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"Speech from Tree and Rock: Recovery of a Bronze Age Metaphor"

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Of all semantic ambiguities in Homer, perhaps the most perplexing, and commanding the most attention of modern scholarship has been the enigmatic phrase involving "tree and/or rock."¹ In attempting to analyze this notoriously elusive phrase, scholars have generally adopted one of two methodologies: that of Indo-European comparison, or that of cultural contact between the Levant and the Mediterranean.² Despite attempts stretching all the way to the Homeric scholia, the meaning of the phrase has yet to be solved. A tantalizingly similar, and equally unsolved collocation appears in the 13th century Ugaritic Ba'al Cycle found at Ras Shamra. Although in recent years scholars have convincingly argued that the phrase in Hesiod and in the Ba'al Cycle are related, there still is no satisfactory answer regarding the meaning of this longstanding crux.³ This much is clear: the status of Levantine ports as vehicles for economic and cultural fluidity between the Levant, Anatolia and the Mediterranean during the 2nd

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¹ I will use the term "rock" here to refer to the unworked material, but in this analysis ultimately the function of the object is largely irrelevant. Likewise, I use "tree" instead of "oak" to denote the general versus the specific. The phrase also appears in scholarship as "oak and rock", or "tree and stone." The use of the word "oak" is an accurate translation of the Greek, but in this case I believe that the generic "tree" is more appropriate due to the importance of the arboreal visual characteristics.

² See Nagy 1990:181–201, Watkins 1995:161–164, O'Bryhim 1996. As recently as this past summer, a book chapter has been published on the topic, linking the Hesiodic occurrence of the phrase with Near Eastern parallels, with an exhaustive survey of previous scholarship on the topic. See Lopez-Ruiz (hereafter L-R) 2010:48–83, 205–210. Her ultimate conclusion, is that the Hesiodic phrase means something like "Why am I digressing about these mysterious/arcane and divine things, that is, about where my special knowledge of the origin of the world and the gods came from?" L-R 2010:82–83. This approach is insightful, but illuminating evidence from Bronze-Age material culture has escaped her notice.

³ O'Bryhim 1996 and L-R 2010 are only concerned with the Hesiodic appearance of the phrase, and although they cite Semitic sources as parallels, there is relatively little comparative textual analysis. Ahl and Roisman 1996:226–227 attempt to reconcile the phrase as it appears in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

millennium is complex, and hardly deniable.⁴ In my view, not just the Hesiodic instance of the phrase, but all of the archaic Greek attestations share a common ancestor with the Ugaritic phrase. This paper will not pursue an argument of direct borrowing, due to a lack of evidence for such a mechanism of transmission, and due to the convenient, but ultimately simplistic representation of the interwoven mythologies of the Levant, Anatolia and the Mediterranean that it would present. The following approach will integrate analysis of Greek and Ugaritic texts with visual analysis of Bronze-Age material culture, and in doing so seeks to offer a final explanation of this previously opaque collocation. It will consist of a two-step process: first, a reanalysis of the phrase in its original form as "*speech* from tree and/or rock," distinct from a more general formula of "tree and/or rock" that has been sufficiently addressed elsewhere; second, a definition of the crux as an ancient metaphorical phrase, with the supposition that the reflexes of the phrase found in archaic Greek constitute three distinct but overlapping stereotyped instances of the metaphor as it appears in Ugaritic.⁵ The metaphor originally describes lightning and thunder as a representation of divine speech and generative power, and likely reflects an element of archaic cultic practice that survived at Zeus' shrine of Dodona.

⁴ Languages attested in the documents of Ugarit include: Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite, Luwian, Hurrian, Egyptian, Cypriot-Minoan and, of course, Ugaritic. The Uluburun and Gelidonya shipwrecks are the some of the most conclusive material evidence for heavy trade between the Syro-Palestinean Coast and the Aegean. The sophistication of the trade occurring in the 14th century BCE is remarkable. For more detailed and sometimes speculative catalogs of trade, see Cline 1994. Also see Lambrou-Phillipson 1990. For an analysis of the physical evidence, see Hoffman 1997.

⁵ Janda 1997 has an exhaustive treatment of the "tree and stone" in Indo-European, see pp. 68–90 for Greek examples, and pp. 159–170 for Semitic examples. His work is almost entirely devoted to the linguistic reconstruction of the ur-phrase, and is generally unconcerned with overarching thematic significance. West 1966:167–169 has an extensive classification of instances not pertaining to the issue at hand, with a summary of previous scholarship. In my view, the phrase may well be a linguistic 'universal' of the two fundamental natural materials. The phrase "tree and rock" appears elsewhere in Greek, Lucill. A. P. 11.253, Juv 6.12 (cj.), Plut. *Mor.I* 608c, Philostr. *Im.* 2.3.1, Palladas *A.P.* 10.55, on a particularly interesting reflex of the phrase in the work of Makarios Chrysokephalos see West 1969:168 and Watkins 1995:162.

At least part of the difficulty in rendering a coherent meaning for this collocation has resulted from confusion over Plato's frequent use of the phrase. In two contexts, he paraphrases lines from the *Odyssey* in a manner that has suggested to many that Greeks at the time of Homer believed in anthropogonic trees and/or rocks. The lines from the *Odyssey* and the relevant passages in the *Apology* and in the *Republic* appear below:

ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς μοι εἶπε τεὸν γένος, ὀππόθεν ἔσσι.

οὐ γὰρ ἀπὸ δρυὸς ἔσσι παλαιφάτου οὐδ' ἀπὸ πέτρης.

(*Od.* 19.162-3)

Penelope, speaking to a disguised Odysseus, asks him about his descent. “So tell me about your race, whence you are, for you are not from anciently spoken oak and/or rock,” she says. The Platonic examples hold fairly accurate to this original appearance, but with significant differences:

εἰ δὴ τις ὑμῶν οὕτως ἔχει—οὐκ ἀξιῶμὲν γὰρ ἔγωγε, εἰ δ' οὖν—ἐπιεικῆ ἄν μοι δοκῶ πρὸς τοῦτον λέγειν λέγων ὅτι “ἐμοί, ὧ ἄριστε, εἰσὶν μὲν πού τινες καὶ οἰκεῖοι: καὶ γὰρ τοῦτο αὐτὸ τὸ τοῦ Ὀμήρου, οὐδ' ἐγὼ **ἀπὸ δρυὸς οὐδ' ἀπὸ πέτρης**” πέφυκα ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀνθρώπων, ὥστε καὶ οἰκεῖοί μοι εἰσι καὶ ὑεῖς γε, ὧ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, τρεῖς, εἷς μὲν μαιράκιον ἤδη, δύο δὲ παιδία: ἀλλ' ὅμως οὐδένα αὐτῶν δεῦρο ἀναβιβασάμενος δεήσομαι ὑμῶν ἀποψηφίσασθαι.

