

CONTENTS

| | <i>Page</i> |
|---|-------------|
| CHAPTER ONE: <i>PRE-TEXTS: INTRODUCTION</i> | 1 |
| 1 PROBLEM STATEMENT | 1 |
| 2 BACKGROUND: TRADITIONAL SOLUTIONS | 1 |
| 2.1 SETTING THE SCENE | 1 |
| 2.2 CULTIC INTERPRETATIONS | 3 |
| 2.3 ALLEGORICAL AND TYPOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS | 4 |
| 2.4 LITERAL INTERPRETATIONS | 7 |
| 2.5 MYSTICAL INTERPRETATIONS | 8 |
| 3 THE CONCEPT OF RELIGION | 10 |
| 3.1 DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION | 10 |
| 3.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION | 13 |
| 3.3 RELIGION IN TERMS OF CONSCIOUSNESS | 13 |
| 3.3.1 Pre-egoic stage | 17 |
| 3.3.1.1 Pre-egoic stage: Sensoriphsical | 17 |
| 3.3.1.2 Pre-egoic stage: Fantasmic-emotional | 19 |
| 3.3.1.3 Pre-egoic stage: Representational mind | 20 |
| 3.3.2 Egoic stage | 20 |
| 3.3.2.1 Egoic stage: Rule or role mind | 20 |
| 3.3.2.2 Egoic stage: Formal-reflective | 20 |
| 3.3.2.3 Egoic stage: Vision-logic | 20 |
| 3.3.3 Trans-egoic stage | 21 |
| 3.3.3.1 Trans-egoic stage: Psychic | 21 |
| 3.3.3.2 Trans-egoic stage: Subtle | 21 |
| 3.3.3.3 Trans-egoic stage: Causal | 21 |
| 4 HYPOTHESIS OR ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO THE RELIGIOSITY OF SONG OF SONGS | 22 |
| 5 METHODOLOGY | 22 |
| 6 RATIONALE: PSYCHOLOGY AS HERMENEUTICAL TOOL FOR | |

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION | 24 |
| 7 CHAPTER OUTLINE | 26 |

CHAPTER TWO: INTERTEXT: THE ANCIENT NEAR

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>EASTERN BACKGROUND</i> | 29 |
| 1 METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS ON STUDYING CULTURE | 29 |
| 2 DIFFERENT AGES | 32 |
| 2.1 PREHISTORY OF THE LEVANT | 34 |
| 3 MESOPOTAMIA | 43 |
| 3.1 SUMERIA | 44 |
| 3.2 AKKADIA BEFORE BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA | 53 |
| 3.2.1 Babylonia | 58 |
| 3.2.2 Assyria | 60 |
| 4 SYRO-PALESTINE | 63 |
| 4.1 UGARIT AND ITS SURROUNDINGS | 63 |
| 4.2 ISRAEL | 67 |
| 5 ARABIA | 76 |
| 6 EGYPT | 88 |
| 7 CONCLUSION | 95 |

CHAPTER THREE: TEXT: EXEGETICAL REFLECTIONS ON

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>SONG OF SONGS</i> | 96 |
| 1 INTRODUCTION: ASPECTS OF MULTILEVELLED RELIGIOSITY | 96 |
| 1.1 HORIZONTAL MOVEMENT | 97 |
| 1.1.1 Entering | 97 |
| 1.1.2 Exiting | 100 |
| 1.2 VERTICAL MOVEMENT | 101 |
| 1.3 CONCEPTION, BIRTH AND NEW LIFE | 102 |
| 2 PRE-EGOIC STAGE | 103 |
| 2.1 PRE-EGOIC STAGE: ARCHAIC LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY | 103 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 2.1.1 Narcissism | 103 |
| 2.1.2 Sensuality | 105 |
| 2.1.2.1 Aural sensuality | 106 |
| 2.1.2.2 Visual sensuality | 107 |
| 2.1.2.3 Gustatory sensuality | 108 |
| 2.1.2.4 Tactile sensuality | 109 |
| 2.1.2.5 Olfactory sensuality | 109 |
| 2.1.3 The body | 110 |
| 2.1.4 Physical functions | 117 |
| 2.1.5 The four elements | 118 |
| 2.1.5.1 Earth | 119 |
| 2.1.5.2 Water | 119 |
| 2.1.5.3 Air | 120 |
| 2.1.5.4 Fire | 121 |
| 2.1.6 Emotionality | 122 |
| 2.1.7 States of consciousness | 123 |
| 2.1.8 Supports, containers and vehicles | 125 |
| 2.2 PRE-EGOIC STAGE: MAGICAL LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY | 128 |
| 2.2.1 Linguistic evidence | 128 |
| 2.2.2 Animism | 130 |
| 2.2.3 Matriarchal age | 130 |
| 2.2.4 Sacred scrolls | 134 |
| 2.2.5 Totemism | 136 |
| 2.2.5.1 Gemstones and minerals | 137 |
| 2.2.5.2 Plants | 139 |
| 2.2.5.3 Animals | 155 |
| 2.2.6 Jungian “archetypes” | 163 |
| 2.3 PRE-EGOIC STAGE: CULTIC-MYTHIC LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY | 164 |
| 2.3.1 Love personified | 164 |
| 2.3.2 Remnants from the sacred marriage cult | 165 |
| 2.3.3 Planetary associations | 167 |

| | | |
|----------|---|-----|
| 2.3.4 | Nocturnal terrors | 168 |
| 2.3.5 | Anthropomorphic representation | 169 |
| 2.3.6 | Deities | 170 |
| 2.3.7 | Ritual song | 172 |
| 2.3.8 | Allegorical interpretations | 172 |
| 2.3.9 | Incantations or oaths | 173 |
| 2.3.10 | Change and resistance | 175 |
| 2.3.11 | Holy places | 176 |
| 2.3.11.1 | Valleys | 176 |
| 2.3.11.2 | Deserts | 176 |
| 2.3.11.3 | Mountains | 177 |
| 2.3.11.4 | Cities | 180 |
| 2.3.12 | Contrast | 181 |
| 2.3.13 | Conflict | 183 |
| 2.3.14 | Smells | 184 |
| 3 | EGOIC STAGE | 185 |
| 3.1 | EGOIC STAGE: RATIONAL LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY | 185 |
| 3.1.1 | Dualistic thinking | 185 |
| 3.1.2 | Naturalism | 186 |
| 3.1.3 | Gender clarity | 188 |
| 4 | TRANS-EGOIC STAGE | 188 |
| 4.1 | TRANS-EGOIC STAGE: PSYCHIC LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY | 188 |
| 4.1.1 | Inclusivity | 188 |
| 4.1.2 | Eschatological dimension: Beyond this life | 188 |
| 4.1.3 | Dissolution of conflict | 190 |
| 4.1.4 | Peace | 191 |
| 4.2 | TRANS-EGOIC STAGE: SUBTLE AND CAUSAL LEVELS OF RELIGIOSITY | 192 |

**CHAPTER FOUR: *CONTEXT: (POST)MODERN REFLECTIONS
ON SEX AND RELIGIOSITY***

193

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----|
| 1 | SETTING THE SCENE | 193 |
| 2 | ALL SEX, NO RELIGION: SIGMUND FREUD (1856-1939) | 193 |
| 3 | ARCHETYPES AND SYMBOLS: CARL GUSTAV JUNG (1875-1961) | 197 |
| 4 | SEX, DEATH AND RELIGION: GEORGES BATAILLE (1897-1962) | 199 |
| 5 | SEX AND WORK: HERBERT MARCUSE (1898-1979) | 205 |
| 6 | SEX, KNOWLEDGE AND POWER: MICHEL FOUCAULT (1926-1984) | 208 |
| 7 | ALL PLEASURE, NO RELIGION: MICHEL ONFRAY (b. 1959) | 219 |
| 8 | NEUROPSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOSITY AND SEXUALITY | 224 |
| 9 | TWO WORLD VIEWS | 228 |
| 10 | CONCLUSION | 229 |

CHAPTER FIVE: SUBTEXT(S): EMBRACING SONG OF SONGS

| | | |
|----------|--|-----|
| 1 | INTRODUCTION | 232 |
| 1.1 | OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS | 232 |
| 1.2 | THE NATURE OF RELIGIOSITY | 236 |
| 2 | PRE-EGOIC STAGE | 238 |
| 2.1 | PRE-EGOIC STAGE: THE ARCHAIC LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY | 238 |
| 2.1.1 | The nature of sexuality | 239 |
| 2.1.2 | Sensuality | 240 |
| 2.2 | PRE-EGOIC STAGE: THE MAGICAL LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY | 241 |
| 2.2.1 | Bodily breath as soul | 242 |
| 2.2.2 | Totemism | 242 |
| 2.2.2.1 | The religiosity of stones, seals and minerals | 243 |
| 2.2.2.2 | The religiosity of plants | 244 |
| 2.2.2.3 | The religiosity of animals | 244 |
| 2.2.3 | Jungian “archetypes” | 245 |
| 2.3 | PRE-EGOIC STAGE: THE MYTHICAL LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY | 245 |
| 2.3.1 | Bodies as reminders of the gods | 246 |
| 2.3.2 | Gods alluded to | 246 |
| 2.3.3 | Celestial bodies as deities | 247 |
| 2.3.4 | Oaths | 247 |

| | | |
|-------|---|-----|
| 2.3.5 | Holy places | 247 |
| 2.3.6 | Canonicity | 248 |
| 2.3.7 | Pesach and its connection with Song of Songs | 250 |
| 2.3.8 | Sabbatical peace and its connection with Song of Songs | 250 |
| 3 | EGOIC STAGE | 251 |
| 3.1 | THE RATIONAL LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY | 251 |
| 3.1.1 | Writing and masculinity | 251 |
| 3.1.2 | Ideology and critique | 252 |
| 3.1.3 | Sensuality <i>and</i> sobriety? | 252 |
| 3.1.4 | Lack of dogma | 253 |
| 3.1.5 | Personal spiritual significance | 255 |
| 4 | TRANS-EGOIC STAGE | 255 |
| 4.1 | TRANS-EGOIC STAGE: THE CENTAURIC AND PSYCHIC LEVELS OF RELIGIOSITY | 255 |
| 4.1.1 | Inclusive universality despite uniqueness | 255 |
| 4.1.2 | Mystical dissolution of dichotomies | 258 |
| 4.1.3 | Towards androgyny | 259 |
| 4.1.4 | Regaining and integrating various levels of consciousness | 260 |
| 4.1.5 | Death, desire and longing for lost belonging | 261 |
| 4.2 | TRANS-EGOIC STAGE: THE SUBTLE AND CAUSAL LEVELS OF RELIGIOSITY | 262 |
| 5 | CONCLUSION | 263 |
| | REFERENCES | 265 |

Pre-texts: Introduction

This chapter deals with “pre-texts” in the sense of the preconceptions and agenda regarding the religiosity, or rather, religiosities of the book of Song of Songs or *Shîr ha-Shîrîm*, according to the text of *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (Schenker, De Waard, Dirksen, Goldman, Schäfer & Sæbø 2004) and its historical interpretations. Henceforth this book is referred to as Song of Songs, while specific textual references in Song of Songs will be indicated only by the chapter and verse numbers.

1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The basic problem that has been encountered since the abandonment, in particular by some in the modern era, of the allegorical interpretation of the book is its religiosity and therefore how its presence can be justified in both the Hebrew and the Christian religious canons -- above all in contexts that have polarised sexuality and spirituality either explicitly or implicitly. This problem has been highlighted even further by the discovery that there is (apparently) no explicit mention of any religion in the text itself. This is unique for a canonised book, if certain allusions in the book of Esther are taken to be references to God.

2 BACKGROUND: TRADITIONAL SOLUTIONS

2.1 SETTING THE SCENE

Song of Songs has become well known for the plethora of its interpretations – more so than any other book in either of the two mentioned canons. This signals either the gravity of the problem of its seemingly elusive religious meaning, or the universal appeal it has had because of its open-endedness in respect of its religiosity.

Various interpretations have served as paths for the quest of its religiosity. However, by implication, they also serve as both extensions to an

organic text, and as pruning of otherwise wild outgrowths which go beyond the narrow vision of the gardener.

The religiosity of Song of Songs has traditionally been closely related to the justification for its inclusion into the Jewish and Christian canons. Some of these reasons could have been, firstly, the alleged Solomonic connection, that is, not necessarily its authorship, but as archetype of both polygamy and of wisdom. Secondly, the Hebrew language in which the “original” was written has served as a textual monument which has enhanced collective identity and pride. Thirdly, it might have been a strategy of co-option because of the strong appeal to the popular imagination of ancient sacral hymns about sexuality, love and the return of spring (Eisler 1995:29). Fourthly, due to its being in written or textual form at a time when this skill was jealously guarded and scarce and therefore almost sacred, the product was initially perhaps almost regarded as a fetish.

The second and fourth motives would not explain in themselves why other Hebrew texts have not complied with the criteria. This is unless a fifth is added: a time frame due to the imminent threat to the said identity, making consolidation, but also closure, for preservation urgent. A combination of some or all of these criteria could also have been possible.

The interpretative solutions offered can be grouped into different numbers of categories, depending on the criteria employed, though these are hardly ever explicated. Each such grouping has its own logical problems, as either the criterion’s validity as relevance is questionable, or certain elements of what is regarded as the essence in terms of the criteria still overlap.

One such problem is the implication that the allegorical and the literal are mutually exclusive; another is that the cultic-mythical belongs to some other category which is neither an allegorical nor a literal interpretation. In fact, Krinetzki (1981:35) regards the cultic-mythical interpretation as a desperate measure to discredit the allegorical interpretation which is nowhere suggested by the text of Song of Songs itself and which has resulted in numerous contradictory interpretations. By “literal” is sometimes meant a “natural” interpretation such as that of Gerleman (1981), who not only excludes all religiosity but even any *Sitz im Leben* such as a wedding context or any depth psychological interpretations such as that of Krinetzki (1981). For

that reason he shies away from any link with Mesopotamian culture. Any possible relation to the aforementioned dimensions are explained away as merely stylistic features expressing different shades of feeling mostly through hyperbole in order to portray the partner as a hero(ine). In fact, the text is hardly ever naturalistic, as he confirms when considering, for instance, that the “Lilien” (1981:198) have an erotic reference. Any simple literal interpretation is undermined by the ample similes and metaphors creating the ambiance of an “as if” reality and always implying at least two meanings (Basson & Breytenbach 1995:443). Such a “flatland” (Wilber 2001:19-21) stance is also unrealistic as it implies that the other three categories are “unnatural”, even if by this is meant “supernatural”. In fact, there is no escape from some form of symbolic interpretation, and even any attempt to do so is in itself unnatural as far as it is unrealistic. This is in tandem with postmodern deference from the one metaphor to the next, *ad infinitum*.

Despite these concerns the proposed interpretations have been grouped into four categories: the cultic-mythical, the allegorical, the literal and the mystical.

2.2 CULTIC INTERPRETATIONS

The cultic interpretations regard Song of Songs mostly as a product of the so-called sacred marriage ritual that was allegedly widespread in the ancient Near East. This view was initiated in 1914 by De Jassy, who regarded Song of Songs as a liturgical text about the Egyptian Osiris and Isis myth. By contrast, Meek regarded it ten years later as an adaptation of the Babylonian Tammuz-Ishtar liturgy (referred to by Krinetzki 1981:35). This ceremony celebrated the contracting of a marriage between a king and a “goddess” as expression and renewal of the celestial marriage of two deities who were brother and sister, that is, the sun god, Dôd, and the moon goddess, Ishtar or Shalmîr.

Wittekindt linked it in 1926 to the celebration in the eighth century BCE of the New Year at the start of spring, whereas Haller in 1940 saw its origin in the Canaanite agricultural festival of unleavened bread, which later developed into Pesach (referred to by Pelletier 1989:6). Pope (1977:210) associated it with ancient Near Eastern funerary rites (cf also Horine 2001:30). All of these

cults relate to the life-death cycle. The mythic interpretation is closely related to the cultic in that it later on explained what had been ritually enacted. This would point to a higher level of consciousness, veiled by the body (Nasr 1996:242), where sexual experience is interpreted within a wider context and implies a view of reality that already divides and separates it into two spheres, both horizontally in terms of genders, and vertically “as above, so below”, while still linking them. The cultic-mythical explanation tries to excavate the historical origins of the text, though this was expressed in the text in symbolic terms. It has survived in the quotations from and reciting of Song of Songs at the Shabbat and Pesach rituals. The latter in particular is peculiar in that a nature festival has been transformed into a culture festival commemorating political liberation and representing a movement from the matriarchal to the patriarchal mindset. Within the Jewish year, Pesach, and within the Jewish week, the Shabbat, can be viewed as the most ancient festivals and both are therefore regarded by some as the most important. It is therefore curious that such a short, and yet such a controversial, text that is otherwise often neglected in lived religion has gained such importance in Jewish liturgy. Its earliest use during Pesach has been traced back to only the eighth century CE (Keel 1986:18). The interpretations of these rituals prove, however, that the cultic is somehow related to the allegorical (Sasson 1979:184).

2.3 ALLEGORICAL AND TYPOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS

The allegorical and typological interpretations imply a double reading, though the primary reading is denied and repressed as only a reference (Blumenthal 1995:85). It is probably the highly figurative language of Song of Songs that has stimulated the allegorical interpretations (Viviers 1990:245) which usually also include a tropological or moral dimension (Viviers 2002:1541). Scheffler (2008:1265-1269) remarks that the fact that more commentaries were written on Song of Songs than on any other Biblical book during the Middle Ages, when it was almost exclusively interpreted in an allegorical way, could ironically only have been because the highly erotic nature of the book was unconsciously recognised in a context which defined the religious by implication as asexual or even anti-sexual. This was a logical contradiction to the fact that the erotic was so highly valued by Hosea and Ezekiel that they

used it as a metaphor for the religious and that the same Hebrew word for love is used in the Bible, irrespective of whether it refers to an erotic or religious partner.

An apologetic interpretation due to the erotic overtones of the book has focused on the sacred marriage between God and his people (Yalom 1997:30). It does not seem that the allegorical interpretation preceded inclusion in the Hebrew Bible, but that it was only used to justify its inclusion later on (Krinetzki 1981:30-31).

The allegorical and typological approaches regard the literal and metaphorical references in the text as divine symbols or types. They have been the dominant interpretations for most of its canonical time in both traditions. According to Viviers (2006:92), this has been a subtle way of censoring the literal interpretation and therefore the body. Moore (2000:336) regards the allegorical approach as the child of “asceticism”. Pope (1977:113) points out that amongst the ancient Greeks the allegorical interpretation was a strategy to disguise the sexual escapades of the gods.

Any erotic reference is allegorised by regarding it as a symbol of deeper, more spiritual realities in order to escape from the psychological discomfort which the reality of the id engenders. This hermeneutic has limited historical interest in comparison with the cultic-mythical interpretation, except where the relationship between the deity and the human is described in terms of historical periods as in the Targum. This approach seems to coincide historically with the patriarchal period in the development of consciousness (Blumenthal 1995:88).

Some rabbis who have found this interpretation appealing have either held that the divine name does occur in 8:6 as an abbreviated suffix, or have been curiously unaware that it does not occur at all (Blumenthal 1995:82). The word שְׁלֵה־בְּתִיָּה in 8:6 can be read as one or two words. As one, it would denote the intensive form, but as two it would mean “fire of YH”, though Maimonides or the Talmud do not recognise this abbreviated form as equal to YHWH. In addition, the Targum has rendered בְּצַבְאוֹת in the adjuration refrains of 2:7 and 3:5 in the sense of “by the Lord of hosts”. This is, according to the Talmud (on Maimonides’s authority), one of the seven names of God, which, when written, cannot be erased. In the other 292 times in the Hebrew Bible

where these consonants occur they are linked with either the tetragrammaton (יהוה) or with אֱלֹהִים or its morphological derivatives with the exception of only five instances. Commentators have, however, all taken these consonants to mean gazelles (Blumenthal 1995:82). Different linguistic arguments have been raised by the main Masoretic manuscripts and commentators, but for Blumenthal (1995:82) “there is, thus, ample precedent to regard both *bi-tseva’ot* and *shalhevetyah* as not being names of God”. However, the fact that Pope (1977:670) mentions that the suffix is a case of the “recognised uses of the divine names for the superlative sense” implies that the divine name is in fact used and must have conjured up connotations with it.

Within the Jewish tradition the book has been interpreted as coded language describing the relationship between God, that is, YHWH, and Israel, his chosen people. To this needs to be added that the Midrashim approached a Biblical text in a fairly free and fluid way to the extent that the impression could be left that the text was not fixed at all (Herrmann 1963:194). The earliest traces of this kind of interpretation are already found in 4 Esdras 5:24-26 and 7:26 from the fifth century BCE (Horine 2001:17). They were later reinforced by Rabbi Akiva during the second century CE (Feuillet 1990:207 and 211), who fought for their canonical preservation at Jabne by hinting at the high priest entering the most holy of holies to have an ecstatic spiritual and mystical experience. Ironically, however, the sexual undertones of this comparison are obvious (Viviers 2003:625).

Within the Christian tradition, mostly the Roman Catholic wing (Viviers 2006:92), the allegorical interpretation had again different references. Initially the Jewish antecedent was reinterpreted and the Church replaced Israel in the relationship between God and his people. This collective conceptualisation became individual when either the soul or Mary replaced the Church as the female partner in the relationship. Within the Christian tradition, it gained momentum since the commentary of Origen (186-252 CE, Feuillet 1990:207), who followed Platonic dualism and the Jewish example, but was aware of the literal meaning, which he identified as an *epithalamium* or marriage song in dramatic form (Horine 2001:24). No one who was still experiencing the desires of the flesh or anyone who had not yet studied the rest of Scripture first was supposed to read it, as they would risk

misunderstanding it. The key to the alleged code would then be the rest of Scripture.

Other allegorical interpretations have regarded it as the discourse of Solomon and Wisdom, and important for this study: the marriage of the active and the passive intellect (Bloch & Bloch 1995a:45). These interpretations are often based on alleged allusions to other parts of the canon.

Related and added to these figurative interpretations are those which have regarded Song of Songs as a political code for Jewish nationalism hidden from Persian authorities, medieval Jewish philosophical understandings as well as mystical interpretations regarding it as being about the harmony of the universe and the union of the spiritual soul with its mundane body (Horine 2001:25-26). Depth psychological interpretations are also sometimes regarded as an allegorical method of interpretation (Viviers 1982:110).

2.4 LITERAL INTERPRETATIONS

After the Mesopotamian parallels to Song of Songs had originally served religious and royal purposes, they were used in naturalistic marriage settings, either with or without references to the sacred marriage ceremonies. They were also used in leisurely or more elevated contexts such as artistic or wisdom circles. The Septuagint from about 100 BCE reflects a literal interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and was the starting point for the history of Jewish interpretation of Scripture (Pope 1977:19). This interpretation is also mostly the Protestant way of reading Song of Songs (Viviers 2006:92). There is no evidence of any allegorical or mystical understanding of Song of Songs. The fact that Rabbi Akiva condemned those who sang the poetry of Song of Songs in the taverns and so profaned it proves that such practices and views existed as early as the first century CE. However, Theodore of Mopsuestia as well as the Codex Sinaiticus from the fifth century CE, Ibn Ezra in the twelfth century (Horine 2001:28) and Sebastian Castellio in the sixteenth century CE were clearly out of step with the theological ideology of their times as it has only been since Moses Mendelssohn in 1788 and Herder in the same century that the literal interpretation has gained significant acceptance (Pope 1977:90 and 111). During the nineteenth century Wetzstein claimed to have found

similar songs surviving in marriage ceremonies in Syria and Palestine (Pope 1977:56). Further impetus was given during the mid-twentieth century to this kind of interpretation by the discovery of similar pre-Islamic nomadic odes, other Middle Eastern songs as well as ancient Egyptian love songs, and even Tamil texts.

The literal interpretation was an attempt to solve the contradictory results of the allegorical methods, and was later expressed as class critique to affirm the depth and value of authentic love, free from materialistic seductions (Horine 2001:26-27). This critique can be linked to the view that Song of Songs plays with several travesties (the lover as king, shepherd and gardener) and could betray the peasantry's idealisation and envy of the higher, royal class. This view would be contradicted if Song of Songs also served as wedding songs conforming to the institutional and therefore ideological aspect of culture. To this growing diversity of the literal interpretation can be added the drama, melodrama and dream theories with either two or three characters, highlighting a love triangle and expressing the theme of the role of envy in love. There is also difference of opinion whether the characters in Song of Songs were historical (for instance the marriage between Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter), or whether this anthology of love poems served as compensatory fantasy or protest and perhaps as wisdom literature. This approach has also been employed by feminism and other forms of gender-relational struggles for their own ideological motives. That Song of Songs is not merely a collection of separate poems but a reworking into a relatively structured unit is now generally acknowledged (Viviers 1982:108-109).

2.5 MYSTICAL INTERPRETATIONS

The mystical interpretations have perhaps always been at least a sub-current. However, they particularly fit the natural sequence of religious development in terms of orthodox-rationalistic-mystical, where the latter is disillusionment with both the previous stages, yet integrating and transcending them, parallel to the stage of maturity after the latent and adolescent phases as described by Washburn (1994:156-182).

That Song of Songs has enjoyed extraordinary status amongst the greatest mystics (Feuillet 1990:217) is due to its high degree of psychological symbolism (Edinger 1995:252). This suggests that an inclusive compromise between the allegorical and the literal is perhaps the most valuable.

During the medieval ages Kabbalah developed as a decoding technique, but also resulted in recognition of the erotic (for instance Suarès 1972:136; Pope 1977:178). The alchemists have regarded the black Shulamite as parallel to Sophia in Gnostic mythology and the *Shekinah* of the Kabbalah. She is the personification of the *prima materia* being transformed through the *solutio* of the oceanic inundation by primitive emotions, the *calcinatio* of burning desires of desert experiences. She is also the division into the four elements of *physis*, earth, air, water and fire which correspond to the four psychological functions of sensation, thinking, feeling and intuition, respectively. The latter is the *coagulatio* as the realisation of the contents of consciousness as well as the *mortificatio* during which her *nigredo* (blackness) comes to the fore, before it is resolved through the *coniunctio* with her beloved and the *coincidentia oppositorum* into the *albedo* (whiteness) of purified materiality and she can give birth to the Second Adam (Edinger 1995:253-256). Her transformation remains imperfect until she has discovered her hidden self which promises to sprout into the *benedicta viriditas* (the blessed greenness) which is “the secret immanence of the divine spirit of life in all things” and which is changed into the purest gold. This is the *anima mundi* (soul of the world) which animates even inorganic matter (Edinger 1995:268). She identifies herself with mountains through the top of which flows the high energy which makes them suitable for worship. It is this symbolism of transformation which Jungian psychology has interpreted as the individuation process.

The different interpretations have been reflected in different translations during different stages of consciousness. This has reinforced the interpretation concerned in a cyclical way.

It seems that at all times in the history of Song of Songs, either as text or as oral tradition, both naturalistic and religious interpretations have prevailed, though not always of the same kind or in the same circles. This in itself raises the question about the validity of the modern dichotomy as two

autonomous and even sometimes exclusive spheres of life, and the possibility of rather viewing these two aspects or dimensions as interrelated and therefore interdependent.

None of these historical solutions to the problem of the religiosity of Song of Songs has, however, addressed the more fundamental problem of the concept of religiosity.

3 THE CONCEPT OF RELIGION

3.1 DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION

The distinction between religious and non-religious occurs virtually universally (Riesebrodt 2007:1). Yet as a category of sharp differentiation it is a creation of the secularisation discourse of Western modernity since the Enlightenment two centuries ago. Its alleged universality has therefore been critiqued and deconstructed by the postmodern perspective (Riesebrodt 2007:2 and 4). This study, however, hinges on the concept of religiosity and some clarification of it is therefore due.

An abbreviated history of the definitions of religion highlights the diversity of meanings of this concept:

1. Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648), identified five “universal” features, which really only reflect deism and upheld a universal ideology of the Enlightenment: an external-to-the-world Supreme Power, who is inwardly worshipped, expiation of sin and retribution in death (Wilson 1998:144);
2. EB Tylor (1832-1917): the evolutionary, inclusive view of a belief in Spiritual Beings (Wilson 1998:145);
3. JG Frazer (1854-1951): the distinction between magic and religion (Wilson 1998:146) where the former is a belief in the human ability to control nature by coercing inanimate agents through imitative or contagious magic, and where the latter is a dependence on conscious and personal superhuman beings and the need to submit to and propitiate them; although magic predates religion, they have sometimes coexisted (Frazer 1991:51);
4. RR Marrett (1866-1943): a belief in supernatural power predating belief in supernatural beings (pre-animism) (Wilson 1998:146);

5. Rudolph Otto (1869-1937): the unique experience of power as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (Wilson 1998:148); Eliade (1959) likewise defines religion as a search for and response to what is regarded as the holy (Nel 1998-2001:6);
6. Emile Durkheim: social functionalism, that is, the division of the world into sacred and profane due to extreme social situations and the need for integration, especially cognitive and moral, irrespective of content (Wilson 1998:150-151); like Freud (1998), he includes totemism (Nel 1998-2001:6);
7. Bronislaw Malinowski's psychological functionalism: sacralisation of human crises, irrespective of content (Wilson 1998:152);
8. Paul Tillich: the ultimate concern, thus purely fundamental existential concern, irrespective of content (Wilson 1998:153);
9. Clifford Geertz: a system of symbols to create moods and motivations, in terms of the general order of existence, with an aura of unique truth (Wilson 1998:154);
10. Horton, Goody, Spiro and Swanson: the belief in spiritual (that is, superhuman) beings, thus excluding universality and non-theistic traditions (Wilson 1998:156).

Hence, resorting to a prototypical polythetical definition in this study, despite its open-endedness, in a sense subverts its own intention which should highlight the elusiveness of the concept (Wilson 1998:158).

In addition to this list by Wilson may be added that William James (1982:46-49) was reluctant to reduce religion to a single principle or essence and regarded it as a collective name for various features which may make up religion to different degrees at different times. Religious sentiment could, for instance, refer to dependence, fear, a connection to sexuality or a feeling of the infinite. He nevertheless distinguishes between institutional and personal religion, the former involving ceremonies, theology and organisation, and the latter being more fundamental and about an individual's inner dispositions, experiences and personal acts. This includes an emotional relation, direct personal communication with the divine and conscience. He is aware that the concept "divine" now needs clarification as it does not only refer to deities, but

then settles for “primal truth” as a tentative suggestion rather than a definition of it.

Seaquist (2006:215-218) refers to Whitehouse, who has made a distinction between two modes of religiosity, which may both occur in the same religion. The first goes back to the Palaeolithic Age and is purely imagistic with no need to verbally explain local, infrequent but very intense experiences. The symbols lead to natural interpretations. One may assume that the explicit concept of religion is not even needed. The second is doctrinal, verbal and highly repetitive, relatively uniform, proselytising and spread over a wide area. This might relate to the distinction between “subjectively centered natural organic” and “socially transmitted cultural” and “objective” types of religiosity (Hansen & Norennyasan 2006:188) or to that between intrinsic and extrinsic types (McNamara, Durso, Brown & Harris 2006a:5-6).

Nel (1998-2001:1-2) asserts that spirituality and religion cannot be absolutely distinguished as they partially overlap. The former is the most original form of human expression, whereas the latter is “the dominant parameter of this expressiveness” and the dramatisation and institutionalisation of spirituality (Nel 1998-2001:11), although it remains ambiguous due to cultural bias. In addition, he distinguishes between the substantive definitions of religion with their reductionist and structuralist explanations of its content, functionalist definitions focusing on religious features and conditionalist definitions as the “expression of all human efforts to ascribe ultimate meaning to the multi-dimensional and plural conditionality” and a “quest for a sense of belonging” (Nel 1998-2001:7). This last definition resonates with Krüger (1995:3), who refrains from limiting religion to either a belief in an afterlife or in supernatural beings, or to rituals, or to all of these together, but regards it as the “dream and the effort found in all cultures to look at our ordinary world *sub specie aeternitatis* [under the aspect of eternity], in the widest horizon possible”. This is the concept of religion which is followed in this study, including the additional distinctions of Wilber (*vide infra* 3.3).

3.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION

Various divisions in the development of religion have likewise been made according to different criteria. Most of these historical outlines are not concerned about the definition of religion, but rather demonstrate its meaning through the different forms it has adopted through time. Swidler (1998:283) refers to Karl Jaspers, who called the period 800-200 BCE the Axial Period. This is when radical change “transformed consciousness itself”, shifting from a concern with survival to an empathic and ethical stance towards other beings. Cousins (1992:7) develops this theory further by adding a Second Axial Period which started on the eve of the twenty-first century CE. This divides the history of consciousness, and more specifically of religion, into three main periods: the pre-Axial, the (First) Axial and the Second Axial.

Platvoet (1993:237-242) works with six types of religion parallel to six types of societies: the religions of hunter-gatherers, food-producers, states with script, religions with scriptures and sects, with exclusive theology and those with inclusive theology. The first four are community religions while the last two are transnational. His is an example of consciousness as collateral to economic conditions, though not necessarily according to the Marxian substructure-superstructure schema. In fact, Chapter two will refer to the reconstruction by Cauvin (2000) of prehistoric precedents, as consciousness preceding economic and other cultural expressions.

3.3 RELIGION IN TERMS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In this study two historical views in terms of a vertical, spatial metaphor for consciousness are pertinent. The first derives from the psychodynamic tradition with its emphasis on the unconscious: Freud with his emphasis on personal history, and Jung going deeper than the personal into the collective. This is a movement into depth, hence as epithet for these schools of psychology. The second view, though not necessarily later, takes interest in a movement upwards, called the superconscious by Assagioli (1991:23-31) in the early twentieth century and dark consciousness in Buddhism because of the intensity of its luminosity (Nasr 1996:245). It is this perspective that has developed into transpersonal psychology from the search of humanistic psychology for the higher potentials of human growth. The levels of

consciousness can be distinguished but not be separated into neat stages, as regressions and overlapping continually occur. That means consciousness moves both upwards and downwards.

The two apparently opposite perspectives relate to the search for soul and spirit, respectively. The search for soul and the enterprise of soul-making are major themes in Hillman (e.g. 1979:128), who has reinterpreted and critiqued the Jungian tradition in a postmodern deconstructive style, arguing for a perspective from below, that is, from the unconscious. On the other hand, “soul” is hardly mentioned by someone such as Wilber who is concerned with evolution of consciousness, that is, upwards, though he also leaves room for linking downwards. These two opposite directions, however, also reflect two kinds of religions. The first is a nostalgic longing for what has been lost, an attraction by the gravity downwards to the Mother and to earth as origin, and eventually into death as the destiny closing the circle of the *uroboros* (the ancient symbol of a serpent eating its own tail). The second is a male, transcendent striving upwards and towards the other. Within the Jungian tradition Neumann (1956) has established the movement away from the Mother upwards by the child in an effort to gain independence or individuation.

Washburn (1994:293) has worked towards an integration of the upward and downward movements, something adumbrated by Assagioli’s psychosynthesis (1991:44-53) when he included these two in his list of fifteen groups of symbols for higher experiences, the others being introversion, expansion, reawakening, enlightenment, fire, evolution, empowerment, transcending love, pilgrimage, transformation, regeneration, liberation and return. Each symbol represents only an aspect of these experiences and needs to be balanced by another, which explains why opposites occur (1991:89-92). Many of these themes will be picked up in Chapter three when analysing the text of Song of Songs. Washburn points out, however, that Wilber (2000:10-11) would regard any downward movement as regression in the sense of retrogression. Washburn (1994) initially viewed transpersonal psychology from a psychoanalytic perspective in his earlier work, but shifted in his later work to root his understanding in the depth psychology of Jung. This can be seen as representing the polarities of the conflict with which the

history of the interpretation of Song of Songs has struggled: Freud, whose focus was on the first half of life, regarded sexual problems to be an important factor in the aetiology of all psychopathology, whereas Jung regarded religious struggles as the key to the understanding of all psychopathology of the second half of life. In that respect Wilber's thinking is, of course, more Jungian, but one should not forget the topographic perspective in Freud's theories which entail the three "vertical" levels of the id, the ego and the superego.

Religion, like sexuality, can serve as a conflict resolution mechanism in the progression through various states of consciousness. This is in line with Krüger, Lubbe and Steyn (2009:8), who define religion as the search for comprehensive integration and radical transcending, that is, for depth and for height for threshold experiences. Unfortunately both religion and sexuality have often turned out to be conflict creators rather than developmental facilitators. The crisis of conflict awakens one towards the higher levels of consciousness and deepens consciousness in reconciliation, without giving up the gains of the new transcendental position. It, in fact, thus enriches the original relationship by its extension to and inclusion of other realities. The hypothesis of this study is that Song of Songs can facilitate the resolution of the traditional Western conflict between spirituality and sexuality, as well as gender conflict within the domain of sexuality, when both these notions of spirituality and sexuality are reinterpreted in such a way as to transcend the impasse. These concepts will be shown to be psychophysically so related that they might even be regarded as interdependent, if not different versions of the same underlying experiences.

During the matriarchal period of history (*vide infra* 2.1 in Chapter two), religion symbolically expressed the relinking (cf the Latin *religio*) of the dependent child, guilt-ridden about its individuation attempts, to the Great Mother in a sex-friendly and earthward attitude.

During the patriarchal period (*vide infra* 2.1 in Chapter two), religion referred to the angry child rebelling against the mother's gravitational opposition to individuation in a sex-unfriendly way, skyward symbolically expressed by the body of *Homo erectus*.

In the more androgynous period of the postmodern era -- reminiscent of, yet very different from, the bisexual primal state of Freudian theory -- the two conflicting tendencies can be integrated into a transcend position of individuation. Here, unique identity has been attained securely enough in the form of the ego for it to reconcile through apparent regression with the source of the Self, from which it is animated and to which it gives form and expression.

Wilber (2001:268) interprets religion in terms of the development of consciousness. It is this theory which will be used in this study to show the different layers of religiosity which underlie Song of Songs.

Wilber (2000:67-74) correlates the developmental stages or levels of the human individual with cultural development in different spheres such as economics and religion. Cross-sectional to the individual and the collective domains, he furthermore distinguishes the interior or subjective (phenomenological) and exterior or objective (empirical) dimensions of both. This results in four quadrants: the individual-interior, the individual-exterior, the collective-interior and the collective-exterior dimensions of reality, none of which should be a reduction without remainder, that is, viewed in isolation. None of the quadrants is reducible to any other, yet each is registered or reflected by the others. His critique of modernity is that it has reduced the "Big Three" (that is, "I", "we" (I and you) and "it") to the "Big One" of "it" only. The subjective, interpretative and value-orientated dimensions have consequently been negated and have to be acknowledged once again.

Krüger, Lubbe and Steyn (2009:18) also distinguish stages in the development of religion which are very similar to those outlined below. They point out that these stages overlap, occur at different times in different cultures and that none is ever left behind completely, but that they merely become layers covered by later developments.

All levels in the development of religion have probably always existed to some degree in the history of humanity: irrespective of the dominant general level of a particular era, certain individuals would at least temporarily achieve higher levels than the average, affording them special roles in society. Wilber (1998:67-72) groups these levels into three groups of three each: pre-personal or pre-egoic, personal or egoic and transpersonal or trans-

egoic. They constitute a hierarchy of “holons” or whole-parts, where a certain number from each stage transcend, but include, differentiate and integrate, and therefore depend on, the previous stage (Wilber 2000:17-19). This is in accord with Freud’s view (1979:5-6) about the preserving nature of the development of the psyche. Wilber (1999:394-397) distinguishes between basic and transitional structures. Basic structures remain as holons, while the transitional ones are phase-specific and temporary as they are replaced and dissolved by subsequent development.

By correlating various systems of thought such as that of Freud, Jung, Piaget, Arieti, Mahayana Buddhism, Vedanta, Sufism, Kabbalah, Christian mysticism, Platonism, Aurobindo and Free John, Wilber has arrived at nine basic structures or states in the spectrum of consciousness.

3.3.1 Pre-egoic stage

3.3.1.1 Pre-egoic stage: Sensoriphysical

The sensoriphysical structure of consciousness correlates with the archaic and prehistoric religion, when families and other groups started to merge into tribes. According to Krüger, Lubbe and Steyn (2009:18), there was still gender equality and harmony with nature, while religiosity was so integrated in life that there were no separate institutions or specialists. They add that the postmodern religious search for an unfragmented world resembles this stage in remarkable ways (Krüger, Lubbe & Steyn 2009:21).

If Geertz’s broad definition of religion as a system of symbolisation to create moods (Kunin 2003:153) is accepted and is combined with the notion of Gliserman (1996:3) that all symbolisation derives ultimately from the body, then one can safely infer that the body as the first available object becomes the first site of religiosity. This view has been corroborated by Bowie (2006:34), who regards the body as the primary classification system and as such as the primary means of making meaning. Kabbalah, likewise, uses the human body as a symbolic structure for different levels of reality. It also ties in with the fact that consciousness “feels like some pattern built with the nonverbal signs of body states” (Damasio 1999:312). The body is the first object to which one can relate, but also the first object which is problematised due to its unfulfilled needs, and therefore needs to be sublimated and

overcome. In that sense religion is an overcoming of the problematic of the body, sometimes achieved through distancing from it. The first body includes, of course, the maternal womb, a paradisiacal state, which is lost and longed for, idealised and unconsciously revered to a level which can easily be equated as religious. Ferenczi (1924:27) has therefore interpreted sexual intercourse as an unconscious enactment of re-entry into the womb. This resonates with Bataille's notion of religion (1962:16-17) as longing for lost intimacy, as nostalgia for a golden age or origin. This fundamental relation to the body can therefore be regarded as the unconscious, preverbal and prehistoric level of religiosity, which has survived in every human being and which forms the basis of all other levels and forms of religion. The archaic level and its earliest 'oceanic' experiences are what all later nostalgia is ultimately about (Freud 1979:1-3).

Relevant to the body which features so dominantly in Song of Songs is also the phenomenological scheme of Kugle (2007:22-26) and the various states of consciousness about the body, that is, the ego's postures toward experience of embodiment. He bases his view initially on al-Zahī's four interdependent levels of bodily existence, where body matter or corps is the innermost core as the origin of all the others, surrounded by the corporal or social bodily movements. This level, in turn, is held by the corporeal or personal, inner, psychological layer of the biological dynamic, ultimately embraced by corporeality as the interpretation of the body's meaning symbolised by religion. The levels seem to reflect Wilber's four quadrants of individual-exterior, collective-exterior, individual-interior and collective-interior, respectively.

Intersecting these four levels of bodily existence, Kugle (2007:23-24) adds four dimensions of bodily consciousness and ego relations to the body, reflecting various religious responses to the body, as quadrants overlaying al-Zahī's four concentric circles.

In three of these states the ego is awake and aware of its mode of relation to the body, in terms of separateness and control: restraint, engagement and enrapture. Sleeping consciousness involves release. In restraint and engagement the ego transcends the body. In enrapture and release it is intimate with and immanent in the body. In restraint the ego is

“against” the body through some form of asceticism, endurance or common discipline. In engagement it works constantly “through” the body as an instrument towards another goal. In enrapture it is intimately identified “with” the body and suffused through pleasure and play into the body’s being and movement, often only briefly experienced after childhood in orgasm and religious ecstasy when it is experienced as absorbed and united with the divine. In release it is in the body during the ego’s withdrawal in rest when the body can peacefully follow its own processes and, in that way, also find some rest. When the ego is released to be back “in” the body, consciousness can receive and identify completely with transpersonal images such as dreams or fantasies from the archetypal realm, a reality seemingly beyond the body, but in fact from within the body rather than from outside it through the senses. According to Nakhshabi, a Sufi author of the fourteenth century CE, this link to the spirit world beyond the death of the body makes sleep a temporary death and death a permanent sleep (Kugle 2007:25).

It would therefore seem that sleep – and therefore death – is a higher state of consciousness than wakefulness, or at least the prerequisite for access to a higher realm. This is in agreement with the view of Washburn (2003:40) and Assagioli (1991:23-24) that the pre- and the trans-egoic are the lower and the higher forms of the unconscious, respectively. The body can also be equated with the id, which is raised to different levels of effort through the sympathetic nervous system, and allowed to relax through the parasympathetic nervous system when the ego is contracted or withdrawn downwards into the body.

A fifth state of regeneration overlaps with all four levels. The ego is urged by survival drives to be “for” the body and to focus on basic animal needs such as food, protection, excretion and rest.

3.3.1.2 Pre-egoic stage: Fantasmic-emotional

The fantasmic-emotional structure of consciousness corresponds to the magical, animistic and fetishistic stages of religion during the transitional phase from tribes to villages. It concerns the emotional-sexual and imagery levels in the individual (Wilber 1998:70).

3.3.1.3 Pre-egoic stage: Representational mind

The representational mind reminds one of Piaget's pre-operational thinking (Wilber 1998:70), which has a symbolic and a conceptual stage. As regards religion, this is the mythic era of the early states in the form of empires and the time of theism in its anthropomorphic phase. Although implying embodiment, it gradually centralises into a patriarchal aniconic form, projective in its dualism as particularly manifested in exclusivist morality.

3.3.2 Egoic stage

3.3.2.1 Egoic stage: Rule or role mind

The rule or role mind is similar to Piaget's notion of concrete operational thinking and is the first mental structure which can think according to rules and imagine the role of another through empathy. It is the time of rational enlightenment and separate nation states (modernity) (Wilber 1998:71).

3.3.2.2 Egoic stage: Formal-reflective

The formal-reflective structure of consciousness is similar to Piaget's formal operational thinking. Wilber (1998:73-74) calls it the centauric mind of the global or planetary consciousness. The term "centaur" has been used by Hubert Benoit, Jane Alexander and Erik Erikson to describe an integrated state of the self experiencing both mind and body, regarded by Jane Loevinger as the highest state of development (Wilber 2001:337). It is the beginning of the integration of the masculine and feminine aspects in every individual, though still with unresolved tension. Spirit-as-matter is sexless, but "Spirit-as-body grows into its own sexuality in order to reproduce itself on that level", though Spirit-as-Spirit is neither male nor female, again sexless and pure emptiness ready to embrace its own sexuality freely when it manifests (Wilber 2001:339-340).

3.3.2.3 Egoic stage: Vision-logic

Wilber (1998:93-94) regards the vision-logic structure of consciousness as dialectical, integrative, creative synthetic thinking in terms of networks and could perhaps be seen as the postmodern mindset. It is based on perspective and the ability to assume that of another. The present study will hopefully

reach at least this level of understanding and integrating different forms of religiosity.

3.3.3 Trans-egoic stage

Several levels exist in the trans-egoic realm, but all could be characterised as forms of mysticism (Wilber 2000:182).

3.3.3.1 Trans-egoic stage: Psychic

Wilber (1998:66 and 73) includes the centauric here as symbolic of the integration of body and mind; that is, the sixth chakra or third eye, the beginning of transcendental, transpersonal, contemplative, pluralistic, universal thinking beyond the ego. The psychic level or nature mysticism is not in the first instance characterised by psychic experiences which do often increase, but by the transition from the egoic to the trans-egoic realm (Wilber 2000:182-183).

3.3.3.2 Trans-egoic stage: Subtle

The subtle structure of consciousness transcends the gross processes of waking consciousness and includes the archetypes, Plato's forms or ideas, Aurobindo's intuitive mind, *gevurah* (judgement) and *chesed* (loving-kindness) in Kabbalah. It is also regarded as deity mysticism (Wilber 2000:182 and 191-197).

3.3.3.3 Trans-egoic stage: Causal

The causal structure of consciousness or formless mysticism is the unmanifest, transcendental and creative ground or source of all the lesser structures. It is the universal and formless Self common to and in all beings. The *keter* (crown) is its Kabbalistic expression (Wilber 1998:72).

Elsewhere Wilber has also mentioned a tenth "stage" of non-dual or Ultimate consciousness of absolute Spirit or empty-suchness. It is not separate from the others, but the all-inclusive, primordial and empty ground, which is one with all forms and "equally present in and as all stages and all phenomena" (Wilber 2001:336). By further distinguishing lower and higher psychic, subtle and causal stages, respectively, he arrives at seven

transpersonal stages. In addition, he distinguishes within each of these stages three substages, resulting in a total of twenty-one transpersonal levels, as well as further subcategories for the pre-personal and personal stages. These subdivisions will be ignored here in order to simplify this study.

4 HYPOTHESIS OR ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO THE RELIGIOSITY OF SONG OF SONGS

Hypothesising and hypothesis testing in the humanities - if these concepts are even applicable here - cannot be pursued as it is done in the so-called natural sciences where causality is used to explain phenomena. Instead, they are about discovering and creating meaning through interpretation. In this study it is accordingly hypothesised that employing a wider definition of the concept of religiosity would yield different interpretative results from the hitherto narrower ones, and that it would reveal, allow for and open up new and liberating horizons of religious relevance for this ancient text.

5 METHODOLOGY

From the previous section it is clear that the widest and most inclusive conceptualisation of religion is therefore probably that contained in the historical development of religion described by Wilber and outlined above. His transpersonal approach to religion in terms of the various levels and development of consciousness will, in addition, be rooted in the psychodynamic context represented by Washburn (1994 and 2003).

This study largely considers the historical reasons for canonisation of Song of Songs as elusive and less pertinent as regards the religiosity of Song of Songs. Instead, it attempts to take all layers of religiosity, including current ones, in their various contexts seriously. Religiosity is regarded as a human dimension and this study represents therefore an anthropological perspective which will include the *religionsgeschichtliche* features of the text within the transpersonal psychological framework. Transcending levels of consciousness are often expressed as awakening and coming to life symbolically expressed by ascension or going outwards. The internal or external distinction that Wilber (1995:107-108 and 2000:247-249) makes is also symbolically expressed by various containers and vehicles which serve

as temporary emotional holding and facilitators in the progression to higher consciousness. This distinction also applies to the possible religiosity *in* the text and the religiosity *of the historical interpretations* of Song of Songs, both contributing to an evolutionary psychohistorical approach to Song of Songs.

A revisionist approach to Song of Songs will therefore retain the link with the past and with tradition, while opening it up to the future. More specifically, it will employ transpersonal psychology as a hermeneutical tool to raise consciousness about the religiosity of the text, whilst subsuming the gains especially from various psychodynamic approaches.

In the postmodern age the traditional hermeneutics in terms of a (still debatable) canon, or even canons, has become suffocating and even the historical and subsequent reactionary critical readings need to be both critiqued and expanded. To accommodate more consideration of the globalising world, one needs to experiment further. The plethora of interpretations of Song of Songs throughout its history has already indicated that the internal tensions have been strained by unsatisfactory or at least limiting solutions. The wider the context, the bigger the picture, the deeper the penetrating gaze, the higher the soaring flight of the imagination, the greater the possibility for a more satisfying resolution or even for a greater meaning in this mystery: nothing less than the vantage point of infinity is to be employed to get at least a glimpse of the multidimensional religiosity of Song of Songs.

This study therefore does not have any strictly scientific pretensions that would limit the approach to the rational, egoic level of understanding. An associative orientation to enhance an intuition of religiosity in Song of Songs will therefore be assumed as well.

Through interpretation the text becomes a screen, even a mirror, onto which one projects one's needs in order to help one recognise them better, without the screen as such revealing itself independently. A reflection of these needs as split off somehow gives some distance and prevents myopia from distorting it into its denial. The size of the screen also enlarges the projection and makes it clearer. Song of Songs therefore needs to be read in its widest possible contexts. There is no way out of subjectivity, and the religiosity of Song of Songs will therefore always reflect the religious needs of the interpreter.

The book of Song of Songs will be dealt with as a unit, as its possible structure and divisions do not seem to be relevant to the theme of its religiosity, and scholars have in any case not achieved any significant consensus about them. The male partner is consistently referred to as the “lover” and the female partner as the “beloved”. Although this may suggest to some a patriarchal bias in terms of active and passive roles, it is purely arbitrary.

6 RATIONALE: PSYCHOLOGY AS HERMENEUTICAL TOOL FOR BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

The relevance of a psychological approach to a study of religion or spirituality becomes evident when it is kept in mind that the *animus* or *spiritus* exists in relation to and has developed from the *anima* or psyche. This polarity can be extended into the conscious in relation to the unconscious. Transpersonal psychology recognises an ever-present spiritual dimension and destiny in human development, especially in the latter half of life when it can become the primary perspective (Washburn 2003:1).

Krinetzki (1970 and 1981) has already pioneered the application of analytical psychology to Song of Songs with Jung and Neumann (1956) as his leading lights. The latter explored the feminine archetype as manifested in the Great Mother. His theories about the origin and history of consciousness are about the psychological stages of human development in terms of transcendence of both the origin in the mother and the ego.

Kille (2001) has explored psychological Biblical criticism in order to bring it into greater prominence as an additional tool for Biblical exegesis, despite its roots going back into antiquity. His own work, as well as his references, deal largely with historical and mythological texts. He also analyses various interpretations from a psychological perspective. Neither he nor Rollins and Kille (2007) refer to its application to Song of Songs or to Krinetzki at all.

As far as could be ascertained, no Biblical interpretation from a transpersonal psychological perspective has yet been done and this study therefore intends to deal with this lacuna.

Transpersonal psychology, as the so-called fourth force of Western psychology, developed from existential and humanistic psychology, but with clear antecedents in the psychodynamic schools (Hergenhahn 1997:527). In fact, William James, who should rather be seen as an exponent of pre-Freudian functionalism, a precursor of behaviourism, was the first to use the term “transpersonal”, what Assagioli (1991:23-31) after him called superconsciousness.

It was Abraham Maslow, however, who reintroduced the term in the late 1960s (Hergenhahn 1997:527). It is noteworthy that he ranked the social lower than the individualistic needs in his famous hierarchy, and what can be translated as the transpersonal values at the peak of consciousness development. This brings to mind Fromm (1957:24f), who also pointed out the conflict between the need to belong and the need to be different and unique. One can even link this back to the nineteenth century struggle between the public and the private in theories of, for instance, Karl Marx.

Charles Tart draws attention to the need for “state-specific sciences”, the relevance of which will become clear when the state of consciousness of the reader, apart from those of the author(s) and editor(s), will prove crucial for the interpretation of texts.

Ever since, transpersonal psychology has been developed into a fully-fledged movement, which has gone beyond the limitations of Western psychology into cross-cultural psychology. In fact, it has broadened into an interdisciplinary enterprise, including diverse fields such as new physics, philosophy and art, mainly through the work of Wilber. Wilber has sought to integrate a multitude of intellectual systems, both Western and Eastern (Wilber 1977, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 to mention a small selection from his prolific writing).

From the earliest months after conception humans can access the three broad states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, representing the gross, subtle and causal, though not permanently or continuously (Wilber 2001:336). It is noteworthy that the two unconscious states are therefore already considered as transpersonal.

Washburn has been regarded as the second of the two main voices in transpersonal psychology (Bynum 1994:189). He focuses on the individual

stages of development, while Wilber's work (1977 and 1995) will be used as a guide for the collective parallel to these developments, an analogy which Freud has also observed (1979:34 and 76). This study purports to explicate the religiosity implied in the different states, stages and levels of consciousness as found in the text itself, but also reflected by its interpretation during the development of culture in history, both in past traditions and as possible projections into the future. This implies that no particular expression of religiosity is excluded, which, in addition, paves the way for both interfaith and secular dialogues.

It is important to note that both Hillman and Wilber, who think in opposite directions, critique literalist thinking, though for different reasons and with differing meanings. For the former's postmodern deconstructive thinking, there is no last or ultimate reality, towards which everything points. There are only images, and those arise from and sink back again into the dark depths of the psyche. For Wilber, on the other hand, any "flatland" thinking (2001:19-21) reduces the infinite wealth of reality to both the quadrant and the level of one's own personal interpretation. For both there is an acknowledgement of different worlds or realities as experienced in different layers of consciousness. This is perhaps also suggested by the elusive nature of the structure of Song of Songs.

7 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The next four chapters will reflect the four concentric circles (though in a different sequence) of al-Zahi (*vide supra* 3.3.1.1). This entails the text as corpus shadowing the body, although the chapters may more closely echo Wilber's four quadrants. The total image will, however, resemble that of a sandglass with Chapter three as the centre through which consciousness flows.

Chapter two deals with the wider *intertextuality* of Song of Songs and is about the collective exterior background circumstances and discourses which might have contributed to its composition, with particular reference to the unfolding of consciousness as expressed in cultural institutions. Only the most pertinent aspects which are relevant for the understanding of Song of Songs

will be dealt with. This chapter relates well to al-Zahi's second concentric circle of society as a social body.

Chapter three will converge on the architecture and texture of the *text(s)* itself/themselves as an external individual product of consciousness, as embodied in the text of Song of Songs, and an instance from this cultural milieu – a part of, and yet apart from, the whole. It contains traces from various stages of the history of religion similar to what Müller (1994) has called “religiöse Erinnerungsreste”. As the central chapter it suitably reflects the core of al-Zahi's model which is the concrete matter of the body. Although this traditionally exegetical chapter will deal a lot with the occurrence of specific words, this should not be seen as logocentric. Apart from aural impressions such as alliteration, assonance, rhyme and rhythm, words are the smallest linguistic units in a written text which can suggest a level of consciousness and therefore the possible religiosity implied by that level. It is words and refrains repeated which, as motifs, weave themes.

Chapter four will diverge again to the current *context(s)* representing some of the internal life of possible present environments into which Song of Songs could be received. Although not the same collective milieu as that which provided the original context to the text, current receptors also influence the meaning of the text through their dialogical and dialectical stance towards themes contained and carried by the text. Various points of contact between Song of Songs and some relevant views will be sought, in order to enhance the level of consciousness through the fusion of horizons (cf Gadamer 1986:272). These partners include both secular and religious thinkers. This chapter can be related to the personal experience of the “received” body, here as text and the psychological reactions to it.

Chapter five will contain a wider and deeper look into the *subtext(s)* of the text, as the implied content of consciousness underneath the text co-produced by its possible intertextual origins, the author(s) and redactor(s) of the text itself as well as the present-day context. It will be shown to be an open, organic body of text which liberates consciousness to recognise the infinite within the finite. It could perhaps be related to al-Zahi's fourth concentric circle as corporeality as an interpretation of the body's meaning symbolised by religion.

Intertext: The ancient Near Eastern background

This chapter deals with the possible intertextual relations which might have contributed to the composition and final text of Song of Songs. This includes not only contact with texts from other cultures, but also these other cultures as texts in the postmodern sense.

1 METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS ON STUDYING CULTURE

Before various cultural complexes can be discussed, some methodological assumptions need to be clarified. According to Eilberg-Schwartz (1990:91), there are three possible approaches to understanding cultural data: contextual (integrationist), diffusionist and comparativist.

The *contextual* approach remains within only one context when interpreting certain cultural phenomena by relating them to others in the same context. However, it has to deal with two methodological problems: *firstly*, to define the context and, *secondly*, to decide which cultural phenomena are related and why. Contexts are seen as internally coherent, at least to a certain degree, but so unique that they are incomparable. There is a reactionary “parallel-anoia” about the “parallelomania” that allegedly connects cultures almost randomly or glibly (Eilberg-Schwartz 1990:88, 94).

The *diffusionist* approach compares and so explains certain phenomena in terms of one or more neighbouring cultures, and therefore assumes that they belong to different cultural contexts, which might not necessarily be the case. An original centre of gravity then has to be determined from which the particular phenomenon spread to the relevant cultures. The problem is that elements that were absorbed from a neighbouring culture are often reinterpreted within the dynamics of the new context. Structure does not simply imply meaning, and continuities as well as discontinuities therefore have to be identified. Similarities are regarded as metonymic because of the (direct) contact between the different cultures.

The *comparativist* approach is that of modern social anthropology which compares phenomena of one culture with those in others not necessarily spatially or temporally adjacent to one another. Similarities are regarded as metaphoric and may be explained in terms of a universal mind developing at different rates in different places. This view clearly has an affinity with the posturing of universal archetypes that structure the human mind.

The diffusionist and comparativist approaches, both accepting comparisons but to different degrees, have to guard against superficially identifying similarities in terms of form, while the causes or content may in fact be different. The contextual approach emphasises this sensitivity. Deciding what is comparable, similar and different amounts to interpretations and has sometimes proven to produce false parallels (Eilberg-Schwartz 1990:94). All three approaches therefore have to deal with the two vexing questions about what is the context and what is relevant. The difference is relative and one of degree, as with concentric circles. These decisions are determined by one's overall world view and operate politically as a defence strategy for one's religious commitment. At the same time, the fragmentary remains from history compel the archaeological search to reconstruct the larger cultural whole through conjecture in terms of analogies and probability (Eilberg-Schwartz 1990:92). This generalisation through inductive reasoning induces a reductionist bias in favour of similarities on the one hand, but also elevates the interpretation to second-order (abstract) reflection which transforms analysis and interpretation (Eilberg-Schwartz 1990:93).

The contextual approach seems to be parallel to the structural analytical approach to texts, whereas the diffusionist and comparative approaches seem to be similar to the historical-critical method of understanding texts. This study will endeavour to benefit from all three cultural approaches whilst keeping their different caveats in mind. However, as the historical-critical approach to Song of Songs is favoured here, there is also a natural affinity towards the comparativist approach to culture. Though these approaches do not neatly coincide with the different chapter divisions, this (second) chapter will mainly use the diffusionist, the third mainly the contextual, and the fourth the comparativist approaches. From these different

angles and concentric circles the fifth chapter sets out to integrate the results into a higher level according to the model that Wilber has developed.

If meaning is, amongst other things, induced in relation to the width of the context, then consideration of the largest possible geographical area needs to be balanced against practical constraints. At least the direct neighbours of the culture which composed the final form of Song of Songs need to be surveyed in order to get a sense of the nature and levels of their religious consciousness, especially how they relate to romantic and sexual love, and of their gender ideologies. The oldest description songs are those celebrating the deities (Herrmann 1963:181 and 197), probably as ideals for human beauty. Love lyrics from the ancient Near East vary, however, in several respects (Westenholz 1995:2481). The cultures included are the majority of the Semitic world as well as the Hamitic culture of ancient Egypt up to the final redaction of Song of Songs. This is not meant to detract from the uniqueness of any culture, but merely to shed light on it through similarities.

In conservative cultures such as some in the Middle East, the situation of the ancient Near East may be reconstructed as analogous to that of the twenty-first century CE (Nicholson 1979:74). Pope (1977:56) likewise refers to Wetzstein's findings in eighteenth century CE Syrian weddings as possible parallels which may shed light on ancient traditions, although Granqvist (referred to by Horine 2001:28) did not find a king's week in Palestine during the first part of the twentieth century. Patai (1959:15-16) also argues that the Middle East has been unique in its resistance to change and consequently still reflects the ancient cultural patterns in the modern era. Therefore such a study complements and compensates for the lacunae in the archaeological and documentary findings. This obviously applies only to the remnants of folk societies still uncontaminated by westernisation, that is, the remote villages and nomadic tribes.

The geographical names mentioned in Song of Songs testify to a large area from, in the north, Damascus, Lebanon, Hermon, Senir and Ammanah to the Bedouins of Qedar in northern Arabia and from the highlands of Gilead in the east to Carmel at the Mediterranean Sea in the west. Cross (1973:27) believes Ammanah to be even further north than the older identification with the Anti-Lebanon, perhaps the Bargylus or a peak, such as Jebel Arsüs, in the

southernmost extension of the Amanus. From these names it is clear that Song of Songs has stretched its wings towards the surrounding world with which it felt a bond, not only in accepting their cultural gifts, but also in processing and ploughing what was received to form a text relevant to a transnational context.

Like Freud, Chetwynd (1991:4) also points out the parallels between the rise of archaeology and psychology over the last century, both uncovering the layers of history. Remembering the past is a re-mem-bering, a relinking and relating to the sources. Remnants and relics have, however, survived in the form of dreams, dance, song, poetry, ritual and drama, that is, through arts and religion, which express and appeal to feelings and intuitions through symbols.

2 DIFFERENT AGES

Religiosity as outlined in Chapter one has had a long and varied development in the Near East as well. The roots of Song of Songs therefore lie much deeper than just its immediate environment, as it was probably created over several centuries before it was put into writing, a process which also developed in turn over several centuries before the final redaction brought this long creation to a standstill.

Viviers (2008:449) refers to the cultural or symbolic revolution of 60 000 to 30 000 years ago as the origin of religion. This was an evolutionary development in the human brain when various kinds of intelligences started to interact, allowing more abstract thought as proven by rock art, more sophisticated tools and more comprehensive funeral rituals.

The literature of the Age of Myth originates from and appeals to the imagination of the right brain in creating images, what has been called the feminine side. It is often difficult to understand archaic language which comes from the depths of the soul, and at the same time from the depths of the universe (Chetwynd 1991:208).

Chetwynd conjectures that the Chalcolithic or Bronze Age in the ancient Near East was the birth of the unconscious, during the creative age of myth, rooted in a single myth about cyclical time. It comprised a period of about twenty-five centuries between prehistory and history proper. In Syro-

Palestinian history, this was, however, the period from 3150-1200 BCE (Deist 1990:36). This era introduced pictogrammes following the Sumerian writing system (Chetwynd 1991:xi-xiii).

