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# **SZAKDOLGOZAT**

## **Renaissance metaphors of the body**

### **- Reneszánsz test-metaforák -**

**The verbal construction of marginal bodily states in William Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* and John Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions***

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“But for the *body*, How poore a wretched thing is *that*?” (John Donne)

## I. Introduction

This paper will concern two texts from the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The rationale for my choice of these specific texts as objects of a comparative analysis is the fact that, in my opinion, they are both organised around the body, or, more precisely, extreme states of the body. William Shakespeare’s narrative poem, *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) foregrounds Lucrece’s raped body and thematises the consequences of sexual violence; while John Donne’s *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, and severall steps in my Sicknes* (1624) is a series of 23 meditations, expostulations and prayers dealing with the author’s near fatal illness. I will argue that, however different the two pieces might be in terms of, e.g. narrative voice or genre, they can both be analysed as rhetorical processes making sense of an extreme body state.

The altered body calls for heightened (self-)reflection: bodily alteration, suffering especially, has to be made sense of, it is but a basic human need. The altered body asks for an interpretation. In my view, however, such an interpretation is not simply a *reading* of the body, it is also a *construction* of a way of understanding that body. I will therefore look for the ways the two pieces invest bodily change with certain meanings as a way of coming to terms with trauma. My interest is the way that tools employed by verbal discourse, such as tropes or narrativising, strive to both express and construct an event that takes place on the most basic (and most human) level of existence, the body. In my view, these rhetorical means are not ‘innocent’, they do not merely operate in the text-world, but, as we shall see in the case of Lucrece, for example, can have very severe consequences in the ‘real’ world as well. In other words, the way we verbally fashion our bodies affects the way we experience them.

I believe that such an active fashioning of the body, be it by verbal or other means, is a pervasive process in all domains of culture. “[W]hat goes on within the body ‘goes without saying’, because it goes on daily, habitually, involuntarily and universally”, hence bodiliness “seems to fall

beneath the threshold of significance into the domain of the *merely* natural” (Paster 5). However, much of recent scholarship has begun to dismember this “merely natural” body and analyse bodily experience as socially constructed and culturally contingent. I will therefore read the literary texts as embedded in a variety of discourses that created their own (sometimes contradictory) images of the body. I will refer to these discourses at appropriate points of my analysis.

This paper will first consider the way the texts create the body and the experience of its extreme states metaphorically. These metaphorical understandings will show some similarity, but the way the two works operate with them in the full rhetorical process will be different. This is most evidently due to the fact that the two texts recount different instances of the altered body: while Shakespeare deals with the consequences of rape, Donne examines the state of disease. However, I also believe that this fundamental difference is, for this essay, not as vital as it first seems to be. This is because I am not primarily interested in what *actually* happens to the body, but in how a text constructs that incident. Both illness and the state of sexual violation can be formulated in an almost infinite number of ways, some of which could possibly coincide with one another. I would like to examine the specific formulations that Shakespeare and Donne offer in the works I have selected, and if these two formulations differ, I will investigate this difference in light of what it tells us about the texts’ understanding of the body in general, and its relation to selfhood and identity.

One last introductory remark has to be added before I proceed to analyse the texts themselves. It is important to understand that when I examine the body in Donne’s or Shakespeare’s text, I examine “not *the* body, but the *early modern* body” (Smith 20). Because of the social constructionist framework that I am working in, this difference is a fundamental one: not only do I see the body as culturally, but also as historically contingent. Bodiliness was conceptualised as something different at the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries from how we understand it today. It was, however, definitely a central issue: with the 16<sup>th</sup>-century advancements in dissection, the idea of (human) anatomy has begun to haunt all fields of culture. Moreover, literature showed a positive obsession with the idea, so much so that “the body

almost disappeared under the sheer weight of poetic tribute of which it was the recipient. It was this recycled procession of poetic evocations of the body which endowed late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writing with its physicality” (Sawday 86). I will now turn to examine two instances of this language of the body that developed in the English Renaissance.

## II. The metaphorised body

“Formulating the body as the most important and most neglected human space calls for extraordinary powers of consciousness, differentiation, and verbalization. Normal language remains silent before the problem and turns to metaphor.” (Reinhard H. Friedrich)

### 1. Lucrece’s metaphors

Let us first examine how the images of a controlled and mastered body change as a consequence of intrusion in *The Rape of Lucrece*.

Apart from her initial “verbal production” (Quay 7) by Collatine, which creates her as an image of chastity, and ignites Tarquin’s lust, we first meet Lucrece in her brief scene as Tarquin’s welcoming, innocent hostess, who’s “never coped with stranger eyes” (99). Her appearance as pure, speechless figure is further elaborated on in the rape scene. Up until Tarquin first touches her, we see her as the perfect match between controlled exterior and chastely void interior, as a mere image envisioned first by Collatine’s praising words, and later created by Tarquin’s lustful eyes as they prey on her body. It is at the beginning of the rape scene that Lucrece’s body takes up a central position in the events. The dominant tropes of the body in this section are definitely architectural: she is “like a virtuous monument” (391), her breasts are “like ivory globes circled with blue” (407), “round turrets” (441), her chest like an “ivory wall” (464) protecting a “sweet city” (469), she is Tarquin’s “fair throne” (413). All in all, the verbal construction of Lucrece’s body in the rape scene is dominated by the image of the chaste woman as a “never-conquer’d fort” (483). In addition, she is also envisaged in geographical or colonial terms, as a similarly virginal stretch of land, her breasts as “a pair of maiden worlds unconquered, / Save of their lord no bearing yoke they knew” (408-9).

Lucrece's body, understood primarily in terms of enclosure, is naturally allied with the architectural metaphor. This is of course embedded in a larger discourse on the "normative Renaissance woman", who is "rigidly 'finished': her signs are the enclosed body, the closed mouth, the locked house. (...) [she is] the emblem of the perfect and impermeable container" (Stallybrass 127). However, apart from gendered discourses of enclosure, "the house has always been the most flexible and most plausible image of the body", claims Reinhard H. Friedrich, and he goes on to cite examples from the Bible for the body-as-house (Friedrich 21), proving that the image is indeed one of the oldest ones for formulating an understanding of the body, especially in its relationship to the soul which, following the logic of the metaphor, resides within it.

