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Yeseul Kim

Images of Anonymous Women

A Semiotic Approach to Image-Text Relations in Interpretations of Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible

PEETERS

IMAGES OF ANONYMOUS WOMEN

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Yeseul Kim

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PREFACE

In an era when AI handles all manner of tasks, I find myself wondering what it means to publish this doctoral dissertation as a book. Wouldn't readers be better served by having AI organize the prior research I worked so hard to compile? While AI has indeed acquired remarkable capabilities, I believe what it cannot do at this stage is to challenge established assumptions. In my occasional conversations with AI, I notice that it tends to generate responses that align with widely accepted viewpoints. AI gravitates toward statistically common patterns in its training data, which often reflect mainstream perspectives. If this is true, then the scholar's primary role – both in the past and now – remains unchanged: to question the preconceptions that most people take for granted, and to expand the horizons of collective understanding by revealing that things might not be as they seem.

This book centers on several key concepts: semiotics, interpretation, image, text, and the idea of connecting all these elements. My argument is simple, perhaps even obvious: all interpretation is subjective. We all know this, yet when writing academic papers, we strive for objectivity. Where does objectivity end and subjectivity begin? What constitutes valid interpretation, and when does interpretation become 'wrong'?

Exploring the relationships between interpreters and their subjects through a semiotic lens – examining interpretations of anonymous women like the Nude Woman from Old Babylonia and the Shulammite from the Song of Songs – proved to be a genuinely enjoyable process. I have employed three approaches – semiotic, biblical-critical, and iconographic – but interpretation remains at the heart of it all. Believing that virtually all interpretations have their own validity, I wanted to honor various perspectives. This deeply subjective endeavor of mine, expressed through academic language, became my doctoral dissertation and, with the help of many people, this book.

Zainab Bahrani, Julia Assante, Othmar Keel, and Fiona Black served as my intellectual dialog partners throughout this work. I have had the privilege of meeting Prof. em. Othmar Keel several times, and he has always been warmly encouraging. Though I never studied directly under him, I consider myself his student. He also graciously permitted me to include many photographs from his publications in this book. Professor Bahrani and I exchanged emails when she generously allowed me to use her photograph, though we have never met in person. I have had no face-to-face contact with the other authors I quote, yet throughout this project, I have felt a deep sense of connection with them all and hold them in the highest regard.

The person who made this intellectual journey possible and helped shape it into a doctoral dissertation is my supervisor, Prof. em. Hans Ulrich Steymans. More than anyone else, he provided unwavering support that enabled me to begin and complete this doctoral work in Switzerland. Without his warm encouragement and guidance, I could never have seen this project through to completion. I am equally grateful to Prof. Mirko Novák, who served as my co-supervisor at the University of Bern and taught me ancient Near Eastern archaeology and iconography.

I would also like to thank the staff at the University of Fribourg, who provided such a conducive environment for focused study. Prof. Martin Klöckener, Prof. Astrid Kaptijn, and Prof. Thomas Schumacher examined this dissertation and helped improve it with their valuable insights. My deepest gratitude goes also to Prof. Christoph Uehlinger, who invested considerable time in refining my manuscript so that it could be published by OBO. More than a decade ago, as a visiting lecturer at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Dr. Thomas Staubli first introduced me to ancient Near Eastern iconography and sparked my fascination with the field. Throughout my studies at the University of Fribourg, he continued to teach me iconography and provided countless valuable insights that enriched this work. Dr. Jürg Eggler made significant contributions to the formation of this book, particularly through his invaluable assistance with philosophical concepts of semiotics. Dr. Izaak de Hulster kindly offered guidance via email when I was first venturing into iconography, and Dr. Jaeyoung Jeon offered precious counsel whenever I felt overwhelmed by my studies. My teachers and colleagues from Fribourg and Bern – Prof. Silvia Schroer, Prof. Stefan Münger, Dr. Patrick Wyssmann, Dr. Florian Lippke and Wenifredo V. Padilla III – provided invaluable scholarly mentorship, academic support, and friendship throughout this journey. I am deeply grateful to each of you. I also thank Hannah Jones for her thoughtful editing of the English, and extend my gratitude to all the institutions and scholars who permitted me to use their photographs.

This dissertation was made possible through the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship, which allowed me to live and study in Switzerland without financial worry. The Community at Chemin Neuf provided a safe and comfortable place to call home. The Jean and Bluette Nordmann Scholarship supported six months of study in Jerusalem, where I was able to develop several related research topics. During that time, I benefited greatly from the academic guidance of Prof. em. Tallay Ornan, Mr. Elnathan Weissert, and Prof. Raanan Eichler.

I am deeply grateful to all those who provided valuable feedback when I presented aspects of this research at various academic conferences. Dr. Gavin Fernandes deserves special mention for the enormous time he invested in providing detailed feedback. Prof. Stefan Fischer supported me when I wanted to give up, encouraging me to persevere.

I also want to thank my mentors in Korea: Prof. Koog P. Hong, my former supervisor at Yonsei University, who never hesitates to offer help, and Prof. Gwangsu Yu, who always provides wise counsel during difficult times. To my fellow travelers on this academic journey, Nuri Kim and Yujin Surh, thank you for sharing the same concerns and being there to lean on.

Throughout the long process of conceiving, writing, completely overhauling, rewriting, defending, and finally publishing this dissertation, I experienced many of life's major transitions as a woman. I met my husband, fell in love, married, became pregnant, gave birth, and am now raising our child. Through it all, my parents, Jineau Kim and Eunjoo Chae, and husband, Jonghoon Lim, provided unwavering emotional support, precious time, and help with childcare that made this publication possible. My love and gratitude to them is boundless. I also want to thank my younger brother, Hayoung Kim, who says I am the person he most admires.

People often compare writing a book to giving birth. As I was finishing the print manuscript of this book, I was blessed with an incomparably precious child, Eunwoo Lim. The thing my child and my dissertation have in common is that both came into this world through the help of many people. For that, I can only feel gratitude.

To everyone, I offer my deepest thanks and love.

Iksan, July 2025
Yeseul Kim

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Freedman, David Noel (ed.). *Anchor Bible Dictionary.* 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
ANEM	Ancient Near Eastern Monographs
ANESSup	Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement Series
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AoF	Altorientalische Forschungen
BaM	*Baghdader Mitteilungen*
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BDB	Brown, F., S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1907
BiLiSe	Bible and Literature Series
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
COS	Hallo, William W., et al. (eds.). *The Context of Scripture*. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002
CRRAI	Compte-rendu de la Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale
DCH	Clines, David J.A. (ed.). *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. 9 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993–2016
DDD	Van der Toorn, Karel, Bob Becking, and P.W. van der Horst (eds.). *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. 2nd ed. Leiden: Brill, 1999
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FAT II	Forschungen zum Alten Testament, 2. Reihe
Ges^{18}	Donner, H. (ed.). *Gesenius Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*. 18th ed. 6 vols. Berlin; Heidelberg; New York: Springer-Verlag, 1987–2012
HALOT	Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, et al. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated and edited under the supervision of M.E.J. Richardson. Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000
HTS	*HTS Teologiese Studies/HTS Theological Studies*
IDD	Eggler, Jürg, and Christoph Uehlinger (eds.). *Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East: An Iconographic Dictionary with Special Emphasis on First-*

	Millennium BCE Palestine/Israel. Electronic pre-publications. http://www.religionswissenschaft.uzh.ch/idd/prepublications (26 Dec. 2020)
IPIAO	Schroer, Silvia. *Die Ikonographie Palästinas/Israels und der Alte Orient: Eine Religionsgeschichte in Bildern*. 4 vols. Fribourg: Academic Press; Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2005–2018
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement series
LAOS	Leipziger Altorientalistische Studien
MC	Mesopotamian Civilizations
NABU	*Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires*
NBL	Görg, Manfred, and Bernhard Lang (eds.). *Neues Bibel-Lexikon*. 3 vols. Zurich: Benziger, 1988–2001
NIDOTTE	VanGemeren, Willem A., et al. (ed.). *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1997
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBO.SA	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis. Series Archaeologica
OTL	Old Testament Library
RIA	Ebeling, Erich, et al. (eds.). *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928–2018
RGG	Betz, Hans Dieter et al. (eds.). *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. 9 vols. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1998–2007
SANER	Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization
SBA	Saarbrücker Beiträge zur Altertumskunde
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
ThWAT	Botterweck, G. Johannes, et al. (eds.). *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*. 10 vols. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1973–2000
TLOT	Jenni, Ernst and Claus Westermann. *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. 3 vols. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997
ZBK	Züricher Bibelkommentare
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum

WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

I. INTRODUCTION

A single image of a woman on a terracotta plaque has generated much discussion about the figure's identity and function. Standing, nude, with hands clasped under her breasts and the clear markings of a navel and vagina, this figure has been identified in various ways, including: the goddess Ishtar, a member of Ishtar's entourage, a personification of *baštu* ('dignity'), a propitious spirit, an exemplary woman, a prostitute, a seductress, a dancer, a female worshipper, a fertility figurine, pornography, a play doll, a magical or ritual device, a burial good, a votive figurine, an ideal of female beauty, and a protective amulet. Similarly, the textual imagery of Song of Songs 7, which details a part-by-part description of a woman from her feet to her head with sensual and enigmatic metaphors, has attracted considerable attention from biblical scholars. She has been characterized as: the most beautiful woman, a goddess, a comic and ugly woman, a grotesque woman, the personification of Israel or the Church, and the topography of the Holy Land, to name a few. For these anonymous women, the suggested identities are as numerous as the interpreters; yet, the object of all these differing interpretations have been a single text, or a single image. This leads one to question: what has caused these interpretations to be so diverse and at times even contrasting? While there have been scholarly efforts to determine who these women were and what they were used for, none have yet focused on why scholarly interpretations portray them so differently.

The subjects of this study are two 'anonymous women' of the ancient Near East: one from an Old Babylonian (OB) terracotta plaque and another from the Hebrew Bible. Because these women are anonymous to modern viewers and readers, they have been ambiguous enough to stimulate the curiosity of scholars. Furthermore because they are women, this scholarly discussion has been enriched by discourses on gender issues, gender hierarchy, and feminism.

The focus of this study is on contemporary scholarly interpretations of these women, which are deliberately chosen to demonstrate how even 'scientific' and 'academic' interpretations can be influenced by the subjectivity of the interpreters. The central question is: How have interpreters of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries CE interpreted these women? This inquiry is further clarified by two sub-questions: (1) Why does the same object generate disparate interpretations, and what leads these interpretations in different directions? (2) How are various images and texts interrelated in these interpretations? Since these questions concern the process of interpretation and the relationship between visual

and textual sign systems in the interpreter's mind, I apply semiotics – the study of signs and interpretations – as a methodological framework to pursue them.[1]

Answering these questions with the help of semiotics leads to the conclusion that the collaboration between the ambiguity of the image or text and the subjectivity of the interpreter causes interpretations to take different paths. The semiotic analysis shows that subjectivity, or the personal preferences of an interpreter, plays an important role, regardless of whether the interpretation is academic or scientific. The transdisciplinary character of semiotics also reveals how the interrelatedness of visual and textual sign systems can be studied by introducing the notion of the 'interpreter' into the schema, replacing the dichotomy of image vs. text with a trichotomy of image-interpreter-text. The role of the interpreter, in collaboration with image and text, is therefore emphasized throughout the discussion.

This study consists of three parts. Part I discusses semiotics and semiotic models for interpreting texts and images, and Parts II and III apply these models to the interpretations of two anonymous women from an image (Part II) and a text (Part III). Parts II and III, the semiotic analyses of these two women, include my own interpretations and self-analysis of them. This is not to offer better or correct interpretations of the women but to provide an example of how one may semiotically analyze one's own work, revealing unnoticed presumptions and personal preferences. In the self-analysis sections of my interpretation, I refer to myself in the third person to distance myself (as the analyst) from (myself as) the 'model author' of my text.[2] This gives a more neutral tone to my self-analysis, facilitating self-reflection. Nonetheless, complete objectivity is impossible, so it should be noted that the self-analysis is also affected by my subjectivity. Again, in this study, my readers are not expected to find any 'right' interpretations, but instead to gain insight into how individual perspectives deeply influence every interpretation.

In Part I, I deal with semiotics as the method of this study. The inter- and transdisciplinarity of semiotics make it an adequate approach for analyzing the intricate image-text relations that take place across the boundaries of images and texts. However, while semiotics has been mentioned frequently in the fields of ancient Near Eastern and biblical studies, its theories and implications have not yet been discussed in depth.[3]

Starting with the definition of semiotics and the advantages of using semiotics as a method, I proceed to the relationship of word and image from a semiotic point of view. Then I introduce Umberto Eco's textual collaboration model to

[1] See Chapter 3 below.
[2] See p. 54 below for the concept of model author.
[3] See p. 5–10 below.

analyze the collaboration between texts and readers. Since this study deals with images as well as texts, an equivalent model for the semiotic analysis of visual images is also needed. Therefore, I offer an image collaboration model, which is based on Eco's textual collaboration model and designed to be isomorphic to it, for the convenient comparison of images and texts. The textual model is the basis of the image model, not because the textual sign systems have priority over visual ones, but because academic discourses to which this study contributes are primarily verbal. This new model is modified from the textual collaboration model using the visual semiotic tools of Erwin Panofsky and Mieke Bal. These modifications are summarized at the end of Part I, in which I offer the finished image collaboration model with explanations.

In Part II, I test my image collaboration model, using three interpretations of the OB nude woman terracotta plaque. I begin with a brief discussion of the research history, typology, and the distribution of the motif, then present my own interpretation, followed by a semiotic analysis of three modern interpretations. These semiotic meta-analyses reveal which assumptions provide the ground for the divergent perceptions of the image. The two interpretations I analyze alongside my own are Zainab Bahrani's 'The Hellenization of Ishtar' and Julia Assante's 'Undressing the Nude'. I chose Baharani and Assante because their interpretations exhibit many contrasting elements: for example, Bahrani positively emphasizes the nude woman's sexuality, while Assante eliminates her sexual properties. At the end of Part II, I compare the three interpretations and their image-text relations and evaluate the effectiveness of my image collaboration model.

In Part III, I examine three interpretations of the woman described in Song of Songs Chapter 7. As in Part II, I begin with the research history of the text's delineation, voice, and exegesis. This is followed by my own interpretation of the woman. In Chapters 13 and 14, I present semiotic analyses of three interpretations: Othmar Keel's iconographic interpretation, Fiona Black's grotesque interpretation, and my own. I selected Keel and Black because their explicit use of visual images in interpreting the text makes the analysis of image-text relations more efficient. Using both Eco's textual collaboration model and my image collaboration model, I discuss these interpretations' underlying assumptions, their strategies of relating images and texts, and their ways of constructing the whole from the part-by-part description. At the end of Part III, I compare these three interpretations and summarize what makes their interpretations so different.

The interpreters whom I call 'Bahrani', 'Assante', 'Kim' (again, I refer to myself in third person in meta-analysis), 'Keel', and 'Black', do not refer to actual persons, but to reconstructed readers or viewers of these anonymous women, who can be inferred from the mentioned authors' texts. Therefore, my analysis of them is a product of semiosis and might differ from what the actual persons

Bahrani, Assante, Keel, Black, and even myself, currently think. Bearing this in mind, I invite you, my readers, to my research journey by getting to know these anonymous women, finding the intricate image-text relations, and discovering the interpreters' personal preferences.

II. RESEARCH HISTORY: IMAGE-TEXT RELATIONS AND SEMIOTICS IN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN AND HEBREW BIBLE STUDIES

The title of this research is: *Images of Anonymous Women: A Semiotic Approach to Image-Text Relations in Interpretations of Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible*. This title has three subjects: (1) a semiotic approach, (2) image-text relations, and (3) interpretations of ancient Near Eastern (ANE) art and the Hebrew Bible. The research history of the third subject, interpretations of the ancient Near Eastern female imagery, will be addressed at the beginning of Parts II and III (chapter 9 §2 and chapter 12 §3). In this chapter, I present a brief research history of the methods relating images and texts in ancient Near Eastern and biblical studies, including semiotics.

The history of the academic field of ancient Near Eastern archaeology (and art history as a part of it) is rather short.[4] University chairs of ancient Near Eastern archaeology were established after World War II with the task of understanding the vast amount of ancient artifacts found in the Middle East, even though research on the ANE artifacts had been conducted before World War II.[5] The classification, identification, and dating of these artifacts were the primary objectives, while methodological discussions on the image-text relationship were a secondary concern.[6] This was partly due to the naïve connections drawn between ancient Near Eastern texts and images in the early days of the field, leading to criticism and avoidance of directly relating texts to images.[7]

Interest in interpreting and understanding the meaning of ancient Near Eastern images gradually increased from the late 1970s onwards. During this time, Panofsky's iconographic method, an art historical approach for interpreting visual representations on three levels,[8] was introduced, discussed theoretically, and began to be applied to ancient Near Eastern art.[9] The methodological discussions also included semiotics. It was introduced as a conceptual frame for reading images as signs, in analogy with linguistic notions such as semantics, syntax,

[4] Cardoso 2023, 178.

[5] Novák 2014, 169.

[6] Kühne 1999, 342; Elsen-Novák / Novák 2005, 186.

[7] As an example of the criticism, see Kraus 1953, 36–80. For the concentration of formal descriptions, dating, and cataloguing in Ancient Near Eastern art history before the 1990s, see Kühne 1999, 346.

[8] See p. 33–40 below.

[9] The first extensive reference to the Panofskian model was in Orthmann 1971, 225–231, but his application of the Panofskian model was partial and inconsistent (Kühne 1999, 347). For other examples of theoretical discussions and applications of the Panofskian model in Ancient Near Eastern art history, see Keel 1992a, 267–283; Lamprichs 1995; Bonatz 2000; etc.

and pragmatics. Under the label of a 'semiotic approach', research, which conceive images *as* signs, were conducted.[10]

Several works in ancient Near Eastern archaeology and art history have been described as using semiotic approaches. For instance, Hans Ulrich Steymans writes that Irene Winter's methodology incorporated semiotics, and the doctoral dissertation of her former student, Mehmet-Ali Ataç, also dealt with semiotics.[11] Gabriele Elsen-Novák and Mirko Novák cite Dominik Bonatz's work on Syro-Hittite monuments as an example of semiotic research.[12] Cory Crawford also states that the semiotic approach – 'reading images as texts' in his understanding – attracted scholars and generated research that view images in communication contexts.[13] However, these approaches raise two key questions: (1) Can the semiotic approach truly be distinguished from conventional interpretations, and, (2) does such a semiotic approach not imply a linguistic supremacy over images?

In response to the first question, the so-called semiotic approaches are not distinguishable from 'non-semiotic' approaches. They approach visual representations from the ancient Near East in the frame of communication and try to read their 'messages' between the 'sender' and the 'receiver' by using semiotic terms and making analogies with linguistic notions. However, interpreting an image and relating it to texts within a communication context does not necessitate the use of such terms or the labeling of it as 'a semiotic work'. Stating that the 'receivers' of the Codex Hammurabi are not only subjects and gods but also future kings is a different version of saying that the Codex Hammurabi was intended not only for subjects and gods but also for future kings.[14] Reading the messages of an image is, in other words, the interpretation itself.

The reason behind the indistinguishability between the 'semiotic works' and usual interpretations lies in that they use semiotics for the production of meanings. Although semiotic metacognition may facilitate a more insightful interpretation, the primary strength of semiotics lies not in producing a definitive or better meaning. Instead, semiotics has a deep interest in the process of interpretation, i.e., *how* an interpretation occurs. A 'semiotic aspect', in fact, is embedded in every interpretation because semiotics is a study of the process of signification. In this respect, while these works can be categorized as 'semiotic approaches', they cannot be an example of using the semiotic 'method' – 'the set of

[10] Hölscher 2000, 160–164; Steymans 2010, 67; Weissenrieder / Wendt 2005, 36; Bonatz 2000, 10–11; Crawford 2014, 245–251, 259.

[11] Steymans 2010, 59.

[12] Elsen-Novák / Novák 2005, 187–188.

[13] Crawford 2014, 245–247, 252.

[14] An example from Elsen-Novák / Novák 2005, 148.

procedures or ways of working that characterize an academic discipline'.[15] Semiotics as a conceptual tool for meta-criticism or the analysis of the process of a certain sign system is a more distinguishing way of using semiotics than as a tool for the production of meanings.[16]

Regarding the second question, Cory D. Crawford criticized the so-called 'semiotic works' for reading 'images as texts', as their understanding of signs was mostly based on textual signs. The use of terms such as 'narrative', 'message', 'sender', or 'receiver' in relation to images was conceived of as implying linguistic supremacy by forcing notions of verbal communication onto visual images. According to Crawford, such logocentrism is related to the strict bifurcation between images and texts. He argues that the boundaries between image and text were not clear-cut in the ancient Near East, and they had a much more complex interrelationship than a simple one-to-one match. Crawford introduces the works of Irene Winter, Zainab Bahrani, and Marian Feldman as examples of better approaches to ancient Near Eastern art than semiotics.[17]

Crawford's criticism seems to stem from his understanding of semiotics. He perceives semiotics as based on linguistic sign systems, and, thus, using linguistic frames for images equates to verbal dominance over visuals. However, there is a false assumption underlying this equation between semiotics and verbal dominance – that communication (messages), which semiotics concerns itself with, is solely about words.[18] Messages take various forms, including high and low tones of sound and visual cues, such as eye wrinkles. Furthermore, a word-free approach to images is similarly impossible as the absolute separation between word and image, which Crawford himself opposes.

I do not argue that all the semiotic approaches treat images and texts without hierarchy; some may unconsciously imply verbal supremacy, as we in academia are accustomed to exchanging knowledge verbally. As will be discussed later,[19] some early semioticians advocated for the linguistic supremacy over other sign systems. However, semiotics today acknowledges that language is only one of many sign systems which altogether comprise an act of interpretation. It is important to note that Bahrani, a strong critic against linguistic supremacy and image-text dichotomy, uses semiotics as a theoretical tool for the conceptualization of the polysemic relationship between images and texts in the ancient Near East.[20] Therefore, while semiotics was (partly incorrectly) regarded by some

[15] D'Alleva 2005, 13.

[16] The analysis of various interpretations of anonymous women in Parts II and III can serve as an example of employing semiotics as a meta-critical tool. For an instance of utilizing semiotic notions to analyze a specific sign system, see Bahrani 2003, 121–148.

[17] Crawford 2014, 252–254, 259.

[18] Crawford 2014, 246–247.

[19] See the discussion in p. 15–22 below.

[20] Bahrani 2003, 96–148.

scholars of Ancient Near Eastern art history as an approach of 'images *as* texts' and criticized for the linguistic invasion over images,[21] it can also be used as a tool for explaining the complex interrelationship of images and texts, as demonstrated by Bahrani.

In summary, semiotics has been frequently referenced but misunderstood and criticized within Ancient Near Eastern art history for promoting linguistic supremacy and for its rigid image-text dichotomy. However, semiotics, with its transdisciplinary character, 'lends itself to interdisciplinary analyses, for example, of word and image relations, which seek to avoid both the erection of hierarchies and the eclectic transferring of concepts'.[22] While semiotics can certainly be employed for meaning production, as has been done in Ancient Near Eastern art history, this is not its most distinguishing application as a method. Therefore, it can be said that, thus far in Ancient Near Eastern art historical discourses, there has been no research that clearly exemplifies the use of semiotics as a methodology, which could serve as a model for those wishing to adopt a semiotic approach.

The situation in the academic field of Biblical Studies differed from that of ancient Near Eastern archaeology. For biblical scholars accustomed to working solely with texts, considering images alongside biblical texts was perceived as grafting images onto texts. The false belief in aniconism, which was thought to have excluded all visual representations from the biblical world, reinforced the reluctance towards images.[23] Therefore, studying biblical texts in conjunction with images raised considerable doubts about the methodological soundness of such an approach. Traditionally, it was thought that for methodological correctness, texts could only be compared with texts, not with images. Due to this closed attitude towards image-text relations in Biblical Studies, scholars of Biblical Iconography – a newly established branch of Biblical Studies (primarily the Hebrew Bible) that aims to understand biblical texts and their world in light of ancient Near Eastern images as visual manifestations of shared cultures – had to persuade their colleagues, justifying the connection between biblical texts and ancient Near Eastern images until very recently.[24]

Such an atmosphere fostered methodological discourses in the field of Biblical Iconography. Othmar Keel, who greatly contributed to the establishment of Biblical Iconography, offered an iconographical exegetic model that revised

[21] For example, see Crawford 2014, 259; Weissenrieder / Wendt 2005, 36.

[22] Bal / Bryson 1991, 176.

[23] See the presentation of the past interpretations of aniconism in Schroer 1987, 3–8; Bonfiglio 2016, 255–257. See also Cardoso 2023, 178–196.

[24] De Hulster 2009, 2. See also the explanatory tones discussing the appropriateness of iconographical researches in biblical studies: Keel 1992a, 358–359; Bonfiglio 2016, 58–63; de Hulster / Strawn / Bonfiglio 2015, 20–22.

Panofsky's model to suit the situations of ancient Near Eastern art history, i.e., the usual lack of relevant texts. Keel's model consists of three levels: (1) motif (to describe the image and the quality of the image-bearer); (2) scene (to identify each motif and synthesize them into a message); and (3) decoration (*Sitz im Leben*). According to Keel's model, one must first interpret an image within its visual and archaeological contexts as much as possible before relating it to a specific text, allowing for the interpretation of an image even when no extant text is directly related.[25]

However, Keel's primary interest was not in establishing a systematic model for relating images with biblical texts, but rather in 'knowing the material' – to understand ancient images and culture as comprehensively as possible. His model was proposed only at the request of his colleagues who demanded such a method after a series of Keel's publications and lectures.[26] As a result, Keel did not provide many examples of iconographic research following his model. His early works (before the model's suggestion) did not adhere to his model, but instead matched thematically related ancient Near Eastern images with biblical texts without thorough consideration of their contexts.[27] His later works focused more on cataloguing images than connecting them with texts.[28] Nevertheless, Keel's model is significant as the first methodological consideration of the unique conditions involved in relating biblical texts to ancient Near Eastern images.

Izaak de Hulster continued the methodological discussion of text-image connection in Biblical Studies. He examined different methods for interpreting images – those of Erwin Panofsky and Oskar Bätschmann, along with a brief summary of others, including semiotics – and chose to follow Panofsky's method combined with some elements from Bätschmann.[29] He proposed a method of 'iconographic exegesis' of the Hebrew Bible, which begins with the biblical text, its delineation, and dating, followed by the search for thematically, temporally, and spatially proximate images. Next, the interpretation of the images follows the Panofskian model, separate from the texts. Finally, the insights gleaned from the images are applied to the biblical texts, compared, and combined.[30] De Hulster's model demonstrates more detailed methodological considerations for relating biblical texts with ancient Near Eastern images than that of Othmar Keel, with practical advice on 'how to conduct an iconographical exegesis of biblical

[25] Keel 1992a, 267–273.
[26] Keel 1992a, XI.
[27] See for example, Keel 1978; Keel 1986.
[28] For example, the project of Corpus der Stempelsiegel. Keel 1995; Keel 1997–2017.
[29] De Hulster 2009, 88–89.
[30] De Hulster 2009, 102–104.

texts'. However, the basis of this model remains anchored in Keel's principles and the Panofskian method.

Ryan P. Bonfiglio broadened the scope of methodological discourse in Biblical Iconography to encompass more recent visual theories, providing insights on the complex interconnection of image-text relationships and their construction of reality.[31] In this vein, semiotics is briefly mentioned as a perspective on visual 'signs', but it is again viewed as a problematic application of linguistic notions to images and is not significantly addressed in his methodological discussion.[32] He suggests three aspects of complex image-text interactions: image-text congruence (thematic similarity), image-text correlation (questioning the relationship: the type or degree of interaction), and image-text contiguity (historical relationship).[33] These are not only three aspects of image-text relationships but also three ways to compare images and texts: by thematic similarity (congruence), by temporal and spatial proximity (contiguity), or by asking 'how they are related' (correlation). In this respect, they do not significantly differ from de Hulster's principles. However, Bonfiglio's work represents a significant advancement in the field of Biblical Iconography by introducing updated discourses on image-text relations, focusing on the complex image-text interactions and broadening readers' perspectives to view images as living agents.[34]

In the field of Hebrew Bible Study, then, there has not yet been a thorough discussion and application of the semiotic method as a tool for relating images with texts. While semiotics has constantly been mentioned as a possible alternative of iconography,[35] it was underestimated as having linguistic domination over images without a deeper discussion, and its transdisciplinary nature was largely ignored.

I aim to fill this gap by providing a thorough discussion on semiotics as a method of image-text relations and offering examples of semiotic research in ancient Near Eastern and biblical studies. As stated earlier,[36] semiotics is optimized for analyzing the process of interpretation rather than producing a better or correct meaning. Therefore, in this semiotic research, I employ semiotic models not to generate a better meaning but to analyze various modern interpretations. I do not offer fixed relationships between images and texts but analyze how different interpreters utilize diverse strategies to relate images and texts to support their arguments. In this way, more complex and intricate relationships between images and texts can be revealed and discussed through the trans-

[31] Bonfiglio 2016, 89–103, 125–139, 176–194.
[32] Bonfiglio 2016, 125–132.
[33] Bonfiglio 2016, 69–89. See also de Hulster / Strawn / Bonfiglio 2015, 22–26.
[34] Bonfiglio 2016, 318–332.
[35] Weissenrieder / Wendt 2005, 28–37; de Hulster 2009, 83–88; Bonfiglio 2016, 117–132.
[36] See p. 6f above.

disciplinary lens of semiotics. Such a focus on interpreters, the process of signification, and the interaction between different sign systems allows an interpreter a 'better' metacognition and ultimately contributes to a richer and more responsible discourse in the academic fields of the ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible.

PART I. METHODOLOGY: SEMIOTICS

INTRODUCTION TO PART I

This part discusses semiotic methods, which will be employed to analyze the interpretations of a visual image and a written text. To demonstrate the intricate image-text interaction involved in these interpretations, I have chosen semiotics as my conceptual tool, as it is a transdisciplinary method applicable to both visual images and written texts. While numerous semiotic studies discuss image-text interaction, the present study covers only those aspects relevant to its purpose, namely introducing the semiotic method to biblical studies and ancient Near Eastern art, and presenting semiotic models capable of analyzing visual images and verbal texts using the same analytical tool. For the latter objective, I adapt a textual model from Umberto Eco to create an isomorphic model that can also be used for analyzing image interpretations.

Chapters 3 and 4 aim to familiarize my readers, whom I imagine to be primarily scholars and students of biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies, with semiotics. They explain the essence of semiotics, present semiotic sign theories, and highlight the advantages of semiotics as a method, especially in accessing image-text relations. Chapter 5 discusses the iconographical model of Erwin Panofsky, Chapter 6 the semiotics of Umberto Eco, and Chapter 7 the visual semiotics of Mieke Bal. Eco's semiotics offers a semiotic model for analyzing interpretations of a text, and the visual tools of Panofsky and Bal modify Eco's textual collaboration model to accommodate visual images. In Chapter 8, I present my collaboration model for visual images.

A single model cannot analyze both a visual image and a verbal text simultaneously, as they belong to different sign systems. However, a semiotic model focusing on the interpreter's role may provide a basic framework for interpreting both images and texts after appropriate modifications. This is possible because the interpreter's collaborative work is required in every sign system, even though the specific collaborative activities differ according to the unique features of a particular sign system. Therefore, I have chosen Eco's textual model as a framework and modified it for visual images. A textual model is employed as a basis, not because I advocate linguistic supremacy over visual, but because academic discourses, including this study, are primarily conducted verbally.[37] As the structures of Eco's model is transdisciplinary, it can be easily transferred to other

[37] See also footnote 310 below.

sign systems while still retaining the unique features of a specific sign system in all its details. When these two isomorphic models – Eco's textual collaboration model and the modified collaboration model for visual images – are used in tandem, the image-text comparisons frequently made in biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies can be examined on a methodologically sound basis by examining how this construction of meaning or semiosis was accomplished.

The two models I present in Part I are designed to analyze various structures of the collaboration between an interpreter and a work. These are not intended to produce a correct or better interpretation but to demonstrate how one interprets the work by constructing various structures of content. While a method or model cannot guarantee the correctness of an interpretation, I bring the unavoidable subjectivity of every interpretation to the forefront and analyze them on a methodological basis. This ultimately leads to more responsible interpretations because following the collaboration model makes the personal motivations behind a particular interpretation clearer.

Semiotics is an adequate method for such tasks. Its inter- and transdisciplinary nature benefits this study in transcending the word-image dichotomy. Semiotics is especially an excellent meta-critical tool: its interest in the interpreter and the process of interpretation encourages the interpreter to view oneself, the suggested interpretations, the present world, and the ancient worlds more sharply and discerningly. The semiotic models introduced and modified in Part I demonstrate these advantages when applied to analyzing the interpretations of visual images and written texts in Parts II and III.

III. SEMIOTICS AS A METHOD

1. What is Semiotics?

1.1. *Definitions of Semiotics*

What is semiotics? Even if one can define semiotics in one sentence, it is almost impossible to describe its essence thoroughly. Winfried Nöth quotes Peter Schmitter in his handbook of semiotics:

> Imagine you should have to describe […] the topography of a country about which there is hardly any certain knowledge. Neither the frontiers of this country are known, nor do we know whether it is a country in the traditional sense at all. Many claim that it is indeed a genuine country, even one that surpasses all known countries in beauty and riches, a country whose possession, once gained, would end all need. Others not only call this hope into question, but also consider the very existence of the country a mere utopia. […] There are still further sources in an immense number of writings giving a detailed description of some regions supposedly belonging to this country. But since these descriptions are mostly quite diverse […] therefore one does not really know whether these are different regions and ecological areas of one and the same country or whether these are, instead, different countries.[38]

This is a brilliant metaphor reflecting the difficulty of defining the term 'semiotics'. The use of the word 'semiotics', its references, goals, realms, and orientations are all different according to different scholars. There is no consensus whether it is a method, a science, a theory, a discipline, a movement, or a point of view.[39]

As a starting point, in order to avoid a confusion of terms, I want to discuss the difference between 'semiology' and 'semiotics'. Both terms are based on the Greek word for 'sign' (σημεῖον). The term semiology was first used by Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, who is regarded as one of the founders of modern semiotics. As Nöth briefly explains, the term semiology is used by scholars who were influenced by Saussure's semiotic theories, such as Roland Barthes and Louis Hjelmslev, who advocated linguistic preeminence for 'semiology'. The term 'semiotics' was first introduced by John Locke, and Charles Sanders Peirce, another recognized founder of semiotics, popularized its usage. This term was employed to designate Peirce's semiotic tradition, which emphasizes the

[38] Peter Schmitter, 'Rezension zu: "Winfried Nöth – Handbuch der Semiotik"', in: *Kratylos* 32 (1987): 1, quoted in Nöth 1990, ix.

[39] See Nöth 1990, 4–5; Deely 1990, 9–21.

transdisciplinary character of 'semiotics' and does not give priority to linguistics. While many other terms have been used, these two are the most well-known. Today, the term 'semiotics' is generally replacing 'semiology'.[40] It is also worth noting that such a division is artificial, and scholars' use of these terms varies greatly.[41]

Different scholars' various definitions of semiotics (or semiology) reflect their interests and emphasis, respectively. Saussure defined semiology as a science of the roles of signs in social life, which did not yet exist (at his time), but was prospected, and language ultimately represents its most prominent part:

> A language is a system of signs and expressing ideas, and hence comparable to writing, the deaf-and-dumb alphabet, symbolic rites, forms of politeness, military signals, and so on. It is simply the most important of such systems. It is therefore possible to conceive of a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life. It would form part of social psychology, and hence of general psychology. We shall call it semiology (from the Greek *sēmeîon*, 'sign'). It would investigate the nature of signs and the laws governing them. Since it does not yet exist, one cannot say for certain that it will exist. But it has a right to exist, a place ready for it in advance. Linguistics is only one branch of this general science. The laws which semiology will discover will be laws applicable in linguistics, and linguistics will thus be assigned to a clearly defined place in the field of human knowledge.[42]

This tendency of linguistic preference was strongly expressed by Louis Hjelmslev, who developed Saussure's theories further and founded the Copenhagen School of Linguistics, which is known as 'a school of radically structuralist linguistics'.[43] Hjelmslev defines 'semiotic' as 'a hierarchy, any of whose components admits of a further analysis into classes defined by mutual relation'.[44]

Hjelmslev's structural approach of semiotics, which defines it as a 'hierarchy', was further developed by Roman Jakobson. Jakobson was influenced both by Saussure and Peirce, but a strong Saussurean influence can be seen in his structuralistic linguistics, as he states: 'we mean by semiotic the general science of signs which has as its basic discipline linguistics, the science of verbal signs'.[45]

[40] Nöth 1990, 13; Rey 1986, 896–897; Chandler 2007, 3–4.
[41] Rey 1986, 900–901.
[42] Saussure 2013, 18 [33].
[43] Nöth 1990, 64.
[44] Hjelmslev 1961, 106.
[45] Jakobson 1971b, 289.

These definitions, which clearly show an emphasis on language, are comparable to the definitions given by the Peircean tradition. However, Peirce's semiotics is not based on linguistics, but on logic:

> Logic, in its general sense, is, as I believe I have shown, only another name for *semiotic* (σημειωτική), the quasi-necessary, or formal, doctrine of signs. By describing the doctrine as 'quasi-necessary,' or formal, I mean that we observe the characters of such signs as we know, and from such an observation, by a process which I will not object to naming Abstraction, we are led to statements, eminently fallible, and therefore in one sense by no means necessary, as to what *must be* the characters of all signs used by a 'scientific' intelligence, that is to say, by an intelligence capable of learning by experience.[46]

Charles William Morris broadened the scope of Peircean semiotics into behavioral semiotics including also that of animals and biological organisms.[47] Morris's definition of semiotics emphasizes its interdisciplinary character:

> Semiotic has for its goal a general theory of signs in all their forms and manifestations, whether in animals or men, whether normal or pathological, whether linguistic or nonlinguistic, whether personal or social. Semiotic is thus an interdisciplinary enterprise.[48]

The interdisciplinary character of semiotics is also stressed by Umberto Eco, who defined semiotics in his early work as 'a discipline, which can and must deal with the whole culture'.[49] Later, he gives the following witty definition of semiotics:

> Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be *taken* as a sign. A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. This something else does not necessarily have to exist or to actually be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands in for it. Thus, *semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie.*[50]

[46] Emphasis in original. Peirce 1931–1960, 2.227.
[47] Nöth 1990, 48–49.
[48] Morris 1964, 1.
[49] 'Die Semiotik ist eine Disziplin, die sich mit der ganzen Kultur beschäftigen kann und muß'. Eco 1972, 38.
[50] Emphasis in original. Eco 1976, 7.

1.2. *Definitions of a Sign*

Among all these different definitions, the only consensus is that semiotics deals somehow with 'signs'. From this follows the question: what is a sign? In fact, signs are defined and discussed not only in modern scholarship but also in ancient times. It is easy to find books and articles about semiotics, which start their discussion in the ancient Greek and Roman world.[51] The tradition of 'interpreting signs' in the ancient Near East and East Asia, evidenced in a great number of divination and medical texts, clearly demonstrates that the history of semiotics should broaden its temporal and spatial scope, although this is beyond the framework of the present dissertation.

The definition of a sign differs according to the two main traditions of semiotics – that of Saussure and of Peirce. Saussure designed a sign model based on linguistic signs, which is further developed for non-linguistic signs by his successors. In the Saussure's sign model, a sign is comprised of two sides: a concept and a sound pattern:

> A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern. The sound pattern is not actually a sound; for a sound is something physical. A sound pattern is the hearer's psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses. This sound pattern may be called a 'material' element only in that it is the representation of our sensory impressions. The sound pattern may thus be distinguished from the other element associated with it in a linguistic sign. This other element is generally of a more abstract kind: the concept.[52]

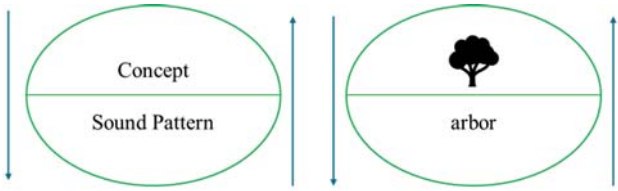


Fig. 1: Saussure's sign model. Based on Saussure 2013, 77.

The famous illustration of Saussure above (Fig. 1) shows the Latin word for tree (*arbor*) as an example of a 'sound pattern' and a picture of a tree as a 'concept'. When someone (who knows Latin) hears the word 'arbor', this sign makes a sound pattern and a concept at the same time: a sound pattern is a 'psychological impression' brought to the hearer at the moment of hearing the word, and a

[51] See Nöth 1990, 14–17; Todorov 1982, 15–59; Eco 1981, 40–43.
[52] Saussure 2013, 76 [98].

concept is an abstract, mental concept of a tree which is evoked in the hearer's mind. These are the two sides of a (linguistic) sign according to Saussure. Later, Saussure replaced the terms 'sound pattern' and 'concept' with the more general expressions 'signifier' and 'signified'.[53]

While the Saussurean sign model is bipartite, Peirce's sign model is tripartite:

> A sign, or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object*. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the *ground* of the representamen.[54]

While the Saussurean model is concerned with 'what makes a sign', the Peircean model is more focused on determining 'how a sign works as a sign': a sign stands for something else, which is an object, not directly but through the interpretant. The interpretant is the object in the interpreter's mind evoked by the sign. The three main players – sign, object, and interpretant – interact on the basis of the ground, which is essential for the whole triadic relation of a sign: the ground[55] of the representamen (sign) is the conceptual part of the object and what the sign stands for. This model emphasizes how a sign works in relationship with the object and interpretant, namely by semiosis, which is 'an action, or influence, which is, or involves, a coöperation [sic!] of *three* subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence'.[56]

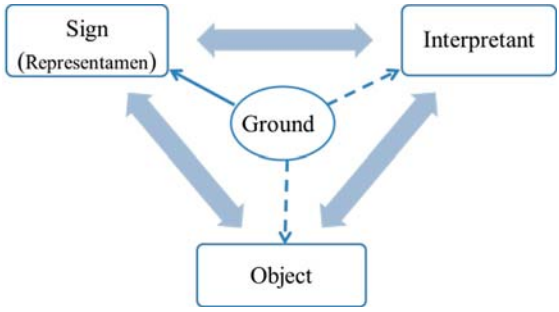


Fig. 2: Peirce's sign model.

[53] Nöth 1990, 60.
[54] Emphasis in original. Peirce 1931–1960, 2.228.
[55] For Peirce's notion of 'ground', see p. 47ff.
[56] Emphasis in original. Peirce 1931–1960, 5.484.

Another unique feature of the Peircean sign model that differs from the Saussurean one is 'infinite semiosis':

> Anything which determines something else (its *interpretant*) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its *object*) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on *ad infinitum*.[57]

The interpretant itself also becomes a sign (the second sign) because an evoked concept brings related concepts (the second interpretant) into the interpreter's mind, and this second interpretant becomes, in turn, a third sign evoking other interpretants – and this continues without end.

There are increasing views that the Saussurean dyadic model is more static while Peirce's triadic model is more dynamic.[58] Saussure modelled signs after linguistic ones, comprised of two sides – the signifier and signified – brought together by arbitrariness. In the Peircean model, however, a sign brings one or more interpretants which become signs bringing forth other interpretants. These two models are designed for different purposes; thus, it is not worth judging which is better or worse. Nevertheless, this fundamental difference may perhaps be the reason that current semiotic studies have become less Saussurean:[59] the broader the scope of semiotics becomes, the more appropriate the Peircean model seems to be because the infinite transference from sign to interpretant and back again to sign makes semiotics transdisciplinary. While the linguistic-based Saussurean semiology causes difficulties when applied to other sign systems, Peirce's typology of sign modes based on multiple triad relationships, is designed to include various sign systems.[60]

1.3. *Semiotics: Between Logo-Centrality and Inter- and Transdisciplinarity*

Semiotics is often criticized for being logocentric. Regardless of its transdisciplinary character, the ideology of the superiority of language may nevertheless be detected in semiotics because it principally has the ambition of applying linguistic models to all other sign systems. This criticism is a reasonable one because semiotics depends to a large extent on linguistic studies. According to Daniel Chandler, there are two reasons for this dependence on linguistics: (1) because of the influence of Saussure and (2) because there have been more

[57] Emphasis in original. Peirce 1931–1960, 2.303.

[58] See for example, Nöth 1990, 46, 63; Köller 1977, 73–74; Pablé / Hutton 2015, 2; Lorenz 2016, 109.

[59] Chandler 2007, 10. See also Sheriff 1989, 136–142. Margaret Iversen examines the sign models of Saussure and Peirce on their adaptability to visual signs and carefully suggests that the Peircean model has more potential for visual sign systems. See Iversen 1986, 82–94.

[60] For more about Peirce's typology of sign modes, see below, p. 61ff.

semiotic studies on verbal sign systems than others.[61] As discussed above, Saussure put the verbal sign system as the most prominent and appropriate object of semiotics by mentioning that 'nothing is more appropriate than the study of languages to bring out the nature of the semiological problem'.[62] Because academic discourses – including semiotic ones – are normally made with verbal signs, language seems to be the hub for all the other sign systems. For example, Émile Benveniste stated that language is a 'translating system' for all systems of signs: 'The signs of society can be interpreted integrally by those of language, but the reverse is not so. Language is therefore the interpreting system of society'.[63] He continues, 'Language is the preeminent semiotic organization. It explains the function of a sign, and it alone offers an exemplary formula of the sign'.[64]

However, semiotics is not only designed for linguistics, but is meant to be inter- and transdisciplinary. It is true that semiotic approaches are taken in many disciplines, not only language-related disciplines including oral language and written texts, but also music, gestures, human and animal behaviors, kinesics, architecture, photography, comics and films, paintings, sculptures, dances and performances, rituals, and advertisements, to name just a few. For pan-semioticians, every thought, even existence itself, is a sign, as long as one recognizes it as one and interprets it.[65]

It is therefore a matter of choice and concentration. Semiotics can be hailed for its inter- and transdisciplinary character, which transfers everything into the systems of signs; on the other hand, semiotics can be criticized for the same inter- and transdisciplinary character because it 'reduces' peculiar features of a certain medium into signs. Even within the academic field of linguistics, there are voices of criticism against certain semiotic approaches because it 'reduces' language 'to its components, words, which are certainly signs'.[66] Then how specifically or generally can semiotics be regarded? There is no neutral position between specificity and generality: within the spectrum, one must choose the place that fits the purpose, being aware of the benefits and drawbacks of the stance.

[61] Chandler 2007, 5.
[62] Saussure 2013, 18 [34].
[63] Benveniste 1981, 13.
[64] Benveniste 1981, 18.
[65] See for example, Peirce 1931–1960, 5.314: 'It is that the word or sign which man uses *is* the man himself. For, as the fact that every thought is a sign, taken in conjunction with the fact that life is a train of thought, proves that man is a sign'.
[66] Benveniste 1981, 5.

2. Why Semiotics?

Why then use semiotics as a method for this research? There are six main reasons: (1) semiotics' transdisciplinary nature; (2) the benefit semiotics provides for the concept of representation; (3) some similarities between semiotics and the ancient Near Eastern thoughts; (4) the openness of semiotics for different code systems (e.g., ancient cultures); (5) its role as a meta-critical tool for recognizing the interpreter's own postulations and presuppositions; (6) to present a semiotic research example in the field of biblical iconography.

First, the transdisciplinary nature of semiotics fits well with this research's purpose. As stated in the Introduction, one of the goals of this study is to analyze images and texts on the same ground, emphasizing dynamic and intricate image-text relations in the act of interpretation. In order to look closely into this interaction, one needs to compare several interpretations and trace the interaction of images and texts in them. For this purpose, the transdisciplinary character of semiotics is necessary. With the help of the semiotic method, one may analyze both images and texts using the isomorphic semiotic models, so that their interaction would reveal itself more clearly.

Secondly, semiotics is suitable for accessing the concept of representation. According to recent semiotic theories, the definite reality cannot be recognized but only its representations, i.e., the signs and their systems. Chandler asserts that 'studying semiotics can assist us to become more aware of the mediating role of signs and of the roles played by ourselves and others in constructing social realities'.[67] As a result, semiotics helps the researcher be aware of the fact that a representation is not identical with its object (or reality), and its meanings are not given, but constructed by the collaboration of the interpreter, the representation, and society. Since this research deals with images, texts, and their interpreters, the semiotic concept of representation serves as the basis of their relationships.

Thirdly, the ancient Near Eastern practice of reading signs, evidenced by abundant medical and divination texts, has some affinity with the modern semiotic way of thinking. Bahrani, after quoting from Barthes who stated that everything is a sign to be read, notes that ancient Mesopotamians had a similar perspective:

> For the Mesopotamians, everything encountered could be read as a sign that referred to something beyond its surface appearance. For instance, an enormous amount of omens listed in texts, known by the title *šumma âlu*, records the ominous signs in the most commonplace aspects of the inhabited environ-

[67] Chandler 2007, 10–11.

> ment. The ultimate wisdom was to be able to interpret scientifically everything in the world. Thus, *pašir šame u erṣetim*, one who is able to (exegetically) decipher the meaning of the heaven and earth, is an epithet used to describe a god as all knowing.[68]

This affinity is even closer with the essence of Peircean semiotics, i.e., the infinite semiosis. Bahrani, discussing *Ṣalmu* (image or representation) in analogy with the concept of simulacrum, contends that:

> […] simulacra do not represent. They repeat, like the fractal, creating an indiscernibility of the original real and unreal reproduction. Similarly, for the Assyrians and Babylonians, the real is made up of endless signs. Real matter already has images in it so that representations proliferate throughout the universe in a virtual (in other words, immanent) state. At the same time, images or representations are part of this metasemiotic reality.[69]

Of course, our understanding of 'a sign', i.e., the semiotics of the modern period, is different from that of the ancient Near East. According to Bahrani's argument, the Mesopotamians conceived of every phenomenon in the world as a manifestation (a sign) of reality as, for example, 'If a light-flash were seen in a person's house – dispersal of the person's house'.[70] On the contrary, it may seem that a sign is discussed in modern semiotics as a mental mimesis-like reference to an object, as with the Platonic concepts of copy and original. Nevertheless, a word in English alphabetic writing signs does not assume the mental similarity to its object, as a light-flash and the dispersal of a house do not. If we accept alphabetic letters as signs of certain sounds and not the light-flash as the dispersal of a house, it is only because our codes are familiar with the former but not the latter.

These questions are related with the fourth point of using semiotics in this study. What seem absurd connections (for modern eyes) in Mesopotamian divination texts or their concept of *ṣalmu* cannot be appreciated without the semiotic point of view that the relationship between a sign and an object does not have to be natural, given, and instinctively understandable. This is the conventionality of a sign in a semiotic perspective.[71] If we do not understand, it is not because it is wrong but because we do not use the same codes as the Mesopotamians. The benefit of semiotics is that it is able to include every physical and mental phenomenon recognized by an interpreter into the realm of a sign, no matter how

[68] Bahrani 2003, 127.

[69] Bahrani 2003, 132.

[70] *Šumma Ālu* 1:20. Quoted from Lawson 1994, 85. According to Lawson, the 'light-flash' is not the cause of the dispersal of the house but rather a sign from the gods to humanity.

[71] This is the conventionality of a sign in the semiotic perspective. See Chandler 2007, 22–28.

oddly and strangely the connection is viewed by a certain culture. Supported by such openness of semiotics for different code systems (e.g., ancient cultures), the idea of infinite semiosis may be compared with similar cognitive views of Mesopotamians (the third point), providing a tool for getting closer to them.

The fifth aspect is that semiotics is a useful meta-critical device for recognizing presuppositions and interpretative habits that the interpreter is unaware of. Since scrutinizing the act of interpretation is the main purpose of semiotics, using a semiotic method allows the interpreter to question why a particular interpretation is made or on what cultural conventions it is based, thereby becoming aware of the codes and the basis of the interpretation. Thus, it can be an excellent meta-critical tool for the analysis of interpretations.

Finally, employing semiotics as a method provides an illustrative example of semiotic research in Biblical Iconography. As stated in Chapter 2, the relatively new field of biblical iconography primarily deals with the relationship between images and texts, discussing various methods to connect them. Semiotics is also discussed in this particular field of research,[72] but the mention is either brief with imprecise explanations[73] or with a cautious voice stipulating that semiotics, as a text-derived method, could be problematic for the interpretation of images.[74]

As semiotics mainly deals with the act of interpretation, my research focuses more on this act of interpretation itself than producing a correct, better interpretation of an ancient artifact. Although I present my own interpretation of the biblical text and a Mesopotamian terracotta plaque image, semiotic tools are used more to analyze how and why I and other scholars have made such interpretations. In fact, if used for producing a better interpretation, this method is not significantly different from already established methods because every interpretation is semiotic – the recognition of signs and construction of interpretations.

If one attempts to analogize the ancient people's way of thinking with modern semiotic philosophic perspectives, then it easily becomes an anachronistic approach to ancient culture. I can analyze ancient images and texts using semiotic tools, but it must be underlined that it is *my* interpretation and it is *me* utilizing a modern method because nothing is understandable for us without using

[72] See for example, Weissenrieder / Wendt 2005, 28; Bonfiglio 2016, 125; de Hulster 2009, 83, 85–87.

[73] For example, Peirce's three 'modes' of signs – icon, index, and symbol – are often misunderstood as three 'types' of signs. See Bonfiglio 2016, 258–263. For a detailed discussion on Peirce's sign modes, see below, p. 61ff.

[74] See for example, Weissenrieder / Wendt 2005, 36; Bonfiglio 2016, 125–132; de Hulster 2009, 86. See also Hölscher 2000, 160–164, which is often quoted in those books. For detailed discussion on the relationship between language and semiotics, and between word and image, see above, p. 20f and below, p. 26ff.

concepts and languages fitting for the modern interpreter.[75] That is why my semiotic tools focus on interpretations themselves rather than the production of a correct interpretation. Semiotics is a tool that widens the perspectives on an ancient culture and on our world, but not to come to a correct interpretation, even though it sharpens the interpreter's mind with more accurate metacognition.

In this research, I present a relatively new approach for Biblical Studies and ancient Near Eastern art history. As a result, there can be problems by using the semiotic method. While there is no perfect method, it is important to address the problems fully before utilizing the method. The following chapter, 'Word and Image', will address the problems before going further into a discussion about semiotic models and their applications.

[75] In fact, traditional methods used in biblical studies such as textual, form, or redaction criticism, or traditional art historical methods such as iconography, are also modern methods which are based on modern theories. As long as we are not ancient Israelites, Judahites, or Mesopotamians, we can never have non-anachronistic tools for our exegesis. From a semiotic point of view, reality cannot be recognized *as it is* but only through the constructions in the interpreter's mind, whether the reality can be accessed partly or not at all. What is needed is not a non-criticizable ancient method of exegesis, but increasing awareness of which lens I use to study an ancient culture. For the semiotic point of view on reality mentioned in this footnote, see Chandler 2007, xv–xvi; Cobley / Jansz 1997, 163–164.

IV. 'WORD AND IMAGE'

1. The 'Word and Image' Issue in Art History

The phrase 'word and image' or 'text and image' is a burning issue in art historical discourses. Although the relationship between words and images has long been discussed since ancient times (e.g., Horace's *ut pictura poesis* and Aristotle's *lexis* and *opsis*), according to W.J. Thomas Mitchell, this issue was reawakened in contemporary scholarship as more people from literary studies engaged in art history with various linguistic and literary tools, such as narratology, discourse analysis, or speech-act theory.[76] Some considered it a new turn in art history, others as a threat of 'linguistic imperialism'. The former group place a high value on semiotics because it aims to study all kinds of signs. In contrast, the latter group of scholars tends to object semiotics' tools because it is generally known to stem from linguistic studies. However, since an absolute separate status between word and image is impossible, the issue of 'word and image' is in fact a matter of degree, asking on which aspect the emphasis is placed. Then, the debate is whether words and images can be put together and compared in alignment (or on the same level) for at stake is the appropriateness of the application of linguistic-derived notions and methods to visual images. Again, the language-based models become a basis not because language has priority, but because our academic discourses are primarily verbal.

Mitchell, Louis Marin, Norman Bryson, and Mieke Bal would well represent the first group of scholars that puts more emphasis on the shared features and vigorous interaction between words and images, without ignoring their differences. Marin's early works discussed the narrativity and visuality of images using linguistic notions and methods; later he focused more on the relationship between word and image as an interactive effect on the interpreter.[77] Mitchell is interested in the inseparable interrelationship between word and image, underlining the 'potential for the shift from word to image' and vice versa.[78] For Bryson, the advantage of a semiotic approach is that it enables one to see an image as a 'discursive work which returns into the society'.[79] This is important because power resides in discourses 'not as a monolith, but as a swarm of points traversing social stratifications and individual persons'.[80] For Bal, 'every act of looking is – not only, not exclusively, but always also – a reading, simply

[76] Mitchell 2003, 51–54.
[77] See Marin 1980, 292–324. See also Guiderdoni 2013, 134, 142.
[78] Mitchell 2003, 51.
[79] Bryson 1991, 70.
[80] Bryson 1991, 71.

because without the processing of signs into syntactic chains that resonate against the backdrop of a frame of reference an image cannot yield meaning'.[81] She objects to the use of the phrase 'word and image' or 'text and image' because it gives a false impression that 'two different, perhaps incompatible things are to be shackled together'.[82] Bal urges her readers to step beyond this word-text dichotomy. However, it is important to note that she occasionally uses similar pairs, such as 'verbality and visuality', 'literary and figurative', or 'discursivity and visuality'. Even though these phrases are used to focus on how these two are deeply interwoven, it gives the impression that she has not completely renounced the word-image dichotomy.

The second group of scholars, who reject the semiotic tools for interpreting visual images, point out that the image has its own peculiarities that cannot be converged (or conflated) with language. Christine Hasenmueller asserts that applying narrative models to visual images is 'awkward' because 'painting presents its components simultaneously rather than sequentially'.[83] Thomas Crow writes that some 'text-based academic disciplines might automatically write off this line of thought as an art historian's reflex', a 'line of thought', that 'permits the soundest tribute to the artist's genuine importance'.[84] Barbara Stafford criticizes the linguistic dominion over images not only in art history and visual culture but also in academia in general.[85] For James Elkins, pictures are 'stubbornly illegible'[86] and have a realm which requires 'silence' as the only response:[87] semiotic accounts inevitably fail to catch the silence because they 'tend to gloss over marks in favor of the scenes they comprise'.[88] He adds that it is not that he wants the 'silence' of images, but 'to show that whatever appears to be outside some social, gendered, bodily, iconographic, biographical, or formal account of a picture can also be inside it, against the unimpeded flow of words'.[89] It is ironic that he tries to explain the 'silence' of various images through words. Even if he could not fully explain what he wanted to deliver to his readers, he *had to try* to explain it through words. A unique feature of the 'inenarrable' and 'inexplicable' is that it cannot be brought into the 'academic' discussion: whenever it is, it requires explications and explanations, unavoidably losing its 'splendor' in the current state of academia. Art history without images cannot be imagined; art history without words is likewise indescribable. As Mitchell asks, 'What is

[81] Bal 2006, 298.
[82] Bal 1991, 27.
[83] Hasenmueller 1978, 294.
[84] Crow 1994, 83.
[85] See Stafford 1996, 5–7 and 1994, 14.
[86] Elkins 1998, xii.
[87] Elkins 1998, 271.
[88] Elkins 1998, 3.
[89] Elkins 1998, 267.

art history, after all, if not an attempt to find the right words to interpret, explain, describe, and evaluate visual images?'[90]

According to Mitchell, 'word and image' is not as simple as it sounds. At first, it might seem that it is the difference of 'hearing and seeing' and 'speaking and depicting'. Then, one realizes that texts are seeable, and images are to be read because 'to see' means, in fact, to assign a label, a name, to it: it is a process in deciding 'what it is' among many possible answers.[91] This is to say that the difference seems to lie in similarity and arbitrariness. However, the 'similarity' does not guarantee an image, as a tree does not necessarily beget an image of another similar-looking tree. Thus, the more one tries to give theoretical explanations about the difference, the more complicated it becomes. No single binary opposition can contain this complexity.[92]

Furthermore, the 'word and image' dichotomy has always carried social and ideological issues. The clichés, such as 'women are objects of visual pleasure for the male gaze',[93] imply the dominance of words over images. The dichotomy is a field of 'power, value, and human interest' that is linked with 'struggle, resistance, and contestation'.[94]

This is why Mitchell suggests understanding the phrase 'word and image' not as a static dichotomy, but as a 'dialectical trope', of 'a whole set of relations and distinctions, that crops up in aesthetics, semiotics, accounts of perception, cognition, and communication', which 'resists stabilization as a binary opposition, shifting and transforming itself from one conceptual level to another, and shuttles between relations of contrariety and identity, difference and sameness'.[95] Mitchell offered 'image X text' as an alternative term, endowing X with a set of implications (e.g., an unknown quantity *x*, multiplication, chiasm, crossing, etc.) to represent their various, complex interwoven relations.[96]

Mitchell's understanding of the phrase 'word and image' as a dialectical trope not only releases one from the need to change the already widely used term, but also endows the term with new implications, preserving its deep, complex, ideology-laden nature. It illustrates clearly how we cannot live without either of them, how their interactions are essential to human life. I also agree with Mitchell, that both have their unique domains along with shared features, and it is impossible to think of one without the other. As he says, 'if art history is the art of speaking for and about images, then it is clearly the art of negotiating the

[90] Mitchell 2003, 53.
[91] Mitchell 2003, 55–56.
[92] Mitchell 2003, 56–57.
[93] Mitchell 2003, 59–60.
[94] Mitchell 2003, 59.
[95] Mitchell 2003, 57.
[96] Mitchell 2012, 2–3.

difficult, contested border between words and images, of speaking for and about that which is 'voiceless', representing that which cannot represent itself'.[97] Thus, the debate on the possibility of applying semiotic notions to images is, again, a matter of degree.

2. Word and Image in the Ancient Near East

In art history discourses, Mitchell formulated the word and image issue as a dilemma between two extremes: between 'linguistic imperialism and defensive reflexes of the visual'.[98] However, the 'defensiveness' does not strongly appear in ancient Near Eastern studies. The relatively short history of the image-text connection in the academic fields of the ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible is one reason.[99] However, the most compelling reason is that the roles and significance of images and words in the ancient Near East differed from those in Western Europe after the Renaissance, which was the primary focus of Panofsky and other art historians. In the ancient Near East, the literacy rate was much lower[100] and writings existed not only to be read, but also to *be* there for apotropaic efficiency.[101] According to Bahrani, an image was 'a mode of presencing', 'a manifestation of presence'.[102] An image was properly regarded as an 'alchemical production of being through art',[103] which was 'by definition an anachronistic thing that transcends its own historical era because its efficacy is both for the present and for the future'.[104]

The most distinct feature of the ancient Near Eastern 'word and image' is that there were less boundaries between images and texts than in Western Europe between the Renaissance and today. The earliest writing originated from images (pictograms).[105] Mesopotamian lexical lists could also have derived from the efforts to organize images on seals.[106] Bahrani contends that:

> Thus, we can see that the process of visual representation or duplication is structurally similar to the system of writing. However, what to the modern viewer may seem like a superficial similarity in mechanisms of representation

[97] Mitchell 2003, 60.
[98] Mitchell 2003, 60.
[99] See p. 5ff.
[100] The low literacy rate in the ancient Near East is thoroughly discussed in Bonfiglio 2016, 22–37.
[101] Sonik 2014, 274.
[102] Bahrani 2003, 137–138.
[103] Bahrani 2014, 163.
[104] Bahrani 2014, 235.
[105] Cf. Nunn 2019, 54–55.
[106] Ross 2014, 309–314.

> is perhaps better defined as a structural unity because the textual always contains the pictorial, and the pictorial has a constant effect on the textual in terms of trace, according to the logic of the script. And the reverse is also true. Thus, we need not think of two areas of words and images with functional similarities or parallels. The two areas are structurally the same because they belong to the same system of signification.[107]

In ancient Near Eastern studies, therefore, the word-image interrelationship is more emphasized than the defensive response against linguistic approaches. Some scholars suggest separating visual and textual research, but this is not to oppose utilizing text-derived methods for images, but to avoid the hurried identification of an image with a text. For example, Keel argues for researching images and texts separately before synthesizing, but nevertheless applies linguistic analogies to images. As Weissenrieder and Wendt noted, the separation is in order to take them together at later stage of analysis.[108] Crawford seems to be against semiotic approaches,[109] but his objection is to emphasize the interrelated aspects and connections between words and images, contending that images and texts should be approached together. Crawford further states that 'images can signify, and texts can be iconic'.[110] Analogies between word and image are widely used in biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies. Bahrani finds a 'performative speech act' from the image of the Warka vase,[111] and de Hulster, Strawn, and Bonfiglio use various image-language analogies, such as 'reading images', 'verbal image', 'visual vocabulary', 'iconographical syntax', and 'image as a type of language', in their work.[112]

It could be argued that images and words should be separately studied for ancient Near Eastern materials, as Keel did, for methodological clarity and also given the relatively small amount of extant written sources. However, such separation is only temporary, and there is a consensus that images and words should to be considered together, not only because of their pervasive interaction, but also because of their strong connection in the ancient Near East, where there is a resistance to set a clear boundary between them. As I show in the Part II, various images and texts taken together construct an interpretation of an Old Babylonian nude woman image. The text of the Song of Songs, as seen in Part III, is also interwoven with images: the description could have not been made without

[107] Bahrani 2003, 128.

[108] Weissenrieder / Wendt 2005, 22.

[109] See Crawford 2014, 242–251. Crawford's objection seems derived from the questionable assumption that the communication (messages) which semiotics is about, is about words. See p. 7f for a discussion on his understanding of semiotics.

[110] Crawford 2014, 259.

[111] Bahrani 2002, 15–22.

[112] De Hulster / Strawn / Bonfiglio 2015, 19–42.

representations and cannot be comprehended without visual imaginings. The interaction between (ancient and modern) texts, images, and interpreters is a compelling way to study the ancient Near Eastern cultures.

3. Preparing for the Next Step

I have the impression that those who speak against utilizing literary studies' tools for visual images seem to imagine a Venn diagram with word and image in their own unique domains with a small intersection (Fig. 3). According to this diagram, the realms of images and words are fixed, and the small intersection is the only limited possible area of image-word interaction, leaving no future possibility for changes. However, such a diagram does not reflect the role of the interpreter: no matter how popular the discourses of the role of a viewer or a reader became, the image-word relationship seems to have been discussed without an interpreter. When the relationship between word and image is approached only based on literal and pictorial works, the two are never understood on the same ground. But when the role of the interpreter is included in the image-word relationship, the word and image meet together on the interpreter's ground. It is the interpreter who describes or derives a story from a visual image and who makes a visual imagination from words. An interpreter is the one who can freely resize and rearrange the intersecting and/or non-intersecting areas of the images and words. True, there are things that never can be represented pictorially nor be explained through words, but that can only be felt – but these things are difficult to bring into academic discourses. However, academics must strive to extend the seeable, hearable, and recognizable realms. Through the collaboration of text, image, *and* interpreter, the supposedly inaccessible boundaries between word and image will be permeable and more will be seen, read, approached, felt, recognized, and understood.

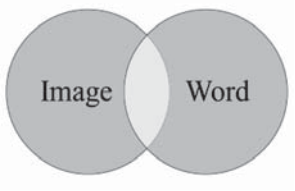


Fig. 3: Separation view of the image-word relationship.

Semiotics regards the act of interpretation as the process of semiosis – communication through signs and codes – but semiotics has the firm but also flexible

ground of being an 'interpreter'[113] and can extend its domain inter- and trans-disciplinarity. Even though semiotics utilizes linguistic- and textual-derived concepts to some degree and thus is criticized for adapting them to other domains, its efforts to be inclusive of all kinds of signs and its focus on the 'interpreter' – who sees, hears, feels, recognizes, shows, and speaks – reveal its potential role in the broader understanding of word and image relations.

[113] The consideration of an interpreter provides a firm basis for image-word interactions, ultimately allowing image-word relations to be flexible.

V. ERWIN PANOFSKY AND SEMIOTICS: ART HISTORICAL HERITAGE

1. Why Erwin Panofsky?

Erwin Panofsky is famous for establishing a systematic model of iconography and iconology in art history. The model consists of three levels of meanings: pre-iconographical description, iconographical analysis, and iconological interpretation. This model raises questions from more superficial to deeper levels of meanings based on the assumption that an image has various messages to be interpreted by the viewer. Approached from a communicative point of view, the model shares common aspects with semiotics. While the model was designed for analyzing visual images from the Renaissance period, it is widely accepted not only in art history in general but also in ancient Near Eastern studies as a basic method of pursuing meanings of visual images, specifically.

Because the first two levels of the Panofskian model – the pre-iconographic description and the iconographical analysis – address the unique characteristics of visual images, such as iconic (i.e., pre-iconographic) and iconographical features, his model is suitable for the modified collaboration model for visual images. I take certain features from the Panofskian model, modify and combine them with the semiotic theories of Eco and Bal, and make this serve for the image collaboration model. Therefore, in this chapter, rather than discussing every aspect of the Panofskian method and its problems in full, I will introduce the model's basic concepts and mention some voiced criticism which are relevant for the modification (§2) and its theoretical potential to be combined with other semiotic theories (§3).

2. The Panofskian Model

As noted above, the Panofskian model can be characterized by three levels of interpretation: (1) pre-iconographic description, (2) iconographic analysis, and (3) iconological interpretation. Panofsky first arranged these three levels into a table in his 1932 publication,[114] and then he published a more detailed and revised version in 'Iconography and Iconology' (Table 1).[115]

[114] Panofsky 1932, 103–119.
[115] Panofsky 1955, 40–41.

Object of Interpretation	*Act of Interpretation*	*Equipment for Interpretation*	*Corrective Principle of Interpretation (History of Tradition)*
I *Primary* or *natural* subject matter – (A) factual, (B) expressional – constituting the world of artistic motifs.	*Pre-iconographical description* (and pseudo-formal analysis).	*Practical experience* (familiarity with *objects* and *events*).	History of *style* (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, *objects* and *events* were expressed by *forms*).
II *Secondary* or *conventional* subject matter, constituting the world of *images*, *stories*, and *allegories*.	*Iconographical analysis*.	*Knowledge of literary sources* (familiarity with specific *themes* and *concepts*).	History of *types* (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, specific *themes* or *concepts* were expressed by *objects* and *events*).
III *Intrinsic* meaning or *content*, constituting the world of '*symbolical*' values.	*Iconological interpretation.*	*Synthetic intuition* (familiarity with the *essential tendencies of the human mind*), conditioned by personal psychology and '*Weltanschauung*'.	History of *cultural symptoms* or '*symbols*' in general (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, *essential tendencies of the human* mind were expressed by specific *themes* and *concepts*).

Table 1: Panofskian Model.
From Panofsky 1955, 40–41.

The main purpose of this model is 'to guide an art historian particularly interested in iconographic interpretation', but he warns that it is 'not to examine the problems of such interpretative work systematically but rather to exemplify its methodological consequences'.[116] Panofsky wanted this table to be used as a guideline, reminding his readers of the danger of misinterpreting the schema as a rigid doctrine separated from the living reality.[117]

2.1. *Pre-iconographical Description*

The first level of interpretation is the 'pre-iconographical description', which describes the 'primary subject matter'. The primary subject matter can be divided in two kinds: (1) factual matters, such as a dog or a man, and (2) expressional matters, which refer to subjective feelings, such as handsome or joyful. On this level, one primarily describes what is depicted in the representation: there is a dog, a triangle, or a set of lines or colors that gives the feeling of cold, etc. This level of meaning is contrasted against more heavily conventionalized and complex meanings in the second level, such as symbols and allegories.

Panofsky is aware that the descriptive act also requires an interpretation and is ultimately also an act of interpretation itself. For example, if there is a lack of a baseline below a man in a painting, one has to decide whether it is the style of the painting or the expression of a floating man.[118] In order to answer such questions and to describe the image correctly, it is necessary to know the history of style. For that reason, Panofsky has set the history of style as a corrective.[119]

The tool for interpretation, designated at this level, is 'practical experience'. The interpreter's experience is the primary tool for recognizing and describing what is depicted in the visual image. Panofsky seems to depend on some universality of recognition of visual representations to a certain degree at this level, but not entirely:

> Everybody can recognize the shape and behavior of human beings, animals, and plants, and everybody can tell an angry face from a jovial one. It is, of course, possible that in a given case the range of our personal experience is not wide enough, for instance when we find ourselves confronted with the representation of an obsolete or unfamiliar tool, or with the representation of a plant or animal unknown to us. In such cases we have to widen the range of our practical experience by consulting a book or an expert; but we do not

[116] Panofsky 2012, 467.
[117] Panofsky 2012, 481–482.
[118] Panofsky 2012, 469.
[119] Panofsky 2012, 472.

> leave the sphere of practical experience as such, which informs us, needless to say, as to what kind of expert to consult.
>
> Yet even in this sphere we encounter a peculiar problem. Setting aside the fact that the objects, events and expressions depicted in a work of art may be unrecognizable owing to the incompetence or malice aforethought of the artist, it is, on principle, impossible to arrive at a correct pre-iconographical description, or identification of primary subject matter, by indiscriminately applying our practical experience to the work of art. Our practical experience is indispensable, as well as sufficient, as material for a pre-iconographical description, but it does not guarantee its correctness.[120]

Bätschmann criticizes this notion of 'practical experience' as an interpretative tool because it assumes that: (1) representation is identical to what is represented and (2) the understanding of a work remains the same regardless of the time gap.[121] According to Bätschmann, these two assumptions are ultimately based on the understanding of art as a mimesis of nature, that 'what is depicted should be identical with the common conceptions of our experience'.[122] He further criticizes that 'practical experience' as a basis for interpretation is a retrogression because it limits the understanding of modern art as well as art from the past.

This criticism can only be justified under two conditions: (1) when the first level covers the complete process of interpretation (without the need for the second and the third levels) and (2) when 'practical experience' as an interpretative tool aims for the perfect understanding of what is depicted. However, Panofsky's introduction of the 'practical experience' as an interpretative tool for the first level is not to guarantee the entire and perfect interpretation of an artwork. It is one of several interpretive tools suggested by Panofsky to be used, mainly in the first level, for a *tentative* interpretation of an artwork before revising and correcting it further. One needs to distinguish the representation from the represented at the end for a more profound interpretation, but as discussed above, it is the work of iconicity which compels a viewer to identify the representation with the represented.[123] Even an abstruse piece of modern art must first be recognized as a series of lines, colors, or dimensions from one's own experience before going further into the process of interpretation, and that is what Panofsky intended for the first level. Panofsky does not present 'practical experience' as something neutral. He never stated that it is sufficient for the correct and complete interpretation; rather, it was suggested as an unavoidable tool for the first

[120] Panofsky 1955, 33.

[121] Bätschmann 1979, 464.

[122] '[...] als das Bezeichnete mit den geläufigen Vorstellungen unserer Erfahrung identisch sein soll, [...]'. Bätschmann 1979, 466.

[123] See p. 61ff.

provisional interpretational work which needs to be supplemented and revised by the history of style and further knowledge, as stated in his quotation above.

Bätschmann's criticism may still seem reasonable because the term 'practical' gives the impression that it refers to basic and common knowledge universally valid for everyone. Panofsky's explanation that 'everyone can recognize…' and 'everyone can tell…' reinforces that impression. Furthermore, the division of levels and interpretative tools in general appears to confine the range of 'personal experience' to a limited realm of knowledge, which is 'less conventional' than the knowledge used in other levels. However, in the quotation above, Panofsky includes acquiring new knowledge through reading books or consulting with experts into the category of 'practical experience', implying that the notion has the potential to be expanded to referring to every semiosis. This means that the notion of 'practical experience' can include every form of knowledge that the interpreter acquires through living, feeling, doing, learning, studying, researching, interacting, etc., basic or specific, unique or common.

Therefore, although applying Panofsky's 'practical experience' to a semiotic model would be problematic, this notion reflects a semiotic point of view in that it admits to the subjectivity of interpretation and, further, the subjectivity of his model. In semiotic theories, experience is admitted as 'not only […] a legitimate basis of interpretation, it is the only possible one'.[124] Nothing can be purely objective; what is important is to admit that subjective elements must play a role in an interpretation, while not quitting efforts to expand the degree of objectivity. Using 'practical experience' as a main interpretative tool for the first level accords with Eco's semiotic concept of interpretation in that every interpretation is a work of semiosis that depends largely on the interpreter's encyclopedias (the subjectivity of Panofsky's 'practical experience') and that the interpreter shall try to achieve as much objectivity as possible by collaborating with the work and by constantly interacting with the outside world (Panofsky's correctives).

2.2. *Iconographical Analysis*

The model's second level is iconographical analysis, which strives to define the secondary subject matter of the image as a whole. This level includes finding the 'subject' or the theme of a visual representation, such as Renaissance paintings of the Last Supper or the 'presentation scene' in Mesopotamian cylinder seals.

At this level, literary sources are used for interpretation. A painting with the theme of the Last Supper can be compared and interpreted with the story of Jesus in the Bible and Church traditions. When there is no directly related literary source available, as in many cases of ancient Near Eastern art, the history of

[124] Bal / Bryson 1991, 202. See also Bal 1991, 91–92.

types helps to define the conventional subject.[125] The history of types is a corrective complementing the literary sources and aids in identifying the representation's correct theme.

However, in ancient Near Eastern art history, the repertoire of visual representations and textual documents often differ greatly, such that it is difficult to find matching texts for visual representations. Furthermore, this approach wrongly assumes that ancient Near Eastern images function as illustrations of texts and are subordinate to them. For that reason, Keel underlines the need to interpret images within the realm of images before finding associated texts, and criticizes Panofsky's model for rushing to literary sources before sufficient interpretation of the image itself through its own symbol system has been made.[126] However, Panofsky stated that in cases that lack literature, the history of types may no longer function as a corrective but as a main tool for identifying the motif.[127] Hartmut Kühne criticizes this point since using the history of types 'as a corrective' requires a fully organized history of types, which makes it inapplicable to ancient Near Eastern studies where the history of types has not yet been firmly established.[128] As Keel and Kühne pointed out, the second level is problematic to apply to ancient Near Eastern images because the Panofskian model, developed for Renaissance art, does not fit the cultural conditions of the ancient Near East, a goal which the Panofskian model is not intended for. Nonetheless, the task of finding the relevant themes is important to obtain the meanings of visual images, thus Panofsky's second level is indispensable, while in ancient Near Eastern studies more efforts for finding the theme without texts and simultaneously building the history of types are required.

2.3. *Iconological Interpretation*

The third level of iconological interpretation attempts to find a deeper or 'intrinsic meaning', which is tied to the 'cultural symptoms' reflected in that work of art without the artist's intention. Panofsky explains this level through the example of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*:

> But when we try to understand it as a document of Leonardo's personality, or of the civilization of the Italian High Renaissance, or of a peculiar religious attitude, we deal with the work of art as a symptom of something else which expresses itself in a countless variety of other symptoms, and we interpret its compositional and iconographical features as more particularized evidence of

[125] Panofsky 2012, 475.
[126] Keel 1992a, 141.
[127] Panofsky 2012, 475.
[128] Kühne 1999, 349–350.

> this 'something else'. The discovery and interpretation of these 'symbolical' values (which are often unknown to the artist himself and may even emphatically differ from what he consciously intended to express) is the object of what we may call 'iconology' as opposed to 'iconography'.[129]

Panofsky also uses the example of a greeting man: 'After all, just as the degree of politeness in lifting a hat is a matter of the will and consciousness of the person doing the greeting, but it is not in his power to control what message about his innermost nature others may take from his gesture, so likewise even the artist knows only 'what he parades' but not 'what he betrays' (to quote an intellectually stimulating American)'.[130] The unconsciously reflected social/religious/cultural assumptions or ideological values are a kind of meaning pursued at this level of iconology.[131] And the 'intellectually stimulating American' whom Panofsky mentions in this quotation, is Peirce, showing Panofsky's connection to semiotics, as I discuss below (§3).[132]

The key tool for this level is the interpreter's 'synthetic intuition'. At this point, Panofsky refuses to define this term and leaves it unexplained saying that 'I cannot describe better than by the rather discredited term'.[133] This term may be understood as referring to a kind of insight from an interpreter which senses the 'intrinsic meaning' as explained above. As a corrective for this rather subjective tool, Panofsky offers the 'history of cultural symptoms' or 'general intellectual history', since an interpreter may compare the insight with what historians say about the general cultural and ideological trend of the artwork's period of production.[134] These correctives are the tools for the judgement whether the intuition is anachronistic or not.

[129] Panofsky 1955, 31.

[130] Panofsky 2012, 479–480.

[131] While such an explanation of the third level thrives in introductory books of art history, what Panofsky meant by the 'intrinsic meanings', by the time that he offered the three levels, are in fact rather unitary philosophical principles underlying a culture: scholars used terms such as 'unifying principles', or 'a common fundamental tendency', to explain Panofsky's ultimate goal of iconology. See Holly 1984, 184–185; Lang 2006, 25–30. The ideological or symbolical values unconsciously imposed on individual artworks are part of the third level, says Holly, but not all of it. An example of Panofsky's 'intrinsic meaning' of the third level would be the Renaissance perspective of 'a desire to order the world in a certain way' (Holly 1984, 148–149). Since finding such a unitary principle of a culture does not accord with the general direction of this study, which values the diversity and multiplicity of meanings, I discuss Panofsky's third level more in the sense of unconsciously expressed social/religious/cultural assumptions or ideological values present in the individual artworks.

[132] See below, p. 40ff.

[133] Panofsky 1955, 38.

[134] See also Panofsky 2012, 480.

The usual criticism about iconological interpretation is that it is too vague and subjective.[135] Such criticism is reasonable because this level depends too much on subjectivity to be called a methodological model, without clear definitions and boundaries. However, the problem lies not in the subjectivity, but in a naïve amalgamation of subjectivity with objectivity: Panofsky tries to objectify this level with the correctives of the 'history of cultural symptoms' or 'general intellectual history'. But could they really objectify the subjectivity of this level to a significant extent? People have diverse thoughts. Thus how is it possible to guarantee that one or more people at the time of an artwork's production did not think differently than what historians discuss about that period? Is it necessary to confine the 'intrinsic meaning' to the historical time period of the *production* of an artwork? Given the amount of subjectivity in this level, I think it would be better to transmit the concept of 'intrinsic meaning' to the realm of the collaboration between the interpreter and the artwork, rather than rashly objectify it by judging its anachronism against general intellectual history.

3. Panofsky and Semiotics

Several scholars have compared the Panofskian model and semiotics and found a number of similarities and differences.[136] There are scholars who emphasize their similarity, calling Panofsky 'the Saussure of art history',[137] and scholars who underline their differences.[138] I do not intend to discuss all the similarities and differences, but to note: (1) certain theoretical and methodological similarities which show the model's potential to combine with semiotics; (2) any critical differences which would block from a combination of the two.

3.1. *Similarities*

I focus on three similarities between the Panofskian model and semiotics: (1) their understanding of visual representations as signs; (2) their shared communicative aspects; and (3) their emphasis on the role of the interpreter.

First, semiotics and the Panofskian model conceive of visual representation as a sign which expresses something about its surrounding culture.[139] The goal of Panofsky's iconology, to 'deal with the work of art as a symptom of some-

[135] See Lamprichs 1999, 75–76.

[136] See for example Damisch 1998, 234–241; Hasenmueller 1978, 289–301; Holly 1984; Leeuwen 2001, 92–118; Viola 2012, 1–28.

[137] Argan 1975, 299. See also D'Alleva 2005, 29; Bal / Bryson 1991, 174; Bonfiglio 2016, 127.

[138] For example, Hasenmueller 1978, 289–301; Damisch 1998, 234–241.

[139] Holly 1984, 44.

thing else which expresses itself in a countless variety of other symptoms',[140] resembles Peirce's definition of a sign: 'a sign […] is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity'. [141] An image, or a sign, is a condensation of cultural ideologies, a 'part of a larger context',[142] the result of the 'infinite semiosis' in Peircean terms.

Secondly, both the Panofskian model and semiotics are based on the communicative aspect of signification. In semiotics, signs are produced, used, and received by conventional codes in the process of communication in a broad sense (not only verbally but also by senses and feelings), which is often called 'semiosis'.[143] In the Panofskian model, artworks are means of communication, which carry certain messages (i.e., meanings) shaped by conventions.[144] Panofsky's famous example of the gesture of tipping a hat as greeting also indicates the importance of communication in interpreting an image.[145]

Thirdly, the Panofskian model recognizes the role of the interpreter, even though it is not emphasized. At the first level, Panofsky accepts that the mere description of an artwork is also an interpretative work by the interpreter, and his explanation of the 'practical experience' implicitly emphasizes the role of the interpreter whose encyclopedia – the collective result of the interpreter's every semiosis – becomes the tool for interpretation.[146] At the third level, the subjectivity of the 'intrinsic meaning' and 'synthetic intuition' witnesses how vital the role of an interpreter is on this level. The relationship between the artwork and the interpreter is dialectic, and this relationship is what Eco assumes when regarding every interpretation.[147] Of course, the Panofskian model's emphasis on an artwork's historical background seems to emphasize the meanings derived from the artwork's original background rather than the interpreter. However, by taking 'practical experience' and 'synthetic intuition' as interpretive tools, the Panofskian model acknowledges the role of the interpreter in the act of interpretation, which is one of the important characteristics of semiotics.[148]

3.2. *Differences*

That Panofsky did not define his own work as a semiotic approach, nor explicitly used typical semiotic terms such as 'sign' or 'signifier', makes one hesitant to

[140] Panofsky 1955, 31.
[141] Peirce 1931–1960, 2.228.
[142] Holly 1984, 44.
[143] Nöth 1990, 168.
[144] See also Hasenmueller 1978, 294.
[145] Panofsky 1955, 26–27.
[146] See above, p. 35.
[147] See chapter 6 §1 below. See also, Eco 1990, 6–7.
[148] See Sheriff 1989, 19–31. Bal / Bryson 1991, 184–188.

call the Panofskian model semiotic. For example, Hasenmueller asserts that what makes the Panofskian model parallel with semiotics is only its shared theoretical assumption that there is deeper meaning behind what is represented and not the model itself.[149]

Hasenmueller points out as a differences between the Panofskian model and semiotics that the former separates three levels of meanings, while recent semiotic studies has a more continual relationship between different levels of meaning.[150] Looked at from the hierarchical representation of the schema, such a critique seems reasonable. However, Panofsky clearly states the continuality and circularity between the levels by saying that they are 'intertwined to form a process both unified and in tension'.[151] In his later publication of the model, he once again emphasizes that these three levels 'merge with each other into one organic and indivisible process'.[152] Nevertheless, the model does give the impression of a hierarchy; one can only advance to the next level when the previous level is accomplished. Such a structure must be modified to be successfully combined with a semiotic model.

Secondly, it is typically stated that the Panofskian model focuses on *what* a sign represents, while semiotics is interested in *how* a sign represents.[153] The Panofskian model aims to find meanings, whereas semiotics strives to find the signifying mechanism.[154] However, to a certain extent, each has an interest in the other side. On the one hand, semiotics' efforts to reveal the signifying mechanism lead to ways to find meanings, as Eco's textual collaboration model helps to ask specific questions to find certain meanings. Because semiotics is interested in the 'deeper meaning', it also produces various tools to search for it, 'making explicit and analyzable what is only obscurely felt'.[155] According to Eco, this striving for the deeper meaning by tracing intricately woven codes reveals 'the hidden interconnections of a given cultural system', and ultimately becomes 'a form of social criticism', because signs produce and criticize ideologies.[156] On the other hand, the Panofskian model pays attention to the signifying process because, on the level of iconological interpretation, one has to ask 'why' an image is represented in such a way, questioning 'the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, essential tendencies of the human mind were expressed by specific themes and concepts'.[157] But still, this 'manner' is not the

[149] Hasenmueller 1978, 296.
[150] Hasenmueller 1978, 290–291, 298.
[151] Panofsky 2012, 482.
[152] Panofsky 1955, 39.
[153] See for example, Leeuwen 2001, 92; Holly 1984, 181.
[154] Damisch 1998, 235.
[155] Bal 2006, 310.
[156] Eco 1976, 297–298.
[157] Panofsky 1955, 41.

same kind of research on signifying mechanisms as in semiotics. Thus, this is one of the differences, but since the Panofskian model does not lose its basic interest in 'how' a representation represents, and semiotics in 'what' meanings a representation makes, the combination of the two will not cause a contradicting problem.

Thirdly, according to Weissenrieder and Wendt, the Panofskian model understands an artwork 'as a reflection of reality; yet not also as its producer',[158] while in a semiotic view, images not only reflect but also construct reality.[159] The Panofskian model does not seem to grasp this aspect of an artwork as a producer of a cultural reality. While Panofsky focused on seeing see an image as a sign, which was produced by the previously-infinite semiosis, there is an impression that he failed to turn the artwork into another sign which brings about another whole series of infinite semiosis generating final interpretants and affecting the world.[160] I do not intend to criticize Panofsky for this matter; it was not his purpose to trace how an artwork constructed the world around. While semiotics regards an artwork as a sign which ultimately causes a change in the world – a final interpretant – the Panofskian model perceives an artwork as a sign which reflects the surrounding cultures. However, since these two different views on a sign are not contradictory to each other, the semiotic point of view can easily be added to the Panofskian sign concept, when it is combined with semiotic models and theories. Furthermore, if the primary focus is given to the interpreter in this model, as discussed above,[161] the interpreter, as one of the elements of the world changed by the artwork,[162] becomes capable of witnessing the concept of a sign as a producer of the world.

The Panofskian model has sufficient potential for the combination with other semiotic models because they are based on similar theoretical assumptions (visual representation as a sign, the communicative aspects, and the role of the interpreter). Unlike Hasenmueller's argument, what makes research 'semiotic' is exactly the shared theoretical assumptions, goals, and orientations. This is of significance for this study as my intention is not to prove that the Panofskian model is semiotic, but to examine the potential for its combination with various semiotic models. Of course, there are differences, but they are not so fundamental that they demand the dismissal of the combination of the two. When supplemented by other semiotic theories, the Panofskian model can be harmonized with the semiotic collaboration model.

[158] Weissenrieder / Wendt 2005, 12.

[159] Bal 1991, 6–7.

[160] A final interpretant is the result of the potentially infinite semiosis, which affects the world thus connecting the world of significance with the world of reality. See above, p. 47ff.

[161] See p. 40.

[162] Cf. the notion of 'final interpretant' in p. 47ff.

VI. UMBERTO ECO'S SEMIOTICS: TEXTUAL COLLABORATION MODEL

In this chapter, I discuss Umberto Eco's semiotics. Since this research's purpose is not to participate in the philosophical discourses of semiotics but to introduce a semiotic approach for biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies, I do not address all aspects of Eco's semiotics but only relevant features. I have chosen Eco's semiotics from among other semioticians as the basic foundation for the semiotic model, which I utilize to analyze various images, texts, and interpretations. His textual collaboration model is adapted to analyze texts, and I have modified the collaboration model to accommodate image analysis, where Eco's textual collaboration model serves as a framework, while his, Panofsky's, and Bal's theories on visual representations modify and replace some text-only features (e.g., textual codes) with visual features. Therefore, in this chapter on Eco, I first discuss his semiotics generally to explain the basic mechanisms underlying his collaboration model (§2), then introduce the textual collaboration model (§3), and incorporate his understanding of iconicity which is used for the modification of the collaboration model for images (§4).

1. Why Umberto Eco?

Umberto Eco was a semiotician, philosopher, literary critic, and novelist with diverse interests spanning semiotic theories, communications, medieval aesthetics, comics, films, and avant-garde arts, among others.

