

Grotesque bodies in the book of Job: A psychoanalytic perspective

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Job is suffering from illness without understanding it. His impairment and exclusion render him disabled in an abled, gloating but threatened society for which he is the laughing stock despite his exceptional piety. His psychic and spiritual breakthrough comes when God makes him reflect on and in the mirror of the wild and disorderly bodies of the two monstrosities, Behemoth and Leviathan, elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible exemplifying chaos, but now unexpectedly celebrated. Even as possible relief thanks to light-hearted humour these grotesque bodies emancipate the object of body-politics by subverting the centre of certainty and power. In this study the Bakhtinian critique of the 'monologisation' of the human body and its experience promised to be fruitfully combined with psychoanalytic insights about imprisoned body-images to enrich the relevance of the book of Job.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The interface of biblical hermeneutics and exegesis with other research fields in the social sciences and humanities such as psychoanalytic theory and literary criticism expanded the horizon of insight for all parties involved, not only for biblical studies.

Keywords: book of Job; disability; illness; psychoanalytic; grotesque; Bakhtin; monster.

Introduction

The context of this study is the attention the body as subjective and more specifically psychological experience is receiving within various academic disciplines where its social construction is emphasised, if not ideologised as if there were no universal or uniquely personal dimension to embodiment (cf. Scarry 1987:346). Within this frame 'non-conformist' bodies, among which are negatively racialised, feminised, sexualised and disabled bodies, have been fighting for recognition but have instead merely met with the false façade of political correctness in the form of masking euphemisms and 'correct' language (cf. Bakhtin 1984:320) over the last half a century.

The hypothesis of this study is that three grotesque bodies portrayed in the book of Job predate this fight for political correctness with more than two millennia, constituting a useful heuristic through their protest against and critique of an abusive superego's discrimination of disabled bodies.

After outlining the main features of the concepts of the grotesque and more specifically the grotesque body and comparing it then to the disabled body, three characters in the biblical book of Job will be described as having, or rather being grotesque bodies before a psychoanalytical lens will explore their possible meanings within their literary context.

Grotesque and grotesque body as concepts

The word 'grotesque' derives from the Italian, '*grottesca*', originally the adjective of '*grotta*' [cave], referring to the subterranean, cave-like ruins where some of the remnants of this form of art, first only as marginal decorations, have been found (Black 2009:67–68). This is symbolically significant, as these images reflect something repressed in the unconscious cellars of the mind.

Based on images of the grotesque body (Bakhtin 1984:315), the other images of the grotesque¹ also stemming from the unconscious have existed since time immemorial. They have included much of teratology, the so-called science of 'monsters' or, more scientifically, the abnormalities of bodily development, including prodigies, in the earliest myths. In Western civilisation during the medieval, Baroque, romantic and Victorian periods the grotesque body has become a separate literary canonical form (Bakhtin 1984:319) where it lies '[a]t the margin of figurative metaphor and literal myth' (Shabot 2015:61).

¹Grotesqueries¹ have been pointed out in the book of Job by Ingram (2017:58).

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The grotesque body should, however, not be regarded as an anachronism, as awareness of it has always been there (cf. Black 2009:66). The (abstract) concepts of the grotesque and even grotesque bodies have been used well before the Russian literary critic and philosopher, Michael Bakhtin (1895–1975), recognised it as a literary trope in his 1940-controversial doctoral dissertation, denied to him by his university but published in 1965. Mazour-Matusevich (2009:*passim*) asserts that Bakhtin's aesthetics of grotesque realism in popular culture was probably influenced by Nietzsche's idea about primordial chaos as the origin of everything.

Firstly, the grotesque stems from the primacy of the body materially rooted in the 'body' of nature, the earth, although Shabot (2015:62) points out: 'The grotesque, then, cannot be summarized and reduced to its relevant elements [...] thus, cannot be fully identified or categorized [...]'. Black (2009:65) also emphasises the relativity and slipperiness of the concept. The body as the base therefore protests against the bossy pretences of the brain.

Secondly, the grotesque therefore concerns the transgression of boundaries, even of the body by valuing the orifices and apertures. This body is therefore neither finished nor limited to one person (Bakhtin 1984:317). This means that the grotesque body emphasises both the open and the protruding potentially penetrative parts of the lower body. However, it also generalises them to, for instance, both the enlarged or at least 'disproportional' mouth and nose with its phallic symbolism (Bakhtin 1984:87, 316) in the upper body of the face (Bakhtin 1984:26–27). In fact, the mouth 'plays' (*sic!*, *vide infra*) an exceptional role and is used to exaggerate unashamed, excessive eating and drinking, even swallowing the world (Bakhtin 1984:316). In the case of animals the head, ears and nose are exceptionally prominent. Except when they are protruding, the eyes have no such importance, as they would suggest individual self-sufficiency not included in the grotesque body (Bakhtin 1984:316).

