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Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum:

A New Gospel For Women by Women

Aemelia Lanyer writes *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* in 1611 during the rule of James I. *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* is Aemelia Lanyer's outcry against the way in which women are enslaved by the English belief system. Lanyer structures her poem into three distinct parts dealing with specific issues surrounding the matters of women, power, knowledge, and freedom from patriarchy. The three parts are the dedicatory poems followed by *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (containing "Eve's Apologie"), and "The Description of Cooke-ham" as the closing. The dedication poetry contains Lanyer's plea, to rich and high-born ladies, to be heard and considered as a valid writer. Lanyer uses techniques of flattery and subversive statements about women and power to ensure that her female audience will sponsor her endeavor, and that her work will be preserved for future generations. *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* is a long poem dealing with The Passion of Christ. Lanyer describes this event from a feminist perspective including "Eve's Apologie" to exonerate Eve from the sin of eating the forbidden fruit. "The Description of Cooke-ham" is an estate poem which is dedicated to the Countess of Cumberland. In this poem Lanyer describes a theoretical paradise in which women are free to learn and share knowledge among one another. In this paradise men are guests and women are the true, free rulers of the estate. My essay reflects Lanyer's structure and focuses on excerpts from each part of Lanyer's work. The first part of this essay focuses on "Eve's Apologie" and examines the re-interpretation of the Genesis story that Lanyer provides. In the second section of the essay I focus on "The Description of Cooke-ham" to show that Lanyer aims to portray the ideal place of liberated and educated women. The last part of this essay examines "To the Queenes most Excellent

Majestie,” a poem which subverts the traditional notions of women in society. The three parts of my paper show that Lanyer is a radical proto-feminist who aims at freeing women from patriarchy by empowering women with knowledge.

I

“Eve’s Apologie”

Lanyer’s poem *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* incorporates many non-traditional ideas about religion and the role of women in it. “Eve’s Apologie” is an argument that shows the Genesis story in a feminist light. Lanyer portrays Eve in a way that is different from the classical Biblical depiction. She is not the seductress or the wanton woman, but she is God’s good gift to Adam. Eve is not given the kind of power Adam is, but rather, she is given a role she must fulfill: she is supposed to make Adam happy and listen to what he tells her. Adam is “Lord and King of all the earth” (ln. 783) making him the ruler of Eve. Eve is not depicted as Adam’s equal even at the point of her creation. She is inferior to Adam in all aspects. Lanyer says that “what Weakness offered, Strength might have refused / Being Lord of all,” (ln. 779-780) pointing to Adam’s superior position. Eve’s primary concern is to please Adam and to obey him. Lanyer states that Eve is “simply good” and has a “harmless heart” (ln. 765,774) and is misunderstood by the interpreters of the Genesis story. She is not a sinner but Adam’s inferior companion who does not know that eating from the Tree of Knowledge is a forbidden act.

Looking at Eve in this way allows us to see that perhaps she is not the only one who has done wrong. After all, Adam was told about the Tree of Knowledge before the creation of Eve. The fact that Adam is the one in control of Eve should suggest that he would share his knowledge with her. But as Lanyer points out, he does not. Lanyer writes that Eve “had no power to see, / The after-coming harme” (ln. 765-766) of her action. This proves that she did not know what

eating the fruit meant. Muller suggests that “there is no explicit indication in the Scripture that the prohibition was ever transferred to Eve” (Muller, 119). Adam kept his knowledge away from Eve and thus caused her to listen to the Serpent’s “subtle” suggestion. The serpent did not tell Eve that eating from the Tree of Knowledge would cause her and Adam to be exiled from Eden. All she is told is that she will gain knowledge and that she will be able to give this said knowledge to Adam. The serpent tells Eve that this knowledge is as great as God’s causing Eve to desire it for her and Adam. Muller says that “the serpent lied to Eve only; hence she was deceived into sinning, but Adam was not” (Muller, 119). Her naïve attitude and lack of knowledge made her an easy target for temptation. Since Eve’s only reason for existing is pleasing Adam and giving him all that she can, it was not hard for the serpent to convince her to eat the fruit.

Eve’s motivation for the supposed sin is not evil or spite, but knowledge. The serpent does not tempt her with wicked words, but with promises of knowledge and equality with God. Thus Eve is not swayed by empty words that cause her to rage against rules and spur her in to bad action, but eats the fruit solely for the sake of gaining knowledge. She is not even aware that this is a sin. McGrath says that: “Eve’s actions are defended as explicable and less heinous than Adam’s, perhaps even praiseworthy, because, beguiled by the serpent, she sinned ‘for knowledge sake.’” (McGrath, 339) The implication made by Lanyer is that though Eve’s action is a sin, she did not want it to be one. She eats the fruit in the name of knowledge, not disobedience or sin.

