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Place and Space in the Song of Songs

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Ever since the rediscovery of a marginal essay by Michel Foucault originally written in 1967, the late 20th century has been described – to use Foucault’s own words – as the »epoch of space.«¹ This focus on Foucault as the point of origin for the so-called *spatial turn*² often overlooks the fact that already in 1903 Georg Simmel postulated that only social organisation creates a visible organisation of space.³ Simmel’s definition of space as a social product was later taken up by the French Marxist sociologist Henri Lefebvre in his seminal study *The Production of Space* first published in English in 1991.⁴ The Marxist focus was later abandoned in favour of a more post-modern approach in the work of Edward Soja who contributed significantly to the introduction of Lefebvre’s tripartite spatial model into the English-speaking world. Both methodological concepts have been embraced enthusiastically by biblical scholars and have helped to illuminate previously neglected aspects of the Hebrew Bible.⁵

1 M. Foucault, Of Other Spaces, *Diacritics* 16 (1986), 22–27 (originally written as a lecture entitled »Des Espaces Autres« to be delivered to the Cercle d’études architecturales in 1967; Foucault himself only authorized the publication of the text written in Tunisia in 1984).

2 On the terminology see E. W. Soja, *Thirdspace. Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined-Places*, 1996.

3 See G. Simmel, Über räumliche Projektionen sozialer Formen, in: *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1901–1908: Gesamtausgabe Vol. 7*, 1995, 201–220. On the sociological relevance of space see M. Schroer, »Bringing space back in« – Zur Relevanz des Raumes als soziologischer Kategorie, in: J. Döring / T. Thielmann (eds.), *Spatial Turn. Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften*, 2nd ed. 2009, 125–148.

4 On Lefebvre’s Marxist approach see R. Boer, Henri Lefebvre. The Production of Space in 1 Samuel, in: J. L. Berquist / C. V. Camp (eds.), *Constructions of Space II. The Biblical City and Other Imagined Spaces*, LHB/OTS 490, 2008, 78–101 and K. Goonewardena, Marxism and everyday life. On Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord, and some others, in: idem (ed.), *Space, Difference, Everyday Life. Reading Henri Lefebvre*, 2008, 117–133.

5 See J. Flanagan, Ancient Perceptions of Space / Perceptions of Ancient Space, in: R. A. Simkins / S. L. Cook (eds.), *The Social World of the Hebrew Bible. Twenty-Five Years of the Social Sciences in the Academy*, *Semeia* 87, 1999, 15–44 as well as the essays collected in J. L. Berquist /

Recent monographs on the Song of Songs (Cant) generally contain a chapter on the problem of place (and space) but tend to remain on a purely descriptive level.⁶ There are, however, a few studies that focus on the application of the insights of spatial theory to the Song of Songs.⁷ The following contribution will join the current discussion about place and space in Song of Songs albeit with a slightly different focus. Following Simmel and Lefebvre I will be viewing space as a social product.⁸ Still following Lefebvre I regard spatial practice as an ordering force of (everyday) life.⁹ This ordering aspect of space influences both, the perception and the conception of space.

In addition to Simmel and Lefebvre I would like to supplement their insights derived from sociology with the anthropological category of *public* and *private*. I am aware of the dangers inherent in creating such binary opposites since they can never be seen as absolute categories within a closed system.¹⁰ Anne Yentsch

C. V. Camp (eds.), *Constructions of Space I. Theory, Geography, and Narrative*, LHB/OTS 481, 2007; G. T. M. Prinsloo / C. Maier (eds.), *Constructions of Space V. Place, Space and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, LHB/OTS 576, 2013 and the application in C. Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion. Gender, Space and the Sacred*, 2008. For alternatives to Lefebvre's theory see M. Löw, *Raumsoziologie*, stw 1506, 2001 and the application of her theory to Deuteronomy in M. Geiger, *Gottesräume. Die literarische und theologische Konzeption von Raum im Deuteronomium*, BWANT 183, 2010. A similar fascination of space can be observed in classical studies and in the field of comparative literature; see e.g. the detailed study by A. Bierl, *Räume im Anderen und der griechische Liebesroman des Xenophon von Ephesos*, in: A. Loprieno (ed.), *Mensch und Raum von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Colloquium Rauricum 9, 2006, 71–103 and C. Domínguez, *The South European Orient. A Comparative Reflection on Space in Literary History*, *Modern Language Quarterly* 67 (2006), 419–449.

⁶ See e.g. M. Gerhards, *Das Hohelied. Studien zu seiner literarischen Gestalt und theologischen Bedeutung*, *Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte* 35, 2010, 349–361 and S. Fischer, *Das Hohelied Salomos zwischen Poesie und Erzählung. Erzähltextanalyse eines poetischen Textes*, *FAT* 72, 2010, 173–206; a recent article by J. Erzberger, »I Sought Him, But Found Him Not« (Song 5:6). *Public Space in the Song of Songs*, *OTE* 24 (2011), 346–362 briefly mentions the work of Lefebvre but does not utilize insights from it.

⁷ Y. Thöne, *Liebe zwischen Stadt und Feld. Raum und Geschlecht im Hohelied*, *Exegese in unserer Zeit* 22, 2012 correlates aspects of gender and space and classifies the spaces used of Cant as »sexy«, i.e. spaces that are suitable for an erotic encounter and »unsexy«, i.e. spaces that are not. C. Meredith, *Journeys in the Songscape. Space and the Song of Songs*, *Hebrew Bible Monographs* 53, 2013 notes the impossibility to put Cant on a map and by utilizing a wide variety of insights from critical theory he is able to uncover a textual spatiality that eludes binary classifications.

⁸ H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 1991, 26–48.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 358.

