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An Exploration of the Garden Metaphor in the Poetry of Song of Songs

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AN EXPLORATION OF THE GARDEN METAPHOR IN THE POETRY OF SONG OF SONGS

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Chapter One

Introduction

Gardens and vineyards are known for the beauties they hold and the appeal they draw. As geographical locales of nature, they stand out as places that are the product of a gardener's conscious effort. Gardens and vineyards are virtually indistinguishable from each other in nature. Geographically, gardens are usually situated on private spaces and may equally be on liminal spaces, i.e., being situated on the border between private and public spaces.[1] In the Song of Songs, the garden is conceptualized as a private space (Song 4:12) with access reserved exclusively for the male and female beloveds. It is also utilized as a metaphor to describe the beloveds, their love relationship, and as a locale for lovemaking. This usage is parallel with the use of gardens metaphorically in ancient Near Eastern love poems.

Vineyard, כֶּרֶם, occurs eight times in the Song (1:6 [2x], 14; 2:15 [2x]; 7:12; 8:11, 12) and is often not spoken of with the nuance of a private enclosed space, but a more general place of meeting—much like the role wells play in biblical narratives.[2] In the Song, the vineyard is not utilized metaphorically as a locale for lovemaking, as the

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[1] Anselm C. Hagedorn, "Place and Space in the Song of Songs," *ZAW* 127 (2015): 216.

[2] Ibid, 220; Cohen David, *Law, Sexuality, and Society: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 41-54; John Campbell, *Honor, Family and Patronage: A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 86. The consensus reached about the geographic locale is that wells are an opportune place to meet the opposite sex. If a man wanted to see the local girls, he only had to sit by the well and he would see them all.

garden is, neither is it utilized as a comprehensive metaphor for fully describing the beloveds and their love relationship, but it is used metaphorically to describe singularly the body of the woman as is a common use in the Hebrew Bible.

Thesis Statement

This guided research paper focuses on identifying the role that the descriptive metaphors of the garden play in the Song, where it appears as a private locale for lovemaking and a source domain for describing the beloveds and the nature of their relationship.

The Direction of the Study

This study is a poetic analysis of the garden metaphor in the Song of Songs examined in light of its immediate poetic context and the milieu of ancient Near Eastern love poetry that also utilizes the garden rhetoric. Chapter one is the introduction of the research. It sets the framework for the research paper, highlighting currents in Song of Songs scholarship. Chapter two reviews Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as a conceptual framework for understanding metaphors. This chapter addresses the relationship between conceptual domains and avers the essential role of the textual context. It also reviews literature on the "garden" as a geographic locale to identify the more salient features that are mapped from the source to the target domain. Chapter three examines selected ANE garden rhetoric that supports the argument for a shared conceptual framework for reading the Song of Songs. Chapter four is the poetic analysis of the garden metaphor in the Song. In this chapter, all references to the garden metaphor are examined poetically and a commentary is done on each verse as a building block for

describing the beloveds in the love genre. Chapter five concludes this paper by presenting the basic arguments of each chapter.

Currents in Song of Songs Scholarship

The canonical status of Song of Songs was initially contested because of its rather "sensuous image" and "erotic character."[3] The potential rejection of the Song from the canon of the Hebrew Bible was based on what contributions the book brought to the rather "spiritual-biblical theology" that other books had as their thrust—the theology of God, sin and salvation, redemption, etc. With the female voice "louder than usual," the appeal was made to either silence the female voice or rather proffer other interpretive options for reading the Song. As Burrus and Moore say, "The attempts of ancient and medieval commentators on the Song of Songs to evade the carnal embrace of its female lover through allegorical exposition merely had the effect of plunging them instead into the arms of another lover, a male lover, God or Christ."[4] While the allegorical reading stands as a go-to for those who frown at the literal reading of the Song, it is critiqued because it "represent[s] a secondary level of interpretation which is not supported by the

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[3] H. H. Rowley, "The Interpretation of the Song of Songs," *JTS* 38 (1937): 338. The sensuous and erotic character of the Song led to the instruction by Jewish interpreters that the book should not be read by anyone less than the age of 30. Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on The Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes,* trans. M. G. Easton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1877), 1.

[4] Virginia Burrus and Stephen D. Moore, "Unsafe Sex: Feminism, Pornography, and The Song of Songs," *Biblical Interpretation* 11 (2003): 24. See also, Stephen D. Moore, *God's Beauty Parlor: And Other Queer Spaces in and Around the Bible* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 21-89.

text per se."[5]

The allegorical interpretation of the Song is developed by the tannaim in "Mekilta Pisha, Ex 12, 6" where the Passover is called the time of love (Ezek. 16, 8).[6] According to this view, Israel is the female beloved and YHWH is the male beloved. In this light, YHWH is the bridegroom who longs for Israel, and Israel is the female beloved who relishes in the presence of her beloved. Hence, all the descriptive metaphors in the Song are reminiscent of the love relationship between YHWH and Israel inaugurated at Sinai. The image of the Song in the Targum, according to Delitzsch, is "a picture of the history of Israel from the Exodus to the coming of the Messiah."[7] The Targum even go so far as to interpret the woman's breasts as an allegory for the Messiah in His lowliness and glory,

> Your two redeemers who are destined to redeem you, Messiah Son of David and Messiah Son of Ephraim, resemble Moses and Aaron, the sons of Jochebed (who are comparable to two young antelopes, twins of a gazelle). And by their merit they fed the people of the House of Israel for forty years in the wilderness on manna, plump fowl, and the water of Miriam's well.[8]

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[5] Athalya Brenner, "To See is to Assume: Whose Love is Celebrated in the Song of Songs?" *Biblical Interpretation* 1, 3 (1993): 265.

[6] Frederic Manns, "Jewish Interpretations of the Song of Songs," *Liber Annuus* 58 (2008): 284. The allegorical interpretation was also noted to be a Song about the completion of the salvation story that began from the Exodus. In this light, the Song retains its superlative form, Song of Songs, as the final event of YHWH's salvific act culminated in the presence of the lovers—YHWH and Israel, undisturbed by any external force(s) in the garden of love.

[7] Delitzsch, 1.

[8] Ibid.

The move away from the allegorical reading and interpretation of the Song was a late nineteenth and early twentieth-century effort.[9] The emphasis on desire and love was brought to the fore as the basic theme of the Song—a desire and love within a heterosexual relationship. This became the subject for a literal interpretation. In the literal interpretation, the Song was interpreted within the lens of a collection of love songs between a man and a woman and was often used in a marriage setting.[10]

Feminist scholars came to view the Song as a rebuke of patriarchy—a rebuke of the rather unrequited love as was commonplace in the patriarchal world. While they agree that the Song highlights the themes of love and desire, they note that the beloveds are equal, and for the female, their love was liberating. She was free from the shackles of the oppressive patriarchal world.[11] The theology of the Song for feminist scholars is "precisely the absence of structural and systemic hierarchy, sovereignty, authority, control, superiority, submission, in the relation of the lovers."[12] Additionally, "the Song is, in effect, the quintessence of the non-patriarchal … It includes no representation of

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[9] Burrus and Moore, 24.

[10] E. J. Cheryl, "A Literal and Structural Analysis of the Song of Songs," *ZAW* 85 (1973): 47-79. Proofs for the literal interpretation of the Song even in Jesus's day is seen in a text that details R. Aqiba condemning the use of the Song during wedding ceremonies as degrading the Song from its spiritual sphere to a secular sphere. See more in Tosephta, *Sanhedrin* 12:10 as quoted in Frederic Manns, "Jewish Interpretations of the Song of Songs," *Liber Annuus* 58 (2008): 282.

[11] Julia Kristeva, "A Holy Madness: She and He," in *Tales of Love,* trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 98.

[12] Alicia Ostriker, "A Holy of Holies: The Song of Songs as Countertext," in *The Song of Songs,* A Feminist Companion to the Bible, eds. Athalya Brenner and Carole R. Fontaine (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 49-50.

hierarchy or rule, no relationship of dominance and submission, and (almost) no violence."[13] Phyllis Trible, a feminist scholar who sees the Song as an echo of paradise between Adam and Eve, writes,

> Born to mutuality and harmony, a man and a woman live in a garden where nature and history unite to celebrate the one flesh of sexuality. Naked without shame or fear … this couple treat each other with tenderness and respect. Neither escaping nor exploiting sex, they embrace and enjoy it. Their love is truly bone and flesh of flesh, and this image of God male and female is indeed very good … Testifying to the goodness of creation, then, eroticism becomes worship in the context of grace.[14]

There are two approaches to reading the Song. On the one hand, the Song can be read comparatively. On the other hand, the Song can be read as an emotive literary piece. The comparative approach, which is adopted by Michael Fox and others, is utilized in this paper. It involves reading the Song within the love genre of the ancient Near East. In this light, the Song is read not as a world of its own, but as a Song in continuity with the milieu within which it developed. The benefit of this approach is such that by paralleling the Song with other love songs within the same genre in the ancient Near East, the metaphors utilized therein take a culturally-contextual meaning rather than a forced allegorical or anachronistic meaning. With the comparative approach, there is an underlying theme or motif that abounds in the love genre—love and desire. Yet, while the Song is in continuity with the love genre of the ancient Near East, it is discontinuous from it in the approach it utilizes to describe the love relationship. Unlike the love genre

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[13] Ostriker, 43.

[14] Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality: Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 161.

of the ancient Near East, the love described in the Song is more anticipatory and the images are more hypothetical than actualized or descriptive. The emotive approach is the approach chosen by Francis Landy and others. This approach sees the Song as personal, emotive, and as heavily psychoanalytic.[15]

The unity of the Song is a controversial issue among scholars of the Song. Since the eighteenth century and with the rise of historical biblical criticism, exegetes have been critical in their analysis of biblical books. The issue for the Song resonates between the Song as a unified corpus or as an anthology of love songs. On the one hand, since the 2000s, the vast majority of scholars of the Song hold that the Song exhibits a unity in light of thematic coherence, repetition of units and refrains, and the consistency in the portrayal of characters within the Song.[16] On the other hand, those who see the Song as an anthology of love songs see it yet as a unified work. They argue not in terms of a disjointed literary work but as a work that was redacted with a common theme and motif that weaves the seam of the book into a unity.[17] Conversely, there is a minor concern that

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[15] More on the emotive approach can be found in Francis Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise: Identity and Difference in the Song of Songs,* 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 2011).

[16] Scholars who aver for the unity of the Song include Duane Garrett and Paul R. House, *Song of Songs/Lamentations,* Word Biblical Commentary 23_B (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 2004); Richard S. Hess, *Song of Songs,* Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017); Gianni Barbiero, *Song of Songs: A Close Reading,* trans. Michael Tait (Boston: Brill, 2011); and Cheryl Exum, *Song of Songs: A Commentary,* The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

[17] Scholars who see the Song this way include D. Bergant, *The Song of Songs,* Berit Olam (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), xv; T. Longman III, *The Song of Songs,* NICOT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001), 15-17, 55-56. For a more reserved view of the Song as an anthology, see, Marc Brettler, "Unresolved and Unresolvable

is raised regarding the unity of the Song. Landy argues that the Song if seen as a unity, lacks the characteristics of a book—a well discernable narrative sequence, and a structural organization.[18] But as Exum notes, the Song is distinct as a lyric poem and not as a dramatic poem, and with lyric poems, a discontinuous form is expected.[19] So it would be making too much of the Song to demand that it exhibits a discernable narrative sequence and reach a climax at the end.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes with the following suppositions that like most critical scholars, this paper adopts a non-allegorical interpretation of the Song, preferring to see the Song as a unified collection of love songs between a man and a woman, which functions as a meditation on human love. It is a unified collection and not a disparate collection in light of thematic coherence, repetition of units and refrains, and the consistency in the portrayal of characters within the Song.

Problems in Interpreting the Song," in *Scrolls of Love: Reading Ruth and the Song of Songs*, eds. Peter S. Hawkins and Lesleigh Cushing Stahlberg (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 185-198.

[18] Landy, 30.

[19] Exum, 8-9, 11-13, 262-263.

Chapter 2

Review of Relevant Literature

The Song of Songs is a book that abounds with garden metaphors. Within the garden rhetoric, several conceptual metaphors appear: BODY IS FRUIT, WOMAN IS FOOD, WOMAN IS A GARDEN, and SEX IS EATING.[1] There are also double entendres and sexual euphemisms, but the Song remains a wholesome description of the beloveds and their union. There is also a reference to the conceptual vineyard metaphor: BODY IS A VINEYARD. This chapter introduces Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and the garden metaphor in particular.

2.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue in their 1980 book *Metaphors We Live By* that people necessarily use metaphorical concepts to structure what they do and how they understand what they are doing.[2] As a cognitive-linguistic approach, CMT operates within the framework that sees human language as a function and feature of human cognition in general rather than a discrete capability of the brain.[3] CMT maintains a distinction between metaphorical expression, the linguistic utterances of metaphor, and conceptual metaphor. It avers that there is a cognitive transference of information from

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[1] All caps indicate conceptual domains or conceptual metaphors.

[2] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[3] Ewa Dabrowska and Dagmar Divijak, *Cognitive Linguistics of Language* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 1; Vyvyan Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics: A Complete Guide* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2019), 25-41; George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenges to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 78-81.

one conceptual domain of experience (source) to another (target) that occurs within the brain of an individual speaker or hearer.[4] I will seek to lay down some basic framework of CMT and how that can be appropriated in the garden rhetoric of the Song.

CMT maintains that metaphor imposes elements of conceptual knowledge and structure from a source domain upon a more abstract target domain, thereby creating new knowledge and schematic structure within the target concept.[5] Within the Song there are clear cases wherein beloveds are portrayed with garden metaphors. The implication created then is that the more abstract target domain, THE BELOVEDS, is re-created in light of the salient features mapped out from the source domain, elements of the garden. In this metaphor, the source domain is GARDEN, so that the beloveds are portrayed with garden metaphors, WOMAN IS GARDEN (Song 4:12), SEX IS ENJOYING SPICES (1:13-17), LOVEMAKING IS EATING FRUIT (2:1-3), WOMAN IS FOOD (5:1, 13-15), and double entendre (6:2, 11; 7:11-13; 8:11-13). The salient features correlated from the source domain to the target domain are technically called mappings. Mapping is defined as "a fixed set of ontological correspondences between entities in a source domain and entities in a target domain."[6]

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[4] Lance Hawley, *Metaphor Competition in the Book of Job* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 2018), 45; George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989), 50, 55.

[5] Hawley, 46.

[6] George Lakoff, "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor," in *Metaphor and Thought*, 2nd ed., ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993), 245.

2.1.1 Interactions between Domains—Source and Target

While there is no precise terminology for cognitive linguistics, there are common terms on which cognitive linguistic theory is based. Words according to cognitive grammar are symbolic entities that pair phonological structure with semantic structure and provide access to an encyclopedic network of knowledge.[7] A concept then is a unit of knowledge relating to a coherent segment of experience.[8] Within the Song, the concept GARDEN is used to evoke salient features that include fertility, lushness, beauty, scenery, etc., as well as other constituents of a garden like flowers, trees, vegetation, a body of water, fruits, agents of pollination—birds, winds, butterflies, etc.

A conceptual domain is "any kind of conception or realm of experience."[9] Domains essentially are constellations of concepts and can be understood as the function—active units of cognition.[10] The distinguishing line between domains and concepts is thin. It lies between the conceptual relationship of a more general cognitive level (domain) and a more specific cognitive level (concept).[11] For example, GARDEN as a

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[7] Hawley, 47; William Croft and Alan D. Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics,* Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004), 30; Ronald W. Langacker, *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5, 16-17, 21-22.

