

JANE ANGER (*fl.* 1589)

FROM JANE ANGER *HER PROTECTION FOR*
WOMEN

(1589)

Introduction

The occasion of Jane Anger's *Protection* was a contemporary pamphlet attacking women, and hers is the first full-length defence alleged to have been written by an English female author. Anger is audacious but self-possessed, making none of the disabling gestures other women feel obliged to offer for transgressing conventional gender roles. Though in her brief opening letter 'To the Gentlewomen of England' she worries about appearing too heated in her defence, she trusts her readers' understanding of the nature of the provocation will overlook any indecorousness. In a second letter 'To all Women in General' her tone changes, however. No longer a 'defendant', she seizes the role of clamorous avenger, and it is this combative persona, as the *Protection* proceeds, that constitutes much of its immediate appeal.

Nonetheless, the work's authorship and purpose raise certain questions. Jane Anger may be the pseudonym of a male author, perhaps the same man who wrote *Book his Surfeit in Love, a Farewell to the Follies of his own Fantasy*, to which the *Protection for Women* replies. Though no copy of the Surfeiter's *Book* has survived, it was entered in the Stationers' Register on 27 November 1588 and apparently printed soon after. The *Protection's* derivative quality suggests the possibility of male authorship, since in many ways it remains bound by the discourse of the male-dominated *querelle des femmes*, or controversy over the nature of women. This was a bookish sixteenth-century debate in which male writers presented formal arguments praising or denouncing women (and sometimes both). Their 'evidence' consisted of lists of historical 'good' and 'bad' women, as well as opinions derived from classical authorities. The genre had no basis in the real lives of early modern women, though one cannot say it did not reinforce cultural stereotypes and so make it more difficult to reform the restrictions under which they lived (Woodbridge 1984: 3–6). Pamela Joseph Benson has argued that the *Protection* remains undifferentiated from other interventions in the *querelle* because it relies largely on the traditional issue of sexual behaviour to evaluate woman's moral nature. Seen in this light, Jane Anger's efforts may go no further than trying to gain greater sexual autonomy for women while defending their slandered reputations; the male-determined parameters of the *querelle* remain, and no 'feminist program' or new idea of woman seems to emerge (Benson 1992: 224).

Other evidence, however, suggests Jane Anger may be a real woman rather than a ventriloquising man, and that her work does manage to break free of certain gender and genre limitations. Simon Shepherd notes that there were five or six women with this name living in southern England when the *Protection* was published in

1589 (1985: 30); one of these could have been the author. The volume was issued by Thomas Orwin and Richard Jones, printers who accepted other works by female writers. Orwin published Anne Dowriche's *French History* in the same year, while Jones had printed Isabella Whitney's poetry. Furthermore, Lynne Magnusson has identified Pierre de la Primaudaye's *Académie française*, translated into English as *The French Academy* by Thomas Bowes (1586), as a main source of the *Book his Surfeit*. Since the latter borrowed heavily from la Primaudaye, Magnusson is able to compare *The French Academy* with the *Protection*, and in turn demonstrates how Anger deliberately reworked her opponent's misogynist arguments to establish a distinct female viewpoint which partly transcends the boundaries of the *querelle* genre (Magnusson 1989, 1991).

Like other works governed by the rhetorical form of *controversia* or disputation, Anger's argument proceeds mainly by compilation: allusions, sayings, and examples matching *Book his Surfeit* are mustered to refute her antagonist. Many of the traditional proverbs she cites imply female inferiority; so her usual strategy is to turn these inside out, showing that their negative implications apply equally well if not more so to men. But if this were all, her *Protection* would remain largely a tit-for-tat exercise typical of the *querelle*. Instead it goes further by calling into 'question that now which hath ever been questionless'. This means reprehending obvious male double standards and deceit, and fostering in women a 'conviction of their own intellectual and moral worth' through her own example of speaking out; in doing so Anger laid the imaginative foundations for a later, more socially active feminism (Henderson and McManus 1985: 31). Her arguments also anatomise the patriarchally encoded nature of everyday language, in which 'woman' is a discourse constructed from masculine moral and aesthetic values that denies real women any authentic sense of agency. By exposing the mono-gendered basis of the Surfeiter's 'objective' or 'natural' commonplaces and assertions, she begins the forward-looking task of language reform in which female life experiences will take their place in a bi-gendered, genuinely human epistemology.

Editions:

Jane Anger her Protection for Women (1589). STC 644, reel 165. *The Paradise of Women*, ed. Betty Travitsky (Westport, Conn., 1981, brief excerpts). *First Feminists*, ed. Moira Ferguson (Bloomington, 1985). *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540–1640*, ed. Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus (Urbana and Chicago, 1985). *The Women's Sharp Revenge*, ed. Simon Shepherd (New York, 1985).

JANE ANGER
 FROM JANE ANGER HER PROTECTION
 FOR WOMEN
 TO DEFEND THEM AGAINST THE
 SCANDALOUS REPORTS OF A LATE
 SURFEITING* LOVER, AND ALL OTHER LIKE
 VENERIANS† THAT COMPLAIN SO TO BE
 OVERCLOYED WITH WOMEN'S KINDNESS.