(*Apology* 34δ)

In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates claims that he has not sprung from tree and/or from rock, but from men. Plato therefore seems to have appropriated the *Odyssey*'s lines in a very similar context, and has set in opposition “oak and/or rock” with “men” (ἐξἀνθρώπων).

Unfortunately, Plato has omitted a crucial word, "παλαιφάτου," from his usage of the phrase, but we will scrutinize that later.

οἷσθ' οὖν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὅτι καὶ ἀνθρώπων εἶδη τοσαῦτα ἀνάγκητροπῶν εἶναι,
ὅσαπερ καὶ πολιτειῶν; ἢ οἶει ἐκ δρυὸς ποθεν ἢ ἐκ πέτρας τὰς πολιτείας
γίγνεσθαι,

(*Republic* 544δ)

Plato, referring to the idea that constitutions have not sprung from trees or rocks, repeats the phrase here with ἐκ instead of ἀπὸ, perhaps intentionally denoting immediate instead of remote descent, but also perhaps rendering a looser paraphrase of the *Odyssey* with the addition of ποθεν and the absence of the negative οὐδ[έ].

In the *Phaedrus*, the third use of the phrase, whose usage is markedly different from the *Odyssey*'s, refers to the cultic practices of the oracle at Dodona. Such an overtly ritualistic version of the phrase is not used anywhere else in Greek literature, and most closely resembles the Ugaritic instance of the crux. This iteration of the proverbial phrase appears to be quite ancient in its retention of an explicit notion of speech associated with trees and rocks.

οἱ δέ γ', ὦ φίλε, ἐν τῷ τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Δωδωναίου ἱερῷ δρυὸς λόγους ἔφησαν
μαντικὸς πρῶτους γενέσθαι. τοῖς μὲν οὖν τότε, ἅτε οὐκ οὔσι σοφοῖς ὥσπερ
ὕμεῖς οἱ νέοι, ἀπέχρη δρυὸς καὶ πέτρας ἀκούειν ὑπ' εὐηθείας, εἰ μόνον
ἀληθῆ λέγοιεν: σοὶ δ' ἴσως διαφέρει τίς ὁ λέγων καὶ ποδαπός. οὐ γὰρ ἐκεῖνο
μόνον σκοπεῖς, εἴτε οὕτως εἴτε ἄλλως ἔχει;

(*Phaedrus* 275β-γ)

Socrates, speaking with tongue-in-cheek to Phaedrus, reports that the first mantic words were those of the oaks in the shrine of Zeus at Dodona, and that the people back then, not being as intelligent as Phaedrus' young contemporaries, were happy to listen to “oak and rock,” as long as they spoke the truth; but to Phaedrus, maybe, it matters who the speaker is and where he comes from, for he does not consider only whether the man's words are true or not.

Therefore, Plato uses the collocation of “oak and/or rock” three times, in two different contexts. On two occasions, he seems to employ lines of the *Odyssey* that describe what many reasonably interpret as an anthropogonic myth, and on a third occasion he references the cultic practice of Dodona (from source unknown), describing prophetic utterances. The *Phaedrus*' passage places the collocation in a speech-context: the tree and rock are speaking, whereas in the *Republic* and the *Apology*, they are silent. However, in the *Odyssey*'s passage, we have the adjective παλαιφάτου, modifying "oak," but I would also submit, extending to "rock." This attests a spoken context (that of speaking or being spoken), for the phrase that approximates that of the *Phaedrus*. The other appearance of παλαίφατος in the *Odyssey* occurs at 9.507, where Polyphemos recalls that the prophesy of the seer Telemos has come to pass: ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ με παλαίφατα θέσφαθ' ἰκάνει. Thus, even the *Odyssey* attests a link between παλαίφατα and prophetic words, or θέσφατα.⁶ Consequently, the mantic element of the phrase in the *Phaedrus* finds a Homeric ideological counterpart.

However, the collocation of “oak and/or rock” in the *Odyssey* is not completely consistent with any of Plato's three uses of the phrase. It shares the generative semantics with its counterparts in the *Republic* and *Apology*, but has the hint of prophesy contained in the *Phaedrus*' attestation, although “oak and/or rock” is “spoken” in the *Odyssey* and “speaks” in Plato. Given these inconsistencies, it seems that Plato was communicating certain instances of

⁶ On this point, see also Nagy 1990:198.

the phrase's iterations in textual or oral traditions, some attested, some not. In short, the variety of the collocation's meanings in these contexts suggests Plato's continued use of an ancient proverbial phrase. An examination of the other archaic Greek examples of this phrase to see if they contain 1) a spoken context, 2) the generative element, or 3) a prophetic element consistent with the *Odyssey's* attestation will assist in illuminating the underlying meaning.

Looking to the *Iliad's* attestation of the phrase, we find that it occurs in a transparently spoken context:

Τρωσὶν δ' αὖ μετόπισθε γερούσιον ὄρκον ἔλωμαι
 μή τι κατακρύψειν, ἀλλ' ἄνδιχα πάντα δάσασθαι
 κτῆσιν ὄσῃν πτολίεθρον ἐπήρατον ἐντὸς ἐέργει·
 ἀλλὰ τί ἦ μοι ταῦτα φίλος διελέξατο θυμός;
 μήμιν ἐγὼ μὲν ἴκωμαι ἰών, ὃ δέ μ' οὐκ ἐλεήσει
 οὐδέ τί μ' αἰδέσεται, κτενέει δέ με γυμνὸν ἐόντα
 αὐτῶς ὡς τε γυναῖκα, ἐπεὶ κ' ἀπὸ τεύχεα δύω.
 οὐ μὲν πως νῦν ἔστιν ἀπὸ δρυὸς οὐδ' ἀπὸ πέτρης
 τῷ ὀαρίζεμεναι, ἅ τε παρθένος ἠΐθεός τε
 παρθένος ἠΐθεός τ' ὀαρίζετον ἀλλήλοιν.

