

# Escaping the surveilling male gaze:

Female corporeality and its spiritual significance in Aemilia Lanyer's  
'Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum' (1611)

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## Sammendrag

Denne oppgaven utforsker hvordan Foucault sine teorier om overvåkning kan gjenspeiles i diktet ‘Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum’ (1611) av Aemilia Lanyer. Diktet ble publisert i Lanyer sin diktsamling *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, og kan beskrives som en ‘Passion narrative’ ettersom den skildrer Kristus sin lidelse og korsfestelse. Spesielt fokuserer jeg på hvordan Lanyer fremstiller kvinner som Jomfru Maria og Eva i hennes gjenfortelling, og hvordan hennes skildring kan gjenspeile hvordan kvinners kropp og sinn blir overvåket og disiplinert.

Jeg argumenterer at Lanyer sin fremstilling av disse kvinnene samt hvordan hun henvender seg til sine kvinnelige lesere og Margaret Clifford the Countess of Cumberland, kvinnen hun dedikerer diktet sitt til, belyser hvordan kvinner kan potensielt unnsnippe det objektiverende og overvåkende mannlige blikk (‘male gaze’). ‘Salve’ gir kvinnelige lesere en utvei hvor de kan henvende seg til sin kristne tro og anvende deres egne unike kvinnelige blikk (‘female gaze’) og tolke bibelen selvstendig fra mannlige autoritet. Spesielt gjennom Lanyer sin fremstilling av den menneskelige Jomfru Maria, og hennes kroppslige forbindelse med hennes sønn Jesus Kristus, tolker jeg at Lanyer i ‘Salve’ fremhever hvordan kvinner har en spesiell kroppslig forbindelse med Kristus og derfor også en unik spirituell tilnærming til kristendommen.

I renessanse ble kvinners kropp og sinn ofte fremstilt som spesielt syndefull gjennom deres forbindelse med Eva og syndefallet. Gjennom Lanyer sin fremstilling av Jomfru Maria sin kroppslige forbindelse med Kristus, og derfor kvinners forbindelse med frelsen av menneskeheten gjennom Kristus, oppfordrer diktet kvinner til å revurdere hvordan deres kropp og sinn blir fremstilt som syndefull og heller fokusere på deres positive forbindelse til Jomfru Maria. Jeg fokuserer hovedsakelig på diktet ‘Salve’, men jeg vurderer også hvordan elementer i hele samlingen *Salve* er med på å styrke budskapet om kvinner sin kroppslige spiritualitet og derfor unike perspektiv i deres tolkning av Bibelen.

Kapittel 1 gir et teoretisk og historisk overblikk, hvor jeg utforsker hvordan kvinners kropp ble sett på i renessansen i England, og hvordan kvinnekroppen blir fremstilt av Lanyer i *Salve*. Jeg plasserer også Lanyer sin diktsamling i forhold til kvinnebevegelsen i Lanyer sin egen tid, også kjent som *Querelle des Femmes* debatten. Kapittel 2 fokuserer på Lanyer sin fremstilling av Jomfru Maria, hvordan den kan sammenlignes med andre gjenfortellinger (‘Passion narratives’), hvordan Jomfru Maria fremhever kvinners unike kroppslige posisjon innenfor kristendommen, og hvordan Lanyer sin fremstilling av Maria også påvirker hennes fremstilling av en menneskelig Kristus. Kapittel 3 utforsker hvordan Lanyer argumenter for

en større mengde selvstendig bibelsk tolkning av kvinner, her argumenterer jeg at Lanyer fremstiller Eva deltakelse i syndefallet som ikke like alvorlig som Adams hvor i tillegg Eva var den første som fikk tilgang til kunnskap som insinuerer at kvinner har like stor rett på kunnskaps som men. Lanyer sin fremstilling av Margaret Clifford the Countess of Cumberland sin kristne tro som spesielt hellig og prektig ('virtuous') forsterker bildet av kvinner sin kristne tro som spesielt helbrederne fremfor undertrykkende. Til slutt ser jeg på hvordan Lanyer fremstiller også seg selv som en kvinnelig religiøs visjonær ('religious visionary'), og gjennom paratekstuelle elementer i *Salve* oppfordrer kvinner til å utføre sine egne tolkninger av Bibelen ved å bruke sine helbrederne kvinnelige blikk.

