

## SONG OF SONGS: FROM TRANSCENDING TO “TRANSCENDENTAL” SEX (1)

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Pieter van der Zwan

Post-doctoral Research Fellow, Department of Old Testament Studies,  
University of Pretoria\*  
Old Testament Studies  
University of Pretoria  
Private Bag X20  
Hatfield  
Pretoria  
South Africa, 0028  
E-mail: dr.pvdz@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

Contrary to the common reception of Song of Songs as ecstatic love poetry, perhaps even exuding some divine atmosphere, is the mostly unrecognised voice of a very human and fragile female protagonist who is either fixated in or has regressed to, a rather primitive psychological condition where her oral, narcissistic and perhaps even depressed orientation ironically opens her up to suggest her desire to include and therefore transcend her beloved. This she does precisely through her embracing sexuality which mirrors her own longing to belong to a wider and greater maternal context which serves as silent background.

### INTRODUCTION

In this first of two related articles<sup>1</sup> a psychological interpretation of the female character as probably the dominant voice in Song of Songs will be pursued. Her personality structure, or at least her psychological condition, *could* be that of the author who has projected her or his own state of mind onto her.

This study of her condition hopes to show that her emotional state reflects that of

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an oral-narcissistic-depressed personality who desperately tries to incorporate her love object in order to find peace within herself. The reason for this interest is that it would then open up the question as to what kind of religiosity can be expected from such a condition, which will be answered in the follow-up article (van der Zwan 2014:861-884). Various ways of expressing her condition will first be sourced from the biblical text before they are compared to a modern psychological framework suggesting an empathic understanding of her state of mind. Finally, some heuristic questions about her religiosity will be opened to be taken up in the subsequent study mentioned above (van der Zwan 2014).

As for the methodological issues involved when (post-)modern psychological categories and insights are applied to an ancient text, it is important that this refers to *one* possible reception, along with, for instance, the philosophical, anthropological, sociological or spiritual viewpoints. Reception can only be from a current and therefore, in a sense, “anachronistic”, stance. Even the traditional literary and historical analyses are in some way “impositions” of present-day perspectives as they utilise current ways of understanding texts and history.

Reader-response theories confirm that an “archaeological” rediscovery of what happened in historical minds is elusive and therefore emphasise that the recipient’s processing in terms of a melting of two horizons is the best that can be offered (Oeming 2013:91). Analyses of the original author(s) – whenever they are known – are therefore excluded and only the characters they created are available for such psychological interpretations, although one can assume that the product, however indirectly, reflects the producer: all creations are always autobiographic. This psychological analysis is therefore part of the literary analysis of the text, but the effect on the (post-)modern recipient rather than the original product is hence the focus of this study. For those used to historical or phenomenological approaches, this may seem like a hermeneutical leap, but including modern approaches to process ancient traditions is also typical of the openness of the post-modern mind. Psychological analyses and interpretations (the plural is important) serve the multiplication of

perspectives to liberate and allow for a wider horizon of possible meanings in not only a critical stance towards less tolerant “fixating” positions, but also a more creative way of engaging with the text.

Because Song of Songs is not a “historical” text, but lyrical love poetry with various mythical hints and mimicking the internal life of its voices, psychological interpretations have always been attractive, just as they have been for the interpretation of non-biblical literature and poetry. In fact, the allegorical and mystical interpretations have in a certain sense also been psychological (Oeming 2013:91) as they served as screens for the projections of the recipient’s experiences, but a psychological approach explicates and reflects upon what has been left unconscious and unsaid.

Krinetzki’s 1970 article (Krinetzki 1970:404-416), culminating in his psychological commentary in 1981 (Krinetzki 1981), under the influence of Carl Jung and Erich Neumann, where Krinetzki set out to find a more universal appeal transcending the cultural context from which Song of Songs could have arrived led van der Zwan (2012) to extend this approach to include a (cross-cultural) transpersonal psychological interpretation of Song of Songs. This came against the wider background of an increasing interest in applying psychological insights into the Bible since the late 1960s after a few decades when Albert Schweitzer had levelled criticism against it. This was against the grain of a long tradition with roots going back to antiquity, including thinkers such as Tertullian and Augustine.