The issue of knowledge is prevalent in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Eve is portrayed as the creature who will do anything to gain and share her knowledge, while Adam is shown as the one to whom knowledge is handed to, and the one who keeps his knowledge to himself. Adam is supposed to be her guardian and lord, but he is ill-equipped and relinquishes that responsibility

by allowing Eve to convince him to eat the fruit. There is no doubt that Adam knows what he is about to do. Lanyer writes that

We know right well he did discretion lacke,
Beeing not perswaded at all;
If Eve did erre, it was for knowledge sake. (ln. 795-796)

By eating the fruit Adam shows disobedience to God and cunning at the same time. He chooses to eat the fruit in order to gain the forbidden knowledge. Muller's accurate observation about the difference between ignorance and malice rings true once again as we look at Adam's motivation behind eating the forbidden fruit.

Adam is the one advised that eating the Apple is prohibited. What implicates Adam even further is that he finds out about the meaning of the fruit before Eve comes to life. Lanyer points out that: "Gods holy word ought all his actions frame, (...) / Before poore *Eve* had either life or breath." (ln. 782, 784). These lines point out that Adam is advised against the Apple before Eve was created. The line "God's holy word ought all his actions frame" (ln. 782) suggests that Adam should have obeyed God, and made sure that Eve stayed away from the Tree as well. Adam fails at this task twice, because not only does he let Eve eat from the Tree, he allows her to sway him in to doing the same thing.

Lanyer suggests that Adam's inability to stop himself from eating the apple has been wrongly blamed on Eve. After all it is he who is the lord of her, not the other way around. As the stronger and more perfect one, Adam should know that eating the Apple has grave consequences and that he will be punished for it.

Lanyer's defense of Eve centers around the points of motive and responsibility. Through the poem she shows that Eve's reasons for eating the fruit are pure and she should not be held

responsible for the fall of all mankind. Lanyer wants to make sure that it is understood that Eve is not trying to sin, nor does she cause Adam to fall on purpose. By giving Eve a new motive Lanyer is able to shift the discussion of culpability on to Adam. Since it is evident that Eve eats the fruit for Adam's sake, it becomes clear that he eats the fruit for his own sake. McGrath states that "Lanyer also insists that men are culpable for the Fall (103); Furthermore, they now boast of the knowledge they acquired through Eve," (McGrath, 335). Adam's selfish act shows that Eve committed an act in the name of her love for Adam and without knowing the consequences. Adam, on the other hand, commits a selfish sin by following in Eve's footsteps.

Lanyer lashes out at the fact that women are still subordinated by men. After all that Adam puts Eve through, and after all she endures, men still behave as masters of women. The religious canon makes it possible for women to be subjects to men because no woman ever stood up before to defend Eve and her deed. Lanyer's reading of the Eden story is not incorrect, nor is it far fetched. It is a woman's reading of the Genesis story which shows how easy it is for men to interpret the Bible and use that interpretation to enslave women under religious guise. Men fail to see the hypocrisy of Adam's action and they refuse to see women as equal to themselves. Lanyer proves that it is not rational for men to think they are superior if Eve is allowed to tell Adam what to do. Lanyer shows that this world would not be as it is had it not been for Eve. She demands that once and for all men admit and acknowledge that women are not second best, but at least equal. Their sins are done in the name of one man, not in the name of spite or evil. Lanyer says

let us have our libertie againe,

And challenge to your selves no Sov'raintie;

Your fault being greater, why should you disdain

Our being your equals, free from tyranny?

If one woman simply did offend,

This sinne of yours, hath no excuse, not end. (ln. 825-832.)

Eve is thus freed from ages of guilt and understood in a new light that shows her as a pure and good person.

II “Description of Cooke-ham”

The last part of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* is the country house poem “The Description of Cooke-ham.” The poem stands in opposition to “Eve’s Apologie” in that “The Description of Cooke-ham” represent the opposite end of the spectrum of knowledge and woman’s ownership of it. “Eve’s Apologie” is written in the name of woman’s liberation from patriarchy. “Eve’s Apologie” paints a bleak picture of disempowered women who are punished for obtaining knowledge. Lanyer ties the historic portrayal of the Biblical even with a radical cry for women’s liberation and writes “The Description of Cooke-ham” which is to serve as a theoretical paradise fostering scholarly environments that stand in direct opposition to the contemporary situation women find themselves in. The final poem of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, “The Description of Cooke-ham,” is to serve as an example of what the world could be like for women if they were freed from under patriarchal rule. In this final poem Lanyer uses the country house poem style to further advance her agenda of encouraging educated and powerful women to create and foster positive learning environments like the court at Cooke-ham.