(1589)

TO THE GENTLEWOMEN OF ENGLAND, HEALTH:

Gentlewomen, though it is to be feared that your settled wits will advisedly condemn that which my choleric vein hath rashly set down, and so perchance Anger shall reap anger for not agreeing with diseased persons, yet, if with indifferency of censure you consider of the head of the quarrel, I hope you will rather show yourselves defendants of the defender's title than complainants of the plaintiff's wrong. I doubt judgement before trial, which were injurious to the law; and I confess that my rashness deserveth no less, which was a fit of my extremity. I will not urge reasons because your wits are sharp and will soon conceive my meaning, ne will I be tedious lest I prove too too troublesome, nor over-dark in my writing for fear of the name of a riddler. But in a word, for my presumption I crave pardon because it was Anger that did write it, committing your protection and myself to the protection of yourselves, and the judgement of the cause to the censures of your just minds.

Yours ever at commandment, 15
 Jane Anger.

* *surfeiting*: sickened by sensual over-indulgence

† *Venerians*: followers of Venus, and thus of sexual desire

1. *settled wits*: calm rationality

2. *choleric vein*: angry temper. Choler or bile was one of four 'humours' or body fluids believed to determine human temperament.

3. *diseased*: i.e. by 'surfeiting'

4. *indifferency*: impartiality

head: main topic (perhaps implying 'chief instigator')

6. *doubt*: suspect, fear

9. *ne*: nor

10. *over-dark*: obscure

TO ALL WOMEN IN GENERAL, AND GENTLE
READER* WHATSOEVER:

Fie on the falsehood of men, whose minds go oft a-madding and whose
tongues cannot so soon be wagging but straight they fall a-railing. Was
there ever any so abused, so slandered, so railed upon, or so wickedly
handled undeservedly, as are we women? Will the gods permit it, the god-
desses stay their punishing judgements, and we ourselves not pursue their
undoings for such devilish practices? O Paul's steeple and Charing Cross! 5
A halter hold all such persons. Let the streams of the channels in London
streets run so swiftly as they may be able alone to carry them from that
sanctuary. Let the stones be as ice, the soles of their shoes as glass, the ways
steep like Etna, and every blast a whirlwind puffed out of Boreas his long 10
throat, that these may hasten their passage to the devil's haven. Shall sur-
feiters rail on our kindness? You stand still and say naught. And shall not
Anger stretch the veins of her brains, the strings of her fingers, and the lists
of her modesty, to answer their surfeittings? Yes truly. And herein I conjure 15
all you to aid and assist me in defence of my willingness, which shall make
me rest at your commands. Fare you well.

Your friend,
Jane Anger.

* *Reader: sic*

1. *a-madding*: carried away by wild foolishness
2. *tongues*: a key word illustrating Anger's inversion of traditional gendered attributes. When discussing the nature of woman, Renaissance male writers habitually equated unruly female tongues with innate moral inferiority. Female public speech is always frivolous yet threatening to masculine order, so the 'good' woman is silent. Here, however, by making the unruly tongue 'her synecdoche for the omnipresence and power of the male word, Anger turns back against its maker a discursive practice that itself rationalizes and preserves [public] discourse as a male prerogative' (Magnusson 1991: 273–4).
- 4–6. *handled . . . undoings*: one of many sexual puns throughout the *Protection*
6. *Paul's . . . Cross*: London landmarks and gathering places. Paul's = St Paul's cathedral. Charing Cross stood at the western end of the Strand at the junction of Whitehall.
7. *halter*: noose or gallows
- 7ff. *Let . . .*: invocations of calamities suggesting righteous indignation, but perhaps playfully deflated by the use of local details; channels = gutters or runnels, for carrying away rubbish and fouled water
10. *Etna*: active volcano in Sicily
Boreas: the north wind
11. *devil's haven*: perhaps alluding to Cuckhold's Haven east of London on the south bank of the Thames, named after the post that stood there bearing a pair of horns (= sign of a cuckolded husband)
12. *kindness*: i.e. in granting loving favours
13. *lists*: limits

A PROTECTION FOR WOMEN, ETC.

The desire that every man hath to show his true vein in writing is unspeakable, and their minds are so carried away with the manner as no care at all is had of the matter. They run so into rhetoric as oftentimes they overrun the bounds of their own wits and go they know not whither. If they have stretched their invention so hard on a last as it is at a stand, there remains but one help, which is to write of us women. If they may once encroach so far into our presence as they may but see the lining of our outermost garment, they straight think that Apollo honours them in yielding so good a supply to refresh their sore over-burdened heads (through studying for matters to indite of). And therefore, that the god may see how thankfully they receive his liberality (their wits whetted and their brains almost broken with botching his bounty), they fall straight to dispraising and slandering our silly sex. But judge what the cause should be of this their so great malice towards simple women: doubtless the weakness of our wits and our honest bashfulness, by reason whereof they suppose that there is not one amongst us who can or dare reprove their slanders and false reproaches. Their slanderous tongues are so short, and the time wherein they have lavished out their words freely hath been so long, that they know we cannot catch hold of them to pull them out, and they think we will not write to reprove their lying lips. Which conceits have already made them cocks and would (should they not be cravened) make themselves among themselves be thought to be