Krüger, Lubbe and Steyn (2009:19) characterise this period as one of advanced food production, larger cities and empires which required writing, growing class and gender inequality and further specialisation of the official religion by a small elite who accepted the common religiosity of magic and superstition.

After a transitional period of about five hundred years, this was partially repressed by the left-brain consciousness for more or less the following twenty-five centuries, since about 750 BCE (which is about the time of the Axial Age's awakening of the individual moral consciousness from 800 to 200 BCE, according to Jaspers [1949:19-43]; cf also Swidler [1998:283] and Cousins [1992:5]). This consciousness has favoured the linearity of logic and historical thinking, culminating in modern scientific thought. It is sometimes regarded as the masculine side, which has partially excluded the feminine aspect, thus impoverishing itself. Chetwynd (1991:10) believes that the emerging psychological perspective is now getting ready to reintegrate and include this long-lost, unconscious human dimension into a more balanced and holistic existence. This entails the synthesis of the preceding three aspects of body, feelings and intellect into a fourth. Chetwynd (1991:3) acknowledges, however, having been significantly influenced by the thought of Julian Jaynes (1976).

Creation usually manifested in sexual terms in the ancient Near East. This was often expressed in love literature which was at the same time lyrical and dramatic, with two or more voices, very often addressing each other as siblings. Yet Sparks (2005:140) regards the number of extant texts dealing with love less than expected considering the normal interest in sex, although they became part of general life to the extent that Lu-dingira, a Sumerian nobleman, even describes his mother in semi-erotic terms. These general expressions, though, other than relating to the god or the king, remained by far the minority. A female lover often referred to herself in the first person plural instead of the singular, especially when she described her bodily attributes, perhaps implying that both lovers own her body or even identifying

her lover with her body, which would have narcissistic implications. An apple tree and an alabaster pillar were phallic metaphors, while gardens and stones referred to pubic hair. All the senses were involved and there was a particular emphasis on jewellery, used literally or figuratively, also expressing the value of the partner. Love literature formed part of epics and hymns of praise and was a combination of narrative and liturgical discourse. This reflected the lack of distinction between sacred and profane and between emotional and physical love (Westenholz 1995:2471-2474). In fact, as Krinetzki (1981:28) confirms, the religious and the profane were not two separate spheres in Israelite culture: YHWH was always present in and behind both. Wisdom literature was therefore never merely secular advice.

2.1 PREHISTORY OF THE LEVANT

The Palaeolithic system expressed itself through a purely symbolic classification of humans into two complementary groups, masculine and feminine, always portrayed separately in pictorial space (Cauvin 2000:68). The Woman and the Bull appeared as divinities in the Levant during the tenth millennium BCE, and the first division between heaven and earth seems to have prepared the way for the emergence of states, urbanisation and social stratification. The sovereign would derive legitimation from the divine, but remain merely its representative.

During the Natufian period (c.12500-10000 BCE) burials, though absent in the arid Negev area, were for the first time supported by sacrificial practices (Cauvin 2000:17), suggesting the enduring power and authority of the deceased. Some of the bodies were accompanied by art, both naturalistic and schematic, representing deer or gazelles, but rarely of humans and then only as asexual. Art and the sedentary villages were gradually simplified, the latter implying larger communities and social reorganisation, explaining perhaps the incorporation of the dead. It seems significant that the development towards sedentary homes as containers might have coincided with the burial of the dead as its parallel. If the Jungian insight into the symbolic significance of buildings as a reflection of the self and particularly of the body is kept in mind, a greater consciousness about the body and its need for containment, through various forms of self-care, might be read into this as

well. Taking care of the body in Song of Songs is a further development in this process of emotional containment and intimacy, and provides vehicles of transformation towards higher and wider levels of consciousness.

According to Jaynes (1976:138-143), hunting tribes of about twenty people each used to live in the mouth of caves during the Mesolithic culture around 10000 BCE. By 9000 BCE they settled in towns of over two hundred people living in about fifty round stone buildings with reed roofs of diameters of up to 8 m, around an open area with bell-shaped pits for food and sometimes reused for burials. They allegedly still lacked a sense of self and any form of “narratisation”, and responded to stimuli caused by stress and cued by the commands of their chiefs with aural hallucinations as a side effect of language. This might be suggested by the fact that the Sumerian word for understanding, *geshtu2*, also means ear (Asher-Greve 1998b:10). This is corroborated by Hallpike who claims the same for many old languages (Asher-Greve 1998b:32n20). The use of nouns was followed by a period when names linked hallucinations to specific individuals. This was due to more permanent relationships, longer lifespans and greater numbers in the warmer postglacial environment. Both hallucinations and names enabled people to persist at their tasks and to improvise thinking as an extension of the voices heard which formed the rudiments of the superego. This psychic development accompanied the advent of agriculture as a primitive supplement to their meat from the hunt. The stress caused by someone’s death due to the more permanent relationships, and in particular that of the king, would intensify the hallucinated voice. The dead king was the first living god, whose tomb at Eynan, north of the Sea of Galilee, became the god’s house. From it developed the multilevelled temples or ziggurats and pyramids to include the king’s successors, as well as statues to perpetuate the dead. Social control was therefore through hallucinations, called gods, and became the ideologies of theocracies. The increase in population, complexity and decisions required more gods and priests, with personal gods or *ili* interceding with higher ones in the hierarchies until the system eventually broke down (Jaynes 1976:198).

Krüger, Lubbe and Steyn (2009:19) summarise this period as revolutionary due to the initiation of agriculture, larger groups and settlements, gender inequality, technologies such as weaving and pottery, the

institutionalisation and professionalisation of religious specialists with the king central to state religion and sacrifices as gifts to the divinities.

The bridging Khiamian period (c. 10000-9500 BCE) brought mainly changes in art, from the previous zoomorphic preponderance to figurines with female forms which were still schematic (Cauvin 2000:25-26). This suggests a humanisation of art, perhaps due to a breakthrough in self-awareness, and specifically a depiction of sexuality in terms of the female. The skulls with horns of aurochs bulls have been found buried in houses. The bulls were rarely hunted, however, probably due to the difficulty, which could explain their exceptional value. The goddess and the bull perhaps expressed the resonance with nature. Like the Palaeolithic Age, the Neolithic Age celebrated the return of spring as a major theme in its religion (Eisler 1995:28). As will be seen, themes of the garden, spring and reciprocal addresses between the lovers were common features of Mesopotamian love poetry (Pelletier 1989:5). In Mesopotamian art priestesses are always dressed but priests, like heroic warriors and gods in battle, are portrayed as naked, perhaps suggesting that they are then more receptive to the divine, especially if they are also virgins (Asher-Greve 1998b:18-19). However, Asher-Greve (1998b:30) also claims that the demotion of the goddesses and of women coincided with a greater emphasis on the distinguishing bodily features of males and females in their nude representations, as well as on motherhood and the physical strength of men. It was the vulva and the womb, rather than the breasts, which defined women (Asher-Greve 1998b:14). Feminine beauty was expressed by metaphors derived from agriculture, whereas erotic pleasure was one of the divine powers (Asher-Greve 1998b:23). In Song of Songs the female body is celebrated in her totality, however, because the focus is not on her fertility but on her enchanting beauty. That multiple horticultural metaphors are used does not detract from this, as fruits and flowers are likewise celebrated for much more than as symbols of birth.

Ever since, the symbols of the woman and the bull have retained their currency throughout the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, including the religion of the pre-Hellenic, eastern Mediterranean. Their proliferation and spread are attested to by the depiction in architecture of the woman as a goddess giving birth to bulls, or, in exceptional cases, to rams in seventh millennium Anatolia.

Elsewhere, quadrupeds, numerous snakes or a nocturnal raptor such as an owl also appeared, sometimes replacing the goddess. The jaws, tusks or beaks of carnivores or dangerous animals are disguised inside female breasts in wall reliefs, symbolising the combination of the nutritious and lethal Mother-Goddess. Raptors in painted frescoes are perched with extended wings on top of little matchstick men without heads. The goddess has exaggerated hips, symbolising fertility, is sometimes seated on panthers, symbolising her royalty, and holds an infant or a young feline in her arms, symbolising maternity or her being the mistress of wild animals (Cauvin 2000:29).

The Mother-Goddess dominates the oriental pantheon right up to the time of the male-dominated monotheism of Israel. On the pottery of the Halaf culture at the end of the seventh millennium she is part of the hunt scene. The frequency of her representation as well as the indication that she is a mythical personality rather than only a fertility symbol made her into a supreme and universal mother, subordinating all others in what has been termed a female monotheism. What some have interpreted as the horns of the bull image, others have taken as the outstretched arms of someone in prayer or reaching out to the mother figure. Cauvin (2000:32) moots the possibility that it could already have portrayed the simultaneous son-and-spouse relationship of the Bronze Age texts. It is important to note that the bull had no particular economic value amongst the last hunter-gatherers of approximately 9500 BCE, just before its domestication which coincided with the first farming economy as the second step of neolithisation. In the Southern Levant the bull appeared in the Jordan Valley only much later, when it was cast in human form.

Regional diversification followed for the southern Sultanian, central Aswadian and middle Euphratic Mureybetian cultural groups, all under the umbrella of the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A. This covers the period 9500-8300 BCE, including the Protoneolithic. Very stylised, abstract female figurines from Netiv Hagdud show only the hips, upper torso and eyes explicitly.

Increased sedentarisation involved fewer but larger settlements, but no territorial expansion, although a demographic explosion at the local level occurred after 9000 BCE. The time required to accurately shape and polish stones suggests their value as phallic symbols rather than their pragmatic

utility. The question could be raised whether both these phenomenon are due to a rise in sexual awareness, especially if sublimated masturbatory suggestions are also read into this cultivation of precious objects (cf Klein 1975:90).

Cauvin (2000:209) refers to Rousseau and Hegel's interpretation of religion as an alienation by the human subject who projects his own qualities onto divine and supernatural personalities, but points out that this dispossession of the self was not to compensate for external economic or demographic circumstances, as Marx believed. The Neolithic revolution in the ancient Near East transformed every aspect of culture without being caused by economic change, although the latter also had social results. Motoyama (1992:79), on the other hand, regards climate as the primary cause for the shape of religion and consciousness. The climate and natural geography of the Near East are generally harsh and instill a semi-crisis mode which would make the population more prone to aggressive, masculine and dualistic tendencies. The tenderness expressed in Song of Songs should not close one's eyes to the sense of urgency, intensity and even aggressive pursuit of sexual satisfaction, although this is, of course, not unique to its geographical context. It is, however, expressed by the contrast between the fertile gardens and valleys on the one hand, and the desolate desert on the other, as mental polarities which reflect the general state of mind of the lovers.

Cauvin rather views the tension of this differentiation as generating the mental energy required to influence the environment, as transcendence of an equilibrium rendered obsolete by the realisation of the misery of human finiteness. Due to the realisation of the individual self, death as the end of that self also became problematised. This insight represented then one of those rapids in the flow of history when inventions are born during clusters of internal conflict. The transformation of the structures of the collective imagination therefore preceded that of society as its external expression. Dangerous animals symbolising suffering and death came to be represented as the immediate retinue of the oriental Goddess, thus expressing her in the unconscious as the ambiguous "terrible mother" of both birth and death. This individuation was not alienation, as the Goddess had been anthropomorphic and thus familiar and recognisable from the start. In fact, it also relinks

humanity to nature, as the infant and the young animal have both been associated with her.

During the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B overlapping somewhat with Pre-Pottery Neolithic A was the period from 8600-7000 BCE. Cultural unity prevailed in the whole of the Levant: stone tool technology, ceramics, rectangular architecture, subsistence economy, herding and cultivation as well as the skull cult. The early Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (8600-8200 BCE) evolved from the Mureybetian culture towards south-eastern Anatolia. The middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (8200-7500 BCE) involved mainly a southern expansion and the herding of small ruminants. The late Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (7500-7000 BCE) was a cultural explosion to the previously uninhabited areas such as the temperate northern coast of Syria with further economic and agricultural developments, for instance nomadic pastoralism. The Pre-Pottery Neolithic B represents important ideological changes: despite the scarcity of art, the first male figure is found. In Anatolia one finds the first portrayal of a couple, the first public buildings as well as indications of sacrifices, perhaps including those of humans, which were apparently still absent in the Levant at the time.

To show how far back in history the roots are of patriarchy against which Song of Songs nevertheless courageously protests, one needs to note that in the southern Levant ithyphallic human statuettes in stone represent the typical emphasis on virility as one of this period's inspirational values. The female figurines tend to conform more to stereotypes of their symbolic function, for instance exaggerated breasts and hips, whereas the zoomorphic ones seem more neutral. Ibexes and rams appear to be substitutes for bulls. However, Cauvin (2000:123) still calls the people of the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B the people of the bull to whom he attributes their sense of instinctive, brute force. The bull symbolises the violence of the storm and the warrior, similar to the way that the Goddess dominated the panther. It was represented, for instance, by the Phoenician Ba'al. Two additional features of this period were bullfights and the humanisation of the bull manifested in the hunting and eventual domestication of the bull. Cauvin (2000:125) surmises that this new concept of virility, which confronted the instinctive, brute force as a civilising

hero, reflected a dominant self-confidence around 8000 BCE. This leads to the warrior gear of the male divinities of the Bronze Age.

Cauvin (2000:130) refers to Mircea Eliade who has pointed to the cosmic symbolism of the house. The straight line and the angle are indicative of both the male and the cultural, whereas the circle represents the transcendent as well as the germinal, the maternal and the intimate, that is, the female. The shift to a rectangular structure above ground therefore reflects a significant change in consciousness. Cauvin (2000:207) argues against those who exploit the potential ambiguity of the idea of domestication to refer also to the architectural changes as both driving back the frontiers of the wild through agriculture and withdrawing more into intimacy. Firstly, this would be contradicted by the raising of the house above the ground as more symbolic of emergence than introversion. Secondly, urbanisation (which was not yet the “Urban Revolution” placed by Gordon Childe in the fourth millennium BCE [Cauvin 2000:220]) did not always result in the invention of agriculture, because “we have found the answer in the identification of a completely new ideology, the advent of divinities who, by opening up the sphere of the intimate self, awakened in the people of the Levant, the necessary energy for a new type of expansiveness”. Art and cultivation were corresponding expressions of the new consciousness, due to the “energising” value of the new images.

From about 7000 BCE the female figurines started to acquire an elongated neck and an occipital elongation stretching the skull up and backwards. The meaning of this is not clear but it reminds one of the neck of the woman in Song of Songs being portrayed as a tower in 4:4 and 7:5. In some the eyes are stressed, perhaps to accentuate the fascinating aspect of the deity or her increased consciousness. It is perhaps significant that Pope (1977:356) claims that the eyes of a woman are regarded in the Hebrew Bible as her most beautiful feature.

Unlike during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B, the seventh millennium BCE reveals single, but unequal burials. This could point to a growing individualism as a result of the emerging male consciousness.

The dualistic religion, which originated during the Neolithic Age in the northern Levant, as Cauvin seems to suggest, has been anthropomorphic in

its expression from the outset. As a projection of some unresolved inner conflict, it was initially expressed as female and then complemented by her male counterpart. This suggests that this conflict was gender or sexuality related, reminiscent of the Freudian notion of the Oedipal complex, but now in its collective appearance.

Smith (1956:84) believes that Semitic religiosity is historically rooted in physical nature and material objects as meeting points between humans and gods, who were, in some sense, regarded as part of the natural universe. The whole range of possible natural objects, from stones through to living beings such as plants and animals to celestial bodies (cf Amos 5:26 and Job 31:26-27), could therefore appear as deities during certain periods of time. Accordingly, clear distinctions between phenomenal and noumenal, between organic and inorganic, and between plants and animals, were not yet made. Self-projection allowed the attribution of human characteristics onto any other entities, resulting in anthropomorphic conceptions of the gods and what has remained in modern thinking as the figurative speech of personification.

In the same way, humans could be transformed into natural objects, such as the panther or a myrrh tree, again highlighting the fluid boundaries between different entities. While lions and war horses could be the lovers of Ishtar in Assyrian myth, art depicted fantastic monsters, half-human and half-animal, that is, centauric, such as the Phoenician cherubim.

According to Smith (1966:257), astral deities are a feature of a syncretistic, national religion, but their local worship retains totemic characteristics. The oldest celestial deities were venerated with the fragrant smoke of burnt offerings, perhaps as the only means believed to be able to reach them in the sky. The oldest and most enduring sacrifice was the offering of a gift or blood on a sacred place or stone. Perfumed clothes were worn at festive occasions, which were always sacred. Perfume was considered very holy amongst the Semites and used in purifications. Jewels and gemstones were sacred as well and generally served as amulets (Smith 1956:453). Nasr (1996:239) adds that body decorations, including ornaments, function in primal religions as “embellishment with cosmic and divine qualities”, as the etymological link between the words “cosmos” and “cosmetics” indicates.

That the spiritual forces belonging to a certain object were relatively detached from it, as suggested by dreams, does not mean that they merely inhabited rather than were identified with these objects. The objects were therefore not mere symbols of the forces, but their very embodiment and permanent centre of activity. Beyond the gods and their relations with a group of humans lay the vast realm of magic and sorcery with a plethora of supernatural agencies, demigods and demons (Smith 1956:87-91).

Furthermore, what was incomprehensible and mysterious and what stimulated the sentiments and imagination, such as sexuality, was invested with awe and reverence, and easily led to beliefs in divine life or supernatural manifestation (Smith 1956:86). The local nature of the gods led to the development of their fixed sanctuaries and homes. This did not mean that the god could not be worshipped outside this locality, but foreign countries were, for instance, regarded as unclean for the God of Israel, who was seen by outsiders as the god of the hills, where victory was secured for his people (cf Amos 7:17 and Joshua 22:19). These special seats of power were usually expressed by the title Ba'al, the master and owner of the premises. In the Hebrew Bible place names which include this title are actually abbreviations for Beth Ba'al.

If Smith is correct in his claim that the Ba'alim were originally the gods of the subterranean and fountain waters where irrigation would not have been necessary and where an oasis could easily be cultivated to produce crops, then these deities would have originated in the valleys and the low-lying areas, where water could gather. That would explain why the God of Israel, as the God of the mountain, the storm and fire, would have been opposed to them, despite the fact that they later extended their domain to include the skies, and later the mountains from where the rainwater came, thus claiming the credit for all fertility. The contrast of green glades in the desert therefore made all Semites regard them as a sacred garden of the gods (Smith 1956:103). This made ownership of and laws regarding water earlier than those for land, which was not private at all for the nomads, except around the source of water. Even in the latest stage of Phoenician religion when all deities had become celestial beings, the original water sanctuaries were still regarded as the holiest. Of all inanimate things, flowing or "living" water (so

prominent in Song of Songs), in particular, had strong supernatural associations and was often believed to have oracular powers and a will to reject or accept offerings (Smith 1956:135). Because the Ba'alim were connected to life and fertility, belief in them led to a highly sensual mythology (Smith 1956:107).

3 MESOPOTAMIA

On the Jazirah of north-west Mesopotamia, the Upper Palaeolithic Zarzian culture was followed by the Epipalaeolithic (9500-7600 BCE), which was very different from the Natufian, Pre-Pottery Neolithic A and early and middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B of the Levant at that time. Instead of the Goddess or the Bull, images of birds as well as their wingless remains, images of wild boars, lions, snakes and carnivores, and the skulls of wild goat have been found. This can be linked to the absence of agriculture and herding and its prerequisite ideology, all of which was to be found from 7500-6300 BCE. Before the late Pre-Pottery Neolithic B no nomadism or sedentisation was found in the Syrian desert. Neolithisation then arrived in the Sinjar and irrigation agriculture was developed even in semi-arid areas, for instance by the Samarra culture. The spread of an agricultural mentality therefore seems to be related to the rise of the masculine rather than the feminine mindset.

While in Egypt and India creation is explained in terms from the biological (the Cosmic Egg) to the abstract (the Word of the Demiurge), in Mesopotamia it had a definite anthropomorphic dimension, particularly in terms of sexual reproduction (Keel 1986:73).

Sacred prostitution, however, did not exist in the ancient Near East. The idea derived from outsider projections and subsequent circular reasoning. Erotic scenes in Mesopotamian art were concerned with magic or depict foreign captives performing sexual acts to entertain their captors and to add to their humiliation. The vocabulary for it did not exist in any of the languages from that area either (Budin 2008:4-5).

This does not exclude the sacred marriage ceremony performed by cultic personnel such as the *entu* (lady deity), usually the daughter or sister of the monarch and probably at the head of the *ugbaltus*, a high class of priestesses (Budin 2008:17 and 20). However, this marriage was probably not

physically enacted because this would imply incest and, secondly, because sexual activity by the *entu* is always negatively regarded in omen texts. Two other groups of religious functionaries were the *kulmashitus* and the *naditus* (fallow or deserted women) from the Ur III period (twenty-first and twentieth centuries BCE). The latter were women, often the oldest daughter of upper class families, who were not allowed to have sex or to marry. The exception were the women of Marduk, who were allowed to have sex or marry, but then were not allowed to have children. They lived together in the *gagûm* or cloisters at the temple where each had her own house and land (Budin 2008:21-23). These three groups were devoted to male deities, while the *harimtus*, *shamhatus* and *kezertus* were devoted to female deities without restrictions on their sexuality as they were now independent from patriarchy. This freedom might have included promiscuity or even prostitution, but this was then not regarded as sacred, despite their religious roles otherwise (Budin 2008:25).

In addition, it remains uncertain if virginity was really a requirement in Mesopotamian marriage contracts. The usual words previously thought to have that meaning, *batultu* (adolescent girl) and *nu'artu*, have turned out to refer to age instead (Budin 2008:31).

3.1 SUMERIA

Nammu, the primeval saltwater enclosing the universe, was the dynamic energy and the self-procreating womb, the creator of heaven and earth and mankind. Abzu was the inert physicality, but the two did not mate.

The primordial union of An, the bull god of heaven, and Ki, the goddess of the earth and subterranean world, gave birth to Enlil. The latter became head of the pantheon until the other gods banished him from Dilmun, the home of the gods, for raping Ninlil. From this encounter was born Nanna, god of the moon, who in turn, with Ningal gave birth to Inanna and Utu, the god of the sun and justice.

Leick (1994:21) classifies the texts of this region into those with a female versus a male perspective, the first mainly as condensed poetry, as in Song of Songs, and the latter as longer, more complex narratives.

Enki, a later child of An and Ki, was the god of the earth, the sweet water ocean under it, springs, wells, fertility, vegetation, wisdom, crafts and magic and the patron of the southern city of Eridu (Leick 1994:12). He is the only Mesopotamian deity, and more so in Sumerian than in Akkadian literature, with phallic characteristics, unlike in Pharaonic Egypt (Leick 1994:21). He created through the wisdom of his words, but also through his link with the fecundity of water or his ejaculated sperm. In *Enki and the World Order* he identifies with his father, when he ejaculates his “bridal gifts” like a lusty bull into the Euphrates and the Tigris. This clearly contrasts with the many figurines of nude females and depictions of the vulva amongst archaeological findings from this area. This also shows that the depiction of the woman in Song of Songs was not alien to the area.

At one stage a fox (Leick 1994:38) is employed as mediator to cure Enki from the affliction imposed by Ninhursaga, the mother goddess of the mountains, because he had eaten from desire and curiosity the eight plants which had sprouted from his seed wasted on the outside of Utu. In this way he had gained knowledge of their “hearts” (or “insides”), and now “determined their fate”. This is reminiscent, of course, of the Genesis narrative about the Fall, but opposes the sentiments in Song of Songs where eating the fruit of the woman is celebrated. In Song of Songs the little foxes serve a similar minor, but opposite, role unless it is to stimulate greater sexual interest through competition. Despite his wisdom, Enki is susceptible to intoxication, and wine and sensuality are both described as clouding his judgement, indeed a negative judgement of what is clearly positive in Song of Songs. In other texts, though, the garden, apple trees and lovemaking are clearly archetypal elements of the sacred marriage ritual (Horine 2001:96).

This is, for instance, the case in *Enki and Ninhursaga* where some fruits, especially apples, are valued for their aphrodisiac qualities and the male member is likened to apple trees. This is once again contrary to the tree as an image of the woman in Song of Songs and to that in a late copy of an Ishtar-Tammuz text, where she says that she “fill[s] the orchard as if with ‘apples’”, that Inanna “is like a spadix covered with dates” and that she is for her spouse “like a vine sprouting with many shoots” (Mindlin, Geller & Wansbrough 1987:29-30). In another collection, Inanna, “who loves apples

and pomegranates”, is said to bring forth potency (Leick 1994:202). Similar fruits are mentioned in Song of Songs and clearly serve as décor in a mediating role to stimulate love in this cultural context which is modelled on the examples of the deities.

The national god of the northern Nippur, Enlil, the god of air, resided on an alluvial plain imbedded by a huge sky and wide flat earth. He was also called *kur-gal* (great mountain) and *rimu* (wild ox) as the child of the bull god, An, and his headdress was decorated with horns (Lurker 1987:110). Despite it being a near universal metaphor, the sky’s fertilising rain as sperm into the earth is a relatively rare feature of Mesopotamian mythology (Leick 1994:17), and water as the sole Mother, rather than earth, remains dominant. Yet, the damp marshes of the earth became suitable metaphors for the female genitals and the vulva represented by a boat. From this it is clear how the earth became a symbol for the female body as it also is in Song of Songs.

The male gods only spoke of love or their emotions as an exception, and the male orgasm is an act of creation, ideally within the context of marriage. Neither the Indian erotic ascetic nor the promiscuous male is paralleled; in fact, male sexuality is not a popular subject in Sumerian texts (Leick 1994:55). While the father was virtually absent (he is completely absent in Song of Songs), the mother had a crucial role in the wedding of her daughter as part of the *hieros gamos* or sacred marriage ritual. The suitor betrothed to the queen was the fertility god, Dumuzi, who then entered the house of Inanna, who would first consult her mother, Ningal (Horine 2001:109). This resonates with the woman’s desire to bring her lover into her mother’s house in Song of Songs.

This can perhaps explain the dominance of the female voice in the area of the erotic, with Inanna, the goddess of love and war and the Queen of Heaven, as the most representative generic goddess. She was represented by reed poles with streamers (Asher-Greve 1998b:18). In time her association with reproductive fertility became overshadowed by her rule over sexual love and sensuality, both conjugal and adulterous, for brides and prostitutes, transvestites and pederasts. She was also invoked to assist in childbirth, though this function resorted more with some or other mother-goddess. Her dangerous male aspect made her a rival of Enlil, the storm god, as she

acquired phallic power from her father. In the underworld she died temporarily like the planet Venus. She therefore becomes a contradictory theological construct similar to Enki. It is for that reason that Leick (1994:157) denies that she was ever either bisexual or androgynous but rather of doubtful sexual identity, as when her cult statue wears a beard to emphasise her special function in warfare.

In the myth, *Inanna and Shukalletuda*, she is depicted as initiating lovemaking and celebrating sensuality while Shukalletuda is punished for “stealing” her during a deep sleep. Another text has her make her own bridal bed in her mother’s home (Horine 2001:109) and in another she wishes that her lover, a lion, would take her like prey to his bedroom (Keel 1986:52). She was therefore clearly dominant in sexuality despite her subservience to Enki, from whom she had to request her powers and whose genitals she once had to touch as an oath (cf Genesis 24:2 and 47:29 and the etymology of “testimony” from “testes” suggesting the divine gift of fertility at stake and confirming the Freudian castration anxiety).

Humans were created separately, but shared in the divine by virtue of their sexual reproduction. Semen is regarded as the essential substance for life and thus divine. In *Enlil and Ninlil*, as in *Enki and Ninhursaga*, premarital experiments are to be used to personal advantage. The girl loses her virginity in lieu of impregnation and offspring (Leick 1994:34).

The so-called Bridal Songs, reflecting the upper classes, reveal romantic freedom in public as well as some furtiveness as to their meeting places. The mother, but also the brother, who also mediates liaisons, were the girl’s main authority figures. Inanna, for instance, requests her brother to accompany her to the Mountain of Cedars, where aromatic tree oils, silver, salts and lapis lazuli are to be found and where she will receive the necessary expertise, perhaps even through sexual intercourse with her brother as an educational ritual (Leick 1994:85).

The father is practically never mentioned. Girls dreamt of and longed for their lovers, their wedding days as well as their imagined or remembered sensual pleasures. According to Asher-Greve (1998b:23), Sumerian love literature emphasised the body, especially the vulva, regarded love as bodily pleasure and focused on procreation. All these songs are about Inanna and

literary products, perhaps derived from folklore, to facilitate rites of passage. This adoption of popular songs for the cultic sphere is not unique to any culture (Leick 1994:68). There are no intriguing plots, but they reflect the time since the girl's first awareness of sexual desire until her wedding day, in pre-industrial societies, often not much later. The texts are often structured as libretti for the different parties concerned. At some point Inanna sings a song in praise of herself. The focus is mainly on the girl's emotions with those of the male stereotyped as projections.

Unlike Egyptian love songs, there is no mention of *chagrin d'amour*, but rather of impatience, restlessness, flirtatiousness, curiosity, deceit and excitement. Inanna's passion for the shepherd and god-king, Dumuzi, himself at one stage begging at her door, is perhaps an example of the intermarriage between the urban and the settled agrarian, semi-nomadic or nomadic pastoralists, always represented by the male, around the Mesopotamian cities.

Eisler (1995:67-69) points out that Inanna initially resisted marriage to this rough pastoralist, perhaps semi-nomadic, as she preferred a settled farmer and the economic benefits he would bring. This is all as nostalgia for the old time when their marriage would be a celebration of the plants rising from the earth. This is why ploughing as a sexual metaphor is borrowed from the Neolithic ways of life. For the same reason death is also associated with sexuality, as the two partners, as well as Geshtinanna, the man's sister, descended into the underworld, from where they also returned. Likewise, the king praises her in one of the hymns as the rising cedar. The growing pressures from the barbaric peoples on the frontiers, however, necessitated military leadership and the centralisation of power into hierarchies.

The cuneiform sign for "woman" is a triangle referring to her vulva, thus identifying the part with the whole, a part object relation in psychoanalytic theory and functioning like metonymy in literature. Inanna represents the power of sexuality and her vulva was therefore sacred. This is never the case with the penis of Enki, as it is with the lingam (the phallus image) of Shiva in Indian mythology. The polluting quality of semen, though, can be seen to share in this sense of the holy as taboo. It is perhaps Inanna's dangerous aspect that she causes it to be secreted.

The first king to become the consort of Inanna, Shulgi, was the second king of the third dynasty of Ur. His deification was, however, only relative to his people, and never an incarnation as in Egypt. He was called Dumuzi, who was elsewhere a shepherd, or the god of vegetation and the male principle, whom demons who took to the underworld in lieu of Inanna. The kingship included a sacerdotal function and by relating sexually to the goddess of love, he tapped into her divine power. Leick (1994:109) refers to Parrinder's observation that symbolic intercourse is often an important ingredient of initiation ceremonies in various cultures. This was allegedly expressed by the sacred marriage rituals and repeatedly re-enacted in various centres of power throughout the kingdom to a good harvest, human fertility and the legitimization of the king's rule. The legendary love life of King Shu-Sîn, the son of Shulgi and perhaps seen as the incarnation of Dumuzi in the love poetry, brings to mind that of Israel's King Solomon, the son and successor of David. The fact that the king could satisfy the sexual demands of the goddess made him worthy of his position. This served as a development of royal ideology, which previously, since the First Dynastic period, had regarded the king as a child, sibling, friend or chosen one of the goddess. Fruit such as pomegranates, grapes, figs and something like apricots, as well as honey were used as metaphors for her love, but not for a particular physical aspect. Ploughing is, however, specific in its figurative use (Lambert 1987:30-31).

The so-called love songs, characteristic of late Sumerian literature, were appreciated by a literate audience and had a decidedly courtly tone even when referring to the low-life milieu of the "alehouse" (Leick 1994:111), reminiscent of 2:4. According to Guinan (1998:53), the tavern in Mesopotamia created both a sexual and ritual context, as the "holy tavern" might originally have referred to Inanna's temple, but later to a brothel. Leick (1994:151) also refers to Bataille's view that the common prostitute has fulfilled the role of co-upholding the sense of the holy through her transgression of the taboo to complement marriage. Such extramarital sexuality was, in fact, partially institutionalised and under the auspices of Inanna in ancient Mesopotamia, and more particularly in the "taverns". The tavern links again the activities of drinking alcohol and having sex in both a real and an associative way as it refers figuratively also to the female state of arousal.

While rape and adultery were regarded as crimes against a man's property, prostitution as an independent profession was not condemned, but frowned upon by men who saw it as loss of power and support. Some prostitutes, though associated with witchcraft and sorcery in some texts, even got married, and were encouraged or even forced to conduct business, probably for their husband's financial gain. The variety of terms used for this role suggests titles of office for some. The tavern and the street were the places for prostitutes to market themselves. Their marginal social position, irregular sexual identity and their perceived sexual power made them suspect and feared like demons and spirits.

The king was directly addressed in the royal love songs. In real life the queen or main wife of the king received libation offerings during and after her life, indicating her quasi-divine status. Polygyny, which was found in all strata of the population, fostered competition among the master's wives and slaves in the art of pleasing him through music, recitation and dancing, as seems to be the case in 1:3-4 as well; hence the possibility that these seductive songs were composed, or at least commissioned, by women.

In one song the barmaid's erotic qualities are praised, comparing the sweetness of her drink to that of her vulva and her mouth. Some have interpreted the beer as her vaginal secretions and her mouth as her sweet utterances. The honey mentioned has sometimes been interpreted as date syrup rather than the product of bees (Leick 1994:124). In the Sumerian language a normal (Emegir) and a female dialect (Emesal), often reserved for goddesses, can be distinguished in the lyrics. The first is often used by a male speaker such as the king, or even Inanna, though she alternates between the two. The male lover is sometimes invited to sleep over in the house of the bride's parents. This could have been a transgression of the social mores and thus have enhanced the power of the seduction, bringing to mind the insights of Bataille (1962:107) in this regard. These words are often spoken by an experienced woman on behalf of the bride. It also distinguishes these love songs from the bridal songs, where the girl takes the initiative but is also more innocent and conforming. With these distinguishing criteria (Leick 1994:118), however arbitrary they may be, Song of Songs should be regarded as love rather than bridal songs which function there rather as flights of fantasy.

In a love song from the first half of the second millennium BCE found in Nippur and written in the Emesal dialect, a priestess of the *lukur* order extols the greatness of the god-king, Shu-Sîn, the fourth ruler of the third dynasty of Ur (c. 2000 BCE). She also refers in explicitly erotic terms to the vulva of the date wine-maiden serving him, perhaps even referring to herself in a sacred marriage ceremony (Pritchard 1955:496). Asher-Greve (1998:30) adds that anatomical parts and nudity for both genders as well as motherhood and male strength became more emphasised in Ur III and Old Babylonian art (2150-1600 BCE).

The courts at Ur and Isin liked to boast about their cultural sophistication, amongst which counted a highly developed aesthetics of eroticism, in contradistinction to the straightforward treatment of sexuality in their myths (Leick 1994:124). If celebration versus explanation is the distinguishing criterion here, Song of Songs once again belongs to the former category rather than to wisdom literature. In the so-called *Tavern Sketch* much is made of an oath required from the beloved:

“May you put your right hand in my vulva,
With your left stretched towards my head,”.

This brings, of course, the similar phrases of 2:6 and 8:3 to mind.

Sumerian love poetry has been regarded as almost wholly gynocentric with scant reference to the male anatomy or enjoyment. All of this could, however, have been a cultural ideal of the first two centuries of the second millennium BCE rather than reflective of reality, as all deities were inclined to transcend established categories (Leick 1994:230). The influence of this poetry may have spilled over into the royal hymns with the king making love to the goddess, but not in the sense “of the neo-primitive ‘fertility rite’ notion that the construct of the Sacred Marriage implies” (Leick 1994:129). The songs about Inanna and Dumuzi’s marriage could possibly have originated from the traditional bridal songs. Inanna is sometimes addressed as goddess, but generally appears as any human bride. This may have served both to develop the polytheistic pantheon and to confirm the traditional customs as a ritualised family ideology. The idea of the sacred prostitute is, however, regarded by Leick (1994:151) as outdated, a myth of Western scholarship discredited by a

more informed interpretation of both ancient texts and archaeological findings (2008).

The poem, *Message of Lú-dingir-ra to his Mother*, has led some scholars to speculate whether the latter actually refers to Inanna herself, in view of the jewellery and horticultural imagery similar to that in Mesopotamian courtly love poetry.

In the Sumerian *Gilgamesh Epic* Enkidu was the savage, wild boy from the field who had to be tamed and civilised by Shamhat (beautiful, voluptuous) through sexual intercourse. This alienated him from his former animal friends. It involved tapping into his animalistic energy, but also its transformation to embrace human intercourse as reciprocity and mutuality. His intimacy with nature was exchanged for intimacy with a woman. He consequently lived in the steppe with the shepherds as an outsider and farmer, the rival in the love between Dumuzi, the shepherd, and the goddess, Inanna (Pelletier 1989:5).

He became the counterpart of the king, Gilgamesh, with whom he struggled in the context of a wedding where the “bed for Ishhara was set up”. This phrase indicates the nine days which lapse after the initial bridal ceremonies, held under the auspices of this love goddess. The conflict concerned the king’s right to deflower the bride before her husband, a custom known but not practised (Leick 1994:257). They recognised each other, became friends and set off together to slay the demonic Humbaba, guarding the trees of the Cedar Mountain and the Bull of Heaven. Ishtar had requested these in her anger from her father, An, to avenge Gilgamesh scorning her. She was, however, left to mourn the Bull together with the sexually marginalised (Leick 1994:166). In this way Enkidu’s role is one of social critique of the prostitute. Perhaps this is also related to the fact that there were never harems at the royal Babylonian court as was the case in Assyria (Boshoff & Scheffler 2000:42).

When Enkidu had to die he cursed the huntsman, who first saw but feared him, as well as Shamhat, who destroyed his purity. Overwhelmed by grief and disillusionment, Gilgamesh left urban life and the female realm. His search was for immortality from the antediluvian couple, Utnapishtim and his wife at the End of the World, that is, in the male, universal and perhaps abstract world, under the guidance of Shamash, the sun god (and therefore

consciousness), who embraces all, even foreign travellers. Leick (1994:264) interprets this heroic action, not only from fear of death, but as the new development of male asceticism in Mesopotamia, more familiar in India. Leick (1994:269) regards this epic together with *Nergal and Ereshkigal* as the only two love stories from the ancient Near East, both finding fulfilment of love only in death.

Shlain (1998:46) points out that the Sumerians invented cuneiform ideograms, but still used them mostly pictographically. Some records used more abstract visual signs as stylised symbols (Shlain 1998:46). This required the right brain to recognise patterns holistically, leaving the possibility for ambiguous interpretation. In that society the supreme deity of their polytheistic pantheon was female. Nammu, representing the universe's primordial element, water, was creative and had a daughter, Inanna, the adventurous goddess of sex and fertility. This culture's first author, Enheduanna, was also female. Gradually, as the abstract use of cuneiform increased, schools and a privileged professional class developed in the growing cities. One can see here some of the roots of the matriarchal traces which have survived or were revived in Song of Songs despite the patriarchal context of its redaction.

3.2 AKKADIA BEFORE BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

In this section the Mesopotamian features of religion linked to sexuality after the decline of the Sumerian culture but before the separate Babylonian and Assyrian cultures will be dealt with briefly.

The successors from the north, the Akkadians, adapted cuneiform in the first half of the third millennium BCE to their language to become even more abstract phonograms, written linearly from left to right. As a result, they invented words for abstract concepts such as justice, destiny and truth, in a culture that was markedly more male orientated. Religious epics previously transmitted orally were cast in writing as part of a rich literature, but remained open to confusion due to the complex writing system.

According to the Flood Myth about creation in Atrahasis, humans were created from the flesh and blood of a slain god, mixed with clay and shaped by the goddess, Nintu. The spirit, in the form of the bones, came from his flesh and intelligence from his blood. Both the spirit and intelligence were

corporeal as is shown by the fact that clothes were given for the statues and spirits of ancestors (Asher-Greve 1998b:23).

A new genre, though with roots going back to the third millennium BCE, developed from the private and secular bridal songs and the courtly love poetry. This was a ritualised version of erotic dialogue to describe divine lovemaking, and was rarely about human emotions. Various deities could be involved, for instance Nanaya and Muati. Although dialogue is the dominant form, the speakers remain anonymous and transitions between them are sometimes indicated by narration. A chorus of women or worshippers and the sibling form of address is replaced by royal metaphors. Orchards function as both the venue for the sacred marriage rituals and as metaphors for the bodies of the lovers (Westenholz 1995:2476-2478).

Another original development was the magical incantations to win the affection of the beloved as well as potency of the male performance. This was part of the increase in the official use of magic in all areas of life during the second and first millennia BCE. Leick (1994:176) interprets this as the neurotic anxiety, paranoia and obsession of the time in general, which often regarded love and sexuality as affliction caused by witchcraft and demons. This also suggests a more inclusive religion, where this can be accommodated, as opposed to exclusive monotheism where demons and magic threaten the deity's omnipotence and are split off as folk religion.

The trained and literate professional classes jealously monopolised apotropaic or exorcistic and therapeutic techniques, divination and incantations, and folk magic became increasingly suspected of witchcraft, perhaps to undermine its competition with the professional interests. Thus the mantic literature reflects only the standardised "scientific" practices. Within the context of existing love poetry, the specialists with their privileged links to the deities used aphrodisiacal potions, spells and rituals to entrance the desired beloved. This reminds one of the mandrakes found, for instance, in 7:14.

In one incantation honey is to be rubbed on the face of the desired girl as a remedy for her proud reticence (Leick 1994:194). The oldest love incantation dates from the Sargonic period (around the twenty-fourth century BCE) and requires the girl to "turn around and around", that is, to be totally absorbed in the object of her love, who is described "as beautiful and as

sweet as oil”, for whom she becomes “sick” with love. She will not have rest before “their necks are (amorously) entwined” (Leick 1994:196). The parallels in 2:5 and 5:8, for instance, are clear.

In another Old Babylonian incantation a prostitute is desired and her physical charms are referred to in bovine as well as the usual horticultural metaphors, here even as an orchard of apples. Mention is made of her not locking the open door, and an apparent distinction is drawn between sexual access as her professional service, and love issuing from her heart (Leick 1994:198). In a collection of Old Babylonian spells the beer goddess, Zerash, binds the drunkard just as the mouth and the vulva of the lovelorn woman have power over her man. Leick (1994:199) speculates that her female secretions may have served as powerful magical substances, but this would reverse the logic that, in contrast to the Sumerian courtly love songs, the female is the one addressed and desired in the incantations.

No formalised relationship nor social disapproval nor any dangers of adultery are mentioned. This was because the power of love and its magical enchantment or manipulation were as all-consuming as love is said to be in 8:6. One was possessed by an external force to which one could only submit. In fact, this might have contributed to the growing demonisation of sexual love in Mesopotamian literature. Thus, both love and hate are mentioned in the Maqlu list of antisocial behaviours.

It is the wife who is the interested party in the potency incantations, in which a stallion could be a metaphor for sexual excitement. Negative aspects of love are treated only obliquely in incantations, omens and to some extent the lamentations (Leick 1994:209). This broadens the range of emotions to include jealousy, frustration and anxiety resulting from love and thus highlighting its ambiguity. Leick (1994:224) regards the unpredictability, volatility and versatility of Inanna as the result of her not being balanced and complemented through sexual union with a male counterpart, as in Hinduism and Taoism. This left sexuality, with all its connotations, including death and the realm of demons over which Ishtar ruled, as the monopoly of women. She could, however, be appeased by magic, for instance by the symbolic offering of a stylised, lozenge-shaped vulva (Leick 1994:227).

Erotic possession through betrothal or marriage to a dead person was sometimes believed to be effected by a witch. This witch would place a figurine of her victim in the lap of a corpse, which would lead to the death of the person thus symbolically united to the deceased. In addition, the attribution of infertility and stillbirths to witchcraft has survived to this day.

These associations made women more suspect of witchcraft than men, thus entrenching their inequality and marginalisation as outsiders in a patrilocal system of marriage. It isolated and separated them into the women's quarter of the house, where jealous rivalry caused undue tensions. The ideal or fantasy of mutually free and monogamous relationships constructed in Mesopotamian texts must serve as protest literature in a society where the legal documents reflect polygynous marriages arranged by parents at an early age. This probably caused the shift in Akkadian literature from the joys of the deities to the struggles of humans.

Love and faithfulness instead of sex are celebrated. The woman's longing for the absent male brings similarities with Egyptian love lyrics and Song of Songs to mind, where emotional volatility are also explored, for instance, in 2:5, 5:8 and perhaps 6:12 (Leick 1994:238). These texts blur the boundaries between incantation and love poetry. They polarise legitimate and anarchic passion and involve the deities now in the suffering that love brings as well.

It should be noted that the verb *tsiahu* ("to laugh") is conceptually linked with lovemaking in the Akkadian texts (Leick 1994:253), as it is also reflected in the meaning of the Biblical יִצְחָק (*Yitschak*). This is the name which Sarah gave her son, whose birth was promised but derided by her. Although this is not the case with Isaac, laughing may be related either to the chaotic which creates through destruction and the absurd, or to a growing contempt for sexuality generalised to females.

Incantations were therefore used therapeutically through their suggestive, even obscene, though not pornographic language. No sex manuals have been found, but those who could afford a "sexologist" had their genitals manually stimulated with a ritual substance, while they vicariously partook of animals' potency when hearing the spell. Sympathetic magic on figurines for more complex problems added to the costs. Those who could not

afford this resorted to talismans and aphrodisiacs. Lamentations were closely related to the traditional dirge and expressed the private grief of mothers, sisters or wives. Derivative genres were chanted in the female Emesal dialect to any of the deities for single or seasonal losses. The omens seem to draw causal links between certain sexual behaviour and their alleged consequences, though the logic escapes the modern mind. They were therefore purely pragmatic and not moral indicators. Blood, including that from menstruation, as well as semen, were believed to be contaminating. This was why certain cult functionaries were not allowed to fall pregnant and thus effectively not to have sexual intercourse.

The questions that may be asked are to what extent the incantations are echoed in the so-called adjurations in Song of Songs, as they are similarly expressed by the separate voice of the “magician”, and secondly, if these adjurations are otherwise simple imperatives.

In three cultic love poems from the third dynasty of Ur and the early Old Babylonian time (2100-1800 BCE) the symbolic marriage between Dumuzi, represented by the king, and Inanna, represented by a high ranking priestess, is depicted at the New Year celebrations to stimulate fertility of the soil and the womb (Halla & Younger 1997:540-543).

However, the later Akkadian version of the *Gilgamesh Epic* reveals the changing attitude towards women and feminine sexuality in particular, as the advice of Siduri, “the woman of the vine”, to the king to enjoy life and sexuality is censored from this version.

In general, there is a shift from the Sumerian personal experience to reflection on sexuality. Even quotations from frustrated lovers are part of the ritual. The lamentations are likewise formalised, sometimes quoting older mythical and literary sources. The resulting collage is detached from a particular context and deals mostly with the woes rather than the joys of love. In the narratives, on the other hand, the psychological development is easier to detect, though the subject of love is treated in depth only by exception and never as a love story. Instead one finds a critical appraisal of the different kinds of human love with a concomitant scepticism. This resonates with Jaynes’s theory (1976) of the breakdown of the bicameral mind in the wake of unbearable crises, resulting in increasing consciousness and abstraction.

3.2.1 Babylonia

The Babylonian *Enuma Elish* was the first creation myth committed to writing, probably dating from the reign of Hammurabi (1792-1750 BCE), remembered for his harsh legislation, and recited at the New Year ritual. According to this text, the self-contained primal matter was believed to have been split in two: the sweet water male, Abzu, and his consort, Tiamat, the goddess of the saltwater, who took the form of either a human being or a sea serpent (Shlain 1998:45). Ea and his brothers inside her primordial womb then killed Abzu who had threatened to kill them for their rowdiness. Ea and Damkina then gave birth to the demiurge, Marduk. To prevent Tiamat from avenging her husband's murder, Marduk blew seven whirlwinds into her belly and then ruptured it with his arrow, which could be interpreted as penetrating and thus dominating her sexually. He dismembered her corpse to create the universe: her buttocks became the mountains and her breasts the foothills; her tears the two rivers of Mesopotamia and her pubic mount the sky's support. This misogynist story is "unfreudian" in its matricide, but links the death of the mother to the birth of creation, indeed a sacrificial killing. In the absence of the father figure, authority became abstract, inducing guilt in the individual.

Marduk, despite having become the supreme deity, was but one of the lovers of Ishtar, the sister of the sun god, Shamash, and herself the naked goddess of beauty, love and war, and Venus as the male morning star and the female evening star. In a hymn to her, from the latter part of the first dynasty of Babylon (c. 1600 BCE), she is praised, amongst other things, for her physical beauty. This is done in a clearly religious context, which could even be interpreted as a prayer (Pritchard 1955:383). Her sister was Erishkigal, who ruled the world of the dead, and to whom Nergal descended to reconcile with her but then became ruler there himself.

In the late second millennium BCE *Erra-epic* Nergal, the god of plague, was raised from his sleep and from the amorous embrace of his spouse by the demonic Seven (Leick 1994:168). This suggests the alternative states of consciousness of both sleep and sexual pleasure, but is also reminiscent of the adjuration refrains of Song of Songs which could suggest that sexual intercourse is a kind of sleep, from which one is not to be awakened too soon.

In fact, this deity is invoked in a curse formula to call various kinds of disasters upon those who fail to respect a vassal treaty. Pestilence and epidemic disease were also personified in the demon, Namtar (Halla, Jones & Mattingly 1990:425).

In another love lyric, the lovers identify with the wisdom god of destiny, Nabu, and his consort, the goddess of divine accessibility, Tashmetu, giving a religious tone to their relationship (Halla & Younger 1997:445). It also shows that sexuality was still linked to religion at a relatively late stage in the Near East. The king, in the role of the god of heaven, would ceremonially prepare a bed at the top of the ziggurat for his queen, in the role of the goddess of earth (Lachapelle 1999:110).

From the Natufian corpses of the ninth millennium who were consulted as if still alive, through to their representation as statues, to their projection as the mighty beings that caused thunder and created the universe until the second millennium BCE, the bicameral mind had been non-conscious and therefore non-responsible. The voices from the right-brain hemisphere constituted the motivation which empowered the left, which could express it in blind obedience in words and action (Jaynes 1976:247).

As the bicameral mind started to break down, the gods of Akkad multiplied in complexity (Jaynes 1976:202). A hierarchy with interceding personal deities developed because those at the top became more distant and inaccessible and gradually withdrew from the common man. This meant that the hallucinations received from the right brain due to the mystical, direct relationship with the deities and transmitted to the left became less audible and therefore more indirect. Instead, people had to rely increasingly on the written records about the gods. These were accessible only indirectly through a class of professionals privileged with the techniques to acquire their advice or, with the collapse of authority, on their own awareness, choices and responsibility, all of which increased uncertainty and anxiety. This led to two hundred years of anarchy from about 1700 BCE (Jaynes 1976:209-211). Jung (1978:6) also links the development of consciousness to the invention of writing, although this then dates it somewhat earlier than what Jaynes has done. Writing was, as Freud (1979:28) also believes, the preservation of the voice of an absent person.

3.2.2 Assyria

Jaynes (1976:210) believes that the Assyrians achieved their expansion through trade with other theocracies. Although exchange rates were fixed by divine decree, being away from the centre of their culture and therefore from the voice of their gods, these ambassadors were exposed to the language of foreign and competing deities. This confrontation with difference and its resulting inner conflict might have brought about the development of a proto-subjective consciousness at the boundaries of their known world, loosening the connection with the deities. After some dark ages from about 1650-1450 BCE, following the demise of the Old Babylonian Amorite rule well known for Hammurabi and his laws, the influence of the Assyrians re-emerged, but now as the most militaristic one until that time. That, coupled with their emphasis on law, is indicative of the growing male bias that Shlain (1991) believes to be the result of the shift to left-brain activities due to the invention of alphabetic writing as, amongst other things, an almost desperate attempt to preserve their heritage.

Jaynes (1976:223) contrasts the Babylonian Hammurabi, portrayed as listening to a god, with the Assyrian Tukulti-Ninurta I, around 1230 BCE, carved on his altar in both an approaching and then kneeling position before an empty throne. This he interprets as the breakdown of the bicameral mind, involving the involuntary inhibition of the temporal lobe areas of the right hemisphere as well as a change in relations between humans and gods, who were henceforth represented or even replaced by symbols. The conquerors interpret it as the gods forsaking those who did not attend to them. In the *Ludlul bel nemeqi* tablets from about the same period it is only in dreams that the angels of Marduk, the lord of wisdom or the skill to control misfortune, console with promises of prosperity. These absences of guiding aural hallucinations led to a sense of morality and guilt, and ideas about redemption and forgiveness.

The poem, *Babylonian Theodicy*, from about 900 BCE, also laments the absence of lost deities and the resulting misfortune. There is a shift to the plural when there is reference to the gods, even when it takes a singular verb. It also hints at a new sense of subjectivity and the individual, and to a crisis in

the validity of authority which had authorised cruelty. This was now questioned by rebellion against a hierarchy that was no longer divinely legitimated. In this confusion, resorting to omens and divination was one solution. Magical incantations describing Tammuz and the goddess, Shulmanitu, were composed according to the same structure as the *wašf* in Song of Songs (Pelletier 1989:7 and 10).

The other reaction to the lack of certainty and authority was a hardening of male attitudes. The Ninevite version of the *Gilgamesh Epic* is the only one to include a most abusive speech by Gilgamesh to Ishtar, who had usurped the male role of trying to seduce and even propose to him. This would have made him ruler of the underworld like Nergal. Ironically his insults and rejection did not save him from his fate from the superior goddess. This is also the only text which refers to her affairs with animals, which were often the form adopted by those she had scorned. According to Leick (1994:262), this passage relates to the growing sense of the dangers of sexuality: Ishtar was no longer the Queen of Heaven, but the Harlot and the opposite of Shamhat.

Gilgamesh's rejection of his previously cherished feminine city values may be interpreted as the individuation from his mother with the onset of puberty, maturity and his ascent to knowledge. This is very different from the Sumerian original where he was still closely allied to Inanna.

Boshoff and Scheffler (2000:51) describe the Assyrians as having the most degrading laws concerning women, with harsh punishments such as blows, forced labour and mutilations, sometimes inflicted by husbands and a court harem with eunuchs as guards (Keel 1986:254).

A Middle Assyrian law book from the eleventh century BCE only allowed the wives and daughters of free men to go out during the daytime if they were veiled. Slaves and prostitutes were allowed out if they were unveiled (Keel 1986:116). The pattern since the days of the Sumerians is clearly one of deteriorating attitudes towards women and sexuality. It might be against this influence in Israel, as well, that Song of Songs protests.

The love lyrics about Nabû and Tashmetu (IM 3233 = TIM 9 54 = SAA 3 14) from the Neo-Assyrian seventh century BC with its cultural dominance in pre-exilic Syro-Palestine where the Israelite religion still allowed such foreign cultic practices, are claimed by Nissinen (1998:624) to be the closest

Mesopotamian parallel to Song of Songs. Although their eroticism is the most blatant from Mesopotamia, especially compared with the subtle style of Song of Songs, they sometimes employ elusive metaphors and refer to cedars and cypresses, a chariot and a gazelle, an apple and all sorts of gemstones, the temptations of a garden and its fruit as in the bridal songs, a bedroom's bolted door behind which the goddess, having washed, lies in bed fantasising in dialogue form about her beloved. Similar to West Semitic lyrics, they employ *paralellismus membrorum* much more than any other cuneiform text (Nissinen 1998:621). The documents, BL 65, ABL 113, ABL 366, SAA 3 10r.8-12, SAA 3 6 and SBH 8 ii 12ff., which differ in relatively minor details due to their different locations, prove its cultic connection: in the beginning of the month of Iyyar (II) the gods enter a bedroom in the inner part of the temple for sex. This is followed by a procession of at least one of them and then the entrance by Nabû into some kind of garden. Each phase is celebrated by a sacrifice and eventually a sacrificial meal for the reign and longevity rather than the offspring of the king (Nissinen 1998:592-595). Rabin, mentioned by Pope (1977:32), claims that dialogue is often used in Babylonian-Assyrian sources to develop a theme, just as in Song of Songs where dialogue dominates from as early as the second verse.

In the same way that the idealism of the Sumerian mythic literature has been exposed by the lamentations for which the incantations endeavour to be the solutions, the protest function of fantasies has been revealed by the legal documents reflecting the actual society of the time. It would, however, be risking exaggeration to interpret these female fantasies as male ventriloquism, projecting their objectifications onto their passive, female victims.

The texts of the later Assyria of the seventh century BCE reflect a very different style and therefore attitude which is aware, sensitive, personal, nuanced and relational. The subjects include many more human activities, including deceit, divination and the need for prayer, as the adjurations and search for the lover in Song of Songs also express. Their uncertainty and indecision lack the confidence of the bicameral mind (Jaynes 1976:248).

4 SYRO-PALESTINE

4.1 UGARIT AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Fragments of Ugaritic texts indicate that El overcame his parents, Heaven and Earth, to become the creator (Leeming 2004:95-96). In Canaan he was, alongside Ba'al, one of the two main deities, a distant high god of weather in various forms, sometimes father or container of the spirits of the dead. One Ugaritic text mentions how he created dawn and dusk (Leeming 2004:96), probably meant in a merismatic way. His earlier personification Dagan or Dagon (grain) had fertility aspects and was later adopted as the Philistine high god.

The more concrete and more present personification of the divine was the goddess of fertility as the god's energising material power and his consort (Leeming 2004:94). As Ashratum, the predecessor of the later Ugaritic and motherly Athirat (either friend or brightness [Lurker 1987:45]), she was described by Hammurabi as the daughter-in-law of the king of heaven. As predecessor of the Amorite 'Asherah (also called Elath), she was also called Ruler of the Field or Steppe in texts from the Middle Bronze Age (Keel & Uehlinger 1992:25), reminding one of הַשָּׂדֶה (of the field) in the adjuration refrains of 2:5 and 3:7. The bull-headed Astarte was the queen amongst the mythical figures in Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine and the equivalent of the Mesopotamian Ishtar. The Phoenician Ashtart was Attart in Ugarit and in the Hebrew Bible, עֲשֶׁתֶּרֶת ('*Ashtoreth*'), the plural עֲשֶׁתֶּרֶת ('*Ashtaroth*') referring to all the Canaanite female divinities associated with Ba'al as in Judges 2:13 and 1 Samuel 12:10. Anat, the violent virgin-sister-wife of Ba'al, is also related to her, if not the same goddess, and avenges his death by dismembering his killer, Mot (death), that is, scattering his remnants as seed (Leeming 2004:103). El gets the sun to bring Ba'al back from death, but his battle with it would resume again after seven years (Leeming 2004:98).

These goddesses are called the wet nurses of the gods in a Canaanite text and another speaks of the Inanna of 'Asherah and Raham as sacred (Yalom 1997:27). This might be related to the symbols of female genitalia scratched on the rock of some Phoenician caves. The sacred creature of the goddess was the dove, as was common among her equivalents in the surrounding cultures. Her horns, reflected in the Biblical name, עֲשֶׁתֶּרֶת קַרְנִים.

List of research project topics and materials

(‘*Ashteroth-Qarnaim*, ‘Ashtarothe of the two horns) in Genesis 14:5, are reminiscent of her primal association with the Bull with which she had now become merged. Amongst the Philistines she also had a belligerent aspect (Lurker 1987:42).

The West Semitic New Year celebrating creation and resurrection at the beginning of spring was preceded by a cyclic period of destruction and death (Chetwynd 1991:38). Semitic temples traditionally faced east, from which the sun rises, also representing spring (Chetwynd 1991:163), and thus symbolised an orientation towards life.

Ba’al, Lord of the Earth and the son of El, was the god of storm and fecundity, known as Hadad in Syria and represented as a bull or a human being. He was the healer, Ba’alzebub, for the Philistines (Leeming 2004:94). By the late second millennium he had taken over as the head of the pantheon after dismembering Yamm (sea) and being sent into death by Mot (Leeming 2004:96), suggesting the individuation struggle of a child who outgrows his parents and takes their places when they withdraw and become less active. He still had to ask his parents to build a palace, a metaphor for creation according to Leeming (2004:97). This is probably because a building or house symbolises the body (Freud 1986:225) which is again involved in creation through sex. This in turn requires the intimacy of seclusion. It is probably another reason why he initially refused to have a window installed; it was, however, also through the window that death could enter, reminding one further of the belief that death would try and spoil the expression of erotic love as in the book of Tobit, perhaps alluded to in 8:6. In fact, he does indeed die after having mated a heifer (Leeming 2004:97), perhaps expressing, amongst other things, the well-known *petite mort* (little death).

Ba’al means owner or lord but this could refer to any god identified by a localising epithet, such as Ba’al-Sidon and Ba’al-Lebanon. The most important for some possible light on 8:11 is Ba’al-Hammon (perhaps meaning lord of the censer altars) mentioned for the first time in an inscription at the Phoenician Sindsirli (Lurker 1987:51-52).

An old deity in Syria, Ba’al Hadad (lord of thunder) ruled over storms and the weather in general. He is sometimes called cloud-rider and depicted at Ras Shamra with a club and the symbol for lightning. He was also a warrior

and called Prince Ba'al and in his death and resurrection narratives he is called Prince of the Earth. Portrayed as a bull, he also represented fertility. In northern Palestine and Ugarit he was Ba'al Sapan (perhaps Ba'al of Mount Sapon, or Ba'al of the north), who overpowered and protected against Yamm, the sea god, and who was sometimes temporarily defeated by Mot, the god of death, who would then reduce the earth to waste and chaos (Talmon 1987:127). He and the goddess, Atargatis (a merging of Astarte and Anat, later Dea Syria), were the two main deities of Syria. From the idea that she castrated originated the custom of the self-inflicted removal of genitals in ecstatic rituals (McLennan 1869-1870:407), perhaps continuing the terrifying aspect of Ishtar. She had lions on both sides of her throne and her attributes were symbolised by a wheat ear and a coping stone (Lurker 1987:44).

The beautiful god of spring and vegetation of Phoenicia and Syria was Adonis, a derivative of the same root as the Hebrew, אֲדֹנִי (Lord) as in Psalm 12:5. He was said to have been born from a myrrh tree into which his mother had been changed. When he died, the goddess Aphrodite made the Adonis rose or anemone, depending on different sources, but perhaps a substitute for the lotus flower, to grow from his blood. This is yet another instance where the woman renders the death of her lover into a kind of resurrection, similar to that of Ba'al and Osiris and resonating with 8:6 where love (that is, the woman) is as strong as death.

An agent of Moth was the Ugaritic Rephesh, the West Semitic equivalent of Nergal or Erra, personifying plague but also protection and healing from it. He was responsible for the death of one-fifth of Keret's descendents (Hallo, Jones & Mattingly 1990:425).

Tools for the sacrifice of incense and other fragrances came from Syria to Israel and Judah in the tenth century BCE, but none from Assyria. The trunks on which these sacrifices were performed came from Anatolia and were used also in Mesopotamia and Arabia (Kügler 2000:50-51). Different from Egypt though, incense was introduced relatively late into Syro-Palestine and Mesopotamia. It was probably brought by the caravan trade from South Arabia and East Africa, making it a cherished item on the Phoenician market, where buyers were made to believe that it was from Lebanon. Fragrances

suggested power, wealth, identity and love, and were derived from burning spices and from ointments (Kügler 2000:55-57).

Altars for burning incense, '*Asharoth* and green trees were typical of the sacred *ḥinā* (high places), which were not necessarily on mountains or hills, but close to cities. In one bilingual text from Ugarit sacrifices over a period of three days commence with the preparation of a bed with the king's bed covers for the goddess Padriya, a daughter of Ba'al, suggesting a sacred marriage ceremony (Sparks 2005:140). Dances around trees are still performed in Lebanon and are mainly associated with sacrifices and vows. Ba'al-Tamar, a place name in Judges 20:33, implies the sacredness of the palm tree at some stage in history (Smith 1956:94n6). Some myths attest to sacred trees having originated from the transformed body or blood of a deity (Smith 1956:191). In 5:15 the beloved likens the physical stature of her lover to the cedars of Lebanon as he hints towards the image of the palm tree in which the goddess often appeared when he praises her in 7:8-9. In merely practical terms trees offer shade, wood, fruit and sometimes sap, and fragrances, generating metaphors for meaning at different levels at the same time. These can be extended to symbolise divine protection and benevolence (Nissinen 1998:604-605).