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# Introduction

‘A generation before Milton, Aemilia Lanyer [...] professes herself to be God’s poet.’  
(Woods 1993, xli)

This is how Susanne Woods, the editor of the 1993 edition of Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, describes Lanyer in the introduction of the collection. Woods specifically points to the postface titled ‘To the doubtfull Reader’ where Lanyer describes herself as being ‘appointed to performe this Worke’ (Lanyer 1993, 139), suggesting that she has been called by a higher power to write her collection. Lanyer writing religious poetry is not necessarily radical, considering how religion was one of the few spaces women were encouraged to interact ‘women were increasingly free to translate religious works and write of their own religious experience, even to the extent of producing religious verse’ (Woods 1993, xxxi). However, as Woods observes, Lanyer’s passion narrative ‘Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum’ ‘claims biblical and historical authority and grants the viewpoint of women as much or greater authenticity as that of men’ (Woods 1993, xxxii).

*Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* by Aemilia Lanyer was first published in 1611 as a quarto and ‘was printed by Valentine Simmes and sold by Richard Bonian, [both] respectable members of their trade’ (Woods 1993, xxxi). The collection contains nine patronage poems, in the middle of the collection with its 1840 lines the title poem and passion narrative ‘Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum’, and last poem ‘The Description of Cooke-ham’, both of which are dedicated to Margaret Clifford the Countess of Cumberland. Lanyer’s Passion closely follows Matthew 26:30-28:10, as this is ‘the only version which contains the warning of Pilate’s wife’ (Woods 1993, xxxvi). However, Woods also points out that Lanyer refers to other gospels that refer to women, such as Mark 14:26.16:11, Luke 22:39-24:12 and John 18:1-20:18 (Woods 1993, xxxvi).

‘Salve’ can be described as a passion narrative, as Lanyer describes in detail the last period of Christ’s life and his crucifixion. Femke Molekamp states that women ‘read and meditated on Christ’s passion with scrutiny and affectivity’ (Molekamp 2013, 185). Molekamp then continues by stating that ‘the passion can thus serve as a locus for female subjectivity, or self-representation, as women reflect self-consciously on their spirituality and lives when engaging with Christ’s humanity and suffering’ (Molekamp 2013, 185). In lines 1161-7 Lanyer describes in detail the image of Christ on the cross, and then in the next stanza in lines 1168-72 Lanyer asks the Countess of Cumberland to meditate on Christ’s body:

This with the eie of Faith thou maist behold,  
Deere Spouse of Christ, and more than I can write;  
And here both Griefe and Joy thou maist unfold,  
To view thy Love in this most heavy plight.  
(Lanyer 1993, 1169-72)

Lanyer wants her readers to participate in a religious meditative reading, as she asks the Countess of Cumberland, to whom 'Salve' is dedicated, to regard her blazon of Christ on the cross and meditate on it. It is not only through the depiction of the Virgin Mary that Lanyer's 'Salve' encourages women to embrace their unique corporeal spirituality, it is also through the blazon of Christ's body which the poem encourages its female readers to gaze at which ultimately encourages them to explore a female focused hermeneutical practice.

In my thesis, I will primarily focus on the passion narrative 'Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum', a poem which I would argue emphasises the importance of female corporeality and spirituality within Christianity. I will do this by using Foucault's theories of surveillance and discipline from *Discipline and Punish*, combined with historical contexts surrounding women and women's bodies in early modern England. Through this historical and theoretical framework I will demonstrate how Lanyer's 'Salve' wishes to resist the objectification and discipline of women's bodies by emphasising the importance of the female corporeal through figures such as the Virgin Mary, and thus highlighting the unique spirituality women have within Christianity, encouraging women to escape the surveilling male gaze and instead apply their female gaze to perform their own biblical interpretations.

Throughout my thesis I will often use the term Foucauldian term 'surveillance'. I will briefly outline my own use of the term surveillance, as I believe it is important to consider what exactly I mean when using this word. In the translator's note to *Discipline and Punish*, Alan Sheridan writes about the difficulty of giving *Surveiller et punir* an English title, as the French word *Surveiller* 'has no adequate English equivalent' (Sheridan in Foucault 2020, ix). Sheridan continues: 'Our noun 'surveillance' has an altogether too restricted and technical use. [...] "Supervise" is perhaps closest of all, but again the word has different associations. "Observe" is rather too neutral [...]. In the end Foucault himself suggested *Discipline and Punish*' (Sheridan in Foucault 2020, ix).

