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THE NARRATIVE IN THE SONG OF SONGS

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The Narrative in the Song of Songs

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One of the benefits I have gained by studying the Song is it has indirectly improved my language skills. Biblical Hebrew, of course, but also German.

"Ich habe mich mit dem Hohelied Salomos und dem Leiden,
welches es seinen Problemlösern bringt, auseinandergesetzt
und bin dadurch gebessert worden."

"I have dealt with the Song of Solomon and the suffering
it brings to its problem solvers and have been improved by it."

Abbreviations

AJSL	*The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*
ANESSup	Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement Series
ARAB	Luckenbill, Daniel David, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia,* 2 Vols, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926–1927
BHQ	Biblia Hebraica Quinta
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
DCH	David Clines, The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, 9 Vols, Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993-2016
EHLL	G. Khan, *et al.* (eds.), Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics, 4 Vols, Leiden: Brill, 2012-13
ESV	English Standard Version (Bible)
HALOT	Koehler-Baumgartner, Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JATS	*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JPS	Jewish Publication Society (In this volume, JPS Bible)
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
KJV	King James Version of the Bible
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version of the Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
OTL	Old Testament Library
PMLA	*Journal of the Modern Language Association of America*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Chapter 1
Introduction

Enveloped by a thick blanket of darkness, cowering under a flimsy mosquito net that was jammed underneath parts of my mattress, sweltering due to a failed electrical generator, I was becoming fascinated by a biblical book I had hardly read before.

As a visiting lecturer at a biblical training centre in Lokichoggio on the Kenya-Sudan border, I still needed to prepare for a class the next morning despite my predicament but what I was reading in the Song of Songs had distracted and detained me. During intervals of fast-failing torchlight, I registered that as I was reading through, the setting of the Song had shifted from a regal setting to a non-regal setting. Reading further it shifted back to being regal again. No narrative impressed itself onto me then, but I was intrigued by what appeared to be an alternating structure in some parts of the Song.

In due course, the generator was resurrected from the dead and I put my "project" on ice, resuming it only a few years later when my knowledge of narratology had sufficiently improved. "What if," I now started to ask, "this is the structure to a unified book?" Johnston says of the Song's structure:

> Like the locked garden of the chaste maiden, the secrets of the book's structure have remained virtually inaccessible to her many suitors. Although the history of interpretation is littered with failed attempts, the goal of unlocking its structure remains a worthy quest.[1]

I was encouraged but at the same time, scholarship was telling me that finding a structure and plot was nigh impossible. As an experiment, I began to pore over the by-now fading, hastily scribbled demarcations in my Bible and began investigating whether "king Solomon" really had told a story in the Song of Songs, perhaps even a fictional story about himself since his name figures a few times in the book and the word "king" also appears a few times.

The Song was one of the most commented on in pre-medieval times. Yet it has equally perplexed many scholars over the centuries. What is a love poem doing in the Hebrew Bible? Is there really a greater meaning in the book? All scholars on the Song know of Saadia ben Joseph's lament that "the Song of Songs resembles a

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[1] Johnston 2009: 36.

lock to which the keys have been lost."[2] Delitzsch correctly points out that the challenge of reading the book lies in first conceptualising the idea of the whole, and yet it is precisely the seeming tensions between unity and disunity, literal and figurative, real and imaginary, that make this such a formidable task. Any scholar who attempts to arrive at a different understanding of the book from that of her or his predecessors is unavoidably attempting to recut the key that will finally open the proverbial lock that "incarcerates" any plot the Song might have. There would be no point otherwise of attempting to recast the theories of earlier proponents.

An abundance of scholarship has preceded this study and has furnished a sturdier platform for this latest point of departure in the quest for the missing structure and narrative. My investigation has coincided with a resurgence in Song scholarship and in light of the considerable advance in biblical literary scholarship in the last half century, although scholarship's objective of attaining a viable structure and plot for the Song has been challenging, a fruitful yield in this area is not beyond our reach. The objective of arriving at fresh literary and theological insights into the Song may indeed be closer today than ever before.

[2] Kafih 1961-62: 26.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

A discussion of how the Song has been approached, let alone how it has been handled as narrative, encounters several challenges. The methodological approaches to the Song are one of the most diverse within the biblical corpus. There are disagreements over how the Song should be defined let alone how it should be read.

In order to situate our subject within the broader discussion, I will first explain how the book has been viewed, then how this might affect the analysis of any narrative. After looking at what kind of narrative we should be looking for, I will address some major issues that make reading a narrative difficult if not impossible. I will then assess how the Song's characters have been handled and finally explore treatments of organising dimensions such as time, structure and spatiality which serve as backbones of any narrative.

What Kind of Narrative?

1. Song

Is the Song of Songs a song? It seems an odd question given its title, yet surprisingly, although the Song's inscription makes it a שִׁיר, no evidence exists that it was originally designed to be sung. A "song" presupposes music, nothing of which has been passed down from antiquity. This has not prevented Garrett from designating singing parts to the different voices in the Song—a tenor (the male voice), soprano (the female voice) and a chorus (daughters and brothers)[1]—or Haïk-Vantoura from claiming to have reconstructed the original music of the Song itself from the Masoretic accents.[2] This is not to say the Song cannot be sung. Haïk-Vantoura's compositions prove this as does Brenner's nostalgic reminiscing on the Israeli folk melodies inspired by the Song.[3] Still, at best, we can only be sure that the "Song" was created first and foremost as a text.

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[1] Garrett 2004: 31-35.

[2] Haïk-Vantoura 1991.

[3] Brenner 2000: 157.

For many in its reception history, the Song was defined as an epithalamium, celebrating a wedding. This belief has presented itself in different ways. In the seventeenth century, Bossuet structured the Song as a collection of Jewish nuptial hymns,[4] dividing it into seven sections with six transitions from night to dawn (2:7; 3:1; 5:2; 6:9; 7:11–12; 8:4).[5] This eventually became the "Wedding Song" view which predominated the nineteenth century. It got a boost when Wetzstein interpreted the Song through the lens of Syrian wedding customs.[6] Incidentally, much of the wedding view hails from one key verse (3:11). Andruska has recently rejected any depiction of a wedding in the Song on the basis that the verse is a tenuous reference to anything wedding-related for the immediate setting of the unit[7] while at the other extreme, Horine assumes that wedding imagery saturates the Song[8] despite the several places in the Song which contradict his viewpoint.

2. Allegory

At least three different allegories existed in Jewish circles. Beginning with Philo and Josephus, the Song was mostly interpreted as referring to God and Israel. The Targum takes the Song as a sequential story of Israel's history and this perspective is maintained throughout medieval Judaism. Around this time, the Song began to be read on the last two days of the Passover festival in relation to that story.[9]

In most of the Jewish midrashim, God is the man and Israel the woman, but some sources have it reversed. A few medieval commentators also link the female beloved to the messiah, particularly in the Song's later chapters.[10] The second kind of Jewish allegory, that the Song is a love story between God and the human soul, is proposed by Maimonides and his followers.[11] Finally, in Kabbalistic writings, the Song is interpreted as a poem of love between different aspects of

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[4] Bossuet 1693.

[5] Bossuet 1693: 195–99.

[6] Wetzstein 1873.

[7] Andruska 2019: 5, 47 n.22, 54.

[8] Provan 2004: 149-150.

[9] *Tractate Soferim* 14:16.

[10] Kozodoy 2012.

[11] In his letter to the Jews of Yemen, however, Maimonides uses a midrashic allegory.

God. These allegories seem to be mutually exclusive but there has been an attempt to harmonise them.[12]

The Karaites placed some emphasis on the literal aspect of biblical texts but in the Song, they were not always consonant with the methodological principles they stood for. Japhet argues that it was not until Rashi that the text's literal dimension became important.[13] For Rashi, the Song was still an allegory and its ultimate meaning lay here rather than in its surface reading but he nonetheless sets out to answer the methodological question as to how one should explain a text whose meaning is from the outset non-literal. The revolution of reading the Song literally led to those such as Rashbam producing multi-layered commentaries that included the Song's literal layer (*peshat*) with the allegorical. Recent multi-layered commentaries have been those of Cherlow (2003) and Fishbane (2015).[14]

The first Christian allegorist, Origen, employed a twofold figurative interpretation wherein the bride and groom were variously understood either as the Church and Christ, or the individual soul and the Word of God. Christian interpretation generally took this line with a highpoint coinciding with the twelfth century Cistercians Bernard of Clairvaux, Gilbert of Hoyland, John of Ford and William of Saint Thierry. A mariological interpretation (e.g. Rupert of Deutz) also arose in which the woman in the Song was viewed as the Virgin Mary. Some unusual treatments include that of Luther's political allegory and those of Brightman (1644) and Cocceius (1665) who read the Song as a historical allegory of the Church.

Recent classical allegorical treatments have been undertaken by Provan (2001), Kingsmill (2009), Gerhards (2010, 2016) and Schwienhorst-Shönberger (2016, 2017), with Davidson (2004) taking the tropological divine-soul view.

3. Typology

This is often confused with allegory because both methods arrive at the same conclusions. Loader describes in detail how Calvin rejects an allegorical method in favour of a typological one. Although Calvin comes to the same conclusions as

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[12] Soloveitchik 2008.

[13] Japhet 2008: 201-202 n.18.

[14] Fishbane includes the four senses that make up the "PaRDeS" method in Judaism (*peshat*, *remes*, *derash* and *sod*) which is nearly identical to the Christian Quadriga (literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical). Both methods of interpretation originated in the medieval period.

the allegorist Bernard, he does so "without using the same view of Scripture as substructure for the *sensus plenior*."[15] Carr explains,

> Whereas allegory denies or ignores the historicity or factualness of the Old Testament account and imposes a deeper, hidden or spiritual meaning on the text, typology recognizes the validity of the Old Testament account in its own right, but then finds in that account a clear, parallel link with some event or teaching in the New Testament which the Old Testament account foreshadows.[16]

The typological view is found mostly in Christian commentaries. Delitzsch adopted a dramatic approach but also took the Song as typifying the Christian "narrative" of Christ's love for his Church.[17] Redford, who compares the Song to Ps. 45, which shares similar language, concludes that if the latter is to be viewed as typical of Christ, then the Song of Solomon must be viewed typically also.[18]

4. Analogy

A type can be similar and dissimilar to its antitype whereas an analogy holds true while there is similarity and *ceases* with dissimilarity. Cainion believes the Song is not to be read as an allegory but as a morally instructive "parable" through analogy with Gen. 2-3 to identify the Shulamite, her rustic lover, and the king, with Adam and Eve, God, and the serpent of Gen. 2-3 respectively.[19] Longman, however, challenges this, describing Cainon's view as a bizarre allegory.[20] Longman himself unpacks what the Song says about the male-female relationship and, by analogy, about God's love for his people.

5. Drama

When discussing drama, there are at least two forms which must be considered.

The first is that of a sacred drama. Because of certain similarities to Sumerian love literature, the Song was once construed as the counterpart to the Inanna-

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[15] Loader 2009.

[16] Carr 1984: 24.

[17] Delitzsch 1993: 3-4.

[18] Redford 2011: xxii.

[19] Cainion 2000.

[20] Longman 2001: 34 n.96.

Dumuzi sacred marriage texts. This was first suggested by Erbt in 1906 and popularised by Meek and Kramer.[21] The view does not have traction today although the issue of whether such resonances do exist in the Song has been raised by Carr and Nissinen.[22] Nissinen especially reviews the Song and concludes that while it technically does not belong to a sacred-marriage ritual, it demonstrably carries forward the erotic-lyric tradition that is connected with such parallel texts.

The second form of drama is that of the theatrical or stage performance. The allegorical methods of Hippolytus and Origen, and the marginal notes supplied within the Codex Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus, in which different verses in the Song were attributed to different characters, paved the way for the dramatic view.

In speaking about "drama," Williams distinguishes between a narrower sense of an actual or intended theatrical (stage) production and a looser sense of dramatic dialogue where though there be strictly no dramatic plot, there are successive scenes and poetical machinery.[23] This would effectively make the "drama" overlap with "narrative." In this regard, Longman warns that the misleading moniker could apply to those who construct a plot but do not associate the Song with theatre.[24]

Goulder views the Song as having a plot of "a semi-continuous sequence of fourteen scenes, moving in a progression from the arrival of the Princess at Solomon's court to her acknowledgment by the King as his favourite queen."[25] Frankly, Goulder's plot is eccentric. At the outset, and based on flimsy evidence, he surmises the woman is an Arabian princess[26] and on 2:8, a bucolic scene with mountains (הרים), Goulder has Solomon appearing, "running across the undulating palace garden."[27] Being of the dramatic school, Goulder shows his pedigree in his tendencies to employ extra-textual information for his narrative and in his paratactic reading across his poems without justification in the face of "lyrical opposition."

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[21] Erbt 1906; Meek 1922; Meek 1924; Kramer 1969.

[22] Carr 1979; Nissinen 2008. Both answer in the negative.

[23] Williams 1801: 63.

[24] Longman 2001: 39.

[25] Goulder 1986: 2.

[26] Ibid., 3.

[27] Ibid., 23.

Following Fischer's suggestion that parts of the Song could be converted (*Umsetzung*) and analysed using a performance-centred methodology,[28] Hopf has recently argued that the Song needs to be described as a dramatic (he prefers the word performative) text and suggests it might have been included in the biblical canon because it was viewed as a Hebrew "counterweight" to Hellenistic drama.[29] Although this drama is not one comparable to Shakespearean theatre, the Song was likely performed in public in a way that bears similarities to ancient Hellenistic traditions of comedy and tragedy.

For Hopf, three criteria establish the Song's performative potential: *lexis*, namely direct speech which can be attributed to certain identifiable characters; *opsis*, the text which evokes elements of imagery like components of the scenery or stage acting; and *plot*, a narrative with a coherent, logical line of action and a unity of time and space. Undoubtedly, the Song has performative potential and Hopf finds features of all three criteria in the Song but to my mind, it is the so-called "marginal text," that includes stage directions, which distinguishes drama from narrative. Many narratives exist which undoubtedly have lexis, opsis and plot but they have been *created* exclusively as texts to be read and only subsequently adapted for performance. Moreover, the Song, being lyric poetry would naturally have a greater potential for lexis than a conventional narrated story. Despite the Sinaiticus manuscript including rubrics for speakers and scene-setting stage directions, the original Hebrew and Greek translations possessed none, it seems.

Hopf appeals to rabbinic comments, such as those of Akiva, in order to show that the Song was performed in the "banquet hall" as a kind of "ordinary [secular] song."[30] This may be so. Yet, even if the Song was performed in the time of Akiva and the Sinaiticus, that is from the second to the fourth centuries, there is (as was discussed in relation to music) no evidence it was designed to be a performance. It is for this reason that one needs to reject Hopf's suggestion

> that the Song of Songs was included in the Writings exactly because of its high esteem as a Jewish performance text: Before its canonization, the Song was quite probably commonly performed on various occasions and it was, thus, very popular among the people.[31]

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[28] Fischer 2010: 240.

[29] Hopf 2017.

[30] t. Sanh. 12:10; cf. b. Sanh. 101a.

[31] Hopf 2017

The Song was probably canonised before it was used performatively, if performances were *commonly* done, which I seriously doubt. Contemporary proponents divide the text far more conservatively than those of the nineteenth century, who demarcated the text according to the anachronistic *acts* and *scenes* created for Roman theatre.

Roberts says that the dramatic view has failed to produce a convincing overall plot or macro-structure.[32] Moreover, he says, the dramatic view has been unsuccessful at defining the smaller micro-structural units, as it has inherently tended to define smaller units primarily on the basis of change of speaker. This procedure does not always work well where the identity of the speaker (e.g. 2:15 or 8:12-13) or boundary of a speech segment (e.g. 5:12-16 or 8:10-12) is unclear.[33]

Murphy underscores a serious difficulty for those arguing for a dialogic structure of the Song, namely the apparent lack of continuity at several points in the text, where there are sudden shifts of scene, topic, and ostensible speaker. Murphy offers three examples:[34] First, it is not clear how Solomon's procession (3:6-11) connects with the preceding account of the woman's search for her lover (3:1-5). Second, 2:8-13, a scene in which the man visits the woman's house is immediately followed by one as if she were hidden in a rocky mountain area. Third, Murphy mentions 8:8-14 which seemingly comprises three fragments (vv.8-10, 11-12, 13-14)[35] which are dubious as a sequence. Any study should seek to resolve tensions between change of speakers, sudden shifts of time or geography, and cohesion at these points in the Song.

The dramatists' greatest shortcomings is that interpreters inevitably fill any gaps that exist from *outside* the textual world and resort (in Montefameglio's words) *a tanti sottintesi, a trasposizioni, a interpolazioni* "to many implicit meanings, transpositions, interpolations."[36] Characterisation in the dramas is often contrived to fit the particular scheme. Waterman, for example, writes "The maiden never acknowledges any relationship to the king [whom Waterman takes as Solomon]. Once only does she use the word "king", 1:12, and then only in the most indifferent and conventional manner, while she warmly mentions the name of the absent shepherd 21 times."[37] How patently false, since the woman clearly

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[32] Roberts 2007: 7.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Murphy 1990: 64-65.

[35] Robert (1948) calls them "appendices."

[36] Montefameglio 2016.

[37] Waterman 1925: 176-77.

asks to proceed in haste to the king's house (1:4) and even delights in the sweetness of her perfume reaching him (1:12). As Exum rightly points out, "why would she and a king be rejoicing and delighting in the love of her absent lover?"[38]

6. Narrative

While my thoughts on this matter are still fluid, I tentatively make the distinction between dramatic and narrative perspectives on the ground that for the latter, the Song is not designed to be a performance, what Ewald espouses as a *Spieldichtung*.

While both dramatic and narrative perspectives incorporate plot, only the former takes the Song as a constructed, ready-made drama. Whether it can be employed as such is a different matter, of course. Cannon, though a self-styled "dramatic" proponent, rejects the view that the Song was made for the stage.[39]

Fischer's ground-breaking work, which employs narratological constructs to analyse the Song, is difficult to pin down. His work should be distinguished from the previous category since as he says

> Hoheslied trägt Kennzeichen eines dem Drama nahe stehenden Textes, einem Textfundus zur Inszenierung eines Stückes. Die Erzählelemente sind Bausteine einer Handlung, die dramatisch inszeniert werden könnten. Als Kritik am Drama kann eingebracht werden, dass der vorliegende Text nicht spielbar ist.

Although he uses narrative methodology, he himself admits "Die Anwendung einer Erzähltextanalyse auf den *a priori* als poetisch eingestuften Text von Hoheslied konnte nur mit Vorbehalt durchgeführt werden, da Hoheslied keine Erzählung ist."[40] He concludes there are building blocks of a plot but there is no uniform structure of action since the requirements of the structure are inconsistent and the disparate parts cannot be brought together into a story but offer their own individual contribution to the "story" of seeking and finding love.[41]

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[38] Exum 2005: 95.

[39] Cannon 1913: 15.

[40] Fischer 2010: 242.

[41] Ibid., 230.

Reynolds's recent "narrative commentary" is a frustrating read. Though there is some good discussion on the importance of the literal layer of the text, his work is replete with the old-school dramatists' tendencies to fill in details from outside the text and to ascribe strange meanings to breaks between the episodes.[42] While he does not call the Song a "drama" but "dramatic poetry," he claims there are "hints at an authorship more familiar with stage performance. The theatrical dialogue form of the Song ... does much to explain the change in voice."[43]

My own work should be placed in this category since I conclude (following Clines)[44] that the Song was not designed as a performance but as a text to be read. I do not read the Song linearly as Reynolds does, for example. If the Song was designed for reading rather than for performance, one could posit the existence of literary devices (like retrospective patterning and flashback, for example) that would otherwise be difficult to incorporate in ancient oral or stage works since they need textualisation to engage the receiver's cognitive sensitivities.

7. Erotic Literature

Early commentators tended to avoid or bypass erotic meanings. Clarke demonstrates how particular commentators in the seventeenth century did so, quoting, among others, Withers (1623): "let no man therefore presume to sing, or repeat, in a carnall sense, what is here spiritually intended; upon paine of Gods heauie indignation."[45] Clarke identifies 5:4 as a controversial verse for the Westminster Assembly Presbyterian divines who said of it, "to an impure fancy this verse is more apt to foment lewd and base lusts, than to present holy and divine notions."[46]

There were exceptions to those who eschewed the purely erotic, however. Castellio (1544) conceived the Song as Solomon's love poem to one of his concubines and felt it was to be read literally. For Grotius (1644), it was a secular hymn to physical love, but he admitted it could be "laudably adapted" by the people of God as an allegory. Luis de León was arraigned before the Inquisition

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[42] E.g. Reynolds 2018: 103.

[43] Reynolds 2018: 32.

[44] Clines 1995: 96-99.

[45] Clarke 2011: 7.

[46] Ibid. 8.

for expounding the Song's "amorous interchange" of lovers (1580) and for translating it into the vernacular (1561).[47]

Carr remarks that it was not until the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that there was any widespread interpretation of the song as concerning human love. This was mainly among Protestant interpreters since Catholic interpreters did not follow suit until the mid-twentieth century.[48] A sudden swell of European authors in the eighteenth century[49]— such as Genest (1707), Blackwall (1725), Wesley (1735/6), Percy (1764), Lessing (1777) and Herder (1778)—who advanced the thesis that the Song was love poetry led to this being a major view. Wetzstein's account of a Syrian wedding (1873)[50] convinced many, like Budde, that the "king" mentioned in the Song (e.g. 1:4) was just a bridegroom.[51] In the early twentieth century, those such as Haupt (1902) and Wittekindt (1925) stood out with more daring explanations of the erotic dimension of the text.

Many in the last few decades have extended the pursuit of the Song as "love poetry" or "erotic literature." Clines, for example, is adamant that the Song fulfils the need for male erotic literature.[52] Boer goes even further and suggests how the Song could be read pornographically.[53]

We need to steer clear of two interpretative extremes. On one hand is that of puritanical-style sexual deprecation which states, "there can be no edification in setting out humane love ... so largely and lively."[54] On the other, we must avoid erotic or even pornographic readings that are *at the expense of the text*.

8. Poetic Fiction

One often comes across the expression "poetic fiction" in relation to the Song. What exactly do we mean by this? First, the phrase points to the fact that the Song is poetry. Even if has an erotic dimension, its genre is more specific, and it possesses those qualities such as emphasis upon meter, parallelism, sound and

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[47] Barr 2000.

[48] Carr 1998: 184.

[49] For others, see Clark Jr. 1946 and Baildam 1999: 127-72.

[50] In Delitzsch 1993: 162-76.

[51] Budde 1894b; Budde 1898: 9-48. Wetzstein himself does not see the "king" as a bridegroom.

[52] Clines 1995: 100.

[53] See p.17.

[54] Durham 1723: 6.

repetition. We will return to the subject of poetry, specifically "lyric poetry," but for now we should consider the second word "fiction." By this, one could mean that all the events and characters in the Song should not be looked for in biblical or secular history. Though they might be loosely founded on biblical or historic persona, they need not bear precise counterparts in such realities. So, although vestiges of the tradition of the marriage of Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter may exist in the Song, we are probably not dealing with this specific event as Theodore of Mopsuestia believed.[55]

On the other hand, when Roberts says of the episode in 1:2-4 that the woman seeing her lover-king could be read as "poetic fiction,"[56] he supersedes the above sense. Roberts here sees the portrayals of these fictional characters and events themselves as a fiction of the female character. Barbiero similarly regards the depictions of king (1:2-4) and shepherd (1:7-8) as "burlesques," essentially a fictional world within a fictional world.

Yet another use for the word "fiction" is that of Gledhill, for whom the daughters of Jerusalem are a "literary fiction" like the wall through which the two lovers Pyramus and Thisbe speak in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and which comments independently on the relationship of the lovers.[57] The daughters are mere poetic elements that have no corresponding realism, phantom women with no concrete reality but shadowy figures who talk and "float" from one context to another. While most would agree that the daughters are a foil, a sounding board that brings out the emotions either of the woman[58] or the reader,[59] to say they are not real "flesh and blood" characters is quite a different issue.

9. Dream

The final category of what could be called an "oneiric text" is not widely held and has been around since the nineteenth century.

Hug (1813) was the first to claim that the entire Song was a dream. Later, so did Freehof (1948) with Clines also suggesting the possibility.[60] However, beginning with Williams (1801); Delitzsch (1851); Ginsburg (1857); Adeney

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[55] *Patrologia Graeca* 66.

[56] Roberts 2007: 63.

[57] Gledhill 1994: 103

[58] E.g. Ibid.; Bergant 2001: 12.

[59] Fischer 2019.

[60] Clines 1995: 103.

(1895) and Budde (1898), among others, commentators usually speak only of Song 3:1-5 and 5:2-7 as being "dream sequences." I have addressed this in a recently published article (2019) and will summarise my thoughts later in reference to 3:1-5 and 5:2ff.

Major Issues Arising in Narrative Analysis

1. Leapfrogging over the Literal

While considering the narrative of the Song, one must first analyse its "literal layer."

The earliest Christian exegesis accepted the principle of a twofold understanding of the Scriptures, known as the *sensus literalis* (literal sense) relating to the human dimension of the text, and the *sensus spiritualis* (spiritual sense) which concerns the theological dimension.[61] There is, however, a non-theological, more literary minded, distinction between the literal sense and figurative sense. Because of differences in definitions, a working definition in this thesis is needed. By literal layer, I essentially mean the plain sense of the text. For example, I do not for one moment think that some of the descriptors of the woman in the *wasfs* are meant to be taken literally, as what Black has called "grotesque" features of the woman.[62] I would rather regard the Song as a house, the first floor of which is the literal layer, the second as one accommodating a manifold assortment of "figures of speech" which would include similes, metaphors as well as erotic double entendre. The third floor, if there is one, is its spiritual level.

For Reynolds, "the literal sense is the form, nature and setting of the poem."[63] This would include the text's historical context and grammatical meaning, among other things. If one bypasses this foundational stratum, one would essentially be, as Reynolds describes it, "building castles on air."[64] This is essentially what interpreters, especially allegorists, have done throughout its interpretative history. Incidentally, the "literal" should not be confused with "literary" such as Mazor has done by writing, "there are three scholarly approaches to the Song of

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[61] The fourfold sense arose much later.

[62] Black 2009.

[63] Reynolds 2018: 5.

[64] Ibid., 10.

Songs: allegorical, cultic-mythological, and literary."[65] Presumably he means "literal," for the other two interpretations are equally literary.

Even if one did include all figures of speech as part of the literal layer, it is clear to most that allegory lies outside the threshold. An early modern advocate of the literal layer was Thomas Percy (1764). Percy had a keen eye for aesthetics and Hebrew poetry. He laments the fact that almost all the commentators he knows have done damage to the Song by being "busily employed in opening and unfolding its allegorical meaning, as wholly to neglect that literal sense, which ought to be the basis of their discoveries."[66] This, to him, seemed like the erecting of an edifice without a foundation. Percy believed that if one should adopt an allegorical perspective, which he was not against, then one should do this "under a lower and more obvious meaning" because in this way, it "delivers the most sublime and important truths."[67] By "lower," Percy means an initial tier, or layer, of interpretation. Percy urges his readers, "the metaphorical sense and the proper, the allegory and its literal meaning, the apologue and its moral, the parable and its spiritual application, should be clearly distinguished from each other."[68]

It has been said that taking the Song as allegory arose as a reaction to its erotic dimension.[69] Yet, one of the first allegorists, Origen, felt the literal "letter" of the text was unimportant not so much because of the erotic words but because it was a veil that covered a spiritual meaning.[70] Origen saw the literal level of the text as the storyline of the drama, the dialogue of its characters.[71] Miller observes that Origen took these literal words as "visible provocations towards the invisible, the unspoken." For Origen, "Words signify, but they do so only as a seductive flash, as gapes in the garment of the text."[72]

Clarke describes how another allegorist, William Whitaker, argues that there is a broader meaning for the word "literal" which means something like "in its fullest sense." Thus, for Whitaker, the literal meaning of the Song includes the allegorical meaning. In the seventeenth century, Durham went even further to argue that the allegorical meaning of the Song was the literal meaning:

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[65] Mazor 2008: 73.

[66] Percy 1764: v.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., v-vi.

[69] E.g. Phipps 1974.

[70] Drake 2014: 815.

[71] Corney 1998: 501.

[72] Miller 1986: 247.

> I grant it hath a literal meaning, but I say, that literal meaning is not immediat, and that which first looketh out, as in Historical Scriptures, or others which are not figurative, but that which is spiritually and especially meant by these Allegorick and Figurative speeches, is the Literal meaning of this Song ... For a literal sense ... is that which floweth from such a place of Scripture as intended by the Spirit in the words.[73]

Clarke perceives this to be a complex notion from a hermeneutical standpoint but judges that Durham is fundamentally no different from the other allegorists.

Boyarin claims that the midrashic readings should not be equated with allegorists such as Origen.[74] He argues the rabbis did not see the Song (along with Proverbs and Ecclesiastes) as a hermetic text, a lock to which the key has been lost, but rather a hermeneutic key to the unlocking of the hermetic Torah. The Song should therefore be read as a *mashal* that interprets the Torah. Yet, in Boyarin's own example, which he says, "illustrates very nicely" this principle, no marked difference with Origen's methodological approach is discernible. Boyarin takes the image of the dove in the cleft of the rocks (2:14) as one afraid, details which he says are worked out by "narrative gap filling." He then links this image with the specific parallel of the people's fear before the Red Sea crossing. Not only is this essentially an allegorical approach but for narrative purposes, Boyarin's "narrative gap filling" is arbitrary. Gap filling generally occurs from clear implicit prompts or explicit information located somewhere within a text. Boyarin, on the other hand, fills the alleged gap with subjective and contrived information such as dramatists do. That the dove is "fearful" is not apparent at all; a theme of inaccessibility, however, is—as Stoop-van Paridon rightly points out.[75]

Another pitfall is the temptation to pay lip service to the need for exegeting the literal layer. Yefet ben Eli, for example, is strongly opposed to the allegorical interpretation but concedes to such an approach for understanding the Song, often interpreting passages in light of the Karaite struggles with the Jewish leaders and their predicted outcome.[76] Even Rashi often does not abide by his principles of *peshat*, leaving a literal interpretation incomplete and moving swiftly

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[73] Durham 1723: 5.

[74] Boyarin 1990.

[75] Stoop-van Paridon 2005: 133.

[76] Alobaidi 2010: 214.

to the allegorical. Nor does he make clear distinctions between the literal and the allegorical.[77]

Another way the literal is bypassed is highlighted by James who complains about the habitual deemphasis of literal landscapes in interpretation of the Song.[78] James laments that although arguably the Song is saturated with imagery relating to the natural world more than any biblical text, and although there is a general acknowledgment of such a prevalence among interpreters, there is not yet a consistent effort to explore how these elements work together toward a conceptualisation of the landscape. She complains that the Song's history of interpretation has tended to focus on mining its allegorical meaning, or on solidifying its "literal" sense as erotic poetry.

2. Erotic Readings at the Expense of the Literal

Few people today would doubt that at the literal level, the Song is about human love. Yet what kind of love is it? At one extreme are religious-minded interpreters who have shied away from anything sexual leading to Phipps's misrepresentation that it was a disgust for sex that gave birth to allegory.[79] At the other end is Boer who attempts a pornographic reading of the entire Song. It is the latter category that I contend with here.

Boer recreates the Song as pornographic sketches that essentially resembles a series of narratives. Despite the fact that Boer says "the Song is distinctly plotless,"[80] he proceeds to fill in "narrative-gaps" on the same lines that the dramatists do within each "scene" in order to recreate distinct episodes where "sex takes place with a range of partners and combinations." Boer's literal reading of the Song, as he describes it, "generates an archaeology of present pornography." No element escapes his roving eye including the words "flock" (1:7) and "kids" (1:8) which are also pressed for a double meaning; every phrase is pregnant with a euphemism for a sexual fetish, a bodily organ, a sexual prop and so on.[81]

Boer might be toying with his readers, deliberately taking his "literal" reading, as he says, to its logical extreme.[82] Nonetheless, such readings of the Song

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[77] Japhet 2008: 206.

[78] James 2017: 3.

[79] Phipps 1974.

[80] Boer 2001: 62.

[81] Boer 2001: 57-58.

[82] Boer 2001: 64.

prompt the need to be cautious and to observe the crucial distinction between erotica and pornography that some have called for. Hess says, "the emphasis of the Song lies in the expression of desire between the two lovers. It is not sexual consummation that is most important but the desire itself that drives the lovers together." [83] Almog, following Hess, writes, "the language ... not so much describes sexual passion but rather constructs it through ambiguous yet evocative expositions, enflaming desire with the reader rather than granting satisfaction and gratification."[84]

The clearest exposition of the difference between porn and erotica lies with Walsh who acknowledges that while both are sexually explicit, they differ in at least three essential ways.[85] First, erotica tends to describe the emotions and internal worlds of at least one sexual participant, while pornography need not. Second, erotica takes more time with the build-up to consummation. It can put consummation in tortuous delay and spend its time relishing the experience of waiting. Pornography will get to the sexual acts as quickly as it can and then spend time repeating them. In pornography, anything before the acts, such as plot or description, is just artifice or dramatic foreplay to what is seen as the real play of sex. Pornography arouses sexual excitement through the representation (and repetition) of sexual acts. Erotica arouses through the acts and through the wanting itself. Hence, it is conceivable to have erotica with only a single sex scene or even none, whereas with pornography it is not. Finally, because erotica does invest description into areas other than the sexual act, it has more play with imagination including the waiting. It cannot simply offer the expression "I can't wait to see him," but must venture into the psyche and the vocabulary of want. Imagination is always the "invisible and ever-active participant" in erotica. Erotica must convey that want and elicit it from the reader. It can do this by indirect description of all the places where the lover is absent or of how she remembers him, or through dreams, allusions, and potent metaphors.

While Walsh has made excellent points, the word "erotica" could practically be replaced with "desire," which Walsh herself uses in the title of her book, *Exquisite Desire*. This is a better alternative than the word "erotic" since in both popular and scholarly circles, the distinction between erotic and pornographic frequently gets blurred and affects one's interpretation. "Erotica is brunettes in silk,

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[83] Hess 2005: 32.

[84] Almog 2010: 254, 253 n.3.

[85] Walsh 2000: 162.

pornography is blondes in nylon,"[86] says contributor Lucy Fischer in *The Guardian* at the same time conveying the fact that the distinction may be more subjective than anything else. In fact, it is the ascribing of the very word "erotic" to the Song which tacitly authorises even scholarly interpreters to read almost anything in the Song as sexual. Boer's dense pornographic reading testifies to this fact, illustrating the tendency to read into the Song, even at crucial points, meanings that might not have been intended at all. One critical example is Boer's reading of the lover's hand in the latch-hole (5:4) as an act of "fisting."[87] His reading may be an outlier but it bespeaks a current tendency of literary scholarship to proliferate sexual entendre in the Song as though the Song was an ancient Hebrew risqué polemic resisting a strait-laced establishment, something that LaCocque tries very hard to prove.[88] Even Goulder, who is initially uncomfortable with an erotic reading of 5:4 and rightly points out, that if we take the expression erotically, "we shall find it hard to make sense of the intervening lines" then back-pedals saying, "Of course, the euphemistic meaning may have occurred to the author also, and he may have put it in as a kind of tease; for he means to titillate, and double-entendre is a technique for titillation, even when the surface meaning is all that applies."[89] Goulder's first point is valid. There are elements in the episode that detract from a sexual reading. While the author undoubtedly means to titillate at certain points in the Song, would he have done so at those especially serious points where the tenor or context resists such a reading? Song 5:4 "does not fit with the course of the narrative," says Fox, despite the fact that "the phrase admittedly makes one think of intercourse."[90] I would also argue that the Song does not display identical emphases of love. Where the predominant emphasis of love in one section may be *sexual*, in another it might be care and support. In yet another, it might be yearning or concern.

Looking at the evolution of 5:4 in modernist times, one finds Wittekindt (1925) influences Pope (1977) who in turn influences Eslinger (1981) and others. At each stage of "transmission," more words surrounding 5:4 become sexualised until even the perfume left by a tearful *exclusus amator* on the dead bolt of the beloved's door, a classic paraclausithyron, is transformed into a well-oiled penis.[91]

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[86] https://www.theguardian.com/notesandqueries/query/0,,-2224,00.html

[87] Boer 2001: 69.

[88] LaCocque 1998: 12.

[89] Goulder 1986: 9, 41.

[90] Fox 1985: 144; cf. Gordis 1974: 90.

[91] Bryson and Movsesian 2017: 49.

No doubt, a subject to tackle in another paper but it seems to me that since we are dealing with "erotica" rather than "pornography" there must be a limit as to the intended double entendre in favour of the emotions and waiting, as Walsh and Hess have already argued.

Holman maintains that the Song can be likened to a three-storey house, the first storey is the erotic, second the literal, and third a spiritual interpretation (reminding one of the distinctions made by the Antiochian school of exegesis).[92] I have earlier provided my own analogy of the house which is different to Holman's.

The problem is too often the erotic readings bypass the literal "first-floor" to construct readings that resemble the allegorists. Even Boer himself acknowledges that his pursuit "merely substitutes one allegory for another, a carnal allegory for a divine allegory."[93] Readings of human love must be careful not to bypass the literal, nor to impose a second, ostensibly author-based, level on the basic reading of the text.

3. Lyric

Before one investigates whether any plot might exist within the Song of Songs, one must address the nature of lyric poetry since this is what the Song is adjudged to be.

First, lyric is often perceived as distinct from narrative poetry and dramatic poetry. The threefold division of poetry into epic, lyric and dramatic goes back possibly to Aristotle.[94] Linafelt, for example, argues that the Song is best understood as lyric *rather than* the other two. Although acknowledging there are both dramatic and narratival elements in the Song, for him this is "a *faux* deployment of narrative and dramatic elements in the service of lyrical ends;"[95] there is no real narrative in the poetry.

Second, since Lowth in the eighteenth century, Hebrew poetry has been identified with the feelings. For Longman, the Hebrew lyric poems are "reflective or affective poems that express the personal thoughts and feelings of a speaker." [96] By contrast, plot and character development relate to stories and narrative poems.

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[92] Holman 1997.

[93] Boer 2012: 9.

[94] Although Genette (1992: 33ff.) argues this goes back to Romanic and Germanic Romanticism.

[95] Linafelt 2006: 292-93.

[96] Longman 1997: 100.

Of the Song, Longman says it is a subjective "narrative impulse" rather than anything in the Song that leads to the dramatic (=finding a "narrative") approach.[97]

Third, lyric poetry's repetitiveness and circularity is taken to be inconsistent to narrativity in the Song. Exum notes that in the Mesopotamian corpus, "the action, especially when accompanied by a narrator who reports events in sequence, progresses in a linear fashion. This is quite unlike the lyric poetry of the Song, where the movement is circular."[98] This understanding of Exum, of the perceived necessity of linear sequentiality for narrative structure, will be important later. Here, it must be noted that Exum appears to state that lyric poetry cannot contain any narrative. This is confirmed elsewhere, when Black and Exum argue that the fact that the Song keeps returning to the same themes and motifs should discourage us from seeking a clearly developed plot and regard it instead as poetry.[99] Similarly, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* states that the Song exhibits a lyrical structure whose unity stems "from repetitions and juxtapositions rather than from narrative devices such as plot or character development."[100] A later edition adds, "the Song is a lyric poem, not a record of events ... when we read lyric poetry, which is essentially a discontinuous form, we should not expect to find the kind of linear unfolding of events that produces a plot."[101]

Fourth, the function of lyric poetry in the Hebrew Bible is not typically connected with storytelling which is instead reserved for prose. Alter writes, "the Hebrew writers used verse for celebratory song, dirge, oracle, oratory, prophecy, reflective and didactic argument, liturgy, and often as a heightening or summarizing inset in the prose narratives—but only marginally and minimally to tell a tale."[102] Dobbs Allsop follows suit, recently asserting that though there are individual poems that incorporate narrative runs and that sometimes even develop characters, for the most part these forms are restricted in scale and put mainly to non-narrative ends. For him, narrative in the Hebrew Bible is instead rendered in prose.[103]

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[97] Longman 2001: 43.

[98] Exum 2005: 51.

[99] Black and Exum 1998: 323.

[100] *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* 2007: 959.

[101] Ibid., 2010: 951.

[102] Alter 2011: 29.

[103] Dobbs-Allsop 2015: 10.

The descriptions of lyric poetry mentioned militate against the possibility of narrative in the Song. Yet, all is not lost. Although lyric and narrative are still being treated as mutually exclusive in biblical studies, within broader literary studies there is a growing interest to view the pair as lying on a continuum. Hühn especially has influenced several theoreticians and practitioners of lyric poetry in this respect. He argues that the traditional division of poetry into lyric, narrative and dramatic genres has serious shortcomings, especially when they are rigidly followed. Seeing any text as purely lyrical with no progression, does not allow there to be any event. The event is the singular, most important element in a narrative. It is the chain of events which leads to a narrative.

Lyric poetry, Hühn argues, can have all three components of a typical narrative—sequentiality, mediacy and narration—although to a lesser extent. Consequently, lyric events can exist although they are mostly psychological, or in some cases discursive.[104] We will return to Hühn in chapter 4 when we establish the types of events that might occur in the Song. For now, I note it is incorrect to say that the entire Song lies on the lyric side of a narrative-lyric continuum. Its various parts lie on different points. In some parts, lyric is pronounced (e.g. 4:1-5:1) while elsewhere, narrative is (e.g. 5:2-6:3). This is something De Wette recognised because, he says, it "fluctuate[s] between lyric and epic poetry."[105] More lately, Fischer has described the Song as having narrative and poetic sections but in saying that the narrative parts are decisive for interpretation, Fischer could be construed as implying that the other parts are *not* useful for any determination of narrative.[106] This would belie the fact that even the less narratival parts of a lyric poem may contain *some* element of narrativity. Despite Alter's sentiments about the apparent lack of storytelling in poetry, he himself recognises the inclusion of deliberate narrative-like elements within Hebrew poetry and proceeds to call this a "narrative impulse" which might present itself in a poem.[107]

Linafelt, as a lyricist, notes that the two night scenes (3:1-5 and 5:2-6:3) exhibit elements based on Aristotle's foundational work of literary criticism, *The Poetics.*[108] Linafelt concludes that these blocs contain a complex rather than a

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[104] Hühn 2004: 151-52 and 2005: 162-68.

[105] De Wette 1843: 534.

[106] Fischer 2010: 1.

[107] Alter 2011: 30-31.

[108] Linafelt 2005: 252.

simple plot since there is *peripeteia* (reversal of fortune) and *anagnorisis* (a dramatic moment of recognition, moment of truth). The former, he believes, is present in both passages, whereas the statement "my soul failed me when he spoke" (5:6) is a moment of truth, a recognition of what was lost when the lover was gone.

In conclusion, the lyrical parts of the Song do not negate the existence of a narrative. Only if the *entire* Song, in all of its parts, lies towards the lyrical end of the continuum as opposed to the narrative end, can one with absolute certainty conclude that we are dealing with a piece of literature that does not contain any story. However, the very existence of narrative-like elements—not just in the night scenes but in diverse parts of the Song with various narratival density—offers the possibility of a narrative if pulled together.

The techniques in this study basically follow on from those pioneers in the field of narratology such as Propp, Todorov and Genette. Because the Song is largely lyric poetry, a methodological justification for narratological technique appears in Chapter 4. Such methodology is argued in depth by Hühn (2004/5) on a conceptual level and to a lesser extent by Kafalenos (2006), among others. I share their conclusions that the theory of poetry has often ignored its fundamental narrative features. There has been a burgeoning of theoreticians and practitioners applying theoretical aspects of postmodern narratology (as opposed to older narrative studies) to lyric poetry within literary studies in general but still sparse application to the biblical corpus. Since Müllner's statement that "Narratologische Fragestellungen sind mit Sicherheit auch dann angemessen, wenn es um biblische Texte geht, die gewöhnlich nicht als Erzählungen betrachtet werden,"[109] Thöne (2012b) has analysed Ps. 55; Eder has examined Ps. 64 (2019); Gillmayr-Bucher has done some work on Pss. 90-92 (2015); and Fischer (2010) and Thöne (2012a) have analysed the Song. The latter two, incidentally, have not focused as much on the concept of "event" as I have in this study.

A narratological approach needs to be balanced with techniques that tackle other emphases in the Song, such as metaphor theory (Gault's 2019 analysis of the body metaphors being a recent offering). Klimek's caution that narratological analysis cannot and should not replace traditional lyric analyses is relevant here,

[109] Müllner 2006: 17.

and happily she concludes that a combination of both techniques can profitably co-exist.[110]

4. Loose Unity or Anthology

The greatest threat to narrative is reading the Song atomistically or regarding the Song as a collection of poems. The view of Gordis that the Song is a collection of poems by various poets[111] differs from that of Murphy, that it is an anthology with thematic unity but minimal structure.[112] One can also see a difference between Keel's view that the Song is a disparate collection redacted to exhibit thematic unity,[113] Bossuet's perspective (1693) that the book is a single epithalamic poem divided into seven cantos by Solomon, or Herder's belief that the Song was a plurality of love songs, a string of pearls, that were composed under a single anonymous author.[114]

One needs to be clear as to why more recent interpreters have concluded that the Song is a collection because if the foundations behind these conclusions can be shown to be weak or an alternative explanation can be offered for the phenomena which led to such conclusions, the theory itself may need re-examination. An exhaustive survey cannot be conducted here but a sampling must suffice.

Proponents of the anthological view have based their arguments upon several criteria, yet no consensus exists as to where individual poems begin and end. Falk looks for changes in setting, situation, tone and speaker to indicate unit divisions.[115] Gordis includes form and language.[116] In the end, depending upon criteria used, the number of poems varies greatly, fifty-two (Krinetzki 1981) being the highest. The constituent genres of the Song have been fully discussed by Horst (1935) and Krinetzki (1981). For Segal, it is the varied material with some attempt at arrangement that shows this is a collection.[117]

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[110] Klimek 2013: 221.

[111] Gordis 1974: 16-18.

[112] Murphy 1990: 64-67.

[113] Keel 1994: 17.

[114] Herder 1778: 531, 593.

[115] Falk 1982: 69.

[116] Gordis 1974: 18, 21-24.

[117] Segal 1962.

For Gordis, the Song is an anthology because some songs are connected with wedding ceremonies and others are not.[118] He recognises that "the division of the Song will depend upon the changes in theme, viewpoint, background or form"[119] but notes that "these criteria will not always be sufficiently exact to command universal assent."[120] Structure probably plays a part here. It is likely the Song is read linearly when attempting to delimit its variant parts. Of course, all texts are read linearly but what if the parts of the Song are not meant to cohere linearly? We will return to this subject soon but clearly structure does play a part. Falk, for example, divides the Song into thirty-one poems because she sees no structural unity.[121] For her, the poems depict different speakers addressing different audiences.[122]

Garrett singles out 1:6 as being one of the reasons why he thinks the Song is a collection. It is a "self-contained unit"[123] with nothing before or after concerning the woman's skin colour. He states that no macrostructural function for this text is possible and that in some sense it can stand alone.

For Carr, the Song is a collection of love songs because they deal with love between a couple.[124] Admittedly, Carr focuses more on the love aspect than the fact that it is a collection, stopping short of unequivocally embracing the Song as a collection, but it does seem that the former aspect reinforces the latter. He says, "love songs are ubiquitous" and draws a brief comparison to "love poetry from all over the ancient Near East." Carr also mentions the resemblance of the Song to Egyptian love poems.[125] On the alleged similitude to the Egyptian collections, both White and Fox, the foremost Egyptian experts in the scholarship of the Song, though weighing in favour of a Hebrew collection of love poetry, think the Song has a highly structured and artistic unity unlike the Egyptian "counterpart."[126] Fox states that the Egyptian collections do "not provide a good analogy to Canticles ... no group of Egyptian love poems is organised quite like

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[118] Gordis 1974: 17-18.

[119] Ibid., 18.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Falk 1982: 71.

[122] Falk 1982, 69, 73-79.

[123] Garrett 2004: 26.

[124] Carr 1981: 98.

[125] Carr 1982: 492.

[126] White 1978: 148-53.

Canticles ... Nor do these collections evidence any attempt to join the songs by means of key-words or motifs."[127]

Gerhards warns that the Arabic wedding songs, which convinced many nineteenth century interpreters that the Song was an anthology of love poetry and which display similarities to individual poetic units of the Song, should be compared with the Song cautiously. That single units of the Song correspond in form and content to Arabic songs is important for the *Sitz im Leben* of individual units, but it does not follow that the Song as a whole should be understood in like manner.[128]

Comments that show the Song *working* as a unity include those of Exum who highlights the fact that "The Song ... works as a unity, so well, in fact, that distinguishing different voices and attitudes is not easy ... Even commentators who see the Song as an anthology tend to read it as though its attitude toward love is uniform and the protagonists are the same two people throughout."[129] Exum's comments are supported by an incongruity that exists among those who see the Song as a collection—the tendency to sometimes read a part of the Song as linked to another part. One example is the case of identifying the speakers in 8:8. Although Falk admits grammatically the speakers could be either brothers or sisters, it is clear from her resultant comments that she proceeds on the basis that it sounds "like a chorus of older brothers" from 1:6.[130] Longman is more daring, saying, "Here the brothers speak for the first time, although the woman mentions them in 1:5–6. As a matter of fact, the mention of the brothers in chapter 1 may well balance their role here in chapter 8."[131]

Alden raises the issue of difficulties with Song 8, which he recognises is very different from the rest of the Song. He notes the trouble that dramatists face in integrating the chapter into their linear plots, having to work hard to make its disparate parts fit together and into their scheme.[132] Had it not been for some key words and verses, 8:12 for example, he surmises most of the chapter would have been relegated to unrelated appendices. Alden recognises, along with others, that parts of Song 8 probably provide closure to the ideas found in the opening of the book. Alden is an anthologist but he also sees a structure in the Song and argues

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[127] Fox 1985: 204; cf. Garrett 1994: 30.

[128] Gerhards 2016: 60.

[129] Exum 2000: 29.

[130] Falk 1982: 132.

[131] Longman 2001: 215; cf. comments in Exum 2005: 256.

[132] Alden 1988: 271.

that the parts of the final chapter unify it with the rest of the book. This begs the question of how much of the chapter is closural.

5. Metaphors and their Interpretation

The Song is rife with metaphor. Metaphor theory has made exceptional strides in the last few decades since Lakoff and Johnson (1980). In cognitive linguistics particularly, the term "conceptual metaphor" relates to the understanding of one idea, or "conceptual domain" in terms of another. In this thesis, source or target domains for conceptual metaphors are notated in small capitals, as is the convention.

There are several pitfalls that can occur when addressing what is considered to be metaphorical language. The first problem is subjectivity in taking something to be metaphorical when it is literal and vice-versa. Several so-called metaphors have caused difficulty or speculation in the Song. For instance, not all interpreters take 2:15, about foxes that ruin the vineyard, metaphorically.[133] In 6:11, "the garden of nuts" is sometimes seen as a literal garden[134] but the word "garden" is more often taken as a metaphorical reference to the woman's body, such as occurs in 4:12-5:1 and in the parallel literature.[135] If that is so, what does it mean when she is described as "dwelling in the gardens" (8:13)? Does this also have a metaphorical meaning, and if not, might there be other instances where "garden" is purely literal? The context of the garden in 4:12-5:1 is more clearly a metaphorical one pertaining to the woman's body. In 6:11; 8:13 and 6:2-3, however, that clarity is absent.

The second problem is that of importing a non-literal word from a metaphorical context into another part of the Song. The clearest example of this error of "freighted context" can be seen in 8:8 where the use of אחות "sister" obviously should be attributed to the speech of the woman's brothers but is sometimes incorrectly attributed to the lover simply because it is he who predominantly calls his beloved this epithet in the Song.[136] As in Sumerian and Egyptian love poetry, the word "sister" is used both figuratively for "intimate companion" and literally as a familial term. In *The Courtship of Inanna and*

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[133] See e.g. Ginsburg 1857: 147.

[134] E.g. Assis 2009: 197.

[135] E.g. Such as in the Egyptian Papyrus Harris 500 (Grp. A, No 3; Grp. C, No. 18) in Fox 1985: 9, 26; "A Balbale to Inana and Dumuzid" (Dumuzid-Inana B) in Sefati 1998: 128-31.

[136] Keel (1994: 75) says this is spoken by suitors of the woman.

Dumuzi, Inanna is called "sister" throughout by her twin Utu but her beau Dumuzi later calls her the same thing.[137]

The third problem is that of over-metaphorising language. This is relevant within the Song's *wasfs*. Waterman's literalism of the language in the *wasfs* (which arose because of his rejection of allegory) led to Soulen arguing that the *wasfs* are metaphorical and not meant to portray the lover's physical characteristics to the reader but the speaker's emotions upon beholding the loved one.[138] Soulen's paper led to the charge of "biblical literalism" or "realism," against any who dared use the *wasfs* for arriving at some kind of visual representation of a protagonist in the Song. Exum, echoing Falk and Fox, however, warns that there is more besides Soulen's way to approach the *wasfs*, that one-to-one correspondences between the images and their referents are precisely matched and designed to convey some particular aspect of each body part.[139]

The fourth problem, leaping over the literal, has largely been addressed. Specifically, in relation to love poetry, Westenholz cautions, "Some critics maintain that metaphor marks off the poetic mode of vision and utterance from the logical or discursive mode. It is the momentary or hypothetical identity, the juxtaposition of two terms (parataxis). A word may be simultaneously literal and metaphorical. It is the interaction of elements of the metaphor that make it important to the understanding of all poetry and love poetry in particular.[140]" Westenholz particularly examines mentions of the garden in ancient near eastern love poetry.

The fifth problem is over-reliance upon comparative studies. Keel often interprets metaphors based on comparative imagery. This is his well-known, and laudable, strength but he tends to interpret using parallels as if both contexts, the Song's and the perceived counterpart's, were the same. For 2:15, using Egyptian iconography that portrays foxes in the role of dubious admirers, he says of the vineyards, this "can scarcely mean anything other than women, especially their feminine charms"[141] that need to be protected from seductors.

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[137] Wolkstein and Kramer 1983: 40.

[138] Soulen 1967.

[139] Exum 2005: 19.

[140] Westenholz 1992: 381.

[141] Keel 1994: 110.

6. Diachronic Layers of Construction

By its nature, narratology generally examines a text as a finished product. My intention in this thesis is to predominantly adhere to a synchronic treatment of the Song and then at the end to discuss possibilities, in a limited way, as to how any narrative might stack up against a diachronic approach.

If the Song has been created and developed over time, in unrelated layers, this would not necessarily threaten the existence of a narrative. I agree with Fischer who notes that a narratological approach need not contradict any diachronic layers of the text.[142] For example, the possibility of wisdom-related redactional material in the Song has been considered for some time. Dell (2005)—following others like Childs (1979); Tromp (1990); and Murphy (1990b)—has discussed such a likelihood. This is a subject we will return to in the final chapter but I note that these authors' works do not put my project into jeopardy even before it has begun. If anything, a narrative in the Song could have implications for wisdom, diachronic development notwithstanding,

Yet, these analyses are quite different from another kind of diachronic approach which not only recognises layers of development but necessitates rearrangement of the material also. Haupt (1902), Wittekindt (1925) and Angénieux (1965) are good examples of this other method. Though the "threat" of such a diachronic approach is non-existent today, I mention it in passing as it is nonetheless detrimental to a narrative approach.[143]

CHARACTERISATION

1. How Many Leading Characters?

For the Song to be a narrative, there needs to be some continuation of the main characters. The most vexing question at one point was, and to an extent still is, how many leading males are there?

The earliest known proponent of the three-character (two male lovers) interpretation is said to be the twelfth century Jewish scholar Ibn Ezra, who saw the shepherd as a separate and distinct person from the king.[144] In truth, Ibn Ezra underplayed the role of the king, instead explaining the story as that of a damsel

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[142] Fischer 2010: 3-4.

[143] See also p.189.

[144] Mathews 1874: 10.

falling in love with a shepherd. Solomon is incidental to the narrative. According to Montefameglio, the first attempts to consider the Song as a drama come from Ghisleri (1609), Panigarola (1621) and Pinto Ramirez (1642).[145] However, the reincarnated three-character dramatic view really takes off in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, under Jacobi (1771), Löwisohn (1816), Ewald (1826)[146] and Ginsburg (1857), among others. With some differences, their story was roughly as follows: A young woman is taken by the king against her will, pines for her true lover, a shepherd who eventually wins her heart.[147] Friedländer contested the view of force, arguing that the woman consents to the king's persuasion.[148]

The three-character view took a beating from Delitzsch who omitted the shepherd in his commentary (1851),[149] establishing a separate trend after him. One sees that both these three- and two-character interpreters were reading paratactically. Although this is not necessarily a bad method of reading, it depends on where one utilises it and whether one fills in gaps with information that does not exist. The dramatists' plots were explained rather elaborately with details filled in that were not explicitly mentioned or even implied by the text. Friedländer, for example, speaks about Solomon travelling from his summer palace in Lebanon to his royal vineyards encountering the woman's house in Northern Palestine.[150] What Friedländer exemplifies is the typical dramatists' act of pulling elements from different places in the Song, in this case the mention of "vineyard" (1:6) and "Lebanon" (4:8-11) to make the king's residence there and fusing them arbitrarily into a single sequence. There is no mention of a "summer palace in Lebanon" nor of the location of the woman's home.

Gerleman adopted the device of "travesties" in his interpretation. There was a "high," royal travesty and a "low" shepherd or gardener travesty.[151] Fox explains, "A 'travesty' is a type of fantasy in which an author, and with him the audience, temporarily escape from their usual place in society by creating a fictive world above, below, or outside their social setting."[152] Fohrer applies literary travesties

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[145] See Montefameglio 2016.

[146] Ewald 1867 in bibliography.

[147] Ibid., 411-15.

[148] Friedländer 1894: 648.

[149] Referenced as Delitzsch 1993.

[150] Friedländer 1894: 649.

[151] Gerleman 1965: 60-62, 96.

[152] Fox 1983: 203

to both male and female protagonists saying that there are two female roles, first that of a country girl and then a city dweller.[153] A modern proponent of Gerleman's and Fohrer's method is Barbiero who assumes the scenes are high and low burlesque, that is fantasies or role-plays.[154]

This interpretation has its difficulties because there are no indicators that the woman is fantasising within the metadiegetic world.[155] Authors generally provide indicative signs to distinguish between the make-believe and the "true" world so that the reader is able to follow. In the Song, none can be identified. With a roleplaying perspective it becomes difficult to pin down the metadiegetic world of the Song. Is the woman a shepherdess imagining she is a queen, or is she a queen imagining she is a country girl? Is she something different, imagining herself to be both? These writers cannot be certain from what strata in society the couple are participating in the burlesque, which is why Fox's suggestion (off the cuff, I think) that "the Song *as a whole* may be a 'shepherd travesty' "[156] lies on indeterminate ground. From what social standing exactly are these transferences to fantasy occurring? Why are Gerleman and Barbiero so "objectively" certain these are roleplays? By their method, one could arbitrarily take *any* of the ancient Near Eastern love songs and impose on it burlesque. Moreover, there are aspects of the Song that resist the idea of roleplay such as the woman's grief at her beau disappearing (5:6); physical violence (5:7); the intrusion of external narratorial voices (6:8); the inclusion of action and movement such as the lover's approach (2:8) and the visit to the garden (6:11); and interaction of characters other than the primary couple (3:3, 3:11; 5:7; 5:8; 8:8). Neither is density of metaphorical language useful for identifying roleplay since both metaphorical and literal modes would theoretically be found in both fantasy/role-playing and reality.

Despite his remark about a possible shepherd travesty, Fox himself generally rejects this theory, claiming that the couple in the Song are not pretending to be royalty but are using terms and motifs from that sphere to express endearment and to stress that in their simple bucolic state love has made them the equivalent of royalty.[157]

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[153] Fohrer 1986 [1968], 302.

[154] Barbiero 2011: 52-58

[155] Narrative diegetic levels were proposed by Genette 1980 [1972].

[156] Fox 1982: 204 (emphasis mine).

[157] Fox 1983: 203-04; 1985: 98; 292-94.

2. Characterisation and Realism

Waterman's hermeneutic of realism (here, the plain sense) led him to conclude the *wasfs* were deliberate caricatures, a woman with grotesque features.[158] Reacting to Waterman, Soulen contends the purpose of the *wasf* is presentational rather than representational and that it does not provide a parallel to visual appearance. The *tertium comparationis* must be seen not in form but instead in the feelings and sense experiences of the poet himself who then uses a vivid and familiar imagery in the form of art.[159]

Realism, however, can be a useful hermeneutic in as much as certain figures of speech may be based upon real descriptions and realism can provide a valid contribution towards characterisation. The comparison of his sweetheart's neck to a tower (4:4) is obviously not literal and yet the man may be thinking about something specific related to the tower that reminds him about his beloved. Realism, therefore, is not dispensable. Gault's recent in-depth argument against the tendency to take these metaphors for their *function* as opposed to *form* cannot be reproduced here but echoes what has just been said; visual form can indeed be important.[160]

Another question is if figurative language is based upon a real characteristic, is the poet exceeding the character of the speaker, or is he portraying the character's experience, or world, accurately? Would the lover in the Song compare his beloved to something he is unlikely to have experienced or knows about but which the poet has or knows of? The poet is unlikely to characterise a local shepherd, for example, as experiencing travel to foreign countries just because these have been experienced by himself but accords the shepherd speech consonant with his character. One would similarly expect the man described as a military conqueror to be a king as opposed to a shepherd, especially—and I think this is crucial—if other royal indicators are in tandem. Soulen says: "that interpretation is most correct which sees the imagery of the *wasf* as a means of arousing emotions *consonant with those experienced by the suitor* as he beholds the fullness of his beloved's attributes."[161] Yet, why should the reader be confined to experience the suitor's emotions only and not be drawn into experiencing the

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[158] Waterman 1948: 38, 63.

[159] Soulen 1967: 189.

[160] Gault 2019: 36-39.

[161] Ibid., emphasis mine.

very identity and world of the speaker in some way, which is otherwise wasted for its aesthetic value?

3. The Role of Solomon

Solomon is mentioned by name only in three places (1:1; 3:7-11; 8:11-12). Since the late nineteenth century, a growing number of commentators have detached the name "Solomon" from the Song's king. Martineau mentions the names of Graetz, Bickel, Kohler, Budde and himself in this endeavour. This batch of critics were reacting to the ludicrous portrayal of Solomon as abductor in the earlier dramatists' works. Martineau himself is a dramatist but says, "Solomon is not an actor in any part of the piece." [162] Haupt thought that Solomon was merely the impersonation of glory and splendour, even a subsequent insertion.[163] The name "Solomon" is today frequently (but not universally) ascribed to the lover. Fox says, "Solomon is ... mentioned only as the archetypal rich monarch with many wives, he is a foil for the boy ..."[164]

For Fischer, 1:1 is not primarily concerned with attributing authorship but giving direction to the reader to take the book in a particular Solomonic perspective and context.[165] Fischer emphasises that the presentation of the figure of Solomon points to different layers in the text. Solomon appears as a legendary figure, one based on his identity in the historical books. In the Song, he is fictitious character, [166] a literary device to be distinguished from the real Solomon, thereby freeing the author of the Song to construe a new (adapted) Solomon.

The attribution to Solomon might assign authority to the text(s). Fischer thinks that if the Song is an anthology, the argument would hold but not if it is a coherent whole (because Fischer sees the book as being critical of Solomon).[167] For Fischer, the Song can function without Solomon because the theme is love; while Solomon reinforces and accentuates this theme, he is not needed for the plot.

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[162] Martineau 1895: 438.

[163] Haupt 1902: 207.

[164] Fox 1985: 122; cf. Harding 2008: 54; Barbiero 2011: 146.

[165] Fischer 2014b: 675.

[166] Fischer says, "In German a distinction is made between Fiktionalität and Fiktivität: Fiktivität refers to imagination and would deny the factual existence of Solomon as a person but Fiktionalität refers to the device of the presentation of Solomon as a literary figure." Fischer opts for the latter. Fischer 2014b: 670 n.3.

[167] Fischer 2014b: 675.

When considering the name of "Solomon" in any narrative, the problem with making the biblical persona of Solomon dispensable while democratising his name to apply to an unnamed lover is that removing Solomon himself would result in quite a different narrative. Imagine removing Poirot from a Christie novel and replacing him with someone who merely uses his name in an ancillary way, "I'm the new Poirot." Since Poirot has his own unique and distinct set of traits, all of which interact with the contours of the ongoing plot in such a way that both character and narrative make and mould each other in infinitesimal ways, the "new Poirot" is not the original but someone else with a different set of traits. The tendency in scholarship to remove the traditional Solomon from the Song and democratise his name for *the* male lover (as distinct from Solomon) or indeed any male lover is no longer the original text since its inclusion of the name "Solomon" is dependent upon the historical account, cultural memory, or tradition of him to infuse these verses with his Solomon's own intricate and unique set of traits that are not divisible without destruction of the original character. Even though scholars today will agree that the Song's Solomon fictionalises his character from Kings/Chronicles in this new "episode" *to some extent*, we can still regard it to be Solomon with his essential traits because the fiction does not destroy his essential character as king and lover *par excellence*.

4. The Role of the Brothers

Four questions need to be answered of the enraged brothers (1:6) when we analyse the Song. What is their purpose in the narrative? Are they being characterised negatively, positively or a combination of the two? What motivates them? How frequently does the motif recur?

The motivation of the brothers in making their sister work is especially unclear to interpreters. Is it to keep spotless the honour of their family and accustom the dreaming "child" to useful activity (Delitzsch); is it a fraternal solicitude for her reputation (Ginsburg; Rashi, Ibn Ezra and Rashbam); is it because she was too prodigal with her favours (Gordis); or is it to drive precocious thoughts of men from her head (Krinetzki)? The actions of the brothers seems to be heavy-handed even by ancient standards since the work of tending to a vineyard was laborious and typically male-oriented.[168] The fact that she is burnt by the sun and that she has no time to look after herself testifies to its arduous nature. If her brothers are responsible for her future *and* able to forcibly put her to work, are they not able

[168] Keel 1994: 49; Delitzsch (1993: 27) calls this brotherly harshness.

to prevent her from overwork or getting sunburnt? There is a contradiction in their characters if they are responsible and upright.

Today, most characterise the brothers positively or at least as responsible older siblings. Their irritation with their sister arises out of an honourable impulse; a potential fault lies with her rather than them, the most common view being her chastity (or what some would purport is left of it) is at stake.[169] However, there are those who are willing to see the brothers as being portrayed negatively. Murphy describes them as peevish, angry, meddlesome and officious.[170] Gerleman is reminded of the Cinderella motif when reading the dynamic between the brothers and their sister.[171] In fact, a negative view of the brothers is the earliest on record. The Greek translator appears to have recognised an antagonistic element in the brothers' anger because he ramps up the language of his translation using ἐμαχέσαντο ἐν ἐμοί "fought with me." The expression is found in Gen. 26:20; 26:22; Lev. 24:10; 2 Sam. 14:6; 2 Kgs 3:23 in a range of verbal and physical fights. The first known Christian commentary, by Hippolytus, uses similar antagonistic language. In his *In Canticum Canticorum*, he uses "have become enemies to me" and the Greek Paraphrase has "the brothers fought me (ἐμαχέσαντό με)."[172] Hippolytus represents the brothers as the prophets of the Jewish law who entice believers away from Christ. Origen also sees the brothers as contending with the sister and while they do so initially, they are also representative of those who repent (he cites Paul as example) and who now appoint others in the Church and who fight alongside her against its enemies.[173] A century later, Gregory of Nyssa also reads the brothers as permanent hostile enemies, applying them to his version of the enemies of the Christian: the World, the flesh and the devil.[174] Jerome, in the Vulgate, translates *Pugnaverunt contra me* "fought against me," Gregory the Great comments "for the sons of the synagogue who persisted in their lack of faith *waged a war of persecution* against those with faith from the synagogue"[175] and Bede recognises the "harshness of the persecutors."[176] Even later, in the twelfth century, Bernard of Clairvaux uses the

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[169] E.g. Alter 2016: 9; Ginsburg 1857: 133; Keel 1994: 49.

[170] Murphy 1990: 128.

[171] Gerleman 1965: 99-101.

[172] Translations in Smith 2009: 290.

[173] *ACW* 26: 279.

[174] Norris Jr. 2012: 61-63.

[175] DelCogliano 2012: 134.

[176] Holder 2011: 48.

trope in his twenty-ninth sermon as an substantial oration concerning conflict and persecution.

The earliest Jewish Tannaitic interpretation sees the brothers as dominators and subjugators rather than disposers of benevolence. Kaplan describes how the early rabbinic sages correlate heroes and villains in Israel's scriptural history with characters and figures in Song.[177] The Tannaitic commentators recognise that the woman's brothers dominate her because this emerges, as Kaplan says, in their comments on Israel's history as refracted through the four foreign empires (Dan. 7) who subjugate her to domination. Interestingly, the earliest midrashim took the four subjugating empires as enticingly speaking to Israel (the brothers to the woman) in 7:1a also before she resists their temptations to disown God in 7:1b.[178] Rashi and Rashbam, in the twelfth century, also took the brothers of 1:6 as the Egyptian dominators. In 7:1a, Rashi follows the early midrash in taking the speech to be of a foreign subjugating power (it is not clear which) enticing the woman to "return from following the Omnipresent" but Rashbam changes both speaker and tone to the man and his friends desiring to gaze at the woman's beauty.[179]

What the Christian and Jewish literature reveals is that earlier comments on the motives and stance of the brothers towards their sister are different from those of modern times with no apparent justification for the switch. This should cause us to pause and ask whether the woman has been negatively affected by an antagonism on the part of her brothers. Instead of "Cinderella's" ugly sisters could we have here a female victim of male patriarchy? Since many take some verses from (or all of) 8:8-12 to be related to the brothers of 1:6 in some way,[180] we must investigate whether the later verses modify or develop *their* character and depiction in any way. If this is the case, then the way it is done could lead to indications of a plot. Any reversal of character or fortunes occurring to the sister on the one hand, and the brothers on the other (akin to that of the Cinderella motif) would be significant. Plots usually pan out in some predictable manner and the narrative may be the basic "rags to riches" story.[181] Irrespective of what their motivations are, if the brothers are, who Propp and Greimas would call in

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[177] Kaplan 2015: 63.

[178] Cant. Rabbah on 1:6; Broch 1968: 107.

[179] In Thompson 1988: 285.

[180] Moreover, some take these verses as an inclusio with 1:6. See Exum 1973: 76; Shea 1980: 383; Dorsey 1990: 192 and Rendtorff 1986: 261-62.

[181] Among others, we have the Egyptian Weni, the Akkadian Sargon and the Hebrew Joseph.

their models, the "villain" and "opponent" respectively—if the brothers are later put to shame, and the victimised ugly sister is vindicated and transformed into the most beautiful of all, winning the hand of her prince charming—it would lend credibility to the presence of a narrative in the Song.[182]

Of the identification of speaker(s) in Song 8:8, perhaps half of all commentators attribute the words "we have a little sister" to them.[183] This poem (or section) stands in stark contrast to those descriptions where the female's breasts are described as being fully developed (4:5; 7:4[3], 7:8[7], 7:9[8]). Although most see the brothers here speaking matter-of-factly about their sister's (premature) breasts, Bergant says they are being disparaging.[184] If they are truly dismissive of their sister, this is a seeming contradiction in their characters that has not been fully explored. Fewer even include 2:15, "catch us the little foxes … who ruin vineyards," as spoken by the brothers.[185]

5. Relationship of the Lovers

The lovers are sometimes portrayed to be always present for one another without any problems in their relationship. Andruska says, "Love is meant to look like the lovers' relationship in the Song: mutual, peaceful, equal, proactive, devoted, desirous, erotic, exclusive, committed and timeless. This order is displayed and established *throughout the book* … "[186] Similarly Segal divides the Song roughly into three parts: first, 1:2-8, in which the love of the couple is not yet developed as a mutual passion; next, 1:9-8:6a concerning the mutual love of the pair; and lastly, the concluding stanzas lightly related to the preceding part of the Song. Segal here presents his entire second part of the Song as exhibiting "the celebration of the mutual love of the pair."[187]

The two examples above represent two kinds of grossly generalised attitude to the relationship of the couple in the Song. Despite such positivity, there are at least two cases of unavailability of the lovers which ostensibly causes tension

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[182] Propp 1968: 28; Greimas 1966: 174-85. 192-212.

[183] E.g. Ginsburg 1857: 186; Robert 1948: 162; Hitzig 1855: 102; Pope 1977: 678; Falk 1982: 132; Fox 1985: 171-72; Murphy 1990: 192; Gledhill 1994: 236; Bloch and Bloch 1995: 214; Longman 2001: 215; Roberts 2007: 342.

[184] Bergant 2001: 100.

[185] E.g. Ginsburg 1857: 147; Barnstone 1970: 14; NKJV (incl. headings for speakers); Bloch and Bloch 1995: 157.

[186] Andruska 2019: 126, emphasis mine.

[187] Segal 1962: 471.

within their relationship. The most obvious is found in the scene of the man waiting outside the door of the woman appealing to enter (5:2-6), which many understand to be a paraclausithyron.[188] Uehlinger recognises this and also takes 2.8–14, the scene of the man at the window, as a paraclausithyron.[189] Although technically Uehlinger is incorrect since no "door" appears in the scene, this does raise an issue as to whether the section conveys a sense of the man "stuck" outside the house with the woman unavailable to him. The relationship between the couple appears to be far more dynamic than being on a steady, even keel. Oversimplification destroys the "ups and downs" that are not only at the heart of a poignant narrative but also in much love poetry as well.

6. Chorus

A chorus implies a performance, either a drama or public singing. Neither of these are implied nor evident in the Song.

