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5 SONG OF SONGS AND ITS METAPHORS

5.1 Unique in gender equality

This chapter deals with the identification and translation of the metaphors in **Song of Songs** for adolescents in view of the previously accumulated information in chapters 2 to 4. This will be done against the backdrop of a general introduction of **Song of Songs** and a brief discussion about the texts of the various Bible translations that are consulted in order to reach a final product. The purpose of giving a general introduction to **Song of Songs** is twofold:

- 1 In view of its controversial nature (it still continues to elicit a disparate variety of responses), I believe any person who ventures into its realm needs to clarify his own position.
- 2 In dealing with specific issues within **Song of Songs** (such as metaphors, for instance) one cannot separate one's general understanding of the work from the specifics, as the one informs the other and **vice versa**.

It needs to be stated, however, that this study also shares these sentiments expressed by Falk (1982:6);

Because of the specific nature of this work, many issues normally treated by Bible scholars, such as the origin and authorship of the text, its time of composition, original life setting, and liturgical functions, are barely touched upon here. Discussions of such issues may be found in [a variety of] Bible introductions and commentaries

...

Consequently only a general overview of the nature of **Song of Songs** will be done by discussing the following aspects:

- 1 Interpretations.
- 2 Structure.
- 3 Imagery.

In all these aspects it will also be seen that **Song of Songs** is a unique book (Nowell, 1989:140) but most notably in its perspective on the issues dealt with in the text (Meyers, 1989:218). Whereas issues depicted in the books of the Bible are portrayed primarily from a male perspective this is not so in **Song of Songs**. The male dominance in the rest of Scripture is reversed in that of the three voices in the poem (male, female, group), the female is the most prominent (Trible, 1978:144-165). The female speaks more often and initiates exchanges more often than the male.

5.2 Interpretations

The most accurate epigram attributed to the studies done on **Song of Songs** is probably furnished by Pope (1977:17) with these words: "No composition of comparable size in world literature has provoked and inspired such a volume and variety of comment and interpretation as the Biblical **"Song of Songs"**".¹

Murphy (1979:99) uses the phrase "a theological *Raritäten Kabinett*" (a place where all kinds of exotic items are collected), to depict the variety of interpretations **Song of Songs** has prompted. The important fact is that much has been written on **Song of Songs** and as long as unresolved problems, controversial issues and genuine difficulties remain, many more responses will indubitably be generated. Thompson puts it this way:

The Song of Songs is quite a short composition when compared to many other biblical (sic) books. Its eight chapters can be read

1 Many scholars agree on this issue. To mention only a few:

- 1 Rowley (1965:197) - "There is no book of the Old Testament which has found greater variety of interpretation than the **Song of Songs**".
- 2 Falk (1982:62) - "Probably no book in the Hebrew Bible has been the subject of more controversy concerning its literary classification than the **Song of Songs**".
- 3 Carr (1984:15) - "Among the books of the Bible, the Song of Solomon is one of the smallest, most difficult, yet one of the most popular with both Jews and Christians".
- 4 Davidson (1986:3) - "No book in the Bible has been subject to radical assessments as to its worth, or as to how we ought to understand it [as **Song of Songs**].
- 5 Childs (1987:578) - "Few books of the Old Testament exhibit such a wide range of differing opinions on the part of interpreters as does the **Song of Songs**".
- 6 Curtis (1988:15) - "There is no book of the Bible (including the book of Revelation) that has been discussed as extensively ...".

quickly but to understand these verses filled with images of plants, animals and a young couple in love can take a lifetime!

The long and complex history of the interpretations of **Song of Songs** has gone on for nearly a millennium and I agree with Murphy (1981:506) that "it is not often enough emphasised that the earliest interpretation of the Song is far from certain". Moreover, not only is there a variety of interpretations but currently there are also different classifications of these various interpretations afforded to **Song of Songs**.

The most basic variety of interpretations attributed to **Song of Songs** is furnished by Davidson (1986:93-102), Carr (1981:98) and White (1978:19) who distinguish three outlines:

- 1 Allegory/typology (mystical).
- 2 Drama/cult-mythological (fertility rite).
- 3 Natural/literal.

Some critics prefer to make a finer distinction in the types of interpretations. Consequently Childs (1987:571), Hassel Bullock (1979:224-229) and Carr (1984:21-32) (in a later publication) make a definite distinction between the allegorical and typological interpretations while Grober (1980:2) and Falk (1982:62) distinguish between the drama and cult-mythological (fertility rite) interpretations. Evaluating the different theories and outlines made by scholars, and treating in depth the long history of interpretation are beyond the scope of this study. Yet it is felt that a brief consideration of the three major positions mentioned above is a necessity as one's interpretive stance will inform one's approach to the metaphors of **Song of Songs**.

5.2.1 Drama/cult-mythological

This approach can be traced back as far as AD 250 with Origen who declared it a marriage song which Solomon wrote in the form of a drama (Carr, 1984:32). This idea was largely ignored until the previous century. Along with the notion of its being a drama came the view that **Song of Songs** was a cultic ritual. Both White (1978:22-24) and Grober (1980:9-

17) give an extensive account of the various scholars expounding this view.

Of all the types of interpretations it is felt that this is the least acceptable one. I agree with Falk (1982:63) that the dramatic view of **Song of Songs** must be dismissed on structural grounds. **Song of Songs** does not have a clear plot or unified portrayal of character which is required by drama. Thus characters and scenes which are not provided in the text itself have to be assumed. Carr (1984:34) summarises this dilemma in this way: "Considerable experience in theatrical production and direction has persuaded me that the Song, as it now stands is unactable".

As far as the cult-mythological or fertility rite theory is concerned I agree with Davidson (1986:98) who points out that there is no real evidence that a cultic drama of the pagan type suggested by those who expound this theory was ever part of the worship in the temple even in its worst days of apostasy.

My personal opinion of this approach to interpreting **Song of Songs** is, however, best expressed in these words of Hassel Bullock:

History has many ironies, and so does exegesis. The bizarre and absurd sometimes expire at the hands of advancing knowledge and technology only to rise again in more contemporary garb. Old Testament exegesis has experienced its share of such phenomena. The mythological or cult, theory qualifies admirably for this category.

Finally, it is felt that the assessment of the drama/cult-mythological (fertility rite) mode of interpretation made by Falk (1982:64), successfully identifies its erroneous areas:

While these theories may account for some of the material in this Song, or at least for some of its influences they do not explain the Song as a whole; rather they impose awkward superstructures ...

5.3.3 Allegory/typology

Carr (1984:21) points out the necessity of distinguishing between allegory as **an extended metaphor** (a valid and helpful literary device) and allegorising as **a method of interpreting** Scripture.

Historically this method of allegorising has been the most common interpretive approach to Song of Songs. Rabbinic scholars, who represent Judaism, understood the lover/beloved exchanges as a description of the relationship between *Yahwe* and Israel. Until recently, the majority of Christian commentators have also made a similar application. For them, however, the relationship between Christ and the church or the individual Christian takes precedence (Matter, 1990:210). It is consequently true that those who value **Song of Songs** most dearly, namely Jewish and Christian believers, have interpreted the book allegorically.

Basic to the allegorical method is the idea that a passage contains no factual or historically true record of any past event. All facts are merely vehicles for a deeper spiritual truth. It is at this point where the allegorical and typological interpretations part ways. Whereas allegory denies the historicity of the Old Testament, typology recognises the literal truth of the facts and then subordinates it to a "higher" or "deeper" level of spiritual meaning. In this regard Carr (1984:24) describes typology as not providing "a different meaning" but rather giving "an added dimension to the sense already present in the text". This is also why White (1978:20) refers to typology as "another facet of the allegorical interpretation". Rowley (1965:210) too, discusses this modified form of allegorising and writes that it supposes **Song of Songs** to have a double meaning. Primarily it deals with human love but a deeper, mystical meaning penetrates the literal one. Both these varieties of approaching **Song of Songs** suffer from serious defects. Davidson (1986:94-96) lists these two points of valid criticism against the allegorical method:

- 1 Nowhere else in the Old Testament is there anything remotely resembling the detailed development of the relationship between a man and a woman. **Song of Songs** lingers upon romantic detail as well as frank and passionate sexuality as nowhere else in Scripture.

- 2 There are no clues in **Song of Songs** which clearly point to the fact that it is intended to be read as an allegory.

Carr (1984:31) lists these two equally valid points of criticism against the typological method:

- 1 The text of **Song of Songs** gives no indication that it is intended as typology.
- 2 There is no indication in the New Testament that **Song of Songs** has a Christological interpretation or application.

Despite a general rejection of this approach to the interpretation of Song of Songs I would like to support its validity in the way done by Murphy (1986:87-90) in a brilliant and thought-provoking article on the history of exegesis as a hermeneutical tool for **Song of Songs**. Murphy (1986:89) prefers to call the allegorical/typological approach as well as the mystical approach (applying the **Song of Songs** to the relationship between God and the individual believer), the traditional approach. Murphy (1986:89) emphasises the importance of this traditional interpretive approach in this way:

The point to be insisted upon is the basic unity of the interpretation in the history of Judaism and Christianity. The Song deals with the love of God for human beings and vice versa. Is this remarkable unanimity merely a brilliant faux pas, or does it supply an added dimension to our understanding of the Song?

I cannot agree more that the Jewish and Christian support of the traditional interpretation leaves one with "a nagging doubt about the adequacy" of the literal/natural understanding of **Song of Songs** (Murphy, 1986:91). This would suggest that the traditional approach has some validity. The question is: in what way? Murphy (1986:90) gives two reasons for the validity of the traditional interpretation which also raises questions as to the exhaustiveness of the literal/natural interpretation:

- 1 Modern hermeneutical (and I would like to add modern literary theory) allows for the validity of more than one meaning.

- 2 The tools of historical scholarship suggest a broader framework of interpretations than merely a literal/natural approach.

There are two tools of historical scholarship that are discussed and they are the following:

- 1 The sexual and marital relationship between a man and woman is the symbol of the covenant relationship between the Lord and His people particularly in view of passages such as Hosea 2:21-22 and Isaiah 62:5. Although the referent (Lord and Israel) of the symbol is not stated explicitly in **Song of Songs** the meaning in a text need not be explicated by the original author in order to be valid (Murphy, 1986:90).
- 2 The reference to the flame of *Yah* (*Yahwe*) in 8:6 establishes the connection between the flames of human love and divine love. Consequently the author of **Song of Songs** can be seen to view human love as a participation in divine love.

The point to be made then is this. Anyone who knows love can identify with love poetry. The subjects and objects can be moved around and replaced with different subjects and objects. The bonding element in the relationship is the presence of certain perennial aspects of love. There is to be affirmations of yearning and admiration. The agony and the ecstasy caused by presence and absence need to be voiced. The descriptions of beauty in each other and the effects upon the senses of seeing, touching and hearing should be present. In short, the common topics of love language are universal in their application. Murphy (1981:515-516) adequately describes the point to reach by an interpreter in this way:

The issue is not so much whether the Song deals with human love as opposed to divine love, as if these were two totally disparate things. It deals with love on various levels, and love belongs to both the human and the divine. If God is love, human sexual love must have some relationship to Him, it reflects and participates in a divine reality. Both levels of love are to be retained in the perspective of the Song.

In addition to this it is felt that the traditional approach goes one small step further to recognise this truth captured by Davidson (1986:159):

*In reliving the human love relationship which the **Song of Solomon** celebrates - its totality, its holiness, its power - we are being pointed to that greater relationship [between God and a Christian] in the light of which we can say, "we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 9:37-38).*

This is why Murphy (1986:90-91) by his own admission changed his neutral stance of the previous years to claim that the traditional approach enriches the literal one since the literal/natural approach does not exhaust the full meaning of **Song of Songs**.

The whole issue of the validity of the traditional approach and how it informs the literal approach is also emphasized by Knight (1988:9) who argues that **Song of Songs** as a collection of love poems was produced by divine inspiration to show readers, step by step, the meaning of true love and this love is "not just the love of a young human couple for each other, but actually the love of the living God. He alone is the source of the love they exhibit and which they discover to be more peaceful and enduring than death itself". Riekert (1983:220) too, urges that **Song of Songs** should be interpreted as "a revelation on human love as part of the creation of God. Human sexual love appertains to the order of creation and therefore to the covenant life between man and God" (emphasis mine).

5.2.3 *Literal/natural*

This view proposes **Song of Songs** to be a collection of Love songs/poems or a structurally unified love poem dealing with the deep human love and sexual love between a man and a woman. Kirk (1987:59) for example, describes **Song of Songs** as a magnificent song of praise extolling the erotic beauty that the king finds in his bride and that she finds in him.

They rejoice in one another and in the gifts of physical beauty and sexual union. Mulder (1991:75-76) feels that **Song of Songs** is this message from the Almighty God to man:

Kijk en luister goed, er mag iedere dag door jou nog een stukje paradijs op aarde beleefd worden, want de liefde tussen man en vrouw, ook de erotische en sexuele, is precies een van die perceeltjes hemel op aarde, die het leven een onuitsprekelijke glans geven.

It is felt that Davidson (1986:157) is both more to the point and succinct in capturing the essence of **Song of Songs** when he describes it as "a liberating celebration of human sexuality" from beginning to end.

Moreover, this meaning (that **Song of Songs** is love poetry, that embraces a wide range of issues on the love relationship - which includes the sexual aspect - between a man and a woman) serves as a criterion which can eliminate vagaries in the interpretations of the past. Murphy (1986:90) asserts that "one is able to test other views by constraining a line of continuity between this meaning and the traditional understanding. If there is no continuity manifest the interpretations may be merely arbitrary and not worthy of serious consideration". Although it is true that the erotic nature of **Song of Songs** cannot be denied (Eybers, 1978:36; Falk, 1982:64) it is also true that in its celebration of human sexuality it also celebrates both virtue (virginity and chastity) as well as fidelity (Hassel Bullock 1978:27; Landy, 1983:73). Childs (1987:575) too, warns that **Song of Songs** deals with the love between a man and a woman within the institution of marriage. In an elucidating article on the theme of **Song of Songs**, Segal (1986:106-113) points out how a very specific type of sexual relationship is rejected: the world of multiplicity of sexual relationships. Consequently **Song of Songs** declares that sex is good, overwhelmingly good, but only within its proper context where it can reach its full potential, namely in marriage with one's own husband or own wife. In this regard Segal (1986:113) makes this important comment:

*One might well consider the possibility that the inclusion of the **Song of Songs** in the canon might derive not from the later allegorical interpretation given to the **Song**, but from the fact that*

the Song presents what is a particular approach to sex and love, one which differs markedly from that of neighbouring pagan cultures.

It is against this backdrop and understanding that the metaphors of **Song of Songs** are to be translated for adolescents. Particularly because adolescents live in a society where very little is certain anymore as the result of a lack of absolutes (Schaeffer, 1976:218-222). Schaeffer (1976:224) mentions this example to illustrate that society has accepted standards on sexual behaviour on the basis of the statistical average of opinion at a given time (which implies that these standards are variable since opinions can change):

*Alfred Charles Kinsey (1894-1957), a biologist-sociologist at the Institute for Sex Research at Indiana University produced his influential **Sexual Behaviour of the Human Male** (1948) and **Sexual Behaviour of the Human Female** (1953). These were based on 18,5000 interviews. Kinsey made that which is "right" in sex a matter of statistics.*

Not to fall prey to the pressures of the arbitrary values of contemporary society, it is incumbent upon every Christian not to underestimate its influence and to adhere to the principle of an exclusive sexual relationship with one marriage partner for life, as it is advocated in **Song of Songs**. In this regard Deckers-Dijs (1991:315) issues a vital warning:

***Song of Songs** may be a revelation about human beings. Both, women and men, can choose for a life-giving or life-destructing way of live [sic]. A human being is not a plaything of fate nor of the god(s), but entirely responsible for his/her own desire.*

Although Falk (1982:87) is cautious in her suggestion that this ancient text may turn out to have something new to teach us about how to redeem sexuality and love in our fallen world I would like to be more bold and agree with Young (1960:354-355) who remarks that because **Song of Songs** celebrates the dignity and purity of human love, it is didactic and moral in its purpose in that it reminds us of how pure and noble true love is. Carr (1984:53) reveals the nature of this true love by identifying the

theme of commitment as being central to the relationship between the two lovers. Therefore the theme of sexual enjoyment and consummation is not the reflection of a passing encounter but of a total dedication and permanent obligation.

Finally it is felt that although the primary intention of **Song of Songs** is to deal with human sexual love and its delights as well as its power, White (1978:28) issues a note of caution with regards to the natural/literal approach of interpretation:

It would be an exaggerated claim to hold that the naturalistic interpretation exhausts the meaning of the Song. The history and interpretation of Canticles, points out that in both Jewish and Christian communities, the book found various levels of meaning.

Segal (1987:39) echoes this sentiment in an article tracing four repetitions in **Song of Songs** at the end of which he argues that a study of these repetitions "will reveal complementary and supplementary levels of meaning of the Song as a whole".

Finally it is felt that Landy (1983:139) brings perspective to the whole issue of the interpretation of **Song of Songs** by acknowledging its multifaceted nature and denying it the luxury of a single interpretation. Poetry depends on ambiguity for its richness and a poem is a vehicle to multiple meanings. The depth of symbolic associations and multiplex allusions inherent in **Song of Songs** actually attempts to do the impossible: "To communicate in language what is beyond language" (Landy, 1983:13). There is, however, consensus among modern scholarship on the issue that **Song of Songs** is love poetry dealing with all the virtues and vicissitudes of love: its feelings, desires, concerns, hopes, fears, commitments and sacrifices.

5.3 Structure

The unity of **Song of Songs** is a matter of considerable discussion. Reese (1983:205) argues that modern critics are radically divided on this question. An example of this fact is seen in Goulder (1986:71) who states that "the Song is a single poem, and not a collection of unrelated lyrics",

while Baumgartner (1967:231) argues that "it is better to think of a collection of love songs in general". There are then, these two positions regarding the structure of **Song of Songs** in current scholarship (White, 1978:28; Murphy, 1983:1):

- 1 **Song of Songs** is a unit of several short poems within the eight chapters.
- 2 **Song of Songs** is a collection or anthology of disparate poems that have little (if any) unity.

