

Carriondove

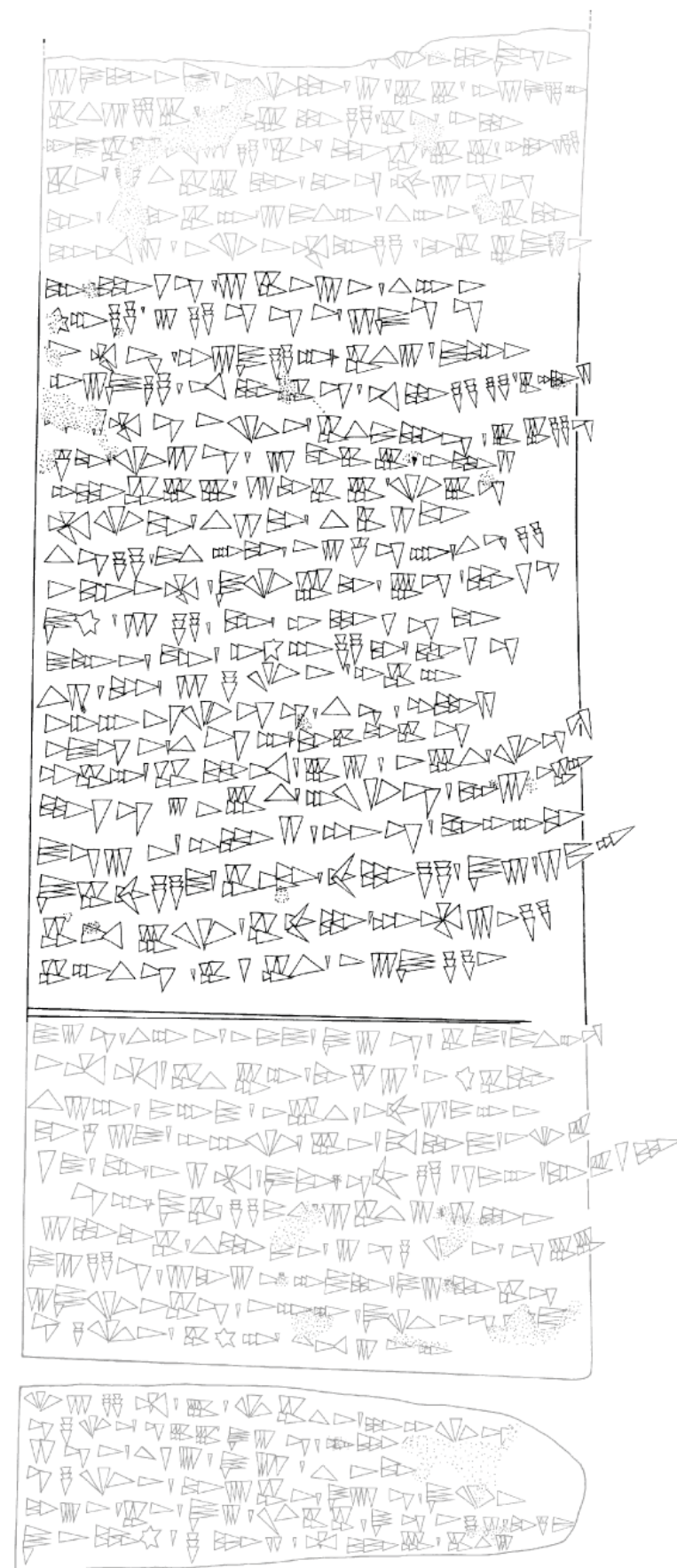
by Ilimilku
trans. *by* Heidi Gustafson

excerpt from Ugaritic tablet
RS 2.[014]+ iii–iv, lines 11–31

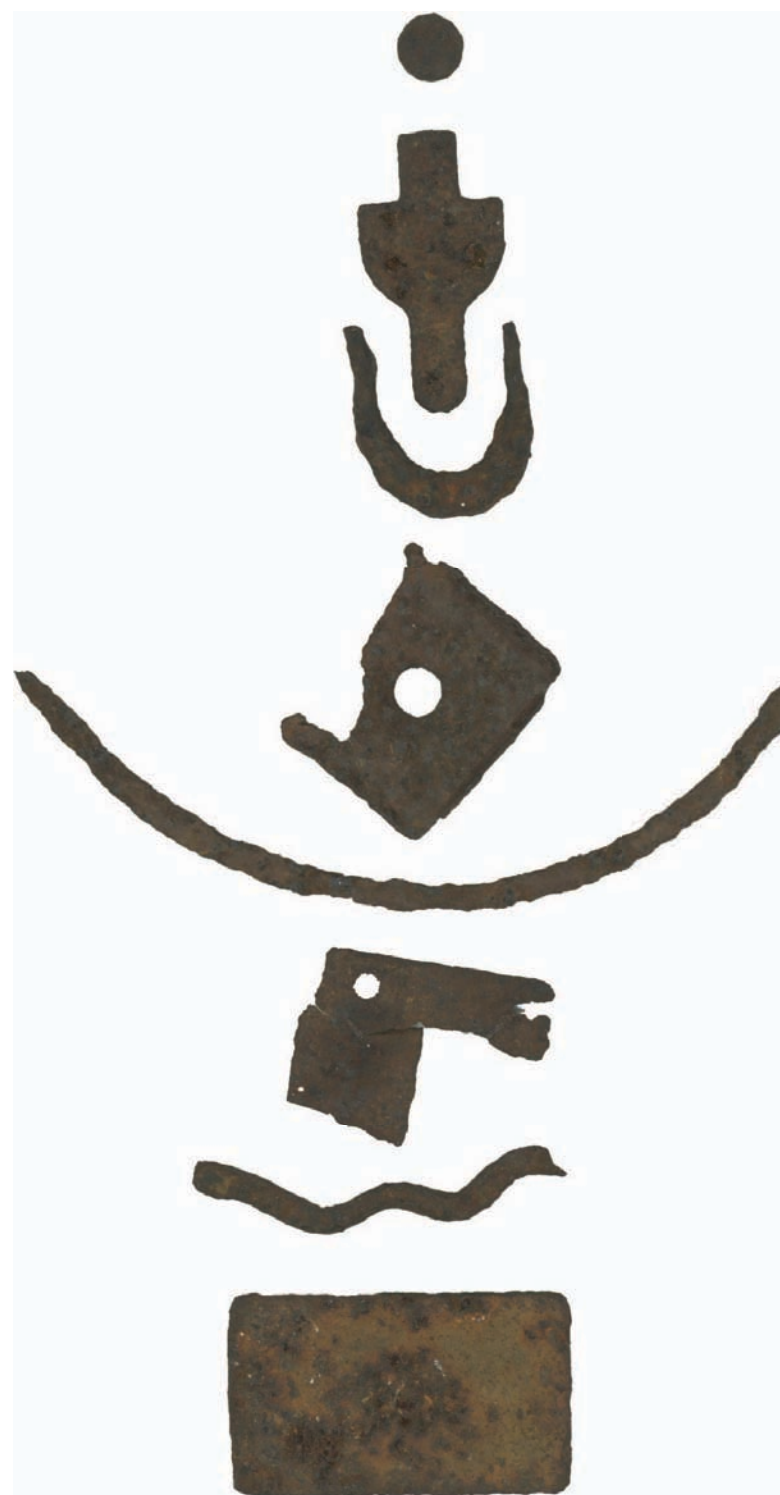
Collection of the House of the High Priest
Ugarit, Syria
ca. 1300 BCE



