Writing for Patronage or Patronage for Writing? Two Case Studies in Seventeenth-Century and Post-Restoration Women's Poetry in Britain

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The seventeenth century provided a fertile ground in Britain for anyone who wished to express themselves in writing. London became the locus of an unprecedented printing revolution that carried on until the eighteenth century, when revolutionary writing subsided, but the printing infrastructure in place allowed for greater specialization and diffusion. Separated by almost one hundred years, the two women featured in this chapter seem to have approached patronage as a last-resort solution to attain financial and artistic independence. While Lanyer tried her hand at the court with an air of nostalgia when her businesses failed, Yerbury refused publication since her 'day-job' provided her with an independent source of income that made writing for money and the general public uncalled for. This chapter delves into the rhetorical strategies of both Lanyer's and Yerbury's literary output that were either geared to convince patrons through a religious trope of Christ's love or avoided the spotlight when financial backup was already secured. Both poets separated their means of living from their writing practice, thus revealing that patronage and the market were unstable instruments for the exposure and practice of quality writing.

Forty years ago, J.W. Saunders in *The Profession of English Letters* noted the importance of the printed-book market for creative writing in early seventeenth-century Britain, while taking into consideration several factors that posed a challenge to its development. For example, the tradition of manuscript culture in court and coterie writers (which tended to avoid printed dissemination), the Puritan opposition to secular literary forms, the unpredictability of censorship

mechanisms, and the difficulty in locating an audience.¹ The seventeenth century provided a fertile ground for everyone who wanted to express themselves in writing. London became the locus of an unprecedented printing revolution that carried on until the eighteenth century, when revolutionary writing subsided, but the printing infrastructure in place allowed for greater specialization and diffusion of writing.² According to Margaret Ezell, a print marketplace did not replace manuscript production as both private circulation and print distribution relied on a close relationship between the text and its social context. A relationship which could imply subtle forms of patronage and professionalization, as, for example, Dustin Griffin has suggested.³

Salve Deus Rex Judæorum (*Long Live the King of the Jews*, 1611), the only known work by Aemilia Lanyer, provides a fine example of an early seventeenth-century poem that straddles the transition between court patronage and the professionalization of print culture. After ample experience in privileged circles as an escort to Lord Hunsdon, Lanyer was forced to leave the court and support herself and her family when she married below her expectations. There is no evidence that Lanyer sought publication to earn a living outside the culture of gift-exchange in court circles, even though she might have contributed in William Shakespeare's circle of associates. If the latter points were indeed the case, Lanyer would have been a professional ghost writer who – when she was forced to leave the court – sought to appeal to a network of female patrons of the arts to reinstate her social standing. Paradoxically enough, when Lanyer went public by printing under her name she gained exposure as an author, but she was further alienated from her alleged patrons, since patronage was still largely associated with manuscript writing and private circulation.

The invisibility of the second case study in this chapter, Ann Yerbury (*fl.* 1730s), an unknown poet with notable literary skills, informs us that for early middle-class cosmopolitan women who ran their own businesses, poetry was not to be mingled with printing or going public, as the earnings of their professional non-literary labour gave them the artistic freedom they longed for. Publishing could have meant, for some of these invisible women poets who shunned the 'rise of the novel' in the eighteenth century, a form of annoying patronage in servitude to the market. Separated by almost one hundred years, the two women featured in this chapter seem to have approached patronage as a last-resort solution to attain financial and artistic independence. While

1 J.W. Saunders, *The Profession of English Letters*, London 2007 [1964], 69.

2 Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution*, Cambridge 2013.

3 Margaret Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print*, Baltimore 1999, 3; Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England 1650–1800*, Cambridge 1996, 5–7.

Lanyer tried her hand at the court with an air of nostalgia when her businesses failed, Yerbury refused publication since her 'day-job' provided her with an independent source of income that made writing for money or for the general public undesirable or uncalled for. This chapter delves into the rhetorical strategies of both Lanyer's and Yerbury's literary output that were either geared to convince patrons or avoided the spotlight when financial backup was already secured. Both poets separated their means of living from their writing practice, and they were aware of the fact that commercial printing and patronage might curtail their artistic freedom and expose them to a publicity that they sought for only when in need (in the case of Lanyer). This fact alienates literature from the market, but reveals an early and unprecedented awareness that literary skills can be powerful goods in the marketplace of print or in the vestiges of the court elite. By the same token, it reveals that patronage and the market were not regarded as essential instruments for the exposure and practice of quality writing.

Aemilia Lanyer: In Search of Lady Patronage

Aemilia Lanyer, *née* Bassano, published her only known collection of poetry, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* in 1611 at the age of 42, following the Stationer's Register of 2 October 1610. The printer, Valentine Simmes, enjoyed a reputation as one of the best printers in London at that time and had produced several fine quartos of Shakespeare's plays in the early 1600s. Even though A.W. Pollard and G.R. Redgrave list four and then eight copies of *Salve Deus*, Susanne Woods accounts for nine copies.⁴ These are not identical issues of the first edition even though the printer remains the same. One copy held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London – and originally meant as a gift to Prince Henry, King James I's oldest son – lacks the dedicatory verses to Lady Arabella Stuart (Prince Henry's cousin), Susan of Kent, the Countess of Pembroke, and Katherine of Suffolk, but includes the Prince's coat of arms on the cover page.

These textual details reveal an awareness of Lanyer's target audience for her writing as well as a deliberate act of self-promotion to win the patronage and the implicit financial support of court circles. The 114 pages of verse in sestet, sonnet, and narrative form, divided into four chapters or collections, have

4 *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640*, eds A.W. Pollard and G.R. Redgrave, 2nd ed. revised and enlarged by W.A. Jackson and F.S. Ferguson, completed by Katharine F. Pantzer, 3 vol. London 1976–1991; Susanne Woods, *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, Oxford 1993, xlvii.

FIGURE 5.1 Portrait of Amelia Bassano Lanier by Nicholas Hilliard (1547–1619).

SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS, THE YORCK PROJECT (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

been studied mainly for their feministic slant, their religious tones and autobiographical source material. An early interest in Lanyer's life was triggered by British historian A.L. Rowse, who brought up the hypothesis that Shakespeare's Dark Lady was Aemilia Lanyer.⁵ Based on circumstantial evidence, Rowse's claims have not been generally accepted by literature scholars, even though some of the information he provided, particularly his quoted source from astrologer Simon Forman, pointed at significant details about Lanyer's life. She was born in 1569 into a family of musicians of Italian descent, the Bassanos, who earlier emigrated from Venice to London and worked for the Tudor court. Her father, Baptista Bassano, died when Aemilia was a child, and as a teenager she was sent to stay with Susan Bertie, dowager countess of Kent, as a waiting gentlewoman. Lanyer considered Bertie "the Mistress of my youth,"⁶ and it was there where the young Aemilia received an education close to a humanist curriculum for women (see figure 5.1.).