(*Il.* 22. 119-128)

Hektor considers an attempt to placate Akhilleus, but quickly reconsiders, saying: “In no way is it possible now to woo him, either by oak and/or rock, with things which a youth and a maiden would woo one another.” At first glance, there is nothing prophetic about the collocation in this context, but there is a conversation of some sort taking place. Regarding "genetic" associations here, we find the speech between a youth and a maiden, in a context of wooing, so

we have potential "genesis" of a sort, but nothing as explicit as in the *Odyssey's* attestation of the collocation. The subtext of procreation is implicit in the use of ὀαριζέμεναι, but it is unclear if ἀπὸ δρυὸς οὐδ' ἀπὸ πέτρης overlaps semantically with the following verb or construes more specifically with the preceding οὐ μὲν πως νῦν ἔστιν. I think it more likely that "about oak and/or rock" construes with the latter, since the relative clause following ὀαριζέμεναι already semantically specifies, and repeats, the verb (ὀαρίζετον). Ultimately, Hektor is considering negotiating with Akhilleus, but *even* if he were able to speak "from oak and/or rock" it would be of no use. It seems that the phrase as it appears in the *Iliad* is involved in persuasion, and appears within a sexual context. What could this overarching phrase, "speech from tree and/or rock" mean? Or what could it *be*?

Hesiod's use of the collocation has been the subject of much commentary, due to the phrase's particularly elliptical nature:

ὥς ἔφασαν κοῦραι μεγάλου Διὸς ἀρτιέπειαι:
καί μοι σκῆπτρον ἔδον δάφνης ἐριθηλέος ὄζον
δρέψασαι, θηητόν: ἐνέπνευσαν δέμοι αὐδὴν
θέσπιν, ἵνα κλείοιμι τὰ τ' ἔσσομένα πρό τ' ἔόντα.
καί μ' ἐκέλονθ' ὑμνεῖν μακάρων γένος αἰὲν ἔόντων,
σφᾶς δ' αὐτὰς πρῶτόν τε καὶ ὕστατον αἰὲν αἰίδειν.
ἀλλὰ τί ἦ μοι ταῦτα περὶ δρυῖν ἢ περὶ πέτρην;

(*Th.* 1. 29-35)

Once more, the phrase appears in an sonic context. The Muses are instructing Hesiod in the arts of poetry and prophesy (ὥς ἔφασαν κοῦραι ...), but Hesiod asks, "But why do I have these things about oak or rock?" In this context, the "things about oak or rock" refer to prophetic

access.⁷ A re-translation of the line as “But why do I have this prophetic access?” makes good sense given the next four lines:

τύνη, Μουσάων ἀρχώμεθα, ταὶ Διὶ πατρὶ
 ὕμνεῦσαι τέρπουσι μέγαν νόον ἐντὸς Ὀλύμπου,
 εἶρεῦσαι τὰ τ' ἐόντα τὰ τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα,
 φωνῆ ὀμηρεῦσαι ...

(Th. 1.36-39)

Instead of digressing about himself, Hesiod refocuses his discussion on the Muses (Μουσάων), and their prophetic powers (εἶρεῦσαι τὰ τ' ἐόντα τὰ τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα) as opposed to his own derivative ability, (... ἵνα κλείοιμι τὰ τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα). From lines 36-74, Hesiod provides a genealogy of the Muses, and then resumes in line 75, ταῦτ' ἄρα Μοῦσαι ἄειδον, Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι. So Hesiod perhaps answers his own rhetorical question, to which he already knows the answer: he can sing of prophesy because the Muses have. So it is probable that “about oak or rock” here refers to prophetic ability, that in Hesiod's case is inspired by the Muses and their “divine voice” (... αὐδῆν / θέσπιν ...). The phrase ... τί ἤ ... has interrogative-causative, not interrogative-resultative force in archaic Greek. The common translation, therefore, of “What's the use/point?” does not quite capture the phrase's semantic profile. A closer English approximation might be “Why in the world?” Even this translation does not adequately capture the full force of the Greek, because ... ἤ ... indicates a rhetorical question to

⁷ I agree with L-R 2010 *contra* O'Bryhim 1996, that the phrase in Hesiod does not refer to cultic objects of composed of wood and rock: “Hesiod is most probably not referring directly to the concrete oracular or cultic aspect of these elements, but to the abstract religious and sage notions that they represented. Likewise, this type of veiled allusion is exactly the one reflected in the Ugaritic passage of the Ba'al Cycle, where, instead of a short proverbial expression we have “tree and rock” clearly linked with sacred wisdom and cosmic knowledge.” L-R 2010:70, see also *ibid.* 82–83. After analyzing the Ugaritic evidence, I will propose a precise meaning for this proverbial expression.

which the speaker already knows the answer. Moreover, the first half of the fifth line, ἀλλὰ τί ἦ μοι ταῦτα ..., ending with a feminine caesura, appears in a unique context here. Otherwise it is found only in the *Iliad*, and only in the formulaic line ἀλλὰ τί ἦ μοι ταῦτα φίλος διελέξατο θυμός, at *Iliad* 11.407, 17.97, 21.562, 22.122, and 22.385. Of particular note here is its appearance at 22.122, just four lines away from the "oak and/or rock" appearance in the *Iliad*. Likewise, Hektor addresses himself in debating a negotiation with Achilles, just as Hesiod responds to his own question here (τύνη, Μουσάων ἀρχώμεθα ...).⁸ So in Hesiod we have the first part of a formulaic line explicitly associated with speech (διελέξατο), and this line also occurs in close proximity to the "oak and/or rock" collocation in both the *Iliad* and the *Theogony*. On the basis of these facts, one must consider the phrase's appearance in the *Iliad* and the *Theogony* to be closely related. In sum, the Hesiodic attestation of the "oak and/or rock" collocation includes a clear sonic context with explicitly prophetic connotations, but without any hint of generative semantics.⁹

Thus far, each of the three attestations in the archaic Greek sources is associated with speech acts, with the collocation in *Odyssey* connoting genesis, the *Iliad*'s attestation representing persuasive speech in a sexual context, and those in the *Odyssey* and *Theogony* involving prophesy. To glean a clearer conception of what the phrase "speech from tree and/or rock" may have meant before its proverbial, murky status in archaic Greek, an examination of the oldest, and equally mysterious, instance of the collocation will be instrumental.

⁸ I owe thanks to Gregory Nagy for helping on this point.

⁹ The use of different prepositions in the three instances of the collocation also warrants comment here. In the *Odyssey* the phrase occurs alongside ἀπό (+ genitive) with generative semantics, in the *Iliad* ἀπό (+ genitive) with sonic semantics, and in the *Theogony* we have περὶ (+ accusative), which means around/about in either a literal, locational sense or in a figurative, ideological sense. West 1966: 169 argues for a strictly locational sense, but this is not conclusive, see also Watkins 1995:161. See below for additional comments.