Thirdly, as the physical bodies are reflected in the social body which in turn mirrors it (Chasseguet-Smirgel 2003:*passim*; Douglas 1984:122–125), this preoccupation with the activities of the face and the lower body is then projected onto the lowest levels of society, although their poverty undermines the realism of this imagery of excessive food. Activities such as eating, sneezing and sex using the open and penetrative body-parts respectively actually bridge but also transgress the boundaries to the external world. Yet, they link human beings and ensure survival and renewal at the same time. This is also demonstrated, for instance, by François Rabelais² who expressed political conflict with the human body.

Fourthly, the grotesque also involves the protest of the lowest levels of society against the norms and clear categories of the highest echelon and of culture (Bakhtin 1984:303–436).

²Bakhtin's doctoral dissertation was on the medieval 'dialogical' grotesque bodies found in Rabelais's work of the Renaissance (Ruck 2009:*passim*), but deriving from biblical passages (Bakhtin 1984:20, 287, 349; cf. Black 2009:83).

There is a grassroots degrading of the noble, 'brainy' pretences of the upper class, exposing the material and bodily base underlying these interests. Apart from eating and drinking, the mouth therefore utters curses and critique. The rebellious bodies of excluded groups are therefore expressed in their speech as well. In fact, Bakhtin relates three phenomena in his study: society, its language and the body (Clark & Holquist 1984:297–299).

Fifthly, these bizarre bodies contradict the ideal body and transgress the boundaries of the beautiful, as fertility is more important (Mazour-Matusevich 2009:8). Apart from being juxtaposed to animals (Bakhtin 1984:5, 15–27, 229–316), they are often metaphorised as monsters being a mixture of more than one body by combining the unexpected, and thus avoiding repetition and similitude caused by endogamy. The French philosopher, historian and medical doctor, Georges Canguilhem (1962:30) put it so well: '*La monstruosité, conséquence d'un Carnaval des animaux, après boire!*' [Monstrosity, the consequence of a carnival of the animals, after drinking!]. In that sense there is an element of sexual perversion included in the concept. The philosopher, George Santayana (1896:258), likewise realised the similarity between the grotesque and the monstrous: 'the grotesque[. It is the half-formed, the perplexed, and the suggestively monstrous'. In addition, apart from ugliness, diseases, especially those suspected of having been caused by promiscuity, also formed part of the grotesque body-package (Bakhtin 1984:161). Coupled with it, however, are the quack cures offered to restore sexual potency (Bakhtin 1984:186).

The Latin etymology of the word, '*monstrum*', means a divine sign showing something, and is related to the English 'demonstrate', but one can also playfully suggest that it is related to 'demon-strate', as teratology was closely associated in the Middle Ages with demonology. Othering sometimes involves demonising the non-self as grotesque (cf. Scarry 1987:88). Canguilhem (1952:205) therefore expects a link to be made between teratology and pathology, as disability used to be first explained by sexual intercourse with either incubi or succubi, before it was toned down as being the result of a mere vision of the devil (Canguilhem 1962:35). When these very fantasies ended up as being understood as pathology, the grotesque body increasingly referred to congenital deformity during the 19th century and after the First World War, more specifically to disability due to trauma. It was also the start of teratology, experimental games of manufacturing monstrosities as possible diversities, on which Victor Hugo's 1869-novel, '*L'homme qui rit*' [The man who laughs], comments as being fairground entertainment. Likewise, Kayser (1961:188) found one of the three features of the grotesque to be an invocation and overcoming of the demonic, apart from being the estranged world and a play with the absurd (Kayser 1961:184–187).

Sixthly, the grotesque is often connected to the carnivalesque and the burlesque, featuring as caricatures and foolish freaks in folk festivities and fairs where hierarchies are playfully travestied, inverted or ignored, apparently with light-hearted

humour. Koepping (1985:194) has noted that the trickster universally in all cultures presents with grotesque body imagery and so inverts the social order and transgresses its boundaries with laughter as protest while offering a utopian counter-reality.