⁵ A.L. Rowse, *Shakespeare the Man*, London 1973.

⁶ Aemilia Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Ivdaeorum*, London 1611, 18.

She also caught the attention of Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, Lord Chamberlain of Elizabeth I. He founded Lord Chamberlain's Men theatre company in 1594, for whom Shakespeare wrote and performed his most successful plays. Despite their 40-years age difference, Hunsdon and Lanyer were probably lovers for a decade until 1592, when Aemilia was pregnant with her only son (whom she named Henry) and was made to marry her cousin Alphonso Lanyer, who had been related to the court musical scene. The marriage proved unhappy because of financial constraints, and Aemilia's situation deteriorated further upon her husband's death in 1613. Her dowry was squandered, and she was removed from any contact with the Jacobean court. Her efforts to run her own school or earn some money from a straw-weighing business from Alphonso were likewise unsuccessful. When, in 1597, Aemilia consulted Forman about her horoscope, her main concern was financial, to the extent that she considered "becoming a ladie again" in reference to entertaining gentlemen in exchange for money.

Aemilia appears to us as a woman with a strong personality, well-read, and knowledgeable about the ways of the world. She was most likely of dark complexion due to her Mediterranean and possibly Jewish-Sephardic ancestry (even though her mother, Margaret Johnson, was an Englishwoman). Her exotic physical appearance, her connection with Hunsdon, Alphonso's acquaintance with the Earl of Southampton, and a series of textual concordances in Shakespeare's Italian plays with Aemilia Bassano, are the main elements invoked to argue a connection between Lanyer and Shakespeare that goes beyond sharing the same circle of patrons.

Barbara Lewalski noted that regardless of any possible identification of Lanyer with the "Dark Lady" of Shakespeare's sonnets, her poetry warrants serious scholarly attention.⁷ Even though this particular aspect of Lanyer's life has distracted from and in some cases overshadowed the study of her poetry, recent scholarship has leaned towards interpreting Lanyer's extant work as a self-contained feminine universe of religious piety or as a desperate attempt to gain patronage. Since *Salve Deus* makes an impassioned defense of women as upholders of virtue and love, it easily lends itself to feministic historicised readings within the context of early modern women's writing.⁸ However, as

7 Barbara Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, Cambridge, MA 1993, 213.

8 Su Fang, "Aemilia Lanyer and the Politics of Praise", *ELH*, 67/2 (2000), 433–45; *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre and the Canon*, ed. Marshall Grossman, Lexington 1998; L. McGrath, "Let Us Have Our Libertie Againe: Aemilia Lanyer's 17th Century Feminist Voice", *Women's Studies*, 20/3–4 (1992), 345; Barbara Lewalski, "Seizing Discourses and Reinventing Genres", in *Aemilia Lanyer*, ed. Grossman, 49–59; J. Mueller, "The Feminist Poetics of 'Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum'", in *Aemilia Lanyer*, ed. Grossman, 99–127; T. DiPasquale, "Woman's Desire for Man in Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 99/

Longfellow and Coles have shown in their analyses of *Salve Deus*, Lanyer's innovation in matters of style and themes is fully appreciated when considering the wealth of her narrative sources. From the psalms and the Book of Salomon, to contemporaries such as Nicholas Breton or Giles Fletcher, whose poems on Christ's passion remain largely unread today.⁹

These lucid interpretations of *Salve Deus*, despite their exhaustiveness, tend to undermine its method of *imitatio* as a cultural and social referent within a circle of learned, powerful and wealthy ladies. As we shall see, Lanyer's *Passion* is textually grounded on theological interpretation and typology, in tune with the Protestant allegiance of their addressees, but its tone is neither meditative nor reflective. As Susan Wiseman remarks, "the poem repeatedly provokes the patron to evaluate her response to Christ's Passion as evoked by the poem".¹⁰ The *Passion* is used exemplarily for its visual and moral impact, and its lack of theological resolution is consistent with its performative nature. Given the scarcity of representations of the Passion in late English Renaissance, Lanyer might have been influenced by Vittoria Colonna and her *Pianto sopra la Passione di Cristo* (Weeping Over the Passion of Christ, 1557)¹¹ in her concern with Mary's sorrow and emotional turmoil, while Veronica Franco's *Rime*¹² might have been a likely source for Lanyer. They were both *cortigianas onestas*, and Lanyer's "Description of Cooke-ham" as well as Franco's "Capitolo 25" (1575), serve both writers as an imaginative space to claim a higher moral and intellectual standard for women – as Christine de Pizan had previously done in *Le Livre de la Cite des Dames* (The Book of the City of Women, 1405), which Lanyer most probably read. Thus, Lanyer presents her own rewriting of Elizabethan verse, which is also informed by earlier Italian adaptations of the Petrarchan tradition by women writers. The representation of Lanyer's *Passion* appears to us as a reenactment of her own exegesis of Christ's love and suffering that owes much to a synthesis of Elizabethan Petrarchism and Italian *petrarchismo femminile*. The dynamic, dialogic, almost prosopopeic narrative invites the reader-patron to partake in a sacrificial ritual of spiritual love in which Christ's sacrifice is equated with the generous act of giving oneself to patronage.

3 (2000), 356–78; E. Hodgson, "Prophecy and Gendered Mourning in Lanyer's 'Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum'", *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 43/1 (2003), 101–16.

9 See K. Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing*, Cambridge 2008; E. Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England*, Cambridge 2004.

10 Susan Wiseman, "Exemplarity, Women and Political Rhetoric", in *Rhetoric, Women and Politics in Early Modern England*, eds. J. Richards and A. Thorne, New York 2007, 140.

11 Vittoria Colonna, *Pianto della Marchesa di Pescara sopra la passione di Christo. Oratione della medesima sopra l'Ave Maria*, Bologna 1557.

