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Scott Noegel, “Geminate Ballast and Clustering: An Unrecognized Literary Feature in Ancient Semitic Poetry.”

GEMINATE BALLAST AND CLUSTERING: AN UNRECOGNIZED LITERARY FEATURE IN ANCIENT SEMITIC POETRY*

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1. DEFINING GEMINATE BALLAST AND CLUSTERING

The essay below contains evidence for a hitherto unrecognized literary device in ancient Near Eastern literature, a device that I shall refer to as “Geminate Ballast and Clustering.” My use of the word “geminate” is not restricted to the grammatical geminate forms, i.e., those forms derived from roots whose second and third radicals are identical, but includes any verb or noun derived from roots that contain any two identical root consonants, whether second and third, first and third, or even more rarely first and second. Since reduplicated and some quadrilateral forms also constitute gemination of this sort I include them as well.¹

The device has as its primary characteristic the clustering of geminate forms in close proximity, often, but not strictly in parallelism. I say not strictly, because the main aim of the device appears to have been a general sense of ballast, and unlike word-pairs which are employed as parallels of sense or meaning, geminate clusters belong generally to the realm of sound devices, and serve to balance one stich's use of gemination with gemination in another.

2. GEMINATE BALLAST AND CLUSTERING IN BIBLICAL HEBREW POETRY

To demonstrate the device I turn first to a case-book example in Ps 74:13-14.

אתה פוררת בעזך ים שברת ראשי תנינים על המים
אתה רצצת ראשי לויתן תתננו מאכל לעם לציים

You parted the sea by your strength; you broke the heads of the Tannin in the waters.

You crushed the heads of Leviathan, and gave him for food to the people of the wilderness.

Note how the passage parallels four geminate forms; three true geminates (i.e. פָּרַר, תָּנַן, רָצַץ) and a first and third radical geminate נָתַן. The latter verb, here written in the 2nd person with a suffix to permit the gemination of both the ת and the נ, also constitutes a word play on תָּנַן and לִוּיָּתָן. The latter example belongs to a type that I shall refer to as “imitation geminates.” Also strengthening the geminate parallel and cluster is the passage's chiasmic compositional structure.

As these stichs demonstrate, the biblical bard chose to parallel one geminate form with another. Put another way, the use of one geminate form inspired the use of others in the same passage. The example also demonstrates that it is best to distinguish the device from that of alliteration, though each of the geminate forms have an alliterative effect in and of themselves, since aside from the ת and נ in the word תָּנַן, the geminate consonants in the verbs פָּרַר and רָצַץ are not resounded elsewhere in the passage in any significant way.

Another striking example of geminate ballast and parallelism appears in Jonah 2:6.

אֶפְפוּנֵי מַיִם עַד נַפְשׁ
תְּהוֹם יִסְבְּבֵנִי סוּף חָבוּשׁ לְרֹאשִׁי

The waters engulfed me, even to the throat;

The depth surrounded me, the weeds were wrapped around my head.

Note how the geminate verb אָפַף “engulf” in the A line parallels the geminate verb סָבַב “surround” in the B line. As in the previous example, here too we find true geminate forms in parallelism, this time also containing a striking case of assonance with the repeated vowels /o/ and /u/.

Jer 31:22 also evidences the device.

עַד מַתִּי תִתְחַמְקִין הַבַּת הַשׁוֹכֵבָה
כִּי בָרָא יְהוָה חֲדָשָׁה בָאָרֶץ נִקְבָה תִסּוּבֵב גֹּבֵר

How long will you waver, O apostate daughter?

For Yahweh has created something new on the earth, a woman encircles a man.

Despite the difficulties that this passage poses for translators the presence of a geminate cluster is clear. The imitation geminate form **השובב** (from **שוב**) is clustered with the “true” geminate form **תסובב** (from **סבב**) in the following line. The geminate cluster also takes paronomastic advantage of the consonant **ב** which appears nine times in this short verse.