The renewed interest in psychological interpretations led, among other things, to its inclusion in 1993 in *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* as well as in a document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission of the same year, its inclusion as a category of the international Society of Biblical Literature and of the European Association of Biblical Studies (where it is called “Emotions and the Biblical World”) and its application to various biblical texts, among others, by particularly D. Andrew Kille, Wayne G. Rollins and Paul M. Joyce in numerous works in the last decade. In the German-speaking world Maria Kassel (1992) and

Manfred Oeming (1995:107-119; 2013) represent strong voices for this approach, and in the French-speaking world Antoine Vergote (1979:252-260) already wrote an encyclopaedic contribution about it in 1979.

The ambiguity and multiplicity in the interpretations of psychologically orientated scholars of the Bible such as Antoine Vergote, Gerd Theißen, Uwe Steffen, Maria Kassel, Manfred Arndt, René Girard, Hyman Fingert and Peter Trummer are sometimes seen as wild exegeses based only on irrational intuitions as they do not seem to have any strict method. Despite its diffuse impression, psychological approaches to the Bible are used in feminist, ideological, deconstructionists, reader response and structuralist criticisms; in fact, all critical approaches have a psychological dimension to them. To this diversity, Clines (1995:110) also remarks that one should not be kept captive by the norms or even categories of a text, but have the freedom to evaluate and interpret them in terms of the present recipient's own standards in order to be authentic. This is not eisegesis, but a critical stance towards the original intention or message of the text as far as it could be ascertained.

Features in the text are associated with modern theories and link the two worlds in that way to make sense to the modern recipient. The current tradition or method is always the mediating lens through which one approaches a text; exegesis without presuppositions is impossible. What a text means only becomes clear in its effects in different historical and geographical contexts. These wider contexts therefore widen its meaning and relevance (Oeming 2013:91-92).

## **SOME TEXTUAL HINTS ABOUT HER EMOTIONAL STATE**

Several aspects of her psychological condition can be deduced from the text.

### **Body parts suggestive of orality**

The first body part mentioned in Song of Songs, פִּיהוּ (his mouth) in 1:2 is the mouth of the male lover. It is the first expression of admiration and therefore of attention – by

the beloved – and about his sensual and physical impact on her. This is immediately followed by adoration of the seemingly non-physical attributes of his name, again implying what is on her lips. מְדַבְּרָהּ (your [that is, her] mouth) in 4:3 suggests various functions such as kissing and speaking. In the case of the woman Krinetzki (1981:136) regards the female mouth, like the vagina, as the symbol for feminine containment. שְׁפָתוֹתֶיהָ (your lips) and its morphological variations are כְּחוּט הַשָּׁנִי (like a scarlet thread) in 4:3 and dripping in 4:11, 5:13 and 7:10, expressed by the verbs תִּטְפַּןָּהּ, נִטְפֹּחַת and דֹּבְבָהּ, respectively. Song 4:2 and 6:6 mention שְׁנַיִם (your teeth), which are praised for their whiteness. לְהִכִּי (for my palate or gums) is associated, clearly as a gustatory sense, with מְתוּקָה (sweet) in 2:3 (hers), with מְמִתְקִים (sweetness) in 5:16 (his) and with the best wine in 7:10 (probably his). לְשׁוֹנָהּ (your tongue) in 4:11 has milk under it instead of words as in Psalm 10:7 and 66:17.

Breasts occur the most of all the body parts in Song of Songs, according to Herrmann (1963:187). This is either suggested through the *double entendre*, אֶהְיֶה (love or breast) in 1:2 already, or mentioned explicitly by a different word, שָׁדַי (my breasts) by the beloved herself in 1:13, and then as אֶשְׂדֶּיךָ (your breasts) in 4:5 and 7:4, both by the lover, using almost identical phrases, comparing them to two gazelle lambs, again in 7:8 and 7:9 by the lover, comparing them to fruit, in 8:1 (referring to her mother's breasts), and in 8:8 and 8:10 (where her brothers are worried about her physical immaturity), all reminding one of the holy name אֵל שַׁדַּי (*El Shaddai*). As the first love object in life, breasts clearly relate to the earliest stage relived in nostalgia through the rest of later life. Breasts obviously have oral connotations, both for the baby who is suckled and for the lover's kisses.

## Eating and drinking

Lavoie (1995:132) has already drawn attention to the erotic symbolism of food, eating and drinking in Song of Songs, as this is also represented in several other cultures and expressed, for instance, by ancient Near Eastern and contemporary Arabic poetry.