Arguments have been advanced in support of both these opposing views. Yet, on both sides there are difficulties. Among those scholars who see unity there is no agreement concerning the demarcation of the units that constitute the whole work. Likewise, for those who view **Songs of Songs** as a collection of poems (love lyrics) there is no agreement as to the number of poems in the eight chapters. Carr (1984:44) feels that those who opt for a collection of love poems are such an overwhelming majority that he writes:

*Almost without exception, contemporary commentators reject the idea that the **Song of Songs** is a single composition. Rather they believe it is a collection of various longer or shorter individual love poems gathered together into a "book" because they share the common themes of the "Love Poetry" genre.*

Although Murphy (1983:1) agrees that opting for a collection of love poems is "the predominant view today" he himself argues (in another publication) that the dialogue, and the repetition of words, phrases and themes suggest that **Song of Songs** has a unity and is not a haphazard collection of disparate love songs. The remarkable homogeneity to the text not merely in themes but also in specific detail is echoed by both Nowell (1987:14) and Reese (1983:107). Reference should also be made to Fox (1985:202-222) who discusses the whole issue of unity vs disunity quite exhaustively. He discusses these six arguments that have been mustered for the disunity of **Song of Songs** and not only regards them as weak but also successfully refutes them (Fox 1985:203-208):

- 1 A variety of life-settings are depicted.
- 2 A variety of geographical references are made.
- 3 A variety of linguistic characteristics are displayed.
- 4 Doublets are present.
- 5 A variety of persons are presented.
- 6 Analogies with love poetry from other cultures prove the collection theory.

Then he discusses the following four unifying factors (Fox, 1985:209-218):

- 1 A network of repetitions.
- 2 Associative sequences.
- 3 Consistency of character portrayal.
- 4 A (loose) narrative framework.

Fox (1985:222) then comes to the unequivocal conclusion that one is justified in interpreting **Song of Songs** as a unity. Gottwald (1987:548) argues that a unitary intent is proved by the number of refrains and repetitions and furnishes a chart which exhibits twenty-one repetitions that occur in **Song of Songs**. This is why Kroeze (1953:28-29) too, opts for a unitary view. One of the most worthwhile perspectives on this issue is probably that of Landy (1979:516) which is a challenge to the whole unity/disunity debate and questions its significance:

Many critics affirm that the Song is an anthology, a hodgepodge of originally discreet lyrics. So it might be; but the literary critic is concerned with the text as he finds it. Furthermore, the very concept of poetic unity is questionable, and certainly ethnocentric. No text is isolated, self-sufficient; none can be understood without reference to others. Thus the question of unity is not relevant, for each component in the discourse - whether it is genre, cycle or single composition - is related to every other, more or less, sooner or later.

This fresh outlook raises two significant questions:

- 1 Is it so important and relevant to make a choice between a collection of poems and a unit of poetry in view of the fact that there is no such a thing as an autonomous piece of literature?
- 2 Since the critic is concerned with the text as it is, is it necessary to account for the fact that **Song of Songs** originated from an oral tradition (Falk, 1982:65-66)?

Landy (1983:33) adds another equally fresh perspective to the first question in that he argues that the issue of unity in **Song of Songs** is less crucial than it might seem to be because one might plausibly consider it to be a collection of varied poems and yet, to have a certain "generic coherence". In this regard Falk (1982:66) admits that the design of **Song of Songs** may be the result of "skillful compilation" regardless of the fact that she argues for a collection of short poems. She also acknowledges the presence of the repetitions but argues that the repeated images in **Song of Songs** may be conventional literary stock, much as Petrarchan imagery was the stock of Renaissance poets or that the collection of separate poems was "derived from a common cultural source" (Falk, 1982:65). This is naturally an inadvertent recognition of the fact that no piece of literature is truly autonomous. Landy (1983:38) however, feels that the assertion that these were stock metaphors is both unprovable and irrelevant.

It is interesting however that two interpreters - Falk (1982) and Murphy (1983) - who approach the structure of **Song of Songs** from the two different perspectives in this unity/disunity debate, both make a similar division of the text. Falk (1982:134) divides the text into the title (1:1) and thirty-one separate poems. Murphy (1983:2-3) demarcates thirty individual units which includes a superscription (1:1). Although Falk (1982:134) views **Song of Songs** as a "variegated collection of different types of lyric love poems", and Murphy (1983:2) recognises "various genres" within a work in which seems "to be signs of an effort to strive for unity", both reach a remarkably similar conclusion, namely, that their demarcation/identification yields approximately thirty units/poems. In view of their work it is felt the following thirty poetic units can be identified which excludes the title stated in 1:1.

Poetic	Reference	Description of content
Title	1:1	Song of Songs
1	1:2-4	Desire
2	1:5-6	Self description
3	1:7-8	Inquiry
4	1:9-11	Admiration: man's voice
5	1:12-14	Admiration: woman's voice
6	1:15-17	Admiration: dialogue
7	2:1-3	Admiration: dialogue
8	2:4-7	Desire
9	2:8-13	Invitation
10	2:14	Desire
11	2:15	Admonition
12	2:16-17	Invitation
13	3:1-5	Anticipation
14	3:6-11	Wedding procession
15	4:1-7	Description: man's voice (<i>wasf</i>)
16	4:8	Invitation
17	4:9-5:1	Admiration: man's voice
18	5:2-6:3	Misunderstanding (Contains woman's <i>wasf</i> - 5:10-16)
19	6:4-10	Description: man's voice (<i>wasf</i>)
20	6:11-7:1	Reminiscence: nut garden
21	7:2-6	Description: man's voice (<i>wasf</i>)
22	7:7-11	Admiration (Interruption)
23	7:12-14	Invitation
24	8:1-4	Wish
25	8:5a	Question
26	8:5b	Reminiscence :apricot/quince tree
27	8:6-7	Tribute to love
28	8:8-10	Reminiscence: Brother's past attitude
29	8:11-12	Reminiscence: vineyard
30	8:13-14	Desire

Some poetic units may have more than one stanza as is successfully shown by Falk (1982:12-51), yet it is felt that these thirty poetic units form part of one organic love poem as a whole, which, on a macrolevel, can

successfully be divided into seven major units (Dorsey, 1990:81-86). One must only be careful not to propose a too intricate plan on the macrolevel, since I agree with Grossberg (1986:148) that the composition of **Song of Songs**, although an organic whole, constitutes an openness. The organic unity in **Song of Songs** is then the final issue of this discussion.

For the specific purpose of this study Grober (1984:87) touches upon the heart of the matter by opting for a unified structure in view of the semantic associations generated by a number of metaphors which draw a large number of scattered verses together in **Song of Songs**. Grober (1984:108) thus concludes that "despite its fragmented nature, the text is held together by a number of metaphors, which generate recurrent patterns of association in a great variety of verses". Landy (1983:39) too agrees that through "the patient discovery of the inner connections of images and sequences" a unity in the structure of **Song of Songs** can be found. Exum (1973:78) comes to the same conclusion as the result of a structured analysis of **Song of Songs**, namely that it reveals "a unity of authorship with an intentional design, and a sophistication of poetic style". In closing, despite the chequered nature of its composition, its odd juxtaposition of images, different settings and rapid changes of tone a list of five structuring principles are identified in **Song of Songs** (Grober, 1984:107-108) which confirms Landy's (1987:315) assumption that the metaphors in **Song of Songs** reinforce its unity through an "intricate web of cross-references, whereby an image is coupled with another at some distance from itself":

- 1 There is the use of recurrent images and ideas in a consistent style.
- 2 Semantic links between key terms are often reinforced by the same sound symbol also found in disparate verses of the text.
- 3 Climax points or "confluences of images" are created in which the same elements appear.
- 4 The modality of the text can be seen to lie in its circularity so that "its end is its beginning, its beginning its end". (For example, in the demarcation of the poetic units *supra* it is seen that **Song of Songs** begins and ends with desire.) Landy (1987:315) argues that there is "a circularity" in **Song of Songs** because the second half reflects the first in this way:

- 1 8:1-2 abbreviates and develops 3:1-4.
- 2 The portraits of the woman in 4:1-7 and 7:1-6 bracket those of the man in 5:10-16.

The fragmentation of the text is therefore not proof of its disunity but rather a mimetic device used in order to capture the fluctuating emotions of the lovers. My view on the structure of **Song of Songs** is then adequately expressed in these words of Landy (1983:39):

Moreover, structural unity corresponds to and expresses outwardly the unity of action i.e. the union of the lovers, and also to the fusion through metaphors of the lovers and the world. Hence the poem is an organic whole, in which content and form are indissoluble.

5.4 Imagery

Most commentators² agree on the abundance of imagery and specifically metaphor in **Song of Songs**. Central to the understanding of the metaphors of **Song of Songs** lie these five aspects:

- 1 Among the various genres of love poetry that have been identified in the text, the Praise Songs (Admiration Song/*Bewunderungslied* and Description Song/*Wasf*) provide the most obvious materials for the consideration of metaphor as its imagery is extravagant and sensuous (Brenner, 1989:30).
- 2 Images for metaphors are drawn from a variety of sources which can be listed as follows:

* **Natural world.** (Flora and Fauna.) Those images pertaining to eating and drinking can be traced back to this source.

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- 2 To mention a few:

- 1 Van Wyk (1978:184) - "Metaphors abound in the Hebrew text [of **Song of Songs**]".
- 2 White (1978:49) - "... provides the **Song** with material for a plethora of metaphors ...".
- 3 Landy (1978:514) - "The **Song** largely consists of metaphors ...".
- 4 Fox (1985:272) - "... the outstanding characteristic of the Praise Songs is the profusion of metaphors ...".
- 5 Meyers (1987:209) - "In no other book of the Hebrew Bible does the imagery figure so prominently as it does in the **Song of Songs**".

- * **Architectural word** (with military nuances). Those images pertaining to regality and wealth can be traced back to this source.
- 3 The imagery of **Song of Songs** has been problematic, difficult and even exotic to many interpreters, scholars and exegetes. Meyers (1987:213) attributes this phenomenon in part to the frequent use of *hapax legomena* (terms not found elsewhere in the Bible) which according to Reese (1983:207) are almost fifty in number.
- 4 Much of the sexual and erotic symbolism and allusions are obliquely subtle and extends beyond the body. This would suggest that a search for genital and anatomical detail, as well as an emphasis on references to sexual intercourse and coitus, is misplaced and distorts the central theme and main thrust in **Song of Songs**.
- 5 Some terms of endearment which are repeated a number of times, are metaphorical while others are not. These metaphors are usually, to use the classification discussed under 3.2.6 not original but dead or standard (stock).

5.4.1 *The Wasf*

Both Fox (1985:271) and Murphy (1973:418-421) distinguish between the Description Song (*Wasf*) and the Admiration Song (*Bewunderungslied*) on the one hand, yet also doubt the complete discreteness of these two categories on the other hand. Since both songs include praise and satisfaction with the beauty of the person loved, this study will view all such poems or poetic fragments as Praise Songs.

Consequently seven Praise Song are recognised:

- 1 1:5-6 (Self description).
- 2 1:9-2:3 (Admiration dialogue).
- 3 4:1-7 (Description song).
- 4 4:9-5:1 (Admiration song).
- 5 5:10-16 (Description song).

6 6:4-10 (Description song).

7 7:2-11 (Description and Admiration song).

Wasf is an Arabic word that means "description" and is used to designate those passages that depict through a series of images the parts of the male and female body. The images are usually graphic and striking. While these images are usually visual, they sometimes appeal to the other senses as the tactile ("breasts like fawns") or the olfactory and taste associations ("lips like lilies"). While *wasfs* are not uncommon in modern Arabic poetry, in ancient Hebrew literature they appear only in **Song of Songs** (Falk, 1982:80). *Wasfs* also appear in ancient Egyptian songs and usually begin and end with a categorical declaration of the beauty of the person and the effect it has on the speaker or others (Fox, 1985:272). It is important then to recognise that not only the subject matter but also the form of the *wasf* is predetermined. The parts of the physique are also described according to a certain pattern. According to Fox (1985:272) there are four *wasfs* in **Song of Songs** and in the first three, the parts of the body are described by proceeding more or less from the top downward. The last *wasf* proceeds generally upward in its description. The most important factor to bear in mind is that most of the metaphors in **Song of Songs** are contained within the *wasfs* (Landy, 1983:73).

5.4.2 Sources of metaphors

Both Meyers (1987:209-221) and Falk (1982:97-106) elaborate quite extensively on the sources of the metaphors in **Song of Songs**. The references to flora and fauna in **Song of Songs** are so many and so various that it can probably also be thought of as nature poetry and not only love poetry. References to flora and fauna are, however, fundamental to the text. They abound everywhere: in different settings, as real, metaphorical and symbolic (Falk, 1982:97). Animals in **Song of Songs** include the mare, sheep, goat, gazelle, deer, nightingale, turtledove, fox, lion, leopard and raven.

One of the most problematic and perplexing animal images has perhaps been 1:9 in which the female is compared to a mare in Pharaoh's chariots. The enigma that surrounds this image is that only stallions and not mares, were used to draw chariots. The dilemma that surrounds the image is that

very few modern women, in the Western world in particular, would find it flattering being compared to a mare despite Carr's (1984:82) conciliatory note that "the comparison naturally must be understood as complimentary". Ginsburg (1970:136-137) defends a probable "uncouthness" that can be attributed to the image with these words: "Such a comparison must have been very striking and flattering in the East, where this animal was so much celebrated for its preeminent beauty". Fox (1985:105) too, suggests that the lines of comparison should be drawn between the excellence for which Egyptian horses were known and the beauty of the girl. It is felt, however, as is assumed by a number of other modern interpreters³, that this image is most successfully understood by recognising the military ploy alluded to. The enemies of the Egyptians set mares loose in war to drive the Pharaoh's stallions wild and this is the crux of the metaphor. As a female horse does violence to the military effectiveness of the charioteers in that it excites the stallions, so does the woman excite the man. Thus the woman is not merely a beautiful creature, she is also alluring in that the man finds her irresistible. Falk (1982:7) considers this image as unfolding on two levels which implies this paradox: "the woman is a graceful, quiet profile, yet also a dangerous captivating power".

Another animal image worthy of a brief reference would appear to be the one that appears in 4:1 and 6:5(b) where the woman's hair is compared to a flock of goats descending from mount Gilead. Waterman (1948:63) concludes that the image is bizarre if not grotesque after this argument:

The comparison of the girl's hair to a flock of goats would have been straightforward and legitimate if mention of the slopes of Gilead had been omitted. As the image stands, the mountain background is, in reference to a girl's head, too large for the goats, for if they are bunched together there are too many slopes bare of goats, but if they are scattered the emphasis falls upon the girl's hairs rather than her hair.

Davidson (1986:126) too suggests that this image may seem "somewhat bizarre". At this point, however, I agree with Falk (1982:84) who argues

3 Pope (1977:336-341), Falk (1982:111-112), Alter (1985:193) and Davidson (1986:109).

that the foreign nature of this image can be made accessible to the modern reader through the process of proper visualisation. The right perspective needs to be taken and the implicit context should be made explicit. With regards to this image she explains:

One can easily picture hair to be like goats on a mountainside by viewing the scene from a distance. From afar, the sight of goats winding down the slopes of the Israeli countryside is striking: the dark animals weave a graceful pattern against the paler background of the hills, suggesting dark waves of hair falling down a woman's neck.

According to Tuell (1993:103), in terms of etymological grounds, the vital part of the comparison is the **motion** of the flock which is "rippling and wavelike". Fox (1985:124) comes to the same conclusion by viewing the scene as from afar which suggests that the appropriate process of visualisation is applied. The flowing tresses of black hair may then be said to resemble lines of black goats as they wind their way down the mountainside. This image suggests the flow and movement of the woman's hair. Since the interpretation of many images depends upon a familiarity with the foreign landscape of Israel, vantage points or settings are to be suggested so that the modern reader might visualise what the original reader might have seen. For the same reason it is sometimes better to substitute descriptions for proper place names. At the very least it is felt that some description should accompany the place name since many of them and their associations are unknown to the modern western reader.

Plants mentioned in the text are equally numerous. Falk (1982:97) writes that over twenty-five varieties of trees, shrubs, flowers, herbs, fruits, nuts, spices and nectars are mentioned and their identification is problematic. The botanical references in **Song of Songs** are difficult to identify because like most of the other such references in the Bible, their common names do not necessarily correspond to modern Hebrew usage.

One example is the word *tappuah* which today means apple, but must have meant something else in the Bible since apples were not indigenous

to ancient Israel (Falk, 1982:98). This word appears four times in **Song of Songs** and is translated by Falk (1982:12-51) as follows:

- 1 2:3 - Sweet fruit tree.
- 2 2:5 - Quinces.
- 3 7:9 - Quince.
- 4 8:5 - Quince tree.

Fox (1985:96-117) who also shuns the word "apple" translates *tappuah* in this way:

- 1 2:3 - Apricot tree.
- 2 2:5 - Apricots.
- 3 7:9 - Apricots.
- 4 8:5 - Apricot tree.

Another term pertaining to nature that contains translation difficulties and is used in imagery in different ways is, *kerem* (vineyard).

- 1 In 7:12 it refers to an outdoor site where the lovers meet.
- 2 In 2:15 a reference to a physical site of a different kind because Falk (1982:101) argues that it cannot specifically be a vineyard since it is attached to the proper name *Ein Gedi*. *Ein Gedi* is an oasis or a spring, and the flowers (henna) brought by the man (lover) do not grow on vines. Grober (1980:68) supports this fact and writes that, as a result of *Ein Gedi's* being an oasis the combination of "henna" and "vineyards" is somewhat strange, particularly "as this is the only reference in the OT to such vineyards". Consequently Pope (1977:354) translates the phrase as "the gardens of *Ein Gedi*" and Falk (1982:17) chooses a more succinct version, namely "**the oasis**" (emphasis mine).
- 3 In 1:6 the word *kerem* is used as both physical site and then symbolically as the outward appearance of the woman. I disagree strongly with Falk (1982:101) on this point who views *kerem* (vineyard) as a symbol of female sexuality and that it would then imply that the woman did not guard herself sexually and has had erotic experience. As the woman describes the neglect of her own "vineyard" within the context of working outside in the sun, it

seems obvious that *kerem* here refers to her outward complexion (physical appearance) that is ruined by the sun. Hence her dissatisfaction at being darkened by the sun which is ironically quite the opposite reaction that one would expect from a young girl today. Yet I am willing to concede with Grober (1980:69) that the term "vineyard" has erotic implications and alludes to the woman's sexual charms or desirability elsewhere in the **Song of Songs**. But the implication in 1:6 would still be that the sun has scarred her physical appearance and that is the reason why she considers herself sexually undesirable and unattractive. It is not because she has had previous sexual experience as Falk (1982:101) would suggest!

The garden (*gan*) like the vineyard (*kerem*) recurs intermittently in **Song of Songs** in different ways. Sometimes it is a physical location and sometimes it is an extended metaphor for the woman and her sexuality. Even when it refers to a place it is generally associated with the woman in that it usually also symbolises her (Falk, 1982:102). The various roles played by the garden motif are extensively discussed by Carr (1984:55-60) and he distinguishes between these five patterns:

- 1 The garden as a physical location.
- 2 The garden as paradise regained (Eden)⁴.
- 3 The garden as royal retreat.
- 4 The garden as cultic centre⁵.
- 5 The garden as erotic symbol.

