

Part Two: The Portfolio

Chapter Three The Ideas

Democracy

In a time during which the reigning king kept a witch examiner on staff and jealously guarded his debatable hold on the throne, Lanyer presented the reigning queen with a small book,¹ which suggested through analogy that commoners and aristocracy were, in the final account, cut from the same cloth. Although the probability that James ever read Lanyer's book is slight, it is significant to note that democracy was anathema to the Scottish king. His insistence upon his divine right to rule absolutely has been noted by many historians, including Thomas Macaulay, who wrote: "[James I] constantly put forward, in the most offensive form, claims of which none of his predecessors had ever dreamed."¹ In a speech to Parliament in March, 1609, James claimed that

Kings are justly called Gods, for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth. For if you will consider the attributes to God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a king. God has power to create, or destroy, make, or unmake at his pleasure, to give life, or send death, to judge all, and to be judged nor accountable to none:

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Yet, submitting her work to the Stationer's Register only one year before the king's speech, Lanyer attempted to initiate a discourse with the queen, his wife, clearly stating in the

Salve Deus that "God makes both even," and perhaps suggesting subtly that James does not deserve to rule:

Nor is he fit for honour, or command,
If base affections over-rules his mind;
Or that selfe-will doth carry such a hand³

On the surface, Lanyer's argument addresses the ongoing litigation about Anne Clifford's ancestral rights to family land.

The right your Mother hath to it, is knowne
Best unto you, who reapt such fruit thereby:
This Monument of her faire worth retain⁴

Lanyer's specific use of the phrases "Heire apparant," "Crowne," and "Gods Steward" and its variants strongly suggests that the notion of monarchy is also addressed:

You are the Heire apparant of this Crowne
Of goodnesse, bountie, grace, love, pietie,
By birth its yours, then keepe it as your owne⁵

Lanyer writes to a woman, the Countesse of Dorcet, displacing James in his most exalted position: "To you, as to Gods Steward I doe write,"⁶ suggesting that perhaps the younger Clifford is more deserving of authority than James because he has been blinded by temporal gratifications:

As worldly pleasures have the powre to blind
So as he cannot see, nor understand
How to discharge that place to him assign'd:
Gods Stewards must for all the poore provide,
If in Gods house they purpose to abide.⁷

The subtle conflation of James's patriarchal location with that of George Russell in his position as husband and father justifies Lanyer's well-considered "vote" for Anne Clifford -
- whose ancestors have earned the right to rule, through

"Their honours" and "for their honourable deeds"⁸ -- and who will, by virtue of her "faire and virtuous deeds,"⁹ make a better administrator. Lanyer, contrasting James's kingly powers "to create, or destroy, make, or unmake at his pleasure, to give life, or send death, to judge all, and to be judged nor accountable to none" reminds the Countess of Dorcet of her *obligations* to the governed:

Bind up the broken, stop the wounds that bleeds,
Succour the poore, comfort the comfortlesse,
Cherish faire plants, suppressse unwholsom weeds;
 Although base pelfe do chance to come in place,
 Yet let true worth receive your greatest grace.¹⁰

In directing Clifford to reward *merit* rather than aristocratic lineage -- a decidedly democratic notion -- Lanyer reinforces her argument for democracy while suggesting a union between Christ and Clifford's soul:

Therefore to you (good Madame) I present
His lovely love, more worth than purest gold,
.....
Whom your faire soule may in her armes infold . . . ¹¹

She conflates the ideas of true faith and democracy because for Lanyer, Christ -- and all his images implies -- is democracy; in heaven, "God makes both even, the Cottage with the Throne."¹²

It is probable that Lanyer had heard or read James's speech in the spring of 1609, and as a thoughtful woman, had considered carefully his declaration:

. . . I am sure to go to my grave with that reputation and comfort, that never king was in all his time more careful to have his laws duly observed, and himself to govern thereafter, than I. I conclude then this point touching the power of

kings, with this axiom of divinity, that as to
dispute what God may do, is blasphemy . . . so is
it sedition in subjects, to dispute what a king may
do in the height of his power¹³

Rhetorically, James had moved from an analogy of kings to gods to his own divinity. Lanyer, in electing Anne Clifford to be "Gods Steward," returns to more acceptable Christian notions of earthly governance, deposes James, and so commits blasphemy and treason.