Eco's semiotics is integrative. He considered most of the theories and approaches of semiotics which had been made in his time, took the good from each, and integrated them. According to Paul Cobley, Eco's work 'contains a productive synthesis of virtually all the 20th century schools of semiotics, supported by a vast knowledge of the classical heritage of sign study'.[163]

Eco's semiotics tries to include all sign systems, finding signs from everywhere. Following Peirce, Eco contends that a sign is not ontologically given as one, but it becomes a sign by interpretation: 'the decisive point of whether or not a sign is present is *whether it is interpreted*'.[164] Thus, anywhere there is an interpretation, there is semiosis:

[163] Cobley / Jansz 1997, 155.
[164] Eco 1976, 89.

> In any case, I do not exclude, I even claim that there is semiosis and thus interpretation in the processes of perception. In this sense, the interpretation […] – based on the assumption or abduction – is the semiotic mechanism, which not only explains our relationship to messages intentionally produced by other people, but also clarifies every form of interaction of humans (and perhaps also animals) with the environment.[165]

Eco's semiotics avoids any extreme. Cobley states that 'In spite of Eco's avoidance of scholasticism, he has not been overwhelmed by a semiotic glut'.[166] Michael Caesar points out Eco's 'non-dogmatism and anti-absolutism' as one of the most attractive characteristics of his semiotics.[167] Eco is against ontological structuralism, which asserts that there is an absolute *Ur-code* (the ultimate code) – the source of all codes freed from all ideological views. But still, he utilizes structuralistic methods as a tool for establishing partial, tentative systems.[168] Eco believes in the conciliation between 'structural logic' and 'dialectical logic', enabling a profound understanding of communications.[169] Caesar expresses this conciliatory feature of Eco's semiotics through the word 'oscillation':

> There is a constant, and fruitful, oscillation in Eco's work between the demands of interpretative freedom on the one hand and the need to secure statements about culture or communication in general within a clearly visible conceptual structure on the other.[170]

Eco never advocates for the absolute freedom of interpretation. While the interpreter is free to interpret, but the work itself guides and confines the interpreter's interpretation:

> To say that interpretation (as the basic feature of semiosis) is potentially unlimited does not mean that interpretation has no object and that it 'riverruns' for the mere sake of itself. To say that a text potentially has no end does not mean that *every* act of interpretation can have a happy ending. Even the most radical deconstructionists accept that there are interpretations which are blatantly unacceptable. This means that the interpreted text imposes some con-

[165] 'Jedenfalls schließe ich nicht aus, ja ich behaupte sogar, daß es Semiose und damit Interpretation bei den Wahrnehmungsprozessen gibt. In diesem Sinn ist die – auf der Vermutung bzw. Der Abduktion beruhende [...] – Interpretation der semiosische Mechanismus, der nicht nur unsere Beziehung zu bewußt von anderen Menschen erzeugten Botschaften erklärt, sondern jede Form der Interaktion des Menschen (und vielleicht auch der Tiere) mit der Umwelt'. Eco 1992, 20.

[166] Cobley / Jansz 1997, 155.

[167] Caesar 1999, 53.

[168] Eco 1972, 396–397, 435–436. See also Nöth 1990, 326.

[169] Eco 1972, 436.

[170] Caesar 1999, 47.

> straints upon its interpreters. The limits of interpretation coincide with the rights of the text (which does not mean with the rights of its author).[171]

Eco's pan-semiotic view, which finds signs from all around an interpreter,[172] and his integratory, transdisciplinary, and conciliatory attitudes are suitable for establishing a semiotic model which involves more than one sign system. His emphasis on the *collaboration* between a work and an interpreter, not accepting the absolute freedom of interpretation, makes his model a method and not a deconstructive theory, while still recognizing the *potential* unlimitedness of interpretation. Eco's textual collaboration model which I introduce below is built on these advantages: it is a method of revealing structures of texts and interpretations, and its transdisciplinary character allows for it to be modified for other sign systems (e.g., visual representations). Eco's semiotics offers a basic framework for this study, providing semiotic models with which I analyze various interpretations of texts and images in Parts II and III.

2. The Basis of Eco's Semiotics

Before using Eco's textual collaboration model, it is essential to understand his semiotic concepts underlying it. Since Eco adapted many of them from Peirce's semiotics, they are discussed together. In the first two subsections, I discuss the Peircean notions of ground, immediate/dynamic object, interpretant, and final interpretant together with Eco's understandings of these notions. The third subsection presents Eco's concept of encyclopedia.

2.1. *Ground, Immediate/Dynamic Object, Interpretant, and Final Interpretant*

It is worth referring again to Pierce's quote on page 19, in which he stated that a sign (or representamen) is everything which stands for some other thing (an object) creating a concept (interpretant) in the interpreter's mind.[173] The sign cannot represent the object in all aspects but 'in reference to a sort of idea'

[171] Emphasis in original. Eco 1990, 6–7.

[172] I.e., from everything the interpreter sees, hears, feels, thinks, experiences, etc.

[173] Peirce distinguishes between a sign and a representamen, but frequently he replaces one for the other without a clear rule or definition. Eco was aware of this (Eco 1987, 279–280, n. 1) and tried to differentiate them. According to Eco 'a sign is the concrete, token, element (the utterance) used in the concrete process of communication and reference, while the representamen is the expressive *type* to which a coding convention assigns a certain content by means of certain interpretant'. In other words, 'representamens are type-expressions conventionally correlated to a type-content by a given culture'. Eco 1976, 1460. See also Eco 1979, 180.

(ground).[174] The object 'is not necessarily a thing or a state of the world but a rule, a law, a prescription'.[175] The interpretant becomes 'the more developed sign' or 'the second sign', generating the second interpretant, which becomes again the third sign, continuously without end.[176]

Peirce introduced concepts related to object and interpretant: immediate object, dynamic object, immediate interpretant, dynamic interpretant, and final interpretant. It is not the goal of this section to discuss these notions in full, but to explain some basic concepts and terms in Eco's textual collaboration model. Therefore, I do not deeply discuss these five concepts, but only briefly present them. The following is a quotation from Peirce dealing with these concepts.

> I have already noted that a Sign has an Object and an Interpretant, the latter being that which the Sign produces in the Quasi-mind that is the Interpreter by determining the latter to a feeling, to an exertion, or to a Sign, which determination is the Interpretant. But it remains to point out that there are usually two Objects, and more than two Interpretants. Namely, we have to distinguish the Immediate Object, which is the Object as the Sign itself represents it, and whose Being is thus dependent upon the Representation of it in the Sign, from the Dynamical Object, which is the Reality which by some means contrives to determine the Sign to its Representation. In regards to the Interpretant we have equally to distinguish, in the first place, the Immediate Interpretant, which is the interpretant as it is revealed in the right understanding of the Sign itself, and is ordinarily called the *meaning* of the sign; while in the second place, we have to take note of the Dynamical Interpretant which is the actual effect which the Sign, as a Sign, really determines. Finally there is what I provisionally term the Final Interpretant, which refers to the manner in which the Sign tends to represent itself to be related to its Object. I confess that my own conception of this third interpretant is not yet quite free from mist.[177]

The interpretant is the idea that the interpreter thinks of an object as evoked by the sign, and the sign stands for the object; yet, this object is not the object in the real world (the outer world), but the object reconstructed in the interpreter's mind based on the 'ground' – the recognized features, attributes, or qualities of an object: 'The ground is an attribute of the object as far as it (the object) has been selected in a certain way and only some of its attributes have been made pertinent, thus constituting the Immediate Object of the sign'.[178] Thus, there are

[174] Peirce 1931–1960, 2.228.
[175] Eco 1979, 181.
[176] Peirce 1931–1960, 2.303.
[177] Emphasis in original. Peirce 1931–1960, 4.536.
[178] Eco 1979, 182. Eco further explains that 'The ground is what can be comprehended and transmitted of a given object under a certain profile: it is the content of an expression and appears to be identical with meaning (or a basic component of it)'. Eco 1979, 182.

two kinds of objects: a Dynamic Object and an Immediate Object.[179] The Dynamic Object is the object in the so-called 'real' world ('the object of which a sign is a sign'), while the Immediate Object is the object that the interpretant, as the second sign, stands for ('object of a sign'), an object constructed from certain perceived and selected aspects of the Dynamic Object.[180]

As objects are distinguished as dynamic or immediate, so are the interpretants. From Peirce, it can be understood that the immediate interpretant is the meaning of a sign, while the dynamic interpretant is the actual effect decided solely by the sign. However, Eco avoids clarifying immediate and dynamic interpretants, and moves on to other concepts.[181]

What is essential in this complex division of the immediate and dynamic is the separation of the objective (dynamic) and subjective (immediate). Peirce and Eco assume the existence of the real or outer world and try to grasp them as much as possible, while admitting the impossibility of an absolute understanding of the reality. Thus, by dividing the concepts of the dynamic and immediate, the matrix of the outer world (the objective) is brought into the world of sign systems (the subjective), interacting intricately. Eco's diagram (Fig. 4) visualizes these complex interactions.

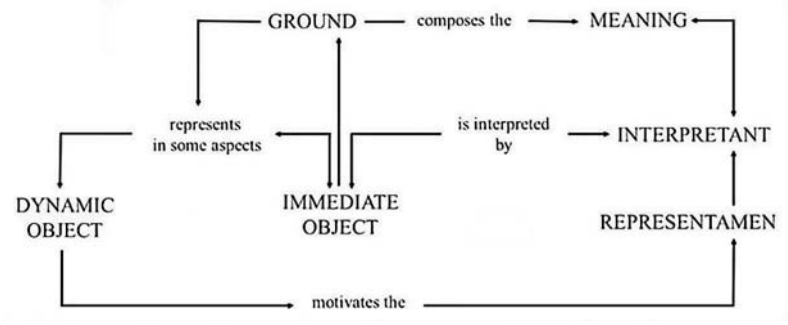


Fig. 4: Semiosis model by Eco, based on Peirce (Eco 1979, 183 fig. 7.1).

[179] Eco 1979, 180–181; Eco 1987, 32–33.

[180] Quotations from Eco 1979, 193. See also ibid., 181–182, and Eco 1987, 33–35, 52.

[181] Eco passes the notions of dynamic/immediate interpretants by a mere statement that 'The interpretant (as object of Speculative Rhetoric) is without doubt 'that which the Sign produces in the Quasi-mind that is the Interpreter' (4.356), but, since the presence of the interpreter is not essential to the definition of the interpretant, this latter is 'in the first place' to be considered as Immediate Interpretant, that is, 'the interpretant as it is revealed in the right understanding of the Sign itself, and is ordinarily called the meaning of the sign' (4.536)' (emphasis in original). Eco 1979, 184. However, if an interpretant needs to be assumed primarily as the immediate interpretant, as Eco asserted, the boundary between dynamical interpretant and meaning (Peirce equated the latter with the immediate interpretant in 4.536) becomes obscure. Eco does not clarify this problem.

This diagram does not depict a one-way process of interpretation, but multiple directions which occur simultaneously. A dynamic object motivates the generation of a sign (representamen). The immediate object, which represents some aspects of the dynamic object, is interpreted by the interpretant and becomes the meaning. The dynamic and immediate object are related based on the same ground, which further composes the meaning.

As one might have felt at this point, the division of the dynamic and the immediate causes the overlap of some concepts in this diagram: the immediate object, ground, interpretant, and meaning. Peirce knew it and sometimes substituted one term with another.[182] Eco also clearly states that 'there is no profound difference between the meaning (as a sum of grounds) and the interpretant',[183] and, 'therefore, being distinguished as formal objects of different semiotic approaches and in reference to different points of view, ground, meaning, and interpretant are in fact the same'.[184]

According to Eco, this process of semiosis not only occurs in one's mind, but also is connected with the outer world: 'After having received a series of signs and having variously interpreted them, our way of acting within the world is either transitorily or permanently changed'.[185] This newly formed way of acting is called a 'habit', 'a regularity of behavior in the interpreter or user of that sign', which is generated by the (potentially) infinite semiosis.[186] This habit becomes the 'final' interpretant, for it stops the infinite semiosis: when a habit is established and results in a changed action, the internal unlimited semiosis stops and affects the outer world.[187] The final interpretant is the link between the intensional world (the world of signification) and the extensional world (the world of reality).[188] But the infinite semiosis continues further: the new habit acted out

[182] Eco 1979, 182, 184.
[183] Eco 1979, 183.
[184] Eco 1979, 184.
[185] Eco 1976, 1465.
[186] Eco 1979, 192.
[187] 'A sign can produce an emotional and an energetical interpretant. If we consider a musical piece, the emotional interpretant is our normal reaction to the charming power of music, but this emotional reaction may elicit a sort of muscular or mental effort. This kind of response is the energetic interpretant. But an energetic response does not need to be interpreted; rather, it produces (I guess, by further repetitions) a change of habit. This means that, after having received a series of signs and having variously interpreted them, our way of acting within the world is either transitorily or permanently changed. This new attitude, this pragmatic issue, is the final interpretant. At this point the unlimited semiosis stops – though not permanently, since our daily life is interwoven with these changes of habit. The exchange of signs produces modifications of the experience. The missing link between semiosis and physical reality as practical action has been found'. Eco 1979, 194. See also Eco 1976, 1465–1466.
[188] 'Whereas a word's extension corresponds to the set of entities that it picks out in the world, its intension corresponds to its inherent sense, the concept that it evokes. […] Thus, the extension of woman would be a set of real word entities (women) while its intention [*sic*] would involve

in the outer world becomes another sign and produces a set of different interpretants.[189]

2.2. *From the Smallest Unit of Meaning to the Largest Complex*

In Eco's understanding of Peirce, an interpretant takes forms of not only a simple definition of a term, but also of 'the conclusion of an argument drawn from the premises' and thus, 'everything that is semantically *implied* by a sign'.[190] For example, interpretants of a term 'apple' include not only definitions such as 'a round fruit of the rose family', but also an image of an apple, the taste of an apple, the story of Snow White, or the tradition of Adam and Eve. Here the word 'apple' is not only exchangeable with other sign systems (visual, olfactory, tactual, etc.), but also replaceable by a whole text, myth, or tradition and vice versa, leading to the infinite semiosis.[191] It is noticeable that the interpretation of, for example, a *word* comes not from a definition based on the equivalence (e.g., synonyms), but from inferences, as the interpretation of a *text* comes also from a set of inferences.[192] In this manner, semiotics encompasses phenomena from the smallest unit of meaning to complex works such as a discourse, a museum, or a myth. Not only verbal but also other kinds of sign systems are involved because interpretants take the forms of all sign systems. Thus, Eco's (and Peirce's) semiotics is the basis of the integration of semantics and pragmatics – the two branches of semiotics which had long been separated[193] – and that of different sign systems, as 'a sememe is in itself an inchoative text, whereas a text is an expanded sememe'.[194]

notions like "female" and "human". Similarly, the phrase Prime Minister of Great Britain would have as its extension an individual ("Margaret Thatcher"), but its intension would involve the concept "leader of the majority party in Parliament"'. Valli / Lucas 2000, 375.

[189] Eco 1979, 194–195; Eco 1987, 54–56.

[190] Emphasis in original. Eco 1979, 184.

[191] Eco 1987, 41–42; Eco 1979, 197–198.

[192] Eco 1981, 42–44. Inference is a 'if … then, $p \supset q$' relationship, which, according to Eco is a nature of a sign. 'A sign […] is not in a relationship of equivalence ($p \equiv q$) with its own meaning or with its own referent, but rather in a relationship of inference (if…then, $p \supset q$)'. Eco 1981, 40. ≡ is a symbol for equivalence, and ⊃ is for implication ('if…then') in propositional logic. Thus $p \equiv q$ means p is equivalent to q, and $p \supset q$ means 'if p then q' or 'p implies q'. See Hurley / Watson 2018, 331–332.

[193] Eco 1987, 15–28; Eco 1979, 3.

[194] Quotation from Eco 1979, 175. This phrase is not explicitly written by Peirce but elaborated by Eco. Eco mentions that this assertion by Peirce is clearly implied in the semiotics of Peirce. Eco 1987, 31.

2.3. *Encyclopedia*

The notion of 'encyclopedia' is a metaphor which well suits this inferential character of Peirce's (and thus Eco's) interpretant. While a lexical definition reduces meanings of a term into the formula '$p \equiv q$' (p is the equivalent of q), an encyclopedia describes all the aspects of a term under every kind of contexts and situations.[195] This term is often used by Eco in order to refer to the knowledge-pool that an interpreter has and uses to interpret a sign. Paolo Desogus explains Eco's notion of encyclopedia as the following:

> As demonstrated in his novel, *The Name of the Rose* (1983), the encyclopedia is akin to an immense library whose books accrue knowledge as it has been represented by cultures of different epochs. However, the library must not simply be considered an archive. The library is also a space wherein books talk with each other, generate intertextual links, and display possibilities of meaning that can be used in order to produce new signs. Since they appear in the form of signs, the books that form the encyclopedia are semiotic objects that transmit knowledge by means of cultural conventions that guarantee their communicability and that can be used as a paradigm in the processes of signification. The encyclopedia is, thus, also a source of semiotic rules that govern semiosis. It is the space where knowledge shows its rules of functioning and establishes the conditions of interpretation and production of signs. In that sense, the encyclopedia is a multidimensional system that works by means of the elements that form it: as Eco himself claims, semiosis is a process that 'explains itself by itself'. (Eco 1976, 71)[196]

The concept of encyclopedia has limits in practice in regard to scope, namely the 'universe of discourse'. It prevents an encyclopedia from expanding infinitely, resulting in certain forms of encyclopedias based on the consented knowledge among a specific group.[197]

Eco's semiotic notions explained above are the basic mechanism underlying the textual collaboration model which I introduce below. The notions of ground, immediate/dynamic object, and interpretant ultimately point out that signs represent objects 'not in all respects but in reference to a sort of idea',[198] which is recognized by an interpreter. The notion of final interpretant is a link between the world of signification (intensional) and the outer world (extensional), as the textual collaboration model is comprised of dimensions of intensions and extensions. A characteristic of Peirce's and Eco's interpretant, – namely, that it

[195] Eco 1979, 187–188; Eco 1987, 44–46; Eco 1981, 40. See footnote 192 above for the propositional logic symbols.

[196] Desogus 2012, 501–502.

[197] Eco 1979, 189; Eco 1987, 47–48.

[198] Quotation from Peirce 1931–1960, 2.228.

operates across all scales, from the smallest unit of meaning (e.g., a word) to the largest complex (e.g., a book, an artwork, a museum, or a myth), regardless of sign system – becomes the basis of the textual collaboration model, which not only reconstructs narratives from simple words but also reduces whole books to fundamental oppositions of elementary ideological values. Finally, the concept of encyclopedia is an excellent metaphor for referring to the vast knowledge-pool of the interpreter, with which various codes and subcodes in the collaboration model operate.

Altogether, these notions and concepts emphasize that an interpreter is not only a person but also a complex of vast signs and interpretants and that the act of interpretation – the collaboration between a work and an interpreter – is the continuous exchange of vast compounds of knowledge and experiences. Eco's collaboration model, which emphasizes the role of an interpreter, reveals how the interpreter's previous knowledge and experiences (i.e., encyclopedia) affect the interpretation.

3. Eco's Textual Collaboration Model[199]

In this section, I explain the textual collaboration model, which Umberto Eco offered in *Lector in fabula* and *The Role of the Reader*. The model shows the structures of complex collaborative aspects between the text and the model reader (see below) in the act of interpreting a text. Although it is a *textual* collaboration model, Eco states that what he suggested can be applicable to non-verbal sign systems after some modifications.[200] Therefore, I use Eco's textual collaboration model for the analysis of text interpretations, and I modify this model for images and use it to analyze the interpretations of visual images. In this section I explain basic concepts of Eco's textual collaboration model; the modification of this model for visual images will be conducted in Chapter 8 with the help of the tools and theories discussed in Chapters 5 and 7.

Eco offers his model of semiotic operations for narrative texts based on Petőfi's TeSWeST (*Text-Struktur-Welt-Struktur-Theorie*).[201] Eco's model is designed to fit a narrative text, for a narrative text contains various types of texts

[199] The title of the model can be found in various translations of *Lector in Fabula* (e.g., 'Ebenen der textuellen Mitarbeit' in Eco 1987, 89), which can be translated as 'levels of textual collaboration' in English. Eco does not give this title in his *The Role of the Reader*. Since the title '*levels* of textual collaboration' gives a false impression that it is a hierarchical, step-by-step model, I introduce this model with a different title, 'Eco's textual collaboration model'.

[200] Eco 1987, 13.

[201] Eco 1979, 13–15.

in it, i.e., it posits most of the problems of interpreting a text. The narrative text model may be extended or reduced in order to fit other types of texts.[202]

The textual collaboration model is based on the premise that 'a text postulates the collaboration with a reader as a condition of its actualization'.[203] In order to understand a text ('the actualization of a text'), the readers must (1) relate the written expressions with their conventionalized contents using various codes and (2) reconstruct what is not spoken, not manifested on the expressional surface.[204] For example, to understand a simple written imperative, 'stay home!', a reader must (1) connect the words such as 'stay' and 'home' with what the reader already knows of the terms, i.e., the reader's encyclopedic knowledge, and (2) read between the lines that this text imposes negative ideological values on the situations that somebody goes out of the house.

When 'reading' is understood in this manner, it is necessary to introduce the concepts of a model author and a model reader. A model author is the intention of the author reconstructed from the text by the reader's act of interpretation, which is distinguished from an empirical author who is the actual author, the person. A model reader can be explained as 'the entire range of the interpretive actions the reader is encouraged or allowed to perform by the text', an ideal reader whom the author had in mind in the course of writing and consequently whom the text predicts.[205] The model author or reader is not equivalent to the empirical author or reader, but it is a textual strategy: the model author is what the text reveals about the author, similar to the 'intention' of the text revealed through the text by the reader's interpretation, different from the 'intention' of the empirical author. A text, by its existence, presumes its model reader who will be able to read and understand various meanings of the text. The collaboration of the text and the reader includes setting up, renouncing, and re-setting of many hypotheses about the model author and model reader in the course of interpretation.[206] Without these concepts of a model author and reader, the complexity of the interpreter's role cannot be accessed. Eco's textual collaboration model (Fig. 5) also utilizes these concepts in order to structuralize the cooperation between the text and the reader in the act of interpretation.

The textual collaboration model (Fig. 5) is divided into left and right sides, and into upper and lower parts. The left and right sides indicate the intensions (world of signification) and extensions (the outer world).[207] Eco borrowed this division from Petőfi's model because it brings both the world of signification

[202] Eco 1979, 12–13, 28–29; Eco 1987, 86–88, 132–134.
[203] Eco 1987, 65.
[204] Eco 1987, 61–62.
[205] See Pisanty 2015, 44, 56–58.
[206] Eco 1979, 7–11.
[207] See footnote 188 on p. 50 for the definition of intension and extension.

and the outer world into the discussion. The lower part deals with the process before the actualization of the contents: interpretation must start with Box 3, the 'linear text manifestation', the text itself, and then is processed by various codes and subcodes (Box 1) within their own circumstances (Box 2), in order to actualize the content. The upper part displays various structures of the actualized content in boxes with arrows between them. The arrows jump from here to there, neither in a certain order nor in hierarchical steps but freely interconnected. This illustrates Eco's point of emphasis in this model: the actualization of the content is not done in a certain hierarchical order but by free movement of thoughts which constantly build, destroy, and rebuild the content's different structures.[208]

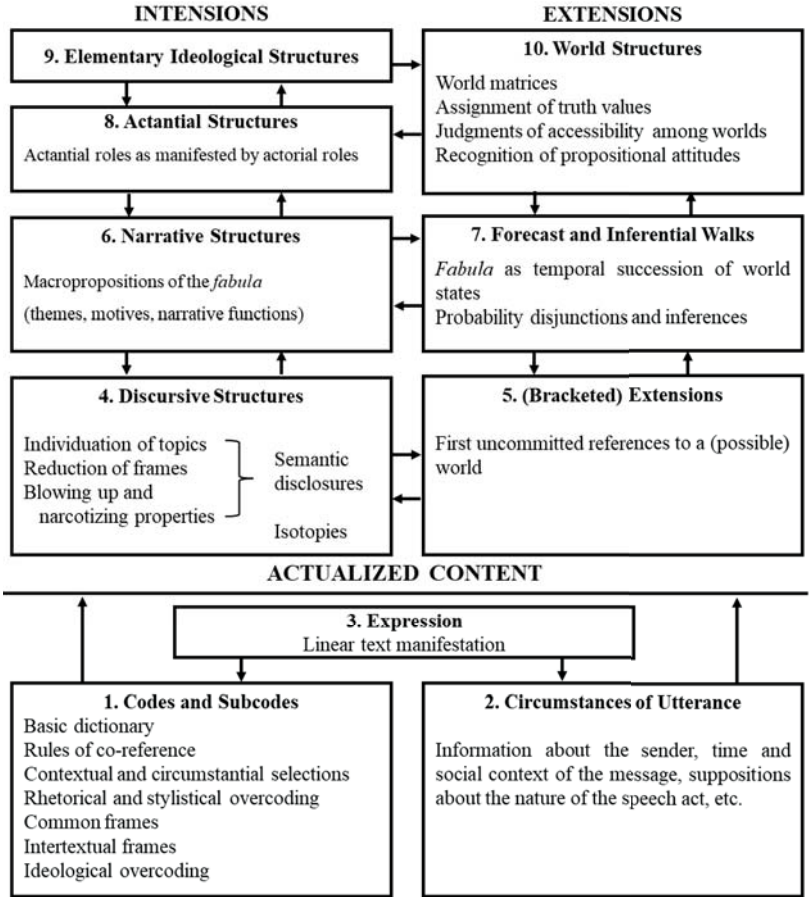


Fig. 5: Eco's textual collaboration model (Eco 1979, 14, fig. 0.3).

[208] Eco 1979, 13–15.

3.1. *'Expression' (Box 3), 'Circumstances of Utterance' (Box 2), 'Codes and Subcodes' (Box 1), and '(Bracketed) Extensions' (Box 5)*

With Box 3, 'expression (linear text manifestation)', the operation of interpreting begins. It is the box of the 'lexematic surface', the text itself before interpretation. If there is a text whose meaning is not guaranteed, e.g., a text of a foreign language which is not known to the reader, then the text is nothing but only 'linear manifestation' for the reader.[209] This linear expression is immediately and simultaneously connected to both (1) the 'circumstances of the utterance' (Box 2) and (2) the 'codes and subcodes' of the reader (Box 1), in order to build the basic forms of content.

The immediate circumstances of the utterance (Box 2) concern the situations of the reader's encounter with the text, such as the circumstances of reading a book, looking at a poster, or hearing a speech, etc. If the text has originated from a different time period or culture than that of the reader, it first requires the actualization of the contents (based on the tentative codes and circumstances) before coming back to Box 2 again and reconstructing the original circumstances of the utterance and thereby actualizing the contents again accordingly.[210]

There are some examples of codes (Box 1) suggested by Eco: basic dictionary (e.g., elementary meanings such as /princess/ = female human), rules of co-reference (e.g., what pronouns refer to), contextual and circumstantial selections, rhetorical and stylistic overcoding (e.g., assumptions for rhetorical expressions), inferences by common frames (postulations according to the common regulations of a culture), inferences by intertextual frames (rules which readers of certain books or genres share), ideological overcoding (postulations according to individual's ideology). The competence of using codes is the competence of using one's encyclopedias.[211]

Through such selections, the reader decides for the first time what the given expression denotes (extension), but postpones the final decision and puts the assumption in brackets in order to wait for more textual evidence before finalizing the decision (Box 5: 'bracketed extensions').[212]

3.2. *Discursive Structures (Box 4)*

If elementary semantic properties such as '/princess/ = a female human' are decided by the code of the 'basic dictionary', in the discursive structure, one

[209] Eco 1979, 15–16; Eco 1987, 88–90.
[210] Eco 1979, 16–17; Eco 1987, 91–92.
[211] Eco 1979, 17–23; Eco 1987, 94–106.
[212] Eco 1979, 17; Eco 1987, 93–94.

decides in detail which semantic properties to activate and to narcotize. The selection of what to activate and narcotize is needed because certainly not all the properties of a princess – including that she has ten fingers and ten toes, etc. – need to be explicitly stated in order to understand the text. The decision depends on the determination of the topic.[213] The topic determines where the infinite semiosis should be oriented and to what extent it must be limited. A topic, as a hypothesis of the regularity of a text, can usually be found by formulating questions, and, to do so, a reader looks for evidence in the text, such as titles or keywords.[214] A narrative text's discursive structure functions like a narrative's plot.[215]

For example, let us look at the biblical text which I interpret in Part III. In the Shulamite description in Song of Songs 7:1–6, the topic would be the body of the Shulamite, and the activated properties are the mentioned body parts, such as her feet, thighs, navel, breasts, neck, eyes, nose, head, and hair, and the narcotized properties are the body parts not mentioned, such as her ears, mouth, or shoulders. The narcotized properties are assumed to be there, but neither mentioned nor, more importantly, discussed. I may reconstruct a discursive structure of the description as the following: a group of people asks the Shulamite to dance in order to see her. The group describes the body parts of the Shulamite together with other elements: her feet in sandals, thighs compared with artworks, navel with a cup, breasts with two fawns of a gazelle, neck with an ivory tower, eyes with pools, nose with a tower of Lebanon, head with the Mount Carmel, and hair as purple and as binding a king. Of course, the constructed discursive structure may differ according to interpreters.

3.3. *Narrative Structures (Box 6)*

In order to realize the narrative structure, a reader reconstructs a fabula, which differs from a plot: while a plot is the story as it is told in the text (discursive structure), a fabula is a 'basic stuff' of the story which is rearranged according to the timeline. A fabula is a series of 'macropropositions' (e.g., propositions about the primary events, contexts, and characterizations) built upon the discursive structure because, in order to construct a fabula, an abstraction of the story by answering the questions of macropropositions is necessary.[216]

The necessary elements to form a narrative are: agents, the first state, change(s), and result(s). This implies that the so-called non-narrative texts can

[213] Eco 1979, 23; Eco 1987, 107–108.
[214] Eco 1979, 24–27; Eco 1987, 108–114.
[215] Eco 1987, 128.
[216] Eco 1979, 27–28; Eco 1987, 128–132.

also be regarded as narrative texts and that they do have fabulae. For example, a scientific text can be a story of 'research' done by researcher(s), which changed the view of the research's object and resulted in the research's conclusion.[217]

To continue the example of the Shulamite description above, the questions of macropropositions would be: Is the Shulamite dancing? Is the group describing the body of the Shulamite? Is the group praising that she is beautiful? etc. I may construct a narrative structure (a fabula) of the description as the following: a group of people wants to see the beauty of the Shulamite and asks her to dance. While the Shulamite dances, the group of people praise the beauty of the Shulamite's body using metaphors, and a king is bound to her beauty.

3.4. *Forecast and Inferential Walks (Box 7)*

A fabula cannot be made at once, but it is built step by step in the course of reading, thus undergoing revisions. A reader constantly forecasts the next state, even at the end of each sentence, but usually at the junctions of macropropositions. All these points are the 'disjunctions of probabilities' (or 'probability disjunctions'), at which the reader builds various possible worlds according to the forecasts about what would happen next.[218]

In the course of forecast, the reader infers macropropositions not only from textual evidence but also from knowledge gained previously outside of the text (various encyclopedias). Eco calls this short step outside the text as 'inferential walks'.[219] Due to the active involvement of the interpreter's encyclopedias, the reader's interpretative preference is revealed at this box, by choosing one option among many which are similarly supported by the text or other sources.

For example, if one infers that the Shulamite is praised for her beauty at the probability disjunction of 'How beautiful are your feet in sandals' (v. 2a), it is likely that the reader also infers the beauty from the probability disjunction of a more unfamiliar metaphor such as 'your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle' (v. 4). By inferring that her breasts are also beautiful, the reader is likely to take images which seem to be beautiful from their encyclopedia of twin gazelle fawns. Since the text is ambiguous about the Shulamite's visual appearance, other readers – according to their interpretative preferences constructed by their encyclopedias – may choose other options that may also seem supported by the text at this probability disjunction: such as humorous, ridiculous, or playful breasts.

[217] Eco 1979, 28–31; Eco 1987, 132–139.
[218] Eco 1979, 31–32; Eco 1987, 140–148.
[219] Eco 1979, 32–33; Eco 1987, 148–151.

3.5. *Actantial Structures (Box 8) and Elementary Ideological Structures (Box 9)*

The actantial[220] and ideological structures are not the final levels of the interpretative work, but they are established early in the course of reading which affects our forecasts and macropropositions. The actantial structure is constructed when a fabula is abstracted into a series of actantial roles, such as subject, object, opponent, sender, and addressee.[221] The elementary ideological structure reveals itself when value judgements, such as good vs. evil, presence vs. absence, true vs. false, etc., are applied on the actantial structure.[222]

As an example, according to the narrative structure of the Shulamite description, which I constructed above, the actantial structure would be similar to: the subject – the describing group; the object – to see and describe the beauty of the Shulamite; the sender (the motivation for the subject's desire for the object) – the beauty of the Shulamite; the helper – the sources of the metaphors used, etc. As the description is interpreted to be praise of the Shulamite's beauty, the beauty is overlaid with the ideological value of Good, as are her body parts and the sources of the metaphors used for describing the body parts.[223]

3.6. *World Structures (Box 10)*

At Box 10, 'world structures', the reader compares various possible worlds that the reader constructed in the course of reading: for example, a possible world of a fabula, of a character, or of a specific reader, etc., with each other, or with the world of reference (the so-called real world) known from the reader's encyclopedia.[224] The notion of a 'possible world' here is not an empty world as discussed in modal logic but rather a world full of its properties and individuals, which represents various structural possibilities of different (states of) fabulae.[225]

Eco defines a 'possible world' as following:

i. a possible world is a *possible state of affairs* expressed by a set of relevant propositions where for every proposition either p or $\sim p$;[226]
ii. as such it outlines a set of possible *individuals* along with their *properties*;

[220] I.e., an action divided into several aspects.
[221] Eco 1979, 37; Eco 1987, 220–223.
[222] Eco 1979, 38; Eco 1987, 223–224.
[223] For more detailed discussion on the actantial and elementary ideological structures, see chapter 11 (§1.2 and §1.3).
[224] Eco 1979, 37.
[225] Eco 1987, 154–162.
[226] Which means that a possible world may be constructed with a set of propositions which can be expressed either 'A is B' or 'A is not B'.

iii. since some of these properties or predicates are actions, a possible world is also a possible *course of events*;
iv. since this course of events is not actual, it must depend on the *propositional attitudes* of somebody; in other words, possible worlds are worlds imagined, believed, wished, and so on.[227]

Every possible world is dependent on the real or actual world (the world of reference). A text does not list all the possible properties of the individuals, but lets its common nouns and proper nouns refer to their equivalents in the actual world through the reader's encyclopedias. In that sense, the actual world (the world of reference) is an 'encyclopedic construct', which allows for the comparison with the possible worlds (which are also cultural constructs).[228]

Eco recognizes a series of different types of possible worlds: a fabula is the possible world of a narrative. This unique possible world of a fabula (W_N) is a variant world derived from the matrix of the world of reference. If a text has more than one fabula, then there are multiple possible worlds. Since the course of reading does not supply a complete fabula from the beginning, there are different possible world states (W_{NSn}) according to the 'succession of textual states'. There are also possible worlds of characters, that is, the possible world that a character imagines, wants, fears, or anticipates at each state of the fabula (W_{NcSn}). A reader's possible world (W_R) is the possible world imagined or anticipated by the reader at each disjunction of possibilities.[229]

A text is not itself a possible world. A text is a 'machine for producing possible worlds', and possible worlds include the worlds of fabulae, the worlds of the characters of the fabula, and the worlds of the readers' anticipations. Some possible worlds must be given up (e.g., a W_R of a detective novel in the beginning) when the entire fabula reveals itself at the end, but this abandoned W_R has still contributed to the course of the realization of the text because the text itself is the matrix of all the possible worlds played.[230]

Applying this to the passage on the Shulamite, the possible world of the fabula of the Shulamite description has the individuals, i.e., the Shulamite, the group of people, and the king. The properties of the Shulamite are: female, dancing, beautiful, etc. The king is likely to be male, but it is not possible to determine the gender of the group members. The group describes and the king is bound to her tresses. This is the world of the fabula that I constructed above, thus it is a possible world of the reader Yeseul Kim.[231]

[227] Emphasis in original. Eco 1979, 219.
[228] Eco 1979, 220–224; Eco 1987, 164–171.
[229] Eco 1979, 234–236; Eco 1987, 194–197.
[230] Eco 1979, 245–247; Eco 1987, 217–219.
[231] About possible worlds, see chapter 11 (§1.3 and §1.4).

Again, all boxes in Eco's textual collaboration model are not steps to follow step by step, but the boxes are interconnected and interdependent. Thus, the structure of ideological oppositions (e.g., true vs. false or presence vs. absence) are constantly formed and revised with a simple world, a sentence, or with discursive, narrative, and actantial structures. The intensions and extensions in fact overlap to a great degree, since nothing is confirmable only in the real world (pure extension), and nothing absolutely ignores the real world (pure intension). Thus, the extensions in brackets (Box 5), and the possible worlds (Box 10), connect the intensions and extentions.[232]

4. Icon and Iconicity: The Preparation for the Modification of the Collaboration Model for Visual Images

In Chapter 8, I modify Eco's textual collaboration model to fit a visual image analysis, applying Eco's concept of the 'iconic code' or 'iconic statement'. To understand what Eco means by the term 'iconic', it is necessary to know first what Peirce meant by the term 'icon', and then how Eco further elaborated the characteristics of an icon.[233]

An icon is one of Peirce's trichotomic division of signs, i.e., icon, index, and symbol. More specifically, icon, index, and symbol are the three different modes in sign-object relations: the icon refers to the immediateness of a sign, the index to the dyadic relation between a sign and its object, and the symbol to the mediating general law between the sign and its object:

> A sign is either an *icon*, an *index*, or a *symbol*. An *icon* is a sign which would possess the character which renders it significant, even though its object had no existence; such as a lead-pencil streak as representing a geometrical line. An *index* is a sign which would, at once, lose the character which makes it a

[232] Eco 1979, 38; Eco 1987, 233–235.

[233] Eco used these terms in his early semiotic work, *Einführung in die Semiotik* (original: *La struttura Assente*, 1968). However, in his later work, *A Theory of Semiotics*, Eco moves toward eliminating the notion of iconicity, emphasizing the conventionality of iconic signs. He criticizes Peirce's notion of icon as an 'umbrella term' which tries to cover such a wide range that it becomes unnecessarily complicated. But without being an umbrella term, it is impossible to set up a typology of signs because every sign has a mixture of different phenomena. Thus, Eco redirects his readers from a 'typology of signs' toward the 'modes of sign production' (Eco 1976, 191–215). However, although Eco suggested a division of signs by 'the modes of sign production' instead of the typology of signs, he kept using the term 'an icon' continuously in his later works. It seems that Eco suggested the new division of signs but never renounced the use of the term 'icon'. I employ his early use of the terms, such as 'iconic codes', 'iconic structure', or 'iconic statement', rather than turning to his new typology of modes of sign production, in my modification of Eco's textual collaboration model.

> sign if its object were removed, but would not lose that character if there were no interpretant. Such, for instance, is a piece of mould with a bullet-hole in it as sign of a shot; for without the shot there would have been no hole; but there is a hole there, whether anybody has the sense to attribute it to a shot or not. A *symbol* is a sign which would lose the character which renders it a sign if there were no interpretant. Such is any utterance of speech which signifies what it does only by virtue of its being understood to have that signification.[234]

Peirce also says, 'I call a sign which stands for something merely because it resembles it, an icon. Icons are so completely substituted for their objects as hardly to be distinguished from them'.[235] An icon does not need the actual existence of an object, but its relationship with an object is imagined as granted because it has immediateness (i.e., instantly felt resemblance) in its relationship with the object. That is to say, an icon can refer to its object without the existence of an object and interpretant. The object can not only be existing things and events, but also notions, logics, or thoughts, etc., which do not require the existence of it in the actual world. According to Bal and Bryson, the poems or sounds of a violin are also iconic in a way because they refer to the object, i.e., the feelings or emotions that the poem or sound expresses.[236] Thus, the resemblance of being an icon does not require the similarity of the whole, but *any* small partial similarity, regardless of the kinds of similarity: visual, olfactory, notional, relational, etc. In that sense every picture has partial iconicity, no matter how conventional the ways of making a picture and its perceptions are. Pictures are the icons in which 'the likeness is aided by conventional rules'.[237]

An index refers to its object by requiring the existence of the object. Peirce gives 'a low barometer with a moist air' as an example of an index of rain. Demonstrative pronouns, such as 'this' and 'that' are also examples of an index because they let the hearer make a connection between himself or herself and the object.[238] For example, a photograph is an indexical mode of sign in the way that it refers to the actual existence of the photographed objects, or, at least, to the actual act of taking the photograph with a camera.

A symbol needs an interpretant in order to represent its object, mediating between the sign and the object as a general law. Thus, conventionality – the agreed law – is the characteristic of a symbol, requiring interpretants in order to function as a sign. Without an interpretant, that means, without an act of interpretation, a symbol cannot be recognized as a sign. Words and conventional

[234] Emphasis in original. Peirce 1931–1960, 2.304.
[235] Peirce 1931–1960, 3.362.
[236] Bal / Bryson 1991, 190.
[237] Peirce 1931–1960, 2.279.
[238] Peirce 1931–1960, 2.286–2.287.

signs are typical examples. But even a simple drawing of a dog has a symbolic mode, as soon as it is *interpreted* as a child's drawing based on the rough lines in the sand.

Even though Peirce mentions icon, index, and symbol as signs, he also notes that most signs have all three iconic, indexical, and symbolic modes.[239] Firstly, a *pure* icon cannot be described in the real world but exists only as an idea because an icon is rather like an immediate feeling, which does not go through interpretative process, 'although for convenience in ordinary parlance and when extreme precision is not called for, we extend the term icon to the outward objects which excite in consciousness the image itself'.[240] Secondly, an index very often has iconic modes, since it has visual appearance referring to existing objects (e.g., bullet holes in reference to the firing of bullets) or mental concepts (e.g., arrows). A photograph is an index of taking a picture with a photo machine, but it is also an icon of the taken scene. Thirdly, a symbol may also have iconic and indexical modes, since it 'may require its interpretation to involve the calling up of an image, or a composite photograph of many images of past experiences, as ordinary common nouns and verbs do'.[241] Finally, regardless of icon, index, or symbol, as soon as a sign – an image, an arrow, a photograph, a word, etc. – is 'interpreted' through conventions, its symbolic modes come to the foreground. 'All signs, Peirce says, are partly iconic (they denote by resembling their objects), indexical (they are 'really affected' by their objects) and symbolic (they denote 'by virtue of a law')'.[242]

In sum, for Peirce, an icon is a mode of sign which stands for the object (or even substitutes the object) by resemblance. Eco takes the term icon and elaborates the concepts of iconicity, i.e., the characteristics of an icon. He criticizes the naïve notion of 'similarity' and emphasizes the conventionality of an icon. For example, a drawing of a dog has nothing similar to a dog because the former is a set of lines while the latter is a living organism. The transformation from a living dog to its drawing is not the result of 'natural correspondence' but rather of 'rules and artifice'.[243] Nevertheless, Eco admits that an icon has certain motivated features ('motivated' in the sense that the form of the sign is motivated by the object).

For that reason, he introduces the concept of 'surrogate stimuli'.[244] Surrogate stimuli are what allow a 3D-movie viewer to have similar stimuli as falling

[239] Peirce 1931–1960, 4.447.

[240] Peirce 1931–1960, 2, 276, 4.447. In order to designate the signs, which the iconic mode prevail the most, such as pictures or photographs, Peirce uses the term 'hypoicon'. See ibid., 2.276–277.

[241] Peirce 1931–1960, 4.447.

[242] Peirce 1931–1960, 4.447. Quotation from Elkins 2003, 6.

[243] Eco 1976, 191–215, quotations from 199–200.

[244] Eco 1999, 353–357.

from a peak of a mountain or about to be hit by a car. When someone's mouth waters looking at a picture of a lemon, it is the work of surrogate stimuli.

> Without therefore detracting anything from the active moment in the perception and interpretation of hypoicons, we must admit that there are semiosic phenomena in which, even if we know that we are dealing with a sign, before perceiving it as a sign of something else we must first perceive it as a set of stimuli that creates the effect of our being in the presence of the object.[245]

By recognizing that hypoicons (i.e., *embodied* icons or signs which emphasize the iconicity, such as a picture, metaphor, etc.)[246] produce surrogate stimuli, Eco admits the motivated character of an icon, though the motivation is not derived from the same stimuli, but 'surrogate' stimuli.[247] Then an iconic sign can always be interpreted as motivated *and* conventional according to the interpreter, making a division between 'motivated signs' and 'conventional signs' problematic. As an alternative, Eco offers the division of 'alpha mode' and 'beta mode':

> I define as alpha mode that mode in which, even before deciding we are confronted with the expression of a sign function, we perceive through surrogate stimuli a given object or scene which we then elect as the expression plane of a sign function. I define as beta mode that mode in which, in order to perceive the expression plane of sign functions, it is necessary first to presume that we are in fact dealing with expressions, and the supposition that they are indeed expressions orients our perception.[248]

For example, if a viewer who has no knowledge of Mesopotamian art is stunned by a drawing of a woman wearing a long dress and horned headgear, sometimes with wings and appearing with a lion, the drawing is looked at by the alpha mode. If the same drawing is looked as a conventional representation of Ishtar, then it is looked through the beta mode. A sensitive interpreter can feel awesomeness from the drawing by the alpha mode, at the same time recognizing it as Ishtar by the beta mode.

For Eco, as well as Peirce, a sign cannot be purely iconic (motivated), indexical (referential), or symbolic (conventional), but these modes are all embedded in a sign albeit in different percentages.[249] Thus, when Eco uses the term 'iconic sign', he refers to a sign which has mainly the features of an icon, i.e., the

[245] Eco 1999, 377. The notion of 'hypoicon' is needed because a *pure* icon, a rather immediate feeling which does not require an interpretation, cannot exist in the real world. See the discussion on p. 63 above and Peirce 1931–1960, 2.276.

[246] Peirce 1931–1960, 2.276–277.

[247] Polidoro 2015, 155.

[248] Eco 1999, 383.

[249] Eco 1976, 216–217.

features which allow an interpreter to immediately equate the sign with the object. Iconic codes are the codes which set up the correspondence between the pertinent features of the object and the transformed representation of the object.[250] An iconic statement is a translation of an iconic sign into a verbal statement (not a simple word but a whole sentence or a bigger text segment). For example, an iconic statement of a drawing of a horse is not just 'a horse', but 'this is a profile of a standing horse'.[251]

Although these terms were used by Eco prior to his articulations of the alpha and beta mode theories, the fundamental idea of the conventionality of an icon was embedded in the combination of the term 'iconic' with 'code' or 'statement'. He had emphasized the conventionality of iconic signs already in *Einführung in die Semiotik*.[252] These terms will be applied in the modification of the collaboration model for visual images in Chapter 8.

5. Summary

Eco's textual collaboration model will be used in this research for analyzing textually written interpretations. This model is an apt tool as it displays the dynamic reader-text interaction and shows how various readers interpret differently, building distinct structures.

The most prominent feature of Eco's collaboration model is its transdisciplinary structure: the structure can be applied to various sign systems while activities in certain boxes retain unique features of a certain sign system. An interpretation of any sign system starts from the manifestation itself, processed by the circumstance and various codes, structuralized in various boxes (discursive, narrative, actantial, and elementary ideological), and linked with the world of reality (the extensions). The discursive and narrative structures may take different forms in other sign systems, but the elementary ideological structures can be found in any sign system. These features are not only the advantage of using Eco's collaboration model, but also represent the potential when modified for the use with different sign systems, for example for analyzing interpretations of visual images.

I want to emphasize once again that the textual collaboration model is to be used to analyze *interpretations* of a verbal text and not for the text analysis itself. Eco also states that the textual collaboration model came from his interest in the

[250] Eco 1976, 206.
[251] Eco 1972, 244–247.
[252] Eco 1972, 220–230.

'collaborative movement of a reader of a written text'.[253] Because the model structurally emphasizes the role of the reader in an interpretation, the model does not necessarily produce a better or a right interpretation, but shows how an interpreter builds different structures in collaboration with the text. When compared with the analyses of interpretations of other readers, the model clearly reveals on which point the interpretation diverges and how. The collaboration model *can* be used for the analysis of a text itself, but it does not exhibit the objective structures of a text but the structures that the analyst made. Therefore, this model is more advantageous for analyzing various interpretations than analyzing a text.

Since Eco's textual collaboration model is originally designed for verbal texts, it requires modification in order to fit visual analysis. The icon and iconicity discussed above is one of the tools used for the modification of the collaboration model. Other tools and semiotic theories needed for modification are examined in the chapters of Erwin Panofsky (Chapter 5) and Mieke Bal (Chapter 7).

[253] Eco 1987, 84.

VII. MIEKE BAL'S SEMIOTICS: READING ART

1. Why Mieke Bal?

Mieke Bal is an interdisciplinary scholar, whose interests include literary theory, art history, semiotics, feminism, cultural theory, and video art. Her writings are also interdisciplinary trying to cross over boundaries between various academic fields.[254] The inter- and transdisciplinary character of her research, her structuralistic and semiotic background, her professionality both in literary and art historical studies, and her deep methodological reflections on the interdisciplinary concepts all benefit this study's goal of offering a safe and coherent ground for the analyses of image-text-interpreter relationships. I borrow some of her semiotic concepts using them to modify the collaboration model together with the Panofskian concepts.

In §2, I discuss Bal's semiotic concepts, which are the basis of her interdisciplinary research on word and image. In §3, I discuss her notion of 'iconography' – 'reading' images – which specifically modifies the Panofskian model and mediates between the Panofskian model and semiotic theories. I explain only the relevant concepts for the modification of the collaboration model and do not introduce all of Bal's semiotic concepts and theories.

2. Bal's Semiotics towards Reading Images

Bal, in a co-authored article with Bryson, identifies 'the core of semiotic theory' as 'the definition of the factors involved in this permanent process of sign-making and interpreting and the development of conceptual tools that help us to grasp that process as it goes on in various arenas of cultural activity',[255] and its range undoubtedly covers visual images. Bal and Bryson state that semiotics has several strong points for image analysis: (1) semiotics is basically a 'transdisciplinary theory', trying to embrace every system of signs, avoiding linguistic imperialism; (2) its transdisciplinary character frees the analyst from the problems which occur in transferring notions of one discipline to another; and (3) its interest in the relations between different sign systems yields more productive results on the word-image relationship than the mere application of linguistic models to visual images.[256]

[254] Bal 2006, xvi–xvii.
[255] Bal / Bryson 1991, 174.
[256] Bal / Bryson 1991, 174–176.

Semiotics is the field in which verbal behaviors (e.g., speaking, listening, or understanding verbal signs) and visual behaviors (e.g., looking at words, images, or architecture) interact. According to Bal, verbality and visuality are the characteristics that work both in word and image: 'an image is not a text; but while irreducibly different, the visual and the verbal domains interpenetrate, influence, and inform each other'.[257] When there is a mythical unit, some present it in words and some in visual images. They are different 'versions' of the same mythical unit, and their relationship is 'not simply a relation of interpretation but a relation of transference'.[258] Therefore, 'neither the verbal nor the visual arts are privileged as the most suitable medium for storytelling. Not only do they each dispose of specific, complementary devices, but also in both cases the telling itself is discursive and visual'.[259] These dynamic and mutual relationships cannot be viewed from any one side, but from the field of semiotics, which enables transdisciplinary analysis.

Bal objects to linguistic imperialism in semiotics, as much as she opposes the strong defensiveness against the use of linguistic-derived concepts for visual images. She says, 'a concept mainly discussed in literary theory – for example, metaphor – is relevant to the analysis of visual art, and refusing to use it amounts to an unwarranted decision to take all images as literal expressions'.[260] However, to avoid a linguistic invasion over other sign systems, it should not be a simple application: the differences between verbal and visual signs in their sign-status and meaning-making processes must be considered, and to which degree a certain concept can be generalized is must be examined first. Then the concepts from other disciplines will enrich the analyses and discourses in a discipline.[261]

The notion of 'reading' is one of such 'traveling concepts' of Bal's semiotics:[262] 'Reading is an act of reception, of assigning meaning',[263] regardless of the sign system. For Bal, 'every act of looking is – not only, not exclusively, but always also – a reading, simply because without the processing of signs into syntactic chains that resonate against the backdrop of a frame of reference an image cannot yield meaning'.[264] The 'meaning' here refers not only to a coherent and productive main meaning, but also to inconsistent, even contrasting, meanings or feelings – any result of semiosis.[265] Bal's notion of 'reading' emphasizes the aspect that every act of signification is a collaborative work between

[257] Bal 1991, 19.
[258] Bal 1991, 127.
[259] Bal 1991, 128.
[260] Bal / Bryson 1991, 176.
[261] Bal / Bryson 1991, 176.
[262] 'Traveling concepts', a term from Bal 2002, *passim*.
[263] Bal 2006, 298.
[264] Bal 2006, 298.
[265] Cf. Bal 1991, 219–220.

the interpreter and the work, transcending the boundaries between different media including the visual and verbal.

Likewise, Bal's uses of 'text' and 'textuality' are not confined to written words, but can include visual images. For Bal, a 'text' means 'a combination of elements leading to semiotic events – acts of reading – a combination that is structured enough to be perceived as a whole and materially presented as complete. Thus defined, novels, poems, drawings, and paintings are texts'.[266] Thus, a text in Bal's usage may refer to a combination of any kind of signs, i.e., visual signs, verbal signs, smells, sounds, feelings, experiences, etc. Bal does not define the term 'textuality' explicitly, but it is used as something like the characteristics of a 'text'[267] which reveal that in its interpretation a semiotic event happens, e.g., allowing one to actively participate in the interpretation, not merely receive what is felt as what is given but as the result of semiosis.[268] For example, if a painting in a museum is a text, the painting's textuality may come from any of the painting's signs (e.g., a specific figure or a small brushstroke) which leads one to contemplate the painting and not just pass by.

Bal's categorization of signs uses the notion of 'textuality' as a criterion for classification. She divides signs in two types: signs for reality and signs for textuality. These types of signs are not determined by the form or characteristics of a visual image's detail, but by the viewer's response. If a detail of an image is not recognized and only considered as a technique to secure verisimilitude in the perception of the image, then it is a sign for reality. If a detail (a small mark, slight difference in brightness, etc.) is 'recognized' as something meaningful, it is a sign for textuality because it produces a 'story', which resides not only in verbal but also in visual media and is therefore significant for the viewer.[269] Because not every detail can ever be recognized by the viewer, the signs for reality inevitably exist. The purpose of Bal's reading is to decrease the number of signs for reality and to fill the work with the signs for textuality as much as possible, so that various ideologies and the multiple relations that the work and the viewer interact with can be recognized.

These notions do not force the terms from verbal sign systems (e.g., words or speeches) directly applied to visual images, but expand and transform them to be transdisciplinary. Therefore, these notions are not a 'linguistic invasion'

[266] Bal 1991, 220.

[267] In this respect, it is important to note that the etymology of the term 'text' goes back to the Latin verb *texere*, 'to interweave, weave, plait', which can be further related to the term 'texture' that is used in semiotics as a multimodal notion that can be applied across different media. See Gualberto / Santos / Meira 2020, 897, 901–904; Djonov / Leeuwen 2001, 541–564.

[268] See Bal 1991, 219–237.

[269] Bal 1991, 216–242.

over other sign systems, but can be used as adequate critical tools for interpretation.

In the next section, I specifically talk about Bal's theory of iconography as a mode of reading an artwork, so that it can be used as a tool for modifying Panofsky's model and for mediating the Panofskian model with semiotic theories. It reveals 'how the idea of reading helps address questions of meaning and the power over meanings, without reducing the image to what it is not'.[270]

3. Bal's Reading Mode of Iconography

Iconography is one of several reading tools of an artwork suggested by Bal, based on the interaction between verbality and visuality in interpretation. Iconography in general is widely understood as a method of interpreting an artwork using contemporaneous literary sources, as in Panofsky's model. In a semiotic perspective, Bal defines iconography differently: reading an image 'as what it is not'.[271]

> Put simply, an iconographic approach proposes that we *read* art, make sense out of what the image is *not* rather than *viewing* it. Reading iconographically is interpreting visual representation by placing its elements in a tradition that gives them a meaning other than their 'immediate' visual appearance suggests.[272]

While traditional art historical 'iconography' interprets an image by *using* literary sources and a history of style and type, for Bal, such an act of interpretation is in fact *reading* an image as what it is not, i.e., *as* a literary source, *as* a history of style or type, or as the art historical discourses. Bal's semiotic[273] definition of iconography makes it a reading tool for an artwork that reveals the interaction of visuality and verbality.

A feature of the method of iconography in general (including Panofsky's) is that it connects an image with a particular tradition (e.g., history of styles, types, motifs or some literary tradition) for (more correct) interpretation.[274] However, according to Bal, such practice of iconography entails some problems: because

[270] Bal 2006, 299.
[271] Bal 1991, 214.
[272] Bal 1991, 177. Emphasis in original.
[273] Bal's definition has semiotic impression because Peirce defined a sign as 'something which stands to somebody for something' (Peirce 1931–1960, 2.228), which basically looks something (a sign) as something else (the object of the sign). In the same manner, Eco defines semiotics as 'the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie'. Eco 1976, 7.
[274] Bal 1991, 177.

iconography tries to find the subject by the given tradition, it tends to be conservative, preferring tradition to innovation. Furthermore, it seems to end the interpretational process when a certain motif is found, unwilling to interpret it further, avoiding ideological responsibilities of meanings. For example, while traditional iconography stops at identifying the subject 'Susanna' from a painting by Rembrandt and matching it with the biblical and Christian tradition of the story of Susanna, Bal urges one to interpret further and sense the voyeuristic desire and feminine requirement of morality from Susanna's unsuccessful effort to cover both her breasts, which allow the elders (and viewers) to easily view her partly naked body. For Bal, if one fails to read such underlying desires and ideologies, the interpreter does not fulfill the responsibility of interpretation.

Nevertheless, Bal states that the indispensable advantage of iconography is that it 'reads the image as what it is not'.[275] That is to say, iconography is a verbal *and* visual mode of reading images, a semiotic reading, 'replacing the signs with the absent item they stand for',[276] i.e., explaining the visual sign with interpretants from not only visual but also verbal sign systems. Iconography, as a reading tool, manifests the verbal-visual interaction.

For example, if there is an image of a woman with a horned hat from Mesopotamia, neither is the depicted woman just a woman, nor is the hat merely a hat: the woman may stand for a great goddess or the whole concept of love and war, life and death; the hat may represent the wearer's divinity or royalty. The image turns the image of a woman into a concept of a certain (or general) goddess, an image of a hat into a concept of divinity and royalty. In this process, the image, as a sign, is read as what it is not – not the image itself but the concept of goddess, divinity, or royalty – generating verbal interpretants such as the words 'goddess', 'royal woman', 'divinity', or 'royalty', as well as other images and experiences of those concepts, showing the visual-verbal interactions.

Another feature in Bal's iconographic reading is that it is based on the synecdochic relationship of a part and a whole. The existence of contrasting meanings as a critical characteristic of art is important for Bal. When one looks for the 'main meaning' of a work, the meaning unavoidably represses other meanings of detailed parts which do not accord with the main meaning. Bal claims that there are parts which do not harmonize with the whole and suggests finding the repressed detail and recognize it as another important sign that adds different stories and meanings to the whole.[277]

[275] Bal 1991, 214.

[276] Bal 1991, 215.

[277] How to demarcate a whole is a subjective matter; what to determine as the 'whole' or the 'main meaning' depends on the collaboration between the interpreter and the artwork, and the interpreter plays a significant role in deciding it. I do not assert that we should renounce the concept

Iconographic reading as suggested by Bal works by signifying details: for example, a tiny insect (a part of the image) on a painting of flowers establishes the meaning of the painting 'Vanitas' (the whole of the meaning).[278] Giving an example from ancient Near Eastern art, one or more pairs of horns attached to a piece of headgear make the whole of a figure divine. For Bal, such a synecdochic relationship – where a part stands for the whole and vice versa – has the *potential* to highlight details which may *not* accord with the whole. From that perspective, Bal criticizes those who consider details that do not contribute to the recognition of the main themes as merely an 'effect of the real' (i.e., overlooked as serving only for the realistic style) or as just 'visual filler', renouncing their interpretation. According to Bal, this is due to the 'desire for wholeness', which causes those people 'to project unity on the image or text, and thus to ignore details that don't fit, that threaten to fracture desired unity'.[279] What Bal criticizes is not the 'effect of the real' itself, but the interpreter's attitude of skipping little details as elements that just enhance the realistic impression. Bal cautions that such an attitude would allow an interpreter to miss the underlying ideologies behind the realistic representation and absorb them unwittingly. Instead, she encourages her readers to regard these little details as 'signs' in order to become aware of the underlying ideologies.[280]

4. Implications

In conclusion, Bal's basic semiotic theory provides a theoretical ground for visual and verbal interaction, which is able to mediate between Eco's textual collaboration model and Panofsky's visual analysis. Bal's reading mode of iconography is helpful in that it encourages viewers not to overlook details, but actively participate in the interpretation process. This overcomes the criticism brought forward against visual semiotics that it overlooks details which cannot be grasped by words. Furthermore, Bal's definition of iconography as reading an image 'as what it is not' opens up a field in which various sign systems, including the verbal ones, come into play.

Bal's basic semiotic theory and her reading tool for visual image can be excellent complements to Eco's semiotics and Panofsky's iconography. Eco's semiotic model is primarily designed for texts, even though he wished the model to be modified and used for other sign systems. Panofsky's model is intended to

of the 'whole'. What Bal suggests here, as I also do, is the subversion of the uncritical praise of the 'whole' and 'main meaning'.

[278] Bal 1991, 177–178.

[279] Bal 1991, 218.

[280] Bal 1991, 246.

aid interpreting visual images, but its sign concept and the structure of the model's levels show different perspectives from Eco's semiotics. Bal's semiotics mediates between the two, emphasizing the interaction between interpreter-image-text and thus provides a practical tool to use in the collaboration model for visual images.

VIII. THE COLLABORATION MODEL FOR VISUAL IMAGES

1. Introduction: Why the Collaboration Model for Visual Images?

At the end of Chapter 6 on Umberto Eco, I stated that the advantage of using his collaboration model – designed for textual narratives – is that it catches both the transdisciplinary character of interpretation altogether with the uniqueness of a certain sign system. On the one hand, the overall structure of the model is transdisciplinary: in any sign system, an interpretation starts from the work itself, processed by various codes and circumstances of the interpretation, and then builds various structures – particularly the deep structures, e.g., elementary ideological structures are shared in many sign systems – connecting the sign worlds (intensions) with the world of reality (extensions). On the other hand, it keeps the uniqueness of a specific sign system: in the textual collaboration model, the codes and subcodes are those of the verbal signs, and the discursive and narrative structures work with plot and fabula which are the most prominent in the verbal sign system. And I also stated that these features also have the potential to be modified and used for other sign systems, after some modification of the boxes which handle the uniqueness of a certain sign system.

In this chapter, I modify Eco's textual collaboration model in order to make an isomorphic model for visual images. Since this study handles both interpretations of texts and images, an equivalent model for visual images is needed to analyze interpretations of visual images on the same ground as the interpretations of verbal texts. In this way, the visual image interpretations can also be analyzed with both their transdisciplinary and visual-unique characters (e.g., visual codes, iconic and iconographic structures). The collaboration model for visual images is expected to present how various viewers interpret the same artwork differently, providing a platform of comparison, and emphasizing the image-text relations manifested in interpretations. When the analyses by the textual collaboration model and by the modified model are compared, they may reveal integrated structures of texts and images used in the interpretation, showing what is beyond the boundaries between text and image.

The modification of the collaboration model in this chapter takes place in three steps. First, I discuss narrativity in visual images (§2) to offer a theoretical background of the transference of the concept 'narrative' from verbal texts to visual images. Secondly, I combine Eco's visual semiotic notions and concepts, the Panofskian model, and Bal's visual semiotic theories, on the basic frame of Eco's collaboration model (§3). At the end, I offer the collaboration model for visual images with a summary of explanations for each box (§4).

2. Narrativity of Visual Images

In order to utilize Eco's model as the basis of the collaboration model for visual images and to decide which modifications are to be conducted, it is necessary to examine how the concept of 'narrativity' is transferrable from verbal sign systems to visual ones.

What is a narrative? In art history, the term 'narrative' is used 'to describe art that provides a visual representation of some kind of story'.[281] Narrative is then a concept used for images which contain at least a story. An image does not need to depict more than one scene in order to be called narrative, but a scene which evokes a 'story' is a narrative.

Eco does not explicitly offer a definition of a narrative, but it is inferable from his discussion that even if a text is normally regarded as non-narrative, as long as a fabula of the text can be found,[282] it is a narrative text in broad terms:

> The model [...] applies – even if it is intended to illuminate narrative texts – also to texts that are not narrative. In other words: one can actualize a fabula or a series of actions in non-narrative texts, even in very elementary linguistic acts like questions, commands, oaths, or conversation pieces. With a request like /come here/, one can extend the discursive structure to a narrative macroproposition, such as: 'there is someone who imperatively expresses the wish that the receiver, to whom he shows a familiar relationship, may move from the position in which he finds himself, to a closer position to the subject of the speech.[283]

Eco finds a fabula from a simple command 'come here': 'there is someone wanting me to go there'.[284] In this command, the speaker's expression of the personal relationship with the receiver and the desire for the receiver's movement become a 'series of actions' which form a fabula. This example shows that a fabula is generated by the interpreter's active collaboration with the text, not by the text alone. Because the reader of the text interprets 'come here' as a

[281] Collon et al. 1996, 22:510.

[282] See p. 57 for the explanation of fabula.

[283] 'Das Modell [...] gilt – wenn es auch zur Erhellung von erzählerischen Texten gedacht ist – gleichwohl auch für Texte, die nicht narrativ sind. Mit anderen Worten: man kann eine Fabel oder eine Handlungssequenz auch in nicht-narrativen Texten, auch in so elementaren sprachlichen Akten wie Fragen, Befehlen, Schwüren oder in Gesprächsausschnitten aktualisieren. Bei einer Aufforderung wie /komm her/ kann man die diskursive Struktur auf eine erzählerische Makroproposition ausdehnen, etwa so: "Es gibt jemanden, der auf imperative Weise den Wunsch äußert, daß der Empfänger, gegenüber dem er ein vertrautes Verhältnis an den Tag legt, sich von der Position, in der er sich gerade befindet, in eine andere und dem Subjekt der Aussage näher liegende Position begeben möge"'. Eco 1987, 132–133.

[284] Eco 1979, 29.

representation of a familiar relationship and a desire for the receiver's movement, this simple imperative statement acquires a fabula and becomes a narrative. If the reader has interpreted it differently, it would have achieved a different fabula, but it could still be a fabula, as long as the reader felt a certain attitude along with the desire (a series of actions) from the statement.

Bal, whose first major work addressed narratology, defines a narrative as follows:

> A *narrative text* is a text in which an agent or subject conveys to an addressee ('tells' the reader, viewer, or listener) a *story* in a medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof. A story is the content of that text and produces a particular manifestation, inflection, and 'colouring' of a fabula. A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors.[285]

A narrative conveys a story, a story produces a fabula, and a fabula is related to events. Bal says that it does not have to be verbally expressed: images are also texts, as comic strips carry narratives without showing a word.[286] Bal gives an example of a picture of Arjuna from Mahaballipuram in Southern India: in that picture, Arjuna is doing yoga, a cat is imitating his action, and five mice are laughing at the cat. Thus, there are three related events: Arjuna takes a yoga position, the cat follows him, and the mice laugh. Bal says that this is a fabula, 'according to every definition' she knows.[287] It shows how an image has a fabula and a narrative. The fabula is generated by the viewer who interprets the raised arms and standing on one foot as 'doing yoga', and the cat 'following his yoga position', and the uplifted mouth edges of the mice as 'laughing at the cat'. A fabula is produced by the collaboration of the work and the interpreter.

Then what about images which seem to be non-narrative, such as a landscape or still life painting or a sculpture? If Eco found a fabula within a simple imperative sentence, is it not also possible to find a fabula from those images, when the image is 'interpreted' by a viewer? The landscape of a flowing river and a bank of reeds shaken by the wind has related events: the wind blows, reeds are shaken, and the river flows. They are related chronologically, spatially, or logically. In a drawing of beautiful flowers in a vase, one may see that the sun shines through the window, the flowers are beautiful and fresh enough to have been picked not long ago, and the vase stands firmly on the table. A single sculpture, as installation art, encompasses related events in connection with its surroun-

[285] Bal 2017, 5. Emphasis in original.
[286] Bal 2017, 4.
[287] Bal 2017, 133–134.

dings – a stone statue of a crouching lion 'watches' things coming in and going out, 'drives out' evil spirits, 'protecting' the region.

This is possible because an image as a (macro) sign[288] brings up a series of interpretants in the infinite semiosis. Whatever the image provokes in the interpreter's mind is a series of events forming a narrative. If one looks over an image without imposing any meaning, it might be dismissed merely as a visual thing without a narrative. However, as soon as one recognizes it as something significant, it produces a fabula and a story, thereby becoming a narrative.

Thus, an image does not need to have more than one scene in order to have 'changes' which an event, i.e., the essential element of a narrative, entails. The changes are inferred by the interpreter, usually those of the immediate former and later states encompassing the depicted moment of a scene. The dynamic representations of a lion hunting in Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs are not in any way dynamic, if the viewer does not imagine the former and after states of the single image, no matter whether the viewer encounters only one scene or several related scenes together. An image depicts temporality in the collaboration with the interpreter, as any other medium does. The dichotomy of 'word-temporal vs. image-spatial' is misleading: words are spoken in spaces and images work in time. In order to express a word, a place is required; in order to look at an image, time is not only consumed, but also estimated in relation with its (imagined) former and the later states. It is easily experienced that the longer one looks at an image, the more details are recognized, thoughts are evoked, and interpretations made by the first impressions are changed. The act of interpretation must take time, however short, since semiosis works in time. Changes, which occur over time, also take place in visual images, forming a series of related events, thus becoming a narrative.

Svetlana Alpers and Michael Baxandall also felt the narrativity of so-called non-narrative artworks and named it 'para-narrative':

> Painting […] that does not fit the convention of narrative or history painting has generally either been looked at as belonging to a non-narrative genre or type (such as portraiture, still life, landscape, icon or *Andachtsbild*), or else relegated to some loose category of decoration. Though it can serve as a resource, a tale is not essential to painting. But in making *visual* sense of depiction we become narratively engaged. […] If we wish, positively, to give the peculiarity of the pictorial its due, we need some minimalist sense of narrative – we need a sort of para-narrative. Para-narrative would refer to the human elements we infer in making visual sense of a pictorial representation.[289]

[288] For the concept of a macro-sign, see Eco 1987, 57–60.
[289] Emphasis in original. Alpers / Baxandall 1994, 42.

However, Bal refuses to call it 'para-narrative' because it gives the false impression that it is without a story. Instead, she suggests naming it 'narrative in the second person' because it makes the narrative a meeting place of '"you", the viewer and "I", the allegedly image-internal narrator'.[290] The meeting between the viewer and the 'image-internal narrator' is exactly the collaboration of the interpreter and the work in the course of semiosis.

From the above discussions, it can be concluded that it is legitimate to talk about the 'narrativity' of visual images. Even the images that I address in the discussion of the Shulamite metaphors (Song of Songs 7:1–6) – such as a wine cup, a bowl, or two gazelle fauns – have events, stories, and narratives in relation with their surrounding contexts: the archaeological context, its relationship with the Shulamite text and with the interpreter, however simple or complex it would be. Ancient Near Eastern images especially often have apotropaic functions,[291] which add the narrative of 'protection' to the owner or viewer of the image. Therefore, it is safe to modify and use Eco's textual collaboration model as a framework for visual analysis, based on both visual and verbal narrativity.

3. Erwin Panofsky, Umberto Eco, and Mieke Bal: Discussions for the Modification

In this section, I discuss in detail how Eco's collaboration model can be modified with the help of the Panofskian model and Bal's semiotic theories. First, I discuss how Eco's collaboration model may become a framework for an analysis model for visual images. Secondly, the boxes in the lower part of the model[292] – the process before the actualization of the content – are modified using Eco's semiotic theories on visual images. Thirdly, the upper part of the model – various structures of the actualized content – is to be modified: in this course, Panofsky's model and Eco's visual semiotics are utilized for the modification of Boxes 4 and 6, Bal's reading mode of iconography is applied to Box 6, and Bal's visual narrative theory is to modify Box 7. Fig. 6 shows a simplified roadmap of the modification. The numbering of the boxes follows Eco's model box numbers, as shown on page 54 above.[293] At the end of this section, I discuss how different theories and tools of Panofsky, Eco, and Bal can be combined.

[290] Bal 2002, 281–282.
[291] See p. 29.
[292] See Fig. 5 on p. 55.
[293] Also See Eco 1979, 14, fig. 0.3.

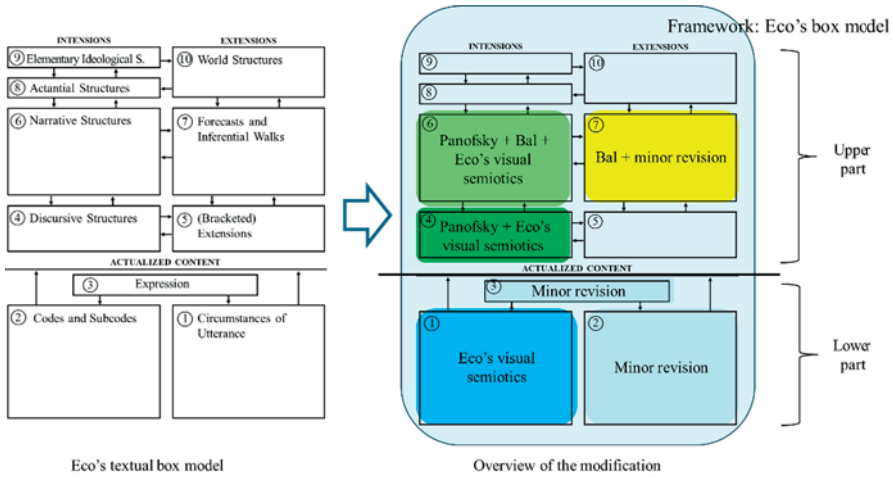


Fig. 6: Roadmap of the modification of the collaboration model.

3.1. *Eco's Collaboration Model as a Framework*

Eco's textual collaboration model is designed for narrative texts (Fig. 5 on page 54). However, Eco hopes for future modifications of his model so that it can be used for other kinds of texts and for non-verbal sign systems.[294] This does not mean that Eco is a pan-linguist. He is aware that language is only a small part of the vast areas of various sign systems and sign-related studies; language only came in at a relatively late stage in the history of semiotics.[295] Eco points out that the understanding of the linguistic sign-meaning and sign-referent relationship as based on equivalence ($p \equiv q$) hinders it from relating it to other sign systems. Only when it is understood to be based on inferences ($p \supset q$), can a linguistic sign system be studied in relation to other sign systems.[296] This inferential character is the semiotic ground for the phenomena that a verbal sign indispensably brings a set of interpretants from different sign systems, such as the visual or olfactory, and vice versa.[297] For example, the word 'apple' provokes interpretants such as various images of apples, the smells of apples, the sounds of cracking apples, etc., and vice versa. All sign systems are related in the act of interpretation. Knowing that this collaboration of different sign systems occurs

[294] See Eco 1979, 13; Eco 1987, 13.
[295] Eco 1981, 40–43.
[296] For the detailed discussion on the opposition between 'equivalence' and 'inference', and for Eco's position on the matter of linguistic sign system in relation with other sign systems, see Eco 1981, 39–44. For a brief explanation of the logic symbols, see footnote 192 above.
[297] Eco 1976, 1468–1469.

in interpretation, Eco made the textual collaboration model to be easily revisable for other sign systems.

The structure of Eco's textual collaboration model has a transdisciplinary character, adequate to serve as a framework for the collaboration model for visual images. First, some boxes of the model are the activities which occur in every sign system: an interpretation starts from the work itself processed by the circumstance and various codes and builds structures of contents, some less abstracted and some more, each linked with the actual world. The actantial, elementary ideological, and world structures (Box 8, 9, 10)[298] especially can also be applied in visual sign systems.

The second characteristic of Eco's collaboration model is that it regards the collaboration between a work and an interpreter as 'a system of nodes or joints' and not as hierarchic levels. These 'nodes and joints' are the model's focal points.[299] The various arrows between boxes show the non-hierarchical character of this model. In this way, the model reflects the free and unordered movement of thoughts in an interpretation not limited to a sign system.[300]

The third characteristic of this model is its link between the world of signification and the world of reality. Eco's collaboration model was originally inspired by Petőfi's TeSWeST (*Text-Struktur-Welt-Struktur-Theorie*), whose advantage is the coordinative consideration on intensions and extensions.[301] By connecting intensional boxes (the world of significance) and extensional boxes (the world of reality) with intercrossing arrows, this model finds a balance between the reader's intensional and extensional works in the course of interpretation. The intensional boxes and extensional boxes are not strictly divided, but rather overlap in many aspects.[302]

While these three characteristics display the structure's transdisciplinarity, specific activities of certain boxes exhibit some unique features of a particular sign system (e.g., specific codes, and less abstracted structures such as Boxes 4 and 6), keeping the balance between generality and specificity. Therefore, when the activities of each box are adequately modified, it can be transferred to the visual sign system, retaining the visual images' transdiciplinarity and uniqueness.

[298] See above pp. 59–59.

[299] Eco 1979, 11.

[300] Eco 1979, 13–15.

[301] Eco says that his model also tries to include other theoretical approaches, especially of Algirdas Julien Greimas and Teun A. van Dijk. Eco 1987, 283–284 n. 2.

[302] Eco 1987, 233–235. See also p. 61 above.

3.2. *The First Field of Modification: Visual Manifestation, Codes and Subcodes, and Circumstances of Display*

The first modification applies to the boxes in the lower part of the model, i.e., the process before the actualization of the content. This part concerns Box 3 'expression', Box 1 'codes and subcodes', and Box 2 'circumstances of utterance'. I added 'visual manifestation' to the title of Box 3 and changed the title of Box 2 to 'circumstances of display'. This part is modified mainly with the help of Eco's list of visual codes.

In Eco's textual collaboration model,[303] every interpretation must start from Box 3, 'expression', which deals with the 'linear text manifestation'. It refers to the work itself, before it is 'interpreted' and its content is produced. What is verbally written or spoken will form actualized content through 'codes and subcodes' (Box 1) within the 'circumstances of utterance' (Box 2). Visual images go through a similar process: the visual representation itself has no content before it is interpreted. When an image itself, i.e., the 'visual manifestation' is processed by various visual codes and subcodes within certain circumstances of display which frame the interpretation, the work is interpreted, and its content is constructed in various structures.

The circumstances of display refer to any situation where a viewer encounters an image, including museum or gallery displays, excavation sites, archaeologically reconstructed situations, information pamphlets, dancing performances, films, comic strips, diagrams in academic articles, or topography such as the space in-between mountains and a river (a favored place of construction according to East Asian geomancy), etc. The viewer immediately infers different information about the context (e.g., the temporal and spatial information) and the assumed sender (e.g., an authority, artist, ancient people, even a deity), activating the relevant codes and subcodes to actualize its content.

For the codes and subcodes in Box 1, I use the list of Eco's ten codes.[304]

1) Perception codes: According to Eco, 'these codes define the conditions for sufficient perception'.[305] These codes are partly responsible for optical illusions. Eco states that this is in the realm of the psychology of perception, not the semiotics.

2) Recognition codes: These codes recognize the basic chunks of visually perceived information, such as the forms, colors, positions, etc., and systemize them into 'iconic statements' with the help of iconic codes below.

[303] See Fig. 5 on p. 55.
[304] Eco 1972, 246–249. See also footnote 188 above.
[305] 'Sie bestimmen die Bedingungen für eine ausreichende Wahrnehmung'. Eco 1972, 246.

3) Transmission codes: There are various ways to transmit the conditions for perceiving images. For example, a cluster of printed dots are perceived as a photographed image through these codes.

4) Tonal codes: These codes work on the already conventionalized variants, and accompany the elements of the iconic codes adding complementary messages.[306] For example, the tones of color have conventionalized connotations, such as 'strong' or 'tension'.[307]

5) Iconic codes: Iconic codes work based on the information processed by the perception, recognition, and transmission codes. They make the image perceived as to be felt similar to the object of the image, whatever the object is – existent things, memories in history, or mental imaginations.[308] The information processed by iconic codes can be transferred into the verbal system which Eco calls 'iconic statements'. The 'iconic statements' are what is usually called from an 'image' or 'iconic sign', such as 'a man' or 'a horse', but Eco strongly emphasizes that they are not equivalent to a word but to a statement or a text, such as 'this is a profile of a brown standing horse'.

6) Iconographical codes: iconographical codes take the information processed by iconic codes as their signs (e.g., a horned crown) and connect them further to the conventions established with the image (e.g., an indication of divinity). Another example: if a set of incised lines on a cylinder seal is recognized as 'a woman wearing a horned crown and a long dress appearing with a lion' by iconic codes, iconographical codes identify her as Ishtar.

7) Codes of taste and sensibility: this kind of codes determine conventionalized connotations but very diversely according to viewers, such as 'elegant', 'beautiful', 'ancient', 'nationalistic', 'stupid', 'erotic', 'attractive'. For example, the stereotyped formula of 'ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern art = rigid' and 'classical Greek art = elegant' is made by the codes of taste and sensibility of modern scholars.

8) Rhetorical codes: rhetorical codes reveal the premise and the argument of an image, by rhetorical figurations, such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole, etc. As Bal contends, tropes occur not only verbally but also in other sign systems as various ways of 'figurations of meaning'.[309] There are metaphors, metonymies, synecdoches, ironies, etc. in visual images and they travel from a medium to another, for example, from text to image and vice versa, high-

[306] 'So nennen wir das System von fakultativen Varianten, die schon konventionalisiert sind. [...] Diese Konventionssysteme begleiten als hinzugefügte und komplementäre Botschaft die Elemente des eigentlichen ikonischen Codes'. Eco 1972, 246.

[307] Eco 1972, 246.

[308] See p. 61ff.

[309] Bal 1991, 69.

lighting multimedia interactions.[310] For example, a pubic triangle depicted on a terracotta model bed found in Mesopotamia is a metonymy or synecdoche of a whole body of a nude woman.[311]

9) Stylistic codes: These are the codes which allow one sense certain aesthetic concepts or artistic styles from an image that the viewer never saw before. This is different from the codes of taste and sensibility: while the codes of taste and sensibility are built on the frequent circulation of the same or similar images, the stylistic codes work on rather original or only once realized images. For example, the stylistic codes make the viewers of the animated movie *The Prince of Egypt* by DreamWorks feel that the drawing is ancient Egyptian in style, even though the artistic style of the movie is different from that of ancient Egyptian art in the strict sense. However, it is important to note that various codes do not work separately, but simultaneously in cooperation.

10) Unconscious codes: these codes combine and structure all the above-mentioned codes in their adequate places, unconsciously projecting or anticipating certain responds.

These codes work together on different levels and layers, sometimes as ground codes and sometimes as subcodes. This is not an all-inclusive nor an exclusive list, but an exemplary one which helps to analyze and reveal hidden arguments in the relationship of image, viewer, and context.

3.3. *The Second Field of Modification: Intensional and Extensional Structure*

a) Box 4

The main activity of Box 4 of Eco's textual collaboration model, 'discursive structures', is to find topics, activating and blowing up some properties and narcotizing others. These are similar to the activities in Panofsky's first level (pre-iconographic description) and Eco's iconic level (see below). Therefore, Box 4 is modified using Panofsky's model and Eco's visual semiotics and changed to 'iconic structures'.

Eco reconstructed five levels in visual communication: iconic level, iconographic level, tropical level, topos level, and enthymematic level.[312] While the

[310] Using terms such as 'metaphor' or 'metonymy' gives the impression that an interpretation of an image is dependent on linguistic theories. However, the visual figurations of meanings are named such because 'naming' is a verbal act. In fact, it is not possible to interpret an image using purely visual codes within a visual sign system. It is not because language has primacy over images, but because interpretation is interdisciplinary in its nature. A text likewise cannot be interpreted without using visual sign systems.

[311] See p. 164ff. For the ambiguous distinctions between metonymy and synecdoche, see p. 220–224 below.

[312] Eco 1972, 272–275.

latter three levels concern rhetorical features of visual communications – such as using visual images for propaganda of certain ideologies – the first two levels handle the unique features of visual images. On the iconic level, iconicity primarily works, making the image felt similar to the represented object.[313] This is the level where a viewer recognizes what is depicted in that image.

Panofsky's level of pre-iconographical description describes the primary subject matter of an image, such as a standing man, a dog, or even the feeling of joyfulness.[314] This is also a level of indicating what is depicted in an image. One might mistakenly think that the term 'pre-iconographic description' seems to be equivalent to Box 3 'expression' because the term sounds as if it is a neutral description before subjective interpretations. However, any description is already an interpretation – reorganized, abstracted as concepts or names, and expressed verbally with the help of various visual and verbal codes. In contrast, Box 3 refers to the work itself as a starting point of interpretation, before the construction of its content. Therefore, the descriptive task of Panofsky's first level requires finding the image's primary (opposed to 'secondary or conventional') 'subject matter' – using Panofsky's terms – which is not yet further specified, such as 'Judith beheading Holofernes,' but interpreted, reorganized, and expressed descriptively, such as: 'a woman who cuts a man's throat with a sword'.

The main activity of Box 4 of the collaboration model for visual images is to interpret the iconic statement – finding the 'primary subject matter' in Panofsky's terms – depending on the iconicity of the image. Taking Panofsky's first level into Box 4, an intensional box, means that the first level is included in the realm of interpretation, eliminating the neutral nuance of the term 'pre-iconographical description'. The viewer chooses which properties to recognize as signs and which to not, thereby determining the iconic elements of what the work presents. At this box, 'iconic statements' can be made,[315] such as 'a woman wearing a horned crown and a long dress appearing with a lion,' but not yet further abstracted as 'a representation of Ishtar'. I name it 'iconic structures' because this box depends largely on the iconicity and because systemizing what is perceived as iconic statements is a process of building a structure, a rather superficial one rather than the deeper ones, such as actantial or ideological structures.

Panofsky's level of pre-iconographic description is reformulated and divided into Boxes 4 and 5 in this model. The interpretation, abstraction, and verbal description occur at Box 4, but its comparison with the objects of visual signs –

[313] See p. 61ff.
[314] See p. 35f.
[315] See p. 65.

e.g., sword, apple, etc. – and reference to such outer worlds are made at Box 5. See page 86 below for the discussion of boxes in extensional realms.

b) Box 6

Box 6, 'narrative structures', of Eco's textual collaboration model abstracts the discursive structure into a fabula, abstracting the plot (result of Box 4) further by setting a series of macropropositions.[316] I modify this box with the combination of Panofsky's second level, Eco's iconographic level, and Bal's visual narrative. I do not say that the activities of Box 6 of Eco's textual collaboration model are identical to those three concepts of Panofsky, Eco, and Bal. There are similarities between the concepts of Panofsky, Eco, and Bal – it is more abstracted than Box 4 and macropropositions are used – but there are also differences. The iconographic level (of Panofsky and Eco) identifies the motif of a representation, which is different from the activity of constructing a fabula. Nevertheless, I chose to fill Box 6 with the activities of the iconographical level of Panofsky and Eco and visual narrative of Bal because their three concepts deal with the 'narratives' of a visual image.

The modification of Box 6 divides the box into two sub-boxes (see Fig. 7): one is the iconographic structure, which brings up the narratives told in the history of art (based on Panofsky + Eco + Bal), and the other one is the visual narrative structure, which produces narratives more idiosyncratic to the image-viewer relationship (based on Bal).

The iconographic structures are built by the activities on Panofsky's second level, Eco's iconographical level, and Bal's reading mode of iconography. Panofsky's second level, 'iconographical analysis', looks for the 'secondary or conventional subject matter', i.e., motifs established in the history of art (e.g., 'Judith beheading Holofernes' or 'Goddess Ishtar').[317] At this level, the visual motif is related to relevant narratives in the literary tradition. Eco's iconographical level is not so different from Panofsky's iconographical analysis level, in which different codes work to recognize the historically conventionalized meanings from certain depictions,[318] for example, a horned crown as an indication of divinity, or a man on a cross as a representation of Jesus. Bal's concept of an iconographical reading, namely that it 'reads the image as what it is not', i.e., an interpretation of the image-sign by interpretants from various sign systems including verbal and visual,[319] emphasizes the aspect of iconography's relationship with verbal narratives. Combined together, the iconographic structure in

[316] See p. 57.
[317] Panofsky 1955, 40.
[318] Eco 1972, 272.
[319] See p. 70ff. Bal 1991, 214.

Box 6 includes activities of abstracting the visual representation into a motif which is established in the history of motif and relating the motif with the (literary) narratives transmitted.

The concept of 'visual narrative structure' is based partly on Bal's reading mode of iconography and partly on her discourse of visual narrativity. Bal's suggestion of the reading mode of iconography underlines the effect of a small detail to its whole.[320] Bal's visual narrativity, discussed above,[321] points out the aspect of visual interpretation that any visual image may produce a personal narrative idiosyncrasy to the viewer when it is interpreted. Combined together, the activities in the sub-box of visual narrative structure try to find subjective narratives constructed by the collaboration between a visual image and a viewer, possibly triggered by details of an image, rather than the more objective narratives established by the tradition concerning the main theme and meanings – the latter is addressed the sub-box of iconographical structures.

These two sub-boxes – iconographical structures and visual narrative structures – are different but combined as a twin set, generating new interactions and meanings.[322] The iconographic reading tries to match the image with narratives in the tradition, while the visual narrative reading constitutes a narrative, more specific to the image and the viewer, which is often against the 'main' meanings suggested by tradition, since it endows little details such as angles or brightness, with new narratives. While the iconographic reading requires previous knowledge of the history of art, the visual narrative reading demands more active participation by the viewer in collaboration with the interpreted work. For example, in an iconographic reading, a woman recognized as holding a bowl with a man's head will be identified as Judith for those who relate the image to the Judith narrative and as Salome for those who connect it to the Salome one. Yet, the visual narrative reading forms its own narratives, such as of defiant Salome or frustrated Judith, or of a white noblewoman according to the interrelationship between the artwork and the viewer.

c) Boxes 8 and 9

I left Boxes 8 and 9, 'actantial structures' and 'elementary ideological structures', as they are because actantial structures can be constructed once a narrative is set no matter whether it is verbal or visual and because elementary ideological values are imposed on a certain work regardless of the sign system. A viewer of an image abstracts an element (not only figures but also small spots or changes in brightness) into an ideological actant, such as the good one vs. the bad one,

[320] See p. 71.
[321] See p. 75ff.
[322] Cf. Bal 1991, 207.

victory of a good one over the bad one, or the good protecting the weak against the evil, etc. These two boxes partly reflect the third level of Panofsky's model – the 'iconological interpretation' – in that it addresses underlying ideological values and principles. The other aspect of Panofsky's iconology, such as 'why this image has assumed this shape at this historical moment',[323] cannot be reduced into a box, but is rather distributed into several boxes: if an image's historical cause is considered, then the collaboration goes back and forth between Boxes 4 through 10 because the image is related to other narratives (historical narratives), which consists of different world structures.

d) Boxes 5, 7, and 10

Boxes 5, 7, and 10 are in the realm of extensions, the actual world. The activities of Box 5 '(bracketed) extensions' of Eco's textual collaboration model do not differ when transferred to visual sign systems. At this box, one makes the 'first uncommitted references to a (possible) world,' i.e., one identifies tentatively what is depicted, *comparing* it with the viewer's experienced world, referring to extensional worlds.