Another notable example of geminate clustering appears in Isa 24:19-20a

רעה התרעעה הארץ פור התפוררה ארץ מוט התמוטטה ארץ
נוע תנוע ארץ כשכור והתנודדה כמלונה

The earth is utterly breaking, the earth is utterly crumbling, the earth is utterly tottering,

The earth is utterly swaying like a drunkard. It is rocking to and fro like a hut.

This passage artfully employs true geminate parallels, i.e., **רעע** and **פרר** with imitation geminate forms created by the normative duplication of the third radical in hithpo'lels of **ע"ו** verbs, in this case **מוט** and **נוד**. The result is a geminate cluster.² Since the device is first and foremost one of sound and only secondarily one of structure (i.e., ballast) the writer was content to complement his geminate cluster with forms that mimic “true” gemination or reduplication. We already have seen in Ps 74:13-14 how the poet employed the **ת** and **נ** in the word **תנין** to achieve a fuller sense of geminate ballast. The imitation geminate forms in Isa 24:19 work much the same way.

Moreover, since geminate ballast is primarily a sound device, poets could achieve geminate ballast simply by placing geminate forms, irrespective of their grammatical type (e.g., whether nouns or verbs), in both the A and B lines. They did not need to form an exact one to one form of grammatical parallelism. As we have seen, where geminate parallelism does occur (e.g., Ps 74:13-14, Isa 24:19) perfect parallels were not required to create a sense of “sound” ballast. The next example, from Amos 9:13b, demonstrates this nicely.

והשיפו ההרים עסיס
וכל הגבעות תתמוגגנה

When the mountains shall drip wine,
And all the hills shall flow (with wine).

Observe how the prophet has employed a hithpo'lel of an **ע"ו** verb, here **מוגג**, in order to achieve the effect of geminate balance with **עסיס**. The repeated consonant **ה** in the

expression **ההרים** “the mountains” also may have added to the impact of gemination, as well as the repeated **ת** in **תתמוגגנה**.

Note a similar example of geminate ballast in Ps 6:8.

עששה מכעס עיני
עתקה בכל צוררי

My eyes are wasted by vexation,
Worn out because of all my foes.

In this instance it is the two geminate forms **עששה** and **צורר** that chiasmically balance the line even though the first geminate is a verb and the second is a noun.³

We also find geminate clustering in the Book of Job (12:16-17).

עמו עז ותושיה לו שגג ומשנה
מוליך יועצים שולל
ושפטים יהולל

With him are strength and resourcefulness,
erring and causing to err are from him.
He leads counsellors away stripped,
and makes the judges fools.

Here the geminate **שגג** “erring” in v. 16 forms a cluster with the geminate parallels **שולל** and **יהולל** in v. 17.

Ps 12:7 offers yet another demonstration of the device.

כסף צרוף בעליל לארץ
מזקק שבעתים

Silver purged in an earthen crucible,
Refined sevenfold.

Here too the device does not aim to achieve a one-to-one grammatical correspondence of lexeme to lexeme, but rather seeks only to parallel the sound of gemination, regardless of the particular word's classification. Thus, the geminate noun **עליל** “crucible” in stich A matches the geminate participle **מזקק** in the B stich.

In some cases, a geminate clustering is achieved only with the assistance of rare words and grammatical forms. See, for example, the geminate pairing in Ps 139:21.

הלוא משנאיך יהוה אשנא
ובתקומיך אתקוטט

Do I not hate, O Yahweh, those who hate you?
And quarrel with your adversaries?

In this passage the poet has chosen to pair the two imitation geminate forms **תקומיך** and **אתקוטט**, the former deriving from **קום** and the latter from **קוט**. The latter root appears to be an Aramaism corresponding to the Hebrew verb **קוץ** suggesting that the poet reached deep into his lexical inventory to achieve the desired geminate pairing.

See similarly a geminate cluster in Hab 2:6-7.

הוי המרבה לא לו עד מתי ומכביר עליו עבטיט
הלוא פתע יקומו נשכיך ויקצו מזעזעיך

Ah, you who pile up what is not yours, how much longer?
And make even heavier your load of indebtedness, right suddenly will your
creditors arise, and those who remind you will awake!