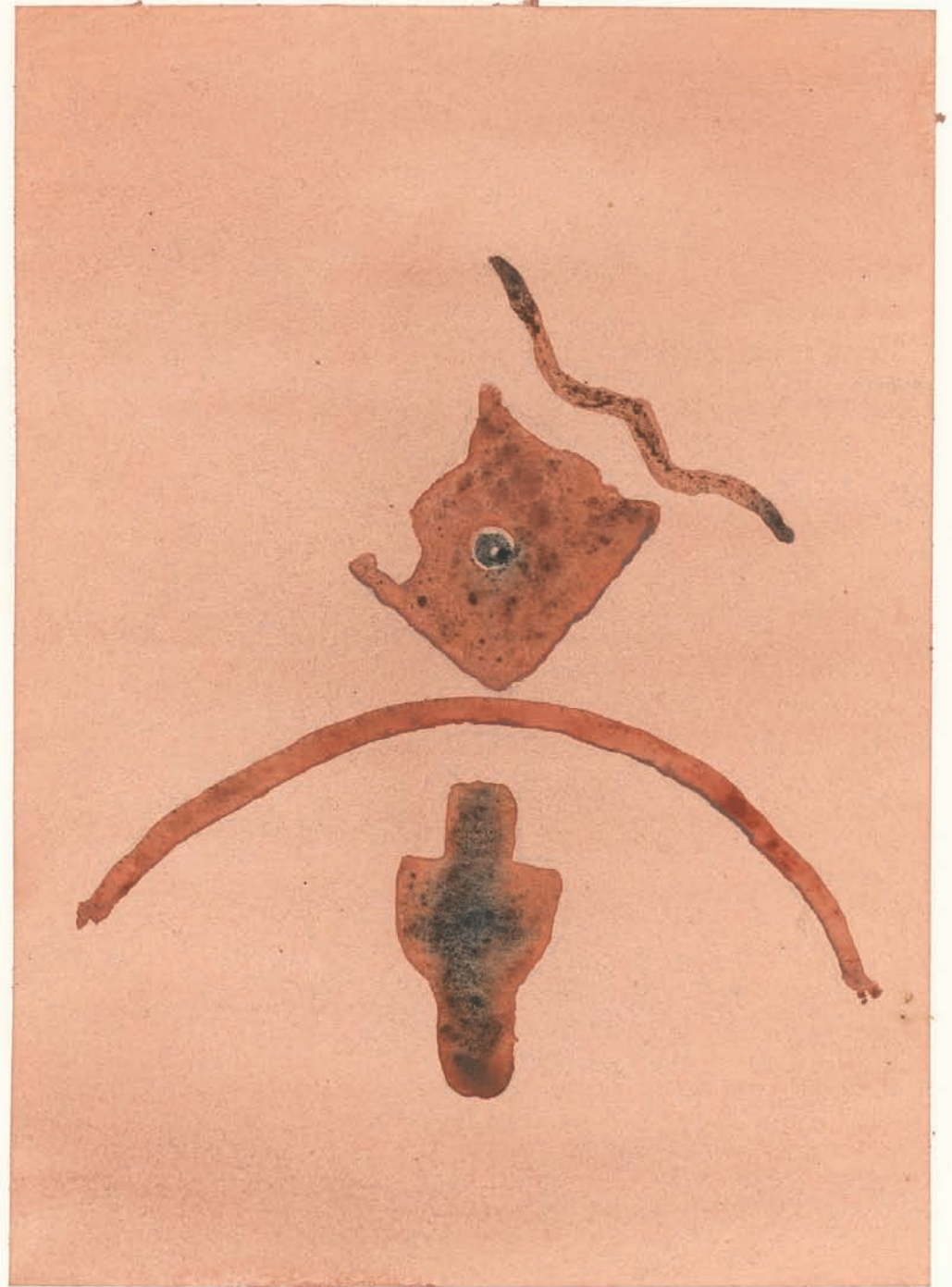
Tablet RS 2.[014]+ iii
House of the High Priest
Ugarit, Syria, 1300 BCE



