

# Mental mapping in the admiration song in Song of Songs 7:2–7

**Author:**Stefan Fischer<sup>1,2</sup> **Affiliations:**

<sup>1</sup>Institute for Old Testament Studies and Biblical Archaeology, Protestant Faculty of Theology, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Old and New Testament Studies, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa

**Corresponding author:**

Stefan Fischer,  
stefan.fischer@univie.ac.at

**Dates:**

Received: 02 Apr. 2018

Accepted: 17 July 2018

Published: 23 Apr. 2019

**How to cite this article:**

Fischer, S., 2019, 'Mental mapping in the admiration song in Song of Songs 7:2–7', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75(3), a4998. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i3.4998>

**Copyright:**

© 2019. The Authors.  
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Mental mapping is a method of interpreting with conceptual metaphors. This method is applied to the admiration song in Song of Songs 7:2–7. The song is interpreted in the context of a dance. For the purpose of interpretation, ancient Egyptian dance paintings and love poems are taken into account. The interpretation presents a methodological study that unmasks arbitrary exegesis and implausible interpretations. It discovers its subtle conceptual metaphors and shows a strategy for a comprehensible exegesis. As a side effect, the male chauvinism present in this song is deconstructed.

**Keywords:** Exegesis; Song of Songs; Methodology; Metaphor; Mapping.

## Theoretical framework for the mental mapping of metaphors

Talking about mental mapping is itself a metaphorical concept. Mapping creates a map, and the source DOMAIN MAP relates to the target DOMAIN MENTAL.<sup>1</sup> Understanding such a metaphor is a matter of language and thought. Mapping describes the action of getting orientation and location on a map – a coordinate system. Mind mapping visualises information on a diagram. Mental mapping, in the context of textual analysis, belongs to behavioural geography and analyses people's perception and their underlying concepts of orientation.<sup>2</sup> With regard to language, metaphors that seem to be based on intuition and spontaneous reaction depend on unconscious cognitive concepts. They are conceptual metaphors, 'understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' (Lakoff & Johnson 2003:5).

When speaking in metaphors, an element A is substituted by an element B, having in common a *tertium comparationis*. This is not merely a one-to-one substitution, because a paradigmatic substitution takes place and the substitute (a word or expression), derived from a different context, brings with it a full range of meanings and connotations (Schökel 1988:108). A metaphor is not primarily seen as a linguistic feature (a figure of speech) but as a concept of an argument (a figure of thought). Therefore, metaphorical interpretations play with a shift of meaning and are a cognitive process that reflects 'first and foremost a conceptual rather than a linguistic phenomenon' (De Jode & Van Loon 2014:39). They (Lakoff & Johnson 2003) are deeply rooted in perception and thought:

The essence of a metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. The metaphor is not merely in the words we use. It is in our very concept of an argument. The language of an argument is not poetic, fanciful, or rhetorical; it is literal. (p. 5)

Therefore, we must turn to cognitive linguistics as a 'tool for investigating how people of a specific social group describe and experience their reality' (Jindo 2009:229). We cannot interview the biblical writers, but, in their texts, they have left behind metaphors as landmarks, indicative of the way they thought. These metaphors provide us access to their mental space. The conceptual system of these metaphors defines the perception and deeds of everyday life (Lakoff & Johnson 2003:3). The SOURCE DOMAIN is typically the concrete domain by which we understand the abstract TARGET DOMAIN through a set of systematic correspondences called mappings (Jindo 2009:226–227).

A common conceptual metaphor is BODY IS A CONTAINER. When listing different body parts, as is the case in Song of Songs 7:2–7, each one will highlight another aspect of the concept. And it is self-evident that a body as a container has a certain shape, as well as boundaries, and that it can be placed in another container. Therefore, one may expect shape and/or boundary metaphors as well.

1. Conceptual metaphors are written in SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS. See Lakoff and Johnson (2003:4).

2. See <http://lexikon.stangl.eu/3921/kognitive-landkarte/>

**Note:** The collection entitled 'Eben Scheffler Festschrift', sub-edited by Jurie H. le Roux (University of Pretoria) and Christo Lombaard (University of South Africa).

**Read online:**

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

As a linguistic phenomenon, a metaphor is close to a simile, or a comparison, consisting of two parts related to each other in comparison: In this regard, A can be compared to B. Different from metonymy, there is no direct relation between A and B but there may be similarities (Dölling 2000:47–48). Whether a substitution (metaphor) or a comparison (simile) is intended is not always clear beyond a doubt, and translations differ. This is also evident in the translations of Song of Songs: The woman's eyes are doves (Can 1:15; 4:1). Her eyes are pools in Heshbon (Can 7:5). Here the LXX adds a comparative particle *ὡς*. The man's eyes are like doves by the pools of water (Can 5:12). In its effect, a metaphor appeals more strongly to the imagination.

