Do Justice and Peace Really Kiss Each Other?

Personifications in the Psalter and an Exemplary Analysis of Ps 85:11

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Abstract

While Lady Wisdom, Zion and Jerusalem, for example, are well-known and frequently analyzed personifications in the Old Testament, the study of personifications in the book of psalms is a research desideratum. After presenting the theoretical background of the term *personification* with special focus on the function of the verb, I will present the results of verb personifications in the psalter followed by a textual analysis of the personified virtues of steadfast love, truth, justice and peace in Ps 85:11. One example of the encounter between justice and peace in the form of a kiss, from Christian reception history, forms the last part of the article. The paper aims to contribute to the broad and intense discussion of metaphor analysis in psalms research on the three levels of theory, of textual analysis of the whole book of psalms and of Ps 85,11 and the reception history of metaphors.

Keywords

theory of personification – verb metaphor – metaphor analysis – book of psalms – Psalm 85 – reception history of metaphors

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Introduction

In the movie *Her*, which came out in March 2014, the main character, Theodore, falls in love with his operating system—in other words, with the voice of his computer, Samantha. He speaks and listens to her by means of an ear bud. Through the mobile phone's camera “eye,” Samantha can see the world. As the storyline develops, Samantha's personality also develops, and she responds to the stimuli around her in an emotional and reactive manner—all in all an excellent example of personification in the sense of “the anthropomorphic representation of any non-human thing.”¹ The Old Testament contains many famous personifications, including (Lady) Wisdom as well as the personified city Jerusalem/Zion. Though these personifications—Lady Wisdom is often called a hypostasis—are frequently analyzed, there is a need for research on personification, especially in the book of psalms.² Although current psalms research includes a rich collection of reflections on various metaphors in the psalter,³ a structured overview of personifications in the psalter is missing; accordingly, this marks the starting point of my article. After presenting the theoretical background of the term *personification* within metaphor discourse, I will give an overview of verb personifications in the psalter, followed by a metaphor analysis of Ps 85:11. Finally, I will provide an example from the Christian reception history of this psalm.

Definitions of Personification

As C. A. Hamilton notes, “We personify when we metaphorically ascribe agency to normally inanimate objects, turning non-existent or imaginary entities into realistic actors or agents.”⁴ In other words, a personification “gives life to characters that have no existence,”⁵ as in the movie *Her*. The broad range of

1 E. Stafford, *Worshipping Virtues: Personification and the Divine in Ancient Greece* (Wales, 2000), p. 4. The English term *personification* derives from the Latin words *persona* + *facere* (“to make a person”). See Stafford, *Worshipping*, p. 5.

2 Cf. H. Marlow, “The Hills Are Alive! The Personification of Nature in the Psalter,” in: D. A. Baer and P. Gordon (eds.), *Leshon Limmudim. Essays on the Language and Literature of the Hebrew Bible in Honour of A. A. Macintosh* (LHB/OTS 593; London et al., 2013), pp. 189–203 (191).

3 Among the great quantity of publications on metaphor in psalms research, see, e.g., P. Van Hecke and A. Labahn (eds.), *Metaphors in the Psalms* (BETL 231; Leuven, 2010), and W. P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms. A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville and London, 2002).

4 Hamilton, “Mapping the Mind,” p. 409.

5 R. S. Edgecombe, “Ways of Personifying,” *Style* 31 (1997), pp. 1–13 (6).

definitions for literary personification depends also on the medium under consideration. Emma Stafford speaks about “complex scales of personification. At one end there is the fully individualized divinity, at the other the figure of speech with scarcely any personality at all. In between may come any number of steps designating stronger or weaker forms of personification.”⁶ Although a range of types of personification may be identified, there is no doubt that personification is a particular kind of metaphor—indeed, as Hamilton notes, “personification is one of our most basic and frequently utilized metaphors,”⁷ because the shared and basic experience of *humanness* provides an opportunity to express many different ideas by comparing things to living entities.⁸ “We are people. We know a lot about ourselves. And we often make sense of other things by viewing them as people too.”⁹ The creation of analogy to human beings is a striking feature of personification as a category of metaphorical language.

On the linguistic level of word class, personification can be realized by means of nouns (time is a healer; inflation is eating up our profits), by adverbs or adjectives (jealous trees) or by verbs (the hills are dancing; life has cheated me). Morton Bloomfield recognizes the grammatical approach to personification: “Of all the grammatical signs of personification, it seems to me that the use of animate verbs and predicates is the most characteristic and important, except perhaps in dialogue or debate. The stress in most personification allegory is on the action.”¹⁰ Thus, it is first of all the verb, which describes actions most often associated with persons or animals, that is important.¹¹ Second, the interaction between the two domains—the subject as the target domain and

6 Stafford, *Worshipping*, p. 2. See also Paxson's glossary of tropes: J. J. Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 42–43.