Here clusters the imitation geminate forms **עבטיט** and **זעזע**. The former is the only such form in the Bible (though the root **עבט** does occur) and the latter form is rare both as a reduplicated form and as a root (i.e., **זוע**) suggesting that the poet again sought rare forms to achieve the geminate cluster effect.

The Song of Deborah (Jud 5:28) also employs a rare word to the same effect.

בעד החלון נשקפה ותיבב
אם סיסרא בעד האשנב

Through the window she peered,
Sisera's mother whined behind the lattice.

Here the poet uses the “true,” but unique geminate form **תיבב** (from **יבב**) in order to produce a geminate cluster with the name **סיסרא**.

The use of a rare grammatical form is similarly used in Ps 135:9.

שלח אתות ומפתים בתוככי מצרים
בפרעה ובכל עבריו

He sent signs and portents against you, Egypt,
against Pharaoh and all his servants.

Two imitation geminate forms here form a cluster: **אתות** and **תוככי**. The former, the normal plural of **אות**, naturally contains a reduplicated **ת**, and the latter adds the suffix **כי** to geminate the sound of the **כ**.⁴ The deliberateness of the device is demonstrated in that the form **תוככי** is the only place in the Psalm where the poet departs from his third person address to employ a second person address in reference to Egypt.⁵

3. GEMINATION AND REDUPLICATION

Another way that a poet could exploit imitation geminate forms to create a geminate cluster was to employ reduplicated forms. Consider this example in Isaiah 7:19.

ובאו ונחו כלם בנחלי הבתות ובנקיקי הסלעים
ובכל הנעצוצים ובכל הנהללים

And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate crevices, and in the
holes of the rocks,

And upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.

Here we find the geminate roots **נקק** and **הלל** used with the quadraliteral form **הנעצוצים**. These geminate forms apparently also provoked the poet's use of the *hapax legomenon* **הבתות** “crevices” in the plural, a form that requires repeating the consonant **ת**. While neither the reduplicate **הנעצוצים** nor the feminine plural form **הבתות** may be considered “true” geminates, the overall sound result is the same.

A related use of reduplicated forms for geminate effect appears in Isa 10:14, an example that we also may classify as onomatopoeia.

ולא היה נִרְדַּר כנף
ופצה פה ומצפצף

Nothing so much as flaps a wing,
Or opens a mouth and chirps.

The prophet here has placed the reduplicated quadraliteral **מצפצף** “chirp” in the B line in order to provide ballast for the geminate participle **נִרְדַּר** in the A line. When

combined with repeated use of the consonants **ב** and **צ** the line mimics the fluttering and chirping of birds.

The combination of onomatopoeia and geminate clustering occurs also in the famous words of Isaiah in 2:4.

וכתתו חרבותם לאתים
 וחניתותיהם למזמרות

They shall hammer their swords into plowshares,
 Their spears into sickles.

Here the geminate verb **כתת** “hammer” achieves ballast via the B line's **חניתותיהם**, a feminine plural form that mimics gemination. The verse obtains its percussive “hammering” sound by way of the same consonant **ת** in each of the other words in the verse.⁶ Thus, the geminate verb **כתת** in the A line inspired gemination in the B line.

One of the most impressive geminate clusters occurs in Job 3:5-9. Here again we find standard geminate forms employed alongside reduplicated forms.

יגאלהו חשך וצלמות תשכן עליו עננה יבעתהו כמרירי יום
 הלילה ההוא יקחהו אפל אל יחד בימי שנה במספר ירחים אל יבא
 הנה הלילה ההוא יהי גלמוד אל תבא רננה בו
 יקבהו אררי יום העתידים ערר לויתן
 יחשכו כוכבי נשפו יקו לאור ואין ואל יראה בעפעפי שחר

Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell on it; let the
 blackness of the day terrify it.

As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined to the days of the
 year, let it not come into the number of the months.

Behold, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice be heard in it.

Let those who curse the day curse it, who are ready to rouse up Leviathan.

Let the stars of its twilight be dark; let it look for light, but have none; and let it
 not see the eyelids of the dawn.