There are several references to incorporation through eating and drinking: 1:2, 1:4,

1:12, 2:3-2:5, especially וַיֹּאכַל (and he will eat) in 4:16, and אֲכַלְתִּי (I have eaten), שָׁתִיתִי (I have drunk), אָכַל (eat!) and שָׁתוּ (drink!) in 5:1, 7:10, 8:1 and 8:2. The sexual undertones suggest that the external body of the other is psychically introjected and internalised as an image that nourishes the self.

חָלָב (milk) is found in 4:11 and 5:12 and חָלָבִי (my milk) in 5:1, which could be referring to saliva in 4:11 and 5:1. Its associations with breasts and infancy lend it feminine connotations. In 5:12 his eyes are like doves washed in milk. As both doves and milk were associated with the “große Mutter” (great mother) in the Jungian interpretation of these cultures, this cluster of allusions here suggests a kind of emphasis or superlative to intensify this image of containment (Krinetzki 1981:169).

Love is also associated with יַיִן (wine) in 1:2, 2:4, 4:10, 5:1 and 7:10. The *hapax legomenon* הַמִּזְגָּג (the mixture, that is, spiced or mixed wine, perhaps with water) occurs in 7:3. It seems to be a stylistic intensification of the wine mentioned previously (Keel 1986:240), similar to הֵרְקָח (mixed with spice) in 8:2, imbibed for its altering effect on consciousness. Keel (1986:171) notes that mentioning milk and wine together in 5:1 is an unusual combination, especially in view of the Hebrew Bible’s sensitivity about mixtures, and that it therefore suggests something anarchic, perhaps suggesting something of her condition.

Milk is also mentioned together with נֹפֶת ([flowing] honey) and שֶׁבֶט (honey) in 4:11 and with יַעֲרִי (my honeycomb) 5:1, adding to the superlative style of Song of Songs (Keel 1986:170). This is further reinforced by honey cake as the purest and most valuable form of honey (Gerleman 1981:162), and conjures up the choicest blessings of YHWH, when he concludes an alliance with his people in Isaiah 55:1 and Joel 4:18. The combination evokes the paradisiacal nourishment referred to in Deuteronomy 32:13f, Isaiah 7:15 and Job 20:17 and the frequent Hebrew Bible phrase about the fertility and productiveness of the Promised Land, to which the body of the beloved is now a parallel.

As eating and drinking occupy such an important place, one would therefore also expect the gustatory sense to predominate as a way of experiencing the incorporated

external world. This is expressed by טוב (good or pleasant) in its various inflexions:

(a) for his love (i.e. for her breasts, if a condensed kind of double entendre is accepted here), which is/are טובים (better) than wine in 1:2. This may include various senses but also includes their taste;

(b) for הטוב (the best, again a superlative) wine, to which her palate, perhaps in the gustatory and tactile senses, is compared in 7:10; and

(c) as a verb, טבו, in the plural form in 4:10, again comparing both her love or breasts to wine and the fragrance of her oils to all the spices.

In fact, all the different senses mentioned in Song of Songs imply an incorporation, whether it be orally or otherwise. The orifices are described mostly with that function.

The same process of incorporation and the nourishing enjoyment accompanying it resonate in nature with the livestock grazing, which the lover imitates metaphorically by being הרעה (the one who grazes) in 2:16 and 6:3, and לרעות (to graze) in 6:2. In 1:7 she asks him where תרעה (do you pasture), to which he responds in the next verse (1:8), telling her ורעי (and let [your fawns] graze). Yet these incorporations are also allusions to the (re-)entry into the maternal womb and their psychic internalisation of each other as images and thoughts in their hearts, which sometimes physically and literally stir the inside as in 5:4.

## Plants and fruit

As the main source of food, vegetative life would have assumed an early value in this culture. Several plants are mentioned, a proportionately greater number than in many other biblical books, and more than the number and frequency of fauna in Song of Songs. It would seem that crops are associated with the female and livestock with the male aspect in Song of Songs. Some plants are either aphrodisiacs or contain substances that induce altered states of consciousness as a form of religious experience. Krinetzki (1981:151) adds that the plants mentioned in 4:14 all had either

medicinal or magical uses. By incorporating them one therefore obtained additional powers. Common to all these possibilities is that they were taken in.