Gazelles, the animals so important in Song of Songs that they are called as witnesses in the adjuration refrains, appeared on coins and gems in Phoenicia. The stag, as a theanthropic substitute for a more ancient sacrifice of a deified virgin, was offered to a goddess, probably a form of Astarte, on the coast in an exceptional annual ritual. The sacred gazelle therefore became a mediator between people and their deity. In addition, worshippers were clad in deerskin to suggest their identification or kinship with both the god and the victim (Smith 1956:310), who was their substitute. They offered libations of deer or antelope blood to the god, Usous, at his sanctuary at an annual piacular and mystical feast (Smith 1956:466-467). The androgynous '*Ashtaroth* was identified with the fish, elephant, horse (winged on the coins of Carthage), dove, particularly in Ashkelon, the sheep on the steppes of Eastern Palestine (if Deuteronomy 7:13 and the name Rachel (ewe) are taken as hints), the bull in the well-watered Phoenician mountains and the cow in Sidon (Smith 1956:310-311). From Lachish comes a scarab showing a dove

under the moon symbol representing the goddess's heavenly nature (Keel 1986:74). Rams were also associated with her counterpart, Ba'al-Hammân (Lord of the sun-pillar). Different from Egypt, the lion is sometimes depicted as overpowered by humans. On old Syrian cylinder seals lions appear as lying down, squatting, striding or attacking a caprid from behind (Keel & Uehlinger 1992:26). Other animals associated with the goddess were the scorpion, the dove and the hare. On old Syrian seals from about 1750 BCE doves are shown flying away from the goddess who is unveiling herself, for instance, towards the weather god who is coming towards her across the mountains. They therefore serve as messengers of her love (Keel 1986:73).

Pope (1977:56-57) refers to the *auṣâf* (descriptions) found by Wetzstein at eighteenth century CE Syrian weddings, where the couple was enthroned as king and queen on the threshing sledge and war songs were sung. This was later elaborated on by Budde and Jastrow as key to the contextual understanding of the form of Song of Songs, and amongst the eight forms identified in Song of Songs by F Horst in 1935. Dalman, and later Stephan, made similar comparisons with a twentieth century CE Palestinian anthology, some of which could be prenuptial songs or simply love lyrics (Pope 1977:142). Different from the Ugaritic love songs, Song of Songs never crosses the boundary to the deities in its similes (Herrmann 1963:190), at least not explicitly.

4.2 ISRAEL

According to Eilberg-Schwartz (1994:3), ancient Jews regarded God as having a body, emphasising his face, arms and feet. However, these were often a displacing euphemism for the penis in the Hebrew Bible (for instance in Judges 3:24, 1 Samuel 24:3 and Isaiah 7:20), probably due to its similar elongated shape or simply because both body parts were aligned when one looked down. Freud explains this depiction as being a repression of and compensation for the drive to look at the genitals ("Schauptrieb"). This kind of depiction was to avert the gaze from his genitals, either out of shame or out of modesty and respect. It would seem that a sense of shame about nakedness is a breakthrough in the development of culture as it implies an increase in consciousness and sensitivity about the ego (cf also Eilberg-Schwartz

1994:21 and 30-56). One could add to that respect as progress in empathy, and acceptance of the reality of difference. It is possible that the notion of an embodied God was a view perhaps rooted in totemism, but it was in any event an anthropomorphic projection of the human body and being, who is said to be created in the image of God (cf Genesis 1:27).

El(ohim) introduced himself to Abram in Genesis 17:1 as אֱלֹהֵי (El Shaddai). This is usually translated as the Almighty, according to Leeming (2004:92), as El of the mountain, but probably associated with שָׁדַי (my breasts, as in 8:10), as he then also changed Abram's name as a sign of his future fertility. This rendered him ambivalent, imaging him as female at the same time, just like Hapi, the Egyptian god of the Nile also had breasts (Yalom 1997:27). It also reminds one of the interpretation of דְּדֵיךְ in 1:2 by both Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross as the breasts of God (Viviers 2002:1542-1543).

El(ohim) originally had 'Asherah, a blend of Anat, Ashtart and Athirat (Leeming 2004:94), as consort, perhaps like אַשְׁמָה (Ashima') from Hamath according to 2 Kings 17:30 as well. The latter was also found amongst the Arabian deities at Taymâ. Traces of this survive in Proverbs 8:22-31, where the feminine personified Wisdom is said to have been with YHWH during creation (Leeming 2004:95). When he later revealed his hitherto hidden name to Moses in Exodus 6:2-3 as יְהוָה, he no longer, as a now asexual God, required a spouse, that is according to the canonical text, but necessarily in daily life at the time. He would not tolerate any rival either, as he included and monopolised all the aspects of the other deities (Leeming 2004:89-90). The religion around 'Asherah, the Queen of Heaven, was condemned (cf Jeremiah 7:18) and destroyed, and monotheism eventually came to its final form in the mid-sixth century BCE. הַבָּעָלִים (the Ba'alim), which some kings still recommended for agricultural purposes, were also opposed, as in 1 Kings 18:17-19, perhaps because as originally sons of El, they brought to mind his sexuality. However, this heightened the homoerotic relationship with his (male) people, as is implied by the pioneering marriage metaphors of Hosea and the erotic visions in Ezekiel 16 of God as a bigamist whose two spouses are sisters, Israel and Judah. According to Exodus 32, the Israelites resorted to a golden calf, or rather bull, the symbol of El, and thus reintroduced his

sexual aspect. Jeroboam had likewise already replaced the cherubim supporting YHWH's throne with bulls.

In their myths, however, the Israelites clothed the parts of his body which would have revealed his sexual identity, lest his male worshippers be exposed for their homosexual relationship with him (Eilberg-Schwartz 1994:73ff and 107). In addition, they implicitly submitted to him through feminisation by being symbolically castrated in circumcision, the blood of which perhaps also imitated that of menstruation. It is significant that the emphasis in psychoanalysis on castration came from someone with Jewish roots. The gender which the males despised therefore ironically came to be the very one they had to symbolically adopt (cf Weiss 2002:154n1; Viviers 2002:1543).

This led to ambivalence about God's body. This was psychically defended against, firstly, by the prohibitions of looking at the divine and the resulting aniconic impulse, although according to Exodus 24:9-11, Moses and the leaders did see God on the mountain, with the attention drawn to what was under his feet. According to Exodus 33:21-23, Moses was allowed to see him from behind only. Some then regarded him as actually bodiless.

On the other hand, God also became genderless, which also rendered him distant and authoritarian, making intimacy with him less likely. His name was not even to be pronounced lest its destructive power be unleashed (Leeming 200:91). The embodied and sexual deities of the neighbouring peoples were regarded as inferior, as the body contained many imperfections. It is usually accepted that these neighbouring peoples linked sexuality and religion so closely in their fertility cults, which seemed to be a universal phase in the history of religion, that the two have not even been distinguished by identifying words as is the case in Song of Songs as well.

It has equally been accepted that Israel was the first to have severed this link, despite relics thereof in the metaphorical depiction of the relationship between God and his people. However, the anthropomorphisms employed in God-talk remained limited to the psychological attributes of being human, and never included the physical. The physical was the main difference between God and humanity, or God and creation. The physical was therefore purely metaphorical. Monotheism can, of course, only be asexual as it excludes any

consort. Asexuality was not a completely foreign concept, though, as the high priestess Abda (child) is likewise portrayed, perhaps due to her religious or professional status, in a relief from the twenty-fifth century BCE in Lagash, Sumeria. In the creation myth of *Enki and Ninmah*, the goddess also creates *dim₂*, a genderless being (Asher-Greve 1998b:14).

By creating sexuality, YHWH stood above it. According to Swinburne (1977:99), God as a bodiless and sexless person, but therefore somehow still gendered, became the essence of theism. This philosophical and abstract God was seen as a hidden, totally different, static, transcendent, absent and inactive Being. He is the product of the rational level of religiosity, which tries to overcome the mythical, and which resurfaced in Western Enlightenment.

There was, however, also another view of God as immanent, present, relational and active. He was the God of the ancestors, and sensory and sensitive like human beings, yet also incorporeal. This view has resurfaced in Jewish Kabbalah, reformation theology and perhaps to a certain extent in pantheism and panentheism.

The image of God as a father -- reinforced through language which is always limited by gender -- was used to legitimate patriarchal culture. Certain Biblical male figures, such as Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel and Daniel, were not required to be fathers. Masculinity was therefore associated with formless spirituality, despite the sexual implications of fathering. This contradiction undermined the cultural ideology which valued procreation but devalued sexuality. That God was masculine but not male left unresolved tension. That feminine connotations cannot replace or complement this masculinity also creates asymmetry between the genders, as if men *have* bodies, while women *are* bodies (Biezeveld 1998:189). The tension could have been resolved if the feminine aspects of God, such as nurturing, and thus the androgynous nature of God (as it still seems to be according to the Elohist in Genesis 1:26-27), had been acknowledged instead, but this would have undermined patriarchy. It would also have been more aligned with Jungian insights which acknowledge the unconscious feminine *anima* in males.

During the Solomonic enlightenment, pagan elements from Israel's neighbours were consciously and unconsciously incorporated into Israel's culture. Examples are horses sacred to the sun in 2 Kings 23:11 and Micah

1:13 and the Queen of Heaven in Jeremiah 7:18 and 44:17 – 19, whose veneration was not limited to the cult of a specific goddess. There was, instead, a syncretism between 'Asherah, Astarte and Ishtar, though they had connotations of war, nourishment and stars, respectively. אֲשֵׁרָה ('Asherah) was prayed to and had phallic אֲשֵׁרִים (sacred trees or poles set up near an altar), for instance in Isaiah 27:9, prophets, sacred vessels and sacred houses. Women from the upper classes took the lead in these celebrations, and cakes in the shape of women holding something round in their hands were associated with them (Kügler 2000:83). Just as women were the main producers of poetry, so their private religiosity was different from the dominant public religion (Ndogo & Viviers 2000:1293).

Jaynes (1976:297) points out that אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*, God), already mentioned in the very first verse of the Hebrew Bible, is a plural form of perhaps a feminine singular, although it is sometimes regarded collectively and then takes a singular verb. It comes from the root אָוַל (to be powerful) and is a general term for the voice-visions of the bicameral mind. Jaynes believes that this plurality from the more creative right brain was gradually reduced by the more logical left brain, from amongst whom a Ba'al (owner) for each city and ultimately YHWH were survivors.

The surface impression is that the latest version of Song of Songs had already demythologised the gods out of a possible earlier text. Yet disguised suggestions of the cults of the high places and the stars, against which the Hebrew kings and prophets railed since the reformations of Josiah (Chetwynd 1991:163), slipped through into the text of Song of Songs.

Although Ezekiel 8:14 mentions the women of Jerusalem mourning the death of Tammuz at the northern gate, there is in general an ideological silence about foreign practices in Israel imposed by the idealising scriptures. Archaeological evidence shows, however, that the Queen of Heaven was widely worshipped and that her sacred marriage to Tammuz or Ba'al, and in some places even to YHWH, was celebrated in sexual rites (Eisler 1995:67). Cultivated land as opposed to the wilderness was said to be בְּעוֹלָה (owned, married), reminiscent of the name Ba'al (Smith 1956:108n3).

Patai (1959) makes little distinction between the Arabs and the Israelites in respect of sex and family life. Mythology of the first couple

preserves traces of incest implicated in the progeneration of their children. The same applies to the third Noahide generation, when all the individuals were either full siblings or paternal cousins. Marriages between sibling and half-sibling occurred until the tenth century BCE. Thereafter both the Levitical law (cf Leviticus 18:9, 11 and 20:17) and Ezekiel law condemn these marriages (Patai 1959:25). This was for the sake of strengthening alliances and the labour pool, not for eugenics (Berquist 1998:106).

The result of the endogenous character of the Israelite family is a continual anti-foreign sentiment both in marriages (despite well-known exceptions such as Esau, Moses, Samson, David) and religion. This closed, conservative resistance to change has been the mode of survival in the harsh natural environments and the way to establish identity by excluding the other. Exposure to foreigners in the agricultural setting, however, softened the hard attitude of the nomadic ethos.

Edwards and Masters (1970:112) refer to well-known *mishnah* that anal intercourse, both heterosexual and homosexual, for both the married and the unmarried, was common practice in ancient Israel, as a contraceptive and to preserve virginity. In classical Israel, the זָרָה (*zarah*) (foreign woman) was distinguished from the זֹנָה (whore) in that the former engaged only in extracoital activities with foreign men, although she was married and pursued her illicit pleasures just for the pure thrill of it, practising everything short of vaginal coitus. She is frequently mentioned, for instance in Proverbs 5:3, 7:12, 22:14 and 23:27. The paean to love in Song of Songs and the prophetic allegory of the relationship between Israel and God are indeed clear proof that both premarital and marital sexual love featured strongly in the ancient Israelite psyche. The descriptive song was fairly limited in Israel during the first millennium BCE and then links feminine beauty mostly to piety (Herrmann 1963:197).

Song of Songs is not usually regarded as amongst ancient Israel's five key wisdom texts, where daughters are relatively absent since they were excluded from narrative in general as well. In the Wisdom of Ben Sirach they are regarded by the father as troublesome (Berquist 1998:97n9). Song of Songs has nothing paternal to preach, but much maternal to celebrate. Instead of, and in contrast to, the basic father-son relationship underlying

much of Proverbs, with its fear of the foreign woman and the need for self-control, the mother-daughter relationship of Song of Songs supports relationship between the lovers. Its form is not that of instructing proverbs, but that of celebrating poetry. In that sense it is also protest literature like Job and Ecclesiastes, though precisely by acknowledging the positive role of Eros.

Yet, as Berquist (1998:96-97) contends, “the very production of discourse about bodies and about sexuality controls bodies and their sexuality”. Whilst affirming authentic sexuality, there is also a subtle critique of and protest against the “father’s personal and financial investment in his daughter’s sexual purity”. This investment is used to partially determine male status (Berquist 1998:97n10 and 115) and reduces all “sexual ethics and body rhetoric to economic concerns” (Berquist 1998:99), although “the exchange of women pre-dates private property” (Berquist 1998:100n17). Even in a room without lattice or window, the young woman in Song of Songs is not isolated from other men and even married women with sexual experience, as in Sirach 42:11 which is so concerned with control over women’s bodies. In fact, she plays seductively with the eyes of her lover peeping through the lattice of the house or foliage. This was not unprecedented as the relative freedom with which Ruth could follow Boas into the field shows (Keel 1986:114). Women were not veiled before or after the exile. An Assyrian relief from the seventh century BCE shows the women of Lachish with a long headscarf, but not veiled (Keel 1986:130-132).

According to Exodus 21, 2 Kings 4:1-17 and Nehemiah 5:1-5, paternal rights extended to selling daughters into slavery or marriage. As the demand for virginity was not absolute, damage to her could be compensated for financially (cf Exodus 22:16-17). Later, in Hellenistic times daughters were excluded from society, isolated and immobilised (Berquist 1998:114) in their father’s home, whereas before both married and unmarried women had been present at public occasions (cf Genesis 18:24 and Judges 21:19-20). It was also later that they were regarded as a source of impurity (Berquist 1998:107). Unlike Hellenistic culture, which recognised adolescence as well, Jewish culture only thought in terms of childhood and adulthood. There was therefore no transitional, exploratory phase with regard to sexuality. Women usually married at the age of twelve and men at the age of twenty, as they were

encouraged to get an education first (Berquist 1998:106). It would only be much later that Talmudic Judaism recognised female adolescence (Berquist 1998:111n64).

Unlike Christianity, the Jewish tradition has virtually never focused ascetically on extreme bodily suffering and therefore major repression of physical desires. The rabbinical tradition of exegesis with its ancient roots was well established as an institution, thus being more community orientated (Riesebrodt 2007:137-138). The discipline of the body has therefore been sublimated to the discipline of the text, as displacement of bodily texture.

According to Smith (1956:357), the fact that unclean, tabooed animals were once again sacrificed in the time of Ezekiel (cf Ezekiel 8:12) suggests that the primitive totemic cult must have been kept alive in private and local superstition. This was a time when public religion was experienced as disillusioning. Deer and antelope were held as sacred in several parts of the Semitic world, although eating them was not forbidden. They had links to various deities. In Israel they had seemingly been replaced by goats as sacrificial animals (Smith 1956:467).

Keel and Uehlinger (1992:21-22) state that caprids (goat-antelopes) and lions are the most frequent figurative elements from the Middle Bronze Age II B (1750-1550 BCE). Figures of caprids as either lying or striding do not reveal their gender and were one of the few motifs which appeared on scarabs as early as during the Middle Bronze Age II A (2000-1750 BC) in the Levant. Ibexes and fawns had been portrayed in Palestine since the Early Bronze Age (3300-2000 BCE) and gazelles and caprids appear more than a hundred times on scarabs in Palestine from 1150-586 BCE. A conic seal from Beth-Shemesh combines a caprid with the other classical symbol of regeneration, the lotus (Keel 1986:139). Both these images abound in Song of Songs where they represent the lover and the beloved, respectively, not only in the refrains, but also in portraying the behaviour of the lover who indulges amongst the lotuses. That they were sometimes reduced to their horns only suggests that it was this part of the animal as symbols of power, potency and virility which impressed people the most. About half of those from the Middle Bronze Age II B were combined with a branch, which symbolised, as with the naked goddess, prosperity and fertility.

Whereas fertility was the positive aim of this amulet protection, the negative was expressed by about a fifth of the findings where a caprid was combined with a rearing cobra, most often forming its tail. As game of the inhospitable, stony and deadly desert, antelope, ibex, gazelle and fallow deer on scarabs were the expression of the victory of life over death. Wild sheep, wild goats, ibex gazelle and deer belonged to the domain of the goddess, as proved by cylinder seals from Old Syria depicting caprids lying down with their head forward or turned back. A scarab from Jericho portrays the naked goddess with the spiralling horns of a ram. She is the source of life and love as is suggested by the fact that the same Hebrew word, חַיָּה, is used for both “wild living animals” and “life”.

Lions and panthers have been associated with the goddess since the seventh millennium BCE and expressed mainly her aggression and therefore the death principle. Sometimes she was associated with both lions and mountains (Keel 1986:148). On a scarab from the south of Gaza she appears as “Ruler of the Animals” between a lion and a vulture. Three depictions also show a vulture on the back of a lion. A scarab from Jericho shows a caprid and a human being lying underneath a lion, suggesting its power over them. Of the 42 depictions of lions on scarabs found in Palestine, 22 were shown as striding and 20 as squatting, while 24 were combined with one or two rearing cobras and only 6 with a branch, which suggests its regenerative power. In one instance a lion shown as lying down is associated with two people who hold a lotus flower, the symbol of regeneration par excellence (Keel & Uehlinger 1992:24-28). The lion also figured in the form of a winged sphinx as a cherub (Keel & Staubli 2001:11).

There is also a possibility that banners and other battle insignia and similar markings on the body portrayed totemic animals (Smith 1966:259), to which certain people belonged and which would protect them as the clan protected them (Cook 1902:418). These “very fragmentary relics of the primitive system” (Cook 1902:414) which survived amongst the more advanced Northern Semites were perhaps also reflected in sacrifice as a ceremonial meal of a totem clan. Keel (1986:86) points out that the emblem of love in 2:4 could have been the dove, to which one could add the alternative possibility of a gazelle.

The stone מַצֵּבוֹת (*massevoth*, some kind of pillar perhaps) representing male deities were signs of a holy alliance and of divine manifestation and presence. Their perhaps phallic suggestion reminds one of oaths being sworn by touching the “feet”, that is, genitals. The wooden עֲשְׂתָרוֹת (*‘Ashtaroth*) represent female deities often in the form of trees, and the small stones סֶמֶיִם (sun pillars) altars for incense or perfume braziers. Although introduced quite late, during the post-Exilic time, into Israel (De Vaux 1978:286), they also added to the totemic history in which Israel also shared. The בָּמוֹת (high places) were often found in the shade of any green tree (De Vaux 1978:287), as reinforced by the later rabbinical tradition that priests sit under sacred trees from which they may not eat the fruit (Cook 1902:423). This adds to the religious associations of the trees in Song of Songs. Nature was therefore also a place of worship, even when the cultic practices also took place in tents, the cloths of which had special significance, as is evident from Exodus 26 and 36.

5 ARABIA

The cradle of the Arabs was the Arabian peninsula. From there they spread as nomads to Egypt and Mesopotamia, with the Fertile Crescent developing into the Semitic civilisation. Arabia is, however, believed to have preserved the Semitic traits most purely and a brief review of their religious expressions suggests the various layers of Semitic religiosity. These include a deeply religious instinct, vivid imagination, pronounced individuality and marked ferocity, though the religion of the Bedouin was respect for tradition rather than passion. The linguistic root of تَقْوَى (*taqwa*, piety) also means to be on guard or to fear.

The Arabian pre-Islamic religion shows the oldest form of Semitic belief, that is, animism, with humans and the good gods on the one hand, around the familiar oases, fountains, glades, trees, mountains and stones. The greater part of information about Arabic polytheism concerns, in fact, the worship of stones, trees and celestial bodies (Smith 1879:83) and the oldest rock drawing suggests a cult for the bull and the ostrich.

On the other hand, there were the strange and hostile animals and beastly *jinn* (demons) found mostly in the unknown desert. The latter could

possess a *majnūn* (madman, from *jinn*) (Hitti 1970:97-98). They were similar to the hairy שְׂעִירִים (demons, satyrs, goats), for instance in Isaiah 13:21, or the nocturnal לִילִית (night hag, *Lilith*) in Isaiah 34:14, which, like the jackals, haunted desolate places such as ruins and deserts (Smith 1879:120-121).

The belief of the *jinn* in animal form reflects an old mythology (Smith 1879:85). Sometimes a certain animal, such as the jackal or the gazelle, was its riding beast (Smith 1956:129). The *jinn* were also associated with trees, adding to the supernatural atmosphere of groves, where wild animals also had their lairs (Smith 1879:132).

Semitic religion developed in the oases rather than the desert and focused on stones and springs. Wells were cleansing, healing and life-giving. Caves led to underground forces and secrets, such as Ghabghab in Nakhlah. *Ba'l* represented the spirit of underground water and was probably introduced at the same time as the palm tree, imported from Mesopotamia and regarded as the queen amongst the trees of Arabia (Hitti 1970:19). Weapons, garments and rags were hung as sacrifices on the sacred palm tree in Najran, reminiscent of the shields and armour hung on the tower of David in 4:4 which it might have resembled.

Allah had three daughters (Hitti 1970:98). The youngest, *al-'Uzzâ* (the mighty, Venus, the morning star), was originally from central Arabia, where she lived in an acacia-like tree. She was known in Northern Arabia as Han-Uzzai (Lurker 1987:362). Her cult of human sacrifice was in Nakhlah with three trees as her sanctuary (Leeming 2004:122), her being the most venerated idol amongst the Quraysh.

Al-Lât (from *ألالة*, *al-Ilahah*, the goddess) was an idol with a large, flat, square white granite block and smaller precious stones kept in a wooden box (Leeming 2004:122) in Ta'if, to which the Meccans and others flocked for pilgrimage and sacrifice. This block could be similar to the stone of the Kaaba, one of the alleged stones of Paradise turned black by the kisses of sinful lips and surrounded by some 360 idols (Leeming 2004:119). If so, then she may have been related to the one local goddess, *Na'ila*, in the form of a black woman, in the Mecca of Mohammed's time. She was associated with Venus or, according to some texts such as Herodotus (c. 400 BCE), with the sun

(Lurker 1987:18). Within her sacred tracts, no trees could be felled, no game hunted and no human blood shed, similar to the case with the cities of refuge in Israel (Hitti 1970:61, 72 and 98-99). Her other names were *al-Rabba* (the Sovereign), Mother of the Gods and Mother of the Sun (Leeming 2004:122). Even after the rise of Islam the priests who attended the shrine at the Kaaba were known as the sons of the Old Woman.

Manah (from مَنِيْنَة, *manīya*, allotted fate) represented an earlier phase of religion and had a black stone as her sanctuary in Qudayd, popular amongst the Aws and the Khasraj. As the goddess of rain, health and victory she was blamed for misfortune (Leeming 2004:122). She was an independent deity associated with Dhu-al-Shara (the Lord of Shara) which was in the form of a Kaaba or black, rectangular, unhewn stone of about 1,3 m high and 0,7 m wide in Petra, the Nabataean capital, with its abundant and pure water. Later she was associated with the vine as its main deity. This epithet replaced the secret name of the sun god, probably Rudâ or Ruldayu, perhaps similar to that of YHWH, a name used as talisman to protect against demons. Both were mountain gods and in opposition to the popular deity. Rudâ was the rival of *Shay' al-Qaum* (the Shepherd of the (nomadic) People). In Safaitic Rudâ became a goddess, a phenomenon which sometimes occurred and which perhaps suggests how blurred the boundaries between the genders were because of a more androgynous view. This suggestion is also reinforced by the frequent coupling of male and female deities, as if parents, responsible for a certain sphere. Consorts also differed amongst various tribes, as if polygamous: *al-'Uzzâ's* consort was *Kutbâ'* or *al-Aktab* among the Nabataeans but *'Attarsamay* among the Thamudaeans. Sometimes incestuous relationships were implied such as in the case of *al-Ilât*, the daughter or consort of *al-Lâh*.

The Nabataean warrior rain god, Hubal (Aramaic for vapour or spirit), represented anthropomorphically, became the chief deity of al-Kaaba, an originally roofless structure to protect a venerated black meteorite. His كَاهِن (kāhin, soothsayer, from the Aramaic כהן) drew lots with ritual arrows, but his own lot was that of مَرْصَد (*ṣanam*, idol, also from Aramaic צלם) later on. Cleromancy (*istiqsâm*) and oneiromancy were amongst many forms of divination across Arabia.

Tradition believes that the Kaaba in Mecca was built by Adam according to a celestial prototype (Hitti 1970:100). It is a walled enclosure around a well and, in pre-Islamic times, idols. The black stone inserted in a wall is veiled by a cloth, the *kiswah*, perhaps similar to the leather cover of the Ark of the Covenant. This also reminds one of women being veiled and evokes the possibility that they may by implication be similarly regarded as sacred. What is shameful and what is sacred seem to share the same taboo perhaps because of their dangerous power.

بابا صنا (*‘anṣāb*) (stones) could be altars or deities owning هــما (*hima*) and هــرم (*haram*) (reserved grazing land) (Hitti 1970:9-12 and 96-98) although Cook (1902:416) claims that stones were worshipped not as the gods themselves, but were rather seen as their abodes. Fire sacrifices were virtually unknown and offerings were simply placed on sacred ground or hung on a sacred tree, or poured over a sacred stone. In covenant oaths seven stones were smeared with blood. Fuls, the idol of the Tayyites, was a bare rock on Mount Aga’ (Smith 1879:89) and Dhu-al-Khalasah was a white stone, seven days south of Mecca, where divining by arrows was done. The dead were buried under a mound of stones or in chambers carved into rock.

In the nomadic culture many tribes worshipped on rocky high places which had a *haram* or sacred open-air enclosure accessible only to those unarmed, ritually clean and in ritual clothes. A baetyl or raised stone or, later, a statue in human form, was worshipped there. There were also portable idols. Natural objects were invested with the sacred and mediated access to the deity (Leeming 2004:119). A person or group’s name initially expressed direct identification with and incarnation of a venerated object through an adjective or noun naming the object. Later, when distance and awe separated the person or people and the object, “son” or “servant” preceded the name, but still indicating descent. The animal gods remained family and therefore minor compared to the greater anthropomorphic gods, who were more of a tribal nature, although the latter could retain some animal symbol or connection. Ironically, the more inclusive a deity became, the more wars for the exclusive possession of its image were waged (Smith 1879:84).

Many tribes or individuals, but mostly sub-tribes (Smith 1879:84-85), bear animal names, suggesting animal ancestors and therefore a totemic

stage. Animal gods amongst the Semites were often projected as astral powers (Smith 1879:76).

The lion of the Yaghûth and the horse of the Ya'ûq were amongst the few animal gods which survived the transformation into a human shape. However, they then became the property of a much larger social group than the usual sub-tribes so that even wars for the monopoly of their image were then waged. The Kaaba had the dove as representative of the Benî Hamâma and the golden gazelles in the same temple represented Sabyân. The Wa'lân identified with the ibex and the Labwân with the lioness. Qur'ân 6:38 also testifies of animal worship. The *jinn* could also appear in animal form.

One part of a tribe was often nomadic and found the Syrian and Nabataean influences on the agricultural section quite attractive due to their sensual nature, although a nomadic girl would often not want to accept a village husband. The foreign and exotic nature of this religion caused it to separate from daily life, and be reserved for festivals only (Smith 1956:113n6). Large nomadic Arab groups from Edom, Midian and Moab were incorporated into Judah.

Amongst these were the 'Oreb (raven), the Shobal (young lion), the Dishon and the Dishan (cf Genesis 36:28 and Deuteronomy 14:5) (a kind of antelope), the Ya'elah (cf Ezra 2:56), the Aran (cf in Genesis 36:28) (the latter both ibex), the Je'ush (cf in Genesis 36:14) which is etymologically related to the Arabian lion god, Yaghûth (protector), the 'Aqan (cf Genesis 36:27), which is probably the equivalent of Ya'aqan in Deuteronomy 10:6 and 1 Chronicles 1:42, the equivalents of Ya'ûq, the 'Epher (fawn, calf of the wild cow, cf Genesis 25:4, 1 Chronicles 4:17 and 1 Chronicles 5:24), the descendents of Caleb (the dog tribe, cf 1 Chronicles 2:18) a branch of the nomadic Hesronites and groups with other animal names. In Israel these often became town or mountain names, such as 'Ephron in Joshua 15:9, Zimri (from *zemer*, a kind of antelope or wild goat) in Jeremiah 25:25, Ayyalon (stag-town), Sha'albim (fox-town), the latter two both in Judges 1:35, and Nimra (panther or leopard) in Numbers 32:3 (Smith 1879:80-93). The genealogical list in Gen 36 of Horite divisions incorporated into the Edomites includes many animal names (Smith 1879:89).

Groups of gazelles were kept at some sanctuaries and sacred symbols of them occurred in South Arabia in connection with 'Athtar worship and at Mecca in connection with *al-'Uzzâ* worship (Smith 1956:466). Ritual hunting or collective rogation with magical rites were aimed at bringing forth rain. On finding a dead gazelle, the Banu Harith of Southern Arabia would bury and mourn it for seven days, regarding it as one of them (Cook 1902:424).

Maternal kinship, which always preceded male kinship according to McLennan (1869-1870:422), polyandry, exogamy, with even kidnappings, and female infanticide were the social features of a totemic system. Kinship was in terms of a common totem, not blood relations. Foreign women therefore introduced foreign totems into a group, leading to heterogeneity in this regard so that a father and his son always belonged to different totems. The Mandaeans still retain maternal naming during religious acts (Smith 1966:259-261). Just as the totem animal could not be eaten by its tribe, except sacramentally, people from the same totem group could not marry. The Banu Hârith would rather die than eat from a woman, which implies a link between the women and the totem. Different food according to different food laws applied to men and women. Regarding a spouse as a sibling was the result of the later endogamous system, which was no longer strictly maternal. The feminine names of some Arab clans and tribes reflect their matriarchal and matrilineal roots, when the goddess precedes the god (Hitti 1970:26 and 100). *بن طبة* (*baṭn*) (sub-tribe, womb) is a clear confirmation of this as well (Smith 1879:86).

The *wasṣm* as marking of cattle and other property could have led to their owners also having been marked in this way as the property of the deity (Cook 1902:419). This and the fact that the god Orotal was imitated by adopting a tonsure like his (Cook 1902:420) shows that religiosity was marked in the body. Amongst the various Semitic vocabularies personal pronouns, nouns denoting blood kinship, numbers and words for certain body parts are almost the same, just as the physical features of their original native speakers.

Typically Semite, the Arabs did not develop any art to a great level, except that of language, both spoken and written. The poetic rhythm, rhyme and musicality of language constitute *سحر حلال* (*siḥr ḥalāl*) (lawful magic), even

when it is not understood (Hitti 1970:90). In fact, Hitti (1970:92) claims that poetry was the only achievement in pre-Islamic culture where the aural seems to have had special status. The creation and performance of poetry in Yemen as in Israel have been seen as feminine activities (Viviers 2000:1293n13). This probably also partially explains the prohibitions on imaging the divine, the holy name of YHWH and the emphasis on the aural experience in revelation, as testified by the status of “the Book” even to that of a fetish perhaps, especially the Qur’ân compared to other scriptures (Smith 1993:46-47 and 66-90). Though rich in animated passion, the oldest extant Arabic poetry is poor in original ideas and has the same themes, being personal (even narcissistic as perhaps in 1:5 and 2:1), local and realistic.

Eloquence was therefore the main form of art amongst the Semites (Hitti 1970:90). From the earliest form, *saj’* (rhymed prose without metre), used by *kuhhān* (oracles and soothsayers, and later in the Qur’an) and meant for “a father” (according to an Arab definition), developed *rajas*. This was a loose, iambic form believed to possess magical powers (Gibb 1926:14), and the songs of this form were composed for “a mother” (Hitti 1970:92). Perhaps the primary meaning of the term, tremor, that is, in the hindquarters of a camel due to disease (Nicholson 1979:74n2), also suggests something of an altered state of consciousness to which the composer was susceptible.

The rhythm was perhaps that of the movement of the camel, as its driver was amongst the first to sing poetic prose. Although from this simple metre developed the most complex prosody and elaborate contents of the *qaṣīda* (ode) of the pre-Islamic Bedouin bards of the early sixth century CE, their fixed conventions point to a long history of convergence (Hitti 1970:93). Its *nasīb* (the elegiac, amatory, and sometimes regarded as erotic, prelude) count amongst these stereotypical, though subjective, elements, although no *shā’ir* (poet) specialised in what later in Islamic times became the *ghazal* (amatory ode) (Hitti 1970:250).

The *auṣāf* (bodily descriptions) as in 4:1-7, 6:4-7, 7:2-8 and 5:10-16 are also found in *The Thousand and One Nights* (Pope 1977:67). This was an earthy celebration of the beauty of the body, especially of the woman, found together with war songs and a sword dance by the bride (Pope 1977:142).

The poet *shā'ir* (رعلد) received his esoteric knowledge from his special *shayṭān* (demon). Due to his contact with unseen powers, his curses based on his acute awareness of the psychological weakness of the enemy had a magical effect, as had his encouraging words on his own people, who therefore memorised them. An annual contest at 'Ukāz was held during the three spring months, when war was taboo and the exhibition and sale of commodities were rendered possible by the peace. For the Bedouins, intelligence was thus measured in terms of poetry (Hitti 1970:94-95). This association of the state of mind of poetry and song with spring is later echoed in linking Song of Songs with the Jewish festival of Pesach.

Reflecting and affecting public opinion, the poet was well aware of the psychological condition of his surroundings, especially to expose the weaknesses of their enemies. Poetry served as *ḥawāḍir* (dīwān) (public register) of its culture, its virtues being *murū'a* (manliness, including courage, loyalty and generosity or hospitality or sacrifice) and *irḍ* (honour). Heroism and chivalry accompanied each other (Hitti 1970:94-96).

Most were local and national with their worshippers called *walad* (offspring), but a few were common to several tribes. Allah or Al-lah (the god) was the principle amongst other deities of Mecca, and creator and supreme provider, whom one could invoke during grave danger. Though the tribal deity of the Quraysh, he is found in a Minaean and a Sabaeen inscription, and abounds in the form HLH in a fifth century BCE inscription from Lihyan, where he was first worshipped since his importation from Syria (Hitti 1970:100). Amongst the deities in Taymā is Salm, represented by a bull's head with the solar disk between his horns. Perhaps his name is related to the only proper name of a person, Solomon, in 1:1, 1:5, 3:7, 3:9, 3:11, 8:11 and 8:12 and the enclitic in 7:2. YHWH was also a North Arabian tribal desert deity, simple and austere and living in a tent, worshipped by herds in desert feasts and sacrifices where the flesh of the camel was the main component (Cook 1902:424). Folk etymology derived the name, YHWH, from *hā'he* (is or to be), although Meek relates the name to the Arabic *hawā* (hawā, blow) (Campbell 1964:132-133 and 430). Although there were several deities, a well-known oath only mentions two, with two others as alternatives. Another oath also mentions only two. Palmyra, south-east of Damascus, had Bel of Babylonian

origin, or Ba'al Shamin (the Lord of the Heavens), as head of a pantheon of at least 20 other deities (Hitti 1970:42 and 76). As Hitti (1970:98) points out, all older elements of religion survive as a compromise in some form amongst higher developments.

شمس (*shams*, sun), a great Arabian god, is also the name of a sub-tribe of the 'Asd, لاله (*hilāl*) (crescent moon), a tribe of Hawāsin and of Namir, and بنو بدر (*banī badr*, sons of the full moon), a sub-tribe of Haḡr bin Dhu Ro'ayn. These are a few examples of how the celestial bodies have remained as entities with whom the Arabs have identified (Smith 1879:81). Rub' (moon-quarter) was also worshipped.

The religion of South Arabia, essentially a planetary astral system with sophisticated temples, rituals and sacrifices, represents a later and higher stage of development (Hitti 1970:97). For the shepherds, who grazed their flock at night when vapours are condensed to water, the moon was very important. It was perhaps called Sin in the Hadramaut. The Minaeans called it *Wadd* (love[r] or father), originally from northern Arabia, whose name appeared in a magic formula on amulets and buildings and was symbolised by a crescent moon with the small disk of Venus. For the Qatabanians it was 'Amm (paternal uncle).

The temple of *Al-maqah* or *Ilmuqah*, perhaps the health-giving or sun god, symbolised by the bull's head and the vine, was the main building in the Sabaean capital of Sirwah. His subordinate consort was *Shams* (sun), seen as wanting to destroy life. Their son was 'Ashtar or 'Athtar (Venus), the third in the triad and the other divine celestial bodies were their other children (Hitti 1970:37, 51 and 60-61). 'Athtar later superseded Il or El as the supreme deity of the pantheon. He was a thunder storm god with Haubas as consort, though the latter was elsewhere a male god. The name Athtarqurumâ is perhaps that of the couple, the deity and consort, as if to suggest an androgynous unity, similar to *Ashim-Yahu*. *Al-Rahman* or *al-Rahim* (the Compassionate) was an old deity in South Arabian inscriptions. Deities were usually evoked by a symbol such as the bull and were only later anthropomorphically portrayed, under Hellenistic influence.

There was, however, no mythology, theology or cosmogony at the level of the Babylonians (Hitti 1970:96). There is no evidence that there was a

belief in a future life (Hitti 1970:101). Both the South Arabian kingdoms of the Sabaeans (c. 750-115 BCE) and the Minaeans (c. 700 – 300 BCE, their name meaning springwater) started as theocracies but ended as secular kinships.

According to Herodotus, the whole of Arabia, and according to Strabo, South Arabia with its mostly sedentary population, was the country of fragrances. The south-western Sabaeans, in particular, with bases along the western coast, produced frankincense, the collection of which was considered a religious act (Hitti 1970:56). From the Hadramaut, the highlands parallel to the southern coast, including the coastlands of Mahrah and al-Shihr with Safar (perhaps Ophir) as its centre, came spices such as cinnamon, cassia, ladanum, myrrh and other aromata for seasoning food or ritual burning, of which incense was the most valuable and reputable. Israel's link with Arabia was already suggested in this regard by Qeturah (perfumed), the wife of whom is said to have been taken by Abraham in Genesis 25:1-4, and who bore him sons who, according to tradition, became various Arab tribes. The queen of Sheba, smelling of myrrh and incense, is also said to have brought the most aromata ever to Israel (cf 1 Kings 10:10) (Keel 1986:119). Condiments and fabrics came from India, and ivory and gold from Ethiopia, but these sources were kept secret in order to retain the monopoly, creating in this way the impression that these were all produced in Arabia. That is apart from the gold mined on the western coast of the peninsula, from Midian to al-Yaman, and in some central parts of the country, some allegedly so pure that it did not even require smelting. The market of Musa had purple cloths, saffron, fragrant ointments, wine and wheat, amongst other things. Most of these products are mentioned in Song of Songs, as in 3:6, 4:6, 4:14 and 5:11, and would have conjured up images of these regions and perhaps have been accompanied by other, more cultural, products such as religious ideas and sentiments.

Although Northern Arabia was mostly nomadic, unlike the south (Hitti 1970:87), its typical religion was a solar one. This is indicative of a rising agricultural society, where the importance of its life-giving rays for vegetation has been realised, but perhaps also the dangerous power of its devastating rays in times of drought (Hitti 1970:97). Al-Hejaz had only three cities, of which the highland al-Ta'if, the paradigm for Paradise in the Qur'ân, produced

honey, figs, grapes, peaches, almonds and pomegranates, and so forth, while the attar of its roses made its perfumery famous. Its vines were introduced there by a Jewess, according to tradition (Hitti 1970:102-103). The urban population of al-Hijas, about 17%, reached the astral stage of religion relatively early.

One of the other two cities, *al-Makkah* (Mecca, from the Sabaean for sanctuary) is an old midway station with a temple for the great pantheon of 360 idols and is therefore based on wealth, as it is in an arid, barren and sometimes unbearably hot valley. The last of the three cities, Yathrib (later *al-Madinah*, the town) is on the spice route between *al-Yaman* and Syria, an oasis adapted for date palms and later a leading agricultural centre under its Jewish inhabitants with considerable Aramaic influence on their proper names and their agricultural vocabulary. Qedar is mentioned in Ezekiel 27:21 as representing Arabia in terms of its merchandise and in Jeremiah 2:10 it is the furthest east, as it is the furthest outpost from Jerusalem mentioned in Song of Songs (Keel 1986:54).

In classical verse, as in the extant Arabic love songs, a swarthy Salmâ, the feminine form of the Arabic version of Solomon, Sulaimân, occurs in parallel to the Shulammite in 7:2. Salibi (1985:181) refers to Morris Seale, who has also highlighted the similarity of content, form and imagery between Song of Songs and its Arabic counterparts. Salibi (1985:180-188) consequently builds a case for his claims that many of the place names or difficult parts of Song of Songs refer, in fact, to places in the Jizân in Arabia, from where it would have allegedly originated. Even if this is the case, however, this could simply be yet another instance of a foreign narrative that has been adopted and adapted by the Hebrew author(s), as is well known about the creation narratives. One could then speak of yet another layer in a palimpsest.

There were two spheres of relating between the genders. Polygamy has been a sign of status and wealth, as for the elite in Israel such as David and Solomon. It has spread the burden of chores amongst the wives, but has also led to bitter competition and jealousy. Harems have always included more concubines than wives. The former were slaves for the purpose of sexual gratification or procreation, but they could not be sold, especially if they

had born their master's offspring (Patai 1959:39-42). They were either bought as free girls from their fathers, or captured in war. In the absence of any wife, the concubine had the status of a wife. Co-wives alternated in cooking for and sleeping with the husband. This right could be traded, as with Rachel and Leah in Gen 30, which seems to imply that the husband had no say in their arrangements in this regard. When he did favour one, he had to compensate the other with a sheep or a goat as the price for her night (Patai 1959:44). If he did not love a certain wife, he did not need to have sexual relations with her or could even sleep in his own tent, as long as he did not sleep with his preferred wife on that night. Yet polygamy, especially as tainted by patriarchy, is critiqued in 8:12.

A Bedouin woman in her polygamous family still has more freedom than those in sedentary culture. She can choose and leave her master when ill-treated (Hitti 1970:28) thanks to the free atmosphere of the desert and southern Arabia where love was regarded as a stage preceding marriage. This region was therefore better known for its love songs. As in Song of Songs, the bride would hide in the mountains for the groom to find her (Loretz 1991:134). Married women sometimes even fell in love with other men. The first step in choosing a wife was taken by a neutral intermediary or the young man's mother speaking to the girl's mother.

Similar to the plant life of the desert, premarital romantic love has survived all restraints placed on it by the tradition of segregation of the genders and the custom of arranged marriages. Secret trysts at the well or in the fields while tending the flocks, and poetic expression of feelings were well known (Patai 1959:47).

From the historical leaders only Queen Sheba, who remains anonymous and is often regarded as one of King Solomon's partners, has survived in the memory of the Sabaean culture of south Arabia. According to Havemann (2003:127), she was associated in pre-Islamic Arabia with cultic places for holy animals such as antelope and snakes.

The traditional commentaries to Song of Songs have sought its historical precedents in either Mesopotamian or Egyptian parallels, but that might only be because Arabian culture has not preserved anything in writing from that time. Nevertheless the Jews were geographically and racially the

nearest to the Arabs and their religion stems from Midian, where Moses is believed to have married an Arab priest's daughter. The tribes from Egypt sojourned the Sinai, which was included in Israel in its heyday, and the Nafûd. In the southern and eastern parts of Israel tribes such as the Midianites, Amalekites, Qenites and Rechabites were also affiliated to the Arabs, many of whom were incorporated as mentioned above. According to Hitti (1970:43), Job was an Arab chief of the tribe of Bene Qedem, east of Palestine, well known for their wisdom. The Ishmaelites, of which Agur and Lemuel of the appendix to the book of Proverbs were kings, were also well known for their wisdom. Hitti (1970:42) suggests that the woman in Song of Songs could have been from Qedar in 1:5 and therefore Arabian, when she says that she is as dark as its tents.

The various products imported from Arabia, including the poetic *waṣf* (description), which would have influenced the way the human body was conceptualised together with the feminine and animalistic aspects of its religiosity, render this cultural background therefore highly relevant for the understanding of Song of Songs.

6 EGYPT

Gerleman (1981) has argued that Song of Songs can almost exhaustively be explained by comparing it to Egyptian love songs. Hermann (1959) probably laid the foundation for that belief which is still very dominant. He identified three major forms for Egyptian love poetry: the day song which could be similar to the poem ending in 2:17 where dawn and therefore the end of the night's lovemaking is announced, the door lamentation which he believes is echoed in 5:2 and the description song which was originally a magic spell for healing in cultic contexts equating the different parts of the dead king with various deities but later completely secularised (Pope 1977:72-73).

According to Nasr (1996:240), Egyptian cosmology is about the place of humans in the universe and the body as a symbol of divine qualities and as projected into temple architecture. The cycles of life and death always involved the whole human being.

In the twenty-seventh century BCE the priest Imhotep developed a monotheistic theology with Ptah, the creator, incarnate in the form of the Apis

Bull. The name of this deity could have been a Semitic loanword meaning opening, referring perhaps to the first sign of the zodiac in the Age of Taurus. He was the highest conception of God ever until that time: a self-created Spirit, an eternal, almighty mind-god, who created merely through thought, being Horus, and expressed in word by Thoth. The other gods of Heliopolis were merely his thoughts (Chetwynd 1991:177). Moses later ruled against the golden calf at the transition from the Age of Taurus to the Age of Aries (Chetwynd 1991:193).

Jaynes (1976:185-187) emphasises that Egypt was more homogeneous geographically and ethnically with regard to both time and place than the other surrounding cultures. This helped to conserve the archaic form of theocracy, the god-king. Memphite theology was, in his opinion, about the various voices or tongues of Ptah, the creator by command, manifested by the various deities. Ptah controlled the bicameral voices, which controlled civilisation. Egyptian, like Sumerian, was a very concrete language. Each living king was Horus incarnated, and every dead king Osiris, whose name in Egyptian means Throne-of-the-Eye, and whose real grave was in Memphis. As his voice was still heard in hallucinations – perhaps actually from his greater-than-life painted and jewelled statues -- after his movement and breathing had stopped, his mummified body was supplied and served with the necessities of life, such as food, women, slaves and even letters. His stepped grave mounds developed into pyramids.

Natural phenomena such as the whispering winds cued the hearing of his voice. Conflicting voices were rationalised by myths about relations between the different deities. Each person had his *ka* (the voice, persona or messenger) to which he went and of which he was master when he died. It was symbolised by the glyph for admonishing: someone on a stand, like a divinity, with the two arms uplifted and flat outspread hands. It is the personal, directing voice heard internally, in parental or authoritative accents. The Egyptian had a passive and obedient attitude towards the *ka*. It seems to be the imperative that called him to his destiny, and therefore some sort of superego or conscience. His *ka* was heard by his self as the voice of another, but by others as himself. It seems to have been the shadow presence, *daemon* or even soul, depicted as a standard-bearer or bird on the head of

the king. It could also be depicted as his twin in birth scenes, with clear left lateralisation, which the right hemisphere of the brain would direct or where the brain areas responsible for speech are (Jaynes 1976:187-193). Perhaps this concept of the *ka* is related to the concept of the “self” which occurs seven times in Song of Songs: 1:7, 3:1, 3:2, 3:3, 3:4, 5:6 and 6:12 (*vide infra* 2.1.1 in Chapter two). One of the symbols for the king was, in fact, the falcon, which was later combined with that of the lion to form a falcon-headed sphinx as seen on some scarabs from the Middle Bronze Age (Keel & Uehlinger 1992:26).

Authority collapsed at Memphis around 2100 BCE in the so-called Intermediate Period before the Middle Kingdom, as the increasing complexity of an extensive kingdom broke down the bicameral mind into anarchy without rebellion or the desire for independence (Jaynes 1976:198-199).

From about 1500 BCE, the king was said to have had fourteen *ka*'s, perhaps suggesting intermediaries, as the relation between the god, the king and the people was defined by the *ka*. The *ba* seems to be the visual experience of the *ka*, sometimes depicted as a humanoid bird attendant on the corpse or statue in funerary scenes. It might have taken over the bicameral *ka* functions as its depiction later as a bird next to a lamp suggests. This close identification with another to whom one belonged is perhaps echoed in 2:16, 6:3 and 7:11 and even by the left arm of the lover holding the head of the beloved in 2:6 and 8:3. It also perhaps relates to the notion of love surviving death as in 8:6-7.

In the ancient Lower Egyptian cosmogony the marshy delta parallels the sweet-salty, mud-marsh lagoon associated with the Sumerian Nammu. Atum masturbated on his island and so initiated a heterosexual lineage through autoeroticism (Leick 1994:16).

Although there were harems, no eunuchs were employed (Keel 1986:254). Kings sometimes married their sisters or half-sisters and even daughters, while commoners sometimes married their siblings. That a twin could marry is also mirrored by folk belief amongst the Egyptian fellahin. This occurred mainly during the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties, when Ramses II even married three of his daughters (Middleton 1962:609). In love songs the partner was mostly addressed as a sibling. This was apart from

sometimes using royal epithets. During the Middle Kingdom of the twelfth and thirteenth dynasties there were two probable cases of commoners marrying their siblings, and one certain case in the twenty-second dynasty during the reign of Sheshonk III (823-772 BCE). Later, Ptolemy II married his full sister, Arsinoe, against Greek law, which only allowed paternal half-siblings to marry. Seven of his thirteen successors married either full or half-sisters. Among commoners, however, this remained a rarity as it probably had royal connotations, although Patai (1959:23) claims that sibling marriages were still common for the peasants and artisans under the Romans. It is possible that the Ptolemies married their sisters to reinforce the Osiris cult against that of Amon-Ra in Thebes. On the other hand, it could have been a transition from the matrilineal royalty to a patrilineal system, or for the sake of the purity of royal blood, but Middleton (1962:609-610) discredits both of these explanations, as it would not account for sibling marriage amongst commoners, or of royalty with commoners. The retention of family property is a more likely explanation, which is probably why it occurred more amongst the urban, where wealth was more likely. The lover often addressed his beloved as his sister as in 4:10, 4:12 and 5:1, but it is generally accepted that this is simply a term of endearment, as incest was disallowed in Israel. Yet, there might have been an allusion to their royal heroes in Egypt whom they were playfully modelling. This possibility is supported by the beloved's wish in 8:1 that the lover were her brother, although then for an apparently different reason.

The gods Osiris and Seth had married their sisters, Isis and Nephthys, respectively, thus setting the example, although almost every culture has such incestuous origin myths, despite strict taboos on sibling marriages. Myths, however, tend to be popular explanations for what already exists, rather than their cause.

Isis, the mother goddess, was associated with the milk-giving cow, the tree of life and the throne of the Pharaoh. Ascending the throne was to sit on her lap. To be nourished at her breasts at birth, coronation and death was to be her son and to be divine as well, her milk conferring immortality (Yalom 1997:11). Her own son was Horus, whom she received from Osiris as his resurrected form when he had already been killed by Seth who was

associated with the desert. As in 8:6, it was once again the woman who rescued her lover from death. Egyptian mothers would invoke her protection by reciting one of several common spells, thus bringing her closer to the general population.

The hieroglyph of the moon or sky goddess, Nut, was *mena* which means both moon and breast. Then the god of the Nile, Hapi, also had breasts to symbolise the fertility he showered once a year on the arid areas along the river (Yalom 1997:12).

According to Shlain (1998:61), Egypt was the most woman-empowering place in the area at the time; men even had to swear obedience to their wives at weddings. According to those like Gerleman who believe that Egypt was the main influence for the creation of Song of Songs, this positive status of women in Egypt would be yet another parallel with Song of Songs where the woman plays such a positive role.

Although several collections of premarital love songs all date from the enlightenment of the Amarna and Ramesside period of the late Egyptian empire's nineteenth (1305-1200 BCE) and early twentieth Dynasties (1200-1150 BCE) (Horine 2001:6), they had more ancient antecedents. They are free verse and unique in that they are introspective, reflecting on feelings, often in monologue, with little plot development. The human lovers can be transformed into gods to express the state of perfection they have reached. In three instances even trees spoke to express higher levels of generosity towards the lovers. The motif of the garden is used mostly in the literal sense as referring to their rendezvous. Love intoxicates the senses and the fragrances came from the fantasy land of Punt (Westenholz 1995:2480). The songs express love without any explicit religious reference, except perhaps as distracting entertainment for those mourning the death of a beloved or as a reference to the beloved as a goddess (Hallo & Younger 1997:125-129). Sexual scenes are not shown in tombs, though (Westenholz 1995:2481). There are allusions to changes in consciousness and bodily states (Pritchard 1955:467-469) and metaphors from the animal and plant kingdoms are amply used to describe each other's body and sexuality, but never as boldly as in 5:4-5, for instance (Fox 1985:277; Sparks 2005:141).

The root *y-f-h* (beautiful) which appears in 1:15, 2:10, 2:13, 4:1, 4:10, 6:10, 7:2 and 7:7, but in so few places elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, was a key value in Egyptian culture (Pelletier 1989:4) and suggests once again the Egyptian influence on Song of Songs.

Hermann (1959:33) mentions love magic as one of the lyrical forms found during the New Kingdom, or the nineteenth and twentieth dynasties (1320-1085 BCE). Snakes and scorpions as well as hunger and thirst are adjured either to protect the lover or to impress his beloved. However, developing a theme by dialogue is uncommon in Egyptian literature (Pope 1977:32).

Fragrances had cultic, medicinal, cosmetic and festive value. The main sources were ointments, contained in melting cones on the guests' heads according to the tomb reliefs, flowers and oils and facilitated bonding between the participants. Even when these festivals were not cultic, their aesthetic celebration still had religious dimensions. This is similar to the lotus flower, which reminded one of the cyclical nature of the life-giving sun and the hope for rebirth that it symbolised.

At the beginning of the first millennium BCE the Egyptians were mass producing what they called the fragrances of the gods in factories in Thebes and exporting them to Assyria, amongst other places. They made the incense industry into a cult, inducing a spiritual experience, as it was believed to purify and protect the faithful, linking them in this way to the gods. Ramses III is said to have spent almost two million jars of incense, most of it in Theban temple of Amun (Watson 2001:151 and 155). Nefertem was simultaneously the god of the lotus, ointments and fragrances and could only be reached through scented smoke. This brings to mind the important role the lotus, ointment and fragrances play in Song of Songs (*vide infra* 2.1.2.5 in Chapter three). In a song about sacred marriage the naked Hathor, like Re the Ruler of Myrrh, and as goddess of life and love (Keel 1986:142) at her sanctuary at Deir el-Bahari in the desert, awaits Amun, who was also associated with Punt, the land of incense, leaving from his temple in Karnak to meet her. The pleasure awaiting the guest was nothing but the emanation of the deity, who created its atmosphere through her divine presence. Sensual joy and religious meaning were therefore not polarities as in daily life, but intimately connected during

the feast as is the atmosphere in Song of Songs as well. In another song within the mythical context of the goddess of heaven, Nut, bending over the earth god, Geb, the divine fragrance, a sign of life, is said to drug and inebriate those present (Kügler 2000:25-28).

Incense said to come from Horus was, however, the main fragrance and its sign *sntr* is derived from *ntr* (god), thus referring to the means by which those who were drawn into the divine family were deified. It was regarded as the divine sweat falling to earth like dew. Although a priest often sacrificed it, it was always theologically understood to be the king doing this. Incense is also found in 3:6, 4:6 and 4:14 and clearly adds a religious atmosphere to Song of Songs (*vide infra* 2.1.2.5 in Chapter three).

The sight of Ma'at, the goddess of cosmic order, had a rejuvenating effect on her father, Amun-Re, the creator and world god. He lived from the smell of her "dew", that is the incense burnt in sacrifice. All deities could confer life energy, but it was Amun's own smell which played a role in the conception of the king, the connection and mediation between the divine and human worlds and the son of Nut (Kügler 2000:29-31). The queen was awakened by the god's smell and thus prepared by it for her encounter with him. The palace was, like the temple, a sacred space (Kügler 2000:35).

The Opet feast in the Luxor temple on a hill, said to be the beginning of the world, was the annual regeneration of Amun-Re and therefore of the world. It was also the place where the king was annually relinked to the transpersonal *ka* to equip him for his task, and this rebirth made him divine once again (Kügler 2000:37-38). In a similar way Hathor would transfer divine power to the queen in the form of life, magic power and salvation by nourishing her from her udder (Kügler 2000:41). Hathor was the predecessor of Isis and appeared as a cow with the solar disk between her horns. As the sky goddess, her name means "house of Horus", whose mother she was, and therefore refers to her womb and the cosmic house. This ties in with Freud's observation (1979:28) that a house could be a symbol of the womb. As "queen of the date-palm" she was the goddess of love, music and dance who also nourished the dead (Lurker 1987:143).

Anointing a corpse ensured that the deceased could unite with the gods, like Aton, the sun god, or Osiris. To be penetrated with their fragrances meant deification and animation (Kügler 2000:46-47).

7 CONCLUSION

Egyptian culture has shown many possible antecedents for Song of Songs such as its lyrical nature and use of similes. However, it was probably only the final influence on the form of Song of Songs which is clearly rooted much deeper in other older, more dramatic and metaphoric Mesopotamian culture, layers with which it still has remarkable parallels (Herrmann 1963:184). The various components of Song of Songs remain timeless inasmuch as these belonged to a relatively common pool of literary traditions without having to borrow from any one in particular. That the Mesopotamian texts are older could simply be due to their having been written on more durable material (Westenholz 1995:2482-2483).

Text: Exegetical reflections on Song of Songs

1 INTRODUCTION: ASPECTS OF MULTILEVELLED RELIGIOSITY

This chapter as the core of this study deals with the text in its final form. Different layers of meaning and religiosity imbedded in the text can be excavated in terms of the levels of consciousness identified by Wilber, as explained in Chapter one. Some of these, especially the older levels, will overlap with later ones and strict separation will therefore not be possible. Moreover, higher levels transcend and therefore also include lower levels. Those who interpret the text as expressing mainly a certain stage of religiosity do so because they are personally sensitive to and resonate selectively with what is collectively represented in the text as a product of that stage. Due to their own projections, they recognise themselves in those aspects of the text and tend to reduce its meaning accordingly, to the exclusion of the other levels. The author of this study is, as a result, also limited in this way. If religion is relinking to lost intimacy, peace and oneness, then one's personal experiences of intimacy in the maternal womb and with an erotic lover would also influence one's religiosity.

The degree to which religious connotations have been recognised during the history of Song of Songs has differed in terms of the sensitivities and memories of each era. The hearers of the eighth to the sixth centuries BCE during which Song of Songs was probably initially composed were much more aware of all its undertones than the post-exilic receivers (Viviers 1990:243). One can expect that this subtle understanding has progressively dwindled even further ever since. The movement between different levels is suggested by themes, firstly, of ascent and descent, secondly, by entering, containment and exiting and, thirdly, awakening and birth to new life. All of these run through Song of Songs as threads that weave the texture of the text. These motifs are, of course, also suggestive of sexual intercourse, which may be regarded as the symbol in the text for the various aspects of mobility

between different states of consciousness and therefore also of different kinds of religiosity.

Some of the themes expressed by symbols of higher experiences which Assagioli (1991:44-53) identified will be taken up to paint the landscape against which religiosity appears in Song of Songs. Verbs and nouns indicating movement upwards and downwards, as well as inwards and outwards, abound in the text. With that also come enclosures, places of intimacy and containment for creative conception leading eventually to birth (cf 3:4 and 8:5).

1.1 HORIZONTAL MOVEMENT

It is noticeable that there is a constant restless entering and exiting in Song of Songs.

1.1.1 Entering

Before any expressed vertical movement, horizontal movement is introduced as soon as 1:4 with the lover *הַבִּיאֲנִי* (bringing me) into *חֲדָרָיו* (his chambers), used here as a locative. Not only is the theme of movement therefore introduced, but also direction: inward, into intimacy. The plural of his chambers reveals something of the creative plurality of pre-egoic fantasies and pleasures. Likewise, the plural of the first person is used to describe her joy, perhaps reflecting her fragmentation after her overwhelming experiences. Now, the “others” are outsiders and referred to in the third person. Her alliance and perspective have moved from them to him.

Then in 1:5 self-awareness follows, self-reflection, even a measure of shame perhaps: *שְׁחֹרָה אֲנִי וְנָאֶה* (I am black and beautiful). This is so well known from the discovery of nakedness and exposure in the account of original breakthrough of consciousness, after the subsiding of pleasure, often due to sexual union and, in extreme cases, even post-orgasmic nihilism or depression and guilt. Not witnessing this time, but almost apologetic, she addresses the *בָּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם* (daughters of Jerusalem), the first indication of her own location, and adds where she came from. She is orienting herself to the change again and it is this that induces her self-consciousness. She is coming

to. She is familiar with the interior of Solomon's palace and so with the highest circles.

In 2:4 הֵבִיאַנִי (he brings me) again as he did in 1:4, but this time אֶל-בֵּית הַיַּיִן (into the wine house), a public pub. According to Keel (1986:85), this could also have been a palace room, a summer house, a temporary private house during the harvest which the old Arab poets portrayed as having a notice board, or, as in Egypt and Palestine, a public house for wine and prostitutes.

In 2:9 מֵצִיץ מִן-הַחֲרָכִים (he gazed through the windows), מִשְׁגִּיחַ מִן-הַחֲלֹנוֹת (peeping through the lattice, both the verb and the noun are *hapax legomena*) implies in the context that the lover is on the outside, אַחֲרֵי כְתִלֵּנוּ (behind our wall) perhaps of בְּתֵינוּ (our houses) in 1:17. Their rendezvous is in nature, where אַף-עֵרֶשְׁנוּ רִעְנָה (also our bed is in the foliage) in 1:16, and where קִרֹּת (the rafters or beams) are אֲרָזִים (cedars) and בְּרוֹתֵינוּ (רְהִיטָנוּ) (our rafters or boards are cypresses, when emended), but his mind is inside where his beloved is.

When she finds her lover outside in 3:4, it is she this time who הֵבִיאַתִּיו (I brought him) אֶל-בֵּית אִמִּי (into the house of my mother), as in 8:2, and וְאֶל-חֲדָר הוֹרָתִי (into the room of the one who gave birth to me). This is the first mention of human birth, after preparation for it in the announcement of the new season in 2:11-15. Her desire to return to her origin and roots, in her unconscious, perhaps even back to the womb as Ferenczi (1924:27) and Neumann (1956) thought of it, is echoed by אָבִיאָךְ ([and] I will bring you) in 8:2.

In 3:6-11 Solomon's entry into Jerusalem on his wedding day is portrayed and, within that frame, the inside of the vessel for containment and the vehicle which facilitates this process. In 3:10 תּוֹכוֹ (its inside) describes the interior of the מִטָּתוֹ (his litter, *vide infra* 2.1.8), as it is being carried up in the air.

In 5:2, in the woman's nocturnal reflection, the same situation prevails: he is outside and knocks in order for her to open for him. According to Keel (1986:177), his requests become like a prayer and the first person possessive pronouns express his dependency. She does not open immediately because she is in control of the כַּפּוֹת הַמִּנְעוּל (the handles of the bolt) in 5:5, of what is

closed and sealed. Perhaps that is why she is still חֹמָה (a wall) וְשָׂדֵי כַּמְגְדִּלוֹת (although my breasts are like towers) in 8:10.

He then tries to do it himself by putting his hand (with the possibility of it being a euphemism for his penis perhaps due to the similar elongated shape of both body parts or due to them both being on the same level when the hands hang down) מִן-הַחֹר (through the (key)hole) in 5:4. The etymological connotation of piercing (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1951:359) suggests his penetration through the orifice that gives access to her “house” representing her body and more particularly her womb (cf also Freud 1986: 225). The association between these two as symbols for the “Weiblich-Mütterliche” will also occur again in 8:2 (Krinetzki 1981:212).

Related to the need for concealment is the need for containment due to the vulnerability, weakness and sickness after having been on such dizzying heights (or highs). Not all the experiences of being in love are pleasant. It is then that these structures serve as temporary abodes of containment. That is when entering is required as respite from the temporary regressions in the service of transcendence, regressions that are included and contained before progression is resumed. *Religio*, from the Latin *religare*, is precisely this relinking with the preceding temporarily lost levels, on which development is built and by which it is fed, so that one can find wholeness and peace again, this time on a higher level.