7 C. A. Hamilton, “Mapping the Mind and the Body: On W. H. Auden's Personifications,” *Style* 36 (2002), pp. 408–427 (409).

8 See M. Delbaere et al., “Personification in Advertising. Using a Visual Metaphor to Trigger Anthropomorphism,” *Journal of Advertising* 40 (2011), pp. 121–130 (122). The authors refer to Lakoff and Johnson.

9 M. Turner, *Death is the Mother of Beauty: Mind, Metaphor, Criticism* (Chicago, 1987), p. 21.

10 M. W. Bloomfield, “A Grammatical Approach to Personification Allegory,” *Modern Philology* 60 (1963), pp. 161–170 (165).

11 “The verb (or occasionally some other part of speech) drives us back to the subject so that we may reinterpret it as a personification, and the verb must be metaphoric in every statement using personifications that is descriptive or narrative.” Bloomfield, “A Grammatical Approach,” p. 166. See also the definition of personification by G. Röhser, *Metaphorik und Personifikation der Sünde: Antike Sündenvorstellungen und paulinische Hamartia* (WUNT 2/25; Tübingen, 1987), p. 134.

the verb as the source domain—must be taken in account. Metaphors develop after a process of interaction between at least two textual elements, the source domain (vehicle) and the target domain (tenor). So “to personify is to ‘map’ information from a ‘source domain’ onto a ‘target domain.’”¹² Especially in personifications, it is the combination of a subject with an unusual predicate that implies new information about the subject (target domain) and a different interpretation of the predicate (source domain).¹³

My reading process and textual analysis of the book of psalms follow the definition of personification applied to biblical texts by Joseph R. Dodson in his book *The ‘Powers’ of Personification: Rhetorical Purpose in the Book of Wisdom and the Letter to the Romans*. For Dodson, personification means “the attribution of human traits to an inanimate object, abstract idea or impersonal being, which is used with action verbs most commonly employed to describe the action of a person.”¹⁴ Accordingly, my reading of the psalter concentrates on verb personifications in which the subject is the target domain and the predicate the source domain. I include personifications in subjective and vocative positions and exclude nouns in object position (e.g., Ps 7:6 or Ps 65:9) and adjectives.¹⁵

12 Hamilton, “Mapping the Mind,” p. 409.

13 See Röhser, *Metaphorik*, p. 135.

14 J. R. Dodson, *The ‘Powers’ of Personification: Rhetorical Purpose in the Book of Wisdom and the Letter to the Romans* (BZNTW 161; Berlin et al., 2008), p. 40. Furthermore he distinguishes between metaphor, allegory, anthropomorphism, prosopopeia and hypostasis, “a figure which stands between a personification and an independent being, more than a personification but not quite an autonomous power.” Following this definition, Wisdom or Lady Wisdom in the Old Testament is a good example of hypostasis. In his scale of personifications, Dodson differentiates between three types: casual (dead metaphors), general (being in comparison to a person) and representative (standing for another person or power and highlighting an emotion, attribute or part of the being). Cf. Dodson, *The ‘Powers’ of Personification*, pp. 31–33.

15 Furthermore, I exclude all personifications concerning YHWH and body parts of YHWH, in addition to the voice of YHWH, which is a kind of anthropomorphism, following Dodson’s definition of anthropomorphism as “the representation of God in human shape and emotions.” I also exclude verbs referring to collective peoples like Jacob and Israel, e.g., Ps 47:2 or Ps 53:7. What I do take into account are the personifications of abstract terms linked to YHWH (like יהוה תֹּנִית in Ps 19:8–9, etc.).

Survey of Personifications in the Psalter

The 150 psalms contain 106 verses with verb personifications, falling into three categories.

The first and most frequent category is the body-part personification:¹⁶

לְבִי וְגִל שָׂמַח לְבִי וַיִּגַּל כְּבוֹדִי אֶפְשָׁרִי יִשְׁכֹּן לְבָטָח: (Ps 16:9)

Therefore my heart (mind) (לְבִי) is glad (שָׂמַח), and my glory (כְּבוֹד) rejoices (וַיִּגַּל); my body (flesh, אֶפְשָׁר) also rests secure (יִשְׁכֹּן). (Ps 16:9 NIV)

The verbs שָׂמַח, גִּל and שָׁכַן all express human actions or relate to human beings. Whereas שָׂמַח and גִּל are connected to the human expression of joy,¹⁷ the verb שָׁכַן here refers to life lived in security and safety, with special focus on protection from enemies and wild animals.¹⁸ The subjects לְבִי and אֶפְשָׁר are body parts that can refer to the person as a whole, a rhetorical device known as *pars pro toto*, which expresses the idea that the entire person is imbued with complete joy and total security, knowing that God's protection is everywhere around him/her.

