


Scanning the body image of Job psychoanalytically

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It would seem that there has been a growing concern about the body during the composition of the Hebrew Bible, just as the body has awakened in the mind of the humanities during the last three to four decades in Western culture. Parallel to that has been a growing interest in psychological understanding often linked to the wisdom writings, and now again when the historical–critical approach has shown its limitations. The aim of psychoanalysing the body image of Job has several advantages: it allows the recipient to sense the body of the protagonist and so penetrate into the core of the narrative. Moreover, psychological sense can be made of the deeper meanings underlying certain body parts, which play a particularly important role for Job. In such a way, a network of subtexts can be accessed. This study will trace the image of Job's body in the mind of the external world around him but more so in his own internal reality as depicted by the text. This will then constitute a body image which shifts amongst the characters and as the narrative develops. The clusters of attention imply the relations between the body parts in Job's mind and suggest the tensions of his still unintegrated body image.

Keywords: Job; body image; psychoanalytic; skin; womb; eyes.

Introduction

This study is an exploratory piece on which further work will be conducted in subsequent research as preparation for a habilitation thesis.

It is significant that not only the Song of Songs but even the Book of Job has been interpreted allegorically in the past when it concerns the body. So, for instance, *חַיְבֹנָי* [my bones] in 4:14 is understood as 'strong deeds' by Gregory the Great (Simonetti & Conti 2006:25), for instance.

Leviticus is the only biblical book outside of the *Ketuvim* where certain aspects of the body are problematised. Being allegedly of the Priestly source, its final version dates from a rather relatively late period but not as late as the often poetic texts such as the Psalter, Song of Songs, Daniel and Job where the body is mentioned most in the Hebrew Bible.

The aim of this study is to interpret different body parts as symbols of meaning but always rooted in the body: 'Ein Symbol ist niemals ganz abstrakt, sondern zugleich immer "inkarniert"' [A symbol is never entirely abstract, but always in some way 'incarnate'] (Jacobi 1957:88). Far from merely presenting a catalogue of body parts and their possible psychoanalytic meanings, however, each body part will be related to as many as possible other parts of the body and other signifiers in the text, such as the mining imagery in 28:1–11, for instance. In this way, a bodily network and structure (*vide infra*) with a texture of meaning can be formed to truly arrive at a dynamic body image with its own narrative, a subtext to the main narrative (whatever that is). This implies that Job's body image constantly changes with time and is seen differently amongst the other characters. This is similar to but also different from the introjected parts or images of the psyche dealt with by object relations theory in the broader psychoanalytic psychology (St. Clair 2000:6). Some of these images are, in fact, part-objects when they have been extracted from an external object because of functionality and could remain unintegrated as *Fremdkörper* [foreign objects] in the psyche when they have been merely incorporated without being internalised.

The feedback from the external world would naturally be internalised by Job or any other human being, but added to that are the experiences which come from his own body. The distinction of external versus internal can be a tricky one, as it does not completely coincide with Lacan's

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(1949:449–455) conscious, visual and Dolto's (1984:*passim*) unconscious, kinaesthetic body images, two theories and images which Nasio (2008:139ff.) combines: some body parts such as the skin and the eyes can be seen externally by others but can also be internally, kinaesthetically, experienced. In addition, the external body can also be seen as mirrored image from the 'inside', by the body itself. On the contrary, internal body experiences are expressed to the external world, for instance, as symptoms, and observed in a second-hand way, not only as visual but also as aural and even olfactory evidence.

Before scanning the body of Job in this way, the rationale of such an exercise will be outlined so that one can draw this logic into a meaningful conclusion in the end.

Where a text is mentioned without naming the biblical book, it always refers to the book of Job.

Rationale

One can and should raise three interrelated questions about this research project: why and how would one actually want to discern the body image of the protagonist, Job, and why would one want to interpret it psychoanalytically? The answers may be found on a literary, not a historical-critical level. That means that our concern is with the literary figure, Job, just as he appears in the text, as we now have it.

As for the first question, there has been a growing interest in the way in which the body is portrayed in the Bible and how this somehow impacts the bodily experiences of the recipient of the text. There is, for instance, now a body theology which goes beyond the traditional biblical anthropology (cf. Nelson 1992). These concerns are, however, still on a theological level. On a purely literary level, the body plays an important role in the plot of the book, as well as in the characterisation and development of one of its main protagonists, Job. Job's crisis has reduced and made him regress into his body. His subjective world itself has thereby shrunk to a basic minimum.

As long as Job remains an invisible voice, understanding his inner experiences will remain mostly elusive as well. By gathering the pieces of Job's body as it lies fragmented and 'interrupted' in the text, one can form a dotted-line image as it appears on the 'outside', that is, in the text and therefore on a conscious level. This will also be made up from the feedback other characters give about Job's body which he would have used as a kind of mirror reflection, impressions which he would have internalised to become part of his own body image.

