

The Worming of A Mad Dog

By Constantia Munda

1617

Edited by Caroline Bivins

Introduction

Background

In 1615, John Swetnam published a pamphlet called *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women*. Swetnam's pamphlet illustrated his strong distaste for women, claiming, "Women are all necessary evils and yet not all given to wickedness; and yet many so bad, that in my conceit if I should speak the worst that I know by some women, I should make their ears glow that hears me, and my tongue would blister to report it" (Swetnam). Using several references to biblical and classical antiquity character and stories, the misogynistic and inflammatory pamphlet attacked women for "leading a proud, lazy, and idle life, to the great hindrance of their poor Husbands" among other acts Swetnam deemed sins (Swetnam). Swetnam's pamphlet was widely read and popular, possibly because of its humor directed toward a male audience. Additionally, the pamphlet stoked the fire of the *querelle des femmes*, a centuries long conversation—or more accurately the debate—pertaining to the nature of women and their societal roles, to name a couple.

Not everyone enjoyed Swetnam's pamphlet. In response, three women independently wrote defenses of their sex. The first was by Rachel Speght, titled *A Mouzell for a Melastomus* (1617). The second was written under the pseudonym Ester Sovernam and was called *Ester Hath Hang'd Haman* (1617). The third defense was titled *The Worming of a Mad Dogge* (1617), published under the pseudonym Constantia Munda.

Munda's *The Worming of a Mad Dogge* directs fierce critique and sharp wit at Swetnam, thereby matching the zest of his pamphlet. Further, Munda embellished the work with several classical, biblical, and early-modern cultural references, often in different languages like Latin or Italian. This decision effectively mirrors Swetnam's writing, but it also demonstrates her vast

intellect, implicitly defending female education and ability to be effective rhetoricians. Moreover, comparing Swetnam to a dog—specifically Cerberus—dehumanizes him as he dehumanizes women in his pamphlet. It emphasizes his animal-like and illogical anger directed towards women. Therefore, Munda’s skilled control of language and references make it as if she truly *is* reigning in a mad dog.

Editor’s Notes

My primary job as the editor of this piece was to attempt to craft an image of Munda’s writing that is faithful to the source material but also is digestible for contemporary readers. Some of my choices to complete such a task may seem obvious: standardizing spelling to match 21st century conventions (like “phrensie” to “frenzy,” “publique” to “public”), correcting placement of punctuation, and so on. On rare occasions, I replaced archaic (as in, not known to the 21st century reader) words with a contemporary equivalent, though more often than not I added a footnote that defines the word. All definitions in footnotes are interpretations or directly from the Oxford English Dictionary. At large, sentence structure or rhythm remain untouched unless there was an obstacle that made it unreadable. I have abridged *The Worming of a Mad Dog* in an effort to condense this edition into the richest and most thematically potent parts. In the end, my goal was to edit the piece as little as possible in order to maintain Munda’s writing “essence,” for lack of a better word, while making it a more accessible text to the general, contemporary reader.

To make *The Worming of a Mad Dog* even more accessible, beyond simple spelling and grammatical edits, I decided to explain the many intertextual references. Many were quoted in a different language, therefore rough translation was required. Because of the abundance of

intertextual references, namely to various mythologies and literary works, editing Munda's witty response became a tedious, but joyful, labor of love. I worked tirelessly to find where these references originated and how to describe it in a way that would explain to the reader why Munda might have cited them. However, despite being a labor of love, my explanations and translations are most certainly far from perfect. Any gaps in knowledge, explanations, and/or translations are a result of having limited resources and time for a project of this scope. For instance, I do not know Latin, but I felt it was crucial to uncover what Munda was quoting, so I used online resources such as Google Translate and Perseus to produce rough translations that were put in footnotes. While not ideal, this process allows a glimpse, albeit an imperfect one, into what Munda was trying to convey. Moreover, while I could have directly changed the Latin to English within the text, I decided to confine the translations and explanatory notes to the footnotes. I attempted to make the text more accessible by providing these translations, but in order to maintain the same experience Early Modern readers would have had, the original quotes remain.