1. *unspeakable*: inexpressible in words
- 2–3. *manner . . . matter*: the respective merits of form and content were argued in a sixteenth-century debate about whether writing in English should be artfully elegant or plain and direct. The stylistic standard once set by Cicero's polished, ornamental Latin was increasingly regarded as too flowery and artificial for English prose. Anger takes an anti-Ciceronian position against the Surfeiter's rhetoric.
5. *last*: wooden model of a foot used to shape shoe-leather; the implication is that the Surfeiter can 'cobble together' only middling-quality work
stand: halt
8. *Apollo . . . them*: women's verse was not authorised, as men's was, by the Renaissance theory of poetic discourse as a patriarchal heritage stretching back through classical authors to Apollo and Orpheus: '[male] poets experience no problem of origin: all the ancient mythology exists to reassure them of the divine origin of their inspiration and activity, and of their deserved place in the . . . mythical Platonic chain of poetic transmission' (Sankovitch 1986: 229)
10. *indite*: write
- 11–12. *wits . . . bounty*: the alliteration mocks the Surfeiter's taste for highly wrought prose. botching = ineptly patching.
13. *silly*: plain, simple, innocent
- 20–1. *should . . . cravened*: if they are not exposed as real cowards

of the game. They have been so daintily fed with our good natures that like jades (their stomachs are grown so queasy) they surfeit of our kindness. If we will not suffer them to smell on our smocks, they will snatch at our petticoats; but if our honest natures cannot away with that uncivil kind of jesting, then we are coy. Yet if we bear with their rudeness and be somewhat modestly familiar with them, they will straight make matter of nothing, blazing abroad that they have surfeited with love, and then their wits must be shown in telling the manner how. 25

Among the innumerable number of books to that purpose of late unlooked for, the new *Surfeit of an Old Lover* (sent abroad to warn those which are of his own kind from catching the like disease) came by chance to my hands; which, because as well women as men are desirous of novel-ties, I willingly read over. Neither did the ending thereof less please me than the beginning, for I was so carried away with the conceit of the gentleman as that I was quite out of the book before I thought I had been in the midst thereof, so pithy were his sentences, so pure his words, and so pleasing his style. The chief matters therein contained were of two sorts: the one in the 35

22. *game*: cock-fighting, a metaphor for male sexual prowess. The passage probably alludes through *Book His Surfeit* to Lyly's 'Cooling Card for Philautus and All Fond Lovers' (1578), in which Euphues, having sworn off love, contrasts himself with a lusty youth named Curio: 'Though [Curio] be a cock of the game, yet [Euphues] is content to be craven and cry creak' (*Euphues the Anatomy of Wit*, ed. Croll and Clemens, 1964: 92).

23. *jades*: knackered horses; an abusive male term for women, which Anger characteristically reverses

25. *away*: do away

27. *nothing*: possible sexual meaning

28. *blazing abroad*: boasting publicly

31. *sent abroad*: published

31–2. *warn . . . disease*: as Magnusson observes, this links *Boke His Surfeit* to a literary stereotype, the reformed libertine, who publishes seduction-romances on the pretext of warning younger men about the dangers of alluring women. An example which *Book his Surfeit* draws on is Lyly's 'Cooling Card for Philautus', a loose paraphrase of Ovid's *Remedia Amoris*. Anger recognises the self-interest in this genre, in that it boasts male writers' familiarity with 'the game': '[Anger] exposes the Surfeiter's repentant posture as a rhetorical ploy, a contrivance enabling him to pass off titillating and self-aggrandizing tales as godly and self-effacing sermons' (1991: 277).

35–8. *carried . . . style*: If this is not ironic, Anger admits that the Surfeiter's fluency, as well as the interest of his stories, lulled her into non-critical enjoyment. Such an admission is strategic, demonstrating that she is not superior to her female readers and so may speak on their behalf. As for the Surfeiter's subject, Magnusson suggests it may have consisted partly of seduction narratives designed to illustrate his double theme: man's folly and women's guile (1991: 276–7). Anger omits discussion of the stories themselves to concentrate on refuting his misogynist commentary.

dispraise of man's folly, and the other invective against our sex; their folly proceeding of their own flattery joined with fancy, and our faults are through our folly, with which is some faith. . . . 40

The greatest fault that doth remain in us women is that we are too credulous, for could we flatter as they can dissemble, and use our wits well as they can their tongues ill, then never would any of them complain of surfeiting. But if we women be so so perilous cattle as they term us, I marvel that the gods made not Fidelity as well a man as they created her a woman, and all the moral virtues of their masculine sex as of the feminine kind, except their deities knew that there was some sovereignty in us women which could not be in them men. But lest some snatching fellow should catch me before I fall to the ground, and say they will adorn my head with a feather (affirming that I roam beyond reason, seeing it is most manifest that the man is the head of the woman and that therefore we ought to be guided by them), I prevent them with this answer. The gods, knowing that the minds of mankind would be aspiring, and having thoroughly viewed the wonderful virtues wherewith women are enriched, lest they should provoke us to pride and so confound us with Lucifer, they bestowed the supremacy over us to man, that of that coxcomb he might only boast, and therefore for God's sake let them keep it. But we return to the *Surfeit*. 45 50 55

Having made a long discourse of the gods' censure concerning love, he leaves them (and I them with him) and comes to the principal object and general foundation of love, which he affirmeth to be grounded on women. And now beginning to search his scroll wherein are taunts against us, he beginneth and saith that we allure their hearts to us. Wherein he saith more 60

45. *so so: sic*

perilous cattle: harmful contemptuous creatures or property

46. *Fidelity*: 'most of the moral virtues were traditionally represented as female figures' (Shepherd 1985: 47)

48. *deities*: mock deferential address: 'deity-ships'

50. *fall . . . ground*: i.e. safely disappear

51. *feather*: perhaps of a peacock, symbol of pride, or alternatively the sign of a fool

52. *man . . . woman*: 1 Corinthians 11.3: 'Christ is the head of every man: and the man is the woman's head: and God is Christ's head.' 'Head' may mean 'source' (alluding to the creation of woman in Genesis 2) rather than 'authority'.