What is precious needs to be protected. This is expressed by the repeated mentioning of the “private property”: in 4:12 גֶּן נָעוּל (a locked garden), גַּל נָעוּל (a locked spring) and מַעְיֵן חֲתוּם (a sealed fountain, reverberated twice in 8:6: כְּחוֹתָם (like a seal or signet ring). Yet, in 4:15 she is for him מַעְיֵן גְּנִים בְּאֶר (a fountain of gardens, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon). Likewise, in 4:16 she is urged יִזְלוּ בְּשָׁמֶיּוֹ (let its balsam fragrances flow [out]). Already there is a religious undertone to these words: according to Fischer (2010a:30), מַיִם חַיִּים means “water of life” which affects cultic cleansing (cf Leviticus 14:5 – 6, 50 – 52; 15:23; Numbers 19:17) and forms part of the eschatological hope of the paradisiacal circumstances (cf Zechariah 14:8).

To suggest this opening up, the verb פָּתַח (open) is used in various forms in 5:2, 5:5 and 5:6 and in both 6:11 and 7:13 הִפְתָּחָה (whether it has

budded or sprouted or sent out shoots). It is used again in 7:13 in the intensive form with the meaning of blossoming. In 7:14 it is more concrete with *וְעַל-פִּתְחֵינוּ* (and at our doors) where it alludes back to *פָּתַח* (have opened) in 7:13. He is allowed to enter into the privacy and intimacy of *גן* (a garden) in 4:12 and *פָּרְדֵּס* (a park) in 4:13, because he also has need of containment and the nurturing it implies.

1.1.2 Exiting

In 1:8 *צֵא-י-לָךְ* (go out) is the lover's urging command to the beloved, who is to follow him tending his livestock in the field. In 2:10 the lover entices her again, *וּלְכִי-לָךְ* (and come), to the open field where he naturally finds himself: [...] *תִּרְעָה* (you tend [...]) and let (your flock) lie down in the afternoon) in 1:7 and *בָּא מְדִלֵּג עַל-הַהָרִים--מְקַפֵּץ עַל-הַגְּבוּעוֹת* (he comes leaping across the mountains, skipping upon the hills) in 2:8 and *הִרְעָה בְּשׁוֹשַׁנִּים* (he pastures amongst the lotuses) in 2:17. It is also the animals of *הַשָּׂדֶה* (the field) which she calls to witness in the adjuration formulas in 2:7 and 3:5.

In 3:11 it is the daughters of Zion who are invited to *צֵאנָה וִירְאֵנָה* (go out and see) the wedding of King Solomon. Much later, in 7:12 the lover invites her again: *נֵצֵא* (let us go out).

She is not quite ready for this exposure and still needs to hide inside some sort of containment even in the heights of the mountains: *בְּחַגְיֵי הַסֵּלַע*, *בְּסִתְרֵי הַמִּדְרָגָה* (in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff) in 2:14, just as her beauty is partially concealed by her veil in 1:7: *כְּעֹטִיָּה* (like one veiled, if the emendation to "as one wandering about" is not accepted) and in 5:7 (they took my mantle or wide wrapper or large veil from me). There was already something similar with the same suggestion in 2:9: he was peeping because she was hiding.

When she goes out all by herself as she used to in 1:6 when she was *נֹטְרָה אֶת-הַכֶּרְמִים* (the keeper of the vineyard), she is vulnerable, as in 3:2 and 5:7, even though she is still inside the protection of the city. Other men cannot give her safety and belonging. It is only with her lover that she can go into the garden in 6:2, into the fields and villages in 7:12 and into the vineyards in 7:13.

It is only much later that she is confident outside and even wants to kiss him in public (8:1) and would make love to him under a tree (8:5). It is because she has become herself a building: וְשִׁדִּי כַּמְגִדְלוֹת, אֲנִי חוֹמָה (I am a wall and my breasts are its towers) in 8:10.

1.2 VERTICAL MOVEMENT

Although they signify progression, the up-down movements also instill a sense of restlessness which only finds peace eventually in 8:10, but which is already promised: תִּרְבִּיץ (you make to lie down [to rest]) in 1:7. The man's movement in 2:8 and 2:17 alternates with that of the woman, who עָלָה (ascends or climbs up) in 3:6 (unless the feminine form זָאת (it) refers to מִטָּתוֹ (his litter) in 3:7, but then it could still represent her *pars pro toto*) and 8:5, and הִנְשָׁקְפָה (literally: “overhanging” and therefore “looking (out and) down”) in 6:10. She ascends, in the first two instances, מִן-הַמִּדְבָּר (from the desert), that is, from feeling low, lonely and lost, and, in the last instance, כְּמוֹ-שָׁחַר (as the day (rising) at dawn (that is, from the dark and the sleep of the unconscious, recalling her being שְׁחֹרָה (black) in 1:5 and שְׁחֹרְחֹרֶת (blackish) in 1:6. אֶעֱלֶה (I will climb up) occurs again in 7:9, when the lover fantasises about getting up the “date palm tree” to reach its “fruit”. The ascensions clearly suggest the arousal of sexual excitement, followed by the descent into relaxation once release and relief from the tension have been experienced. This alternates with downward motion in 6:10-12. These opposite, but complementary, vertical movements introduce and therefore proleptically suggest erotic contexts (Horine 2001:140).

In 4:1 we encounter מִהָר גִּלְעָד (from the mountain of Gilead) from which the flock of goats גִּלְשֵׁי (descend). The next verb describes movement in the opposite direction: the flock of sheep שָׁעְלוּ (which ascend) from the washing. Perhaps the phallic מִגְדָּל (tower) in 4:4 and 7:5 with the plural in 5:13 suggest a similar sense of arousal and upward movement, in addition to their defensive positions at the gate (De Vaux 1978:235) where they also “proudly” overlooked the surrounding area as the woman looks out in 6:10. The crescendo continues in 4:6 with וְאֶל-גִּבְעַת הַלְבוֹנָה וְאֶל-הַר הַמִּיָּר וְאֶל-הַר הַחֲלִיטִינָה (I will go (up) to the mountain of myrrh and to the hills of frankincense).

Then there is again the opposite movement in 4:8: מְלִבְנוֹן [...] מְלִבְנוֹן תָּבוֹאִי (from Lebanon [...] from Lebanon, come [down]) and תִּשׁוּרֵי מְרָאשׁ אָמְנָה, מְרָאשׁ מְהַרֵּי (look down from the top of Amana and from the top of Senir and Hermon [...] from the mountains of), which is followed by mentioning the animalistic dangers lurking there and how the lover has been overwhelmed by the beloved.

It is noteworthy that when the lover יָרַד (went down) in 6:2 and יָרַדְתִּי in 6:11, it is in both cases to his garden. Letting go in sexuality is to descend to the realm of the unconscious and the id in Freudian terms. In 6:2 the lover descends to his garden לְרֵעוֹת (to feed) or be nourished by the life force.

The constant restless movement and the fact that the text is a constant dialogue, involving several parties, add to the lively feeling of the interaction. In general he seems to take her out into the world, while she prefers to provide intimacy and belonging for him.

The two-way movements are also mirrored by the *auṣâf* (bodily descriptions). Deckers (1993:186) notes that the movements of the male are always from spatially high to spatially low up until the last *waṣf* (description) in 7:1-7, where his eyes move from the beloved's feet upwards.

1.3 CONCEPTION, BIRTH AND NEW LIFE

There is a strong theme of fertility and the awakening of nature in general, which resonates with the theme of development and evolution. The celebrated sexuality is not completely without any thought of offspring, as Fox (1985:287-288) claims about Egyptian and Israelite love poetry. This is insinuated by the explicit mentioning in the negative to accentuate it, that none of the ewes coming up from the waterplace are without lambs in 4:2 and 6:5, and by the references to a mother in 3:4, 3:11, 6:9, 8:1, 8:2 and 8:5. According to Brown, Driver and Briggs (1907:51), this could be etymologically related to a similar word for womb, to conception, הוֹרֵתִי (she who conceived me) in 3:4 and to birth, לִיּוֹלֶדֶתָּה (for the one who gave birth to her) in 6:9, and חִבְלֶתָּה אִמְךָ [...] חִבְלָה יָלַדְתָּךְ (your mother was in travail with you [...] she was in travail and brought you forth) in 8:5. 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. Horine (2001:5) claims

that the Egyptian world view was in this respect 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. It also juxtaposes and contrasts the two extremes of birth in 8:5 and death in the very next verse – and, in fact, beyond.

2 PRE-EGOIC STAGE

2.1 PRE-EGOIC STAGE: ARCHAIC LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY

As this entails the prehistoric era, no direct textual indications are to be expected. However, the earliest individual development is still reflected in rootedness of the past. Regressions such as birth and sleep and sometimes to the as yet unintegrated remnants from the past are hinted at or described by the text. The archaic level provides some anthropology as a basis for the implied “theology” of the later levels. As such it is expressive of the immanent dimension of religiosity.

2.1.1 Narcissism

Narcissism resorts like animism and magic (Freud 1998:76-77) under the pre-egoic stage, precisely because the ego is still insufficiently developed, creating thus the need for it. This is confirmed by the anonymity of the two lovers who have not yet found their name and ego identity. The wish introduced as early as in 1:2 in terms of the third person suggests this lack in relation to the first person, who is still the passive object. It is then balanced through the shift to dialogue in the second person, with which 8:14 also concludes the text.

That the text reveals a rather narcissistic stage in love is clear from the fact that the emphatic **אני** appears twelve 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 (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 אָהָבָה (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, 8:11. That amounts to only thirty-eight out of a total of a hundred and seventeen 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 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 fifty-two instances. That the greater majority of these references to the self occurs in dysphoric contexts suggests that the self is in crisis, often leading to impulsive behaviour. Love brings the essence of the self in crisis.

Sixteen of the thirty-eight verses where the first person is not mentioned are part of a *waṣf*, a description of the other: three of the woman in the second person (4:1-7, 6:4-7 and 7:2-8) and the fourth of the man in the third person (5:10-16). This is as if the description is given in his absence and in response to the question of the daughters of Jerusalem, addressed in the refrains and perhaps in all the instances where the third person is used. Seven more are also in praise of the partner, but as single verses rather than as part of a *waṣf*. Another eight (3:6-11, 6:8 and 6:10) have military or royal connotations and are described in the third person, as if the intensity of the projected inner conflict can only be dealt with at a distance. What is striking is that the only proper name of a person, Solomon, appears almost always (except in 1:5 and 8:12, in the latter case, where he is personally addressed for the first and only time) amongst these verses where reference to the self has been suspended (1:1; 3:7, 3:9, 3:11 and 8:11), as if consciousness of the archetypal hero crowds out the egoic state.

Yet, the first word after what can be considered to be the title is the verb, וְשָׁקֵץ (let him kiss me), in the jussive, an imperfect implying an as-yet-not reality or a wish, a fantasy, even a prayer, an invitation, a reaching-out beyond the self. It already differentiates between “him” and “me” before proceeding to the second person (five times), and eventually to the first person plural. Enallage or the shifting between different persons is, however, common in poetry, giving it a dramatic sense (Pope 1977:297). It is typical of

praising addresses, especially of God (cf Psalm 145:3 and 4, Fischer 2010a:22).

For those of allegorical inclination, the dialogical style of Song of Songs resonates with the same form of revelation by the divine (Beauchamp 1990:157), although the beloved initially speaks of the lover in the third person, that is, addressing a third other. If this does not suggest triangulation and a move away from the origin dyad, then at least the presence of an anonymous voyeur is implied: either the other girls, who serve as witnesses, or the reader, or both, before addressing the lover personally. It is as if there is some distance between them due to her idealisation of him as *הַמֶּלֶךְ* (king) in 1:4 and she suggests having been chosen by him from amongst others, from whom she is then distanced. She witnesses about him, after having experienced him and so there is also the notion of reflection.

2.1.2 Sensuality

Song of Songs is inundated with sensual descriptions and an inventory of the use of the five senses, and the predominance of one or more may prove to be important hints of the different states of consciousness. Dreams are, for instance, seldom experienced other than visually (Hillman 1979:186). The sensual seems to be more suggestive of the female receptive, inward, experiencing or passive aspect, whereas the words of motion suggest the outward and male expressive aspects. Being in love is being sensually aroused and awakened as it sharpens some senses such as the proprioceptive, *וַיִּמְעִי, הָמוּ עָלָיו* (my insides seethed because of him) in 5:4. Experiences are sometimes described in multisensorial terms such as the lover's mouth in 1:2 or the visual and aural impact of the beloved's footsteps in 7:9. This suggests the intensity of such sensory clusters (Hunt 2008:84) rather than synaesthesia as Hunt reads into 2:14 (2008:91 and 202) where the visual and aural are alternated similar, for instance, to the respective appeals through the two parallel interjections, *קוֹל* (listen!) and *הִנֵּה* (look!) in 2:8 (Eder 2004:6n10). In addition, *עֵרֶב* (sweet or pleasant) does not need to be limited to a gustatory meaning. On the other hand, the state of being in love also inhibits certain sensory experiences, such as the vestibular, as when drunk (cf *וְשָׁכְרוּ* (and get drunk) in 5:1) from *יַיִן* (wine), with its typical loss of

balance, proportion, perspective, integration, but also inhibitions, leading to exaggerations and extreme views, or as when asleep. The aesthetic often induces a sense of religiosity as will gradually become clear.

2.1.2.1 Aural sensuality

As poetry Song of Songs appeals in the first instance to the aural sense through its musicality, manifested in its rhythm and playing with repetitive sounds: for instance, alliteration of ש and ר (thrice each, in that order) occur in the very first verse and that of ש and ק (twice each, in that order) in the second. As such, 1:2 also represents the sound of smacking lips through onomatopoeia (Watson 1984:235). Words are also repeated, all suggestive of the cyclical and intense nature of primitive behaviour resonating with its environment, in which ample variation is, however, also experienced. After the initial cry of desire, two verbless sentences follow in 1:3, suggesting directness and even the most primitive language of infants: לְרִיחַ שְׁמֹנֶיךָ טוֹבִים, שְׁמֹן תִּזְרֹק שְׁמֹךְ (your ointments have a great smell, your name is perfume poured out).

The same would apply to the echo of the cola in parallelisms. Like the numerous similes and metaphors expressing free association, even if collectively established, these link two experiences, just as the two partners in love are linked. Hunt has interpreted the similes as expressions of the transformation of the lovers (2008:297-320) and the metaphors as expressions of their synthesis (2008:321-348), suggesting that these kinds of associations facilitate development to different emotional and perhaps spiritual levels. In fact, sometimes parallelisms are comprised precisely by two similes echoing each other, such as in 1:5c and 1:5d: כָּאֹהֲלֵי קֶדָר, כִּירִיעוֹת שְׁלֹמֹה (like the tents of Qedar, like the curtains of Solomon or Salmah, if the emendation is accepted as Gerleman (1981:100) has done to form a synonymous parallelism to refer to the temporary shelter of two Bedouin tribes). Similes can even become extended, as in 4:1e-4:5c, 6:5c-6:7b and 5:12-5:13b. Metaphors and similes can also be intertwined, as the series in 7:2c-7:10 and the single instance in 8:14 show (Watson 1984:260). This linking can also have the function of continuity of the flow of sounds, as in a chiasmus, for instance in 1:6: שְׁמִנִי נִטְרָה אֶת-הַכְרָמִים--כְּרָמִי שְׁלִי, לֹא נִטְרָתִי (they

made me the keeper of the vineyards, my own vineyards I did not keep). Another aural technique achieving a similar effect is that of tabulation of exotic vocabulary, as in 2:10-13 (Watson 1984:370).

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: 2:16, 6:3 and 7:11, the latter two inverting the order of the first and the last omitting the first part of 2:16. The reversal effectively communicates the sense of equality and mutual possession (Feuillet 1990:216).

These are just a few examples of the aural techniques used in the text to appeal to the reader or to the listener. The protagonists, however, also testify to hearing the other. קוֹל (the voice) occurs in 2:10, and probably refers to that of her lover, and קוֹלְךָ (your voice, that is, of the beloved), twice in 2:14, is עֲרֹב (sweet) to hear. In 4:3 מִדְּבָרְךָ (your mouth, that is, your words, a *hapax legomenon*) are נְאוּהָ (comely) like her whole being in 1:5. This might refer to the sound of her voice or to some pious characteristic of hers (Herrmann 1963:187). The final appeal, הִשְׁמִיעֵנִי (let me hear [it, that is, your voice]) like his friends מְקַשְׁיָבִים (who give attention) is found in 8:13, from the lover this time.

2.1.2.2 Visual sensuality

Beauty and pleasure are the most typical experiences of love, although the range of vocabulary used to denote it is relatively limited in Song of Songs. It is, however, often repeated and concrete images are continually presented (Gerleman 1981:146 and 195).

For beauty four words are used:

נְעִמָּה (you are pleasant or delightful or lovely - as an exclamation of admiration after וַיֵּמָה occurs only once, that is, as a verb in 7:7;

נְאוּהָ (comely or seemly) in 1:5 (despite her dark colour), as in 6:4 (like Jerusalem), נְאֻהָ in 2:14 (her appearance), as in 4:3 (her lips), all therefore refer to the beloved;

יָפָה is the more common word and is used twice in 1:15 (both as exclamations of admiration after הִנֵּה), as יָפְתִּי in 2:10 and 2:13 (both as substantive vocatives), יָפָה twice in 4:1 (both again as exclamations of admiration after הִנֵּה for her whole being), as a verb יָפֶה in 4:10 (an exclamation

of admiration after מָה), as in 7:2, יָפָה twice in 6:4 (like Tirtzah) and in 6:10 (like the moon), and יָפִית in 7:7 (as exclamation of admiration after מָה);

דָּגוּל (looked at or conspicuous) in 5:10 refers to the lover and reminds one of the boastful banners mentioned in 2:4, 6:4 and 6:10.

For pleasure in its multidimensionality טוֹב (good or pleasant) is used in its various inflexions:

for her love or breasts, which is/are טוֹבִים (better) than wine in 1:2. This may include various senses: visual, tactile, even olfactory and gustatory, and, of course, proprioceptive;

for his ointments, regarding its fragrance, they are טוֹבִים (great), in 1:3

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

and as a verb, טָבוּ, 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.

The range of application of this adjective is therefore fairly wide, to describe various senses.

Colours such as the רֶעֶנָה (lush greenness) in 1:16 of spring (or around the summer solstice, according to Lemaire [1975:23]), with all its flowers and fruits are constantly implied by the descriptions of nature. To this may be added white, black, red, gold, greenish (בִּתְרָשִׁישׁ) in 5:14, blue (סְפִירִים) and purple. White plays a dominant role throughout Song of Songs: from her teeth which resemble white washed sheep, the lover's white complexion, his white eyes in 5:12, his body of ivory in 5:14, as are his legs in 5:15 and her neck in 7:5, the (white) dove and words like לְבוֹנָה (frankincense) in 3:6; 4:6 and 4:14, לְבָנָה ([full] moon) in 6:10 to which the ironic darkening effect of the sun can be contrasted and לְבָנוֹן ([the snow covered] Lebanon) mentioned seven times, which sounds almost like לָבָן (white).

2.1.2.3 Gustatory sensuality

Tastes are implied by the food which is so often mentioned in Song of Songs.

Vide supra 2.1.2.2 and *vide infra* 2.1.4.

2.1.2.4 Tactile sensuality

Touching is constantly implied, by kissing as early as in 1:2. His holding and caresses become a refrain in 2:6 and 8:3: שְׂמָאלוֹ תַּחַת לְרֹאשִׁי וְיְמִינוֹ תִּחְבֶּקֵנִי (let his left hand be under my head and his right arm hold me). This was, incidentally, also the typical sexual position ascribed to the Mesopotamian deities, such as Tammuz and Ishtar (Bloch & Bloch 1995b:34). *Vide supra* 2.1.2.2.

2.1.2.5 Olfactory sensuality

The olfactory signals the presence of the gods and the divine (Keel 1986:70) and has an exceptional place in Song of Songs. It starts early in 1:3 where שְׁמֵנֶיךָ (your oils) are praised for their רִיחַ (scent), especially when they are תּוֹרֵק (poured out). Perhaps the sense of smell is already introduced through kisses because the Egyptian custom to touch noses instead of lips when doing so in order to get a sense of the other person's smell still had an influence here (Gerleman 1981:203). After the physically and psychically nourishing senses of taste and touch, the primitive sense of smell is introduced. This is paralleled in 4:10 again. Pope (1977:304-305) argues that נִזְכְּרָה in 1:4 should be translated as smell or inhale or at least as savour to include both the olfactory and gustatory senses. The olfactory appreciation is, in his opinion, in line with its use in Leviticus 24:7, Isaiah 66:3, Hosea 14:8 and Psalm 20:4, where it applies to incense and burnt offerings, thus probably introducing some religious connotations.

In 1:12 her nard נָתַן רִיחוֹ (yields its odour), whereas in 2:13 it is the blossoming vines that do so, reminiscent of the lover of the beloved and serving as stimulus and motivation for her to follow the lead of nature. In 7:14 one smells the pungent mandrakes and in 1:13 and 1:14 the lover smells like fragrant plants, probably because he spends most of his day as a shepherd in the field. In 3:6 it is the approaching king, who is like (palm-like) columns of dust cloud מְקֻטָּרֵת (perfumed – with cultic and sacrificial connotations) with myrrh, incense and imported spices.

The myrrh mountain and frankincense hill of 4:6, as in 8:14, conjure up the smell of these plants carried in the evening air, as do those of the park in 4:13-14, the garden's spices in 4:16, the myrrh and balsam of the garden in

5:1, the myrrh on her hands and door handle in 5:5, and the beds and terraces of spices and fragrant plants in 5:13. וְרִיחַ (and the smell) of her clothes is כְּרִיחַ (like the smell) of Lebanon in 4:11, presumably of its trees, as in 7:9, where it is again that of her breath, which is like apricots. It is clear that the odour stimulation comes from the plant environment of the lovers and from the imported spices derived from plants. Yet that of her oils (or perhaps sweat and other excretions) is said in 4:10 to be better still than all these spices, just as his name has been positively compared and identified in the direct identification of metaphor to the smell of spread ointment in 1:3. Perhaps this means that his good reputation has spread like the best of fragrances.

Oil or ointment has many associations. It does not only refer to paradisiacal opulence, but is also an important gustatory carrier and stimulant. As nomads did not know of vegetable oils, except perhaps olive oil, the oldest unguents were from animal fat, thus associating it with the animal world as well (Smith 1956:383-384). *Vide supra* 2.1.2.2 and *vide infra* 2.1.5 and 2.3.14.

2.1.3 The body

At this pre-egoic level there is a strong emphasis on experiences of the body. It hardly needs to be mentioned that Song of Songs is a highly sensual text, but what the religious implications of that are need to be explicated. At the earliest stage the body is the sole love object and site where the most primitive form of immanent religiosity can develop. The original body, which includes that of the mother, will only later become symbolised to compensate for her absence and will then be displaced onto and projected into various other objects, such as substitute lovers who will hold this sublimation. Transcendence is thus only achieved when the body's needs are frustrated and their satisfaction is sublimated through the displacement of instinctual energies into less instinctual, "higher" channels such as culture. As mentioned in Chapter one, the body can be regarded as the ultimate basis of all symbolisation, of which religion is but one system.

Freud regarded the first form of the ego as a body ego (1927:31). This would imply that there cannot strictly be a pre-egoic stage and would therefore be aligned to the notion of Klein (1975:221) that the ego exists from

birth. In Song of Songs there is clearly an exceptional awareness of the body, or rather some cherished parts of it, as the Hebrew word denoting the body as a whole, *בשר*, is absent from Song of Songs, while occurring particularly in the legal texts (Lys 1967:18). However, *מֶעָה* might refer to the man's body in general in 5:14, as *בָּטֶן* in 7:3 could refer to the woman's body in general. Some body parts are explicitly mentioned. In the old Orient one could express the power and meaning of a deity, a deceased or living person by associating various worldly powers with different body parts (Keel 1986:130). Although this does not happen explicitly here, these ideas could probably have played a role in the back of the mind of the informed listener or reader.

Reminiscent of psychodynamic associations between a house and the body as containers, and therefore representations of the self (Jung 1984:116; Freud 1929: 128f and 1986:85 and 225), houses are mentioned in the explicit and literal sense but suggesting their figurative function as well: *בֵּיתֵינוּ* (our houses) and its inflexions are used first as a representation of the lovers' rendezvous in 1:17 and implied in 2:9. It is then used in combination with *הֵייל* in 2:4, and implied in 3:1f and 5:2f when there is reference to the home of the beloved. It further refers to her mother's house, or the maternal womb, in 3:1 and 8:2. In 8:7 *אִם-יִתֵּן אִישׁ אֶת-כָּל-הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ* (if a man would give all the wealth of his house), he would be ridiculed might also mean that love cannot be other than reduced to the body as well.

צִוְאֶרְךָ (your neck) in 1:10 is likened to the tower of David in 4:4 and 7:5, and in 7:5 her nose to the tower of Lebanon, expressing an almost aggressive pride like her eyes in 4:9 and 6:5 (Keel 1986:63-64 and Krinetzki 1981:196).

As an orifice which links her inside to the outside, her nose acquires an almost numinous aura (Krinetzki 1981:196). In 7:9 it is said to be itself the object smell: its fragrance reminds one of apricots. *הַחֹר* (the hole) of the door in 5:4 and *גָּלִילִי* (rods of) in 5:14 are parts of the door, perhaps used metaphorically to describe body parts of the beloved and the lover, respectively. Because *חוֹמָה* (wall) – note that it is a different word from *פֶּתָלֵנוּ* used in 2:9 – is still a male concern with control in 8:9, as were *הַחֻמּוֹת* (the walls) in 5:7, it had to be reinforced with *טִירַת כֶּסֶף* (battlement of silver) and *נִצּוֹר* (we will enclose) her *דֶּלֶת* (door) with *לֹחַ אֶרֶז* (a board of cedar) in 8:9. This is again a different word from *פֶּתָחֵינוּ* (our doors) used in 7:14. The

beloved then speaks metaphorically about her own body in 8:10: וְשִׁדִּי חֻמָּה, אֲנִי חֻמָּה (I am a wall and my breasts are its towers). It is the orifices which can mediate and facilitate the transition and access which relinks, adumbrated by the tactile and gustatory senses of their מְנַשְּׂיָקוֹת (with kisses) in 1:2.

In fact, the first body part mentioned in Song of Songs, פִּיהוּ in 1:2, is the mouth of the male lover. It is the first expression of admiration – by the beloved – and about his sensual and physical impact on her, but this is immediately followed by adoration of the seemingly non-physical attributes of his name. Thereafter it is her skin which is שְׁחֹרָה (black) כְּאֶהֱלֵי קֶדָר כִּירִיעוֹת (like the tents of Qedar, like the curtains of Solomon or Salmah) in 1:5 and שְׁחֹרָתָה (blackish) in 1:6. This first elaboration about a body is, in fact, about her own. (Cf also how she again sings, narcissistically, her own praise in 2:1.) Black is complimentary when it refers to hair as in 5:11, rather than to the skin, although there is some difference of opinion about that (Pope 1977:307). Viviers (1998:5) regards a light skin as a male-valued and male-conditioned body ideal, according to 4:10 and Lamentations 4:7, which the city girls had internalised and therefore made the beloved self-conscious when they stared at her.

Keel (1986:54) and Pope (1977:311-318) point out that many goddesses and other numinous beings have been black in the history of religion, and that they induce both terrifying and fascinating feelings, that is, Otto's *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (1917:29), through their exotic and mysterious sense of being different. This is also perhaps suggested by her dark colour, which is in 1:5 כְּאֶהֱלֵי קֶדָר (like the tents of Qedar, a Bedouin tribe in the Syrian-Arabian desert [Gerleman 1981:100]) כִּירִיעוֹת שְׁלֹמֹה (like the curtains of Solomon or Salmah). The origin of many of them could be traced back to meteoric stones which had fallen from the sky, that is, from "heaven". Darkness and black seem to suggest the mysterious, awe-inspiring realm beyond the human.

Red is the defining characteristic of being human and it was this feature and his beautiful eyes which made David good-looking (cf 1 Samuel 16:12 and 17:42), both symbolising vitality and intensity. A limestone painted red from the temple in Arad is the only symbol found of the presence of YHWH and the ideal man is shining red.

Of the four *auṣâf* (descriptions, plural of the Arabic *waṣf*), and more specifically celebratory songs of description (Loader 1998-2001:104), three (4:1-7, 6:4-7 and 7:2-6, where almost every verse line starts with a word denoting a body part) are about the body of the woman. Incidentally, this genre occurs only in Song of Songs with all of canonical literature (Pope 1977:56). Only in 5:10-16 is the body of the male lover praised. This is unique to both the Hebrew and Christian canons, as the body is perhaps such a reminder of death, which traditional religion has tried to deny. The first two *auṣâf* in Song of Songs are descriptions of the beloved (that is, 4:1-7 and 6:4-7) and concern the upper part of her body only, as if to prepare or tease the reader. They also alternate with descriptions of the body from top to toe.

The beloved is a tall woman: זאת קומתך דמתה לתמר (your height is like a palm tree) in 7:8, היפה בנשים (the most beautiful amongst women – reminding one of the superlative in the title) in 1:8, 5:9 and 6:1. קולך (your voice) is ערב (sweet) to hear, ומראיך (and your appearance) נאה (wonderful) to see (both in 2:14) and her ריח (smell) like apples (7:9). The visual of the עיניך (your eyes, that is, of the woman) in 4:9 and עיניו (his eyes) in 5:12 and the numerous verbs of seeing, such as אל-תראוני (don't look at me) in 1:6, משגיח (look through) and מציץ (peer) in 2:9, confirm the strong visual experience of love. To this can be added the many implicit and explicit references to ריח (smell) involving the olfactory, the tactile when she wishes תחבקני (let [your right arm] embrace [that is, contain] me) in 2:6 and 8:3, and the aural receiving the קול (voice) of the other in 2:8 and 5:2 which are echoed by קולך (your voice, that is, hers) twice in 2:14 and 8:13.

Like פיהו (his mouth) in 1:2, מדברך (your [that is, her] mouth) in 4:3 suggest various functions such as kissing and speaking, and in the case of the woman Krinetzki (1981:136) regards the female mouth, like the vagina, as the symbol for feminine containment.

שפתותיך (your lips) and its morphological variations are כחוט השני (like a scarlet thread) in 4:3 and dripping in 4:11, 5:13 and 7:10, expressed by the verbs נתפנה and דובב, respectively.

רקתך (your temples) are covered but visible through her veils in 4:3 and 6:7 in identical phrases. 4:2 and 6:6 mention שניך (your teeth), which are compared to a flock of shorn sheep with their twin lambs (מתאימות), only in Song

of Songs), moving up from הִרְחֹצָה (the washing, only in Song of Songs), implying their whiteness. לְחִכִּי (for my palate or gums) is associated, clearly as a gustatory sense, with מְתוֹק (sweet) in 2:3 (hers), in 5:16 (his) with מִמֶּתְקִים (sweetness) and (probably his) in 7:10 with the best wine. לְשׁוֹנְךָ (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, according to Herrmann (1963:187). This is either suggested through the double entendre, דֹּדִיךָ (love or breast) in 1:2, or mentioned explicitly by a different word, שְׁדִי (my breasts), for the first time by the beloved herself in 1:13, and then as שְׁדֵיךָ (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 (her mother's), and in 8:8 and 8:10 (her brothers worried about her physical immaturity), all reminding one of the holy name אֵל שְׁדַי (El Shaddai). As the first love object in life breasts clearly relate to the earliest pre-egoic stage relived in nostalgia through the rest of later life.

לְחִיֶיךָ (your cheeks or jaws) are referred to in 1:10, as his are in 5:13. עֵינֶיךָ (your eyes) are compared to doves in 1:15 and 4:1, as his are in 5:12; and in 4:9 and 6:5 they are idealised because of their exaggerated power. This hyperbolic sense is increased by בְּאַחַד (with [just] one of) which is mentioned twice in 4:9. In 7:5 her eyes are compared to בְּרִכּוֹת (the pools). In 8:10 they are used figuratively for the mental view that the lover has of his beloved.

תַּחַת לְרֹאשִׁי (under my head) occurs in 2:6 and רֹאשְׁךָ עָלֶיךָ כְּכַרְמֶל (your head is like Carmel) in 7:6 where it is mentioned twice, whereas רֹאשׁוֹ (his head, probably a euphemism for the tip of his penis, as repression often transposes a body part from a lower to an upper part, according to Freud [1986:387]) is נִמְלֵא-טָל (filled with dew) in 5:2 and כְּתָם פָּז (of the finest gold) in 5:11.

שְׁעָרֶךָ (your hair) in 4:1 and 6:5 is in both cases, in almost identical phrases, compared to a flock of goats moving down the highlands of Gilead שֶׁגָּלְשׁוּ (which ascend) and וְדִלִּת רֹאשְׁךָ כְּאַרְגָּמָן (and the hair (from דָּלָל [hangs])) of your head is like purple, like the seat of the litter in 3:10 (she dyes it reddish with henna or red-purple (כְּאַרְגָּמָן) [Pope 1977:629]) in 7:6, which is so awe-inspiring that מֶלֶךְ אֲסוּר בְּרֶהָטִים (a king is captivated by its tresses). His hair is

referred to by קְנֻצוֹתַי רְסִיסֵי לַיְלָה (my locks with the drops of the night) in 5:2 and קְנֻצוֹתָיו תְּלִתְלִים שְׁחֹרֹת כְּעֹרֹב (his locks curled, black like a raven) in 5:11. The variation in vocabulary emphasises the importance of hair for both genders. The Hebrew Bible (cf Psalm 69:5 and Judges 16:17) associated innumerability, vitality and even sinister demonic power with hair. When it was black, it was a sign of youth (Keel 1986:132) but also of the dangerous, demonic aspect of the beloved (Keel 1986:201).

Only the arms and legs of the lover are mentioned. In 2:6 and 8:3 the same words are used without explicitly mentioning arm as it is in 8:6 with זְרוֹעָךְ (your arm), which can also mean shoulder associated with strength. שׁוֹקָיו (his legs) in 5:15 has the same connotation of strength. It is different from יָד (hand), which is used for both her (5:4) and him (5:14) and for an artist (7:2). This erotic suggestion is reinforced by כַּפּוֹת (palms) in 5:5, here referring to the handle of the door of the hands, but with this plural especially soles of the feet. Both the handle and the door can, therefore, serve as disguised references to the female genitals. וְאֶצְבָּעַתִּי (and my fingers) in 5:5, has “myrrh” עֹבֵר (overflowing) them. On the other hand, רַגְלִי (my feet) are mentioned in 5:3, and in 7:2 they are alluded to by פְּעֻמֶּיךָ (your [foot]steps), which refer to their sound as she is dancing, but also perhaps to their appealing movement as observed visually. In respect of the above-mentioned instance in 5:3, one should keep in mind that feet are “a standard biblical euphemism for genitalia” (Pope 1977:381 and 517-518). It could therefore function as yet another double entendre here. According to Freud (1974:32), body parts such as the feet (or shoes) and the hair, which function as fetishes, do so due to the smell attached to these parts. In addition, especially the feet of women can compensate for the missing penis. In this way fetishes are a substitute for the “normal” sexual object (Freud 1974:29). Freud (1974:30) links the sexual fetish to religion by pointing out that in the latter the deity is embodied in the fetish and that the cherished body part or sexual object has indeed such an elevated quality. He regards it as normal when the sexual aim is not yet reachable in a state of being in love. The sexualised object then serves as a metaphor as temporary displacement and substitute for the absent beloved, similar to the notion of the transitional object in Winnicott’s thinking (1975:223).

בִּטְנָה (your belly or body or womb) in 7:3 can also mean her innermost soul, passion or intellectual faculties (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1907:105), but its use as an architectural rounded projection in the shape of a bell or cushion makes the literal meaning in this context the obvious one. Loader (1998-2001:105) understands it as genitals to correspond to שְׁרָרָה in the parallelism. It could be parallel to מַעְיִי in 5:14, where it refers to the torso of the male lover, his external belly, or his body, as many translations have it, although it literally refers to the internal organs, or figuratively, the seat of emotions or source of procreation (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1907:588-589), as it is in Psalm 71:6 (Pope 1977:519). יָרֵכוֹ (his hip or thigh) has a potentially erotic sense in both 3:8, where the (phallic) sword of each bodyguard is girded upon it, and in 7:2, where her voluptuous curves (חֲמוּקָי, a *hapax legomenon*) mesmerise the onlookers. Keel (1986:214) points out that the thigh was archaically sometimes a euphemism for the genitals (cf Genesis 46:26; Exodus 1:5) as the most holy body part by which an oath was sworn.

Just thereafter שְׁרָרָה (your navel or umbilical cord, but genitals according to Loader [1998-2001:105]) is mentioned in 7:3 and now often interpreted euphemistically to mean vulva, as it fits the sequential description from below between the thighs and the belly or womb, the latter emphasising it through the only synonymous parallelism in the relevant description (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1907:1057 and Pope 1977:617-618). It would then have both sexual and birth connotations. To this may be added that the beloved's female sexuality is also repeatedly, from 1:6 until 8:12, alluded to in an encoded way as her כֶּרֶם (vineyard). Pope (1977:636) has translated אֶפְסָה (usually: your face) in 7:9 as nipple, but then his argument about the sequential description can no longer be sustained.

The seat of cognitive functions (cf Deuteronomy 29:3, Keel 1986:151) is metaphorically represented by לֵב (his heart) in 3:11 and its morphological variations in 5:2 and 8:6. In 4:9 the same root occurs twice as a verb, לִבְבִּיתִי (ravished my heart), suggesting a loss of self-control. Here one finds body parts as metaphors of sublimated emotional experiences. They also serve as some kind of superlative to make the emotions more concrete and vivid (Keel 1986:129).

2.1.4 Physical functions

Lavoie (1995:132) has drawn attention to the erotic symbolism of food, eating and drinking in Song of Songs, as it is in several cultures, represented by, amongst others, ancient Near Eastern and contemporary Arabic poetry.

There are several references to incorporating food by eating and drinking: 1:2, 1:4, 1:12, 2:3-2:5, especially וַיֹּאכַל (and he will eat) in 4:16, and אָכַלְתִּי (I have eaten), שָׁתִיתִי (I have drunk), אָכְלוּ (eat!) and שָׁתוּ (drink!) in 5:1, 7:10, 8:1 and 8:2. These clearly have sexual undertones, a close connection confirmed by the presence of יָבֵא and דוֹדִי in 4:16, which are recalled in 5:1, where מוֹרִי adds to the atmosphere (cf also Proverbs 7:17 – 18, although there the opposite tone). In these cases the external body of the other is psychically introjected and internalised as an image which nourishes the self.

חֶלֶב (milk) is found in 4:11 and 5:12 and חֶלְבִי (my milk) in 5:1, which could be referring to saliva in 4:11 and 5:1. Its associations with breasts, as between Inanna and Dumuzi, and infancy lend it feminine connotations. Donkey milk was believed to improve beauty, which could mean that his eyes are beautiful when they are like doves bathing in milk in 5:12. As both doves, the symbol of Astarte, and milk were associated with the “große Mutter”, this cluster of allusions here suggests a kind of emphasis or superlative to intensify this image (Krinetzki 1981:169).

Love is also associated with יַיִן (wine) in 1:2, 2:4, 4:10, 5:1 and 7:10. One also reads of הַמֵּזֶג (the mixture, that is, mixed wine, perhaps with water) in 7:3, and of הֶרְקֶה (mixed with spice) in 8:2, imbibed for its altering effect on consciousness, although in this respect it is even superseded by sexual love (cf 1:2 and 4:10). 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 and free. All of these induce and bring to mind the lost paradisiacal state.

Milk is also mentioned together with נֶפֶת ([flowing] honey) and דְּבַשׁ (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 of 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. It also has eschatological connotations, when products from both sedentary and nomadic life will be at the feast. Rivers of milk, wine and honey are also pictured as paradisiacal promises in Qur'an 47:15. Perhaps honey as her excretions and טָל (dew) as his in 5:2 could be associated.

Song of Songs therefore has a clear emphasis on orality: the mouth and its parts are repeatedly mentioned, as are kisses right at the beginning, with allusions both to sucking of breasts associated with love and, of course, the outward expression of speech. As eating and drinking occupy such an important place, one would therefore also expect the gustatory and tactile sense to predominate as a way of experiencing the external world.

The same process of incorporation and the nourishing enjoyment accompanying it are resonated in nature with the livestock grazing, which the lover imitates metaphorically by being הֹרֶעָ (the one who grazes) in 2:16 and 6:3, and לְרִעוֹת (to graze) in 6:2. In 1:7 she asks where תִּרְעָה (do you pasture), which is responded to in the next verse (1:8) with him telling her וּרְעִי (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.

2.1.5 The four elements

The archaic level is perhaps also best associated with the elements as aspects of the body and its sensuality. Nasr (1996:239) points out that the body is in direct contact with the elements of nature and therefore has a fundamental yet subtle link to the sphere of life which is beyond ordinary understanding.

2.1.5.1 Earth

The bulk of Song of Songs is very earthy with all its agricultural and horticultural references, its mountains and hills, providing spaces of containment as well as rootedness like the body. Perhaps these spaces suggestively confirm the invisible and subtle nature of air, enlivening as in 4:16, just like water.

2.1.5.2 Water

Liquids, such as wine, milk and flowing honey, represent feminine energy as the source of life. Water also symbolises the regressive aspect of erotic love and belongs to the domain of the “weiblicher Gefäß” (the feminine receptacle) (Krinetzki 1981:221). These occur repeatedly, often with mention of their earthy containers as well:

in 4:2 (as in 6:6) where sheep come up מן-הֶרְחָצָה קָ (from the washing), probably linked to their shearing; the festivities were likened to weddings amongst Egyptian Bedouins (Abu-Lughod 2005:255) and celebrated as a festival in 1 Samuel 25:4f and 2 Samuel 13:23 (Keel 1986:133), suggesting perhaps some religious connotations as well;

in 4:11, where flowing honey תִּטְפֹּנָה (drips, like her hands dripping with myrrh in 5:5: נִטְפוּ);

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

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

in 5:2 with טָל (dew) and רוֹטֵיטִי לַיְלָה (night drops); Keel (1986:177) notes that dew almost exclusively suggests blessing in the Hebrew Bible (cf Genesis 27:28 and 39) but it remains unclear why he denies this connotation here;

in 5:12 על-אַפְיִקֵי מַיִם (at channels of water) רָחֲצוֹת (bathed) in milk (the same root as הֶרְחָצָה in 4:2) עַל-מְלֵאָת (at a full one, that is, a spring, yet another *hapax legomenon* and superlative to express exceptional abundance [Gerleman 1981:174]);

in 5:13 עֹבֵר (overflowing) myrrh;

in 6:11 הַנָּחַל (the torrent);

in 7:3 אֶגְן הַסֶּהַר (round bowl);

in 7:5 בְּרִכּוֹת (pools);
 in 7:10 wine הוֹלֵךְ (going or flowing) and דוֹבֵב (gliding);
 in 8:7 מֵיִם רַבִּים (a lot of waters), וְנָהָרוֹת (and streams) cannot יִשְׁטְפוּהָ (overflow it).

2.1.5.3 Air

Wind as moving air echoes the restless, fiery male movement, especially when it carries arousing smells. Air is therefore often used to suggest the stimulation of the olfactory sense as in 3:6, עָשָׁן (smoke) and מְקַטְרֶת (fragrant with), which here, however, also implies fire.

Winds are implied in 2:17 by הַיּוֹם (the day) נְשִׁיפוֹתָ (which breathes, as if waking up) and in 4:16 הִפִּיחִי (cause [the garden] to exhale, that is, to exude its fragrances [Pope 1977:408]) as well as by their respective directions as צָפוֹן (north[wind]) and תֵּימָן (south[wind]), both feminine grammatically. Although it is here about the pre-egoic level and expressed as if in the body with its sensation through the elements, it might be added that at the later magical level the wind was believed to be more alive and life-giving. So, for instance, in traditional Near Eastern magical thinking ewes which were fertilised in the north wind were believed to have male offspring, whereas those fertilised in the south wind were believed to have female offspring. One could also whistle and bring on the wind magically. That is perhaps why both are feminine in Song of Songs. They could be brought on simply by commanding them (Krinetzki 1981:153) and in Egypt the north wind was believed to be beneficial for stimulating festivities (Krinetzki 1981:270n339).

Air is therefore based in breath and the body, and accordingly personified. As breath and spirit of life in Ezekiel 39:9 (cf also Psalm 104:30), they revive even the dead (Keel 1986:169).

Although רוּחַ (breath or wind or spirit, also feminine grammatically) is never mentioned in Song of Songs, one is reminded of it in this context, especially by רִיחַ (smell) twice in 4:11 and as a verb in 7:14, רִיחַ (smells of, which derives from the same root). The question could, as a result, be asked why spirit is so conspicuously absent in Song of Songs whilst נַפְשִׁי (my soul) is mentioned so often as in 1:7, 3:1, 3:2, 3:3, 3:4, etc. Keel (1986:57 and 115) links soul to the throat as bodily metaphors of life breath and the intense

feelings of yearning, for instance in 6:12 elsewhere explicitly linked to אֶהְבָּה (love). This seems to relate love with the self, revealing it as soulful, without any metaphysical reference. The summary by Eder (2004:11-12) of its possible meanings leaves the impression that it could be closely related to libido or life instinct. When the soul has left, the will to live is paralysed. This is the state which immediately precedes death (cf Genesis 35:18, Keel 1986:183). This means that love is a life risk, it is about life and death, but still as strong as death (cf 8:6). Love is a delicate development in human existence. The awakening of the unconscious *anima* or *animus* needs to be timed sensitively. Like fire, it is a fragile yet dangerous element, but it can be channelled to good use.

2.1.5.4 Fire

Fire, as expressed in 8:6b-7a, perhaps refers to male energy, as in רֶשֶׁתִּי רֶשֶׁתִּי אֵשׁ (its flashes, flashes of fire), despite אֵשׁ (fire) sometimes (like הִשְׁתַּחֲשִׁי in 1:6 and כְּחֶמֶה in 6:10) and שִׁלְהֶבְתִּיהָ (an intense flame, another *hapax legomenon*) being grammatically feminine. It would seem that Freud (1979:27n1) takes a phallic view of flames as they leap upwards and the fact that fire is followed by flooding in this verse reminds one of his theory that extinguishing a fire by micturition is an ancient male desire, not only as homosexual competition, but also symbolically suggesting the taming of nature in his wild desires. Fire would then also be preserved in the domestic hearth of the housewife. The archetypal psychologist, James Hillman (1979:186), notes that the gods constantly assume various shapes, just like fire.

This leads one to the words employed to express this energy: the various syntactical forms and inflexions of אֶהְבָּה (love), a grammatically female word, occur in total twenty-nine times in Song of Songs, eighteen times as verbs (five times with נַפְשִׁי (my self or soul) as the subject) and eleven times as nouns, six times without the definite article, perhaps to express personification as a proper noun there (Jenni & Westermann 1971:61-62). Despite Jenni and Westermann's contention that it is never hypostasised, אֶהְבָּה is made to coincide with the lover in 7:7 as *abstractum pro concreto* and personified as being capable of being woken up and as someone שֶׁתִּהְיֶה (who delights in) in 2:7, 3:5 and 8:4, implying that it might

sometimes not delight in being woken up or disturbed. The state of love is like a sleep which needs its own time as in Ecclesiastes 3:1-11. That it is the main theme of Song of Songs is evident from it being the main concern in the adjuration refrains and in what can be regarded as the key statement in 8:6-7.

On the other hand, דוד occurs thirty-five times, possibly five instances of which refer to the beloved's female love as breasts. It is then always found in the *dualis* form, that is in 1:2, 1:4, twice in 4:10 and 7:13 (all of these and only these without the *mater lectionis*), perhaps to suggest her two breasts, if intended as a double entendre. Thirty times the male lover is the receiver and object of her love: in 1:13, 1:14, 2:3, 2:8, 2:9, 2:10, 2:16, 2:17, 5:2 (here referring to other lovers in general or as the friends of the lover), 5:4, 5:5, twice in 5:6, 5:8, four times in 5:9 referring also to lovers in general, 5:10, 5:16, twice in 6:1, 6:2, twice in 6:3, 7:10, 7:11, 7:14, 8:5 and 8:14. It functions therefore metonymically as an incarnation of love and has, of course, the same consonants as the name David, perhaps associating the lover with another famous king well known for his intrigues with women.

תַּשׁוּקָתוֹ (his longing) occurs in 7:11 perhaps as a critique or reparation of her longing for him as part of the curse in Genesis 3:16; this would imply a return to paradise. Like קִנְיָה (passion) in 8:6, and אֶהְבֶּהָ, these are all grammatically feminine nouns referring to the feelings of the male lover towards the female beloved. With חִמְדָּתִי (I desired) in 2:3, מַחְמָדִים (desires, the plural, as in מִמְתָּקִים (most sweet), expressing intensified feelings) in 5:16, and בְּתַעֲנוּגִים (in exquisite delights) in 7:7, one opens up to be sensitive to the subtleties of life with its risky implications: נִפְשִׁי יָצָאָה (I lost my mind) in 5:6 and לֹא יָדַעְתִּי--נִפְשִׁי שָׁמַתְנִי (without knowing it, my soul was transported) in 6:12, where the disorientating madness of love is expressed.

2.1.6 Emotionality

Although this is already implied in the energies described above, it also includes the affective side of love. This is seen in 1:4, נִגִּילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה (we will rejoice, the root recurring as a noun שִׂמְחָה (the joy [of his heart] in 3:11) and בָּךְ נִגִּילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה (we will be glad and rejoice in you) where the lover is in ecstatic celebration, shared in 3:11 by the daughters of Zion, who are invited to וּרְאִינָה [..] בַּמֶּלֶךְ (and observe the king with great pleasure, the preposition ב

rendering the verb of perception to have a meaning of intense pleasure or pain, depending on the context [Pope 1977:447]). What is internally experienced through the senses and emotionally is expressed externally through the words of the women and the wild, restless movements of the male who is:

מִדְלֵג (leaping) and מִקְפֹּץ (springing) in 2:8, in 2:17 and who is urged: בָּרַח (hurry) in 8:14.

Emotion moves one, however, also to be חוֹלֵת אֶהְבָּה (sick with love), as in 2:5 and 5:8, when one can only beg others: בָּאֲשִׁישׁוֹת (sustain me with raisin cakes) and רִפְדוּנִי בִּתְפוּחִים (support me with apricots or apples). According to Hosea 3:1 and Jeremiah 7:8 and 44:19, these cakes played a role in the cult of the Canaanite goddesses in whose shape they were probably formed as they were found to be in the palace kitchen of Mari in Syria (cf Isaiah 16:7; 2 Samuel 6:19) (Keel 1986:86; Gerleman 1981:119). Again in 5:4 one reads: וַיַּעֲי הָמוּ עָלָיו (my insides seethed because of him). It is probably also why the beloved מִתְרַפֶּקֶת (is leaning, another *hapax legomenon*) on her lover in 8:5. The invitation, וּשְׂכָרוֹ (and get drunk), in 5:1 resonates with the feeling of being in love, which is why wine and love are so interrelated in Song of Songs. All this implies some extent of unconsciousness while slipping into a type of trance, dissociated from the rest of reality, but perhaps also opening up to and entering into another more transcendent reality.

2.1.7 States of consciousness

The notion contained in קוּמִי (get up) in 2:10 is repeated in the identical phrase in 2:13, and אֶקוּמָהּ (I will get up) in 3:2 adds to the atmosphere of change and new beginnings, to which the lover calls his beloved in 2:10-13. It recurs later in 5:5 as קָמָתִי (I got up). Having got up in 3:2, she also went out into the city.

Awakening and coming to life constitute one of the main themes which this study wishes to emphasise since it relates to religiosity as the supreme expressions of both. The idea of sleep occurs several times in Song of Songs, either explicitly as in 5:2 and 7:10 (if the Masoretic text is accepted, rather than the Septuagint, Peshitta or Vulgate, which all emended it to be translated as teeth), and again suggested in יִשְׁנִים (old [fruit], withered, as if asleep

[Brown, Driver & Briggs 1907:445]) in 7:14, or implicitly as in waking the beloved or love – the refrain that might be indicative of this very theme in the text.

The verbs תעוררו and תעירו of the refrains may mean awaken, as the ancient translations have it and for which Tromp (1985:89-95), Pope (1977:386-388) and De Villiers (1988:100-101) have argued by virtue of the same meaning in 4:16, 5:2 and 8:5, or whether disturb would be contextually more sensible, as Gordis (1974:82), Ringgren (1981:263), Viviers (1989) and Fox (1985:110) have contended, while Rudolph (1962:130), Würthwein (1969:38) and Gerleman (1981:117) opt for both by using the older meaning (lest you awaken) for the first verb, תעירו, and the later one (lest you disturb) for the second verb, תעוררו. The change in consciousness referred to in both cases seems to be the hermeneutical key to the entire text and in that regard the difference is irrelevant.

Perhaps love is regarded as some form of sleep, from which the lovers should not be awakened too soon. That would then relate inversely to 5:2 where the woman sleeps, while her heart ער (was awake), which makes one think of lucid dreaming. She is therefore the one who is aroused as well as the one who arouses him, although the encouragement is mutual as with נרוצה (let us rush) in 1:4, and his repeated urging her to get up in 2:10-13, and to then find herself overwhelmed (cf 2:5) with his fire, which is stronger than death. In 8:5 עוררתיך (I aroused you) continues the same line of thought.

In 4:16 the wind is also called upon: עורי (wake up). Awaking and wind, arousal and fire, as well as the movement of ascent, are therefore all linking metaphors to suggest higher levels of consciousness.

As in the rabbinic interpretation of 7:10 (McAlpine 1987:139-140), sleep can also be associated with death. As כמות (like death) and כשאול (like the underworld), death is eventually indeed introduced explicitly in the key 8:6, close to the end of Song of Songs, but also just after the verse speaking about the birth of the lover. The existential transitions of birth and death are almost juxtaposed.

In Egypt, Mesopotamia and Syro-Palestine sleep needed divine protection against either natural or supernatural dangers for which a variety of measures could be taken (McAlpine 1987:179). This could make it more

sensible to remain somehow alert as in 3:1, 5:2-5 and 3:8 מִפְּחַד בַּלַּיְלוֹת (because of the dread in the night) (McAlpine 1987:17), perhaps not natural ones as elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (McAlpine 1987:179).

יָלַן ([the sachet between her breasts] lies) in 1:13 suggests protection, sexual activity, sleep and peace. In 7:12 the same verb is found: נָלִינָה (let us pass the night) which is often used for sexual activity away from home and played off against Ruth 3 (McAlpine 1987:21). It is collocated with נִשְׁכְּמָה (let us rise early) as the first word in the next verse.

לֹא יָדַעְתִּי--נִפְשִׁי שָׁמַתְנִי, מִרְכָּבוֹת עַמִּינָדִיב (before I knew it, my soul set me on the chariots of my princely people) in 6:12 is interpreted as the beloved being transported in her dreamlike ecstasy to some state beyond her usual self, this would confirm her vision of some fairyland. When the association of spices is added, then the long distances timelessly traversed across mountains play into the atmosphere of otherness and the many levels of dreamlike experiences (Fischer 2010a:183 and 188). In 2:14 בְּחֻגֵּי הַסֵּלַע בְּסִתְרָה (in the cleft of the rock, in the covert of the cliff) makes the elevated condition more intimate and enclosed, although also less accessible, just like the cliffs of Edom (Keel 1986:100 and 173). The two dimensions of up and inside therefore coincide here.

2.1.8 Supports, containers and vehicles

Containers echo the body in resembling its shape and holding function in some way. In that sense they are extensions or imitations of the body. They also serve to hold the body itself, as the body holds the different emotions and states of consciousness. They also facilitate the transformation of these in a like manner. The metaphorical value of buildings has already been referred to above. It is not clear to what extent the מְשֻׁכְּנוֹת (dwelling-places) in 1:8 were enclosed spaces.

Viviers (2008:454) is, however, correct when he points out that these enclosed environments can also function as incarcerations, as the vineyard which the woman has to guard for her brothers and her limited behaviour in public (cf 1:6, 5:7, 8:1 and 8:9).

בְּמִסְבּוֹ (on his divan) in 1:12 is used for a round couch to recline on during a banquet. Eating and drinking, and feasting and relaxing are thus

associated with it. Beds are mentioned during Israel's stay in Egypt and then again only from the monarchy onwards, with equal frequency in royal and non-royal situations, though their structure and composition are noted only for those in the royal court (McAlpine 1987:87). A couch or bed can be used for sleeping, repose, reclining while eating, recovering from illness or for sexual intercourse and intimacy. To a certain extent all of these are fused by ערשנו (our couch) in 1:16, at least semi-consciously. The same noun occurs in Deuteronomy 3:11 referring to the bed of King Og of Bashan and is then perhaps an iron sarcophagus, adding the connotation of death as well. It is found mostly in poetry.

על-משכבי (on my bed) in 3:1 is found approximately equally in both poetry and prose. It is commonly used when sexual activity is explicitly mentioned (Pope 1977:431). The noun stems perhaps from a southern dialect (McAlpine 1987:75) and is derived from the verb which means to lie down. From the thirteenth century BCE the Egyptian custom of painting or sculpting a naked woman on her bed to express a wish or effect it magically also entered Canaan, as archaeological findings from Der el-Belach south of Gaza have shown. Empty votive beds from Beersheba from the seventh century BCE are part of the same tradition (Keel 1986:176). It was a covered bridal bed and a booth from wood, as this is the etymological meaning of the Semitic root in Syriac and Arabic, the survival of the wife's tent (Smith 1966:199-200) and raised, implied by its occasional collocation with עלה as in 3:6 (McAlpine 1987:71-72).

מִטָּתוֹ (his litter) in 3:7 was also raised and is found mostly in prose and possibly from a northern dialect where it refers to the seat of Solomon. It was also used in connection with being bedridden and with death (McAlpine 1987:72-73). For Gerleman (1981:135) the description of this vessel has something hyperbolic to it, which, of course, ties in with the tone of Song of Songs. Some regard it as the platform of the audience hall with the royal throne, or as a royal room rather than a seat, that is, a fixed structure rather than portable. Rabbinic writing has interpreted it further as referring to the Temple, the Ark, or a curtained litter on which a virgin bride was carried in procession. As those in 1:5, these images conjure up associations with Exodus 26 and 36 where the cloths of the sacred tent have an important place

in cultic life (Keel 1986:54). A Babylonian equivalent would then be *namnuma'*, which includes the Semitic root *n-w-m*, and therefore again the notion of sleep.

Amongst the annual festivals in Egypt was that at Thebe where the living and the dead were united in a banquet. Related to that was the Opet festival when the great god of Karnak, Amon, visited the goddess, Mut, in her temple in Luxor. Both started with a procession, were accompanied by numerous hymns and depicted in paintings. On the way home people joined the procession led by the king to their graves which were just for this one beautiful day changed into the houses of their heart's desire. This happened with priests spreading frankincense and armed soldiers protecting the huge Amun barque and three other barques, one being for the king, as these were carried at night through the desert (Gerleman 1981:136-137). Even if the cultic aspect was not taken over by the author(s) of Song of Songs, they would have composed it under that impression. That this was the background image is all the more likely when it is remembered that such litters are otherwise never mentioned in the Hebrew Bible (Gerleman 1981:138).

אֶפְרִיֹן in 3:9 is another *hapax legomenon*, and in apposition to מִטָּתוֹ in 3:7. It is not dealt with by McAlpine probably because its meaning is disputed as a palanquin, bed of state, palace, throne, aedicule or marriage canopy for newlyweds, which was sometimes of foliage, as in 1:16. It is described as made of the wood from the Lebanon and in 3:10 four parts of it are distinguished as עַמֻּדָיו (its posts, the same word used to which his legs are compared in 5:15) in 3:10 and made of silver. רִפְיָתוֹ (its support) derives from the same root as the imperative, רִפְדֵּנִי (support me), in 2:5. It is gold while מִרְכָּבוֹ (its [seat]) is purple and its inside fitted with love. It is almost as if the contours of a human body are described here.

Added to this, there is a repeated insinuation of being transported by the condition of love into another realm. This commences as early as in 1:9, where בְּרֶכְבִּי (the chariots of) is mentioned, and again as מִרְכָּבוֹת in 6:12. That these vehicles serve as symbols for the body is also borne out by the allegorical interpretation as alluding to the human body of Christ containing the Godhead and then later the Church as His mystical body (Pope 1977:441-442). Amongst modern Egyptian Bedouins, but before the advent of cars, the

bride would be taken on camelback from her father's house to her husband's, completely cloaked and seated hidden away inside a wooden litter, which was covered in red woven blankets. Another woman, regarded for her brave challenge, would dance in front of her as young men sang and fired guns nearby (Abu-Lughod 2005:253). Dancing in this context could well be a form of homage to the divine (Smith 1956:95n6).

2.2 PRE-EGOIC STAGE: MAGICAL LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY

During this developmental stage, internalisation of the desired and idealised love object outside of the self and its body are continued, but now by investing every object thus revered with a "soul", and in this way personifying it and then identifying the self with the other. The self is therefore defined in terms of the other and there is a merging and confusion between the self and the object (Wilber 1995:164). This manifests mainly in totemism, which can literally have any object as its anchor. One may proceed from the lowest level of dead materiality as the first transitional object to bridge the space towards the absent mother, who is still the primary love object during this matriarchal era.

2.2.1 Linguistic evidence

This level also represents the primary process, which is still experienced daily and expressed by two main stylistic features of language that reflect the primal stages. These features are metaphor displacing identity as in 2:1 אֲנִי הָרֹזֶה מִשָּׁרוֹן (I am a rose from Sharon) and metonymy condensing it in a somewhat reductionist splitting and part-object relationship as שְׁמֶךָ (your name), which probably represents and conjures up his whole being with all its wonderful associations in 1:3. Metonymy in Song of Songs often seems to be related to the body, a part of which would represent its physiological function such as a reference to the mouth to signify speech or kissing in 4:3 (Hunt 2008:54). Inversely, a sensory experience can also be a metonymy for the presence of the body or a part of it which is associated with the experience, as is the case with the beloved's perfume in 1:12 (Hunt 2008:265) and visual and aural impressions made by her footsteps in 7:2 (Hunt 2008:267). A third possibility is that it could have either or both of these two implied meanings,

as is the case where her nose could refer to the specific body part or to her breath in 7:9 (Hunt 2008:313). Thus love itself becomes identified and incarnated in the lover. To this can be added the hyperboles and superlatives which abound throughout Song of Songs, to mention just a few: the title, שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים (Song of Songs) in 1:1, הַיָּפֶה בְּנָשִׁים (the most beautiful amongst women) in 1:8 and 6:1, and כֵּיין הַטּוֹב (like the best wine) in 7:10.

Displacement and condensation are also phenomena which occur in dreams, both indicating a form of regression (Freud 1986:507). Although Oppenheim (1956) does not list Song of Songs amongst the Biblical texts describing dreams, some scholars such as Delitzsch (Pope 1977:415) and Freehof and Gordis (Pope 1977:510-511) have recognised 3:1 and 5:2 as such, or at least as dreamlike states, typical of someone in love. Fischer (2010b:339-343) associates these possible dream or fantasy scenes with the various spaces which are timelessly traversed and which therefore likewise serve as projection screens for differing moods and wishes at an individual level and for gender connotations at a social level to suggest the fictive nature of the narrative. This kind of dream state could also refer to threshold consciousness, either as a hypnogogic or a hypnopompic state. The dreaminess of the lovers is also reflected in the fragmentary style and the archetypal nature of Song of Songs. Logical structuring of Song of Songs has defied uncontested results, despite ingenious attempts by Exum (1973) and Fischer (2010a): one is never really sure whether it is one long poem or an anthology, and if the latter, neither where one ends and the next begins. The semi-structure seems to reflect the struggle to find order and a sense of sobriety in the chaotic mental states of being in love and of being overwhelmed by the divine which both defy narrow, rational understanding.

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 which 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, נַפְשִׁי יָצָאָה (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). This is the price she has to pay for the higher consciousness of the individuation from the narrow confines of her patriarchal background to which her lover calls her in 2:10 (Eder 2004:8).

2.2.2 Animism

Like magical thinking in general, animism closely identifies with another entity by blurring the boundaries between the two “bodies”. Frazer (1991:190) mentions a belief in ancient Arabia that the shadow is an extension of the body, perhaps even the soul, which contained the power of speech and movement. If this is a general Semitic notion, then וְנִסּוּ הַצִּלְלִים (and the shadows flee) in 2:17 may be more alive than simply disappearing as dawn arrives, as is suggested by their being personified. This is perhaps a linguistic remnant of the belief that all is alive with a soul.

2.2.3 Matriarchal age

The magical level is experienced by an infant when it is emotionally held by its mother and when it enjoys a fantasy of omnipotence, thus allowing it to believe that merely through a wish or a sound uttered, satisfaction of needs magically arrives. The mother is at the same time the centre of its universe. Its collective parallel in cultural development has left its mark on Song of Songs and most commentators tend to agree that the book seems to favour the feminine, which led many feminists to relate positively to it. Ndogo and Viviers (2000:1303) are, however, correct that as much as Song of Songs downplays patriarchy, it does not display any matrilineal domination.

