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Skin and beyond: reading the surfaces of the body in ancient Greek literature

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Skin and Beyond

Reading the Surfaces of the Body in Ancient Greek Literature

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And how does it feel now you've scratched that itch?

How does it feel?

And pulled out all your stitches

Hubris is a bitch

Florence + the Machine: excerpt from '100 Years', from the album *High as Hope* (2018)

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Acknowledgements: skin in the game

In the spring of 2023 I got my first tattoo. After thinking about skin and its historical conceptualizations for several years, I was curious about if and how a tattoo would change the way I viewed and felt my own skin. I remember the three hours I sat for it vividly: the chair I was in, the novel I was reading and the trance-like concentration with which the incomparable Mártha Álfa worked on my arm. What I do not remember is pain. Granted, my tattoo is hand poked—a much gentler process than the more common method involving a machine. I only flinched when the needle hit a nerve.

Much like sitting for my tattoo, I experienced working on the present thesis as a gentle process. I have many people to thank for this. First of all, my two *Doktormütter* Ineke Sluiter and Tazuko van Berkel: their guidance allowed me to make sense of a topic as conceptually rich as the skin, of which I have only (forgive the pun, Ineke) scraped the surface. This is not to say I didn't flinch every now and then. Ineke and Tazuko—wonderfully complementary in their approach—were always there to pick me up and push me to think further. I hope I can do right by their kindness, trust and patience by paying it forward.

It is a cliché to say that doing a PhD is lonely; in my case, it was also patently untrue, as I was—dare I say—anchored in many supportive academic communities. My colleagues in the Leiden classics department made me feel right at home from the start, after I made the long journey west from Nijmegen. I am happy to call many of the occupants of *de gang* friends: I would like to mention Suzanne Adema, Bert van den Berg, Merlijn Breunesse, Aiste Čelkyte, Leanne Jansen, Renske Janssen, Casper de Jonge, Basil Nelis, Christoph Pieper, Adriaan Rademaker, Jörn Soerink, Antje Wessels, and fellow PhD's Irene van Eldere, Kees Geluk, Henric Jansen, Ruben Poelstra and Louis Verreth. The members of the LUCAS research centre have similarly been a source of inspiration, with a special shoutout to the LUCAS hiking club. Teaching was one of the best parts of my job—I think I only *really* learnt ancient Greek after I started teaching it. I felt immensely proud (and a little old) watching my students grow both as classicists and as people.

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Glyn Muitjens

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A note on textual references and translations

For references to ancient authors, I use the *OCD* abbreviations—unless the author is not included there, in which cases I use those of the *LSJ*. References to Hippocratic texts are mostly to the easily accessible Loeb editions. Only when the numbering of the treatises might cause confusion I also provide the paragraph number in Littré’s edition of the text: *Steril.* is now considered a separate treatise, for example, but is treated by Littré as a part of *Mul.* For fragments, I provide the number of the fragment plus the edition or volume of the collection (included in the bibliography) in which it is found. As the texts I cite come from a variety of genres and because some fragment collections, such as the *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*, are cumbersome to navigate, this hopefully makes the fragments easier to look up than using the common abbreviations (*FrGhH*) of these collections would. Translations of ancient Greek are my own unless indicated otherwise.