## Application: Mental mapping in the admiration song in Song of Songs 7:2-7

### Admiration song and dance

The physical appearance of the woman is described in several poems (Can 4:1–15; 6:4–10; 7:1–10), while the man's appearance is described only once (Can 5:10–16).<sup>3</sup>

As the focus is not on her bodily appearance but on her effect on the singer, the so-called *wasf*/description songs are better termed admiration songs.<sup>4</sup> Admiration songs not only describe the body of the woman as an object of esteem but also the feeling of the one/or the group who gives praise. An admiration song is a poetic form of praise and not a genre (Kaplan 2015:125 n.7).

Here, the repeated request to turn (Can 7:1) puts the admiration song (Can 7:2-7) in the context of a dance,<sup>5</sup> the unknown Mahanaim dance (Can 7:1b), which is perhaps a ronde dance of two rows with the woman in the centre. The verb 'to return'/'to turn around' creates a Janus pun: Firstly, the women of Jerusalem, as the assumed speakers of the last preceding verse, call her to return from the nut orchard (Can 6:11) and secondly, she turns her body, she is dancing. The group that is speaking wants to gaze at her: 'turn (around) that we may gaze on you!' (Can 7:1a). The association with dance is supported by the rhetorical question: 'What do you gaze at, Shulammitte?' (Can 7:1b). The root *הרה* with the preposition *ב* expresses an investigative, lustful and satisfying watching.<sup>6</sup>

The double praises 'How beautiful' (Can 7:2.7) and the honorific addresses 'daughter of Nadib'/'daughter of a prince' (Can 7:2) and 'daughter of Tanurgim'/'daughter of delight' (Can 7:7)

3.The focus in Song of Songs is on the woman. The admiration song of the man has been placed in the section of seeking the beloved. The daughters of Jerusalem are asked to support her search and demand a description (Can 5:9) as well as direction (Can 6:1). The description is given in the admiration song in Song of Songs 5:10–16 and the direction in her metaphorical answer 'in his garden' (Can 6:2).

4.Fox distinguishes between 'description song' and 'admiration song'. The former is composed 'mainly of simple item-by-item praise of parts of the beloved's body or other qualities'. In the latter, 'the declaration and metaphors apply to the beloved's beauty and its effect on the onlooker' (Fox 1985:272). As it is not the beauty of the body alone but its effect on the other protagonist, I prefer 'admiration song' for all of them. They are also connected by the formal use of the root *יפה* 'beautiful' in Song of Songs 4:1.7.10; 6:4.10; 7:1.6.

5.Bergant (2001:80) calls Song of Songs 6:13–7:15 'An Ode to the Dancer'. Haller (1940:41) thinks of the belly-dance of a naked woman draped with jewellery.

6.'mit Lust, Befriedigung sehen' Dietrich and Arnet (2013:157). See Micah 4:11, Psalms 27:4, and Ezekiel 36:25.

frame the poem<sup>7</sup> and the symmetrical description of the woman's body is brought to a close. Song of Songs 7:7 summarises in a praise what her body parts have in common. In addition, Song of Songs 7:7 may be a bridge to the subsequent poem,<sup>8</sup> because a praise of beauty can also open an admiration song (Can 4:1), but the structural ties to Songs of Songs 7:1-6 are much stronger.

In the broader context (Can 6:4–7:10), the other poem of admiration (Can 6:4–7) is joined by the Janus of Song of Songs 7:1 to the two poems of admiration Song of Songs 7:2–7 and Song of Songs 7:8–10 and emphasises the woman's beauty, not so much in terms of the woman's outer appearance but her character and the impact she has on the viewer. He praises her as being beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners (Can 6:4), disturbing him with a glance of her eyes (Can 6:5). Only then does he turn to the beauty of her hair, teeth and cheek (Can 6:5b–7). The admiration song in Song of Songs 7:8–10 differs from Song of Songs 7:2-7 by the shift from praising her beauty to expressing his desire, playing on the metaphor of the man as conqueror.

Song of Songs 7:1 sets the scene in the context of a group. Depending on the general setting, the audience might be the wedding guests (Haller 1940:41), who are surrounding the bride (Rudolph 1962:170); a group of men, probably young men, accompanying the bridegroom as LXX Codex Venetus suggests: *OI ETEPOI TOY NYMΦIOY ΠPOC TON NYMΦION* (Hopf 2016:398), or the daughters of Jerusalem (Fox 1985:158) in the harem (Stoop-van Paridon 2002:39). There is a shift in the speaker–addressee constellation between Song of Songs 7:1a and Song of Songs 7:1b. The LXX Codex Alexandrinus suggests a shift from bridegroom–bride (*O NYMΦIOC ΠPOC THN NYMΦHN*) to the bridegroom–the queens and daughters (of Jerusalem) (*TAIC BACIΛICCACIC KAI TAIC ΘYTATPACIN O NYMΦIOC TAΔE*). Most likely it is the young man<sup>9</sup> who is speaking to the woman (e.g. Fox 1985:154; Hopf 2016:409; New Jerusalem Bible), as the admiration songs are always between individuals, namely, the man and the woman.<sup>10</sup> There is direct communication between the two of them. Typically, in an admiration song, the man uses the second person and speaks directly to his beloved and not about her (Bernat 2004:331).