The plural interjections within the Song, which Garrett calls a chorus, tend to be brief and the identity of the speakers is not always discernible. Interpreters are divided whether the speakers are the daughters of Jerusalem, the queens and consorts, or unnamed bystanders. Exum thinks the function of the chorus is readily discernible in that the speakers follow on the heels of what appears to be a crescendo to a consummation.[190] This is only true to an extent, however. While in 5:1 this may be true, in 1:11, "we will make you ornaments of gold" does not follow this pattern.

7. Watchmen

Black surveys the number of reactions the watchmen's beating (5:7) evokes in interpreters, from avoidance to justification. Such reactions, she observes, only serve to highlight the problem of what such a text, in which violence is used to suppress the woman's actions, is doing in an idyllic love poem.[191]

Grotius is perhaps the first to break away from allegorical readings, concluding that the woman is in a state of arousal when she is beaten, commenting, "*udam se factam dicit*," meaning "she says that she is damp." Grotius is the forerunner of those who read the beating of the woman as a sadomasochistic act. Burrus and

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[188] Pope 1977: 522-24; Fox 1985: 282-83; Bergant 2001: 62.

[189] Uehlinger 2013: 596.

[190] Exum 2005: 40.

[191] Black 102.

Moore are similarly willing to see both "the pain-filled pleasure of a bottom" and "the pleasureless pain of a battered woman" as equally valid readings of the sentinels' beating.[192] Yet, as I have discussed earlier, it needs to be clarified that probably only one of these readings was intended by the author. When Nellen says Grotius "shed clear light on the sexual allusions"[193] in the Song, it is doubtful that Grotius himself was taking a reader's perspective for 5:7.

Linafelt who sees something of a "plot" in the Song, is willing to see the sentinels as emblematic of an emotional denouement. The purpose, he surmises would be

> in order to represent what it feels like to discover that one's *nepes* has "gone out," that one has been ravished by desire—and that feeling, at this moment in the poetry at least, is the feeling of vulnerability, violation, assault. The defining feeling of the denouement is summarized in the final line of the poem: "I am faint with love" (v. 8).[194]

If Linafelt is right, then the literary trope of these watchmen poses some specific significant function in relation to a highpoint in the Song.

8. Narrator

The presence of an explicit narrator is not needed to constitute a narrative. Rimmon-Kenan argues that every tale must have its teller. Relevant to the Song are her words, "Even when a narrative text presents passages of pure dialogue ... there is in addition to the speakers or writers of this discourse a 'higher' narratorial authority responsible for 'quoting' the dialogue ..."[195] Exum is of the same mind here.[196]

Several have pointed out statements which appear to be those of an omniscient voice rather than of a character. Fischer says the narrator has an auctorial (non-focused) homodiegetic function.[197] He knows more than the figures in the text and communicates with them and, by doing this, is part of the text. One place

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[192] Burrus and Moore 2002: 137; cf. 2003: 44-45.

[193] Nellen 2008: 813.

[194] Linafelt 2005: 257.

[195] Rimmon-Kenan 2005: 91.

[196] Exum 2000: 27.

[197] Fischer 2014b: 678-79.

where the narrator is heard, according to Fischer, is 6:8, "there are sixty queens ..."[198]

Organising Dimensions

1. Structure

By and large, interpreters before the modern era tended to completely ignore questions of the Song's structure. If they did demarcate the Song at all, one method to ascertain divisions was key repetition such as the "adjurations" found in 2:7, 3:5 and 8:4 and 5:8.[199]

With the advent of the more "decentralised" viewpoints, analysts tended to concentrate on isolated sections of the text since the Song's structure appeared to be non-existent.[200] For Phipps, the Song's author "showed little concern for the sequence of ideas in arranging the stanzas"[201] and Goethe laments, "Unfortunately, ... the poems cannot be fully enjoyed since they are fragmentary, telescoped, or driven into one another, and mixed up ..."[202] The Song had become a "charming confusion" to many. This, incidentally, is what Haupt calls the Song (and Pope after him).[203] Haupt even took it upon himself to rearrange the Song's passages and put them where "they belonged."[204] The Song had become a veritable hodgepodge of structure and content, a ramble, a meandering journey into elated oblivion and euphoric "nowhereness."

The "New Literary" approaches began appearing in the late twentieth century. Exum was the first to propose that the Song be divided into six units arranged as a chiasm.[205] Exum acknowledges that in such instances where a unit is difficult to demarcate, she has instead had to rely upon the parallel (or corresponding) unit within the chiasm before arriving at the boundaries.[206] In Landy's assessment, "her analysis is very precise and perceptive; unfortunately she produces as many correspondences from outside the bounds of her related units as from within

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[198] Ibid., 679.

[199] See e.g. Deutz and Deutz 2005: 212, 268.

[200] See Uehlinger 2013: 594.

[201] Phipps 1974: 82.

[202] In Haupt 1902b: 208.

[203] Pope 1977: 54; Haupt 1902b: 208.

[204] Haupt 1902b, 1902c.

[205] Exum 1973.

[206] Exum 1973: 49.

them."[207] One would also expect other scholars, with some rigour, to arrive at similar conclusions to Exum on form. Shea, however, went on to modify Exum's conclusions arguing for a chiasm in his own rhetorical analysis.[208] Following Shea was Webster, who had a different and more complex five-part partially inverted chiasm,[209] and Dorsey, who arrived at a symmetry of seven chiastic units.[210] Davidson conducts a survey of studies supporting a unified Song and finds 4:16-5:1 (which for Davidson relates to the consummation of the wedding mentioned in 3:11) to be the centre of the book,[211] not far off the Masoretic centre of 4:14. The significant variation among these and other competing chiastic proposals[212] has put the whole chiastic structure into doubt and caused some consternation among scholars.[213]

For narrative purposes, chiastic form could, in theory, coexist with another structuring device. A narrative structure and a poetic structure are two very different things. One can see poetic features that enable cohesion across several units while the narrative within these units need not be confined to a single scene or temporal arc. A chiasm may cover several time periods and scenes.[214] Chiastic poetic structures point to unity but not necessarily narrative, neither does their presence invalidate the existence of the latter.

Those who have tried to find an explicit narrative in the Song, especially the dramatists, have read it in a linear fashion. Estes's remark that "the linear approach seems to require a degree of precision that exceeds the actual data of the text"[215] is probably true. If one tries to overlay a straight line upon one that is not, to acquire like for like, one is bound to fail. The former will only coincide at certain, perhaps several, points upon the original, leaving us with mere impressions of the latter. We would acquire snatches of the original, discerning points upon it but never grasping the whole because the shape of the former requires more complexity than a straight line. Similarly, one cannot overlay a sequential narrative upon one that is not, for example, the attempt to impose a

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[207] Landy 1983: 40.

[208] Shea 1980.

[209] Webster 1982.

[210] Dorsey 1990.

[211] Davidson 2003: 63.

[212] E.g. Carr 1984; Davidson 2003; Hwang 2003; Garrett 2004.

[213] Hwang 2003: 104-05; Murphy 1990: 64.

[214] See Walsh 2001 and Assis 2002.

[215] Estes 2010: 292.

linear structure upon a narrative with flashbacks. One will be left with mere impressions of the original narrative; "a collage or a kaleidoscope of scenes" which is what Estes precisely thinks of the Song. For Estes, impressionism is the only answer. But just as non-conformity of the two lines should not lead to a denial of existence of a line, the non-conformity of conventional narrative structure does not mean a storyline does not exist.

The Song's interpreters seem to fall into a spectrum of opinion that ranges between clear linear temporal progression on the one hand, and on the other hand, a repetition of love themes ensconced within a literary world of timelessness. Among those interpreters who see some chronological progression in the Song, it is not always the case that the perceived movement is (always) linear. On comparing Renan's dramatic view with that of Hengstenberg, one finds that Renan does not recognise any real progression; each act repeats the act before it, and simply takes the action a little forward in time.[216]Although Hengstenberg's dramatic perspective divided the Song into two overarching parts—union (1:1-5:1) and reunion (5:2-8:14), with further minor divisions—Hengstenberg also incorporated a cyclical pattern into his structure, arguing that the Song "is so arranged that one and the same thing keeps recurring under different forms ... with ever increasing distinctness and clearness."[217] The cyclical or "elastic band" portrayal of the two lovers' togetherness and separation makes Hengstenberg surprisingly close to the next century's literary methodologists despite the distance in terms of his approach (allegory) and time.

The dramatic view had come under increasing attack by the time of Cook, prompting him to write:

> From beginning to end the lovers go from seeking each other to finding each other. But this action does not move in a straight line from separation to union; it leaps in impulsions of voiced desire, from anticipated joy to actualised joy and back again. Any speech may find itself anywhere on the circle of seeking and finding.[218]

Elliott, who attempted to demonstrate unity, is essentially in agreement with these sentiments. After analysing the abundant repetitions in the Song, she writes that

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[216] Renan 1884.

[217] Hengstenberg 1860: 271-72.

[218] Cook 1968: 21.

> with these repetitions of experiences there is a gradual development of the love relationship. The searching becomes a mutual search; the finding leads to a mutual possession, the songs of contemplative praise reveal a mirroring dynamic indicative of growing union and communion between the lovers.[219]

Fischer, who endeavours to show both concentric (=circular) and linear aspects, similarly concludes, "Hoheslied weist demnach eine lineare und eine konzentrische Struktur mit zyklischen Themen auf."[220] Mitchell, who combines both cyclical repetition and linear progression into one scheme, describes this as a kind of spiral that moves through several stages.[221] In addition, Mitchell also embraces the chiastic structure that Dorsey and others espouse.

The conclusion of this section on structure is that what we possess is a Song which is basically a love story that repeats itself in such a way that "timelessness overwhelms but [that] does not totally suppress time. A concern for time survives in the urgent longing of the lovers for each other."[222] It is both cyclic and progressive. However, two weaknesses exist in the current literature: First, there is no clear distinction made between the cyclic and progressive parts in the Song. Often, the former is given prominence, to the loss or deficit in discussion of the latter. If both cyclic and progressive parts are present, they ought to be given sufficient attention. Second, because of an inordinate focus on cyclic elements in contemporary scholarship, there is still no real advancement in the basic message of the Song which is presented to us very early on. We seem to be told the same thing, in different ways admittedly, but there is no development in the core message and any progression only exists within each cycle until the "plot" (or relationship) rewinds back to the beginning. Perhaps this is the very reason that the Song has been described as containing no plot, but mere glimpses or impressions of true love instead. As an impressionistic piece of work, we are enjoined not to try to squeeze significance out of every little detail in the Song. Each song cycle has its own miniature theme within the broader theme of love. This may sound good on the surface. The fundamental problem with such a

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[219] Elliott 1989: 262.

[220] Fischer 2010: 87; Cf. Steinberg 2014: 56.

[221] Mitchell 2003: 146.

[222] Munro 1995: 121.

perspective lies not in the understanding of cyclical patterns, or even the relentless recurrences of timeless lovemaking, but in that there seems to be no precedence within the entire literature of ancient Israel in which a cyclical pattern did not *also* exhibit a forward motion within successive cycles until some kind of resolution is reached or knowledge of the main subject under consideration was advanced considerably (one can point to the books of Job and Judges). Without any progression or furtherance of primary information for the reader trying to secure some coherent "message" from its readings, such can only be gained via allegorising (unless the Song was meant to be read in conjunction with Israel's other great narratives of YHWH's faithfulness, or it was meant to be read with sapiential awareness of what true love should be). Contemporary interpretation of the Song emphasises mainly the cyclical, impressionistic elements with their focus on sexual love, which seem to dominate beyond what one might expect, throwing up the question of the Song's function in the first place.

Mitchell's desire to see a spiral form may provide an answer. The shape his "spirals" take is essentially cyclic but his aspirations to see a spiral rather than just mere cycles that go nowhere is probably what we should be striving for. Any proposal on structure would have to reconcile the appearance of Sisyphean loops in the book with any progressive parts and qualify to what extent any spiralling plot would advance both time and space.

2. Time

Those who have attempted to read the Song linearly, whether as a tight or loose narrative, have run into trouble concerning the behaviour of the couple and their relationship. A few such problems can be mentioned here.

The first is the problem of when the couple's sexual union takes place. If it occurs right at the start of the Song, there are problems for the traditional view especially given the traditional ethical viewpoint that one refrains from sex before marriage. We begin with Luis de León, for whom the whole Song was *una égloga pastoral* "a pastoral eclogue" in which Solomon and his wife speak as a shepherd and shepherdess. When he comes to 1:4 "the king has brought me to his chambers," not only does the "shepherdess forget their pastoral identities," Luis also interprets the Hebrew verb הביאני as a "prophetic perfect" to suit his own linear understanding that she will be brought into the king's chambers later in the Song. He says that "according to the use of the Hebrew language, although it

shows past time, it stands for what is to come, to show that the certainty and firm hope that one has will happen."[223] One surmises that early on, Luis finds himself grappling with the temporal problem of the woman *brought* to the king's house being premature which is why he opts for his peculiar reading of the preterite verb. A related issue crops up in the contention between Budde and the dramatists of his day. Budde argued that palpably in the first chapter, it seems that the marriage of the couple has already been consummated. Considering verses like 1:4 and also 1:13 where the lover spends time on the woman's breasts all night, Budde appears to be right.[224] Harper later weighs into the fray, conceding that Budde's argument was the "strongest point against the dramatic view."[225] Harper avoids 1:13 entirely choosing to reiterate 1:12 instead, translating it "while the king sat at his table." In short, none of the dramatists provide a convincing answer as to why the couple's union seems to take place at the very start of the Song.

Similar "difficulties" occur in the central parts of the Song. Martineau, who held a three-character view, was against the reading that the nuptials takes place at the close of the fourth and beginning of the fifth chapters because he surmised that the lover was still afraid of the woman at 6:12 and not yet in possession of her and he had to grapple with the very same issues as Luis and Harper.[226] Steinberg, who is not a dramatist but takes a cyclical view, notes an anomaly in 5:2. If one reads linearly past the marriage and after (3:6-5:1), at 5:2, there is a reversion in time. Steinberg sees a new cycle occuring here in which the couple are unmarried.[227] Pope also raises a problem concerning how a groom might arrive and leave the house of the woman if he is married to her (5:2-6) which would not be expected in a linear timeline.[228]

Near the end of the Song, a linear sequence is challenged by 8:1-2. The reader is surprised because it appears as if the couple are apart. Because Delitzsch already has the woman and Solomon together in 7:12-14 visiting her parental home, he opts for an intradiegetic level of her thinking about him as her brother

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[223] My translation of León's Chapter 1, line 3.

[224] Budde includes 2:3-7.

[225] Harper 1902: 91.

[226] Martineau 1895: 436.

[227] Steinberg 2014: 212.

[228] See Pope 1977: 408.

in a [day?]dream.[229] Ginsburg, who has the woman leaving Solomon's palace with her shepherd lover in 7:13, says of 8:1-2 that the woman now "recalled to her mind the obstacles which they had met with in her mother's home.[230] On the other hand, Zhang, who does not take these verses linearly, describes the intensity and smoothly choreographed plans of the woman in the light the man's inaccessibility: "this chain of actions ... that it betrays her *premeditation* ... this set of her imagined busyness further expounds on the exuberance of her wish is inflamed by his inaccessibility: ... "[231] Compressing 8:1-2 into solely her wishes, Zhang continues " ... If only so, then I would, I would, I would, O I would, I would." For Zhang, this reveals that her desire to have the man with her and kiss him *has not yet been met* but she also recognises that they will be together again in 8:6.[232] We have a sequence in which the two lovers are together (7:12-14), then apart (8:1-2), then together again (8:3-6). This resembles a cyclical sequence more than it does a linear one.

All the problems of sequence and time raised above do not matter to an anthologist. Themes, and even phrases, could keep recurring because no logical timeline exists. Yet there is an alternative that needs to be mentioned which can accommodate both narrative and cyclical information. A number have recognised that the Song begins *in medias res*.[233] If this is so, it automatically raises the possibility of a timeline which is not linear. As an opening narratival device, *in medias res* frequently occurs in tandem with a series of analepses, basically flashbacks. Flashbacks are primarily used to recount events that happened prior to the story's primary sequence of events and to portray the backstory of a central character that is shrouded in mystery. They can be used to demonstrate character growth of that central character and reveal motivations behind any significant actions. Flashbacks typically hide their formal function by being presented as memories, dreams or confessions.

To my knowledge, the issue of a sustained interpolated second series of events making up a sub-narrative which represents events that happened before the opening of the Song has never been raised. Yet, if the Song is indeed told from the woman's perspective, as many think, irrespective of whether it is a narrative or loose unity, perhaps parts of the Song are reflections of her past. Maass, in his

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[229] Delitzsch 1993: 138.

[230] Ginsburg 1857: 185.

[231] Zhang 2016: 112.

[232] Ibid., 116.

[233] Estes 2010: 304; Exum 2005: 93.

book *Writing the Breakout Novel says,* "if the purpose of your story is to unfold the secrets at the center of your hero's life, then there is no reason the key events or revelations need to be presented in the calendar order in which they occurred. What is more important is that there is a march toward understanding, a sense we are drawing ever closer to the truth ..."[234] Flashbacks would furnish a running commentary on the "disjointed narrative" of the woman's past life.

In existing Song interpretation, flashbacks have been handled piecemeal, much like its structure once was before structural approaches emerged. Those references which have been surmised to be flashbacks include, among others, the brothers' wish to do something about their small-breasted little sister (8:8);[235] the recognition of a chronological anomaly between 5:2-6:3 and that of the wedding in 3:6-11;[236] the fact that the couple are not together in 6:11 while one of the partners in the relationship must woo the other again.[237]

3. Space

The locations mentioned in the Song have sometimes been thought to provide clues to its provenance.[238] The topoi themselves do not necessarily indicate setting. For example, references to Lebanon and Transjordan appear to be part of the high register of speech of the speaker's poetic repertoire. In the modern age, the Song's spatiality, as with its structure, has been viewed as a melee of jumbled spaces, "a curious mixture of pastoral, urban, and occasionally regal allusions"[239] and only in the last decade or so been treated seriously as a "profoundly spatial text."[240]

Fischer (2010), devotes a portion of his narratological analysis to space, dividing the Song into two broad areas of "city" and "country" and then further partitioning into four basic categories: city indoors, city outdoors, country outdoors, country indoors. Fischer concludes that the binary oppositions are not

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[234] Maass 2010: 59.

[235] The Targum reads the Song as redemptive history but 8:8-10 as a flashback to before that history (Longman 2001: 25); Estes 2005: 436; Akin 2015: 186; Haines 2016: 257; Gault 2019: 81.

[236] Steinberg 2014: 212.

[237] Assis 2009: 197.

[238] Jastrow 1921: 145; Gordis 1974: 25; White 1978: 33; Jericke 2005.

[239] Alter 2011: 232.

[240] Meredith 2017: 2.

dualisms but lie on a continuum. He states that a stereotypical gender allocation of spaces in the Song leads to conflict when boundaries are crossed:

> Dieser zeichnet sich an den Übergängen ab und wird an der räumlichen Überschreitung zugewiesener Räume offenbar. Dort wo eine Figur in den Raum der anderen Person eindringt, tritt die Erwartung an sie heran, die mit diesem Raum verbundenen sozialen Normen zu erfüllen. Dieses ist der Fall, wenn der Mann in die Schlafkammer der Frau eindringen will oder wenn die Frau den öffentlichen Raum betritt.[241]

In Narratology, a "boundary crossing" is a crucial scene where the borders between two "worlds" are transgressed. Herman and Vervaeck explain that actions and actants who transgress these borders often play a central role in the story.[242] Schellenberg says such crossings are important in the Song regarding

> ... the separation of the two lovers, who have to overcome spatial distance before they can enjoy their erotic encounters. In the text this is reflected in the importance of the motif of seeking and finding (e.g.5.6-8) and in the frequent use of verbs of locomotion (e.g. 1.8; 2.8).[243]

Thöne (2011) uses Michel de Certeau's (1984) idea that spaces are constituted by social practice as her launchpad. Scenes in the text have an intrinsic relationship with certain emotional, sexual or gendered responses. *Sexy Räume* are those spaces that are conducive for the lovers to meet. Thöne regards these spaces as persistently of feminine gender, enclosed, and hidden from public view: the mother's house, the garden, some parts of the countryside and the vineyard. Thöne sees a distinction between the good garden and the menacing city and draws a distinction between "mother's house" and "father's (more precisely brothers') house." Since she accepts the broad consensus of the Song being as a collection of originally independent love songs, what would be an overlap in terms of the two houses for a narrative view is not for an anthologist. Thöne shows that the house of the mother of the woman offers security and protection,

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[241] Fischer 2010: 204.

[242] Herman and Vervaeck 2005: 59.

[243] Schellenberg 2014: 141.

while the male-dominated houses mean forced withdrawal or even suffering for women.

Meredith (2013)[244] is not too interested in Fischer's "purely descriptive"[245] work and even less interested in analysing settings in the Song *as relative to each other* than he is to take each setting in its own right and the spatial practice on the part of the reader. In this regard, his analysis becomes a counterpoint against the more objective author-text approaches. Nevertheless, there are some gains to be made. Meredith demonstrates that the reader interacts differently with space in the Song, whether in the forms of the lovers, the garden or the city. The connectedness of different images must be negotiated though awareness of the role of the reader in the process of meaning-making. His analysis reveals that units often thought to be quite distinct are linked through spatial continuity. For example, Song 3:1-5 and 3:6-11 both display a concentric pattern, with an enclosed centre (the chamber within the mother's house, the enclosed litter) surrounded at its outer edges by a male circle whose function is defence. He also finds that spatial continuity exists between 4:1–5:1 and 5:2–6:3. While the controlling *imagery* has changed in the text from garden to city, the underlying spatiality that structures chapter 4 rolls into chapter 5 (a locked garden/woman has made way for a locked house/woman).

Hagedorn (2015) focuses on the application of the insights of spatial and social theory to the Song of Songs. He focuses on 4:12–5:1; 6:2ff, arguing that by using the imagery of the garden and the vineyard, the Song creates spaces that are in between the enclosed world of city and house and the wide-open countryside in which the protagonists of the Song move and operate. The creation of alternative spaces beyond the public and private or town and countryside dichotomy enables the man and the woman of the Song to contest and re-negotiate boundaries and cultural identity. Hagedorn's study is useful in narrative analysis for at least two reasons. First, it shows that space in the Song is not a hodgepodge of scenes. There are definitive delimitations, with three kinds of spaces involved. Second, Hagedorn, in passing, mentions the dangers inherent in creating binary opposites since they can never be seen as absolute categories within a closed system.[246]

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[244] In this study, 2017 edn.

[245] Meredith 2017: 4.

[246] Hagedorn 2015: 208-9.

Binary opposites are only of a limited usefulness when explaining the structure of social and spatial relationships in the Song.

Conclusion

The reception history of the Song is a complex narrative in itself. The Song has been interpreted diversely and some of these methods are in opposition to each other as well as conflicting with any narratological study. Yet, from the manifold readings, one thing comes across clearly: the Song has a complexity and depth which could theoretically support there being a narrative. As we will soon see, narratology is a study of narratives, whether real or fictive, having at least two events in a time sequence. That a huge number of interpreters have acknowledged that at least part of the Song has a narrative impulse offers us hope. Since a narrative is composed of a series of events, it must have some kind of structure, which is the topic to which we now turn.

Chapter 3
The Song's Macrostructure

Even before one attempts to show how a plot might exist and function in the Song, the establishing of its structural outline is essential. The presence of a macrostructure in the Song implies its unity and can only be assumed by those who at least see a loose unity between the units, even if this unity is not strong enough to support a plot. Despite there being a sizeable number of advocates for a loose unity in the Song, a stronger cohesion between units, which suggests a more deliberate original arrangement, is nonetheless discernible.

The purpose of this chapter is to propose and outline a new macrostructure, one able to support both circular and progressive elements. My aim is to show that the Song bears witness to two intertwined categories of repeating units, each with its own largely exclusive characteristics and each existing at a separate temporal level. These may be termed as "regal units" and "non-regal units." The narrative proper is primarily conveyed through the non-regal units through a linear storyline set in the past. The regal units provide a final cyclical "happily-ever-after" picture. This is an essential step towards identifying the narrative. Without sifting between the two kinds of units, which establishes the correct levels of temporality, setting and characterisation, arriving at a proper narrative is difficult, to say the least.

There is a third group of units which evidence some ambiguity leading to uncertainty as to which category they belong. Although I include them here separately and show how they are ambiguous, I will defer their definitive allocation to one of the two categories until the next chapter. Chapter 5 will deal with literary analyses of the Song's units that I establish in this chapter. In that fifth chapter, the analysis relates to themes not pertaining directly to structure as in this chapter but which are prerequisite to the expounding of the narrative in Chapter 6.

The Regal Units

1. Introduction

The "regal units" of the Song, unlike the non-regal units, emphasise a royal setting, characterisation and action and exhibit considerable imagery suited to persons of an elevated status and their contexts.

There are at least six royal units that will be immediately treated:

(i) 1:2–4; (ii) 1:9–2:7 (iii) 3:6–11; (iv) 4:1–5:1; (v) 6:4–10; and (vi) 7:2–11.

Most of the above include the word "king" (1:4; 1:12; 3:9,11; 7:6) or "queen" (6:8,9) but since the surface meaning of these words is sometimes contested, the royal nature of these units must be proven. This is also true for the one unit for which neither word appears. These six units adequately represent the "regal units" within the Song; it is possible to arrive at more. Three other units—1:5–6, 6:11–7:1 and 7:12–14—are ambiguous and will be treated separately. The last chapter of the Song also exhibits features similar to the regal units in certain parts but will be treated separately as it resembles an epilogue that provides a closing function for the entire Song.

The purpose of this section is twofold: first, to establish that each of the six regal units listed above portrays royal characters and has a regal setting, I will specify the stylistic and formal features that give each unit its royal character and thus distinguish them from the non-regal units. Second, I will show that the regal contexts across the units form a series of events constituting a simple narrative—specifically, one that is related to a royal wedding. While the regal units can be read independently as a micro-narrative *in medias res*, they are ultimately part of a larger narrative, with the non-regal units providing the regal units' backstory.

2. Analysis

Song 1:2–4

1. Not a King? Only a Bridegroom?

In the inaugural unit, the lover, described as המלך "the king," facilitates having his beloved brought to his personal residence. For Fox, the word "king" in 1:4 is merely an epithet of affection, like "my prince" in the Egyptian love songs.[1] The use of the definite article—"the king"—makes the term less likely to be a hypocorism. Fox's argument would be more convincing had the woman addressed the lover alone, in a private setting, rather than speaking to the

[1] Fox 1985: 22, 26, 98. Similarly, Watson (1995: 256-57) and Paul (1995: 250-51) have separately attempted to read the word "king" in 1:4 as a generalised endearment by connecting it with an alleged practice in Mesopotamian love poetry, of occasionally designating any male lover as *šarru* or *lugal* "king." They are dependent upon other scholars whose works I have begun examining for myself. So far, based on the few source texts cited, I have found little evidence to support their readings but pending a final conclusion, I mention my ongoing investigation.

accompanying women.[2] However, as the address occurs in a public setting at the very beginning of the Song, without any indication of a metaphor, it more naturally invites the reader to take "king" at face value.

Others consider "king" to be an epithet for a bridegroom.[3] Wetzstein's account of the Syrian custom of calling the bride "queen" and groom "king" has been especially influential in this regard. Wetzstein writes that "the groom ... along with his young wife ... plays the part of king (melik) and she of queen (melika), and both are treated and served as such."[4] Wetzstein, however, did not explicitly draw a link between this wedding custom and the "king" in the Song, despite claims to the contrary.[5] Delitzsch, who appended Wetzstein's descriptions of the Syrian wedding to his own commentary on the Song, also did not connect the two, instead interpreting "the king" as a royal personage.[6] Indeed, Wetzstein's emphasis upon Syrian wedding customs has been demonstrably overstated with respect to the Song's "king," since use of the expression as an epithet for a bridegroom is only one possible interpretation. The oft cited Pirqey de R. Eliezer §16, which states that "a bridegroom resembles a king," does not support the case either since the rabbis are merely pointing out one resemblance, without further comment as to why this is so.

The expression "the king" in this context clearly cannot be read as an epithet for a groom or affection without serious reservation. Indeed, the motif could refer to a king, given that 1:1 alleges the Song is written by, or about, King Solomon and the king/Solomon motif(s) recur throughout the Song.

2. Solomon

The imagery further appears to draw a specific connection between the Song's kingly lover and Solomon, especially to those narratives of him bringing Pharaoh's daughter to Jerusalem. 1 Kgs 3:1 states, "Solomon made a marriage alliance (חתן) with Pharaoh king of Egypt and he took (לקח) the daughter of Pharaoh and brought her (בוא) to the City of David." This is also prominent in 2 Chr. 8:11[7] (cf. 1 Kgs 9:24), where Solomon is said to have "brought up (עלה) the

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[2] Her speech does not constitute enallage. See pp.97-99.

[3] Garrett 2004: 128; Gordis 1974: 18.

[4] Wetzstein 1873: 288 [trans. in Delitzsch 1993: 165].

[5] E.g. Snaith 1993: 16. Wetzstein only draws comparisons to the *wasfs* (Wetzstein 1873: 291).

[6] Delitzsch 1993: 23–24, 35–36, 128-29.

[7] The word *he'ĕlāh* should probably be amended to *hā'elyôn* "he brought up" to follow the ἀνήγαγεν of the OG in which Solomon is the subject of the action. See Van Seters 2015: 201.

daughter of Pharaoh from the city of David to the house which he had built for her."

The Song uses the word בוא in its *hiphil* form twice to describe the lover bringing his beloved to "his house" (חדריו in 1:4; cf. 2:4). The verb עלה (3:6) appears later, together with the noun form of חתן (3:11), in a scene describing a wedding. These are common words, of course, but even if the number of words is insufficient to establish any clear intertextual relationship between Kings and Chronicles, and the Song, the sustained emphasis in all three texts on a *king's* relocation of a bride from her house to his own is undeniable. Only in these three biblical texts is more than a little space given to this particular motif, offering reason enough to inquire whether "the king" might be identified as Solomon.

The presence of the young women (עלמות) with whom the female speaker converses (1:3) could be true of many general situations. However, we must ask does this anticipate the presence of עלמות in 6:8 who, together with queens and concubines, are a royal collective reminiscent of Solomon's harem (1 Kgs 11) that are admiring the woman? Already in form and content, this first unit strongly resembles a Sumerian balbale of Inanna, in which Inanna, along with other young women, praises the king and welcomes him to her home for the first time.[8] Of note is the fact that while these women admire the lead female, they *love* the groom (1:3b). Pope notes a difficulty here for who take the Song as descriptive of human love. Coming from a woman in love with her man, the lead female's statement, that all the other girls love her mate, is very unusual. Pope is right; for any ordinary couple it would be unusual indeed but not so if the man is Solomon, of whom it has been said, loved many women (1 Kgs 11:1).[9]

The unit's paronomasia offers a further latent royal clue in this regard. Noegel and Rendsburg list several cases (I will use their transliterated forms) of explicit paronomasia in 1:3–4, centred around the letters *šin* and *mem*, including *moškēnî*, *niśmĕḥāh* and *mêšārîm*.[10] Rendsburg and Young have also recently proposed that the sounds of *minnəšîqôṯ* "with the kisses" (1:2) play on those of *šemen Tûraq* (1:3).[11] Hunt argues that in addition to the explicit paronomasia, others might be "concealed on the surface, suggested only to the listener who contemplates or meditates reflectively on the lyrics."[12] Hunt terms these instances

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[8] See p.105.

[9] Pope 1977: 302.

[10] Noegel and Rendsburg (2009: 72-73) note that *niśmĕḥāh* captures the sibilant quality of *šin.*

[11] Rendsburg and Young 2017.

[12] Hunt 2008: 68.

"subtle" or "concealed" paronomasia and provides fifteen examples in the Song.[13] Following Hunt's lead, could the *šin* and *mem* sounds, also be subtly reflecting the name of Solomon in this opening scene? Auwers notices the connection between sounds in *šm* "name" and *šmn* "oil" and words like "Solomon" and "Jerusalem"[14] and Estes is also open to the name Solomon being activated here but "because his name is derived from the verb *šālēm* (to be perfect, complete)."[15] Having activated in the reader's mind a connection between the name *šĕlōmō* and the *šin* and *mem* sounds on the one hand, the phrase "your name" (*šəmeḵā*, 1:3) on the other hand seems to tease the reader, that the king the woman speaks to may be none other than *šĕlōmō* himself.

Song 1:9–2:7

Several motifs related to a royal lifestyle occur in this unit, which itself exhibits a recognisable shift from 1:7–8, "from the simple world of the shepherds to the magnificent world [of kings]."[16]

1. Solomon

There are several indications that the unit attempts to connect the male lover with Solomon.[17] First, the favourable mention of Pharaoh's cavalry (1:9) is unusual in a late text. It suggests a deliberate reference to an earlier era, such as Solomon's, of openness and internationalism (1 Kgs 5:4–5 [5:24–25]), and especially recalls the tradition of his horses being imported from Egypt (2 Chr. 9:28). The male lover is characterised as possessing knowledge of Pharaoh's chariots, further developing his Solomonic persona. Second, "the beams of our *houses* (בתינו) are cedar" in 1:17 evokes Solomon's building projects. The phrase itself is curious as on the face of it, at least two houses are described. Despite being called a grammatical quirk,[18] the phrase may instead be a vestige of the deuteronomic

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[13] Hunt 2008: 72–80; on this phenomenon, cf. Segert 1984: 454–61.

[14] Auwers 2010: 116.

[15] Estes 2010: 305.

[16] Keel 1994: 56.

[17] Scholarship agrees that the traditions about Solomon serve to perpetuate a cultural memory of him. See Lemche 2013: 171, 179.

[18] Occasionally, when two nouns are joined in construct form, a plural absolute noun converts the first construct noun to a plural, though the sense is actually singular. See Zakovitch 2004: 135; Murphy 1990: 132; Pope 1977: 360.

tradition of Solomon having built several "houses." One was his own, another was "the house of the forest of Lebanon" which may be the temple (the "house of the Lord")[19] or a different house, and yet another for Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kgs 3:1; 7:2; 7:8–12, 9:15, 24; and 2 Chr. 8:11). The "houses" in Song 1:17 also draw attention to the earlier Solomonic traditions on account of their woodwork: Note the similarity of the phrase ארזים ... קרות "beams/rafters[20] of cedar" in 1:17 to the similar כרתת ארזים "cedar beams"[21] in 1 Kgs 6:36; 7:2, 12. Mentioned alongside cedar beams in 1:17, is another wood, ברות.[22] This wood is used to make רהיטים which itself although frequently translated "rafters," can have a later meaning of "(panelling) boards"[23] which would then evoke the tradition of Solomon panelling the floor, doors and walls(?) of the temple[24] with ברוש (1 Kgs 6:15, 34; 2 Chr. 3:5), another word for ברות.[25] In the tradition, the very two woods of 1:17, ארזים and ברושים were requisitioned by Solomon from Lebanon for his building projects (1 Kgs 5:22 [English 5:8]; 9:11; 2 Chr. 2:7-8 [8-9]; 3:5).

2. The King's Surroundings

A metonym related to the king's house appears in 1:12, where the woman's perfume is said to be עד־שׁהמלך במסבו. Despite a tenuous rendering of the word מסב as an item of furniture,[26] the word is attested elsewhere with a cluster of meanings roughly denoting "around." It appears in 1 Kgs 6:29 and 2 Kgs 23:5, where it clearly means "surroundings," specifically of the house of God. In Song 1:12, it likely refers to the house of the king—the place in which he dwells.[27]

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[19] Hellander and Guillaume 2019: 15-29 but contrast with Chyutin, 2006: 106-7.

[20] *HALOT* 8713.

[21] *HALOT* 4445.

[22] Possibly fir, pine, cypress or juniper.

[23] Note the Syriac and Greek equivalents in *HALOT* 8694.

[24] and perhaps the other houses mentioned (cf. 1 Kgs 10:12 for almug wood used in different houses; 1 Kgs 9:1, 10, 15).

[25] Cf. *HALOT* 1432 and 1433.

[26] *HALOT* 5345 includes Ps. 140:10 as a close meaning that uses סבב; *BDB* 6434 includes Job 37:12. It occurs as the adverb "all around" in 4QPr . See *DCH* 5, 359.

[27] The word מסב is frequently interpreted as the king's "bed," "table," "couch," "divan," or "cushion," under the influence of the Septuagint's *ἀνακλίσει* ("reclining"?). The Greek translator has been influenced by the next line, 1:13, which portrays the lover in bed, and/or by 4:14, which contains the only other mention of nard, within an intimate "bedroom dialogue." Cf. the related מוֹשָׁב (*HALOT* 4951) "dwelling place" or "seat."

While a specific bedroom context cannot be ruled out, מסב itself refers to the general surroundings.

Alternatively, we might follow the Karaite grammarians who, deriving the word from מְסִבָּה (cf. *HALOT* 5346; *DCH* 5, 359), concluded "what was round about him" meant "his council,"[28] what Hunt calls the king's "circle."[29] In the final analysis, therefore, במסבו is best translated "in his (physical and/or social) surroundings," that is, his (the king's) house or household.[30]

3. Luxurious House

A difference of opinion has emerged as to whether 1:16b–17 depicts the couple in a royal house or a garden. Many have suggested it refers to the king's chambers.[31] The materials used to construct the house are significant: "cedar" and "cypress" indicate a luxurious dwelling and the sumptuous wealth of a palace.

Kings took pride in the fragrance of the woods as well as in the length of the timbers, as seen in Tiglath Pileser speaking of Nimrud: "With long cedar beams, no fragrance is as good as that of the cypress tree, products of ... [Hermon] I roofed them (the palaces)."[32] Similarly, Esarhaddon's palace boasted "great beams and tall trunks, logs (or planks) of cedar and cypress from Mt. Sirara (Hermon) and Mt. Lebanon." Esarhaddon adds, "Long cedar beams I stretched over it (for its roof) door-leaves of cypress."[33] This fits the boast of Song 1:17 that "the beams of our house are cedar, our beams cypresses."

Kings would incorporate a variety of woods for different palatial suites of rooms or component wings,[34] the subsequent descriptions would read like a catalogue of trees from a luscious forest. Ashurnasirpal II's standard inscription, for example, describes his "palace of cedar, cypress, daprānu-juniper, boxwood, meskannu-wood, terebinth, and tamarisk."[35] In light of such inscriptions, the phrase ערשׂנו רעננה (1:16), which may be translated "our bed is luxurious/green," is more readily understood. The word רענן is usually translated as "green," in the

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[28] Lines 11–16 in Khan 2000: 264, 307-8.

[29] Hunt 2008: 265.

[30] Cf. Falk 1982:: 113.

[31] Rashbam (in Thompson 1988: 237); Goulder 1986: 18; Horine leaves the primary imagery open to both possibilities but interprets in overarching terms of bridal chambers. Horine 2001: 117.

[32] *ARAB* 2.804.

[33] *ARAB* 2.697-8.

[34] Wiseman 1952: 26-27.

[35] Grayson 1991: 227.

sense of a luxuriant tree, and עֶרֶשׂ, means "couch" or is a synonym for "bed."[36] So, 1:16–17 could be describing the couple lying on a luxurious bed, imagining it to be the exotic tree from whence it sprang, while staring up at the cedar and cypress beams and panels of their room. Incidentally, another cultural aspect of the "green bed" (1:16) may be reflected in a Sumerian song, in which a nuptial bed in the palace is set up on which servants place cedar-perfumed reed grass for the couple's pleasure.[37] The Song's couple may find themselves surrounded by similar perfumed greenery.

4. An Exquisite Garden

It is also possible that 1:16b–17 portrays the couple in an exquisite garden. Several recent commentators interpret "the beams of our houses are cedar" as referring to an outdoor bower in which the lovers are reclining (1:17).[38] Looking up, the lovers see the branches of the majestic cedar. The statement follows on from the mention of the "green bed" which, it is assumed, denotes a pastoral setting (1:16b). Comparisons of the lovers to the vineyards of Engedi (1:14) and to the rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys (2:1) add to this impression. There are, however, several reasons to reject the setting here as rural and to consider it instead as being the royal gardens (or park).

First, cedar and cypress (1:17) have very strong royal connotations. Barbiero points out that "cut[ting] down cedars was the prerogative of great monarchs."[39] These trees were not native to Israel and had to be brought, with difficulty, from Lebanon. The Assyrian kings, facing the same challenges, boast of importing them into their own gardens. The cedar and cypress ceiling could thus indicate an exceptional setting—royal gardens and parks (cf. Ecc. 2:5). Häusl and Silber, taking their cue from Keel, stress the garden motif is not just that of a nature idyll but a well-arranged and nurtured, exotic park.[40] It is an arboreal paradise, substantial enough to be considered an extension of the king's *hedarim*, his property. Such a "King's Garden" is mentioned in 2 Kgs 25:4; Jer. 39:4, 52:7; and

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[36] *HALOT* 7358; for parallelism of "bed" and "couch" see Job 7:13; Ps. 6:7.

[37] Sefati 1998: 99-100.

[38] Barbiero 2011: 77–82; Murphy 1990: 135–36; Ginsburg 1857: 140; Fox 1985: 104–05; Fishbane 2015: 51. Fox goes so far as to think that much of the speech in this unit emanates from this (rural) lovers' bower.

[39] Barbiero 2011: 81 n.159.

[40] Häusl and Silber 2000: 189. Keel 1994: 169-74.

Neh. 3:15. A magnificent late Iron Age garden (located through pollen analysis) adjacent to the palatial structure at Ramat Raḥel, has revealed exotic vegetation imported from India and Persia, including cedar of Lebanon.[41] Material evidence for a Jerusalem palace garden, such as cited by 2 Kgs 21:18, is missing, but a later author of the Song could have conflated the imperial gardens of Ramat Raḥel, or elsewhere, with the palace of the king in a single fictional royal motif of the king's house. Substantial textual evidence reveals that gardens were located on the residential grounds of powerful people, especially the king (e.g. Est 1:5; 2 Kgs 21:18; cf. several Assyrian kings[42]) and his associates (e.g. Pharaoh endows Sinuhe with a demesne containing "a garden ... as is done for a Chief Friend").[43]

Second, the references to Engedi and Sharon are clearly metaphors. Their function is to highlight the lovers' superlative qualities by drawing comparisons between them and the beauty of the places named. They consequently do not indicate any definitive geographic setting.

Third, the broader context of 1:9–2:6 can be read as dealing with the theme "life in the king's house" (1:12). This is developed later[44] but one can immediately note how the woman is provided for and protected by her lover. In response she can say, "with great delight I 'dwelt' in his shadow" (2:3). The various scenes, including that of the garden, are not necessarily those of diverse locations but vignettes of different themes pertaining to his house. The "couch" or "bed" of 1:16 can therefore be interpreted within this wider setting.

5. Wealth

Wealth, in and of itself, is no sure indicator of royalty, but its presence in 1:9–2:7, coupled with explicit mention of "the king" (1:12), suggests a royal portrayal. King and Stager note that luxury substances in ancient Israel were limited to royalty and the affluent.[45] Stansell remarks that wealth in the Solomonic era was concentrated among a small elite of state functionaries, with Solomon

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[41] Younker 1992: 615-16; Lipschits, Gadot and Langgut 2012: 71–2.

[42] E.g. Tiglath-Pileser I (Grayson 1991: 55); Aššur-bēl-kala (Grayson 1991: 105); Ashurnasirpal II (Grayson 1991: 290).

[43] Parkinson 1997: 42.

[44] p.104.

[45] King and Stager 2001: 280.

considerably in front.[46] Even if Solomon's wealth is overplayed in the Hebrew Bible, its tradition is well-established. If the Song intends to represent the era of Solomon, associating the male lover with wealth significantly increases the chances of his identification as "the king."

As a beneficiary of the lover's wealth, the woman wears the finest apparel—dazzling displays of finery that make the best sense in a royal setting. Her cheeks and neck will be adorned with jewels (1:10), and gold and silver ornaments are not just purchased but *made* (עשׂה) for her (1:11). The plural נעשׂה (we will make) in Song 1:11 suggests that either the male lover speaks as one of several "anonymous admirers,"[47] or the speakers are court women, skilled at creating such intricacies (such as those who decorate the אפריון in 3:10).[48] In 1:11, the offer is to make a specific form, or pattern (תור), of golden ornament, implying jewellery with "turns" or "plaits" of some kind.[49] Such "turns" evoke the woven gold patterns/ornamentation in Ps. 45:14–15 [13–14], in which the royal bride has a משׂבצות זהב (filigree/plaited work of gold) made for her, perhaps by her female attendants. The word תור incidentally also appears in Est. 2:12, 15, in connection with preparing Xerxes's harem women although its specific shade of meaning for the noun "turn" there might be related to Esther's particular visiting "cycle" or "allocation," or even her "grade" or "rank" (cf. 1 Chr. 17:17).

6. Perfumery

Perfumes and spices are a subset of wealth, valued in ancient times as much as gold and silver.[50] As Nielsen recognises, "an ordinary couple could not afford a daily use of … exotic aromata imported from countries far away."[51] The regal units, it seems, portray an extremely wealthy couple. The woman's nard in 1:12 is an example of a non-metaphorical mention of perfume. Nard was an expensive and exotic aromatic, perhaps from India.[52] Pliny identifies it as foremost among perfumes, again suggesting the elite characterisation of the woman in the Song.[53]

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[46] Stansell 2005: 104; cf. Gottwald 1992.

[47] Gerleman 1965: 108.

[48] It is unlikely that a group of shepherds are speaking (Barbiero 2011: 64).

[49] *HALOT* 10099 interprets תור as "row" or "sequence." Readers must make up their own minds as to how this might compare with *HALOT* 3409 טור which does mean "row."

[50] King and Stager 2001: 280.

[51] Nielsen 1986: 93.

[52] Theophrastus (*Enquiry into Plants* 9, 7.2; *Codex Parisiensis* 28).

[53] *Natural History* 13, 2.

Expensive perfumery might also appear in the metaphors of 1:13–14. As the lover lodges (ילין) himself on the woman's breasts, she compares him to a "bundle of myrrh" and a "cluster of henna flowers." Though any love speech, whether royal or not, could utilise these metaphors, one could argue that points of contact exist between the metaphors and the specific context the characters find themselves in. The argument would be similar to what Gault has recently said for points of contact existing for *form* within both source and target domain.[54]

The aromatics used in the metaphors may not be plucked from "thin air" but taken from the lovers' characterisation or setting. As allusions to the art of ancient perfumery, in which denser oils were blended with lighter, sweeter fragrances (this technique continues in perfumery today[55]), they either arise from the personal fragrances of the man which evokes these images in the woman's mind (cf. the king's perfumes in Ps. 45:8) or from the context of the royal bed chamber, as was mentioned in relation to the "perfumed bed" earlier.[56]

7. Images of Abundant Provision

Wealth is connected to abundant provision. Stansell describes patron–client relationships in which a wealthy and powerful patron provides financial support, protection and other needs to those who come under his sponsorship.[57] In the ancient Near East, the king is the idealised provider, located at the centre of a network of mutual protection.[58] He was the wealthiest patron and the ideal provider, capable of extending provision to others.

Several motifs of abundance occur in swift succession in 2:3–5, emphasising the lover's ability to offer substantial provision and sustenance and portraying him as an idealised provider and protector.[59]

In 2:3, the lover is compared to an apple tree whose protective umbra causes the woman to dwell (ישב) in his shade.[60] This "shade" is a synecdoche for dwelling under his roof (consider באו בצל קרתי "they came under shade of my rafters," Gen. 19:8). The tree also provides delightful fruit to sustain (סמך) the

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[54] Gault 2019: 36-39.

[55] Groom 1997: 34, 246.

[56] p.57.

[57] Stansell 2005: 94.

[58] Ibid.

[59] See also p.251.

[60] See Elliott 2000: 70-71; Ginsburg 1857: 142.

woman. The motif goes back to the royal context of Inanna's poems (e.g. Dumuzi-Inanna F, line 38): "As [in the shade] of a forest of haiur-trees I shall find shelter in you."[61]

The action of the man in spreading a דגל over her (2:4) complements this idea of protection/sustenance. In addition to its possible military connotation, דגל can be understood, by extension, as a standard or banner of not only an army but also its head, or royal leader. This is specifically "*his* דגל." Synecdochally, this king's banner could stand for his royal cloak, which he spreads over the woman. An emblem of her benefactor's protection, this would show she has become part of his household and is henceforth under her patron's protective covering (cf. Ruth 3:9; similarly "wings" in Ps. 17:8).[62]

One might think the "house of wine" motif in 2:4 implies drunkenness or wantonness[63] but instead it chiefly reinforces the wider theme of abundant provision. In this sense, wine is used in covenant provisions as promised by YHWH, the divine king (Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13), who will make a feast of rich food and wine in his eternal house (Isa. 25: 6, 10).

The lover is also urged to support the woman with raisins or raisin-cakes (2:5). Raisins in the Hebrew Bible are usually presented by those of wealth and power as items of substantial provision (and cost).[64] While not necessarily an indicator of royalty itself, the mention of raisins in the Song contributes to an overall characterisation of the lover as an idealised provider of substance.

8. Military Imagery

Theoretically, militaristic imagery need not denote a royal setting or characterisation per se. However, in the ancient Near East, motifs of war and kingship are intertwined and the depiction of a military leader could therefore suggest royalty.

Meyers claims that the Song applies militaristic imagery exclusively to the female, but a clear possibility for the man exists in 3:7–8, where the armed escort is described in relation to Solomon.[65] Moreover, the imagery of the militaristic

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[61] Sefati 1998: 173.

[62] cf. Hunt 2008: 166.

[63] E.g. Pleins 2007; Hunt 2008: 165.

[64] To be precise, seven out of nine occurrences: as cakes, אשישות (2 Sam. 6:19; 1 Chr. 16:3 incl. Song 2:5) and as bunches, צמוקים (1 Sam. 25:18; 30:12; 2 Sam. 16:1; 1 Chr. 12:41). The word אשישה appears in Isa. 16:7 and Hos. 3:1. See e.g. Hunt 2008: 120.

[65] Meyers 1993: 203.

lover within the Song depicts him as a powerful, high-ranking leader. The lover speaks familiarly of the Egyptian cavalry in 1:9, suggesting a person of high rank who is familiar with foreign warfare. In 2:4, he spreads his דגל, which in addition to possible protection may refer to a royal standard or banner, or even be a metonym for a royal tent (similar to how Nebuchadnezzar spread his royal pavilion over a chosen spot in Jer. 43:10).[66] Given this imagery, it is difficult to see how the man is depicted only as a high-ranking leader and not the king himself.

9. The Superiority of the Lovers

The couple are idealised in this unit. She is described as a lily among thorns (2:2a) since she is superior among הבנות "the daughters" (2:2b). The man, similarly, is an apple tree[67] among other forest trees (2:3a) just as he is superior among הבנים "the sons" (2:3b).

Despite the presence of the definite article in each case, Fischer has rejected the particularity of these terms.[68] Yet, there is nothing to discount the possibility that the reference is to specific groups of men and women that appear in the Song itself. Instead, the presence of the definite article, together with the occurrence of the motif of the superiority of the female over other royal women elsewhere in the Song (6:8-9), suggests that הבנות are specifically women of the court. Moreover, a generalised expression "most beautiful among women," using בנשים without the definite article, is found elsewhere in the Song (1:8; 5:9; 6:1), in the non-regal units.

Fischer claims that "there is no matching parallel for the phrase 'among the sons' in the Song."[69] However, royal male "counterparts" do appear: as royal warriors (3:7) or even the lover's male "friends" (חברים) in 8:13, if they may be regarded as royal compatriots. A similar sentiment, of the king's superiority over his peers, appears in Ps. 45:8 [7], where the king is said to be anointed above his "friends" (חברים); while in 45:15, the royal bride's maidens are also called "friends" (רעות). The "sons" can therefore be understood to mean those male attendants in the royal court.

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[66] Since דגל can be used for a military unit some have connected it with "insignia." See Murphy 1990: 132–33 n.4.; Andruska 2018; Verde 2019: 191.

[67] Or "apricot." Fox 1985: 107.

[68] Fischer 2019: 88.

[69] Fischer 2019: 88.

The apple tree laden with fruit is a symbol of masculine fertility in the ancient world.[70] Given that the idealised fertile man in the ancient Near Eastern literature is often of royal origin (or attains a high leadership status),[71] this aspect of the man's superlative qualities over his peers also might indicate his imperiality. Similarly, the lily, if it is the water-lily or lotus as Keel argues, is a primary symbol of regeneration and at times associated with royalty,[72] fertility being the power and influence that ancient women exerted.[73] Keel adds that the woman here depicts herself as someone exceptional rather than one among thousands.

10. Close Parallels with the Sumerian Royal Love Songs

Throughout this section, there are some remarkable parallels to the Dumuzi-Inanna songs, which predominantly portray the couple as royalty. These will be discussed later.[74]

Song 3:6–11

1. Solomon and Opulence

The unit has traditionally been read as depicting an extravagant scene from King Solomon's marriage ceremony. It is becoming more common, however, to see this as a scene of the protagonist lovers observing (or imagining) Solomon and his bride, rather than a depiction of their own marriage.[75] Regardless, there is universal recognition that this unit depicts royalty.

In 3:7–8, a royal attaché of armed warriors escorts a bride or a groom, if not both. Various signs of wealth recur: expensive perfumes such as myrrh and frankincense, among other fragrant powders (3:6); and an object designated an אפריון, commissioned by Solomon and described as opulent, with silver, gold and purple (3:9–10). This purple colour (ארגמן) apparently produced from a marine snail, thousands of which were needed to produce dye for a single garment.[76]

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[70] Miller 2013; Kramer 1969: 96.

[71] See e.g. Couto-Ferreira 2018: 6.

[72] Keel 1994: 78-80.

[73] De Whyte 2018: 24.

[74] p.104.

[75] The lovers as observers, e.g. Adeney 1895: 23; Hess 2005: 116. The lovers imagining themselves as the royal couple, e.g. Barbiero 2011: 164; Exum 2005: 141; Würthwein 1969: 49; Murphy 1990: 152.

[76] Herzog and Spanier 1987; Reese 2010; Sterman 2012.

Possession of such fabrics was a mark of not only wealth but likely nobility and royalty as well.

2. Royal Women

The "daughters of Jerusalem" (= "daughters of Zion") reappear in this unit. They feature in the decoration of Solomon's אפריון (3:10) and are specifically told to go out and "look on Solomon" (3:11). Given that they have access to this אפריון (perhaps a palanquin), these women either belong to Solomon's harem or are maidservants in his house.

3. Venue of the Wedding

It is a fair assumption that the marriage celebrations of Solomon and the Judahite kings took place in Jerusalem, at or near the royal palace.

The most attention the Hebrew Bible pays to a royal wedding occurs in three sets of passages dealing with Solomon: the texts dealing with Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter; Ps. 45; and Song 3:6–11. The first two specify the king's house in relation to the bringing of the bride. The Song likewise suggests that the destination is the king's house in Jerusalem, with the repeated emphasis on the king bringing his beloved to his house reflecting this. The court women who go to see Solomon (3:11) may go out from the palace; Yefet ben Eli suggests they are called "daughters of Zion" to draw attention to their association with the king's palace.[77] In 3:6 and 8:5, the movement of the litter is described with עלה, which may denote movement specifically towards Jerusalem.[78] If "desert" refers to a specific toponym, the Judean desert east of Jerusalem is the only conclusion (there are no deserts in the Northern Kingdom), thereby pointing to Jerusalem, the very city in which the king's house is situated.

4. Royal Palanquin(s)

In 3:6 and 3:9, two objects appear, a מטה and an אפריון. Each object must be identified before being argued as objects of royalty.

The word מטה normally means "bed," an object for lying down. Its relation to the verb נתה (stretch, extend)[79] also reminds us that it must permit its occupant to stretch out, and we can therefore instantly rule out the possibility of it being a carriage, chariot or sedan chair. For Assis, the מטה of 3:6 is "Solomon's bed in a

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[77] Alobaidi 2010: 217–8 incl. n.80.

[78] Robert, Tournay & Feuillet 1963: 140–1.

[79] "מִטָּה" in Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*.

stationary position."[80] Both he and Almog take this "bed" to mean Solomon's private bed, in his bedroom.[81] Similarly, Griffiths identifies it as his "marriage bed."[82] Such views fail to take into account the versatility of the word מטה, which extends to *portable* bed-like objects. We certainly find evidence of portable recliners termed as "מטה" in situations where conveyance is a concern (e.g. 2 Sam. 3:31). More relevant for the transporting of a royal occupant is 1 Sam. 19:15, in which Saul asks for David to be dispatched in a מטה (Greek= κλίνης, reclining couch/bed). Against Assis's view of sixty guards watching Solomon's bedroom, the substantial security detail surrounding the "bed" and protecting the occupant from "the terrors of the night" (3:8) bolsters the interpretation of a portable couch or a small palanquin.[83] It also points to the occupant being royal. Contra Griffiths, the particular word for "bed" used by the poet is different from the word used for the marriage bed in 1:16 (ערשׂ), perhaps to distinguish the lovers' bed from the מטה.

Assis sees the אפריון of 3:9 as distinct from the מטה of 3:7.[84] There is, however, no firm reason for doing so, as they might be synonyms (using repetition) for the same object. The אפריון has, in fact, been understood as a palanquin from the earliest times (e.g. Mishnah Sotah 9:14). The lavishness of the אפריון and the fact that it is owned by Solomon (3:9) support the assertion that its occupant is royal.

The foremost argument against the אפריון being a palanquin (or sedan chair) is the burgeoning notion it is a stationary object or fixture. Gerleman reads it as a *Thronhalle* (building) by equating אפריון with the Egyptian *pr* (house).[85] Ibn Ezra possibly saw it as the temple.[86] The Blochs prefer a palace or throne.[87] While a stationary structure (perhaps a hypostyle hall, with pillars) for a wedding reception might seem an attractive reading, the presence of a מרכב, a constituent of the אפריון (3:10), negates any connotation of immobility. The word comes from רכב "to ride" and has more than one meaning, all associated with conveyances: "chariot" (1 Kgs 5:6), "seat" (Lev. 15:9) or a "saddle."[88] Hamilton observes

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[80] Assis 2009: 110.

[81] Almog 2010: 258.

[82] Assis 2009: 110-11; Griffiths 2011: 85.

[83] Assis 2009: 110.

[84] E.g. Assis 2009: 111.

[85] Gerleman 1965: 139–42.

[86] See in Mathews 1874: 21.

[87] Bloch and Bloch 1995: 165.

[88] See discussion related to מרכבה on p.167.

that רפידה in 3:10 "may be compared with Arabic *rifadah*, 'saddle blanket,' that is, something spread out and over."[89] In addition, the descriptions of "pillars" and a "covering" point to a canopied palanquin. Although עמוד is usually translated "pillar," it can mean "pole" (cf. Ex. 26:32, 37 for the Ark of the Covenant).[90] In one Egyptian story, Prince Hordedef travels "reclining in a palanquin of ebony, with carrying poles of tamarisk wood mounted in gold."[91] The Greek also supports a moveable object with φορεῖον for אפריון in 3:9; in 2 Macc. 3:27–28, the king's representative is put into a φορεῖον and *carried* out. Surely, then, the viewpoint that the אפריון is a palanquin is correct; if this is so, the person borne within must be a royal dignitary.

If each case above involved a "carriage," it would have widened the scope for identifying the person being carried, who might be an important dignitary but not necessarily royal. A "chariot" could suggest either a military or diplomatic personage, but a "palanquin" or "sedan chair" specifically suggests the latter, a royal personage or a royal representative. The likelihood of the אפריון being a sedan chair remains slim. Its features point to an extravagant royal palanquin or covered litter, while the מטה is definitely either a portable royal couch or palanquin.

Song 4:1–5:1

The regal nature of this unit is not as obvious as the others. The word "king" does not occur anywhere but the recurring mention of a "veil" (4:1, 3) and "bride" (4:8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 5:1), as well as a metaphorical emphasis upon first intercourse and the woman's virginity, reveal an intimate, post-nuptial context.[92] As it textually follows the preceding royal wedding, the traditional reading is one of continuation from the previous unit. More importantly, via the literary technique of blending, the unit is utilised in the later, more obviously regal 6:4–10, which portrays, via the literary technique of blending, a royal court of "queens" and "concubines." This technique of blending will be discussed later.[93] For now, we

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[89] Hamilton 1997: 1181; Cf. Ginsburg 1857: 152, cf. Estes 2010: 343–4.

[90] Freedman and Willoughby 2001: 188. Early Tannaim compare the אפריון to the movable ark (Kaplan 2015: 112).

[91] Parkinson 1997: 113.

[92] See p.118.

[93] See pp.242-245.

may observe a few of the telling characteristics of royal personae found in this unit.

Two non-metaphorical descriptions appear which hint at the woman's elevated status or wealth. First, she is said to be wearing perfumes with fragrances better than any spices (4:10, cf. 4:11). This also provides the grounds to think that the references to expensive perfumes in the other verses—myrrh, frankincense, nard and saffron, along with lesser aromatics like calamus, cinnamon and aloes (4:6, 13, 14 and 5:1), all described as "leading (ראשׁ) spices"—may also be points of contact with the woman's characterisation and not purely metaphorical.

Second, she is wearing an exotic necklace (4:9).[94] This may have some linkage with 4:4, in which the lover describes his beloved's neck as a tower with shields hanging from its walls.[95] Gault has already argued for correspondence in form between the beloved's slim neck and the tower, while Isserlin suggests that the description of the shields relates to the appearance of the beloved's necklace.[96] A "several storied" necklace worn closely around a woman's neck might be reminiscent of courses of masonry when topped with warriors' shields.[97]

Correspondences with earlier regal units also make the reader think of her high status: her "oils" and "fragrances" (4:10, 11) mirror those belonging to the king (1:3); how he sees her as a garden of perfume mirrors how she imagines him as a bundle of myrrh and henna (1:13, 14); the woman's love is better than wine (4:10), mirroring how the king's love is superior to such wine (1:2).

As for the garden metaphor itself, scholarship has sometimes deemed such a garden to be a fantasy. Exum, for example, doubts that any "garden in the ancient Near East would have contained such a wide variety of spice-bearing plants and trees from such far-away places as Arabia, Africa, and India, growing side by side."[98] Yet James has recently challenged this assessment, citing "textual references and archaeological remains [to] reveal how integral exotic plant elements were to the ancient Near Eastern garden."[99] She asserts that "such exoticism is possible through a series of cultural commitments and ideals,

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[94] Depending upon meanings of ענק and צורון. Cf. discussion of the LXX's ἐνθεμα and τράχηλος in De Crom 2019: 130-32.

[95] Cf. Ezek. 27:11; 1 Macc. 4:57; Lachish reliefs at British Museum.

[96] Gault 2019: 36-37; Isserlin 1958: 59.

[97] Cf. Keel 1994: 60, 147; Garrett 2004: 190-91.

[98] Exum 2005: 177. Also, Gerleman 1965: 159; Murphy 1990: 161; Hunt 2008: 129; Garrett 2004: 198; Barbiero 2011: 226; Hagedorn 2015: 214; Meredith 2017: 108-9.

[99] James 2017: 69.

including (but not limited to) travel, botanical interest and knowledge, and horticultural skill."[100] She cites specific gardens from the ancient Near East and Egypt in support of her case—those of Sennacherib, Tiglath Pileser I, Ashurnasirpal II and Thutmosis III, Hatshepsut, Ramesses III and Ramat Raḥel—even including lists of the exotic plants each king boasts of collecting and planting on home soil. In fact, all the substantial gardens in these ancient texts point to either powerful or royal ownership.[101] Whether the garden of 4:12–5:1 is an idealised fantasy or not, its imagery follows a tradition of elite royal gardens, with the conclusion here that the woman is, at least, being portrayed as a royal garden. In an analysis acknowledging these associations, Meredith comments that

> the image is of a royal and imperious garden, a garden in which the world's vegetative wonders have been intentionally brought together. The lovers' garden thus models itself on a very particular tradition, and one that is directly rooted in the processes of political control.[102]

For Meredith, as a botanical wonder garden, and for Landy, because of its sheer magnificence and complexity, פרדס (4:13; cf. Neh. 2:8; Ecc. 2:5) must be associated with the royal paradigm.[103]

A final characteristic indirectly supports reading the man as a king: he is the idealised Solomonic figure despite Solomon's name never appearing in the unit. Unrestricted travel to Lebanon is mentioned in 4:8, 11 and 15. Although historically, ancient Israel had cordial dealings with its neighbour during the Omride dynasty especially during Ahab's reign, its literature places an emphasis upon the era of Solomon's alliance with Lebanon (e.g. 1 Kgs 5; 7; 9), thus foregrounding the Solomonic period in the Song reader's mind. The range of metaphors the man uses to describe his beloved also highlights his characterisation as someone able to link his beloved's beauty to not only pastoral imagery but also specific military representations. He is presented as a man with a wide imagination and profound literary depth. His range of language extends

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Even the one Egyptian poem with an exotic garden, which James thinks is removed from an imperial context because it was found in a craftsman's village, portrays the girl from a wealthy and powerful, if not royal, family: she has a Nubian maid; an attendant; a laundryman; and wears a seal-ring and perfumes. Cf. Westenholz 1995: 2480.

[102] Meredith 2017: 81.

[103] Landy 2011: 179; Meredith 2017: 84-85.

from the marital to the martial,[104] the floral to the faunal. The Hebrew Bible presents one idealised person who knows, owns or speaks about such a range of issues: Solomon (e.g. 1 Kgs 4:33), who is himself a king.

Song 6:4–10

Several groups of royal women appear in 6:8–9 to praise the lead female. If there is any doubt that 6:8-9c, especially the statement "there are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number," contributes to a specific royal setting, that instead of doing so it merely affirms the protagonist's beauty over that of other women in general, then the same cannot be said for the repetition of thought in Song 6:9d–e. This is a literary event, not a metaphor or figure of speech:

> The daughters saw her and called her blessed
> the queens and concubines also, and they praised her.

These lines provide the definitive royal setting the poet wishes to evoke—a king's house. Song 6:8–9 narrows this to indicate that there are many royal women *in this king's harem*.

For many, the considerable number of queens, concubines and virgins is an allusion to Solomon's harem in 1 Kgs 11:3, although their numbers differ between the two passages.[105] Furthermore, as Estes (citing Culver) notes, "in the OT *malkâ* is used exclusively of queens of foreign lands."[106] Indeed, "the pl. 'queens' is very unusual, for in the OT a sg. queen is typically indicated."[107] It seems likely that the poet draws attention to the harem, including its apparently foreign queens, to invoke Solomon, said to have possessed many foreign wives and numerous concubines (1 Kgs 11:1–6; possibly Ecc. 2:8).

The king's resplendent consort in Song 6:10 also contributes to the regal portrayal. Here, her appearance is not only described through comparison to the heavenly luminaries[108] and an awesome army but to their elevated gaze. The verb שׁקף is used elsewhere when a person looks down over a landscape (e.g. Gen. 18:16; 19:27) or across at something out of a window (Prov. 7:6; 2 Sam. 6:16; 2

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[104] Solomon is sometimes presented as military leader (2 Chr. 8:3-10).

[105] Delitzsch 1993: 112; Murphy 1990: 66; Hauge 2015: 93; Fischer 2019: 89.

[106] Estes 2010: 381; cf. Culver 1980: 509 (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* 119b).

[107] Estes 2010: 384.

[108] Goitein 1965: 220–01; Long 1996: 703-09.

Kgs 9:30). The woman's dazzling portrayal is of not only an imperious figure but possibly of one borne aloft, as in a palanquin or sedan chair; the connotation of elevation emphasises both her physical elevation and her high status.

Song 7:2–11

There is disagreement about the royal colouring of this unit. Whereas Murphy asserts that there is "no intent to suggest royalty in the proper sense,"[109] Keel notes "a queenly setting"[110] and Bergant its "royal fiction."[111]

The unit opens in 7:2 with the woman described as a בת־נדיב (noble daughter). This phrase suggests an epithet of praise based upon her newfound status (as a queen) in the royal harem, with echoes of 6:4–10, the bringing of the woman into the *hedarim*. Indeed, a few verses later she is said to be in the presence of a king (7:6). Unless this is forcibly converted into a travesty or hypocorism, the natural reading is that the man is ascribing kingship to himself. Pope specifically cautions against eliminating any reference to a king because of the absence of the definite article,[112] which can be explained by the intimate dialogue—the lover might naturally call himself "a king" instead of "the king" when speaking playfully to his beloved.

The man is characterised by an international awareness. When comparing his bride to what he knows from his world, he uses several key toponyms: Heshbon, Lebanon, Damascus and Carmel "all situated on or near one of the important international highways that traversed the land of Israel."[113] Although earlier scholars, such as Spoer, thought allusions to foreign cities were improbable—leading him to amend Heshbon, for example, to Hebron[114]—there is clearly an attempt here to portray the lover as well travelled and knowledgeable. He exhibits specific knowledge—"pools in Heshbon by the gate of Bat-Rabbim" (7:5) may be derived from a large reservoir in Heshbon, the ancient Amorite capital.[115] Several of the above toponyms, at least, are fortifications; together with the gate of Bat-Rabbim (perhaps the Ammonite capital city Rabbah)[116] and the tower of

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[109] Murphy 1990: 185.

[110] Keel 1994: 231.

[111] Bergant 2001: 82.

[112] Pope 1977: 630.

[113] Bergant 2001: 88.

[114] Spoer 1906: 292–301.

[115] Estes 2010: 395.

[116] Brenner 1992: 113–15.

Lebanon, which are mentioned in 7:5, there appears to be a specific awareness of foreign (possibly military) landmarks. It is not just the naming of foreign places which could arguably be used in love speech as metaphors but the specific way these have been done which is unlikely to be a commoner's traits but accord well with the Solomon of yore.

Next, because 7:2–11 reutilises the imagery of 4:1–5:1, the context of which is a royal post-nuptial scene, the present context could also be situated within the same orbit of events.[117]

Finally, some like Carr have recognised that the royal wedding psalm 45 and parts of the Song have common themes.[118] Amidst other thematic parallels between the two texts, I note that the leading females in both accounts are honoured by other royal women (Ps. 45:9; Song 6:8-10) and then, significantly, both the Song's lover and the Psalm's king are subsequently depicted admiring the beauty of their beloved (45:12; 7:6) who herself is addressed as "daughter" (45:11; 7:2).

Four other descriptions of the woman in this unit should be mentioned. Individually, none are incontrovertible proof of royal characterisation, but collectively could support the argument that the poet deliberately wishes to create a context of nobility and wealth:

First is the woman's purple (ארגמן) hair in 7:6a. Murphy says this could be related to the well-known expensive dye, royal purple (cf. 3:10; 1 Macc. 4:23).[119] Arguably, the purple may only be poetic or be the sheen of her hair in the faint light.[120] Even so, the lover appears to liken her hair to a particular purple colour associated with wealth and nobility.

Second, the woman's sandals are admired (7:1). Estes is right to caution that sandals do not always imply luxury (e.g. Amos 2:6; 8:6);[121] they could also be decorative items. Keel, however, elicits support from Ezek. 16:10 and Jdt. 10:4 and 16:9 to argue that sandals could be suited to a noblewoman.[122] So the sandals in 7:1 could, at the very least, increase the chances of the woman being of high status.

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[117] pp.244-245.

[118] Carr 1981: 102-04.

[119] Murphy 1990: 186.

[120] Estes 2010: 395; cf. Bloch and Bloch 1995: 203–4; *HALOT* 8693.

[121] Estes 2010: 393.

[122] Keel 1994: 23.

Third, the woman resembles a palm tree (7:8–9a). Though a metaphor, such a tree typically held a central position in palace courtyards and is frequently associated with the king in ancient Near Eastern iconography.[123] It is as if the man compares his beloved to a specific luxurious date palm situated in his palace courtyard/garden.

Fourth, her thighs are compared to jewels (7:2). This is admittedly another metaphor, but I mention it here as it could originate from the concomitant elements constituting the portrayal of a wealthy lifestyle and a woman bedecked in the finest jewellery.

THE NON-REGAL UNITS

1. Introduction

The "non-regal units" of the Song emphasise a non-royal setting, characterisation and action. They contrast with the regal units, which bear explicit traits related to royalty. Since their patent feature, the absence of royal indicators, is generally apparent, this section is shorter than the previous one. The specific settings of the scenes in this group vary, but their common characteristic is that the lovers are depicted as ordinary persons.

There are at least four indisputably non-royal units: (i) 1:7–8; (ii) 2:8–17; (iii) 3:1–5; and (iv) 5:2–6:3. This section aims to establish that each of these four units portrays a non-royal setting by specifying the features and setting that give each its non-royal character. The identification of these units depends on elements relating not only to setting and the characters' status but also to their actions and speech. These non-regal units make up the backbone of a series of events constituting a narrative which revolves around the domain of the woman rather than the man.

2. Analysis

Song 1:7–8

This unit has been largely treated as set in the countryside because of prominent pastoral and bucolic imagery.[124] Mentions of characters' "flocks," "sheep" and "young goats," in conjunction with words like "shepherds" and "graze/pasture,"

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[123] Dalley 1993: 2; Margueron 1995: 892–93; Winter 2010: 355-56; Giovino 2007.