The final part of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* by Aemelia Lanyer is the “Description of Cooke-Ham”, a poem praising the crown estate leased to William Russell of Thornough, brother to Countess of Cumberland. It is in this estate that Lanyer writes *Salve Deus RexJudaeorum* and

spends a lot of time with the distinguished ladies she dedicates her work to. Lanyer bases the premise of the poem on the fact that, like the house, she is only privileged to spend time in this exalted company for a short time. Lanyer further explores the theme of knowledge and the role women play in its acquisition and its spreading. Lanyer also shows that though women are not supposed to have power there are some women who were able to harness the at least some power. Lanyer also explores the theme of knowledge as power and freedom. She shows that knowledge, power and freedom are present in Cooke-ham, and that women should begin to empower one another through knowledge. Marshall Grossman notes that : “Lanyer portrays Cookham as a place without men, a sort of feminine academy” (Grossman, 136.) Learning and teaching are a big part of Cooke-ham and Lanyer ensures that her audience sees that learning for women is pure and good, rather than sinful or impossible to obtain. In “Cooke-ham” Lanyer reaches back to “Eve’s Apologie” to draw a parallel between women in Cooke-ham and Eve. She uses rich imagery evocative of Eden, but ensures that this paradise is different because unlike Eden, it is women who are the primary knowledge possessors.

In the opening stanzas Lanyer shows that Cooke-ham is the place where she is able to write her work due to the graces she is granted there. Cooke-ham is thus transformed in to a place where favor, nobility, and Godliness are all present in one person: the Countess of Cumberland. Lanyer writes,

Farewell (sweet *Cooke-ham*) where I first obtain’d
Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain’d;
And where the Muses gave their full consent,
I should have power the virtues to content. (ln.1-4)

The placement of these lines at the very beginning of the poem indicated how crucial Cooke-ham is to the creation of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. In four lines Lanyer names all of the necessary

things that she needs in order to be able to write *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. “The “Muses” she refers to are the noble and rich ladies to whom *Slave Deus Rex Judaeorum* is dedicated. But the Muses are not only rich: they are virtuous as well. Lanyer makes it clear that her audience is worthy of hearing her new version of the Passion. Along with the three Graces and the Muses, Cooke-ham is shown as another driving force behind Lanyer’s work. Lanyer writes about the estate as another person like herself: a person of lower class who is blessed by the presence of the Countess and her guests. Lanyer also describes Cooke-ham as full of virtue and as a place fit for Jesus, a place that is more than beautiful, but also blessed by God. Lanyer says that Cooke-ham is a place “Whetre princely Palace will’d me to indite, / The sacred Storie of the Soul’s delight.” (ln.5-6). Lanyer shows that Cooke-ham is a blessed place where she is inspired by Jesus and is able to create *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Lanyer’s assertion causes her to be placed at Cooke-ham as a prophet through whom God communicated his gospel to the ladies present.

Lanyer makes sure that the reader understands that the estate is only a platform for what the women really want to do: spend time with one another, read the bible, and learn. Cooke-ham is a sanctuary in which these women are able to congregate and exchange knowledge between themselves. Lanyer thus points out that the ability women have for generating knowledge and sharing it is much easier to attain in a group with no men around to disturb the process. Unlike Eve, whose attempt at sharing the knowledge ended up bringing women to their disgrace, the women at Cooke-ham are free to share the knowledge they have and not be afraid of any sort of punishment.

Lanyer chooses to portray the land in this fashion to underline that Cooke-ham is subordinate to the Countess, and not to its owners. Unlike men the Countess will not restrict women’s access to knowledge. Ownership is a continuing theme in the discourse of power over knowledge and nature, and is present in “Eve’s Apologie” where Lanyer shows that though Eve

was not the given the agency of power she was able to gain it because Adam accepted the forbidden fruit from Eve's hands. Eve was not the owner of paradise (Adam was), but she is the person who determined it's fate. Similarly the Countess of Cumberland is the person who determines who is invited to be a guest at Cooke-ham and who is not. Lynette McGrath suggests that :

Lanyer expresses her consciousness of a difference articulated on gender that works against the interests of women as a group; in addition, she asserts the value of a female community, of women's history, and of women's intellectual, virtuous and writerly potential (McGrath, 334.)