The point to be made is this: when dealing with these terms (vineyard and garden) the translator has to distinguish between the literal meanings and the metaphorical allusions attached to them.

Finally, despite the abundance of nature imagery, metaphors also spring from the realms of artifice (art, craft and architecture) and the military. Grober (1980:75 and 81) refers to these metaphors in terms of precious metals and city imagery. Meyers (1987:213-214) suggests that there are two images that are significant within the sphere of architectural imagery

4 Landy (1979:513-528) wrote a challenging article in this regard entitled "The **Song of Songs** and the Garden Eden".

5 In view of the rejection of cult-mythological mode of interpretation this view of the garden is also rejected.

and I agree. The first is found in 4:4 where the woman's neck is compared to the tower of David built for an armour, and 7:4 where the woman's neck is compared to a tower of ivory and her nose to the tower of Lebanon. Segal (1962:480) regards both these images as grotesque and ascribes a literary function to this grotesquery:

Only as playful banter can be rationally explained the grotesque description by the lover to the damsel of her neck as "like the tower of David built for an armoury", or her nose "as the tower of Lebanon which looketh towards Damascus" ... and similar comparisons of her other limbs.

Although playful banter does have a place in **Song of Songs** it is felt that it is not the intention of the man (lover) here. Such banter could only be interpreted as a series of insults which would be offensive (Fox, 1985:275). Although a number of interpreters⁶ admit that both these images are problematic to the modern reader their use is not so obscure when the common qualities between the referent (tenor) and image (vehicle) are noted and when it is recognised what associations are suggested by the image (vehicle). The most acceptable explanation for the woman's nose would then be to recognise the physical quality of "straightness" that is common to both the nose and the tower, or to view the Hebrew root (*lbn*) of the name "Lebanon" as a platform to suggest "whiteness" and "frankincense", which both share the same root (*lbn*). The qualities suggested would then be that of symmetry, well proportionedness, beauty, elegance, grandeur, pride, fragrance and a lovely colour (pale).

6 To mention a few:

- 1 Carr (1984:159) - "Like a tower of Lebanon ... solid limestone and 10 000 feet high, hardly seems an apt comparison for a lady's nose".
- 2 Fox (1985:273) - "If the image [of the nose like the tower of Lebanon] is taken as **descriptive** of the length of the girl's nose, then it is hyperbolic to the point of being grotesque. If the purpose is merely to describe its straightness, the simile says little and says it obscurely.
- 3 Davidson (1986:127) - "It is doubtful whether many of today's beauties would be flattered by having necks compared to a tower" and Davidson (1986:148) - "Since the tower of Lebanon probably refers to the Lebanon mountain massif which rises to over 9 000 feet, this seems a somewhat exaggerated compliment even in large noses were in Biblical times considered as a sign of beauty - a view for which there is scant evidence".

The image of the neck of the woman is easier to envision since a long neck was considered graceful in Egypt and consequently most probably also in Israel as it forms part of the same region, namely, the Near East (Fox, 1985:130). While length is the common denominator in this image it is not the main point to be recognised. The woman's neck resembles a tower because the necklace made up of rows of beads that she wears, resembles the way in which it is built: with winding courses. The translation "winding courses" (NEB) is an alternative to, "built for an arsenal" (RSV) and "built as a fortress" (JB). Other versions that drop the military overtones are the TEV, "round and smooth" and the NIV, "built with elegance". Despite the architectural possibilities present in this image I agree with Meyers (1987:213) that the military overtones should not be rejected. Even if only on the grounds that a tower is after all, "first and foremost a military structure" (Meyers, 1987:213). Consequently Ginsburg (1970:156) is correct in attributing the qualities of boldness and authority to the image. Apart from projecting beauty and splendour, the image also projects a quality of inner strength and power that truly makes a woman beautiful.

5.4.3 Nature of Metaphors

The strangeness of the metaphors in **Song of Songs** and its effect is probably best captured by this apt introduction:

It is a paradox of human nature that strangeness, like its opposite, often breeds contempt. While the Song has been widely celebrated by Bible scholars and lay audiences alike, there is another mood, of uneasiness, even embarrassment, which sometimes murmurs beneath the din of our applause (Falk, 1982:81).

The note of discontent is reaffirmed by Fox (1985:272) who states that because of the unexpected and sometimes disconcerting nature of metaphors, they have presented a perennial problem to interpreters. This is why Curtis (1988:51) too, argues that there are elements in the metaphors of **Song of Songs** that are culturally distanced from Western sensibilities and understanding, which make many of the images difficult to understand and appreciate. Moreover, Landy (1987:306) praises the metaphors of **Song of Songs** by calling them "wonderfully perplexing,

sometimes surreal in their juxtaposition of extreme **incongruities**, their baroque development, [and] their cultivation of **disproportion**" (emphasis mine). Soulen (1967:183-190) makes an interesting contribution to the interpretation of the metaphors in **Song of Songs** by arguing that they are not "representational" but "presentational". This means that they are not intended to describe physical features by visual comparisons but rather the "arousing of emotions consonant with those experiences by the suitor as he beholds the fullness of his beloved's attributes" (Soulen, 1967:189). What Soulen (1967:183-190) tries to do by arguing that the images are "objective correlatives" in T.S. Eliot's terminology, is to prove that scholarly interpretation of the metaphors of **Song of Songs** is at fault because it is too literalistic in its approach. Falk (1982:83) rightly recognises three defects in this approach:

- 1 Nothing is offered to the modern reader in order to make the metaphors as vivid and as familiar as it is in the original Hebrew.
- 2 By reducing the metaphors to vague evocations of ineffable feelings, the relationship between referent (tenor) and image (vehicle) is deprived of meaning.
- 3 Since the validity of a metaphor is dependent on vaguely similar emotional associations there would be no way to distinguish an apt metaphor from a poor one.

Consequently, Falk (1982:82-85) argues that it is unnecessary and unfortunate to dismiss the metaphors in **Song of Songs** as bizarre, grotesque, comical, unfortunate or even puzzling on two grounds:

- 1 The metaphors in **Song of Songs** express a sophisticated poetic sensibility which can be made accessible through critical analysis and the method of interpretative visualisation. This implies that the translator has to make the leap in association over the gap that exists between object or referent (tenor) and image (vehicle).
- 2 English literature is rife with examples that themselves might qualify for the epithet "bizarre". It is not odd to find a poet such as Ezra Pound comparing the inside of a subway station to a branch of a tree in his famous two line poem "In a station of the Metro":

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough (Pound, 1968:119).

Soulen (1967:183-190) draws criticism also from Fox (1985:275) who argues that "Soulen slights the representational qualities of the metaphors [of **Song of Songs**]". The representational character of the metaphor in **Song of Songs** can be defended on the basis of these two arguments:

- 1 The metaphors take the form of itemised physical description with one-to-one correspondences between the images and the parts of the body, for example "Your eyes are like doves" (4:1). It is as if the poet were seeking to be analytical and precise so as not to heap up images in order to overwhelm the reader with sense-impressions, but rather to seek a particular image for each part of the body.
- 2 The vehicle (image) of the metaphors usually has some sensory feature in common with its tenor (object or referent) such as the length of the neck (suggested by the tower). The image is selected to match the specific item (object or tenor) with which it is used, thus the flock of goats weaving down the slopes of the mountainside is said to be like the woman's hair and not her eyes.

Conversely, it also has to be stated that the full meaning of the metaphor cannot be explained by merely pointing out the sensory resemblance between object (tenor) and image (vehicle). This reaffirms the referential (cognitive) function of metaphor discussed under 3.2.4 which recognises the ability of a metaphor to say something in a way that cannot be said in any other way. Fox (1985:267) explains it in this way:

But a metaphor depends for its meaning - its full contextual meaning with its new and unparaphrasable connotation - not only on the extent of the common ground but also on the "metaphoric distance" between image and referent: that is, the degree of unexpectedness or incongruity between the juxtaposed elements and the magnitude of the dissonance or surprise it produces.

Deckers-Dijs (1991:134-135) add to this perspective the fact that the beauty of the metaphors lie in their ambiguity and that they "onthullen de waarheid in een voortdurend **verhullingsproces** en dwingen zo elke lezer als in een labyrint de waarheid te gaan zoeken" (emphasis mine). She is

therefore correct in asserting that "de grote performatieve kracht van het lied is misschien wel zijn uitbundige metaforisatie" (1991:134).

Finally, in the discussion on the imagery of **Song of Songs** no explicit distinction is made between simile and metaphor. This is partly due to the generality of the discussion (to include as many images as possible) and partly due to the fact that metaphors in the *wasfs* are also formulated as comparisons (Fox, 1985:275). Fox (1985:275-276) further dismisses the distinction between simile and metaphor in **Song of Songs** with this argument:

*There is widespread agreement among modern literary theorists that the classical grammatical distinction between simile and metaphor is not in itself significant with regard to poetic effect. Simile and nominal predication are two ways of formulating metaphor ... most metaphors in Canticles use the *kaph* of comparison, but others lacking it do appear, apparently at random.*

Although this is a viable argument it is felt that this study should only deal with those images which are explicitly metaphors particularly as no discussion on simile is done in chapter 3. It should also be mentioned that the debate on whether metaphor and simile ought to be viewed as completely different figures of speech has probably not yet been settled. Van den Bogaard (1988:120) argues in contrast to Fox (1985:276) that "metaforen en vergelijkingen zijn niet onderling verwisselbaar" as they possess "verschillende pragmatische werking", yet concedes that the distinction between metaphor and simile cannot be too stringent since any theories on these figures were not available to the author of **Song of Songs**. This study will then consider only those metaphors which are formed without the use of the *kaph* as Grober (1980:64-110) has done. Grober (1980:64) identifies and sets out to analyse and to discuss twenty-five metaphors in **Song of Songs**. Grober (1980:64) divides the metaphors into four different groups for the purpose of analysis:

- 1 Metaphors related to the man (lover).
- 2 Metaphors related to the woman (beloved).
- 3 Metaphors present in the man's (lover) address to the woman (beloved).

4 Metaphors present in the woman's (beloved) description of herself.

This study identifies thirty metaphors that will be translated in the order in which they appear in the text, and of those thirty, only five do not occur in the seven Praise songs identified under 5.4.1. Of these five metaphors two appear in poetic units of desire while three appear in poetic units of reminiscence. Finally it should be recognised that because these metaphors carry with them a wealth of symbolism, are of a high literary quality, and consist of a large number of *hapax legomena*, most of them can probably be classified as original metaphors within this highly sophisticated love poem of aesthetic value (Murphy, 1983:5; Landy, 1982:31).

5.4.4 *The symbolism of sexuality*

Despite the important place of eroticism in **Song of Songs** it must be said that interpretation can occasionally go too far. The search for references to genitalia and coitus can become so intense that the subtlety and finesse of the poetry is lost. Fox (1985:298-299) warns that "readers like lovers do not always know how far to go". Love poets tease their readers with sexual double entendre which prompts them to look for more. The reader might then end up seeing sexual allusions everywhere and double entendres might even be interpreted as explicit metaphors for genital organs or sexual intercourse. Fox (1985:299) issues this warning in this regard:

Interpreting too many things as penises and vaginas imposes upon the poem a genital focus that is foreign ... to the Song of Songs. The painstakingly scholarly search for genitalia in effect slights the breadth and variety of the lovers' sexual interests and pleasures.

5.4.4.1 Sexual allusions

Pertinent examples of sexual allusions are the following:

- 1 2:17 (*al hârê bâter* - on the mountains of Bether/on the rugged mountains) - The phrase (*al hârê bâter* is regarded by some interpreters to allude to the breast, vulva or "other bifurcated

- charms of the bride" if *bâter* if translated as "cleft" (Pope, 1977:410).
- 2 4:13 (*š^elâhayîk* - your limbs/body) - The word *š^elâhayîk*, if translated as "conduct" or "channel", is linked with the vagina (Carr, 1984:124; Grober, 1980:95).
 - 3 5:4 (*yâdô min-hahôr* - his hand through the opening) - The phrase *yâdô min-hahôr* ("his hand from/into/through the hole") is construed as a euphemism for "penis". Fox (1986:144) explains how the preposition *min* ("from") can also be translated as "into" if seen from the perspective of the one inside who will see the hand "in from the outside". Pope (1977:517) strongly argues for "hand" as a euphemism for the phallus in view of the term's unmistakable use as such in the manual of discipline of the Essene sect at Qumran. Consequently 5:4a "my love thrust his 'hand' into the hole", is to Pope (1977:519) suggestive of "coital intromission". Despite this very convincing argument it is felt that the contextual evidence proves otherwise. The woman refuses him entrance in 5:3 and then decides to open up the door after all in 5:5. The lovers could not possibly be together in 5:4 for sexual intercourse.
 - 4 7:2 (*š^orrêk* - navel/middle) - The problematic term in this verse is *š^orrêk*. Pope (1977:617), Carr (1984:157) and Goulder (1986:56) agree that this term occurs only in two other places in the OT, namely Ezekiel 16:4 (meaning "umbilical cord") and Proverbs 3:8 (meaning "innerpart of Man" or "flesh"). As a result of a similar Arabic word *sirr* which denotes "secret", many interpreters opt for the word "vulva". Falk (1932:127-128) however, translates the term as "hips" because "English has no word that is not either clinical or pornographic in tone". Fox (1985:159) appropriately asserts that there is no need to refer to a secondary Arabic word when the usual meaning of the Hebrew "navel" is appropriate within the context.
 - 5 7:9 (*ʾappêk* - nose/breath) - Referring to Ugaritic applications Pope (1977:636) chooses to translate the term *ʾappêk* as "vulva". It is felt that such an interpretation is grossly misplaced in view of internal evidence from the CT where the word normally means

"nose" or "nostrils" (Carr, 1984:162). The translation "breath"⁷ is perhaps the most appropriate within the context.

Although I agree with Fox (1985:298) that these five examples do not represent genitalia, it must be said that two pertinent patterns of eroticism do emerge from **Song of Songs**:

- 1 The love expressed explores the lovers' view of sexuality in terms of their whole body and not only the genital areas. Eroticism pervades the whole body. All the parts, for example hair, eyes, nose, mouth, palate, navel, abdomen and legs are charged with sensuality and erotic energy.
- 2 Moreover eroticism extends beyond the body to engulf and permeate the lovers' whole existence (which includes body, soul and spirit) and behaviour. The lovers want to smell each other's sweetness of the mouth, hear each other's voice and embrace and caress in an abundance of touch. There is no separation of the physical and the psychological (emotional) or spiritual. Love is not separated from sex as the one includes and encompasses the other. We have in **Song of Songs** not an experience in hedonism but the expression of an eternal commitment.

Fox (1985:299) aptly captures the nature of the eroticism and sensuality in **Song of Songs** with these words:

Many things happen in love besides sexual intercourse, and we obscure the particularity of these experiences if we reduce them all to veils that conceal sexual intercourse or to symbols that "really" represent coitus. We can recognise that the lush eroticism of these songs is pervasive without seeing channels as vaginas, hands as penises, noses as clitorises, or (heaven help us), a door latch as a "vaginal vestibule and bulbs, along with the bulbospongiosus muscle".

To appreciate the sensuality and eroticism present in **Song of Songs** more fully, Knight (1988:14) introduces this significant view of the Hebrew

7 So translated by Falk (1982), Lloyd-Carr (1984), Davidson (1986), NIV, TEV, RSV and JB.

concept of *nepes* as it is used by the woman in 1:7 to say to the man "my soul loves":

Hebrew nephesh [sic] describes the human as being a whole, a total person ... and here our Hebraic heritage has something unique to offer to Western society, which for many years has been dominated by its Greek heritage. The latter separates the ideal from the actual, heaven from earth, time from eternity, body from soul, male from female, love from sex; this separation has brought about in the West the promiscuous and permissive society that the rest of the world despises (emphasis mine).

Since *nepes* includes the body, soul and spirit, Knight (1988:14) is justified in asserting that *nepes* "implies the presence of the Good Shepherd himself in the human relationship of love". Deckers-Dijs (1991-297) recognizes this dimension in the Hebrew term *nepes* and translates it as "mijn wezen [my being]". Thus, the focus of **Song of Songs** is love and not sex. The sexual is recognized as one of the ways in which love expresses itself in marriage. The delight of the lovers reaches far beyond the sexual aspect only. Although there can be no doubt about the description of sexual encounters between the two lovers in **Song of Songs** it must be emphasized that these descriptions are both subtle and tasteful and neither crass nor explicit (Curtis, 1988:52).

5.4.4.2 Ambiguous imagery

Another very important aspect to be dealt with in this section are a number of double entendres present throughout the whole text as "a primary literary technique" (Segal, 1988:254). It is felt that these phenomena, of which twelve are identified, cannot unequivocally be viewed as metaphors, as they can also be regarded as referring to the literal entity they describe. The possible allusions of these double entendres will be discussed but because they can also be very literal, it is felt that they cannot be treated as metaphors in the process of translating or the product of translation. The discussion of these ambiguities reiterates the truth of Landy's (1983:140) assessment that **Song of Songs** is "enigmatic" by which is meant that many questions about the poem remain unanswered. Ambiguity arouses feelings of ambivalence because

it both conceals and reveals. As a result an enigma ensues in **Song of Songs** about which Landy (1983:140) has this to say:

We never quite know what happens or whether anything happens, and all the anecdotal energy that we devote to the construction of the narrative results either in false solutions, or in frustration. There is no single truth in the poem, only an inexpressible reality. Yet the poem tempts our imaginative, constructive efforts through its prodigality with clues, and the promise of the brilliant fragments of narrative that compose it.

This view is supported by Falk (1982:123) who too argues that the interwoven layers of symbolic meaning in **Song of Songs** cannot be unravelled without rending the fabric of the whole. **Song of Songs** seems to depend on a special kind of logic which is appropriate for expressing the existential paradoxes of the love relationship.

What follows then is a discussion of twelve such cases where doubt and ambiguity is imminent. These double entendres are to be discussed in these five groups:

- 1 Vineyard imagey (1:6, 2:15, 8:12).
- 2 Wildflower imagery (Lily/Lotus) (2:16, 4:5, 6:3).
- 3 Garden imagery (4:16, 5:1, 6:2).
- 4 Mountain imagery (4:6, 8:14).
- 5 Wine image (8:2).