Sources and Other Readings

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The Worming of a Mad Dog.¹
Or, A Sop for Cerberus² The Jailer of Hell
No Confutation but a sharp Rebuke³ of the Batter of Women.
By Constantia Munda - *dux fœmina facti*⁴

The itching desire of oppressing the press with many sottish and illiterate libels, stuffed with all manner of ribaldry, and sordid inventions, when every foul-mouthed male-content may disgorge his Lycambean poison⁵ in the face of all the world, hath broken out into such abysmal contagion in these our days, that every scandalous tongue and opprobrious wit, like the Italian mountebanks⁶ will advance their peddling wares of detracting virulence in the public piazza of every stationers shop. And printing that was invented to be the store-house of famous wits, the treasure of divine literature, the pandect and maintainer of all sciences, is to become the receptacle of every dissolute pamphlet. The nursery and hospital of every spurious and penurious brat, which proceeds from base frenetic brain-sick babblers. When “*scribimus indocti*”⁷ must be the motto of every one that fools himself in print: tis ridiculous! But when “*scribimus insani*”⁸ should be the signature of every page, tis lamentable our times so stupidly possess and be numbed with folly, that we shall verify the proverb, “*L’usanza commune non è peccato*”⁹... Yet woeful experience makes it too true, “*consuetudo peccandi tollit sensum peccati*,”¹⁰ as may be seen by the works of diverse men that make their pens their pencils to limme¹¹ out vice that it may seeme delicious and amiable; so to detract from virtue and honesty, as though their essence were only in outward appearance of goodness, as if mortality were only circumscribed within the conditions of our sex, “*cælum ipsum petimus stultitia*.”¹² Foolish man will reprehend his Creator in the admirable work of his generation and conservation: Woman, the second edition of the epitome of the whole world, the second Tome of that goodly volume compiled by the great God

¹ This edition is an edited and abridged version that appears on the [Women Writers Online site](#).

² “Cerberus” from Greek mythology is the three-headed hound of Hades, the lord of the underworld.

³ I’ve replaced “Redargution” with the most transferable contemporary word of the same meaning “Rebuke.”

⁴ “*Dux fœmina facti*” in Latin: “a woman was the leader of the deed.” From Virgil’s *Aeneid* (19 BC).

⁵ Likely in reference to the poet Archilochus who wrote satirical about Lycambes, the father of the girl Archilochus was in love with. The poems were so hurtful or “poisonous,” Lycambes and his daughters hung themselves.

⁶ “Italian mountebank” means “imposter” or “fraud.”

⁷ In Latin, roughly translates to “write unlearned.”

⁸ In Latin, roughly translates to “write crazy”

⁹ An Italian proverb that roughly translates to “custom is not crime” or “common practice is not a sin.”

¹⁰ In Latin, roughly translates to “The habit of sinning takes away the sense of sin.”

¹¹ I’ve replaced “limme” with the most transferable contemporary word of a similar meaning, “illuminate,” as in, “To paint (a picture or portrait); to portray, depict (a subject).” See OED’s entry for “limn.”

¹² Latin. Roughly translates to “We seek heaven itself with foolishness.”

of heaven and earth is most shamefully blurred and derogatively erased by scribbling pens of savage and uncouth monsters. To what an irregular strain is the daring impudence of blind-fold bayards¹³ aspired unto? That they will presume to call in question even the most absolute work composed by the world's great Architect? A strange blasphemy to find fault with that which the Privy Council of the high and mighty Parliament of the inscrutable "Tri-unitie"¹⁴ in Heaven determined to be very good. To call that imperfect, froward,¹⁵ crooked, and perverse to make an arraignment and bear-baiting¹⁶ of that which the Pantocrator¹⁷ would in his omniscient wisdom have to be the consummation of his blessed weeks work, the end, crown, and perfection of the never-sufficiently glorified creation. What is it but an exorbitant frenzy, and woeful taxation of the supreme deity. Yet woman, the greatest part of the "lesser world," is generally the subject of every pedantical goose-quill. Every fantastical poetaster¹⁸ which thinks he has licked the vomit of his Coriphæus¹⁹ and can all but patch a hobbling verse together, will strive to represent unseemly figments imputed to our sex, (as a pleasing theme to the vulgar) on the public theatre, teaching the worser sort that are more prone to luxury, a compendious way to learn to be sinful. These foul mouthed railers²⁰, "*qui non vident ut corrigant, sed quærunt quid reprehendant*,"²¹ that reprove not that they might reform, but pry into actions that they might carp and cavil: so that in this infamous profession they far exceed the vilest kind of pharisaical ostentation, and so surmounting beyond all comparison railing Anaxarchus,²² who for his detracting and biting tongue was pestled to death in a brazen mortar.

