

“NOBLE VIRTUES” AND “RICH CHAINES”: PATRONAGE IN THE POETRY OF
AEMILIA LANYER

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

“NOBLE VIRTUES” AND “RICH CHAINES”: PATRONAGE IN THE POETRY OF
AEMILIA LANYER

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For my Mom, Dad, and especially Jack, for whom I do everything.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I: FEMALE ALLIANCE.....	8
CHAPTER II: SPIRITUAL AND EARTHLY MARRIAGE	31
CHAPTER III: LINEAGE, INHERITANCE, AND LAND	48
CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	67
WORKS CITED	73

INTRODUCTION

Farewell (sweet Cooke-ham) where I first obtain'd
Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain'd;
And where the Muses gave their full consent,
I should have powre the virtuous to content:
Where princely Palace will'd me to indite,
The sacred Storie of the Soules delight.

“The Description of Cooke-ham”¹

In the penultimate poem of *Salve Dues Rex Judaeorum*, Aemilia Lanyer simultaneously celebrates and elegizes an Edenic female community. In “Cooke-ham”, Lanyer credits her time spent at the estate with Margaret and Anne Clifford as the impetus in the creation of a larger collection, the “sacred Storie” of a female utopia that would ultimately comprise *Salve Deus*. Lanyer therefore invites the readership of not only her perspective patrons, but also that of all virtuous women, whom she hopes will “grace this little Booke” (“To all vertuous Ladies in generall” 72) and form a community of educated, honorable females.

Utopian discourse in early modern England was incredibly popular, as accounts of colonization and travel narratives fueled utopian fictions like Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) and Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis* (1626). Lanyer’s female community was also a construct used by other

¹ Henceforth, all poems and prose selections within *Salve Dues Rex Judaeorum* will be quoted from *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Ed. Susan Woods. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

female writers, as in the pastoral utopia of Mary Wroth's *Urania* (1621) and much earlier in Christine de Pisan's *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405).

"Cooke-ham", moreover, was the first poem of the utopian-like country house genre, predating even Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst". The country house genre in seventeenth century British poetry represented, for poets and their audience, the fashioning of a rural community in which the estate became the locus of power, hospitality, and abundance. However, Raymond Williams' classic book *The Country and the City*, first published in 1973, lifted this "lovely veil of enchanted nature" (Bowerbank 28) to uncover the underpinnings of estate society, exposing the laborers and other mechanisms that lay behind an ostensibly plentiful nature. Williams' work was indicative of the bifurcated essence of the utopia; while utopian texts most often invent an idealized world, the imaginary realm acts as a mirror to reflect very real social constructs. Utopias serve as models for how a given society *should* operate, and allow the creator the freedom to explore alternative social, political, and economic systems. In doing so, utopian literature can be seen as a "fundamentally experimental and transformative genre [that reveals a] paradox between ideal and lived space, between ideology and social practice" (Pohl 2).

Thus, it is clear that utopian ideals, however far-fetched, remain rooted in actuality. *New Atlantis*, for example, drew on contemporary scientific developments of Bacon's time. *New Atlantis* evoked early

modern advances in the sciences, including the experiments of Dutch scientist Constantin Huygens, whose research with “cataracts, musical fountains, [and] hydraulically activated songbirds” (Vickers 788) may well have led to the success of Bacon’s most popular work.² Lanyer’s female Eden similarly incorporates the structural components of early modern English society. It is evident that Lanyer’s has, as Barbara Lewalski has persuasively argued in her influential essay “Imagining Female Community: Aemilia Lanyer’s Poems”, fashioned a “defense and celebration of the enduring community of good women” (213). Lanyer repeatedly praises the virtue and grace of her patrons, and of women in general. What is less immediately apparent is the real-life models for Lanyer’s utopia, and her motivation in crafting such a community. Dissecting *Salve Deus* reveals how this imaginary female community was governed by the social, economic, and political constructs of early modern England, and how these constructs were, in turn, shaped by the dominant organizational framework of the time: patronage. Lanyer’s Eden is less an “allegorical space” (Pohl 1) than a reaction to, and incorporation of, patronage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Patronage shaped nearly every institution in early modern England, from governmental policies to family life. As Robert C. Evans explains in *Ben Jonson and the Poetics of Patronage*,

The patronage system was more than simply a means of

² As Vickers explains, *New Atlantis* was reprinted with the *Sylva Sylvarum* thirteen times between 1627 and 1685” (788), and was translated into French (1631) and Latin (1643, 1648, 1661).

organizing the economy or of structuring politics, of arranging social life or of thinking about one's relations with God. Because it was all these things, it was also a psychological system: the assumptions behind it inevitably affected how people thought about themselves, others, and their mutual interactions. (23)

It is important to remember that Lanyer's bid for patronage is largely unprecedented; as the first Englishwoman to assert herself as a professional poet, her bid for patronage becomes particularly significant. Lanyer naturally sought out any means of influence that she might manipulate to sway her audience of prospective patrons. Lanyer consequently evokes a myriad of themes embedded within the cultural fabric of early modern England, and, more specifically, themes closely related to the lives and concerns of her aristocratic audience. Lanyer also draws upon models of her male contemporaries—poets like Samuel Daniel, Ben Jonson, and John Donne—to construct her bid for support.

Thus, Lanyer's female community does not belong entirely in the realm of utopian imagination, nor does it negate the influence of patriarchy. *Salve Deus* mirrors the actual formation of female alliance, alliances that operated around or within a patriarchal society.

Characterizing *Salve Deus* as a purely feminine community neglects the ubiquitous, though perhaps less glaring, role of the men. While there are a number of radical protofeminist notions within Lanyer's work, to dismiss the role of men within *Salve Deus* would be to neglect a crucial part the book's structure, and the cultural foundations that produced its framing. Lanyer does not reject patriarchy so much as she seeks models to work

within its constraints. As medievalist and feminist historian Judith Bennett argues, "Women's history has shown, again and again, that women have not been merely passive victims of sexual inequality; women have also colluded in, undermined, survived, and sometimes even benefited from the presence of patriarchy" (10). Lanyer's portrayal of her prospective patrons, and her own poetic self-fashioning, navigates the essentially masculine patronage system governing both the imaginary and actual realms of *Salve Deus*.

If we consider, then, Lanyer's relationship to her would-be patrons, both within the text and outside of it, there emerge recurring themes of the noblewoman's place within the economic framework of the period. Lanyer capitalizes on one of the most pressing issues for the aristocracy: land and inheritance. Interrelated concerns of marriage, lineage, inheritance, and patronage helped to develop systems of female alliance in the early modern world, a network from which Lanyer hoped to glean monetary support. Furthermore, Lanyer's primary dedicatees—Margaret Clifford and her daughter Anne—were embroiled in a protracted legal struggle over Anne's inheritance from her father, the deceased George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland. As Lawrence Stone explains, "property was the only security against total destitution, in which connections and patronage were the keys to success, in which power flowed to the oldest males under the system of primogeniture, and in which the only career opening for women was in marriage" (88). Lanyer foregrounds and manipulates these issues

to win the sympathy of her dedicatees, and legitimize their position as patrons to the poet Lanyer.

Stone's depiction of marriage as "the only career opening for women" raises interesting questions about the representations of matrimony within *Salve Deus*. As a legal institution, marriage regulated not only the bonds between English men and women, but also the connections between women themselves. Marriage opened up and shaped the networks of kinship and patronage that wives might use to advance the careers of their female (or male) kin. It is no surprise, then, that Lanyer uses marriage as a framework for the book, as it represents one of the key tools at her disposal. Lanyer transposes the analogous practices of early modern marriage and patronage into the spiritual realm of *Salve Deus*. She utilizes her portrayal of spiritual marriage as a response to the legal difficulties of her would-be patrons, especially those of her principle dedicatees, Margaret and Anne Clifford. This spiritual marriage—and thus spiritual inheritance that descends among this community of women—legitimizes the real-life claims of the Clifford women.

Moreover, justifying her patron's claims not only demonstrates Lanyer's flattery of and sympathy for her patronesses, but also rationalizes Lanyer's own claim to poetry. Sanctioning Margaret's claim (on behalf of Anne) marks the Cliffords as noblewomen, whose duty it is to support the poet. Lanyer argues that masculine virtue legitimizes the rank of not only

Margaret and Anne, but the entire assemblage of her would be patronesses. Lanyer constructs an extended conceit of patronage throughout *Salve Deus* that aligns Lanyer with the land and its noble estate, the great manor to which the families of her noble patronesses must tend. Lanyer's book becomes a conduit for this entitling virtue, and the means by which her patrons earn and maintain their social standing.

In developing multi-level systems of patronage and reward, Lanyer's utopia reflects the network of female alliance in early modern England, a network governed by not only by the interaction of women, but also the ubiquitous presence of patriarchal influence. Lanyer's *Salve Deus* reinfects female alliance, marriage, and inheritance in light of her bid for patronage, and her work can subsequently be viewed as a strategy of betterment on Lanyer's behalf.

CHAPTER I

FEMALE ALLIANCE

Like bees under an early summer sun
Leading a new swarm out to the wildflowers,
Or stuffing honey into the comb,
Swelling the cells with nectar, or unloading
The pollen other bees bring to the stall,
Or warding off the worthless brood of drones:
The busy hive seethes with their activity
And the fragrant honey is redolent of thyme.

Virgil, *The Aeneid*³

In “The Authors Dreame to the Ladie *Marie*, the *Countesse Dowager of Pembroke*”, Aemilia Lanyer envisions passing through the “*Edalyan Groves*” (1) to discover her would-be patron presiding over a community of female attendants. Embedded within this hierarchy of service, as well as Lanyer’s comparison of Lady Sidney’s work to “faire wax, or hony” (201), is the classical image of the beehive. Many early modern writers appropriated Virgil’s hive to represent the relationship of the individual to the larger community. Virgil’s conceit of the hive renders Aeneas’s initial view of Carthage as a bustling utopia, one in which individual bees perpetuate the hive’s existence through toil and reproduction. Throughout the early modern era, women in particular reworked the hive into a number of forms, from household items to

³ From *The Essential Aeneid*.

clothing, and the bee “implies their service and connection to a larger unity, the household located among all other households constituting society” (Frye 4).

The hive also commonly served as a political symbol, and while politically inflected bee-texts of the time unveil the “persistence of patriarchy” (Merrick 26),⁴ the duality of the beehive metaphor raises interesting points about the nature of female alliance. Studies of female connections demonstrate that the “‘domestic’ and the ‘political’, and the ‘private’ and the ‘public’ are hard to separate in the early modern period” (Daybell 2).⁵ The primary roles assigned to English women were that of wife and mother, and a woman’s role within this domestic framework often overlapped with the political realm as she endeavored to advance the interests of her family. The social network of kinship doubled as a political matrix, and thus a means by which women might exercise influence.

Lanyer’s potential benefactors circulated within these networks of female alliance, as both suppliers and recipients of patronage. The lives of these noblewomen were defined not by autonomy, but by their lucrative (or unsuccessful) utilization of such relationships. Lanyer uses *Salve Deus* to similarly navigate the early modern system of female connections. The female community of *Salve Deus* mirrors the women-to-women

⁴ Jeffrey Merrick’s essay, “Royal Bees: The Gender Politics of the Beehive in Early Modern England,” discusses the implications of the early modern discovery that a female insect ruled the hive.

⁵ Daybell here is drawing largely on the work of Barbara Harris, especially her important essay “Women and Politics in Early Tudor England.”

networks that Lanyer was using to further her career. Such alliances had served the interests of these noblewomen's families, both male and female kin. Lanyer must have hoped that in appealing to female alliance, and the relationships with powerful men upon which such alliances were often contingent, that she might also enter into this patronage network as a beneficiary.

