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Aemilia Lanyer's Use of the Garden in Salve Deus Rex Judæorum

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Abstract

Aemilia Lanyer used her collection of poetry, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* to redefine the way that women should look at themselves in the eyes of God. She began her collection with poems dedicated to women that she had deemed virtuous and worthy of individual attention. Her dedicatees were then presented to her readers as the true Disciples of Christ; an honor due to women because of their empathy for Christ's situation. Lanyer rewrote the biblical Passion story in order to include a feminized version of Christ, the rightful female Disciples of Christ and an additional trial presented to Pontius Pilate asking for the reexamination of women and the blame placed upon them by Eve. She gathered all of these women in a garden within her poetry in order to present them with vital information for their future. Lanyer presented herself as a prophetic poet in order to give herself the authority she required to deliver a prophecy of warning to her readers.

This thesis examines the way that Lanyer used religious and nature imagery in order to deliver her prophetic warning of danger to her dedicatees. Using eco-feminist scholars, I explore Lanyer's connection of women's right to nature in her poetry. I also examine Lanyer's fashioning of herself as a prophetic poet in order to impress the urgency of the female situation on her readers. Finally, I discuss her rewrite of the Passion story and the ultimate message that Lanyer intended to send to her readers through her poetry.

Introduction

During the late 16th century and early 17th century, women were reduced to roles that rarely extended beyond the home or the church. They were expected to be subservient and resolved to the patriarchal society that they were living in. Many women were confined to their homes and when they went out to worship, they were limited even within the church. In the late Renaissance, female writers were publishing either Psalm translations or writing private dedication poems. Balking societal expectations, Aemilia Lanyer published a collection of poetry that focused on the Passion story and women's rightful place with Christ. Aemilia Lanyer was a 40 year old woman with no formal education that scholars are aware of. Yet, her poems have been hailed in recent years as rare feminist achievements from a patriarchal period in English history. Hidden within her recounting of the Passion story, Lanyer wrote about the superiority of women in the eyes of God. She managed to publish *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* and distribute copies to several potential patrons without persecution.

Aemilia Lanyer's collection of poetry, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* was originally published as being written by Shakespeare's Dark Lady, giving Lanyer little to no recognition for her poetry. Once Susanne Woods gave Lanyer credit for her poems by republishing her volume in 1993, Lanyer immediately attracted the attention of readers and scholars alike. Their attention has been focused on Lanyer's strong feminist voice and her use of the garden imagery to empower women but the focus should shift to Lanyer as a religious poet and her use of the garden to warn women. Lanyer used religion and its representations of the garden and women in order to present an alternate view of Christ and His relationship with women. She used her poetry to rewrite the Passion story to place women at the rightful side of Christ. This poetry was intended to be a warning to

all women of the dangers of the patriarchal society that they were living in. Lanyer knew that women were stuck in a society that would continue to oppress them but published her poetry in order for them to be aware of this oppression.

The use of eco-feminist scholars in this analysis is vital to understanding the connections between women and nature. Lanyer's use of the garden image in her poetry is necessary to the message of danger that she is attempting to deliver by the end of her collection of poetry. By using the works of Susan Griffin and Barbara Gates in an analysis of Lanyer's religious poetry, I can extract the meaning of her use of the garden image. Lanyer intended for the garden to represent a place of gathering and a place of warning and the eco-feminist belief of female right to nature follows the same principles as Lanyer. Gardens in wealthy estates had begun to represent prestige for the men who owned them and women were pushed out of that environment. The time period that Lanyer was writing in should have deterred her from writing about such controversial subjects as female equality to Christ and women's rights to the garden space. To publish such a strong feminist vision without fear of repercussions would have taken a woman incredibly aware of how far she could push her limits. In order to disguise her agenda, Lanyer uses the religious and garden imagery to convey her message in a way that will be demonstrative of her prophecy.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the scholarship conducted on Aemilia Lanyer and her collection, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, thus far. Most scholars have focused solely on the feminist allusions in Lanyer's poetry and lightly touched on the nature and religious imagery as well. Lanyer's use of the Passion story in order to re-try Eve and ask for another look at the blame of women has caused a large number of scholars to consider

her a feminist poet. Many scholars have also focused their analysis on Lanyer's use of the patronage system in her dedication poetry and her decision to dedicate her poetry to women only. She appeals to both women of royalty and popular women of society that Lanyer, herself, has deemed virtuous and sympathetic to her cause. Scholars have analyzed Lanyer's choice to make her dedicatees the alternative Disciples to Christ in her title poem, "Salve Deux Rex Judæorum." What has yet to be explored is Lanyer as a religious poet rather than a poet who merely uses religious as a writing tactic and her reoccurring use of the garden image.

In Chapter 3, I plan to explore Aemilia Lanyer as a religious poet and the fashioning of herself as prophetic poet within her collection. Lanyer's use of her own versions of both Christ and the Passion story were intended to help her convey a prophetic message of danger to her dedicatees. She chose the Passion story as the central vehicle for her poetry because only that religious story could deliver her message with the urgency and importance that her prophecy required. Lanyer also chose to rewrite Christ as a man sympathetic to the plight of women due to His similar experiences with men. I will explore the importance of Lanyer's use of religious imagery in her poetry, as well as the need for the religious themes in order for Lanyer to present herself as a prophetic poet. Only as a prophetic poet, can Lanyer make the claims and assertions in her poetry without being considered blasphemous or a heretic. She shrewdly writes herself as a humble servant of Heaven, bound to deliver the prophecy that been given to her in a dream. Lanyer's use of religion in her poetry also allows her to give women a place of power and authority within Christianity. I will examine her treatment of both men and

women in the Passion story and, using some eco-feminist scholarship, discuss Lanyer's portrayal of women in nature and the power that this develops.

In Chapter 4, I plan to discuss Aemilia Lanyer's use of the garden space in her poetry in order to gather her dedicatees and deliver her prophecy. Lanyer knew that the garden space was representative of comfort and betrayal for many of the women that she was writing to. Both Eden and Mount Olive were Biblical representations of a garden that had rejected innocence beings in Lanyer's eyes. Eden expelled Eve on her blame along and Mount Olive was the place of ultimate betrayal for Christ. Lanyer used the perceptions of the garden space to provide her dedicatees with a sense of unease about their position in her poetry. I will explore how Lanyer used the duality of the garden in order to create tension and uncertainty for readers. She intended for them to follow her throughout the collection of poetry in order to understand the ultimate message of warning. In her collection, Lanyer uses the garden to show her dedicatees how a place of comfort in their own lives can become uncertain. The use of eco-feminist scholars, Susan Griffin and Barbara Gates, will illuminate the connection between women and nature that Lanyer was alluding to in her collection. This connection is vital to her use of the garden as the place she has chosen to deliver her prophecy.

My thesis argues that Lanyer used both garden and religious imagery in order to deliver a prophetic message to her dedicatees. The garden images that Lanyer uses throughout her dedication and title poem(s) are actually symbols of the fragility of her female community. Her use of the Passion story allows her to align women with a powerful Christian image and give them the confidence to believe in her as a prophetic poet. Lanyer is using these images as a way to warn the female community of how easily

this sense of power can be destroyed. The connection between women and nature is vital to the simultaneous destruction of both. Lanyer's placement of her community in the garden was her attempt at warning the community while staying within the confines of acceptable female writing tactics. In her collection of poetry, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, Lanyer uses her dedication poems to create a female community with her dedicatees. Along with the dedications, Lanyer makes subtle references to flaws or weaknesses that each woman has that could potentially cause their destruction. Lanyer then progresses to her title poem "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum," where she amplifies the danger that this community is in through specific references towards fallen or ruined women in the Passion narrative. Despite the positive spin that Lanyer places on some of these women, the danger is apparent through her continual references to their devastation. Lanyer makes a consistent attempt throughout *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* to warn her community of their precarious position within the garden space.

Review of Literature

Women, as writers in the 17th century, were expected to stay within the confines of specific topics and/or purposes society had dictated was proper for them to write. In order to successfully publish their work, women either had to translate the works of others or cover only topics considered acceptable for women to write about such as religion or nature. In her collection of poetry, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, Aemilia Lanyer combined religious and nature imagery in order to validate her own claims to female authority and community. By merging these different images, along with deferential language, Lanyer was able to craft a strong narrative voice that has been the focus of many literary scholars.

Once Aemilia Lanyer's poetry was republished giving her full recognition for her own collection, scholarship has focused on the feminist, authority, religious and patronage themes that appear in her poetry. Lanyer used both the image of a garden and the Passion story multiple times in her poetry as a representation of female community. The image of the garden and the female community that she placed inside it suggests the power and authority that Lanyer gave herself as a writer. The religious allusions, particularly the references to the Passion story, gave Lanyer to authority to write herself as a prophetic poet. Scholars who have addressed Aemilia Lanyer's sense of female community and use of the garden imagery have all concluded that these connections are meant to portray female empowerment and stability. The scholars have all agreed with one another that the reoccurring religious and garden imagery in Lanyer's poetry is representative of the need for a female community. The garden references, along with Lanyer's Passion story, have been interpreted by scholars as demonstrative of Lanyer's

attempt at prophetic authority, her feminist beliefs and her desire for patronage. With the garden image being a place of community for Lanyer's female dedicatees, scholars believe that she uses this image to highlight the power of the garden. Through the garden image, Lanyer achieves prophetic authority and a societally proper way to explore her feminist beliefs about Christianity's rejection of women's roles within religion.

The fact that Lanyer published her poetry underneath her own name and was successful in this endeavor has been a strong focal point for feminist scholars. In her article, "'So great a difference is there in degree': Aemilia Lanyer and the aims of feminist criticism," Lisa Schnell argues that Lanyer's name being so prominent on the cover of her collection was what drew scholars in during the early stages of her literary criticism. Schnell believes that because Lanyer published her own radical ideas about female superiority in society and religion, scholars such as Esther Gilman Richey believe that she must have been familiar with veins of feminist thought being published by others, such as Cornelius Agrippa. The all-female dedicatees and feminized version of the Passion story are other examples within Aemilia Lanyer's poetry that scholars like Richey, have identified as feminist verse. In her article, "'To Undoe the Booke': Cornelius Agrippa, Aemilia Lanyer and the Subversion of Pauline Authority," Richey argues that Lanyer's ideas of female right to religion came from Cornelius Agrippa's "interpretation of a women-centered New Testament" (110). If some of Lanyer's ideas about women's rights can be connected to Agrippa's readings, then Richey believes that her poetry can be officially classified as feminist. Richey argues that Lanyer's belief in these rights is more prominently present in her belief that women are the true disciples of Christ because only women can truly understand Christ's suffering.

> In her view, receiving the "body and blood" moves far beyond the Pauline "confession" to include the feminine reception and delivery of Christ's suffering—the desire to participate in the same betrayal, marginality, and brokenness that Christ undergoes. (116)

John Rogers makes a similar argument about Lanyer's use of her community in his article, "The Passion of the Female Literary Tradition: Aemilia Lanyer's 'Salve Deus Rex Judæorum'." Rogers argues that the feminized Christ was another representation of Lanyer's attempt to reclaim a feminine right to religion. Rogers notes that, "the Christ of *Salve Deus* resembles many of the poem's women, whose will exists, it often seems, only to be violated" (439).

Scholars interpret the representation of Lanyer's female community as the disciples of Christ in her Passion narrative as reflective of how Lanyer viewed her dedicatees and their value in her community. In her article, "The Feminist Poetics of Aemilia Lanyer's 'Salve Deus Rex Judæorum'," Janel Mueller argues that Lanyer chose to write specific dedication poems for her collection because she wanted to bring attention to specific women. The women that Lanyer chose to dedicate her poems to were all women of the court (both in and out of favor). Some scholars argue that Lanyer did this to create a community of women who were unafraid to push past the boundaries of their patriarchal society, not unlike herself. Lynette McGrath believes that by aligning herself with this community, Lanyer was agreeing with the definition of 17th century feminism as "a consciousness of women's rights and solidarity in the face of their oppression by male power" (333). In following with this definition, Lanyer chose her dedicatees based on their unfair treatment by the patriarchal system. Lanyer assures these women that if they

accept her invitation into the garden space, they will be free from the constraints of patriarchy.