[124] Pope 1977: 328; Exum 2005: 106; Barbiero 2011: 64.

strongly indicate that the man is a shepherd[125] and the woman a shepherdess.[126] The man's appearance is not addressed, while the woman's is only noted insofar as the possibility that she (occasionally?) wraps herself in a head covering[127] and is described as exceptionally beautiful (1:8). This pronouncement may emanate from the man, or alternatively from the daughters of Jerusalem, as per Heinevetter.[128] For an otherwise rustic unit, the daughters' presence is jarring, especially as they have often been thought to be exclusively royal attendants. Stoop van-Paridon believes they are members of the harem,[129] while Delitzsch more generally terms them "ladies of the palace."[130]

However, their exclusively royal role has been challenged. Fischer, for example, has recently stressed that their appearances occur in non-royal settings, even in the woman's domain.[131] For this reason, the interpreter must be cautious about attributing an exclusively royal role to them. Even if connected to the king, they also seem to associate themselves with the protagonists in non-royal settings and when the protagonists are not presented in royal roles. While a particular collective identity can be found in the nomen "daughters of Jerusalem," a distinctiveness in identity and role also exists. Daughters of Jerusalem are somehow associated with Jerusalem but may have a specific royal role (e.g. 3:10, 11; 6:9d); at other times, however, they may have no discernible or explicit royal role (e.g. 2:7; 3:5; 5:8; 8:4; possibly 1:8) and thus seem more like common members of the public. One must therefore tackle their distinct, unit-specific identity and role, as and where they appear. As a rule of thumb, the presence of the daughters of Jerusalem in any unit does not, in and of itself, imply a royal context and consequently does not mean that the daughters themselves are royal.

Song 2:8–17

This unit is mostly, if not entirely, rural, mitigating any connection with the palace. The lover's arrival and departure, together with his travels "over the mountains" (2:8; 2:17), frame the unit.

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[125] E.g. Exum 2005: 106; Alter 2016: 10.

[126] E.g. Ginsburg 1857: 136; Elliott 1989: 53-54.

[127] If בעטיה means "as one veiled" (ESV, NIV); cf. Emerton 1993: 159-60 for the meaning of "picking lice."

[128] Heinevetter 1988: 79. For Garrett, it is a "chorus." Garrett 2004: 136.

[129] Stoop-van Paridon 2005: 470.

[130] Delitzsch 1993: 24.

[131] Cf. Fischer 2019.

When the man stands at the woman's window, it is implied that he is peering in at her where she resides (2:9). This is immediately followed by countrified imagery, raising the possibility that the house in this particular unit may be located in the countryside. The descriptions of a spring-time atmosphere (2:10–13) need not indicate setting, but in conjunction with the more definitive clues present, it would convince a reader of a countryside setting. The sight of the woman in the "clefts of the rock" (2:14), what Meredith sees as a "cliff face," is indicative of such, as is the imagery of foxes and vineyards (2:15).[132] These bucolic elements, together with the absence of any urban or royal features, create mental associations of countryside imagery for the reader, thereby shifting her or his thoughts away from the typical city setting of royalty.[133]

Because the man travels alone, the absence of any attendants suggests he is not royal. In addition, while in other units the man's physical appearance or accoutrements are important, here he is left undescribed, again suggesting someone ordinary.

Song 3:1–5

It is possible to read these verses as a sequence of events continuing from 2:8–17.[134] The immediate setting of both is the same. As in the former unit, 3:1–5 begins within the setting of the woman's house (3:1) before progressing to a city scene (3:2–3) and then returning to the woman's house (3:4). No apparent geographic context is offered. Clines thinks "her bedroom door opens straight onto the street," presumably of the city.[135] Meredith likewise gives this impression by referring to the woman's experiences as "city-living."[136] This might be true, but the problem is that the word "street" never specifically appears in relation to her home. The woman's need to "rise and go around, in the city, in the streets" (3:2) may simply indicate she must rise and travel to it; she could be living outside the city, in the countryside.

Because the unit is proximate and immediately follows a unit in which the woman's house is shown to be in the countryside, the reader automatically seeks to connect both motifs of the woman's house to the same linear sequence. The

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[132] E.g. Fischer 2003.

[133] Meredith 2013: 123.

[134] See also p.151 and especially p.211.

[135] Clines 2011: 129.

[136] Meredith 2018: 93.

woman is portrayed in her room in 2:9 and on her bed in 3:1. Bucolic descriptions also appear in intervening verses and so in a consecutive reading of the two units, the reader's perceptions do not readily shift from understanding 3:1 as the countryside. As with the previous unit, such perceptions oppose any urban, and consequently royal, connotations. The invocation of the daughters of Jerusalem (3:5) need not indicate a particular setting and must be considered along the lines of the earlier discussion pertaining to 1:7–8—they can be invoked either in the city or outside of it.[137]

Apart from the setting, the protagonists' characterisation suggests they are not royal. Unlike the sensational descriptions in a typical royal unit characterising either the man or the woman, here their appearances are left undescribed; they have neither attendants nor exotic accoutrements.

Song 5:2–6:3

The happenings within this unit's initial verses are widely seen as a repetition of events in 3:1–5. Its setting begins within the woman's house (5:2–6), proceeds to the city (5:7-8) and ends by engaging with the daughters of Jerusalem, in either the city or a non-specified, liminal space (5:9–6:3).

The recurrence of events in 5:2–8 from 3:1–5 naturally creates mental associations with the earlier unit in the reader's mind. The woman's house, its location, the trajectory of movement and even the characters are all duplicated, forcing the reader to recall the earlier episode. This seems deliberate (whether by way of original authorship or later arrangement is another matter), and some differences aside, the mental arena of the earlier drama is recreated in the reader's mind. The spatial contrast of country versus city is also readily imported from the previous units of 2:8–17 and 3:1–5 (if the reader has read these together), leading any gaps of characterisation and setting to be filled in with the material from these earlier units.

As in those units, the man is never presented as a king, although here more than anywhere else, a measure of ambiguity related to his character does exist. This ambiguity appears in, among other things, the idealised description within a *wasf* for him (5:10–16). His portrayal here is very different from the beginning of the unit in which we are hardly given any information. The typical objection that the *wasf* "does not speak of the man as a king but as a lover"[138] must be balanced

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[137] See also p.102.

[138] Deckers 1993: 195.

against some of its grand metaphorical parallels which leads Barbiero to argue that the man's aristocratic nature is being stressed.[139] Apart from the unusual *wasf*, attributing the unit to the non-regal group is more natural given that indicators of a regal setting and characterisation for the couple are largely absent. Lack of any regal immediacy means the imagery at the forefront of the reader's mind is not royal.

THE AMBIGUOUS UNITS

1. Introduction

As previously stated, three units—Song 1:5–6; 6:11–7:1; 7:12–14—are considered ambiguous, but for very different reasons. The first and third of these units have settings that are difficult to determine; the immediate setting of 6:11–7:1 is readily discerned but ambiguity lies in the possible hint at royal connections.

There are portions of chapter 8 which should be also somehow associated with the non-regal. These will be treated separately since they function as part of an epilogue.

2. Analysis

Song 1:5–6

In these verses, the woman relates to the daughters of Jerusalem a woeful tale of being forced to look after the family vineyard by her brothers. Is this setting a family home in the country? More specifically, could it be a vineyard, or at least in the country? Barbiero thinks so, but as Exum rightly points out, this need not be the case; the woman could as easily be speaking from the vantage point of the royal court (e.g. Delitzsch's view) or the city.[140]

That the unit has a possible royal setting stems from the daughters' presence, not because they are *necessarily* royal but because they are sometimes associated with royalty (3:10). Some see them as being the עלמות of 1:2–4 indicating possible continuity between the units and placing the setting in/near the king's house (1:4).[141] Additionally, Roberts notes a continuing emphasis on the —שׁ sound that

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[139] Barbiero 2011: 286.

[140] Barbiero 2011: 58-59; Exum 2005: 102.

[141] E.g. Murphy 1990: 127; Roberts 2007: 51 n.12.

is important in the earlier unit.[142] The case for a non-royal setting is weaker and mainly centres around the phrase "most beautiful among women," which appears in the following unit (in 1:8). If attributed to the daughters, the phrase suggests at least a continuation of characters between the daughters' explicit mention in the present unit and 1:7–8.

Song 6:11–7:1

The unit opens with a protagonist stating that she or he had gone to inspect a nut garden (6:11). Whether this garden is *also* symbolic is developed in the next chapter[143] but if one is not to fall into the allegorist pitfall of bypassing the literal while diving headlong into the metaphorical, this garden should be seriously considered as the unit's setting. The speaker's wish to see the "blossoms of the valley" and the "vines" suggest it should be rurally located. Despite the seemingly rural setting, the unit might still contain some subtle royal indicators. The mention of "garden" itself is ambiguous since in the ancient Near East gardens were frequently associated with royalty, and sometimes located in the countryside. In Est. 1:5, 7:7–8, Ahasuerus's garden was located in the Susa citadel but the royal orchard of Ashurnasirpal II, for example, was sited seven miles from the royal city, yielding vines and exotic fruit-bearing plants.[144]

The woman seeks to view "vines" and "nuts" and "pomegranates" (6:11) and this would be consonant with royal practice to create orchards of mixed fruit-bearing, often exotic, plants. The ownership of the garden in 7:1 is never mentioned, in much the same way that Bergant recognises that "the ownership of the vineyards [the brothers oversee] is not mentioned" in 1:6.[145] One possibility consequently arises—it may be rural garden whose ownership lies with the palace.

Having said this, three problems spring to mind in relation with this garden setting. Song 8:11 appears to pose the case of a royally-owned-but-rented vineyard and likewise, royal ownership of the garden in 6:11 need not make the unit itself royal. One needs to see how this garden and the characters interact and function. Second, in tandem with the above, there is uncertainty as to whether the lover himself is depicted as a royal, if he is indeed depicted at all. The crux

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[142] Roberts 2007: 60.

[143] p.163.

[144] Wiseman 1952: 27, 30.

[145] Bergant 2001: 15.

interpretum is 6:12. On the one hand, the woman states that she is confronted by "the chariots of ... a prince,"[146] from which the introduction into the scene of a royal lover or other, less specific royal persona might be inferred. On the other hand, the Septuagint translator apparently saw no royal connotation, translating as "chariots of Aminadab." The entire Hebrew sentence is extremely difficult to decipher, warranting closer scrutiny later.[147] Third, based on one possible meaning of מחנים as "armies" in 7:1, many see a military presence, leading to a possible royal connection.[148] This too is controversial, as מחנים has other possible meanings that are unrelated to the military or royalty.

In the final analysis, even if it could be granted that the ancient rabbinic viewpoint[149]—that the speaker of the unit is the woman, that she finds herself in a garden, and then the unexpected riding companion of a royal potentate—is correct, it is clear that in the entire unit, neither man nor woman are ever depicted as royal nor are they exquisitely dressed, another reason to be cautious in attributing royalty to them.

Song 7:12–14

This unit has been deemed ambiguous because determining its context depends upon whether it is connected with the (royal) unit preceding it or is read distinctly.

The primary couple are not specified in either description or appearance, but given that it is only two verses long, the reader may be meant to link the unit to preceding material. Yet, because "the woman utters a string of ... rapidly shifting nature images"[150] the reader receives the impression that the countryside is their natural habitat, thereby weakening the possibility they are nobility. Still, this remains uncertain since the couple's immediate setting, from which they are to "go out" (7:12), is never identified and the rural elements specified in the destination—"the fields" and "villages" (or "henna bushes," depending on the meaning of כפרים)—suggest it is the countryside.[151]

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[146] ESV.

[147] p.165.

[148] E.g. Fischer 2010: 118, 146; Spencer 2017: 163.

[149] See Neusner 2001: 185-90.

[150] Grossberg 2005: 242. Grossberg includes v.11 in the unit.

[151] Cf. Garrett 2004: 246; Barbiero 2011: 413-14.

Whatever the immediate setting, clearly neither characterisation nor setting offer specifically royal elements.

CONCLUSIONS

1 There is a marked difference in characterisation between regal and non-regal units, not least those characteristics which "infuse" the settings and characters of certain units with a royal hue. Other distinctive characteristics pertaining to the action and behaviour of the characters within each of the two kinds of units can also be discerned. These conclusions are detailed following the literary analysis of the individual units.[152]

2 The following is only a tentative representation of the structure of the Song which will be revised once a decision is made as to where best to place those units presently designated as "ambiguous."

Unit	Regal	Ambiguous	Non-Regal
1	1:2-4		
2		1:5-6	
3			1:7-8
4	1:9-2:7		
5			2:8-17
6			3:1-5
7	3:6-11		
8	4:1-5:1		
9			5:2-6:3
10	6:4-10		
11		6:11-7:1	
12	7:2-11		
13		7:12-14	
14		8:1-14	

[152] pp.175-184.

Chapter 4
How to Identify Narrative Presence

Having established the macrostructure of the Song in the previous chapter, and even before analysing it for plot, one must identify the selected conditions or minimal criteria for any narrative to exist within any particular text. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly survey what options narratology has used to do this in order to determine how one can identify the presence of narrative in the Song. I highlight the fundamental constituents of a narrative and narrow down from a range of options the elements one ought to be looking for in the Song in order to positively identify a narrative. To clarify the theoretical concepts of these fundamentals of narrative, I employ case examples where applicable, many from the Song itself although a fuller analysis of these exemplars from the Song must wait until the next chapter.

Criteria of Identification

In classical narrative theory, the method used to identify the presence of plot was to regard those texts as narrative which contained the presence of a mediating authority, an explicit narrator. Such mediated texts were contrasted with the direct presentation of events in drama.[1] The problem with this classical concept is that it restricts narrativity to the domain of discourse communication, covering only those works containing a narrating authority, or mediator. While this includes purely descriptive sketches and travel reports, it excludes all lyric, dramatic, and cinematic texts. As a lyrical text, the Song would inevitably also be excluded.

A second concept of narrativity arose within structuralism, in which the defining characteristic of narrative is not a feature of discourse but rather a feature of what is narrated. Texts that we describe as narrative, in the structuralist sense of the word, contrast with purely descriptive texts (such as maps and guidebooks) in that they contain a temporal structure and represent changes of

[1] See, for example, Stanzel's *A Theory of Narrative* (1984).

state. The structuralist concept, although it can apply to a representation in any medium, excludes representations whose referents do not have a temporal structure and consequently which do not contain any changes of state. Thus, drama and lyric poetry can be narrative—in so far as changes of state are portrayed in them—but descriptive texts are excluded since they represent a single moment in time and a single state of affairs.[2] While the Song might qualify for the structuralist approach since (at least) the high narrativity verses of 5:2-8 do contain recognised changes of state, its frequent designation as lyric, itself widely being understood as a single state, would disqualify this approach prematurely.

As a result of the shortcomings of the two aforementioned methods—which have been deemed to be either counterintuitive or insufficiently differentiated[3]—a mixed concept has emerged in literary criticism. It is this hybrid approach that is utilised for the Song here as it permits a text under analysis to be both lyric and have a more purely descriptive component. More importantly, it still allows for changes of state, that is temporal changes—what we are essentially looking for. The latter have also come to be known as "events" and have come to be regarded within narratology as the fundamental constituents of a narrative text. Analysing what exactly is an "event," as an absolute minimum for a narrative to exist, will hereto serve as a springboard for a more detailed discussion as to how narrative in the Song can be determined.

Beyond establishing the events that occur in the individual parts of the Song, I have chosen three further criteria for an analysis of how these events relate to each other to create a narrative: "causation," "temporality" and "human interest." Their discussion constitutes the remainder of this chapter. As to why these three criteria have been chosen, and not others, see below.[4]

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[2] Schmid says, "Description is also found in texts which represent more than one state of affairs if those states of affairs lack the double bond of similarity and contrast or are not connected to a single identical agent or element of setting." Schmid 2003: 5.

[3] Schmid 2003: 18.

[4] "Other Criteria," p.95.

1. The Event—The Bare Minimum

1.1. What is an event?

Before the term "event" became the norm for the fundamental constituent of narrative, Dorfman (1969) used the term "narreme" to refer to the substructural units of a narrative. This was essentially similar to the phoneme in phonology or the morpheme in morphology. Dorfman, however, did not explicate how these narremes could be combined to form a narrative.

Abbott calls the narreme a "micro-narrative," a term that is preferred here. Abbott clarifies that a narrative is "the representation of an event or a series of events."[5] In this instance, I understand Abbott's definition as pertaining to the atomic micro-narrative. The key concept, Abbott stresses, is "event" by which he means a constituent of action. He, along with others, views action as the sequence of events in a narrative.[6] Without this action, one cannot have a narrative.[7] Under the purview of actions, Abbott includes acts or happenings (when no character is causally involved).[8] Jahn restrictively describes a "story" (meaning fabula) as "a sequence of events which involves *characters.*"[9] Jahn's definition makes it unclear if one could permit a narrative simply based on events where no characters appear but a sequence of events does occur. In theory, a narrative is possible where no human nor anthropomorphic characters ever appear, although in respect to the Hebrew Bible, this is probably never the case.

Abbott follows Genette in believing that a single action or event can constitute a narrative (essentially a micro-narrative) since there is a transformation from an earlier state to a later, resultant state.[10] For Genette, "the king died" was as good a narrative as any.[11] The minimal condition of narrativity in this case is that at least one transformation (change of state) must be represented.

At this point, certain narratologists refine the definition of this requisite change of state even further. Genette cites Birge-Vitz for whom a story needed

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[5] Abbott 2008: 13.

[6] Cf. Giora and Shen 1994: 447-58; Pavel 1985: 17-24; Propp 1968: 25-65; Ryan 1991: 124-47.

[7] Abbott says, "some prefer the term 'events,' since 'action' is also used synonymously with act." Abbott 2008: 228. cf. Herman 2002: 53.

[8] Abbott 2008: 232.

[9] Jahn 2005: N1.2.

[10] Genette 1988: 19; cf. Abbott 2008: 13.

[11] Genette 1988: 20.

not only a single transformation but also a transformation that could be expected or desired.[12] Genette goes on to further the theoretical scope of this transformation, including transformation that is feared, gratifying, or disappointing.[13] Nonetheless, Genette notes that all these specified transformations are unduly complex and not compulsory for a story to exist.

A comparable complexity can be found in Schmid's criteria.[14] Schmid noted that while every event is a change of state, not every change of state constitutes an event. To qualify as an event, a change of state—for Schmid at least—must possess factivity; resultativity; relevance; unpredictability; persistence; irreversibility; and non-iterativity. While Schmid's list is useful to cross-check and prevent errors of legitimisation, most narratologists are not so prescriptive. Schmid's refinements will not be expounded just now but consideration will be given to one example of an event in the Song.

If applying a single-event criterion to the Song, a sentence such as "Draw me after you" (1:4a) is not an event since it is mere expression of desire rather than realised action. Only if successive statements were to establish that the king did indeed draw the woman after him, could the realised action be deemed as an event for the purposes of story. On the other hand, the next sentence in 1:4b, "the king has brought me into his chambers" is clearly an event since it describes the completed action of the king. This is true whether the action is couched in the recent or distant past from the temporal vantage point of this utterance.

1.2. At Least Two Events

Although the first unit of the Song (1:2-4)—using the single event criterion—might already contain a minimal narrative, many theorists need at least two events, occurring one after another, to form a micro-narrative.[15]

In order to transform the single-event statement "the king has brought me into his chambers" into one agreeable to those such as Prince and Rimmon-Kenan, a further action should be added to the existing information. The inclusion of the

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[12] Genette 1988: 19; cf. Birge-Vitz 1977: 645-75.

[13] Genette 1988: 19.

[14] Schmid 2010: 9-12.

[15] See e.g. Barthes, for whom a cardinal function must open, maintain or close. Hence, two functions are needed. Cf. Prince 1982: 6; Rimmon-Kenan 2005: 19; Cobley 2014: 5-6.

next statement found in 1:4c: "We will exult and rejoice in you," describing the action of more than one person rejoicing (identified and discussed in analysis of this section below), would then yield two events—provided this rejoicing can be shown to be an event and to not be merely a future intention. Although it is hardly believable that these women do not express joy even if they are only expressing their intention to do so, their actual *act* of rejoicing can in fact be validated by a statement elsewhere, in Song 6:9d which contains the very affirmation sought after: "the daughters (Some translations='young women') saw her and called her happy." This, it will be argued later, is an allusion to 1:4c—a group of women rejoicing over the female protagonist.[16]

Having shown the presence of two successive events, many would find this sufficient to constitute a micronarrative but others would argue this is still not, in and of itself, enough. Causality between the first and second events (here, 1:4b and 1:4c) must both exist and be demonstrable.

1.3. Implicit or Explicit Events?

Given that an event is essentially an action or occurrence, an immediate difficulty arises when identifying events. Should events be implicit or explicit?

Attempting an answer to the question becomes more difficult since the subject of explicitness tends to be discussed in relation to causality. It would be expedient to find discrete discussion concerning explicitness (or implicitness), disconnected from the subject of causality, especially since some believe that causality is extraneous to the existence of the event(s).[17] The problem is the paucity of such discrete discussion.

A greater problem is that discussions on the subject can appear to convey the impression that an explicit typology, an *explicit* presence of a particular kind of verb, for example, is needed for the identification of an event.[18]Admittedly, authors may not be claiming this at all but one could conceivably argue—because of the lack of in-depth discussion of explicitness as a discrete element from causality—that the need for explicitness is indeed being claimed.

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[16] p.123.

[17] Abbott, for example, treats "event" and causality separately. "Explicitness" of causality, indeed causality itself, for him, need not be proved for existence of narrative. Abbott 2008: 13-15, 41-44.

[18] Not any verb, however, since such can be found in propositions, etc. See Herman 2005.

By contrast with a typological perspective, a functional view might take a slightly different line, falling under the purview of what Steinberg has emphasised, namely the need for a functional approach to narrativity as a whole, so as to counter the limitations of a purely structuralist/formalist methodology.[19] A functional perspective is able to view action implicit within the details. From the statements, "The king sent 2000 chariots to the battle. After the war, he only had 1000," one can reasonably assume an implied intervening event between the events of the individual statements—that of the battle in which half the army was decimated—implying a transformation between the first and second sentence. This would satisfy Rimmon-Kenan's requirements for an event—"a change from one state of affairs to another."[20]

Schmid permits implicitness of the event on the grounds that any implicit change of state already implies

i) a temporal structure with at least two states, the initial and final situations;
ii) the presence of a similarity and a contrast between the states, or, more precisely, the identity and difference of the properties of those states;
iii) and both states, and the intervening transformation concerns one and the same subject.[21]

Consider as application the case of Song 1:6, "My mother's sons were angry with me; they set me keeper of the vineyards; my own vineyard I have not kept!" Between the event of the brothers delegating the sister as keeper of the vineyard and the event of her not keeping her own self properly,[22] the reader can reasonably conclude that the event(s) of her actually keeping the family vineyard is/are implied.[23] Her actual act(s) of labour, though inexplicit throughout the Song, is/are inherent in her speech. The vineyard work got done but not before the state of the woman was detrimentally transformed.

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[19] Sternberg 2011: 35-50.

[20] Rimmon-Kenan 2005: 16-17.

[21] Schmid 2010: 3.

[22] Most interpreters see the second "vineyard" functioning as a metaphor for the woman herself or something she possesses (beauty, virginity etc.).

[23] Incidentally, from the vantage point of speech in 1:6, all these events have occurred in the past.

Related to implicitness of information is the subject of reading gaps which is addressed below.

1.4. Gaps

Implicit events may be found in deliberate gaps within the text. The technique of gapping, and gap-filling while reading, is well-established within analysis of biblical narrative and this theoretical ground need not be re-traced.[24] Yet, there is a paucity of discussion concerning gap-filling in relation to analyses of biblical lyric despite the fact that theoretical postulations of gap-filling that underpin the concept in narrative analysis were borrowed from discussions that included lyric poetry within their horizon. One such case is the theoretical work of Iser whose original framework clearly includes lyric.[25] Moreover, the application of the theory of gap-filling has been conducted for decades now by lyric analysts not working with the biblical texts. Applying the concept of gapping to an analysis of the Song's lyrics is therefore no anomaly.

The Living Handbook of Narratology makes clear that a reader is, more generally, a decoder of any text in the broad sense of signifying matter.[26] As part of this decoding function, gaps might exist for the reader to fill out or that are filled out by the poet elsewhere. An example of the latter variety in the Song is the mention of the daughters rejoicing in Song 6:9d that fills the gap in 1:4c.[27] Such gaps that can be filled by access to details accrued from elsewhere in the text is what Sternberg calls a temporary gap.[28]

In an important paper on narration within poetry as much as a theory of poetry itself, McHale notes poetry is chiefly characterised by high segmentivity such as spacing by line breaks and stanza breaks. He remarks such places are precisely where the reader's meaning-making apparatus must bridge the gaps created by these segments. The reader must employ "the ability to articulate and make meaning by selecting, deploying and combining segments."[29]

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[24] See e.g. Perry 1979: 35-64, 311-361. Cf. Perry 1976.

[25] Iser 1978: 79-80.

[26] http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/52.html

[27] Song 1:4d "rightly do they love you" could also present an allusion to the women's rejoicing.

[28] Sternberg distinguishes this from a "permanent gap." Sternberg 1978: 50-1, 238-41.

[29] McHale 2009: 14.

Gaps that are deliberately left in a poetic text can be an important factor in making a presented situation more expressive or suggestive. In such a case, the absence of the gap would weaken the aesthetic effect the author is attempting to achieve.[30] Discussion relating to how gapping technique might throw light upon the Song's "*mi-zot*" (who is this) repetition is patently absent in Song scholarship. A redressal will be attempted later showing how, through gapping technique, the reader is provided with coherent characterisation across all three repetitions despite differences between them.[31]

1.5. Kinds of Events in Lyric

Even assuming one can, in theory, overlay narratological concepts upon lyric poetry, in practice, much of lyric is description representing a single moment in time and a single state of affairs rather than a change of state. Also, lyric's typical outspokenness of feeling is difficult to define as an "event."

The presence of description does not, in and of itself, mean that a story does not exist. Schmid reminds us, that "as well as represented changes of state, which are dynamic elements, a story includes static elements, which are the states or situations themselves, the settings and the agents or patients within them. Thus, by necessity, the presentation of a story combines narrative and descriptive modes."[32]

As for mental or existential problems confronting the speaker, Hühn, in his seminal paper "Plotting the Lyric," finds that poems employ a wide variety of forms of narrative and techniques of narration to present and tackle these (as well as descriptive modes). He goes on to speak about four kinds of events occurring in lyric poetry.

i) Retrospective Events: He first discusses events occurring within retrospective narration. It has been widely recognised that in the Song, the female protagonist is the (predominant) autodiegetic narrator of the poem.[33] She tells

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[30] Ingarden 1973: 144-45.

[31] p.247.

[32] Schmid 2010: 5.

[33] E.g. Goitein 1993; Brenner 1993; LaCocque 1998: 41

her own narrative and does so frequently in the past tense (e.g. 1:4b; 1:6b-e; 1:12; possibly 2:3c-d; 2:4; 3:1-5; 5:2-7; 6:2; 6:11-6:12; possibly 7:14c-d; 8:5c-e; 8:10; etc.). Other voices of retrospection may be that of the narrator (3:9-10; 8:11), and the man (4:9; 5:1a-d; 6:9d-e), if they are not that of the woman. Retrospectivity is usually considered the prototypical temporal relation of the narrative act to the story.

ii) Simultaneous events: Hühn also sees events occurring within "simultaneous narration" in which the speaker narrates incidents as they occur, enacting or perceiving the story and at the same time communicating it. It must be noted that when a sequence of events is said to be simultaneous, this does not mean the events occur contemporaneously with each other but are simultaneous from the temporal perspective of the speech that describes them. The woman speaks of her lover paying her a visit (2:8-9), describing it as it happens. Each described event is simultaneous but they also show progression between them.
Both the act of narration (as the immediate, purely mental reflection accompanying the on-going experience) and focalisation are instantaneous and limited to the respected moment. This kind of narration is particularly widespread in poetry.

iii) Prospective Events: Hühn next sees events in lyric occurring within "prospective narration." Specifically examining Tennyson's poem *Crossing the Bar* in which a story functions both on a literal and on a metaphorical level, Hühn theorises that this technique offers a strategy to cope with the uncertain and often frightening future by pre-structuring it through prospective narration. In relation to the Song, this kind of narration, if it does exist in the Song, would appeal to those working on its use of metaphor and allegory. For our purposes, this is not relevant. Hühn does not mention double-entendre, which is ample in the Song, and one wonders if it might be included within prospective narration.

iv) Discursive Events: Fourth, events occur as "discursive narration."[34] Hühn argues that although plots and their events normally refer to, and are located on, the story level ("story events"), they are always constituted by the discourse level in the first place since plots and events have no existence in the (factual or fictive)

[34] Hühn does not specifically use this term but implies it.

world.[35] It is therefore not a surprise when in lyric, plot function and reference and location may be shifted entirely to the discourse level as "discourse events" where the medium is thematised and takes over plot function.

After the (simultaneous) narration of the lover visiting his beloved (2:8-9), his words following (2:10) could be construed as a discourse narration, what might typically be introduced in narrative proper with the quotation marker, "he said." Elsewhere, the *wasf* for the man in 5:10-16 would in narrative begin with the woman responding to the question of the women (5:9) by saying, "I replied" after she says, "they responded and asked me..." These are all, in Hühn's framework, events occurring at the discourse level.

Despite the legitimacy of applying Hühn's discursive narration in theory, I will not be assuming each and every discursive statement of speech in the Song is a "discourse event" since the act of applying sequentiality to every discursive event could be problematic and has garnered criticism.[36] I will, however, take that discursive speech which implicitly and strongly suggests the *realisation* of an event which might have otherwise appeared as one of the other three varieties of event. Such events are "key" and integral to the story; they are analogous to what Barthes termed as cardinal events and are consequential.[37] Not every discourse event affects the continuation of the story but cardinal events do. One cannot delete them without altering the story.

1.6. Causality

Causality refers to the notion that there is a relationship between events such that one event changes the story world in a way that enables future events to occur.[38] A story must contain a degree of causal coherence to allow readers to follow the logical succession of events.

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[35] Hühn 2005: 147-72.

[36] Huhn's approach has been especially criticised by Culler who accuses him of providing a backstory for even poems that do not have them, ignoring what the poem actually does and not reporting happenings but describing what the speaker could do if the situation were different. Culler affirms "Many lyrics do recount stories" but argues that Hühn seeks to make sequentiality the determinant even to mental, discursive speech that does not warrant it. Culler 2018: 205-09.

[37] Barthes also called these "nuclei." Barthes 1975: 248.

[38] Trabaso and Van den Broek 1985.

The necessity of a causal connection between events has been stressed since Forster.[39] Unlike the Russian formalists who focused on the rearrangement of story elements in the discourse, Forster (1927) focused more on the logical consequence of one action from another. His famous exemplar was "The king died and then the queen died" which Forster said was not a plot unless one wrote, "The king died and then the queen died *of grief*."[40]

Forster's formulation was widely accepted until Chatman (1978) pointed out that because of the purposive character of speech, readers will assume that even in the first example the queen's death has something to do with the king's; though not explicitly stated, the connection is nevertheless implicitly present.[41] More recently, Abbott and Schmid, among others, have followed Chatman. Schmid forcefully asserts that

> the minimal definition of narrativity can and should be formulated in such a way that it does not require the presence of an additional (e.g. causal) connection between the states. After all, only rarely do literary texts contain an explicitly expressed causality. For the most part, the cause of a change of state is open and must be 'determined' or 'concretized' by the reader. Even if the reader of a story encounters a passage that is so explicit that it can only be read in a single, unambiguous manner, it is still the case that the reader must interpret it in order for the relations of cause and effect to be concretized. Moreover, in many works there are actually a number of very different possible explanations for a single change of state.[42]

Despite these arguments, it is still the case for many narratologists that having a series of events, in and of themselves, may not be enough to constitute a micro-narrative and so Cobley writes, " 'story' consists of all the events which are to be depicted. 'Plot' is the chain of causation which dictates that these events are somehow linked and that they are therefore to be depicted in relation to each

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[39] Richardson 1997: 37, 61; Richardson 2005; Rimmon-Kenan 2005: 18.

[40] Forster 1927: 130.

[41] Chatman 1978: 46.

[42] Schmid 2010: 4; cf. Abbott 2008: 42.

other."[43] There is a need then for causation to govern any legitimisation of a micro-narrative in the Song, at the very least to satisfy the need for theoretical comprehensiveness.

Prince emphasises the need for a plot to have a sense of wholeness because of a continuant subject. [44] He applies this principle also to micro-narratives offering several examples of the same to show how even a very short narrative may have a wholeness. "A narrative where there is no continuant subject, no relationship between beginning and end, no (explanatory) description of a change in a given situation, a narrative made up of middles, as it were, has practically no narrativity," says Prince.[45]

We now come to a methodology that can be used to establish causation between events found in the Song. Emma Kafalenos's book *Narrative Causalities* offers both an argument and a methodology. It has already proved useful in analysing causality within the biblical corpus.[46] For examining the grand whole, Kafalenos's methodology is ideal to pull micro-narratives from across the sections together and see the big picture emerging.

Focusing throughout on the temporal dimension of the cognitive process of reading, Kafalenos's study considers perceivers' interpretations of causality in response to nonfiction as well as to fiction, to visual as well as to verbal communication, and to events we perceive directly as well as to reported events. She argues that interpretations of the consequences and causes of events are contextual and that narratives, by determining the context in which events are perceived, shape interpretations. The methodology, on which the argument is based, is a theory of "functions," a concept she inherits from Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*.[47] Both Propp and Kafalenos build upon the work of Todorov which demonstrated that there was a marker at the beginning and end of all the narratives he analysed and which Todorov called "equilibrium."[48] Todorov

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[43] Cobley 2014: 5.

[44] Prince 1982: 150-51.

[45] Prince 1982: 151.

[46] E.g. Green, 2017: 77; Zeelander 2012: 23-36 and to a lesser extent Gilmour 2011: 46, nn.17-19.

[47] Propp 1968.

[48] Todorov 1969: 75.

noticed that each story began and ended in equilibrium, that is, in a relatively stable situation, separated by a period of imbalance.

In Kafalenos's paradigm (represented on p.190), a "function" is a position in a causal sequence.[49] Functions represent events that change a prevailing situation and initiate a new situation. Kafalenos identifies ten functions (out of Propp's thirty-one, generalising Propp's to some extent but also providing additional detail) in order to create a conceptual vocabulary for the causes and consequences of events that occur in narratives. Her ten functions locate positions/stages along a path that leads from the disruption of an equilibrium to a new equilibrium. A complete sequence—from the onset of imbalance to its resolution—will include all five key functions (A, C, C', H, I) and may include any or all of the five additional functions (B, D, E, F, G).

Although not all ten functions appear in any one narrative, the comprehensive framework effectively enables the analysis and comparison of interpretations related to events and causality across a range of texts, including lyric poetry. This paradigm will be applied to the Song to determine the boundaries of the overarching narrative. If there is a typical story in the Song, functions should be positioned in a causal sequence on the lines of what Propp suggests, along with cyclical alternation between the equilibrium and imbalance that Todorov observed. For a plot to be complete, it must shift from one equilibrium to another. The newer equilibrium will be similar, but not identical, to the first.

2. Temporality of Events

Temporality has always been a primary consideration of narratologists across the board. Steinberg's definition of a narrative, "a sequential representation of a sequence of events," reminds us that events not only occur in time but that they may be represented out of the order from which they occur in time and space.

Narratology uses discrete terms for the original sequence of events and the reordered sequence of counterparts. Unfortunately, terms are not used consistently within the field. Terms like "narrative," "plot", "story", "sjuzhet," "fabula," "histoire," "récit," "discourse" appear as synonyms of each other and have been used variably for both original and reordered sequences. In this study,

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[49] Kafalenos 2006: ix.

the terms "narrative" and "plot" are used interchangeably for the layer in which events may be dischronologised, while I have used the term "fabula" for any pre-ordered sequence of events before its rearrangement. I have tried to avoid the use of the word "story" in many places since it can be confused with how Rimmon-Kenan, for example, uses it, for what I call "fabula" while in popular parlance, "story" and "narrative" are often interchangeable. Occurrences of the term, however, will appear, especially where it is being quoted by others or something is better expressed in popular convention. The term "narration," often adopted for a third aspect of narrative on top of the other two layers,[50] what is termed "fabula" and "plot/narrative" in this study, will be discussed as part of the latter.

Hühn emphasises that lyric poetry may also contain events out of sequence where their original positions (as fabula) may be reordered and represented (as narrative).[51] Sequences of events in both fabula and narrative include both mental/psychological states as well as those events occurring externally to the mind of the speaker. One could, theoretically, anticipate the Song might contain not just high narrativity events but also low narrativity (the highly lyrical portions) out of order from their original temporal sequence. Only the former category has been touched upon in treatment of the Song, such as Steinberg addressing the transition between 5:1 and 5:2, which he sees to be a flashback given that the couple are not depicted as being married in the latter.[52]

3. Human Interest in the Events

Some, like Bremond (1966), Prince (1973) and Martin (1986),[53] have argued that while temporal succession and causal connection are necessary links in narrative sequences, they are not in themselves sufficient to explain any plot that is likely to prove interesting to us. Martin says causality might explain the "plot" of a scientific study, but not of a narrative for which the human dimension is needed. Cortazzi similarly argues that it is this human interest that determines whether events and causes fit together in a plot with a beginning and an end (plus Aristotle's use of "middle" between them).[54] Wolf calls this "teleology," meaning

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[50] See Rimmon-Kenan 2005: 89-108.

[51] Hühn and Schönert 2005: 2.

[52] Steinberg 2014: 212.

[53] Martin 1986: 100.

[54] Cortazzi 1993: 86.

the human purpose for why the narrative exists, and Culler labels it "cultural vraisemblance."[55]

As love poetry featuring human lovers, if there is a story in the Song, its human interest will relate to human love, at the very least. If there is a further and deeper purpose to the story (e.g. theological allegory), this is not a concern here.

4. Other Criteria

"Events," "Causation," "temporality" and "human interest" have been singled out as central components in analysing narrative. These criteria are essentially what Cortazzi lists[56] and are analogous to Wolf's triad—chronology, causality and teleology.[57] Undoubtedly, other criteria exist which could be considered key for identifying narrative in the Song.

Herman and Vervaeck, for example, consider time, characterisation, and focalisation as key components in the analysis of narrative (as opposed to fabula). One might also want to shortlist spatiality, progression and setting. All of these, it could be argued, are important in their own way. Spatiality especially deserves a more methodical treatment—along with temporal reordering, frequently comes spatial rearrangement.[58]

However, clearly, the primary aspects narratologists want to see in a text before discussing things like time and space is the presence of events and (arguably) causality between them. These being present, other considerations naturally follow. Given that events and causality are the two primary considerations, above all else, that I have sought to approach in a more methodological way, it is debatable as to which of the other considerations take priority over others.

In any case, considerations of the other potential criteria I have not "isolated" are not absent but have been (and indeed, will be) addressed to a large extent. Questions of spatiality, for example, have naturally arisen when determining the units that are royal or otherwise, and setting especially has been discussed already. Because of limited space, these other facets must be subsumed within

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[55] Culler 2002: 165-69.

[56] Cortazzi 1993: 85.

[57] Wolf 2005: 30.

[58] Herman and Vervaeck 2005: 59.

other analyses and while not singled out, they are still addressed. I will nonetheless return to summative discussions towards the end of this study.

Conclusion

It has been established that at least four identifying criteria are needed in order to identify narrative in the Song.

First, identification of the events within each individual regal and non-regal unit, for which there could be contemporaneous, retrospective discursive types. The events if each unit will be identified in tandem with relevant literary analysis of the text. This is undertaken in the next chapter.

Second, identification of the causality between the events within an individual unit will also be undertaken along with establishing the events themselves. The presence of at least two causally related events would mean the presence of a micro-narrative. Having examined events in individual units, we proceed to examine whether there is any causal connection and coherence between units as a whole. At this stage, we aim to reconstruct the fabula of the plot. The Song as we have it is the representation of the fabula with events reordered, emphasised, deemphasised or even implicit within the discourse.

Third, identification of the temporal relationship between the events of the fabula, also how the regal and non-regal units relate to one another and might be represented in the narrative.

Fourth, whether the narrative has any human interest, especially a love narrative.

Chapter 5
Literary Analysis of Macrostructural Units

In this chapter, the macrostructural units that were established in Chapter 3 will be analysed. The focus of Chapter 3 was specifically to identify a unit as being either regal or non-regal.

The aim of this chapter is threefold. First, other literary emphases necessary to the explication of the narrative are addressed. Second, the detailed description and differences of the two categories of units and how they might provide two temporal levels of the narrative are outlined. Third, having discussed, in Chapter 4, how to identify narrative and having singled out events, causality and temporality especially, I will now list the events of each unit within their regal and non-regal categories. In Chapter 6, I will take these listed events and show how they are causally linked to each other to provide two levels of narrative. I will then finally show how the regal and non-regal sequences of events relate to each other to provide one complete narrative.

The Regal Units

Song 1:2-4 He Brings Her to His House

Analysis

This unit is characterised by some puzzling switches in form of address. Unexpected shifts in number, person and gender occur in vv.2 and 4. The traditional view of these phenomena was that that the primary couple are in the presence of a group of women so that the shifts relate to interaction between various characters, including the women.[1] Yet recent interpreters are abandoning the idea of a female group's presence.

To an extent it is understandable why. Take 1:3, for instance, the only explicit reference to a group of women. Despite the mention of עלמות "young women" who love the man, the absence of the definite article could imply how the man is loved by females universally. This lack of explicitness of a third party led Pope to assert that any claim of a presence other than the primary couple was a fanciful

[1] Among others, Rashbam; Origen.

assumption.[2] Murphy went further, removing the necessity of even the man's physical presence, leaving the woman to be engaged in mere soliloquy.[3]

The scene opens in the third person jussive form "let *him* kiss me" (1:2) but in the second half of the verse, there is an abrupt switch to second person singular "because ... *your* love ... "[4] This has evoked various proposals to explain or eliminate the incongruity.[5] The Blochs' explanation is that the opening jussive is one of respect (e.g. Gen. 44:7; 1 Sam. 26:19).[6] This explanation is unconvincing since the form of address switches back to "you," never to reappear. The woman is clearly on familiar terms with the king. Gerleman's proposal was to put the switching down to enallage, namely "a substitution of one tense, number or person for another tense, number or person."[7] Fox went on to suggest that enallage has a precedent in the Egyptian love songs although he noted that a specific "we-they" enallage is unattested.[8] Indeed, enallage is attested in the Hebrew Bible,[9] including within the Song,[10] but its likelihood in 1:2-4 diminishes when one considers setting and characterisation of the scene from a wider literary perspective.

First, this scene is the foremost in a series of progressive scenes, including 3:6-11 and 6:4-10, strongly resembling and overlapping with these later scenes in terms of principal characters and imagery. Second, the scene resembles Ps. 45:14-15, a poem often compared to the Song,[11] in which women are excitedly accompanying the royal bride to the king's house. Third, the characters can be established through a surface analysis of the unit's speech, especially its pronouns and logical sequence. For want of space, only 1:4 is presented but adequately supplies an idea of the entire unit:

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[2] Pope 1977: 297.

[3] Murphy 1990: 127.

[4] The LXX takes דדיך as *dadayik* as it has μαστοί σου "your breasts," making the man speak. This interpretation appears to have been influenced by Prov. 5:19, or Song 8:1 where mention of both kissing and breasts occurs. 6QCant:1:1 agrees with MT.

[5] See Pope 1977: 297.

[6] Bloch and Bloch 1995: 158.

[7] Dupriez 1991: 154.

[8] See Gerleman 1965: 94-95; Fox, 1983: 199-206.

[9] For specific cases, see Levias 1934: 104–108.

[10] E.g. compare Song 2:4 "*He* brought me to the Winehouse" and 2:5 – "*[you]* sustain me with cakes."

[11] E.g. Carr 1981: 102-05. Calvin went as far as to say the Song was an expansion of Ps. 45 (See Loader 2009).

Ref.			Speaker	Addressee
1:4a	Draw me after you. Let us run!	מִשְׁכֵנִי אַחֲרֶיךָ נָרוּצָה	Woman	Man
1:4b	The king has brought me (in)to his chambers!	הֱבִיאַנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ חֲדָרָיו	Woman	Ladies
1:4c	We will exult and rejoice in you!	נָגִילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בָךְ	Ladies	Woman
1:4d	We will extol (lit. 'remember') your love more than wine!	נַזְכִּירָה דֹדֶיךָ מִיָּיִן	Ladies	Man
1:4e	Rightly, they love you!	מֵישָׁרִים אֲהֵבוּךָ׃	Woman	Man

The shift from addressing the second person (you) in 1:4a to the third person (the king) is what is put down to enallage.[12] Looking more closely however, we observe that 1:4c is a response of a group to a single woman. The initiators of this response can be viewed as the women alongside the female protagonist. If they are responding to the preceding statement of the leading woman's excitement, then they are commiserating with her in her joy. The addressee in 1:4a is the king and in 1:4b it is the female companions. The group of women, perhaps including the leading female, then praise the man in 1:4d. Finally, the leading woman closes this sequence of interchanges by addressing the man in 1:4e. Here, her purpose is to pass on her observation of her female companions' love for the man and to endorse both their feelings and the king's character.

The triad of addresses in 1:4a, 1:4d and 1:4e conflicts with the view that "the physical presence of the man is not necessarily indicated."[13] The plain sense of such addresses strongly indicates the presence of the male protagonist. The collective "we" in vv.1:4c and 1:4d, spoken to the female and male protagonists respectively, indicates the presence of characters besides the couple.

Fourth, the speech here has thematic and linguistic resemblance to a Sumerian balbale (poem) to Inanna.[14] Kilmer has tentatively suggested that the "bal" in

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[12] Pope 1977: 303.

[13] Murphy 1990: 127.

[14] *Dumuzid-Inanna G* in Sefati 1998: 177-84.

"balbale" means "turn," "rotate," or "change" and that the term was used for "multi-modal" songs within specific sections of the compositions.[15] This is seemingly an appropriate designation of the alternating (or rotating) dialogue between the speakers in the Sumerian balbales. In the aforementioned balbale, Inanna, with other young women, welcomes her beloved to her home for the first time, praising him as king and expressing her joy upon his arrival at her house. In the Song, these roles are reversed, with the king bringing the woman to his house, the welcome to the royal house being placed on the lips of the women. The kings in both the Song's opening unit and the balbale never speak. Like the Song's indirect words "Let him kiss me", the balbale opens with the female speaking about the man but not to him directly. Then, a group of women interject and address the lover by the epithet of affection and affinity "our brother." The poem, like the Song, then reverts to the woman who ratifies their sentiments: "Indeed ..."

In the style and form of both poems, there is a sudden interjection of speech and apparent shift in speakers and addressees and a closing affirmation of the female group. In the third strophe, only the protagonist speaks. She expresses her joy upon her beloved's arrival at her house, and for the delight awaiting them when they make love on their nuptial bed.

Lines	Speaker	Addressee	
1-2	Single Female?	Women?	The burgeoning one, he ..... with his own mother; the one with kindly eyes takes counsel with his father.
3-12	Women	Man	You are our brother ... in charge of the palace gate ... you are our city father and judge ... our mother speaks favourably with you.
13-16	Single Female	Man	lying at your side is my utmost joy. Your coming here is life indeed, your entering the house is abundance; My sweet, let us delight ourselves on the bed.[16]

[15] Kilmer 1992: 104; Kilmer 1995: 470.

[16] Alternatively, "couch" (Sefati 1998: 184).

All the aforementioned factors lead to the conclusion that the Song's first scene is that of the female protagonist being brought to the king's *hedarim,* his house. A group of women rejoice at her arrival. Enallage theory unintentionally dispenses with these women or at the very least suppresses their interaction (thereby weakening the case for the lover being a king). It seems, however, that the leading woman's speech has been crafted to extol the king's love, in unison with them. Their rejoicing is a direct result of her "bringing" to the king's house.

Her destination is established as the king's dwellings. A *heder* is not necessarily a room *per se* (as in contemporary Hebrew usage) but the word often conveys a sense of the inner sanctum of privacy that Pope grandly calls the *interiora domus*.[17] In 1:4, the word relates to the private residence of the king (plural=*hedarim*). The meaning of *heder* should not be restricted to "bedroom" or "bridal chamber," as some do. What is in mind is a collective of several rooms, namely his house.

The king's presence indicates that he has either just received the party of women at his *hedarim* or he has personally and purposefully gone to bring the female protagonist to his *hedarim* from somewhere outside the city. The latter especially hints at the possibility of an entire backstory in which case this scene is portrayed *in medias res*. Moreover, while we are given the destination of the journey, an important observation is that we do not see anything of *where* the journey has originated and *what* has preceded this invitation of the king. Again, the absence of these elements points towards a plot that has begun *in medias res*. As in the case of the love relationship, which has been presented to us without a beginning,[18] the opening scene has not provided the context or reason that precipitated the journey in the first place.

Events

There are two events:

1. The king has brought me to his *hedarim* (1:4b)
2. We will rejoice … We will extol … (1:4c-d)

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[17] Pope 1977: 303.

[18] Those who see the Song beginning *in medias res* do so on the basis of the relationship e.g. Barbiero 2011: 53.

The first event is explicit in the woman's speech. The second event is implicit but the speech of the female group implies not only that they will rejoice (future tense) but that they are already welcoming the female protagonist and praising the king. Their speech is not laconic nor devoid of emotion. The response in 1:4e, "Indeed they love you" attests to this. Moreover, the female group's response is presented retrospectively in 6:9d as "The daughters saw her and were glad."[19]

One feels causation between the two events is self-explanatory. We have here a micro-narrative of the woman being brought to the king's house resulting in great joy to a group of women who welcome her.

Song 1:5-6 Recalling Her (Family) Home

Analysis

The ambiguous placement of this unit, either with the royal or non-royal units, and especially its uncertain coherence with either 1:2-4 or 1:7-8 has been highlighted earlier. Still, it is better to consider the unit as continuing the event found in 1:2-4 since any attribution of speech in the next unit to the "daughters of Jerusalem" (1:8) does not necessarily have a direct bearing upon their mention in this unit. In 1:5, the daughters could (contra Fischer 2019) more naturally be viewed as functionaries associated with the king of 1:4. In 3:10, בנות ירושלם have a hand in decorating Solomon's אפריון and in 6:9d, בנות are presented in the company of the royal women. Yet, apart from appearing in royal contexts, they are also invoked in the liminal space between the woman's house and the city (3:5 and 5:8). This leads one to infer that they are a generic group, accorded their title because they are *connected* with Jerusalem (the king's city?) but not because they are resident within it, a fine distinction indeed. They primarily serve a poetic function and are ubiquitous in the Song's spatiality. All iterations of their presence are part of an "organic whole" in the Song irrespective of whether these women are found in the palace or outside Jerusalem. Equally, they are a definitive subgroup of the general populace; the phrase does not refer to the female population connected with the city, *in toto*. In 1:5-6 specifically, they can be considered as associated with the king of 1:4. The female protagonist's speech, that they should not stare at her (1:6) because of her looks, fits the scenario of a woman being looked over by them, one being brought into the king's *hedarim* for the first time (1:4).

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[19] See also p.123.

1:6 is mainly the woman's retelling of events related to her past. There are gaps in this backstory that need filling such as the motivation of the enraged brothers which we will return to in the next chapter.[20] In any case, what is irrefutable is that she here presents the *causative reason* for her black colour—the laborious obligations of viticulture forced upon her by her brothers.

Events

Song 1:5 contains no events but 1:6 has at least five:

She recounts: I am black ... because (שֶׁ)[21]

1. The sun has gazed upon me
2. My mother's sons were angry with me
3. They set me keeper of the vineyards
4. <I worked on the vineyard(s)>
5. <But> my own vineyard I have not kept

The events relate to the past affairs of her house. The fourth event is implicit while the rest are explicit. The fifth event is notionally debatable but most understand her words to be a metaphor and generally concur that what she essentially implies is that something has happened to her *body*, one effect of which many would consider to be the resultant "blackishness" and why she recounts her story.[22] This short retelling of past events is effectively a narrative within a narrative. The events from this nested narrative's fabula have been reordered in order to start with the immediate reason for her blackishness—the sun—and the narrative is focalised from this perspective. Clearly, event 1 should lie between events 4 and 5. A chain of causality is present between the brother's actions (2 and 3) and their effects upon their sister (4, 1 and 5). The sequence of events is 2, 3, 4, 1, 5, causatively leading to her blackishness.

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[20] p.195.

[21] For שֶׁ as "because", see *HALOT* 9261 (e).

[22] Exum 2005: 104-06.

Song 1:9-2:7 Love and Joy in His House

Analysis

Why this unit is a royal one has been discussed. Addressed here is the cohesion of its disparate scenes and purpose.

1. Joyous Life in the Royal House: Sumerian Parallels

The theme of bringing a spouse into one's royal house is well-attested in the ancient near Eastern love literature.[23] So is the theme of subsequent dwelling, intimacy and joy in the palace.[24] The Dumuzi-Inanna songs are especially noteworthy in this regard.

Specific themes present in Dumuzi-Inanna F are paralleled in the Song:

i) Inanna is a fitting ornament for the king (lines 17-18=Song 1:10-11);

ii) The luxuriant couch in the Dumuzi-Inanna songs, the nuptial bed, is designated as "greenery" and described better elsewhere as laden with fragrant grass (line 5=Song 1:16).[25] The royalty of its occupants is repeatedly emphasised.

iii) The man is a tree in the palace courtyard (line 16=Song 2:3).

iv) The woman finds shelter in her lover, as a tree among other trees (line 38=Song 2:3). Events occur frequently "in the palace" or in alternative terms for the palace.

In Dumuzi-Inanna C:

i) A golden bracelet is placed on the woman's hand (by her) and beads are tied upon the woman's neck (lines 16-17=Song 1:10-11).

ii) Not just anywhere but *in the house*, she pours wine into her lover's mouth (lines 27-29=Song 2:4)

iii) The man must abundantly provide for her in the house (lines 32-38, 47-48=Song 2:3-5).

Incidentally, the theme of joy in the house of the king is also found in Dumuzi-Inanna P (lines 12-16):

> In the Enamtila, the king's house
> His spouse dwelt with him joyfully

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[23] Sefati 1998: 153, 180, 238, 250, 271, 291-2.

[24] Sefati 1998: 129, 130, 135, 136, 173, 225, 226.

[25] Sefati 1998: 41-42, 99-101, 144, 180, 283, 304-05, 310, 354.

> In the Enamtila, the Dumuzi's house
> Inanna dwelt with him joyfully
> Inanna rejoicing in his house[26]

Not only is there a correspondence of themes between the Mesopotamian and Hebrew love poetry but these correspondences are distributed throughout Song 1:9-2:7 and the language is close, if not exact. Clearly, common themes are being replayed in the Song by an author familiar with the heritage of Mesopotamian love literature and the motifs collectively point to the context of love and life in the royal spouse's house along with descriptions of the nuptial bed.

The themes of bringing to, and loving in, the royal house cohere as one whole. A smaller "snapshot" occurs in Dumuzi-Inanna G—the bringing of the spouse into the house (lines 1-14) is placed in tandem with the lovers on the nuptial bed (lines 15-16). Reminiscent also is Dumuzi-Inanna D: The brother brought me into his house and laid me down upon a bed dripping with honey.[27]

In the Song these ideas have been separated into two distinct sections (1:2-4 [2-6] and 1:9-2:7).

2. Cohesion

Since Song 1:2-2:7 has frequently been treated by scholarship as a single unit,[28] taking only a part of this block, namely 1:9-2:7, as a cohesive whole is not too problematic. The disparateness within the unit's constituents is the very thing Elliott uses to make a case for unity.[29] These disparate constituents, or scenes, do not necessarily suggest any inorganic relationship between themselves nor indeed do they necessarily evidence a collection of several poems (Falk) but they can instead point to a single unified section of individual but mutually dependent snapshots that serve the central theme of "love in the man's house." Their unity is one which Roberts postulates as "an overture in an opera."[30] The cohesion of the various parts depends on the controlling technique of parataxis to pull together starkly dissimilar images that have been juxtaposed without a clear connection. In analysing Hebrew poetry, Hauser noted that

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[26] Sefati 1998: 225.

[27] Sefati 1998: 153.

[28] For an overview, see Roberts 2007: 98-101.

[29] Elliott 1990: 43.

[30] Roberts 2007: 101.

> Parataxis ... selects only certain elements which often at first glance do not appear to correlate well with one another. This does not mean that the adjacent parts lack a common unity or exist in a vacuum separate from one another. The unity that is present is subtle, implicit, indirect, and below the surface. It comes to expression not so much in the words of the writer as in the thoughts the writer creates in the mind of the audience. The lack of conspicuous links between the parts presents the audience with disjointed and seemingly unrelated elements, causing the audience to ask questions and use its imagination in an attempt to fill in the gaps and relate the adjacent members to one another.

Parataxis of imagery is more a poetic than a narrative device and its inherent randomness suits lyric's need to express the emotions and deepest impulses of a person, such as joy, exceptionally well since it relates so closely to the subconsciousness where precise enunciation is impossible. Judging from the reception history of this unit, the discrete thoughts the Song's author attempts to create in the mind of readers—of a relationship of intimacy—have found their mark while the relation *between* them is not always clear. Those such as Horst, Keel, Falk and others who wish to see these as diverse, unrelated songs are partially justified in doing so. The scenes do appear as separate and distinct snapshots—they contain limited information within a setting that is replaced as quickly as it appears. Yet these disparate vignettes are acting incrementally in order to contribute to a common theme and setting.

The scenes have been created in a staccato fashion. Much like staccato scenes in movies today, they can be analysed independently, but are never intended to be analysed *in isolation* from each other nor from the portrayal they are overarchingly conveying. Each scene in this agglomeration of images incrementally builds up to a larger whole and one gets the distinct message that in the backdrop to the centrality of the couple's relationship is the "good life." Apart from the paratactical disparateness then, it is equally important to emphasise that the inherent differences between the scenes never contradict the overall literary setting being one related to a high status. The quick succession of snapshots provides discrete but complementary signification such as "love," "provision," "wealth," "togetherness" and "intimacy" which can fall under the

semantic domain of LOVE AND JOY IN THE KING'S HOUSE, all being placed under one thematic "regal roof."[31]

Events

There are at least four, possibly five, events:

1. In his shade, I delighted/desired (2:3)
2. and <in his shade, I> sat down/dwelt (2:3c)
3. He brought me to the house of wine (2:4a)
4. and <He placed> his banner over me, love (2:4b)

The retrospective events are not presented chronologically but poetically—the fabula has been reordered—the events 3, 4, 2, 1 (or 3, 2, 4, 1). One can argue for a causality between these events on the following grounds:

The third event repeats the theme of bringing to the house (1:4b); the fourth event introduces the theme of the lover's undertaking for her protection under his roof; the second event emphasises the woman dwelt (ישׁבתי) under him as a "tree," a figurative image of both lover and his house; the first event emphasises that having dwelt in his house, she found great delight (חמדתי) in her lover[32] which repeats the theme of "delight" because of her bringing (1:4c).[33]

A fifth possible event is: "While the king was on his couch, my nard gave off its fragrance (1:12)." Direct causality that flows to or leads from this statement to the other events, however, is difficult to articulate. An implicit event must be assumed prior to this. For example, it could be said the woman wears the nard because she is given new apparel and ornamentation (1:10-11) after she is brought to the house. Still, it is difficult to see what event 1:12 then leads to and this lack of onward linkage disqualifies its suitability as an event.

We have here a micronarrative of the king bringing his beloved into his palace where she then dwells with him and is delighted by his love. Compared to 1:2-4, the greater emphasis here is upon joy dwelling in the house rather than on being brought to it.

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[31] See the evidence for kingship on p.55f.

[32] Need not imply her stay has been long. The metaphor of the lover as "tree" is polyvalent. It has connotations of sexuality, provision, security but is also a metonym of the lover's house. See in relation to 8:5c-e on p.263.

[33] Cf. Ginsburg 1857: 142.

Song 3:6-11 and 4:1-5:1 Royal Wedding & Consummation

Introduction

The unit can be read as two distinct yet closely connected scenes.

The first (3:6-11) is usually taken to be an extravagant scene from the wedding day of King Solomon with either the bride or the groom being escorted by armed warriors on a journey. Its exegesis does not pose huge problems for narrative but the specific identity of the protagonists travelling in the scene do need to be ascertained as this will have an impact upon the coherency of the overall narrative in the Song.

The second scene (4:1-5:1) contains highly erotic language couched in metaphor. While contemporary scholarship has recognised the metaphorical language to be a description of lovemaking, what is not always identified is the nature of the specific occasion for the scene. There are clues enabling the lovers to be identified as royalty[34] and because the specific theme of marriage is present in both, with the theme of first intercourse in the latter, one can consider their respective scenes as those of the wedding celebration and consummation. Both can be read as a single block much like the union of the couple in the ancient Sumerian love poems is described after the preparations for the marriage ceremony. Consider the poem dubbed "The Blessing of Dumuzi on His Wedding Day" in which Sefati notes both aspects exist in the one poem.[35]

The scenes (celebration and consummation) will be considered one after the other but their events will be listed and discussed together.

Analysis

1. Wedding Celebration (3:6-11)

1.1. Is This Really a Wedding?

Andruska's rejection of the word "wedding" (3:11) as tenuous to the immediate setting of the unit[36] is based on her argument that the non-stative perfect עטרה denotes completed action. She reasons that it was the wedding day when Solomon's mother "crowned" him, and this occurred at some point in the past. Indeed, some translations have rendered the text in such a way that the wedding

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[34] See p.67.

[35] Sefati 1998: 301-06.

[36] Andruska 2019: 5, 47 n.22, 54.

could be read as coterminous with a retrospective investiture. The JPS, for example, has "gaze upon king Solomon, even upon the crown wherewith his mother hath crowned him in the day of his espousals."

The construction would look something like the following:

look ...

at King Solomon

at/in the crown

(which his mother crowned him in the day of his wedding

even in the day of the gladness of his heart)

The bracketed material lies in the retrospective temporal frame: it all pertains to the crown's origin and, crucially for Andruska, so does the wedding. A better poetic reconstruction of the strophe is as follows:

3.11

a	צאינה וראינה	leave and look,
b	בנות ציון	Daughters of Zion:
c	במלך שׁלמה	at King Solomon
d	בעטרה שׁעטרה־לו אמו	at/ in the crown (which his mother crowned him)
e	ביום חתנתו	on the day of his wedding
f	וביום שׂמחת לבו	even on the day of the gladness of his heart

The Five cola of this closing strophe begin alliteratively with the preposition *bet*.[37] The first bicolon (11a-b) exhorts the daughters to look at something, the second bicolon (11c-d) indicates what they are to look at and then, as Roberts notes, "the third bicolon (11ef) gives a temporal setting for the whole of this

[37] Cf. Roberts' study on microstructure 2007: 156-58.

strophe (and for the whole of 3:6-11 for that matter)... "[38] In this construction, the verb שׁעטרה is still non-stative perfect, the investiture is still retrospective but it is not coterminous with the wedding day which is now contemporaneous with the exhortation to go look at Solomon and/in his crown.

There are other reasons to see this unit as depicting a wedding but most of these would involve drawing from other parts of the Song or reading retrospectively. Yet, as will hopefully be seen by the end of Chapter 6, in taking the unit independently, the would-be interpreter misses the intricate network of allusions and dependencies that individually and collectively create the meaningful whole of the Song, one key theme of which is a climactic wedding.

1.2. Who is Travelling?

The person being conveyed is usually identified as either the royal bride or the king. Yet, there remains the possibility that this is not just a single person, but that one partner is implicitly present and accompanying the other.

Little consideration is given to spatial orientation of the scene with placing the traveller(s) on the one hand with those who might be observing them on the other. However, the text itself supports such a spatial distinction and exploring this opens up a vista of possibilities when attempting to identify which of the royals is being transported. One verse, in particular, can help determine which of the protagonists is travelling and who is not: the exhortation in 3:11, "go out daughters of Zion and look on King Solomon."[39] The identity of the speaker(s) is not an immediate concern. This is less relevant for the plot than the fact that it is the daughters who are told to go and see Solomon.[40] We can be certain that the poet has thus far kept the king and the daughters apart in the spatial construction of the scene. This spatial setting allows a deictic point of reference from which three possibilities emerge.

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[38] Roberts 2007: 157.

[39] "Daughters of Zion" is a parallel phrase used here for the "daughters of Jerusalem." See Exum 2003: 306 n.8.; Goulder 1986: 12; Longman 2001: 94; Assis 2009: 112; Barbiero 2011: 150.

[40] Others see the speech belonging to an external chorus of voices (Barbiero 2011: 141; Garrett 2004: 175) or the woman (Exum 2005: 138).

Option 1: The King is at home, the bride and the daughters are travelling.

The poet could be portraying the bride's journey to the groom's house.[41] It could be argued that the designations "Solomon's bed" and the palanquin Solomon "made for himself" need not refer to the apparatus upon which the king himself is borne but that which he has built for his bride to be conveyed to him. Moreover, from the repeated inquiry "who is this?" (3:6; 6:10; 8:5), many naturally assume that the identity of the character in 3:6 is the woman.[42] This would mean the armed guards are present to protect the bride rather than the king (3:7). The phrase סביב לה could even be read as "around *her*" rather than "around *it,*" with an emphasis upon the woman rather than the bed. Such a theme of warriors protecting a bride is found in *Pirqey de Rabbi Eliezer* §12 and Tobit 3:7-8.

For Assis, there are two litters depicted—that of Solomon is at home (3:11) while the bride is being ushered from afar (3:6).[43] Irrespective of whether the king's litter is processing locally, or not, if he is at home waiting for his bride's litter, we would need the daughters of Jerusalem to be accompanying the bride to separate them from the king. This means they are urged to go forth from the bride's litter they accompany in order to see Solomon who awaits them at their destination. This is not a problem since many see them as attendants to the travelling bride.

That the king would more naturally be at home, awaiting his bride is also in line with custom. Estes argues that "great lords like Solomon did not pick up their wives and concubines themselves but sent an escort party to fetch the bride ... "[44] Culturally, this would make sense and would reflect other texts of the ancient Near East.

Option 2: The daughters are at home, the king is travelling. There is no bride.

Some see no bride in the entire scene.[45] Alster, for example, sees it as a movement of four parts in which the poet shifts from the general survey of the retinue to a particular focus upon Solomon in his palanquin.[46] This view has some merit

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[41] So understood by Gerleman 1965: 135-38; Elliott 1989: 84; Keel 1994: 128, 130; Hess 2005: 118.

[42] So Murphy 1990: 149; Fishbane, *Song*, 91.

[43] Assis 2009: 94, 103-19.

[44] Estes quotes Gen. 24 and 1 Macc. 9:37 in his favour. Estes 2010: 342; cf. Lys 1968: 154; Barbiero 2011: 149.

[45] E.g. Longman 2001: 135; Exum 2005: 143; Alster 2008.

[46] Alster 2008.

because indeed, the woman's presence is not clearly perceived; it is the presence of the king that is sensed by the reader.

The reason for such an emphasis upon the groom is thought to be "drawn from a wedding custom, in which a groom makes a grand entry at his wedding feast."[47] This however cannot be the sole reason since it fails to explain why the groom in the Song is travelling and needs protection from the "terrors of the night" (3:8), that is, he must be coming from outside the city, travelling at least some part of the "night." This aspect alone impresses the majority of readers with the sense that the king must be accompanying his bride because why else would he be travelling for his own wedding? Würthwein believes the scene to be that of the groom and his friends *going* to fetch the bride. However, this ignores the phrase of origin, namely "coming up from the desert," which gives the appearance that the party is heading towards the city.[48] If he is coming to Jerusalem, then he is bringing his bride.

Those who see no bride at all often fail to see that her presence may be implied rather than made explicit. There is also the fact that the use of two words, מטה and אפריון, might denote two conveyances and consequently two royals. The leitmotif from elsewhere within the Song such as 1:2-6 and 8:5 in which both man and woman are together also strengthens this case.

Option 3: The daughters are at home, both the king and his bride are travelling.
The question at the start of the unit takes the reader by surprise, "Who is this?" The issue of the identity of the traveller is thrust upon the reader but not answered in the text.

The reader is also confronted by questions such as, "Why would the king be travelling to his wedding and not his bride?" Where is the bride? Why does he need so many guards? Why does he need to be in a palanquin? These are just some of the questions which the readers must grapple with. Yet the most difficult question, and probably the most important, is why has the poet couched the opening question as מי זאת—which implies that the traveller is a single female—but then never mentions a single female in the text? At the outset one can speculate that the question may be a rhetorical device posed to the reader. If it is, then the answer must be inferred. In reality, even those who answer, "the groom" or "Solomon" from clues that they see in the text must infer this, rightly or

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[47] Garrett 1993: 401.

[48] Würthwein 1969: 49.

wrongly, through a process of deduction since no answer is given to the question itself.

It is therefore not a stretch to suggest that the question posed by the poet is itself a clue; it suggests a mystery that must be solved. It immediately suggests to the reader that this is, first, a person and, next, that this person is female. The suggestion of Pope, that the meaning of מי is substituted for that of מה in the same way as Akkadian does for its own equivalents, is a possible solution since זאת would then refer to "Solomon's bed" but using מה for מי is unusual for biblical Hebrew and consequently would have confused readers.[49] Even if one were to grant this to be the solution and move on, the same inquiry device, "who is this?" confronts the reader in 6:10 and 8:5, again with no explicit identification in each case but in these instances, a woman is strongly implied. Could Pope and others who follow this line be certain that the poet is not implying the presence of a woman by asking the question in 3:6 in the same way? In other words, could it not be a rhetorical device which forces the reader to mentally recreate the presence of a female via contextual clues? There are several reasons why this is possible. Let us consider at least two clues from within this unit itself, without recourse to reading beyond 3:11, that a bride might be present.

We have here three elements: Solomon, travelling and wedding which converge to suggest that this might be a picture of Solomon fetching his bride. No other king of Israel goes forth to fetch his bride, other than Solomon. Even David sends others to bring his prospective wives to him (e.g. Michal in 2 Sam. 3:13–16; Abigail in 1 Sam. 25: 39–42; Bath-Sheba in 2 Sam. 11:26–27). Two lexemes which lie within the frames of the wedding scene, namely עלה (3:6) and חתנ (3:11), are taken from the earlier tradition of Solomon bringing up (עלה) the daughter of Pharaoh (2 Chr. 8:11; 1 Kgs 9:24) to Jerusalem after he makes "an alliance through marriage" (חתנ in 1 Kgs 3:1). Admittedly, two words, one (עלה) of which is common, makes for a poor case of intertextuality but the fact of the matter is I am not arguing for intertextuality but for collective memory; the two are not the same thing. We have already seen some cases in the regal units in which specific elements of the Solomonic tradition are dispersed. The reader has also read about a king bringing (בוא) his beloved to his house (1:4, 2:4) and now, the motif of Solomon's wedding brings to the reader's mind the element of the missing bride.

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[49] Pope 1977: 423; cf. Horst who appends a note in *Biblia Hebraica Kittel* (1937); NAS; RSV.

Second, the number of armed guards employed in 3:6-11, sixty, is twice the number that accompanied David (2 Sam. 23:18-19, 23-37) as well as double the number of men that accompany Samson for his wedding (Judg. 14:11-20).[50] Of course, there may be no standard number required at all but it is nevertheless an intriguing thought that the poet is suggesting to the reader two cohorts, protecting two clients, in the one travelling party.

Related to this is the possibility of there being at least two transport vehicles, a royal portable "couch" and palanquin as some have suggested.

Of the three options, above, the first is the cultural favourite. Kings would await their brides at home. On the other hand, one has to examine the Song for itself, and ask whether the poet may be attempting to portray something about this king that does not fall in line with cultural norms—a king who *goes out of his way* to bring his bride. Solomon's personal bringing of an Egyptian wife to Jerusalem is a prominent theme in the Hebrew Bible and the king here is explicitly named as Solomon (3:7, 9). Also, why exhort the daughters to צאינה "go out" if they are the ones travelling?

Taking the unit independently, I might choose the second option since the bride is not explicitly mentioned and Solomon, as groom, does appear. The Song, however, has a way of getting under the interpreter's skin especially in reading and comparing its various images *together*. In chapter 6, therefore, I will be further developing how the third option could be read.

2. Royal Wedding Night (4:1-5:1)

This section was traditionally understood as a speech related to the nuptials of the bride and groom.[51] However, in recent decades, the nuptial aspects of this section have been overlooked. The main purpose of this section is to show the connection of 4:1-5:1 to the context of a wedding and in particular to the wedding night.

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[50] Estes 2010: 342.

[51] See ancient commentary in Wright 2005: 331-42.

2.1. First *Wasf* (4:1-7)

The first *wasf* spoken by the man is framed by the phrase "[Behold] you are [altogether] beautiful my companion" in an *inclusio* whose boundaries are 4:1 and 4:7.[52] There is a pervading ambiguity in this *wasf*, in which the reader never knows whether its setting should belong to the previous segment or to what follows—is this part of the wedding day or night? Irrespective of which it is, the *wasf* "imbibes the savour" of its preceding or succeeding contexts, both of which relate to a wedding. Even more important to root this *wasf* within a wedding context is a specific (possessive) noun, צמתך. The word appears twice in this *wasf* (4:1, 3; cf. 6:7) with the man extolling the woman's beauty behind/within her צמה. Traditionally, צמה was often interpreted as a "veil," but is has also borne alternative translations.

The Septuagint's "silence" is thought to have arisen out of the translator's confusing the possessive form of צמה, namely צמתך, with the possessive of the similar word צמת which can either mean "to destroy" (cf. Ps. 69:5) or "to be silent" (cf. Lam 3:53).[53] Ceulemans and De Crom (2007) have challenged this viewpoint and have established the possibility that there may have been a genuine link between veiling and silence in the mind of the Septuagint translator.[54]

Most early Jewish and Christian commentators regarded the word as "veil"[55] and even in the medieval times, when an alternative meaning of "hair" arose for it, major Jewish scholars were still considering צמה as a hair *covering*. Rashi, for example, views it as a (hair) kerchief.[56] Only in the sixteenth century does Luther's translation "Zöpfen" as "braids" influence other European translations. In recent decades, Bloch and Bloch have argued that "tresses" is a better translation than "veil" on the grounds that in Isa. 47:2, צמה is a direct object coming after the verb גלה "uncover." The Blochs argue that while a veil cannot be "uncovered," hair certainly can.[57] This argument, however, is flawed because while גלה does generally mean "uncover," it *can* be used with an article of clothing

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[52] Some consider the *wasf* to end with v.5. I see its end at v.7 since I consider 4:6 to be a reference to a part of the woman's body, and 4:7 seems to summarily judge her to be spotless. Strong summarising statements end later *wasfs*: 5:16; 6:9; and arguably 7:11. For how 4:7 conveys closure see Haines 2016: 196-7.