This therefore leads from the outside to the inside, going under Job's 'skin', where these external images of his body merge with his experiences and own images of his body, assisting or undermining how he makes sense of his body.

Part of his experiences and images would be too much for Job to process and integrate into a healthy psyche and be

projected outward again, like excrement when it is negative, or as idealisation when it is too positive, because it is too dissonant with and does not fit in well with his previously established image. Expressed as words or acting-out behaviour, these projected shadows are taken in by the others again, who would feed it back in the inevitable 'recycling' process of re-internalisations of previous projections and network which all people are part of. These 'others' are not only those who communicate with Job about his own body but also all other bodies referred to, including but not limited to those of these very interlocutors (i.e. the three companions, Elihu and God). Their images can potentially be internalised by Job, as it is clear that he has done when he himself speaks about their bodies in 10:4 when Job wonders if God's eye is also of flesh, although this may already be because of his projections. Most important 'beyond' Job's body, however, are the animals referred to by God and observed by Job. At least unconsciously, Job can compare his body to theirs.

In fact, God's reaction to Job's plight is not argumentative as those of Job's other interlocutors have been but presenting him with challenging body models, amongst others. The bodies of the behemoth in 40:15–24 but especially of the leviathan in 40:25–41:1–26 are described in detail, the latter by the longest text for any animal in the Hebrew Bible.

Job's body images reflect and reveal something about his personality which is implied in the text. This leads one to the third question raised above about the rationale for a psychoanalytic interpretation of his body image(s). Originally, Freud, as medical specialist, related his psychological insights to the body and recognised many physical symptoms as, what is today called, somatisation.¹ Although the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Paul Schilder, and not Freud, coined the concept of body image (1935:11), it built on Freud's insight that the ego is in the first place a body ego (2010:253–255).

From Job's reconstructed body image one could then go even one step further and infer a psychobiography of Job to understand his skin illness better. One needs to accept that psychoanalysis is cross-culturally valid, as much empirical research has proven to a large extent. Despite this bodily basis of psychoanalytic thinking, it is surprising that so little attention has been given to the body in psychoanalytic approaches to the Bible. In the four-volume work, *Psychology and the Bible: A new way to read the Scriptures*, edited by Ellens and Rollins, and comprising in total over 1400 pages, there is only one page discussing somatisation, and then only relating to the New Testament, more specifically to Jesus (Capps 2004:64).

Such a psychoanalytic bodily analysis enhances and enlivens Job's portrayal as he is presented in the text; it not only widens and expands the character quantitatively beyond the words of the text (which the recipient does in any way, by imagining more than what is given and by reading between the lines) but also qualitatively changes Job's body image through a different understanding of it from what its

1. Different recurring bodily symptoms without an organic origin.

reception has been thus far. This is done through psychoanalytic interpretations which add depth to the character and peep into the most probable unconscious of Job, perhaps of the author and even of the recipient.

The nature of the unconscious is to have images of concrete objects (Freud 1946:277), all originally and ultimately related to the body. If the unconscious has the structure of a language as Lacan claims, then that language must have the structure of the body (*vide supra*), something which Didier Anzieu (Anzieu & Tarrab 1986:43), believing it to be implicit in Freud as well, asserts. Metaphors in the unconscious are identifications and symbolism because of similarity (Jakobson 1956:76, 78). As such they always refer back to a concrete object or action.

The body and its parts are always images as the concrete realities are absent and only represented in the text by words. As such they are always interpretations of observations and experiences of the character, the author and/or the recipient, all of which always include an unconscious dimension. This is particularly the case when the body is used in a metaphorical way, suggesting that there is a link between the vehicle and the tenor, a distinction which Ivor Richards (1936) makes in his interactions theory. As the psychocriticism of Charles Mauron (1963) has shown, the choice of a particular metaphor is therefore never arbitrary but refers back to the unconscious of the person employing it. Furthermore, what seems to us as metaphors might actually be somatisation. It is precisely on this unconscious level that we want to unveil Job's hidden body image. On the surface of the text the external body parts mentioned allow a starting point for a body map to be drawn up in future research.

Job's 'external' body

Not all the body parts mentioned in the book belong to Job. Some refer to the bodies of other human beings, of animals and even of God. Firstly, apart from these nouns making the body explicit, there are, secondly, also verbs where the body is implied, such as speaking, scratching and looking, but these will not be dealt with in this study because of practical limitations of space. Thirdly, the 'unsaid' about the body, such as certain absent body parts, should also be analysed.

Some might object that one only has the 'said' and therefore cannot analyse the 'unsaid', but the 'unsaid' is actually much more than the 'said'! For instance, if about 250 body parts are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, why have only about 68² been selected for the Book of Job? This would apply to both main protagonists, that is, the figure of Job and God.