12 Veronica Franco, *Rime, a cura di Stefano Bianchi*, Milan 1995.

Lanyer's adaptation of Petrarchism is also to be appreciated in Shakespeare's sonnets, as John Hudson has argued convincingly in the biographical and textual traces of Lanyer in Shakespeare's plays.¹³

David Lasocki and Roger Prior have reconstructed and contextualised every available piece of information about several generations of the Bassano family as musicians and instrument makers up to Aemilia's life in London. Most of their book *The Bassanos* (1995)¹⁴ has historical interest for musicologists, but the chapter entitled "Was Aemilia the Dark Lady?" is obviously appealing to the literary historian. The authors are careful not to support Rowse's bold claims about the identity of the Dark Lady, but they reach similar conclusions and draw much of their evidence from Simon Forman as well. Even though Lanyer's scholars are reluctant to acknowledge that Shakespeare and Aemilia knew one another, Lasocki and Prior state that "there can be little doubt that Shakespeare knew Aemilia".¹⁵ They invoke the etymological coincidences in Shakespeare's Italian plays: Emillius and Bassanius in *Titus Andronicus*, Aemilia in *Othello* and Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*. Above all, they underline the fact that they both belonged to the same small group of professional court entertainers. This apparent coincidence might not have been such, since Aemilia had a peripheral relationship with the Jacobean court after her separation from Henry Hunsdon and her marriage to Alphonso in 1592.

The publication of the *Salve Deus* collection as late as 1611 is in itself a token of Aemilia's lack of favour and activity in the court. Erica Longfellow notes that "although other women had added dedications to their poems, none had so clearly inscribed the search for patronage into their work".¹⁶ Isabella Whitney, who printed her poems in 1567¹⁷ and addressed ladies in generic terms or metaphorically as "flowers of philosophy", did not produce a catalogue of possible patronesses, and neither did Ann Lock in her sonnets (1560) or Mary Sidney Herbert in her translation of the Psalms,¹⁸ which circulated in manuscript form in the 1590s and Aemilia might have read. A more obscure figure, Jane

13 Colleen Shea, *Literary Authority as Cultural Criticism in Aemilia Lanyer*, London 2002, 386–407; W.M. Roberts, "Gnosis in Aemilia Lanyer's 'Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum'", *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 59/2 (2005).

14 David Lasocki and Roger Prior, *The Bassanos: Venetian Musicians and Instrument Makers in England, 1531–1665*, Aldershot 1995.

15 *Ibid.*, 117.

16 Longfellow, *Women*, 59.

17 For a modern, albeit incomplete edition of Whitney's poetry, see *Renaissance Women Poets*, Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney and Aemilia Lanyer, ed. Danielle Clarke, London 2001.

18 *The Sidney Psalter*, eds H. Hamlin et al, Oxford 2009.

Seager,¹⁹ was very explicit and creative in her appeal for patronage in Elizabeth I's court when in 1587 she translated the prophecies of the ten Sibyls from the Latin of Filippo Barbieri's *Sibyllarym de Christo Vaticina* and encased them in a binding of velvet.²⁰

The complete collection of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* is addressed to nine noblewomen, some of whom she did not know personally: Queen Anne, Princess Elizabeth, Lady Arabella Stuart and the Countesses of Kent, Pembroke, Bedford, Cumberland, Suffolk, and Dorset, plus a general address to "all virtuous Ladies in general". The Countess of Pembroke and the Countess of Bedford maintained circles of poets and Aemilia's main patron, Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland, was one of the dedicatees of Spenser's *Fowre Hymnes* (1596), another source for Lanyer. Her address to nine ladies, a number that coincides with the nine Muses of Mount Helicon, is unprecedented and serves a narrative, pragmatic and performative purpose.

It is unclear whether Aemilia ever knew Shakespeare personally, but it is perfectly possible that they knew of each other. They had common acquaintances and both strove to survive in the competitive arena of courtly patronage – although Shakespeare was far more successful than Aemilia. More than a hypothetical personal connection, they shared similar challenges by dint of their social standing and possibly their personal ambitions. Both published their respective poetry collections within two years (1609 and 1611) and both were experienced in the glories and miseries of human fortune. Any reverberations between Lanyer's and Shakespeare's work becomes meaningful when viewed as pieces of a shared artistic and generational tapestry, interacting in multifold variations of the same cultural capital that feeds on the practice of eclectic borrowing, imitation and adaptation.

One of the most striking echoes of Shakespeare in *Salve Deus* is the commonplace metaphor of the world as a stage, which according to Lanyer's formulation is closer to Antonio's verses in *The Merchant of Venice*: "I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano/A stage where every man must play a part, And mine a sad one"²¹ than to the monologue of the seven stages of man in *As You Like It*.²² Lanyer writes that "For well you knowe, this world is but a Stage/ Where all doe play their parts, and must be gone"²³ for the daughter of her

19 Jane Seager, "The Divine Prophecies of the Ten Sibylls" ed. Jessica Malay, *English Literary Renaissance*, 36/2 (2006), 189–93.

20 For an extensive discussion of Elizabethan manuscript poetry by women, see *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Poetry*, eds Jill Millman and Gillian Wright, Manchester 2005.

21 William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. J.L. Halio, Oxford 2008, Act 1:1.

22 William Shakespeare *As You Like It*, ed. A. Brissenden, Oxford 2008, Act 2:7.

23 Lanyer, *Salve Deus*, 46.

main patron, Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset. Since the beginning of her dedication to her, Lanyer calls for preparing (with “Lampes with oyle”) “to enter with the Bridegroom [Jesus Christ] to the feast, where he that is the greatest may be least”.²⁴ Lanyer embarks on a lengthy explanation of why the last will be the first, borrowing from the parable of the labourers in the vineyard from Matthew 20:1. She dismisses external displays of virtue (“Greatnesse is no sure frame to build upon”) because only virtue based on love can be immortal. If a powerful individual does not devote himself to good deeds, then this is the mark that he or she does not stem from a virtuous lineage: “If he that much enjoyes, doth little good, we may suppose he comes not of that blood”.²⁵ Aemilia is inviting the countess of Dorset to take up her stand in the world stage by performing good deeds because this is the unmistakable sign of virtue.

This standpoint is ritualised in two acts that Aemilia invokes throughout her poem: receiving Jesus Christ in steadfastness at the Feast table and developing a generous attitude towards others, in particular women such as Aemilia who are “humble” and vividly aware of the abuses of men. She in turn can only act as a facilitator of God’s love in their lives:

Therefore to you (good Madame) I present
His lovely love, more worth than purest gold,
Who for your sake his pretious blood hath spent,
His death and passion here you may behold. (46)

Lanyer’s equation of patronage with divine love – inscribed in Christ’s sacrifice – instills dynamism in *Salve Deus*. Women’s love of Christ is of superior quality to that of men and, as a result, female patronage is too. After the dedication to the Countess of Dorset, Lanyer describes in the chapter “To a Vertuous Reader” that the men who criticise women are the same kinds of men who “dishonoured Christ his Apostles and prophets, putting them to shamefull deaths”.²⁶ John Rogers contends that “Lanyer’s representation of the Passion enables her retrospectively to assume for herself the right to have written this poem” identified as “holy work”,²⁷ but Aemilia’s authority as a writer does not seem to require any strategy of endorsement since she does not hide a personal relation (or lack thereof) with some of her would-be

24 *Ibid.*, 41.