[8] Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010), 324.

[9] Langacker, 44.

[10] Evans, 14.

[11] Hawley, 48.

domain evokes the specific cognitive concept of VEGETATION. While this remains, the domain is equally helpful in assisting the speaker/hearer in both selecting and noting what should be excluded in correlating meanings from a domain to a concept. Within the Song, for example, the female beloved speaks of the male beloved in plant metaphor as a "bundle of myrrh" (Song 1:13, 14). While the salient features correlated from the source domain, MYRRH, include beauty, fertility, frailty, fragrance, etc., the role of the source domain is evident within the plant metaphor twofold. It not only assists in appropriating mappings from its source to the target, but also assists in exempting some less salient options. Within the plant metaphor utilized in Song 1:13, 14 the more salient features correlated from the source domain are beauty, fertility, and fragrance, thus excluding the less salient option of frailty that is a feature common with plants.

2.1.2 Source Domains, Target Domains, and Mappings

The relationship between source domains and target domains according to CMT is such that a concept in one domain (source) partially defines a concept in the other domain (target), conventionally given the form TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN.[12] The process of defining concepts within domains is called mapping. There are two kinds of correspondences used to define the mapping between source and target domains: ontological and epistemic. Ontological correspondences are between features of the source domain and features of the target domain; epistemic correspondences hold between elements in the source domain and relations between elements in the target

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[12] Hawley, 50.

domain.[13] Lakoff explains this phenomenon using the example of ANGER IS HEAT OF A FLUID.

> Ontological correspondences:
>
> — The container is the body.
> — The heat of fluid is the anger.
> — The heat scale is the anger scale, with end points zero and limit.
> — Container heat is body heat.
> — Pressure in container is internal pressure in the body.
> — Agitation of fluid and container is physical agitation.
> — The limit of the container's capacity to withstand pressure caused by heat is the limit on the anger scale.
> — Explosion is loss of control.
> — Danger of explosion is danger of loss of control.
> — Coolness in the fluid is lack of anger.
> — Calmness of the fluid is lack of agitation.
>
> Epistemic correspondences:
>
> Source: When the fluid is heated past a certain limit, pressure increases to the point at which the container explodes.
>
> Target: When anger increases past a certain limit, pressure increases to the point at which the person loses control.
>
> Source: An explosion is damaging to the container and dangerous to bystanders.
>
> Target: A loss of control is damaging to an angry person and dangerous to other people.
>
> Source: An explosion may be prevented by the application of sufficient force and energy to keep the fluid in.
>
> Target: A loss of control may be prevented by the application of sufficient force and energy to keep the anger in.[14]

Thus, according to CMT, certain features are correlated from GARDENS to the BELOVEDS in the conceptual metaphor BODY IS A GARDEN. And the possible salient features

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[13] Croft and Cruse, 196.

[14] George Lakoff, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 387.

available for transference are determined by the textual and poetic context.[15]

2.2 The Essential Role of the Textual Context

While CMT can be incorporated into the Song and serve as a framework for understanding the metaphors therein, the textual context is an essential starting place and the final arbiter for discerning the metaphors. In this section, I show the essential role of the textual context of the Song as a possible link to understanding the metaphors of the Song.

2.2.1 The Poetic Context

The poetic context of the Song delimits and identifies the features correlated from the source (GARDEN/VINEYARD) to the target (BELOVED). One must first question whether a particular evocation of GARDEN/VINEYARD is literal or metaphorical. Or is it perhaps both a literal geographic location and a metaphorical image? While both options cannot easily be excluded, since double entendre abounds within the Song, the poetic context helps in deciding when GARDEN/VINEYARD is a source domain for metaphor.

In the introduction of the Song, the vineyard metaphor is identified. In this introduction, the reader is prepared to see that the literal vineyard is used to evoke the vineyard metaphor and thus parallel the vineyard with the body in 1:6.

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[15] Hanne Løland, *Silent or Salient Gender? The Interpretation of Gendered God-Language in the Hebrew Bible, Exemplified in Isaiah 42, 46 and 49,* FAT 2/32 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 42-47.

Do not look upon me because I am dark	אַל־תִּרְאוּנִי שֶׁאֲנִי שְׁחַרְחֹרֶת
because the sun has burned my skin	שֶׁשְּׁזָפַתְנִי הַשָּׁמֶשׁ
sons of my mother burned with anger at me	בְּנֵי אִמִּי נָחֲרוּ־בִי
they made me the keeper of the vineyards	שָׂמֻנִי נֹטֵרָה אֶת־הַכְּרָמִים
[but] I have not kept my own vineyard	כַּרְמִי שֶׁלִּי לֹא נָטָרְתִּי:

This introduction is a complex, yet significant, primer to understanding the vineyard metaphor in the Song. The verses leading up to verse 6 speak of a certain "me" as being the recipient of love. In what follows, this certain "me" is further described with a literary device that seeks to provide a case and then counter it, or in some instances provide an apologetic for it.

The first line of verse 6 continues from the thought of the female beloved as dark from verse 5. The female introduced in the first four verses is not just the recipient of the love of a man, but one in "high demand"—metaphorically nuanced as a king. In what follows, there is an obvious displeasure between the female voice and the daughters of Jerusalem, who seem left out in the obvious choice made by the man in the Song. This displeasure is further heightened by the theme of the color of the skin of the female voice chosen by the man in "high demand." The apologetic lines that follow then, seek to not only provide an apologetic for the condition of the skin of the female beloved, but also go against the established tradition of beauty that attaches fair skin as a characteristic of beauty and dark skin as a characteristic of ugliness.

The apologetic and the inversion of the established characteristic of beauty leads to the use of the vineyard metaphor. While the female voice is arguably dark skinned, the metaphor makes the dark skin as desirable as a fair skin would have been desired. In verse 5 the metaphor parallels the dark skin of the female, with the tents of Kedar and the curtains of Solomon. The target domain then is the WOMAN'S BODY and the source

domain is TENTS OF KEDAR and the CURTAINS OF SOLOMON.[16] In what follows the female's beauty is described metaphorically from the source domain of the VINEYARD as an inversion of the established characteristics of beauty. The parallel between the female beauty/body and the vineyard is thus established in view of the goal to inverse the characteristics of beauty. The poetic lines in v. 5, therefore, serve as a contextual lens for interpreting the metaphor in v. 6.

The image of the female as selected by the man in "high demand" does not match up—an inversion of the beauty and the beast imagery (the female being the beast and the male in "high demand" being the beauty). Hence, to make the female beautiful in her own right, the metaphor of the vineyard is utilized. In verse 6, the female voice speaks of the established beauty tradition, hence, the call to "not be looked [down] upon because she is dark skinned." The sun is utilized as an element that darkens the skin. The point then is that how workers toil to keep the vineyard of their masters, and through that get sun burned, so the female is sun burned or dark skinned. So the apologetic lines show that the female beloved arguably does not have a dark complexion as a natural skin color but one she got as a result of working the vineyards and consequently getting sun burned. The role of v. 5 is to alert the reader to the topic of the woman's body, then v. 6 recounts how she literally has been darkened by the sun because she is being made to work in a literal vineyard by her brothers. The metaphor, WOMAN'S BODY IS VINEYARD is evoked in the last line of v. 6, "but my own vineyard, I have not kept." The first person, "my

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[16] The metaphor introduced here is discussed and analyzed later in this paper. For now, it is the supposition of this paper that the metaphors are utilized to describe the female's beauty, the "me" in previous verses, in a favorable light.

vineyard," recalls "my skin" from v. 5, so that the target WOMAN'S BODY comes back into view and VINEYARD serves as a source for imagining the woman's body as a neglected vineyard.[17] This contextual information from the parallel line suggests a relationship for the metaphorical mapping between vineyard as a geographic locale and the body of the woman.

2.3 The Garden

Interpreters of the Song have often taken the garden metaphor as a reference to female sexuality. In the ancient Aramaic commentary of the Targum, the Song receives the following interpretation: "You women who are married are chaste like a chaste bride, and like the Garden of Eden, which no one has permission to enter save the righteous…. Your virgins are sealed thus they are like the spring of living water."[18] Ambrose correlates a similar idea in the words, "Thou, O virgin, art a garden inclosed [sic], preserve thy fruits, let no thorns arise in thee, but let thy grapes flourish, let not any take from thee the fence of thy modesty."[19]

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[17] Some scholars who see the metaphor here in light of the poetic context include Gianni Barbiero, *Song of Songs: A Close Reading* (Brill: Leiden, 2011), 57; Ronald A. Veenker, "Forbidden Fruit: Ancient Near Eastern Sexual Metaphors," *Hebrew Union College* 70/71 (1999-2000): 57-73; W. F. Albright, "Some Canaanite-Phoenician Sources of Hebrew Wisdom," in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. Noth and D. Winton Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 7; August H. Konkel, *Tyndale Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Job, Ecclesiastes & Song of Songs* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006), 1079.

[18] Philip S. Alexander, *The Targum of Canticles: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes*, The Aramaic Bible: The Targums 17A (Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier/T&T Clark International, 2003), 141.

[19] Richard Frederick Littledale, *A Commentary on the Song of Songs: From Ancient and Medieval Sources* (London: J. Masters, 1869), 187.

Within the ancient Near East the garden metaphor is widely recognized as a pervasive motif of eroticism.[20] The garden metaphor is utilized poetically as a reference befitting the feminine gender. It is utilized in the "Manchester Tammuz" to express a young woman's desire for the presence of her lover thus, "Into the garden of apple trees he brought joy … Into the garden of grapes he brought joy."[21] In a description of his mother, Ludingira speaks of her in garden metaphor, she is "a garden of delight, full of joy, / an irrigated fig tree, covered with fircones."[22] The consensus that can be reached is that the GARDEN is a well-grounded source domain within love poems for the target domain, the FEMALE BELOVED.

While the garden is referenced as a metaphorical focal point for understanding the body of the female beloved, it is nevertheless still a garden. Elaine James's point is well stated,

> The garden itself is the center of the poem's gravity, pulling our attention toward the flourishing plant life that constitutes it. Its representation of natural elements, however, has been almost entirely overshadowed by an interpretive fixation on the garden as a metaphor for the young woman's sexuality.[23]

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[20] Within the ancient Near East the GARDEN metaphor correlates the idea of female sexuality as well as a locale for love. See Elaine T. James, *Landscapes of the Song of Songs: Poetry and Place* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 57; Joan Goodnick Westenholz and Aage Westenholz, "The Old Akkadian Love Incantation MAD V8," *Orientalia* 46 (1977): 213.

[21] Bendt Alster, "The Manchester Tammuz," *Acta Sumerologica* 14 (1992): 1-46; Gwendolyn Leick, *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature* (London: Routledge, 1994), 73.

[22] Jerold S. Cooper, "New Cuneiform Parallels to the Song of Songs," *JBL* 90 (1971): 157-162.

[23] Elaine T. James, *Landscapes of the Song of Songs: Poetry and Place* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 56. While there is a convergence to the function of

Hence, this section seeks to see the garden for what it is. The basic framework for this is the understanding that the more the source domain is understood, the more precisely salient features are mapped from the source domain to the target domain, and the more understanding is gleaned as to features that should not be mapped onto the target domain.

2.3.1 The Garden as a Microcosm

While the garden is a geographic locale in nature, it is nonetheless a framework for understanding nature. Noting the significance that the garden plays in ancient literature, Christopher Meredith surmises that as a constructed space closely related to agriculture, the garden both refers to and contains nature, but it is not nature per se. The garden, rather, is a cultural form that serves as a microcosm for ideas about the natural world.[24]

The first important feature of the garden as a microcosm is the point that the garden contains and refers to nature.[25] As a network for understanding the environment—

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gardens (as an emblem for human sexuality and fertility), there are, however, divergences. Gardens are utilized for their utilitarian purpose (food and shelter), aesthetic pleasure, accommodating mortuary spaces, as well as creating religious meanings by hosting and symbolizing sacral and ritual rites of various kinds. See more in James, 63; Kyung-Jin Zoh, "Re-Inventing Gardens: A Study in Garden Theory" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennyslavannia, 1994), 114-156; Christopher Taylor, *The Archaeology of Gardens* (Aylesbury Bucks: Shire Publications, 1983), 5; Jane Renfrew, "Vegetables in the Ancient Near Eastern Diet," *CANE* 1 (1995): 192; Maureen Carroll, *Earthly Paradises: Ancient Gardens in History and Archaeology* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003), 21-39.

[24] Christopher Meredith, *Journeys in the Songscape: Space in the Song of Songs* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013), 108, 109; See also, Gwendolyn Leick, *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 73-74; James, 59.

[25] James, 59.

most prominently its plants, rocks, soils, and waterways—the garden imitates the native ecosystem closely enough to ensure the survival of the elements contained within.[26] The point articulated from the note that the garden contains and refers to nature is that "it must be aware of and, to a certain extent, attuned to the patterns and capabilities of the natural landscape."[27]

Secondly, although the garden is one with nature, it is not identical to nature.[28] As contained within nature, the garden remains foreign to nature as seen in the intervention of the role of a gardener to tend, manage, and keep it, all these to make the garden at home in a rather foreign environment. Without these intentional efforts of a gardener, the garden would revert to a natural state, becoming a non-garden.[29]

The third and final note on the garden as a microcosm is the point that the garden prioritizes aesthetics, and as such is a form that both expresses and generates cultural values.[30] The aesthetic function of the garden is reminiscent of the description of the garden in Genesis as a garden of delight.[31] Like the garden of Eden and the famous

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 19. The same motif is found in the song of the vineyard in Isaiah 5. The vineyard was an intentional effort of YHWH against nature to make of his people something more. In his intentional act to cater and care for them, the song of the vineyard shows that without the work of YHWH the vineyard would return to its natural state, a non-vineyard state.

[30] James, 61.

[31] A.R Millard, "The Etymology of Eden," *VT* 34 (1984): 103-106; see also, Matthew Richard Schlimm, *70 Hebrew Words Every Christian Should Know* (Nashville:

hanging gardens of Babylon, gardens reflect the human agency of their gardener in its grandeur and splendor, as well as become the gardener's very signature.[32]

In the Song, the elements contained in the garden are referenced in Song 1:13, 14; 2:1-4. These elements abound with aesthetic descriptions in Song 4:1-5, 10-15; 5:10-16; 6:4-9; 7:1-9. They also carry the idea of foreignness to nature and the need to be carefully catered and tended. For example, in Song 2:15, the foxes are conceptualized as those who need to be kept at bay from the garden lest they destroy the elements in the garden. In Song 4:12 the garden is enclosed, shut up, and sealed.

2.3.2 The Garden Metaphor

William Shakespeare opens one of his masterpieces with a garden metaphor, "O what pity is it, That he had not so trimm'd and dress'd his land as we this garden."[33] In this poem, the lack of care for "his land" is a target domain—he had not so trimm'd and dress'd, spoken of in light of the source domain, the reference to "we" who take care of "this garden." As seen in Song 1:5, 6, there is a parallel here in the use of the garden metaphor. The source domain in both cases revolves around the conceptual world of gardens and the target is the body that lacks the required care that ought to be apportioned

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Abingdon Press 2018), 12. The same motif is found in the Song imagery of the garden as a locale of delight both to behold and to remain in, as well as to long for.

[32] The role that gardens play and tell of the gardener is articulated by Robert Harrison who writes that gardens in their aesthetics become "a signature of the human agency to which they owe their own existence." See Robert Pogue Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 7.

[33] Marion Turner, *Chaucer: A European Life* (New Jersey: Princeton, 2019), 342.

to it.

