

## JOB'S PROBLEMATIC BODY FOR BOTH PROTAGONIST AND RECIPIENT

Pieter van der Zwan  
University of South Africa

**Abstract:** For as long as Job remains an invisible voice without an exterior body, understanding his inner experiences will remain mostly elusive as well. The body of Job is “heard” in the emotional descriptions that Job gives of his pain as he experiences it kinaesthetically. When speech and sound are, however, seen as the “shadow” of the body, and in this way echoing it in its absence, the silences, like the unconscious, are the base of this body in these descriptions. In the meantime, Job’s body remains problematic as it is, firstly, not recognised by his interlocutors for lack of empathy, secondly, not by the recipient(s) for whom it is nothing but two-dimensional words, which are often almost incomprehensible due to cultural and temporal distance, and, thirdly, not even by Job himself who struggles to see in it the reality which God eventually points out to him. Yet a bridge can be built thanks to a “universal” body shared by all parties.

**Keywords:** Job, body, recipient, sound, silence

After hearing or reading this biblical book, the recipient<sup>1</sup> has seemingly been blinded to the visible Job, just as Job has been blinded to God, specifically God beyond the boundaries of his body with which he is being confronted. The problematics of Job’s body therefore have to do with its asymptotic reduction to the virtually non-existent.

That has partly to do with the relative lack of narrative which only prosaically and peripherally frames the poetic argument in the body of the text, despite this narrative probably having been the original core. Could one, for instance, make a silent movie of Job? Or are the aural, the language

---

<sup>1</sup> In order to be inclusive, the word “recipient” has been preferred, hence referring to both readers and listeners. This is not only to accommodate the ancient, illiterate audiences, but also blind people who rely on audio recordings. It also ties in better with the concept of “reception history.”

and logic the base of the book? Much music has tried to express different facets of the book, from Orlande de Lassus's 1565 cycle of motets, the *Sacrae Lectiones Novem ex Propheta Job* to the 1964-musical<sup>2</sup>, *Fiddler on the Roof*, which are strongly influenced by the Book of Job. It seems that movies about Job only started to gain momentum in the 21st century, perhaps in tandem with the rediscovery of the body in the humanities from the 1980s. Between the aural tradition and the currently surging visual culture of the western world, artists such as Georges de la Tour (1593–1652; Veber's film, 2003) and the visionary William Blake (1757–1827; originally published 1826 but here: 1995; Mason 2011: 460–475) already gave us a diet of dots of what would become the (out)lines of a picture (cf. Boss 2010: 10), first moving in the 1931 *Job: masque for dancing* by Vaughan Williams, who based his ballet-music on Blake (Ries 1984). In this way the aural Job developed into first static and then moving pictures.

This is possible because the plot is dramatic but thinly detailed, in that it is summarised in the first two and part of the last chapters (cf. also Boss 2010: 2), and therefore the recipient is invited to fill in the gaps with potential self-projections. Relatively little happens *to* Job compared to what happens *in* him (Boss 2010: 12), in his mind and in his body. The interaction with other characters is limited to dialogue, keeping the interlocutors stuck in their heads. Yet Boss (2010: 6) considers the *dramatic* form of the book due to its unity of *action*, apart from that of time and space. This action would then *not* include the events narrated in the pro- and epilogue, although this is done by Gelber (1975) in his theatre piece. The play which Eaton and Young have made out of the book is not the original drama either, according to Boss (2010: 6), whatever this may have been.

Two issues therefore intersect: that of the plot and that of the book's visual or at least potential visual nature. The hypothesis of this study is that the real narrative is hidden in the problematic body of Job.

The methodological approach is a modification of the usual psychological, and more specifically psychoanalytical, understanding of the protagonist's mind by the recipient in that Job's body is taken seriously. Job-as-body—and not a disembodied Job—is the acting and developing *subject* with which / whom the recipient humbly tries to empathise by

---

<sup>2</sup> Filmed in 1971.

visualising him in his silent experience. In this way the recipient as witness can “hear” the words whispered by Job’s body-image as his unconscious. At the same time, this is a challenge to the general notion that the unconscious is visual imagery (cf. Ramachandran and Gregory 1991 and Jung’s view of the archetypes as images) translated into auditory conscious speech.

After having first explored how the body of Job confronts him with the boundaries of his physical and social existence, and then how this body problematises the reception of the work, the way that a trans-individual body can build and be the bridge between the verbal centre and the silent, suffering sensuality at the periphery will be presented as a possible resolution to this intra- and post-textual conflict.

The translations of the Jerusalem Publication Society of America (1917) have been used but old forms such as “hath” have been modernised.

## JOB’S BODY FOR BODY

Not all the (approximately) 69 body-parts mentioned in the book belong to Job (cf. Schellenberg 2016: 122–126). Some refer to the bodies of other human beings, animals (*vide infra*) and even of God. The body of Job is scattered in about 60 body-parts spread across the 42 chapters, and remain relatively few, fleeting and free-floating. From these fragments we can build up a body-map, showing where the attention is focussed and which parts are ignored. Apart from nouns making the body explicit, there are, of course, also verbs where the body is implied, such as speaking, scratching and looking.

Due to obvious practical constraints, it is impossible to work through even all these explicit mentions and therefore a selection of three has been made to serve as examples of how this study intends to develop. Despite their high frequency, נַפֶּשׁ (“throat”, “life-energy”), רוּחַ (“spirit”), לֵב and לֵבָב (both: “heart”) which occur respectively 35, 31, 20 and 9 times, have not been included, as they most often function metaphorically, whereas the emphasis in this paper is specifically on the literal, concrete body.