¹⁰ See the overview in L. Lamphere, *The Domestic Space of Women and the Public World of Men. The Strengths and Limitations of an Anthropological Dichotomy*, in: C. B. Brettell / C. F. Sargent (eds.), *Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, 4th ed. 2005, 86–95; D. L. Rotman, *Separate*

has aptly observed that »... public space was not wholly public for it also contained a private component; private space was not wholly private for it also contained a public component. Within the context of the community, household space was private. [Yet] within the context of the house, some spatial areas were more private than others.«¹¹

If Yentsch is correct, an absolute separation of the spheres is impossible to maintain. Studies of the social construction of reality of ancient societies have confirmed this view.¹² They stress that statements that seem to link the private sphere to the inside (of a house) and thus label them as female space while the outside is seen as male dominated space appear to describe the ideal world that can never be created.¹³

To this observation we have to add the various insights from feminist theory and social anthropology that investigate the mobility of women as well as women's claim to public space.¹⁴

Spheres? Beyond the Dichotomies of Domesticity, *CA* 47 (2006), 666–674 and L. Wurst, The Legacy of Separate Spheres, in: D. L. Rotman / E.-R. Savulis (eds.), *Shared Spaces and Divided Places. Material Dimensions of Gender Relations and the American Historical Landscape*, 2003, 225–238.

11 A. E. Yentsch, The Symbolic Divisions of Pottery. Sex-Related Attributes of English and Anglo-American Household Pots, in: R. McGuire / R. Paynter (eds.), *The Archaeology of Inequality*, 1991, 205; see also the remarks in M. Herzfeld, The cultural politics of gesture. Reflections on the embodiment of ethnographic practice, *Ethnography* 10 (2009), 131–152.

12 See D. Cohen, Law, sexuality, and society. The enforcement of morals in classical Athens, 1991, 70–97.

13 See K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle*, 2nd ed. 1994, 95–98 who notes the male perspective of much of the sources and C. Meyers, Where the Girls are. Archaeology and Women's Lives in Ancient Israel, in: M. C. Moreland (ed.), *Between Text and Artefact. Integrating Archaeology in Biblical Studies Teaching*, *SBL Archaeology and Biblical Studies* 8, 2004, 31–51 for archaeological evidence.

14 See e.g. T. Fenster, Gender, Religion, and Urban Management. Women's Bodies and Everyday Lives in Jerusalem, in: K. M. Moirin / J. Kay Guelke (eds.), *Women, Religion, and Space. Global Perspectives on Gender and Faith, Space, Place and Society*, 2007, 41–60.

1 The Spatiality of Song of Songs

Song of Songs (Cant) mentions fifteen toponyms.¹⁵ The geographical centre seems to be Jerusalem, which is referred to eight times.¹⁶ From this centre reference is made to geographical places in all four directions: the North is represented by Lebanon (Cant 3,9; 4,8.11.15; 5,15; 7,5), Hermon, Senir and Amana (4,8); Tirzah (6,4); Damascus (7,5) and Carmel (7,6).¹⁷ Places in the South are En-Gedi (1,14) and Kedar (1,5). The East is referred to in places like Gilead (4,1; 6,5), Heshbon (7,5) and possibly Baal Hamon,¹⁸ while a single reference to the West is made by Sharon (2,1). Detlef Jericke has recently studied these toponyms and evaluated their use in the Song of Songs in regard to a possible date of composition during the 3rd century B.C.E.¹⁹

Next to these actual geographical topoi that probably do not represent concrete historical realities but are utilized as part of a »poetic topography« or »spiritual landscape« that should evoke images of exoticism we find a rich variety of other places in Song of Songs.²⁰ These places and spaces are no less exotic or poetic and they provide us with a unique window into the imaginative and imagined world of the author(s) of Song of Songs. In the following I would like to look at two of the imagined spaces in more detail, namely the garden and the vineyard.

¹⁵ On the problem see the detailed study by D. Jericke, *Toponyme im Hohenlied*, ZDPV 121 (2005), 39–58.

¹⁶ Cant 1,5; 2,7; 3,5.10; 5,8.16; 6,4; 8,4. With the sole exception of Cant 6,4 all references to Jerusalem appear in the construction בנות ירושלים.

¹⁷ The Lebanon in Song of Songs has attracted the attention of scholars, see H.-P. Müller, *Der Libanon in altorientalischen Quellen und im Hohelied. Paradigma einer poetischen Topographie*, ZDPV 117 (2001), 116–128 and S. Japhet, »Lebanon« in the Transition from Derash to Peshat. Sources, Etymology and Meaning (with Special Attention to the Song of Songs), in: S. M. Paul / R. A. Kraft / L. H. Schiffman / W. Fields (eds.), *Emanuel. Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov*, VTS 94, 2003, 707–24.

¹⁸ Whether Baal Hamon can be located in the East is open to discussion; see the arguments in Jericke, *Toponyme*, 50 f. and the detailed attempts at a location in M. H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, AB 7C, 1977, 686–690; maybe O. Keel is right when he explains the name as being a creation of the author (O. Keel, *Das Hohelied*, ZBK.AT 18, 2nd ed. 1992, 253 f.). The Vulgate seems to understand the name in a similar way when it reads *vinea fuit pacifico in ea quae habet populos*.

¹⁹ Jericke, *Toponyme*, 51–53.

²⁰ On the concepts mentioned see H.-P. Müller, *Travestien und geistige Landschaften. Zum Hintergrund einiger Motive bei Kohelet und im Hohenlied*, ZAW 109 (1997), 557–574 and idem, *Der Libanon*, 116–128.