[53] E.g. Van Wyk (1981).

[54] Ceulemans and De Crom 2007: 516-7, 521.

[55] Origen, Jerome, Saadia, among others.

[56] Pope 1977: 457.

[57] Bloch and Bloch 1995: 166-8.

as a direct object with a meaning of "remove." Take Deut. 23:1, the injunction that "a man shall not … uncover his father's garment" or Isa. 22:8, where God "removes" the covering (מסך)[58] of Judah. If גלה can mean "remove" then it strengthens the case for צמה in the Song to mean "veil."

The linguistic evidence for a veil begins with the Septuagint translator for Isa. 47:2 who renders צמה as a *κατακάλυμμά*, "veil that covers the face" (cf. Susanna 32). Similarly, Symmachus translates צמה as *κάλυμμά* "veil" in the Song (cf. 2 Cor. 3:13 for kalumma that covers Moses's face).[59] One can also turn to Arabic, where the word *ṣammat* means "cloth which veils the face."[60] From a linguistic perspective, it is well known that the Arabic *ṣ* evidences a consonantal shift representing the Hebrew letter *tsade*. Thus, it seems there is an Arabic cognate for the very word we are investigating to further buttress our case.[61]

While we have seen how a צמה is a veil, possibly even one that covers the face to an extent, we further note how the social custom of the ancient Near Eastern bride was to be veiled. Van der Toorn (1995) has emphasised the dual capacity of the veil in the ancient Near East—first, as bridal covering and second, as a social appertunance. The veil found in 1:7 (implied by "as one wrapped") and 5:7 (רדיד)[62], for example, appear to function as an everyday social accessory for modesty.[63] There is no indication that the woman's face is covered in any way. What kind of veil is a צמה, however?

Since the woman's eyes and cheeks are said to be behind her veil (4:1; 4:3; 6:7) it is reasonable to conclude that it conceals her face at least partially. Coincidentally, bridal veils in the ancient texts are indeed sometimes described as having their faces covered. In the Hebrew Bible, a nuptial veil covering her face is probably how Leah pretended to be Rachel on her wedding night (Gen 29:25). Gilgamesh is said to have covered the face of his deceased friend Enkidu as if the latter was "like a bride" (*kima kallati*).[64] The word *kallati* here is the equivalent of the Hebrew כלה "bride" in Song 4:8-5:1 which is addressed in the next section. On the other hand, the high priestess of Emar's *head* is said to be covered "like a

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[58] *HALOT* 5363.

[59] However, he opts for "silence" in Isa. 47:2.

[60] Guidi 1927: 13; Goldhizer 1896: 52-53.

[61] *HALOT* 8039.

[62] See p.157.

[63] Van der Toorn 1995; Fernandes 2019: 61-63.

[64] Gilg. VIII ii 17.

bride."[65] In the final analysis, even if bridal veils did not always cover faces, brides appear to have been veiled and the presence of a veil in Song 4 is a strong indicator of a marriage context.

A wedding context is also hinted in how the male's strong desire for genital intercourse is portrayed. He depicts a particular part of his beloved's body as two hills (4:6). This is a possible metaphor for the female's genitals[66] since the *wasf* works its way down the female body and the breasts have already been mentioned (4:5). More telling, however, is the fact that unlike a man who is out for a quick fix, he is on a quest of adventure (4:8) which will lead him to eventually find and *unlock* the closed garden and more specifically, release the flowing fountain (4:12-5:1) of his כלה "bride" and drink therefrom. This is a metaphor for a virgin bride's first intercourse and a subject we will soon return to.

2.2. Growing Anticipation (4:8-11)

Song 4:8-4:11 contains metaphors related to the growing anticipation of the man for his bride who has captivated him (4:9). The invitations concerning locations in Lebanon (4:8) present the possibility that the segment may be a shift in geography for the couple. This, however, is doubtful. Geographical locations may in fact be incorporations of the sexual language in the same way that the smells, sights, flora and fauna of nature are all employed to make this one night special. The references to mountain in Lebanon would therefore be purely lyrical; they poetically scale the heights of passion on the wedding night.

This is especially evident in 4:11a which occurs amid these verses but whose metaphorical language, "Your lips, my bride, drip honey; Honey and milk are under your tongue," employs the senses of touch and taste to describe the sensuousness of passionate kissing. Likewise, the "fragrance of Lebanon" in 4:11b is a metaphor, which this time employs the sense of smell to describe the man's olfactory exploration of his bride.

Beginning with 4:8, up to 5:1, there is a repeated use of כלה "bride" (e.g. Isa. 49:18; Jer. 2:32).[67] The appellative occurs six times and is not found anywhere else in the Song, suggesting it is not just a simple term of endearment but connected to the marriage theme of the unit. Those who choose to disregard such a meaning, do so on the grounds that the word could also mean a "bride-to-be" or

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[65] Emar VI/3.369: 63-64.

[66] Dillow, *et al.* 2004: 137-8.

[67] *HALOT* 4491.

"daughter-in-law," and make an interpretative decision not to take a connotation of marriage.[68] The appellative אחתי "my sister" is used four times in this section out of its five occurrences in the Song.[69] It is not indicative of an incestuous marriage but is the equivalent of an "intimate friend" and is found abundantly in the parallel literature in this sense.[70] It does not negate the meaning of כלה as "bride." In the book of Tobit, the marriage of Tobias and Sarah is blessed by her father Raguel, "You are her brother and she is your sister" (Tob. 7:11). Subsequently Tobias refers to his wife Sarah as "sister" (8:4); his father Tobit calls his wife Anna "my sister" (5:21); and Raguel also calls his wife Edna "sister" (7:15). The meaning of "sister" is essentially "companion."

2.3. The Garden Metaphors (4:12-5:1)

Through the metaphor of EXOTIC GARDEN, the Song presents the woman as a fertile producer of all things good, including pleasure for the man.[71] Ancient commentators, such as Yefet ben Eli, skirted round the sexual undertones of the metaphor, preferring to understand this as a real garden. The garden is a botanical "site where the bride encounters the bridegroom."[72] However, recent scholarship is convinced that the metaphors associated with the garden relate to the woman herself and via this for sexual intercourse with the man.[73] Almog, for example, speaks of the Song's tendency in "favouring figurative speech over unambiguous literal language" in regard to the sexual act.[74] There are obvious parallels with agricultural metaphors in the Sumerian and Egyptian poems which stand for sexual activity.[75]

Yet, this sexualised garden metaphor for the woman's body is nuanced using a specific characteristic—it is "locked" or "sealed." A tricolon of statements (4:12) emphasises the sealed or closed nature of the woman. She is:

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[68] E.g. Trible 1978: 162; Snaith 1993: 65; LaCocque 1998: 7.

[69] It also appears in 5:2.

[70] See e.g. Fox 1985: 7-81; Sefati 1998: 124, 136.

[71] Landy (2011: 195) asserts the woman also becomes a substitute for the garden of Eden.

[72] Alobaidi 2010: 238.

[73] E.g. Fischer 2014a; Paul 1997; Almog 2010: 257.

[74] Almog 2010: 259.

[75] See e.g. Sefati 1998: 194-205; 218-35; 260-66; 360-4 and Fox 1985: 26.

גן נעול	a garden closed
גל נעול	a fountain closed
מעין חתום	a spring sealed

Keel remarks that in a number of texts (e.g. Lev. 12:7; 20:18, Prov. 5:15-18), a fountain or spring is a metaphor for the female genitalia.[76] The adjectives, however, refine the metaphor, placing the reader not within the confines of sexual intercourse in general but within the ambit of the nuptial bed. As Stol says of the act of sexual intercourse in marriage, "virginity was important. It plays a major role on the first marriage night, at the moment of truth."[77] The metaphors used in this section emphasise the woman's virginity.

The final verse of the unit (5:1e-f) ends with an invitation to eat and drink. The garden contains nourishing trees for the lover to enjoy and its spring produces water that slakes his thirst. Many earlier commentators saw the words as an invitation by the man to friends, to feast in a "real" garden[78] but it is more likely that the invitation is a euphemism for sexual consummation. Consider Prov. 5:19 and 7:18 where it is possible for lovemaking to "slake" the lovers' thirst; or a Sumerian poem dubbed "My Honey Man" in which the man is likened to a garden of barley, lettuce and apples and in which he sweetens his beloved with his honeyed body.[79] Keel, who thus far picks up the earlier references to food and drink as sexual allusions surprisingly follows the older commentators at 5:1e-f.[80] Hagedorn follows Keel but sees this more narrowly as "an invitation to the readers ... to become an active part in its pleasures."[81] However, those addressed are not friends of the couple nor are they the readers of the Song. They are the couple themselves who are deeply engaged in lovemaking, the word "friends" being parallelism for "lovers":

> Eat, friends.
> Drink ... lovers.

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[76] Keel 1994: 176.

[77] Stol 2016: 105.

[78] E.g. Durham 1723: 246-7; Herder (in Baildam 1999: 179).

[79] Sefati 1998: 165-70.

[80] Keel 1994: 184.

[81] Hagedorn 2015: 212-3.

They are exhorted by an external voice, most likely that of the narrator whose presence is occasionally felt elsewhere.[82] The voice undertakes to speak on behalf of the lovers where they cannot, not unlike the external voices that might interject in a Greek Tragedy.[83] Greek theatre employed a chorus, which could be called upon to speak on behalf of protagonists whose own speech could not be spoken for any reason. I do not believe that the Song is a (Greek) drama, nor that a chorus is speaking, but there is a resemblance nonetheless in that what is too private to mention is undertaken suggestively by outside help, namely the sexual climax of this coupling. This is effectively metalepsis of the narrator intruding upon the events of the plot.[84]

Unusually, the lovers are urged, metaphorically, to drink deeply. Although the exhortation uses the word שׁכר "to get drunk," a word almost always used negatively, for the process of inebriation, it is used positively here for drinking deeper than one already has done (strengthening my case that the exhortation is to the lovers rather than to the readers).[85] What is in mind is to be "drunk" of the metaphorical liquor the partners have to offer each other. Almog argues that "the central subversive practice of the Song is eliminating the notion that the inherent pinnacle of the sexual act is penetration."[86] There is some truth in this since the language for sexual climax is generalised as the intoxication of the lovers' bodies. At the same time, this is not a text promoting unbridled sensuality and drunkenness but the uncharacteristic portrayal of the sexual climax of first intercourse in the Hebrew Bible, a moment which reinforces the conservative social practices of ancient Israel. As Pleins puts it, a moment of indulgence reinforces the boundary lines of ethical purity.[87] What has been inaccessible thus far is now made unrestricted to the lovers.

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[82] Thus Gerleman 1965: 134-43; Grossman 2008: 79-88. Exum thinks the narrator might be speaking through one of the characters. Exum 2005: 182. For others, it is the man (Murphy 1990: 157); the woman (Gordis 1974: 61); or the daughters (Fox 1985: 119; Snaith 1993: 71).

[83] Richardson 2011: 15; Weiner 1980.

[84] Metalepsis of the narrator occurs in the ancient Near Eastern texts. See e.g. Wasserman 2013.

[85] This solves the problem of temporal ordering—how the man is to drink after he has already drunk wine and milk. Cf. Snaith 1993: 70.

[86] Almog 2010: 253.

[87] Pleins (2007) overemphasises drunkenness in the Song but his words are nonetheless applicable for 5:1.

Events

Several events occur over the course of the two units:

1. What is this coming up from the Wilderness ...? (3:6-7)
2. Solomon made himself an *apiryon* ... (3:9-10)
3. Go out and look at Solomon ... (3:11)
4. You have made my heart beat faster (4:9)
5. May my beloved come into "his garden" (4:16)
6. I have come into my "garden ... gathered ... eaten ... drunk ..." (5:1)
7. Eat, friends and drink deeply lovers (5:1)

The first is an implicit simultaneous event couched within a discursive question—the emerging palanquin(s) and travellers are introduced within direct speech. The second event is retrospective and alludes to the making of Solomon's אפריון. Being a flashback, it precedes the first event temporally. The third is a discursive event that is especially relevant if the words are spoken by a character, perhaps one amongst the daughters speaking to the others. Roberts thinks the language of 3:6-11 is merely descriptive and all [the "events"] appear contemporaneously.[88] However, there is some temporal progression discernible between the observing of the approaching travellers by the daughters and their being exhorted to go out. The next four events are also implicit within discursive statements: the man is captivated by the woman; the woman invites the man to enter into "his garden", a metaphor for an invitation to sexual activity; the man acts upon the invitation; and finally, the climax of the couple's sexual activity is implied in the closing discursive statement.

The causality between the implicit events of No. 1 and 3 create a micronarrative of the coming up of the travelling party and the response of the daughters to their appearance. Causality also exists linearly between the sequence of events 4, 5, 6 and 7 creating a micronarrative of escalating sexual tension up to its climax.

Song 6:4-10 A Song of Admiration

Introduction

The unit consists of two parts: a *wasf* to the woman (6:4-7) and a royal praise song (6:8-10). The unit is one that contains repeated themes and motifs from

[88] Roberts 2007: 149.

earlier units but which also demonstrates a temporal frame that has been modestly advanced from earlier scenes.

Analysis

1. Conveyed to the House

Here is another repetition of the motif of the woman being led by the king to his house (cf. 1:2-4; 3:6-11). His house is now represented by his harem which itself is embodied by the mention of queens, concubines and maidens (6:8-9).

The protagonist's beauty is on display, for all to admire. Fisher explains that "the mention of the woman has been placed at the centre of this passage [6:8-9]. She is portrayed against three types of women that are presented in two lines of poetic parallelism."[89] Perhaps the literary construction is patterned after a physical configuration the author has in mind: the lead female surrounded by three companies of admiring women. I have earlier noted the imperiousness by which she is portrayed—looking down and across (שׁקף)—suggestive of being borne aloft in a palanquin, almost soaring through the other women who are looking up at her.[90]

The portrayal repeats the earlier imagery found in 1:2-4 and 3:6-11 but the three units are not concurrent, for some time has elapsed between 3:6-11 and 6:4-10. This is evident in the progression from the mention of a single group of women (in each of the two earlier units) to three. It may also be evident in the מי־זאת question—since it was first asked (3:6) it has apparently moved through the rank and file of the royal court to its upper echelons (6:10). Assis remarks how there is a process of intensification for the reader in the numbers of the women: sixty, eighty, innumerable[91] (6:8) but the intensification can also be perceived inversely, with a proliferation of the מי־זאת question in the mouths of first the maidens/daughters, then the queens and concubines (6:9).[92]

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[89] Fischer 2019.

[90] As discussed on p.65.

[91] Assis 2009: 190.

[92] Long (1996: 707) perspective, that the male lover speaks, is technically possible in 3:6 and 6:10 but not in 8:5 as inquiry is made of both.

2. Joy

The theme of joy is repeated from earlier royal units. This is not always apparent in some translations largely because of the way ויאשׁרוה in 6:9d is rendered. Translations are generally divided between "and they blessed her" (e.g. NASB, ESV) or "and they called her happy" (e.g. JPS, RSV). The problem is not that one of these translations is wrong but that their difference is only ostensible since in the Hebrew Bible, there is a close connection between the state of blessedness and the emotion of joy or happiness. The word אשׁר appears in several places with both (or either) nuance of meaning, e.g. Gen. 30:13; Mal. 3:12-15; Ps. 1:1; Ps. 72:17; Job 29:11; Prov. 31:28; Deut. 33:29; Sir. 25:23. The connection between blessedness and joy is especially apparent in Mal. 3:12-15:

> And all the nations will call you **blessed** (אשׁר)
> for you shall be a **delightful/joyful** (חפץ) land

The integral connection between blessing and joy also holds true for a synonym of אשׁר, namely ברך (to bless), such as can be seen in the repeated line in psalm 21:7 [6]:

> you make him most **blessed** forever
> you make him glad with the **joy** of your presence

Finally, it is worth clarifying that blessing another person for their goodness engenders joy in one doing the blessing. This is evident in 1 Kgs 8:66:

> and they **blessed** the king
> and went to their homes **joyful and glad of heart**
> for all the goodness that the LORD had shown ...

The pronunciation of happiness in 6:9 repeats the earlier theme of joy, particularly that of the maidens' rejoicing on account of the king's benevolence to the leading female (1:4c) and that of the woman's delight in her lover (2:3). Beginning with the lowly maidens and spreading to the senior females, the royal women bless the leading lady, calling her happy, but equally rejoicing in her being brought by the king to his house.

3. *Wasf* (6:4-7)

The second *wasf* for the woman in 6:4-7 repeats the themes and metaphors of its counterpart in 4:1-7 although not without dissimilarities. Strikingly, unlike its predecessor, there is no reference to any body part lower than the cheek due to this being a public setting. The literary focus is the admiration of the woman's beauty by onlookers rather than intimacy between the couple.

Song 6:4, together with 6:10, frames an inclusio by using the expressions יפה (beautiful) and אימה כנדגלות, the latter of which is difficult to interpret. If it does mean "awesome as [an army with] banners," as some have interpreted it, it could be suggestive that the poet is thinking of a military cohort on the move. Keel sees a description of an approaching army in battle formation but alternatively, the military connotation could have arisen from the previous imagery of the travelling party, especially the sixty armed escorts (3:7-8).[93] The Hebrew word אימה, however, may not bear any military connotation at all. Such a connection is only derived from the military context of Hab. 1:7 in which another form of the word, אים, is used to describe an army. Ultimately, any military connotation is not vital for the coherency of the plot and alternative interpretations are just as relevant.[94]

The phrase "You are beautiful as Tirzah ... lovely as Jerusalem" referring to the capitals of the Northern and Southern kingdoms were (political connotations aside) perceived as magnificent hill cities. The man may have chosen his similes because his beautiful, magnificent bride perched upon her conveyance reminds him of those cities.

Finally, the mention of a veil in 6:7, as in 4:1 and 4:3 connects the setting with that of a wedding.

Events

1. ... Your eyes ... have overwhelmed me (6:5a-b)
2. Daughters saw her and blessed her /called her happy (6:9d)
3. Queens and concubines [saw her] and praised her (6:9e)

Three retrospective events appear in this unit, the latter two of which are certain.

The first (possible) event is implicitly contained within a discursive statement the man makes, that his beloved has overwhelmed him. However, it could be

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[93] Keel 1994: 215.

[94] For interpretations of אימה כנדגלות see Goitein 1965; Gordis 1974: 67; Long 1996.

argued that this is a purely rhetorical outpouring of his praise for her rather than an actual event. It is therefore not clear whether this is a real event or not.

The second and third events are found in 6:9d-e:

> daughters saw her and called her happy
> the queens and concubines also, and they praised her.

The structure of these two strophes is like that of Prov. 31:28:

> Her children rise up and call her blessed
> her husband also, and he praises her.

Both halves of the first sentences in each case are connected and exhibit causation.[95] Causality is evident between the "seeing" of the daughters and their pronouncement of happiness, with one event leading to the other.

The third event shows progression from the second. The praise of the queens and concubines follows that of the daughters. Although I have chosen to read 6:9d-e as two events, technically there are six events implied distributively. The daughters saw her (ראוה); they bless her (ויאשׁרוה); the concubines and queens, each in turn, see her (ראוה through poetic ellipsis) and praise (ויהללוה) her. In each case, there is a retrospective event implied by the perfect nouns.

We have therefore a micronarrative of the royal women around the woman, admiring and joyfully praising her as she together with her lover make their way through the admirers in, what I would argue, is a palanquin (or two, if 3:7 and 3:9 refers to two vehicles). There is a repetition of themes and characters from 1:2-4 and 3:6-11 suggesting cyclical repetition. We will return to how these events contribute to a sequential narrative in the next chapter.

Song 7:2-11 [1-10] Mutual Union

Introduction

This section is important for recognising how the tail end of the narrative is echoed and re-emphasised in later parts of the Song, specifically the events in 4:1-5:1, by using earlier motifs, themes and vocabulary.

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[95] Cohesion is discussed by Roberts 2007: 239.

Analysis

1. Fourth *Wasf* (7:2-7)

Of the four *wasfs*, only this last one references the bodily parts of the woman in ascending order. It repeats elements of the first *wasf* (4:1-7) but in a striking rearrangement of order (see table on p.245).

In comparing the ten items listed in each of the wasfs, one finds that despite the detailed catalogue of body parts, there is a conspicuous absence in the later list of those parts around the mouth—teeth, lips, mouth and cheeks. The poet has instead chosen to have this particular erogenous zone appear in 7:10, after the *wasf*. This technique appears to be deliberate in order to focus on the metaphors of passionate kissing for this special intimate occasion.

2. Sexual Consummation (7:8-10)

In the Song, the two units which portray the couple's intimacy more explicitly are 4:1-5:1 and 7:2-11.

It was established earlier that Song 7:2-7 and 7:8-10 belong together. The poet has reserved mention of the breath, mouth, lips and teeth for 7:9d-10 in order to intensify the intimacy of the verses following the *wasf*. The poet adeptly uses first a simile and then a metaphor of wine for a passionate, enduring, open-mouthed kiss. The man compares the woman's mouth to the best "wine" (7:10a) and in response she finishes his sentence,[96] describing it as gliding over his lips and teeth (7:10b-c).[97] Carr rightly notes, "the poetic device of having her complete his words heightens their mutuality. This is not just male desire of a woman, nor female desire for a man, but mutual desire."[98]

Goulder would have the lover looking at the woman's body while she is fully clothed and perhaps stood up or dancing. [99] Whether the section *begins* with her dancing is another study altogether, but regardless, by 7:6, the couple may be in bed because of how the man describes himself: as a king "captive in the tresses." The word used for "tresses" is רהטים, what most would understand to be referring to the woman's "hair" or if one translates the word literally, it means "channels

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[96] For alternatives to speaker and text see Roberts 2007: 280-4.

[97] Modern translations opt for LXX's ὀδοῦσιν "teeth" against MT's ישנים "sleepers," dropping the י (cf. *BHQ* 18, p.63 n.10).

[98] Carr 2003: 132.

[99] Goulder 1986: 56.

for water" (cf. Gen. 30:38, 41; Ex. 2:16). Winandy describes them as "canals."[100] This imagery weighs against Goulder's notion of a fully-clothed woman because it appears to be that of a woman with flowing hair, whose strands have spread out in every direction to resemble water channels or canals. She must therefore be lying flat, itself a strong indication of a sexual scene and this is corroborated by the speech of 7:8-9, that of the man comparing his beloved's breasts to clusters of fruit he is about to "pick." The scene also reemphasises the couple's movement towards sexual union and the theme of first intercourse that one finds in 4:1-5:1, along with:

i) Both scenes are preceded by *wasfs*, where the man admires the woman (4:1-7 and 7:2-7).

ii) The man is said to be לבב "captivated/enchanted" by his beloved's eyes (4:9) and אסור "captivated" by her hair (7:6c).

iii) The man's decisiveness to sexually traverse the beloved in order to reach her breasts is apparent in both. He likens her breasts to a mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense he must scale (4:5-6).[101] Now, after likening her breasts to the fruit of the palm, he says, "I will climb the tree" and "take hold of its fruit" (7:8-9). Viezel describes how "אחז + ב ... is a verb [construction] that denotes a decisive and directed action."[102]

iv) The man's intention to pluck from the tree and eat therefrom (4:12-5:1 esp. 4:16) parallels the motif of the woman as a garden that will be unlocked and eaten therefrom (7:8-9).

v) The comparable metaphorical language of kissing using sweet liquids—honey, milk and wine is present in both (4:10-11; 5:1 and 7:10).

vi) The imagery of intricate protuberances, as metaphors for the female body, exists within the words שלחים "shoots/canals" (4:13a) and רהטים "channels" (7:6).[103]

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[100] Winandy 1960: 151.

[101] or her labia (p.117).

[102] Viezel 2014: 755.

[103] Keel (1994: 176) translates שלחים as "canals," which he sees as a possible euphemism for the woman's genitalia, although he clarifies that the plural form "forbids rigorously ascribing a single meaning to the metaphor ..." Most translators prefer "shoots."

vii) There is comparable metaphorical language of first intercourse. In the former is the imagery of a locked underground water fountain. The use of נוֹזְלִים especially suggests water that is flowing and abundant (4:12-15). The parallelism within 7:3 has similar resonances:

Your שׁר "navel/vulva"	is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine
Your בטן "belly"	is a heap of wheat encircled with lilies

In the first line, *abundant* wine echoes the *flowing* fountain imagery and whether שׁר is specifically "navel," or perhaps "vulva," either is being used as receptacle for limitless replenishment to slake the man's thirst. The second line might overlay an image of sexual chastity. The stomach area being as "wheat" might be a euphemism for sexual activity as in the earlier sexual "eating."[104] As for chastity, Rashi describes the encircling flowers as a "hedge" which fences the woman's stomach. No suitor "breaches it to enter," he says. So, the primary image of a vessel that flows abundantly is overlaid by another, of life-giving grain that has been hedged about, effectively closing it to intruders. Several commentators note the meaning of סוגה is "hedged" or "enclosed" which Pope says is "well established in Aramaic and post-biblical Hebrew and Arabic."[105] The Greek πεφραγμένη and the Vulgate *vallatus* mean "enclose." The comparison of the woman's breasts compared to deer feeding among שׁושׁנים "lilies" or probably "lotuses" (4:5) is now repeated, with an *enclosing* function for this garden of produce.[106] This recalls the *hortus conclusus,* the garden enclosed (4:12). Admittedly, an enclosure of lotuses is not much of a barrier and for Exum the image conveys a lack of protection as

[104] Meredith (2018b: 346) says, "Food ... makes up for the lack of literally rendered 'sex acts' in the Song by providing a code through which we can understand them and a mask for their absence."
[105] Pope 1977: 622. Cf. Fox 1985: 159; Keel 1994: 235.
[106] Cf. the suggestion of Gault 2019: 186 as the petals of the navel.

admittance for her lover.[107] Perhaps the metaphors should not be pressed too far but I note that if they are blended with those in Song 4, abundant rivers of "wine" or "waters" that flow from her שׁר or belly (7:3; cf. 4:15) may themselves be acting as a natural barrier of lotuses for the garden (see picture below).



Whitetail doe eating lotuses

(Photo: Bruce MacQueen. License: 123rf.com)

3. The Refrain of Mutual Belonging (7:11)

Is this a concluding statement for the preceding verses or an opening statement for the woman's speech in 7:12-14?[108] The former is more probable since there seems to be a temporal discontinuity between verse 11 and the next verse that is the start of a new episode (a fresh invitation by the woman) to lovemaking.

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[107] Exum 2005: 234.

[108] For closing 7:12-14, see e.g. Bloch and Bloch 1995: 102-3; Rudolph 1970: 174; Roberts 2007: 284-88. As the start of a new section, e.g. Budde 1898: 40; Würthwein 1969: 64-66; Lys 1968: 270.

Moreover, as a refrain of *mutual* belonging, the third of three (2:16; 6:3; 7:11) that perform a closing function,[109] it reflects the preceding interchange—the man's speech (7:10a) and her interjectory finishing of his sentence (7:10b)—much better than it starts an invitation issued in a solitary voice (7:12).

The term for "desire" (תשׁוקה) has generated much debate. Hess believes that the word inherently contains a sense of "to dominate" and discusses the term in relation to Gen. 3:16 and 4:7.[110] Hess proceeds to say that the negative connotation of תשׁוקה in the Genesis texts which arises from the depiction of a battle of wills is now lost in the Song.[111] For him, "the Genesis judgement of each person seeking domination is reversed, with each person now seeking mutuality and willingly giving possession of their body to their partner." If Hess is right, then there is a tone of finality and resolution to the problem of the battle of wills presented in the early episodes of the Hebrew Bible. Theology aside, this is an interesting point purely from a literary perspective—it is a resolution to an existing dilemma. For our purposes, this resolution would be expected at the end of a section rather than at its beginning, meaning 7:11 fits better with the material that precedes rather than what follows.

Events

1. a king is held captive in the tresses (7:6)
2. I said, "I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit" (7:9)

Picking out the events from the lyrical descriptions is difficult. Yet two events are discernible. The first is a simultaneous event couched within the discursive speech of the man, where he states that "a king is captive . . ." This is a reference to his being enthralled by the woman and is occurring concurrently with his speech. In addition, it could allude to his being caught in the strands of her hair the image of which has been discussed.

The second event is a retrospective one, again couched in his discursive speech: "I said (אמרתי), I will climb . . ." The speech itself is laden with sexual entendre—the intention to "climb" being an obvious sexual allusion—but the sentence nonetheless reflects what the man has said to himself. In other words, he has decided and is determined to proceed further with this sexual congress.

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[109] Elliott 1989: 174-5.

[110] Hess 2004: 79-95.

[111] Hess 2005: 224; cf. Carr 1984: 164 n.2.

We have here a micronarrative in which the man is enthralled by his beloved and decides to take it further, to "ascend" to new heights with her, to satisfy his increasing sexual desire.

THE NON-REGAL UNITS

Song 1:7-8 Going Out to Join the Lover

Introduction

Many understand the couple to be portrayed as a shepherd and shepherdess in a bucolic scene. In his succinct manner, Alter says, "in this poem, they are both shepherds."[112] Yet, the unit introduces a few ambiguities, namely the identity of the speaker in v.8; the occupational role of the two lovers in both verses; and the willingness of the woman to be in the man's social environment.

The unit is best suited to the non-regal category because of the surface language of shepherding and since the nature of the woman's behaviour has more affinity with other non-regal units than the regal ones.

Analysis

1. Who is the Responder in 1:8?

The woman's question in 1:7 is addressed to her lover and so one would have expected the responder of 1:8 to be the man. Surprisingly, there is some ambiguity in the responder's identity.[113] For our purposes, however, the identity of the responder does not matter so much as the advice itself.

2. Pastoral or Royal lovers?

A major consideration involves the straightforwardness of the language. The plain sense in the speech of both verses does suggest that the couple are pastoralists. Yet, when reading these two verses with its concentrated pastoral imagery, the interpreter should be open to the possibility that the pastoral language is

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[112] E.g. Alter 2016: 10.

[113] Many think it is the daughters since the appellation "most beautiful among women" is used elsewhere by them (5:9; 6:1). For Barbiero (2011: 64), it is a male chorus of shepherds. Cohen believes the woman addresses her absent shepherd lover while in the king's court. Cohen 1946: 3.

metaphorical for kingship since the motif of the shepherd-king occurs abundantly in the Hebrew Bible and elsewhere in the ancient near East.[114] The conceptual metaphor operating in this unit would be as follows: (ROYAL) LEADERSHIP IS A PASTORAL JOB and this is what we can now proceed to unpack.

I start with Westenholz who says, "encoded in the symbolism of the shepherd is an elaborate metaphysical schema of the way in which relationships, society, politics, ethics and global consciousness are to be envisioned."[115] Indeed, the shepherd is an archetypal trope with royal associations. YHWH is depicted as a shepherd king (Gen. 49:24; Ps. 23); David also (1 Sam. 26:19; 2 Sam. 5:2); Israel's tribal leaders and judges are called "shepherds" as well (2 Sam. 7:7; 1 Chr. 17:6). The king as shepherd is a common motif in the near Eastern literature as a whole. It occurs significantly in the Dumuzi-Inanna love poems, where Dumuzi is not only a shepherd but becomes the king, the faithful provider of Uruk.[116] The Egyptian king Sesostris I says Ra appointed him as "shepherd of this land."[117] Tiglath Pileser I is called the "chief herdsman" of Assyria.[118] The god Ashur appoints Sennacherib's descendant to shepherd Nineveh and its people.[119]

The language of possessing and leading flocks is also related to the royal shepherd motif. YHWH as shepherd-king guides his people in the wilderness as a flock of sheep (Pss. 78:52, 80:1). The Mesopotamian king Samsu-iluna says Marduk gave him "the totality of the lands to shepherd ... [and he] laid a great commission on ... [him] to make his nation lie down in pastures ..."[120] Similarly, Ammi-ditanna claims that Ea gave him wisdom to "shepherd the widespread people of [his] land by means of fine pastures and watering places and to make them lie down in pastures."[121] Other examples abound but clearly, given its preponderance in the ancient Near Eastern royal texts, the pastoral language of 1:7, "where do you feed your flocks and make them lie down?" could just as easily be royal language related to his house if it is situated within a wider regal context. It is really 1:8 which poses the greater difficulty for any royal connotations. Yet,

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[114] Cf. Aranoff, 2014; Gan, 2007.

[115] Westenholz 2004: 1281.

[116] Wolkstein and Kramer 1983: 29-49.

[117] Lichtheim 2006: 116.

[118] Grayson 1991: 13, 27.

[119] Grayson and Novotny 2012: 55, lines 62-63.

[120] Frayne 1990: 381 (E4.3.7.5.13-24).

[121] Frayne 1990: 413 (E4.3.9.2.19'-25').

even the reply may be subtly doing the same thing. Before I suggest how, we must briefly recount how the verse has been handled in the past.

The woman's profession has already been set up for the reader as the keeper of the vineyards (1:6) and the imagery of her as an agriculturalist recurs at later points (2:14-15; 6:12; possibly 8:11-12). This would theoretically conflict with another occupation which is why the dramatists who constructed an entire *ménage à trois* from these verses, of a shepherdess kidnapped by the king but pining for her shepherd love, must blithely bypass the anomaly or believe both roles to be simultaneously true. Tending to the vineyard and looking after herds are two full-time roles. Isa. 5:1-6 is a testimony to the amount of work required for a "keeper of a vineyard" (Song 1:6; cf. Isa. 27:2). In actuality, there is no continuity in the woman's occupation between 1:6 and 1:8. Unlike the man, for whom there is some shepherding vocabulary later (2:16; 6:3), Song 1:8 is the only place she appears to be a shepherdess.[122] Partly for the reason of discontinuity with the surrounding verses, 1:7-8 has been treated by critical scholarship as being an independent poem, or as Barbiero thinks, another manifestation of a woman flitting between fantasies. It must also be noted that Horst and others following have taken these verses in the form of a tease.[123] Zakovitch moreover says, "... treibt der Hirt mit seiner Geliebten Wortspielereien."[124] I propose, therefore, that there is viable alternative to the existing theories, one which takes the verses as a tease but which also incorporates the possibility of ambiguous language that references not only pastoral but also royal conceptual domains.

To summarise 1:7-8, the woman has just asked where the lover resides. He (or another voice) responds: if she does not know, she should follow the tracks of the "sheep" to רעה (feed/graze/shepherd) her "young goats by the shepherds' tents." Before examining the language of the reply more closely, one finds that the advice to follow the tracks of the sheep is not dissimilar to the wisdom of Job 21:28-29, "For you say, 'Where is the house of the noble? Where is the tent in which the wicked lived?' Have you not asked those who travel the roads, and do you not accept their testimony ...?" Although the constructions of speech in Job and the Song are similar, their contexts and purposes are radically different. Yet, there is

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[122] The references to herds in the *wasfs* 4:1-2, 5 and 6:5-6 bear no explicit link to her ownership of them. Cf. Roberts 2007: 69 and comments in Murphy 1990: 83.

[123] Horst 1961: 176, 183; Elliott 1989: 53; Murphy 1990: 134; Gledhill 1994: 107; Roberts 2007: 67 n.81; Alter 2016: 10; Linafelt 2018: 123.

[124] Zakovitch 2004: 122.

an echo in the Song of Job's cutting words to his friends—a comparable exhortation to follow those who have already travelled the way sought.

This brings us to the meaning of the צאן that the woman must follow (1:8c). Whether these are hers or his is unspecified but in either case, while the word צאן "flock" signifies creatures,[125] on another level, they could be a metaphor for "royal subjects" (cf. Ezek. 34; Zech. 11) if the reply is linked to an existing royal metaphor in the earlier verse. If we reframe the question without the metaphor, she asks "where is your place from which you rule?" The reply would be to "follow my subjects."

In the next line (1:8d), she is directed to lead her "young goats" to the tents of the shepherds. The word גדיות is an unusual feminine hapax legomenon since the word for "kids" in general appears in the masculine form: from the singular גדי (Gen. 38:17, Ex. 23:19, etc.), is derived גדיים (1 Sam. 10:3) or גדיי (Gen. 27:9, 16). This suggests something particular and unusual is occurring in the use of the feminine plural גדיתיך (your *young female goats*). If her question in v.7 is loaded with allusions to the shepherd-king motif, something similar might be found in the response in v.8, an allusion to the possibility of her having a potential "flock" (=female attendants? עלמות "young women"?), whom she could accompany to his "pasture." This viewpoint is especially relevant to those interpreters who understand the responder of the verse not to be the man but a group of young females. The use of "young female goat" in the reply is relevant to the question because the goat was both an image of resourcefulness and intelligence in the desert (a Sumerian proverb reads "Although it has never gone there, the goat knows the wasteland" [126]), and so the female protagonist can rely upon these young women to get her where she wants to be, the abode of the lover (the image proleptically anticipates her seeking the daughters' help in 5:8; 6:1). The (young) goat also appeared frequently in the mythology and literary folklore of ancient Near Eastern cultures in association with royal figures. One Akkadian text calls her royal subjects the "young goats" of "Ishtar the bride, leading goat of the

[125] Shepherds possessed a mixture of "sheep" and "goats" and צאן can refer to either. *HALOT* 7836.

[126] No. 3.111, Alster 1997: 99.

land."[127] An iconographic motif of a goddess, the "mistress of the animals," feeding her goats appears on the lid of a pyxis found in Ugarit.[128]

Finally, in 1:8e, there is a connection between the exhortation to the woman to go to the place of the shepherds' tents and her earlier reluctance to be in the company of the man's חברים (friends/companions). To paraphrase:

Question:	Where do you pasture?
	I don't wish to be beside the flocks (pastures) of your **friends.**
Reply:	you pasture beside the (place of) **the shepherds**' tents.

Just as רעים (shepherds) and their tents can metaphorically mean "rulers" and their encampments (cf. Jer. 6:3-4; Nah. 3:8),[129] the word חברים (friends) in certain contexts can assume a military/royal connotation also. In his study of kingship law in Deut. 17, Grant has suggested four themes describing human kingship that become paradigmatic for other such texts in the Hebrew Bible, including the royal psalms.[130] Grant's second theme is especially relevant for the word חברים in Ps. 45:8, where one perceives the "democratising effect" that Grant develops in his study. The psalm's king is an exemplar of righteousness but is chosen from among his "friends". In Song 1:7-8, the man's "pasture" or "tent," his house, is singled out and made exemplary from those of his חברים, a superlative-among-equals theme which recurs in 2:3.[131]

In conclusion then, the surface pastoral essentials of the reply could also be subtle references to things associated with kingship—a deliberate ambiguity that cleverly sets up an uncertainty as to the identity of the man and which recurs in subsequent non-regal units. As for whether it is the likely or best reading of the passage, that would depend on one's view of the Song's unity. For a narratival viewpoint, it must be read in light of the whole Song and will be addressed in Chapter 6.

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[127] Langdon, 1916: 115, line 10; cf. the phrase "Inanna of the goats" in *Emar* 379:6.

[128] Louvre, Paris, "Lid of a pyxis with mistress of the animals," https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/lid-pyxis-mistress-animals

[129] Zakovitch (2004: 121) believes that Jer. 6:2-4 seems to be aware of and uses Song 1:7-8.

[130] Grant 2004: 193.

[131] See also p.63.

3. Negative Feelings of the Woman

There is in this first non-regal scene a very subtle but real hesitation on the part of the woman to enter into the social environment of her lover compared to the scenes that precede and follow.[132] She is clearly reluctant to be in the company of the חברים "friends/companions" of the man. But for what reason? She herself testifies that she does not want to be בעטיה in the presence of the man's friends. The best rendition of this expression is "as one wrapped" or "covered" although alternative renditions abound.[133] Dobbs-Allsop comments that "the basic meaning of the root 'to cover' is well established (e.g. 1 Sam. 28:14; Ps. 109:19; Sir. 50:11). What is not clear here is what the 'covering' implies."[134] Most, if they do read בעטיה as a reference to a head covering, conclude she does not want to appear as a prostitute.[135] This is unfortunate because is it a misunderstanding that prostitutes went around in veils. It also engenders reluctance in other interpreters who could in theory accept that a covering is in mind but will not opt for the meaning because they do not want to associate this covering specifically with prostitution (e.g. Garrett).[136] Gledhill attempts to mitigate any confusion by adding, "Not all prostitutes were veiled, as Tamar was, and not every veiled woman is a prostitute."[137] I would go further, however, and assert that not only is an entire sociological credo of veiled prostitutes created from a single misread sentence in Gen. 38:15 but also that prostitutes went about unveiled in ancient Israel and some of its neighbouring cultures like that of Assyria. I have elsewhere attempted to explicate the proper meaning of the relevant text as well as highlight some

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[132] Murphy 1990: 131.

[133] Von Gall 1904; Emerton 1993 take the word as "picking lice/fleas" (e.g. Jer. 43:12 where the shepherd "picks lice" from his clothes), a humorous reference to the woman not wanting to be waiting. Some see a metathesis, reading טעה (an Aramaic form of Hebrew תעה = "wander") instead of עטה. Rudolph 1970: 125; Gordis 1974: 80; cf. Field 1901: 399 who cites Greek equivalents.

[134] Dobbs-Allsopp 2006: 26 n.23.

[135] Among many others, Stärk 1911: 306; Zakovitch 2004: 124; Barbiero 2011: 66.

[135] Fernandes 2019.

[136] Garrett 2004: 137.

[137] Gledhill 1994: 108.

texts in Assyrian law[138] but acknowledge that further social analysis could still be conducted to cement my assertions.[139]

It is nevertheless about time in Song studies that the fears the woman faces, that is, her reluctance, is not taken as that of appearing as a prostitute. Still, her reluctance to appear in the company of men other than her lover cannot be dispensed with either. Based on the work of Van der Toorn and others, I have argued that her covering marks the woman out as one who bears an affinity to a man.[140] Her fear, therefore, is not to appear in the presence of those males without any sign of her attachment to her lover. It is extremely important to note that the specific scenario she envisages is one in which he is absent. This is implied by her concern to be left standing next to the "flocks" of his friends. Such resonations occur later along with, what I believe to be, these very specific connotations for her unveiling (5:7) in the presence of the city's guards.

Another aspect of the woman's hesitations relates to her asking him "where" to find him (his house?) and the exhortation to "go out" (from her house) to him. Keel thinks she is asking him in 1:7 where he will be pasturing his flock in order to rendezvous with him.[141] He cites Joseph's question in Gen. 37:16 as a question with a similar construction.

Joseph	איפה הם רעים	where are they pasturing?
Woman	איכה תרעה	where are you pasturing? / do you pasture

Joseph's question refers to the present as denoted by the imperfect tense. Although one would think the imperfect of 1:7 refers to either a specific instance in the future or present, a better alternative is reading the verb in the habitual sense—where do you (usually) pasture? The proof of this is in the reply אם־לא תדעי לך. Dobbs-Allsop sees in this reply an asseverative, "surely you know." He remarks, "Indeed, the first couplet in 1:8 may be construed to say as much, taking the initial <u>'im-lō'</u> as a particle of asseveration 'surely,' as it is sometimes used in Hebrew (1 Kgs 20:23; 2 Kgs 9:26; Isa. 5:9; Jer. 15:11; Ezek. 3:6; 34:8; Job 1:11; cf.

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[138] Fernandes 2019. Judah was misled because Tamar was sitting at the gate, exhibiting herself. Her face veil prevented him from recognising her but it may not be linked specifically with prostitution.

[139] Recent works touching upon relevant issues are those of Alsen (2019) and Bird (2019).

[140] Fernandes 2019; cf. Van der Toorn 1995, who specifies this as one of the two functions of woman's veiling, the other being for the marriage ceremony.

[141] Keel 1994: 52; cf. Estes 2010: 309.

GKC §149a-d; Joüon §165a-i; WOC §40.2.2a-b) ..."[142] Roberts believes that the use of the ethical dative in this case indicates she may already know the answer to her question of the whereabouts of the man (If you do not know ... but surely you should know).[143] Barbiero and others recognise the irony in the response. Barbiero points out that the Hebrew has an ethical dative "If you do not know it for yourself ..." [144]

The overall irony then lies in the fact the woman has supposedly given herself to her lover—the expression "whom my soul loves" denotes her "deep feelings for another"[145]—and yet she is professedly either "ignorant" of his habitation (his house) or just does not acknowledge she knows. Dobbs-Allsop adds a further nuance to the irony by adding that "the initial word of the second and third lines, ʻêkâ, which here means "where?" as in Aramaic, plays on its more normal sense in Hebrew, "alas!", again as in laments and funeral dirges (e.g., Lam. 1:1)."[146] The teasing response can be read as a gentle expostulation, but not a mocking[147] nor angry[148] one, to her to follow the well-worn paths to her lover's habitation. Ravasi notes that the pathways of the Bedouin are often created by the passage of goats. If one follows them, one reaches the shepherd's tent.[149] The reply is effectively saying, she should know where to go by now. She just has to pursue the well-worn path of the man's flock (literal or metaphorical for "followers"). However, she cannot remain where she is (her home?), she must take the initiative to leave her own milieu and enter into his social environment.

There are a number of observations one can draw from the use of the verb יצא (go out) in v.8b. There is the notable observation of Barbiero who spots that the verb יצא

> is intensified in the Hebrew text by an ethical dative ... [צאי־לך] ... It is a verb of theological importance: it is the verb of the Exodus. So the woman is being advised to adopt the attitude of the Exodus, to abandon her own certainties in order to face the new situation.

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[142] Dobbs-Allsop 2006, 26 n.24

[143] Roberts 2007: 67-68 n.81.

[144] Barbiero 2011: 67; cf. Ravasi 1992: 178 n.28.

[145] Fishbane 2015: 38.

[146] Dobbs-Allsop 2006, 26.

[147] Something older commentators considered e.g. Friedländer 1894: 650.

[148] Wright 1933: 110-11.

[149] Ravasi 1992: 178.

Also, if the woman needs to be encouraged with the words, צאי־לך (you go out!), it suggests a person who, while being obviously in love, is still hesitant to leave her house. Kaplan says, even though "her beloved presumably responds in the next verse with a treasure map to his location, the female protagonist's anxiety is palpable."[150]

Her speech makes the fantasy perspective problematic. If she were fantasising, why would she create an unwelcome image of companions in whose presence she is reluctant to be and then proceed to imagine an unwelcome reply? As Barbiero and Murphy respectively point out, the reply given to the woman "invites the woman to ... [go out] seeking her beloved in his social environment without any fear of gossip" and now "go to the very place that she [has] held out as a danger."[151] Fantasies tend to work the other way round. They generate welcome atmospheres amid harsher realities.

Despite scholars picking up on her apprehension to be in the man's social environment, an even bigger question is whether she is reluctant to be with him there because she perceives a threat in that environment or whether it is that her reluctance stems from a threat from home. In other words, the problem may not lie in her destination but in her origin. The answers to this riddle, however, are not found in this unit itself.

Events

1. "where do you feed ..." (v.7)
2. "Surely, you know ..." (v.8)

She asks him where he shepherds his flock (his house). He or someone else replies that she should know and that she should go out (from her house) and follow others who have trod the path. Both are discursive events.

Song 2:8-17 Obstacles to a Spring Invitation

Introduction

Song 2:8-17 has been widely treated as a single unit whose unity is based upon a cohesion of both narrativity and structure. The unit can be demarcated as six

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[150] Kaplan 2015: 160.

[151] Barbiero 2011: 68; Murphy 1990: 134.

segments although scholars frequently come up with a smaller number.[152] Starting and ending the entire unit is the subject of the man arriving and departing, respectively. The inner core (Segment C) has been recognised as a chiasmus that contains an invitation by the man.[153] The subject matter immediately preceding and succeeding this chiasmus concerns itself with the man standing outside walls of some kind. The one unusual segment is vv.15-16 which does not readily fit with the other segments.[154] The unit can therefore be depicted with a near-symmetrical structure of six segments as follows:

Man's arrival upon the mountains (vv.8-9a) **A**

Standing outside the wall; peering through the windows (v.9b) **B**

Invitation to come away with him (vv.10-13) **C**

Persuading outside walls; peering through gaps in stone (v.14) **B′**

Invitation Ruined (vv.15-16) **C′**

Man's departure upon the mountains (v.17) **A′**

Analysis

1. Segment A and A′ (2:8-9a and 2:17) - The Man's Arrival and Departure

The unit begins with the woman describing her lover's approach as a gazelle leaping over the mountains. These "mountains" are probably not Himalayan in height but they spatially separate his domain from that of his beloved. Presumably, he is coming from his house. This denotes at least some spatial distance that separates the lovers which will not only be repeated in the closing segment but accentuated by the poet.

The unit closes with the man departing and the woman tells him to "turn until the day breathes and the shadows flee." It is unclear whether by "turn" (סבב) she is

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[152] e.g. Roberts sees three segments in a unified poem. Roberts 2007: 102-04. Keel treats the unit as five once separate songs redacted together. Keel 1994: 95-118.

[153] Roberts 2007: 109.

[154] Roberts (2007: 104, nn.3, 5) highlights how the foxes motif (2:15) is a problem for coherence.

asking him to *return* to her or telling him to *turn away*.[155] Nevertheless, since he has been with her thus far, the logical implication of either directive is that of a spatial distance introduced between them, whatever the instigating reason(s) might be. Even the added complexity of interpreting עד שׁ (which has been translated in at least four ways—until; when; while; before)[156] and the equally ambiguous temporal phrase that follows it[157] does not mitigate this spatial implication of סׂב.

2. Segments B and B′ (vv.9b and 14) - The Man's Attempts to See Her

In Segment B, having traversed the mountains to reach the woman, the lover is portrayed in 2:9 as standing behind what is described by her as כתלנו "our wall." The word כתל has an equivalent in the modern Hebrew כותל and is related to the Akkadian *kutlu* (a rail, fence or side-wall).[158] Its Aramaic form is found in Dan. 5:5 and Ezra 5:8. It is correct then to think "*our* wall" is synecdoche for her house[159] but it could have the added implication that this is a frequent trysting venue for the couple. Roberts prefers to think it refers to a common possession of both lovers. However, the obstacle of the wall and the man's possible clandestine meetings mitigates against this viewpoint.[160]

Segment B′ is a similar to B. The couple are on either side of a barrier. First, it is a wall of the house that separates them. Now, it is a natural wall of stone that creates the division. In both segments is an emphasis upon the man craning and peering to get a glance at his beloved (2:9, 14). But apart from her house, where exactly is she next? Most translations prefer to render her next location in the outdoors. A typical rendition of the first lines of 2:14 are as follows:

line 1	יונתי בחגוי הסלע	My dove in the clefts of the rock
line 2	בסתר המדרגה	in the crannies of the cliff
line 3	הראיני את־מראיך	Let me see your face

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[155] Vulg. has *reverteré* "come back" and LXX ἀπόστρεψον "turn away." Fishbane has, " 'When' (or 'before') ... the shadows flee, set out my beloved ..." making the man stay with the woman all night until the morning. Fishbane 2005: 80.

[156] "when" (JPS); "until" (NRSV, KJV, Pope, Murphy); "while" (REB) or "before" (NJB, Fox).

[157] Exum asks, "does the fleeing of the shadows refer to their lengthening until they disappear, as day draws to a close (cf. Jer. 6:4), or to their disappearance when the sun rises?" Exum 2005: 131.

[158] Black, George and Postgate 2000: 171.

[159] Keel 1994: 96; cf. Budde 1898: 10; Murphy 1985: 308; Estes 2010: 325.

[160] See Roberts 2007: 117 n.56.

This conveys the impression of her playing hide-and-seek on a remote hillside or cave. Stoop-van Paridon thinks this is just a figure of speech for the woman who is still ensconced in her home.[161]

I offer here another possibility—that the woman is working in a vineyard. This interpretation does not affect the meaning of the unit as a whole, nor indeed any plot as such. It would affect one's understanding of lines 2 and 3 but not necessarily line 1. Stoop-van Paridon sees lines 1-2 related to "places where doves lived"[162] and this imagery could be retained within line 1 in my perspective.

That the woman is in a vineyard would largely depend upon the meaning of מדרגה. The LXX translator does not see a "cliff" at all but uses the genitive προτειχίσματος (cf. 2 Sam. 20:15; 1 Kgs 20:23; Lam. 2:8), a word difficult to translate but roughly meaning a "first wall" of some kind.[163] The translator may have the earlier "wall" in mind, possibly continuing that context. The Targum and Peshitta were not satisfied with this meaning and substituted with המגדלות (towers). On the other hand, the meaning of "cliff" is probably found in Ezek. 38:20, the only other place in the Hebrew Bible where מדרגה is used. Another late meaning, which I conjecture to be the one used in the Song, is that of "terrace" or "level" such as one finds in vineyards. *HALOT* lists such a meaning for "step" and "stair" in middle Hebrew.[164] Apparently, a root existed in proto-Semitic as "d-r-g" which has evolved into several words in the cognate languages.[165] Narrowing down these cognates, for our purposes we find the Arabic *daraja* is "step, stair, flight of steps" and can also mean "rank, degree, grade." Commentators sometimes opt for other meanings related to terrain. Even here, one can see the influence of the root d-r-g in the Arabic *daraj* "way, route, course"[166] and the Akkadian *daragu* and *durgu* "path."[167] However, in Song 2:14, the idea of gradation is what, I suggest, is being visualised by the word מדרגה, namely one of a number of levelled surfaces built into the landscape for agricultural production.

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[161] Stoop-van Paridon 2005: 133. Rashbam thinks she might still be in her room.

[162] Stoop-van Paridon 2005: 133.

[163] *Liddell-Scott-Jones* 42219.

[164] *HALOT* 4850; Jean and Hoftijzer 1965: 60.

[165] See Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 259; Arad 2005: 74; Hecker 2007: 52.

[166] Wehr 1976: 276.

[167] *HALOT* 4850; *BDB* 2210. A word in Arabic, sometimes referred to in Song interpretation because of its similarity to מדרגה, is *madrajat* (mountain track) which *BDB* understands as "steep places" and *HALOT* maintains is a "mountain thoroughfare."

As concerning line 3 of 2:14, when commenting upon why the man's sighting of the woman is oddly couched in the plural, מראיך (literally, "your appearances"), Estes inadvertently touches upon what the man's situation could have been by describing what he wants from her, namely " ... a total view of her appearance rather than a partial glimpse from a distance."[168] One scenario which fits his catching glimpses of the woman, perhaps intermittent appearances of her, is that the man is behind a mortarless stone wall with unfilled crevices in between. The woman is "in the clefts of the rock" from his vantage point.

The phrase בסתר המדרגה would then refer to hidden places of a (vineyard) terrace: the woman is semi-concealed (by growth) on a terraced hillside enclosed with a retaining wall. This could be near the woman's family home if archaeological findings are anything to go by.[169] There is definitely an element of "hide-and-seek" here, but she is not doing it deliberately. Rather, the lover is watching her from one side of this retaining wall and is catching glimpses of her from behind its nooks and crannies.

line 1	My dove in the clefts of the rock
line 2	in the hidden places of the [vineyard] terrace
line 3	let me see your sightings (i.e. glimpses of you)

This imagery contributes to a more coherent and robust leitmotif of the Song's vineyard theme especially the role of the woman as keeper of the family vineyards (1:6) and the sudden mention of "vineyards" in 2:15. The lovers being on either side of a retaining wall (B′) is symmetrical with their being on two sides of the house wall (B). It also fits in better with the reality of vineyards sited near dwellings which the poet might have visualised.[170] Fishbane entertains the possibility that the new context of 2:14 is that of the fields but then rejects the idea because he thinks the shift in imagery must be an entirely new venue.[171] There is a shift in location, and time, from the house to the (family) vineyard but this keeps the woman within the spatio-literary boundaries of her house, an important space which keeps recurring in the non-regal units.

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[168] Estes 2010: 326.

[169] See e.g. Gibson 2001: 133.

[170] The possibility exists of polysemous wordplay in the word מדרגה meaning both "cliff" and (vineyard) "terrace." Certainly, in post-biblical Hebrew both meanings are attested.

[171] Fishbane 2015: 75.

3. Segment C: (vv.10-13) Spring Invitation

The central segment of the unit denoting the crucial part of the scene is the man's invitation which itself forms an ABA pattern chiasm.[172] The central theme is established by the repetition "arise my love."[173] As in 1:8, where the woman is urged to צאי־לך "go out" to her lover's dwellings, the invitation is now repeated but more forcefully. This is accomplished through the imagery of an opportune spring season—a time of blossoming and singing[174]—but especially through exhortative appeals with the words in 2:10b, קומי לך רעיתי יפתי ולכי־לך "arise, go, my beautiful companion and get going" and repeated in 2:13, קומי לך ... ולכי־לך "arise, go ... and get going." Significantly, the verbs are constructed, as in 1:7-8 (צאי־לך), with the dative, which Keel calls the *dativus commodi* ("for yourself"/ "for your sake").[175] The construction underscores the persuasion. The verbs are also relayed in couplets, demonstrating the intensity of his fervour.[176] Whether one translates as "go" or "come away,"[177] this is a clear, heartfelt appeal to the woman to leave her house and go away with the man. This "call" is similar in construction to that of Jonah קום לך "arise, go" or Abraham לכי־לך "go your way."[178]

The man's speech is not only at the centre of a chiasm but it is marked. Dialogue in the Song is frequently untagged; identities of speakers must be worked out by the reader using language and context. In 2:10a, however, the direct speech of the man, is marked, "my beloved replied and said to me," by what Stendebach calls the standard discourse formula.[179] The poet has unusually taken pains to establish these appeals as coming from the man even though the identity of the speaker can be established from the context.

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[172] See Roberts 2007: 109-10 for an analysis of the structure. Cf. Murphy 1990: 140.

[173] Keel 1994: 100.

[174] There may be some polysemous wordplay occurring in v.12b as זמיר can either mean "singing" or "pruning."

[175] Keel 1994: 100; cf. Joüon-Muraoka 2011 §133d

[176] Bergant 2001: 29

[177] Keel argues that when two such imperatives occur in combination, they always have the sense of "arise" and "go." Keel 1994: 100.

[178] Cf. Butting 2000: 143-45.

[179] i.e. ענה ... ואמר, Stendebach 2001: 217-18.

4. Segment C′: (vv.15-16) Foxes in vineyards

A good start in tackling these two important verses is to ask five questions:

> Is this plain or metaphorical speech?
> Is the tenor negative or positive?
> What does it relate to?
> Who are the speakers?
> Who are the addressees?

Only a few take the "foxes" as being non-metaphorical. Garrett, for example, believes this is all about a *game* of chasing little foxes ... for playful young lovers.[180] As such, a chorus of voices calls upon the young couple to help in the game. Most interpreters, however, take the foxes as a metaphor. The most popular interpretations are that the vineyard symbolises the (sexual/spiritual) life of one or both lovers, or even their relationship, and the foxes represent some kind of threat to this.[181] Christians especially have tended to interpret the foxes as being sin or demonic powers that jeopardise faith in God (Origen), or even heretics who damage faith in churches (Bede).[182] Other interpretations take them as some kind of emotional thieves—"anxieties, suspicions, cares" (Bernard of Clairvaux)—or behaviours which ruin love relationships: "dishonesty, selfishness, impatience, or even reluctance to adjust, apologize or forgive."(Glickman)[183] For the rabbis of the Midrash, Rashi and those who followed him, the foxes were the Egyptian subjugators of the vineyard of Israel.

Other figurative explanations that have surfaced in the last few decades are: the deflowering of the woman (Noegel and Rendsburg);[184] stratagems of other lovers to consummate their love in secret (Weems);[185] a sexual double-entendre since noses poking up through the vines could symbolise corresponding male and female sexual symbols (Goulder);[186] city guards who abuse defenceless women

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[180] Garrett 2004: 161.

[181] For the view that believes these "foxes" spoil the couple's relationship, see e.g. Munro 1995: 92; Hess 2005: 97-98; Fishbane 2015: 77.

[182] Holder 2011: 83.

[183] Glickman 2004: 83.

[184] Ullendorrff 1979: 448, quoted in Noegel and Rendsburg 2009: 164.

[185] Weems 1997: 394.

[186] Goulder 1986: 24.

(Falk);[187] and the wild nature of sexuality that needs to be tamed (Landy).[188] Indeed, the foxes are so much of a puzzle to some that they seem out of place with the surrounding material.

The tenor of the metaphor is also very important. A few read it positively—Murphy, for example, suggests it to be as a tease by the woman who because of her inaccessibility saucily retorts to the man that she is readily accessible to other young men (=foxes).[189] Most interpreters, however, understand these foxes to pose a threat to the vineyard. The majority of interpreter take "foxes" as a negative metaphor. In metaphor theory, there is a concept called "point of similarity" or "common domain factor" which refers to the intended focus of a metaphorical concept. The common domain factor for "foxes" would relate to specific qualities of the animal, not every unique property (characteristic or attribute) of a fox. In this instance, the source domain of this negative metaphor is FOXES, which retains the connection with the piel form of the verb חבל meaning "to ruin" (2:15; cf. Ecc. 5:5; Job 17:1).

In texts of antiquity, wild creatures were frequently (though not always) seen as destructive predators and the enemies of humanity.[190] Foxes, more specifically, are also frequently described in pejorative terms. A short selection of examples can be presented here: Foster relates how foxes were seen as "vain, cowardly and deceitful" in certain Sumerian compositions.[191] Collins describes how in the Hittite literature, the fox could be useful if denigrating the enemy.[192] One example, she cites, is from a letter of Hattušili I in which the king counsels, "don't take the side of the fox who always does hostile things." In this vein, one can cite from Assyria, Esarhaddon's prism, "the seditious rebel ... to Elam like a fox fled away."[193] Greek poet Theocritus writes: "Two foxes lurk nearby; one prowls down the vine rows, stealing the ripe fruit, while the other pits all her cunning against the boy's satchel."[194] In addition to their destructiveness and wile, foxes have

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[187] Falk 1982: 118.

[188] Landy 2011: 240-41.

[189] Murphy 1990: 141.

[190] Breier 2018: 657-72.

[191] Foster 2002: 278.

[192] Collins 2002: 241.

[193] British Museum 121005, Column 1, Line 54-55.

[194] Theocritus, *Idylls* I, 48-50; cf. *Idylls* V, 111-112. See other examples from the Greek world in Hagedorn 2003: 341-42.

attracted other pejorative connotations such as trespassing, hiding in the day,[195] skulking behind walls and peeking through gaps (cf. Ezek. 13:4).

Taking its negative tenor into consideration, it is possible to take the utterance about "catching foxes" as coming from the woman's brothers as a verbal attack against the couple. Grammatically and linguistically, this is feasible. This study takes the brothers' function in the Song as fulfilling Propp's villain or Greimas' opponent. They oppose their sister's relationship. Although their motives are not perfectly clear, they do not want her to leave with her lover. Hence, the speech in 2:15 is their attempt at derailing the relationship. This theme of opposition is best treated *in toto* and will be deferred until the next chapter.[196]

5. Negative Occurrences in this Unit

5.1. Inaccessibility

Despite Keel's view, that the unit aims "to bring about a movement on the part of the woman that will make her accessible to the lover,"[197] several motifs are combined in order to create a stronger sense of *inaccessibility*. Stoop-van Paridon points out that the five nouns at the beginning of 2:14 create the metaphor of doves and their residences in order to emphasise the isolation of the woman in her home.[198] The underlying Hebrew phrase meaning "hidden in the secret places of the rock" is used in Obad. 1:3; Jer. 49:16 for Edom's false sense of security because it thinks it is ensconced in safety. From the vantage point of archaeological explorations at es-Sela, one cannot but help recall its difficult terrain, with its foreboding wadis boxing in a single rocky promontory that leads to what would have been an otherwise isolated, inaccessible Edomite mountaintop fortress.[199] There may be some overlap in the target meaning of the Song's metaphor. Similar to how YHWH finds offense in Edom's cocooned security and distance from him, there may be an element of frustration in the man's words in Song 2:14. The woman is ensconced in her (walled) environment;

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[195] E.g. Esarhaddon Prism, British Museum 121005, Column 5, line 25: "Whither can the fox go in the sunlight?"

[196] p.206.

[197] Keel 1994: 103.

[198] Stoop-van Paridon 2005: 133.

[199] See Da Riva 2019.

the man yearns for her to come away, with him. His repeated attempts at getting a glimpse of her as well as his persuasion for her to come away underscore this.

5.2. Sibling Conflict

Seen as a verbal attack, the speech in 2:15 would fall under a cluster of behaviours which includes name-calling, put-downs, sarcastic remarks, verbal threats, and public humiliation. With such a view, the speech is potentially divisive to the couple's intimacy and unity.

5.3. Tardiness

Like 1:7-8, here is another subtle inclusion of the woman's lack of response to the man's appeals. His appeal to "come away" with him has ended in failure. Instead, she possibly urges (compels?) him to return to her, to her home (2:17).[200]

5.4. Segregation

There is a segregation of the male and female lovers. The poet decisively dissociates the man's words from those of his beloved isolating her on one side of the ontological divide, while placing his presence as he watches her and his appeals, on the other. He even has a separate section of direct speech to himself, distanced from her descriptions of him within distinct, nested inclusio and different register of speech.

5.5. Separation

The negative outcome of affairs mentioned above is accentuated by the poet's use of the phrase הרי בתר (mountains of *'bether'*) in 2:17. While the meaning of *bether* has posed some difficulty (and is often translated as "spices" or less commonly, as a location)[201] it more likely refers to separation. Garrett translates הרי בתר as "cleft mountains" since the root בתר means to "split" or "cut in two," in other words, to

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[200] Depending on the meaning of סב "turn."

[201] Works (including lexica) frequently translate בתר as "spices" in order to tie הרי בתר with 8:14 הרי בשׂמים "mountains of spices" or 4:6 "mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense" and with *Malabathron*, a spice from India and China mentioned by Horace and Pliny (Snaith 1993: 44; Haupt 1902a: 53). All this is conjecture. Theodotion (and the Syriac) simply render the word as "fragrant" but Aquila, Symmachus and the Vulgate take it as a toponym.

separate two entities.[202] This meaning of בֶּתֶר is attested elsewhere.[203] As the word is a segholate noun within a construct relationship, הרי בתר could be translated "mountains of division" or "mountains of separation." While the mountains may be cleft in themselves, more importantly they separate the lovers spatially. Spatial separation is a common trope of love poetry. The separation is described in much the same way Shakespeare uses the ocean to divide two shores upon which the lovers await each other:

> Let this sad int[e]rim like the ocean be
> Which parts the shore, where two contracted new
> Come daily to the banks, that when they see
> Return of love, more blest may be the view[204]

Similarly, one Egyptian love poem uses the desert for similar effect:

> If only you come to your sister swiftly,
> Like a gazelle bounding over the desert . . .[205]

In Song 2:17, the poet does not simply use "mountains" as has been used in its opening; instead, the mountains either "separate" the lovers or they are "separated" just as the lovers are.

Sexual interpretations of the "cleft mountains" as breasts (Garrett, Keel, Noegel and Rendsburg)[206] or pudenda (Haupt)[207] distract from, even undermine, the literal layer of the text. The "mountains" create the spatial division between his house and her house. A sexual interpretation at this point destroys the Song's distinct cyclical feature of convergence and divergence of the couple, and

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[202] For cleft mountains, see NRSV; Garrett 2004: 63. Cf. Falk 1982: 119; Carr 1984: 104.

[203] In Gen. 15:10, the verbal form is used. Abraham is said to have split/separated (בתר) the animals in two. A common noun form appears in Jer. 34: 18 and 19, meaning two "divisions" or "parts" of a whole since oath takers are said to walk between the separated parts (בתרי) of the calf. Others who render בתר as "separation" are Murphy 1990: 139; Elliott 1989: 77. The LXX uses κοιλωμάτων meaning roughly "mountains of chasms"—based on κοιλωμάτων "hollow" (e.g. 1 Kgs 7:15 [Gk 7:3] Strabo 8.5.7; cf. *Liddell-Scott-Jones* 24675) and *DCH* offers "mountains of gorges"—both of which implicitly contain the theme of separation by connotation of "chasms."

[204] Sonnet No. 56.

[205] Fox 1985: 66.

[206] Keel 1994: 117; Garrett 2004: 161; Noegel and Rendsburg 2009: 194 note *p*.

[207] Haupt 1902b: 233.

particularly the latter which is what is being highlighted—the couple are not together at the end of this episode.

Events

1. The voice of my beloved. Behold he comes ... (2:8)
2. Behold he stands behind our wall ... (2:9)
3. He speaks and says to me ... (2:10)
4. The woman is working in the vineyard and the lover is attempting to see her (2:14)
5. Catch the little foxes [which] are ruining the vineyards ... (2:15)
6. He grazes among the lilies (2:16)
7. Turn (away?) my beloved ... on the mountains of separation. (2:17)

The events in this unit are all simultaneous events. The first three events are said to be simultaneous from the perspective of the speech which describes them but they are also part of a sequence, a progressive chain: the lover travels to see his beloved, attempts to catch a glimpse of her in her home, and invites her to come away with him. The fourth event is implied and is encapsulated in partly metaphorical speech, itself discursive. The fifth event is that of the interjection concerning foxes which I have, and will expand on, as being the divisive speech of the brothers. The seventh event is implied in the directive to "turn." That the lover has indeed "turned," that is, it is an event, I infer from the phrase "mountains of separation," meaning the lovers have been separated.[208]

There is no causal connection between events 3 and 4. It appears the latter is a new scene. It is possible to see some causation between events 4 and 5 since both might have vineyards as a possible context and the speech about foxes concerns an event occurring in the vineyard, but this causal link is inferred via the fourth implied event. There is stronger causation between events 5 and 7. It could be argued that the proximity of the lovers is inhibited by the intervention of the brothers' speech, resulting in the lover departing.

Event 6, in the logic of the Song, is the woman's affirmation of love (2:16) that has resulted from the attempted break-up by the brothers. Her lover is feeding/shepherding among lilies, which refers to her lover in his own domain. This is best dealt with at the end of this study as there are three statements (2:16;

[208] Also see discussion on p.211.

6:3 and 7:10 [11]) that create progression in the Song.[209] Although this event 6 seems disconnected from the two events on either side, both events 6 and 7 are caused by the brothers speech.

In conclusion, there are two micronarratives which are connected thematically and contextually (her house) but which appear to provide an overarching negative sequence of events—of inaccessibility, inertia to act, wicked divisiveness and separation.

Song 3:1-5 The First Search

Introduction

Song 3:1-5 consists of the woman's nocturnal search for her lover (vv.1-4) and a second occurrence of the adjuration refrain (v.5). There is general agreement over the unity of this episode[210] but disagreements about whether the unit is independent, whether it relates to 2:8-2:17 or whether it is connected to 3:6-11 as part of a wider narrative.[211]

Those who consider the unit to be a stand-alone poem, do so for lack of seeing any connection with contiguous sections. Clearly, a crisis and a resolution exist in the unit and taken in isolation from the rest of the Song, the unit could appear to be a self-contained story. In viewing so, however, major questions remain—why is there a crisis at all? Why is it significant? Such questions pose difficulties when reading the unit as a standalone poem.

On the other hand, let us consider whether the search story might continue the events of the previous unit. Those who connect both units today are in the minority. Steinberg, for example, does so because of perceived associations with the wedding that follows (3:6 ff.). For him, the nature and purpose of 3:1-5 is a lucid dream in which the woman's pre-wedding jitters or longing for her beloved is revealed.[212] Will her beloved appear at the next morning's ceremony? Barbiero connects the earlier unit to this one via a mirroring of themes.[213] Repetition

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[209] p.289.

[210] Even anthologists view 3:1-5 as a single song. See e.g. Würthwein 1969: 47-48; Rudolph 1970: 137; Falk 1982: 24-25.

[211] Huwiler treats 3:1-11 as a single unit (Huwiler 1999: 262-68). Provan sees intentional juxtaposition of 3:1-5 and 3:6-11 although he does not regard 3:1-5 connected to 3:6-11 as a story (Provan 2000: 150-67).

[212] Steinberg 2014: 54-61, 156-58.

[213] The previous unit, however, had no search. Barbiero 2011: 127.

alone, however, cannot provide evidence that these units should belong together as part of a single set of events. Numerous past interpreters have understood 3:1-5 to be connected to the preceding account of the man's visit to his beloved's house. Many of these have been dramatists, who viewed the two units as distinct scenes of a continuing set of events[214] but the approach should not be linked to the dramatic perspective.[215]

Analysis

1. Dream?

It is strange that many render this unit a fantasy or a dream partly because the events begin in bed for there is no mention of sleep even.[216] Given that any account could conceivably start with a protagonist in bed, wide awake, any dream theory cannot rest upon this criterion alone.[217] We must look to other evidence to establish whether this is truly the case.

For others, the sequence of events seems surreal, especially the portrayal of a lone woman searching the streets at night.[218] It can still be pointed out, however, that the oft-perceived "surrealities" never transcend events that might be recognisable in the real world in order to deem this a dream. A night search, for example, is unusual but not impossible. Moreover, no elements occur to signal either the start or the end of the alleged dream-state, such as other texts of ancient near-eastern literature are inclined to include in cases of dreams. Nor is there a retrospective statement to say the woman was dreaming. This line of argument is essentially the same as I have taken for 5:2ff. and can be found in my recently published article "Shaken from Slumber."[219]

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[214] Both two-person and three-person dramatists consider these as two distinct scenes though not always as scenes in a single act. See Delitzsch 1993: 10; Harper 1902: 12-21; Bruno 1956: 35-37; Goulder 1986: 22-27.