By gathering the pieces of Job’s body as it lies tattered 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 others give about Job's body that he would have used as a kind of mirror and as impressions, and which he then would have internalised to become part of his own body-image. In a similar way Job would also, probably unconsciously, internalise the bodies of others—those of other people, animals (*vide infra*) and God, and merge them with the feedback on his own body from others to result in his subjective body-image.

One can therefore distinguish an external and an internal body of Job, the former being how it is perceived by others, that is, from the outside, whereas the latter is how Job himself perceives it from the inside, both as physical experiences and as a body-image in his mind, which would in turn have conscious and unconscious layers.

However, this body remains a textual one, without a texture that can be touched. The parts of Job's body are always only images, as the concrete realities are absent and only referred to in the text by words. As such they are always interpretations of observations and experiences 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. Furthermore, 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 mind of the person employing them. In addition, what seems to us as a metaphor might actually be somatisation.

Although פָּנִים ("face") is mentioned the most amongst all the body-parts—that is, 70 times—many forms of this root are prefixed with the prepositions ל or מ, rendering them into mainly directional indicators. In second position is יָד ("hand") with 53 mentions, of which many are also used with prepositions, and then in adverbial functions to suggest instrumentation. Then follows עַיִן ("eye"), mentioned 46 times, as the first to refer more directly to the organ or to its role as a metaphor for the mind. The eye therefore dominates as a body-part in a narrative where facing the eyes of the Other seems to be the life-threatening or existential challenge.

One hears about the eyes, but one never sees them. One therefore has to imagine them, make a mental image of them and visualise them, but one actually remains somehow blind to them. Likewise, the eye refers in many cases to a defect (as in 11:20 וַתִּבְרָחַ, 17:7 תִּבְכְּלָנָה, 17:5 תִּבְכְּלִינָה ["is

dimmed”] and 31:16 אָבִלָה) where the verb in all cases except the third means “fail,” with a causative sense in the last instance. In fact, it is with the invisibility of God that Job is struggling. This search makes him also blind to 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 in general and therefore also about his skin-disease thereafter. 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 as in Psalms 17:15 where it is linked to בָּהֲקִיץ (“when I awake”) and 27:4, or lift up his eyes to heaven as in Psalm 121:1, or fail by seeing a false image of God in icons, prohibited by Exodus 20:4–5 and Deuteronomy 5:8–9.

God does not have this sight problem which is perhaps why God only refers twice to eyes, in both cases to those of wild animals (*vide infra*) 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 3:10 בְּטִנִּי [“of my womb”] and 10:18 מִרְחֹם [“out of the womb”]), where these verses refer to different people. The first two of the four words for the womb, בֶּטֶן, רֶחֶם, [מֵעֵרָה] and קֶרֶב, used in the Hebrew Bible occur in the book, and all in the mouth of Job himself. He starts quite early, in 1:21 already, mentioning בֶּטֶן. Nine out of 16 times in the book this noun is used for the womb.

Apart from equating his nameless mother in a *pars pro toto* metonym—and more specifically as a synecdoche—with her רֶחֶם (“womb”) which יִשְׁכַּחְהוּ (“forgets him”) in death in 24:20 (as if he forgets her) and so reducing her to it (as in 19:17 where בְּטִנִּי [“my womb”] is used), he curses that very base and origin of his existence when life makes no sense to him anymore in 3:10 (בְּטִנִּי [“my womb”]) and 3:11 (מִרְחֹם [“from the womb”]). It is somewhat echoed in 10:18 (again מִרְחֹם [“from the womb”]), making him regard the womb as a grave which both levels people from all classes according to 31:15 (both בֶּבְטֵן and בְּרֶחֶם [“in the womb”]). Twice, in 38:8 (using מִרְחֹם [“out of the womb”]) and 29 (מִבֶּטֶן [“out of the womb of”]), he even alludes to God as having a womb. From this alternating use in parallelisms, it is clear that the two words are used synonymously.

The word רָחַם is used here four out of five times negatively, always for a mother's womb. This reminds us of 14:1: אָדָם יְלוּד אִשָּׁה קָצָר יָמַיִם וְיִשְׁבַּע-רָגְזוֹ (‘‘Man who is born of a woman has few days and is full of trouble’’). Coupled with that is the relative absence of women in a book of 42 chapters, where these hints and a few mentions are considered exceptions. This conspicuous silence about women and such a complex attitude to the womb in a biblical book calls for some psychoanalytic interpretations.

The centripetal flight to the womb is probably caused by the core of the crisis going on at the periphery of his body: the skin. This link to the womb—to his mother—is probably also caused by the nature of the skin to exclude, the typical oedipal experience. It is therefore not coincidental that Job's father is never mentioned. He is absent in the words but not in the mind of Job when 24:9 is considered: יִגְזְלוּ מִשֹּׁד יְתוֹם (‘‘they pluck the fatherless from the breast’’), perhaps some projection of his own babyhood (*vide infra*).

The word עוֹר (‘‘skin’’) occurs 10 times in the Book of Job, i.e. more than 10% of the 99 times in which it occurs in the Hebrew Bible. In addition, the *hapax legomenon* גִּלְדִּי (‘‘my skin’’), probably Aramaic, in 16:15 brings the total number of times that the skin is mentioned explicitly to eleven. Ten of these instances are about Job and only 10:11 (giving the positive counterpart of Ezekiel 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 it does not refer to a dead animal which has been skinned. Sometimes the word for skin is not mentioned explicitly but referred to, as in 2:7, 8, 12 and in 11:15 where Zophar sarcastically speaks of פְּנֵיךָ מִמּוֹם (‘‘your face without a spot’’). Although various interlocutors mention the skin, amongst whom Satan (who actually challenges God to touch Job's bone and flesh in 2:5) is first while God has the last word about the ‘‘ideal’’ skin of the leviathan, and Bildad mentions it in 18:13, the majority of mentions come from Job, the one who is probably most aware of it due to his plight in that very part of his body.