...

These wretched miscreants go groping, and sometimes on all fours, to traffic with other folks credits by their own divulged and dispersed ignominies. That impudently seek by others

¹³ Likely meaning "One blind to the light of knowledge, who has the self-confidence of ignorance." See OED for entry.

¹⁴ Since in quotations, I'm maintaining Munda's spelling of "Trinity."

¹⁵ Likely meaning "bad, evilly-disposed, 'naughty'." (The opposite of *toward*.) See OED entry.

¹⁶ Bear-baiting was a form of entertainment where dogs were set loose to fight against a bear which had been chained or tethered by the neck or leg.

¹⁷ A Greek term meaning "ruler of all" or "almighty."

¹⁸ A person who writes inferior poetry.

¹⁹ Contemporarily spelled as "coryphaeus," it means the leader of the chorus in Ancient Greek dramas. Here, Munda likely uses it to mean "leader" or "chief."

²⁰ Someone who rants.

²¹ Latin. Roughly translates to "Those who do not see so that they may correct, but seek what they might criticize."

²² A Greek philosopher c. 380-320 BC.

dishonour to set a shamelesse face on the matter, and thus to put out their immodest horns to butt at and gore the name and reputation of the innocent, being so besotted with a base and miserable condition, and blind in themselves, they blush not in their tongues to carry the gall of Rabilius,²³ and in their chaps the poison of Colimachus²⁴ in their mouths, the flame of Mount Etna²⁵ in their eyes, Jupiter's lightning which he darted at the centaurs,²⁶ in their thoughts Bellona's²⁷ arrows, in their serpentine words the bitterness of Sulmo against Orbecca,²⁸ blending and commixing²⁹ all their discourse with hepatic aloes³⁰ and unsavory simples, deriving all their ingredients of their venomd recipes from the apothecaries shop of the Devil. Notwithstanding, as the same learned man metaphorically says, "*Cotesti usei scangerati, città senza muro, navi senza governo, vasi senza coperto cavalli indomiti senza freno non Considerano.*"³¹ These wide open-doors, these unwall'd towns, these rudderless ships, these uncovered vessels, these unbridled horses do not consider that the tongue being a very little member should never go out of that same ivory gate, in which, (not without a great mystery) divine wisdom and nature together hath enclosed, it signifying that a man should give himself either to virtuous speech or prudent silence, and not let tongue and pen run up and down like a weaponed mad-man, to strike and wound any without partiality, every one without exception, to make such an universal massacre (for so I may term it, seeing words make worse wounds then swords) yet lest villainy domineer and triumph in fury, we will manacle your dissolute fist, that you deal not your blows so unadvisedly. Though feminine modesty hath confined our rarest and ripest wits to silence, we acknowledge it our greatest ornament, but when necessity compels us, tis as great a fault and folly "*loquenda tacere, ut contra gravis est culpa tacenda loqui*",³² being too much provoked by arraignments, baiting,

²³ Possibly referring to Gaius Rabirius Postumus, an ancient Roman banker who was defended by Cicero.

²⁴ Possibly referring to Callimachus, an ancient Greek poet.

²⁵ Volcano on the coast of Sicily, Italy.

²⁶ Jupiter is the Roman god of sky and thunder and the King of the Roman gods. Zeus is the Greek equivalent to Jupiter. Centaurs are half human, half horse beings. In Greek mythology, Zeus(Jupiter) threw a lightning bolt at Ixion, the father of Centaurus who would mate with horses giving rise to the centaur race.

²⁷ Bellona is the Roman goddess of war.

²⁸ While "Orbecca" is unidentifiable, likely due to Munda's variations in spelling or my own lack of resources, Sulmo or Sulmona is the Italian region Ovid is from. "Orbecca," then, might be a region that was in conflict with Sulmona.

²⁹ Likely meaning "To mix (two or more things) together." See OED entry.

³⁰ Originally written as "epaticke aloes," this likely refers to "hepatic aloes" which was used in medicine for its perceived effect on the liver and bowels.