The Countess high social status dictates her potential to gather a powerful female community in which women will be able to explore their potential for scholarship. The Countess has the power to invite guests such as Jesus Christ, and Moses. It is no wonder that the land shrivels and dies as the Countess is getting ready to depart. Lanyer herself has fallen into deep sadness as the days of the summer are due to be over. Lanyer underlines the fact that the Countess is once again placed in the position of Eve: she is leaving Paradise, and will not return to it. In addition Lanyer states that she will not ever be allowed to go back to Cooke-ham, showing that once discharged from paradise Eve had no power to go back. As the exit scene proceeds Lanyer shows that both women are metaphors for Eve, but in different ways: Lanyer is a messenger from God, a carrier of the gospel, the Countess is more powerful and has the ability to spread Lanyer's message unto a wider audience.

Part of the appeal of Cooke-ham is the fact that women may indeed engage in activities that involve reading and discussing one another's knowledge. The Bible is one of the favorite things that Lanyer points out as a topic of study and conversation. Lanyer writes:

What was there then but gave you all content,

While you the time in meditation spent,
Of the Creators power, which there you saw,
In all his Creatures held a perfit Law; (ln. 75-78.)

These lines show that the Bible and love of Jesus allows the Countess to better appreciate nature. Lanyer also states that it is God's will that places all things in a certain order. It is a reference to her own social standing, and her ability to accept being of a lower social order than some of the other Ladies present at Cooke-ham. Lanyer chooses to elevate the Countess of Cumberland's social status even further. In lines 81 through 94 Lanyer names many Biblical men with whom she has seen the Countess walk the grounds of Cooke-ham. The first group consists of Jesus and his disciples. Lanyer writes

In these sweet woods how often did you walke,
With Christ and his Apostles there to talk;
Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,
To meditate what you therein did see: (ln.81-84.)

As we will see all of the ladies present at Cooke-ham have also been personally invited to the Last Supper by the dedication poems preceding *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Due to her high status it is only natural that the Countess be able to approach the other guests of the supper and invite them to her estate. McGrath notes that women are closely connected to Jesus by saying that: "Women (...) share with Christ the nurturing privileges of the priestly function, in some profound way facilitating His spiritual role as He does theirs" (McGrath, 342.) The status the Countess has renders her as the spiritual and academic leader at Cook-ham. The Countess is able to reach out to the saints and Jesus and invite them to attend Cooke-ham's learning. By showing the familiarity which the Countess has with the men, Lanyer underlines just how high the

Countess's social standing really is. She transgresses the earthly order of nobility, and is elevated to the holy and timeless order of saints and Gods.

Next, Lanyer parallels the Countess with Moses who was elected by God to lead the Jews out of Egypt. Moses was also the man who has received the ten commandments and brought it back to the Jews in the desert. Lanyer writes to the Countess: "With *Moyses* you did mount his holy Hill, / To know his pleasure, and perform his Will" (ln. 85-86) Lanyer makes a reference to the geographical position of Cooke-ham just a few lines ahead of placing Moses at Cooke-ham with the Countess. She says that Cooke-ham is elevated so that "[...] thirteen shires appear'd all in your sight" (ln.73.) By showing that both Moses and the Countess walk up towards the heavens Lanyer shows that the Countess is privy to divine knowledge which God wants her to share with the other women present at Cooke-ham. Making the Countess equal in status to Moses makes the Countess responsible for bringing her women out of slavery. In this sense Lanyer is referring to the patriarchal ways in which women have been subjugated by men. Instead of ten commandments, the Countess will receive knowledge that she is obliged to give to the other ladies: it is *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* that God gives the Countess via Lanyer. This is the definitive covenant that God is making with woman of Cooke-ham: he wants to free them from being enslaved by men, and he wants nothing more than their love in return.

Lanyer uses the imagery of trees full of fruits that are symbolic of the tree of knowledge. There is one tree in particular, the first and last seen at Cooke-ham. It is a tree where shade is given to the ladies who read, it ensures that no lady is disturbed by sun, wind or noise while learning, and it is a tree which listens to the readings taking place underneath it. Grossman notes that: "the tree in 'Cooke-ham,' which serves as the focal point for the feminine companionship and endeavour during the stay of [the Countess of Cumberland.]" (Grossman, 140.) The tree at Cooke-ham is a metaphor for the tree that we have seen in "Eve's Apologie." It is Cooke-ham's

own tree of knowledge that is present specifically for the ladies. Lanyer writes of her work in similar terms: she creates it at Cooke-ham and is able to show it to the women who are present there.

Though knowledge is a public property for the women at Cooke-ham there is one thing which receives much more of it from the Countess's lips than other ladies: the Tree at the entrance to Cooke-ham. Lanyer describes it as:

[...] that faire tree,
That first and last you did vouchsafe to see:
In which it pleased you oft to take the ayre,
With noble *Dorset*, that virgin faire: (ln.157-160.)