1 Group one

- * **Chapter 1:6** (*karmî sellî* - my own vineyard) - In the first part of the verse "vineyard" is meant literally, while "my vineyard" (with the emphasised possessive) in 6b, can be said to allude to the woman's physique and its beauty. Pope (1977:326) argues that the double determination of *karmî sellî* (my own vineyard) *sellî* must be emphatic which suggests that the woman says "my very own vineyard". Although Fox (1985:102) asserts that "we are hardly to suppose that the girl owned her own vineyard" (which is a viewpoint I agree with), such a possibility cannot be ruled out

completely. I do not agree with the fact that "my vineyard" refers to the woman's sexual organs or virginity (Pope, 1966:326; Falk, 1982:10; Goulder, 1986:13). Fox (1985:102) is correct to argue that in taking "my vineyard" as a reference to genitals is foreign to **Song of Songs** of which the main concern is the total experience of love between the lovers.

- * **Chapter 2:15** (*k^erâmîm* - vineyards and š^e(â)lîm - foxes) - Most interpreters agree that this is a most enigmatic and puzzling verse. Ohman (1988:30) vaguely suggests that it is a reference to sin. Fox (1985:114), however, writes that the following three interpretations are the most commonplace:

- 1 The vineyards represent the woman's feminine charms and the foxes represent any harmful forces.
- 2 The vineyards represent the blossoming love between the two lovers and the foxes any adverse circumstances that may damage their relationship.
- 3 The vineyards represent nubile girls and the foxes lustful youths.

Although I accept the second option which is that of Delitzsch (1885:54), the web of enigma woven around this verse suggests that the authenticity of other possible interpretations cannot summarily be denied.

- * **Chapter 8:12** (*karmî sellî* - my own vineyard) - This verse seems an obvious repetition of the reference in 1:6 as the phrase *karmî sellî* recurs here. The phrase *l^epânay* "before me" is to be interpreted as "in my care" (Fox, 1985:175) and "sufficiently guarded by me" (Pope, 1977:690). I therefore agree with the fact that "vineyard" refers to the woman's whole being or "totality of ... personal and mental endowments" (Pope, 1977:691), yet it is felt that a more literal denotation may also be possible. Because the vineyard can be seen as a metaphorical reference to the woman, the term "thousand" then implies that the woman gives herself wholly to the man whereas "two hundred" refers to the credit her brothers deserve for looking after her until she is married.

2 Group two

- * **Chapter 2:16** (*hâro^{e(h)} basô sannîm* - he feeds among the lilies) - Pope (1977:405) captures the gist of the dilemma evident in this line when he writes "the ambiguities of this line present some delicate problems". One of the major problems is how to translate *ro^{e(h)}* ("feed/graze/browse") - is it the man himself eating or is it his sheep? On the one hand I disagree with Fox's (1985:115) view that the phrase "**certainly** alludes to lovemaking" (emphasis mine) but on the other hand I agree that it may "allude in particular to **kissing**" (emphasis mine). One reason why the phrase cannot refer to lovemaking (as an act of sexual intercourse) is because the marriage takes place only in chapter 3. To infer the act of consummation before the marriage is contrary to the theme of chastity and purity running concurrent with the theme of commitment, loyalty and devotion throughout **Song of Songs**. This issue is discussed more fully under 5.4.5. The phrase does, however, have definite erotic overtones as the lily/lotus with its delicate beauty is associated with both **femininity** in 2:1 and **lips** dropping liquid myrrh in 5:13. Grober (1984:96) goes as far as to say that the "lotus becomes a symbolic image associated with the sensual aspects of womanhood". But still I believe that the lovers' sensuality on that night before the wedding in 2:16-17 is within the loving limits of chastity and purity.

Since the lover is then compared to a buck/stag/gazelle in 2:9 and 2:17, he can here implicitly be seen as a gentle creature nuzzling among and pasturing on the delicate lily/lotus plants which represent the femininity of the woman. The fact that the lily/lotus⁸ is edible (Grober, 1984:99-100) strongly suggests that the reference in 2:6 is to **kissing** only. One has to realise, however, that a strong case for either line of interpretation (transitive: "he feeds his flock" and intransitive: "he browses himself") can be made which means that "in the final analysis, the choice is determined by predilection" (Pope, 1977:406).

8 It is perhaps useful to know that the plant *sô sannâ(h)* "lily/lotus" is in the opinion of Nogah Hareuveni, director of Neot Kedumim (Gardens of Israel), a *narcissus tazetta*, which is a common wild flower (Falk, 1982:114).

* **Chapter 4:5b** (*hâro^(îm) bašôšannîm* - feeding among the lilies) - Grober (1984:101) feels this image is complex and Landy (1983:74) sees it as an example of puzzling imagery. Pope (1977:470) makes the mistake to transfer the image of the lily/lotus as the girl (2:1) into this verse. Grober (1984:101-102) deftly explains how 5:13 and 8:1 present imagery that explains why in this verse the "lotus" is to be viewed as the man's lips and the "fawns" do not represent the man as it does in 2:9 and 2:17. Yet, the multifunctional nature of the clause "which grazes among the lilies" is amply proved by Fox (1985:131) who lists no less than five possible functions:

- 1 It stresses the delicacy of the fawns. (They are pampered in that they are allowed to graze among lilies and not merely on grass.)
- 2 The fragrance of the lilies is reminiscent of the scent of the woman's breast.
- 3 This image gains special erotic significance when read with 5:13 where the beloved's lips are compared to lilies.
- 4 The possibility of the poet intending the reader to imagine the woman with a wreath of lilies framing her breasts is also in this phrase.
- 5 It creates a delicate pastoral image which is that of fawns grazing among lilies.

* **Chapter 6:3** (*hâro^{(e(h))} bašôšannîm* - he feeds among the lilies) - this line is the reverse of 2:16 ("my lover is mine and I am his" has become I am my lover's and my lover is mine") and commentators have strained to find significance in this line (Pope, 1977:557). It is felt that 6:3 is plagued with the same ambiguity and enigma as 2:16 (namely, is the man eating or is his sheep grazing?) with one difference: *ro^{(e(h))}* can now refer to the act of sexual intercourse and not kissing only because the lovers are married. Because the lily is associated with lips (5:13) and also an **edible** plant (Grober, 1984:99-100), it is felt that even in 6:3 the phrase *hâro^(eh) bašôšannîm* alludes to kissing only. I believe the inversion of the woman's expression of mutual belonging, is proof of the change that marriage has brought about within her. She has grown in

maturity and the selfish "my lover is **mine**" has now become the sacrificial "I am my **lover's**".

3 Group three

* **Chapter 4:16** (*gannî* - my garden) and 5:1 (*l^egannî* - to my garden) - It is felt that in the last part of this poetic structure, namely 4:16-5:1, the metaphorical and the real are so enmeshed, that it should be discussed as a double entendre. Although it is true that both 4:16 and 5:1 form part of the extended metaphor of the woman as a garden, it is equally true that the garden functions on two levels: the literal and the figurative. Although the emphasis is on the figurative meaning it is felt that the literal meaning which the garden may serve as a scene where the lovers meet cannot be ruled out. Falk (1982:122) reiterates this fact by writing that "the garden ... functions equally as a metaphor for the beloved and as the setting where the lovers meet". I also agree with the view that the voice in 5:16 is that of a third speaker, possibly the poet himself. His injunction to "be drunk on love (caresses/lovemaking)" is naturally proof that 4:16-5:1 should principally be read metaphorically.

* **Chapter 6:2** (*l^eggannô* - to his garden) - I agree here with Carr (1984:145) that this may refer to a literal garden too. Although the case for a literal reading is stronger in this verse than in 4:16-5:1 (discussed under 3.1 *supra*) the figurative reference must also be assumed. In contrast to "vineyard" it is felt that "garden" refers more exclusively to the sexual charms of the woman (Pope, 1977:555). Finally because "going down to the garden" can refer to so many different aspects of lovemaking and the enjoyment of each other as lovers, a strictly literal translation is to be favoured with 4:16, 5:1 and 6:2.

4 Group four

* **Chapter 4:6** (*har hammôr* - mountain of myrrh and *gib^e(a)t hall^ebônâ* - hills of frankincense). There is a unique uncertainty and ambivalence about the terms *har hammôr* ("mountain of myrrh") and *gib^e(a)t hall^ebônâ* ("hill of frankincense"). Falk

(1982:212) sees these as geographical hills but Pope (1977:472), Carr (1984:188) and Fox (1985:132) point out the improbability of such a reference in view of the fact that these spices were not grown in Israel. Because myrrh is specifically associated with her breasts in 1:13 these hills and mountains can be seen as a reference to the woman's breasts. Moreover, Dillow (1977:77) views this image as a reference to "the proverbial 'Mount of Venus'". Although it is felt that one should opt for the figurative implications, a more literal interpretation is not to be regarded as entirely impossible.

- * **Chapter 8:14** (*hârê b^esâmîm* - mountain of spices) - Here the phrase *hârê b^esâmîm* ("mountain of spices") can once again refer to the woman's breasts or "Mount of Venus" as in 4:6. It is felt that since this verse occurs in the poetic unit of **desire** a figurative reading is to be favoured.

5 Group five

- * **Chapter 8:2b** (*mê^asîs rimônî* - from the juice of my pomegranate) - I feel less strongly than Fox (1985:166) that "pomegranate" refers to the woman's breast. Yet Pope (1977:659) points out that the term *asîs* designates not only "juice/nectar", but is also a poetic term for wine and other intoxicating juices. Not only is wine associated with sensuality in 1:2 but pomegranates are also associated with the woman's sexual charms in 4:13. Ultimately I feel the possibility for a plain literal interpretation should be left open.

As a result of the ambiguity in each of these double entendres, however slight some of them may be, it is felt that all of them must be dealt with as literally as possible in the process of translating them or the product of translation. Even if they are interpreted metaphorically, it must be remembered that they are original metaphors within a poetic (expressive) text, and on that ground require a literal rendering.

5.4.5 Metaphoricity in terms of endearment

The man (lover) uses two terms of endearment when he addresses the woman and both can be regarded as metaphors. The first is the expression *yônâtî* ("my dove") which occurs in 2:14, 5:2 and 6:9. The second is the expression ^a*hotî kallâ(h)* ("my sister, bride") which occurs in 4:9, 4:10 and 5:1.

1 *yônâtî*

Although "dove" is a term of affection it should be recognised that it does not constitute an original metaphor but a stock (standard) one because it has moved from being an innovating and an individual creation to a routine and collective repetition.

This fact is reiterated by Carr (1984:100) who calls the dove the "common symbol of love" and Pope (1977:399) who writes that "the gentleness and amateness of the dove make it a fitting **universal** symbol of love" (emphasis mine). This implies that the translator could choose any of the seven translation equivalents (procedures) discussed under 3.3.2.6 but preferably retain the image. The most satisfying equivalent in this case specifically, in view of its universality (it is not culturally bound), is the first option, namely that of reproducing the same image. It is thus felt that all the Bible⁹ translations consulted for the purpose of this study, translated *yônâtî* successfully with "my dove/"my duif", except the TEV which has replaced the metaphor with a simile ("you are like a dove").

2 ^a*hotî kallâ(h)*

The address "my sister bride" has evoked divergent views. I do not agree with Falk (1982:122) and Fox (1985:135) who see both the terms "sister" and "bride" as metaphors. I believe "bride" is an indication of their marital status after the marriage which takes place in the wedding procession 3:6-11. Carr (1984:119) concurs with this view and adds that the focus of the term is also on the sexual element and its consummation.

9 They are discussed subsequently under 5.5:

1	RSV
2	JB
3	TEV
4	NIV
5	OV
6	NV

It is only subsequent to the poetic unit of 3:6-11 that the man calls the woman his bride. The affectionate epithet "my bride" means exactly what it says and there is no reason to translate it otherwise. The term "sister" is, however, a metaphor of endearment. Carr (1984:121) confirms that this term is well attested as an epithet of endearment in the literature from the Ancient Near East and has nothing to do with family ties. Because this is a dead metaphor it is either to be paraphrased or replaced with a cultural equivalent. It is thus felt that with this term only the TEV and NV renders it successfully with "my sweetheart" and "my beminde" respectively. Personally the terms "darling" and "liefing" is preferred, but that is a matter of personal taste. My own translation for ^a*hoŋ kallâ(h)* would then be "my darling bride" in English and "my liefingsbruid" in Afrikaans.

Finally it should be stated that my view of the lovers' marital status and rejection of all views contrary are unequivocal. It is felt that Falk (1982:122) is erroneous in her statement that 4:9-11 does not "seem to be about marital love" and that Fox (1985:313) cannot be further from the truth in asserting that within **Song of Songs** "sexual intercourse does not consummate marriage". Fox (1985:314-315) eventually concludes that the text does not assume that marriage is a prerequisite for sexual relations. Consequently the sexual ethic and virtue implied is not chastity but only fidelity. Personally it is felt that **Song of Songs** extols and endorses both the virtues of fidelity (commitment) and chastity (purity). I agree wholeheartedly with Knight (1988:5) who asserts that **Song of Songs** cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of OT canon which unequivocally states that "you shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14 - NIV). In 8:12 the woman refers to the credit her brothers as the keepers of her "vineyard" should get, which implies they had to keep her pure. It is only in chapter four (after the wedding ceremony) that the woman commences to describe herself as "a locked garden", that she is addressed as "bride", and that the poet develops the image of the garden as representative of her sexual charms which is to be enjoyed in the act of consummating the marriage (sexual intercourse). Prior to 3:6-11 there is not only no mention of "bride", but there is also no reference to garden imagery as the symbol of coitus. Although Fox (1985:23) furnishes some strong arguments against a marriage relationship, they can all be refuted in this way:

- 1 Although the woman is under the brothers' control in 1:6 it must be recognised that she is married only in 3:6-11.
- 2 In 5:2-6 the man is refused entrance to her room. It is felt that even newlyweds might encounter problems which would lead to this situation that is typical to any marriage.
- 3 The woman might well wish to be a real sister in order to kiss the man openly in 8:1, since in ancient Israel family members were permitted to kiss openly in public but surprisingly (and contrary to contemporary custom in the West) it was unacceptable and in bad taste for married couples (Carr, 1984:166). The woman is therefore expressing a longing for a public expression of her love.
- 4 In 8:8 her betrothal is spoken of not as a future event but as a reminiscent thought.

Finally, it is felt that **Song of Songs** celebrates true and complete love as a divine gift to a man and a woman. The poetic units capture relevant and significant incidents in the experience of two lovers committed to *Yahwe* and each other. These incidents are arranged in a way that traces the development of the relationship from engagement to its consummation in marriage and beyond. The physical and sexual expression of love is seen as appropriate only within the context of a lifelong marriage commitment and many experiences that test and threaten the relationship are also described as examples of struggles and victories over adverse circumstances or situations. Riekert (1983:222) sums up the whole issue of commitment in **Song of Songs** and its effect on love and marriage in this way:

When it [Song of Songs] sings about love between the sexes, Canticles contributes to making marriage relationships love relationships in which people experience the wonder of sexuality as a gift of God.

In marriage, then, man may experience again the goodness of love as the gift of Eden, and enjoy a taste of its perfection that is yet to come in heaven (Webb, 1990:99).

5.5 Bible versions

This section briefly deals with the various Bible translations which are consulted in the process of successfully translating the metaphors of **Song of Songs** for adolescents and for the purposes of evaluation. The reasons for consulting these particular versions are given together with a brief commentary on each. It is interesting to note that 600 years ago the problem that faced the English-speaking world was that there was no translation of the whole Bible. Today the English-speaking world is ironically plagued by the problem that the flood of available translations brings about confusion and conflict to the minds of many (Foster, 1983:8-9).

5.5.1 *Afrikaans versions (Old and New)*

There are only two versions available in Afrikaans (1953 and 1983) and consequently both are consulted. The OV (Ou Vertaling) was completed in 1933 but the revised version appeared in 1953. Bekker (1983:7) regards this translation, particularly with regards to Job (which is also rich in metaphors), as a "gematig-letterlike maar tog soepele oorsetting uit die Hebreeus".

The version that is mostly used both officially and unofficially is the NV (Nuwe Vertaling). The aim of the NV was to accomplish a translation that has kept track with the developments in Afrikaans during recent years and with the results of scientific research.

5.5.2 *Revised Standard Version*

The RSV is chosen as it represents the modern or revised edition of the King James Version prior to the New King James Version. Metzger (1982:28) is correct when he writes that the RSV is actually "still in the making since the RSV Bible committee is an ongoing committee". The first completed edition, and the one used in this study, is, however that of 1952. One of the most important reasons for choosing the RSV is because it is felt it is one of the most popular versions in the RSA together with the NIV and the TEV. In this regard Bekker (1983:8) states that "'n sekere

teken van sy (RSV) gewildheid is die al groter wordende aantal kommentare wat die RSV as basis gebruik".

5.5.3 *Jerusalem Bible*

The JB was published in 1966 and is the standard Roman Catholic English translation in the RSA. Foster (1983:116) is also very positive of the JB in that he rates its accuracy and beauty as "fair", and its clarity as "good". In translating the JB an eclectic textual basis was used. The Masoretic text as well as the LXX (Septuagint) was used for the OT and the whole Bible was compared to its French predecessor **La Bible de Jerusalem**. Kubo and Specht (1985:131) perspicaciously point out that the feature that makes this translation valuable is "the copious informative and instructive notes".

5.5.4 *Today's English Version*

I agree with Bekker (1983:5) that the fact that the TEV (Good News Bible) is the flagship of dynamic-equivalence (one of the most popular methods of translating), necessitates its inclusion in the study as one of the versions to be consulted. Bekker (1983:10) calls the TEV the pride of the Nida-School but also warns that its literary and poetic sections create problems. Foster (1983:102-103) rates the TEV exactly the same as the JB. Despite legitimate criticism that can be levelled at the TEV it must be admitted that it is an honest attempt by skilled translators to make the Word of God come alive to modern man in simple and meaningful language.

5.5.5 *New International Version*

The NIV is included for its wide acceptability (Bekker, 1983:5). Brachtler (1982:152) aptly captures the success of its publication in this way:

Its reception has been nothing short of spectacular. By December 1978 over 1,200,000 copies had been sold, and it seems reasonable to assume that in time this translation will replace the King James Bible in private and church usage among evangelical conservatives.

Its international acceptability and comprehensibility also prompted the Gideons to place it in hotels and other public places as alternative to the KJV. Foster (1983:111) too, thinks very highly of the NIV and rates its accuracy and beauty as "good", and its clarity as "excellent". It is interesting to note that in terms of these three criteria (accuracy, beauty and clarity) Foster (1983:127) considers the following versions to be the best:

- 1 KJV (King James Version) in terms of **beauty**.
- 2 NASB (New American Standard Bible) in terms of **accuracy**.
- 3 NIV (New International Version) in terms of **clarity**.

Finally, the NIV can be regarded as the product of careful and conscientious scholarship which might have this effect expressed by Brachter (1982:165):

It is to be hoped that at long last the NIV will once and for all lay to rest the still widespread belief that the King James Version is the original Word of God and that any translation that differs from it is a perversion, a devil's masterpiece produced by people with a low view of Scripture.