Ugaritic Textual Evidence of the Collocation

The proverbial phrase, "speech from tree and/or rock"¹⁰ appears three times in archaic Greek poetry, and a very similar phrase surfaces as many times in the Ugaritic Ba'al Cycle found at Ras Shamra in what is now Northern Syria. It is generally accepted that the text of Ras Shamra is a recorded instance of a much older oral-poetic tradition. As the oldest textual manifestation of this collocation, dated to the 13th century BCE, the Ugaritic evidence is crucial to understanding an older and more conservative stage of the phrase, especially given the complex network of cultural and economic exchange between Anatolia, the Levant and the Mediterranean. A formulaic address that includes the phrase in question has three different speakers. In the first instance, El, the head of the Pantheon, addresses the craftsman god Kothar-wa-Hassis, in the second, Ba'al the Storm-God entrusts the speech to two divine messengers, and in the third, the two divine messengers deliver Ba'al's speech to the goddess Anat. Looking at the Storm-God Ba'al's address to Anat, CAT I.3 iii.18-32, we have:¹¹

Hurry! Hasten! Rush!
 To me let your feet run,
 To me let your legs race
 For I have a word, and I will tell you,
 A message, and I will recount it to you,
 A word of tree¹² and murmur¹³ of rock,

¹⁰ Traditionally in Ugaritic scholarship 'abn is translated "stone," for consistency's sake I will continue using "rock."

¹¹ All translations of Ugaritic text are based on Smith Pitard 2009 except where noted. Syllabification follows Smith Pitard 2009 and Huehnergard 2010.

¹² 'š likely denotes a cedar tree, but I will use a more neutral and controversy-free translation of "tree." I believe the visual form of the tree to be the crucial semantic element of the analogical metaphor that will be argued below.

Converse of Heaven with Earth,
 Of Deeps to the Stars.
 I understand the lightning¹⁴ Heaven does not know,
 The word humans do not know,
 And Earth's masses do not understand.
 Come and I will reveal it,
 In the midst of my mountain, Divine Sapan
 In the holy place, on the mount of my possession,
 In the pleasant place, on the hill of my victory.

I take the middle section (lines 21-28) to be essentially appositional (although there is a more nuanced bipartite organization that will be discussed below), and the systematic, interlocking repetition of key vocabulary supports such a reading:

¹³ I translate *lhšt* as "murmur," not "whisper" because the following reading suggests that the sound was indistinct, but not likely to be quiet.

¹⁴ The reading of this phrase will be the subject of the following argument, and I offer my translation in the text below.

dm rgm 'iṭ ly w 'argmk	For I have a word , and I will tell it to you ,
hwt w 'atnyk	A <u>message</u> , and I will recount it to you,
rgm 'š w lhšt 'abn	A word of tree and <u>murmur of rock</u> ,
t'ant šmm 'm 'arš	Converse of Heaven with Earth,
thmt 'mn kbkbm	Of Deeps to the Stars,
'abn brq dl td' šmm	<u>The rock-lightning</u> Heaven does not know,
rgm ltd' nšm	The word humans do not know,
wltbn hmlt 'arš	And Earth's masses do not <u>understand</u> .

What draws one's attention immediately is the phrase *rgm 'š w lhšt 'abn*, "word of **tree** and murmur of **rock**," which reads very similarly to the archaic Greek textual *crux*.¹⁵ In interpreting this phrase within the Ugaritic text, line 26 features quite prominently. Specifically, the collocation *'abn brq*, literally, "rock-lightning" has been the subject of much debate: some have interpreted it as a construct noun referring to particular form of lightning thought to derive from heavenly rocks, and the more common translation is "I understand lightning," with *'abn* characterized as a g-stem verbal formation, which is echoed in *wltbn* just two lines later.¹⁶

However, the internal Ugaritic evidence seems to support the minority opinion. In the vocalized text, there is relatively little evidence that demands *'abn* be a noun or a verb.¹⁷

¹⁵ Avishur 1984:593–594, concludes that *'š* and *'abn*, ("tree" and "rock") form a word-pair.

¹⁶ See Smith Pitard 2009:227–228 for relevant bibliography, and their evaluation of the structural and thematic implications of reading *'abn* as a noun or a verb. They ultimately read *'abn* as a verb.

¹⁷ There is only a minor difference in syllabic count between *'abni* and *'abînu*, but within the larger context of the syllable/word count of the tricolonic structure of lines 26–28, taking *'abn* as the first element of a compound noun is significant. We already also have *'abni* at line 23, and given the repeated, chiasitic use of the nouns *rgm* (*rigmu*),

Thematically, *'abn brq*, and line 26 as a whole, must be especially relevant given that they only appear in Ba'al's instance of the address, which is then repeated by his messengers. One cannot reconstruct the line for El's address in 1.1 III 10-16.¹⁸ However, all instances of the speech share the text contained in lines 27-28. This makes it unlikely that *'abn* represents a verb functioning in the construction of [main verb] + [particle] + [subordinate *yqtl verb].¹⁹ If one posits that construction's presence in this passage, with *'abînu* as main verb, it follows that the negative particles (*l-*, *hm*) in lines 27-28 would also function in an extended form of this structure. One would then have to explain, somewhat violently, the same lines (and same negative particles) in El's speech as having a different syntax, since there is no verbal *'abn* which could function as a main-verb in an extended construction. However, if one takes *'abn brq* as a construct noun, the syntax of Ba'al's and El's speeches, which are otherwise identical, coincides, with Ba'al's speech simply having a further appositional noun-phrase added to the pre-existing list. This noun-phrase, "the rock-lightning Heaven does not know," therefore, must reflect something specific and revealing about Ba'al's word that only Ba'al himself can reveal. There is clearly an element of word-play occurring in this passage, with paranomasia between the words meaning "rock" and "to understand." One could perhaps argue for the etymological multiformity of *'abn*

šmm (*šamûma*) and *'arš* (*'arši*) in this section, reading *'abn* as a noun is more internally consistent with the passage as a whole. Vocalizing as *'abni*, we have:

26	<i>'abni-baraqā dā-lā-tida'ū šamûma</i>	b c d	4/13
27	<i>rigma lā-tida'ū našûma</i>	b' c d'	3/9
27-28	<i>wa-lā-tabînū/hamulātu 'arši</i>	c' d'	3/11

If *'abn brq* is a compound noun, then we have 4 words (though functioning as 3, since 2 compose a single compound noun) consisting of 13 syllables, but if we take *'abn* as the verb *'abînu*, we have 4 words consisting of 14 syllables, which would further imbalance the lines. Given the the other instance of punning in the passage using the noun *rigmu* three times (lines 20, 22, 27) and the verb *wa-'argumu-ki* once (line 21), it is more internally balanced for there to be one corresponding verbal form, namely *wa-lā-tabînū*, accompanied by two instances of the noun *'abni*.