Geographical and colonial imagery, on the other hand, became a recurrent tool for speaking about the body as a later development, one that was essentially a consequence of colonial enterprises on the one hand and anatomical on the other, both of which were in their flourishing during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries: "[a]s they embarked upon the project of unravelling the body's hidden recesses", Renaissance anatomists "found themselves wandering within a geographical entity. The body was a territory, an (as yet) undiscovered country, a location which demanded from its explorers skills which seemed analogous to those displayed by the heroic voyagers across the terrestrial globe" (Sawday 23).

What unites these two images is the attempt at creating a metaphorical understanding of the body which allows for "mastery (...) and control over its internal processes" (Sawday 17), either through presenting it as a well-structured building or as a stretch of land that can be conquered, owned and organised. Lucrece's body is conceptualised in such terms when the poem first centres around her image. Her body at this stage of the poem is "possessed within the envisioning male, whether Collatine or Tarquin" (Carter 212); the tropes creating her image, in addition to the above mentioned architectural and geographical metaphors, are "part of the traditional vocabulary of Elizabethan love poetry" (Maus 76), such as the images employed by the set rhetoric piece of the blazon: "coral lips (420)", "alabaster

skin” (419), “hair, like golden threads” (400), etc. The creation of Lucrece’s body-image is therefore, at this point, part of a traditional (male) rhetoric that is active in creating Lucrece as a masterable whole.

The military metaphorisation of the forced sexual act proceeds logically from the verbal construction of the female body as an enclosed fortress. As the almost symmetrically opposed counterpart of Lucrece, her ravisher, Tarquin, appears as a figure in motion, in action. After his initial hesitation, he evidently declares war: “Affection is my captain, and he leadeth” (271), and with that, “[t]he Roman lord marcheth to Lucrece’ bed” (301). And further, “march’d on to make his stand / On her bare breast, the heart of all her land” (439). His hand touching Lucrece’s virginal breast is pictured as a “[r]ude ram, to batter such an ivory wall” (464), and to his petrified victim he announces to have “come to scale / Thy never-conquered fort” (482-83).

Tarquin’s act brings about major changes in the concept of Lucrece’s body. His literal intrusion is put on a metaphorical level, and meditation over its consequences dominates the remaining section of the poem. Interestingly enough, Lucrece herself is first given voice as a result of Tarquin’s intrusive touch. Here already, she appears as one whose body is actually in motion, although the description of this inner movement is still very much in line with the series of architectural metaphors of the section, and is depicted as the rushing about of citizens within a castle, or soldiers in a fort:

“They [her veins], must’ring to the quiet cabinet  
Where their dear governess and lady lies,  
Do tell her she is dreadfully beset,  
And fright her with confusion of their cries.”  
(442-45)

After having been abandoned by Tarquin, in her post-rape state, Lucrece, for the first time in the poem, starts reflecting on her own body and delivers a speech of exquisite rhetoric in which she laments over the changes that took place within it.

First of all, the building is ruined:

“Her house is sacked, her quiet interrupted,  
Her mansion batter’d by the enemy,  
Her sacred temple spotted, spoiled, corrupted,  
Grossly engirt with daring infamy.

Then let it not be call'd impiety,  
 If in this blemished fort I make some hole  
 Through which I may convey this troubed soul.” (1170-76)

Similarly, later, during her ekphrasis of the painting of Troy, she likens herself to the battered city: “so my Troy did perish” (1547), she says, following up on the imaging of rape as a battle.

However, an even more fundamental shift occurs during Lucrece’s lament: architectural metaphors, those of organised interiors, give way to primarily *natural* ones: “The branches of another root are rotted” (823), “My honey is lost” (836), “thy weak hive” (839), “thy chaste bee” (840), “Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud? / Or hateful cuckoos hatch in sparrows’ nests? / Or toads infect fair founts with venom mud? (848-50), “This bastard graff shall never come to growth” (1062), “thy stock pollute” (1063), “his fruit” (1064), “Unwholesome weeds take root with precious flowers; / The adder hisses where the sweet birds sing” (870-71), “The bark peeled from the lofty pine / His leave will wither, and his sap decay” (1167-68) etc. Her body, for Lucrece’s self-examining eye, comes to life, or, more accurately, to a life in death. Moreover, she recognises the presence of something alien within herself, and does so via descriptions of natural processes. From being an empty but well-organised architectural structure, or the conquerable *terra incognita*, her body, through her own eyes and, ironically, as an effect of the rape, becomes a living thing, an organism, simultaneously made to wither (“rough winter that the flower hath / kill’d” (1160-61) and also ironically to blossom, due to the (possibly) engendered child. Tarquin’s intrusion “revealed a vista of an alternative (and dangerous) mode of existence in which the marginal, the low, the anti-rationalistic reigns supreme” behind the “cool, reserved, classical forms” (Sawday 19) of the body.

## 2. Tropes of the body in the *Devotions*

Let us now turn to certain focal points in Donne’s text and examine the variety of ways it metaphorises the (diseased) body. We will notice a significant difference between the two texts: while Lucrece’s story contains an essential shift in the understanding of the body, marked also by a change in



narration and perspective (from one dominated by external narrators and viewers to an inner monologue of the protagonist), bringing with it an alteration in the set of metaphors employed; Donne's account of his illness moves rather in circles. As Ramie Targoff puts it, there is an "impression of circularity produced by the *Devotions* – the feeling that despite real changes in Donne's condition, we are never fully moving forward" (138). This circularity, however, will be the cornerstone to what I shall later explain as Donne's way of coming to terms with, and formulating an understanding of, his disease. Donne's body-metaphors, due to the circular nature of the text, are pervasive ones: they haunt the *Devotions* all the way through.