53. *prevent*: forestall

54. *minds . . . aspiring*: alluding to Prometheus, who stole fire from heaven after Zeus had taken it away from humans

54. *thoroughly*: thoroughly

56. *confound us . . . Lucifer*: turn us into . . . arch-angel who rebelled against heaven and was overthrown; a type of pride

57. *coxcomb*: the cock's comb, but also a fool's cap, thereby suggesting deluded self-conceit

62. *scroll*: body of evidence

truly than he is aware of; for we woo them with our virtues and they wed
 us with vanities; and men, being of wit sufficient to consider of the virtues 65
 which are in us women, are ravished with the delight of those dainties which
 allure and draw the senses of them to serve us, whereby they become
 ravenous hawks who do not only seize upon us but devour us. Our good
 toward them is the destruction of ourselves; we being well-formed are by
 them foully deformed. Of our true meaning they make mocks, rewarding 70
 our loving follies with disdainful flouts. We are the grief of man, in that we
 take all the grief from man; we languish when they laugh, we lie sighing
 when they sit singing, and sit sobbing when they lie slugging and sleeping.
Mulier est hominis confusio, because her kind heart cannot so sharply
 reprove their frantic fits as those mad frenzies deserve. *Aut amat aut odit*, 75
non est in tertio: she loveth good things and hateth that which is evil; she
 loveth justice and hateth iniquity; she loveth truth and true dealing and
 hateth lies and falsehood; she loveth man for his virtues and hateth him for
 his vices. To be short, there is no *medium* between good and bad, and there-
 fore she can be *in nullo tertio*. Plato his answer to a vicar of fools which 80
 asked the question, being that he knew not whether to place women among
 those creatures which were reasonable or unreasonable, did as much beau-
 tify his divine knowledge as all the books he did write; for knowing that
 women are the greatest help that men have (without whose aid and assist-
 ance it is as possible for them to live as if they wanted meat, drink, clothing, 85
 or any other necessary), and knowing also that even then in his age (much
 more in those ages which should after follow) men were grown to be so
 unreasonable, as he could not decide whether men or brute beasts were
 more reasonable. Their eyes are so curious as, be not all women equal with
 Venus for beauty, they cannot abide the sight of them; their stomachs so 90
 queasy as, do they taste but twice of one dish, they straight surfeit and needs
 must a new diet be provided for them. We are contrary to men because they
 are contrary to that which is good. Because they are spurblind they cannot
 see into our natures, and we too well, though we had but half an eye, into

71. *flouts*: jeers

73. *slugging*: idling

74. *Mulier . . . confusio*: proverbial (Tilley W656): woman is the ruin of man

75–6. *Aut . . . tertio*: proverbial (Tilley W651): either she loves or she hates, there is no third way

80. *in . . . tertio*: in nothing a third way (i.e. in between)

Plato . . . fools: probably Socrates responding to Glaucon on the equal capacities of men and women in *The Republic*, V, 451–6

84. *greatest help*: Genesis 2.18 (see below II. 225–6).

85. *wanted*: lacked

89. *curious*: particular

93. *spurblind*: obtuse (literally, wholly or partly blind)

their conditions because they are so bad; our behaviours alter daily because men's virtues decay hourly. 95

If Hesiodus had with equity as well looked into the life of man as he did precisely search out the qualities of us women, he would have said that if a woman trust unto a man it shall fare as well with her as if she had a weight of a thousand pounds tied about her neck and then cast into the bottomless seas. For by men are we confounded, though they by us are sometimes crossed. Our tongues are light because earnest in reproving men's filthy vices, and our good counsel is termed nipping injury in that it accords not with their foolish fancies. Our boldness rash for giving noddies nipping answers, our dispositions naughty for not agreeing with their vile minds, and our fury dangerous because it will not bear with their knavish behaviours. If our frowns be so terrible and our anger so deadly, men are too foolish in offering occasions of hatred, which shunned, a terrible death is prevented. There is a continual deadly hatred between the wild boar and tame hounds; I would there were the like betwixt women and men unless they amend their manners, for so strength should predominate where now flattery and dissimulation hath the upper hand. The lion rageth when he is hungry, but man railleth when he is glutted. The tiger is robbed of her young ones when she is ranging abroad, but men rob women of their honour undeservedly under their noses. The viper stormeth when his tail is trodden on, and may not we fret when all our body is a footstool to their vile lust? Their unreasonable minds which know not what reason is make them nothing better than brute beasts. . . . 100 105 110 115

97. *Hesiodus*: seventh-century BC Greek poet, proverbial for misogyny. He related the myth of Pandora, the first woman, whom Zeus sent with a jar of evils to punish man for Prometheus's theft of fire.

98. *precisely*: scrupulously; a word often derogatively applied to Puritans

100–1. *thousand . . . seas*: Luke 17.2

102–6. *Our . . . behaviours*: passage closely resembling Thomas Bowes's translation of Pierre de la Primaudaye's *The French Academy* (1586, p. 483, e.g. light, nipping, rash, boldness), a work which *Book his Surfeit* has 'slavishly' imitated (Magnusson 1989: 312). Anger evidently did not know *The French Academy* itself.