Both אִמּוֹ (his mother) in 3:11 and אִמְּךָ (your mother) in 8:5, that is, of the lover (or Solomon), and both לְאִמָּהּ (of her mother) in 6:9 and אִמִּי (my mother), that is, of the beloved, in 1:6, 8:1 and 8:2 are referred to in 3:4 as the one who conceived or gave birth to him or her without using the noun (mother) itself. In 8:5 she is perhaps hinting at mothering him, as partners are often unconsciously substitute parents for each other in a love relationship.

Seven times (1:5, 2:7, 3:5, 3:10, 5:8, 5:16 and 8:4) the בָּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם (daughters of Jerusalem) are addressed or referred to, four of these in the famous refrains of adjuration, with בָּנוֹת צִיּוֹן (daughters of Zion) in 3:11, while in

6:9 Jerusalem is not mentioned. The singular בַּת occurs in 7:2 and with the implied exception of בֵּין הַבָּנוֹת (amongst the daughters) in 2:2, these are the only two instances when it refers to the beloved. כָּלָה (bride) occurs in 4:10, 4:12 and 5:1 as a figurative expression of intensity (Gerleman 1981:155), all immediately preceded by אָחוֹתִי (my sister) and רַעִיָּתִי (my friend, nine times and only in Song of Songs). These forms of address are tender, pet names, terms of endearment, and denote a sense of belonging and closeness (Fischer 2010a:66). It cannot be excluded, however, that these words also allowed incestuous longings as part of the polymorph perverse nature of primitive sexuality to be experienced and expressed in an unconscious and therefore innocent way according to the psychoanalytic perspective.

Sixty – as many as the king's bodyguards – מְלָכוֹת (queens) are mentioned in 6:8. Sixty is a round figure in the duodecimal system (Gerleman 1981:138) and perhaps not literally meant. It is rather yet another superlative expression in Song of Songs (Keel 1986:120). The queens are mentioned again in 6:9, the only two times ever in the Hebrew Bible in respect of Israel and then only in the plural, perhaps suggesting the favourites of the harem of the king, but also adding an exotic outlandish flavour to the text. Then eighty פִּילָגְשִׁים (concubines) are also mentioned in the same verses. These high numbers serve to enhance the superlative implied by the contrast between the many and the one exceptional woman (Gerleman 1981:185). עַלְמוֹת (young women) is mentioned in 1:3 and 6:8 where they are said to be without number, while בִּנְיָשִׁים (amongst women) occurs in 1:8, 5:9 and 6:1. Yet in 6:9 they look up to the beloved at the peak of this pyramid of power – another superlative expression – as if she is a divine being (Keel 1986:202). In fact, the word וַיִּהְלְלוּהָ (and they praise her) occurs in the Hebrew Bible mostly in a cultic context where God is praised (Keel 1986:204). The Hebrew Bible sometimes portrays cities as young women and in Hellenistic times cities and their fate were personified in the form of city goddesses (Keel 1986:198).

To these feminine characters can be added the many animal names with feminine suffixes as well as feminine archetypes such as house, water, spring, fountain, river and death. So can the many horticultural and pastoral descriptions, in fact, the general embeddedness in nature. Three of the four *auṣâf* are descriptions of the beloved, one of the lover. This may seem to give

the most prominence to the male lover as the one who speaks, but the importance of the passages spoken by the girl and her dominant voice in the book as a whole, including its framing by her opening and closing words, begging and beckoning the “king” (Viviers 2003:631n6; Viviers 1998:4), outweigh this. Most feminine of all is, however, the possible double entendre employed by the ambiguous דוֹדֶךָ (your beloved) as in 5:9 and echoing, for instance, דֹּדֶיךָ (your love) in 1:2, referring perhaps to both love, the main theme of this book, and breasts, that sacred symbol of what is benign in the universe (Yalom 1997:48).

The military allusions such as the chariots, towers, soldiers and הַמַּחֲנֵיכִים (the two camps) in 7:1 may seem to have naturally strong masculine connotations. However, in the ancient eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamian mythology war was associated with the goddess of love, as explained in Chapter two.

This is further reinforced by the fact that in 6:10 the two best known celestial bodies, לְבָנָה (moon, which is mentioned first) and חֶמֶה (sun), are both feminine in form in the military context of 6:10. Both of these are used instead of the masculine הַיָּרֵחַ, which is also poetic, and הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, which occurs in 1:6, where it is also feminine, and personified as an eye שֶׁשָּׂזְפָתַי (which caught sight of me). In 6:10 the word הַנִּשְׁקָפָה (who looks down upon) occurs which is usually used for God looking down from heaven (cf Deuteronomy 26:15; Psalm 14:2; 85:12; 102:20; Lamentations 3:50). In fact, dawn in Canaanite mythology is a divine being and the sun and moon were the two most exalted deities in the Near East (Keel 1986:206). The sun often functioned in the Near East as a deity judging and avenging hidden injustice through its punishing gaze (Keel 1986:56). This is corroborated in 1:6 where the sun looking down on the beloved is collocated with her brothers who נָהָרוּ (burnt with anger) against her. As an archetype the sun is usually regarded as masculine, as it represents consciousness in the erect male orientation upwards.

To this belongs the mysterious comparison אֵימָה כְּנִדְגָלוֹת (terrible as an army with banners, that is, being in awe of overwhelming beauty (Gerleman 1981:182) similar to the host of heaven or stars in Deuteronomy 17:3 and Jeremiah 8:2. The participle occurs only in Song of Songs, adding to the feeling of something extraordinary, even elusive or illusory, thus resonating

perhaps with Gerleman's suggestion (1981:189) that it refers to a mirage, since the boundaries between imagery and reality are not at all absolute in Song of Songs. These celestial bodies might have been experienced as intimidating eyes, like those of the beloved in 4:9 and 6:5 (Gerleman 1981:183). This reminds one strongly of Ishtar armed with a sword and accompanied by the sun and moon as she appears, for instance, on Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals from the seventh century BCE (Keel 1986:206). The beloved is portrayed as superhuman, incomparable to other women (Gerleman 1981:186). The bride herself, however, is never called queen (though sixty others are mentioned in 6:8), as would have been expected since it was common in the surrounding cultures of the time.

Yet the king is mentioned – four times (1:4, 3:9, 3:11 and 7:6, although not in the *waṣf* praising his body) and Solomon seven times. This suggests the transition to the mythical level, a mostly patriarchal era.

No father or bridegroom is ever mentioned, although the wedding day of King Solomon is referred to in 3:11. In 1:6 one finds בְּנֵי אִמִּי (sons of my mother). Once again their father is not acknowledged and they are not called brothers either, perhaps to indicate the emotional distance, or to emphasise and anchor them in her mother. They could be simply brothers, if they are not biologically distant as half-brothers. In contrast, her lover is in 2:3 exceptional בֵּין הַבָּנִים (amongst the sons). In 8:1 she wishes her lover, the only male figure who is positively evaluated (Viviers 1998:5), were like a brother, whom she could kiss in public without being scorned, in other words brother now has a positive connotation. Her real brothers are implied in 8:8-9, where they refer to their sister twice. They are portrayed as overprotective, meddlesome and possessive, perhaps a critique of patriarchy. The other males are mentioned mostly in their professional capacities as חֲבֵרָיָה (your companions) in 1:7 as in 8:13, רוֹכֵל (a merchant) in 3:6 (ten of the seventeen times which they are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible are in Ezekiel 27 and relate to Tyre and Sheba, thus adding again the exotic nuance), הַשָּׂמָרִים (guards) in 3:3 and 5:7, שְׁשִׁים גִּבּוֹרִים (sixty bodyguards) in 3:7 and an אָמֵן (artisan) in 7:2. יָרְעִים (friends) is in apposition to דּוֹדִים (lovers) in 5:1, as יָרְעִי is to דּוֹדִי in 5:16. The בֵּית אָב (house of the father), a common expression in the Hebrew Bible, is, significantly, replaced by בֵּית אִמִּי (the house of my mother) in 3:4 and 8:2

(Viviers 2008:454). As in individual psychic development the father has not (yet) intruded into the dyad between the mother or her representatives and the infant who still lives in the illusion of a magical world.

2.2.4 Sacred scrolls

Ritual purity may be considered as magical thinking according to the law of contagion, as the ritual status of an object is determined by, among other things, whether it has been in physical contact with an unclean object or not (Frazer 1991:11). On the other hand, texts and names can be holy in themselves, implying some inherent supernatural power.

The sacredness of scripture by virtue of having been inspired has been debated by the Talmud in terms of whether it defiled the hands, referring to the taboo which results from the sacred. Not only Song of Songs but also the books of Esther and Ecclesiastes came under the spotlight, since the *tetragrammaton* does not appear in any of them. Song of Songs, however, always enjoyed a higher status than the other two books, probably because of the belief that an abbreviated form of the tetragrammaton occurs in 8:6. It was not a question about canonicity, but about the status of these books in the already closed canon. The Talmudic rabbis were not promoting ritual purity, but wanted to protect holy works from destruction or desecration (Broyde 1995:67).

Many sages have regarded the name of Solomon in Song of Songs as holy, being a disguised reference to God Himself. Within normative Jewish law, difference of opinion remains about the status of these three books precisely because the ultimate and holiest of God's names does not appear in either of them. There is a sense that this particular ineffable name sets any reference to God apart from a more general mentioning of God, as could happen in any secular book. One is tempted to draw a parallel between the distinction of the Reformation in terms of general and particular revelation on the one hand and this distinction made in Judaism, on the other. The sound of this name has a certain taboo and fetish-like character, the function of which is, however, served by either the talismans or amulets mentioned by Loretz (1994), before the aniconic sentiment was introduced.

It would therefore seem that the presence of the divine name induces holiness into the whole of the text in which it occurs. That the presence of this name in the rest of the canon of which a book forms part does not have the same effect means that each book is somehow still regarded as independent, despite the underlying belief in the allegorical interpretation that the rest of the canon induces its meaning.

Touching either sacred food or the Torah scrolls defiled the hands so that the other of the two could not be touched thereafter without rendering it unclean, and thus unfit for use, for instance eating in the case of sacred food. This was a practical way to prevent people from storing food with the holy scrolls in the Ark of the Covenant and having both been eaten by rodents. In addition, books that defiled the hands were allowed to be saved from a fire on the Shabbat. However, they were not allowed to be erased in order for the material to be reused as a palimpsest, though this has ironically happened in the history of the interpretation of Song of Songs in a figurative way. They also needed a blank page at both the beginning and at the end lest the hands touch the scroll itself.

The question of whether these books defile the hands has also been raised about some apocrypha, about what have been regarded as heretical works such as the Gospels and the remains from sacrifices. Those that do not defile the hands have been argued to be some sort of oral Torah which is in written form merely because of their ritual function. The early commentaries regarded the fact that someone had expounded on a text as no proof of its canonicity. They understood “defiling the hands” as implying canonicity even though this therefore seems to conclude the question raised about some apocrypha and heretical books. On the other hand, Maimonides could accept that a book defiled the hands even when it was not part of the canon. Sacred texts could exist outside of the canon and could even be inspired, such as prophecy, while those inside the canon were not necessarily so (Broyde 1995:70). From this it seems that sanctity may not necessarily imply authority and normativity, or vice versa.

2.2.5 Totemism

From an initially very literal and concrete object, higher levels of existence, that is, life and its gradually more complex forms, are increasingly accessed, as humans recognise their similarity and affinity with these, from plants to animals. Although the hunting of animals precedes settled agriculture and the cultivation of crops, one may assume that nourishment from plants would have occurred from the very earliest times. Animal husbandry would, of course, also later become a part of the agricultural period and therefore more at the forefront of the mind.

All over the world different protected plants or animals are generally sympathetically united and linked in a peculiarly intimate relation to different clans, similarly protected by them, sometimes as guardian spirits. Thus both the animal and the people have dual identities, with the people being addressed and calling themselves by the name of the relevant plant or animal, and the plant or animal as brother or sister, depending on the sex involved. Totemism is the belief in an external soul as the permanent or temporary deposit of one's life or part of it. This deposit is an investment for safe-keeping, especially in times of danger, in a powerful object external to one's own body, from which the gift of magical powers is received in return. These critical times require at least males to be initiated at puberty, due to the dangers perceived to be involved in sexual relations, a crisis that naturally entails some regression (Frazer 1991:688-689 and 700). The totem is the ancestor of humans, although some like the genii of the *Arabian Nights* are at the same time humans (McLennan 1869-1870:414-415). Totemism might also resemble the idea of Destiny (McLennan 1869-1870:417). In fact, projections result in a temporary loss, something desirable in terms of its scarcity value, which is to be regained, though transformed, as destiny.

Fetishism and animism represent the last stages of this phase: magical properties are induced into inanimate matter, which then serves as transitional objects replacing the parental figures. It is the coincidence of the material and the spiritual, with little distinction between animate and inanimate. McLennan (1869-1870:422-423) regards fetishism as the ascription of "a life and personality resembling our own, not only to animals and plants, but to rocks, mountains, streams, winds, the heavenly bodies, the earth itself, and even the

heavens". All these natural phenomena are attributable to the presence of a soul or spirit, mostly human-like yet ultimately divine, as they are detached portions of the deity. This drives them to action as humans recognise in themselves. As such, pantheism constitutes the perfection of fetishism (McLennan 1869-1870:423). Freud (1929:257) regards fetishes, which, incidentally, occur in both sexuality and religion, as displacements of attention from body parts onto mostly inanimate objects which must therefore resemble these body parts through association. Blame due to misfortune can also be projected onto them to protect the primitive worshipper (Freud 1979:64).

At the risk of creating the impression that a mere list of the gemstones, plants and animals which occur in Song of Songs is given, these concrete entities with which ancient cultures had a more direct relationship than today will now be described in some detail in order to conjure up a mental image of their reality.

2.2.5.1 Gemstones and minerals

Fetishes occur in all cultures, and the gemstones and seals (cf Loretz 1994) referred to in Song of Songs should be considered as such, since magical powers were attributed to them (Krinetzki 1981:171). Like oaths, seals are expressions of intense and firm commitments of loyalty but also signs of protection especially when they are placed close to the heart (cf also Proverbs 6:22). They then function as amulets. The lovers identify so closely with these symbols that they virtually become them for each other in 1:13-14 and 8:6, respectively (Keel 1986:247). Furthermore, in view of Smith's phenomenology of Scripture (1993), the relative scarcity of texts in a largely illiterate society could elevate them to the status of magical objects, which symbolise collective experience, identity and achievement, and as such attain an ideological value in themselves. Freud (1930:64) implicitly regards talismans as a pre-superego phase when anger about adversity was projected onto the fetish.

It would seem that the jewellery, gemstones, minerals and materials mentioned are mostly in connection with the body description of the male lover. Keel (1986:186) points out that this description of the body in terms of precious stones seems somewhat abrupt and chaotic but that it is typical of

the way the statues of deities were portrayed. His statue-like body also reminds one of the proscription in Deuteronomy 4:16 not to worship the body as an image or idol. Loader (1998-2001:105) points out, however, that some cultures express beauty in terms of an image, for instance the German *bildschön* (beautiful, pretty as a picture) and the Afrikaans *beeldskoon* (beautiful, pretty as a picture). Keel (1986:39) sees in these supernatural portrayals of the lovers (cf also 6:10) what he calls “‘Göttertravestie’, ‘Theomorphie’ oder *divine fiction*” (travesty of the gods, theomorphism or divine fiction) as parallels to the royal and pastoral travesties.

In fact, these stones and fragrances seem to be the lovers’ main embellishment, as clothes are hardly ever mentioned. Zevit (2001:563) relates *תָּמָּן* (seal or signet) in 8:6a to figurines and other cultic objects, which were sometimes worn around the neck, sewn on the garments over the heart, tied to the upper arm (near the heart) or to the forehead, and similar to the *אֵיט* on the hands, as expressions of piety (cf Exodus 13:9, Exodus 14:3-4, Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18). Cook (1902:418-419) mentions that the *אֵיט* as in Numbers 2:2 could have been flags, property or body markings representing the relevant clan or family’s totemic animal (cf Numbers 2:2 and Genesis 4:15). *תּוֹר* refers, for example, to a circlet in 1:10 and 1:11, but to a turtle dove in 2:12. Through yet another double entendre, this suggests the association between the two, the circlet perhaps having been a figurine of this animal. Two aspects of the magical stage, totemism and fetishism, are thus merged.

Three words are used for gold: *כָּתָם* (poetic and late [Brown, Driver & Briggs 1907:508]) in 5:11 refers to the lover’s head and *פָּז* (pure, refined gold) in 5:15 to the pedestals on which the pillars of his legs are set. The third is *זָהָב* in 1:11 referring to the woman’s jewellery, where it is collocated with *הַכֶּסֶּף* (silver), as it is in 3:10, where it refers to the support of the litter. The gods were also made from gold. It is also the material of the reinforcement in 8:9 (in contradistinction to monetary currency as in 8:11), and refers literally to the material of the beloved’s jewellery, alongside *בְּחֹרִיזִים* (with strings of beads, another *hapax legomenon*) and *בְּתָרִים* (with circlets) in 1:10, with *עִמְּנִידוֹת* (with studs, another *hapax legomenon*) in 1:11, the *עֲנִק* (pendant) (sometimes serving as an amulet [Keel 1986:153]) *מִצְרָנֶיךָ* (of your necklace, another

hapax legomenon) in 4:9, *חֲלָאִים* (ornament) in 7:2 and *כְּחוֹתֶם* (like a seal), perhaps a love charm, in 8:6. In 5:14, gold is mentioned to figuratively describe his hands, another extremity of his body like his head and feet, which also contain *בִּתְרִשִׁישׁ* (with chrysolite) in 5:14, perhaps referring to his rings.

This jewellery serves, of course, as an extension of the body and is merged as such in the eye of the observer. Many goddesses were portrayed as naked and only wearing jewellery (Keel 1986:153), perhaps to accentuate certain body parts. This is in contrast to clothes, which are never mentioned in detail but only implied in the verbal noun *כְּעֹטֶיָהּ* (like one who veils herself) in 1:7 (if an emendation to mean wandering is not preferred), either as someone mourning or even a harlot, as *מִבְּעַד לְצִמְתָּהּ* (behind your veil) in 4:1, 4:3 and 6:7, *שְׁלִמְתֶּיהָ* (your garments) in 4:11, *כְּתֹנֶתִי* (my coat) 5:3, *רִדְיִי* (my mantle, that is, a wide wrapper or large veil) in 5:7 and *בִּנְעָלִים* (in sandals) in 7:2. Where she has a veil, the king wears a *עֹטָרָה* (crown) in 3:11. *כְּחוֹט* (like a thread of) *הַשָּׁנִי* (scarlet) in 4:3 describes her lips, as her hair is *כְּאַרְגָּמָן* (like purple) in 7:6. Purple came from the coast at Carmel and was used as expensive violet or dark red dye for textiles. In the Hebrew Bible it occurs almost exclusively in cultic (cf Exodus 25:4-39, 29; Jeremiah 10:9) and royal (cf Esther 1:6; 8:15) contexts (Keel 1986:220). *סַפִּירִים* (sapphire or probably the old name for lapis lazuli [Gerleman 1981:177]) in 5:14 covers the ivory statue-like male body. *שֵׁשׁ* (alabaster) in 5:15 has been emended by the Targum to mean ivory, but both refer to the whiteness of his strong legs. If it is calcium carbonate, then it occurs only in Esther 1:6 as well in the Hebrew Bible, but quite often in Egyptian literature (Gerleman 1981:177). *שֵׁן* (ivory) occurs in 5:14, where it refers to *מִעְיוֹ* (his belly) and in 7:5 the neck of the beloved is compared to an ivory tower in a hyperbolic explosion of magical fascination (Krinetzki 1981:195). According to Krinetzki (1981:171), ivory was also seen to have magical powers.

2.2.5.2 Plants

As the main source of food, vegetative life would have assumed an early value and appreciation in the primitive mind. Plants are therefore connected to the oral stage of development. In addition, they are often associated with their fragrances and are thus an appeal to the rather primitive sense of smell,

which would become celebrated during the cultic-mythic stage in much more cultivated forms. Both their gustatory and olfactory appeal would have contributed to transpersonal states as peak (though as mere peek!) experiences reaching beyond the ordinary and daily experiences into realms transcending these. Trees also provide shade and some served as reminders of the former consort of YHWH (Biezeveld 1998:193). As in the Sumerian myth where Ishtar mentions that Tammuz's mother, Sirtur, gave birth to him under a sacred cedar tree (Krinetzki 1981:217), the beloved refers to a similar occurrence in 8:5: שָׁמָּה חָבְלָתְךָ אִמְךָ [...] תַּחַת הַתְּפוּחַ (under the apricot tree [...] there your mother was in travail with you).

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. This suggests a more primitive layer of worship of the sources of food and, in the case of trees, also serves as a phallic reminder (McLennan 1869-1870:407). It would seem that crops are associated with the female, and livestock with the male aspect in Song of Songs, except for גְּדִיָּתֶיךָ (your kids, that is, not fully grown yet, and in need of nursing) in 1:8 and again in the name Engedi in 1:14. Some plants are either aphrodisiacs or contain substances that induce altered states of consciousness as a form of religious experience. On the other hand, Carr (2003:140) refers to Brenner, who claims that many of the herbs and spices mentioned in Song of Songs were used in Egypt and ancient Greece for birth control. Krinetzki (1981:151) adds that the plants mentioned in 4:14 all had either medicinal or magical uses. Many of these plants also resemble some human body part and therefore made some visual impression as well. The trees have the additional use of shade, offering peace and privacy to people to relax and enjoy their fruit, with oral and sexual suggestions in this context. It is peculiar that the olive is never mentioned (except for their oil perhaps in the references to ointments), as it constituted one of the three most important and useful trees for the ancient Israelite, next to the vine and the fig (United Bible Societies 1972:118).

Gardens (in the masculine singular form, גַּן, and its morphological derivatives in 4:12, twice in 4:15, twice in 4:16, 5:1, twice in 6:2 and in 8:13, whilst in the feminine singular form only in 6:11) and פָּרְדֵּס (park) in 4:13 are unlike הָיְעָר (the forest) as in 2:3 or הַשָּׂדֶה (the field, for crops) in 1:7 – 8, in the

refrains of 2:7 and 3:5, and in 7:12, in that they require careful tending as Jerach intends to do in his vying for Nikkal's love in the Ugaritic myth (Krinetzki 1981:207). It could probably also allude to the lost garden of Eden (Fischer 2010a:118 and 174) for which it creates compensatory hope: in Genesis 13:10 the house of YHWH has a garden around it in which the most beautiful trees grew (cf Psalm 52:10 and 92:13-16). It is significant that this private, intimate and protected space for the lovers is mentioned right at the centre of Song of Songs (Fischer 2010a:180). 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; the others were only known as rare and expensive imported products. It therefore offers a vision beyond normal reality. In Ugaritic mythology gardens and wadis were favourite cultic places to worship Baal, the god of the earth (cf Isaiah 1:29, 57:3-10; Jeremiah 2:23). The father of the gods, El, would dream of the heaven raining oil and the streams flowing with honey (Keel 1986:207). Lebanon with its fragrant conifers was seen in large parts of the Near East as the garden of the gods (cf Ezekiel 31:8) and temples in Nineveh were situated in lush parks irrigated by numerous canals. In Sirach 24:13-34 one reads of Wisdom as both bride and garden:

[13] I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress tree upon the mountains of Hermon.

[14] I was exalted like a palm tree in En-gaddi, and as a rose plant in Jericho, as a fair olive tree in a pleasant field, and grew up as a plane tree by the water.

[15] I gave a sweet smell like cinnamon and aspalathus, and I yielded a pleasant odour like the best myrrh, as galbanum, and onyx, and sweet storax, and as the fume of frankincense in the tabernacle.

[16] As the turpentine tree I stretched out my branches, and my branches are the branches of honour and grace.

[17] As the vine brought I forth pleasant savour, and my flowers are the fruit of honour and riches.

[18] I am the mother of fair love, and fear, and knowledge, and holy hope: I therefore, being eternal, am given to all my children which are named of him.

- [19] Come unto me, all ye that be desirous of me, and fill yourselves with my fruits.
- [20] For my memorial is sweeter than honey, and mine inheritance than the honeycomb.
- [21] They that eat me shall yet be hungry, and they that drink me shall yet be thirsty.
- [22] He that obeyeth me shall never be confounded, and they that work by me shall not do amiss.
- [23] All these things are the book of the covenant of the most high God, even the law which Moses commanded for an heritage unto the congregations of Jacob.
- [24] Faint not to be strong in the Lord; that he may confirm you, cleave unto him: for the Lord Almighty is God alone, and beside him there is no other Saviour.
- [25] He filleth all things with his wisdom, as Phison and as Tigris in the time of the new fruits.
- [26] He maketh the understanding to abound like Euphrates, and as Jordan in the time of the harvest.
- [27] He maketh the doctrine of knowledge appear as the light, and as Geon in the time of vintage.
- [28] The first man knew her not perfectly: no more shall the last find her out.
- [29] For her thoughts are more than the sea, and her counsels profounder than the great deep.
- [30] I also came out as a brook from a river, and as a conduit into a garden.
- [31] I said, I will water my best garden, and will water abundantly my garden bed: and, lo, my brook became a river, and my river became a sea.
- [32] I will yet make doctrine to shine as the morning, and will send forth her light afar off.
- [33] I will yet pour out doctrine as prophecy, and leave it to all ages for ever.

[34] Behold that I have not laboured for myself only, but for all them that seek wisdom (King James Version).

Sumerian songs from the sacred marriage context celebrate the beloved, Inanna, as a well cared for garden. These holy gardens are still scorned and therefore remembered in Isaiah 1:29, 65:3 and 66:17. In an old Egyptian love song the temple garden of the sun god in Heliopolis serves as a rendezvous for lovers (Keel 1986:158-160). In that respect, ancient erotic literature is often different from the common notion in Near Eastern myths, where gods or humans plough a field in order to sow their seed with a view to reproduction and offspring, which represents the masculine aspect. In its cultural context both gardens and vineyards symbolise the rendezvous, the women and their sexuality (Carr 2003:13). The male lover's face is also compared to flora in 5:13:

לְחִיוָּ כְּעֶרְוַת הַבֶּשֶׂם מִגְדָּלוֹת מְרִקְחִים (his cheeks are like balsam beds, terrace beds of spices)

שִׁפְתוֹתָיו שׁוֹשְׁנִים--נִטְפּוֹת מֹר עֵבֶר
(his lips are lotuses dripping of flowing myrrh)

מְגִדִּים (excellence) in 7:14 and with פְּרִי (fruit, also in 2:3) in 4:13 and 4:16 (where it is מְגִדִּיו) refers to the best gifts of nature, which is its meaning in Syriac and Late Hebrew (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1907:550), but in this context, of course, also sexuality.

Inventories such as the expensive and imported plants and עֲצֵי (trees of) various kinds in 4:13 – 14 could easily be transformed into hymns due to their superlative tone (Keel 1986:168). This happened in Sumeria, the initial Egyptian onomastica of Amenemope, Psalm 148 and the song of the three captives in the furnace of Daniel 3:51-90 (Keel 1986:157). It could therefore have carried similar religious connotations.

הַנִּצְנִים (blossoms) in 2:12 seems to have a general meaning. The same root appears as a verb, הִנְצוּ (budded), in 6:11 and 7:13. בְּאֵבִי (with freshness) in 6:11 is another general word for new plant life. מְרִקְחִים (spices, another *hapax legomenon*) in 5:13 also seems to refer to fragrant plants in general.

אַרְזִים (cedar, *Cedrus libani* or *Abies cilicica*) in 1:17 and 5:15, and the singular אֶרֶץ in 8:9, refers to the wood rather than the tree, which could grow up to 27 m tall and 12 m wide. According to Keel (1986:78), they were the

most enormous trees and said to be the trees of God (cf Psalm 80:11) who had planted them Himself (cf Psalm 104:16). As the most precious wood, it was used all over the Near East for temples and palaces due to its durability and fragrance. It was associated with Lebanon (cf Psalm 29:5) and the cedar mountain was regarded in Mesopotamia and elsewhere as the residence and the garden of the gods. The leaves are dark and evergreen, with a silver glow in the sun. The cones take three years to mature and its wood is popular for building (United Bible Societies 1972:108). Krinetzki (1981:171) states that the blossoms of cedar trees were believed to have magical powers to stimulate fertility.

תָּמָר (date palm, *Phoenix dactylifera*), in 7:8 is common in Israel – especially around Jericho and Egypt, well known for its straight, tough trunk without branches ending in a circle of huge leaves of up to 2,7 m which resemble a hand with fingers, and it grows initially upwards before it is bent down by its own weight. It can grow up to 24 m and from a distance looks very attractive and is therefore often used to decorate buildings. It takes 30 years to develop fully and can live up to 200 years (United Bible Societies 1972:160-162). The tree's artificial fertilisation was an important part of both husbandry and religion in Mesopotamia (Frazer 1991:582). לְאֶשְׁכְּלוֹת (like [date] cluster) in 7:8 and 9 resembles the polymastic statues of some goddesses of antiquity to enhance their image of fertility and perhaps to remind one of their natural link to the animal and plant kingdoms (Yalom 1997:16). בִּסְגִינֵי ([take hold] of its fruit-stalks) in 7:9 is an Aramaic loanword (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1907:703). אֶעֱלֶה בְּתֵמָר אֲחֻזָּה בִּסְגִינֵי (I will climb up the palm tree, I will grab its fruit stalks) in 7:9 brings to mind an Egyptian grave painting from 1430 BCE where the goddess Isis appears in the image of a tree with a breast suckling the king, Tutmoses III, in order to revive him. A similar scene elsewhere shows her also in human form (Keel 1986:167). Likewise, on a mural in Mari two young men are portrayed inside the temple climbing two palm trees, on which two huge doves sit, in order to harvest its dates. The dates are supplied by the goddess standing on a lion between them, expressing the divine with particular intensity (Keel 1986:224). This three thousand-year-old motif is found from Sumer to Carthage and even in modern Arabic poetry. Keel (1986:226) rightly points out that it would have been indeed extremely strange

if Jerusalem had not heard about it. In fact, the prophets protested against the Egyptians touching the breasts of the two fictitious Israelite women representing Jerusalem and Samaria (cf Ezekiel 23:3) as this was a sign of idolatry and licentiousness (Yalom 1997:28). No other kind of statuette in Judea from the eighth to the sixth centuries BCE was as widely distributed as that of the pillar goddesses with their hands holding their conspicuous and heavy breasts into which this image condensed. The palm had been the primeval image of the holy tree of the Near East since the third century BCE. It was similar to the tree of life in the Hebrew Bible and found especially in the vicinity of the temple in Jerusalem (cf 1 Kings 6:29, 32, 35; Ezekiel 40:16-41; 26). This more tender focus on the breasts as erotic represents a sensitive shift due to patriarchy's growing esteem of virginity from the earlier Canaanite and Sumerian emphasis on the genitals during an era when fertility, as also ritualised in the sacred marriage, was more important (cf Deuteronomy 22:13-22) (Keel 1986:230).

בְּרוֹשִׁים, a variation of בְּרוֹשִׁים (Aleppo pine, *Pinus halepensis* or the aromatic cypress, fir or juniper [Brown, Driver & Briggs 1907:141]) in 1:17, is the largest of the Lebanese pines and grows up to 18 m. Its branches spread out upwards. It has yellowish twigs and its leaves are needles clustered in twos or threes. Its bark is smooth and grey when young and the cones are reddish-brown. Its wood was used for beams in buildings (United Bible Societies 1972:162-163).

הַמֶּר (myrrh) in 1:13, 3:6, 4:6, 4:14, 5:1, 5:5 and 5:13 is a dark-red gum with a strong aroma and a bitter taste, from the knotted branches of a bush or tree from the *Commiphora abyssinica*, *Commiphora molmol* and *Commiphora schimperi* genera of the Burseraceae family in Arabia, Ethiopia and on the Somali coast. It was dissolved in water or oil and used for wedding clothes (Psalm 45:9), the love bed (Proverbs 7:17), the harem girls before their first visit to the king (Esther 2:12) and to anoint the cultic instruments and the priests (Exodus 30:23) (Keel 1986:69). This is one example of how the erotic, the royal and the religious were often associated with one another. Exposed to the atmosphere it soon hardens and browns. The best resin secreted through the bark and was used as an ingredient in the holy ointment. Although it was not indigenous to Israel, some wealthy people might have had it in their

garden or as an expensive imported luxury. It was also used as an analgesic and to embalm the dead (United Bible Societies 1972:147-148). In 1:13 it could have functioned as a reminder and transitional object during the physical absence of the lover, or even as a talisman; in Egypt it has served from the third millennium BCE as an amulet worn in a sachet on the chest or between the breasts. It is probably also referred to in Isaiah 3:20, and the amulet as a sign of belonging to the goddess is the only thing ever found between breasts (cf Hosea 2:4). This also reminds one of the goddess Mullissu or Ishtar regarding King Assurbanipal as a lance-shaped amulet between her breasts in a neo-Assyrian oracle. In Song of Songs the beloved is therefore associated with the divine (Keel 1986:68-70). This is a way of combining the religious and the erotic similar to the way in which modern women still wear a cross in their cleavage.

לְבוֹנָה (frankincense) is mentioned only together with myrrh in 3:6, 4:6 and 4:14 as yet another superlative expression of intensity. As such it is also found in an old Egyptian magic spell in an erotic context where a demon is beseeched (Keel 1986:142). The balsamic exudate imported from India, the Somali coast, Arabia, Ephah and Sheba could have been from *Boswellia Carteri*, *Boswellia Frereana* or in particular from *Boswellia sacra*, a medium-sized shrub with pinnate leaves and small greenish or whitish blossoms, perhaps explaining its Hebrew name. Contrary to myrrh, it is only in Song of Songs where frankincense is not explicitly connected with cultic life relating to the temple offerings and as an ingredient in holy ointment (United Bible Societies 1972:121-122). When burnt it exudes a heavy almost anaesthetising and sweet smell (Keel 1986:119-120). The oldest reference to it is in Jeremiah 6:20 from the seventh century BCE.

וַאֲהָלוֹת (and aloes), if it is not a collective name for various kinds of aromatic woods, is likely to be *Aquilaria agallocha*, the slender eaglewood tree, indigenous to south-east Asia, northern India and East Africa (Keel 1986:168). It can reach a height of 36 m and secretes a dark brown aromatic resin, especially when it is old. It therefore had to be imported and would have been expensive (United Bible Societies 1972:91). It was also used as medicine (Gerleman 1981:161).

וְקִנְמון (and cinnamon) in 4:14 is obtained from the valuable inner bark of the evergreen *Cinnamomum cassia* or *Cinnamomum seylanicum* (Keel 1986:168), which grows up to 9 m, belongs to the Laurel family and is native to tropical Sri Lanka, Malaysia and China (Gerleman 1981:161). The bark is cut and then easily peeled off (United Bible Societies 1972:108). Apart from its use as a condiment and perfume, it was also, according to Exodus 30:23, an ingredient of holy oil.

בִּתְרִי in 2:17 probably refers to some Indian spice plant or herb (*Cinnamon tamala*) which was said by the first century CE Pliny to have been cultivated in Egypt and Syria as well (Keel 1986:110).

נֶרְדִּי (my nard, *Nardostychnus jatamansi*) in 1:12, 4:13 and 4:14 was imported by the Phoenicians from the Himalayan countries of Bhutan and Nepal, as well as from Kashmir, and belongs to the Valerian family. In India it was used as an aphrodisiac (Keel 1986:67). The root and lower part of the stems are fragrant and, when dried, they are used in perfume and ointment. Its smell resembles that of patchouli rather than musk (Gerleman 1981:111). It was a symbol of wealth and beauty to create an image of a paradisiacal and ideal flower garden. It was successfully grown at the latest in Roman times in Syria as well (Keel 1986:166).

וְקִרְכֹּם (and turmeric or saffron) in 4:14 is another *hapax legomenon*. Keel (1986:166) mentions two possible species from which it derived: *Curcuma longa* or turmeric is a slender herbal plant from south-east Asia and India with a yellow or orange-brown essential oil in its roots used for spices and colorants. As the other products in Song of Songs and the fragrances for the post-Biblical temple in Jerusalem came from this area as well, he settles on this possibility. The other is what the Jewish tradition has accepted as being *Crocus sativus* (Gerleman 1981:160) from the southern Caspian mountains and the Black Sea. This plant has blue flowers and a long thread-like stigma, which, when dried and pulverised, yields a yellow dye for food, clothing and walls as well as spice. Mixed with oil it serves as a condiment, perfume and medicine. Its presence amongst foreign spices suggests that it was not indigenous. A third possibility, *Carthamus tinctorius*, is a plant indigenous to the Middle East and of the thistle family, which reaches up to 1,2 m. It has red florets used for dye in clothing and as a food colourant. Its

Hebrew name could raise the question whether the sacred site, Har Karkom, in Sinai with its temple and phallic menhirs, is alluded to (Chetwynd 1991:40).

הַתְּפוּחַ (the apricot [tree]) serves as a rendezvous for the lovers in 2:3 and 8:5, the latter also referring to it as the birthplace of the lover. In 2:5 its fruit is a tonic and in 7:9 its smell is likened to that of her face or nose. It literally means sweet-smelling fruit or plant, as its root נָפַח means breathe or blow, which in turn makes the reference to the body part as nose rather than face more probable. It refers to *Prunus armeniaca* which is about 9 m tall with reddish bark, pink flowers and heart-shaped leaves. It has probably been abundant in Israel since Biblical times, unlike wild apple trees which were found only in nearby areas and the fruit of which is small, acid and not very attractive (United Bible Societies 1972:92). Fischer (2010a:24) also supports this translation instead of apples, which he claims were cultivated in the Levant only at a later stage. Keel (1986:82) justifies his acceptance of apples on account of their remnants having been excavated at Kadesh-Barnea and because a Sumerian love song allegedly calls the beloved an apple tree. However, the latter translation is probably based on circular reasoning as apples do not appear in Mesopotamian art with pomegranates, grapes and figs, nor do they feature in Egyptian art (Lambert 1987:30-31).

If this is, in fact, about apple trees, it might be worthwhile to make a cross-cultural reference to the Kara-Kirghis barren women who “roll themselves on the ground under a solitary apple-tree in order to obtain offspring” (Frazer 1991:120). In the canton of Aargau in Switzerland an apple tree is sometimes still planted at the birth of a boy, and tended with special care as its growth is believed to be tied up with his fate and fortune (Frazer 1991:682). Lavoie (1995:132-133) also supports this translation as in Joel 1:12 and in the Egyptian, Coptic and Arabic translations of Song of Songs rather than citrons, oranges, lemons, apricots, peaches or quinces. In Babylonia it was regarded as an aphrodisiac, but this could once again be based on circular reasoning.

רְמוֹנִים (pomegranate trees, *Punica granatum*, *Malum punicum* or *Malum granatum* [Gerleman 1981:147]) are trees reaching up to 4,5 m which have dark-green spear-shaped leaves, branches with thorns, scarlet, yellow and white flowers which are used for dysentery, and a berry fruit as big as an

orange with a hard red or yellow rind. The pulp, delicious and juicy, is divided into 9 or 10 often lignified partitions holding its many seeds, which yield a syrup, grenadine. It originates from Persia and its neighbouring countries, is indigenous to many countries in North Africa and Western Asia and was cultivated even before the Israelite monarchy.

Pomegranates were already a sexual symbol in the Sumerian sacred marriage songs and Inanna calls Dumuzi her pomegranate garden (Pope 1977:491). Whereas the lotus was the symbol of regeneration in the Levant, the pomegranate had that function in the Assyrian and Egyptian cultures. An ivory depiction of the paradise mountain from which four rivers flow forth is shown with a pomegranate tree on each side. On a wall covering from Nimrud it forms part of a scene with a palm tree flanked by bulls (Keel 1986:134-136). In Mesopotamian literature it is considered to be an aphrodisiac. In Egypt pomegranate trees are depicted with their fruit on eighteenth dynasty (1550-1292 BCE) tombstones and in a love song, the beloved's breasts are compared to pomegranates. In the ancient Near East in general pomegranates appear on architecture and clothes as a decorative feature. According to United Bible Societies (1972:168-170), the Syrian god of the same name is not to be connected to them, however. The place name in Joshua 15:32 suggests their presence there some time in the past. They are artistically represented and found in Solomon's temple (cf 1 Kings 7:18) and on the skirts of Aaron's ephod (cf Exodus 28:33). In Song of Songs they are mentioned in 4:13 where there is also mention of שְׁלִיחַיָּךְ (your sprouts), in 6:11, 7:13, and its fruit in 8:2, always in the plural. As the veil divided the temple and probably the cheek in two, one part was in the light and the other in the dark, thus resembling the Egyptian imagery of the pomegranate with its two opposing halves, and reminiscent also of the Tao symbol. Its roundness and colour are similar to those of the cheek and the same root in Aramaic means both cheek and pomegranate.

הַתְּאֵנָה (the fig tree, *Ficus carica*) in 2:13 is indigenous to Western Asia and has been cultivated in Israel where, with good care, it could yield two harvests per year. פְּגִיָּה (its early figs) in the same verse ripen in June, and are chiefly appreciated for their fine flavour. The late ones come in August and September and are often pressed into cakes and exported. The fruit has a

high sugar content and has been used medicinally. The tree can reach 6 m and has long curved branches, which sometimes gives it the appearance of a bush. Its trunk is smooth and silver-grey. The leaves are large and shaped like a hand, and the thick foliage affords pleasant shade (United Bible Societies 1972:118-119). The verb הָנִיחַ (put forth) also means make spicy or embalm in Genesis 50:2 and 26 and therefore suggests revival. This fits 2:13, as it concerns the revival of nature from the deadness of winter. In Arabic it means become white or red, referring to its fruit which is ripening (Gerleman 1981:125). This links well with the description of the male in 5:10:דִּידִי צָח וְאֶדְמִי (my beloved is glazing white and ruddy).

רִגְמוֹ (walnut, *Juglans regia*) in 6:11 probably refers to the beautiful tree, indigenous to cooler northern areas such as Galilee, Lebanon, Western Asia and Persia with its broad crown and fresh green oval leaves, offering shade and a pleasant fragrance. Its nuts are covered by a thick rind which makes a brown dye (United Bible Societies 1972:192-193). Until the nineteenth century CE massive nut trees could be found around the village of Apeca at the source of the Adonis River in Lebanon (Keel 1986:208).

הַבִּצְלֵת in 2:1 is probably the narcissus with several flowers on one stem and a bright golden yellow, found in Israel. Keel (1986:79) believes that, although it remains unidentified, it was probably a conspicuous kind of lily or iris. Isaiah 35:1 is the only other Hebrew Bible reference to it and then in the context of a wonderful age of salvation which God will create. There it is sometimes translated as crocus or asphodel. As the coastal plain of Sharon north of Tel Aviv is mentioned in 2:1, it could also be a sea daffodil (*Pancratium maritimum*). Other translations are rose, for which there is little evidence, but a red tulip (*Tulipa sharonensis*) has also been suggested (United Bible Societies 1972:150-151).

קָנָה (calamus, perhaps *Andropogon calamus aromaticus* [ginger grass], *Cymbopogon martini* or *Acorus calamus*) in 4:14 is an aromatic swamp reed from Central Asia (Gerleman 1981:160). It is a constituent of anointing oil, imported at great cost (cf Jeremiah 6:20 and Ezekiel 27:19) from a far country (United Bible Societies 1972:171-173) for cultic purposes according to Exodus 30:23, Jeremiah 6:20 and Isaiah 43:24, like frankincense (Keel 1986:168).

כֶּפֶר (henna) in 1:14, and its plural, כְּפָרִים in 4:13, is from the fragrant plant, *Lawsonia inermis*, of about 3 m with light green spear-shaped leaves, thorny branches, and it is probably indigenous to India where it grows wild. It is also cultivated in the warmer more inland regions of Israel, such as Jericho, Jaffa and the lush oasis of Engedi on the desert landscape west of the Dead Sea (cf Joshua 15:61-62), mentioned in 1:14. Its yellow (Gerleman 1981:112) or white thick flowers are sweet-smelling like roses and would be carried by wealthy women in a little bag. Dye was made from its leaves and used as a cosmetic in ancient Egypt, as it is today among the Arabs, for colouring fingernails and toenails. It is uncertain if the Israelites used it like that as well, but the fact that Deuteronomy 21:10-14 disapproves of this foreign influence may imply this practice. The dye is made from dried and crushed henna leaves, mixed with warm water (United Bible Societies 1972:128). The Egyptian word for it, 'anch jimi, means life inside because it was regarded as such thanks to its smell. Henna blossoms wrapped in fine string were placed with the dead in their graves (Keel 1986:70), as the thirteenth saying of the Egyptian Book of the Dead mentions. The magical Papyrus of Leiden similarly deals with a small bundle of blossoms from a little tree.

בְּשָׁמִים (perhaps spices in general or balsam tree, *Commiphora opobalsamum*) and its morphological derivatives in 4:10, 4:14, 4:16, 5:1, 5:13, 6:2 and 8:14 is a shrub of up to 4,5 m with stiff branches exuding a pleasant-smelling resin, which soon hardens when exposed to the air, trifoliate leaves and white flowers. Similar to dwarf birch its branch ends contain pale yellow juice which smells like lemon or rosemary. The gum is used for perfume and medicine. It was indigenous to southern Arabia (Sheba, cf 1 Kings 10:10) from where it was imported. It was also grown near the Dead Sea (Gerleman 1981:161) and used in anointing oil. Archaeological findings suggest that it has been planted under royal care at Engedi since the seventh century BCE (Keel 1986:154). In Song of Songs it is probably the balm of Gilead, where it was perhaps grown, though not indigenous, along the Jordan valley near Jericho. United Bible Societies (1972:177-178) also considers the possibility that it could refer *Astragalus tragacantha*, which grows everywhere in Israel and up to 60 cm.

שושנה (lily or lotus) and its morphological derivatives in 2:1, 2:2, 2:16, 4:5, 5:13 (the only instance where it relates to the lover, that is, his lips), 6:2, 6:3 and 7:3. All but the first two instances are in the masculine plural form. It is an Egyptian loanword and probably includes several species and even families, or even any showy plant. Its possible resemblance to a cup in 1 Kings 7:26 and 2 Chronicles 4:5 also seems to refer to the Egyptian lotus or water lily (*Nymphaea lotus*, *Nymphaea alba* or *Nymphaea caerulea*), which was more probable when Sharon was still full of swamps. In 1 Kings 7:26 the temple tank and in 1 Kings 7:19 and 22 capitals are described as having been in the shape of this flower, reminding one of vessels and capitals in Egypt and Palestine in the shape of the lotus flower, but never in the shape of a lily. The lotus was one of the most popular symbols of regeneration in the Egyptian, Syrian and Phoenician cultures during the first millennium BCE, and the sun god is often portrayed as sitting in a lotus. In Egyptian mythology the flower symbolised the transition from troubled primeval waters to the organised world. At every possible occasion deities, people and even the dead were portrayed as smelling it to benefit from its regenerative powers and to become fresh and young again like the morning sun. Archaeological findings from Palestine show that this practice was also known there (Keel 1986:79-80), while findings from Lachish show the Canaanite goddess of love, Qudshu, holding enormous lotus flowers to show her sexual and rejuvenating powers. A painted stele from Deir el-Medina shows her standing naked on a lion and offering a lotus to the ithyphallic fertility god, Min, with the belligerent Resheph (cf 8:6) on her right (Keel 1986:149). In the Levant and in Egypt the symbol of the tree of life was also often complemented by the Egyptian symbol for the lotus flower (Keel 1986:107). Assagioli (1991:103) points out how the lotus links the four elements in that its roots grow in mud, while its stem is in water and its flower opens in the air to the sun.

Only one species of the lily grows in Israel, the *Lilium candidum*, the white or Madonna lily. Other botanists claim it to be the red *Lilium chalcedonicum*, which is more likely meant in 5:13, although the last part would fit a rare fragrant flower better, according to United Bible Societies (1972:134-135). If it is an anemone, although its name is derived from Naaman (darling), it brings to mind the myth of Adonis, from whose blood

sprang scarlet anemones. It blooms in Syria around Easter, when at least one of his festivals might have been held. The Arabs still call it wounds of the Naaman. The colour thus suggests the suffering which stains the otherwise “white” love.

הַדְּדָאִים (love apples, *Mandragora officinalis* or *Mandragora autumnalis*) in 7:14 as paronomasia reminds one of דְּדָאִי later in the same verse and of דָּד in 7:13 of the motifs of love and breasts, which it might resemble. Deriving from the same linguistic root as these words, it was 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). It grows everywhere in the fields of Israel and Syria, and on waste places throughout the Mediterranean area. It is a perennial related to the nightshade, potato and tomato. This stemless herb has large oval leaves arranged in a rosette, and purple flowers, yellowish green fruits, which are rather like plums and ripen in May during the wheat harvest. The shape of its large, fleshy and forked roots resembles the lower part of the human body, giving rise to the belief that it promoted fertility (United Bible Societies 1972:138-139 and Krinetzki 1981:208). It has also been used medically as a narcotic and purgative. Its odour is differently experienced as fragrant or foetid. Modern-day Arabs still call it apple or egg, that is, the testicles of the *jinn*. Two Egyptian bas-reliefs, one from the fourteenth and the other from the twelfth century BCE, show the queen offering mandrakes to the king. The plant also occurs in a love poem to suggest an erotic experience, in a love song where the breasts are likened to mandrakes, and in the poetic euphemism, to exude the smell of mandrakes. The Hebrew word sounds like דְּדָאִים (baskets of) in Jeremiah 24:1, which might be coincidental or etymologically related as the small yellow fruits on short stalks in a rosette of leaves resemble a basket (Keel 1986:235). 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.

הַחֹמֶה (thorns) in 2:2 is one of many words for what occurs in a wide variety in a dry country such as Israel, but it is characteristic of uncultivated or neglected areas, and may symbolise God’s judgement and punishment (cf Genesis 3:18, Isaiah 7:23-25) or the work of false prophets (cf Mt 7:16)

(United Bible Societies 1972:184-185). Here it functions as an extreme which is so typical of the state of being in love and of ultimate experiences.

The next two plants are agricultural products and thus indicative of a time after nomadic existence. חִטִּים (wheat) in 7:3 is one of the oldest cultivated plants in the world, usually mentioned first among the resources of a country and sown in Israel in December, some weeks after barley. It is harvested at the earliest in April, depending on the temperature and climate, a week or two after barley (United Bible Societies 1972:195-197). Here it might have connotations of the most basic sustenance for livelihood but the *tertium comparationis* is, according to Loader (1998-2001:106), the protruding shape of the genitals rather than the colour of the skin, as Delitzsch regarded it, in line with the Islamic conception of the colour of the first human being to suggest health and purity (Pope 1977:621).

הַגְפְּנִים (the grapevines) in 2:13, 6:11, 7:9 and 7:13 have their origin in the Armenian hills around the Caspian Sea and were common among the Canaanites during patriarchal times, in contrast to the strict and simple moral life of the nomads, amongst whom they are seldom mentioned. After settlement in the promised land it was only the Nazirites and the Rechabites who abstained from יַיִן (wine) in 1:2, 2:4, 4:10, 5:1, 7:10 and 8:2, but for religious reasons. כֶּרֶם (vineyard) and its morphological derivatives occur twice in 1:6, twice in 2:15, 7:13, twice in 8:11 and once in 8:12. Vineyards were often grown on fertile hills to benefit from the sun from all sides, but also in the valleys, for instance that of Sharon and even the dry Negeb. The best-loved ones, though, were near dwellings. They required hard work: the soil needed to be prepared and a fence and watchtower to be erected. The trunks can be like trees of a considerable diameter. One can sit under them as has become almost proverbial of the peace enjoyed during the Solomonic time, or they can creep along the ground, or be supported by forks or climb over trees.

תְּפֹרֶךְ (grape blossom) occurs in the Hebrew Bible only in 2:13, 2:15 and 7:13 and suggests the development into puberty as a double entendre. The kinds of grapes grown are now difficult to determine, but fermentation happened naturally in that climate after one or two days. The *hapax legomenon*, הַמְצָא, (mixed or spiced wine) in 7:3 occurs in Psalm 75:9 in its Aramaic form and seems to be a stylistic intensification of the wine mentioned

previously (Keel 1986:240). In both cases it signifies the mucous excretions due to the woman's pleasure and orgasm, which מַעֲסִיס רִמְיָי in 8:2 also confirms and which is paralleled by a similar Sumerian text.

Lemaire (1975:24-25) argues that the *hapax legomenon*, עֵת הַזִּמְיָר, in 2:12 should be translated as the time of the grape harvest, and not the time of singing, as it thus makes better sense in the context and aligns with the only other occurrence in pre-Christian literature, that is in line 6 of the Gezer tablet from the tenth century BCE. It derives therefore from a Canaanite dialect predating Solomon's time. The feast of the grape harvest, with its parallel in Shechem mentioned in Judges 9:26-27, would have been at the beginning of July, in the month of Tammuz, thus conjuring up the Babylonian cultic background, something of which still survived in Israel according to Ezekiel 8:14. However, Lemaire does not seem to realise that this is too late for the spring context of Song of Songs. He traces this back to parallels in Phoenicia and Ugarit, where a bunch of grapes would be offered in a peace sacrifice and believes that Song of Songs, evoking a holy time, explains its inclusion in the canon.

2.2.5.3 Animals

A proportionately greater number and frequency of animals than in many other Biblical books occur in Song of Songs. The question could also be asked why certain animals have not been mentioned, for instance camels in the procession of 3:6 or snakes with their phallic connotations. The remnants of a closer relationship to animals, reflected in the pet names of the lovers for each other, need to be explored. Theriomorphism or the portrayal of humans in animal form or vice versa or combining their forms into one is in one sense personification, reflecting the lack of understanding and tolerance for difference, but in another a form of identification and projection. It may also well be a human *déjà vu* triggered by the animal within. Worshippers elevated and tried to emulate animals as substitute parental figures, from which they often derived their daily nourishment (Smith 1879:89). Some of these animals were projected into the night skies, where they were recognised as celestial constellations, which represented various periods of the year (Chetwynd 1991:183), as *Homo erectus* had long ago learnt to look up for orientation.

יוֹנִים (doves or pigeons, *Oena capensis* [Schwartz 2000:41] or *Columba livia* [Keel 1986:72]) and its morphological variations occur in 1:15, 2:14, 4:1, 5:2, 5:12 and 6:9. No other bird of the 359 species in the Hebrew Bible is mentioned so often (Isaacs 2000:3). Pigeons lived not only in caves and mountains, but were also domesticated (cf Isaiah 60:8). In Psalm 55:7 the dove is admired for its swiftness. It was specifically the white kind of dove which was sacred to the goddess as the painting from the Ishtar temple in Mari shows. Tibullus confirmed this by saying in the first century BCE that white doves were sacred to the Palestinian Syrians (Keel 1986:187). According to Keel (1977:32), the dove had been associated with Ishtar, Anat and Astarte, “Paredra Jahwes”. Doves have been regarded as an attribute of theirs, perhaps because they live in permanent pairs, or as messengers, since the beginning of the third millennium BCE (Keel 1986:72). They could also be portrayed on a notice board to indicate the shrine of the goddess of love, as that of Ishtar in Mari from the second millennium BCE and an eighth century BCE temple model from Palestine show (Keel 1986:100-101). According to ancient zoology, doves have no bile and were therefore regarded as very peaceful and clean, yet also personified as mourning, with some even mooting them etymologically as having developed from a root with that meaning (Isaacs 2000:24). Their resemblance to the dark eyes of the Near Eastern lovers could only have been through their movement and intensity as they were blue-grey (Keel 1986:72). Smith (1956:294) points out that the dove was neither eaten nor touched by the Semites, and yet it was sacrificed by the Hebrews. It is only in Song of Songs that it functions as a pet name, whereas elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible its sound expresses lamentation or it serves as an image of inexperience (Gerleman 1981:114). Both of these associations might have added romantic, nostalgic and melancholic connotations to its use in Song of Songs. Like most bird species, doves are monogamous, at least during the incubation period when two birds are necessary to keep the egg warm and to then feed the young (Lachapelle 1999:123). They might also have been symbols of words flying through the air and of hope (Edinger 1995:269).

Similarly, הַתּוֹר (turtle dove, either *Streptopelia turtur*, *Streptopelia decaecto* or *Streptopelia senegalensis*) in 2:12 may have been an

onomatopoeic name. The turtle dove was the symbol of spring when it was heard during its migration northwards through Israel in April, with some staying to breed.

Both these birds were used as sacrifices, substituting them for a lamb or kid, perhaps as a concession to the poor (Leviticus 5:7), and therefore sold in the temple (United Bible Societies 1972:23-24). The dove is found amongst the Arabs under a different name, **ملم** (*Hamâm*), as a sub-tribe of the Asd (Smith 1879:79), is found in the Kaaba and was not eaten by the Syrians, confirming its original totemic character (Smith 1879:85). As in the Biblical flood narrative, it is sent forth in the Gilgamesh epic. It also played an important role in the foundational saga of the oracle of Siwah devoted to Amun in Egypt where its excrement was used as a drug, both eaten and sacrificed. Their eggs also served as food for the dead, whose soul or *ba* appeared in its image carried towards heaven, and the enthronement festival of Osiris and Horus was announced by their release (Wilms 1987:116-117).

The only other bird mentioned in Song of Songs is **עורב** (a raven, *Corvus corax* (Schwartz 2000:36-37) in 5:11, with reference to its black colour, in contrast to the white doves of 5:12. They are intelligent, adaptable and playful. It suggests, however, the domain of the hairy goat spirits and wild demons (cf Isaiah 34:11; Zephaniah 2:14) (Keel 1986:186-187). The name of this unclean bird is found amongst the Arabs as **بارغ**, (*GHarâb*), a sub-tribe of the Fasara (Smith 1879:79) and was also the name of a Midianite prince, probably the chief of a tribe with the same name (Smith 1879:89), again suggesting its original totemic significance.

שועלים (fox, *Vulpes nilotica*, *Vulpes vulpes* or *Vulpes flavescens*, or golden jackal, *Canis aureus*) is mentioned in 2:15 as a metaphor for interfering with the lovers, who, so to speak, love fresh grapes and can cause terrible damage to a vineyard (Lemaire 1975:24). The two species mentioned are similar, although the latter has a broader head, shorter nose and ears and longer legs. It is gregarious, hides during the day in caves and feeds on carrion. Although not numerous, it was perhaps the most common and widespread predator in the region (United Bible Societies 1972:31-32). The Egyptian demon-god appeared also in the form of the jackal (Chetwynd

1991:188) and amongst the Arabs it is found under a different name in the feminine form, *TH'âlabat* (قِلَابَة), as the name of certain tribes (Smith 1879:79).

The Hebrew Bible does not always distinguish between goats and sheep, as is also indicated by *עֶדְרָא* (flock) in 1:7, 4:1, 6:5 and 6:6, where it can refer to either or both. The milk of both these animals could be substituted for that of the mother in case of emergency (Yalom 1997:28). According to Keel (1986:133), herds suggested to urbanites the transition to the domain of goat spirits and the demonic (cf Isaiah 13:21 and 34:11).

Grazing goats were a symbol of an intense will to live in the Near East. Some 2 000 years after they had been depicted in the king's cemetery in Ur as eating from blossoming trees, suggesting the sphere of Inanna or Ishtar, they still often appeared on seals in Israel even in the eighth century BCE representing the messengers and servants of the holding and nourishing primal Mother (Krinetzki 1981:135). That the beloved's breasts are compared to two fawns in 4:5 and 7:4 brings to mind two goats portrayed on fourteenth century BCE ivory from Ugarit being fed by a goddess sitting on a mountain with her upper body naked (Keel 1986:58-61). None of the young has been lost through predators or illness in 4:2, suggesting blessing and by implication the benevolence of God (Keel 1986:133). The goat might have been the first ruminant to be domesticated, perhaps a kind of besoar goat, and the oldest remains at Jericho date from 8500 BCE. *זֵאִים* (goats) in 4:1 and 6:5 belong to the family of the hollow-horned ruminants, were generally black in Israel, but perhaps also sometimes red, wilder than the ram and used as a scapegoat and sacrifice. Apart from their meat, their hair was not considered useful as wool, but was used for fabrics and the skin for water bottles, garments and perhaps for the tents mentioned in 1:5. This word is also used metaphorically for a devil or satyr. The Syrian goat was notable for its long pendulous ears and backward-curving horns. *זֵאִי* in 1:8 refers to young goats and forms part of the place name mentioned in 1:14 (United Bible Societies 1972:36-37). It is found amongst the Arabs as *أناس* ('Anas), the son of Wâ'il, brother of Bekr and as the tribe of the 'Anasa, whose eponym is represented as the uncle of Wâ'il, probably of the same origin (Smith 1879:79) and once again suggesting its totemic origin.

הַצֹּאֵן (the flock) as in 1:8 is another instance where both kinds of livestock are mentioned together, with sheep more numerous and important, as is also attested by the some 400 times that they are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. That most sheep were white is one reason why הָרִחְלִים (the ewes) in 4:2 and 6:6 are likened to the woman's teeth. Sheep were usually of the broad-tailed *Ovis laticaudata* kind. Only the ram had horns which were used as trumpets and oil containers. The fat in their long tails could weigh up to 13 kg and was used for sacrifice (United Bible Societies 1972:75-76).

לְסוּסֵי (to a mare of) in 1:9 is another *hapax legomenon*, although the masculine form occurs 138 times in the Hebrew Bible. Horses succeeded the ass, which was much more ancient in Semitic cultures where it was sacred for some tribes, especially in the worship of Typhon in Egypt. Horses originated from the steppes of Central Asia where they were domesticated between 4000 and 2000 BCE. From there they spread south and westwards. They appear amongst the mammals from the Palaeolithic Age of the Mount Carmel caves. The earliest evidence of their use for war chariots dates from the Hyksos tribes, who subjugated parts of Mesopotamia, Syria and Egypt between 1800 and 1600 BCE. Unclean, horses were only domesticated in Israel in the time of Solomon, who imported them from Egypt and Cilicia mainly for military purposes (cf 1 Kings 10:28). Before that time keeping them was considered a sign of impiety, perhaps because they were used to draw chariots in idolatrous processions and also perhaps why they were hamstrung even until the time of David (cf 2 Samuel 8:4) (United Bible Societies 1972:43-45). Comparisons with horses are not very complimentary at times (cf Psalm 32:9 and Proverbs 26:3) and Keel (1986:64) points out that 1:9 is one of the few places in the Hebrew Bible where it has positive connotations. Horses were associated with luxury and arrogance by the prophets (cf Isaiah 30:16, 31:1 and 3; Zechariah 9:10), and envy or the pride of the other expressed through horses obviously undermined their being admired on a conscious level. In Song of Songs, however, as so often expressed through the royal metaphors, pride and the egoic level are not repressed but celebrated as is the id level of the pre-egoic level. Like the lion, the war horse also symbolised the aggressive aspect of the naked goddess (Keel 1986:108). In 2 Kings 23:11 and probably in Micah 1:13 some Jews devoted horses to the sun.

Amongst the Arabs it occurs as the figure of **قويع** (the hinderer), suggesting perhaps its military use (Smith 1879:77).

Two predators seem to symbolise the aggressive side of the love goddess. They may, however, also suggest the dangerous aspect of love itself. **נָמְרִים** (leopards, *Felis pardus*), were common in Israel in Biblical times as in 4:8, where the word may be part of a place name. It is one of the most dangerous beasts of prey for both animals and humans. Its fur, yellow on the back and sides, has black spots grouped in patterns, which camouflage it whilst lurking on the forest floor with its changing light and shadow. Its movement is graceful and noiseless, making its attacks sudden, and its savagery proverbial. In Hosea 13:7 it is used to symbolise God's wrath (United Bible Societies 1972:48-49). It is found amongst the Arabs as **رمد** (*namar*) a sub-tribe of Rabî'a bin Nisâr, of the Asd and of Qodâ'a (Smith 1879:79).

אַרְיֹת (lions) in 4:8 are one of the largest and strongest carnivores and are dangerous to cattle and humans. The territories of the African and the Persian lions met in the Middle East. The lion's majestic appearance, especially its mane, its swift movements and fearlessness, have made it into a symbol of majesty and strength. Its lair is a hollow in the ground, hidden behind shrubbery, preferably of the subtropical vegetation of the Jordan valley. It stays in one place for only a few days before moving on again. The large forests of Lebanon apparently had dens of lions and they lived in the Negeb as well. They kill smaller animals with a blow of the paw and larger ones by a bite to the throat. The lion has become symbolic of Judah, but also of the Devil and enemies (United Bible Societies 1972:50). It is found amongst the Arabs under a different name, **حسا** (*Asad*), as the name of a number of tribes (Smith 1879:79), as well as in the gentilicium, Labwân (from **لؤي**, lioness), a subdivision of Ma'âfir (Smith 1879:80), and is the figure of **توفي** (the helper) (Smith 1879:77). According to Krinetzki (1981:140), the lion and the leopard in Song of Songs are symbols of the enigmatic and devouring mother.