Seventhly, the grotesque induces the ambiguous reactions of both empathy and disgust. However, the empathy is often condescending making the grotesque body a tragic or pathetic object of a privileged gaze, which in turn feels itself gazed upon by the grotesque body's mocking, denuding laughter. In that sense the abject (including the disabled body) and the uncanny creating cognitive dissonance are also present in the grotesque (cf. Russo 1994:9). Black (2009:116) put it correctly: 'Though a simplification, it is helpful to think of the abject as a kind of psychoanalytical elaboration of the grotesque'. In Mary Shelley's 1818-Frankenstein the monster is portrayed as outsider and victim of society who created it through alienation (Britton 2009:3).

Disabled body

Some of these characteristics of the grotesque body can also be ascribed to the disabled body, even if laughter and ridicule are not an immediate intention but rather, inversely, the attack a person with disability suffers. Neither are body-boundary transgressions and the activities associated with them directly relevant. As Davis (1997:64) recognises: 'There is a thin line between the grotesque and the disabled.[...] The grotesque, as with disability in general, is used as a metaphor for otherness, solitude, tragedy, bitterness, alterity'. This is reiterated by Koch (2017:155): '[...] the grotesque has also been used to mark illness and disability as something that deviates from the norm – so, in fact, preserving the illusion of the ideal non-grotesque body'.

Just as with the grotesque body, 'the disabled' body has become a category delimiting it from 'the ordinary' body instead of recognising a continuum between these two abstract and unreal 'extremes'. All bodies are partially disabled, as all are also grotesque.

In any event, the grotesque body is a body image, something projected onto, but not exclusively owned by a separate group of ostracised people. The same applies to the 'disabled body'. It is, in fact, the body image more than the body which has been disabled and which works disabling. Instead of recognising that the 'disabled body' is a body-image just as the grotesque body is a literary trope [*vide supra*] and therefore a body image, the (universally) impaired body has been falsely classified as a separate ontological *body*.

Davis (1997:52) points out that normalcy is a position of group power consciously opposed to the disabled who has have to survive relatively alone until recently. This is also the case with the loner, Job, opposed by his society represented through the three counsellors who never

mention his bodily suffering and impairment but rationalise it away with blaming.

Unconsciously 'normalcy' is a psychic defence against the threatening power of disabled's mirroring reminder that all bodies are actually disabled and heterogeneously different and particular despite their interconnectivity with other bodies. In that sense the disabled body is not as isolated as psychic splitting [*vide infra*] wants it to be but as open as the grotesque body, always connected to other bodies.

Both the grotesque and the disabled bodies are hybrid, open, fragmented, fragile, fluid and chaotic bodies, in fact, similar to how the postmodernism critiques the homologisation of the human body and conceptualises the embodied subject (Shabot 2015:58).

Three grotesque bodies in the book of Job

Bakhtin (1984:76, 125) refers twice explicitly to the book of Job, but not to a specific textual reference. His concept of the grotesque body therefore needs to be recognised by the recipient.

Job's body

The main protagonist makes some scattered remarks about parts of his broken body from which the recipient of the book can weave together a fuller picture, much of it found in chapter 19 (cf. also Van Der Zwan 2019:*passim*) In fact, there are more than 70 body parts mentioned in the book, most of them referring to Job.

Many of these have to do with his skin as his body-boundary (cf. Van Der Zwan 2017:*passim*) where the main illness, perhaps צָרַעַת (wrongly translated as 'leprosy') manifests according to 7:5: לְבַשׁ בְּשָׂרִי רָקָה וּגִישׁ [My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin closes up and breaks out afresh]. This unexpected openness of his skin complicates negotiation with the (abject) outside world about identity even beyond the ordinary orifices and so induces anxiety.

This causes him bodily and social suffering due to his odd and threatening appearance according to 19:17b–19: יָחַמְתִּי וְהַמְתִּי לְבָנֵי בְטָנִי [and I am loathsome to the children of my tribe] גַּם-עֲוִילִים מְאַסּוּ בִי אֲקוּמָה וַיִּדְבְּרוּ-בִי [even urchins despised me; if I arise, they speak against me] תַּעֲבוּנִי כָל-מִתֵּי סוּדֵי וְזֶה-אֶהְבְּתִי וְהִפְכוּ-בִי [all my intimate friends abhor me; and they whom I loved are turned against me]. Different from the grotesque body in the carnival and perhaps the two monstrous animals in the second divine speech (cf. Van der Zwan 2021:*passim*), Job's body is, like those of people with disabilities, *not* partying and *not* making fun of 'natural' bodies. On the surface in consciousness, the opposite is, in fact, the case, when he is laughed at in 12:4 and 30:1, but unconsciously, where everything is reversed, the 'normal' public would feel ridiculed and threatened by the mere possibility that it could

also end up like Job's grotesque body and so defend themselves pre-emptively by mocking or at least excluding these 'monstrous' bodies.