The second most frequently mentioned personifications are those related to nature:¹⁹

תְּהוֹם-אֶל-תְּהוֹם קוֹרָא לְקוֹל צְנוּרִיךְ כָּל-מִשְׁבְּרִיךְ וְגִלְיָד עָלֵי עֲבָרֵי: (Ps 42:8)

Deep (תְּהוֹם) calls (קוֹרָא) to deep (תְּהוֹם) in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. (Ps 42:7, NIV)

Picking up on the central imagery of water in Ps 42, v.7 contains a strong metaphor. The calling between the deeps and the roar of waterfalls strengthen the

16 For more examples of body-part personifications, see Pss 17:5; 18:37; 27:3; 28:7; 31:11; 33:21; 41:7; 44:19; 63:4; 63:6.

17 For the expression of joy in the psalter, see C. Abart, *Lebensfreude und Gottesjubil. Studien zu physisch erlebter Freude in den Psalmen* (WMANT 142; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2015).

18 Cf. Deut 33:12,28; Jer 23:6; 33:16. See E. Zenger and F.-L. Hossfeld, *Die Psalmen I. Psalm 1-50* (NEB 29; Würzburg, 1993, p. 112). שָׁכַן is usually connected to human actions but also sometimes to God (e.g., Num 35:34; Exod 25:8; 25:46), with animals in the sense of living or making their home (e.g., wild beasts, Job 37:8; birds, Ezek 17:23; Ps 104:12; Job 39:28), with abstract nouns (e.g., justice, Isa 32:19) and with nature (e.g., rain cloud, Job 3:5).

19 For more examples of personifications of nature, see Pss 19:2; 76:9; 85:13; 96:11-12; 97:1; 97:6; 114:3-5, as well as Marlow, "The Hills Are Alive," p. 196.

image of loud and powerful water, overwhelming the lyrical “I” “as thunderous waves crash on this self.”²⁰ The chaotic water or deep calls to something. קרא refers to the will, the intention to communicate with somebody. This is human action,²¹ as the following example of nature personification also illustrates:

נְהַרֹת יִמְחַא־יָכָף יַחַד הָרִים יִרְנְנוּ: (Ps 98:8)

Let the floods (נְהַר) clap their hands (יִמְחַא); let the hills (הָר) sing together for joy (יִרְנְנוּ). (Ps 98:8 NRS)

Clapping hands (יִמְחַא) and singing together for joy (יִרְנְנוּ) are also human actions,²² things that floods and hills are not able to do. These verbal metaphors function as personifications, attributing human traits to inanimate entities by using action verbs commonly employed to describe people. The poetic imagery of Ps 98:8 expresses the call for all creation to praise YHWH. “The personification of the natural elements seems an important part of their function of affirming YHWH’s supremacy and highlights their unique place in the created world over which he rules.”²³ Whereas רנן in q. (“call loudly, shrilly; rejoice”) and pi. (“exult, cry out”) is usually connected with human beings,²⁴ the verb is also used metaphorically in Isa 44:23; 49:13 (heavens); Job 38:7 (morning stars); Isa 35:2 (desert); Ps 96:12; 1 Chron 16:33 (trees); Ps 89:13 (Tabor and Hermon); Jer 51:48 (heaven and earth); and Isa 52:9 (ruins of Jerusalem). These examples show that metaphorical phrases with רנן are mostly nature personifications, with the exception of the personification of architectural elements (the ruins of Jerusalem in Isa 52:9).

The third most frequently mentioned personifications employ abstract terms,²⁵ as in the two following examples:

20 W. Brueggemann and W. H. Bellinger, *Psalms* (NCBC; Cambridge, 2014), p. 205.

21 For the root קרא, cf. C. J. Labuschagne, “קרא,” *THAT* 2 (1976), pp. 666-674. The root קרא is rarely combined with animals in the subject position. One example is the cry of the young ravens in Ps 147:9.

22 מחא q. with the meaning “to clap the hands” only occurs three times in the HB: Isa 55:12; Ezek 25:6; and here in Ps 98:8. We find another nature personification in Isa 55:12, where the trees of the field will clap their hands.

23 Marlow, “The Hills Are Alive!,” p. 203.

24 The noun רנה means “a loud cry,” which is usually connected with the word field of joy in the HB, especially in the psalter. Cf. J. Hausmann, “רנן,” *ThWAT* 7 (1993), pp. 538-545, as well as Abart, *Lebensfreude und Gottesjubiläum*, p. 135.