Even though I recognise the difficulty of using surveillance as a form for the French *Surveiller*, I also believe that the word 'discipline', though an interesting and relevant term, does not cover the main tension found throughout Lanyer's collection: that of control accomplished through monitoring of women's bodies. I would argue that this creates the

tension outlined by Foucault between the surveilled and the surveiller, where women are the surveilled and men and society as a whole are the surveillers. This problematic dynamic creates an observing hierarchy where certain behaviours are normalised, and individuals are examined and ultimately objectified. The *OED* defines ‘surveillance’ as: ‘Watch or guard kept over a person, etc., esp. over a suspected person, a prisoner, or the like; often, spying, supervision; less commonly, supervision for the purpose of direction or control, superintendence’ (*OED* ‘surveillance’, a). I will continue to use the word surveillance to mean to monitor or supervise in order to control, hence the latter part of the *OED* definition.

I also use the term ‘hermeneutics’ throughout my thesis. When I use the term ‘hermeneutics’ I specifically mean ‘The interpretation of scriptural texts’ (*OED*, ‘hermeneutics’, 1). More specifically, I use the hermeneutics to refer to ‘the art of understanding’ where the response of readers are seen as the main focus. As Anthony Thiselton describes in *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, this form of hermeneutics focuses on the dynamic function of a text, how it communicates with and is understood by its reader: ‘Communication, like teaching a class, describes not only what is *transmitted* by the text, or the source of the subject matter, but also what is *conveyed to*, and *understood and appropriated by*, the reader or the “target” audience’ (Thiselton 2009, 12). This form of hermeneutics also emphasise the importance of ‘Pre-understanding’, where ‘objectivity’ is seen as impossible as every individual is shaped by their traditions and communities: ‘Preliminary understanding begins with what we inherit from the wisdom or common sense of the community and traditions into which we were born and educated. Gadamer insists that the transmitted wisdom of communities ranks above the subjective data of the fallible individual “consciousness”’ (Thiselton 2009, 23). Considering the importance of pre-understanding to hermeneutics, it is important to consider historical elements relevant to Lanyer’s female readership in order to understand what kind of biblical interpretations they are more likely to perform based on their cultural background.

Early Lanyer scholarship was mostly centred around feminist theory. Feminist Lanyer scholarship was often a response to A L Rowse who first published Lanyer’s poetry in the collection titled *Poems of Shakespeare’s Dark Lady* in 1979. In the introduction to the collection Rowse theorised that the figure of the ‘dark lady’ in Shakespeare’s sonnets was Aemilia Lanyer, where he demonstrated that Lanyer moved in the same social circles as Shakespeare. More specifically, Rowse looked at how Lanyer was the mistress of Queen Elizabeth’s Lord Chamberlain, Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon (1526-1596), who was also a



strong patron of the arts, including The Lord Chamberlain's men, Shakespeare's Theatre company (Woods 1993, xviii).

This sparked reactions among feminist literary critics who thought it was unfair to pay attention to Lanyer's poetry collection solely on the basis that she was once connected to Shakespeare. Many of these feminist critics chose to focus on Lanyer's patronage poems, the poems preceding the main title poem in *Salve*, in order to highlight female reading circles and communities. As Suzanne Trill discusses in her 2001 article 'Feminism versus Religion: Towards a Re-Reading of Aemilia Lanyer's "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum"', prior to 2001 not that many critics focused on the theological aspects of Lanyer's *Salve*, where most of the scholarship on Lanyer focused on the patronage poems rather than the passion narrative and title poem 'Salve':

A breakdown of Kari McBride's meticulously maintained bibliography indicates that over 80% of the articles are feminist in perspective: of these, roughly 25% focus on the dedicatory poems and the politics of patronage; just over 20% address the question of how Lanyer constructs "authority" for herself as a woman writer; and another 15% focus on "The Description of Cooke-Ham." Although a minority of essays (about 5 %) focus on *Salve Deus*, many of them are not primarily concerned with religion. (Trill 2001, 71-2)

The patronage poems receiving more critical attention is also evident by which selection of Lanyer's poems are often anthologised. In the 2008 anthology *Early Modern Women's Writing: An Anthology 1560-1700* edited by Paul Salzman, all of Lanyer's patronage poems appear in full. Meanwhile the Salzman anthology only includes 40 stanzas out of the total 330 of the religious title poem 'Salve'. Significantly, the section in 'Salve' called 'Eves Apologie' appears in Salzman's anthology, but no other parts of the actual passion narrative does. Even though this omission could be explained as simply not having enough space for the entire poem, with its 1840 lines, it is significant to note that all eleven patronage poems appear in the Salzman anthology. The only edition still published today of Lanyer's entire poetry collection is the edition edited by Susanne Woods, which was first published in 1993.