25 *Ibid.*, 43.

26 *Ibid.*, 49.

27 John Rogers, “The Passion of a Female Literary Tradition: Aemilia Lanyer’s ‘Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum’”, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 63/4 (2000), 442.

patronesses, even if one is the former queen, Elizabeth I: "And this great Laddie whom I love and honour/And from my very tender yeers have knowne".²⁸ Aemilia seeks a reaction in her readers-patronesses: to accept the love of Christ in their lives.

The evangelical slant of *Salve Deus* has been overshadowed in many analyses of the representation of Aemilia's passion of Christ for its visual spectacle: mainly, the eroticism of Christ's body, close to a Gongorean and Baroque image of the contorted and fatally wounded Christ. Lanyer's exhortation to her patrons to gaze upon and desire the body of Christ as a symbol of grace is one of the most frequently discussed aspects of her poem, even though the display of this motif in English devotional literature has not been sufficiently studied. Debora Shuger locates this tradition of finding Christ's love in his Passion in the early reformers and even Calvin himself,²⁹ and as a result later English Calvinist accounts of the Passion resort to a Catholic tradition of the inner suffering of Christ since this highlights the inner struggle of an 'elect soul'. A vivid representation of Christ's Passion allows Lanyer to reconcile her mixed devotional heritage as the daughter of an Italian Catholic family who had become Protestants in England. The gentle and visually beautiful representation of Mary's lamentation while holding the dead body of Christ is an unusual image in English Elizabethan poetry, which Lanyer may have read in Vittoria Colonna. Particularly, on the tone of motherly suffering – itself an appropriation of Jacopo Sannazaro's *Lamentatio de Morte Christi* (Lamentation of Christ's Death, 1526).

Whether Lanyer's notion of the Passion of Christ is inspired by her family origins or not is beside the point. It may help understand her intimate knowledge with this imagery, but not why she is using it as a model, or even as a ploy, for patronage. The answer to this has again more to do with Lanyer's authorial and narrative intentions than with a conscious choice of theology. Integrating spiritual love in one's life can be achieved more effectively when the 'exempla' illustrates the constructive effects of love. Suffering cannot "fold up all Beauties in your breast" (129) or be the "Husband of Thy Soule" because it does not foster generosity of spirit. Again, Lanyer's adaptation of typological references of the Psalms is contingent upon a performative action that she prioritises. It is a form of 'personation' that is close to a prosopopeia. Adamson, Alexander and Ettenhuber define it as a mask, which – however close to a real person – is a performance whose rhetoric has persuasive value in the context

28 Lanyer, *Salve Deus*, 8.

29 See Debora Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity*, Berkeley 1994.

of Renaissance poetry.³⁰ Shakespeare's Sonnets are more interactive than persuasive, and look forward to provoking thought in a reader-witness instead of eliciting a proactive response from a reader-patron.

The sorority of *Salve Deus* is not grounded in a meritocracy of the spirit. The exalted quality of recognising and expressing the love of the soul is predicated first on the grounds of being a woman of social stature. And then, as we have seen, on the good deeds that such recognition of Christ's love inspires:

This Grace great Lady, doth possesse thy Soule,
And makes thee pleasing in thy Makers sight,
This Grace doth all imperfect Thoughts controle,
Directing thee to serve thy God aright. (62)

Lanyer's politics of praising is taken to an extreme for the sake of inviting patronage. At the same time, it gives her a cue to justify her inspiration by a Muse. The Grace of these great ladies, and especially Lanyer's main patroness the Countess of Cumberland, inspires her to trigger their latent love into action. Aemilia is thus invested with the power of divine inspiration to become a purveyor of the gift of love to her reader-patron ladies. The narrative effect is irresistible, since Lanyer authorises her poetic speech and her entreaty to patronage by dint of her prophetic powers:

These high deserts invites my lowely Muse
To write of Him, and pardon crave of thee,
For Time so spent, I need make no excuse,
Knowing it doth with thy faire Minde agree
So well, as thou no Labour will refuse. (62)

The recognition of Christ's love is the prerogative of women and, particularly but not exclusively, the responsibility of those from high social standing. Lanyer considers that a virtuous life inspired by the love of Christ is the mark of true nobility, but she is also aware that this is not a guarantee of fairness:

What difference was there when the world began?
Was it not Virtue that distinguished all?
All sprang but from one woman and one man
Then how doth Gentry come to rise and fall? (36)

30 *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, eds Sylvia Adamson, G. Alexander and K. Ettenhuber, Cambridge 2011, 111.

This series of rhetorical questions fall into the cliché of being 'equal in the sight of God'. They also attempt to comfort Anne Clifford, who was entangled in a legal dispute to inherit her father's estate (42). Line 36 reveals a moment of crisis in which Aemilia interrogates the mystery of divine justice: is salvation, including social salvation, a matter of faith alone, or of virtuous deeds? As we have seen, Lanyer's structure and content of her *Passion* suggests the second option in consonance with her likely Christian leanings, but she is also aware of the challenges that social degeneration poses to even the most virtuous of individuals. For Lanyer, spiritual love can be experienced when it is gladly accepted as a redemption of Christ's suffering or as compensation for social alienation. Thus patronage becomes metaphorically an act of higher love that perpetuates class differences as much as it effaces them.

Ann Yerbury: Becoming an Invisible Author

Approaching the considerable poetic production of Ann Yerbury, a perfectly unknown poet in her lifetime as well as in ours, challenges the notion that in order to be termed a professional writer one has to obtain some sort of benefit from it. And yet, gain cannot be completely dissociated from Ann's writing practice, since it enabled it on a regular basis. To the excitement of holding, reading and making sense of a collection of poetry that has not been transcribed or edited before, we may add the growing realisation that Yerbury's case may not be a one-off trove. Decades-long established critical assumptions about the rise and maturity of the novel as an eighteenth-century genre that allowed the professionalisation of women writers coexist with an alternative dormant reality: the manuscript output that we find in archives and libraries by women who wrote for self-expression and the advancement of their learning with an apparent disregard for seeking money or recognition through their writing. Judging whether Yerbury's poetry ranks among the best poetry of her day is beyond the scope of this chapter, but her case brings home a series of questions that invite us to reconsider the connections between life-writing, women's canonical production and the dichotomy between writing for profit or attaining profit for writing.