[215] Non-dramatists are, e.g. Hontheim 1908: 1-14; Robert 1963: 56; Exum 1973: 53-56; Rendtorff 1986: 262-63; Carr 1984: 95-106; Elliott 1989: 67; Gledhill 1994: 131-46; Barbiero 2011: 127.

[216] See e.g. Delitzsch 1993: 57; Jastrow 1921: 180; Lys 1968: 139; Würthwein 1969: 48; Rudolph 1970: 155-56; Gordis 1974: 84; Falk 1982: 119; Estes 2010: 334.

[217] See comments by Murphy 1990: 145.

[218] E.g. Delitzsch 1993: 58; Garbini 1992: 209 "nocturnal dream"; Lys 1968: 139 "rêve d'amour."

[219] Fernandes 2019.

2. Has the Lover Disappeared or Has He not yet Appeared?

The phrase "I sought him but did not find him" (3:1) supports two possible scenarios which could precipitate the mentioned crisis: either the lover was with the woman and has now disappeared or she had been expecting him but he has not appeared. We need not be presently concerned about the reason for either scenario. This will be addressed in the next chapter.[220]

The first scenario is often held by those who see the unit as a post-love-scene, in which the woman, now awake, reaches out to her lover who has disappeared from the bed.[221] The Septuagint supports this scenario with an addition, "I called him but he hearkened not to me," as though the lover was present earlier. These surplus words to the MT appear to have been added in order to mirror the text from the later search episode (5:6).

A second scenario is that the woman was expecting (or hoping) for his presence. Her actual search is not yet underway. The word בקשׁ could support either a sense of waiting on someone (e.g. lions seeking their food from God, Ps. 104:21) or a more frantic, peripatetic search or a passive looking for someone's presence (cf. 1 Chr. 16:11; 2 Chr. 9:23; Ps. 27:8). In this scenario then, the woman's passive looking (3:1) inexorably leads to a more determined, physically challenging search (3:2).

The Hebrew expression בלילות, which describes the woman lying on her bed, is the plural form and literally translates as "in the nights" or "night after night."[222] On the other hand, Joüon (and others who follow him) understand בלילות as referring to a single night, a *pluralis compositionis*.[223] In his grammar, Joüon discusses בלילות as a *pluralis compositionis* and writes: "In poetry, לילות sometimes seems to mean *parts of the night, the nocturnal hours*."[224] Between the two scenarios above, the second is more viable. The fact that the woman is on her bed בלילות "in the parts of the night" more resembles her being awake in the late hours, looking out for her lover than sleeping or dreaming. She is like an alert watchman (Isa. 21:8) awaiting her lover who has not yet come.

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[220] p.211.

[221] Budde 1898: 14; cf. Snaith 1993: 46; Goulder 1986: 27; Pope 1977: 415.

[222] See e.g. Roberts 2007: 131. Cf. Estes 2010: 334; Bloch and Bloch 1995: 158; Murphy 1990: 145; Garrett 2004: 170; Fox 1985: 118; Linafelt 2002: 323-45.

[223] Joüon 1909: 172. Cf. Pope 1977: 415; Murphy 1990: 145; Barbiero 2011: 129.

[224] Joüon-Muraoka 2011: §136b.

3. The City Search

Since she is portrayed as deciding to go to the city and to search its streets, it means this is where she expects her lover to be. She is not concerned to look nearer than the city. Such a depiction fits better with a scenario of the lover having not yet arrived from the city rather than him disappearing from her bed.

While it is not made explicit in this episode that the woman is living outside the city (indeed some think she lives in the city), the unit has thematic resonances with the preceding one—they both begin with the woman in her room. When reading on from the previous country unit, there is a literary gap concerning the house's location but it is filled by contextualisation from previous non-regal units. The woman must follow *country* tracks to get to his dwelling in 1:8, and he traverses the *hills* to get to her house in 2:8. That is, at least one of their houses is in the city while the other is in the country and if she looks for him in the city, then her house is in the country or at least at a distance that she can reach it on foot.

In 3:3, the woman encounters "the keepers that circle the city." There is no implication that the woman is antagonistically confronted by these guards. Instead, she blandly says in 3:3, "the keepers found me." No sooner than she encounters the guards, she meets with her lover (3:4).

4. The Mother's House

When she finds her lover, the woman brings him back (3:4) to, as she says, "the house of my mother." It is the very one from where she started, her own house.

The way the woman ushers her lover to her house—she "held him and did not let him go"—is curious for it contains a hint of duress on her part. The negation of רפה especially denotes an element of determinism exercised upon the part of what is being indomitably held onto (e.g. Prov. 4:13 where the youth must hold onto instruction, preventing it from slipping from his grasp). Given the added nuance of the man not showing up at her house earlier when she clearly was expecting him, one cannot but ask the question whether he chose not to do so. If so, is he now being compelled to be with her, at her house, without being given the option to exercise a choice against her own desire? One wonders whether the poet has introduced an element of irony with this particular action at the end of the entire episode.

In the Chester Beatty Papyrus, the boy is lovesick because the girl does not appear for a week because her mother forbids her to. When he finally holds her, he says, "I hug her—and she drives illness from me."[225] Immediately following his sentiment of relief and joy, even then, the poet surprises us by making him issue the following sardonic pronouncement, "*But* she has left me for seven days."[226] My point is that by the end of Song 3:4, a tidbit of irony could be left in the mouth of the reader in addition to the greater portion of the theme of sexual desire. In the Egyptian poem, the girl is prevented from seeing her lover by outside influence but in Song 3:1-5, one must ask, "what has held the man back?" A potential answer lies elsewhere in the Song.[227]

Events

1. On my bed by night I sought him ... (3:1)
2. I sought him but did not find him (3:2)
3. [While I was searching] The watchmen found me (3:3)
4. I passed them and found him (3:4)
5. I held him ... and brought him into my mother's house ... (3:4)

All the events are retrospective and explicit. There is a strong causal connection in this sequence of events. This is clearly a short narrative, longer than a micronarrative, which progresses from the woman looking out for the man at her home, to searching for him in the city, to finding him and bringing him to her home.

Song 5:2-6:3 Shaken from Slumber, Bereft and Beaten

Introduction

Song 5:2-6:3 consists of a description by the Song's female protagonist of a visit by her lover who attempts to gain entry to her house but fails. The story then takes a dramatic turn with the man withdrawing, the woman following him only to find he has disappeared. As she searches, she encounters the night watchmen (3:4). Unlike the previous occasion, she is now beaten and has her veil confiscated. All described above happens in 5:2-8. The unit ends with a dialogue between the woman and the daughters of Jerusalem, in 5:8-6:3.

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[225] Fox 1985: 55.

[226] Ibid.

[227] Addressed under "Third Sequence" on p.211.

Analysis

My intention is to summarise the analysis of 5:1-8 with reference to my recent article which primarily deals with the opening statement by the woman, "I slept but was awake (5:2),"[228] leading to the theories that she is fantasising,[229] or dreaming[230] or in a state of semi-wakefulness.[231] My investigation concluded that the evidence for the events in 5:2-8 are the real experiences of the woman in the Song rather than those of a dream. I affirm with others that she is initially asleep, perhaps restlessly and deeply agitated about something.[232] This is where I part company with those who think she remains asleep.

Proponents of the dream theory have focused on the formal sleep expression but have paid insufficient attention to any wake-up expression. The absence of an expected formula such as "X awoke," led me to hunt for another possible formal method to show that the sleeper has indeed awoken. After examining thirty-three texts from the Hebrew Bible and from elsewhere in the ancient Near East, I found that when no explicit wake-up term is utilised, an "agent of arousal" (="agent of disturbance") is employed instead to wake the sleeping character, and is a common method of signalling to the reader that the threshold of sleep has been crossed. This agent is typically the touch of the waker, their voice, or a noise produced. In 5:2b, such a typical wake-up expression is used to signal the reader that the sleep state has finished (5:2a) and the woman is shaken out of her slumber by the noise at the door, the lover's knock and his voice (5:2b). What follows 5:2b is, therefore, consequently subsequent to the sleep event.

I further explored a reading of the story that distinguishes between the woman's awareness of a sound and the realisation of its source. This increases the possibility that the woman is disturbed from sleep.

Finally, I questioned whether the alleged unrealistic elements—especially that of the veiling and beating, which lead to the dream designation—are necessarily beyond the pale of reality. I examined social customs to show that the guards' behaviour could exist within that cultural milieu. The beating may reflect the social attitudes of the guards rather than pointing to any behaviour of the woman

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[228] Fernandes 2019: 44-76.

[229] e.g. Barbiero who employs the term 'burlesque'. See Barbiero 2011: 14.

[230] See Fernandes 2019: 46 nn.8-9.

[231] Pope 1977: 511; cf. Snaith, 1993: 72.

[232] See e.g. Fox 1985: 143; Alter 2016: 39 n.2.

(the assumption she is a prostitute, for example) or legal infringement by her. As a precursor to this conclusion, I explored in some detail the subject of veiling in the ancient Near East and found the practice for a woman primarily represented her affinity to man. Although widows retained their head coverings, unmarried women who were not married, including prostitutes, went unveiled. This last finding especially led me to review the so-called evidence for veiled prostitutes from Gen. 38 and reject this as a faulty reading.[233] Instead, I have argued that the episode of the beating and the confiscation of the head covering in 5:7 is a literary device which repeats and re-emphasises the woman's loss of affinity to her lover presented in 5:6. In 5:7, her head covering is described as a רדיד, a particular type of garment attested in Assyrian textile texts and included within a category of large wraps and shawls.[234] As such, she could use it to cover her head when she is in public. Incidentally, Tamar's head covering in Gen. 38:14 is described as a צעיף. These are probably specific and different garments but both function as head coverings in their respective texts.[235] The guards who remove her head covering function as symbolic characters. Though they retain their realistic attributes—and they may well be fleeting but real characters in the narrative—their function is to represent the major idea of the narrative at this point, the couple's separation. The theoretical basis for this, in narrative terms, I will discuss later.[236] At least three issues were left undeveloped or omitted from my article. These are relevant here.

1. Liquid Myrrh

The first relates to whether the enigmatic מור עבר "liquid myrrh" left by the man on the door handle (5:5) is a clue to his high status. Some think the myrrh originates from the woman, as she prepares sexually for the man.[237] The repetition better fits a discovery of the substance than her wearing it. Perhaps it is difficult to prove where the myrrh originated but given its associations with the

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[233] Judah mistakes Tamar as a prostitute because she *sits at the city gate* (38:14), having covered her פנה "face" (Gen. 38:15). Prostitutes frequented the boundary of the city or the gate e.g. Rahab (Josh. 2.15); the prostitute Samson visits (Judg. 16:1-3) and evidence later in history. See Fernandes 2019: 62 n.68.

[234] Attested as *rad-di-di or ra-di-du*. Nos. 96.6', 98.11', 105.3' in Fales and Postgate 1992: 109, 111, 113.

[235] See Fernandes 2019: 62-63.

[236] p.219.

[237] Exum 2005: 195; Keel 1994: 194.

specifically "flowing myrrh" that drip from the man's lips (5:13), I prefer to see it as originating from him. Is the myrrh metaphorical for his kisses here? The fact that the liquid is "flowing" suggests it is myrrh oil rather than his saliva. The shut out lover leaving fragrant oil has been associated with the *paraclausithyron* genre.[238] There are certainly dissimilarities, such as the absence of a complaint against the door[239] but there is also a close parallel with Lucretius's description of the "lover shut out, weeping, [who] often covers the doorposts with oil of marjoram, presses his love-sick kisses upon the door."[240] I agree with Murphy, who says the myrrh is a sign from the man as a token of his love and a tangible sign of his presence even though he disappears.[241] Even a mediocre quality myrrh procured from amazon.co.uk, applied to a knob leaves a lingering reminder for a few days. One wonders what liquid myrrh from ancient times, which was a rare, costly and elitist commodity might have done.[242] Nielsen describes the lovers in Song 5:5 saying, "It is clear that an ordinary couple [such as this] could not afford a daily use of frankincense, myrrh and other exotic aromata imported from countries far away."[243] So, the question remains, who is the man given he is able to afford or procure this liquid myrrh

2. A Solomon-Like Lover?

Another issue relates to when the daughters question the woman, why her lover is better than others. Is her description of her exquisite lover (5:10-16) a comparison to Solomon? Could it even be an indication that he is Solomon? Of course, a woman may compare her beau to countless jewels and spices and the grand metaphors would make him no more regal than an inglorious pauper. However, the words the woman uses to describe her lover, *in their totality*, remind the reader specifically of Solomon because the costly materials used for

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[238] Literally, "lament beside a door" from παρακλαίω "lament beside" and θύρα "door." This well-known literary trope is found in Sumerian, Egyptian, Greek and Latin love poetry. Those who see similarities to a *paraclausithyron* include Bergant 2001: 62-63; Pope 1977: 522-24; Fox 1985: 282-83.

[239] Murphy 1990: 169; Garrett 2004: 205.

[240] Lucretius: *De Rerum Natura* 4.1177-79.

[241] Murphy 1990: 171.

[242] Myrrh resin was mainly found in limited regions of southern Arabia. A lesser variety came from eastern Africa. The process of extracting the product from plants was tedious, producing only small amounts of perfume. See S. Ben-Yehoshua *et al.* 2011.

[243] Nielsen 1986: 93.

her descriptive metaphors appear also in the material inventory in 1 Kings 9:11-10:29.

Song 5:11-15	**1 Kgs**
Gold	9:11, 14, 28; 10:2, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 25
בשׂם "spices" and towers of מרקחים "sweet smelling herbs"	10:2, 10, 25
Myrrh	10:25
Ivory (שׁן)	10:18 (שׁן) 10:22 (שׂנהבים) cf. 2 Chr. 9:17)
Sapphires	אבן יקרה "Precious stones" (10:2,10, 11)
Cedar	10:27 and other refs x 6

Alabaster (שֵׁשׁ) does not appear in relation to Solomon in this particular account but in that of David providing שׁישׁ for a young Solomon (1 Chr. 29:2).[244] Apart from comparing the inventory of materials in the two texts, compare the manner that spices are emphasised in both. Although Brenner casts doubt as to whether some of the spices mentioned in the Song should be associated with Solomon,[245] what she fails to notice is that in no other place in the Hebrew Bible is there both an emphasis on spices along with an *immediate reemphasis* of their abundance

[244] Apparently, a synonym of שֵׁשׁ—*see HALOT* 9568.

[245] Brenner's concern is to address the view that the Song was written early. She does recognise that in the stories about Solomon, the blanket term *bosem* can be found. Brenner 1983: 75.

other than in 1 Kgs 10:10 and Song 5:13. The Song's ערוגת הבשם "beds/rows of spices" and a re-emphasis מגדלות מרקחים "towers of spices" to describe the lover's cheeks reminds the reader of the Solomon's procurement of a "great quantity of spices" which is reemphasised, "never again came such abundance of spices."[246] Finally, the summarising deuteronomic statement, "thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom" (1 Kgs 10:23) supports the daughter's question in Song 5:9, why is the lover superior to others? With all this in mind, we reiterate the question, is the woman hinting her lover is Solomon or is she comparing him to Solomon? This intriguing ambiguity remains unanswered in this particular unit.

A methodological question arises at this point. Why is 5:2-6:3 being treated as non-regal if the man is wealthy, possibly Solomon himself. The answer is that elsewhere, as here, wealth is only one possible clue to the high status of an individual. In this unit, the overall *setting* of the unit is non-regal. The sequence of events begins in the woman's house and her "high" *wasf* concerns the man who is not present with her (see below).

3. Are the Couple Together in 6:1-3?

The third and most important issue is whether the couple are back together in 6:1-3. The second question the daughters of Jerusalem ask the woman is "where has your lover gone?" Her response can be read in two parts. The first half of her response is in 6:2, "My beloved has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices, to graze [shepherd] in the gardens and to gather lilies." This is a crucial reply and must be interpreted correctly.

Andruska, Fischer, and others interpret the sentence as meaning the lover is not absent but is with the woman, and that they are making love.[247] Andruska uses this very interpretation to resist Spencer's "text of terror" view—that the woman has rejected the man and is subsequently raped in 5:7. Andruska argues that a woman raped does not immediately invite a man into her bed.[248] She essentially sees no unrequited love in 5:2-8. While I agree with Andruska that there is no rape in 5:7, I agree to an extent with Spencer's broader assertion, that

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[246] מרקח is a hapax which *HALOT* 9290 defines as a "spice, perfume."

[247] Fischer 2019:82.

[248] Andruska 2019: 6, 7 n.26, 134; Spencer 2017: 62, 63, 68–69, 73.

in 5:2-8 there exists a picture of unrequited love, even if it is momentary.[249] However, against Andruska I contend that in 6:3, the couple is not pictured in bed but rather they are separate.

There are several indications for this. The verb ירד (6:2), meaning "go down" or sometimes "go up," presupposes spatial antithesis. The man has gone away from the woman. The word פנה (6:1) "turned" also implies this spatial remoteness. Consider Jer. 6:4, where the day is said to have "turned away," creating the evening. Even when it seemingly means the opposite, "turn towards"—for example when appeals are made to YHWH to turn to the speaker (cf. Pss. 25:16; 119:132)—one cannot escape the connotations of physical or relational distance. The use of the word might also insinuate that their hearts have grown distant also (see Deut. 29:17; Deut. 31:18; Ps. 40:5). That the woman is "sick with love" (5:8) and must adjure the daughters to find her lover supports this.

Having said this, the real basis of conclusions like Fischer's and Andruska's, I suspect, arises not from their failing to grasp implications of distance in the word פנה but from their misunderstanding of what it means, metaphorically, for the man to have gone down to "his garden." Since the "garden" in Song 4:12-5:1 is the female protagonist, they think it must be so in 6:2 also. As Verde says of 6:11, "the metaphor of the garden always refers to the woman."[250] Since 4:12-5:1 metaphorically alludes to the sexual union of the couple, both passages, they think, must be consequently signifying this very same sexual theme. This viewpoint, however, must be challenged. A metaphor does not always need to be consistent in terms of its referent, even within a single text. This is evident from the use of "vineyard" in 1:6, 8:11, 12. One needs to ask how the woman as "garden" (4:12-5:1) relates to the man who is feeding in his "gardens." The difference between the singular and plural, I believe, is deliberate and can only be resolved if the temporal dimension of the entire Song is considered. We will return to this crucial issue in the next chapter.[251]

Before we end this section, a final note concerning my article "Shaken from Slumber" follows. Within it, I may have inadvertently conveyed the impression that the couple have separated permanently since I write that the forcibly

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[249] The woman does open the door eventually and her heart "dies" when the man leaves (5:6). This shows she loves him.

[250] Verde 2019: 197.

[251] See "Question/Anagnorisis of Man's House" on p.223.

removed woman's veil symbolises "the absence of her lover in her life" and that he "is no longer accessible to her."[252] I must clarify that the beating may indeed represent a more serious, perhaps trenchant, separation from which she finds it difficult to currently gain access to her lover but it need not symbolise a *permanent* breach either. In the woman's own mind, she is still her beloved's (6:3a). They love each other despite the ongoing separation.

Events

1. I slept[253] but my heart was awake (5:2a)
2. A sound! My beloved is knocking (5:2b)
3. Open to me … (5:2c)
4. My head is wet with dew … (5:2d)
5. I had put off my garment … I had bathed my feet (5:3)
6. My beloved put his hand to the latch, thrilling my heart (5:4)
7. I arose to open [the door] to my beloved (5:5a)
8. My hands dripped with myrrh … (5:5b-d)
9. I opened to my beloved (5:6a)
10. My beloved had turned and gone (5:6b)
11. My soul failed me when he spoke (5:6c)
12. I sought him … I called him … (5:6d-e)
13. The watchmen found me … beat me … (5:7a-c)
14. They removed my veil (5:7d)
15. I adjure you daughters … (5:8)
16. Why is your beloved better than others …? (5:9)
17. My beloved is … altogether desirable … (5:10-16)
18. Where has your beloved gone …? (6:1)
19. My beloved has gone down to his garden … to shepherd in the gardens and gather lilies (6:2)

Compared to the other units, this one contains the most events the majority of which are retrospective.

Event 2 is simultaneous as the woman speaks even as the lover calls out to her. Event 3 is discursive—the lover appeals to the woman to open the door and

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[252] Fernandes 2019: 64 (cf. p.68), 67.

[253] It is preferable to read ישנה as a past action (cf. 1 Kgs 3:20).

permit him entry. In event 4, the self-description of the lover's hair being wet with dew implies the retrospective event of his travelling to the woman's house. Event 5 is discursive but although it relates two retrospective events (her having changed and bathed), these are not actually part of the sequence. The actual event is that she responds to him and provides an excuse not to open the door. Finally, events 15-19 are discursive events: the woman adjures the daughters; this leads them to ask her two questions which she answers in turn. The unit is recognised to contain "a sustained narratological and dialogical cohesion that is unmatched in any other part of the Song"[254] and causation between the units is relatively straightforward even if the narrative is unusual.

Song 6:11-7:1 Garden, Vehicles and Dance

Introduction

This unit is considered to be the most difficult in the Song. With its complexities that include questions of textual integrity, tackling this unit might seem like a futile task. Mulder's question related to one verse in particular, "Does 6:12 even make sense?" probably sums it up.[255] Yet, despite numerous difficulties, a thorough analysis of these verses in this study has yielded abundant returns.

Analysis

1. Reunited in the Garden

Either the man or the woman begins, "I went down to a nut garden" (6:11).[256] Which person, however? Most think it is the woman[257] but there are good reasons to think it is the man.[258] The identity of the speaker in 6:11 is actually not that important for our purposes as the poet brings *both* protagonists together in the garden. It is important to note that they were separate before this time.

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[254] Roberts 2007: 199.

[255] Mulder 1992.

[256] אגוז is thought to be the "walnut." Cf. Pope 1977: 574-79. For Gersonides, it is "perfume" (in Kellner 1998: 77).

[257] Incidentally, LXX has an addition not found in MT but in 7:13: ἐκεῖ δώσω τοὺς μαστούς μου σοί "there I will give you my breasts."

[258] See e.g. Krinetzki 1981: 188-90; Elliott 1989: 159, 161; Deckers 1993: 194; Keel 1994: 222; Provan 2001: 349; Barbiero 2011: 323; Steinberg 2014: 244-5; Verde 2019: 197. For the idiom of going (down) to the garden" in ancient Near Eastern poetry, see Westenholz 1992: 382; Westenholz 1995: 2482.

Another important aspect is the need to establish *how* the garden in this instance is being used. The statement can be taken literally. The surface reading evokes the image of an agrarian inspection of some kind. The speaker goes to see the readiness of the plantations. Now that this surface meaning has been established, one can ask the following questions: Is it a sexual metaphor for the partner's body such as is used in 4:12-5:1 and in other literature?[259] Moreover, is it being used for sexual activity as in 4:12-5:1? Deckers, who assumes this garden entrée symbolises eroticism and sexuality and no "agricultural signification,"[260] repeats the mistake of the allegorists, who often leave nuances of surface meaning indeterminate. On the other hand, the way the "garden" is often viewed as an erotic metaphor demonstrates a methodological error. The "garden" is taken to be a sexual act but that meaning is really derived from 4:1-5:1. The symbolic meaning of a motif as it is used in one context is "freighted" unknowingly into another text without regard for the new context. An over-consistent Keel, by contrast, gets the nuance of 6:11 correct. He emphasises that the double entendre in the present context involves *checking* to see if the time for love is ready.[261] It is less about eroticism per se, or the couple being intimate, than it is about being the *opportune time* to be intimate. This nuance is crucial. The spring scenery functions as a potent reflecting imagery for this purpose, to provide a suitable physical backdrop for an invitation to intimacy (cf. 2:11-15), hence the words "I went ... to see if the vines have blossomed." In this way, if either the man or the woman is speaking, the literal garden can still have a double reference to the partner but not in precisely the same way the metaphor is used for the woman and her body in 4:12-5:1. Even if one of the two is visiting a literal nut grove to check it out, their real motive is to determine if the partner is ready for love. This implies they have been separated, at least briefly, possibly longer.

Taking the unit independently, it is impossible to be conclusive as to whether the garden, besides being literal, stands for the man (e.g. Assis 2009: 197; Andruska 2019: 73) or the woman (e.g. Garrett 2004: 232). The structure of the broader narrative and its thrust, however, offers some clues as to who the better candidate for the garden might be as well as clues to the speaker of 6:11. The

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[259] e.g. Papyrus Harris 500 (Grp. A, No 3; Grp. C, No. 18) in Fox 1985: 9, 26; Dumuzid-Inana B in Sefati 1998: 128-31.

[260] Deckers 1993: 195.

[261] Keel 1994: 222.

again, the poet could have left the identities ambiguous for the same kind of ambiguity occurs in 6:12.

2. Surprise or Exhilaration

The phrase לא ידעתי (6:12) literally means "I did not know" or "I do not know" (cf. Gen. 4:9; Gen. 28:16). It is frequently rendered "before I knew it" but to do so one either has to fill in the missing "before" or take the phrase idiomatically, which seems to have no precedent. The phrase that follows it, נפשי שׂמתני, is translated as "my soul/desire set me."[262] This would mean the speaker was taken by surprise in some way.

Roberts, who devotes considerable discussion concerning the structure of the verse, contends that "a single colon consisting only of the negative particle and a verb (לא ידעתי) is quite unusual for Hebrew poetry."[263] Roberts's view is supported by Shalom Paul who argues that the longer לא ידעתי נפשׁי "I did not know myself/my soul" and the similar לא־אדע נפשׁי "I do not know myself/my soul" in Job 9:21 are similar Hebrew idiomatic equivalents of *ramānšu la ide* "he does not know himself" that is found in Akkadian medical texts.[264] Paul explains how the Mesopotamian phrase describes the (partial) loss of consciousness in a person during a certain disease. Used as idioms, they connote the loss of mental composure from an overstimulation of the emotions, either from overwhelming suffering and sorrow as in the case of Job's pronouncement, which Paul translates as, "I am totally distraught/out of my mind"[265] or from great joy and exhilaration, which is what Song 6:12 might be alluding to. Fox provides some support for use of the Akkadian phrase in this way by supplying an Egyptian equivalent *smḥ ḏt* "to forget/be unaware of one's body" in which the boy in one love poem has not seen his beloved for a week and has now lost control of himself. Even physicians, he says, could not relieve the sickness of his heart.[266] One can see how נפשׁי plays a part in describing a person's consciousness also in Jonah 2:8[7] "when my soul (נפשׁי) fainted in me."

The phrase לא ידעתי נפשׁי then might denote overwhelming, joyous emotion. The most likely cause of this exhilaration is the unexpected sight of the partner.

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[262] e.g. RSV; NAB; Elliott 1989: 161.

[263] Roberts 2007: 251-3.

[264] Paul 1978.

[265] Paul 1978: 93. Seow (2013: 548) takes it as self-doubt, "I do not know myself."

[266] Fox 1985: 55, 156.

The speaker says in response, "I could hardly keep my composure" or "I am beside myself with joy." Depending on who the speaker of 6:11 is, there may be a change of speaker from the man to the woman.[267] Since the word נפשׁי is specifically and frequently used elsewhere in the Song in relation to the woman's feelings for her lover,[268] it could be her who responds to the sight of him but this is not a necessity. If Paul's rendition of לא ידעתי נפשׁי is correct, then נפשׁי, which precedes שׂמתני, might be doing double duty here and שׂמתני may then be translated as "it (my soul) set me among chariots."[269]

3. Conveyances

Regardless of the subject of שׂמתני, a preposition should come before the object מרכבות. This is missing in the MT although some medieval manuscripts include a *beth*. The phrase מרכבות עמי־נדיב is extremely difficult to translate. The word נדיב on its own could either mean "noble" or "princely,"[270] or "willing" (cf. Ex. 35:5; 2 Chr. 29:31) but עמי־נדיב as a whole is frequently accepted as the proper noun Amminadab.[271] This "path of least resistance" was first taken by the LXX. Yet, the respective translations of Aquila and Symmachus as "with the chariots of the *Prince* of my willing people"[272] and "with the chariots of the *leader* of the People" reveal that these earliest translators doubted the rendition Amminadab, instead deferring to the incorporation of majesty for עמי־נדיב. As Garrett notes, unless it had some significance for the ancient readers, the name Amminadab makes no sense. None of its appearances in the Hebrew Bible "is of sufficient stature to give significance or symbolism to the chariots here."[273]

Keel notes that a sudden introduction of "city" vocabulary into the garden imagery "... transposes one to the courtly or military world, already encountered in 1:2-4; 1:9-12; 3:6-11; 6:8-10."[274] The connotations arising from the words like מרכבות and נדיב (usually "chariots" and "noble/prince") convey the impression that the woman has been taken by surprise by conveyances belonging to military or nobility. Steinberg draws a parallel with the sudden meeting of the chariot of

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[267] Thus Robert, *et al.* 1963: 244; Murphy 1990: 178-79.

[268] 1:7; 3:1, 2, 3, 4; 5:6; 6:12. Cf. Deckers 1993: 194.

[269] שׂמתני could, in theory, refer to the woman if the man is speaking ("she set me").

[270] *HALOT* 5999.

[271] Also, Vg, some Hebrew Mss. and KJV.

[272] Aquila incorporates both "willing" and "prince" in a single translation!

[273] Garrett 2004: 233.

[274] Keel 1994: 225.

Mehy in Chester Beatty I, saying that the woman finds herself in the chariot of a nobleman.[275] Zakovitch's reversal of the words עמי־נדיב to render it "nobleman of the people" (cf. Num. 21:18; Ps. 47:10 [9]; Job 34:18)[276] offers something to think about but if one prefers not to tamper with the order of the words, another helpful suggestion is that of Garret who takes עמי־נדיב as the woman's sobriquet for her beloved "my noble beloved," a counterpart to the man's use of בת־נדיב "noble daughter" for her (7:2). Garrett reads עמי as a substitute for the more familiar דודי "beloved."[277] Still, the use of עמי behind proper names like Ammizabad (1 Chr. 27:6) and Ammiel (Num. 13:12), where its meaning could be "my uncle" rather than "my beloved," needs further clarification and it is preferable, for now at least, to retain the meaning of "my noble people."

An alternative, from Rashi, is that *ammi-nadib* is the same as *am-nadib*, the *yodh* being redundant as in שׁכני סנה "dwelling in the bush" (Deut. 33:16); גנבתי יום "stolen in the day-time" (Gen. 31:39); and רבתי עם "full of people" (Lam. 1:1). Although Rashi prefers "a willing people," the phrase עמי־נדיב could, if Rashi's treatment of the *yodh* is correct, also mean "a princely/noble people."

As for מרכבות, Bergant thinks the imagery possibly corresponds to that of the litter of Solomon in 3:7 since both the litter and chariot are majestic vehicles of transportation.[278] An even closer connection between the earlier "palanquins" and מרכבות can be established if one accepts that מרכבה is not specifically "chariot" here but bears a late meaning of "riding vehicle." Deckers accepts "vehicle" is a plausible alternative but provides no evidence.[279] I have attempted to fill this gap by looking at the case for a late meaning of מרכבה in the Hebrew Bible and amongst the cognate languages of Arabic, Aramaic, Syriac and Mandaic. While I have not included this research here in order to reclaim space, the fruit of these labours is that there is evidence that a late sense emerged for מרכבה as "riding vehicle." This later connotation would include the likes of litters or palanquins. One could therefore legitimately read in 6:12 that the woman is being set among "riding vehicles"—rather than the more specific "chariots"—such as the מטה and אפריון mentioned in Song 3:7-9, thereby providing some linkage with them.

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[275] Mehy is not the lover but an obstacle to him as he journeys to his beloved. Steinberg 2014: 245.

[276] Zakovitch 2004: 240.

[277] Garrett 2004: 233. Whether Garrett himself sees any majesty in "noble" is unclear.

[278] Bergant 2001: 80.

[279] Deckers 1993: 193.

4. Insistence to Return

Roberts notes that 7:1 exhibits an opening in which cohesion between the parts of the verse is exceptionally strong.[280] However, whether 7:1 should be appended to 6:11-12 or to 7:2-11 is controversial, indeed it is impossible to determine on the basis of formal features alone. In the end, Roberts decides to attach it to the *wasf* beginning in 7:2.[281] Yet, it does not seem to belong to the *wasf* either and it could be a shift in setting within 6:11-12, with some thematic coherence, much the same way the scenery shifts from the lover skipping over the hills (2:8) to his standing outside the window (2:9) to standing next to a wall of stone (2:14). The conclusive proof that it follows from 6:11-12 will be discussed in the next chapter, in accordance with the narrative's trajectory.

Who are the speakers in 7:1a? The addressee appears to be the woman (denoted by בָּךְ). A clue to the identity of the addressers lies in her response to them (7:1b); the most obvious grammatical implication of the masc. pl. form of מה־תחזו "why will you look?" is that a primarily male group is answered. Indeed, the predominant interpretation today is that a group of admiring men, perhaps the lover included, calls the woman back.[282] Others find a grammatical precedent to identify the initial speakers as the daughters of Jerusalem.[283] Various interpretations are theoretically possible if one takes the unit independently. Yet, in the Song itself, another male group of speakers can be heard in 8:8-9. The identification of the all-male group in 8:8-9, with minimal controversy, has been the brothers.[284] There is no reason why they cannot be the speakers here. I have argued that they speak in 2:15 and, as we will soon see, multiple strands of evidence corroborate their presence here also.

Normally, שׁובי might have neutral connotations but here epizeuxis has been utilised to create an emotional appeal. The repetition (four times within a short

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[280] Roberts 2007: 263.

[281] For the difficulties to join 7:1 with 6:11-12, see Roberts 2007: 265.

[282] An early interpreter is Rashbam (in Thompson 1988: 285). Others see the man only (Durham 1723 [1668]: 276; Assis 2009: 202-03) or the man's friends (Carr 1984: 154).

[283] Based on Joüon 150a and the use of the masc. pl. for feminine speakers in Ruth 1:8; Joel 2:22; Amos 4:1. Cf. Song 1:6; 2:7; 3:5; 5:8; 8:4. E.g. Delitzsch 1993: 119; Garrett 2004: 233; Fox 1985: 150; Heinevetter 1988: 151; Roberts 2007: 262.

[284] For other views, see Exum 2005: 256-57.

sentence) transforms the word from a mild request into insistent compulsion.[285] Unless one emends the MT's שׁוּבִי to סוֹבִי "revolve" (Budde) or to the verbal root יסב "to leap" (Pope), שׁובי itself has nothing to do with turning in a dance (Good) but is simply a call to return.[286] Whether the woman is dancing, however, is an issue we will return to and many, like Fox and Exum, vociferously reject any notion of actual dancing occurring at this particular point.[287]

5. "And We May See You"

The reason for the male speakers' insistence that the person "return" is now given: "that we will see you" or "and let us see you" (either imperfective or cohortative meaning is possible). The emphasis is on the speakers' inability to *see* the woman if she does not return. A survey of the uses of חזה with a following *beth* in the Hebrew Bible reveals that it would be valid to translate this as "see" or "look at" as in Mic. 4:11 ותחז בציון עינינו "and may our eyes see/look at Zion." (cf. Job 36:25; Ps. 27:4; Isa. 47:13).[288] Bergant claims that חזה "signifies a look of remarkable intensity, the kind of look inspired by an object of sight that is considered an exalted vision."[289] The speakers therefore assert their intention to admire the woman (but this could be a false pretext in order to get her back).

I hesitate to use the word "gaze" for though legitimate, it evokes a sense of prurient curiosity or erotic voyeurism for those assuming that a group of men are erotically scrutinising the woman as she dances.[290] Gordis goes so far as to say "she is naked or clothed in diaphanous veils."[291] Such connotations are not present, however, and this situation is not necessarily what Black calls "the most logical scenario."[292] If the speakers are her brothers, for example, their desire for her to "return" in order to "see" her again would not be because they wish to ogle at her.

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[285] The rhetorical form: "2 imperatives + personal name + same 2 imperatives + requested action" occurs in Judg. 5:12. The context in Judges shows that the rhetorical form, in itself, need not be interpreted negatively (cf. Fishbane 2015: 175). 4QCant[a] has the second of the two pairs of 'come back' missing.

[286] Good 2015: 113, 118-9.

[287] Fox 1985: 157; Exum 2005: 225; Murphy 1987: 117-9.

[288] Cf. *HALOT* 2763 where meanings of "see," "look at" and "behold" are often interchangeable.

[289] Bergant 2001: 81.

[290] e.g. Ullendorrf 1979: 448; Noegel and Rendsburg 2009: 145 n.64, 202 n.38.

[291] Gordis 1974: 96.

[292] Black 2006: 167; cf. Roberts 2007: 262 n.12.

6. "Shulamit"

In the existing literature, the woman is frequently designated *Shulamit* as if this was her name, an endearing epithet, or a term of origin.

Linking the term with Abishag specifically, as Fischer does,[293] is "unfounded romantic speculation."[294] I echo Rowley's assessment, that "it is high time Abishag was banished from the commentaries on the Song of Songs, into which she has been imported on such slender grounds."[295] Yet, the fact that *-l* and *-n* are sometimes interchangeable in semitic texts[296] so that "Shulammite" could theoretically be the gentilic "Shunammite" is itself still worthy of some attention. It must, however, be treated with caution, for as Pope says, there is no evidence that Shunem (Josh. 19:18; 1 Sam. 28.4; cf. 2 Kgs 4:12) was also known as Shulem prior to the composition of the Song.[297] Most, if not all, manuscripts of the LXX read *sulamitis*, as do the other ancient versions.[298]

Other explanations do exist,[299] but one interpretation which should be taken seriously is that the root *sh-l-m* which makes up the name (*Sh^{e}lomo*) deliberately underlies the word *Shulamit* to create a strong connection through assonance. Keel explains that, "it is a name ... to designate a relationship. The consonants evoke the feminine form of שׁלמה, 'Solomon'- שׁלמית the one belonging to Solomon."[300] This is demonstrated by Rowley who, following Erbt and Goodspeed, has catalogued thirty-one sources, starting from the twelfth century, which maintain that *Shulamit* is the feminine form of Solomon.[301] Rowley himself suggested the term "Solomoness."[302] Although awkward in English, as a single word it captures the intent of the original; a better one is not forthcoming unless one opts for something like what the NIV study Bible offers: "Solomon's girl." On the same lines, Bergant suggests the term could be

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[293] Fischer 2019: 86.

[294] Cogan 2001: 156.

[295] Rowley 1939: 91.

[296] Moscati 1980: 32 (§8.26).

[297] Pope 1977: 598.

[298] *Sounamitis* and *Sunamitis* appears in some manuscripts of the LXX and Vulgate.

[299] such as "peace" or "perfection" e.g. Gersonides (in Kellner 1998: 79); cf. Pope 1977: 596-600.

[300] Keel 1994: 228.

[301] Rowley 1939: 84-9; cf. Erbt 1906: 196; Goodspeed 1934: 102-4.

[302] Rowley 1939: 84, 89.

> … a derivation of *šlm*, the Hebrew root from which comes the names Solomon and Jerusalem and the word peace. This latter explanation, where the name characterizes the woman as a female counterpart of the fictional Solomon, appears to be the most likely one. This view brings together all three aspects of the word *šlm.* It accounts for the Solomonic fiction, the frequent references to Jerusalem, and the description of idyllic or peaceful settings.[303]

Interpreters have raised two morphological problems with the rendering of *Shulamit* as "Solomoness." These will be addressed in the next chapter.[304]

7. Riposte

7.1. מה־תחזו "Why Should You See?"

Most consider the reply in 7:1 to be an objection by the woman, either a playful or serious rebuke.[305] The word מה could be translated several ways but given the insistence of the male speakers that the woman return, מה here most likely denotes surprise or objection.[306] Fox interprets it as a negative imperative, "why would you gaze" in the sense of "do not gaze."[307] Fishbane offers two alternatives by saying, "the force of the query … is 'why would you gaze?' (or 'for what reason?'). It poses a rhetorical challenge to the group's request. Alternatively, it conveys the maiden's rebuttal: 'how could you gaze at me …'?"[308]

Exum describes the problems faced in interpreting the woman's reply as follows: "one reason the reply is hard to understand is that the comparison to *mēḥōlat hammaḥănāyim* … is difficult to fathom. If we understood its significance, it would be easier to determine whether the speaker demurs at or approves of the request to look. Will those who look be gazing in awe, as they would at something spectacular? Or will they be looking with curiosity or disdain?"[309] Exum's comment above highlights the problem with how חזה is

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[303] Bergant 2001: 81.

[304] p.229.

[305] For some, the man speaks here on the woman's behalf, e.g. Steinberg 2014: 246; Provan 2001: 349-52; Garrett 2004: 233.

[306] Exum translates, "How you look upon the Shulammite!" giving מה the same force as in 7:2, מה־יפו "How beautiful …"). Exum 2005: 228.

[307] Fox 1985: 71; Goulder 1986: 55; Snaith 1993: 98; Kravitz and Olitzky 2003: 84.

[308] Fishbane 2015: 175.

[309] Exum 2005: 228.

mostly read, as the "gaze" of spectators. However, as we have seen earlier, the word need not be limited to such a connotation and can be translated "looking at."

The woman takes up their taunt and redeploys it as an objection, "Why should you look at the Shulamit ...?!" This retort may be cleverer than has been recognised. We return to it in the next chapter.

7.2. המחנים Location, Armies or Households?

A location called Mahanayim in Gen. 32:3 [2] leads some to think a מחלת המחנים is a particular style of dance associated with this location.[310] However, the word more commonly means "camps" a rendering which itself needs fine-tuning since it can have different connotations in biblical Hebrew. After Wetzstein (1873), many have assumed it to be two camps (=groups) of dancers or spectators in Song 7:1.[311] Another frequent viewpoint is that of a military encampment (e.g. Isa. 37:36). A third plausible option is that the word refers to a *domestic/civilian* camp, that is a group of people. In Gen. 32:8[7]-33:8, Jacob divides his company into two מחנים—that of Leah and of Rachel. Consequently, מחנים could refer to two domestic groups or households.

7.3. כמחלת Dancing Wordplay

On the face of it, the word appears to refer to a dance since a "*Meḥolah* is a variant of *maḥol* (dance)."[312] Accordingly, many interpretations consider it refers to some flamboyant, military or celebratory pirouetting.[313] However, there is no indication that the woman herself is dancing *at this time*. Such a viewpoint arises from the voyeuristic "turn around, let us gaze on [ogle at] you" kind of interpretation which, as we have already emphasised is not necessarily found in the text. The "dance" could, moreover, refer to an occasion not at the immediate time but one that is anticipatory.

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[310] Delitzsch 1993: 121.

[311] Budde 1898: 19, 35; Gordis 1974: 68; Würthwein 1969: 62-3; Brenner 1990.

[312] Bloch and Bloch 1995: 199.

[313] Gruber 1981: 341-5.

Events

1. I went down to the nut orchard to look ... (6:11)
2. Before I was aware, my desire set me among the chariots of my kinsman, a prince (6:12)
3. The male group press the woman to return (7:1a)
4. She denies them by a witty reply (7:1b)

The first two events are retrospective, the latter two are discursive.

Song 7:12-14 [11-13] Invitation to Intimacy

Introduction

This has been recognised as another invitation poem such as 2:8-17.[314] Also present are references to springtime, which in the Song, both actively brings a surge of life in the couple's love and acts as a mirror that symbolically reflects opportune times for that love.

Analysis

The woman's invitation incorporates several hortatory verbs, mirroring the tenor of the man's invitation to her. We return to this phenomenon as it has implications for the narrative.[315]

Because this is an invitation to intimacy following on from a unit that clearly depicts the couple already immersed in intimacy, it suggests a temporal discontinuity from 7:2-11, meaning that either 7:12 is the start of an independent poem or that time has progressed from 7:11.[316] It could, incidentally, also indicate a reversion of time, a flashback, something not emphasised in the existing literature.

Since the couple are together, what is the setting from which the invitation is issued? Taking the unit independently, this would be indeterminate but one possibility is away from a house the couple are presently in suggested by the expressions "let us go," "let us go out" and "let us rise early" (7:12-13). One

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[314] e.g. Gray 2013, who sees in it what he calls a *Lech L'cha* Trope.

[315] See p.237.

[316] Scheffler (2019: 289) sees 7:13 as the final stage of sexual consummation between the lovers, continuing from 7:2-11. Yet 7:11 exhibits strong closure (Roberts 2007: 284-8), one of the reasons to take 7:12-14 as a distinct unit.

recalls that the appeals of the man to the woman were to leave her house and come away with him (2:9-13). In this unit, the woman's intention is to go to the "fields" and כפרים. The latter ambiguously means either "villages" (cf. 1 Chr. 27:25) or "henna bushes" (cf. Song 1:14; 4:13).[317] It could be argued that these are transitory and transitional staging posts towards their anticipated ultimate destination; they are transient, momentary episodes of love all moving inexorably towards a more permanent destination where their sexual ambition will be consummated. While this is not made explicit, a few clues point to this possibility. First, the verb לין "lodge" with its connotations of transience suggests this. Next, the fruit mentioned in 7:14 is ripe (מגד, "choicest" cf. Deut. 33:14-16) in contrast to the mere "buds" and "blossoms" of 7:13. This indicates that the woman is thinking of a time not too far away but beyond their immediate springtime rural pursuits.[318] Moreover, the מגדים "choice fruits" as symbols of her love (7:14), are those that she has "stored" (צפן) for her lover, indicating both a future moment for their union and her anticipation of it.[319]

I discern another layer of meaning throughout these verses, of effectuation of their love which is now ripe for consummation. The word מגדים especially appears in 4:13, within the garden metaphors of the sexual consummation of the lovers.

Events

1. Come ...
   ... let us go out to the field and lodge in the villages/henna bushes (7:12)
   ... let us rise early to the vineyards ... There I will give you my love (7:13)

2. I have stored for you [choice fruits] (7:14)

There is only one event contained in the first two verses, namely the woman's invitation. It is discursive and explicit and repeated for emphasis, the statements to "go" and "rise early" being part of the same invitation. A retrospective event appears in her informing her lover, "I have stored for you [choice fruits]" (7:14). In other words, she has prepared herself sexually for him. I am disinclined to see the statement "the mandrakes have given forth fragrance," as a separate

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[317] Keel 1994: 254; Bergant 2001: 91.

[318] Keel 1994: 256.

[319] "beside our doors [will be] all choice fruits" is a legitimate translation as the copula is missing.

retrospective event but it is nonetheless part of the preparations she makes to be with him.

While a single event present cannot be said to be a micro-narrative for some narratologists, two would qualify. Her preparations to be with her lover come first and they result in her invitation to him to leave for their venue(s) of love. The invitation, however, is not shown as realised—in this unit at least.

CONCLUSIONS

Having undertaken an analysis of the units in the Song, from the perspective of two fundamental groups—the regal and non-regal, one can now summarise how each has several distinct characteristics that differ from the other.[320]

1. Distinctive Characteristics of the Regal Units

1.1. Lyricism versus narrative

Compared to the non-regal units, these units collectively have the greater lyrical quality. Three out of four *wasfs*, for example, occur here.

1.2. Setting as the king's house

The setting of the units is either inside the king's house or within its general locale. The house itself is presented in several forms, mostly via metonymy and synecdoche: his *hedarim* (1:4); images of abundant provision such as the "house of wine," sustaining fruit, arboreal shade and the spreading of a cloak/banner are intertwined; an apple tree that represents both the lover and his house in which the woman "sits/dwells" (ישׁב, 2:3); a harem with several groups of women such as the daughters of Jerusalem in their royal version (3:10; 3:11) and royal queens and concubines (6:9); the implied venue of the wedding in 3:6–11 as the king's house in Jerusalem; the king's surroundings (1:12) through which permeates the perfume of the woman; and potentially, the garden of the man (6:2).

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[320] The citation of references as examples is not exhaustive.

1.3. The Woman is a bride

The word כלה "bride" is only found in these units (4:8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 5:1) and nowhere else in the Song. Moreover, in some units the woman is depicted as a wearing a veil which partially covers her facial features (4:1, 3; 6:7). Related to this is the wedding of Solomon (3:11).

1.4. The Woman's behaviour and emotions

She is never depicted as being discordant with her lover. There are no states of emotional disequilibrium. Themes of intense joy (e.g. 1:4; 2:3) or heart sickness (2:5) do occur but sudden surges or drops of emotion are absent, suggesting emotional and psychological stability. Throughout these units, her attitude towards her lover is consistent. She compliments his attributes (1:16), she invites him [in]to herself (4:16), she is responsive and always by his side (6:5); harmoniously finishing his speech (7:10b).

1.5. The man's accessibility to the woman

There is never an issue with accessibility. Even when the issue of access is explicitly raised, such as when the man seeks to traverse the fragrant hills of his beloved (4:6), when he wants to enter the exotic garden that his spouse is figuratively, his entry is not just permitted but encouraged (4:16). No separation between them is portrayed although when he brings her to his house (1:4), it implies she was separated from him before.

1.6. The union of the couple

The couple is never depicted as being separated. There is, however, the allusions to the woman's brothers (1:6), to her mother (6:9), or to her being brought to the house (1:4; 2:4), all of which implicitly suggests her past.

1.7. Fruit/flora

These are employed by each of the lovers as metaphors for their partner (e.g. 2:2, 3) or for sexual activity (4:13-16).

1.8. Militaristic imagery

This almost always occurs within the regal units. The sole exception outside the regal units is 8:9–10, part of the epilogue, which employs siege motifs to

figuratively portray the woman being conquered by the man (and her brothers losing the battle).[321]

1.9. Admiration of the woman's beauty

It is only in these regal units that the woman's beauty and appearance are admired, in its specifics. She is not just beautiful but black (1:6), the specific parts of her body, such as eyes (1:15) are described. Also, the phenomena of personal aesthetics being enhanced by an object such as jewellery (1:10, 11, 12; 7:2) only occurs in the regal units.

1.10. How the woman's material dress is used

Dress reflects togetherness. There are two items that are used as objects of admiration of the woman—her sandals (7:1) and her veil (4:1, 3; 6:7). Both items are exceptional. Mention of jewellery is made above. All cases denote objects of admiration by the man of the woman.

1.11. Language of power, wealth and status

The poet presents the protagonists as having an idealised status: they possess opulent wealth; they wear superior perfumery; they are eminent among other men and women; they are borne in royal vehicles (a royal palanquin or sedan chair); they have others in service to them—soldiers, female attendants and makers of jewellery; the man is able to provide abundantly; he has a pronounced military knowledge; and possesses an international awareness. The man is essentially presented as a king and as a powerful, knowledgeable, militaristic, well-travelled lover—a veritable Solomonic persona. It is difficult to dismiss the possibility that a deliberate connection is being established with Israel's king.

1.12. The bringing of the woman to the king's house

This significant motif is described explicitly (1:4; 2:4) as well as presented indirectly in terms of a procession with royal observers (3:6–11 and 6:4–10).

1.13. Seasons

The seasons are not so evident. Furthermore, mentioned fruit and flora offer no definitive indication of the concurrent season. The closest clue, if admissible, is

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[321] p.268.

the mention of eating mature apples (2:5) which arguably would have been available after June.[322] It would be difficult to prove that the word מגדים "choicest fruits" (4:13), which might indicate summer (see the non-regal seasons below), is not purely metaphorical.

1.14. Mention of "Solomon" or "king"

Solomon is mentioned explicitly in two units (1:5; 3:7, 9, 11). There are also several subtle allusions to him and the traditions with which he is associated, including paronomasia in 1:3 evoking the "name" of the king (*šĕlōmō*) from perfume (*šmn*); the house of cedar (1:17); a large harem (6:8-9); the motif of a king personally going to bring a wife to his house (1:4; 2:4) and the portrayal of an era in which Egypt (1:9) and Lebanon (4:8) are looked upon favourably. The lover is described as a "king" in three units (1:4, 12; 3:9, 11; 7:6). Snaith concluded in 1934 that the references to Solomon were in what he called "the autumn group" based on the autumnal season he perceived was being portrayed in specific units.[323] While today, one cannot accept Snaith's conclusions of an autumnal season, the fact that these units roughly coincide with the royal units outlined here could buttress my case that they belong in a specific group.

1.15. Use of metaphors and indirection for sex

Clear references to sexual intimacy occur only in the regal units. While Exum rhetorically queries whether the couple actually "consummate their love ...?" and answers, "Yes, on the figurative level," she is writing about the Song as a (loose) whole.[324] If one, however, takes the Song as two groups of regal and non-regal units, one finds that such figurative themes of sexual consummation—as opposed to other forms of intimacy—preponderate only the former; two whole units (4:1–5:1 and 7:2–11) to be precise. "Lesser" references to sexual intimacy occur elsewhere, such as the lover lodging on the woman's breasts overnight (1:13-14); allusions made to their nuptial bed (1:16); his "fruit" being sweet to her taste (2:3); a mutual, recumbent embrace (2:6; cf. 8:3); and kissing via a metaphor of wine (1:2; 5:1; 7:10; cf. 8:1-2).

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[322] Cant. Rabbah on 2:3 says, "the apple-tree ripens its fruit only in the month of Siwan."

[323] Snaith 1934: 135.

[324] Exum 2005b: 84

1.16. Use of smell, colour, taste

A gaudy variety of colour, such as crimson/scarlet thread (4:3);[325] purple hair and seat (3:10; 7:6), silver posts (3:10); and gold (3:10) and possibly green couch/bed (1:16)[326] are all associated with wealth, power and royalty. Colours associated with flora, such as henna (1:14; 4:13), rose, lily (2:1, 16; 4:5), saffron (4:14); animals, such as tiger/leopard (4:8) and fawns (7:4); specific colours of fruit such as pomegranate (4:3; 6:7) and apples (2:3); and the celestial objects (6:10); and random items, such as the whiteness of doves, milk (5:12) and teeth (7:10) are scattered throughout these units with a greater preponderance than the non-regal. They appear to be supporting the contemporaneous union of the couple. Exotic perfumes are mentioned liberally in these units (1:3, 12, 13, 14; 3:6; 4:6, 10) along with the scents of exotic woods (1:17) or henna (1:14; 4:13; 7:12). The sense of taste is largely evoked in these units, such as mentions of wine (1:2; 1:4); raisins (2:5) and apples (2:5).

1.17. Allusions to the movement of liquids

These serve to capture the closeness of the couple: the exchange of salivary juices (1:2; 4:11; 7:10); the drinking of wine and milk (5:1) in response to being invited into the "garden" of the woman; and possibly the name of the beloved being described as "poured oil" (1:3).

1.18. Exotic Toponyms

The speakers of the regal units are more concerned with exotic vistas both within ancient Israel and in foreign lands, but these attitudes are largely contained in the man's speech, characterising him as being familiar with these foreign places.

2. Distinctive Characteristics of the Non-Regal Units

2.1. Lyricism versus narrative

Two units (e.g. 3:1-5; 5:2-6:3) have the highest narrative-like features of the Song.

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[325] Finitsis 2019: 4-5.

[326] If "green bed" here refers to the decorated nuptial bed.

2.2. Setting is predominantly in the woman's house

This is clearly the case in 2:8-17 and 3:1-5. Song 5:2-6:3 certainly begins with her house and this location is implied in 1:8; 7:1 and 7:12. Song 1:7-8 and 6:11-7:1 appear to be rural while 7:12-14 is unknown. Her house is represented via metonymy, synecdoche, through contextual or relational clues: a wall (2:9) her window (2:9); a possible depiction (2:14) and mention of a vineyard associated with the family (2:15); her bed (3:1); mother's house (3:4); door hole (5:4) and bolt (5:5); going out (1:8; 7:13); the brothers' speech (2:15; 7:1).

2.3. Bucolic context

The units appear to have the countryside as their setting. The woman only visits the city to search for her lover.

2.4. The woman's emotions

The woman addresses her lover by using the phrase שׁאהבה נפשׁי. Whether translated as "whom my soul loves" or as Alter urges, "whom I love so,"[327] this phrase appears only in the non-royal units (1:7; 3:1; 3:2; 3:3; 3:4), primarily in one single unit, 3:1-5. Alter's rendering brings out the truest sense of what is in mind, what Keel calls "the focus of all her desire and passionate longing,"[328] clearly a deep yearning in her soul, which by its nature implies union with her lover has not yet been realised. Even the word נפשׁי itself, used in relation to her non-equilibriums of emotion (5:6; 6:12) occur only in these units.

2.5. The man nearly always appears in a non-descript way

While his intense emotions are often implied, his physical appearance is almost never described. The one exception is when the woman waxes lyrical, describing him in an idealised way (6:10-16).

2.6. How the woman's material dress is used

In these units, dress is strikingly entwined with instances of varying degrees of difficulty in the relationship and related to the lover's absence. She does not want to appear veiled in his absence (1:7); her *kuttonet* "tunic" (5:3) is used as a reason

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[327] Alter 2016: 10.

[328] Keel 1994: 52.

for her not opening the door which separates her from her lover; and finally, her veil is forcibly removed (5:7), which I have argued in a recent article is a sign of his absence.[329]

2.7. The man's invitations

His invitations to the woman only appear in these units. Whether implicit (1:8) or explicit (2:10-13), they essentially encourage her to come away or appeal for access to her (2:14; 5:2).

2.8. The attitude of the woman to the man

Her attitude in the first units is rather ambivalent. The very first unit is filled with irony. She asks about where he lives (1:7-8) for which the reply is effectively "you already know... get going." She does not appear to respond to his pleas to leave with him (2:8-17) and dawdles with reluctance in response to his advances (5:3). Her repeated inertia provides subtle clues of hesitation at the very least. However, in the later units, there is a demonstrable difference. She compliments him and his appearance remarkably (5:10-16) and invites him away with her for lovemaking (7:12-14).

2.9. Conflict with the man and disappearance

The negatives of the Song appear in these units. For the woman, they relate to her being asked to either go to the man's house (1:8) or come away with him (2:10-13). They start subtly—easily missed in 1:8—but then intensify, reaching their apex with the woman's beating and de-veiling. The man disappears and she must search for him (3:1-3; 5:6-7). This, incidentally, reshapes Falk's understandings that interiors in the Song, as opposed to exteriors, are conducive to the couple[330] because while interiors may be potentially conducive to the couple, especially in the regal units but occasionally in the non-regal (7:12-14, and 3:4 to an extent), in the latter they are also depicted as being spaces which generate conflict and separation (5:2-6).

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[329] Fernandes 2019: 69.

[330] Falk 1982: 88-91.

2.10. The woman is sometimes inaccessible to the man

Inaccessibility is an especially prominent theme in these parts of the Song. The man has difficulty in seeing her. He is depicted as having to peep through windows (2:9) or rocks (2:14) and waiting outside in order to gain access (2:9, 14; 5:2). There appear to be periods of separation implied between the couple in all but the last unit (1:7; 2:8, 15; 3:1; 5:6; 6:11-12).

2.11. Fruit and flora

These are presented in the context of the arrival of spring, as tropes concerning the opportune time for the couple's relationship and intimacy to blossom (2:8-17; 6:11). Elsewhere, they appear in context of the woman having stored (צפן) these fruits in readiness for him (7:13-14).[331] However, they are not employed as the current realisation of that intimacy. Moreover, the protagonists never metaphorically identify themselves or the partner as fruit or flora (the woman is not a lily or an orchard, and so on).

2.12. The language of power and wealth

There are no attendants or royalty, no wearing of extravagance, no references to foreign lands. The language, by contrast, is toned down with respect to such trappings. An exception is the idealised descriptions of the man by the woman when she speaks with the daughters in 5:8-6:3.

2.13. Seasons

The seasons are more evident. Spring is used as a deliberate device to encapsulate the man's invitation (2:11-13), to test for opportunity for a union (6:11) or to frame the woman's invitation to the man (7:12-14). Spring depictions only appear in the non-regal units because they reflect the opportunity for the fulfilment of love, not that consummation in itself. A colder season is implied by the mention of dew (5:2) and used for the context of the man's disappearance. If מגדים (7:14) does mean "choicest fruits"[332] and not just "choicest gifts" and if it is not purely metaphorical, it could be indicative of a season, namely the days after spring, the emerging summer, since the woman anticipates the love she has "stored up" for her beloved from the vantage point of the blossoms of spring (7:13).

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[331] Also, in the epilogue, "pomegranate juice" is stored for future intimacy (8:2). See p.259.

[332] *HALOT* 4779; cf. Deut. 33: 13.

2.14. Sexual references are (almost?) absent

The couple are almost never *depicted* as being intimate. That is to say, no direct or indirect language for sexual intercourse exists. There is, of course, no need to be prudish about sex but one can show that the specific literary boundary crossing of sexual intercourse never actually occurs in the non-regal units. The protagonists call each other endearments ("love", "dove," etc.) but the closest one comes to any suggestion of sex between the couple in the non-regal units is two instances: The first is when the woman holds her lover tightly until she brings him to her *heder* (3:4). Even here, it is not clear whether *heder* is merely a repetition by synecdoche for the mother's *house* in the line before, nor whether anything sexually transpires between the couple in her *heder*.[333] It is simply not stated. The second instance is that of the woman's mention of her lover's scented lips (5:13) and sweet palate (5:16), a metaphor for her possibly having kissed him passionately on the mouth at least once before, to the point of tasting its "sweetness."

Song 5:2-7, verse 4 especially, is often cited as a very sexualised scene but as we will see in the next chapter, these meanings must be read against the grain of the narrative itself. The special case of the phrase for the man, having "gone down to his garden to feed among the lilies" (cf. 2:16; 6:2-3) is treated separately—it is a subtle reference to the sexual activity of the man in his own house but not used for sexual consummation between the two protagonists.[334]

2.15. Almost no detailed descriptions of the couple

In the non-regal units, there is, at best, a generalised epithet "most beautiful of women" for the woman (1:8; 5:9). The man's specific appearance is almost non-descript. The one significant exception is an idealised portrait given by the woman (5:10-16) to the daughters.

2.16. The mention of "Solomon" or "king"

These are never made explicit nor clear, yet numerous ambiguities exist: The specific description of the man's shepherding activity is frequently used in relation to kings (1:7-8); the items associated with him, "liquid myrrh" (5:5) and "his garden" (6:2) leave questions as to whether he may be of high status; his

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[333] The adjuration refrain in 3:5 is not a reference to the couple sleeping together. See p.262.

[334] See p.223-27.

idealised description as a Solomon-like figure (5:10-16) is unusual as is his possible association with the expression "noble people" (6:12); and the cognomen *Shulamit* (7:1), if it means something like "Solomoness" is intriguing.

2.17. Use of smell, colour, taste

Colour, taste and smell occur in specific bursts, always in relation to their anticipated union or current separation.

Springtime fragrances of fruit and flora are used by the man to invite the woman away with him (2:12-13). Similarly, mandrakes are used by the woman in the anticipation of a permanent union (7:13-14). The senses support an *anticipation* of permanent togetherness and union which has not yet been realised.

Smell, such as myrrh, is used in conjunction with the departure of the man (5:5) when they are separated. The smell of spices, herbs and myrrh are used by the woman as metaphors to recall the man's characteristics (5:13; 6:2). A density of colour terms are also used for this purpose: the man is said to be radiant and ruddy (5:10); gold (5:11, 14, 15); black (5:11); ivory and sapphires (5:14); alabaster (5:15); beds of spices (5:13; 6:2) and lilies (6:2, 3; 7:3).

2.18. Allusions to the movement of liquids

These serve purposes other than highlighting the closeness and intimacy of the couple. Water dripping from the man's hair (5:2) portrays him as a solitary, pathetic figure standing at the woman's door; myrrh dripping from her fingers (5:5) serves as a token of the by now departed beloved. The exceptions all occur in her recounting of her beloved's excellencies to the daughters—his eyes being like doves besides streams of water, as if bathed in milk (5:12); and his lips dripping myrrh (5:13) and his mouth (literally, "palate") being "sweet" (5:16) serve as recollections of the sweetness of his closeness.

2.19. Exotic Toponyms are negligible

A single reference to an exotic place exists, namely to "Kedar." A potential second is "Salmah" if a toponym should be read instead of "Solomon."[335] This might indicate the setting in the non-regal units is more localised or the characters have not much experience of foreign countries.

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[335] e.g. Pope 1977: 320; Fox 1985: 100. A recent rebuttal is that of Gault 2019: 71-72.

3. Literary Outline of the Song

3.1. Two levels of Portrayal

The fact that the characters of the regal sections especially appear more stable suggest that their respective units might be operating at the same level of portrayal. The non-regal units, on the other hand, while sharing characteristics with each other, if viewed altogether, also demonstrate less of an equilibrium between themselves. Emotions dip and surge, the couple are sometimes together and sometimes apart. Both negative and positive events seem to be occurring in this group. These specific variances mentioned need not mean the units do not belong together but may indicate a plot of some kind. In the next chapter, it will be demonstrated how these units can be viewed together in a single linear timeline.

The following is the representation of the structure of the Song having decided where best to place those units designated as "ambiguous." Three sets of units could be considered as related pairs since they are closely related to each other by both chronology and event. The reader will recall that the events of 1:2-4 can be read with those of 1:5-6.[336] Also, 2:8-17 and 3:1-5 should be read together, as a sequence of events, if those of the former directly cause the absence of the man in the latter.[337] Finally, 3:6-11 and 4:1-5:1 should be read together, not only because they are adjacent, with no intervening material but also because in antiquity, events of the wedding day and intimacy of the wedding night are frequently found together in the one poem. There is also the fact that they are jointly used to recreate the latter units of "royal intimacy."[338] One could, therefore, in theory, argue that these six units should be three. With this perspective, one essentially ends up with an alternating repetition, parallelism of an ABA'B' ... pattern, in the Song.

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[336] p.102.

[337] p.151 and p.211.

[338] See p.244.

Unit	Regal	Non Regal
1	1:2-4	
	1:5-6	
2		1:7-8
3	1:9-2:7	
4		2:8-17
		3:1-5
5	3:6-11	
	4:1-5:1	
6		5:2-6:3
7	6:4-10	
8		6:11-7:1
9	7:2-11	
10		7:12-14
11	8:1-14 (epilogue)	

3.2. Alternating Repetition—An attested pattern in the Ancient Near East

As this study primarily concerns plot, the postulation of an alternating parallelistic structure for the Song is tentative. Further study must await another opportunity. Nonetheless, pending such a study, one can assert that the pattern itself is one that is well attested in the texts of ancient near East. That it theoretically might be employed in the Song is therefore quite feasible.

Alternating Repetition has also been called *alternance*[339]and *entrelacement* (interlacing)[340] by French theorists. No substantive work exists, which addresses this specific form of parallelism in terms of ancient Near East. One can, however, present a few examples from existing research to cement the assertion of alternating parallelism being well attested.

Walsh's *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* lists six cases under the subject of "alternating repetition":[341]

[339] Todorov 1966: 140.

[340] Technically, interlacing can involve more than two sets of information but scholars sometimes use the term synonymously for alternating structures.

[341] Walsh 2001: 47-56.

i. 1 Kgs 2:36-46a.
ii. Gen. 12:1. The phrase *lek lekha*, which incidentally also occurs in Song 2:10, 13, has an alternating repetition of consonants.
iii. 1 Sam. 1:12-13 in which A units apply to vocal or auditory phenomena and B units focus on visual phenomena.
iv. 1 Kgs 20:16-21 alternates between points of view concerning the Israelite army and that of Ben-Hadad.
v. 2 Kgs 17:6-41 alternates between Israel/Judah's sin and Yahweh's response.
vi. 1 Sam. 8:1-12:25 oscillates between units describing the assemblies of the people under the leadership of Samuel and units which contain much more dramatic narratives featuring Saul.

In a later book, Walsh includes 1 Kgs 1:1-2:12a as a case for the phenomenon.[342] Fokkelman likewise has shown its existence in Ps. 119,[343] Bozak identifies alternation in Jer. 30-31, in the gender of the implied audience[344] and Hanson has found alternating statements of promise and invitation in Ps. 34:8-11.[345] Maloney mentions how divine praise alternates between communal and individual subjects in Ps. 34 providing its macrostructure;[346] how in Ps. 25:4-5, an alternating pattern of sounds occurs;[347] and how there is a possible alternating of persons in Ps. 37:35-36.[348] Other cases may be that of Ps. 103:11-12, Isa. 49:2,[349] and Pss. 9 and 10 which may originally have been a single acrostic poem in which alternating lines began with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet.[350] In Song scholarship, some, but not much, focus has been placed on alternation, primarily concerning the searching and finding theme and spatial alternation

[342] Walsh 2009: 116-17.
[343] Fokkelman 2003: 239, 241 n.19.
[344] Bozak 1991.
[345] Hanson 1984: 78.
[346] Maloney 2009: 150.
[347] Ibid., 48.
[348] Ibid., 89-90.
[349] Lichtheim 1971-72: 110.
[350] E.g. Weiser 1962: 149.

between house and city[351] and primary characters' speech[352] and Snaith has divided the Song into alternating sections of spring and autumn.[353]

Outside of the Hebrew Bible, Space in both Xenophon's *Ephesiaka* and Chariton's *Callirhoe* is kept apart in two different, alternating story lines for most of the narratives.[354] Alternation, with flashback, is found in Homer's *Odyssey*, within units that shuttle the reader to the past from the present and back again. Flashback naturally creates an alternating pattern if the goal is to convey the reader back and forth between two times or contexts. Next, Krispijn describes "alternierender Typus" in inscriptions of the Hammurabic dynasty,[355] Lichtheim mentions that Egyptian poetic stanzas can be grouped in three major ways, one of which is the regular alternation of stanzas of different shapes,[356] and De Moor writes that in Ugaritic verse, binary and ternary lines often alternate freely.[357]

This brief survey shows that an alternating pattern can occur on a microlevel, such as related to consonants, where it might be more incidental, but it is also evident on larger scales, right up to the macrolevel of a text, where it might offer greater assurance of design. Clearly, it occurs in both narrative and poetic texts and might involve several dimensions—spatial, temporal or characterisational, among others. The upshot of the evidence is that the Song's regal and non-regal units are of two different contexts, possibly even of two different time periods. Alternating repetition as a structural device easily lends itself to such emphases. Clearly, alternation is occurring in the Song at some level and even if a strict alternating pattern over its macrostructure is yet to be proven, this need not weaken the plot itself. It is to the examination of how the segments of the Song work to create a plot that we now proceed.

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[351] See E.g. Barbiero 2011: 128.

[352] See e.g. Pope 1977: 148, 208.

[353] Snaith 1934.

[354] De Temmerman 2012: 504-05.

[355] Krispijn 1982: 160.

[356] Lichtheim 1971-72: 105.

[357] De Moor 1993.

Chapter 6
Establishing Fabula and Narrative

If the Song has a narrative, then technically, it exists in the form we now have in the Hebrew Bible.[1] What we are mainly attempting to figure out in this chapter is first, the fabula of events—what the original sequence of events should be. I will take the listed events from the previous chapter and show how they are causally linked to each other to provide two levels for the narrative. I will then finally show the regal and non-regal sequences of events relate to each other and conclude what the narrative is about and how it should be read.

In attempting to analyse the fabula, the rearrangements of some events are inevitable. Thankfully, this is minimal, a testimony to the orderly arrangement that exists in the Song. It is important to note also that what is being done by analysing the fabula of events in the Song is not the kind of re-arrangement that theorists such as Haupt (1902) and others undertook. The critical method of these twentieth century scholars was essentially to "cut and paste," to recreate what they thought the original author had written relative to a pre-diachronic handling of the text. Narratology, on the other hand, recognises that an author has freedom to synchronically rearrange the original order of events (fabula) and present them in a non-chronological way (narrative).

We have already separated the Song into two groups of events, the regal and non-regal and determined that these groups show two levels or sequences of events.[2] This began the fabula reconstruction process. We have also determined that these two groups recur in an alternating pattern,[3] meaning the arrangement is not haphazard as the early modern critics saw the text, but orderly.

The non-regal units will be examined first as they essentially provide the backstory to the regal units. It is easier for the reader to follow the chain of events between the two if it is done this way round. Kafalenos's method of function analysis will be applied in order to determine the chain of causation that exists between the events. The regal units are highly lyrical and repetitive and

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[1] Allowing for some textual variances in LXX, etc.

[2] p.185.

[3] p.186.

composed of "cycles" with a handful of events. Kaflenos's method will not be applied here but this highly lyrical and cyclic dimension will be mapped out and a case will be made as to how the author achieves unity and some progression between the cycles.

FABULA IN THE NON-REGAL UNITS

Preconstruction of the Fabula in the Non-Regal Units

We will now apply Kafalenos's causation paradigm to the non-regal units in order to determine the causational threads that exist between the functions within each sequence and across the sequences, and from this to ascertain any overarching narrative. The paradigm is shown below:

EQ	Equilibrium
A (or a)	a destabilizing event (or re-evaluation that reveals instability)
	B there is a request that someone alleviate A or a
C	decision by the C-actant to attempt to alleviate A or a. The C-actant is the character who performs function C' and H
C'	C-actant's initial act to alleviate A or a
	D C-actant is tested
	E C-actant responds to test
	F C-actant acquires empowerment (or disempowerment F_{neg})
	G C-actant arrives at the place, or time, for H
H	C-actant's primary action to alleviate A or a
I (or I negative)	Success (or failure) of H
EQ	A new equilibrium is established

At first glance, Kafalenos's paradigm and its notation may seem somewhat unusual to biblical scholars, perhaps even simplistic. This, however, belies its robustness which has been highly appreciated within narratology and literary criticism. The paradigm essentially incorporates the concept that for a plot to be complete, it must shift from one equilibrium (EQ) to another. Each newer equilibrium will be similar, but not identical, to the first. Between one equilibrium of a narrative and the next, one typically finds a destabilising event (often termed "inciting incident" or "crisis" elsewhere) that disrupts the initial EQ. The destabilising event itself is notated as a function (A). Alternatively, a character performs a re-evaluation of existing circumstances by which instability is revealed, again notated as a function (a).