Line 5 brings together two true geminates, **ענן** “cloud” and the *crux interpretum* **מרירי**. Lines 6 and 7 build upon the cluster by repeating **לילה** twice and employing the geminate **רנן** “sing.” Lines 8 and 9, however, bring the pericope to a fever-pitch of geminate parallels in their use of **אררי**, **ערר**, **כוכב**, and **עפעפי**.

See also the dense concatenation of gemination (and reduplication) in Job 16:12-16.

שְׁלוֹ הֵייתִי וַיִּפְרֹדֵנִי וְאָחַז בְּעַרְפִּי וַיִּפְצַּעֲנִי וַיִּקְיַמְנִי לוֹ לַמָּטְרָה
 יִסְבוּ עָלַי רַבִּיּוֹ יִפְלֹחַ כְּלִיּוֹתַי וְלֹא יִחְמוֹל יִשְׁפֹךְ לָאָרֶץ מִרְרַתִּי
 יִפְרֹצֵנִי פֶרֶץ עַל־פְּנֵי־פֶרֶץ יֶרֶץ עָלַי כְּגֹבוֹר
 שָׁק תִּפְרַתִּי עָלַי גְּלָדִי וְעַל־לִתִּי בַעֲפָר קִרְנִי
 פְּנֵי חֲמֻרְמָה מְנִי־בְכִי וְעַל עֲפַעְפִּי צִלְמוֹת

I was at ease, but he broke me asunder; he also took me by my neck, and shook me to pieces, and set me up for his target.

His archers surround me, he cleaves my insides asunder, and does not spare; he pours out my gall on the ground.

He breaks me with breach upon breach, he runs upon me like a warrior.

I have sewn sackcloth on my skin, and have laid my horn in the dust.

(K) My face is reddish with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death.

A veritable tapestry of geminate and reduplicated forms, this passage parallels פֶּרֶץ and פְּצַץ in line 12. In line 13 we find סָבַב, רָבַב, and מָרַר. In line 15 there is עָלַל, and in line 16, חֲמֻרְמָה and עֲפַעְפִּי. Moreover, it clusters these geminate parallels so that they resound in the words עַרְף “neck” in line 12, תִּפְר “sewn” and עֲפָר “dust” in line 15, as well as the entirety of verse 14: יִפְרֹצֵנִי פֶרֶץ עַל־פְּנֵי־פֶרֶץ יֶרֶץ עָלַי כְּגֹבוֹר.

Similarly, we hear the consonants of מִרְרַתִּי in verse 13 and עֲפָר in verse 16 echoed in the reduplicated forms of line 16, namely חֲמֻרְמָה and עֲפַעְפִּי.

4. GEMINATE BALLAST AND CLUSTERING IN UGARITIC POETRY

Since biblical literature shares many poetic forms and devices with the Ugaritic texts we should not be surprised to find geminate ballast also at work in Ugaritic literature. Since the reader by now is aware of the features of this device, I shall be content with merely citing the text and pointing out where gemination appears. I turn first to the Epic of Baal (CAT 1.4 IV:14-18).

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 14. yštn aṭrt lbmt ʿr | He sets Asherah on the back of an ass, |
| 15. lysmsmt bmt pḥl | On the beautiful back of a donkey, |
| 16. qdš yuḥdm šbʿr | Qadish seizes, he leads. ⁷ |
| 17. amrr kkbkb lpm | Even Amrar like a star before him, |
| 18. aṭr btlṭ ʿnt ⁸ | Marches the Virgin `Anat. |

This passage clusters several reduplicated forms. Note, for example, **ysmsmt** in line 15, as well as **amrr** and **kkbkb** in line 17. Here again, the poet's word choice appears to have been influenced by a desire for reduplicated forms. Also of note is that one of the geminate forms exploited by the bard is a personal name, specifically the god Amrar.⁹

Geminate ballast also is achieved in CAT 1.4 V:54-55.