Scholars believe that it was Lanyer's self-assurance in her own authority that gave her the confidence to put these women together in a community. In her article, "Old Renaissance Canons, New Women's Texts: Some Jacobean Examples" Lewalski explores Lanyer's choice to dedicate her poems solely to women and argues that these dedications serve as an invitation to her female community. "Her volume as a whole is conceived as a Book of Good Women, imagining a female community sharply distinguished from male society and its evils... Her several dedicatory poems emphasize the legacy of virtue from mothers to daughters" (401). The female community that Lanyer is dedicating her poems to wasn't given the chance to respond or reply to these invitations but Lewalski believes that Lanyer assumed their inclusion in the community by the virtue of invitation alone. Suzanne Woods argues that the feminist leanings in Lanyer's work are more apparent through her insistence that her authority is derived from being religiously devout, a "Good Woman". This assumption of female authority through religious avenues is interpreted by Woods as a socially acceptable way for Lanyer to present her views without severe consequence. Woods argues that Lanyer is using her position as a religious woman to disguise her claim for rightful authority as a female writer in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum.* Lanyer uses the gender acceptable tactic of deference and humility in her poems to allow her the freedom to explore a woman's role in religion and society in general. Through her use of specific women within her dedication poems, Lanyer creates a female community that is closer to God by virtue of their feminine characteristics.

Woods believes that Lanyer wanted to emphasize the natural place that God gave to women within religion and their own sense of community (96).

The role of women in religion was tumultuous at best in 17th century England. Scholars believe that Lanyer's beliefs about the true religious role(s) of women gave her the confidence in her poetry to give priestly roles to worthy women. Michelle White argues that Lanyer's feminist poetics can be seen within her portrayal of certain women as worthy of being represented as religious figures. In "A Woman with Saint Peter's Keys?: Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611) and the Priestly Gifts of Women," White focuses on women's role within Lanyer's Passion narrative. White believes that "she depicts women as the true disciples and founders of Christ's healing Church, and she positions Jacobean women as the spiritual heirs of these female disciples" (324). Lanyer bestows the gift of Saint Peter's keys to Margaret Clifford within the title poem as a physical sign of Clifford's female virtue and worthiness. By restoring her female community to their rightful places, scholars argue that Lanyer is giving religious power back to women. In her article "Feminism Versus Religion: Towards a Re-Reading of Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*," Suzanne Trill concurs with White that Lanyer focused on her dedicatees, their place within her female community and their worthiness as women to be the true Disciples of Christ. Trill believes that a specific definition of feminism needs to be applied to Lanyer that goes beyond the basic definition provided by McGrath. Trill states that, "in Lanyer's case, faith does not preclude feminism; rather her feminism is facilitated by her faith" (76). Lanyer and her female community were defined by their faith and scholars argue that they derived their feminist beliefs from their understanding of the Passion narrative.

Lanyer's continued use of garden images and how women interact with them in her poetry has led to common reading of these images as homoerotic. Some scholars, such as Constance Furey, have identified the entire garden space as homoerotic by virtue of its safe, freeing nature. The homoeroticism within this interpretation is implied by the possibility of the occurrence of homoeroticism within such an equalizing and neutral space. In "Utopia of Desire: The Real and Ideal in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*," Furey argues that Lanyer uses her poetry to create a realistic, utopian version of female society devoid of men. By creating an alternate reality with her garden imagery, Lanyer provides her female community with a safe environment to be sexually free within. Michael Morgan Holmes believes that Lanyer felt so oppressed in 17th century society that she created a garden space in which women needed only to depend on one another. In his article, "The Love of Other Women: Rich Chains and Sweet Kisses," Holmes points out that Lanyer created this garden space out of a sense of loneliness at the perceived abandonment by her own gender. Lanyer is aware of the lack of a solid female community and uses her garden imagery to try and connect a group of women back together. Holmes argues that "Lanyer presents homoerotic affection as a way for women to overcome the ravages of men's proprietary claims and as a positive ground for real-world communities" (167). Lanyer's intense desire to block out the reality of 17th century society is a direct reaction to the way that women were treated by both men and one another. Holmes believes that Lanyer's struggle is a combined result of a lack of a strong female community and her own feminist beliefs.

Feminist scholars have claimed Lanyer as a prime example of 17th century feminist verse and interpreted her garden imagery as a representation of this feminism. The

different environments that Lanyer creates are what Furey calls “a live circuitry of desire [that] links not only characters within the poem but also the author and the reader” (574). In the 17th century the identification of the garden space as a female space had been replaced with the garden space being a symbol of male pride in his estate. Women of the house where no longer allowed in the estate gardens that they had once designed and kept as a hobby. With all of this frustration at yet another right being taken away from women, Lanyer tried to identify with her potential community by making the garden space solely female again. The strong desire for a safe female space is what has caused scholars to read the garden space as sexual. In her article, “Aemilia Lanyer’s Pathetic Phallacy,” Amy Greenstadt echoes Furey’s assessment of Lanyer’s creation of a safe sexual environment for her community. Scholars argue that Lanyer used the garden space in her poetry to give relationships that she engaged in in reality a chance to play out in her desired homoerotic way. Greenstadt focuses almost exclusively on the phallic symbolism of Lanyer’s repeated use of the trees within her garden images and how the women in her community interacted with these trees. Greenstadt suggests that the trees are a failed attempt to replace the sexual encounters that Lanyer felt should be occurring in the safe garden space and argues that the use of nature as a sexual replacement is Lanyer’s way of connecting with her feminine desires.

The majority of the feminist scholars acknowledge that their identifications of Lanyer’s feminism stems from the prophetic authority that she demands in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*. Her claims for prophetic authority extend into her desire for poetic authority as a woman. Feminist scholars recognize the connection between the feminist readings of her poetry and the language that Lanyer uses to assume prophetic authority.

Susanne Woods addresses the power of poetic authority through Lanyer's proclamation of prophetic authority. Lanyer claims that her Passion story came to her in a dream and begs her audience to forgive her "imperfect indeavours". Woods identifies that it is Lanyer's humbling language that gives her authority: "Lanyer uses the *humilitas* topos, one of the foundations of patronage poetry, to create a vision of exemplary female authority in a specifically Christian context" (85). By employing this deferential language, Lanyer lowers herself so far that she actually reverses her position. The correlation between what scholars have interpreted as feminist and the instances in which Lanyer is claiming prophetic or poetic authority is inseparable. Aemilia Lanyer used her dedication and title poems to validate herself as a prophetic authority. In her article, "'Owning' in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* ('Hail God King of the Jews')" Audrey E. Tinkham addresses how Lanyer uses a religious context combined with garden imagery to back up her claims to authority and right to create this female community.

The garden space offered a significant amount of simultaneous safety and strength for the female community in Lanyer's poetry. Tinkham notes that Lanyer calls for her female community recognize that despite their noble ranks, they are all at a disadvantage as women in their patriarchal society. In her article, "Writing in Service: Sexual Politics and Class Position in the Poetry of Aemilia Lanyer and Ben Jonson," Coiro uses Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* to juxtapose the traditional view of a literary woman's position in 17th century society. Coiro argues that Lanyer accomplished all of the things that Woolf believed impossible for women of her class, position and talent. Coiro argues that this authority outside of the natural world is what Lanyer pulled from to create a

garden space for her female community. Her dedication poems are Lanyer's extended invitation to each woman to join her in a realm of power accessible only to them. The only way for Lanyer's claims to be taken seriously would be to use certain tactics acceptable for women to use when writing. As a woman writing in the 17th century, Lanyer had to utilize specific humble language in order to make her poetry acceptable for all possible audiences. A common way for authors to present radical ideas, especially religious ideas, was to claim prophetic authority in which their version of Biblical events was sent to them by God in vision or dream and they were meant to spread the word about what they've seen. Lanyer prefaces her title poem, "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum" stating that her version of the Passion story came to her in a dream. Ann Baynes Coiro argue that the Passion narrative that Lanyer details in her title poem is religious on the surface level but on a deeper level, Lanyer is showing her reader how the prophetic authority grants her freedom beyond the natural world. Scholars note that by claiming prophetic authority, Lanyer also places herself in a position of power within her female community.

Scholars have argued that Lanyer's claim to authority can be identified in several different areas of her poetry but the community that she creates is indebted to her for giving them the garden space so her authority can go unchallenged. In coming about this position in a naturally progressive way, Lanyer's prophetic authority isn't forced. In "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum", Lanyer creates an Eden for her female community and Tinkham believes that Lanyer intended for her dedicatees to recognize her creation of this space and defer to her authority. Woods argues that Lanyer's authority comes from the religious context of her poetry and the God-like position that she places herself amongst

all of the other women in her created community. Lanyer's use of religious language and imagery is essential for Lanyer to claim rightful authority; she can create her radical version of the Passion narrative through her poetry as long as she claims prophetic authority. If Lanyer is God's prophet, she cannot be persecuted for the words that God gives her. This Eden is, what Tinkham argues, the rebirth of society's view of women's roles and rights.

Tinkham believes that Lanyer used the garden space to "fling down the gauntlet for all women to exercise virtue by fulfilling their role as stewards of the realm through owning their (and her) womanly virtue" (68). The garden space was a challenge of recognition to Lanyer's female dedicatees. Lanyer wanted the women in this community to recognize her as the authority that brought them together. By their recognition, Lanyer validates her own claim to this authority within the garden space. In "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum", Lanyer creates an Eden for her female community and Tinkham believes that Lanyer intended for her dedicatees to recognize her creation of this space and defer to her authority. By acknowledging her power, scholars believe that Lanyer wanted her female dedicatees to become the new society whose judgment(s) could rewrite societal views of women. Tinkham believed that:

> Through her description of the "piteous cries" of the "poore women," power enough to "move their Lord," Lanyer establishes explicitly that women have the power to both speak the truth and to inspire others to do so. (72)

This desire for female truth drives Lanyer to call her new society to reevaluate previous judgments that condemned women, specifically women in their garden space. Within her title poem, Lanyer asks her dedicatees that are dwelling in the garden to take another look at Eve's transgressions in Eden and decide as a society of women whether or not Eve should be completely at fault. Tinkham argues that if Lanyer's powerful community of women could reverse Eve's judgment, they would give the power back to women, both historically and in the future. The dedication poems are Lanyer's chance to offer up her garden space to certain members of the female community and invite them to dwell within this space's safety.

With female empowerment within reach of women who would accept Lanyer's offer to join her in the garden, Lanyer implies that by their acceptance, these women also acknowledge her as the creator and source of their power. The majority of the power that Lanyer gives these women is the power to empower women. Scholars note that Lanyer believes that lack of female power began with religious power being wrested away from them from the very beginning, with Eve. In order to give herself the authority to give others power, scholars identify a section "Eve's Apologie in defence of Women" within Lanyer's title poem that she details how women were denied their true place with God by a wrongful interpretation of Eve's actions in the Garden of Eden. Scholars point out that when Lanyer asks her female community to take another look at the Original Sin, she gives an implication of the power that she wields to rewrite a woman's role in history and religion. In her article, "The Gospel According to Aemilia: Women and the Sacred" Achsah Guibbory believes that Lanyer was "undoing the punishment that God placed on Eve and canceling the bondage of women" with her use of the garden space (201).

Lanyer places her community back in the original garden space and asks them to look at what classified Eve's actions as sinful. Scholars argue that instead of absolving Eve completely, Lanyer shows the equality of the wrongdoing on both Eve and Adam's parts. Rather than completely denying men the right to religion and giving that right to women, Lanyer presents Eve's transgressions as equal to Adam's.