Because of obvious practical constraints, it is impossible to work through even all the explicit mentions, and therefore, a selection has been made to serve as examples in what way this study intends to develop. The face, hand, mouth, nose

²This is the figure which one arrives at when one adds up the list of Schellenberg (2016:122–126), but she has not included גְּרִיטָה [his gristles] as in 40:18, from the noun, עֲצָמֹת [bones, strength, self] and יְמִינִי [right hand] as in 40:14, which puts the total then at 70.

and bodily beauty will be dealt with here because of their frequency and therefore assumed significance in the text. Despite their high frequency, שֵׁן [throat, life-energy], רוּחַ [spirit], לֵב and לֵבָב [both: heart], which occur 35, 31, 20 and 9 times, respectively, have not been included as they most often function metaphorically, whereas the emphasis in this article is specifically on the meaning of the literal, concrete body and its psychoanalytic meanings, as well as that of the relation between certain body parts.

Job is the character who speaks most about the body, and so it would be rare to find a body part which the outside world emphasises more than he.

Face

Although פָּנִים [face] is mentioned the most, 70 times, in many instances the root is prefixed with the prepositions, ל or מ as contract of מִן, rendering them into a mainly directional indicator. Many of these could, however, also be taken literally, such as 1:12 where the Satan leaves פָּנֵי יְהוָה [from before the face of God]. It is important to trace the face of God to link it with the eyes of Job who wants to see something of God. The Satan is the first to mention God's face in 1:11, almost repeated verbatim in 2:5 but then as that which Job would curse once his tide would have turned. When Job so often refers to his own face as in 9:27, 16:8, 16, 17:6, 29:24 and 30:10, which he obviously cannot see except indirectly in the face of the others where it is mirrored, it concerns his self-conscious unease and shame. Yet, he hardly refers to God's face, only in 13:8, 13:24 and 23:15, when one interprets the other cases as prepositional and less explicit. This suggests that his obsession with seeing God (*vide infra*) is not simply about facing God. In general, there are many instances of someone covering or hiding the face, where the absence of the face ironically makes it conspicuous, such as in 13:20, 13:24, 24:15 and 34:29. Compared and contrasted to the first mention, it seems significant that God and the narrator are the last to mention a face, and then that of Job, which God will lift up in 42:8, 9. This seems like an ironic turn of events, where not the sought face of God, but that of Job becomes highlighted.

Hand

Something similar applies to יָד [hand] which is mentioned 53 times but which is often used instrumentally in Biblical Hebrew and, for instance, preceded by the preposition ב-. To this can be added כַּף [palm], occurring 13 times, and יְמִין [right hand]. The hand of God, and then in the singular as God 'does not have' a left hand, again mentioned first by the Satan in 1:11, is particularly important when it is linked to Job's skin which God 'touches', expressed by various forms of נָגַע in 1:11.19; 2:5; 4:5; 5:19; 6:7 and 19:21, all with negative connotations, an euphemistic way of a much more violent contact from God (cf. Van der Zwan 2017:5f.), displaced to the Satan. That is why Job wants God to withdraw God's hand in 13:21. It is therefore understandable that Job is the one who refers to the hands of God most of the time: 2:10, 6:9, 10:3 (where כַּףּי [literally: your palms] is used), 10:7, 10:8,

12:9, 12:10, 13:21 (where **כַּף** [literally: your palm] is used), 14:15, 17:3 (by implication), 19:21, 26:13, 27:11 and 30:21. Just as in the case of the face, God is once again the last to mention the hand, and then again that of Job in 40:32. That means that God has the last word about Job's body.

Mouth

There is a strong concentration on the mouth which Job, however, only mentions a third of the 36 times.

This includes **פה** [mouth] appearing in any of its forms 36 times, **שֵׁפָה** (lip: 2:10; 8:21; 11:2, 5; 12:20; 13:6; 15:6; 16:5; 23:12; 27:4; 32:20; 33:3) 12, **לִשׁוֹן** (tongue: 5:21; 6:30; 15:5; 20:12, 16; 27:4; 29:10; 33:2; 40:25) 9 times, **הַךְ** (palate: 6:30; 12:11; 20:13; 29:10; 31:30; 33:2; 34:3) 7 times, **קַר** (saliva: 7:19; 30:10) twice, **שֵׁן** (tooth: 4:10; 13:14; 16:9; 19:20; 29:17; 39:28; 41:6) 7 times, **רֶצֶץ** (bit, set of teeth: 41:5) once, **לֶחִי** (jaw, cheek: 16:10; 40:26) twice and **תַּלְפִּיטָה** (jaw: 29:17) once, that is, 77 explicit references to the oral area. This is to be expected in a narrative constituted by 'oral-sadistic' arguments, such as in 8:21–22, which are, however, in stark contrast to the bodily suffering of Job. The effect of this bodily suffering in the opposite of silence manifests likewise in the mouth when the tongue cleaves to the dry palate in 29:10. The mouth and, secondly, the nose are connected through their mutual link with aggression in the Book of Job.