The imagery surrounding that tree presents an interesting reversal of the imagery and the meaning of the original Tree of Knowledge. Eve was presented as the person who came to the tree to take its fruit and to discover new things from the tree. In this instance the Countess comes to the tree to read and to gain knowledge, and to share it with that tree. The countess is thus doing exactly the opposite of what Eve did to the Tree of Knowledge, instead of taking knowledge from the tree she is giving it to the tree. Lanyer adds a further distinction between Eden by showing that at Cooke -ham, knowledge is gained and shared by women with other women. Grossman suggests that:

Lanyer's pathetic fallacy transfers human attributes to the landscape, which appears 'as if on a bended knee.' [T]he tree at Cookham affords a 'Prospect' from which the landscape appears to want something of the ladies: 'some strange unlook'd for sute.' (Grossman, 137.)

Grossman's observation pertains to the closeness of the natural sanctuary, the women, and the knowledge. The estate craves to ensure that women are safe during their knowledge-seeking

days. The Countess is sharing the knowledge with other ladies at the tree, making it as communal act in which women do not keep the knowledge greedily to themselves, but are willing to share it with the world, and especially one another.

As the countess leaves the estate she chastely kisses the tree, an act that excites jealousy in Lanyer. She writes of the event:

And with a chaste, yet loving kisse took leave,
Of which sweet kiss I did it soon bereave:
Scorning a senceless creature should possesse
So rare a favour, so great happinesse. (ln.165-168.)

Lanyer is so jealous of the Tree that she kisses it after the Countess has. She ends up gaining the favor that was bestowed onto the Tree and justifies it as a favor that cannot be given to a plant that cannot spread its pleasure to others. On the metatextual level this is a metaphor for knowledge and women's entitlement to it. As Lanyer describes earlier, the Countess likes to "put the booke" in to the Tree's trunk, meaning that the Tree is present in the partaking of the knowledge. But here Lanyer is saying that the Tree cannot be the sole recipient of knowledge. Thus she steals the knowledge from the tree in the same manner Eve stole the fruit for the Tree of Knowledge. In both cases the act of stealing is done in the name of passing the knowledge on to others, hence it is not a sin, but an act of love. Lanyer sums up the event by saying

No other kiss it could receive from me,
For fear to give back what it tooke of thee
So I ingreastfull Creature did deceive it,
Of that which you vouchsafe in love to leave it. (ln. 169-172.)

Here Lanyer is referring to a different kind of knowledge: the carnal knowledge and the knowledge gained by privilege. The kiss given to the tree signifies that it is preferred by the

Countess. Lanyer craves such favoritism because it is a sign of power and social privilege. After all the noble Countess will not kiss every person, but only those who are worthy of the honor.

“Description of Cooke-ham” ends in another radical call to action. Lanyer creates this imaginary paradise to show the rich and powerful women that they can spread their influence and ensure that knowledge will be spread among women. By doing so women will be able to say that they freed themselves, and that no mercy from a man was needed to accomplish it.

III

“To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie.”

The final part of this paper explores the dedication poetry that Lanyer places before the beginning of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. The radical message of Lanyer’s work goes back to the beginning of the poem and is present in the poem dedicated to Queen Anne of Denmark, “To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie.” She is the first powerful woman whom Lanyer asks for support and recognition. Lanyer’s message is clear: women are the best suited people to appreciate each other, they are also the only ones who can help one another get out from under the rule of men. Lanyer’s humble language and radical claims aim to grab attention and to get the women who already have power to realize that their social place can be improved. As a consort to the king of England, James I, Anne is a perfect person to whom Lanyer could have dedicated the poem *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Thus the theme of empowerment through knowledge and sisterhood are present in the poem written for Queen Anne.

Lanyer’s address to Queen Anne does not waste time on petty flattery. The first thing Lanyer does is establish the grounds on which she is entitled address Anne. Jacobean customs stated that women were only allowed to write if they were translating texts written by men, or if they wrote about religion. Any writing done by a woman may have been dismissed right away,

and Lanyer is aware of this fact. Susanne Woods writes about Lanyer's caution while addressing the queen:

When Lanyer approaches her patrons it is from a well-established and familiar tradition of poetic humility graced by ladies, patrons, and queens. That she is herself a woman is, on the other hand, an additional reason for humility beyond her lower social standing, and so one more reason for the power of grace to reveal itself (Woods, 86).