That the garden as a collection of plants and such a private, intimate and protected space for the lovers, is mentioned right at the centre of Song of Songs (Fischer 2010:180), although it is a constant venue in most of the text, seems to be of significance and might unconsciously refer to the innermost body part of the woman. This is reinforced by the fact that Gerleman (1981:159-160) notes that the garden described in 4:12-5:1 is so exotic that only the pomegranate tree could have been found in a Palestinian garden, thus symbolising the fantasies going on about what is mysteriously hidden and intimate in the depths of the body.

Of the many fruits and vegetative substances mentioned in Song of Songs, many are to be digested for nutritional, medicinal or aphrodisiacal, and perhaps also fertilising, reasons. A list of these substances will reinforce how strong the oral subtext in Song of Songs really is:

(a) וְקַנְמוֹן (and cinnamon), וְכַרְכֹּם (and turmeric or saffron) in 4:14 and בָּתָר in 2:17 served as condiments.

(b) מְגִדִים (excellence) in 7:14 and with פְּרִי (fruit, also in 2:3) in 4:13 and 4:16 (where it is מְגִדֵי) refers to the best gifts of nature.

(c) לְאִשְׁכָּלוֹת (like [date] cluster) in 7:8 and 9 resembles the polymastic statues of some goddesses of antiquity - again with oral connotations - to enhance their image of fertility and perhaps to remind one of their natural link to the animal and plant kingdoms (Yalom 1997:16).

(d) בָּטְסֵסְנֵי ([take hold] of its fruit-stalks) in 7:9

(e) הַתְּפוּחַ (the apricot [tree]); Fischer (2010:24) also supports this translation instead of apples, which he claims were cultivated in the Levant only at a later stage.

(f) הָרְמוֹן (of the pomegranate) in 4:3 and 6:7, רְמוֹנִים (pomegranate trees) in 4:13, 6:11 and 7:13 and רְמוֹנִי (my pomegranate) in 8:2 were already a sexual symbol in the Sumerian sacred marriage songs and Inanna calls Dumuzi her pomegranate garden (Pope 1977:491).

(g) הַתְּאֵנָה (the fig tree) and פְּגִיָּה (its early figs) in 2:13.

(h) הַטְּיִים (wheat) in 7:3 might here have connotations of the most basic sustenance for livelihood

(h) הַגְּפָנִים (the grapevines) in 2:13, 6:11, 7:9 and 7:13 and כְּרָם (vineyard) and its morphological derivatives occurring twice in 1:6, twice in 2:15, 7:13, twice in 8:11 and once in 8:12 are important for יַיִן (wine).

(i) הַדְּוִדָּאִים (love apples) in 7:14 as paronomasia reminds one of דּוֹדֵי later in the same verse and of דָּדִי in 7:13 of the motifs of love and breasts, which they might resemble, all with oral connotations. Deriving from the same linguistic root as these words, love apples were seen to have aphrodisiac and fertility value as in Genesis 30:14-16, which is the only other text in the Hebrew Bible where it occurs (Horine 2001:196). The shape of their large, fleshy and forked roots resembles the lower part of the human body, giving rise to the belief that they promoted fertility (United Bible Societies 1972:138-139; Krinetzki 1981:208). They were also used medically as a narcotic and purgative. Gerleman (1981:210) points out that the meaning of the word has been questioned and cannot be taken as necessarily referring to mandrakes, but could perhaps be a collective name for various plants with narcotic and aphrodisiac qualities, still, however, allowing for the image of a “body” incorporated.

### **The theme of receptivity**

The oral attitude is also suggested through opening and entering behaviour, and through the element of water.

Together with constant entering into, and exiting from, spaces of containment and concealment, one finds the beloved opening in a number of situations. To suggest this not only is the verb פָּתַח (open) used in various forms in 5:2, 5:5 and 5:6, but in both 6:11 and 7:13 הִפְרִיָּהָ (whether it has budded) symbolises the same transition of coming to life by opening up. The verb “opening up” is used again in 7:13 in the intensive form with the meaning of blossoming. In 7:14 it is more concrete with וַעֲלֵ-פֶתְחֵינוּ (and at our doors) where it alludes back to פָּתַח (have opened) in 7:13. The man is allowed

to enter into the privacy and intimacy of גן (a garden) in 4:12 and פַּרְדֵּס (a park) in 4:13, because he also needs the containment and nurturing it implies. In a sense he is being taken in by his beloved.

Despite the exclusivity about other potential lovers who are nothing but שְׂעָלִים (foxes, little foxes), there is an openness and sensitivity towards each other and about the divine in the context which will be dealt with in a follow-up paper.