Mothers and Daughters

Within the larger framework of kinship, immediate family most often served as the primary concern for noblewomen like those of *Salve Deus*. The increasing emphasis on the nuclear family as the household model ensured that a woman's most pressing concern would be her direct descendants. Barbara Harris's "Sisterhood, Friendship, and the Power of English Aristocratic Women" explains that noblewomen

devoted most of their time and energy to reproductive, managerial, political, and social functions essential to the survival and prosperity of their husbands' patrilineages, focusing particularly on advancing their husbands' and sons' careers, arranging their daughter's marriages, and managing their estates and households. (21)

The documentation of early modern women's wills and legal engagements reveals the close ties between many mothers and daughters. There is ample evidence that mothers often protected the financial interests of their daughters in the early modern world. Aristocratic women assisted their daughters by supplementing their daughter's dowries, traveling to attend their lying-in (a period of a month or so when pregnant women retired to a

separate area of the household), exchanging gifts and letters, and by offering advice on a number of other practical matters (Harris 21-30). Mothers frequently engaged in litigation on behalf of their daughters, and willed bequests (from trinkets to tracts of land) to protect the financial security of their female children. Margaret Bassano, for example, bequeathed virtually all her “Leases good and chattels [to her] welbeloved daughter Emelia Bassano”. Margaret not only entrusted eighteen-year-old Lanyer with her property, but also the charge of her male kin. Margaret’s will reveals that she had taken “some responsibility for her son-in-law and grandson” (Woods, *Lanyer* 15), a responsibility she then conferred on Aemilia. Margaret’s affection for Lanyer demonstrates not only a pertinent example of a close bond between a mother and her daughter in early modern England, but also how that bond might be transposed into the economic framework of the family.

Lanyer’s relationship with her own mother may have led her to appeal once more to that particular female alliance in writing *Salve Deus*. In the title poem, Lanyer situates herself and all women within a network of mothers and daughters when she repeatedly refers to “Our Mother *Eve*” (763). Lanyer then emphasizes this network of matrilineal support by accentuating such relationships within the lives of her patroness. Lanyer structures her community as a matrix of mothers and daughters, including Queen Anne and Princess Elizabeth, whose tributes open the work; Susan Bertie, who is pointedly addressed as the “*Daughter* to the

Duchesse of Suffolk” (36; emphasis mine); and, of course, Margaret and Anne Clifford, the principle dedicatees. “The Description of Cooke-ham” stems from Lanyer’s time at the Cookham estate with Margaret and Anne, a period of some length in the 1590s or early 1600s, before the poem was composed in 1609. During this time, Lanyer was surely exposed to the legal troubles plaguing the Countess of Cumberland and her daughter, trials that demonstrate the closeness of their maternal bond. Upon his deathbed and without a male heir,⁶ Lord Cumberland left the whole of his estate to his brother, Francis, in 1605. However, in doing so, Lewalski notes that Henry ignored a deed from the reign of Edward II entailing those estates upon his *child*, regardless of sex (“Lady” 266). Margaret and later Anne thereafter engaged in continual litigation and court appeals over Anne’s inheritance rights, battling “the combined force of law courts, powerful courtiers, the Lord Chamberlain, the Archbishop of Canterbury, their own husbands, and even the king himself”. Margaret fought tirelessly on Anne’s behalf, as Anne later wrote of her mother: “she shewed she had a spirit too great to yield to fortune or opposition, further than necessity compelled her to it; and so much constancy, wisdom, and resolution did she shew in that business, that the like can hardly be paralleled by any woman”. Lanyer’s praise of the mother-daughter bond, then, would have been especially poignant to the Clifford women, whose intimacy was that is apparent throughout Anne’s diaries.

⁶ Margaret’s two sons by George Clifford died in 1590 and 1591, leaving Anne as her only surviving child, born in 1590 (Lewalski, “Lady” 266).

Lanyer's utilization of the mother-daughter alliance has most famously pointed to Margaret and Anne, but Lanyer's project extends throughout the dedicatees of *Salve Deus*. In her dedicatory poem to Lady Katherine, Lanyer takes care to label the Countess of Suffolk's children as "blessings" (35) twice within the early lines of the poem before embarking on an extended wish these "noble daughters likewise read / This little book that I present to you" (49-50). Lanyer equates her book with spiritual sustenance, the "heavenly food" (51) that Katherine must "let them vouchsafe to feed" (51). Lanyer not only highlights the spiritual blessing of the mother-daughter alliance, but also marks *Salve Deus* as part of the children's inheritance when, in the next stanza, Lanyer writes of Lady Katherine's daughters: "Yea, let those ladies . . . receive *this jewel* from Jehovah sent" (55-7; emphasis mine). While "this jewel" seemingly refers to Christ, the line is ambiguously rendered so that Lanyer's book itself also represents the jewel. It was not unusual for mothers to bequeath such precious gifts to their daughters, as in the case of Elizabeth Paulet, who received a ring, "gold collar and gold heart" (Harris 30) from her mother in 1516. The ambiguity of the line, which also implies *Salve Deus* is "from Jehovah sent", refigures the book as a jewel fit to be passed not only between Katherine and her female children, but all women in the mother-daughter matrix who are descended from "our Mother *Eve*." Lanyer's book becomes an object that all dutiful mothers must circulate among their daughters. Thus, the importance of matrilineal inheritance stretches far

beyond Margaret and Anne, and is rendered in *Salve Dues* as a natural and necessary extension of maternal obligation.

The Household

Lanyer's depiction of Lady Katherine and her "noble daughters" also proposes that Katherine is responsible for the spiritual and moral education of her children, an education in which Lanyer hoped her book might be implemented. Lanyer's pointed reference to the moral education of young girls draws attention to Lanyer's service as a tutor to Anne Clifford at the Cookham estate, a role Lanyer emphasizes in her dedicatory poems to the Clifford women. While the exact nature of Lanyer's position is not known, it is likely that she served as a music tutor, and may have assisted Anne with French and Italian (Woods, *Salve Deus* 32). Lanyer's *Salve Deus* is an attempt to re-enter this network of patronage, perhaps to regain a position comparable to her former role as a gentlewoman servant. Although tutors were most often male, Lanyer's alignment of her book with Christ legitimizes her claim to education; considering the mother was responsible for nurturing her children's ethical upbringing, Lanyer's implies that her work (and by extension, Lanyer herself) might serve as moral instruction.

Lanyer's role as a tutor, and recipient of this form of patronage, reflects her participation within a larger system of female alliances that aristocratic women and men called upon to strengthen their kinship

networks. As Harris explains, the central government relied on noble families to “implement and maintain law and order in the countryside”, a service which was rewarded with

grants from [the crown’s] growing stock of land, offices and fees at its disposal. Nothing was more important, therefore, to members of the aristocracy than maintaining and strengthening the networks of kin, clients, neighbors, and servants that gave them a claim of the bounty of the crown. (22)

Education played a pivotal role in these development of kinship networks for women, since skills gleaned from proper schooling would help such women attain worthy husbands. A worthy husband would not only provide economic stability, but would also supplement the kinship network by annexing his kin to that of his wife. Moreover, knowledge of the classics, music, poetry, modern languages, and literature were considered desirable qualities, ones that would help noblewomen further the social and political interests of their families at court (Mendelson 49). Lanyer’s *Salve Deus* thus offers a means by which her patroness could supplement the education of her daughter, and therefore herself and her larger kinship network.

. In drawing attention to her role as a tutor and gentlewoman servant, Lanyer shrewdly targets a system in which women exercised a considerable deal of influence. The education of aristocratic daughters was a realm in which women retained a good deal of power and authority. One of the most important aspects of an adolescent girl’s upbringing involved her placement within a noblewomen’s household to not only

complete her education, but to “expand [her] social circles, and hopefully, secure the assistance of another well-connected family in arranging [her marriage]” (Harris 24-5). The placement of a girl relied almost exclusively on the senior woman of the accepting household, and thus represented one of the strongest and most crucial examples of female alliance in the early modern world. Kinship networks were a vital part of this process, as women were likely to choose a member of their family. While women most often favored their natal kin, usually fostering a younger sister, grandmothers, aunts, and occasionally even distant cousins provided places for the next generation of women (Harris 25-6). This focus on education lends *Salve Deus* a kind of weight that would have elevated it above mere poetry; as a moral guide, Lanyer’s book could function as a tool by which to ultimately benefit the entire kinship network.

Lanyer further fashions herself as a worthy instructor by addressing the woman who helped cultivate Lanyer’s own spiritual and intellectual education—Susan Bertie. Before her marriage to Alfonso Lanyer in 1592, Lanyer claims to have been educated in the house of Bertie, the dowager countess of Kent. In her dedicatory poem to the countess, Lanyer praises Susan for her guidance:

Come you that were the Mistris of my youth,
The noble guide of my ungovern’d days;
Come you that have delighted in Gods truth,
Help now your handmaid to sound foorth his praise:
 You that are pleas’d in his pure excellencie,
 Vouchsafe to grace this holy feast, and me. (1-7)

Here, Lanyer implies that she remains in the charge of Bertie, a “handmaid” who but seeks the support once more of her “noble guide”. Lanyer’s address to the Countess Dowager of Kent connects “Lanyer’s young girlhood to an atmosphere of patronage, [and suggests] a supervisory status on the part of the Countess of Kent or at least a powerful exemplary status” (Barroll 31). Lanyer’s appeal to Susan echoes Harris’s assertion that placement within an aristocratic household might help younger women secure the assistance of a wealthy family and create “valuable patronage connections of their own” (25). Lanyer addresses Susan in this fashion not only to benefit from her childhood patron, but also to imbue *Salve Deus* with a semblance of moral and spiritual import. Susan Bertie’s education of Lanyer enhances Lanyer’s credibility as a moral guide; just as Lanyer was once a participant in this form of female alliance, so should she once more benefit from such connections. In addressing a learned community of mothers and daughters, Lanyer may have hoped her audience would view *Salve Deus* in light of not only Lanyer’s previous participation in a network these noblewomen controlled, but also the potential in utilizing Lanyer and her work to perpetuate the matrix of educated women.

The Court

The kinship networks of Lanyer’s patronesses were particularly relevant in court, where noblewomen might exercise informal power on

behalf of their families. An extension of female influence in the assignment of young women to aristocratic homes resided in the appointment of the Queen's Maids of Honor. Appointments depended on the recommendation of the Queen's Ladies-in-Waiting and Gentlewomen of the Privy Chamber, and these women generally favored daughters of their family and friends (Harris 26). Lanyer's inclusion of Lady Bedford in part stems from Bedford's position as Queen Anne's only Lady of the Bedchamber. While Lady Bedford was a frequent dedicatee of Jacobean poets, and thus a logical choice for Lanyer's address, she also relied significantly on female alliances to further her social standing. Lady Bedford had successfully utilized the Queen's favoritism to promote the interests of her female kin. In fact, it was this same female ingenuity that garnered Lady Bedford and her family royal favor, as she and her mother were among the first women to visit the new Queen Anne in Scotland (Payne 173). In a court atmosphere fraught with James' misogyny, Lady Bedford nonetheless retained a notable source of power. Her influence, bolstered by Queen Anne's favoritism, was extended to her female relatives, and Lanyer must have hoped to also enter into this network of women's patronage.

Lady Bedford's negotiation of female alliances allowed Lanyer a similar means of approaching the traditionally masculine patronage system. By accessing the patronage network via female connections, Lanyer might subsequently form a relationship more akin to the male

poets of her time. Samuel Daniel, Ben Jonson, John Donne, and Michael Drayton were among Lady Bedford's most notable beneficiaries. In fact, most of the women in Lanyer's *Salve Deus* were known patrons of male writers, as noted by Theresa D. Kemp: "John Florio and Samuel Daniel both derived positions as grooms of Queen Anne's Privy Chamber as a result of recommendations by Queen Anne's favorite, Lucy Countess of Bedford, to whom they had dedicated their literary endeavors" (7). Lanyer attempts to utilize female networks, then, much in the way *male* poets had previously done. Woods' excellent biography of Lanyer illuminates the particularly strong connection between Samuel Daniel and Lanyer's collection of female patrons. Daniel not only served as a tutor for Mary Sidney, he also tutored Lady Anne Clifford, residing from roughly 1599 to 1605 in the Clifford household (34). Upon Daniel's death in 1619, Anne Clifford erected a monument in his memory at her own expense, suggesting an exceptionally close relationship between tutor and tutee (Williamson 2). Daniel dedicated works to both the Clifford women and Lady Bedford, and he also wrote several masques for Queen Anne. Lanyer's work references three of Daniel's pieces—*Cleopatra*, *A Letter from Octavia*, and *Rosamond* (Woods, *Lanyer* 36)—which suggests Lanyer was familiar with the poet's work, and sought to emulate not only his poetry, but also his patronage connections.