### The Egyptian setting of the dance

As the works of White<sup>11</sup> (1978) and Fox (1985) suggest, an Egyptian background for the interpretation of Songs of Songs has been widely accepted.

7.He is praising her as the daughter of a noble one, a princess. See Loader (2001:104).

8.Some scholars see 7:7 only as the opening verse of the next poem. See the discussion for the demarcation in Loader (2001:100–103).

9.Stoop-van Paridon (2002:401) opts for the daughters of Jerusalem, but her decision is as a result of her interpretation that Song of Songs takes place in a harem where the young man would not have access.

10.Even if Mahanaim might refer to a military situation, it is unlikely that a new group – soldiers – is introduced here, as I suggested elsewhere (Fischer 2010:149). For methodological reasons, Hopf (2016:340) argues for keeping the numbers of figures as small as possible, namely, a minimum of three figures/voices in Song of Songs.

11.'The use of the descriptive song in the Song of Songs ... functions in a similar manner to the *wasf* in Egyptian poetry' (White 1978:148).

Besides the dance in two rows, as already known from the Old Kingdom,<sup>12</sup> the erotic dance of single women was common in some acrobatic dances. Sometimes a single naked dancer, in the geometrical pose of a swastika, different from the other dancers, draws attention.<sup>13</sup> Even if discernible lines of contiguity face the problem of the enormous lapse of time between the New Kingdom and the Hellenistic era of Song of Songs, the congruence of the general motifs is obvious. As for other parts of the Old Testament, texts from the New Kingdom show a congruence and correlation, especially in the field of entertainment.<sup>14</sup>

Brunner-Traut points to the profane character of the dances from the New Kingdom at certain festivals. Some features correlate to our poem. Female dancers wore loose hair and were dressed in a short skirt that does not cover the vulva (Brunner-Traut 1992:49). This is also the case in a banqueting scene from the tomb of Djoserkaresoneb (TT 38). On the western end of the south wall in the two upper sub-registers, two almost naked women with an incense cone on their heads are helping a woman get dressed, caring for her hair, hanging a necklace, et cetera. Each one wears a small girdle around her hip and the pubic hair is clearly visible. In the lower register, musicians and a female dancer are shown. While the little dancer is naked, wearing bracelets around her arms and a necklace and a girdle of beads around her hips, the other dancer to the right wears a long dress down to her feet, but at the same time the whole body is shown. It is a dance between two rows of chantresses, who are taking part in the performance, followed by the guests.<sup>15</sup> The audience is in the register below as is typical for Egyptian conventions (cf. Spencer 2003:119).

## Context and setting

The images used in the admiration songs are a mix of metaphors and similes. The beauty of the woman lies not in the addition of the different body parts. Adding up the body parts and bringing them into perspective is a misconception and leads to a grotesque figure with no functional integrity, as Black<sup>16</sup> explicates. Her beauty is perceived as a 'mixed bag' (Brenner 1993:250) or is interpreted as 'a parody of the serious *wasf* genre' (Brenner 1993:253). The body looks strange, as a body in Egyptian art looks strange to an eye trained in the

12. See Kinney (2008:101–107, 239–242) who gives several examples of rhythmic dances in groups.

13. See the three examples in Kinney (2008: Nr. 70, 79, 80).

14. The Papyrus Harris recto 500 contains copies of Love Songs, the Intef Harper's Song and two tales. It calls them 'Songs of charming away the heart' (*šmḫ.t. jb*). This form of record leaves the possibility of being taken up at a certain time in the Levante from Canaanite transmission to the royal court in Jerusalem and later on among the wise men in Jerusalem, but one would still have to postulate unattested stages of transmission. Alternatively, Quack argues for the Late Egyptian Period (2016:82).

15. See [https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/djoserkaresoneb38/e\\_djoserkaresoneb\\_04.htm](https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/djoserkaresoneb38/e_djoserkaresoneb_04.htm)

16. 'The human body is a frequent and ideal target for grotesque depiction, since exaggerated or extreme characterisation of the human form, to the point where physical abnormality is highlighted, makes it both funny and frightening. ... One of the results of this kind of figuration, notably features such as hybridisation and exaggeration, is used in effect to dehumanize the described target, both by combining the human with the non-human ... and by disallowing functional integrity' Black (2000:116–117).

western perspective. Instead, the body in the songs of admiration is close to the Egyptian manner of 'Aspektive' (Brunner-Traut 1996). The focus of the composer is on the individual parts. He admires what he knows and not what he sees.<sup>17</sup> Even if the body is the sum of different pieces, a jointed doll (Brunner-Traut 1988:10), each body part must be taken as an entity by itself. Regarding Egyptian praise songs, Fox states: 'In none of the Praise Songs is there an attempt to make the images of a song work together to create an atmosphere or a cohesive background picture' (Fox 1985: 270–271).