The character who acts to try to alleviate the destabilising event has a special name in Kafalenos's work, the C-actant. Kafalenos cautions about calling C-actant the "hero" or "protagonist" as these terms are not always synonymous.[4] I have retained her term but with some reservations because of its relative unfamiliarity within biblical literary scholarship.

To alleviate the instability, the C-actant must take a decision to do so, which is denoted as another function (C). This decision will result in their initial action (C')—read as C-prime. This initial action might then be followed by another, a primary action (H), to alleviate or resolve the instability.

2. Initial Problems

When I tried to determine the series of events in the Song and how they might relate to each other, a few problems quickly became apparent. The first problem encountered was the difficulty in determining the C-actant. This is an inevitable hardship as plots can be read from different points-of-view, blurring who the C-actant might be.[5] In the Song, the core issue is how to interpret the man's actions in relation to a narrative that might be about the woman.[6] In 2:8-17, for example, the poet clearly presents the lover with his own desires to be with his beloved. This is especially apparent in his insistent invitations for her to leave with him

[4] Kafalenos 2006:8.

[5] Kafalenos 2006: 10-12.

[6] Most scholars would agree the Song is primarily from the woman's perspective.

(2:10-13). He decides to alleviate a destabilising situation, namely separation from his beloved, and acts on his decision by visiting her over the hills to call her away. His determination to travel to see his beloved accords with what Kafalenos notes would be that of a typical C-actant: the mention of a character's change of position in order to alleviate a problem typically signals that character's adoption of the C-actant's role.[7] One expects the C-actant in 2:8-17 to therefore be the man. Kafalenos, however, notes that in many narratives, a character who is affected by, or knows about, a function-A/a event related to someone else decides to try to ameliorate the situation and in doing so becomes a C-actant for part of the narrative.[8] She illustrates this phenomenon using Anderson's *The Princess and the Pea* in which the queen becomes a C-actant to alleviate the destabilising situation (a) of her son's need of a wife. The queen decides to test an alleged princess (C), formulates a secret plan (C') and executes it by placing a pea under several mattresses of her bed to test the alleged royalty of the princess (H).

If in Song 2:8-17, the man's actions are related to a wider narrative of the woman and exist as a result of his counterpart's wishes rather than purely down to his own independent, self-determined desires, then for our purposes, his sequences should be treated as being embedded within hers as he is attempting to assist her alleviate whatever instability she perceives or occurs in her own circumstances. A key word in the previous sentence is "purely." Undoubtedly, the man's desire for the woman to come away is volitional, but is this the complete picture? Or should one link this with a destabilising or re-evaluation event (function-A/a) related to her? One significant clue towards a solution is that his actions are always reported by her. Scholars working on the Song typically recognise the Song is unassailably the woman's "story."[9] In the non-regal units this becomes even more apparent, especially in the more narrative-like sections. In principle, then, his visitations and appeals might exist to help move forward *her* narrative rather than his and this must be taken into account.

The second problem is that one has to determine how to deal with actions that are implicit. This is not really a big issue since plots, which are tellings of fabulas, omit details from their fabulas all the time and these must be inferred in the reading process. In Kafalenos's notation, square brackets around functions indicate their implicitness. Kafalenos cannot be accused for substituting

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[7] Kafalenos 2006: 14.

[8] Kafalenos 2006, 36 cf. 32.

[9] i.e. "story" used in a loose sense here.

bracketed (implicit) information for unwarranted guesswork—she is conscientious enough—but in any case, I have been more conservative in assuming implicit information than Kafalenos has. Bracketing events in this case is not akin to the reading between the lines to find a plot as the dramatists did. Rather, the events can be validly derived from within the sequence itself or implied because of the sequence that precedes or follows. From examples Kafalenos provides, it is clear that instances of function-a and function-C are frequently omitted from representations of stories but since these functions are closely connected with the explicitness of the C-actant's initial action C', they are largely recoverable and should not generate any protest.

Other events that are not always defined or spelt out in a narrative but which might be represented and implied from its trajectory are:

i) A success (F) or failure (F_{neg}) resulting from a test (D) the C-actant faces. The test itself is a challenge, a literary trope, which the C-actant must face and overcome en route to her/his goal.[10]
ii) A success (I) or failure (I_{neg}) resulting from the C-actant's primary action (H) to alleviate the initial problem.
iii) An initial equilibrium is not always explicitly represented, especially in narratives which begin *in medias res*.

The provisional functional diagram for the first regal unit follows:

1:7-8

EQ	[The two lovers are together and happy]
a	[The woman wants to see her lover in future]
C	[Woman decides to ask her lover where he lives]
H	Woman asks her lover where he lives
F	The reply is she knows, she should go out ... flock.

At the beginning of 1:7-8, the togetherness of the couple indicates an implied equilibrium. The woman's question reveals her function-a re-evaluation revealing an instability. She wants to meet with the lover, what some interpreters term as a "rendezvous."[11] Her act to alleviate this instability makes her the C-actant

[10] The word "test" here has no theological import such as when we are told, "God tested Abraham" (Gen. 22:1).

[11] Keel 1994: 52; cf. Estes 2010: 309.

resulting from an implied function-C decision to ask to be with her lover. Both function-a and function-C are implicit within her action of inquiry, which itself is both her initial action and her primary action to alleviate a. She gets an answer, empowering her (function-F), even if the reply is unusual: "surely, you know... go out in the tracks of the sheep."

However, this is where a third problem soon becomes evident. One notices both protagonist lovers want to be with each other but in such a way that the woman must come away from her home. The same problem is evident in the next sequence, an abbreviated version of which is as follows:

2:8-2:17

a	[Man and woman are not together]
C	[Man decides to be with his beloved]
C'	Man travels to be with his beloved
G	Man arrives at woman's home
H	He attempts to persuade her to come away
I_{neg}	He fails and they are separated

One would expect the initial action of the man's travelling (C') and arriving at the woman's house (G) to alleviate the instability. However, even when this initial act to alleviate the instability is accomplished, a further action is still needed, namely the primary act (H), an urgent call to come away with him (2:10-14). Similarly, in 1:7, though she is already with the man, she wants to know about his house and be with him there.

Compare this to Christina Rosetti's lyric poem, *A Birthday,* which is about a woman awaiting her lover who is travelling to her. Kafalenos notates the act of the lover's travel in the poem as function-H as it is his primary act to alleviate the predicament of their separation.[12] In Rosetti's poem, the aim of the couple is merely to be together so representing the lover's travelling as function-H is apt. However, in the Song's first two non-regal units, the two lovers are already together when they launch their respective questions to each other. Apparently, it is not enough for either of them to just be together. She still pines to be with him *in his environment* and he still insists she *come away* with him. Here dawns the realisation that either of their desires would result in her *leaving* her house and one must judge whether the resultant departure from her home is merely

[12] Kafalenos 2006: 169-70.

coincidental or whether there is any urgent and encompassing motivation, or plausible antecedent cause to do so.

There is no apparent reason nor prior cause given in these two units why the two lovers might want her to leave home. A motivating reason could come from the woman herself but it is found in 1:6, in the regal units, where the woman speaks of her past—her angry brothers compelling her into work on the vineyard. This incidentally is the one group of events with no causational link with other regal events,[13] the very verse flagged by Garrett as being self-contained and independent.[14]

3. The Start of the Fabula (1:6)

At this point, we need to examine 1:6 for what appears to be the introduction of antagonists to the narrative. Many interpreters portray the brothers as protectors of their sister or her virginity. Yet, the verse could offer an introductory set of subtle signs for the existence of antagonists in the Song.

The female protagonist reveals to her female confidantes that she was made to work in the family vineyard where the sun "gazed" (שׁזף) upon her. One might miss the implications of her speech had it not been for the fact that the sun has physically damaged the "vineyard" of her bodily appearance. So, while שׁזף generally means "to look," here the force of her speech act conveys that the sun *burnt* her. Just as the heat of the sun welts her physical body, the hot anger (חרה) of her brothers disfigures her emotionally. She does not say this explicitly but the implications are present for her listeners—and us readers—to work out.

Exum explains, "we have a pun on *ḥrh*, 'to burn, to be angry,' and *ḥrr*, 'to burn, scorch,' and perhaps also *nḥr*, 'to rage, to snort' ... Anger, like the sun, burns."[15] The connection that Exum and Landy draw with חרר is especially interesting for I note that four times out of eight or so instances the verb is used, it occurs specifically in relation to people who are harmed both physically and emotionally in some way: Job 30:30, Job's skin turns black, his bones burn with heat, he is the companion of jackals (v.29); Ps. 69:4, the speaker is weary, crying out because of those who hate him without a cause (v.5); Ps. 102:4, the speaker's bones burn, all day his enemies taunt him, deriding him by using his name for a curse (v.9); and Prov. 26:21, the contentious man who engenders strife. In all

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[13] p.255.

[14] Garrett 2004: 26.

[15] Exum 2005: 105; Landy 2011: 142 n.9.

these cases, there is a victim and an oppressor. The verb חרה itself, which is explicit, though often attached to God's just anger, can be used for an unjust anger and the harming of a "victim" without cause. Consider its use in relation to Cain's anger against Abel (Gen. 4:6); in Balaam's tirade against his donkey (Num. 22:27); in Eliab's accusation against David (1 Sam. 17:28); and Saul's bloodthirsty pursuit of David (1 Sam. 20:30).

So far, the brother's anger, it seems, could be interpreted either way—just or unjust. Some retrospective reading using material from Song 8 may be necessary, however, to get a fuller picture. That is what Song 8, as an epilogue where loose ends are tied, is designed for and how narratives function. One sometimes has to find a "key" to an earlier mystery from later in a narrative. When one pre-empts the meaning of לא־יבוזו לי "they would not *despise* me" (8:1) as a reference to her brothers rather than outsiders,[16] one begins to get a different impression of the brothers' anger. Song 8:1 seems to suggest her brothers are not just *angry* with her but they *despise* her, בוז being a strong word in the Hebrew Bible (cf. 2 Kgs 19:21; Song 8:7). The person who despises another holds them as insignificant.

If one returns to 1:6 and re-reads, it is an emotional hurt that seems to be at the heart of the sister's speech. Notice the way her sentence is constructed:

> ... I am a שחרחרת "darkish" [because]
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Sun gazed | **physical hurt to body** |
> | Brothers angry | **Emotional hurt (anger)** |
> | They set me keeper | **Emotional hurt (heavy-handedness)** |
> | My vineyard not kept | **physical hurt to body** |

Technically, this is not a chiasm, but I have shown it so, in order to demonstrate that at the heart of her speech is hinted emotional hurt that accompanies the physical.

Drawing from Song 8 again, at least one vineyard which is said to be owned by Solomon no less, is discovered to have been given to נטרים "keepers" (8:11). If 1:6 is read retrospectively with 8:11, it seems that the brothers must be the keepers (plural) and that they have set their sister to be keeper (singular).

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[16] See p.259.

1:6a My brothers … **set me keeper** of the vineyards

1:6b My own vineyard I have not kept

8:11 Solomon had a vineyard … **he gave it to keepers**

8:12a My very own vineyard is before me

As mentioned in chapter 2, the work of tending to a vineyard is recognised as laborious and typically male-oriented. It is unusual for her to be doing (all?) the work and more so to the extent that it would burn her skin.[17] If these brothers do care for their sister's health and appearance, perhaps they should be more concerned. Some have reckoned the brothers would negotiate a bride price with a prospective suitor (cf. 8:8) for her,[18] and it is also speculated the sister has not looked after herself, hence their anger. If so, why then oppose her suitor later?[19]

The brothers now seem almost like a male version of Cinderella's stepsisters in a proto-Cinderella story.[20] One wonders if like those sisters, the brothers shirk their own responsibilities, leaving them to her. Suggestions that the brothers are protectors of their sister's virginity[21] or that she has not kept her virginity (purportedly her vineyard) might be seriously misjudging both her and the metaphor she uses.[22] After all, if the vineyard of 1:6b does refer to her lost virginity, then its formal equivalent in 8:12a "my own vineyard (virginity??) is before me" would be a rather bizarre statement. Moreover, it is strange that even those who might wish to see a loose continuity in the Song fail to see that the alleged meaning of losing her virginity contradicts the much clearer metaphors of it being secure (4:12). It is more reasonable to conclude that the vineyard

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[17] p.34.

[18] See e.g. comments in Gledhill 1994: 104; Keel 1994: 279.

[19] See pp.207, 268.

[20] The phrase "my mother's sons" is poetic and need not indicate that her siblings are stepbrothers (e.g. Gledhill 1994: 104; Delitzsch 1993: 27).

[21] Alter 2016: 9.

[22] e.g. Pope 1977: 326-8. Roberts 2007: 61-62 provides reasons why the "virginity perspective" is incorrect.

metaphor refers to her own body which she has not maintained because of the effects of the work and sun.[23]

Her self-description, שחורה "black" (cf. Lev. 13:31, 37; Zech. 6:2, 6) and שחרחרת usually translated "blackish," emphasises her being sunburnt from intense outdoor labour, not her race.[24] Fiona Black raises a legitimate question at this point: Since the second adjective is a hapax and has been hypothesized to be a pun on the former (blackish), could both be taken interchangeably?[25] The answer to this is probably "no" since "in Semitic nominal derivation, reduplication often provides an extension in the meaning of a word in comparison to its non-reduplicated base."[26] This is the conclusion of Butts who, in an extensive study of reduplicated nominal patterns in Semitic languages, notes that almost all adjectives like שחרחרת, of the nominal pattern $C_1C_2C_3C_2C_3$, "are qualitative adjectives that fall into well-defined semantic groups, such as diminutives, intensives, sound-symbolic terms, and bodily or personal characteristics, including defects and color terms."[27] Amongst Hebrew Bible scholars, שחרחרת is read as an intensification by Hess[28] but many take it as a diminutive.[29] Both are technically possible but the latter is to be preferred. The diminutive is more common within reduplication forms right across the Semitic languages and reduplicated adjectives of colour terms, according to Butts, belong to the most common semantic group traditionally known as bodily or personal characteristics. Butts also notes that such adjectives characteristically "mark the speaker's attitude toward the person being described ... they express an extension in meaning due to their heightened emotive, empathetic character."[30] This leads one to think that שחרחרת could be an emotive term given to the woman by others—her brothers, for example—which she now recalls for her immediate hearers.

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[23] See also p.273.

[24] Exum 2005: 103; Ausloos 2019. As for how her beauty and blackness are related, see Roberts 2007: 59 n.45.

[25] Black 2006: 173.

[26] Butts 2006: 99.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Hess 2005: 57.

[29] Delitzsch 1993: 26; Zöckler 1898: 55; Harper 1902: 3; Segal 1927:111; Carr 1984: 78; Joüon-Muraoka 2011: 233, §88-J; Stoop-Van Paridon 2005: 55; Alter 2016: 5 n.6.

[30] Butts 2011: 87.

I am also open to the possibility that in addition to the reduplication with a diminutive meaning, the ending *-et* in this case either concretises the diminutive[31] or personifies it (e.g. *Qohelet* "preacher" (Ecc. 1:1); *sopheret* "scriber" (Ezra 2:55); *pocheret* "binder" (Neh. 7:59); *yoshebet* "inhabitant" and *oyebet* "enemy").[32] It becomes something like "[little] blackish [one]" and if coming from patronising brothers, it would be meant in a demeaning way, one of four possible pejoratives given to their sister by the woman's brothers. This, however, is by no means incontrovertible.

If the brothers are using their sister for field labour, then the specific phrase "they set me keeper," could contain undertones of domineering behaviours, and if שׁחרחרת is a belittling aptronym, a slur, the brothers have used for her predicament of being sunburnt,[33] it would be the first instance in a pattern of speech that could be construed as patronising (cf. 2:15; 7:1; 8:8-9). Although this is not made obvious, what is transparent is the connection she draws between the sun's scorching heat and the "hot anger" of her brothers as well the negative effects each has upon her.

I have struggled to describe these brothers. They are characterised negatively in the Song, as I will continue to demonstrate. I use the term "antagonistic" in relation to them being literary antagonists, opposed to the protagonist in the same vein as Propp's villain or Greimas's opponent. At the lower end they seem selfish and peevish. At worst, they appear to be guilty of emotional abuse towards their sister. However one chooses to describe them and their motives, they do have an active role in the Song, contrary to some.[34]

Attributing an antagonistic role to them, even if not common today, was around for a long time although such a dimension had not been explored fully. For some reason, in medieval times, the antagonists were changed to protectors, as was mentioned in the second chapter.[35] A group of antagonistic brothers would explain the woman's inconsistent behaviour in the non-regal units towards her lover, and sheds light upon the nature of their remarks (and her ripostes) when they do speak elsewhere in the Song (2:15; 7:1a; 8:8-9).

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[31] See comments on the moniker "Shulamit" on p.170.

[32] The last two could also be collectives. Waltke and O'Conner 1990: 105, §6.4.2c.

[33] One questions whether in the root שׁחר "black," there is also a pun related to the verb חרשׁ "to plough" which often has the idiomatic connotation of oppression by wicked people who foment evil (cf. 1 Sam. 23:9; Job 4:8; Ps. 129:3; Prov. 3:29; 6:14; 12:20; 14:22; Hos. 10:13; *HALOT* 3510).

[34] E.g. Exum 2005: 257.

[35] p.34.

A closer examination of 1:6 has revealed that it can theoretically provide the necessary antecedent cause for the woman to want to leave home and be with her lover permanently. It seems interpreters have focused inordinately on the theme of skin colour to the detriment of seeing the more important theme of the brothers' anger found in the verse. Other than 5:7, it is the one verse where the woman in the Song suffers most.

The literary methodological justification for using 1:6 as a reconstructed beginning of events for the fabula of the non-regal units rather than that of the regal units is taken from Kafalenos's argument that "events lend themselves to more than one interpretation of their function" and the words of the text unavoidably (whether correctly or incorrectly, intentionally or not) guide readers' interpretations of the function of the represented events.[36] Song 1:6 has already been recognised as being a "self-contained unit"[37] in as much as it describes past events disconnected from those concurrent with the woman's conversation that she is black but beautiful (1:5).[38] However, 1:6 could serve the function of not just providing a backstory to her "blackness" but also to introducing that backstory of the narrative as a whole. Kafalenos argues that "since events are functionally polyvalent, and their function depends on their consequences, readers often change their interpretation of the function of an event as they read, page by page, and acquire further information."[39]

Wearing her methodological hat, Kafalenos cautions that

> In narratives in which the sequence of the representation is different from the chronology of fabula, readers' interpretation of the function of individual events will be guided by the sequence in which the events are arranged. Thus the event that seems the primary motivation and is interpreted as function A (or a) in the representation may be entirely different from the one that is interpreted as function A (or a) in the fabula.[40]

For our purposes, this means that the initial function-a (the woman wants to *see* her lover again) is not accurate; she wishes to be with him, *in his home*. Also, the

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[36] Kafalenos 2006: 14.

[37] Garrett 2004: 26.

[38] Her self-description as "black" (1:5) is just a means of introducing her past suffering (1:6).

[39] Kafalenos 2006: 45.

[40] Ibid.

concept of functional polyvalence for 1:6 means that while these analeptic events are recounted in dialogue with the daughters (1:5), they also introduce the reader to a different timeline, one that is initiated by a sequence of suffering for the woman thereby creating further consequences for her and responses from her.

4. Character Formation Narrative

We have already discovered that the characterisation of the female protagonist in the non-regal units is very different from that of the regal. Many of the behavioural attitudes and negative outcomes for the couple in the former units become explicable if taken within the context of sibling antagonists which the analeptic events in 1:6 concerning the brothers are emphasising.

As one studies the Song's non-regal units from this perspective, it becomes evident that they conform to the general description of a *Bildungsroman*:

> A *Bildungsroman* (a novel about a character's development into adulthood) begins at a point where the protagonist (the main character), while still young, begins to be aware of herself as an individual in a world that includes other individuals, and traces that character's development to a point that she interprets as the milestone marking her entrance into the adult life for which she has been preparing: entrance to a career, earning enough money to be able to contribute to her younger siblings' education, getting married, etc. The path that a *Bildungsroman* traces, typically, is a single sequence that includes numerous recurrences of the donor events (functions D, E, and F), each of which provides for the protagonist experiences that allow her to develop the qualifications or attributes she needs to become the person she wants to be.[41]

The most relevant parts of the quote above is the concept and nature of a *Bildungsroman* and how Kafalenos labels the functions that typically occur in such narratives. The very nature of a *Bildungsroman* is for the principal C-actant to undergo a series of tests before she or he can come to maturity. Each test may be a discrete episode but there is an overarching trajectory of events that inexorably leads to the protagonist eventually acquiring empowerment for success. This has an impact upon how one perceives the units in the Song.

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[41] Kafalenos 2006: 18.

Current scholarship would view these as a loose anthology of mostly positive poems. My research from the last chapter has already revealed the fact that not all these "discrete poems" are as positive as they are made out to be. Beyond this, they can be linked together if they are part of an overarching narrative of a protagonist being tested, a *Bildungsroman.*

Kafalenos labels the constituents of these tests as functions D, E, and F in her paradigm, which are functions that respectively pertain to the testing of the principal C-actant; to the response of the C-actant to the test; and to the C-actant acquiring empowerment for her or his desire/goal to be fulfilled. In terms of Kafalenos's paradigm, the C-actants in other kinds of narratives differ from those in *Bildungsromane* since they, when they make the decision to act (function C), already have the power (skills, strength, knowledge, money, maturity, etc.) to accomplish their endeavour. Kafalenos notes that

> in the former case much of the representation is generally devoted to the events of function H: direct action to alter the function-A situation. In the latter, some—and sometimes most—of the representation is devoted to events designed to empower the C-actant: .... the events of a Bildungsroman that lead to increased maturity. Events that are designed to empower the C-actant to accomplish function H are interpreted by the functions of the donor section (functions D, E, and F). Function F marks the C-actant's acquisition of the power to accomplish function H. Function F_{neg} marks the C-actant's inability to acquire power needed to accomplish function H.[42]

Now that we have gained a theoretical foothold into the concept of *Bildungsroman,* I must address those readers who may take exception to the fact that I am speaking of a lyrical poem in terms of a purely narrative genre. I am not arguing that the genre of the Song is a *Bildungsroman* but am merely drawing an analogy to what should more appropriately be considered as a composite poem of both lyric and narrative. A poem could make use of a *Bildungsroman* structure if it is capacious enough to account for the development of a human person's narrative across time. Modern examples that have been defined as poetic

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[42] Kafalenos 2006: 29-30.

Bildungsromane include Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* which Golban calls "a short proto-Bildungsroman in verse form,"[43] Byron's dramatic poem *Manfred*,[44] Browning's *Pippa Passes*, and the shorter coming-of-age poem *In Progress* by Rosetti.

I prefer to see all these poems as *Bildungsgedichte*, and the Song of Songs as belonging to this category, different in some ways from, for example, Wordsworth's *The Prelude,* but nonetheless a "formation poem" in which the central character—here, a female protagonist—is shaped and empowered in personality rather than being a static, uni-dimensional character. An alternative classification is *Lehrgedicht* which might suit the fact that the Song is increasingly being studied for its wisdom potential. Sadly, the phenomenon of the *Bildungsgedicht, or Lehrgedicht* in literature is an under-discussed phenomenon. Each episode of the character development can either be causally connected with another episode or loosely connected with an overarching goal. In terms of the former, the *Bildungsgedicht* has some overlap with another brand of character plot, the picaresque, though here the protagonist never develops any abilities as a result of her/his multiple experiences.[45] It is the seeming independence between episodes which can misleadingly create the impression of there being independent songs. A strength of treating the Song as a *Bildungsgedicht* instead of conventional drama is that what seems to be an episodic sequence of lyric poems do not need to be forced into a shape such as was characteristic of the dramatic perspective. Its discrete parts are both self-contained but also connected as a whole.

I will now demonstrate how the discrete episodes depicted in the non-regal units provide individual tests for the woman to allow her to fulfil her desire to leave the house of her antagonistic brothers and to live with her lover forever. I will show how she responds in each episode and how her final success of realising her desire after several failures is achieved. It is necessary to re-write the functions of the first couple of sequences since we are now taking 1:6 as a motivating set of events within a *Bildungsgedicht*.

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[43] Golban 2018: 244.

[44] Ibid., 269.

[45] Kafalenos 2006: 19.

Reconstruction of the Fabula of the Non-Regal Units

First Sequence (1:7-8)

Woman as C-actant	
EQ	[Woman living at her home with her antagonistic brothers]
A	Brothers are angry and make her work on the vineyard (1:6)
a	[Woman seeks emotional support (from her lover)]
C	[Woman considers being with her lover permanently]
C'	She meets with her lover
H	Woman asks her lover where he "feeds"/"shepherds"
D	The reply is she knows already, she should go out after the "flock"
F_{neg}	[Woman does not respond]
I_{neg}	[Woman fails to leave home]
EQ	[Couple physically separated again]

The woman lives with her brothers. This is inferred from her description in 1:6 along with later statements (2:15; 7:1; 8:8-9). Her father is not mentioned and the mention of her mother (1:6; 3:4; 6:9; 8:2) never actually states she is alive. This situation is the initial equilibrium at the beginning of the fabula.

At some point, her brothers make her manually labour in the vineyard which, I have argued, harms their sister physically and emotionally (1:6). It is a destabilising event for her. From this ordeal, it may be assumed that her harsh circumstances lead to her act of seeking emotional support from someone (function-a). Her feelings concerning this decision are not made explicit but are reasonable given her experiences in "work" and with the anger of her brothers.

The beginning of the relationship with her lover is not revealed but her decision C to seek him as her permanent love and comfort would be an event embedded within those antecedents of their revealed romantic relationship that scholars have already recognised to exist *in medias res* in the Song. How serious she is to leave home at this time is not made explicit, but she meets with him (C') and her primary action is to ask her lover where he is (H), so as to facilitate the possibility of her departure. This is inferred partially from the fact that in 1:7, though she is with him, there is a desire to be with him in *his environment*,

where he "shepherds/feeds." Equally, however, one does not infer this from 1:7 in isolation. Instead, the reader must return to this point in a process of re-reading, in what Smith calls retrospective patterning. The process of retrospective patterning, according to Smith, involves a realignment of certain thematic elements within the reader's understanding of the text just read. She writes that

> The reader's experience is not only continuous over a period of time, but continuously changes in response to succeeding events. As we read, structural principles, both formal and thematic, are gradually deployed and perceived; and as these principles make themselves known, we are engaged in a steady process of adjustment and retrospective patterning.[46]

The woman's act H, to ask her lover about his domain, will resolve her own perceived instability (1:7).[47] While the language of the inquiry teases the reader, never fully revealing whether the one sought after is really a "shepherd" or a "shepherd-king,"[48] the reply she receives (1:8) is itself enigmatic, for the words "surely you know" (taking the ethical dative)[49] presupposes knowledge of his shepherding-house on her part. The reply can be understood as test D because it is designed to enable the woman to use her own initiative to leave her home for the lover's environment. The problem is not one of knowledge, it is the lack of empowerment. This is offered as a kindly expostulation: the ethical dative צאי־לך "go out" and "follow in the well-worn paths of the [=my] flock" tells her all she needs to know.[50] Couched in metaphor, as was the query, it is ultimately an emboldening element for her to obtain function-a, her desire to depart her house to live permanently with her lover.

One expects the woman to respond to the test (a possible E function) but no response is portrayed. From the man's return to her house in the next sequence, the reader understands that the woman failed this test D resulting in a lack of empowerment for her (F_{neg}) and failure of her primary action (I_{neg}). The sequence

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[46] Smith 1968: 10. By structure, Smith does not mean only the poem's formal elements but "the product of all the principles, both formal and thematic, by which a poem is generated ..." (p.6).

[47] p.136.

[48] p.131.

[49] p.136.

[50] A similar instruction is found in Jer. 50:8.

implicitly ends with the couple physically separated since the man must return in the next sequence. The equilibrium at the end of the sequence is, as one expects, similar to its beginning.

Second Sequence (2:8-17)

Man as C-actant		
EQ		[Couple are physically separated]
a		[Man desires his beloved to be with him permanently]
C		[Man decides to invite his beloved away with him]
C'		Man travels to be with his beloved
G		Man arrives at her house
D_1		He attempts to see her from behind the wall/window
H		He attempts to persuade her to come away with him
D_2		He attempts to see her from behind a (vineyard?) wall
	D_3	Brothers accuse the lovers of ruining the vineyard
	F_{neg}	Woman urges him to turn away. Both are disempowered
I_{neg}		The man departs home
EQ		Couple physically separated again

The second episode begins after an unknown length of time. The language of spring heralds both the seasonal setting as well as the metaphor of an opportune time for the lovers' romance to blossom and for them to be united. The fact that the man's desire is not to merely *see* his beloved corresponds with her own desire in the previous episode. The man wants to call her away with him (function-a).

As a *Bildungsgedicht*, it is reasonable to suppose that this sequence is embedded within the wider narrative of the woman's desire (function-a) to leave home and live with him. His actions are meant to empower her to secure her wishes. Her role as overarching C-actant to resolve her predicament herself is de-emphasised by the "assistance" she receives from him. The poet turns the focus upon the man's desires here, marking out his hortatory speech.[51] The speech to "go out" is more forceful that that of 1:8. There is an escalation of intensity

[51] p.144.

because of the failure on the previous occasion. Appeals to "go out" and "come away" are ejected and repeated in quick succession.

As C-actant in this embedded episode, he decides to visit her (function-C) and his initial act to alleviate his function-a desire is to traverse the hills and come to her house (C'). While there, he faces a number of disempowering tests (D_1, D_2 and $D_{3)}$, all of which reinforce in the reader's mind the inaccessibility to her. He must peer through her window and gaps in stone.[52] It is not merely a desire for intimacy that he seeks, his is not the actions of a skulking voyeur, a postpubescent peeping Tom, but set against the backdrop of her quandary with her brothers, he is cautiously circumventing his would-be opponents.[53] The poet's goal is to highlight the difficulties the man encounters in seeing her, let alone in his inviting her away. The greatest obstacle to his invitation is the interference of her brothers who now confirm their antagonistic role by interjecting their condescending remarks (D_3). This is a test for the woman as much as it is for the man and so it can be offset within the wider sequence.

Foxes: The Brothers' Second Appearance

This speech is rarely considered to be that of the brothers. That the speaker (or speakers) forms, or self-identifies as being part of a plurality, as well as addressing one, can be derived from the plural forms אחזו־לנו "catch for *us*" and וכרמינו "*our* vineyards." At the end, we are told Solomon gives one vineyard to "keepers" (8:11) and that the brothers set their sister as "keeper" (1:6). Also, they have some interest in the marriage prospects of their *little* sister (8:8), but whether their motive is to give her away or keep her back is open to question.

Bloch and Bloch say the brothers have responsibility for their sister (and her work) and so they must be the speakers.[54] Indeed, since the unit begins with the lover visiting the woman in *her* home, it is realistic to conclude that her brothers also live there and the reference to "vineyards" are those belonging to the family (cf. 1:6; 8:11). It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the speakers in 2:15 are the brothers.

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[52] p.141.

[53] The language of opposition becomes very apparent in 8:8-9 with the use of siege vocabulary.

[54] See e.g. Ginsburg 1857: 147; Barnstone 1970: 14; NKJV (incl. headings for speakers); Bloch and Bloch 1995: 157.

An unwillingness to attribute the voices to the brothers stems from the need to attribute all inexplicit speech to the two lovers, to treat the speech as positive, or to treat this unit as an independent poem. Roberts, for example, argues that the woman is speaking in 2:15 on the basis that with the exception of 8:8, which he recognises to be the brothers speaking, no other person uses a first person plural possessive suffix.[55] Surely Roberts should have taken the "exception" as a possibility that the speakers of 2:15 could indeed be the brothers. Elliott's argument that the speaker must be the woman because she is the one who is speaking elsewhere in the unit is similarly weak.[56]

Garrett raises a good point, that it would be unusual if the man or woman are speaking since it is usually they who are the focus of the action.[57] This would challenge those that think that either, or both, of them are addressing a plurality such as the daughters (Steinberg) or a yet undisclosed group (Fischer).[58] Moreover, tying to identify characters when isolating earlier chapters from the later ones, and treating them as though they were independent, does not usually work with narratives. Identities of characters can frequently be misidentified because later chapters might provide "keys" to unlocking earlier ones. This is one of those narratives designed to be re-read, especially once the reader has learned from 7:1 that the speech of 2:15 must be that of the brothers targeting the young couple.[59] Until we reach that point, we can still consider the possible tenor and purpose of the speech here.

The speech undoubtedly conjures up images of chasing after creatures, attempting to lay hold of them without letting them go, and such is a distinct possibility in the case of the word "vineyards" as we have already discovered in the last chapter.[60]

Yet, the word "foxes" can be used metaphorically for people and if the target domain is the two lovers, then the basic conceptual metaphor being used is:

YOUNG LOVERS ARE LITTLE FOXES.

This metaphor needs further unpacking. The speech enjoins someone to "catch" the foxes. Clearly, it is being used negatively. Metaphorically, this would be used

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[55] Roberts 2007: 117, 342.

[56] Elliott 1989: 73.

[57] Garrett 2004: 160.

[58] Steinberg 2014: 145; Fischer 2003: 14.

[59] p.233.

[60] p.145.

in the sense of "trap" or "ensnare" (cf. Job 18:9). The speakers do not so much want to catch literal foxes as trick, or stop, the lovers.

Fishbane notes that the two instances "convey the sense of seizing or grabbing for one's benefit."[61] The speakers benefit from the capture of the foxes. Moreover, Fischer remarks that their speech is of special importance because it includes the idea of representation.[62] Someone wants someone else to do the catching or trapping. Many present the brothers as upholding their sister's virtue but one can read their speech as consulting with each other, either through overprotectiveness or selfishness, to keep their sister home. Being aware of the lover's invitation to their sister, they attempt to derail the meeting by insinuating that these meetings of their sister with her lover are ruining the vineyards.

We have already been informed that the vineyards are those of the brothers and that they set their sister to be their keeper (1:6; cf. 8:11). Their appearance at the beginning and end frames the entire book. Butting recognises that, "the intention of this arrangement might be to show, literarily and literally, the brothers actual envelopment of their sister."[63] Their envelopment could extend to their desire to pursue some damage control in their sister's relationship and keep her at home. The metaphor then could be modified as:

THE SUPPRESSION OF YOUNG LOVERS IS THE ENTRAPMENT OF LITTLE FOXES.

The theme of the brothers making their sister look after the vineyards has already been activated earlier (1:6). Their complaint, then, is that the lovers are ruining the vineyards by (perhaps the wrongful accusation of) engaging in romantic liaisons while not attending to the work. Again, as in 1:6, they seem to care more about productivity in the vineyard than they do their sister.

The word "little" could be here used instead of "young" but it could also be used as a condescension in the way big brothers might use for a younger sister who is under their thumb (cf. 8:8). If used as a derogatory slur for their sister's lover, it could bear the sense of being "inconsequential" but much of the invective is surely directed at his "skulking around" in his attempts to see the sister. His furtive peeping through holes in the wall/rock fits the metaphor perfectly. In his scrambling around the vineyards, he is being accused of ruining (מחבלים) it.

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[61] Fishbane 2015: 77.

[62] Fischer 2003: 13.

[63] Butting 2000: 148.

If there is double entendre attached to the words, the man is not only being accused of spoiling the vineyards but falsely accused of despoiling their sister (perhaps even of conceiving a child since מחבלים in 8:5 bears this meaning). In this case, the vineyard is used metaphorically as: A DESPOILED VIRGIN IS A RUINED VINEYARD. I note, however, that their use of the plural "vineyards" makes such a double entendre less convincing if it refers to just the sister but it could work if the accusation is that he has despoiled not only their sister but *many* virgins.

In any case, as Propp's villain who prevents the hero from achieving his quest, the brothers' speech can be taken as a complaint employed to break up the couple's liaison and to derail the prospect of their sister leaving by emotionally injuring the man. The metaphor, in full, being used by the brothers of the young couple is approximately:

> TRIFLING YOUNG LOVERS WHO RUIN (PRODUCTIVITY OR/AND VIRGINS), AND NEED SUPPRESSING ARE LITTLE FOXES THAT RUIN VINEYARDS AND NEED TRAPPING.

I have placed the options in brackets but in any case, the brothers' action D_3 has an effect upon the couple because soon after, the man is retreating to his house whence he came without fulfilling his function-a wish to have the woman come away. Her appeal to him to "turn away" or "return," whichever it is, comes on the "mountains of separation" that form the backdrop for his departure. Once more they are separated. The tests have disempowered the man but more importantly, the woman has not stood up to her brothers.

Her response that they belong to each other affirms their love; saying that he "feeds among lilies" (2:16) essentially refers to his *house,* where he "feeds." Unfortunately, saying any more at this stage would "spoil the fun" for my reader. Suffice it to say mine is not the usual interpretation of the motif which is usually interpreted as sexual entendre for the couple being intimate but I will show why it functions differently.[64] In any case, her own desire to leave home has been short-circuited. The resultant new equilibrium is as before, the couple are physically separated but their separation on this occasion is emphasised by the metaphor of cleft mountains in order to symbolically reflect their current separation.[65]

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[64] pp.223 and 289.

[65] See p.148. For "symbolic characters," see p.219.

Third Sequence (3:1-5)

Let us consider the possibility that this unit is independent of its predecessor, not forgetting that this is one of two units which scholars recognise as having the highest narrativity in the Song. Taken autonomously, the destabilising event portrayed would be unlinked to any pre-existing problem. The loss of the man's presence cannot be associated with the desire to be with him *permanently* because that is not represented in this unit as was emphasised in the previous two. The representation merely reveals the woman's awareness he is missing (function-a) and that she wants him. There are at least three problems with such a reading. No reason is given why the man is missing. Even if one reconstructs function A—either he has not visited or he has left her side (either scenario is possible)—a bigger problem is that no reason is given *why* either is a destabilising state. This is especially true for the first scenario which is probably why most interpreters assume the second scenario, that he is gone missing from her bed. Even if this issue is soluble, then, the mention of the guards becomes a problem for they seem to serve no real purpose in an independent poem. She encounters them, she asks about her lover, she receives no response, she passes them, she then immediately finds her lover resulting in her success (I) to bring him back home with her. The fabula can be (provisionally) reconstructed as follows:

A	[Man has left her bed…]
a	[…*or* he has not visited]. She becomes aware of his absence
C	She decides to look for him
C'	She looks for him nearby
H	She goes out into the city streets to look for him
I	She finds him and brings him back to her bed

On the other hand, let us consider the possibility that the sequence of events in the previous episode are those which create the predicament at the start of the present sequence (see revised fabula below). The brothers' involvement resulted in the man's departure, causing the lovers to be separated again, the new equilibrium. Now, we also have a causative reason in the present sequence for the scale of her distress. She has been expecting him according to her declared wishes (2:17) which ended the previous sequence. He has not returned and she is now portrayed in bed facing a new destabilising event A. As C-actant, she searches for

him. Functions C, C' and H are the same as earlier. However, if this sequence is read and contrasted with 5:2-8 as part of a wider narrative, the guards can be read as symbolic characters of an ongoing concern for the couple to maintain an abiding unity. I expand on what symbolic characters do in relation to 5:2-8.[66] More importantly, her finding of her lover, if set in the wider narrative, becomes a test (D) of whether she will now finally stay with him or be separated yet again. She has indeed left her house, she demonstrates the response the reader eagerly anticipates, of her responding to his appeals of 2:10-13. The tension, though escalated, results in an anti-climax because she brings her lover back with her to her house. This is an ironic element in the narrative. For though she finds him (or is found by him) in his domain, the city, and she has the opportunity to stay with him, she takes him back to her house. Though read as a success from an independent unit perspective, her action results in a failure (I_{neg}) from the perspective of an overarching desire to be with him *permanently*. Unfortunately, this permanency cannot happen in *her* house. His inevitable departure is inexplicit but implied from the next sequence which has him returning. His leaving results in yet another separation.

Woman as C-actant	
EQ	[Couple physically separated]
a	Man not returned
C	She decides to look for him
C'	She looks for him
H	She goes out to the city to look for him
D	She finds him [test: will she now go with him to his house?]
E	She responds by bringing him back to her house
I_{neg}	[He departs]
EQ	[Couple physically separated again.]

[66] p.219.

Fourth Sequence (5:2-5:6b)

Man as C-actant		
EQ		[Woman in her house, couple physically separated]
a		[Man desires to be with her]
C		[Man decides to visit]
C'		He visits her
H		He knocks and wakes her
	D	He asks her to open to him
	E	She delays opening, providing reasons
	F_{neg}	Neither is empowered
I_{neg}		He departs
EQ		[Couple are separated]

The fourth sequence begins with the couple separated. The man desires to be with his beloved, he decides to visit, resulting in his arrival at her door (a, C, C'). His primary action, however, is to attempt to gain entry at her door (H). His vociferous appeals to let him in can be seen as yet another test for the woman, whether both of them will be empowered to be with each other (D). Her response to the test is to delay and perhaps provide excuses (E). This results in them being disempowered (F_{neg}). Because this is a test concerning the woman's response within the sequence of the man, events D, E and F_{neg} are offset. His attempt to be with her ends in failure and he departs (I_{neg}). Once more, they are separated bringing the equilibrium to what it was at the start of the sequence.

In this episode, the issue is a more fundamental one, of gaining entry to her rather than his appealing for her to come away with him. Compared to the previous sequence, the relationship portrayed here exhibits something of a regress in the relationship since the fundamental issue of access becomes more important. This sequence has resonances with the second, in terms of her non-availability but the man's appeals are even more urgent than before (1:8; 2:10-15). We see an escalating progression in intensity. Now, he thumps on the door (דופק

in 5:2 is onomatopoeic)[67] whereas earlier, he stands outside the window (2:9). The difference between the two portals has some significance in that the latter represents the immediacy and proximity of both the space between them and the choice she must make.

Is he calling her away at such a late hour? It is possible since she herself later invites him to rise early and leave (7:13). It has been argued she resists because of the late hour and her sleepiness.[68] It has even been suggested to me that she is reluctant because of the "inconveniences" of hygiene needs that accompany sexual activity. Yet, no reason exists within the unit itself and the lack of admittance in this scene stands in sharp contrast to that of her bringing her lover into her house at the late hour (3:4). However, if the unit is taken as part of the ongoing narrative, her reluctant behaviour would either fit the profile of one fearful of her angry brothers or it would suggest, as is more likely, she is facing a dilemma of commitment.

The poet intends this latest appeal to the woman as a more personal one than the others, a make or break moment in which the decision may involve not just coming away with him but the narrower issue of continuing to grant him access to continue his appeals. The door is symbolic here. It represents her heart (5:2) which she must open to (heed) his voice (קוֹל), over and above competing voices she has in her head, such as those of her brothers or that of fear and doubt. In the Song's closure, the association between her brothers and the lover is presented as a war of sorts, with the woman herself presented as a city waiting to be conquered (8:9-10).[69] The struggle is not physical but a psychological-emotional one, happening in the woman's own mind. The unit begins with her having trouble sleeping (5:2). Obviously, detachment from her home is difficult even if the relationship with her brothers is less than ideal. Some aberrant behaviour, such as being unable to commit to her lover is not unexpected. The ongoing question is, "who will win the battle?" The lover loses this particular battle and empowerment. Her instinctive impulse is to deny him his wish, instead making herself inaccessible to him by offering valid reasons for her unavailability (5:3).

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[67] Fox (1985: 143) follows Ibn Ezra, who explains the word as "importunate." Fox cites דפקום in Gen. 33:13 "urge them" or "beat them."

[68] Keel 1994: 189.

[69] p.268.

The man tries to gain access, by wresting the latch or bolt from its place. Failing to open it, and seemingly her heart too, he departs but leaves a token of his love. The poet drops us a subtle clue concerning the man's identity; he is someone wealthy enough to have procured liquid myrrh. His lone and lamenting figure applying the sensuous substance to the door handle evokes the *paraclausithyron* motif of the jilted lover. Yet, mingled with this sad symbol of loss, the poet offers us redeeming hope. Clearly, she loves him—as he attempts entry, her heart is thrilled (5:4). As the lover disappears into the night, his sensuous sign lingers on the latch, it drips to the floor, it will drip from her trembling fingers (5:5), her soul is mortified that she has wounded him or that he has gone forever. No other explanations can account for why her soul is said to "leave" her (5:6b). We are left with the equilibrium we opened with and with the conclusion that they both still love each other but that the time for them to come together had not yet come. The question that lingers on the reader's mind is, "will they now ever be together forever?"

A note on sexual innuendo in this sequence

I wish to consider, at this point, statements such as LaCocque's, that in this scene "the sexual allusions are obvious."[70] At the outset, I must qualify that LaCocque is not reading the passage from a reader-oriented perspective because he speaks of the "author's discourse."[71] He and others fail to connect with the depth of emotional despair that is intended for both lovers in this sequence and the next.

LaCocque and others see a strong sexual innuendo in the statement "my beloved put his hand to the hole, and my heart was thrilled within me" (5:4). In interpreting this sentence in a sexual way, they commit the same errors as the allegorists for whether by inadvertency or design, they methodologically err by taking the meaning of selective words out from their own context and replacing them with sexual meanings. They do so by utilising meanings which do not appear in the non-regal units but in the regal, with its imagery of eroticism and perpetual availability of the lovers to each other. They treat the Song as though it were monolithically dealing with love in exactly the same way throughout, and then presenting 5:2-6 as a *fait accompli* sexual act even though the narrative itself

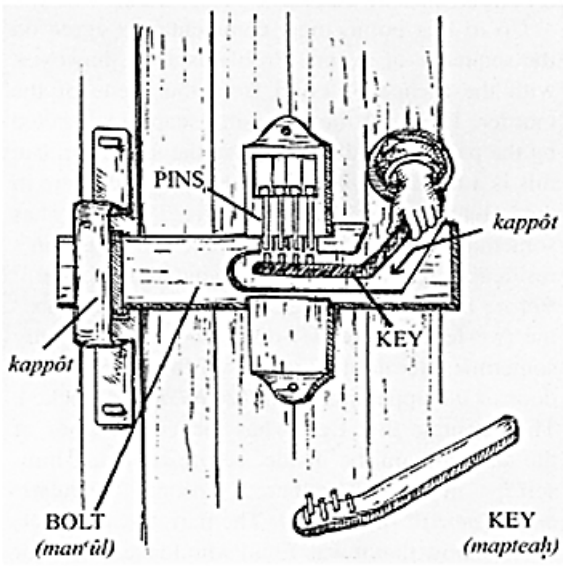
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[70] LaCocque 1998:117.

[71] Ibid.

is still working towards this goal. In truth, the episode ends with separation and heartache, the couple having not actually seen each other.

Stager notes that Pope bypasses the literal level of 5:4, jumping straight into the sexual meaning.[72] Stager himself describes in considerable detail the locking mechanism alluded to in the verse (see diagram below). In such a mechanism, one must insert one's whole hand into the opening in order to insert the key. So, there is no other way that the poet would have described this other than has been done.



The pegs at the bit end of the key correspond to the tumblers in the bolt. When inserted, the pegs lift the tumblers, the bolt can be retracted and the door opened.
Stager 2003: 241.

Having said that, if one should concede the poet is employing sexual entendre (as Stager thinks), this is more likely done using *irony*, to show that the "door" to her body remains locked. The literal layer describes his hand reaching in and she in turn is affected by his voice (and the sight of his hand?). By the time she is moved with emotion, he has gone. The door remains shut, all that is left is a reminder of his presence, the strong-scented myrrh. Zhang draws attention to "the sound play embedded in *ḥāmaq*, which reverberates with the woman's arousing (*hāmû*) and his pounding (*dôpēq*) until (and in spite of) the semantic sense of *ḥāmaq* renders both in vain: 'he has turned away.' "[73] This irony of the woman's late readiness juxtaposed with the man's unavailability is a reversal of

[72] Stager 2003: 241.

[73] Zhang 2016: 86.

their initial stances. Zhang notes that "the word *nāṭpû* ("drip") playfully melts away her previous resistance of *ʾăṭannēpēm* ("soil") through reshuffling of three radicals of the root from *ṭ-n-p* to *n-ṭ-p*. In other words, the vocal change gives a clue about a changed mind-set."[74] Although Zhang understands the text as overturning her previous anxiety, about soiling her feet, into joy, it seems more likely the result is mixed joy and sorrow. The myrrh brings joy, but it is a poor, sorry substitute for its owner. The full force of the irony is that she has kept both the door to her room and her bodily entrance shut until now and when finally her very insides are moved and she is about to open the door, it is too late.

One way or another, the context of the passage works against any suggestion of *realised*, penetrative sex irrespective of the literal layer. It does not matter whether we think the man outside the door is ravenous for sex, although we cannot really know this for sure. Nor does it matter, as LaCocque solemnly testifies, that "figuratively, hand means 'penis,' in Ugarit, Egypt, Israel."[75] What matters is the context. Does the context and mood support an entendre, and if so, to what extent? This is not the account of a naked woman[76] waiting in sexual anticipation for her lover but one which, at face value and at the outset, presents her as not being available to the man. This categorically contradicts LaCocque's statement that "even if one takes the scene at *face value* ... the sexual connotation is so crystal clear."[77]

Of course, the sentence "my beloved put his hand to the hole, and my heart was thrilled within me" can, indeed, be read as sexual innuendo for an accomplished sex act if it were located within 4:1-5:1. A sexual double entendre at that point does not force itself, counter to the context. The same, however, cannot be said of its location in 5:2-7 if one is considering the perspective of the text itself. The "hole" is the crevice in the door frame or in the door itself; the man's hand is ... his hand; and her thrill, while it may refer to sexual desire, it is not what LaCocque is thinking of.

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[74] Ibid., 84

[75] LaCocque 1998: 117.

[76] Keel (1994: 186, 189), amongst others, reads 5:3 "I had put off my garment (כתנת)" as though she is naked. She has removed an *outdoor* tunic, not an undergarment (cf. linen כתנת worn by priests over their undergarments–Ex. 28:39; 29:5; Joseph's colourful כתנת–Gen. 37:31,32; Hushai appears with a torn outdoor כתנת–2 Sam. 15:32). It is also a cold night (5:2 mentions "dew").

[77] LaCocque 1998: 117.

Fifth Sequence (5:6c-6:3)

Woman as C-actant	
EQ	[Couple are separated]
a	The woman is mortified that she has hurt her lover
C	[She decides to open the door to her lover]
C'	She opens the door but he has already left
H	She goes out [to the city streets] to look for him but does not find him
F_{neg1}	She meets the watchmen who beat her and de-veil her
F_2	She meets the daughters of Jerusalem who ask about her lover
I_{neg}	She has not yet found him
EQ	[She returns home? Couple are separated]

After four sequences and failures, the couple's separation now appears to have created a deeper impact on the woman. No argument is needed to establish the connection between the previous sequence and the beginning of this one. Her words, "My soul failed [me] when he spoke" (5:6c) indicates her turn of heart to his speech, either accompanying the appearance of his hand at the door or his withdrawal. This specific speech is omitted and substituted by his actions. His departure creates her awareness of a new destabilising predicament (function a).

She opens the door (C, C'), which incidentally must follow (5:6b) in the fabula. The opening of the door is her initial action to alleviate the instability but as the man has already left, her primary act (H) is to search for him, as before, in the implied city streets and squares (3:2). However, because we have reached the point of the *peripeteia*, the turning point of the narrative, she does not find her lover. This is designed to be a worsening of her situation (although it could be argued this began in 5:2). The peripeteia's purpose is to surprise the reader but is also meant to follow as a result of the woman's previous failures. A peripeteia in general is designed to cause emotions of fear, pity, dismay, sadness or shock in the reader who engages with the changed circumstances of fate in the life of the protagonist.

The downward trend in the chief protagonist's fate is plain to see. She sinks into despair, she searches the empty streets (leitmotif implied from 3:1-5), she

cannot find her lover, she is beaten by watchmen (5:7). Suitable themes, motifs and matching characterisation are drawn together to reflect the nadir of the narrative, a seeming serious breach in the relationship.

The second encounter with the guards results in her being beaten and de-veiled (F_{neg1}). It is a disempowering act for her. The veil, as I have argued elsewhere, represents the bond between herself and her lover.[78] How telling is it that only the veil is confiscated (5:8) unlike in Assyrian law where beatings were more severe and most clothes were stripped off a prostitute.[79] The beating and de-veiling signal to the reader the depths of her loss.

The guards are a literary motif, a reflector, of the by-now more abiding absence of her partner. There is no reason to take this event as non-literal. These guards and their horrific actions are symbolic characters of the woman's own circumstances. In this case, confusingly enough, a symbolic character is a literal character in the narrative.

Symbolic Characters

The use of the word "symbolic" in this instance pertains to a technical device of narrative rather than to figurative language. In a narrative, "symbolic elements" or "symbolic characters" are any major or minor elements or characters whose primary literary function is to signify something, even though the element/character itself may retain realistic attributes. Their very existence represents some major idea or aspect of the narrative, "they point, they hint, ... they cast long shadows."[80] According to Kennedy and Gioia, symbol can be divided into two: symbolic characters and symbolic acts. "In some novels and stories, symbolic characters make brief cameo appearances. Such characters often are not well-rounded and fully-known but are seen fleetingly and remain slightly mysterious."[81]

Emmrich describes how "the reader is encouraged to see the lion attacking Samson as a 'symbolic prelude' to Samson's exploits against Philistia. The lion appears out of nowhere ... The killing of the lion sets in

[78] Fernandes 2019: 63-68.

[79] See Fernandes 2019: 59-63 for Assyrian law and why the woman in the Song is not a prostitute.

[80] Kennedy and Gioia 1995: 236.

[81] Idem, 2010: 224.

> motion a chain of events that leads to Samson's posing of the riddle ... that culminates in the slaughter of the Philistines ..."[82]
>
> One ancient Egyptian love poem in the Chester Beatty I papyrus concerns a young couple who miss each other for seven days. On one occasion, when the boy attempts to visit the girl, he encounters the passing Mehy in his chariot. Loprieno notes that Mehy is a mysterious figure "who frequently has royal or aristocratic associations and plays the role of a trickster or *arbiter amoris*."[83] Mehy with his "enchanted men in tow," as the poem reads, becomes a foil for the young man's separation from his own enchanted inamorata. Yet, Mehy also represents the boy's own anxieties, reluctance and distractions that prevent him from seeing his beloved sooner.

The guards in the Song (3:3; 5:7) are real characters. Like Samson's lion and Mehy, they appear and disappear but manage to leave an effect upon the reader while also representing each protagonist's current state of affairs. The guards reflect the state of the relationship between the man and woman. This becomes especially clear in the later episode when the woman's veil, a symbol of her attachment to the man, is torn from her whereas it is a case of a "close-call" the first time. In 3:4, the poem reads "scarcely had I passed them when I found him (her lover)." In 3:5, his presence and resumption of their unity obviates any reaction from the guards but his persistent absence in 5:8 results in further desolations for her. With her veil being torn from her, it seems she has failed for the last time and she is disempowered ($F_{1\text{-neg}}$) from being with him. All empowerment to achieve her goal of permanent togetherness has been stripped from her.

At this lowest point, the author raises the narrative from the proverbial ash-heap for now the reader encounters the beginnings of a resolution. None of the first four movements set the situation towards a resolution. The woman has continually done the opposite of what she is meant to be doing, going away with her lover, resulting in repeated separations between them. Thus far, by being permitted to witness how the woman responds to each situation, readers gain

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[82] Emmrich 2001: 68-69.

[83] Loprieno 2005: 127.

information about her personality and current state of mind and how she interacts with the man and his appeals in different facets. She undoubtedly loves him, but she seems ambivalent at times. Brogaard, a philosopher specialising in cognitive neuroscience and philosophy of mind, writes extensively on what we call "romantic love." Her writing on the subject incorporates fresh insights from psychology written in a punchy and informal manner. She calls situations where emotions of a person seem to conflict and where they love a partner with an incoherence of desires "in-between cases of love." She writes:

> Desires can trump each other ... Although the two desires are incoherent, my will is not divided, so I am not ambivalent. ... Ambivalence can also stem from a failure to fully identify with a possible course of action. ... If, on the other hand, I don't know whether I can identify with a possible course of action, I cannot get to the point of wholeheartedly ranking my alternatives. If I nonetheless choose to act, my action is not wholehearted. Ambivalence about my choice lingers at least until the action is complete and cannot be undone. *Ambivalence resolves once I decide that one of my desires is worthy of being acted on* or that both alternatives truly are equally worthy of pursuit, or once obstacles rule out one course of action. ... With only one course of action untaken, I am no longer divided ... In order for incoherent desires to amount to ambivalence, they must result in an inner conflict about what to do. Ambivalence lies *in the failure to form a will to pursue a course of action that one fully embraces ...* In-between cases of love frequently lead to ambivalence, because the lukewarm or partly suppressed emotions are accompanied by weak desires or desires we are not fully conscious of.[84]

It is fair to say for the woman in the Song, either those desires which compete with her expressed desire to be with her lover permanently (1:7) must be vanquished or, using Brogaard's words here, the woman's ambivalence will resolve once she decides that one of her desires is worthy of being acted on.

It is precisely at the nadir of the peripeteia, when the woman is portrayed as the most ambivalent, when her separation is the most entrenched and when her sadness is the darkest, that one expects a resolution and the ambivalent woman herself to change. The role of "agents of change" is fulfilled by the daughters of

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[84] Brogaard 2015: 177-78, emphasis mine.

Jerusalem. They act as agents of empowerment to help her decide that her desire, namely the pursuit of living with the man, is worthy of being acted on.
Their two questions (5:9; 6:1) are meant to empower the woman, to stir up her love, so that when she is next asked to leave with the man, she succeeds. The empowerment (F_2) is itself in two parts and needs some explanation because being couched in lyrical form, it may not be readily recognised as a means of empowerment. The two questions that empower the woman, are: the *question of his person* and *the question of his house*.

1. Question/Anagnorisis of the Man's Person

Anagnorisis is an Aristotelian literary concept. In his *Poetics*, as part of his discussion of peripeteia, Aristotle defined *anagnorisis* as "a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune."[85] It is the moment of revelation, realisation or recognition. It is a moment of truth, a moment of discovery, a moment where we the audience and/or character(s), once kept in the dark, now have light thrust onto the real circumstances, thus, we confront truth. Aristotle writes that the anagnorisis is most effective when it coincides with reversals, such as we have seen for the woman in the Song.[86]

The term is used by Aristotle in more than one kind of circumstance[87] but the phenomenon essentially means "to know exactly," "to know again," or "acknowledge" (from the Greek *anaginōskō*).[88] This "knowing" could involve one of the following:

i) a character recognises or identifies her/his true nature, or recognises another character's true identity,
ii) discovers the true nature of her/his situation, or that of the others.

Usually, this awareness leads to the resolution of the narrative.

The question in 5:9 is "why is your beloved better than another beloved?" Despite a long-winded answer that primarily consists of superlative physical characteristics of the man, her answer can be whittled down to her summation in 5:16, וכלו מחמדים "all of him is desirable."

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[85] *Poetics*, 1452a.

[86] *Poetics*, 1452b.

[87] Lucas 1968: 131, 52[a]29-[b]8.

[88] Blunk 1975: 245.

The question is not intended to elicit knowledge from her but is one for the purposes of empowering her. Because of it, she is able to discover, crystallise and bring into sharp focus, in her own mind, the true nature of her lover and her own emotions. Deep down in her heart she already knows his character but now, any competing feelings of fear, immobility, guilt or betrayal and the like which arise from her family situation give way to the desirability of her lover. His loveliness is what she seeks more than anything else.

Aristotle's concept of anagnorisis did not just stop with a character's newfound awareness but he included the knowledge of the reader. He describes how this part of the narrative, the peripeteia, might often yield an enlightenment to the reader about a particular character's identity. This happens in relation to the man. As an exception from the rule that the man is never described, here is a significant difference. The reader is now presented with the possibility he is Solomon himself.[89]

In the book of Genesis, anagnorisis to a character occurs when Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, saying "I am Joseph" (45:3) and Tamar reveals herself to Judah (38: 25-26) whereas the "man" wrestling Jacob (32:25-29 [24-28]) whose name he is eager to identify (32:30 [29]) is only later revealed to the reader to be *Elohim* with the words "I have seen God face to face" (32:31 [30]).

2. Question/Anagnorisis of the Man's House

The next question the daughters pose concerns his house "Where has your beloved gone?" (6:1). Although it is possible that she does not know how to get there, clearly, she knows where he is. He has gone down to his garden to feed among the lilies (6:2), yet another lyrical, cryptic reply.

I have already made the case for the couple being separated at this point.[90] So, the garden motif is hardly likely being used as a sexual metaphor for the woman. Here is another case of a context, assumed to be similar to 4:12-5:1. A metaphor can differ in its meaning and nuance, depending upon context. The metaphor here has the nuance of referring to the man's domain, his house. Any connotations of female sexuality are via this primary target domain. This assertion is based on four observations:

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[89] p.158.

[90] p.160.

1. The descriptions the woman uses for the man's features and his activity in 5:10-16 and 6:2 respectively are those that subtly recollect the traditions and characterisation of Solomon.
2. The four garden metaphors of 6:2 (his garden; beds of spices; grazing in the gardens; gathering lilies) and the one in 6:3b (grazing among lilies) arise from the conceptual domain of ROYAL HAREM, Solomon's house in particular.
3. The transformation of the female protagonist into a metaphorical "garden" (4:7-5:1) takes place *after* she is in the man's house. Once there, she is a "garden" amongst other "gardens" in one "garden" of love. In the Song's fabula, the events of the regal units, including 4:12-5:1, temporally follow those of the non-regal, including 6:1-3.
4. The mutual belonging statement "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he grazes among the lilies" is one of two refrains (6:3a and 2:16) in the non-regal units. They have the following features:
    i. The statements are cited by the woman alone, not the man.
    ii. The statements occur during major *separations* between the couple. Song 6:3a is a minor syntactical variant of 2:16, where, it has already been argued that the couple are separated, with the woman urging the man to "turn back." Similarly, the couple are not together in 6:3 but temporarily separated.
    iii. The statements are unlike the mutual embrace statements (2:6; 8:3) which do imply the physical closeness of the couple.
    iv. The statements' function is to affirm the longer-term security of the relationship. In the non-regal units, they are affirmatory for the woman's emotional connectedness with her beloved and present her with a hope for a renewed togetherness with him in the future.
    v. A third refrain 7:11 (7:10) is found in the regal units. The difference between this instance and the other two is that they do not precede separations.
    vi. The use of the refrain and how it shows progression and narrative development is charted under "spatiality" on p.289.

The confluence of this cluster of metaphors establishes that the man has gone up to his house. The expression "his garden" does appear in 4:16 where it metaphorically relates to the woman and her body. Yet, in the present context, if the man has "gone down" and "turned away" then the metaphor must be pointing elsewhere. Metaphors can change meaning according to context. Thankfully, the deliberate piling up of several metaphors help to identify the meaning in 6:2-3. Already, the mention of a "garden" could imply royal ownership[91] but the overlaid expression "grazing/feeding in the gardens" evokes the metaphorical language of sex and multiplicity of women. The king's wives were, in a sense, "enclosed" in their harem to give the king pleasure in both beauty and sensation. Stol describes how in the Old Babylonian period and especially in the Assyrian period, the women in the harem

> were called *sekretu*, ... literally 'a closed up woman' (i.e. one closed up in the palace), similar to the literal meaning of the Assyrian *esirtu* 'concubine'. It has been translated as 'harem woman', but a broader meaning, 'palace woman', is better.[92]

Thus far in the non-regal units, the man's house has been implied through various means: the question concerning *where* he feeds his flocks (1:7); the implied origin in his arrival to, and departure from, her house (2:8, 17; 5:2, 6). The question, "*where* has your beloved gone?" (6:1), here implies his point of origin (where he has returned). She replies that he is in "his garden" feeding "in the gardens" among the lilies. There are several significant clues to the reader that this may be Solomon. He is הרעה "the one grazing." As has been discussed, the word can mean "shepherding" which itself is a potential royal metaphor.[93] The phrase "(flower)beds of spices" ערוגות הבשׂם strongly implies Solomon and "gathering lilies" raises the possibility of a royal personage.

The Hebrew שׁושׁן is probably the lotus since the Arabic *sousan* and Coptic *shoshen* refer to the Egyptian *sheshen*, namely the Nile's blue water lily (Egyptian lotus) with its hieroglyph being a lotus shoot.[94] The iconography of the lotus features prominently on royal insignia in the ancient Near East. As Ziffer says, "the image of the enthroned king holding a cup and a lotus flower was

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[91] p.58.

[92] Stol 2006: 530. "Closed up" does not suggest the women were not free to go outdoors.

[93] p.131.

[94] McDonald 2018: 20.

disseminated throughout the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East and became an icon of kingship."[95] See, for example, the illustrations of the Persian and Assyrian kings each with lotus, below and on p.276. The lotus is found in the form of volute capitals (proto aeolic) adorning stone pillars found throughout ancient Israel and Judah, as well as on bullae.[96]



Apadana at Persepolis. Darius I (or Xerxes I) and crown prince hold lotus blossoms.
Originally in Curtis and Tallis 2005. Permission © Nigel Tallis

[95] Ziffer 2002: 20.

[96] Millard 2012: 187-189.

In the Song, only the feminine singular equivalent שׁוֹשַׁנָּה appears, in 2:1, 2 in relation to the female protagonist.[97] There is no dedicated feminine plural form; instead the common שׁוֹשַׁנִּים in 6:2-3 obscures whether gender has any relevance but it would be significant if the lover is gathering "female lilies" because his "collecting" and "feeding" amongst them again points to Solomon (1 Kgs 11:1). One final note is the use of both singular "garden" and plural "gardens" in the same sentence (6:2). The first is a synecdoche of the man's house, the second "gardens" refers to his sexual activity, meaning his collection of females. At the point of 6:2-3, the female protagonist herself is not yet one of his many "gardens," one of his numerous conquests, but the reader already suspects that she will be (4:12-5:1). The entire phrase "feeding among the lilies" is itself a common zoomorphic motif (usually of a single grazing ibex, stag, or doe surrounded by a garland of lotus flowers) that Zevit notes is very common in ancient Israel. He finds its significance uncertain but suggests meanings of sustenance and safety.[98] We have seen this theme in relation to the house of the king in 1:9-2:7.

In conclusion, we have here a complex blending of metaphors occurring in 6:2-3 which signals to the reader that the lover, who we now suspect to be Solomon, has returned home. The couple remain separated, but the new equilibrium comes after a transformation in the woman has occurred. The woman does not find the man in this sequence and presumably returns home having failed to be with him (I_{neg}). However, she has been empowered for the next sequence so that when the time for her next test comes, she will pass it.

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[97] Both Štrba 2004 and Suderman 2005 conclude that the word means "lotus."

[98] Zevit 2001: 386

Sixth Sequence (6:11-7:1 [English 6:13])

Man (or woman) as C-actant		
EQ	Couple are separated	
a	[Speaker wants to be with the partner]	
C	[Speaker decides to check if the "garden" is "in bloom"]	
C'	Speaker visits a garden (with metaphorical implication for the partner)	
H	The woman is set among transport vehicles	
	D	Her brothers urge the sister to return [to their home and not leave] so they can see her
	E	She responds to their attempts to manipulate her
	F	She is finally successful at standing up to them
I	[The couple will be departing]	
EQnew	[Couple are together]	

This sixth sequence is patterned after the second (2:8-17) and the author frequently alludes to its forms, themes and words but unlike the negativity of the earlier episode this is meant to be a denouement, a positive reversal of the former.

A measure of ambiguity exists as to who the C-actant is. This may be deliberate to show the agency of both individuals involved in this crucial sequence to bring about their success. The C-actant could theoretically be the woman, making her the speaker of 6:11, but the symmetry of the units demands it should be the man. Moreover, the man is the one who frequently goes down to the garden in the ancient near Eastern poetic texts[99] and in the Song it is he who travels to see whether the woman is ready for love (2:8). The verb ירד only appears twice in the Song (6:2 and 6:11) and presupposes spatial antithesis at both times. In 6:2, he goes back home. Here (6:11), it is he who probably returns to her. Having said this, verifying the identity of the speaker is not overly important because they both meet again.

The C-actant, preferably seen as the man, visits the woman in a literal garden of nuts. This nut garden is meant to be linked to her home in some way, perhaps part of the same cultivations as the vineyard (1:6; 2:14-15). The references to

[99] Westenholz 1992: 382; Westenholz 1995: 2482.

spring are explicit in both episodes. This literal garden is not only the backdrop for a new rendezvous but it is also metaphorical for the couple. The seasonal implication is that the time for love has returned and that another invitation to "come away" will ensue soon because the "garden" is now in "bloom."

Either the man or woman is placed amidst conveyances (מרכבות, 6:12) of the noble (נדיב) sort.[100] In the three-character view, 6:12 is sometimes taken as an abduction scene in which the woman is whisked away to Solomon's house against her will.[101] The presence of the vehicles denote they are there to take her away but there is no evidence of compulsion. The soul of the speaker is exhilarated to see the partner again.[102] I agree with Landy, although for different reasons, that, "the incoherence that follows, ... is presumably contingent, yet reflects, with appropriate serendipity, the disturbance of the narrative."[103]

As in 2:15, the brothers perform their function as villain/opponent by interfering again (7:1a). This is yet another test D which the woman must pass in order to achieve her desire of being with the man forever. Will she capitulate to their machinations again? On the previous occasion, her response to their speech is only that they still belong together (2:16a) and that he "grazes among the lilies" (2:16b). Because of the anagnorisis in 6:2-3, the reader now knows this "grazing" to mean he had departed to *his house*. She was not successful against her brothers then but now, in what is meant to be the most significant reversal in the entire Song, she will provide them a retort (E) and pass the test (F).

At the end of this sequence, unlike its beginning, the couple are presumed to be together and ready to leave. In the next sequence, the woman will invite the man away. The narrative is now nearing its conclusion and the equilibrium reflects the new situation. The test, which is critical to the successful outcome of this sequence and to the entire narrative, will now be examined in detail.

1. Appeal to See Her Again (7:1a)

The speakers are the woman's brothers, not a prurient troop of men ogling her.[104] It is extremely important to read their request properly for it is at this point interpreters' imaginations tend to run wild. One cannot be certain whether they

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[100] p.166.

[101] Ginsburg 1857: 175-76.

[102] p.165.

[103] Landy 2011: 194.

[104] p.169.

are asking to see her dance. The word "dance" in the woman's reply may not be *directly* related to their request. What they are clearly doing is requesting her to return so that they can "see her."

The motivation for their request is an attempt to either get her to stay and not leave or to return once she has left. The vagueness at this point corresponds to the vagueness of the lover being asked to סֹב, to either "turn towards" or "turn away" from the woman (2:17).[105] It does not matter which for either implies she is leaving them at this time.

Her final test D now involves resisting the brothers' attempts to bring her back and instead secure a successful departure from the house. As they elsewhere attempt to keep their sister under their control (1:6; 2:15), their speech could be mere manipulation. Bergant is probably on the right lines by saying that they refer to her extraordinary appearance.[106] They use her newfound radiance of joy or beauty as a justification for their request to look at her, or perhaps they are simply saying they want to see her *again*. The use of the imperfect נחזה here could even mean they want to keep on seeing her. Whatever it is, they now address her as Mrs. Solomon, using a sobriquet of the lover she is leaving home with.

I have already described how *Shulamit* has been interpreted as the feminine of Solomon.[107] Here, in 7:1, there is a third anagnorisis, a final revelation that the lover is indeed Solomon and he has returned to call her away again.

Interpreters have raised two morphological problems with the rendering of *Shulamit* as "Solomoness."

1. The presence of the article, especially in the first of the two instances. [108]
2. The unexpected presence of the *sureq.*[109]

Rowley emphasises that *Shulamit* cannot be a regular proper name because of the preceding ה as the article but counters that this would have "no weight against the view that she was called 'the Solomoness'."[110] This is only partly true as "return, the Solomoness" (7:1a) is awkward not only in English but so the Hebrew equivalent. The Blochs have a better suggestion, that the ה is not a

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[105] p.140.

[106] Bergant 2001: 81.

[107] p.170.

[108] Rowley 1939: 91.

[109] Rowley 1939: 91.

[110] Rowley 1939: 91.

definite article but a vocative such as הושׁעה המלך "Help, O King!" (2 Sam. 14:4; 2 Kgs 6:26).[111] One could, therefore, render שׁובי שׁובי השׁולמית as "return, return, O Solomoness!" (7:1a). The Blochs fail to account for the second השׁולמית for which a vocative is impossible, but one could nonetheless render the sentence with impunity: "why/how will you look at the Solomoness?" (7:1b). In the first instance, the ה is a vocative while in the second, it is taken as the definite article without any problem.

As for the presence of *sureq*, it probably derives from what, I argue, is a case of hitherto undiscovered allusive paronomasia. This allusive paronomasia occurs in 7:1 and references 2:15 as its source. The first wordplay is between the words אחז "catch" and חזה "see/look at" with two consonants rearranged and a similar sound for third. The second wordplay between שׁועלים "foxes" and שׁולמית "Solomoness" with three consonants rearranged along with the added sound of *sureq*.

Although paronomasia is more often seen to present itself as a localised phenomenon, occurring within the same sentence, several researchers have noted its existence on a wider level, operating at great textual distances and functioning as a marker of allusion.[112] One of these is Kline who also offers a methodology on how to discern the presence of such allusive paronomasia. On applying this methodology, one finds that the possibility of a paronomasia does exist. Kline emphasises that metathesis of consonants alone would have been insufficient to prove literary dependence since the "deliberate" connection might only exist in the reader's mind. In the case of the paronomasia between Song 2:15 and 7:1, however, there are two further criteria which cements this as deliberate allusion: proximity and function.