25 For more examples of personifications of abstract terms, see Pss 19:9-10; 25:21; 40:13; 44:16; 49:18; 69:8; 85:11-14; 89:15; 94:15.

וְצִדִּיק מִשְׁמַיִם נִשְׁקֶה (Ps 85:12b)

And righteousness (צִדִּיק) looks down (נִשְׁקֶה) from heaven.

Although the root שִׁקַּח (look out/down from above) can be connected to YHWH (see, e.g., Exod 14:24; P. 14:2; 53:3; 102:20; Lam 3:50), to nature (top of Pisgah in Num 21:20; borderland in 1 Sam 13:18) and to abstract terms (e.g., evil/disaster looms out at the north in Jer 6:1), the most frequently used combinations are with biblical characters in analogy of human beings (e.g., Gen 18:16; 19:28; 26:8; Judg 5:28; 2 Sam 6:16; 2 Kgs 9:30; Prov 7:6).²⁶ Thus justice in Ps 85:12 is personified through the use of the verb שִׁקַּח.

תָּם-וְיֹשֶׁר יִצְרוּנִי כִּי קוֹיִתִּידָהּ (Ps 25:21)

May integrity (תָּם) and uprightness (יֹשֶׁר) preserve me (יִצְרוּנִי), for I wait for you. (NRS; see also Prov 2:11f.)

נָצַר means “to protect and observe” somebody or something, e.g., the field (Job 27:18; 2 Kgs 17:9) or fruit trees (Prov 27:18). It is often used for human sensory perception, including listening, and for the concrete action of protection.²⁷ In the psalter, נָצַר in the meaning of “care” or “welfare” is mostly applied to depictions of YHWH as a deity willing and able to protect and preserve somebody who is in deep misery, crisis or danger or to protect the whole people. When integrity and uprightness are called upon to preserve the lyrical “I,” these human attributes perform the function of protection (from enemies), analogous to refuge in God.

Additional cases of personification cannot be clearly assigned to a specific area of verbal imagery. These personifications employ architectural elements and food and other imagery.²⁸

שִׂאוּ שַׁעְרֵיכֶם | רְאִישֵׁיכֶם וְשִׂאוּ פִתְחֵי עוֹלָם | יִבְאֵה מֶלֶךְ הַכְּבוֹדָהּ (Ps 24:9)

Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. (Ps 24:9 NIV)

26 For the root שִׁקַּח, see H.-P. Mathys, “שִׁקַּח,” *ThWAT* 8 (1995), pp. 458-461 (459f.).

27 See G. Sauer “נָצַר,” *THAT* 2 (1976), pp. 99-101 (100f.), and S. Wagner, “נָצַר,” *ThWAT* 5 (1986), pp. 577-587.

28 For more examples of further personifications in the psalter, see Pss 18:5-6; 55:16; 104:15.

Personification of *abstract terms* provides the most opportunity to dig deeper into metaphor analysis. With this in mind, I will focus on personification of abstract terms in my textual analysis of Ps 85:11. First, however, I will provide a short overview of the content and structure of the poem.

Psalm 85

Ps 85 stands out for its large number of personifications and is therefore well suited for analysis of the personification of abstract terms in the psalter. The psalm belongs to the collection of Korah and Esrachite Psalms (Pss 42; 44-49; 84f.; 87-89) and speaks about the deliverance of Israel, the anger and rage of YHWH, the sin and lamentation of the people and the restoration of the land, with delightful images of a happy ending. Based on the structure criteria of time, the poem can be divided into three sections: vv.2-4 recall YHWH's past deliverance and restoration of Israel; vv.5-8 talk about the present, in which the people, still suffering under the wrath of YHWH, praise God's faithfulness; and vv.9-14 refer to the future, although the two verbs in v.11 (נִשְׁקֹוּ and נִפְּזֹוּ) and one verb in v.12 (נִשְׁקֹוּ) are in the qatal, as in vv.2-4. The third part of the psalm is often described as a vision using prophetic language, for which the qatal, in this case the *perfectum propheticum*, is characteristic.²⁹ Speaking about the verb forms and themes in the first (past) and third (future) section, K. Schaefer notes, "Past deliverance is a motive for God's future intervention."³⁰

On the rhetorical level, vv.2-8 are narrated from the point of view of a lyrical "We" speaking to YHWH in a strong You-perspective. With the shift to the lyrical "I" in v.9, the perspective changes to speaking *about* YHWH. Here we find a dense concentration of personifications (see below, in italics).