Job's psychic suffering from both his body and society makes him to speak of an experienced rather than an objective body. So he believes that his eyes rather than his bones will survive after death according to 19:26–27: *ואחר עורִי נִקְפוּ-זאת ומִבְשָׂרִי אֲחַזֶּה אֱלֹהִים* [and when after my skin this is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God] *אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי אֲחַזֶּה-לִּי--וְעֵינַי רְאוּ וְלֹא-נָרַךְ כְּלוֹ כְלִימִתִּי בְחַקִּי* [whom I, even I, shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another's. My reins are consumed within me]. In fact, his eyes are one of his two body parts he claims to have helped the disabled in 29:15. Figuratively, he empathically fills in the lacking functioning organ of the other with his own seeing eyes and so transcends his own body-boundaries, sharing in the body of the other, just as he does in sacrificing for his children in 1:5 and praying for his false counsellors in 42:10, all of this leaving Job 'unfinalizable', according to Hyun (2013:219).

The prominence of the mouth in the book of Job has also been noticed (Van Der Zwan 2022d:passim). Perhaps due to some eating disorder, Job regards himself as emaciated as his body is reduced to the minimal, according to 19:20: *בְּעוֹרִי וּבְבָשָׂרִי דָבְקָה עֲצָמִי וְאֶתְמַלְקָהּ בְּעוֹר שְׁנֵי* [My bone cleaves to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped with the skin of my teeth]. Job feels as if he is being swallowed³ in 10:8 and eaten by God as by a lion in 10:16 and perhaps by others in 16:10 and 19:22, and by moths in 13:28. His body has become the Lacanian '*corps morcelé*' [fragmented, cut-up body], a mutilated and castrated body which is why God summons him to gird his (חֲלָיִ) loins in 38:3, repeated in 40:7, and to have his power where Behemoth has it in 40:16: in his loins (although a different Hebrew noun, מתן, is used there). God therefore emphasises the body parts so prominent in the grotesque body.

Not only his outer body but also his insides are negatively affected, causing him to stink according to 19:17a: *רוּחִי נִדְרָה לְאִשְׁתִּי* [my breath is abhorred by my wife]. This ill man presents the abject Real, his unsymbolisable and un-imagable body to the world, to use Lacan's terminology. Job's traumatised body is the victim of God's violence according to 9:13 (where another monster, Rahab, is mentioned) and 16:9, for example.

Despite the compensations listed in 42:12(-15) and his exceptionally long life according to 42:16, there is strangely enough no mention of his bodily recovery, although one would presume that with such an off-spring and long life. Job's ambiguous body vacillates between life and death, just what the grotesque body does: '[It] occupies the middle ground between life and death, between subject and object, between one and many'⁴ (Shabot 2015:59). That may also be the case for the monstrous pair in 40:15–41:26.

3. *וּתְבַלְעֵנִי* (You swallow, destroy me; cf. 2:3) reminds of Isaiah 25:8 where God swallows Death, itself usually swallowing its victims.

4. This curiously reminds of the Winnicottian transitional space.

Behemoth's body

One can translate this proper-name as the augmented plural of the Hebrew, בהמה [beast], with 'Superbeast', thus highlighting its wild and fleshy body. The fact that so many possible attempts at identifying Behemoth in the animal kingdom have been made without a certain conclusion means that it cannot be assumed to be a hippopotamus which has been the majority opinion among scholars (Van Der Zwan 2022a), as a monster can be 'a false resemblance' (Huet 1993:4). Habel (1985:559) even considers it a fabrication of the fantasy of the author. Its identity therefore remains slippery just as the grotesque body.

God's first remark about this beast is: *הִנֵּה-נָא בְהֵמוֹת אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתִי עִמָּךְ* [Behold now Behemoth, which I made with you], closely linking and resembling it to Job.

Behemoth is further introduced by particularly emphasising its mouth in 40:15, 20, 23 and concludes with the invincibility focusing on its face, according to the last verse about the free Behemoth, 40:24, where it makes a mockery of mighty men.