In the *Devotions*, similarly to *Lucrece*, the image of the body-house is a central one: in Meditation 1, Donne speaks of the body as a "building", and health-conscious men as ones who "polish every stone, that goes to that building" (7). In Prayer 5, he constructs the body as a piece of architecture with many doors through which the entering of sin threatens, and prays to God for his help in keeping those doors shut: "Open none of my *dores*, not my *hart*, not of mine *eares*, not of my *house*, to any *supplanter* that would enter to undermine me in my *Religion* to thee" (28). In Prayer 11, Donne figures the body as a house of God, with many rooms, the most important one being the heart: "so though thou bee alwayes present, and alwayes working in every roome of this thy House, my body, yet I humbly beseech thee to manifest alwayes a more effectuall presence in my *heart*, then in the other Offices" (60). In the 18<sup>th</sup> meditation, the body-house is presented as crumbling, once left by the soul: "that *body* hath lost the *name* of a *dwelling house*, because none dwells in it, and is making haste to lose the name of a *body*, and dissolve to *putrefaction*" (96). The other recurring trope of *Lucrece*, that of the body as a geographical unit, or a stretch of land, a country, is also present in Donne's text. In the 8<sup>th</sup> meditation, for example, man is pronounced to be a world, one whose "*matter* is *earth*, his *forme*, *misery*", the latter of which is figured by the sea surrounding a stretch of land.

If the body is imagined as a piece of architecture or as a stretch of land, then the corresponding images of the body in illness are those of a besieged building or a land at war. Parallel to the way *The*

*Rape of Lucrece* images sexual violence as the siege of a fortress, Donne also employs military imagery to express his body in an extreme state: “in a minute a Cannon batters all, overthrowes all, demolishes all” (7), he laments in Meditation 1. Later, in Meditation 19, by the time his recovery has already started, he declares that “[i]n me the *siege* is so farre slackned, as that we may come to *fight*, and so die in the *field*, if I *die*, and not in a prison” (99). However, the altered state of the body, for Donne, be it of a house or a geographical unit, is not always imagined in terms of a battle between two forces: “The house may be united within but besieged from the outside, or it may decay from within. The first is the more immediately startling and dramatic, the second the more dangerous peril” (Friedrich 22). The 22<sup>nd</sup> meditation starts with such an image of the always-already crumbling body-house or body-farm: “How *ruinous* a *farme* hath *man* taken, in taking *himselife*? How ready is the *house* every day to fall downe, and how is all the *ground* ovespread with *weeds*, all the *body* with *diseases*?” (116). I will return to the image of this already “ruinous farme”, which is a significant one in the *Devotions*’s formulation of disease.

If we now leave the territory of the body-house and the body-land, we are to arrive at the political body, one that is figured in terms of affairs in a state, a very pervasive image in the *Devotions*. It also appears in *Lucrece*, when, for example, Lucrece’s veins are imagined as servants rushing to wake up their “dear governess and lady”, i.e., the heart (443). Within Donne’s political body, formulated according to the “traditional analogy between the king and the heart” (Szántó 109), the latter is often figured as the principle organ: “the *Heart* alone is in the *Principalitie*, and in the *Throne*, as *King*, the rest as *Subjects*, though in eminent *Place*, and *Office*, must contribute to that, as *Children* to their *Parents*, as all persons to all kindes of *Superiours*” (56). Donne here imagines the body as a hierarchically organised entity, where, much like in a state, all units have their own circumscribed field of function. Moreover, not only the body, but the disease itself is often metaphorised as such a political organisation: “*Diseases* themselves hold *Consultations*, and conspire how they may multiply, and joyn with one another, & *exalt* one anothers force” (35). The disease, however, from being the enemy of the

body, is soon figured as its accomplice, as they form an alliance, an inner empire, a mutual political unit. Here, similarly to the above quoted instance of the “ruinous farme”, illness is imagined as something inner, as something within the body, as that body becomes rebellious:

The *pulse*, the *urine*, the *sweat*, all have sworn to say *nothing*, to give no *Indication* of any dangerous *sicknessse*. (...) [A]nd yet they see, that invisibly, & I feele that insensibly the *disease* prevails. The *disease* hath established a *Kingdome*, an *Empire* in mee, and will have certain *Arcana Imperii*, *secrets of State*, by which it will proceed, & not be bound to *declare* them. (52)

“The body had become the rebellious subject, hoarding its own knowledge of illness, and hiding within itself the constitution of the rival who, unless the rack prevailed, would eventually unseat the rule and order of the body’s erstwhile owner”, explains Jonathan Sawday, borrowing Donne’s political language (34). If the body conspires, it has to be made to confess by means of examination: Donne employs the language of jurisdiction and dissection to construct the image of the examined body: “They have seene me, and heard mee, arraign’d mee in these fetters, and receiv’d the *evidence*; I have cut up mine own *Anatomy*, dissected myselfe, and they gon to *read* upon me” (46). The illness here is clearly presented as a hermeneutical task set for patient and doctors, one that is to be solved only if nothing is kept secret: “I have hid nothing from them”, “they hide nothing from one another”, “they hide nothing from the world”, he claims later (47). From this obsession with opening the body both in front of the self, the physician, and, most importantly, God himself, come further images of torture and confession: “In intestine Conspiracies, *voluntary Confessions* doe more good, then confessions upon the *Rack*”, writes Donne in Meditation 13 (68).

Apart from images of the architectural, the geographical, or the political/judicial body, Donne’s text is scattered with other ways of metaphorising the state that he is in. He employs the language of many fields of knowledge, a prominent trait of what has become to be termed ‘metaphysical’ writing, a mode of writing most often associated with Donne’s literary output. Images borrowed from natural

philosophy, for example, often appear as ways of formulating the diseased state. Meditation 2 employs a chemical analogy: “a *Fever* doth not melt him like *snow*, but powr him out like lead, like yron, like brasse melted in a furnace: It doth not only *melt* him, but *Calcine* him, reduce him to *Atomes*, and to *ashes*, not to *water*, but to *lime*” (11).

