

that would give those deeds lasting meaning. One has the sense von Heyking is sympathetic to Churchill here, but the importance placed on such public storytelling revives an earlier tension associated with magnanimity. If the great-souled individual is content with the truth of his deeds, then ensuring the proper public narrative seems to be of little importance (both points seem true of Marlborough). If, as seems to be the case for Churchill, action acquires its intelligibility owing (at least partly) to the stories later told about it, then we are left with the question of whose story will dominate, as well as the threat that honor can be stripped from the individual as soon as a new storyteller comes along. Will the great-souled individual who is wedded to the importance of storytelling really be so willing to subordinate his desire for honor to a desire for truth at the end of the day?

Perhaps the answer to the tension is hinted at in von Heyking's final chapter, "Friendship with the 'Old Man.'" Von Heyking draws his own story to a close with the acknowledgment that human narration, however gifted the storyteller, does not truly complete political action. Churchill seems not to have been a religious believer in any traditional sense, but von Heyking finds traces of an underlying hope that his actions will ultimately be found significant within the framework of a moral cosmos that ensures the triumph of justice. It is this hope that, von Heyking tells us, sustains both the pursuit of justice and the possibility for political friendship. Perhaps it assures the final convergence of proper honor and truly great deeds as well.

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Aaron Tugendhaft: *Baal and the Politics of Poetry*. (London: Routledge, 2018. Pp. xviii, 165.)

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Aaron Tugendhaft's *Baal and the Politics of Poetry* studies the Ugaritic mythological poem of *Baʿlu* for what it can reveal about the relationship between poetry and politics in its ca. thirteen-century BCE Syrian coastal context. Ugaritic is a Northwest Semitic language closely related to Hebrew, Phoenician, and Aramaic and is known primarily from alphabetic cuneiform tablets discovered since 1928 at the tell of Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit) and other sites. *Baʿlu* narrates on six clay tablets the exploits of the eponymous local storm god, who battles and overcomes the sea god Yammu (tablets

1–2) and the god of death Môtu (tablets 5–6); between these contests he is granted a palace by the high god ʾIlu (tablets 3–4). The work under review comes amid an upsurge of attention to *Baʿlu* and other ancient Middle Eastern myths of divine combat. Contemporary contributions sharing Tugendhaft’s interest in defining the political context and aims of these texts include Debra Ballentine’s *The Combat Myth and the Biblical Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2015), Noga Ayali-Darshan’s *Treading on the Back of the Sea* (Bialik, 2016), and Joanna Töyräänvuori’s *Sea and the Combat Myth: North West Semitic Political Mythology in the Hebrew Bible* (Ugarit-Verlag, 2018). Within this subfield, Tugendhaft’s study is distinguished by his hypothesis that *Baʿlu* disrupts rather than fortifies the traditional link between terrestrial kingship and divine favor. The substantiation for this is to be found in the second half of the book (chaps. 4–6), where Tugendhaft engages in close and perceptive textual analysis to show how *Baʿlu* depicts its protagonist as a neglected upstart who is embroiled in intragenerational conflict and must claw his way to a fragile relevance.

Tugendhaft’s first chapters form a powerful two-pronged treatise on method. Chapter 1, “Baal and the Modern Study of Myth,” documents how *Baʿlu* and other Ugaritic texts were assumed, from their discovery, to represent a mythological phase of culture that was of value chiefly for elucidation of the Bible. Expanding the discussion beyond ancient Middle Eastern studies, Tugendhaft shows how allowing myth to be a universal mode—with Heidegger and Barthes, *inter alia*, rather than it being temporally or culturally specific, with Cassirer—introduces the possibility that myth and its dereification can be sought in any historical context, such as at Late Bronze Age Ugarit. Chapter 2, “The Baal Cycle and Bronze Age Politics,” queries a scholarly habit of separating the study of Ugaritic mythological poetry from that of contemporary but mostly Akkadian-language documentary texts (letters, treaties, etc.) from the same site; this situation has resulted from practicalities of scholarly specialization but also from a penchant to assume that myth is by definition archaic and therefore unmoored from mundane history. In meticulously attending to documentary texts, Tugendhaft reveals not only an ancient environment in which “a small cadre of literate individuals ... simultaneously engaged in political, economic, and scholarly activities” (35) but also the possibility that one such individual, the ʾIlmilku who signed the *Baʿlu* tablets and other mythological texts, may be identical with a homonymous operator involved with international affairs and royalty. This possibility seems both less necessary than the evidence suggests (compare, e.g., 37n43) and less necessary for the literary argument than is implied by the frequency of Tugendhaft’s references to ʾIlmilku’s position and/or to *Baʿlu* having originated with his authorship.