Water is an important element in Song of Songs and also functions to symbolise this receptiveness of the lovers, not only towards each other but also to the subtleties of the background against which they experience life. Liquids, such as wine, milk and flowing honey, represent feminine energy as the holding source of life and water in particular also belongs to the domain of the “weiblicher Gefäß” (the feminine receptacle) (Krinetzki 1981:221). These fluids are found repeatedly, often with mention of their earthy containers as well:

(a) in 4:2 (as in 6:6) where sheep come up מן-הַרְקָצָה (from the washing), probably linked to their shearing; in 4:11, where flowing honey תִּטְפָּנָה (drips, like her hands dripping with myrrh in 5:5: נִטְפָּי);

(b) in 4:12, where a closed spring and sealed fountain are mentioned;

(c) in 4:15, where there is a fountain, a well with flowing water and streams flowing down the Lebanon;

(d) in 5:2 with טֵל (dew) and רִטְסֵי לַיְלָה (night drops);

(e) in 5:12 על-אַפְיָקֵי מַיִם (at channels of water) רְהָצוֹת (bathed) in milk (the same root as הַרְקָצָה in 4:2) עַל-מַלְאָת (at a full one, that is, a spring);

(f) in 5:13 עֹבֵר (overflowing) myrrh;

(g) in 6:11 הַנָּחַל (the torrent);

(h) in 7:3 אֶגֶן הַסָּהַר (round bowl);

(i) in 7:5 בְּרִכּוֹת (pools);

(j) in 7:10 wine הוֹלֵךְ (going or flowing) and דוֹבֵב (gliding);

(k) in 8:7 מַיִם רַבִּים (a lot of waters), וּנְהָרוֹת (and streams) cannot יִשְׁטְפוּהָ (overflow it).

## Possessiveness

With receptivity comes the other side of the coin, namely clinging to what is regarded as possession. The need to own her lover is, in fact, her own need to be owned by him and thus by someone who will hold her whole body and soul as expressed in 2:6: תְּחַבְּקֵנִי בְּיָמֵינוּ תְּחַבְּקֵנִי (let his left hand be under my head, and his right hand embrace me) and in 8:3: תְּחַבְּקֵנִי בְּיָמֵינוּ תְּחַבְּקֵנִי (His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me), where the stylistic figure of merism includes all that is between the two extremes thus subtly emphasising the theme of total absorption again.

One is tempted to bring the word דוֹד (beloved/lover) in association with דָּוָר (receptacle, mostly translated as “basket”) as in its derivatives in 2 Kings 10:7, Jeremiah 24:1 and 2, as these words have similar sounds and could easily be linked in the unconscious in the same way that the active and the passive are not all that clearly separated in the unconscious.

Apart from the main refrains in 2:7, 3:5 and 8:4 (and, to a certain extent, 5:8), there are also other refrains: 2:16a: דוֹדִי לִי וְאֲנִי לוֹ הִרְעָה בְּשׂוֹשָׁנִים (my beloved is mine, and I am his), 6:3a: אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי (I belong to my beloved/lover and my beloved is mine) and 7:11: אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְעֲלֵי תְּשׁוּקָתוֹ (I am my lover’s/beloved’s and his desire is for me). The reversal effectively communicates the sense of equality and mutual possession (Feuillet 1990:216). Possessiveness is, however, but one aspect of narcissism.

## Narcissistic traces

The most prominent suggestion of narcissism is the high level of first person references. That the text reveals a rather narcissistic stage in love is clear from the fact that the emphatic אֲנִי appears 12 times in Song of Songs (1:5, 1:6, 2:1, 2:5, 2:16, 5:2, 5:5, 5:6, 5:8, 6:3, 7:11 and, 8:10). To these indications of the first person, as well as preformatives and affirmatives, Deckers-Dijs (1993:188) adds the seven instances where אֲנִי (which she translates as “my being” or “my essence”) occurs (1:7, 3:1, 3:2,