At some of its most interesting formulations, however, the state of illness appears as one invested with value, a positive condition. In Meditation 17, affliction is figured as a treasure, “as *gold* in a *Mine*” (87), although one without much practical currency, but one that brings the sufferer closer to Heaven. Such a perception of suffering is granted to Donne by a theological formulation of illness. A Protestant prayer book, as quoted by Ramie Targoff, “exhorts the sick man or woman to remember that ‘whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly, that it is God’s visitation’, and proceeds to explain the proper frame of mind for understanding the illness’ purpose” (Targoff 133). In a Christian framework, sickness always has a *purpose*, because it is perceived as an opportunity granted by God to the individual to repent his or her sins. How such a formulation informs Donne’s text will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Let us now examine the body metaphors we have so far collected from the point of view of how they contribute to the rhetorical and narrative process of formulating the altered body. How do the images enlisted above create rape and disease, respectively, as an understandable whole? How do the texts systematise what appears as a chaotic experience of the body? And, finally, what solutions do they construct as the logical outcome of the rhetorically formulated understanding of the altered body?

#### **IV. Understanding the body’s altered states**

##### 1. Constructing rape in *Lucrece*

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Lucrece’s body before her rape is primarily understood in terms of architectural enclosure. In order to understand the full significance of this, we have to examine the poem as informed by both ancient and early modern value systems. It is important to note that the story of *Lucrece*; originating from Roman mythology and formulated by Livy and Ovid before it

resurfaced in the Renaissance; is, to some extent, still embedded in the value system of ancient Rome. Such an honour-based system posits the woman as a possession of her husband, and formulates her chastity as a repository of family honour. Therefore, when conceptualised as a contained whole, Lucrece's physical being gains symbolic status. As explained by Sarah E. Quay,

[i]n constructing Lucrece as pure and closed, (...) the men around her are able to create their own illusion of wholeness. In *The Rape of Lucrece* both the system and those who govern it gain definition in defining Lucrece, for if woman is the container for what is good, pure, and whole, man can define himself against such descriptions. (7)

Thus, Lucrece's chaste body becomes the centre of a structure that might best be imagined in terms of concentric circles, each of which is built around the previous one. Starting out from the body, the next sphere is Lucrece's bed (which she does not leave until line 1037!), followed by the walls of her chamber and the system of doors and corridors within the house through which Tarquin approaches her, described in very suggestive terms: „The locks between her chamber and his will, / Each one by him enforced, retires his ward” (302-303); „Now is he come to the chamber door, / That shuts him from the heaven of his thought, / Which with a yielding latch, and with no more, / Hath barred him from the blessed thing he sought” (337-40). These doors and pathways make up the house, which further alludes to the whole of Collatium, and even further to Rome itself. Each level is linked to the following one by means of a metonymic relationship between the two, but every single element stands in for the whole system as well. This elaborate structure is further complicated by the numerous ways in which the very concrete, physical and spatial is constantly turned into the conceptual and abstracted. Lucrece is not only turned into her own chamber (and her chamber into her), Collatium and Rome, but also into the concept of chastity and intactness. Collatium signifies everything Collatine possesses, both on a very material and a metaphysical level, and also suggests the sum of possessions an honourable (Roman) male can form right to. Rome is present primarily as an idea and not as a geographical unit: through Lucrece's chaste body and the honourable Collatium we get a compressed version of everything that is

virtuous and that makes up the Roman value system. “[T]hine honour lay in me”, laments Lucrece to her husband (834), and she calls her rape a “crest-wounding” scar (828), one which destroys the honour of the whole family, as represented by the image of the herald throughout the poem. She tells Collatine that “in the interest of thy bed / A stranger came”, where bed stands for the literal bed itself, but also for Lucrece’s body lying on that bed, and with that, their whole matrimony and even further, everything that is Collatine’s possession (of which Lucrece is simply the most precious one). Furthermore, when Brutus, at the end of the poem, calls for Collatine to take part in active revenge, he claims that in “these abominations (...) / Rome herself (...) doth stand disgraced” (1832-33). In this respect, the body in *Lucrece* is also a *political* body, but more concretely so than it is in the *Devotions*, because whatever happens to Lucrece’s body is also loaded with actual significance for the state itself.

If we turn to look at the act of rape from the perspective outlined above, it becomes obvious that Tarquin’s act is committed against a series of imaginary victims, all of which are condensed in Lucrece’s body. He violates the whole of Roman value system, and “[h]e rapes Collatium, the home and room, as female space. His vision precedes his movement through its corridors and doorways, pushing him steadily deeper into ‘her’” (Carter 215). Shakespeare’s poem therefore “recognizes that the bodies of men and women lie at the center of the notion of a familial state, and that Tarquin’s crime violates the chaste vessel through which patriarchal authority transmits itself” (MacDonald 10).

Following from the above, it seems clear that Lucrece’s “never-conquer’d fort” (483) is a central element in maintaining social equilibrium. Her body is constructed as an enclosed whole, and formulated as the cornerstone of *balance*, a central concept of both medical, poetic and political theory in the Renaissance. “Underlying the poem is the common Renaissance belief (...) that all things are balanced against their opposites, which are held in check, and the corollary, that corruption and death are waiting to overbalance virtue and life” (Bromley 201-2). Suggestive of this inevitability of corruption are the poem’s remarks on the impossibility of maintaining happiness:

“O happiness enjoy’d but of a few!  
An, if possessed, as soon decay’d and done,

As is the morning's silver-melting dew  
Against the golden splendour of the sun!" (22-25)

Or, as Lucrece later observes: "But no perfection is so absolute, / That some impurity doth not pollute" (853-54). The poem therefore often alludes to the fact that pollution, corruption, and a potential loss of balance are somehow encoded in human affairs. This feeling of uncontrollability is also strengthened by Lucrece's evocation of the major role that opportunity plays in decisive events, especially in those that bring about the victory of the sinful intent: "O Opportunity, thy guilt is great: / 'Tis thou that execut'st the traitor's treason" (876-77), she complains.

It is to counter this mutability and corruptibility that Lucrece's body is posed as an intact whole, as a stronghold of integrity. However, by being presented as a fortress, never penetrated before, she is also "inscribed in a language that invites sexual violence" (Jed 7). The poem's language creates her as a *rapeable* woman, or, to put in a more risky way, a *woman to be raped*. This resonates with Tarquin's accusations that put the blame of her rape on Lucrece herself, a rhetorical tool often employed by aggressors in many rape narratives: "The fault is thine, / For those thine eyes betray thee unto mine" (482-83), claiming that it was Lucrece's beauty that almost asked for sexual violence.