102. *light*: Anger recontextualises the usual male insult (= wanton) to bring out pro-female meanings: nimble, swift

103. *nipping*: biting

104. *noddies nipping*: fools decisively refuting

109–16. *There . . . lust*: again close to *The French Academy* (505), which cites (but does not endorse) such 'proofs' of woman's 'natural' irascibility. Anger recycles them to show man's inversion of natural relationships.

111–12. *strength . . . hand*: Anger 'prefers the clarity of openly aggressive relations between the sexes' (Shepherd 1985: 48) to unnatural deceit

Euthydemus made six kind of women, and I will approve that there are
 so many of men, which be: poor and rich, bad and good, foul and fair. The 120
 great patrimonies that wealthy men leave their children after their death
 make them rich, but dice and other marthrifths, happening into their
 companies, never leave them till they be at the beggar's bush, where I can
 assure you they become poor. Great eaters, being kept at a slender diet,
 never distemper their bodies but remain in good case; but afterwards, once 125
 turned forth to liberty's pasture, they graze so greedily as they become sur-
 feiting jades and always after are good for nothing. There are men which
 are snout-fair whose faces look like a cream-pot, and yet those not the fair
 men I speak of; but I mean those whose conditions are free from knavery,
 and I term those foul that have neither civility nor honesty. Of these sorts 130
 there are none good, none rich or fair long. But if we do desire to have them
 good, we must always tie them to the manger and diet their greedy
 paunches, otherwise they will surfeit. What shall I say? Wealth makes them
 lavish, wit knavish, beauty effeminate, poverty deceitful, and deformity
 ugly. Therefore of me take this counsel: 135

Esteem of men as of a broken reed,
 Mistrust them still, and then you well shall speed.

I pray you then, if this be true (as it truly cannot be denied) have not they
 reason who affirm that a goose standing before a ravenous fox is in as good
 case as the woman that trusteth to a man's fidelity? For as the one is sure to 140
 lose his head, so the other is most certain to be bereaved of her good name,
 if there be any small cause of suspicion. The fellow that took his wife for his
 cross was an ass, and so we will leave him; for he loved well to swear on an
 ale-pot, and because his wife, keeping him from his drunken vein, put his
 nose out of his socket, he thereby was brought into a mad mood in which 145
 he did he could not tell what.

119. *Euthydemus*: opponent of Socrates in an early Platonic dialogue on education named after him. *The French Academy* (238–40) quotes part of their debate but does not mention his list.

122. *marthrifths*: spoilers of thrifty ways

123. *beggar's bush*: a London tavern in St Giles notorious for its shady clientele

128. *snout-fair*: fair-faced

cream-pot: pallid (and therefore suggesting cowardice, as in *Macbeth* 5.3.11–12: 'The Devil dam thee black, thou cream-faced loon: / Where got'st thou that goose-look?')

132. *diet*: slim

136. *broken reed*: perhaps a riposte to the traditional idea of woman as a broken rib (Genesis 2.21)

143. *cross*: penance (alluding to Christ's exhortation to follow his example of taking up the cross, i.e. finding spiritual strength in adversity; Matthew 16.24)

swear on: i.e. live life dependent on

When provender pricks, the jade will winch, but keep him at a slender ordinary and he will be mild enough. The dictator's son was crank as long as his cock was crowing, but proving a craven he made his master hang down his head.

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Thales was so married to shameful lust as he cared not a straw for lawful love, whereby he showed himself to be endued with much vice and no virtue; for a man doth that oftentimes standing of which he repenteth sitting. The Roman could not, as now men cannot, abide to hear women praised and themselves dispraised, and therefore it is best for men to follow Alphonso his rule: let them be deaf and marry wives that are blind, so shall they not grieve to hear their wives commended nor their monstrous mis-doing shall offend their wives' eyesight.

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Tibullus, setting down a rule for women to follow, might have proportioned this platform for men to rest in and might have said: every honest man ought to shun that which detracteth both health and safety from his own person, and strive to bridle his slanderous tongue. Then must he be modest and show his modesty by his virtuous and civil behaviours, and not display his beastliness through his wicked and filthy words. For lying lips and deceitful tongues are abominable before God. It is an easy matter to entreat a cat to catch a mouse, and more easy to persuade a desperate man to kill himself. What nature hath made, art cannot mar, and (as this surfeiting lover saith) that which is bred in the bone will not be brought out of the flesh. If we clothe ourselves in sackcloth and truss up our hair in

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165

147. *provender pricks*: (the need for) fodder urges (him on)

winch: kick impatiently

148. *ordinary*: = regular diet; literally, a set-price meal in a public house

dictator's son: unidentified

crank: cocky, self-confident

151. *Thales*: seventh-century BC Greek philosopher. In *The French Academy* (481) when asked why he never married, Thales explains it was too soon when he was young and too late when he was old. Anger reinterprets the story from a woman's viewpoint, exposing Thales's 'wisdom' as sexual self-interest.