The authors of *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print* correctly assess the prevailing attitudes concerning the initiation of a popular standard of rule during James's reign:

the notion of democratic government was
abhorrent to the powerful in Renaissance
England, [and] They instilled this
abhorrence in their "inferiors."¹⁴

The aristocracy, to whom Lanyer petitions in the *Salve Deus*, having received in the past and receiving in the present their honors in direct relation to their families' ability to remain in monarchical good graces, had no reason to support the marginalized Lanyer's ideology. Lanyer's patrons certainly understood the meaning of making "both even, the Cottage with the Throne,"¹⁵ and could not have wished for such an eventuality.

Lanyer very obviously did not abhor the idea of democracy. Her days at court, her son Henry (the illicit and unrecognized Henry X),¹⁶ and her own marginal state at court may have influenced her beliefs and contributed to the

bitterness, at times apparent in her writing, concerning the court hierarchy. It may be assumed, nonetheless, that timidity did not impel Lanyer to suggest her own treason to the queen. In all likelihood, she knew that her beliefs would not be embraced in court circles, that, in fact, in all probability they would be censured. However, she determines that Lady Anne's moral triumph, bringing the countess fame, commendation, and reverence, will protect her from the consequences of disputing "what a king may do":

So this poore worke of mine shalbe defended
From any scandall that the world can
frame....¹⁷

While her beliefs about government and the rights and duties of rulers are least subtle in the dedication to Anne Clifford, Lanyer includes in the *Salve Deus* many other indications that she did not favor England's contemporary form of government. In the book's first dedication, that to Queen Anne, Lanyer sets up a *metafora continuata*, paralleling the Danish queen's court on earth, in which Lanyer, like Christ who is the "Crowner of all Kings," the king-maker, lives "unfortunate," with Christ's court in heaven: The heavenly king is

The hopefull haven of the meaner sort,
Its he that all our joyfull tidings brings
Of happie raigne within his royall Court:
Its he that in extremity can give
Comfort to them that have no time to live,¹⁸

wherein Lanyer's spiritually equalizing wealth waits;

And since my wealth within his Region stands,

And that his Crosse my chiefest comfort is,
Yea in his kingdome onely rests my lands

Of honour there I hope I shall not misse:
Though I on earth doe live unfortunate,
Yet there I may attaine a better state.¹⁹

She subtly furthers the insinuation in the employment of rhyme royal,²⁰ a seven-line, iambic-pentameter stanza rhyming *ababbcc*, in her verse dedication "To all vertuous Ladies in general," whom she invites "with the rest / Whom Fame commends to be the very best,"²¹ to Elysian fields, wherein all womankind, along with the Titans, Christ, the Muses, Aesop, Cynthia, and Minerva, share equally in wealth:

Thus may you flie from dull and sensuall earth,
Whereof at first your bodies formed were,
That new regen'rate in a second berth,
Your blessed soules may live without all feare,
Beeing immortall, subject to no death:
But in the eie of heaven so highly placed,
That others by your virtues may be graced²²

Other dedications written in rhyme royal -- "To the Ladie *Arabella*," whose kinship with Elizabeth I and James I and legitimate claims to their thrones condemned her to spend much of her life in the Tower, and "To the Lady *Elizabeth's* Grace," the princess, are actually written to royalty. The third dedication written in rhyme royal is "To the Ladie *Lucie*," the Countess of Bedford, the queen's best friend, catagorized by Lewalski as the "most powerful non-royal woman in England."²³

Lanyer continues the leveling conceit in "The Authors Dreame to the Ladie *Marie*," in which she, the Muses, various goddesses of wisdom and war, Nymphs, Satyrs, and unnamed

saints gather at a secret, sacred spring, to be led in psalm-singing by Mary Sidney, the principle female literary figure of the age, in celebration of the agreement of Nature and Art, and all that they metaphorically represent, to remain at the spring