The poem's language, therefore, constructs Lucrece's body in a twofold manner: it is partly understood as a perfectly enclosed and intact space, but also as one that is to be violated by a representative of an outer world of mutability, a world in which imbalance and corruption always lurk around the corner. And as the body-whole is forcibly made to be part of that world of threatening chaos, the threat becomes real and the whole social order has to be called into question (which manifests itself in the banishment of the kings).

The act of rape in Shakespeare's poem is therefore primarily understood in terms of a forced intrusion of something of the external and potentially chaotic into a body that has been painstakingly rhetoricised into an organised whole. The military metaphor is therefore a perfect one to verbalise such an event. Through Tarquin's invasion, outer imbalance *becomes a part of* the rhetorically balanced body. The natural tropes I have already alluded to are also suggestive of this intrusive fusion: "Why

should the worm intrude the maiden bud?”, exclaims Lucrece (848). Moreover, Lucrece imagines the disgrace to be carved into her cheeks by means of her tears and facial expression which are unable to hide sin: “For they their guilt with weeping will unfold, / And grave, like water that doth eat in steel, / Upon my cheeks what helpless shame I feel” (754-56). Corruption becomes part of, and written on the body. Because both her own identity, and, as explained above, the identities and values of those around her were somehow dependent on the integrity and chastity of Lucrece’s body, as a result of rape the body loses its main function.

In order to maintain, if not the integrity of self, but at least her innocence, Lucrece must perform a split between soul and body, the interdependence of which was evident to her before: “My body or my soul, which was the dearer / When the one, pure, the other made divine?” (1163-64). As Katherine Eisaman Maus explains:

This is not a merely rhetorical question. What she yearns for is her condition before the rape when there was no need to make a choice between the body and the soul. She finds the conflict between them impossible to endure, but refuses to privilege one element and resolve the conflict. (70)

In her post-rape state therefore, Lucrece becomes a split self, unable to reassert her identity which depended on the integrity of chaste body and chaste soul. Much like John Donne, who, in Meditation 10, finds his body to conspire against him, Lucrece is also alienated from her physical self, which, for her, means alienation from her whole being. The intrusion of the external into the body as it is conceptualised by *Lucrece* means the shattering of the whole self. The metaphors of the body in the poem, those of “house, fortress, mansion, temple, tree bark (...) emphasize the protective and enclosing function of the body – the way the body surrounds the soul and wards off danger. Once the house is sacked and battered, the inhabitant suffers, regardless of her guilt or innocence” (Maus 70). Even if she claims that “Though my gross blood be stained with this abuse / Immaculate and spotless is my mind”



(1655-56), the unity of self, which rested on the integrity of protective, enclosed body and chaste soul, can never be reclaimed.

It is partly because of this interdependence of soul and body (and partly because her story is embedded in a pre-Christian system of values) that certain ways of understanding rape are not available to Lucrece. Such is the rhetoric developed by St. Augustine, the one that has permeated Christian formulations of rape ever since. “Augustine’s redefinition of rape seems to offer simple and merciful consolation, since it allows him to hold that a raped woman remains chaste: ‘(...) if [the] will continues unshaken and steadfast, whatever anyone else does with the body or to the body, (...) involves no blame to the sufferer’” (Thompson 6). This merciful consolation, however, is not one that Lucrece can adopt. Although she, in a distinctly Augustinian way, formulates a contrast between corrupted body and innocent soul, it is precisely this split that makes it unbearable for her to live any longer: “Ah me! the bark peel’d from the lofty pine / His leaves will wither, and his sap decay; / So must my soul, her bark being peel’d away” (1167-68).

Because Lucrece’s body is in a metonymical relationship with the social order that it is both part of, symbolic of, and the foundation of, its corruption is significant not only in the realm of the private, but also in that of the public:

“Why should the private pleasure of some one  
Become the public plague of many mo?  
(...)  
For one’s offence why should so many fall,  
To plague a private sin in general?” (1478-1484),

complains Lucrece as she likens Tarquin’s act to that of Paris of the Troy myth. Whatever happens to the integrity of the body of Lucrece, it happens to the integrity of the body of state and also to the set of values that govern that state. Not only Lucrece, but the whole contingent of men arriving at the scene find themselves in a “wilderness where are no laws” (544). The body’s disintegration also means the disruption of social order.

The rhetorical means by which rape is conceptualised in Shakespeare's text therefore construct a narrative in which suicide becomes inevitable. The intrusion of something external destroys the body's *essence*, i.e., its intactness, enclosure, and masterability, and is also destructive of the integrity of self, which depended on the harmony of a chaste soul in a chaste body. Additionally, through the body's metonymical formulation, it also undermines societal values, and creates a crisis in the integrity of the state at large. The body has lost all its functions, but what is even more important is that it has become unsuited for its own figurative formulations. It is definitely no longer a fortress, and even if understood as a beehive, it is one whose "honey is lost". The natural imagery, although it hints at a body more full of life, at the end of the day simply reinforces the rhetoric of the chastly void body, one which loses meaning and significance once it is penetrated. Lucrece is only able to formulate her body *negatively*, in terms of what it *is not* anymore: it is not a whole. The poem offers no positive alternatives to the body imagined as a masterable whole. "Lucrece submits to the structure that promotes (...) wholeness. In the end, she is unable to move into a space that recognizes, and is not controlled by, rigid categories and definitions of experience" (Quay 9). The rhetorical process creating rape in *Lucrece* is one that, because it is based on the idea of the enclosed or mastered body-as-a-whole, inevitably equates that body's exposure to the external with death.

When I now turn to John Donne's text, I will keep in mind some of the issues discussed above. To what extent is the body imagined as an intact whole in the *Devotions*? Is disease conceptualised similarly to rape? Is the relationship between disease and body in any way analogous to that of aggressor and victim? What does Donne suggest about the relationship between soul and body? How do the discourses of Christian theology and Renaissance medicine inform the text, and in what way do they make its rhetoricisation of an extreme body state different from the one we have seen in *The Rape of Lucrece*?