Lanyer's use of the male patronage system reflects the ubiquitous presence of masculine models and influence throughout *Salve Deus*.

Lanyer's potential benefactors relied upon men to bolster their female alliances, and female alliances were often formed, in part, to further the interests of their husbands, sons, and other male kin. Although Lady Bedford—one of the leading literary patrons of early modern England—employed horizontal ties of kinship and successfully advanced her female kin, she nevertheless operated within an essentially patriarchal system. Although Queen Anne's favoritism was clearly important, Lady Bedford and her family remained dependant on patronage by Secretary of State Lord Salisbury (Payne 173-4) throughout Lady Bedford's time at court. Moreover, Lady Bedford endeavored on behalf of both her female *and* *male* kin, even though her placement of her male kin met with less success (Payne 173).

Moreover, just as aristocratic women advanced the interests of their male kin, so might have Lanyer hoped to promote her husband, Alfonso Lanyer. The title page of Lanyer's volume describes the poet as "Mistris *Aemilia Lanyer*, Wife to Captaine *Alfonso Lanyer* Servant to the Kings Majestie" (2). While this "certifying permission of her husband . . . is what we would today call 'mainstream'" (Woods, *Salve Deus* viii), it nonetheless calls attention to Alfonso's participation in Lanyer's courting of patrons. Alfonso's signature may have functioned as an "advertisement, highlighting a chain of connections that ultimately lead to the majestic world of court" (Kemp 389). Moreover, of the nine surviving copies of *Salve Dues*, one bears the inscription "guift of Mr. Alfonso Lanyer"

(Woods, *Salve Deus* xlix), suggesting that Alfonso was using his own contacts to promote his wife's work. Lanyer's *Salve Deus* may have contained a female utopia, but one presentation copy was intended for Prince Henry, the oldest son of King James. This copy also has "Cumberland" written in ink on the page preceding the title page, and it has been suggested that Margaret Clifford may have acted as a conduit to Prince Henry (Woods, *Salve Deus* xlvi). Thus, while Lanyer clearly hoped to reach her female patrons by drawing on patterns of female alliance, it is clear that these alliances were at least in part shaped by men, and often depended on men's endorsement and participation.

Female Friendship

The influence of patriarchy and masculine poetic models becomes clearer when we consider Lanyer's evocation of friendship throughout the volume. To avoid applying anachronistic notions of modern friendship, we must evaluate friendship in the early modern era through the lens of social hierarchy, which, like patronage, governed most every personal and political transaction of the time. While the term in its singular form might have been used to refer to a personal, intimate relationship, the word was rarely divorced from structures of rank and power. Embedded in the understanding of social hierarchy was the notion of exchange, and "friend" in early modern England often referred to relationships of patronage:

[The] word before the 18th century always meant no more than 'my advisors, associates, and backers'. This category often

indicated a relative, particularly a parent or an uncle by blood or marriage. But it could also include a member of the household, such as a steward, chaplain, or tutor; or a neighbor, or a political associate sharing a common party affiliation; or a person of high status and influence for whom there was acquaintance and from whom there was hope of patronage.” (Stone 79)

Harris’ valuable study of women and politics has likewise revealed that females referred to their “more distant relatives collectively as their friends, a term that also included neighbours with whom they exchanged visits, favours and patronage” (39). Thus, in stating that Lanyer intended to invoke ideals of friendship, I do not mean that Lanyer sought to transcend class boundaries; in fact, a number of critics have rightfully pointed to the class tensions within *Salve Deus*.⁷ One of the strongest invocations of friendship as it relates to rank comes in the penultimate piece, “The Description of Cooke-ham.” Lanyer contextualizes her role within the friendship-patronage system in “Cooke-ham” when she laments her absence from Lady Cumberland:

Unconstant Fortune, thou art most too blame,
Who casts us downe into so lowe a frame:
Where our great friends we cannot dayly see,
So great a difference is there in degree.
Many are placed in those Orbes of state,
Parters in honour, so ordain’d by Fate;
Neerer in show, yet farther in love,
In which, the lowest alwayes are above. (104-10)

Lanyer’s “love” for the countess is clearly at odds with their division in “degree.” While Lanyer is acutely aware of the social hierarchy that separates her from the Clifford women, she nonetheless implies a close (if

⁷ Ann Baynes Coiro, for example, claims Lanyer’s *Salve Deus* constitutes a critique of authority and social hierarchy, a “subversive” (369) and “radical manifesto” (365).

somewhat dubious) relationship. Lanyer affectionately implicates herself as a participant in Anne's "former sports" (119),⁸ and sentimentalizes her parting with Lady Cumberland:

. . . taking me by the hand
You [Lady Cumberland] did repeat the pleasures which had past,
Seeming to grieve that they could no longer last.
And with a chaste, yet loving kisse tooke leave,
Of which sweet kisse I did it soone berheave. (162-165)

On one level, Lanyer remains bound to her lower class status, dependent on patronage: "And ever shall, so long as life remains, / Tying my heart to her by those rich chains" (209-10). While these chains evoke enslavement or duty, Alastair Fowler also explains in *The Country House Poem* that "gold or silver chains were often given as a present confirming the intimacy of a friendship" (52, n. 210). The language of this final line, emphasized by the spondee "rich chains", stresses Lanyer's continual reliance on her patroness. However, regardless of whether the chain represents a token of friendship or enslavement, it nonetheless remains a tangible bond between the two women. In fact, the chains enwrap Lanyer's very "heart" (300), for her livelihood depends on this bond. The contradiction of unconstrained friendship and enslavement, moreover, is an accurate reflection of the patronage-friendship; poets were at the whim of their wealthy patrons, and such relationships were often marked by instability. Lanyer's oblique references to friendship are yet another means of marking *Salve Deus* as worthy of financial support, a reminder that

⁸ Though, as many critics have noted, this is highly unlikely, as Lanyer was 20 years Anne's senior (Lewalski, "Lady" 239).

Lanyer deserved a place in the network of patronage that the term “friend” encompassed.

Lanyer’s invocation of friendship also draws on classical models of male friendship, models with which her well-read patrons were familiar. Not only did many of Lanyer’s patronesses—Susan Bertie, Queen Anne, Arabella Stuart, and Mary Sidney—know Latin, Lanyer’s utilization of classical references throughout *Salve Deus* further indicates her ideal audience is an educated one. Lanyer’s time in Susan Bertie’s household would have exposed her to classical texts on friendship that she uses to solidify her connection to similarly-educated noblewomen. As Woods explains, Susan Bertie’s household valued women educated in the Protestant humanist tradition (*Lanyer* 10). Lanyer, then, would have been familiar with classical texts in Latin and Greek, including the works of Cicero. In fact, Woods describes Lanyer’s prose compositions—“To the Lady *Margaret*” and “To the Vertuous Reader”—as “Ciceronian in their accumulation of dependent clauses and parallels, and, more generally, both pieces are at ease with rhetorical figures and constructions” (*Lanyer* 11).

Lanyer’s emulation of Ciceronian models, however, reaches beyond constructions of language. Cicero’s *On Friendship*, like Lanyer’s *Salve Deus*, revolves around the concept of virtue. With their understanding of Latin, Lanyer’s and her would-be patronesses would have been familiar with the etymology of the word: from *vir*, meaning

“man”, and *virtus* meaning manliness, valour, worth (*OED*).⁹ Furthermore, Cicero argues that friendship cannot be disengaged from the quality of virtue, for virtue “is the parent and preserver of friendship, and without it friendship cannot possibly exist” (18). Cicero’s emphasis on virtue informs the concept of friendship as a wholly masculine entity. Similarly, Montaigne’s “On Friendship,” which Lanyer and her patrons would most likely have been familiar with, argues friendship remains unattainable for women due to their “ordinary sufficiency, ” and thus, women “cannot answer [friendship’s] conference and communication, the nurse of this sacred bond” (199). Montaigne’s depiction of friendship reflected the early modern understanding of friendship as an effacement of the division between male friends, where the self “is lost in order to be enhanced” (Dolan 43).

It would be implausible to argue that Lanyer hoped to procure friendships like Montaigne’s fusion of souls, either within the book’s utopia or outside of it; Lanyer’s positioning of herself as a poet requesting patronage necessarily entails a hierarchy of rank, which manifests itself in her repetitive comparison of her “dim steel” of a mind to the rich crystal “mirror” of her elevated patroness (“To the Queen’s” 36-41). However, drawing on Ciceronian ideals of friendship would help solidify connections to her potential backers, many of whom Lanyer had never met. Lanyer acknowledges such distance in her address to the Lady Katherine when she admits, “it may seem right strange, / That I a stranger should presume

⁹ I am indebted to Dr. David Read for his illumination of the word’s origins.

thus far, / To write to you" (1-3). Invoking the ideal of male friendship helps to justify Lanyer's foray into what was most commonly a masculine realm. Manly virtue allows Lanyer to construct a poetic image in the likeness of her male contemporaries, whom she looked to as authors who had successfully navigated the patronage network. By endowing both herself and her patrons with this masculine trait, Lanyer's poet-patron relationship might become analogous, for example, to the long-standing affiliation of John Donne and Lady Bedford. Donne and Lady Bedford illustrated (for a time) not only a relatively stable patronage relationship, but also one in which the ties of patronage and companionship overlapped. Jonson praised Lady Bedford's "learned" and "manly soul" ("On Lucy Countess of Bedford" 13), thus demonstrating that it was only by masculine attributes that Lady Bedford could achieve such closeness with her male beneficiaries. Lanyer may have evoked masculine virtue in an attempt to achieve a similarly sustaining patronage relationship, one made possible by masculine friendship, and, consequently, virtue's "harmony of interest, permanence, fidelity" (Cicero 78). One-time payment from patrons was usually insufficient, and authors hoped for "comparatively more profitable and enduring rewards, such as a position in the patron's or another aristocrat's household, or preferment to a court, church or government appointment" (Kemp 385). While Lanyer was obviously unable to vie for a political appointment (like Jonson or Donne), fashioning her poetic endeavor as one sanctioned by masculine virtue

would allow her to participate in the patronage network already endorsed by her potential benefactors.

Economic Crisis

Considering the tumultuous, tentative nature of the patronage system, Lanyer would certainly have hoped for a rekindling of her ostensibly idyllic time spent at Cookham with Margaret and Anne Clifford. Given her previous association with the Clifford women, it is therefore logical that her strongest appeals be addressed to Margaret and Anne. As a result, *Salve Deus* constitutes, in large part, a response to the economic and legal troubles of her principle dedicatees. Karen Robertson asserts that women did “affirm their support for one another, particularly over common threats to economic survival” (153). Robertson details Elizabeth Raleigh’s utilization of female kinship networks in an attempt to regain some property after the conviction of her husband, Walter Raleigh, of treason. Though Elizabeth penned several letters requesting assistance from the crown, Robertson’s essay focuses on a letter endorsed by a group of Elizabeth’s female cousins who had been similarly involved in legal and economic battles. Such networks of support existed as

additional resources for aristocratic widows and wives in times of trouble. Lady Margaret Beaufort opened her great household at Collyweston to numerous women of this kind. Lady Anne Clifford, her half-brother’s daughter, and her two daughters found refuge with her when she separated from her husband, Henry, Lord Clifford. (Harris 42)

Lanyer's *Salve Deus* can be therefore be read as Lanyer's defense of Margaret and Anne Clifford in a time of economic crisis. Lanyer's evocation of friendship supports her construction of sympathy, as do the number of references throughout the work to women who have been wronged, from Lucretia to Cleopatra. In "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," Lanyer laments Margaret's "sad Soule, plunged in waves of woe" (34), and compares Satan's "infinite annoys" (37) to Margaret's detractors as she fought on behalf of Anne's inheritance. This is also why Lanyer portrays Margaret as controlling nature in "Cooke-ham"; Margaret's mastery of the landscape suggests that she and Anne are, in fact, rightful inheritors of land. Nature in "Cooke-ham" bedecks itself to please Lady Cumberland. The "walks put on their summer liveries" (21), the trees donning "leaves, with fruits, with flowers clad" (23). Even the "little Birds in chirping notes did sing / To entertain both [Margaret] and that sweet spring" (29-30). The trees transform "themselves to beautiful canopies" (25) to both please and protect the Cliffords, to "shade the bright sun from [Margaret's] brighter eyes" (26). The willingness of nature to delight and protect Margaret and Anne suggests they are the natural inheritors of land, and that the land itself is in opposition to the "infinite annoys" of anyone who might oppose such inheritance.