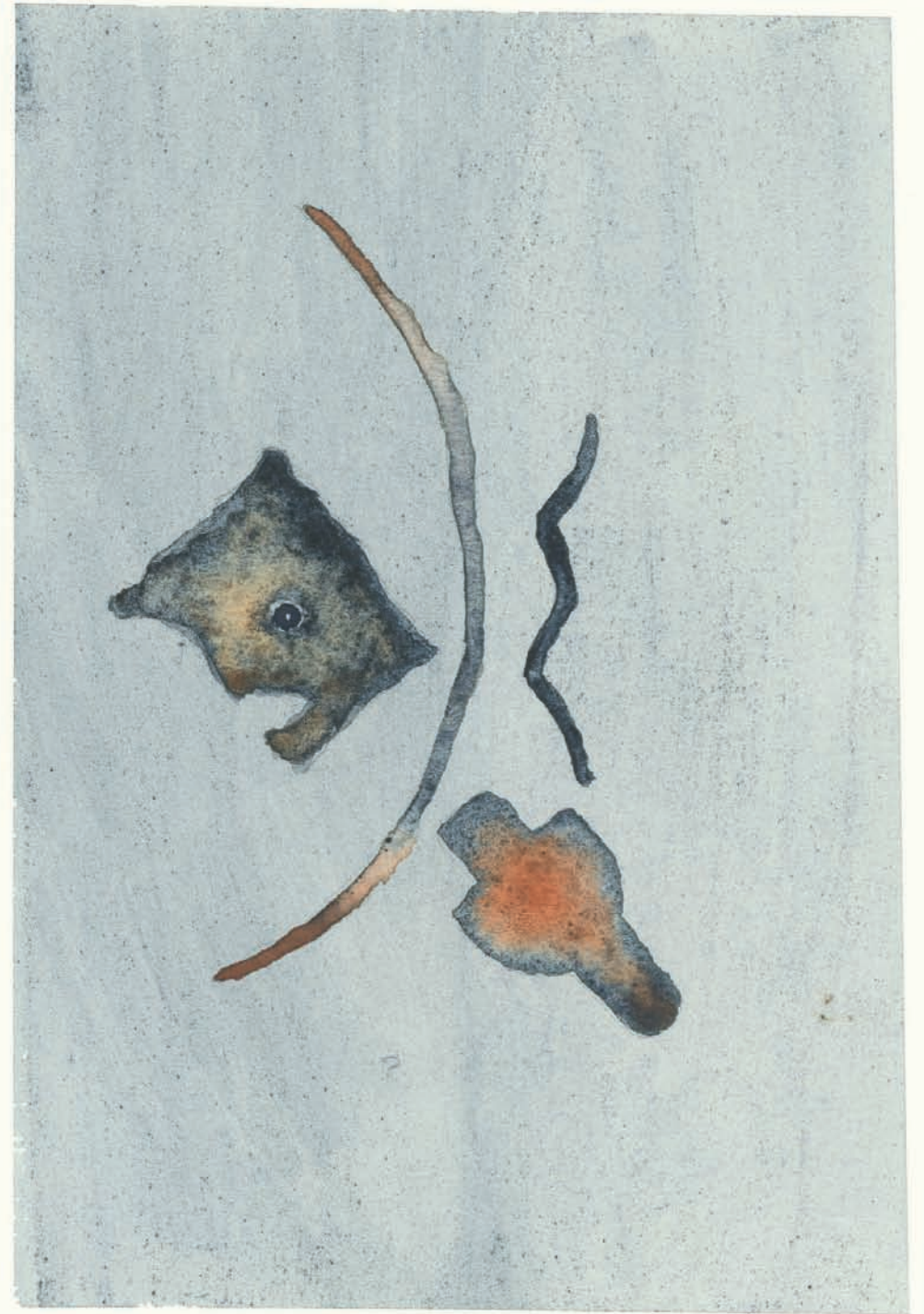
Drawn tablet RS 2.[014]+ iii
House of the High Priest
Ugarit, Syria, 1300 BCE