29 See W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms: Translated with Text-Critical and Exegetical Notes* (London, 1943), p. 382. Erich Zenger considers the qatal forms in the first section, too, to be *perfectum propheticum*, interpreting them as prolepsis, an anticipated looking into the future. See E. Zenger and F. L. Hossfeld, *Psalmen 51-100 (HThK.AT)*; Freiburg et al., 2nd edn, 2000), p. 527. For further options of structure, e.g. into four sections (vv.2-4; 5-8; 9-10; 11-14-6+8+6+8 lines) see B. Weber, *Werkbuch Psalmen II. Die Psalmen 73 bis 150*, Stuttgart 2003, p. 92 and Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, p. 366f.

30 K. Schaefer, *Psalms (Berit Olam; Minnesota, 2001)*, p. 209.

Ps 85:9-14 (NRS: vv.8-13; v.9 follows NIV v.8)

- 9 Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
for he will speak peace
to his people, to his faithful,
but let them not turn to folly.
- 10 Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,
that *his glory may dwell* in our land.
- 11 *Steadfast love and faithfulness meet [met];
righteousness and peace kiss [kissed] [each other/fight against each other/
fought].*
- 12 Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,
and righteousness will look down from the sky.
- 13 The LORD will give what is good,
and *our land will yield its increase.*
- 14 *Righteousness will go before him,
and will make a path for his steps.*

In v.10, קְבוֹד (“glory, honor”) is personified: “Glory has become an actor, a personage, a theatrical character on the stage. *He* will inhabit our earth—namely, ‘our land.’”³¹ Besides the well-known personifications of justice, peace, steadfast love and truth in vv.11-14,³² which will be analyzed below, the term אֶרֶץ, introduced in v.13, is also noteworthy. V.13 depicts “our land” yielding its produce. Although the phrase נָתַן יְבוּל is connected with אֶרֶץ (Lev 26:4, 20; Ps 67:7; Ezek 34:27; Zech 8:12) or אֶדְמָה (Deut 11:17) in the Hebrew Bible and therefore does not belong to an explicit human action, as is required of personification,

31 T. Samuel, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids et al., 2003), p. 608.

32 For the connection between the personifications in vv.10-13, consider the following statement by David J. Zucker: “When God’s glory dwells in the land, truth and justice are present, as are faithfulness and well-being. Consequently, in bestowing God’s bounty, the land yields its produce.” D. J. Zucker, “Restructuring Psalm 85,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 35 (2007), pp. 47-54 (53).

the land here is often understood as a personification because of its active role.³³

The psalm ends on the road, where personified justice, which looks down from the sky in v.12, goes before YHWH (v.14). Syntactically, it is not clear whether YHWH or justice is the subject of the last verb (שׁים, “put, set”) in the psalm: does justice (NAB, NAS, NIV, NRS) or YHWH (TNK, EIN) make way for his footsteps? Consequently, it remains uncertain to whom the possessive pronoun of the 3rd p. m. sg. in פְּעָמָיו (“his footsteps”) belongs. Are the footsteps those of justice or those of YHWH? Regardless, the psalm finishes by describing the new life of happiness, fruitfulness, truth and peace in the land, including divine presence.

Textual Analysis of Ps 85:11

Having described the content and syntactical problems of the third section (vv.9-14), let us now have a detailed look at v.11

חֶסֶד־וְאֱמֶת נִפְגְּשׁוּ צֶדֶק וְשָׁלוֹם נִשְׁקוּ:

and here especially on the second personification

צֶדֶק וְשָׁלוֹם נִשְׁקוּ

Righteousness/justice and peace kiss/fight [kissed/fought against each other].

In this vivid poetic description, we find two subjects (צֶדֶק וְשָׁלוֹם) with one predicate, נִשְׁקוּ, which causes many problems. נִשְׁקוּ here in the Masoretic Text

33 Through the use of personification in this case, space is transformed into place: “The author of Psalm 85 converts the geographical space of the land into place where they [the Israelites] feel at home, namely ‘our land.’” J. H. Coetzee, “Psalm 85: Yearning for the Restoration of the Whole Body,” *OTE* 22 (2009), pp. 554-563 (558). For further details about the term אֶרֶץ and its function as personification in Ps 85, see the whole article. Space—mainly in abstract categories like up, down, inside, outside, etc.—and movement are prominent features in the third section of Ps 85. We read about a horizontal encounter in v.11 and a vertical one in v.12, where truth springs up from the ground (from below to above) and justice looks down from heaven (from above to below). YHWH, implicitly localised above, gives what is good (from above to below), and the land yields its increase out of the earth (from below).