Box 7, 'forecast and inferential walks', of Eco's textual collaboration model needs some minor modifications. In reading a text, a reader constantly forecasts the next state and chooses the most probable one among many options inferred in comparison with the outer world, following the temporal succession of the text.[324] Instead, in interpreting visual images, a viewer imagines the pre- and post-states of what is depicted in the image. That is how the dynamism of a fixed sculpture or relief is felt. As discussed above (§2), images work in time. Time is consumed in order to interpret and scrutinize an image. By looking closely, the early interpretation may change after a minute, an hour, or a year. Each time, the viewer infers the most probable scenarios in comparison with the outer world (figures, locations, other images, experiences, books, or myths, etc.), and a disjunction of probability could be a new perspective on the main figure or a small detail that was not recognized before.

Box 10, 'world structures', also remains the same. As in the world structures in the textual collaboration model,[325] a viewer constantly builds and rebuilds possible worlds in relation to the world of reference (the outer world) constructed in the form of an encyclopedia and compares various possible worlds: of a figure, an artwork, a narrative, or a(nother) viewer.

[323] Holly 1984, 185.
[324] See p. 58.
[325] See p. 59f.

3.4. *Theoretical Similarities and Differences*

Panofsky + Eco: Eco's model is designed for narrative texts and Panofsky's for visual images. However, Eco's model has a transdisciplinary character, which enables the Panofskian model to be transplanted into the collaboration model for visual images. The Panofskian model is modified in the following way. (1) The concept of 'level' in the Panofskian model is changed to the concept of a 'box' in Eco's model. This possible because Panofsky refuted the hierarchy of levels and asked his readers to approach it as 'one organic and indivisible process'.[326] (2) When transplanted into Eco's framework, the Panofskian model loses its emphasis (not the entire interest) on objectivity and becomes more flexible to subjectivity; this results in the concept of a sign which is not only a reflector but also a producer of reality in collaboration with the interpreter.

Eco + Bal: Bal's reading mode of iconography emphasizes reading an image 'as what it is not', underlining the inter- and transdisciplinary character of visual interpretation. Eco's semiotics also emphasizes transdisciplinarity. Bal objects to the uniformity of an image because, if an image is viewed only as a whole, serving only for the 'main meaning', then the details – small marks and signs – are ignored and repressed, failing to reveal hidden narratives and ideologies. This multiplicity suits Eco's textual collaboration model because it has a system where different fabulae coexist in a text: there are different fabulae and different possible worlds at every corner of a word, sentence, section, chapter, and according to different characters and readers. Sometimes characters have different possible worlds that contradict each other, and a reader's anticipated possible world might turn out to be different from the possible world of the main fabula.[327] Thus, Eco's model has the capacity to embrace Bal's visual semiotics.

Panofsky + Bal: While both Bal and Panofsky deal with visual images, their interests are different: Panofsky looks for the main theme, but Bal searches for small marks that are inconsistent or even contradict the main theme. This difference is counter-balanced by confining the Panofskian model's interest in the main theme within the iconographical structures, while other structures ensure the existence of different or contrasting themes. In fact, Bal and Panofsky are not fundamentally against each other. Bal recognizes the value of iconography, as it is icono-graphy, the 'writing by means of images', which is 'the challenge to the unwarranted assumption that visual art is iconic and verbal art symbolic'.[328] But there are some points to be improved regarding the traditional

[326] Panofsky 1955, 39.
[327] Eco 1979, 245–247; Eco 1987, 217–219.
[328] Bal 1991, 178.

sense of iconography, and, as discussed above,[329] Bal made several suggestions to use iconography more productively: to regard iconography as what 'reads the image as what it is not'; to further interpret by not stopping at finding the matching tradition;[330] and to emphasize the potential of iconography to attach significance to small details.[331]

Panofsky's model and Bal's visual semiotics are transferrable to Eco's model and enrich it. 'Schemata' bind Eco and Panofsky, 'iconography' connects Panofsky and Bal with each other, and 'semiotic theory' brings together Bal and Eco. Panofsky is added to Eco's model in order to make it applicable for visual images, and Bal ameliorates it with her theoretical reflections and tools for reading images. Eco's visual semiotics mediates the theoretical differences between Bal and Panofsky. By interacting with each other, the theories of Eco, Panofsky, and Bal construct a common ground for combination into a model.

4. Summary and Visual Representation of the Image Collaboration Model

In this section, I offer the collaboration model for visual images, with summarized explanations of each box and a suggestion of the visual representation of the model at the end. For more detailed discussions and explanations, see §3. This model is applied to the analysis of various interpretations of an Old Babylonian (OB) nude woman terracotta plaque in Part II and images of the Song of Songs chapter seven in Part III.

The basic structure is similar to that of Eco's textual collaboration model: it has ten boxes, vertically grouped by whether the content is actualized or not, and horizontally grouped by intensions and extensions. The numbering of the boxes also follows Eco's model.[332] Interpretation starts from the image itself at Box 3 – 'expression: visual manifestation'. This is the image as it is, a starting point for the interpretation. The image is immediately processed by the interpreter using various codes and subcodes, in the context of the viewing relationship of the image and the viewer. Codes and subcodes structure the content of the image in various intensional boxes, which interact with each other, in relation to the extensional structures.

[329] See p. 70ff.
[330] Bal 1991, 214–215.
[331] Bal 1991, 177–178.
[332] See Fig. 5 above and also Eco 1979, 14, fig. 0.3. The numbers seem to be placed from bottom to top and from left to right regardless of the sequence of interpretation in order not to give the false impression that the numbers indicate the steps of an interpretation.

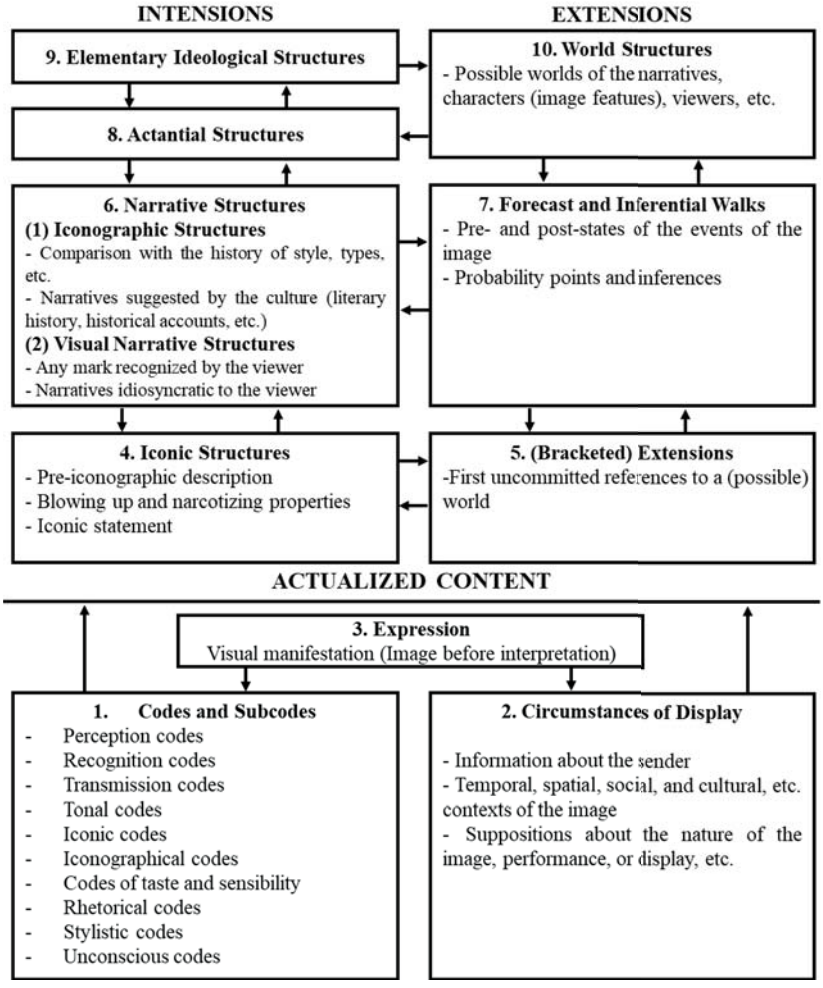


Fig. 7: The collaboration model for visual images.

4.1. *Codes and Subcodes (Box 1), and Circumstances of Display (Box 2)*

When an image comes into the viewing relationship with its viewer, it is perceived by the viewer within the circumstance of the display (Box 2). The viewer's interpretation differs greatly by the circumstances of how the image is displayed: in a museum, in a gallery, found in an archaeological excavation, on a movie poster at the corner of the street, printed in an academic article, or drawn on a ground by a child, etc. According to different circumstances, the viewer decides what kind of encyclopedia will be used to produce the image's meaning.

In accordance with the decided circumstance and encyclopedia, the viewer utilizes various codes and subcodes to interpret the image. Through the codes of perception, recognition, transmission, tone, iconic, iconographic, taste and sensibility, tropes, styles, unconsciousness, etc.,[333] the characteristics of the transmitting medium is diagnosed; perceived as a visual image; signs are recognized; and its figures, objects, themes, narratives, ideological arguments are identified and produced.

4.2. *Intensional and Extensional Boxes*

With the help of the codes, the receiver reconstructs various structures: iconic structures, iconographic structures, narrative structures, actantial and elementary ideological structures. As Eco's textual boxes are neither step-by-step instructions nor a hierarchy, but boxes crossing freely from one to the other, these structures are not built one upon another in the interpreter's mind; rather, thoughts jump from one to the other, building, destroying, and rebuilding the structure, in the process of infinite semiosis.

a) Iconic structures (Box 4)

An iconic structure is built by identifying what is depicted in an image depending on its iconicity. The topic as recognized by the viewer without referring to the history of the motif is the focus of this box. For example, this box looks for 'a woman wearing a horned crown and a long dress appearing with a lion' and not 'a representation of Ishtar'.

b) Narrative structures: iconographic structures and visual narrative structures (Box 6)

I divided Eco's Box 6 – 'narrative structures' – into two sub-boxes: iconographic structures and visual narrative structures. While iconographic structure works on how an image is related to a certain narrative in the tradition, the visual narrative structure operates on how the image produces a narrative. As discussed above, the iconographic structure finds the theme of an image in the history of art, requiring the knowledge of the history of types and relates it to the known narratives in the literary history. For example, 'the woman wearing a horned crown and a long dress appearing with a lion' is identified as a figure of goddess Ishtar and related to the stories, historical accounts, or myths of Ishtar that speak of her as the goddess of love and war, the city goddess of Nineveh and Arbela, or in her relationship with Dumuzi or other kings. When relevant literary text is not

[333] For the explanation of each code, see p. 81f above.

provided, as is the case of the OB nude woman terracotta plaque discussed in Part II, the history of art provides the labeling of the motif 'Nude Woman' with all history, distribution, and variations of the motif, and relates the artwork to the modern discourses about it.

The visual narrative structure relates the image with narratives, but it is the narrative which is made by the viewer's experiences responding to any element of the image, whether a small detail or the main theme. For example, from the same image of the OB nude woman, one may construct a narrative of a sexy seductress focusing on her nakedness, while another might infer a narrative of a non-living object focusing on her static posture. Such narratives may greatly differ from the 'main meaning' suggested by the history of art (if a 'main meaning' is established), but they still encompass the work and the viewer. Finally, when the iconographic and visual narrative structures interact with each other, agreeing with some and contradicting others, they produce rich and multifaceted meanings.

c) Actantial structures (Box 8) and elementary ideological structures (Box 9)

I left Boxes 8 and 9 in Eco's textual collaboration model as they are because they are also valid in visual sign systems. A visual mark always makes a difference in its relation to its surroundings and the relative oppositions and parallels create various actantial roles. For example, if a black line is drawn on white paper, the black line is opposed to the white background, becoming the subject against the object. This can, of course, be very different according to the viewers, as long as the viewer recognizes the image as something significant (as a sign). Again, different viewers will catch different ideologies from the image, such as, 'balance is good' or 'dynamic is powerful', etc. An image which has several figures will entail more complex structures of actantial roles and ideological arguments. For example, the OB nude woman terracotta plaque may yield the following actantial roles: the woman, the subject, and the ancient male viewers as the object of her seduction, carrying ideologies such as 'female nudity is powerful', or '*femme fatale*', or imposing a positive value on the nude female body. One might read it differently according to one's own narratives.

d) Extensional boxes: bracketed extensions (Box 5), forecast and inferential walks (Box 7), and world structures (Box 10)

The different intensional structures (the world of signification) have a constant relationship with the extensional worlds (the world of reference, i.e., the actual world), through 'bracketed extensions', 'forecast and inferential walks', and 'world structures'. The first tentative extensional links are formed by recognizing the elements of the visual image as what the viewer already knows in

previous experiences (Box 5, 'bracketed extensions'). In the construction of narratives through the collaboration of the image and the viewer, the viewer repeatedly 'forecasts' the image's pre- and post-states, constructing 'changes' of the event of the image. The viewer may produce different narratives diverged from any point of an image, the 'probability disjunctions'. Among them, the viewer 'infers' the most probable situations by considering all the possibilities in comparison with the actual world (Box 7, 'forecast and inferential walks').

By forecasting and inferring different situations or events of what is depicted in the image with the help of the knowledge of the actual world, the viewer constantly builds and rebuilds various possible worlds (Box 10, 'world structures'). The possible worlds are those imagined by the viewer concerning an artwork's narrative (e.g., worlds of figures, narratives, or viewers), which are made against the background of the actual world but modified according to the narrative's conditions. It is an imagined world where a constructed narrative takes place. For example, a possible world of the figure of the OB nude woman terracotta plaque would be a world of Old Babylonia where the nude woman's male viewers are titillated by looking at her. Different figures, marks, or different viewers may generate distinct world structures of the same image, causing tension and dynamism.

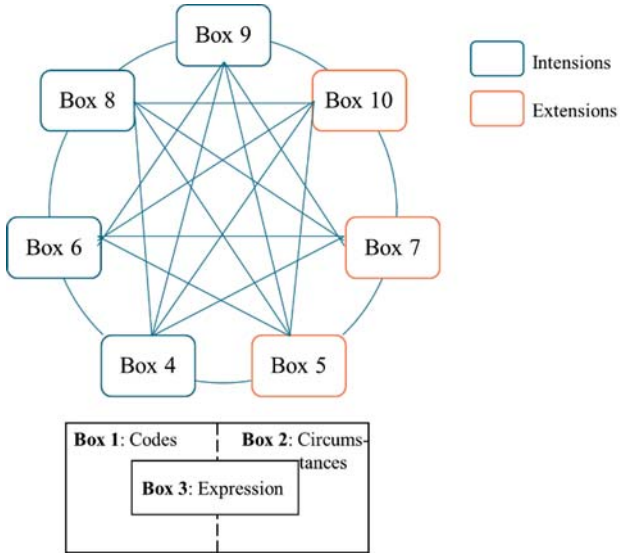


Fig. 8: A new graphic expression of the collaboration model.

The constant and immediate relationships between the intensional and extensional realms and between each box are insufficiently visualized in the frame structure of Eco's model. Eco states that the arrows indicate non-hierarchic but

mutual interconnections between each box. However, in the visualized structure of Eco's model, the boxes are arranged vertically in levels: the horizontal arrows are restricted to the boxes on the same level (Boxes 4 and 5, Boxes 6 and 7, and Boxes 8, 9 and 10), and the vertical arrows are limited to the immediate upper and lower boxes. According to this model, Box 4 cannot be immediately connected with Box 10, but must go through other boxes. The division of intensional and extensional realms by left and right sides gives the impression that the relationship between intensions and extensions is more static than dynamic. This does not graphically express Eco's intention of 'interdependences among 'boxes''.[334] For those reasons, I newly formulated the graphic representation of the collaboration model as seen in Fig. 8.

The boxes are arranged in a circle, removing the hierarchical impression from Eco's visualization of the model. Between the boxes, there are lines which indicate mutual interconnection and interdependence with all other boxes. The intensional and extensional realms are marked by the color of the boxes in the circle, undermining the clear-cut boundary between the two realms. Box 3 is surrounded by Boxes 1 and 2, expressing that the work cannot be perceived, recognized, and interpreted without its framing circumstances and codes. Boxes 1 and 2 are divided by a dotted line, signifying the interdependency of codes on circumstance and vice versa: the selection of codes depends on the circumstances, and circumstances are assumed by codes. In this graphical expression of the collaboration model, whether for texts or for visual representations, the dynamic interrelationship of the boxes is more clearly visualized, emphasizing the direct, non-hierarchical, and almost inseparable correlations of different operations of an interpretation, the collaboration between a work and an interpreter.

[334] Eco 1979, 15.

CONCLUSION TO PART I

In Part I, I reviewed key concepts of semiotics relevant to the purposes of introducing a semiotic method easily accessible for the scholars and students of biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies and presenting semiotic models for the analysis of interpretations of visual images and verbal texts. I suggested Eco's textual collaboration model as a semiotic model for interpretations of a text. Reusing the structure of Eco's collaboration model, I offered a model for visual images, with the help of Eco's theories on visual semiotics, Panofsky's model, and Bal's visual semiotic tools.

As I stated in the introduction of Part I, the two presented models – Eco's collaboration model and the modified collaboration model for visual images – are not meant to produce a correct or better interpretation, but to show various forms of different structuralizations according to the interpreters. When several interpretations are compared using these models, they yield interesting points, as will be shown in Parts II and III.

I do not present the collaboration model for visual images as a 'guide model' for others; even though it may aid students or scholars who look for various ways of conducting semiotic research on biblical texts and ancient Near Eastern art, a 'model' cannot avoid the impression of 'a guide to be followed', which must be overcome for more sensitive and flexible analysis. This model serves as an example of a semiotic study and as a linking chain for more comprehensive and detailed theoretical discourses.

PART II. INTERPRETATIONS OF AN IMAGE: AN OLD BABYLONIAN NUDE WOMAN TERRACOTTA PLAQUE

INTRODUCTION TO PART II

Part II has two main purposes: (1) to analyze three different interpretations of an Old Babylonian (OB) nude woman terracotta plaque and (2) to test the semiotic model for images which I offered in Part I.

In the analysis of different interpretations of the nude woman image, I chose two articles – 'The Hellenization of Ishtar' by Zainab Bahrani and 'Undressing the Nude' by Julia Assante[335] – and I will also offer my own interpretation. I chose these two articles because they show the most contrasting views, as Asher-Greve and Sweeney expressed them as 'not compatible'.[336] Each interpretation will be analyzed in the following manner: (1) an article – a text-based type of writing – will be analyzed according to the textual collaboration model of Umberto Eco; (2) an interpretation of the specific image of the nude woman, reconstructed from the article, will further be examined by the image collaboration model; (3) some points of the article which are beyond the limits of each box will be discussed separately in detail; and (4) finally, the image-text relations manifested in these interpretations will be discussed.

In the analysis, I will try to discuss all the boxes in the models, but I will pass some boxes without discussion. For example, Box 1 'codes and subcodes' is difficult to discuss in a box because any interpretation of a sentence, a line, or even a word, requires a complex cooperation of various codes. Boxes 5 – '(bracketed) extensions' – and 7 – 'forecasts and inferential walks' – may be discussed together with Box 4 – 'discursive/iconic structures' – and Box 8 – 'narrative structures'. While Part I provided the basic explanation of the concepts of each box, more detailed explanations about them are also given in the analysis of Bahrani's article because this is the first analysis using the textual collaboration model and the image collaboration model with a concrete example. In the analyses of Assante's and Kim's interpretation, some overlapping structures which similarly appear in Bahrani's interpretation (e.g., the narrative structure as an academic journey of the author) will also not be explained in detail. Regardless, I discuss the boxes in a certain order neither because the process of interpretation follows this order nor because these boxes are the steps to take for a correct interpretation, but in order to present the analysis in an organized way.

[335] Bahrani 1996, 3–16; Assante 2006, 177–207.
[336] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 151. See also Green 1992, 191.

The boxes are interdependently related and interconnected, as Eco entreats his readers to bear in mind.[337]

The second task, the test of the image collaboration model, is imposed on Part II because it mainly discusses how one interprets the image of the OB nude woman – an image greatly disputed in the scholarship of ancient Near Eastern studies. The interpretation of an image demands interpretants from various sign systems, including images and texts; yet when the object of interpretation is a visual image, it is necessary to use a model designed for this specific sign system because it uses different codes and subcodes to construct various levels of structures. After the three interpretations – including my own – are examined through the two semiotic models, I will briefly state the test-result of the image collaboration model in the conclusion to Part II.

I will first briefly introduce the OB nude woman terracotta plaque, its image, research history, typology, and distribution (Chapter 9). Then I will present my own introduction of the image (Chapter 10). After that, in Chapter 11, I will semiotically analyze the interpretations of Bahrani (§1), Assante (§2), and myself (§3), and compare them (§4). Again, when I state the names of the authors – Zainab Bahrani, Julia Assante, or Yeseul Kim – each author/interpreter is mentioned not as a person but as a reconstructed model author of the article and as a reconstructed model interpreter of the ancient artifact.

[337] Eco 1979, 14–15; Eco 1987, 83–85.

IX. ABOUT THE NUDE WOMAN

1. Why the Old Babylonian Terracotta Plaque Depicting a Nude Woman?



Fig. 9: Nude Woman; terracotta plaque; 13 × 4.8 cm; Tell Asmar (?); Old Babylonian (2017–1595 BC). The Louvre Museum, AO 12466. Courtesy © 2007 GrandPalaisRmn (musée du Louvre) / Franck Raux. Source: https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010119484

Old Babylonian (OB) visual representations of nude women, especially on terracotta plaques, are one of most disputed images in the ancient Near East. Its lack of divine or any other accompanying attributes and textual inscriptions are the main reasons for heated debates on the nude women's identification and function. The fact that it is usually isolated on terracotta plaques and on cylinder seals makes it more difficult to determine her identity. Nudity is another element which brings fervent arguments, not only because her body is deprived of clothing to represent her social status,[338] but also because female nudity is an important modern issue, deeply related to the marginalization of women, sexist concepts, gender hierarchy, shame and voyeurism, and feminism as their antithesis.[339] Even if the identification of these OB nude women was obvious to Old Babylonians, they are anonymous to us, generating various interpretations.

[338] While nudity communicates certain ideas and messages, social classes or status typically represented in nude in Mesopotamia are too little known to identify the OB nude woman.

[339] See for example, Picazo 2000, 26–29; Dobres 2000, 38; Garcia-Ventura 2019, 23–24; Bahrani 1996, 4–6; Keel / Schroer 2004, 11–12, 24–25.

I chose the OB nude woman on a terracotta plaque in the Louvre Museum, number AO 12466 as the specific object of interpretation. It was published in a photograph in Barrelet, *Figurines et reliefs*, fig. 801.[340] This woman is reprinted in Bahrani, 'The Hellenization of Ishtar', fig. 5, and a line drawing of this woman published in Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, Abb. 68, has been reprinted in a number of other articles,[341] all presenting different interpretations of her. Since the most prominently diverging interpretations are those of Bahrani and Assante, I selected them for semiotic analysis.

2. Research History

Nude female (without a baby) terracotta figurines and plaques from Mesopotamia, and more broadly in the ancient Near East have been interpreted variously: fertility figurines, goddesses, (temple or street) prostitutes, worshippers, female cult staffs, erotica, play dolls, magical or ritual devices, burial goods for afterlife, seductresses, dancers, votive figurines, ideals of female beauty, protective amulets, etc.[342] The main issue of interpreting these nude female representations is whether they were goddesses or mortal women because the usual lack of textual inscriptions and divine attributes and their isolated appearance in plaques and figurines hinder explicit identification.[343]

Concerning the OB Nude Woman terracotta plaques (where 'Nude Woman' is capitalized to denote a specific art historical type, rather than a general description), there has been a handful of identifications suggested. These are: personification of *baštu* ('dignity'), the goddess Ishtar, entourage of Ishtar, a propitious being or spirit, an exemplary woman, etc. I also included Nude Woman representations on cylinder seals because they refer to our frontal nude woman in question with the same gesture; even though meanings might differ according to different media, identification may remain the same.

The Nude Woman's identification as *baštu* was first offered by Frans A.M. Wiggermann, supported by two points: (1) as one of the triad of *lammassu*, *šēdu*, and *baštu* which often appear together both in texts and cylinder seals; and (2) the inscription '*baštu*' written on a votive triangular object representing a vulva. While Wiggermann admits that these are not solid proof but speculations, he considers the nudity of the woman as the link to the *baštu* written on the vulva

[340] Barrelet 1968, fig. 801.

[341] See for example, Assante 2006, 195; Keel / Schroer 2004, 15; Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 161.

[342] See summaries in Thomason 2019, 116; Suter 1992, 75–76; Assante 2006, 2; Postgate 2018, 15–17.

[343] See Picazo 2000, 30; Pruss 2002, 540; Keel / Schroer 2004, 20.

votive. Assante agrees with him, emphasizing her function as a protective spirit.[344] For Elisa Roßberger, the broader meanings of *baštu* – physical charisma; public image and attractiveness of a person, palace, or a temple; uncorrupted body; social integrity; prerequisite for entering a palace or temple – were related to the Nude Woman because the Nude Woman and *baštu* were both importantly regarded for entering (public and private) buildings and for successful meetings with gods and humans in those places.[345] However, Candida Felli criticizes that 'in ancient Mesopotamian imagery, figures are rarely meant to refer to abstract concepts, at least in their first meaning'.[346]

Secondly, there are interpretations in connection with the goddess Ishtar. The identification of Ishtar is widely refuted, mainly because (1) the Nude Woman's lack of divine attributes contradicts with the clear display of divinity in Ishtar iconography, and (2) Ishtar appears side by side with the Nude Woman in some OB cylinder seals.[347] Felix Blocher identified this Nude Woman as a specific member of Ishtar's entourage, *kezertum*, a status of woman related to the cult of Ishtar.[348] *Kezertum* means 'to curl the hair'. Blocher connects this word with the typical hairstyle of the nude women and speculates that the numerous Nude Woman representations were the depictions of the *kezertum* women who came to work at temples as captives and who let their hair grow curly.[349] However, there is no decisive evidence whether the word *kezertum* refers to the hairstyle of the Nude Woman plaques.[350] Nicholas Postgate developed Blocher's *kezertum* interpretation and suggested that the Nude Woman was part of the cult staff who played the sexual role of Ishtar,[351] but his explanation limited multisided aspects of her nudity only within her sexual activity[352] and did not answer the question of her archaeological context – if the Nude Woman was a member of the cult staff in Ishtar's temple, why were her images displayed at the entrances of familial houses? Nevertheless, certain connections with Ishtar can still be valid: Ishtar's praised nudity in texts (esp. love songs), lack of attributes of maternity, and her frontal iconography in the third-millennium Mesopotamia.[353]

[344] Assante 2006, 200–201.
[345] Roßberger 2018a, 235–236.
[346] Felli 2015, 220.
[347] See for example, Assante 2006, 199; Pruss 2002, 541.
[348] Blocher 1987, 225–228.
[349] Blocher 1987, 225–230.
[350] The hairstyles of these OB nude women were not uniformly curled-looking either. See for example, Wrede 1990, Plates 33–36; Barrelet 1968, pl. XXXIX. See also Roßberger 2018b, 527.
[351] Postgate 2018, 15–17.
[352] For the various aspects of the nudity of the woman, see p. 112–125 below.
[353] Stephanie Lynn Budin states that nudity and frontality conform to the iconography of Inanna in the third millennium BCE. Budin 2018, 191. See also Asher-Greve / Westenholz 2013, 163–209; Asher-Greve 2003, 33–35. This iconography of third millennium BCE may have

Thirdly, some researchers see her as a propitious being, a protective spirit, or somehow a lesser goddess. P.R.S. Moorey takes the podium under the feet of some of the OB nude women as an important sign and puts her 'in a special category, yet amongst the mortals rather than the immortals as if she was a mediating figure or beneficent spirit that was betwixt and between'.[354]

While Moorey renounces this intermediary spiritual being's divinity, others think such supernatural beings were still divinely conceived of in Mesopotamia, especially as lesser gods and goddesses. For Silvia Schroer, the Nude Woman refers to a lesser goddess because of her relatively high but also low position in cylinder seals: while the podium under her feet and worshippers around her signify somewhat higher status, her smaller scale and isolated position indicate a lower status than major gods.[355] Urs Winter takes the Nude Woman's position in front of a weather god as an important sign and identifies her as the partner of the weather god (Adad and Amurru), as a protective and intermediary goddess, but not a major goddess.[356] For Assante, this Nude Woman was one of the lesser gods upon whom the people of Babylonia relied after the fall of Ur III.[357] She explains that these nude women's archaeological contexts – near entrances and shrines in domestic contexts – and the medium (image bearer) – terracotta plaque – reveals her as a lesser goddess (protective spirit).[358]

Fourthly, representation of this Nude Woman has been interpreted as a mortal woman, as does Bahrani. Bahrani sees the nudity of the Nude Woman from the perspective of sexuality and eroticism and identifies her as a 'seductress,' without a link to divinity. However, it is paradoxical that her supporting evidence mainly stems from images and texts about goddesses (Ishtar, Tashmetu, and Aphrodite).[359] Julia Asher-Greve and Deborah Sweeney note that nudity 'as a form is essentially human' and cannot exclusively be 'limited to the realm of the supernatural and magic'.[360] For them, the OB Nude Woman is a counterpart of the nude hero, each representing ideal femininity and masculinity.[361]

Felli argues that the Nude Woman is a (unspecified) goddess-related temple personnel whose music performance in the nude warded off evil. She is not a portrait of an individual woman, but a representation of a certain kind of female

continued to later periods and spread into wider region (e.g., Syria). See a similar interpretation for Syrian nude woman representations in the Middle Bronze age in Pruss 2002, 544–545.

[354] Moorey 2003, 32.

[355] Schroer writes, 'dass sie zwar als Göttin verehrt wird, aber meistens eine Nebenfigur ist'. Quotation from Keel / Schroer 2004, 15. See also p. 96–98 in the same volume.

[356] Winter 1983, 196–197.

[357] Assante 2002b, 20–21.

[358] Assante 2002b, 1–21.

[359] Bahrani 1996, *passim*.

[360] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 151.

[361] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 153.

profession, probably *kezertum* or *ḫarimtum*.[362] She argues that the Nude Woman appears sometimes on a small scale on cylinder seals, together with the male figure known as the purifying priest; as the priest figure is not a god but a man, so is the Nude Woman.[363] Her relation to music is driven from her clasping hands, which Felli interprets as a singing posture.[364] However, as I will discuss below, the position is more known as a gesture of modesty in front of a higher entity.[365] Moreover, the Nude Woman often appears standing shoulder to shoulder with other deities on cylinder seals, depicted in the same size as the deities, rather than in smaller sizes. Even on the cylinder seal which Felli uses as a proof, the Nude Woman is depicted in large scale alongside two other main figures, categorically separated from the small-sized musicians and players.[366]

Marta Luciani also identifies the Nude Woman as a mortal woman. She argues that the plaques were likely to have been thrown away after use. She takes this as evidence of 'being secular' (not sacred). She interprets the pubic triangle and the jewelry of the Nude Woman as the indication of the festive mood (jewelry) of celebrating femininity (pubic triangle). The plaques were probably used for a single event, such as a rite of passage for young girls.[367] Luciani's intention to show that 'there is no reason to confine all interpretations exclusively within the realm of magic, divinity, or the supernatural when dealing with female images'[368] is well transmitted, but her interpretation is as speculative as other 'supernatural' interpretations: the one-time use does not necessarily indicate that the plaque was used secularly. The traces of disposal might not point to a 'single use' but possibly the use of certain seasons or longer periods of time. Once-sacred-things were also intentionally thrown away after use.[369] The emphasis of the pubic triangle cannot be confined to the meaning of a single event rite of passage, but it is the most important feature of the Mesopotamian way of representing femininity.[370] It seems that we – modern scholars – do not yet have decisive proof of identification of the Nude Woman.

The Nude Woman's social or religious function is also debated. One suggestion is a possible function of protecting and promoting well-being of household magic. Since those terracotta plaques were mostly located near the entrances or in domestic shrines of residence buildings, together with other terracotta plaques such as heroes or warriors, Humbaba masks, Pazuzu, dogs and lions, they are all

[362] Felli 2015, 222, 230–233.
[363] Felli 2015, 225.
[364] Felli 2015, 227.
[365] See p. 128–130 below.
[366] Felli 2105, 228, fig. 13.
[367] Luciani 2020, 219–222.
[368] Luciani 2020, 221.
[369] See my discussion in p. 110 below.
[370] Bahrani 1996, passim.

regarded as protective and propitious.[371] Wiggermann's interpretation of *baštu* also assumes her protective role by the parallelism with other protective spirits such as *lamma* and *šedu*.[372] The protective feature of female nudity is supported by textual evidence, the 29th year name of Ammi-ditana and the 9th year of Samsu-ditana, which mention powerful naked *lamma* (protective) deities.[373] Roßberger adds the function of making a successful encounter with superiors and gods when entering buildings, emphasizing the Nude Woman's placement near entrances.[374]

Another realm of social function which is often associated with the OB Nude Woman is that of sexuality and ideal femininity. For Bahrani, the Nude Woman represents the sexually attractive body as an object of the male gaze, whose function is to please and titillate her male viewers. Graff agrees with Bahrani and further notes that while men gazed at the nude female's representation sexually, women saw them 'as recognizing (representations of) themselves'.[375]

Asher-Greve and Sweeney suggest that the OB Nude Woman functioned as an ideal femininity. For them, the Nude Woman seems 'rather demure' and 'sexual non-aggressiveness, or even inexperience',[376] mostly signed from her non-exaggerated hips, breasts, and vulva. Roßberger asserts that the proliferation of mold plaques of the Nude Woman came with the need for the exact replication of 'the increasingly symbolic character of the perfect and beautiful female […] body'.[377] Roßberger extends this function of ideal femininity a step further into the function of an aesthetic decoration of spaces.[378]

Because of the lack of inscriptions and divine attributes, not one interpretation among them is fully proven with concrete evidence. Yet, the lack of evidence is not the evidence of absence. In Chapter 10, I will show which interpretations I prefer and which of them I do not agree with. What led my interpretation to accept certain arguments and not others will be discussed in chapter 11 §3.

[371] Assante 2002b, 6–14; Roßberger 2018a, 236–237; Ornan 2010, 236.
[372] Wiggermann 1987, 28–29.
[373] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 142; Roßberger 2018a, 236; Suter 2000, 73.
[374] Roßberger 2018a, 235–236.
[375] Graff 2014, 385–387.
[376] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 160.
[377] Roßberger 2018b, 531.
[378] Roßberger 2018a, 224.

3. Typology and Distribution of the Motif

3.1. *Typology*

In this section, I will discuss various classifications of the nude female visual representations from Old Babylonia. In order not to miss out on certain types which are present only in a specific region, typologies which range over the whole area of Old Babylonia are included in this discussion.[379]

For the typology of female nude representations in Mesopotamia, Bahrani used four categories: (a) the mother, (b) the seductress, (c) the sexual partner, and the (d) the entertainer. While types (a) and (b) are isolated representations, (c) and (d) are in narratives. According to her typology, our OB nude woman (Fig. 9), who neither holds a baby nor acts in a narrative, belongs to group (b), 'the seductress', along with other nude women with hand gestures of clasping hands, holding breasts, or pointing to the genitals.[380]

Ruth Opificius distinguishes three types of *en face* nude woman representations in Old Babylonia: (1) with clasping hands, (2) supporting breasts, and (3) wearing special jewelry or holding objects, which is further divided by different kinds of jewelry and objects.[381] According to this typology, our OB nude woman belongs to type (1), 'with clasping hands'.

Christoph Uehlinger offers a broad typology of all nude woman representations in the ancient Near East, which includes Anatolia, Syria, and the Levant, divided by their gestures and accompanying objects: (1) holding breasts, (2) clasping hands, (3) arms hanging down to thighs, (4) arms hanging down to abdomen or hands covering the genitals, (5) mixed gestures, (6) arms protruding to the sides of the body, (7) vertically raising arms, either bent or straight, (8) Qadištu-type (Qudshu/Qedeshet) with V-form arms holding plants or animals, (9) with a baby, (10) with objects (e.g., a disc, drum, or a bird).[382] Accordingly, our OB nude woman belongs to type (2), clasping hands.

Uehlinger's typology is detailed by gestures and objects, but it also includes a wide range of time periods, media, and geographical space into one type, which would be inadequate to use only for the discussion of OB nude woman representations. Bahrani's categorization seems intuitive, but the names of types already

[379] For that reason, I do not discuss here the typology of Wrede (2003) which is confined to Uruk and Auerbach (1994) on the Diyala region. While Auerbach's study compares terracotta plaques with other cities in Mesopotamia, the type of the nude woman with a drum/disc – one of the most frequently appearing female nudes – is put aside for not having been found in the Diyala region. See Auerbach 1994, 143–144.

[380] Bahrani 1996, 7–9; Bahrani 2001, 80–88.

[381] Opificius 1961, 37–60.

[382] Uehlinger 1998, 53.

decide their meanings before sufficient discussion. Opificius's types are designed for the Old Babylonian period *en face* nude woman terracotta plaques, and it rightfully distinguishes different hand gestures, presenting the type of clasping hands as an independent carrier of meanings. Even though Opificius's typology is less detailed compared to Uehlinger's, it is explicitly designed for the OB Nude Woman and more detailed than Bahrani's typology. Therefore, I will follow Opificius's typology and discuss our OB nude woman as an example of the 'clasping hands' type of OB *en face* Nude Woman terracotta plaques.

3.2. *Distribution of the Motif*

Graff states that the clasping hands type of the frontal Nude Woman representtations started to appear in Mesopotamian terracotta plaques during the Akkadian period, but its iconography 'clearly derived from the hand-modeled figurines of nude females in the round which already at this time had been produced in the ancient Near East for millennia'.[383] The first examples of the Akkadian frontal standing and clasping hands nude woman terracotta plaques stem from Tell al-Wilayah and Tell Asmar, but Graff suspects them to have been more wide spread, given the poor archaeological remnants of the period.[384] The number of these frontal nude woman depictions on terracotta plaques rapidly increased in the late 19th century BCE,[385] reached its peak in the Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian periods, and started to fade around 1700 BCE.[386] The frontal nude standing woman motif was the most famous one in the repertoire of terracotta plaques during this period, and the clasping-hands type was a significant portion among them.[387]

Geographically, the *en face* nude woman with clasping hands type appeared throughout all Babylonia, which may be called a 'pan-Mesopotamian' type.[388] These are found ubiquitously, from Ur to Assur, from Mari to Susa.[389]

The cylinder seal is a medium in which the frontal nude woman motif also proliferated in the stylized form. This motif, especially of clasping hands, entered cylinder seals at the end of the 19th century BCE, reached its peak between 1825–1750 BCE, and was continuously used but declined in the early Kassite period.[390] However, the general motif of the frontal nude standing woman –

[383] Graff 2014, 373. See also Assante 2002b, 7.
[384] Graff 2014, 373.
[385] Roßberger 2018b, 527.
[386] Assante 2002b, 2.
[387] Assante 2002b, 7.
[388] Assante 2002b, 2; Graff 2014, 373.
[389] Assante 2002b, 2; Opificius 1961, 37–41.
[390] Roßberger 2018a, 233.

regardless of the gestures – travelled to Syria, continuing the tradition, even though it underwent some variations, such as a head in profile or the hairstyles; the clasping-hands type is also witnessed, albeit rarely.[391]

According to Budin, in general, the frontal nude standing woman motif travelled through Syria and Anatolia to the Levant during the third and second millennia and arrived in Egypt in the 13th century BCE.[392] The third millennium Mesopotamian frontal nude woman representations have been found to be not only the direct ancestors of the OB Nude Woman,[393] but also the distant ancestors of the so-called Aštart plaques and Qedešet/Qudšu in the Late Bronze Age Levant.[394] The influence of the Mesopotamian frontal nude woman motif can also be traced to the female representations of the Iron Age Southern Levant.[395]

[391] See for example, Porada 1948, no. 946.
[392] Budin 2016, 170.
[393] Budin 2018, 194–196.
[394] Budin 2015, 4–12.
[395] Moorey 2003, 28–31, 34–35, 40–41, 58–60.

X. PRESENTATION OF MY OWN INTERPRETATION: THE NUDE WOMAN AS A SIGN-COMPLEX

1. Introduction

I discussed above the research history, typology, and distribution of the clasping-hands type of Old Babylonian nude woman terracotta figurines and plaques. In this chapter, I will present my own interpretation of a specific image of an OB nude woman terracotta plaque (Fig. 9).[396]

After providing a short description of the image, I will discuss visual signs of this specific OB nude woman image: its archaeological contexts; female nudity (including sexuality and eroticism, fertility/abundance, magical powers, cultic/religious activities, human essence, the concept of *baštu*, Ishtar, and jewelry and makeup in nudity); frontality; hand gesture; detailed face; slim body, legs, and feet; and the lack of divine attributes. These are the visual signs that I recognize in interpreting the image. My purpose is not to find a definite identification of the OB nude woman as a type, but to generate an interpretation idiosyncratic to this specific plaque. Therefore, my discussion will not include every issue of the OB Nude Woman figure in general but only those relevant to this plaque. The data from these separate discussions will be synthesized, revealing an intercrossing point: our OB nude woman has a supernatural status as an image, in relation with Ishtar. My interpretation, as an interpretant of the sign 'the OB nude woman terracotta plaque', interplays with Bahrani's and Assante's interpretations along with other articles, monographs, and scholarly discourses, is also affected by my personal experiences. The personal experiences and interpretative preferences which guided the overall direction of my interpretation will be separately discussed in Chapter 11 §3.

2. Description

Fig. 9 presents a photograph depicting a nude standing woman with clasping hands and aligned legs and feet. The height of the plaque is 13 cm and the width 4.8 cm,[397] easily fitting in a hand. Her facial expression is rather ambiguous; it is difficult to discern whether she makes a neutral face or smiles slightly. Her hair is rich and curved upwards at the shoulder. The frontal posture exposes her

[396] See p. 98-99 for the basic information (e.g., museum information) about the plaque and its photograph, and the reasons for choosing this image as the object of my interpretation.

[397] Barrelet 1968, 401 number 802.

face, breasts, navel, and vulva directly to the viewers. The breasts do not show the nipples, but they could have been originally painted on which has been lost over time. The round navel is carved, and the vulva is indicated by a vertical line in the pubic area. The woman's head is slightly bent to her right (viewer's left), and her right-side hair tresses are more opulent than the other side. This tilted head gesture gives a soft and warm impression. The frontal eyes catch the viewer's attention. Her neck and waist are adorned with jewelry-like curves.

3. Archaeological Contexts

3.1. *Date and Place*

This specific plaque (Fig. 9) – which is frequently quoted in articles – was not brought to light in a controlled excavation.[398] The drawings of her mostly refer to the depiction in Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, which refers back to Barrelet's 1968 publication,[399] which confirms neither the excavation site (Tell Asmar?), nor gives a precise dating (approx. 2017–1595 BCE).[400] Since it is likely that this plaque is a purchased plaque from antiquities dealers, its providence could be either Ishchali, Tell Asmar, or Khafajeh.[401] With deep grief, Assante describes how early excavations destroyed major sites of Mesopotamia without proper documentation, and how easily the terracotta plaques were thrown away for their low economic value, which obscure the dating and find spots.[402] Nevertheless, references to this image usually state that it belongs to the Old Babylonian period by typology and style analysis.[403]

The terracotta plaques of this type[404] were found in various contexts: mostly in domestic areas, either inside private house buildings or in courtyards, but also on streets or in temples (usually non-elite residences of the temple) – if inside buildings, many of them were found near entrances, doorjambs, window frames,

[398] The general typology and dating of such nude woman terracotta plaques from the Old Babylonian period are supplemented by the information gained from more recent and systematic excavations. See the research history and typology of this motif in p. 99–106 above. See also Wrede 2003 and Blocher 1987 for the general typology and dating.

[399] Winter 1983, Abb. 68; Assante 2006, 195; Keel / Schroer 2004, 15; Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 161, etc.

[400] Barrelet 1968, 401 Nr. 801.

[401] Auerbach 2000, 44.

[402] Assante 2000, 113–115, 142, 174.

[403] See for example, Bahrani 1996, 9; Assante 2006, 195; Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 161; Keel / Schroer 2004, 15, etc.

[404] For its typology and distribution, see chapter 9 §3 above.

or shrines/house sanctuaries,[405] where figures of minor deities and protective spirits were typically placed to protect the place.[406] The nude woman plaques were discovered with other terracotta plaques, such as the plaques of bull-eared gods, heroes, dogs, lions, or erotic scenes.[407] While the Nude Woman plaques are widely found in domestic contexts, they are not generally attested to in funerary contexts of the Old Babylonian period of Mesopotamia.[408]

3.2. *Material*

This terracotta plaque is mold-made. Clay as a material is cheap and easily accessible, ideal for mass-production. It is also deeply associated with the act of creation in Mesopotamian myths,[409] since clay was the material the gods used to create human beings. Even though terracotta products are more fragile in comparison to stones and metals, it acquires a durability when it is fired.[410] Clay was regarded as a material with the power of protection and transference, mentioned in Mesopotamian magical texts of apotropaic and protective purposes.[411] For these reasons, terracotta was a sensitive medium that could quickly adapt to social and cultural changes.[412]

The molded plaque as a medium favors mass-production of exact replications. The molds were portable, allowing the wide and long travel of visually standardized messages.[413] Since the capture of the exact form and prototype allowed archaism and non-human authorship, the molded plaques' ability to produce identical copies gave this medium authority.[414] This newly emerged medium changed the forms of pictorial representations by centering a figure or an epitomized narrative in a bordered flat surface without a division of spaces; this was thoroughly different from the scheme of cylinder seals.[415] The repertoire of motifs shows that the status of deities from cylinder seals were lowered when they were transferred to terracotta plaques, which made them more familiar to domestic settings.[416] These figures were truncated from their original contexts

[405] See for example, Woolley / Mallowan 1976, 171–174; Stone 1987, 116; Moorey 2003, 29–30; Assante 2006, 194; Assante 2002a, 28; Assante 2002b, 14–16; Graff 2014, 378.
[406] Assante 2006, 194; Assante 2002a, 27–28.
[407] Assante 2002a, 27.
[408] Pruss / Novák 2000, 185–186; Moorey 2003, 29.
[409] Lambert / Millard 1999, 57–61. See also, Assante 2002b, 15–16; Keel / Schroer 2004, 13–14; Graff 2014, 379; Darby 2014b, 15.
[410] Darby 2014b, 15.
[411] Darby 2014b, 15; Geller 2016, 24, 32, 335, 416; Maul 1994, 457.
[412] Roßberger 2018b, 530.
[413] Assante 2002b, 3.
[414] Assante 2002b, 18–19.
[415] Assante 2002b, 4–5.
[416] Assante 2002b, 11–12.

(e.g., narrative scenes in cylinder seals) and shown in a new context of plaques, commonly with a frontal body and face.[417] The typical contour of the OB nude woman plaques – 'the ovoid shape and convex back' – could fit in a hand comfortably, but tactical undifferentiation throughout the body implies that it was meant to be viewed rather than touched.[418]

3.3. *Breakage*

These plaques were mostly found broken, but some have been found completely intact.[419] Because of the poor documentation and preservation of the excavations in the past, it is difficult to say whether they were intentionally broken or simply thrown away after they were accidently wrecked.[420] Graff agrees with Auerbach that the lack of holdings or fittings on the back of most of the terracotta plaques – except for the rare cases of remnants of supportive legs for the plaques – indicate they were transitorily used, placed on shelves or niches, rather permanently used.[421] Even if they were intentionally broken after certain uses, it does not necessarily mean that they represented evil spirits like some figurines used in anti-witchcraft rituals,[422] since intentional breakage could have occurred by the cult to prevent reuse.[423] The terracotta plaques of horned bull-eared males – typically interpreted to protect the house – are found broken as often as the nude woman.[424] Since terracotta plaques were easy to break, it is still possible that the nude woman plaques were not intentionally broken even though most were found broken.[425] What can be stated for certain is that the use of a mold made terracotta plaques as a circulating medium was not meant for eternity but for a certain time, as objects were easily replaceable by another one.

[417] Assante 2002b, 9, 16.

[418] Roßberger 2018b, 528.

[419] Moorey 2003, 29; Graff 2014, 378.

[420] To suggest the possibility for the intentional breakage with more certainty, one needs a consistent pattern of breakage in a closed context. Moorey 2003, 10.

[421] Auerbach 1994, 3, 327–328; Graff 2014, 378. There are also rare cases of holes to hang it. See Klengel-Brandt / Cholidis 2006, 50 and Tafel 5 Nr. 25.

[422] See Schwemer, 'Empowering the Patient', 311–313, for examples of using figurines as substitutes for warlocks and witches in Babylonia.

[423] Marchetti / Nigro 1997, 31.

[424] In Auerbach's study of terracotta plaques from the Diyala, the type 1 – 'nude standing woman facing front with hands folded on the upper abdomen or under the breasts' – numbers 52 broken plaques out of 65, and the type 23 – 'supernatural being with a horned miter, bull ears and a beard' – numbers 36 broken plaques out of 37. Auerbach 1994, 45, 60, 360–371, 398–405.

[425] Pruss argues that the dominant number of broken cases in the Late Bronze Age Munbaqa implies their ritual breakage, since the number of complete ones found is not large. Pruss 2002, 542.

3.4. *My Interpretation of the Signs of the Archaeological Contexts – Date, Place, Material, and Breakage*

The obvious household context of the Old Babylonian nude woman terracotta plaques indicates its relationship with household activities. Concerning ancient beliefs towards entrances and openings and the plaques' occasional discoveries within shrines and house sanctuaries, I think that the nude woman was involved in household religion, with the roles of protecting the household against evil spirits and welcoming propitious beings into the house.

According to Karel van der Toorn, household religion in Old Babylonia was involved with three different types of gods: gods of the house (*ilī bītim*), gods of the family ('your god' or 'the god of your father'),[426] and ancestor gods. While gods of the family were usually taken from lesser gods of the pantheon (major gods were reserved for high-ranking elites and royal families only), the gods of the house were anonymous.[427] Since our OB nude woman looks relatively young, she does not seem to fit in the category of an ancestor cult. Furthermore, ancestor cults were usually practiced by male members of the house – women are mentioned only as wives without their own names[428] – thus OB nude women were probably not venerated as images of female ancestors.

Old Babylonian lullaby texts mention that crying babies in a house bother the house god (*il[ī] bītim*) and goddess (*ištar bītim*).[429] The term *ištar* here is used not as a reference to the goddess Ishtar, but as a generic term for a female supernatural being. Van der Toorn suggests that the god and goddess of the house might have been the same beings as the god and goddess of the doorpost (*sippu*) mentioned in first millennium texts and that iconic representations of the god and goddess of the house were located near the house's entrance.[430] He asserts that the god and goddess of the house were neither the family gods nor ancestor gods, but 'protective household deities without a name'.[431]

Our OB nude woman may represent the goddess of the house: the OB nude woman is depicted as nude, with jewelry ornaments, fitting the description of Ishtar. Even though the term *ištar* in *ištar bītim* does not denote the great goddess Ishtar, the use of the same name as a generic for a female supernatural being could have caused her depiction as nude, or the other way around, nudity could have caused her to be called *ištar bītim*. The usual location of the goddess of the

[426] Van der Toorn suggests that the 'house' in *il bītim* indicates rather 'house' than 'family', because 'the usual designation of the family god is 'your god' or 'the god of your father''. Van der Toorn 2008, 21.

[427] Van der Toorn 2008, *passim*.

[428] Van der Toorn 2008, 25–28.

[429] Farber 1989, 34–37; Van der Toorn 2008, 23–25.

[430] Van der Toorn 2008, 23–25.

[431] Van der Toorn 2008, 25.

house – near the entrance or in the house sanctuaries – also conforms to the usual find location of the OB nude woman plaques within the house. The plaques might have been thrown away on streets and courtyards in the following circumstances: when a house was renewed or rebuilt, when moving to another house, after certain period of usage – if the period of usage was limited for a cultic reason – or after the plaque was damaged.[432]

Still, it is not certain whether the OB nude woman was a (lower) goddess, a spiritual being, or a mortal woman because, in most cases, she does not wear clear divine attributes. However, it could be that house deities and protecting spirits were not necessarily equipped with divine attributes, especially if Assante is right with her argument on the terracotta plaques' function of lowering and familiarizing the status of divinities.[433] Furthermore, taking on the roles of protection and promotion of wellbeing at the entrances and house sanctuaries signifies that she became, or was regarded as, supernatural once she was molded on plaques as an image and put near entrances or in house sanctuaries, whether she was originally human or not. This can be further considered in connection with the sign, 'lack of divine attributes' discussed below. Her nudity in connection with the goddess Ishtar will also be discussed with the sign, 'nudity'.

4. Female Nudity

The Old Babylonian nude woman will most likely be recognized as nude when first seen by any 21st century CE English-speaking reader interested in the ancient Near East or the Hebrew Bible, because the exposure of breasts and genitals is considered nudity and is not frequently encountered in public places. On the other hand, nudity is culturally dependent, and for some other cultures this image of an Old Babylonian woman might not be viewed as nude, i.e., looked at without any sexual intention.

Before proceeding, I want to briefly address the issue of the distinction between nakedness and nudity. These two terms have been variously defined: practical vs. symbolic/transcendental; practical vs. aestheticized/idealized; negative vs. positive; actual vs. ideal, etc.[434] While those distinctions might conform to

[432] Apart from the question whether the nude woman plaques were intentionally broken or not, even when the nude woman plaques were intentionally broken, the intentional breakage may have been necessary for revered images and does not need to be automatically linked with the image's lower status (e.g., substitutes of witches or warlocks). See p. 110 above. Likewise, Pruss argues for the intentional breakage of the nude female figurines in Middle Bronze Age Ebla and Late Bronze Age Munbaqa, which he interprets as a type of representations of the goddess Ishtar. Pruss 2002, 541–545.

[433] See p. 109 above.

[434] Clark 1956, 3; Allolio-Näcke 2019, 36; Höpflinger 2019, 7; Roßberger 2018a, 225.

our daily usage of the English terms naked vs. nude, I agree with Lynda Nead that the differentiation between nakedness and nudity is an English dichotomy which excludes various other ways to conceive of the female nude[435] and thus cannot be automatically applied to ancient Near Eastern studies without deeper consideration.

Representation of a female nude is not a universally preoccupying motif; in the Mesopotamian art of the third millennium BCE, nudity was 'far removed' from visual representations of 'ordinary men and women, including kings and queens, as well as from deities'.[436] While the male nudity was clearly recorded in this period, female nudity remained uncommon. Ordinary Old Babylonian women in public were represented dressed.

There are cases in which female musicians are depicted nude.[437] The most common type of nude female musician in the Old Babylonian period is the representation of nude female drummers, depicting a frontal nude standing woman who holds a drum (Fig. 10).[438] However, it is dubious whether this type reflects an actual practice of drumming in nude because the nude female drummers appear only as isolated figurines or plaques, while clearly sharing its stylistic characteristics with the nude woman type – they are usually classified under the 'nude woman' type in general.[439] There is a depiction of a nude woman holding a drum during sexual intercourse with a lute-playing man (Fig. 11), but its focus is on the sexual act, showing a position that makes it almost impossible to play the musical instruments, visually expressing how music is deeply involved in sexual acts.[440] Otherwise, there is a rare case from Old Babylonia that depicts a nude woman playing a lyre while standing on a podium, accompanied by a man in a cloth dancing and playing a drum (Fig. 12).[441] This might point to an actual nude performance of female musicians, but its archaeological context is unclear in helping to determine whether this scene involves an extraordinary (or cultic?) situation or not.[442] Therefore, nude female musician plaques suggest that certain music performances were accompanied by nudity, rather than that the nudity was required for certain professions such as female musicians.

[435] Nead 1992, 16–17. See also Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 129–130.
[436] Roßberger 2018a, 234.
[437] Otto 2016, 128.
[438] See for example, Barrelet 1968, pl. XXXIII–XXXVII.
[439] See p. 104–105 above for the typology of the nude woman.
[440] Cooper 2016, 219–220. In this article, Cooper identifies the woman as a *kezertu*, a temple-related prostitute.
[441] Collon 2003, 101.
[442] Opificius 1961, no. 581–582.







Fig. 10: A nude female drummer. Terracotta plaque, Tello, Old Babylonian (Barrelet 1968, no. 368).
Fig. 11: A nude woman and man having intercourse and playing musical instruments. Terracotta plaque, Larsa, Old Babylonian (Winter 1983, Abb. 261).
Fig. 12: A nude woman playing a lyre and a man dancing and playing a drum. Relief stele, Old Babylonian, unprovenanced (Winter 1983, Abb. 260).

The typological connection between the nude female drummer type and the clasping-hands nude woman type and the rare appearance of nude female musician representations in non-cultic contexts indicate that the proliferation of standardized female nude representations in the Old Babylonian period is not to be taken for granted, but rather as a special phenomenon.[443] Our OB nude woman was not the result of the natural tendency to depict female nudes, but had its own history, becoming 'the most visible for the urban population in daily life but also during festivals in the temple's courtyard'[444] and communicating specific messages. I will now discuss what kind of messages could have been communicated with her nudity through specific keywords.

4.1. *Sexuality and Eroticism*

Since nudity reveals sexual attributes, a nude body is often linked with sexuality and eroticism, both positively and negatively. The representative example of a positive connection between nudity and sexuality is Bahrani's interpretation, which sees our OB nude woman as an object of the male gaze whose purpose was to sexually please her male viewers.[445] Bahrani argues that female sexuality was positively viewed, never degraded, and powerfully attracted the male sexual gaze. The main evidence of her argument is an inscription written on a life-size

[443] Roßberger 2018a, 224–225.
[444] Roßberger 2018a, 236.
[445] Bahrani 1996, 8–13.

marble nude woman statue ordered by a Middle Assyrian king, Ashur-bel-kala (1073–1056 BCE), who is stated to have made 'these sculptures in the provinces, cities, and garrisons for titillation [*siahu*]'.[446] *Kuzbu*, the power of sexual attraction – also an attribute for deities – is often discussed as a link between nudity and sexuality, regardless of gender.[447]

On the other hand, some scholars observed modern (Western) prejudices over the link between nudity and sexuality and criticized those who look for the sexuality from ancient nude representations. According to Anna-Katharina Höpflinger, the 'naked, young, thin, (white) woman' has been the modern Western ideal of female nudity,[448] and it built modern viewers' attitudes towards the OB nude woman as she conforms to the Western taste. Marcia-Anne Dobres also argues that scholarship's emphasis on the breasts and vulva came largely from 'what late 20th century industrial, capitalist, and male dominated societies see as titillating (heterosexual) sexual attributes of women'.[449] If the OB nude woman looks sexy and erotic, that is because our – me and my readers' in the 21st century CE – perception of nudity has been affected by our modern view.

However, ancient Mesopotamians did emphasize certain sexual aspects of nudity. A vulva was frequently mentioned in Mesopotamian love literature.[450] The exposure of a vulva in visual representations, at least, can be regarded as a locus of sexuality and eroticism in the Old Babylonian period. Female breasts are also mentioned in erotic contexts, but the vulva appears much more frequently.[451] It is important to note that female nudity and sexuality were not treated as a mere object of the male gaze, but the opposite: women were described as active, self-directed, and even aggressive in making themselves sexually satisfied.[452] Nathan Wasserman suggests that Ishtar would be the 'archetypal female figure' of such aggressive female sexuality.[453]

The connections between nudity, sexuality, and Ishtar may also be found elsewhere: some votive objects in the shape of a pubic triangle presented in Ishtar's temples imply the connection between the vulva and the goddess of sexuality.[454] However, according to the inscriptions on those votives, the relation between the nudity and the goddess Ishtar were not limited to sexuality but

[446] Bahrani 1996, 12. *Siahu* here seems to be a typo. It is *ṣiahu.*
[447] Bahrani 2001, 47, 55, 63–67; Bahrani 2002, 57; Thomason 2019, 114.
[448] Höpflinger 2019, 8.
[449] Dobres 2000, 39. See also Keel / Schroer 2004, 10.
[450] Wasserman 2016, 38–42; Roßberger 2018a, 232. See also Haas 1999, 130–133.
[451] E.g., 'Stretch your(m.) left hand and touch our vulva! Play(m.) with our breasts!' PRAK 1 B 472 I 13'–14', in Wasserman 2016, 152. See also ibid., 39, 59–62.
[452] Leick 1994, 56; Haas 1999, 127–128; Wasserman 2016, 28.
[453] Wasserman 2016, 28. See also Hass 1999, 127–128.
[454] Gries 2019, 152; Schmitt 2012, Taf. 224.

further connected to magical protection, apotropaism, and well-being, as will be discussed below.[455]

4.2. *Fertility/Abundance*

Female nudity was widely discussed in association with fertility in the 19th century CE scholarship.[456] According to Schroer, the early excavators were unable to acknowledge the female nudity of the Mesopotamian visual representations because of their puritanical minds. They felt the need to cover female nudity with something other than sexual desire and eroticism, and fertility was their solution.[457]

This reckless linkage between female nudity and fertility was heavily criticized by feministic scholarship in the 20th–21st century CE. First, this linkage is not proven by iconography because many of these nude women do not have attributes of maternity (a baby or a gesture of breastfeeding).[458] Secondly, the link is denounced as a projection of the Western degradation of women. According to Garcia-Ventura, the link follows Cartesian mind/body dualism: man vs. woman = mind vs. body = culture vs. nature = superior vs. inferior.[459] As a part of the Western sexist concepts, it claims fertility and biological reproduction to be the primary function of a woman – a mother and caregiver for all nature – but inferior to male roles.[460] On the contrary, in Mesopotamia, fertility was considered as a primarily masculine attribute as men were the creator of the seed.[461] Mesopotamians also distinguished between eroticism and reproduction/fertility, as witnessed by various means of contraception and birth control.[462] Assante argues that human fertility was never a major concern in Mesopotamia, which suffered from overpopulation from time to time.[463] Ishtar was frequently depicted exposing her lower body, described as having sexual intercourse with her male partners, but never giving birth nor becoming a mother.[464]

The automatic connection between female nudity and fertility deserves criticism because the ideology of the inferiority of the female body is unconsciously

[455] Jakob-Rost / Freydank 1981, 326; Kryszat 2017, 124; Gries 2019, 152–153. See also p. 117, 121f below.

[456] See Picazo 2000, 23–29; Budin 2015, 30–31; Budin 2002, 315–316.

[457] Keel / Schroer 2004, 24–25.

[458] Pruss 2002, 544

[459] Garcia-Ventura 2019, 23–27.

[460] Picazo 2000, 27–29; Budin 2015, 30.

[461] Budin 2015, *passim*; Pruss 2002, 544.

[462] Biggs 2000, 4–11; Brenner 1997, 52–89; Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 159; Pruss 2002, 544.

[463] Assante 2003, 26–27.

[464] Abush 1999, 452–456. See also Haas 1999, 27–30.

projected in that connection. However, fertility in a broad sense requires more consideration, as one of many aspects of female nudity in ancient Mesopotamia. While Budin's argument about the primarily masculine responsibility of fertility in Mesopotamia seems reasonable,[465] the female role of nourishing is also a part of the semantic realm of the term 'fertility' in modern English, as its derivatives (e.g., fertilizer or a fertile land) imply. Fertility in the meaning of abundance and success may well have been coded in the nudity of the OB woman terracotta, as the divine intercourse of Inanna/Ishtar promised abundance and political success for the king without necessarily resulting in the actual pregnancy.[466] I do not think the female nudity is confined to fertility; rather, it seems that it was broadly accepted to signify a symbolic success in any realm, such as political achievement and economic abundance, as female nudity functions in sacred marriage texts or in erotic terracotta plaques in Old Babylonia.[467] Even though our OB nude woman is depicted singularly without her (male) partner, the fertility in the meaning of general abundance and success can still be coded within her nudity.

4.3. *Magical Powers*

Some scholars noted magical powers embedded in the female nude in Mesopotamia. Assante strongly argues for the magical power of female nude representations, not confined to sexual realms but in a general span of life: the cure for illness or snake bites, protection, success, well-being, etc. The magical power does not come solely from female nudity, but in combination with the medium of the terracotta plaque and its location near entrances and in house sanctuaries.[468] Wiggermann's identification of the OB nude woman as *baštu*, a protective spirit, assumes the link between nudity and the magical power: (1) the OB nude woman is identified as *baštu* because of her nudity (exposure of vulva); and (2) *baštu*, identified as a protective spirit, has magical powers which assure personal happiness and protection.[469] The relationship between representations of female nudes and magical protective powers is usually evidenced by two year names. In the 29th year name of Ammi-ditana, it says: 'Year in which Ammi-

[465] Budin 2015, *passim*.

[466] For example, see Sefati 1998, 212–214, 223–228, etc. I refer here to the sacred marriage texts, not necessarily assuming the existence of the actual 'ritual intercourse' of the sacred marriage but the literary or symbolic significance on the society. See Lapinkivi 2008, 27–28, 32, 41. See also Haas 1999, 27–30.

[467] Assante 2002a, 42 (esp. n. 70), 46–47. In the mentioned examples, the sex with Inanna/Ishtar brings magical forces for economic abundance, political success, cure for illness, etc. See also, Sefati 1998, 212–214, 223–228, etc.; Wasserman 2016, 43.

[468] Assante 2002a, *passim*; Assante 2002b, 1, 6–14, 19–20; Assante 2006, 'Undressing the Nude', 200–202.

[469] Wiggermann 1987, 28–29.

ditana, the king, made and adorned with reddish gold and precious stones powerful naked protective deities who pray for his life and brought the Lammas to Inanna the great Lady of Kish who raises the head of her king'.[470] Samsu-ditana's 9th year name includes: 'Year (the king made) naked protective deities'.[471] Magical powers of protection, healing, and wellbeing embedded in female nudity were assumed not only in Mesopotamia but also in the Levant.[472] However, the specific mechanism of the magic of the OB nude woman – activated whether by incantations, performances, prayers, complex rituals, or just being looked at – cannot be determined.

4.4. *Cultic or Religious Activities*

The magical powers discussed above are essentially related to cultic or religious activities, since such special powers were considered divine or angelic.[473] Regardless of gender, nudity sometimes functioned as a marker for cultic contexts. Anthropologically, nudity during cultic activities might have started to avoid contamination of clothing.[474] Angelika Berlejung states that cultic nudity was kept importantly side by side with the specially designed cultic clothes.[475] Visual representations of nude priests, wrestling men, and male and female nude musicians from Uruk throughout the Old Babylonian period reveal a close relationship between cult/religion and nudity.[476] Even though the cultic purity expressed by nudity was mostly confined to men, and women in rituals were almost always clothed in Mesopotamia, some goddesses were depicted nude as were female musicians or dancers in cultic contexts occasionally.[477]

It seems difficult to entirely separate cultic/religious contexts from our OB nude woman because of its archaeological contexts: found near the entrances and house sanctuaries, laid together with other terracotta plaques of magical figures such as the bull-eared god or Humbaba. Whether interpreted as a mortal woman or a goddess, her relation to the religious sphere remains because it is her archaeological context which links the two. Later in Syria, in Late Bronze age Munbaqa, nude female figurines – which show the later tradition of our OB nude woman – were used in cultic contexts which took place in front of niches

[470] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 142.
[471] https://cdli.ucla.edu/tools/yearnames/HTML/T12K11 (last accessed on 2.4.2021). See also Roßberger 2018a, 236.
[472] See for example, Ornan 2010, 236; Suter 2000, 75–76; Keel / Schroer 2004, 23.
[473] See Zgoll 2006–2008, 11: 323.
[474] Allolio-Näcke 2019, 41.
[475] Berlejung 2001, 1411.
[476] Bahrani 1993, 13–14.
[477] Asher-Greve 1997, 442, 447. See also p. 113–114 above.

in houses, involving incense burners and shrine models.[478] Katharina Pyschny, discussing female nudity in the ancient Levant, asserts that 'the almost exclusive link between female nudity and the religious sphere is possibly supported by the absence of female practical or functional nakedness'.[479] This can also be applied to Old Babylonia, where no female nude depiction of swimming or fishing was found, unlike ancient Egypt.[480] Therefore, our OB nude woman terracotta plaque seems to have functioned for religious beliefs, especially in the domestic realm, given the archaeological data.

4.5. *Human Essence*

Nudity in general has often been interpreted to signify the human essence. Assante explains that *baštu* – personification of dignity – is represented nude to signify the human essence because dignity may 'belong to everyone, regardless of class or gender'[481] and is too essential to wear clothes. This view is most strongly expressed by Asher-Greve and Sweeney: 'the nude form can be considered the 'essence' of human beings';[482] 'ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians perceived the nude as "incarnating" essences'.[483]

However, the link between the nudity and human essence cannot be universally applied. Asher-Greve and Sweeney's observation of nudity and the human essence is affected by François Jullien, a Western philosopher and sinologist, who is said (by Asher-Greve and Sweeney) to claim that the Chinese did not present nudity in their art because 'they did not know the idea of an "essence" of the human'.[484] Within this frame, Asher-Greve and Sweeney ask themselves 'whether the concept of "le nu" was known before the Greeks', and proudly answer 'yes' with ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources.[485] Leaving Jullien's (and the quoting Asher-Greve and Sweeney) misunderstandings of East Asian metaphysics and the concept of essence aside,[486] such a reasoning is

[478] Pruss 2002, 539–541.

[479] Pyschny 2019, 156.

[480] Some nude female figurines holding musical instruments (esp. a drum) are found both in Mesopotamia and the Levant. However, practical/functional reason of nudity for playing musical instruments is unclear, and musicians were engaged in cultic activities. See Otto 2016, 127–128. See also p. 113f above.

[481] Assante 2006, 202.

[482] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 162.

[483] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 167.

[484] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 128–129.

[485] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 167.

[486] East Asian cultures including China also depicted concepts in human forms as witnessed by mythological figures in visual representations, but it was just not nude. The most biased preconception of the book, *Le nu impossible*, is that Jullien thinks of nudity as the *only* form to depict essence in visual representation; yet, why should an unclothed body be the 'essence' of human?

problematic because it presupposes nudity to be the only visual form of the essence of a human. This link between nudity and the human essence is culturally formed, which conveys several hidden prejudices: (1) the unclothed body is the original format of the human being; (2) original is pure; (3) pure is essence; (4) clothing mixes the pure originality with external things. However, the unclothed body does not need to be accepted as the universally original form, while in some cultures it is accepted as so. The original might not be pure, and purity is not the necessary link for essence either. Essence is the core, which cannot be further reduced, but it is not necessarily pure.

Semiotically speaking, a body itself cannot be a 'pure' 'essence' because a body is the result of cumulated social/cultural decisions and environments. A body might be viewed as an essence of humans in some cultures, but whether this was so in ancient Mesopotamia is not addressed by Asher-Greve and Sweeney. Concerning the vast corpus of omen texts based on physiognomy in Mesopotamia,[487] a body was more probably conceived as a semiotic complex of various meanings, not a pure essence. Ulrike Steinert argues that the concept of a 'person' or body in Mesopotamia was 'holistic', 'plural', 'complex', and 'composite':[488] a human body was perceived as a mixture of light color substances (bones and saliva) and red/dark color elements (flesh, blood, and clay).[489] The body of Gilgamesh was composed as 2/3 divine and 1/3 human.[490] Besides, the nude women on OB terracotta plaques are not completely nude; they wear jewelry, contradicting the link of 'nude = without clothes = without covering/revision = essence'. Therefore, I do not think that our OB nude woman communicated the human essence among her Old Babylonian viewers.

4.6. *The Concept of Baštu*

As I briefly discussed, in the research history,[491] several scholars identified the OB nude woman as the personification of the abstract concept of *baštu*. *Baštu* has a wide semantic range: from physical attractiveness – whether masculine or feminine – charisma, and erotic stimulations, to social success, pride, joy, and

May the idealized female or male nude body really represent the whole humanity or only 'beautiful' men/women? It is not that nudity was impossible in China because they 'did not know the idea of essence of human', but rather because of their (1) stricter taboo of nudity and because (2) the visualization of the essence of human took other forms than the human nudity. See also critical remarks in a review by Christian Helmut Wenzel on Jullien's book: Wenzel 2009, 240–243, esp. 242–243. For other ways of depicting the essence of human, see n. 706 below.

487 See Bahrani 2003, 136. Kraus 1939.

488 Steinert 2012, 121.

489 Steinert 2012, 131.

490 Steinert 2012, 125–129.

491 See p. 99–104 above.

happiness.[492] The evidence for interpreting *baštu* as a protective spirit is that *baštu* appears together with *ilu*, *lamassu*, and *šēdu*.[493] However, *baštu* appears with other abstract concepts such as 'name (reputation)', 'help', or 'splendor', as well.[494] Like personal names, such as 'XX [deity's name] is my *lamassu*' and 'XX [deity's name] is my *baštu*', there are also names such as 'XX [deity's name] is my shelter/protection'.[495] Steinert states that 'the personification of *baštu* as a deified being is not necessary in most cases and *baštu* can also be interpreted as an abstract concept'.[496] Nevertheless, the concept that the term *baštu* expresses visual attractiveness, erotic charisma, positive emotions, and good social reputations is undoubtedly embedded in the OB nude woman terracotta plaques. Therefore, while it might be too early to name our nude woman as '*baštu*', *baštu* as a Mesopotamian concept is surely expressed by her nudity.

4.7. *Ishtar*

Ishtar is often mentioned as the impetus for the nudity of female figurines and plaques. Budin relates the first frontal depictions of female nudes on Early Dynastic terracotta jar handles to an ethnic group of Kish who marked their identity with the goddess Inanna/Ishtar. These jar handles in the shape of a female body were depicted as nude, possibly in connection with the third millennium Inanna/Ishtar iconography.[497] Assante identifies the nude women depicted on Old Babylonian erotic plaques as the representations of Inanna/Ishtar, which were made to please the goddess by showing what she favors – 'sex, beer, and beds' – and to ask for her supernatural powers of healing, success, and abundance.[498] Pruss presents the possibility of identifying the nude female figurines from MB Ebla and LB Munbaqa with Ishtar/Astarte, arguing that if the figurine does not depict Ishtar/Astarte herself, then it is a reference to her characteristics.[499]

Scholars relate nude female representations to Ishtar because: (1) both do not indicated having had children; (2) Ishtar is mentioned as nude in several texts; (3) the nude women are sexually attractive, and Ishtar is described as the most sexually appealing woman; and (4) the frontal look was used for Inanna/Ishtar's iconography in the third millennium in Mesopotamia. The lack of divine

[492] Steinert 2012, 467–468, 501.
[493] See p. 99f.
[494] Steinert 2012, 443–444, 429.
[495] Steinert 2012, 446–451.
[496] '[…] daß eine Personifikation von *baštu* im Sinne eines vergöttlichten Wesens in den meisten Fällen nicht zwingend ist und *baštu* auch als abstraktes Konzept interpretiert werden kann'. Steinert 2012, 451.
[497] Budin 2018, 186–196.
[498] Assante 2002a, 47–48.
[499] Pruss 2002, 544–545.

attributes on those depictions is variously explained: Pruss suggests that hair adornments replaced the horned crowns; Budin argues that the horned crown was not yet standardized as a sign of divinity in the third millennium BCE,[500] and that the nudity in Ishtar's iconography without a horned crown became a strong tradition that later periods inherited.[501]

Another point that links the OB nude woman and Ishtar comes from textual sources. While the textual references to the nude woman are rare, those frequently mentioned in scholarly discourse are in relation to Ishtar. The Middle Assyrian life-size nude statue of Ashur-bel-kala with the inscription that it is aimed 'to titillate,' which became the main piece of evidence for Bahrani's sexual interpretation, was found 'in a ditch near the Temple of Ishtar at Nineveh' (Fig. 26);[502] 'two powerful naked protective spirits' in the two year names of Babylonia, were Lammas brought to Inanna.[503] *Baštu* was an important attribute of Ishtar.[504] The lead votive plaque in the shape of a vulva with the inscription of *baštu*, which made Wiggermann link the OB nude woman with *baštu*,[505] was also dedicated to Ishtar, saying that: 'When Šarrum-kēn (was) Ensi of Assur, Ḫadītum, the wife of Bēlum-nada (?), made a consecration gift to *Ištar aššurītum*, her mistress. For her husband's life, her (own) life and the life of her child, she has brought a vulva [TÉŠ = *baštu*] into it'.[506] I do not think this is coincidence; any textual hint of our OB nude woman appears around Ishtar. Finding a nude statue in a 'ditch' near Ishtar's temple does not turn the statue automatically into a representation of a goddess; but the erection or positioning of the statue could have occurred in association with Ishtar's cults or entourage.

To sum up, it can be stated that the OB nude woman was somehow connected to Ishtar. I do not think it was the great goddess Ishtar *per se* because the nude woman, in most cases, does not bear divine attributes, while Ishtar's iconography in OB requires a horned crown.[507] The OB nude woman might have been a reduced, lowered version of Ishtar to fit into the familial atmosphere of the

[500] The middle of the second millennium BCE is the earliest point that one can be *assured* of the use of the horned crown as a sign of divinity. Before that, it is not as clear: it seems that various signs, including horns (without the headgear), plants, or water, could have marked divinity. Neumann / Neumann 2020, 264, 267, 268, 270.

[501] For these five points, see Budin 2018, 187–193; Assante 2002a, 30–42; Pruss 2002, 543–544.

[502] Moorey 2003, 32.

[503] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 142.

[504] Steinert 2012, 428–430.

[505] Wigermann 1987, 28–29.

[506] 'Als Šarrum-kēn Ensi von Assur (war), hat der *Ištar aššurītum*, ihrer Herrin, Ḫadītum, die Frau des Bēlum-nada(?), ein Weihgeschenk gemacht. Für das Leben ihres Mannes, ihr (eigenes) Leben und das Leben ihres Kindes hat sie eine Scham [TÉŠ=baštu] hineingebracht'. Jakob-Rost / Freydank 1981, 326.

[507] See the discussion about the lack of divine attributes in p. 134–136 below.

household religion[508] or she might have been a servant of Ishtar or a lower goddess belonging to Ishtar, whose role was similar to any protective spirit. If she were the goddess of the house (*ištar bītim*) as discussed above;[509] even though the word *ištar* does not refer to Ishtar but to a female supernatural being, the polysemic or homonymic relation either reflects some pre-established relationship or could have caused OB minds to relate them post-factum.

4.8. *Jewelry and Makeup as a Sign, in Combination with Nudity*

Our OB nude woman wears rich ornaments on her neck and waist. In all the OB nude woman terracotta plaques, the women wear some type of jewelry on their nude bodies. The clear-cut facial features and thick eyelines also hint at the possibility that they could have been originally colored and depicted as wearing cosmetics. The jewelry and makeup without clothing is itself a special type of clothing.[510] Then a nude body itself, decorated with jewelry and cosmetics, is to be viewed as conveying messages different from a merely naked body.

Inanna's nudity in *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld* could be viewed as 'a symbolic preparation for entry into the underworld'[511] because she removed not only her garments but also her jewelry and makeup. Wearing nothing, not even jewelry and makeup, nude woman depictions would not have differed from male nudity of deprivation, which represented dead enemies and captives,[512] and that is probably why Inanna lost her power in the course of entering the underworld. However, by wearing jewelry and makeup, nudity escapes from the messages of death, deprivation, and degradation.

Suter says, 'That her [Inanna/Ishtar's] sexual appeal is inherent in her jewelry rather than in her nudity is explicit in the names given to individual pieces such 'come man, come'' [the name of the jewelry].[513] The name of Inanna/Ishtar's eye cosmetics is 'der Mann soll kommen, soll kommen'.[514] Bahrani noted how importantly jewelry was used in erotic love poetry 'as a device of erotic allure'.[515] The jewelry and the (possible) makeup on our OB nude woman also adds eroticism, or at least communicates the message that she is not degraded nor deprived, but positively valued.

[508] See p. 108–112 above.
[509] See p. 111 above.
[510] Graff also notes that it is rather 'dressed in an erotically charged manner', than nude. Graff 2014, 373.
[511] Bahrani 1993, 16.
[512] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 137–138; Bahrani 1993, 15–16.
[513] Suter 2000, 72.
[514] Wilcke 1976–1980, 81. See also Haas 1999, 47.
[515] Bahrani 1996, 11.

4.9. *My Interpretation of the Sign 'Nudity' of the OB Nude Woman*

I have inferred eight different messages which could have been communicated by the sign 'female nudity' of the OB nude woman terracotta plaque and discussed which points I think are valid and why. Together, the nudity of our OB nude woman is sexually and erotically coded, expressing the concept of *baštu*, promising abundance, success, protection, and wellbeing through her magical powers. Her nudity states that she is of higher status than other ordinary women but lower than major goddesses and reveals her connection with Ishtar in the realm of the OB household religion (Fig. 13).

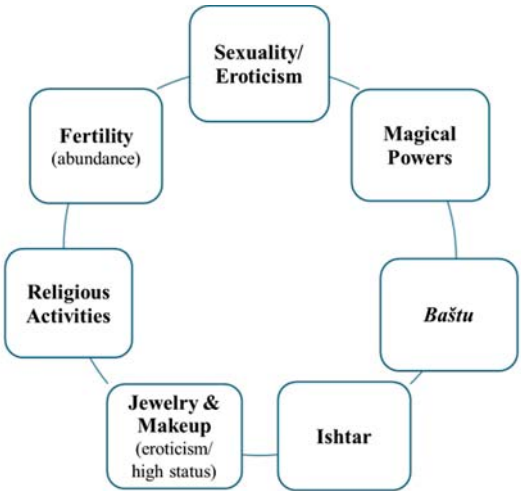


Fig. 13: The female nudity of the OB nude woman.

I did not accept the hypothesis that nudity communicates the message of representing the human essence because the connection between a nude body and the concept of essence is not proven by Mesopotamian culture-specific evidence. Moreover, the link is unlikely in OB contexts because the body was viewed as a sign-complex rather than a pure essence.[516] I also do not grant an exclusive, dominant role to one message over others because asserting only one message of the female nudity would simultaneously ignore the others whose possibility is no less likely than the others, whereas several messages could have been communicated together. If the meaning of her nudity is solely sexuality and eroticism, she is turned into a porno actress; no matter how the sexual role is positively viewed, it neglects that she was located near the entrances and house shrines where men, women, and children would have been. If she is interpreted to have

[516] See p. 120 above.

functioned only in magical terms, the exposure of her vulva and its significance in contemporary love poetry cannot be explained. If she is the great goddess Ishtar *per se*, her lack of divine attributes remains questionable.

The female nudity of this OB woman was specifically contextualized. Her most probable context is Ishtar: Ishtar is sexually appealing; has magical powers; grants protection, private and public success, abundance, and wellbeing; and her status is higher than an ordinary human being. *Baštu* is an important feature of Ishtar.[517] Ishtar covers all the messages discussed and validated above, becoming an overarching notion (Fig. 14). I do not assert that our OB nude woman is the goddess Ishtar, but that all the messages transmitted through the OB woman's nudity must be interpreted in connection with Ishtar: whether she is a minor goddess related to Ishtar, a worshipper of Ishtar, or a woman taking the role of Ishtar.[518]

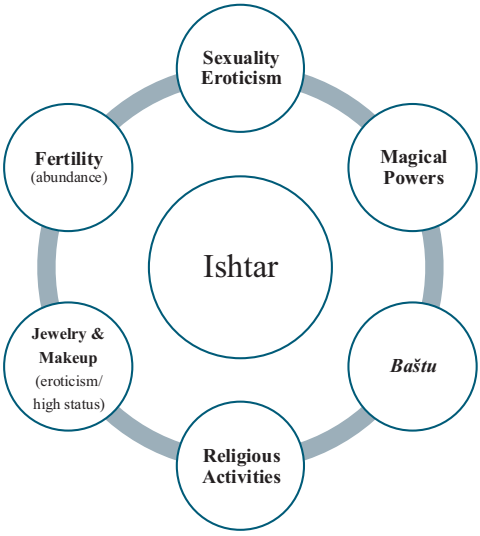


Fig. 14: Ishtar as an overarching notion of the female nudity of the OB nude woman.

[517] See p. 121f above.

[518] While Postgate suggested that these OB nude women would be the 'temple ladies who stand in for Ištar in her role as the goddess of sexual activity as part of their service in the temple' (Postgate 2018, 17), neither the archaeological data confine their presence to the temple, nor should the role of Ishtar be limited to sexual activities. Nevertheless, it is still possible that certain women could have been believed to play the role of Ishtar, whether in sexual, magical, apotropaic, or protective contexts.

5. Frontality

Frontality is specially noted in art history because of the power generated when the viewer encounters the direct gaze of the depicted figure: the gaze inspires awe in the viewers and gives them an uninterrupted relationship with the represented figure.[519]

The frontal depiction of anthropomorphic images was not common in the period between late Early Dynastic and Neo-Sumerian Mesopotamia. However, representations of high goddesses – e.g., Inanna, Nanše, or Baba – in this period often depict the face frontally on a clothed body. According to Asher-Greve, this was a posture reserved exclusively for the most powerful deities in ritual contexts, revealing the figure's high status.[520] The situation began to change at the end of the third millennium BCE, when the frontal posture of female nudes appeared on jar handles at Kish. This frontality was a new iconography of nude women in Mesopotamia because the earlier periods' three-dimensional nude figurines disabled the distinction between the frontal and profile views. The iconography of the frontal nude woman seems to have been the prototype of the standardized nude female representations in later periods of Mesopotamia.[521]

While frontality in Mesopotamian art is commonly referred to the direct engagement with viewers as noted above, the frontality can be interpreted in two opposite directions, either aggressively or passively. The aggressive impression can further be connected to two concepts: sexuality/eroticism and the superiority.

Firstly, the aggressive impression of frontality is often related to the sexuality/eroticism of the female nude. Pruss asserts that 'they are shown in an offensive and directly erotic manner, in a performing and presenting situation and not primarily as passive objects to be viewed'.[522] However, Assante argues that the equation 'frontality + nudity = offensive eroticism' came from modern male viewers' visual habit towards female nudes, accustomed to gazing voyeuristically upon the female body who cannot look back from their (semi-)profile positions.[523] Since common modern female nudes normally do not look back, the frontal gaze is perceived as aggressive.

The aggressive gaze can also be read as a gaze of the superior upon the inferior, such as the gaze of divine beings towards human beings. According to Asher-Greve, 'frontality is the code for the transcendent figure, signifying high rank as well as implying acknowledgement of the beholder's presence, engaging

[519] Asher-Greve 2003, 4–6; Gombrich 2012, 125; Schapiro 1973, 37–39; Sonik 2013, 287–289.
[520] Asher-Greve 2003, 5, 33–35.
[521] Budin 2018, 181–185, 194–196.
[522] Pruss 2002, 543.
[523] Assante 2006, 197–198.

him/her and thereby avoiding passive observation'.[524] Schroer interprets this aggressive gaze as something that requires attention and devotion from the beholders.[525] Assante also connects frontality with a higher status.[526] The aggressive empowerment of frontality may also provide protection against evil spirits, as the frontality of Humbaba masks or Pazuzu plaques.[527]

Secondly, frontality can be read as a sign of passiveness. Asher-Greve and Sweeney relate the frontality of the OB nude women to the notion of isolation because her frontal posture contrasts with the profile posture of other figures on cylinder seals, leaving her isolated from the narrative.[528] In a similar logic, Bahrani points out that the frontality of the OB nude woman emphasizes her passive availability.[529]

It is important to note that the aggressive or the passive 'impressions' are from modern viewers. Since we do not have clear sources on how frontality was viewed in Mesopotamia, subjective impressions must fill in the gap for interpretation. Therefore, I cannot avoid adding my own impression on frontality: if a direct gaze of frontality registers an 'I-you' relationship between the visual representation and its viewer, as Schapiro and Bal suggest,[530] this signifies intimacy, which contrasts with the indifference of profile figures (like a third-person narration). Direct eye-contact may inspire not only awe but also feelings of closeness and intimacy, the sense of being cared for.[531]

When this option of an intimate concern joins the discourse, the two paradoxical impressions of frontality – aggressiveness and passiveness – do not become binary oppositions but two of many impressions that frontality emits, each sharing certain features with others. The present state of the terracotta plaque sends me messages of neither absolute aggressiveness nor passiveness, but mainly an intimate feeling that she is willingly available (a part of passiveness) for the household's wishes, while warding off evil spirits with her aggressive gaze.

[524] Asher-Greve 2003, 13.

[525] Keel / Schroer 2004, 21.

[526] Assante writes, 'Despite her frontality and nakedness, her fixed stance, the closed gesture of her hands, the sharp T-form outline created by the angles of her arms, convey an impression of the inert, the closed and the static'. Assante 2006, 196. This hints that she thinks of frontality in a powerful way, contrary to the concepts of inert, closed, and static.

[527] See Graff 2012, 117–129.

[528] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 153.

[529] Bahrani 1996, 12.

[530] Schapiro 1973, 46; Bal / Bryson 2001, 1–16.

[531] A similar observation has been made by Sonik: 'Eye gaze detection, in humans, is vital: where the direct gaze in many other species frequently elicits an aversive response, signaling a potential risk – as a predator – or functioning as a threatening display, direct eye contact in humans plays a crucial role in communication and affective bonding, and has a tangible effect on perception, cognition, and arousal'. Sonik 2013, 289.

6. Hand Gestures

Our OB nude woman clasps her hands in front of her waist. According to Asher-Greve and Sweeney, this was the most common type of the nude female repertoire in Old Babylonia, which was produced as statues, figurines, and plaques in various materials.[532] The frontal nude women on OB cylinder seals almost uniformly take this gesture (e.g., Fig. 15). These women on cylinder seals seem to have been the direct continuation of our OB nude woman on terracotta plaques, appearing slightly later than the terracotta plaques.[533] According to Roßberger and Assante, the OB nude women's (and also naked male figure's) frequent appearance on pedestals in cylinder seals emphasizes their status of 'pictures in a picture' or 'a representation of a representation',[534] referring back to the OB nude woman's representations in terracotta plaques.



Fig. 15: Cylinder seal, hematite, Old Babylonia (18th–17th century BCE), detailed provenance unknown. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (1984.383.12). https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/326973. Public Domain.

This gesture of the OB nude woman, both in plaques and cylinder seals, has been interpreted in connection with passivity and stillness. Uehlinger interprets this gesture as signifying 'receptivity' and 'prayer'.[535] Schroer accepts Uehlinger's interpretation and further notes that this gesture connotes concentration and self-control as a gesture of prayer or inner-peace in the case of divinities.[536] Asher-Greve and Sweeney assert that it represented demureness as the ideal of femininity: 'modesty of gesture and static posture are indicative of qualities thought essential to the feminine gender'.[537]

However, the clasping of hands was not exclusively reserved for females. This gesture was used by any gender to show dedication and modesty throughout

[532] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 152.
[533] Roßberger 2018a, 233, 235.
[534] Roßberger 2018a, 234–235; Assante 2002b, 7; Assante 2006, 196.
[535] Uehlinger 1998, 53.
[536] Keel / Schroer 2004, 28–29.
[537] Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 153, 160.

Mesopotamia's history. It was a common gesture of suppliants, men and women, in Early Dynastic Mesopotamia (Fig. 16).[538] Although represented in profile, the similar (or same) gesture of the 'bearded servitor' on Assyrian reliefs (the rightmost figure in Fig. 17) is interpreted by Bernard Goldman as 'the pose of the eternal attendant'.[539] The divine attendant statues at the entrance of Nabu's cult room in the Nabu temple at the Neo-Assyrian Kalhu also have the same gesture.[540]



Fig. 16: Depictions of the 'eternal attendant'. Left: Stone sculpture, Nippur, 2600–2500 BCE; Right: Stone sculpture, Tell Asmar, 2900–2600 BCE. The Metropolitan Museum of Art (62.70.2 and 40.156). https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/329080; https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/323735. Public Domain.