153. *standing . . . sitting*: presumably, seeking public attention versus quietly ruminating

154. *The Roman*: in *The French Academy* Marius the Roman rejects Metellus's beautiful and virtuous daughter: 'I had rather be mine own than hers' (482)

156. *Alphonso*: (so-called) the Wise (1221–84), King of Leon and Castile (Aragon in *The French Academy*, 484), to whom this opinion is attributed

159. *Tibullus*: sexually ambivalent Roman poet (c. 55–19 BC) claimed women were deceivers in his *Elegies* III.4.60 (Shepherd 1985: 48). In *The French Academy* he commends female 'shamefastness' (516).

160. *platform*: plan, counsel

168–9. *that . . . flesh*: proverbial (Tilley F365); 'brought out' = removed from

169–70. *sackcloth . . . dish-clouts*: traditional apparel signifying repentance and mourning (and therefore sexual unavailability). *clouts* = cloths

dish-clouts, Venerians will nevertheless pursue their pastime. If we hide our breasts it must be with leather, for no cloth can keep their long nails out of our bosoms. 170

We have rolling eyes and they railing tongues; our eyes cause them to look lasciviously, and why? because they are given to lechery. It is an easy matter to find a staff to beat a dog, and a burnt finger giveth sound counsel. 175
If men would as well embrace counsel as they can give it, Socrates's rule would be better followed. But let Socrates, heaven and earth say what they will, 'man's face is worth a glass of dissembling water'. And therefore to conclude with a proverb: 'write ever, and yet never write enough of man's falsehood' (I mean those that use it). I would that ancient writers would as well have busied their heads about deciphering the deceits of their own sex as they have about setting down our own follies; and I would some would call in question that now which hath ever been questionless. But sithence all their wits have been bent to write of the contrary, I leave them to a contrary vein, and the Surfeiting Lover, who returns to his discourse of love. 185

Now while this greedy grazer is about his entreaty of love (which nothing belongeth to our matter) let us secretly, ourselves with ourselves, consider how and in what they that are our worst enemies are both inferior unto us and most beholden unto our kindness.

The creation of man and woman at the first (he being formed *in principio* of dross and filthy clay) did so remain until God saw that in him his workmanship was good, and therefore, by the transformation of the dust which was loathsome unto flesh, it became purified. Then, lacking a help for him, God making woman of man's flesh (that she might be purer than he) doth evidently show how far we women are more excellent than men. Our bodies are fruitful, whereby the world increaseth, and our care wonderful, by which man is preserved. From woman sprang man's salvation. A woman 195

173. *rolling*: sexually provocative

176. *Socrates's rule*: at his trial, as elsewhere in Plato's writings, Socrates claimed the only wisdom he possessed was knowledge of his own ignorance

178. *dissembling water*: proverbial (Tilley W86): as false, unstable, as water

179–80. *man's falsehood*: proverbial (Tilley F34)

183. *questionless*: taken as certain
sithence: since

185. *returns*: Anger has presumably been refuting the Surfeiter's argument point by point. She now skips his 'entreaty of love', which does not attack women directly, returning to his text at l. 282.

187. *ourselves . . . ourselves*: women to women

190–1. *he . . . clay*: Genesis 2.7; *in principio* = in the beginning

196. *fruitful . . . increaseth*: fulfilling the divine injunction in Genesis 1.28.

197. *woman*: the virgin Mary

was the first that believed, and a woman likewise the first that repented of sin. In woman is only true fidelity; except in her there is no constancy, and without her no housewifery. In the time of their sickness we cannot be wanted, and when they are in health we for them are most necessary. They are comforted by our means, they [are] nourished by the meats we dress, their bodies freed from diseases by our cleanliness, which otherwise would surfeit unreasonably through their own noisomeness. Without our care they lie in their beds as dogs in litter, and go like lousy mackerel swimming in the heat of summer. They love to go handsomely in their apparel and rejoice in the pride thereof; yet who is the cause of it, but our carefulness to see that everything about them be curious? Our virginity makes us virtuous, our conditions courteous, and our chastity maketh our trueness of love manifest. They confess we are necessary, but they would have us likewise evil. That they cannot want us I grant; yet evil I deny, except only in the respect of man who, hating all good things, is only desirous of that which is ill (through whose desire, in estimation of conceit, we are made ill).

But lest some should snarl on me, barking out this reason, that none is good but God, and therefore women are ill, I must yield that in that respect we are ill, and affirm that men are no better, seeing we are so necessary unto them. It is most certain that if we be ill they are worse, for *malum malo additum efficit malum peius*; and they that use ill worse than it should be are worse than the ill. And therefore if they will correct *Magnificat*, they must first learn the signification thereof. That we are liberal they will not deny, sithence that many of them have, *ex confessio*, received more kindness

198. *first . . . repented*: the Samaritan Woman in John 4 who is ‘the first character in the Gospel to engage in serious theological conversation with Jesus’ (*Women’s Bible Commentary* 1992: 296) . . . Mary Magdalene, the woman who anoints Jesus and is traditionally (though erroneously) identified as a prostitute in Western Christian tradition

201. *wanted*: lacking

202. *meats we dress*: food we prepare

204. *noisomeness*: capacity for self-injury

208. *curious*: just right

210. *necessary . . . evil*: proverbial (Tilley W703)

213. *in . . . conceit*: by fanciful or self-flattering thoughts

214–15. *none . . . God*: the Calvinist belief that human nature is deeply sinful and utterly dependent upon divine grace for reclamation

217–18. *malum . . . peius*: evil added to evil makes a worse evil

219. *Magnificat*: first word in the Latin version of Mary’s hymn of thanksgiving (Luke 1.46–55) upon learning she has been chosen to bear Christ. ‘Correcting *Magnificat*’ is proverbial for finding fault on the basis of false knowledge; ‘here Anger applies the proverb literally, since men who learn the signification of [the] *Magnificat* . . . will of necessity realize the worth of women’ (Henderson and McManus 1985: 181).