John Harvey argues, "Gardens were locations of surveillance and eavesdropping, sites of aristocratic emotion and oppression."[34] Gardens were female spaces.[35] And consequently metaphorically nuanced as the female body itself.[36] Due to the highly nuanced rhetoric and significance that is commonplace with the garden metaphor, this is evidence why most love songs in the ancient Near East are arguably incomplete without a reference to this metaphor. Sumerian songs used in marriages often describe the beloved as a well-stocked garden.[37] Inanna, speaks with the garden metaphor,

> My brother has brought me into the garden.
> Dumuzi has brought me into the garden. …
> By an apple tree [cf. Cant. 2:3] I kneeled as is proper.
> Before my brother coming in song,
> Before the lord Dumuzi who came toward me, …
> I poured out plants from my womb,
> I placed plants before him, I poured out plants before him.[38]

Within this garden metaphor, Inanna is described as a fertile being within a garden. In Egypt, the same pattern is found in their love songs. In one of such love songs, the female beloved describes herself using the garden metaphor,

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[34] John Harvey, *Medieval Gardens* (London: Batsford, 1981), 103-106.

[35] Laura Howes, *Chaucer's Gardens and the Language of Convention* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 100-101.

[36] See Ann Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); and Brain E. Daley, "The Closed Garden and Sealed Fountain: Song of Songs 4.12 in the Late Medieval Iconography of Mary," in *Medieval Gardens,* ed. Elizabeth MacDougall (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986), 263-267.

[37] Samuel Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite: Aspects of Faith, Myth and Ritual in Ancient Sumer* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1969), 96.

[38] Ibid, 101.

> I am your favorite sister.
> I am yours like the field
> planted with flowers
> and with all sorts of fragrant plants.
> Pleasant is the canal within it,
> which your hand scooped out,
> while we cooled ourselves in the north wind.[39]

Arguably, the theme of the love songs is more descriptive than actual, and salient features correlated include beauty, lushness, and fertility, among others.

In the Song, the garden metaphor is utilized and found between the lips of the beloveds as a descriptive term for describing each other. In Song 1:14, the garden metaphor is evoked on one hand as the male beloved is described as "a cluster of henna blossoms," "an apple tree in the forest" in Song 2:3, and as "a cedar of Lebanon" in Song 5:15. The female beloved on the other hand is described as "a lily among thorns" in Song 2:2, as "pomegranates" in Song 4:3; 6:7, as a "garden of spices" in Song 4:13-15, as a "mound of wheat encircled by lilies" in Song 7:2, and as "clusters of dates or grapes" in Song 7:7-8. Other metaphors that evoke the garden metaphor within the Song include, "enjoying his/her fruit" (Song 8:12), "a garden where both the beloveds are each invited in" (Song 4:12-5:1; 6:2), and "ripening of the fruits within the garden," which is arguably a reference to the sexual ripening or readiness or coming of age of the female beloved in Song 6:11; 7:12.

The primary approach that this paper takes is analysis of the Song as love poetry. Therefore, the aim in what follows is to assess the poetics of various metaphorical expression, and in particular the expressions that evoke the garden metaphors.

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[39] Papyrus Harris 500, group C, no. 18; tr. Fox, 26.

Chapter 3

Ancient Near Eastern Background to the Garden Metaphor of the Song of Songs

The point of beginning with this background from the ancient Near East is to show that within the love poetry genre of the ancient Near East there is some level of continuity in the Song of Songs. When that occurs, it helps to limit the scope and meanings of the metaphor. In the portrayal of the union between lovers, ancient poets draw metaphorical implications from nature like the fruitfulness of nature, the need to cater for and tend to nature, and the oppositions to the processes of nature. Thus, through the garden metaphor, the union between lovers abounds like nature with fruitfulness, intentionality between lovers makes the relationship work amidst oppositions, and the lovers are called to nurture the relationship. With cultivation of land as the ever-present vocation of ancient people, it became the palette for their construction of one of nature's most dazzling features, the relationship between a man and a woman.

A garden as a geographic locale is "the place where Nature is subdued, ordered, selected and enclosed. Hence, it is a symbol of consciousness as opposed to the forest, which is the unconscious, in the same way as the island is opposed to the ocean... it is a feminine attribute because of its character as a precinct."[1] The characteristics of the garden as subduing, ordering, selecting, and enclosing nature are characteristics that form the motif in most love songs of the ancient Near East as well as the Hebrew Bible. As a conceptual domain, GARDENS form the framework for understanding the love relationship as voluntary and not imposed on the lovers; as selecting—as depicted in the

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[1] J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols,* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1971), 115.

Song's image of the beloved's picking each other "among the rest"; and as enclosing—re-echoing the language of the exclusiveness of their relationship.

Raymond Gibbs Jr. argues that "an understanding of the social context is crucial to understanding the development of a literary metaphor."[2] The GARDEN concept as a source domain in metaphor was not at home solely in the Hebrew Bible but was ubiquitous among the neighbors of the ancient Near East.[3] In order to better understand the garden metaphor within the Song, it is beneficial to begin with occurrences of the metaphor in ancient Near Eastern literature in general.[4] Furthermore, since "it is only natural that when an analogy is obvious, it should give rise to the same metaphor in

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[2] Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., "The Process of Understanding Literary Metaphor," *JLS* 19 (1990): 71.

[3] Jennifer Metten Pantoja argues that Near Eastern mythological texts chronicle many of the activities and interests of patron deities in gardens. These deities typically lived in temples on cosmic mountains, which contained lavish gardens. Iconographic sources confirm that agricultural concerns were part of their varied repertoire. Jennifer Metten Pantoja, "The Metaphor of the Divine as Planter of the People in the Hebrew Bible" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 2014), 75.

[4] Othmar Keel, however, believes that the comparison ought to begin from physical proximity rather than a literary dependence based on genre. He explains that identifying meanings for the Song should begin from the Hebrew Bible, then progress to the iconography of Syria-Palestine for visual imagery in the Song. When these options have been fully exhausted, then one mat turn to Egypt or Mesopotamia. Othmar Keel, *Deine Blicke sind Tauben: Zur Metaphorik des Hohen Liedes*, SBS 114/115 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1984), 11-30, as quoted in Brian Gault, *Body as Landscape, Love as Intoxication: Conceptual Metaphors in the Song of Songs*, Ancient Israel & Its Literature 36 (Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2019), 38. Yet, the genre has a large role to play in identifying meanings from the Song, and since the genre of the Song is more at home with its ancient Near Eastern neighbors, it is best to begin identifying meanings from literary dependence based on the genre of the Song rather than from the corpus of the Hebrew Bible.

various languages,"[5] this chapter would note how the background of the ancient Near East's use of the garden metaphor forms a suitable backdrop for understanding the Song.[6] This approach is based upon three principles. First, "Biblical literature is rich in metaphor. But the precise import of its graphic allusions can sometimes be recovered only in the light of comparative data, both textual and artefactual."[7] Second, "Our interpretative competence is ultimately commensurate with our grasp of the culture and language of a work's era of composition…. The more we know about both literary and cultural context, the greater our chance of yielding an unambiguous result."[8] Third, a benefit of a background study is to "recognize that the literature of the ancient Near East was produced not only out of a particular culture but also out of a larger literary tradition

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[5] Stephen Ullmann, *Language and Style* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966), 81. Also, linguists have noted the need for a common conceptual framework as the backdrop from which metaphors find their meaning. Ning Yu accounts for the words of linguists thus, "Since human beings all share a basic body structure, and have many common bodily experiences, it follows that different languages should have parallel conceptual metaphors across their boundaries." Ning Yu, "The Relationship Between Metaphor, Body, and Culture," in *Body, Language, and Mind: Sociocultural Situatedness,* ed. Roslyn M. Frank et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 2:388.

[6] The benefit of comparing the Love Song from the Hebrew Bible with those of its ancient Near Eastern neighbors is observing genre similarities. Still, there are difficulties in noting how the Love Song in the Hebrew Bible draws from its ancient Near Eastern Love genre. While it would be pressing too much to argue for literary dependence, it is worthy of note to see how the parallels exist stemming from a similar conceptual metaphor spectrum.

[7] William W. Hallo, "Compare and Contrast: The Contextual Approach to Biblical Literature," in *The Bible in The Light of Cuneiform Literature,* Scripture in Context 3, ed. William W. Hallo, Bruce W. Jones, and Gerald L. Mattingly (New York: Mellen, 1990), 7.

[8] David Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics, and Divine Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 118.

and that comparison with other literature that is similar … reveals certain aspects of a text that might remain hidden."[9] The comparative background for the study of love songs is reminiscent of the love emotion as a universal experience and not particular to a time or a place. Ted Gioia writes,

> Though researchers in local musical customs have rarely focused on universals, preferring to champion (but seldom explicitly) the view that each culture's songs are incommensurable and inextricably embedded in local practices and traditions, the careful student of love songs is struck by the exact opposite phenomenon—namely, that the people who created these songs seem to be consulting the same playbook, even to the extent of drawing on similar comparisons and metaphors, and describing almost identical emotional states.[10]

A good example of how the Song of Songs seems to be operating from the same playbook as ancient Near Eastern love poetry is when it is compared with the Love Lyrics of Nabu and Tasmetu:

> My lord, put an earring on me,
> let me give you pleasure in the garden!
> [Nabu,]my [lo]rd, put an earring on me,
> Let me make you happy [in the ta]blet [house]![11]

Within this song, the lyric is built around the conceptual domain GARDENS, which is at home with how the people in the ancient Near East spoke about love. In this poem, the garden is a location for lovemaking, but it is not metaphorical. The garden imagery seems

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[9] K. Lawson Younger Jr., "The contextual Method," in *The Context of Scripture,* ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), xxxvii. John Walton avers in agreement that, "There is simply common ground across the cognitive environment of the cultures of the ancient world." John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 10.

[10] Ted Gioia, *Love Songs: The Hidden History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 181.

[11] Alasdair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press: Helsinki, 1989), 96.

to be a universal source for the love poetry. Consequently, the ANE parallels in this chapter indicate the conceptual environment for the Song more than literary borrowing. Furthermore, in the prospective marriage between Inanna and her shepherd Dumuzi, she proclaims relentlessly her desire to be with her lover,

> Me, let me go, let me go, to the garden (*ki-ri-ši*) let me go!
> Me, the lady, let me go, let me go to the garden (*ki-ri-ši*)!
> Me, the lady of heaven, let me go, let me go to the garden (*ki-ri-ši*)!
> In the garden (*ki-ri-a*) dwells the man of my heart![12]

The locale of the garden is still reserved within these love poems as a scenery for lovemaking. While the parallel between the ancient Near Eastern love poetry and the Song of Songs remains, it is clear that the emphasis revolves around love play and lovemaking between the beloveds. The common motif in the Song of the garden as a place for lovemaking also appears in Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources.[13]

There are basic metaphors in the Song of the Hebrew Bible that are in continuity with those found in the ancient Near East— animal metaphors, plant metaphors, body metaphors in general, and specific body metaphors nuanced with sexual motifs.[14] The

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[12] Bendt Alster, "Manchester Tammuz," *ASJ* 14 (1992): 19, 44-48.

[13] Robert Alter notes that while the undisputed idea within this section of the poetry in the Song of Songs is the emphasis of the fragrant paraphernalia of love, the poetry climaxes with, "the odd and satisfying consonance in this teasing game of transformations between the pleasure of play with language through metaphor and the pleasure of love play that is the subject of the lines." Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 249. See also, David Damrosch, "Allegories of love in Egyptian Poetry and the Song of Songs," *Stanford Literature Review* 5 (1988): 24-42. Raz Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines and the Archaeology of Asherah*, BAR 636 (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1996), 83.

[14] BODY IS LANDSCAPE as a conceptual metaphor is well proposed by Douglas J. Porteous, "Bodyscape: The Body-Landscape Metaphor," *Canadian Geographer* 30 (1986): 7-11. See also, Elaine T. James, *Landscapes of the Song of Songs: Poetry and*

difficulty raised with this continuity across cultures is reminiscent of what was argued by Ning Yu when he notes that, "empirical studies of conceptual metaphors have revealed that some of them are potentially universal, others widespread, and still others culture-specific."[15] Hence, we are left with an analysis of comparative literature that wrestles with figuring out what was borrowed, what was original (cultural), and what was universal. While the difficulty remains, there are gains to be achieved from such a comparative study that help identify meanings from a conceptual framework within which the literary work developed.

The purpose of investigating the ancient Near East as the background for the Song of Songs is implied also by the premise of influences—the conclusion that knowledge of background obtained from the ancient Near East is necessary to understand the metaphors in the Song of Songs. For example, the sweetness that is correlated with love in the description of the feeling the beloveds share (Song 4:11) is in continuity with the ancient Near Eastern love poetry. In an Old Babylonian hymn the thought is expressed thus:

Place (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Ulrike Steinert, "Concepts of the Female Body in Mesopotamian Gynecological texts," in *The Comparable Body: Analogy and Metaphor in Ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman Medicine,* Studies in Ancient Medicine 49, ed. John Z. Wee (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 275–357; Julia M. Asher-Greve, "The Essential Body: Mesopotamian Conceptions of the Gendered Body," *Gender and History* 9 (1997): 447; Joan G. Westen-holz, "Metaphorical Language in the Poetry of Love in the Ancient Near East," in *La circulation des biens, des personnes et des idées dans le Proche-Orient ancien,* ed. Dominique Charpin and Francis Joannès (Paris: Recherche sur les civilisations, 1992), 382; and Page duBois, *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women,* Women in Culture and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 65–85.

[15] Yu, 248. Yu typifies the analogy within three broad spectrums: literary borrowing, shared tradition, and universal archetype.

> I will sing a song of Belet-ili,
> Pay attention, comrades; listen, warriors!
> To sing of Mamma is sweeter than honey or grapes,
> Sweeter than…and 'apples,'
> Than the fat of pure butter,
> Sweeter than…and 'apples.'[16]

All this to say that there is a background from which the garden metaphor resonates, and that background is the poetic world of the ancient Near East.

3.1 BODY IS A GARDEN

The conceptual metaphor BODY IS A GARDEN is well attested in the ANE. The metaphorical relationship between body and landscape is averred by Douglas J. Porteous who writes,

> Since Classical times, at least, and in many cultures, the earth has been regarded as female, fertile if properly propitiated, but barren, like a wasteland, if incorrectly dealt with. Father Sky provides semen in the form of rain. Mother Mary, to give just one example, is impregnated from on high. Mother Earth, lowly, graceful, but with all the frailties of woman, is complemented by the male skygod, high, clean, pure. Recognizing the power as well as the nurturing capacity of our native heaths, we divide the earth's surface into fatherlands and motherlands.[17]

The appropriateness of LANDSCAPE as a source domain for BODY is supported in light of the universal description of landscape as an unidentified gender. This description of landscape as an unidentified gender gets its gender polarity from applying descriptors from the human body. Whatever is mapped from the HUMAN BODY as a source domain to the LANDSCAPE as a target domain, and vice versa gives gender polarity—masculinity or

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[16] M. Mindlin, M. J. Geller and J. E. Wansbrough, eds., *Figurative Language in the Ancient Near East* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies University of London, 1987), 31.

[17] Porteous, 3.

femininity to the landscape.[18] Yet, whether the landscape is described in body terms, or BODY IS A GARDEN, sexual imagery is a persistent theme.[19]

3.1.1 Body Metaphors

The Song of Songs abounds with metaphors as descriptions of the body, both of the male and female. Atkins argues, "This rich, highly metaphorical way of writing about the female remained the pattern for later writers, but no other race has equaled the Semites in this field."[20] Descriptions of the body in the Song include imagery from the realms of botany (2:1), animal life (2:16), and architecture (8:10). These same categories are prevalent in ANE love poetry.