Fig. 17: Depiction of a bearded servitor clasping his hands on the right edge of the photo. Relief of Tiglath-Pileser III. Gypsum alabaster, Nimrud (Kalah), 745–727 BCE. Detroit Institute of Arts (50.32). https://dia.org/collection/assyrian-king-tukul-apil-esharra-iii-also-called-tiglath-pileser-iii-receiving-homage/33256. Public Domain.

[538] See for example, Braun-Holzinger, *Frühdynastische Beterstatuetten*. Winter also recognized the relationship between this gesture and earlier praying-statues (*Beterstatuen*). Winter 1983, 123–124.

[539] Goldman 1990, 42–43.

[540] Neumann 2018, 183.

These examples show that this gesture indicated a relatively lower status: the suppliants before gods, the servitor behind kings and high officers, lower deities at the entrance of the cult room of a main deity. At the same time, this gesture, worn by the lower entity, sends messages of welcome and availability to its superiors: the suppliants welcome the deities, the servitor is willing to welcome his superiors' orders, and divine attendants at the entrance welcome the main deity and show their availability for commands. Concerning our OB nude woman's placement near entrances, her hand gesture can be read as a way to mediate between the household and the higher deities, to listen to the mortals' prayers, and to bring their wishes to higher gods and goddesses.

However, the plaques' viewers were not only higher gods and spirits but also humans. Being divine and, thus, superior to people, the nude could have served the residents of the house as a helping, supportive spirit, who cares about, heals, and brings success to the house. Her gesture could have been interpreted as a message of welcome and service not only for benevolent spirits and deities but also for the household, showing intimate concern by her frontality.

7. The Detailed Face and Slim Body

The OB nude woman's detailed face and slim body of are not usually distinguished as an important sign except for typological purposes, but are implicitly referred to in ambiguous terms such as 'loveliness', 'beautiful', 'sexually alluring', or 'feminine'.[541] However, as Assante argues,[542] this could be a projection of the modern visual habit. Bahrani interprets the detailed face and slim body as the signs of a non-reproductive purpose, contrary to the exaggerated sexual attributes (breasts, hips, vulva) and abbreviated faces of the so-called fertility figurines common in the Ur III period.[543] The slim body is interpreted also as a sign of youth. Small breasts and slim waist are thought to indicate a female body which has not given birth or breastfed.[544]

My impression is that the interpretation of being young comes not only from her face and slim body, but also from the rendering of the woman's skin as smooth and wrinkle-free. Besides the young look, the detailed face may hint at other meanings, such as emotions and individual identity.

Our OB nude woman has rather an ambiguous facial expression, which would have made it easy for the viewer to project one's own emotions. Her

[541] See for example, Assante 2006, 195; Bahrani 1996, 8–10; Asher-Greve / Sweeney 2006, 153.

[542] Assante 2006, 195. See also p. 115 above.

[543] Bahrani 1996, 10.

[544] Roßberger 2018a, 232.

eyelids have very slightly drooping curves at the end, and her lip lines are almost horizontal. This makes it difficult to judge what kind of facial expression she is making: is she smiling or indifferent? If her eyes were originally colored, the impression might have been different. However, in this extant form, her ambiguous facial countenance would have easily allowed the viewers to project their emotions and desires onto her, which would have constructed her as a responsive and supportive figure for the household.

The detailed face and slim body may also indicate the individual identities of different families. Surprisingly, even though these OB nude woman plaques were mold-made, there were only one or two identically molded copies found. Mostly, though, each nude woman has slightly different features: richer or less hair, bigger or smaller eyes, smiling or horizontal lips, more voluminous or flatter breasts and hips, fatter or slimmer bodies, different angles of clasping hands, better or worse modelling skills, etc. Diverse facial details are an element which easily distinguish one plaque from another, endowing each nude woman with a uniqueness and specificity. In the realm of household religion, the various renderings and modellings of these molds might have indicated various families, reflecting myriad ideals or stylistic preferences of female nude representations.

8. Legs and Feet

The legs of our OB nude woman are held together, and her feet are located on a protruding base above the bottom of the plaque. According to Roßberger, these features emphasize 'the stationary, objectified quality of the depicted', representing their immobility as 'the depiction of an object not an animate being'.[545] Assante also argues that the nude woman figures on cylinder seals are 'not meant to signify a living entity but a terracotta plaque or figurine; in other words, in seals she is a copy of a copy'.[546]

I agree that the frontally together-held feet indicate a static state, contrasting with the spread legs of the profile figures on cylinder seals which depict motion. Especially on cylinder seals, the nude woman appears on a pedestal occasionally (Fig. 18), while other figures are in profile and involved in the narrative. In contrast, the pedestal indicates that its supported figure is not an active actor in the scene but an artifact or a representation.

[545] Roßberger 2018b, 527–529. See also Assante 2006, 196.
[546] Assante 2002b, 7.

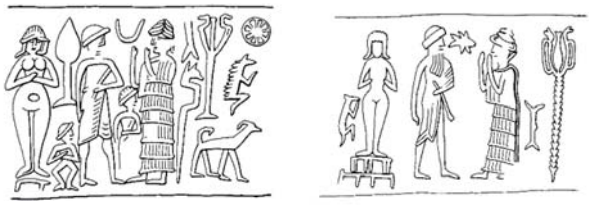


Fig. 18. A nude woman on a plinth. Cylinder seals,
Old Babylonian, unprovenanced (Winter 1983, Abb. 94, 95).

However, does the protruding base in the terracotta plaques signify the same as the pedestals in seals? If the nude woman figure on seals references the nude woman terracotta figurines and plaques, then whom does a nude woman terracotta plaque represent? Is it really a pedestal that our OB nude woman (Fig. 9) stands on? Or is it a part of the plaque's frame, which became thicker to support the plaque's bottom, appearing also with other figures?[547] While most plaques are broken above the ankle making it difficult to produce a generalized answer, there are some cases where the nude woman appears clearly without a pedestal.[548]

It can be interpreted that our OB nude woman (Fig. 9) is depicted as not standing on a pedestal but on the ground. The horizontal line stretched from her feet most probably represents the ground, although the broken and worn toes make it difficult to discern. In any case, if it were a pedestal, it should have been more prominently rendered, higher and bigger in size, as the pedestal is clearly marked on cylinder seals (Fig. 18).

The feet of our OB nude woman are aligned, facing the front, and evidently less active than the legs that are widely spaced; but does it really indicate an inanimate object? This sign signals less movement, but not necessarily inanimation, especially concerning the Mesopotamian phenomenon that a visual representation or a statue (*ṣalmu*) was regarded as an animate, living substitute.[549] In cylinder seals, though not often, there are depictions of the nude woman with a profile head or a raised arm, clearly indicating her role as a living participant in the surrounding narrative.[550]

I suggest the possibility that the nude woman's aligned feet signify her bond to the house. Her legs held together may equally symbolize the household's wish that the nude woman not leave the house. If she were one of the house's protective spirits, she might have been the most bound spirit to the house among many

[547] See for example, Barrelet 1968, pl. LIII fig. 562.
[548] See for example, Barrelet 1968, pl. XXXVIII fig. 389, 395, pl. XLIV fig. 462.
[549] See Bahrani 2014, 67–84, 211–216.
[550] Felli 2015, 221.

other protective spirits, welcoming and attracting other benevolent and higher deities and caring for the house's needs. It is possible that she could not be detached from the house and work for other families. While the meaning of aligned feet as spatial confinement is not exactly evidenced by Mesopotamian sources, this concept of an image – as a living agent rather than an inanimate object – fits the usual attitude towards visual representations in Mesopotamia. Cult statues were often abducted from their original place to remove the deity's protection of an enemy's land.[551] If the nude woman were to leave the house, it could have meant the collapse of the house and the family, as it was similarly believed that if the house god or goddess left, it would bring about the clan's destruction.[552] Together with her hand gesture, this feet posture could express the figure's readiness for the household and higher deities,[553] while being bound to the house.

9. Lack of Divine Attributes

These nude women representations, in most cases, neither bear any divine attributes – such as a horned crown or wings – nor an inscription. Consequently, it is widely disputed whether they were divine beings or mortal women.[554] There were some cases where a nude woman is depicted with wings *and* a horned crown or with a horned crown *and* an attribute animal on which she stands,[555] but it is not certain if they represent the same entity; what can be inferred from such cases is that a goddess can be depicted in the nude.

Rarely, however, there are cases where the OB nude woman appears with a horned crown. A seal impression on a case tablet from OB shows a nude woman with a horned crown, clasping hands, standing with two other figures, a 'god with mace' and another figure.[556] Several cylinder seals dating to the19th–18th century BCE from Kültepe and an unknown province depict a standing nude woman with horns.[557] Opificius offers photographs of two OB nude

[551] Downes 2019, 337; Bonfiglio 2016, 215–216.

[552] For example, 'My god has turned his face to some other place. My clan has been dispersed, my fold is broken up'. *STC* II, pl. 81, quoted in van der Toorn 1996, 128. In this book, van der Toorn proposed that the god of the house and the goddess be the ancestors (ibid.), but later he renounced this interpretation. He newly suggested that they were 'god or goddess near the doorpost', 'protective household deities without a name'. Van der Toorn 2008, 25.

[553] Cf. an example from the Hebrew Bible, see עמדים in Zech 3:4.

[554] See Picazo 2000, 30; Pruss 2002, 540; Keel / Schroer 2004, 20.

[555] See for example, Woolley / Mallowan 1976, Pl. 81. The famous 'Queen of the Night' relief (Burney Relief) is also of this kind. While its authenticity has been questioned, the iconographical type of winged nude goddesses wearing a horned crown appears in several other cases. See Collon 2005, fig. 5, 6.

[556] Klengel-Brandt 1989, fig. 84.

[557] See Winter 1983, Abb. 78, 87, 137.

woman terracotta plaque-figurines with a crown, which she asserts to have a 'Federkrone, die deutlich mit davorgelegtem Hörnerpaar geschmückt ist'.[558] The horns do not take the typical Old Babylonian form of the horned crown, and whether one ought to conceive of them as horns or some other protruding decoration of the crown cannot be judged with certainty. Nevertheless, there are several cases where the OB nude woman on terracotta plaques wears a kind of crown or miter, signifying a relatively high status.[559]

In most cases, however, the nude woman with clasping-hands type does not wear a horned crown. Some argue that some deities or supernatural beings do not need to wear a horned crown to show their divinity. Budin states that 'the use of horned miters was relatively new in Mesopotamian iconography in the third millennium, only first beginning to appear in the ED II period'.[560] According to her, the tradition of representing a goddess without a horned crown and wings started with Kish nude female jar handles.[561] While by the time of Old Babylonia, the horned crown became popular for deities in the pantheon, this older tradition could have been retained in household religions. For Urs Winter, the nude woman, although a protective, intermediary 'goddess', does not need horns to mark her divinity because she has Syrian origin.[562] Or, the horned crown might have marked the *major* deities; a lesser goddess was still depicted without it, as the fully clothed woman holding an ear of grain without headgear on the *kudurru* of Meli-Shipak is often identified as the goddess Shala.[563] Pyschny asserts that not only the horned crown but also nudity could be the marker of divinity: 'nudity is a (though not the only) relevant 'identity marker' of goddesses and their status, characteristics, competencies, and so on'.[564]

Assante suggests that the lowering of status was one of the functions of the terracotta plaque medium in Old Babylonia.[565] However, it does not mean that the domestic terracotta plaques did not use horned crowns for marking a divinity;

[558] Opificius 1961, 72.

[559] See for example, Barrelet 1968, Nr. 336–337, 368–369, 798–799, etc.; Wrede 1990, 226–227, Taf. 8 Nr. 9.

[560] Budin 2018, 191. See also Nunn 2019, 64.

[561] Budin 2018, 195–196.

[562] Winter 1983, 192–193.

[563] Ornan identifies her as the goddess Shala depending on the two hybrids accompanying her and an ear of corn that she holds as an attribute. Ornan 2009, 133. The picture of the *kudurru* can be acquired from the British Museum BM 90829 (https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=557529001&objectid=369362).

Ursula Seidl identifies the uncrowned woman in that *kudurru* also as a goddess, presumably Shala. Seidl 1989, 24, 195–196.

[564] That is due to its relationship with cultic/religious contexts, evidenced by the absence of the practical or functional female nudity (such as swimming) in Southern Levant. Pyschny 2019, 150, 156.

[565] Assante 2002b, 12.

in fact, there are occasionally figures wearing horned crowns in the repertoire of the terracotta plaques in Old Babylonia;[566] they could be higher deities. There are also indications that the same deity was depicted with or without a horned crown on terracotta plaques.[567] Nevertheless, the status of the figures depicted in terracotta plaques in general seems to have been lower or more familiarized than the deities in the pantheon. From this discussion, it can be concluded that the nude woman on the OB terracotta plaques were regarded generally as lesser than major deities, but high enough to wear special headgear.[568] For some craftsperson, she was so high as to be depicted with horns.

It is important to note that the boundaries between deities and human in Mesopotamia were not as clearly drawn as we now think. Kings could share similar iconography with deities.[569] Schroer argues that women could have been praised in the way of describing goddesses (*imitatio deae*).[570] Likewise, the goddesses were anthropomorphized. The horned crown as a marker of divinity was what we (modern scholars) induced from various visual representations of Mesopotamia, and we do not know if there were more sophisticated rules for applying horned crowns which we have not yet understood. The wings became an attribute of supernaturality simply because there are no winged human according to modern knowledge. Then it becomes obvious that the so-called 'divine attributes' are limited to what we – modern scholars – are *able to* recognize as divine attributes. In this context, does the lack of such divine attributes signify the figure's definite lack of divinity or supernaturality? The situation becomes more complex in cultures such as in Mesopotamia where the boundaries between the divine and earthly were indefinite and oscillated in visual representations.

The status of our OB nude woman has complex characteristics: on the one hand, this type of the OB nude woman had a higher status – wearing headgear (even with horns) and occasionally having worshippers around her. On the other hand, she presents a lesser status through the absence of a headgear. While the nude woman in general could have been represented as higher, the craftsperson of our OB nude woman's plaque mold chose not to render headgear. Filling the visual gap, this could be an intentional lowering of her status for that specific household context to emphasize her function of serving as a protective spirit for the members of the house, an intermediary between the supernatural and mortal.

[566] See for example, Barrelet 1968, Pl. XII–XV, XXX, LIX, LXI, LXXVII, etc.

[567] The goddess Nanše, visually identified by the attribute geese, is depicted on terracotta plaques sometimes with the horned crown and sometimes without. See Opificius 1961, 80–82, 253, no. 243–251.

[568] See for example, Berrelet 1968, Nr. 369, 799, 798, etc.

[569] Suter 2019, 394.

[570] Keel / Schroer 2004, 22.

10. Synthesis and Conclusion

Synthesizing my interpretations of the visual signs discussed above, the meanings of the OB nude woman can be visually arranged as in Fig. 19. The Old Babylonian nude woman's visually represented status is too high to call her a mundane woman, but too low to define her as a major goddess. She is depicted erotically and sexually alluring, young in appearance, having *baštu* and magical powers which ensure success, abundance, and well-being within the realm of the household religion. She shows intimate concern for the viewers, gesturing that she welcomes benevolent spirits into the house and that she cares for the house members and is prepared to help their needs. Her ambiguous facial expression leaves room for the free projection of her viewer's minds, allowing them to have a direct and close relationship with her. She is protective spirit, related somehow with Ishtar, but bound to the house, uniquely representing its supernatural protection. She might be the goddess of the house (*ištar bītim*), but also not, since there is no direct evidence. Even if she represented a mortal woman, being molded on a terracotta plaque and put near entrances and domestic shrines indicate that she took on the role of a supernatural being with magical powers, not a mortal woman, but as a living image.

The roles and functions of the OB nude woman cannot remain singular, since different signs of her representation transmit different messages, as discussed above. Suter suggests that one terracotta figurine 'may have served several functions during different stages of its life'.[571] The plurality of function may also have been true for the plaques based on the various situations of the viewers. As the viewer wished for the protection of the house, healing of illness, success in business or in their loves; or as the viewer was titillated by the image; as the viewer thought of beauty from looking at her, etc., this terracotta plaque would have played different roles.[572]

According to Bahrani, 'a correspondence of one sign to one referent' was 'completely alien' to ancient Mesopotamians.[573] Their representation system was fundamentally polysemic, and the divine realm was no exception. For example, the name of the protective spirit, *udug*/*šedu*, did not have an one-to-one match with a certain spirit, but could denote various beings.[574] The term *lamma* not only referred to an intermediary goddess, but also to any human representation of divinities and deified kings, i.e., statues.[575] Not only did one term designate multiple divinities, but also a divine being was represented in multiple

[571] Suter 2000, 75. Dales 1960, 260–261.
[572] See also Green 2019, 196.
[573] Bahrani 2003, 147.
[574] Wigermann 1987, 26.
[575] Birot 1980, 146–147; Wigermann 1987, 27.

forms; Ishtar was not only a goddess in the form of a human female, but also in the forms of a planet, a queen, love, and war. Porter notes that 'the Mesopotamian model of god was not construed in binary terms, and that Mesopotamians tended instead to envision a particular god as moving fluidly within a set of alternate forms'.[576]

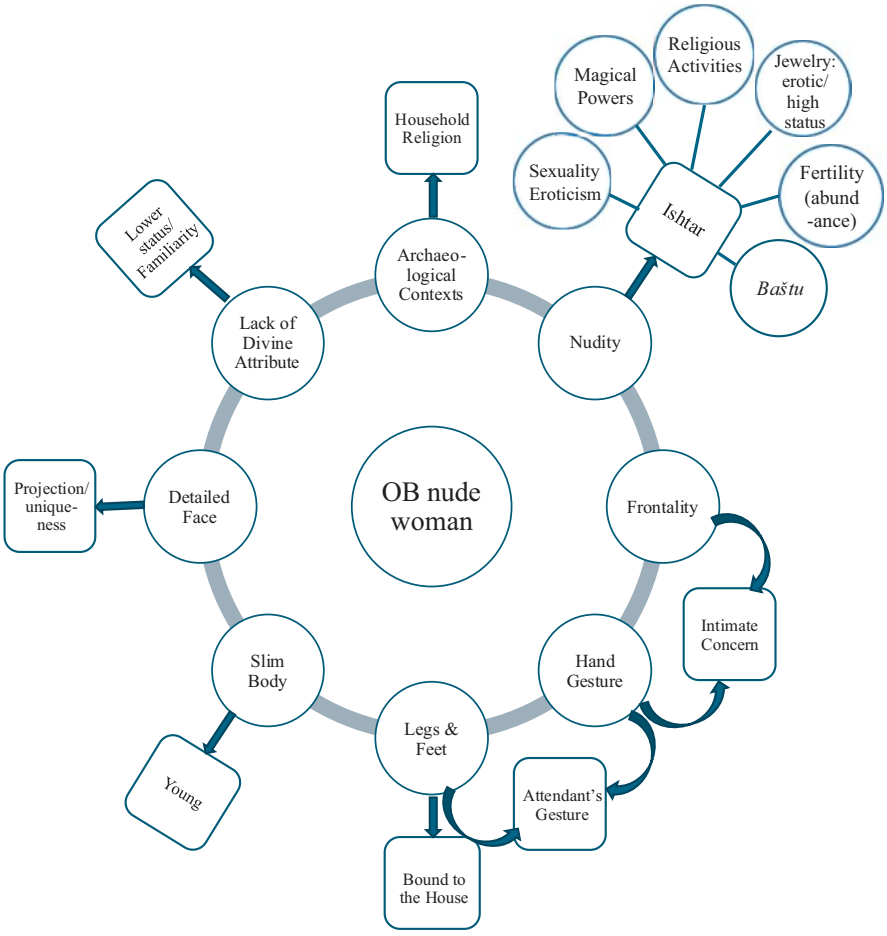


Fig. 19: Synthesis.

According to Dobres, 'what makes visual symbols (such as female figurines) powerful and evocative communicators is that their meanings are multiple, overlapping, ambiguous, as much contested as they are widely shared, and not nearly as obvious and straightforward as we would like'.[577] I agree with her, that in

[576] Porter 2009, 188.
[577] Dobres 2000, 44–45.

ancient times meaning was also plurally conceived no matter how strictly it was controlled because that is the work of semiosis – an infinite linkage of interpretants. Our OB nude woman was a powerful icon in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia, as it is the most frequently excavated visual representation of that time. The OB nude woman might have had the most complex and multiple roles that the terracotta plaques with this motif would have been a basic item to place in the house to deal with numerous household affairs.

XI. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE IMAGE

In this chapter, I will semiotically analyze different interpretations – Zainab Bahrani (§1), Julia Assante (§2), and my own (§3) – of the specific plaque of the Old Babylonian Nude Woman (Fig. 9) and compare them (§4). The analysis will focus on various structures of these interpretations, the underlying ideological assumptions, and the ways they relate images with texts. Eco's textual collaboration model will be applied for the analysis of their interpretation, and the image collaboration model designed in Part I will serve to analyze their interpretations of the OB nude woman terracotta plaque.

Principally, the semiotic analysis of Bahrani's interpretation (§1) will be used as an exemplar of the textual collaboration model and the image collaboration model, providing guidelines and detailed discussions of each of the model's box. It will also show how the isomorphic structure of these two models allows for an equal comparison between verbal texts and visual images.

Since the interpretations of Bahrani, Assante, and Kim (i.e., myself) are presented in academic writings, some interpretative structures (or boxes) of their texts overlap: for example, their circumstances of utterance (Box 2) are clearly academic, messaging the reader to assume that the text is a mixture of facts, research results, and author's opinions, well combined with the author's unstated personal preferences. Their narratives (Box 6) commonly take the form of an author's journey for a better understanding of the OB nude woman terracotta plaque. This can further be abstracted into an actantial model (Box 8) featuring the author as a subject, the academic goal as an object, the evidence as a helper, and the problems as opponents. Box 3 is always the written article of an author itself or the image itself. For the sake of brevity, these boxes will not be discussed in detail except in §1.2 where I provide a detailed example of the textual collaboration model. Furthermore, Box 10 of the text will also not be presented because the possible world of an article includes too many individuals and properties to handle. Since the point of comparison between each interpretation is the OB nude woman terracotta plaque, the world structure of their image interpretations will be offered instead. In addition, Boxes 1, 5, and 7 of the textual and image model may often be skipped not only because it is impossible to discuss all the codes used to interpret a text or an image, but also because the result of the activities of these boxes are shown in other boxes.

The models show various structures of the collaboration between a work and an *interpreter*; thus, it is important to note that the analyses are constructed also by my interpretation. Again, in this chapter, my reference to the authors – Bahrani, Assante, and Kim (i.e., myself) – does not indicate the empirical author,

i.e., the living person, but the 'model author' reconstructed from their written interpretations[578] and distinguished from the actual person.

1. Zainab Bahrani's Interpretation of the Image in 'The Hellenization of Ishtar'

Zainab Bahrani's article, 'The Hellenization of Ishtar', objects to the binarism of the 'Western vs. non-Western = high vs. low' formula which results in the inferiority of non-Western arts. She argues that the visual representations of Aphrodite in the nude were affected by the Mesopotamian precursors, which include our OB nude woman terracotta plaque. It is categorized as a 'seductress' type which was made as an object of the male gaze to titillate the male viewers. Bahrani emphasizes that unlike the Greeks who showed repulsion against female sexuality and the vulva, Mesopotamians positively perceived female active seduction and the exposure of the vulva.

The first subsection §1.1 gives a summary of the article. §1.2 analyzes Bahrani's article using Umberto Eco's textual collaboration model. §1.3 utilizes the image collaboration model to reconstruct various structures of Bahrani's interpretation. §1.4 offers a special comparison of Bahrani's text and image interpretations of a single object, the life-size Assyrian marble nude woman statue, discussing the isomorphism of the two collaboration models. The subsection §1.5 analyzes several points of Bahrani's interpretation which requires special attention, which cannot be dealt within a single box but encompasses various boxes. §1.6 examines the image-text relations in her article, followed by a summary and conclusion (§1.7).

1.1. *Summary of the Article*

Here I offer a summary of the article to give some ideas of what it is about and how the arguments proceed. I tried to include as many direct quotations as possible so that the reader may experience some of the article's wordings and expressions. It is also to important note that this summary focuses more on the parts addressing the OB nude woman, while briefly outlining briefly other parts of the article.

Bahrani starts the article by stating that the Knidian nude Aphrodite statue became the standard of beauty in Western art[579] and that non-Western art was judged as inferior to it. She explains that since female nude representations had

[578] See p. 54 for the concept of a model author.
[579] Bahrani 1996, 4–5.

been a taboo in Greece before the late 5th century BCE, the Knidian Aphrodite could only be made thanks to the Near Eastern tradition of depicting female nudes. However, the Greeks never represented a vulva because of their fear and revulsion towards it as reflected in Greek literature.[580] She asserts that 'the female nudity was mainly associated with sexuality' in the ancient Near East and criticizes the previous interpretations which regard all ancient Near Eastern female nudes as 'fertility fetishes or mother goddesses'.[581] She distinguishes four iconographical types of female nudes in ancient Mesopotamia: (a) the mother; (b) the seductress; (c) the sexual partner; and (d) the entertainer and discusses the first two types.

The first type, 'the mother', is the visual representation of the 'nude nursing mothers', which had appeared with exaggerated breasts and hips in prehistory, but since the Ubaid period took the form of a slim body and a much more detailed face. This later form of the 'mother' type reflects the ideal beauty of a young woman, 'not as a mother as a reproductive agent, but one who is an object of male sexual desire and pleasure'.[582]

The 'the seductress' (19th century BCE–late first millennium BCE), the second type, has unexaggerated breasts and hips, slim body lines, and an elaborated vulva. This type has usually been interpreted as connected to fertility by modern scholarship. However, Bahrani interprets this type as 'actively seductive', where the body is 'provocatively displayed'.[583] She argues that this type's hand gestures, whether clasped, pointing to the breasts, or hanging at the sides, 'must also have had sexual connotations to the Babylonian viewer'.[584]

Bahrani strongly argues that an expression of a vulva 'as the site and source of sexual pleasure' was essential for Mesopotamians and was particularly 'seductive' and 'irresistible' for male sexual gazes.[585] The Mesopotamian literary texts 'place a great emphasis on the eroticism of the female body, and the vulva is usually the focal point in erotic poetry'.[586] The frontality of a female nude emphasizes not only her active temptation for male gazes, but also her 'passive availability' and the submission of her body to male sexual desires.[587]

The most decisive evidence of Bahrani's connection between nudity and erotic sexuality comes from a life-size nude woman marble statue from the 11th century BCE, which bears an inscription on the back: 'I made these

[580] Bahrani 1996, 6.
[581] Bahrani 1996, 7.
[582] Bahrani 1996, 8.
[583] Bahrani 1996, 8–10.
[584] Bahrani 1996, 10.
[585] Bahrani 1996, 11.
[586] Bahrani 1996, 11.
[587] Bahrani 1996, 12.

sculptures in the provinces, cities and garrisons for titillation'.[588] She interprets it as a direct linkage between the male sexual gaze and nude female representations.[589] Bahrani concludes the section with the statement that:

> In Mesopotamian literary and visual imagery it was the vulva, emphatically exhibited as the sign of difference that defined femininity as other than man, and functioned as an index of femininity. The image of the idealized female body was thus the object of desire, and as such was the site of the crystallization of the male gaze, an aestheticized body presented for the male viewer's pleasure.[590]

At the end of the article, Bahrani explains how Western and Eastern art merged together in the Hellenistic period and how representations of the vulva were never accepted by the Greeks, while ignorance of the vulva was never adapted by the Babylonians.[591] Concluding the article, Bahrani encourages her readers to 'investigate the modes of differentiation, fixation, and cultural hierarchization still at play within this discipline', in order not to reduce non-Western arts to 'the fetish of the barbarians'.[592]

1.2. *Structures of the Article*

1.2.1. Box 3: Expression – linear text manifestation

Box 3, 'linear text manifestation', in the interpretation of Bahrani's article, refers to the article 'The Hellenization of Ishtar' itself it its original form, before interpretation.

1.2.2. Box 2: Circumstances of utterance

The circumstances of the 'utterance' of this article are two-sided. On the one hand, it is an academic journal article published in *The Oxford Art Journal* in 1996. It gives the message that this article has scientific character: that it tries to persuade the reader with certain opinions and evidence. On the other hand, this article was received by me, selected to be discussed for my dissertation when I sat in a library. The latter circumstance gives its reader (me) the following

[588] A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium B.C. The Royal Inscriptions of Assyria*, vol. 2 (Toronto, 1991), 108: A.O.89.9. Quoted in Bahrani 1996, 12.
[589] Bahrani 1996, 13.
[590] Bahrani 1996, 13.
[591] Bahrani 1996, 14–15.
[592] Bahrani 1996, 15.

messages: ‘concentrate on the act of reading’, ‘criticize some of its content’, and ‘focus on the interpretation of the Old Babylonian nude woman’, etc.

1.2.3. Box 1: Codes and subcodes

I cannot list here all the codes used to interpret the text,[593] but as an example, I can discuss some (not all) of the codes used to interpret the title: ‘The Hellenization of Ishtar: Nudity, Fetishism, and the Production of Cultural Differentiation in Ancient Art’. By ‘rhetorical and stylistic overcoding’, the title is expected to show the subject and topics, allowing its readers to assume that this article is about Hellenization, Ishtar, nudity, fetishism, cultural differentiation, and ancient art. Each word is understood immediately by the readers’ codes of ‘basic dictionaries’. By the ‘rules of co-reference’, the preposition ‘of’ connects ‘Hellenization’ and ‘Ishtar’, and the colon in the title connects what is before and after the colon, connecting the above-mentioned topics in the following manner: Ishtar – her nudity – fetishism of her – in the ancient arts – which somehow show cultural differences. By the code of ‘contextual and circumstantial selections’, the ‘art’ is limited to some kind of ancient art excluding (e.g.) Renaissance paintings because the neighboring word ‘ancient’ confines the realm of the meanings of ‘art’. If the reader has previous knowledge of Ishtar – that she is a Mesopotamian goddess – and/or if the reader has read Bahrani’s other works, it becomes obvious by the codes of ‘inferences by intertextual frames’ that this ‘ancient art’ is further confined to Mesopotamian art. Finally, through the work of ‘ideological overcoding’, their appearance in the title can immediately bring positive or negative connotations to different readers. For example, if the reader is used to connecting the term ‘fetishism’ with negative connotations, that word is ideologically overcoded with negative feelings, and the title will be interpreted in such a way that the negative imagery of fetishism is connected with the Hellenization of Ishtar.

1.2.4. Box 4: Discursive structures; Box 5: (bracketed) Extensions; Box 7: Forecast and inferential walks

Examples of key topics in this article (Box 4) are: the falsely underestimated appreciation of a female nude in Mesopotamia; how the fertility and mother goddess interpretations of a Mesopotamian female nude has been affected by Western standards; how ancient Greeks and Mesopotamians were different in expressing their female nudes; a female nude body as the object of the male sexual gaze in Mesopotamia; how the body renderings of the seductress type attracts a

[593] For the list of codes and subcodes for interpreting texts, see p. 55–56.

male viewer's sexual gaze; the vulva as an index of the erotic pleasure in Mesopotamia. These topics constitute discursive structures of the article's contents. Hypothesizing these topics, it is likely that the article's readers collaborate with the text activating the sexual aspects (e.g., expression of vulva and its erotic implications) of the Mesopotamian nude woman representations, while narcotizing non-sexual aspects, such as the archaeological context of these representations; readers assume that there must have been an archaeological context for each artifact, but since it is not prominently discussed in the article, it is also narcotized in the reader's collaboration with the text.

The name of Box 5 is '(bracketed) extensions': it is marked with brackets because it is the first tentative decision of a sign's meaning before it is finally confirmed in the continuous process of reading. For example, in encountering the word 'seductress', the reader must decide the word's meanings: for example, what does a 'seductress' mean? Is she simply trying to attract or sexually seduce someone in the way of a femme fatale or even a sorceress?

These temporarily interpreted meanings are corrected or finalized at Box 7, as the reader frequently forecasts the next content or event and infers certain propositions about the whole fabula at the same time. For example, when reading the sentence, 'Four main iconographic types of nude females appear in Mesopotamian representations of the historical period: (a) the mother, (b) the seductress, (c) the (passive and active) sexual partner, and (d) the entertainer' on page 7 of Bahrani's article, a reader might anticipate that the article will discuss all four types. However, in their reading, the reader will discover that Bahrani does not explain the sexual partner and entertainer types, but focuses on the seductress type. Then the reader realizes the one macropropositions that Bahrani's main purpose in the article is to discuss the seductress type as a witness to Mesopotamians' appreciation of the female nudes. Moreover, the reader will also learn that the term 'seductress' clearly has sexual implications.

1.2.5. Box 6: Narrative structures

According to Eco, the narrative structures are actualized by the narrative macropropositions, which are formed by the contraction, synthesis, and expansion of the micropropositions expressed in the discursive structures.[594] The narrative macropropositions constitute one or more fabulae, according to the topics of the discursive structures.[595]

Eco states that scientific or academic texts have fabulae, 'as the story of a research, with its temporal steps, the modification imposed on the starting situ-

[594] Eco 1987, 129.
[595] Eco 1987, 130–131.

ation by an acting subject (the researcher – or Science in person)'.[596] Thus Bahrani's article also has a fabula (and even various fabulae according to how one reads) in which Bahrani fights against erroneous Western stereotypes of the Mesopotamian arts.

Bahrani confronted serious misinterpretations of the Mesopotamian arts, which are based on the Western modes of differentiation, setting the ancient Greek as the norm and all others as 'non-Greek'. It generated hazardous results, such as:

1) Greek art is the only ideal, and the Greeks had the ability to appreciate a human body in the nude.
2) Non-Western attitudes to sexuality are inferior to Greek ones, thus they did not have the ability to appreciate the human body in the nude.
3) Ancient Near Eastern female nude bodies are all fetishes of fertility and reproduction.

To overcome these misconceptions, Bahrani offers visual and textual evidence that:

1) Earlier in Greece, visual representations of the female nude had been taboo.
2) The prototype of the first Greek nude, Aphrodite (the Knidian Aphrodite), was the Near Eastern Ishtar/Astarte.
3) Ancient Greeks had a fear and revulsion of vulvas and female sexuality; while they adapted Near Eastern iconography, they eliminated representations of vulvas. The Greeks introduced the tradition of voyeurism, representing nude female bodies as what should not be seen.
4) Mesopotamians regarded the vulva as the 'sign of difference'[597] between males and females and elaborated it in visual representations. The provocative female sexuality was seen as the ideal and the essence of femininity.
5) All of Bahrani's evidence supports the argument that Mesopotamian representations of nude females focus on the erotic pleasure of the male gaze.

Finally, Bahrani overcomes the problems caused by Western modes of differentiation. She corrects the erroneous assumption that Greek art is superior to non-Greek art by stating that both the East and West exchanged cultural elements, while maintaining non-exchangeable concepts unique to each culture.

[596] Eco 1979, 31.
[597] Bahrani 1996, 13.

1.2.6. Box 8: Actantial structures

Having Algirdas Julien Greimas's actantial model and Vladimir Propp's narrative functions in mind, Eco established Box 8, 'actantial structures'.[598] At this box, the narrative structures are further abstracted to certain functions or actantial roles. However, this does not mean that the actantial roles can only be established after the construction of the whole text's narrative structure; the actantial roles are set up in the early phases of the reading and is constantly revised, since the reader must make hypotheses on the actantial roles to realize the narrative structure.[599] Here, I use Greimas's actantial model in order to reconstruct and visualize an actantial structure.

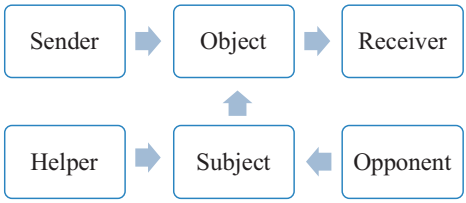


Fig. 20: Greimas's actantial model.

Greimas's actantial model consists of six actants: subject, object, helper, opponent, sender, and receiver (Fig. 20). The subject desires the object, the helper assists the subject to achieve the object, and the opponent tries to make the subject-object connection fail. Greimas did not clearly define the roles of the 'sender' and 'receiver'; yet, his suggestions about the sender-receiver relationship can be summarized as the following. The sender-object-receiver line is about the communication; a sender is the one who imposes a mission to the subject (i.e., the sender motivates the subject to desire the object); a receiver is the one who benefits from the subject-object relationship. The receiver can often be equated with the subject because, in banal love stories for example, the man, as a subject, desires the woman for his own sake.[600] Louis Hébert neatly arranged Greimas's actants as the following:

> The sender is the element requesting the establishment of the junction between subject and object (for example, the King asks the Prince to rescue the Princess). The receiver is the element for which the quest is being undertaken. To simplify, let us interpret the receiver (or beneficiary-receiver) as that

[598] Eco 1987, 220–223.
[599] Eco 1987, 220.
[600] Greimas 1971, 162–163, 165, 169.

which benefits from achieving the junction between subject and object (for example, the King, the kingdom, the Princess, the Prince, etc.).[601]

The actants of Bahrani's article can be constructed in various ways: the subject can be Bahrani or ancient Near Eastern scholarship or Mesopotamian art, etc. If the subject is Bahrani, this article will be the story of Bahrani fighting against Western-based prejudices about Mesopotamian art, and if the subject is Mesopotamian art, it will be the story of Mesopotamian art struggling to regain its honor. Since I put Bahrani as the subject of the fabula of the article, I present here an actantial structure whose subject is Bahrani.

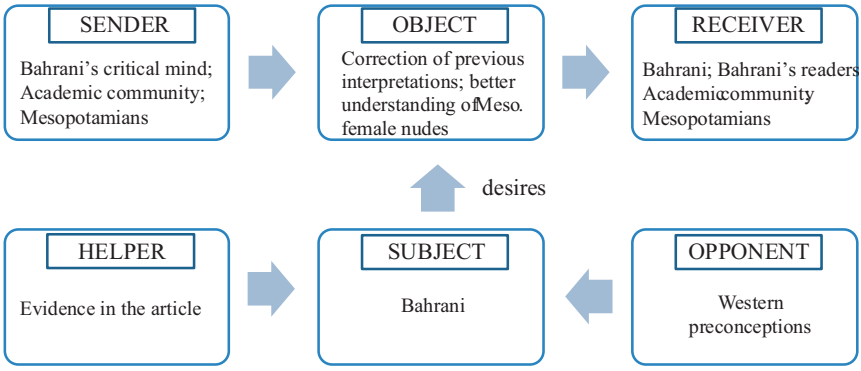


Fig. 21: An actantial model of the article 'The Hellenization of Ishtar'.

Bahrani, the subject, desires to correct the previous misinterpretations of the ancient Near Eastern nudes and acquire a better understanding of them. The object is what Bahrani, the subject, desires. The evidence that Bahrani offers are the helpers of achieving the object. The opponents are Western preconceptions. The sender – the initiator of the subject-object relationship – would be Bahrani's critical mind towards previous misinterpretations or Bahrani's encyclopedic knowledge about the Mesopotamian art which enabled her to judge that the previous interpretations have been wrong. The academic community's interest in obtaining a true or better evaluation of the research object may also be the sender.

[601] Hébert, *An Introduction to Applied Semiotics*, 81. Hébert points out that this 'sender' actant may cause to confuse the position and function in a narrative, that the sender's position of initiator in a narrative sequence overlaps with the helper's function of helping the subject in a broad sense (Hébert, *An Introduction to Applied Semiotics*, 81). While Hébert suggests another semiotic model as an alternative – the canonical narrative schema which was developed by Greimas as a subsequent model of the actantial model – I decided to stick to the older model in order not to complicate the discussion more by introducing new concepts and explanations. In my analysis, the 'sender' refers to the traditional concept of the 'initiator' of the subject-object relation.

The Mesopotamian people would also be the sender, for they initiated Bahrani's desire of understanding the Mesopotamian female nudes by stimulating her interest in what they left behind. There are several receivers in this model: Bahrani is a receiver in the sense that she achieves what she desires; the Mesopotamians could be a receiver since their reputation is restored through Bahrani's arguments; and the academic community and the article's modern readers are the receivers because Bahrani's discussion enriched their knowledge.

1.2.7. Box 9: Elementary ideological structures

In the actantial structure, the subject Bahrani and her desire (i.e., a better interpretation of the Mesopotamian female nudes) are elementarily overlaid with the ideological value of 'True', while the opponents, the previous misinterpretations based on the Western preconceptions, are imposed with the elementary value of 'False'. The True-False opposition brings the opposite connotations of Positive-Negative, and further related with the Good-Bad opposition. This structure is repeated throughout Bahrani's argument. I visualize here the repetitive elementary ideological structures constituted by a series of oppositions using the semiotic square by Greimas and François Rastier.

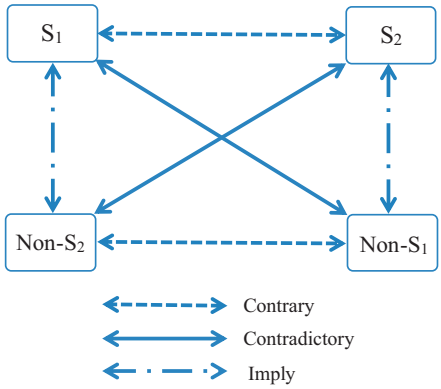


Fig. 22: Greimas and Rastier's semiotic square.
Based on the figure in Greimas / Rastier 1968, 88.

The semiotic square of Greimas and Rastier is composed of four sides, connected to each other through three kinds of relationships: contradictory, contrary, and implication. Starting with the upper line, there are two contrary words or concepts, S_1 and S_2. On the lower line, the contradictions of S_1 and S_2, i.e., non-S_1 and non-S_2 are located. Non-S_1 is placed on the diagonal point of S_1, and non-S_2 is located on the diagonal point of S_2. Thus, the relationship between S_1 and

S_2 is contrary; between S_1 and non-S_1, and S_2 and non-S_2 are contradictory. S_1 and non-S_2 are in the relationship of simple implication, forming a positive deixis, while implications between S_2 and non-S_1 form a negative deixis.[602]

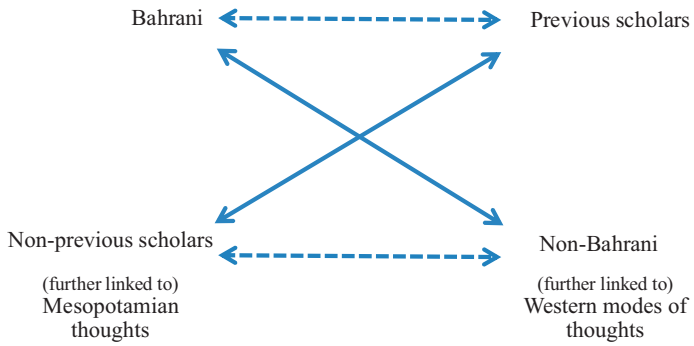


Fig. 23: A semiotic square of the article 'The Hellenization of Ishtar'.

In Fig. 23, I put Bahrani, the subject of the actantial structure, in the place of S_1. What stands in a contrary relation to S_1 (i.e., S_2) is the previous scholars, who misinterpreted Mesopotamian female nudes according to the Western modes of thoughts. The Western modes of thoughts, then, can also be a further implication of non-S_1 (non-Bahrani), and Non-S_2, i.e., non-previous scholars, can be connected to the Mesopotamian thoughts according to the narrative structure discussed above.

This structure is repeated throughout the article. Fig. 24 is an example. Mesopotamian thoughts become second S_1, while Western modes of thought are now second S_2. Second non-S_2, non-Western modes of thoughts, is further associated with the idea that Mesopotamian female nude representations are the ideal feminine sexuality for the Mesopotamians (third S_1). Second non-S_1 then indicates that Mesopotamian nude female representations are universal fertility fetishes (third S_2).

The third non-S_2 would be 'the Mesopotamian female nude representations = non-(universal fertility fetish)', implying that, at least for Mesopotamians, they were not fertility fetishes. The third non-S_1 would be 'the Mesopotamian female nude representations = non-(sexuality ideal for Mesopotamians)'.

This is only an example. At each non-S places, it can take other definitions according to what to negate because, at each square, the S is given with composed words. I will not delve into each possibility because my purpose is to show an example of how the structure of opposite values repeats itself in the article.

[602] Greimas / Rastier 1968, 86–105.

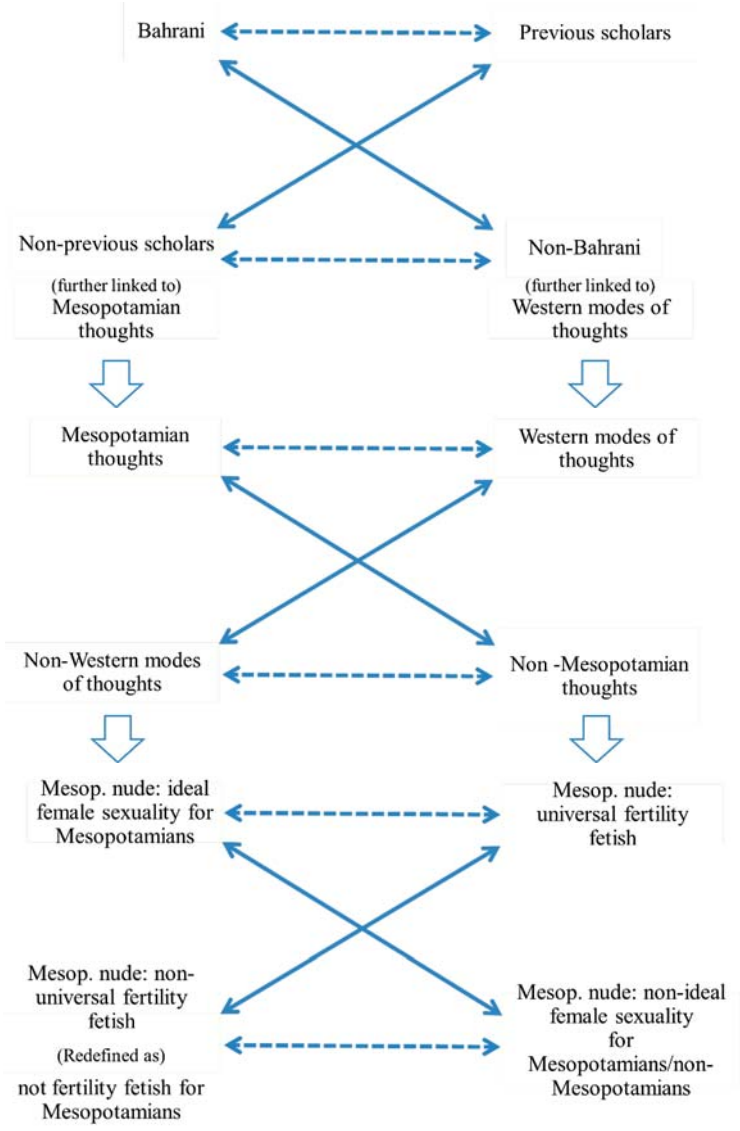


Fig. 24: Repeated structures of the opposition in the article 'The Hellenization of Ishtar'.

It can be seen from the repeated structure that the interpretations of sexuality and the fertility fetish are opposed to each other. In the repeated structure, the elements on the left side are given the values of True, Positive, and Good, and the elements on the right side are overlaid with elementary ideologies such as False, Negative, and Bad. The article does not explicitly say that Western modes

of thought – elements on the right side – are false, but it is represented in this way through the structure of binary oppositions. Even though the contents do not say it, the structure itself gives certain ideological nuances by presenting the contents in a specific way.

1.2.8. Box 10: World structures

This box handles the structures of the possible worlds. According to Eco, a possible world is 'a *possible state of affairs* expressed by a set of relevant propositions where for every proposition either *p* or ~*p* [non-p]'.[603] It is the world 'imagined, believed, wished', by the fabula, character, or reader.[604]

Various possible worlds can be reconstructed from Bahrani's article, e.g., a possible world of a fabula, possible worlds imagined or assumed by a character (e.g., Bahrani, previous scholars, or ancient Mesopotamians), or possible worlds imagined by different readers.[605] Because I cannot examine all these possible worlds and their accessibilities, I will select three kinds of possible worlds from the article and discuss them in detail in the following sections: (1) the possible world of the viewer 'Bahrani' of the Old Babylonian nude woman terracotta plaque (§1.3.8); (2) the possible world of the reader 'Bahrani' of the inscription written on the Assyrian nude female marble statue (§1.4.1); and (3) the possible world of the viewer 'Bahrani' of the Assyrian nude female marble statue (§1.4.2). The possible world of the viewer 'Bahrani' will further be compared with possible worlds of other viewers at the end of Part II.

1.3. *Structures of Bahrani's Interpretation of the Image*

In this section, I reconstruct Bahrani's interpretation of the OB nude woman terracotta plaque whose photograph is printed in her article. While Bahrani does not present a separate interpretation of this specific terracotta, this image is introduced as an example of the seductress type with joined hands. Thus, her interpretation of the seductress type woman with this specific gesture will be considered as her interpretation of this terracotta.

1.3.1. Box 3: Expression (visual manifestation)

Box 3 is the image itself – the photograph of the nude woman terracotta plaque printed in Bahrani's article and labeled as 'Fig. 5', which depicts the same nude female figure in relief as shown in Fig. 9.

[603] Eco 1979, 219. Emphasis in original.
[604] Eco 1979, 219.
[605] See Eco 1979, 234–236.

1.3.2. Box 2: Circumstances of display

The article provides the historical context of this nude woman terracotta plaque; it is Babylonian and dates to around 1800 BCE. The OB people or the culture as a group can be regarded as the sender of the image as a message. A detailed archaeological context is not mentioned in the article. The viewer's context of the encounter with this image could have been in the Louvre Museum (AO 12466, displayed in Salle 227),or through some books or scholarly articles.

1.3.3. Box 1: Codes and subcodes

The codes of perception, recognition, and transmission allow the viewer to recognize this object as a terracotta nude female relief plaque. If the viewer encounters the image in a printed photograph, the viewer still knows that this is a piece of paper with a photograph of the terracotta nude female relief plaque. By the works of iconic codes, this image is perceived as a nude woman standing, clasping her hands, and looking at the viewer. Bahrani's iconographical codes classify this image as the seductress type of nude female representations in Mesopotamia. Bahrani's rhetorical codes senses the message 'desire me' from the image, especially from the act of displaying sexual attributes.

1.3.4. Box 4: Iconic structures; Box 5: (bracketed) Extensions

At first glance, Bahrani would have tentatively interpreted the image (Box 5) as a representation of a nude woman, provocatively presenting her nude body. This hypothesis has been finalized throughout her examination of the image, forming the following discursive structure.

This is a nude standing woman, who holds clasped hands in front of her upper body. She is looking frontally, her body is slim, and her hips and breasts are round, not exaggerated. Her hair reaches to the shoulder in loops, which 'frame the youthful and rounded face'.[606] Her pubic triangle is 'outlined with incised lines and a central vertical incision to indicate the separation of the labia'.[607] She wears jewelry for the adornment of the body.[608]

In this iconic structure, the topic would be the young sexual beauty of a nude female body; thus, properties which imply the youngness (the slim body, youthful face), sexuality (hips, breasts and the pubic triangle), and beauty (the hair, jewelry) are activated. On the other hand, properties such as the nude woman's navel, toes, eyes, lips, or the shape of her arms are narcotized.

[606] Bahrani 1996, 10.
[607] Bahrani 1996, 9.
[608] This description of the image is reconstructed using Bahrani's wording, in Bahrani 1996, 9–11.

1.3.5. Box 6: Narrative structures; Box 7: Forecast and inferential walks

a) Iconographical structures

Iconographically, i.e., using textual and art historical knowledge, Bahrani interprets the nude woman as an example of the seductress type. The iconography of the image is related to some Mesopotamian literary texts which emphasize the vulva in heterosexual erotic contexts. Bahrani further makes an iconographical parallel between this image and images of nude women lying on terracotta model beds and confirms the erotic context of the image.

b) Visual narrative structures

The above-mentioned iconographical interpretations – the joint hands with sexual connotations, the vulva as 'the site and source of sexual pleasure',[609] and the nudity indicating erotic context – are further interpreted according to Bahrani's personal intuitions. The narrative of the OB nude woman terracotta plaque interpreted by Bahrani may take the following form. The nude woman wants to sexually attract the male gaze. For that purpose, she provocatively presents her sexual attributes to her viewers, while taking a submissive gesture with a sexual intention.[610] Her body is actively seductive by being slim, by not exaggerating her hips and breasts, by presenting her vulva, by adorning her body with jewels, and by having a young-looking face. She makes direct eye contact with her male viewers and commands, 'desire me!' The male viewers cannot resist gazing at her.[611]

The pre-state of the event (Box 7) possibly imagined by Bahrani could be the sexual desire itself before being materialized as a visual representation, and the post-state would be the strong effects of the nude woman image to its male viewers. By her inferential walks (Box 7) into Mesopotamian love literature, other female nude representations, and personal experiences, Bahrani chose sexual interpretation as the most probable scenario.[612] However, there are probability disjunctions (Box 7) at which different interpretations could have been made. The joined hands gesture can be interpreted as one of respect or worship. The nude female body might communicate not only the physical eroticism but also some symbolic messages, such as the power, abundance, or its relation to a certain deity.[613]

[609] Bahrani 1996, 11.
[610] See also Bahrani 1996, 6.
[611] Bahrani 1996, 9–10.
[612] This is discussed more in detail in pages 161ff below.
[613] See for example p. 112–125 above.

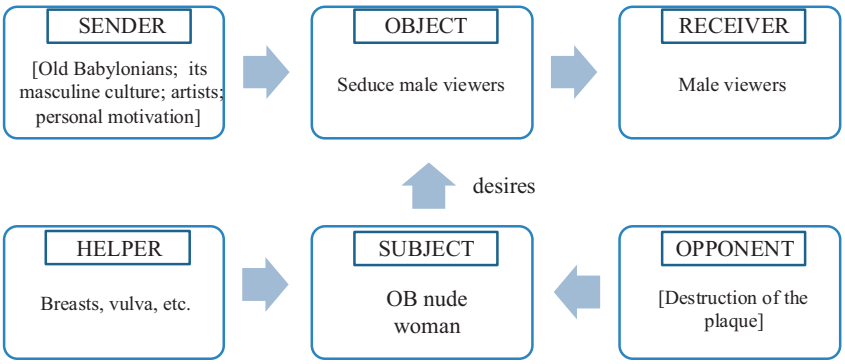


Fig. 25: An actantial model of the nude woman according to Bahrani's interpretation.

1.3.6. Box 8: Actantial structures

The subject, the nude woman, wants to seduce her male viewers. The erotic and sexual attributes of her body help her to realize her desire. The opponent does not appear in the reconstructed narrative but it can be imagined that the destruction of the plaque would disrupt the subject's longing for the object because the nude woman seduces its male viewers by being visually looked upon. The sender of the subject-object relationship could be the people of OB, its masculine culture, the nude woman image's own motivation for seduction, or the artists who made the terracotta. The receiver/beneficiary of the subject's achievement of the object is the image's male viewers who are enticed by looking upon her.

1.3.7. Box 9: Elementary ideological structures

In the actantial model, the nude woman and her desire are overlaid with the value of Good. Throughout the discussion Bahrani contrasts her sexual interpretation with the interpretations of reproduction and fertility, which are designated with the words, such as 'reduce', 'lowest', 'problematic', and 'not valid',[614] that have the connotation of Bad. However, the interpretation of sexuality comes with words such as 'beauty', 'pleasure', 'actively', 'ideal', and 'mastery',[615] carrying positive connotations in globalized modern cultures. Paradoxically, words such as 'object of', 'passive', 'availability', 'isolated', or 'displayed' also accompany Bahrani's description of the nude woman.[616] These words give the impression of passiveness, which is overlaid with negative connotations in modern cultures. For this paradoxical ideological evaluation, see discussion in p. 164ff.

[614] Bahrani 1996, 8, 10.
[615] Bahrani 1996, 10, 12.
[616] Bahrani 1996, 10, 12.

1.3.8. Box 10: World structures

A world structure of Bahrani's interpretation of the OB nude woman terracotta plaque shows a possible world imagined by the viewer, Bahrani (W_{pB}), which is again reconstructed through me as Bahrani's reader.

The left column shows the individuals who constitute the structure of the world W_{pB}. The actants discussed in the actantial model may also be individuals, but since there are some hypothesized actants – such as the destruction of the plaque as an opponent – I listed only the ones which appear in Bahrani's discussion. The top row displays the properties of the individuals. The plus sign signifies the existence of the property, the minus the absence of the property. The individuals may have more properties, but only the topic-related properties, which constitute the structure, are listed.[617] If some properties are essential for the world's structure ('essential properties'), they are indicated with parentheses.

	Male	*Female*	*Nude*	*Slim*	*Sexual allure*	*${}_pS_v$**	*${}_vG_p$***
Nude woman terracotta Plaque	(-)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	[+]	[+]
The breasts of the nude woman	(-)	(+)	(+)	-	(+)		-
The pubic triangle of the nude woman	(-)	(+)	(+)	+	(+)		-
The joint hands of the nude woman	-	(+)	+	+	(+)		-
Viewers	(+)	(-)	(-)		-	[+]	[+]

Table 2: $W_{pB.}$

* ${}_pS_v$: the nude woman terracotta plaque (p) seduces (S) the viewers (v).

** ${}_vG_p$: the viewers (v) gazes (G) at the nude woman terracotta plaque (p).

There are also 'structurally necessary properties', abbreviated as 'S-necessary' properties, which have the 'dyadic and symmetric relation' that the concerned individuals cannot be proved without the existence of each other. For example, if A and B – protagonists of a novel – are a married couple, A is designated as a wife of B and B as a husband of A. The marriage relationship of A and B is structurally necessary in the fabula; if they are not married, the couple as protagonists do not exist anymore in the novel. According to Eco, 'They [the

[617] See Eco 1987, 181.

S-necessary properties] hold only within the framework of a fictional world'.[618] While Bahrani's article is not fiction but an academic article, the academic hypothesis about the ancient world may not be structurally different from fictional worlds. Thus, the relationship of seducing and being seduced, of gazing and being gazed, between the nude woman and the male viewers are the S-necessary relationships. The S-necessary properties are marked with square brackets.

The possible world W_{pB} (Table 2) is a world in which the nude woman actively seduces her male viewers with the help of her sexual attributes, such as her nude breasts, pubic triangle, and the gesture of her joined hands. She is presented as an object of the male gaze. At the end of this chapter, W_{pB} will be compared with the possible worlds of the viewers Assante and Kim.

1.4. *Special Comparison: Bahrani's Interpretations of the Image and Inscription of the Assyrian Nude Woman Statue*

In Bahrani's article, the female nude statue of Ashur-bel-kala plays an important role as evidence of the erotic allure of female nudes. In this section, I will compare the world structures of the statue as an image and its inscription, as revealed in Bahrani's interpretation. The comparison will serve as an example of how the isomorphism of the textual collaboration model and the image collaboration model works in one's interpretation.

1.4.1. Structures of Bahrani's interpretation of the inscription

For the inscription, Bahrani offers Grayson's English translation (Box 3):

> (Property of) the palace of Assur-bel-[kala, king of the universe, strong king, king of As]syria, son of Tiglath-pile-ser (I), king of [the universe], strong [king, king of Assyria], son of Assur-resa-isi (I) (who was) also king of the universe, [strong king, king of] Assyria: I made these sculptures in the provinces, cities and garrisons for titillation. As for the one who removes my inscriptions and my name: the divine Sibitti, the gods of the west, will afflict him with snake-bite.[619]

According to Bahrani's interpretation, titillation is the main topic (Box 4), constructing a narrative (Box 6) that the king made the statue in order to sexually titillate his male people. In this possible world (Box 10), Bahrani assumes the viewers to be only males, in order to be sexually titillated, while other interpre-

[618] Eco 1979, 237. See also Eco 1987, 197–203.

[619] A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium B.C*. The Royal Inscriptions of Assyria, vol. 2 (Toronto, 1991), 108: A.O. 89.9, quoted in Bahrani 1996, 12.

ters may include women and children as viewers since the inscription states that these statues were also erected in cities and provinces. In the latter case, the 'titillation' could be understood in a symbolic sense. In Bahrani's narrative, the S-necessary properties are that the nude statue titillates its viewers and that the king wishes to cause titillation for his male population.

Properties	*Male*	*Female*	*$_nT_v$**	*$_kW(_nT_v)$***
The king	+	-		[+]
The nude statue	(-)	(+)	[+]	[+]
Viewers	(+)	(-)	[+]	[+]

Table 3: W_{iB}

*The nude statue (n) titillates (T) its viewers (v) = $_nT_v$.

**The king (k) wants (W) the nude statue (n) to titillate (T) its viewers (v) = $_kW(_nT_v)$.

1.4.2. Structures of Bahrani's interpretation of the statue's image

For the image of the statue, Bahrani offers a photograph of the life size marble statue see Fig. 26 (Box 3).

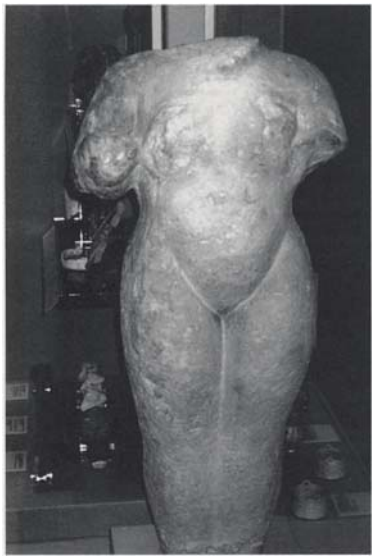


Fig. 26: A photograph of the Assyrian nude female statue as appears in 'The Hellenization of Ishtar'. Marble statue, Nineveh, 11th century BCE. In the British Museum, London. Photo courtesy of Zainab Bahrani (Bahrani 1996, 13 Fig. 9).

The iconic structure (Box 4) of the marble statue reconstructed by Bahrani is well reflected in her statement:

> It represents the youthful figure of a girl. The head and part of the arms are missing, as well as the lower legs. The breasts are small but rounded, and the condition of the surface does not allow us to conclude if the nipples were carved in relief. Yet the pubic triangle was carefully carved in low relief with rows of 'snail' curls.[620]

The image's iconographical structure (Box 6) locates it in the tradition of nude female representations which prevailed in Mesopotamia for a long period of time. At the probability disjunction (Box 7) of the statue's hand gesture, which is now lost, Bahrani chooses to read it as a variant of the seductress type gestures',[621] even though the disjunction may also lead in another direction, such as, a posture of raising one hand as a blessing gesture and another hand holding an object (an attribute?), concerning the degree of the elbows that are partly damaged.

The possible world of the marble statue which the viewer Bahrani imagined (W_{sB}) can be reconstructed as in the table below.

Properties	*Male*	*Female*	${}_nT_v$*	${}_kW({}_nT_v)$**
The king	+	-		[+]
The nude statue	(-)	(+)	[+]	[+]
The statue's vulva	(-)	(+)		
The statue's breasts	(-)	(+)		
Viewers	(+)	(-)	[+]	[+]

Table 4: W_{sB}.

*The nude statue (n) titillates (T) its viewers (v) = ${}_nT_v$.

**The king (k) wants (W) the nude statue (n) to titillate (T) its viewers (v) = ${}_kW({}_nT_v)$.

This world shows a similar but more expanded structure than the world of the inscription because more individuals play in this world. Not only is the nude statue, but also some of the statue's body parts are recognized as being important in this world, and they are given essential properties because they are the helpers that cause its male viewers to become titillated.

[620] Bahrani 1996, 12.

[621] Bahrani 1996, 12. Here Bahrani discusses the nude statue as one of the 'monumental versions of the same imagery' of the seductress type plaques and figurines, implying that she categorizes it in the seductress type.

1.4.3. Comparison: The world structures of the image and the inscription of the statue

According to Eco, a world structure (W_i) is accessible to another world structure (W_j) 'when the world structure of W_i can generate (through manipulations of the relations between individuals and properties) the world structure of W_j'.[622] That is to say, when W_j has all the individuals and properties of W_i, and the essential properties of the common individuals of W_j do not contradict with W_i, W_j is accessible to W_i. When the structurally necessary (S-necessary) properties of the two worlds do not contradict each other, Eco calls them 'isomorphic'.[623] When the numbers of individuals or properties are different in two worlds among which one world is accessible to another, while not being symmetric, they can still be isomorphic since S-necessary properties decide the isomorphism of the structures.[624]

If two possible worlds have different S-necessary properties, these worlds are not isomorphic. For example, in the fabula of the inscription constructed by the reader Baharni, the nude statue exists only to sexually allure its 'male' viewers, and the male viewers exist only to become sexually titillated by the nude statue. If this relationship is destroyed, the fabula cannot be kept and must be rewritten.

The two possible worlds of the interpreter Bahrani, which she imagined through the nude statue (W_{sB}) and its inscription (W_{iB}), are isomorphic because the S-necessary properties – the titillating and titillated relationship and the king's cause of the titillation – remain the same in both worlds. The possible world of Bahrani's interpretation of the statue (W_{sB}) has more individuals than that of the inscription (W_{iB}) because the interpretation of the statue considers both the inscription and the statue iconographically bound. All the properties and individuals of W_{iB} can be found in W_{sB}, having the same S-necessary properties, and their essential properties do not contradict each other: they are isomorphic, and W_{iB} is accessible to W_{sB}.

It is therefore observable that when Bahrani takes texts and images as evidence of a prevailing phenomenon of an ancient culture, the image-text relation is isomorphic. The textual evidence moves in the same direction as the images. One might say that this comparison of world structures witnesses nothing more than the natural intuition that the texts must accord with images in order to use them as evidence. However, semiotics sows doubt about what seems natural, and gives 'meaning to messages one vaguely senses but fails to analyze'.[625] The isomorphism of the two models – textual collaboration and image collaboration –

[622] Eco 1979, 231.
[623] Eco 1987, 206, 216; Eco 1979, 231, 244–245.
[624] Eco 1987, 183–187, 206, 216–217; Eco 1979, 231–233, 244–245.
[625] Bal 2006, 310.

facilitates comparisons of image and text interpretations showing how one relates images with texts.

1.5. *Discussion*

In this section, I will analyze several aspects of Bahrani's interpretation which extend beyond the boundaries of each box. There are three points that I want to discuss: (1) reproduction vs. sexuality; (2) parallelism between the 'seductress' type and terracotta model beds; and (3) the ideological paradox in Bahrani's interpretation of the OB nude woman.

1.5.1. Reproduction vs. sexuality

Bahrani argues that the Mesopotamian nude woman's visual representations were intended as erotic enticement for the male gaze. She criticizes the interpretations of fertility/reproduction for not being based on Mesopotamian textual evidence.[626] Visually speaking, for Bahrani, the (1) unexaggerated hips and breasts, (2) slim body, (3) elaborated vulva, and (4) detailed face are the primary signs of sexuality and erotic allure, which invalidate fertility/reproduction interpretations. According to her, these features are common not only for the seductress type but also for the mother-type nudes.[627]

a) *Small and round, unexaggerated hips and breasts*
According to Bahrani, the exaggeration of hips and breasts and the simplification of other body parts communicate a message of reproduction.[628] It implies that unexaggerated hips and breasts would not concern reproduction as the features of being small and round further connote youthfulness.[629] This can be abstracted as in the following table.

Hips and breasts	*1st connection*	*2nd connection*	*Final interpretation*
Small and round	Youthful	Good to look at for male gaze	Visually sexual allure
Not exaggerated in size	Not-reproduction		

Table 5: The interpretative process of the small and round, unexaggerated hips and breasts.

[626] While Bahrani does not explicitly claim that her interpretation is the only correct one, the structure of her argument implies exclusivity. See p. 149ff above.
[627] Bahrani 1996, 7, 16, n. 37.
[628] Bahrani 1996, 7.
[629] Bahrani 1996, 8.

b) *Slim body*

Bahrani states that the mother type nudes' 'hips and thighs are rounded, but would be remarkably slim if the figure is meant to denote fertility'. This statement makes the equation: 'slim vs. not-slim = not-fertility vs. fertility', i.e., if not-slim, then fertility; if slim, then not-fertility. However, non-fertility cannot be directly connected to the notion of sexuality. The link between non-fertility and sexuality suggested by Bahrani is youthful beauty: 'this youthful and slim nursing figure does not overtly spell fertility in the sense that the large breasted, broad hipped figurines of Near Eastern prehistory do. […] She represents an ideal of youthful beauty'.[630] Thus: slim body → (non-fertility + youthful) → beauty → good to look at for male gaze → sexual allure.

Feature of the body	*1st connection*	*2nd connection*	*3rd connection*	*Final interpretation*
Slim	Not fertility	Beauty	Good to look at for male gaze	Sexual allure
	Youthful			

Table 6: The interpretative process of the slim body.

c) *Elaborated vulva*

In Bahrani's discussion, the vulva is directly related to erotic sexuality. She states, 'In my opinion, the greater emphasis on the representation of the vulva is an index of that sexual pleasure'.[631] Visually, the Mesopotamian female nudes do not skip indicating the vulva, while the indication of vulva does not necessarily denote sexuality. Bahrani underlines the textual proof instead, that the vulva is emphasized in the Mesopotamian erotic literature. The following table describes the connections involved in that interpretation:

	Features	*1st connection*	*2nd connection*	*3rd connection*	*Final interpretation*
Image	Indication/ elaboration of vulva		Vulva = erotic context in image too	Vulva = erotic	Vulva = sexual allure
Text	Emphasis in vulva	vulva = erotic context in text			

Table 7: The interpretative process of the elaborated vulva.

[630] Bahrani 1996, 8.
[631] Bahrani 1996, 10.

d) *Detailed face*

In Bahrani's discussion, the abbreviation of the face is related to fertility, while the elaboration of the face is connected to non-fertility and non-reproduction, representing female sexuality. The male gaze binds these concepts together, that the detailed face – visually more beautiful than the abbreviated face – is appealing to the male gaze, thus sexually alluring. It is important to note that if a representation of a male body has a detailed face, it would not be interpreted as having *female* sexuality. This implies that feminine sexuality comes primarily from the *femaleness* of the face rather than how detailed it is represented. This provides the possibility that the detailed face may have alternative meanings other than the female sexuality.

	Face features	*1st connection*	*2nd connection*	*3rd connection*	*Final interpre-tation*
The discussed types	Woman's face	feminine	sexually opposite to masculine	sexual	Sexual allure
	Elabo-rated		non-reproduction	beautiful/ good to look at for male viewers	
Earlier period fertility figures	Abbrevi-ated	elimination of all other features of a woman other than that of reproduc-tion	reproduction	not beautiful	no sexual allure

Table 8: The interpretative process of the detailed face.

The discussions above display how the four features of the OB nude woman – (1) unexaggerated hips and breasts, (2) slim body, (3) elaborated vulva, and (4) detailed face – are connected to the (visually) sexual allure, as the object of the male gaze.

However, all four features may point to meanings other than female sexuality. For example, the exaggeration of breasts and hips may point to sexuality, but the contribution of hips for fertility/reproduction is dubious. The elaborated vulva might be involved in reproduction in artistic traditions, such as in the nude female frontal terracotta from Revadim, whose vulva is emphasized by the nude

woman's pointing gesture indicating that she is experiencing labor pangs.[632] If the exposure of the vulva may connote sexuality regardless of other accompanying attributes, such as a baby or a certain posture, why cannot a vulva signify fertility and reproduction? The indication of a vulva and other sexual attributes may have various meanings other than sexuality or reproduction.[633]

As discussed above, the OB nude woman's somehow realistic bodily proportions, with round hips and breasts, slim body, and the detailed feminine face, conforms to modern ideals of female sexuality.[634] Likewise, the binary opposition of 'reproduction vs. female sexuality' might also have originated from the modern binary logic. All four features of the OB nude woman repeat the linkage between 'non-reproduction' and 'female sexuality', being bound to the concept of the 'male gaze': the abbreviated face along with the exaggerated hips and breasts do not appeal to the male gaze and thus point to functional productiveness (i.e., reproduction), while the detailed face of a slim body is sexually alluring to male erotic pleasure and does not necessarily hold on to functional productivity. The underlying binary opposition is pleasure vs. function, or more precisely, unproductivity vs. productivity. The aesthetic beauty of the OB nude woman is evaluated as unproductive and connected to sexual pleasure, while the non-aesthetic features from the older periods' fertility fetishes are considered unappealing to the male gaze and functionally productive. Therefore, the binary opposition of female sexuality vs. reproduction includes the following set of dichotomies: beautiful vs. ugly = sexual pleasure vs. reproduction = unproductive vs. productive.

All the connections in the tables could have taken different directions for other interpreters. These connections are constructed by Bahrani's personal intuitions and experiences combined with her research data. I do not intend to say that intuition is subjective and unfitting for academic arguments. Intuitions and personal preferences are unavoidable, even essential in academia, motivating the desire for scholarly research. What I underline here is that a subjective impression from the nude images might have functioned as an important sign for Bahrani and guided her interpretation toward the direction of female sexuality.

1.5.2. Parallelism between the seductress type and the terracotta model beds

Bahrani discusses the eroticism of the above-mentioned gestures in parallel with terracotta model beds. The model beds display a copulating couple, or a single nude woman lying on the bed. In the cases where a nude woman is displayed frontally on a model bed, she makes the gestures of: 'lifting up her breasts with

[632] Ornan 2007, 215–235.
[633] See p. 112–125 above.
[634] See p. 115 above.

her hands, keeping her arms at her sides, or holding joint hands up in front of her'.[635] Bahrani further interprets:

> The latter version, portraying the woman in a submissive static pose must also have had sexual connotations to the Babylonian viewer. In all versions of these bed scenes the genitals of the females are carefully indicated. In fact, in some examples a single detailed pubic triangle covers the entire surface of the bed. In this way the pubic triangle functioned at times metonymically, the genitals standing for the whole body of the nude.[636]

In Bahrani's discussion, the erotic connotation of the terracotta model beds, so obvious from the copulation scenes, becomes valid also for the scenes of a single lying nude woman. A nude woman lying on a bed further brings erotic connotations to the nude frontal standing woman through the parallelism of the frontal position and the same hand gesture. Such parallelism works in the following way:

{(Copulating couple + model bed) → erotic}, thus, (model bed → erotic), thus, {(lying woman + model bed) → erotic}.

{(Lying woman + model bed + frontal + the gestures) → erotic}, thus, {(frontal + the gestures) → erotic}, thus, [{standing woman + (frontal + the gestures)} → erotic].

Bahrani adds that a single pubic triangle carved on a model bed metonymically stands for the entire nude female body. This metonymy implies that Bahrani interprets the model bed with a single pubic triangle to have the same erotic connotations as the model beds with the entire nude female body or with copulating couple scenes. This can be expressed as the following:

[{Copulating couple + indication of (vulva $\subset$ nude female body) + model bed} → erotic], thus {(vulva $\subset$ nude female body) → erotic}, thus [{lying woman + model bed + nude + indication of (vulva $\subset$ nude female body)} → erotic].[637]

[{Lying woman + model bed + nude + indication of (vulva $\subset$ nude female body) + frontality + the gestures} → erotic], thus, [{nude + indication of (vulva $\subset$ nude female body) + frontality + the gestures} → erotic], thus, [standing

[635] Bahrani 1996, 10.
[636] Bahrani 1996, 10.
[637] $A \subset B$ signifies that 'A is a proper subset of B, A is included in B but not identical with it'. See Korpela 2014, 217.

woman + {nude + indication of (vulva ⊂ nude female body) + frontality + the gestures} → erotic].

These mathematical signs reveal the logic behind the parallelism, distinguishing the recognized signs interpreted by Bahrani. The logic of parallelism, often used in ancient Near Eastern art history to draw meanings for images which, in most cases, do not have inscriptions, may semiotically be structured in this way, calling attention to the detailed process of interpretation.

1.5.3. The ideological paradox in Bahrani's interpretation of the Nude Woman

As briefly mentioned in Bahrani's ideological evaluation of the OB nude woman (p. 153), she interprets the woman as both active and passive: she is 'actively' 'seductive' and 'alluring', 'tempting' the male viewers, but at the same time a 'passive' 'object of pleasure for the male gaze', 'isolated' and 'displayed', showing her 'availability'.[638] These paradoxical oppositions are mostly bound to the topic of 'the nude woman as an object of male gaze'. The term 'gaze' brings negative connotations because it is frequently used in art history to criticize the 'sexually objectifying attitude that a representation takes toward its feminine subject matter, presenting her as a primarily passive object for heterosexual-male erotic gratification'.[639] By using the term, the male viewers who gaze at the object are immediately given negative ideological elements, while the nude woman becomes the victim of that gaze. On the other hand, the nude woman is also described as 'provocative' and 'actively seductive', who masters the male viewers' attention.[640] Not only is this 'mastery' positively presented since it is what 'dispels any possible menace',[641] but every sexual feature of her is also portrayed in a positive light.

Consequently, on the one hand, the nude woman is the subject of the narrative who actively seduces the male viewers (positive); on the other hand, she is passivized as an object of the male gaze (negative). To examine these contrary ideological values ascribed to the nude woman, I created a semiotic square based on Bahrani's frequently used phrase, the 'nude woman as an object of male gaze', which displays the opposition of 'nude female' and 'male gaze' (Fig. 27).

At first glance, the nude female seems to be in the contrary position not with the 'male gaze' but with the 'clothed male' (in heterosexual contexts). Nevertheless, I put the 'male gaze' in the place of S_2 because the 'female nude' and 'male gaze' are in a contrary relation on the line of the exercise of power: when

[638] Bahrani 1996, 10–13.
[639] Eaton 2008, 878.
[640] Bahrani 1996, 6, 10, 12.
[641] Bahrani 1996, 12.

a man gazes at a nude woman, the male gaze exercises power upon the female nude. It is the contrary relationship between the subject and object.

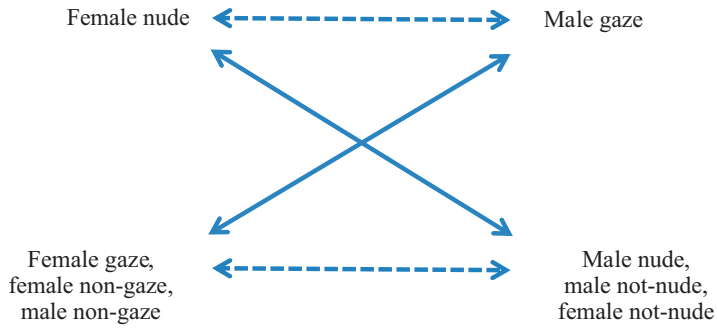


Fig. 27: A semiotic square of 'a nude woman as an object of the male gaze'.

The nude female is opposed to the male gaze. However, because the nude female has two properties – 'nude' and 'female' – and the male gaze has two other properties – 'male' and 'gaze' – it is difficult to decide the realm of non-S_1 and non-S_2. Technically, non-S_1 could be everything but not S_1, thus it includes: not-female nude, not-female not-nude, female not-nude. These are equivalent to: male nude, male not-nude, female not-nude. In the same manner, non-S_2 includes female gaze, female non-gaze, male non-gaze (Fig. 27).

Then what are the 'non-nude' and 'non-gaze'? The common category for them is neither the category of clothing nor of gazing; what binds them together is the subject-object relationship. Nevertheless, the words 'nude' and 'gazing' still belong to different categories, the former to the clothing and the latter to a way of looking. The opposition between the 'female nude' and the 'male gaze' thus have three kinds of different oppositions: male vs. female; nude vs. clothed; gazing vs. gazed. It can be rephrased such as: female-nude-gazed vs. male-clothed-gazing.

The rephrased oppositions – female-nude-gazed vs. male-clothed-gazing – imply that the male subjects of the gazing act are clothed, while the gazed object females are nude. The clothed ones are the subjects of the gazing, and nude ones are the gazed objects. These implications do not seem to be wrong in the context of the possible world imagined by Bahrani because the viewers most likely encountered the image in their state of being clothed at entranceways of common houses.[642] Nevertheless, this implication only works in Bahrani's interpretation, in which the nude woman is fixed as the object of male viewers.

[642] See p. 108 above.

Concerning these implications, there are three candidates for non-S_1 (female-gazing, male-gazed, female-gazed) and three candidates for non-S_2 (male-nude, female-clothed, male-clothed). The number of cases of the opposite relations between S_1 and S_2 would then be 3 * 3 = 9. However, I give priority to the male-female opposition in this semiotic square to make the discussion less complicated. The properties of nude and gaze are subordinate to the female vs. male opposition in Bahrani's discussion, since she asserts female nudity in Mesopotamia as a way of differentiating femininity from masculinity, as 'the sign of difference that defined femininity as other than man'.[643] Thus, if I give priority to the gender opposition, the gender property must be negated in non-S_1 or non-S_2 states. In this case, the number of possible cases is reduced to four: (a) female-gazing vs. male-nude; (b) female-gazing vs. male-clothed; (c) female-gazed vs. male-nude; and (d) female-gazed vs. male-clothed.

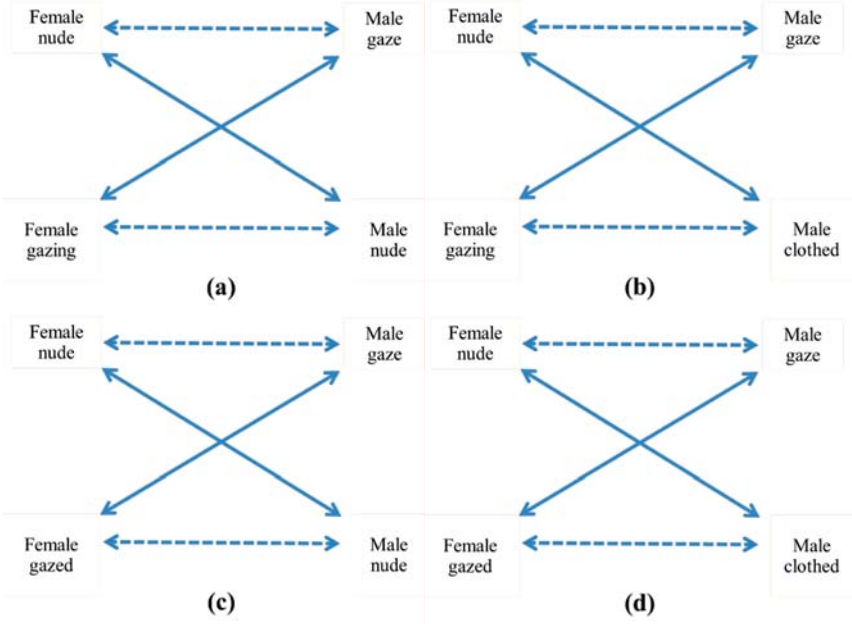


Fig. 28: Semiotic squares of (a), (b), (c), (d).

In case of (a), the female (clothed) is gazing at the male nude. This is not likely for Bahrani because she states elsewhere that 'there are no images of nude men, passively displayed as objects of the gaze'.[644] The case of (c), where the male nude is gazing at the female-clothed, is also not probable because our OB

[643] Bahrani 1996, 7, 13.
[644] Bahrani 2002, 57.

woman is nude. In the case of (b), the female (nude) gazing at the clothed male does not accord with Bahrani's interpretation that the nude woman is fixed as an object of the male gaze. Bahrani explains her usage of the term 'gaze' elsewhere: 'the Gaze then is not simply a glance or a look, but a look that structures and controls. [……] The Gaze is thus male while the place of femaleness is passive, to be viewed'.[645]

The semiotic square of (d), in which the clothed male gazes at the female nude, suits the explanations Bahrani offers. 'Male-clothed' (non-S_1) implies that the male is the subject of the gaze (S_2), and 'female gazed' (non-S_2) implies that the female is nude (S_1). What this semiotic square signifies is that the female, being nude, can never be the subject of the gaze. The male, being the subject of the gaze, must always be clothed because he is opposed to the female nude.

It is interesting that this fixation of the position of the nude woman as gazed is not only suggested by the structure, but also supported by the content. In the article, Bahrani does not mention that the nude woman looks back at the viewer. Bahrani notes the images' 'frontal position' but not frontal *looking*. The nude woman not only cannot become a subject of gazing, but also is deprived of the ability of looking. If the woman, as a passive image, may directly look at the viewer, the voyeuristic male gaze and the process of fetishization that Bahrani criticizes will be broken. However, in Bahrani's article, the nude woman remains an object of the male gaze; she is made such that it is impossible for her to look directly back at her viewers.

Bahrani's intention might have been that the nude woman is able to look at the viewer with her eyes as a living image,[646] whereas she does not look in the sense of a power relation. However, visual looking and exercising power are closely related. If the nude woman is able to look directly (i.e., gaze) at the viewers,[647] the 'active = male' and 'passive = female' equations are broken, subverting the power of the male gaze. According to Gombrich, such direct looking from an image causes awe which leads the viewer into submission.[648] Therefore, if the nude woman cannot yield her power by looking, it means that she cannot even look at her viewers.

The implication that the nude woman cannot gaze at the viewer contradicts the evident phenomenon: when the nude body faces the viewer, the eyes of the

[645] Bahrani 2001, 35–36.

[646] The possibility that Bahrani perceives the nude woman image only as an inanimate object – then the nude woman cannot look – is excluded in this discussion because Bahrani emphasized that images were regarded as living existents in Mesopotamia in her other writings. See for example, Bahrani 2014.

[647] In this discussion, I do not distinguish between 'looking directly' and 'gazing'. A *direct* look already implies the 'look that structures and controls' which Bahrani defines as a 'gaze'. See Bahrani 2001, 35.

[648] Gombrich 2012, 125. See also Asher-Greve 2003, 4–6; Schapiro 1973, 37–39.

woman also face the viewer. Phrased differently, the viewer feels that the nude woman directly looks – gazes – at the viewer by the work of iconic codes. The detailed face, which Bahrani underlined as evidence of a non-reproductive purpose, has two eyes directly looking at the viewer when she is looked at by the viewer. In this case, it can be said that Bahrani narcotized the property of 'gazing' from the nude woman and caused it to be absent.

The question that I raised at the beginning of this discussion, that the nude woman is described both as an active subject and passive object, was caused by this problem: the nude woman's property of looking or gazing is denied. Being active and passive at the same time is not the problem: a thing or person can have both properties in different situations. However, in Bahrani's interpretation, this ambivalence is bound to the contradictory treatment of the nude woman's gazing. The frontality of the nude woman generates active impressions such as 'provocative', 'actively seductive', and 'mastery of the spectator's viewpoint',[649] while she is only gazed at and cannot look directly – gaze – at her viewers. The nude woman seduces, but that seduction is only for the male's sexual pleasure. She commands, 'desire me', but this command is not for her own sake but for the satisfaction of male sexual desire.

In a semiotic analysis of her article, Bahrani interpreted the nude woman paradoxically: she is presented not only as Good and Active, as she presents her sexual attributes without any negative implications, but also as Passive and Poor, as she remains an object at all times. In Bahrani's article, the OB nude woman is more active and proud of her body than what has been assumed by previous scholars of fertility/reproduction interpretations, but the patriarchic culture of Mesopotamia confined her to the position of a sexual object.[650] By presenting the nude woman with these ambivalent aspects, Bahrani presents the nude woman as an innocent victim who is both good and passive while being exploited by others: the victim of male desire and the victim of Greek and Western chauvinism.

It is also important to note that the male viewer is not at all presented as active either. Although the male viewers are the subject of the gaze, this gaze is

[649] Bahrani 1996, 6, 12.

[650] Bahrani's attitude towards the patriarchal culture of Mesopotamia can be discerned through statements such as, 'This [women's body not as a function of reproduction but as a source of male physical pleasure] does not imply that ancient Mesopotamia was a utopian society that saw a value in women equal to that of men, but that this patriarchal culture viewed erotic allure rather than reproduction as the most valued aspect of femininity. […] The image of the idealized female body was thus the object of desire, and as such was the site of the crystallization of the male gaze, an aestheticized body presented for the male viewer's pleasure'. Bahrani also mentions that 'the ideology of gender in both cultures was subject to the requirements of masculine interest', or 'both visions of femininity were created by male artists for a masculine culture', etc. Bahrani 1996, 13, 15.

interpreted as a reaction to the nude woman's sexual allure and seduction. The nude woman is presented as a victim, but the assailant is not the male viewers. The structures of the article do not suggest who the real assailant was in the Mesopotamian historical context; but in the context of modern scholarship, the assailant is clearly indicated: the Western modes of differentiation which rely on 'the concept of the classical ideal for their very foundation and legitimation of cultural superiority'.[651]

1.6. *Image-Text Relations in 'The Hellenization of Ishtar'*

Bahrani asserts the authority of her interpretation through textual proofs. She criticizes the fertility/reproduction interpretations for not being based on textual evidence, while ancient texts support the sexual interpretation. She also states that 'my aim here is to investigate the images of nude women in conjunction with information regarding attitudes towards the female body derived from the Mesopotamian textual record'.[652]

The text-image relationship that Bahrani utilizes for her arguments is displayed most clearly through her discussion on the vulva's eroticism. The vulva as an index of sexual pleasure is supported in two ways: (1) through the parallelism with the terracotta model beds, as discussed above,[653] and (2) through the Mesopotamian erotic literature, which emphasizes the vulva as a focal point. This dual approach demonstrates Bahrani's use of image-text relations: she argues that images and texts from a culture point in the same direction, reflecting the culture's 'prevailing viewpoints', although there can be differences in details. This can be rephrased in semiotic terms as isomorphic. The isomorphism of the texts and images in Bahrani's interpretation has also been found in regard to the nude statue of Ashur-bel-kala.[654] In Bahrani's article, images and texts are related supplementarily, supporting each other as different manifestations of the same cultural concept in an isomorphic structure.

1.7. *Recapitulation*

In this section, I examined various structures of Bahrani's article, of her interpretation of the Old Babylonian nude woman, and of the marble statue and its inscription. Semiotically analyzed, those structures showed how Bahrani's interpretation of sexuality came through images and texts, collaborated with her

[651] Bahrani 1996, 15.
[652] Bahrani 1996, 7.
[653] See p. 164f.
[654] See §1.4.

personal intuitions and preferences, which then developed into her academic arguments. Semiotics is especially useful to uncover underlying assumptions and ideological structures of an interpretation that are not explicitly mentioned but emitted by the structure of an academic article.

The image-text relation that Bahrani utilizes in her arguments is that images must be supplemented by texts and vice versa, 'in order to arrive at a better understanding of the prevailing ancient Mesopotamian viewpoints'.[655] Images and texts head in the same direction, proving each other in isomorphic structures.

As can be seen from the special comparison between the image and the text of the nude woman statue of Ashur-bel-kala, the isomorphic structure of the textual collaboration model and the image collaboration model enables one to compare verbal texts and visual images compatibly on the same ground. The models also distinguish idiosyncratic narratives which each interpreter imagines, bringing personal intuition and preferences into the discussion. These models are especially suitable for displaying how image and text interpretations correspond to each other in semiosis and for equally comparing various interpretations on the same ground.

Semiotically analyzed, Bahrani's article successfully convinces the reader that the OB nude woman was a sign of ideal feminine sexuality and that the female sexuality was positively perceived in Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, interpreting the OB nude woman as an object of the male gaze, she unintentionally set up the structure of 'female-nude-gazed vs. male-clothed-gazing', which fixes the role of the nude woman as an object of the male gaze. No matter how Bahrani strived to emphasize the active seduction of the nude woman and the positiveness of female sexuality, the structures witness that the nude woman's active-looking seduction is interpreted as only for male sexual desire and reduced to a position in which the nude woman cannot look or gaze *back* at its viewers.