Trill also highlights that many of these early feminist critics saw Lanyer's theological writing as 'appropriated religious discourses in order to disseminate her proto-feminist ideas' (Trill 2001, 68). Trill continues, stating that 'Lanyer's writing is primarily studied for what it can potentially reveal about early modern female consciousness or subjectivity, rather than for its participation in doctrinal debate' (Trill 2001, 68). Trill suggests that this comes down to how critics view religious themes in female poets such as Lanyer differently than for male poets writing about the same themes:

Whereas critical discussion of Donne and Herbert's religious writing centres on disagreements about their exact doctrinal and consequent ideological position, Lanyer's poetry is assumed to be "defined" by the broad, umbrella terms: "Protestant" and "feminist". (Trill 2001, 68)

Trill expands upon this idea, drawing on 'Profession or Performance? Religion in Early Modern Literary Study' by Kate Narveson:

Kate Narveson has recently argued that literary studies of early modern religious writing tend to divide between those that view religion as a "profession" and those who see it as a "performance." While Donne and Herbert tend to attract critics "who look at religion as a propositional belief," Lanyer is predominantly discussed by "those for whom [religion] is a cultural system imbricated in structures of power, gender, ritual, sexuality, and so forth". (Trill 2001, 68)

Trill continues by stating that in recent years critics have started to focus more on the religious dimensions of *Salve*, and that these critics often successfully create a fusion between feminism and theology: 'Consequently, they bring us closer to an understanding of both the force of Lanyer's poetry and the complexity of her religious identification(s)' (Trill 2001, 73). Lanyer often alludes to complex theological references in her poem, often drawing on and blending different Christian denominations' doctrinal positions. I would argue that this is not something Lanyer does solely on the basis of giving biblical women a greater status and voice than previously done by male theologians. Rather, Lanyer participates in and highlights the culture of female religious reading circles of her time, where women are reading and interpreting the Bible while participating in sophisticated and intellectual debates about religion. In my thesis I will continue to explore the religious aspect of Lanyer's 'Salve', and how she often participates in intricate theological discussions and incorporates them in her own female focused passion narrative.

This sophisticated participation in theological discussions is highlighted by how Lanyer mixes the metaphors surrounding the Protestant doctrine of the Eucharist, as discussed in the 2017 article 'Book, Body, and Bread: Reading Aemilia Lanyer's Eucharist' by Julianne Sandberg, with the Virgin Mary *lo spasimo* and *co-redemptrix* Catholic controversies, as mentioned by Gary Kuchar in the chapter 'Sad delight: Theology and Marian iconography in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*' in his 2008 monograph. Femke Molekamp, in her monograph *Women and the Bible in Early Modern England* from 2013, rightly states that Lanyer's *Salve* 'is a bold display of female hermeneutics and authorship' (Molekamp 2013, 9). More specifically I would argue Lanyer's

‘Salve’ explores women’s corporeality and its unique spirituality through its connection to Mary and Christ, and how biblical women have at times been overlooked and dismissed because they have not been regarded as individuals, but rather as an extension of the biblical men. Additionally, I argue that Lanyer portrays a certain uneasiness about the surveillance and discipline that biblical women such as the Virgin Mary and Eve have been subjected to by male commentators, where ‘Salve’ attempts to address the unrealistic expectations put on these women, and later on women in general, and seeks to highlight how male surveillance has been ineffective as it often only focuses on the physical actions of these women, while also not considering these women as reflective and spiritual human beings.

My thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical and historical overview. Here I demonstrate how Foucault’s theories can be applied to early modern women, and how there are only a few critics such as Lisa Hopkins in her 1996 article Hopkins ‘Renaissance Queens and Foucauldian Carcerality’ that have applied Foucault’s theories to early modern English women, and none to Lanyer. I will also look at how people had a different perception of the body during the early modern period, drawing on the historical research on the body in Michael Schoenfeldt’s 1999 monograph *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton*, as well as Lynette McGrath’s investigation of the early modern perception of the female body in her 2002 monograph *Subjectivity and Women’s Poetry in Early Modern England*. McGrath’s analysis of how the female body is perceived differently within female circles, and how it is perceived in midwifery by female midwives compared to male physicians, inspired my own analysis of how Lanyer incorporates language surrounding child labour in her collection, where Lanyer’s poetry seeks to emphasise women’s participation in the salvation of mankind. Lastly, in this chapter I will also look at the *Querelle des Femmes* debate and feminism in early modern England, where by using the anthology *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640* by Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus I will investigate how Lanyer’s work should be placed within these discussions.