2 The Role of the Garden in Cant 4,12–5,1

In Cant 4,12–5,1 we find the fullest description of a garden in the Song:

- (12) A locked garden (is) my sister, bride (אחותי כלה) → 4,9.10.12; 5,1
 a locked garden,²¹ a fountain sealed.
-
- (13) Your shoots²² a paradise (פרדס) of pomegranates
 with fruits of excellence (פרי מגדים),²³
 henna with nard

21 Read גל instead of גל with LXX (καῖητος κεκλεισμένος), Vulgate and Peshitta. גל I denotes a heap of stones (e.g. Gen 31,46) and גל II (maybe cognate to Akk. *gallu*, a literary epithet of the sea as in *ālānišu dannūti ša ina aḫi tām̄ti gal-la-ti*; cf. CAD, G, 18) normally describes waves but mostly occurs in the plural (see e.g. Isa 48,18; 51,15; Jer 5,22; Ps 89,10; 107,25). If MT is maintained reference is often made to Ug. *gl II* »(bowl shaped) cup« (see G. del Omo Lete / J. Sanmartín (eds.), *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition: Part One*, HdO 67/1, 2003, 297 with reference to KTU 1.14 IV, 1f.). This word, however, rather seems to be cognate to Hebr. גֶּלָה as in Josh 15,10; Jud 1,15 (see also Akk. *gullatu C* [CAD, G, 129] and possibly Gr. γαυτλός »water bucket« [Herodotus, Hist. 6.119] or »drinking bowl« [Theocritus, Id., 5.104]); also how one has to imagine a locked bowl remains unclear from this interpretation. Since repetition is a poetic device in Cant the double use of גל is not a problem.

22 שְׁלוּחַי is *hap. leg.* in the Hebrew Bible and a derivative from שָׁלַח. Acc. to HAL, 1517 it has to be distinguished from שְׁלֵחַ III denoting a canal or a water channel. The latter is cognate to Akk. *šilih̄tu* (CAD, Š/II, 443) and the use of the word in Mishnaic Hebrew (m. Mo'ed Qatan 1,1; b Bab. Bat. 4,7). The female suffix can only refer to the woman addressed as אחותי כלה in 4,12. LXX translates ἀποστολαί σου; this points to the pi'el use of שָׁלַח for a tree spreading its roots (Jer 17,8) or for a vine producing shoots (Ez 17,6 see also Ps 80,12) and שְׁלוּחַי may be a by-form to שְׁלֵחוֹת »tendrils« as in Isa 16,8 (cf. Ges¹⁸, 1362).

No matter which translation one chooses the image requires explanation for the following problems:

- 1) Taken literally shoots cannot be a paradise
- 2) Canals cannot be a paradise with pomegranates either.
- 3) None of the above can refer to a woman

It is one of several examples where the imagery is used in the description of the beloved person. Maybe the author is looking forward to Cant 6,11 where the female form of גן (גנה) is used – albeit in a verse where the woman is speaking. When »garden« can be masculine or feminine in Song of Songs it might not be surprising, that the actual beloved woman and her description using nature terminology collapse.

23 מְגֵד only in Deut 33,13–16 and Cant 4,13.16; 7,14; LXX interprets in Cant 4,13.16; 7,14 and translates ἀκρόδρυα »fruit-trees« while in Deut 33,13–16 ὄρα is used.

- (14) Nard with saffron²⁴,
 calamus and cinnamon
 with all trees of *incense*.²⁵
 Myrrh and aloes, → 3,6; 4,6
 with all the most precious spices.
- (15) Fountain of the gardens,
 well of living water,
 indeed flowing from Lebanon.
- (16) Awake north-wind and come south-wind.
 Blow through my garden, let its spices spread.
 Let my beloved come in his garden
 and taste its fruits of excellence (פרי מגדים).
-
- (1) I have come into my garden, my sister, bride (אחותי כלה).
 I have gathered²⁶ my myrrh with my spices.
 I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey, → 4,11
 I have drunk my wine with my milk. → 4,11
 Eat friends,
 drink and get drunk by
 love²⁷!

Cant 4,12–5,1 is a carefully crafted piece, which is highly significant for the shape of the book as a whole. The passage climaxes in what interpreters generally consider the centre of the Song of Songs: in Cant 5,1b a male voice encourages his friends to eat, drink and to get intoxicated by love.²⁸ This central verse is an invitation to the

²⁴ כרכם *hap. leg.*; maybe related to Akk. *kurkânû* (CAD, K, 560 f.), which can describe a medicinal plant or be listed among aromatics. In y Yoma 41d, 27–36 כרכם (»saffron« or »curcuma«) is mentioned as one of the ingredients of frankincense. LXX translates *νάρδος και κρόκος*, which would point to saffron (*crocus sativus* as in e.g. Homer, Il. 14.348 and Aristophanes, Clouds, 51 [ἡ δ' αὖ μύρου, κρόκου, καταγλωττισμάτῳ]).

²⁵ LXX does not understand the wordplay and translates *μετὰ πάντων ξύλων τοῦ Λιβάνου*.

²⁶ ארה only Cant 5,1 and Ps 80,13; maybe related to Phoenician *ʾr(h)* as in KAI 13,4 (uncertain reading); see also Akk. *arû C* »granary«, »storehouse« (CAD, A/II, 313). LXX supports the meaning »to gather« when it translates *ἐτρύγησα σμύρναν μου* (cf. Homer, Od. 7.124); in b. Bava Metz'ia ארי / ארה describes a labourer who plucks fruit (see M. Jastrow, Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature, 2005, 118).

²⁷ LXX misunderstands the דודים here as a second address to the friends and translates *φάγετε, πηλαιοί, και πίετε και μεθύσθητε, ἀδελφοί*. On the basis of Cant 5,13 Y. Zakovitch, *Das Hohelied*, HThKAT, 2004, 209 wants to follow the Septuagint reading here. In doing so, he neglects the fact that the plural of דוד in Cant is generally used in an abstract sense (see Cant 1,2,4; 4,10).

²⁸ Keel, *Das Hohelied*, 173.

readers of Song of Songs to become an active part in its pleasures.²⁹ In addition, the Masoretes indicate that Cant 4,14 has to be seen as the middle of the book.

In the pericope itself the phrases אַחַתִּי כֹלָה (4,12b; 5,1a_α) and פְּרִי מִגְדִּים (4,13a_β; 4,16b_β) form an outer and inner frame. Here the catchword אַחַתִּי כֹלָה links Cant 4,12–5,1 to the preceding song of admiration in 4,9–11. Within this song of admiration 4,11 can be seen as a transitional verse: the reappearance of the Lebanon (previously mentioned at 3,9 and 4,8) indicates a transition towards nature and the outside in general pointing forward to וְגוֹלִים מִן לִבְנוֹן in 4,15, while דָּבַשׁ וְחֹלֵב אֲכַלְתִּי יַעֲרִי עִם דְּבַשׁ שְׁתִּיתִי יַיִן (5,1a_β) echoes the (erotic) consumption in 5,1a_β (עַם הַלְּבָנִי (עַם הַלְּבָנִי).