By placing her dedicatees in the garden space, Guibbory agrees with Powell and McBride that Lanyer collects all of these women together to represent Eden and their decision to absolve Eve of being labeled at fault for the Original Sin. Because the women that Lanyer chooses to invite to her garden space are "vertuous Ladies", scholars assume that these were women whose opinion Lanyer valued. If these women decided collectively as a community to pardon Eve, Guibbory argues that Lanyer believed that this would be all that would be needed for society to accept this new interpretation of female value and role within religion. The definition of Eden as the place of the Fall would no longer be considered and the garden space would no longer be the place where women disgraced. Scholars note that with Eve and Eden cleared of the burden of the Original Sin, women were by association cleared as well. Lanyer takes advantage of this newfound freedom in "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum" by giving multiple women a stronger voice in her Passion narrative. In her article, "'Witnesse thy wife (O *Pilate*) speakes for all': Aemilia Lanyer's Strategic Self-Positioning," Powell explains that:

> Having established through Pilate's wife the idea that female behavior that may appear on the surface to be transgressive is in reality virtuous, and having elided that admirable woman with Eve and herself, Lanyer is

> prepared to employ her next strategy in creating the space for a public hearing with her petition. (11)

Lanyer employed the voices of ignored or misinterpreted Biblical women and claims their voices for her own cause. Powell argues that power that Lanyer wields in her use of both Eve and Pilate's wife is acceptable because she states that she does it for the good of all women. Powell notes the in the context of "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum" women have been freed from the blame of Eve and put in their rightful place as disciples of Christ. Women are once again powerful and empowered amongst one another. In Eden, women can gather together in a place of validation and draw strength from the garden and each other. Scholars argue that for Lanyer to rewrite the Biblical interpretation of Eve, give Pilate's wife a voice and change the meaning of Eden; her prophetic authority is validated by her reader's belief in the power God gave her.

The validation by way of religion was a common poetic tool. Even though many English writers were Christian, they often referenced Greek and Roman mythology and called for inspiration from their pagan Gods. In her article, "Remembering Orpheus in the Poems of Aemilia Lanyer," McBride argues that Lanyer goes beyond her use of Biblical icons and calls the very power of the mythical Greek Gods to authorize her (89). McBride cites Lanyer's use of the Greek God Orpheus, the patron God of poetry, as a sign of her desire for power beyond the physical place that she lived in. McBride defines Lanyer's purpose behind using Orpheus by detailing that:

> While the story of Orpheus itself suggests two of the principal kinds of poetry that commonly mark initiatory pastoral poems—epithalamium and

> elegy—it is the mythic figuring of Orpheus as the ur-poet that Orphic narrative the stuff of poetic profession. (89)

McBride argues Lanyer wanted to be considered the original authority of female poetics just as Orpheus was considered the father of poets. To call upon a Greek God in the same context that Lanyer also references Christianity is a difficult balance to maintain without being considered blasphemous, says McBride. Instead, Lanyer dances around the subject and calls for Orphic, aka poetic inspiration in her dedication poems. McBride explains that the authority necessary for Lanyer to be simultaneously inspired by a Greek God and her Christian God is given to her by the prophecies she receives in her dream-like state. Both McBride and Powell agree that while Lanyer's prophetic authority may come from different sources, she is able to validate her claim to authority through her religious poetry and her creation of the garden space.

With Lanyer spending so much time in her poetry claiming authority, scholars debate as to who she is trying to convince of this authority: her readers, her dedicatees or society as a whole. Many scholars, such as Woods and Powell, agree that a common practice amongst poets and writers during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries was a poet's bid for patronage through their collections. Leeds Barroll notes that by dedicating their individual writings to certain, typically wealthy and powerful people, a poet could retain a patron to pay them for writing. In his article, "Looking for Patrons," Barroll explains that by depending on the royal currently in charge, poets could receive more than enough payment for their dedicatory poems to live off of. Commonly, poets would write to the royalty that were currently available and in favor with the court. Scholars collectively identify that Aemilia Lanyer wrote to both living and dead potential female patrons, as

well a significant amount of women who were out of favor with the court. The current scholarship begs the question of what Lanyer's purpose was for writing to each of these women. McBride reminds her fellow scholars that Lanyer was lower ranked member of the court and generally out of favor so her assumed need for patronage was dire.

Scholars assert that both her title and dedication poems, Lanyer's desire for patronage becomes the catalyst for her use of the garden image as a place for her female community. Lanyer needed patrons in order to survive as writer but scholars believe that she had a larger purpose beyond just money or recognition. Barroll argues that Lanyer's bid for patronage was more than a desire for money; she wanted her female patrons to be aware of the possibility of their connection. Scholars point out that Lanyer places each woman she addresses within her garden space and by virtue of all of them being present in this garden, a makeshift community is created. In her article "Breaking 'the rule of *Cortezia*': Aemilia Lanyer's Dedications in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*" Lisa Schnell identifies this as Lanyer presenting herself as "the bestower of God's 'inestimable treasure,' Lanyer has created a situation in which the women are in a perpetual, even urgent, state of indebtedness to her" (85). Many scholars are in agreement with Schnell that when Lanyer makes her bids for patronage, she is choosing women whose patronage would be of value to her.

Schnell argues that Lanyer disguises her bids for patronage with her poetry as invitations to her dedicates to join her in a feast for the entire community. Schnell details this disguise as having an even deeper meaning beyond a simple bid for patronage:

> When the invitation is seen in the context of the sacred-secular mingling that has already gone on in *Salve Deus*, it assumes a role entirely

> consistent not with Lanyer's piety, but rather with the ways in which the symbolic vocabulary of Christianity works to further the strategies of courtly obligation already noted in the dedication. (84)

Schnell points out that while all the dedicatory women are spoken to with a level of reverence, Lanyer never fails to point out their flaws from the viewpoint of male society so that she may twist these flaws into virtues worthy of her garden community. According to Schnell, Lanyer knows how 17th century society operates and provides a welcoming place within the garden for female flaws.

Schnell argues that Lanyer chose her potential patrons solely for their possible place in her community. Scholars are in agreement that the troubles of many of her dedicatees were well known to Lanyer. Barroll details a specific instance that Lanyer references in her poetry concerning the Clifford women. Margaret Clifford and her daughter Anne Clifford were fighting for the right to their own estate which was being given away because Anne Clifford was not a male heir. Barroll and Schnell believe that Lanyer wasn't just choosing random wealthy women for potential patrons; she was choosing women who were already having difficulties in their male dominated society. The debt that these women would feel after realizing that Lanyer had extended them an invitation to a place beyond their earthly troubles would be immeasurable. Schnell argues that Lanyer's bid for patronage with these women was solely to create a debt that these women could fulfill by accepting Lanyer's Passion narrative and joining her in the garden space.

If patrons were to accept Lanyer as a poet of their employ, scholars believe that she would have interpreted this as the patron's belief her feminist agenda. In her article, "Re-Writing Patriarchy and Patronage: Margaret Clifford, Anne Clifford, and Aemilia Lanyer," Barbara Lewalski questions what this agenda actually was and how successful Lanyer believed she could be. Lanyer chose a multitude of powerful women to dedicate her poetry to but, as scholars note many of them were out of favor with the court. Barroll explains that if Lanyer was truly attempting to gain patronage, she should have been writing only to women in favor with the court and men as well. Barroll argues that Lanyer's bids for patronage through her dedication and title poems were simply an attempt to gain access to or prove her connection to a courtly world beyond her reach. Barroll notes that, "as a female poet with a nonaristocratic social and educational background, Aemilia Lanyer was seriously handicapped as a player in the Court game" (42).Barroll argues that Lanyer simply tried to exhaust all angles of possible patronage. With Lanyer being out of touch with the court, she wouldn't have a good idea of who was currently in favor and who wasn't. She had written a controversial collection of poetry and knew that it would most likely be acceptable only to women so she chose to write only to female patrons. Barroll believes that Lanyer was a resourceful woman who wanted to try every avenue that she could to gain both patronage and access to the court.

Scholars have identified Lanyer's use of the garden space as one of her repeating strategies in her bid for patronage. The garden space provided an idea of safety and power that would be very appealing to the specific women that Lanyer was writing to. Su Fang Ng focuses exclusively on the connections that Lanyer created between the garden, the female community and the equalizing effects that they have on one another in her

article, “Aemilia Lanyer and the Politics of Praise”. Ng argues that in order to equalize herself with her potential patrons, Lanyer used the garden space to “contain the competition among her potential women patrons” (439). With the garden being God’s creation and therefore a pure place, Lanyer hoped for the female community to be influenced by their environment once inside. Ng believes that Lanyer wanted to force her potential patrons to realize their role in a safe, female place as opposed to the reality of their patriarchal world. Lanyer had problems praising some of the female patrons that she identified in her dedication poems due to their different hierarchal standings. According to Ng, Lanyer knew that these women may have difficulty accepting each other as a single community but persevered in her attempt to unit them in the garden space for the good of all women.

In an exhaustive effort to make the garden space even more appealing to her female community, McBride argues in her article, “Sacred Celebration: The Patronage Poems,” that Lanyer implies the power that can be achieved within the garden space. McBride explains that, “Lanyer in this construction becomes the one who controls and constructs the status of these women” and by virtue of her creation, her community defers to this power (77). McBride argues that Lanyer played on the religious context of her poetry to reinforce her authority with her potential patrons. The garden image in the bible represents a place of purity and healing. Lewalski points out that Lanyer would have assumed her patrons shared this definition of the garden and argues that Lanyer intends for her community to realize how precious the opportunity to dwell in such a space would be. Scholars believe that Lanyer places herself in a God-like position by creating this garden for her female community. McBride believes that by insinuating that she holds

just as much as power as God, Lanyer makes it clear to her readers/potential patrons that she holds the key to their existence within that space.

The scholars that have so far commented on Lanyer's use of the garden space in her poetry have decided that the garden space is equal to female community and empowerment. The general assumption has been that Lanyer's garden image is a direct reflection of Eden and her intention was for her community to consider it a safe space. Despite the majority of scholars' collective agreement that the garden is safe, secure and empowering for women, there has been mention by a few scholars of the garden image as unsafe. The eco-feminist belief that nature represents danger for women has been noted by Susan Griffin in her book, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*. Even in the 17th century, the garden space was being reclaimed and dominated by men as a sign of wealth and status. With women being dominated by men in the same manner as nature, Griffin believes that understanding the connection between women and nature is essential to interpreting a female author's use of nature. While Griffin never explicitly mentions Lanyer, the correlation between Lanyer's garden images and the difficulties that her female community was having in their patriarchal society is worth exploring.

. My thesis will present Aemilia Lanyer as a religious poet. Scholars of Lanyer's poetry have yet to look at her as a religious poet. Instead, Lanyer's use of the religious is viewed as a merely vehicle to propel her message. Lanyer's prophetic authority was intended to solidify her status as a religious poet to her readers. I am arguing for presentation of Lanyer as a religious poet first and a feminist second. Lanyer's complete rewrite of the Passion story and strong representations of Christ and women call for a reexamination of her place in scholarship. Her use of nature, the garden in particular, has

also been readily ignored by scholars in both her dedication and title poems. Lanyer uses the garden in order to both deliver her prophecy and completely reexamine the role of women in society. Using some eco-feminist scholarship, I will argue that Lanyer's use of the garden in her poetry was intended to convey power, authority and ultimately, the destruction of women. She uses the duality of the garden to deliver a prophecy; her entire poetic collection should be viewed as a warning. I will explore Lanyer's use of her poetry as a slow progression towards her title poem in which she finally delivers her message. The complete purpose behind her poetry is to lead up to that final prophecy and warn women as their dwindling position in society.

Aemilia Lanyer as a Religious Poet

Despite prevailing scholarship to the contrary, Aemilia Lanyer should not be considered a feminist poet, but a religious poet instead. Many scholars have regarded Lanyer's use of religion as merely a vehicle to drive her message. A study of *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* reveals that Lanyer's use of religion goes beyond the superficial; she rewrites the entire Passion story and replaces the male disciples with female disciples. Her use of the religion is vital to understand her entire collection of poetry. No longer should her use of the religious be considered superficial, otherwise the entire purpose of her poems are missed. Lanyer uses her poetry to present herself a prophetic prophet so that she is able to deliver a prophecy at the end of her title poem. The fashioning of herself as a prophetic poet gives Lanyer the power she needs in order to reexamine the Passion story and present her message.