## 2. Formulating disease in the *Devotions*

Let us first examine the body imagined by the text a bit more closely. When contrasted with *Lucrece*, it becomes obvious that the enclosed body, one that was posed as the cornerstone of a whole social order, and also of personal identity in Shakespeare's poem, is, in Donne's case more threatening than desirable. First of all, it is isolation in general that is singled out as the most horrible accompaniment of disease: "As Sicknesse is the greatest misery, so the greatest misery of sicknes is *solitude*", he claims in Meditation 5 (24).

For Donne, it is '*a disease of the mind*' (25) to choose to be alone – he even argues against religious solitude, declaring that it is wrong to think that 'the way to the *Communion of Saints*, should be by such a *solitude*, as excludes all doing of good here' (26). Separation and individuation make no sense to Donne as principles on which to act: 'There is no *Phenix*', he says, 'nothing singular, nothing alone' (25). (Selleck 166)

From this, it follows logically that "No Man is an *Iland*, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*" (87). The most horrible element in disease is precisely a loss of this connectedness. Separation and enclosure conjure up claustrophobic fears in Donne's text, what "he fears is oppression, containment, and claustrophobia more even than the attack itself" (Friedrich 22). The body as a self-contained world is not an idea that appeals to Donne. When imagined as a closed, microcosmic entity, the body appears as self-destructive, one that inflicts disease upon itself. The colonisable stretch of land in *Lucrece* turns into a terrible inner geography where "modest physical symptoms become ecological disasters" (Targoff 139):

Is this the honour which Man hath by being a *little world*, That he hath these *earthquakes* in him selfe, sodaine shakings; these *lightnings*, sodaine flashes; these *thunders*, sodaine noises; these *Eclipses*, sodain offuscations, & darknings of his senses; these *blazing stars*, sodaine fiery exhalations; these *rivers of blood*, sodaine red

waters? Is he a *world* in himself, not only to destroy, and execute himselfe, but to presage that execution upon himselfe (...)? (8)

This meditation, the very first one, starts with the military image of the disease as a “Cannon” that “batters all, overthrowes all, demolishes all”, but closes with the body as not a mere besieged fortress, or a suffering victim, but an active agent in bringing about disease. Donne expands this idea later, in Meditation 12, by claiming that “our selves are in the plot, and wee are not onely *passive*, but *active* too, to our own destruction”, and again formulates the self-executioning body by adding that “I doe nothing upon my selfe, and yet am mine own *Executioner*” (63). Meditation 4 also thematises the body’s capacity to produce diseases and destroy itself: “as the other *world* produces *Serpents*, and *Vipers*, malignant, & venimous creatures (...) that endeavour to devoure that world which produces them (...), so this world, our selves, produces all these in us, in producing *diseases & sicknesses*” (20). The last meditation returns to the idea of the self-ruining body, and spells out again that “we doe not onely stand under a *falling house*, but *pull it* downe upon us” (122).

As we have seen so far, the *Devotions* dominantly formulates disease as originating from the body’s own self-destructive ability, i.e., as an inner phenomenon. According to such an understanding, corruption is the body’s own mechanism, and not a violation from outside. Disease is primarily figured as part of an unnatural and unpleasant separation from that outside. Such an understanding of disease is clearly informed by the discourse of early modern medicine, one that was still dominated by the ancient Greek “concept of humors – that is, specific bodily fluids essential to the physiological functioning of the organism” (Siraisi 104). According to the humoral theory, the body, made up of four fundamental humors, is in flow with “a universe composed of analogous elements” (Schoenfeldt 3) through the processes of intake and excretion. The body’s health in such a system depends on a successful maintenance of its inner balance of humors, which is brought about by the careful management of the body’s relationship with its environment. “Obstruction” for humoralism is therefore “cause and evidence of illness” (Schoenfeldt 3). The body, when closed up, when its flow is blocked, is capable of

being self-toxic by producing too much of a certain humor: the body “is a dynamic and porous edifice continually producing ‘superfluous excrements’ which must constantly be evacuated or the organism will poison itself” (Schoenfeldt 118). Similarly, a shortage of humors might also be a cause of inner imbalance resulting in illness. Disease, if conceptualised as such an inner humoral imbalance, “is not seen as a foreign presence within the body, but as a condition of what has become the body itself” (Selleck 151).

Donne’s doctors, to whom he continually alludes in his text, worked within such a framework of sickness and health, one that influenced Donne himself. Donne’s idea of a potentially self-destructive body is one that clearly resonates with the dominant concepts of humoralism. Disease is the body’s inner imbalance, and the capability of bringing about this imbalance is somehow encoded in the body itself.

This idea of disease as being encoded in the body is formulated by the image of the always-already “ruinous farme” (116) that I have earlier dealt with. In Meditation 22, where Donne conjurs up the image of the body as a farm, that is inhabited by the self, he describes that farm as one that demands constant reparations because it is inherently ruined. This also implies that there is actually no final way of fixing it, similarly to the ultimately incurable body:

the whole *ground* is of an *ill nature*, the whole soile *ill disposed*; there are no inclinations, there is a propensnesse to *diseases* in the *body*, out of which without any other *disorder*, *diseases* will grow, and so wee are put to a continuall labour upon this *farme*, to a continuall studie of the whole *complexion* and *constitution* of our *body*.  
(116-17)

The *Devotions* fomulates disease as an ever-present phenomenon, one that is unavoidably a part of the “miserable condition of Man” (7). Indeed, even in Meditation 1, where disease is first figured as an all-destroying cannon-ball, the possibility of such an ambush is understood as forming part of this “miserable condition”. No matter how unexpected disease seems to be, no matter how much the

sufferer might perceive it as an attack from outside, it always actually stems from within, it is related to the body's inner self-ruining capacity, which is a part of being human in general. It is by such means that "Donne's self-examination (...) results in an examination of the human condition" (Goldberg 510), and in an understanding of *his* sickness as being in a metonymical relationship with sickness *in general*, moreover, sickness *in general* as a possible metonymy for human existence itself. Telling of this shift is the way the personal pronouns often change from first person singular to first person plural (or the other way round) during each devotion. The speaker is sometimes the "I", and sometimes the "wee", as in "Man", but essentially, both of them. The account of personal suffering is always embedded in a meditation on the general condition, then related to an expostulation with God where Donne cites Biblical figures and likens his affliction to theirs: "While the meditations serve to place Donne in the context of fallen humanity, the expostulations place him in the context of Christian history" (Goldberg 514). The 10<sup>th</sup> meditation, for example, starts with an account of "*Natures nest of Boxes*", its "*Concentrique*" circles (51), which, one by one, all gravitate towards their center, in which destruction is inherent. From angels and the heavens, Donne arrives at "the *societies* of men", in which "[t]wentie *rebellious drums* make not so dangerous a noise, as a few *whisperers*, and secret plotters in corners". The political trope is then brought within the realm of the body and the already quoted image of the conspiring body, whose fluids have "sworn to say *nothing*" is conjured up. The illness is first figured as one in general, then turns into "my case" by the end of the Meditation.