Chapter 3, “Divine Combat as Political Discourse,” centers on a text from eighteenth-century BCE Mari, a city on the Euphrates just inside the modern Syrian border. An Akkadian letter found at this site reports a prophecy in which the storm god Adad reminds Mari’s king, Zimri-Lim, that he

once gave this king weapons “with which I [Adad] fought with Sea.” Tugendhaft goes beyond the widespread observation that divine combat is invoked to support kingship to show that the attribution of Zimri-Lim’s royal success to Adad—a god more venerated in nearby interventionist Yamḥad than at Mari itself—rhetorically binds Zimri-Lim to that neighboring kingdom. Through this cogent demonstration, Tugendhaft illustrates that ancient Middle Eastern combat myths aim at a variety of specific political ends, and he opens the way to a more context-specific evaluation of *Baʿlu* than is usually countenanced.

Chapters 4–6 contain the substance of this evaluation. Chapter 4, “The Politics of Time,” contrasts *Baʿlu*’s focus on contemporary historical time and intragenerational conflict with the cosmogonic and intergenerational preoccupations of the Babylonian Akkadian epic *Enūma eliš*. Once again, the Ugaritic text has often been assimilated to the Akkadian text owing to preconceptions about mythological texts. Chapter 5, “Unsettling Sovereignty,” unites epigraphic and lexico-semantic observations on tablet 2 of *Baʿlu* to argue that Baʿlu’s defeat of Yammu is not so final as traditionally understood. Furthermore, the complex envoy scene and its aftermath witness both Yammu and Baʿlu rhetorically or implicitly challenging ʾIlu, the ostensible sovereign. Finally, Chapter 6, “Kinship Contested,” suggests that references to violence against brothers, especially in the final two tablets of the epic, problematize the kinship language on which ancient Middle Eastern metaphorical diplomacies rest. The fact that Baʿlu’s victories are always dependent on martial prowess rather than kinship obligations uncovers the artificiality and contingency of the diplomatic metaphor. Taken together, these chapters represent a fresh and compelling reading of a complex text that has too often been made to serve biblical ends and claimed to simply mirror Mesopotamian patterns.

Baal and the Politics of Poetry began as a 2012 New York University dissertation, but to call the final product an edited dissertation would hardly do justice to the clearly considerable efforts undertaken in the intervening years. The work has been thoroughly restructured and refined. An impressive number of publications that appeared between 2012 and 2017 are engaged. There are places in which the reader may want to refer to additional sources for deeper understanding of other combat myth texts or the twentieth-century CE historical contexts with which Tugendhaft frequently introduces his chapters. In a note to chapter 4, Tugendhaft correctly observes that “Doing justice to the complexities of *Enuma elish*, and how they operated in mediating political meanings for the poem’s audiences over a long history, would require an entire study in itself” (75n6); interested readers might find recent volumes by Gösta Gabriel (“*Enūma eliš*”: *Weg zu einer globalen Weltordnung* [Mohr Siebeck, 2014]) and Thomas Kämmerer and Kai Metzler (*Das babylonische Welterschöpfungsepos “Enūma eliš”* [Ugarit-Verlag, 2012]) helpful. The *Babel und Bibel* lectures of Friedrich Delitzsch, with which Tugendhaft introduces the same chapter, are studied in their German imperial context in two insightful and detailed

monographs: Reinhard G. Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel-Streit* (Universitätsverlag / Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994) and Klaus Johanning, *Der Bibel-Babel-Streit* (Lang, 1988).

The strengths of the present work are its modeling contextualization of mythological texts by reference to documents illuminating contemporary sociopolitical realia and its productive dismantling of scholars' sneakiest tendencies when characterizing the political import of ancient Middle Eastern myths. Tugendhaft's innovative perspective on what one such myth is really doing is a thoughtful and detailed counterbalance to those tendencies, and it is therefore warmly welcomed.

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John Lombardini: *The Politics of Socratic Humor*. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018. Pp. ix, 284.)

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“It is a truism,” observes Mary Beard in her *Laughter in Ancient Rome*, “that the practice of laughter is closely bound up with power and its differentials” (University of California Press, 2014, p. 129). John Lombardini’s *The Politics of Socratic Humor* reflects on a specific anxiety surrounding Socratic intellectualism and the dangers it might have posed to the democratic operation of authority in classical Athens. Socrates’s mockery in Aristophanes and his irony (narrowly understood as *eironeia*) in Plato appear ambivalent, at best, in their relation to the Athenian democracy. Xenophon, by contrast, defends Socrates’s claims to superiority; mockery and irony in his account function as pedagogical techniques for guiding interlocutors to recognize that they lack knowledge. In the afterglow of the Athenian democracy’s brilliance, Aristotle views *eironeia* as in tension with social virtues such as friendliness, truthfulness, and wittiness. This last—*eutrapelia*—offers a practice of virtuous laughing and joking that avoids the hierarchical implications of *eironeia* and instead fosters reciprocity. Later in antiquity, Socrates continued to figure in the imaginations of Cynic, Stoic, and Epicurean philosophers. Although exempt from the anxieties of democracy, these philosophers still used humor in philosophical ways, making mockeries of themselves, as in the case of Diogenes, to call attention to the conventional and thus unnatural basis of collective judgment.