The culture-specific imagery of the opaque metaphors makes it difficult to find the exact point of these characterisations (Kaplan 2015:97).

In contrast to the other admiration songs, the eye of the viewer starts at the lowest body part<sup>18</sup> and moves upwards in ascending steps to body features associated with the feet via the lower torso to the upper torso and finally to the head (cf. Roberts 2007:268), 'following the male gaze of delight' (Fishbane 2015:178).

In the main part of the song, the first bicolon speaks about the beauty of the bodily appearance, while the second bicolon elaborates on the body feature (cf. Roberts 2007:266), with reference to its imaginative effect on the man.

## Mental mapping

In the admiration song in Song of Songs 7:2–7, the abstract SOURCE DOMAIN BEAUTY is expressed in the TARGET DOMAIN BODY of the woman. All similes and metaphors of the body are to be analysed under the aspect of beauty because the admiration song culminates in the declaration of her beauty (Can 7:7), a generalising praise (Roberts 2007:273).

All single SOURCE DOMAINS are taken from nature or architecture. They are concrete, expressing the abstract concept of beauty in concrete body parts. Obviously, the description of the SOURCE DOMAIN will be chosen because it resembles the physical appearance. Thus, it is important to note that the abstract concept of beauty is the criterion for interpretation and the physical metaphors are only the means to praise the beauty of the TARGET DOMAIN BODY and its effect on the man.

Song of Songs 7:2 states, 'How beautiful are your feet/steps in their sandals, daughter Nadibs! Your rounded hips are jewellery, handiwork of a craftsman.'

The verse opens with an interrogative and a verbal clause, with a literal, adjectival praise of her beauty, followed by a

17. Peuckert (2017:110), with reference to Heinrich Schäfer, the vanguard of Egyptian art in Germany, points out, 'dass die ägyptische Form der Darstellung nur demjenigen, der eine perspektivische Naturwiedergabe erwartet, 'falsch' erscheine, während es sich stattdessen um eine gänzlich andere Auffassung von dem handle, was als eine getreue Wiedergabe der Natur zu verstehen sei.'

18. Egyptian love songs also follow ascending or descending steps. See White (1978:148).

vocative, addressing the woman. He praises the beauty of her feet/steps in sandals. פָּעַם, with the double meaning of feet and steps, refers to the moving of the feet in a dance and praises their beautiful appearance in sandals. It differs from all other body features that are praised with metaphors or similes in nominal sentences.

In the following, the SOURCE DOMAIN JEWELLERY refers to the TARGET DOMAIN ROUNDED THIGHS or HIPS. The dual ירכיך 'your thighs/hips' refers to the upper part of the leg. Her thighs/hips are praised because of their curvy appearance or turning.<sup>19</sup> While men wear their swords there (cf. Can 3:8), the woman's thighs are beautiful like (קָמוֹ) jewellery. It is not said that she has decorated her hips with jewellery, even if this is not unlikely and would add to the praise.

Egyptian wall paintings of female musicians and dancers from the New Kingdom give some insight:

An Ostrakon in the Museo Egizio di Torino<sup>20</sup> in Italy shows a painted scene of a bending female dancer, with inverted hands and feet supporting her body. She is doing a flip-over, has full flowing black hair and wears a black skirt with red spots and appears to be levitating with ease (Brunner 1992:51).

In the tomb of Nakht (TT 52), a group of three female musicians are depicted. The middle one plays a lute and moves her feet like dancing. All three wear their hair loose. The lute player is naked and wears only a small string of pearls around her hips. The navel is clearly visible. Her breasts are shown in the front view (Aspektive). Even if she is accompanied by the other women, she is the main or solo dancer (printed in Brunner 1992:65).

The Egyptian wall fragment (BM 37984) from the tomb of Nebamon (TT 181) depicts two dancing women in a similar manner, sparsely dressed around the hips, the navel enlarged and visible (printed in Brunner 1992:66). See also the tomb description at [www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/nebamon\\_ipouky181/e\\_nebamon\\_ipouky\\_01.htm](http://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/nebamon_ipouky181/e_nebamon_ipouky_01.htm)

The jewellery is a *pars pro toto* for the eroticism of an exotic and naked dancing woman. The second bicolon, 'the work of a master hand' elaborates on the perfect beauty of these ornaments.

Song of Songs 7:3 notes, 'Your navel is a rounded bowl, may it never lack mixed wine. Your belly is a heap of wheat hedged about with lilies.'