In some Akkadian love poetry, the same body imagery is found:

> [Let me pro]vide a new chariot for you [……]
> [whose] thighs are a gazelle in the plain,
> [whose] ankle bones are an apple of Siman,
> whose heels are obsidian,
> whose whole being is a tablet of lapiz lazuli![21]

Here, the descriptions of the woman draw upon three categories: animals, gardens, and jewels.

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[18] The appropriateness of "body" and "landscape" and the symbiotic conceptual relationship that exists between them Porteous argues is necessitated by the fact that the earth as an "unidentified sex, a recumbent giant… can readily be understood by applying descriptors based on the landscape we know best, the human body." Porteous, 3.

[19] Porteous, 9.

[20] John Atkins, *Sex in Literature.* 4 vols. (London: Calder, 1978), 1:177–79.

[21] SAA 3 14 r. 4-8; Fiona Black, "Beauty or the Beast? The Grotesque Body in the Song of Songs," *Biblical Interpretation* 8 (2000): 302-33; Fiona Black, *The Artifice of Love: Grotesque Bodies and the Song of Songs* (New York: LHB/OTS, 2009), 392.

As in Song 1:6, skin color is a focus of some ANE love poems. In Egyptian love lyrics, praises abound for the white, shining skin of the female beloved, and the nature of Egyptian art suggests that fairness was an ideal of beauty.[22] Throughout the Middle Ages, across the wide spectrum of chronology and geography, extant literature and art reflect the view that a woman's light skin is beautiful and dark skin is considered ugly.[23] While the picture of fair skin as the epitome of female beauty is the consensus across a vast majority of geography and time, this perception is not present in the literature of Mesopotamia.[24] An image from a divine love lyric depicts the agreement of dark skin color as desired. Marduk's intense desire for Ishtar depicts this, "She was white, like a gecko; her skin was burnt [naqlât] like a pot."[25] The parallel line between Ishtar's skin as white yet burnt like a pot, hence suggesting black, parallels a white skin (which is desirable as the ideal of beauty) with a burnt pot (a dark skin) in a syntagmatic relationship.

The body metaphor then in the Song describing the color of the female beloved's skin as "dark but lovely" builds from the ancient Near Eastern rhetoric of describing the

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[22] Gault, 63.

[23] David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 90.

[24] Gault, 65.

[25] Wilfred G. Lambert, "The problem of Love Lyrics," in *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature and Religion of the Ancient Near East,* ed. Hans Goedicke and J. J. M. Roberts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 120. Lambert preferred to translate [naqlât] as dark in light of the parallelism with Song 1:5 as the Mesopotamian mark of female beauty. Lambert, "Devotion: The Languages of religion and Love," in *Figurative Language in the Ancient Near East,* ed. Murray Mindlin, Markham J. Geller, and John E. Wansbrough (London: University of London School of Oriental and African Studies, 1987), 34.

color of the skin. The Song adopts that general consensus of fairness as being an ideal of beauty but builds on that to introduce a dark skin as also desirable. This introduction of the dark skin as desirable is argued for by Keel who notes that with the dark skin paralleled with the tents of Kedar and the curtains of Solomon, the blackness of the speaker is, "at once frightening and fascinating; she is mysteriously different."[26] This difference Keel argues is in light of the ANE culture and religions that introduces many goddesses and other numinous beings as dark.[27] Hence, the poetic context suggests that the female beloved is dark yet lovely.

From the realm of botany, the female beloved in Song 2:1 announces, "I am a rose of Sharon." Kövecses points out that the cognitive metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS is well known and can be observed among a vast majority of cultures. In English literature, PLANTS commonly provide the vehicle for metaphors through their various parts, their mode of cultivation, and their stages of cultivation.[28]

Within the conceptual world of PEOPLE ARE PLANTS there lies a shared tradition in both Egyptian and Mesopotamian love songs that parallels what is found in the Song. The Canaanite love-goddess Qodshu signals the life-renewing power of her charm by holding gigantic lotus flowers in her hands. In a painted ivory carving from the tomb of

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[26] Keel, *Song,* 74, 75.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Zoltan Kövecses, *Where Metaphors Come From: Reconsidering Context in Metaphor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 19, 25.

Tutankhamen, the pharaoh's young wife Ankhesenamen holds a bouquet of lotus blossoms to his nose, implying that by the generating power of the lotus flower, evoked by the Qodshu, she is aiming to bring him back to life.[29] This imagery then of Qodshu as restoring life with lotus blossoms evokes the body metaphor of restoration and fruitfulness, reflecting what a woman in love brings to the relationship—life and fruitfulness.[30] In drawing from the source domain of FLOWERS, the female beloved's description, "I am a rose of Sharon," is drawing from an established rhetoric to imply that she is fruitful and brings fruitfulness to the relationship with her beloved.

3.1.2 Sexual Motifs

As highlighted in the introduction to this chapter, poets in the ancient Near East commonly used garden imagery to write about love. As a feature of gardens, fruits naturally became symbols of sexuality and, because of their productivity, salient features of the fruit were mapped onto the beloveds and their sexual union. In a Sumerian text known from an Old Babylonian copy Inanna describes Dumuzi as follows:

> He flourishes, he flourishes, he is lettuce, well watered,
> My…garden…
> My barley, growing luxuriantly large in its furrows, he is lettuce, well watered,
> My 'apple' tree which bears fruit at its tip, he is garden, well watered.[31]

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[29] Keel, 114. The life giving function of flowers is a demonstrated function both in the Levant and in Egypt in the ancient symbol of the "tree of life."

[30] Qodshu is a fertility goddess as well as a goddess of love. She is depicted nude, holding flowers, standing on the back of a lion, sometimes facing the viewer. Other times, she is shown naked, standing on a lion and holding a weapon, between the Egyptian fertility god, Min, and the Canaanite god Resheph. See more in Charles Russell Coutler and Patricia Turner, eds. *Encyclopedia of Ancient Deities* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2020), 394.

[31] Mindlin et. al, 26.

From the description of Dumuzi by Inanna, FRUIT imagery evokes a sexual motif. The reference to "his flourishing" may be a reference to the union between the lovers, Inanna and Dumuzi, or more particularly his physical appearance, sexual appeal, or the sexual pleasure that Dumuzi brings to their union. The reference to his being a "lettuce" falls within the broader fruit imagery to correlate the idea of sexual potency, sexual attractiveness, and power.[32] The same goes for his description as a well-watered garden and as barley growing luxuriantly large.

In a similar vein, in the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic, Ishtar addresses the hero thus: "Come, Gilgamesh, you be the groom, Give me now your fruit! You be my husband, I will be your wife."[33] And Ishtar is elsewhere praised as follows: "She/Goddess of joy, clothed with love, adorned with fruit, cosmetics and sex-appeal."[34] The use of the parallelistic line implies that Ishtar is clothed with love and adorned with fruit, that is, cosmetics and sex appeal. This correlates with the sexual motif of the fruit imagery that is seen clearly in Song 2:3-4. The fruit imagery also appears in a late copy of an Ishtar-Tammuz text,

> As I go to the young man, my spouse,
> For my spouse I fill the orchard as if with 'apples.'
> Young man, so love the young lady.
> Inanna, who is like a spadix covered with dates,
> So love the young lady Inanna.
> For my spouse I am like a vine sprouting with many shoots.[35]

In the Song of Songs, the same pattern is seen playing out as the beloveds draw from the conceptual world of NATURE to portray the bodies of one another. The female beloved is likened to a mountain of pleasantries (2:17; 4:6; 8:14) and a tree of pleasure (7:3a, 8-10). The bottom line is expressed thus,

> From this brief survey of fruity language in love poetry we suggest that the luscious, natural attractiveness of fruit is the essential factor, and one should not seek too precise an application of the various terms to particular things or aspects of human (and divine) love. Use of 'honey' and other terms for sweetness is much the same. They convey the sense of pleasure which they bring, without creating any precise allegory.[36]

Within the fruit metaphor, the most salient feature transferred from the source to the target domain is the idea of the natural attractiveness of the fruit paralleled with how the beloveds feel physically attracted to each other. The evidence that leads to this conclusion is the point of the pleasures that rest within the love union.[37]

The sexual motif in utilizing PLANTS as a source domain to describe the target domain PEOPLE is a well-established trend in love poetry in the ancient Near East. Within Egyptian love poetry, the scenery of a garden is often invoked to parallel the charms of the beloved,

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid, 24.

[34] Ibid. Ishtar is also elsewhere described as a mistress of fruit and *aguhhu. Aguhhu* could mean something worn as a belt but in light of another parallel structure of its usage, *kus.la* is paralleled with *aguhhu* which means something belonging to a prostitute. Therefore, the reference to Ishtar as being a mistress of fruit and *aguhhu* may be a reference to her sexual appeal and/or promiscuity.

[35] Ibid, 26.

[36] Ibid, 27.

[37] The idea also appears within ancient Near Eastern love songs. For example, "Your sex-appeal is something sweet, it is honey, very sweet." S. N. Kramer et al., "Five New Sumerian Literary Texts" *Belleten*16 (1952): 362-364. Also, "Muati, passion for you is sweet, The appeal of your love is sated with honey." W. G. Lambert, "Divine Love Lyrics from Babylon" *MIO*12 (1966): 48-50.

> Distracting is the foliage of my pasture:
> the mouth of my girl is a lotus bud,
> her breasts are mandrake apples,
> her arms are vines,
> her eyes are fixed like berries,
> her brow a snare of willow,
> and I the wild goose![38]

Correspondingly, in Egyptian love poetry, a male character speaks of the female character in this way, "how intoxicating are the plants of my wetland! The lips of my beloved are the bud of a lotus, her breasts are mandrakes."[39]

Yet another coordinating metaphor with a sexual motif is the metaphor, SEX IS EATING. Within the Song this metaphor is utilized as the female beloved eating the fruit of the male beloved (1:13, 14; 2:3, 5; 4:6, 13-5:1; 7:8). While the metaphor can easily be misappropriated as a product of literary inquiry or escapism for an erotic venture, Gault's point is well articulated,

> Thus, the maiden's desire to taste her lover's delicious apple does not demand an anatomical referent. In fact, the Song's poet repeatedly employs the eating/drinking metaphor as a symbol of lovemaking (2:4, 16; 4:11, 6:2-3; 7:3, 7-9; 8:2; secondary meaning 6:11-12; 7:12-13). In the closest parallel, the maiden portrays her own body as a garden of choice fruits, to which she invites her lover to consume its produce (4:16). Thus, just as the woman's garden is a general metaphor for her delicious delights, the man's sweet-tasting fruit (2:3) can be similarly explained as a general image of his sexual charms, which brings his beloved pleasure in their lovemaking.[40]

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[38] W. K. Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 312.

[39] Tobin A. Vincent, "Love Songs and the Song of the Harper," in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, 3rd ed., ed. W. K. Simpson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 309.

[40] Gault, 100. See also, W. Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, 16th ed. ed F. Buhl, (Leipzig: Vogel, 1915), 659.

All this to say that the reference to "eating his fruit" finds its meaning within the love poetry as a feature of the pleasure that the beloveds find in each other's presence and not an anatomical representation of their sexual escapade.

Within love poems women are often conceptualized as food and ready for the taking. In one of such poems the woman's presence is likened to a fruit that is ripe and ready for the taking. The conceptual metaphor in such love poems is both a metaphorical and narrative innuendo-laden metaphor of what a man desires to do with a woman.[41] Within that background, Song 5:1 pictures the male who has come to his garden, the female beloved, conceptualized as WOMAN IS A GARDEN. He has gathered his myrrh with his spice, conceptualized as SEX IS GATHERING SPICES. And he has eaten his honeycomb with his honey, conceptualized as WOMAN IS FOOD.

Another parallel example is found in the Old Akkadian incantation involving Ea, the god of wisdom and incantations. In like parallel to garden rhetoric, the speaker describes his approach to a woman thus, "I climbed into the garden of the moon/Sîn, I cut down poplar for her daylight."[42] This garden rhetoric combines the man's imagined physical approach to his object of desire in a literal garden with an anticipated sexual advance into her figurative garden.[43]

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[41] Brownsmith, 31-32.

[42] Joan Westenholz and Aage Westenholz, "Help for Rejected Suitors: The Old Akkadian Love Incantation MAD V 8," *Orientallia* 46 (1977): 198–213.

[43] Gault, 117. The phrase "to go down to the garden" is averred by Shalom M. Paul as functioning as a metaphor for the PLACE and ACT OF LOVEMAKING. Shalom M. Paul, "A Lover's Garden of Verse: Literal and Metaphorical Imagery in Ancient Near East Love Poetry," in *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe*

In light of the parallels with ancient Near Eastern love poetry, the poet of the Song has utilized a common conceptual horticultural image to present the female beloved as a garden where the male beloved "comes into" for lovemaking. Alter makes the point clear when he notes,

> Poetic language and its most characteristic procedure, figuration, are manipulated as pleasurable substance: metaphor transforms the body into spices and perfumes, wine and luscious fruit, all of which figurative images blur into the actual setting in which the lovers enact their love, a natural setting replete with just those delectable things.[44]

In light of the cultural parallels identified thus far, the tree imagery as a love depiction of the female beloved correlates with the idea of her beauty and glory. It evokes a body metaphor with a sexual motif.

3.2 Animal Metaphor

Animals and plants are frequently referenced in the Song as source domains to describe the beloveds as target domains. This section will focus on one animal metaphor within the Song, namely the gazelle, and its ancient Near East background as utilized in love poetry.

3.2.1 A Gazelle 2:9, 17; 8:14

A gazelle is conceptualized either as an analog to men, i.e., those who are free to travel, or as a description of a frightened woman, i.e., a prey. Like the horse, the gazelle was praised for its beauty and grace. In an Egyptian poem, the woman compares the male

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Greenberg, ed. Mordechai Cogan, Barry L. Eichler, and Jeffery H. Tigay (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 104.

[44] Alter, 254.

to a gazelle,

> If only you would come to (your) sister swiftly,
> like a gazelle bounding over the desert,
> whose legs are shaky, whose body is weary,
> for fear has entered his body.
> A hunter, dog with him, pursues him,
> but they can't even see his dust.[45]

Like the Song of Songs, the idea correlated from the gazelle to the target domain, the male beloved, is the idea of the swiftness of the gazelle. This thought is best expressed in the Gilgamesh epic with Enkidu losing his vitality to a harlot. After his first sexual encounter, Enkidu's legs went rigid, and he was unable to run with the gazelles again. This indicates a loss of freedom—symbolically Enkidu was no longer a "gazelle" himself.[46]

3.3 Feminine Attributes Correlated Within Garden Rhetoric

The use of a garden as a source domain for what appears to be the primary target, the female beloved, abounds within the Song. Unlike other biblical literature where the feminine figure is used as a source domain targeted at either a besieged city, an unfaithful people, or the concept of wisdom, in the Song, the feminine figure is targeted from the source domain of a garden to correlate more positive qualities that sometimes revolve around sexuality, fruitfulness, chastity, commitment, faithfulness, beauty, and security.[47]

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[45] P. Chester Beatty I, Group B: No. 40.

[46] George M. Schwab, Sr., *The Song of Songs' Cautionary Message Concerning Human Love* (Bern: Peter Lang Inc., International Academic 1999), 219.