221. *ex confessio*: by their own admission

in one day at our hands than they can repay in a whole year; and some have
 so glutted themselves with our liberality as they cry 'no more'. But if they
 shall avow that women are fools, we may safely give them the lie; for myself
 have heard some of them confess that we have more wisdom than need is, 225
 and therefore no fools, and they less than they should have, and therefore
 fools. It hath been affirmed by some of their sex that to shun a shower of
 rain and to know the way to our husband's bed is wisdom sufficient for us
 women; but in this year of '88 men are grown so fantastical that unless we
 can make them fools we are accounted unwise. . . . 230

And now, seeing I speak to none but to you which are of mine own sex,
 give me leave like a scholar to prove our wisdom more excellent than theirs
 (though I never knew what sophistry meant).

There is no wisdom but it comes by grace; this is a principle, and *contra*
principium non est disputandum. But grace was first given to a woman, 235
 because to our Lady; which premisses conclude that women are wise. Now
primum est optimum, and therefore women are wiser than men. That we
 are more witty, which comes by nature, it cannot better be proved than that
 by our answers men are often driven to a *non plus*; and if their talk be of
 worldly affairs, with our resolutions they must either rest satisfied or prove 240
 themselves fools in the end. . . .

Now sithence that this overloyed and surfeiting lover leaveth his love
 and comes with a fresh assault against us women, let us arm ourselves with
 patience and see the end of his tongue which explaineth his surfeit. But it
 was so lately printed as that I should do the printer injury should I recite but 245
 one of them, and therefore, referring you to *Boke His Surfeit in Love*, I
 come to my matter. If to enjoy a woman be to catch the devil by the foot,
 to obtain the favour of a man is to hold fast his dam by the middle, whereby
 the one may easily break away and the other cannot go without he carries
 the man with him. The properties of the snake and of the eel are the one to 250
 sting and the other not to be held; but men's tongues sting against nature
 and therefore they are unnatural. Let us bear with them as much as may be,
 and yield to their wills more than is convenient; yet if we cast our reckoning

229. *fantastical*: absurdly irrational

234. *grace*: divine grace

234–5. *contra . . . disputandum*: there is no arguing against principle

236. *Lady*: the virgin Mary

237. *primum . . . optimum*: the first is the best

238. *witty*: wise, prudent; clever

239. *non plus*: nonplus, inability to reply

245. *lately printed*: entered in the Stationers' Register on 27 November 1588 and evidently
 published soon after

247–8. *devil . . . dam*: proverbial combination (Tilley D225)

249. *without*: but that

253. *cast . . . reckoning*: balance our accounts

at the end of the year we shall find that our losses exceed their gains,
 which are innumerable. The property of the chameleon is to change himself; 255
 but man always remaineth at one stay and is never out of the predicaments
 of dishonesty and unconstancy. The stinging of the scorpion is cured by the
 scorpion, whereby it seems that there is some good nature in them. But men
 never leave stinging till they see the death of honesty. The danger of pricks
 is shunned by gathering roses glove-fisted, and the stinging of bees pre- 260
 vented through a close hood. But naked dishonesty and bare inconstancy
 are always plagued through their own folly.

If men's folly be so unreasonable as it will strive against nature, it is no
 matter though she rewards them with crosses contrary to their expectations;
 for if Tom Fool will presume to ride on Alexander's horse, he is not to be 265
 pitied though he get a foul knock for his labour. But it seems the gentleman
 hath had great experience of Italian courtesans, whereby his wisdom is
 showed; for *experientia praestantior arte*, and he that hath experience to
 prove his case is in better case than they that have all unexperienced book
 cases to defend their titles. 270

The smooth speeches of men are nothing unlike the vanishing clouds of
 the air, which glide by degrees from place to place till they have filled them-
 selves with rain, when breaking, they spit forth terrible showers. So men
 gloze till they have their answers, which are the end of their travail, and then
 they bid modesty adieu and, entertaining rage, fall a-railing on us which 275
 never hurt them. The rankness of grass causeth suspicion of the serpent's
 lurking, but his lying in the plain path at the time when woodcocks shoot,
 maketh the patient passionate through his sting because no such ill was
 suspected. When men protest secrecy most solemnly, believe them least, for
 then surely there is a trick of knavery to be discarded; for in a friar's habit 280
 an old fornicator is always clothed.

It is a wonder to see how men can flatter themselves with their own con-
 ceits. For let us look, they will straight affirm that we love, and if then lust

256. *at . . . stay*: in the same state

259. *pricks*: thorns

265. *Alexander's*: one of the traditional nine worthies or heroes

267. *Italian courtesans*: in Lyly's 'Cooling Card for Philautus', Euphues worries about
 betraying his former lover, an Italian courtesan named Lucilla, by writing against love.
 As in the case of *The French Academy*, Anger seems to rework details which the
 Surfeiter borrowed directly from Lyly but does not consult Lyly herself (Kahin 1947:
 33).