Lanyer's support of Margaret and Anne, however, is likewise meant to elicit sympathy on Lanyer's behalf. As Robertson explains, the women "who endorsed Elizabeth Raleigh's plea seem to be responding to

perceived parallels between her economic vulnerability and their own” (153). Lanyer’s emphasis on Margaret’s economic struggles highlight Lanyer’s own precarious financial and social standing. Lanyer’s lament at Margaret’s departure from Cookham reflects this duality. Estranged from her husband, Margaret’s stay at that “sweet Place” (7) was temporary, as Cookham was a crown manor leased by Lady Cumberland’s brother, William Russell. However, Lanyer also credits this separation, as discussed earlier, with the discrepancy in rank, a physical and social gap that patronage might alleviate. Lanyer’s appointment to a more permanent position as a tutor, for example, would free her from the whims of “Unconstant Fortune” (103). Lanyer’s lament reflects the inadequacies and tensions of the patronage system. As Evans explains, there were two modes of literary patronage, the “ideal version, grounded in perfect reciprocity and noblesse oblige, that existed mostly in the minds and imaginations of the writers; and the often imperfect, inadequate, frustrating, or uncertain arrangements they encountered in everyday life” (29). Margaret’s influence on nature, therefore, doubles as a manifestation of the patron-client relationship, in which Lanyer becomes the landscape: “Hills, vales, and woods, as if on bended knee / They had appeared, your honor to salute, / Or to preferre some strange unlook’d for sute” (68-70). The natural world’s offer of service recalls Lanyer’s dedication to Lady Cumberland: “To thee great Countesse now I will applie / My Pen, to write thy never dying fame” (“Salve Deus” 9-10).

Lanyer's laudatory depiction of the Clifford women's grace and piety attempts to demonstrate how her poetry might enhance and preserve their moral character as perceived by the larger society, much like the tree's "fair green leaves" (63) that obstruct Phoebus' rays in "Cooke-ham," and "Whose pleasing boughs did yield a cool fresh air" (65). Lanyer offers up the patronage model as a means of alleviating the Cliffords' trouble. Lanyer's propitious and idealizing depictions of Margaret and Anne could thus provide them with a semblance of power, especially at a time when both women remained locked in litigation.

Lanyer's manipulation of female alliance reveals the more informal methods by which a female writer in early modern England might seek support. Lanyer draws on the authority available to her as a woman in an essentially patriarchal culture, and like her aristocratic patrons, this power was "contingent on [relationships] with powerful men, both family members and friends" (Payne 170). Of these relationships with powerful men, marriage was by and large the most important for Lanyer's patrons. The careers of most early modern noblewomen hinged upon such union, a facet of English life and patronage that Lanyer incorporates in *Salve Deus*.

CHAPTER II

SPIRITUAL AND EARTHLY MARRIAGE

[Marriage] is the lawful conjunction of two married persons; that is one man and one woman into one flesh.

William Perkins¹⁰

Given the increasing emphasis on marriage and family in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, it is not surprising that Lanyer's work revolves around the institution. Marriage would have represented a central and connective subject within Lanyer's network of female alliances, as it was a topic of particular concern for her aristocratic, Protestant patronesses. The concept of the nuclear family as the household's core became increasingly solidified as an ideological and physical institution in early modern English culture. Many historians and critics have charted the growing emphasis on marriage and the nuclear family, noting the decline of community in favor of immediate kin and household.¹¹ Ideals of family life were shaped and reaffirmed by widely circulated moralistic guidebooks of the period. Authors of these guidebooks discussed the

¹⁰ qtd. in Wrightson, 45.

¹¹ Keith Wrightson's *English Society 1580-1680*, and Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex, and Marriage* both address with these issues. Though Wrightson is critical of Stone's interpretation (namely Stone's oversimplification and neglect of the common people), Wrightson nonetheless argues that Stone's book "remains a treasury of information on the family lives of the English elite in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (236, n. 11).

ideal relationship between husband and wife, and parent and child, moving from the selection of a spouse to the rearing of children. Writers like William Perkins emphasized the fusion of souls in marriage, marked by a “cherishing of one another” and “an holy kind of rejoicing and solacing themselves each other with other in a mutual declaration of the signs and tokens of love and kindness” (qtd. in Wrightson 66). The Protestant Reformation was a key factor in the ubiquitous portrayals of marriage as a loving, egalitarian partnership. Reformation theology helped, in part, to fuel an “ideal of conjugal affection” (Stone 100), in which the husband and wife were spiritual equals whose devotion to family was second only to their worship. Perkins’ assertion that marriage was “ordained of God in paradise” (Wrightson 45) echoes the Protestant belief that one’s role as husband or wife “was the first and most important vocation or calling and one’s family were the ‘nearest neighbors’ whom God enjoined people to love” (Fairchilds 199).

Though the Protestant notion of an egalitarian partnership may have existed as the ideal, most women were aware of the less romantic reality of marriage. Frances Dolan discusses the tension inherent in the Christian figuration of marriage as “one flesh” and the actual hierarchy of lawful unions, in which the husband leads and the wife obeys. Despite an emphasis on unity of person in marriage, early modern “religious, legal, and popular discourses reveal a deep distrust of equality” (Dolan 3). Though women in the early seventeenth century might have “entertained

the hypothetical possibility of marriage as a perfect friendship, they were apt to portray real-life union of equals as the rare exception that proved the rule” (Mendelson 131-2).

What Protestant ideology also masked was the more realistic understanding of marriage as an economic transaction, especially for aristocratic families. Lanyer’s Protestant wives and mothers would have been concerned with the three major objectives of family planning on which marriage was contingent: “the continuity of the male line, the preservation intact of inherited property, and the acquisition through marriage of further property or useful political alliances” (Stone 37). Marriage was a collective decision on behalf of the family, in which acquisition of property and potentially lucrative kinship networks played a large role.

The unequal nature of this economic partnership was legally enshrined in coverture. Once a woman became a *femme covert*, the “common law fiction” (Erickson 237) that a husband and wife were “one flesh” ensured that a wife retained no independent legal status. Essentially, as far as property rights were concerned, a wife had no autonomous legal existence. Coverture meant that apart from provisions made before marriage, wives preserved no control over property, and could not “file lawsuits or be sued separately, nor could they execute contracts. The husband could use, sell or dispose of her property (again, unless prior provisions were made) without her permission” (Fairchilds

280). The property women contributed as dowries likewise fell under control of their husbands, and while she might be entitled to one-third of her husband's estate upon his death, a wife might also be left entirely at the mercy of his will (Erickson 25).

A pragmatic approach to marriage as an economic jointure, coupled with women's lack of legal redress, could and did lead to marriages marked by unhappiness. Lanyer's principle dedicatee, Lady Cumberland, had a notoriously difficult marriage. Lord Cumberland was a gambler and spendthrift, and an adulterous husband even in the early years of his marriage to Margaret (Williamson 25). Henry's dashing character and infidelity estranged him from his wife, and over time Lord Cumberland's profligate and rash ways steadily reduced his inheritance. Henry subsequently began a new career as an adventurer and navigator, partly "with the idea of adding other territories to the English crown, and increasing its power and dignity, and partly with the feeling that, by such voyages, he would be able to restore again his fortune, money which in days past he had wasted" (Williamson 27). Beginning in 1586, Henry embarked on a series of fairly successful (though largely unremarkable) voyages that garnered him some favor at Court. With the Queen's support, he was appointed a Knight of the Garter in 1592. However, when Henry returned to London, he found his estate and finances in utter disarray. His expenditures had greatly exceeded the gains of his previous voyage, in which he had plundered ships in the Canaries and Azores

(Williamson 29). Lady Anne records in her diary that her father “sold much land and consumed his estate in continual building of ships, voyages, horse-racing, Tilting, Shooting, Bowling Matches and all such expensive sports” (qtd. in Williamson 33). His estate and land had been drastically reduced by his mortgages and sales, and he died heavily in debt.

At Cookham, Lanyer was surely exposed to the marital troubles plaguing Margaret Clifford, a theme Lanyer subsequently developed in writing *Salve Deus*. Lanyer draws on the pious cliché of the bridegroom as a spiritual alternative to Margaret’s discontented marriage. Christ becomes the “Husband of [Margaret’s] Soule” (“*Salve Deus*” 253), the only husband who holds true fulfillment. Lanyer offers comfort to Margaret through this marriage, asserting that Margaret’s detractors in her fight for Anne’s inheritance will be subsequently punished: “The Lord wil roote them out that speake proud things, / Deceitfull tongues are but false Slanders wings” (113). Margaret’s marriage to Christ marks her as uniquely virtuous, for Lady Cumberland truly embodies Christ’s many virtues, as she remains steadfast “unto him [her] faith most firmly bound / To serve and honour him continually” (1699). Lanyer likens Margaret’s sufferings to those of Christ, and depicts Margaret’s love for Christ as the supreme manifestation of righteousness. Margaret, under coverture, retained no rights to the land her deceased husband willed to his brother, yet Margaret gains the kingdom of heaven by Christ’s sacrifice in “*Salve*

Deus”: “And dying made her Dowager of all; / Nay more, Co-heire of that eternall blisse” (258) Lanyer’s spiritual marriage rectifies the wrongs of Margaret’s earthly marriage, a consolation Lanyer surely hoped would result in patronage.

Many critics have argued that Lanyer’s portrayal of spiritual marriage is radical and subversive; Aschach Guibbory claims Lanyer’s depiction constitutes a negation of earthly marriage, claiming that to

reject marriage is to undo the hierarchical social order in which men rule over women, thus freeing women from bondage to men and thus fulfilling the redemptive significance of Christ’s Passion. If the goal of life is union with Christ in heaven at the end of the world, then marriage, with its commitment to reproduction, only delays that goal. Moreover, for a woman to choose Christ as her only Spouse, her true lover, is not just to be devoted to God but to reject the authority of any earthly husband, an authority understood in early seventeenth-century England to be representative of the authority of all earthly magistrates, particularly the king. (204)

Guibbory’s argument is, to an extent, valid and revealing; Lanyer does, at points in *Salve Deus*, depict Christ as the supreme spouse, one which no earthly union could replicate. However, Lanyer’s book is fraught with contradictions of this assertion. I doubt, for example, that Lanyer would have emphasized a network of mothers and daughters if she intended her spiritual marriage to negate the need for reproduction. Lanyer explicitly links the role of mother with power, as when she describes the late Queen Elizabeth as “that deare Mother of our Common-weale” (“To the Lady *Elizabeths* Grace” 7), or privileges Mary’s role as Christ’s mother in “*Salve Deus*”: “Deere Mother of our Lord, whose reverend name, / All people

Blessed call, and spread thy fame” (1031). We must also remember that Lanyer’s construction of a mother-daughter matrix is also one of *wives* and their children, emphasizing the importance of marriage in the regeneration of kinship and thus patronage networks. In fact, Lanyer privileges Lady Katherine’s role as wife as the supreme gift from “Gods power” (12):

Vouchsafe sweet Lady, to accept these lines,
Writ by a hand that doth desire to doe
All services to you whose worth combines
The worthi'st minds to love and honour you:
 Whose beautie, wisdom, children, high estate,
 Doe all concur to make you fortunate.