³¹ Italian. Roughly translates to, "These are used, cities without walls, ships without government, vessels without covers, untamed horses without reins. They do not consider."

³² Latin. Roughly translates to, "To speak is to be silent, as conversely it is a grave sin to speak is to be silent."

and rancorous impeachments of the reputation of our whole sex, “*stulta est clementia—perituræ parcere cartæ*,”³³ opportunity of speaking slipped by silence, is as bad as importunity upheld by babbling “*λαλεῖν ἃ πρέπει, κρείττον ἢ σιωπᾶν*”³⁴. Know therefore that we will cancel your accusations, traverse your bills, and come upon you for a false inditement, and think not tis our waspishness³⁵ that shall sting you; no sir, until we see your malepert³⁶ sauciness reformed, which will not be until you do “make a long letter to us,” we will continue Juno’s, “*Non sic abibunt odia vivaces aget violentus iras animus Sanusque dolor æterna bella pace sublatâ geret.*”³⁷

...

...I note your untoward nature contrary to all men, for whereas in all others of your sex by your confession, idleness engenders love, but in you hate...Coriolanus when he saw his mother and his wife weeping, natural love compelled him to leave sacking the city for their sakes, “*ab hoc exemplum cape*,”³⁸ but your barbarous hand will not cease to ruin the senses, and beleaguer the forces of Gynæcia,³⁹ not sparing the mother that brought forth such an untoward whelp⁴⁰ into the world as thy self, playing at blind man’s buff⁴¹ with all, scattering thy dissolute language at whomsoever comes next. You never heard of a boy, an unlucky gallows that threw stones in the market-place he knew not whither. The wisely cynical philosopher bade him take heed lest he hit his father. “*Nomine mutato narretur fabula de te.*”⁴² You might easily, if you had had the grace, perceive what use to make of it. But you go forward, pretending you were in great

³³ Latin. There is no accessible translation of it, but I have attempted to roughly translate it to “Clemency is foolish—spare the perishable papers.”

³⁴ Greek. Roughly translates either to “speak what you must, or be silent” or “It is better to speak what is proper than to remain silent.”

³⁵ The use of “waspishness” here is a double entendre. Not only can it mean resembling a wasp, the insect, but it can also mean “Quick to resent any trifling injury or affront; irascible, petulantly spiteful.” See OED entry.

³⁶ I’ve maintained the incorrect spelling of “malapert,” which is a presumptuous or saucy person (see OED entry), because it is another double entendre. “Malepert” insinuates that malapertness is a trait of men.

³⁷ Latin. Roughly translates to “Not thus will hatreds go away, living angers will be dealt with by a violent mind, and healthy sorrow will bear eternal wars, having been removed by peace.”

³⁸ Latin. Roughly translates to “take an example from this.”

³⁹ “Gynæcia” is the plural form for the word “Gynæceum,” an area of a home or palace that served as women’s quarters in ancient Rome. In botany, “gynæcia” is the collective reproductive organs of a flower.

⁴⁰ The young of a dog, a puppy.

⁴¹ Blind man’s buff is a game that is a variant of tag, where the person who is “it” is blindfolded. “Buff” means “small push.”

⁴² Latin. Roughly translates to “With the name changed, the story is about you.”

choler⁴³ against some women, and in the ruff of your fury. Grant one absurdity, a thousand follow. Alas (good Sir) we may easily gather you were mightily transported with passion. Anger and madness differ but in time. It was a pleasant sight to see you in your great standing choler and furious ruff together. Your choler (no doubt) was too great for a Spanish peccadillo,⁴⁴ and your shag ruff seemed so grisly to set forth your ill-locking visage, that none of your she-adversaries do attempt to confront your folly. ...

...