Since the rediscovery of *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* by scholars in 1993, Aemilia Lanyer has been considered primarily a feminist poet. Her poetry is addressed to women, focuses on women, and vies for purely female patronage. While Lanyer may be considered feminist by recent scholars, this emphasis has taken away from her original purpose. Her use of the Passion story to tell her version of women's rights in both their personal roles and roles in society is vital to understanding her feminist beliefs. In order to truly explore Lanyer's feminist beliefs, a study of Lanyer as a religious poet and her purpose behind using religion in her poetry is essential. As a religious poet, Lanyer used her role as a writer to call to other women and gather them together as a community. There were several gender, religious and patriarchal restrictions imposed on women during the early 17th century that helped to shape Lanyer's collection of poetry. Her

collection became a warning for her readers and dedicatees of the danger that they were in as women. A number of rights for women had recently been reduced or taken away and Lanyer believed that women weren't paying attention. So she hid the message in her poetry as a prophetic dream from God. She decided to publish her collection in order to get her prophetic message out into the hands of women. Lanyer disguised her prophecy of warning beneath the story of Christ's sacrifice because it was the only subject that reflected the urgency of her situation.

Lanyer was introducing radical ideas about female religious figures and women being equal to Christ. She knew that doing so would result in a societal sacrifice on her part. The sacrifice that Lanyer is making was tied to the ideas that she was publishing in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*. Her idea about women being the rightful disciples of Christ was alone radical enough to have her ostracized from her own Church. With her poetry, Lanyer was essentially saying that women were (morally and religiously) the superior gender and deserved their rightful place at the hand of God:

> Therefore we are not to regard any imputations, that they undeservedly lay upon us, no otherwise than to make use of them to our owne benefits, as spurres to virtue, making us flie all occasions that may colour their unjust speeches to passe currant. Especially considering that they have tempted even the patience of God himself, who gave power to wise and virtuous women, to bring downe their pride and arrogancie. (26-33)

By equalizing her dedicatees with Christ in her poetry, Lanyer makes the bold assertion that women are to be viewed just as holy as Christ. Lanyer's use of the Passion story in

her poetry was the vehicle that she needed to propel her prophecy with her devout readers. She used a common story to capture her readers' attention and help to convey the gravity of the situation that she felt women were in. In his article "The Passion of a Female Literary Tradition: Aemilia Lanyer's 'Salve Deus Rex Judæorum'," John Rogers explores the purpose behind Lanyer's use of the Passion in her poetry:

> Lanyer's published poetry is not simply *about* the crucifixion; the justification for its composition is founded on the deep cultural logic of Christianity's understanding of the crucifixion and especially on the theology of justification that necessarily accompanies any early modern consideration of the Passion of the Christ. (437)

Women weren't even considered as important as men in society and she continually restates the failures of men throughout her poetry, focusing specifically on His disciples falling asleep in the garden. For Lanyer to publish a series of poems about the superiority of women in the eyes of Christ, she needed to protect herself. So she chose to present both her poems as ordered by God in a prophetic dream and herself as the chosen deliverer of this prophecy. By placing herself in the role of prophet, Lanyer has the power to create a garden for dedicatees to gather in to hear her prophecy. Because prophetic dreams are known only to the individual who received the prophecy, there would be no way for others to dispute the validity of Lanyer's claim.

Lanyer knew that she still ran the risk of being tried and hanged for blasphemy due to the content of her poetry. Lanyer felt so strongly about her ideas that she was willing to publish and distribute her poetry, essentially sacrificing herself for her

dedicatees with each stanza. This sacrifice would consist of being shunned by society as a whole for the extreme ideas that she was publishing, even by the women that she was writing to. If they found her ideas too radical, they may not pay attention at all. In order to counteract this, Lanyer used her prophetic power to create the garden. Her creation of the garden became another way for Lanyer to veil her feminist beliefs through religious context. This strategy relied on the women's connection to the garden in order for her prophecy to be delivered. Lanyer makes her dedicatees feel safe in the garden and introduces them to Christ before she presents God's ordained prophecy. All of this is possible through the power she gleans from her dream.

In each of these dedication poems, Lanyer builds on the emotional reactions that the Passion story would bring out in her readers. She uses this emotion to propel the sense of religious purpose in her poetry and hide her feminist beliefs within the religious context. Beginning with her poem to Queen Anne, Lanyer introduces the idea of women claiming their rightful place as the true disciples of Christ. She states that she is unworthy of making such claims on her own but Christ's story gives her to prophetic authority to go ahead:

> This Storie: that whole Worlds with Bookes would fill,
> In these few Lines, will put me out of breath,
> To run so swiftly up this mightie Hill,
> I may behold it with the eye of Faith;
>
> But to present this pure unspotted Lambe,
> I must confesse, I farre unworthy am. (315-320)

She sets up her own authority through her professed humility. This humble claim also gives her the right to speak of Christ in a more personal and approachable way without being disrespectful. The Christ that Lanyer writes about in her dedication poems would not have been a recognized version of Christ to her readers. With each dedication poem, Christ displays more pronounced feminine traits. The purpose is not to create a feminine version of Christ, but rather to create a Christ that would understand and sympathize with the plight of women. Lanyer believed that women deserved their rightful place with Christ. His acceptance of these women as His companions throughout the dedication poems leads into the Christ in "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum." Both Christ's story and the dedicatees' connection with Him are a vital element to Lanyer's prophecy in the title poem. Lanyer needed her dedicatees to feel Christ's pain and betrayal so that they would be open to hearing her prediction for women's future. She uses her role as a prophetic poet in order to strengthen the prophecy for her dedicatees.

According to Kari McBride and John Ulreich, in their article "Answerable Styles: Biblical Poetics and Biblical Politics in the Poetry of Lanyer and Milton," Lanyer's role as a prophetic poet is deemed successful because, "by paraphrasing the Magnificant in her own voice, Lanyer becomes herself the messenger of God. Plainness in this case seems to be profoundly prophetic and evangelical, both divinely inspired and, ultimately, divine" (338). Lanyer employs humble language in order to both give herself the authority to deliver a prophecy from God and become holy by the deliverance of it. She writes her dedication poems in order to gather women together for the purpose of delivering her prophecy.

Lanyer begins her progression with a dedication to Queen Anne, a well-known patron of the arts and religious devotee. Lanyer praises the multitude of gifts that Nature has so generously bestowed upon the Queen: "For you have rifled Nature of her store / And all the Goddesses have dispossest / Of those rich gifts which they enjoy'd before" (7-9). Lanyer employs pagan language to describe the gifts but still references the Queen's obligation to Christ. Using both paganism and Christianity, Lanyer wants the Queen to connect herself with the sisterhood of Nature, but ultimately walk alongside Christ as an equal:

> And since all Arts at 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:
>
> Why should not She now grace my barren Muse,
> And in a Woman all defects excuse. (157-162)

In this stanza, Lanyer calls attention to the power that can be created when Christ and Nature combine in the Queen's acceptance of her invitation. She points out how the qualities that both religions have bestowed on the Queen are rare but necessary for the growth of all women. Lanyer knew that using of both pagan and Christian beliefs in her poetry wouldn't be a popular avenue, but she was willing to risk it for the collective safety of her dedicatees.

By pointing out these gifts, Lanyer hopes to gain the favor of the Queen, but also remind her that she did not come by these gifts naturally. In this poem, Lanyer hints that although she is royalty, the Queen should still pay homage to Christ. Lanyer appeals to

the Queen by reminding her of this rank: “Here may your sacred Majestie behold / That mightie Monarch both of heav’n and earth / He that all Nations of the world controld” (43.-45). While the Queen may hold court on earth, Christ out-ranks her on all levels. Lanyer offers comfort to the Queen by explaining her own relationship with Christ. She has cultivated a personal relationship with Christ that gives her the ability to create a safe space in the garden. Lanyer gives a sense of this relationship through the intimate language that she uses when discussing Christ.

In “To the Lady *Elizabeths* Grace,” Lanyer invites the eldest daughter of Queen Anne: “Though your faire eyes farre better Bookes have seene; / Yet being the first fruits of a womans wit / Vouchsafe you favour in accepting it” (12-14). By identifying Elizabeth’s intelligence and wit as the reason for her invitation, Lanyer connects with Elizabeth on a more personal level. Christ’s relationship to Elizabeth is connected to her birthright as a royal. Lanyer knew that Queen Anne raised her daughter to have a relationship with Christ. Elizabeth would have seen Christ as a divine figure of purity and martyrdom. However, Lanyer makes Christ accessible to Elizabeth, not just as a religious figure but as an equal: “Even you faire Princesse next our famous Queene” (8). Christ views the Queen as a worthy equal and by association, he views her daughter the same way. Therefore, in these two poems, Lanyer gathers two powerful women to her through her narrative authority. Lanyer’s relationship with Christ gives her a power beyond earth and this makes these women indebted to her.

In her next poem, “To all vertuous Ladies in general,” Lanyer addresses both her readers and her dedicatees. She reminds them immediately of her power to gather them together by introducing the Queen: “Let this faire Queene not unattended bee / When in

my Glasse she daines her selfe to see" (6-7). Lanyer places this poem here to remind the rest of her dedicatees and readers that her focus is on women as a collective, not just women with earthly power. Lanyer wants women to realize that she and Christ view the others as equal to these powerful, well-known women. Lanyer's suggestion that these mortal women could potentially be equal to Christ would have been considered blasphemous to any male or religious readers. She needed her readers and dedicatees to understand the urgency of their situation and in doing so, she makes it clear that she is willing to sacrifice herself for them by writing these poems, particularly her title poem "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum." This sacrifice would have included potentially being societally and religiously ostracized by publishing her poetry.

"To all vertuous Ladies in general" serves as a promise for what these women will experience if they trust Lanyer as an authority. Lanyer humbly calls for these women to read her poetry in order to join her in the garden: "Where worthy Ladies I will leave you all / Desiring you to grace this little Booke" (71-72). By reading her "little Booke," the women accept Lanyer's invitation into the garden space and a more intimate relationship with Christ:

> Onely by name I will bid some of those,
> That in true Honors seate have long bin placed,
> Yea even such as thou hast chiefly chose,
> By whom my Muse may be better graced;
> Therefore, unwilling longer time to lose,
>
> I will invite some Ladies that I know,
> But chiefly those as thou hast graced so. (85-91)

Because Lanyer is speaking to all “vertuous” ladies, she does not need to reference any specific woman in the poem. Instead, she uses “vertuous Ladies” as a general reference to all women who consider themselves worthy of a place in Lanyer’s garden. Due to the urgency of their situation, Lanyer knows that she has little time to waste with explanations. In the last few lines of the final stanza, she lets them know that once they are all gathered and every invitation has been accepted, she can relay the prophecy that these women desperately need to hear.

Women were Lanyer’s intended audience; she knew that her ultimate message in “Salve Deus Rex Judæorum” would not be well received by any male or radically religious readers. She uses a religious subject matter to conceal her more radical ideas about women and their roles in society. Although she was a religious woman, Lanyer could rationalize her radical suggestions by reminding her readers that women have been completely stripped of all religious roles. She not only uses a religious motif to catch her readers’ attention, but also to draw attention to the lack of allowed female participation in religion beyond worship. Lanyer draws parallels between women and Christ in her dedication poems but portrays them in as a prophecy, rather than reality:

> Leaving here her lands, her state, dignitie;
> Nay more, vouchsafe disguised weedes to weare:
> When with Christ Jesus she did meane to goe,
> From sweet delights to taste part of his woe. (27-30)

Lanyer knows that using the dream-like prophecy as her setting, she could invite these women to join with Christ without the risk of any physical harm. The garden that she creates is hypothetical, but becomes much more tangible as Lanyer continues to invite her

dedicatees. The religious nature of her poetry makes it irrefutable by any potential critics who would seek to challenge the ideas that she presents. She states numerous times that her collection of poetry is inspired by a prophetic dream.

A common strategy by male religious writers at the time was to claim that their writing was inspired and divined by God. Lanyer used the same strategy knowing that in religious England, gender wasn't an issue if God had given the writer a prophecy to deliver. The idea of Christ being willing to join and walk among women as equals was incredibly unusual to any potential male readers. But Lanyer knew that she needed to get her message out so she disguised this idea within her prophetic dream from outside readers. She needed each of these women to pay particular attention to her prophecy so she hid their invitations inside dedication poems. In the following chapter, I examine how Lanyer enables these women to walk with Christ as equals.

Lanyer assures this community that Christ desires this gathering and has given her the prophetic authority to create a space for them to gather. In her dedication to Lady Anne in "To the Ladie *Anne*, Countesse of Dorcet," Lanyer states that everything that she has fashioned for these women, including the safe garden space, the rights by which to gather and the choice of worthy companions for one another is Christ's desire for them:

> Blest by our Saviours merits, not my skil,
> Which I acknowledge to be very small;
> Yet if the least part of his blessed Will
> I have perform'd, I count I have done all. (9-12).