There is virtually no information about Ann Yerbury's life. We know she was the wife of William Yerbury, who belonged to a wealthy family of clothiers in the Bristol region of England. A leather-bound notebook written by Ann's mother and found among her papers informs us that Ann was married to William on 24 June 1735. They moved to London soon afterwards and she gave

birth to three children: John (1736), Ann (1737), and Mary (1738). Her husband died in 1741. The Bristol Record Office records a Yerbury family of clothiers in a record of Assignment of a lease from February 1693, in which a John Yerbury, “late of Beckington, co.Somerset” is mentioned.³¹ There is also mention of a letter from Ann Yerbury to Mr and Mrs John Kiddell from Bradford – which became an important textile centre in the nineteenth century – dated on 11 October 1748. She may also be the Ann Yerbury, widow of Bradford, Wiltshire, whose will is dated on 30 May 1799.

Ann Yerbury’s mother details births, deaths and marriages from several members of her immediate and extended family. However, she does not record the birthdate of her two children that appear mentioned in the notebook. She only refers to a brother of Ann, Charles, who “died y^e 21 of Oc:^{br} of 1740 in y^e 34 years of his age”, without giving further details about the circumstances of his passing. This date indicates that Ann may have been born in the first decade of 1700. In one of Ann’s own poems, she reveals that her birthday is on 12 February. Curiously enough, Ann’s mother records in her diary that “my mother Smyth died y^e 12 day of Feb^{ry} 1717”. The coincidence in the day of Ann Yerbury’s birth and her grandmother’s death may explain why Ann’s mother did not want to mention her birth date, or it might be argued that there was no need to write those dates down on paper because she remembered perfectly well the birthdates of her two children.

Other than the factual information surrounding the scarce details about Ann Yerbury’s biography, the notebook is significant as an artifact of women’s writing. It was not uncommon for women to keep a record of family mementoes and genealogy. However, this notebook in particular denotes a willingness to be objective by providing the raw facts while, at the same time, it is emotionally selective in its criteria for inclusion. Members of the family are missing, and there are also omissions in the categorisation of events. If Ann’s mother had aimed at being thorough in her record, she would have mentioned, for instance, the date of Charles’ marriage, since she includes the date for the death of one of his children. Her memory is selective even when she attempts to be objective, or this objectivity is only in appearance. Ann Yerbury’s poems and prose also rely on memory and choice in the construction of her literary persona and in her life-writing, and in ways which would have startled any commercial printer.

31 Bristol Record Office, Records of the Anglican Parish of St Mary, Assignment of a lease, 20 February 1693. Ref no P/Xch/D/20(b)i–ii. Retrieved online at the Bristol Record Office <<http://archives.bristol.gov.uk>>

The Ann Yerbury Papers collection is held at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library in Los Angeles.³² The library catalogue describes it as “devotional poetry before 1800” and as “Poems and prose written by Ann Yerbury between 1729 and 1753 on various themes including illness, religion, friendship, reflections, and death”. The collection is arranged thematically into 3 groups. Most items are poems (48 pieces) from 1732–53, but there are also three earlier pieces of prose (1730) that Yerbury defines as “themes”: the family papers, and a modern newspaper article and letter dating from 1950 and 1956, respectively. The news clip features a short report about Belcome Court, in Whiltshire, Bristol area, where the Yerbury family lived – according to the report – from the fifteenth century to the early twentieth century. The Yerburies were keen on architecture, and their house and gardens underwent several reforms from notable architects in the late eighteenth century. The newspaper clip is attached to a handwritten note from Hugh Rogert & Nicholl, surveyors, probably signed by Nicholl, who sends it to a Mr Bangham because “your wife is connected to this family”. Another paratextual piece of ephemera is kept in a separate folder-box of the collection. It is a frost-fair keepsake with a woodcut illustration of a pastoral landscape and the caption “Ann Yerbury. Printed on the River of Thames when Frozen over, January 30, 1739–40”. These keepsakes had been very popular since the seventeenth century in particularly cold winters when the River Thames froze. Frost Fairs and stalls were set up and letterpress keepsakes were made on the spot with the name of the buyer.

Ann Yerbury might have visited the Thames in the winter of 1739–40 and had one of these keepsakes printed for her with her name on it, even though her writings do not mention any trip to the river. This might have been the only time Yerbury saw her name on printed matter, albeit never her work.

The ‘family’ papers of the collection give insight into the everyday management of a household. They are penned with the aim of keeping a record of family affairs, especially if any incident has occurred in the house. Yerbury also writes a “hymn for the late public safety in y^e time of the Rebellion 1745” where she expresses her concerns about the Jacobite Rebellion in 1745 and how it altered public order. Most of her writings are devoted to reflections and meditations on illness and death. Through her soliloquy on ‘morning bliss’ during her walks and her meditations on death, Yerbury reveals not only her frail state of health during 1749–1753, but how her illness is strengthening her resolution to live for the good of her family and God. In 1750, after one of the coldest winters

32 MS.1994.002. The author of this chapter wishes to thank the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library for permission to quote from The Yerbury Papers collection.

ever registered in London, Yerbury begins a cycle of recoveries and relapses that she attributes to the 'hand' of God. She is torn between her determination to live and her respect for divine will.

It would be an oversimplification to consider Yerbury's manuscript an exercise in domestic 'occasional verse'. It happened indeed on regular occasion but did not follow the discipline of a diary. Most of her poems were triggered by an event, which Yerbury considered important in the flux of personal or communal history. This is one of the specific traits that make Yerbury's collection original and professional in its viewpoint. Even though we can trace a thread in her choice of themes, Yerbury displayed a range of circumstances that led to her main concern: our place on earth in the face of death. She felt herself to be a subject of history, a "soul" who needed to make sense of how her personal story related and interacted with those circumstances. This mimetic quality and the capacity to grant historical transcendence and momentum to personal affairs – while interpreting communal events as being part of a fragmented but cohesive narrative – is Yerbury's characteristic poetic seal.

Often these concerns are articulated in a religious key from the viewpoint of a woman who is pious as well as versed in the Bible. Nevertheless, she displays a more limited textual knowledge of the scriptures than her seventeenth- or sixteenth-century peers since she rarely paraphrases episodes or lines from the Bible. Yerbury's use of pious language owes more to an *ad hoc* stylistic preference than to a willingness to draw an exegesis. She demonstrates strong religious convictions in God's love as a unifying energy that inspires at difficult moments and helps to understand ethical concerns. She is not preaching or prophesying, even though she can give advice to others or warn them. Jesus and Jehovah (instead of 'Lord', in keeping with the denomination of the King's James Bible) are a moral force to Yerbury in her survey of her inner and outer world.