This rhetorical formulation results in an impression that whatever happens to Donne's body is not only a private matter, but is also telling of a more general condition. Such an emblematic formulation of the body and its altered states somewhat resembles the structure we have observed in *The Rape of Lucrece*, where Lucrece's body stood in a metonymical relationship with the collective values of a society. Yet, this condensed nature of the body in *Lucrece* meant that if the body, whose default condition was one of enclosed equilibrium, was thrown off balance, it resonated in the whole structure, which had to be re-ordered. In the *Devotions*, however, we are facing a body that stands for

the human condition by virtue of its always-already corrupted state, one that is also realised as a basic feature of human existence at large. Changes brought about by disease within this body are therefore not conceptualised as having (symbolic or actual) consequences in the order of things, but as being of importance to individual or collective *understanding*. Disease is understood as a heightened state, in which the otherwise present, but often ignored, becomes evident to the self, i.e., disease is a prime occasion for self-reflection, and, through that process, a reflection on the condition of man. While Lucrece's self-reflexive rhetoric focuses on the essential *differences* between her pre- and her post-rape state, Donne's text is more like an awakening, a realisation of *what has already been there*.

This realisation, however, is not merely about the corrupted body, it is also about the correspondence of bodily corruption to the sinfulness of the soul. "[M]y *meditation* is fearefully transferred from the *body* to the *minde*, and from the consideration of the *sickness*, to that of *sinne*", says Donne (122). Sin, as a "spiritual sicknes" (8) is intertwined with the description of physical disease in the text, and Donne clearly

understands the treatment of one to affect the treatment of the other, just as the symptoms themselves overlap. Readers may be tempted to differentiate indications of bodily versus spiritual disease, to determine whether the "red rivers" described in Meditation 1, for example, are meant to signify the bloody color of the urine in typhus, or a world of sinners suffering from God's plagues. But far more important than separating these symptoms from each other is to grasp how profoundly Donne believed them to belong together. (Targoff 141)

The concept of the interrelation between sin and sickness is one derived from Christian theology, and is a fundamental one in Donne's rhetorical formulation of his diseased state. According to the logic of original sin, sinfulness has been a prevalent feature of human affairs ever since Adam's fall. In a fallen world, this prevalence of sin runs parallel to the inherent corruptibility of the body that I have discussed above: "Adam's fall, then, links sickness and sin, for sickness enters the world with sin.

Further, fallen life is sickness” (Goldberg 509), a sickness that is brought about by the prevailing condition of sinfulness. That is, the body’s inherent tendency towards self-destruction is pre-dated by the soul’s original sinfulness.

In such a framework therefore, bodily disease is not only indicative of the human condition at large, but also of the condition that the individual’s soul is in. The disease of the body points towards the less legible disease of the soul, i.e., sinfulness. However, the individual’s sinfulness is always embedded in the ever-present sinfulness of the fallen state of all mankind. Therefore both the diseased body and the sinful soul of the speaker of the *Devotions* can be expanded metonymically to refer to the general condition of man. “My *God*, my *God*, what am I put to, when I am put to *consider*, and *put off*, the *root*, the *fuell*, the *occasion* of my *sickness*? What *Hypocrates*, what *Galen*, could shew mee that in my *body*? It lies deeper than so; it lies in my *soule*”, claims Donne in Expostulation 22 (118), but goes on to assert that the state of his soul further points towards the original sin: “The *root*, and the *fuell* of my *sickness*, is my *sinne*, my *actuell sinne*; but even that *sinne* hath another *root*, another *fuell*, *originall sinne*” (118).

In this respect, if, as I have explained above, disease is conceived of as a window, one that lets the sufferer reflect on what has already been present, but has not yet manifested itself; then this window is one that opens not only on the inherent corruptibility of the body, but also shows that corruptibility as originating from the prevalence of sin in the world.

Because of the inherent nature of both sin and bodily corruption, there is ultimately no cure to be obtained for them within the limits of this world. Accordingly, the *Devotions* closes with the suggestion of the possibility of relapse: “*They warne mee of the fearfull danger of relapsing*”, pronounces the title of the last, 23<sup>rd</sup> devotion. “The horror of relapse is not simply or even primarily physical discomfort. Instead, it results largely from spiritual failure, and sinks us back into the state of sin” (Targoff 153). It is in this respect, that the cyclical nature of the whole text, that I have alluded to earlier in this paper, gains its significance: the incurable body and the incurable soul of the mortal world



are modelled by the text itself that seems to suggest its own re-readability; and, by implication, the constant renewability of the suffering that it narrates.

Disease (both bodily and spiritual) in Donne's text, therefore, is formulated in such a way that it can never be overcome within the boundaries of this world. Lucrece faces a similar problem in her post-rape state: she realises that she has no choice but to quit the world in which her integrity can never be recuperated. Yet the case in the *Devotions* is also fundamentally different from Lucrece's, primarily because the text does not posit an ideal, original selfhood in the form of the harmonious whole of intact body and innocent soul. In Donne's text, as we have seen in the above, both are understood as already corrupted, or at least inherently corruptible; the body is a "ruinous frame" and the soul is plagued by original sin. Disease, therefore, if figured as the combination of this two, is merely an intensified version of the normal state of being, a condition in which what has already been there becomes obvious. Lucrece's reaction to the insolubility of her situation is her suicide, but such an act is not a possible one within the logic of the *Devotions*. This is partly because of the text's Christian framework, in which suicide is considered as a sin. But, even more importantly, suicide is not seen as necessary or effective by the rhetorics of the *Devotions*. Because in Donne's text, the state of (physical and spiritual) disease is seen as a *given*, both for himself and for the whole of mankind, it cannot be solved by merely turning one's back on it.