After the classification of the beloved as a locked garden (and as a sealed fountain) in 4,12 the main part of the poem is devoted to the description of a sumptuous garden, echoing imagery that will reappear in the *ekphraseis* known from classical romances.³⁰ The double use of the phrase גֵּן נִעוּלָה stresses the exclusivity of access to this private pleasure garden.³¹ As is well known, the Vulgate translation of this verse (*hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa / hortus conclusus fons signatus*) forms the point of origin of the Christian allegory of Mary as being a closed garden i.e. a virgin.³² The Rabbis equally stress the virginity of Israel, when explaining the phrase but do not give up the sexual connotations entirely, when Song of Songs Rabbah reports a teaching of Rabbi Nathan who expounds the phrase »a garden locked, a fountain sealed« as follows: »one refers to vaginal, the other to anal intercourse.«³³ Even the allegorical readings of Cant 4,12 maintain something of the original intention of the text as they too express the lure, the promise, and the enigma connected with the female body as well as the desires attached to it.³⁴

²⁹ See H.-P. Müller, *Das Hohelied*, ATD 16/2, 4th ed. 1992, 53.

³⁰ On the reception history of the genre in later Byzantine literature see A. R. Littlewood, *Romantic Paradises. The Rôle of the Garden in the Byzantine Period*, BMGS 5 (1979), 95–114.

³¹ See J. C. Exum, *Song of Songs. A Commentary*, OTL, 2005, 176; different E. Assis, *Flashes of Fire, A Literary Analysis of the Song of Songs*, LHB/OTS 503, 2009, 136 who maintains that the woman is »locked to the man.«

³² G. Ecker, *Allegorical Gardens of Desire in Modernity. A Gendered Perspective*, in: S. E. Scott (ed.), *The Art of Interpreting, Papers in Art History from the Pennsylvania State University* 9, 1995, 261 f.

³³ *Song of Songs Rabba to Cant 4,12*; translation according to J. Neusner, *Song of Songs Rabbah. An Analytical Translation*. Vol. 2, BJS 198, 1989, 73.

³⁴ See also Y. Almog, »Flowing Myrrh upon the Handles of the Bolt. Bodily Border, Social Norms and their Transgression in the Song of Songs, *Biblical Interpretation* 18 (2010), 251–263 who has demonstrated how the use and appearance of liquid in Cant is »blurring the borders between the body's inside and outsides« (257 f.).

Reality and fantasy are blurred in the description of the garden as the man literally envisages a paradise that is stocked with several exotic plants that are not native to Palestine.³⁵ The vocabulary points to an utopian fantasy garden.³⁶

The various plants have stimulated the fantasy and creativeness of the interpreters – one example may suffice here. In the medieval commentary on Song of Songs by Moses ibn Tibbon (1195–1274 CE) מר ואהליות («myrrh and aloes») become the Mizwôt and the Torah given to Israel at Mt. Sinai. This is done via the wordplay of the Hebrew for tent (אהל) and the אהליות (aloes) found in the verse.³⁷ The commentator continues to state that Jacob/Israel is a dweller of tents and thus a cultural being and worthy to receive them in contrast to Esau who is a man of the field (Gen 25,27). Here ibn Tibbon anticipates an insight of modern exegesis that tends to locate the origin of several of the poems in an urban, rather than a rural milieu.

As in Greek thought the plants' → plants' »distinctive botanical characteristics tend to become blurred in the mythical accounts in which they are linked together, encompassed by a single boundary.«³⁸ It is not the fruits that matter but only their pleasant smells and aromas. Here it is especially revealing that the man in Cant 5,1 only gathers (ארה) myrrh and spices from his garden but he eats the things that are not mentioned in the description. The careful avoidance of the ravishing of the garden eschews all connotation of (sexual) force.³⁹ In doing so the perpetuity of the garden is emphasized – despite the obvious sexual connotations and the pleasures taking place in the garden it is not a fleeting place as for example the gardens of Adonis are.⁴⁰ As the love between the two protagonists is

³⁵ G. Gerleman, Ruth – Das Hohelied, BKAT XVIII, 2nd ed. 1981, 159 followed by Gerhards, Das Hohelied, 255.

³⁶ On the meaning and derivation of the various plants see H.-P. Müller, Hld 4,12–5,1. Ein althebräisches Paradigma poetischer Sprache, ZAH 1 (1998), 191–201.

³⁷ See O. Fraise, Moses ibn Tibbons Kommentar zum Hohelied und sein poetologisch-philologisches Programm, Synoptische Edition, Übersetzung und Analyse, SJ 25, 2004, 319: תורה ומצות ולא איש שדה שנצטוו באהל מעד וקבלות שידעם איש אהלים ולא איש שדה.

³⁸ M. Detienne, The Gardens of Adonis. Spices in Greek Mythology, European Philosophy and the Human Sciences, 1994, 5.

³⁹ For such an imagery see Sappho, fr. 105b (Voigt): οἶαν τὰν ὑάκινθον ἐν ὄρεισι ποίμενες ἄνδρες | πόσσι καταστειβοῖσι, χάμαι δέ τε πόρφυρον ἄνθος... and Longus, Daphnis and Chloe 4.7 where Lampis tramples the garden (καὶ εἰδὼς πάνυ αὐτὸν τῷ παραδείσῳ τερπόμενον ἔγνω τοῦτον, ὅσον οἶός τε ἔσται, διαφθεῖραι καὶ ἀποκομῆσαι). »Given the prenuptial context, Lampis's violence against the flowers might suggest the impending loss of Chloe's virginity« (F. I. Zeitlin, Gardens of Desire in Longus's Daphnis and Chloe. Nature, Art and Imitation, in: J. Tatum (ed.), The Search for the Ancient Novel, 1994, 148–170, 159).