This verse is the only synonymous parallelism (Loader 2001:105). Both TARGET DOMAINS focus on the same

19. The root חָמַק 'to turn', as for 'to turn away'. 'Songs 5:6' is used in the literal way and refers either to her moving thighs 'the place where your thigh turns' or to her curved thighs, hips or buttocks. See Fox (1985:158).

20. See <http://www.ancient-egypt.co.uk/turin/pages/Picture%20247%20ostraca%20from%20deir%20el%20medina.htm> and [http://img2.juzaphoto.com/001/shared\\_files/uploads/735510.jpg](http://img2.juzaphoto.com/001/shared_files/uploads/735510.jpg)

region of the body (Fishbane 2015:181). In a literal sense, שָׂר, from the root שָׂרָר 'be strong', refers to the umbilical cord (Ezk 16:4) or to the navel. A praise of the umbilical cord does not fit the scene but the navel could be an object of desire and is a prominent feature in Egyptian art.<sup>21</sup>

The SOURCE DOMAIN ROUNDED BOWL refers to the TARGET DOMAIN NAVEL.

As a bowl is a container, this is a CONTAINER METAPHOR, difficult to grasp on a physical level. The construct state 'bowl of roundness'<sup>22</sup> makes it a SHAPE METAPHOR, praising the perfect shape of her navel,<sup>23</sup> shaped like the moon.<sup>24</sup> The loveliness lies in the shape.

The metaphor is elaborated with the wish 'may it never lack mixed wine' which fits to a CONTAINER METAPHOR. It praises the enjoyment of the bowl in a litotes as abundant, notwithstanding what the exact composition of מִזְג, mixed wine, is.<sup>25</sup> This beautiful bowl should never be unused but always be full. It deserves it. The abundance is associated with intoxication, being drunk with love, which is even a wish for the lovers (Can 5:1). On a literal level, one might allude to some sort of sex-play where the navel is used like a goblet.

It is sometimes suggested that שָׂר is not the navel but the vulva. The etymology for a direct translation as 'vulva' as Loader argues seems to be far-fetched.<sup>26</sup> As a secondary allusion to navel, it would play on the CONTAINER METAPHOR but not on the SHAPE. When it is further suggested that the rounded bowl filled with liquid refers to the physiological process of lovemaking (Loader 2001:105) and the mixed wine is a metaphor for sperm (Haller 1940:41; Müller 1992:74), then the fact that the second bicolon elaborates on the body feature seems to have been overlooked.

Such crude praise is not in accordance with the gentle praise of all other admiration songs. As far as the praise of the navel expresses sexual desire, it may include a subtle euphemism alluding to the vulva/genitals, but the vulva is not boldly introduced as Brenner (1993:246) states.

In the next line, the SOURCE DOMAIN HEAP OF WHEAT refers to the TARGET DOMAIN BELLY.

Loader (2001:105) suggests that this line of synonymous parallelism refers to the same body part as in the first line; in

21. See the images of dancing women, like the one in TT 52 (see above). Another fine example is a burial wood figure of the girl Tadjia as a mature woman, from the late Egyptian Period (25th Dyn.), Berlin, AM 16999.

22. 'Roundness' סָדָר is sometimes translated as Aramaic 'moon', also referring to artificial work of moonlike, crescent jewellery שָׂדָרָן (Jud 8:21–26; Is 3:18). The moon is the basis of some rabbinic interpretations. Cf. Alexander (2003:177).

23. The Syrian female (goddess) figurines that depict the navel or vulva are all ornamentally round in shape (Keel 1992, cf. Figure 127).

24. See Fischer (2010:34): 'Mondbecken'.

25. Clines (2011:206) suggests 'mixed with spices', Zakovitch (2004:246) suggests 'mixed with water'.

26. Loader (2001:105) argues that שָׂר derives from the rare root \* שָׂרָר 'genitals', known from Arabic.

his view, vulva and womb. As a double reference to the same body part is never the case in an admiration song, it is likely that it refers to two different body parts that are close to each other. As the eye of the observer moves back and forth around the navel, the literal translation 'belly' fits the description. The parallelism calls for a SHAPE METAPHOR. The belly, probably a gently curved belly,<sup>27</sup> is likened to a heap of wheat, having a lustful effect on the viewer.

The implicit yellow colour of the heap of wheat might contribute to her beauty.<sup>28</sup> It might have been the subtle reason for the choice of the metaphor.

The elaborate phrase 'fenced with lilies' is an oxymoron. A fence protects, and lilies are metaphors for the beauty of lovers (Can 2:1.2) and their lovemaking (Can 2:16; 4.5; 5:13; 6:2.3). It goes against the composition of the song to interpret the elaboration bodily, as Rudolph (1962:172) does, who sees the lilies as the pubic hair covering the womb.

Song of Songs 7:4 states, 'Your breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle.'

This verse is identical to Song of Songs 4:5, but for structural reasons the second elaboration 'that browse among the lilies' is omitted.