Nose

In a narrative with so much negative emotions, one would obviously expect **אַנְיָ** [anger, nose] to have a prominent place. This is, in fact, the case with 22 instances, to which can be added **מִן־חֻרְרֵי** [out of his nostrils] from **חֻרְרֵי** [nostril] in 41:12 where the leviathan is also said to be fuming with smoke, thus also insinuating anger.

Negative emotions are expressed even by God, the one described most with wrath in the Book of Job, such as in 4:9, the first time the root, **אַנְיָ**, appears. The nose, to which anger is associated, is therefore one of the relatively few body parts connected to God in the Hebrew Bible.

The nose or anger, that is, as organ-origin or its product, is on the lips of all in this book. God's nose or anger is, however, mostly mentioned by Job who might be projecting his own unbearable 'body' and its emotion onto God, the One who holds this emotion and its organ the most in this book. Once does the root, **אַנְיָ**, refer only to the body part: in 27:3 where Job's nostrils are linked to God's breath. In 40:24 and 26, the behemoth's nose is to be ringed as a way of humiliation, but even here the nose and its emotion, anger, function as a sign of pride. This may be an indirect hint at Job's pride which is undermined and therefore enlists his rage.

Bodily beauty

If one is interested in the unconscious meanings of the body, then the 'unsaid', the silenced, as the possible repressed in the unconscious, should also be analysed. What is significant of

the 'unsaid' about Job's body is that it was never prized for its beauty during his period of health before and after his illness, as many of the Hebrew heroes and heroines such as David (cf. 1 Sm 16:18) and Sarah (Gn 12:11) have been claimed to be (cf. Clines 1995:221–223). From this silence it would seem that bodily beauty was not a criterion of **שְׁלוּמִים** (welfare, in its broadest sense, including health [Van der Zwan 2018:300]), which one assumes for a model like Job. This is despite the explicit mention of the beauty of his daughters as part of his recovery in 42:15.

Job's 'internal' body

This concerns not only the first-person references which Job makes to his own body but all the statements he makes about any other body too, in this way showing what is uppermost in his mind when he conceptualises a body, but ultimately always his own body which determines what he selects from or projects onto other bodies. The eye, womb, skin, flesh and bones have been selected once again because of their high frequency and therefore assumed significance in the text, although frequency is sometimes not a factor when the narrative has highlighted a body part.

Eye

In third position of frequency is **עֵין** [eye] with 46 mentions and often closely linked to the face. The eye dominates as body part in a narrative where facing the eyes of the Other (cf. Gray 2010:276) seems to be a life-threatening or existential challenge.

In many cases, the eye refers to some kind of weakness, such as in 11:20 (**וַתִּכְבֶּה**) 17:7, (**תִּכְבְּלָנָה**) 17:5, (**תִּכְלֶינָה** [is dimmed]) and 31:16 (**אֶכְבְּלָה**) where the verb in all case means 'fail', with a causative sense in the last instance. In fact, Job's eyes are failing him in perhaps more ways than one. His existential search ironically blinds him to God and the meaning of his suffering. His ultimate quest is to see God, according to 19:27, which is eventually satisfied in 42:5 and which perhaps explains his silence about his skin disease thereafter.

Incidentally, 42:5 is regarded by Tur-Sinai (1967:481) as an indication of the source of the book. That is why Job is the one mentioning the eye the most, 31 times in total, of which only 11 refer to his own, 6 to those of God and 14 to those of others. He does not go to a sanctuary or temple to 'see' God, as is often the case in the Hebrew Bible (cf. also Ps 17:15), lift his eyes to heaven as in Psalm 121:1 or fail by seeing a false image of God in icons, prohibited by Exodus 20:4f. and Deuteronomy 5:8f.

Unlike Job, God does not have this sight problem which is why God only refers twice to eyes, in both cases to those of wild animals which should serve Job as examples: the vulture in 39:29 and the leviathan in 41:10.

The eyes are somehow linked to the womb, in the sense of replacing it, as in 3:10³ and 10:18,⁴ though referring to different people. In the latter case, this may perhaps even be

3.3:10: **כִּי לֹא סָגַר, דַּלְתֵי בֵּטְנִי וְסָתַר עֵינַי, מֵעֵינַי** Because it shut not up the doors of my [mother's] womb, nor hid trouble from my eyes.

4.10:18: **וּלְמָה מָרַחַם, הֲצִאתִי אֲנִי, וְעֵין לֹא-תִרְאֵנִי** Wherefore then have You brought me forth out of the womb? Would that I had perished, and no eye had seen me!