Two animal species are particularly important for this study. The first is the deer, three species of which existed in the Middle East. They were the red deer, *Cervus elaphus*, which has been extinct in southern Syria and northern Israel since prehistoric times; the edible fallow deer, *Dama mesopotamica*, in

the forests of Galilee and Mount Carmel and the symbol for the tribe of Naphtali; and the edible roe deer, *Capreolus capreolus* or *Gazella gazella*, although the latter could also have been the gazelle as the Arabic زغل (*ghazal*) does not make a distinction between them. They were allowed as food according to Deuteronomy 12:15 and 22 and 15:22. The word is found amongst the Arabs as the gentilicium, لَعُو (Wa'lân), a subdivision of Murâd (Smith 1879:80). The *tertium comparationis* is their grace and speed, rather than their appearance (although that also adds to the comparison) which made them suitable as metaphors for the lover in Song of Songs (Keel 1986:96). As animals which not only survived the threats of the deadly and chaotic wastelands but actually showed amazing agility and vitality, they seemed to incarnate some numinous power and life principle which could even triumph over death (Keel 1986:139). That they function with lotus flowers as metaphors in Song of Songs renders them together, as in 2:16 and 4:5, as a kind of positive superlative (Keel 1986:140) and hyperbole of the beloved. In Sirach 26:17 from about 180 BCE one finds a similar depiction of the beloved with sacred connotations (Keel 1986:142-144). Deer, like date palms, were holy to Ishtar and similar goddesses of love in Mesopotamia, Syria, Ugarit and Egypt (Keel 1986:92). Three words for them are used in Song of Songs:

עֹפָר (fawn), probably as a general term, occurs only in Song of Songs in 2:9, 2:17 and 8:14 and as the masculine plural in 4:5 and 7:4 with reference to the breasts of the beloved;

בָּאִילֹת (by the hinds) occurs as the feminine plural in 2:7 and 3:5 preceded by בְּצִבְאוֹת אֵן (by the gazelles and) as part of the adjuration refrain;

הָאֵילִים (stags) occurs as the masculine plural in 2:9, 2:17 and 8:14, in all instances preceded by לְעֹפָר אוֹ לְצִבִּי אֵן ([be] like a gazelle or fawn of), with reference to the male lover.

The second species is the צִבִּי (gazelle, *Gazella dorcas*, *Gazella arabica* or *Gazella subgutturosa* [Schwartz 2000:240] where the latter is found from Iran to the Suez). It occurs in 2:9, 2:17 and 8:14 and with its feminine plural form, בְּצִבְאוֹת, in the refrains of 2:7 and 3:5 probably to echo the feminine plural, בָּאִילֹת, although they represent two different animals in two different genders. The feminine singular, צִבְיָה, in 4:5 and 7:4 with reference to the breasts of the beloved, occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible and is a

double entendre with another identical word, but derived from a different root, meaning beauty and honour. This animal species is smaller than the grey antelope, about 1 m long and 53 cm tall and has a yellowish brown fur. It is indigenous to the Middle East and lives alone or in small herds. Its only defence is its colour and speed, not its horns (United Bible Societies 1972:33-34). It can cover huge distances and manages leaps with great ease. Its preferred habitat is the forests and woods, and it has sophisticated olfactory, aural and visual senses. According to Deuteronomy 14:5, it may be eaten. Its speed has been likened to religious zeal and it has been said to be the most pious animal. The mystics likened its antlers to the divine emanations, reaching up to heaven (Schwartz 2000:149-152). In the past the woman was depicted as having the power to arouse desire but elude capture, just like the gazelle (Abu-Lughod 2005:254). It is found amongst the Arabs under a different name as the gentilicium, *سبى* (*Sabyân*, gazelle), a subdivision of the Asd (Smith 1879:79). Golden gazelles were also found in the Kaaba (Smith 1879:80), suggesting their dominant symbolic value in the ancient Near East.

Rimbach (1972:2) regards most of the animal imagery of Song of Songs as unique to those poems. There are only a few exceptions where they respond to literary conventions, although, in his opinion, the international conception of Hebrew poetry is largely based on Song of Songs. He mentions as examples the stag and the gazelle to depict speed in 2:9, 2:17 and 8:14, that certain exotic geographical locations are characterised by their fauna, such as in 4:8, and the fox (cf 2:15) as portraying mischievousness (1972:6). He further argues against the generalisation that Hebrew imagery is concrete, a view originating with JG Herder and influencing Hebrew Bible scholarship through his friend JG Eichhorn. Instead, the concrete functions as an abstraction because it can be repeated and understood without reference to any particular personal observation. A concrete image actually functions as a literary convention (1972:3) evoking a complex of references extending far beyond the detail (1972:iii). On the other hand, these animals were to be transcended as objects of worship in Israel (cf Ezekiel 8:10 and Deuteronomy 4:17-18).

Traces of theriolatry often adumbrated the mythical and theistic aspects of Song of Songs. This represented the shift from fusional

identification in the present magical stage to separation through projection and splitting in the next.

The challenge for a Western psychological reinterpretation is now to stay as much as possible within the cultural framework of Song of Songs, since the Western psychological tradition has used European myths and models to explain and express its theories.

2.2.6 Jungian “archetypes”

Wilber (1999:369) does not regard the thematic images of human existence as archetypes in the sense that the ancient and traditional mystics used to conceive of it. Their conception of it was as the manifestation of the first forms emerging through involution from causal Spirit as the highest level of reality and therefore on the transpersonal subtle level. For Jung, despite his various uses of the term, they are mythic-archaic forms collectively transmitted in the human psyche as the direct counterpart of bodily instincts. Krinetzki (1981:40-41) has focused on the archetypal in Song of Songs, but limited himself mostly to the *animus* and the *anima*, in particular as the latter is expressed in the “große Weibliche”, of which the Great Mother is one expression. The archetype of femininity is above all expressed in אֶהְבָּה (love) with which the female beloved is identified. By projecting the internal unconscious and often corporeal world onto external nature (for instance הָרִים [mountains], גֶּן [garden], מַיִם [water], יַיִן [wine]) and culture (for instance כְּפָרִים [villages], עִיר [city], בֵּית [house], דֶּלֶת [door], חֶרֶב [sword]), these become symbols of unconscious events and experiences.

The first proper name, שְׁלֹמֹה (Solomon), already introduced in the title, has become archetypal in tradition for both wisdom and sexuality, but here also alludes to the theme of שָׁלוֹם (peace) and rest. Although it is simply an enclitic use of the adjective, the reference to the woman as הַשּׁוֹלְמִיט (the Shulammitite) in 7:1 adds the feminine aspects to this idea to make it complete. The fact that the archaic אֲשֶׁר (which) is used in the title (only) instead of שֶׁ as is the case elsewhere in the text (for instance in 2:17) (Fischer 2010a:225) suggests that this figure is ancestral and belongs to a world of the past.



2.3 PRE-EGOIC STAGE: CULTIC-MYTHIC LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY

Just as the body was celebrated auto-erotically at the archaic level, and related to other bodies through the mediation of transitional objects of the magical level, it is now displaced into that of the adored other. The other is deified in anthropomorphical ways, which means that the self and its body are still involved in a disguised way through projection. Although personification has already taken place at the magical level, it is within the cultic-mythical structure in particular that it finds its place. Personification as a form of projection of internal experiences onto external objects belongs to the dualistic latent phase.

2.3.1 Love personified

In the refrains love is personified as being able to be awakened and pleased. It is noteworthy that אֶת-הָאֱהָבָה (love) occurs only in 2:7, 3:5, 8:4 (that is, in the adjuration refrains, which might have been intertextually borrowed formulae) and in 8:7, with the definite article, and then only in 8:7 once without the accusative indicator, אֶת. This leaves the impression that it functions as a proper name (Gerleman 1981:118), and therefore refers to a person, in all the other instances. In 8:6-7 it is exalted as powerful as death and reaches the final climax towards which the superlatives throughout the text have been culminating. This reminds one of Anat's struggle against Mot, who is as strong as Baal in Ugaritic mythology, whereas Isis receives her son, Horus, from Osiris who has already been killed by Seth in the Egyptian myth as well. In all three cultures it is therefore the women who conquer death. It is, however, love in Song of Songs and not procreation as in the Levirate marriage of Deuteronomy 25:5-10, which transcends death (Keel 1986:248). The reference to death to which love is equal could mean that the woman, who is repeatedly equated to love, would even die for her beloved as the final seal of her devotion. Alternatively, it could be an unconscious expression of the realisation that the dead are most often loved more as they become romanticised due to guilt feelings, amongst other things. Death is also personified in 8:6 as if it is, ironically, a living being and jealousy comes dangerously close to death (cf Proverbs 6:34) (Keel 1986:250). This brings to mind the *coincidentia oppositorum* which occurs when the serpent in the

ancient *uroboros* symbol of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth eats its own tail.

2.3.2 Remnants from the sacred marriage cult

Wilber (1999:385) would probably deal with this aspect as belonging to the magical mind because of the magical rites involved and also because of the focus on sexuality, fertility and the concomitant enmeshment with nature. However, here it will be dealt with as part of the mythical mind, due to the deities who are now involved, both as projections of parts of the self and as personifications of natural forces.

If Song of Songs as such is not drama, but lyrical love poetry, it still contains elements from the pagan environment, which has stimulated the cultic-mythical interpretation (Horine 2001:30). Although Horine does not accept this interpretation of Song of Songs, he still regards the images of the bridal chamber, originally inside the temple where the king performed the fertility ritual with a virgin priestess, as indicative of the sacred marriage background in which Song of Songs has some of its roots. These are, in his opinion (2001:43-44), alluded to in 1:4 חֲדָרָיו (into his chambers), 1:16 עֲרֻשָּׁנוּ (our bed), 1:17 בְּתֵינֵנוּ (our houses), 2:4 בֵּית הַיַּיִן (the wine house), 3:4 אֵמִי (the house of my mother) and חֲדָר הוֹרָתִי (the room of she who conceived me), 3:9 אַפְרִיֹן (palanquin), 5:1 לְגַנִּי (into my garden), the latter an Aramaic technical term (Horine 2001:37), as well as through the references to אֲרָזִים (cedars) in 1:17, resonated in 5:15 and 8:9, the odours of which were associated with the temple of the love goddess. In addition, the archetypal hints from this ritual as it occurred in some Sumerian texts, that is, the sacred garden, “apple” trees and lovemaking, are found in Song of Songs as well (Horine 2001:96).

Consistent with ancient Near Eastern culture (Fox 1985:14), these spatial and architectural concepts are perhaps similar to landscape images such as the rounded shapes of mountains. They are also perhaps euphemistic puns on the adored female body (Horine 2001:109 and Keel 1986:112), which is therefore, by implication, given a religious connotation parallel to that of a temple.

The sacred marriage chamber metonymically represents the womb as the maternal chamber for conception as in 3:4, whereas the garden and

vineyard represent her whole body. This is reinforced by the common consonantal root of נָדָרָיו and the denominative verbal form, which means to penetrate deeply (cf Ezekiel 21:19), while חֶרְבוֹ (his sword), hinted at as a phallic symbol in 3:8, is the implied subject.

Viviers (1990:241) mentions that the wedding in 3:6-8 sounds similar to religious processions and theophanies in the neighbouring cultures. He also believes that the mother fulfils the same function in 3:4 as the Egyptian Hathor (Viviers 1990:242). To this might be added the parallel role of the Sumerian Ningal in the sacred marriage ritual of Inanna and Dumuzi (Pope 1977:421-422).

In the Ugaritic fertility myths the vine and the field were Baal's messengers, and referred euphemistically to the male and female partners in the sexual act (Pope 1977:646). The role of the vine was therefore that of the male, contrary to that in Song of Songs, but the same image in a parallel mythical context. It would have conjured up similar religious sentiments, at least for those who were educated enough to be familiar with their neighbouring cultures.

The food, drink and love of 5:1 are also echoed in the Ugaritic text, 4[51].4.35-39, where 'Asherah receives these same gifts from her husband, El, in his abode, thus inducing the mythical background to Song of Songs (Horine 2001:101). Similar parallels occur in respect of the carriage in 1:9 בָּרֶכְבִּי (in the chariots of), 3:7 מִטָּתוֹ (his litter) and 6:12 מִרְכָּבוֹת (chariots). These function as transitional and transportational vehicles from one marital status, and perhaps symbolically state of consciousness, to another and are closely linked to the marriage chamber images (Horine 2001:124).

Although the chariot was a military vehicle in the ancient Near East, this function was overshadowed in the Mesopotamian sacred marriage ritual, where it mainly served as a bed. In a Sumerian text, Enlil embraces his wife, Ninlil, in such a chariot built by the king, who is rewarded with the blessing of his marriage by the virgin priestess of the Inanna temple. In hymns about the sacred marriage from Sumeria the furnishings of the bed of Inanna are dealt with in as much detail as those of the litter of Solomon in 3:9-10. In the Gilgamesh Epic it is Ishtar who offers her bed as a gift to her hero. In old Egyptian love songs love under a tree is mentioned in a temple context, which

brings to mind the prophetic polemic against mountain sacrifices and sexual offences under certain trees associated with the Baal cult (cf Hosea 4:13). In fact, the majority of cases elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible where the word רַעֲנָנָה (lush in 1:16) occurs are in this connection (cf Deuteronomy 12:2; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 16:4; Jeremiah 2:20; Jeremiah 3:6 and 13; Ezekiel 6:13; Isaiah 57:5, Keel 1986:76-78).

The vehicle thus relinks and mediates the transition from the earthly to the divine worlds or levels of consciousness (Horine 2001:125-127). The military associations of these nuptial spaces is reinforced by the presence of גִּבּוּרִים (soldiers or bodyguards) in 3:7 and the soldiers implied in 6:12-7:1, and in that way link these two episodes as well (Fischer 2010:148). They echo the connection between war and love represented by the ancient goddess, and thus clarify the military images found in the context of eroticism in Song of Songs. Perhaps both these aspects of her were regarded as the violent, revolutionary and conflict-ridden crossing of boundaries to alternative worlds, a transition often effected through playful travesties.

Some have speculated whether the yields from the harems implied by 8:12 were due to sacred prostitution as it was practised for Astarte of the Sidonians (cf 1 Kings 11:5, Keel 1986:256).

2.3.3 Planetary associations

The participle, הִנְשָׁקָה (looking down), in 6:10 adds to the celestial context created by the planetary associations. The mythological associations are reinforced by the fact that שחר (dawn) is an Ugaritic deity, who was well known in the pre-Davidic Jerusalem (Müller 1988:117). It also once again reminds one of the goddess, especially Inanna, who, according to sacred marriage texts, was elevated through marriage to the new status of Queen of Heaven (Horine 2001:160-161). For Keel and Uehlinger (1992:335) it is Ishtar's astral character and her terrifying war aspect which constitute the background to 6:10. Yet, the alternatives, כְּלִבְנָה (like the moon) and כְּחֶמֶה (like the sun) instead of יָרֵחַ and שֶׁמֶשׁ, respectively, have been used in 6:10, perhaps to avoid allusions to the deities. Müller (1988:120) considers כְּנִדְגָלוֹת (like bannered hosts) to refer to the Pleiades. Like the sun and the moon, these were regarded as attributes of Inanna-Ishtar, the Queen of Heaven,

mentioned for instance in Jeremiah 7:18, with whose type the woman is therefore associated.

There are indirect, perhaps even unconscious, implications of שְׂמָאלוֹ (let his left hand be under my head and his right arm embrace me) in 2:6 and 8:3. The first is the portrayal of the left hand as (only) supportive and the right as active, marking an almost universal symbolism inscribed onto the body and imposing meaning onto the world. This was also the case in the Hebrew tradition (Hunt 2008:195). This distinction includes religious undertones of the sacred and the profane as a result of humans naturally facing the rising sun, the source of all life, in the east. This orientation results in the two hands relating to the two winds, צָפוֹן (north) and תֵּימָן (south), in 4:16: the universal inequality and asymmetry accorded to two otherwise almost identical hands are derived from the light and warmth coming in the northern hemisphere from the south, while the colder shadow falls to the north. In many cultures the left, which is the weaker in most people, represents death, passivity, holding and the feminine, whereas the right is a symbol of life, taking and the masculine. Oaths are, for instance, sworn with the right hand. If this distinction was not consciously made in the collective mind, it might have meant that the boundaries between the sacred and the profane, and between the male and the female, were being blurred as well (Bowie 2006:37-39). This therefore links the celestial bodies to the literal body and the different appreciation of its parts.

2.3.4 Nocturnal terrors

Demons may be regarded as part of the mythic world view and as such דִּמּוֹנִים (due to dread in the night) in 3:8 refers to the demonic threat against the wedding procession or that of death in the bridal chamber, a widespread belief in the ancient Near East. They were thought to be attracted particularly by good-looking brides and pestered humans with sickness and death specifically at night, which was therefore an ominous time. In Exodus 11:4f and Isaiah 37:36 nocturnal intervention is even identified with YHWH or his angel (Krinetzki 1981:122). Demons, symbolising sexual anxiety, first needed to be killed by the sword, clearly referring to phallic potency (Keel 1986:122). This is, for instance, evidenced in the book of Tobit, where the jealous demon,

Asmodeus, kills seven husbands to prevent them from having sex with the bride. According to rabbinic literature, this fate could befall either party of the marriage, however. The marriage canopy and its variations elaborated upon above were perhaps the precaution taken against these dangers (Horine 2001:150). The subtlety and fragility of the sacred are sensitive and vulnerable to the gross gravitation which constantly attempts to draw it back into the primitive levels of the unconscious and of death. Viviers (2006:94n8) mentions a belief that the demons craved to be incarnated and would therefore try to enter the woman via the virginal blood and eventually also the man. This might imply an appreciation of the body as a container outside of which existence is hellish.

2.3.5 Anthropomorphic representation

That deities are portrayed in human form is well known. Not only were humans made in God's image, but also vice versa. According to Müller (1994:378), the *aušâf*, which occur in 4:1-7; 6:4-7, 5:10-16 and 7:2-8, are rooted in the cultic hymns when a deity is described in terms of its statue, such as the Akkadian portrayal of the god Ninurta and an Ugaritic description of Baal. These myths were only later secularised using their images and themes in love poems (Watson 1984:353). Deities were imagined as having bodies from stone and metal (cf Jeremiah 10:9; Daniel 2:32) as an old Egyptian text about cult statues confirms. In the myth of the Heavenly Cow from the fourteenth century BCE the sun god, in particular, was said to have bones of silver, limbs of gold and hair of lapis lazuli. A hymn to Amun-Re from the twelfth century BCE has almost the same description, except that his flesh is said to be of gold. A golden head probably referred to the sun and the blue of lapis lazuli imitated the sky as the primeval ocean. The Pharaoh as the son of the sun god was therefore likewise portrayed (Keel 1986:190), reflecting in his body the celestial spheres. In the Israelite tradition the place on which the feet of God rest and his throne are made from lapis lazuli (cf Exodus 24:10) (Keel 1986:193), that is, what the sky was in Egyptian mythology. This is reflected in 5:15 where the sockets of the legs or feet are also from fine gold like the head, perhaps a merismatic way of speaking about the whole of his body. The anthropomorphical depiction of the gods as projections of the

human body was therefore in turn received as an ideal and model for the human body and in a roundabout way the human body was therefore a reminder of a god, thus reintegrating its own projection.

2.3.6 Deities

One now comes to the core of the mythic mindset, which is theism in its many variations.

A few deities are hinted at: *רֶשֶׁפִּי* *רֶשֶׁפִּי* *אֵשׁ* (its flames, flames of fire) in 8:6 is a repetition of the same noun in two differently inflected forms of the root to emphasise its intensity. The noun appears also in 1 Chronicles 7:25 as a proper name, and in Psalms 76:4 and 78:48, Job 5:7, Deuteronomy 32:24 and Habakkuk 3:5 referring to pestilence and death, in the latter case associating it also with YHWH (Halla, Jones & Mattingly 1990:425). It brings to mind the Canaanite-Phoenician chthonic partner of the fertile land, the weather deity (Keel 1986:250) of lightning and plagues, Resheph, wielding his fiery arrows (Horine 2001:197). He is related to the Mesopotamian Nergal. These aggressive and phallic attributes in 8:6 are therefore projected onto the lover, just as the beloved has identified herself as a divine presence through her link with the prophylactic seals on the lover's body. He spreads death and his epithet is Lord of the arrow, suggesting his phallic yet also destructive nature. The Egyptians made him into a war god with a shield and club or ball axe, and the head of a gazelle instead of the usual *uraeus* (rearing cobra) in his Upper Egyptian crown (Lurker 1984:301). In Egyptian iconography he also appears several times to the left of the nude fertility goddess, who is standing on a lion and holding a lotus and a serpent, with the ithyphallic Min on her right, emphasising the ambivalent nature of the great goddess of both love-life and war-death (Pope 1977:670). As a parallel to *מָוֶת* (death), reminiscent of the Canaanite deity, the killer of Ba'al who therefore also interfered in his relationship, and *שְׁאוֹל* (the underworld), the contrast with love (but not necessarily life) is thus reinforced. A new polarity different from the usual and expected one (life-death) is therefore introduced: love survives death, already adumbrated by the trip through the desert as the domain of death (Fischer 2010:170n177), but there is also refuge and the intense experiences of God (Fischer 2010:200). This ties in with the sacrificial nature of love. To these

subtle hints to Phoenician-Canaanite deities, Viviers (2008:456) adds Yamm, the dominant sea, river and water god eventually only overcome by Ba'al (Lurker 1987:175), as being conjured up by the repeated mentioning of violent waters in 8:6.

בַּעַל הָמוֹן (at Baal Hamon, or perhaps at Baal of Abundance) probably refers to a fictional locality, but nevertheless hints at a deity whose temple might be implied (Krinetzki 1981:229). It could also simply denote master or owner of wealth as well.

צִבְאוֹת (gazelles) in the adjuration refrain also brings to mind as a homonymy יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-צִבְאוֹת (YHWH God of Hosts) with both its military and celestial connotations suggested perhaps in 6:4 and 6:10, and אֵילֹת הַשָּׂדֶה (hinds of the field) to אֵל שַׁדַּי (*El Shaddai*, or God of my breasts, for instance in Genesis 17:1, usually translated as God most high or God Almighty), and perhaps also hinted at by דִּדִּי (my love, or my breasts), for instance in 7:13. The animal names would then function as euphemisms or sobriquets out of respect for the divine name, but this occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible (Viviers 1989:89). The fact that they are not mentioned in the adjuration of 8:4 might reflect some sensitivity about swearing by foreign deities, which might then explain versions without them (Keel 1986:242).

The allegedly abbreviated tetragrammaton (יה -) at the end of 8:6 has often been used as proof that Song of Songs is a Yahwist book. If it is meant literally, it could be similar to אֵשׁ יְהוָה (the flame of YHWH) in Numbers 11:1 and 1 Kings 18:38. Some savants have drawn attention to the use of divine names for the superlative, which, of course, still acknowledges the presence of the ineffable name here. Others have noted the brevity of the verse line as indicative of the need for textual emendation, often through, amongst other things, an anaptyctic penultimate syllable. This would render the singular feminine pronominal suffix, referring to אֶהְבָּה (love) and parallel to רֶשֶׁפִּיהָ (its flames) in the preceding colon. Whether the last syllable should be separate from the pregenitive noun שְׁלֵהֶבֶת has also been mooted as a possibility, which would negate its superlative value to become instead a proper name in the genitive case. However, even if it is intended as a superlative, the sound of the suffix ending might probably have conjured up the holy name, even if only unconsciously, as happens with homonyms in general.

Viviers (2008:455) believes that YHWH was the male personification of patriarchy and therefore intentionally omitted in line with the general implied subversive critique in Song of Songs against this ideology. However, there is no proof that YHWH was consciously recognised as such despite the fact that god constructs determine and reflect gender constructs. Viviers's view is, however, supported by Brenner's observation that God is absent in situations where strong women come to the fore, such as in Judges 4 and in the book of Esther (Viviers 2006:97). As it does not seem to be an oversight that the most holy name does not appear in Song of Songs, the omission might, in fact, have been intended and been so conspicuous in both the cultural and the canonical contexts that it would paradoxically have induced an awareness of the presence of the omnipresent and solely recognised national deity. What remains unsaid or hinted at between the lines can, ironically, become the foreground of the text. Silence is not necessarily a rhetorical device to discredit someone or something.

2.3.7 Ritual song

The first two words of the title, שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים, refer to the combination of music and poetry as its verbal extension. Both these modes of expression and communication reflect alternative, often dreamy, states of consciousness. According to Jenni and Westermann (1976:895), all singing and instrumental music were originally in a cultic context and even later profane music often retained some sacred connotation. In 2:12 הַזָּמִיר (both song and pruning, functioning as a pun [Watson 1984:369]) echoes this mood (Jenni & Westermann 1976:896), in which this anthology is cast right from the start. That Song of Songs is still sung at the modern Jewish Pesach can be regarded as a continuation of this cultic aspect.

2.3.8 Allegorical interpretations

The earlier translations, such as the Septuagint, still maintain a naturalistic interpretation which does not avoid the sexual suggestions, but therefore does not seem to recognise more abstract or sublimated love in Song of Songs. Breasts are, for instance, explicitly mentioned in 4:5, 7:3 and 8:1. In fact, the earliest interpretations of Song of Songs seem to be naturalist, although still

rooted in the cultic and mythical, before the paternal cultural separation of sexuality and religiosity in the allegorical approach became dominant. Although the allegorical interpretation belongs to the cultic-mythical approach as it is the product of theistic religions, the variety of its content will not be discussed here, since its limits depend only on the extent to which the exegete can manage to project his imagination onto the text as a recipient screen. This interpretation of Song of Songs has been the dominant one in both the Jewish and Christian mainline traditions, perhaps, amongst other factors, induced by their canonical contexts within which it has been situated. Canonisation could, however, have been either a cause or effect of this interpretation (Müller 1994:393)

2.3.9 Incantations or oaths

Incantations or oaths belonged to the cultic sphere because they were a holy act sealing a promise or agreement in a holy place, sometimes administered by a holy person, and in connection with holy objects. At the same time they functioned within the mythical context where one could invoke a deity as witness and sponsor. In Israel one was supposed to swear only by invoking YHWH, the God of heaven and earth. Although swearing by other deities occurred, this was condemned. Later people swore by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, the temple or their own head, perhaps to indicate what was at stake. That the young woman makes her audience swear by the same two antelopes to which she compared her lover implies that she deified him, even if in a playful way, but Song of Songs is perhaps too intense for any such light-heartedness. At the beginning of the twentieth century some commentators believed that this was a way to avoid divine names in an erotic context, something similar to the way the French, when swearing, would say *bleu* instead of *Dieu*. Similar examples do not exist otherwise in the Hebrew Bible, though, and the French substitute then has no meaning in the context apart from the allusion to the divine name (Keel 1986:92) unless it refers to the blue sky as heaven, the abode of God.

Suppressing the conditional curse in the apodosis from fear of harm due to the magical power of speech and a further reduction of the formula left only אִם (if) introducing the remaining positive conditional protasis, but

rendering it a negative asseveration (Pope 1962:575-577). To swear an oath is to make an appeal to an external deity to witness and affirm the truth of a statement. The verb literally means to come under the influence of or to enter into a relationship with the magical number of seven things (Smith 1956:182). It might not be coincidental that Lebanon (3:9, 4:8 (twice), 4:11, 4:15, 5:15 and 7:5), Solomon (1:1, 1:5, 3:7, 3:9, 3:11, 8:11 and 8:12), the mother (1:6, 3:4, 3:11, 6:9, 8:1, 8:2 and 8:5), the daughters of Jerusalem (1:5, 2:7, 3:5, 3:10, 5:8, 5:16 and 8:4), my soul or self (1:7, 3:1, 3:2, 3:3, 3:4, 5:6 and 6:12) and the objects of the lover's activities in 5:1 are all mentioned seven times. Jerusalem is, curiously, mentioned eight times (1:5, 2:7, 3:5, 3:10, 5:8, 5:16, 6:4 and 8:4). As in Mesopotamian sex omens where the woman is the active agent (Guinan 1998:41; Keel 1986:243), oaths are uttered by the beloved.

Widengren (1969:8) opposes adjuration to prayer and regards it therefore as part of magic rather than religion. However, the external expressions of these two psychically different reactions are often too similar to distinguish them from each other. Krinetzki (1981:168) also regards it as a magical ploy to conjure up the desired results.

The refrains in 2:7, 3:5 and 8:4 have often been regarded as key to the structure and interpretation of Song of Songs. They all contain the words enacted as they are said: הִשְׁבַּעְתִּי אֶתְכֶם (I adjure you), as well as the verbs אֶם-תִּעִירוּ (lest you awaken) and אֶם-תִּעֲוֹרְרוּ (and lest you arouse) as an apparent warning about the power of love.

The adjuration formula, אֶם [...] אֶם, is replaced by the negative [...] מָה וּמָה (why [...] and why) in 8:4. Here the allusion to the gazelles and the hinds is also omitted, as it is now no longer a pure adjuration, but rather a prohibition, even though it is introduced by the same הִשְׁבַּעְתִּי (I adjure) as in 2:7 and 3:5. The *waw* as *mater lectionis* is also absent in the second verb, תִּעֲוֹרְרוּ, suggesting that this was a variant of the previous formula. The adjuration in 5:8 is not really a refrain, although it uses the same adjurative introductory words in requesting the witnesses to promise and swear that they will do what the beloved wants.

The two animals mentioned always occur together and in the same order, except in 4:5 and 7:4, where both are associated with her breasts, but these verses are not adjurations. It is further noteworthy that the images

conjured up by the beloved's adjurative demands, בַּצְבָּאוֹת אוֹ בְּאֵילֹת הַשָּׂדֶה (by the gazelles [masculine] and the does [feminine] of the field) are mirrored by the wild, restless movement of the lover, who is likened to the same animals in 2:9, 2:17 and 8:14, though differing in gender, number and age: there they are both masculine and in the singular, and a young stag is specifically mentioned. This comparison regards both appearance and movement. On a Middle Assyrian cylinder seal a fallow deer is portrayed as leaping over a mountain and on a piece of ivory from Lebanon from the same period a stag is shown as fleeing from a fox (Keel 1986:95). It is as if the beloved identifies the lover with the animals and wants him to be or behave like them. On the other hand, Viviers (1989:87), like Keel (1986:44 and 92-94), regards the animals in the refrains as the substitutes and representatives of God on earth and as reminders of love, conflating therefore two concepts and also expressing an awareness of divine presence even at the height of passion. Both polytheism and expressing the divine name are therefore avoided when swearing by the attributes of God instead (Viviers 1989:89).

2.3.10 Change and resistance

The mythical level still functions as group conformity, conventionality and ideology (Wilber 1999:43). Personal critical attempts towards change are therefore discouraged. Two verbs in various inflexions suggest such a conservative attitude: נִטְרָה (maintain) twice in 1:6, נִטְרָתִי in 8:11 and לְנִטְרִים in 8:12, and the participles, הַשְׁמָרִים (guarding) in 3:3 and 5:7 where the pre-genitive שְׁמָרִי is also found. The first verb of maintenance can, however, also denote a nurturing action of caring for the vineyards. Perhaps the negative imperatives as warnings of restraint and correct timing in the adjuration refrains contain a similar element of resistance against change that seems overwhelming: two forces pulling in opposite directions, just as love and death, Eros and Thanatos, compete. Neither force can be manipulated by possession (Keel 1986:245).

Both her begging him to סוּב ([re]turn) in 2:17, and his שׁוּבִי שׁוּבִי (turn! or come back!) in 7:1 express the repetitive and cyclical nature of obsessive love, reflected also in the refrains, among other things.

2.3.11 Holy places

Place names function as metaphors reflecting different traditions and connotations (Fischer 2010:187) to convey certain qualities through their associations (Fischer 2010:181). Although water as a life-giving source constitutes the root of holy places, which are initially infused with animism, deities were later on associated with sacred localities. These are therefore dealt with here as part of the cultic-mythic level of religiosity. Incidentally, they also tie in with the contrast of height and depth, a theme running through the text at all levels and reinforcing the polarities and the struggle towards transcendence.

2.3.11.1 Valleys

הַעֲמָקִים (of the valleys) in 2:1 is the first noun which implies depth, with associations of the unfathomable and the unsearchable (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1907:771), and different levels of elevation. To this can be added מַעְיָן גְּנִים בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים וְנָזְלִים מִן-לְבָנוֹן (a garden fountain, a well of living water and streams from the Lebanon) in 4:15.

Talmon (1987:125) identifies the pair of opposites, mountains and deserts, as a Biblical motif signifying the positive and negative poles respectively of human existential experiences. In addition, both function spatially and temporally.

2.3.11.2 Deserts

The desert refers to the Sinai experience as a brief transitional time, traditionally forty years, between Egyptian slavery and the much longer First Temple period of settlement in the Promised Land, Israel, mentioned only in 3:7, and then with a military connotation. Stay in the idealised land was traditionally sometimes thought of as almost a millennium, and identified with the Mountain of Israel. The desert signifies aridity and barrenness, from which one would rise to the time and place of water and fertility. Although the desert functions as a refuge for lonely outcasts, it represents bare survival. In Semitic mythology it is also inhabited by demons and *jinn*, wild animals such as the raven and the Ugaritic god of death, Moth, who also lived at the base of the mountains (Talmon 1987:126-127). Despite the fact that God revealed himself

there, it was only for meeting his people in crisis. Müller (1988:113) regards the desert of 3:6 therefore as a numinous place. It is the resting place of the night hag, Lilīth, according to Isaiah 34:14, but, according to Psalm 29:8, God's creative voice of flames of fire made it tremble. Although God still provided for the wandering tribes, it was the place of punishment due to their detours of doubt and transgression.

2.3.11.3 Mountains

Valleys imply mountains and this idea is elaborated upon in 2:8, where the lover moves *על-הָהָרִים* (on the mountains) and *על-הַגְּבוּעוֹת* (on the hills), echoed in 4:6, and in 8:14 by *עַל הָרֵי בְשָׁמִים* (on the mountains of spices). According to Keel (1986:142), this word pair evokes a mythic-cultic landscape with mysterious blessing powers (cf Genesis 49:26; Deuteronomy 33:15) and its appeal continued long after the Baal cult of the heights had been denounced (cf Hosea 4:13 and Deuteronomy 12:2). In 2:17 the antelope are again *עַל-הָרֵי בְתָר* (on the mountains of separation or spices) as they are pictured *עַל הָרֵי בְשָׁמִים* (on the balsam mountains) in 8:14. In Egyptian love poetry a far and mysterious land of myrrh, frankincense and fantasies, Punt, also features as a utopic rendezvous (Gerleman 1981:128 and 161; Krinetzki 1981:113).

The fragrant mountains of 2:17 and 4:6 could then refer to somewhere similarly unreal which would then probably be in the south (cf Jeremiah 6:20; Isaiah 60:6) and the antithesis of the wild and dangerous Lebanon of 4:8 in the far north of Palestine (cf Deuteronomy 11:24; Joshua 1:4; 9:1) (Gerleman 1981:150 and 152). Both, however opposites (perhaps as a kind of merism), represent aspects of the numinous. Mountains could as such also signify the place of death for the gods (Loretz 1991:135).

Mountains sometimes functioned as thrones for goddesses, for instance for the wild Ishtar who is depicted on a cylinder seal as energetically getting onto a mountain (god) (Keel 1986:145). According to the Gilgamesh tradition, the Lebanon Mountains served as a secret home for Anunnaku (Loretz 1991:140) and as Ishtar's residence. They reach a height of 3 083 m in the north and were regarded in Ezekiel 31 as the mountain of YHWH who had planted its cedars himself (Psalm 104:16) (Keel 1986:145). For Krinetzki

(1981:140) they represent the Great Mother (according to theories of Neumann [1956]) whose body they resemble. The smell of Lebanon sticking to שְׁלִמְתֶּיךָ (your clothes) in 4:11 suggests this contact with the divine. An inscription from Cyprus mentions a Phoenician who called on the Baal of Lebanon. That it was snowcapped might have created a halo effect and the religious atmosphere which this suggests. Hittite treatises from the second millennium BCE already mention several gods in connection with Mount Lebanon and Hermon. According to Psalm 29:6, Lebanon and Sirion leapt like young calves, similar to the lover leaping like a gazelle or a young hind in 2:9, 2:17 and 8:14. Lebanon is mentioned seven times in Song of Songs: in 3:9, twice in 4:8, 4:11, 4:15, 5:15 and 7:5, perhaps also suggesting in this way its religious undertones. Philo of Byblos included Lebanon and Hermon, as well as Saphon (perhaps its summit and probably associated with צפון [the north wind] in 4:16) amongst the holy mountains of the Phoenicians.

Three of the four names in 4:8, Amana, Senir and Hermon, could refer to the northern, middle and southern parts, respectively, of the Anti-Lebanon. Deuteronomy 3:9, however, points out that two of them were apparently the same: the Sidonians or Phoenicians called Hermon Sirion, but the Amorites called it Senir (Keel 1986:145; Gerleman 1981:152). Hermon, the sacred mountain as its name implies, is at 2 814 m the highest peak of the Anti-Lebanon range. As the northern boundary of Israel with Syria, it had military connotations, particularly in connection with the view it allowed (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1907:356). 1 Chronicles 5:23 mentions the nearby Baal Hermon and the apocryphal book of Henoch narrates that the angels, who wanted relations with women, came down on to Hermon. Its slopes and peaks are still covered with the ruins of numerous sanctuaries, temples and altars, which remained in use until at least the fourth century CE (Keel 1986:148) .

Carmel, or *Rosh Qodesh* (Sacred Cape) to which the beloved's head is likened in 7:6, also had a long history of worship, extending into Greek and Roman culture: Periplus of Scylax in the fourth century BCE, for instance, called it a mountain of Zeus, Tacitus identified the name of the mountain with that of a god and Vespasian sacrificed at an open-air altar on the top. With Thabor, Saphon and Lebanon it counted amongst the sacred Phoenician mountains. An altar of twelve stones, but no temple or statue, has been found,

suggesting an open-air place of worship. It was later disputed between the Phoenicians whose god, Baalshamem, or more probably Melqart of Tyre, ruled over it and the Israelites, leading to the triumph of Elijah (cf 1 Kings 18:20-48) (De Vaux 1978:280). Mount Gilead is simply mentioned in 4:1 and 6:5 as pastoral space.

In the highlands, from which the military defeat of Canaan was possible, the desert deity YHWH was reinterpreted as a mountain god, although he was already associated with Mount Sinai and Mount Horeb in the wilderness as well (Talmon 1987:130). Mountains functioned as both centres and boundary markers (Talmon 1987:131). Although theology of God's omnipresence rejected the mythic notion of holy space, it still regarded mountains as representing the *axis mundi*, connecting heaven and earth, with their foundations in the life-threatening but subdued waters of the underworld (cf Deuteronomy 32:22; Psalm 24:2, 77:20, 93:3-4; Isaiah 17:13; Jonah 2:7 and Psalm 104:6-8; Habakkuk 3:9). As many Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals show, it is against this negative aspect of water that the weather god fights with his arrows, a role taken over by YHWH in, for instance, Psalm 18:13-16 (Keel 1986:250) and in the creation narrative (Fischer 2010:74). These pillars of the universe thus connected the three levels of reality (Talmon 1987:132). In addition, various mountains were associated with God, theophanies and cults, culminating in the election of Zion as a symbol of the vision of the future (Talmon 1987:133). Mountains are regarded as the sources of springs and brooks which will flow forth from the house of God, according to Joel 4:18 (cf also Psalm 46:2-5), facilitating the association between the mountains and rivers. They are also eschatologically imagined as full of fruit trees, wine and milk, but also of blood, due to the victory to come, after which the global banquet, liberation and reconciliation will follow (Talmon 1987:134). It is therefore clear that both deserts and mountains are charged with various emotional and religious connotations.

According to the Hebrew Bible, however, YHWH had only two mountains: Sinai, which is where he came from, and Zion, his home, and later that of his name, representing YHWH's special presence there (De Vaux 1978:280-281). As the former Jebusite citadel and fortress conquered by David, it had strong military connotations, linked to YHWH Sabaoth. From the

time of Isaiah onwards it had strong religious associations, being the centre of formalised and institutionalised religion and Jewish piety. The book of Deuteronomy stresses at least twenty times that it was chosen by YHWH through a theophany. It was the centre of religious festivals and of the covenant, as it housed the temple, designed according to foreign ideas and by foreign workmen. When it was saved in 701 BCE from foreign invasion and destruction, it became a visible sign of its miraculous protection in the collective memory. In poetry it was equated with Saphon, the residence of the gods (cf Psalm 48:3). The temple was later seen as the cosmic centre, although this idea does not occur in the Hebrew Bible, except in the visionary altar, which Ezekiel saw, but which was never built. It was, however, also inspired by foreign ideas (De Vaux 1978:326-328). Through the Psalms and the later prophetic texts this relatively small mountain became inflated in the religious mind, far beyond its natural height (De Vaux 1978:281). It is to Zion, one of the hills on which Jerusalem was built, that the city owes its status in Song of Songs as well.

2.3.11.4 Cities

Jerusalem is, in fact, the first of eighteen (or nineteen, if Bat Nadim is a proper name in 6:12) place names which is mentioned in 1:5, repeated in the three refrains of 2:7, 3:5 and 8:4 and in 3:10, 5:8, 5:16 and 6:4. The latter is the only time when it is not associated with its daughters but with the beloved instead, giving it a feminine aura.

Cultural and collective spaces are usually coded as masculine while private, intimate spheres have feminine connotations. These place names serve as screens onto which unconscious wishes and anxieties can be projected (Fischer 2010:189). תִּרְצָה (Tirtzah, beauty or pleasure) in 6:4 is probably used merismatically with Jerusalem to express the extent of the beloved's beauty. It has very old roots, dating from the fourth millennium BCE, and is associated with the reign of Omri, whose house had strong diplomatic connections with Phoenicia and the religion of Astarte (Wright 1962:152). The fact that it was for a short time the capital after the reign of Solomon adds, however, to the fictional character of Song of Songs, as does מִגְדַּל דָּוִד (the tower of David, a *hapax legomenon*) and מִגְדַּל הַלְבָנוֹן (the Lebanon tower,

another *hapax legomenon*) in 7:5 (Fischer 2010:185). דַּמָּשְׁקַ (Damascus) is mentioned in 7:5 suggesting its being watched from Jerusalem just as the celestial bodies in 6:10 look down upon lesser beings, thus perhaps subtly suggesting Jerusalem's similar status as celestial. Together with חֶשְׁבֹן (Heshbon) in 7:5, these two non-Israelite cities can indicate a much broader, more universal view than simply nationalistic.

The city mentioned in 3:3 and 5:7 is not identified, but may be Jerusalem. בָּעִיר (in the city), בִּשְׁוֹקִים (on the streets) and וּבִרְחֻבוֹת (and on the squares) in 3:2, the beloved dares exposure as she is searching. Instead of her finding her lover the policemen ironically find and assault her in 5:7. She cannot dare to kiss him בַּחוּץ (outside), lest she be scorned, in 8:1. הַחֲמוֹת (the walls) in 5:7 are boundaries which limit her search, but within which she is also abused. It is guarded by males as the "skin" of the social and public body. The city of God does not afford her much protection and belonging, despite its beauty in 6:4, unless one is here subtly confronted by cruelty as the underbelly of beauty. Her beauty is, however, much more universal than the centre would suggest and resembles also the distant Tirtzah or some fictive place elsewhere: בְּרִכּוֹת בְּחֶשְׁבֹן, עַל-שַׁעַר בֵּת-רַבִּים (the pools of Heshbon, at the gate of Bat-Rabbim, probably an epithet of Heshbon to suggest the multitudes which frequented it [Pope 1977:626]) in 7:5. The pools and gate, like the tower, are the orifices of the body which is the city, its wall the skin.

2.3.12 Contrast

Intensity is not only expressed through repetition as in the refrains (Gerleman 1981:157), but also through polarities, which can be regarded as part of the projecting and mythical mind. The need to separate more strongly that which seems to blur into one another is now realised by the developing religious consciousness.

The descriptions vacillate between the royal and the rural (cf for instance הָרָעִים [the shepherds] and וְרָעִי [and let graze] in 1:8 versus הַמֶּלֶךְ [the king] in 1:12). רָחַצְתִּי (I cleaned) in 5:3 (resonating with הִרְחַצָּה in 4:2) contrasts with אֶטְנַפֶּם (I will dirty them) in 5:3, as does פָּתַחְתִּי (open) in 5:2 and its morphological variations in 5:5 and 5:6 with נָעוּל (locked) twice in 4:12. In 5:3 פָּשַׁטְתִּי (I took off) is opposed to אָלְבִּשְׁנָה (I would put it on). הַיּוֹם (the day) and

הַצִּלְלִים (the shadows) are juxtaposed in 2:17. The latter are repeated in 4:6, and contrast with הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ (the sun) in 1:6, and שָׁחַר (dawn) and חֶמָּה (sun) in 6:10 as well. More examples are: בִּקְשָׁתִּיהוּ (I looked for him), וְלֹא מָצָאתִיהוּ (but I did not find him) in 3:2 and קָרָאתִיו (I called him), וְלֹא עָנָנִי (but he did not answer me) in 5:6. All these contrasts create an intense tone which approaches that of the religious mind.

The title already expresses intensity through a superlative, adumbrating the style so often used for the beauty of the woman, for instance הַיָּפָה בְּנָשִׁים (fairest among women) in 5:9 and 6:1 and for the man, וְחֶכְמָה כֵּיין (and your palate is like the best wine) in 7:10. There is thus a constant awareness of hierarchical levels as the comparison, טוֹבִים דְּדִיךָ מֵיין (your love is better than wine) in 1:2 already shows. Excess, of course, belongs to the extreme nature of the erotic and the religious, as Bataille (1962:89) has argued.

One also finds absolute claims such as the comparison of her teeth to the symmetrical completeness of the descending ewes expressed by וְשִׁנֶּיהָ אֵין וְשִׁנֶּיהָ אֵין (and none fails among them) in 4:2 echoed in 6:6, כָּלָךְ יָפָה (all of you is lovely) and וְיָמוֹם אֵין בָּךְ (and there is no blemish in you) in 4:7 (which is reminiscent of how it is used mostly in cultic contexts [cf Leviticus 21:17 ff and 22:20] referring to priests and sacrifices otherwise not being acceptable to God), תַּמְתִּי (my perfect one) in 5:2 and 6:9 and אֵל-יִחְסֹר הַמֶּזֶג (there is no lack of mingled wine) in her “navel” in 7:3, a negative to emphasise a positive. Perfection is also ascribed to him: וְכָלֹ מִחֲמַדִּים (and all of him is lovely) in 5:16. Asher-Greve (1998b:10) claims, however, that perfection was something guaranteed by the mother and birth goddesses. This would imply that the modern interpretation of it being an exaggeration for stylistic purposes is culture relative and not loyal to the original sense of Song of Songs.

To this can be added exaggeration expressed by hyperbole, for instance דָּגוּל מִרְבָּבָה רָאשׁוֹ כְּתֵם פָּז (standing out from amongst ten thousand. His head is the finest gold) in 5:10-11, מִרְאֵהוּ כְּלִבְנוֹן בְּחֹר כְּאַרְזִים (his appearance is like the Lebanon, excellent like the cedars) in 5:15 (Fischer 2010:183n220; cf also Gerleman 1981:142) and מַה-יָּפֹו פַעְמִיךָ בְּנָעָלִים, בֵּת-נָדִיב (how beautiful are your steps in sandals, oh, prince’s daughter!) in 7:2, implying perfection through a rhetorical question (Fischer 2010:151n129).

This kind of singularity and exceptionality is also ascribed to her, *כְּשׁוֹשְׁנָה בֵּין הַחוֹחִים כֵּן רַעֲיָתִי בֵּין הַבָּנוֹת* (like a lotus amongst the thorns is my friend among the daughters) in 2:4 and *אַחַת הִיא [...] אַחַת הִיא* (one is she [...] one is she) in 6:9-10, which calls to mind the divine selection of the people of God according to the Hebrew Bible. The ultimate superlative occurs in the crucial 8:6-7. The reduction from the plural to the singular to suggest selection reappears in the final verses.

2.3.13 Conflict

Contrast suggests conflict. The military references may be seen as symbolic of this internal psychic conflict and its defences which are so part and parcel of passionate but tumultuous love, represented by the power of love and the women who elicit it (Viviers 1989:86).

Inner conflict is expressed externally. Seeking and finding in 3:1-5 and 5:2-8 might not be opposites logically, but rather steps in a struggle towards progression and development. This theme is well known from the prophets (cf Hosea 2:9, 5:6; Jeremiah 7:27, 2:13; Isaiah 65:1, 12) and the wisdom teachers (cf Proverbs 1:28) about the love relationship between YHWH and his people and explains the allegorical interpretation of Song of Songs in that regard. The question in 6:1 about the whereabouts of the lover sounds similar to that of Anat in the Ugaritic myth to the sun goddess, Shapash, about Baal after his temporary disappearance to the world of the dead due to a drought. Although Keel (1986:196) denies any link to it, the obviously educated author or editor of Song of Songs might have been influenced by it and any educated readers reminded of it. The same theme is found when the crying Ishtar searches for Tammuz-Marduk in the underworld and brings him to life in the bride's room. The two episodes of searching in Song of Songs might then be about some timeless mythical past which is relived in a dreamlike state, a possibility which Gerleman (1981:131) discounts due to the absence of death and lamentation in these passages of Song of Songs. These do, however, recur as themes in the mythical versions.

The chariot and horses of Pharaoh in 1:9 are the first indication of the beloved's powerful impressiveness. *וְיָדָגְלוֹ* (and his banner) in 2:4 and *כְּבָדָגְלוֹת* (bannered armies) in 6:4 and 6:10, which Exum (2005:218) describes as a

theophany of the woman, suggest perhaps the intimidation of אִימָה (awe-inspiring, the same word used in Exodus 15:16 and 23:27 for God), also in 6:4 and 6:10 because her beauty הִרְהִיבֵנִי (alarms me) in 6:5.

Banners could function as a public notice board, warning, or expression of pride such as a title. In war these banners portrayed the assignment or the tutelary deity under whose auspices the soldiers had to fight. Assyrian standards show, for instance, the fighting weather god on a bull. In 2:4 the love goddess as the tutelary goddess could perhaps have been expressed on the notice board by a dove representing the beloved (Keel 1986:86). She is, in fact, like גִּבּוֹרִים (the soldiers) and מַגְבֵּרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (the soldiers of Israel) in 3:7. She fights for her lover and אֶחְזָתִיו (clutches him) just as all of them are אֶחְזִי (clutching) חֶרֶב (a sword), מְלֻמְּדֵי מִלְחָמָה (trained for war) in 3:8 and as the lover says, אֶחְזָה (I will clutch) the date clusters in 7:9. The third instance of הַגִּבּוֹרִים in 4:4 is also in connection with the beloved's proud neck אֶלֶף הַמָּגֵן תָּלוּי עָלָיו כָּל שְׁלֹטֵי הַגִּבּוֹרִים (built with turrets) בְּנוּי לְתַלְפִּיּוֹת (on which a thousand shields and all the soldiers' armour are hung). This calls to mind the tutelary and destiny goddesses of cities in the Hellenistic era which were portrayed as wearing a diadem in the shape of a wall coping (Keel 1986:138). The round shields could have resembled suns as in Psalm 84:12 and Isaiah 54:12 (De Vaux 1978:233), adding the connotation of pride and royalty, but also life.

The debate with the brothers about the status of the beloved in 8:9-10 is also expressed in terms of fortification and protection, although it could simply refer to a house. If טִירַת in 8:9 means a row of stones at the top of a tower rather than a battlement, then it could have been associated with the coping stone which was one of the three symbols attributed to the Syrian Mother goddess, Atargatis (Lurker 1987:44). This adds a royal connotation to the defence.

2.3.14 Smells

Fragrances were used to enrich sacrifice and various substances were poured onto sacred stones at Bethel, just as they were used on the hair and skin as a festive luxury and a sign of hospitality (Smith 1956:232). Unguents could have the equivalent value of blood, for which it could be substituted in

the covenant ceremony, and that used in sacrifice was applied to the worshippers to impart its spiritual qualities (Smith 1956:383-384). *Vide supra* 2.1.2.5.

3 EGOIC STAGE

3.1 EGOIC STAGE: RATIONAL LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY

3.1.1 Dualistic thinking

This stage is either about religion in its split-off, even privatised, form in culture, or about the rationalistic denial of its traditional form. As the former, it often functions in a dualistic, polarising way. The latter perhaps unconsciously reminds one of the feminine, which needs to be repressed now. It is important to recognise that it never disappears, as no preceding stages ever do, but that it has to go underground or is reinterpreted and even abused for the sake of male power and hegemony. It becomes the shadow side of society and exits then in the form of male rationality, which critiques traditional religion.

The other side of this duality is the opposites which often occur in Song of Songs, but then as complementarities. Opposites are often interdependent, such as when they are used merismatically or for emphasis: the snow-white Mount Lebanon versus the dark desert tents of Qedar, male versus female, sun versus moon, winter versus spring or summer, night versus day, black versus white, the couple versus those excluded, domestic versus wild animals, sheep versus goats, gazelle versus hinds, peasant versus royal class, rural versus urban, up versus down, in versus out, Tirtzah versus Jerusalem, beloved versus lover, I or me or mine versus you (in the constant dialogue), nature versus culture (Heinevetter 1988:179), water versus fire, movement versus peace, birth versus death, and finally love versus death. These are found throughout the text, sometimes in parallelisms. The history of their interpretation add to this sense of conflict, mainly through the literal versus figurative understandings. They can thus express symmetry and balance, for instance the twin lambs to indicate the symmetry of the beloved's teeth or the two gazelles to which her left and right breasts are compared (Keel 1986:139). This is also often the case when what one partner has said is echoed later by the other, in response to an earlier Biblical text, for instance 7:11 as a reaction to Genesis 3:16, or where metaphors such as the dove and

the gazelle are used for both lovers though with different bodily references. This complementarity of opposites comes close to the use of merisms as *שְׁמָאלוֹ תַּחַת לְרֹאשִׁי וְיָמִינוֹ תִּחְבְּקֵנִי* (let his left hand be under my head and his right hand embrace me) in 2:6 and echoed in 8:3, *עוֹרִי צָפוֹן וּבּוֹאֵי תִימָן* (awake, north wind, and come, south wind) in 4:16, *יָפָה כְּלִבְנָה, בָּרָה כְּחֶמֶה* (fair as the moon, clear as the sun) in 6:10 and *חֲדָשִׁים גַּם-יְשָׁנִים* (new and old) in 7:14, so typical of hymns such as Psalm 96:11 and 148:12. It is stylistically also reinforced by the two parts (1:1-5:1 and 5:2-8:14) into which Song of Songs has been divided (Fischer 2010:67) and the chiasmic structure in *parallelismi membrorum* such as *עוֹרִי צָפוֹן וּבּוֹאֵי תִימָן* (awake, north wind, and come, south wind) in 2:16 and *אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי* (I belong to my lover and my lover to me) in 2:16, 6:3 and 7:11 (Fischer 2010:134-136).

3.1.2 Naturalism

With this approach one understands Song of Songs in its most obvious and natural sense, but also reduces it to that only, without leaving the possibility of any deeper or other meaning. Egyptian love poetry, as researched by Hermann (1959), resonates with Song of Songs in terms of naturalism. Washburn's theory becomes particularly relevant when the awakening of the teenager protagonists is considered in terms of their psycho-spiritual development. They have recently matured to puberty, with the concomitant reminder of nature and their sexuality. The *הַסֶּתֶו* (the winter) in 2:11 of the latent period has passed and the promises of spring life affirm their own sense of ripeness. They feel mirrored and confirmed by their projections and their sense of recognition is a form of reintegrating the dualism between the self and the outside world.

Salibi (1985:180) claims that the naturalistic reading of Song of Songs as erotica is the Arabian interpretation; yet the literal and literary interpretations of Song of Songs have resurfaced in the Western world since the European Enlightenment. Although he might be suspected of being ideologically motivated in his views, Salibi nevertheless reveals how Song of Songs is received in that culture. Another aspect of this level is consequently the literal and literary interpretations of Song of Songs since the European Enlightenment.

On the surface Song of Songs seems to be merely a secular view of reality, which could be in the wake of disillusionment with established forms of religiosity and a lack of a creative urge to reinvent its forms. No explicit reference is made to any deity or religiosity, as is typical of the dualistic mindset. Yet the less than sober tone betrays different undercurrents as is also the case in puberty when these can actually erupt with an intensity which surpasses that of all other stages.

The sense of pride expressed, for instance, by the towers and the royal atmosphere in large parts of Song of Songs, such as the referrals to the king and בַּת-נָדִיב (daughter of a prince) in 7:2 and עַמִּי נָדִיב (my princely people) in 6:12, is perhaps compensation for the temporary eclipse of the non-personal before the transpersonal is discovered.

Due to disenchantment following the realisation that the self has been alienated from itself during the mythical period, the rational level of consciousness retains a sobriety as to the distinction between different levels of consciousness and therefore of religiosity, levels which are not to be confused. The ego, which has been projected elsewhere, is therefore retrieved and temporarily leads to a reduction of reality in terms of sensory perception and logic with its dual and often dichotomous, that is, mutually exclusive, polarities. This can result in either a universal or pragmatic kind of ethics, similar to the moral aspect of the traditional fourfold interpretation of the Bible, but can be dissolved by the postmodern realisation of cultural relativity.

Despite their sometimes timeless dreaming, the lovers also have a realistic sense of time which depends on distinctions such as הַחֹתָו (the winter) and הַגֶּשֶׁם (the rain) in 2:11, which עָבַר (has passed), the negative implying the positive, that is, the winter has changed to spring. Just as seasons alternate, so do light and dark: from בִּצְהָרִים (noon) in 1:7 to בַּלַּיְלוֹת (at night) in 3:1, 3:8 and implied in 5:2, whereafter they can say, נִשְׁכְּמָה (let us rise early) in 7:13, to welcome שָׁחַר (dawn) in 6:10 and הַיּוֹם (the day) in 2:17 echoed in 4:6 until the special day mentioned twice in 3:11.

3.1.3 Gender clarity

There are clear distinctions between the lovers in this heterosexual romance. The lack of such distinction has often been associated with denigration of corporality, sexuality and femininity (Yalom 1997:32) under the guise of androgynous ideal, but their difference is clearly celebrated in Song of Songs. This goes beyond sexuality: the woman says she is שְׁחֹרָה (black) in 1:5, but praises her lover for being צֹהַר וְאֶדֶם (dazzling white and ruddy) in 5:10 and his eyes which are like doves רְחֻצוֹת בְּחֵלֶב (washed in milk) in 5:12. From a psychodynamic perspective this reveals the archetypal associations of the feminine with the dark underworld of the subconscious and the masculine with the light of consciousness.

4 TRANS-EGOIC STAGE

4.1 TRANS-EGOIC STAGE: PSYCHIC LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY

4.1.1 Inclusivity

The mystical interpretation includes both the literal-naturalistic and the allegorical understandings whilst remaining appreciative of the parallels in other religious contexts. It has therefore been a recognition that different realities exist at different levels, as Luther has, for instance, understood Song of Songs (Pope 1977:125-126).

4.1.2 Eschatological dimension: Beyond this life

Perhaps the anagogic interpretation, as the last of the steps towards the fourfold meaning traditionally ascribed to a Biblical text (Deist 1984:100), comes closest to this level of consciousness in that it has a teleological and eschatological focus.

From Song of Songs it is clear that, unlike Genesis 1:28, but parallel to the second creation narrative in Genesis 2, procreation is not the main reason for sexual union. Miles (2002:65) suggests that a belief in immortality makes a concern with procreation redundant, and perhaps even implies that procreation is simply a way to salvage and compensate for what is lost of the paradisiacal condition. This could be confirmed by the belief expressed in 8:6 that love will co-exist with or in, that is, survive, death. This is unless erotic love actually serves there as a veiled defence against the fear of death, even

in the absence of procreation. In fact, it is noteworthy that the second creation narrative also supplies orientating names perhaps to render it more real. However, whereas the names there are of rivers, in Song of Songs they are mostly for mountains, despite the fact that water and rivers play such a symbolic role in Song of Songs. Yet at least one of these Edenic rivers, Gihon, compassing Cush (cf Genesis 2:13), is connected to the country from which many of the fragrant products mentioned in Song of Songs originate. This paradisiacal link of Song of Songs is perhaps the reason that offspring do not get much emphasis in Song of Songs, and why one reads in 8:6-7:

כִּי-עֲזָה כַּמּוֹת אֶהְבֶּה קֶשֶׁה כַּשָּׂאוֹל קִנְאָה

(for strong as death is love, as radical as She'ol is passion)

רֶשֶׁפִּיהָ רֶשֶׁפִּי אֵשׁ שְׁלֵהֲבֶתֶיהָ

(its flames are flames of fire, an intense flame)

מִיָּם רַבִּים לֹא יוֹכְלוּ לִכְבּוֹת אֶת-הָאֶהְבֶּה

(many waters cannot extinguish love)

וּנְהָרוֹת לֹא יִשְׁטְפוּהָ

(and streams cannot overwhelm it)

Death, as the ultimate challenge in this intensifying series of hyperboles, is still not the ultimate human reality or destiny. Love survives it. Light and life, however, imply their opposites which need to be integrated as well. It might in this regard be significant that מוֹת as the masculine noun is balanced with שָׂאוֹל as the feminine noun in the parallelism of 8:6. In addition, the latter occurs mainly in poetic contexts, according to Jenni and Westermann (1976:839), and therefore adds to the sense of an alternative state of consciousness. It is always in the absolute form, suggesting it is a proper name thus personifying death, perhaps as a jealous third party trying to spoil the lovers' precious bond and experiences. It has both the sense of wilderness and noise, that is, the chaotic nature to which all life returns, and yet, which is said to be transcended by love. Despite the fact that it indicates mostly a locality, one can understand such an experience of a different space as a different state of consciousness as much as love can be imagined as a fairyland. Its theological connotations are derived from the fact that it is opposed to both the earth and heaven, as a realm where not even consciousness of God is possible (cf Isaiah 38:18 and Psalm 6:6). It is

significant that death, as the decomposition of the body and therefore its functions and desires, are also transcended by love, which would imply that love transcends the body and its physical aspects. Love is like an antidote, a talisman, against death.

4.1.3 Dissolution of conflict

In depth (and death!) all conflict becomes irrelevant as the *uroboros* expresses its realisation in *coincidentia oppositorum*, of which Otto's *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (1917:29) is perhaps the model. As part of the eschatological dimension, the resolution of conflict through its transcendence results in healing and wholeness. This is stylistically already implied in the use of merisms where the two extremes of the same entity represent all-inclusively the whole, just as the last two of the *auṣaf* described the lovers from head to toe and vice versa. The perspective from infinity dissolves all intensity and polarities as, in fact, partial perspectives. Whedbee (1993:277) also notes the reconciliatory nature of Song of Songs as regards opposites, but seems to limit it to genders and class, the latter expressed by both the city-country and the king-commoner tensions.

In addition, there is a blurring of boundaries, formally indicated as well, which explains the plethora of divisions suggested by various commentators despite current agreement that Song of Songs is a collection of carefully arranged erotic love poetry. “[I]t would appear that literary fluidity underscores the work's ethereal mood – the ethos of erotic love in all its sensuality and complexity” (Horine 2001:2). On the other hand, its fragmented nature reflects its defiance of any complacency and conventionality and contributes to creating an atmosphere reflecting seemingly chaotic, but perhaps rather creative states of mind.

Structurally, however, the adjuration refrains function as links between the hostile city of the Jerusalem daughters and nature where the animals witness their intense and intimate experiences (Fischer 2010:203).

The value attributed to symmetry in 4:5 שְׁנֵי שִׁדְיָהָ כְּשְׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם, תְּאוֹמֵי צִבְיָה (your two breasts are like two fawns which are twins of a gazelle) resonates with the constant binding reciprocity between the genders who both suffer from being emotionally off balance: in 2:5 and 5:8 (she is lovesick due to his

absence) and in 4:9 and 6:5 (he out of his mind due to her awe-inspiring presence). They also mutually heal and fulfil each other who, as previously two parts in themselves (an as yet unintegrated *anima* or *animus*) and as two separate individuals, can together experience integration. As such their union goes beyond repressive patriarchy which fails to integrate the unconscious *anima* and scorns an expressed *animus*. Their wholeness and fulfilment are expressed as פְּרִי (fruit) in 2:3, 4:13 and 16, 8:11 and 12 and as שְׁלוֹם (peace, well-being, rest) in 8:1 and in the word play on it in the names of the two lovers (Krinetzki 1981:43). The royal metaphors repeatedly express the elevated, sublime, sublimating and sensitive nature of love (Krinetzki 1981:127). This is sometimes also expressed syntactically, for instance in 4:13-15 which starts off with reference to water, then shifts to fragrant plants and then returns again to water. At the same time it is reflected in the metric as an alternation between a tristichon at the beginning and end, held together by the [im] sounds, with a distichon in the middle which, in turn, is partially held together by the alliteration of the [k] sounds in כָּל וְקִנְמוֹן עִם כָּל וְכִרְכֹּם קִנָּה וְקִנְמוֹן (Krinetzki 1981:149). Even the texture of the text reflects the containing aspect of love through its balances.