5.6 The metaphors (comparison, translation and discussion)

In this section the thirty identified metaphors are furnished as they appear in the original Hebrew text of *Biblia Hebraica (BH)*. Subsequent to the Hebrew metaphor, a list of the metaphors as they have been translated in the consulted translations will then be rendered in order to make a comparison. This will be followed by a personal Afrikaans translation and a personal English translation as well as a discussion of the particular metaphor.

In my personal translations the two principles that took precedence over any other consideration are the following:

- 1 In view of the fact that all the metaphors are original and within the context of an expressive (artistic/aesthetic) text, with the exception of those discussed under 5.4.5, they are to be translated literally. Consequently the referent (tenor) and especially the image (vehicle) is to be retained.
- 2 In view of the fact that adolescents are not informed readers as a collective socio-intellectual group and reveal a weakness in the area of word meanings, the terminology (vocabulary) employed in the TT must be of such an intelligible nature that they will be able to optimally respond to the translated metaphors. Consequently all abstruse, esoteric and totally unfamiliar terms are to be avoided.

In order to resolve the ambiguities and uncertainties as to which word to use when confronted with obscure and problematic Hebrew terms, a third principle is applied. This principle is the application of a global or contextual approach in the interpretation and analysis of metaphors. Kruger (1991:289-298) expounds both the importance and advantages in such a global approach when translating metaphors in a literary text. The conclusion made by Kruger (1991:295) is that such metaphors should be translated *sensu stricto* which is essentially the same conclusion reached under 3.3.2.6. If a word in classical text is obscure, however, and the translator is confronted with a possibility of two or three equally valid options in the TL, the main thrust of the metaphor as is evident from the context should serve as a guideline as to which the best option is. The contextual issues considered in this study are the following:

- 1 The main thrust of the cluster of metaphors.
- 2 The paradigm of the poetic unit.
- 3 The major themes of **Song of Songs** as a whole.

Because translators of the OT "frequently come across a type of difficulty which does not normally trouble translators or works in modern languages: the meaning of several words in biblical [sic] Hebrew is insufficiently known" (Albrektson, 1978:152), it is important to apply a contextual approach. The translator of the OT is not only plagued by words of uncertain or unintelligible meaning but also by words which

have no exact or direct equivalent in the lexical stock of the TL. A classic example is the term *nepeš*, traditionally translated as "soul" (see discussion under 5.4.4.1). Albrektson (1978:156) agrees with Knight (1988:14) that in the West the soul is seen in opposition to the body (a dichotomy foreign to the ancient Israelite view of man and his nature) which implies that to translate *nepeš* with "soul" might be misleading. The Swedish Bible of 1917 with its use of fifty different Swedish words to render this Hebrew term in spite of the translators' express ambition of preserving verbal consistency" (Albrektson, 1978:157), proves the problematic nature of the issue.

5.6.1 Metaphor 1 (1:3b)

1 Original Hebrew: BH -

שֶׁמֶן הַיִּרְקָה שֶׁמֶן

2 Comparison of consulted translations

Afrikaans:

OV: U naam is soos salf wat uitgegiet is.

NV: Jou naam is suiwer parfuum.

English:

RSV: Your name is oil poured out.

JB: Your name is oil poured out.

TEV: There is a fragrance about you, the sound of your name recalls it.

NIV: Your name is like perfume poured out.

3 Personal translations

Afrikaans:

Jou naam is 'n geurige* parfuum!

English:

Your name is a fragrant* perfume!

* Alternative version: kosbare/precious.

4 Discussion

Metaphor 1

The word *tûraq* is both obscure and problematic (Pope, 1977:300), and can either reflect the name of a precious and scarce cosmetic oil (Carr, 1984:74) or it is the amended form of *mûraq*, "poured" (Fox, 1985:98). Falk (1982:109) points out that it (*tûraq*) can also mean "green". If *tûraq* is seen as a Ho¹fal (causative passive) of *rwq* or *riq* then Koehler and Baumgartner (1985:889) gives the meaning as "empty out" or "pour forth". Because *tûraq* can refer to both the fragrance of oil poured out and to the name of an expensive cosmetic oil in the Near East, both "fragrant" and "precious" are employed in the translation. I agree with Falk (1982:109) that the use of "oil" or the name *tûraq* might elicit inappropriate associations in modern readers and opted for "perfume" rather than terms such as "deodorant", "lavender" or even - as Davidson (1986:104) jokingly muses - "Brut for men"! It is important to note that in the Hebrew culture a person's name was thought to be synonymous with his character. The name represented the person (Curtis, 1988:60). This metaphor consequently also expresses the woman's admiration of the man and his character. All the translations consulted retain the image with varying degrees of success except the TEV which paraphrases it. The OV and NIV mould the image in the form of a simile, however. It is felt that the terms "parfuum/perfume/fragrance" used by the OV, NIV and TEV respectively are more appropriate for teenagers than "salf/oil" of the OV, RSV and JB.

5.6.2 Metaphor 2 (1:13)

1 Original Hebrew: BH -

צֶלוֹר הַפָּר | דּוֹדִי לִי
בֵּין שְׂדֵי יָלִין:

2 Comparison of consulted translations:

Afrikaans:

OV: My beminde is vir my 'n bossie mirre wat tussen my borste rus.

NV: Die man wat ek liefhet, is vir my 'n sakkie mirre wat tussen my borste lê.

English:

RSV: My beloved is to me a bag of myrrh, that lies between my breasts.

JB: My Beloved is a sachet of myrrh lying between my breasts.

TEV: My lover has the scent of myrrh as he lies upon my breasts.

NIV: My lover is to me a sachet of myrrh resting between my breasts.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

My liefing - is 'n sakkie pot-pourri wat naglank tussen my borste rus!

English:

My love - is a sachet of spices spending the night between my breasts!

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 2

Môr ("myrrh") is an aromatic gum from the bark of a tree that flourishes in Arabia - and was used as an exotic perfume to enhance the desirability of the person who used it (Pope, 1977:350; Koehler & Baumgartner, 1985:562). Consequently this image carries with it connotations of intimate closeness, attractiveness, delight and even intoxication. Because of the lack of resonance the relatively unfamiliar term "myrrh" might have for adolescents, the term "spices" is preferred. In Afrikaans the term "kruie" or even "pot pourri" could be favourably received. Fox (1985:106) rightly asserts that *yâlîn* literally means to "spend the night" and not merely "lie" as the root *lîn* signifies "to pass the night" or "spend the night" (Koehler & Baumgartner, 1985:481). The word *ṣ^erôr* denotes a bundle, pouch, sachet or any similar object that serves as a small bag (Pope, 1977:350). Hebrew women usually wore little bags filled with perfume and aromatic spices around their necks (Ginsburg, 1970:138). I agree with Curtis (1988:65) that this metaphor indicates that the lover is in the woman's thoughts as pervasive and delightful as a sweet-smelling perfume. The metaphor is also indicative of the woman's desire which

will be fulfilled physically subsequent to their wedding day. All the consulted translations successfully retained the image except the TEV, and it is felt that the word "rus" of the OV is more appropriate than the "lê" of the NV, just as the word "rest" of the NIV is more faithful to the original Hebrew than the "lies" of the RSV or "lying" of the JB. The word "sachet" employed by the JB and NIV also seems more apt in the romantic context of the metaphor than the word "bag" employed by the RSV.

5.6.3 Metaphor 3 (1:14)

1 *Original Hebrew:* BH -

אֶשְׁכֵּל הַכֶּפֶר | דֹּרֵי לִי

בְּכֶרְמִי עֵין גִּדִּי:

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: My beminde is vir my 'n tros henna blomme in die wingerde van Engedi.

NV: Die man wat ek liefhet, is vir my 'n bos blomme uit die wingerde van En-Gedi.

English:

RSV: My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of En-ge'di.

JB: My Beloved is a cluster of henna flowers among the vines of Engedi.

TEV: My lover is like the wild flowers that bloom in the vineyards at Engedi.

NIV: My lover is to me a cluster of henna blossoms from the vineyards of En Gedi.

3 *Personal Translations*

Afrikaans:

My liefing - is 'n bossie bloeisels vanuit 'n oasetuin!

English:

My love - is a bouquet of blossoms from the gardens of an oasis!

4 Discussion

Metaphor 3

The term *hakkôper* refers to "henna/camphire/cypress" which is a wild shrub that still grows on the coastal plain and around Jericho and has thick bluish-yellow flowers that resemble a bunch of grapes (Pope, 1977:352; Koehler & Baumgartner, 1985:453). Consequently the term "blossoms" is used in the translation, not only because the woman refers to the fragrance and beauty of the henna blossoms but also because the specific plant terminology bears no specific significance to the modern adolescent reader. The term *eškol* regularly denotes a cluster of grapes, but as various translators and commentators show, it is a word that is here used for a collection of flowers (Pope, 1977:352). Finally, because *Ein Gedi* was the most important oasis in the Judean desert and not known for vineyards (Grober, 1980:68), I opted for "the gardens of an oasis". Because unknown place names or names that would not have any resonances with today's adolescents are either omitted or replaced with a word that expresses what the name represents throughout the translations of the thirty metaphors "oasis" was chosen for *Ein Gedi*. All the consulted translations successfully retain the image although the TEV moulds it in the form of a simile. The NIV and NV are the only translations that successfully indicate that the blossoms are "from" and not "in" *Ein Gedi*. The collective word "bossie" is favoured above "ruiker" in my own Afrikaans translation for its alliterative effect.

5.6.4 Metaphor 4 (1:15c)

1 Original Hebrew: BH -

עֵינֵיךָ יוֹנִים:

2 Comparison of consulted translations

Afrikaans:

OV: U oë is soos duiwe!

NV: Jou oë is duiwe.

English:

RSV: Your eyes are doves.

JB: Your eyes are doves.

TEV: How your eyes shine with love!

NIV: Your eyes are doves.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Jou oë - is die van duiwe!

English:

Your eyes - are those of doves!

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 4

I agree with Falk (1982:112) and the KJV (King James Version) that the woman's eyes are likened to the eyes of doves and not to the dove as a whole. Many commentators have made divergent suggestions on the common denominator between the woman's eyes and a dove (Pope, 1977:356). Although the common ground between the object (tenor) and the image (vehicle) may be obscure, aspects such as softness, delicacy, gentleness, purity, innocence and reticence seem quite appropriate and apt. Nee (1966:33) explains, however, how the eyes of a dove can see only one thing at a time, which signifies a singleness of purpose. This suggests that the woman has a whole-hearted commitment toward, and a devoted admiration for her lover only. All the consulted translations except the TEV retain the image, but choose the dove, and not its eyes, as the image (vehicle) in the metaphor. The OV moulds the image into a simile, however.

5.6.5 Metaphor 5 (2:1a)

1 *Original Hebrew:* BH -

אֲנִי־הַבְּצֵלֶת הַשָּׁרוֹן

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: Ek is 'n narsing van Saron.

NV: Ek is affodil van Saron.

English:

RSV: I am a rose of Sharon.

JB: I am the rose of Sharon.

TEV: I am only a wildflower in Sharon.

NIV: I am a rose of Sharon.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Ek is 'n veldblom in kusvlaktesand!

English:

I am a wildflower in coastal plains*!

* Alternative version: sandy soil.

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 5

Falk (1982:114-115) convincingly points out that the terms *h^abaselet* and *sôsannat* do not refer to "rose" and "lily/lotus" respectively, but to common wildflowers known as *tulipa sharonenses* and *narcissus tazetta*. Pope (1977:368) and Grober (1980:103-104), however, show by reference to other Near Eastern literature how the second flower can be either a lotus or a lily. Identification of the first one remains problematic.

The various names proposed for these two Hebrew terms are "rose", "asphodel", "crocus", "iris", "anemone" and "wildflower". Koehler and Baumgartner (1985:67) give the word "ashpodel" for *h^abašelet* and "lily" for *šûšan*. Since the exact nature of the flower is unknown, "wildflower" is chosen for the first. "Wildlily" is chosen for the second as the name is familiar to contemporary adolescents in this country but it must be noted that the lily in this country differs from the lily in the text. The important point in this metaphor is that the woman is not involved in selfpraise. She is modestly reflecting upon herself as merely one among the many wildflowers. This does not imply, however, that Curtis (1988:67) is making an erroneous assumption in suggesting that 2:1 is proof of the fact that the woman has developed a more positive self-image. Although the woman is modest she is not offering an apology as in 1:5-6 anymore. This affirms the truth that love and praise are able to transform a person's opinion of himself, and even person's appearance. I therefore agree with Knight (1988:16) who describes the woman as "radiant" with love because her self-respect has increased. The increase in self-respect is induced by the lover's love and expression of admiration. The word *šârôn* is not only the proper name of the low coastal plain known for its sandy soil, but it is also a word in the generic sense for "plain" (Pope, 1977:367). Consequently I opt for "coastal plains" or "sandy soil" in my own translation. All the consulted translations retain the image but only the TEV truthfully renders *h^abašelet* as "wildflower".

5.6.6 Metaphor 6 (2:1b)

1 Original Hebrew: BH -

שׁוֹשַׁן הַעֲמָקִים :

2 Comparison of consulted translations

Afrikaans:

OV: 'n Lelie van die dale.

NV: 'n Lelie van die laagtes.

English:

RSV: A lily of the valleys.

JB: The lily of the valleys.

TEV: A lily in the mountain valley.

NIV: A lily of the valleys.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

'n Wilde lelie in diepvalleigrond!

English:

A wild lily in deep valley earth!

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 6

Hâ^(a)mâqîm is the plural with the article of *êmeq* and designates a deep valley or a plain situated low (Koehler & Baumgartner, 1985:716). It is the poet's intention to point out that these wildflowers grow in a variety of locales (Falk, 1982:115) and consequently "sandy soil" and "deep earth" is utilised in my personal translations. All the consulted translations retained the image but it is felt that the "laagtes" of the NV is less successful for adolescents than the "dale" of the OV as the latter has a more romantic ring to it while the former has echoes of depression. Neither "laagtes" nor "dale" is completely satisfactory, however. The English translations all manage to reflect the self-deprecating nature of the woman's description of herself by using "a lily" rather than "the lily" except the JB. In this regard the TEV is the most successful with its "I am only a wildflower ... a lily".

5.6.7 *Metaphor 7 (2:4b)*

1 *Original Hebrew:* BH -

וְדָגְלִי עָלַי אֶתְקַבֵּה:

2 *Comparison of consulted translations.*

Afrikaans:

OV: Sy vaandel oor my was die liefde.

NV: Hy straal van liefde vir my.

English:

RSV: His banner over me was love.

JB: The banner he raises over me is love.

TEV: Raised the banner of lover over me.

NIV: His banner over me is love!

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Sy vaandel oor my is liefde*!

English:

His banner over me is love*!

* Alternative version:

Hy staar na my met liefde!

His gaze upon me is love.

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 7

The word *diglô* presents semantic and interpretive problems. The word indicates "banner", "ensign" or "standard", but Carr (1984:91) feels that the military overtones are misplaced in this context. Pope (1982:376), Carr (1984:91) and Fox (1985:108) take the root *dgl* and connect it with the Akkadian *dagâlu* ("see", "look", "gaze"). Koehler and Baumgartner (1985:203) also render two possible meanings, namely "banner" and "see" for the root *dgl*. This implies that the man's intent and desire towards the girl is love. It is perhaps important to note that this love is a committed love which desires the best for the other partner even at the cost of one's

own well-being. It is, as Knight (1988:17) phrases it: "There is none of what Jesus refers to when he declares: 'I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart' (Matthew 5:28)". Both interpretations and translations appear to be acceptable and both possibilities are offered in my own translation. If one chooses to opt for "gaze" rather than "banner" it must be kept in mind that it is really no longer a metaphor. All translations retain the image and only the NV opts for the alternative translation: "hy straal van liefde vir my".

5.6.8 Metaphor 8:4:1c-d)

1 Original Hebrew: BH -

עֵינֶיךָ יוֹנִים
מִבְּעַד לְצִמְתְּךָ

2 Comparison of consulted translations

Afrikaans:

OV: U oë is soos duiwe deur u sluier heen.

NV: Jou oë is duiwe agter jou sluier.

English:

RSV: Your eyes are doves behind your veil.

TEV: How your eyes shine with love behind your veil.

NIV: Your eyes behind your veil are doves.

3 Personal translations

Afrikaans:

Jou oë - is die van duiwe agter jou sluier!

English:

Your eyes - are those of doves behind your veil!

4 Discussion

Metaphor 8

Much of this image is discussed under Metaphor 4 but the added phrase, *mibba'ad l'ešammâtêk* ("behind your veil") alludes to the bashfulness of the girl and the attraction between the two lovers. It also underscores the aspect of marriage because women would normally only wear a veil as either a bride or a prostitute (Carr, 1984:112). This also supports the view that 3:6-11 represents the wedding procession (see 5.3) and that 4:1 is the start of their first wedding night. All the translations consulted retain the image except the TEV. The OV moulds it into a simile, however. All translations in this instance also take the image (vehicle) to be the dove as a whole and not its eyes only.

5.6.9 Metaphor 9 (4:11a-b)

1 Original Hebrew: BH -

נִפְתַּת תְּטַפְּנָה שְׂפִתוֹתַי כֶּלֶה
דְּבַשׁ וְחֶלֶב תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנִי

2 Comparison of consulted translations

Afrikaans:

OV: Heuningstroop drup van u lippe af, bruid, heuning en melk is onder u tong.

NV: Jou lippe proe soos heuningstroop, my bruid, jou tong soos heuning en dikmelk.

English:

RSV: Your lips distil nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue.

JB: Your lips, my promised one, distil wild honey. Honey and milk are under your tongue.

TEV: The taste of honey is on your lips, my darling; your tongue is milk and honey for me.

NIV: Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb my bride; milk and honey are under your tongue.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

My bruid! Jou lippe - drup heuningstroop met heuning en melk onder jou tong!

English:

My bride! Your lips - drip nectar with honey and milk under your tongue!

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 9

This metaphor refers to the sweetness of their kissing. The word *nôpet* refers to "nectar" or "liquid honey" from the honeycomb as distinct from *d^ebaš* which is "honey". The honey and the milk that are under the tongue are standard symbols of richness and fruitfulness (Carr, 1984:122). All the consulted versions retain the image with varying degrees of success except the TEV which gives a subtle paraphrase and the NV which employs a simile but it is also felt that it strays a little too far from the original Hebrew by rendering *tiṭôp^enâ(h)* as "proe" rather than "drup". Koehler and Baumgartner (1985:613) render the root *ntp* as "drip" or "trickle".