⁴⁰ On the gardens of Adonis and their connection to the Eastern Levant see H.-P. Müller, Adonis und Adonisgärtchen, ZDMG 154 (2004), 265–284; for Ugaritic parallels see J.-M. Husser, Adonis

never threatened by either jealousy or competing suitors in the Song of Songs so is the vegetation of the garden never endangered.

The description of the garden ends in 4,15 and in 4,16 a speaker commands the winds from the North and the South to blow through the garden. Who is speaking in the first half of the verse is not entirely clear and only in 4,16b do we hear the voice of the woman. Again I would argue that this verse marks a transition: the spreading of the spices by the winds triggers the entry into his garden by the man,⁴¹ who then literally smells and tastes its pleasures. As it is obvious that the garden is an erotic metaphor for the women, it is possible that it is the woman who speaks in verse 16.⁴² The aromas spread by the winds are then a powerful agent as they either emit »the irresistible appeal of perfume which brings together the most distant of beings or else [provoke] precocity in the sensual adolescent, or extreme sexual potency in the seducer or hyper-sexuality in women.«⁴³

Gardens have recently started to capture the attention of literary and cultural critics.⁴⁴ Here the interest moves beyond horticultural investigation and addresses questions of social and anthropological structure. Gardens can be characterized as forming an intimate space and a place for love of both, humans and plants as is the case in the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnos:

140 ... πέλας δέ τις ὄρχατος αὐλῆς
ἀμφιλαφῆς δροσόεντι φυτῶν ἐβαρύνετο καρπῶ
τετράγυος πρὸ δόμοι· καὶ ἄρσενα φύλλα πετάσσας
θηλυτέρῳ φοίνικι πόθον πιστώσατο φοῖνιξ.

Before the house near the courtyard was an enclosure, widespread, four acres of trees heavy with fresh fruit. Male palm stretched his leaves over female palm, pledging his love.⁴⁵

et le chasseur tué. Chasse et érotisme dans les mythes ougaritiques, in: J.-M. Michaud (ed.), *Le royaume d'Ougarit du Crète à l'Euphrate. Nouveaux axes de recherches. Actes du congrès international de Sherbrooke 2005. Faculté de Theologie, d'Ethique et de Philosophie 5–8 Juillet 2005, Collection Proche-Orient et Littérature Ougaritique, 2007, 545–565.*

⁴¹ Thus also Gerhards, *Das Hohelied*, 256, who, however, maintains that the man is speaking in 4,16a.

⁴² Comp. Exum, *Song of Songs*, 180 f.

⁴³ Detienne, *Gardens of Adonis*, 127.

⁴⁴ See the essays collected in J. Ebach / H.-M. Gutmann / M. Frettlöh / M. Weinrich (eds.), »Schau an der schönen Gärten Zier ...« *Über irdische und himmlische Paradiese. Zu Theologie und Kulturgeschichte des Gartens*, *Jabboq* 7, 2007.

⁴⁵ Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 3.140–143; English translation according to W. H. D. Rouse, *Nonnos – Dionysiaca Books I–XV, LCL 344*, repr. ed. 1962, 111.

Since flowers and plants are seen as the work of Eros,⁴⁶ it is not surprising that in the Greek novel of the Hellenistic period gardens and love can collapse into each other.⁴⁷ Additionally, feminist theory has drawn attention to the fact that gardens often represent a *liminal place*, i.e. being situated on the border between private and public spaces.⁴⁸ They »are fantasized as hideaways, sanctuaries in which a female self can develop without social constraints and the norms of femininity.«⁴⁹ The garden, however, is to be separated from the *locus amoenus* and the ideal landscape of Greek Bucolic poetry by being an artificial enclosure with borders. As such the garden appears to be a meta-place, i.e. a space that in itself represents the border between (wild) landscape and the enclosed space of a house.

In Cant 4,12–5,1 the outside world is symbolized by the living waters flowing from Lebanon (v. 15b). The waters flowing from Lebanon evoke mythical images and Lebanon in the Song of Songs does not describe a romantic place of love. Rather it can be a cipher for the wilderness as in Cant 4,8 or have a positive connotation stressing the exquisite character of the beloved as it is the case in 4,11. I would argue that this ambivalent attitude towards the Lebanon points to an attempt to domesticate the outside world that threatens to intrude upon the garden. A similar strategy is employed in Longus' pastoral novel *Daphnis and Chloe*, when he places the garden of Dionysophanes in such a way that it is possible to overlook the outside world:⁵⁰

ἐντεῦθεν εὖοπτον μὲν ἦν τὸ πεδίον καὶ ἦν ὄραν τοὺς νέμοντας· εὖοπτος δὲ ἡ θάλασσα καὶ ἐωρῶντο οἱ παραπλέοντες· ὥστε καὶ ταῦτα μέρος ἐγένετο τῆς ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τρυφῆς.⁵¹

From here one had a beautiful view over the plain and was able to observe the herdsmen therein; equally beautiful was the view over the sea where one saw those who sailed past; thus the pleasant view was also part of the delights of the garden.

46 See Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, 2.7 (τὰ ἄνθη πάντα Ἔρωτος ἔργα· τὰ φυτὰ πάντα τοῦτου ποιήματα).

47 See e.g. Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, Prol.: ἐν Λέσβῳ θηρῶν ἐν ἄλσει Νυμφῶν θέαμα εἶδον κάλλιστον ὧν εἶδον· εἰκόνα γραπτὴν, ἱστορίαν ἔρωτος. καλὸν μὲν καὶ τὸ ἄλσος πολύδενδρον, ἀνθηρόν, κατάρρυτον ...

48 See N. Würzbach, *Raumdarstellung*, in: V. Nünning / A. Nünning (eds.), *Erzähltextanalyse und Gender Studies*, Sammlung Metzler 344, 2004, 54.