[47] Among scholars, there is a concern over the "bizarre or strange" imagery correlated to the feminine body. See Carol Meyers, "Gender Imagery in the Song of Songs," *Hebrew Annual Review* 10 (1986): 211. This arises over the quality of these

The emphasis on the feminine body metaphor and not the masculine body metaphor is because,

> The female body and voice are ideal for the contemplation of romantic love, all its benefits and instabilities. Not only because women are half the equation in a heterosexual pair, but because the female body as valuable but vulnerable resource aptly captures the reality of love demonstrated by the Song of Songs…. Thus the imagery of fertility and fortification associated with the woman's landscape-body according to both the male and female speakers reflects this awareness of the risks and rewards involved with romantic love.[48]

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images. Some have suggested an accommodating reading strategy, others a parodic reading, and some a grotesque interpretation. For suggestions on an accommodating reading strategy see, Richard Soulen, "The *wasfs* of the Song of Songs and Hermeneutics" *JBL* 86 (1967): 183-190. For a parodic reading see, Athalya Brenner, '"Come Back, Come Back The Shulammite' (Song of Songs 7:1-10): A Parody of the *wasf* Genre," in *A Feminist Companion to the Song of Songs*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 234-257. For a grotesque interpretation see Leroy Waterman, *The Song of Songs: Translated and Interpreted as a Dramatic Poem* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1948)*;* Segal M. H, "Song of Songs," *Vetus Testamentum* 12 (1962): 470-490; and Fiona C. Black, *The Artifice of Love: Grotesque Bodies and the Song of Songs* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009). The motivation for the concern over the "bizarre or strange" imagery is the assumption that there is something wrong with the body. See Cheryl Exum, "Ten Things Every Feminist Should Know about the Song of Songs," in *The Song of Songs: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole R. Fontaine (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 33. Some scholars aver that the images are inappropriate for what seems to be the task of depicting physical attractiveness. Meyers, 211. Others scholars argue that the body metaphor is absent. Exum, 34. The concern for the absent body is pressed by overlooking the poetry. Kelli Anne Gardner agrees with the concept of an absent body and writes that the woman in the Song is "constructed out of field and brook, rather than flesh and bone." Kelli Anne Gardner, "The Figure and Figuration of Woman in the Hebrew Bible: Female Body and Voice in Song of Songs, Proverbs 1-9, 31, and Lamentations 1-2" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2020), 54. While the feminine character may neither be real, nor a direct link to a historical identity of the author's time frame, there is yet a sense in which the woman is an active discursive force that helps to shape cultural norms about gender, bodies, and love in every community that reads and values this text. See more on this in Michael Foucault, *An Introduction,* Vol. 1 of *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007); and Zainab Bahrani, *Women of Babylon: Gender and Representation in Mesopotamia* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[48] Gardener, 61. While the female beloved is seen in this light, the imagery of the

3.3.1 Wholeness[49]

In the male beloved's description of the female beloved from her head to the sole of her foot, the image correlated is usually an image of wholeness. Whether her feminine features are drawn from the source domain of GARDENS, TREES, LANDSCAPE, AROMATICS, or PERFUMES, the idea correlated is one of wholeness with no hint of imperfections. The landscape imagery is productive and interactive, providing the male beloved with sustenance, shade, and a pleasurable terrain on which to gaze and frolic.[50]

The wholeness feature of description is equally found among love songs in the ancient Near East. The female beloved is usually praised sequentially in most Egyptian love songs from the eyes to the thighs, while the Assyrian lyrics laud the thighs, ankles,

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male beloved in the Song resonates more with the idea of strength, value, and sturdiness.

[49] The literary feature utilized in the wholeness description is argued for by Jacqueline Vayntrub who notes that this literary feature involves the use of a totalizing description, moving from part to part, and implying an exhaustive description when, of course, it is not. Its use, therefore, is to persuade the audience of some overall quality or attribute of the object described. Vayntrub, "Beauty, Wisdom, and Handiwork in Proverbs 31:10-31," *Harvard Theological Review* 113 (2020): 48-50; see also, Vayntrub, "Tyre's Glory and Demise: Totalizing Description in Ezekiel 27," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 82 (2020): 225.

[50] The wholeness of the landscape imagery descriptive of the female beloved is well accounted for by the vast majority of feminist scholars. See, Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity, and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Nancy Dunca, ed., *Body Space: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn, *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism* (London: Routledge, 1995); Sue Best, "Sexualizing Space," in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, ed. Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn (London: Routledge, 1995), 181-194; Sigrid Weigel, *Topographien der Geschlechter: Kulturgeschichtliche Studien zur Literatur* (Reinbek: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1990); Christopher Meredith, *Journeys in the Songscape: Space and the Song of Songs* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013).

and heels.[51] In all of these descriptions, the salient feature correlated from these descriptions is a somewhat otherworldly beauty, a beauty that has no blemish. Thus, playing on the riches of metaphor to describe the beauty, particularly of the female beloved, to map salient features of wholeness and perfection. Yet, this is still within the conceptual source domain and not a literal description of beauty, as ancient Israelite description of beauty has eluded scholars as to what exactly did the Israelites classify as beautiful.[52]

3.3.2 Fertility and Fortification

From the discussion of the Song thus far and the conceptual source domain GARDEN, it is safe to say that one of the salient features correlated to the female beloved

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[51] Wolfram Herrmann, "Gedanken zur Geschichte des altorientalischen Beschreibungsliedes," *ZAW* 75 (1963): 176–196; George Schwab, "Waṣf," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings,* ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008), 835–842; Fox, 52; Martti Nissinen, "Love Lyrics of Nabû and Tašmetu: An Assyrian Song of Songs?" in *"Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf": Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient; Festschrift für Oswald Loretz zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres mit Beiträgen von Freunden, Schülern und Kollegen,* ed. Manfried Dietrich and Ingo Kottsieper, AOAT 250 (1998): 589 r.5–8.

[52] G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, Vol. I: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions,* trans. D.M.G. Stalker (London: SCM, 1962), 364; see also for a contrary opinion, Luke Ferretter, "The Power and the Glory: The Aesthetics of the Hebrew Bible," *Literature and Theology* 18 (2004): 123-138. In comparison with Arabic literature, Noegel and Rendsburg, aver that the idea of wholeness is seen in parallel with *Tašbīb* which is essentially a poetry of praise, elaborative for its descriptions of the woman's charms that qualifies its rendition as a devotional expression of love. The parallel with Arabic love songs in terms of language and poetic features is seen in parallel motif both with the Song of Songs and Arabic love songs with the frequency of words like wine, song, vineyards, gardens, orchards, towers, fortifications, walls, military equipment, and comparisons to palm trees and animals, usually gazelles, horses, and lions. In addition, not only does the poet praises his lover, he has praises for his lover from the lips of nobles and maidens. Noegel and Rendsburg, 133, 135.

is her fertility.[53] Like a lush garden that has evergreen lush produce, the female beloved is imagined as a fertile being. Ludingira describes his mother in garden rhetoric as fertile with the words,

> My mother is rain from heaven, water for the finest seed,
> A harvest of plenty ….,
> A garden of delight, full of joy,
> A watered pine, adorned with pine cones,
> A spring flower, a first fruit,
> An irrigation ditch carrying luxuriant waters to the garden plots,
> A sweet date from Dilmun, a date chosen from the best.[54]

The thought utilized from the fertility theme as a feature of gardens is seen here in the metaphorical description of Ludingira's mother. Elaine James notes,

> The gendering of the landscape participates in a larger conceptual motif in ancient Near Eastern literature. Other biblical texts play on the symbolic significance connecting agricultural productivity and human sensuality. For example, the book of Ruth connects an abundant barley harvest and the availability of food signify and prepare for the marriage of Ruth to Boaz and their own ability to produce an heir. Similarly, Samson's accusation of the Philistines after they have plied Delilah to discover the answer to his riddle employs the motif of likening agricultural labor to human sexuality, and does so to bawdy effect: "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle (Judg 14:18).[55]

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[53] Love poems within the ANE with the characteristic of fertility ascribed to the woman include, the hymn of Enki and the World Order, Enki and Ninhursag, and Enlil and Ninlil. In these love poems the male lauds the fertility of the female beloved as appealing and one in which he desires to enjoy. These love poems often tagged, "masculine erotic poems" are different from the often tagged, "feminine love songs," which rather than laud the feminine fertility, speak more of the sensual and fully corporal relationship between the male and female devoid of any form of a characteristic of fertility.

[54] Jerold S. Cooper, "New Cuneiform Parallels to the Song of Songs," *JBL* 90 (1971): 160.

[55] Elaine T. James, *Landscapes of the Song: Poetry and Place* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 38, 39.

James continues,

> The emphasis on the landscape and on images of cultivation in the landscape suggest that the sensuality of the Song is not phallocentric, nor is it occupied with conception as a direct outcome of the erotic relationship. At the same time, there is an underlying interest in fertility that is underscored by the agricultural imagery throughout.[56]

The idea of fortification is implied in the idea of a garden. Due to their exotic nature, gardens are generally barricaded and fortified to ward off predators and unwelcomed visitors. So, in the garden conceptual source domain, the female beloved is correlated with the idea of being fortified and is not open access to everyone but to her male beloved alone. In an ANE parallel, the idea of fortification and protection is seen in images that speak of access limited to the beloved and not to anyone. In a Middle Babylonian copy of the Babylonian Tammuz-Istar text, Istar speaks thus, "At your entering may the bolts rejoice over you, May the door open [for you] of its own accord![57] Although, not clearly stated, but within love poetry, Istar implies that there is indeed a fortification that hinders access to others, while at the same time reserving access to none other than her beloved.

This chapter has identified the garden metaphor of the Song as a conceptual domain that is continuous with the ancient Near Eastern rhetoric of the garden metaphor. Conversely, when garden rhetoric within the Song is read, the function of the metaphors contained therein are to be explained within the framework of the ancient Near East.

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[56] James, 40.

[57] M. Mindlin, M. J. Geller, and J. E. Wansbrough, 31.

Chapter 4

Poetic Analysis of the Garden Metaphor in the Song of Songs

The Song of Songs is a well attested love poem. Within this poem the garden metaphor features predominantly as a significant source domain to describe target domains. As the poetry unfolds, it becomes clear that the garden metaphor is utilized to describe the beloveds and other times as a private space for lovemaking. The correlation of the garden metaphor both as a geographic locale and as a metaphorical embodiment of the beloveds is thus of central importance to the Song.

This chapter seeks to explore the poetics of the garden metaphor in the Song. The method employed in the poetic analysis includes translating specified verse(s) from the Song, identifying the source and target domains, positing potential mapping from the source to the target domain, evaluating options based on time, culture, and context, as well as positing possible meaning of the Song's imagery. The goal of this chapter is to show that GARDEN is a significant and comprehensive source domain within the love poetry.

4.1 The Female Beloved as a Keeper of Vineyards (1:6)

Do not look upon me because I am dark	אַל־תִּרְאוֹנִי שֶׁאֲנִי שְׁחַרְחֹרֶת
because the sun has burned my skin	שֶׁשְּׁזָפַתְנִי הַשָּׁמֶשׁ
sons of my mother burned with anger at me	בְּנֵי אִמִּי נָחֲרוּ־בִי
they made me the keeper of the vineyards	שָׂמֻנִי נֹטֵרָה אֶת־הַכְּרָמִים
[but] I have not kept my own vineyard	כַּרְמִי שֶׁלִּי לֹא נָטָרְתִּי:

Within this verse, the reader is introduced to the idea that the metaphors in the Song are descriptive of the beloveds. There is arguably a double entendre and a pun in this verse that sees the vineyard as a literal vineyard, then as a source domain to describe the female beloved's body. In this sense, the vineyard metaphor is similar to the garden

metaphor as it evokes the theme of body descriptions from the source—GARDEN/VINEYARD.

The point of the female beloved's skin being dark is given an apologetic in this verse. The apologetic is based on the fact that she works the vineyard (literally), and on account of working the vineyard gets sun burned. Also she gets swamped with taking care of the vineyard and neglects to take care of her own vineyard (metaphorically her body). The salient feature correlated from the source—VINEYARD, to the target—THE BODY OF THE FEMALE BELOVED, is the idea that as a vineyard requires care for its aesthetic quality to be appreciated, so the female beloved requires care as she comes of age to be appreciated aesthetically. This point is made throughout the Song as she is frequently at logger heads with the daughters of Jerusalem over her worthiness to be loved, being that her physical features discredit her.

The book begins with praises for the male beloved (1:2-4), contrasting the praises with the relative unworthiness of the female beloved, and introducing the theme of the vineyard as a non-metaphorical location that parallels the king's chambers (הַמֶּלֶךְ חֲדָרָיו) in verse 4.[1] The parallel is stark in both the epilogue in 8:11-12 and the prologue in 1:6.

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[1] The idea of the king's chambers as a private domain evokes the garden metaphor wherein both lovers meet. Throughout the love poetry, the lovers are each bringing the other into a private domain. The private chambers (1:4, 2:4) and the mother's house (3:4, 8:2) evoke the idea of the exclusivity of a garden utilized in the love poetry as a private geographic locale for lovemaking. See more in, Gianni Barbiero, *Song of Songs: A Close Reading* (Brill: Leiden, 2011), 57.

Verse 5 introduces the beloved as dark but lovely (שְׁחוֹרָה אֲנִי֙ וְנָאוָ֔ה) like the tents of Kedar (קֵדָ֖ר כְּאָהֳלֵ֑י) and the curtains of Solomon (כִּירִיעֹ֥ות שְׁלֹמֹֽה). In verse 6, she describes her skin color (שְׁחַרְחֹ֔רֶת) as a product of the tanning of the sun (שְׁשֻׁזָפַ֥תְנִי הַשָּׁ֖מֶשׁ) and identifies herself as a keeper of the vineyards (נֹטֵרָ֣ה אֶת־הַכְּרָמִ֑ים) who regardless, has not kept her vineyard (כַּרְמִ֥י שֶׁלִּ֖י לֹ֥א נָטָֽרְתִּי). The identity of the female beloved as a keeper of vineyards is one of several identities that she takes up in the poetry that is not historical.[2]

Verse 6 has two identifiable Hebrew roots in uncommon forms. The form שחרחרת is the only adjectivial form of the the root שחר (dark, black) in the Bible.[3] נחרו also is one of the only three instances of the Niphal form of the root חרה (be angry).[4] Additionally,

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[2] Gianni Barbiero argues that within the poetry the characteristic of role-playing abounds. The beloved man is sometimes identified as playing the role of a king (1:4, 12), and a shepherd (1:7), while the beloved female role plays a keeper of the vineyards (1:5-6), a shepherdess (1:8), and an oriental princess (3:6-11; 7:1). All these, Barbiero notes, are not historical identifications but "… a literary device, an escape from the real situation with its prosaic limitations and an immersion in a fictitious situation which is felt to be more suitable for love." Barbiero, 14, 52. John Donne agrees, noting, "Lovers who truly possess each other possess the world and are the world. The mistress and the lover between them comprehend in themselves all the world's riches, beauties, honors…." A. J. Smith, and John Donne, *The Songs and Sonnets* (London: Edward Arnold, 1964), 57. See also, Gerleman, G., *Ruth, Das Hohelied*, BK 18 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1965), 60-62; Muller, H.-P., "Die lyrische Reproduction des Mythischen im Hohenlied," *ZTK* 73 (1976): 26-27; Muller, "Das Hohelied," in H.-P. Muller, O. Kaiser and J. A. Loader, "Das Hohelied, Klagelieder, Das Buch Ester," *ATD* 16/2 (1992): 13, 40; Heinevetter, H.-J., "Komm nun, mein Liebster, Dein Garten ruft Dich!' Das Hoheliedals programmatische Komposition," *BBB* 69 (1988): 173.

[3] Brenner A, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament*, JSOTSup 21 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 121.