In chapter 2 I investigate the importance of the Virgin Mary in Lanyer’s ‘Salve’, where I argue that Mary is crucial to the poem’s vision of female corporeality and spirituality. I do this by first comparing Lanyer’s depiction of Mary with other traditional passion narratives’ depictions. I do this by drawing on Donna Spivey Ellington’s 1995 article ‘Impassioned Mother or Passive Icon: The Virgin’s Role in Late Medieval and Early Modern Passion Sermons’. I then move on to look at how the surveillance and discipline of women’s

bodies can be reflected in the Virgin Mary, where I draw on Julia Kristeva's article *Stabat Mater* and Gary Kuchar's theories in *The Poetry of Religious Sorrow in Early Modern England* surrounding the *lo spasimo* controversy and how this is reflected in Lanyer's Mary. Next I investigate how Mary's body is central in Lanyer's vision of corporeal spirituality, where I draw on *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* by Mary Fissell to show how the pre-Reformation celebration of the Virgin Mary affected how women viewed their own bodies, especially during child labour. I also continue to look at Donna Spivey Ellington's historical analysis on Mary, this time drawing from her 2001 monograph *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. I then move on to look at Christ's corporeal connection to women, and how this further emphasises the unique spiritual connection women have to Christianity. In this section I especially draw on the articles 'Literal and Spiritual Births: Mary as Mother in Seventeenth-Century Women's Writing' from 2015 by Victoria Brownlee and 'Compassionate Petrarchanism: The *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* Tradition in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*' from 2020 by Megan Herrold. I also draw on Julianne Sandberg's 2017 article 'Book, Body and Bread: Reading Aemilia Lanyer's Eucharist', where Sandberg argues that Lanyer present a distinctly Protestant passion narrative where she presents the Eucharist or body of Christ as a text rather than as the literal and corporeal sense. I am not entirely convinced by Sandberg's argument, as I will demonstrate, because I posit that Lanyer does in fact emphasise the importance of Christ's and Mary's corporeality within the Passion.

In chapter 3 I propose that Lanyer encourages her readers to pursue their own gynocentric or female based biblical interpretations. This chapter does not extensively draw on Foucault's theories, as instead it mostly explores the historical aspects connected to Lanyer's call for an increased amount of female sight and hermeneutics. In this chapter I demonstrate how Lanyer depicts women as having a distinct and clear sight which importantly interprets biblical texts and situations more clearly than the male sight. Lanyer does this by presenting the failure of biblical men such as Pontius Pilate to realise the true significance of Christ, where in contrast the women during the passion clearly see and understand his significance. I draw on Edith Snook's 2005 monograph *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England*, where I especially draw on Snook's analysis of passion narratives written by women encourage female readers to apply their female gaze and desire whilst reading about Christ's Passion. I then move on to look at how Lanyer portrays the faith of the patron of 'Salve', Margaret Clifford the Countess of Cumberland, as

having potential healing properties, emphasising the virtues of the countess and how her faith can benefit others. I here draw on Micheline White's 2003 article 'A Woman with Saint Peter's Keys?: Aemilia Lanyer's "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum" (1611) and the Priestly Gifts of Women', which discusses how Lanyer grants the countess with priestly powers through her portrayal of the admirable virtue of the countess. I expand on this, suggesting that 'Salve' not only portrays the healing properties of the faith of the countess, but also women in general. In the following section I explore how Lanyer self-fashions herself as a religious visionary in order to strengthen the ethos of the collection and its emphasis on the importance of female faith. Lastly, I investigate how the paratextual elements, such as the printed marginalia and the postface, within *Salve* helps to frame Lanyer's collection and further emphasise the importance of female biblical interpretations, where women apply their gaze and follow their intellectual desire independent from men. Here I draw on Margaret Simon's article from 2018 'Glossing Authorship: Printed Marginalia in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*', and Erin McCarthy's third chapter 'Selling the Illusion of Access: Readers and Multiple Dedications in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611)' in her 2020 monograph *Doubtful Readers: Print, Poetry, and the Reading Public in Early Modern England*. Both Simon and McCarthy investigate the publication of Lanyer's *Salve* which influenced my own analysis of how the paratextual elements in *Salve* promotes female led biblical interpretations.