It is paradoxical: the nude woman actively seduces male viewers, but she is a passive object of the male gaze. Is the active seduction then for the male sexual appetite which prefers sexually active women? Bahrani's paradoxical attitudes might have come from two motivations: one to give a more active and positive stance to the nude woman in comparison to the reproduction/fertility interpretations, and the other one to conform to the assumed reality of male supremacy in Mesopotamia. As a result, although Bahrani tried to present the nude woman as a positive expression of female sexuality, she is reduced to an object of the male gaze; her own sexual pleasure is never emphasized in the article in contrast to the male sexual pleasure that is frequently mentioned.

Even more, by setting the ideological opposition of 'sexuality vs. reproduction' against the androcentric interpretations of reproduction/fertility, Bahrani

[655] Bahrani 1996, 7.

brought a set of oppositions such as 'beautiful vs. ugly = sexual pleasure vs. reproduction = unproductive vs. productive'. However, reproduction may also be aesthetic, while sexual pleasure is not necessarily unproductive. Most probably, Bahrani did not intend this. Nevertheless, such a binary structure so prevalent in our culture also permeated her semiosis.

This is my interpretation of Bahrani's interpretation of the OB nude woman. On certain points of my discussion, my readers could find other probability disjunctions to read it differently. I read Bahrani as a model viewer who saw the OB nude as a woman who is reduced to a sexual object by the androcentric culture of Mesopotamia. I felt Bahrani's paradoxical attitude towards the nude woman from reading her article: Bahrani saw the nude woman as simultaneously powerful and powerless. The nude woman has the power to seduce its male viewers, but she is unable to break the male gaze. Model author Bahrani knew that, in a patriarchic society, a woman could not enjoy gender equality as she can today in the Western world. Thus, Bahrani could not but reduce the nude woman to a passive object of the male gaze, while embracing the nude woman's status by emphasizing her erotic allure. That is how the nude woman was given two eyes but is unable to gaze; she is both active and passive at the same time. And this is my idiosyncratic narrative on the model viewer Bahrani.

I emphasize once again that the Bahrani discussed here is not the living person but the model author and viewer Bahrani who reveals itself throughout the article 'The Hellenization of Ishtar'. In fact, on some points, Bahrani shows different opinions in other articles published before and after the publication of 'The Hellenization of Ishtar' in 1996. For example, in her article 'The Iconography of the Nude in Mesopotamia', published in 1993, Bahrani discusses the OB nude woman under the category of 'fertility' and connects her to the cult of Ishtar, the same connection that she criticizes in 'The Hellenization of Ishtar'.[656] Six years later, in 2002, Bahrani opens up the possibility of power residing in the passive frontal pose, arguing that the passiveness of the frontal pose is 'not simply passive, but contained an element of power in it as well', although this power seems to be limited to the nude goddess on the Burney relief in her discussion.[657] Hence, what is presented as 'Bahrani' in this dissertation is limited to what is written in the article 'The Hellenization of Ishtar'.

Bahrani's complex process of semiosis may not have come about in the order that I reconstructed here, but simultaneously with much more complexity. My reconstruction of her semiosis is to hint at how an article is not merely a text but a response to a series of various signs – images, texts, or other sign systems.

[656] Bahrani 1993, 12–13; Bahrani 1996, 9.
[657] Bahrani 2002, 57.

In the next section, I will analyze the interpretations of the model author Julia Assante in the article 'Undressing the Nude', in which Assante replies to Bahrani's interpretation, stating that the nude woman as an object of the male gaze only is highly unlikely. This interaction between Assante and Bahrani will be focused on, along with Assante's use of texts in interpreting images.

2. Julia Assante's Interpretation in 'Undressing the Nude'

This section is my analysis of Julia Assante's article 'Undressing the Nude' and her interpretation of the image of the Old Babylonian nude woman terracotta plaque. As stated above, I chose Assante's article because it argues directly against Bahrani's sexual interpretation, showing how diverse the interpretations of one image can be. Assante's interpretation removes all of the sexual implications from the nude woman and urges readers to see her as *baštu*, the personification of dignity. 'Undressing the Nude' is a final interpretant of Assante's semiosis of the OB Nude Woman image.

This section discusses the structures directly without repeating the basic concepts of the collaboration models. A brief explanation of each box can be found in Chapter 8 and in the analyses of Bahrani (§1). While most boxes are discussed in detail, some boxes are skipped for the sake of brevity.[658]

2.1. *Summary of the Article 'Undressing the Nude'*

In the introductory section, Assante explains how 'The Nude' 'promoted the belief that making nudes for male visual pleasure was the inevitable outcome of human instinct' in the modern West.[659] The nudes from prehistory and antiquity were also carried into this genre, removed from their contexts and forced into the frame of fertility. Even though the focus has changed from fertility to sexuality in recent discourse, 'scholars fall into the trap of conflating sexuality with sexiness and subsequently measure the physical appeal of a nude against modern ideals'.[660]

Assante explains how some concepts – e.g., youthful, lovely, docile, and helpless – came to represent 'femininity' and 'The Nude' to secure male dominance over the female in the post-enlightenment period.[661] The representations of the female nude in antiquity were interpreted according to this modern

[658] See p. 140f for an explanation of which boxes are to be skipped and why.
[659] Assante 2006, 178.
[660] Assante 2006, 179.
[661] Assante 2006, 182.

concept of 'The Nude', if not deprived of attention for being stylistically unattractive (i.e., unrealistic representations). In contrast, the concept of 'The Nude' was never forced upon representation of the ancient male nude, witnessing modern scholars' double standards that are not based on ancient sources.

For prehistory's female nudes, Assante argues that, since they do not fit the modern standard of 'The Nude' as a 'sexual mate', they must have had another womanly feature, i.e., the 'procreator', influenced by Darwin's Theory.[662] This is the logic behind the uniformed Mother Goddess interpretations. This logic generated double standards: while men in luxurious dresses were easily conceived as princes or kings, women in fancy clothing and headdresses tended to be interpreted as goddesses, as if real women were incapable of such portrayals.[663] Alternatively, Assante suggests that prehistoric female representations might have represented the real women of the time, with their experiences and wisdom, who might have been 'a legendary chieftain […] a great shaman or healer or the official keeper of the seasons'.[664]

For the female nudes from ancient Mesopotamia, scholars interpreted them as sexually appealing to the male gaze. For example, the 'Nursing Mother' motif, which depicts a nude woman holding a baby, was even interpreted as a sexual object of the male gaze, while the prime identifying iconography, the infant, is ignored.[665] The second example, the 'Nude Female' motif, was largely oversexualized because her 'slender frame, long-legged, unexaggerated secondary sexual characteristics conforms to modern tastes'.[666] The Nude Female's characteristics, i.e., exposing herself and staring at the beholder, caused her to be perceived as a prostitute because modern visual habits cannot accept a nude woman who challenges the male-dominating position in voyeuristic relationships.[667] Examining various of the motif's contexts, Assante argues that the Nude Woman has appealed widely to 'women, children and men of humble homes', making it impossible to confine her to sexual roles.[668]

Assante gives attention to the nude woman's static and isolated posture. According to Assante, these features reflect that 'she does not represent the living' but 'an icon, an object',[669] most likely the personification of the abstract concept *baštu* – dignity – as a protective spirit.[670] Assante suggests that *baštu* was represented in the nude because:

[662] Assante 2006, 186.
[663] Assante 2006, 188–189.
[664] Assante 2006, 191.
[665] Assante 2006, 194. Emphasis in original.
[666] Assante 2006, 195.
[667] Assante 2006, 197–198.
[668] Assante 2006, 198.
[669] Assante 2006, 196.
[670] For information about *baštu*, see p. 99.

> … dignity is too basic to have such dress. It is something essential, bone deep and unadorned, and it can belong to everyone, regardless of class or gender. […] Nudity here is also a way of universalizing a symbol, democratizing it, while at the same time suggesting that *baštu* originated before or outside of human civilization.[671]

Therefore, even though she is represented in the nude, she is 'too distanced from any citation of palpable sexuality to stir desire'.[672]

In the last section, Assante emphasizes once again that 'the forms of female sensuosity' cannot be limited to 'a single-sex province', nor can they be confined to a single function.[673] It is necessary to overcome modern Western visual habits and gender preconceptions in order to enjoy the diversity of meaning in these ancient nude representations.[674]

2.2. *Structures of the Article 'Undressing the Nude'*

The article itself is the linear text manifestation (Box 3). The topics of the article (Box 4) constitute the summary presented above (§2.1) and forms the narrative (Box 6) that Assante takes as an academic journey to vindicate the wrongly downplayed fame of ancient female nudes, free from the obstacles of modern visual habits on 'The Nude'. (Box 6). Then the actantial role (Box 8) of the subject will be Assante, the object the better understanding of ancient female nudes, and the opponent modern visual habits.

Ideologically (Box 9), Assante imposes connotations of False or Bad on fertility and sexuality interpretations and Good on other diverse interpretations, such as a woman of leadership, power, and wisdom, or dignity. However, the ideological opposition of 'sexuality vs. dignity' corresponding to 'Bad vs. Good' causes a paradox that this opposition unconsciously accepts the dichotomy of 'Mind vs. Body = High vs. Low', which Assante wants to break. This is discussed more in detail on p. 179.

[671] Assante 2006, 202.
[672] Assante 2006, 202.
[673] Assante 2006, 204.
[674] Assante 2006, 204.

2.3. *Structures of Assante's Interpretation of the Image*

This line drawing of the Old Babylonian nude woman terracotta plaque (Fig. 29) is the visual manifestation (Box 3) of Assante's interpretation of the image. In the article, this drawing is referred back to Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, Abb. 68.



Fig. 29: A line drawing of the nude woman (Assante 2006, 195 fig. 4).

Concerning the circumstances of display (Box 2), the primary senders of this terracotta plaque are known to be the OB artists or artisans who made it. It is also important to note that there is another sender in the picture's transmission to us – the one who drew this line drawing – and it is likely that his/her own interpretation of this artifact contributed to the drawing's details. The primary receivers of the OB nude woman image, i.e., the OB ordinary household including men, women, and children according to Assante,[675] are also senders because they used this image and left it so that modern archaeologists could find it.

In the iconic structure (Box 4) of Assante's interpretation of the nude woman, the activated and blown-up properties are: her front-facing body, the positions of her legs and arms. The properties led Assante to interpret the nude woman as a non-living object-like representation of dignity. The nude woman's slender frame and sexual attributes are noted but not discussed further. Other properties, such as her hair, eyes, nose, lips, navel, thighs, fingers, or the ornaments around her neck and waist, are narcotized.

Iconographically (Box 6), this image of a nude woman belongs to the 'Nude Female' motif. Assante's choice to identify her as *baštu* is also affected by Mesopotamian texts which mention *lamassu*, *šēdu*, and *baštu* together.

[675] Assante 2006, 194.

In constructing Assante's own visual narrative structure of the image (Box 6), the nude woman, as *baštu*, is different from other protective spirits such as *lamassu* and *šēdu*: while they are 'true spirits, possessing emotion and free will',[676] actively participating in narratives graved on cylinder seals, the nude woman is 'substantially' different, 'as an object incapable of participating in the narrative action',[677] even though she is a protective spirit who protects the dignity of the household.[678] Because of her relative inactiveness in Assante's interpretation, the nude woman's desires are not clearly stated. It seems that she is primarily given the role of a helper in the visual narrative constructed by Assante.

The narrative and the actantial structure of the nude woman image would be similar to the following: Old Babylonian ordinary family members (subject) want to ensure their happy and long lives (object). Deities motivate that desire (sender) by endowing such a desired life when the people present themselves with dignity – *baštu* – in front of the deities. *Baštu*, the nude woman, helps in this process by protecting their dignity (helper). The household never look at *baštu* with a sexual gaze because she is not a woman at all in their eyes; if they do, it would be improper for her dignity (opponent). These actantial roles can be visualized as in Fig. 30. At probability disjunctions (Box 7) in constructing this narrative, Assante chose to interpret the OB nude woman not as a symbol of feminine sexuality but as the depiction of the inanimate household spirit of dignity. The probability disjunctions are discussed further in §2.4.3.

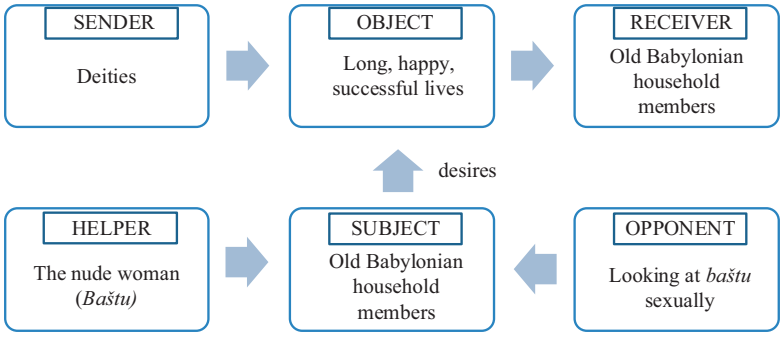


Fig. 30**:** An actantial structure of Assante's OB nude woman interpretation**.**

In Assante's interpretation, viewing the nude woman as dignity is ideologically Right, Good, and Positive, but as feminine sexuality is Wrong, Bad, and Negative (Box 9). Dignity and sexuality are presented as two contrary concepts,

[676] Assante 2006, 201.
[677] Assante 2006, 201.
[678] Assante 2006, 201–202.

and dignity implies non-sexuality while sexuality implies non-dignity. Therefore, Assante's interpretation ideologically implies that throwing a sexual gaze to *baštu* is Bad and False.

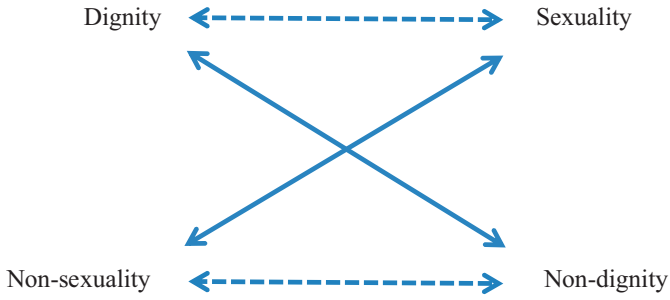


Fig. 31: A semiotic square of Assante's OB nude woman interpretation.

In the possible world (Box 10) of the OB nude woman imagined by Assante (W_{pA}), the OB household desire to protect their dignity by *baštu*, the nude woman. The nude woman is a protective spirit, as well as *lamassu* and *šēdu*, but she is inanimate in contrast to them. The woman's nudity and static posture are not intended to make her sexy, even less to be the object of a sexual gaze, but to visualize the characteristics of dignity symbolically (Table 9).

	Human	*Baštu = dignity*	*Protective spirit*	*Nude*	*Sexual*	*Animate*	*Ability to protect dignity*	*${}_{m}D({}_{p}P_{d})$**
OB household	(+)	(-)	(-)	+/-	+/-	(+)	-	[+]
OB nude woman terra-cotta plaque	(-)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(-)	(-)	(+)	[+]
Her nude body / static posture	-	+	+	+	(-)	(-)	+	
Lamassu/ šēdu	(-)	(-)	(+)	-	-	(+)	-	

Table 9: $W_{pA.}$

*${}_{m}D({}_{p}P_{d})$: the household (m) desires (D) that the OB nude woman terracotta plaque (p) protects (P) their dignity (d).

The structure of this possible world of the viewer Assante (W_{pA}) will be compared with those of Bahrani (W_{pB}) and Kim (W_{pK}) at the end of this chapter.

2.4. *Discussions*

2.4.1. Assante's response to Bahrani and a hidden paradox

In her article, Assante explicitly counters Bahrani's sexual interpretations of the Old Babylonian female nudes twice. The first case is about the Nursing Mother motif, and the other one is about the 'Nackte Frau' (Nude Female) motif.

Assante identifies the female nudes depicted with an infant as the iconography of a nursing mother or motherhood.[679] Rebutting the excessive sexualization of female nudes which even happened to those with a baby, she quotes Bahrani:

> One scholar asks us to ignore the chief identifying iconography of this figure, her infant, and see her 'not as a mother as a reproductive agent, but one who is an object of male sexual desire and pleasure. Her straightforward reproductive capabilities are de-emphasized in favour of her desirability. They are no longer as important as her ability to lure the male gaze, to please the male viewer sexually' (Bahrani 1996: 8).[680]

Assante criticizes Bahrani on that point, asserting that:

> The above slant on the Nursing Mother's sexuality is not the result of research; it is contrary to it. Stating that female nudes belong to an all-male province implies that women have no sensitivity, interest or even awareness of their own bodies (or, if women created nudes for male sexual delectation, are they not then pimping their own sex?). Furthermore, it implies that women are culturally conditioned to avoid looking at realistic images of female nudity. Rather than extracting the Nursing Mother from the artifact class to which it belongs, as in the case above, it is of the upmost importance to study the motif *within* that context before any claims about its meaning can even be considered.[681]

Assante counters Bahrani's points further, saying that 'Nude females of any variety were certainly not made for the male gaze any more than other plaque figures were, such as the very popular bull-eared god'.[682] She does not reference Bahrani's article here, but it is implied since Bahrani is the one who clearly

[679] Assante 2006, 193.
[680] Assante 2006, 193.
[681] Assante 2006, 193. Emphasis in original.
[682] Assante 2006, 194.

asserts that the female nudes' purpose is male sexual desire, and the term 'male gaze' is repeated constantly in Bahrani's article.

The second point of refutation is Bahrani's sexual interpretation of the 'Nude Female' motif which Bahrani named 'seductress':

> More recently, one art historian sees her as the quintessential 'seductress', explicitly made for – and engaged in – sexually exciting men (Bahrani 1996: 8–9). Never mind that she appears frequently on seals whose owners are women (Collon 1986: 132). All of these interpretations turn the 'Nackte Frau' into an active sexual agent, and, as I will presently show, all are likely to be wrong.[683]

Assante continues to implicitly argue against Bahrani that 'the wide general appeal of the 'Nackte Frau' for women, children, and men of humble homes from the Diyala in the north to the southern reaches of old Sumer makes untenable a reading of prostitutes and temptresses for the most commonplace of all Old Babylonian images'.[684]

In sum, Assante criticizes Bahrani for interpreting the Old Babylonian female nudes not based on their artifact contexts but on preconceptions conditioned by the modern visual habit and judges Bahrani's interpretation as insufficient to be called a research result. Even though Bahrani's interpretation arose as a refutation of the previous androcentric fertility interpretations, Assante sternly states that such sexual interpretation is not better than fertility interpretations, since both are constructed by the modern visual habit of 'The Nude'.

However, Assante's interpretation is also not free from the modern conceptions that Assante wants to refute. The typical modern Western male-female dichotomy is followed by a set of binaries: Male vs. Female → Culture vs. Nature → Mind vs. Body → High vs. Low, etc. The uniformed sexuality and fertility interpretations follow this set of binary oppositions, imposing only body-like (thus 'low') attributes to the female nudes. To subvert that order, Assante removes sexual meaning from the ancient female nudes and instead endows them with magical and political features. In this course, Assante puts the 'feminine = sexuality/fertility' connection on the ideological stance of False, Negative, and Bad. However, it is only a one-dimensional subversion because Assante did not break the dichotomy itself. By excluding fertility and sexuality from the ancient female nudes – two of many multidimensional aspects of not only femininity but also masculinity – Assante unintentionally admits that the properties of sexuality and fertility are *inferior* to others. That is why, for Assante, vindicating those ancient images would mean excluding such interpretations from them. I believe

[683] Assante 2006, 197.
[684] Assante 2006, 198.

that what Assante tries to argue against is not sexuality and fertility themselves, but the *uniformed* interpretations focusing *only* on the fertility and sexuality of ancient female nudes. Nevertheless, her drive to emphasize that point seems to have been expressed in the textual structures which accept the inferiority of fertility and sexuality.

2.4.2. Dignity, nudity, and essence

For Assante, dignity (*baštu*) is to be represented as nude because both dignity and nudity are 'basic', 'essential', 'bone deep', 'unadorned', 'belong to everyone', 'regardless of class or gender', 'remaining to a person when all else is stripped away', 'universal', 'democratic', and 'originated before or outside of human civilization'.[685] I want to review some of the presuppositions here.

Presupposition (a): 'Dignity is the essence of human being, unadorned, belonging to everyone'. However, according to the *CAD*, *baštu* is a word used for *praising* some people or deities. In prayers, it is said that 'evil should depart in front of you, dignity should enter with you'.[686] As Assante also stated, *baštu* was regarded as 'a gift conferred by Inanna/Ishtar's gaze',[687] and was used not only for humans or deities but also for temples, objects, and animals. If dignity was regarded in Mesopotamia as something essential to humanity, why does someone wish to enter with dignity, why is someone praised for having dignity, and why do animals and objects also have dignity? If dignity was universal and democratic, regardless of class and gender, why is possessing it regarded as special and praised?

Under this presupposition, there are several hidden links: (1) the unclothed body – how one is born from the mother's womb – is the original format of humans; (2) original is essential; and (3) clothing mixes the original with external. However, as discussed above,[688] unclothedness is not universally accepted as the original format of humanity, and original is not always essential.[689] Furthermore, the 'Nude Female' is not completely naked; she wears various ornaments and jewelry, sending a message about her status. Certainly, her nudity cannot 'belong to everyone' (i.e., represent the universal essence of the human being) since she is in *feminine* form – which excludes the male body – and the *slim* and *young* shape of her body cannot represent all kinds of people but only some women of a specific age and health condition.

[685] Assante 2006, 202.
[686] 'baštu', *CAD* B: 142–144.
[687] Assante 2006, 201.
[688] See p. 119–120 above.
[689] If so, is a baby essential to a human? Even if so, why then not represent *baštu* as a baby?

Presupposition (b): 'Dignity was originated before or outside of the human civilization'. This presupposition contradicts presupposition (a) because the 'essence' of the human being – what makes a human a human – cannot be originated outside of human civilization. If it originated outside of human civilization, how is a human being different from an animal?

Therefore, the connections between dignity-nudity-essence are culturally dependent, evident in modern Western cultures but not in ancient Mesopotamia.

2.4.3. Probability disjunctions in the connections 'the clasping hands gesture – inertness and stasis – not living – object – and non-feminine'

About the pose that the 'Nude Female' takes, Assante writes:

> Despite her frontality and nakedness, her fixed stance, the closed gesture of her hands, the sharp T-form outline created by the angles of her arms, convey an impression of the inert, the closed and the static. She does not represent the living. She is often in seals a representation of a representation. In a very few scenes, she wears the horned miter, commonly seen on male and female statuettes to depict divine status. Less frequently, she is the recipient of worship, as many objects were in ancient Mesopotamia. In seal scenes, her fixedness and frontality are in sharp contrast to the action taking place around her and work to interrupt action rather than further it, like a misplaced exclamation point stranded in the middle of a sentence. In short, artists did not depict her as they depicted other figures in the same scene but as aloof and unresponsive. The Nude Female was clearly an icon, an object, hardly understood as a woman at all by her contemporaries.[690]

In this paragraph, Assante makes a series of connections starting from the nude woman's posture, to her inertness and stasis, followed by her status as an inanimate object, and finally, to her non-feminine features.

	Connections				
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	Final
Clasping hands	closed T-form	inert, closed, and static	not living	object	non-feminine
Aligned feet	fixed				

Table 10: Connections from the nude woman's posture to her non-femininity.

[690] Assante 2006, 196.

At each probability disjunction, the interpretation could have gone in different directions. For example, while Assante chose to interpret the Nude Female's clasping hands and aligned feet as 'closed' and 'static', another may have felt it was polite and decorous. This could further have been conceived as actively taking a posture of welcome or being prepared for the next actions.[691] Even if one accepts Assante's impressions that the nude woman is fixed, static, and closed, it could be interpreted as merely submissive or passive: not necessarily a non-living object. At the probability disjunction between an 'object' and 'non-feminine', one may interpret it to represent a female statue or a symbol,[692] not always denying her femininity.

Then why did Assante take this series of connections? The first impression – static, inert, closed – is commonly shared by other viewers,[693] but how about the connections to the 'not-living' and 'non-feminine'? The article gives hints: 'In seal scenes, her fixedness and frontality are in sharp contrast to the action taking place around her and work to interrupt action rather than further it, like a misplaced exclamation point stranded in the middle of a sentence'. Spoken differently, Assante finds it odd to see a non-interacting figure (the Nude Female) in the middle of a narrative scene and turns her into a non-living object to excuse for her inactive participation in the scene. This logic must presuppose that the narrative has nothing to do with the 'Nude Female'. However, it is still possible to think that the 'Nude Female' in a presentation scene (one of the scenes that the 'Nude Female' usually appears) takes the role of *looking at the viewer* in the narrative of the scene. She does not interact with others but still takes a part in the narrative as she is.

The last connection of 'an object' to 'non-feminine' seems to be jumping. Previously, Assante explained that *baštu* was represented in female form because that word is grammatically feminine in Akkadian.[694] Nevertheless, according to Assante, *baštu* is an 'abstract neuter' because she is an object – thus, *lamassu* (female), *šēdu* (male), and *baštu* form a triad, representing 'a certain gender balance required for a good life'.[695] However, *baštu* is grammatically and visually feminine. There is no reason to see the nude woman as a neuter, nor is there evidence. No matter how the nude woman is depicted– closed, fixed, and static – she is visually represented as a woman. It seems that Assante made such excessive de-sexualization of the 'Nude Female' as a counterwork to her over-sexualization.

[691] See for example my interpretation of the OB nude woman in p. 128–130 above.
[692] See p. 132ff.
[693] See p. 128–129 above.
[694] Assante 2006, 201.
[695] Assante 2006, 201.

The choices that Assante made at each probability disjunction prove that an interpretation – however academic or scientific it is – cannot be made without personal experiences and preferences, which lead the overall direction of the interpretation and amalgamate previous discourses and known facts into a new perspective. Assante's article prompts me to guess that she was tired of reading uniformed fertility or sexual interpretations of the nude woman and wanted to show that the 'Nude Female' can be interpreted better without sexual meanings. This is a reasonable motivation for research because it offers a new hermeneutic frame. Therefore, Assante's hermeneutic choices, based on the various contexts of the 'Nude Female', deserves great appreciation, as long as one is aware of the presumptions and personal preferences underlying her interpretation.

2.5. *Image-Text Relations in 'Undressing the Nude'*

There are two examples that hint at how Assante assumes the image-text relations and how she utilizes them in 'Undressing the Nude'. Both cases reveal that Assante underlines similarities between images and texts, such that images can be understood as texts.

> Perhaps a more important question is, why should breasts, realistic or not, point to sexuality in the first place? A woman's body comes with breasts in the same way as a table comes with legs. As one of many signs for the female body in the language of imagery, it may not convey more messages about sexuality than a letter in a given word does. Another major sign is of course the vulva. In fact, a triangle with a slash at the bottom corner – a schematic vulva – is a word in cuneiform writing, standing for 'woman', just as a simple phallic symbol similar to an arrow pointing up means 'man'. A triangle with a slash may not be great art by our standards but one could probably claim that as a metonymic sign it carried vaster, deeper meaning than a naked female body did to its contemporaries.[696]
>
> In fact, many female nudes of the ancient Near East may be largely silent about biological sex, or only vaguely refer to gender as an abstract condition, as impartial as the feminine or masculine gender of the word table in French or German.[697]

In the first statement, Assante compares the cuneiform sign for 'woman', which schematically visualizes the vulva, with the image of the exposed vulva of the OB nude female representations. As the cuneiform sign does not titillate its readers, the nude woman's exposed vulva would not necessarily evoke sexual arousal. In the second statement, the female gender markings of the ancient Near

[696] Assante 2006, 192.
[697] Assante 2006, 199.

Eastern nudes are likened to the grammatical gender markings such as the word endings '-sion' or '-ance' in French or '-ung' or '-keit' in German. In these comparisons, Assante perceives an image in the same manner as a cuneiform sign. The visual image of a nude woman needs not be viewed sexually, in the same way as a word-sign for woman would not be looked at with a sexual gaze.

I do not agree with Assante's stance on understanding visual images as texts because a visual image functions much more on its iconicity than a writing symbol does, and iconicity makes one perceive a sign not as a sign but as the object that the sign stands for.[698] Writing signs have a certain degree of iconicity, but much less than visual images. Thus, if a real nude woman may titillate its viewers, so does its visual representations even though in different degrees, regardless of whether it is realistically or schematically rendered.[699] Nevertheless, these comparisons indicate that Assante tends to regard visual image signs in a similar way to textual signs.

2.6. *Recapitulation*

Assante's interpretation came out as a final-interpretant of Bahrani's, Wiggermann's, and previous androcentric interpretations, as well as the signs from the 'ancient nude woman representations'. She criticizes the negative effects of the modern habit of 'The Nude', which resulted in two extreme ways of looking at ancient female nudes: either the oversexualization of slim and pretty nudes or the dehumanization of fat and unsexy nudes. Alternatively, she suggests reading the prehistoric nudes as chieftains, great shamans, or healers instead of the stereotyped interpretation of the mother goddess and reading the OB female nudes as *baštu*, an inanimate protective spirit and the personification of dignity, in place of reducing her as an object of the male gaze.

While Assante's interpretation of the OB nude woman as a kind of protective spirit is well evidenced by the archaeological contexts, her identification with *baštu* can be controversial.[700] Moreover, the relation that Assante creates between the 'nudity' of the OB nude woman and her 'dignity' by the concept of the 'human essence' is based on modern Western prejudices which are not proven by Mesopotamian materials. The ideological structures also reveal that her efforts to cleanse the OB nude woman from sexuality paradoxically reinforces the false dichotomy 'mind vs. body' = 'superior vs. inferior' because her intentional overlooking of its sexual connotations – evidenced in Mesopotamian

[698] See p. 61–65 above.
[699] For the concept of iconicity, see p. 61ff above.
[700] See p. 120 above.

texts – implies that Assante conceives of the bodily sexual gaze as being too inferior for dignity.

The image-text relation that Assante utilized in her article – to read images as textual signs – helped her to discuss the images more analytically, but at the same time caused her to underestimate the power of the iconicity of visual images. Even though, both in the visual and textual signs, the symbolic and iconic modes work together, the degree of iconicity – which allow a viewer to perceive a set of lines identified with its object, stimulating similar reactions – differs in them.[701] Such a strategy of relating images and texts, reading images as textual signs, might have blocked Assante from recognizing various effects which the visual expression of a vulva may evoke.

Notwithstanding, Assante's interpretation greatly contributes to the academics by revealing the origin of the stereotyped sexual, fertility, or reproduction interpretations of ancient nudes, and by rightfully criticizing the problematic ideologies behind them. The semiotic analysis of her interpretations shows that every academic interpretation must involve personal experiences and preferences guiding the overall direction of the interpretation.

3. Yeseul Kim's Interpretation in 'The Nude Woman as a Sign-Complex'

My interpretation, 'The Nude Woman as a Sign-Complex', recognizes seven different points of the OB nude woman as signs and interprets them in discourse with previous interpretations of the nude woman. At the end of the interpretation, I synthesize all the signs and its interpretations into a figure, the OB nude woman, and identify her as a kind of a protective spirit from household religion, related somehow to Ishtar, having supernatural powers as an image rather than as a mortal woman.

Since I, the empirical author of pages 106–137 above is also me, the analyst here, the boundary between the empirical author, model author, and the analyst becomes obscured in this section. Nevertheless, I distinguish between them, as I did with Bahrani's and Assante's interpretations, by referring to the model author as 'Kim' in third person even though it is my interpretation. The personal experiences which are discussed in this section are not tangible from the model author but come from me the empirical author. My purpose in this section is to share the personal experiences which affected my interpretation and to analyze them in semiotic terms. Thus, I will open my own experiences and personal preferences as a woman and a South Korean native in §3.2.2.

[701] See p. 61–65 above for the concept of iconicity.

3.1. *Structures of Kim's Interpretation of the Image*

Since Kim's interpretation on pages 106–137 above is the linear text manifestation (Box 3) of her interpretation of the image, focusing solely on the Nude Woman terracotta plaque, the structures of her article do not significantly differ from the structures of her image interpretation. To avoid redundancy, I do not discuss the overlapping structures of her article, but instead proceed directly to analyzing the structures of her image interpretation.

Fig. 9 is the visual manifestation of the OB nude woman (Box 3). According to Kim's interpretation regarding the circumstance of display (Box 2), the senders (the artists and users) of the image are the OB people. The description on page 106 shows her iconic structure of the OB nude woman (Box 4). The activated and blown-up topics of the iconic structure are the nude woman's face, eyes, head, hair, clasping hands, breasts, navel, vulva, nudity, frontality, legs, feet, and jewelry adorning her. Her shoulders, toes, and back are narcotized.

Iconographically (Box 6), this nude woman is categorized as a standing nude woman motif, a type of clasping-hands gesture, which proliferated in the form of a molded terracotta plaque in the OB period. Kim's idiosyncratic visual narrative about the nude woman is confined to the specific terracotta plaque (Fig. 9),[702] neither including the nude woman on cylinder seals nor generalizing the nude woman as a type. The visual narrative occurs in the context of household religion, in the setting where the plaque is placed near entrances and small shrines in ordinary houses and/or held in the occupants' hands.

The reconstructed narrative (Box 6) and actantial structure (Box 8; Fig. 32) would be similar to the following: the nude woman (subject), a kind of protective spirit living in the house, wants to protect the household (object). The sender of the desire would be the wishes of OB people for a happy and long life, permeated in the act of making those terracotta molds and plaques and reflected in the Mesopotamian worldview. Ishtar could have also been the sender, but since the exact relationship between Ishtar and the nude woman is not yet determined, it cannot be assured. At least it can be assumed that the nude woman's connection to Ishtar would be the source of the nude woman's magical powers, helping to achieve her goal (helper). The beneficiary of that desire is the OB household. Evil spirits who want to ruin the house and its members are the nude woman's opponent. At the probability disjunctions (Box 7) of each visual sign that Kim activates – nudity, frontality, etc. – Kim chooses to interpret them as viewing her as a warm, welcoming protective spirit based on the ancient Near Eastern knowledge that she has studied and also on her life experiences as a native South Korean.[703]

[702] Kim states it on p. 107.
[703] See p. 191–194 below.

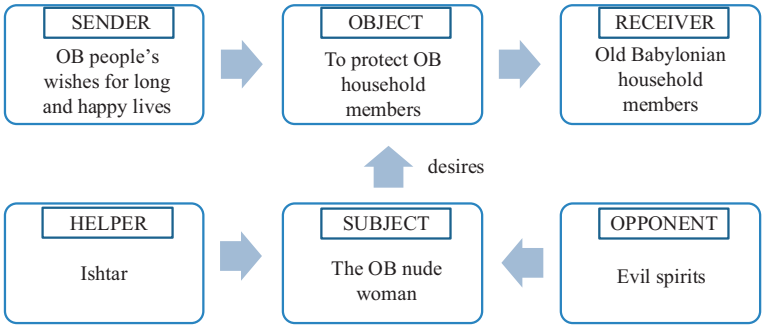


Fig. 32: An actantial model of Kim's interpretation of the OB nude woman.

Ideologically (Box 9), the nude woman is presented as Good, while evil spirits are shown as Bad. The OB people's wishes for a long, happy, and successful life and all their efforts to attain it are categorized as Positive and Life, while everything against it is Negative and Death. Regarding the identification of the nude woman, Kim uses the binary of mortal vs. supernatural. However, she tries to use a more integrating view that the nude woman covers both the mortal and supernatural realms as a protective spirit. Thus, this ideological opposition between mortal and supernatural does not accompany the ideological opposition of Good and Bad, but both are valued as Good.

	Human	*Protective spirit*	*Divine*	*Living*	*Active*	*Possess magical powers*	*Related with Ishtar*	*Unique*	*Bound to the house*	$^{p}W_{h}$*	$^{p}W_{b}$ **	$^{p}P_{h}$***
Nude woman terracotta plaque	?	(+)	?	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	[+]	[+]	[+]
Clasping hands gesture				+	(+)	+						
Frontal face				+	(+)	+	+					
Nudity				+	+	(+)	(+)					
Household	(+)	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	[+]		[+]
Benevolent spirits	-	+	+	+	+	+			-		[+]	

Table 11: A world structure of W_{pK}.

*$_{p}W_{h}$: the nude woman terracotta plaque (p) welcomes (W) the household (h).

**$_{p}W_{b}$: the nude woman terracotta plaque (p) welcomes (W) benevolent spirits (b).

***$_{p}P_{h}$: the nude woman terracotta plaque (p) protects (P) the household (h).

The possible world (Box 10) of the nude woman terracotta plaque in OB as imagined by the viewer Kim (W_{pK}) (Table 11) is the world where the nude woman molded on the terracotta plaque actually lives and acts as a protective spirit. Her properties and relation with other individuals – uniqueness, magical powers, relation to Ishtar, bound to the house, protecting and welcoming of household – are listed in the table below. There are more things that she does to help the general well-being of those in the house, such as hearing their invocations and taking care of them, but in this table, I only list the ones most discussed in the interpretation.

3.2. *Discussions*

3.2.1. Kim's interpretation as an interpretant of Bahrani's and Assante's interpretations

Kim's interpretation arose as an interpretant of Assante's, beyond Bahrani's, and ultimately an interpretant of the sign, the visual image of the OB nude woman terracotta plaque.

As a sign, the visual representation of the OB nude woman generated various Western and androcentric interpretations as its macro-interpretants in the 19th century CE. After that, the sign 'OB nude woman' produced Bahrani's interpretation as another macro-interpretant, which also became the macro-interpretant of all the previous modern androcentric interpretations that Bahrani argues against. Assante's interpretation comes after, as a macro-interpretant of the sign 'Bahrani's interpretation', the signs of various previous androcentric interpretations, and of the sign 'OB nude woman'. Fig. 33 simplifies this process.

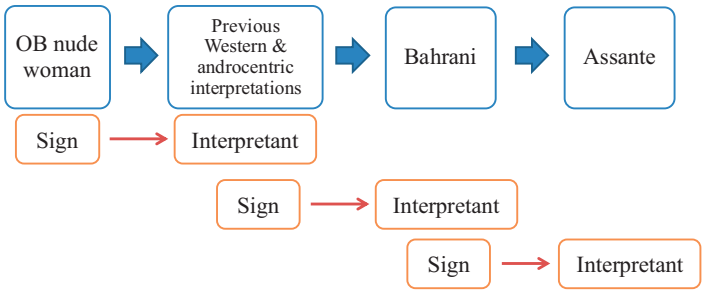


Fig. 33: Simplified model of the sign-interpretant relationship of the OB nude woman.

In this complex interrelation of signs-interpretants, Kim's interpretation offers another macro-interpretant of the signs: the OB nude woman, previous androcentric interpretations, Bahrani's sexual interpretation, Wiggermann's *baštu*

interpretation, Assante's take over from Wiggermann's, and other signs – scholarly articles, monographs, images, etc. – she encountered in interpreting the image (Fig. 34). Kim's interpretation is part of the complex semiotic net of the culture, interpreted and interpreting, connecting ancient Mesopotamia with the modern globalized world and of relating the image with texts.

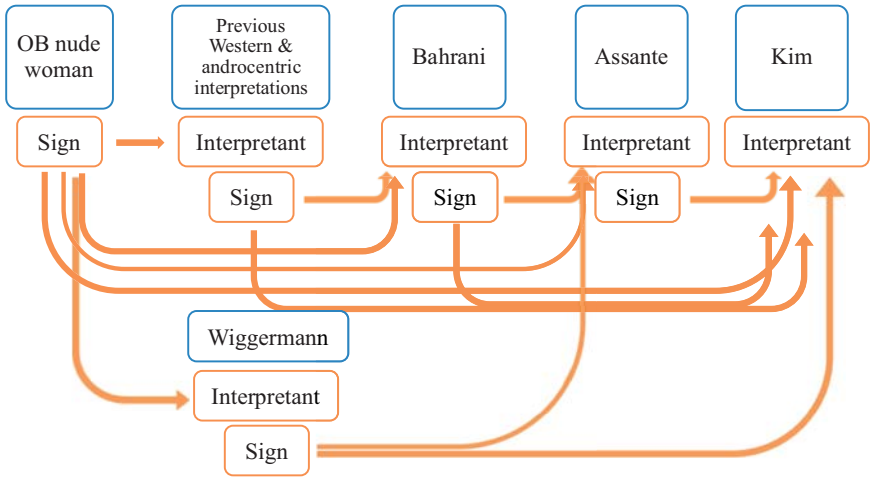


Fig. 34: Complex model of the sign-interpretant relationship of the OB nude woman.

Reading an academic article as an interpretant of signs perceives a scholarly work within the vast network of semiosis. It also allows one to accept that an academic article, as an interpretant, is the author's response to previous scholarly discourses, guided by his/her experiences and personal preferences at each probability disjunction.[704] However scientific it claims to be, it is an outcome of one's semiosis and not at all purely objective.

3.2.2. Kim's Korean cultural background which affected her interpretation

As I repeatedly emphasized in Part I, interpretation is a collaboration between the work and the interpreter; the subjectivity of the interpreter – personal experiences and preferences – also plays a significant role filling the textual/visual gaps. Interpretation of the OB nude woman image requires an especially active participation of subjectivity because of her ambiguity: the lack of accompanying figures or inscriptions. In this section, I will present what personal experiences of Kim's affected her interpretation and how. I will point out five signs on which

[704] See Eco 1979, 31–32; Eco 1987, 140–148. See also chapter 8 §3.3 and chapter 6 §3.

Kim's personal experiences present the clearest impact and discuss how Kim's experiences intermingled within her interpretation.

a) *Archaeological contexts*
Kim interprets that the archaeological contexts of the OB nude woman terracotta plaque point to her household religious setting and suggests imagining her as a benevolent spirit protecting the house.

This interpretation is influenced by her experiences of Korean household religions, which involves the existence of various lesser deities protecting the house and the habit of putting talismans near entrances. Among those lesser gods in the traditional household religion in Korea, there are, for example: a goddess of fire and the kitchen who is responsible for the wealth of the house and for preserving the embers in the kitchen; the god of the backyard protects the house from the back, ensuring that various sauces preserved in the backyard are not spoiled; the goddess of toilet – located in an outhouse – is responsible for keeping the toilet clean so that no demon of an epidemic comes through the toilet; and the god of the main entrance protects the house's entrance. There are still more. These household deities form a complex divine family, bound to the house.[705] After the modernization of South Korea, the architectural structure of houses changed, and these gods ceased to be living deities. The proliferation of Christianity in South Korea also degraded the belief in these deities as superstitions, but this traditional religious system survived in fairytales and mass-media, constructing the minds of Koreans in its unique way.

Along with the academic knowledge that the OB nude woman terracotta plaques are found with other plaques in domestic areas, especially near entrances and house sanctuaries, Kim's personal experience of Korean household religion allowed her to think of the terracotta plaques as a set that functioned to protect the house and to ensure the well-being of the house's members.

b) *The female nudity*
Kim's negative experience as a woman who was implicitly required to be sexually appealing to the male gaze in order to reach the standard – to marry a man – forced her to find *alternative* interpretations to the sexual/erotic one. This does not mean that Kim ignored the sexual aspects of the terracotta plaque; she emphasizes that the sexuality is coded in the nudity, since the exposure of the vulva was a sign of sexuality and eroticism in Mesopotamia. However, in Kim's interpretation, the OB nude woman's sexuality as a sign conveys a message that she

[705] The familiar relationship differs according to local traditions. See Chung et al. 2014, 'Origin of Gate God', 52–54; 'Song of Household Guardian Deity', 80–81; Chung et al. 2013, 'Cheollyung: Backyard God', 146; 'Cheuksin: Outhouse Deity', 147; 'Jowang: Kitchen God', 169–170; 'Munsin: Gate God', 176–177; 'Seongju: House Guardian God', 182–183.

has magical powers including influence over the occupants' sexuality, rather than functioning primarily as a source of sexual arousal, although the latter possibility is not entirely dismissed.

As an East Asian native, Kim's experience of the concepts of essence drove her to reject the connection between nudity and the human essence. The quote about the lack of nudity in Chinese art in the article 'On Nakedness, Nudity, and Gender' depreciates her ancestors' (who as Koreans shared cultural aspects with the Chinese) ability to visualize the essence,[706] while the Greeks and Mesopotamians were capable. Kim's experience of the concepts of essence in East Asia allowed her to think that it need not to be connected to nudity but may take many other forms.

c) *Detailed face and slim body*

Kim's taste for female beauty, probably constituted not only through Western influence but also by South Korean culture, which favors a slim body, long legs, small face, rich hair, big eyes, and youth rather than age, made her think that our OB nude woman is young and beautiful.

Kim's personal experience of childhood, interacting with stuffed animals, could have also played a role. Small kids are used to thinking that these stuffed animals are alive, know their feelings and react. Later kids learn that this is the work of their brains which project their feelings onto the ambiguous facial expressions of the stuffed animal. Kim's interpretation of the OB nude woman's ambiguous facial expression as a means to project the viewer's feelings could have been affected by such experiences.

d) *Legs and feet*

Kim's experience of Korean household religion gave her the idea of a protective spirit that is bound to the house. The house deities in the Korean religious system are believed to have mobility within the house in order to protect the household, but they are bound to the house's vicinity[707] and are unable to travel far away from lest they lose power. Such experiences gave Kim the idea that a protective spirit may be bound to a house while still mobile.

[706] See p. 119f above. While visualizations of essence may take various forms in traditional East Asian cultures, what I am familiar with are abstract forms and diagrams, such as the symbol of yin and yang or the *taijitu* (literally, 'Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate'), which takes a form of dynamic circles. The combination of yin and yang are the essence of every human being – regardless of gender, race, or class – and further of the whole universe and cosmos. See Louis 2003, 145. The South Korean national flag incorporates a portion of the *taiji* diagram, witnessing the shared cultural heritage of East Asian cultures.

[707] See for example, Chung et al. 2013, 'Teoju: Land Tutelary God', 188–189.

e) *Lack of divine attributes*

In Korea's traditional household religion, there are many gods and goddesses, which are said to have been once human but became deities.[708] The myths with which Kim grew up are full of stories of humans who became gods and gods who became humans.[709] Furthermore, in the Korean language, not only deities but also benevolent and even malevolent spirits all have the '신(神)' title which means 'god' or 'deity'. Seen through these experiences, our OB nude woman's lack of divine attributes did not lead Kim to automatically remove the possibility of her divinity, but prompted her to think of other options, such as she is a lower deity, a supernatural being, or was once a human but became supernatural upon being depicted as an icon on terracotta plaques.

I stated Kim's personal experiences here, especially those with traditional Korean household religion, which affected her interpretation. Since Kim is me, I could acquire much more knowledge on her personal experiences and preferences than the other interpreters I analyzed above. Although 'Kim' here is the model author of Chapter 10, 'The Nude Woman as a Sign-Complex', distinguished from me the analyst, and I must admit that the boundary between the model author Kim and the analyst Kim became rather vague in this analysis.

What I want to emphasize is that I revealed my personal experiences not to prove my interpretation, nor do I want to apply the Korean household religious system to Mesopotamian studies. Rather, these personal experiences show why I chose a certain track of interpretation instead of many other possibilities. As the semiotic analysis of Bahrani's and Assante's interpretations have revealed, interpretations – how academic they are – cannot be built independently from the interpreters' personal experiences.

3.3. *Image-Text Relations in 'The Nude Woman as a Sign Complex'*

In Kim's interpretation, the relationship between texts and images are rather free and unrestricted. Because she is aware of the fact that images and texts come to mind without a discernable order in semiosis, each contributing to the final interpretation, she admits that, academically, non-related images or texts also affected her interpretation. This does not mean that she does not distinguish the academically acceptable realm of relations (spatially, temporally, or thematically related) from non-acceptable ones. Rather, by dividing her role as a model author and as an analyst, Kim could safely show which personal drives led her interpretation in a certain direction. For Kim, images and texts are two of many

[708] See for example, Chung et al. 2013, 'Origin of Gate God', 54.
[709] See for example, Chung et al. 2014.

types of information that freely pop up and intricately interact in the course of interpretation.

3.4. *Recapitulation*

Kim's interpretation is a macro-interpretant of Assante's, Bahrani's, and other previous scholars' interpretations, and finally of the sign, the OB nude woman terracotta plaque. Various images, texts, and personal experiences play a role in her semiosis.

Kim tries to avoid the pitfall of applying the positive vs. negative formula to the binary oppositions that she uses. For example, the mortal vs. supernatural opposition is undermined when the OB nude woman was identified as in between them. However, the binary opposition that Kim wanted to eliminate from her interpretation – mind vs. body = high vs. low – she unintentionally fell into. Even though Kim recognized sexuality and eroticism from the OB nude woman's nudity, there is nothing erotic or sexual in the narrative as a protective spirit. Kim unconsciously refrained herself from interpreting the OB nude woman as an object of a sexual gaze. Such an attitude reveals that Kim perceives the sexual gaze as ideologically bad, but other roles of the protective spirits – protecting promoting life, success, abundance, etc. – as good, implying the mind vs. body = high vs. low oppositions. This shows how difficult it is to think outside of stereotypes, to break fixed ideas.

Regarding the image-text relations, Kim's interpretation shows that texts and images belong to different sign systems but are freely transferrable, even though the transference may cause some distortions when it reaches into another sign system. Images and texts may arise in the interpreter's mind freely and unrestrictedly and then interact intricately. They are not in binary opposition, but rather only two of many ways of expressing a mental concept or an interpretant.

Kim used semiotic concepts and perspectives in recognizing multiple signs from the OB nude woman. By constructing an idiosyncratic narrative of the OB nude woman, as a result of the interplay of her knowledge of Mesopotamia and her personal experiences in semiosis, Kim's interpretation displays another side of the nude woman's multifaceted aspects.

4. Comparisons and Conclusion

4.1. *Comparison of the Image-Text Relations*

The model authors – Zainab Bahrani, Julia Assante and Yeseul Kim – construct image-text relations in their arguments similarly but also differently. In general, all three model authors perceive visual marks as signs, transfer them to texts, and relate them to other images. For example, in interpreting the OB nude woman with the clasped hands gesture, the three authors divide certain features of that visual representation and connect them to the textually presented concepts, such as: exposure of the vulva (image) – sexuality – object of male gaze; nudity (image) – essence – dignity; or gesture (image) – warm – welcoming, etc. Then, these concepts are related to the images of the OB nude woman or other ancient nude images again. This is a semiotic way of investigation, perceiving certain marks as signs which embed meanings and textualizing them again in order to communicate in the academically friendly way (i.e., articles).

There are also differences. The image-text relation used primarily by Bahrani is that the images and texts head in the same direction, as seen in the evidence of the prevailing phenomena of the same culture. Assante emphasizes the similarity between images and texts – that images can be understood as texts in semiotic manners. For Kim, images and texts are two of many types – music, dance, cooking, etc. – of how to manifest thoughts, which freely pop up and interact regardless of how close or distant their affinities are in the course of semiosis. The distinctions among the three model authors do not reflect the varying attitudes of the actual authors towards the image-text relationship; rather, they represent different focal points for their arguments as manifested in their texts. All three (real) authors will most likely use other strategies on other occasions. The three model authors' differences reveal how the ways of the interaction between images and texts are diverse, perhaps as diverse as the number of different interpreters. There can be no right or wrong way to connect images and texts in semiosis, although 'acceptable' ways do exist for different social communities (e.g., academic circles).

4.2. Comparison of the Possible Worlds

The three possible worlds – W_{pB}, W_{pA}, and W_{pK} – imagined by the three model authors take place in the same cultural context (Old Babylonia) and features the same individual (the Old Babylonian nude woman terracotta plaque), but the structures of these possible worlds are distinct from each other. W_{pB} constructs a world where the OB nude woman is an object of the male gaze, and the woman

seduces her male viewers. In W_{pA}, the nude woman does not appeal sexually to her viewers because she is *baštu*, a special kind of protective spirit and an object-like abstract personification of dignity. W_{pK} imagines the world where the nude woman, unique to the house and bound to the house's vicinity, actively interacts with the household as a protective spirit somehow related to Ishtar. As displayed in the tables above (Table 2, Table 9, and Table 11), these worlds feature different individuals, S-necessary properties, and essential properties.

The possible worlds of Bahrani and Assante sit in especially stark contrast. The nude woman 'seductress' has a strong sexual allure in W_{pB}, while the nude woman '*baštu*' of W_{pA} is not at all conceived of as a female because she is supposed to be viewed as an abstract personification of dignity. A visually represented vulva in W_{pB} is the intentionally elaborated 'site and source of sexual pleasure',[710] in contrast to the vulva in W_{pA} which simply marks a female body without any sexual connotation, similar to a grammatical gender marking.[711] The nude woman of W_{pA} does not have the same special relationship with male viewers as the nude woman of W_{pB} does. These two possible worlds cannot access each other and are not isomorphic.

In fact, all three possible worlds have different structures: they are not isomorphic because each world has distinct S-necessary and essential properties which cannot be valued in another's world. For example, individuals, such as women and children, do not exist in W_{pB}, while they play the S-necessary role in W_{pA} and $W_{pK,}$ desiring the protection of their dignity; the sexual gaze towards the OB nude woman promoted in W_{pB} and reluctantly allowed in W_{pK} is not permitted in W_{pA}; the S-necessary relation of welcoming in W_{pK} does not exist in W_{pB} and W_{pA}; the woman is not *baštu* in W_{pK} and W_{pB}; the nude woman cannot look at the viewers in W_{pB}, while in W_{pK} she looks at the household with caring/concerning eyes.

Structurally, all three possible worlds share that the nude woman is female, nude, and frontally displayed. W_{pB} and W_{pK} have the sexual property of the nude woman in their structures. The possible worlds of W_{pA} and W_{pK} are similar in structure, where the nude woman is a protective spirit – although Assante's OB nude woman is a special kind of protective spirit – inanimate and object-like – while Kim's nude woman is alive, sexual, and movable within the house.

The structures of W_{pB}, W_{pA}, and W_{pK} are built on the same ground – that the nude woman is female, nude, and facing frontal – but end in different forms. They have similar, different, and contrary aspects in their world structures. These differences may be due to the nature of interpretation – potential unlimitedness – but also due to the uncertainty of the image of our OB nude woman. No matter

[710] Bahrani 1996, 11.
[711] Assante 2006, 199.

how clearly this nude woman may have been identified in the eyes of the OB people, she is ambiguous to us, stimulating our imaginations and generating as many interpretations as the number of interpreters. Even in antiquity, her structural ambiguity – facial expression, the 'static' posture and frontal gaze, etc. – could have engendered diverse interactions with its viewers, each time redefining the relationship between the woman and her viewers. The image is truly an open work, both in antiquity and in our time, which fits the conditions of an aesthetic message that Eco proposed: 'The message has an aesthetic function, when it is ambiguously constructed and appears auto-reflexive'.[712]

4.3. *Conclusion to Part II*

In Part II, I analyzed three different interpretations of the Old Babylonian nude woman image and their strategies of relating images and texts. Through my analysis, I tried to state that different interpretations, however academic they are, cannot be built without personal experiences, preferences, and intuitions, which considerably affect the interpretation.

The comparison of the three interpretations demonstrates that we are living in the world of semiosis. The books and articles we read, the pictures and photographs we see, and the lectures we listen to, etc., are all signs, which had been generated as interpretants of the previous signs. The real world exists, but cannot be perceived without the process of semiosis. No matter how objective they may look – such as academic journals, known-as-facts, realistic copy of a line drawing, or even photographs – they contain interpretations guided by rather subjective personal experiences.

I also tried to test the semiotic model for images which I modified from Eco's textual collaboration model. The image collaboration model successfully showed that images and texts can be analyzed in an isomorphic frame, revealing the integrated structures which are beyond the limits of each sign system. The image collaboration model is tuned, on one hand, to be well suited for the uniqueness of visual representations (e.g., iconic and iconographic structures), and, on the other hand, to be able to integrate the contributions from other sign systems in an interpretation. In Part II, this model also provided a platform for the comparison of different image interpretations.

Through the two isomorphic models I was able to reconstruct and analyze the model author's interpretational structures of the Old Babylonian nude woman image. With the help of these two models, I discussed how the chain-

[712] 'Die Botschaft hat eine ästhetische Funktion, wenn sie sich als zweideutig strukturiert darstellt und wenn sie als sich auf sich selbst beziehend (autoreflexiv) erscheint', Eco 1972, 145.

like quasi-infinite connections of signs and interpretants result in different structures and conclusions and become another sign for future interpretants.

Image and text belong to different sign systems; yet if they are to be analyzed separately using discrete models, it is difficult to see, or at least insufficiently underlined, how images and texts together build an integrated structure. These two models – Eco's textual collaboration model and the image collaboration model – recognize the differences between texts and images and their peculiarities, but does not force one over the other. The differences are reflected in the models, but in deep structures – such as narrative, actantial, elementary ideological and world structures – the two models converge into one and show the structures of the integrated story. Of course, here the 'story' is not only verbal but a transdisciplinary concept, which can be manifested in any sign system. These models are transdisciplinary and eligible for the systematic interdisciplinary analysis of images and texts.

PART III. INTERPRETATIONS OF A TEXT: A DESCRIPTION OF A WOMAN (SONG 7)

INTRODUCTION TO PART III

The woman described in the Song of Songs chapter 7[713] is an anonymous woman, known as 'the Shulamite'. 'Shulamite' is an epithet and not a name,[714] thus she remains anonymous, evoking curiosity as to who she is. Its metaphoric part-by-part description does not give detailed information about her visual appearance, presenting a wide gap to be filled by the readers. Its erotic language brings different perspectives on sexuality into the discussion, generating diverse interpretations. The whole image of this anonymous woman may greatly differ according to one's interpretative tendency and how one gazes at her.

In Part III, alongside with the presentation of my own interpretation, I will semiotically analyze various interpretations of this anonymous woman to find out what makes them differ, how the whole body is constructed from the parts, and how images and texts interact in them. I chose the interpretations by Othmar Keel and Fiona Black for the semiotic analysis because their construction of the woman's body contrasts with each other: the most beautiful woman vs. the grotesque body. Their clear use of visual representations in discussing the Song also facilitates semiotic analysis of their image-text relations.

The description does not provide a complete image of her body – the whole body must be built, constructed, and imagined by the reader. By looking at what kind of images each interpreter projects onto this anonymous woman, Part III will reveal that different interpretations have their own right derived from the semiosis – including personal experiences – of the interpreter. It will also show the complex interactions of images and texts in the course of interpretations. The description of the woman in Song 7 is a junction of various points of view – anonymity, metaphor, part-whole, sexuality, and visualization – which underline the role of the reader.

[713] See the delineation in p. 203–205 below.

[714] Fox 1985, 157; Murphy 1990, 181; Barbiero 2011, 364; Exum 2005, 226; Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 355.

XII. ABOUT THE DESCRIPTION (SONG 7:1–6)

1. Translation

v. 1aα	שׁוּבִי שׁוּבִי הַשּׁוּלַמִּית
v. 1aβ	שׁוּבִי שׁוּבִי וְנֶחֱזֶה־בָּךְ
v. 1bα	מַה־תֶּחֱזוּ בַּשּׁוּלַמִּית
v. 1bβ	כִּמְחֹלַת הַמַּחֲנָיִם׃
v. 2a	מַה־יָּפוּ פְעָמַיִךְ בַּנְּעָלִים בַּת־נָדִיב
v. 2b	חַמּוּקֵי יְרֵכַיִךְ כְּמוֹ חֲלָאִים מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אָמָּן׃
v. 3a	שָׁרְרֵךְ אַגַּן הַסַּהַר אַל־יֶחְסַר הַמָּזֶג
v. 3b	בִּטְנֵךְ עֲרֵמַת חִטִּים סוּגָה בַּשּׁוֹשַׁנִּים׃
v. 4	שְׁנֵי שָׁדַיִךְ כִּשְׁנֵי עֳפָרִים תְּאֲמֵי צְבִיָּה׃
v. 5a	צַוָּארֵךְ כְּמִגְדַּל הַשֵּׁן
v. 5bα	עֵינַיִךְ בְּרֵכוֹת בְּחֶשְׁבּוֹן עַל־שַׁעַר בַּת־רַבִּים
v. 5bβγ	אַפֵּךְ כְּמִגְדַּל הַלְּבָנוֹן צוֹפֶה פְּנֵי דַמָּשֶׂק׃
v. 6aα	רֹאשֵׁךְ עָלַיִךְ כַּכַּרְמֶל
v. 6aβ	וְדַלַּת רֹאשֵׁךְ כָּאַרְגָּמָן
v. 6b	מֶלֶךְ אָסוּר בָּרְהָטִים׃

v. 1aα	Turn, turn,[715] O Shulamite,[716]
v. 1aβ	Turn, turn, and let us see you!
v. 1bα	What would you see from the Shulamite?
v. 1bβ	[Something] like the dance of the two camps!
v. 2a	How beautiful are your steps in sandals, young noble lady!
v. 2b	The curves of your thighs are like jewelry rings, work by an artisan's hands.
v. 3a	Your navel is the round cup, which shall not lack its mixed wine.
v. 3b	Your belly is a mound of wheat, surrounded with lotuses
v. 4	Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle
v. 5a	Your neck is like the ivory tower
v. 5bα	Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, near the gate, 'Daughter of the Great'
v. 5bβγ	Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon, watching over Damascus
v. 6aα	Your head, upon you, is like the Carmel

[715] For the translation of שובי as 'turn', see p. 229–230 below.

[716] The Hebrew definite article ה is often present when the addressed person is present. In this case, it could be seen as a sign of vocative (Joüon / Muraoka 1993, §137g). Nevertheless, the article still functions to determine a common noun when it is with vocative. Therefore, השולמית here literarily means 'the Shulamite', as בַּשולמית in v. 1b clearly marks 'Shulamite' as a common noun. See also footnote 714 above.

v. 6aβ And the hair of your head is like purple [cloth]
v. 6b [The] King is captured in the tresses.

2. Delineation and Voice

2.1. *Delineation*

The delineation of Song 7:1–6 varies. A group of commentators include 7:1–6 within a larger unit: 7:1–8:4;[717] 7:2–8:4;[718] 6:11–7:7;[719] 6:4–7:10;[720] or 6:4–7:11.[721] Song 7:1–6 seems to be an independent unit, while the beginning and the end of the unit still vary: 7:2–6[722] or 7:1–7.[723]

Whether 7:1 can be separated from 6:11–12 is in question. Some commentators separate between 6:11–12 and 7:1.[724] The change of the voice from the first person singular (6:11–12) to the first person plural (7:1) could be the marker of the unit change.[725] Some commentators connect 6:11–12 with 7:1, understanding the call to turn around (שובי) as the return from the nut garden in 6:11,[726] or from the chariots of a noble people or Amminadib (עמי-נדיב) in 6:12.[727] However, שובי could also be understood as 'turn around' or 'turn round' at a single place without the need for the place of departure.[728] Furthermore, Song 6:11–12 is a retrospective monologue in the past perfect tense, while 7:1 is a narrative of a present event: it is unnecessary to connect 6:11–12 in order to make a returning point for the word שובי in 7:1.

While the unity of 7:2–6 is in consensus, whether to connect v. 1 to v. 2–6 is in debate. On the one hand, when commentators connect 7:1 to 7:2–6, 7:1 serves as an introduction to the description in 7:2–6.[729] On the other hand, Gillis

[717] Murphy 1990, 180.
[718] Garrett 2004, 235–236.
[719] Fox 1985, 154.
[720] Exum 2005, 211–212.
[721] Barbiero 2011, 317–320.
[722] Gerleman 1965, 194; Keel 1994, 230.
[723] Zakovitch 2004, 241.
[724] Zakovitch 2004, 241; Barbiero 2011, 319; Murphy 1990, 180, 185.
[725] Barbiero 2011, 361.
[726] Gerlemann 1965, 192; Fox 1985, 155; Garrett 2004, 231; Exum 2005, 225.
[727] Keel 1994, 228.
[728] שוב is used for the turning around of a body on a same spot (e.g., 1Chr 21:20), thus it is not difficult to imagine the same word used in a dance context. In Prov 20:26, שוב is used to depict the turning (whirling) of a wheel, in *hiphil* form with a causative sense that the king turns (whirls) a wheel upon the wicked. See p. 229–230 below for a more detailed discussion. See also Murphy 1990, 180–181; Barbiero 2011, 363–364; Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 356.
[729] Fox 1985, 155; Murphy 1990, 180, 185; Zakovitch 2004, 241; Exum 2005, 225–226; Barbiero 2011, 367; Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 353.

Gerleman and Othmar Keel are against the connection between 7:1 and 7:2–6, claiming that there is no introduction in other descriptive songs in Song.[730] Gerleman expresses doubt on 7:1 being an introduction, saying that such introduction would make the description to be spoken by an anonymous public.[731] Keel also argues that since the only personal names – Amninadib and Shulamite – are present in 6:12–7:1, but not in 7:2–6, 7:1 must be separated from 7:2–6. However, their arguments can be disputed in the following way: first, there is a similar introductory sentence in the other body descriptions. In Song 5:10–16, the question of the daughters of Jerusalem (5:9) serves as a motivation for the following description (5:10–16), similar to the way that the request by a group of people in 7:1 motivates and introduces the description in 7:2–6.[732] Secondly, there is no need to assume that the male lover has to be the speaker of the description of the woman's body; it could also be a public group speaking.[733] Thirdly, as stated above, the Shulamite is a common noun since it is followed by a definite article,[734] and having one specific epithet and one personal name cannot be the ground for unity.

Whether the description ends at 7:6 or continues further is another dispute. Some commentators see that the description of the woman ends at 7:6,[735] others think it finishes at 7:7.[736] For the former group, 7:7 is a marker of the beginning of the second description (7:7–9/10/10aα), but for the latter group, the same verse is a concluding sentence for the first description (7:2–7). Some others regard the end of the description to be 7:10 (or 7:10aα).[737] However, it is difficult to read 7:7 as the concluding line of a small unit because the first word in 7:8, זאת, a demonstrative pronoun, refers directly back to 7:7. Furthermore, 7:7ff speak in a different voice: starting with the intimate term 'love' (7:7), the speaker of 7:7–10 actively engages in the tree-metaphor of the woman exclaiming that 'I will climb up the palm tree (a metaphor for the woman's body) and I will grab its clusters (a metaphor for the woman's breasts)' (7:9a). This intimate mood contrasts with the distant way of perceiving the Shulamite in v 1-6: the woman is called 'the Shulamite' (v. 1) or 'young noble lady' (v. 2), and the only engaged player in the description is 'a king' mentioned in the third person. Such a

[730] Gerleman 1965, 195; Keel 1994, 226.
[731] Gerleman 1965, 195.
[732] The similarity of the structure between the two descriptions is also observed by Fox 1985, 155.
[733] See the discussion on the voice in p. 206–208 below.
[734] See footnote 716 above.
[735] Gerleman 1965, 194, 201; Keel 1994, 230–231, 239; Garrett 2004, 237; Barbiero 2011, 367.
[736] Fox 1985, 154; Zakovitch 2004, 242.
[737] Murphy 1990, 180; Exum 2005, 211–212.

distancing voice also contrasts with other descriptions spoken by a lover (cf. 4:1; 5:10; 6:4).[738]

In my analysis, 7:1–6 is a coherent unit, distinguished from the previous and subsequent verses. While 6:11–12 is in the retrospective mood, using past tenses (perfect form for the use of past), 7:1 indicates a present event by using imperative and imperfect forms. The speaking subject is in the first-person plural (7:1), which can be differentiated from the first-person singular in 6:11–12. Song 7:1 and 7:2–6 are connected; v. 1 offers the motivation and context for the description of the woman's body in v. 2–6: a group of people in 7:1a wants to look upon the Shulamite. In response to their request, the woman's body is seen and depicted through a series of metaphors and similes in 7:2–6. The description in 7:2–6 ends at v. 6, and 7:7–10 presents a new description of the same woman.

Descriptions of a woman's body tend to begin with an exclamation of her beauty, such as 'you are beautiful' or 'how beautiful' (4:1, 6:4, 7:2). 'How beautiful' appears in 7:7, starting a new description. The voice also separates between 7:1–6 and 7:7–10 as discussed above: while the voice in 7:1–6 is distancing, 7:7–10 is intimate. Therefore, 7:1–6 is a coherent unit, while the surrounding verses – 6:11–12 and 7:7–10 – show different times and voices in different units. Nevertheless, all these units may be included within a bigger unit because the theme of 'nobility' which appears first in 6:12 (עמי-נדיב) is repeated in 7:2 (בת-נדיב), and there is no explicit link of the change of the described object in 7:7–10.[739] One larger unit that I can suggest is 6:4–7:11, as Barbiero delineated.[740] This unit mainly concerns the description of the woman's body,[741] whether praised through the male lover's mouth (6:4–7; 7:7–10aα) or sung by a group of people (7:1–6). This unit finishes with the addition of the woman's short comment on their love, including the expression of belonging (אני לדודי), which also ends other units (2:16–17; 6:3).[742] However, this larger unity reflects the final stage of the composition, and the smaller unit of 7:1–6 is unique in that it has strong features of performance, starting with a description of the dynamic movement of the feet and legs and using the language of rhythmical sounds and appearances.[743] These traces of a performance also separate this unit from other

[738] Exum also senses the difference in tone in 7:1–6 in comparison with the other descriptions of the female body in the Song of Songs which are typically understood as spoken by the male lover – 'The description here in 7:1–6 is, however, more controlled than the earlier ones' – even though Exum groups 7:2–10 together as a song spoken by the male lover. Exum 2005, 232.

[739] Similar observations can be found in Exum 2005, 233, 237; and Barbiero 2011, 372, 388. See also Zakovitch 2004, 244 for the cohesiveness on which the theme 'noble' builds.

[740] Barbiero 2011, 317–320.

[741] So does Exum, while her delineation does not include 7:11. Exum 2005, 214.

[742] Barbiero 2011, 402.

[743] For details, see p. 208–209.

descriptions of the female body (4:1–7; 6:4–9), which focus on the facial and bust area, beginning with eyes and ending with cheeks or breasts.

2.2. *Voice*

The voice of 7:1 is not at all certain. While all the commentators agree that v. 1 is a dialogue between two entities – whether a group or an individual – there are various suggestions for the specific identification of the speaker.

The speaker of v. 1a is mostly suggested to be a group of people or a person representing a group of people because of the usage of the first-person plural pronoun 'we' in v. 1aβ. The group could be: (1) the daughters of Jerusalem or women chorus, which appeared as the speaking group in Song 5:9 and 6:1–2;[744] (2) an anonymous group or chorus, whose gender is unable to be identified from the textual evidence;[745] (3) a male chorus, since v. 1b (or 1bα) seems to be spoken by a man, since as the female group (the daughters of Jerusalem) talks only with the female protagonist, the group of people speaking to the male lover must also be a male group;[746] and (4) a group consisting of the Shulamite's relatives (cousins), probably the speaker of 8:8–9.[747] The speaker may also be a male individual, representing a whole group behind him. Gerleman asserts that Amminadib in 6:12, whom he assumes to be the Shulamite's lover, is the speaker of 7:1a.[748] Exum argues that the male lover is the speaker of 7:1a, in which the first-person plural includes the daughters of Jerusalem.[749] Without a decisive clue from the text, all of these options are possibilities.

In my analysis, it does not make a significant difference whether v. 1a is spoken by a group or an individual representing the group, as long as v. 1a clearly transmits the group's desire. I choose to define the voice as a group to emphasize that it is the group's desire to see the Shulamite. For the identification of the group, I will not specify its gender because there is not enough textual evidence.

Verse 1b might have one voice or two different voices. For those who think the whole verse 1b has a single voice, the speaker may be: (1) the male protagonist,[750] (2) another chorus group,[751] or (3) the Shulamite.[752] If it is the Shulamite speaking, it would be strange that she speaks about herself in the third

[744] Fox 1985, 154–155; Garrett 2004, 231, 233; Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 353.
[745] Murphy 1990, 185; Zakovitch 2004, 241.
[746] Barbiero 2011, 361–362.
[747] Keel 1994, 228.
[748] Gerleman 1965, 190.
[749] Exum 2005, 226.
[750] Gerleman 1965, 193; Fox 1985, 154; Garrett 2004, 231.
[751] Zakovitch 2004, 243.
[752] Murphy 1990, 181; Exum 2005, 211, 228.

person. The female protagonist never refers to herself in third person elsewhere in the Song of Songs, unless she uses figurative language.[753] There are other commentators who think v. 1b has two voices: Barbiero thinks that v. 1bα is a question spoken by the male lover, while v. 1bβ is an answer from the male chorus.[754] For Brenner, v. 1bα is the question of the Shulamite, and v. 1bβ is the answer from her interlocutors.[755] Petronella W.T. Stoop-van Paridon asserts that v. 1b has a single speaker, an attendant of the Shulamite, but the verse is comprised of two sentences, a question and an answer.[756]

In my analysis, I find Barbiero's suggestion convincing: v. 1bα represents the man's question, and v. 1bβ serves as the group's response. Exum objects to the division of the voice in v. 1b: 'Nowhere else in the Song is a couplet divided between speakers'.[757] However, the voice in 7:10a is likewise divided: while v. 10aα uses a second-person feminine possessive suffix indicating the male speaker, the expression לדודי ('to my love') in v. 10aβ is the exclusive expression for the lover which only the woman uses.[758] Thus it is also possible that the man asks in 7:1bα and the group answers in v. 1bβ.

A more important reason for having two voices in v. 1b lies in the attitude of the speaker in v. 1bα. The commentators who connect v. 1bα and 1bβ as a single voice often interpret v. 1b as having a rebuking nuance because they take the preposition כ ('like, as') in a pejorative sense, in combination with the interrogative מה, meaning of 'why'.[759] If so, this means that the speaker of v. 1bα does not want to show her to the group. However, such an understanding causes a problem because the Shulamite's body is shown to the group in v. 2–6 without any struggle or conflict. It is better to understand v. 1bα as a neutral question of the male lover to the group, and v. 1bβ as an answer from the group; they want to see in her something like the dance of the two camps. Then v. 2–6 becomes the group's observance of her dancing, which they requested.[760]

[753] For example, she refers herself as 'my garden', 'his garden' (4:16), or a 'wall' (8:10). 'The Shulamite' in 7:1b is not a figurative expression. In v. 1a the group also calls her 'the Shulamite', and when a group directly speaks to the female protagonist in the Song of Songs, they never call her by figurative expressions.

[754] Barbiero 2011, 319, 365–366.

[755] Brenner 2005, 165.

[756] Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 358.

[757] Exum 2005, 229.

[758] See Fox 1985, 163; Murphy 1990, 187; Zakovitch 2004, 253; Barbiero 2011, 399–400.

[759] Gerleman 1965, 188, 193; Pope 1977, 601; Fox 1985, 158; Keel 1994, 225, 229; Murphy 1990, 180, 185; Garrett 2004, 231–232.

[760] This understanding implies that the display of her body to the group in this context is not shameful behavior.

V. 2–6 are agreed to be spoken by a single voice. However, the identification of the speaker differs: the group of v. 1a[761] or the male lover.[762] In my analysis, the one who showed the desire to see the Shulamite would describe her in v. 2–6. The group's position, more distanced from the Shulamite in comparison to the male lover, corresponds with the distancing mood of v. 2–6.

To conclude, a group of people repeatedly asks the Shulamite to turn in order to see her (v. 1). Somehow, the way of seeing or showing is related to 'the dance of the two camps'. The text does not explicitly say whether the Shulamite dances or not, but there are some traces of dynamic movement in the description of the Shulamite:[763] (1) the text presents the whole body, unlike other female body descriptions (4:1–7; 6:4–9); (2) the description starts with the feet, drawing the initial attention to their (possible) movement; (3) the word פעם for foot implies stepping movements (v. 2a);[764] (4) the word חמוק (verb חמק 'to turn') for the roundness of the thigh implies the ring-like whirling motion of the thighs and legs (v. 2b);[765] (5) the word דלה (verb דלל 'to dangle') for hair has the nuance of 'dangling' (v. 6a) which happens when one dances.[766] These traces build an

[761] Zakovitch 2004, 241; Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 386.

[762] Fox 1985, 155; Murphy 1990, 185; Barbiero 2011, 319–320, 361; Exum 2005, 211–212. Keel 1994, 230–231.

[763] These textual traces can be found in Barbiero 2011, 364, 366–369, 371, 373, 386. For Zakovitch, the word 'dance' (מחלה), the description order starting from the feet, and the specific word choice for חמוק are evidence of the dancing Shulamite. Zakovitch 2004, 241, 244. Pope does not explicitly argue that the Shulamite is dancing, but his translation of שובי in 7:1a as 'leap' implies that he understood the situation as a request for a dance. Pope 1977, 595.

[764] פעם can be translated as 'a foot' or 'a step' (See Sæbø, 'פַּעַם', *ThWAT* 6: 703–708; 'פַּעַם', *HALOT*: 952a–953a; 'פַּעַם', *Ges*[18] 4: 1068; 'פַּעַם', *DCH* 6: 731; Hamilton, 'פַּעַם', *NIDOTTE* 3: 650–651). Its parallel word, רגל, is used more often for the meaning 'foot' (e.g., Isa 26:6; *ThWAT* 6: 705; *Ges*[18] 4: 1068). פעם and רגל are polysemic words for 'time, moment, occasion, occurrence' (*ThWAT* 6: 706–707; *Ges*[18] 4: 1068). The logic for the polysemy is known to come from the time consumption or time measurement by making a step which is a movement (*NIDOTTE* 3: 650). Since the regular meaning of פעם is 'time' and only an additional meaning is 'foot', while the reverse works for רגל (Cohen 2008, 446), פעם for the foot of the Shulamite emphasizes her movement or motion.

[765] The verbal root חמק appears twice in the Hebrew Bible: Jer 31:22 and Song 5:6 ('חַמּוּק', *Ges*[18] 2: 364b; 'חַמּוּק', *HALOT*: 327; Thompson, 'חמק', *NIDOTTE* 2: 183). In Song 5:6, the verb חמק is used in *qal*, in the context of the male lover gone away while the woman opens the door for him. In Song 5:6, this word comes together with עבר ('to pass') side by side, suggesting a possible parallel relationship. It is usually translated as 'turned' or 'turned away'. The *hithpael* form of this verb is used in Jer 31:22, rebuking the daughter Israel, normally translated as 'waver' or 'turn hither and thither'. The 'rebelling (turning back/השובבה) daughter', Israel's epithet in Jer 31:22, comes after the denunciation of her turning away (התחמק), implying the round movement of verbal root חמק. Zakovitch makes an analogy with the verb סבב in Jer 31:22: after Israel is denounced for twisting herself free (חמק) in v. 22a, YHWH declares a new thing that a woman will encompass (תסובב) a man in v. 22b (Zakovitch 2004, 244). See also Barbiero 2011, 373.

[766] The noun דלה refers to hair or a thrum ('דַּלָּה II', *DCH* 2: 439a; 'דַּלָּה 1', *Ges*[18] 2: 251; Alden, 'דַּלָּה I', *NIDOTTE* 1: 949–950). In Song 7:6 דלה forms a construct with the noun 'head', pointing

argument for the dancing Shulamite. The rhythmical sound created by the repetition of שובי (turn!) four times, the alliteration of ש, and vocal exchanges of /u/ and /i/ in 7:1a reinforces the atmosphere of the performance of song and dance. Therefore, it is likely that this song has its *Sitz im Leben* in a performance of singing and dancing, although its specific context cannot be assured.[767]

3. Research History

The description of the body in 7:2–6 presents the woman by describing selected body parts, from the feet to the head, using metaphors and similes that are unfamiliar to modern eyes. The combination of the part-by-part description and the bizarre metaphors and similes underlines the ambiguity of her whole image, urging its readers to fill the gaps and construct the whole. In this section, I introduce

that it is connected to the head. What the domains of weaving and hair have in common is the long thin thread-like thing, which dangles (the verbal root דלל).

The verbal root דלל, 'to dangle' or 'to hang down', occurs only once in the Hebrew Bible (*NIDOTTE* 1: 949; *DCH* 2: 239a; *Ges*[18] 2: 251; 'דלל II', *DCH* 2: 440; 'דלל 1', *Ges*[18] 2: 251; Hess, 'דלל II', *NIDOTTE* 1: 954). In Job 28:4, the miners go deep into the earth and they דלו and נעו. Here the verbal root דלל forms a parallel with נוע. נוע occurs 42 times and its meaning points to the 'repetitive back-and-forth movement' (Pelt / Kaiser, 'נוע', *NIDOTTE* 3:62–63), like the intense trembling of feared people (e.g., Ex 20:18), the shaking of head as an expression of taunt (e.g., 2Kgs 19:21), the staggering of a drunk (e.g., Ps 107:27), or the feature of wandering (e.g., Gen 4:12; Ps 109:10). Thus, it is possible to imagine a free but repetitive movement from the verbal root דלל. Hairs dangle; ancient thrums hanging down from a vertical loom dangle according to the weaving movement.

Most commentators translate דלה in Song 7:6 as some kinds of hair: 'hair' (Barbiero 2011, 386; Murphy 1990, 180; Exum 2005, 212) 'lock' (Pope 1977, 629), 'strands of hair' (Garrett 2004, 242), 'dangling hair' (Zakovitch 2004, 248), or 'thrum' referring to certain hairstyle (Fox 1985, 160–161). Barbiero underlines that the root דלל is used to express the dynamically dangling hair of the dancing Shulamite (Barbiero 2011, 386). The Barbiero's suggestion is convincing: without the need for the expression of the dangling movement, the author would have used a more common word for hair (שער), which appears in other descriptions of the woman in the Song of Songs (4:1; 6:5), instead of דלה. Tied locks of hair would sway according to the body movement. The root דלל intensifies the dangling nuance of the (locks of) hair.

[767] A marriage festival has been suggested as a specific *Sitz im Leben* of such a performing situation for the entire Song of Songs (see Wetzstein 1873, 287–294; Staubli 2016, 91–97), but the female protagonist's cry of pain from violence and from the loss of her lover in 5:6–7 does not seem to fit the blessing atmosphere of wedding ceremonies. Another suggestion is the sacred marriage ritual (see Rowley 1937, 337–363; Keel 1994, 12–13), which cannot be safely argued to have actually taken place in the southern Levant (cf. Lapinkivi 2008, 27–28, 32, 41). The theory that Song was originally a drama is also based on its performing features, but as recent critics noticed, it is difficult to find an overarching plot (for the critics, see e.g., Exum 2005, 78–79; Murphy 1990, 58). Recently, David Clines proposed a song contest for Song's implied social context (Clines 1995, 98–101). I will not pin down *Sitz im Leben* of Song 7:1–6 any further, while clearly arguing that this specific song stemmed from an oral performance context.

various image proposals of the whole of this woman (the Shulamite) that the modern scholars and commentators have suggested.

Diverse interpretations of the Shulamite have been offered in modern scholarship: beautiful or ugly,[768] nude or clothed,[769] dancing or not dancing.[770] However, in order to avoid dichotomous judgments on the Shulamite – whether she is beautiful or not, clothed or not, dancing or not – I will classify various interpretations of the Shulamite into six categories according to different whole images that the interpreters constructed: (1) the most beautiful woman, (2) a goddess, (3) Israel/the Church, (4) the topography of the Land, (5) a comic and ugly woman, (6) a grotesque body (Fig. 35). This categorization is not affected by the decisions of delineation, voice, and genre that I made above.

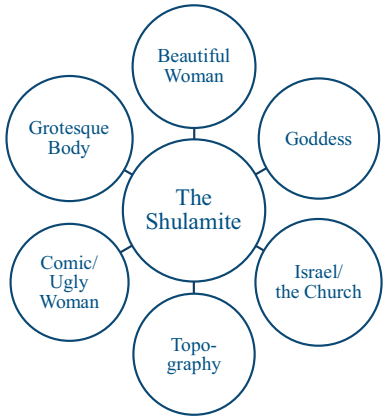


Fig. 35: Interpretations of the Shulamite.

a) *The most beautiful woman*

This construction of the whole is conferred by the highest number of scholars in the modern period.[771] Gerleman, Fox, and Keel designate the Shulamite as a

[768] For the interpretations which see the Shulamite as a beautiful woman, see footnote 771 below. Noegel, Rendsburg, and Brenner imagine a rather ugly Shulamite (Noegel / Rendsburg 2009, 137–146; Brenner 1993, 252).

[769] The interpretations of the Shulamite as a nude or semi-nude can be seen in: Garrett 2004, 239; Barbiero 2011, 368; Fischer 2019, 2–4, 6; Brenner 1993, 246–247. The clothed Shulamite is argued by Fox, who asserted that the breasts, navel, and thighs are imagined by the male lover (Fox 1985, 155). Exum suggests that the Shulamite's body is 'clothed in metaphors' (Exum 2005, 232).

[770] The Shulamite is dancing in the interpretations of: Zakovitch 2004, 241–242; Barbiero 2011, 364, 366–369, 371, 373, 386; Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 358; and Fischer 2019, 2–3. The described woman is not dancing in the interpretations of: Gerleman 1965, 194; Fox 1985, 155; Keel 1994, 231; Murphy 1990, 185; Exum 2005, 225, 231–232.

[771] Gerleman 1965, 194; Fox 1985, 155; Keel 1994, 231; Murphy 1990, 185; Zakovitch 2004, 242; Garrett 2004, 237; Barbiero 2011, 362–389; Exum 2005, 231; Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 370; Fischer 2019, 3, 5–6.

noblewoman, a daughter of prince, based on the vocative 'daughter of a noble' (בת נדיב) in v. 2.[772] For Fox, she is also 'the perfect one', as he infers from the epithet 'the Shulamite' the noun שולם 'perfection'.[773] Gerleman constantly compares the woman with Egyptian sculptures, implying that his construction of the whole would be similar to Egyptian female sculptures, although he does not give a specific example of what kind of Egyptian artifact he has in mind.[774] Barbiero defines the Shulamite as the most beautiful mortal woman, but states that in her body 'something which corresponds to God himself and to his great works is being contemplated',[775] emphasizing that she is described similarly to a deity.

b) *A goddess*

While Barbiero underlines that the Shulamite is described in terms normally used for deities, Pope envisions her as a goddess *per se*, 'superhuman in nature and size', which then fits the tremendous size of the describing objects – such as mountains, towers, or pools.[776] Discussing the Shulamite in comparison with love and war goddesses such as Ishtar, Anat, Sakhmet, and Kali, Pope alludes that his imagination of the whole takes the form of a goddess.[777]

c) *Israel/the Church*

The ancient and medieval allegorical readings of the Shulamite construct the whole of the Shulamite as Israel or the Church. The body consists of the parts which represent cultic notions and objects, but the whole is the perfect Israel/Church envisioned as the beautiful beloved woman or bride of YHWH/Christ.[778] Modern allegorical interpreters do not necessarily compare the body parts with such religious objects and notions, but see the whole Shulamite – the female protagonist of the entire book of the Song of Songs – as an allegory of Israel in the image of the perfect and most beautiful bride.[779]

d) *The topography of the Land*

As a kind of an allegorical reading, some interpreters match the body of the Shulamite with the topography of the southern Levant, i.e., the Holy Land. The most

[772] Gerleman 1965, 194–196; Fox 1985, 155–158; Keel 1994, 230–231. It is to note that for Gerleman and Keel, the described woman is not the Shulamite because they separate 7:1 from 7:2–6 as two different independent units. Gerleman 1965, 194; Keel 1994, 226.

[773] Fox 1985, 155–158.

[774] Gerleman 1965, 197, 200.

[775] Barbiero 2011, 365.

[776] Pope 1977, 627.

[777] Pope 1977, 606–611.

[778] Freedman / Simon 1983, 274–289; Rashi 1983, 129–136; Norris 2003, 250–265. See also Black 2000, 108–111.

[779] Schwienhorst-Schönberger 2015, 141–146; Gerhards 2006, 74–75; Herreman 2017, 900.

distinguishing example of the interpretation is André Robert and Raymond Jacques Tournay: they map the feet of the Shulamite on the Nile, thighs on the coastline of Palestine/Israel, navel on Jerusalem, belly on the mountain of Judah, breasts on the Ebal and Grizim mountain, neck on the 'little Hermon' (Nebi Daḥi), eyes on Heshbon, nose on the mount Hermon, head on Mount Carmel, and hair on the coastline stretched from Mount Carmel.[780] Recently, Elaine James also mapped the Shulamite on the landscape of the Holy Land, not visually but mentally: the Shulamite is the mental map of the 'beloved geography' onto which the beauty of the Shulamite is projected.[781]

e) *A comic and ugly woman*

In contrast to the dominating interpretations of the Shulamite as a beautiful woman, some interpreters subversively read the text as a description of an ugly woman. Noegel and Rendsburg suggest reading the description as an invective, which was made to humiliate Solomon by making fun of his wife, the Shulamite. According to their interpretation, a group of people satirically praise the Shulamite and disgrace her by using bizarre metaphors and erotic terms, such as a wine cup for the vulva, twin gazelle fawns for breasts, or an ivory tower for the neck.[782] For Athalya Brenner, the Shulamite is fat, a 'mixed bag', far from the ideal beauty in ancient as well as modern cultures:[783] 'her belly is fat and jumpy like her breasts (3c, 4), her neck is (disproportionately?) long, her eyes by now turbid, her nose outsize (5)'.[784] She is not aesthetically beautiful, but 'comical – even ridiculous – as well as sexy'.[785] Such jocular and humorous description of the Shulamite underline the 'flesh-and-blood object of desire' embedded in the text and protests against cultural and literary conventions.[786]

f) *A grotesque body*

The commentators above constructed their imaginations of the Shulamite in whole in different ways, but did not clarify the mechanism *by which* the described parts build the whole. Fiona Black is the one who focused on that mechanism, and the way she chose to construct the whole is through the notion of the 'grotesque'. According to Black, 'grotesque' can be described as 'an artistic or literary convention, marked by difference or a sudden juxtaposition of incongruous elements'.[787] As the phrase 'mixed bag' which Brenner used to depict the

[780] Robert / Tournay 1963, 248–268.
[781] James 2017, 121, 144–147.
[782] Noegel / Rendsburg 2009, 137–146.
[783] Brenner 1993, 244–253. Quotation from ibid., 250.
[784] Brenner 1993, 250.
[785] Brenner 1993, 252.
[786] Brenner 1993, 253–255.
[787] Black 2000, 115–116.

Shulamite indicates, several commentators already felt the existence of grotesquerie from the text because of the disparate metaphors used for the single body.[788] Black reads the body of the Shulamite as 'intensely hybridized and disproportioned, an impossible creature',[789] revealing the dynamics of love.[790] Black's mechanism for the construction of the whole of the Shulamite is to materially sum up the described parts, neither as a unity nor as a praise of beauty.

In Chapter 14, I pick out three interpretations and analyze them semiotically, focusing on the *mechanism* by which various interpreters, including myself, construct the unstated whole of the Shulamite from the stated parts. Most interpreters, except Black and myself, suggest the whole imagery of the Shulamite without clear links to the parts, but when semiotically analyzed, it can be discovered that some never achieve the whole from the parts, some gather the visual information from the metaphors to get the whole, and some take the metaphors literally to patchwork the whole. As I stated in the introduction to Part III, the Shulamite's description is full of gaps which the readers must fill – thus these different ways of constructing are not a matter of right or wrong, but they the fields of the collaborative dynamics between the text and its interpreter.

[788] See a summary in Black 2009, 63.
[789] Black 2009, 154.
[790] Black 2009, 72–74, 156.

XIII. PRESENTATION OF MY OWN INTERPRETATION: IMAGES OF THE SHULAMITE

1. Introduction

The description of the Shulamite in Song 7:1–6 consists of a set of metaphors and similes of her body parts. This part-by-part description does not explain the whole image of her but leaves it to the readers' imaginations, as I stated in the research history above. Various readers suggested diverse images of the whole of the Shulamite.[791] However, is the whole image of the Shulamite completely dependent on the reader, or does the text already imply the whole? While one cannot reconstruct how the Shulamite looked like in the ancient author('s)' eyes, it is possible to imagine what female images the authors, singers, performers, or audiences projected onto the Shulamite in the early days of song's circulation.