God whose 'evil eye' penetrates Job's life and body, despite 11:4. This implicit evil eye might be a projection of Job's own attitude, as he is the one who curses, according to 3:1, which could be an effect of his own evil eye. If he suffers from any kind of blindness because of psychological causes, this blindness may be as a defence against such aggression or even against illicit sexual gazing, as 31:1 could suggest and to which 15:12 could hint. Gray (2010:237, 240), however, interprets this last-mentioned verse as a reference to arrogance as often expressed by the eyes, and more so if יָרָמָן [wink], which does not fit the context here well, is somehow a textual corruption for תְּרוֹמִינָה or יְרוּמוֹ, similar to רְמוֹת [haughty] in Proverbs 6:17 and רָמוֹ [lofty] in Proverbs 30:13.

Womb

Two of the four words for the womb, רֶחֶם, בֶּטֶן, [מַעֲוָה], קֶרֶב and קֶרֶב, used in the Hebrew Bible occur in the book and all from the mouth of Job. He starts quite early, in 1:21 already. This verse reminds one of Qohelet 5:14 and Sirach 40:1, mentioning בֶּטֶן. Even when Job uses the first person in 1:21, this is a neutral and universal statement about the womb, applying to every human being. In following the previous verse's mention of rending his mantle and shaving his head here with nakedness, it is as if he is undressing to return to the womb. This is still before his skin has been attacked but already foreshadowing the link between the womb and his skin. In fact, rending the mantle may be a kind of gesture symbolising and even sublimating the laceration of the skin during mourning, as was customary in Canaan of the 14th century BCE, testified to in UT 67.VI.11–22, for instance. Shaving the hair during this rite signalled separation from the social collective which implies that hair did exactly the opposite: it bound one to it. The hair also has a phallic sub-meaning so that cutting it suggests castration (Parfitt 2007:61f.). Gray (2010:130), following Tur-Sinai, asserts that in this verse the Hebrew scientific and poetic ways of thinking about birth are combined.

A total of 9 out of 16 times this noun is used for the womb which has different connotations in the book: Alter (1990:94–102) has pointed out the key antitheses between Job's words in Chapter 3 and those of God in 38:2–38, amongst which is the womb. Twice, in 38:8, 29, Job even alludes to God as having a womb, although Tribble (1987:68) suggests that this 'womb' is ironically transcended by being created by God. The image of the womb is therefore used for God's activity of creation as well.

There is therefore ambivalence about the womb. On the one hand, Job equates his nameless mother in a *pars pro toto* metonym, and more specifically as a synecdoche, with her womb and so reduces her to it (as in 19:17 where בֶּטְנִי [my womb] is used) or, alternatively, regards her womb as her essence so that, by associating her so strongly to it, he can 'abbreviate' her to it. The linguist, Roman Jakobson (1956:76, 81), recognised metonyms⁵ as serving the same function as what Freud discovered as psychological condensation

5.Although Lacan (1966:511) linked metaphors to condensation, which means that two images are merged into one.

of images in dreams. In both language and dreams, these phenomena serve as a way to disguise something. If Job's metonymic way of speaking is a denigration of the womb, this could perhaps explain why Job claims that this womb יִשְׁכַּחְהוּ [forgets him; *vide infra*] in death in 24:20, as a projection of his own need to forget and so repress *her*, his mother. He curses that very base and origin of his existence when life makes no sense to him anymore in 3:10–11, somewhat echoed in 10:18, making him regard the womb as a grave, with reminiscences of being buried in a crouched position like an embryo (Gray 2010:130). The womb levels people from all classes according to 31:15, hinting at the fact that this is what the grave does too. Incidentally, the word, כְּנָפֵל [miscarriage or abortion; cf. Ps 58:9 and Qoheleth 6:3], from the verb, נָפַל [fall], is qualified by טְמוּן [hidden] in 3:16 to suggest that any remembrance or historical event recorded by others be wiped out, just as in 10:18 (cf. also 24:20, *vide supra*), although explicitly the eyes of this creature are said never to see external reality, just as in Qoheleth 6:4–5. The 'blindness' of this creature is therefore projected onto others and the external world.

Three out of the five times that the word, רֶחֶם, is used; it is negatively connoted: in 3:11, 10:18 and 24:20.⁶

This negative stance towards the womb is reminiscent of 14:1: אִדָּם יְלוּד אִשָּׁה קֶצֶר יָמִים וְשָׂבַע-רָגָו [Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble]. Coupled with that is the relative absence of women in a book of 42 chapters, when these hints and a few mentions are considered exceptions. This conspicuous silence and such a complex attitude to the womb in a biblical book calls for some psychoanalytic interpretation, to be pursued in future research.