The main emphasis is, however, on its genitals in 40:16–17, 19, perhaps also suggested by its nose as body-part ironically to be pierced in 40:24 (cf. Van Der Zwan 2022c). Only three verses, 40:16–18, describe its body: its force is focused in its centre and virtually all attention is directed to the inside of its body (cf. Bakhtin 1984:318), to its bones and sinews, although open to be understood as sexual metaphors, according to Quick (2022:345; cf. also Van Der Zwan 2022c). The overall focus is therefore on food and phallic fertility. Otherwise its behaviour is depicted as rather passive, relaxed and lazy but not monotone. He receptively welcomes the chaotic waters rushing at him and swallows the abysmal Jordan with its gaping mouth, according to 40:23. At the same time Behemoth's body is also embedded in this body of nature, its protrusions of mountains and its apertures of flowing rivers (cf. Bakhtin 1984:318), according to 40:20 and 40:23 respectively. Both bodies are open to each other, all so typical of the grotesque body.

Leviathan's body

The same invincibility of Leviathan also focusing on its face continues immediately thereafter proceeding with the teasing and provocative rhetorical questions to which all obviously negative answers are expected. In fact, the role of the grotesque includes provocation to make sense of something (cf. Black 2009:75).

Otherwise Leviathan's body is almost opposite to that of Behemoth: the focus is in 40:31 and 41:7–9 on the outside, on its skin, that is, the problematic part of Job's body. Although its skin is described as 'closed' and so as apparently opposite to the 'open' grotesque body [*vide supra*], the subtext should rather be read as suggesting self-sufficiency and invincibility as with Behemoth despite the efforts from the outside world to make it a victim. Much more than in the case of Behemoth

is described about Leviathan's body in 41:5–16 focusing again on its face, then its skin and again on its face before moving somewhat down and inward to its neck, flesh and heart, the latter of which is its only internal organ, so different from Behemoth's description. Furthermore, it is more active than Behemoth and even aggressive with the provocative speech of the mouth of this boastful⁵ and perhaps blasphemous beast in 41:4–6 and its fiery mouth and nose blazes flames of fire in 41:11–13 where one is tempted to interpret them as metaphors for its inflammatory words: they threaten to burn the boundaries to the outside world and put its environment on fire. Different from that of Behemoth, the mouth of Leviathan is therefore also noted for its speech, even when it is initially introduced with reference to its speechless mouth in 40:25–27, again including the nose perhaps as phallic feature in 40:26. A fourth reference to its mouth in 41:19 is also possible where it would chew iron and brass as if these were straw and rotten wood. In 40:30 it is to be eaten at a carnivalesque banquet by fishermen (cf. Bakhtin 1984), subtly suggesting their mouths. This is reminiscent of Bakhtin's observation:

The limits between animal flesh and the consuming human flesh are dimmed, very nearly erased. The bodies are interwoven and begin to be fused in one grotesque image of a devoured and devouring world. (p. 282)

Although there is no hint at Leviathan's genitals, except for the two possible sexual euphemisms expressed by its nose (*vide supra*), the same phallic ברה [sword] useless for Behemoth according 40:19 is now no option in 41:18 (cf. also 41:20–21) for Leviathan either. Almost at the end of its description the final focus is on its underbelly in 41:22–24.

Yet, both figures are connected to play and laughter, even ridicule, in 40:20 where Behemoth is imagined as party-animal and in 40:29 where Leviathan cannot be so imagined. The same verb, שחק, is again used in 41:21. In the first two instances others are imagined to sportively play with them, collectively celebrating the body and the earth beyond good and evil as if in a carnival perhaps, ignoring culture and its superego which divides the group. In the second instance this dreamy collective energy is, however, implicitly denied through the rhetorical question because it would involve some human binding. In fact, Leviathan's laughter in the third instance actually involves scorn, perhaps also implied in 41:26.

Much of its description may again be hyperbolic (cf. Clines 2011:1167, 1195, 1197). On the other hand, one is not sure whether to treat Leviathan's body like a bird in 40:29 or like a fish in 40:25–26, 30–31 or like some other animal, a dream-like hybrid.

Just as with Behemoth, numerous inconclusive attempts at identifying Leviathan among real animals prevent an assumption of it being a crocodile (Doak 2015:269; Van Der Zwan 2022a). Among these possibilities is a sea-dragon and

5. The plural noun, גבורות [strengths], hints at the גבר [man] whom Job is called upon by God to become (again) in 38:3 and 40:7, a word used 15 times in the book.

could then be identical to another monster mentioned in the book: הַתַּנִּין (the [sea-]dragon) in 7:12, an intensive noun derived from the verb, תן [elongate], giving it a phallic connotation but figuratively meaning 'enemy' (Rashkow 1997:77). It could be that the monstrous pair should be seen as complementary parts of the same fantasy.