# Chapter 1: Theoretical and historical context: The female body and subjectivity controlled

In this chapter I will outline some of the theoretical and historical context that are important to my overall thesis. I will first explore some of Foucault's theories from *Discipline and Punish*, where I argue that his theories surrounding hierarchy and discipline are especially applicable to early modern women. Foucault mostly explores how his theories in *Discipline and Punish* are applicable to 'man', and even though he seems to be referring to 'man' in a universal sense referring to mankind, his work still does not explore how gender may affect these theories. I suggest that the theories surrounding the surveillance and discipline of the body and soul in order to uphold a specific hierarchy can operate differently for women than men. I would argue that applying these theories to early modern literature addressed to or discussing women would be especially interesting, as after the Reformation there seem to be changing attitudes towards the body in general and especially the female body.

In addition to Foucault's theories in *Discipline and Punish*, there are several historical contexts which are important to my thesis, especially related to how women's bodies were perceived in early modern England. This is applicable to my overall analysis of how the female body has been surveilled and objectified by the male gaze, and how Lanyer's collection — and especially her passion narrative 'Salve' — seeks to promote how the female body and female gaze are especially important within Christianity, encouraging her female readers to independently pursue biblical interpretations.

In the next section 'The female body in early modern England' I investigate how women's bodies were pathologized and othered, and how child labour was one of the few women-only spaces where men were actively excluded. Some found it alarming that these spaces were exclusively female, which later in the sixteenth century caused the rise of male midwives. Before this, midwifery was a female-only profession, where some midwives such as Jane Sharp even published books that described the female body and the changes it endured during pregnancy and child labour. It is revealing how different a woman's positive portrayal of the female body is compared to men's understanding of the uncontrolled and sinful female body. This can be seen by looking at the illustration in Sharp's book which depicts the female body as a site of fertility and beauty where womb is rendered as a flower that opens to reveal a baby.

The beauty and importance of the female body is something which Lanyer explores in her collection *Salve*. In the prose piece ‘To the Vertuous Reader’, which precedes the title poem ‘Salve’, Lanyer introduces her portrayal of the female body as something sacred especially within Christianity through the Virgin Mary and her conception of Christ. In this prose piece, I suggest, certain words reveal how the collection seeks to celebrate the spirituality of the female reproductive body. I further explore this in Chapter 2 where I look at the portrayal of the Virgin Mary and Christ in ‘Salve’, but it is important to interpret some of the images in ‘To the Vertuous Reader’ as I would argue it acts as a preface which frames Lanyer’s collection. This preface also helps to support what I interpret as the collection’s overall message of promoting biblical interpretations led by the female gaze which celebrates rather than condemn female corporeality.

Considering the feminist origin of Lanyer scholarship, I will also look at the debates in early modern England known as the *Querelle des Femmes*, or the woman question, and how Lanyer’s collection should be understood within these debates. In this section I will also briefly explore the importance of religion and religious communities to women in England after the Reformation. The reformed religion emphasised the importance of reading the Bible which resulted in the rise of literacy rate among the general population, including women. However, even though women were encouraged to read and worship in private, there were still limits to this private worship. The Geneva Bible, which was the most ‘widely circulated books in Elizabeth’s reign’ (Molekamp 2013, 6), contained an ‘abundance of supplementary material [...], providing guidance to readers’ (Molekamp 2013, 34). These notes found within the 1599 Geneva Bible are not always neutral, and may even convey negative view on women. I suggest that Lanyer’s *Salve* encourages a community of reading women to interpret biblical texts outside of these frameworks, where they are encouraged to follow their own intellectual desires and trust their unique female spirituality.

## Foucault, discipline, and early modern women

In the first chapter ‘Docile bodies’ of ‘Part three: Discipline’ section of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault defines discipline as a tool of power where the body and the soul of an individual is its target. Foucault traces how the body was discovered as an object and target of power during the Classical age. Thus, the body has been paid special attention to, creating a form of discipline or disciplining: ‘It is easy enough to find signs of attention then paid to the body — the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes

skilful and increases its forces' (Foucault 2020, 136). Foucault elaborates that discipline 'produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies' (Foucault 2020, 138). This form of disciplining and attention paid to the body is an aspect of Foucault's theories I will pay special attention to when looking at Aemilia Lanyer's 'Salve'. Although Foucault does not focus on gender in any aspect of his study, I suggest that some of what he outlines in the 'Discipline' section of his study is especially relevant to how women might have been and perhaps still are disciplined or 'watched' differently than men, whilst simultaneously being held in a particular form of disciplined docility.

