

beings are created for friendship, that friendships are necessary for happiness, and that it is through the *communicatio* or shared life among friends that men and women flourish and are fulfilled. But Aquinas ultimately transcended Aristotle's understanding of friendship by claiming that God has befriended every human being and thus opened possibilities for friendship and community that Aristotle could never imagine. Through charity, the gift of God's very life, goodness, and happiness, friendships become a way of life conducive not just to virtue, but to holiness and joy.

*Conversation, Friendship, and Transformation* is a remarkable achievement. Because of its high scholarly quality and the rigorous analysis of its arguments, it is best suited for doctoral seminars and for academics researching the persons and ideas Jackson engages in the book. It is not a text to be read lightly, but anyone who invests in it will be richly rewarded and even inspired.

PAUL J. WADELL  
St. Norbert College

*Landscapes of the Song of Songs: Poetry and Place.* By Elaine T. James. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. xii + 233 pages. \$99.00.  
doi: 10.1017/hor.2018.104

Elaine T. James brings a novel approach to the poetics of the Song of Songs (hereafter, the Song) by focusing on the text's evocation of various types of landscapes. Through the concept of landscape and with judicious application of theory, especially of geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, this book transcends many of the binaries that have limited modern interpretations of the Song. Identifying the genre of the Song as lyric poetry, James sidesteps many of the "plot" questions that have plagued both literal and allegorical interpretations. Instead, she focuses on aesthetic, affective, and ethical aspects of the association of the lovers with the landscape in the Song. Landscape is more than just environment or backdrop in the Song: James uses it to mean "a materially grounded textual representation of human experience in a locale" (14). By defining landscape as land shaped by human beings, James avoids the tendency of modern interpreters to read an antithesis between "nature" and "culture" into the Song.

After a very helpful introduction that situates and illustrates James' "reading for landscape," the second chapter focuses on "the agrarian landscape" in the Song. This chapter is foundational for the rest of the book, illustrating very concisely how the centrality of agriculture and pastoralism in ancient societies shaped metaphors for sexuality. The discussion of contemporary agrarianism, and in particular the work of Wendell Berry, is somewhat

uncritical and less original than other parts of the book, depending on the work of Ellen Davis. The readings of Song 1:5–8 and 7:11–14 are enriched by a wealth of information about ancient viticulture and shepherding as well as poetic parallels from surrounding cultures.

Chapter 3, which focuses on the garden poem near the center of the Song (4:12–5:1), demonstrates that exoticism was a feature of gardening in the ancient Near East, and hence that modern commentators miss the mark in claiming that this poem describes a “fantasy garden” (68–69). James argues persuasively that the garden is a microcosm of the human experience of the natural world and that the poem captures both the “Apollonian” and the “Dionysian” aspects of that experience (84). This chapter, with its intriguing but underdeveloped insights on smell and taste imagery, could have benefited from engagement with the growing scholarly literature on sense perception in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., the work of Yael Avrahami).

To me, the most compelling chapter is the fourth, “The Cityscape.” Here James brings together an impressive range of theoretical perspectives to show how the city functions as a landscape as well as a metaphor in the Song, drawing upon the personification of cities as women in the ancient world. This chapter first analyzes the two poems in which the woman pursues her lover in the city, 3:1–5 and 5:2–8, which describe the city in contrasting ways, the first as a place that is nurturing to the lovers and the second as a place of danger. James then offers a fascinating and original reading of 8:8–10 as a playful “battle of the sexes,” depicting the young woman as a city under siege.

The final chapter, “The Map of the Body,” reads the three (partial) descriptions of the woman’s body as landscapes, based on mentions of places in the land of Israel in those poems (4:1–7, 6:4–7, and 7:2–7). While James makes some astute observations about the perspective of the viewer in these poems, it is not clear to me that geography (or cartography) is the most helpful lens through which to read them. More persuasive is her argument (against some feminist scholars) that despite the strangeness of the imagery to modern Western eyes, these descriptions are expressions of love and admiration.

This book’s unique contribution is to show that “the Song elaborates a vision of what it might mean to love one’s land, which is to see it with affection and to intervene in it with care” (151). James is at her best when she is explicating the poetry of the Song by analogy with other artistic expressions, ancient and modern.

KARINA MARTIN HOGAN  
*Fordham University*