In this presentation of my interpretation, I suggest one of many ways of constructing the whole of the Shulamite. The whole is studied not as a photograph-like image, but as images that are projected by the model readers and audiences,[792] which the text suggests within the cultural frame of the Iron Age southern Levant, when the description was circulated as a performance of a love song, before the allegorizing of the text. My translation and stance on the delineation and voice is already offered above (Chapter 12). §2 explains why I chose the Iron Age southern Levant as the temporal and regional background of the song's circulation. §3 constructs the whole of the Shulamite by looking through the interplay of metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche. §4 examines possible projected images of the whole Shulamite from female visual representations in the Iron Age southern Levant, discussing various aspects of the images and comparing them with the Shulamite.

2. Why the Iron Age Southern Levant

Several locations of the compilation of the Song of Songs have been suggested;[793] yet scholars today widely agree that Jerusalem was the geographical setting because of the frequent mention of and the important role of the daughters

[791] See p. 209ff above.

[792] For the concept of a model reader, see p. 54f.

[793] For example, Noegel and Rendsburg suggest northern provenance relying on linguistic features of northern dialect. Noegel / Rendsburg 2009, 52–55. Ptolemaic Alexandria had also been suggested but largely denied because of no mention of Alexandria in the Song of Songs. See Barbiero 2011, 36.

of Jerusalem.[794] While Jerusalem is the most probable geographical setting for the book's compilation, the particular passage of the Shulamite description may have different regional contexts.

The issue of dating is much more complex. The suggested periods of composition range from the Solomonic period[795] to the Hasmonean period,[796] or it was transmitted over all these periods.[797] The majority of scholars date the book to the second temple period, roughly 3rd–2nd centuries BCE as evidenced by the late linguistic features.[798]

The language of the Song is multidimensional: while a major part is written in classical Biblical Hebrew, it shows a strong influence from Aramaic vocabulary and grammar, and small portions display Greek, Persian loanwords and traces of Mishnaic Hebrew. Some terms or phrases are connected thematically with parts of the rest of the Hebrew Bible.[799] The definite *terminus ad quem*, especially of the Shulamite description (7:1–6), would be around 30 BCE, as 4QCant[a], a copy dated to the early Herodian period, preserves this part whose orthography is more or less similar to the Masoretic version.[800]

While for some, linguistic features such as Aramaism, Greek and Persian loanwords, and Mishnaic vocabulary suggest later origins, the proponents of earlier dates interpret these features as indicative of the northern dialect or spoken Hebrew and deliberate stylistic choices for alliteration or to evoke an exotic atmosphere.[801] The former group regards the intertextual relationship as evidence for the presence of other scrolls prior to the Song, while for the latter, the intertextuality is proof that the scribes of the other biblical books knew the Song either orally or from written texts.[802] As Carr writes, 'in so far as the language

[794] See for example Keel 1994, 5; Fox 1985, 189; Garrett 2004, 18; Young 1993, 159–161, 165. Elgvin discusses which period of Jerusalem would fit the most as the setting of the Song of Songs, without questioning 'why Jerusalem', implying that Jerusalem is generally accepted as the geographical context for the composition of the Song of Songs. Elgvin 2018, 121–132.

[795] Solomonic period is suggested not only because of the Solomon-attributed authorship but also because of pan-Israelite toponyms mentioned in the Song of Songs and its similarity with the love songs of New Kingdom Egypt. Garrett 2004, 16–22. Just for raising a possibility, see Carr 2011, 447–448. For some evidence of early dating of the Song of Songs, see Young 1993, 157–165.

[796] It is mainly evidenced again by pan-Israelite toponyms and by late linguistic features. Elgvin 2018, 195–197.

[797] See for example, Staubli 2016, 95.

[798] For the summary, see Elgvin 2018, 101–108. Noegel and Rendsburg suggest 900 BCE composition (Noegel / Rendsburg 2009, 174–184), and there are also 8th–6th-century-BCE advocates, such as Keel 1994, 4–5.

[799] For the linguistic features of the Song of Songs, see Fox 1985, 187–190; Elgvin 2018, 101–108; Carr 2011, 434–447; Young 1993, 157–165; Noegel / Rendsburg 2009, 174–184; Garrett 2004, 16–22, etc.

[800] Flint 2005, 96–97; Tov 2000, 199–204.

[801] For linguistic evidence of the Northern dialect of an early date, see Young 1993, 157–166.

[802] See footnote 799 for references.

of a fluidly transmitted book like the Song can be used for dating at all, it is generally compatible with *either* an early or a late dating of the book'.[803]

Both sides are convincing, yet, the problem of the late dating for me is that dating the Song close to the dating of the Qumran scroll unavoidably requires the author's allegorical intention. On the one hand, it seems reasonable to follow Torleif Elgvin's stance that the general themes and the use of toponyms from both northern and southern Israelite territories fit better to the Hasmonean period *than* the Persian or Hellenistic periods. On the other hand, if the composition (or the major redactions) took place during the Hasmonean period, it should contain direct mentions of YHWH and stronger traces of the Torah as the evidence of an allegorical reading[804] because keeping these erotic scrolls in Qumran communities must imply religious or allegorical readings of the Song. In my opinion, a song is fundamentally performative, and if the Song was intended to be read as an allegory of the love between Israel and YHWH, these songs should contain more explicit mentions of YHWH to be adequate for the performance of the Song in cultic contexts of the YHWH religion. The complete lack or too rare – only once alluded in שלהבתיה (8:6) – appearance of YHWH and the Mosaic Torah, etc., leads me to think that the Song was originally sung as a secular and sensual love song and even composed for this purpose,[805] and only after that, it was interpreted as an allegory for the relationship between Israel and YHWH. Thus, the Song or its individual poems could have been written much earlier than the linguistic data might show.

The Aramaism in its language could be either poetic/performative/oral features or the northern dialect. Elgvin's question, why update the relative אשר to ש if all the readers could still understand אשר in the Hasmonean period, may be answered in that the short form of ש was not only a later form but also an older (northern) oral form preferred for songs because of its short length of pronunciation, also used in the Song of Deborah (Judg 5:7).[806] The toponyms from both the north and south may not only reflect the later Hasmonean expansion of territory or the United Monarchy, but also the positive imagery of those places deeply rooted in the minds of ancient Israelites and Judeans, even though they

[803] Carr 2011, 447. Emphasis in original.

[804] Carr suggests the dependency of Deuteronomy on the Song of Songs concerning the shared theme of divine love and jealousy, especially on the linkage between Deut. 6:5 and Song 1:7; 3:1–4, stating that there must have been more evident traces of Mosaic Torah 'if the author of the Song knew anything about the Mosaic Torah'. Carr 2011, 436–437.

[805] If it had not been written yet, the 'dynamic, free transmission' of oral tradition, which 'is not constrained by fidelity to an original text, but rather continually produces new poems out of old ones', should have left the mark of their Second Temple knowledge of YHWH and Mosaic Torah in the written form. Quotation from Fox 1985, 190.

[806] See Garrett 2004, 17; Young 1993, 163.

were constant rivals.[807] Concerning the possible link between the 'strange woman' of Prov. 1–9 and the female protagonist of the Song of Songs – that they both actively seek the male lover at night, on streets, kissing, etc. – Carr points out that it would be less reasonable that the Song's author would take the negative description of the 'strange woman' in Prov. 1–9 for the positive depiction of the lover in the Song, than vice versa.[808] The relatively gender-equal attitude in the Song of Songs also goes against its late composition with any original intention for allegory:

> Equality is the essence of the relationship between the young lovers in the Song, and this can hardly have been intended as a model for God's relation to Israel (or to an individual soul). Patriarchal marriage, where the man initiates the relationship and provides for a woman, from whom he can then demand fidelity, is a more appropriate metaphor for the relationship between God and Israel and is so used by the prophets, most notably Hosea and Ezekiel.[809]

Nevertheless, human love might be interpreted as the manifestation of divine love, but the YHWH-Israel relationship could have only been made later. The interpretative link to the relationship between YHWH and Israel must be a secondary *allegorical* reading, neither metaphorically nor symbolically intended by the text because the link is not specifically mentioned in the book and the conceptual move from human lovers to the Israel-YHWH relationship is not encoded by the form.[810] Some suggest allusions to the Jerusalem Temple, made in

[807] For example, Mount Carmel appears as the sacred place *per se* in the Hebrew Bible (1Kgs 18; 2Kgs 2:25, 4:25; Jer 46:18, etc.), Lebanon as the place of ever-green fertile region of cedar (1Kgs 5; 9:19; Isa 40:16; Jer 18:15; Ps 72:16; 92:13; 104:16–17; Song 4:15; Ezra 3:7, etc.), and Heshbon as the place of the great victory during the desert wandering (Num 21; Deut 1–4; 29:6; Jos 9:10; 12:2; Judg 11:18–27; Neh 9:22). This interpretation came from my own experience as a South Korean. Koreans – whether north or south – think they are brothers and sisters and that the lands are to be united one day even though they are still at war and have memories of their grandparents being killed by the other side. Some famous songs – also the national anthem – of South Korea, written either before or after the division, include toponyms of North Korea such as Mount *Baekdu* or Mount *Keumkang* in the positive imagery.

[808] Carr 2011, 438–439.

[809] Fox 1985, 237.

[810] In recent studies which assert the original allegorical intentions of the Song of Songs, there is a trend not to label them 'allegorical' but 'metaphoric' or 'symbolic'. See Herreman 2017, 184–185, 214–215; Elgvin 2018, 145. However, the reading of the Song of Songs from the perspective of Israel-YHWH relationship cannot be a metaphor because a metaphor needs an explicit statement of the compared (i.e., target or tenor) and comparing (i.e., source or vehicle). The difference between allegory and symbol, offered by those scholars (see Herreman 2017, 150–153), suggest that an allegorical link is made arbitrarily and the meaning expands inwards from general to particular, while a symbolic link is not arbitrary and the meaning expands outwards from particular to general. However, In the case of reading human anonymous lovers as YHWH-Israel, it is an inward expansion of the meaning from general to particular. Furthermore, reading the whole Song of Songs as

three levels – (1) the level of terminology including words such as myrrh, fragrance, purple, or הר המור ('the mountain of myrrh') as a suggested wordplay for הר המוריה (Mount Moriah); (2) the level of phrases such as 'O fairest among women' or 'wake up', and (3) the level of basic themes such as the breaking of dawn, etc.,[811] – are in fact too general to assure the allegorical intention. The cult-related terms are more likely mystifying tools rather than the evidence of the YHWH religion, since the beloved ones were commonly compared to deities in the ancient Near Eastern literature,[812] not so different from today (e.g., addressing the beloved as 'my angel'; referring to an actress or an opera singer as a 'diva' = a divine being; or comparing a woman's appearance to the image of a goddess).

For these reasons, on the one hand, there is enough evidence that the earliest composition of the Song was before the mainstream of Hellenization reached the southern Levant, as ardent and sensual love songs without implications of the YHWH-Israel relationship. On the other hand, some themes in the Song of Songs were notably more common in later periods – the Hellenistic period – than before. The opposition between bucolic nature and the hostile city, the watchmen who patrol the city (3:3; 5:7), or the foxes damaging vineyards (2:15) have parallels in Greek poetry.[813] Using litters (3:6–10) or crowns for the bridegroom (3:11) were Hellenistic conventions rather than the ancient Hebrew customs.[814]

As a result, the book of Song of Songs shows traces of both early and late dating. Considering its oral character – the title 'Song of Songs' indicates that it was to be sung[815] – the mixture of early and late features implies that these songs were orally transmitted for a long period of time,[816] some core concepts were conservatively kept while some others were revised and newly added over the course of recurrent performances. Thus, the historical frame of a song must differ according to each song.

In the case of the form and content of the specific song in 7:1–6, the listing of body parts in the form of 'your X [body part] is (like) Y' is found mostly in Egyptian descriptive texts, from ritual descriptions in Pyramid texts through to

the YHWH-Israel relationship just from one possible allusion to YHWH (8:6) can be called arbitrary, which could have been made by the reading habits of Judean tradition in the 2nd–1st century BCE.

[811] See Elgvin 2018, 152–157.

[812] Barbiero 2011, 30–31. For example, 'Behold her, like Sothis rising at the beginning of a good year', in 'Papyrus Chester Beatty I', trans. Michael Fox (*COS* 1.51:128), or '[my mother is] The gracious goddess of her (city) quarter', in the 'Message of Lú-dingir-ra to His Mother', translated in Civil 1964, 3.

[813] Barbiero 2011, 32–34; Hagedorn 2005, 206–227; Burton 2005, 180–205.

[814] Barbiero 2011, 32–33.

[815] See also footnote 803 above. As an example, see p. 230 below.

[816] See also Staubli 2016, 95.

2nd-millennium love songs to love songs from the 25th Dynasty.[817] Similar forms can also be found in Akkadian hymns from the 2nd and 1st millennium BCE.[818] However, this form does not appear in Greek literature.[819] Many of the metaphors 7:1–6 – especially the cup/vessel, twin gazelles, lotus flowers, and mountains – are iconographically associated with female bodies in the second and first millennium Levant,[820] hinting that the form and the metaphors in the description originated prior to the Hellenistic era and remained throughout the long period of its oral transmission.

For the purpose of iconographic research in §4,[821] therefore, it seems reasonable to take the entire Iron Age II into account in order to reserve sufficient time for oral transmission and to consider the relatively slow transition of material cultures. As for the geographical setting, while the Song is generally regarded as having been compiled in Jerusalem, the Shulamite description which shows a relatively high concentration of *hapax legomena* and northern toponyms may reflect northern influence. Therefore, both Jerusalem and North Israel must be considered: Jerusalem and North Israel in the Iron Age II are the likely setting of the description of the Shulamite.

In order to study the possible projected images of the Shulamite against the background of Iron Age II Jerusalem and North Israel, I will widen the scope to encompass the whole Iron Age and the regions of Judah, North Israel, southern Phoenicia, and Philistine territories together because: (1) material cultures show a relatively slow transition (temporal)[822] and (2) cultural exchanges evidently occurred in this period (regional).[823] This would roughly cover the sites from Akhziv to Beersheva, from Gaza to Damascus. It is not that I conceive these

[817] Keel 1994, 21–24; Fox 1985, 9, 52.

[818] See Keel 1994, 23–24; Livingstone 1989, 99; Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 137.

[819] While a part-by-part description itself existed in Greek literature, it does not appear in Greek love poetry before Philodemus (1st century BCE). Even Philodemus's description of a woman does not employ metaphors for each body part. *Genesis Apocryphon*, a more-or-less contemporary work, describes the beauty of Sarai part-by-part, but it merely repeats 'how lovely' or 'how beautiful', not using metaphors. Shaye J.D. Cohen asserts that the body part description of a lover in Greek literature is 'the result of Semitic influence' (Cohen 1981, 49). An important feature of the Hellenistic Jewish descriptive song is to emphasize the wisdom or skills of the beloved woman, which cannot be found in the Song of Songs (ibid., 48–49). One exception, which describes a body with metaphors written in Greek, is *Joseph and Aseneth* 18:9, dated to 100 BCE to 2nd century CE (the oldest manuscript is a Syriac version from 6th century CE), which undoubtedly is the 'reminiscent of the Song of Songs' (Burchard 1985, 232). For the dating and the translation of *Joseph and Aseneth* 18:9, see ibid., 179–180, 187–188, 232.

[820] See the discussion in p. 229–250 below. See also Staubli 2016, 95.

[821] 'Iconographic' as in the meaning of studies with visual representations, and not the level of iconographic analysis in the model of Panofsky.

[822] Cf. Ornan 2005, 10.

[823] For the dynamic cultural exchanges in the realm of art in Iron Age Israel and Judah, see Beck 2000, 178.

regions and time periods as a single cultural unit, but to cover the possibility that some artifacts, which are absent from site excavations but found in neighboring cultures, actually existed and were used. Therefore, widening the scope to Iron Age Israel, Judah, Phoenicia, and Philistine territories will help to envision the repertoire of female representations.

3. Interpretation of the Body Part Description in Song 7:1–6

Song 7:1–6 has been noted for its 'bizarre' body part metaphors.[824] When approached only from the metaphoric perspective, the body misses its link between the parts and the whole, separated, disproportioned, and itemized. However, the Shulamite description in Song 7:1–6 utilizes not only metaphors but also metonymy and synecdoche. Working together, they depict the body parts of the Shulamite, at the same time allowing the parts to stand for the whole of the Shulamite. This section discusses the metaphors/similes, metonymies, and synecdoches used in the Shulamite description, from her body parts to the whole.

3.1. *Definitions of Metaphor, Metonymy, and Synecdoche*

People have been using various figures of speech developed in their own cultures. The ancient Hebrew language also utilized diverse ways of expressing one thing in another way, and, among them, there were what we call metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche. Even though ancient Hebrew speakers' classification of such tropes might have been different, since they did not leave us a list of trope categories, we, the modern scholars, cannot avoid using the terms we are familiar with: trope, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony, or hyperbole.[825]

Since the 20th century, modern theories of metaphor have been introduced into the academic field of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible and have become an important tool for interpreting the vast amounts of metaphors used in the Hebrew Bible. This corresponds to the academic trend of the 'rhetorical turn', the revived interest in rhetoric which is 'deeply and unavoidably involved in the shaping of realities' as an indicator of a society's way of conceptual thinking.[826] However,

[824] See Gault 2019, 57; Falk 1982, 81; Black 2009, 63.

[825] Researches on the ancient Near Eastern tropes have also utilized the terms such as metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche, defining them according to Western theories of tropes. Again, it is inevitable because their articles are written in Western languages such as English, and a list of trope categories made by ancient Hebrew speakers is not extant. See for example, Noegel, *'Wordplay' in Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 309–310; Bühlmann / Scherer 1994, 68–83. See also footnote 75 above for the unavoidability of using modern methods in reading ancient texts.

[826] Chandler 2007, 123–124. Emphasis in original.

the recent interest in rhetoric in Biblical Studies has nearly been limited to metaphor, while other tropes are rarely discussed or even neglected.[827] Metaphor is one of various figures of speech, and metaphor alone cannot explain the dynamic interaction of tropes embedded in a text.

Before looking at the interaction of tropes in the Shulamite description, I will discuss the definitions of metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche, for which there is not agreement. Even the usual definition of a metaphor as being 'the transfer of the name of one object to another object through a relation of analogy', bears logical discomfort: 'but what is a relation of analogy in itself if not a metaphorical relation?'[828] When defined as 'understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another',[829] how is a metaphor distinguished from a sign since, 'A sign, or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity'?[830]

The situation is more complicated when it comes to the boundaries between metonymy and synecdoche, which fluctuated throughout history.[831] Table 12 shows definitions of metonymy and synecdoche that are easily accessible online.

In the definitions, while metonymy is generally explained by the term 'attribute', 'association', or 'qualities' and synecdoche by 'part-whole', they raise some questions. For example, the Merriam-Webster dictionary includes 'the name of the material for the thing made (such as boards for stage)' in synecdoche, but does the 'material-object' relationship not overlay with the 'quality-object' relation that the Cambridge dictionary defines as metonymy? In the example of synecdoche suggested by the Cambridge dictionary – the law for a police officer – is the law not one of the 'features' of the police officer – who enforces laws – which is defined by the same dictionary as the key character of metonymy? The Oxford English dictionary conceives 'suit-business executive' as an attribute relation of metonymy, but is the suit not a kind of 'part' of an image of a 'business' man which is synecdoche? Eco also notes the ambiguity in the traditional definitions of metonymy and synecdoche: 'one cannot accept that the relationship between 'grapes and bunch' is a synecdoche while the one between 'grapes and Bacchus' is a metonymy, since even the fact that grapes (and wine) are in some way connected to Bacchus should be registered by the semantic representation of "grapes"'.[832]

[827] See for example, Van Hecke 2005, 1–4; Verde 2016, 45–46; de Hulster 2009, 105–118, etc.
[828] Eco 1984, 89.
[829] Lakoff / Johnson 1980, 5.
[830] Peirce 1931–1960, 2.228. Emphasis in original.
[831] Nerlich 2010, 297–316.
[832] Eco 1976, 281.

	Metonymy	*Synecdoche*
Merriam-Webster	A figure of speech consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated (such as 'crown' in 'lands belonging to the crown').[833]	A figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole (such as fifty sails for fifty ships), the whole for a part (such as society for high society), the species for the genus (such as cutthroat for assassin), the genus for the species (such as a creature for a man), or the name of the material for the thing made (such as boards for stage).[834]
Cambridge Dictionary	The act of referring to something using a word that describes one of its qualities or features.[835]	A word or phrase in which a part of something is used to refer to the whole of it, for example 'a pair of hands' for 'a worker', or the whole of something is used to refer to a part, for example 'the law' for 'a police officer'.[836]
Oxford English Dictionary	The substitution of the name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant, for example suit for business executive, or the turf for horse racing.[837]	A figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa, as in England lost by six wickets (meaning 'the English cricket team').[838]

Table 12: Online dictionary definitions of metonymy and synecdoche.

In modern scholarly discourses, the definitions of metonymy and synecdoche become more complicated. The examples in Table 13 include definitions which distinguish between the two, while not subordinating one under the other.

	Metonymy	*Synecdoche*
Kenneth Burke	'to convey some incorporeal or intangible state in terms of the corporeal or tangible', e.g., to speak of 'the heart' rather than 'the emotions'.[839]	'part for the whole, whole for the part, container for the contained, sign for the thing signified, material for the thing made, cause for effect, effect for cause, genus for species, species for genus, etc.', e.g., the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm.[840]

[833] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metonymy.
[834] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/synecdoche.
[835] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/metonymy.
[836] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/synecdoche.
[837] https://www.lexico.com/definition/metonymy.
[838] https://www.lexico.com/definition/synecdoche.
[839] Burke 1974, 506.
[840] Burke 1974, 507–508. He notes that although 'material for the thing made' is very close to metonymy, he includes it as a type of synecdoche.

Hyden White	'Designating a part of the anatomy whose function can be used to characterize the function of the whole body', e.g., 'fifty sails for fifty ships'.[841]	'A symbol of a quality that is characteristic of the whole individual, considered as a combination of physical and spiritual elements, all of which participate in this quality in the modality of a microcosmic-macrocosmic relationship', e.g., 'he is all heart'.[842]
Terence Turner (1991)	'parts of a single whole of spatial and functional relations', i.e., spatial/functional part-whole relationship.[843]	'A specific relationship between metaphor and metonymy, as when a part of a whole (a metonymic relation) also replicates the form of the whole (a metaphoric relation)', e.g., 'Hobbes's Leviathan, in which the giant body of the sovereign is made up of the bodies of his subjects'.[844]
Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (1991)	'contiguity or part-whole within the same semantic domain', e.g., 'each body part, such as the monkey's nose, is a metonym for the monkey, just as a human body part is a metonym for humans, by being a part of the whole'.[845]	'A polytrope that involves analogy between two semantic domains metonymically linked as a result of metaphorical predication'. Two conditions of synecdoche: '(1) two distinct semantic categories become metonymically related – either through part-whole relationship or through contiguity; and (2) there is an interpenetration or embeddedness of metaphor and metonymy',[846] e.g., a monkey as scapegoat/mediator in Japanese culture.[847]
Ken-Ichi Seto (1999)	'a referential transfer phenomenon based on the spatio-temporal contiguity as conceived by the speaker between an entity and another in the (real) world', i.e., 'an E(ntity)-related transfer',[848] e.g., partonomical part-whole relations such as a handle for a cup.[849]	'a conceptual transfer phenomenon based on the semantic inclusion between a more comprehensive and a less comprehensive category', i.e., 'a C(ategory)-related transfer',[850] or, categorical part-whole relationship. E.g., 'Bread as in to earn one's (daily) bread'.[851]

Table 13: Academic definitions of metonymy and synecdoche.

[841] White 1973, 34–35.
[842] White 1973, 35–36.
[843] Turner 1991, 148.
[844] Turner 1991, 148.
[845] Ohnuki-Tierney 1991, 161, 169.
[846] Ohnuki-Tierney 1991, 187.
[847] Ohnuki-Tierney 1991, 178.
[848] Seto 1999, 91.
[849] Seto 1999, 99.
[850] Seto 1999, 92.
[851] Seto 1999, 114.

The example of '50 sails for 50 ships' is attributed to metonymy by White in Table 13, but it is a synecdoche for the Merriam-Webster dictionary in Table 12. For Burke, metonymy is limited to the expression of the incorporeal in terms of corporeal, not vice versa. For White, Turner, Ohnuki-Tierney, and Seto, both metonymy and synecdoche involve part-whole relations, but the metonymical part-whole relation is differentiated from the synecdochical part-whole: the metonymical part-whole is more physical (partonomical), spatial, and temporal, while the synecdochic part-whole is more categorical (taxonomical). Turner and Ohnuki-Tierney – trope theorists in anthropology – describe synecdoche as involving both metaphorical and metonymical principles, i.e., the combination of analogy and part-whole.

My purpose in showing such diverse or even disparate definitions is to state that there is no consensus on the definition of metonymy and synecdoche among scholars. Even though certain keywords repeatedly appear – albeit inconsistently – such as 'attribute' or 'contiguity' for metonymy and 'part-whole' for synecdoche, these words are not clearly defined,[852] resulting in contradictory definitions. Bearing in mind that definitions of tropes may vary according to different perspectives, the question is which definition fits the purpose of this study. Since I owe it to Eco for the study's methodological framework, I introduce and apply Eco's understanding of the tropes.

For Eco, 'the difference between synecdoche and metonymy has nothing to do with the concrete relations between a "thing" and its parts or other contiguous "things": the difference lies purely within formal bases'.[853] Rather than offering a clear definition of synecdoche and metonymy, Eco chooses to explain them using metaphors: 'the synecdoche could be limited to semantic representations in the form of a *dictionary*, reserving metonymy for representations in the form of an *encyclopedia*'.[854]

On the one hand, synecdoche is like a dictionary. Designating something as a synecdoche means 'to grasp its "universal" essence, to recognize that thing as the individual of a species related to a genus'.[855] This process involves movements between lower and upper categories, as a dictionary defines a word by hierarchical categorizations: e.g., choices between animal and plant, and then sheep and cow, then male and female. It can be analogous to the vertical, hierarchical movement in a tree diagram (Fig. 36). Thus, according to Eco, synecdoche is limited to the shifts from a species to its genus and from genus to

[852] For example, what is the boundary of 'attribute': is a part an attribute of a whole? The taxonomical and categorical part-whole relations are also not distinguished in most definitions of metonymy and synecdoche. See also Eco 1984, 90.

[853] Eco 1984, 116.

[854] Eco 1984, 90. Emphasis added. For the concept of 'encyclopedia', see p. 52–53 above.

[855] Eco 1984, 117.

species.[856] Defined as such, the 'conceptual metaphor' that Lakoff and Johnson theorized is, in fact, a synecdoche of metaphor.[857]

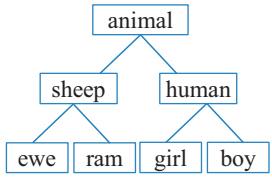


Fig. 36: Synecdochic vertical movement in a tree diagram.
Based on Eco 1984, 51 fig. 2.2.

On the other hand, metonymy is like an encyclopedia. An encyclopedia explains a word by describing the multifaceted aspects of the object in every context. The form of an encyclopedia is similar to the structure of the Q model that Eco introduces,[858] whose characteristic is the non-hierarchical network of connections among unlimited interpretants of a sign (i.e., infinite semiosis).[859] For example, when 'plant' is defined as a 'living structure which is not an animal, frequently with leaves, getting its food from air, water, earth,' the Q model structures the network of signification of this definition as in Fig. 37. Diverse Q models can be structured according to different contexts of the term 'plant', e.g., industrial apparatus or the verb 'to plant'.[860] The Q model does not display a hierarchical genus-species relationship, but emphasizes the connections among all of the attributes (semes) which are used to explain the sememe /plant,[861] and the semes next to each other in the Q model are 'contiguous'.[862] When metonymy is defined as 'to name an object by another thing which has the contiguity

[856] Eco 1984, 92.

[857] For example, the conceptual metaphor of 'you're *wasting* my time' is 'TIME IS MONEY'. The conceptual metaphor 'TIME IS MONEY' is the synecdoche (genus) of various metaphors such as 'this gadget will save you hours', 'I've invested a lot of time in her', etc. Examples from Lakoff / Johnson 1980, 7–8.

[858] Q model is made by M. Ross Quillian for a 'semantic memory', visualizing the interconnection of various defining elements of a word or concept. See Eco 1976, 122. For an example of the Q model, see Fig. 37 on p. 228.

[859] For the notion of 'infinite semiosis', see p. 20f above.

[860] See Table 25 in Eco 1976, 123.

[861] A seme is 'the "minimal unit" of signification' (Greimas / Courtés 1988, 278), and 'semes are conceived as abstract, deep structural entities of metalinguistic description' (Nöth 2001, 317). A sememe is 'the set of semes identifiable within the minimal sign' (Greimas / Courtés 1988, 279). A sememe entails semes of agent, object, instrument, purpose, material, component, etc. (Eco 1984, 114–115). For example, the signified (sememe) of the word 'wine' has smallest units of meaning such as 'grape', 'fermentation', 'hangover', 'bottle', 'human', 'Bacchus', etc., in various contexts.

[862] Eco 1984, 106–107.

relationships with the first one',[863] the contiguous relation refers to the movements between the nodes in the Q model.[864] In this respect, metonymy can be likened to the movement between an encyclopedia entry and its properties in its explanation. More precisely, Eco defines metonymy as a relationship between sememe and seme:[865] '*a metonymy becomes the substitution of a sememe with one of its semes* (for example, /Drink a bottle/ for "drink wine" because a bottle will be registered among the final destinations of wine) or of *a seme with the sememe to which it belongs* (for example, /Weep thou, O Jerusalem/ for "May the tribe of Israel weep" because among the encyclopedic properties of Jerusalem must be included that of its being the holy city of the Jews)'.[866]

It is important to note that under such a definition, the *pars pro toto* and its inverse relations (partonomical part-whole, i.e., object-component) are included in metonymy because the partonomical parts can be the semes of a sememe and vice versa.[867] For example, the properties or semes of a sememe /house/ would be: having a roof (formal component), being cultural (agent, antithesis to 'natural'), made of bricks (material), as shelter (function). Thus, having a roof, one of the formal properties of a house, becomes a metonymy when one describes a house as someone's roof.[868]

Metaphor is based upon both synecdochic and metonymic principles.[869] On the one hand, metaphor involves synecdoche: the *tertium comparationis* of a metaphor is the upper category of the tenor and vehicle which binds both in one category. For example, in the metaphor 'the tooth of the mountain,' the shared feature (*tertium comparationis*) of the peak (tenor) and tooth (vehicle) is 'being sharp'. The shift from peak to tooth includes the movements from a species to a genus (from peak to the concept of 'sharpness') and then from the genus to the second species (from the concept of 'sharpness' to the tooth) (Fig. 38).[870] The property of being sharp is the integrating category of two different entities: peak and tooth.

On the other hand, metaphor is established on metonymy. Metaphor is a shortcut of two different semes in the Q model. If the 'similarity' of a metaphor, the key albeit naïve concept which normally designates a metaphor,[871] is

[863] 'Es ist metonymie, einen Gegenstand durch einen anderen zu benennen, der Kontiguitätsbeziehungen mit dem ersten aufweist'. Eco 1972, 185.

[864] Eco 1984, 68–69, 112–114.

[865] For the definitions of seme and sememe, see footnote 861 above.

[866] Eco 1984, 114. Emphasis in original.

[867] Eco 1984, 115–117.

[868] Eco 1984, 116.

[869] Eco 1984, 93; Eco 1972, 183.

[870] Eco 1984, 92–94, 98.

[871] See Kövecses 2010, ix–x; Chandler 2007, 127; Richards 1965, 127; Eco 1984, 113–114; Eco 1976, 280, etc.

established by the mediating semes – the shared properties – between the tenor and the vehicle, the metaphor is a jump among the distant semes related by a series of contiguous connections in a Q model. A metaphor shows ‘contiguity in the index’ in ‘a web of interpretants’ of infinite semiosis.[872]

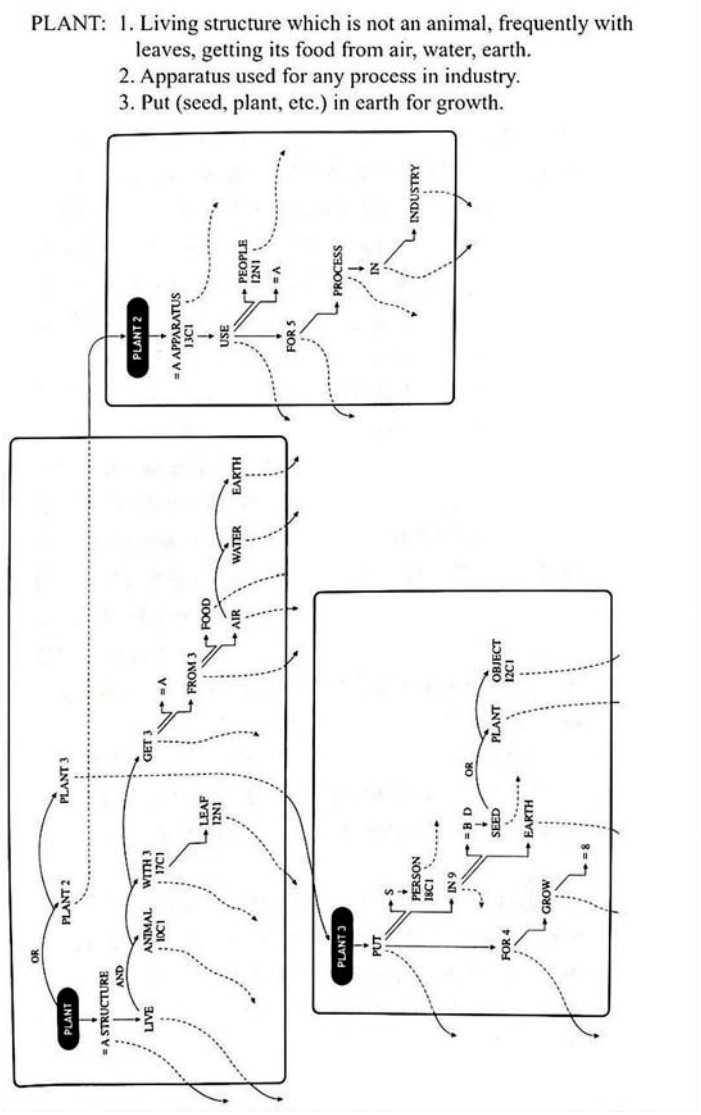


Fig. 37: The Q model as a metaphor for the non-hierarchical movement of metonymy. Eco 1976, 123 Table 25.

[872] Eco 1984, 106–107.

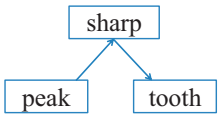


Fig. 38: Synecdochic movement in metaphor. Based on Eco 1984, 93 fig. 3.3.

Therefore, a metaphor involves both synecdochic and metonymic principles. Looking through the metonymic point of view, metaphor is a leap between non-hierarchical semes infinite interpretants' network. From the synecdochic perspective, a metaphoric movement between the target and source domains, or the tenor and the vehicle, includes the movement of species–genus-species.

Eco renounces offering 'a synthetic, immediate, blazing definition of the metaphor', because 'the process of metaphorical production and interpretation is long and tortuous'.[873] Eco likewise does not provide simple definitions of synecdoche and metonymy, but scatters their characteristics in his discussions. Nevertheless, in order to progress my discussion, I set brief boundaries of metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche, reflecting Eco's observation:

1) Synecdoche refers to a genus in terms of species or a species in terms of genus, i.e., categorical part-whole relationship. It can be compared to the form of a dictionary. In a tree diagram, the movement is vertical.
2) In metonymy, a seme stands for its sememe or a sememe stands for one of its semes. It is analogous to the form of an encyclopedia. Its movement is horizontal in the Q model.
3) Metaphor involves both synecdoche and metonymy. In a metaphor, A (tenor) is compared to B (vehicle) which shares its genus with A (synecdoche). The movement from A to B is also a leap in a network of interpretants which are metonymically connected. Simile takes the concrete form 'A is *like* B', but its mechanism does not differ from the metaphor, and there is no consistent semantic difference between the similes and metaphors in Song 7. Therefore, even though I distinguish between metaphor and simile in the discussion of individual metaphors and similes, I use the term 'metaphor' to refer to both in more synthetic discussions for the sake of brevity.

These tropes cannot be clearly distinguished from each other, but intricately interrelated.[874] In the next subsections, I analyze the individual body part metaphors (§3.2) and examine how different synecdoches and metonymies are interrelated in those metaphors (§3.3). Finally, I explore the interplay of these tropes

[873] Eco 1984, 129.

[874] A same trope can be differently understood (e.g., as metonymy or synecdoche) according to interpreters. See p. 250 below.

in the construction of the whole of the Shulamite (§3.4), which is further compared to female visual representations from the Iron Age southern Levant in §4.

3.2. *Metaphors and Similes in the Body Part Description*

After the short introduction of the description in Song 7:1, v. 2–6 list the body parts of the Shulamite from her feet up to her head and hair. Except for the feet, which are plainly stated as 'beautiful', the depiction employs metaphors and similes comparing her body parts with objects, landscapes, flora and fauna, etc. These metaphors and similes, however, do not conform to the modern way of expressing beauty. They seem to be rather bizarre and unclear.[875] In this section, I discuss these metaphors and similes in the context of the Hebrew Bible and the cultural background of the ancient Near East with a special focus on the Iron Age southern Levant in order to clarify what this song tried to show its audiences at the time of its early circulation and performances.

Verse 1a. Turn, turn, O Shulamite, turn, turn, and let us see you!
שׁוּבִי שׁוּבִי וְנֶחֱזֶה־בָּךְ
1bα. What would you see from the Shulamite?
מַה־תֶּחֱזוּ בַּשּׁוּלַמִּית
1bβ. [Something] like the dance of the two camps!
כִּמְחֹלַת הַמַּחֲנָיִם

Verse 1 is the prelude to the description. The verb שובי is translated mainly in two ways: (1) return or turn back[876] or (2) turn around.[877] The Hebrew שוב is a broadly used term for 'turn', 'return', 'go back', and mostly it indicates a change of direction.[878] For that reason, some commentators reject translating it as 'turn around' as in a dance.[879] However, שוב is also used for the turning

[875] See Gault 2019, 57; Falk 1982, 81; Black 2009, 63.

[876] Gerleman 1965, 188; Fox 1985, 157; Keel 1994, 228; Garrett 2004, 231; Exum 2005, 225.

[877] Murphy 1990, 180–181; Barbiero 2011, 363–364; Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 356.

[878] Fabri, 'שׁוּב', *ThWAT* 7: 1118–1176; Soggin, 'שׁוב', *TLOT* 3: 1312–1317; 'שׁוב', *Ges*[18] 1327b–1331a; 'שׁוב I', *DCH* 8: 273b–298a; Thompson / Martens, 'שׁוב', *NIDOTTE* 4: 55–59; 'שׁוב', *HALOT*: 1427b–1434a.

[879] See Murphy 1990, 181; Exum 2005, 225. Murphy states that 'the woman is asked to face the speaker(s)', assuming that she shows her back to the speaker(s). For Exum, the Shulamite is called to return from the nut garden in 6:11–12. However, it is more likely that it is not the woman but the male lover who went to the nut garden in 6:11–12 because a 'garden' is a motif exclusively used for the woman in Song; if someone went down to the garden, that person should be someone other than her. Furthermore, since 6:11–12 are narrated in the retrospect manner in the perfect tense, looking back to the past event of going down to the nut garden which unexpectedly turned out to be a place of chariots, the narration of 6:11–12 does not need to take place in the garden but somewhere else.

around of a body on the same spot (e.g., 1Chr 21:20) or for the turning (whirling) movement of a wheel (Prov 20:26),[880] indicating circular movements.[881] The basic meaning of the root, 'having moved in a particular direction, to move thereupon in the opposite direction, the implication being (unless there is evidence to the contrary) that one will arrive again at the initial point of departure',[882] implies that the verb can be used in a dancing context for moving forwards and backwards or side to side, returning to the original point.

In 7:1, שובי appears four times, which gives the nuance of a repeated turning, as in a dance. It is also important to note that 7:1a has rhythmical sounds: the alliteration of ש and the interchange of the vocal /i/ and /u/ are repeated throughout the line.[883] This hints at the Shulamite description's performative context. When sung, this was likely accompanied by a dance in a performance.

There have been several suggestions for the meaning of the epithet 'Shulamite'[884]: (1) the women from the town of Shunem (1Kgs 1:1–4, 2:13–25; 2Kgs 4:8–37, 8:1–6) 'the Shunammite', in which the interchange between '*l*' and '*n*' occurred; (2) *šulmânîtu* (^{d}DI *nin-tu*), an epithet of Ishtar, the goddess of love and war, which might have possibly been worshiped in the ancient Israel/Palestine (Jer 7:18, 44:17–19:25); (3) an epithet referring to the feminine counterpart of Solomon; (4) the Jerusalemite, for Jerusalem was called Shalem (Ps 76:3); (5) the woman of peace or the perfect woman, for the assumed root of the 'Shulamite' שלם: peace or completion.[885] It is possible that many layers of meaning exist in the word 'the Shulamite' – not a personal name but a common noun[886] – evoking various connotations.[887]

The verb הזה (its basic meaning 'to see')[888] is a synonymous parallel word for ראה (e.g., Job 23:9; Prov 24:32; Isa 33:17), but חזה is more often used in sacred contexts.[889] There are two ways for the translation of הזה ב- in v. 1bα. On the one hand, the preposition ב may introduce a direct object (the Shulamite)

[880] In Prov 20:26 the verb is used in *hiphil* form. This has to do with the causative sense in the context, namely that the king turns (whirls) a wheel upon the wicked.

[881] Fabry, *ThWAT* 7: 1134.

[882] Holladay 1958, 53.

[883] Barbiero 2011, 363.

[884] It is a common noun designated by the definite article ה. See footnotes 714, 716 above.

[885] These five suggestions are mentioned in a number of commentaries. See especially Pope 1977, 596–600; Fox 1985, 157–158; Zakovitch 2004, 242–243; Barbiero 2011, 364–365; Exum 2005, 226–228; Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 354–355.

[886] See footnotes 714 and 716 above.

[887] For the concept of connotation in interpreting poems, see Schulte-Sasse / Werner 1994, 98–99, 108.

[888] Vetter, 'חזה', *TLOT* 1: 400–403; 'חזה', *Ges*^{18} 2: 333b–334a; 'חזה I', *DCH* 3: 181; Naudé, 'חזה', *NIDOTTE* 2: 56–61; *BDB*: 'חזה', 302; *HALOT*: 301a.

[889] Naudé, *NIDOTTE* 2: 56; Barbiero 2011, 365.

as in v. 1aβ.[890] In this case, the interrogative מה would not be a question for 'what', but 'how' or 'why'. On the other hand, the ב may be translated as 'in', having the interrogative מה as a question for the object of gaze.[891]

The interrogative מה can be translated as 'what', 'how', or 'why'.[892] These can be divided by their moods into three groups: (1) a *neutral* question of 'what' (e.g. Gen 37:15);[893] (2) a *negative* rebuke of 'why' (e.g., Gen 31:26; Ex 14:15; Pro 24:32; Isa 33:17), and 'how' (e.g., Gen 38:29; Jer 2:33, 36), including the expression of impossibility of 'how' (e.g., Job 19:28);[894] (3) a *positive* exclamation of 'how' (e.g., Ps 21:2; 119:97; Job 19:28; Joel 1:18).[895] The tone of negative rebuke does not accord with the text because the body of the Shulamite is displayed in v. 2–6 without a hint of struggle or conflict. The מה in v. 1bα is not an exclamation either; if it is, then the man is admiring the action of the public watching her. The man admires only the woman in the Song of Songs. Therefore, the understanding of מה in v. 1 as a neutral question of 'what' seems to fit the context.

When מה is translated as 'what', the preposition ב is to be understood as 'in'. The verb ראה, the parallel word for חזה, has an occurrence that someone sees certain values or qualities 'in' another person: he [YHWH] may not see a thing of nakedness (anything indecent) in you (לא-יראה בך ערות דבר, Deut 23:15). When some values or deeds are thought to be residing 'in' a person (e.g., Exod 36:1; Ps 3:3; Prov 14:33, etc.), then one can 'see' those values and deeds 'in' that person, as in Deut 23:15.

The meaning of 'the dance of the two camps' is uncertain: it may be envisioned as (1) two groups of dancing chores and the Shulamite dancing in between the two;[896] (2) two groups of spectators watching a dancer;[897] (3) a special dance originating from the place 'Mahanaim';[898] (4) a disdainful woman who dances between military camps has also been suggested,[899] but there is no

[890] Gerleman 1965, 188; Pope 1977, 591; Fox 1985, 154; Keel 1994, 225; Murphy 1990, 180; Garrett 2004, 231; Exum 2005, 228.

[891] Zakovitch 2004, 241; Barbiero 2011, 319; Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 359.

[892] 'מָה', *Ges*^{18} 3: 635a–636b; 'מָה I', *DCH* 5: 150b; 'מָה', *HALOT*: 550a–552a; 'מָה', *BDB*: 552a–554a.

[893] Barbiero 2011, 319, 365–366. Stoop-van Paridon seems to add some negative nuance, though she translates it as an interrogative of 'what'. Stoop-van Paridon, *Song of Songs*, 358. Zakovitch translates it as 'what' ('*was*' in German), but he is open to the other options. Zakovitch 2004, 243.

[894] Pope 1977, 601; Fox 1985, 154–155; Gerleman 1965, 188–193; Keel 1994, 225, 229; Murphy 1990, 180; Garrett 2004, 231–232.

[895] Exum 2005, 211, 228.

[896] See Zakovitch 2004, 244; Garrett 2004, 234; Barbiero 2011, 366.

[897] Fox 1985, 158; Murphy 1990, 181. However, Murphy leaves the question open.

[898] But this suggestion is rejected by a number of commentators. See for example Murphy 1990, 181; Exum 2005, 229.

[899] Fox 1985, 158.

evidence that there were females who did this. (5) Pope presents various myths from the ancient Near East and India about goddesses who fought battles in a dance-like manner.[900] Since 'the dance of the two camps' appears regarding the Shulamite, it may be a solo dance. There is no indication that the group also dances; rather, desiring to *see* something from the Shulamite, they ask her to dance. However, the majority of the מחולה are a group dance in the Hebrew Bible.[901] Perhaps that is why the group asked '*something like* (כ) the dance of the two camps' and not exactly the dance of the two camps. It is likely that the *impact* of a group dance is what they wanted from the Shulamite.

The description in 7:2–6, spoken by the group, shows what the group saw from the Shulamite: she makes a strong impression on her viewers similar to the dance of the two camps.

Verse 2a. How beautiful are your steps in sandals, young noble lady!
מַה־יָּפוּ פְעָמַיִךְ בַּנְּעָלִים בַּת־נָדִיב

The description starts with the Shulamite's sandaled feet, which make steps.[902] Her steps are exclaimed to be beautiful. I translate בת-נדיב as a 'young noble lady': בת need not refer to an actual daughter, but indicates one's property who is.[903] נדיב (בת-נדיב) is constructed in a similar format to that of 6:12 (עמי-נדיב), emphasizing the Shulamite's nobility.

Verse 2b. The curves of your thighs are like jewelry rings, a work by artisan's hands.
חַמּוּקֵי יְרֵכַיִךְ כְּמוֹ חֲלָאִים מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אָמָּן

From v. 2b on, the description utilizes one metaphor or simile per a body part. In v. 2b, the Shulamite's thighs – or hips –[904] are compared to (round or oval) jewelry rings,[905] which are perfect and beautiful as made by an artisan.

[900] Pope 1977, 606–611.

[901] Only one exception is the dance of Jephthah's daughter. However, her dance is marked as plural 'dances' (מחלות) along with plural drums (תפים) in Judg 11:34. It could be that she came out with other women dancing and drumming, but only she was noted in the text.

[902] פעם can be translated both into a 'foot' or 'step'. See footnote 764 above for my argument for taking the meaning of 'step' in this verse.

[903] Haag, 'בַּת', *ThWAT* 1: 867–872; 'בַּת I', *Ges*[18] 1: 185; 'בַּת I', *HALOT*: 165b–166b; 'בַּת', *BDB*: 123; 'בַּת I', *DCH* 2: 281b–288b; Caragounis, 'בַּת', *NIDOTTE* 1: 779–781.

[904] ירך as a body part covers the ranges of thigh, hip, hip joint, and figuratively also genitals ('יָרֵךְ', *Ges*[18] 2: 498; 'יָרֵךְ', *DCH* 4: 299; Rogers, 'יָרֵךְ', *NIDOTTE* 2: 543–544). The word's usage for the hip-socket in Gen 32:33, along with the figurative usage for sexual organ, suggests that the range of the word as a body part could cover hips.

[905] נזם in Prov 25:12, the parallel word for חלי (jewel), gives a hint that it is the ring type jewelry.

Jewelry was worn to be seen, a display which reveals the wearer's beauty, wealth, and high social status.[906] The comparison of the Shulamite's curvy thighs with masterpiece jewels reveals the conceptual metaphor which relates the female body with the display of beauty and with connotations of perfection, beauty, preciousness, and nobility.

Verse 3a. Your navel is the round cup, which shall not lack its mixed wine.

שָׁרְרֵךְ אַגַּן הַסַּהַר אַל־יֶחְסַר הַמָּזֶג

In this verse, the Shulamite's navel is compared to a round cup, filled abundantly with wine. While the Hebrew word שר points to an umbilical cord and thus a navel by contiguity, some commentators suggest that this could also be a euphemism for a vagina.[907] אגן denotes a cup, bowl or goblet,[908] small or large, likely to be used in ritual and festive contexts.[909] The jussive form of the verb 'shall not lack (אל-יחסר)' expresses wishes, requests, and commands.[910] The Hebrew word מזג ('mixed wine') is a *hapax legomenon*, but the Aramaic equivalent מזג and the Hebrew variant מסך support the theory that it is mixed wine, especially mixed with spices for a stronger flavor.[911] The famous imagery of a cup or vase with overflowing liquid held by deities and supernatural figures throughout ancient Mesopotamia and Syria – the *ḫegallu* vase as a visual metaphor for abundance – might have been an inspiration.[912] A female body, also, was conceptually connected with a cup or vessel in the Iron Age southern Levant, as in the female-body-shaped vessel discussed below.[913] The never-ending mixed wine connotes endless abundant joy and the intoxicating power of love, for wine is often compared to love in the Song (1:2,4; 4:10; 7:9). The sexual

[906] Golani 2013, 129.

[907] See Pope 1977, 617–618; Keel 1994, 234.

[908] 'אַגָּן', *Ges*[18] 1: 12b; 'אַגָּן', *DCH* 1: 117b; Hostetter, 'כְּלִי', *NIDOTTE* 2: 654–656; 'אַגָּן', *HALOT*: 11a.

[909] אגן appears three times in the Hebrew Bible: once here used for a container of wine (Song 7:2), once containing blood in the covenant making ceremony (Exod 24:6), once referring to a small kind of bowl (Isa 22:24). However, archaeological evidences point to rather large bowls for אגן: there are some large bowls or craters found from excavations with the inscription אגנא. One example from Khirbet Semrin was found in a banquet room in a sanctuary of Abgal, indicating its usage in religious and festal contexts (Pope 1977, 618; Zakovitch 2004, 245). The inscriptions often show that the bowls or craters are dedicated to certain deities (Pope 1977, 618). It seems that the אגן type container had ritual and festive uses.

[910] Waltke / O'Connor 1990, 566–570.

[911] 'מָסַךְ', *BDB*: 587. See also Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 368.

[912] For the images and explanation of the *ḫegallu* vase, see Black / Green 1992, 184.

[913] See p. 269f below. Also, from the Late Bronze Age Tell el-Farʿah (South), there is an ivory plaque which depicts that a woman with a juglet filling a cup of her male partner in a festive context, indicating their intimate relationship. See E. Fischer 2011, 85–86.

connotation in this metaphor does not mean that she is completely naked or now having sexual intercourse, but rather it would be likely that the group blesses her amorous power by describing her navel.

The group describes the Shulamite's navel as 'the' cup which shall not lack 'the' mixed wine, using the definite article ה. It gives a nuance that this specific kind of cup and wine could have been famous for its character – for the connotation of abundance.[914] Or, the definite articles may function for the rhythm and alliteration, not having the function of specifying the noun. Whatever the case is, for the group, the Shulamite's navel (or vagina) is identified with the cup, which contains ever-flowing strong mixed wine for religious purposes or for feasts. Her navel/vagina is valued as the source of joy having connotations of sexual attraction and abundance, praised in the context of joyful banquets which were probably connected with religious thanksgivings and blessings. This metaphor reveals the conceptual metaphor that the female body (navel) is a container (round cup).

Verse 3b. Your belly is a mound of wheat, surrounded with lotuses.
בִּטְנֵךְ עֲרֵמַת חִטִּים סוּגָה בַּשּׁוֹשַׁנִּים

The belly of the Shulamite is compared to a mound of wheat surrounded by lotus flowers. The belly, בטן in the Hebrew Bible, has connotations of food, thought, fertility, and knowledge.[915] ערמת חטים is a heap, pile, or mound of wheat, which has connotations of an abundance of food, overflowing nutrition, and good living.[916]

[914] Although the use of definite articles in the Biblical Hebrew is rather loose, even more freely applied in poetry, the general tendency in Biblical Hebrew poetry is to eliminate it. It seems more likely that the article is placed upon intention, especially when the article is marked not only by vocalization but also by the consonant ה. (Joüon / Muraoka 1993, §137, f).

[915] In the Hebrew Bible, בטן as a body part appears: (1) as a place of digestion of food (e.g., Job 20:14–15); (2) as a symbol for wealth or poverty (e.g., Prov 13:25); (3) as a place of knowledge and thoughts (e.g., Prov 22:18; Ezek 3:3); (4) as a place of embryos and fetuses (e.g., Ps 139:13). Children are often designated as פרי-בטן (the fruit of a belly), referring to the reproductive organs of both males and females (e.g., Gen 30:2; Mic 6:7).

[916] The word which I translated as 'mound' is ערמה, a heap or a pile, rather than a sheave ('עֶרֶמָה', *HALOT*: 887a; 'עֲרֵמָה', *Ges*[18] 4: 1016a; 'עֶרֶמָה', *DCH* 6: 564b; Harman, 'ערם', *NIDOTTE* 3: 538–539), concerning its usage in the many heaps of various offerings (2Chr 31:5–10), and that it is also used for the heaps of rubbish (Neh 3:34). It has the connotation of abundance, for it appears in the context of threshing (Ruth 3:7), and of abundant offerings to YHWH (2Chr 31:5–10). For the translation of this word as 'mound', see footnote 928 below.

חטים is a plural form of חטה, which means both wheat and ears of wheat ('חִטָּה', *HALOT*: 307a; 'חִטָּה', *Ges*[18] 2: 340b; 'חִטָּה', *DCH* 3: 201; Wegner, 'חִטָּה', *NIDOTTE* 2: 104–105). In the Hebrew Bible, it appears basically as food: as a nutritional source (e.g., 2Sam 17:28–29), and as an ingredient for bread (e.g., Exod 29:2). It also appears as a symbol of good living and abundance (e.g., Deut 32:14; Ps 147:14), that the Promised Land was figured as the land of wheat (e.g., Deut 8:8), but lack of it would indicate great poverty (e.g., Joel 1:11). Wheat was one of the trade goods (e.g.,

שושן is usually translated as lily,[917] but there has been a suggestion that it is an Egyptian loan word for lotus (*sšn*), for the following reasons:[918] (1) the word שושן in the Hebrew Bible refers to the flower-like capital of a column (e.g., 1Kgs 7:19, 22) or flowery decoration of a cup (e.g., 1Kgs 7:26), and archaeological evidence shows lotus shape capitals and cups; (2) while the Septuagint translated שושן as κρίνον, Herodotus used the same word (κρίνον) for lotus; (3) the lotus is a widely known symbol for regeneration and vital power in ancient Egypt and Levant. The symbolic meanings of lotus – life and regeneration –[919] also accords well with the architectural motif of temple columns (1Kgs 7:19, 22). שושן appears elsewhere in the Song, as a metaphor for the female protagonist showing how distinguished she is among others (2:1–2), and in the metaphor of a young gazelle eating among lotuses signifying the regeneration of life (2:16; 4:5; 6:2–3, cf. Fig. 41).[920] Lotus flowers could be served in dishes as decoration and for their intoxicating smell.[921] Iconographically, lotus flowers were used as attributes of deities in ancient Egypt and the Levant,[922] appearing also with kings in the Levant.[923]

Having something surrounded by lotuses thus would give the connotation of a strong but sweet intoxicating scent, along with regeneration and life-giving power. The possibility of eating lotuses fits better in this context than lilies because it corresponds to the nutritional connotation of a heap of wheat. The surrounding lotuses reinforce the connotation of a source of life, i.e., abundant nutrition, vegetation, and the power of regeneration.

The vehicle of the metaphor, a mound of wheat surrounded with lotuses, has been controversial. The suggestions by various commentators can be categorized

Ezek 27:17), used also for payments (e.g., 1Kgs 5:11), and the harvest of wheat was kept as a festival (e.g., Exod 34:22). Thus, having חטה connotes food, nutrition, abundance, and good living. חטים appears with ערמה only in this verse in the Hebrew Bible, so it is uncertain whether it refers to the processed, edible wheat or the ears of wheat before threshing. Nevertheless, the connotation as an abundant food source is clearly expressed here.

[917] See 'שׁוּשַׁן I', *DCH* 8: 314b–315a; Gerleman 1965, 194; Fox 1985, 154, 159; Murphy 1990, 180; Zakovitch 2004, 241; Exum 2005, 212. In *HALOT* the entrance gives the meaning 'lily', but in the explanation it gives possibility also for 'lotus'. 'שׁוּשַׁן/שׁוּשָׁן I', *HALOT*: 1454b–1455b; *Ges*[18] gives both possibilities for lily and lotus. See 'שׁוּשַׁן I', *Ges*[18] 6: 1338. Stoop-van Paridon transliterates the word, renouncing to translate it. Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 98.

[918] See Keel 1994, 78–79; Schroer, 'Lotos', 670; Staubli 2016, 84–87; Schmoldt, 'שׁוּשַׁן', *ThWAT* 7: 1205–1207; Pope 1977, 368. Garrett agrees with Keel, but he opens the possibility for both lilies and lotuses. Garrett 2004, 148.

[919] See footnote 921 below.

[920] See p. 238 below, esp. footnote 942.

[921] Brunner-Traut 1980, 1092–1094; Schroer 1995, 670.

[922] For lotus flowers appearing with various gods, see for example, Schroer, *IPIAO* 4, 456–459; Ornan 2011, 265–266, 269–271; and with goddesses, see Cornelius 2008, 98–99; Budin 2015, 323–324.

[923] See for example, Beck 2000, 180–181.

into three proposals: (1) a pile of harvested wheat on a threshing floor, which is fenced by thorns for protection. In this picture the thorns are replaced by flowers (lilies, in their interpretation) to enhance the connotations of beauty and preciousness[924] or of accessibility;[925] (2) floral (lily, according to their interpretation) decoration around the Shulamite's belly;[926] (3) a cup or bowl with a lotus pattern decoration on its rim or a dish decorated with lotus flowers (Fig. 39).[927]

The first option seems less convincing because of the lack of evidence. A flower – whether lotus or lily – is not able to physically protect the harvested wheat, and no visual evidence for such artistic concept has been found. The second option does not explain the metaphor which compares the belly with a wheat mound. The third option is based on the conceptual metaphor, that the female body (belly) is a container – of abundance which contains a mound of wheat – assuming that a huge bowl similar to the shape of the lower abdomen contains and supports the mound of wheat likened to the upper belly.[928] The pottery decoration motif from the Late Bronze Age, in which a pubic triangle replaces a lotus flower/tree between caprids (Fig. 41),[929] suggests the possibility that the conceptual metaphor which relates a female lower abdomen with lotus flowers in the context of containers could have been continued from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age.[930] The third option also continues the conceptual metaphor that the 'female body is container' of v. 3a, and is corroborated in the material culture of the ancient Levant, which shapes a bowl or cup in the form of a female body (Fig. 58).[931] For these reasons, the third option is the most probable in the background of the ancient southern Levant. In fact, the third option integrates the other two options: the lotus flower decorated bowl 'protects' (the first option) the foodstuff inside, adding the 'aesthetic' pleasure (the second option).

This 'female body – container' metaphor is combined with another conceptual metaphor: the female body (belly) is food or foodstuff (wheat). Thus, verses

[924] Delitzsch 1875, 112; Fox 1985, 159.

[925] Exum 2005, 234; Fischer 2019, 5.

[926] Delitzsch 1875, 112; Gerleman 1965, 198; Pope 1977, 622; Murphy 1990, 182; Garrett 2004, 239; Stoop-van Paridon 2005, 371.

[927] Keel 1994, 233–235.

[928] The word ערמה, usually translated as a heap or pile (see footnote 916 above), does not only refer to a pile heaped on the ground but also a mound contained in some kind of a container whether a sack or a vessel because the plural of it are transportable and loadable on donkeys (Neh 2:16). The singular word is never used when it indicates huge piles on the ground, implying that it may be in a smaller scale and containable. Hag 2:16, in singular, points out that ערמה is a *single* unit whose volume was not fixed – it could be smaller or larger over half.

[929] See also p. 238–240 below.

[930] Keel / Uehlinger 1998, 72–73 fig. 80–81. The close relationship between the general 'tree with caprids' motif and the pubic triangle can be witnessed since 3000 BCE or even earlier in the ancient Near East. Ornan 2007, 227–228.

[931] Schroer / Kipfer 2015, 7–14.

3a and 3b deal with drinks and foodstuffs essential for the joyous and satisfactory life, equating the body parts of the Shulamite not only with drink and foodstuff (wine and wheat), but also with their containers (round cup and decorated bowl).

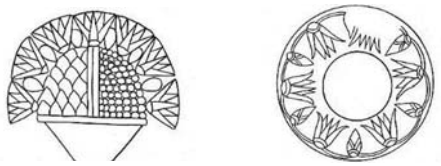


Fig. 39: Dishes or vessels decorated with lotus flower.
Left: Part of tomb relief, West Thebes, 1340 BCE (Keel 1994, fig. 129).
Right: Stone bowl, unprovenanced, 8th/7th century BCE (Keel 1994, fig. 130).

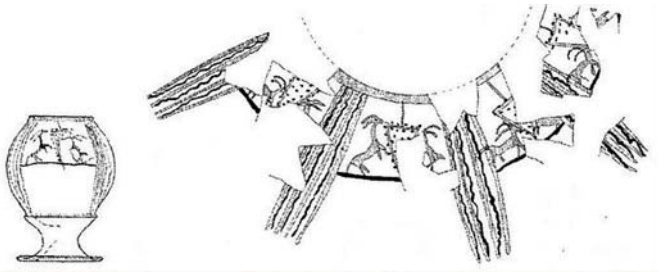


Fig. 40: A variant of the tree/lotus with caprids motif, the tree/lotus replaced by a pubic triangle. Pottery, Lachish, LB IIA (Choi 2016, 197 LA-38).

Verse 4. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle.
שְׁנֵי שָׁדַיִךְ כִּשְׁנֵי עֳפָרִים תְּאֲמֵי צְבִיָּה

The Shulamite's breasts are compared to twin gazelle fawns. The female breast (שד) appears as a sign of fertility in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 49:25; Hos 9:14), as a source of initial nutrition (Job 3:12; Ps 22:10; Isa 28:9; Joel 2:16), mother-caring (Lam 4:3), female maturity (Ezek 16:7, also in Song 8:8), and as a sexual organ (Ezek 23:3, 21; Hos 2:4). Scholars see the connotations of agility (movement), liveliness, and youthfulness from the twin fawns,[932] along with the symmetrical sameness and abundance from twins (תא'מ 'to double').[933] צביה refers to a female gazelle.[934] This word in plural appears as the animals which

[932] Pope 1977, 470; Keel 1994, 150; Zakovitch 2004, 189, 246; Garrett 2004, 191; Barbiero 2011, 378.

[933] 'תאם', *HALOT*: 1675a; 'תאם', *Ges*[18] 6: 1421a; 'תאם', *DCH* 8: 583a. See also Pope 1977, 470; Fox, *The Song of Songs*, 131; Murphy, *The Song of Songs*, 155; Zakovitch 2004, 189; Barbiero 2011, 190–191, etc.

[934] 'צְבִיָּה', *HALOT*: 998b; 'צְבִיָּה', *Ges*[18] 5: 1100a; 'צְבִיָּה', *DCH* 7: 71b; Moore / Brown, 'צְבִי, צְבִיָּה', *NIDOTTE* 3: 739–740.

the woman in the Song makes her friends swear by (2:7; 3:5). Gazelles connote life, love, swiftness, etc., according to different contexts: a gazelle appears also in an ancient Egyptian love poem as a symbol of swiftness;[935] gazelles appear as a symbol of life and power on numerous seal amulets from ancient Egypt and the southern Levant;[936] gazelles were an attribute animal of Levantine goddesses of love, frequently appearing with the nude goddess depictions.[937] In ancient Egypt and the southern Levant, gazelles were deeply involved in the cults of various deities and they were used to decorate the crowns of deities, kings, and palace women.[938]

This simile appears also in Song 4:5, another female body description. While the whole verse of 7:4 recurs in 4:5, another phrase is added at the end of 4:5: 'that browse on lotuses'. Regarding the simile in 4:5, scholars frequently suggested for the *tertium comparationis*: (1) the symmetry[939] and (2) the beautiful color, shape, and/or the jiggling movement.[940] However, some commentators warn not to compare the 'form' but the 'effects': the picture of the gazelles browsing on lotus flowers is not a natural picture, but a conventionalized visual representation of liveliness and renewal of life, evoking effects of refreshment and warmth of life as female breasts would have.[941] This artistic motif of gazelles browsing on a lotus flower is a variant of the motif 'tree with caprids' (Fig. 41), which was famous throughout the entire ancient Near East, appeared in the fifth millennium BCE, and proliferated in the second millennium BCE, related especially to female imagery signifying the regeneration and abundance of life.[942] This motif was commonly used in the Levant during the second millennium BCE, and even served as a Canaanite ethnic marker,[943] and the continuation of this motif is evidenced by a stone bowl from Koptos, 3rd–1st century BCE.[944] The lotus flower was added to the motif or replaced the tree and 'became a norm in the later second millennium' in the Levantine imagery and

[935] *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* 2:426.

[936] Keel 1994, 150.

[937] Keel / Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses*, 19–20; Keel 1994, 92–94; Schroer, *Die Tiere der Bibel*, 110–111; Barbiero 2011, 191.

[938] Brunner-Traut 1977, 426–427; Ornan 2011, 269–270; Schroer, *IPIAO* 3, Nr. 934.

[939] Pope 1977, 470; Murphy 1990, 155; Zakovitch 2004, 189; Barbiero 2011, 189.

[940] Gerleman 1965, 150; Landy 1983, 76; Zakovitch 2004, 189; Barbiero 2011, 189–190.

[941] Keel 1994, 151; Keel 1984, 81–85; Staubli 2016, 84–85; Garrett 2004, 191. See also Barbiero 2011, 191.

[942] See Ornan 2011, 267–269. For the artistic origin of the motif of gazelles flanking a lotus, see Staubli 2016, 84–85; Keel 1994, 150–151. The general motif of gazelles flanking a tree is placed on the two thighs nearby the pubic triangle of a female figurine from the Revadim, signifying the connotation of life (Keel / Uehlinger 1998, 74; Ornan 2007, 227–228). The wide distribution of this motif throughout the ancient Near East since around 3000 BCE implies that this image had 'amuletic value' of regeneration and good life (Kletter et al. 2010, 78).

[943] Ornan 2011, 268.

[944] Staubli 2016, fig. 3.

continued through the Iron Age.[945] When combined with male deities – albeit rarely – the tree-with-caprids motif expresses the divinity of the male figure.[946]

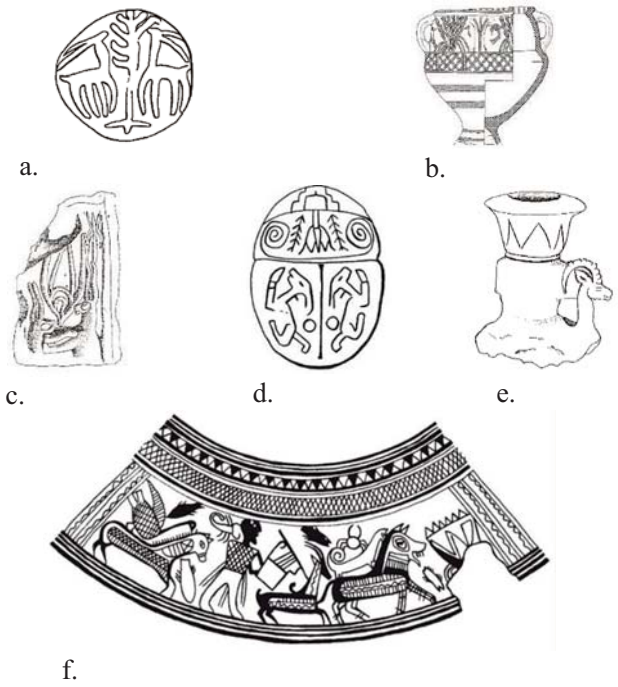


Fig. 41: The motif of tree with caprids and its variants including lotus flowers.
a: Stamp Seal, Taanach, 1150–980 BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1254).
b: Krater, Bet-Shean, first half of the 12th century BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1257).
c: Terracotta plaque, Megiddo, 1050–950 BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1256).
d: Scarab, Southern Levant, 1700–1550 BCE (Keel 1994, fig. 88).
e: Neck of a vessel, Megiddo, 7th century BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1832).
f: Pottery, Megiddo, ca. 1000 BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1229).

The connotation of a life-source – full of energy, vitality, abundance and regenerative power with sufficient nutrition – is reinforced by the juxtaposition of young gazelles and the woman's breasts in 4:5 and 7:4. The browsing of lotuses is also mentioned in Song 2:16 and 6:3, in which the male lover is likened to the grazing animal. In this metaphor, not only are the eaten lotuses understood as the sexual aspect of the woman,[947] but also the browsing scene connotes the divine-like lifeforce, regeneration, and abundance. Whether the phrase 'that

[945] Ornan 2011, 265–266.
[946] Ornan 2011, 269–270.
[947] Pope 1977, 405–407; Murphy 1990, 142; Keel 1994, 114–115; Zakovitch 2004, 162; Garrett 2004, 162; Barbiero 2011, 122–123; Exum 2005, 130, 165, etc.

browse on lotuses' was originally present in 7:4 or not, the verbatim repetition of the twin gazelle fawn metaphor for the woman's breasts indicates the close relationship between 4:5 and 7:4, and the connotations of the metaphor may be transferred into the context of the Shulamite's body.

Therefore, the metaphor of 'your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle', is filled with the connotations of vitality, beauty, nutrition, abundance, sexuality, and life-giving power, i.e., the source of life. Even though the phrase 'that browse on lotuses' is absent in 7:4, the symmetric arrangement of the two fawn gazelles evokes the motif of gazelles feeding on a plant. It can be said that this simile is based on the conceptual metaphor, that a female body (breasts) is the source of life.

Verse 5a. Your neck is like the ivory tower.
צַוָּארֵךְ כְּמִגְדַּל הַשֵּׁן

The Shulamite's neck is compared to 'the ivory tower', i.e., a (historical or fictional) tower which might have been decorated with ivories inside.[948] A neck (צואר) has connotations of beauty and protection (as a place of ornaments and amulets), strength (in order to support yokes and burdens), and arrogance according to various contexts in the Hebrew Bible.[949] A tower (מגדל) has connotations of height, strength, protection, and greatness, along with pride and arrogance which come as the result of its height, strength, and power.[950] Ivory carries connotations of luxuriousness, wealth, and dignity in the Hebrew Bible because it was expensive and used only among the ruling elites.[951]

To find the ground for the comparison between the neck and the ivory tower, commentators suggested: the ivory color as the skin color, smoothness, height or length, beauty, luxuriousness, dignity, elegance, craftsmanship, pride, or the

[948] Pope 1977, 625; Keel 1994, 235; Barbiero 2011, 379. See also footnote 951 below.

[949] Cf. Gen 27:40; 41,42; Deut 28:48; Judg 5:30; Isa 10:27; Jer 27:8; Ps 75:6; Job 15:26; Song 1:10; 4:4; 7:5; 8:21; Neh 3:5, etc.

[950] Cf. Gen 11:4–5; Isa 2:15; Ps 61:4; 48:14; Prov 18:10, etc.

[951] Liebowitz, 'Ivory', 1992, 3:584–587. In the Song of Songs, ivory appears once more in 5:14, describing the male lover's belly. Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, ivory occurs as a luxurious item used for beautiful ornamentation (1Kgs 10:18, 22; Ezek 27:6, 15; Amos 6:4 etc.). Some furniture were decorated with ivories (1Kgs 10:18; Amos 6:4; etc.). It seems that there were architectural structures named after 'ivory': the ivory house (בית השן, 1Kgs 22:39; Amos 3:15) or ivory palaces (היכלי שן, Ps 45:9). Those buildings were probably decorated with ivories inside, not entirely made of ivories, as the archeological finds of various ivory inlays from Samaria and Ugarit, etc. (Pope 1977, 625; Keel 1994, 235; Barbiero 2011, 379). This would be the case for the ivory tower in Song 7:5a. Although an ivory tower is not known elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, this could refer to a tower which was famous for its ivory inlays because it is designated with the definite article ה (Gerleman 1965, 198; Pope 1977, 625; Fox 1985, 160; Keel 1994, 235; Garrett 2004, 241; Barbiero 2011, 379).

presence of an ivory necklace.[952] In my analysis, the *tertium comparationis* can be found in the overlapping connotations of a neck and a tower: strength, pride, and protection. The similarity of the shape of a long neck and a tower must also be the reason for the specific choice of the vehicle 'tower' (Fig. 42). When this tower is decorated with ivory inside as other buildings named after 'ivory',[953] the tower not only protects but also displays beauty, pride, dignity, and wealth.

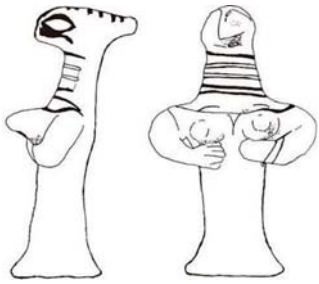


Fig. 42: A terracotta figurine, Beersheba, 8th century BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1545).

Hence, in this simile, there are two conceptual metaphors *combined*: (1) a female body (neck) is (defense) architecture (tower), well-known also from Song 8:8–10. Various female figurines attached to model shrines, female body shape columns, Judean 'Pillar' Figurines,[954] and female head capitals indicate how a female body was deeply associated with architecture throughout the ancient Near East.[955] And (2) a female body (neck) is the display of beauty (ivory). The association of these two metaphors results in a conceptual metaphor: a female body is a strong and beautiful piece of architecture. The Shulamite is described as a woman who not only shines beautifully, but also strongly guards herself and her people against dangers from the outside: 'her people', the people whom she loves and cares for, such as her lover, family, friends, etc., will benefit from her protection.

Verse 5b*α*. Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, near the gate, 'Daughter of the Great'

עֵינַיִךְ בְּרֵכוֹת בְּחֶשְׁבּוֹן עַל־שַׁעַר בַּת־רַבִּים

[952] Gerleman 1965, 198; Pope 1977, 625; Fox 1985, 160; Keel 1994, 235; Murphy 1990, 186; Garrett 2004, 241; Zakovitch 2004, 246–247; Barbiero 2011, 379; Exum 2005, 234.

[953] See the footnote 951 above.

[954] See p. 262 below.

[955] See Schroer 2007, 430–446.

The eyes of the Shulamite are compared to pools. Keel suggests that 'eye' in Biblical Hebrew not only refers to the visual organ, but also to glances or gazing acts.[956] A pool was usually artificially made (2 Kgs 20:20; Eccl 2:6; Neh 3:16), having walls (Neh 3:15) and channels (Isa 7:3; 36:2). Although the pools in Heshbon do not necessarily have to be historical in order to function as the vehicle for the metaphor, archeological excavations revealed a reservoir, whose capacity reaches nearly two million liters, constructed around 10th–8th century BCE.[957] The reservoir's large size must have been impressive.[958] The gate name 'Bath-Rabbim', which can be translated as 'daughter of many' or 'daughter of the great people', is not known. It could be a historical one named after the city to which the gate is oriented,[959] or a gate named by some special characteristics of the gate,[960] or a fictional one with symbolic meanings.

The Hebrew word for eye (עין) also has the meaning of 'spring'.[961] It suggests that the ancient Hebrew speakers would probably also think of water sources upon hearing the word 'eye' (e.g. Jer 8:23; 9:17; Ps 119:136 etc.).[962] Keel's suggestion of 'gleaming' as the *tertium comparationis* is convincing, since the light was regarded as an important aspect of eyes in the Hebrew Bible,[963] and there is the gleam of the water when the sun shines on it. Then the conventional comparison between an eye and a water source includes connotations of gleam, sparkle, and brightness.

Eyes are understood in Song as *expressing* a person's features – e.g., captivating the viewer – rather than limited only as a tool for visual perception.[964]

[956] Keel 1984, 55–56; Keel 1994, 69.

[957] Geraty, 1992, 3:181–184; Ray 2001, 99.

[958] Ray 2001, 107.

[959] Gerleman 1965, 199; Murphy 1990, 183; Zakovitch 2004, 247; Exum 2005, 235.

[960] Fox 1985, 160; Keel 1994, 236; Barbiero 2011, 381–382; Pope 1977, 626.

[961] Schreiner, 'עַיִן',*ThWAT* 6:48–56; 'עַיִן I', *Ges*[18] 4:955a–956b; Jenni / Vetter, 'עַיִן', 874–880; 'עַיִן II', *DCH* 364b–365a; Beyer, 'מַעְיָן', *NIDOTTE* 2:1018–1019.

[962] Pope 1977, 625; Fox, *The Song of Songs*, 160; Murphy 1990, 186; Zakovitch 2004, 247; Barbiero 2011, 380; Exum 2005, 235.

[963] Focusing on the strong effects of eyes, Keel suggests that the 'eye' in the Biblical Hebrew refers not only to the visual organ, but also to glances (*Blicken*) or gazing acts (Keel 1984, 55–56; Keel 1994, 69; also in *Ges*[18] 4:956a and *ThWAT* 6:43). However, in 7:5 which is the description of the woman's body parts, it would be better to translate עין as an eye, rather than a glance, for the consistency with other body parts.

[964] The strong captivating effect is one of the expressing – not perceiving or receiving – aspects of eyes in the Hebrew Bible. Eyes in the Hebrew Bible give attention, express desire, emotions, virtues, light, or beauty. An eye is an organ which shows interest and attention (e.g., 1Kgs 1:20; Ps 10:8); which gets knowledge (e.g., Gen 3:5; Num 24:3); which is the place for sleep (e.g., Gen 31:40; Ps 132:4); which shows desire (e.g., Gen 3:6; Num 15:39; 1Kgs 20:6; Ezek 23:16); which expresses various emotions like sadness by shedding tears (e.g., Jer 9:17; Ps 116:8), anger (e.g., Gen 31:35; Job 16:9), joy (e.g., Eccl 11:7), etc.; which shows virtues and vices like generosity (e.g., Deut 7:16; Prov 22:9), arrogance (e.g., Isa 2:11; Ps 18:28), evil will (e.g., Deut 15:9; Prov 23:6); impiety (e.g., Prov 30:17), etc.; the eyes can become brighter (1Sam 14:27; Pro 15:30) or lose its

The effects of the Shulamite's eyes would have been as strong as the impressive pools in Heshbon, near the gate crowded with people and caravans which brought wealth and prosperity.[965] The pool, as a water source, was the place of life, wealth, and prosperity, which would result in greatness. It is probable that the group saw from the Shulamite's eyes the intense attraction which actively captivated her onlookers with strong light expressing wealth, prosperity, and greatness.

In this respect, this metaphor can be seen as a reflection of two conceptual metaphors: (1) a female body is a water source, as in Song 4:12–15 and Prov 5:15–18,[966] and (2) a female body is architecture.

Verse 5bβγ. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon, watching over Damascus.

אַפֵּךְ כְּמִגְדַּל הַלְּבָנוֹן צוֹפֶה פְּנֵי דַמָּשֶׂק

The nose of the Shulamite is compared to a tower standing in the mountainous region of Lebanon, facing eastwards to Damascus. Lebanon is viewed positively in most cases in the Hebrew Bible because it was regarded as a geographical region rather than a foreign political entity,[967] carrying connotations of height, prosperity, abundance, strength, stability, fragrance, divine, beauty, glory, and rarely, arrogance.[968] Similar to a neck, a nose has connotations of beauty,

light (e.g., Ps 38:11; Gen 27:1); eyes were also used to express beauty of someone (e.g., Gen 29:17; 1Sam 16:12). With these occurrences, it seems that an eye was understood as an organ for the expression of attention, knowledge, sleep, desire, emotions, virtues and vices, light, and beauty, other than seeing and visual perceiving. See Stendebach, 'עַיִן', *ThWAT* 6: 31–48; 'עַיִן I', *Ges*[18] 4:955a–956b; Jenni / Vetter, 'עַיִן', *TLOT* 2: 874–880; 'עַיִן I', *DCH* 6: 355b–364b; Harman, 'עין', *NIDOTTE* 3: 385–390.

[965] See Geraty, 'Heshbon', *The New Encyclopedia*: 628; Ray 2001, 107.

[966] Song 4:12–15 and Prov 5:15–18 compare not the eyes but a woman as a whole with water sources, but in Song 7:5, the Shulamite's eyes are ultimately related to the whole of the Shulamite. See p. 250ff.

[967] Smith, 'Lebanon', 1992, 4:269–270. See also Nogalski, 'Lebanon', *NIDOTTE* 4: 902.

[968] Lebanon has several symbolical values in the Hebrew Bible. Lebanon appears as a place of snow (Jer 18:14). Because of the snow, Lebanon was famous for its ever-flowing water from the top (Jer 18:15; Song 4:15). The water made the land fruitful and abundant (Ps 72:16; 92:13). The prosperity of Assur was compared to Lebanon (Ezek 31:3). Lebanon was said to be the place of the female lover of the Song, very high, expressing her unapproachability (twice in 4:8). Lebanon was often figured as the best of what humans could have (Isa 40:16), thus the fall of Lebanon symbolizes the fall of manly strength (Isa 10:33–34). Lebanon connotes excellency (Song 5:15), and it is especially noted for its height (e.g., Jer 22:6, 20). The cedars of Lebanon were a famous material for the most luxurious building projects such as temples and palaces (e.g., 1Kgs 5, 9:19; Ezr 3:7), and also for Solomon's palanquin (Song 3:9). The cedars of Lebanon are mentioned to be high (e.g., 2Kgs 19:23), the beautifier of YHWH's abode (Isa 60:13), and the YHWH's tree itself (Ps 104:16–17). The cedars are noted for their fragrance (Hos 14:7–8; Song 4:11) and also for their roots' stability (Hos 14:6). Because of all these high qualitative values, Lebanon is mentioned for its glory (Isa 35:2), comparable to the garden of Elohim (Ezek 31:8–9, 16), but on the other hand, it expresses

pride, and arrogance, the latter two of which overlap with the connotations of a tower as discussed in v. 5a.[969] The tower watches over Damascus, a city with the connotations of rivalry, trade, and wealth.[970]

When the Shulamite's nose, an olfactory organ, is compared to a tower of Lebanon, it could allude to the fragrant smell of the cedars of Lebanon, as the wordplay between Lebanon (לבנון) and 'frankincense' (לבונה) shows. The simile may also be based on the formal resemblance of a nose and a tower (conical).[971] The aspect of height conceptualizes the image of the Shulamite as a proud woman who is capable of protecting herself and her loved ones.[972] The tower looking over Damascus, traditionally a wealthy rival state of Israel, emphasizes the aspect of surveillance, being alert, and being superior. Like the tower simile in v. 5a and the pool simile in v. 5bα, this simile brings the conceptual metaphor that a female body (nose) is architecture (tower),[973] with the connotations of protection, superiority, pride, strength, and olfactory beauty.

Verse 6aα. Your head, upon you, is like the Carmel
רֹאשֵׁךְ עָלַיִךְ כַּכַּרְמֶל

The head of the Shulamite is compared to Carmel. In the Hebrew Bible a head (ראש) not only refers to the body part – often standing for the whole of the person – but also signifies the 'top', the 'best', or 'totality' in general.[974] Since

arrogance (e.g., Isa 2:13). Therefore, Lebanon had the connotations of height, prosperity, abundance, strength, stability, fragrance, divine, beauty, glory, and arrogance. See Smith, 'Lebanon', 1992, 4: 269a–270b; 'לְבָנוֹן', *DCH* 4: 515b–516b; Mulder, 'לְבָנוֹן', *ThWAT* 4: 461–471; 'לְבָנוֹן', *Ges*[18] 3: 595b–596a; Nogalski, 'Lebanon', *NIDOTTE* 4: 900–902.

[969] Cf. Isa 3:21; Ezek 6:12; Ps 10:4, 115:6; Song 7:9, 1:16, etc.

[970] Damascus is usually mentioned as the capital city of Aram in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., 1Kgs 15:18). The Hebrew Bible tells how once David became king at Damascus (1Kgs 11:24), but it was lost some time during the reign of Solomon (1Kgs 11:24). Since then, Damascus appears as a rival city of North Israel (e.g., 1Kgs 15, 16, 22). McRay, 'Damascus', 1992, 2: 7–8. Damascus is mentioned for its wine and trade (Ezek 27:18) and for its wealth (Isa 8:4).

[971] Fox 1985, 160; Barbiero 2011, 384; Exum 2005, 236.

[972] Keel 1994, 236; Barbiero 2011, 382–383; Exum 2005, 236.

[973] See footnote 955 above.

[974] ראש as a body part refers to a head (e.g., Gen 40:17), sometimes including hair (e.g., Lev 10:6), but it is also used for the top of something (e.g., a top of mountain in Isa 2:2), the top of a hierarchy (e.g., chief in Neh 12:7), or the best of quality (e.g., the finest balsam in Exod 30:23). ראש expresses totality, the total amount, sum (e.g., Num 5:7). As a human head, this is not only the place where the blessing gesture is made on (Gen 48:14–18), but it is also related to curses (e.g., Lev 24:14), mourning rites and lamentation (e.g., Jos 7:6; 2Sam 13:19). There were head decorations (e.g., Ezek 13:18), which could show the person's high social status (e.g., a crown in Esth 2:17; Priest's turban in Exod 29:6). Anointing oils were poured on the head (e.g., Lev 21:10). A head stands for the whole person in several expressions: heaping coals on someone's head points to his/her pain (e.g., Prov 25:22); blood on someone's head to refer to his/her guilt (e.g., 2Sam 1:16); to return something on someone's head indicates retribution (e.g., Judg 9:57); to raise (רום, נשא) someone's head means to honor him/her (e.g., Ps 3:4; Gen 40:13), or taking a census (נשא, e.g.,

a head must be on the top of the body, the expression that the head is 'upon you' (עליך) has led some scholars to consider it redundant.[975] However, voicing עליך reinforces the connotations of the 'top' and 'highness' of a head, keeping the rhythm of three words per stich. In this respect, Carmel here refers most likely to Mount Carmel and not to an orchard.[976] All the ancient translations interpret it as a place name.

In the Hebrew Bible, Mount Carmel has rich connotations. Mount Carmel was remembered as an important cultic place of YHWH. It is the place that the people of Israel confessed YHWH as their true god, as a result of the contest between Elijah and the priests of Baal (1Kgs 18:20–40). After this event, YHWH gave rain to the dry land (1Kgs 18:41–46). Another prophet Elisha seemed to have lived in Carmel for some time (2Kgs 4:25). YHWH was once figured as Mount Carmel by the sea (Jer 46:18). Mount Carmel was also noted for its beauty (e.g., Isa 35:2) and fertility (e.g., Jer 50:19). Because of its height, it was a favored place for refuge (e.g., Amos 9:3).[977] Thus, Mount Carmel had the connotations of sacredness, beauty, fertility, and height.

There have been various suggestions on the *tertium comparationis* of this simile: (1) the height of the mountainous region as an expression for the Shulamite's pride, beauty, or majesty; (2) the word play with כרמיל (color crimson), which will be connected with the woman's hair color in v. 6aβ; (3) rich vegetation similar to the luxurious hair; (4) fertility or sexuality from the word play with כרמל (orchard or garden).[978] All of these suggestions may play a part in the simile, based on two conceptual metaphors: (1) female body as a landscape[979] and (2) the female body as vegetation. Various land forms have been configured as females, such as: cities (Jerusalem/Zion) called 'daughters' (e.g., Ezek 16); 'the land flowing with milk and honey' (Exod 3:8; Num 13:27; Deut 6:3, etc.) is a female gendered expression of a landscape;[980] mountains, orchards, gardens, and streams are used metaphorically to refer to the female protagonist throughout the Song. Plant imagery connected to the female body is widespread in visual

Num 1:2). See 'ראֹשׁ I', *DCH* 7: 365b–376b; Rooy, 'ראֹשׁ', *NIDOTTE* 3: 1015–1020; Beuken / Dahmen, 'ראֹשׁ I', *ThWAT* 7: 271–284; 'ראֹשׁ I', *Ges*^{18} 5: 1207a–1208b.

[975] While some commentators sense redundancy because a head must be at the top of a person, Pope dismisses the discussion saying that a head is often said to be on someone (Pope 1977, 629). Barbiero argues that this preposition is structurally needed because the 1st, 2nd, 9th and 10th body parts are written with two words. He adds that the preposition emphasizes the head as the crown of the body, referring ultimately to the Shulamite's pride (Barbiero 2011, 384–385).

[976] For other meanings of the Hebrew word כרמל, see Mulder, 'כַּרְמֶל', *TWAT* 4: 340–351; Clines, 'כַּרְמֶל I–IV', *DCH* 4: 462.

[977] Thompson, 'Carmel, Mount (Place)', 1992, 1:874–875.

[978] Pope 1977, 629–630; Fox 1985, 160; Keel 1994, 236–238; Murphy 1990, 183, 186; Zakovitch 2004, 248; Garrett 2004, 242; Barbiero 2011, 385; Exum 2005, 236–237.

[979] Also, Fischer 2019, 5.

[980] Cf., Gardner 2017.

representations in the ancient Levant and Egypt.[981] The choice of Mount Carmel for the head of the Shulamite could have been based on the combination of these two conceptual metaphors, designating her as 'the best' of beauty, of majesty, of vitality – almost sacred.[982]

Verse 6aβ. And the hair of your head is like purple [cloth]
וְדַלַּת רֹאשֵׁךְ כָּאַרְגָּמָן

The hair of the Shulamite is compared to a purple cloth. This Hebrew word for hair or thrum (דלה, Song 7:6; Isa 38:12) carries the nuance of dangling because the verbal root דלל means 'to dangle' or 'to hang down' (Job 28:4).[983] The Hebrew word for purple (ארגמן) may refer to the purple color but I translate it as a purple cloth because all of the occurrences of the word refer to a purple thread or cloth; if it refers merely to a color, it is not a simile but a plain statement of her hair color. The dyeing color of ארגמן was expensive, made from a vast number of sea snails.[984] Purple cloths were used for social elites as well as for cultic uses in the Hebrew Bible.[985] Wearing purple clothes meant a high social

[981] Staubli 2015, 333–340; Keel / Schroer 2004, 36–37.

[982] Sacredness is one of the strongest connotations of Mount Carmel. See the previous paragraph. In the similes and metaphors used for the body parts of the Shulamite so far, the accumulation of repeatedly occurring connotations of 'life', 'abundance', 'vitality', 'nutrition', and the 'source of life' constructs her as an almost divine character. See p. 252–256 below.