49 Ecker, *Allegorical Gardens*, 263.

50 On the garden of Dionysophanes see P. Grimal, *Le jardin de Lamon à Lesbos*, *Revue Archéologique* 49 (1957), 211–214 and on the role of gardens in Longus' works in general see Zeitlin, *Gardens of Desire*, 148–170.

51 Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 4.3.

In contrast to other parts of the ancient novel where the outside world is full of dangers for the loving couple, here the world is simply transformed into being an object that literally paints the background for the paradise-like garden (ὥστε καὶ ταῦτα μέρος ἐγένετο τῆς ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τρυφῆς).

In both cases it becomes obvious that the production of space does not operate with binary opposites such as inside vs. outside or garden vs. wilderness. As mentioned above, the existence of the garden is never threatened – neither from outside forces nor from the inside. In Cant 6,2f., where the beloved man is transformed into a stag grazing amongst lotuses a peaceful vision of intense delight is created:⁵²

- (2) My beloved has gone down to his garden,
 to the beds⁵³ of spices, → 5,13aa
 to graze in the gardens,⁵⁴
 and to gather lotuses.⁵⁵
- (3) I am my beloved and my beloved is mine, → (5,6); 7,11
 grazing amongst the lotuses. → 2,16b

The formulaic use of אֲנִי לְדוּדִי וְדוּדִי לִי by the woman in connection with the image of grazing »expresses the lovers' total absorption in each other« and paints the potential destructive impetus of grazing as the deepest understanding of belonging.⁵⁶

The imagined space of the garden is finally transformed into a female entity when we read in Cant 6,11

⁵² On the beloved as stag see O. Keel, *Deine Blicke sind Tauben. Zur Metaphorik des Hohen Liedes*, SBS 114/115, 1984, 78–81.

⁵³ שׁוּשַׁן only Ez 17,7,10; Cant 5,13; 6,2. LXX translates εἰς φιάλας τοῦ ἀρώματος here.

⁵⁴ The plural is probably poetic (Zakovitch, *Das Hohelied*, 229); Exum, *Song of Songs*, 210 has drawn attention to the fact that the woman can be »both a lily (2,1) and lilies, a garden and gardens.«

⁵⁵ שׁוּשַׁן as a name for a flower only Hos 14,4; Cant 2,1.2.16; 4,5; 5,13; 6,2.3; 7,3; Sir 50,8 and 1QH^a XVIII.31 (ואפררה בשושנה לבי נפה למקור עולם). On translating שׁוּשַׁן as »lotus« and being related to Egyptian *ššn* see Keel, *Deine Blicke sind Tauben*, 63–78 as well as B. Štrba, שׁוּשַׁן of the Canticle, Bib 85 (2004), 475–502 and W. D. Sunderman, *Modest of Magnificent? Lotus versus Lily in Canticles*, CBQ 67 (2005), 42–58.

⁵⁶ Exum, *Song of Songs*, 210.

- (11) I went down (ירדתי) to the nut⁵⁷ garden⁵⁸ (גנת אגוז) → (6,2)
 to look at the blossoms⁵⁹ of the valley⁶⁰;
 to see if the vine (גפן) had budded (הפרחה), → 7,13
 if the pomegranates had bloomed⁶¹ (הנצו).⁶² → 7,13

Otherwise being masculine in the Song of Songs we now encounter a female nut-garden (גנת אגוז). The verse is a description of an experience of the man and it is more reserved than in the previous passages. Instead of grazing, plucking or eating he is simply looking here, expressing his desire. The blossoming of nature echoes the description of the awakening of spring and love in Cant 2,10–14. As in 4,12–5,1 the place is an exotic garden, when it is described as גנת אגוז. »The fruit was held to be an aphrodisiac in antiquity, just like the pomegranate, probably because of the shape which recalls the female organ.«⁶³

57 אגוז *hap. leg.*; the translation »nut« is supported by LXX καρύα; cf. Sophocles, fr. 759 καρύαι μελῖαι τε (quoted according to S. Radt (ed.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* Vol. 4. Sophocles, 1977) and later Jewish Aramaic (Jastrow, Dictionary, 11); see also Josephus, War 3.517 referring to the walnut (*juglans regia*) when describing the fertile district of Gennezareth: καρύαι μὲν γε, φυτῶν τὸ χειμεριώτατον, ἄπειροι τεθήλασιν, ἔνθα φοίνικες, οἱ καύματι τρέφονται, συκαὶ δὲ καὶ ἐλαῖαι πλησίον τούτων, αἷς μαλθακώτερος ἀήρ ἀποδέδεικται. b Ber. 50b mentions that nuts were part of the nuptial procession. The earliest archaeological evidence for the existence of walnut trees in Palestine comes from Ramat Raḥel where excavations have revealed fossil pollen of the *juglans regia*; see O. Lipschits / Y. Gadot / D. Langgut, The Riddles of Ramat Raḥel. The Archaeology of a Royal Persian Period Edifice, *Trans* 41 (2012), 71f. and D. Langgut / Y. Gadot / N. Porat / O. Lipschits, Fossil Pollen Reveals the Secrets of the Royal Persian Garden at Ramat Raḥel, *Jerusalem, Palynology* 37 (2013), 1–15.

58 גנת f. also in Est 1,5; 7,7,8; In Cant ג is masculine (4,12.15.16; 5,1; 6,2; 8,13).

59 אגוז only Cant 6,11 and Job 8,12; LXX supports the translation: γενήμασιν τοῦ χειμάρρου; in biblical Aramaic it describes the fruit (Dan 4,9.11.18); see also the Akk. cognate *inbu* (CAD, I–J, 144–147), which can be used to denote both, fruits and sexual attractiveness.

60 On the basis of Num 24,6; Job 29,18^{LXX} (and Arabic *naḥl*) W. Rudolph, *Das Buch Ruth – Das Hohelied – Die Klagelieder*, KAT XVIII/1–3, 1962, 166 followed by Gerleman, *Ruth – Das Hohelied*, 188 and Müller, *Das Hohelied*, 69f. wants to think of a palm here.