But chiefly your most honorable Lord,
Whose noble virtues Fame can ne'r forget . . . (19-26)

The “worthi’st minds” (a group in which Lanyer’s own mind is pointedly included) derive their “love and honour” from Katherine’s role as wife to an “honorable Lord.” Lanyer idealizes Katherine’s marriage to a “most loyall Spouse” (34) as the countess’ greatest blessing. Lord Admiral Thomas Howard was “of an old and powerful family” (Woods, *Salve Deus* 36), the means by which Katherine bolstered her “high estate”. Lanyer’s portrayal of their marriage is one of mutual benevolence and love, for Katherine is the “Fountaine from whence [Howard’s] chiefe delights do flow” (40). And while spiritual marriage may have seemed attractive to the unhappy Lady Cumberland, Anne Clifford was newly married when Lanyer composed “Cooke-ham.” The image of Anne accompanying “the Bridegroom to the feast” (15) hearkens to the earthly marriage Anne had recently embarked upon. In effect, Lanyer authorizes Anne’s earthly marriage by comparing

it to a spiritual one, recalling Perkins' assertions that marriage is "ordained of God in paradise." It would be unwise of Lanyer to wholly reject earthly marriage in light of her patroness's fresh union, especially when Lanyer was likely vying for a position within that very household.

Early modern marriage, furthermore, was as much a female concern as a male one. Lanyer utilized marriage as a construct in *Salve Deus* to inflate her social standing, just as her would-be patronesses looked to marriage to further their own social and economic interests. Although men clearly retained ultimate control within marriage, Lanyer nonetheless uses the means of influence available to her even within the patriarchal construction. To argue women were merely at the whim of patriarchy, is, as Amy Louis Erickson indicates, to deny "both daughters and mothers any decision-making power" (93). Early modern women could and did use marriage as a tool to augment their social standing. Among the aristocracy, "more than three quarters of young men—and, one presumes—young women—were fatherless at the time of their marriage (Erickson 93). Thus, it is evident that mothers brokered marriages on behalf of their daughters, marriages that would further the interests of the entire family. Although the husband, under coverture, retained legal control over both his property and the dowry he would acquire from his bride, it is nonetheless significant that a potential suitor's contribution was expected to match that of his would-be wife. Women ultimately retained no legal charge over wealth annexed by marriage, yet

we have seen how female alliances acquired through marriage allowed women to wield power informally. The most common form of an executor appearing in early modern wills was, in fact, an executrix. In this role, widows wielded nearly complete control of their husband's estate (Erickson 156). Harris asserts that a wife's experience in managing the family estate prepared her to competently act as executrix upon her husband's death. Marriage could confer control of large manorial estates to Lanyer's potential benefactors, as in the case of Katherine Howard, whose "high estate"—the duality of the word suggesting both Katherine's social state and the great manor, which was symbolic of rank—results from her union to Thomas Howard, her "most honorable Lord". Marriage, therefore, was of particular importance for aristocratic women because it represented one of their only viable career paths, and a means of extending and strengthening patronage networks. Marriage "was the gateway that opened lifelong careers for women" (Harris 21), and women were more likely to work within its constraints than to wholly reject it:

Because wives had no legal stake in the physical and economic resources of the household, no lawful way out of an unsatisfactory union, and few if any career options in lieu of marriage, they were more likely to feel impelled to make marriage work as a social and economic partnership, even when it was not a viable as an emotional and sexual bond". (Mendelson 131)

Moreover, women's "control of property as wives and widows enabled them to play a significant role in ensuring each other's material well-being" (Harris 22). Marriage, then, acted as a conduit for women to form and strengthen female alliances. Lanyer's *Salve Deus* cannot be read as a

rejection of earthly marriage, since it enabled Lanyer's would-be patroness to offer Lanyer the financial security that the poet sought to glean from such coalitions.

In "To Penshurst," Lanyer's contemporary Ben Jonson provides an example of marriage as a potentially successful career path for aristocratic women. Jonson's illustration of Lady Sidney's role in "To Penshurst" is a fairly accurate portrayal of her function at the estate. When "To Penshurst" was published in 1616, Penshurst Place in Kent was home to the Sidney family. Jonson's interaction with the Sidneys must have led to his awareness of the affectionate relationship between Robert Sidney and Barbara, formerly Barbara Gamage. Wed in 1584, the marriage of Robert and Barbara "seems to have embodied the Protestant matrimonial ideal articulated in a numerous contemporary marriage manuals and advice books (Lewalski, "Lady" 262).¹²" The domestic intimacy and emphasis on child rearing in "To Penshurst" rises from the harmony of the Sidney's nuclear setting. Robert Sidney's over 320 letters to Barbara attest to the deeply rooted affection and domestic happiness of his marriage, as is evident in excerpts such as this, from June of 1594: "Sweet heart. I would not for anything that the il husbands at the court should know how fond I am growne to send you on this fashion the first dainties I can come by: least they should think I were quite mad" (qtd. in Lewalski, "Lady" 263). Moreover, Sidney's letters confirm his prolonged and numerous absences,

¹² See the discussion and the bibliography of marriage books in Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent, & Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475-1640* (San Marino, Calif., 1982).

vacancies of lordship that allowed Barbara to run the estate. Not only did Robert entrust Barbara to oversee the daily machinery of Penshurst, a number of letters reveal that Sidney also expected her to supervise improvements to the buildings: "I need not send to know how my buildings goe forward, for I am sure you are so good a housewife you may be trusted with them" (qtd. in Lewalski, "Lady" 263). Barbara's situation was not uncommon; many gentry estates were "under the temporary management of wives during their husband's necessary absences and [wives] could thrive under considerable periods of such supervision" (Wrightson 94). Robert trusted Barbara to manage his estate during his absences and highly respected her proficiency at the task. Sidney even shared his financial difficulties with his wife, and his letters frequently reinforce his "affectionate concern for her place and authority in the household, and for preserving their good reputation for hospitality despite the needful retrenchment of expense" (Lewalski, "Lady" 263). Although few of Barbara's letters survive, it is clear that she not only managed Penshurst to a great extent, but that she was also praised, revered, and trusted for her skills.

Yet while Lady Sidney and noble wives like her may have attained a level of control over their estates, this agency did not efface the underlying assumption of marital hierarchy, of the wife's subservience to the male head. The psychological framework of such hierarchy infiltrated most every aspect of English society, and Lanyer, in inflecting *Salve Deus*

with marital themes, depicts marriage and patronage as analogous constructs. The hierarchical order of marriage is not undone, as Guibbory argues, but rather *reinforced*, as both relationships in early modern England constitute economic transactions with an embedded hierarchy. Wrightson asserts that what distinguished relationships of patronage “above all was the fact that this was the reciprocity in *unequal* obligations. Such relationships stemmed from the existence of *permanent* inequalities and were based on the recognition of power of one party and dependence of the other” (57). Marriage, though masked by the Christian fiction of “one flesh,” was shaped by the same understanding of wifely obedience and dependence. Dolan explains that early modern marriage, like patronage, was understood “as the joining of those who are unlike and unequal” (43). Marriage, for Lanyer, also offered an alternative to the traditional framing of courtly love that male poets often used in addressing their patronesses. Discourse of patronage used relations of love to “purify and idealise what was always of course an economic transaction” (Lamb 56). Love poetry of the era was consequently fraught with economic metaphors; for example, Donne in Elegy 19 addresses his mistress as “my America, my Newfoundland, / My kingdom, safest when with one man mann'd,/ My mine of precious stones” (28-30). Lanyer could not speak as a courtly lover, so marriage offered a viable substitute, one that was similarly inflected with economic concerns.¹³ Lanyer rejects this mode

¹³ Lanyer even describes Christ’s death and resurrection with economic language in “Salve Deus”, claiming “When He shall come in glory, that was solde / For all our sinnes;

explicitly in *Salve Deus*, asserting, “That outward Beatuie which the world commends, / Is not the subject I will write upon” (“*Salve Deus*” 185-6). Lanyer here refers to the Petrarchan practice of equating a woman’s external beauty with her inner virtue. With no choice but to reject the Petrarchan model, Lanyer must have also recognized the danger in her bid to be a professional female poet. Male poets most often wrote seeking a political end, which would represent an unacceptable foray into the public sphere for Lanyer. In “To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie,” Lanyer self-consciously asserts: “Not that I Learning to my selfe assume, / Or that I would compare with any man” (147). Marriage, on the other hand, offered a socially sanctioned model for Lanyer and her patroness to follow. Aligning her quest for patronage with her dedicatees’ marital interests would permit Lanyer’s actions to appear as a normal manifestation of the social order. Lanyer, therefore, does not wholly reject earthly marriage, but rather employs it as a means of cementing her relationship with her patronesses.

Lanyer’s address “To all vertuous Ladies in generall” begins the extended metaphor of marriage and patronage. Lanyer’s depiction of saintly yet virtuous women presents a hierarchical order; Lanyer’s community is essentially a collection of female attendants who serve a centralized power. Spiritual marriage endows women with virtue, which marks them as attendants to Christ, and by extension, attendants in the

we are happily chang’d” (61), and “To his eternall glory, beeing so poore, / To make a purchase of that heavenly Realme” (903).

larger, Christian network of patronage. Lanyer likens the “wedding garments [that] every one” dons to Christ’s robes of “purple scarlet white / Those perfit colours purest Virtue wore” (8, 15-16). By covering themselves in bridal robes, Lanyer’s women also take on Christ’s virtue. Lanyer calls upon these women by proclaiming “Let this faire Queen not unattended bee” and “Adorn your temples with fair Daphne’s crown” (8, 23). Female attendants, summoned by Lanyer, are called forth to serve not only a divine authority, but also the Queen herself (whom Lanyer hopes to similarly serve, and be rewarded for in turn). Just as “bright *Titans* shining chariot” is “Attended on by Age, Houres, Nights, and Daies” (43, 45), so do Christ’s bridegrooms serve him at the encouragement of the poet. The connections between Lanyer’s spiritual metaphor and her real quest for patronage are most explicit near the poem’s close, when she conjoins the spiritual ascension of these women with the earthly blessing of Lanyer’s book:

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

Where worthy Ladies I will leave you all,
Desiring you to grace this little Booke. (64-72).

The “virtues” that might grace “others” are clearly intended to light upon Lanyer’s “little Booke”. Similarly, in “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum,” Lanyer leaves a portrait of Christ with Lady Cumberland as a metonymic

representation of Lanyer's book, which preserves Christ's image through poetry:

Therefore (good Madame) in your heart I leave
His perfect picture, where it still shall stand,
Deeply engraved in that holy shrine,
Environed with Love and Thoughts divine. (1325-28)

Although Lanyer also equates virtue with the godly nature of Christ, it is clear that the concept cannot be divorced from the earthly system of patronage. To be virtuous is not only to act as a good Christian, but also to do so by supporting the less fortunate Lanyer. In highlighting the analogous relationship of these institutions, Lanyer's divine union endorses, and even requires, the sponsorship of *Salve Deus*.