... here in equall sov'raightie to live,
Equal in state, equall in dignitie²⁴

Lanyer sheds subtlety in "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet," when she reminds Margaret Clifford's daughter that "God makes both even, the Cottage with the Throne",²⁵ and that heaven sees only virtue as nobility:

What difference was there when the world began,
Was it not Virtue that distinguisht all?²⁶

She then questions the very foundations of British society:

All sprang but from one woman and one man,
Then how doth Gentry come to rise and fall?²⁷

And asks what must surely be an impertinent, if not seditious, question:

Or who is he that very rightly can
distinguish of his birth, or tell at all,
In what meane state his Ancestors have bin,
Before some one of worth did honour
win?²⁸

The equalizing "mirrour" image, which Lanyer first uses in her dedication to Queen Anne, and in which Anne herself, Eve, the various Greek and Roman warrior goddesses, Lanyer's "booke," and by extension, Lanyer herself, in a metaphoric *trompe l'œil*, reflect and become each other at the same time they become role models for each other, gives Lanyer the

strength and confidence she needs to become not only teacher of, but spokesperson for, historical womankind.

Gender Equality

In "To The Vertuous Reader," Lanyer offers formal prose argument structured as classical epideictic oration, in which she admonishes women to abandon internalized patriarchal perceptions and to cast off unwarranted aspersions, the utterance of which only serves to inspire women to moral perfection. Characteristic of Renaissance rhetors following Cicero and Quintilian, it is evident that Lanyer pays attention to *inventio* (the seeking out of appropriate arguments), *elocutio* (employment of tropes and schemes), and *dispositio* (proper arrangement) in her argument, and that she looks to Aristotle's topics as they were catalogued in the plethora of rhetorics and dictionaries of topics, schemes, and tropes available in Renaissance England. Her *exordium correctivio* acknowledges the charge made against women so often in *querelle* publications of maligning one another:

Often have I heard, that it is the property of
some women, not only to emulate the virtues and
perfections of the rest, but also by all their
powers of ill speaking, to eclipse the
brightnes of their deserved fame; now contrary
to this custome, which men I hope unjustly lay
to their charge, 5²⁹

contains a *conversio in eadem* and a definition of her audience:

I have written this small volume, or little booke, for the generall use of all virtuous Ladies and Gentlewomen of this kingedome; and in commendation of some particular persons of our owne sexe, such as for the most part, are so well knowne to my selfe, and others, that I dare undertake Fame dares not to call any better, 10

and offers her *proposito*, stating her belief and purpose: women must respect themselves, each other, and demand the respect of the world in general:

And this have I done, to make knowne to the world, that all women deserve not to be blamed though some forgetting they are women themselves, and in danger to be condemned by the words of their owne mouthes, fall into so great an errour, as to speake unadvisedly against the rest of their sexe.... 15

Lanyer continues, employing *diaeresis*, dividing her proposition into its basic parts, indicating, ironically, that internalization of misogynist cant is woman's only fault and pointing out that it is in women's interest to reject the power of sexism:

which if it be true, I am perswaded they can shew their owne imperfection in nothing more: and therefore could wish --for their owne ease, modesties, and credit) they would referre such points of folly to be practised by evill disposed men. 18

She begins her *narratio* by identifying the nature of her opposition -- the ignorance of misogynistic men. At the same time, in a precise and elegantly terse catalogue of man's dependence upon women, Lanyer reminds those ignorant, sexist men to whom and to what extent they are in debt:

who forgetting they were borne of women, nourished of women, and that if it were not by the means of women, they would be quite extinguished out of the world, and a finall ende of them all, 22

If it were not for women, obviously, men would not exist.