By employing a deferential tone with her acknowledgement of her feeble attempts at writing, Lanyer validates her own prophetic authority. The confidence in Lanyer's language helps to solidify her as a prophetic poet:

> But my weake Muse desireth now to rest,
> Folding up all their Beauties in your breast.
> Whose excellence hath rais'd my sprites to write,
> Of what my thoughts could hardly apprehend. (1831-1834)

She uses this humble language but doesn't apologize for what she is saying because she presents it as truth. In writing powerfully and with religious purpose, she becomes powerful by default.

With her last dedicatee officially invited to join, Lanyer speaks of Christ's grand entrance into the garden as opening a door to a new life for these women: "But Jesus Christ the Just: By him alone / He was orecome, He open set the dore / To Eternall life, ne're seene, nor knowne before" (126-128). The symbolic opening of this "door" as the entrance to their garden can only be done by Christ because He allows them to witness his final moments. Lanyer lets Christ open this door as a sign of respect and deference, but keeps her authority by the very nature of having created the door. Lanyer goes on to point out the relationship between Christ and the feminine. She argues that Christ wouldn't exist for anyone to worship had it not been for women:

> Begotten of a woman, borne of a woman, nourished of a woman, obedient to a woman; and that he healed woman, pardoned woman, comforted 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.. (43-48)

In each example of Christ's connection to women, Lanyer weakens the distance that traditional religion has placed between God and women. With her community of women gathered together, Lanyer uses this poem to solidify the relationship of Christ to the women.

In these dedication poems, Lanyer's intention has been established through her version of Christ and the women gathered in her garden. Lanyer's poetic authority as a prophetic poet is derived from her creation of the garden. These dedication poems set up in the order and progression that Lanyer intends "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum" to be read. She invites these women into the garden because she wants to make a point about the women as a collective group. Lanyer wants these women to embrace the garden as a place of spiritual and personal safety. Christ considers these women his true disciples in place of the Bible's traditional male disciples. Lanyer uses the dedication poems to set up the connection between Christ and the women in the garden because their interactions with one another are essential to Lanyer's intended message.

In "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum," Lanyer relives the betrayal and crucifixion of Christ with her dedicatees. She takes them through His night on Mount Olive, his trial with Pilate and his eventual death upon the cross. Instead of focusing solely on the physical aspects of the story, Lanyer tells the story in a more personal, passionate way. Because of the intimate relationship she has developed with Christ, Lanyer is able to speak about Him familiarly and comfortably. She is continually asking Christ about how He is feeling about men and their cowardice versus women and their steadfast faith.

Lanyer becomes critical and judgmental of men, who do not see the true purpose behind Christ's sacrifice: "How blinde were they could not discerne the Light!/How dull! if not to understand the truth./How weake! if meekenesse overcame their might" (505-507). Christ never directly answers Lanyer but she infers His replies from His lack of actual response. Women and Christ are one within Lanyer's version of the Passion. Both are silent martyrs, sacrificed for men. Throughout the poem, Lanyer calls to specific dedicatees to call their attention to certain aspects of Christ's story in order to strengthen their connections to Him in order to bring her prophecy to light: "That when darke daies of terror shall appeare,/ Thou as the Sunne shalt shine; or much more cleare" (55-56). Lanyer compared her prophecy to the light of knowledge, ending the darkness of men's religious hold on women.

The female connection to nature helped Lanyer both gather her dedicatees together and propel her prophecy. She knew that she couldn't just give them the prophecy at the beginning of her poem. Lanyer needed to justify her poetic choices because she wanted her dedicatees to be invested in the knowledge that she was about to give them:

> Good Madame, though your modestie be such,
> Not to acknowledge what we know and find;
> And that you thinke these prayses overmuch,
> Which doe expresse the beautie of your mind;
> Yet pardon me although I give a touch
> Unto their eyes, that else would be so blind,
> As not to see thy store, and their owne wants. (1449-1455)

Lanyer wanted these women to see the danger that was right in front of them. Her purpose as a prophetic poet was to deliver her message in a way that would stay in the minds of her readers. When she speaks directly to her dedicatees, specifically Lady Margaret, Lanyer wants to be able to show them how they are connected to one another through their mutual connection to the garden. All women are connected to nature and by default, one another as well.

Lanyer reminds her readers that Christ has blessed women: "His special care on those whom he hath blest/From wicked worldlings, how he sets them free:/And how such people he doth overthrow" (149-151). Women are the blessed ones in Christ's eyes but in the eyes of all other men, they are dispensable. Through her specific references to Lady Margaret, Lanyer asks her female readers to pay closer attention to certain sections of her poem: "There may you see him as a God in glory,/ And as a man in miserable case;/ There may you reade his true and perfect storie" (1329-1331). Only women can understand the true story of Christ. While men focus on the sacrifice of his death, Lanyer asks her dedicatees to also look at the betrayal that Christ endured. Lady Margaret can see Christ in his true form, as a God and a man. Man's limited vision sees only the power of Christ, while women are able to see Christ as a whole person. Lanyer draws a parallel between the way that men have viewed Christ with the way men view women, as being capable only of one function. Both Christ and women were put on this earth to sacrifice themselves for the betterment of mankind.

To strengthen the connection between Christ and her dedicatees, Lanyer recalls the night of Christ's betrayal: "That very Night our Saviour was betrayed / Oh night! exceeding all nights of sorow / …. But to Mount Olives went, though sore afraid/ To

welcome Night, and entertaine the Morrow" (329-334). Lanyer believes that under the constant oppression of men, women endure the same crushing depression that Christ felt when he walked into the garden alone. She wanted her readers to draw the connection without having to explicitly state their similarities: "Sweet Lord, how couldst thou thus to flesh and blood/Communicate thy griefe? tell of thy woes?/Thou knew'st they had no power to doe thee good" (377-379). Just as Christ could not speak of his doubts, women cannot speak out about their doubts as well. Lanyer knew that her female readers would be able to identify with Christ's moment of humanity. Christ knew about his fate and told no one but God in His prayers. Lanyer realized that it was her duty as a prophetic poet to tell her readers and dedicatees their fate and to help them see it through their connection to nature.

During Christ's moments of doubt on Mount Olive, Lanyer notes that his disciples were nowhere to be found: "Yet what great weaknesse in the Flesh was found!/They slept in Ease, whilst thou in Sorow drown'd" (426-427). She reminds her readers and dedicatees that in this garden, Christ is one of them. They must take the place of these male disciples in order to provide Christ with the support he truly deserves: "And then to lay the fault on Patience backe,/That we (poore women) must endure it all;/We know right well he did discretion lacke" (793-795). Women are used to having to take the blame, which makes them the perfect disciples for Christ.

In late Renaissance England, women were blamed for any inadequacies in their children or the lack thereof, any problems/issues in their marriages, etc.. Women were constantly reminded that they were in weak in both mind and spirit since Eve defied God's will and tricked Adam. Only women could truly understand and sympathize with

Christ's martyring act while his male disciples could not. Lanyer makes it clear that this could only occur while the women and Christ were in this garden space because she created this space for this purpose alone. For Christ to get the support he deserved in his weakest moment and for women to display their capabilities as religious leaders. Lanyer wanted to show how closely her readers and dedicatees could empathize with Christ, thereby showing the parallels of women to Christ:

> Saying, Not my will, but thy will Lord be done.
> When as thou prayedst an Angel did appeare
> From Heaven, to comfort thee Gods onely Sonne,
> That thou thy Suffrings might'st the better beare,
> Beeing in an agony, they glasse neere run,
> Thou prayedst more earnestly, in so great feare. (401-406)

Lanyer wanted to show her readers how cruel men in power can be. Christ prayed to His Father and received no comfort, no words before he was taken away. God is portrayed as a cold, unfeeling male figure to Christ. While the Biblical version of Christ's betrayal includes Angels from Heaven sent to comfort Christ, in Lanyer's version of the Passion story, she chooses to forgo mentioning this moment in order to further her prophecy of danger. Just as Christ was abandoned by the central male in His life, women will soon succumb to the same fate by the hands of the patriarchal society that dominates their lives. Lanyer's prophecy is coming true in the story of Christ. Lanyer tries to convey the danger that the women are in by speaking to the connection that Christ once had with his disciples. They were his trusted confidants and friends, just as women were to their

husbands. Women were entrusted to be companions, raise their children and run their households. His disciples were trusted to accompany and protect Christ.

Lanyer groups her dedicatees along with other devoted women of Christ throughout "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum." She places them alongside the Virgin Mary during Christ's sacrifice: "His woefull Mother wayting on her Sonne,/All comfortlesse in depth of sorrow drowned;/Her griefes extreame, although but new begun" (1009-1011). Only a woman could understand the pain of the virgin Mother and Lanyer aligns herself and her dedicatees with this devoted and iconic image. This image provides continuity for her readers in the strong religious and feminist themes that Lanyer is using in her poetry. She hides her beliefs in female importance in society inside the image of the Virgin Mary, one of the only revered women in Christian worship. Lanyer pledges their devotion to her by giving her a title: "To thee most beauteous Queene of Woman-kind" (1039). She states that Christ would have named her similarly had He been able but since He was not; Lanyer took it upon herself as Christ's disciple to exalt the Virgin Mary's status as His mother.

At the beginning of Christ's trial, Lanyer argues for all women by asking everyone to take another look at Eve and her so-called "ultimate" sin. She brings her readers back to the original Garden to try and change the view of women with Christ's blessing: "But view his Holy life, his good desert/Let not us Women glory in Mens fall,/Who had power given to over-rule us all" (758-760). Lanyer is not condemning men but rather asking for another look at whether or not the ultimate sin was Eve's fault alone. A reevaluation of the true extent of Eve's discretion brings women closer to Christ because the blame is no longer pushing them away from the garden:

Then let us have our Libertie againe,
And challenge to your selves no Sov'raigntie;
You came not in the world without our paine,
Make that a barre against your crueltie;
Your fault beeing greater, why should you disdaine
Our beeing your equals, free from tyranny? (825-830)

Lanyer isn't calling for ultimate female superiority but rather a realistic view of women. She considers the equalization of the genders a step towards a stronger equal relationship with Christ. Women already have a more intimate relationship with Him because of their shared mistreatment at the hands of men.

Pilate's wife speaks soon after Lanyer is finished with "Eve's Apologie." She calls for the release of Christ but also continues Lanyer's subtle call for another look at society's view of women: "Art thou a Judge, and asketh what to do/With one, in whom no fault there can be found" (857-858)? She speaks from experience, recalling the constant judgment of women on a daily basis. Pilate's wife knows that her husband cannot and will not understand her pleas but continues regardless. Lanyer includes her monologue because she wants to show how women could see through the mob mentality to understand the innocence of Christ. Women's intimate connection with Christ allows them to see Him for the martyr that they are also destined to be, through no choice of their own.

All of these women were integral women in the Bible and Lanyer has chosen them for their symbolism. Eve was the Mother of All, Mary was the mother of Christ and Pilate's wife pleaded for his life. Each one of these women wanted desperately for Christ

to live while men seemed to do everything in their power to ensure His death. Lanyer addresses her readers several times throughout each woman's monologue, asking for their judgment. She wanted them to realize how much of their lives had been dictated by men and their decisions. Lanyer calls again to Lady Margaret, beseeching her to follow her advice:

> All wealth and honour thou do'st quite reject,
> If thou perciev'st that once it proves a foe
> To virtue, learning, and the powres divine,
> Thou mai'st convert, but never wilt incline. (1389-1392)

Lanyer wants these women to realize their position in society. She reminds them that wealth, status and titles will not serve them in men's eyes. Women were judged long before her dedicatees came to be and they cannot continue to allow themselves to be judged. She wants her dedicatees to be symbols like the women of the Bible.