¹⁸ Smith 1984.

¹⁹ Pace Smith Pitard 2009:29.

in line 26 as introducing simultaneous notions of "understanding" and "stone," but syntactically, 'abn is certainly a noun.²⁰ The remaining piece of the puzzle would be an analogous construct noun-phrase to 'abn brq, and this is exactly what one finds when examining a text describing the fulfillment of Ba'al's wish to build his palace on mount Sapan.

The fragmentary text of CAT 1.101, describing Ba'al's enthronement, contains this illustrative parallel, and its evidence suggests that the noun-phrase 'abn brq has a close parallel:

b'l yṭb kṭbt ḡr hd r[] kmdb btk ḡrh'il špn b[tk] ḡr tl'iyt. šb't brqm ṭmnt. iṣr r't 'š brq y[] r'išh tply tly bn 'nh 'uz'rt tml 'išdh qrn[m] b(?)t 'lh r'išh bglṭ bšm[m] [] ṭr. 'it ph kṭt ḡbt [...] kyn ddm lbh	Baal sits (enthroned) like the sitting of a mountain Haddu...like the (cosmic) ocean, In the midst of his mountain, divine Sapan, In [the midst of?] the mount of victory, (With) seven lightning-flashes, Eight store-houses of thunder (?). Tree-lightning. [...] His head is adorned (?), With dew between his eyes ... at his base ... the horns[s] ... on him (?) His head with a downpour from the heavens ... is watering, His mouth like two clouds (?)... Like wine is the love of his heart...
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Although difficult to read, this text does include a depiction of Ba'al's body in terms of natural elements. It begins with the realization of the finale of the former text, Ba'al finally sits enthroned on his mountain. The young Storm-God has attained the height of his power by inhabiting the highest geographical altitude. Notably, we find the compound-noun 'š brq, "tree-lightning," which appears to correspond to 'abn brq, "rock-lightning" in the previous text. The

²⁰ For another example of wordplay in Ugaritic see Greaves 1994.

pairing of "word of tree" and "whisper of rock" is significant, and the tandem of "tree-lightning" and "rock-lightning" are analogously constructed. Apparent in the two Ugaritic texts is that "rock-lightning" occurs in a sonic context, and "tree-lightning" appears in a visual context.²¹ Moreover, in CAT I.3 iii, the "rock-lightning," appears in an extended parallel structure with *rgm* (word), *hwt* (message), *lhšt* (murmur), and *t'ant* (converse). By analogy with the other elements, "rock-lightning" is likely not just occurring in a sonic context, but actually representing a speech act of Ba'al. This speech act, I contend, is the sonic component of lightning, namely *thunder*, which is compared to the sound of rolling or crashing rocks.²² Consequently, "tree-lightning" is a doubly appropriate visual description of a branching, tree-like, lightning bolt as it strikes a tall, earthly object, such as its arboreal semi-eponymous counterpart. Thus, 'š *brq* and 'abn *brq* are metaphorical descriptions of lightning and thunder.

²¹ Pardee 1998:138, comments that this "tree-lightning" reminds one of the branching spear of Ba'al on the Ras Shamra Stele, also known as *Baal au foudre*, confirming the visual nature of 'š *brq*. See also Fisher and Kutson 1969:159, and Pope and Tigay 1971:124. Heffelfinger 2007 argues that this passage consists of opposing descriptions comparing Ba'al to a mountain and those comparing him to a storm. She argues that there is an inherent opposition between these two forms of metaphors, with the mountain ultimately subordinating the storm. However, this notion neglects the fact that Ba'al only has full dominion over the storm once he has attained his palace on his sacred mountain. The two, storm and mountain, consist in a fundamentally *causal* relationship. Thus, her discussion of the metaphorical language, while sophisticated, is built on a false premise. Ba'al "wears" the storm because it is a recent acquisition, only gained upon the completion of his mountain-palace. Although her readings are necessarily based on her own reconstructions due to the fragmentary nature of the text, a sizable portion of them are convincing.

²² Thunder is frequently characterized as a divine voice in Semitic texts, especially in Akkadian omen texts, see below and n24 for Ugaritic evidence. For instances of the relationship between the sound of stones and thunder in Indo-European see Nagy 1990:181–201. However, there is not much comparative Semitic evidence, one possible example being in Akkadian ARM 14, 7:6 DN (...) *rigimšu udannim abnam ra-ab-bi-tam it-ta-ad-di* "Adad has made his thunder strong and has set down a huge rock." See Kouwenberg 1997:84 for commentary. The equation of the sound of thunder with that of crashing or rolling rocks is perhaps a linguistic universal, e.g. English 'rolling thunder.' The comparison of thunder to rocks and lightning to trees is much more popular in Indo-European traditions, and is even found in Hittite ritual (see Forte forthcoming). This opens up the possibility that this metaphor, "speech from tree and/or rock" is a product of Semitic and Indo-European cultural interaction, the concept of lightning and thunder as speech-related omens from a Storm-God being nearly universal in Semitic and Sumerian religion, and the metaphorical relationship between trees and lightning, and rocks and thunder being prevalent in Indo-European traditions.

Elsewhere, Ba'al's voice is commonly characterized as thunder, perhaps most relevantly in CAT I.4 V, which contains a well-attested expression **ytn ql*, "to give one's voice." Lines 8-9 read: *wtn.qlh.b'rpt / šrh.larš.brqm*, "And may he give his voice in the clouds, May he flash to the earth lightning."²³ With this in mind, one can understand the mysterious "word of tree" (*rgm š*) and "murmur of rock" (*lhšt 'abn*) as representing a layered metaphor. The phrases contain visual and aural metaphors for lightning and thunder: a bolt that appears in the sky like a tree, (as seen in *š brq*) and a thunder which mimics the sound of rocks (followed in the same passage by *'abn brq*).²⁴ Moreover, lightning and thunder themselves are metaphorized as Ba'al's divine speech, a "word (*rgm*) of tree and a *murmur* (*lhšt*) of rock," consisting of these very same two components: the visual *š brq*, a lightning-bolt, and the sonic *'abn brq*, namely the "thunder which Heaven does not know."²⁵ Thus line 26 of CAT I.3 iii (*'abn brq dl td' šmm*), appearing exclusively in Ba'al's speech, provides a partial gloss of "word of tree and murmur of rock" (*rgm š w lhšt 'abn*), thereby revealing Ba'al's ability to communicate oracularly through his lightning and thunder. Moreover, *š brq*, the key analogue to *'abn brq*, occurs only in the description of Ba'al's enthronement. As Ba'al promised to Anat to reveal his secrets upon his enthronement, so the text itself reveals the arcane meaning of "speech from tree and rock" to the initiated audience in the description of Storm-God's enthronement.