3:3, 3:4, 5:6, 6:12), and then always with the first person singular suffix as well, always referring to the woman and only in the last instance not within a dysphoric scene. In the first five of these seven instances it is the subject of אָהַבָהּ (love). References to the self - either in the singular or the plural - are only absent in 1:1, 1:3, 1:8, 1:10, 1:15, 2:11, 3:6-11, 4:2-5, 4:11, 4:13-15, 5:11-15, 6:6-8, 6:10, 7:2-8, 8:6-7 and 8:11. That amounts to only 38 out of a total of 117 verses, where there is no reference to the self. This is partially due to the fact that most of Song of Songs is a testimony to very profound experiences. Deckers-Dijks (1993:188) refers also to Rosenzweig, who claims that the word “I” does not occur as often in any other biblical book. In only nine cases the man refers to himself, whereas the woman refers to herself in 52 instances. The self is in crisis, often leading to impulsive behaviour. Love and the confrontation with the miracle of intimacy brings the essence of the self in crisis and forces a regression which would hopefully further lead to consolidation and integration.

### Depressive tendencies

Along with the general celebratory and ecstatic atmosphere exuded by Song of Songs there is actually also some tension,<sup>2</sup> which emphasises the disturbed mind of the woman in particular. This was already clear from the overwhelming majority of self-references within dysphoric contexts mentioned above.

As antidote to these inner conflicts she resorts to seeing reality in terms of polarities – so typical of the mad state of love (Keel 1986:173) – to express the intensity of her feelings. This is also typical of the rationality of puberty as a strategy to orientate oneself in the seemingly chaotic ocean of arousing but also upsetting experiences. Not only are gardens and deserts juxtaposed in Song of Songs, but also

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Stephan Fischer, “Machtstrukturen der Gewalt in Hoheslied”, *Protokolle zur Bibel*, 18/2 (2009):109-121 and his paper, ‘Friction in the Fiction of Solomon in Song of Songs.’ Presented at the Symposium on Das Hohelied Salomos, August 9-11. (University of Basel, Switzerland, 2012) and published in this issue of the journal as Fischer, S 2014 Friction in the Fiction of Solomon in Song of Songs, *Journal for Semitics* 2014/2ii:810-822.

mountains and valleys, ascending and descending, masculine and feminine. The fragmented style can suddenly switch between persons or to the plural when a peak experience is hinted at as in 1:2-4.

There are also thoughts about death in the mind of the woman. This is explicitly stated by *כי-עזנה כמות אהבה, קשה כשואל קנאה* (for strong as death is love, as radical as She'ol is passion) in 8:6. She experiences, dreams or fantasises not only about feeling desolate and desperately searching for (her) love(r) in the streets in 3:2-3 and 5:6, but also wild, ravenous masculine forces persecuting her in 5:7.

The structural analysis of Eder (2004:22) shows that the second of the two assumed dream scenes differs from the first precisely because it is a fantasy that is shattered through reality testing. As if she is waking up to reality, the beloved's feelings, the number of her body parts mentioned, her activities and her self-consciousness as expressed by the repetition of the first person are all multiplied, perhaps to suggest the rising tension, her sense of falling apart and her desperate attempts to defend against it. This is supported by the expression, *נפשי יצאה* (my soul left me, I lost my mind), in 5:6 which is associated with dying in Genesis 35:18 and Psalm 146:4 (Eder 2004:15). Something of her confusion surfaces again and again: *לא ידעתי--נפשי שמתגני* (without knowing it, my soul was transported) in 6:12, where the disorientating madness of her love is expressed.

She is *חולת אהבה* (sick with love) in 2:5 and 5:8 and begs others to *באשישות* (sustain me with raisin cakes) and *רפדוני בתפוחים* (support me with apricots). Again in 5:4 one reads: *ומעי המו עלי* (my insides seethed because of him). It is probably also why the beloved *מתרפקת* (is leaning) on her lover in 8:5. At least six times her state of mind is expressed in what could only be distress. Perhaps this is due to her rising awareness of greater intimacy which she could have had if she had children (as well).

## Pregnancy and childbirth

It is conspicuous that it is above all the woman in Song of Songs who sometimes refers to offspring even in a context where that is apparently not the aim. Perhaps the

intimacy and assurance of “possessing” dependent children brings some relief to her anxious spirit.

There is a strong theme of fertility and the awakening of nature in general. The celebrated sexuality is not completely without any thought of offspring, as Fox (1985:287-288) claims about Egyptian and Israelite love poetry.