One of the earliest items in the collection is a bunch of prose papers composed in 1730. The first of these is entitled *Some Reflections on Death*, and it starts with a set of questions that marks the discursive tone and the inquisitiveness of her approach to mortality:

How common is it for the generality of mankind to be afraid of Death? If possible wo'd they not fly him as from their most dreadful foe? Oh, how they tremble at his approach? What terrors possess their soul at his approach! And what would they not give, was it possible to bribe off ye fatal hour?³³

33 Ann Yerbury, *Some Reflections on Death* (1730) in The Yerbury Papers, MS.1994.002. William Andrews Clark Memorial Library in Los Angeles.

Yerbury goes on describing that only people attached to pleasures would find death unbearable. She argues that, far from being terrifying, death is a place of solace and reunion with the love of God. However, her argument gains complexity when she reviews the reasons why someone who leads a 'bright' life should be afraid of death. Is it because they do not want to depart from their families? There are traces of a Sapphic poetic component in her train of thought, a welcoming of death not as a redemptive force but as the pleasant dwelling of the soul. She articulates her desire for mortality:

In the most agreeable scenes of my Life, I can think on Death at a future state with joy. Rottenness at the grave are no mortifying thoughts to me. What though my body is laid in the dust, my soul shall mount up to the glorious mansions already prepared. My soul can never decay if nourished with spiritual food.³⁴

There is a distinctive mortal quality in Yerbury's writing, a preoccupation with any event or emotion that confronts her with the fragility of existence. The prospect of death threatens her physical being, but it empowers her true spiritual one. Death is the motive underpinning her autobiography: writing is a proof of being alive and of participating in the flow of history, which is ruthless but mitigated by God's hand who cares for one's soul. Thus, life-writing guarantees a place not only in history, but in eternity. Her physical life belongs to history, her spiritual one is timeless.

Perfect love, uninterrupted peace, blissful harmony, friendship disinterested and without end. Oh!, with what transports of joy would I embrace that kind, that welcome messenger, who would release me from this stage of mortality, this fleeting theatre.³⁵

Her poetry enacts a struggle between facts and their possible transcendent meaning. There is no willingness to proselytise when Yerbury refers to salvation; there is instead an impulse to know, to rationalise and to communicate her sense of existence. By welcoming death and fighting it on occasions, Yerbury derives her notion of personal story (and tragedy) from her construct that the individual is a co-participant in her destiny.

The advice that she gives *To a Professed Libertine* (1730) follows a similar pattern: a description of a state of death "within the vaulted earth" in which the

³⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 3.

libertine's pleasures will "thy memory blot" and worms "will be the constant companions in the shades with thee". But even if one misspends his life, "your conscious soul, alas! Can never die". The metaphorical images are reminiscent of the graveyard poetry as in Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743), but the genre flourished some years after Yerbury composed these poems and she does not entertain gothic scenes of death, as is the case with Blair or Edward Young with *Night Thoughts* (1742). Meditations on death, epitaphs and reflections upon one's own life at the prospect of death (whether real or imaginative) were not uncommon in much of the poetry produced by women in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Yerbury's versification on this subject is in line with what her contemporary women writers had published or circulated around that time. Mary Chandler, who ran a milliner shop in Bath and published a much-read poem entitled *A Description of Bath*, wrote her "Own Epitaph" in 1736 in which she takes stock of the way she had lived, conveying a sense of moral self-assessment with no dramatic artifice, lamentation, or attempt at philosophical disquisition. However, the depth of her message touches modern readers:

She never could forgive, for she never had resented;
As she never had deny'd, so she never repented.
She lov'd the whole Species, but some had distinguish'd;
But Time and much Thought had all Passion extinguish'd.³⁶

Chandler writes in heroic couplets, as Yerbury does, and displays a similar pattern of acceptance and resolution that is also predicated in her poetry. In this poem, Chandler weaves contrasting images that reinforce her poetic statement: that she has left an imprint as a soul ("Believing she lost not her Soul with her Breath"). The outcome of finding this balance between accepting your modest public place in history and building your own story based on strong ethical grounds is a poetry that reveals a taste for reporting everyday events in a sincere voice. It is closer in the choice of tone and topic to the working-class, kitchen-maid poetry of Mary Leapor, for instance, than the bluestocking rhetoric of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu when she addresses a similar subject matter in *Answer to a Lady Who Advised Retirement*:

In crowded courts I find myself alone,
And pay my worship to a nobler throne.

³⁶ Mary Chandler, "On my own epitaph" (1730), in *Eighteenth Century Women Poets*, ed. Roger Lonsdale, Oxford 1990, 152.

Long since the value of this world I know,
 Pity the madness, and despise the show.
 [...]
 Seldom I mark mankind's detested ways
 Not hearing censure, nor affecting Praise
 And unconcern'd, my future fate I trust
 To that sole Being, merciful and just.³⁷

Montagu's self-assessment at the prospect of death is poetically arresting, but less grounded in concrete experience ("value of this world", "mankind detested ways"). Yerbury, as a member of a middle class that relies more on work than salons, on networks of neighbors than women cliques, is both a reflection of her intimate sphere as much as her personality as a poet – but it is not, despite the recurrence of pastoral topoi, an exercise in Augustan imitation and versification.

Sarah Prescott, in her analysis of the coexistence of manuscript and print poetry in this period reminds us that the years from 1690 to 1740 cannot compare to figures of the later eighteenth century in terms of textual production, even though the period is important to understand the subsequent flourishing of women's writing. She mentions three patterns in particular, "the significance of provincial culture, the marketing of virtue as a saleable commodity, and the emergence of the highly public yet respectable woman writer",³⁸ all of which resonate with Yerbury's poetry inasmuch as it instills real life into current affairs, and a human touch of transcendence that is heartfelt without relying on emotionality or sensibility. Scholars of eighteenth-century women's poetry have identified its fragmentary and imaginative nature as well as its appropriation of classical poetical models.³⁹ These formal idiosyncrasies may have prevented us from appreciating the depth of thinking behind the base material that women used as subjects of poetical creation: life-writing.

37 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, "In answer to a lady who advised retirement" (1730), in *British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century: an Anthology*, eds Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine E. Ingrassia, Baltimore 2009, 688.

38 Sarah Prescott, *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture*, New York 2003, 9. For a monograph on habits of reading and writing in provincial England, see Jan Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-century England*, Oxford 2007.