is the qatal q. in pausa of the root נשק. Recalling the verb's importance as the source domain in the theory of personification, let us draw our attention to the verb. Compared to a noun, a verb triggers many more aspects of a certain domain because linguistically it is part of the structure subject-predicate-object and therefore is connected with more elements and raises more questions than does a noun. The meaning of the verb נשק q. in active form is "kiss" or "touch" on one hand (נשק I) or "fight", "arm oneself" on the other (נשק II).³⁴ נשק I is neither reflexive in the sense of "kiss *each other*," nor does it have an object here, which is usually verbalized with the preposition לְ,³⁵ with a suffix³⁶ or with a proper name³⁷ in the object position: what or whom do נשק and שָׁלוֹם kiss, then, and where? There are exceptions in which the object can also be introduced alone (1 Sam 20:41 and Ezek 3:13: each other; Hos 13:2; Prov 24:26; Ps 2:12). In Hos 13:2, for example, נשק I is the last element of the verse, and it is preceded by an object: "calves they kiss" (נֶשְׁקוּ יְעֻלִּים). In any case, most commentators translate נֶשְׁקוּ in Ps 85:11 by changing at least the vocalisation of the verb to the Nifal, including the strong dagesh (נִשְׁקוּ, kiss each other), although no Nifal of נשק exists in the Hebrew Bible.³⁸

נשק I q. very seldom refers to an erotic kiss between man and woman (Song 1:2; 8:1). It is, rather, a common way of saying hello or goodbye to near relatives (Gen 31:28), especially after a long separation (Gen 33:4; 45:15; Exod 4:27). Nonetheless, in most of these cases it is used as a greeting. נשק I does not belong only to the sphere of personal relationships such as love, friendship and kinship; it is also used within the cult as a symbol of veneration (1 Sam 10:1; 1 Kgs 19:18; Hos 13:2).³⁹ In the Piel it also means "kiss" (e.g. Gen 29:13; 31:28; 32:1; 45:15; Ps 2:12), and in the Hifil it means "to touch each other." The only example in the Hifil can be found in Ezek 3:13, where the translations "to touch each other" and "to brush/beat against each other" are both possible. The last leads us to the root נשק II, with the meaning of "fighting."

The root נשק II can also mean "to arm oneself," "to equip oneself/to be armed with" (Ps 78:9; 1 Chron 12:2; 2 Chron 17:17). The noun נֶשֶׁק is translated

34 W. Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament* (Berlin et al.: 18th edn, 2013), p. 857.

35 See, e.g., Gen 27:26; 29:11; 48:10; Exod 4:27; 2 Sam 14:33.

36 See, e.g., Gen 33:4.

37 See, e.g., Ruth 1:14.

38 See J. Ebach, "'Gerechtigkeit und Frieden küssen sich' oder: 'Gerechtigkeit und Frieden kämpfen' (Ps 85,11). Über eine biblische Grundwertedebatte," in: U. Bail and R. Jost (eds.), *Gott an den Rändern: Sozialgeschichtliche Perspektiven auf die Bibel: Für Willy Schottroff zum 65. Geburtstag* (Gütersloh, 1996), pp. 42-52 (42).

39 See K. M. Beyse, "נשק," *ThWAT* 5 (1986), pp. 676-680 (678-679).

as “equipment, weapons, armour.”⁴⁰ The participle נִשְׁקִי קֶשֶׁת (1 Chron 12:2; 2 Chron 17:17) with the meaning “to be armed with a bow” evokes the image of kissing/touching the bow and therefore being united with it, in the sense of being armed with it.

Moving on to the subjects, צֶדֶק refers to righteousness, justice, the ordered, divine principle which can also denote active divine intervention. Accordingly, it is also used as a synonym for salvation and deliverance by God.⁴¹ צֶדֶק is mentioned three times in this psalm and is further personified in v.12, where it looks down from heaven, and in v.14, where it goes before YHWH. The second subject, שְׁלוֹם, which has already appeared in v.9, describes more than the absence of war; it is peace in the sense of wholeness and integrity, in having enough and being satisfied.⁴²

The first part of v.11 contains—in a synonymous construction with the second part—the word pair חֶסֶד (see also v.8), in the sense of steadfast love and covenant loyalty, and אֱמֶת, (see also v. 12) in the sense of truth, faithfulness and reliability, with the predicate נִפְגְּשׁוּ (ni. 3rd p. pl. qatal). The root פגש carries the notion of meeting, but we do not know if this encounter takes place in a positive way or in a negative one, as in the sense of clashing.

In v.11 we can find a combination of personifications and homonymy. Considering the fact that all nouns of the verse are mentioned at least once in the text, a strong semantic relationship between them can be stated.