Lanyer's spiritual marriage does not completely transcend the masculine and liberate "women from bondage to men," as Guibbory argues; rather, spiritual marriage in *Salve Deus* endows women with masculine virtue. This masculine virtue is essential because it marks Lanyer's patrons as noblewomen, a title that necessitates their patronage. Virtue, as previously discussed, was a highly charged word in early modern England, and Lanyer's educated dedicatees would have been aware of its masculine connotation. Lanyer's utilization of virtue as a defining trait of nobility echoes early modern debates over the nature of virtuous noblemen:

The widest social dimension of honour, embracing both lineage and lordship, was the community of honour itself . . . But the status of being honourable implied a tension between inherited status and personal quality, between 'blood' and 'virtue'. The man of honour was required to establish the innate quality of his honorable blood

by his virtuous deeds. (James 332)

One of Lanyer's goals in *Salve Deus* is to connect this masculine, ennobling virtue to patronage. In "The Author's Dreame to the Ladie *Maries*, the Countesse Dowager of *Pembrooke*", Lanyer praises the "manly mayd" Belladonna—Goddess of War and Wisdom—and describes Mary Sidney's literal and figurative embrace of such manliness: "this most noble Lady did imbrace her / And all humors unto hers did frame" (35, 44). Echoing Jonson's praise of Lady Bedford's "manly soul", it is Mary Sidney's masculine qualities of "virtue, wisdom, learning" (28) that ensure her fame. Lanyer also declares Queen Anne's right to the throne as a "Virtue" that "All Princes of the world doe most desire" (65, 66). Moreover, it is not just women within the work who possess such virtue. Christ is the first virtuous male, but Lanyer also commends Lady Katherine's husband as a

. . . most honorable Lord,
Whose noble virtues Fame can ne'r forget:
His hand being alwayes ready to afford
Help to the weak, to the unfortunate:
All which begets more honour and respect,
Than Croessus wealth, or Caesars sterne aspect. (25-30)

The depiction of Katherine and her husband evokes the great lordship of Sidney and his wife, whose patronage is enshrined in Jonson's poem. As noble Christians, the virtuous noblewomen of *Salve Deus* must likewise support the poet Lanyer. Lanyer's metaphor of her mind as "dym steel" ("To the Queenes" 41) is not merely a humble positioning, but also an oblique comment on her meager financial state. Lanyer's arrangement of

spiritual marriage, therefore, is self-serving—such spiritual unions legitimize the earthly compensation for which Lanyer wrote.

Clearly, Lanyer did not intend to completely reject earthly marriage. Although Lady Cumberland may have appreciated the spiritual model as an alternative to her troubled earthly union, we must remember that Margaret and the rest of Lanyer's patrons' status as noblewomen was, in part, defined *by* their marriage to aristocratic men. Marriage represented a model by which Lanyer might approach patronage, and also acted as the medium to interrelated factors that Lanyer would manipulate to legitimize her claim: inheritance, lineage, and land. The real-life marriages of Lanyer's patrons helped define them as wives within noble, landed families. Lanyer capitalizes on this symbol of wealth in light of her own bid for patronage, particularly as it relates to virtue, inheritance, and entitlement.

CHAPTER THREE

LINEAGE, INHERITANCE, AND LAND

Eve because she had helped to seduce her husband hath inflicted on her, an especiall bane; In sorrow shalt thou bring forth thy children, they desires shall bee subject to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

So here the reason of that which I touched before, that Women have no voyse in Parliament, They make no Lawes, they consent to none, they abrogate none. All of them are understood either married or to bee married and their desires subject to their husband, I know no remedy though some women can sift it well enough.

*The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights*¹⁴

Lanyer's portrayal of marriage exists as but one of many representations of women and matrimony in the early modern era. In addition to the various moral guidebooks on that ideal nature of such unions, tracts like the 1632 treatise *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights: or, The Lawes Provisions for Women* offered justification of the subordination of wives both within the household and the larger state. *The Lawes Resolutions* turns to the Biblical fall from grace in an attempt to justify the contemporary effacement of women's legal rights. Eve's disobedience, the yet unknown author T.E. argues, not only disinherits all future generations of women, but also effectively wills sorrow upon all of humankind. Marriage, in this argument, becomes the inevitable and

¹⁴ Qtd. in Aughterson, 153.

necessary role for women, and women's lack of legal voice by coverture is punishment for Eve's "especiall bane."

The Lawes Resolutions links the early modern emphasis on marriage to its supposedly Biblical roots, and in doing so, highlights what is arguably the most pressing concern for aristocratic families in the sixteenth and seventeenth century: the acquisition, maintenance, and inheritance of land. Primogeniture—inheritance following the male line—generally governed the transmission of property. In the absence of sons, property was jointly inherited by daughters (Erickson 26). The goal of marriage was the production of an heir, a burden that fell chiefly upon the wife. Thus, a critical part of every aristocratic woman's life involved "Producing an heir and ensuring its survival" (Payne 166).

We have already seen how Lanyer's portrayal of female alliance and spiritual matrimony constitutes an attempt to "sift . . . well enough" the relationship between the poet and her would-be patronesses. Lanyer similarly manipulates the topic of inheritance in her bid for support. Given that Margaret and Anne are her principle dedicatees, the issue of land becomes especially relevant. "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," dedicated primarily to Margaret as Christ's bride, focuses on the female point of view in retelling the Passion of Christ.¹⁵ In the section titled "Eves Apologie,"

¹⁵ Lanyer's approaching of her patrons through religion would have presented another female model in her construction of patronage. Religion was not only an acceptably female subject, it could serve as an equalizer for women, one that drew on female alliances: "feminine piety had evolved into a body of expertise which mothers taught daughters and mistresses their maidservants . . . shared with female friends, neighbors, and relations in the course of everyday socializing" (Mendelson 228).

Lanyer's interpretation of the fall argues Adam the more liable, for while Eve acted from innocence and love, Adam's choice was one of willful and knowing disobedience. Eve's action was simply a "tragic misunderstanding" (Woods, *Salve Deus* xxvii): "Her fault though great, yet hee was most too blame; / What Weaknesse offerd, Strength might have refused" ("Salve Deus" 778). In assigning blame primarily to men, Lanyer discredits the assertion of *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights* that Eve's supposedly greater sin should render early modern wives legally impotent, and Lanyer thereby legitimizes the Cliffords' claim to Lord Cumberland's land. Rather than an inheritor's of Eve's guilt, Margaret becomes the "Co-heire of that eternall blisse" (258). She wills this to Anne, whom Lanyer assures that "All [Margaret's] faire parts you challenge as your owne" ("To the Ladie Anne" 60). Lanyer thus establishes (in part) a system of matrilineal descent throughout *Salve Deus*, perpetuated by her mother-daughter matrix. Such a matrix would have been encouraging to Margaret and her daughter, who fought at great length to obtain Anne's birthright.

In addition to "Eves Apologie, the body of "Salve Deus" contains a number of explicit references to Anne's disinheritance, and Margaret's battles on her behalf. Lanyer's discussion of the spiritual holy land is symbolic of Anne's real-life inheritance. Lanyer confers ultimate control over all lands to Margaret's spiritual husband, at whose command the "Hills melt like wax" (95). Entering into a true spiritual marriage with Christ

should necessarily entail celibacy, which would, of course, render an earthly heir impossible. Lanyer, however, offers Anne a means of subverting this by supporting Lanyer's work. Lanyer directs Anne to "weare this Diadem I present to thee" ("To the Ladie *Anne*" 63). Once again, the ambiguous phrasing of the line allows Lanyer to align her book with the crown. Refiguring Lanyer's work as such evokes Christ's crown of thorns, to which Anne (by virtue of her mother) is heir:

You are the Heire apparant of this Crowne
Of goodnesse, bountie, grace, love, pietie,
By birth its yours, then keep it as your owne,
Defend it from all base indigniitie;
The right your Mother hath to it, is knowne
Best unto you, who reapt such fruit thereby. (65-72)

This wrests control from earthly landholders and bestows it upon the spiritual family that the Cliffords (via *Salve Deus*) have joined. In an effort to win the support of her legally-locked dedicatees, Lanyer assures them that while earthly land may be yet unattainable, Margaret and Anne still retain rights to the kingdom of Heaven.

Although Lanyer's portrayal of Anne's disinheritance has received much critical attention,¹⁶ the issue of inheritance speaks to the body of Lanyer's potential patrons. Most of her would-be benefactors were (or would soon be) wives of powerful men, and circulated within patronage networks of the landed elite. *Salve Deus* does not attempt to undo the hierarchical order of marriage and patrilineal descent and replace it with a matrilineal system; Lanyer may have emphasized this to win sympathy

¹⁶ See, for example, Barbara Lewalski's "Rewriting Patriarchy and Patronage: Margaret Clifford, Anne Clifford, and Aemilia Lanyer."

from Margaret and Anne, but Lanyer's larger project extends to the nobility of both genders. Critics have made much of Lanyer's protofeminist characterization of "evil 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" ("To the Vertuous Reader 20-22). It is important to note, however that Lanyer is not condemning *all* men, just those who would unjustly denounce the entire female sex. In the same prose piece, she acknowledges "honourable minded men", and asserts that she directs her book to the "modest censures of both" (56, 50) honorable men *and* women. And just as Lanyer does not wholly reject marriage, neither does she seek to reorder the deeply embedded system of inheritance. Lanyer's emphasis on land and virtue places these noblewomen and their families (including the powerful men to whom these women were connected) within the broader context of the patronage system, and highlights not only their position as landowners, but the subsequent duties that accompany such nobility—that is, their duty as patrons to support the less fortunate Lanyer.

Lanyer's reinflection of inheritance reveals that the truly defining trait of "noble virtue" is patronage, rather than lineage.¹⁷ Throughout her work, Lanyer contrasts virtuous nobles—that is, those that participate in the

¹⁷ Lanyer's own experience might have shaped this portrayal. In her youth, as mistress to Lord Hudson, Lanyer was impregnated and subsequently married to Alfonso in 1592. Her son, the "illegitimate child of Lord Hudson, did not receive riches or honors from his noble blood but was instead reared as the ordinary child of a musician, Alfonso Lanyer. From this perspective, class hierarchy became highly contingent not on blood lineage, but on social convention" (Lamb 47).

patronage network, and thereby earn their titles—and non-virtuous nobles—those who reject the network of patronage, and have thus unjustly inherited the land. Ideals of good lordship in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, as Stone explains, involved

a reciprocal exchange of patronage, support and hospitality in return for attendance, deference, respect, advice, and loyalty. This 'lordship' embraced not only the wider ramifications of kin, but also the household retainers and servants, the client gentry, and the tenants on the estates, all comprising a collective 'affinity'. (73)

As wives of such lords, Lanyer's patronesses are similarly expected to serve these tenets of good stewardship and support the collective affinity, which Lanyer endeavored to join by creating *Salve Deus*. Lanyer often emphasizes her patroness' virtue as intertwined with nobility in the repetition of "noble virtue" throughout the work. The word "noble" is at once indicative of character *and* blood. Nobility is defined "Of a person or people: illustrious or distinguished by virtue of position, character, or exploits", and/or of "Of birth, blood, family, etc."; a noble is also "one recognized or conferred by a sovereign or head of state" (*OED*). Lanyer's coupling of nobility and virtue emphasizes the obligations of her aristocratic patrons, responsibilities that Lanyer regularly references:

So craving pardon for this bold attempt,
I here present a mirrour to her view,
Whose noble virtues cannot be exempt,
My Glasse beeing steele, declares them to be true. ("The Authors
Dreame" 209-12)

This stanza functions as a call to noble duty in a number of ways. Not only does it draw attention to Lanyer's "steele" glass, a sharp juxtaposition

to the images of rich light attached to Lady Sidney earlier in the poem, but the penultimate line also insists on Mary Sidney's patronage of Lanyer. Because Sidney possesses those "noble virtues," she "cannot be exempt" from her aristocratic duties. These virtues cannot help but be reflected in Lanyer's mirror; in other words, the fruits of Sidney's nobility *must* be reflected upon Lanyer. The ambiguous phrasing and positioning of the line lends itself to such a reading, although Lanyer also intends it to be read as flattering of Mary Sidney.

Jonson's "To Penshurst" provides a useful poetic corollary to early modern ideals of stewardship and lineage that also inform Lanyer's portrayal. "To Penshurst" celebrates the successful functioning of noble patronage that entitles the Sidneys to their estate. "Thy lord and lady" (50) offer up plenty to their "collective affinity", and Robert Sidney furnishes an unusually generous portion:

Where comes no guest but is allowed to eat
Without his fear, and of thy lord's own meat;
Where the same beer and bread and self-same wine
That at his lordship's shall be also mine. (61-4)

Jonson similarly portrays Barbara Sidney as the model lady of the country house, one prepared to meet the demands of hospitality with "high huswifery" (85). Barbara's well-kept home and its ever-ready organization of "her linen, plate, and all things night" (86), coupled with her characterization as "noble, fruitful, chaste withal" (90), coalesce into an archetypal figure of an aristocratic lady. The orderliness of Barbara's

household is consequently reflected in nature's regenerative abundance.