Apart from examining examples of allusive paronomasia which exist across books, Kline includes cases which occur between one part of a book and another. Among other examples, Kline mentions Lam. 2:11 referring back to 1:20; Jer. 21:14 alluding to 17:27; and Job 22:17–18 where Eliphaz uses paronomasia in order to reformulate Job's words in 21:14–16).[113] The case which I present here, between Song 2:15 and 7:1, would also be a more localised instance of soundplay.

Noegel lists several possible functions of paronomasia in general, one of which is satire.[114] The function of the specific case I have presented is to create a

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[111] Bloch and Bloch 1995: 198; cf. Elliott 1989: 162-3; Exum 2005: 226.

[112] See Kline 2016: 10-12, 67-68, 73-76.

[113] Kline 2016: 10-11.

[114] Noegel 2013: 28.

satirical version of the brothers' request, who at one time wanted to "catch the little foxes" (2:15), now ironically want to "see" their sister (and her lover) as if they showed affection towards them. It is not accidental, I believe, that by this very point (6:11-7:1) of the narrative the lover has been revealed to be none other than Solomon and their sister seems to be on the verge of leaving home. A subtle, biting irony is created in which an underlying "trap" exists in the request for the sister to return so that they may "look on" her when really their intention might be to "trap" her. The phrase *ḥaza Shulamit* is borne out of *aḥaz Shualim*. Any admiration they might have stands in stark, ironic contrast with their disparaging attitude towards her and her lover. Because there is a very specific wordplay going on, innate to the Song itself, *Shulamit* is not a standard name one would find in another ancient text. This is why Fox's reason for discounting it as a feminisation of Solomon on the basis that the feminine of *Sh^{e}lomo* is *Sh^{e}lomit* (Lev. 24:11; 1 Chr. 3:19) does not stand.[115] We are not dealing with a standard feminised form.

A distinct matter to *Shulamit* being a feminine form of the name "Solomon," and which would stand or fall separately, is whether it could be a diminutive construction. Furthermore, since diminutives can connote not only affection and smallness (size or quantity) but disparagement, is this diminutive pejorative? Fiona Black has suggested—partly tongue-in-cheek perhaps—this is Solomon speaking, naming her after himself, a diminutive "my little me."[116] One must consider whether the *–t* suffix is an early case of diminution in biblical Hebrew such as Speiser suggests,[117] which occurs in Mishnaic Hebrew[118] and is productive in Modern Hebrew.[119] Another consideration is that in the Song, there are two cases of diminution which can be attributed to the speech of the brothers (8:8, "little sister" and 2:15, "little fox") and one other case besides 7:1 in which diminution is possibly marked (1:6 "little blackish one") by them to describe the sister. Perjoration in the first two references is conceivable especially in 2:15, but it is difficult to pin down in the latter two. Schneider reminds us, "the interpretation of a diminutive in an insult depends on situational factors, most

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[115] Fox 1985: 157.

[116] Black 2006: 167.

[117] Speiser offers the example of יוֹנֶקֶת (shoot/twig in Job 8:16) from יוֹנֵק (young plant in Is 53:2). Speiser 1936: 37-8. Speiser noted that in all Semitic languages, *-t* had four Semitic values, one of which was the construction of the diminutive.

[118] Segal 1927: 121.

[119] Bolozky 2013.

notably the relationship between the speaker and hearer."[120] One inescapable fact is that the brothers were angry with their sister and their relationship is less than ideal (1:6). So, any conclusion in the matter of diminution/pejoration (the two are not mutually inclusive) must take this into account.

2. Riposte (7:1b)

We now come to her riposte. As a starting point, I wish to take up Fiona Black's descriptions of the woman's replies in general. Although Black is not focusing particularly on this verse, she unwittingly summarises the woman's reply nicely:

> she is clever and creative as she does so [i.e. reply]. She uses her brothers' and her lover's words but twists and turns them and throws them back repackaged. Her words tease; they partially reveal and partially conceal. They invite speculation and prevent the full consummation of knowledge.

The woman says, "why would you see the Shulamit as the dance of *maḥănāyim*. Bergant notes that "maḥănāyim is in dual form indicating a pair of something." "But of what?" she asks.[121] The military interpretation is popular but "camps" as a synonym for "two households" is also feasible. Neither מחלת nor מחנים is a common term but the poet has chosen them because of the wordplay between some kind of "dance" and the word for "two houses."[122] We must remember that though Song scholarship has represented space in the Song rather loosely, there is a strong duality operating across the Song, of two houses, the man's and the woman's. In the non-regal units, the garden spatially relates to the man, the place he shepherds, grazes, and so on. The vineyard, garden of nuts and her (mother's) house relate to the woman. Thus far, we have seen how she wishes to be with him in his house (1:7) and is called away from her house (2:10-14). We have also seen the tendency of the brothers to try to control their sister.

With this in mind, we will explore three possibilities for the phrase כמחלת המחנים two of which incorporate some intricate wordplay. The scope of the wordplay only becomes plausible when the narrative is seen in its entirety.

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[120] Schneider 2003: 211. Schneider's book concerns English diminutives but this saying is true for all languages.

[121] Bergant 2001: 81.

[122] p.172.

1. Wedding Dance

The woman's reference to "dance" need not mean she is actually portrayed dancing in the Song for she says, "why would you see ..." It may, however, be an anticipatory statement, a reference to an action in an approaching marriage celebration, for example. The Sumerian song, *Dumuzi-Inanna C* (lines 27-29) describes how when the spouse is brought into the royal palace, music will play:

> When my brother comes into the palace,
> Let the musicians [play] there,
> And I will pour wine into (his) mouth.

The friends of the bride rejoice. Dancing will ensue until the time of the couple's sexual union (lines 41-44):

> Baba, going to the lap of the bridegroom,
> let us rejoice! Dance! Dance!
> Baba, for my nakedness let us rejoice!
> Dance! Dance![123]

Clearly, this *balbale* has some similar themes to the one mentioned in connection with the royal unit, Song 1:2-4.

2. Queen

The reference to a specific form of dance appears to also have an underlying wordplay. If one rearranges the consonants *kaph-mem-heth-lamed-teth* in כמחלת "as a dance," (replacing the *ḥeth* with the homophone *kaph*) to get *kaph-mem-lamed-kaph-teth*, one gets כמלכת "as a queen." This is especially relevant if *Shulamit* is a feminisation of Solomon and the woman's brothers are attempting to get her to return and not leave with Solomon. One cannot discount a subtle allusion here to her earlier reply to them in 2:16 (cf. 6:2-3), "he grazes [in his gardens] among the lilies, which as we have seen is a complex metaphor relating to queenship in the king's house.

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[123] Compare the two source texts in Sefati 1998: 136-37 and Jacobsen 1987: 18. For the name "Baba," Jacobsen (1987:18 n.6) says it is a pet-name for Inanna (cf. Sefati 1998: 149-50).

Her insinuation in effect is "how can you look upon the Solomoness as 'queen' of two camps [i.e. houses]?"[124] She cannot live in both Solomon's and their house. She must forsake the latter.

3. Ruining/Sexual writhing

A more complex case of wordplay involves yet another allusive paronomasia between 7:1 and 2:15, where כמחלת המחנים "as a dance of two camps" alludes back to מחבלים כרמים "ruining the vineyards." There is a metathesis of four consonants (along with a substitution of others), the consonants are refracted across two words. What could the function of this possible paronomasia be?

In 2:15, the "foxes," the couple themselves, were accused by the brothers of *ruining* the vineyard—whether through play or sexual activity is open to ambiguity since חבל "ruin" in *qal* form can mean "travail/writhe" in the *piel*.[125] In 8:5, the piel form appears: "your mother travailed (=writhed)," whether in maternal labour or sexual activity is itself ambiguous. The *qal* meaning of sexual "ruin" is found in the Vulgate's *ibi corrupta est mater tua ibi violata est genetrix tua* "There was corrupted your mother. There was violated she who bore you."

Martin argues at length for the use of חבל in 8:5 as a political invective following from Noegel and Rendsburg investigations of Arabic equivalents of invective.[126] The response, "why should you see the Solomoness *dancing* in two camps?" might harbour a hidden, caustic message based on the earlier accusation, "why should you see the Solomoness 'ruining (חבל) the vineyards' of two houses." Apparently, המחנים "the camps" was chosen instead of הבתים "the house(hold)s" to provide the necessary metathesis for the wordplay.[127] Also, if the *piel* meaning is to be considered, an even further subliminal and sarcastic possibility emerges: "why should you see

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[124] Or "in two camps." Fishbane notes many manuscripts do actually contain a *bet* and not a *kaph*. Fishbane 2015: 175. In the *Masorah Parva,* the Masoretes reveal their doubts over the finalised spelling in indicating that כְּמְחֹלַת is doubly defective. See also *BHQ*, 238 n.41.

[125] Cf. *BDB* 2773. Knight notes that the specific "dance" in 7:1 is a twisting one. Knight 1988: 35.

[126] Cf. Martin 2010: 198-201.

[127] The phenomena of an unusual word choice to suit the specific metathesis involved is common. See e.g. Kalimi 2018: 43.

> the Solomoness 'cavorting (or being deflowered) in the vineyards' of both camps?"[128]

Each of the three possibilities above reflects a cleverness and creativity, not to mention boldness in the woman's riposte before the difficult challenge for her to "return" home. In the scenario of leaving home to be Mrs. Solomon, all three possibilities are relevant, each meaning adds another nuance to her imminent future: there will be dancing at her (royal) wedding; she will be a queen; and in a manner of speaking, to subvert her brother's earlier gripe that s(he) is ruining the vineyard (or sexually cavorting in it) she defiantly insinuates she will indeed be sexually writhing with Solomon. Deliberate multiple meanings are generated by the one reply but ultimately, the purpose of her riposte is to reject their plea for her to return since she cannot do what she must do, nor be what she must be, if she lives in two houses at once, especially theirs. She staves off the scheme the brothers employ to prevent her from marrying and leaving home (cf. 8:8, "what shall we do in the day she is spoken for?").

Garrett has already spotted the fact that 6:11-7:1 answers the invitation in Song 2:8-17. He goes on to explain that "In the psychology of the Song, the chorus wants the woman to stay in their world, but she cannot do this because she has crossed the threshold from virgin to wife."[129] Though the identity of the "chorus" in Garrett's explanation is rather nebulous, he is correct that 7:1b is essentially the rebuff expected earlier. Her insistence to her brothers that she can only "dance" in one house, her lover's, echoes the enduring dictum implied in Elijah's sarcastic response to Baal's prophets "how long will you limp (i.e. dance) between two different opinions? (1 Kings 18:21).[130] Jesus's words, "no one can serve two masters" and the statement, "can a slave serve two masters?" in the Midrash *HaGadol* also serve to capture the concept of this dualistic impossibility, as does the German aphorism *man kann nicht auf zwei Hochzeiten tanzen* "one cannot dance at two weddings."

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[128] Cf. Martin 2010: 201; Noegel and Rendsburg 2009: 164 on 2:15.

[129] Garrett 2004: 234.

[130] For the Baalists' "limping" as ritualistic dancing, see *HALOT* 7758; Walsh 1996: 248; Sweeney 2013: 228; Gruber 1981: 340-41.

Seventh Sequence (7:12-14 [English 7:11-13])

Woman as C-actant	
EQ	[The couple are together in her house]
a	[The couple have not left yet]
C'	[She decides to go with the man]
C	She prepares to leave with him
H	She invites her lover away to a venue of love
I	[The couple leave]
EQ	[They are together in his house]

The woman is clearly the C-actant in this sequence. It begins with the couple together in her home. Although she has successfully passed the previous test and is now with her lover, the couple have still not left her house, a state which needs addressing (a). The woman therefore decides to go away with her lover and tells the man that she has stored manifold pleasures for him (C, C'). More importantly, her primary act will be to explicitly invite the man away with her to their intended destination (H).

Andruska majors on the mutuality between the couple, observing that "in 7:11–14 the woman echoes the man's call to go with him to the fields to see the blossoming spring in 2:10–14."[131] This is true but not the whole picture because she does so after several failures to act. The mutuality is achieved only after several attempts. Throughout the Song, several hortatory appeals are made by the man, each episode rising in tension. These appeals were not acted upon because of the woman's fear of leaving her home. Those same hortatory verbs are now placed in her mouth to show her transformation. It is she who will now be the one to undertake the primary act to invite the man to "go out" with her (H).

Verb	Song 1:7-8; 2:8-17; 5:2-6:3
צאי־לך	1:8
קומי לך	2:10,13
לכי־לך	2:10, 13
פתחי־לי	5:2

Verb	Song 7:12-14
נצא	7:12
נשׁכימה	7:13
לכה	7:12
פתחינו / פתח	7:13 / 7:14

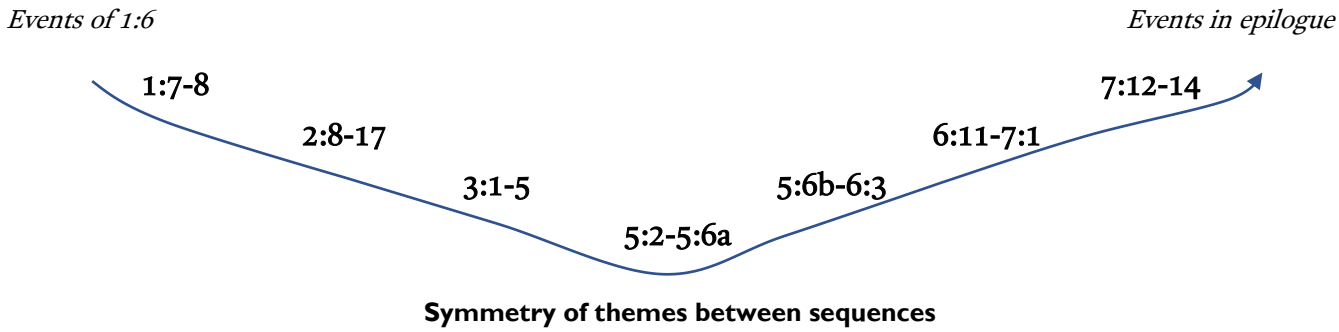
[131] Andruska 2019: 63.

The verb קום is not used in this sequence but instead a close synonym שׁכם "rise early" appears. Perhaps this is because the verb קום in 3:2 and 5:5, appears in two episodes in which the woman rises to leave, but ends back home in both. What hope is offered by the word קום on those occasions is quickly dashed. Instead, with שׁכם, the poet offers not only a synonym but a new beginning.

This sequence overturns the negative endings of those previous units and anticipates a joyous and successful conclusion (I). But do the couple leave? Are they together forever in the house of the man? The narrative stops short of either and the confirmation that they do so comes instead from the regal units. Without this final confirmation, the long-awaited resolution that the woman leaves her house and lives with the man in his house, forever, are never made explicit in the non-regal units.

Conclusion: Narrative in The Non-Regal Units

For lack of space, I will subsume most of my observations under the section entitled "Putting it Together as a Narrative."[132] Here, I note that the non-regal units are comprised of seven sequences that exhibit a measure of thematic symmetry between the two halves on either side of the central unit, 5:2-5:6a.



The latter sequences are reversals for their counterparts. Each latter sequence repeats *some* content and characteristics in its counterpart but also portrays an "opposite" outcome. This symmetry shows that the non-regal units are a unity and the latter units were designed to "turn" around 5:2-6a.

[132] p.279.

i) 1:7-8 is a short sequence. No setting is made explicit but one infers (from sequences on either side) it is the woman's spatial domain. She shows reluctance to be near the man's friends. She is told by him to "go out" but no initiative of hers is witnessed. Her destination is where the man "shepherds" immediately evoking settings such as fields but the unit cleverly anticipates that the place where the man "shepherds" is a royal house which is revealed in later units and the epilogue.[133]

7:12-14 is another short sequence. No setting is made explicit but one infers (from its earlier sequence) it is her spatial domain. The woman's earlier reluctance is reversed. She takes the initiative to invite him to "go out." The immediate destination is the "field" and "villages" but the unit cleverly anticipates the ultimate destination is the man's house which is portrayed in the regal units and the epilogue.[134]

ii) In 2:8-17, the man travels to see the woman, she is in the house and then possibly in a vineyard, he is unable to call her away, the brothers speak to derail the meeting, she does not stand up to them, the lover must "turn towards/away" (סבב), they are separated (2:17).

In 6:11, it is (more likely) the man who travels to see the woman in a garden, the brothers speak again, attempting to make her return (שובי) (7:1a). Unlike earlier, she stands up to them and twists their language (2:15=7:1b). Unlike earlier, the couple stay together (implied from next sequence).[135]

iii) In 3:1-5, the woman is sleeping in her house. The man is absent. She searches and meets the guards who show no reaction. She finds her lover, bringing him back to her mother's house (which is something she ought not to have done). They are together temporarily and it is implied (from the next sequence) he leaves.

In 5:6b-6:3, the woman is sleeping in her house. The man visits and then leaves. Her search is implied. She meets the guards who beat her. Unlike earlier, she does not find her lover. It is revealed he has gone back home. The couple are separated.

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[133] See e.g. pp.223 and 276.

[134] See e.g. pp.173 and 287.

[135] p.140.

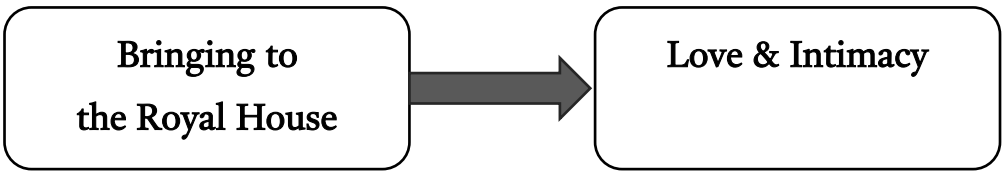
iv) The central sequence is the "*paraclausithyron*" which, it could be argued, begins the peripeteia and downtrend. Being at the heart of the narrative, it highlights the critical decision the woman must make concerning the man.

FABULA IN THE REGAL UNITS

Reconstructing the Fabula of the Regal Units

The regal units are very different from the non-regal. Their content has already been analysed in the previous chapter and here I will outline their structure as cycles of repeated themes. In some ways my assessment is similar to Elliott's, that 1:2-2:7, introduces the main themes that will be developed in the rest of the Song.[136] The main difference is that Elliott sees 1:2-2:7 as an organic whole, a prologue, while I take 1:7-8 as a temporal intrusion, an analepsis, between two regal units. These two regal units, nonetheless, set the thematic pattern for the all the regal units.

The events of these regal units can be arranged under two thematic frames that recur across the Song. Three cycles of repeating themes and motifs exist. The first cycle is concerned with the king and his consort coming to the royal house (1:2-6) and their ensuing life of intimacy in that house (1:9-2:7); the second cycle is that of the wedding of the royal couple (3:6-11) and the wedding night (4:1-5:1); the third cycle concerns admiration from the royal house (6:4-10) and intimacy of the couple (7:2-11). Each cycle can be represented as shown below.



Cyclical Pattern: Two overarching themes.

[136] Elliott 1989: 39.

With the above paradigm, we can proceed to recreate the fabula. It will be immediately seen that every event in any single cycle is not duplicated in every unit. Nonetheless, any one event recurs at least once, in a later cycle. The thematic references below are exemplars and not exhaustive.

1. Fabula of the Three Cycles

Bringing to the Royal House	**1:2-6**	
	Travelling to the Royal House	1:1-6; 2:4
	Joy	1:4c-d
	Interaction/Comparison with Peers	1:2; 2:2-3b
Love and Intimacy	**1:9-2:7**	
	Couple Intimate (all night)	1:13-14
	Mutual Embrace	2:6

Bringing to the Royal House	**3:6-11**	
	Travelling to the Royal House	3:6
	Interaction/Comparison with Peers	3:11-a-c
	Joy	3:7a; 3:11f
Love and Intimacy	**4:1-5:1**	
	Wasf	4:1-7
	Couple Intimate (all night)	4:6
	Sexual Intercourse (metaphorical)	4:12-5:1

Bringing to the Royal House	**6:4-10**	
	Short *Wasf*	6:4-7
	Travelling to the Royal House (implied)	6:8-9
	Interaction/Comparison with peers	6:9
	Joy	6:9d-e
Love and Intimacy	**7:2-11**	
	Wasf	7:2-7
	Sexual intercourse (metaphorical)	7:8-10
	Mutual belonging	7:11

2. Cyclical Repetition, Progression, and Unity

In this section we will look at how the regal units recycle previous material through repetition and how later units exhibit progression from the earlier ones. Three techniques are presented: blending of metaphors; gapping and retrospective reading; and transitioning.

2.1. Technique 1 – Blending of Metaphors

The author of the Song has created the latter regal units by blending vocabulary, imagery and motifs from the earlier ones with complementary material which reinforces the earlier emphases. This blending methodology is not completely absent from the existing literature. Its theoretical starting point is the unity it exhibits, with its shared themes and vocabulary that have been distributed across the Song's units. This latter aspect, Elliott has already based much of her argument on for a loose unity.[137] Verde has an upcoming paper in which he investigates how the Song is conceptually coherent and how such coherence is created. In his abstract, he writes, "Thanks to extended metaphors, clusters of metaphors intertwine and cumulate during the reading process, shaping a generally coherent conceptualization of a certain topic."[138]

As things stand, even with Verde's upcoming contribution, I suspect the subject will still need further exploration; there is more than just a loose unity in the Song. An initial case can be made here for how the blending methodology employed in the Song forges such a unity. I will show how the themes from the wedding day and wedding night are blended into one coherent whole in the latter half of the Song. My analysis is confined to two units, 6:4-10 and 7:2-11.

2.1.1. Using 3:6-11 and 4:1-4:7 for 6:4-10

The unit consists of two parts, the third *wasf* (6:4-7) and a royal praise song (6:8-10). Barring some dissimilarities between the Song's third *wasf* and the first (4:1-7), it is obvious the poet has repeated the themes and metaphors of the first in the third. The woman is said to wear, what I have earlier argued to be, a wedding

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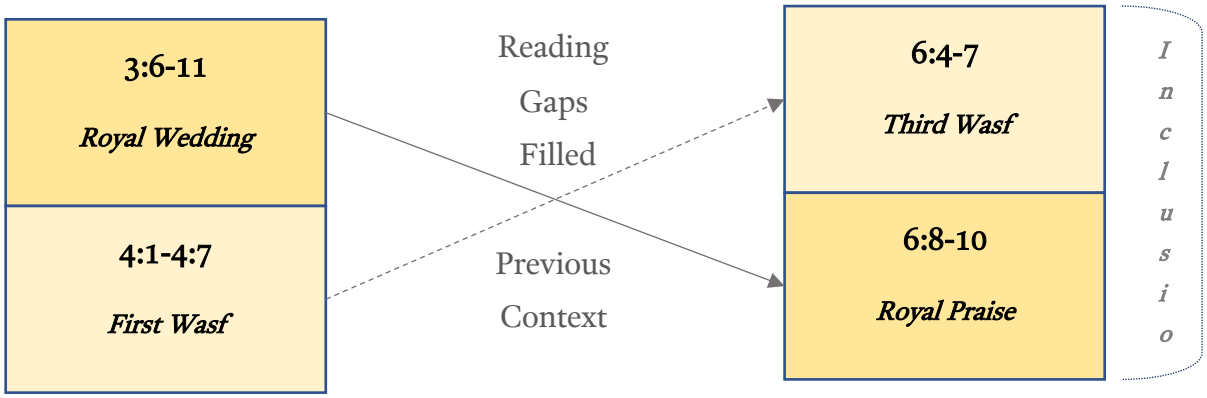
[137] Elliott 1989.

[138] Verde 2020 (forthcoming).

veil (צמה), a word appearing only in three places.[139] Nonetheless, the listed parts of the body that are missing in the third *wasf*—the lips, mouth, neck and breasts—give it a "truncated" feel and this leads Gerleman to call it a "torso" of a *wasf*.[140] Snaith also dismissively calls the language "strangely weak" and suggested its heavy borrowing from 4:1-7 and inconsistency was due to unskilful editing.[141] A simpler explanation for the shorter version, however, is that the poet has already established the longer version in 4:1-7 and the reader fills in any gaps from there.

The context is one and the same for both, the overarching cycle of wedding day and night—the woman is wearing a veil (4:1, 3; 6:7). One sees that the poet also repeats the themes and motifs of 3:6-11 in 6:8-10. Both units have royal women greeting a travelling party, both have travellers in a palanquin (שקף in 6:10 suggests the woman is physically elevated above the others), both have the *mi-zot* question.

The order of using 3:6-11 and 4:1-7 is reversed, the earlier *wasf* that appears in the wedding night context now leads the unit. The two contexts appear to be welded together into a single cohesive unit which is structured as an *inclusio* framed by two terms יפה and אימה כנדגלות (vv.4,10). The contexts from the previous units enable the reader to fill the gaps as to what is happening.



Temporal progression can be witnessed between the two units. The events of 6:4-10 appear to be taking place after the events of 3:6-11 but not very long after. In the former scene, the travelling party is emerging from the desert to reach near

[139] See p.115.

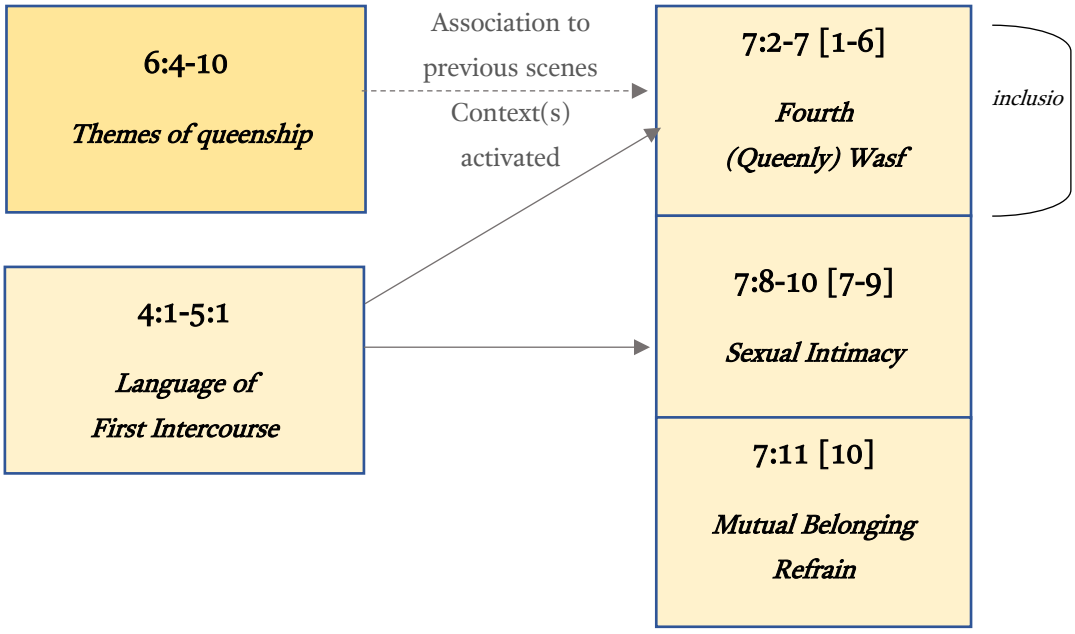
[140] Gerleman 1965: 181.

[141] Snaith 1993: 87, 94.

what is presumed to be the palace. The daughters are exhorted to "go out" and see the party. In 6:8-10, there has been a modest advancement of time. Two more groups of women are now admiring the bride.

2.1.2. Distributing 4:1-5:1 across 6:4-10 and 7:2-11 [1-10]

The poet uses a similar technique in 7:2-11, drawing from earlier units. Queenly themes are found in the *wasf* of 7:2-7. By drawing on language and imagery from 4:1-5:1 and embedding them into a new constellation of images similar to what has already been portrayed, the earlier contexts are now activated in the reader's mind. Metaphors, such as the drinking of wine, of food and enclosed or sealed drink/grain have also been utilised and together with a final mutual belonging refrain, they have been blended into one coherent unit. This can be visually represented as follows



The *wasfs* have been designed together and their imagery shared. This can be seen in the table below. Note that body parts, in bold, act as visual cues but are not the only shared elements; there is shared language between all columns. In the lower half of the table especially, the elements are refracted in such a manner

that where 6:4-10 does not include an element from 4:1-5:1, that element is added to 7:2-11 instead.

i. From col.1, the following are not found in col.2 but in col.3: neck, the description of her breasts, the "expedition" to her breasts, the summative statement of beauty, and garden metaphors.
ii. From col.1, the cheeks appear in col.2 but not col.3.
iii. Only lips and mouth appear in col.1 but not teeth. Only the teeth appear in col.2. Yet, all three appear in col.3.
iv. The description of hair in cols.1 and 2, as goats descending Mt. Gilead have been replaced in col.3 by locks flowing down Mt. Carmel.

Song 6:4-10 and 7:2-11 supplement each other for the overarching cyclical theme of bringing to the king's house and intimacy therein. This is also evidence that Song 6:4-10 and 7:2-11 could never have been two unrelated, independent poems. Rather, they were created together, from the same source 4:1-5:1. This is another argument towards unity in the Song.

4:1-5:1	**6:4-10**	**7:2-11 [1-12] Reordered**[142]
Behold, you are **beautiful** ...	You are beautiful as Tirzah...	**7:2aα** How beautiful
		7:2aβ are your **feet** ...
		7:2b Your rounded **thighs** ...
Your **eyes** are doves behind your veil.	Turn away your **eyes** from me, for they overwhelm me	**7:5b** Your **eyes** are pools ...

[142] Shows distribution of elements from first two columns.

		7:5c Your **nose** ...
Your **hair** is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of **Gilead**.	Your **hair** is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of **Gilead**.	**7:6** Your **head c**rowns you like **Carmel**, your flowing **locks** are like purple ... a king is held captive in the **tresses**.
Your **teet**h are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young.	Your **teeth** are like a flock of ewes that have come up from the washing; all of them bear twins; not one among them has lost its young.	**7:10** Your **mouth** like the best wine. It goes down smoothly for my beloved, gliding over **lips** and **teeth**.
Your **lips** are like a scarlet thread, and your **mouth** is lovely.		
Your **cheeks**[143] are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.	Your **cheeks** are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.	
Your **neck** is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone...		**7:5a** Your **neck** is like an ivory tower.
Your two **breasts** are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle ...		**7:4** Your two **breasts** are like two fawns twins of a gazelle.
... *I will* go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense. [**breasts/genitals**]		**7:9** *I will* climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit. Oh, may your **breasts** be like clusters of the vine ...
You are altogether beautiful, my love ...		**7:6** How beautiful and pleasant you are ...

[143] "Gums" in Häusl and Silber 2000: 188; KJV has "temples."

4:12-5:1 Metaphors for first intercourse: **sealed garden**, sealed *perennial spring*, Eating and drinking, etc.		**7:3** Your navel[144] (or vulva)[145] is a rounded bowl that *never lacks mixed wine*. Your belly is a heap of wheat, **encircled** with lilies.

2.2. Technique 2 - Gapping and Retrospective Reading. "Missing" Bride

There are two broad locations in which a gap can exist in a text in relation to the information that is needed to fill it from another part of the text. A gap may exist later in a text and is meant to be filled by the reader from information occurring earlier. In the last technique, we saw how gaps in 6:4-10 and 7:2-11 could be filled from earlier units. However, gaps can also occur in an earlier part of a text in order to enable the reader to fill them using information gained later. It is this second type of gap that I want to look at in relation to the *mi-zot* questions.

As discussed earlier, 3:6 causes difficulties for interpreters because it asks a question but supplies no answer.[146] The *mi-zot* "who is this?" question appears in 3:6; 6:10; 8:5. It is correct to say that all three instances of the question have missing *explicit* replies. The reader is, in each instance, meant to answer the question from material at hand, either within the immediate vicinity of the question or from further on. The very existence of such phenomena suggests it was intended as a reading-oriented technique. A number of interpreters already acknowledge the phenomenon of provoking a response from the reader for individual cases of the *mi-zot* question but there needs to be a recognition of how the questions are related to each other and how material from elsewhere in the Song is used to fill these gaps.[147]

If 3:6-11, for example, is read atomistically, the verses immediately following could never provide any assuring answer to the *mi-zot* question in v.6 since no "who" answer is provided to a "who" question. At best, the answer could be "the bridegroom," or "Solomon" since it is "his bed" and "*apiryon*" that are mentioned and it is he whom the daughters are encouraged to "go look at." This of course

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[144] Cf. Ezek. 16:4.

[145] Pope 1977: 617.

[146] See also p.110.

[147] Among others, for 6:10, see Ringgren 1981: 283; Fox 1985: 153; Estes 2010: 385. For 8:5, see Fishbane 2015: 206; Carr 1984: 108.

raises the question why is the "who" denoted by זאת as though the reply should be identified as a female.

One answer, that utilises gap-filling by recourse to other parts of the text involves the technique of mirroring. The motif of a travelling *couple* is established at the very start of the Song (1:2-4) and reappears towards its close (8:5). This raises the possibility that although 3:6-11 concerns only the king, it is thus because there is a mirrored emphasis upon the bride elsewhere. This mirroring effect is already well known among Song scholars, one of its chief proponents being Elliott.[148] This opens up the possibility that Solomon is indeed travelling with his bride in 3:6-11 and that she just has not been mentioned. Steinberg's formal construction of the three *mi-zot* questions shows who potentially is in mind in each case:[149]

3,6	"Wer ist sie ...?"	→ Der Mann erschient.
6,10	"Wer ist sie ...?"	→ Die Frau erschient.
8,5	"Wer ist sie ...?"	→ Mann und Frau erscheinen.

The above pattern could lead to the surface conclusion that one partner is absent in the first two answers but it does not remove the possibility that the other partner is implicitly present and that the first two instances mirror each other (with the third presenting both partners).

The mirroring technique is itself a step away from an anthology perspective which regards the *mi-zot* question in 3:6 (and its unit) atomistically. It inherently raises the theoretical possibility that these regal units, and possibly the whole Song, is a unitary whole. However, instead of espousing such a mirroring technique, I wish to propose that the technique involved is not so much mirroring but rather gap-filling and retrospective reading. The gap is designed to be filled by the readers themselves through their growing assurance that it is the presence of the bride who is meant to be supplied in each gap. In other words, not only are the three *mi-zot* questions *leitwort* but so are their answers. They are linked to each other by design and even though the male may be present in each case, the specific answer meant to be elicited by this very specific question is "the bride" or "the woman." This is unlike mirroring, in which case the answer for 3:6 is "the man" and 6:10 "the bride."

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[148] Elliott 1986: 246-51.

[149] Steinberg 2014: 167.

From a reading perspective, the seeming absence of the bride can be seen as an implicit reading gap in the text. Ingarden refers to "spots of indeterminacy," an idea later developed by Iser and Sternberg who note that a gap that is deliberately left in the text can be an important factor in making a presented situation more expressive or suggestive.[150] In such a case, the absence of the gap would weaken the aesthetic effect the author is attempting to achieve. Because a bride is not explicitly mentioned in the wedding scene, from the perspective of those who take the segment atomistically or as part of a loose collection, 3:6-11 would not have any linkage, for example, to the scene of the king bringing his bride to his home (1:2-4). However, if the reader assumes a narrative is being told, then the gap can be filled with details garnered first, from the opening scene but especially also those later scenes in which the "who is this" question reappears.

As illustrated in the diagram below, the poetics in the Song evokes the reader's answer to each "who is this?" inquiry to become clearer and more obvious.

Clarity

	3:6	**6:10**	**8:5**
Progression of the Question "Who is This?"	Coming up from the desert?	Bright as the dawn ...?	Leaning upon her beloved?
Focus on the subject	Unclear Focus falls upon the entire litter but mostly on that which belongs to the man	Clearer Focus initially includes other women but finally, focus is upon the protagonist alone	Clear Focus upon the primary couple and no one else
Identity	Woman? Man? Litter?	Woman	Definitely the Woman
Interpretation Difficulty	Difficult	Less Difficult	Least Difficult

Retrospective Reading

[150] Ingarden 1973: 50-56; Iser 1971: 1-45; Iser 1976: 257-80; Sternberg 1978: 50-5, 238-46.

The *mi-zot* question is a key refrain that the poet uses to get the reader involved in anticipating the arrival of the woman, the bride, into the king's house. Because the reader is presented with the specific question, מי זאת, the reader is already primed to anticipate a woman appearing. The expected answer is delayed because of competing images of the man and guards. It raises questions in the reader's mind as to who is intended, just as we have witnessed in the Song's interpretative history. When the reader encounters 6:10, however, the answer is a lot clearer because we know the man is present because of his speech (6:4-10). The question is readily answered, as "the bride" or "the woman" but even here it must be inferred. In 8:5, there is no doubt left, for the question is "who is this leaning on her beloved?" Through retrospective reading, or what Smith terms "retrospective patterning" the reader can go back and see in her/his mind's eye a woman journeying up from the desert in the company of her groom and his band. As we noted in relation to 1:7-8, Smith says,

> the reader's experience ... continuously changes in response to succeeding events ... structural principles, both formal and thematic, are gradually deployed and perceived ... in a steady process of adjustment and retrospective patterning."[151]

While the *formal* context of 3:6-11 is that of the bride and groom motif, the bride herself is be implied through a *rhetorical* device which forces the reader to mentally recreate the woman via retrospective patterning/reading. The question is designed to have a responsive effect upon the reader as the entire Song is read, and by the looks of it, the Song was not designed to be read once and put away but read again and again. The question is rhetorical but is answered through the response, and in the mind, of the reader. As Carr says, "if there is any contextual continuity, the answer to the question must be obvious—that it is the bride herself. This same idiom appears in Song 6:10, again with no answer in the text, and in 8:5 where the second half of the colon demands the answer 'the woman' (bride)."[152]

The device also presents a progression within itself. At first, the evoked image of the woman (via the question) is blended in with images of other characters (3:6). The focus then narrows, and she is surrounded by palatial women (6:9-10). Finally, as she nears the onlookers, she is seen leaning upon her beloved (8:5).

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[151] Smith 1968: 10. See comments on re-reading in relation to "first sequence" on p.205).

[152] Carr 1984: 108.

This movement, from the general to the particular, is a reading across the Song rather than remaining confined to a single scene, such as Alster's reading from the general litter to Solomon, within 3:6-11 alone.[153]

2.3. Technique 3 - Transitioning: How Images in 1:9-2:7 Advance in 1:2-6

2.3.1. Transition: Movement to Residing

Whereas in the opening scene there are verbs of movement (משך "draw" and רוץ "run"), from Song 1:9 to 2:7 verbs are scarce and comparisons are abundant. However, verbs that do appear (לון "lodge" and ישב "sit/dwell") have been chosen to convey a sense of rest if not the idea of dependency as outlined earlier.

Time has slowed down and the couple even have time to look at the finer points of their surroundings such as the cedar 'rafters' of his house.

2.3.2. Transition: Journeying to the Royal House to its Nuptial Bed

Whereas Song 1:2-4 describes the king's bringing of the spouse to his house, 1:13-16 is a section specifically devoted to the nuptial bed. Reinforced by the use of לון "lodge the night," 1:13-14 depicts the lovers lying next to each other all night.[154] The description of the green bed and exotic woods in 1:16-17 is a possible parallel to the royal nuptial bed described in Sumerian texts. As discussed earlier, 1:16-17 may not be set outdoors but rather on a royal, exotic bed, with the couple looking upwards, admiring the panoply of cedar and cypress panelling.

2.3.3. Transition: Extolling the Man's Love to Showing Aspects of Love

The king's love is extolled in 1:2-4. In 1:9-2:7, aspects of love are now emphasised. In tandem with the aforementioned imagery taken from the context of the nuptial bed (1:13-16), the three strophes of 2:3-5 convey the idea of a new life of dependence and provision.[155]

The woman's dwelling with her lover is compared to dwelling in the shade of an apple tree (2:3), a metaphor which draws on its *protective* and *sustaining*

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[153] Alster 2008.

[154] *HALOT* 4642.

[155] Roberts (2007: 83-101) considers 2:1-3 and 2:4-7 as separate units. No contradiction exists as they can be viewed as subunits.

aspects.[156] The lover is appealed to support (רפד) her with raisins or raisin cakes (2:5). Despite frequent erotic connotations for "apples" and intoxicating pleasures of wine in the parallel love literature,[157] the fruit and wine metaphors of 2:3-5 are less about drunkenness or wantonness (implied by Pleins) and more about provision.[158] The eating and drinking metaphors may still hint at intoxicating sexual pleasure but they do so by reinforcing those metaphors of provision and protection in the previous verse. From the perspective of the man, the metaphor of wine has connotations of generous provision, and from the perspective of the woman who accepts the wine, it has meanings of received love, sustenance and life.

Wine, in association with produce and fruit, is a technical term used in the covenant provisions. Wine is promised by God to Israel for obedience and is withheld by God for disobedience. Abundance of wine becomes a familiar prophetic image of eschatological blessing when "the mountains will drip new wine" (Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13). In the future, YHWH will make a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine in the place he will dwell, his eternal house (Isa. 25:6, 10). He will remove tears and reproach from his people, bringing joy (25:6). The fruit and the wine in Song are positive images of love, joy, celebration and provision. These metaphors reinforce a traditional reading—that of the woman desiring her lover and his caring, sustaining and providing love.[159]

Complementing the tree metaphor with its protective shade is the undertaking of the man to spread his banner over the woman in his house of wine (2:4). As discussed earlier, the man's דגל could be associated with his royal cloak that he spreads upon her (Cf. Ruth 3:9-Boaz will "spread his skirt over his handmaid"). In Mal. 2:16, this motif is deliberately subverted; the covering garment of the marriage covenant is deliberately made into one of violence rather than of support.[160]

The verbs of provision and sustenance (סמך sustain; רפד support) and staying under another's roof (ישׁב dwell [/sit]) are all packed in together to convey to the reader the complementary roles of a dependant and a provider. The words in

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[156] E.g. Ginsburg 1857: 142; Elliott 2000: 70-71.

[157] e.g. Keel 1994: 83, 88; Pope 1977: 376-82.

[158] Pleins 2007: 153-65.

[159] See e.g. Bede in Holder 2011: 66-69; Gregory of Nyssa in Norris 2012: 131-33.

[160] Glazier-Mcdonald 1998: 249.

Dumuzi-Inanna F (line 33), "... will indeed supply you in plenty," reflect this undertaking of one spouse towards the other.[161]

2.3.4 Transition: Future Rejoicing to Realised Rejoicing

Several lines in Dumuzi-Inanna P collectively capture the significance of a transition to joy on bringing the royal spouse into the palace with its euphoric effects thereafter: "Dumuzi brings ... to ... [162] My bridegroom [will rejoice] in me ... In the Enamtila, the king's house, his spouse dwelt with him joyfully . . ."[163] Such a transition is also captured in the Song.

While Song 1:4c speaks of future rejoicing in the lover, the frame that 2:3 encompasses is pushed further. Both גיל (1:4c) and חמד (2:3) are linguistic expressions that frame the concept of Joy. Megahan's in-depth study (2014) provides a starting point for understanding the lexical concept of JOY in biblical Hebrew. His work verifies the core features of JOY as being volition, desire, determination and satisfaction. More specifically, he studies the frames that deal with CAUSE, EMOTION or RESPONSE in relation to JOY as a lexical semantic domain.

For want of space, Megahan does not specifically deal with חמד but lists the word as one primary linguistic expression that can profile EMOTION related to JOY.[164] The use of חמדתי (2:3) highlights the CAUSE of the female protagonist's "great delight," her lover who has brought her to his house (1:4c). Veenker's translation of חמדתי as "I was sexually aroused"[165] is too narrow and does not do justice to the range of joy emphasised.

Conclusion: Narrative in The Regal Units

1. Overview

The regal units are largely lyrical and repetitive. The units exhibit complex dependencies upon each other to present a coherent whole. There is an intricate blending of conceptual metaphors from earlier cycles which individually and collectively provide later cycles a composite picture of events. These are highly lyrical but some progression is evident. Techniques are employed to compel the

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[161] Sefati 1998: 173.

[162] The sentence is fragmentary but it might describe Dumuzi's bringing Inanna to his house.

[163] Col. 1, line 21, Col. 2, line 8 and Col. 3, lines 12-16 in Sefati 1998: 225.

[164] Megahan 2014: 193.

[165] Veenker 1999-2000: 57-73.

reader to read again. One cycle is dependent upon the other two to fill in gaps and details. They have been created together, not independently.

Because there are at least two, essentially repeating, events which are causally related and which appear to be linked temporally and spatially, the theoretical requirements of a micronarrative are met.



The Micronarrative of the Regal Units

There is movement and progression in this micronarrative but it is minimal. The narrative is about a king, not just a bridegroom. More specifically, it is about Solomon bringing his bride to his house on his wedding day. There is great rejoicing from the court ladies at this deed. The wedding night follows in which the couple experience a life of love, with the king providing for his bride and the couple deeply intimate with each other.

The conjugal speech section (4:8-5:1) is especially packed with sexual metaphors but they are used in such a way as to evidence a centripetal force at work, driving the speech towards the ultimate goal of portraying the couple reaching the sexual climax of first intercourse. The marriage theme is discerned within the aforementioned trajectory but is also evident in the word כלה (bride) that is used to bind these verses together. This appellative occurs six times and is only found here in the Song which suggests it is not just a simple term of endearment (contra Snaith)[166] but is connected to the themes of marriage and first intercourse.

The regal units, as a whole, have no definitive beginning, middle and end, of the kind that Aristotle and much later Forster insisted on. The narrative begins *in medias res* with the king bringing his bride to his house. The events in the preterite group (1:6) do not causally relate to the other events and consequently

[166] Snaith 1993: 65.

do not qualify as the beginning of this short narrative. The judgement of existing scholars that 1:2-6 begins *in medias res* is therefore correct.[167]

If one applies to our micronarrative Carroll's working conceptual definition of narrative closure, namely "the phenomenological feeling of finality that is generated when all the questions saliently posed by the narrative are answered,"[168] it is difficult to pinpoint the presiding macro questions posed by the narrative, if there even are any. There is only a semblance of closure in as much as the sexual union of the couple provides closure to the events of the woman being brought to the king's house and their marriage. This, however, hardly qualifies as a closure "that is generated by certain central features of a narrative" as Carroll defines it, for there is no typical middle of this narrative.

What we have in the middle of this micronarrative is an interaction with the royal women. Other elements one might expect in a typical middle, such as an inciting incident or crisis, which drives a plot forward, are absent. Despite a cyclical (repeating) sequence of (roughly five or so) events in the regal units qualifying as a "micronarrative" by the standards of the field of narratology, I am inclined towards the conclusion that what we have in the regal section is a set of repeating lyrical units with a broad micronarrative that lacks typical narrative form but whose narrative sequence is also not rigidly repeated since each iteration contains nuances of information pertaining to a particular theme that is not found in other sequences.

There is a group of events, belonging to 1:6, that are not directly linked to the other events in the regal units. Song 1:6 exists for the purpose of providing reasons for the woman's blackness but its events have no direct causative linkage with events in the present, within the regal units. I have grouped them as follows:

The woman made to work in the vineyard by her antagonistic brothers

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[167] e.g. Fox 1985: 255; Exum 2005: 93; Estes 2010: 304; Barbiero 2011: 53; Haines 2016: 261; Andruska 2019: 77; Walsh 2019: 266.

[168] Carroll 2007: 1.

2. Vertical and Horizontal Readings of the Royal Units and Cycles

The author has woven together independent scenes in order to produce a beautiful, harmonious whole. There is both a horizontal and a vertical aspect to the units in the cycles. Each unit in a cycle is equally important and interesting. Each can be read independently which is why each might convey the impression that it is a standalone poem. However, each unit also has counterparts in the other cycles. In this way, gaps in any one unit are filled and the (one) micronarrative is fleshed out. The scenes cohere paratactically.

One cycle may furnish details which another excludes. For example, 1:2-6 has no mention of a wedding but the recurring cycle in 3:1-11 with that theme supplies these details. This means that the unnamed "king" of 1:4 is Solomon who is bringing his bride to his home. This fits the scenario of the woman's entrance into a large harem (6:8) for which Solomon inexorably comes to mind. The bride herself is not mentioned in 3:6-11 but her presence is supplied from 1:2-6 and 6:4-10, 8:5 and elsewhere.[169]

The first scene gives the impression that the women/daughters might be travelling with the king and his consort. However, from 3:6-11 we learn the daughters are awaiting them, recasting the opening scene which fits well with the scenario of excited chatter among women who are now meeting for the first time. This also explains why the author makes the female protagonist tell them more about her past family affairs at this point (1:6); they have only just arrived. The praise and rejoicing of one set of women associated with the king (1:3-4) is extended to others in the harem (6:8-9) thereby progressing the temporal frame. Song 3:6-11 also anticipates 6:4-10 since only the daughters ask the question "who is this?" but later many queens, concubines and virgins echo it.

The image of the lover laying on the woman's breasts all night (1:13) is complemented by the extended dialogue in 4:1-5:1 which also defines the context of this night being the wedding night. All the cycles include the motif of the couple making love with the lover satisfying himself with her breasts. This particular motif is found in Prov. 5:19, part of a passage that has been closely linked with the Song most recently by Schellenberg.[170] It is probably not coincidental that it is the "wife of your youth" the man is to be satisfied with. Yet, in the Song, only in 4:1-5:1 are we given the necessary detail of the woman being

[169] p.247.

[170] Schellenberg 2018.

a bride with a focus upon first intercourse.

These examples demonstrate, in part, why one should understand the regal units as containing a single recurring micronarrative and not a loose unity of disparate micronarratives. It is in the filling of the gaps that the reader advances her understanding and progresses the temporal frame. In asking "how does poeticity interact with narrativity in poetic narratives [or for that matter, narratival poems]," McHale finds that attaining meaning from gaps within poetry is one of the engines that drives progression much like it does in narrative.[171]

3. Solomon's Wedding and the Royal Male Protagonist

In addition to gaps of meaning in one royal cycle that are filled by recourse to the other cycles, another indication that it is the very same micronarrative permeating throughout the royal units is the fact that the royal cycles appear to be *collectively* and *complementarily* drawing a specific connection between the Song's royal lover (1:4; implied in 6:8-9) and Solomon (3:9,11) and collective cultural memory of him. They are not two separate individuals; Solomon's name is neither incidental nor simply used as a foil for another male protagonist in these royal units. There is primarily a strong relocation theme which contains echoes of the tradition of Pharaoh's daughter relocating to Solomon's house although it is unlikely that the female protagonist should be identified with the Egyptian counterpart—there is no indication of this in the Song. Rather, the tradition has been co-opted into the new micronarrative.

Among several other things that bring Solomon to mind are an "unknown" king's name being linked with the sounds in Solomon's name, his house of cedar (1:17) and his large harem praising a new arrival (6:8). Even the unusual plural form in the phrase "the beams of our *houses* are cedar" in 1:17 which has been questioned on grammatical grounds,[172] could belie a vestige of the tradition of Solomon having built for his bride a separate house resembling his own, of cedar rafters (1 Kgs 3:1; 1 Kgs 7:8-12; 1 Kgs 9:16, 24; 1 Kgs 11:1 and 2 Chr. 8:11).

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[171] McHale 2009: 16.

[172] Zakovitch notes there are other instances in the Hebrew Bible where two nouns are joined in construct form, a plural absolute noun converts the first construct noun to a plural, though the sense is actually singular. See Zakovitch 2004: 135; cf. Murphy 1990: 132; Pope 1977: 360.

EPILOGUE AND CLOSURE (SONG 8)

Introduction

Song 8 can technically be read as an epilogue which provides reflections on what has gone before and tells us something of the Song which cannot be gathered from the composition itself but which also provides a denouement to the non-regal sequence of events.

It ties up loose ends so that questions or mysteries arising in the course of the narrative are answered. It also fills in what would otherwise be plot holes just as in the closing of a traditionally structured plot, where the villain is exposed, parts of a mystery are explained, misunderstandings are clarified, or lovers are reunited. An epilogue presupposes unity of composition and would presumably be meaningless to anthologists.

An epilogue is essentially a closing section and any techniques employed within it are closural. It is possible for a closing unit to incorporate several sub-devices that serve the overarching function of closure.[173] The following is an outline of Song 8:

vv. 1-5	Summary
vv. 6-7	Desire to be set as a seal/Sayings of true love
vv. 8-10	Tables turned on the brothers
vv. 11-12	Who is the vineyard owner?
vv. 13-14	Finally, dwelling in the gardens

1. Summary (8:1-5)

1.1. Introduction

How this section relates to the verses that precede it can be problematic. Scholars sometimes connect 8:1-4 (they might include v.5) to the verses that precede it.[174]

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[173] Malachi, for example, ends with two brief epilogues, which have a slightly different function. See Collins 2014: 435.

[174] e.g. Barbiero (2011: 408) takes 7:12-8:4 as a whole; Elliott notes there is an invitation to a "house" (7:14, 8:2). Roberts (2007: 313) uses the verb נתן "to give" to establish cohesion between the two units.

There are reasons for discontinuity, however, which arise from the tenor in 8:1-2 and which will be discussed during analysis and in the conclusion.

The whole of 8:1-5 is, I suggest, a summary of the narrative but only key moments compressed into the space of a few verses. Concerning narrative summaries, Zeelander writes,

> They recapitulate what has occurred and as they do this they stop the forward movement of the story's action ... they generally summarize not the whole story but elements of the key transforming event. A summary may do this by repeating key words of the transformation, such as ... modified repetitions ... or the summary may express the key idea using different words.[175]

8:1-5 stops the forward motion of the narrative in Song 1-7. As we will soon see, it does not link up to the narrative and may instead recount what has gone before although not with strict repetition. If so, these verses' primary function is to jog the reader's memory and recount the trajectory of the narrative, but also swiftly tracing its movement from the negative to positive.

1.2. Who will give you to me? (8:1-2)

Song 7 ends decisively with the man and woman beginning a new journey and a new stage of their relationship but Song 8 begins with the woman wishing her lover would be "given" to her. He is not with her, permanently at least. Despite Roberts who thinks it is impossible to read the second person masculine singular suffix on יתנך in 8:1a in any other way than anaphoric to the man of 7:12-14,[176] it is possible to take it as anaphoric to the woman's search for him (3:1-5 and possibly also 5:2-7). Although 8:1 is frequently rendered as a vocative, "Oh that you would be as a brother to me,"[177] the literal, non-idiomatic meaning, "*who will give you* as a brother to me?" recalls the woman's desperate search for her lover and dependence on outside help. As Roberts remarks, "here the woman longs for someone to give the man to her."[178] It could anticipate her reliance on the daughters to mediate between her and the lover (5:8) to facilitate his return to

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[175] Zeelander 2012: 82.

[176] Roberts 2007: 313.

[177] The LXX omits the כ before the אח and some interpreters follow suit, omitting the simile. Lys takes the כ as asseverative. Lys 1968: 277-8.

[178] Robert 2007: 306.

her. The idiom מי יתנך signifies "if only" (cf. Ex. 16:3; Num. 11:29; Deut. 5:29) denotes an unrealised wish.[179] Even the metaphor of kissing via an exchange of fluids ("wine of her pomegranate"=juices of her cheeks, cf. 4:3; 7:9) that interpreters attribute to the couple being intimate is clearly related to her *unfulfilled* desire. "I would ..." she says repeatedly, as Zhang has poignantly reminded us.[180]

The woman's wish has been understood as evidence of coyness before public scorn for overt displays of love[181] but there are problems with the idea that the Song is specifically emphasising the *general* taboo. Thus far, no public obstacle has prevented them meeting in vineyards, henna bushes (7:11-12) and open streets (3:4). So, why is she worried *now*? Bergant notes that the woman is willing to risk both her relationship with the man as well as public scrutiny by urging him that she be identified as his public seal. She concludes, "it is obvious from the sentiments found throughout the poems that there is no risk in the first situation, and the woman cares little about the second. The woman is secure in their love and unconcerned about public opinion."[182]

I suggest that the anomaly of behaviour in 8:1-2 is alluding to the disappearance episodes, when her love is not as secure as it eventually will be. As Barbiero notes, "The verb 'to find/meet' (*māṣā'*) links our song with 3:1–5 and 5:2–8, the two nocturnal searches."[183] Murphy also lists the parallels with the disappearance passages.[184] In 8:1-2, we catch a further glimpse into the woman's innermost thoughts as we did in 3:1, "I will rise now and go." It reveals the scale of her past yearning.

Along with the dynamic of her unfulfilled desire is another dynamic related to her wish to bring him to her family house. While her mother is mentioned, her brothers are not. Yet they are referred to indirectly. From the phrase "my mother's sons," one infers this to be the very house her brothers reside (1:6). Also, her wish for the lover to be a "brother" to her reminds the reader of her own, dominant, brothers—apparently, she is the only pure one of her mother (6:9).[185] Moreover, her desire for a "brother" is preceded by the phrase לא־יבוזו לי

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[179] Assis 2009: 226-7.

[180] Zhang 2016: 112.

[181] Among others, Assis 2009: 228; Bergant 2001: 97. Estes 2005: 433.

[182] Bergant 2001: 97.

[183] Barbiero 2011: 425.

[184] Murphy 1990: 189.

[185] The term "brother" can mean "boyfriend" but here, as LaCocque (1998: 161) explains, a blood

which although mostly read as "*none* would despise me," the literal "*they* would not despise me" could be taken as a reference to her brothers. If it does refer to her brothers, then this is a significant revelation that the brothers are not just angry with her but they despise her.

While on the face of it, she wants to "smuggle him into the house without being caught,"[186] perhaps the reason is not so much disapproval from the public but from within her own home. Yet, she wishes he would stay permanently in *her home*. For him to do so, he would have to be "a brother" to her. In other words, she must bring him to her home instead of leaving it. Perhaps this is what the Song is warning the reader against (that she cannot have her cake and eat it. She must be either willing to give up her house or her lover). Ironically, this is what she attempts in 3:4. She brings him back, clingingly not letting him go.

In 8:2, the further nuance of her desperation is revealed in אנהגך "I would lead you." How she wishes to take her lover to her house is very unusual. Elsewhere, נהג is frequently used for driving cattle (Gen. 31:18) or someone away against their will (Gen. 31:26). This does not mean that a more neutral connotation of leading has not been used elsewhere (e.g. 1 Sam. 30:22 of men leading their families away or 2 Chr. 25:11 of Amaziah leading his army) but even in those places, there is a suggestion of submissiveness on the part of those who are being led. The characterisation of the woman here is someone headstrong and determined, even to the point of dragging her lover to her house. As we have already seen, the ironic result of bringing her lover to *her home* is failure as a permanent solution and her desire remains unfulfilled.[187]

1.3. Mutual Embrace (8:3)

Despite the resemblances of 8:1-2 to 3:1-5, significantly, there is no embrace statement in the 3:1-5. The presence of the embrace refrain in 8:3 signals that now, unlike 3:5, the couple are not just in the same house but that they will always be together. The only other instance of this repetition occurs in 2:6, towards the end of that regal unit showing the couple dwelling in the king's house. The embrace refrain acts as a reflector for the final equilibrium in the narrative. It reflects a movement from unfulfilled desire or recurring separation in

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brother is meant.

[186] Keel 1994: 261.

[187] p.211.

the previous two verses to a newfound permanent unity. It sets the reader up for the adjuration statement which follows.

1.4. Final Refrain of Adjuration (8:4)

The most important refrain in the Song is known as the adjuration refrain (2:7; 3:5; 5:8 and 8:4).

Andruska has recently contributed a substantial treatment of the adjurations' relationship to wisdom and their didactic potential for the Song's reader.[188] She engages with ten perspectives and then proposes an eleventh. Her detailed discussion is worthy of more space than can be devoted here but suffice it to say that Andruska's proposal has merit for a wisdom approach to some of these closing statements of the Song. She maintains that the adjurations continually advise the reader not to awaken love within herself or himself until the type of love pictured in the Song is present. "The poet didactically shows us throughout the Song what love looks like when it is present, when it has desired to awaken."[189]

The refrain always begins the same way, "I have made you swear, daughters of Jerusalem." However, the last refrain of the oath formula *'im ... wĕ' im* has been replaced by *māh ... û'māh*. This is significant because the change at the end reflects closure. Steinmann makes a compelling case for the author "varying the oath for effect [here], since this is the last and climactic occurrence of the refrain."[190] Steinmann says, "the difference in expression is designed to catch the reader's attention."[191] Exum translates the last refrain, "Why do you arouse and awaken love?" The implication for Exum is that love is fully aroused.[192]

Since a transformation of love is being mooted in both text and reader, the adjurations must be reflecting a personal change narrative occurring in the Song, one which we have already witnessed concerning the woman (5:8-6:3).

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[188] Andruska 2019: 43-61.

[189] *Idem.* 60.

[190] Steinmann 2013: 37.

[191] *Idem.*

[192] Exum 1973: 74.

1.5. Who is This? (8:5a)

I have dealt extensively with this refrain.[193] The third instance of the מי זאת "who is this" question reveals the woman "leaning" on her lover. It is different from the previous two (3:6; 6:10) because it depicts both lovers in a "together at last" motif that closes the narrative. It is the final leitmotif of the king and his bride coming up to his house after traversing the wilderness.

1.6. Apple Tree (8:5b)

The tricolon in the second half of 8:5, concerning the apple tree motif, poses some problems for interpretation most of which cannot be discussed here.[194] The most important of these is the question of who is speaking and about whom. Those following the Greek and Syriac witnesses, view the person born/conceived under the apple tree as the woman. I have retained the MT version, which is that the woman speaks to and about the man.[195] It appears that the apple tree motif in the Song is polyvalent. It could be a reference to a specific, literal tree[196] but more importantly, it becomes a motif for the man and his excellence above other men; and as she dwells under this "tree's" shade, it symbolises his majesty and protection (2:3).[197] Here, it symbolises the union of the couple and simultaneously serves to crystallise the theme of the man's house. Trees are favourable space motifs for lovers' trysts as is seen in the *Turin Love Song*.[198] In 8:5b, however, this apple tree has witnessed at least two generations of lovers and even "presided over" the man's conception: "*there* your mother conceived/was in labour with you." This tree is therefore part of the man's garden, a synecdoche for his family dwelling of at least two generations. The spatial "there" refers back to the emphases throughout the narrative of the ultimate destination of the lovers, the house of the king.

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[193] p.247.

[194] The issues are i) What is the specific meaning of the verb עור here and does it have a sexual connotation? ii) What is the specific meaning of חבל in the present context? iii) Is the apple tree the only location given in the tricolon?

[195] Following the LXX texts, which make the man speak to the woman, some interpreters have re-pointed the Hebrew to follow suit, e.g. Delitzsch 1993: 142; Zöckler 1898: 128.

[196] Some see no reference to a literal tree, only a metaphor for sexual activity, e.g. Garrett 2004: 253.

[197] p.61.

[198] E.g. Fox 1985: 50.

1.7. Conclusion on 8:1-5

In conclusion, 8:1-5 is not a single scene such as some think.[199] Instead, there is a compressed summary of the entire plot. Within 8:1-5, there is a movement from absence (8:1-2) to intimacy (8:3), transformation (8:4) and unity (8:5). Although there are those who think v.5 has no connection with v.4, the evident juxtaposition of the two houses, the house of the woman (and her brothers) on the one hand and the house of the lover on the other (vv.1-2 and v.5) with a transformative section in between (v.3-4) repeats the dualism between the two houses and evokes the המחנים "two camps" (7:1) apparent throughout the Song.[200] Below I suggest some allusions to the narrative, which trigger the reader's memory by themes evoked.

Themes Evoked in 8:1-5	Ref.	Allusions
Separation	8:1	Man's disappearance (3:1-5; 5:2-6:3)
The mother's house; woman's lack of a true brother	8:1-2	Dishonourable brothers (1:6; 2:8-17; 7:1)
Mutual embrace	8:3	Sections with sexual intimacy (1:12-14; 4:1-5:1; 7:2-11)
The stirring of true love	8:4	Meeting the daughters (5:8-6:3)
Coming up from the wilderness, togetherness; "who is this?"	8:5a	The king bringing the woman to his house (1:2-6; 3:6-11; 6:4-10)
Apple tree; intimacy; protection, man's house (man's mother)	8:5b	Apple tree (2:3); garden and house of the man (1:9-2:7; 6:4-10).

2. A Seal of Love (8:6a) and Sayings of True Love

In 8:6a, the woman asks to be a seal on her lover's heart and arm. This statement of desire resembles Ps. 17:8, "keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me under the

[199] E.g. the lovers lying in a bower—Fox 1985: 166.

[200] E.g. Murphy 1990: 195.

shadow of your wings." It seems that the woman's desire is to become one with her lover and share his identity.[201] However, her sentiments might also hint at past differences or separations between them, thereby connecting the statement with problems in the relationship that have been portrayed in the narrative earlier (e.g. 5:2-7). She never wants to be apart from him again.

In an Egyptian poem, the boy sings, "If only I were her little seal-ring, the keeper of her finger! I would see her love each and every day."[202] The implication throughout the poem is that he does not. Given that two significant separations are recorded in the Song already, the desire to be a seal could well echo this theme of longing to be close to him.

The seal in 8:6a is meant to be worn on the lover's "arm" rather than as a signet ring. Pope counters that "anatomical terms are somewhat loosely used in biblical poetry, and the 'arm' may be a poetic synonym for 'hand.' "[203] This is essentially right but it is nonetheless worth considering the possibility that this seal is a royal one in light of the numerous references to royalty in the poem. The rosette worn around the royal arm is sufficiently depicted in the Assyrian iconography and has been determined to be not just a decorative element but a symbol of royal sovereignty.[204] The statement in Song 8:6 could therefore be a reference to the preceding narrative about a woman desiring to be with a king.

8:6a has also been used to introduce five wisdom sayings, all put into the mouth of the woman. I have chosen not to expand on these for several reasons. A pressing practical reason is that space is short but more importantly, the sayings are abstract reflections on the nature of love. They do not contribute to the development of the narrative but affirm it in a very general way. It has been suggested that 8:6b-7 was redacted into the Song as a wisdom section[205] and while I do not contend this assertion, I note that the aphoristic statements individually and collectively attest to the immovable and uncompromising nature of true love. The five sayings could therefore be used to reinforce the narrative of

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[201] Exum 2005: 250. Kabergs (2014) speculates there is polysemous wordplay on זרועך "your arm" with a meaning akin to "take me to heart as a seal upon your strength."

[202] Fox 1985: 38.

[203] Pope 1977: 666.

[204] See e.g. Ussishkin 1982: 115.

[205] See Dell 2005: 14-17. Cf. next chapter under "wisdom."

a man and woman who both, in the final analysis, do not compromise their love for each other. This would be a worthy topic for a future project.

3. Tables turned on the Brothers (8:8-10)

3.1. Brothers' Motivations (8:8)

The word "sister" is used in the Song as a designation by the lover for his beloved, but here by the woman's brothers (8:8a). Many link this verse back to 1:6, where the brothers first appear.

Bergant argues for three reasons why the designation must be spoken by them and not the man.[206] First, the use of לנו "our" is in the first person possessive plural form denoting a group. Although both the man and woman have been suggested as speakers, a group voice would better fit the brothers whom we have heard elsewhere (2:15 and 7:1a). Bergant also says that the description of the woman's breasts here contradicts the high praise the lover accorded them in earlier poems (4:5; 7:4[3], 7:8[7], 7:9[8]). Elsewhere, the woman is presented as mature, with well-formed breasts (cf. 4:5; 7:4, 8-9). In other words, Bergant believes they are churlishly belittling her endowments. Bergant's viewpoint is backed by cultural attitudes in which well-endowed female breasts were admired.[207] On the other hand, a description of misshapen breasts, being considered ugly, was sometimes used in insults.[208] However, most today take the reference to the female's having "no breasts" not as a slur on her shape but to her immaturity, the speaker(s) simply describing, in a matter-of-fact, concerned way, their young sister coming of age.[209] That may be so, but Bergant has a further point, that the word קטנה (little), could be a disparaging word, denoting not only small in size but insignificant in value. The lover would never speak of the woman in this way but my research coincidentally finds the brothers have used a possible patronising diminutive "little" in 2:15 ("little foxes") and further potential diminutives from them are in 1:6 and 7:1a. Irrespective of whether

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[206] Bergant 2001: 100.

[207] E.g. *DI*-C, line 39 (Sefati 1998: 137); Cheops requests "deep breasted" women for entertainment (Parkinson 1997: 110).

[208] See the Sumerian insult in Stol 2016: 689.

[209] E.g. Fox 1985: 173. Walsh (2000) recognises that the brothers are not listening to the fact that the woman's breasts are praised often but portrays them as naïve patriarchs.

Bergant is right, that this is a slur on the girl's breasts, or whether the female in the picture is just young, the speakers might still be demeaning towards her.

A clue to the possibility that the brothers' speech is insulting is her own response in 8:10, "my breasts were as towers." This is usually taken as a reference to the mature breasts she now has. The siege language (8:9) which precedes it, however, seems to paint a different picture. Rather, in 8:10, she is contradicting their description in defence. So, we are back to the possibility that Bergant may be right, that theirs is crude and insulting speech. Calling their sister "little" and (as Keel describes it) "flat-chested"[210] might be minimising language to demolish her confidence. This would then be the language of *kalam*, basically insults, which often favoured physical denigration.[211]

Whether the brothers share their disparaging remarks between themselves or speak down at her is unclear.[212] Nevertheless, the tenor of their remarks sets the tone for their subsequent speech and governs how they are to be characterised. If their speech starts unpleasantly, should we really assume their next words in 8:8b-9 are honourable?[213] Bergant herself, although taking the brothers to be making disparaging remarks about the sister's breasts, takes them as being their sister's protectors.[214] Barbiero also recognises the negative aspect of the brothers saying, "If the mother represents the positive side of the family, the brothers represent its negative aspect."[215] Yet, even he does not go beyond a "tutelary, paternalistic role" motivated by economic interests. The brothers should be their sister's protectors by custom (e.g. Laban in Gen. 24: 50-51, 55), but in action, when it comes to the lover they are confronted with, they renege on this filial obligation and attempt to stop their sister from leaving.

It could be construed that these men, who appear to be domineering in 1:6, make her work so they can keep her home. The question they ask concerns what

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[210] Keel 1994: 279.

[211] See e.g. in the following two texts: (1) *A diatribe against Engar dug (Diatribe B)*: "blocked at the anus ... a tail stuck in its mouth ... limping cripple ... " (2) *The debate between Bird and Fish*, lines 86-94: "Chopped off beak and legs, deformed feet, cleft mouth, thin tongue!"

[212] Some think the woman is quoting her brothers. E.g., Budde 1898: 45-46; Gerleman 1965: 219; Murphy 1990: 198; Munro 1995: 33-34, 77; Longman 2001: 215-17. Exum rejects the notions that the "little sister" is the woman or that she is quoting her brothers. The little sister is a fictive foil that enables her to say something about herself. Exum 2005: 255.

[213] Among many who see the brothers as honourable are Fox 1985: 172; Pope 1977: 678-80; Longman 2001: 215-17.

[214] Bergant 2001: 100.

[215] Barbiero 2011: 474.

they *will* do in the day their sister is "spoken for," namely asked for in marriage (cf. 1 Sam. 25:39 where David ידבר באביגיל "spoke concerning Abigail"). The verse has been seen as a flashback to the woman's puberty[216] but it could be read as an ongoing concern for themselves, not because of their sister's welfare but because of the threat of her leaving them in future. Rather than exercising their responsibility for giving her in marriage, when read in light of their other interactions (1:6; 2:15; 7:1a), the spirit in which these elder siblings ask the question arises not from their concern about what is good for *her* but what is beneficial for *them*, for example the tending of the vineyards. The question can be read as asked between themselves, in conference, as a desperate appeal for solutions as to how to resolve the crisis caused by their sister's impending marriage and departure.[217] Then again, they may only be against the one particular lover in the Song and not against other prospective suitors. We just do not know.

Many think the brothers' metaphors for their sister arises from their speculation about their sister's sexuality. For Bergant, the wall and door both represent the woman's chastity, while silver and cedar are used respectively to make her more beautiful.[218] Fishbane sees the two images as opposites, a wall suggests chastity and a door profligacy.[219] Consequently, the brothers' actions are responses that tackle and alleviate each case accordingly. It is fair to say that most think the brothers' speech reflects a motive of honour or at least responsibility in order to protect their sister. I will now attempt to show how their metaphors could be read as a "battle" to keep their sister at home and prevent the male protagonist from taking her away.

3.2. Siege Language (8:9)

James has recently built on previous statements by Murphy and Exum, among others, to create a more robust interpretation of siege imagery associated with these verses.[220] Indeed, על + נצר can mean "besiege" and טירה "battlement" or "encampment"[221] while the verb חנה "encamp" with על can mean "encamp against."

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[216] Krinetzki 1981: 225-26; Rudolph 1965: 183; Lys 1968: 294; Exum 2005: 256.

[217] Hitzig (1855: 102) thinks brother replies (v.9) to the other (v.8).

[218] Bergant 2001: 101.

[219] Fishbane 2015: 216; Verde 2018: 113-14.

[220] James 2017b. Cf. Exum 2005: 258-60; 2005c.

[221] For נצר+על, cf. Deut. 20:12; 2 Sam. 11:1; 20:15; 1 Kgs 15:27; 16:17; 20:1. Cf. James 2017b:36.