The four personified terms חֶסֶד, אֱמֶת, צֶדֶק and שְׁלוֹם become four different and at the same time synonymous entities. Having diverse connotations (justice/ordered divine principle; peace/being satisfied; steadfast love/covenant loyalty; truth/reliability), they are synonyms for salvation and well-being in creation.⁴³ They are mostly interpreted as personifications of attributes of YHWH, as divine impersonations, angel-like messengers or mythical figures, attendants encircling the king of glory,⁴⁴ with the focus being on God's character and activity.⁴⁵ However, they are also considered personifications of human virtues and are therefore seen as personifications of attributes both

40 See, e.g., 2 Chron 9:24; 2 Kgs 10:2; Neh 3:19; Ps 140:8. The noun for “kiss” is נִשְׁקִיָּה. See Song 1:2; Prov 27:6.

41 See B. Johnson, “צֶדֶק,” *ThWAT* 6 (1989), pp. 898-924 (903, 910). Furthermore, it connotes a commitment to the community, especially to the weak and the poor. See Ebach, “Gerechtigkeit und Frieden küssen sich,” p. 46.

42 See K.-J. Illman, “שְׁלוֹם,” *ThWAT* 9 (1995), pp. 93-101 (93-94).

43 See Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, p. 369.

44 See Coetzee, “Psalm 85,” pp. 560f.

45 See J. C. McCann, *The Book of Psalms* (*The New Interpreter's Bible* 4; Nashville, 1996), p. 1017.

of God *and* of his people, as “living realities that apply to both the character of God and the hoped-for behaviour of renewed man.”⁴⁶ L. Alonso Schökel considers the personifications to be donations or presents from God to the people for their well-being.⁴⁷

Moving from the semantics of the verse to metaphor analysis, the observations drawn from mapping the aspects triggered by the input domains and by the interaction of the two domains can be explained as follows:

It is not possible to side with one of the two semantic options of the source domain, namely, with respect to the verb נִשֵּׁק, “kiss” or “fight.” The essential point here is that justice and peace, as well as steadfast love and truth, do not sit inactively waiting but rather come together in a dynamic process.⁴⁸ This means that the *absence* of these elements is characteristic of the present situation narrated in the psalm. When we read “kiss,” the harmonious meeting has either just begun (salutatory kiss) or has already reached its aim (goodbye kiss); when we read “fight,” the controversial meeting has just begun.⁴⁹ What can be said is that they meet in an intensive way, coming in contact with one another, probably after a long absence—this is what נִשֵּׁק implies. The most essential aspect is that they come together—after a time of separation from the land which has not seen justice and peace, truth and steadfast love at all. Is this just the beginning of a controversial conflict (a fight) or the end of the meeting (a kiss)? The question remains open.

Taking into account the context of psalm 85 in its entirety and moving on to rhetorical analysis, we can see that the psalmist uses personification to switch the focus away from the dense relationship between YHWH and the lyrical “We” described in Ps 85:2-8. From v.9 on, different perspectives appear with new subjects in acting positions, instead of the strong You-perspective expressed by the lyrical “We” in the text pleading with God for help and for an end to his anger (see vv.2-8). These personifications function as a kind of discharge in the relationship between the lyrical “We” and YHWH, a kind of release of

46 S. Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids et al., 2003), p. 608.

47 See L. A. Schökel and C. Carniti, *Salmos: Salmos 73-150 (Nueva Biblia Española; Estella/Navara, 1993)*, p. 1112. A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms: Psalms 73-150 (New Century Bible; London, 1972)*, vol. 2, p. 612, considers peace and steadfast love to be divine, whereas faithfulness and righteousness refer to the people of Israel.

48 See Zenger, *Psalmen*, p. 533.

49 See Ebach, “Gerechtigkeit und Frieden küssen sich,” p. 46. Of course, peace and justice can be in conflict, and giving peace a chance can come at the cost of justice. And conversely, to have justice sometimes can put peace at risk.

tension. By simultaneously shifting away from the lyrical “We” and YHWH, which represent the *human* and the *divine*, the personifications in Ps 85:11 bring the *human* and the *divine*⁵⁰ aspects together by forming one space in which they intersect. In this manner, a new area of land is described, in which the various social entities of justice, peace, steadfast love and truth come together in a dynamic process.

Example of Reception

Human or divine? Kiss or fight? Let us see if reception history can shed new light on these semantic problems in Ps 85:11. Both Jewish and Christian scholars deal with the choice between “fight” and “kiss.”⁵¹ The following example from Christian tradition was chosen due to its strong connection with the subject of this article (personification) and to its possibility of a visual presentation which appears in figure 1.⁵²

This image from the Stuttgarter Psalter, a 9th-century Carolingian manuscript from the Abbey Saint-Germain-des-Prés near Paris, depicts an encounter between two females. The image includes the Vulgate translation of Ps 85:11-14, “*misericordia et veritas obviaverunt sibi iustitia et pax osculatae sunt*,” in the first two lines. The translation “*osculatae sunt*” clearly refers to the kiss. “In Theodoret’s exegesis ‘Quaestiones in Genesim’ (5th cent. CE), righteousness and peace are understood as personifications of Elisabeth and Mary: the one carrying righteousness (John) in her womb kissed the other carrying peace (Jesus) in her womb.”⁵³ This miniature thus follows a tradition linked to the encounter

50 Although דָּוִד seems to belong to divine space, as can be seen in v.12; 14, the commentators, as I tried to show above, are not sure if these entities should be considered divine attributes or human virtues.