Nature constitutes a continually renewing source of submission:

Thy copse too, named of Gamage, thou hast there,
That never fails to serve thee season'd deer,
When thou wouldst feast or exercise thy friends.
The lower land, that to the river bends,
Thy sheep, thy bullocks, kine, and calves do feed ;
The middle grounds thy mares and horses breed.
Each bank doth yield thee conies ; and the tops
Fertile of wood, Ashore and Sydneys copp's,
To crown thy open table, doth provide
The purpled pheasant, with the speckled side :
The painted partridge lies in ev'ry field,
And for thy mess is willing to be kill'd.
And if the high-swoln Medway fail thy dish,
Thou hast thy ponds, that pay thee tribute fish,
Fat, agèd carps that run into thy net. (19-34)

Lewalski notes in "The Lady of the Country-House Poem" that Lady

Sidney's noble lineage is literally ingrained in the nature of Penshurst:

Jonson also gives Barbara Sidney mythic significance as embodying the estate's ideal fusion of nature and culture. Along with the classical nature gods (Pan, Bacchus, dryads, satyrs, fauns) who inhabit Penshurst, and the Sidney memorials such as the tree marking Phillip Sidney's birth, several signs of Barbara's life and lineage are inscribed in the estate, identifying her closely with its superabundant natural fruitfulness (264).

Lady Sidney's fruitfulness is explicitly linked to reproduction, as she has successfully produced heirs to carry on the lineage embedded in the landscape. Jonson paints her as a dutiful mother, one who fosters her children and endows them with the proper sense of piety and education:

Each morn and even [her children] are taught to pray
With the whole household, and may, every day,
Read, in their virtuous parents' noble parts,
The mysteries of manners, arms and arts (95-98).

Jonson underscores the children's legitimacy as inheritors of Lord Sidney's estate, for they are referred to as "*His* children" (91; emphasis mine). Moreover, Jonson's economic metaphor in stating these children are Robert's "fortune in this age" (92) reveals the family itself as a microcosm of the patronage system, in which the husband, as head of the household, parcels out land to the next generation of nobility. The virtuous patronage of the Sidney family, therefore, remains etched in the estate itself, ensuring continual bounty for the entire patronage network, and the perpetuity of the Sidney's noble line.

Like "To Penshurst," *Salve Deus* flatters its dedicatees by painting them as virtuous noblewomen, which not only entitles their landed families to such property, but also *requires* that these nobles participate in the patronage network. Their nobility stems from virtuous ancestors, a nobility which Lanyer establishes through not only her network of virtuous mothers and daughters, but also the men operating in and around these female communities. Jonson's and Lanyer's emphasis on heredity would have been familiar to their wealthy patrons, for the "larger the property and status . . . the more intense was the preoccupation with the lineage" (Stone 70). Both wife and husband in early modern England felt a "duty which may be inseparable from a desire to preserve and reproduce through the generations the social nexus that is their household" (Wright 301). Thus, just as Jonson interweaves the lineage of both Sidneys, so does Lanyer incorporate archetypes of both male and female nobility in

her work. Lanyer's first detailing of a noble's specific duties comes in her praise of Lady Katherine's husband, Lord Howard, whose "noble virtues Fame can ne'r forget" (26):

His hand being alwayes ready to afford
Help to the weak, to the unfortunate:
All which begets more honour and respect,
Than Croessus wealth, or Caesars sterne aspect.

And rightly showeth that hee is descended
Of honourable Howards antient house,
Whose noble deedes by former times commended,
Do now remaine in your most loyall Spouse,
On whom God powres all blessings from above,
Wealth, honour, children and a worthy Love. (27-36)

Lanyer thus argues that Lord Howard's patronage secures the perpetuation of his line; his "noble deeds" are rewarded with "a worthy Love" in marriage to Susan Bertie, and their subsequent children. Susan Bertie's "children" and "high estate" (23), which Lanyer names as her chief fortunes, spring from her marriage to Lord Howard. Susan's virtue is defined by the nobility of her husband, echoing Kari McBride's assertion that in Jonson's "To Penshurst," Barbara Sidney as the "virtuous wife is central to the ideal estate, her virtue both dependent on and significant of her husband's particularly noble virility" (5).

Moreover, while Lanyer emphasizes the matrilineal descent of virtue from Margaret to Anne, the mother-daughter line is not wholly disentangled from men. Scholars like Marie Loughlin have looked to the following passage as indicative of Lanyer's effort to ascribe to Anne "some of the duties undertaken by gentlewomen on their manor estates; in

addition, they imagine Anne as a wealthy and powerful woman, capable of dispensing patronage" (168-9):

Bind up the broken, stop the wounds that bleeds,
Succour the poore, comfort the comfortlesse,
Cherish faire plants, suppressse unwholsom weeds;
Although base pelfe do chance to come in place,
Yet let true worth receive your greatest grace. (76-80)

Loughlin's interpretation is certainly relevant, especially considering

Anne's recent marriage to Richard Sackville, Earl of Dorset, in 1609.

However, such readings neglect the first three lines of the stanza: "And as your Ancestors at first possesst / Their honours, for their honorable deeds, / Let their fair virtues never be transgrest (73-5). Anne's model of virtuous patronage draws upon the entirety of her ancestry, not just that of her mother. Anne Clifford's claim to her land was contingent on her male lineage, or, as she would later acknowledge in her diary, the "Inheritance of my forefathers" (qtd. in Wrightson 301). Anne's spiritual inheritance also connects her to the lineage of Christ, whose heredity Lanyer configures as masculine. Christ "sprung from the roote of Jessie" ("To the Ladie *Margaret* 18), and "shal inherit / His Father Davids throne" ("Salve Deus" 1052).¹⁸ Moreover, these aspects of patronage are not solely feminine; Anne's comforting of the poor and "comfortlesse" mirrors Thomas Howard's "hand being always ready to afford / Help to the weake, to the unfortunate" ("To the Ladie *Katherine*" 27-8). Lanyer refers to the duties Anne would soon be undertaking as the wife of a nobleman, much

¹⁸ Jesus, as Woods explains, "was in the line of David, whose father was Jessie" (Woods, *Salve Deus* 34, note to lines 15-16).

like Lady Katherine and Lord Howard. Anne was, in fact, departing from Cookham to Dorset's Kentish estate (Grossman 138). Lanyer writes of Anne's marriage into the Sackvilles, earls of Dorset, as another marker of virtue in "Cooke-ham":

And that sweet Lady sprung from *Cliffords* race,
Of noble *Bedfords* blood, faire steame of Grace;
To honorable *Dorset* now espows'd,
In whose faire breast true virtue then was hous'd. (94-7)

Moreover, Katherine's dedicatory poem directly precedes Anne's poem, suggesting that Katherine's idyllic marriage was intended as a model for Anne's entrance into the network of patronage as an aristocratic wife.

The etymology of virtue, with its masculine derivative, would have reinforced the concept of patrilineal descent, even in the case of Anne and Margaret. While Lanyer's matrilineal construction may lend itself to a profeminist reading, it is important to note that it is a *masculine* attribute that largely sanctions Anne's rights to inherit land. Just as Susan Bertie's rank is contingent upon her husband's nobility, so do Margaret and Anne rely upon a masculine virtue to secure Anne's inheritance. Ascribing such masculine virtue to Anne, then, does not completely "challenge patriarchal ideology" (Lewalski, "Imagining Female Community" 221), but rather reinforces patrilineal descent in assuring that a masculine trait warrants such inheritance.

Lanyer's *Salve Deus* is also populated with examples of "wise and virtuous" ("To the Vertuous Reader" 33) *femmes fortes* from the Biblical and classical tradition, a popular subject for writers in the seventeenth

century. *Femmes fortes* like “*Jael* wife of *Heber*” (“To the Vertuous Reader 36)¹⁹, “valiant *Judeth* (“*Salve Deus*” 1482)²⁰, “chaste *Lucrece*”²¹ (“*Salve Deus* 211), and the goddess of wisdom *Minerva* (“*The Authors Dreame*” 3) were often depicted “not in female dress but with helmets, swords, and armour, which indicated to contemporary viewers that they were not claiming their heroic traits for *women* but instead temporarily acting as *men*” (Fairchilds 25). *Femmes fortes*, rather than challenging notions of femininity, were often reassuring of gender order. *Lucretia*, in particular, exhibits her masculine courage in defense of the female attribute “most important to traditional patriarchy, wifely fidelity” (Fairchilds 25). Thus, even Lanyer’s configuration of virtue as feminine in “To all vertuous Ladies in generall,” when she personifies virtue as “hir whom winged Fame attends” (3), ultimately supports patrilineal descent. Anne’s virtue is both masculine and feminine in the sense that Margaret is depicted as virtuously chaste. Margaret’s masculine virtue, like *Lucretia*’s, allows her to defend her feminine virtue of wifely fidelity. Such virtue implies that Margaret was an exemplary loyal wife to Lord Cumberland, further solidifying Anne’s claim as the legal heir to his estate. Such virtue recalls Jonson’s extolling of *Barbara Sidney*’s as “fruitful, chaste withal”

¹⁹ Woods explains the Biblical origins: “*Sisera* took refuge in the house of *Jael*, wife of *Herber*; she killed him by hammering a tent peg through his skull” (*Salve Deus* 49)

²⁰ Woods explains the Biblical origins: “heroine of the apocryphal book of *Judith*, who beheaded the enemy general, *Holofernes*” (*Salve Deus* 114).

²¹ *Lucretia* was a “Roman matron and rape victim who had committed suicide rather than bring disgrace on her husband’s family” (Fairchild, 25)

(90), for her faithfulness to her husband ensures the rightful legitimacy of Lord Sidney's heirs, a "fortune, in this age" (92).

Lanyer's argument of virtue as authorizing rank is of particular relevance for her larger project. Lanyer portrays her book as a conduit for virtue, a means by which her patronesses must maintain their nobility. As previously discussed, it is the patronage of Lanyer's work that sanctions the rank of her benefactors, of which land is symbolic. Lanyer consequently positions herself as an integral piece of the land's fabric. She constructs this conceit by drawing attention to her lack of property, as compared with the estates of her patrons. This begins in the first dedicatory poem to Queen Anne, where Lanyer juxtaposes her own Christ-like poverty with the wealth of her patrons:

And since my wealth within his Region stands,
And that his Cross 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 pointedly positions herself as a unpropertied poet, one whom her landed patrons might well aid. Lanyer's conceit of patronage and property subsequently threads throughout *Salve Deus*, and becomes more pointed in her dedicatory poem to Susan Bertie. Lanyer portrays *Salve Deus* as "faire greene grass" that is nurtured by Susan as the "Sunnes virtue" (8). Susan's patronage is literally equated with Lanyer's endeavors at the poem's close, for "Only [Susan's] noble virtues do incite / [Lanyer's] pen, they are the ground [Lanyer will] write upon" (45-6). In "To the Lady

Anne, Countesse of Dorcet,” Lanyer claims she writes as God’s steward, “In whom the seeds of virtue have bin sowne, / By your most worthy mother, in whose right, / All her faire parts you challenge as your owne” (58-60). Lanyer continues her conceit, begun with Susan Bertie, of her work as the earth in the poem to Anne Clifford. Lanyer uses other ambiguously constructed lines to imply that the “seeds of virtue” sown by Margaret may well refer to Lanyer, and the duty of tending to such seeds is subsequently bequeathed to Anne. Lanyer, as the land, then acts as a conduit for this inheritance. Lanyer likens her poems again in “*Salve Deus*” to “plants” (1456) from which spring “faire seeds of Virtue” (1455). As Mary Ellen Lamb observes, the metaphor of patronage was often tied to the word “plant” (54), reinforcing the patron-client relationship embedded in the natural landscape of *Salve Deus*. Though Jonson etches Lady Sidney’s lineage and “fruitfulness” into Penshurst, Lanyer reconfigures her very self and her work as a generative aspect of the landscape, and a retainer and provider of virtue. She becomes both the fruit and the seed, a representative of the mutually beneficial system of patronage. Anne and her fellow patronesses must manage their estates, just as Lady Sidney administers the affairs of Penshurst. In doing so, they assure the regeneration of Lanyer’s seeds of virtue. In turn, Lanyer has “fram’d for her Eternitie” a crown to which Anne and the other dedicatees—as dutiful patrons—are now rightfully “Heire[s] apparent” (*To the Ladie Anne*” 64, 65).