Yet, this fragmented body to which Job has regressed, reminding one of that in the mind of the infant before the mirror experience, is brought together and somehow integrated, when Job's skin as שָׁחִין רָע (‘‘sore boil’’) in 2:7 resonates in and is mirrored intertextually already in:

- Exodus 9:9, 10, 11 (twice) as one of the plagues against the Egyptians,
- Leviticus 13:18, 19, 20, 23 where, in the context  $\text{עֲרֵבָה}$  of (unknown meaning, but often wrongly translated as “leprosy”), it is one of seven skin-illnesses ranging from clean to unclean which the priest can deal with. Even when  $\text{עֲרֵבָה}$  is not necessarily implied, as the word never occurs in the text of Job, there might have been at least an unconscious association for an author who might have been aware of this priestly text. The unconscious is not about logical but about associative connections,
- Deuteronomy 28:27, 35 in a list of incurable skin illnesses and of God’s threatened punishments ending up in the exile,
- and in 2 King 20:7 which echoes verbatim Isaiah 38:21 and is about king Hezekiah’s bodily problem.

The word  $\text{עֲרֵבָה}$ , which does not occur in the Book of Job as it does in Leviticus 13–14 referred to above, could be related to the skin problem from which Job suffers. Yet, although it is probably wrongly translated as “leprosy” to compensate for lack of better understanding of its meaning, it showcases the inadequacy of speech to represent Job’s body (*vide infra*).

Intertextually related to the above-mentioned passages about Job’s boil could thus be associated in the mind of the reader with both the exodus and the exile, two situations of being an outsider. That is perhaps why Job longs nostalgically for the “inside” again, even inside his mother’s womb, a pre-oedipal, paradisiacal Eden from which he has been banished. Yet this inclusion in the mother is also an exclusion of the external world, which is now banishing him as well. He cannot take refuge regressing to this maternal body as it does not exist for him anymore but has left traces in his mind and soul. Job therefore fantasises of regressing to the death from which he was conceived and born in an attempt to short-circuit the painful detours between death and death.

The textual narrative and narrative time (cf. Gérard Genette’s term, anachrony [1972: 89]), however, does not start at this beginning, that is, at Job’s birth, but in  $\text{עֵז}$  (“Uz”) according to 1:1 and in the  $\text{קֶדֶם}$  (“east”) according to 1:3, outside the Israelite boundaries. In the Greek Old Testament Book of Job, he is said to be a ruler of Edom. Here he is an insider, but perhaps also an outsider as his exceptional heart, behaviour and

belongings set him apart as גדול מכל (“greater than all” or “the greatest of all”) his people. It is lonely at the top, left behind when his children go to party. He is then step-by-step down-graded and excluded from this top position to be eventually reduced from his extended body in the form of his possessions and children to his personal body which is then “eaten up” by his own skin from the outside.

This also happens socially as he would have been banned from the community if the laws of the Priestly Source would have been enacted: מרחוק (“from afar”) in 2:12 seems to be in agreement with the separation prescribed in Leviticus 13:46 and Numbers 12:14. Also, on a more intimate level his now clearly false friends, initially still לאָרץ אִתּוֹ (“with him upon the ground”) in 2:13, subtly turn against him with accusatory schadenfreude-arguments devoid of empathy and practical assistance, probably stemming from envy all along, showing that their arguments derive more from the heart than from the head. This alienation goes so far that in 30:10 Job bemoans being rejected even by outcasts:

תַּעֲבוּנִי רִחְקוּ מִנִּי וּמִפְנֵי לֹא-תִשְׁכּוּ רֶגֶל

They abhor me, they flee far from me, and do not stop to spit in my face.

The fragile position of Job at the outskirts and frontiers of his society due to his “boundary” struggles is primarily due to his skin, which has important psychoanalytic meanings as it is the boundary of the body and the site of both contact and conflict with the external world where it is excluded. Paradoxically and ironically his exclusion also means that he is overly included and even overwhelmed by an external world which floods his own borders so that his identity becomes an issue, an experience which God understands at the end of the book by repeatedly confronting him with the question about his own self.

That oedipal issues of exclusion are involved is clear from his silence about his father, over against several mentions of his mother (*vide supra*). Ultimately, he feels excluded by God, perhaps also unconsciously seen as a father-figure.

He tries to bridge the distance to this invisible God (cf. 13:24) by focusing on his eyes. This includes his question about God’s eyes in 10:4:

הַעֵינֵי בְּשָׂר לָךְ אִם-כְּרֵאוֹת אֲנוֹשׁ תִּרְאֶה

Do You have eyes of flesh? or do You see as a human being sees?

It's as if he imagines that God's invisibility also makes him as Job invisible to a blind God. He has an urge to "see" God, when he will have escaped from his captive skin, according to 19:26–27<sup>3</sup>:

וְאַחַר עוֹרִי נִקְפוּ-זֹאת וּמִבְּשָׂרִי אֶחְזֶה אֱלֹהִים

And when after my skin this is destroyed, then with(out) my flesh shall I see God.

אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי אֶחְזֶה-לִי וְעֵינַי רְאוּ וְלֹא-זֶר כָּלוּ כְלִיתִי בַּחֲקִי

Whom I, even I, shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another's; my reins are consumed within me.

This urge is eventually satisfied in 42:5:

לְשִׁמְעַ-אֲזִן שָׁמַעְתִּידָה וְעַתָּה עֵינַי רְאִיתִךָ

I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You.

Here as well, when he is still alive, perhaps explaining his silence about his skin-disease thereafter which is now no longer a barrier. The eye, the womb and the skin are therefore interwoven in their psychoanalytic meanings and together weave the subtext.

