle.[19] It describes the actions

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[17] CTA 6 iii. 3–14.   [18] CTA p. 40, n. 9.
[19] CTA 6 iv. 32–8 may be compared with CTA 4 iv. 20–26 and CTA 3E 13–17, and also with CTA 17 vi. 47–51 which belongs to the story of Dnel.

a deity will perform when entering into the presence of another and may be called the approach motif'. When all the variants are compared they yield similar results to these other comparisons, but because the relationship of the different tablets of the Baal cycle is not certain, and because the motif occurs in other texts besides the Baal texts, any conclusions would be very tentative. The similarities that recur are best regarded as quotations from a general literary stock suitable for inclusion in several different stories rather than the repetitive element in one particular narrative.

SUMMARY

From this sample survey it seems clear that the types of error that occurred at Ugarit are very similar to those discovered by the textual critics of the Hebrew Bible. But in some ways they are very different. Especially noticeable is the virtual absence of complex errors which lead to any serious misunderstanding of the original meaning. There are more errors involving a letter constituent than a letter, more involving a letter than a word. When they do involve a word or a phrase they are more often than not deliberate changes for effect or insignificant variants. In conjecturally emending the text of the Hebrew Bible it is generally assumed that the error, whenever it did occur, was of a complex nature which gave rise to an incorrect interpretation. But even in an unvocalised script like Ugaritic, such errors do not appear to have been common.

The scribe clearly paid careful attention to the spelling of rare words, and most of the errors discovered here have occurred in common words. Familiarity with their usage evidently bred contempt for their spelling. Very often the biblical critic will suppose the opposite to have been the case. He will seek by careful emendation of a common word to retrieve one of the rarer words of the Hebrew lexical stock. This would not be a typical scribal error. It would be more usual to find an anomalous word that concealed a common original. Often the laws of phonological change will explain individualistic spelling errors.

But by far the greatest area these examples illustrate is that of the role of oral tradition. Of course scribal practices and religious conventions changed through the ages but at this

stage of Canaanite literary activity very few manuscripts appear to have been copied visually. It is clear that little attention was paid to literal or verbal accuracy. Once the scribes had developed their very own script it was natural that they should commit to writing their own epics and liturgies. What we have may not be sufficient to reveal the details of an ancient cultic ritual, but only the programme notes.