Lanyer extends this metaphor in “The Authors Dreame to the Ladie Marie, the Countesse Dowager of *Pem-brooke*”, when Dictina, the moon, likewise participates in the system of patronage that graces the land:

Now faire *Dictina* by the breake of Day,
With all her Damsels round about her came,
Ranging the woods to hunt, yet made a stay,
When harkning to the pleasing sound of Fame;

Her Ivory bowe and silver shaftes shee gave,
Unto the fairest nympe of all her traine;
And wondring who it was that in so grave,
Yet gallant fashion did her beauty staine:

Shee deckt her selfe with all the borrowed light
That *Phoebus* would afford from his faire face,
And made her Virgins to appeare so bright,
That all the hills and vales received grace. (45-56)

The hierarchy of patronage is clearly seen in the female attendants who serve Dictina, who serves Mary Sidney. The gift of patronage echoes in the image of “borrowed light”, and by Sidney's virtue, the land likewise receives grace. Lanyer calls on Mary “To grace those flowres that springs from virtues ground”, that is, Lanyer’s poetic “workes” (214, 215).

Lanyer’s alignment of her book with the land of her patroness emphasizes their duties, as landed nobles, to support Lanyer. This virtue enables them to carry out their duties to the crown, thereby bestowing and regulating gifts to implement the overall policy of centralizing power.

The physical manifestation of good lordship was not only land, but also the “great house with its open hospitality” (Stone 73). Lanyer often draws upon this symbol of patronage by describing her poetic endeavors in architectural terms. Lanyer’s work becomes a literal “frame of Glory . . .

erected” in her dedicatees’ honor, where “virtue should be settled & protected” (“The Ladie Anne” 2, 4). Nobility without patronage will not suffice, for mere “Greatness is no sure frame to build upon” (17). Lanyer likens her patrons to “Gods Stewards”, who must “for all the poore provide, / If in Gods house they purpose to abide” (55-6). This hierarchy of spiritual patronage implies that her patronesses must provide an earthly position for Lanyer within their great manor if they hope to one day reside in the spiritual home—the “Monument of [their] faire worth” (71)—that Lanyer erects in *Salve Deus*.

The culmination of Lanyer’s symbolic identification with land and the great manor comes in “The Description of Cooke-ham.” The poem constitutes a valediction for Lanyer’s time at the estate, and more specifically, the patron-client privilege she enjoyed as Anne’s tutor.²²

Nature humbly performs as a client to its patroness, the Lady Margaret.

The land itself acts out Lanyer’s request:

The very Hills right humbly did descend,
When you [Lady Cumberland] to tread upon them did intend,
And as you set your feete, they still did rise,
Glad that they could receive so rich a prise. (35-8)

²² Lanyer’s concentration on landscape may also have been an appeal to the love of nature espoused by Margaret and Anne. After her mother’s death by smallpox in 1560, Margaret lived for seven years with her Aunt, Mrs. Elmes, at Lillford, Northhamptonshire (Williamson 36). Margaret’s love for her time in the country prompted her to send her own daughter Anne to the same spot for several years in her early youth, which, recorded by Lady Anne, “caused this Mother and Daughter ever after to love a Country life the better, they both being Seasoned with the ground of goodness and religion” (qtd. in Williamson 37). Margaret, moreover, displayed an interest in utilizing nature for personal benefit. Anne describes her mother as “deeply interested in alchemy, and she found many excellent medicines that did good to many people, and that she distilled waters and chemical extractions, delighting in the work, for she had a good deal of knowledge of minerals, of herbs, of flowers, and of plants” (qtd. in Williamson 38). Margaret’s intimate knowledge of plant life indicates a continual engagement with the landscape, one that very likely resulted in her understanding of nature’s medicinal properties.

“Rich”— a pun on the monetary gains that Lanyer stands to gain from Lady Cumberland’s support—is reiterated by the poem’s final lines “Tying my heart to her by those rich chaines” (210). Lanyer’s depictions of attendants—both spiritual and literal—throughout *Salve Deus* occur again in figures of nature, such as “The pretty Birds [that] would oft come to attend” (47) Margaret and Anne. Margaret’s presence within the landscape stimulates such natural bounty, and the “House receiv’d all ornaments to grace it” (19). Margaret’s patronage, then, only increases her estate. It is only when Margaret’s patronage ceases—that is, when she and Lanyer part—that the season of bounty abruptly ends. “The trees that were so glorious” (133), in the Cliffords’ absence “Forsooke both flowres and fruit” (134). Margaret’s failure to perpetuate the system of patronage ensures harm to the estate, as “The house cast off each garment that might grace it, / Putting on dust and cobwebs to deface it” (202). Margaret did not own Cookham; her brother William Russell leased it from the crown. However, Lanyer suggests here that neglecting patronage might harm Lady Margaret’s larger kinship network. Lanyer’s argument is relevant, considering the broader context of patronage. Aristocratic families were granted such estate and lands by the crown, as a reward for implementing patronage policies. But Lanyer is quick to demonstrate, at the poem’s close, how fostering *Salve Deus* might solve this trouble. She assures her would-be patroness that “When I am dead thy name in this may live” (206), a guarantee that fame and entitling virtue

will descend to future generations of readers; that is, if Lanyer receives the support to perpetuate the fruits of her poetic labor.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

My intent in this discussion has not been to dismiss Lanyer's bold claim for female equality. Lanyer's assertion that God himself bestows "power to wise and virtuous women" ("To the Vertuous Reader" 32) would certainly have been empowering to early modern women. However, the critical focus on Lanyer tends to isolate these protofeminist responses as indicative of Lanyer's entire book, an oversight that, in the end, ignores the often complex and conflicting ideologies in *Salve Deus*. Despite her impressive attempt as a middle-class female poet in seventeenth-century England, Lanyer failed within a progressively more disjointed system of literary patronage. Wrightson's depiction in *English Society 1580-1680* of an increasingly individualized England, in which the traditional networks of community and kinship were deteriorating, reflects Lanyer's own frustrations with inadequate patronage. Confronted with the challenge of multi-leveled hierarchies of patronage, rank, and gender, Lanyer's *Salve Deus* is consequently fraught with incongruities. To idealize her poetry representing a feminine utopia neglects the myriad of contradictions within Lanyer's text; her praise of worldly marriage in addition to a spiritual one; the glorification of a celibate union with Christ and her emphasis on earthly lineage and inheritance; her endorsement of masculine virtue and feminine grace; and her struggle to write within male models of patronage

are but some of the many engaging and perplexing subtleties of *Salve Deus*.

To elevate Lanyer's poetry to what Lewalski has called a "defense and celebration of a community of good women" runs the risk of romanticizing female alliances, thereby effacing the historical realities of Lanyer's position. Although Lanyer may have constructed, in part, a feminine utopia, the men who are absent here should not be dismissed as unimportant. For example, the critical dependency on "Cooke-ham" as representative of "Lanyer's erasure of the masculine presence" (Miller 161) obfuscates its historical context—Lanyer's seemingly idyllic time with Margaret and Anne Clifford was not only necessitated by Margaret's troubled relationship with her husband, but her stay at the Cookham estate was in fact made possible by the agency of men: namely, Margaret's brother William Russell, who leased the lands from the king. Relationships between men and women in a patriarchal society necessarily govern the interactions between women themselves, and we should consider the relationships of both genders in order to better comprehend the entire machinery.

Viewing the relationship between men and women as it relates to female alliances raises other interesting questions of continuity across historical and critical discourse. Robert Evans' characterization of patronage as a psychological framework suggests that the multi-level hierarchies of *Salve Deus* might extend to other forms of women's writing.

Broadening the study of patronage beyond poetry could illuminate the larger corpus of women's texts. A comparison of epistolary forms (like the letters of Elizabeth Raleigh) to Lanyer's poetry, for example, may enhance our understanding of early modern women and their approach to the literary realm. Indeed, many of Lanyer's patronesses, including Katherine Howard and Mary Sidney, penned a number of suitor's letters that might aid a discussion of women and their response to economic crisis. As Lynne Magnusson explains, such letters "represent a surprisingly wide range of public actions. Very often, these actions are prompted not by the thirsty pursuit of opportunity driving male suitors but by the withdrawal of various forms of sustenance" (56). Clearly, both Lanyer's *Salve Deus* and these letters were governed by a dependence on and incorporation of unstable patronage models. An assessment of Lanyer's poetry with traditionally non-canonical texts would enrich our understanding not only of female alliance in light of patronage systems, but also how masculine models shaped such interactions.

The setting aside of rigid distinctions in genres of women's writing might also have a leveling effect that would allow previously obscured congruencies to emerge. A more fluid consideration of Lanyer's role within the larger poetic body could offer insight into not only the early modern era, but also its relationship to contemporary culture. Although Evans argues that the type of "poem addressed explicitly to a superior, which might be called the essential or archetypal patronage poem . . . has

no real counterpart in recent writing” (90), I think that viewing the patronage poem as but one part of a larger progression would ultimately be more fruitful in understanding poetry and audience. While current poetry may not explicitly appeal to a higher authority, and may not “demand such a radical accommodation to another ego” (Evans 90), modern writing is still largely dependent on audience. While the higher authority has expanded from a particular patron to a group of literary journals or similar publications, no poet can really claim to write without an audience in mind. Mikhail Bakhtin astutely characterizes poetry as language “saturated with intention” (qtd. in Forbes 200). In the postmodern age, absolute sincerity and poetry as uniquely expressive of the self has been deemed impossible; nothing is written “without at least an implied listener [and] a social context that influences its making; human feelings and perceptions are so fluid and fleeting that it is impossible to give any true static account of them” (Forbes 4).

Deborah Forbes, in *Sincerity’s Shadow: Self-Consciousness in British Romantic and Mid-Twentieth-Century American Poetry*, combines poets from different historical time periods—William Wordsworth and Adrienne Rich, Robert Browning with T.S. Eliot—which has the benefit “of allowing us to see these familiar poets with a freshness made possible by the abandonment of some of our habitual categories” (12). I would argue that this practice should be expanded across larger traditional barriers.

We might consider how Lanyer's depiction of Cookham's Edenic estate differs or compares with Tennyson's "In Memoriam:"

But where is she, the bridal flower,
That must be made a wife ere noon?
She enters, glowing like the moon
Of Eden on its bridal bower. (24-28)

Or perhaps we could consider Lanyer in light of Peg Boyers' narrative of learning to lie as a young girl:

How enormous then that first transgression,
against Father's command, a sin damning as Adam's:
walking to school alone.

We all lied, mother explained,
it was . . . *necessario*.
How else to survive

Father's rages,
his sweeping interdicts
and condemning opinions? ("Coat" 4-12).

Similarly, Lanyer's unique position as a female poet operating within a patriarchal system may have broader ramifications for postmodern women. Judith Bennett persuasively argues for a long-term approach to the study women's history. Bennett argues for the existence of what she terms a "patriarchal equilibrium" (2); that is, the idea that while there have been a number of changes in the narrative of female oppression, the structure of patriarchy and women's relation to it has remained roughly the same. Bennett, for example, posits that while women in medieval England earned seventy-one percent of annual wages grossed by men, today, that figure stands roughly unaltered—women in Great Britain earn seventy-five

percent of the compensation gleaned by their male counterparts (5).

While Bennett's provocative book is more of a call-to-arms for feminist historians, and less of a common practice, I believe her approach could be a valuable across disciplines, and might yield some surprising parallels between Lanyer and contemporary writers. Lanyer's work might therefore weigh into our thinking about both poets of her age like Jonson and Shakespeare and writers of our own time. Ultimately, we might then interrogate to what extent women writers remain still bound by the "rich chains" of patriarchy, social rank, and audience.

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