[4] Scott B. Noegel and Gary A. Rendsburg, *Solomon's Vineyard: Literary and Linguistic Studies in the Song of Songs* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2009), 73.

there is a re- occurrence of the consonant *shin,* which occurs six times in the first two lines of the poetic verse.[5] Of the six uses in the first two lines, there is a rare verb שׁזף (look upon, glare) which occurs only twice elsewhere—Job 20:9; 28:7.[6]

The role that the "vineyard" image thus plays as the love poetry unfolds is to prepare the reader for the understanding the garden metaphor as descriptive for the body of the beloveds and a place for lovemaking. This role is embedded in the use in verse 5. The vineyard is a literal geographic locale where the female beloved works and also a metaphorical referent to her body. This preparation, however, is important in light of the fact that the "vineyard" is a more general locale than the "garden." And the way the poetry moves, it is chiastic to narrow in to the "garden" metaphor from the more general "vineyard" reference. So as the reader journeys through the poetry and takes stops at junctures where the beloveds are described with "garden" metaphors (as is the case in 1:14, a cluster of henna blossoms, 2:3, an apple tree in the forest, 5:15, a cedar of Lebanon, and 4:13-15, a garden of spices) the reader ought to understand the source domain, GARDEN, as a reference to the target domain, the BELOVEDS. In this sense, the "garden" metaphor is chosen as a more descriptive domain than the vineyard metaphor.

The vineyard metaphor in the Song is a regular image for describing a female in general without a nuance of love imagery that characterizes the Song of Songs and its

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[5] Fox, *Song of Songs,* 102.

[6] Noegel and Rendsburg, 73.

ANE parallels. The "vineyard" is utilized here in the Song as well as in the vineyard Song in Isaiah for speaking about a woman (Israel in the case of Isaiah) more generally and not with the nuances of love descriptions that is embedded in a "garden" metaphor.[7]

Furthermore, there are three main attributes shared between the physical "garden" and its metaphorical referent, the beloved's body. First, "gardens" are a place of secluded privacy surrounded by walls to keep strangers away as well as prying eyes.[8] This sense predominates within the love poetry seen in the nuance wherein the beloved's offers entry to the each other exclusively (2:17; 4:12, 16; 8:10, 12, 13-14). Second, the "garden" is a symbol of spring-like prosperity. Spring represents the rebirth of nature and renewal of love. Within the love song, the female beloved is pictured as a flourishing garden at the coming of spring thus mapping out her readiness for love.[9] Third, gardens are filled with innumerable sensual pleasures.[10]

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[7] Within the Hebrew Bible, the vineyard metaphor runs through varying lengths. The parallel between Isaiah's usage of the vineyard rhetoric and its usage in Song of Songs is well accounted for by Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp, Continental Commentaries (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 182. Wildberger says that the vineyard parallels Solomon's harem (Song 8:12), which is more general than specific in light of the Song's exclusivism between the lovers. See also, H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–5*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006), 329; H. Stephan, *Modern Palestinian Parallels to the Song of Songs*, Studies in Palestinian Customs and Folklore 3 (Jerusalem: Palestine Oriental Society, 1923), 16.

[8] Kathryn L. Gleason, "Gardens in Preclassical Times," *OEANE* 2 (1997): 382.

[9] Brian P. Gault, *Body as Landscape, Love as Intoxication: Conceptual Metaphors in the Song of Songs* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 93.

[10] Jill M. Munro, *Spikenard and Saffron: A Study in the Poetic Language of the Song of Songs*, JSOTSup 203, eds. D. J. A. Chines and P. R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic

The emphasis on the beloved as a keeper of the vineyard builds from the identity of the "vineyard" as a metaphorical referent for the beloved. While the boast of the female beloved about the male beloved begins this love poetry, the parallel lies stark with the identity of the female beloved, and in particular with the rather apologetic tone she gives about her physical state as dark (שְׁחֹרַחְתִּי), and then her inability to keep her vineyard (כַּרְמִי) because she has been charged to keep the vineyards (הַכְּרָמִים) in place of hers. Richard S. Hess comments that the apologetic tone is because the female beloved's own body has not been cared for as would be appropriate for someone seeking love. Not only has her devotion to her role as a keeper of the vineyard obscured her from this responsibility to look after herself, but also, in exercising her role as a keeper of the vineyard, it has actively contributed to a skin condition other than what she might have desired. Furthermore, the apologetic tone arises out of the recognition that the beauty she speaks of herself may be seen less as exotic and desirable and more as common and lacking in any attraction to measure up to the expectations of the class.[11] Within this framework then, it seems more likely that the vineyards (הַכְּרָמִים) are literal, while "my vineyard" (כַּרְמִי) is a metaphorical reference to the female beloved's body.

Press, 1995), 98-99. While Munro notes the pleasure evoked from a garden scenery, he notes however that while the garden maps that understanding, the vineyard is more socioeconomic and does not parallel the mapping from the garden.

[11] Richard S. Hess, *Song of Songs,* Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Michigan: Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 84. See also, Ian A. Duguid, *The Song of Songs,* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Westmont, Illinois: IVP, 2015). Brian P. Gault argues that the dark skin color of the female beloved was one not welcomed in light of the various Jewish sentiment expressed in their codes and extrabiblical works of literature. With the various antitheses he provides, he concludes that dark skin was undesirable in Jewish Culture. Gault, 61-67.

4.2 Elements of a Garden Mapped onto the Beloved (1:13-17; 2:1-3)

A bundle of myrrh my beloved is to me	צְרֹור הַמֹּר ו דֹודִי לִי
that lies all night between my breast	בֵּין שָׁדַי יָלִין:
A cluster of henna my beloved is to me	אֶשְׁכֹּל הַכֹּפֶר ו דֹודִי לִי
in the vineyards of En-Gedi	בְּכַרְמֵי עֵין גֶּדִי:
Behold you are fair my love	הִנָּךְ יָפָה רַעְיָתִי
behold you are fair	הִנָּךְ יָפָה
your eyes are doves	עֵינַיִךְ יֹונִים:
Behold you are handsome my beloved	הִנְּךָ יָפֶה דֹודִי
Yes, pleasant!	אַף נָעִים
Also, our bed is green	אַף־עַרְשֵׂנוּ רַעֲנָנָה:
The beams of our house are cedar	קֹרֹות בָּתֵּינוּ אֲרָזִים
[And] our rafters of fir	רַחִיטֵנוּ בְּרֹותִים:
I am the rose of Sharon	אֲנִי חֲבַצֶּלֶת הַשָּׁרֹון
the lily of the valleys	שֹׁושַׁנַּת הָעֲמָקִים:
Like a lily among the thorns	כְּשֹׁושַׁנָּה בֵּין הַחֹוחִים
So is my love among the daughters	כֵּן רַעְיָתִי בֵּין הַבָּנֹות:
Like an apple tree among the trees of the wood	כְּתַפּוּחַ בַּעֲצֵי הַיַּעַר
so is my beloved among the sons in his shades with great delight	כֵּן דֹודִי בֵּין הַבָּנִים בְּצִל�ֹּו חִמַּדְתִּי
and I sat down	וְיָשַׁבְתִּי
and his fruit was sweet to my taste	וּפִרְיֹו מָתֹוק לְחִכִּי:

With the introduction of the "vineyard" metaphor in 1:5, 6, as a geographic locale and "my vineyard" as a source domain for the female beloved, the reader is now prepared to appreciate the "garden" metaphor.

The metaphor in this section draws its source from the domain of the components of a "garden." The target for the metaphor is the "beloveds." The idea carried onto the target from the source domain is the idea of lovemaking, secluded privacy, and intoxicating sensual pleasures. This section of the song is directed to the male beloved within which the female beloved maps out sensory metaphors from the conceptual world of gardens to describe the pleasures of their relationship.

There is a notable alliteration within this section, especially with verses 15 and 16. Three words are specially chosen for their acoustic effect, and they occur only once in the Song. These words are, נעים (pleasant), ערשׂנו (our bed, couch), and רעננה (green, verdant). All three words have a reoccurring consonant. The first word has a *nun* and an *ayin.* The second word has an *ayin,* a *resh,* and a *nun.* The final word has a *resh,* an *ayin,* and two *nuns.* The alliteration is further heightened by the inclusion of the pronominal suffix נו (our) to the second word, thus allowing all three words to be marked with both a *nun* and an *ayin.*[12]

Similarly, in verse 17 there is an alliteration among the words in this verse. The first word קרות (beams) has a *resh* and a *taw*. The second word בתינו (our house) has a *bet* and a *taw.* The third word רהיטנו (rafters) has a *resh* and a *tet* (tet in this word corresponds as a voiceless dental *taw* appearing in the preceding words), and the final word ברותים has a *bet,* a *resh,* and a *taw,* corresponding with the total of the sounds in the three preceding words. The link then is established between verse 16 and 17 with the use of two key words in alliterative link—ערשׂנו and ארזים. Both words share four similar consonants or sounds in correlating order.[13] "Pharyngeal '*ayin* and laryngeal *aleph'* appear at the start of each word, next follows *reš* in each form, then come the sibilant sounds *śin* and *zayin* respectively, and finally the nasals *nun* and *mem* occur."[14]

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[12] Noegel and Rendsburg, 76.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

This section of the love poetry begins with descriptively outlining the pleasures that characterize the relationship between the beloveds.[15] The source domain first referenced is BUNDLE OF MYRRH. A bundle of myrrh is a kind of amulet of varied form and contents, worn on the neck and often documented in oriental iconography.[16] Myrrh used here is a scented resin cultivated in Arabia, Ethiopia, and Somalia.[17] Its use within the song maps out the reference of the pleasing and erotic nature of the myrrh as accompanying intimacy as well as serving as a synecdoche for it.[18]

This section of the Song relies heavily on sensory imagery along with figurative and elevated language. Patrick Hunt writes about the very sensory image within the Song of Songs and notes that in vs. 13, the sensory images are threefold. Beginning with the visual metaphor, its primary sensory experience is tactile with the placement of the male beloved mapped out as a bundle of myrrh between her breasts in very intimate proximity.

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[15] Commenting on the role the aromatics play in this section of the song, Richard Hess notes that although all the aromatics are applied to the female beloved, they each represent the sensual pleasure that the physical presence of the lover brings. Hess, 103.

[16] Othman Keel, "*Deine Blicke sind Tauben. Zur Metaphorik des Hohen Liedes*," *SBS* 114/115 (1984): 108-114, quoted in Barbiero, 76. Griffiths adds that myrrh is an aromatic gum from the tree *Commiphora schimperi*, widely used in the pre-modern Mediterranean world as an ingredient in perfumes and oils of various kinds, as well as a component of incense. He avers that the use occurs frequently in the Song (3:6; 4:6, 14; 5:1, 5, 13) regarding an implied love-making between the beloveds due to its explicit sexual appeal. Griffiths, 158.

[17] Zohary Michael, *Plants of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982), 200.

[18] The erotic character of myrrh plays out significantly in Prov. 7:17; Esth. 2:12. Griffiths comments that the myrrh in the Song was always about the beloved's pleasing and erotically exciting perfume. Griffiths, 157, 159.

Yet, the bundle of myrrh has a double entendre of mapping the presence of the male beloved as well as mapping an additional olfactory sense.[19] In the final analysis, the breast as a basic symbol of comfort as well as a prominent secondary sexual characteristic of special attraction becomes a location where she can privately hold him.[20] The private domain, "her breasts," draws back on the "garden" metaphor as a private domain reserved for the beloveds.

The next descriptive metaphor utilized for the beloved is a cluster of henna. Henna (*Lawsonia inermis)* is a shrub that can reach the height of three meters and blooms in yellow-white with a rose-like perfume.[21] In light of the cluster of sensory metaphors that feature in the Song, Patrick Hunt observes that there is a paradigm here that begins with the visual metaphor, "the henna," blossoming and evoking the olfactory sense by its fragrance, and the clustering at En-Gedi suggests tactility.[22] Like "the myrrh" in the

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[19] Patrick Hunt, *Poetry in the Song of Songs: A Literary Analysis,* Studies in Biblical Literature Vol. 96 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008), 89. Alter speaks of the placement of the bundle of myrrh between the female beloved's breast and notes that, "because he nestles between her breasts all night long… the act and the actors of love become intertwined with the fragrant paraphernalia of love." Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry,* 199.

[20] P. Roth, *The Breast* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972); B. Rudofsky, *The Unfashionable Human Body* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971). The location of myrrh remains between her breasts, provoking a word picture of the male lover spending the night with the female and evoking a scene of sexual pleasure full of fragrances and the most desirable physical experiences. Also, the location between her breasts indicates her musings as she opens to him the most precious parts of her body as she longs for his lovemaking as a means to express the love they share. Hess, 104, 105.

[21] Zohary, 190.

[22] Hunt notes that the sensory type metaphor is further heightened by the end product of the henna as gustatory grapes which evokes the pleasure gotten from an intoxicating wine. Hunt, 89. Beyond its erotic, alluring nature, henna is often regarded as

preceding verse, with its exotic and precious nature, "the henna" maps out the beloved as exclusive to the female lover.[23] The choice of the aromatics as a source domain in this section of the poetry situates the location for such venture within the private domain, "gardens." The reference to "En-Gedi" apart from being a geographic location where the aromatics are found is well chosen in light of what it evokes in Israelite history. With the word parallel between David (דויד) and lover (דּוֹדִי), and the role En-Gedi plays in the narrative of David as a secret hideout from King Saul, the Song plays on that "secret" imagery and maps both the location, En-Gedi, and the aromatics found within En-Gedi as all pointing to the reclusion of the lovers to a secret place for lovemaking—"the garden."[24] Hence, what the "garden" is to the lovers, as a private domain, "En-Gedi" becomes to them from the parallel with David's narrative and the role of secrecy En-Gedi plays.

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a symbol of life in light of its geographic location on the edge of the Dead Sea (En-Gedi) surrounded by the desert, a situation that speaks of the triumph of life over death.

[23] Hess notes that as the myrrh emits a distinctive fragrance for the female lover, the spreading forth of the fragrance provides an environment that presents the male as of the greatest worth and separated from everyone else. Hess, 62.

The tactile sensory evocation that comes with this section of the love poetry is well attested for by Origen who observes that one of the features of the aromatics referenced as a source domain for the beloveds is that its scent is only emitted when rubbed, a comment which further heightens the idea of the lovemaking between the beloveds. Michael V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 106.

[24] Hess notes that while the vineyards of En-Gedi may describe physical plantations, it is most likely a metaphor for the physical body and in the usage in this section of the Song, the role it plays is a setting particularly appropriate for the love between the beloveds. Hess, 63.

The final section of verse 17 that points to the lover's bed as "our bed is green" is poetic. To call it "green" is to observe and underscore that poetry as well as connect it to desire and fertility—as the bed blooms with the lovers' desire, and the blooms are beautiful to both the eye and the nose, so is the flesh of the lovers to each other. Beyond its beauty, the reference, "our bed is green," maps out the "bed" as a fertile playground for lovemaking as well as evokes its magnificence within nature.[25] The last section on the elements of a "garden" (2:1-2) mapped unto the beloveds is scenic with a representation of the beloveds among potential competitors. The role the source domain, FLOWERS, plays in this section of the poetry is well attested for.[26] With their shape and scent, flowers evoke expressions of beauty, freshness, and attraction.[27] In universal language, as well as in later Greek texts and other subsequent traditions paralleling ancient Near East literature, some of the intense floral or fruit connections to beauty, desire, and fertility are

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[25] Griffiths, 171. The scenery is poetic as observed by Tremper Longman III who notes that beyond the secrecy that the reclusion into the garden provides, there is an evocation of sensory pleasantness that arises from the trees that produce a pleasant scent, thus making the spot a pleasant place for an intimate encounter. Tremper Longman III, *Song of Songs: The NIV International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 135. Others like Othmar Keel observe that placing the lovers within the house of cedars and junipers is to see them as exercising divine prerogative because mountains of cedar were a dwelling place or garden of the gods. Othmar Keel, *Song of Songs: Continental Commentaries* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 75, 76. Yet, the poetic imagery revolves more within the realms of humans exercising love than they usurping the prerogative of the divine in their exercise of love. See Hess, 67.