268. *experientia . . . arte*: experience surpasses art (theory)

274. *gloze*: flatter

276. *rankness*: coarse overgrowth

serpent's: snake's (proverbial; Tilley S585)

277–8. *shoot . . . passionate*: dart (i.e. at dusk) . . . suffer painfully

283. *look*: i.e. with any interest

pricketh them, they will swear that love stingeth us; which imagination only
 is sufficient to make them essay the scaling of half a dozen of us in one 285
 night, when they will not stick to swear that if they should be denied of their
 requests, death must needs follow. Is it any marvel though they surfeit,
 when they are so greedy? But is it not pity that any of them should perish,
 which will be so soon killed with unkindness? Yes truly. Well, the onset
 given, if we retire for a vantage they will straight affirm that they have got 290
 the victory. Nay, some of them are so carried away with conceit that,
 shameless, they will blaze abroad among their companions that they have
 obtained the love of a woman unto whom they never spake above once, if
 that. Are not these froward fellows? You must bear with them because they
 dwell far from lying neighbours; they will say *mentiri non est nostrum*, and 295
 yet you shall see true tales come from them as wild geese fly under London
 bridge. Their fawning is but flattery, their faith falsehood, their fair words
 allurements to destruction, and their large promises tokens of death, or of
 evils worse than death. Their singing is a bait to catch us, and their playings
 plagues to torment us; and therefore take heed of them, and take this as an 300
 axiom in logic and a maxim in the law: *nulla fides hominibus*. There are
 three accidents to men which, of all, are most unseparable: lust, deceit, and
 malice (their glozing tongues the preface to the execution of their vile minds,
 and their pens the bloody executioners of their barbarous manners). A little
 gall maketh a great deal of sweet sour, and a slanderous tongue poisoneth 305
 all the good parts in man. . . .

At the end of men's fair promises there is a labyrinth, and therefore ever
 hereafter stop your ears when they protest friendship, lest they come to an
 end before you are aware, whereby you fall without redemption. The path
 which leadeth thereunto is man's wit, and the miles-ends are marked with 310
 these trees: folly, vice, mischief, lust, deceit, and pride. These to deceive you
 shall be clothed in the raiments of fancy, virtue, modesty, love, true-meaning,
 and handsomeness. Folly will bid you welcome on your way and tell
 you his fancy concerning the profit which may come to you by this journey,

286. *stick*: hesitate

289. *killed* . . . *unkindness*: variant of the 'to kill with kindness' (proverbial; Tilley K51)

290. *vantage*: superior or secure position

294. *froward*: perverse

294–5. *bear* . . . *neighbours*: spoken sarcastically (it's the neighbours who are dishonest, never oneself)

295. *mentiri* . . . *nostrum*: we are not liars

296–7. *geese* . . . *bridge*: 'London Bridge was made for wise men to go over and fools to go under' (Tilley L417)

301. *nulla* . . . *hominibus*: there is no truth in men (Tilley F34)

302. *accidents*: attributes 304.

304. *pens*: a sexual pun

310. *miles-ends*: posts marking miles

and direct you to vice who is more crafty. He, with a company of protestations, will praise the virtues of women, showing how many ways men are beholden unto us; but our backs once turned, he falls a-railing. Then mischief, he pries into every corner of us, seeing if he can espy a cranny that, getting in his finger into it, he may make it wide enough for his tongue to wag in. Now, being come to lust, he will fall a-railing on lascivious looks and will ban lechery, and with the collier will say, 'the devil take him', though he never means it. Deceit will give you fair words and pick your pockets, nay, he will pluck out your hearts if you be not wary. But when you hear one cry out against lawns, drawn-works, periwigs, against the attire of courtesans, and generally of the pride of all women, then know him for a wolf clothed in sheep's raiment, and be sure you are fast by the lake of destruction. Therefore take heed of it, which you shall do if you shun men's flattery, the forerunner of our undoing. If a jade be galled, will he not winch? And can you find fault with a horse that springeth when he is spurred? The one will stand quietly when his back is healed and the other go well when his smart ceaseth. You must bear with the old *Lover his Surfeit* because he was diseased when he did write it; and peradventure hereafter, when he shall be well amended, he will repent himself of his slanderous speeches against our sex and curse the dead man which was the cause of it and make a public recantation. For the faltering in his speech at the latter end of his book affirmeth that already he half repenteth of his bargain, and why? because his melody is past. But believe him not, though he should out-swear you, for although a jade may be still in a stable when his gall-back is healed, yet he will show himself in his kind when he is travailing; and man's flattery bites secretly, from which I pray God keep you and me too. Amen.

Finis.

318. *cranny*: sexual pun

321. *ban*: curse

collier . . . him: 'Like will to like, quoth the devil to the collier' (Tilley L287)

324. *lawns, drawn-works*: fine linens, ornamentally patterned fabrics

326. *fast*: close

328. *galled*: chafed by a harness or over-work (proverbial; Tilley H700)

333–6. *repent . . . repenteth*: another indication of Anger's perception that the Surfeiter's hand-wringing over the dangers of love is simply a prelude to his 're-conversion' in future romance narratives (Magnusson 1991: 277–8)

337. *melody*: (sexual) performance

339. *gall-back*: chafed back, rubbed sore

kind: true colours

travailing: toiling (at seduction); alternatively, 'travelling'

WOMEN WRITERS IN RENAISSANCE ENGLAND

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