5.6.10 *Metaphor 10(4:12a)*

1 *Original Hebrew: BH -*

גִּן וְעֵץ אֶחָד
כָּלָה

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: My suster-bruid is 'n geslote tuin .

NV: My beminde bruid is 'n tuin wat toegemaak is.

English:

RSV: A garden locked is my sister, my bride.

JB: She is a garden enclosed my sister, my promised bride.

TEV: My sweetheart, my bride, is a secret garden.

NIV: You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

My liefingsbruid! Jy is - 'n tuin toegemaak*

English:

My darling bride! You are - a garden enclosed*.

* Alternative version: geheime tuin/a secret garden.

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 10

This metaphor refers to the woman's virginity, sexual exclusivity and modesty (Carr, 1984:123; Davidson, 1986:131). The term *nâ'âl* designates "locked", "bolted" or "closed". The word "closed" is preferred because of the pastoral nature of the image. Nee (1966:91) points out how a garden is not only used for agricultural purposes but also for beauty and pleasure. Although there are trees, they are not for timber and although there is fruit it is not for commercial produce. The purpose of the garden is enjoyment and this idea underscores the truth that sexuality as God intends it is both beautiful and a pleasure. All the translations retained the image with varying degrees of success but it is felt that the JB and OV are artistically the most pleasing with "garden enclosed" and "geslote tuin" respectively. The TEV with its "secret garden" is also most effective with regard to teenagers. It is only felt that "secret" may perhaps be seen as being a little too far removed from the Hebrew term *nâ'ûl* and consequently "secret" is suggested as an alternative version.

5.6.11 *Metaphor 11 (4:12bi)*

1 *Original Hebrew: BH*

גַּל מְעֻלָּה

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: 'n Geslote bron.

NV: 'n Tuin met 'n muur om.

English:

RSV: A garden locked.

JB: A garden enclosed.

TEV: A walled garden.

NIV: You are a spring enclosed.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

'n Versteekte waterbron.

English:

A spring hidden.

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 11

Many modern translations have taken *gan* for *gal* as *gal* is a little obscure. In the OT *gal* can mean either a "heap of stones" or "a wave of water" (Grober, 1980:83; Koehler & Baumgartner, 1985:181). Pope (1977:488) notes how the word "spring" or "fountain" are also employed for *gal* although "fountain" more properly belongs to *ma'yân* Metaphor 12. The term "pool" is also accepted by taking the Ugaritic root *gl* ("cup") which then suggests a "bowl-shaped pool". The term "spring" is preferred as it is in keeping with the "living" or "moving" water rather than "still"

water, in this extended cluster of metaphors found in 4:12-15. For artistic effect the term "hidden" is utilised rather than repeating "closed" for the Hebrew term *nâ'ûl* that is repeated. This metaphor refers to the intimacy of the woman's sexuality in marriage. Of the English translations consulted, only the NIV opts for "spring" and not "garden" as a translation to *gal*. Of the Afrikaans versions, the OV does not translate *gal* as "garden" again. Consequently it is felt that the NIV and OV are the more successful translations in this regard.

5.6.12 *Metaphor 12 (4:12bii)*

1 *Original Hebrew:* BH -

מַעְיָן סָתוּם :

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: 'n Verseëlde fontein.

NV: 'n Fontein wat afgekamp is.

English:

RVS: A fountain sealed.

JB: A sealed fountain.

TEV: A private spring.

NIV: A sealed fountain.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

'n Verseëlde fontein*.

English:

A fountain sealed*.

* Alternative version: 'n Privaatfontein/A private fountain.

4 Discussion

Metaphor 12

The term *ma'yân* ("fountain") alludes to feminine sexuality (Fox, 1985:137). The verb *hâtûm* is used for the sealing of a document for purposes of authentication in I Kings 31:8 (Carr, 1984:125). All the consulted translations retain the image. The TEV renders it a "private" spring which again is effective with regard to teenagers but can perhaps be construed as a little too far removed from the Hebrew term *hâtûm*. Consequently "a private spring/'n privaate fontein" is suggested as an alternative version. The only problem with the term "verseëlde/sealed" of the OV, RSV and NIV is perhaps that it might give the impression that the fountain is silent and not blowing, while the truth is that the fountain is enclosed so as to allow only the lover (man) and thus ensure privacy. It is felt that the "verseëlde fontein" of the OV is more satisfying as a result of its brevity than the "fontein wat afgekamp is" of the NV. This metaphor also refers to the exclusivity of the woman's sexuality and is last in the cluster of three metaphors in 4:12. The whole thrust of this cluster of metaphors is to praise the chastity of the women.

5.6.13 Metaphor 13 (4:13)

1 Original Hebrew: BH -

שֶׁלְתֵיךְ^a פְּרִיטִים רְמוּנִים עִם פְּרִי מִגְדִּים
כִּפְרִים עִם-נֶרְדִּים:

2 Comparison of consulted translations

Afrikaans:

OV: U spruite is 'n park van grante met kostelike vrugte, henna-blomme met nardus.

NV: Jou liggaam is 'n lushof, granaatbome met keurige vrugte, hennastruik saam met nardus.

English:

RVS: Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard,

JB: Your shoots form an orchard of pomegranate trees, the rarest essences are yours.

TEV: There the plants flourish. They grow like an orchard of pomegranate-trees and bear the finest fruits. There is no lack of henna and nard,

NIV: Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with choice fruits, with henna and nard.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Jou ledemate* - open 'n lushof van granaatbome: met feestelike vrugte tussen bloeisels, met gesogte parfuim.

English:

Your limbs* - open a paradise of pomegranates: with festive fruit among blossoms, with rare perfume.

* Alternative version: Jou sjarne/Your charms.

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 13

The term *š^elâhayîk* has been a continual stumbling block to translators and commentators. The term is commonly accepted to be the equivalent of "branches" or "tendrils". Koehler and Baumgartner (1985:976) are also uncertain about this term and suggest the meaning "womb" along with "channels" and "shoots". Consequently the word has been translated as "plants" (NIV and TEV) and "shoots" (JB and RSV). Fox (1985:137) argues that the term *š^elâhîm* means "irrigation channels" in Mishnaic Hebrew. There is, however, no precedent in the OT itself for this term (Grober, 1980:95). It is felt that the JPSV (Jewish Publication Society Version) and Falk (1982:33) interprets the term correctly by translating it with "limbs". Therefore, the terms "liggaam" and "body" might also be considered appropriate if "ledemate" and "limbs" appear too clinical. In my translation the verb "open" is added to capture the meaning "send out" or "reach over a distance" that the root of the verb *šlh* has. The

alternative term "charms", as suggested by Grober (1980:98), seems equally acceptable in view of the obscure meaning of the term. This term is at the beginning of 4:13 and ushers in the first example of an extended metaphor in **Song of Songs**. Although all the consulted translations retain the image it is felt that the TEV and NIV are the more successful of the English versions and the "jou liggaam is 'n lushof granaatbome" of the NV far more satisfying than the "u spruite is 'n park van granate" of the OV. The TEV does mould part of the image in the form of a simile, however. In my personal translations the terms "feestelike vrugte" and "festive fruit" are employed for alliterative effect rather than "keurige vrugte" (NV) and "treasured fruit" (NIV) respectively. It is felt that the terminology of the NV, TEV and NIV are the most effective or adolescents as the "shoots" of the RSV and JB may be relatively unfamiliar while the "spruite" of the OV may even be more obscure.

5.6.14 *Metaphor 14 (4:14)*

1 *Original Hebrew:* BH -

נָרְדֻּ וְכַרְפֹּם קִנְיָה וְקִנְמֹן עִם כָּל-עֵצִי לְבוֹנָה
מֵר וְאַהֲלֹת עִם כָּל-רֹאשִׁי בְּשָׁמִים:

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: Nardus en saffraan, kalmoes en kaneel, met allerhande wierookstruik, mirre en allewee, met allerhande kostelike speserye.

NV: Nardus en saffreen, kalmoes en kaneel saam met elke soort lekkerruik-kruie, mirre en aalwyn saam met al die beste lekkerruik-kruie.

English:

RVS: Nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all chief spices.

JB: Nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all the incense-bearing trees; myrrh and aloes, with the subtlest odours.

TEV: Of saffron, calamus and cinnamon, or incense of every kind. Myrrh and aloes grow there with all the most fragrant perfumes.

NIV: Nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with every kind of incense tree, with myrrh and aloes and all the finest spices.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Saffraanstruik, suikerriet en spesery: met elke soort welriekende boom.
Eksotiese parfuim en vetplant: met al die edelste kruie!

English:

Shrubs of saffron, sweetcane and cinnamon bark: with all the fragrant trees! Exotic perfume and succulents! With all the finest spices!

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 14

The object (tenor) of this metaphor is implicit and the same as in metaphor 13, namely the woman's limbs (body) or charms.

There are a profusion of exotic and foreign names for various spices and perfumes in this metaphor in contrast to the names of flowers and fruit in the previous one. Of the nine types of spices and perfumes mentioned, three grow in Israel (*b^ešāmîm* - balsam, *koper* - henna, *karkôm* - saffron), three had to be imported at high cost from countries such as Arabia, India and China (*l^ebônâ* - frankincense, ^a*hâlôt* - aloe, *nêrd* - nard and there is doubt about whether the last tree mentioned ever grew in Israel (*Môr* - myrrh, *qinnâmôn* - cinnamon, *qânê* - cane). The abundance of spice and perfume names reflect the intensity and fullness of the lovers' feelings. The fruit, flowers, spices and perfumes in both Metaphors 13 and 14 serve as symbols of rarity and beauty for the woman. Consequently Grober (1980:99) is correct to say that "despite the care taken to give the names of different shrubs and despite the orderly juxtaposition of the plants mentioned therein, it soon becomes apparent that the intention is **not to describe a real garden**" (emphasis mine). This is then a fantasy garden of rare, exotic and precious plants, flowers, spices and perfumes. Consequently, in my personal translations, foreign names are, as far as possible, either replaced with a descriptive word as, for example, "exotic

perfume" for "nard", or a descriptive word was added to enhance familiarity, as for example "shrubs of saffron". All the consulted translations retain the image of a spice garden. The JB uses the unfortunate term "odours" and it is felt the NV is too pedestrian with its repetitive use of "lekkerruik-kruie" while the OV use an unnecessary unfamiliar word "alewee" instead of "aalwyn".

5.6.15 *Metaphor 15 (4:15a)*

1 *Original Hebrew - BH*

מַעְיָן־יָאֵל בְּגַנִּים

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: U is 'n fontein van die tuine.

NV: Daar is 'n fontein in my tuin.

English:

RVS: A garden fountain.

JB: Fountain that makes the gardens fertile.

TEV: Fountains water the garden.

NIV: You are a garden fountain.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Jy is - 'n fontein vir tuin op tuin!

English:

You are - a fountain for many gardens!

4 Discussion

Metaphor 15

The phrase *ma'yân gannîm* literally means "a fountain of gardens" (Pope, 1977:495). Fox (1985:138) argues that it refers to the fact that this is a fountain of the sort found in gardens which implies that the woman is not an exposed public fountain but an enclosed and private one. Although this is true as a general statement I believe that the cluster of metaphors in 4:15 is intended to emphasise the woman's reservoir of creativity and love (Reese, 1983:231). Grober (1980:86) too, sees an antithetical relationship between the cluster of metaphors in 4:12 which concentrate on the woman's exclusivity and privacy, and 4:15 which concentrates on the woman's creativity, vivacity and abundance. Consequently I opt for "a fountain for many gardens". Of all the English consulted versions only the JB opts for more than a literal translation by adding some sense "fountain that makes the gardens fertile". Of the Afrikaans versions the OV with its "fontein van die tuine" is more satisfying as it is more suggestive of the abundance of the woman's love than the "'n fontein in my tuin" of the NV. The OV and NIV are the only versions that for the sake of clarity insert who the tenor of the metaphor is (You - the woman).

5.6.16 Metaphor 16: (4:15b)

1 Original Hebrew: BH -

בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים

2 Comparison of consulted translations

Afrikaans:

OV: 'n Put met lewende water.

NV: 'n Put met borrelende water.

English:

RSV: A well of living water.

JB: Well of living water.

TEV: Streams of flowing water.

NIV: A well of flowing water.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

'n Put met borrelende* water!

English:

A well of bubbling* water!

* Alternative version: vloeiende/flowing.

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 16

Carr (1984:126) refers to the importance of the water in the well being "living" water which means it was running or flowing of its own accord. The NV successfully captures the nature of this water with the alternative term "borrelende". Koehler and Baumgartner (1985:294) render the meaning of the term as "living joyfully". It is felt that all the translations capture the required sense of abundance and vivacity, and successfully avoid to concentrate on the woman's privacy and exclusivity again. The NV, TEV and NIV used the more effective "borrelende/flowing" as far as adolescents are concerned. All the consulted translations retain the image.

5.6.17 *Metaphor 17 (4:15c)*

1 *Original Hebrew:* BH -

וְנָזְלִים מִן־לְבָנוֹן:

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: Wat van die Libanon af vloei.

NV: Strome van die Libanon af.

English:

RSV: Flowing streams from Lebanon.

JB: Streams flowing down from Lebanon.

TEV: Brooks gushing down from the Lebanon mountains.

NIV: Streaming down from Lebanon.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

'n Rivier wat uit berge bruis!

English:

A river cascading down the mountains!

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 17

Pope (1977:496) points out the important fact that the cascading and roaring streams that flow from the Lebanon when the snows are melting in the spring, are both an impressive sight and sound. Grober (1980:86) notes that these images in 4:15 adequately reflect the passionate ebullient side of the woman's nature. Koehler and Baumgartner (1985:605) furnish both the meanings "streams" and "floods" for the term *noz^elîm*. Both meanings suggest a strong surge of water. This metaphor is the culmination of the cluster in 4:15 and it is appropriate that the woman is eventually likened to an impressive roaring and cascading river gushing from the mountain as the symbol of her exuberant love. This is the last metaphor in the cluster found in 4:15 which has **moving water** as an image. Since water is life-giving, this cluster suggests that the woman gives life and vivacity to the marriage relationship as the name "Eve" (life-giver) would also suggest (Knight, 1988:27). The moving water imagery also reflects the fact that the woman is an equally active participant in the marriage and love relationship which underlines this truth expounded by Knight (1988:25): "Rare among the religions of the world, Judaism has retained what we call a woman's right to - and need for - sexual satisfaction." Of the Afrikaans versions the NV is both more literal and effective and of the English versions it is felt that the TEV is

most successful for adolescents with its "brooks gushing" down from the Lebanon mountains. All the versions retain the image though. The OV and NIV unfortunately seem to fail to view this as a separate metaphor.

5.6.18 *Metaphor 18 (5:11a)*

1 *Original Hebrew:* BH -

רֹאשׁוֹ כֶּתֶם פִּזָּה

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: Sy hoof is goud, suiwer goud.

NV: Sy voorkop is soos suiwer goud.

English:

RSV: His head is the finest gold.

JB: His head is golden, purest gold.

TEV: His face is bronzed and smooth.

NIV: His head is purest gold.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Sy voorkop - is die fynste goud!

English:

His forehead - is the finest gold!

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 18

Both the terms *ketem* and *pâz* have an uncertain origin (Pope, 1977:534). Both are names of two types of gold joined into a single structure for poetic hyperbole and is consequently usually translated as the "finest gold" or the "purest gold" (Carr, 1984:140; Fox, 1985:147). Scholars generally

have difficulty in interpreting these two terms and Grober (1980:76) points out that the secondary meaning, which denotes the colour of blood ranging from crimson to dark brown, is often not considered. Carr (1984:140) confirms this possibility of a greater variety in colour by writing that "the traditional translation 'pure gold' (i.e. refined gold) is possible, but most recent lexicographers have identified this as chrysolite [Greek](golden stone), i.e. many of several yellow or green-yellow semi-precious gem-stones ...". The terms "forehead/voorkop" and "finest/fynste" are employed for alliterative effect. Another important fact is that the term *rô(ʿ)šô* must refer to the forehead, face and neck, and not to the hair (Carr, 1984:140). All the consulted translations retained the image except the TEV which reads "his face is bronzed and smooth". In this regard I agree with Davidson (1986:137) that the TEV version is "too pedestrian". The NV replaces "kop" with "voorkop" which makes perfect sense and does not adversely affect the image of the metaphor at all. The NV moulds the image in the form of a simile, however.

5.6.19 *Metaphor 19 (5:13c-d)*

1 *Original Hebrew: BH -*

שִׁפְתֹתָיו שׁוֹשְׁנִים נִטְפֹּת מִזֶּרַע עֵבֶר :

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: Lippe is lelies wat van vloeiende mirre drup.

NV: Sy lippe is soos lelies, hulle drup van mirre.

English:

RSV: His lips are lilies distilling liquid myrrh.

JB: His lips are lilies, distilling pure myrrh.

TEV: His lips are like lilies, wet with liquid myrrh.

NIV: His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Sy lippe - is lelies wat drup met vloeiparfuum!

English:

His lips - are lilies dripping liquid spice!

4 Discussion

Metaphor 19

The phrase *môr* (*ôbêr*) denotes a type of myrrh of which (*ôbêr* is a particle with an adjectival function that indicates its nature, which is "liquid", "flowing" and "wet". The root *br* signifies both "liquid" and "movement" (Koehler & Baumgartner; 1985:675). This image is evocative of the sensual pleasures between the lovers and kissing in particular. Grober (1980:72) notes that this phrase occurs only once again in **Song of Songs** and nowhere else in the OT. The word *sôsannîm* can refer to lily or lotus and what makes it significant in the context of this metaphor is once again the fact that even as a flower, this plant is edible. Although all the translations consulted retain the image, the JB and RSV unfortunately employ the slightly obscure and misplaced term "distilling" instead of "dripping" or "wet" and the NV, TEV and NIV recast the image in the form of a simile.

5.6.20 Metaphor 20 (5:14a-b)

1 Original Hebrew: BH -

יָדָיו גְּלִילֵי זָהָב מְמִלָּאִים בַּתָּרְשִׁישׁ

2 Comparison of consulted translations

Afrikaans:

OV: Sy hande is ronde stawe van goud met edelstene ingelê.

NV: Sy hande is soos stawe goud met edelstene ingelê

English:

RSV: His arms are rounded gold, set with jewels.

JB: His hands are golden, rounded, set with jewels of Tarshish

TEV: His hands are well-formed and he wears rings set with gems.

NIV: His arms are rods of gold set with chrysolite.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Sy arms - is stawe goud geset met edelstene!

English:

His arms are rods of gold studded with gems!