Lanyer wants her readers and dedicatees to feel the weight of Christ's ordeal for themselves. She goes through each moment of His time in the garden and subsequent arrest, torture and death because they needed to experience their fate first hand. Lanyer's prophecy is detailed in its message about the connection between Christ, women and the garden. She declares that her role as a prophetic poet is to get her message across by any means, even if it means sacrificing herself in the same manner as her dedicatees are meant to sacrifice themselves:

> A Matter farre beyond my barren skill,
> To shew with any Life this map of Death,
> This Storie; that whole Worlds with Bookes would fill,

In these few Lines, will put me out of breath. (313-316)

Lanyer feels so strongly about the prophecy she's been given that she tells her readers how unworthy she feels as a woman and how compelled she feels to deliver this prophecy despite her unworthiness. Yet, she does so for the sake of her readers and her dedicatees. Lanyer makes it clear that just as Christ was willing to sacrifice himself for all, she is willing to sacrifice herself for the good of all women. Her prophecy in her collection of poetry, specifically in her title poem "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum" is Lanyer's final gift to women, the gift of knowledge.

Within the circle of her dedicatees, Lanyer speaks to her readers and states that if she had been present at Christ's "trial," she would have spoken to Pontius Pilate and asked him to reevaluate the history of women:

> 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,
> The after-coming harme did not appeare:
>
> The subtile Serpent that our Sex betraide,
> Before our fall so sure a plot had laide. (763-768)

The fate of women had been decided and sealed long before Lanyer's time but she makes her argument hoping to change to viewpoint of her readers. She calls for Pontius Pilate to see the error of judging innocence, women and Christ are innocent of their crimes. Lanyer believes that women's connection to the plight of Christ calls for a retrial of their supposed sins: "And then to lay the fault on Patience backe/That we (poore women) must endure it all" (793-794). Women have carried the burdens and worries for things beyond

their control and yet Lanyer's prophecy details this fate as being unavoidable. She speaks in a tone of finality, as if the fate of women was decided long ago.

Lanyer continues with her prophecy because it isn't about changing the fate of women; her prophecy is about warning women of the danger that they are in. Her readers and dedicatees have been oblivious to the reality of their station in life. The garden that Lanyer creates to tell this prophecy has already been taken away from them and they haven't even realized it. She is desperate for these women to understand that the true meaning of this prophecy is to provide her readers and dedicatees with awareness to their situation. Lanyer's use of religion to convey her prophetic message of danger is essential to the success of *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*.

Lanyer, Women and the Garden

The image of the garden had a multitude of meanings for Lanyer. She believed that the garden represented a place of both safety and danger for women, particularly her dedicatees. Lanyer also believed that the garden was signified the judgment and betrayal of innocence, i.e. women and Christ. Overall, a study of Lanyer's poetry reveals that she believed that the garden was a place to be examined and a place to reexamine. Within the dedication poems, Lanyer used the garden as a way to call for the reexamination of the Passion story and the way that Chris is portrayed. By studying the way that Lanyer used the garden in her poetry, a new understanding of her purpose can be revealed. Lanyer wanted her readers to feel comfortable enough in her poetry to question and doubt the issues that she was bringing to light. In order to do that, an analysis of both the issues and the way that she uses the garden to portray each issue is necessary.

As a religious poet, Lanyer was able to publish her poetry and ideas as a prophetic prophet. But in order to truly propel her message, Lanyer used the garden as an idea to connect her dedicatees and readers with their fate. She needed a reoccurring concept in her poems that would resonate with her readers and help her dedicatees to accept her prophecies. Lanyer chose the garden because of what it represented both religiously and individually to her dedicatees. Biblically, the garden meant betrayal and martyrdom with both Eve's condemnation and Christ's betrayal and arrest occurring in gardens. Lanyer used these connotations throughout her poetry in order to solidify the connection between her garden and Christ. For women in the late Renaissance, the garden represented a connection to God in nature and later, a severance of this connection by men. She used her prophetic authority to create a garden within her poems to invite her dedicatees to

join her inside. Once she had gathered them together, she reminded them of what a traditional version of the garden represented and what the reality of the garden had become. Lanyer wanted her dedicatees to feel united in their fate as women. This bond was essential to her prophecy. If these women did not feel connected to one another, they couldn't truly understand the magnitude of what Lanyer was trying to say. The significance of the garden in Lanyer's poetry is tied to the women that she is writing to. The removal of women from their place of primal power prompted Aemilia Lanyer to use the garden as the focal point of her collection of poems, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*. An analysis of Lanyer's use of the garden as a prophetic poet is necessary in order to understand the prophecy of danger that she is trying to deliver in her poems.

In early 17th century Renaissance England, the roles of women were limited beyond the home. Societal expectations of women were restricted to being religiously devout, morally pure and devoted solely to the men in their lives. In her book *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in the Seventeenth-Century England*, Laura Gowing states that, " The male head of household stood at the centre of a complex web of duty, responsibility and obedience, and his power was upheld by law" (7).Women were considered more valuable as symbols of motherhood and chastity rather than contributing members of society. While men were occupied with industrialization and advancement in the cities, women were often expected to stay and manage their father's/husband's estates. In the late Renaissance, the gardens surrounding these estates were considered a woman's place. Gowing states that women were given free rein on the estate grounds until the early 17th century when the trend turned towards meticulously groomed gardens

that were designed by professional landscapers. Men then banned women from organizing and tending one of the only places that had been considered distinctly female.

In the late Renaissance while Lanyer was writing, Queen Elizabeth had recently died and King James I had ascended the throne, placing men back in the seat of power. King James' belief in an autocratic government made men second-class citizens and women were viewed as third-class citizens with little to no power beyond that of the male authorities in their lives. Women had little power or control over their own lives, even after marriage. Gowing states that women were expected to bend to men's will at nearly every opportunity, sacrificing their beliefs and values for those of a male authority figure. This expectation was one of the driving factors behind Lanyer's poetic message. Lanyer believed that the garden image that she was using in her poetry was representative of a freedom from this oppression. Because she believed in the female right to dwell amongst nature, Lanyer used the garden repetitively in her poetry to further the idea of this right.

Lanyer was aware of this issue and in her poem "To the Vertuous Reader," she begins by giving a reason for publishing her poems:

> Often I have 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, I have written this small volume, or little booke. (1-6)

Lanyer was acutely aware of the expectations and limits of women in their hierarchical society. The basis of this patriarchal acquiescence was rooted heavily in religion and the

clergy's interpretation of the Bible. According to Laura Gowing, "Biblical texts and medical theories provided the key to a basic understanding of gender in which women's descent from Eve made them morally weaker than men. Moral frailty was the foundation of feminine weakness" (2). Women could never participate fully alongside men because they were inherently and morally corrupt from birth. Eve doomed her entire gender to being viewed as weak and unfit for true religious devotion. Women were not allowed clerical rights within the church because of their corrupt souls. Gowing argues that men could impose these rules because, "The subordination of women to men was fundamental to social, spiritual and familial structures" (5). Women wouldn't question being restricted because subordination was their ordained role in life. Beyond attending worship, women weren't given a place within their religion. Women were encouraged to be devout and dedicated to their religion, but they were not allowed to serve God.

Women were treated as though their gender made them lower-class citizens. They never had the chance or right to prove themselves because the moment that they were born, women had little value in society. Gowing believes that the treatment of women was based on their gender making them predisposed to a lower class. In her book, *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print*, Anne Haselkorn states that:

> Legal and conventional restrictions limited most women to a private life, in which the hierarchical arrangements that characterized the political scene were consciously extended into theory about and practice within the family and about the place of the daughter/mother-wife-mistress/widow within it. (18)

Because the women of the early 17th century were treated as lower class citizens their entire lives, they didn't see fit to publically question the loss of their religious rights. Haselkorn argues that it is because women did not and could not question this loss, that this practice was allowed to continue. Women allowed their roles to become increasingly restricted without public complaint.

Women were also restricted in their friendship and communication with one another and often sought solitude in the gardens of their estates. Often, depending on the political views of their families, women might not have been allowed to speak or socialize with each other. Wives and daughters were thought to be more suited to the quiet, solitary environments of their country or rural estates. Many wives ran their husbands households in their absence so being able to leave their estates wasn't an option. These forced stays at their estates kept women isolated from one another. In order to pass the time, some women would turn to the grounds surrounding their homes and tend the gardens themselves. Because their stays in these country homes also meant a disconnect from the Church, they tried to worship in different ways. Because they were given only nature as a place beyond the inside of their homes to explore, these women felt a strong pull towards dwelling in their own nature spaces. Many women chose to try and connect to God through nature. They didn't worship in a pagan way, but rather spent time in the gardens reading scriptures, praying and being close to God through his creation. As Barbara Gates states in her book *Kindred Nature,* "Interpreting the meaning forced of nature became second in importance only to interpreting the meaning of God" (11). The garden became a focal point for women to use in order to relate to God because they had few other choices. Many of the women desired a place for religious clarity

outside of the restrictive confines of the patriarchal church. The garden was an original creation of God and Lanyer wanted women to equate the garden with a place free from patriarchy.

In Lanyer's poetry, she often refers to women in the garden as natural and the place that God intended for them to be. When Lanyer speaks of women's removal from the garden in her references to Lady Margaret, her tone shifts to blame and anger in her reference to the lies being told to keep the Countess of Cumberland out of the garden: "The Lord wil roote them out that speak prowd things,/Deceitfull tongues are but false Slanders wings" (111-112). This anger comes from Lanyer's observation of women's lack of control in their own lives. She knew that if women felt in control of her garden, then they would be more willing to accept that the garden was part of them. Lanyer felt this connection between her dedicatees and the garden and equated the garden with being a natural part of women.

When the height of fashion became perfectly manicured lawns and gardens, ladies of the estates were stripped of their gardening rights in favor of hired-out landscapers. Women were never given alternatives to losing the garden as a private place, it was just taken away. Often, with the isolation of being so far some companionship, the garden became a place where women could feel as though she was among something. Being in the garden meant being around other life and this helped many of these women to feel more needed and less alone. In her book *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*, Susan Griffin analyzes the connection between women and nature and the way that both are abused in connection with one another. Lanyer explores this connection in "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum" through Christ and her dedicatees equal standings in the garden.

Griffin argues that both nature and women are typically restricted at the same time, “And it is said that nature can be understood only be reduction, that only by reducing her to numbers does she become clear” (13). Only by forcing nature to become unnatural through the rigid garden designs can men feel in control of it. Women are expected to be deferential to man the way that they believe nature is deferential to man. Because nature and the garden are so easily bent to the will of men who want to change and warp it into their view of what it should be, women will take note and follow in Her footsteps. What most men did not realize was that women did not view nature in the same regard. Many women were beginning to see nature as a part of them, a comfort, a piece of God that they are allowed to have. Griffin believes that women and nature are one and the same. In her book, Griffin writes of woman as if she is nature and thus feels the pain of industrialization and rape of her resources.

Lanyer knew that men had the same need for control over women and wanted her dedicatees to realize how dire their situation was becoming. By conquering the garden, they were essentially conquering women as well. Gates argues that once men decided that women’s connection to Nature could be stronger than their own, they minimized this connection because, “plac[ing] women closer to nature often became the basis for their social definitions of womanhood” (12). Men chose to define women by the unpredictability and moodiness of nature, rather than the power of Mother Nature. Lanyer knew that many of her dedicatees would have experienced the loss of their gardens and wanted them to re-experience those same feelings of loss while reading her poetry. Even if their connection to nature was not conscious, Lanyer knew that the garden would have a strong meaning to the devout women that she was writing to.

Lanyer chose the garden as the place for her dedicatees to gather because of what the garden as a space represented to women. Eden was the original place of female judgment. Mount Olive was the garden in which Christ was betrayed. Both of these images were meant to instill both power and fear. Eden was the original garden, lush and without mistake. Mount Olive was the place that Christ chose for his last moments, he chose the symbolism of the betrayal in Eden for his own capture. Lanyer created a space that would represent both security and uncertainty to her readers. Lanyer wanted the garden to stir up feelings of safety in a natural environment and insecurity with how volatile nature can be. The personification of nature through Mother Nature connects women and their nurturing instincts to the natural so Lanyer used this connection to help her readers understand the danger that they were in. Lanyer believed that this impending danger, her prophecy in "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum," would alert women to their shrinking roles in society. If nature is the one place left that women could truly be safe and connect with God and men had taken it away, where were women supposed to go? Lanyer wanted her readers to be asking themselves this very question instead of just standing aside while all of their natural rights as women were slowly being stripped away. She wanted them to be aware of what was happening to them.