Metaphorically, she alludes in a brief *digressio* to the seminal problem -- a lack of masculine virtue:

doe like Vipers deface the wombes wherein they were bred,
onely to give way and utterance to their want of
discretion and goodnesse. 24

Calling on Scripture and on virtue itself for authority and using the *homologue* of Christ to edify her argument, Lanyer begins her *refutatio* following Quintilian's instruction, offering examples of male perfidy to discredit women's accusers, reminding her audience that morally bankrupt men crucified their own savior --

Such as these, were they that dishonoured Christ his
Apostles and Prophets, putting them to shamefull
deaths. 26

And concludes her disjunctive *emphymeme* with the obvious consequent: considering their ethical and moral composition, "evill disposed men" and their denunciations should be disregarded and ignored:

Therefore we are not to regard any imputations, that
they undeservedly lay upon us, 27

except insofar as they may be used as inverse models of feminine virtue:

no otherwise than to make use of them to our owne
benefits, as spurres to vertue, making us flie all
occasions that may colour their unjust speeches to
passe currant. 30

Pivoting again on a *homologue*, she refers to, and calls authority from, a higher power, suggesting that even God is angry with men, who are guilty of the deadly sin of pride,

and has empowered women in their wisdom and virtue to defeat them:

Especially considering that they have tempted even the patience of God himselfe, who gave power to wise and virtuous women, to bring downe their pride and arrogancie. 33

As *confirmato*, she draws from biblical sources, appealing to scriptural authority, cataloguing "historically" the triumphs of virtuous, strong, and pious women over ungrateful, weak, and wicked men:

As was cruell *Cesarus* by the discreet counsell of noble *Deborah*, Judge and Prophetess of Israel: and resolution of *Jael* wife of *Heber* the Kenite: wicked *Haman*, by the divine prayers and prudent proceedings of beautiful *Hester*: blasphemous *Holofernes*, by the invincible courage, rare wisdom, and confident carriage of *Judeth*: & the unjust *Judges*, by the innocency of chaste *Susanna*: with infinite others, which for brevitie sake I will omit. 40

As further amplification of what misogynistic men owe to women, Lanyer offers the Incarnation:

As also in respect it pleased our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, without the assistance of man, beeing free from originall and all other sinnes, from the time of his conception, till the houre of his death, to be begotten of a woman 44

Through Christ's birth ("born of a woman"), His sustenance ("nourished of a woman"), and His submission ("obedient to a woman"),³⁰ the savior of mankind acknowledged their worth. If man's eternal salvation is not proof enough of women's right to equality and the respect of those she has saved, Lanyer, once again employing the *homologue* of Christ as her authority, reminds men that the son of God has nurtured women

and that he healed women, pardoned women, comforted women, 46

even as she has nurtured him. The son of God has never doubted female merit: He, even in his darkest hour, regarded a woman:

yea, even when he was in his greatest agonie and bloodie sweat, going to be crucified, and also in the last houre of his death, tooke care to dispose of a woman: 48

Further, Christ chose women to participate in the most important tasks of his life on earth:

after his resurrection, [Christ] appeared first to a woman, sent a woman to declare his most glorious resurrection to the rest of his Disciples. 50

Her catalogue of feminine religious virtue, along with Christ's comfort of and reliance upon womankind, concludes with those women who have, contrary to Jacobean interpretations of Scripture, performed ecclesiastical duty:

Many other examples I could alledge of divers faithfull and virtuous women, who have in all ages, not onley beene Confessors 52

Women have as well accepted Christ's greatest command, choosing to die rather than betray him:

but also indured most cruel martyrdome for their faith in Jesus Christ 54

With sophist-like grace, Lanyer unveils another disjunctive *enthymeme*:

All which is sufficient to inforce all good Christians and honourable minded men to speak reverently of our sexe, and especially of all virtuous and good women. 57

With a subtle *insinuatio*, she suggests that good Christians recognize and revere womankind; bad Christians and heathens do not.