... So you, peradventure,⁴⁵ having had some cursed wife that hath given you as good as you brought, whatsoever faults you espy in others, you take that to heart. You run a madding up and down to make a scroll of female frailties, and an inventory of meretricious behaviours, ascribing them to those that are joined in the sacred bands of matrimony. Because you have been gold with brass money, will you think no coin currency? Because you have suffered shipwrecks, will you dissuade any from venturing to traffic beyond seas? Besides, you show yourself unjust in not observing a symmetry and proportion of revenge and the offence: for a pelting injury should not provoke an opprobrious calumny; a private abuse of your own familiar doxies⁴⁶ should not break out into open slanders of the religious matron together with the prostitute strumpet⁴⁷; of the nobly-descended ladies, as the obscure base vermin that have bitten you; of the chaste and modest virgins, as well as the dissolute and impudent harlot. Because women are women, you will do that in an hour, which you will repent of all your life time after. Nay rather, if the ruff of your fury would have let you look over it, you would have diverted the flood-gates of your poisoned streams that way where you perceived the common shore to run, and not have polluted and stained the clear and crystalline waters. Because women are not women, rather might be a fit subject of an ingenious satirist. "*Cum alterius sexus imitata figuram est*"⁴⁸: the reason is, "*Quàm præstare potest mulier galeata pudorem, Quæ fugit à sexu?*"⁴⁹ But when women are women, when we sail by the true compass of honest and religious conversation, why

⁴³ In medieval physiology, choler is one of the four cardinal humors. It is identified with bile and associated with peevish or irascible temperaments.

⁴⁴ A small, unimportant offense or sin.

⁴⁵ Means "perhaps."

⁴⁶ A "doxy" is a female prostitute. See OED entry.

⁴⁷ Another word for a female prostitute, or more generally, a mistress or promiscuous or lascivious woman. See OED entry.

⁴⁸ Latin. Roughly translates to "When imitated by the opposite sex."

⁴⁹ Latin. Roughly translates to "How can a helmeted woman show modesty, who flees from sex?"

should you be so doggedly incensed to bark in general? Why should you employ your invention to lay open new fashions of lewdness, which the worst of women scarce ever were acquainted with? ... A fool speaks sometimes to the purpose. If you needed to use your pen, the time would have been far better spent if you had related to the world some stories of your travels, with a gentleman learned and wiser than yourself ... But it is easy to give a reason of your exasperated virulence, from your being a traveller: for it is very likely when you first went abroad to see fashions, it was your fortune to light amongst ill company, who trying what metal you were made of, quickly matriculated you in the school of vice, where you proved a most apt non-proficient, and being gold of your patrimony, your purse was turned into a past, and that by women. Like a dog that bites the stone which had almost beat out his brains, you come home swaggering: “*Prodiga non sentit pereuntem fœmina censum, At velut exhausta redivivus pullulet arca Nummus, & è pleno semper tollatur acervo, Non unquam reputant quantum sibi gaudia constant.*”⁵⁰ Which if you cannot understand, is to this sense: A lavish woman thinks there is no stint onto her purse, as though thou had a mint, she casts no count what money she’ll bestow, as if her coin as fast as the ebb did flow. Such it may be (I speak but on suspicion) were the conditions of those minions your minority had experience of in your voyages. Wherefore none either good or bad, fair or foul, of what estate soever, of what parentage or royal descent and lineage soever, how well soever nurtured and qualified, shall scape the convicious⁵¹ violence of your preposterous procacity. Why did you not snarl at them directly that wronged you? Why did not you collimate⁵² your infectious javelins at the right mark? If a thief takes your purse from you, will you malign and swagger with every one you meet? If you are beaten in an ale-house, will you set the whole town a fire? If some courtesans that you have met with in your travels (or rather that have met with you) have ill entreated you, must honest and religious people be the scope of your malicious speeches and reproachful terms? Yet it may be you have a further drift, to make the world believe you have an extraordinary gift of continence; soothing yourself with this supposition, that this open reviling is some token and evidence you never were affected with delicate and effeminate sensuality, thinking this pamphlet should assoile⁵³ thee from all manner

⁵⁰ Latin. Roughly translates to “The prodigal woman does not sense the perishing census (wealth), but just as if money sprouts up anew from the emptied chest, and is always taken from a full pile, they never calculate how much their pleasures cost them.”

⁵¹ Means “Railing, reproachful, abusive.” See OED entry.

⁵² The use of “collimate” here means “aim” or “direct.”