On the other hand, there seems to be a nostalgic longing for the womb behind this denigration which probably only serves as defence against the loss of the womb. The romanticised description of the mine in 28:1–11 can be interpreted as a disguised hint at the womb where the precious minerals (28:1–2, 6, 10) and gemstones (28:6, 10) are to be found. In fact, one of the first words in this passage, מוֹצֵץ [source, spring, which is often here translated as 'mine'], is resonant with מוֹצֵץ [springing forth] in 38:27, where God speaks of the new spring born from the desolate and deserted desert. A sense of death as extremity is also present in this 'womb-mine' in 28:3, a kind of dark grave, which suggests a death from which precious things are 'born'. Ironically the human eyes can pierce its אֶפְלַי [thick darkness] in 28:3 [cf. also 28:10, 11], and so seem different from the eyes which are confronted with harsh reality outside the womb, according to 3:10. The association of darkness with תְּהוֹמוֹת [the deep] and יָם [and the sea] in 28:14, the latter recalling נְהָרוֹת [streams] in 28:1, suggests that the same characteristics of the womb are in Job's unconscious: depth, (amniotic⁷) fluid and darkness. Fountains and rivers, as gateways to שְׂאוֹל [the netherworld], are seen to be fed by תְּהוֹמוֹת [the deep] where the leviathan has to be kept under control (cf. also Keel 1996:33f., 41f.; Kloppper

6.The other two being 31:15 and 38:8.

7.Cf. Frymer-Kensky (1987:234).

2002:60). This conceptualisation of the underworld can be psychoanalytically interpreted as the chaotic yet life-yielding *Id*, the Freudian pleasure principle, which needs to be kept within bounds, and is in this context related to the womb experience.

At the same time there is also a disillusioning realisation by Job that wisdom is not amongst the precious things about which Job dreams. Wisdom is not to be found by the penetrating eye in the ideal but naïve womb-state. The eye's transcendental longing for God and supposedly wisdom then as well is not to be satisfied in the womb. In this way, the womb and the eye are seen as or become polar opposites.

When the eye is, however, associated with a fountain or spring in the word, *וַיַּע*, (cf. Jr 8:23), so is a womb perhaps also suggested in *קַי־יִכְבֵּן* [springs of the sea] in 38:16. This is still the case even when *יִכְבֵּן* replaces *יִכְבֵּן* [from weeping, that is, lest they trickle] as a textual emendation in 28:11 (cf. Dt 33:18; Pr 5:16, 18). The eye is therefore also caught up in the conflict of ambiguity.

Skin

The centripetal flight to the womb is probably caused by the core of the crisis going on at the periphery of Job's body: the skin. The link to the womb, to his mother, is probably also caused by the nature of the skin to exclude the external world as the other, the typical oedipal experience. It is therefore not coincidental that Job's father is never mentioned. He is absent at least in the words even if not in the mind of Job when 24:9, where the word, *תוֹם*, [fatherless] is considered.

The word, *עוֹר* [skin], occurs 10 times in the Book of Job, more than 10% of the 99 times which it occurs in the Hebrew Bible. In addition, the *hapax legomenon*, *גִּלְדִי* [my skin], probably Aramaic, in 16:15 brings the total number of times that the skin is mentioned explicitly to 11. In 4:15 *בְּשָׂרִי* [my flesh] probably also refers to the skin, as Job states that the hair stands up on it. In fact, the original meaning of *בְּשָׂר* may have been 'skin', as it is with *بشرة* in Arabic, where it does not refer to hide, as Wilkinson (1991:203) claims.

Ten of these instances are about Job and only 10:11 (giving the positive counterpart of Ezk 37:8) and 40:31 celebrate the miracle of the skin, in the former his own and in the latter that of the leviathan, the only time in the Hebrew Bible where an animal skin does not refer to a dead animal which has been skinned.

According to Balentine (2006:59), the meaning of *דָּעַב* [for, up to] in 2:4 – the first time the skin is mentioned in the book – has the idea of relative value in the context of barter exchange in the background, in which case the skin is seen as something replaceable, not essential as the bones at the core are and which as remnant survive even death and the loss of *שְׁפָתַי* (life[-breath]; cf. Ezk 37:3,4). The skin at the periphery of the body is just a mask, a *persona*, manifesting the change in the social role which Job is experiencing

because of his losses. This sense can be linked to that of Dhorme (1926:23) who takes *דָּעַב* as suggesting equivalent retaliation before the law, meaning that a superficial skin wound would not elicit strong reaction as life remains still unthreatened. This could fit the context here as a relatively minor injury could be compromised but it would imply that the skin is regarded as of lesser value. Yet, it would be ironic that God then only allows (mainly?) Job's skin to be attacked, although it seems as if Job's whole (external) body is affected, when 2:7 is taken into consideration.

When either the first or second mention of *עוֹר*, as a *pars pro toto* synecdoche, in 2:4 rather means 'body', then Satan would not limit the attack on the skin only, but, as the next verse explains, would include *אֶל-עֲצָמוֹ וְאֶל-בְּשָׂרוֹ* (his bone and his flesh), probably as merism for the whole body.