I would argue Foucault's observations on discipline as 'an art of rank', consisting of hierarchy and individualization, is especially applicable to Lanyer and female writers in early modern England. Foucault states that discipline 'individualizes bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations' (Foucault 2020, 146). A person might be born of a certain rank, but will be perceived differently depending on whom they are around. A person's rank is dependent on others in their community and society — they might get promoted or demoted, praised or shunned, all depending on whether or not they are in favour with people of a higher rank. This aspect of Foucault's theory is certainly relevant to Aemilia Lanyer's 'Salve', as the poem is dedicated to Lanyer's patron — Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland — who was in a legal battle with brother-in-law Francis Clifford, the 4th Earl of Cumberland, concerning the inheritance of the Clifford estate.

Anne Clifford was Margaret and George's only surviving child, and as the Cliffords had no surviving male heir, the 'properties pertaining to the Cumberland earldom legally reverted to [George's] brother Francis' (Lewalski 1991, 90). However, Anne Clifford still had the right to claim other titles, castles, estates, and County offices in Westmoreland and Yorkshire 'which by writ of Edward II were entailed to the heir general in the direct Clifford line, that is, daughters as well as sons; some of these properties constituted her mother's jointure<sup>1</sup>' (Lewalski 1991, 90). However, George Clifford had written a will that after his death in 1605 left these estates to his brother Francis, while still providing monetary provision for his daughter Anne and 'giving her the reversion should his brother's male line fail' (Lewalski 1991, 90). Margaret Clifford was insistent on her daughter's claim as heir and

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<sup>1</sup> OED definition of jointure (noun): The holding of property to the joint use of a husband and wife for life or in tail, as a provision for the latter, in the event of her widowhood.: A sole estate limited to the wife, being 'a competent livelihood of freehold for the wife of lands and tenements, to take effect upon the death of the husband for the life of the wife at least' (Coke upon Littleton, 36 b) (OED 'jointure', 4.a. and 4.b.)



fought for it until her death in 1616. Margaret ‘masterminded almost continuous legal and domestic struggles to maintain Anne’s claims, and Anne continued them until she finally obtained her inheritance in 1643, though only after her uncle and his son had died without male heirs’ (Lewalski 1991, 90).

Lewalski’s biographical description of Margaret Clifford the Countess of Cumberland reveals how a woman’s place in a hierarchy is precarious, and often depends on the decisions made by the men in her life. Early modern women’s place in Foucault’s theory — of individual bodies circulating among a network of relations — has an added tension. Not only are these women dependent on their peers and those in higher positions to affirm and validate their own position within this hierarchy, they are also dependent on the decisions of men. These men have an additional gender advantage where they are able legally to make decisions on behalf of the women in their life — as demonstrated by the will of Margaret Clifford’s husband.

Chapter two of Foucault’s ‘Discipline’, ‘The means of correct training,’ outlines other important aspects which I find relevant to Lanyer and early modern women in England: hierarchical observation through surveillance, normalizing judgement, and the examination — which ultimately leads to objectification. Discipline and its hierarchical organising power is most effective when the mechanism of observation, or surveillance, is incorporated:

The exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see [and] induce effects of power, and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom they are applied clearly visible. (Foucault 2020, 170)

Foucault explains how the developments during the classical age — and later the inventions of the telescope; ‘the lens and the beam, [integral part[s] of the new physics and cosmology’ (Foucault 2020, 170) — created a new type of investigation and surveillance of humans. However, I would argue that this form of heightened surveillance of the human body was applicable to women even before the invention of the telescope, something which I will elaborate more on in my next subsection ‘The female body in early modern England’.