The narrative of the subtext is therefore also more in Job's body than in the arguments raised by all the interlocutors, and the strongest arguments are those presented by the evidence of the silent<sup>4</sup> animal bodies (*vide infra*), specifically those closer to the end. All these bodies "speak" for themselves and show the polarity of language and body as perhaps the two real protagonists of the narrative.

In fact, the narrative of the subtext is precisely how Job's body threatens to disappear due to the dominance of the surface-text from the stage and the page. The narrative which is Job's body ranges from his prenatal

<sup>3</sup> Incidentally, Job's body is also problematic due to the obscure language such as in this verse (cf. e.g. Driver and Gray 1977: 174).

<sup>4</sup> Unless 41:4 refers to the leviathan.

existence in the womb in 10:8–12 to his death in 42:17 at the age of 140 years, even 20 years older than the “perfect” age if the gematria of the five fingers being  $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 = 120$  is taken seriously. Actually, 10:8–9 is a summary of his life, mentioning only its beginning and end:

יְדִיד עֲצָבוֹנִי וַיַּעֲשֵׂנִי יַחַד סָבִיב וַתְּבַלְעֵנִי

Your hands have framed me and fashioned me together round about;  
yet You destroy me!

זָכֶר-נָא כִּי-כַחֲמֶר עָשִׂיתָנִי וְאֶל-עָפָר תִּשְׁיִבֵנִי

Remember, I beseech You, that You have fashioned me as clay; and  
will You bring me into dust again?

## JOB'S BODY FOR THE RECIPIENT

Just as the dots suggest the silhouette of the body, so the lines of the text always only give us an outline of a message where we have to read between the lines and write further ourselves. This “Fortschreibung” (“writing further”) issues from our bodies precisely where it becomes an issue. Narrative is thus not only the one-dimensional, linear progression and reference towards a *telos*, but actually towards other texts, hence our search for intertextuality and for diachrony running through, before and after the current text into its reception. This multidimensional continuity both turns out to be endless and also misses—like an asymptote—the immediacy of the body, which only leaves its different shadows in different directions, incarnating in its multiplicity an open network. The body itself is, however, absent in the text which can only refer to but never represent it.

This is, in fact, also about the nature of language as compensating for an absence. Something of this opposition between the body and language has been pointed out by Paul-Michel Foucault's (1994: 211) contention that sexual discourse replaces sex as act. This mutually exclusive relation between the body and language also becomes particularly clear in extreme situations such as the way in which Elaine Scarry (1985: 33) has understood and described torture where the victim is reduced to a body despite desperate screaming to which the perpetrator seems to be deaf. On the other hand, this polarity of power distribution reduces the

perpetrator, whose body becomes invisible or even absent in the victim's mind, to speech. The body speaks for itself as no language could express its experiences, as psychosomatics has shown. Something similar, yet different, is true of chronic-pain sufferers who are silenced by stigma which is obviously produced through the defamatory speech of other people about them.

Likewise, Job might have suffered from both excruciating pain and the social stigma which mutes him when it concerns his bodily trauma. That is perhaps why he escapes, though prodded by his interlocutors, into empty and pretentious arguments. Yet, his body sporadically betrays the reality hidden by these verbal defences. Alternatively, were his skin-disease a psychosomatic symptom it would, ironically, speak louder than any words could.

The "voice" is, in fact, the only remnant of Job's body *in* the text, but then still indirectly so, as it only leaves letter-traces. Freud (1955: 377) advised to us to pay *freischwebende Aufmerksamkeit* ("floating attention") when listening to the many voices of patients. Theodor Raik (1956: 136), recommending a "third ear" which listens to the tone rather than the content of what is said, reminds us of Socrates' invitation: "Speak, that I may see you." He also spoke of an "unsounding, quasi-silent" voice revealing the other's unsaid and the listener's inner voice. Lacan (cf. 1973: 182) prided himself that his main contribution to psychoanalysis was the addition of the gaze and the voice to the list of partial drive objects (*objets a*<sup>5</sup>, pronounced "objet petit a" [object little-a]), including already Freud's (1942: 67) recognition of the breast, faeces, urethra and penis. With such an "object" Lacan meant, however, an unresolved problem, an empty leftover, a signifier of absence, of the unthinkable and therefore of the ineffable. In contradistinction to *besoins* ("needs") as physical and *demandes* ("wishes") as symbolic, this *désir* ("desire") remains beyond the previous two as ineffable. There has therefore been a shift from a "positive" "in terms of presence and sound" to a "negative" understanding of voice "in terms of absence and silence" (Lagaay 2008).

Miller (2016) claims that Lacan would have asserted that the

<sup>5</sup> "a" stands for both *l'autre* (the other) and as first alphabetic letter for the beginning of the symbolic system and the algebraic placeholder, meaningless but open to particular contextual significance.

unconscious arises from the “speaking” body, even when the latter never explicitly stated this. It is an unconscious of pure *jouissance*, which always has a body. That is why Lacan replaced Freud’s concept of the unconscious with a neologism, *parlêtre*.

There are only left-over traces of the body in the book which is itself, like the recipient, excluded from the text. That is perhaps why the mentions of Job in Ezekiel 14:14, 20 reduce him with two other heroes of faith to their נַפְשָׁם (“life-energy”, “souls”):

וְהָיוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה בְּתוֹכָהּ נֹחַ דָּנִיֵּאל (דְּנִיֵּאל) וְאִיּוֹב הַמָּה בְּצַדִּיקֹתָם  
וַיִּנְצְלוּ נַפְשָׁם נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, says the Lord GOD.