Wood's observation is accurate because it shows the way in which Lanyer bases her argument for legitimacy: since she is a lowly woman it is Anne's duty to allow her to speak about a religious topic. One of the primary topics of this poem is the issue of women's restricted access to knowledge. The poem strikes back and demands that women have free access to knowledge. Lanyer stands up to the Jacobean laws and states that her message is divinely inspired, and therefore must be acknowledged as legitimate. Thus Lanyer's address to the queen begins:

Vouchsafe to view that which is seldom seene,

A Woman's writing of the divinest things:

Read it faire Queene, though it defective be,

Your Excellence can grace both It and Mee. (ln. 3-6)

Lanyer acknowledges the fact that writing done by women is a rare occurrence, and thus establishes *Salve Deus Rex Judearum* as a kind of a phenomenon. Lanyer ensures that *Salve Deus Rex Judearum* takes on a religious topic, The Passion of Jesus Christ, so that she may be allowed to show it to people, without the fear of persecution. Lanyer is thus able to mask her radical message to women under the guise of religious literature.

Though "To Her Queenes Most Exellent Majestie" is an patronage poem, Lanyer does not address Anne in empty phrases aimed at her pride and vanity. To begin, Lanyer uses

references to classical mythology, and shows that the queen is superior to the goddesses of old.

Lanyer writes:

From *Juno* you have State and Dignities,
From warlike *Pallas*, Wisdome, Fortitude;
And from *Venus* all her Excellencies,
With their best parts your Highnesse is indu'd: (ln. 13-16.)

These lines suggest that Lanyer believes Anne is more than a high born queen; she is greater than all the goddesses, because she inherits from them their best strengths. Woods notes that “Anne (...) combines and surpasses the virtues of the three goddesses (...) and therefore controls both art and nature (Woods, 88.) This passage also suggests that Anne is a descendant of the goddesses. The lines immediately following say, “How much are we to honor those that springs / From such rare beauty, in the blood of Kings.” Lanyer’s poetry relies on Anne’s ability to support and appreciate the arts.

Lanyer calls attention to the fact that Anne is surrounded by artists. She also makes a remark about Anne influencing nature in a way refined art cannot. The ability of a woman to influence nature without the arts is suggestive of the statement Lanyer makes about knowledge and women: we are closer to nature and do not need to have knowledge mediated through art.

Lanyer writes:

The Muses doe attend upon your Throne,
With all the Artists at your beck and call;
The Sylvane Gods, and Satyres every one,
Before your faire triumphant Chariot fall:
And Shining Cynthia with her nymphs attend
To honour you, whose Honour hath no end. (ln. 19-24.)

Lanyer is crafting the image of Anne raised above all men and praised by all forms of creatures, even those who are not trained as artists. This is another way for Lanyer to establish her authority in the field of writing, because women were generally uneducated at that time. Since Lanyer is a woman, and thus not formally educated, her suggestion of the queen's inspiring personality allows her to say she can be a writer, even if she was not taught how to write by a teacher. Thus Lanyer shows just how many forms of worship Anne receives: from the polished and learned artists to women who by no means have a right to create literature

By making sure that Anne's characterization is in opposition to her own Lanyer is able to paint a picture of noble virtue versus meek virtue. By doing so Lanyer can say that she is able to reflect Anne by the common denominator of virtue. Woods says that:

Identification between woman patron and woman poet, between she who graces and she who is graced and who together are graced by divine grace, is most pronounced when Lanyer describes the volume's main poem, "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," which she commends to the queen (Woods, 87).

In spite of the difference in their social status both Lanyer and Anne have been endowed with divine virtue, and thus both share God's virtue. Since both Anne and Lanyer share the virtue of God, Lanyer can say that Anne should "Looke in this Mirrour of a worthy Mind, / Where some of your faire Virtues will appeare; / Though all it is impossible to find" (ln. 37-39.) Lanyer deems herself capable of showing the queen's pale reflection. Lanyer underlines her point by showing that she is a mirror made of "dym steele, yet full of spotless truth" (ln. 41.) It is a touching image showing that Lanyer is not like the other artists who surround Anne. Woods notes that:

The poet [Lanyer] holds up a “Mirroure of a worthy minde” (l.37), presumably the mind of the queen [Anne], who reads and sees her virtues reflected in the poem, but also and inevitably the mind of she who makes the mirror (Woods, 87).

Thus Lanyer establishes herself as more than a flatterer, she places herself as a truth-sayer, a real lover of the queen. Lanyer states that although her words may not be as extravagant as the other poets’, hers are true and therefore the most appropriate praises of the queen.

Lanyer’s purity allows her to say that Anne’s reflection will bring forth an image of Jesus Christ. She writes: “Here may your sacred Majestie behold / That mightie Monarch both of heav’n and earth” (ln. 43-44.) This assertion says that *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* is a primary form, a verbal mirror, in which Lanyer is able to show the connecting virtue that Lanyer, Jesus and Anne carry. It is a necessary connection of the three figures, and it can only be expressed through words.