[983] The word דלת is a construct form of the noun דלה, which refers to hair or thrum, appearing only here and in Isa 38:12. Isa 38:12 reports that the king Hezekiah felt as if his life was severed from the דלה during his illness. The appearance of a weaver (ארג) in that verse points that the word is used in the context of the weaving practice. In Song 7:6, דלה forms a construct with the noun 'head', pointing that it must be something connected to a head. What the contexts of weaving and the head have in common is the long thin thread-like thing, thus the noun דלל would refer to thrums, hair, or some type of thin and long hairdo, which dangle from a loom or a head. דלל, the grammatically fitting verbal root of the noun דלה, means 'to dangle' or 'to hang down', thus it could be the most probable root also semantically. See 'דָּלָה II', *DCH* 2: 439a; 'דָּלָה 1', *Ges[18]* 2: 251a; Alden, 'דָּלָה I', *NIDOTTE* 1: 949–950. See also 'דלל II', *DCH* 2: 440b; 'דלל 1', *Ges[18]* 2: 251b; Hess, 'דלל II', *NIDOTTE* 1: 954.

The verbal root דלל occurs only once in the Hebrew Bible. In Job 28:4, the miners go deep into the earth far from other people, and they דלו and נעו. Here the verbal root דלל forms a parallel with נוע. נוע occurs 42 times and the meaning safely points to the 'repetitive back-and-forth movement'. Thus, it is possible to imagine a free but repetitive movement from the verbal root דלל. Thrums hanging down from a vertical loom must also move and dangle according to the weaving movements. See Van Pelt / Kaiser, 'נוע', *NIDOTTE* 3: 62–63; 'נוע I', *DCH* 5: 644a–645a; 'נוע', *Ges[18]* 4: 795b–796a. The quotation is from *NIDOTTE* 3: 62.

[984] Danker, 'Purple', 1992, 5:557; Keel 1994, 238.

[985] In the Hebrew Bible, ארגמן is mentioned as weaving materials for tabernacle (e.g., Exod 26:1), for the priests' cloths and other equipment (e.g., Exod 28:6). Foreign deities were decorated with purple cloths (Jer 10:9). The banquet place of the Shushan palace was decorated with the purple cloths (Esth 1:6), and also the Solomon's palanquin in Song 3:10. Purple clothes were mentioned as the loot from the Median kings (Judg 8:26), Mordechai was reported to have worn a robe woven with purple threads (Esth 8:15), and a woman of valor would wear clothes of purple (Prov

status (e.g., Prov 31:22; Judg 8:26; Esth 8:15). Thus, purple cloths connote beauty, wealth, sacredness, high social status, and luxuriousness.

For the simile's *tertium comparationis*, most commentators suggest the color, gleaming aspect, and luxuriousness.[986] It is a simile; the hair does not need to have the same purple color of ארגמן, but the lustrous black hair might have resembled the effect of the magnificent purple threads or cloths. The shared connotations of beauty, wealth, and high social status again put her in the conceptual metaphor that a female body (hair) is a display of beauty (purple cloth).

Verse 6b. [The] King is captured in the tresses
מֶלֶךְ אָסוּר בָּרְהָטִים

A king appears here as a metaphor for the male lover. There is no definite article preceding the word 'king', but in poetry the definite article is often omitted.[987] The male lover appears frequently as a king in the Song (1:4, 12; 3:7, 9, 11). The figuration of the male lover as a king adds the connotation of nobility and highness to the Shulamite.

The king is captured in tresses (רהטים). The word רהט occurs four times in the Hebrew Bible, and except this verse it refers to a water trough for animals. The meaning of 'tresses' is suggested mainly from the context because: (1) hair is mentioned right before; (2) רהטים is designated with a definite article indicating that it has been mentioned or well known in that specific context; and (3) the expression 'capture/bind in' (אסר ב-) points to the picture of binding someone with ropes (e.g., Judg 16:7; 2Kgs 25:7).[988] Some commentators assume a polysemic relationship between the long hair and running water.[989] The context hints that the king cannot withdraw from the Shulamite's attraction. While both options – troughs or tresses – are possible, I suggest the possibility of a pun between troughs and tresses. On the one hand, the water (liquid) imagery continues throughout the body description: from the cup of mixed wine (v. 3) to the pools of Heshbon (v. 5). Mount Carmel, to which the woman's head is likened, was known to be a region of sufficient water.[990] Water imagery is related to female sexuality (cf. Song 4:12,15; Prov 5:15–18). On the other hand, for some specific audiences of the time – probably social elites – the word רהטים might have

31:22). ארגמן was luxurious goods for trades (Ezek 27:16), and the beauty of Tyre included the purple cloths (Ezek 27:7).

[986] See Pope 1977, 629–630; Fox 1985, 161; Keel 1994, 46–49, 238; Murphy 1990, 183, 186; Zakovitch 2004, 248; Garrett 2004, 243; Barbiero 2011, 387; Exum 2005, 237.

[987] Waltke / O'Connor 1990, 250.

[988] It is so unless the preposition ב is followed by a spatial noun such as a prison or a city (cf. Gen 40:5; 2Kgs 23:33).

[989] Pope 1977, 630; Barbiero 2011, 387; Exum 2005, 214.

[990] Thompson 1992, 874–875.

indicated a fancy hairdo, as the Song of Songs is filled with *hapax legomena* of luxurious items. Thus, it is possible that some audiences thought of both 'tresses' and 'water troughs' upon hearing v. 6b. Since the word רהטים is in plural and designated by the definite article ה, the word רהטים does not only refer to the Shulamite's hair in v. 6aβ, but also represents all her previously mentioned body parts as captivating water sources.

As Stefan Fischer noted, v. 6b is a conquest metaphor,[991] based on the conceptual metaphor 'love is war'.[992] Throughout the ancient Near East, the victory of the king is visually represented by images of a king holding and dominating bound enemies (Fig. 43). However, while a king is usually depicted as the conqueror, here the king is bound as a defeated enemy.[993] Thus the king being bound by the Shulamite's hair or attractive body parts is a reversal of a common motif of the king who conquers enemies and binds them.

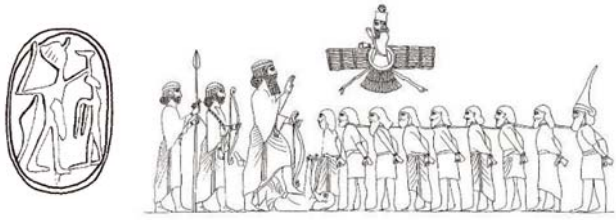


Fig. 43: Visual representations of captured enemies.
Left: Scarab, Dor, 1150–1100 BCE[994] (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1031).
Right: Rock relief, Behistun, 520–518 BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1973).

Table 14 is a summary of the conceptual metaphors in 7:2–6. While conceptual metaphors are conventionally articulated as 'A *is* B',[995] it is to note that the metaphors in the Hebrew Bible not only involve visual analogy but also effectual similarities; thus they can also be rendered as 'A *has the effect of* B'.[996]

As the table shows, the Shulamite is figured as having an ideal femininity. She has everything one desires from a female body: she displays beauty, she holds intoxicating drinks and foods of (sexual) joy, she guards herself and her loved ones safely, and she is a land which is the ultimate generator of life.

[991] Fischer 2019, 6.

[992] Verde 2016, 193–194.

[993] For example, see Schroer, *IPIAO* 4, no. 1029, 1031–1032, 1036, 1973.

[994] In this image, a king holds the hair of an enemy and he is about to smite him, while the enemy's hands are bound on his back, although the binding rope is omitted.

[995] See Lakoff / Johnson 1980, 3–21, 108–109.

[996] See for example, Keel 1994, 25–26; Keel 1984, 27–30; Schroer 2007, 426. However, while they seem to overlook the formal (visual) similarity asserting that the point of comparison is *not* the form, the ancient Hebrew speakers had not only the effects but also the formal aspects in mind in using metaphors. See my discussion in p. 258 below.

Verse	*Tenor*	*Vehicle*	*Conceptual Metaphor*
2b	Thigh curves	Jewelry rings	Female body is display of beauty
3a	Navel	Wine cup	Female body is container Female body is drink
3b	Belly	Mound of wheat	Female body is container Female body is food
4	Breasts	Gazelle fawns	Female body is source of life
5a	Neck	Ivory tower	Female body is architecture Female body is display of beauty
5bα	Eyes	Pools in Heshbon	Female body is architecture Female body is water source
5bβγ	Nose	Tower of Lebanon	Female body is architecture
6aα	Head	Mount Carmel	Female body is land Female body is vegetation
6aβ	Hair	Purple cloth	Female body is display of beauty
6b	Body parts	Water troughs	Female body is water source
	Male lover	Defeated king	Love is war

Table 14: Conceptual Metaphors in Song 7:2–6.

3.3. *Metonymies and Synecdoches in the Body Part Description*

Metonymy and synecdoche may reside together in a single expression because their differences do not depend on the 'concrete relations' with a thing, but rather on the 'formal bases': dictionary-like form or encyclopedic form.[997] Taking the example of sememe /house/ mentioned above,[998] the relationship between the sememe and its semes – e.g., with roof (form), cultural (agent), made with bricks (material), as shelter (purpose), etc. – is metonymy (Table 15). However, when the seme <roof> becomes the title of a categorization which includes everything with roofs, the sememe /house/ which has a roof will be a species of the genus 'with roof' synecdochically. The same is valid for other properties too: for example, the property of purpose <as shelter> of the sememe /house/, which was traditionally conceived as metonymy, may become the genus (synecdoche) of

[997] Eco 1984, 90, 116. See also p. 224–228 above.
[998] P. 226 above. For the definition of seme and sememe, see footnote 861 above.

all other things whose purpose is to shelter, such as an animal shelter, emergency center, etc. (Fig. 44).[999] Therefore, the determination of a trope depends on 'a contextual decision on the part of the interpreter (or the producer)'.[1000]

Sememe	*Semes*			
/house/⊃[1001]	Form	Agent	Material	Purpose
	With roof	Culture	Bricks	Shelter

Table 15. A sememe and its semes (metonymy). Reorganized from Eco 1984, 116.

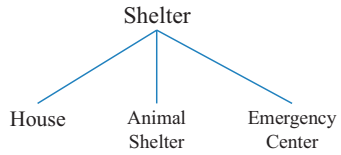


Fig. 44: Genus and species (synecdoche).

In this subsection, I examine the interplay of metonymies and synecdoches in the Shulamite description. In this course, the decision between metonymy and synecdoche reflects my specific point of view, and different interpreters may conceive them as other tropes.

In Table 14, I defined the tenor, vehicle, and the underlying conceptual metaphors of each metaphor/simile in the Shulamite description. In the table, each conceptual metaphor is the genus of each body part's metaphor/simile. For example, under the genus 'female body is display of beauty', there are species such as 'the Shulamite's thighs are jewelry rings' or 'her hair is purple cloth'. Therefore, describing the Shulamite's thighs as jewelry rings is a synecdoche of the conceptual metaphor 'female body is display of beauty'.

Looking at the table, one may also find out that the Shulamite metaphors have metonymical relations in two ways: with the tenor and with the vehicle. First, each tenor of the Shulamite description (thighs, navel, etc.) is the metonym for 'the body of the Shulamite', i.e., partonomical part-whole. Thighs, navel, belly, breasts, neck, eyes, nose, head, and hair are formal components of the body of the Shulamite. Therefore, each body part metonymically stands for the whole body of the Shulamite, even though some body parts – arms, shoulders, toes, etc. – are not mentioned (thus narcotized).[1002]

[999] Eco 1984, 115–117.
[1000] Eco 1984, 115.
[1001] For the sign ⊃, see footnote 192 above.
[1002] For the concept of narcotized properties, see p. 56 above.

Secondly, the vehicles of the Shulamite metaphors are the metonyms of their connotations. For example, 'the display of beauty' is a seme (purpose) of sememes /jewelry rings/, /ivory tower/, /purple cloth/. The cup-wine in v. 3a and wheat-bowl in v. 3b are metonymically related in quadruple: (1) the cup of wine and bowl of wheat stand for containing; (2) the cup is the metonym for wine, a mound of wheat stands for its container; (3) 'to drink' is the purpose (seme) of wine, and 'to eat' is of wheat; (4) the cup of wine and the wheat-bowl are semes which metonymically stand for the sememe /festival/ or /cultic ritual/. The function of the motif of two symmetrical gazelle fawns is to promote vitality as an imagery of the source of life (nutrition, vegetation, regeneration, etc.). The towers in v. 5 stand for their purpose of protection for the self and the beloved ones, and the pools stand for the seme (purpose), 'water source'. The connotations of Mount Carmel – sacred place, abundance, life force etc. – are the semes (properties) of the sememe /Mount Carmel/. The image of a defeated king is the formal component of the scenery of war.

These metonymical semes may also be synecdochically related. For example, while the body parts stand for the whole body of the Shulamite (metonymy), the body of the Shulamite is a species of the genus 'female body' in general (synecdoche). The jewelry rings point to the purpose of 'display of beauty' metonymically, but they are also synecdoches because under the genus of 'display of beauty' the jewelry rings become its species (the taxonomical part).[1003] The same can be applied for the other vehicles in the Shulamite description: the seme 'containing' is the genus of the cup and bowl, the seme 'water source' may categorize its species such as pools or troughs.

The metaphors in the Shulamite description do not stand on its own, but play with metonymy and synecdoche. Therefore, even in its individual units, the metaphors must be seen in relation with metonymy and synecdoche. In the following subsection, I will construct the whole of the Shulamite from these individual units in the interplay of metaphors, metonymies, and synecdoches.

3.4. *Construction of the Whole: Metaphors, Metonymies, and Synecdoches in the Shulamite Description*

The construction of the whole body of the Shulamite from the mentioned body parts can be done in three steps: (1) the anatomical construction of the whole body from the tenor parts of the metaphors (thighs, navel, breasts, etc.); (2) the compositional construction of the whole world from the vehicle parts of the metaphors (jewels, wine cup, twin gazelles, etc.); (3) building a new metaphor of the whole body of the Shulamite (Fig. 45).

[1003] See p. 250 above for the intricate interaction between metonymy and synecdoche.

First, as discussed above, each body part of the Shulamite metonymically stands for her whole body, as the semes of the sememe/the body of the Shulamite/. Even though some body parts – e.g., toes, fingers, arms, shoulders, etc. – are not mentioned, it is not that they do not exist on the body or the body is itemized. The body parts that the Song does not mention are narcotized and assumed to be there by the metonymical process. When the song cumulatively mentions the body parts, from feet to head and hair, the construction process gets accelerated by the metonymies piled up on another. The body parts altogether point to the whole body of the Shulamite.

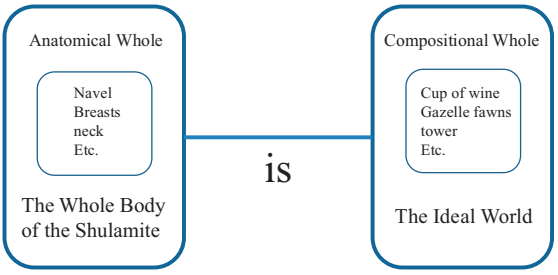
Secondly, while the body parts cumulatively construct the whole body on the tenor parts of the metaphors, the vehicle parts are also accumulated building another whole. The properties of the Shulamite's body are demonstrated by various objects: abundance (never-lacking mixed wine, mound of wheat, twin gazelle fawns), perfection (masterpiece jewelry), source of life and vitality (lotuses, twin gazelle fawns, pools), beauty and wealth (purple clothes, jewelry, ivory tower), prosperity and superiority ('daughter of many' gate, tower overlooking Damascus), strength and protection (towers), joy and intoxicating power (wine cup), and majesty and sacredness (Mount Carmel). These objects and their signifying properties, as a whole, designate a world: a world comprised of jewelry and clothes (v. 2b, 6aα), drink and food (v. 3, 5b), flora and fauna (v. 4, 6aα), architecture and landscape (v. 5–6). Since these elements of the world are filled with the connotations of beauty, vitality, protection, and abundance, this is not a mere world, but an ideal world that the viewers' desire for their well-being is projected onto. As the semes of the sememe /the ideal world/, these elements of the world – cup of wine, (bowl of) wheat, lotuses, towers, pools, gazelle fawns, etc. – stand for the whole world metonymically, and this effect is reinforced by the cumulative relation of the individual metaphors.

Thirdly, this double process of metonymy for the Shulamite's body parts (tenors) and the elements of the ideal world (vehicles),[1004] builds a new metaphor between the whole body and the whole world: the body of the Shulamite (tenor) is an ideal world (vehicle). In this new metaphor, again, metonymy and synecdoche interact with each other. Metonymically, the elements of the ideal world become the properties of the Shulamite. Like the dove of Ishtar or the cup of Dionysus which metonymically stand for its owner as an attribute,[1005] the vehicles of the individual metaphors – jewelry rings, a cup of wine, mound of wheat, gazelle fawns, towers, pools, Mount Carmel, purple cloths, water

[1004] By the term 'double process of metonymy', I refer to the phenomenon that each body part and each associative part of the ideal world stands for the whole body/ideal world by the metonymical *process*: a process, emphasizing the one-by-one cumulative relationship resulting in a new metaphor, 'the Shulamite is the ideal world'.

[1005] Eco 1984, 94–95.

troughs – evolve into attributes, properties, or semes of the sememe /the Shulamite/. These metonyms of the whole Shulamite are arranged in consistency: the beginning and the end of the body description form a parallel that they are accessories *on* the body: jewelry rings and purple cloths, which can be attached to the body, both having the connotation primarily of beauty.



The new metaphor: the body of the Shulamite is the ideal world
The new conceptual metaphor: the female body is the ideal world

Fig. 45: The new metaphor of the whole of the Shulamite.

Synecdochically, the tenor (the Shulamite) and the vehicle (the ideal world) of the new metaphor can be categorized together under their shared property (genus), and the movement from the genus to each species and vice versa is synecdoche. Then what could be the genus of the Shulamite and the ideal world? Which property integrates all the connotations – beauty, perfection, nobility, source of joy and love, life-giving power, abundance, sexual power, vitality, overflowing nutrition, good living, protection, pride, wealth, prosperity, superiority, strength, highness, majesty, and almost-sacredness – in a single category?

The integrating genus of all these connotations is ideality and perfection: the ideal/perfect abundance which shall not lack, the ideal/perfect protection that no danger can enter, the ideal/perfect source of life which allows regeneration, etc. Such ideality and perfection do not exist in the mortal world but belongs to the divine realm, which belongs to the genus 'supernaturality'. The ultimate genus of the Shulamite and the ideal world is, thus, supernaturality (Fig. 46). As a species of it, the Shulamite has female divinity or supernaturality, but since she is a mortal woman, it is semi-divinity.

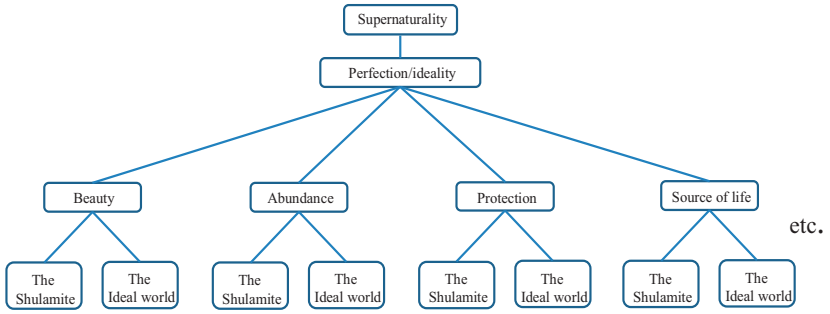


Fig. 46: The genus of the new metaphor.

Some of the metaphors and visual symbols used for the Shulamite's body parts – the cup of ever-flowing liquid, lotus flowers, gazelles, the tree-and-caprid motif, and a mountain – are traditional attributes of supernatural beings. The concept of the *ḫegallu* vase was a visual metaphor for abundance held by deities and supernatural figures. Various gods and goddesses appear with lotus flowers, either holding them in their hands or sitting on them. Gazelle is known to be an attribute animal of Levantine goddesses, and the tree-with-caprid motif was the visual symbol for abundance, life, and divinity.[1006] Mount Carmel was a famous cultic place, and traditionally mountains were typical abodes and attributes of deities in the ancient Near East.[1007] The use of these metaphors and visual symbols implies that the description compares the Shulamite with a supernatural being, if not a goddess. The increasing size of the vehicles – from jewelry rings and a cup to towers, pools, and the Mount Carmel – may also indicate the Shulamite's gradual process of becoming like a semi-goddess, as her dancing performance and the viewers' describing response come to its climax.

Therefore, the Shulamite is described to have the powers of a semi-goddess.[1008] No mere human may have all these connotations at the same time. Goddesses throughout the ancient Near East concerned for the petitioners' overall well-being, including the protection, strength, life-giving power, abundance, prosperity, political success, fertility, sexual power, etc.[1009] Described as beautiful, proud, dominant, the most high, and great in magic,[1010] a goddess is the one who is able to create an ideal world for her worshippers.[1011] In the new

[1006] See p. 233, 235, 238, 239 above.

[1007] See p. 245 above. See also Bonatz 2021, 1–8.

[1008] Not a major goddess but a *semi*-goddess because if the description assumed an image of one of the major goddesses the text must have included a known attribute of the goddess.

[1009] Albertz / Schmitt 2014, 487–488.

[1010] Cornelius 2008, 80–87; Wyatt, 'Astarte', *DDD*: 109–114; Asher-Greve / Westenholz 2013, 127–130, etc.

[1011] Also witnessed in the Hebrew Bible: Jer 44:17–19.

metaphor that 'the Shulamite is the ideal world', she is the one who may practice her supernatural powers for the well-being of herself and her beloveds, including her male lover and those who praise her (the viewer group).

This image of the Shulamite contains paradoxes: the Shulamite is a mortal woman, but at the same time she becomes a semi-goddess by the interplay of tropes. Literally, the Shulamite is *envisioned* as a semi-goddess. Since metaphors 'assert *seriously* something that is beyond literal truth',[1012] even though the literal meaning in a metaphor is not true in the factual value, it is *believed* as the truth. Then the Shulamite truly becomes a superhuman in the context of the singing and dancing performance, who embodies the ideal world, everything that her spectators desire, and makes her viewers partake in this ideal world by the experience of her performance. The connotations of the body part metaphors are in fact the viewers' desires that the viewer group wants to project onto the Shulamite. As the dancing performance gradually reaches its climax, she rhetorically becomes a semi-goddess.

In the same manner, she is in the constant dancing motion but directly faces the viewers. Even though the group is looking at her, the strong impression of her face (two eyes and nose) prohibits the viewers and readers from gazing at her voyeuristically. The male lover, envisioned as a triumphant king, is captivated by her like a defeated enemy. Through this dynamic reversal of positions, eventually, the group reverts their eyes from her, and gazes upon the king (v. 6b). The Shulamite was an object to be gazed upon, but her power dominates the ones who gaze upon her. The whole of the Shulamite constructed by the complex rhetorical interactions integrates such paradoxes.

Efforts to decipher the individual body part metaphors, without looking at the whole in the interplay of tropes, would result in reading the separated body parts without consistency. On the contrary, looking through the cumulative relations of metaphors, metonymies, and synecdoches not only constructs the whole body of the Shulamite but also reveals how the body is envisioned as having the paradoxical semi-divinity. The tropes in the description do not build the Shulamite's body as a mixed bag or a grotesque creature,[1013] but as a woman who has the properties of the ideal world according to the viewing group's desire. The Shulamite is a human but also becomes or changes into a semi-goddess, by the group's act of praising her body in metaphors, metonyms, and synecdoches, in the context of the performance.

In next section, I discuss the possible visual representations of the whole of the Shulamite, as reconstructed by the textual interaction of metaphors, metonymies, and synecdoches. It is important to note that the reconstructed whole

[1012] Eco 1984, 89. Emphasis in original.
[1013] See Brenner 1993, 250; Black 2009, 153–159.

image cannot be reduced to one, but must remain plural. The visual representation of the Shulamite is in fact the interpreters' projected images onto her. Various images can be projected onto the Shulamite according to different readers, and what I discuss below are some possible options from the Iron Age southern Levant and eventually, images that I project, as a reader of the Song of Songs who has studied ancient Levantine artifacts.

4. Images of the Shulamite

In the previous section, I offered my interpretation on the textual description of the Shulamite. In this section, I discuss the images from the historical background of the Iron Age southern Levant that the text allows its readers, singers, or performers to project onto her. While the text is a textualization of an image, i.e., the description of the Shulamite, the ancient Levantine images are given as examples of the visualization of this text. The Iron Age southern Levant as the temporal and spatial setting of this iconographic research is already given above (§2). In §4.1, I clarify certain problems and propositions of the task of 'finding' projected images of the Shulamite. Then I offer eleven candidate images and briefly examine how these eleven types could all be the projected images of the Shulamite (§4.2). Finally, I select one type – the female drummer type – to provide a full discussion of the image and its relationship with the Shulamite description (§4.3).

4.1. *Problems of Visualizing Verbal Imagery*

How can one imagine the whole of the Shulamite, inferred from the described parts? After all, what is the whole of her that the description suggests? In the previous subsection (§3.4) I concluded that the whole of the Shulamite is compared to the ideal world, synecdochically categorized together under the genus of 'supernaturality'. However, she is still a human woman. Then what image would fit such description of the Shulamite? How may one visualize a verbal imagery from a text?

Mitchell dealt with the relation between the mental image and the verbal imagery in his book on Iconology. He concluded that the mental image surfaces in language, that mental images and verbal imagery are connected.

> The pictures that seem to reside in our language, whether they are projected in the mind's eye or on paper, are artificial, conventional signs no less than the propositions with which they are associated. […] That is why … we demystify the notion of mental imagery by replacing it with its material

> equivalent ('replace every process of imagining by a process of looking at an object or by painting, drawing or modelling').[1014]

The verbal imagery which constructs mental images may be materialized in visual images, and in this process, projection occurs. Then, I can reformulate the question: what is the *projected* image of the Shulamite that the description reveals? This question changes the frame, from the reconstruction of the visual appearance of the Shulamite, to the mental images that the describing viewers were *to* have in mind upon looking at the Shulamite as suggested by the text. Neither the visual appearance of the Shulamite nor the describing group's minds are reconstructable; the point is what the text suggests about the whole of the Shulamite, when it is viewed through the knowledge of the Iron Age southern Levant – the estimated time of circulation of the song as discussed in the previous section (§2).

According to David Rapaport, 'any organizing of the external world according to a principle of organization of the subject's 'private world' is considered projection'.[1015] Darius Ornston states that 'Freud proposed that from early infancy on, whenever we mentally attend or tentatively classify, whenever we orient or organize, whenever we anticipate or understand, we project'.[1016] It is a 'ubiquitous' and 'normal' process of thoughts,[1017] which 'plays a very large part in determining the form taken by our external world'.[1018] Peirce's separation between the dynamic object and immediate object is also based on the understanding that the reality cannot be perceived as it is,[1019] but through the glasses constructed by the interpreter's previous knowledge (conventions) and experiences. Looking at an object or an image, therefore, also requires the mental activity of the projection of conventional signs, whether they are almost photographic detailed pictures or highly stylized symbols.

I interpreted the Shulamite description that the viewer group looked at with awe praising her beauty. The viewers may have projected any image of a beautiful woman onto the Shulamite: it could be their neighbors, or female representations they encountered in everyday lives or in special occasions at palaces or temples, etc. Each member of the group might have projected distinct images of a beautiful woman. Among these various cases of images, what can be studied are the female representations that have come to us through excavations. They were the most famous visualizations, i.e., the conventional signs of various

[1014] Mitchell 1986, 26.
[1015] Rapaport 1967, 348.
[1016] Ornston 1978, 154.
[1017] Ornston 1978, 155.
[1018] Freud 2001, 75. See also ibid., 109.
[1019] See p. 47–50 above.

existing concepts of woman and femininity of that time and region. Therefore, the female representations of southern Levant may provide fruitful discussions about the Shulamite.

Before going to the visual representations of a woman in Iron Age southern Levant, it is to note that the textual description (Song 7:1–6) works both visually and non-visually. First, the whole Shulamite is to be imagined visually – from feet to head, a *visual* order – simultaneously connoting non-visual properties of the Shulamite. Secondly, the individual vehicles of the metaphors (e.g., cup, pools, towers, etc.) are also to be understood visually *and* non-visually. Some scholars argued for the priority of non-visual connotative similarities in the metaphors of the Song, e.g., functions, impressions, and emotions.[1020] However, the metaphors cannot succeed without any one of the two. For example, twin gazelle fawns are compared to the Shulamite's breasts for their shared connotation of vitality and source of life. Nevertheless, the tenor and vehicle are also visually similar, since the two breasts are paralleled with two gazelles: while the contour would not be exactly the same, both share the visual feature of the symmetrical position of two voluminous objects. One more example: if a 'neck' is compared to a 'tower' as a sign of safety and protection, why not 'ramparts' or 'city wall' for the same connotation? A tower is deliberately chosen because of its visual similarity of the conical shape shared with a neck. Without the visual similarity, the metaphor would not have been chosen. Therefore, both visual and non-visual features of the description must be considered in order to study the possibly projected images.

However, analyzing the visual and non-visual features of the description does not guarantee finding an 'equivalent' image of the Shulamite. The description is ambiguous in several aspects: first, while visual arts primarily provide optical information, the visual hints offered by the description are too obscure to find the 'matching' images. From the text it is only sufficient to acknowledge that it describes a female body, which could refer to *any* form of a female body, whether chubby or thin, short or tall. The description merely gives the vague atmosphere of 'beauty' through the praising tone, not offering detailed information about her outer appearance.

Secondly, focusing on symbolical aspects of the description likewise does not yield a clear depiction of the Shulamite. Connotations of a visual image may differ according to interpreters, especially the female representations of the ancient southern Levant whose identifications are not clearly established. Even though the woman of 'the woman at the window' motif (Fig. 50) only depicts the head of a woman as opposed to the described whole body of the Shulamite;

[1020] See for example, Keel 1984, 27; Soulen 1967, 187, 190.

this image of a head may also be the image of the Shulamite when interpreted as a goddess.

Thirdly, it is problematic to 'find' the 'matching' images of a text. It is possible on certain circumstances, such as a formal description (e.g., Greek *ekphrasis*) of an artifact or an artistic motif, but not for the description of a literary character, i.e., the Shulamite, condensed with symbolical signs and non-visual connotations. Motifs in texts and in visual images do not always match, let alone those of the ancient cultures whose materials are limited for us.

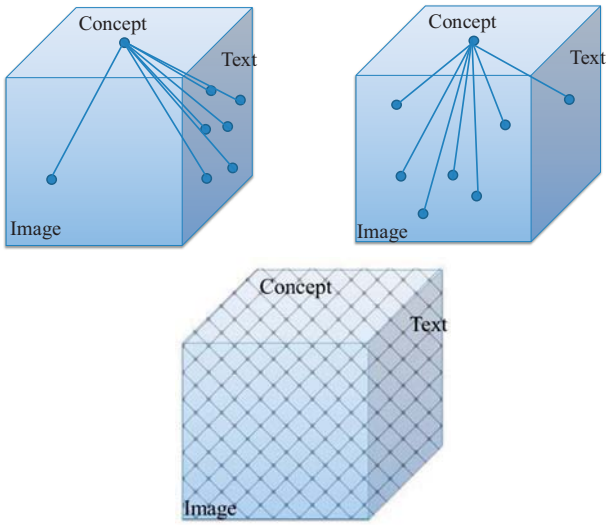


Fig. 47: Polysemic image-text relationship.[1021]

For these reasons, it becomes obvious that the image-text relationship cannot be the one-to-one matching relationship. If there is an abstract concept, ways of expressing the concept in the verbal realm and the visual realm are diverse, let alone other sign systems. For example, a concept of 'Ishtar' may be manifested through various myths and legends textually written or orally transmitted, and also through various visual representations of her in different forms: sometimes with wings, with a lion, together with different figures, clothed or nude. They are all related, but differently manifested. Then a text must be related not only

[1021] See also the diagram of the relationship between image, contents, text, and the world designed by de Hulster (de Hulster 2009, fig. 1). While his and my diagrams agree that the images and texts are interrelated with concepts/contents, my diagram emphasizes the plural relations between different sign systems.

with a single image but also with a whole group of images (Fig. 47). It is the polysemic relationship, as Bahrani states, and as every sign system is.[1022]

Theoretically, every visual representation of a woman from the Iron Age southern Levant could be projected onto the Shulamite. For example, a visual representation of only a head of a woman (Fig. 50) may also become one of many images of the Shulamite,[1023] since (1) an image of the same concept is not expected to visualize what is written about the concept word by word. Put another way, the mentioned feet, thighs, navel, breasts do not have to be visually depicted in order to be a projected image of the Shulamite. And (2), in the projection, the female visual representation can be interpreted to fit the connotations of the description of the Shulamite according to the viewers, becoming the image of the Shulamite, interconnected by different nets of infinite semiosis. Setting these possibilities as propositions underlying the section, I sorted out eleven types of female representations from Iron Age southern Levant, under some conditions which will be discussed below.

4.2. *Eleven Candidates of the Projected Image of the Shulamite*

I sorted eleven types of anthropomorphic female representations which are the candidates of the projected images of the Shulamite, based on the catalogues in Schroer, *IPIAO* vol. 4 and Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, thinned out into 123 samples. The eleven types are: (1) frontal standing nude woman; (2) a drummer; (3) Judean Pillar Figurines (JPF); (4) woman at the window; (5) a horse rider; (6) a double-pipe player; (7) a woman holding a bird; (8) Leonine/feline goddess (Sachmet/Bastet); (9) Hathor; (10) Ishtar; (11) a female anthropomorphic jar. These eleven types are selected by the following conditions: (a) temporal (Iron Age) and regional (North Israel, Judah, Phoenicia, and Philistine) proximity as discussed above;[1024] (b) anthropomorphic rendering (including female anthropomorphic vessels); (c) clear attributes of a woman; (d) it excludes some features which clearly contradict the description of the Shulamite, such as a pregnant woman, a woman with an infant, or a swimmer.[1025] Among these eleven types, some are found through excavations more frequently than others and some less often. I also included female images which do not depict the whole body because projection of a whole female imagery can be done without actually seeing the

[1022] Bahrani 2003, 185–196; Eco 1981, 40, 42–44.

[1023] See the discussion in p. 263f.

[1024] See p. 219 above.

[1025] A pregnant woman and a woman with a child are excluded because the concept of 'pregnancy' and the responsibilities of being a mother contradicts the Song of Songs' focus on the erotic desires of young lovers, even though these types also share some properties with the Shulamite, such as abundance and the source of life.

representation of a complete body: not mentioned body parts are assumed to be there albeit narcotized.[1026] Below are the examples how these distinct female images can be interpreted fitting the visual description and non-visual connotations of the Shulamite.

Type 1. Frontal standing nude woman (Fig. 48). This type of female representations includes various hand gestures: hands hanging on the sides, two hands supporting the breasts, one hand pointing to a breast and another to the vulva or to the belly, two hands pointing to the vulva, hands joined in front of the lower abdomen (the sub-type seen on Fig. 48), or outwardly stretched arms in V-form holding plants or animals (including that of the *qudšu*/*qedešet* type). The gestures and accompanying attributes would communicate different meanings, but all can be interpreted to have the connotations of the Shulamite description: the beauty, the source of life, the giver of joy and safety. The beauty: the notion of 'beauty' is not measurable, especially among ancient artifacts whose aesthetic codes we do not have. Many objects of this type are made with humble techniques, thus even though some of them may not conform to our (modern viewers) standards of beauty, the abstract concept of the woman that these representations try to depict may have communicated the notion of beauty.[1027] The source of life: female sexual attributes such as breasts or vulva often carried connotations of life (i.e., vital powers), nutrition, prosperity, and success in the ancient Near East as discussed in Chapter 10.[1028] Even though these connotations should be applied carefully according to different contexts, the limited knowledge about those anonymous women allows more freedom of interpretation. The giver of joy: nudity of this type may carry connotations of sexual joy, as nudity is often connected with eroticism and sexual activities.[1029] The giver of safety: some image bearers of this type are a part of a shrine model or temple façade, i.e., represented together with an architecture in a cultic setting, connected to all the connotations of these cultic buildings. Safety and protection were the ones of the most important functions of the images displayed on architectures because the boundaries between inside and outside were regarded as magical spaces which

[1026] See p. 259 above. For the notion of 'narcotize', see p. 56 above.

[1027] Amy Gansell, from her survey of the ivory sculptures of the 'woman at the window' motif (Fig. 50 below), tries to objectify the visualizations of feminine beauty with certain features: 'large eyes, fair skin, and slender but curvy, youthful bodies' (Gansell 2014, 65). However, these 'common' features are induced only from ivory carvings – expensive and luxurious material – which require relatively high craftsmanship. Such standards may differ in different materials, image bearers, and media. Since my research takes images from various materials and image bearers, it is reasonable to reserve more space for personal projections in the concept of beauty, than forcing them into few limited physical/visual features.

[1028] Assante 2002a, *passim*; Assante 2002b, 1, 6–14, 19–20; Assante 2006, 200–202. See the discussion in p. 112–125 above.

[1029] Pyschny 2019, 134–139; Klein 2019, 499–523. See also p. 112–125 above.

not only benevolent but also evil spirits could enter.[1030] This type of images thus may be projected onto the Shulamite.





Fig. 48: Example of type 1. A nude woman. Terracotta, Tell Beit Mirsim, 1200–1150 BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1177).
Fig. 49: Example of Type 3. JPF. Terracotta, Lachish, 8th–7th century BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1544).

Type 2. A drummer. This type is discussed in detail in the next section.

Type 3. A Judean Pillar Figurine (JPF) (Fig. 49). Erin Darby defines JPF broadly: 'small clay figurines with pillar bases and arms either supporting or holding the breasts; a small number hold a disk or a child'.[1031] In contrast, Raz Kletter excludes the figurines with a disk or with a child from the JPF category.[1032] JPFs are found mostly in the Judean region, but also in Philistia and in North Israel albeit scarcely.[1033] Various archaeological contexts revealed JPFs: rooms, houses, public or sacred buildings, house shrines, tombs, streets, gates, cisterns.[1034] While there is a dispute whether the pillar base depicts a tree or the lower part of the dressed body, or merely functions as a base or handle,[1035] I think the ancient viewers would have seen them both as trees and dressed bodies using them as bases and handles. While the ancient viewers might have had the knowledge that it represented a tree, a handle or a stand, the visual and formal similarity with a skirted lower body would have allowed them to view it as the lower part of a body.[1036] There have been various suggestions about the function and identity of this woman: a toy, a votive figurine of a female suppliant, a

[1030] Assante 2002a, 28–29; Roßberger 2018a, 235–237. In the Hebrew Bible, Exod 12 witness the apotropaic importance of architectural boundaries. Albertz / Schmitt 2014, 419–420. Even though nude images might seem too week to ward off evil spirits in modern eyes, the nudity – whether male or female – had apotropaic functions in the context of architecture in the ancient Near East. See Ornan, 'Humbaba, the Bull of Heaven', 236; Suter 2000, 75–76; Keel / Schroer 2004, 23.

[1031] Darby 2014a, 2.

[1032] Kletter 1996, 28–30.

[1033] Kletter 2001, 187.

[1034] Kletter 2001, 194.

[1035] Darby 2014b, 16–17.

[1036] See p. 63f for such characteristics of a visual representation.

mother or nursing goddess, a fertility goddess, Ashera, Astarte, a protective spirit, a deceased ancestor, or a magical tool.[1037] The majority of the interpretations tend to posit it in the realm of magic and cult/religion, i.e., as a goddess or a magical figure, mostly because of its archaeological connection with cultic places and its emphasis on the breasts – the sign of nurture, and in consequence, life.[1038] Whether as a goddess or a magical figure, if this figure is interpreted as the provider of life, joy, success, abundance, food and drink, well-being and safety – common petitions to supernatural beings – a JPF may have become a projected image of the Shulamite.





Fig. 50: Example of type 4. Woman at the window. Ivory, Samaria, 9th–8th century BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1556).
Fig. 51: Example of type 5. A horse rider. Scaraboid, Acco, 1150–900 BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1104).

Type 4. A woman at the window (Fig. 50). This motif is distributed from Assyria to Samaria between 9th–8th century BCE.[1039] The visual representations of this motif are almost always found within the context of a palace, presumably belonging to certain kinds of royal furniture.[1040] This motif has been interpreted as a representation of feminine beauty,[1041] an elite woman, a 'window goddess', a 'cultic prostitute', or a lover implying difficult accessibility and future sexual union through the window.[1042] These interpretations, no matter how they are opposed to one another, commonly agree that she connotes a high

[1037] See for example, Kletter 2001, 195–205; Darby 2014a, 34–60, 328–338; Keel / Uehlinger 1998, 328–341; Moorey 2003, 60–63; Green 2019, 195–196.

[1038] See footnote 1037 for references. Even when it is interpreted as a votive figurine of a human suppliant, the interpreter still conceives it as 'the instruments through which the people at large in their own communities approached supernatural powers for aid and comfort in ways that were, presumably, thought by them to be acceptable to the supernatural powers thus petitioned'. Moorey 2003, 59.

[1039] Winter 2016, 180.

[1040] Suter 1992, 13–16.

[1041] See for example, Gansell 2014, 64.

[1042] Suter 1992, 25. For the criticism on the interpretations of 'window goddess', or 'cultic prostitute', see ibid., 21–25. I.J. Winter states that the women in the 'woman at the window' motif are 'adorned as elite women and goddesses would be, so they must possess positive attributes appropriate to display on royal furniture'. Winter 2016, 190.

status and feminine beauty, for she is highly decorated and mostly made of ivory. High status conforms to the description of the Shulamite that she is a 'daughter of noble' (בת-נדיב). The wide semantic range and the rich connotations of the term 'feminine beauty' may become related with the notions of vitality, joy, and sexuality, whether she is a goddess or a mortal woman.[1043] Furthermore, the woman inside a window frame carries the connotation of 'safety', separated from the outer world,[1044] and can be related to the architecture metaphors of the Shulamite. Even though the textual manifestations of the 'woman at the window' motif in the Hebrew Bible are rendered in a negative sense (e.g., Jezebel in 2 Kgs 9:30, Michal in 2 Sam 6:16, and the mother of Sisera in Judg 5:28),[1045] the Shulamite shows an opposite and positive perspective towards these biblical passages as other parts of Song also do (e.g., the intertextuality with Gen 2–3, Prov 7).[1046] The visual motif of 'woman at the window', outside of the biblical account, was 'probably positively coded in their representations of feminine beauty'.[1047] Thus the 'woman at the window' motif can be interpreted to have similar properties as the Shulamite. Even though the woman's other body parts are omitted, the head stands as *pars pro toto* for the whole body,[1048] and the whole of her could be easily imagined (albeit not uniformly) and projected onto the Shulamite. However, if one interprets the woman at the window as a woman of ill repute, this image cannot be projected onto the Shulamite.

Type 5. A horse rider (Fig. 51). A woman who rides on a horse was a motif prevalent in the Late Bronze Age Levant and Egypt, but the motif was still known in the early Iron Age in a decreased number.[1049] Even though the carve on the scaraboid of Fig. 51 is too schematic to identify the figure's gender, the combination of a high headgear (a schematized *atef*-crown) and horseback riding enables to posit it in the tradition of a riding goddess of war.[1050] The towering *atef*-crown identifies the woman as a goddess. In the Late Bronze Age tradition of the motif (including that of Egypt) some of the images appeared with an inscription 'Astarte'.[1051] Astarte was venerated as a goddess of war and horse in Egypt, Levant, Phoenicia and Syria, and became a major goddess in the pantheon of Syria and Phoenicia in the Iron Age.[1052] She was particularly related to

[1043] Gansell 2014, *passim*.
[1044] Winter 2016, 182.
[1045] Suter 1992, 22–23.
[1046] Trible 1973, 42–47; Keel 1994, 251–252; Barbiero 2011, 120–121, 402–403; Carr 2011, 434–439.
[1047] Gansell 2014, 64.
[1048] Rehm 2003, 503.
[1049] Cornelius 2020, 4.
[1050] Cornelius 2008, 40.
[1051] Cornelius 2008, 60.
[1052] R. Schmitt 2013, 216.

warfare, horse, hunting, healing, protection, and political power, and as a deity in general (regardless of gender) she was also praised as a giver of life, well-being, luck, abundance, prosperity, and health.[1053] As a result, the riding woman may be interpreted to be a projected image of the Shulamite, providing life, abundance and protection, and dominating the lover with mighty power. Even though the Shulamite is not horse-riding at the moment, the war-metaphor in v. 6 – her capture of the king – allows one to project the image of Astarte onto the Shulamite, feeling their shared belligerence.





Fig. 52: Example of type 6. A double-pipe player. Terracotta, Achziv, 8th century BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1552).
Fig. 53: Example of Type 7. A woman holding a bird. Terracotta, Sarepta, 7th century BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1816).

Type 6. A double-pipe player (Fig. 52). This figure's biological sex is not clearly depicted, but the stylistic similarity with JPF (the head and the skirt-like pillar base) defines its feminine gender. Fragments of other double-pipe player figurines show typical feminine hairstyles (e.g., veils),[1054] witnessing the existence of female double-pipe player representations in Iron Age southern Levant. It seems that there were also male double-pipe players,[1055] although in many cases it is difficult to determine the gender. Unlike the drummer type which appeared independently and prevalently in and beyond the Iron Age Israel, this type has only been found in Phoenician, Philistine, and Edomite sites in a small number, mostly between 7th–6th centuries BCE.[1056] Thus, it seems that the double-pipe player figurines had different, probably more limited, meanings than the drummers, although both play musical instruments and sometimes appear together.[1057] If one interprets this type as a mere representation of a player or a

[1053] Schmitt states that as all the deities in a pantheon were bestowed with functions of general well-being, abundance, life, help, and fertility, Astarte was also called for those functions, even though he emphasizes her war-like aspects. R. Schmitt 2013, 216–217, 221, 224.
[1054] For example, see the figurine number PD4 in Sugimoto 2008, 165.
[1055] Sugimoto 2008, 44–45.
[1056] The statistics is based on Sugimoto 2008, 44–47.
[1057] See Paz 2007, 11; Sugimoto 2008, 45.

member of an orchestra, this double-pipe player cannot be a projected image of the Shulamite. However, if one focuses on its cultic contexts,[1058] the music playing of this type acquires magical powers related to life, joy, and safety, conforming to the connotations of the Shulamite, which allow one to feel the similar effects of her.

Type 7. A woman holding a bird (Fig. 53). This type only scarcely appears in 7th century Phoenicia, and has not yet been found in Judah, Israel, and Philistia.[1059] A fully clothed and veiled standing woman holds a bird, and the lower parts of the body are similar to the pillar base of JPF. Schroer interprets her as an offering bringer,[1060] while Sugimoto conceives her as the representation of the aspects of Astarte.[1061] According to Schroer, a figurine of an offering bringer may also have supernatural powers of 'Perpetual Adoration' if it is put into a cultic place.[1062] If one follows Sugimoto's interpretation, the bird-holding woman may communicate the connotations of Astarte discussed above (type 5, a horse rider), but if one sees her as no more than a visual cognate to an offering bringer – who does not have properties of the source of life, joy, protection etc. – she will not be a projected image of the Shulamite.

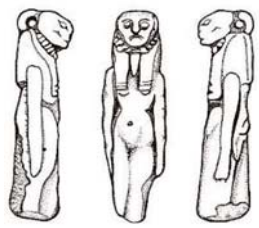




Fig. 54: Example of type 8. Leonine/feline goddess. Amulet, Jerusalem, 840–700 BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1484).
Fig. 55: Example of type 9. Hathor. Scarab with gold frame and ring, Tell el-Ajjul, 7th century BCE or later (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1760).

Type 8. Leonine/feline goddess (Sachmet/Bastet) (Fig. 54). The leonine/feline goddess Sachmet and Bastet are most often represented in the form of a hybrid of an animal head and a female body. They take different postures in various contexts: standing alone without holding anything, holding a scepter, an ankh, or an udjat-eye, or sitting, or associated with other figures. Bastet was a beloved goddess for characters such as being benign, merry, and festive, linked

[1058] See Sugimoto 2008, 44.
[1059] Sugimoto 2008, 41–42, 83.
[1060] Schroer, *IPIAO* 4, 752.
[1061] Sugimoto 2008, 83.
[1062] Schroer, *Eva*, 12–13.

with perfumes and (sexual) intoxication. Sachmet, on the other hand, underlines rather wild and dangerous characters, which make her a healer, life saver, and a protector. It is known that when Sachmet or Bastet are represented on its own (e.g., as an amulet) without an identifying inscription, they are not distinguishable.[1063] While Sachmet and Bastet share the properties of femininity and protection, the ambiguity in differentiating the two in visual representations may suggest that Sachmet and Bastet were regarded as neighboring aspects of femininity. Then the different connotations of the two goddesses would join together, to be used at different needs and situations. Therefore, a viewer may interpret an image of Sachmet/Bastet with connotations such as: giver of life, joy, 'good' (*nfr*), sexual (intoxicating) power, protection, mighty power, nutrition, regeneration, etc.[1064] The mighty power may also be related with the Shulamite's domination over the king (v. 6b). Even though Sachmet/Bastet is represented with an animal head, the overall femininity expressed through the body and the fitting connotations allow one to link Sachmet/Bastet with the Shulamite in the mental projection.

Type 9. Hathor (Fig. 55). The goddess Hathor was represented in several ways in the southern Levant, and her typical head – big eyes, outwardly curled shoulder-length hair, and cow-like ears – was often used in a seal and amulet repertoire, representing the whole of her and her symbolism. Hathor carries connotations of protection, beauty, love, eroticism, life and fertility, etc.[1065] It corresponds to the connotations of the Shulamite description, which depict her as a beautiful woman and a giver of life (nutrition, life-force, regeneration), (sexual) joy, and protection of the caring ones.





Fig. 56: Example of type 10. Ishtar. Scaraboid, Ashdod, 7th century BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1873).
Fig. 57. Example of Type 10. Ishtar. Scaraboid, Lachish, 7th century BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1807).

Type 10. Ishtar (Fig. 56, 57). Visual representations of Ishtar, a Mesopotamian major goddess, circulated in the Iron Age southern Levant especially after the Assyrian conquest of Israel. The occurrence is not limited to North Israel but

[1063] Eggler / Gubul 2020, 1–3.
[1064] Eggler / Gubul 2020, 6.
[1065] Schroer, *IPIAO* 4, 62, 65, 84.

also found in Lachish, if the frontal standing semi-nude woman graved on a stamp seal – surrounded by a winged disk, a worshipping ape, a worshipper on a podium, and a branch (Fig. 57) – is to be identified as Ishtar as Ornan argues.[1066] The more typical representation of Ishtar depicts a woman in a long dress in profile, and on the background of her is a circle of stars which is an emblem of Ishtar (Fig. 56). The star-circle has been interpreted as an indication of the radiance of the goddess.[1067] If this type represents Ishtar, various well-known connotations of the goddess in Mesopotamia are embedded in that representation, although the connotations must be the localized version of the southern Levant. Again, if Fig. 57 depicts Ishtar, she may have communicated connotations of not only protection, power, and success, but also abundance and prosperity,[1068] the acknowledged properties of the goddess in Mesopotamia. Ishtar is especially known to be the beautiful and sexually powerful lover.[1069] If those aspects were adapted in the southern Levant, it is easy to project her image onto the Shulamite, who is the most beautiful lover described as the giver of life and joy, the protector of beloved ones, and the powerful seductress who is able to bind the king.

Type 11. A female anthropomorphic container (Fig. 58). Vessels were continuously shaped in human, animal, and plant forms in various cultures including the southern Levant. There are many types of female anthropomorphic containers, and Fig. 58, a Philistine clay vessel, is shaped in the form of a woman, with a head, two arms, two breasts, and horizontal stripes which decorate the abbreviated lower body. While Schroer designates it as a 'Gravidenflasche', i.e., a bottle in the shape of a pregnant woman,[1070] the protruding belly may not necessarily point to the pregnancy of the female figure but be made so in order to increase the storage capacity in the form of a chubby woman.[1071] The clear indication of the breasts and the usage of it as openings of the vessel point that this vessel connects female breasts with the notions of food, drink, and nutrition – which can be extended to the overarching sign of life and well-being.[1072] As a container, it protects its content, thus the meaning of protection can also be attained. If one sees it as a pregnant woman, this image cannot be projected onto the Shulamite; however, if one sees it as the giver of life (food, drink), source of joy (as the container of intoxicating liquid), and the protector of the contained

[1066] Ornan 2001, 249–251.
[1067] Ornan 2001, 239–243.
[1068] Ornan 2001, 250–251.
[1069] Abush 1999, 452–456.
[1070] Schroer, *IPIAO* 4, 256, no. 1175.
[1071] Darby also states that the categorization of some of those female anthropomorphic vessels as 'Gravidenflaschen' is supported neither by archaeological nor by textual evidence. Darby 2014a, 335.
[1072] Schroer / Kipfer 2015, 1–26.

things, thinking that she is beautifully rendered, it may also be appropriate to be a candidate. Indeed, the body image of the Shulamite suggested by the descriptive text could be chubby as this vessel,[1073] albeit the absence of the feet,[1074] although the other ten types of female representations are depicted in rather slim forms.



Fig. 58: Example of type 11. A female anthropomorphic jar.
Clay vessel, Tell Qasile, 1150 BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1175).[1075]

As briefly shown, there are diverse reasons why all these ten types might become the projected images of the Shulamite, conforming to its description both in visual form and non-visual connotations. Since the Shulamite is interpreted to be both mortal and (semi-) divine, all these female representations – whether a goddess or a mortal woman – may become the image of the Shulamite. In all these types the connection between a female body and the concepts of beauty, vitality, joy, source of life, protection, abundance, and prosperity is manifested in various ways, although the degree of the relations might differ according to interpreters. Again, these are not discussed in full but presented as examples of possible interpretations. In the following section, I will give my own – more detailed – interpretation of type 2, the drummer type.

4.3. *Case Study – The Female Drummer Type*

A female drum player is an artistic repertoire in Iron Age II southern Levant. Female drum players are mainly portrayed in two distinct sub-types: (1) plaques (Fig. 59) and (2) pillar figurines (Fig. 60). The difference in medium is related with the difference in artistic styles: women of the first type are usually depicted as nudes or semi-nudes decorated with jewelry, while women of the second type

[1073] For example, Brenner imagines a woman with a chubby and sensuous body. See Brenner 1993, 247–248.

[1074] As I stated above, not every mentioned body part is to be visually present in order to be a projected image of the Shulamite. See p. 257ff.

[1075] The source of this image is: Mazar 1980, fig. 18.

look as if dressed since it is easy to view the pillar base as a long skirt. The first type seems to have been proliferated in northern Israel during the Iron Age, especially before the 8th century BCE, and the second type mostly appears in later periods of Iron Age throughout the southern Levant including North Israel and Judah but the majority in Phoenicia, Transjordan, and Edomite regions.[1076] As one of the most common female representations in North Israel during the Iron Age IIA–B, I pick one image of a complete figurine from this drummer plaque type and interpret it (Fig. 59).[1077] The interpretation that I offer below is idiosyncratic to this specific artifact and may not automatically be applied to other plaques in this type because my interpretation includes specific features of this object and its archaeological backgrounds.





Fig. 59: Example of type 2. A drummer: plaque. Terracotta, Tel Reḥov, 9th century BCE (Kletter / Saarelainen 2011, fig. 4).
Fig. 60: Example of type 2. A drummer: pillar figurine. Terracotta, Tel Shikmona, 9th–8th century BCE (*IPIAO* 4, Nr. 1551).

[1076] Sugimoto 2008, 20–21, 28–29, 57–58.

[1077] The other type of the female drummer, i.e., the drummer pillar figurines, would yield different interpretations from what I offer in this subsection. The drummer pillar figurines were most likely viewed as dressed because of the skirt-like looking base (see the discussion on JPFs in p. 5). The different distribution pattern of the pillar-based drummers would also generate meanings different from the plaques. However, there are possibilities that a viewer reads connotations similar to the plaques since the pillar-based drummers depict the same theme: a female standing drummer (see Sugimoto 2008, 32–34). Even if one focuses on the fact that these pillar-based drummers are neither nude (indication of cultic sphere – see below in this footnote) nor adorned with jewelry (indication of a high or special status), they may still hold the cultic and apotropaic functions which can be extended to the Shulamite symbolism according to interpreters, inferred from the tomb and cultic contexts (see Sugimoto 2008, 28–29).

Regarding the connection between nudity and cultic sphere in southern Levant, Pyschny states that in southern Levant 'the almost exclusive link between female nudity and the religious sphere is possibly supported by the absence of female practical or functional nakedness'. Pyschny 2019, 150, 156.

The plaque depicted in Fig. 59 is about 12 cm high and 4 cm wide. According to Sarit Paz, there are traces on the back of the plaque for attaching it to an altar or a stand.[1078] The plaque depicts a frontal looking standing woman holding a round object (a drum)[1079] on her left chest with two hands. On the right chest a breast protrudes. The drum is framed. The woman seems to be nude, but wears a veil and rich ornaments: a headgear, a decorated waste belt, earrings, necklaces, armlets, bracelets, and anklets. Her eyes are big and round, and her nose is partly broken but seems to have been long. Her mouth is indicated by a simple horizontal line whose left end is slightly raised. Her navel is decorated and emphasized by a set of round spiral or circle lines. Her pubic triangle is clearly shown, and, at the bottom of the triangle, her vulva is underlined by overlaying circular holes.

There has been a debate what the disc-shaped object that the woman holds represents. A solar disc, a tambourine or a drum, a loaf of bread, a plate, and an offering bowl were suggested, but it became more or less a consensus that the disc represents a framed drum,[1080] which men and women used for dancing, cultic purposes, and celebration of victory, as witnessed in the Hebrew Bible.[1081] This type of plaques is usually found in North Israel and dated to the Iron Age II A–B periods, but still occurs in other places of the southern Levant after 9th century BCE, albeit smaller in number.[1082] This type seems to have been circulated across North Israel and beyond.[1083] While in many cases the exact archaeological contexts are not recorded, the extant data point out that they are found in cultic, secular, public, domestic, and tomb areas,[1084] probably used in various aspects of the people's lives.

For the identification of the female drum player on plaques, there have been several suggestions – a goddess, a representation of a deceased, a mortal woman representing a goddess, a worshipper, a priestess, etc. – but all in a cultic sphere.[1085] For the function of these plaques, a toy, an amulet, a votive gift, a cultic souvenir, and a magic vehicle are also proposed.[1086] While making a toy with terracotta – easily breakable material – decoration only on the frontal part

[1078] Paz 2007, 21–22.

[1079] See next paragraph.

[1080] Paz 2007, 72–74; Sugimoto 2008, 6–10, 35; Hillers 1970, 16.

[1081] Gen 31:27; Exod 15:20; Judg 11:34; 1Sam 18:6; 2Sam 6:5; 1Chr 13:8; Ps 68:26, 81:3, 149:3, 150:4; Isa 5:12, 24:8, 30:32; Jer 31:3; Ezek 28:13. See also Paz 2007, 82–101; Sugimoto 2008, 68–73.

[1082] Sugimoto 2008, 57; Paz 2007, 55.

[1083] Ziffer et al. 2016, 41e.

[1084] Sugimoto 2008, 60; Paz 2007, 59–60.

[1085] Paz 2007, 74–78, 118–119; Sugimoto 2008, 85; Hillers 1970, 610–618; Keel / Uehlinger 1998, 165–167; Schroer, *IPIAO* 4, 67–68.

[1086] See summaries of these suggestions in Sugimoto 2008, 5–6; Paz 2007, 118–120.

is unlikely;[1087] all other functions with some supernatural powers seem possible because of the plaques' relation with cultic contexts as well as domestic.

Concerning its wide spectrum of find contexts – inside and outside buildings, streets, tombs, sacred and secular places, public and domestic realms, etc. – which does not exclude cultic and ritual contexts, it seems that the female drummer plaques were used for amulet-like functions,[1088] protecting the owner and/or viewers and ensuring their successful life and well-being, whether dead or alive. The female drummer must be a figure who was believed to enhance such magical powers: protection of the owner, economic abundance, healing, well-being, political success, promotion of vitality, etc., everything required for an amulet or talisman. As discussed in Chapter 10, such a widely distributed and long-loved motif is likely to have taken diverse roles, not limited to a single function, having the all-round capability to deal with every kind of situations of a person's life.[1089] The drummer's high status is hinted at from her rich ornaments, the occurrence in cultic or ritual places, and the lack of clear divine attributes indicate that she might neither be a major goddess nor a mere mortal woman, but in between, as a supernatural auspicious spirit or a minor goddess.[1090] It would also be possible that this representation was modeled after a mortal woman but attained supernatural powers once depicted in terracotta, or she might be a woman related to a certain goddess.[1091] As the most famous motif of female representation in Iron Age II North Israel, it could also be a representation of a feminine beauty, no matter how it was elaborate or coarse.

This specific plaque (Fig. 59) was found inside a building of Area C at Tel Reḥov, stratum 4 (9th century BCE). Tel Reḥov was 'one of the major cities in the North Israel during Iron Age I and IIA, and preserves Canaanite features of material culture relatively well since it was not destroyed but continued through the Late Bronze Age to Iron Age.[1092] In Tel Reḥov, 55 figurines were found, the most in number excavated and recorded in North Israel, albeit many of them fragmentary. Out of 55 complete and fragmentary figurines, 26 are anthropomorphic figurines, mostly females. Among them, eight were female drummer type plaques, which is the majority of anthropomorphic representations

[1087] Kletter 1996, 73. Kletter's argument was made on JPFs, but similar features – easily breakable terracotta as material and the lack of decoration on the back of the figurines – are observed from the drummer plaques.

[1088] See also Sugimoto 2008, 6, esp. n. 8; Paz 2007, 119.

[1089] See p. 138f above.

[1090] A goddess, whether major or minor, may have been depicted playing drums in the ancient Near East, albeit not often, as witnessed by a goddess with seven stars holds a drum in a Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal. In ancient Greek art, the goddess Cybele is represented as holding drums. See discussions in Hillers, 'The Goddess with the Tambourine', 611–612, 616; Keel / Uehlinger 1998, 166 n. 38; Paz 2007, 76, 78.

[1091] For an example of such case, see p. 136 above.

[1092] Ziffer 2016, 60e.

concerning the high number of fragments.[1093] Area C is a well-planed part of the city, and archaeologists suggest that the inhabitants of this area were likely to be elites who were engaged in cultic and ritual activities of the city, inferred from various cultic objects (e.g., altars, stands), seals, and the high consumption of meat found in this area.[1094] This plaque was found in a small building (CQ1) consists of a large room and two chambers. It was not a residential building due to the absence of an oven and exceptionally high number of loom weights, which indicate that there were more than one loom operating in this building. In a small chamber that the plaque was found (locus 6436), there were 107 loom weights and other spindle whorls, vessels, stone implements and bowls, an animal figurine, a seal, and a tile with hieroglyphs.[1095] A building next to it (CF) revealed a clay altar.[1096]

The general distribution of this type and the specific archaeological context of this plaque point out that this female drummer cannot be separated from cultic meanings, such as meanings of protection, apotropaism, and magical powers. Possibly attached to a clay altar,[1097] this specific plaque was to protect not only the sphere of women's weaving related with cultic and economic activities,[1098] but also the general life span of her viewers, promoting their economic and political success, long life, healing, abundance, well-being, happiness, etc. – the roles of a protective spirit. This meaning is further reinforced, when her nudity (exposure of a breast, navel, vulva, and thighs), which may connote sexuality, magical powers, religious activities, and abundance,[1099] is combined with the drum symbolism as the celebration of victory, success, music and cult.[1100]

This image of a female drummer expresses her whole body, including her feet, thighs, navel, belly, breasts, neck, eyes, nose, head, and veiled hair. She has visual cognate features to the metaphors of the Shulamite,[1101] that her thighs are smooth and round, her navel (or vulva?) is shaped as a circled whole, her breasts

[1093] Ziffer 2016, 40e–41e.

[1094] Ziffer 2016, 37e–43e, 53e–54e, 62e–63e.

[1095] Paz 2007, 22; Mazar 2019, 128–129.

[1096] Ziffer 2016, 39e.

[1097] See above footnote 1078.

[1098] For the relationship between weaving and cultic activities, see Mazar 2019, 133–135. See also 2 Kings 23:7.

[1099] See my discussion on female nudity on p. 112–125 above. The discussion focuses on the interpretation of the Old Babylonian nude woman plaque, but its similarity in archaeological contexts – they were prevalent in domestic, sacred, cultic, and public places – point to the similar direction that the nudity of the drummers also had meanings of magical powers, abundance, religious activities. Even though the attitudes towards exposed sexual attributes of a female body were different in biblical accounts and in Mesopotamia, both relate it with sexual activities, positive or negative, thus pointing to sexuality. Only the connection with Ishtar which I argued in interpreting the Old Babylonian nude woman cannot be automatically applied here.

[1100] See footnote 1081 for the drum symbolism.

[1101] For the discussion of visual similarity in Hebrew metaphors, see p. 258f.

are protruding, her neck – adorned with necklaces – is straight and stable, her eyes are wide, her nose is high and long, and her head is high. Her hair is covered by a veil-cloth. The shape of her belly above the pubic triangle may seem similar to a mound of wheat put in a bowl of a lotus flower shape (Fig. 61). Symbolically, as a representation of a cultic-related woman (goddess or not), our drummer represents magical powers of life, well-being, and protection, along with the connotations of beauty and sexual joy which her nudity implies as one of the most famous female representations of that period and region. A hand drummer may also have danced at the same time, as in Exod 15:20; Judg 11:34; Jer 31:4.

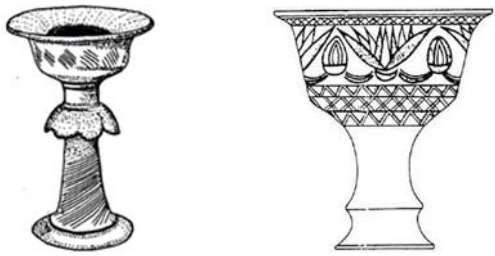


Fig. 61: Examples of lotus flower shape vessels.
Left: Cult stand, Tel Amal, 10th–8th century BCE (Beck 2000, right side of fig. 16).
Right: Chalice, Tell e-Farah South, 10th–8th century BCE (Beck 2000, right side of fig. 18).

When our drummer's image is projected onto the Shulamite, the possible northern features of the Song may seem fitting to the background of the Tel Reḥov drummer plaque.[1102] The dance of the two camps – the dance of *Maḥanayim* (מחנים) in v. 1 sets the stage for the performance of singing, drumming. In that performance, the Shulamite is rhetorically described to become a (semi-) goddess, who mediates between the spiritual and mortal realms. She looks frontally at her viewers, exchanging gazes. The combination of nudity and frontality captivates the viewers' eyes, representing an ideal world. The drumming and dancing of her bring the viewers into the space of victory, auspicious magic, and joy. In the image of the drummer, the Shulamite incorporates an ideal world, in which the viewers can get everything they need – foods, drinks, life, joy, abundance, protection, etc. – given by deities. The Shulamite, projected as the drummer, connects different realms: realms of her body, the viewers, the ideal world, and deities.

I do not claim that the viewers in Song 7:1–6 described the Shulamite as nude and drumming. The woman in the Song of Songs is also not mentioned to have a function in a cultic realm. What I suggest is that this image of a female

[1102] See p. 214–219 above, esp. p. 219.

drummer could have been projected onto the description of the Shulamite, as other female representations might also have been. Possibly the Shulamite's beauty was so awe-inspiring and such a blessing that it led the viewing group to describe her as a (semi-) goddess-to-be in between the mortal and supernatural realms, projecting the image of the drummer. If the Shulamite can be interpreted as someone more than a mere mortal woman, as a representation of a protective, auspicious spirit or a minor goddess, her description, which works on the interplay of metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche may have caused audiences of the biblical text to project the drummer image onto her and thereby intensify the transformation of the Shulamite into that magically powerful supernatural being.

5. Conclusion

In my interpretation of the Shulamite, I analyzed the textual description first using concepts of metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche, and then looked for the possible projected images of the whole of the Shulamite from the Iron Age southern Levant.

While the only-metaphoric perspective on the description of the Shulamite's body is limited to an itemized body, the cumulative relations of the metaphors in play with metonymies and synecdoches construct the whole body: a new tenor – the whole body of the Shulamite – and a new vehicle – an ideal world – are built, forming a metaphor that 'the whole body of the Shulamite is an ideal world'. In that metaphor, the tenor and the vehicle become the species of the genus 'supernaturality', revealing that the whole Shulamite is envisioned as a semi-goddess in the specific context of the performance of the song. This whole of the Shulamite integrates paradoxes: she is forced to dance by the group of viewers but her strong appeal dominates them; the powerful king, the male lover, is captivated by her; finally, she is a mortal woman but she is rhetorically believed to have divine powers belonging to the ideal world, such as the powers of beauty and life; provision of food, drink, and nutrition; sexual attraction, regeneration and protection of her beloveds; and the promotion of a successful life.

This whole of the Shulamite can be compared to a set of female visual representations from the Iron Age southern Levant. These images are possibly projected images of the Shulamite which correspond to the visual and non-visual description of her, in the perspective of the ancient performers or audiences. Among the eleven types selected, I interpreted one type – a female drummer – more deeply with the discussion of the archaeological contexts as a case study, and compared the image with the description of the Shulamite. It is true that the one I picked – the drummer type – is the image that I projected onto the

Shulamite. The drummer shows the closest (but not entire) correspondence to the formal and connotative description of the Shulamite, as an amuletic image with magical powers, integrating the paradoxes that she is neither a major goddess nor a mere mortal woman, and that she is to be gazed upon but dominates her viewers with her magical powers. Notwithstanding, some ancient interpreters of the Shulamite description might have thought of different images, either among the candidates or outside of the list.

Unfortunately, the text does not provide any more details to thin out the list. Fortunately, however, the ambiguity of the text provokes the active imaginations of the interpreters, enriching its diverse meanings. The whole of the Shulamite built from the text, neither itemized in parts nor disregarded as a mere inanimate object of gaze, can be related with a group of images (not a single one) reflecting and further constructing the multidimensional aspects of the Shulamite.

In the following chapter, I will semiotically analyze how the imagery that was textualized once – when Song 7:1–6 was written – is visualized again by modern readers with the aid of ancient Near Eastern images, Renaissance images, biblical and non-biblical texts, and the interpreters' experiences.

XIV. SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TEXT

In this chapter, I semiotically analyze three interpretations: Othmar Keel's, Fiona Black's, and my own interpretation, which I just presented. These interpretations are chosen for their explicit use of visual images, while Keel's and Black's visualization of the text contrast each other. The analysis focuses on various structures of their interpretations, the underlying ideological assumptions, the ways they construct the whole of the woman from the parts, and their image-text relations.

For the analysis, I distinguish three layers of interpretation: (1) the layer of the article in which the authors' interpretations are presented in written form; (2) the layer of the authors' interpretation of the Hebrew text; and (3) the layer of the authors' interpretation of images used in their interpretations of the Hebrew text. However, since the first layer is a textual manifestation of the second layer, which is also textually manifested, these two layers mostly have overlapping structures. Thus, I present the second and third layer in this chapter, while some information about the first layer is given in the introductions of each author's interpretations. As in Part II, some boxes will be skipped or discussed with other boxes in order to avoid unnecessary repetitions.[1103] Examples of a full discussion of each box of the textual collaboration model and image collaboration model can be found in chapter 11 (§1.2 and §1.3).

Again, I differentiate me as an author of my interpretation (model author) and as an analyst, referring the former in third person 'Kim'. My reference to the authors – Keel, Black, and Kim – does not indicate the empirical author, i.e., the actual person, but the 'model author' reconstructed from their written interpretations.[1104] By separating the model and empirical author, one may escape from the pitfall of assuming that the opinions in the text are the fixed, never-changing interpretation by the actual author.

1. Othmar Keel's Interpretation of the Song of Songs

Othmar Keel's interpretation of the described woman in Song 7 uses various images from the ancient Near East. He interprets the woman as 'die Fürstentochter' or 'the prince's daughter' (בת נדיב in 7:2), underlining her nobility. She is not the Shulamite, since he separates Song 7:1 from 7:2–6.

[1103] See p. 140 to check the skipped boxes and the reasons for not discussing them.
[1104] See p. 54 above for the notion of a model author.

My analysis is based on Frederick J. Gaiser's English translation of Keel's commentary on the Song of Songs,[1105] but at some points the original German version will be mentioned. The main text of the analysis, the linear text manifestation of Keel's exegesis of the Song 7:2–6, is in Keel, *The Song of Songs*, 230–238, but additionally pages 147–151 (commentary on 4:5) will also be referred to because of their intertextual relations.

I offer a summary of Keel's commentary to help my readers understand his construction of interpretation in §1.1. Following the summary, his interpretation of the text is analyzed (§1.2). Synthetic discussions and criticism of Keel's interpretation are given in separate sections (§1.3, 1.4), examining how Keel utilizes images and texts together (§1.4).

1.1. *Summary of Keel's Commentary on Song 7:2–6*

The woman, designated as 'the prince's daughter', is described by her male lover, the king. He observes her body starting from the feet. The thigh-jewel simile in v. 2b points to 'the sculptured quality of the subtle curves of the inner thighs, the buttocks, and the hips'.[1106] It is compared to the images of chain-type jewels of 'Syrian goddesses' which decorates their hips (Fig. 62).

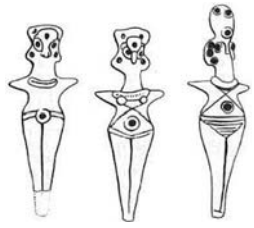


Fig. 62: Keel's use of images. Syrian goddesses. Terracotta figurines, Hamath; the right one is unprovenanced. 13th–12th century BCE (Keel 1994, fig. 127).

For the navel-wine cup metaphor in v. 3a, Keel argues that the navel is used as a euphemism for the vulva, referencing again the 'Syrian goddesses' (Fig. 62) and to two Late Bronze Age Levantine pendants (Fig. 63), whose navel and vulva are interchangeably rendered. He further points to the close relationship between sexual intercourse and drinking, based on the textual and visual evidence: the sacred marriage texts and the visual representations of couples drinking collected from Old Babylonia, Syria, Bronze Age Megiddo and Neo-Assyria (cf. Fig. 64).[1107] For the belly likened to 'a heap of wheat encircled with lotuses'

[1105] Keel 1994, 230–238. Original in German: Keel 1986, 212–221.
[1106] Keel 1994, 234 and fig. 127.
[1107] Keel 1994, 234 and figures 39, 40, 64, 127, 26, 104, 106, 111, 112, 128.

in v. 3b, Keel offers ancient Egyptian and Levantine images of bowls or dishes decorated with lotus flowers which signify freshness and regenerative powers (Fig. 39). He argues that the belly, also indicating her womb, connotes her fertility.

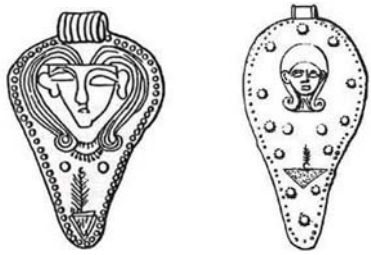


Fig. 63: Keel's use of images: interchangeability of navel and vulva.
Left: Electrum pendant, Ugarit, 14th–13th C. BCE (Keel 1994, fig. 104).
Right: Gold pendant, Minet el-Beida, 14th–13th C. BCE (Keel 1994, fig. 106).



Fig. 64: Keel's use of images. Drinking and intercourse.
Terracotta reliefs, Old Babylonian, ca. 1750 BCE (Keel 1994, fig. 111).

In v. 4, Keel turns his readers to his commentary to Song 4:5, in which he explains the simile of breasts and young gazelles.[1108] He suggests that the breasts are compared to young gazelles (v. 4), for gazelles were the 'symbols of life and renewal' in the ancient Near East, showing images of gazelles across ancient Near East and Egypt (Fig. 65). The point of comparison in this metaphor is 'her playful, lively, life-giving power'.[1109]

Keel interprets the tower metaphors for the woman's neck (v. 5a) and nose (v. 5bβ) as indicating her high pride and strong anger, as impressive as the 'self-confident' and 'proud military preparedness' of a tower, that 'anyone who arouses her displeasure must reckon with insurmountable resistance'.[1110] For the eye-pool metaphor in v. 5bα, the proposed shared property between eyes and

[1108] While it is the same simile, a phrase is added in 4:5: 'that feed among the lotus blossoms'. Keel explains 7:4 under 4:5 because 4:5 appears first. However, he clearly separates these two versions, not applying the added phrase for the interpretation of 7:4. Keel 1994, 147–150. See also Keel 1984, 81–88.

[1109] Keel 1994, 147–151 and figures 85–87, 45–48, 8–11.

[1110] Keel 1994, 235–236.

pools is their ‘gleaming’ aspect, based on the metaphorical usage of eyes in the Hebrew Bible. The woman’s head is connected to Mount Carmel (v. 6a) for its ‘dominating height’, indicating her high pride.[1111]

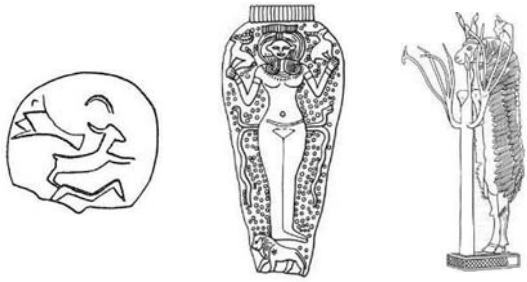


Fig. 65: Keel’s use of images. Gazelles.
Left: Conical Seal, Beth-shemesh, 7th century BCE (Keel 1994, fig. 87).
Middle: Gold pendant, Minet el-Beida, ca. 1350 BCE (Keel 1994, fig. 47).
Right: Composite materials (gold, lapis lazuli, shell, etc.), Royal cemetery of Ur, ca. 2650 BCE. (Keel 1994, fig. 8).

In his interpretation of v. 6b, the purple points to the dark gleaming color of the woman’s hair provoking great vitality. The hair is ‘dangling, free-hanging, or flowing,’ ‘lively’, ‘playful’, and ‘changeable’.[1112] He compares the simile with ancient Egyptian images of female musicians and servant girls (Fig. 66, Fig. 67) which show the ‘refined effects with hair of this type’.[1113] The woman’s hair is so attractive that the king becomes her captive, as a ‘result of the seductive attraction of her flowing tresses’.[1114]

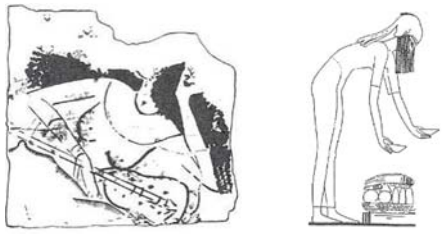


Fig. 66: Keel’s use of images. Hair.
Left: Limestone ostracon, Deir el-Medina, 12th century BCE (Keel 1994, fig. 132).
Right: Painting, Tomb of Rekh-mi-Re (no. 100), West Thebes, ca. 1425 BCE (Keel 1994, fig. 131).

[1111] Keel 1994, 236–238.
[1112] Keel 1994, 238.
[1113] Keel 1994, 238.
[1114] Keel 1994, 238.

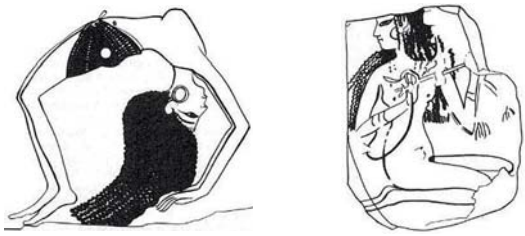


Fig. 67: Keel's use of images. Hair.
Left: Limestone ostracon, Deir el-Medina, 13th century BCE (Keel 1994, fig. 78).
Right: Limestone ostracon, Deir el-Medina, 13th–12th century BCE (Keel 1994, fig. 79).

1.2. *Structures of Keel's Interpretation of the Described Woman*

This section analyzes Keel's interaction with the text of Song 7:2–6 in interpreting the described woman. As this reconstruction is based on my interpretation of Keel's commentary, it is in fact a collaboration between the Hebrew text, Keel, Gaiser (the translator), me, and other interpreters whom Keel refers to in his commentary. Therefore, these structures cannot be fixed but remain tentative and hypothetical, although they may still reveal some of Keel's unstated hermeneutic assumptions.

The Hebrew text of Song 7:2–6, which I offered at the beginning of Part III (chapter 12 §1), is the linear text manifestation (Box 3). For the circumstances of utterance (Box 2), Keel states that Song 7:2–6 is a song of description and admiration,[1115] independent from other parts of the book Song of Songs.[1116] Specific to the genre, as a song of description and admiration, Keel argues that 7:2–6 is a profane love song originated from cultic songs of ancient Egypt.[1117] It implies that Keel reads the poem as a love song which praises the beauty of the beloved. Keel speculates that the collection of the Song of Songs, including this poem, was done in the Israel/Palestine region between the 8th–6th century BCE, when Egyptian love poetry still thrived and the artistic motifs of the ancient Near East flourished in Israel/Palestine.[1118]

The topic (Box 4) of Keel's interpretation of the described woman is that she is a prince's daughter, who has the properties of pride, nobleness, attractiveness, liveliness, new life and life renewal, freshness, fertility, and seduction. Interpreting the described woman, Keel activates and narcotizes certain properties of the words in the description (Box 4). For example, he activates: the symbolical values of twin gazelle fawns but not their shape and color; the aspect of self-

[1115] Keel 1994, 230.
[1116] Keel argues that the Song is a collection of various love poems. See Keel 1994, 17.
[1117] Keel 1994, 22–24.
[1118] Keel 1994, 5.

confidence from the tower-neck/nose metaphor but narcotizes their similar shape; the gleaming aspect of the eye-pool metaphor but not their color, etc. Overall, Keel activates symbolical and functional meanings of the words and related images, while narcotizing the features which have most often been recognized by the modern understanding of the metaphors.

Keel's interpretation features two characters in the narrative (Box 6): the described woman and her lover. While a crowd appears in the eye-pool metaphor (v. 5bc), they are not individuals in this scene but a part of the metaphor. The male lover describes the woman's body. It seems that the woman stands rather still and her hair is flowing. The woman makes a powerful impression on her lover, conveying her pride, fertility, and life-giving potential. Finally, the woman seduces the king with her flowing tresses.[1119] This narrative can be reorganized as the following actantial structure.

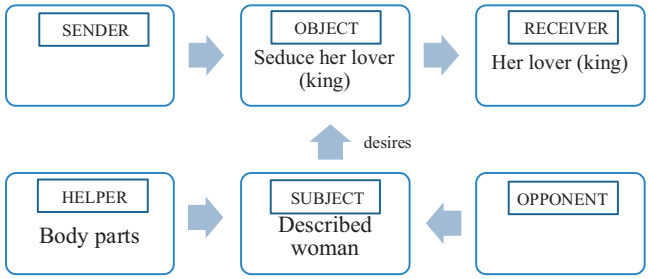


Fig. 68: An actantial model of Keel's interpretation of the described woman.

The described woman greatly impacts on whoever looks at her, particularly seducing her lover, the king (receiver). Her impact and awe which bring her lover's praise, come with the help of her body parts that have been described. The opponent and the sender of this structure cannot be inferred from Keel's commentary. Ideologically (Box 9), all the woman's properties and body parts are positively interpreted.

In the world (Box 10) of the described woman as interpreted by the reader Keel (W_{wK}), the described woman and the king are lovers, and they have high social status. The king is affected by the strong impressions which she emits. The woman is interpreted to own properties of luxuriousness, pride, attractiveness, liveliness, playfulness, intoxication, seductiveness, and giving new life.

[1119] Keel 1994, 238.

	female	*high social status*	*wLk**	*wSk***	*luxurious*	*proud*	*attractive*	*lively and playful*	*intoxicating*	*seductive*	*giving new life*
Woman	(+)	(+)	[+]	[+]	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)
King	(-)	(+)	[+]	[+]							

Table 16: A world structure of the described woman interpreted by the reader Keel (W_{wK}).
*wLk = the reciprocal relationship of love (L) between the woman (w) and the king (k).
**wSk = the woman (w) seduces (S) the king (k).

1.3. *Discussion: Probability Disjunctions and Keel's Choices*

The metaphors in Song 7:2–6 give vague information about the woman, producing many probability disjunctions across which various possibilities of interpretation are spread.[1120] At a probability disjunction, Keel tends to choose an option which: (1) is close to the usages in the rest of the Hebrew Bible and (2) matches the symbolism of the metaphors' describing sources. However, among the several possibilities that meet those conditions, his final choice is mainly led by his personal preferences. Here, I give two examples.

a) The neck-tower metaphor in v. 5
Keel asserts that the word for 'neck' in Hebrew metaphorically expresses 'pride'. This is based on the combination of the words 'haughty' and 'neck' in Ps 75:6, Job 15:25–26.[1121] Then he matches this meaning of the neck with the symbolism of a tower by interpreting that a tower shows 'self-confident military preparedness' (i.e., pride). Keel's attribution of 'pride' to the signification of the woman's neck seems to be derived from the connotation of 'arrogance', taken from the 'arrogance' of a tower,[1122] and he positively turned to fit the context of the

[1120] See p. 58 above for the notion of 'probability disjunctions'.
[1121] Keel 1994, 147.
[1122] The word for a neck (צואר) appears in the Hebrew Bible in various meanings: (1) as a place to put necklaces and amulets, adding beauty, protection, and certain social status to the body (Song 1:10; Gen 41:42; Judg 5:30; 8:21); (2) as a place to bear a yoke or burden physically (Gen 27:40, Dtn 28:48; Neh 3:5; Isa 10:27; Jer 27:8 etc.); (3) as a body part expressing arrogance figuratively (Ps 75:6; Job 15:26; etc.); (4) falling on someone's neck signifies intimate emotions toward each other in greetings (Gen 33:4; 45:14; 46:29). It seems that a neck has connotations of beauty and protection (as a place of neck ornaments and amulets), strength (in order to support yokes and burdens), arrogance, and intimate emotion *according to* various contexts in the Hebrew Bible (*ThWAT* 6:928).

The word for tower, מגדל, also has wide semantic ranges: it usually refers to a tower, along city walls (Jer 31:38; Neh 3:1; etc.) or within a city (Gen 11:4; Jdg 9:51; etc.), but it can refer also

woman's description. However, between a neck and a tower, not only pride (or arrogance) but also 'strength' and 'protection' could be the *tertium comparationis* because both necks and towers are used in such ways in the Hebrew Bible.[1123] At this probability disjunction, therefore, there are at least three possible options that are all supported by uses in Hebrew. It is thus personal preference that finally makes the choice.

b) The purple-hair metaphor in v. 6

The purple-like flowing locks of the woman in v. 6b provides another example. Keel interprets the word דלת, a construct form of the noun דלה, as 'flowing locks' which are 'lively', as well as 'playful and changeable'. Since דלה refers to hair or some type of hairdo, or a thrum,[1124] it could have denoted untied hair or locks which can dangle as Keel suggests. The purple cloth or purple color (ארגמן) is commonly understood to have connotations of luxuriousness and royalty, and Keel adds another connotation: 'vitality' from its dark gleaming color. Referring to his commentary on 4:1, Keel argues that black hair symbolizes vital powers because 'hair' often points to one's power in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Judg. 16).[1125] Particularly, black hair may connote power, indicating youth.[1126] A flock of goats in 4:1, used for the hair of a woman, is assumed to be black and given the connotations of 'impertinence' and 'impudence'.[1127] Connected with those nuances of vitality, playfulness, and impossibility to control, Keel interprets the woman's dangling hair as lively, playful, and changeable.

However, 'purple' and 'black' are different colors, and the above-mentioned connotations are not included in the word 'purple'. His connection from the dangling hair to seduction is also not based on concrete evidence and may be interpreted differently by others. Thus, Keel's depiction of the woman's hair as vital, lively, playful, changeable, and seductive, seems to have been affected by his personal preferences, even though he tries to objectify his interpretation by researching the semantic range of each word.

to towers or high raised constructions for various works: in vineyards (Isa 5:2), for furnaces (Neh 3:11) or for speeches (Neh 8:4). Figuratively a tower stands for strength as the name of YHWH (Prov 18:10), in which one receives protection against the enemy (Ps 61:4). Counting the towers of Jerusalem was a means to meditate the greatness of Elohim (Ps 48:14). A high tower, along with high mountains, strong walls, and beautiful things, is equated with arrogant men (Isa 2:15; Gen 11:4–5). From those figurative usages, it seems that a tower had the connotations of height, strength, protection, and greatness. The connotation of arrogance could be added, which comes as the result of its height, strength, and power (Isa 2:15). See 'מִגְדָּל I', *HALOT* 543b–544a; 'מִגְדָּל I', *Ges*[18] 626; 'מִגְדָּל I', *DCH* 5: 131a–132a; Schoville, 'מִגְדָּל', *NIDOTTE* 2: 841–842.

[1123] See footnote 1122 above.

[1124] 'דַּלָּה II', *DCH* 2: 439a; 'דַּלָּה 1', *Ges*[18] 251; Alden, 'דַּלָּה I', *NIDOTTE* 1: 949–950.

[1125] Keel 1994, 141.

[1126] Keel 1994, 142.

[1127] Keel 1994, 46–49.

These choices witness what kind of femininity Keel projected onto the described woman. In his whole image of the woman, she is a mixture of various concepts of femininity: she is 'a perfect prince's daughter' who must be 'proud and reserved'.[1128] She seduces not only the king who is 'appropriate to her superior qualities',[1129] but also a crowd of people. She is not only generous and friendly, but also enraged: 'Although the woman's friendly eyes charm and refresh every passerby like royal pools, anyone who arouses her displeasure must reckon with insurmountable resistance'.[1130] In spite of her high social status, her 'flowing locks' are compared to the hair styles of female servants and musicians, apparently low in class: her hair is 'lively', 'playful and changeable', 'as evident in the serving girl in […] the tomb of Rekh-mi-Re'.[1131] While Keel may have intended to compare only the hair rather than the entire social strata, his interpretation could have been influenced by personal leanings instead of by fully considering the societal context. While it seems likely that Keel intended to compare only the hair, the omission of the social context in his comparison suggests that his interpretation may have been influenced more by personal preference than by a comprehensive understanding of the context.

In this whole image of the woman, various images of femininity are mixed: a proud noble woman, a bright and cheerful servant girl, a goddess who gives a new life, a haughty and lofty woman, a fertile woman, a generous woman, a sexy woman with flowing hair, a young fresh girl, a woman who is difficult to approach, a woman who is attractive for all but 'appropriate' only for her king-lover, etc. This is a mixture of various properties circulated as 'feminine', rather than a picture of a consistent portrayal. Although Keel portrayed these images in a positive light, the whole image of this woman remains a projection of fragmented feminine ideals, reflecting Keel's personal preferences.

Should Keel have intentionally incorporated such inconsistency for a particular purpose – such as Black's interpretation outlined in §2 – then this discrepancy carries academic significance. However, this rather unconscious blending more likely demonstrates how personal subjectivity can inadvertently permeate scholarly interpretations. Despite employing academic methods such as linguistic, comparative, and iconographic analyses, Keel could not fully escape the influence of his own preferences. Indeed, none of us, including myself and my readers, can entirely evade the influence of personal inclinations.

[1128] Keel 1994, 231.
[1129] Keel 1994, 238.
[1130] Keel 1994, 236.
[1131] Keel 1994, 238.

1.4. *Image-Text Relations in Keel's Interpretation*

1.4.1. Image-text relations in Keel's commentary

Keel offers a model for the 'proper' understanding of the metaphors in the Song: a concentric circle. One should start searching for meaning in the immediate literary context of the metaphor, which is the smallest circle. If the problem is not solved within the closest context, one may expand outward: first to the broader context of the Song of Songs, and then further to the Hebrew Bible. The next wider circle is the cultural frame of the land of Israel/Palestine. The circles get wider, to include the cultures of ancient Egypt and the ancient Near East.[1132] In practice, however, Keel does not seem to stick to this model because he compares the text with other literary and artistic sources from the entire ancient Near Eastern world neither with consistency nor with detailed explanation for his selection of images and texts.