⁵³ Means “To absolve from sin, grant absolution to, pardon, forgive.” See OED entry.

of levy and taxation of a lascivious life; as if, because you cynically rail at all both good and bad, you had been hatched up without concupiscence;⁵⁴ as if nature had bestowed on you all *θυμὸς*,⁵⁵ and no *ἐπιθυμία*.⁵⁶ T'was spoken of Euripides,⁵⁷ that he hated women in *choro*,⁵⁸ but not in *thoro*,⁵⁹ in *calamo*,⁶⁰ but not in *thalamo*.⁶¹ and why cannot you be liable to the same objection? I would make this excuse for you, but that the crabbedness of your style, the unsavory periods of your broken-winded sentences persuade your body to be of the same temper as your mind. Your ill-favoured countenance, your wayward conditions, your peevish and pettish nature is such, that none of our sex with whom you have obtained some partial conference, could ever break your dogged frump frowardness: upon which male-contented desperation, you hanged out your flag of defiance against the whole world, as a prodigious monstrous rebel against nature. Besides, if your currish disposition had dealt with men, you were afraid that *Lex Talionis*⁶² would meet with you; wherefore you surmised, that inveighing⁶³ against poor illiterate women, we might fret and bite the lip at you, we might repine to see our selves baited and tossed in a blanket, but never dare in open view of the vulgar either disclose your blasphemous and derogative slanders, or maintain the untainted purity of our glorious sex: nay, you'll put gags in our mouths, and conjure us all to silence: you will first abuse us, then bind us to the peace; we must be tongue-tied, lest in starting up to find fault, we prove ourselves guilty of those horrible accusations. The sincerity of our lives, and quietness of conscience, is a wall of brass to beat back the bullets of your vituperous scandals in your own face. Tis the resolved aphorism of a religious soul to answer, "*ego sic vivam ut nemo tibi fidem adhibeat*:"⁶⁴ by our well-doings to put to silence the reports of foolish men, as the Poet speaks; "*Vivendum recte tum propter plurima, tum de his Præcipue*

⁵⁴ Means "Eager or vehement desire; in theological use the coveting of 'carnal things,' desire for the 'things of the world.'" See OED entry.

⁵⁵ Greek. Roughly translates to "anger" or "wrath."

⁵⁶ Greek. Roughly translates to "wish," "longing," or "yearning."

⁵⁷ Euripides was a Greek tragedian of classical Athens.

⁵⁸ Latin. Roughly translates to "chorus."

⁵⁹ Latin. Roughly translates to "in the marriage bed."

⁶⁰ Latin. Roughly translates to "in the reed/pen."

⁶¹ Latin. Roughly translates to "in the chamber."

⁶² Latin. Refers to the law of retribution, often referenced as the "eye for an eye" commandment in the Book of Exodus 21:23-27.

⁶³ Means "to speak vehemently." See OED entry.

⁶⁴ Latin. Roughly translates to "I will live in such a way that no one will trust you."

causis ut linguas mancipiorum contemnas."⁶⁵ Live well for many causes; chiefly this, to scorn the tongue of slaves that speak amiss. Indeed, I write not in hope of reclaiming thee from thy profligate absurdities, for I see what a pitch of disgrace and shame thy self-pining envy hath carried thee to, for thy greater vexation and more perplexed ruin. You see your black grinning mouth has been muzzled by a modest and powerful hand, who has judiciously bewrayed⁶⁶ and wisely laid open your singular ignorance, couched under incredible impudence, who hath most gravely (to speak in your own language) "unfolded every pleat, and shewed every wrinkle"⁶⁷ of a profane and brutish disposition, so that there is a doubt whether she hath shown more modesty or gravity, more learning or prudence in the religious confutation of your indecent raylings. But as she hath been the first champion of our sex that would encounter with the barbarous bloodhound, and wisely dammed up your mouth and sealed up your jaws lest your venomous teeth like mad dogs should damage the credit of many, nay all innocent damsels; so no doubt, if your scurrilous and depraving tongue breaks prison, and falls to licking up your vomited poison, to the end you may squirt out the same with more pernicious hurt, assure your self there shall not be wanting store of hellebore⁶⁸ to scour the sink of your tumultuous gorge, at least we will cram you with antidotes and catapotions,⁶⁹ that if you swell not till you burst, yet your digested poison shall not be contagious. I hear you foam at mouth and growl against the author with another head like the triple dog of hell, wherefore I have provided this sop for Cerberus, indifferent well steeped in vinegar. I know not how your palate will be pleased with it to make you secure hereafter. I'll take the pains to worm⁷⁰ the tongue of your madness, and dash your rankling teeth down your throat: tis not holding up a wisp, nor threatening a cucking stool⁷¹ shall charm us out of the compass of your chain, our pens shall throttle you, or like Archilochus⁷² with our tart iambics

⁶⁵ Latin. Roughly translates to "One must live rightly both for many reasons, and especially for these reasons, that you may despise the tongues of slaves." Munda also translates this in the next sentence. It is unknown who the "Poet" Munda refers to.