Three ⁸ times *עוֹר* is mentioned with *בָּשָׂר* [flesh], and three (or four⁹) times with *עֲצָם* [bone]. In two of these cases, it is combined with both *עֲצָם* [bone]¹⁰ and *בָּשָׂר* [flesh].¹¹ It would therefore seem that the skin is one of the three most significant body parts in Job, together forming the gross structure of the body, just as it is in Ezekiel 37:6, 8, Micah 3:2–3 and Lamentations 3:4. Interesting is that blood does not count amongst these basics. The sequence in which these body parts are mentioned together varies, but in more cases the skin comes first; so there seems to be more a way of scanning the body from the outside inwards. The skin seems to be regarded, sometimes with flesh as in 10:11, to serve as some kind of clothing, onto¹² which even sackcloth, the mourning garb, can be sewed (*תִּפְרְתִי* in 16:15), but in 7:5 worms take that place to cover Job's flesh. Job claims in 30:18 about his diseased skin: *יִתְהַפֵּשׂ לְבוֹשִׁי* (my garment has been disfigured).

Sometimes the word for skin is not mentioned explicitly, but referred to indirectly, as in 2:7.8.12 and in 11:15 where Zophar sarcastically speaks of *פְּנֵיךָ מִמּוֹם* (your face without spot). Various interlocutors, amongst whom the satan (who actually challenges God to touch Job's bone and flesh in 2:5) is first, mention the skin, while God has the last word about the 'ideal' skin of the leviathan. Bildad mentions skin in 18:13 where some have interpreted the word 'skin' as 'body'. However, Job mentions it the most, as he is the one who is probably most aware of it because of his plight in that very part of his body. The skin has important psychoanalytic meanings of identity and exclusion as it is the boundary of the body and the site of both contact and conflict with the external world.

8. In 7:5, 10:11 and 19:26.

9. If *שִׁנָּי* (my teeth) in 19:20b is regarded as part of the skeleton, but this consideration becomes irrelevant since Gray (2010:273) regards this word as a textual corruption. The others are 10:11, 19:20a and 30:30.

10. In 19:20 the last words of Psalm 102:6, *דָּבַקָה עֲצָמֵי לִבְשָׂרִי* (my bone[s] cleave[s] to my flesh), are partially echoed in *בָּעוֹרִי יִבְשָׂרִי דָּבַקָה עֲצָמֵי* (My bone cleaves to my skin and to my flesh).

11. In 10:11 and 19:20.

12. Although Gary (2010:253) believes that the verse rather means that sackcloth be sewn and used on top of, and so as compensation for, the skin.

Flesh

Flesh is mentioned 18 times and two-thirds thereof by Job. Flesh mentioned by Job is important because it seems as if it is either linked to the eyes or somehow 'becomes' eyes, according to 19:26,¹³ where Job vouches, once he has lost his skin: *וּמִבְּשָׂרִי אֶחְזֶה אֱלֹהִים* (then from my flesh I will see God), even when he will have retained the *בְּעוֹר שְׁנֵי* (skin of my teeth, that is, the bare minimum), mentioned a few verses earlier in 19:20. Just as the eyes are opposed to the womb, so his flesh seems to be opposed to his skin. Yet, it is also a sign of life 'clothing' the innermost counterpart, the bones, which is also the hidden reminder of death. In this way the skin (together with flesh) is a cover-up for death. There has been some controversy about whether *וּמִבְּשָׂרִי* (and with[out] my flesh) should be interpreted as 'deprivative' or not. One of the indications that the intention is that Job wants to see from the flesh and therefore as a still living being, is that he would have referred to bones as the only remainder after death if he thought of a posthumous seeing.

In 14:22, ending a chapter that starts about birth, *בְּשָׂרוֹ* (his flesh) even seems to refer in a metonymic way to one's offspring, and so as extension of one's own 'flesh', although Clines (1989:336) and Habel (1985:244) interpret it as the suffering body of the deceased. Elsewhere, such as in 21:6, it means the whole body, and here specifically in a psychosomatic sense. It is not clear in what way Job's persecutor-friends are not satisfied with his flesh in 19:22, where Schellenberg (2016:126), however, understands it as animal meat, just as in 31:31, which Clines (2006:1028–1029) interprets likewise and adds that meat was a prized gesture of hospitality. Clines (1989:454–455) understands 19:22 in the same way but then as the opposite of 31:31, in that 19:22 literally refers to animal meat devoured by wild beasts, but metaphorically refers to slander and accusations (*vide infra*). This figurative use means that Job's body is by implication dehumanised to that of an animal. When Elihu speaks about flesh in 33:21, 25, it sounds like he is referring to a dying body, which is miraculously rescued. The flesh of the corrective body which God presents in that of the leviathan in 41:15 which can be seen as the opposite to that of Job in 19:20.