39 Paula Backscheider, *Eighteenth-century Women Poets and their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre*, Baltimore 2005; *Producing the Eighteenth-century Book: Writers and Publishers in England 1650–1800*, eds Laura Runge and Pat Rogers, Newark 2009; Gillian Wright, *Producing Women's Poetry, 1600–1730: Text and Paratext, Manuscript and Print*, Cambridge 2013.

There is a marked individuality in Yerbury's poetry that makes no pretense of imposing into the public sphere; but then, there is no doubt about her self-authority. Since Yerbury did not write for an audience – although she might have circulated her poems among her circle of friends and relatives – we may assume that she enjoyed greater freedom by not being published. There is no reference in her poems to any wish to be published or any regret for not going public, but yet her poetry and prose are assured. Can we deem as literature those writings that are not geared towards a public audience? Ultimately, what we see in the traces of invisible women such as Yerbury is that their production enjoys an intellectual freedom of speech that may be more restrained or predictable when it is conceived with an audience in mind (even if the texts were published posthumously).

There is in Yerbury, though, a sense that her writing can and should be useful for others to read, not because she is relaying the word of God or speaking on behalf of a political agenda, but because her vision is the result of self-meditation and analysis of the world inside and around her. Yerbury's production spans two crucial decades of rapid changes in the spread of the professionalisation of women's writing. Yerbury would have enjoyed in theory more opportunities to expose her writing to a larger public than her predecessors, had she found a list of subscribers to support her printing enterprise. There is no way of knowing, from her extant materials, whether she attempted any of this or whether she was willing to do so. She was a wife and a working mother in her family business. She did not endure financial hardships, even though she could not afford to quit her 'day job'. She was to all intents and purposes a modern working mother, a member of the educated middle class who derived her sense of worth from her work and community life.⁴⁰ There is not in Yerbury's poetry, however, any vindication of class pride or even any mention to her business. It is an intense personal and meditative poetry that does not borrow the rhetoric of sensibility and rationalises what it means to be alive in the meanders of fate. She does not vindicate women's rights, but she does not assume a stance inferior to men. She aims at being universal through her particular case. In this regard, Yerbury is closer to the popular kitchen-maid poetry of Mary Leapor in her absence of an audience despite her strong vindictive messages of gender, class, and abuse. Leapor, though, was published posthumously by subscription. Invisible poets, such as Yerbury, pose a question mark on the intersections between class and opportunity in their chances to achieve

40 For an overview of middle class women and their productivity, see *Women, Work and Wages in England, 1600–1850*, eds Penelope Lane, Neil Raven and K.D.M. Snell, Rochester, NY 2004.

public recognition. Her class or gender did not prevent Yerbury from being published, but she did not belong to or corresponded with networks of blue-stockings and learned societies. Her choice of genre and method of inquiry (meditative, philosophical, iconoclast and fragmentary throughout a unifying theme) was not easy to market in the buoyant supply of novels. Yerbury lacked opportunities because she was normalised into the middle-class system and her poetry might have seemed even to her an individual pursuit of no social or intellectual value. She did not hack for the market, and her options as a published writer must have been scant due to intellectual prejudice. Leapor's plight, however, appeals to the curiosity of the more privileged members of the middle class for her depictions of the abusive working conditions of maids. This treatment is not restricted to employers, though, as Leapor denounces parental abuse in her lines:

Then to her Fancy *Celia's* Woes appear,
 The Nymph, whose Tale deserves a pitying Tear;
 Whose early Beauties met a swift Decay;
 A Rose that faded at the rising Day
 While Grief and Shame oppress'd her tender Age,
 Pursu'd by Famine and a Father's Rage.⁴¹

Leapor's choice of the name *Celia* and the reference to the decay of beauty resonate with an inversion of Pope's short poem *To Celia*: "Celia, we know, is sixty-five, Yet Celia's face is seventeen; Thus winter in her breast must live, While summer in her face is seen". Yerbury resorts sometimes to pairs of pastoral pen names in her poems (Cassander-Celia, Cleone-Lucinda, Lysander, Cynthia). Even though Leapor's tone is more belligerent than Yerbury's in the 1730s, the pathos of accepting one's lot while resolving to live according to one's own vision is prevalent in most women's poetry from the 1730s and 1740s. On the occasion of another significant event in Yerbury's biography, the death of her mother, she takes up the quill to record it and writes *Soliloquy to Sudden Death*. She returns to her usual subject matter of the mystery of existence:

But in what manner hence she took her flight
 What mortal knows? Unseen, she pierced the clay:
 Unseen, these lower mansions gaily fled;
 She left a track behind, that we might trace

41 Mary Leapor, "The cruel parent" (1730) in Richard Greene, *Mary Leapor: A Study in Eighteenth-century Women's Poetry*, Oxford 1993, 67.

Her airy footsteps, thro' the blissful road.
 Think oh my soul! This moment only thine,
 In this probationary state: the next,
 Thy state is fix'd: tremendous thought!⁴²

Yerbury's tone is deeper and somber in her later poetry, when her meditations on death become a narrative motif to defend one's own dignity in life. It enunciates her own sense of power and authority in this "probationary state". Yerbury's voice becomes outspoken when she writes an impassionate defense of a 'deceased gentleman' who has been slandered upon death by an anonymous "author of a scurrilous elegy" (1749): "Nor let thy Spleen in Slander still delight:/Do justice to the venerable shade/Do justice to yourself: nor thus degrade". Yerbury's staunch defense of self-dignity is built upon a sense of personal integrity.

Yerbury dedicates much of her poetic production to friends and relatives who have passed away or are seriously ill, employing this same Sapphic undertone of celebratory dying, including her own "impending" death in 1733 that did not happen when she composed a Hymn "to be sung before her funeral sermon". She can't wait to let herself go at the prospect of gaining new knowledge and "seek beyond the skies". God invites her to do so: "Come, fly this dull, this narrow sphere/And regions new survey". Death is also for Yerbury an appealing place where true wisdom, knowledge and love can be realised. She often refers to the narrow-mindedness of earthly life and converses with a God who offers a heaven of personal salvation in which true understanding reigns. It was not uncommon for Yerbury to revise her poems "years later", in some cases even twenty years later, which shows a commitment to writing as her mode of expressing and revising her feelings. She discloses her approach to writing in her *Poem on a Sabbath Day*:

When in my closet, from the world retired
 My thoughts, my soul, &all by heaven inspir'd
 Shall nobly show the empty joys of life
 Domestick quarrels, or more publick strife
 (Which spread their black contagion here below)
 and upward fly, from whence my comforts flow.
 The noblest objects, shall employ each thought.
 With love sublime & admiration fraught.⁴³