Then, what is the constant pattern of his interpretation of the text in relation with images? What is his actual strategy of relating images and texts? To answer briefly, Keel interprets a word in the text and then relates it with one or more images that depict *the same concept* that the word implies.

In v. 2cd, Keel interprets the 'rounded thighs' as the lines of the buttocks, inner thighs, and hips and the 'jewels' as a chain-like jewelry, and these words together are interpreted to signify 'the chain, which is frequently worn around the hips'. Then Keel relates this hip-chain with the chain-like horizontal lines at the pubic triangle of the 'Syrian Goddess' images (Fig. 62). However, what Keel calls 'Syrian Goddesses' are female naked terracotta figurines in a schematized style, and what might be the 'hip-chain' could have been lines indicating vulva. He also does not discuss whether these terracotta figurines can be identified as goddesses.

In v. 3ab, the word 'navel' is linked with the 'Syrian Goddess' images, again, (Fig. 62) because these figurines depict the navel (or vulva) in an exaggerated size. Fig. 62 is mentioned again as the evidence of the navel-vulva interchangeability, related with two pendants showing a schematized female head and sexual attributes because one pendant displays a tree above an inverted triangle (indication of the pubic triangle), while another one depicts a tree on a small circle (navel) above an inverted triangle (Fig. 63). The combination of the word 'navel' (as a euphemism of vulva) with 'wine' is linked with the images of sex and drinking (Fig. 64), without detailed explanation of their contexts or identifications.

[1132] Keel 1994, 27–29.

In v. 3cd, the combination of the word 'belly' with 'lotuses' is connected to the food-vessel images decorated with lotus flowers, one unprovenanced and one from 18th dynasty Egypt (Fig. 39).

In v. 4, the word 'gazelles' is related with various images of gazelles: gazelles with love goddesses, gazelles with tree of life, etc., from the Early Dynastic period Mesopotamia, 18th dynasty Egypt, to Iron Age Levant (cf. Fig. 65).

In v. 6b, the word 'flowing locks' is linked to ancient Egyptian images of women with black, long, curly, and loosened hair (Fig. 66, Fig. 67). However, there is not enough discussion on whether the Hebrew 'דלה' (flowing locks) can be matched with such loosed and curly hair. The images given depict female musicians, dancers, and servants. From the selected and connected images, it can be inferred that Keel matches images to a word regardless of their social contexts: he interprets the described woman as a noble woman, a prince's daughter, but uses images of women from a lower social setting, namely dancers, musicians, and servants, in order to illustrate her hair.

As can be seen here, Keel relates images to words without a detailed discussion about the images. The connection is usually made by the same theme, such as 'hip-chain', 'navel', 'lotus', 'gazelle', 'black hair', etc. or less often by the same phenomenon, such as 'the interchangeability of navel-vulva'. However, the images and texts are not always linked by temporal, spatial, archaeological, or social contexts. The textual interpretation is abstracted to a word, and then equivalent images of the word are searched often regardless of other factors, as long as the image stems from the broad realm of the ancient Near East and Egypt.

This way of connecting images and texts corresponds with his perspective on the image-text relationship that he advocates. Keel states that the pictorial equivalent of a single linguistic sound or a letter is a single line or a color stain. Iconic equivalents of words are images of anthropomorphic figures, objects, plants, and animals, such as a snake, a bull, or a dove.[1133] Since Keel thinks that an image is the equivalent of a word, he looks for images that express a single word and relates them. As he observes that a text and a picture deal independently with the same subject,[1134] he connects images and texts which are thought to express the same subject matter, albeit without a further consideration of their spatial or temporal relations.

However, not providing a thorough discussion about the selected images and their contexts does not mean that Keel did not interpret the images. He interpreted them using a series of interpretants, and the connection between texts and images itself is a result of his interpretation. After connecting the images with texts, he derives further meanings from the images and applies them to the texts.

[1133] Keel 1992a, 270.
[1134] Keel 1992b, 358.

For example, from the depictions of heterosexual couple having intercourse and drinking, he postulates that the combination of navel (vulva) and wine points to sexual intercourse. Keel starts from the text, goes to the image, and then returns back to the text with a more developed meaning. This can be structuralized as in Fig. 69.

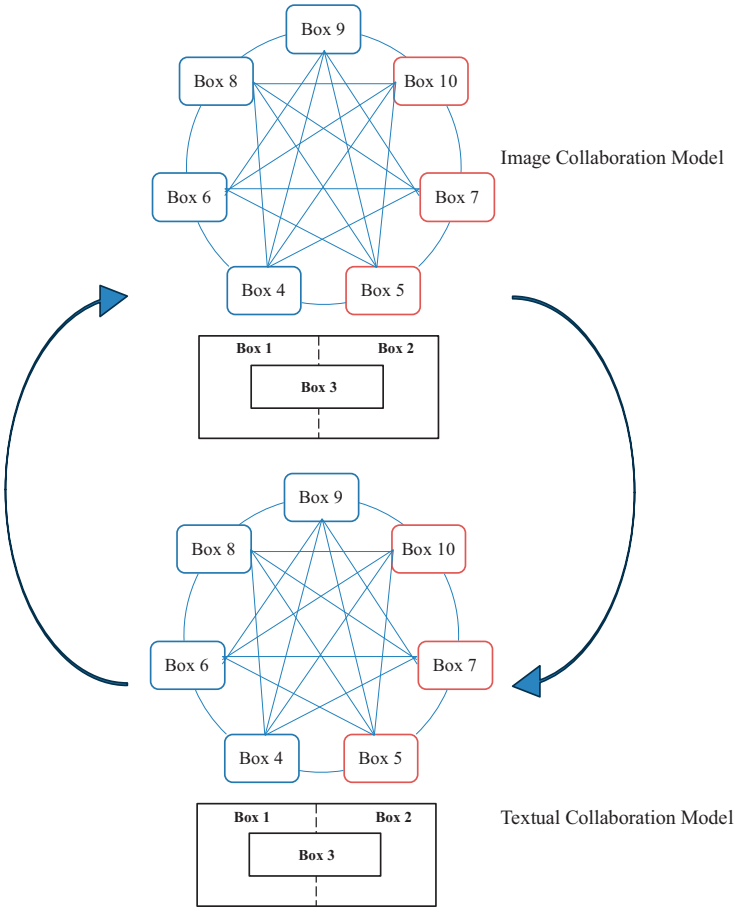


Fig. 69: A structural visualization of the image-text relation in Keel's interpretation.

The textual collaboration model on the lower part of Fig. 69 is the starting point. Any textual sign within Song 7:2–6 provokes interpretants from the world outside of the sign (extensional realms), e.g., ancient Near Eastern images, and then these secondary signs (i.e., images) are interpreted in the image collaboration model (on the upper part of Fig. 69). Then the processed meanings are brought back to the intensional structures of the text (Box 4, 6, 8, 9), adding meanings to the textual sign (the lower part of Fig. 69).

For example, the textual sign of twin gazelle fawns (שני עפרים תאמי צביה) in Box 3 of the textual collaboration model is processed in their intensional and extensional dimensions. At the boxes of extensions, the linguistic sign of the Hebrew phrase is related with visual representations found in Keel's encyclopedia: the pictorial signs of the 'lotus with gazelles' motif. These images are interpreted as the symbol of life and renewal, circulating in the boxes of the image collaboration model (the upper part of Fig. 69). Then the result of Keel's semiosis of the image (the 'symbol of life and renewal') is inserted back into his interpretation of the biblical text (the lower part of Fig. 69) to conclude that the meaning of the textual sign of 'twin gazelle fawns' as the 'symbol of life and renewal'.

To give another example, Keel's interpretation of the metaphor of the woman's belly as a heap of wheat encircled with lotuses involves the following process. As suggested in Eco's textual collaboration model, the model reader Keel related the word for belly to the womb by the codes of intertextual frames,[1135] and interpreted it as connoting 'nourishment' and 'fertility'. Since wheat connotes food and eating, Keels asks in which context a lotus flower may occur with food, and he finds the context of the decoration of food or food vessels. Then he interprets the image of a foodstuff decorated with lotus flowers (Fig. 39, left) in a way clarified by the following structures of the image collaboration model:

– Iconic structures (Box 4): it is 'a bowl filled with fruits and berries', 'framed by lotus flowers'.[1136]

– Iconographic structures (Box 6): it was 'pictured in the tomb of Ramose',[1137] related with the wishes of new life and regeneration in the afterlife context.

– Visual narrative structures (Box 6): the lotus flowers keep the food fresh with regenerative powers.

– Actantial structures (Box 8): the lotus flowers (subject) make the food fresh (object), by its regenerative powers (helper).

– Elementary ideological structures (Box 9): the lotus flowers, the food, the regenerative powers, the freshness are all valued as 'life' positively, but the spoilage in the food (the result of the absence of the lotus flowers) is imposed with the elementary ideology of 'dead' negatively.

– World structures (Box 10): the lotus flowers have the properties of life and regenerative power.

[1135] See p. 56, 144 above for a short explanation and example of codes of intertextual frames.
[1136] Keel 1994, 235.
[1137] Keel 1994, 235.

The meanings resulting from these structures are brought back to the text's interpretative structures (the lower part of Fig. 69), resulting in Keel's interpretation that 'the belly or womb of the beloved produces not only children but also freshness and new life for her lover'. [1138]

This interpretative pattern is repeated for each word or metaphor where an image is mentioned throughout Keel's commentary. Differences occur depending on whether Keel operated more with the contexts of the image or not, but this pattern of structural connection remains. In practice, anyone's interpretation of a text in relation to images show a similar pattern. The differences come from how one builds the iconic, iconographic, visual narrative, actantial, elementary ideological, and world structures. Therefore, Keel does interpret the images that he mentions, but he just pays less attention to the context of the image than he suggests his readers to do.

In summary, Keel's strategy of relating images and texts is mainly made on the level of words or themes (reduced to a word), by selecting images which express 'the same subject matter',[1139] sometimes regardless of the image's temporal, spatial, social, or archaeological contexts. This linking strategy itself is not a problem; one may link a text with image by a theme, by the same subject matter, or for some others by temporal or spatial closeness. Nevertheless, had Keel offered more information regarding the criteria for image selection, interpretations of each individual image, or the contextual settings surrounding an image, his synthesis of textual and visual elements could have facilitated a more multifaceted exploration of the interplay between various sign systems: images, texts, and spaces (whether archaeological, temporal, or geographical contexts). This expanded perspective would have rendered his arguments more persuasive.

1.4.2. Visualization of the individual metaphors and the whole of the woman

Keel relates ancient Near Eastern visual representations to the text at the level of individual words or metaphors, but not at the level of the woman as a whole. His pairings of (textual) concepts and images can be listed as the following:

Thighs / jewels (hip-chains) – the 'Syrian Goddesses' (Fig. 62).

Navel – the 'Syrian Goddesses' (Fig. 62); a semi-nude woman on an Old Syrian cylinder seal.

Navel / vulva – the 'Syrian Goddesses' (Fig. 62); two pendants depicting a schematized female head and sexual attributes (Fig. 63).

[1138] Keel 1994, 235.
[1139] Keel 1992b, 358.

Wine / drinking – two Old Babylonian terracotta plaques depicting a heterosexual couple drinking and having intercourse (Fig. 64); a soapstone chest depicting a drinking couple and a couple lying on a bed; three images of a drinking couple from a cylinder seal, wall relief, and ivory plaque.

Belly / encircled with lotuses – an ancient Egyptian image of a bowl of foodstuff decorated with lotus flowers (Fig. 39, left); an image of Phoenician bowl decorated with a lotus flower pattern (Fig. 39, right).

Gazelles – various images of gazelles (stamp seals, cylinder seals, from Egypt, Levant, etc.) (e.g., Fig. 65).

Ivory tower – ivory relief (mentioned but the image is not offered in the commentary).

Pools – the scarab of Amenhotep III whose inscription commemorates the construction of a 'pool' (mentioned but the image is not offered in the commentary).

Flowing locks – two images of a lute playing woman, and one of a servant girl and another of a female dancer from the ancient Egypt (Fig. 66, Fig. 67).

In these concept-image pairings, Keel selects images which visualize the mentioned body parts or the objects used as the vehicle (source) of the metaphors. This visualization, as discussed in the previous section, mainly follows thematic equivalence, regardless of historical or social contexts. Thus, these images cannot be applied to the whole of the woman, but are restricted to being used as 'examples' of the possible appearance of the body parts or the objects.

Keel's construction of the *whole* woman from the part-by-part description, therefore, accords with any of these individual images nor with the sum of all these images. The sum of these images result in a hybrid image of a non-human, which is not Keel's intention, since his interpretation of the woman posits her in a 'queenly setting', as a 'prince's daughter'. Even though Keel states that 'the purpose of listing the parts is always to describe the whole',[1140] neither the logic of how to construct the whole, nor the details of the whole image, are explained. Therefore, Keel's visualization of metaphors and his way of relating these images with the text are confined to the realm of parts and does not reach the whole.

1.5. *Recapitulation*

Keel uses vast number of visual representations from the ancient Near East and Egypt in interpreting the text of Song 7:2–6. This is unrivaled among the published commentaries of the Song of Songs. His comparison with artistic motifs from the southern Levant, and further from ancient Egypt and the Near East,

[1140] Keel 1994, 230–231.

offers new convincing interpretations of the metaphors in Song 7:2–6. By suggesting a concentric circle model, Keel tries to objectify the process of interpreting metaphors from a distant culture. His interpretation, without a doubt, is a great contribution to the academic field of the Hebrew Bible.

However, Keel's concentric circle model cannot avoid his personal preferences that guide the overall direction of his interpretation. At the probability disjunctions of each word, phrase, and metaphor, his final choices are dependent on what he thinks about the ideal femininity – lively, young, playful, proud, seductive, fertile, with attractive long flowing hair, etc. This can be said as a mixture of ideal femininity famous in his culture.

Keel's strategy of relating images and texts is to link images of a *same theme* to the text. He interprets a textual word, then relates it with an image of the same theme, interprets the image, and brings the interpreted meanings of the image back to the word. In this course, as long as the images are from the ancient Near East and Egypt, the differences within that broad period and region – temporal, spatial, archaeological, social, or geographical contexts – are not usually addressed. Even the image of an ancient Egyptian servant girl can be used for the comparison with the woman whom he designates as 'the prince's daughter'. This is based on his thought that an image is equivalent to a word. By his logic, if the 'flowing hair' of the servant girl matches with the word 'the flowing locks (דלה)', the image of the servant girl becomes equivalent to the Hebrew word, although it is the description of an aristocratic woman. If Keel thought of images not as a word but as a whole sentence, paragraph, or a text, i.e., the iconic statement,[1141] Keel would have considered other aspects of the image: e.g., that she is a serving girl, barefoot, wearing a transparent cloth and hat.

His image-text relation is also confined to the described woman's body parts, not reaching the whole of the woman. He verbally states that the woman is described as 'a perfect prince's daughter', but the relationship between this abstract imagery and the offered images of the parts is not discussed. His interpretations of the metaphors stick over the body parts, resulting in either an itemized body or a hybrid creature. His interpretation of the woman does not achieve the whole.

It can be said that Keel's major strategy in his commentary on Song 7:2–6 is based on matching ancient Near Eastern images and texts of the same subject matter, confined only to each part of the woman. This rather loose connecting strategy of images and texts allows his personal preferences to play a great role in filling the gap between images and texts.

[1141] For the concept of iconic statement, see p. 65.

2. Fiona Black's Interpretation in The Artifice of Love

Fiona Black's interpretation of the Shulamite description – Song 7:1–10 in her delineation – takes a grotesque approach. Black focuses on the uncomfortable, incongruent, and unattractive aspects of the description, accepting these problematic aspects as they are in the concept of the grotesque. Her approach is a reader-oriented one, showing how the readers – distant from the culture that the Song originated in – may receive the discomforts in the text, while not dismissing the Song's amatory context.

As Black's approach is not historical, she does not use visual representations from the culture of the Song as Keel did; rather, she offers various grotesque images in explaining the concept of the grotesque, albeit not directly related to the image of the Shulamite. A cartoon image titled 'The Song of Solomon illustrated (for our literalist friends)' by the cartoonist Den Hart in 1978 (Fig. 70) is the only visual representation of the Shulamite mentioned in Black's interpretation. This is not what the Shulamite is supposed to look like, but an image of how a reader may envision her. This image is discussed in detail in §2.4.1.

The first subsection (§2.1) gives a summary of *The Artifice of Love*. The second subsection (§2.2) restructures how Black interprets Song 7:1–10. The interpretative habit of the model author 'Black' is discussed in a separate subsection (§2.3) and her strategy of relating images and texts in §2.4, which is followed by a conclusion in §2.5.

2.1. *Summary of The Artifice of Love*

Since my purpose of reading this book was to analyze Black's interpretation of the Shulamite description and compare it with other interpretations, this summary focuses on pages 153–159 – a section in which her interpretation of Song 7:1–10 is offered – while providing a brief sketch of the rest of the book.

In the introduction of the book, Black urges her readers to honestly admit that there is awkwardness, discomfort, incongruity, complexity, and paradoxes in the descriptions in Song of Songs, characterizing it 'as troubled text'.[1142] The grotesque is neither suggested as the better way of interpreting the description nor argued as the original intention of the author, but offered as a hermeneutic tool which 'will facilitate the exploration of the incongruity of the images' of the lovers.[1143]

In Chapter One, titled as 'The Problem of the Body in the Song of Songs', Black starts her discussion with a cartoon image (Fig. 70), which depicts an

[1142] Black 2009, 3.
[1143] Black 2009, 4.

image of a female body as a grotesque hybrid of plants, twin gazelles, a cup, a necklace-like series of shields, towers, goats, doves, sheep, honey, etc., based on Chapters Four and Seven of the Song. Along with three other modern literary texts which resemble the Song's strange part-by-part body description, Black asks how such a description may occur in the context of love and how the 'dissected and itemized' body can be approached.[1144] Black then overviews various reactions to the description, which mostly read the text as a positive compliment (the 'hermeneutic of compliment').[1145] Instead, she proposes the grotesque reading which reveals and embraces the frank discomfort that the interpreters feel from the metaphors.[1146]

In Chapter Two, 'Uncovering the Grotesque Body', modern literary and artistic theories of the grotesque are discussed. The 'grotesque body' is the topic of this chapter, as theorized mostly by Mikhail Bakhtin, but also as expressed by Roland Barthes, Margaret Miles, Mary Russo, Wolfgang Kayser, Geoffrey Galt Harpham, Michel de Certeau, and the notion of 'abject' by Julia Kristeva. Black summarizes the concept of the grotesque as the following: 'Briefly put, one could say that the grotesque body is the body in process, the body undergoing change. […] The grotesque body is integrated with life, with nature, with the world around it. As such, it is often represented as hybridized, a mixture of a variety of natural and human-fashioned elements'.[1147]

Chapter Three, 'Revealed and Concealed: The Grotesque Body in the Song', shows how Black reads the grotesque body from Song 4:1–5; 4:9–16; 5:10–16; 6:4–7; 7:1–10. The first impression of these texts is of a grotesque body, a hybrid of nature, cycles of life, sex, architecture, human inventions, and war. The themes of nature and the life-cycle are related with the leaking body, eating, consumption, and the senses of smell, taste, and touch, and also with the theme of sex. The themes of architecture, human invention, and war are discussed especially with the body in Song 7:1–10. Black describes the body in Song 7 as the following:

> On the delicate base of two beautiful, sandalled feet, we find thighs like jewels, a vagina that flows continually with wine, a belly like wheat and two young gazelles (or a cluster of grapes) for breasts. Then, balanced on a tower of ivory is an oversized head – as big as Carmel – with purple hair, entrapping a king. The full(er) picture of the woman given in this description reveals a body that is intensely hybridized and disproportioned, an impossible creature.[1148]

[1144] Black 2009, 19.
[1145] Black 2009, 20–62.
[1146] Black 2009, 63–64.
[1147] Black 2009, 120.
[1148] Black 2009, 154.

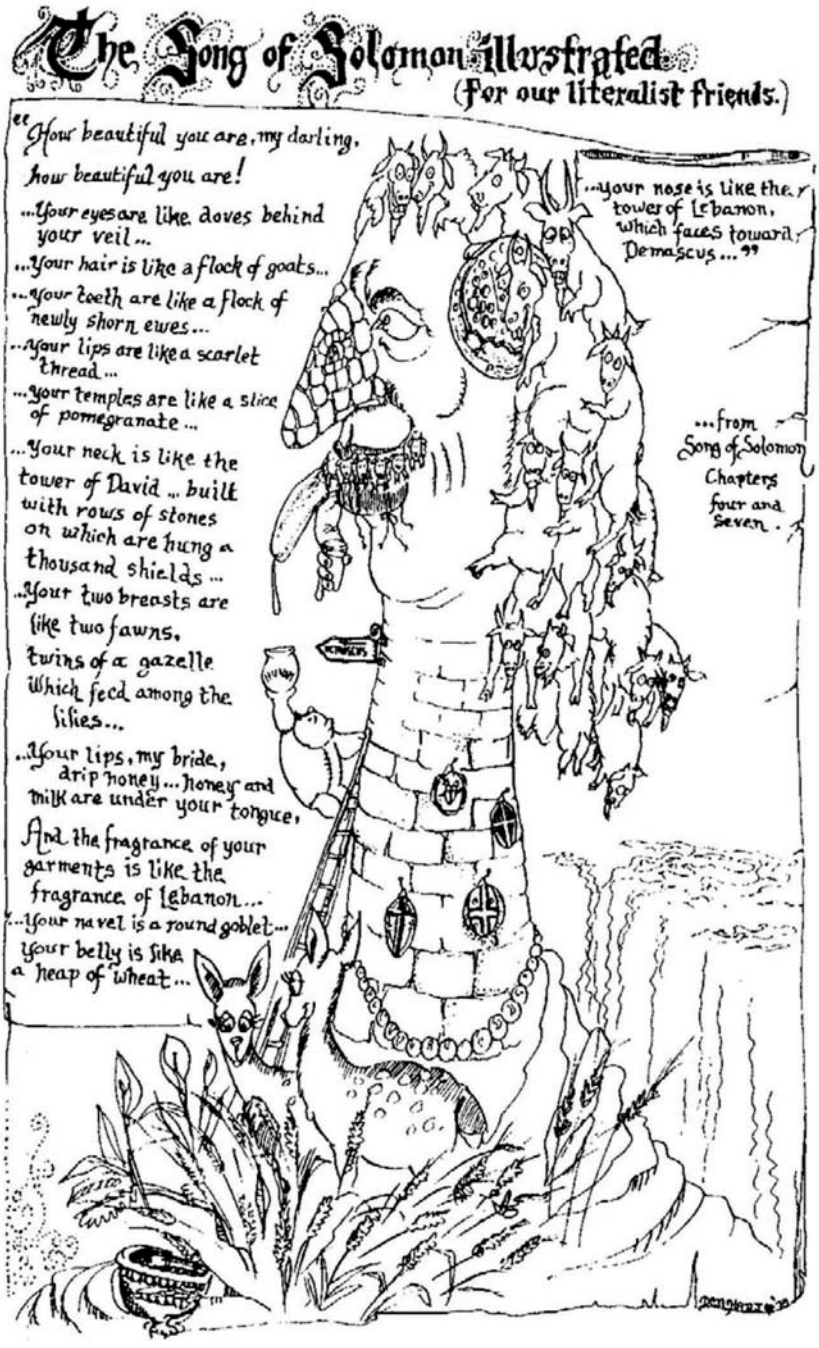


Fig. 70: Den Hart, 'The Song of Solomon illustrated (for our literalist friends)' (Black 2009, 10 fig. 1).

As with other bodies, this body has connections with the 'natural imagery' of the flora and fauna and the cycles of life: e.g., the grazing gazelles (v. 4) or the water troughs from which animals drink (v. 6). The imagery of 'fecundity and food' is also present here: the woman's stature as the 'palm tree' and the breasts as the 'fruit clusters' (v. 8) and further as the 'clusters of the vine' (v. 9).[1149] However, such 'pleasing' natural images are disturbed by the land which dismembers the body and by the human industrial objects built on that land: an ivory tower is built on the neck, the tower of Lebanon on the nose, and pools on the eyes. These architectures have 'military importance', adding the connotation of 'the violence and chaos of war' to the description, endowing the Shulamite with 'political power' to capture the king.[1150] When all these elements are compounded, 'valour and victory are here, but these can never be achieved without estrangement and loss'.[1151]

Black interprets other descriptions of the lover's body (male and female, 4:1–5; 4:9–16; 5:10–16; 6:4–7) also grotesquely. In the grotesque imagery, the body of a lover becomes the field of the interaction between various disparate things: nature, cycles of life, sex, human industry, war, as well as spiritual encounters with mysticism.[1152]

In Chapter Four, 'On Reading the Grotesque (Erotically)', Black relates the grotesque with the erotic using the concepts of Barthes and Kristeva. The Song of Songs is erotic, not only because its contents include erotic materials and allusions, but also because the text itself teases its readers by the delicate push and pull of the relationship: the opaque imagery of the Song drives its readers to ponder what is happening and what is meant, at the same time restricting the realms of possible interpretations.[1153] Therefore, not only is the relationship between the lovers amatory, but so is the relationships between the text and the readers. Then why do the lovers use grotesque language for each other? That is because any amatory relation involves 'the tension between abjection and desire'.[1154] In Lacanian psychoanalysis, a baby must be separated from its mother in order to distinguish the 'self' and the 'other', even though the separation is 'abject' for the baby. Likewise, the lovers impose the grotesquerie on each other's body, in order to fully love the other in the conflict between desire and abjection,[1155] between the ideality (desire) and its impossibility (abjection). Lovers have the desire to see the ideality from the other while it is not attainable

[1149] Black 2009, 154–155.
[1150] Black 2009, 157–158.
[1151] Black 2009, 158–159.
[1152] Black 2009, 174–185.
[1153] Black 2009, 207–224.
[1154] Black 2009, 227–228.
[1155] Black 2009, 236–237.

in the real world; it causes the feelings of loss and distance even when the lovers are physically present with each other. Grotesque is a way to mediate between such opposing, ambivalent feelings of love, by hybridizing incongruent elements together in one entity. Therefore, 'the grotesque body cannot exist without the lover's longing to see perfection and the ideal', while 'the desire would expire if not continually threatened by its corruption'.[1156] Black further emphasizes this interdependence, stating, 'The grotesque and the erotic […] both ensure that the other thrives'.[1157]

In 'Conclusion', Black clarifies her motivation for the entire work: it was her 'curiosity about the strangeness of the body images in the Song of Songs'.[1158] According to her, 'the ultimate directions of a grotesque reading', 'is to try to understand, via the imagery, what might be learned about the Song's language of love'.[1159] Black concludes the book with her confession how she loves the Song of Songs.

2.2. *Structures of Black's Interpretation of Song 7:1–10*

The linear text manifestation of Black's interpretation (Box 3) is the Hebrew text of Song 7:1–10. While Black does not offer an English translation of the Hebrew text, the structures of her interpretation are reconstructed based on her discussion of the text, concentrated in pages 153–159 in her book *The Artifice of Love*.

Black does not discuss the dating and the *Sitz im Leben* of the Song of Songs (Box 2) because she does not take a historical approach but a reader-response one.[1160] Nevertheless, Black hints at what she thinks about the circumstance of the utterance of the Song. It is the ancient Hebrew version of 'reflections on love and sexual relationships', which takes the form of 'a private dialogue between two lovers', which also serves to instruct 'the behavior of lovers'.[1161]

The topic (Box 4) of Black's interpretation is that it is the grotesque formulation of the Shulamite's body: she is represented as a hybrid of flora and fauna, cycles of life, sex, topography, architecture, human industry, and war. In her interpretation, Black activates and blows up (Box 4) the formal aspects of the vehicles of the metaphors that the Shulamite's head is 'as big as Carmel' and that her vagina 'flows continually with wine', etc.[1162] The formal aspects of these images are piled upon one another, and the body of the Shulamite becomes

[1156] Black 2009, 229.
[1157] Black 2009, 229.
[1158] Black 2009, 238.
[1159] Black 2009, 238.
[1160] Black 2009, 5–6, 125.
[1161] Black 2009, 1.
[1162] Black 2009, 154.

'intensely hybridized and disproportioned, an impossible creature'.[1163] At the word level, Black activates what are usually conceived of as negative aspects. For example, she draws the properties of cold, inhumane, and military from the Hebrew words for towers and pools. From the word 'military', she activates not only the victorious aspect but also estrangement and loss.[1164] In the level of the whole body, Black does *not* narcotize not-mentioned body parts, leaving them *absent* in the body. Thus, the body is represented as an itemized body, with a lack of essential body parts and organs.

At Box 5, in which the first, almost immediate impression of the sign is made, Black has the first impression which is similar to the hybridized, comical, and grotesque body of Fig. 70.[1165] However, in the course of interpreting the body with the help from grotesque theories, she chooses to interpret the body *grotesquely in the context of love* at probability disjunctions (Box 7).

One may reconstruct the narrative (Box 6) of the Shulamite in Song 7:1–10, according to Black's interpretation as the following: upon the request of an audience to see her, the Shulamite asks back, 'How will you look at the Shulammite, in the dance of the *Maḥănāyim*?' implying that 'Well, what are you looking at?!'[1166] With this statement, visual attention is given to her body as she presents herself.[1167] Driven by his love, the male lover desires to see the ideal from the Shulamite, which is impossible in the real world, and that failure causes him feelings of loss and loneliness, although she is physically in front of him. The only way to express his love, which integrates all the feelings of erotic, beautiful, loss, and estrangement, is the grotesque language.[1168] Therefore, he uses grotesque imagery to describe her body part by part, from feet to head. On her body, the plants grow, animals graze, architectures are built, and victory and loss occur in wars.

While the subject of this reconstructed narrative is the Shulamite who actively controls the audience's visual attention, I set the male love as the subject in the following actantial model (Fig. 71) in order to include the grotesque description in the discussion because in Black's interpretation the description reflects the describing subject's desire.[1169]

The man (subject) desires the Shulamite (object). His feelings of distance and loss – although she is physically present – not only obstructs (opponent) him

[1163] Black 2009, 154.
[1164] Black 2009, 157–159.
[1165] Black 2009, 126.
[1166] Black 2009, 202–203.
[1167] Black 2009, 157.
[1168] Black 2009, 228–229, 236.
[1169] Black emphasizes that the woman's status of 'autonomous, engaged subject' throughout the Song of Songs (Black 2009, 237), but she admits that the description of the woman's body sets mostly the male lover as the subject. See ibid., 182 n. 112.

from realizing his desire but also motivates (sender) him to desire to make her present. To mediate between these ambivalent feelings of love and thus to make her fully present in a loving relationship, he employs grotesque language (helper), which provides him with a tool to integrate incongruent elements. Therefore, the beneficiary of the subject's desire is the male lover himself (receiver).

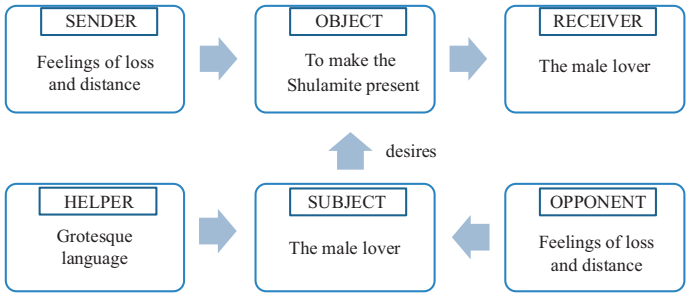


Fig. 71: An actantial model of Black's Interpretation of 7:1–10.

This can further be reconstructed as a world structure (Box 10) of Black's interpretation (W_{sB}), as in the table below. There are the Shulamite, the male lover (the king), and the audience. The man loves the Shulamite and expresses his love and desire for her in terms of grotesque language. While the man's feeling of loss of her is explicit in this interpretation, the Shulamite's same feeling towards the man is not expressed in Song 7:1–10, but in 5:10–16,[1170] thus this property is not a S-necessary property but still a valid one. The audience does not hold a significant role in this world. They are present there, looking at the Shulamite's body, but it does not affect the narrative since Black constructs this world as primarily focused on the love relation between the Shulamite and the man.

Ideologically (Box 9), Black reverses the typical positive vs. negative binaries in double. On the one hand, the notions which are usually regarded as positive in discussing the body of the Shulamite – such as victory, nature imagery, idyllicism, etc. – are balanced by the usual negative ideological values of the grotesque imagery. On the other hand, the grotesquerie of the Shulamite's body – such as menstruation, sexual fluid, oversized head, towers and pools built on the body, etc. – and their connotations – e.g., loss, death, estrangement, abject, etc. – are rendered positively as they reveal the deep sides of the describing subject, i.e., the male lover. In this process, Black deconstructs the binary opposition between the positive and negative.

[1170] Black 2009, 159–165, 182–184.

	female	*Standing*	*lying*	*sLm**	*Feels loss of the lover*	*Has desire to make the lover present*	*Looking at the Shulamite's body*	*grotesque*
The Shulamite	(+)	(+)	(-)	[+]	+	+	-	(+)
The Man	(-)		(+)	[+]	[+]	[+]	[+]	+
The Audience			-				+	

Table 17: A world structure of the Shulamite by Black (W_{sB}).
*sLm = the reciprocal relation of love (L) between the Shulamite (s) and the man (m).

2.3. *Discussion: Ambivalence and Grotesque in Black's Interpretation*

Ambivalence is the unique feature of Black's interpretation. Black always tries to find ambivalence from the object of interpretation: the love is not only erotic but also grotesque, involves not only victory but also estrangement and loss. At the end of her book, Black emphasizes once more her interpretative goal of finding ambivalence:

> I hope that my reading advocates an approach to the text which embraces, in fact foregrounds, difference and incongruity in it, while at the same time, allowing for the presence of beauty and idyllicism. It is hoped that these can be hold together in tension so that more of the Song's complicated textures may be elucidated.[1171]

This interpretative habit is a grotesquerie as it is. The grotesque, 'represented as hybridized, a mixture of a variety of natural and human-fashioned elements',[1172] shows various aspects of a body which cannot be seen from the classical perspective, but only by distortions, itemization, and hybridization. These hidden, contrasting, and usually unrecognized aspects come to the foreground and become visible to the viewers in grotesque imagery. This process is exactly what Black's interpretation aims to do: look at various aspects of the object, including the positive and negative sides.

One of the various sides of the Shulamite description in Song 7:1–10 as a text is that it strongly requires the cooperation of a *reader*. The Song of Songs, as a text, entices its readers through the elaborated push and pull games of relationship. The erotic materials in the content of the Song, the obscurity of the metaphors, the ambiguity of the narratives, and the fluidity of imagery which

[1171] Black 2009, 244.
[1172] Black 2009, 120.

continues body analogies throughout the Song, cause the readers to imagine what is depicted, to ask what is happening there, and to struggle to solve the text's problems.[1173] That is why so many commentators have offered solutions:

> In the matter of the bodies of the Song of Songs, it is entirely conceivable that the reason that scholars struggle to explain a particular analogy is not because they lack experience of the historical context with which to interpret it, or even the sophistication to perceive the correct meaning. Rather, the struggle would be because of the incredibly effective figuration that we encounter in the Song. It does what effective figuration does: it eludes the reader just enough to keep him or her guessing.[1174]

The Song not only represents the lovers who long for each other, but also seduces its readers to read, interpret, and deeply think about the text. The text makes the readers love the Song: 'The Song may be a jealous lover, ensuring that it constantly has the attentions of its readers'.[1175] It also allows its readers 'the right of reply':[1176] the various interpretations of the Song, including Black's and mine, are replies from the readerly-lovers of the Song.

Black, like many other readers of the Song, loves the Song. She confesses her love at the end of the book:

> Oh, and one more thing: Deeply, yes, I love the Song of Songs.
>
> I love the razor-cut of its jaw; I love the tartness of its bite. I love the warping of its curves; I love the fancy of its whims. I love the darkness of its eyes; I love the denting in its skin. I love the strangeness of its gaze; I love the splatter of its voice.[1177]

Black writes that her grotesque reading is 'a reading that, like all others, tries to make sense of what one finds'.[1178] Then why did she choose this specific grotesque reading? This is because she loves not only the bright, loving, and erotic sides of the Song, but also its problematic sides as her confession shows. She sensed the 'strangeness' of the body imagery of the Song, but loved it so much that she did not want to hide it under the 'hermeneutic of complement' but brought it to the fore as it is. The grotesque body, a hybrid of various objects, nature, cycles of life, architecture, and war, etc., is lovely as it is, revealing the truth of love: every love involves the erotic, grotesque, desirous, and abject. The description of the Shulamite in Song 7:1–10 has the sides of love, grotesque, beauty, abject, erotic, victory, loss, and readers (Fig. 72). And Black loves all of

[1173] Black 2009, 167–169, 213–220.
[1174] Black 2009, 167–168.
[1175] Black 2009, 221.
[1176] Black 2009, 221.
[1177] Black 2009, 244.
[1178] Black 2009, 244.

them. The grotesque might have been the only way that Black could express her love for the multifaceted body imagery in the Song.

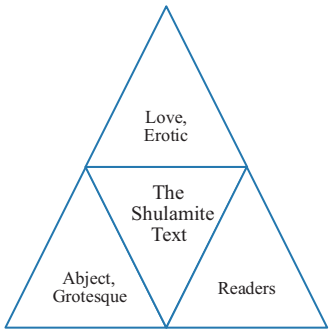


Fig. 72: The sides of the Shulamite text in Black's interpretation.

2.4. *Image-Text Relations in Black's Interpretation*

2.4.1. Black's interpretation of the cartoon image of Hart

Black's discussion of Hart's cartoon image is rather short, concentrated in four paragraphs on pages 9, 11, and 126 of *The Artifice of Love*.

Black's interpretation starts with the visual manifestation of Fig. 70 (Box 3). The title of the image is 'The Song of Solomon illustrated (for our literalist friends)', was published in 1978's journal *Wittenburg Door* which 'describes itself as "the world's pretty much only religious satire magazine"'.[1179] The cartoon is displayed (Box 2) in the satirical context, teasing the literalistic interpretations of the Song that the end of literal interpretation is such a comic and strange image of the woman.[1180]

Black describes: 'Hart's cartoon is whimsy, a bit of clever and playful irreverence. It functions to overload the reader's imagination, piling all interpretive possibilities into one format, and adding a few more besides (e.g., Winnie the Pooh catching honey dripping from the woman's mouth)'.[1181] This cartoon image of the woman is constructed based on Chapters 4 and 7 of the Song, and the cartoon visualizes the excerpts from these chapters word-by-word. Although Black's own description of all the details in the image is not provided in her book, it is probable that she constructed the iconic structure of the image (Box 4) as the literal visualization of the female body imagery in Song. The topic of

[1179] Black 2009, 9.
[1180] Black 2009, 11.
[1181] Black 2009, 11.

this image suggested by Black is: 'a pictorial rendering of the strange descriptions of the body proffered by the Song's lovers'.[1182]

The narrative (Box 6) which Black focuses on is not the narrative of the content of the cartoon, but the narrative of the cartoon as an agent. The cartoon is the subject: 'the cartoon *shows* both what is possible and what is improbable. It also *presents* the alluring possibility of literalistic interpretation, […] The cartoon *raises* the question […] A cartoon in a satirical magazine *liberates* the reader / viewer […]'.[1183] The cartoon is the subject which 'encapsulates the problem of the body in the Song'.[1184] While the iconographic structure of this image (Box 6) refers to the Song's Chapters Four and Seven, the visual narrative structure (Box 6) – the narrative idiosyncratic to the viewer Black – points to the journey of the image as a subject who visualize the Song's difficulties in a grotesque manner.

Thus, in terms of actantial structure, the cartoon (subject) desires 'to visualize the problems in the Song's body imagery' and 'to construct the body grotesquely' (object). The sender of this desire is the Song's difficulties. The grotesque piling of individual images is the helper. The opponents, then, are those who dismiss such grotesque readings of the Song, 'who would urge that to read the imagery literally in this way is to miss the point, to show oneself ignorant of poetic language, even to be unaware of the sophistication of literary technique that is evident in the Song's metaphors'.[1185] The beneficiary of the cartoon's desire for the object is Black, the magazine's readers, as well as the readers of the Song (Fig. 73).

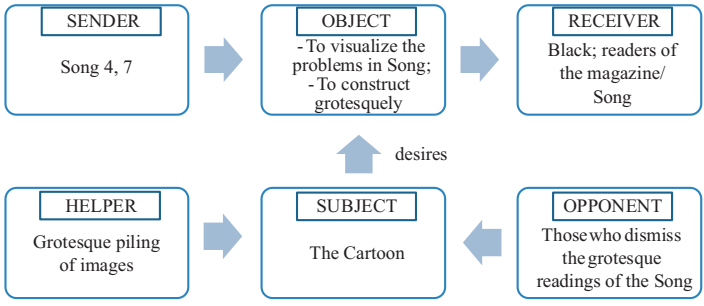


Fig. 73: Actantial structure of Black's interpretation of Hart's cartoon.

[1182] Black 2009, 9.
[1183] Black 2009, 11. Emphasis added.
[1184] Black 2009, 9.
[1185] Black 2009, 126.

Ideologically (Box 9), the direct visualization of the problems in Song revealing its ambivalent aspects is valuated positive, while the simple belief that the body *must* be beautifully rendered, which suppresses the incongruent difficulties in the body imagery, is negative. The possible world (Box 10) of Black's interpretation of the cartoon is the world where a cartoon image may actively affect its viewers and exchange messages. In this world, the cartoon liberates the viewers and readers from the conventionalized method of reading – the 'hermeneutic of compliment' – by the satirical and grotesque depiction of the woman in the Song.

2.4.2. Grotesque match between the visual and literal

Hart's cartoon image (Fig. 70), which can be suggested as Black's visualization of the Shulamite, has the context of satire.[1186] However, divergent from its satirical intention, Black states that the image not only represents the satirical voice but also reveals the truth of the text – that the readers' 'first impression' could be as grotesque as the cartoon image. It can be said that the cartoon image is brought up from her encyclopedia, as the first impression of Song 7:1–10 at Box 5 of her interpretation. This could happen to any reader of the Song. What Black did further is that, when the interpreter must choose between various possible options of interpretation (Box 7), she chose to keep the first grotesque impression, while most modern scholars decided to suppress the strange feeling and cover it under the 'hermeneutic of compliment'. The Song's body description as a text – which is to be distinguished from the author's intention – leads its readers to the grotesque imagery.

The grotesque image – as Hart's cartoon shows – matches the literal with the visual. Every element used in the description, such as the cup, pile of wheat, twin gazelle fawns, towers, pools, etc., can be found in the visual image, piled upon one another, on the places where the corresponding body part is assumed to be. Because these non-humane elements replace the body parts, that body is hybridized, itemized, and disproportioned. Thus, there are two strategies of relating images and texts: one is to visualize literally what is in the text, and another one is to heap an image upon the other following the sequence of the textual description. The grotesque image is a verbatim visualization of the text.

In fact, the grotesque essentially involves the visual. The grotesque is a visual representation of problems, ambivalence, incongruity, and discomfort. When the these are not forced to be harmonized but envisioned as they are, the result is grotesque imagery. It is a patchwork of incongruent elements. The grotesque is efficient to visually represent the incongruity and multifacetedness.

[1186] See p. 304 above.

In this aspect, the grotesque is a meeting point of differences: the incongruent aspects of love – erotic and grotesque, desire and abject, life and death, etc. – gather together and become contiguous to each other in a grotesque image. In the grotesque body of the Song, the lovers meet and exchange their desires. The grotesque imagery of the Song is also the meeting place of the text, its readers, and their visual imaginations. Finally, in the grotesque discourse, the readers are encouraged to bring together the incongruent aspects of any object, for example, to face the positive side of death, to think of joyful aspects of aging, to see the harmful sides of being clean. The grotesque, by linking the incongruent parts, widens the viewers' and readers' horizons.

Black does not offer Hart's cartoon as the image of the Shulamite *per se*. That image is 'whimsy', but does not succeed in 'contextualizing of the body images within the parameters of (biblical) love poetry'.[1187] The image is, as Black notes, an example of the first impression.[1188] Black does not discard this first impression but develops it further to accord with the context of love, reading the body image of the Shulamite as the love's grotesquerie, the hybrid of desire, erotic, abject, and death. By taking the strategy of relating images and texts grotesquely, that is, the verbatim visualization of the literal and the hybridization of different images, Black's text implicitly suggests that the first impressions, contrary to its negative nuances – that it is premature, erroneous, or illogical – hold some truths which can only be seen in the grotesque perspective, and the verbatim match of the visual and literal is not always to be disregarded as a simple one-to-one match, but reveals its own veracity which cannot be detected in other ways. Black's strategy of relating images and texts is as ambivalent and multifaceted as her interpretations aim at.

2.5. *Recapitulation*

Black is unique in thinking of using the grotesque as the hermeneutic tool for reading the Shulamite's body. As Black states, numerous commentators sensed something strange in the Song, but never dared to see it through the grotesquerie.

Black's grotesque reading blends the boundaries between the good and bad, the positive and negative. She finds ambivalent and incongruent aspects of an object: love is not only erotic and desirable but also abject and grotesque. In her interpretation, the grotesque is not bad or negative, but joyous, playful, and estranging: it is beyond the good-bad binarism. An exception is her attitude towards interpretation: looking for the single and absolute solution is negative,

[1187] Black 2009, 11.
[1188] Black 2009, 126.

while searching for the multiple, complex, and incongruent meanings is valued as positive. Black's interpretation aims to the ambivalence and incongruence.

Black's interpretation discusses not only the relationship of the lovers in the Song, but also the relationship between the Song as a text and its readers. She describes the Song as a 'jealous lover' who desires to keep the readers' interest. Its readers have been enticed to contemplate the meanings of the Song both day and night throughout the history. Black's discourse on the Song includes such dynamics of the text and its readers.

Black's grotesque reading corresponds to her strategy of relating images and texts. As the grotesque fuses various aspects into a figure, the image-text relation that she constructs matches the literal with the visual verbatim, combining every element of the text in a single but incongruent figure, piled up on diverse imagery. The individual body-part metaphors are literally taken, visually patched together and heaped on one another to construct the whole. Black's image-text relation uncovers a paradox that the first visual impression of a text, often a simple one-to-one match between the literal and the visual, may also expose the text's ulterior sides that involve the veracity. The image-text relation in Black's interpretation is, therefore, as ambivalent and multifaceted as her grotesque readings.

Black never states that the grotesque is the definite or portrait-like image of the Shulamite. It is suggested as a hermeneutic experiment of the Song. The grotesque image, therefore, is Black's projected image upon the Shulamite. It is Black who reads the Shulamite's body grotesquely. Others might have received similar first impressions or not at all. As much as the text suggests a grotesque reading, it also leads its readers strongly to the 'hermeneutic of complement' by its context of beauty and love. What oriented Black to the grotesque reading, then, is her personal preference of looking for the ambivalence and incongruity.

As Black stated at the end of her book, her grotesque reading is a way of making sense of the problems in the text, as other commentators did. While others looked for some external materials such as the ancient Near Eastern sources to understand the 'strange' imagery of the body in the Song, Black embraced the problems as they are and brought them into the light through the concept of the grotesque. Her interpretation displays the body of the Shulamite in a unique way that others have not dared to do.

3. Yeseul Kim's Interpretation in 'Images of the Shulamite'

Yeseul Kim's interpretation of the Shulamite description – Song 7:1–6 – focuses on two questions: (1) how to construct the whole from the metaphoric body part description, and (2) how to visualize the textual description of the Shulamite. For the first question, Kim chooses to interpret through the play of tropes –

metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche – to construct the whole from the parts. Her answer to the second question is to look for the possible images that the viewers/audiences/singers might have projected onto the Shulamite. The whole image of the Shulamite, according to Kim, is an image of a mortal woman who is believed to be a semi-goddess in the specific context of the performance of the song. Kim's interpretation not only clarifies her process of construction of the whole, but also actively utilizes visual representations from the ancient Near East, especially from the Iron Age southern Levant, with the concept of mental projection which inks the text with images.

Since Kim's presentation of interpretation in pages 200–274 in Part III is the textual manifestation of her interpretation, there are overlapping structures between her presentation and her interpretation of the Shulamite. Kim's interpretation is semiotically analyzed in §3.1. §3.2 discusses the characteristics of Kim's interpretation which cannot be confined within a box, and §3.3 focuses on Kim's strategy of relating images and texts. Since the analyst – myself – is the author of Kim's presentation and has knowledge of her personal backgrounds outside the text, 'Kim' in this section is not entirely a model author but positioned in between the model and the empirical author.[1189]

3.1. *Structures of Kim's Interpretation of the Shulamite in Song 7:1–6*

The linear text manifestation (Box 3) of Kim's interpretation of the Shulamite is the Hebrew text of Song 7:1–6. According to Kim's interpretation, the broad historical context of the text can be positioned within the Iron Age southern Levant, probably sung with a dancing performance (Box 2).

The main topic (Box 4) of Kim's interpretation is 'becoming a semi-goddess'. Kim activates the properties of protection, abundance, prosperity, beauty, perfection, vitality, etc., from each vehicle of the metaphors and defines them as the properties of a deity or a supernatural being. The narrative (Box 6) is set on a performance of songs and dances. A group of people calls the Shulamite to turn around in a dance. The Shulamite starts to dance. The group is awestruck by her dance. That awe comes not only from her beauty, but also from the strong non-visual impression emitted from her which they interpreted as the magical powers of vitality, abundance, prosperity, protection, perfection, etc., as 'almost sacred'. She becomes a semi-goddess by the singing and describing act of the group. At the end of the dance, overwhelmed by a strong impression, the male lover – the king – becomes bound, subjugated under her power like a defeated enemy. The Shulamite, now as a superhuman, is not only higher than the describing group – who once called upon her and dared to gaze at her – but also

[1189] For the difference between a model author and an empirical author, see p. 54 above.

stronger than the king. This narrative is a result of Kim's consistent choice of the properties of supernatural powers beyond mere feminine beauty at each probability disjunction (Box 7) and can be reconstructed as the following actantial model (Box 8).

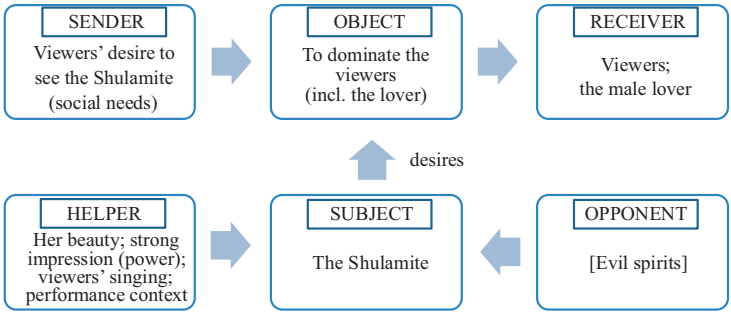


Fig. 74: An actantial structure of Kim's interpretation of the Shulamite.

The Shulamite is the subject of the desire to dominate the viewers (including the king) with positive powers. Her beauty, the context of performance, and the strong impression that she emits during the dance result in the group's act of singing the description and help her achieve her object (helper). The sender of the Shulamite's desire is the viewers' desire to see her beauty, derived from the social needs – the needs of wellbeing, abundance, etc. – of the group to benefit from her magical powers. It is not clear whether she agreed with their desire of looking at her or whether she danced in resistance to their gaze. What is apparent in Kim's interpretation is that even though the Shulamite's dance was initiated by the group's desire to see her, i.e., the group exercised power over the Shulamite, the Shulamite reverses the power relation by dominating them with her semi-divine powers revealed during her dance. Those powers ultimately benefit the viewers and her male lover, the king, who is happily defeated by her. The Shulamite's power of 'protection' implies that her magical powers may also fight against evil spirits, which indicates that the evil spirits – only implicitly mentioned in Kim's interpretation – play the actant of an opponent.

The possible world of the Shulamite (Box 10), constructed by the reader Kim (W_{sK}), is the world where the Shulamite is dancing. In this world, she is both a mortal woman and a superhuman. The male lover is envisioned both as a king and a captive defeated by the powers of the Shulamite. The group looks at her, but she dominates them. As a semi-goddess, the Shulamite is depicted as the one who may give protection, abundance, vitality, etc., to her beloveds and the viewing group who praise her beauty.

	Dancing	*Mortal*	*Super-natural*	*King*	*Captive*	*Beautiful*	*gSs**	*sDg***	*sDm****	*Having ability to give protection, vitality, abundance, success, etc.*
The Shulamite	(+)	(+)	(+)	(-)	(-)	(+)	[+]	[+]	[+]	(+)
The male lover		+	-	(+)	(+)				[+]	
The group	-	(+)	(-)	(-)			[+]	[+]		(-)

Table 18. The world structure of the Shulamite by the reader Kim (W_{sK}).

*gSs = the group (g) sees (S) the Shulamite (s).
**sDg = the Shulamite (s) dominates (D) the group (g).
***sDm = the Shulamite (s) dominates (D) the male lover (m).

Ideologically (Box 9), while all the properties of the Shulamite are valued as Good, some ideological oppositions may also be found: (1) mortal vs. supernatural, (2) king vs. defeated enemy, and (3) dominating vs. dominated.

a) *Mortal vs. supernatural*
The Shulamite's status as a mortal woman is opposed to her occasional status as a supernatural woman. The Shulamite becomes a powerful semi-goddess within the specific context of the performance, but this does not imply that the Shulamite as a mortal woman is ideologically overlaid as Bad, while being supernatural is Good. She attains each status circularly and repeatedly. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the viewers and audiences who want to benefit from the Shulamite's semi-divine powers, supernaturality implies ideality, and thus is relatively more positive than the state of the mortal.

b) *King vs. defeated enemy*

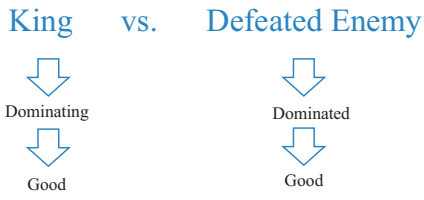


Fig. 75: A diagram of the male lover's changing status.

Fig. 75 presents the changing status of the male lover. He is the king, but becomes a defeated enemy, a captive. The status of being a king implies dominating, and the defeated enemy dominated, but this dominating-dominated

opposition does not represent the positive-negative opposition. While dominating is conventionally valued as Positive, he is happily dominated by the Shulamite's powers, thus being dominated is also Good. The male lover's status dynamically moves between a king and a captive.

c) *Dominating vs. dominated*
Throughout the performance, the Shulamite and the viewing group switch their positions of dominating and dominated. At the beginning of the performance, the viewers require the Shulamite to dance so that they watch her: the power of gaze is exercised by the viewers upon the Shulamite. However, by the end of the performance, the Shulamite exercises semi-divine powers over the group, and the group is dominated by her power. The dominating-dominated relationship between the Shulamite and the group is constantly and repeatedly overturned each time that the description is performed.

These transitions occur with the performance. The performance changes the states of the initial, ordinary situation (the mortal Shulamite, the powerful king, and the dominating group) to the new positions in the special, occasional performance (the semi-divine Shulamite, the defeated enemy, and the dominated viewers). This process is repeated whenever the performance is held. This circularity is one of Kim's interpretative preferences which is discussed in the following section.

3.2. *Discussion: Interrelationship, Circular Transition, Processuality, and Diversity in Kim's Interpretation*

From Kim's presentation of her interpretation, she constantly underlines the interrelationship, circular transition, processuality, and diversity.

Firstly, Kim's emphasis on the interrelationship of the signs is most clearly shown in her discussion of the play of tropes. Kim uses the interrelationship of metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche to construct the whole of the Shulamite. Commentators mostly understood the descriptive parts of the Shulamite only as metaphors (and similes) in the form 'A is (like) B'. However, Kim discusses how metonymies and synecdoches are embedded in these body part metaphors and how each body part metaphor stands for the whole and cumulatively related to manifest the whole of the Shulamite. When read only as a list of metaphors, the reader cannot infer what the text says about the whole of the Shulamite. However, when the text is seen as the interrelation of metaphors, metonymies, and synecdoches, the mechanism of how parts stand for the whole becomes clearer and the implied identity of the whole of the Shulamite may be revealed:

the whole Shulamite is the whole, ideal world. Synecdochically, this new metaphor implies the supernaturality of the Shulamite.

Secondly, Kim's interpretation shows a strong tendency of looking at circular transitions. The object of interpretation is viewed not as a fixed state but as in a process of the constant and circular changes. As discussed in the previous section, the Shulamite's mortal and semi-divine states, the king's powerful and defeated positions, and the dominating and dominated relationship between the Shulamite and the viewers are circularly changed before, during, and after the performance.

Thirdly, Kim's interpretation tends to emphasize the processuality. Kim interprets the part-by-part Shulamite description as a process of transition regarding her status. In dancing, the Shulamite 'becomes' a supernatural woman starting from her feet and completed by her head and hair. It is as if a camera zooms in on her feet, thighs, abdomen area, breasts, neck, and head and hair in the process of changing, and by the time it zooms out to take the whole shot, she has already become the semi-divine figure. In this process, the king is increasingly more dominated by her powers and the viewers increasingly overwhelmed by her awe. The cumulative piling on of parts is also processual. The degree of impression differs when the process has just started (at her feet) and when it has been completed (at her head): the increasing size of the vehicles, from jewelry rings to Mount Carmel, reflect the degree of astonishment which becomes greater.

Fourthly, Kim's interpretative habit looks for diverse meanings. For Kim, the relation between a sign and its meanings is plural. A metaphor does not have to remain as a metaphor but may be read as a metonymy or a synecdoche. A visualization of the Shulamite cannot be a single one, but many – as many as there are readers. While Kim singles out the most convincing scenarios in order to make the discussion more explicit in her commentary of the text, her interpretation generally aims at finding diverse meanings.

The interrelationship, circular transition, processuality, and diversity are universal concepts, but Kim's interpretative habit could have been affected by her cultural environment. As mentioned in Chapter 11,[1190] Kim was born and raised in South Korea, where the mixed cultures of Korean Shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity generated diverse perspectives.

Korean Shamanism is centered on a (frequently female) Shaman, who mediates between the realms of the gods, spirits, and humans through dance performances.[1191] They served not only individuals who sought to hear from deities and ancestral spirits, but also various communities: families, villages, and

[1190] See p. 191ff.
[1191] Heyman 2003, 3.

nations.[1192] The concept of the Shulamite as a human who becomes a supernatural being through dance and who serves a group's wellbeing could have been influenced by Kim's cultural experiences of Korean Shamanism.

Korean Confucianism underlines complex relationship within the family, society, and in the universe. The Korean language's complex address system – its address terms number around 1,200[1193] – especially reveals how various interrelationships are distinguished and expressed in Korean culture.

Philosophical Taoism, which has permeated Korean culture since the 7th century CE, undermines binary dichotomies such as beauty and ugliness, life and death, divine and secular, and dominating and dominated.[1194] The famous story of Zhuangzi, the Chinese philosopher from the 4th–3rd century BCE, in which, after dreaming of being a butterfly he wondered whether he was a man dreaming he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming it was a man,[1195] emphasizes the transformation of things and blurs the boundaries between the self and other.

The Buddhistic philosophy embedded in the Korean culture underlines the concept of 'transience' (무상/無常): nothing stays, everything constantly changes, which ultimately points to the understanding of the 'non-duality of self and other' (자타불이/自他不二).[1196] The cumulative relation of the metaphors, which results in the whole being larger than the sum of its parts, could also have been affected by the Buddhistic philosophy of totality – that one is in many and all is in one (일즉다 다즉일/一卽多 多卽一).[1197] Such worldviews conceive of the world as processual and as circular movements, undermining boundaries.

Furthermore, there are numerous cases of an ordinary human becoming a (semi-) divine being in Korean traditional myths and legends, as discussed in Chapter 11.[1198] Kim's interpretation of the Shulamite description as a process of becoming a semi-divinity seems to be especially affected by her personal experiences of transformation animations that an ordinary girl becomes a super woman with supernatural powers to save the people. In such animations, the transformation scene uses the movement of the body, part-by-part, surrounded by supernatural powers.

Concerning the frequently mentioned 'strong impression' of the Shulamite, Kim never discusses precisely what that is. It appears to be derived from the concept of 'chi' (기/氣) – the invisible energy of a person, animal, plant, or an

[1192] Walraven 2007, 284.
[1193] Jeon 2005, 128–129.
[1194] Choi 1998b, 28, 103.
[1195] Möller 1999, 439.
[1196] See Raquel 2020, 164.
[1197] Choi 1998 *1*, 307.
[1198] See p. 191ff.

object. When the group of viewers was overwhelmed by the Shulamite, it is her strong chi, connected to supernatural powers, by which the viewers were dominated. The chi in this specific context may also be translated as 'charisma', but chi is believed to have both spiritual and physical powers.

Finally, having been raised in a Christian household, Kim developed familiarity with biblical narratives. Christianity, initially brought to Koreans during the Joseon Dynasty by Korean elites rather than missionaries, symbolized modernization and Western education.[1199] As a nation that commemorates the births of both Jesus and Buddha, (South) Korean culture embraces a diverse array of religions, originating from both Eastern and Western traditions – ranging from Korean Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, to Christianity – with equal influence, creating a dynamic of diversity.[1200]

The concepts of diversity, interrelationship, circular transition, and processuality are not unique to Asian cultures but are rather universal, attracting attention in Western academics recently. Nevertheless, the Korean cultural influence on Kim's encyclopedia, which guide the overall direction of her interpretation, cannot be disregarded. Kim's interpretation is academically acceptable, built on discourses with Eco, trope theorists, and the commentators of the Song, but her personal preferences for the interrelationship, circularity, processuality, and diversity cannot be proved academically but may be analyzed semiotically.

3.3. *Image-Text Relations in Kim's Interpretation*

3.3.1 Kim's interpretation of the female drummer terracotta plaque from Tel Reḥov

Fig. 59 is the photographed visual manifestation (Box 3) of the drummer from Tel Reḥov. According to Kim's discussion of the drummer's archaeological context (Box 2) on pages 267–272 above, the image was at the center of the society of weaving women in Iron Age Tel Reḥov, protecting not only their cultic and economic activities but also their lives in general.

Kim's description of the drummer plaque on page 269 reflects its iconic structure (Box 4). Iconographically (Box 6), it belongs to the artistic tradition of the drummer plaques, which was prevalent in North Israel during Iron Age II A–B periods. Kim assumes the function of the plaque as an amulet and identifies the drummer as a supernatural auspicious spirit or a minor goddess, as inferred from the heavy ornaments, the occurrence in cultic contexts, and the lack of divine attributes, while she still opens the possibility that it portrays a mortal

[1199] Choi 2007, 180–192.
[1200] Choi 2007, 179.

woman but could have been venerated as a supernatural being after her image became permanently kept as a plaque.[1201]

Kim overlays another narrative idiosyncratic to her (the visual narrative structure, Box 6), which is a story of the drummer as a supernatural protector. Attached to a clay altar, the drummer gives protection, abundance, healing, political/economic/cultic success, well-being, and a long life to her viewers. She is half-nude, but she is not ashamed of her nudity; she is proud of it because her exposure of a breast, navel, vulva, and thighs attract the attention of the viewers – whether male or female – and provide her with magical powers. She welcomes other benevolent spirits and higher deities to promote the lives of her viewers and expels evil spirits. In Kim's projection, this narrative of the drummer becomes interrelated with the story of the Shulamite: drumming and dancing, the drummer exercises her magical powers for her viewers, worshippers, and the ones that she cares about. This narrative can further be reconstructed as the following actantial model (Box 8).

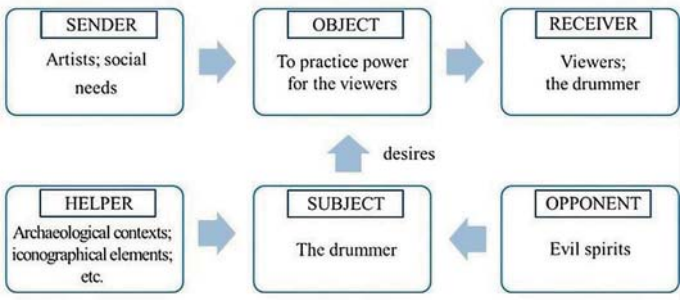


Fig. 76: An actantial model of the female drummer terracotta plaque from Tel Reḥov.

The drummer is the subject. She desires to practice positive powers for her viewers. That desire originated from the artist who made her (the plaque), or it was the need of that social circle – e.g., need of protection, success, or wellbeing – which inspired those artists to form her image in a terracotta plaque. While the drummer fights against evil spirits, everything around her – the terracotta as material, the plaque as a mobile medium, the drum, her exposed sexual attributes, her ornaments as iconographic elements, the cultic context, and the existence of her viewers, etc. – is the helper that enables the drummer to protect her viewers. The beneficiary of the desire is not only the viewers but also the drummer herself because it is her own will to fulfill that desire.

[1201] See Kim's presentation of her interpretation in p. 273 above.

The ideological structure (Box 9) of the drummer does not differ too much from that of the Shulamite[1202] because Kim projected the image of the drummer onto the Shulamite. The possible world (Box 10) of the drummer is the world that the drummer plaque is not a mere terracotta plaque but an active agent who drums and dances, protecting her viewers with magical powers. It is a still image, but believed to be active and powerful, and that belief has an actual effect on the reality in this possible world.

3.3.2. Mental projection of the interpreter in relating images and texts

Kim's characteristic strategy of relating images and texts is the interpreter's mental projection.[1203] Her construction of the whole Shulamite involves image-projection onto the textual Shulamite, where Kim discusses eleven possible projected images from the perspective of ancient audiences or performers.

Recently, Bonfiglio categorized three ways of relating images and texts commonly practiced in iconographic exegesis in the Hebrew Bible studies: image-text congruence, image-text correlation, and image-text contiguity. These are 'three main issues or perspectives' in relating images and texts previously done in biblical studies,[1204] whether by the shared theme (congruence), historical time and place (contiguity), or by asking 'how (much) they are related' (correlation).[1205] Kim's strategy may belong to the 'correlation' category, but in fact it is at the boundary of this categorization because the focus is not only given to the image/text but also to the 'interpreter': in the mental projection, an interpreter decides how to relate an image with a text. It could be a similar theme, style, historical context, or a feeling, which may be the 'connecting link' between the image and text. Kim discusses the notion of the interpreter and opens the possibility that images and texts may rather be freely related by the interpreter without an intentional set of principles (e.g., historical, thematic, etc.).

Only after opening the door for the interpreter's mental projection does Kim limit her study to the historical context of the Iron Age southern Levant, as one of her goals is 'to imagine what female images the authors, singers, performers, or audiences projected onto the Shulamite in the early days of the circulation of the song'.[1206] Kim discusses the reasons why she set the background of image-text relation in the Iron Age southern Levant, then offers possible female images (thematic connection) from that cultural frame (historical connection). Within that frame, Kim emphasizes that interpreters may correlate various

[1202] See p. 311f above.
[1203] P. 214 above.
[1204] Bonfiglio 2016, 69.
[1205] Bonfiglio 2016, 69–89. See also p. 10 above.
[1206] P. 214 above.

images – whether anthropomorphic, hybrid, or a head only – with the textual Shulamite. The eleven candidates that Kim offers are the minimum number of the possible projected images and can be much more.[1207] According to different interpreters, all these images may be connected to the Shulamite, or only one or two, or none at all.

The image-text relation that Kim assumes in the process of mental projection is therefore polysemic. Kim writes: 'the reconstructed whole image cannot be reduced to one, but must remain plural';[1208] 'the whole of the Shulamite […] can be related with a group of images (not a single one) reflecting and further constructing the multidimensional aspects of the Shulamite'.[1209] This one-to-multiple relation becomes eventually multiple-to-multiple: a projected image of the Shulamite can also be related with other texts and narratives. This is similar to the infinite net of semiosis: everything is related to everything else, regardless of whether the connections are proximate or distant.

Kim's interpretation encompasses all three categories that Bonfiglio set. It relates female images (thematical – congruence) of the Iron Age southern Levant (historical – contiguity) to the textual Shulamite, giving special attention to the complex image-text relations which may occur according to different interpreters (question of 'how' – correlation). Emphasizing the role of the interpreter, Kim's image-text relating strategy goes beyond those categories, incorporating the interpreter's subjective thoughts and feelings. As Eco understands the reading of a text as the collaboration between the text and the reader,[1210] Kim's basic assumption of image-text relation is the collaboration of image, text, and the interpreter. The relation is neither absolutely dependent on the nature of the text or image, nor completely open to the interpreter, but their collaboration plays in between, in various degrees.

3.4. *Recapitulation*

Kim's interpretation underlines diversity, interrelationship, circularity, and processuality. Using tropical theories and the concept of mental projection as the major tools for interpreting the Shulamite, Kim relates images with texts, parts with the whole, drawing the changing aspects of the Shulamite, and opening the possibility for the plural, multidimensional, and polysemic meanings.

Kim brought special attention to mental projection as a way of relating images and texts. Mental projection crosses the academic boundaries of what have

[1207] P. 276 above.
[1208] P. 256 above.
[1209] P. 276 above.
[1210] Eco 1987, 65.

been practiced in Biblical Iconography – i.e., the thematic and historical relation between image and text – and emphasizes the role of the interpreter. It is not any more subjective than or inferior to the thematic or historical relation. The investigation into the mental projection tries to illuminate how the interpreter delineates thematic and contextual boundaries, and reveal the deeper internal and personal motivations in one's way of linking images and texts.

Kim clearly states in her presentation that part of her interpretation is affected by her personal experience as a South Korean.[1211] In the semiotic analysis of her interpretation, not only as a model author but also as the empirical author,[1212] Kim discloses her own personal motivations which affected the overall direction of her research. As Black noticed,[1213] disclosing personal experiences alone cannot fully account for one's interpretation, as these represent merely selected aspects of one's life. Nonetheless, revealing Kim's subjective perspectives shows how interpretations can be shaped by both academic and personal factors.

The distinguishing characteristics of Kim's interpretation – interrelationship, circular transition, processuality, diversity, mental projection, the interpreter's role, and plurality – underscore the importance of the tripartite collaboration between text, image, and interpreter. Influenced by her personal experiences and enthusiasm for unfixedness, fluidity, and acknowledging subjectivity, her interpretations posit the Shulammite's status as shifting between a mortal woman and a semi-goddess. Like other interpreters, Kim's subjective semiosis shaped the overarching direction of her academic interpretation of the Shulammite.

4. Comparisons and Conclusion

4.1. *Comparison of the Image-Text Relations*

Othmar Keel, Fiona Black, and Yeseul Kim use different strategies to establish the image-text relation according to their own purposes. Keel's strategy is to connect images and texts by the same subject matter within the broad realm of the ancient Near East. He abstracts a text into a word of a concept and looks for the equivalent images. Both image and text may reflect the same cultural phenomenon. Although Keel's practical application of image-text relations – unlike his theory – often overlooks contextual differences across space, time, and societies within the ancient Near East, his commentary on the Song of Songs remains

[1211] See footnote 807 above.
[1212] See p. 54 for the notion of model author and empirical author.
[1213] Black 2009, 243.

unparalleled in utilizing diverse ancient Near Eastern visual representations for interpreting the text.

Black's strategy is to match the visual with the literal grotesquely. What is textually expressed is literally transformed to the visual: when there is a mention of twin gazelle fawns, the image of twin gazelle fawns must appear in the visualization of the Shulamite. The image of the Shulamite's body is thus a grotesque piling on of different visual motifs: the sandals, jewels, wine and wine cup, wheat, young gazelles, towers, pools, Mount Carmel, purple hair, palm tree, grapes, and apples. Since Black acknowledges that her reading is neither historical nor author-oriented; her grotesque strategy successfully escapes from the pitfall of anachronism and becomes an effective tool of provocative interrelationship between images and texts, good and bad, harmony and incongruity.

Kim's strategy of mental projection relates images and texts according to the interpreter's personal preferences. The text may become visualized as the interpreter projects images from the personal encyclopedia, and a visual image is overlaid with narratives that the interpreter constructs. The ground of the image-text connection may take the thematic similarity, historical closedness, styles, or abstract feelings, but the decision depends on the interpreter's unique semiosis. Such a strategy emphasizes the plurality of meanings and the role of the interpreter, in the collaboration of image, text, and interpreter.

Keel's, Black's, and Kim's use of different strategies come from their different purposes of reading: Keel, as the pioneer of Biblical Iconography, wanted to set an objective way of relating the Hebrew Bible with ancient Near Eastern images. Black, in the background of postmodern philosophies, preferred a subversive way of reading which will reveal the suppressed sides of the Song. Kim wished to give prominence to the interpreter while balancing with the contexts of images and texts. By these different purposes, the interpreters chose fitting strategies of relating images and texts: the thematic approach, grotesque matching, and interpreter-oriented image-text relation. None of the strategies investigated here are wrong. They are only different, serving the interpreters' needs.

4.2. *Comparison of the Part-Whole Relations*

As Keel, Black, and Kim use distinct strategies for their different purposes, their constructions of the part-whole relation of the described woman/Shulamite also vary. In Keel's interpretation, the body parts of the described woman never reach the whole. He discusses individual body part metaphors in comparison with ancient Near Eastern images, but neither the sum of parts nor each part achieves the whole of the described woman. The woman is interpreted as 'the prince's daughter', thus a noble woman, but his part-by-part commentary does not always

match with the nobleness – even the images of servant girls are used to explain her. The woman's parts and the whole are adrift.

In contrast, the parts of the Shulamite in Black's interpretation are connected to her whole body by a clear principle: the whole is the sum of parts. In the whole body of the Shulamite, there are jewels, wine, cup, wheat, young gazelles, grape and palm clusters, towers, pools, and Mount Carmel, all incongruent, not harmonized, oddly proportioned, abject, and grotesque. Nevertheless, this is the whole body, and the parts and the whole are literally connected.

The parts and the whole of the Shulamite assumed by Kim are related metaphorically, metonymically, and synecdochically. Using Eco's trope theory, Kim underlines that metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche handle different ways of part-whole relations. By reading the body description of the Shulamite with these tropes, not only each part stands for the whole but also the cumulative relations of the parts reinforce the whole as the paradoxical process of creating a semi-divinity. The parts and the whole are complicatedly interrelated.

Since the Hebrew text does not offer a clear and photographic picture of the whole body of the woman/Shulamite, it opens a great gap to be filled by the reader. The construction of the whole, therefore, largely depends on the interpreter's way of looking at her. The different part-whole relationships suggested by Keel, Black, and Kim not only reflect how they see this woman, but also create diverse Shulamites, affecting the viewing ways of their readers.

4.3. *Comparison of the Possible Worlds*

Three distinct possible worlds are constructed from the same text by Keel, Black, and Kim, each with different delineations. These differences in delineation result in disparate structures for their respective possible worlds: in Keel's world, the Shulamite does not exist, while in Black's and Kim's world the Shulamite is the main figure. Nevertheless, the main difference between these three possible worlds comes from how they construct the whole by filling in the textual gaps.

In the possible world of the described woman by the reader Keel (W_{wK}), the woman is not the Shulamite but a prince's daughter. She is in love with the king. She is luxurious, proud, attractive, lively, playful, intoxicating, seductive, and gives a new life. The woman and her lover – the king – fit together in their high social status. Yet, her playful and liveliness can be compared to those of a female servant, due to the way that Keel constructs the woman: a melting pot of modern Western concepts of femininity.

In the Shulamite's possible world of the reader Black (W_{sB}), a group of people and the male lover watch the body of the Shulamite who is standing. The male lover – the king – describes the Shulamite using the grotesque language in order

to express his feeling of loss of her and the desire to make her present. She is grotesque, as well as the male lover because elsewhere in the Song she describes his body in a similar (but not the same) manner as he does. In W_{sB}, the boundaries between good and bad, love and grotesque, erotic and abject are blended, and the incongruency and the grotesquerie of the Shulamite's body are acknowledged as valid ways of expressing the lovers' desires.

The reader Kim constructed the possible world of the Shulamite (W_{sK}) in which she is a mortal woman but becomes a supernatural semi-goddess in the specific context of the dancing performance. In W_{sK}, the Shulamite dances, and her male lover (envisioned as a king) and a group of people watch her singing and praising her beauty. In the performance, the Shulamite has the ability of giving protection, abundance, success, healing, vitality, well-being, and life-force, as a semi-goddess who may bless her beloved ones and her worshippers – i.e., the male lover and the group – with her magical powers. Even though the group exercises the power of looking at her, she dominates them, and the king is also captivated by her. The description reflects the desire of the group that she blesses them, while the Shulamite exercises overwhelming power over them to be surrendered under her.

These three possible worlds take disparate structures. They all deal with the same woman in Chapter Seven of the Song but result in three different women in three separate worldviews. Keel's described woman is a noble woman with complex characters, Black's Shulamite is a passionately beloved woman to the extent of the grotesque, and Kim's mortal Shulamite may acquire supernatural powers. The collaboration between the Song Chapter Seven and the readers produced such unique women in discrete possible worlds, as the text – with the ambiguous metaphors – welcomes the readers' active collaboration, and as these three readers were happily entrapped by such attractiveness of the text.

4.4. *Conclusion to Part III*

In Part III, after the presentation of my own interpretation of Song 7:1–6, three different interpretations of the text were semiotically analyzed: the prince's daughter by Keel, the grotesque lover by Black, and the mortal and supernatural woman by Kim. I especially focused on how these interpreters formed the whole body out of the part-by-part description and how they related the text with various images in their interpretations. The collaboration models for texts and images served as a tool for the exposure of the underlying structures of their writings. As various structures of the interpretations were disclosed, the personal preferences which governed the overall direction of each interpretation also revealed themselves.

While the three interpretations take distinct structures, the common trait of them is that their structures are built *according to* the interpreter's personal preferences. Keel's background of the modern academics urged him to look for a more objective way of interpreting the Song: comparison with the visual representations from the ancient Near East was the way he chose to objectify his interpretation of the difficult metaphors in the Song. Black's interest in the ambivalence of love, eroticism, and the Song of Songs brought her to the grotesque reading, embracing the problematic sides of the Shulamite description. Kim's mixed background of the Korean heritage (Korean Shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity) led her to read the Song of Songs in the context of interrelationship, circularity, processuality, and diversity, with the emphasis of the role of the interpreter. The interpreters' encyclopedia, which was constructed by their daily experiences, navigated their semiosis to take the form of the final interpretant expressed in their writings.

The text of the Song; the readers' personal experiences; images from the ancient Levant, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Renaissance, modern and postmodern times; other texts and narratives of which the interpreters reminded themselves; commentaries and articles about the Song; academic discourses on the language of the Hebrew Bible and on the archaeology of the southern Levant; narratives that the interpreters constructed, etc., all collaborated to yield their unique interpretations, to construct the images of the anonymous woman in Song Chapter Seven and to frame the future readers' perspectives towards the world.

XV. CONCLUSION

Using two anonymous women – one from a text and one from an image – this study sought to introduce semiotics as a methodological framework for conducting image-text analysis, with particular attention to the role of the interpreter and to the meta-critical analysis of different interpretations.

Semiotics is a transdisciplinary method, which is well-suited for the isomorphic analysis of images and texts. In Part I, I introduced Umberto Eco's textual collaboration model, which is designed for examining text-reader collaboration, and modified it with the help of Erwin Panofsky's and Mieke Bal's visual theories to be used with images without compromising the uniqueness of the visual sign system. Since these two models – Eco's textual collaboration model and the image collaboration model that I offered – are isomorphic, together they create a methodological framework for a safe analysis and comparison of image and text.

Both of these collaboration models focus on the role of the interpreter. The ten boxes that comprise these models show various structures built by the collaboration between the interpreter and the work. Semiosis relates the work with the interpreter intricately, resulting in diverse interpretations as unique as the interpreter's personal experiences. This does not mean that the interpreter has absolute freedom when interpreting an object. A text or an artwork puts norms and restrictions on the extent to which one may interpret, though the exact limitation may differ according to interpreters' perspectives. Neither the interpreter's absolute subjectivity, nor the work's sole objectivity is possible. The interpreting environment – including the text or image itself and its recognized signs and structures, as well as the physical, social, cultural, political, historical circumstances of the act of interpretation, and the interpreter's previous knowledge, experiences, and cultural horizon – all affect the direction of an interpretation. This establishment of meaning is a true collaboration between the work and the interpreter.

The role of the interpreter, emphasized by these two models, was specifically addressed in the other two meta-critical parts: Parts II and III. Here, I selected an image and a text from ancient Near Eastern female imagery and analyzed a few of their modern interpretations in order to suggest what might have led their interpretations in such disparate directions. These meta-critical analyses go beyond the word/image dichotomy, by focusing on the interpreter's underlying assumptions and personal preferences. As I stated in the research history, semiotics, whose interest deeply lies in the nature of signs and their interpretations, may reach its full potential in such meta-critical study.

The subject of Part II was an image of an OB nude woman terracotta plaque. After giving my own interpretation of the OB nude woman image – a protective spirit, related somehow with Ishtar – I analyzed that interpretation alongside two other interpretations of the same image: Zainab Bahrani's 'seductress' and Julia Assante's '*baštu* (dignity)'.

Bahrani's interpretation positively emphasized the eroticism and sexuality of the OB nude woman. Yet, in this analysis, her sexuality is structurally limited: she remains the object of male gaze, unable to gaze back at her viewers. Ironically, while Bahrani's feministic background made her want to free the OB nude woman's sexuality from humiliation and degradation, the figure's active seduction caters only to the satisfaction of male sexual desire.

Assante's feministic background led her interpretation in the opposite direction. Assante's desire to construct the OB nude woman not as an object of the male sexual gaze but as an autonomous, dignified and confident woman, led her to identify the woman as *baštu*, a personification of dignity. However, this personal preference eventually led her to become bogged down in the dichotomous structure of Mind vs. Body = High vs. Low = Male vs. Female. In her efforts to break the connection between 'Female' and 'Low', she accepted instead the link between 'Body' and 'Low', and thus committed herself to an interpretation in which recognizing the OB nude woman's dignity meant also rejecting her sexuality.

Kim's South Korean background – in the meta-analyses, I referred to myself in the third person to indicate the model author revealed through the text – guided her interpretation of the OB nude woman. This led her to view the figure as a protective spirit, similar to numerous deities in the traditional Korean household religion who were once humans but became supernatural spirits. Examining the archaeological context of the image, Kim interpreted the OB nude woman as part of a household religion, and further pointed to her lack of a divine attribute as a sign that she is of lower status than other, major deities. Relating her nudity with various aspects of Ishtar – sexuality, eroticism, dignity (*baštu*), magical powers, religious activities, high status, and abundance – Kim construed the OB nude woman as someone related to Ishtar. She could have been a mortal woman, Kim hypothesized, but was nevertheless believed to have supernatural protective powers ever since she was modelled in terracotta plaques.

In Part II, the image collaboration model proved to work well in placing visual sign systems into isomorphic frame with textual systems. By comparing the textual and image collaboration models, I have shown that interpreters of both images and texts construct their interpretations within similar structures. When many interpreters use texts to support their interpretation of an image, and vice versa, the similarity in structure between image and text interpretations bear witness that their perspectives are consistent. For example, Bahrani's interpretations

of the nude statue and its inscription showed isomorphic structures. Assante particularly emphasized the similarity between images and texts, and gave some indication that she understood images as texts in the semiotic perspective. Kim, also semiotically, underlined how interpreters relate images and texts rather freely. What decided the overall directions of these different interpretations, then, was the collaboration between the ambiguity of the OB woman image and the personal experiences and preferences of the various interpreters, which may be semiotically analyzed by the two models.

The subject of Part III was the woman described in Song of Songs Chapter Seven in the Hebrew Bible. After discussing the delineation, voice, and the research history of the passage, I offered my own interpretation of the anonymous woman: the Shulamite, a mortal woman who was believed to become supernatural in the specific context of a performance. The other two scholars whose interpretations I compared with my own – Othmar Keel and Fiona Black – explicitly used visual images in interpreting the text. Yet, each visualized the described woman differently, using distinct strategies of creating image-text and part-whole relations.

For Keel, the described woman is not the Shulamite but a prince's daughter who is in love with the king. He interpreted her as the most beautiful woman, but what this means was tied closely to his own concepts of ideal femininity mixed in one figure: being proud, lively, playful, attractive, fertile, seductive, dispenser of new life and renewal of life, and implicitly passive. In his interpretation, the part-by-part description does not clearly relate to the woman's whole. Keel was unrivaled for the number of ancient Near Eastern visual representations he used in order to interpret the Song of Songs, relating texts and images by a thematic similarity. Yet, while he tried to be objective in his iconographical exegesis, the semiotic analysis revealed that subjectivity nevertheless played an unavoidable role in his commentary.

In Black's interpretation, the Shulamite and her male lover describe each other using grotesque images in order to express their desire and feelings of loss. Thus, the Shulamite is a grotesque woman. The body part metaphors are grotesquely piled upon one another, turning the whole of the Shulamite into the sum of her disproportioned, unharmonized, and incongruent body parts. However, Black evaluated these grotesque elements positively in her argument, as signs that the lovers can cope with desire and loss, and with the ambivalence of love. Black's strategy of relating images and texts – the grotesque match between the literal and the visual – also bespoke ambivalence and diversity, beyond the boundaries of standard, academic image-text relation. Black's post-modernistic personal love for looking at the multifaceted sides of an object and for undermining boundaries eventually encouraged her to embrace the strange, grotesque aspects of the Song of Songs.

Kim emphasized the aspect of change in her interpretation of the Shulamite: she is a mortal woman, who in the specific context of performance becomes a supernatural semi-goddess who endows her loved ones with protection, abundance, and wellbeing. Each of her body parts and the metaphoric sources stands for the whole in an interplay of metonymy and synecdoche, and the cumulative relation of the parts reinforces the strong impression she gives of being a mediator between the mortal and the supernatural realms. Kim related this textual image of the Shulamite to female representations from the Iron Age in the southern Levant, using the concept of mental projection, which asserts that it is the interpreter's mental projection that ultimately relates images with texts. Kim's personal background, which is influenced by many different factors – including Korean Shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity – helped her construct the whole Shulamite through the frame of interrelationship, circular transition, processuality, and diversity.

What is shown through a semiotic analysis of these interpreters – Keel, Black, and Kim – is that it is the collaboration of the text and the subjectivity of the interpreter which decides the overall direction of an interpretation. When the text is ambiguous, such as in Song of Songs Chapter Seven, the collaboration makes interpretations richer and more splendid. All of the interpreters examined in this study – Keel, Black, and Kim, as well as Bahrani and Assante – were eager to engage with and contemplate the enigmas and ambiguity of the image or text they studied, and to come to their conclusions through the influence of their minds' personal preferences, which have been revealed by their choice of one interpretative option over others. In each case, the collaboration between an open work and a participating interpreter produced diverse interpretations,[1214] which often contrast with one another, yet also enrich the scholarly discourse and frame of thoughts of today.

Images and Texts employ different systems of transmitting messages. On the one hand, the verbal system conveys meaning through articulated language, using words, letters, or sounds related by grammatical structures and synthetized over time. It follows a predetermined, linear order. On the other hand, the visual system delivers messages through shapes and colors, which are perceived immediately and holistically without a given sequence. One may 'feel' an image in a way that does not necessarily translate into language. Due to these differences, the interpretations of images and texts follow different paths, requiring different analytical models tailored to their respective systems.

However, an 'analysis' is primarily 'verbal', not only because most analyses are explained through language and textual signs, but also because the nature of 'analysis' aligns with the verbal system: it divides the whole into component

[1214] See p. 198 for the concept of an 'open work'.

parts for evaluation before synthesizing these parts back into a whole. This segmental character dominates the verbal system rather than the visual system. Consequently, efforts to analyze images using various methods and models have been constantly criticized for 'linguistic imperialism over images'. This study may not escape similar criticism since the image collaboration model is designed based on the textual collaboration model.

Nevertheless, such differences between images and texts cannot be the definitive criteria for separating the two, as these characteristics may be shared by both. For instance, as discussed above,[1215] images take time to be interpreted, and texts may also be perceived wholistically though their 'correct' meaning may not be assured. Images can be divided into segmental parts, and texts can be felt affecting one's subconscious mind. The known differences between images and texts are, in fact, their 'dominating characters': it is a matter of degree, with each sharing the characters of the other. As with Peirce's categorization of signs – icon, index, and symbol – all share some iconic, indexical, and symbolical modes to some degree,[1216] so do images and texts.

For these reasons, while Parts II and III are separated to distinguish between the 'interpretations of an image' and 'interpretations of a text', each part employs both textual and image collaboration models. Verbal sign systems engage in interpreting images, and visual imaginations arise in interpreting texts. They cannot be entirely separated, yet they remain distinct. This paradox can be methodologically harmonized by focusing on the 'interpreter' rather than the dichotomy of 'image' and 'text'.[1217] Therefore, the collaboration models emphasize the interpreter's role in building structures of meanings. This explains why Parts II and III, which use both models, reveal similar interpretative mechanisms, while uncovering different underlying preconceptions of interpreters.

This study's focus on the interpreter not only ensure methodological soundness in studying images and texts together structurally, but also correlate the semiotic net of biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies in content. The artistic type of the Old Babylonian nude woman was transmitted to the Iron Age southern Levant throughout ages and across the ancient Near East, while styles and some meanings changed.[1218] I have proposed several descendants of this figure as potential visualizations of the Shulammite. Regardless of whether one accepts my interpretation, these images were among the most famous female representations at the time when people performed the Shulamite description as a song

[1215] P. 75ff above. See also p. 26ff.
[1216] P. 61ff above.
[1217] P. 31f above.
[1218] See p. 106 above.

and dance.[1219] The OB nude woman, therefore, is related to the Shulamite through ancient viewers and singers who lived in the Southern Levant. They were the interpreters of the images and the description. Parts II and III are, then, together recreate the collaboration of the image-interpreter-text, both in terms of content and structure.

In this study, I argued for the great potential of semiotics as a transdisciplinary method. Since an act of interpretation infers data from an interpreter's stored knowledge and experiences in all kinds of sign systems, including the visual and verbal, any interpretation necessarily involves both images and texts. Semiotics is an appropriate transdisciplinary method of looking at such multifaceted interactions between different sign systems. This study is an academic step forward, which will help scholars of the Hebrew Bible and of ancient Near Eastern art become more aware of the collaboration between image, text, and interpreter. Influenced by my personal preferences, this research also breaks new ground by looking at diversity, interrelations, and subjectivity not only among the images (both visual and textual) of ancient anonymous women, but also among their modern interpreters.

Neither absolute subjectivity nor complete objectivity is possible; it is always somewhere in between, and their collaboration yields a variety of interpretations. A work gives instructions to which extent one may interpret, and different interpreters – whose encyclopedias are all distinct and unique as their lives – diverge the interpretations of a same work to all directions. These diverse interpretations, generated as the interpretants of the former signs and then became the signs to be interpreted in the written and drawn format, ultimately affect the reality by communicating with their readers. While the academic fields of the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East have highly appreciated the objectivity, they have not given sufficient acknowledgement to the subjectivity. However, when the subjectivity of interpretations become the focal point of a research, it contributes to the academic community with more opened and embracing minds because it draws attention to the background of how an interpretation is made. The perspective of the community will become broader, having examined various experiences that the model authors disclose through their interpretation. Finally, studying the subjectivity of interpretations also make the analyst more aware of his or her own subjectivity, eventually leading to a more balanced, or more objective, interpretation.

[1219] Even if the description dates to the Hellenistic period, the Greek female nudes were themselves influenced by Mesopotamian nudes which have their origins in the OB nude woman, as Bahrani demonstrates in 'The Hellenization of Ishtar'.

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