speak to Renewable Anat



deliver to the Carriondove of Nations



the message of Powerful Ba'al



emanation of Lord Force



Salt in the earth sacrifice



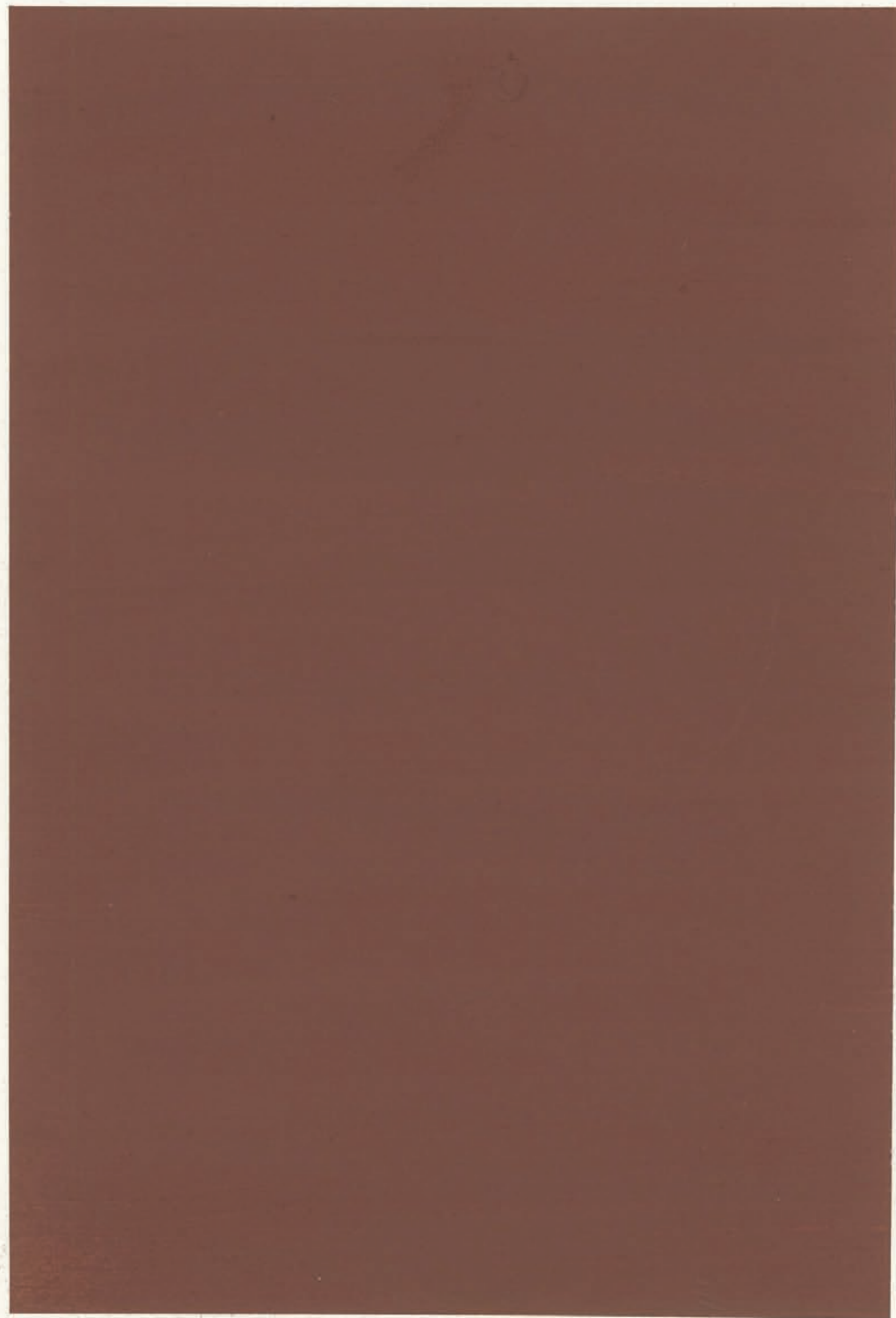
Blood in the dust harmony



Pour peace for the liver of earth



Still bliss for the glory of field



tick tock tick
to 'my. p'nk. t'smn
let's run quick



△△△△△ △△△△△ △△△△△
△△△△△ △△△△△ △△△△△
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for i have a word to give to you