42 Yerbury, *Soliloquy to Sudden Death*, 1747.

43 Yerbury, *Poem on a Sabbath Day*, 1732.

Writing is for Yerbury a mental exercise of observation that is inspired by heaven, but not mediated by it. She is not an instrument or an agent of the divine. Through silence and meditation she reaches an inspired state, which allows her to employ her thinking and creative abilities to make sense of the world around her and inside herself. Her visions are assisted sometimes by classical thinkers – “And now methinks I see the sons of art/Like Aesculapius, acting each his part” – (1733), or her invocation as a muse to Apollo on occasion of Queen Caroline’s illness in 1737 – “Fly to thy learned sons with sacred art/some sovereign medicine ere too late impart/Oh Gods, I ask no more than you can give”. These create a syncretic effect in her poetry that move her necessarily away from restrictive interpretations of women’s poetry as closet versification.

Yerbury’s poetry is no different in her mastery of contemporary tropes and stylistic resources from the production of many of her contemporary poetesses. Despite her fragmentary, episodic nature and the scant material traces of her biography, a recurrent theme weaves her collection: the meaning of life and the construction of an ethical self who is inscribed in a community that alienates the individual soul. Even though Yerbury does not write on impulse, there is often an episode that triggers her sense of biography as history. Her working use of Augustan pastoral poetry shows that she participated in a poetic tradition of women’s writing and a cultural capital that cultivated life-writing as a method of historical analysis to generate original thinking about oneself and the world. Ann Yerbury’s case reveals to us that, despite her extreme invisibility – there is no evidence about the circulation of her poetry or her willingness to go public – women poets wrote with authority about their chosen themes. Yerbury belonged to a middle class that relied on its work and did not endure financial constraints, but she chose not to publish by subscription and make herself known. Several factors might have impinged on her invisibility as a poet, and some of them might have to do with a classed consciousness that going public meant exposing oneself and one’s work to criticism.

Marketing Talent

Publishing was becoming a market, and the woman professional writer who relied on it for her sustenance might have been aware of the constraints of the market that women poets such as Yerbury ignored or chose to reject. When reading original manuscripts, we are reminded that the history of women’s writing and production of ideas happened very often on the margins of the market even when women enjoyed unprecedented opportunities to be published. Bigold has recognised the urgency of approaching the period from a

more holistic point of view, since for the most part, “scholars have been content to assess a writer’s engagement and importance based on their productions in print”.⁴⁴ The need to recognise that “there were forms of social authorship wider than the print market”,⁴⁵ which reveals the degree of involvement of women as writers who generate knowledge through life-writing (and writing for life) in the form of poetry, letters or miscellaneous genres of prose and fiction.

Helen Smith explains how dedications existed as “sites of rhetorical play, peritextual structures designed to constrain and direct the reader, and elements of the complex system of patronage that drew together social, political, and religious, as well as literary, life”.⁴⁶ She further describes patronage in the seventeenth-century as a “network of associations”.⁴⁷ In early modern culture, a successful candidate had to forge emotional links with a prospective patron. Jessica Malay argues that in order to gain patronage through writing, as was the case with Lanyer, “it was essential to carefully construct a text that would strengthen the writer’s affinity with the patron either through the creation of a new bond or the building upon an existing relationship”.⁴⁸ This is exactly what *Salve Deus* attempts to do by establishing a closer relationship with Lady Margaret Russell (*née* Cooke) and her daughter Anne Clifford. Lanyer constructs within her poem a narrative of shared intimacy evoking that “faire night”, when she and Russell shared a taste of “Paradice” of “pleasant groves, hills, walks and stately trees”. According to Lanyer, Lady Russell asked her to write “praisefull lines of that delightful place”⁴⁹ which would become the “Description of Cooke-ham” that puts an end to Lanyer’s poem. Since the early 1980s, Lanyer scholarship has tended to lay emphasis on her construction of a community of “good women”. Barbara Lewalski, Elaine Beilin and Susanne Woods elaborate on Lanyer’s construct of a feminist sisterhood of patrons, united by gender, virtue, love of poetry and the Protestant faith.⁵⁰ Other readings by Loughlin,

44 Melanie Bigold, *Women of Letters, Manuscript Circulation and Print Afterlives in the Eighteenth Century*, New York 2013, 7.

45 *Ibid.*, 8.

46 Helen Smith, *Grossly Material Things. Women and Book Production in Early Modern England*, Oxford 2012, 57.

47 *Ibid.*, 54.

48 Jessica Malay, “Positioning Patronage: Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* and the Countess of Cumberland in Time and Place”, *The Seventeenth Century*, 28/3 (2013), 251–74.

49 Woods, *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer*, 51:18.

50 Elaine Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance*, Princeton 1987, 177–207; Susanne Woods, “Aemilia Lanyer and Ben Jonson: Patronage, Authority, and Gender”, *Ben Jonson Journal*, 1 (1994), 15–30; Barbara Lewalski, “Patriarchy and Patronage: Margaret Clifford, Anne Clifford, and Aemilia Lanyer”, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 21 (1991), esp. issue ‘Politics, Patronage and Literature in England 1558–1658’, 87–106.

DiPasquale or White interpret Lanyer's subversion of her rewriting of the Passion as illustration of her literary skills and theological wisdom.⁵¹ In both readings, the issue of patronage appears to be inextricably linked to the construction of Lanyer as an author, regardless of the fact that she was not successful in gaining the financial or social support of her addressees. For Yerbury, her approach to writing was consistent, rigorous and personal, albeit inspired in episodes of common interest. She shunned being exposed to the public eye even though she was intent on having an effect on her immediate surroundings. For both women, as for many of their contemporary visible or invisible poetesses, their material reality almost always superseded their talent on paper.

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51 Micheline White, "A Woman with Saint Peter's Keys? Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Ivdaeorum* (1611) and the Priestly Gifts of Women", *Criticism*, 45/3 (2003), 323–41; Theresa DiPasquale, *Refiguring the Sacred Feminine: The Poems of John Donne, Aemilia Lanyer, and John Milton*, Pittsburgh 2008; Marie H. Loughlin, "Fast tid unto Them in a Golden Chaine: Typology, Apocalypse, and Woman's Genealogy in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Ivdaeorum*", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 53/1 (2000), 133–79; Kari Boyd McBride, "Sacred Celebration: The Patronage Poems", in *Aemilia Lanyer*, ed. Grossman, 60–82.

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