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 54. ḥš. trmmn.hk[lm] | Quickly you shall erect a palace, |
| 55. btk. ṣrrt. ṣpn | In the midst of the summit of Saphan. |

Earlier in the Baal cycle, Baal's mountain is called **ḡry il** “my holy mountain” (CAT 1.3 III:29) or **mrym ṣpn** the “heights of Saphan” (CAT 1.3 IV rev. 1; 1.4 IV:1; 1.4 V:23; 1.5 I:11), but here the term used is **ṣrrt. ṣpn** “summit of Saphan.” The geminate term **ṣrrt** was employed in order to match the geminate form **trmmn** “you shall erect” in the previous stich.¹⁰

In CAT 1.4 VI:16-17 we also find the following geminate cluster.

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 16. i[lm]. bhth. tbnn | He builds his house, |
| 17. x[xx.] trmm. hlkh | He erects his palace, |
| 18. y[tl]k. llbnn. wʿšh | He g[oe]s to Lebanon for its wood. |

Here the imitation form **tbnn** “he builds” (root **bny** with energetic **-n**) creates geminate balast with both **trmm** in line 17 and **llbnn** in line 18.

CAT 1.4 VII:45-50 also constitutes a geminate cluster.

45. dll. al. ilak. lbn	I will send a delegation to the son of the gods, Mot,
46. ilm. mt. ‘dd. lydd	A herald to the beloved,
47. il. ǵzr. yqra. mt	Of El, the hero. He will call Mot.
48. b npšh. ystrn ydd	With his throat, instruct the beloved,
49. b gngnh aḥdy. dym	With his insides, I alone reign.
50. lk...	

Several geminates create the cluster in this passage including dll “delegation” (l. 45), ‘dd “herald” (l. 46), ydd “beloved” (ll. 46, 48), and the reduplicate form gngnh “insides” (l. 49).

Note similarly El's query to Athirat in CAT 1.4 IV:38-39.

38. ...hm. yd. il mlk	Does the “hand” of El the king excite you?
39. yḥssk. ahbt. tr. tʿrrk	Or the love of the bull arouse you?

In this passage the words yḥssk “excite you” (from the geminate verb ḥss) form a geminate parallel with tʿrr “arouse you” (also from the geminate verb ʿrr).

Another example can be found in CAT 1.19 III:50-53 where we also find geminate clustering.

50. ymǵ. lmr̄rt. tǵll. bnr	He arrived at Mararat-taǵullal-banir.
51. yš̄u. gh. wyš̄ḥ. y lk. mrr̄t	He lifted his voice and shouted, “Woe to you Mararat- taǵullal-banir, near which Aqhat was killed.
52. tǵll. bnr. dʿlk. mḥṣ̄. aqht	
53. ǵzr. š̄ršk. bars̄. al	The hero! May your roots not (sprout) in the earth.”

The place name “Mararat-taǵullal-banir” contains two geminates (i.e., mrr̄t and tǵll). It is repeated in lines 51-52 for dramatic effect, and is complemented by the word š̄rš̄ “root,” in line 53, itself a word that contains a geminated consonant (š̄).

The geminate root ǵll appears to have been a Canaanite geminate favorite, since we find it in another geminate cluster in CAT 1.3 II:25-28.

25. tǵdd. kbdh. bšḥq. ymlu	Her liver swells with laughter,
26. lbh. bšmḥt. kbd. ʿnt	Her heart fills with joy, ʿAnat's liver with victory,
27. tšyt. kbrkm. tǵll bdm	Knee-deep she plunges in soldier's blood.
28. ḏmr. ḥlqm. bmmʿ. mhrm	To the neck in the gore of troops.

Here tǵll clusters with the geminate forms tǵdd “it gluts” in line 25 and mmʿ “gore” in line 28.

One of the most pronounced examples of geminate ballast and clustering in the Ugaritic texts appears in CAT 1.17 II:34-41.

34. ...yšl	
35. ḥm. kṛt wyššq	He feeds the Kotharot, and gives drink to
36. bnt hll snnt. ḥmš	The daughters of the new moon, the swallows, a fifth,
37. tḏt ym. yšlḥm. kṛt	A sixth day, he feeds the Kotharot,
38. wyš[šq] bnt. hll. snnt	And gives drink to the daughters of the new moon, the swallows.
39. mk bšb[ʿ] ymm tbʿ. bbth	Lo on the seventh day, there departed from his house
40. kṛt. bnt hll. snnt	The Kotharot, the daughters of the new moon, the swallows.
41. mddt. nʿmy ʿrš. hrt	Extended, the pleasantries of the bed of conception,
42. ysmsmt. ʿrš ḥllt	The delights of the bed of penetration (?)