matter i deliver to you



a word of tree



WV ' 74

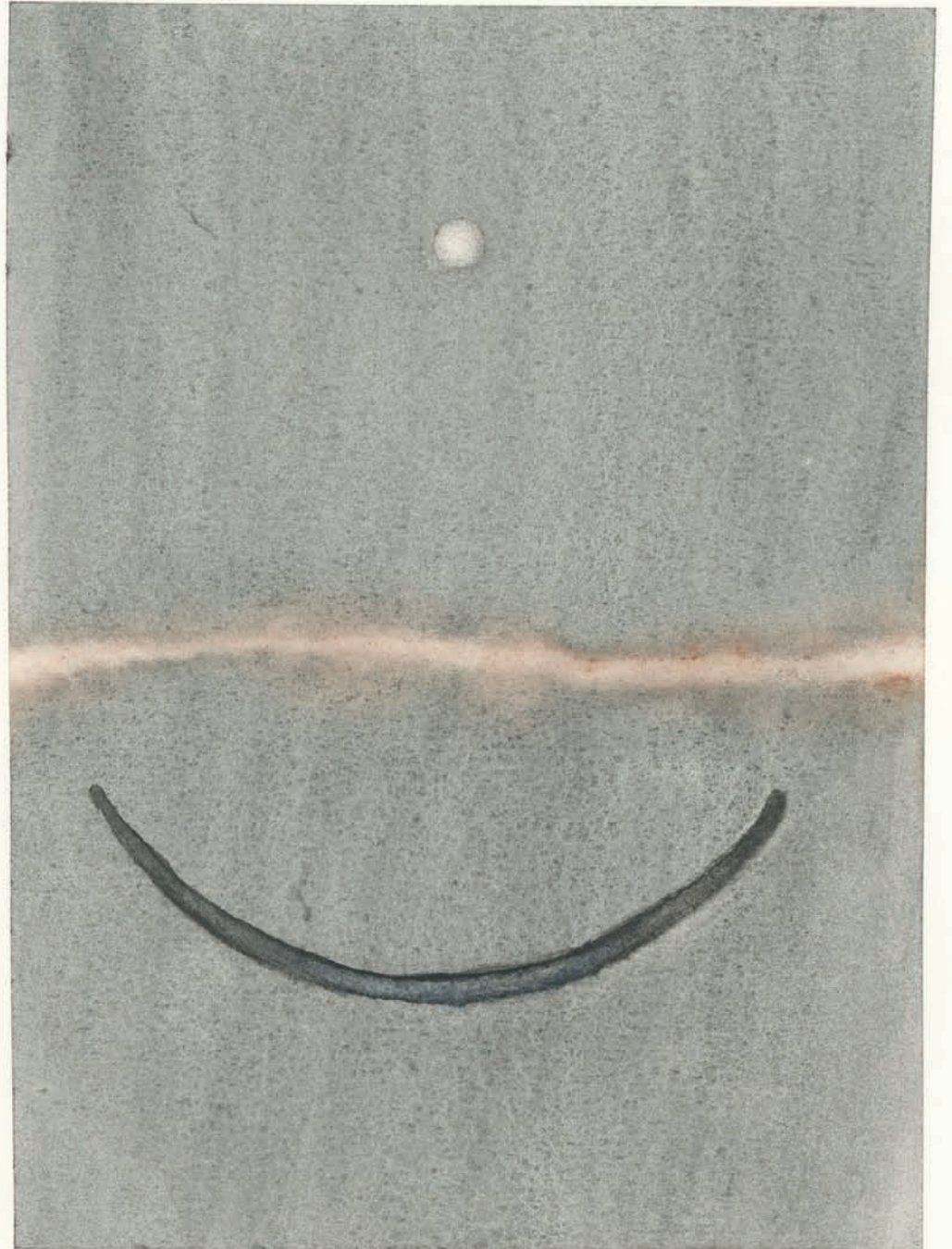
and a whisper of stone



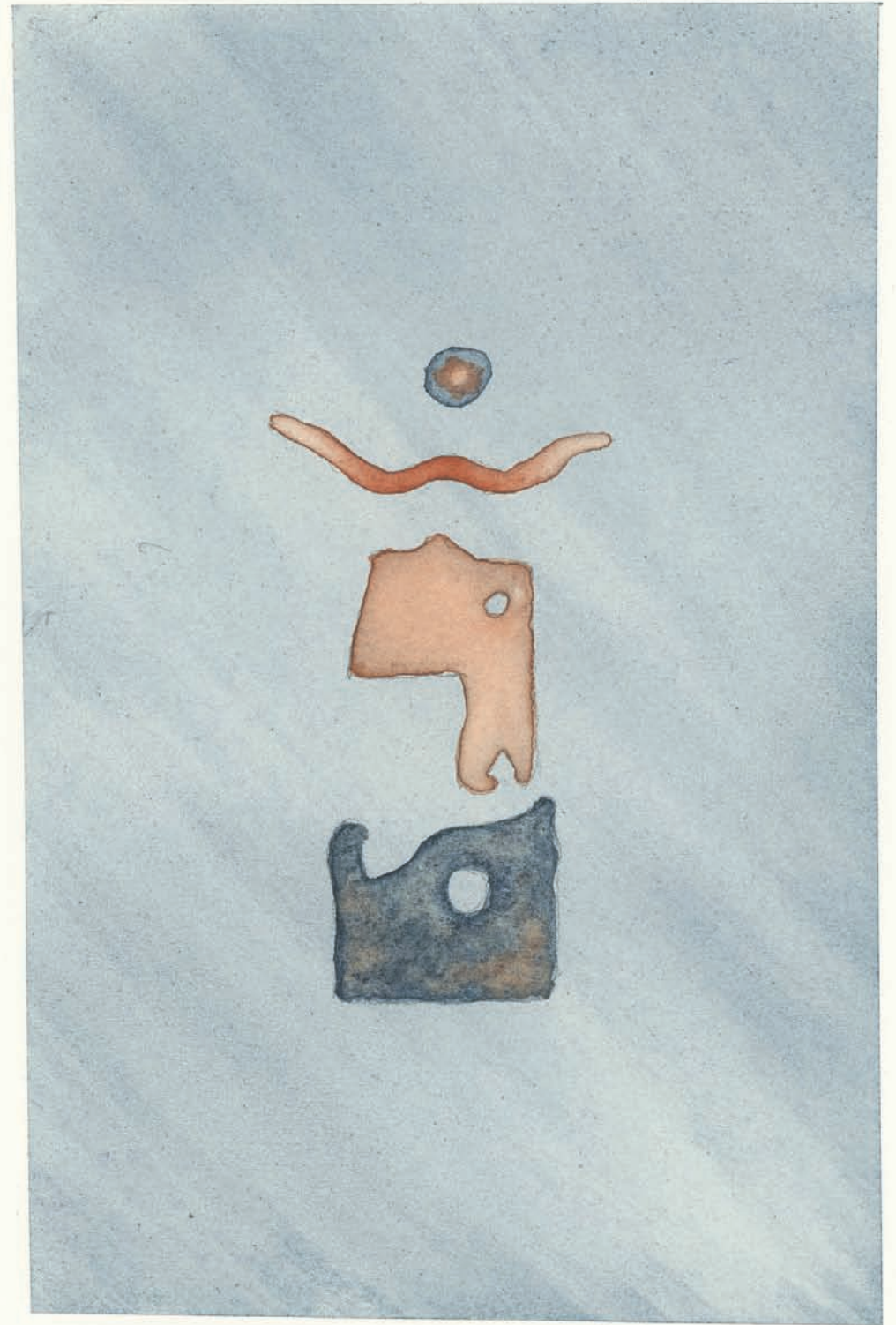
moaning of heaven with earth



and of deep with stars



i understand blessbolts even the heavens do not know



a word unknown to humans



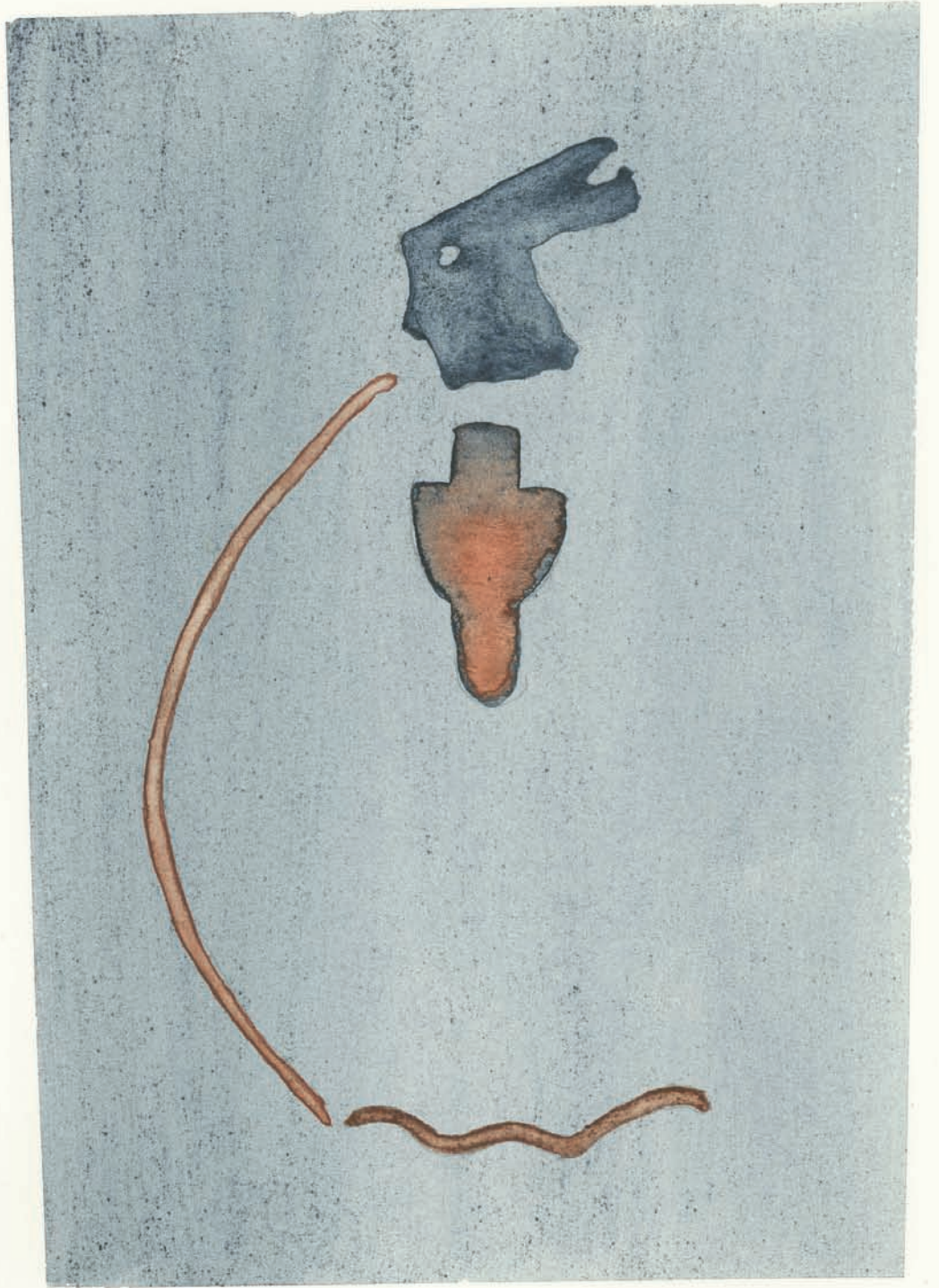
which masses on earth cannot comprehend



atm. w ank. ihgyh



come
i will reveal it to you



in my mountain Holy Arc



in the sanctuary
in the peak of my heritage



in the beautiful place
innermost inland of triumph



Notes

Ugarit. 13th century BCE Syrian coast city. 1928 ruins tilled up by a farmer in western Syria. Entire dead heaven, resurrected. Then there were wars, guards. Language limbs emerge only in spurts. Weapons, tablets, statues, instruments, ivories, tools, stelas, stones, fires, soil.

Ugaritic. Primary reed stem root alphabet. Lots of Bible lineage. Ugaritic requires an obscene amount of retroactive cross pollination of multiple Semitic languages in order to grasp the gnarly quality of the words. And interpretations? Hard clay. Beware. Ugaritic inherits a built-in defense system, a fortified identity - a language of stone, *stone's language*. Nonetheless, diligent, tireless work of linguists and ancient Near East scholars generously lay ground for us to explore. For those wishing to spend more time with scholarship, a brief bibliography of specific sources (published in English) contributing to my translation are included.