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 20

The term *gâlîl* occurs only four times in the OT of which not one instance is particularly helpful. I agree with Carr (1984:142) however, that the reference to "silver rings" in Esther 1:6 provides a clue. In keeping with the thrust of the two metaphors in 5:14 which emphasise the strength of the man in exaggerated love language, it is felt that "cylinders" or "rods" of gold are the most appropriate to use. The picture of the man's arms is to celebrate both beauty and strength (Reese, 1983:237). The term *yâdâw* literally refers to "hands" but in Biblical usage as in Ugaritic, the term can refer to the whole arm as far as the armpit or the shoulder (Pope, 1977:562). Consequently Pope (1977:502) is correct in the assertion that if applied strictly to "hands", neither rings nor rods seem appropriate. In this regard it is felt that the TEV negates the whole image of strength intended by this metaphor with "his hands are well formed and he wears rings". The verb *mâlâ*¹ literally means "filled" (Koehler & Baumgartner, 1985:524), but the "set" used by the consulted English versions is more appropriate. I opt for "studded" for sound effect as the "d" sound is repeated in "gold". The term *târšîš* designates a much discussed but a still unknown geographical location (Pope, 1984:142). Therefore, contextually it makes more sense to opt for a descriptive term such as "gems" or "jewels" since these terms cannot be confused with geographical locations. All the consulted translations retain the image except the TEV, and the NV chooses to put the image in the mould of a simile while the RSV omits the basic image (vehicle). Only the RSV, JB and NV choose the general term "jewels/edelstene" although the JB makes an attempt to accommodate the geographical reference of *târšîš* by translating it as "jewels of Tarshish". It is interesting to note, however,

that the "chrysolite/chrisoliet" of the NIV and OV has a strong impact on the reader as a result of its strong alliterative "r" sound that echo the "r" of "rods of gold".

5.6.21 *Metaphor 21 (5:14 c-d)*

1 *Original Hebrew: BH -*

מַעֲיֹר עֲשֵׂת שֵׁן | מְעֻלָּפֶת סַפִּירִים:

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: Sy liggaam 'n kunswerk van ivoor, bedek met saffierstene.

NV: Sy lyf is soos 'n blok ivoor, met saffiere ingelê.

English:

RSV: His body is ivory work, encrusted with sapphires.

JB: His belly a block of ivory covered with sapphires.

TEV: His body is like smooth ivory, with sapphires set in it.

NIV: His body is like polished ivory decorated with sapphires.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Sy liggaam - is 'n blok blink ivoor bedek* met saffiere!

English:

His abdomen - is a block of polished ivory encrusted* with sapphires!

*Alternative version: rippelend/rippling.

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 21

This metaphor refers to the man's flat and muscular stomach and even perhaps to his stomach muscles in particular. There is a difference of

opinion as to what the term *mê'âw* refers to. Pope (1977:543) feels that the term designates the whole of the body above the private parts and below the chest at the back and front, and thus chooses to use the term "loins". In view of the woman's seeing only one side at a time it is felt that "belly", "stomach" or "abdomen" is perfectly sufficient. All the consulted translations opt for the more general term "body", except the JB ("belly"). The noun *šēset* is a *hapax legomenon* that means "polished", "smooth", "sleek" or "shiny". The term "blink" is employed for alliterative effect in my personal translation. Although the term *sên* literally means "the tooth of an elephant" (Pope, 1977:544), it is used for "bar" or "block" in Mishnaic Hebrew (Fox, 1985:149). The term "artwork" is invariably applied (RSV and OV) but it is felt it does not capture the sense of power and strength intended. It is felt that both these terms "bar" and "block" are in keeping with the main thrust of the metaphor which is to communicate strength. The verb *âlap* literally means "to cover" or "enwrap" (Koehler & Baumgartner, 1985:710) but the words "encrusted" (RSV) or perhaps even "rippling", more successfully captures both the decorative and powerful aspects of this image. It must be said that "rippling" might however be seen as a little far removed from the Hebrew verb and therefore it is only suggested as an alternative version. Although "sapphire" in the text differs from the sapphire of today it is felt that the name of the gem is well known by the intended reader, and therefore could be transferred literally. All the consulted translations retain the image except that the TEV, NV and NIV mould the image into a simile. It is felt that the "encrusted" of the RSV is more successful than the "decorated" of the NIV as it captures the strength and masculinity intended by this image more successfully.

5.6.22 *Metaphor 22 (5:15a-b)*

1 *Original Hebrew: BH -*

שֹׁקֵי עַמּוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ מִסָּדִים עַל-אֲדָנֶיָּה פֶּזֶז

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: Sy bene is marmerpilare wat rus op voetstukke van fyn goud.

NV: Sy bobene is soos marmerpilare wat op goue voetstukke rus.

English:

RSV: His legs are alabaster columns, set upon bases of gold.

JB: His legs are alabaster columns set in sockets of pure gold.

TEV: His thighs are columns of alabaster set in sockets of gold.

NIV: His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Sy bene - is marmerpilare geset in voetstukke van goud!

English:

His legs - are pillars of marble set on sockets of gold!

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 22

This metaphor is the last of a cluster lauding the power and strength of the man that accompanies his beauty. The term *sôq* literally refers to the "thighs" (Koehler & Baumgartner, 1985:957) but both Carr (1984:143) and Pope (1977:546) argue that it refers to the whole leg within the context of this verse. The TEV and NV opt for "thighs/bobene" while the other translations choose "legs". The term *ammûdîm* designates "pillars" or "columns" (Koehler & Baumgartner, 1985:714) and both terms embody the strength the image intends. *Sês* designates either "alabaster" or "white marble" (Pope, 1977:546) but the latter is to be preferred for adolescents as it is more familiar. The verb *yâsad* means "to set" or "to base" and *dnê* refers to various sorts of sockets, bases or pedestals (Pope, 1977:546). As all evoke equally strong connotations of strength and power any one is acceptable. The terms "set" and "sockets" are employed for alliterative effect. It is interesting to note that there is an antithetical progression in the description of the man in 5:11-15 (Grober, 1980:78). The deep warm radiant brightness of the gold and the lilies is developed in contrast to the cold pale shine of ivory and marble. All the consulted translations retained the image but the NV moulds it into a simile. It is

felt that the use of "marble" by the NIV, NV and OV is more appropriate for adolescent readers than the "alabaster" employed by the TEV, RSV and JB.

5.6.23 *Metaphor 23 (5:16a)*

1 *Original Hebrew:* BH -

חִבּוֹ מִמִּתְקִים

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: Sy verhenelte is pure soetigheid.

NV - Sy mond smaak soet.

English:

RSV: His speech is most sweet.

JB: His conversation is sweetness itself.

TEV: His mouth is sweet to kiss.

NIV: His mouth is sweetness itself.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Sy verhemelte is 'n soet drankie!

English:

His palate - is sweet drink!

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 23

The noun *hêk* designates the inside of the mouth and specifically the gums and palate as the organ of taste and speech (Pope, 1977:549). Although the image may praise either the man's kisses or fine speech it is felt that the emphasis is on kissing. The term *mamtaqqîm* is recognised by both Fox (1985:149) and Grober (1980:73) as "a sweet drink". Consequently

all the consulted translations fail to recognise the image in Metaphor 23 and the RSV and JB view the word *hikô* as referring to speech or conversation rather than taste.

5.6.24 *Metaphor 24 (5:16b)*

1 *Original Hebrew:* BH -

וְכָלֹּ מִחֲמַדִּים

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: Hy is geheel en al die lieflikheid self.

NV: Alles aan hom is begeerlik.

English:

RSV: And he is altogether desirable.

JB: He is altogether lovable.

TEV: Everything about him enchants me.

NIV: He is altogether lovely.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Hy - is 'n man van genot*!

English:

He - is a man of delight*!

* *Alternative version:* Hy is 'n begeerlike man!/He is a desirable man!

4 Discussion

Metaphor 24

Both Pope (1977:549) and Ginsburg (1970:171) are correct to furnish the literal rendering of the Hebrew as "his totality is desirable things" and "his whole person is exceedingly lovely" respectively. The term *maḥ^amaddîm* literally means "desirable things" or "treasures" (Grober, 1980:74). By referring to 2:3 Grober (1980:75) eventually chooses to translate the line "all of him is sweetness and manly protective shade". In an attempt to retain the image Falk (1982:37) renders the line "man of pleasure". Taking this cue I opted for "he is man of delight/hy is man van genot" in an attempt to remain as brief as possible and to employ an image (vehicle) albeit an altered one. It is clear that this cluster of metaphors in 5:11-16, is one in which the woman "speaks in triumphant satisfaction, as if her magnificent verbal creation has irrefutably answereth girls' [who wanted to know where her lover was] scepticism" (Fox, 1985:149). None of the translated versions retain the image but the vagueness of the term *maḥ^amaddîm* explains such a step. It is felt that the "begeerlik/desirable/enchants" of the NV, RSV and TEV respectively is more appropriate within the context of the mood of intoxicating love suggested by the metaphors in 5:16 than the "lieflikheid" and "lovely" of the OV and NIV respectively. Consequently I render alternative translations of my own in this respect.

5.6.25 Metaphor 25 (7:3a-b)

1 Original Hebrew: BH -

שָׁרֵרְךָ אֵינָן הַסֹּהַר אֶל-יְחֹסֶר הַמָּוֶג

2 Comparison of consulted translations

Afrikaans:

OV: U nawel is 'n ronde kom - laat die gemengde wyn nie ontbreek nie.

NV: Jou naeltjie is 'n ronde kom waarin die kruiewyn nie ontbreek nie.

English:

RSV: Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine.

JB: Your navel is a bowl well rounded with no lack of wine.

TEV: A bowl is there, that never runs out of spiced wine.

NIV: Your navel is a rounded goblet that never lacks blended wine.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Jou naeltjie - is 'n geronde kelk, nooit sonder kruiewyn*

English:

Your navel - is a rounded goblet, never lacking spiced wine*!

* Alternative version: propvol kruiewyn!/brimming with spiced wine!

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 25

The term *sôr* is obscure and uncertain and like Fox (1985:158-159) I agree that "navel" is to be accepted, rather than "vulva" (Pope, 1977:617) or "pelvic basin" (Grober, 1980:102). Koehler and Baumgartner (1985:1010) designate the meaning "navel-roll" to the Hebrew term. The phrase *ḥaggan* is a *hapax legomenon* and means "rounded bowl" or "rounded basin" and the nature of this vessel is now clear from archaeological data (Pope, 1977:618). It is a large, deep, two-handled, ring-based bowl. It is felt that "goblet" used by the NIV for this term is more apt than "bowl" of the RSV, JB and TEV in that it underscores the delicacy of the woman. This is why "kelk" is employed in my personal translation. The term *mezeg* is another *hapax legomenon* that refers to a "spiced wine" or "mixed wine". Pope (1977:619) uses the term "punch", Falk (1982:41) the term "nectar" and the NIV uses "blended wine". The prohibition *ḥal-yehsar* is intended to point out that the bowl deserves never to lack wine and not that it is always full (Fox 1985:159). As it does not affect the retention of the image I submit an alternative version ("propvol kruiewyn"/"brimming with spiced wine") for the sake of the adolescent readership. All the consulted translations retain the image. The TEV

omits the tenor ("navel") however. It is felt that the term "goblet" is the most successful for teenagers of all the translations consulted.

5.6.26 *Metaphor 26(7:3c-d)*

1 *Original Hebrew: BH -*

בִּטְנֶךָ עֲרֵמַת חֲטִיִּים סוּגָה בַּשּׁוֹשְׁנִים:

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: U liggaam is 'n hoop koring, omring deur lelies.

NV: Jou maag is 'n hoop koring met lelies omring.

English:

RSV: Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies.

JB: Your belly a heap of wheat surrounded with lilies.

TEV: A sheaf of wheat is there, surrounded by lilies.

NIV: Your waist is a mound of wheat encircled by lilies.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Jou middel - is 'n gerf goue koring versier met lelies!

English:

Your waist - is a sheaf of golden wheat* adorned with lilies!

* Alternative version: Curved and golden corn.

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 26

Some translators rendered *biṭnêk* in this metaphor as "body" and Koehler & Baumgartner (1985:119) give the meanings "belly", "body" and "womb". Both Pope (1977:621) and Carr (1984:184) are of the opinion that it is including too much. It is also different from *mē'āw* ("stomach")

in 5:14 in that it refers to the lower abdomen, below the navel and is also used specifically for the womb (Carr, 1984:158). It is felt that "waist" employed by the NIV or "middle" is more complimentary for women than "belly" used by the JB and the RSV. Another worthwhile alternative would be to use "body". Although a few commentators do not bother to discuss the term ^(a)*rêmâ(h)* "mound/heap/pile" (Koehler & Baumgartner, 1985:737). Ginsburg (1970:178) argues that the image makes sense in view of the fact that "corpulency was deemed essential to an Eastern beauty". In contrast to this view I agree with Fox (1985:159) who strongly argues that this image does not mean that the woman "had a potbelly". Mesopotamian and Egyptian art shows that women are portrayed as slender and the general ideal of human beauty was not corpulency. Both Davidson (1986:140) and Fox (1985:159) state that the quality shared by a heap of wheat and the woman's stomach is a gentle curve and a tawny colour. Pope (1977:621) and Falk (1982:41) also emphasise the importance of colour as a common ground in this image. In this regard it is felt the "sheaf of wheat" of the TEV and "mound of wheat" of the NIV are more appropriate than the "heap of wheat" employed by the JB and RSV. I retain the image of wheat but delete the reference to a "mound" as an alternative to stress the point made by Fox (1985:159) that the image does not imply a protruding belly. In the alternative rendering "corn" is used rather than "wheat" to create an alliterative effect with "curbed". The verb *sûgâ(h)* "heged/encircled/surrounded" is a *hapax legomenon*. Although threshed wheat was fenced with thorns for protection from cattle I agree with Pope (1977:622) that in this image the purpose is decorative. Consequently it is felt that the term "adorned" used by Falk (1982:41) or a term such as "decorated" is more appropriate than "hedged". A subtle term such as "adorned" is also more appropriate to the main thrust of the metaphor which is to underline the delicate beauty of the woman. All the consulted translations retain the image. Because of the uncertainty surrounding the terms *šôr* and *biṭnêk* in Metaphor 25 and 26 respectively, the TEV's leaving the object (referent/tenor) implicit, is perhaps a way out of the impasse created. Otherwise it is felt that the OV ("liggaam") and NIV ("waist") apply the most successful terms for adolescents in this instance. The words "sheaf/mound" of the TEV and NIV respectively are also bound to be more effective than the "hoop/heap" of the other translations.

5.6.27 *Metaphor 27 (7:5b-c)*

1 *Original Hebrew: BH -*

עֵינֶיךָ בְּרִכּוֹתִי בְּחֶשְׁבּוֹן עַל־שַׁעַר־בַּת־רַבִּים

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: U oë, vywers in Hesbon by die poort Bat-Rabbim.

NV: Jou oë soos die damme by Gesbon, by die poort van die groot stad.

English:

RSV: Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim.

JB: Your eyes are pools in Hehbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim.

TEV: Your eyes are like the pools in the city of Heshbon, near the gate of that great city.

NIV: Your eyes are the pools of Hesbon by the gate of Bath Rabbim.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Jou oë - is diep stil poele by die hoofpoort van die stad!

English:

Your eyes are deep silent pools at the main city gate!

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 27

The word *b^erêkôt* designates "pools" or "ponds" (Koehler & Baumgartner, 1985:155) and the central thrust of this image is to emphasise the stillness, calmness, clarity and depth in the woman's eyes. Heshbon is an ancient city 80 kilometers east of Jerusalem. The city was noted for its fertile fields and vineyards but like Bath Rabbim (a gate near the well-known pools of the city) the names no longer carry the resonance they once had. Consequently Heshbon is translated as "city" but Bath

Rabbim is probably best deleted because of the uncertainty and obscurity that surrounds the meaning of the name (Pope, 1977:626). Personally it is felt that translating it as "maingate" or "important gate" is an acceptable alternative as *rabbîm* is the plural of the root *rb* which means "multitude" (Koehler & Baumgartner, 1985:868) and might signify that it is a gate through which many people pass. I also agree with Knight (1988:36) that there is no conclusive evidence as to why the city Heshbon is chosen and disagree with Brenner (1992:115) that the city was chosen by the author to evoke negative responses as a foreign city. One can also argue that it was a **royal** city and as such evokes a positive response. All the consulted translations retain the image but the TEV and NV mould it into the form of a simile. All the consulted translations use acceptable terminology as far as adolescents are concerned except the OV which utilises the completely incomprehensible term "vywers" and perhaps the NV which truthfully uses "damme", but which is a term that is not as successful within a romantic context as "poele".

5.6.28 *Metaphor 28*

1 *Original Hebrew: BH -*

אם-חומה היא נבנה עליה טירת כסף

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: As sy 'n muur is, sal ons 'n silwerrand daarop bou.

NV: As sy 'n muur was, het ons op haar 'n silwertoring gebou.

English:

RSV: If she is a wall, we will build upon her a battlement of silver.

JB: If she is a rampart, on the crest we will build a battlement of silver.

TEV: If she is a wall, we will build her a silver tower.

NIV: If she is a wall, we will build towers of silver on her.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Is sy 'n muur - bou ons op haar torings* van silwer!

Engels:

If she is a wall - we will build on her towers* of silver!

* Alternative version: versierings/decorations.

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 28

The wall signifies strongness of character suggesting the woman's adhering to the values of chastity and virginity. The silver is therefore the reward given to her by the brothers in this regard. According to Fox (1985:173) *tîrat* denote structures on top of a wall but it is not clear what they are. Pope (1977:680) argues that the term designates "a row of stones" and Koehler and Baumgartner (1985:352) add the meaning "battlement". The important issue is that it adds to the splendour and beauty of the wall consequently I suggest an alternative rendering. All the consulted translations retained the image. Of all the consulted translations only the JB appears to unfortunately utilise a relatively unfamiliar term with regard to adolescents and that is "ramparts".

5.6.29 *Metaphor 29*

1 *Original Hebrew:* BH -

וְאִם-בָּלַת הִיא נִצֹּר עָלֶיהָ לַיּוֹם אֶרֶז:

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: As sy 'n deur is, sal ons dit met 'n sederplank toeslaan.

NV: As sy 'n deur was, het ons haar toegemaak met sederplanke.

English:

RSV: But if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.

JB: If she is a door; we will board her up with planks of cedar.

TEV: But if she is a gate, we will protect her with panels of cedar.

NIV: If she is a door, we will enclose her with panels of cedar.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Is sy 'n deur - sal ons haar toemaak met houtpaneel*

English:

If she is a door - we will close her with panels of wood*!