There are additional thematic elements at work in Ba'al's address to Anat. The sound of thunder frequently precedes heavy rain storms, which form an additional fertility motif of intercourse between heaven and earth. This notion of "converse" persists in Semitic

²³ For a detailed and current discussion of this passage, see Smith Pitard 2009:561–570.

²⁴ As Smith Pitard 2009:224 note, *rgm* is used in an epistolary context as referring to the written words of letter, similar to English "to send word" (i.e. a messenger or letter). Thus a visual use of *rgm* seems to be corroborated by the common usage of the word throughout the Ugaritic corpus.

²⁵ So my decision to translate *'abnas* "rock" not "stone" is relatively minor, but seeks to reflect the notion that the sonic mimicry applies to the raw material of rock as well as to the worked material of stone.

traditions.²⁶ Particularly relevant to this notion of “converse” are the earthly and celestial equivalents of tree and rock, and of lightning and thunder, which functioned as paired representatives of intercourse between the earthly and the divine.²⁷

Ba'al summons Anat to help him consolidate his power against his rivals. He must convince the powerful warrior Goddess to heed his call, so he uses the ultimate persuasion, a great reward. He offers her the ability to understand what no one else can, his divine speech of lightning and thunder, which will remain obscure to mankind and heaven alike. This is reminiscent of the *Iliad's* attestation of the phrase, where Hektor seeks to convince Akhilleus but cannot. The Ugaritic text's interlocking word-order of *rgm*, *'abn*, *šmm*, and *'arš* is perhaps also representative of the connective nature of the “word/murmur” (lightning/thunder) for heaven and earth in this religious text.²⁸

The description of Ba'al's mouth as composed of two clouds (corresponding to his lips) lends further credence to the metaphoric reading of the passage in CAT I.3. The lightning and thunder issue forth from the clouds, as the Storm-God delivers his message to the world below. Thus, what the text of the Ugaritic preserves is an audio-visual metaphor for lightning and thunder, “speech from tree and rock,” that is beautifully nuanced into “word of tree,” and “murmur of rock,” and specifically glossed by the surrounding text:

²⁶ See Batto 1987, Smith Pitard 2009:561–563. For this passage analyzed in terms of divine marriage, see Pongratz-Leisten, B. 2008, for which reference I thank Erwin Cook and Gregory Nagy.

²⁷ See Brown 1999:327.

²⁸ Wyatt 2005:115 argues that *t'ant* is indicative of copulation between heaven and earth.

dm rgm 'it̄ ly w 'argmk <u>hwt</u> w 'atnyk rgm 'š w lhšt 'abn t'ant šmm 'm 'arš thmt 'mn kkbkm <u>'abn brq</u> dl td' šmm rgm ltd' nšm wltbn hmlt 'arš	For I have a word , and I will tell it to you, A <u>message</u> , and I will recount it to you, A word of tree and <u>murmur of rock</u> , Converse of Heaven with Earth, Of Deeps to the Stars, <u>The thunder</u> Heaven does not know, The word humans do not know, And Earth's masses do not understand.
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The latent structure of the passage reveals itself. The noun phrases, describing the bipartite divine speech act of lightning (using the visual aspect of *rgm* three times, see n.21) and thunder (using 1. *hwt*, which is semantically sonic, and 2. two construct-noun phrases with *'abn*, which analogically describes the nature of the sound), function in an extended ABABBA structure, with synchysis fused with chiasmus. This metaphorical phrase also occurs in Greek, although it is significantly more worn by time and usage in those traditions.²⁹ However, there is one more important piece of evidence regarding the nature of this phrase, and it lies on a Bronze-Age cylinder seal in a Northern Syrian style.

On several seals, the Storm-God appears with a branch-like object issuing from his mouth that is particularly reminiscent of "word of tree."³⁰ One could reasonably attribute the similarity between the "word of tree" in the Ugaritic text and the visual "word of tree" to sheer coincidence. However, one specific seal suggests that it may not be mere chance at work. In BM 132824, we seem to have an exact depiction of the resulting scene after Anat heeds Ba'al's call, and returns to him along with his two divine messengers.

On the seal, as in the Ugaritic text, a Storm-God, with characteristic attributes: crown, kilt, weapons, and subdued bull, stands atop mountains; he peers down at a winged goddess who is

²⁹ Pace Burkert 2004:28.

³⁰ Williams-Forte 1993, in a case of exceptional insight, solely on the basis of the iconographic evidence and the textual evidence from CAT I.3.iii 15-28, postulated that "word of tree" was referring to lightning. Seals in question include: Louvre AO1634, Tell 'Ajjul No 43, British Museum 132824, and Kultepe Ib Pl. XIXB.

trailed closely by two armed companions; from the Storm-God's mouth, a tree shoots forth. The stylistic element of the goddess' two spears covered by her wing is characteristic of 18th century BC seals from Northern Syria.³¹ Consequently, on Syrian seal and in Ugaritic text, we have parallels at every level of detail, from the characters to their locations.

In the text, the Storm-God possesses power over a "word of tree," and on the seal, a tree appears in front of his mouth.³² Although it would be inaccurate to call this completely categorical, since a comparative analysis of image and text will always possess a substantial level of difficulty, the level of thematic correspondence between a Northern Syrian cylinder seal from ~1700 BC, and a northern Syrian text from ~1200 BC is so close as to suggest a significant relationship. The visual metaphor posited for the "word of tree" in the Ugaritic text may actually find its visual illustration in a corresponding cylinder seal that pre-dates the transmitted text by roughly 500 years. The implications of this are many, but it may follow that a "the word of tree" is a remarkably ancient visual metaphor for lightning as an expression of the Storm-God's power, and that this particular episode in the Ugaritic text may be included in a much more ancient mythological tradition with undiscovered antecedents.

³¹ See Porada 1957:193, for a discussion of the winged goddess in Syrian seals, see Teissier 1987:79–81.

³² The evidence from material culture makes a visual or physical analysis of "rock" in Ugaritic and Greek rather unlikely. The "rock" in the Ugaritic passage has relatively clear sonic characteristics, and only the "tree" is represented visually in the cylinder seals. This seems to support "word of tree" as a visual metaphor, and "murmur of rock" as a sonic metaphor, since only the former can be represented in visual depiction. Thus, the notion of "thunder-stones" should probably be characterized as a related but ultimately separate phenomenon.