וְנֹחַ דָּנִיֵּאל (דְּנִיֵּאל) וְאִיּוֹב בְּתוֹכָהּ-חַי-אֲנִי נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אִם-בֶּן אִם-בֵּת יִצְּלוּ  
הֵמָּה בְּצַדִּיקֹתָם יִצְּלוּ נַפְשָׁם

Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, says the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

The Book of Job seems to invite a kind of mind-body dualism, as the arguments never touch the body. Job’s human interlocutors hardly refer to his body, but to “truths” ignoring it. Incidentally, these long discussions are absent in the Quranic version of his life. In the Book of Job it is only God who draws his attention to the several animal (*vide supra*) bodies which serve as models, but particularly the בְּהֵמוֹת (“behemoth”) in 40:15–24 and the לֵוִיָּתָן (“leviathan”) in 40:25–41:26. The unique body as event and emergence eludes the universal grip of linguistic signification. Job himself poses this opposition<sup>6</sup> between the second-hand aural and the “visual,” or rather his insight, based on his own personal, primary experience in 42:5. His previously “blinded” body reminds us of the blinded body in Isaiah 29:9–10 which exceeds reduction to the representable:

<sup>6</sup> Clines (2011: 1216–1218) denies any such opposition, because, amongst other reasons, וְעַתָּה (“and now”) must include his hearing of what God said just in the previous verse.

הַתְּמַמְהוּ וְהַתְּעַשְׂעוּ וְשָׁעוּ שְׂכָרוֹ וְלֹא-נִין נָעוּ וְלֹא שָׁכַר

Stupefy yourselves, and be stupid! Blind yourselves, and be blind!  
you that are drunken, but not with wine, that stagger, but not with  
strong drink.

כִּי-נָסַף עֲלֵיכֶם יְהוָה רוּחַ תְּרִדְמָה וַיַּעֲצֵם אֶת-עֵינֵיכֶם אֶת-הַנְּבִיאִים וְאֶת-  
רִאשֵׁיכֶם הַחֲזִים כָּסָה

For the LORD has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and  
has closed your eyes; the prophets, and your heads, the seers, has He  
covered.

Yet, Job's unique body is an uncanny *déjà "lu"*, in contradistinction to a *déjà vu*. Incidentally, Freud (1947: 236–238) characterised the nature of the *Unheimliche* ("uncanny") as hidden and links it to being robbed of one's eyes, something which Job but also the recipient suffers from in a figurative way.

One can easily be caught up in the long arguments which make up most of the book, or even with notions such as theodicy, without empathically resonating with the body of Job which also calls on the recipient to reflect on the history of his or her own body and how that experience raises questions about God.

In "Antwort auf Hiob" ([1952] 1967: 48) Jung goes even further and accuses God of not being conscious of Job's (physical) suffering before having been incarnated, *em-bodied*. Embodiment is by implication therefore not a regression or reduction to the body but progression in consciousness.

The Canadian philosopher Brian Massumi contends that bodily experience has to do with affect which exceeds and transcends language and resists cultural coding. Building his process-philosophy on the radical empiricism of William James ([1912] 2003) and the assertion of the primacy of relation (Massumi 2011: 4, 29–30, 34–37, 85–86), he moves towards an activist philosophy (Massumi 2011: 1–28; 2017: 101), where the transmission of affective power leads us to direct perception through embodied "affective attunement" (Massumi 2015: 112–145) which is "trans-individual" (Massumi 2014: 34–35, 45–59; 2015: 177–204). Applied to the Book of Job, sensing the suffering of the protagonist in an empathic way can open the recipient up for the hidden, often invisible,

bodily pain of other recipients and even non-recipients of the book and so access the “universal” body.

There is another reason for the body of Job to be elusive to the (post) modern recipient, namely that it might have been very different from the familiar body. This danger is exemplified by the unknown nature of צָרַת (vide supra), the skin-illness dealt with in Leviticus 13–14, if that is what Job suffers from. The question can be raised of what kind of illness it really is, when he manages to have ten children again in 42:13, his three daughters the most beautiful in the country according to 42:15, and when he himself reaches an age in excess of the perfect one, no word being said that he has been cured of his illness.

This individualisation and almost even schizoid withdrawal into the self render such a figure odd and invites the recipient to project unresolved and unintegrated issues onto him so that he can easily and ironically become a scapegoat, just as Job's friends have done. As someone who cannot be classified, he might then be considered “impure” or even a transgressor. Suggestions of foreignness are not experienced as bridges but used as barriers. All of this underlines that Job is also an outsider to the recipient, but highlights the loneliness of bodily suffering which the recipient may therefore ironically recognise.

## THE BODY AS BRIDGE BETWEEN JOB AND ITS RECIPIENTS

Yet, the liminality of Job's being ironically renders him like the Winnicottian transitional space as potentially all-inclusive through the book's universal appeal to transcend all “skin” variations. Boundaries and borders, including the skin, in the Book of Job are relative. They are constantly in flux and in crisis but also creative and transformative. The distance of the recipient from the text and therefore the body of Job should make for humble, open listening and looking, especially when faced with silence and darkness.

As outsiders the recipients have wider and deeper insight which is more than just the distance from the narrative and from the unique body of Job. As “insiders” to the trans-individual body, which is somehow concrete yet universal and devoid of any limitation to individuality, they are capable of empathy crossing individual boundaries. In this way, the recipients can be a correction to the false friends of Job.

It is precisely in this empathic way that the recipients can reach the relatively elusive, individual body of Job. The understanding transcends the limiting cognitive and even the emotional categories: only in concrete activism as universal engagement is the recipient's understanding of the individual expressed and verified. This quest is what Massumi also advocates: dynamic activity as "mutual inclusion" (2014: 34–35, 45–59) rather than static substance, in this case, the cognitive pretence to explain the bodily condition of Job.