⁶⁶ Means "to accuse, malign, speak evil of." See OED entry.

⁶⁷ While Munda puts this in quotes, this does not come from Swetnam's pamphlet.

⁶⁸ Hellebore is a plant, sometimes referred to as the Winter Rose. In Greek mythology, hellebore was used to cure madness or as an antidote to poison of the Hydra.

⁶⁹ Likely meaning just "potions."

⁷⁰ If a dog has "worms," that refers to the animal having a parasite usually in their digestive system. To rid a dog of worms, it is often called "worming" or "deworming." Here, Munda claims she is (de)worming Swetnam.

⁷¹ A "cucking stool" were chairs formerly used to punish disorderly women. Women would be tied to a chair and exposed to the public for humiliation.

⁷² Archilochus (680 - 645 BC) was a poet known as the earliest Greek writer of iambic.

make you Lopez his godson.⁷³ We will thrust you like Phalaris⁷⁴ into your own brazen bull, and bait you at your own stake, and beat you with your own weapon, “*Quippe minuti semper & infirmi est animi exiguique voluptas ultio: continuo sic collige quod vindicta nemo magis gaudet quam fœmina.*”⁷⁵

...

Is there no reverence to be given to your mother because you are weaned from her teat and never more shall be fed with her nipple? You are like the rogue in the fable which was going to the gallows for burglary, that bit off his mothers nose because she chastised him not in his infancy for his petty-larcenary.⁷⁶ Is this the requital of all her cost, charge, care, and unspeakable pains she suffered in the producing of such a monster into the light? If she had crammed gravel down your throat when she gave you suck, or exposed you to the mercy of the wild beasts in the wilderness when she fed you with her breast, you could not have shown yourself more ungrateful then you have in belching out your nefarious contempt of your mother’s sex. Wherefore I think it is a pleasing revenge that your soul arraigns you at the bar of conscience, and your distracted mind cannot choose but haunt you like a bum-bailiff to serve a subpoena on you. The style and penning of your pamphlet has brought you within the compass of a praemunire,⁷⁷ and every sentence being stolen out of other books, accuses you of robbery. So that you carry in yourself a walking Newgate⁷⁸ up and down with you, your own perplexed suspicions like Prometheus’s vulture is always gnawing on your liver.⁷⁹ Besides, these books which have come out late (which has prevented me in the designs I proposed in running over your wicked handy-work) are like so many red-hot irons to stigmatize your name with the brand of a hideous blasphemer and incarnate Devil.

⁷³ There is no reference to “Lopez” or a “godson” in Archilochus’s (easily accessible for free) work, so it is not clear what Munda is referring to here.

⁷⁴ Phalaris (died 554 BC) was the tyrant of Acargas during the 6th century BC. He is alleged to have roasted his victims alive in a bronze bull.

⁷⁵ Latin. Roughly translates to “Revenge is always the pleasure of a weak and small mind: conclude at once that no one delights more in vindictiveness than a woman.”

⁷⁶ This refers to Aesop’s fable often titled “The Thief and His Mother.” In the fable, the thief bites off his mother’s ear, not nose.

⁷⁷ “Praemunire” was a medieval English legal statue referring to the offence of challenging the monarch by acknowledging a foreign power over the crown.

⁷⁸ “Newgate” is used like “prison” here.

⁷⁹ In Greek mythology, the Titan Prometheus is punished for giving humans fire. He is chained to a rock where an eagle (sometimes depicted as a vulture, as Munda does here) would eat his liver. Prometheus’s liver would regenerate and the eagle would eat it, creating a cycle of suffering.

...

You promise your spectators the bear-baiting of women, and yet you think it not amiss to drive all women out of your hearing so that none but your self, the ill-favored Huncks,⁸⁰ is left in the bear-garden to make your invited guests merry. Whereupon it may very likely be, the eager young men being not willing to be cheated out of their money they paid with for their room, set their dogs at you, amongst whom Cerberus that hell-hound appeared, and you bit off one of his heads, for presently you call him the two-headed dog, whom all the poets would fain to have three heads. You therefore having snapt off that same head, were by the secret operation of that infernal substance, converted into the same essence. And that may serve as one reason that I term you Cerberus the Jailer of hell; for certainly "*Quicquid dicitur de toto, dicitur de singulis partibus.*"⁸¹

...