The SOURCE DOMAIN TWO FAWNS relates to the TARGET DOMAIN BREAST.

We have a METAPHOR of YOUTH and BEAUTY. The fawns express youth and twins of a gazelle fertility. The latter is further elaborated in 'twins of a gazelle'. It expresses identity and thereby the completeness of beauty, like the complete number of teeth in the metaphor of the shorn sheep (Can 4:2).

For Rudolph (1962:147), this recalls an idyll of nature (*ein hübsches Naturbild*) and Zakovitch (2004:246) assumes that the fawns are chosen because they illustrate the mobility of her breasts in the dance.

Song of Songs 7:5 notes further, 'Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are the pools of Heshbon by the gate of the daughter of Rabbim. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon looking toward Damascus'

The first metaphor *Your neck is like an ivory tower* has no elaboration. This is a signal marker for the end of the series of body features of the upper torso (Roberts 2007:269).<sup>29</sup> The simile likens the neck to an ivory tower and the nose is likened to the tower of Lebanon. Song of Songs 7:5 opens a series of BODY FEATURES expressed as SHAPE METAPHORS. All buildings and features of landscape

27. Figurines often show a slightly curved belly and the navel in midst of it. For example, Phoenician marble no. 3, Moscow Pushkin Museum. Second Century BC.

28. Fox (1985:159) imagines her with a tawny hue.

29. Other scholars think that the second stichos has been lost by a textual accident (e.g. Fox 1985:159; Wilke 2017:92).

contribute to the DOMAIN HER BODY IS BEAUTIFUL. Every architectonic feature is beautiful. Neck and tower are easily related by the feature of being long/high,<sup>30</sup> the same as for her nose (Can 7:5) and breasts (Can 8:10).

The ivory is difficult to determine. It adds to decorative beauty and value (cf. Can 5:14) but makes it hard to imagine a real monumental tower. A reference to colour (Zakovitch 2004:246) is unlikely and an identification as 'a fort on the road that brought African ivory to the Mediterranean' (Wilke 2017:92) would not give any metaphorical meaning to ivory.

The eyes are related to pools. The homonym עין spring/eyes in connection with pools associates with water, clarity,<sup>31</sup> mirroring (Zakovitch 2004:247) and probably also with purity (cf. Can 5:12). From the argument, they must have been famous and/or exotic.

No identification of any of these architectural features has been made even if the places are known. Wilke investigates the geography of Ptolemaic Syria and asserts that all places depict 'the double Ptolemaic defence line at the northern front' (Wilke 2017:92). In this case, her beauty would go along with fortification. She is not easy to reach and needs to be conquered. It also adds the kingdom imagination (see below).

Song of Songs 7:6 notes, 'Your head upon you is like Carmel and the threads of your head (is) like purple; a king is held captive in the tresses.'

Song of Songs 7:6 continues with the description of body parts and Mount Carmel closes the list of place names. Instead of a building, her head is likened to the mountain and ראשך 'your head' recalls 'your summit'. The metaphor moves from BODY FEATURES are like BUILDINGS to BODY FEATURES are like a LANDSCAPE, yet it is still referring to the SHAPE. This series is not continued in the next line. Instead, the threads of her head are likened to purple dye, a luxury good. The allusion goes with the colour of the hair.<sup>32</sup> This praise might be initiated by the reference to Carmel, which at a certain time of the day might appear glossy purple. If we consider that the meeting of the lovers takes place until sunset (Can 2,16-17; 4:15), one may imagine that her hair appears glossy purple in the rays of sunlight. She might also have had her hair tinted.

Recalling the situation of a dance, the curly hair of a female dancer, falling in threads, can be very prominent and fascinating.

30. The same metaphor is used in Egyptian Love poetry. Chester Beatty Love Songs 1, White (1978:177); Fox (1985:52. Song 31).

31. The opposite is stated in the rabbinic teaching Sifre Devarim: "'Pools," just as no one is able to discern what is in this pool, so also no one is able to supersede the teachings of the sages' Kaplan (2015:108).

32. Fox (1985:151) has argued that למרכ forms a Janus constellation, suggesting the mountain and the homophone 'karmil, a purple cloth-like "argaman," to which her hair is compared in the continuation of the verse' (Fox 1985:161). This suggestion of reading 'karmil' is accepted as an emendation in Clines (1993:371).

The climax of the series of similes and metaphors is reached in the last stichos 'a king is held captive in the tresses'. The purple colour of her hair represents the threads of her beauty. He is enchanted when sunset turns the appearance of her hair into purple red.

We have a complex metaphor with different allusions:

BEAUTY is a TRAP. The image of hunting is recalled and usually used negatively when referred to women (Pr 7:22; Ec 7:26).<sup>33</sup> In short, one may say LOVE/ADMIRATION is LOSING CONTROL. The image used is even stronger, held captive may refer to hunting but, with the reference to a king, it may also refer to captivity and war. ADMIRATION is LOSING CONTROL is superordinate to ADMIRATION is CAPTIVITY or ADMIRATION is WAR.