Lanyer concludes, beginning her *peroratio* by excusing herself and her "imperfect" argument with an understated *humilitas topos*:

To the modest sensures of both which, I refer these my
imperfect indeavours, 58

acknowledges her reader's benevolence in another *conversio in eadem*:

knowing that according to their owne excellent
dispositions, 59

good sense:

they will rather, cherish, nourish, and increase the
least sparke of virtue where they find it, by their
favourable and best interpretations, 61

and fairness:

than quench it by wrong constructions. 61

She concludes by wishing her readers well as she asks for their well-wishing:

To whom I wish all increase of virtue, and desire
their best opinions. 62

Again, Lanyer's manifest rhetorical expertise makes her argument unequivocal. Women are not inferior to men; in fact, if men are carefully judged by their own standards, it is they who are inferior to women. Lanyer assumes a perspective more commonly associated with the twentieth century than with the seventeenth when she admonishes her female readers to reject commonly held beliefs about their inherent inadequacies and to stop judging each other by male-defined standards. Rather than criticize each other, women should support each other -- they should "cherish, nourish,

and increase the least sparke of virtue where they find it, by their favourable and best interpretations," rather "than quench [virtue] by wrong constructions."³¹ Women *do* have heroic role models, such as Deborah, Jael, Judeth, Susanna, and the Virgin Mary, in which they may see reflections of their own worth.

Eve's Apology

Addressing the most common *querelle des femmes* arguments in her marginally noted "*Eve's Apology*," Lanyer offers a deft reversal of responsibility for the fall of mankind. She inverts the traditional argument against Eve, and so all women, having the worse appear the better cause. Eve's "sinne," in *antanogoge*, becomes virtue:

Our Mother Eve, who tasted of the Tree,
Giving to Adam what shee held most deare,
Was simply good, and had no powre to see 765³²

More significantly, it becomes a virtue born of an excess of virtue:

Not Eve, whose fault was onely too much love,
Which made her give this present to her Deare,
That what shee tasted, he likewise might prove,
Whereby his knowledge might become more cleare804

And Adam's "weakness" becomes Machiavelian:

He never sought her weakenesse to reprove,
With those sharpe words, which he of God did heare: 806

Not only is the first man responsible for the fall of all Mankind, but, for withholding God's proscription from her, he is held accountable for the corruption of Eve as well.

Moreover, the very knowledge with which men oppress and subjugate women, they owe to Eve:

Yet Men will boast of Knowledge, which he tooke
From Eves faire hand, as from a learned Booke 808

In elegant *concessio*, Lanyer considers that "If any Evill did in [Eve] remaine,"³³ as she was made from genetic stuff of Adam, he bears responsibility for it -- "Beeing made of him, he was the ground of all."³⁴ Further, Adam bears responsibility for Satan's stain of original sin that Eve ("If one of many Worlds could lay a staine"), and so all women, bear ("Upon our Sexe, and worke so great a fall).³⁵ Adam and his descendents, by extension, also bear responsibility for the historical blemish under which Renaissance womanhood labored, and out from under which Lanyer attempted to write them.

Again, Lanyer makes use of Quintilian *exempla*, referring to the "historical" facts of Scripture to reverse the "Eve is a woman, Eve is a sinner, all women are sinners" *pseudo enthymeme* employed by women's detractors with one of her own, implying instead that "Peter is a man, Peter betrayed Christ, all men betrayed Christ":

To wretched Man, by Satans subtill traine;
What will so fowle a fault amongst you all?
Her weakenesse did the Serpents words obey;
But you in malice Gods deare Sonne betray. 816

Not only did wretched men betray Christ -- by extension from Pilate -- they pronounced sentence on him:

Whom, if unjustly you condemne to die,

Her sinne was small, to what you doe commit;
All mortall sinnes that doe for vengeance crie,
Are not to be compared unto it 820

Lanyer focuses on the relative gravity of each gender's transgression and finds, indeed, that man's compounded crime is the most mortal of sins possible in the entire universe:

If many worlds would altogether trie,
By all their sinnes the wrath of God to get;
This sinne of yours, surmounts them all as farre
As doth the Sunne, another little starre. 824

For that reason, Lanyer exhorts, men must "Then let us have our Libertie againe"³⁶ and relinquish their presumption of authority over women. "And challenge to your selves no Sov'raigntie,"³⁷ she warns. Men owe their very existences to Eve and her daughters, Lanyer reminds them again: "You came not in the world without our paine,"³⁸ and urges that recognition of that verity alone should suffice to keep men civil: "Make that a barre against your crueltie"³⁹

Man, who has committed the most perfidious of mortal sins, has no right to subject woman,