4.1.4 Peace

The various superlative features of the text and the expressions of perfection point to another world. The ultimate human destiny as a subtle theme throughout the text is eventually explicitly mentioned as שְׁלוֹם (peace) in 8:10. The lover has the capacity to bring about this state of being, for תִּרְבִּיץ (you let [them] lie down and rest) in 1:7 which was already a subtle promise. This is linked to the notion of תִּרְעָה (you let graze) and echoed by her הַיּוֹשֵׁבֶת בַּגִּנִּים (who dwell in the gardens) in 8:13, that is, home at last, the final containment. In this way these verses frame Song of Songs to suggest the peace theme running right through it. It has already been adumbrated in the name, לְשׁוֹלֵמָה (Solomon), right at the beginning in the title and occurs seven times throughout the text in 1:1, 1:5, 3:7, 3:9, 3:11, 8:11 and 8:12 and as part of the name of Israel's holiest place, יְרוּשָׁלַיִם (Jerusalem), also mentioned seven times in 1:5, 2:7, 3:5, 3:10, 5:8, 5:16, 6:4 and 8:4, as well as in the adjectival substantive, הַשּׁוֹלֵמִית (the Shulamite) mentioned twice in 7:1. Fischer

(2010a:236n13) considers it a possibility that this play on the name of Solomon is yet another allusion to the paradisiacal אִישׁ or אִשָּׁה (man or woman) couple in Genesis 2:23. Some have regarded it as an epithet for Ishtar or Anat (Keel 1986:212). She exists as a derivative and variation of her male partner, finding peace in his shadow (cf 2:3) but remains otherwise mysterious and anonymous, as the questions about her identity in 3:6 and 8:5 insinuate as well.

These hints are subtle precursory promises of integration and rest from all the restless movement, which she, however, urges him to continue with in 8:14. This was foreshadowed by the references to sleep and bed suggesting the states and containing places where this peace is obtained in sexual peak experiences as a rehearsal for death, the ultimate religious experience (cf Bataille 1962:23) and a foretaste of higher levels of consciousness. She already experienced a reprieve and relief in the softer light and cooler temperature בְּצִלּוֹ (in his shadow or shade) in 2:3 where she can also enjoy his fruit whilst protected from the bright, burning blaze of the sun to which she has been exposed under patriarchal labour in 1:6. This resonates with her הַיִּשְׁכָּבֶת הַגִּנִּים (dwelling in the gardens) in 8:13. One needs some reprieve in the cooler and darker but more creative recesses of the unconscious from the productivity-driven mindset often geared to simply protect its achievements.

4.2 TRANS-EGOIC STAGE: SUBTLE AND CAUSAL LEVELS OF RELIGIOSITY

Like the mysterious woman, who, despite her clear presence, remains anonymous, the silence in Song of Songs about the Ineffable, beyond the limitations of sensuality and the conflicts it creates, suggests a level of religiosity higher than the traditional. The Infinite cannot be reduced to language or thought.

Context: (Post)modern reflections on sex and religiosity

1 SETTING THE SCENE

In this chapter the twentieth century CE context as a potential receptor of Song of Songs is presented through some prominent theories which have dealt with related themes and left an enduring influence on current thought. Only the broad outlines of this landscape will be sketched. Where the concept of religion was problematised in Chapter one, that of sexuality comes under the spotlight in this chapter in order to ascertain if the two concepts are really as mutually exclusive as much of the history of the interpretation of Song of Songs has implied. The twentieth century was a reaction against the Victorian attitude towards sexuality. It saw a growing awareness of and demand for sexual liberation and a concomitant change towards religion which have influenced, and have been influenced by, the thought of these philosophical exponents whose ideas have reverberated across the whole world.

2 ALL SEX, NO RELIGION: SIGMUND FREUD (1856-1939)

By way of introduction to this chapter Freud needs to be only mentioned as the background to the sexual consciousness of the twentieth century CE. In the first of his three essays (Freud [1905] 1974:13-47) on sexuality Freud focused on the *plural* nature of human sexuality both in terms of its object and its aim (Freud 1974:13 and 26). It is in children that he could show the natural “polymorphous perversity” which exists in all human beings. In his second essay he showed that sexuality was not an adult development but present right *from birth* (Freud 1974:47). In his third essay he described the narrowing of sexuality to the dominance of the *genitals* in puberty whilst also reviving long buried sexual structures and in this way consolidating sexual identity (Freud 1974:78). His main contribution is therefore the discovery of the universal and virtually infinite nature of sexuality, similar to the

multidimensionality and seemingly endless forms and objects which religiosity can acquire.

As to religion Freud is well known to have reduced it to an illusory projection of a father figure (1979:11) and later considered linking it secondarily to a reliving of the “oceanic feeling” of unity one once enjoyed with the maternal body. He constantly seems to project onto religion, however, what happens in love: each lover unconsciously wants the partner to fulfil a parental role as the woman seems to know intuitively in 8:5 when she hints at maternal intimacy with the lover just as she has repeatedly put him as a paternal figure, a king, on a pedestal. Her appeal also resonates with the desire in sexual intercourse to return to the maternal womb, according to Ferenczi (1924:27) who has been alluded to several times. Similar to the theories with which James ([1901-1902] 1982:33) was already familiar, Freud reduces religion to sexual and other human relations which are projected as unfulfilled wishes. There is, however, ample reason to do the inverse and explain sexual relations in terms of religious experience to which they point as the ultimate desire, as Frankl (2000:90) and the allegorists have also done.

Freud has expressed his views about religion mainly in four works. In *Totem and taboo* (1998:73), he says that one projects one’s own wishes onto the environment by *magical thinking* and omnipotently believes that one is in this way fulfilled. Religion is the result of Oedipal guilt feelings amongst a primordial horde of brothers who had killed their alpha male father because he had monopolised all the women, although they also loved him. They then had sexual access to the women but their remorse in the form of the superego’s aggression, which was now turned against them, inhibited them as they also identified with the father on whom they were dependent and for whose protection they longed. In an attempt to repair the damage, they initiated civilisation to mediate their ambivalent instinctual desires by diffusing and generalising their love for a single object to passive and non-judgemental love for all humanity and even beyond (Freud 1998:60). This aim-inhibited affection is therefore only a compromise position and serves at the same time to strengthen the communal bond. It is not clear why this cannot be an expression of the polymorph perversity which Freud had postulated earlier on sublimation of raw libidinous energy to a higher level which he promotes in the

next work discussed below. Spreading one's love like that could, however, also be an economic strategy to hedge one's bets in order to secure at least some remaining love in case of loss. This development also coincided with humans standing in an erect position and therefore becoming more aware of the sky.

In *The future of an illusion* (1928) Freud focuses on what the common person understands by religion, such as a way to explain the riddles of the world and to offer assurance of a benevolent Providence to whom one should submit unconditionally. He regards culture as the domination of nature and the control of human relations. Humans are more than animals in that they can achieve this by the repression of their drives. To compensate for this religious beliefs express the oldest and strongest wishes, such as that for a father and for immortality, and pretend through fantasy as if these wishes have been fulfilled (1928:38). He distinguishes between an error and an illusion. The former is simply incorrect information whereas the latter is based on the belief of magical wish fulfilment (1928:39). By restraining the drives religion is, like totemism, a way to integrate the individual who otherwise remains an enemy of society due to wishes such as incest, cannibalism and killing (1928:10). It is not, however, clear why these wishes are so different from those which religion intends to fulfil. Freud touches on the *oceanic feeling* as a possible factor in religion and claims that the ego which originally included everything in an intimate bond with the universe ends up, like Eros itself, as a reduced residue of what they once were. In this he resembles the thoughts of Bataille (1962:12) though in an inverse way: the latter regards the universe as all-inclusive when the individual was originally still absorbed in it as it will be again in death.

Two years later he elaborates in *Civilization and its discontents* (1930) on the deeper sources of religion but claims that an oceanic feeling of wholeness is a later addition to religiosity and therefore not an authentic religious experience. It is not clear what his definitional criteria for religion are to make this exclusion. This primal feeling is a regression and is re-experienced in love when the boundary of the ego dissolves to a certain extent (Freud 1979:3). In this way religion helps people to distance themselves from suffering by self-soothing. He discounts, however, that Eros

as object-instinct can be the answer as it is constantly countered by the aggressive and destructive wishes of Thanatos, the ego-instinct. It is clear that Freud recognises the link between religion and sexuality but continuously wants to explain the former away in terms of the latter. He never offers an explanation why the inverse could not be the case.

Moses and monotheism (1939) is a historical novel in which Freud wants to reconstruct history according to psychoanalytic theories as he had done in *Totem and taboo*. He is influenced by the theories of his contemporaries, Breasted, Meyer and Sellin, in that he believes that Moses was an Egyptian follower of Akhenaton (the latter was known in his earlier reign as Amenhotep IV) and his wife Nefertiti, the founders of monotheism. This Pharaoh tried to abolish the polytheistic Amon cult with its belief in life after death by reducing the divine to Aton, the sun god from whom all vital energy derived, without any belief in a hereafter but with a strong morality. When this reformist Pharaoh died the polytheistic priests reinstated the former religion during the period of instability which followed. Moses remained, however, loyal to this monotheism and convinced the Semitic slave tribes of it. He then flee with them to the Sinai Peninsula where they joined another Hebraic and monotheistic tribe, the Midianites, who worshipped the strict volcano god, YHWH, leading to a religious war in which Moses was killed. The rebels later regretted their crime and then expected Moses' return as Messiah and rooted their monotheism in guilt feelings about this patricide. This is therefore another version of what Freud says about patricide in *Totem and taboo*. He believes, however, that the aniconic monotheism is progress in that it rejects magical thinking and promotes ethical attitudes which require the renunciation of the drives. Antisemitism is anti-intellectualism in that it rebels against this demand to repress the drives as the idolatrous religions of old used to rebel. Not only does Freud contradict the historical evidence with outdated theories, but he clearly regards monotheism as a higher level of religion due to its repression of the drives despite his own atheism. He would therefore probably have considered Song of Songs as an instance of rebellion against this development as well. As far as could be ascertained Freud (1986:346) referred only once to Song of Songs and then by pointing out how

the body and its functions are expressed by architectural and plant metaphors.

Religion is therefore closely linked to the vicissitudes of sexual love which has been lost or was never obtained and for which it tries to compensate. Sexual love is the most intense experience of the pleasure principle and sets the pattern for the search for happiness (Freud 1979:19). Aesthetics is not a sublimation of this principle, since beauty and attractiveness are originally attributes of the sexually loved object. Beauty must, however, refer to secondary features because despite the excitement they arouse, the genitals are hardly ever viewed as beautiful (Freud 1974:33n).

Together with Nietzsche and Marx, Freud has added a dimension of depth to interpretation: the surface phenomena reflect a deeper structure, but according to Foucault (referred to in Megill 1985:223-224), this foundation is not firm or objective truth, nor a final signified to which all signifiers point. It becomes a superficial secret. As will become clear below, for Foucault there are no facts, only interpretations: every *interpretandum* is always already an *interpretans*, every object is already a subject. Beneath the symptoms Freud did not discover the concrete traumas, but anxious fantasies, the interpretations of lived history. Language is therefore not a reference to a passive reality, but an interpretation imposed by the ruling class.

3 ARCHETYPES AND SYMBOLS: CARL GUSTAV JUNG (1875-1961)

Whereas Freud departed from the symptom, his former student, Jung was to develop his theories in terms of symbols as they manifest in dreams, art and religion. Symbols are images or parts of the personal psyche which point to meanings beyond the limitations of conscious sensory experiences and of the intellect (Jung 1978:4). Symbols derive from the archetypal world as the original feeling of wholeness with the parents called the Self, from which the ego painfully separates to find a new identity in its society which becomes its substitute parent (Jung 1978:120-121). Although this is consciously a unified and continuous identity, it remains fragile and liable to fragmentation when under threat (Jung 1978:8). The archetypes, amongst which the most important are the Self, the shadow, the *anima*, the *animus* and the *persona*,

are general inherited mental forms or motifs stored in the collective unconscious, while symbols are their specific content expressed to the conscious mind. The archetypes are identifiable through comparison of dreams and collective cultural images. They are therefore not rooted in personal experiences as compensatory dreams are (Jung 1978:56-58).

One such archetype is the *anima* or feminine unconscious aspect of a male, where the *animus* is the masculine unconscious part of females. These parts remain repressed until integrated into consciousness. The *anima* can personify moods, receptiveness to irrationality, personal love, an emotional link to nature, to the unconscious and to the spiritual. The main influence in the specific content of the *anima* is the mother who can give it either a positive or negative character (Jung 1978:186-187). Its most general manifestation is in erotic fantasies, most often infantile and due to neglect of a man's emotional life. The *anima* is projected when he immediately and madly falls in love with an unknown woman but with whom he "recognises" an already long and intimate bond. Yet, ironically, it is especially women with a fascinating mysteriousness who attract such projections because they serve as a blank screen due to their lack of visible identity. It is only when the man recognises his fantasies as his own unconscious personality which needs to be integrated that he can disentangle himself from this dangerous entrapment (Jung 1978:191). On the positive side the *anima* puts a man in touch with the right inner, unconscious values and greater depth excluding irrelevancies and guiding him by revealing his calling through symbolised psychic images (Jung 1978:194). In this way the *anima* mediates between his ego and the Great Wise Man aspect of the Self as the sense of the whole which often has, like the *anima*, a fourfold structure.

The *anima* can appear as the purely instinctual Eve, as the romantic and aesthetic Helen of Goethe's *Faust*, as the Virgin Mary who sublimates Eros to *agape*, or as *Sophia* and the Shulamite of Song of Songs who transcend even the most superlative forms of holiness (Jung 1978:195). Jung does not elaborate why he typified the protagonist of Song of Songs in this way. From this it is, however, clear that he regards the instinctual as negative or at least primitive with little potential to convey spiritual truths.

When a man takes his feelings and fantasies seriously and fixes them in a specific form, he gradually realises their meaning. They will then link with deeper material which wells up from his unconscious and his intellectual and ethical devotion to this cultivation will facilitate his individuation to unfold. If the *anima* is reduced to her collective representation, she loses her individual aspects, which will detract from his personal individuation. If she is limited to an external woman, she will be split off and alienated from his inner feminine reality which he does not recognise and on which he will remain dependent (Jung 1978:195-198). Krinetzki (1981) has interpreted Song of Songs in terms of the *anima-animus* relationship, but one often gets the impression that one is not reading about real lovers but about solipsistic parts of the Self. Song of Songs deals, however, with the real love between two human beings which awakens them even more to the universe and the subtle impressions they receive from it.

In contrast to Freud, Jung remained open to both religion and polygamy, though he reacted against the tendency in Freud to reduce almost everything to sexuality. Jung's understanding of Eros, as was his view of religion, was that these two fields of human experiences were much more diffuse than Freud's narrow and normative stances towards both.

4 SEX, DEATH AND RELIGION: GEORGES BATAILLE (1897-1962)

For the multidisciplinary though unsystematic, diverse and, some would say, perverse, French thinker Bataille (1962:12), birth is the violent rupture with the continuity with the universe. Discontinuous consciousness and existence as a separate identity are further strengthened by the general and amorphous taboos on killing and sex which humans are required to uphold, in contradistinction to animals. The heterogeneous and chaotic need to be kept at bay if one wants to preserve a calm and organised existence. The extreme mysteries of birth and death and the excessive experience of states of transgression can never rationally be reflected upon.

Religion has, however, permitted certain transgressions in sacrifice, orgies and war, to allow humans to temporarily experience the forbidden, that is, sacred, intimacy with all beings and to thus restore the lost continuity. Despite all efforts to erect and maintain a separate and differentiated ego, the

ultimate desire is to anonymously lose one's individuality into the infinite which is death, or what Jung would perhaps have called the Self, and religion has called God. This sounds very similar to the "oceanic" feeling of oneness with everything which Freud deals with as common to both religion and at the height of being in love and which he relates to the earliest illusionary state of the infant with its mother (Freud 1979:1-3). The loss of one's autonomous self is symbolically suggested by stripping naked and the sense of vulnerability and obscenity, yet also liberation, which follow. What is revealed is the continuity of being. The loss of self in the excess of transgression is also achieved in laughter and poetry, the latter perhaps because it pushes against the limits of language. The fusion with continuity is at the same time a violent fission from discontinuity.

Life includes death self-subversively right from the start: the knowledge of death constantly threatens the fragile boundaries of life as the "other" (Dollimore 1998:254). The transpersonal is therefore achieved in eroticism in the other and ultimately in death. It does not happen, though in the sense that it would include the personal and then go beyond it, unless one considers the very historicity of the personal as what can never be erased. The transitions between levels of existence are violently achieved. In birth one is ruptured from continuity, and in sex and death one is ruptured from discontinuity as 8:6b also asserts: love is as fierce (or violent?) as death.

What was previously disgusting (defended against by displacement and projection) paradoxically turns out to be intensifying the pleasure. Contrary to Freud who regarded the attraction of the forbidden as due to repression, the lifting of which still failed to fully satisfy, Bataille regards civilisation as precisely that which stimulates eroticism (Dollimore 1998:252). It is ironically the lure of the void which heightens vitality (Bataille 1991:108).

Sex was originally an abundant overflowing of life without any (re)productive intent. Prehistoric humans would probably not have made the causal link between sex and offspring many months later. When the lovers in Song of Songs want to spend themselves erotically they do not have any (re)productive intent either.

Although later developments of these transgressions made them useful in the service of productive work, their original motive was simply that of

spending – wasting, without any return -- the excess energy with which life overflows, just like the sun which gives life will eventually exhaust itself (Bataille 1988:28). Sacrifice was not originally aimed at appeasing the deities, but simply to vicariously participate in death as the violent relinking with the continuity of nature for which all humans long. War was therefore not originally a political means to obtain more power and possessions either, and orgies were not intended to magically fertilise nature and stimulate agriculture (Bataille 1962:75-78). All of these were about the ecstasy which temporarily allows humans to experience the lost continuity in death and sex, both of which are about losing oneself and merging with the All, and to briefly escape from the unstable disequilibrium which is life.

This brief reprieve and relief are, like birth, a momentary, violent rupture and connect with life, which is rooted in the senseless destruction of bodies and properties, with the luxury of death. Although the losses and mutability of life cause great anguish, there is also and at the same time exhilaration. While work, prohibition and culture stem from anguish and the disavowal of the animal in humans through the denial and transformation of nature, death is the ultimate expression of life (Dollimore 1998:249). This fatal attraction by the gravitational force of death (Bataille 1962:59-60) reminds one of the ideas of Ferenczi (1924:27) about the nostalgia for and ultimate longing to return to the womb, or then, to the primal disorder of Mother Earth who devours her children. It also sheds some light on the fascination with even inanimate objects from nature as became clear from, for instance, 5:14-15. In Song of Songs there has been a constant identification with other “bodies”: stones, plants, animals, even the earth as a whole or other celestial bodies to which the erotic urge is extended.

The conflicted desire and fundamental ambivalence towards life, which Freud has identified as well, is also symbolically expressed in Song of Songs in the moving to and fro between nature and culture, and the restless alternation between ascending and descending and between exiting and entering, until peace is eventually found in 8:10. It is also verbally expressed in the refrains and by the aphoristic wisdom of 8:6-7, which Bataille (1962:23) virtually echoes when he writes that eroticism is “a challenge to death through indifference to death”. For Bataille the life and the death instincts are therefore

not opposed but Eros-Thanatos is opposed to work-culture-civilisation which remains without resolution, except that the latter is constantly absorbed by the former. Life is, however, constantly born from death again. Not only is sexual climax metaphorised as *la petite mort*, but it is also followed by what one could call a postorgasmic nihilism. Orgasm, the merging with the other as representative of the All, brings one to the edge of death. By losing oneself, one is beside oneself as both lovers so often cry out in Song of Songs. Love promises and re-“hearses” (!) the death of the two individuals as the mystical continuity between two discontinuous beings. As eating and drinking often functioned as suggestions of sexual absorption of the other in Song of Songs, for instance in 5:1, so the totality of the universe swallows and embraces the individual in death. The literal internalising of food reminds one rather of Freud’s view of the original ego including the whole of reality until it is separated through consciousness. Likewise, in eroticism one is annihilated in ecstasy and dissolved in oblivion. The orifices are like wounds opening one to the other and to death.

This is perhaps suggestive of the extreme, even crisis, states of consciousness, for the integration for which Bataille has a mystical yet violent passion: the ecstatic and the disgusting, the sublime and the scatological (obscene literature especially about excrement) are ultimately about the same taboo which is transgressed, sometimes achieved in black humour, another contradiction. He explicates linking without containing it with a metanarrative. Despite his insistence on immanence against transcendence, his celebration of excess exploding transgressively and destructively beyond any boundaries into infinity is a search for the lost intimacy of continuity that is temporarily regained in sexual ecstasy and finally in death. Eros is always accompanied by Thanatos, the unstoppable drive to disintegrate individual identity in order to remerge with the All. One is reminded here of the military terror, for instance in 6:10 and 7:1, and violence in 5:7 that mysteriously accompanies the love poems of Song of Songs as well as the challenge to death in 8:6, all in the context of the celebration of excess beyond all utility or any sublimation, defying any definition or system, transgressing into infinite alternatives (Berquist 2002:84). Nature transcends culture, despite the narcissistic illusions of progress that civilisations love to cherish.

Experience destroys conceptual frameworks, which work in a self-subversive way, just as sexual encounters undermine personal identity. To back down from this abyss is a falsification of the authentic experience. The surplus energy of heterogeneity and contradiction cannot be contained or tamed by rationality; one can only find partial and temporary release and relief from it by projecting, expending and excreting it as undigested waste. Collapsing ideologies lead to the disintegration of social orders and civility, which are exposed as farcical. Sometimes transgression is interpreted as a gift or sacrifice, where it works ironically as redemptive transcendence. Likewise, human beings can only regain the sacred by plunging into their animality. The sacred, however, remains immanent. It includes the abject: blood, sweat, tears, excrement, saliva, rupture of identity and extreme emotions such as laughter, rage, drunkenness and sexual ecstasy.

The fear of this happening creates temporary defensive taboos, which are themselves also repeatedly broken. Self-identity as discontinuity in either mind or body is “lost” in both these experiences when awareness of separateness is dulled. Bataille probably regards transcendence as a boundary and restriction to the immanent, preventing the levelling of difference.

Bataille regards human eroticism as different from animal sexuality in that it is a psychological quest independent of reproduction (Bataille 1962:11). Yet his base materialism also attempts to disrupt the polarity between high and low, and would probably have scorned sublimation as falsifying or reducing reality. The birth of offspring makes them distinct and discontinuous from their parents and in that sense alone, despite the fact that they are regarded as reproductions of their parents and despite the fusion of the egg and the sperm (Bataille 1962:12-14).

In death the original but temporarily lost continuity is ultimately restored (Bataille 2006:15). Eroticism is a rehearsal, a glimpse of that experience and state, but subverted by the simultaneous desire for continued separate existence, either through children or through immortality.

Bataille distinguishes between physical, emotional and religious eroticism. The first is the almost fatal violation and dissolution of privacy and individuality and thus undermines the social order. It is already suggested by

nakedness as the abandoning of self-possession to open through secret channels to erotic communication, which overcomes separation. He seems to be stuck in the Freudian notion of the woman as the victim and the man as the sacrificer, who shares vicariously through her sacrifice in a symbolic way (Bataille 1962:19). In the heat of sexual passion, body and flesh integrate to a greater extent than usual and the lovers attain transcendence of love beyond animality.

Nevertheless, emotional eroticism has less of an obsession with separate existence. The fervour of love and affection may be more intense than physical desire. That is why they suffer the anguish of separation after the physical union. The other becomes wholly significant to the extent of being a possession, linked to death: rather than losing the beloved, the lover would either kill her or die himself.

It is clear that both death and eroticism are religious experiences and states for Bataille as they both suggest the restoration of lost intimacy through continuity. This ties in with the notion in this study that religiosity is about the experience of relinking, to refer to its etymological meaning. It is the sacramental nature of eroticism that points beyond the elusive in the immediate towards death. However, this ironically also implies the reintegration of unique particularity as exception and excess. On the other hand, it is also the most violent loss and separation – from discontinuity (Bataille 1962:16-17).

God as the personal and infinite object of eroticism, in whom all continuity resides, has no need of anything except not to be disturbed in the silence, where all polarities (such as temporal or eternal, physical or spiritual and animal or divine) meet and where all human passions are said to be fulfilled (Bataille 2006:23). This reminds one of the silence of the, perhaps, ineffable in Song of Songs. However, God is now the object of desire, whereas God is the subject of the love relationship in the allegorical interpretation of Song of Songs. As in the refrains, God is not to be disturbed.

Shame about certain body parts gradually becomes part of the inner experience of sexuality for human beings. It destabilises and questions human existence (Bataille 1962:30). These inner experiences have a universality, which, of course, suggests some form of continuity, although they

can also be exploited, as by modernism, to present closed systems. They do, however, allow transcendence of gross animality (Bataille 1962:37), through symbolic meanings or, even deeper inward, through the leap of faith that opposites coincide: that what is otherwise transgression is perverted into the holy and revealed as allowing access to the eternal. It mediates the difficult condition between animality and the divine. The divine in itself also has an ambiguous nature: *tremendum et fascinans*. It is the other, separate and heterogeneous.

5 SEX AND WORK: HERBERT MARCUSE (1898-1979)

In *Eros and civilisation* Marcuse (1973:35; 102), like Jung, typifies instinctual life as feminine, and then as a potentially positive transforming power of what he regards as the current repressive culture. He roots his erotic utopia in the belief that civilisation need not be repressive. This is contrary to Freud's argument in *Civilization and its discontents* ([1930] 1979) where he claims that due to the demands of the superego, in order to be economically productive, one has to sublimate erotic energy into work and culture. This implies that the more civilised a culture is, the more repressed and the less conscious it is. According to Freud (1979:25), increased control over nature has not led to greater happiness. The more progressed a civilisation is, the more restrictions on sexual relations increase (Freud 1979:40). It is, however, questionable if this observation of Freud is accurate. This does not undermine the assertion, though, that sex is seen as subversive to civilisation and vice versa, which implies that the latter represents in actual fact Thanatos and not simply the conflict between the two opposing drives. Eros and civilisation are also opposed in terms of the love relation as two versus many. The depth of intimacy is diluted in the name of sublimation. Ironically this is what Marcuse advocates but then regards it as liberation from the limited genital and monogamous constraints.

Marcuse argues, however, that this is merely a historical contingency and thanks to the development of technology which has automated production and reduced scarcity, there is now a surplus repression. The sublimation of libido need no longer be repressive, but will lead to greater sociality and will be liberating when it overflows and becomes diffused into the whole of the

body and the world as its extension. Work will then take on the nature of play as adumbrated by art which derives from fantasy and which has always managed to sidestep the reality principle to a certain degree. At present, work is still unnecessarily alienating as it is still due to necessity or *Ananke* which constrains freedom (Marcuse 1973:179). Happiness is sacrificed for the sake of progress driven and demanded by guilt feelings. As the sense of guilt is core to Freud's concept of religion, religion and sex are therefore opposed, and religion is by implication associated with Thanatos. Competition and the obsession with productive efficiency have become redundant. Freud's opposition of the reality and pleasure principles can be mediated by *Eros* as a narcissistic principle if the performance principle is no longer operating. By combining the ideas of Marx and critical theory with psychoanalytic insights, he advocates a socialist society where the feminine influence will correct the patriarchal bias. The same notion is also found in 1:6 and 8:8-9 where its representatives, the brothers, control women's labour and sexuality, respectively, as their property (Viviers 2008:453-454). This will change both the instinctual structures and consciousness to sensualise rationality. *Eros* has an inherent libidinal morality and will lead to a liberated society.

Although Marcuse can be criticised for romanticising the feminine as non-violent, the negative aspects of the collective *animus* can at least be corrected by its integration with the feminine. Alford (1987:869) has also pointed out that paternal influence as representative of the reality principle is less due to the often absent father or to the overriding socialising power of the capitalist state than in the bourgeois families of Freud's time. This means that the maternal influence is already stronger, that there is greater compliance and weaker ego development. Alford (1987:870-871) continues by describing narcissism as the refusal to accept separation from or dependence on the external libidinous object but refers to Grunberger and Chasseguet-Smirgel who highlighted that "its regressive potential may be transformed into the ground of mature autonomy". It is this engulfing of the world by the ego which Marcuse believes will eroticise nature and fuse with the whole external world. It seems that Marcuse would equate this with the feminine expression of *Eros*, as Freud (1979:25) had already pointed out that the desire to dominate nature is deeply rooted in human prehistory and seems to represent male

aggression. It is important to point out at this juncture that there is a danger of romanticising what is perceived as feminine Eros and demonising what is perceived as masculine Thanatos and civilisation, as if these two opposing drives do not belong equally to both genders as the ambivalent nature of the goddess has repeatedly indicated. At the same time the progression of science and technology will render nature an extension of the human body (Marcuse 1969:31). *Eros's* self-sublimation will liberate creative energy from the alienated body whose sexuality has been reduced to the genital and the reproductive, and will in this way animate the world as well. By redirecting and generalising libido the ego ideal as a substitute for the lost perfection of the primary narcissism of infancy will be sublimated to re-include the world into a sense of authentic wholeness while not being co-opted by society (Alford 1987:876).

Marcuse's reconciliation (1973:149) will also absorb "death, silence, sleep, night, paradise – the Nirvana principle not as death but as life". As Alford (1987:877-878) has remarked, this denial of the distinction between life and death and between the self and the other reveals the regressive narcissism of a wish to return to the womb. He adds that some theorists have regarded an indifference to death as a characteristic of narcissism. Insomnia as a consequence of pathological narcissism is due to a failure to unconsciously distinguish between sleep and death (cf Marcuse 1973:192). There is no consideration of gratification through object mastery. Wish and fulfilment are magically merged in the illusion of omnipotence (Alford 1987:880). Marcuse appeals to an ineffable memory which not only calls to passivity in oceanic fusion, but also revolutionary action in the world to recreate the conditions for this paradisiacal state. As the etymology of the word indicates, his utopia is not necessarily a place but rather an aesthetic experience.

Though Marcuse's vision has been regarded by some as naïve, he anticipated many of the countercultural social movements of the late 1960s when he believed the young were fighting for Eros against Thanatos. That he indulges in fantasy might equally be said of *Song of Songs*, but then fantasy is precisely a protest against and critique of an unacceptable status quo and the creative portrayal of an alternative reality.

6 SEX, KNOWLEDGE AND POWER: MICHEL FOUCAULT (1926-1984)

In contrast to Marcuse, the French post-structuralist historian-philosopher Michel Foucault does not believe one can return to an authentic social order where polymorphously perverse drives will be freely expressed. There is no natural order but only waves of power which create and control sexuality and which should be endlessly attacked (Megill 1985:256). Nor does he believe that the economic factor is essential in the alleged repression of sexuality (Foucault 1978:7).

His relevance to Song of Songs is due to both his “hermeneutics” and his trilogy (originally intended to be six volumes) in 1978, 1985 and 1986, respectively, on *Histoire de la sexualité* (*The history of sexuality*). His aim is to analyse sex in terms of power which he found is socially constructed, constantly changing due to unequal force relations and does not repress but instead proliferates sexual discourse. According to Wyke (1998:1), its publication triggered a massive interest in old sexual systems amongst scholars of ancient civilisations. Rather than being a structuralist epistemology as many have labelled his work, he preferred to call it archaeology and later genealogy as these terms were free from traditional metaphysical connotations and also suggested the exploration of the hidden structures of knowledge (Kearney 1986:284). Yet there is not a causal continuity between the *épistemes* (the historical *a priori* that grounds knowledge and its discourse) of different eras which pre-exist and condition human subjects, but rather leaps and ruptures (Kearney 1986:286).

Foucault deals with Western history and identifies the Renaissance as a period when language was seen as resembling things and the world as divine script. Nature was interpreted as a system of direct revelatory symbols with mystical correspondences (Kearney 1986:287). In the Classical Age of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries CE God became absent and the world autonomous material with language representing it indirectly as signs to the human subject (Kearney 1986:287). In the Modern Age of the last century language has become the self-referential discourse of the transcendental ego of autonomous human subjects no longer with any correlation between words and things. Language no longer refers to God or nature but only to the human

subject itself (Kearney 1986:288). In this fragmentary nature of language the sign exists only in terms of its difference from other signs (Megill 1985:209). Postmodern language refers only to itself and is anti-humanistic in that the limited consciousness of the subject is now also an epistemic field subject to external laws of the repressed unconscious of desire and transgression beyond its control (Kearney 1986:289).

Knowledge is never neutral and is often monopolised by institutions such as science repressing what lies beyond its limits as deviancy or what Bataille calls excess, which is kept under surveillance in enclosed institutional spaces where bodies were reduced to a form of dressage (Kearney 1986:291). Through the mutually excluding oppositions of language the prevailing power establishes its identity and controls knowledge but is also constantly undermined by the leaks of transgression and deviation which relink what has been discontinuous (Kearney 1986:294). There is always a conflict between same and other or non-identity against which identity has to define itself, hence the creation of the subject as against the object. Despite the pretence to be all-inclusive it is never restless; there is always a restless remainder. Culture is therefore always in crisis. It is on the gaps in-between that Freud also concentrated to access the hidden and repressed unconscious. This theme resonates with the restless leaps of the gazelle across the mountains, reflected also in the fragmented structure of Song of Songs. It is the “subjugated knowledge” of Song of Songs as subversive discourse which rebels against the totalitarian theology and inspires to radical activism. It is the unspeakable and the unsaid which have been excluded from speech but which reside in the gaps of the dominant discourse as latent discourse which resonates with the ineffable religiosity of Song of Songs (cf Megill 1985:226). It is this critical and creative aspect which is persecuted but which ironically keeps the whole of the organism or text alive. Later on, however, Foucault denies any “secret discourse, animating the manifest discourse from within” (Megill 1985:226). This is as a consequence of his denial of an ultimate and authentic ground to which everything refers back.

Foucault’s rejection of the visual and spatial metaphors of understanding renders his own discourse utopian in the etymological sense of “no-place” (Megill 1985:196-198). The Apollonian metaphysics of revelatory

light encloses and subjects the dark Dionysian force as a silent and unmoving object in the form of language as a container of the contained (Megill 1985:215-217). This leaves a sense of longing for an irretrievably lost past, as the penetrating downward and outward gaze into depth where a final signified as firm foundation is no longer found because the signified always has an excess and heterogeneity beyond the containment of the signifier. The postmodern look at art therefore does not search for its hidden intention but simply enjoys the liberating, free and infinite play of signifiers without any reference to external signifieds (Megill 1985:221-225 and 229). Nor does it subject its object, like the panoptic prison of Bentham, to the invisible disciplinary power (Megill 1985:242). The search for the religiosity of Song of Songs should perhaps be equally humble and open to a similar personal relationship with the text which is not penetrated by an objectifying gaze, but which renders its reader equally legible while also exposing the implicit but unknown systems which imprison and discipline the reader's perspective (Megill 1985:243).

In the first volume of his trilogy, *La volonté de savoir* (*The will to knowledge*) Foucault deals mainly with methodological issues pertaining to his study and deconstructs the view that sexuality is repressed in modern Western society as being a pretence to undermine authority. In fact, sexuality has been imposed as a core feature of modern identity. In reality this has become the age when the secrets of sexuality are spoken about in such an unprecedented way that professionals are even paid to listen to them (Foucault 1978:7). Its allegedly liberating discourse has replaced religion which previously used to motivate revolutionary projects. The history of sexuality entails confessions of transgressions to a therapist which have replaced the Christian pastoral which Protestantism gradually abolished in the ecclesiastical sphere.

The new voices are really part of the same tradition of power which they criticise. If so, it is not prohibition, censorship or denial through which power is constituted. Power is creative and productive of reality, objects and truth (Megill 1985:241). Power is wrought not in the form of taboos but in the generation of speech about sex, where even the silences are part of its institutionalised canon. Expression was intended as a form of sublimation

objectified in rationality. Through sex education, for example, the universal “sin” of adolescence was meant to be made redundant.

It is the apparatus of sexuality which has dominated discourse since the nineteenth century CE. Other social institutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which proliferated sex talk in order to control it better were the spheres of medicine and criminal justice: the former through the aetiology of the nervous and mental disorders in terms of excess, onanism, frustration and “frauds against nature”, and the latter through its gradual broadening of “crimes against nature” to include minor indecencies and perversions. All these developments awakened attention and intensified awareness about sexuality. It was not only through continual extension, but also through the reinforcement of heterogeneous sexualities, that the origins of discourse were dispersed (Foucault 1978:34). Megill (1985:237), however, detects a leap in Foucault’s thinking here: the fact that discourse about sexuality has increased does not imply that it has produced more sexuality and more of its heterogeneities. It simply means that desire has been translated into discourse and therefore become more conscious.

The economy of exploiting sexuality as *the* secret has thus added to the proliferation of its discourse as an economic ploy to focus on genitally centred, marriage-based reproduction to the arbitrary exclusion of unproductive, so-called wasteful activities. Nature became a law that distinguished and united the sexes, only for the creation of labour capacity (Foucault 1978:38). As a science, however, the discourse pretends to be neutral while serving morality, but it is therefore not authentic. Knowledge is obtained through confession where the listener is the agency of domination.

Most of the pre-Freudian discourse on sexuality was defensive and meant to conceal the very thing it was talking about, a dispersion-avoidance, a growing science of sexuality displacing the almost universal erotic arts which drew truth from the very experiences and deflected them back into the practices themselves as secrets transforming the subjects involved: testimony as introspective and remembering narrative, liberating itself from the power to silence the truth. Unlike the arts, the truth has grown from below, its secrecy rooted not in its scarcity value but in the intimacy of the speaker with what is spoken about, despite its commonness. Yet that also threatened to scandalise

scientific discourse, were it not justified “through a clinical codification of the inducement to speak”, “through the postulate of a general and diffuse causality” emanating from sexuality, “through the principle of a latency intrinsic to sexuality”, “through the method of interpretation” and “through the medicalisation of the effects of confession” (Foucault 1978:65-7). It was in this new science that the concept of sexuality was born (Leick 1994:5). The history of sexuality that Foucault intends to write is therefore a history of the discourses of sexuality. The sexual subject is subjected to a questioning about sexuality which is problematised in order to integrate it into a field of rationality (Foucault 1978:69). There is a field of meanings to decipher, layers and levels of truth about the self. The knowledge of the subject is not so much about his or her form but about the inner divisions, that is, alienating conflicts which determine the subject.

Discourse is the language of the ideology of (often sexist) power institutions; there is no timeless truth of sexual experience and sexual morality; it is always the product of cultural conditions (Blue 1996:43). Foucault’s view of power is that it is the changeable product of and immanent in interactive and unequal relations, that it comes from below, is both intentional and non-subjective and implies resistance as a self-subversive aspect inherent to it (Foucault 1978:94-95). It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined.

He identifies “four strategic unities” which go beyond the usual “idea that there have been repeated attempts, by various means, to reduce all of sex to its reproductive function, its heterosexual and adult form, and its matrimonial legitimacy” as not accounting for different sexual politics, age and social classes (Foucault 1978:103). The first is the hysterisation of women’s bodies as saturated with sexuality, intrinsically pathological and thus integrated into medical practice, and their organic communication with the social bodies. The second unity is a pedagogisation of children’s sex as simultaneously natural and unnatural; the third is an economic, political and medical socialisation of procreative behaviour, and the fourth a psychiatrisation of perverse pleasure in terms of pathologising and normalising. Four corresponding representative figures emerged from this: the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple and the

perverse adult. Likewise, the first to be “sexualised” in the collective body was the “idle” woman at the periphery of the “world” (Foucault 1978:121). Then came the adolescent in danger of squandering his intellectual, moral and procreative capacities. The working classes had to wait before birth control, the conventional family as politico-economic control and eventually the juridical and medical control of perversions focused on them. The bourgeois subordinated their bodies and souls to sex as the mysterious power on which their future depended. The “auto-sexualisation” of their class body during the eighteenth century was expressed in its own health, hygiene, descent and race, “the incarnation of sex in its body, the endogamy of sex and the body” (Foucault 1978:124), the affirmation of the body being one of the primordial forms of class consciousness (Foucault 1978:126). The body is therefore a political object, the meaning of which is contingent on historical knowledge processes which inscribe it with society’s ideas and ideals. Society is controlled through the body which functions like other non-verbal discourses such as clothing and architecture (Viviers 2010:111).

Contrary to Freud, Foucault does not view sexuality as naturally given, to be discovered by knowledge and held in check by the power of culture. Rather, he regards it as a historical product of the latter in order to intensify bodies, both individual and collective, as objects of knowledge and as instruments of power, as the basis of relations.

With his first volume Foucault outlines the postmodern context and its origins: the growing focus on the self that started in antiquity that he would deal with in his subsequent work. This chronology shows the increasing interiorisation of consciousness and a concomitant movement towards what was regarded as the essence of society. “The history of the deployment of sexuality, as it has evolved since the classical age, can serve as an archeology of psychoanalysis” (Foucault 1978:130), taking up the cause of liberation from repression as well as general oppression and exploitation, so vociferously expressed by Wilhelm Reich between the two World Wars. That the mechanisms of power were used more to arouse than to repress sexuality since the great awakening of sexual concern in the eighteenth century was, however, suggested by the fact that the sexual “revolution” has proven to be not conditional on economic and political liberation. It is, in fact, due to the

inflation and artificial creation of alleged human needs that sexuality has been “produced”.

The concept of sex as something other and more than the physical was shaped by the different strategies of power (Foucault 1978:152). It was defined by the linkage between function and instinct, finality and signification, which demarcated the model perversion of fetishism. The physical causality functioned as a unique signifier and a universal meaning signified through its lack. Its mysterious truth and sovereign elusiveness have imbued it with a value and desirability greater than life itself and so found to be in cahoots with, but also greater than, death itself, creating the illusion of asserting it against all power, when it is itself the grand master that purports to reflect our very selves, instead of bodies, pleasures and knowledge (Foucault 1978:157).

In his second volume, *L'usage des plaisirs* (*The use of pleasure*) Foucault sets out "to analyse the practices by which individuals were led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognise, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play amongst themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover in desire the truth of their being, be it natural or fallen" (Foucault 1985:5). He also speaks of the "aesthetics or arts of existence" as the "techniques of the self", referring to actions by which people set themselves rules of conduct that bring about self-transformation. The problematisation of sexual activities and pleasures includes a morality that can allow tranquillity of soul through a total detachment from the world and an insensitivity to the stirrings of the passions with mastery over the self as its goal. This implies a relation to the reality or context in which one acts as well as to oneself, not only as self-awareness, but also as self-transformation (Foucault 1985:28).

Classical culture, but also the ancient Near East, did not have a single term for sexuality as a loose connection of behaviours, images, sensations, desires, instincts and passions with a similar nature, origin or causal mechanics (Foucault 1985:35). Foucault then deals with the fifth to the beginning of the third century BCE attitudes to and reflections on *aphrodisia* (pleasure), as the closest related concept, as a backdrop for studying the four stylisations of sexual conduct: dietetics concerned with the body (for instance the best climate and season for healthy sex [less in spring when the air is

warmer and drier], foods, purging medicines and even music), economics concerned with marriage, erotics concerned with the love for boys and philosophy concerned with the truth. He considers the dimensions of use, self-mastery (in respect of drink, sex, food and exercise) and moderation as indicative of the deontology, ascetics and teleology, respectively, that structured the moral experience of sexual pleasures.

Explicit precautions are notably lacking in these perspectives compared to the later Christian spirituality. The first aspect of immorality was the lack of self-mastery. For Aristotle self-indulgence relates only to the “pleasures of the body” and excludes the delight in sight, hearing and smell, though some Greek texts regard the gaze as the entrance through which desire can reach the soul. On the other hand, the kiss was highly valued as physical pleasure and communication between the two souls, despite its dangers. For Plato, desire implied privation and thus suffering due to the reminding image that can only exist in the soul. The separation between body and soul therefore does not hold. Lust, however, is the sickness of excess in the body and not the bad volition of the soul. The second aspect of immorality is passivity which was seen as unmasculine. This would suggest that the activism of aggression is regarded as superior to the vulnerable openness of Eros. Both these aspects of immorality overturn the natural hierarchy, which meant that *aphrodisia* was subordinated, as its intensity seduces people to go beyond their needs, explaining the hyperbolic language of sexual arousal. Immoderation, however, is regarded as unnatural, both in its quantitative and qualitative dimensions. The infinite, insatiable nature of desire is unnatural if not integrated with or into reason, including practicalities such as knowledge and timing, as well as the recognition of the self by the self born from the inner struggles of the soul with itself and against the violence of its desires (Foucault 1985:87-88). That would mean that it remains cut off from the larger whole. However, the ecstatic tendencies in Song of Songs are rendered suspect within this emphasis on moderation.

The violence, friction and heating of the body during the sexual act lead to greater fluidity of the relevant humour. (It is interesting that fire and water are the two elements explicitly mentioned in 8:6.) Its separation into foam through agitation is accompanied by eventually losing control and losing

essential energy that needs to be economised. This can also happen during nocturnal emissions when concomitant dreams reveal the state of the body, a belief that also occurs in the ancient Semitic cultures (Oppenheim 1956:184).

The Greeks believed the origin of sperm to be in the marrow, perhaps seen as the deepest realm of the body. It then descended down the spinal column as a tingling sensation. This sounds similar to Kundalini (Parrinder 1980:35), except that the movement is in the opposite direction. In addition, unlike women, men can preserve, concentrate and so elevate their sperm as energy to a higher level including, for instance, (“egoic”) offspring, activity and self-cultivation, at least in certain cases. Order and preservation include memory for future benefit.

Foucault has focused on classical culture whereas this study is concerned with the ancient Semitic civilisations of the Near East. He refers, though, to the apparently universal thematic complex of “anxiety, which identifies the sexual act with the ‘virile’ form of semen and associates it with violence, exhaustion and death...” (Foucault 1985:137). Anxiety and violence are masculine defences against the feminine gravitation of death. For the ancient Chinese this threat and loss could be countered by wilful retention or the invigorating effect of contact with the other sex’s vital principle (Foucault 1985:137).

The aspect of truth entails the art of the self or soul-making which is different from *logos* to which Eros has to submit. “The lover’s task, the accomplishment of which will in fact enable him to reach his goal, is to recognise the true nature of the love that has seized him.” “(I)t is not the other half of himself that the individual seeks in the other person; it is the truth to which his soul is related.” The Platonic reflection is therefore on “the subject and the truth he is capable of”, rather than on “the object and the status that ought to be given to him” (Foucault 1985:243). It is not about the body of the object of love but about the desire for immortality that is remembered through the yearning for the beautiful that “has been seen beyond the heavens” (Foucault 1985:238). Rather than distinguishing proper from improper acts and objects, it is the self charting the journey of desire with all its difficulties and detours to “where it reenounters its own nature”, from courtship of the object to *askesis* of the subject as access to truth about the self (Foucault

1985:244). The other is therefore not seduction away from, but mediator towards the self.

The concept of eroticism might be culturally transformed and extended to the practice of either prostitution on the one hand, or medieval knightly courtship on the other. What is important as well, however, is that classical ethics was very much male orientated, particularly as regards the building of soul or “the art of the self” through moderation as control over the feminine.

In Volume 3: *Le souci de soi* (*The care of the self*) Foucault refers to the work by Artemidorus as the only surviving oneirocriticism (the analysis of dreams) from antiquity. It distinguishes between two forms of nocturnal visions: those reflecting the present condition of the body and mind versus those that alter the soul through an event from the future. A second distinction is between those which are literal and those which are figurative and therefore require interpretation. These distinctions intersect to create four different types of dreams. In sexual dreams the dreamer is always present in the dream as the leading actor (Foucault 1986:26). This corresponds with Gestalt psychology. Secondly, sexual acts are seldom signified but instead signify; they are images rather than meanings, which are often social in nature. The meanings of dreams are meant to guide one in ordinary life. This is the same for the sexual act which above all signifies a relationship of power and an economic game of expenditure and profit. This lends more understanding to the allegorical interpretation of Song of Songs.

The more individualism grew in the Hellenistic world, the more ethics had to assist in the cultivation of the self to fill the vacuum left by the breakdown of external rules, reminding one of the breakdown of the bicameral mind and the growing need for individual and situational judgement. Human beings were defined as destined to care for themselves. Health and medicine were closely related to this and dealt with pathos as both the passions and the physical illnesses caused by disorder, imbalance, passivity and lack of volition. Ethics now also involved health and a greater attention to the body. However, it was different from the former discipline and education for social reasons. In fact, death, disease and physical suffering were not seen as truly unhealthy if they contributed to the health of the soul whose illnesses could even be disguised as virtues (Foucault 1986:54). That was why one had to

adopt an attitude of watchfulness over the “gates” of the “city” and the “house”, especially at “night”. It included the relation between the self and all representations, so as never to become attached to them but always to stay in control through rational and free choice. In practice this allowed enjoyment but without desire or disturbance (Foucault 1986:68). The exercise of power over oneself was expressed in social relations such as marriage and public life as well.

The need for balance is a reflection of the general fragility of the human body (Foucault 1986:122). That is why the sexual practices are so dangerous for the care of the self. Dancing choruses were seen as an ideal way of exercise that could help girls to remain active and keep their body temperature up. Boys could in this way repress their desires through exhaustion of body and soul. It was not about a conflict between body and soul, but about their harmonisation according to the laws of the body itself, about a correlation of the desires as they manifest in both. When the body loses control of itself, the result is convulsion and illness. On the other hand, if the soul goes beyond the needs of the body, an ethical problem arises. The soul should be subordinate to the body without the stimulation of fantasies, guided only by “the austere economy of organic functions” (Foucault 1986:136). Pathologising the sexual act has to do with excess and with loss of control and the resultant expenditure in passivity, the cause of illness.

Amongst the Epicureans, the Cynics and the Stoics, only the latter supported marriage. After separation of the sexes the Creator leads them back to each other by strong desire for both association and union. Marriage is thus dual in its form, universal in its value and specific in its intensity in its complete fusion, beyond mere pleasure or self-interest. That is why “(t)he art of conjugality is an integral part of the cultivation of the self” (Foucault 1986:163). It must honour Hera, Aphrodite and Eros, the demiurges who created order from chaos (Foucault 1986:176). Sensual pleasures also have a place in friendship and love (Foucault 1986:201) because one without the other makes for superficiality and trading. Sexuality is the origin and continued animation for friendship and reconciliation between the sexes when it is devoid of violence and coercion, making both partners active subjects. Shared pleasures are made more intense. The love of boys is an upward “escape

from immediate necessities, the acquisition and transmission of knowledge through the intense forms and secret ties of friendship” (Foucault 1986:218).

Foucault concedes the possibility of the allegorical and spiritual significance of his source texts, concealed by the cloak of time (Foucault 1986:228). Ultimately this art of existence aims at the pure enjoyment of oneself through mastering the threats to its frailty by abiding in and depending on a universality grounded in nature and reason. With the Christian era a growing anxiety about the threat of sexuality to the relation with the self constantly limits it more and more even at the price of intensification. The inquiry has led to greater vigilance (Foucault 1986:239).

It has been pointed out that Foucault’s history is fictionalised rhetoric as an exaggeration to prophesy against the dominant discourse which the literalist tries to conform to (Megill 1985:244-247). His concern is about power over the body as discourse rather than as concrete or literal. Sexuality as discourse is the historical apparatus through which sex, without any natural substratum as the norm, is produced and controlled (Megill 1985:253).

Foucault managed to finish his fourth volume just before his death but his estate restrictions have unfortunately prevented its publication. It deals with the Christian history of sexuality which might be very relevant for the dialogue about Song of Songs.

7 ALL PLEASURE, NO RELIGION: MICHEL ONFRAY (b. 1959)

A philosopher from the same country who is contemporary to this study is Michel Onfray, atheist, elitist and materialist, propagating an individualist anarchism, libertinism and “ascetic hedonism”.

Yet his views also include a comprehensive aesthetic, even of gastronomy, self-actualisation, harmony and reconciliation with oneself, others and the world, immanent love incarnated in the pleasure of the body, in fact, an idealism of a paradise on earth.

Despite his democratic claims, his support of hierarchies makes him at the same time an elitist. Art, knowledge, consciousness and integrity are essential and there is no philosophy without psychoanalysis according to Onfray. Not as radical as Bataille, his work nevertheless deserves some

attention in this context, as he attacks the monotheistic religions for their alleged anti-body, anti-sexual, anti-women and anti-pleasure stances.

Influenced by Nietzsche, La Mettrie, Aristippus and the philosophers of Cyrene, he critiques mainly the Platonic philosophical tradition. Pythagoras he accuses of having invented the dialectics between high and low (Onfray 2000:183). Following Dionysios, he wants to deconstruct all forms of alienation and myths inspired by a death wish or death instinct (the Freudian Thanatos) or by a refusal of the world in favour of pipe dreams and fantasies. Yet he believes that one's name points towards one's destiny. Struck by the notion and experience of an existential *hapax*, a single epiphany of existence, he also feels a mystical relationship with his work. What one could perhaps call synchronicities questions, of course, the insistence on choice that Onfray (1993:51) regards as crucial for "sculpture de soi" (sculpting of the self). He marvels at Michel de Montaigne's experience of the intimacy of his soul and his body when he squarely faced and fully accepted the reality of death during an accident, reminding him of his own close brush with death during a heart attack at the age of twenty-eight. That his passionate sobriety is all but clinically calculated clearly stems from his own intense bodily experiences and the confrontation of death. His anti-religious stance can only be due to his utter disappointment in the established institutions, which seem superficial and not to resonate with his own patently religious experiences.

With regard to love, he does not regard desire as suffering, punishment or lack, but as excess. Secondly, desire is not necessarily fulfilled by being a couple, as if it is spherically shaped like the cosmic egg of old (Onfray 2000:56). It is not about love as healing the wound, finding the original wholeness of the primitive androgynous being, which the energy of desire has to regain (Onfray 2000:54). He resists on "attelage" (harnessing, yoking, linking) (Onfray 2000:64) and believes that the word's etymology means "away from the stars" and that it is therefore a rupture with celestial fancies and ideals, with dualism and spirituality, in favour of "l'option matérialiste, moniste et atomistique" (the materialist, monist and atomistic option) (Onfray 2000:61). Thirdly, he denies that there could be two types of love, the one spiritual and the other "merely" physical. Instead, in appealing to Nietzsche, he asserts that only the body can get hold of the spiritual (Onfray 2000:69). It

is only in the body that the soul can find peace (Onfray 2000:85), resonating with the peace the beloved found with her lover in 8:10.

Love is a mystification of desire and pleasure, which is about physiology, not metaphysics (Onfray 2000:77). There is only a catharsis of desire when the excess fluids – for both sexes – are externalised in order to restore the equilibrium (Onfray 2000:80). Desire unsettles the body, pleasure should restore it (Onfray 2000:89). Passion, love, feeling and heart actually mean desire, pleasure, libido and sex. Lack, fusion and wholeness actually mean excess, discharge and solitariness. Theology is to be replaced by philosophy (Onfray 2000:82) and poetry is just a sign of ignorance (Onfray 2000:79). “La libido, l’énergie et les forces qui travaillent une chair doivent remplacer au plus vite les cantiques....” (the libido, the energy and the forces which activate the flesh must replace songs as fast as possible, Onfray 2000:85). From this one can detect his literalist attitude which leads to a flatland view of reality where there are no levels or layers of consciousness. He would probably read Song of Songs as merely a celebration of sexuality and freedom without sensing the constant presence of a quiet religiosity.

The ascetic strategy is to sublimate the sexual need in the service of the self. In this economy, inner peace of mind should not be paid for sex (Onfray 2000:90-91). For each body is a closed monad, without doors or windows, indivisible, atomistically single and alone, impenetrable (Onfray 2000:95).

Despite his critique of Platonic philosophy, he accuses the Hebrew Bible in particular of being against the body, desires, pleasures, feelings and sensations, emotions, passions, women and life itself, renouncing, refusing, resisting and repressing them all (Onfray 2000:109-110, 120 and 126). It is a statement like this from an exceptionally popular philosopher, even amongst the working class, which clearly shows ignorance of the Song of Songs and emphasises the importance of the book to correct misconceptions about religion and its relation to sexuality even amongst the educated elitists. According to Onfray (2000:116), Paul of the New Testament and Platonic philosophy extended this anti-body sentiment to a hatred for the earth and, in fact, all matter. In Eve both the desires for pleasure and knowledge are seen as sin.

Women are taught to regard fidelity, monogamy, heterosexuality, couples and maternity virtually as archetypes (Onfray 2000:190), while the phallocratic and communitarian naturalism of transcendence and ideal worlds of the “familialistes” (those who promote the ideology of the family as core institution) regards semen and sperm as equal to blood and soil, against a contract of the will (Onfray 2000:194). He supports in this the epicurean cultural, temporary ethic of artificialism, where people are engaged in an “*Eros léger*” (a light *Eros*) (Onfray 2000:214). Intersubjectivity (his equivalent to love) will be born, will grow, blossom and die like any other organism (Onfray 2000:124). The ideal single should be free to enjoy the body without being in love and without the prospect of children, to love deeply and singly without sharing the same roof or excluding sex with others (Onfray 2000:217). To squarely face and accept death means that one should have no need for a name to survive as insurance against mortality (Onfray 2000:220). Against the naturalists, who denigrate women and femininity but celebrate the female in motherhood, the culturalists should denigrate the female and emancipate one from the mother by celebrating women and femininity (Onfray 2000:222). It seems therefore that there is no access to nature for Onfray inasmuch as he claims Christians regard culture as a hindrance to God (Onfray 2005:184). That would mean that Christians regard God as “natural”, as pure and authentic. At the same time, he would have to acknowledge that Christianity is itself a cultural product and that culture is therefore to be regarded with suspicion, a self-subversive argument, which he simply leaves aside.

Onfray (2005:33) acknowledges that he borrowed the term “athéology” from a letter written in 1950 by Bataille to Queneau. He asserts the familiar critique of the notion of God as a mere projection of the inverted image of a finite and imperfect human being, to compensate for unbearable consciousness (Onfray 2005:58). Although he does not state it himself, this mirror image would then function like the partner in the allegedly original androgynous being, making one whole. In Islam, paradise as the anti-world is likewise pictured in terms opposite to what one would find in an Arab tent: all sorts of fragrances and even wine (Onfray 2005:131). It seems that - which is so often the case in general - his atheism is merely a rejection of a certain concept of God. He refers to Giordano Bruno, who regarded the spirit to exist

at the physical level of atoms and life, and that divinity comes to a compromise with matter, the mystery of which it thus resolves. Incarnation is thus infinitely wider than what the church has taught (Onfray 2005:116). There is, however, a mystical element in this view, so typical of pantheism. It also reminds one of Bataille's possible influence on him in this regard. He assumes glibly that a post-Christian secularism has to be atheistic, and radical and militant at that (Onfray 2005:261). He accepts by implication only a closed view of reality, as he ridicules anything beyond the material of this world as irrational (Onfray 2005:72).

The Western body scheme is Platonic-Christian, despite many people not being Christian, according to Onfray (2005:74). The symbolism of the organs and the hierarchy of their functions value the heart and the brain but trivialise the viscera and the sexual organs; even professionally the neurosurgeon is valued more than the proctologist. The soul is spiritualised and dematerialised. This dichotomy has informed the Christian discourse, both in medicine and in philosophy, over the last two thousand years. Now Onfray seems to forget his former accusations against the Hebrew Bible in his earlier book, though he later on refers to Leviticus 21:16, where no one with a physical defect is allowed to become a professional priest (Onfray 2005:100). The rabbis adhere to both an ascetic ideal as well as that of demographic expansion. Therefore various purity laws pertain especially to women (Onfray 2005:102). Even the Fall has been sexualised by the church fathers (Onfray 2005:97). Yet, he describes the (spiritual) character of God as equally driven by the death wish: violent, jealous, vengeful, misogynous, aggressive, tyrannical, intolerant (Onfray 2005:93).

Repression as an expression of the death instinct, perhaps as a defence against the unbearable realisation of the void waiting after this temporary reality, has perverted love to have death as its object and is accompanied by contempt of women, to whom one would prefer virgins, mothers and wives. Fear of death has therefore been converted into love of death. This denial, if not hatred, extends not only to all natural things such as the body, desires, passions, drives or impulses, love, sex and life, but also to all increased presence in this world: reason, intelligence, books, science,

culture and, as summary, one could add: consciousness (Onfray 2000:236-237).

Even if these theorists do not directly relate to the themes of Song of Songs, they testify about the problems surrounding sexuality in the current Western world and express a nostalgia to return to the body as a source of profound meaning. To these troubling experiences Song of Songs can be a corrective influence. It would seem that the erotic longings expressed through their work have religious undertones and resonances which are perhaps universally hard-wired in the human brain.

8 NEUROPSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOSITY AND SEXUALITY

Having been urged towards physiology by Onfray, neurotheology offers perhaps at least the pretence of a more objective platform on which the natures of and relation between religiosity and sexuality can be discussed.

That the language of sexual pleasure resembles that of transcendence and mystical union in ineffable bliss, rapture, ecstasy, exultation and losing oneself in a sublime experience of union is corroborated by the similar neurological structures involved in both. Both sexual and religious experiences are activated by the rhythmic and simultaneous stimulation of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. The processes involved, however, are not identical as orgasm remains mainly limited to the hypothalamus as a result of tactile stimulation, while intense religious experiences involve the higher cognitive functions of the frontal lobe and associated areas. This does not prove any spiritual reality or that religious experience is simply a mental fantasy (Newberg, D'Aquill & Rause 2001:125-126). It does suggest that sexual experience can be regarded as a rehearsal of a much more profound and higher experience, of which it is but a pale shadow. The feeling of being absorbed into a larger whole erases or diminishes a sense of separation and self and leads to experiences of the divine beyond any personalised conception, in fact, to a sense that one is identical with God. This is clearly reminiscent of the primal, oceanic state of unity with the mother and the whole universe (Newberg, D'Aquill & Rause 2001:105-106) and could therefore be interpreted as regression.

Neurotheology, especially the work of Newberg and D'Aquill (Ambrose 2002:7), has found that during religious experiences the prefrontal cortex of the human brain, which is the centre of attention, shows increased activity, while the parietal lobe, responsible for one's sense of time and space, shows decreased activity, as does the temporal lobe. The senses of boundaries and linearity are lost during an experience of infinite connectivity and lead to a feeling of being centred, of a presence, peace, unity, quieting and nothingness.

On the other hand, the body can also take the initiative and bring on these experiences: temporal lobe seizures can lead to visions that are interpreted as religious revelations. Epileptics, for instance, sometimes testify to experiences of divine presence and communication, endowing everything with cosmic significance. These mystical experiences can also be induced by the hallucinogenic drug, psilocybin, and have been found to have lifelong positive effects when coupled with religious ritual. According to Riesebrodt (2007:60-62), these views about the utility of religion are, however, based on "outdated evolutionary biology and functionalism".

The neurological location of religiosity depends on the concept of religion. Andrew Newberg (2001) and his collaborators associate it strongly with mysticism. They have, however, failed to neurologically distinguish religious from non-religious unitary experiences, which include concentration, and which first have to be translated into linguistic and rational terms as religious.

Although the physiology for each emotion and state of consciousness is different, there are significant overlaps. At the same time, there are obviously different levels of both sexual and religious experiences. In fact, it is conjectured in this study that the higher the levels achieved, the greater the extent of these overlaps. This is also in line with Wilber (1995:57): the lower levels of consciousness are included in the higher levels. According to Penrose, referred to by Kriel (2002:151), "(c)onsciousness is a whole-brain phenomenon brought about by large-scale quantum coherence". Consciousness "is the unified mental pattern that brings together the object and the self" (Damasio 1999:11) and the relationship between the organism and the object is the content of consciousness (Damasio 1999:20). Through

introspection and empathy it is possible to infer private first-person consciousness from public third-person behaviour (Damasio 1999:13). The range of objects to which one can become emotionally attached and to which one can attribute value are infinite (Damasio 1999:58) and apply to both sexuality and religion. According to Walmsley (2002:235), meaningful wholes and a tendency to focus on relationships, and organisational principles such as continuity, closure, similarity, etc. are typical phenomena in consciousness. It would seem that homeostatic regulation (conflict management) of emotions, amongst other things, depends on the wide range of wakefulness, sleep, attention and consciousness, all related to the body (Damasio 1999:260). Physiologically consciousness has been variously identified with the mind, localised in the (not only human) brain, or in (a) certain part(s) of it. Alternatively, the notion that it is inherent in the whole body, or even beyond it as well, has broadened the options but also the confusion. From this it is clear why this consciousness was chosen as a key concept for the understanding of religion in this study. Perhaps sexuality and spirituality are both attempts to transcend this body.

That sexuality is situated also in the brain and not only in the genitals is by now common knowledge (Eisler 1995:169-175). Interpretation of sexual and emotional arousal is environmentally conditioned. Although all instincts are cognitively mediated, they are experienced in the body, irrespective of whether they are said to be of higher or lower consciousness. Spiritual states as altered states of consciousness (like orgasm even when it is not used to induce mystical states) are therefore equally experienced in the body. All these states involve a change in a sense of time, space, identity, strong emotions and motor output. Both passion and illumination speak of love as the yearning for connection and oneness. This is more developed in humans due to their longer biological dependency as infants, females enjoying non-seasonal sex, multiple female orgasms and frontal sexuality. The bonding between infants and adults as well as that between the genders is therefore more developed, and has in turn promoted cooperation and language. Sex served originally as bonding in the group between the primates where the male acquired food from hunting and the female from gathering, thus supplementing the different kinds of food supply. This also confirms the link

between food and sex (Lachapelle 1999:123). Personalising the other through a name increased an awareness of self. Self-consciousness is furthermore also a product of the existential crisis which being in love triggers. At the same time, everything in the environment lightens up to reveal its meaning. One opens up to the divine, particularly in crisis. Chemically endogenous morphines, apart from masking pain and increasing energy for fight or flight in crisis, add pleasure through bonding and touch. Falling in love probably increases phenylethylamine, an amphetamine-like substance. It is clear that the evolution of sex, love, pleasure – and one could say meaning -- and consciousness are closely interrelated in more complex life.