Song of Songs frequently refers to Solomon the king as the lover (Can 1:2–4) and he was known as the example par excellence for love (Ec 2:8; 1 Ki 11:3). Here, it might come as a surprise. In Song of Songs 7:2–7, a king, without the article, might have been used, because the Solomon reference is not given, and the lover has entered the woman's kingdom. The woman's body is a spatial category borrowed from the landscape of Israel and beyond, sketching 'a surreal and partial kingdom admittedly, but a kingdom nonetheless' (Meredith 2013:224).

As a king is powerful, the beauty of the woman becomes even more powerful. As captivity has to do with war, it has to do with violence. This is the counter verse to all metaphors where the man besieges the woman with force (e.g. Can 5:2–8). In the following poem, the metaphorical description of lovemaking with the woman (Can 7:8–10) takes up a related image, namely, LOVE/ADMIRATION is CONQUEST. He is conquering (the body of) the woman like someone who climbs a palm tree and takes hold of its fruit (Can 7:9). This may be read as LOVEMAKING is HARVESTING; in the context of a war metaphor, it might also be understood as LOVEMAKING is TAKING what you desire.

The effect of her beauty is him losing his freedom. Being captured by her beauty is an aspect of love, so we may say that BEAUTY IS LOSING CONTROL leads to LOVE IS LOSING CONTROL.

The grammatical form of אסור (qal pass. ptc masc. sing. abs.), translated as 'captivated, being tied', emphasises the helpless situation. In a power play between the sexes, he stresses that he has no choice, he is helpless and dependent like a captive. This is very different from all the active movements the man undertakes to come to his beloved. Right afterwards he is active again, climbing on the woman as his palm tree. Here, roles are reversed (Munro 1995:36). Her beauty has made him powerless. Being a helpless king, she is in control. This is in striking contrast to the

<sup>33</sup>.It might also allude to the story of Delilah and Samson, who bound him by his own hair (Jud 16:13–20) and took dominion over him.

conventional metaphor of a man who captures a woman being seen as a conqueror (cf. Can 6:12; 7:9).

Critically, one can see this as an excuse for his following actions. He can do nothing about it, or in modern terms – it is his genes that drive him to her.

Song of Songs 7:7 notes, 'How beautiful you are and how pleasing, love, daughter of Tanurgim/daughter of delight.'

This verse praises her and summarises her beauty. He addresses her in a vocative as love, the daughter of delight. The address forms an inclusio with daughter of Nadib (Can 7:2), which refers back to Song of Songs 6:12 (Amminadib), bringing the poem to a close. This is the quintessence of all the images that had been used to praise her beauty, nobility, wealth and craftsmanship (Fox 1985:155).

## Conclusion

The examples of ancient Egyptian dance in art value each body part and give a deeper understanding of erotic scenes in a festive (partly cultic) context. There nakedness is part of the depiction in 'Aspektive', showing what was not seen. Interpreting this poem with the methodology of conceptual metaphors enables the reader to understand the concept of beauty. It structures the interpretation by systematic correspondences, known as mappings.

The consequent application of conceptual BODY and SHAPE metaphors unmask arbitrary exegesis and implausible interpretations that do not focus on the concept of beauty but on sex, partly turning the beauty of the admiration into crude sex. The woman has been sketched as being her own kingdom. This leads to the climax of the poem in Song of Songs 7:6c, where the man is sketched as a king held captive, with the reversal of the metaphor MAN IS CONQUEROR to MAN IS CAPTIVE. In the admiration song, it expresses utmost admiration. The deconstructing of this metaphor shows the male's chauvinism who, for all his passivity, is not only an active admirer of the woman but takes over control in the following song (Can 7:8–10).

## Acknowledgements

### Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

### Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not reflect his official position or institution.