Comparing them

Whereas Job's suffering body is described from the first person perspective, that is, mostly kinaesthetically, the two monsters are described from a third-person perspective, mostly visually.

Different from the body of Job scattered in the text of the whole book, the bodies of the two monsters are more like the literary *wasf* (Arabic for 'description', celebrating bodily beauty; cf. Quick 2022:341), although an anti-*wasf*, a term used by Bernat (2004:341–347) but then for another biblical body description, would be more accurate. In fact, he (Bernat 2004:334–336) regards the monster-description as an enemy-*wasf*. This is, however, interrupted by remarks about its invincibility, for instance.

The slowness of the monsters' bodily movements suggests something disabled despite their apparent functional control. All three bodies are pictured as under attack by those who regard them as problematic bodies. This vulgar violence against them is coupled with eating, making it a kind of perversion.

None of these bodies is female (in opposition to such an assertion by Black [2009:107ff.] about the grotesque), but Job's might be understood as somehow effeminate, psychically castrated, when God's call to Job to regain his manhood is taken into consideration in 38:3, repeated in 40:7 (*vide infra*).

All three bodies, however, are ugly bodies, even when the two animals impress with their threatening strength and in that way oppose and protest against the sense of vulnerability which Job is experiencing. All three grotesque bodies are, then, a critique of the classical canon (Bakhtin 1984:433). They can be contrasted to the beautiful bodies of Job's daughters in 42:15, their sensuality suggested already by the previous verse. In fact, it is the only verse where the aesthetic is asserted, if בְּנֵעִימִים [in pleasure] in 36:11 is ignored as merely hypothetical.

All three bodies are eventually elevated by God and the two monstrous ones are both recognised as special beings: אין-על-עפר מְשֻׁלוֹ הָעֵשׂוֹ לְבָלִי-חַת (it [Behemoth] is the beginning of the ways of God) in 40:19a and in 41:25–26: אֵין-עַל-עֶפְרָא מְשֻׁלוֹ הָעֵשׂוֹ לְבָלִי-חַת (it looks at all high things; it is king over all the proud beasts), perhaps also hinting at the inversion of hierarchy through 'comic crownings and uncrownings' (Mazour-Matusevich 2009:2). God asserts the primacy of the monstrous body as the base,

not the exception, from which the normal and the ideal deviate. Perhaps God painted two opposite extremes with the two monsters, but both as 'naturalised' in their environments.

Only Job's body is associated explicitly with death of which there are, however, implicit traces as in 40:19 and 40:30, in the descriptions of the other two grotesque, monstrous bodies, apart from their own continuous threatening presence. Yet, as Canguilhem (1962:29) claims: '*le monstre, c'est le vivant de valeur négative, sa valeur est de repoussoir [...]. C'est la monstruosité et non pas la mort qui est la contre-valeur vitale [...]*' (the monster is the living thing of negative value, its value is repelling [...]). It is monstrosity and not death which is the counter-value of life [...]).

God's blessing of Job in 42:12ff. can probably be extended to all monstrous bodies when the curses on the superego have been satisfactorily vented. The total of reality based on the chaotic grotesque is therefore framed and embraced by God's blessing.

Different from the grotesque body, the eyes (*vide supra*) do play some role, especially for Job (*vide supra*), but less so for Behemoth in 40:24 where they could, however, be protruding, although again more so for Leviathan in 41:10 where they are, however, closely linked to its sneezing nose.

Psychoanalysing grotesque bodies

Oddly enough, there has been virtually no psychoanalytic exploration of the grotesque⁶ and therefore of grotesque bodies, even when the grotesque elicits so many pointers to the unconscious. This also applies to Bakhtin's but less so in Kayser's work (Black 2009:105).

The grotesque body – as also the disabled body – is about body images. Black (2009:106), however, opposes Russo's distinction between a somatic (as silent witness) and an inner grotesque which relates to the recognition that subjective bodies are all images distinct from the objective body, whatever that may be.