Early on already, in 1:6, the woman speaks of the sons of her mother (בְּנֵי אִמִּי). They are not called “brothers”, perhaps to indicate their emotional distance, or to emphasise and anchor them in her mother. In contrast, her lover is, in 2:3, exceptional בֵּין הַבָּנִים (among the sons). In 2:9, 2:17 and 8:14 she says her lover is לְעֶפְרַיִם הַאֲזִילִים (like a young hart). Although in 8:1 she wishes her lover, the only male figure who is positively evaluated (Viviers 1998:5), were like a brother, it is about her oral desires because then she could kiss him in public without being scorned.

She refers to בַּיִת אִמִּי (the house of my mother and perhaps even her intimate bedroom) in 3:4 and 8:2 – suggesting perhaps the maternal womb. Both Freud (1929:128f; 1986:85, 225) and Jung (1984:116) recognised that buildings, especially houses, often function as symbols for the body or its parts. The בַּיִת אָב (house of the father), a common expression in the Hebrew Bible, is, significantly, replaced here (Viviers 2008:454).

She also mentions the mother of the man in 3:11; in 8:1 she wishes him to suck from the breasts of her mother, with whom she obviously identifies, and this implies that she wishes him to be at her breast. In 8:5 she stresses his birth from his mother by mentioning it three times in a row. By saying that she awakened him under the same tree where he was born, she suggests that his coming to life, waking up in, and to, this world is similar to what happens when they make love and, again, she unconsciously merges with his mother. Motherhood is clearly brought into association with conception, הוֹרְתִי (she who conceived me) in 3:4 and to birth, לְיוֹלְדָתָהּ (for the one who gave birth to her) in 6:9, and חֲבָלָה יִלְדָתָהּ [...] חֲבָלָתָהּ אִמְךָ (your mother was in travail with you [. . .] she was in travail and brought you forth) in 8:5.

Seven times (1:5, 2:7, 3:5, 3:10, 5:8, 5:16, 8:4) the בָּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם (daughters of

Jerusalem) are addressed or referred to, four of these in the famous refrains of adjuration. Similarly בָּנוֹת צִיּוֹן (daughters of Zion) is found in 3:11. Only in 2:2 and in 6:9 is it the man who refers to daughters and, again, to the singular, בַּת (daughter), in 7:2.

These suggestions therefore repeatedly feature in the background, although there is no direct indication that children are expected from the sexual enjoyment of the two lovers, except if one senses pregnancy in 5:4: וַיִּמְעֵי הַמּוֹ עָלָיו (my insides were in commotion/roared because of him). Horine (2001:5) claims that the Egyptian world view in this respect was generally opposite to that of the ancient Near East. In that sense Song of Songs is therefore closer to the Mesopotamian sacred fertility songs and weaves a fabric of associations with references to breasts and milk.

As in individual psychic development the father has not (yet) intruded into the dyad between the mother and the infant, of which the two lovers are likewise a repetition in the illusion of a magical world.

In contrast to motherhood, where the complete baby spends many months inside the mother and thus develops a very close intimacy with her, fatherhood does not change the man to that extent as it does not involve such a deep relationship with the new life. It is more a social institution (except in the couvade syndrome and rituals). No father figure is ever mentioned in Song of Songs, which deals with much deeper inner realities.

The male lover in Song of Songs is more aware of animal offspring though. In 1:8 he suggests how his lover can meet him at work: וַרְעֵי אֶת-גְּדֵי־תֵן (and feed your baby goats) which she takes care of – reflected again in the proper name, עֵין גְּדֵי (Engedi), in 1:14. All of this adds further weight to her association with motherhood. For him, this could have more to do with economics: possession and labour. In 4:5 and 7:4 he compares her breasts to כְּשֵׁנֵי עֶפְרָיִם, תְּאוֹמֵי צִבְיָה (two fawns, twins of a gazelle). In 4:2 her teeth are compared to עֶדֶר הַקְּצוּבוֹת (a flock of shorn ewes) and to עֶדֶר הַרְחֵלִים (a flock of ewes) in 6:6, not just to sheep in general. Somehow he is reminded of babyhood, which the fawns represent when he looks at her breasts. In the spring

context procreation is all around them. It forms the décor of their own drama of love and passion. Female breasts are physiologically more involved with motherhood than with sex or, better, motherhood is more involved with sexuality than what fathers would want to tolerate. It would therefore seem that love play is at least partially a repetition of and regression to, that early infant experience. This obvious similarity is, however, repressed because of the incest taboo and the guilt attached to it and thus censored from the text.