Your fault beeing greater, why should you disdain
Our beeing your equals, free from tyranny?

whose indiscretion is, at most, venial:

If one weake woman simply did offend,
This sinne of yours, hath no excuse, nor end. 832

Lanyer rhetorically realizes a changed venue for a new trial of Eve and serves aptly as her advocate. She calls upon the jury of her readers, "all virtuous women," to review the testimony and remove the charges against Eve. As she did in her dedication "To The Vertuous Reader," Lanyer employs

classical modes of argumentation in "Eve's Apology" to nullify the justifications centuries of men have made for the mistreatment of women. Lanyer's seventy-two line defense of Eve serves to exonerate the first woman, re-examining the damning evidence that has been used against her, and so all women, for sixteen hundred years. Betrayed in her innocence by cunning Satan and false-protector, Adam, Eve, like her daughters, is clearly virtuous and has been maligned unjustly.

At the same time, "Eve's Apology" seeks to set the record straight concerning the true felon, Adam, whose Machiavelian withholding of crucial information caused the stain of Satan to corrupt innocent Eve and her offspring, humanity, one half of whom, the male half, malicious by nature and educated by Satan, compounded their treachery by murdering the Saviour of the world.

Lanyer's ideas concerning power and its distribution were startling and dangerous ideas for a subject under any monarchy, but especially dangerous ideas for a subject during the reign of James I, who defined himself in terms of deity and who resolutely held the "power to create, or destroy, make, or unmake at his pleasure, to give life, or send death, to judge all, and to be judged nor accountable to none."⁴⁰ Lanyer in daring "to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power," committing blasphemy and guilty of sedition,⁴¹

demanded a restructuring of English government, a redistribution of power between the sexes, and a revision of the worth of women.

Notes

- ¹ Thomas Babington Macaulay, *A History of England*.
- ² James I, Speech to Parliament, 21 March 1609.
- ³ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 49-51.
- ⁴ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 75-8.
- ⁵ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 65-7.
- ⁶ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 57.
- ⁷ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 52-56.
- ⁸ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 81.
- ⁹ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 111.
- ¹⁰ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 75-80.
- ¹¹ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 111-115.
- ¹² "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 19.
- ¹³ James I, Speech to Parliament, 21 March 1609
- ¹⁴ Hazlekorn and Travitsky 11.
- ¹⁵ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 19.
- ¹⁶ The *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. X: "only son of William Carey, esquire of the body to Henry VIII, by his Wife Mary, sister of Anne Boleyn" 976. Henry Carey, had he been legitimate, would have been Henry IX, and his son, Lanyer's son, if legitimate, would have been Henry X.
- ¹⁷ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 85-86.
- ¹⁸ "To the Queenes most Excelent Majestie" 55.
- ¹⁹ "To the Queenes most Excelent Majestie" 60.
- ²⁰ Rhyme Royale may take its name from its use by King James VI of Scotland in "The Kingis Quair" (Holman 383).
- ²¹ "To all vertuous Ladies in general" 77.
- ²² "To all vertuous Ladies in general" 70.
- ²³ Lewalski *Writing* 95.
- ²⁴ "The Authors Dreame to the Ladie Marie" 94.
- ²⁵ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 19.
- ²⁶ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 34.
- ²⁷ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 36.
- ²⁸ "To the Ladie Anne, Countesse of Dorcet" 37-40.
- ²⁹ In-text line numbers in this section refer specifically to Lanyer's dedication "To The Vertuous Reader."
- ³⁰ "To the Vertuous Reader" 44.
- ³¹ "To the Vertuous Reader" 61.
- ³² In-text line numbers in this section refer specifically to Lanyer's title poem, "Salve Deus."
- ³³ "Salve Deus" 809.
- ³⁴ "Salve Deus" 810.

³⁵ "Salve Deus" 811-2.

³⁶ "Salve Deus" 825.

³⁷ "Salve Deus" 826.

³⁸ "Salve Deus" 827.

³⁹ "Salve Deus" 828.

⁴⁰ James I, Speech to Parliament, 21 March 1609.

⁴¹ James I, Speech to Parliament, 21 March 1609