The cluster begins with the imitation geminate form wyššq “he gives drink” in line 35, and continues with the true geminates hll “new moon” and snnt “swallows” in line 36, which are followed by the form of the numeral tḏt “sixth” in line 37. The geminates then repeat in lines 38 and 40. Bolstering the geminate cluster are the imitation geminate sounds of ymm “day(s),” and bbth “from his house,” in line 39, the difficult word mddt

“extended” (?) in line 41, the reduplicate form *ysmsmt*, meaning “delights” from the root *ysm*, and also the word *hllt* in line 42.

A similar example occurs in CAT 1.17 VI:35-39.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 35. šrgk. h̄hm(?). mt. uḥryt. mh. yqḥ | Your lies are loathsome. As for man,
what does he get as his destiny?
What does man get as his fate? |
| 36. mh. yqḥ mt. aṭryt spsg. ysk | White glaze is poured out |
| 37. [l]riš . ḥrṣ . lṣr. qdqdy | On (the) head, lye
on top of my pate. |
| 38. [ap]mt. kl. amt. wan. mtm. amt | [And] I'll die the death of everyone,
Yea I will certainly die! |
| 39. [ap m]ṭn rgmm. argm. qštm | [Also anoth]er thing I shall say: the
bow [is a weapon] of heroes! |
| 40. [] mhrm | |

Line 35 begins the geminate cluster with the difficult word *h̄hm* “loathsome” and continues in lines 36 and 37 with the terms *spsg* “white glaze” and *qdqd* “pate.” The passage then builds upon the cluster with a web of paronomasia utilizing the consonants /a/, /m/, and /t/. Note also the cognate accusative *rgmm argm* “a saying I will say.”

5. GEMINATE BALLAST AND CLUSTERING IN AKKADIAN POETRY

Geminate ballast and clustering also appears in Akkadian literature. Again I shall be content with citing the text and briefly highlighting where gemination appears. The first example comes from *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* III:7-8 (*BWL*, 48-49).

7. [u]r-ra u mu-šú iš-ten-iš a-na-a[s-su-us]

Day and night alike I groan,

8. šuttu (MAŠ.GE6) mu-na-at-tú mal-ma-liš šu-um-r[u-ša-ku]

In dream and waking moments I am equally wretched.

In this passage the geminate form *anassus* (from the verb *nasāsu*) in the A line has inspired the use of the reduplicate *malmališ* in the B line.

We see the device also at work in the Contest between the Tamarisk and the Palm: 5-6 (*BWL*, 156-157) in which the Tamarisk boasts.

5. ...[iš-p]a-ra-ak-ma qé a-ma-ḥa-aš ú-la-ba-aš um-ma-nam-ma

...I am a weaver and beat up the threads. I clothe the troops.

6. [...m]a-aš-ma-ša-ak-ma bi-it i-li-im ú-la-al

[...] I am the exorcist and purify the temple.

The A line's *ummanamma* finds ballast in the B line's use of the reduplicated noun *maššmaššu* and in the geminate verb *elēlu/ullulu* “purify.”

See also *Enuma Elish* I:42-43.

42. i-zu-uz-ma il-ta-si e-li ḥar-mi-ša

She was furious and screamed at her lover,

43. mar-ši-iš ug-gu-gat e-diš-ši-ša

Delirious, she was beside herself with rage.

The geminate verb *ezēzu* in the A line finds a match in the B line's *uggugat* and also in the imitation geminate form *ēdiššiša* (from *ēdišši* plus the suffix *ša*). As this and other examples demonstrate, the device does not constitute gemination in the service of alliteration, but rather alliteration in the service of gemination. The alliteration here thus aims to mimic or amplify other geminates.

We find geminate ballast also in *Enuma Elish* I:74-75

74. ^dE-a uš-ziz-zu ir-nit-ta-šu UGU ga-ri-šu

Ea set up his victory over his adversaries,

75. qir-biš kum-mi-šu šup-šu-ḥi-iš i-nu-u4-uḥ-ḥu

Then he rested very quietly inside his room.