Lanyer is able to show that both women reflect different sides of Jesus’s life. On the one hand Anne receives the divine blessing to be the monarch who rules people. On the other hand Lanyer is able to live her life in a meek state of praising Jesus through her writing. Lanyer says:

He that all Nations of the world contold,

Yet tooke our flesh in base and meanest berth:

Whose daies were spent in poverty and sorrow,

And yet all Kings their wealth of him do borrow. (ln. 45-48.)

Thus Lanyer builds on the idea that Jesus, Anne and Lanyer are connected. If Anne is the reflection of Jesus as the mighty savior of the meek, and Lanyer is the meek one, then Anne is obliged to listen to Lanyer and support her art. Woods notes that “while Lanyer acknowledges her low social status, she also suggests that her lowliness empowers her authority” (Woods, 87). Lanyer’s low social status is a way for her to show that she is the subject of Anne’s scrutiny, but

Anne must first look at Lanyer's work in order to exercise her power over the work Lanyer has created.

Now that Lanyer has established her right to be heard she brings forth her offering: "Eve's Apologie." She makes it plain that Eve is the mother of all woman kind, the sole parent responsible for bringing women in to existence. Once again Lanyer uses the language of single parentage excluding men for the creation of life. Lanyer says that she will re-tell the story of the fall of Adam and Eve, and that it is up to the queen to decide if her work is correct. Anne is given the authority to condemn women, or release them of all guilt that the Bible placed on them. Anne is also placed in a position where she cannot say that Lanyer's re-telling of the story is in the wrong. Lanyer writes:

Behold, great Queene, faire *Eves* Apologie,

Which I have writ in honour of your sexe,

Ane doe referre unto your Majestie,

To judge if it agree not with the Text:

And if it doe, why are poore Women blam'd,

Or by more faultie Men so much defam'd? (ln. 73-78.)

The last line is a truly revolutionary statement. Lanyer accuses men of being the ones who should be blamed for women's social subordination. Anne is thus placed in a position where she is tied to Lanyer's work as a judge of Eve's guilt or innocence. Anne is to decide whether humankind was expelled from paradise because of Eve, or whether it is due to the indiscretion men have committed. Kari Boyb McBride says that "Anne is asked to 'view' and 'read'- asked to practice an act of virtue and authority normally reserved for men" (McBride in Grossman, 68). Lanyer suggest that the story of Eden has always been told from a men's perspective and no one has ever bothered to re-examine the story. Thus it is Lanyer's divinely sent destiny to re write

the story of the fall, as it is Anne's divinely sent responsibility to hear Lanyer out and to judge her effort.

Lanyer finishes this part of the dedication poem by inviting Anne to the Last Supper. It is there that Lanyer will present *Salve Deus Rex Judeaoru*, in which Jesus's passion is described, and includes "Eve's Apologie," and exonerates of all women kind. Lanyer tells Anne that Eve will be honored at the last supper, she will be dressed in verbal magnificence that only a royal like Anne can understand. Lanyer writes:

And this great lady I have here attired,
In all her richest ornaments of Honour,
That you faire Queene, of all the world admired,
May take the more delight to looke upon her: (ln. 80-82.)

The interesting metaphor of dressing Eve in words reveals that Lanyer is going to take the responsibility of Eve's humiliation away from her. After the fall from Eden Adam and Eve became aware of not being dressed. Their nudity was a sin they could see with their own eyes, so they attempted to cover their bodies with fig leaves. Lanyer's dressing of Eve in this figurative way is evocative of Eve trying to cover her naked body. But since she will appear already dressed in Lanyer's words Eve will not have to be ashamed of being naked in the sight of God's son. Lanyer writes:

[Anne] May take the more delight to looke upon her:
For she must entertaine you to this Feast,
To which your Highnesse is the welcome'st guest. (ln. 82- 84.)

This is a radical way to portray Eve. Lanyer shows her to be a "great lady" dressed in "all her [...] Honour" she is also "faire" and thus not the traditionally sinning wretch who is driven by evil. Lanyer makes it clear that Eve holds a place at the table at Last Supper, and that other

women are there as well. This is also a non-traditional claim that shows that Jesus and his last hours were not spent in men's company alone. Lanyer points out that the Bible is unfair to women because it was authored by men, who aim at keeping women subordinate. Anne is given the agency and the responsibility to read the divinely ordered *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and judge for herself whether she prefers to stay a slave to the narrative written by men, or whether she would prefer to see Eve in a different, more feminist light.