Some theories, such as that by the popular philosopher who wrote under the pseudonym Osho (2002:99-101), have mooted the possibility that only a marriage where the husband becomes like a son to his wife can achieve this level of depth, because then the woman is reminded of her intimate relationship with her son. This is perhaps why Freud (1974:133) also noted another, perhaps sexual, dimension when he said that a mother's relation to her son is "altogether the most perfect, the most free from ambivalence of all human relationships". Behind her holding the man as she does in 3:4 (cf. אָחַזְתִּי I held him) is her own longing not only to be grasped at certain of her body parts as he does in 7:9: אֶחֶזְקָה בְּסִנְסְנֵי וְיָהִי נָא שְׁדִיךָ כְּאֵשְׁכָלוֹת הַגֶּפֶן וְרִיחַ אֶפְךָ כְּתַפְוִחִים (I will take hold of its branches and let your breasts be as clusters of the vine), but her longing that תֵּהַבְּקִנִי (he embrace) her in totality (expressed by the merism, his left and his right hand) as she wishes him to do in 2:6 and 8:3. Her desire to hold a baby as she will never to be able to hold her lover is but a projection of her own need to be held by what is infinitely greater than her, and that is ultimately a religious and a transpersonal need.

### **Attempts to escape and the risk of addiction**

Not only her dreams or fantasies but also the very state of being in love inhibits certain sensory experiences, such as the vestibular. An example is being drunk (cf. וְשָׁכַרְוּ [and get drunk] in 5:1 and the references to it in 7:10 and 8:2) from יַיִן (wine), with its typical loss of balance, proportion, perspective, integration, but also inhibitions, leading to exaggerations and extreme views.

## **Different levels of religiosity**

A further suggestion of inclusivity is the level of unconscious or semi-conscious religious traces which run throughout the text (cf. van der Zwan 2012), which have not been the primary focus of this paper.

## **TRANSCENDENCE IN THE “PATHOLOGY” OF *SONG OF SONGS***

Following from the above exegesis, several indications suggest that the female character might have tendencies of an oral-narcissistic-depressed personality structure or psychological state (although there are also traces of a genital or hysterical personality structure, but to a lesser degree). Freud regarded human development as following initially three stages according to which a certain body part was awakened: first oral, then anal and then genital awakening.

Whenever a certain stage would psychically not be dealt with properly due to some or other difficulty, that stage would become a fragile structure in the total development. In serious cases a person could get stuck there and be “fixated” in that stage or in less serious cases a person would regress to that stage in crises among which one could regard falling in love. People in the oral stage find themselves in a relatively primitive mode where basic trust has not been established properly. They tend to be narcissistic, depressed and want to fill their inner void by trying to psychically include as much as possible to puff up their weak ego.

According to Lämmermann (2006:294-296), people of this developmental level want to reassure themselves by incorporating not only physical nutrition, but also their partner in an emotional and exclusive way, often trying to render him or her into a child in order to defend against a dominating anxiety about losing the lover. Love and to be loved are therefore important themes. Materialistic, possessive and even addictive tendencies express these anxieties and their defences.

Yet in this “pathological” condition there is also an openness and inclusivity, albeit of a desperate kind. It reaches out beyond itself in what could be called at least a

primitive stage of transcendence. There is a longing for something, no, Someone, greater. Sexuality is one important way of expressing this. "Transcendence" has had two virtually opposite meanings in history. The one refers to "going beyond and leaving behind". That has been the traditional stance towards the sexuality portrayed in Song of Songs. The other meaning which has always survived - even as a dotted line throughout the Middle Ages - and which is now cherished in transpersonal psychology is: instead of leaving behind the lower levels, one recognises and includes them (Wilber 2007:131n). Instead of leaving behind the sexuality in Song of Songs as in the allegorical interpretations, one should include the sexuality in the foreground as pointing towards something or someone greater in the background which contains and holds it. With that perspective sexuality then also regains its transcendental nature.

### **"CONCLUSION"**

The above analysis of the various ways in which the female lover of Song of Songs suggests that she struggles with her oral, narcissistic and depressed condition to include her lover and in this way reveals her own existential and emotional need likewise to be contained by a Transcendent Reality.

The question can now be asked: What is this transcendent background to which her sexuality points? What kind of religiosity can one expect from such an oral-narcissistic-depressed condition? How can this text from "inspired Scripture" inspire the reader or listener to live on a higher level when the main voice is that of such an anxious character? That will be the subject of the follow-up article of the same title.

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