Like the spokes linking the hub to the rim of a wheel, so the trans-individual body centripetally links the abstract centre to the concrete outsiders and both Job and the recipients are seamlessly linked to each other. As a critique of logocentrism, however, this tension between the alleged essence at the centre and ex-(s)istence outside the centre moves the wheel forward, as if the outer parts tend to move away from the inner dominance. This is despite the one-dimensional empty silent centre *in* the centre—perhaps the epicentre—in the apparently calm midst of the "storm," remaining static in its microscopic, infinitesimal minuteness, even when it remains dependent on the dynamic periphery for its in-sistence.

As subversion of the word, of language, in the noisy text of Job, there is at the same time a thematic call to silence in the very same text. It is God who brings Job back to his body, precisely by not answering to his false questions, but by "showing" and getting him in touch with the body rather than by derailing him on detours as his other interlocutors have done. This God has done by calling him to silence and by confronting him with the gaps of the unsaid.

Silence about several things in the Book of Job has already been mentioned and should be dealt with as a manifestation of his body in an "aural medium," the text, even when Seow (2011) has highlighted that the poetry is also visual in the way that homographs have been used. Incidentally, it is noteworthy that Seow in his almost thousand-page commentary on the first 21 chapters of Job lists neither "silence" nor the "body" in his Subject Index (2013: 895–902). In fact, he refers to body parts or experiences mainly as metaphors ("the belly" [2013: 895], "the womb" [2013: 902], "skin" [2013: 302 or as metonym 2013: 301], "heart" [2013: 621], even animals [2013: 985], food [2013: 897] and taste [2013: 901]). In this way, Seow is silent about Job's body, similar to Job's friends who seems to ignore and not "hear" it.

Already early on, when Job's calamities have dawned upon him but before his opening speech, silence descended onto him and his friends. This may be a suggestion that they are listening to their unconscious, spoken by their bodies. Mourning as a silent period of self-reflection involves a week in 2:12–13. In 3:18 the prisoners enjoy the restful silence of death, free from the oppressive voice of their taskmaster. Balentine (2006: 90) interprets שָׁנְנוּ as “sleep,” which it need not be. Silent meditation should be wakeful, for instance. In 4:16 Eliphaz tells Job that with his vision there was דְּמָמָה (“a whisper”, “silence”) before he heard a voice, probably not of a human being as Torresan (2003) claims, but perhaps reflecting Eliphaz' psycho-spiritual condition. “Schweigen und Stimme höre ich” (“I heard silence and a voice”) is how Gradl (2001: 83–84) translates it, linking it to 1 Kings 19:12. Eliphaz personifies iniquity in 5:16 as eventually קִפְּזָה פִּיהָ (“keeping quiet”). According to Clines (1989: 147), this silence is not only indicative of the noise of rebellion against justice ending but also of amazement and astonishment in a state of awe.

In 6:24 Job is willing to be quiet (אֶחְרֹשׁ), but in 7:11 Job affirms in the negative that he will certainly not be quiet by אֶחְשֹׁךְ-פִּי (“withholding” my mouth”). Yet, in 16:6 Job testifies that speaking does not relieve his suffering, meaning neither his own speaking nor that of his companions. Job's healing is thus not thanks to the famous psychoanalytic “talking cure.” Then again, in 21:5 he calls his opponent to silence so that he may be heard.

In 11:3 Zophar claims that people יִחְרֹשׁוּ (“have remained silent”) precisely because of Job's boastful talking. The same root is used in 13:5 (perhaps a proverb like that in Proverbs 17:28; *vide infra*) when Job advises his advisers to תִּחְרֹשׁוּן (“be totally quiet”) and thus find wisdom, in 13:13 (תִּחְרֹשׁוּ) so that he can talk and in 13:19 where אֶחְרֹשׁ (“I [that is, he] will [be the one to] keep quiet”) before dying. There was a time when Job was the one teaching others who then יִדְמּוּ (“would be silent”), according to 29:21–22 (cf. also 29:9–10). In 30:27, however, Job's noisy mind and heart וְלֹא-דָמּוּ (“do not keep quiet, rest”), although in anxiety he would keep quiet (וְאָדָם) in 31:34.

In 32:1 it is the three companions of Job who are in desperation brought to silence as they stopped responding to him. This might have been the trigger for Elihu's speech, tempted to fill the silence. Clines (2006: 712)

rightly notices the strangeness of the reason offered here for their silence, but explains it as words running dry due to impatience, not as any kind of recognition and acknowledgement of Job's stance. Elihu confirms their silence in 32:15–16 and in 33:31 and 33:33 advises silence (שִׁתָּקֵט, in both verses), so that he can teach Job wisdom. Incidentally and ironically the LXX omits 31b–33, cutting Elihu's own verbosity (Pope 1973: 253).

Amongst Job's human interlocutors it is first Eliphaz in 5:1, then Zophar in 11:5, and finally Elihu who specifically deals with divine silence in 33:13, 34:29 (וְהוּא יִשְׁקֵט “and [when] He is silent”) and 35:12, 14. In 9:3, 14–15, 32 Job seriously considers silence as an attitude to the silent God. Although Job hints in 10:13 that God's silence is divine mystery, he complains about God's silence in 19:7 and 30:20. Yet, it is as if God's silence opens Job's eyes to God in 42:5, that is, if Job is the speaker in the previous verse. Perhaps God's apparent silence is experienced by those who refuse to listen. Clines (2011: 1216), however, understands 42:4 as God telling Job to be silent before answering God. Likewise, Olson (1981) makes an interesting statement when he claims that Job eventually “sees” thanks to his *own* silence.

Even God speaks of God's potential silence asking Job rhetorically in 41:4a: [...] אֶתְרִישׁ (“Would I keep silence [...]?”). Silence here would mean fear, in this case of the leviathan. Yet, one should not exaggerate God's speech over and against God's silence as Pleins (1994) does, as this vacillation continues throughout the book even amongst the other interlocutors.