The key concept to Donne's solution is *healing*. Healing is understood as a long and slow process, one which reaches its ultimate goal only in the afterlife. Healing of soul and body go hand in hand: "O most mightie, and most merciful *God* (...), Behold mee under the vehemence of two diseases, under the necessity of two *Physicians*, authorized by thee, the *bodily*, and the *spiritual Physician*" (23). The healing of the body, within the humoral regime, was understood as a process of reorganising the body's inner makeup: "Bloodletting, cautery, and the hotness or coldness of foods and medicines were all ways of regulating the quantity and temperamental quality of the humors. The balance required constant monitoring and regulation in health as well as in sickness" (Siraisi 118). Healing, in the form of

such constant monitoring of intake and excretion, permeated both the healthy and the diseased state, and made no basic difference between the two, much in line with what we have seen as Donne's idea of disease not being essentially different from health. This pervasive process of healing meant a careful intake and, when necessary, a purge (as in Donne's 19<sup>th</sup> devotion), to manage the balance of humors within the body. Such a continual process of intake and purge also informs the way the "spiritual sickness" is administered. Here, Donne clearly states that the role of the physician is filled in by God himself: "My *God*, my *God*, my *God*, thou mightie *Father*, who hast beene my *Physitian*", begins the 23<sup>rd</sup> expostulation (122). Accordingly, Christ is figured as the physic that needs to be taken: "Thou glorious *Sonne*, who hast beene my *physicke*", continues the same expostulation (122). The 4<sup>th</sup> prayer also brings up this image: "With his stripes wee are healed, sayes the *Prophet* (...); how much more shall I bee healed now, now, when that which he hath suffred actually, is actually, and effectually applied to me? Is there any thing incurable, upon which that *Balme* drops? Any vaine so emptie, as that *blood* cannot fil it?" (23). Healing is understood as a continuous taking in of Christ, which also involves an identification with him through suffering. Such a process of taking in is complemented by the process of spiritual purging through repentance, also achieved with the help of, and literally through, Christ: "Let the *Spirit* of true *contrition*, and *sorrow* passe all my *sinnes* through these *eies*, into the *wounds* of thy *Sonne*, and I shall be cleane" (109).

Both the physical and the spiritual disease are understood in terms of needing the continuous process of healing: of taking in and purging, a process that involves necessary openness:

Donne uses the ongoing analogy between his physical and spiritual conditions to portray himself as continually open to influences, both good and bad: his heart is "prepared" by and for God, but it is also continually "subject to the invasion of malignant and pestilent vapours" (59) (...), the paradigm being that what is outside has a powerful potential to *become* self. (Selleck 165)

In Donne's text, this *self* is understood in much less rigid terms than the one we have seen in *Lucrece*. The wholeness of this self does not depend on enclosure and intactness of body and soul; nor is it understood as the default condition. Consequently, bodily deterioration cannot mean the shattering of this self, quite the contrary: through the cyclical processes of disease and healing (and sin and repentance), the self becomes open and ready to take in the transcendent presence of Christ, and to purge itself from sin and corruption. The incorporation of Christ into the self is seen as the cornerstone of real identity. Achieving this state is understood as a process, and not as a starting point in the *Devotions*, and illness plays a central part in such a process. Soul and body are gradually opened up towards the divine in cycles of sickness and curing. Because of the inherent corruptibility in the human condition, however, no final healing is possible within the boundaries of this world: "thou didst never so put out any of these *fires*, as that thou didst not rake up the *embers*, and wrap up a future *mortalitie*, in that *body* (...). Thou proceedest no otherwise in our *soules*, O our *good*, but *fearfull God*: Thou pardonest no *sinne* so, as that *sinner* can sinne no more" (120).

Therefore the final restitution is posited as a future event: the real identity of self is gained with the resurrection in the next life. Until then, the self is to be given over to God: "If my heart bee *prepared*, it is a *returning* heart; And if thou see it upon the *way*, thou wilt carrie it *home*; Nay, the *preparation* is thine too; this *melting*, this *wounding*, this *breaking*, this *contrition*, which I have now, is thy *Way*, to thy *Ende*" (59-60). In this sense, the cyclical rhetorical process of the *Devotions* can be understood as a way of formulating, again and again within each devotion, the desperation felt over each step of the disease into a feeling of hope that both disease and healing form part of a process that eventually leads to salvation, figured as a union with Christ; "to whom I shall be married *indissolubly*, though by this way of *dissolution*", as Donne puts it (80). "The whole process, repeated over and over, resembles one of digestion – of taking something in, grappling with it till it becomes part of oneself and till one's 'disposition' is changed by it" (Selleck 165).

## V. Conclusion

As we have seen in the above, both *The Rape of Lucrece* and the *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* are organised around the process of grappling with fearful change that takes place within the realm of the body. The rhetorical means by which these processes are verbalised bring the texts to a consideration of the relationship of body and identity. The solutions they propose to overcome the traumatic body state are radically different, and this difference is partly due to the texts' contrasting understanding of that relationship. Another basic disparity seems to be between where the works draw the line between normalcy and extremity.

On the one hand, in *Lucrece*, the body at the centre of the text is constructed as an original, intact whole, protecting, like a fortress or a tree bark, the chaste soul. Rape is correspondingly a violent intrusion of the external into the organised whole of inwardness. Because Lucrece's personal identity rests on the intactness of that wholeness, her suicide is formulated as inevitable. On the other hand, John Donne's piece constructs the body as inherently tending toward self-destruction, and the soul as always-already plagued by original sin. Therefore the body's altered state, that of disease, is not essentially different from normalcy, merely calls our attention to the always-already present. In such a construction, identity does not depend on an original wholeness, it is posited as a project, one that is to be achieved not by enclosure, but by a union with the divine.

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