Although convincing in many aspects, James's perspective contains some weaknesses. For instance, although she correctly argues that טירת, as a construct form of טירה, usually means "encampments," she has not explained why these will be made of "silver." Moreover, although James focuses on the חומה "wall" within the siege imagery, she has neglected the דלת "door."[222] If one assumes that the military imagery is correct, rendering דלת as a city "gate" (e.g. Deut. 3:5), fits nicely with the siege context. Still, the emphasis upon "cedar" remains puzzling. The mentions of "silver" and "cedar" actually detract from siege imagery, indicating instead aesthetic embellishment, as a few have suggested.[223] Neither does the mention of לוח ארז, a single board of cedar quite fit with the picture of a barricade related to a siege, unless this is a case of a singular noun being used as a plural.[224] Cedar trees are not only elitist trees from the provenance of Tyre or Aram, but the imagery of attacking soldiers felling nearby cedar trees (sieges used trees nearby) to barricade an Israelite city is suspect.[225]

Overall, James's paper is still compelling and I have modified certain perspectives to more naturally represent the tenor in the Song itself. I use Jer. 33:4-5a to throw some light on the Song's siege metaphor. Jeremiah decries the people of Israel and their desperate attempts to protect themselves by tearing down the Judahite royal palaces in order to barricade the gates of the city (Jerusalem mainly) against the siege ramps of the advancing Babylonian conquerors. Undoubtedly, cedar boards were ripped off from the palace interiors in feeble attempts to stave off the attackers. Additional siege preparations included fortification of the existing walls and construction of towers. James is essentially correct, for what is happening is that those currently occupying the "city" are panicking and "ripping apart the furniture" in order to keep the "invader" out. The woman has already been depicted as a city or the walled parts of one (4:4, tower with rows of stone; 7:5[4] ivory tower; 6:4, Jerusalem and Tirzah). She is here being depicted as a city ruled by tyrants. The invading force is the lover and James correctly analyses this part of the imagery. The lover as

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[222] Incidentally, the wall in 8:9 is a חומה (wall of city), not a כתל (wall of house) as in 2:9, suggesting that the woman is indeed being compared to a city.

[223] Exum suggests the adornments will "enhance the young woman's appeal to potential suitors." Exum 2005c: 271.

[224] Fox 1985: 173. In archaic Hebrew poetry, singular is sometimes used for plural. Rashbam regards the nouns טִירָה and לוח as collectives and renders them in the plural. See Japhet 2009: 283. The Vulgate also render the two nouns in the plural.

[225] Cf. Deut. 20:19.

besieger is a motif found in Mesopotamian love literature.[226] James, because she resists the dominant reading of male social control over female virginity, unfortunately also rejects the interpretation that the speakers are the brothers but takes the speech to instead be that of the lover. James's objection in taking the speakers as the brothers because it would introduce new speakers at this late stage is not a problem in this thesis because it has been shown that the brothers speak elsewhere.[227] Contrary to James, the most natural reading is that the brothers are speaking. The brothers say if she is an open gate, they will close her up with a cedar board. The comments of those who think this is a reference to protection from promiscuousness with unwanted solicitations miss the point. It is rather to prevent the lover from gaining a "foothold" to win her over *from them*. They wish to prevent the "city" from being taken, both sexually and physically.

The brothers build a battlement to fight the lover and bar the gate of the city to keep him out (8:9). James sees the expressions נצור עליה and נבנה עליה as the lover stating he and his forces will "besiege" the woman and "build" battlements upon her.[228] She takes both verbs as referring to the lover operating from the outside of the city. Yet, while צור + על mostly means "besiege" (from without) as James correctly asserts, it can have the meaning of "enclose/barricade" which could be happening from within—the barricade is forced against (על) the gate from the inside.[229] Similarly, the building of battlements could be done from within. These are metaphors of reinforced wall and gate by residents from within the city which, reflecting on the events in Jer. 33:4-5a, represent the brothers need to not just forcibly keep their sister's sexuality unexpressed but keep her home ("what shall we do in the day she is spoken for?"). Their sister's options would be to either capitulate to her brothers' tyrannical rule over her or have the lover "conquer" her, thereby defeating the oppressive incumbents.

Because the reference to silver still does not harmonise well with any siege scenario, I have considered another dimension to the metaphor. At first glance, it might seem extraneous to use silver within siege imagery but actually silver has been used to buy terms of peace for a city, such as the case of Menahem appeasing Tiglathpileser III by offering him a thousand talents of silver (2 Kgs 15:19). In our metaphor, this translates into the lover capitulating to the brothers'

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[226] E.g. Wasserman 2016: 179.

[227] James 2017b: 7.

[228] James 2017b: 3-4.

[229] See *HALOT* 7924, 4.b.

offer by accepting to forego his "assault" upon the woman and taking "a built-up battlement laden with silver" as tribute instead. Whether this might be a reference to them offering a real monetary bribe or a spoken enticement to relinquish his love for their sister is difficult to ascertain but it could be reinforced by the sentiments of the scorned offer of wealth saying (8:7b), where if a man offered all the wealth of his home (to another to surrender true love), that offer would be scorned.

3.3. Riposte (8:10)

The riposte is similar to 7:1 where the woman takes her brothers' words, twists them somewhat and uses them to her own advantage against them.[230] The *Kalam* insult necessitated a response. A Sumerian proverb enjoins, "May you find the response to an insult hurled at you in a dispute."[231] In her rejoinder she uses their own city-siege vocabulary to convey two important facts:

1. She has been scaled and conquered by her lover
2. She has been liberated by her lover

For the first, a blending of conceptual imagery is employed, utilising several previous metaphors of the Song. In 4:4, her neck is compared to a tower with תלפיות "rows of stone on a wall" and in 7:5[4] to an ivory tower.[232] In 7:8-9 [7-8], her stature is compared to a date palm that her lover must climb to reach its fruit, her breasts. There is a blending of the imagery, of besiegers scaling a city and its wall, conquering and liberating it from tyrannical rulers. For the woman to now say she was "a wall," she effectively says that her lover has climbed and assailed the city.

In the second, the שׁלום is a reference to the city having been liberated. Usually, the language of liberation for a besieged city involved the defeat of the invaders either through inside resistance or from outside help. Jerusalem hoped Egypt would liberate it in the siege with Nebuchadnezzar but their would-be liberators proved to be the weaker of the two foreign powers and they were defeated. In the

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[230] p.233.

[231] *The Electronic Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, Oxford University, Proverbs: collection 3: c.6.1.03, http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.6.1.03#

[232] The Greek version of the LXX uses ἐπάλξεις for טירת "battlement" which is the very term used by Aquila's version in 4:4 to translate the Hebrew תלפיות. Cf. *HALOT* 10185.

Song's narrative, circumstances are quite different. The woman is being dominated and controlled by insiders. It is in her best interests if the lover turns out to be the stronger and liberates her. So, though he is an invader and her conqueror, he is also her liberator, freeing her from her enslavers. He conquers in order to liberate.

For Fox, the language of finding peace is about the woman now gaining favour in her brothers' eyes.[233] This explanation, however, does not accord with all that we have read of them thus far. James sees the peace as a reference to the woman surrendering to the terms of the *attacking* besieger, the lover, accepting his terms of peace.[234] This could make sense within the siege picture but another possible scenario is where the population of a city might find peace in their besieging *liberators*.[235] The word שׁלום evokes multiple meanings at this point. First, because of her besieger she has found שׁלום from her brothers' domination. Here, connotations of liberty, deliverance, salvation and absence of conflict also come into play.[236] Second, there is a possible wordplay with the name of her lover; she has found Solomon. Third, and more likely, the entendre to her satisfaction and contentment following sexual intimacy with her lover is not to be missed. This is the very thing the brothers were trying to prevent.

Since intimacy with her lover has been discouraged, at best, by her brothers and she has been denigrated at worst, her reply in 8:10 "my breasts were as *towers*" is a defensive one and contradicts their plans in 8:9. She is not affirming her chastity at this point, as many think, but quite the opposite. She vindicates herself from the brothers' attempts to control her sexuality *oppressively* by using their "wall" and "siege" metaphors against them to triumphantly answer that her lover has conquered her. She was a wall, her breasts were towers which the lover scaled to defeat them. Could she be speaking from the vantage point of already having been intimate with her lover? In other words, has time moved on? It could well be that she is now in the lover's house. The reply "I am a wall" (so Barbiero) could be read as "I [was] a wall."[237] The expression אז הייתי "then I was" could, in

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[233] Fox 1985: 173.

[234] James 2017b: 10.

[235] James 2017b: 8 10; Barbiero 2011: 479-80; Exum 2005: 258.

[236] *HALOT* 9627.

[237] Barbiero 2011: 478.

theory, denote a specific occurrence in the past.[238] Verde has recently argued that 8:10 conceptualises the woman as an adult in full possession of her sexuality.[239] I am in essential agreement with this for the woman says of herself "thus/then I *was* in his eyes." or "I seemed to him" (cf. Gen. 27:12) as one who found peace (satisfaction?). The reply may not be an actual confrontation with the brothers but a poetic reply, one proclaiming her liberation by her benevolent captor.

4. The Vineyard Owner and his/her vineyard (8:11-12)

These verses play on ambiguities in the meaning of the word "vineyard" as well as the identity of its owner.

The word occurs in both v.11 and v.12 (diagram on next page). The reference in v.11 is to the literal vineyard of Solomon. It describes the common ancient Near Eastern practices of tenant farming and sharecropping. Tenants are to pay Solomon a thousand pieces of silver for hiring his vineyard, from which they are allowed to keep two hundred pieces for themselves (8:12b).[240] The conclusion the reader naturally draws is that v.11 refers to the very vineyard which the woman has been working on (1:6). This is striking since it would mean the tenants of the vineyard, the brothers, might be nonchalantly opposing the king who owns it but it depends whether they themselves recognise him.

Most would consider the word "vineyard" in 8:12a to be referring to the woman's body. Its relationship with 8:11 is like that between 1:6a and 1:6b. In each case, a metaphorical use of "vineyard" is based upon a literal.[241]

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[238] The word אז can have a temporal value ("then"), a consequential value ("so", "therefore", "then") or an antithetical value ("and yet", "nevertheless", "notwithstanding which"). After some deliberation, Verde rejects the temporal meaning. Verde 2018: 107-09.

[239] Verde 2018: 106.

[240] Exum points out that if one takes a thousand pieces as each keeper's hire price, a complicated transaction occurs. She prefers to see the thousand as the value of the vineyard itself rather than each keeper's price. Exum 2005: 260. Cf. vineyard value in Isa. 7:23.

[241] Gordis 1974: 80.

1:6a	Woman	My brothers ...	Literal
		made me keeper of the vineyards	⇩
1:6b	Woman	My own vineyard I have not kept	Metaphorical
8:11	Unknown	Solomon had a vineyard ...	Literal
		he gave it to keepers	⇩
8:12a	Man/Woman	My very own vineyard is before me	Metaphorical

The vineyard in 8:11 sometimes gets given the metaphorical sense of Solomon's harem.[242] Fischer, for example, writes, "In a non-congruent way, the application is that Solomon may have a thousand women but the man who speaks has his beloved one."[243] It is tempting to take Solomon's vineyard in a dual sense that includes his harem of a thousand women (1 Kgs 11:3). However, other than the presence of the number "thousand," it is uncertain whether the text at this point offers further footholds for this additional meaning and what it achieves if so.

Solomon is frequently seen as a distinct person from the lover and so are the vineyards of each man.[244] Fox says the lover in 8:12b pokes fun at Solomon since others besides Solomon will partake of the fruit of his vineyard besides him, whereas the lover can enjoy his vineyard by himself.[245] This is not the only reading, nor the most practical. This thesis has argued that there is only one male lover, not a competitive pair. Moreover, the mentions of Solomon are not incidental nor a poetic foil. The great king of Israel is to be identified as the male lover in the Song.

The speaker in 8:11 could be the lover, the daughters, the woman, or even the narrator, but one of the last two options is most likely. If the male lover is Solomon, it is unlikely he would be saying these words whereas 8:12, "my own vineyard is *before* me," could be said to make more sense if Solomon is speaking and the "vineyard" is the woman facing him.[246] However, the prepositional phrase לפני could be translated "at my disposal," in which case the female is asserting her

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[242] Fox 1985: 175.

[243] Fischer 2014b: 680.

[244] Fox 1985: 174; Bergant 2001: 102; Roberts 2007: 353; Exum 2005: 260-61.

[245] Fox 1985: 175.

[246] Fox 1985: 174; Roberts 2007: 353; Exum 2005: 260; Exum 2005c: 278.

autonomy.[247] Given the formal equivalence between 1:6b and 8:12a, כרמי שלי "my own vineyard" and how the latter reverses the former, one is inclined to take the speaker as being her.[248] Whereas at first, she had not kept her vineyard because of her brothers control over her (1:6b), now it is at her disposal to do with it as she pleases (8:12a). This rendition is attractive for feminist ideology about the female control over one's own body.[249] Rightly so, but it is not her lover who needs to be reminded of her autonomy. Here, she either vicariously reflects to herself or her lover, rejoicing in her newfound liberty from her original "keepers," her brothers, and is poised to now give herself to her lover freely and willing; or as Alden asserts, it is her brothers that she addresses, telling them she no longer needs their oversight.[250]

8:12b (perhaps along with 8:13-14) could be a tease. Garbini describes this as "una sorridente e ... benevola ironia" (a smiling and ... benevolent irony).[251] She is wittily telling her lover, Solomon, that he should now be receiving a thousand pieces of silver for his own literal vineyard, or (if he is the speaker in 8:12a), teasing that he should be getting that same value for his metaphorical vineyard, that is, for her.[252] As for the two hundred, she could be the one owed that amount for being the "keeper" of the literal vineyard (1:6) or he, as keeper of her body, is due that amount.

5. Finally, Dwelling in the Gardens (8:13-14)

Here is a finale that recapitulates the main objective of the narrative. Berlin uses the term "time-bridge" to describe a literary device that signals the end. She explains that when a biblical writer wishes to cut off his narrative and "wants to let his audience know that the story is finished," he may bring the narrative to some future time beyond the time of the plot, closer to the time of the audience.[253] While the final unit in the Song does not exhibit a far-flung future, its author has brought the reader beyond previous time contexts, all the way up

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[247] See e.g. Gen. 13:9; 20:15; 24:51; 34:10; 47:6; 1 Sam. 16:16. On the other hand, it could also have a nuance of "in my care" as in Prov. 4:3; Isa. 53:2; Gen. 17:18.

[248] e.g. Ginsburg 1857: 190; Munro 1995: 41 42; Estes 2010: 415; Landy 2011: 154.

[249] e.g. Arbel 2000.

[250] Alden 1988: 277.

[251] Garbini 1992: 286.

[252] This could be the man if the lover and Solomon are two distinct persons. Hence Fox sees the lover as speaking to Solomon. Fox 1985: 174-75.

[253] Berlin 1994: 107-10.

into the "happily ever after" of the woman finally in her lover, the king's house. A constellation of allusive vocabulary and images is designed to corroborate this.

1. *She dwells in the gardens*. She is היוֹשׁבת "the one dwelling" in the abode of her lover. Mentioned earlier is גנו "his garden" where he grazes/shepherds and gathers lilies (2:16; 6:2). Earlier, she is also said to dwell in his shade (2:3). In 1:7, she expressed her need to be with the man, where he "shepherds his flock;" now in fulfilment, she dwells (ישׁב) in his "gardens," leitmotif of her dwelling (ישׁב) in his shade (2:3). This demonstrates how overlapping imagery of the garden, apple-tree and shepherd-house place are all images of his house.

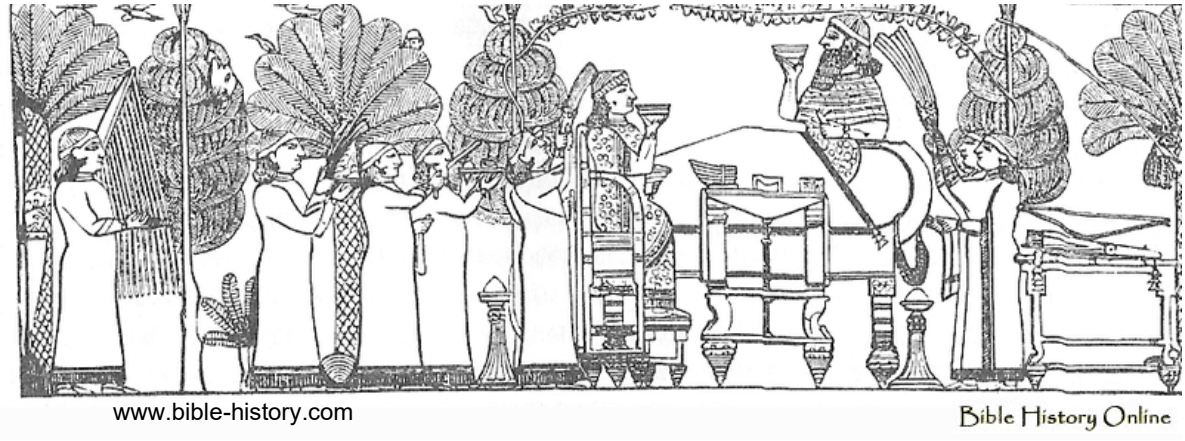
2. *She is surrounded by a company listening to the sound of her voice*. This evokes the imagery of a royal household. The company are called חברים "male companions" which occurs in 1:7. In that context, the male companions had "flocks" as did the lover. This is the ancient Near Eastern language of the shepherd-king which Ewald and others of the two-lover hypothesis have failed to recognise and so think that the shepherd was the final winner of the woman's love.[254] However, the metaphorical language points to a collective of male attendants or the king's peers. Song 8:13 provides closure to the enigmatic fear portrayed in 1:7 in which the woman was reluctant to be in the company of the חברים "friends" of the man without him.[255] Because in 8:13 the חברים are said to be מקשׁיבים "listening" to her voice, one can interpret this as being the king's representatives serving his consort, listening to her bidding.

3. *He wishes to hear her voice*. The word השׁמיעיני "let me hear" together with קולך "your voice" occurs in both 8:13 and 2:14. In the previous context, he was outside her house (2:9). Closure is now provided. In the "gardens," his own house, he can—and asks to—hear her voice.

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[254] Ewald 1867: 411-15.

[255] p.136.



Drawing of a bas-relief from the interior apartments of Ashurbanipal.
The king feasts in the garden with his queen and attendants nearby.
British Museum 124920

Some interpret the final verse as Solomon being rebuked.[256] I prefer to read it as a tease. It evokes and provides closure for 2:17, where the woman tells the man to "turn away" upon "mountains of separation." Here however, he must ברח "flee" upon הרי בשׂמים "mountains of spices." Despite the word "flee," the underlying meaning is a teasing reference to sexual passion. Wherever he is, the lover is urged to flee back to his garden, to his "beds of spices" to graze (6:2) and undertake another sexual adventure upon the hills of spices (4:6).[257] It is yet another allusion to his harem and she is now part of it. The narrative ends with an open-ended invitation to love "upon the hills of spices."

Conclusion: Closure

How confident can we be that Song 8 an epilogue? This was initially addressed in the second chapter, under "Time."[258] Song 8:1-2 does not fit the earlier context and tenor of 7:12-14, showing an obvious discontinuity. The couple are now separate again. Neither do these verses fit with the alternating structure thus far. We are expecting a regal unit after 7:12-14 but 8:1-2 is portrayed from the vantage point of the mother's (woman's) and not the king's house. I have written why 8:1-5 is a summary.[259] Mirsky's observation that pattern variation has a

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[256] Fischer 2014b: 680.

[257] 8:14 and 4:6 are a reversal of "hills of separation" (2:17).

[258] p.44.

[259] p.264.

"reinforcing and aesthetic value"[260] is relevant for the change in pattern in 8:4 which signals to the reader the completion of the woman's transformation.

It has also been noted that the very last verses of the book create an *inclusio* with its beginning.[261] Robert has suggested that the original ending of the book is 8:8-14, in other words, coming before the wisdom material that now precedes it.[262] At the very least, the Song encourages us to make connections at the end to opening themes, not just to repeat them but to bring a sense of closure to the developing narrative.[263] According to Zeelander,

> When information that was reported or language that was used at the beginning of a narrative is repeated at the end, we have repetition that is closural almost by definition ... As readers recall the opening words (or become aware of them upon re-reading), they see that the writer is 'closing the loop' or the frame is 'enclosing the story.'[264]

Clearly, loose ends are being tied up in the closing verses. Despite Weems's opinion that 8:8-14 "does not seem to bring any further closure to the poetry,"[265] these verses bring a final closure to a narrative that has been building up throughout the Song. The woman is vindicated before her brothers' machinations against her, providing finality to the conflict displayed in the chapters that precede. Here, we have the third reference that relates to the brothers' speech (cf. 1:6; 2:15; 7:1 [6:13]). With each response, the woman becomes more vocal and bolder, denoting progression in the narrative. More now than ever before, the narrative reminds us of Gerleman's Cinderella motif.[266] These verses develop the brothers' antagonistic portrayal further and shows them being put to shame, their "ugly" sister is vindicated and transformed into the most beautiful of all, winning the hand of her prince charming.

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[260] Mirsky 1977: 9-23. Although Mirsky deals with oral texts in which modified syntax would alert the listener that the end was at hand, the function of pattern change in oral works could equally apply to a written document.

[261] See e.g. Murphy 1990: 198.

[262] Robert 1948.

[263] Exum recognises this but sees no narrative objective in this technique. Exum 2005c: 274.

[264] Zeelander 2012: 62-63.

[265] Weems 1997: 432.

[266] Gerleman 1965: 99-101.

Putting It Together as One Complete Narrative

What is the Narrative About?

1. Overall Plot

The initial inciting incident or destabilisation event(s) can be found in 1:6 mediated from the level of the temporal present. In order to establish the fabula, only the event cluster in 1:6 had to be moved once the regal and non-regal units were separated. The poet has displaced 1:6 to allow the woman to introduce her backstory from the later vantage point and present it to the daughters (1:5). This is a testimony to the remarkable order that exists within the Song. The primary impulse of the narrative is focused on the desires of the woman to be with her lover forever. However, the backstory, involves her struggles to disassociate herself from her home which her brothers dominate and the hard work associated with their homestead (1:6; with an allusion in 2:14-15 related to the vineyard and a possible echo in 6:11 to that work). The keys events of the entire narrative are mostly found in the non-regal units where the events exist within seven linear sequences. The events of the regal units follow the non-regal but are cyclic, within three frames of repeating themes.

The plot is not of a drama but a narrative. It is essentially similar to a *Bildungsroman* but I prefer the term *Bildungsgedicht* since this is a poem. It is a poem with a character-building narrative that portrays several "tests" which the woman encounters, each offering the possibility to fulfil her desire of being with the man forever. She fails at least four times and after finding herself at her lowest (5:7), she is empowered with the help of the daughters of Jerusalem (5:8-6:3). The meeting with the daughters (5:8) produces a kind of inner transformation in both the woman and the poem. On the one side, the woman seems unwilling to act upon her lover's appeals (1:7-8; 2:8-17; 3:1-5; 5:2ff) and not yet ready for her love to be aroused (2:7; 3:5). On the other side of this continuum, there is a remarkable change in her attitude.

In the fifth test (7:1a), she succeeds in providing the correct response (7:1b) to her brothers and the couple will then leave (7:12-14). The woman and her lover, Solomon, travel up to his house (1:2-4) on their wedding day (3:6-11) amidst joy

and admiration (6:4-10). They then enjoy each other intimately ever after in his house where he provides her sustenance and love (1:9-2:7; 4:1-5:1; 7:2-11).

2. Characters (Other than the Man)

The most complete profile is that of the female protagonist who has what narratology would call a "full" or "round" character.[267] She undergoes sensations; she shapes the narrative and/or determines its flow; she shows dramatic initiative; she expresses her own opinions and/or follows its own notions; she is subject to others' opinions; she makes relevant decisions; and her actions influence the movement of time in the narrative. Often this is mediated through the lyric in which the reader gets fragments of character in between utterances of euphoric sentiment and must reintegrate these images mentally into a coherent whole.[268] Another aspect of her character is that it is "dynamic," meaning she changes over time, as a result of resolving a central conflict or facing a major crisis. Round characters generally appear in texts that are narratives.

The brothers are characters that occupy an antagonistic role in the non-regal units. They are the villainous counterpart to the lover's chief protagonist and jostle for control over the sister. She is being called away by her lover (2:10-14) and they successfully derail this attempt (2:15-17). In a sense they are like Joseph's brothers who serve in that narrative as antagonists. In the Song, the absence of the woman's father has been recognised as a glaring omission and one wonders whether this contributes to an instability within the family.[269]

The daughters are functionaries that either rejoice in the love between the couple or facilitate that love (5:9; 6:1), stirring love in the woman. They might be considered what Berlin calls "agents" or Fischer "reflectors."[270] They are not important for themselves and they exist for the effect they have on the woman, to elicit her speech. On the other hand, contrary to Berlin's own description of "agents," they do express joy and we can relate to an extent with them. Fischer sees them as not taking an active part in the Song but we do find them performing a key role in stirring the woman's love. Their role lies somewhere between reflectors and characters.

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[267] Forster 1927: 67-78; Herman, Jahn and Ryan 2005: 54.

[268] Margolin 1983: 1-14.

[269] E.g. Delitzsch 1993: 27; Gledhill 1994: 104.

[270] Berlin 1994: 32; Fischer 2019: 98.

4. Solomon

The primary narrative is that of the woman, undoubtedly. However, the element of mystery is introduced with the man. The man technically is Solomon throughout but in the non-regal units his identity is largely suppressed until later.

Exum thinks if the Song were specifically about King Solomon, readers would be less likely to identify so readily with its protagonists as readers have done throughout the centuries.[271] Yet, readers *have* been identifying with the royal aspects of the Song for beyond a millennium. Only in modern times has the Song been de-gentrified. Nevertheless, I could concur partly with Exum in as much as it appears the Song tries not to overwhelm the reader with Solomon at first but reveals him only later. Considering its trajectory, the Song's superscription in 1:1 is premature; it spoils a perfectly good plot. Everyone recognises in the superscription multiple meanings for the word לשלמה, one of which is "concerning Solomon." If the superscript does not refer to Solomonic authorship (which most serious scholars doubt), then perhaps it is a clue as to the book's contents. Whether it was created along with the Song or appended later is difficult to say but its relative pronoun *'ăšer* rather than *še* used in the body of the book makes it stand out. Dell raises questions about and suggests possibilities as to the Solomonic attribution.[272] She concludes that "the Solomon link seems to be more than just an attribution, in that the character of Solomon seems to pervade the Song in a more profound way than is often assumed."[273]

I suspect it was a later addition for without it, the pleasure of reading the Song is enhanced. To begin with, without the superscription the reader will probably not grasp that the "king" (1:4) might be Solomon. The poet has "veiled" him in most of the non-regal units and presented him subtly in parts of the regal ones. Only in 3:6-11, where Solomon is arguably the most prominent, is he mentioned indirectly although in vv.9 and 11, the words "king" and "Solomon" converge suggesting a link between the two. So, at this point the reader might realise the regal units are about Solomon.

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[271] Exum 2005: 8.

[272] Dell 2005: 10.

[273] Dell 2005: 24. Her emphasis is the book's connection with wisdom.

Second, the reader may not guess immediately that there is a single man and woman throughout. The variation between the settings and characters of the two levels are enough to "confuse" the reader into thinking there are two men (or women) and this is evidenced throughout the Song's interpretative history. The Song introduces a "king" (1:4), a "shepherd" (1:7) and so on, all the while carrying the reader through a subtle journey with Solomon always as an undercurrent with "hints, flashes and ambiguities" until it is ready to start pulling both strands together more "forcefully" in the sequence between 5:1-6:3, introducing the reader to his harem in 6:4-10 and finally in 6:11-7:1 confirming to the reader that the lover is Solomon. The reader does not necessarily come to Solomonic conclusions automatically in the beginning.

I would not consider the technique employed to be in the vein of Gerleman's travesty or Barbiero's burlesque but rather one of the poet deliberately suppressing the lover's royal identity in the non-regal units. We have already discussed the methodological problems involved in ascribing role-play to contexts for which no indications of shift in diegesis exist.[274]

In 1:7-8, the man could not be both literal "king" and "shepherd," at the same time (even if he was once a shepherd, like Dumuzi). So, the man must either be king who is called a "shepherd" or just a literal shepherd. On re-reading, the reader realises the "shepherd" has no sheep when he visits (2:8); he is wealthy enough to procure liquid myrrh (5:5). Even the bucolic statement of the man grazing among lilies (2:16) is a subtle clue that is only unpacked later (6:3). Bigger clues dropped in the anagnorises of 6:1-3 and 7:1 concerning the lover's excellence, his house and his identity, all consecutively point to Solomon.

It is not even certain whether at 1:7-8 the woman herself knows the lover is Solomon or for that matter the brothers in 2:15. Yet, it would be peculiar that she seeks him in the city (3:2; 5:7) if she did think he is a shepherd, or even that she asks the guards about him (3:3). There is a gradual revelation as to who this man is until the poet begins to relax on the suppression of his identity which coincides with the transformation of the woman. The Song, in other words, was designed with retrospective reading in mind, to be retraced, re-read and enjoyed.

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[274] p.30.

5. Voices Heard

The extradiegetic narrator who intervenes in the narrative from outside the fictional universe of the Song communicates occasionally. The narrator speaks to the readers directly that King Solomon had an אפריון (3:9-10). Possibly it is the extradiegetic narrator, if not the woman, who communicates the proverbial sayings that solidify the concept of unwavering love (8:6b-7); who relays the fact that Solomon owns the vineyard (8:11); and if it is not the royal women who ask the *mi-zot* question (3:6; 6:10; 8:5), it is probably the narrator's voice. The narrator also speaks to characters—exhorting the daughters to see Solomon (3:11) and encouraging the lovers to drink deeply (5:1).

The primary intradiegetic narrator is the woman, the chief character telling her story from the first-person perspective whether communicating directly with readers from the temporal level of the present (e.g. 1:2-4) or the past (e.g. 2:8) She also communicates to other characters (e.g. 1:7; 3:3; 7:1; 5:10). The man's voice is heard in many places in both temporal levels of the present (1:9) and the past. However, it is of significant note that we may not actually be hearing his voice directly in the past at all. It would depend whether it is his voice heard in 1:8 and 6:11, and whether the woman mediates her lover's pleas to open the door in 5:2 or not. In 2:10-14, she mediates his discourse "my beloved speaks …"

The daughters rejoice at the woman's arrival (1:4b), ask her probing questions (5:9, 6:1) and possibly say, "we will make ornaments for you" (1:11). It could be they who are asking the *mi-zot* question in 3:6 and in 6:10, along with other royal women. The brothers' voices can be heard directly in 2:15; 7:1a. It is uncertain if they speak directly in 8:8-9 or if their voices are mediated by the woman. Similarly, we may be hearing an echo of their voices in the word "blackish" (1:6) in the woman's self-description.

Reading the Narrative

1. How the reader should read the Song?

I propose that the narrative was designed to be read over two temporal levels. The author of the Song follows other storytellers from the ancient world, such as those who wrote the epic of Gilgamesh and of Etana, who begin their narratives

in the middle of the original sequence of events, *in medias res*.[275] One can posit the following eight characteristics which is true of the Song similar to other works *in medias res*:

i. The Song's opening unit (1:2-4), along with specific gaps in its opening context, bears the hallmarks of a beginning *in medias res.* The narrative (presentational, and non-chronologically ordered, sequence of events) starts at some point further on in the fabula (the original, chronologically-ordered, sequence of events).

ii. This creates the presence of gaps in the beginning of the narrative. The gaps will be filled in as the poem proceeds. With narratives that begin *in medias res*, details are filled in gradually, either through dialogue, flashbacks or description of past events.[276]

iii. The filling in of these gaps in the Song is by means of antecedent material that relates to the gaps at the beginning.

iv. The filling of the gaps involves temporality in the form of analepses—flashback sections (an earlier time in the fabula but occurring within a later point in the narrative).

v. The analepses create two narrative levels, the regal dealing with the present, the non-regal with the past. The first filling-in occurs at the level of the present (1:6), the woman relays the backstory of her brothers and their domination. This links to the past (1:7-8). The reader then shifts between portrayals of the present and the past.

vi. Once 7:14 has been reached, the reader will have obtained enough missing antecedent material in order to "catch up" with the beginning.

vii. The epilogue (Song 8) uses material from both temporal levels combined with aphoristic sayings that solidify and even enhances the appreciation of the preceding narrative.

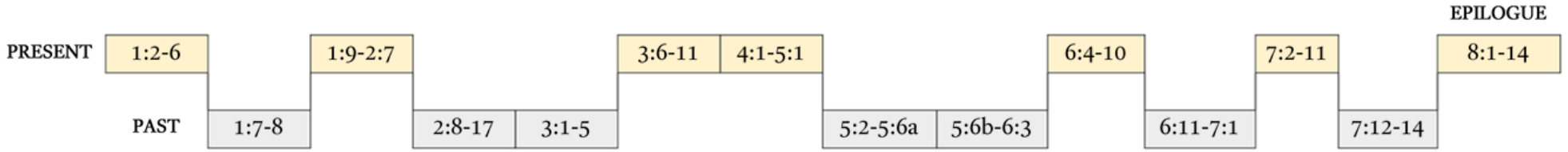
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[275] Richardson 2008: 7; Hallo 2004: 32.

[276] De Jong 2014: 88; Prince 2003: 44; Zettelmann 2011: 244.

viii. The Song is a poem but it is not purely lyric. The sequence of events in the past are linear creating the "backbone" of a narrative. However, neither is it purely narrative—the events of the present are circular and repetitive resembling lyric. As a whole, it should be read as a *Bildungsgedicht* that contains both narrative and lyrical elements.

ix. How the reader is meant to read the Song is depicted on the next page.



The Song as it should be read

Note: There is no need to separate 5:2-6:3 but doing so here shows the two parts of the central unit.

2. Why should the non-regal units be analeptic to the regal?

The first reason is because this order makes the most sense in terms of continuity. Many question why 5:2-6 portrays a dramatic downturn in the couple's relationship. Those more homiletically minded often apply this to mean "problems in marriage"[277] but as Gledhill, and separately Steinberg, have correctly read, the couple are not depicted as married in these verses.[278] Assis likewise sees the couple courting in 6:11 because he recognises that time has regressed since the man must woo the woman again.[279] Keeping all the non-regal units at the same temporal level alleviates all these difficulties. The order also makes the most sense in terms of the woman's change in dress, and especially behaviour. Keeping all the problems of the lack of togetherness for the couple and the difficulties in their relationship at the same temporal level unravels what is otherwise confusing for the reader.

The second reason is that the last sequence of the non-regal units links with the first showing that it is the backstory to the first regal unit which is *in medias res*. According to Mortimer, "In a coherent system, beginnings lead to endings, and endings determine how we understand beginnings."[280] A well-designed beginning *in medias res* can be confirmed because the gaps in the reader's knowledge will somehow be gradually filled in as the narrative unfolds. Song 7:14 is proleptic to the units that relate to the king's house. As noted in the previous chapter, the vineyards and fields and villages in these verses are transitory stations, inexorably leading the couple to another unmentioned destination. Here I show that the destination is the king's house. A burst of cohortatives in the plural occurs in this unit to highlight joint action. The only other instance in the Song where such a cohortative occurs is in 1:4. The particularity of these cohortatives must be noted for it is significant that there are no other cohortatives in the entire Song used for the female urging her lover to do something jointly.

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[277] e.g. Akin 2015: 130.

[278] Gledhill 1994: 39; Steinberg 2014: 212.

[279] Assis 2009: 197.

[280] Mortimer 2008: 213.

7:12 Let us go my beloved[281]



7:12 Let us go out to the field



7:12 Let us lodge in the villages/henna bushes



7:13 Let us rise early to the vineyards



1:4 Let us run. The king has brought me to his *hedarim*

A third reason is that in the final non-regal unit, the poet makes the woman anticipate the sexual intimacy of the regal units. The language of mandrakes, fields and vineyards, and so on, inexorably points to what she is metaphorically speaking about—sexual intercourse with her lover, which in the non-regal units has not been emphasised but which is done so in the regal. The word מגד in 7:14, which relates to mature fruit in the Song, is unusual in the Hebrew Bible but occurs three times in the Song, twice in 4:13-16, which is part of 4:1-5:1, the wedding night. The language also anticipates the nuptial bed of 1:12-14. The closest semblance of vocabulary and motif from 7:12-14 is found in 1:12-14 with at least six aspects of correspondence. Among other things, there occur near homophones שׁדי (breasts) in 1:13 and שׂדה (field) in 7:12; homographs הכפר "the henna" in 1:14 and בכפרים "in the villages" in 7:12 since כפרים is the plural for both words; and verbal repetition where the lover ילין "spends the night" with his beloved in 1:13 and she urges them to נלינה "let us spend the night" in 7:12.

A fourth but perhaps the most important reason is that the narrative is not quite complete at the end of the non-regal sequence of events. The woman's desire is still technically unfulfilled. She and her lover may be anticipating leaving her house but this is not actually depicted. The final resolution is achieved in the regal sequence. *His house*, her joy and the joy of others of being in that house are all portrayed here. While the woman's mental transformation is depicted in the non-regal, only the regal units show her physical transformation into the king's bride.

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[281] Fishbane (2015: 195) reckons this as a plural cohortative.

3. Spatiality of the Narrative

The narrative as described is not completely out of step with Fischer's four settings. However, how individual spaces should be distributed and viewed is different. First, several scenes should fall under the category "the man's house" and "the woman's house" both seen as opposites. The woman is urged to leave her house (2:10-13) or wishes to be in that of her lover (1:7). The broader domains are the country and city in which the two houses are situated. The summary of 8:1-5 juxtaposes the house of the woman (and her brothers) on the one hand and the house of the lover on the other (vv.1-2 and v.5)—with a transformative section in between (v.3-4)—establishing the dualism between the two houses, recalling "two camps" (7:1) that are apparent throughout the Song.[282]

Hagedorn has warned that sharp binary opposites tend to get transgressed and such is the case in the Song.[283] Apart from the dichotomy of the man and woman's domain, there are the few instances of the "in-between" where the woman meets the daughters (5:8-6:3). Incidentally, it is unclear whether she actually meets them in 2:7; 3:5 and 8:4. When she does (5:8), that space appears as neither private nor public but is liminal which, as Thomassen claims, coincides with powerful times of transformation.

> During liminality, the initiands live outside their normal environment and are brought to question their self and the existing social order through a series of rituals that often involve acts of pain: the initiands come to feel nameless, spatio-temporally dislocated and socially unstructured Liminal periods are both destructive and constructive, as the formative experiences during liminality will prepare the initiand (and her/his cohort) to occupy a new social role or status, made public during the reintegration rituals.[284]

Rundel says that, "Liminality's place in transformation is to provide separation from one's comfortable milieu for objective questioning of that milieu."[285] In doing so, the individual's life can be constructed or destructed to occupy a new social role or status.

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[282] E.g. Murphy 1990: 195.

[283] Hagedorn 2015: 208-9.

[284] Thomassen 2006: 322.

[285] Rundel 2015: 159.

I disagree with Falk's viewpoint that interiors make contexts that are most conducive to the couple, and the streets are the least sympathetic.[286] Song 5:2-6 and 3:1-2 are interior environments but not conducive to the couple, neither is the mother's house as such. Thöne's dichotomy between brothers' house and mother's house is incorrect. It would be more accurate to say that the chamber of her mother—perhaps it is her own room—is the woman's safe place within the mother's house (2:9; 3:1; 3:4; 5:2; 8:2) but this should not be extended to the entire house since this is also the domain of her brothers.

The most conducive and consistently harmonious space for the couple is the man's (king's) house. The others are not consistently so. The view that the city is *only* evil is incorrect since this is true in 5:7 whereas in 3:3, she can find her lover there and embrace him. The portrayal of fields and vineyards are not homogenous. They later become conducive to love (7:12-14) when earlier they are not (2:14; 2:15). Spatiality is subject to temporality in this regard and spaces that were once threatening lose their danger when the couple are together at the end. All of nature is transformed along with the woman's own transformation.

I agree with Hagedorn that "the geographical centre seems to be Jerusalem"[287] since it is from the vantage point of the regal units the narrative is launched. Certain regal scenes could be understood as portraying the king's garden(s) (1:17-2:3) which metaphorically also become the king's harem women (6:2) and more specifically the female protagonist (4:12-5:1). Often, geographical topoi in the regal units do not represent concrete historical realities but are utilised as part of a poetic topography. Hagedorn sees vineyards as places between private and public. From a private-public dynamic, I concur with this assessment but because I approach the Song's spatiality via a narrative route rather than a sociological one, I also see them as being associated with the house of the woman and her family.

The strong dichotomous spatiality—the world of the woman and that of the man, the countryside and the city respectively—is interrupted by what Schellenberg sees as boundary crossings from one domain to another. They are important opportunities for love.[288] My findings are that there are two unrealised crossings, the woman being told to follow the "she-goats" (1:8) and her plan to bring her lover from "outside" to her mother's room (8:2). Most are actual

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[286] Falk 1982: 88-91.

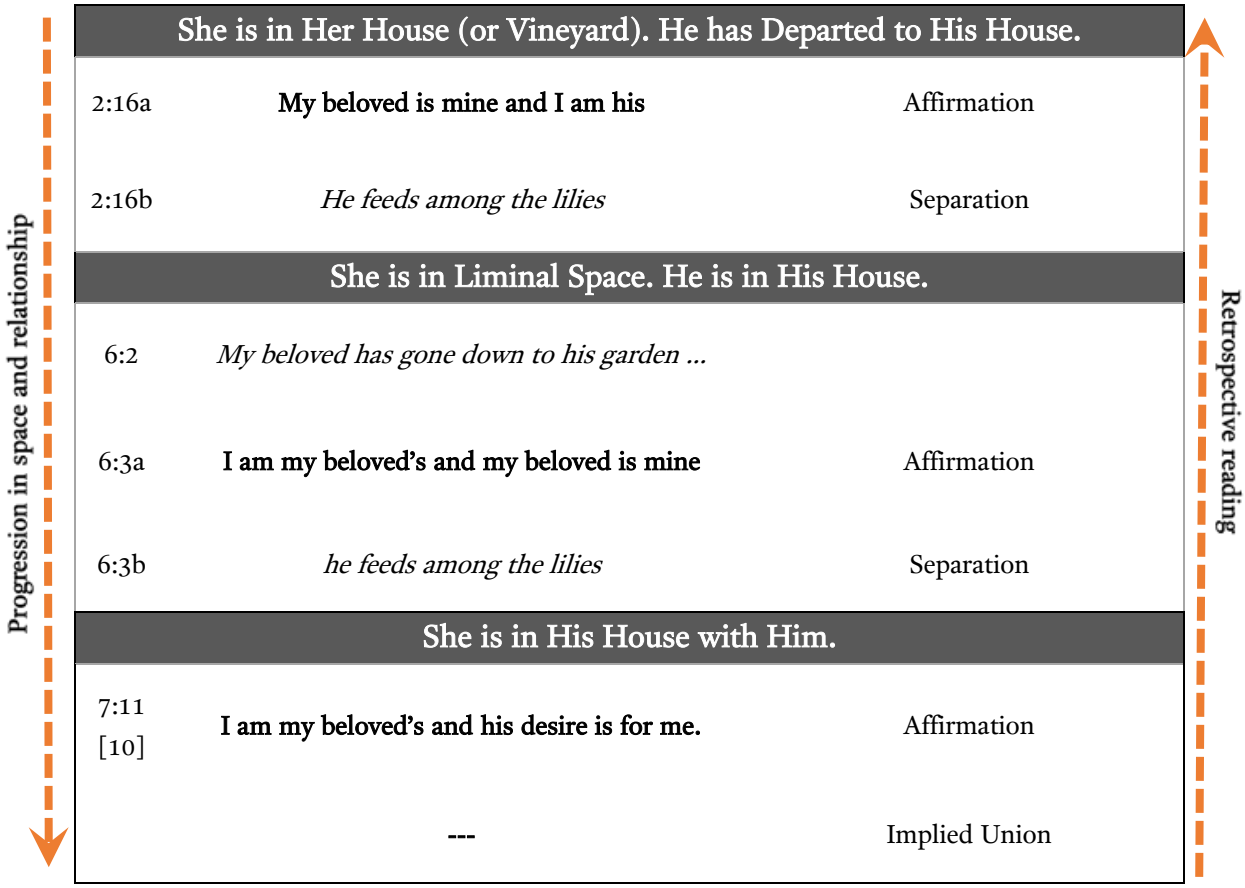
[287] Hagedorn 2015: 210.

[288] Schellenberg 2014: 141.

crossings: the couple going to the king's house (1:4); the lover crossing "mountains" to be with his beloved (2:8) and returning thereupon (2:17); the woman going to the city (3:2) and returning to her mother's house (3:4); the couple crossing the "desert" to the king's house (3:6; cf. 8:5a); presumably the lover going down to see his beloved (6:11); the couple journeying cross-country (7:12-14); and there are two implied crossings, that of the man (5:2) and the royal couple (6:4-10). The words הרים "mountains" (2:8, 17) and מדבר "desert" (3:6; 8:5a) should not be exaggerated in size. Their poetic spatial connotations for separation or distance have been recognised but the Hebrew words can literally mean "hills" or "tracts of wasteland" which would be traversable to the lovers.

The three instances of the mutual belonging statements (2:16; 6:3; 7:11) occur across both levels of the narrative but they also allow us a glance into the dynamics involved in the interaction between the narrative and spatiality. The function of the statement is to affirm the love of the couple, not to relay whether they are separated or not. There is a difference in each phrasing because there is a progression of time and circumstance. In 2:16, the lover has just left and they are separated in 2:17. In 6:3, he has been separated from her for longer. Notice how each statement precedes the location of the man as "he is feeding among lilies/lotuses." In 2:16, a specific location is not revealed whereas 6:3 is also preceded by the revelation he is in his "garden." In 7:11 [10], that statement is missing since they are *both* in the man's house (on the basis that 7:2-11 [1-10] is a cyclical repetition of 4:1-5-1). Winandy recognises the second instance of the refrain marks a progression over the first.[289] There is a modest but deliberate swapping of the two halves. Progression can be extended further with the third refrain substituting "I am his" for "his desire is for me" which in that context is of the sexual union of the couple. In reading to the end of the Song and then through a retrospective reading of these statements, they are clarified individually and collectively. We can see that the "feeding" statement is not about the sexual union of the chief protagonists because it is missing in 7:11 but it does refer specifically to the separated man in his harem. This is depicted below.

[289] Winandy 1960: 135.



Mutual Belonging Refrain and the Man's Feeding Among Lilies

4. Have we read the Song wrongly? Is this narrative new?

If one pays close attention to the reception history of the book, one will find that most parts of what I claim in this thesis have been written about by numerous people over the centuries. What has been missing so far is a depth of exploration of certain specific themes; a tying up of the (already explored) discrete constituents of the narrative; and a recognition of how the constituents have been ordered and how they temporally, spatially and causally relate to one another.

The post-enlightenment modernists, who broke away from allegorist and theological moorings did much good in their analyses of their readings of the literal text. With these interpretations came a better literary and poetic understanding of the Song. However, their tendency to see the Song as a "charming confusion" has, in my view, contributed to such perspectives as anthology or travesty which has obscured the unity, arrangement and characterisation of the Song.

Another problem is that interpreters have been too distracted, rightly or wrongly by other emphases of the Song, to fully explore its roles of Solomon and the antagonists. Had these dimensions been better understood, we might have had a very different perspective of how the Song operates. We would certainly have had a clearer understanding of how it depicts vicarious love and then triumphantly upholds it for the purposes that interpreters have sought to use it for, theology especially. There are many subtle allusions to Solomonic character throughout the Song, suppressed mostly in the non-regal units but more open in the regal. On the one hand, if one reads contemporary scholarship, one finds that Solomon is incidental to the Song and comment is confined to those passages where his name appears *explicitly*. On the other hand, the older interpreters, for whom the entire Song was a carte blanche story of Solomon, failed to appreciate the subtleties and "hiddenness" of his character in the Song.

The other endemic affliction to hit the Solomonic character has been that of the dramatists to vilify him. Though they legitimately attempted to stitch the various voices in the Song together, they transformed Solomon into the antagonist. This can be seen even in what would be called a contemporary commentary, Provan's 2001 work in the *NIV Application* series, in which Provan's understanding is that the woman is a member of Solomon's harem but wishes to return to her shepherd lover.[290]

As for the true antagonists, most, if not all, early Jewish and Christian interpretations seem to be incorporating a reading of the brothers as one of antagonism, even persecution. However, they do not explore this possibility further, proceeding instead to allegorical interpretations for emphases that they considered more important. In later Jewish commentaries that do devote attention to the literal layer, we find the brothers' role beginning to evolve. Rashi and Ibn Ezra[291] register the brothers' presence but they considerably weaken the domination theme. By the time of Rashbam the brothers have become protectors of the sister,[292] and with TaMakH, two centuries later, the brothers are omitted completely.[293] A "cognitive dissonance" in recognising the element of antagonism toward the woman but not sufficiently exploring its dimension persists into the

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[290] Provan 2001: 302-03.

[291] Mathews 1874: 28.

[292] Thompson 1988: 298

[293] E.g., he makes the woman speak of *her* little sister (8:8). See Feldman 1970: 189.

twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Clines recognises "she has been the victim of male violence and anger (1.6), and she bears the marks of it on her face; and now the poet invites his readers to share his sight of the woman's humiliation."[294] Yet because the Song for Clines is mostly a male point of view on sexuality, an erotic book, he judges this to be "the very stuff of pornography."[295] In commenting on the possibility of a plot in the Song, Exum writes

> We may discover a plot of sorts, revolving around their [the protagonists'] delight in each other and their efforts to overcome the obstacles that keep them apart. We can even let the Song's abrupt transitions and sudden shifts of scene, its inchoate stories and hints of drama, tease and tantalize us to find connections where they are lacking. What reader, for example, does not want to know more about the anger of the woman's brothers (1:6)? Yet we never learn anything about it.[296]

Related to the above, but also a separate category in its own right, is the fact that many poetic devices and imagery peculiar to biblical Hebrew and its texts eluded the ancient interpreters, especially Christian ones. As our knowledge of the ancient techniques of poetry and wordplay has improved, we have discovered legitimate, hitherto unnoticed, cases of paronomasia in the last few decades. The examples of paronomasia I suggest (2:15; 7:1) are not outside the confines of such discoveries. The siege imagery in 8:8-9 which James (2017b) has explored well is built upon much preceding knowledge of ancient warfare from biblical and extra-biblical texts. In the Song especially, the narrative dimension is heavily dependent upon such poetic devices and socio-historical imagery.

Finally, the tendency to fragment the Song into independent poems, from the time of the enlightenment on, has not helped. Though inheritors of this approach have adopted other legitimate methods and viewpoints, their emphases in showing how the Song is a *collection* or group of differing forms/songs inherently undermines the ability to see the unifying forces in the Song.

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[294] Clines 1995: 119.

[295] Ibid., 113, 119.

[296] Exum 2005: 42.

5. Why Has the Author Chosen This Structure?

The question, I suspect, operates partly on the assumption that reading the Song in the way I have set out is more confusing than reading it linearly. This itself presupposes that the ancient reader was unable to perceive non-linear shifts of context or read non-linearly. As we have already discussed, the flashback and alternating pattern was an option that was in existence in the ancient Near East, even to poets (as were numerous non-linear structures such as ring and cyclical structures). The answer to why the author chose this particular structure is largely related to why any text might incorporate it. There is no need to reproduce the manifold benefits of incorporating analepses within a narrative.

Specific to the Song, however, one can note that analepses can explain character motivation for both the man and woman. "The king has brought me to his *hedarim*" (1:4b) celebrates a newfound equilibrium of affairs for the woman. Likewise, "draw me after you" could suggest an implicit weakness, that she is sapped of strength and wishes to be drawn out of her present situation. Such use of *drawing* or *pulling* out of circumstances is used in Gen. 37:28 when Midianites "drew out" Joseph from his pit. What has happened before to warrant the king's act and the woman's need is supplied by the analepses. Her inner thoughts and history are revealed in flashback, providing her early experiences as explanations of both her difficulty in escaping her setting and her will to be with her lover in his house. The flashbacks add intricacy and depth to the narrative and help to draw the reader into it.

6. Has the author failed to Communicate?

One can simply initiate here what could be a rather extensive discussion by examining the issue of flashbacks in relation to the Song. A good flashback, I would suggest, needs

1. A clear shift in space, time and character portrayal.
2. A resumption of the previous space, time and character portrayal.
3. A story continuity "outside" of the flashback, that is, between where the flashback occurred and where the resumption occurs.

The break in continuity between 1:6 and 1:7 has been easily recognised with "shepherding" displacing kingship. Between 1:8 and 1:9, Barbiero recognises a

shift "from the simple world of the shepherds to the magnificent world [of kings]."[297] This is true also of Masoretic interpretation which sees a structural break, if not necessarily a temporal one, by placing a *setumah* after 1:7-8 indicating a new section is about to begin. I have also mentioned the shifts between 5:1 and 5:2 and 6:10 and 6:11 which Steinberg and Assis have registered as regressions in temporal portrayal. The assertion therefore that the author has either *failed* to communicate the role of the antagonists or failed to make obvious that there are contextual changes or temporal regressions occurring in the text is therefore a rather moot point.

That said, there is a measure of dependency upon readers to register these changes. Emmott, in a cognitive study on the subject, stresses the importance of the reader being able to monitor which context and which "version" of any one character is being referred to at any one point. Emmott says that,

> If the reader misses the signal of a context shift, this can lead to confusion. This is most likely to occur when the flashback and the main narrative not only contain the same characters but have similar settings . . .[298]

The interplay between the negative events of 1:6 and the role of the analepses beginning from 1:7-8 is crucial to grasp.

7. A Narrative of Human Interest

We have in the non-regal units a kind of proto-Cinderella narrative bearing "cultural vraisemblance," a likeness to existing narratives in culture.[299] The narrative of overcoming oppression and marrying into another social class to be saved from a family that does not love or appreciate you is an incredibly powerful one. The protagonist's brothers are never presented as physically or sexually violent but they are nonetheless controlling and psychologically manipulative. They use patronising language to keep her in line (possibly 1:6; 2:15; 7:1; cf. 8:8). They make her do their work for them (1:6). Their motivation for the marriage of the sister is not honourable (8:8). They attempt to manipulate her into not leaving when the moment comes (7:1a). We have also a man who loves the woman and repeatedly tries to woo her away from home. She must come to the

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[297] Keel 1994: 56.

[298] Emmott 1999: 182.

[299] Culler 2002: 162ff.

empowerment she needs to decide for herself to leave. In the middle of this "male battle" is the conflicted woman, who clearly loves the man but also demonstrates inertia, perhaps fear, in heeding his calls.

Chapter 7
Implications of the Narrative and Final Conclusions

Having discussed the narrative itself, there are further implications that arise and areas for further study which have not been addressed earlier.

IMPLICATIONS

1. Unity

I see this work as only the beginning of a process that needs further clarification, crystallisation and investigation into the unity of the Song. Nevertheless, the following are areas which point towards the Song's unity and which might offer opportunities for study:

i. The Song possesses a coherent narrative, a Bildungsgedicht or character formation poem. In such a text, the "awkward" breaks between units do not matter so much as each unit serves to independently tell its own episode and serves the larger goal of the overarching plot. These disjointed units, which have been mistaken for independent poems, inexorably lead to an overarching goal of character formation for the protagonist.

ii. The units can be read paratactically. There is no need to fill details as the dramatists do. Parataxis also joins the disparate parts of 1:9-2:6 which is a montage or vignettes of life in the king's house using tight staccato imagery. Song 4:2-5:1 employs this staccato imagery in the service of the wedding night; 2:8-17 also, to some extent, when the man visits his beloved in her house.

iii. The poetry employs the technique of conceptual blending (e.g. 6:4-10 and 7:2-11) in which earlier disparate images are piled one on top of the other to create a composite picture but which also exhibits some progression.

iv. Incremental Repetition is evident in which repetition advances action related to motifs and advances the narrative (for both coherence and progression) such as the confrontation with the watchmen (3:3; 5:7) and the *mi-zot* question (3:6; 6:10; 8:4).

v. There is a strong governing macrostructure consisting of alternating regal and non-regal units creating periods of alternating characterisation, context, space and time.
vi. The recurring cyclical events and imagery serve to unite the themes and related events they cover.
vii. Most of the Song appears to have been authored by either a single poet or perhaps a single group. There is some question over parts of the final chapter (see below).

2. Layers of Construction

I have remained at the synchronic level of interpretation in this study. In any case, it is difficult to see how any part of Song 1-7 was constructed at different times since there is a strong interdependence between the chapters. I would include 8:8-14 along with the first seven chapters since it is integral to the narrative. Robert has also seen this section as the original ending of the book.[1] The question of whether 8:1-5 (or parts of it) should be included is more difficult. On the one hand, they could be originally included with the narrative to break the momentum and structure of the first seven chapters. On the other hand, they read like an independent set of verses. As a whole, it appears to be a more a broad sweep of the preceding narrative than part of the narrative itself. More work needs to be done in this area but it is possible these verses might be preparatory for the wisdom insertions in the convention that Dell has discussed.[2] If 8:6-7 are later editorial insertions, then perhaps 8:1-5 were also added late in the Song's development to make further clarifications of the narrative but then this also opens up the difficulties as to how the repetitions relate to their corresponding instances in the main narrative which leads us back to their being part of the original narrative.[3]

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[1] Robert 1948.

[2] Dell 2005: 14-17.

[3] 8:1-2 for 3:1-4 missing the man; 8:3 for 2:6 mutual embrace; 8:4 for 2:7; 3:5; 5:8 adjuration; 8:5a for 3:6; 6:10 *mi-zot*; 8:5b for 2:3 apple tree.

3. Authorship and Date

The superscription purports the Song was written by Solomon. Even if this superscription is a later addition, as has been suggested, most of the Song as we have it could still, in theory, be authored by a single person.

The devices and techniques that have been described in this thesis can go back millenia and any resemblance to Greek texts may be incidental. The Song cannot be summarily judged to be a late work on this basis. If anything, there is a strong working knowledge and incorporation of themes and tropes from Egyptian, Sumerian and Akkadian love-poetry. While the linguistic evidence that those like Dobbs-Allsop submits for a late dating is compelling,[4] one cannot rule out the process of updating for readability in Late Biblical Hebrew within the Persian or Hellenistic era to yield what we now possess as the final form. While one cannot conclude its age on either sociological or linguistic grounds with certainty, there is potential for further investigation.

Technically, we still do not know whether the Song was authored by a man or woman. Clines is certain that in the absence of any evidence for female literacy, it is has been authored by a male.[5] This is plausible but his assertion that it was written for other males must be reviewed. The Song is less pornographic and more of what Walsh calls "erotica," a word I remain uncomfortable with due to popular overlap in connotations with the former.[6]

4. Genre

Any text may have several goals and consequently function in more than one genre. While it is a lyrical love poem, the Song is also a Bildungsgedicht, a character formation poem. It lies somewhere between pure lyric and a narrative poem. Its narrative does not contradict what Barbiero says, that "it is typical of the amorous lyric that it progresses from separation to union by means of a gradual drawing together of the lovers."[7] As a finished product it also contains some thoughts about wisdom in love.

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[4] Dobbs-Allsop 2005.

[5] Clines 1995.

[6] Walsh 2000.

[7] Barbiero 2011: 23.

The Song is not an epithalamium since it does not exclusively deal with a wedding, even incorporating elements when the couple are not married, not together, or emotionally and physically apart from each other (nothing to do with post-nuptial arguments as is often sermonised). The inclusion of such elements flatly contradicts the Wedding Song view with its seven-day wedding week.

It is not an anthology as it is not a random collection. There is a coherent overall narrative which binds the individual episodes together. In addition, there is too much order and arrangement and deliberate interdependency to be a loose collection. The Song demonstrates a unity of purpose and message. It develops a clear picture of the relationship of a single couple against the backdrop of antagonistic influences from within, and perhaps from without (e.g. the girl's reluctance to be with her lover in public in 8:1). To quote Reynolds here, "there is consistent characterisation, context and plot: not as clear as theatre, but within the idiom of poetry."[8]

Ascribing the genre "erotic poetry" frequently encourages interpreters to read many parts sexually when they should not be. The purpose of the Song is not erotic poetry although it incorporates erotic (as opposed to pornographic) elements in the regal units to portray the couple living in sexual harmony. As a Bildungsgedicht, the sexual intimacy is placed at the very end of the fabula and not before several failed attempts to be with the lover permanently occur.

The Song is not a drama in any sense of the word. This study should not be associated with the dramatists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The narrative is too complex to be dramatised and was designed to be read. Even the fact of the interchanges between two time periods is complex for stage. My understanding is that the Greeks did not incorporate such alternation of time periods in their plays whereas the ancient texts do.

I also stand by Nissinen's conclusion that the Song though not a sacred-marriage ritual was nonetheless born out of this erotic-lyric milieu. How this fulfils a religious function is best said by him:

> The idea of sacred marriage is not about sex and fertility, nor should it be taken as a manifestation of the sacralised power of sexuality experienced in sexual intercourse. Rather, sex and love are the best possible metaphors for divine-human communication and union, on an institutional as well as individual level. Because love itself is a metaphor for this union, love

[8] Reynolds 2018: 4.

> poetry does not need to employ religious vocabulary or to explicitly mention divine actors to be read as a description of the relationship between God and people, especially if a long-standing cultural memory supports a reading of this sort.[9]

Nissinen thinks that in the absence that the Song was ever read "literally" (by which I think Nissinen means non-religiously rather than non-allegorically), the use of the book at popular festivals, weddings and banquets remains a reasonable option primarily because the Song with its alternating male and female voices and chorus, lends itself to performance. If performances did take place, they were probably piecemeal, parts of the Song rather than its whole or works based on but devolved from the original. We see evidence of this in the liturgical and folk traditions.

5. Sex and Marriage

There are undoubtedly several ethical lessons one can learn from the Song but the questions that arise most often are those concerning sex and marriage. In Chapter 2, we discussed how innumerable interpreters have argued over whether the consummation of the couple took place at the beginning or later in the Song.[10] Questions that get asked are: Is a marriage depicted? Are the lovers themselves depicted as married? Are they being depicted as engaged in sex before marriage?

Before answering these questions, a quick review of the narrative is necessary. Prior to this study, the Song has been read linearly. This study, however, has found there to be two temporal levels that undergird the narrative, one in the present and the other in the past with alternating shifts between them. The past storyline contains a narrative of seeking each other with inner and outer obstacles along the way. However, the past ends with the couple journeying to the king's house. Prior to this point, no sexual intercourse is made obvious, whether in direct or indirect speech. This does not necessarily contradict Exum's remark that "the blurring of distinctions between the more literal level of wishing and desiring and the figurative level of consummation is also a blurring between past, present, and future."[11] If one takes the Song as a whole, without any regard to two time periods, then the Song does seem to blur these things but when one analyses the

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[9] Nissinen 2008: 215-16. Nissinen quotes Exum 2005: 64.

[10] p.44.

[11] Exum 2005b: 85.

Song, filtering it by means of its non-regal and regal dimensions, surprisingly, the "level of wishing and desiring" which Exum speaks about is found to take place in the former while sexual consummation happens in the latter.

So, to answer the questions, the narrative is depicting a marriage but only in the regal units, from the perspective of the present. A wedding of Solomon is being portrayed in Song 3 with ancillary scenes in 1:2-4 and 6:4-10. The marriage night is found in 4:1-5:1 and 7:2-10. The former, in particular, has a strong emphasis upon marriage through the word כלה "spouse" and צמה "veil." There is also prominent emphasis upon first intercourse. The woman is portrayed to be a virgin (4:12-5:1).

Sexual intercourse *after* marriage was highly regarded in ancient Israel (e.g. 2 Sam 13:12-13) with sexual penetration before marriage especially frowned on. The Song preserves these societal boundaries and does not challenge nor subvert them. This would contradict the opinions of those who use the Song to support the portrayal of a legitimacy of pre-marital sex: Andruska, for instance, who says that "the lovers have been enjoying sexual love outside of marriage throughout the poem"[12] and Knust who asserts that "According to the Song of Songs, a beautiful girl who enjoys making love can fulfill her desires outside of marriage and still be honored both by God and by her larger community."[13] LaCocque's main thesis of his essay is that "the Canticle celebrates the noncondoned loves between a man and a woman. Not inscribed within the framework of societal approval of the union between two families of the clan, the Song is a pamphlet, that is, an 'off-limits' literary production."[14] Burrus and Moore summarise "the scholarly consensus that ... has stripped the Song of its traditional matrimonial framework and reconstrued it instead as a paean to unmarried love and lust, with no wedding veil in sight and no apparent intent to procreate."[15]

Of course, it does depend upon what scholars mean by "sexual love" or "making love" but I understand the claimants to mean intercourse. While my intention is not to pronounce an ethical conclusion concerning the legitimacy of pre-marital sex, I caution those who try to use the Song to support its legitimisation, that they will have to look elsewhere for that. There is no indication that any intercourse has occurred before marriage in the Song.

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[12] Andruska 2019: 54.

[13] Knust 2011: 7.

[14] LaCocque 1998: 51

[15] Burrus and Moore 2003: 26.

Incidentally, the NET bible's note that "the term מִשְׁכָּב (*mishkav*, 'bed') in 3:1 is the common term for marriage bed" is misleading because the word has no such specific connotation. A "sexual connotation," is possible for *mishkav* but as in English, this would depend on the specific context or use of euphemism. In 3:1, the woman is on her bed, in her own home, not a marriage bed.

One can equally refute those prudish enough to argue biblically against all forms of intimacy. Clearly some form of intimacy is being tolerated before marriage in the Song. In the non-regal units, one such example is 3:4 where the woman clings onto her lover and brings him to her house although no suggestion of an actual sex act ever occurs. A formal Victorian reservedness is never depicted in the Song. The lovers are not at a defensive arm's length even before marriage; described instead is a deliberate or circumstantial boundary in their intimacy. The very first explicit mention of a kiss occurs en route to the marriage ceremony (1:4), and the mutual embrace statement (2:6) occurs within the context of the couple living together in the man's house. Keel and Garrett draw meanings of fertility and fruitfulness from the "stomach" imagery of 7:3 but Exum, Gault and Andruska deny such possibilities.[16] At best, in the Song, sexual intercourse is enjoyed between the married couple with no strong emphasis upon procreation.

6. Feminism

The Song has a narrative which would broadly accord with Trible's description that "there is no male dominance, no female subordination, and no stereotyping of either sex."[17] However, the narrative must work towards these ideals. In the end, male dominance has been defeated (7:1b; 8:10) and the woman rejoices in her liberty (8:12a) and is even able to tease Solomon (8:11b-12, 14). Her need to leave her house and dwell in her lover's (1:7) was not because of some patriarchal custom of the woman dwelling in the man's house nor because of some pressure from her lover (Solomon, the tyrant-lover as the old dramatists would have it) but to escape a situation of brotherly heavy-handedness. The lover-king is displayed as a conqueror of the woman (2:4) but from the perspective of patiently wooing her (1:8; 2:10-13; 5:2; 6:11) and ultimately winning her from her brothers (8:9-

[16] Keel 1994: 234-35; Garrett 2004: 240; Exum 2005: 234; Gault 2019: 183; Andruska 2019: 73.
[17] Trible 1978: 161.

10). She has both the freedom to love him and do with her body as she pleases (8:11b).

7. Wisdom

In a key paper concerning the Song and wisdom, Dell cautions that one cannot lightly dismiss the Song as not related to wisdom just because it is deemed to be a collection of love poetry.[18] She draws a very important distinction between wisdom literature, wisdom as a genre, and [Lady] Wisdom as personified in the book of Proverbs. These three categories can be applied in light of new findings herein.

First, the Solomonic label (1:1) could potentially be a key step in legitimising the Song as wisdom literature. In this study, we have traversed beyond the typical recognition of Solomon in the Song, to plumb the depths of subtleties related to traditions about him. Such emphases could help associate the Song, says Dell, "in a more integrated way, to wisdom's wisest patron, Solomon."[19] Second, Dell tackles the subject of editorial links with the wisdom genre. The most widespread suggestion for linking the Song to the wisdom genre is that the Song went through a stage of redaction connected with wisdom circles. I have already suggested that 8:1-7 could have been included later. Third, while I do not find any direct parallels with the loose woman in the Proverbs, I note that some (but not all) verses that have been linked with the loose woman depict the woman of "my narrative" before she is transformed: she clings on to the lover (3:1-4), she desperately seeks him (5:6) and she plans to seduce him before he is present (8:1-2). In my view, the Song is technically not depicting a *loose* woman but two sides of the wise woman undergoing a "journey" of wisdom. This is also reflected in the sharp polarisation of the summary in 8:1-5. On the one hand, 8:1-2 are the words of a wilful woman who desires to bring her lover to her house. 8:3-5, on the other hand depicts the lovers together in his house, apparently after the woman's love is awakened (8:4) and her realisation that both her lover and his house are the best for her own particular situation (cf. 5:8-6:3).

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[18] Dell 2005.

[19] Dell 2005: 13.

Elsewhere, Dell suggests that three elements should define any wisdom (or didactic) psalm.[20] First, there needs to be a "ruling wisdom thrust," that is, an overall dominance of wisdom concerns in the piece. In the Song, several proverbs or their themes might provide such an undercurrent of wisdom. This would depend upon how other readers choose to describe the brothers. Are they just overprotective and against the one specific lover? Or are they intrinsically selfish and evil? The Song itself says the woman is "the *only one* of her mother, pure to her who bore her" (6:9). Here, "pure" (ברה) could have connotations of being righteous (e.g. Pss. 24:4; 73:1). If she is righteous, then does this mean her brothers are unrighteous? If so, then one can view the two spatial zones of the man and woman in the Song as "The house of the righteous and the wicked." This links with, among other proverbs, that which states "great treasure is in the house of the righteous, but the gain of the wicked brings trouble" (Prov. 15:6; cf. 3:33; 14:11; 21:12). I have also mentioned the dualism of "two camps" and 8:1-5 under "spatiality" above.

Another proverb which has some resonances is "A friend (רע) loves at all times, a brother is born for adversity" (Prov. 17:17). In the Song, the woman calls her beau as רעי "my friend" (5:16) and wishes he could be a brother. Her own despise her (8:1). Again, depending upon how one reads the characterisation of the brothers, they could be seen as exemplifying the character of proverbial "fools." They are bent on keeping the lover away in order to keep their sister at home but equally do not seem too concerned about her physical or emotional wellbeing either, giving her a task which is physically both laborious and withering (1:6) and blaming her (or her lover) for their perceived ruined vineyards (2:15). The ironic image of them willing to tear down the "building" (reinforcing the city gate using cedar from inside) in order to keep him out (8:9) is one of "cutting off their noses to spite their faces." As Dell notes of the trope, fools are self-absorbed; quick-tempered; manipulative, lazy and profligate with money.[21]

Second, there needs to be an "intellectual tone." This involves stylistic devices weaved together in an intellectual way by the use of reason and is an acknowledgement that, as with the proverbs themselves, wisdom is an art of cleverness. Apart from the wisdom sayings in the Song, an intellectual tone via

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[20] Dell 2015: 151.

[21] Dell 2016: 5.

stylistic structuring and clever wordplay exists in what I have identified as three anagnorises, culminating in the clever retort of 7:1. These make the decisions of wisdom—the reasons for choosing to follow the man's call and leave home—stand out to the reader.

Third, Dell suggests there should be a "didactic speech intention," that is, the teaching role, whether formal or informal. As I see it, the narrative is a Bildungsgedicht, a poem concerning a character's transformation, whose aim is to transform the reader also. Andruska says the Song

> seeks to transform the character of its reader concerning love, so that they become the type of person who can discern what wise love is meant to look like, ... through the inspiring and instructive story of the lovers, into the type of lovers who are able to exercise discernment in love and not awaken it until the type of love in the Song is present ..."[22]

8. Theology

The intent of the original author(s) is another matter entirely and cannot be discussed here but there is nonetheless potential to apply the narrative via a few theological routes.

First, one can apply the Song's narrative to a narrative of God seeking a half-hearted people who must struggle to overcome their own fears and doubts as well as facing opposing forces from within and out, but who will be ultimately victorious. The "couple" will finally be together forever. How each faith reads this broad outline is outside the scope of this thesis and so is the methodology employed, whether it should be by midrash, allegory, typology or analogy.

Second, one can provide a message of reinforcement of faith in God via the Song's relationship to wisdom literature. This I have dealt with under "wisdom."

Third, the Song has already been viewed as a midrash on garden life of the first couple Gen 2–3.[23] Following Trible, Davidson sees a celebration of human sexuality that points to an ideal relationship achievable in a post-Fall world, which impinges upon the lovers.[24] Taking the whole Song as underscoring such themes is a generalisation of the Song's content. More specifically, however, the

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[22] Andruska 2019: 137.

[23] Trible 1973: 30-48; cf. Cainion 2000.

[24] Davidson 1989.

regal units do depict what life was like in the garden or what it will be like in a future paradise.

Final Conclusions

This study has presented evidence of a coherent plot in the Song of Songs that is very much unlike the typical dramatic kind of plots that have been put forward which often tend to incorporate extra-textual information for their coherency. The narrative is one which exists on two temporal levels, present and past which makes up its macrostructure. The narrative begins in media res with alternating temporal levels and then a final epilogue to tie loose ends.

The Song lies between pure lyric and narrative. Despite its cyclical speeches and themes on the main temporal level, there is a Bildungsgedicht, a formation story, couched in the past. If Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-1796) is considered to be the first Bildungsroman in world literature[25]—though I doubt it if one were to include the ancient writings in this survey—one wonders whether the Song of Songs might qualify as an early formation poem. The Song, with its transformative narrative of a woman can powerfully affect an individual. There are certainly Cinderella-like elements in the narrative which in my estimation makes it worthy of attention from wider literary scholarship. It reveals that the literary artisans of the ancient Hebrews were not just well-versed with the surrounding culture and poetry but employed that knowledge to produce one of the most enduring and profound pieces of poetry that has ever existed.

One hopes that the "locked garden" of this sublime book has been made more accessible by my work and that the "secrets of the book's [alternating] structure"[26] and narrative has been made attractive to further scholars.

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[25] Golban 2017: 112.

[26] My added word, *pace* Johnston 2009: 36.

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