## References

- Alexander, P.S., 2003, *The Targum of Canticles. Translated, with a critical introduction, apparatus, and notes*, The Aramaic Bible 17A, vol. 17A, T&T Clark, London.
- Bergant, D., 2001, *The Song of Songs*, Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew narrative & poetry, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, PA.
- Bernat, D., 2004, 'Biblical Wasfs beyond song of songs', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 28(3), 327–349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030908920402800305>
- Black, F., 2000, 'Unlikely bedfellows: Allegorical and feminist readings of Song of Songs 7.1–8', in A. Brenner & C.R. Fontaine (eds.), *The Song of Songs, A feminist companion to the Bible*, second series, vol. 6, pp. 104–129, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.
- Brenner, A., 1993, 'Come back, come back the Shulammitte (Song of Songs 7.1–10): A parody of the wasf genre', in A. Brenner (ed.), *The Song of Songs, A feminist companion to the Bible* 1, pp. 234–257, JSOT Press, Sheffield.
- Brunner-Traut, E., 1992, *Der Tanz im Alten Ägypten. Nach bildlichen und schriftlichen Zeugnissen*, Ägyptologische Forschungen 6, J.J. Augustin, Glückstadt.
- Brunner-Traut, E., 1996, *Frühformen des Erkennens. Am Beispiel Altägyptens*, 3. Auflage, WBG, Darmstadt.
- Clines, D. (ed.), 1993–2011, *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew (DCH)*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.
- De Joode, J. & Van Loon, H., 2014, 'Selecting and analyzing metaphors in the Hebrew Bible: Cognitive linguistics and the literary', in K. Smelik & K. Vermeulen (eds.), *Approaches to literary readings of ancient Jewish writings*, pp. 39–52, Brill, Leiden.
- Dietrich W. & Arnet, S. (eds.), 2013, *Konzise und aktualisierte Ausgabe des Hebräischen und Aramäischen Lexikons zum Alten Testament (KAHAL)*, Brill, Leiden.
- Dölling, J., 2000, 'Formale Analyse von Metonymie und Metapher', in R. Eckardt & K.V. Heusinger (eds.), *Meaning change – Meaning variation*, Arbeitspapiere des Fachbereichs Sprachwissenschaft 106, pp. 31–54, Universität Konstanz, Konstanz.
- Fischer, S., 2010, *Das Hohelied Salomos zwischen Poesie und Erzählung. Erzähltextanalyse eines poetischen Textes*, FAT 72, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen.
- Fishbane, M., 2015, *Song of Songs: Shir ha-Shirim: The traditional Hebrew text with the new JPS translation/commentary*, JPS Bible commentary series, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, PA.
- Fox, M.V., 1985, *The Song of Songs and the ancient Egyptian love songs*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI.
- Haller, M., 1940, 'Das Hohe Lied', in M. Haller & K. Galling (eds.), *Die fünf Megilloth*, HAT 1, 18, Mohr/Siebeck, Tübingen.
- Hopf, M., 2016, *Liebesszenen. Eine literaturwissenschaftliche Studie zum Hohenlied als einem dramatisch-performativen Text*, ATHANT 108, TVZ, Zürich.
- Jindo, J.Y., 2009, 'Toward a poetics of the biblical mind: Language, culture and cognition', *Vetus Testamentum* 59(2), 222–243. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156853309X406659>
- Kaplan, J., 2015, *My perfect one. Typology and early rabbinic interpretation of Song of Songs*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Keel, O., 1992, *Das Hohelied*, 2 Auflage, ZBK 18, TVZ, Zürich.
- Kinney, L., 2008, *Dance, dancers and the performance cohort in the Old Kingdom*, Archaeopress, Oxford.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M., 2003, *Metaphors we live by*, University Press of Chicago, Chicago, IL.
- Loader, J.A., 1998–2001, 'Exegetical Erotica to Canticles 7: 2–6', *Journal for Semitics* 10(1&2), 98–111.
- Meredith, C., 2013, *Journey in the Songscape. Space and the Song of Songs*, HBM 53, Sheffield Phoenix Press, Sheffield.
- Müller, H.P., 1992, *Das Hohelied*, 4 Auflage, ATD 16/2, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen.
- Munro, J.M., 1995, *Spikenard and saffron: A study in the poetic language of the Song of Songs*, JSOT.SS 203, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.
- Peuckert, S., 2017, 'Überlegungen zu Heinrich Schäfers Von ägyptischer Kunst und zu Hedwig Fehheimers Plastik der Ägypter', *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 144(1), 108–138. <https://doi.org/10.1515/zaes-2017-0008>
- Quack, J.F., 2016, 'Where once was love, love is no more? What happens to expressions of love in late period Egypt?', *Die Welt Des Orients* 46(1), 62–89.
- Roberts, D.P., 2007, *Let me see your form: Seeking poetic structure in the Song of Songs*, Studies in Judaism, University Press of America, Lanham, MD.
- Rudolph, W., 1962, *Das Buch Ruth*, KAT 17/1–3, Gerd Mohn, Gütersloh.
- Schökel, A., 1988, *A manual of Hebrew poetics*, SubBi 11, Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Roma.
- Spencer, P., 2003, 'Dance in Ancient Egypt', *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66(3), 111–121. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3210914>
- Stoop-van Paridon, P.W.T., 2002, *Het Lied der Liederen: een filologische analyse van het Hebreeuwse boek Shir hashshirim*, Peeters, Leuven.
- White, J.B., 1978, *A study of the language of love in the Song of Songs and ancient Egyptian poetry*, SBL.DS 38, Scholars Press, Missoula, MT.
- Wilke, C., 2017, *Farewell to Shulamit. Spatial and social diversity in the Song of Songs*, Jewish thought, philosophy, and religion 2, De Gruyter, Berlin.
- Zakovitch, Y., 2004, *Das Hohelied*, HThKAT, Herder, Freiburg.