Cylinder seal impression BM 132824³³

The Ugaritic evidence crucially contains all three associative elements found in the various Greek examples of the phrase: 1) a persuasive, spoken context 2) the generative/sexual element and 3) a prophetic association. That "speech from tree and rock" was an ancient metaphor for lightning and thunder allows one to view the Greek sources with new clarity.

In returning to relevant lines in *Iliad* 22, we find a peculiar level of situational similarity between the Ugaritic text and the text of Homer. The young Storm-God, Ba'al speaks a "word of tree and a murmur of rock" to the goddess Anat, so Hektor concludes that he cannot "woo" (ὄαριζέμεναι) Akhilleus from "tree or rock", with the things that a youth and a maiden (παρθένος ἠΐθεός τε) would.

Τρωσὶν δ' αὖ μετόπισθε γερούσιον ὄρκον ἔλωμαι
 μή τι κατακρύψειν, ἀλλ' ἄνδιχα πάντα δάσασθαι
 κτήσιν ὄσσην πτολίεθρον ἐπήρατον ἐντὸς ἔέργει·
 ἀλλὰ τί ἦ μοι ταῦτα φίλος διελέξατο θυμός;
 μή μιν ἐγὼ μὲν ἴκωμαι ἰών, ὃ δέ μ' οὐκ ἐλεήσει
 οὐδέ τί μ' αἰδέσεται, κτενέει δέ με γυμνὸν ἐόντα

³³ I owe thanks to Dominique Collon of the British Museum for allowing me to display this seal drawing.

αὐτως ὡς τε γυναῖκα, ἐπεὶ κ' ἀπὸ τεύχεα δύω.
οὐ μὲν πως νῦν ἔστιν ἀπὸ δρυὸς οὐδ' ἀπὸ πέτρης
τῷ ὀαριζέμεναι, ἅ τε παρθένος ἠΐθεός τε
παρθένος ἠΐθεός τ' ὀαρίζετον ἀλλήλοιιν.

(Il. 22. 119-128)

As in the Ugaritic, the phrase here simultaneously connotes persuasion and intimacy. As Ba'al attempts to convince Anat to hasten to him, so Hektor momentarily hopes to persuade Akhilleus to relinquish his anger by accepting Helen and treasures as a sort of placating reverse-dowry. And as there are sexual undertones in the Ugaritic, so they also appear in the *Iliad*, most obviously in lines 124-5: ... κτενέει δέ με γυμνὸν ἐόντα / αὐτως ὡς τε γυναῖκα, ἐπεὶ κ' ἀπὸ τεύχεα δύω.³⁴ Hektor fears that Akhilleus will slay him as he would a woman, once Hektor has stripped off his own armor. If one interprets this stereotyped instance of the phrase as possessing two frozen connotations associated with lightning and thunder in the Bronze Age and beyond: their role in fertility, as inseminating agents themselves and as harbingers of the nourishing rains, and their irrefutability as divine speech, the phrase in its *Iliadic* context is particularly appropriate. That the characterization of the thunder's sound is similar in the Ugaritic and the Greek is worth emphasizing: we have "moaning" or "murmuring" (lhšt), and "wooing" (ὀαριζέμεναι).

³⁴ Perhaps ὀαριζέμεναι is an allusion to the previous lines' discussion of dividing up the possessions of Troy and giving it to the Akhaeans along with Helen to make amends and to end the war. Hektor appears to be comparing this reparation, the division of Troy's treasures to accompany Helen's return to Agamemnon, to a placating gift, or perhaps even to a wedding dowry. For a much more detailed account the erotic undertones of this passage, see Ready 2005.

By treating Hesiod's use of the phrase as a stereotyped element of an original metaphor of lightning and thunder, we gain insight into the role of prophesy and omen in the beginning of the *Theogony*:

ὥς ἔφασαν κοῦραι μεγάλου Διὸς ἀρτιέπειαι:
καί μοι σκῆπτρον ἔδον δάφνης ἐριθηλέος ὄζον
δρέψασαι, θηητόν: ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι αὐδὴν
θέσπιν, ἵνα κλείοιμι τὰ τ' ἐσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα.
καί μ' ἐκέλονθ' ὑμνεῖν μακάρων γένος αἰὲν ἐόντων,
σφᾶς δ' αὐτὰς πρῶτόν τε καὶ ὕστατον αἰὲν αἰίδειν.
ἀλλὰ τί ἦ μοι ταῦτα περὶ δρῦν ἢ περὶ πέτρην;
τύνη, Μουσάων ἀρχώμεθα, ταὶ Διὶ πατρὶ
ὑμνεῦσαι τέρπουσι μέγαν νόον ἐντὸς Ὀλύμπου,
εἰρεῦσαι τὰ τ' ἐόντα τὰ τ' ἐσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα,
φωνῆ ὀμηρεῦσαι ...

(*Th.* 1. 29-39)

"But why do I have these things around oak or rock?" Hesiod seeks to rephrase the underlying cause of his own prophetic abilities, not in terms of himself (μοι), and the objects and abilities given to him, but in terms of the Muses themselves (... Μουσάων ἀρχώμεθα ...). The prophetic power of song endowed by the Muses does not lie in Hesiod's received σκῆπτρον, or even in the αὐδὴν / θέσπιν, but in their primary function as divine vocalists. Hesiod vows that his prophetic voice only exists in as much as he now dutifully re-performs what the Muses have already sung: ταῦτ' ἄρα Μοῦσαι ἄειδον, Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι (*Th.* 65). The phrase, "these things about oak or rock," (... ταῦτα περὶ δρῦν ἢ περὶ πέτρην) is a stereotyped preservation of a

Bronze-Age metaphor, and Hesiod employs it here masterfully. Ba'al reveals the mysteries of universe through his "word of tree and murmur of rock." Why does Hesiod have access to an archaic form of prophesy inspired directly by divine voice? Because the Muses sing and he, understanding them, mimics.