The same neglect in research on the body-image of people with disabled bodies still existed in at least 2002, according to Taleporos and McCabe (2002:971) and Reel and Bucciere (2010:91). However, some people with disabilities find that they are seen as grotesque (Reel & Bucciere 2010:91, 92) with sometimes also an implied importance of the mouth due to their eating disorder defences (Reel & Bucciere 2010:92ff.; cf. also Baker, Sivyer & Towell 1998:*passim*; Bucciere & Reel 2009:*passim*), but also tying in with the stereotype of the grotesque body.

That means that the body image is not only conditioned by 'not being able to' – in fact, something universal and not limited to people with 'disabilities' – but mostly by being seen as ugly and sexually undesirable, even when these

people can do other things which 'abled' bodies cannot. This is then what they have in common with the grotesque body, even when both grotesque and 'disabled' bodies are able to work, procreate – even the most beautiful daughters in the land – and enjoy a long life. Moreover, when elderly people are not able to do those same things the label of disability disappears as the disability is then regarded as normal.

Psychic splitting into a good and a bad object is the earliest and lowest-level defence trying to protect the good part from the bad in the same object. Later the dichotomy of these two aspects can be realistically integrated and recognised as actually belonging to the same object (Fairbairn 1958:380). Not only bodies but also body parts are divided by an absolute boundary into these two simplistic groups without a continuum between them. In order to remain in the illusion of a whole, beautiful and functional body the 'normal' person needs and depends on the grotesque and disabled bodies of others onto which this person can project the real of a fragmented, ugly and dysfunctional body and can dissociate from the abject, where abjection is the opposite of identification. These abject realities of the body are then disowned and dumped on a body which is therefore not disabled by a bodily defect but by society (cf. Walls 2007:15).

The binary and therefore hierarchical division between the pure and the impure (or clean and unclean, perfect and imperfect) categories in the Hebrew Bible is subverted by God through the hybrid bodies of the two, probably unclean monstrosities nicknamed⁷ Behemoth and Leviathan for the lack of exact identification with the hippopotamus and crocodile respectively. God cares inclusively and does not distinguish these monsters from other animals. The formerly watertight compartments are now exposed as unrealistic, idealist fantasies over against the endless excess which cannot be accommodated in such a simplistic and naïve order.

A body is generalised as disabled when only one selected body part is less functional than the relative norm in a specific social context. That problematic body part metonymically but wrongfully becomes the essence of the projected body-image. This is typical of psychic splitting and its part-object relations where a part is valued for its function, typical of the paranoid-schizoid position (Klein 1946:101).

Davis (1997:61) points out that the focus on a single, troubling body part reminds the abled person of the uncoordinated, fragmented pre-specular body, the other body, the unsymbolised Real repressed behind the Imaginary, according to Lacan's theory. This reminder of what could happen with regression also includes an anxiety of contagion by the disabled body, for not only are body-boundaries instable but also the boundary between illness and health (cf. Koch 2017:149), and therefore also that between ableism and disability.

6.Unless Freud's theory about the uncanny is considered as such.

7.The animals staged in the first divine speech are described without nicknames.

Davis (1997:62) also points to the uncanny character of the Real, referring to Freud's notion of '*das Unheimliche*', examples of which Freud finds, significantly, in dismembered body parts. Davis therefore regards the whole body as '*heimlich*' [homely, familiar], from which the disabled body has deviated (cf. also Doak [2015:272, 275] who regards monsters as the boundary of the 'home'). This is, however, ironic, as the fragmented, uncoordinated body is actually the original '*heimliche*', which has become '*unheimlich*' (uncanny) and alienated due to repression as a result of the specular body image. It is in this context significant that both Freud (1998:154, 2008a:89, 2008b:351) and Jung (1984:116) found the body to be often represented in dreams by a house, that is the body as home from which one is 'born'.

God refers to mythological figures, that is, the *images* of the unconscious. This does not need to be all serious and could include the humorous trickster (cf. Koepping 1985:*passim*; *vide supra*). This monstrous pair might mirror the formerly presumed as perfect, self-sufficient and finished Job but now exposed and reduced to the desperate survival of bodily-basics.