61 אגוז only in Ez 1,7 (qal); Cant 6,11; 7,13; Qoh 12,5 (all hi.).

62 LXX adds ἐκεῖ δώσω τοὺς μαστοὺς μου σοῖ thus creating a close parallel to 7,13.

63 G. Barbiero, *Song of Songs. A Close Reading*, VT.S 144, 2011, 352f.

3 Vineyards as Places Between Public and Private

Related to the garden, though of a different quality is the vineyard in Song of Songs.⁶⁴ Not part of the divine creation, the vineyard is one of humanities first agricultural achievements (Gen 9,20). Though poets like Alcaeus recommend that no tree should be planted sooner than the vine,⁶⁵ the intoxicating nature of the wine might be the reason why it is excluded from Eden.⁶⁶ Like the garden the vineyard is a human creation that is in need of (agricultural) care; also vineyards are often enclosed and carefully guarded.⁶⁷

כרם occurs nine times in the Song of Songs.⁶⁸ Commentators have long recognised that next to the general description of an actual vineyard, as for example in Cant 1,6bα (שמני נטרה את הכרמים) the word כרם can be used to denote the woman (1,6bβ), thus being used as an expression of (male) desire.

In contrast to the private aspect of the garden as portrayed in the Song, the vineyard is seen as a place of wider male-female interaction. When Homer describes the harvest on the Shield of Achilles (Iliad 18.478–608) it is said that men and women collect the grapes in baskets:

παρθενικαὶ δὲ καὶ ἡῖθεοι ἀταλὰ φρονέοντες
πλεκτοῖς ἐν ταλάροισι φέρον μελιτῆδεα καρπὸν.

... girls and boys, their hearts leaping in innocence,
bearing away the sweet ripe fruit in wicker baskets.⁶⁹

64 כרם occurs nine times in Cant 1,6 (2x); 1,14; 2,15 (2x); 7,13; 8,11 (2x).¹² On vineyard and wine in the Song of Songs see A. C. Hagedorn, *Of Foxes and Vineyards. Greek Perspectives on the Song of Songs*, VT 53 (2003), 337–352.

65 Alcaeus, fr. 342 (Voigt): μηδὲν ἄλλο φυτεύσης πρότερον δένδριον ἀμπέλω.

66 See Noah's shameful behaviour after too much drinking in Gen 9,21 and also Thr 4,21b. For a positive view see Jud 9,13; Ps 54,5; Qoh 10,19. The same can be said for the Homeric epics where the wine can be positively called μελιτῆδης (Homer, Il. 4.346; 12.321 etc.) or μελίφερων (Homer, Il. 6.264; 8.506 etc.); on the negative side especially the Odyssey knows of the intoxicating side of wine (cf. Homer, Od. 3.139; 9.454; 18.295 etc.).

67 On the role of vineyards, viticulture and vine in ancient Palestine see C. E. Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine. Viticulture in Ancient Israel*, HSM 60, 2000.

68 A. Brenner has observed that amongst the »foodstuff« mentioned in the Song of Songs wine and wine related vocabulary head the list; cf. A. Brenner, *The Food of Love. Gendered Food and Food Imagery in the Song of Songs*, Semeia 86 (1999), 101–112. However, in her attempt to gender food etc. in the Song of Songs she does not attach a male or female label to wine. On a possible gendering of wine see M. Herzfeld, *The Poetics of Manhood. Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village*, 1985, 81 who observes: »drinking red wine is a symbol of manhood, since it is thought to produce the blood that creates sons.«

69 Homer, Il. 18.567–568 (English translation according to R. Fagels, *The Iliad*, 1990, 486) – lines 561–572 are devoted to a description of a vineyard.

Here men and women work together and the desired division of labour and space becomes blurred.⁷⁰ It seems that a vineyard in antiquity provided an opportune place to meet the opposite sex and has probably to be seen in the same context as, for example, the village well.⁷¹

This tallies well with passages like Cant 2,15 where outside intrusion is described.⁷² Here the foxes – a picture for other suitors – enter the vineyard, e.g. threatening the woman. Like the garden, a vineyard may be privately owned but unlike the enclosure of the garden the borders of the vineyard are porous. Being a source of agricultural produce it becomes necessary to let the outside world enter (e.g. at harvest time) and this entry is perceived as being disruptive. It may not be surprising that brothers as guardians of female chastity appear in connection to the vineyard (Cant 1,6). As the vineyard too is a place beyond the moral and societal restrictions the agricultural world can be transformed into a sexual playing field.⁷³ Since the vineyard is a space shared with foxes, brothers and maybe even Solomon (Cant 8,11), the beloved has to emphasize once again his exclusive claim – in Cant 8,12 this is done by the triple use of the possessive pronoun:

(12) My vineyard that belongs to me is before me, → 1,6bβ
 the thousands for you, Solomon,
 and two hundred for the keepers of its fruit.

Via the root נטר the verse echoes the statement of the woman in Cant 1,6bβ where again three possessive pronouns make it abundantly clear that the brothers do not exert any authority over the woman's sexuality.⁷⁴

(6) ... my vineyard that belongs to me, I have not guarded (לא נטרתי). → 8,12a

Like the garden, the space of the vineyard guarantees freedom of movement and the delight in desires. Like the garden, the vineyard is a space in between – this

⁷⁰ On the so-called »politics of spatial differentiation« see Cohen, *Law*, 41–54.

⁷¹ For meetings between men and women at a well see for example Gen. 29,1–11 and Pausanias, 4.20.6; J. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage. A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community*, 1964, 86 observes for traditional Mediterranean societies: »In the popular mind wells and illicit sexual intercourse are linked together. If a man for any reason wants to see the local girls, he has only to sit by the well and by and by he will see them all.«

⁷² See Neh 3,35 where foxes (שועל) as in Cant 2,15) are described as climbing walls (חומה) as in Cant 8,9f.).