After the assertion that Anne has got to judge the future of woman's faith Lanyer points out that there is yet another lady whom she would like to invite to the Last Supper: Lady Elizabeth, Anne's daughter. Lanyer is masterfully showing Anne that her own flesh and blood, Elizabeth, is a reason to read *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. She shows that Elizabeth is a virtuous and kind lady, and that she deserves to see *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* as much as her mother does. Elizabeth is "[...] the pattern of all Beautie, / The very model of your Majestie [Anne] / [...] enforceth Love and Duty, / The perfect patterne of all Pietie" (ln. 91-94.) Anne is forced to see her daughter in terms of goodness. If Elizabeth is to remain such a wonderful creature, then she deserves to be revered and seen as a person of greater stature than women have been seen thus far. Lanyer drives the point even further by begging Anne to allow Elizabeth to see *Salve Deus Rex Judeaorum*. She writes: "O let my Booke by her faire eies be blest, / In whose pure thoughts all Innocency rest" (ln. 95-96.) Elizabeth's innocence and piety are a way for Lanyer to say that there is nothing evil or impure said in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, on the contrary, she wants Elizabeth's blessing and approval as much as she wants Anne's. Lanyer is thus saying that this piece of writing should be shown to more than just one woman, that it should become a gospel for all women who are good and pious.

Lanyer finishes the dedication poem by telling Anne that women are more entitled to knowledge than men. This is a pre-emptive strike against the cultured ways of men. She writes:

“But as they are Scholers, and by Art do write, /So Nature yields my Soule a sad delight,” (ln. 149-150) meaning that women are naturally inclined to be knowledge seekers, and that though men have to learn it through the agency of art, women have it in their very being. But while Lanyer tells Anne that women are entitled, and better able to harness knowledge, she also makes sure that she does not overstep her boundaries. Lanyer states that though she is better suited to tell the story of Eve, and Christ’s passion, she is not as capable of it as men may be. She says that

To doe that which so many better can;
Not that I learning to myself assume,
Or that I would compare any man: (ln. 146-148.)

The sadness Lanyer feels here is due to the fact that she is not schooled like men are, but she emphasizes that she is far more capable of re-telling the story of Eve. She is thus saying that what she is writing is pure and natural, a bitter note to the scholars of that time who had to spend time learning how to write poetry while Lanyer is naturally able to do so.

But what Lanyer says in the next stanza is the most crucial part of the poem: she traces art and learning back to nature thus making women the originators and the chosen ones for whom knowledge was designed. She says:

And since all Arts first from Nature came,
That goodly Creature, Mother of Perfection,
Whom *Joves* almighty hand at first did frame,
Taking both her and hers in his protection: (ln. 151-154.)

Lanyer’s argument is a statement about nature being the first and foremost thing that God has created. Lanyer suggests that since nature is the first existing agency for inspiration, and also perfection, then it is women who are closer to it and have greater access to natural, unrefined knowledge. Woods says that

the debate between nature and art was a commonplace of Renaissance literary discourse, with nature generally thought to precede art and art to surpass nature (...)Lanyer claims authority for her own art in part through asserting a traditional primacy of nature, and in part through the vision of nature and art reconciled through the beauty and wisdom of female patrons (Woods, 87-88.)

Thus nature is shown as the original power, which stems directly from God, and is more perfect because of that. Lanyer shows that culture is the secondary agency invented by men to understand nature, and that women do not need to be involved in the cultural process. Thus Lanyer's ability to write and learn is not necessarily connected to art and culture as she is a woman and thus able to understand the world of God in a more accurate and keen way than men would ever hope to.

Lanyer's claims make it clear and plain that women are powerful and knowledgeable by virtue of their existence. Her plea to Queen Anne shows that Lanyer is not afraid to stand up to English society and fight in the name of equality. Lanyer is not only a revolutionary writer, she is also a woman who believes in her cause. She also shows that the exclusion of women from arts is not a crucial ailment to woman kind; after all we carry art within us through nature. Lanyer states that since God made us closer to nature, then it is God's divine will that women be the possessors and originators of knowledge. Seeing the issue of knowledge in this fashion provides a very strong argument for women's intellectual liberation. After all knowledge and power are inherently connected, and since we are the mothers and the originators of it, then obtaining and sharing it is a divinely ordained act, and not a sin.

In conclusion, Lanyer's work provided women with a revolutionary way in which they may argue against patriarchy. As a young woman I see the value and power of Lanyer's

arguments, and I believe these arguments should be made an essential part of the feminist discourse. Though Lanyer writes *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* four hundred years ago I find that her points are as valid now as they were in 1611. The issue of women's equality is an ongoing discourse which will not end until women are given a chance to be heard. Lanyer began her plea in 1611, and it has been largely ignored until recently. I believe that she is a landmark writer exemplifying that the fight for women's rights began long before the 1970s. Lanyer left a legacy behind: women should attain power and freedom through knowledge. I believe that my effort to bring her work in to the spotlight is in accordance with her wishes.

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