Here the Š-stem verb of *uzuzzu* is paralleled with an imitation reduplicated form, the Š-stem noun *šupšuḥu* from the verb *pašāḥu*.

Another example occurs in the Tale of the Poor Man of Nippur 132-133.

132. ir-ti-ma ina dun-ni qaḡ-qa-ri ḡamši sikkāti (GIŠ.GAG.MEŠ)

And drove five pegs into the hard ground,

133. qātē (ŠU) šēpē (GIR.MIN) qaḡqada (SAG) ú-pak-kir-šú

Tied (his) hands, feet, and pate.

Here the noun *qaḡqari* “ground,” finds a nominal match in the B line's *qaḡqada* “pate.”

Compare also the geminate ballast and clustering in Gilgamesh X:272-274

272. na-ad-na-áš-sú ana lil-li šur-šum [ši-ka-ri]

To a fool is given beer-dregs instead of

273. GIM.Ì.NUN.[NA]

butter.

274. tuḡ-ḡu ù ku-uk-ku-šá šá GIM [...]

Garbage and cheap flour which like [...]

Here the geminate and reduplicate forms include *lil-li* “fool” and *šur-šum* “dregs” in line 272, and *ku-uk-ku* in line 274. The use of *na-ad-na-áš-sú* in line 272 and the repeated *šá* sign in line 274 add to the geminate effect.

See also Gilgamesh XI:183-184.

183. am-ma-ki taš-ku-nu a-bu-ba: barbaru (BAR.BAR.RA) lit-ba-am-ma
nīšē (UKU.MEŠ li-ša-[aḡ-ḡi-ir])

Instead of bringing a flood: would that a wolf had appeared to diminish
the people!

184. am-ma-ki taš-ku-nu a-bu-ba: ḡu-šaḡ-ḡu liš-šá-kin-ma mātu (KUR) lid...

Instead of bringing a flood: would that famine had appeared to slay the
land!

In this example the poet complements the geminate noun *abūbu* with the reduplicated noun *barbaru* “wolf” in line 183, as well as the first and third radical geminate noun *ḡušaḡḡu* “famine” in line 184.

In a few cases, geminate clusters are created in combination with names that contain duplicated consonants, much as we saw in the Ugaritic passage above. Thus, in *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* III:25-26 (*BWL*, 48-49) we find.

25. làl-úr-alim-ma a-šib nippur^{ki}

“Laluralimma, resident of Nippur,

26. a-na ub-bu-bi-ka iš-pu-ra-an-[ni]

Has sent me to cleanse you.”

Here the name Laluralimma finds a reduplicated parallel in the B line's ubbubika.

Similarly, see the Preceptive Hymn to Shamash 35-36 (*BWL*, 128-129).

35. te-te-ni-bir ta-ma-tum rapaštum^{tum} šá-di-il-ta

You never fail to cross the wide expanse of sea,

36. [šá] ^di-gi-gi la i-du-ú qí-rib lib-bi-šá

The depth of which the Igigi know not.

The form tetenebbir with the duplicated consonant /t/ bolsters the B line's geminates Igigi.

6. CONCLUSION

The device examined above appears to be employed in all strata of biblical Hebrew poetry, and its widespread usage in other Semitic texts shows that it was acquired in scribal circles along with other sophisticated compositional techniques. Its appearance in Akkadian suggests that the device may have originated in Mesopotamia and moved westward with cuneiform culture at an early date. However, regardless of its provenance, the evidence suggests that geminate ballast and clustering was yet another technique available to the ancient Semitic poet, and while this initial foray into the various aspects of the device remains in its infancy, I would like to suggest two avenues for future research.

First, I would suggest that the device be examined for its relationship to other poetic features including chiasm, onomatopoeia, paronomasia, Janus parallelism, and key

roots.¹¹ Indeed, a few of the examples we have examined occur in tandem with these devices.