The fertile theta state of between 4 and 8 brainwave cycles per second in the vague, preverbal twilight zone of metaphor and paradox between sleep and waking is below the censor of rationality. It is equal to the pregnant chaos before creativity, including the erotic, sometimes expressed in somnambulism and contradictory images inspired by memories of love. At 7.5 cycles per second they resonate with the electromagnetic Schumann waves around the earth, between its surface and the ionosphere. It is perhaps in this sense that Marcuse has intuited that the erotic experience can be generalised to the whole environment. During reverie, sleep and orgasm at least one of the brain hemispheres descends to this realm (Leonard 1983:193-194).

During mystical, sexual, out-of-body and spiritual experiences such as possession as well as dreams and visual hallucinations the amygdala, hippocampus and temporal lobes are intensely activated and work closely together (Du Toit 2002b:14-15). It is this limbic system which integrates emotional impulses and higher thoughts to produce emotional states (Craffert 2002:87), rather than the autonomic nervous system which constructs more basic experiences (Craffert 2002:62). Bodily conditions brought about by going up a mountain, solitude and staying awake for extended periods as paths to either physiological hyperstimulation or physiological deprivation can induce such states (Craffert 2002:58-59). The mind-body relation is therefore best understood at the level of consciousness (Walmsley 2002:266). That these experiences occur irrespective of their content (Craffert 2002:79), that is, of the cognitive mediation, suggests that they might be archetypically related.

9 TWO WORLD VIEWS

The Western view is that every development in the history of the world derives from and continues the primal creation by a male god where sex plays only a subordinate and often despised role. The Taoist view, on the other hand, is that everything derives from sex as the interplay between *yin*, or female principle, and *yang*, or male principle. The latter view does not simply concern yet another dualism, but is about a continuum and constant process of readjustment to regain the balance between these two interacting participants (Lachapelle 1999:139). In the Ho-Chh'i festivals sex was something numinous in the rituals and, although it is not clear which deities were involved, it seems that those personifying the celestial bodies and the five elements, and the spirits inhabiting and controlling various bodily parts participated. These festivals survived until the seventh century CE when they came to be frowned upon by Buddhists and Confucians.

In this tradition the most important body part was not the left hemisphere of the brain as it is in Western culture, but the solar plexus four fingers below the navel. This is considered the sacred centre of the body, the area still called the *sacrum* in Latin, from where the energy exchange with the rest of the universe occurs. It signifies not only the most primal life functions such as sex, foetal life, birth and food ingestion, but also the deepest emotions (Lachapelle 1999:141-142). Yet there is not the same emphasis on fertility, procreation and what Lachapelle (1999:146) calls the male ego, as in the West, but rather on group bonding and linking with nature. In ritualised sexual relations not only the genitals but the whole body, including the brain, are stimulated repeatedly and over a longer period of time which involves a tuning of the central nervous system: whereas either the sympathetic or the parasympathetic nervous system is usually aroused with the other being inhibited, arousal switches over to the other system when the one has been hyperaroused for a sufficiently long period. Thereafter the simultaneous discharge of both systems stimulates the middle part of the cerebral cortex which creates both a pleasant experience as well as a sense of oneness with everything. The right hemisphere concerned with holistic perception is then dominant. The strong rhythm of repeated ritual activity effects a positive discharge of the limbic or animal brain, which promotes a sense of social

bonding. When someone is completely receptive the whole being is experienced as sexual and this can happen in any relationship or connection, even with an animal, a plant and the whole world. This brings to mind Freud's notion of polymorphous perversity and once again hints at the oceanic experience in the womb and shortly thereafter. D.H. Lawrence (referred to by Lachapelle 1999:156) added to this that sex can only "live" when it is unconscious, dynamic and beyond gender orientation, something suggested by the multiple genders found in some primal cultures (Lachapelle 1999:149). Something similar was expressed by the travesties in Song of Songs where different parts of the self could act roles, such as king in 1:4 and shepherd in 2:7, which complement their usual place in society and liberate their sexuality from a limited role imposed by society. In primal cultures where sexuality is celebrated in a more diffuse and creative way, society is, in fact, experienced as a holding partner. The self is then allowed to become so wide and deep that it can open itself to the whole universe and be like a king crowned by the sun (Lachapelle 1999:161).

10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter various voices have participated in an implied dialogue with Song of Songs and created some scenarios where it could be received and struggled with. In addition, the current status of scientific findings about the natures of and relation between religion and sexuality made a more sober, "egoic" contribution to a postmodern Western landscape. This sounds desperate in its search for answers, but might be more open to explore ancient religious literature promising to reveal long lost insights and sensitivities again.

From this selective but hopefully representative picture of the current Western mindset the most evident common denominator is the search for oneness and continuity with the highest and most inclusive possible reality. It would seem that the analytical attitude towards the world has led to an experience of a fragmented and atomistic reality reflected in the modern view of language as self-referential as interpreted by Foucault. A sense of loneliness in a world which only allows brief and conflictual connections became clear from the philosophy of Onfray. A psychological defence against

this is then to take care of the self above all else, especially in terms of moderation and activity, the long history of which Foucault has described. This egoic state does not, however, reflect a sense of belonging to a wider context than the personal body and soul and their vicissitudes. A sense of meaning is likewise critically curtailed.

The transpersonal view of religion as various levels of relinking with and inclusion of lower levels into ever higher states resonated well with the various conceptualisations of sexuality and love. These virtually all hint at integration and a reconnection with the universe: from the oceanic sense of (both religious and) sexual experiences which Freud acknowledged, the Jungian archetypal images of male and female polarities reconciling into the Self, Bataille's notion of losing one's separate identity from and resuming continuity with the universe or God in death, as rehearsed in sex, to Marcuse's nostalgia to reintegrate erotically with the feminine. By presenting the history of the discourse about sexuality in the Western world, Marcuse has provided the background against which the other theories have been conceptualised. He has shown that, amongst other things, the concept of sexuality itself has not only changed with the vicissitudes of power relations, but also become more pronounced as a very instrument of power. This may help to explain why sexuality has been more readily recognised as the most obvious content of Song of Songs in the last few centuries.

These two different expressions of the same ultimate longing to intimately belong to infinity, to be held and embraced by God in the universe, to return to the womb of Mother Earth through the tomb, is almost ritually enacted in Song of Songs through the portrayal of liberated and liberating sexuality which includes a greater consciousness of nature as it struggles through the conflicts of various levels of ever greater inclusion. The higher levels of existence, of spirituality, are rooted in the lower levels, in the body and in matter. Instead of seeing this diffusion of sexuality as a dilution, its transcendence above the narrow obsession with and reduction to genital, heterosexual and reproductive sex should rather be celebrated as the "polymorph perverse", the creativity of which is the participation in the cosmic ebb and flow, progression and regression, height and depth, as the most inclusive embracing of reality.

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Subtext(s): Embracing Song of Songs

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the tentative, or rather deferred, conclusions as possible subtexts, as the text has turned out to be a palimpsest for constant rewriting and co-writing. The content of each previous chapter will be summarised and integrated into a whole in order to arrive at the main patterns of religiosity without going into detail again.

1.1 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The first chapter concerned the *pretexts*, that is, the history of the interpretation of Song of Songs and the concepts, assumptions and theories. The problem statement about the religiosity of Song of Songs and its justification as scripture was addressed by testing the hypothesis that a wider definition of the concept of religion could yield answers which would, in fact, turn out to be liberating. The methodology followed in this study was to outline the different stages of religiosity in terms of levels of consciousness as identified by Wilber's transpersonal psychology. This was supported by contributions from religious studies, anthropology, ancient history, linguistics, philosophy and neuroscience to arrive at an interdisciplinary panoramic view of the text under consideration.

As background to the problem statement, the historical interpretations within the mainstream Christian and Jewish traditions have been outlined to explain how the canonicity of Song of Songs has been justified. The allegorical interpretation has generally denied any literal reference to sexuality and narrowed its concept of religiosity in terms of scriptural revelation. Yet Scheffler (2012 personal communication) has correctly pointed out that the allegorical interpretation is also due to the manifestation of the collective unconscious. The so-called literal interpretation, on the other hand, has found acceptance within the canon as wisdom literature, but has in turn been based on a narrow definition of sexuality. When it denied any religiosity, it did so in

terms of a narrow definition of religiosity as well, though different from that of the two traditions referred to. The cultic-mythical interpretation saw religiosity in terms of parallels between neighbouring religions but still excluded other forms of religiosity. Both these concepts of religiosity and sexuality were therefore found to be too restrictive and mutually exclusive, not only in terms of each other, but also in terms of the different understandings of each of these concepts amongst different interpretative traditions.

Even if religiosity and sexuality or Eros are not mutually exclusive but two polarities along a continuum, the former often depicted as masculine and the latter as feminine, that would imply that religion and the masculine are more related to Thanatos. Perhaps religion is instead about the conflict between these two basic forces as much as it is between the conflict between male and female and how to relink and integrate them.

In order to arrive at the broadest possible concepts of both religiosity and sexuality, the two most prominent transpersonal developmental theories were used, that is that of Washburn and Wilber representing the individual and the collective dimensions of this approach, respectively.

In Chapter two the collective development of consciousness as far as it relates to both religiosity and sexuality in the cultures as *intertexts* of the ancient Near East until the final redaction of Song of Songs was sketched to give a sense of the context from which Song of Songs possibly grew. Arabia allows a glimpse of some possible animistic, fetishistic and totemistic remnants in Song of Songs, while Mesopotamian parallels point to a later theistic layer of Song of Songs. Egypt probably inspired the final form with its more mundane and physical perspective on erotic love. Women had a higher status there as reflected in the mythology and daily life than in Mesopotamia, where the development from a matriarchal to a patriarchal culture led to their relative oppression by a more masculine emphasis on the “spiritual”. It is between these three cultural complexes that Song of Songs was born, holding the tension between various levels of religious development. Some features are, however, common amongst them, as the different levels of religiosity are shared universally at different times.

Carr (2003:23) reminds us, as the Middle Eastern myths have done, “that human sexuality is also a reflection of divinity” and of “the gendered

character of humans made in God's image". In addition, this God speaks of "our image" and "our likeness", that is, in the plural, which includes the male and the female, as in the divine councils of the neighbouring cultures. Anthropomorphism has projected a perfect human form, and even body, onto the divine which in turn serves as the ideal.

Echoing ancient creation myths, the Hebrew God does not create alone but brings forth plants and animals through the female earth, whilst human sexuality embodies and reflects God's creative power as much as human intimacy and even interaction in general are always embodied and sexual; "much of life is structured by a language of touch and bodily presence" (Carr 2003:24, 32 and 34). Unlike other ancient creation myths, however, gendered intimacy in both the second creation narrative of Genesis 2 and Song of Songs does not focus on procreation and reproduction, but on a unique creation. The human psyche seems to realise the ambiguous and multivalent nature of sexual experience as it has been metaphorically expressed by ancient and traditional societies (Leick 1994:5), from its cosmic role in their creation myths, through the legitimization of their political leaders to their intimate and private encounters.

Chapter three has revealed a continuing plurality of sometimes unconscious messages and interpretations underneath the *text* of Song of Songs (Müller 1992:4), despite the formal, conscious and excluding orthodoxy of the patriarchal religious institutions. The transpersonal psychological reinterpretation of Song of Songs has proven particularly suitable in view of the strong themes of awakening and ascending. Each form of religiosity is included but transcended by a higher level. That is why the different previous layers are not erased, but merely hidden, to resurface once some excavations have been done. The atmosphere of fantasy and travesty adds to the sense of being in different worlds, outside daily reality.

The individual's developmental stages of the psyche are a reliving and reflective, if not commemorative, of those phases in the evolution in the history of humanity. As such, any text (whether written or in the postmodern sense of the word), any trace of human existence, testifies to all the previous stages of development implied as its prerequisites and as such is a monad of the preceding totality. Previous layers of religion, as is often the case with a

word's etymology, can be excavated from the unconscious of the text through recognition and remembrance, where they will be found to have survived despite the collective amnesia. What might appear as atavistic regression is a reliving as reintegration through reinterpretation from a later retrospective viewpoint of long-lost experiences. This is apart from the unconscious God who lives in every human being and therefore writer and reader (Frankl 2009:22).

These background voices together constitute a protest call to relink to the cooler, fertile and feminine oases of the unconscious in the midst of the bright, but scorching and often arid, male consciousness. If such a plethora of interpretations – some recycling from time to time – point to either some elements of universality or some unresolved issues, or both, then the history of the interpretation of Song of Songs suggests some as yet unfathomed depths which are worthwhile exploring. Even when some of these religious dimensions derive from beyond the text itself, they have still found the text a suitable container or screen for it.

Chapter four engaged with some partners in the dialogue about religiosity and sexuality as partially representing the current *context*. This was done in order to explore the viability of broadening these concepts to such an extent that Song of Songs could become more accessible in terms of its relevance to people who do not share the same cultural backgrounds, despite claims of translatability between the different cultural clusters.

In the present chapter the usefulness of this study as well as its limitations also need to be highlighted in order to make appropriate recommendations. By transcending the limiting religiosity imposed by the rest of the canons and the traditions to which they belong onto Song of Songs, the truly unique contribution of this book has not only been allowed to surface more freely, but the wider religiosity now radiated from this book to the rest of the canons would also be enriched and broadened. In addition, by recognising a more inclusive religiosity than the traditional concepts, not only ecumenical dialogue and cooperation but also interfaith relations will be enhanced in a pluralistic world which is struggling with conflicts of communication and community. At the same time the debate about such complex concepts as religiosity and sexuality and their interrelation can never be closed and in that

sense this study succeeded even if it could only humbly serve as a heuristic stimulus. More disciplines and more of the disciplines already consulted can and should come on board. The study could be critiqued for being Eurocentric especially in view of the fact that it has been written on the continent of Africa with its wealth of potential insights. Finally, the practical implications and applications of the study in the various spheres of various societies need to be worked out. Before these issues can be addressed an integrative summary of the findings of the previous chapters is now due.

1.2 THE NATURE OF RELIGIOSITY

The earliest layers of civilisation do not make any sharp distinction between ordinary and religious life; in fact, everything is interpreted religiously. It is in this deepest stratum that Song of Songs also has its roots. During the history of the development of Song of Songs from probably oral fragments until its final redaction and inclusion into two religious canons, it has adapted to and adopted the prevailing contours of the prevailing religion.

Just like other facets of psychological development, the various stages of sexuality do not necessarily coincide with their parallel religious ones, except in health, and optimal religious development does not necessarily depend on or imply equal, optimal development in other areas of being human. The inverse, however, is not true as the quality of sexuality depends on the level of religiosity (Frankl 1988:26).

When religion is relinking as its etymology suggests, it implies, of course, a temporary separation after an original oneness. The question immediately arises what the origin and what the subsequent parts entail. It is for that reason that splitting, projection and integration as conflict resolution have been issues that have been grappled with in the background. The view in this study is that the unity of everything was the original condition towards which religion aspires to return, but at higher levels of consciousness. This is paradoxically only achieved through transcendence which involves temporary distancing before a “regression” allows integration with the previous levels (Washburn 1994:26-27).

Religious experiences are deeply personal and subjective, and as such one can only identify with those of others when one has experienced them

oneself. One is primed to recognise and resonate with what is familiar, resulting in selective sensitivity. This reveals the parts of the soul which are most conscious, but those parts which are more unconscious can be accessed through confronting what seems less familiar.

Song of Songs testifies, though briefly and fragmentarily, to some very intense encounters, switching suddenly between persons or to the plural when a peak experience is hinted at as in 1:2-4. The transitions from awakening to being passionately alive in various states of consciousness are repeatedly brought to the fore. This is reinforced by the polarities which are so typical of the mad state of love (Keel 1986:173).

If the Afrikaans word, “verwek” (conceive a child), is brought into play, its etymological relation to “opwek” (arouse), “opgewek” (in high spirits, light-hearted, awakened) and “wakker maak” (awaken) become significant as interwoven dimensions of the same theme. If the refrains warn not to fast-track love, it is precisely about respecting the natural pace of an unfolding process. It is about the celebration of becoming more alive, more awake, more conscious, and all that with the discoveries and generosity of puberty as a model (Feuillet 1990:206).

Awakening the past in the unconscious is one aspect of growing into a higher level of consciousness with its wide view of reality. For Beauchamp (1990:157), for instance, the typological interpretation deepens human experience, and salvages for the present what, on the surface, seems to belong exclusively to the past. On the other hand, what seems to be present only on the surface of the moment also has its roots deep in the past, while the present serves also as the soil of the future. The various inanimate objects, plants, animals, celestial bodies, significant people – mothers and lovers -- and even ideational constructions of meaning, all of which occur in Song of Songs, represent various stages of religiosity *in* the text as much as the explicit interpretations of the text during history do as well.

All of these elements were once the objects of identification or idealisation and religious devotion, everyday realities that were temporarily held onto as transitional objects before the next level of development could be accessed. They might be forgotten or, when remembered, even scorned, but they remain part of the ranks of the ladder of collective human evolution, of

every human being's history and identity, and are relived in the individual's development, sometimes as regressions.

Sometimes what seems to have been left behind and lost some of its immediate meaning is regarded as if shrouded in mystery, and understood and experienced as either divine or demonic. To become, for instance, aware of one's animality can either animate to animosity or arouse to endearment, depending on the animal associated with. This archaic element is also expressed verbally through the poetic use of old words, as early as in the title.

2 PRE-EGOIC STAGE

2.1 PRE-EGOIC STAGE: THE ARCHAIC LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY

The earliest religious experiences, even when not realised as such, can only be preverbal and sensed in the body as sensuality and emotions. In fact, without a body the divine cannot be experienced (Viviers 2002:1546 and 1547). Bynum (1991:156 and 190) claims that women in particular somatise their spiritual experiences easier than men as they are less dichotomous in their self-image and are naturally more aware of their bodies.

That Song of Songs is highly sensual hardly needs to be mentioned. If religion is a system of symbolisation with the aim of inducing certain moods and motivations, as Geertz maintains, and if all symbolisation ultimately derives from the body, as Gliserman (1996:3) asserts, then the body is the primary site for the manifestation of religiosity. Religiosity is potentially already situated in the body, despite the body's narcissistic roots.

The environmental crisis and the growing rediscovery of the significance of nature by modern religion have led to a renewed interest in the significance of the body as an extension of nature sharing in the same elements and archetypes. This includes a curiosity about the subtle or non-material body, often stimulated by non-Western traditions (Nasr 1996:236). In the new body theology there is a desire to discern divine revelation and an experience of the divine in both ordinary and extraordinary bodily experiences, which abound in Song of Songs. It also includes the experiences of the body of the other and how they affect the recipient of these perceptions (Nasr 1996:257). It is as if through the orifices the boundaries to nature and to

the other are dissolved to extend embodied experience to include even that of the other (Viviers 2010:123).

The maternal body is the first religious object of devotion, and according to Ferenczi (1924:27), sexual intercourse is the unconscious rehearsal of re-entry into the womb, for the male as his maternal object, and for the female vicariously and so through the male as subject. At the same time, orgasm as the loss of a sense of identity can be seen as the rehearsal of death. Sex is in this way unconsciously a spiritual experience through the body. The sensuality and bodily devotion expressed in Song of Songs remind one also of the earliest infantile stages, long before the reawakening of puberty, when love was essentially expressed by the mother through bodily care. All other and later experiences are always, at least unconsciously, related to and in terms of the body. The allegorical interpretation has an intuition of that as is proven from the fact that it can read religiosity from bodily metaphors. There must be some common denominator between the religious and the erotic to build the bridge between the two experiences. The same applies to the relationship between God and his people figuratively portrayed by the prophets as a marriage, that is, a sexual relationship.

2.1.1 The nature of sexuality

Sexual intercourse signifies the crossing of at least physical boundaries into the realm of the other and the different; identities are in some way deconstructed (Guinan 1998:44). Transcendence, transgression, linking and creativity coincide in a unique way. As Guinan (1998:40-41) puts it so aptly: "Human sexuality is imbued with liminal meaning. Exchanges, openings, penetrations and permeable boundaries are an inherent part of human erotic life. Ambiguous and anomalous phenomena appear in the cracks and spaces in taxonomies and cultural classifications. Liminal phenomena are displacements deriving from contradictions and challenges to social structure; at the same time they define social lines, they challenge their integrity. These phenomena are perceived to be powerful, disgusting, uncanny, or dangerous."

It is significant that the creation of the woman, according to Genesis 2:21, from the side or rib of the man, happened while he was in a תַּדְמָה

(deep sleep), a *hapax legomenon* and perhaps a unique state. Although apparently only ordinary sleep is mentioned in Song of Songs, Beauchamp (1990:151) associates deep sleep with death, from which both sexual partners originate and arise and to which they peacefully relapse when satisfied. This is aptly expressed in some Germanic languages such as German where *Befriedigung* (satisfaction) is from the same linguistic root as *Friede* (peace). Different levels of arousal and of consciousness are clearly discernable in Song of Songs: from sleeping and perhaps dreaming, to being awake, from sexual arousal and being in love, even lovesick, to being at peace at its consumption, and from memories of birth to the realisation of death. All these levels are linked and relinked to religious vestiges which are only hinted at, creating thus a subtle atmosphere which transcends the gross and the explicit.

Although Keel regards Song of Songs as an anthology of secular love poems, he recognises it as a celebration of the divine power of love, which merges the sacred and the profane, but then “nicht eine dumpfe Gier nach Genitalien, sondern die Bewunderung für das geliebte Gegenüber” (1986:41, not mindless genital lust, but admiration for the beloved facing you). To describe sexual love in such a context is to endow it with sacred significance, and thus to critique all superficial attitudes to it, without detaching it from the physical on the other hand.

2.1.2 Sensuality

If religion is the relinking (*religio*) back to the alienated, then reconnecting to the body and its senses and through it to the environment and the “other” gender, is all part of that experience as a pilgrimage to the origins and process of transformation. There is probably no other book in the Jewish or Christian canons which has proportionately so many sensory and sensual references or so many contextualising in terms of the many aspects of the surrounding nature.

Song of Songs, for instance, “exudes” various fragrances. Kügler (2000:11) notes that smells directly shape self-image and the perception of the world. Hillman (1979:186-187) finds smell the best analogy for the psychological perception of invisible and intangible psychic depths. It is, in his

view, also significant that the word “essence” denotes both the hidden core of an entity and fragrance and that the word “ethereal” refers to something other-worldly. He adds that smelling something is taking in the spirit. Just as smoke is visually obscuring, blinding and suffocating and requires an “undersense” or *hyponoia*, so the soul is conceptualised in alchemy as between the watery and earthy body and the fiery spirits of the underworlds or “other-world”.

Incense probably contains a substance that also occurs in hashish, which is why it is so popular in cultic and magical practices. Fragrances signify the presence of the gods or holy people (Kügler 2000:19-20). This also overlaps therefore with the mythical dimension.

Watson (2001:154) claims that all fragrances cherished by humans have the same ingredients as their sex hormones and are therefore ultimately based on unconscious sexual stimulation, even the scents used in religious ceremonies. Yet it also has another association: the first smell after death before putrefaction sets in is sweet and has been linked to the departure of the soul. This gave pleasant fragrances a sacred connotation in the ancient world (Watson 2001:155). Fragrances therefore have associations with both Eros and Thanatos.

2.2 PRE-EGOIC STAGE: THE MAGICAL LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY

As has been shown, various folk superstitions, derived from the social background against which Song of Songs was composed, have been woven into the text. These elements can still induce a certain atmosphere in the informed and sensitive reader. Even when the magical stage of consciousness is already accompanied by myths, one can nevertheless distinguish it as such, due to the animistic feature of blurring the boundary between the separate identities. Any object, animate or inanimate, can become identified with in this way and then clung to for protection and prosperity. At individual level this is represented by the omnipotent illusion of the infant, who regards the body of the mother and the rest of reality as part of itself.

2.2.1 Bodily breath as soul

While breathing is not explicitly mentioned as a bodily experience and function in Song of Songs, it is suggested by the winds and the smells and when the day is personified in 2:17. Winnicott (1975:154) regards the infant's interest in breath as between the inside and the outside of the body and as a basis for the ideas of souls and spirits as the capacity for healthy illusion and the link between the individual internal and the collective external worlds. Religious concepts and experiences are, likewise, creations in the space between these two worlds (Winnicott 1975:224).

2.2.2 Totemism

Remnants from the totemic background were preserved in the high value attached to certain stones and minerals, a general regard, openness and receptivity to nature and the feminine, the veneration of certain plants, believed to have had magical powers, and of certain animals, in which people recognised themselves. The latter are often still the proper names of people, or shown on battle insignia or even as body markings (Cook 1902:415-416).

All of these would, at least unconsciously, have conjured up some religious connotations from the hunter-gatherer era, elements of which survive even in postmodern times despite the present generation being simply not attuned to the muffled echoes of what makes themselves heard in the text. The prescribed scientific attitude has desensitised the natural intuition for the religious. Incidentally, it is not clear why Viviers (2008:449) calls supernatural beings "counter-intuitive", especially as he adds that this common human inclination is all very natural. That one would see beyond the purely sensory input (Viviers 2008:450) would, in fact, make it precisely intuitive, a development cherished by transpersonal psychology as more inclusive. It is not necessarily a creative projection. It is well known that the Israelites at certain stages of their history resorted in an allegedly regressive way to star, well and even tree worship (Cook 1902:418). Incidentally, the beloved is compared to all three of these natural phenomena: in 4:12, 6:10 and 7:9, respectively.

Fragmentary survivals and periodic revivals induce through associations a religious atmosphere. This is not monolithic despite the later

monotheistic-mythical redaction of the Hebrew canon which tried to erase or at least reduce these traces of so-called heathenism. The majority of decorative features mentioned in Song of Songs occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible almost exclusively in cultic and royal contexts, a connection which is to be expected due to the often ideological role played by religion in politics. Popular religion could not be mothballed from other times and other peoples (Cook 1902:430-431). When the canon is relativised by recognising its diverse religiosity, one's eyes are ironically opened to signs of religiosity beyond its boundaries.

2.2.2.1 The religiosity of stones, seals and minerals

Fetishes and amulets are expressive of magical, omnipotent thinking, with direct outcomes, contrary to religion where there is a realisation of dependence and having to wait for the Other. The fetishistic nature of the Five Scrolls, but also the canon in general, is a continued recurrence of this earlier stage in human religiosity.

Even inanimate objects become alive in the mind of those who regard them as fetishes. Loretz (1994:237) has argued that the sachet of myrrh resting between the breasts of the beloved in 1:13 and the seals on the arm wrist and the heart of the lover mentioned in 8:5 do not have the function of sealing or authentication, but of amulets to protect their bearer from misfortune and sickness, the omens of death, and to increase his or her lust for life.

Magical power was likewise ascribed to the stone material of the seals of scrolls, making them into very important economic and legal instruments. Similar to an oath, a seal is invested with intense emotional commitment. Both serve as guarantees, either through symbolic representation of the guarantor or by calling upon a witness who seals the testimony or commitment by appealing to a higher being in whom even more faith has been invested. Seals have also been found in Mesopotamian graves, reminding one of 8:6 where they are mentioned in juxtaposition to death and where the beloved wants, in the form of a seal, to become part of the very body of her lover. This proves that the seal symbolises the body and how closely religiosity is tied to the body. The body is, in fact, metaphorised in all the *auṣāf*. In 4:12 the seal

probably refers to and represents the hymen, mentioned euphemistically and to veil her honour or shame or to express reality in an intensified way. In 5:11-15 the body of the lover is not only idealised as a superlative, but the precious metals invested with the divine at the same time also enhance his body to obtain a semblance of the statues of the deities in whose image he is described.

2.2.2.2 The religiosity of plants

Plants could also have functioned as totems. They would have carried something of the divine when they had mind-altering effects or when they, like apples and pomegranates (Müller 1988:113), were believed to be aphrodisiacs or fertility enhancing. As general energisers they can make the consumer feel more sexual, healthier and sexier. In addition, the shape of the roots of mandrakes resembles the lower part of the human body, in the same way that various fruits are metaphorically related to certain body parts, and the palm tree even likened to the whole body of the tall and voluptuous beloved in 7:9. The many trees mentioned in turn remind one of the wooden '*ashereth*', representing goddesses in the territory of Israel (De Vaux 1978:286) which Krinetzki (1981:217) regards as phallic symbols. Trees and their fruit are therefore often symbols of the body charged with meanings.

2.2.2.3 The religiosity of animals

The change from an agricultural to a pastoral lifestyle, as happened in Sumeria (Eissler 1995:67-69), would have suggested livestock rather than plants as the daily realities to identify with, to desire and to devote oneself to.

In Song of Songs all the animals are mentioned with positive connotations: the livestock, after which the characters look, the endearing identifications with the dove and the deer, but also perhaps the leopard and the lion, suggesting the wild, even dangerous animalistic passions, which rage in the lovers. Deer, lions and doves were, like the date palms, closely associated with the goddess of love across the Near East and Egypt and often signalled her presence and influence (Keel 1986:102 and 111). All these occur prominently in Song of Songs and would inevitably have conjured up connotations of the goddess.

All these bodies - whether of stone or water, whether that of plants or of animals -- have become, at some stage or another, the representations and the reminders of the divine.

2.2.3 Jungian “archetypes”

Wilber (1998:148) understands the Jungian “archetypes” as primitive and universally inherited images of the basic themes of human experience in the collective unconscious. These, although (according to him) incorrectly called archetypes, also belong to this stage of development, but are expressed mythically and otherwise, such as in the structure of images in art and literature, as the footprints of the deities. Krinetzki (1981) has focused mainly on the *anima* and *animus* as the shadow of the Self. Neumann’s Great Mother (1956) is found projected onto various natural and cultural objects, often suggesting physical and emotional containers, and in the background to the goddess. Other archetypes such as the trickster, the damsel in distress and rebirth could also be explored.

2.3 PRE-EGOIC STAGE: THE MYTHICAL LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY

From the identifying and introjecting tendencies of the magical consciousness, the self develops to the inverse to cast the other in terms of projections. The psychic processes are expressed by stylistic forms such as personifications and by content such as anthropomorphic deities.

Various mythical traditions from in and around Israel underlie Song of Songs, but have been “translated” or edited out of its canonical form by the monotheistic redactors. Müller (1988:112), for instance, explains 6:10 as a lyrical reproduction of what was once a mythical idea and its iconographic expression. He regards the *’h* (who) interrogative, which also appears in 3:6 and 8:5, as typical of hymnal style.

That the cultic-mythical sense has been rediscovered in the rational modern era is due to a retrospective insight, in a sense a regression. This is always necessary when a previous layer of meaning has not been properly integrated and acknowledged.

2.3.1 Bodies as reminders of the gods

Song of Songs abounds with references to gemstones and precious minerals, which enhance the value of the lover, hinting as mythological remnants at theomorphic representation of the lovers.

The alienated and split-off projection onto the statues of the anthropomorphic deities is reclaimed and re-owned through the mediation of the beloved, whose body then becomes generalised and projected back onto the whole of reality which is romanticised. Then one is sensitive to the presence of the divine in all of reality as the body of God, perhaps similar to how the visible universe is the phenomenal form and manifestation of the Buddha body, with the Buddha nature descending into the human body as humans ascend to higher consciousness and perfection (Nasr 1996:246). This is perhaps also suggested by the Sumerian word for limbs, (*me*) *dim*₂, in Akkadian, *binātu* and *binûtu*, which also means creation and creature. The Sumerian *dim*₂, in Akkadian, *banû*, means to create and refers to the form of the body (Asher-Greve 1998b:9). Bodies are not only represented by the statues of the deities but also by celestial objects, stones, holy places such as rivers and mountains, plants and animals, all of which can somehow imply expressions of the divine.

Idealisation is, however, in Klein's view (1997:64), a defence against the disappointing reality of the other who does not really match one's ideals of perfection, but still remains a carrier of these ideals.

2.3.2 Gods alluded to

The mythical level is in the first instance represented by the casting of deities on to the religious stage.

The contested suffix, יָה, of שְׁלֵהֶבְתִּיהָ (a flame of YHWH or an intense flame) in 8:6 could be an abbreviated reference to יהוה (YHWH), the God of storm and lightning, or it could just mean lightning. In the latter case it would resonate with his Canaanite-Phoenician, Resheph, in רֶשֶׁפִּי אֵשׁ (flames of fire) and would also be associated with Ba'al, amongst others, the god of storms, the love between him and Anath, and their fight against Moth (death), all echoed in 8:6. The mighty waters would then also allude to the underworld, according to, for instance, Psalm 18:4 and Jonah 2:3 (Loretz 1994:241-242).

Deities as manifestations of the principle of love and life are opposed to dangerous demons, thus expressing contrast and conflict as intensity during the pre-egoic negotiation of change.

2.3.3 Celestial bodies as deities

People for whom the *hiph'il* and *niph'il* of שָׁקַף (look down) are used are usually regarded as superhuman, especially when they do so מִן-הַחַלּוֹנוֹת (from the windows) as in 2:9. They are therefore also used for gods and other supernatural beings (Müller 1988:114). That the woman is compared to dawn, the moon, the sun and the “bannered hosts” suggests therefore that she has celestial status, confirmed by the fact that this verb is often accompanied by מִן-שָׁמַיִם (from heaven). The adjective, אַיִמָּה (terrible), adds to the sense of *mysterium tremendum*, linking the aesthetic and the numinous (Viviers 1990:244). The body of the beloved therefore becomes as if celestial through her likeness to these heavenly luminaries. Several main themes (Lebanon, Solomon, the mother, the daughters of Jerusalem, my soul or self and the objects of the lover's activities in 5:1) are expressed seven times in an era when this figure had special significance due to the seven celestial bodies which were known. This links to the root meaning of the Hebrew word for oath as well.

2.3.4 Oaths

Oath swearing is a cultic act, but also has a magical aspect in that the power of the spoken word is asserted to create a reality. One does not swear by a deity but by its attributes. This is expressed in Song of Songs by the creatures of the wilderness which represent the attributes, thus avoiding polytheism but still retaining the sacred atmosphere (Keel 1986:94).

2.3.5 Holy places

The proper names of places mentioned in Song of Songs contribute to its mythic dimensions in that they convey pregnant hints to religious centres. These probably developed from the magical interpretation of certain places, especially those containing water, such a crucial feature in Song of Songs and contained by the earth and cooled by the wind. The late and almost isolated

mention of fire in the climax of the text in 8:6, although constantly adumbrated by the allusions to sacrifice and incense, suggests something of the unnamed fiery YHWH, the God of storm and lightning, who eventually reigns supreme from his holy mountain over all aqueous fertility symbols.

That ascending and descending are so often mentioned suggest mountains, with their association with altars and worship, and add to the general religious sense exuded by Song of Songs (De Vaux 1978:284). This is reinforced by the frequent mention of incense and other fragrances in this regard, conjuring up religious associations. This network of constant linking even goes beyond the text and its contextual background to be embodied in new contexts such as a religious canon which infuses additional religiosity by linking it to other religious markers such as Pesach and the Sabbath.

2.3.6 Canonicity

In the same way that people project their own split-off parts onto other people through idealising or demonising, so they project their own fantasies through eisegesis onto texts which are the very projections of others. They then “recognise” the voice of their deity in it as revelation and elevate the text to scripture and religious canon. This implies a layering of projections with the resultant continuous, if not infinite, deference of ultimate-as-original meaning, as per postmodern deconstruction. Everything is a metaphor of something else and the alleged original remains elusive in the oblivion of this archaeology of the mind. The more repressed and projected, the greater the sensitivity as a vicarious sense of recognition and the more powerful the reaction.

Religiosity is often induced by the contextual use of Song of Songs, especially through the allegorical interpretation rather than discovered in the text; though one can argue that its potential for or susceptibility to such nuances of meaning can still be discovered. Melting of hermeneutical horizons and investing new meaning by rediscovering lost, neglected or hidden experiences can be relevant to contemporary needs: the desire for the “O/other”, difference and identity in a pluralistic and yet global society as the product of the Second Axial Period (Cousins 1992:13). In referring to Müller who regards the imaginary world of Song of Songs as an example of “einer

unbewußt religiöse Daseinsaneigung", Viviers (1990:243-244) explains that religious experiences which have become unconscious surface again during times of confusion and the eclipse of religion such as the Hellenistic time during which Song of Songs received its final form.

By resonating with and alluding to other texts, an intertextuality then becomes visible, which seems to confirm the original sense of canonicity. Although Keel (1986:22), for instance, denies any close link to the sacred marriage rituals and regards the poems as even more secular than those of Egypt, he finds theological character of the book as a whole through its relation with other Biblical texts, such as the Eden narrative, wisdom literature and the prophets. The context of the canon, constituted by the collective identity, induces the spirit and atmosphere of the whole collection, which functions as a form of redaction, using various contributions and fragments to adopt a new meaning, just as Song of Songs itself comprises smaller texts from different contexts. This seems to be a one-way process, however, as no other canonical book refers to Song of Songs, the first references to it occurring only in the second century CE (Davies 1998:139). This is despite Song of Songs alluding to intertextual commonalities elsewhere in the canon. The new context is both that of the collection, and that of the social milieu, in which the canon serves as normative, each influencing the meaning of the other in a cyclical way. Moreover, in the case of Song of Songs, there have, of course, been two different and exclusive monotheistic traditions in which it has been embedded: Judaism and Christianity, both of which assimilated it in its own way.

No other Biblical book has elicited as many commentaries and diverse interpretations, which seems to suggest that it has an exceptionally strong appeal, resonating with something which may be universal at an unconscious level. On the other hand, its open-endedness may have invited the diversity of projections and reactions. In fact, it is the mysterious nature of the book which made Rabbi Akiva to regard it as most sacred, the holiest of holies (Krinetzki 1981:31). It may be this "Geheimnis" which gives the deepest sense of belonging and "Heimweh" on a preverbal and pre-egoic level.

Krinetzki (1981:122), however, believes that Song of Songs was included in the canon as, amongst other things, a reactionary measure meant

to be a corrective to the demonising of sexuality in the apocryphal Book of Tobit.

2.3.7 Pesach and its connection with Song of Songs

That Song of Songs is sung at and so closely connected to the Jewish Pesach (Pelletier 1989:404), with its roots in the universal spring festival, is perhaps a vestige of the earlier matriarchal sacred marriage and fertility rites, which have survived in the later patriarchal mythical stage. The blessings bestowed in the Israelite tradition on the breasts and the womb, for instance in Genesis 21:7, are in fact very similar to their high status in the religion of their pagan Canaanite neighbours with whom they might have felt in constant competition. In case of emergency, wet nurses or even the milk of sheep or goats could be substituted for that of the mother (Yalom 1977:27-28), which might explain the presence of these animals in 4:1 and 6:5. Even when certain motifs were borrowed from neighbouring cultures and literature without the intention of taking over their religious content (Krinetzki 1981:36), but particularly when doing so to critique and counter this religious content, they still leave traces in the unconscious which remind one of this foreign religious content.

2.3.8 Sabbatical peace and its connection with Song of Songs

In 8:10 שָׁלוֹם (peace) is mentioned, which also links with the Sabbath as rest in that both concepts are about completion, adumbrated by כְּמוֹת (like death) as the eternal Sabbath. This has been personified and deified as the Bride of God, as the ultimate form in the goddess development in Judaism. *Lilith* and the *Matronit* had been the negative and positive aspects, respectively, of and united in the Soharic *Shekinah*, the divine presence or indwelling, and regarded by Patai (referred to in Pope 1977:169-171) as the ambivalence of male sexual experience. The Sabbath night then became devoted to sexual celebration in which Israel was the male and Sabbath the female partner, perhaps avoiding acknowledgement of the real female due to this ambivalence. This is reminiscent of the sacred marriage rituals prevalent in the ancient Near East. For the Falashas of Ethiopia, the Sabbath was the daughter of God, pre-existent to creation, like Wisdom in Proverbs 8 and the

mediatrix between humans and God. This development reached its peak in sixteenth century Safedic Kabbalah, where the invisible, veiled, Sabbath was welcomed as Queen and Bride with the same *לֵךְ דָּוִד* (come, my love) of 7:12 in the open field, probably under the rising evening star of Venus, reminding one of *מִי זֹאת עֹלָה מִן-הַמִּדְבָּר* (who is she, who ascends from the desert?) in 8:5. During the same night, the unholy *Lilith* would roam around, trying to seduce man, and thus perhaps representing *פַּחַד בַּלַּיִל* (terror in the night) of 3:8 (Pope 1977:171-174).

3 EGOIC STAGE

3.1 THE RATIONAL LEVEL OF RELIGIOSITY

3.1.1 Writing and masculinity

If the theory of Shlain (1998) is valid, that is, that alphabetic writing has created a male bias at the expense of our common femininity, then Song of Songs -- in fact, all texts -- have contributed to that effect. In addition, this invention seems to have coincided with, or even compensated for, the breakdown of the bicameral mind and the breakthrough of consciousness which are, according to Jaynes (1976), a male development. This would mean that textuality is itself a signal of that loss of the voice of the alleged deities, and thus of religiosity in its theistic form. The very textuality of the text therefore expresses male rationality.

The rational level of religiosity usually expresses a male aspect, but this is not strongly represented in the text. There are only a handful of phallic symbols: the lover himself, the archetypal and perhaps paternal figure of King Solomon and his armed bodyguards with their swords, the abusive city policemen in 3:3 and 5:7, the bothersome brothers of 1:6 and 8:8 and perhaps in 3:6: *כְּתִימֹת עָשָׁן* (like pillars of smoke). The towers mentioned in 4:4, twice in 7:5 and in 8:10 all refer to the nose, neck or breasts of the female beloved. The lover and Solomon are the only ones with religious overtones. Otherwise, male symbols such as the serpent and the bull featuring so often with the goddess are conspicuously absent in Song of Songs.

The recognition itself of the various levels of religiosity probably belongs to the modern rational mind, which can distance and separate itself from allusions such as alleged illusions proudly outgrown. The secular

interpretation, which finds nothing but mundane love beyond these background relics, is a product of this mindset, but is still split off from other parts of the psyche. It is a reduction of the text in terms of this self-alienation.

3.1.2 Ideology and critique

Yet, it is also the sobriety of rationality which recognises that Song of Songs has often served as a screen for religious projections. This is in the first place not as confirmation of the *status quo*, but as advocating an alternative world by representing the subdued yet subversive spiritual dimension in a text with pre-Axial roots. The royal and pastoral travesties dramatise these fantasies. The past serves as an ideal for and a critique of the present. However, intertwined with that protest are elements that support class and gender ideology, for instance by presenting the traditional gender dualism. As part of the canon, Song of Songs serves, especially through the allegorical interpretation, mostly patriarchal privilege. This is despite its dissonant voice which speaks, even as one of the shortest books in the Bible, on behalf of the outsiders and the marginalised.

According to Horine (2001:6), it was the interpretation of Song of Songs in terms of alleged parallels in Egyptian premarital love poetry, which are silent about both fertility and religion, which reinforced the imposition of the modern world view onto Song of Songs.

3.1.3 Sensuality and sobriety?

God and the beloved are interchangeable, which is perhaps why there is no explicit mention of God in Song of Songs: someone who is sexually in love and obsessed with the beloved has no space, no further need even, for a separate God, except to pray for his help in times of disappointment. Trible (1993:102) also notices this tendency for God to withdraw in Genesis 2-3 when the lovers unite sexually to discover each other and themselves. Unconsciously the beloved has become God incarnate, just as all of reality becomes alive and acquires a religious and spiritual nuance, soaked in profound meaning as subtle background. Just as the whole body and being of the lover becomes erogenous, so too does the universe as God's Body, of

which the beloved's body is a monad. In that sense the deified beloved is also the shadow, the reminder, of the universal and omnipresent divine.

It is only in the absence of this beloved that God becomes the place holder, a projection of the missing partner, of which the allegorical interpretation of Song of Songs is an example. According to Fischer (2010a:222-223), it is, however, the selective interpretation in terms of metaphor which makes it invalid. It is used specifically to veil the body due to shame.

The rational level of making sense of reality is not as flatland (Wilber 2001:19-21) as it seems, nor is it, for that matter, as rational as it sounds. The lovers live to a great extent in core consciousness, limited to the here and now. Their sense of self is likewise dependent on the events and objects of the moment. On the other hand, they reveal a vague sense of their inherited past through the traces of buried religiosities and the references to birth by the woman. At the same time, there is a consciousness of death and what can transcend this life.

They sometimes withdraw into the formless chaos of the mental underworld of sleep and dreams, of lovesick madness, before the creativity of the erotic and of love resurges (Leonard 1983:193). This is physically paralleled by them moving to the outskirts of society and back, and up the heights of elevation before they descend again into rest and peace. Their elevating compliments are not condescending, but in fact, put the other on a pedestal and themselves by implication lower. They move in and out of private, even intimate, containing spaces as much as their love is exchanged through their bodily orifices, the doors and windows of the houses of their selves (cf also Freud 1986:346).

3.1.4 Lack of dogma

It is the cool, clear mind of rationality which makes one realise that the religiosity of Song of Songs is not one of firm convictions, except perhaps those imbedded in the refrains as well as in 8:6-7, unless they were uttered in the heat of the moment. For what is institutionalised and standardised as religion by society and culture can numb personal religious sensitivities and obfuscate the voice and vision of the divine. As the laws of love lie beyond

even the *Torah*, without interfering with it (Krinetzki 1981:227), so the possibilities of encountering the divine are not closed by any set revelation. Absolute certainties are psychoanalytically indicative of a body-mind split, when the lived body no longer affords a sense of groundedness, an experiential centre, which relinks us to the universe (Balamuth 1998:282). This is then compensated for by a mental anchor. In fact, the capacity to tolerate and even appreciate complexity and insecurity is a feature of higher development. The religiosity of Song of Songs is of a subtle and indirect nature through remnants, suggestions, double entendres and connotations conjuring up a holistic atmosphere which reminds one of other religious contexts, rather than abstract and transcendental ideas, detached from space and time, which develop only later (Smith 1956:114). This associative attitude is akin to Jewish Midrash exegesis (Fischer 2010:223) and, just like the body's orifices, links and relinks into the once-lost intimacy. The poetic archaisms relink the reader to the past with which he or she is reconciled as he or she integrates it through regression in the process of individuation. The fragmented and leaping nature of Song of Songs has disallowed unanimity about its structure and ample uncertainty exists about the meaning of many expressions. This in itself is significant as it emphasises the preliminary nature of human insight into love and the divine.

The absence of dogma and belief can be experienced as liberating for those finding meaning precisely in vertiginous free-fall. Infinity cannot be divided into two finite realms of meaning and non-meaning. Liberated from dogma one's eyes are opened to the universal presence of the divine.

This elusive aspect, enhanced by its poetic nature (Burden 1986:38), is also reflected in the almost anarchic fluctuation between different levels and persons, not conforming to expected rules. As Fischer (2010a:245) points out, the dialogical structure of Song of Songs undermines any authoritative teaching, but opens itself up to various possibilities to the reader who has to participate in the text through his or her own questions. He adds: "Deshalb kann Hoheslied als ein weltliches Liebeslied ein echt geistliches Lied der Liebe sein, denn 'die Liebe ist, wie die Sprache selbst, sinnlich, übersinnlich'."

Finally, none of the words in the canon, in which Song of Songs has been incorporated, and which could be translated as religion or its

morphological derivatives, occur in Song of Songs itself. That is, unless one hears the words suggested in the name of the region, Amana, through which the “reliable” or “constant” river flows. This concept would anyway be a Western imposition onto a text from a culture that does not separate the religious from the secular.

3.1.5 Personal spiritual significance

The egoic level of religiosity would also include a personal relationship to the text which the reader may find of autobiographical significance, another reason why its religiosity cannot be closed or reduced to that of the religious institutional context within which it functions. A student who started his doctoral studies on Song of Songs just a month before the Love of his Life was sealed in death after a seventeen-year relationship could discover, for instance, divine consolation and meaning in the text. He can now more clearly recognise the gift of love as the “Word of God” in his life.

4 TRANS-EGOIC STAGE

4.1 TRANS-EGOIC STAGE: THE CENTAURIC AND PSYCHIC LEVELS OF RELIGIOSITY

The recognition of the different layers of religiosity as still and always present in the psyche would heal the artificial and temporary split of the rational level relinking the lost parts and rediscovering the forgotten dimensions of human religiosity. The trans-egoic stage therefore reaches beyond all the separations which the ego has imposed. These reconciliations will now be highlighted.

4.1.1 Inclusive universality despite uniqueness

A peak experience is a religious experience (Wulff 1997:608) and not only the highest level of consciousness someone has reached, but also the highest level of integration of previous levels of consciousness, including some of the unconscious. It reaches into the deepest accessible layers of the soul but also above and beyond the ego, all manifestations of identity, including gender, and rationality. As such it is therefore also translinguistic.

If the reader has had existential “*hapax*” moments, revelatory of immensely deep and incontestable meaning in what seems to remain a

mysterious miracle, cracking open a new dawn, somehow changing the direction of life, during what might seem to others as mundane and general events, or at best called synchronicities, then pronouncing the silently present, ineffable Name in the infinite beauty and sense of profoundly humbling elevation would be nothing but blasphemous.

The highest level of consciousness is an integration of all experience and is therefore also experienced as erotic. In the same way that the earliest religious experiences are bodily based, so the highest religious experiences are also experienced in the body. In fact, the soul and the spirit are nothing but symbolisations, sublimations and therefore projections of the body (cf also Viviers 2010:110). When humans awaken to and experience the presence of the divine in nature and all of reality as its receptacle, they relink with the plants and the animals, the streams and the mountains and the stars as manifestations of the sacred. The body as part of the universe to which it relates as its wider context of meaning also reflects it, but this does not mean that the human body as a microcosm is the centre of the macrocosm (Lachapelle 1999:133). This connection is also mooted by Weiss (2002:73 and 122), who refers to Mary Douglas: the fragility of the territorial boundaries is projected onto the body as a preoccupation with its orifices, pollution and boundaries. Inversely, the body of the leader represents the territory.

In the Abrahamic religions the body is sacred by virtue of being alive through the breath of God (cf Genesis 2:7). The eclipse of the body in Western Christianity under Platonic influence took a further step in the direction of death when the Enlightenment view of the body as a dead machine rendered it a public object of investigation and control devoid of any mystery and its link to the divine (Nasr 1996:236-237). It was around the same time that Herder reduced Song of Songs in his interpretation to a merely literal and natural expression of adolescent erotic love. The body as a veil, yet manifestation and aspect of consciousness and, what is called in Tantrism, feminine *shakti* power, has a spiritual wisdom significant for spiritual realisation (Nasr 1996:242-243). This also resonates with Isherwood (2000:14): "Bodies know more deeply than minds alone ...". The unexpected focus on and celebration of the body in Song of Songs within a canon and tradition which has tried to hide if not control it (cf Kugle 2007:22) broadens

the horizon of spiritual awareness and growth. Only when the body rules over the mind again can the illusion of the ego be transcended and humans be “authenticated by all beings” (Nasr 1996:246).

Lachapelle (1999:131) claims that people who did not take up agriculture in their development, but rather moved to mountainous areas, deserts, jungles and islands became observant of all life, regarding it as their own body and life. They developed rituals to celebrate the sanctity of the land and its life cycles.

If, through this inclusive recognition of religious elements from various stages, the highest level of Platvoet’s types of religions (1993:237-242) has been reached, this study would have served an interfaith purpose as well. Song of Songs is not a nationalistic text, as are other books in the Hebrew Bible. (That Heshbon could have conjured up expansionist memories is, of course, a possibility.) It seems to transgress the boundaries of the urban centre of Jerusalem into rural Phoenicia (cf all the references to Lebanon, especially in 4:8) and to stretch into the southern desert (cf Qedar in 1:5). However, this is only if one forgets the multiple roots of this testimony by focusing only on the late redaction of the text as a book within a restrictive canon. It tries to be accommodating and inclusive by balancing two capitals in 6:4. It reaches and looks out at the world in 7:5. In this way it also celebrates the exotic as different and other beyond the narrow confines of the ego.

Song of Songs deals with a theme experienced universally, in all places and times, despite the postmodern critique of all such claims due to their irreducible unique individual character. Song of Songs accordingly also orientates itself concretely by anchoring itself geographically. It thinks in local, real and existential terms (cf Engedi in 1:14). As much as it has been moulded by foreign influences, as much does it transcend any narrow group religion. Yet the repeated occurrences of fantastic superlative features, hyperboles, dualistic extremes, perhaps also by the many *hapax legomena*, or related to it, words which occur only in Song of Songs or very seldom in the Hebrew Bible all suggest not only excess but also singularity and exceptionality. The projection of superlatives as an expression of wishes and ideals is one of the foundational features of religion, according to Freud (1979:31). It lays the foundations of an *as-if* reality.

This adds an exotic, esoteric if not mysterious tone to the text. The allusions and citations to things which remain in silence in the background might have been comprehensible only to educated insiders (Keel 1986:257; Fischer 2010a:17), including women (Davies 1998:140). In this way it would then also mirror the inaccessibility of the beloved (cf 2:14, 4:8, 4:12) or their uniqueness in 5:10 and 6:9. This is also suggested by mentioning various mountain peaks symbolising perhaps peak moments. Exaggeration may be a secular way to compensate for a certain lack or absence of religious images of fulfilment, elevating it to a sacred level which borders on the miraculous, bathed in an aura of other-worldliness. In this world virtually magical and supernatural feats, such as leaping over mountains in no time, can be achieved. Stylistically this atmosphere is created through foreign and archaic words and through references to exotic elements (Fischer 2010:219). When nature reawakens in spring it is experienced as a miracle which also reveals the hidden potential for love between people who resonate, respond to and celebrate these wonders (Krinetzki 1981:103).

4.1.2 Mystical dissolution of dichotomies

The transpersonal interpretation recognises the reconciliation of conflict in the *coincidentia oppositorum*. This could include the realisation that both the immanent dimension of religiosity expressed in the archaic and its transcendent aspects as expressed in the mythic are needed for what could be regarded as a panentheistic experience of the text.

As the distinction between the two hands and so between gender stereotypes lessens, the sacred will become more evident in the profane and vice versa as well. Transgressing the boundaries leads to new classifications and new polarities. A more androgynous healing might assist with a more inclusive, though also more ambiguous and complex, religiosity involving both hemispheres of the brain. A religiosity which includes the whole body, both hands, both brains and both sexes allows a whole-body orientation which in turn renders the holy more wholesome as well. With a wider perspective, more meaning is allowed and recognised. In addition, as Viviers (2002:1551) asserts, naked corporeality serves as the great equaliser.

This study is invested in a mystical approach, whilst retaining all distinctions. It consequently regards all material external phenomena as expressions of the internal spirit which binds everything together. In that sense all interpretations are valid and part of the human process of development, although some are considered more advanced because they are more inclusive than others. By relinking to predecessors, a whole and authentic religious conscious can be achieved.

The idea of the text as a conflict resolution mechanism ties in with Winnicott's notion of religion (1975:223-224) as a transitional object, mediating between the self and the other, that is, between internal and external realities as a necessary (temporary) transitional phase (Wulff 1997:365). It also links well with Horton's view of mystical states as a dramatic "upsurgence of residual primary narcissism". This includes "the intrauterine relational mode" (referred to in Wulff 1997:362), where he is referring to the oceanic feeling of oneness when the infant regards all of reality as part of its own body and being.

Meaning therefore exists at different levels simultaneously, to add credence to the old adage: "as above, so below", resonated in the Christian prayer: "...on earth as it is in heaven". On their own, each of these levels of meaning remains problematic as it denies the other aspects of reality. The latest, the literal, might pride itself on having outgrown false religiosity, but its sacred-secular dualism as the left-brain male thought pattern excludes the feminine, esoteric depth of the allegorical or symbolic understanding, for instance the Jungian and kabbalistic readings in search of a hidden substructure. Westenholz (1995:2483) notes that the various symbols and metaphors of love lyrics remained extremely flexible in their signification and "refer to several levels of perception at the same time" despite their often formulaic use. Reduction to what is dominant is a falsification.

4.1.3 Towards androgyny

Song of Songs is, amongst other things, about the linking of genders through sexuality. Its appreciation, also by older non-adolescent people, as classic literature and as canonical is a nostalgic linking, incorporating and remembering of the old with the new as in 7:14: **וְעַל-פְּתָחַיִנוּ כָּל-מְגִדִּים--וְדָשִׁים גַּם**

יְשָׁנִים (and at our doors are all kinds of precious fruits, new and old). Where one has linking, one has religion.

The unconscious recognition of the alienated part of the self in the other due to projection as it is mirrored back by the image constructed of the other results in the reintegration of the separated parts of the self and a higher level of consciousness. By separating from the other in order to relate more authentically with the other, the self finds itself in individuation in the Jungian sense.

The reintegration results in a release of excess energy or libido in order to experience a greater sense of relaxation and peace, both internally and externally. This is typically the experience of orgasm where one is temporarily liberated and relieved of the ego, but nevertheless experiences a regression.

4.1.4 Regaining and integrating various levels of consciousness

Many commentators, such as Pope (1977:26), view Song of Songs as a relatively late redaction due to late influences. However, that it contains archaic structures of the mind is suggested by other scholars dating it as far back as 950 BCE (Watson1984:40). In fact, its creation seems to span a long period of time, analogous to the wide spectrum of states of consciousness which it both reflects and induces. This is enhanced by the sophisticated and erudite poetic devices, including archaising, creating a sense of nostalgia (cf, for instance, Watson 1984:368-371) reminding one of a lost and partially forgotten world, a golden era, now clothed in mystery, with sacred connotations through its relics and periodic revivals in popular religion. It is this partially lost intuition which can be regained.

Poetry is particularly well suited to facilitate this mediation process, through figures of speech such as metaphors and metonyms parallel to displacement and condensation, respectively, in Freudian dream analysis. Like the polysemic nature of poetry and the fact that so many modern commentators (for instance Keel 1986:35-39) have regarded metaphor as central to the interpretation of Song of Songs, its levels of meaning are multiple.

Dreams themselves also seem to appear in the text, but in uncertain, dream-like ambiguity. Wilber also distinguishes the metonymic from the

metaphoric (1995:217 and 589). Condensation represents a relic from the primal stage with merging due to a lack of boundaries. For more evolved stages it refers to what is coded, concealed and mysterious, from which the meaning can be decoded and revealed by ever-unfolding and merging contextual horizons. Through ever-more elevated transcendence a wider view and a more inclusive perspective can be attained.

Metaphors displace, but do so by relatively free association including inversion, in this way linking diverse experiences to achieve a higher and wider meaning.

4.1.5 Death, desire and longing for lost belonging

If the aphorism of 8:6-7 suggests that the beloved wants to pride her beauty on the lover's body as a piece of jewellery and in this way retain both the closeness of the lover and the status of having been loved, even when the lover dies (Loretz 1994:238), it would be a narcissistic attitude of the beloved: being loved or having been loved as an ineradicable historical fact would be more important and enduring than the lover. Pope (1977:668), however, asserts that the woman identifies her own essence and power as "Love" (note the capital letter!). She would then be love incarnate, that is, be love in her very flesh, and see her power as equal to that of death. Rudolph (1962:180) notes that the woman does not refer to *her* or *their* love, but to love, and that the poetic formula therefore presents a general truth, even if it functions as the proper name of a third party which links them. Gerleman (1981:216), however, leaves the possibility open that it could also refer to the woman.

Love is not stronger *than* death, but as strong as death. It does not conquer death by erasing the reality of death, but survives parallel with it and changes it through this relation with death. In love one can face even death. Loving someone from the perspective of death transforms the relationship to add the crucial transpersonal dimension of gratitude. Death is the horizon against which love finds its widest meaning. Eros and Thanatos continue to exist side by side. Each remains dependent for its value on the other: love as being linked to an "other" gives meaning even to death and death through its irreversible boundary makes a lover to invest fully while he or she enjoys the finite presence of the beloved. Intimacy with death can bring about real

awakening and transformation, parallel to the way that love can radically transform both the lover and the beloved (Sogyal 1992:29). It is not the attachment to an illusion of permanence, not insecurity, possessiveness or pride which allows free love during this life (Sogyal 1992:35), but the gift of death and the awareness that love can transcend it. It is a courageous love which defies all (Keel 1986:116).

The way erotic love is presented in Song of Songs conjures up eschatological and paradisiacal images (Fischer 2010:73n106) with its celebratory and idealising perspectives. Although the beloved is clearly aware of birth, no children as the fruit of their love is mentioned, as there is no need to be survived when one is firmly convinced that death will be survived. That is apart from the overwhelming enchantment of love itself which relegates any thought of procreation to oblivion.

The etymology of the word *religio* as relinking (in)to some original matrix echoes well with modernism's nostalgic search for origin(s) as the Real and the Pure in contradistinction to the obsession with progress and evolution. The lost paradise is the matrix of the Great Mother of the uroboric unconscious ocean of chaos, but also of unity. This condition of the lowest energy and highest inertia, yet greatest freedom, exercises its ultimately irresistible gravitational attraction as Death. So-called transcendence will remain a temporary, alienating transgression if it remains unintegrated, that is, unrelated to its origin, in the name of evolution or even revolution. It is, however, only part of the journey of the infinite Whole of getting to know Itself by splitting off its repressed parts as projections, which are to be controlled as objects, but which inevitably become the greater mass and gravitational force only to overpower the erstwhile subject as its Frankenstein.

4.2 TRANS-EGOIC STAGE: THE SUBTLE AND CAUSAL LEVELS OF RELIGIOSITY

The limited personal level of development of the author of this study prevents him from being able to outline the higher levels of consciousness, that of the subtle and the causal in terms of Wilber's system, except to recognise the Ineffable in the silence and to respect and trust those who can witness to these levels.

There is always a part that remains ineffable even if it resonates as a *déjà vu* recognition of an ultimate or original infinity that can never be separated as a concept or split off and projected in language. In fact, language is redundant and obstructing, if this whispering intuition is properly heeded. These are the gaps which Freud traced like a sleuth, the unsaid and the uncanny, the image of mystery for those who are so used to hearing explicit language substituted and compensating for experience.

5 CONCLUSION

The four main traditional interpretations of Song of Songs have reflected different levels of religiosity. Each has its contributions and its shortcomings. All interpretations are valid in terms of the development of consciousness in the same way that all interpretations are ideologically informed, including the attempt at all-inclusivity of this study (Viviers 1998:1). It is for that reason that the naturalistic interpretation should not be regarded as the most natural, and therefore normative for this is precisely the pretence which every ideology employs. In fact, much in Song of Songs is not natural to the context to which it reacts. Much of it is also protest fantasy about an alternate reality and a utopian-religious paradisiacal vision (Viviers 1989:87n2; Viviers 1998:7). The cultic-mythical interpretation is reflected in the magical and mythical stages of religious development and opens up interfaith understanding of commonalities and relativity between different religious traditions rather than undermining and discrediting religious claims. The literal and naturalistic interpretations of Song of Songs reflect the need for sobriety of the rational stage of religiosity as another expression of the search for human universals and the appreciation for the immanent and the aesthetic. The allegorical repression of sexual awareness is parallel to the latent stage of individual development when sexuality is temporarily toned down. It expresses, however, the need for internal linking through symbolisation in a corrective effort to transcend the narrow flatland orientation which cannot sense anything beyond the physical. However, in doing so the physical is instead demeaned. The mystical is perhaps the most inclusive as it accommodates all these three attitudes, integrates them and even strives to go beyond them.

The protagonists of Song of Songs remain anonymous because they are archetypal expressions. Neither sex nor religion is ever explicitly mentioned in Song of Songs, although both are constantly present and subtly interwoven into the texture of the text which remains open to expansion and elevation. For Wilber (2001:336), “the sacred exists in and as a balance and partnership of hierarchy (traditionally male) and heterarchy (traditionally female)”. Although its traditional interpretation has been masculine, Song of Songs is a feminine text, receptive to projections of all kinds of religiosities and non-religiosities, to investments to be reflected back as revelations, open, yet full of nourishment like the Great Mother herself, fully available. That there is mention neither of a father nor God might not be coincidence, especially if Freud’s contention that God is merely a projection of the image of the father is kept in mind. The religiosity of this text is not found in paternal projection, but has its roots much deeper in the ancient maternal womb, so to speak.

That the definition of religion remains elusive suggests due humility and silence, while listening to the faint whispering of the Ineffable. Due to its unbearable lightness it is not all that easy to recognise. It reveals itself only in an organic relationship with the text. It exists in the plural and is about an overwhelming atmosphere that elevates consciousness to recognise the Divine presence in the aesthetic and the sensual, and therefore, ultimately, in the body. Love as a higher level of consciousness is expressed in, amongst other things, a sensual touch and voice and glance. To experience the numinous, above all of the feminine (Krinetzki 1981:141) and in the aesthetic, is to be struck numb by the awesome and deeply sad sunset, the violence of the ocean, the soft whispering of the wind, the optimism and hope of a bright early morning...where words are superfluous or, worse, distorting abbreviations.

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