The text of the book of Job frames several aspects (cf. Van Der Zwan 2022c) but the Satan introduced in the book's sixth verse already and reintroduced in the first verse of the second chapter is conspicuously absent at the end of the book. At the same time the Satan is probably linked to the idea of blaspheming or cursing in 1:5 (supposedly by Job's children), in 1:11 (the Satan wrongly predicting Job would do) and in 2:5 (again the Satan wrongly predicting Job would do), and in 2:9 (Job's wife suggesting it). It is ironically expressed through the verb, בָּרַךְ [bless], elsewhere used in its non-ironic meaning in 1:10 (by God), 1:21 (by Job) and 42:12 (by God). Instead of cursing God, Job curses (using a different verb, קָלַל) the night of his conception and his own day of birth. He moreover appeals in 3:8 to those cursing (again using two other verbs, קָבַב or נָקַב [lay a spell, according to Clines [1989:167]; cf. 5:3] and עָרַר לְיָמֵינוּ ([to] arouse Leviathan), probably done so in the divine speech, ironically by God. Although blessing is thus an element framed, cursing or blaspheming is interestingly not, even when Leviathan may represent it at the end. It is possible that the Satan and blaspheming or cursing is therefore embodied in these two monstrosities, the second, Leviathan, certainly not expected to flatter or politely and submissively negotiate according to the rhetorical questions in 40:27–28. Instead, its arrogant and perhaps cursing speech is mentioned in 41:4 (*vide infra*). Finally, Leviathan as disguised Satan curses the abusive superego against which it successfully and praiseworthy revolts, so much like the role of the grotesque body in a carnival. Pope (1965:73) believes that וַיִּנְפְּשֵׁי אֶשְׁמִי וַיִּנְפְּשֵׁי אֶשְׁמִי [and touch my throat] 13:14b expresses self-cursing. One could understand it as a kind of oath.

Some commentators such as Ebach (1996:153) have wondered whether God is actually not disguised in the Leviathan, incidentally the animal with the longest description in the

Hebrew Bible. That could mean that the Satan is just a mask God is wearing in the introductory two chapters of the epilogue. God is then playing the grotesque Satan-body in this carnival of teasing bodies. Whether God is, in fact, masquerading as the two monstrosities and/or as the critical, questioning, mischievous Satan as Trickster, God is thus not siding with the *superego* but subversive and reaffirming the Real (to use the Lacanian concept) of the *id* expressed in the body. God is taking care of the grotesque body which has been with Job right from the start according to 40:15 (cf. 7:12). If the monster-pair is a cover-up for the Satan with whom God made a secret deal unknown to Job, God is taking care of the Satan as well.

Watermeyer (2013:90) models the disabled body on the disorderly, grotesque bodies of the carnival which refer to the Lacanian Real and induce both feelings of threat at the cultural boundaries and of energy. It is like 'matter out of place', according to Douglas (1984:36), referring to dirt and dust. The two monstrosities and the broken body of Job in the dirt and dust seem like bodies out of place. If body-images are closely linked to the understanding of the social body, then God is hinting at the superego embodied in the not always so subtly dominating group as well, where 'disabled' bodies are experienced as monstrosities by the abled world, because they induce anxiety of being disabling (Van Der Zwan 2022b:5).

In one sense the grotesque and the disabled bodies are balancing but cooperating opposites: the grotesque body tries to drive away the reality of the disabled body by feasting excessively. That is why the mythical monsters metaphorising the torn and broken body (Doak 2015:270–279; Raphael 2004:407) serve as cooperating corrective to the disabled body of Job even when they do not pretend or parade as politically correct and even when Job is also already presented in a grotesque way himself.

Davis (1997:64) is correct with his evaluation: 'One problem with terms like "disability" and "the grotesque" is that they disempower the object of observation'. The grotesque seems to be obsessed with the gross. There may be a false fascination with the grotesque and the disabled as heroic figures at the periphery, as may be suggested by the exceptionally high frequency with which they appear in films to please the voyeuristic desires of those who also want to see sex and violence, that is, the grotesque and monstrous-perverse bodies as alternatives to the boring normal but also to increase the appreciation for the ideal.

Conclusion

The grotesque body is psychically closely connected to the monstrous, perverted, abject and even disabled bodies which all represent bodily alterity in the sense of the other body but also of the body as the other. Not only Job's diseased body but also the monstrous bodies with which Job does not feel at ease, deal precisely with the *id*'s raw realism of ugly, excessive exaggeration and with transgression of the pretentious

boundaries through exclusion by an abusive superego. Even a continuum between a disabled and a normal or ideal body is problematic as this would suppose two polarities depending on only one selected aspect and elevating it to single norm when the reality is much more complex, intertwining different aspects of the body.

In the book of Job, in the battle between bodies, God does not describe the ideal body and does not side with the superego, but compares the broken Job with two (other) grotesque bodies of monstrous animals as mirror-models to be admired as all bodies are ultimately grotesque and disabled. The grotesque and disability apply to everybody.

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