Aemilia Lanyer was a middle class woman writing to women of a much higher social standing. She wrote to them because the system affected all women, no matter their societal rank. Lanyer intended to unite women by gathering them in a place of her own poetic creation. She is able to completely ignore the hierarchal societal structure by addressing these women as devout Christians. Lanyer offers them a chance to gather with Christ, not just to worship Him but to gather alongside Him in the garden. The power

given to her by her status as a prophetic poet makes it possible for her dedicatees to believe in her ability to bring Christ to them. Without her promise of prophecy, Lanyer wouldn't have had the power to write her poetry.

Lanyer intends for women to feel and understand their own destruction through the loss of nature and the loss of Christ. As a religious poet, Lanyer used the garden for both its biblical symbolism and the innate connection that women should feel towards nature. Using the correlations that Griffin draws between man's abuse of nature and man's abuse of women, Lanyer's use of the garden draws an entirely new meaning beyond that of a physical space. Lanyer knew that gardens were no longer considered a woman's place. Instead of the simple gardens that once existed for the women of the house to attend, gardens became a status symbol for the man of the house. Women were no longer allowed to tend their estate gardens because men wanted a professional touch and women weren't considered skilled enough to do so. Their place in the garden had been eliminated so it represented instability in addition to unease. Lanyer used the reality of her dedicatees situation to bring her prophecy to reality. These women could not ignore the loss of their gardens just as they could not ignore their connection to that loss. Lanyer wanted her readers to be painfully conscious of the situation that women were now in. The loss of the gardens and religious restrictions prompted Lanyer to write and publish her prophecy so that women could finally be warned.

The garden becomes a place for Lanyer to redefine the role of women as a community and as religious figures. In order to establish this new role, Lanyer describes Christ in a way that is both accessible and equalizing. She gives her readers a Christ that views women as equals, not as lower forms of humanity. Lanyer wanted to reduce the

lofty views of Christ in the eyes of her dedicatees because she wanted them to view Him as a peer. In the garden, Christ walks among these women as equals. Christ's presence in the garden is symbolic of His acceptance of these women. Lanyer doesn't describe Him physically until "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum," but His personality and His interactions with her dedicatees give her readers an alternate view of Christ. Christ's role in these dedication poems is compared often to the roles of women. Just as women are often martyrs for man, Christ is a martyr for all mankind. He was put on this Earth to sacrifice Himself and that same societal pressure is applied to women. They sympathize with the burdens placed on each other. Both Christ and Lanyer's dedicatees are equal in their plights within the context of her poems.

In her first dedication poem "To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie," Lanyer shows the Queen that in the garden, Christ is a peer. Lanyer insinuates that joining the garden guarantees a relationship with Christ. This relationship is reflected in the way that Lanyer describes Christ to the Queen. She assures the Queen that if she joins her within the garden, Christ will be appeased because the Queen has shown Lanyer favor:

> 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. (55-60)

Lanyer uses her religious devotion to Christ to claim a close, personal connection with Him. She ensures the Queen's acceptance to join her in the garden. Lanyer's purpose

behind choosing the Queen to be the first woman invited is to establish the power in the invitation itself. Nature becomes personified as a female: “For you have rifled Nature of her store,/And all the Goddesses have dispossest/Of those rich gifts which they enjoy’d before” (7-9). In making Nature a woman, the garden becomes a place in which women are equals with all who enter. By inviting Queen Anne into the garden before any of the other women, Lanyer sets a precedent for the women who will have the privilege of being invited after her.

In the garden, equality is the key denominator. Christ wouldn’t be present in the garden if all of these women were not his equals and worthy of His presence. She takes it a step further by suggesting that the garden makes Christ worthy of being their equal; women being the superior beings in this space. The garden becomes such a strong equalizing space that her dedicatees become equal to Christ and He has no more influence or power in this space than they do. While the women are deferent to His story, the garden is a place that causes the dedicatees and Christ to treat one another with mutual respect. Lanyer wants these women to recognize how closely their experiences parallel Christ’s life. She is preparing them for her forthcoming prophecy in “Salve Deus Rex Judæorum.” Lanyer declares the garden as a place of truth, so much so that Christ dwells with them in it:

> Let Virtue be your guide, for she alone
> Can leade you right that you can never fall;
> And make no stay for feare he should be gone:
>
> But fill your Lamps with oyle of burning zeale,
> That to your Faith he may his Truth reveale. (10-14)

Lanyer wants these women to have the same relationship with Christ that she has cultivated for herself. This relationship is essential to her dedicatees connection with the garden. When they connect with Christ, they are also accepting the garden that Lanyer has created. Lanyer's garden provided an equalizing space for Christ and her dedicatees. By gathering in the garden, the women are accepting Christ as their equal in life and death.

The acceptance of both Lanyer's garden and Christ as an equal would have seemed realistically impossible for any of Lanyer's readers. This prompts Lanyer to address this impossibility through a brief mention of dreams and their fleeting state in comparison to the reality of what she can offer her readers. In her poem, "The Authors Dreame to the Ladie *Marie*, the Countesse Dowager of *Pembrooke*," Lanyer recalls a dream that she had specifically regarding Lady Marie different from the one that has inspired her entire collection, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*. While recollecting this separate dream, Lanyer muses to the Lady Marie that whoever dwells in this place must be quite a worthy person, only to realize that Lady Marie currently lives in such beauty and splendor:

> Yet looking backe into my thoughts againe,
> The eie of Reason did behold her there
> Fast ti'd unto them in a golden Chaine,
> They stood, but she was set in Honors chaire. (5-8)

Despite all of this finery, Lanyer reminds Lady Marie that this is just a dream. While Lady Marie may truly be worthy, this garden doesn't actually exist in either reality or even hypothetically. She dreamt of Lady Marie in a garden because of how women can

connect to the natural space. Lanyer wants to focus on the urgency of the female situation.

Lanyer viewed women's removal from the garden as yet another example of women's blindness to their rightful place in society and in nature. Lanyer similarly believes that her dedicatees and readers should be aware of their right to be in the garden. In her dedication to Lady Marie, Lanyer points out that she saw Marie as the voice of reason but obviously, it must be a dream because men do not recognize the value of women:

> Me thought I pass'd through th' *Edalyan* Groves,
> And askt the Graces, if they could direct
> Me to a Lady whom *Minerva* chose,
> To live with her in height of all respect.
>
> Yet looking back into my thoughts againe,
> The eie of Reason did behold her there
> Fast ti'd unto them in a golden Chaine,
> They stood, but she was set in Honors chaire. (1-8)

Lanyer dreamt of Lady Marie residing as the voice of Reason in a beautiful, garden-like place. She argues that within their natural habitat, women are recognized for their true potential. By writing this as a dream apart from her prophecy, Lanyer can insinuate how possible her dreams must be. If God is sending her prophecies, He must also have a hand in some of her other dreams and He wants the Lady Marie to realize her rightful place in the society He created. Griffin also argues that women were often ignorant of their right

to be with nature (16). Lanyer wants Lady Marie to see how closely the loss of her dream garden corresponds with the loss of her actual garden on her husband's estate. By taking the dream garden away in the middle of the poem, Lanyer mimics the destructive power of men. She wants Lady Marie to relive that feeling of powerlessness. Using her poetic power, Lanyer offers the Countess a chance to join other worthy women in her garden. This would be an opportunity for Lady Marie to live inside a place of female supremacy:

> But here in equall sov'raigntie to live,
> Equall in state, equall in dignitie,
> That unto others they might comfort give,
> Rejoycing all with their sweet unitie. (93-96)

The situation that she is presenting is not real, by any means. Lanyer needed to bring both Lady Marie and her readers back to the reality of their actual situation with this poem. Lanyer's progressive ideas needed to be eased into the reader's minds. Instead of making outright assertions about the rightful place of women with Christ, Lanyer introduces the idea through a dream-like prophecy directed towards Lady Marie. In doing this, Lanyer presents her view without being too forward. Lanyer wants her readers to get used to the idea of the garden and Christ's place within the garden.

In the next four lines, Lanyer coaxes Lady Marie into agreeing to enter the garden:

> And Madame, if you will vouchsafe that grace,
> To grace those flowres that springs from virtues ground;
> Though your faire mind on worthier workes is plac'd,
> On workes that are more deepe, and more profound. (213-216)

Lanyer uses the promise of a more profound experience in her own garden to entice the Countess. This promise materializes in the appearance of Christ: “Yet it is no disparagement to you / To see your Saviour in a Shepheards weed / Unworthily presented in your viewe” (217-219). Lanyer describes Christ as treating the women as equals. The role of the garden has now evolved into an equalizing space in addition to being a gathering place for this community of women.

The progression of the idea of the garden takes another step forward when Lanyer chooses Lady Margaret as her next dedicatee. The purpose behind inviting the Countess after the Lady Marie is to both further the idea female community and establish Lanyer’s understand and connection with her dedicatees. Lanyer uses her role as a prophetic poet to appeal to Lady Margaret in the poem, “To the Ladie *Margaret* Countesse Dowager of Cumberland.” Lanyer adopts a much more familial tone when writing to Lady Margaret, giving the allusion that they had a relationship closer than the usual patron/poet relationship. Lady Margaret’s invitation to the garden is hidden within a reference to the Garden of Eden:

> I deliver you the health of the soule; which is this most pretious pearle of all perfection, this rich diamond of devotion, this perfect gold growing in the veines of that excellent earth of the most blessed Paradice, wherein our second *Adam* had his restlesse habitation. (9-14).

Lady Margaret’s purity of soul enables her to be worthy of an invitation. Lanyer describes the garden in more detail with it becoming even more tangible with the addition of Lady Margaret: “The sweet incense, balsums, odours, and gummes that flowes from that beautifull tree of Life, sprung from the roote of *Jessie*” (14-16). She is describing

both Eden and her own garden in this stanza. The “tree of Life” references the tree of Knowledge located in the garden of Eden but this tree seems to grow from Christ himself. Lanyer is creating a garden from the roots of Christ for her dedicatees. The detailed descriptions of the smells and vines that surround the tree of Life in Lanyer’s garden were actually references to each of the dedicatees in Lanyer’s poetry. All of these different vines, flowers and plants make up the garden that Christ could walk within as an equal. This shift from talking about the garden in a vague way to describing details of the location marks an advance in Lanyer’s attempt to connect her dedicatees.

When addressing Lady Katherine in her poem, “To the Ladie *Katherine* Countesse of Suffolke,” Lanyer immediately makes it clear that she has little connection with the Countess other than hearing about her great virtues. Despite their lack of physical acquaintance, Lanyer describes many different traits she believes make the Lady Katherine worthy of an invitation to the garden: “When her bright eyes beholds that holy one / By whose great wisedome, love, and special grace / Shee was created to behold his face” (16-18). As one of the last dedicatees to be invited, Lanyer reminds the Countess that her gifts were given to her by Christ for a reason. Lanyer confronts Lady Katherine about her gifts and reminds her that she needs to be willing to use and share her gifts: “Yea, let those Ladies which do represent / All beauty, wisedome, zeale, and love, / Receive this jewell from *Jehova* sent” (55-57). Certain that the Lady Katherine will not refuse her offer, Lanyer gives her a glimpse into the garden:

> And unto you I wish those sweet desires,
> That from your perfect thoughts doe daily spring,
> Increasing still pure, bright, and holy fires,

Which sparkes of pretious grace, by faith doe spring:

Mounting your soule unto eternall rest,

There to live happily among the best. (103-108)

With each line of this final stanza, Lanyer describes in increasing detail the wonder of the garden that awaits this community of women. While each poem is technically dedicated to one woman, Lanyer knew that they would be reading one another's invitations. Each poem serves as a reminder to the other dedicatees and readers that this garden will become tangible if all of these women believe and gather in it.

When speaking directly to Lady Anne, Lanyer delivers her last invitation to the garden with a call to read her poetry: "Then in this Mirrour let your faire eyes looke / To view your virtues in this blessed Booke" (7-8). The image in this mirror is an Eden-like paradise. This mirror is meant to represent how close this garden is to becoming a reality. If the women have agreed to join the garden, they have mentally joined the space. If they were to gaze in a mirror, as Lanyer asks Lady Anne to do, they would see reflected behind them an image of the garden and freedom from the restrictions of their lives.