Plato's attestation of the crux in the *Phaedrus* acquires a remarkable clarity when viewed in the context of the Ugaritic phrase:

οἱ δέ γ', ὦ φίλε, ἐν τῷ τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Δωδωναίου ἱερῷ **δρυὸς λόγους** ἔφησαν
μαντικούς πρώτους γενέσθαι. τοῖς μὲν οὖν τότε, ἅτε οὐκ οὔσι σοφοῖς ὥσπερ
 ὑμεῖς οἱ νέοι, ἀπέχρη **δρυὸς καὶ πέτρας ἀκούειν** ὑπ' εὐηθείας, εἰ μόνον
 ἀληθῆ λέγοιεν: σοὶ δ' ἴσως διαφέρει τίς ὁ λέγων καὶ ποδαπός. οὐ γὰρ ἐκεῖνο
 μόνον σκοπεῖς, εἴτε οὕτως εἴτε ἄλλως ἔχει;

(*Phaedrus* 275β-γ)

Plato describes the extremely archaic technique of divination native to the oak-shrine of Dodona, beloved by Zeus. As the site of frequent lightning strikes due to the oaks' natural attractive properties (see note 37) the location was interpreted as holy to the leader of the Pantheon, and the priests there divined lightning and thunder, "speech from tree and/or rock," as indicative of Zeus' will. This is likely the most transparent preservation in Greek of the phrase's original function in archaic ritual, but being too far removed temporally (τοῖς μὲν οὖν τότε ...), Plato has lost the metaphorical meaning of the phrase, interpreting it as referring to the speech of literal trees and rocks.

Returning finally to the *Odyssey*, we have an alternate explanation to the idea that the Greeks thought that men were born from trees and/or rocks:

ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς μοι εἶπὲ τεδὸν γένος, ὀππόθεν ἐσσί.

οὐ γὰρ ἀπὸ δρυός ἐσσι παλαιφάτου οὐδ' ἀπὸ πέτρης.

(*Od.* 19.162-3)

Penelope literally says to a disguised Odysseus, "For surely you are not born from anciently-spoken oak and/or from rock." Perhaps reintroducing the original metaphor to her statement will prove instructive: "For surely you are not born from lightning and/or thunder." Here, the stereotyped generative aspect of lightning and thunder, as seen in the Ugaritic, is transformed into a teasing *adynaton*. Lightning fertilizes the ground through nitrogen deposits, and lightning and/or thunder are harbingers of the nourishing rain-waters.³⁵ Moreover, the Miller/Urey experiments of the 1950's sought to recreate the origin of life on earth by simulating lightning strikes in an environment rich with water, ammonia, nitrogen and hydrogen, and succeeded in creating organic compounds. Thus the pairing of "anciently-spoken oak and/or rock" as a metaphor for lightning and thunder could feasibly represent a creative event. It requires mention that Greek δρῦς, as the lightning-wielding Zeus' favored oak tree, is particularly appropriate in this context, even more so since oaks attract lightning strikes at a higher-rate than any other tree.³⁶ In short, scientific inquiry appears to support the archaic beliefs that lightning was particularly attracted to the oak, and that lightning strikes were generative as well as destructive.

Further, only if one interprets "speech from tree and/or rock" as a metaphor for lightning and thunder, can one convincingly explain why either ... ἦ ... or ... οὐδ' ... is present in all three archaic Greek examples of the crux. Although belonging to the same phenomenon, lightning and thunder seem bipartite due to the difference in the speeds of light and of sound.

³⁵ See Shepon, Gildor 2008 for a study of climate change on nitrogen-compounds deposited into the soil by lightning. See Nagy 1990:197 for Indo-European textual examples of the generative power of lightning strikes, esp. n119 for further sources and discussion.

³⁶ See Nagy 1990:196.

Consequently, there is always an "and/or" when the phrase occurs. Lightning and thunder may occur simultaneously, there may be a delay between the two, or one may seem to occur without the other. In the *Odyssey*, the adjective παλαιφάτου is crucial, since it preserves the proverbial and prophetic nature of the original Bronze-Age phrase, and repositions Penelope's question in the larger metaphorical context of "speech from tree and/or rock."

Whether this phrase in the *Odyssey* reflects the cultural belief of the Greeks is essentially unknowable. *Adynata* have at least two major subtypes, universal and situational. It is impossible to know whether this phrase is the former or the latter. Likewise, we cannot know whether whatever poet(s) crafted these lines had access to the original metaphor. To view the phrase of "speech from tree and/or rock" as being subject to semantic loss, and transforming gradually into an idiom with non-compositional meaning is likely the correct approach. At any given stage during this process, each individual speaker would have a different level of understanding of the phrase's original meaning, and while Plato almost certainly did not have access to the phrase's origins, it is unclear what its absolute semantic status was at any stage of the idiomatic process. Here I will offer a few examples in English to make this point clearer; there are three phrases, "by hook or by crook," "to make ends meet," and "the proof is in the pudding." If one were to ask a sample of native English speakers what the overall meaning and origins of these phrases were, there would be a variety of responses. Some would have no idea on either account; some would be able to give a general gist of the phrase's meaning and context without being able to identify the exact function the "hook," "meet" or "pudding," in which case the phrase would be a non-compositional idiom, that which cannot be analyzed semantically in distinct parts; a few would be able to answer both questions accurately. This situation of idiomatic transformation seems to be the most accurate in attempting to analyze the semantic profile of "to speak from tree and/or rock" in Greek, and accounts for the variety

of prepositions in the phrase's use in Homer and Hesiod. What is certain, however, is that this phrase survived for over 1500 years, relatively intact despite wear-and-tear from its lengthy sojourn, in a testament to the power of an inherited oral tradition that likely functioned within a highly specific ritual context.

In an effort to elucidate the crux of "tree and/or rock," I hope both to have redefined the phrase as including the notion of *speech*, and to have offered an explanation of its appearance in Greek epic and the Ba'al cycle. The Ugaritic evidence supports the reading of "word of tree and murmur of rock" as a visual and auditory metaphor for lightning and thunder. If one views the archaic Greek attestations, analyzed as "speech from tree and/or rock" as preserving stereotyped thematic elements of prophesy and generation present in the Ugaritic, there appears a clear inherited ideological system that persists from the Bronze-Age through Homer and Hesiod. In all three archaic Greek contexts the phrase can be specified as "speech from tree and/or rock," which distinguishes the crux from a more general and popular collocation, "tree and/or rock." In the *Iliad*, the phrase has connotations of persuasion in a context of courtship, in the *Odyssey* it is generative and prophetic, and in the *Theogony*, it occurs in a transparently prophetic context within a larger work concerned with the creation of the universe. Each Greek phrase is likely an idiomatic reflex of an original, which is well-preserved and artfully articulated in the Ugaritic, in which lightning and thunder represent divine speech as a prophetic act of persuasion, and are representative of the converse and mingling between heaven and earth. The visual evidence from Northern Syria suggests that the origins of this phrase, "speech from tree and/or rock," may be lurking in cultic practice of the early 3rd millennium BCE.

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