⁷³ Cf. Thöne, *Liebe*, 430 and M. Falk, *Love Lyrics from the Bible. A Translation and Literary Study of the Song of Songs*, 1982, 100–102.

⁷⁴ Exum, *Song of Songs*, 106.

time not in between the house and the open countryside but in between the realm of the public and the private. Vineyards are places of joy and happiness; planting vineyards and drinking their wine or eating their fruits is a sign of the peaceful condition of humanity and almost an utopian state that is desired.⁷⁵ In contrast to the garden, however, these joys are not exclusive ones. The very nature of the vineyard makes it a shared space and various agents lay claim to it.

Conclusion

By using the imagery of the garden and the vineyard, Song of Songs creates spaces that are in between the enclosed world of city and house and the wide-open countryside. Since the protagonists of the Song of Songs move and operate in all of these three spaces binary opposites are only of a limited usefulness when explaining the structure of social and spatial relationships in the Song. The creation of alternative spaces beyond the public and private or town and countryside dichotomy enables the man and the woman of Song of Songs to contest and re-negotiate boundaries and cultural identity.

Though being reluctant to use Edward Soja's concept of a Thirdspace for the analysis of spatiality in Song of Songs, it cannot be denied that some aspects of such a Thirdspace occur in the creation of the above mentioned in-between spaces.⁷⁶ In the garden and in the vineyard the abstract and the concrete, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the real and the imagined come together.⁷⁷ For the male lover both spaces suggest availability – an availability that is not necessarily granted within the closed confines of house and city (cf. Cant 5,2–4).

The descriptions of garden and vineyard can be understood as being both, actual places that exist in the imagination of the speaker (and reader) or more or less veiled references to the beloved woman. If that is the case, the construction

⁷⁵ See e.g. Am 9,14aß; Isa 37,30; 65,21; Jer 31,5.

⁷⁶ Taking up Foucault's concept of *heterotopias*, Soja regards it as »the micro- or site geography of Thirdspace« (Soja, Thirdspace, 157). Previously to Soja, H. K. Bhaba, *The Third Space*, in: J. Rutherford (ed.), *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, 1990, 207–221 had used the term in his definition of hybridity: »... hybridity is the ›third space‹ which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority ... The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation« (211).

⁷⁷ The pairs are taken from Soja, Thirdspace, 56.

of space in the Song of Songs would affect both, the description of the beloved person as well as the place which the beloved occupies.

Naturally, these rather brief forays into the Song's spatiality could only illuminate limited aspects of the various concepts employed. Further study is certainly needed to address for example the performative nature of space and the relationship between space and gender.⁷⁸ But this must be done in another contribution.

Article Note

This article originated as a lecture delivered to the Society for Old Testament Study. I would like to thank J. Cheryl Exum and John F. A. Sawyer for the kind invitation and valuable feedback. All remaining shortcomings are, of course, my own.

Abstract: The article investigates the role of space in the Song of Songs. Taking recent theoretical insights into spatiality (M. Foucault, E. Soja, H. Lefebvre) as a starting point for an exegesis of selected passages from Song of Songs (Cant 4,12–5,1; 6,2 f.) it is argued that by using the imagery of the garden and the vineyard, Song of Songs creates spaces that are in between the enclosed world of city and house and the wide-open countryside. Since the protagonists of the Song of Songs move and operate in all of these three spaces, binary opposites are only of a limited usefulness when explaining the structure of social and spatial relationships in the Song. The creation of alternative spaces beyond the public and private or town and countryside dichotomy enables the man and the woman of Song of Songs to contest and re-negotiate boundaries and cultural identity. In a further interpretative step the imagery of garden and vineyard is supplemented by comparative material from the Greek world.

Zusammenfassung: Der Beitrag untersucht die Funktion des Raumes im Hohelied. Ausgangspunkt sind raumtheoretische Überlegungen (M. Foucault, E. Soja, H. Lefebvre), die zur Exegese ausgewählter Passagen des Hoheliedes (Cant 4,12–5,1; 6,2 f.) herangezogen werden. So ist es möglich zu zeigen, dass das Hohelied den Garten und den Weinberg benutzt, um Räume zu schaffen, die zwischen der abgeschlossenen Welt der Stadt und der offenen, der freien Natur liegen. Da die

⁷⁸ See e.g. the observations in C. Meredith, *The Lattice and the Looking Glass: Gendered Space in Song of Songs 2:8–14*, JAAR 80 (2012), 365 f.

Protagonisten sich in allen drei Räumen bewegen, sind binäre Interpretationsmodelle der Struktur der sozialen und räumlichen Beziehungen nur bedingt hilfreich. Indem sog. Zwischenräume geschaffen werden, können der Mann und die Frau im Hohelied die Grenzen der eigenen kulturellen Identität verschieben. Im Rahmen eines kulturellen Vergleichs werden die Bilder und Konzeptionen mit vergleichbarem Material aus dem griechischsprachigen Raum ergänzt.

Résumé: Cet article est une enquête sur la fonction de l'espace dans le Cantique des Cantiques. En partant des éléments théoriques sur la spatialité (M. Foucault, E. Soja, H. Lefebvre), l'exégèse de certains passages choisis (Ca 4,12–5,1; 6,2f.) montrera qu'en utilisant l'imagerie du jardin et de la vigne, le Cantique des Cantiques crée des espaces, qui se situent entre le monde clos des villes ou des maisons et la campagne vaste et ouverte. Comme les protagonistes du Cantique des Cantiques se déplacent entre ces trois espaces, les oppositions binaires ne sont pas très utiles quand il faut expliquer la structure sociale et spatiale dans le Cantique. La création d'espaces alternatifs, au-delà de la dichotomie du publique et du privé ou de la ville et de la campagne, permet à la femme et à l'homme du Cantique des Cantiques de contester et de renégocier les frontières et l'identité culturelle. Dans un effort d'interprétation supplémentaire, l'imagerie du jardin et de la vigne est complétée avec du matériel comparatif tiré du monde grec.