Flesh also distinguishes humanity from the divine in metal, probably that of statues of deities, as 6:12 affirms by means of a rhetorical question. Serving often as a metonym for a whole body or rather the human being, it is only once referred to by an outsider, the satan, in 2:5 who couples it with bones as a merism (*vide infra*) for the decrepit and perishable body of Job. This verse could also suggest the perishable¹⁴ and the 'surviving' or remaining parts of the body, yet another polarity to suggest inclusion. Twelve of the 18 times where *בָּשָׂר* is mentioned, it is done so by Job himself, once again because it is his own flesh attacked by his skin, which is sometimes grouped with flesh and bones.

13. Pope (1973:147) remarks that this verse is known for its difficulty and that it has elicited different interpretations throughout history. One should therefore be careful not to invest it with all kinds of certainties.

14. Cf. probably also 10:4 and 34:15.

Bones

References to the skeleton or parts of it occur 13 times in the text. In 2:5 *עֲצָמוֹ* (his bone, that is, in the singular) probably serves as one polarity of a merism (*vide supra*) to suggest a whole (cf. Gn 2:23, where this first mention in the Hebrew Bible is also in the singular).

It is not clear what *מֵעֲצָמוֹתַי* [than my bones] actually means in 7:15 where it could simply refer to Job's living body, but then another body part, such as *מֵעָה* [belly, body] would probably have been more suitable. Job speaks once positively of bones when he even says in 10:11 that *תְּשַׁכְּבֵנִי* (You [that is, God] have knit me together) with bones *וְגִידִים* [and sinews^{15,16}]. The singular, *עֲצָמִי* [my bone], is used in 19:20 again, but here probably as a collective for his whole skeleton (Clines 1989:451; cf. 2:5, Gn 29:14, Ps 102:6 and Lm 4:8).

Eliphaz uses *עֲצָמוֹתַי* [my bones] metaphorically to suggest core and essence in 4:14. Zophar means the same thing in 20:11 with *עֲצָמוֹתָיו* [his bones]. The slightly different word, *בְּעֹצֵם* [might, bones], in 30:21 again reflects the metaphorical use. Job uses *עֲצָמִים* in the same way in 21:23 and in 30:17; he might be referring to his deepest core (cf. Clines 2006:513) with *עֲצָמִי* [my bones], however, seemingly adding a psychosomatic aspect to it, when the night *נִקְרָה* [pierces] them, just as they are burned in 30:30: perhaps because of his reflections during his sleepless nights Job experiences the pains of his psyche and spirit in his body. In fact, *נִקְרָה* in this verse has been emended by some to the verb, *יִקְרָה* [be hot, burn; Habel 1985:416]. Either his bones are somehow connected to *וְעַרְוִי* [[and] my sinews] or the participle, *עֹרָה* [gnaw], as it occurs in 30:3 as well, is meant (Clines 2006:953, 1006). This latter possibility could make more sense as the mauling action of his pains, somewhat paralleled to the devouring action of slander implied in 31:31 (*vide supra*). The plural, *עֲצָמַי* [my bones], in 30:17 might betray his sense of disintegration into fragmented parts.

In 21:24 the word, *עֲצָמוֹתָיו* [his bones], is preceded by *וּמִמֶּה* [and the marrow of] to indicate that only when marrow *הִשְׂקָה* [is moistened], are bones alive (cf. the dry, dead bones in Ezk 37:2, 4).

The 'corrective' bones are again found in 40:18 where it is the only instance referring to the bones of an animal and where *עֲצָמוֹתָיו* [its bones] are made of *בְּרֹזֶה* [brass], the same material Job supposes his flesh is to be made of in 6:12 where the word, *חַדִּישׁ*, is used.

Conclusion

'Psychoanalysing' the body image(s) of Job involves more than just Job's conscious awareness of his own body and includes all references to anybody mentioned in the book, and therefore all body parts and even verbs which imply the body

15. The noun, *גִּיד* [sinew], is used only four more times in the Hebrew Bible: Genesis 32:33, Isaiah 48:4 and Ezekiel 37:6, 8.

16. Cf. also 40:17 where God uses a different verb, *יִשְׁרָגוּ*, with approximately the same meaning.

are relevant. The unmentioned parts of the body are also important as the silence about them can have meaning as well.

The link between the narrative and certain body emphases shows how closely the two aspects of the book are intertwined. Job's own emphasis is on his eyes, 'his' womb and his skin, the latter being the site where his disease is made public to the world. These three body parts experienced from the 'inside', although two of them, the eye and the skin, are, in fact, highly public and so externally exposed, are also the most problematised ones. They are, furthermore, the most interconnected with each other despite two, the skin and the womb, occurring less frequently in the Book of Job than most other references to the body. Polarities can be part of a merism or implicitly suggest tension between some body parts, showing that Job's body is not as integrated in his unconscious as a mirror image would suggest.

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I declare that I am the sole author of this research article.

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