Now that the women have accepted their invitations and gathered together, Lanyer writes one last plea in "To the Vertuous Reader." She speaks frankly and without apology in defense of women everywhere: "And this I have done, to make knowne to the world, that all women deserve not to be blamed though some forgetting they are women themselves" (10-13). Lanyer provides a reason for gathering these women together. She desires a united female community, not one that forgets the bonds of womanhood. In order to create a bonded community of women beyond her dedicatees, Lanyer reminds her readers of the greatness of being a woman, despite centuries of being wrongfully

blamed. Lanyer reminds her readers that some may, “referre such points of folly, to be practiced by evill disposed men, 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” (18-21). By reminding her readers of the true power of women, Lanyer gives her poems purpose beyond their dedications. She wanted to further their sense of worth. Lanyer used her hypothetical garden and prophetic dream to increase her dedicatees’ feelings of value.

Lanyer’s dedication poems invite each woman to join Christ in the garden. She refuses to explain why they are being invited other than to state that they will be receiving a prophecy, leaving both the readers and dedicatees to question what this prophecy could possibly entail. Lanyer will answer this question in “Salve Deus Rex Judæorum.” In the dedication poems, the garden is a place of gathering and warmth. Lanyer wants the dedicatees to feel safe in the garden because she needs to deliver a specific message, a prophecy about the future of women. In order to emphasize her message; Lanyer connects her dedicatees to Christ by showing them His betrayal on Mount Olive, thereby enabling them to relive His pain and loss. Through Christ’s experience, they will realize their doomed fate. Lanyer uses the betrayal and crucifixion of Christ as the vehicle to reveal her prophecy. Through Christ’s sacrifice and death, she shows her dedicatees their fate.

Lanyer used “Salve Deus Rex Judæorum” to demonstrate how much closer women are to nature and the garden than men, explore how this closeness helps them to connect with Christ on a much more intimate level and to use her dedicatee’s relationship to the garden and Christ in order to reveal her prophecy. Lanyer speaks directly to Lady

Margaret throughout “Salve Deus Rex Judæorum.” Not only was Lady Margaret wronged repeatedly by male patriarchal society, but she was also inspired Lanyer’s use of the garden for a gathering space. Lady Margaret’s estate had a garden on the grounds that Lanyer references frequently in both her dedication and title poems. Lanyer considered the garden a peaceful, female place because of this experience: “With pleasant groves, hills, walks and stately trees,/Which pleasures with retired minds agrees” (23-24). Lanyer needed to use an image that her female readers would connect to and understand in a way that her male readers never could.

Lanyer uses her dedicatory poem to create a garden for Lady Margaret to join but now that she has accepted the invitation, Lanyer reveals the true purpose for these individual invitations to the garden. She wanted to gather all of these women together in a space that once belonged to them and only recently had been claimed by men. Lanyer wanted the garden space to represent loss and betrayal for these women:

> Whose all-reviving beautie, yeelds such joys
> To thy sad Soule, plunged in waves of woe,
> That worldly pleasures seems to thee as toyes,
> Onely thou seek’st Eternitie to know,
> Respecting not the infinite annoyes. (33-37)

The loss of one woman’s garden should be a loss to all women. With the loss of each piece of land, they are losing a piece of themselves. Lanyer wants Lady Margaret’s struggle to be an example to women. Lady Margaret followed society’s rules for how women should act and instead of being rewarded; she is punished with the loss of her estate. Lanyer intended for her other dedicatees and readers to empathize and connect

with Lady Margaret's plight and by doing so, become able to see the true message behind Lanyer's recollection of her struggle. Just as the beauty of the naturally tended garden is unappreciated by men, women are equally unnoticed. Women are appreciated by no man except Christ. In the garden, they must realize that they are alone in their plight, just as Christ was on Mount Olive.

Lanyer wants her readers to realize that this loss of space has been at the expense of men's weaknesses. Christ's disciples' ability to fall asleep in the garden means that they do not belong within it. Griffin states that, "woman's nature is more natural than man's, that she is genuine with the 'cunning suppleness of a beast of prey'" (26). Women are the defenders of Christ, worthy of watching over Him in the garden. The garden represents a closer connection to nature and Christ for Lanyer's dedicatees but the men are blind to that connection because they care only for themselves. Lanyer believes that Christ should have expected His disciples to deceive him:

> For they were earth, and he came from above,
> Which made them apt to flie, and fit to fall:
>
> Though they protest they never will forsake him,
> They do like men, when dangers overtake them. (629-632)

Lanyer's dedicatees would never consider abandoning Christ. He joined them in the garden during their invitations and time of need so they wouldn't leave Him during his moment of need at Mount Olive. She needed to create a strong bond between these women and Christ and does so by appealing to their similar situations.

With Christ's death occurring in their garden, the garden becomes dangerous: "When this sweet of-spring of thy body dies / When thy faire eies beholds his bodie torne

/ The peoples fury, heares the womens cries" (1130-1132). Lanyer knows that no matter how highly women prove themselves, they are doomed to the same fate as Christ. Lanyer wants women to be aware of this danger. Some of her dedicatees were already becoming victims of these reduced roles and Lanyer was calling for their awareness. Instead of allowing them to be condensed into roles that men were deciding for them without question, Lanyer wanted women to know what was happening to them. While she doesn't call for women to take action against men, Lanyer wants them to be educated about their roles.

Lanyer wants these women to understand that just like the gardens of their estates, the garden that they are currently dwelling in is no longer safe. Most men considered themselves dominant over all, even Christ. Organized religion was being run by men who would interpret the Bible for themselves and leave no room for women as worshipers. Lanyer could see the disintegration of women's roles in the church, the court and the home. Queen Anne was no longer in power, women weren't allowed to worship beyond specific restrictions and the home and garden were no longer a woman's place. Lanyer knew that women were losing their place in society. Their roles were being reduced by the moment and Lanyer needed to warn women of the danger that they were in. Her prophecy was vital at the time that she wrote "Salve Deus Rex Judæorum." She invited them into the garden along with Christ in order to show them the emptiness of their sacrifice. Christ was sacrificed for a reason but women were being sacrificed for the whims of man. Lanyer set her dedicatees in a place no longer considered theirs, the garden. She desperately wanted to convey the message that women were no longer safe anywhere, including the confines of the garden.

The garden was the only place that Lanyer could convey this message to her dedicatees. She created a space similar to both the Garden of Eden and Mount Olive, innocent and peaceful but on the edge of destruction. Both places were ruined by the judgment and betrayal of an innocent being by men. Women and Christ have been condemned to a lifetime of suffering for man. Lanyer needed to give her message in a place that her dedicatees would both recognize and not understand. They would be aware of the garden being shifted from their power to that of their husbands but they may not be aware of the symbolism of the garden itself. Using the garden is essential for Lanyer to tell her dedicatees that they have been, and always be, in danger as long as men are allowed to invade their spaces. Christ was betrayed in a garden and these women will be as well, victims of their own patriarchal society.

Conclusion

Aemilia Lanyer's collection of poems, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, is written through a feminist lens. But the true meaning behind her poetry is discovered through a study of Lanyer as a religious, rather than feminist, poet. Lanyer's fashioning of herself as a prophetic poet was both a tool to avoid persecution and a way for Lanyer to convey the urgency of her readers' situation. Her use of the garden as a place for her dedicatees to gather was meant to invoke the feeling of loss for her readers. They lost their own gardens and Christ, who was their equal within the garden, was also betrayed in the garden. In the beginning, the garden was an image that dedicatees and readers would recognize and relate to. By the end of her collection, Lanyer intended for her readers to associate the garden with the betrayal of men and the danger that women were in by being connected to nature and the garden. This connection was considered primal by Lanyer. She believed that women were connected to the garden in their connection to Christ. Women are equal to Christ in the garden and thus the garden space is vital to the deliverance of Lanyer's prophecy of danger.

Salve Deus Rex Judæorum is a progressive collection of poetry with each poem furthering Lanyer's urgency to deliver her prophecy of danger. The progressive religious nature of her collection meant that Lanyer was able to position herself as a prophetic poet. This prophetic position allowed Lanyer rewrite the entire Passion story and present it in an alternate view placing women in the role of the true Disciples of Christ. She presents her dedicatees as the sympathetic, rightful followers of Christ due to the similarities in their treatment by men. All of these tools were used by Lanyer in order to communicate the urgent danger of women in late Renaissance England. Much of

Lanyer's power came from her use of the garden in her poetry and the connection she draws between women and nature.

The use of several different eco-feminist scholars in an analysis of Lanyer's poetry is necessary to understanding her prophecy. Both Griffin and Gates have argued that it is a woman's right to dwell within nature and Lanyer places her dedicatees within this garden because she also believes in this right. By studying Lanyer's use of the garden in both her dedication and title poems, a further understanding of both her religious and feminist beliefs can be discovered. Lanyer intended for the garden to represent the lost right of women to dwell in their natural, estate spaces. Gates argued about the female definition of womanhood and the role that garden played in this definition. Lanyer made similar claims of definition but used nature and the garden to define a woman's role with Christ. The connections that these eco-feminist scholars present between women and nature are echoed throughout Lanyer's poetry. By exploring the power that both Gates and Griffin believe women can draw from nature, the authority behind Lanyer's prophetic status is revealed. She used the garden as a place to draw power from in order to present her message. Because her readers would also feel this innate connection to nature, according to Gates and Griffin, we can understand why Lanyer chose the garden as a place for them to gather. Her dedicatees became the equals of Christ in her poetry and the garden was the environment that this equality occurred within.

If Aemilia Lanyer's poetry is to be truly understood and studied, the analysis must focus on more than just the feminist aspects of her work. Lanyer was first, and foremost, a prophetic poet. Throughout *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, she strove to deliver her

prophecy by means of the garden image. The garden represented both the feminine right to nature and the religious significance of the space. Because Lanyer is creating her own garden space, she added direct connections between women, Christ and nature. The development of her own garden inside of her poetry allowed Lanyer to connect her dedicatees to the garden in a personal way. Future scholarship should broaden its scope when studying Aemilia Lanyer to include all aspects of analysis, beyond that of feminism and focus more on the content and images in her poetry. Many have regarded her use of religious imagery as merely a way to showcase the inequality of women in late Renaissance society. Instead, scholars should focus on Lanyer's use of the Passion story as a tool to convey her prophetic message. She was a religious woman with strong views on the treatment of women, not the other way around. Lanyer desired to give her message to her dedicatees through her collection of poetry and strove to deliver this message throughout her version of the Passion story.

The need for additional scholarship has also been exacerbated by the late-coming of Lanyer to the academic sphere. Due to the late publishing of her work in 1993 by Suzanne Woods, Lanyer has had less than twenty years of scholars studying *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*. Because of the rarity of a female poet in the late Renaissance with strong feminist imagery in her poetry, scholars immediately focused on Lanyer's choice of dedicating her work only to women and featuring women as the focus of her work. She claimed that women were equal to Christ: "But yet the Weaker thou doest seeme to be/In Sexe, or Sence, the more his Glory shines/That doth infuse such powerfull Grace in thee" (289-291). This sentiment is echoed throughout Lanyer's poetry and scholars were so intrigued by her claims of equality that they may have neglected all of the other aspects

of *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*. Aemilia Lanyer's collection of poetry deserves more inclusion in anthologies and a wider scope of analysis by scholars. While sections of her poetry are becoming included in anthological works, her collection as a whole conveys a prophetic message that cannot be understood while separated. The reading of her entire collection, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, should be encouraged by those who wish to study the religious poets of the late Renaissance.

As both a poet and a woman, Aemilia Lanyer sacrificed herself by publishing her collection, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*. She knew that the radical ideas inside of her poetry could potentially cause her to be charged with blasphemy and/or rejection from society. Despite these dangers, Lanyer knew that it was necessary that she write, publish and distribute her poetry to both her dedicatees and any other unintended readers. Her poetry is vital to understanding a woman's view of the religious and societal pressures and restrictions of the late Renaissance. Lanyer should be considered an important religious poet, representative of the spiritual understanding and questioning during that time period.

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