[26] See, for example, Barbiero, 82; Hess, 67. Flowers according to Hunt are universally acclaimed as an image of fertility in several ways. Often associated with a feminine love motif, it is mapped as an emblem of gifts of love since antiquity. It represents an underlying sense of feminine sexuality and beauty. Hunt, 108.

[27] Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on The Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes,* Translated by M. G. Easton, A.m., D.D (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1891), 40; Keel, 80.

referenced in the love poetry and evoked within garden scenes.[28] The idea mapped from the metaphor of a "flower" either as a lily or a rose evokes the sense of luxury, pleasantness, and fertility of the female beloved stated by her and agreed upon by the male beloved.[29]

The parallel between the thorns and the flowers is more poetic than geographical. Barbiero comments on this, noting that while the preposition 'among' does not appear in this case, as in the parallel in v. 3, the extent to which the flower is attractive and life-giving is paralleled with thorns which are unpleasant and associated with the desert, the symbol of death. Hence, while the female beloved is a flower who bears a breath of new life and who attracts irresistibly with her charm, in comparison, the other young women who echo the daughters of Jerusalem are repellent as thorns.[30]

Verse 3 forms a paradigmatic relationship with verse 2, mirroring the presence of the beloveds among the daughters and sons of Jerusalem. While the "female beloved" is a "flower" among thorns, the "male beloved" is "an apple tree" among "the trees of the wood." Like the flower among the thorn imagery, the image of an apple tree among the

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[28] Hunt, 108.

[29] While the sense of frailty is also within the conceptual world of the source domain, FLOWER, it is however not mapped onto the beloved, because the metaphor does not speak of the temporary nature of their love but of the luxury and beauty that is characteristic of a flower. Also, frailty is not a salient feature of the "flower" in this metaphorical expression. See more in Bernard Knox, ed. *The Norton Book of Classical Literature* (New York: Norton, 1993), 234; Hunt, 108.

[30] Barbiero, 84. Hess adds that the clear sense between the parallel of the flower and the thorn is the insignificance of the latter in light of the former. He notes that for the lover to compare a flower among thorns to his partner among the young women suggests that he has eyes for her alone, not for anyone else. Hess, 68.

other trees of the wood is also poetic than geographic. In light of the horticulture and geography of Israel, Michael Fox translates תַּפּוּחַ as an apricot, noting that except for the wild inedible kind, apples did not grow in ancient Israel.[31] Yet, as Keel observes, the apple appears to have been known in earlier Sumerian literature.[32] The emphasis then, and idea mapped from the apple tree among the other trees of the wood is the idea of an apple tree that distinguishes itself by its usefulness in providing something nourishing—refreshment, pleasure from taste, and the accompanying odor. The parallel then evoked from both the "flower" among the thorns and "the apple tree" among "the other trees of the wood" is that as the flower enhances the pleasure of visual forms and beauty, the apple tree stimulates the taste and olfactory senses.[33] Furthermore, the contrast is drawn on the appropriateness of the source domain chosen to the "garden" metaphor. "Apples" and "flowers" are more at home in a "garden" than thorns and trees of the wood. The imagery evoked then is on the private domain of "gardens" where the beloveds see themselves as inhabiting, as opposed to the thorns and other trees of the wood

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[31] Fox, 107.

[32] Keel, 82. Hess provides an overview of various references to the apples in the Old Testament. See Hess, 69. The reference to an apple tree as a fruit tree in ANE iconography is often used as a metaphor for the woman and has an erotic background in the Graeco-Roman and ANE worlds. Its use in the Song as a reference for the male beloved parallels its usage in Sumerian texts on sacred marriage. See Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite: Aspects of Faith, Myth, and Ritual in Ancient Sumer* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1969), 95-96; D. Wolkstein, and S. N. Kramer, *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1983), 38, 40. While fruit imagery is one of the most universal sexual metaphors, an apple is mostly used to evoke sexual appeal. C.f., John Atkins, *Sex in Literature*, 4 vols (London: John Calder, 1978), 3:222; Ronald A. Veenker, "Forbidden Fruit: Ancient Near Eastern Sexual Metaphors," *Hebrew Union College* 70-71 (2000): 58.

[33] Hess, 69.

that are more public domain.

In verse 3b, the placement of the male beloved as an apple tree among the other trees of the wood, the female beloved resting in his shade, and enjoying the pleasures from his fruit, all seem to have a double entendre.[34] The metaphor of finding rest under the shade of the male beloved mapped as an apple tree evokes the idea of shelter or protection from the scorching rays of the sun—a metaphorical reference that draws on her being skin burned in 1:5. In the shade of her beloved, the female feels secure. Love to the female beloved is sitting in the shade of her beloved.[35] Furthermore, the thought introduced here is the metaphor, SEX IS EATING (c.f., 4-7) correlated from the words of the beloved, "his fruit was sweet to my taste." I discuss this metaphor in detail below.

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[34] Renita J. Weems notes this double entendre and says that the metaphor could go both ways, either as a referent to the sweetness of the apple to the female beloved's taste or some part of the male beloved's body as sweet to the beloved's taste. She concludes by noting that whatever it means, it was clear to the beloveds, while it remains a quest for the rest of us to figure out. Renita J. Weems, "The Song of Songs," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 5:389. See also Trible Phyllis, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 145.

[35] Barbiero, 86. Munro adds that the metaphor of an apple tree maps the idea of strength and protection and hence, becomes an appropriate image for the male beloved, who, with masculine chivalry and with fatherly tenderness, shelters his young bride. Munro, 83. Munro's point on masculine chivalry may run contrary to the rather feminine dominance that is evoked everywhere within the Song. The sense then of a shade as observed by Hess revolves more around providing an occasion for the female beloved to sit and find pleasure in remaining close to her lover. Hess, 78. Paralleling the metaphor in 1:13 of the proximity of the male beloved between the breasts of the female beloved, the sense of a shade evokes the idea of dwelling in proximity, as well as the refreshment that flows from such proximity.

4.3 Further Elements of a Garden Mapped onto the Beloveds (5:1, 13)

I have come to my garden, my sister, [my] bride	בָּאתִי לְגַנִּי אֲחֹתִי כַלָּה
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice	אָרִיתִי מוֹרִי עִם־בְּשָׂמִי
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey	אָכַלְתִּי יַעְרִי עִם־דִּבְשִׁי
I have drunk my wine with my milk	שָׁתִיתִי יֵינִי עִם־חֲלָבִי
Eat [and] drink friends	אִכְלוּ רֵעִים שְׁתוּ
drink beloved ones	וְשִׁכְרוּ דּוֹדִים
His cheeks are like a bed of spices	לְחָיָו כַּעֲרוּגַת הַבֹּשֶׂם
banks of scented herbs	מִגְדְּלוֹת מֶרְקָחִים
His lips are lilies	שִׂפְתוֹתָיו שׁוֹשַׁנִּים
dripping liquid myrrh	נֹטְפוֹת מֹר עֹבֵר:

This set of metaphors operates within the "garden" rhetoric as its source domain and is targeted at both the "male" and "female" beloved. The idea mapped from the source domain to the target domain is secluded privacy and lovemaking (5:1) and the elevated description of the male beloved (5:13-15). This still describes and highlights the "garden" as a private domain. "Coming into" the "garden" correlates with the idea of BODY IS A GARDEN and the "eating and drinking" correlates with the idea of WOMAN IS FOOD and SEX IS EATING FOOD.[36]

The metaphor in v. 13 also draws from the source domain GARDENS. The "aromatics" used to describe the male beloved in this section have already been used by the male beloved to describe the female beloved. In both cases, the idea mapped from the source to the target domain is the pleasures in their love relationship.

[36] More on the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD is seen in Zoltan Kövecses who summarizes the thought: "This conceptualization of women and men chiefly occurs when they both are considered for sexual purposes. The relationship of sexuality that exists between women and men is perhaps the main and most productive perspective from which men think and talk about women. The SEX IS EATING and THE OBJECT OF SEX IS FOOD metaphors combine with the metaphor of SEXUAL DESIRE/LUST IS HUNGER, where the object of hunger is again APPETIZING FOOD. These metaphors led to the

4.4 A locked Garden 4:12

An enclosed garden is my sister, my bride	גַּן ו נָעוּל אֲחֹתִי כַלָּה
a spring shut up, a fountain sealed	גַּל נָעוּל מַעְיָן חָתוּם:

The source domain for this section of the love poetry is still a GARDEN. The target domain is the FEMALE BELOVED'S BODY. The salient feature mapped from the source domain to the target domain is secluded privacy—a characteristic of both a garden and their love relationship. This poetry still draws back on the choice of the source domain, GARDENS as a private domain.

There is a well-defined alliteration in this verse. Commentators on the Song have noticed the collocation of the two nouns that begin both lines—גן (garden) and גל (fountain). The usage of גל is utilized uniquely in the Hebrew Bible, employed here by the poet of the Song "*alliterationis causa.*"[37] The alliterative use of the words in this verse is clearly observed by Noegel and Rendsburg,

> Note that the repeated word נעול "locked" provides both a *nun* to alliterate with גן "garden" and a *lamed* to alliterate with גל "fountain." Furthermore, the word גל "fountain" follows כלה "bride," presenting another nexus: both words have *lamed* preceded by a velar consonant, the voiceless *kaf* in the case of כלה "bride," and the voiced *gimel* in the case of גל "fountain."[38]

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conceptualization of women as appetizing food." Zoltan Kövecses, *Where Metaphors Come From: Reconsidering Context in Metaphor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). See also, Esther Brownsmith, "To Serve Woman: Jezebel, Anat, and the Metaphor of Women as Food," in *Researching Metaphor in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Marta Pallavidini and Ludovico Portuese (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2020), 44; Lakoff George and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[37] Noegel and Rendsburg, 92.

[38] Ibid.

In this section of the poetry, the distinguishable trait of a garden as exclusive and barricaded is expressed in the thought, to be enclosed or shut up (נָעוּל) and sealed (חָתוּם). Within this metaphor there seems to operate a double entendre that maps the garden. Francis Landy retorts that the insistence that the garden can only be mapped as a sexual euphemism ignores the one certainty of poetry, that it is polysemantic, that is, it maps meanings on many levels.[39] Keel agrees, commenting that the metaphor of the closed garden and sealed spring belongs to the series of inaccessibility metaphors in 2:14 and 4:8, and does not map onto the target domain as often has been claimed the idea of chastity and the exclusive rights of use and ownership; rather, it maps the female lover as inaccessible, whose charms are all the more wonderful, mysterious, and exotic.[40] That the "beloved ones" are not seen in the poetry as partaking from the fruits of the "garden" draws back to the point that the "garden" and the fruits therein are reserved exclusively as a private domain for the beloveds.

Taking 4:12-5:1 together, the idea mapped out in light of the garden metaphor includes lovemaking, secluded privacy, and a new theme of feasting is introduced, probably to map out the partial success both beloveds have achieved in light of the opposition from the female beloved's brothers (1:6). In verse 12, the male beloved speaks

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[39] Francis Landy, "The Song of Songs and the Garden of Eden," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 98:4 (1979): 519. Landy avers that while the garden image revolves around a garden, it also connotes sex, the cycle of fertility in nature as well as in man. While the locked garden may suggest chastity, to confine it to that signification alone would be to equate womanhood with maidenhood. See also, Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics: A Concluding Statement," in *Style in Language*, ed. T. Sebeok (Cambridge: MIT, 1960), 370.

[40] Keel, "Das Hohelied*," ZBAT* 18.2 (1992): 162.

of the female beloved as providing restricted access to herself, and at the close of verse 16, the female beloved invites the male beloved to come into "his garden" and "eat of its pleasant fruits." This passage of the Song beginning with 4:12 and ending with 4:16, according to Hunt, may well be one of the most concentrated images in the Song for sensory richness and a riot of visual and olfactory experiences.[41] Playing on the imagery of "gardens" as places where acute sensuality is stimulated, not just by fragrances and fruits but by the compressed or density of pleasures planned there, this section of the Song heightens the dialogue on BODY IS A GARDEN.[42] The intimate fragrance emitting from the lovers' fantasy garden would be almost overwhelming, as proximity and profusion bloom together, and might be mapped as a paradise metaphor for the union of the beloveds.[43]

The descriptions in verse 15 and the call for the north wind in verse 16 are new images introduced. While Hunt observes that some images evoked in these verses both invite yet defy commentary,[44] Walsh C. E. notes that,

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[41] Hunt, 126.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Francis Landy, *Paradoxes of Paradise: Identity and Differences in the Song of Songs*, Bible and Literature Series (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983), 189.

[44] Hunt, 127. The mappings for the liquid imagery are noted to be a veiled allusion to bodily secretions and the exchange of bodily fluids in kissing, fondling, and sexual intercourse. See Cheryl Exum J., *Song of Songs: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 180.

> Sensuality is maximized in the use of blowing winds to disperse the fragrances as an allusion to motion as well as repose and rhythms of breathing. Fountains and flowings are liquid images that might even allude to the seed of life, "living waters" as orgasms and reproductive secretions of the body that mingle and fertilize this united body of roots and trunks massed together otherwise known as the garden of love.[45]

The point then with the new imagery still borders around BODY IS A GARDEN. While there is general amazement that is evoked by this imagery, the words of David M. Carr echo that,

> So it is that the Song of Songs, however explicit it will get at times about the man's and woman's bodies, never attempts to tame their sexual union (or our imaginative creation of it) with language. Instead, the Song constantly approaches their lovemaking and fades away, or teases with double entendres. It stokes the fires of erotic imagination, getting explicit enough to get the flames burning, yet not dousing them with the water of description. In the end, the Song is more about desire than consummation.[46]

The entry of the "north" and "south" winds into the garden imagery is still reminiscent of BODY IS A GARDEN. The reference to the "north wind" maps out a reference to the things within Song 4:11-16 that geographically comes from there. The reference to the "south wind," however, while mapping warmth, implies a powerful wind that effects change—a change that arises from the blowing of the winds that emits the fragrance of "her garden" and thus reminds the male beloved of the desirability of "her garden" and the need for him to enter it.[47]

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[45] Walsh C. E., *Exquisite Desire: Religion, the Erotic and the Song of Songs* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2000), 108.

[46] David M. Carr, *The Erotic World: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 116.

[47] Hess, 134.