* Alternative version: sederplanke/cedar

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 29

Pope (1977:679) asks the important question of whether the parallelism in Metaphor 28 and 29 is synonymous or antithetical. The fact that a wall protects, preserves and repels (suggesting that the woman is both inaccessible and impregnable), is generally accepted. A door, however, serves the dual function of opening a wall and closing an opening. Consequently Fox (1985:173) argues that to panel a cedar board implies ornamentation and not fortification. I rather agree with Falk (1982:132) that the woman is to be planked up with cedar if she is wanton. Pope (1977:681) suggests that the verb *nâsûr* is to be translated as "close up". All the translations retain the image. Because "cedar/sedar" seems to be a term that can be either well-known or unknown among adolescents, I include it as an alternative version. It is perhaps unfortunate that the TEV employs "gate" for *delet* as the term "gate" has fewer connotations of privacy than "door" and privacy is part of the main thrust of this metaphor.

5.6.30 *Metaphor 30*

1 *Original Hebrew: BH -*

אֲנִי חֹמֶה

2 *Comparison of consulted translations*

Afrikaans:

OV: Ek is 'n muur.

NV: Ek is 'n muur.

English:

RSV: I was a wall.

JB: I am a wall.

TEV: I am a wall.

NIV: I am a wall.

3 *Personal translations*

Afrikaans:

Ek is 'n muur!

English:

I am a wall!

4 *Discussion*

Metaphor 30

The woman strongly affirms her quality of having retained her chastity and virginity until her marriage. Grober (1980:107) goes as far as to say that this metaphor can be seen as a rebuttal of her brothers' slight to her womanhood. One is almost tempted to translate Metaphor 30 as "I am indeed a wall". Finally, I agree with Carr (1984:172) that the use of the past tense "I was" (RSV) is unsupported. All the consulted versions retain the image.

5.7 Translation of metaphors within poetic units (English)

In this section my personal English translations are furnished within the context of the poetic units in which they occur. For the context the NIV version is taken although the typography is altered according to my own taste and in order to accommodate the personally translated metaphors. I also took the liberty to translate ^{ʾa}ḥotî kallâ(h) as "my darling bride" as is proposed under 5.4.5 as well as deleting the conjunctive "and" where it was deemed necessary in order to enhance the artistic effect. The only remaining liberty taken was to replace all unfamiliar plant names, animal names, spice names and place names with a description if those names were thought not to have resonance with today's adolescents. This was done because, as "realia" [words denoting concepts characteristic of the culture and historic development of one nation and alien to another] cannot be translated in a conventional way and they require a special approach" (Florin, 1993:123). Although this special approach does not imply any strict rules (Bagajewa, 1993:354), it does presuppose that a translator should be able to motivate the choices he has made. Hafter (1983:30) suggests that culturally-specific names should be described in more general terms in the TL.

The alternative versions to my personal translations are not submitted. In each case I opted for the version I prefer most so as to avoid the use of footnotes. The metaphors are highlighted to facilitate recognition. Here is a list of the poetic units in which the thirty metaphors occur:

- 1 Desire (1:2-4) - Metpahor 1.
- 2 Admiration: woman (1:12-13) - Metaphors 2-3.
- 3 Admiration: dialogue (1:15-17) - Metaphor 4.
- 4 Admiration: dialogue (2:1-3) - Metaphors 5-6.
- 5 Desire (2:4-7) - Metaphor 7.
- 6 Wasf: man's voice (4:1-7) - Metaphor 8.
- 7 Admiration: man (4:9-5:1) - Metaphors 9-17.
- 8 Wasf: woman's voice: (5:10-16) - Metaphors 18-24.
- 9 Wasf: man's voice: (7:1-5) - Metaphors 25-27.
- 10 Reminiscence: brothers' attitude (8:8-10) - Metaphors 28-30.

5.7.1 Desire (1:2-4) - Metaphor 1

*Let him kiss me
with the kisses of his mouth -
for your love is more delightful than wine.*

*Pleasing is the fragrance
of your perfumes;*

*Your name
is a precious perfume!*

No wonder the maidens love you!

*Take me away with you -
let us hurry!
The king has brought me
into his chambers.*

5.7.2 Admiration: woman (1:12-14) - Metaphor 2-3

*While the king was at his table
my perfume -
spread its fragrance.*

*My love -
is a sachet of spices
spending the night between my breasts!*

*My love -
is a bouquet of blossoms
from the gardens of an oasis!*

5.7.3 Admiration: dialogue (1:15-17) - Metaphor 4

*How beautiful you are -
My darling!
Oh, how beautiful!*

*Your eyes -
are those of doves!*

*How handsome you are -
My lover!
Oh, how charming!*

*Our bed is verdant.
The beams of our house - are cedars,
our rafters are firs.*

5.7.4 Admiration: dialogue (2:1-3) - Metaphors 5-6

*I am a wildflower
in sandy soil!*

*A wild lily
in deep valley earth!*

*Like a lily among thorns -
is my darling
among the maidens.*

*Like an apple tree
among the trees of the forest -
is my lover
among the young men.*

*I delight to sit in his shade
and his fruit -
is sweet to my taste!*

5.7.5. Desire (2:4-7) - Metaphor 7

*He has taken me -
to the banquet hall.*

*His banner over me
is love!*

*Strengthen me with raisins
refresh me with apples
for I am faint with love!*

*His left arm -
is under my head.
His right arm -
embraces me.*

Daughter of Jerusalem!

I charge you

by the gazelles

and by the does

of the field:

Do not arouse or awaken love -

until it so desires.

5.7.6 Wasf (4:1-7) - Metaphors 8

My darling!

Oh, how beautiful!

Your eyes -

are those of doves

behind your veil!

Your hair -

is like a flock of goats

descending from the mountain slopes.

Your teeth -

are like a flock of sheep just shorn

coming up from the washing:

each one has its twin,

not one of them is alone.

Your lips -

are like scarlet ribbon.

Your mouth -

is lovely.

Your temples -

behind your veil

are like the halves of a pomegranate.

Your neck -

is like a strong tower

built with elegance -

on it hang a thousand shields,

all of them -

shields of warriors.

Your breasts -

Are like two fawns

like twin fawns of a gazelle

that browse among the lilies.

Until the day breaks

and the shadows flee

I will go -

to the mountain of exotic spice

to the hill of fragrant incense.

All beautiful, you are -

My darling!

There is no flaw in you.

5.7.7 Admiration: man (4:9-5:1) - Metaphors 9-17

*You have stolen my heart -
My darling bride!
How much more pleasing
is your love than wine,
and the fragrance of your perfume
than any spice!*

*My bride!
Your lips -
drip nectar
with honey and milk under your tongue!*

*The fragrance of your garments
is like that of fresh mountain air.*

*My darling bride!
You are -
 a secret garden
 a hidden spring,
 *a private fountain!**

Your limbs -

*Open a paradise of pomegranates;
with festive fruit among blossoms,
with rare perfume.*

*Shrubs of saffron, sweetcane and cinnamon bark:
with all the fragrant trees!*

*Exotic perfume and succulents:
with all the finest spices!*

*Your are -
a fountain for many gardens
a well of bubbling water!
a river cascading down the mountains!*

*Awake - North wind!
Come - South wind!*

*Blow on my garden
that its fragrance may spread abroad.*

*Let my lover
come into his garden
and taste its choice fruits!
I have come into my garden -
My darling bride!
I have gathered my perfume
with my spice.
I have eaten my honeycomb
and my honey;
I have drunk my wine
and my milk!*

Eat!

O friends -

and drink!

Drink your fill, O lovers!

5.7.8 Waṣf: woman's voice (5:10-16) - Metaphors 18-24.

My lover -

is radiant and ruddy

Outstanding among ten thousand!

His forehead -

is the finest gold!

His hair -

is wavy and black as a raven.

His eyes -

are like doves by the water streams

washed in milk

mounted like jewels.

His cheeks -

are like beds of spice

yielding perfume.

His lips -

are lilies

dripping exquisite liquid spice!

*His arms -
are rods of gold
studded with gems!*

*His abdomen -
is a block of polished ivory
rippling with sapphires!*

*His legs -
are pillars of marble
set in sockets of gold!*

*His appearance -
is like that of a mighty mountain,
choice as its cedar trees.*

*His palate -
is sweet drink!*

*He -
is a man of delight!*

*This is my lover.
This is my friend.*

5.7.9 Waṣf: man's voice (7:1-5) - Metaphors 25-27

How beautiful your sandalled feet -

O prince's daughter!

*Your graceful legs -
are like jewels
the work of a craftsman's hands.*

*Your navel -
is a rounded goblet
brimming with spiced wine!*

*Your waist -
is curved and golden corn
adorned with lilies!*

*Your breasts -
are like two fawns
twins of a gazelle.*

*Your neck -
is like an ivory tower.*

*Your eyes -
are deep silent pools
at the main city gate!*

*Your nose -
is like a tower on the mountains
overlooking a great city.*

*Your head -
crowns you like a majestic mountain-top.*

*Your hair -
is like royal tapestry
the king is held captive by its tresses.*

5.7.10 *Reminiscence: brothers' attitude (8:8-10) - Metaphors 28-30*

*We have a young sister.
Her breasts are not yet grown.
What shall we do for our sister
for the day she is spoken for?*

*If she is a wall -
we will build on her
decorations of silver!*

*If she is a door -
we will close her
with panels of wood!*

I am a wall!

*My breasts -
are like towers.*

*Thus I have become in his eyes
like one bringing contentment.*

5.8 Vertaling van metafore binne poëtiese eenhede (Afrikaans)

In hierdie afdeling word my persoonlike Afrikaanse vertalings weerspieël binne die konteks van die poëtiese eenhede waarin hulle voorkom. Die NV word vir die doeleindes van die konteks gebruik, alhoewel die tipografie verander is volgens persoonlike smaak en om die persoonlik vertaalde metafore optimaal te akkommodeer. Ek het ook die vrymoedigheid geneem om ^a*hoti kallâ(h)* as "my lieflingsbruid" te vertaal soos voorgestel onder 5.4.5 en om die voegwoord "en" uit te laat waar dit nodig was om artistieke effektiwiteit te verhoog. Verder het ek aan 4:3b en 4:4 verander omdat na my mening die NV die doel van die beeld hier misverstaan het (Falk, 1982:84). In die laaste plek is alle onbekende plantname, diername, kruiename en plekname vervang met beskrywings om bekende assosiasie by die adolessente leser te verseker. Die alternatiewe weergawes van die persoonlike vertalings word nie voorgelê nie. In elke geval het die keuse geval op die weergawe waarvoor ek voorkeur verleen om voetnotas te vermy. Die metafore word aangedui met 'n benadrukte lettertipe om herkenning te fasiliteer. Hier is 'n lys van die poëtiese eenhede waarin die dertig metafore voorkom:

- 1 Begeerte (1:2-4) - Metafoor 1.
- 2 Bewondering: vrou (1:12-14) - Metafore 2-3.
- 3 Bewondering: dialoog (1:15-17) - Metafoor 4.
- 4 Bewondering: dialoog (2:1-3) - Metafore 5-6.
- 5 Begeerte (2:4-7) - Metafoor 7.
- 6 *Wasf*: man se stem (4:1-7) - Metafoor 8.
- 7 Bewondering: man (4:9-5:1) - Metafore 9-17.
- 8 *Wasf*: vrou se stem (5:10-16) - Metafore 18-24.
- 9 *Wasf*: man se stem (7:1-5) - Metafore 25-27.
- 10 Herinnering: broers se gesindheid (8:8-10) - Metafore 28-30.

5.8.1 Begeerte (1:2-4)

Soen my!

Soen my weer en weer -

Jou liefkosings is beter as wyn!

Jou parfuum ruik so lekker.

Jou naam

is 'n kosbare parfuum!

Daarom het die meisies jou so lief.

Vat my saam met jou.

Kom ons hardloop.

Die koning vat my na sy kamer toe.

5.8.2 Bewondering: vrou (1:12-14) - Metafore 2-3

*So lank die koning
op sy rusbank gelê het
het my vloeiparfuum
se geur versprei.*

My liefling -

is 'n sakkie pot pourri

wat naglank tussen my borste rus!

*My liefling is 'n bossie bloeisels
vanuit 'n oasetuin!*

5.8.3 Bewondering: dialoog (1:15-17) - Metafoor 4

Jy is mooi

Jy is mooi!

*Jou oë -
is die van duiwe!*

*Jy is mooi
man wat ek liefhet -
jy is aantreklik*

*Ons bed is die groen blare,
ons huis se balke is die seders,
sy daklatte is die sipresse.*

5.8.4 Bewondering: dialoog (2:1-3) - Metafore 5-6

*Ek is 'n veldblom
in kusvlaktesand!*

*'n Wilde lelie
in diep valleigrond!*

*Soos 'n lelie tussen dorings -
so is my liefling
tussen die meisies.*

*Soos 'n soetvrugboom
tussen wilde bome -
so is die man wat ek liefhet
tussen die jongmans.*

tussen die jongmans.

*Ek sit graag in sy skaduwee
sy vrugte -
is soet in my mond.*

5.8.5 Begeerte (2:4-7) - Metafoor 7

*Hy vat my
na 'n feesplek toe.*

*Sy vaandel oor my
is liefde!*

*Julle moet vir my
rosyntjies gee
om my sterk te maak.
Julle moet my
met appels verfris
want die liefde verteer my.*

*Sy linkerarm is onder my kop.
Sy regterarm omhels my.*

Vroue van Jerusalem!

*Ek smeek julle -
ek roep die ribbokke
en die takbokke in die veld*

tot getuie:

*moenie die liefde wakker maak en aanvuur
voor die tyd daarvoor
nie ryp is nie.*

5.8.6 Wasf: man se stem (4:1-7) - Metafoor 8

Jy is mooi -

My liefeling!

Jy is mooi.

Jou oë -

is die van duiwe

agter jou sluier!

Jou hare -

is soos 'n trop bokke

wat teen die berghange afstroom.

Jou tande -

is so wit soos 'n ry pasgeskeerde skape

wat nou net skoon gewas is,

elkeen met 'n tweeling

nie een sonder 'n lam nie.

Jou lippe -

is soos skarlakenrooilint.

Jou mond -

bekoor my.

*Jou voorkop -
is soos 'n halwe granaatskyf
agter jou sluier.*

*Jou nek -
is soos 'n sterk toring
wat uit rye klip gebou is:
daaraan hang duisende skilde,
al die skilde van die helde.*

*Jou twee borste
is soos klein bokkies
soos die tweeling van 'n ribbok
wat tussen die lelies wei.*

*Wanneer die aandwind begin waai,
die skaduwees lank word -
wil ek na my berg eksotiese parfuim
my heuwel gesogte geure toe gaan.*

*Alles aan jou is mooi -
My liefling!
Aan jou is niks verkeerd nie.*

5.8.7 Bewondering: man (4:9-5:1) - Metafore 9-17

Jy het my hart gesteel -

My liefslingsbruid!

*Jy het my hart gesteel -
met een kyk van jou oë,
met een skakel in die ketting om jou hals.*

*Ek hou van jou liefkosings -
my liefslingsbruid!*

*Jou liefkosings -
is beter as wyn.
Jou parfuum -
ruik lekkerder as al die lekkerruik-kruie.*

*My bruid!
Jou lippe drup heuningstroop
met heuning en melk onder jou tong!*

*Jou klere -
ruik soos die vars berglug.*

My liefslingsbruid!

*Jy is -
 'n toegemaakte tuin
 'n geslote waterbron
 'n verseëlde fontein!*

Jou ledemate -

*open 'n lushof van granaatbome:
met feestelike vrugte tussen bloeisels,
met gesogte parfuum.*

*Saffraanstruik, suikerriet en spesery:
met elke soort welriekende boom.
Eksotiese parfuum en vetplant:
met al die edelste kruie!*

*Jy is -
'n fontein vir tuin op tuin!
'n put met borrelende water!
'n rivier wat uit berge bruis!*

*Word wakker - Noordewind!
Kom - Suidewind!*

*Waai deur my tuin
versprei sy geur.
Die man wat ek liefhet
Kom na my tuin toe.
Hy kan die geurige vrugte daarvan eet.*

*Ek het na my tuin toe gekom -
My lieflingsbruid!
Ek pluk my speserye
my lekkerruik-kruie.
Ek eet my lekker vars heuning.
Ek drink my wyn*

*Ek drink my wyn
en my melk.*

Eet vriende!

Drink!

Word dronk van die liefde!

5.8.8 Wasf: vrou se stem (5:10-16) - Metafore 18-24

*Die man -
wat ek liefhet is blakend gesond
en blosend van kleur.
Jy kan hom uitken tussen tienduisend ander.*

*Sy voorkop -
is die fynste goud!*

*Sy haarlokke -
soos dadeltrosse so swart soos 'n kraai.*

*Sy oë -
is soos die duiwe langs die spruite
duiwe wat lyk
of hulle in melk gewas is
waar hulle langs die water sit.*

*Sy wange -
is soos die kruiebeddings
waar lekkerruik-kruie groei.*

Sy lippe -

is lelies

wat drup met vloeiparfuum!

Sy arms -

is stawe goud

geset met edelstene!

Sy liggaam -

is 'n blok blink ivoor

rippelend met saffiere!

Sy bene -

is marmerpilare

geset in voetstukke van goud!

Sy voorkoms -

is soos die van 'n magtige berg,

indrukwekkend soos die seder.

Sy verhemelte -

is 'n soet drankie!

Hy -

is 'n man van genot!

So lyk die man wat ek liefhet.

So lyk my lewensmaat

Vroue van Jerusalem.

5.8.9 Wasf: man se stem (7:1-5) - Metafore 25-27

*Jou voete -
is so mooi in jou skoene
edel dogter.*

*Die rondings van jou heupe -
is soos juwele
wat deur kunstenaarshande gemaak is.*

*Jou naeltjie -
is 'n geronde kelk,
propvol kruiewyn!*

*Jou middel -
is 'n gerf goue koring
versier met lelies!*

*Jou twee borste -
is soos takboklammers
soos die tweeling van 'n ribbok.*

*Jou nek -
is soos 'n toring van ivoor.*

*Jou oë -
Is diep stil poele*

by die hoofpoort van die stad!

Jou neus -

is soos 'n toring op die berge wat op 'n groot stad afkyk.

Jou kop -

is soos 'n majestueuse bergpiek.

Jou hare -

soos rooi wol.

Jou haarlokke bekoor die koning.

5.8.10 Herinnering: broers se gesindheid (8:8-10) - Metafore 28-30

Ons suster is nog klein.

Haar borste

is nog nie ontwikkel nie.

Wat kan ons vir ons suster doen

die dag

as hulle om haar hand begin meeding?

Is sy 'n muur -

bou ons op haar

torings van silwer!

Is sy 'n deur -

sal ons haar toemaak

met houtpaneel!

Ek is 'n muur!

*My borste -
is soos torings.*

*Daarom is ek
vir die man wat ek liefhet
iemand wat hom gelukkig maak.*