Second, the literary function of the device also requires research.¹² It appears to be related in a general sense to other types of parallelism, such as gender-matched parallelism and grammatical parallelism, though its reliance on sound, rather than meaning differentiates it. It also shares features with the clustering phenomenon noted first by Jonas Greenfield in biblical poetry,¹³ but its relation to paronomasia, alliteration, and punning suggests that it has a referential function.¹⁴ At the very least, as more examples of geminate clustering come to light, they perhaps will provide a key to poetic strategies for alliteration elsewhere in ancient Near Eastern literature. Nevertheless, while alliteration (or onomatopoeia) may be at times a result of the device, the clustering of ballast geminate, reduplicate, and imitation geminate forms cannot properly and solely be called “alliteration.” Instead, this device represents a learned compositional feature, a sophisticated aural technique which attracted other alliterative forms, and a device which now should be entered into the manuals and handbooks of ancient Semitic poetry.

7. ENDNOTES

* Different drafts of this paper were presented at Cornell University (October 4, 1999), the American Oriental Society annual meeting (Portland, OR, March 14, 2000), and the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature-Pacific Northwest Branch (Spokane, WA, April 29, 2000). I gratefully acknowledge the helpful feedback of a number of individuals present at these meetings, especially Profs. Stephen Kaufman, Jerrold Cooper, Francis Landy, Ehud Ben Zvi, and David Owen. I extend my gratitude also to Profs. Gary Rendsburg and Wilfred G. E. Watson for their insightful correspondence on the contents of this article as well.

¹ I realize that the name of the device I have suggested may be confused with so-called “true” geminate forms. Nevertheless, after having searched unsuccessfully for an alternative appellative, the proposed term comes closest, I believe, to capturing the essence of the device.

² This passage also contains a remarkable word play. See Scott B. Noegel, “A Slip of the Reader and not the Reed,” *JBQ* 26/1 (1998): 12-19; *JBQ* 26/2 (1998): 93-100.

³ The same geminate couplet appears in Ps 31:11.

⁴ The rare suffix is presumably of an Aramaic-type or an archaic Hebrew variant.

⁵ Later, of course, God is addressed in the second person (i.e., vv. 13-18), but this is different.

⁶ Noted by Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (JSOTSup 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), 236.

⁷ On the meaning “leads” see Gary Rendsburg, “Modern South Arabian as a Source for Ugaritic Etymologies,” *JAOS* 107 (1987): 623-628.

⁸ With Simon Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (Atlanta, GA.: Scholars Press, 1997), 126-127, I also understand the last four words in lines 17-18 as forming a couplet with the following line. Nevertheless, this does not impact the geminate cluster proposed here.

⁹ For word plays present in this passage see Scott B. Noegel, “A Janus Parallelism in the Baal and Anat Story,” *JNSL* 21/1 (1995): 91-94 (92-93); *Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job* (JSOTS 223; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 176-177.

¹⁰ In CAT 1.3 I:21-22 *ṣrrt* also appears, but there the geminate cluster is achieved by repeating the consonants ‘l just before it, i.e., ‘l. b’l. b *ṣrrt* *ṣpn* “Over Baal on the summit of Saphan.” The word *ṣrrt* occurs also in CAT 1.6 I:16, and in the following line the imitation geminate form *tšttn* “she sets him” appears. Elsewhere in the cycle where *ṣrrt* appears, there appears to be no geminate clustering at work (e.g., CAT 1.6 I:62, 57).

¹¹ Cf. Benjamin Uffenheimer, “The ‘Desert of the Sea’ Pronouncement (Isaiah 21:1-10),” in David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz, eds., *Pomegranates and Golden Bells : Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 686, who notes that this chapter also contains repeated roots (e.g., הלחהלה in Isa 21:3, 21:8).

¹² Prof. Wilfred G. E. Watson has suggested to me by way of private communication (July 19, 2000) that the device may function to denote reiterated action (e.g., Ps 12:7) or multiplicity of object (e.g., Isa 7:19).

¹³ Jonas C. Greenfield, “The ‘Cluster’ in Biblical Poetry,” *Maarav* 5-6 (1990): 159-168.

¹⁴ On word plays as referents see the essays contained in Scott B. Noegel, ed., *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2000).