4.5 Garden as a Locale

4.5.1 Song 6:2, 11

My beloved has gone to his garden to the beds of spices to graze in the gardens and to glean lilies	דּוֹדִי יָרַד לְגַנּוֹ לַעֲרוּגֹות הַבֹּשֶׂם לִרְעוֹת בַּגַּנִּים וְלִלְקֹט שֹׁושַׁנִּים׃
To the garden of nuts, I went down to see the green of the valley to see whether the vine had budded	אֶל־גִּנַּת אֱגוֹז יָרַדְתִּי לִרְאוֹת בְּאִבֵּי הַנָּחַל לִרְאוֹת

Verse 2 contains two short phrases, parallel to each other with a series of aural correspondences. The first three letters of the first word in this verse לערוגות are repeated in the first word of the second line—לרעות in an almost similar order. The consonant *gimel* in the first word in the first line is repeated in the last word of the second line—בגנים, and the *taw* at the end of the לערוגות is seen repeated at the end of לרעות. In addition, the consonant *bet* and *mem* in בשׂם are repeated in the word בגנים.[48]

Chapter 6 of the love song provides an entrée into the conceptual world of GARDEN AS A LOCALE FOR LOVEMAKING. In chapter 5, after the long discussion between the female and male beloveds, and the male beloved "going into" the female beloved mapped as BODY IS A GARDEN, the poet introduces a supposed search for the male beloved by the female beloved. Chapter 6:1

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[48] Noegel and Rendsburg, 100.

answers a geographic location question asked by the daughters of Jerusalem as to the whereabouts of the male beloved. Barbiero notes the conundrum of this section, while Heinevetter H. J. stresses this as intentional and poetically driven.[49]

The point of mapping BODY IS A GARDEN unto GARDEN IS A LOCALE FOR LOVEMAKING is suggested by Gault. Having surveyed historical parallels with the Hebrew love Song, Gault notes that the poet in the Song uses horticultural images for the physical place where lovers meet as well as a metaphorical symbol of the beloved's body, while at times blurring the two together.[50] The parallel of this section with other sections of the "garden" rhetoric is neat. While the reference moves from BODY IS A GARDEN to GARDEN IS A LOCALE FOR LOVEMAKING, the constituents of the garden usually

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[49] The conundrum for Barbiero begins with the search of the female beloved for the male beloved. Why did the female beloved go through the stress of being beaten and mistreated by the watchmen (5:7) if all along she knew where the male beloved was, as revealed in her rather quick response in 6:2? Another concern which is revealed in this section is the shift from the garden as BODY IS A GARDEN to GARDEN IS A LOCALE FOR LOVEMAKING. Barbiero comments that for the first time the "garden" which was always a referent for the female beloved (4:16-5:1) shifts to what was even described as the male beloved abandoning her (5:6a)! This according to Barbiero is the reason various authors hold that these verses have nothing to do with the preceding context. Yet, as Barbiero notes, the call out that the beloved has gone into his garden is linked to 4:16e (cf. 5:1a). These continual cross-references with which the Song is strewn speak strongly in favor of the unity of the whole composition. Barbiero, 308, 309. The poetic expertise here according to Heinevetter is intended by the author to evoke a surprise with paradoxical changes. The author has poetically given an unexpected turn of events with the lament at the door, in the sense that with the lament for the beloved at the door, the idea evoked is the desire for union soon to be realized (5a). H. J. Heinevetter, 140, as quoted in Barbiero, 308.

[50] Gault, 89. The historical parallels with the Song surveyed by Gault can be found in Izak Cornelius's work on Egyptian iconography. Izak Cornelius, "The Garden in Iconography of the Ancient Near East," *JSem* 1 (1989): 225-26; Shalom M. Paul, "A Lover's Garden of Verse: Literal and Metaphorical Imagery in Ancient Near Eastern

referenced still map out "garden as a locale" and "body as a garden," thus collapsing both conceptual worlds, BODY IS A GARDEN and GARDEN IS A LOCALE FOR LOVEMAKING, into one.[51]

With 6:2, 11 there seems to be no collapsing of both references, with the "garden" being mapped out singularly as a geographic locale. But as Fox observes the specific collocation "to go down to the garden" in 6:2, 11 revolves around the ancient Near East where it is often employed by a poet as a mixed metaphor for both the person and place of love.[52] This then suggests that the WOMAN IS A GARDEN metaphor, while not the primary emphasis, is at least a secondary possibility, since gardens are not typically a place for grazing.

Love Poetry," in *Tehillah le-Moshe,* eds. M. Cogan, B. L. Eichler, and J. H. Tigay (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 99-110; Bendt Alster, "The Manchester Tammuz," *ASJ* 14 (1992): 19.44-48. Gwendolyn Leick, *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 53.

[51] Westenholz and Westenholz note this collapse and comment, "It is difficult to read the Song of Songs without sensing the distinction between the metaphorical and literal meanings of words vanish like smoke—the scents and colors of the land and its fruits and trees blend with the description of the beloved's charms into an indissoluble whole." Joan Westenholz and Aage Westenholz, "Help for Rejected Suitors: The Old Akkadian Love Incantation MAD V 8," *Orientalia* 46 (1977): 217. See also Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry,* 217.

[52] Fox, 44. Fox avers that the use of the garden imagery by the Egyptian poet was a poetic device to blur the line between the person and place of love.

4.5.2 Song 7:11-13

Come my beloved let us go forth to the field	לְכָה דוֹדִי נֵצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה
let us lodge in the villages	נָלִינָה בַּכְּפָרִים:
Let us get up early to the vineyards	נַשְׁכִּימָה לַכְּרָמִים
let us see if the vine has budded	נִרְאֶה אִם פָּרְחָה הַגֶּפֶן
[whether] the grapes blossoms are open	פִּתַּח הַסְּמָדַר
[and] the pomegranates are in bloom	הֵנֵצוּ הָרִמּוֹנִים
there I will give you my love	שָׁם אֶתֵּן אֶת־דֹּדַי לָךְ:
The mandrakes give off a fragrance	הַדּוּדָאִים נָתְנוּ־רֵיחַ
and at our gates all [manner of] pleasant [fruits] old and new	
	וְעַל־פְּתָחֵינוּ כָּל־מְגָדִים חֲדָשִׁים גַּם־יְשָׁנִים
which I have laid up for you, my beloved	דּוֹדִי צָפַנְתִּי לָךְ:

The second couplet, 7:11-13 still plays on BODY IS A GARDEN and SEX IS EATING FRUIT. The call introduced in 7:11 to come away for a retreat into the field, and the various references to aromatics, function within the already established "garden" metaphor, and the aside, "there I will give you my love," are pointers to the reader to note the continuation of the "garden" metaphor within the Song. Even without the mention of the locale garden as a private domain, the text evokes the act of love-making, which is a private act, as taking place in no other place than the private domain, garden. The retreat referred to here has them lodging in the village for the night and progressing at the break of dawn to visit the vineyards for inspection. The idea mapped out here is reminiscent of 6:11 in light of the parallels of seeing the blossoming vines and the pomegranates within the private domain, "gardens."[53] Seeing the relationship between the previous couplet

[53] A similar thought is mapped out by Hess who notes that the picture is a metaphor for the body of the female beloved and its fecundity for love. Ibid. In light of Assyrian parallels, Nissinen concludes, "The garden is not the only place where the erotic (6:2, 11) and this in 7:11-13, Hess avers that,

> In this verse, the drama and journey again lead to the same destination, the place of lovemaking. This is a place full of luxuriant vines and greenery, a place of fruitfulness in which the life-giving powers of physical love are represented by the giddy intoxication that the vineyard promises and the great symbol of abundant fruitfulness in Israel, the pomegranate, rich in seeds and luscious fruit. These images are the same as in 6:11. Such repetition frames the whole erotic picture of the female in chapter 7.[54]

There is an obvious alliteration that occurs here with the words, דדי (beloved) and דודאים (mandrakes). Noegel and Rendsburg note that it is quite probably that,

> either (1) mandrakes were called in Hebrew by the term דודאים because the plant was believed to have aphrodisiacal power, or (2) the plant was called דודאים for whatever reason any name is attached to any plant (or anything, for that matter) and thence came to be considered an aphrodisiac because its name evoked the sounds of the poetic word for "love."[55]

4.5.3 Song 8:11-13

Solomon has a vineyard in Baal Hamon	כֶּרֶם הָיָה לִשְׁלֹמֹה בְּבַעַל הָמֹון
he leased the vineyard to keepers	נָתַן אֶת־הַכֶּרֶם לַנֹּטְרִים
for its fruit everyone was to bring	אִישׁ יָבֵא בְּפִרְיֹו
a thousand silver [coins]	אֶלֶף כָּסֶף׃
My vineyard is before me	כַּרְמִי שֶׁלִּי לְפָנָי
you may have a thousand Solomon	הָאֶלֶף לְךָ שְׁלֹמֹה
and those who tend its fruit two hundred	וּמָאתַיִם לְנֹטְרִים אֶת־פִּרְיֹו׃
The one who dwells in the gardens,	הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת בַּגַּנִּים
the companions listen for your voice	חֲבֵרִים מַקְשִׁיבִים לְקֹולֵךְ
let me hear it	הַשְׁמִיעֵנִי׃

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encounters take place, it is a multi-layered metaphor for luxury, lovemaking, a woman, and her genitals." Nissinen Martti, "Love Lyrics of Nabû and Tašmetu: An Assyrian Song of Songs?" in *Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf, Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient,* ed. M. Dietrich and I. Kottsieper (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998), 617, as quoted in Gault, 91.

[54] Hess, 198.

[55] Noegel and Rendsburg, 104.

In the final section of the poetry, the poet introduces Solomon who is previously introduced subtly with the use of pun. With this poetic device, the poet uses שַׁלְמָה in Song 1:7 and the feminine epithet in Song 7:1, שׁולמית as a hint to Solomon's name. Additionally, the poet uses Solomon's other name ידידיה (beloved of YHWH [2 Sam. 12:25]) by the way of repeated forms דודי (my beloved) and דדיך (your love).[56]

The last couplet (8:11-13) contains the "vineyard" theme. The introduction of the vineyard of Solomon in Baal Hamon as contrasted with the vineyard of the speaker in verse 12, the leasing of Solomon's vineyard to keepers, and the price levied on the fruits from Solomon's vineyard all revolve around the use of the vineyard as a non-metaphorical reference.[57] The reference to "my vineyard" which the female beloved draws back on echoes the prologue in 1:6.[58] Also, the reference to the "one who dwells in the gardens" evokes the garden metaphor.

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[56] Noegel and Rendsburg, 161, 162.

[57] Griffiths notes that the location, Baal Hamon, is nowhere found paralleled either in the Song or anywhere in scripture, and he suggests the reference be understood as a toponym. Understood in the personal sense, the expression could be lord of a multitude or master of wealth which would be an allusion to Solomon and his harem or his riches. In the local sense, it would be suggestive of a place of the multitude or of riches that could allude to Jerusalem. Griffiths, 341, 486, 487. The reference, כַּרְמִי, in verse 12 with the 1cs suffix leaves open the possibility of a male speaker in light of the parallel with Solomon as owning vineyards. There is also the possibility that the reference is tied to verse 10 and thus opening the possibility to a female speaker. I, however, take the speaker to be male in light of the parallel with Solomon owning vineyards and the final couplet in verse 13 which is a reference from the male beloved to the female beloved, implied by the participle, הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת.

[58] Griffiths notes the structural parallel with the epilogue in 8:11-12 and the prologue in 1:6. He observes that the keywords "my vineyard" (1:6; 8:11-12), and "guard" (1:6; 8:11-12) occur verbatim in both verses. The role of 8:11-12 and 1:6 in their various sections are neat and serve parallel functions of closing the section where they

As has been the case with the Song, the poet plays with both the literal and metaphorical usage of the "vineyard" while leaving hints for the reader to map out meanings appropriately. With the absence of the components of the garden in verse 11 and the possessiveness with which the vineyard is addressed in verse 12, "my vineyard," it is likely that "my vineyard" is used to draw an allusion to the reference already established with the garden metaphor. The appropriateness of this verse as a suitable epilogue is observed by Hess, who writes,

> The true and committed love of this couple thus contrasts dramatically with the harem of Solomon. He can have the great wealth and the appearance of great pleasure that is demonstrated by, and (supposedly) comes with, his harem. However, the female regards her body and her love as her own and of greater worth than all of Solomon's wealth. This theme, placed in the concluding verses of this great poem, is so important. The pleasures of sex, as great and praiseworthy as they are, do not become ends in themselves. All the joy, all the sensuality, is subsumed beneath the respect for the woman and her right to use her body in a committed relationship of love.[59]

The final verse in this couplet (v. 13) echoes the garden metaphor. This time it is a referent from the male beloved to the female beloved, implied by the participle, הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת in the feminine gender. Throughout the Song, the female has been described as "a garden." For the male beloved to describe the female beloved as residing in "a garden," the idea mapped is that the delights of "her garden" are now made permanent for him, a suitable ending to the Song.[60]

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occur, which according to Griffiths is evidence in favor of an approximately chiastic view of the Song's structure. Griffiths, 341.

[59] Hess, 359.

[60] Hess, 361.

This chapter examined the garden metaphor in the Song of Songs. The language and imagery examined thus far metaphorically describe the body of the beloveds, BODY IS A GARDEN, and the pleasantries that are associated with the union of the beloveds, WOMAN IS FOOD and SEX IS EATING FRUIT. Within the love Song, the beloveds describe each other using the garden metaphor that to an English reader may seem like the bedrock for a romantic getaway, but within the rhetoric of the Song, the ideas carried from the source domain, the GARDEN, to the target domain, the BELOVEDS, resonate within the framework of the garden metaphor, and the meanings are found through a poetic exploration.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Love is an emotional response to someone or something. For the ancient poets of Song of Songs, the emotion of love was primarily described metaphorically with the use of gardens and the elements therein. Gardens are a geographic locale that are well represented for their agricultural and aesthetic functions. Most of their agricultural and aesthetic functions are carried over as conceptual metaphors and utilized in the Song as descriptions of the beloveds and their relationship. As a common description in the ancient Near East depicting the love relationship and the female beloved, the Song continues the tradition and incorporates these descriptions within its poetry. While there are benefits to reading the Song analogically as a reference to the relationship between YHWH and Israel, or as a reference to the relationship between Christ and the Church, there are more benefits to seeing the Song as a poetic masterpiece utilizing a contextual and conceptual source metaphor nuanced within the rhetoric of the ancient Near East to describe both the love relationship and the beloveds.

As utilized in the Song, the "garden" functions as a source domain that describes the "body of the beloveds," "the pleasures that are a crucial part of their relationship," while also being conceptualized as a "locale for lovemaking." Within the Song, the immediate poetic context in light of ancient Near Eastern parallels helps situate meanings to more salient features. The double entendre that the Song plays as functioning as a locale for lovemaking is in light of the image of a garden as a secluded place with restricted access.

The metaphors identified within the Song that resonates are BODY IS A GARDEN, WOMAN IS A GARDEN, and SEX IS EATING FRUIT. While the metaphors above are referenced for the beloveds, some sub-themes feature primarily within the garden metaphor. They include descriptions of the beloveds within the Song, sexual motifs, and songs of descriptions. Hence, even though the Song is a Song sung by a beloved about the other, it is still a Song of each beloved about himself/herself.

Presenting the backgrounds of the ancient Near Eastern garden rhetoric side by side with the Song shows that they were in continuity. In Babylon and Egypt, for example, the love relationship is well described using garden metaphor. Within this garden metaphor, the beloveds see nature as a springboard from which to describe their relationship. What the "garden" is—lush, secluded and private, fruitful, beautiful, and pleasurable—their love relationship proposes to be. Within this study then, it concludes that the Song describes the relationship within the eyes of the beloveds, and not from those of the protagonists or antagonists, who oftentimes question, "Who is your beloved?" and other times adjure, "How is your beloved better than others?" (Song 5:9).

This utopia, as the beloveds describes their relationship, is nuanced with a metaphorical motif. From their expression, they correlate the motif of a lived romantic reality in their relationship with the source metaphor, THE GARDEN. The beauty of the surroundings of the "garden" becomes an extension of the beauty of the beloveds. The pleasures that come with being in a "garden" are nuanced for the pleasures the couple finds in their mutual love. The enclosed nature of a "garden" parallels the idea of privacy and intimacy that the beloved share with each other in the relationship.

The conclusion drawn from this guided research is that the poetic exploration of the Song within a comparative framework of the genre of the love songs of the ancient Near East is profitable for understanding and situating the Song within its milieu which better provides a more literary informed meaning to the Song.

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