Ugaritic Ba'al Cycle. Primary fragments forming the epic narrative of Ugarit. Found among 500+ tablets in the house of *rb khnm*, chief of priests. Depicts elemental events, reign of rulers, birth and death. Concerns about creation, lineage. Always partial. Ba'al and his sister-wife Anat are two most-high gods, whose relationship soils the cycle, a profound double: siblings, lovers, killers, glory makers, shape-shifters.

Cosmic Revelation Formula. What is translated here. A special device to talk god talk. Found in various states of legibility, on three distinct tablets. I've followed other translators by reconstructing and setting in poetic form the entirety of the oracle. In each instance of the cosmic oracle formula, lord god delivers secret visionary message intended to initiate a cosmic, even karmic, process.

Ore, ur- Ugaritic poetry is written in free rhythm. Her grammar Janus-headed, so speculatively specialized. I chose, instead of going anxiously down into Ugaritic's technical lingual labyrinth, to imagine each word as mineral reverie, *whisper of stone*. Inner translator became stone whisperer; grinding, refining, softening of words in order to experience them in direct volumes, echoes, exposures, thundertones.

Ilimilku *ilmlk* left us simple colophons in his name, with an occasional flourish of cryptic resume. Scribal student and poet for sure. Diviner, chief of priests, chief of the temple herdsman, sacrificer to the king? Either him or his teacher. Poetic, ideological, or theological agency? We do not know who. In any case, scribal translations were a mystical art housed in same realm as sacrificial ritual.

Who is Speaking. i is always Ba'al, the Cloudrider, speaking.

Right before the beginning. Two divine messengers, perhaps angels, paying homage. And being told the message they are to deliver to Anat. Anat is in her temple, bathing in warrior blood then purifying herself in the dew of heaven. Why? She just killed so many warriors that the sky appears to be filled with a swarm of severed hands as locusts.

First part. Four lines of introduction to Anat and Ba'al, their primary and secondary epithets. First epithet is the address on the envelope. Second time around, inside the letter, the "dear my love so and so" of a letter.

Second part. Four lines of a multidimensional ritual invocation. Inviting an end to war and initiation of terrestrial peace.

Third part. Three lines of urgent diagonal momentum, a kind of Ugaritic foreplay.

Fourth part. Ba'al says a cosmic revelation coming. He lures Anat to come into his mountain temple. End of message angels are to deliver to her.

Right after the end. Messengers go to and arrive at Anat. Before they deliver the message of Ba'al, Anat, anticipating bad news, goes berserk and gets all kinds of shakes and says all matter of rageful words about destroying enemies of Ba'al. Then Anat recites the message back for Ba'al, in a kind of verbal agreement contract: *I will* salt in the earth sacrifice (stop warring), *I will* blood in the dust harmony (make love)...

Messages. Many messages from the Ancient Near East were scribed into mineral clay, fired, wrapped again in fresh raw clay, the same message written. Or a new message, even a false one, was put on the surface. Then everything together refired, hardened, again. When one received the miniature message, they would crack off the outer layer of fired clay to reveal the inner message of stone. My work of aesthetic translation here perhaps functions as that envelope, a protective sheath cracked off the main message, providing initial access to core ore words.

Consulted Translations

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Online Access to Cuneiform Tablets

Cuneiform Digital Library Collection, <http://cdli.ucla.edu/>

West Semitic Research Project, University of Southern California, <http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/wsrp/>

The Virtual Cuneiform Tablet Reconstruction Project, <http://www.virtualcuneiform.org/gallery.html>

Ugaritic Translation Software (Microsoft Word only), <http://www.ugrt.com/>

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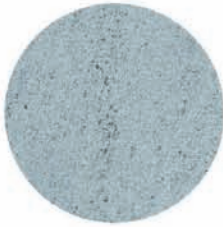
Outer
Grey Ochre *mlḥmt*
Iron Oxide w Manganese + trace elements
 $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3 + \text{MgO} + \text{SiO}_2 + \text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 + \text{CaO}$



Blood
Red Ochre *ddym*
Iron Oxide
 Fe_2O_3



Iron
Dark Red Ochre *ārbdd*
Iron Oxide of Hematite
 Fe_2O_3



Inner
Blue Ochre *šlm*
Iron Phosphate of Vivianite
 $\text{Fe}^{2+}(\text{PO}_4)_2 \cdot 8(\text{H}_2\text{O})$