According to Korpel and de Moor (2011: 101) there are פְּתוּחוֹת (“spaces”) after 40:2, 5 to show rhetorical silences. Job himself is so overwhelmed in the two verses, 40:4–5—between the two speeches by God in chapters 38–39 and 40–41—that he is also reduced to silence: יָדֵי שִׁמְתִּי לְמוֹפֵי (“I lay my hand upon my mouth”). This reminds one of his hypothesising words, וְתִשָּׁק יָדִי לְפִי (“and my hand would have kissed my mouth”) in 31:27 that also suggest reverent silence and awe, with Habel (1985: 437) adding that the kiss is that thrown at the heavenly bodies mentioned in the previous verse. Such a silence would then have been a betrayal of God, according to 31:28. Job now practices the humble silence he preached to his friends in 13:5 (*vide supra*), alluded to by Qoheleth 5:1–7 as a precondition for listening to recognise and experience God's presence (cf. 1 Samuel 15:22; Guttridge 2001: 91).

Brettler (2013: 19) argues that Job wants silence and that wisdom is somehow connected to it. Yet, it seems like Job's command of the airways allows him to escape from his body. This is not the silence of the sleep-death Job initially longed for.

All of these instances about silence show how it is a theme running throughout the book, linking it to awe and wisdom. It frames the book with collective silence in 2:13 close to the beginning and Job's insightful silence 42:5–6 in the last chapter. The temptation is to regard silence as a precondition for listening, but it might just as well be a precondition for "seeing" God (with insight) when Job is faced with silence.

Perhaps the silences suggest the "unwritable," the unspeakable, and should be psychoanalysed as the unsaid. If one is interested in the unconscious meanings of the body, then the "unsaid" and the silenced as possible repressions in the unconscious should also be analysed. This could include the symptoms of Job's body speaking by nature of their silence to betray and reveal the repressed. Dolar and Zupancic (2006: 73) claim that "[w]hat language and the body have in common is the voice, but the voice is part neither of language nor of the body." Dunn (1981), just like Ricœur (1976: 87–88), argues that "we go beyond verbal and propositional meaning to a sensual and intimate sense expressed by language and silence. This is a silence which is not (empty and only) beyond speech or discourse but "full" and "present" in the beauty of the "text, through its rhythm, figurative language, and melody [...]" (Dunn 1981: 102).

Hill (2004) reminds us that the body in itself can never enter ego-consciousness as it has sensations before our imagining, thinking and speaking. In fact, precisely in the silent Buddhist meditation lies the way *out* of ego-consciousness (or *méconnaissance*, as Lacan [1966: 99] calls it) and in yoga the way to transcendence. It is therefore not the body-ego or body-image formed from "the inverted mirror reflections of the surface of the body," nor the images from direct perception or from our imagination, which determine how others see our bodies.

It is significant that God, close to the end of the book, does not respond to Job's urgent and persistent questions despite mirroring several of Job's references to the body in his opening speech in chapter 3, such as the womb, its "doors," the "eyes of dawn" and the leviathan. Instead, God leads Job to remember and compare himself with impressive celestial and

animal bodies, in this indirect way perhaps bringing Job back to his own body. This process liberates Job from his chatter and thoughts to silent awe, away from his narrow-minded ego-obsessions, to allow him to be overwhelmed and to almost merge with the endless cosmic miracle, as if he really had no skin to separate him from it. Different from Job's three companions, who provoke Job into a repetitive cycle, God's speeches break this cycle and empty his mind to open a space for first-hand experiences which can only be in the body. God gets underneath Job's protective radar to penetrate his body-soul. Job's ego gets lost in God's infinitely bigger picture of which his body is also a part. Earlier on Job missed these experiences as his ego was caught up by the "echo" of his own voice, just as the mirror image does to the ego. Although Job still speaks only a few words after God they could be considered what Lacan (1966: 247–279, 254, 256) called "full speech" as compared to "empty speech," the latter being just a projection of the false ego (cf.  $\kappa\dot{\iota}\psi$  ["emptiness"] in 35:13)

Similar to the view of Scarry (1988: 24) that speech and the body seem to exclude each other, speech is here reduced to the body. When the body is broken, language is useless.

## CONCLUSION

Both the protagonist, Job, and the recipient of the book struggle with the "unlayering" of the body as the plot is unfolding and which has remained largely invisible. For Job this is true in a concrete way in that his skin and the subsequent layers of his body are unpeeled. This is accompanied by his psychological regression in time in order to "nakedly" reach the safe and stable core of being. For the recipient undoing the disguising layers of history in search of the authentic in the autonomous, independent original has proven both elusive and deceptive in the postmodern realisation of endless deferral and eternal mediation in a palimpsest without end. Despite all the historical undressing, the figure of Job remains as invisible to the recipient as God is to Job, until 42:5. Despite hearing (about?) God, Job is as unsatisfied as the recipient hearing about the invisible Job. Both parties, Job and the recipients, have been striving to reduce the multiplicity of illusions to a single, static reality. It is only through the recipient's experience of his or her own problematic body that the recipient can mirror and "feel into" Job's body as yet another representative of the "universal" body.

It may seem ironic that beyond biblical literature the Book of Job has found a veritable place in—and so moved to the centre of—world literature, precisely because the protagonist, Job, struggles with being an outsider. This alienation applies also to Job's body, not recognised by his human interlocutors, which is hostile to himself and elusive to the recipient. In the end Job discovers that he likewise has not recognised the “body” of God incarnated in creation and sees God for the first time.

This paradoxical reception means that Job is struggling with a universal issue, that of being excluded, but paradoxically ends up being excluded from the minority-centre. Such reception is, however, possible thanks to the affirming and mutual mirror images which trans-individual empathy as projective identification facilitates between the periphery and the centre.