That who is extolled amongst clowns and fools, shall be a hissing byword to the learned and judicious in so much as your unlucky shrieking shall affect them with ghastly terrors and amazements. Never think to set forth more larums⁸² of your brutishness, but as Labienus,⁸³ who was surnamed "rabies" madness, because he used such liberty of his detracting tongue, that he would, without regard or discretion, rally upon all men in his exasperated mood. When all his books and writings were made a bonfire of (which in those days was a new-found way of punishing untoward wits) "*Eam contumeliam,*" (said mine author), "*Labienus non tulit neque superstes ingenio suo esse voluit.*"⁸⁴ Labienus took snuff at this contumelious destruction of his despised labors, he was unwilling to be the surviving executor of his own wit, whereupon in a melancholy and desperate mood he caused himself to be confined up, and carried into the vault where his ancestors were entombed (thinking (it may be) that the fire which had burned his fame should be denied him) he died and buried himself together. I do not wish you the same death, though you have the same conditions and surname as he had, but live still to bark at virtue, yet

⁸⁰ Possibly in reference to Hercules Huncks (1601-1676) who was one of the guards at the execution of King Charles I and is listed as one of his regicides.

⁸¹ Latin. Roughly translates to "Whatever is said of the whole, is said of the individual parts."

⁸² A call to arms. See OED entry.

⁸³ Possibly Titus Labienus (100 - 45 BC) who was a military officer for Julius Caesar. He died at the Battle of Munda, implying this might be where part of her pseudonym came from. However, his burial Munda later describes does not align with what is known about Titus Labienus's burial, so it is not clear who she refers to here.

⁸⁴ Latin. The full quote roughly translates to "Labienus did not bear that insult, nor did he wish to survive with his own genius."

these our writings shall be worse then fires to torture both you and your book. Wherefore transcribing some verses that a gentleman wrote to such a one as your self in this manner I conclude.

“Thy death I wish not, but would have thee live, To rayle at vertues acts, and so to give Good vertues lustre. Seeing envy still Waites on the best deserts to her owne ill. But for your selfe learne this, let not your hand Strike at the flint againe which can withstand Your malice without harme, and to your face Returne contempt, the brand of your disgrace; Whilst women sit unmov’d, whose constant mindes (Arm’d against obloquy) with those weate windes Cannot be shaken: for who doth not marke That Dogs for custome, not for fiercenesse barke. These any foot-boy kicks, and therefore we Passing them by, with scorne doe pittie thee. For being of their nature mute at noone, Thou darst at midnight barke against the moone; Where mayest thou ever barke that none shall hear, But to returne the like: and maist thou beare With greefe more slanders then thou canst invent, Or ere did practise yet, or canst prevent, Maist thou be matcht with envy, and defend Scorne toward that which all besides commend. And may that scorne so worke upon thy sense, That neyther suffering nor impudence May teach thee cure: or being overworne With hope of cure may merit greater scorne. If not too late, let all thy labours be Contemn’d by upright judgements, and thy fee So hardly earn’d, not pay’d: may thy rude quill Be alwaies mercenary, and write still, That which no man will read, unlesse to see Thine ignorance, and then to laugh at thee; And mayst thou live to feele this, and then groane, Because tis so, yet cannot helpe, and none May rescue thee, till your check’t conscience cry, This this I have deserv’d, then pine and die.”⁸⁵

*“Et cum fateri furia iusserit Verum, Prodente clames conscientia; scripsi.”*⁸⁶

Finis.

⁸⁵ An excerpt from a poem titled “To the nameles Author of a late Character entituled, an Excellent Actor, following the Wise” found in a collection of satirical essays by John Stephens from 1615. The poem is attributed to I. Cocke (or J. Cocke). Thank you to Dr. Margo Kolenda-Mason for assistance in finding this.

⁸⁶ Latin. Roughly translates to “And when fury bids you confess the truth, your conscience cries out as it speaks; I wrote.”