51 In Jewish tradition, for “fight” see the Midrash Bereshit Rabba/Genesis Rabbah 8 to Gen 1:26. See Ebach, “Gerechtigkeit und Frieden küssen sich,” p. 47, and U. Sals, “Of Worms and Worlds. Psalm 22:7, 90:4, and 85:11 in Light of Jewish-Christian Contacts in the Middle Ages,” in: M. Grohmann and Yair Zakovitch (eds.), *Jewish and Christian Approaches to Psalms* (HBS 57; Freiburg et al., 2009), pp. 95-107 (103). For “kiss,” see Midrash Shemot Rabba to Exod 4:27.

52 In Christian tradition, for “fight,” see, e.g., the quarrel of God’s daughters; in Ebach, “Gerechtigkeit und Frieden küssen sich,” p. 49, and Sals, “Of Worms and Worlds,” pp. 103-104.

53 Sals, “Of Wombs and Worlds,” p. 103.

FIGURE 1

between Mary and Elisabeth.⁵⁴ As Aaron meets and kisses Moses in Exodus 4, Mary and Elisabeth meet and kiss each other in Luke 1:39-56. The kiss between Aaron and Moses in Exod 4:27 is—with reference to Ps 85:11—interpreted as the kiss between peace/love (Aaron) and justice/truth (Moses). Furthermore, the encounter is understood as one between priest (Aaron) and prophet (Moses).⁵⁵ In the miniature, John, in Elisabeth's womb, is part of the prophetic line, whereas Jesus, in Mary's womb, follows the priestly line.⁵⁶ Elisabeth is on the left, being embraced by Mary. The background could be the Judean hill country mentioned in Luke 1:39.⁵⁷ Gender always matters in personification, but that is another matter. Nevertheless, we should remember that דק

54 See M. Oeming and J. Vette, *Das Buch der Psalmen. Psalm 42-89* (NSK.AT 13/2; Stuttgart, 2010), p. 248.

55 See Ebach, "Gerechtigkeit und Frieden küssen sich," p. 48, and Sals, "Of Worms and Worlds," p. 102.

56 See Ebach, "Gerechtigkeit und Frieden küssen sich," p. 49.

57 See P. Gordan, "Gerechtigkeit und Frieden haben sich geküsst. Ps 84 (85), 11," *Freiburger Rundbrief* 27 (1975), pp. 16-17 (17).

(justice/Moses/Elisabeth) as well as שָׁלוֹם (peace/Aaron/Mary) are masculine nouns, whereas חֶסֶד (steadfast love) and אֱמֶת (truth) are feminine nouns.

Conclusions

This article has traced a long journey, starting with the movie *Her*, in which Theodore falls in love with the voice of his operating system, and then delving into definitions of personification, focusing on the verb and an overview of personifications in the psalter. As a result, those personifications can be divided into three categories: body-part personifications, personifications of nature, and personifications of abstract terms.

The results of the metaphor analysis of Ps 85:11 are, first and foremost, that steadfast love and truth as well as justice and peace come together in a dynamic process, in the sense either of a fight or of a kiss. Second, the results depend on the context: the rhetorical style of the personification changes the focus, shifting away from a strong focus on YHWH and the relationship between the lyrical “We” and YHWH in Ps 85. Third, although the focus changes, the text accounts for both human and divine aspects, so that the four personifications of justice, peace, steadfast love and truth, human and/or divine attributes in different shapes, create a new space after an absence from the land, describing a time of restoration for the people of Israel in a new place.

One of many examples from Christian and Jewish tradition connects these ideas with a strong line of intertextuality to Exodus 4 and Luke 1. The personification of the virtues of justice and peace in Ps 85 have on the one hand become biblical figures, in the sense of the English term *personification* deriving from the Latin meaning “to make a person.” On the other hand, the personifications are identified with Mary and Elisabeth, prominent narrative characters of the New Testament. The interpretation of the miniature from the Stuttgarter Psalter shows that the human, referring to Elisabeth’s womb, and the divine, referring to Mary’s, come together as representatives of a new place, as described in the last section of Ps 85.