An issue related to the visual-auditory tension in the Book of Job is the question of the nature of the unconscious: whether it is only *visual* images or is constituted by the other sensory impressions as well. Research on this question and its application to the present study could amplify the temporary conclusions recorded here.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Balentine, Samuel E. 2006. *Job*. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys.
- Blake, William. 1995. *Illustrations for the Book of Job*. New York: Dover.
- Brettler, Marc Z. 2013. “(Divine) Silence is Golden: A New Reading of the Prologue of Job”. *Interested Readers: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David J. A. Clines*, edd. James K. Aitken, Jeremy M. S. Clines and Christl M. Maier: 19–26. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- Clines, David J. A. 1989. *Job 1–20*. Dallas: Word Books.
- Clines, David J. A. 2006. *Job 21–37*. Nashville: Nelson.
- Clines, David J. A. 2011. *Job 38–42*. Nashville: Nelson.
- Dolar, Mladen, and Alenka Zupancic. 2006. *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Driver, Samuel R., and George Buchanan Gray. 1977. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job: Together with a New Translation*. Edinburgh: Clark.
- Dunn Robert P. 1981. “Speech and Silence in Job”. *Semeia*, 19: 99–103.
- Foucault, Paul-Michel. 1994. *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir*, Paris: Gallimard, coll. “Tel”.

- Freud, Sigmund. 1955. *Gesammelte Werke. Band 7: Werke aus den Jahren 1906–1909*, edd. Anna Freud and Edward Bibring. London: Imago.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1942. “Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie und verwandte Schriften”. *Gesammelte Werke chronologisch geordnet, Band 5: Werke aus den Jahren 1904–1905*, ed. Anna Freud: 27–145. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1947. “Das Unheimliche”. *Pages in Gesammelte Werke chronologisch geordnet, Band 12: Werke aus den Jahren 1917–1920*, ed. Anna Freud: 227–268. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.
- Gelber, Sholome M. 1975. *Job Stands Up: The Biblical Text of the Book of Job Arranged for the Theater*. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations.
- Genette, Gérard. 1972. *Figures III*. Paris: Seuil.
- Grادل, Felix. 2001. *Das Buch Ijob*. Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk.
- Gutridge, Coralie A. 2001. “The Sacrifice of Fools and the Wisdom of Silence: Qoheleth, Job and the Presence of God”. *Biblical Hebrews, Biblical Texts: Essays in Memory of Michael P. Weitzman*, edd. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Gillian Greenberg: 83–99. London: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Habel, Norman C. 1985. *The Book of Job: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- Hill, Melvyn A. 2004. “The Silence of the Body”. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 43: 29–43.
- James, William. 2003. *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Jung, Carl G. 1967. *Antwort auf Hiob*. Zürich: Rascher.
- Korpel, Marjo C.A., and Johannes C. de Moor. 2011. *The Silent God*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- Lacan, Jacques. 1966. *Écrits*. Paris: Seuil.
- Lacan, Jacques. 1973. *Le séminaire, Livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. Paris: Seuil.
- Lagaay, Alice. 2008. “Between Sound and Silence: Voice in the History of Psychoanalysis”. *Episteme*, 1: 53–62.
- Mason, Emma. 2011. “Elihu’s Spiritual Sensation: William Blake’s Illustrations to the Book of Job”. *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*, edd. Michael Lieb, et al.: 460–475. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Massumi, Brian. 2011. *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Massumi, Brian. 2014. *What Animals Teach Us about Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Massumi, Brian. 2015. *Politics of Affect*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Massumi, Brian. 2017. *The Principle of Unrest: Activist Philosophy in the Expanded Field*. London: Open Humanities Press.
- Mauron, Charles. 1964. *Des Métaphores Obsédantes au Mythe Personnel*. Paris: Corti.
- Miller, Jacques-Alain. 2016. "Habeas corpus". *La cause du désir*, 3: 165–170.
- Olson, Alan M. 1981. "The Silence of Job as the Key to the Text". *Semeia*, 19: 113–119.
- Pleins, J. David. 1994. "'Why Do You Hide Your Face?'" Divine Silence and Speech in the Book of Job". *Union Seminary Review*, 48: 229–238.
- Pope, Marvin H. 1973. *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Ramachandran, Vilayanur S., and Richard L. Gregory. 1991. "Perceptual Filling in of Artificially Induced Scotomas in Human Vision". *Nature*, 350: 699–702.
- Richards, Ivor A. 1936. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ricœur, Paul. 1976. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*. Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press.
- Ries, Frank W. D. 1984. "Sir Geoffrey Keynes and the Ballet "Job"". *Dance Research*, 2: 19–34.
- Boss, Jeffrey. 2010. *Human Consciousness of God in the Book of Job: A Theological and Psychological Commentary*. London, New York: T & T Clark International.
- Scarry, Elaine. 1985. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Scarry, Elaine. 1988. *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons*. Selected Papers from the English Institute, 12. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Schellenberg, Annette. 2016. "'Mein Fleisch ist gekleidet in Maden und Schorf" (Hi 7,5). Zur Bedeutung des Körpers im Hiobbuch". *Verkörperung als Paradigma theologischer Anthropologie*, edd. G. Etzelmüller and A. Weissenrieder: 95–126. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter.
- Seow, Choon L. 2011. "Orthography, Textual Criticism, and the Poetry of Job". *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 130: 63–85.
- Seow, Choon L. 2013. *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

- Torresan, Paolo. 2003. "Silence in the Bible". *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 31: 153–160.
- Veber, Francis, director. 1998. "Job raillé par sa femme". *Le Dîner de Cons*. Gaumont et al.