Another important element with surveillance at its centre is the concept of normalising judgement, and thus the production of the norm. All disciplinary systems contain some form of possible judgement of all the individuals involved: ‘At the heart of all disciplinary systems functions a small penal mechanism. It enjoys a kind of judicial privilege with its own laws, its specific offences, its particular forms of judgement’ (Foucault 2020,

178). Judgement becomes a powerful tool where individuals who act against the norm might be stigmatised by the group they are in. This form of stigmatisation and exclusion is what leads to normalisation: ‘The perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compare, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*’ (Foucault 2020, 183). The normalisation of certain behaviours or traits within a group — where individuals are examined and thus surveilled — is also found in Lanyer’s ‘Salve’, where Lanyer frequently celebrates and praises patron Margaret Clifford for her virtue whilst also comparing her to other historical and biblical women, putting the countess herself at the top of the hierarchy with her admirable virtue. Foucault identifies the combination of surveillance and normalisation as ‘one of the great instruments of power at the end of the classical age’:

For the marks that once indicated status, privilege and affiliation were increasingly replaced — or at least supplemented — by a whole range of degrees of normality indicating membership of a homogeneous social body but also playing a part in classification, hierarchization and the distribution of rank. (Foucault 2020, 184)

The different degrees of normality, or what would be considered as normative behaviour appropriate for a group, can differ not only based on class but also on gender. What is seen as normal behaviour or decorum for men might be seen as transgressive when performed by women and vice versa. What Foucault calls the nineteenth-century creation of a ‘homogeneous social body’ which supplemented one’s status, I would argue, was concept which was already present for women in early modern England, if not before.

One example of this is how Queen Elizabeth I had to defend her status as monarch and her capacity to reign despite her female gender. John Knox, an exiled Puritan, published in Geneva in 1558 *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the monstrous regiment of Women* — a pamphlet which was most likely directed towards the Catholic Queen Mary, but was published close to the accession of Elizabeth I. In it, Knox ‘passionately argues that a female ruler is an affront to nature, revealed religion, justice, and reason’ (Henderson and McManus 1985: 12). The discussions surrounding whether women should be able to reign as sovereign monarchs, may have led to the rhetoric found in the speech Elizabeth I made to the Troops at Tilbury on August 19 1588:

I know I have the bodie, but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and Stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm, to which rather then any dishonour shall grow by me, I my self will ventir my royal

blood, I my self will be your General, Judge and Rewarder of your vertue in the field.  
(Harley MS 6798 in Green 1997, 444)

Elizabeth I identifies herself as having the body of ‘a weak’ and ‘feeble woman’, affirming the preconceived notion of women being the weaker sex, while also later distinguishing herself from her own sex by describing herself as brave and noble by identifying herself as having ‘the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too’. The queen identifies that she is a woman, but describes herself as an exceptional one, one who has the ability to reign because she is strong and passionate like a king.

Foucault states that the act of examination ‘combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of normalizing judgement’ (Foucault 2020, 184). The examination is also a way to punishment and judgement: ‘It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them’ (Foucault 2020, 184). This eventually leads to a fear of judgement or potential punishment if one breaks with the norm, and it is this constant surveillance ‘the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection’ (Foucault 2020, 187). This hold on the disciplined individual is what eventually leads to objectification:

the examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification. In this space of domination, disciplinary power manifests its potency, essentially, by arranging objects. The examination is, as it were, the ceremony of objectification. (Foucault 2020, 187)

Lanyer also explores objectification in ‘Salve’, where a whole subsection of the poem titled ‘An incentive against outward beauty unaccompanied with virtue’ (Lanyer 1993, lines 185-248) where Lanyer outlines the dangers of beauty when coupled with a lack of virtue, especially for women as they are more likely to get exploited by dangerous men. In this section Lanyer compares to the Countess Clifford a number of mythical and historical women — Cleopatra, Helen of Troy, Lucrece, Rosamund the mistress of King Henry II, and Matilda who was pursued by King John — none of whom truly measure up to the countess’ virtues.

Even though Foucault did not explicitly address how his theories affect gender, or how they affect different genders differently, I argue that the theories outlined in the discipline section of his work are especially applicable to women in early modern England. The theories surrounding surveillance, normalising judgement and the examination — ultimately leading to the objectification of individuals — help illuminate how women

operated within their own sphere as well as how they were watched and observed on a different level than men in early modern society.

One critic who does apply Foucault's theories to early modern women is Lisa Hopkins, who in her article 'Renaissance Queens and Foucauldian Carcerality' looks at how women were punished differently than men during this period, where she pays special attention to the punishment and eventual execution of Mary Queen of Scots. Hopkins focuses on how the female body was punished and surveilled differently than men. This differential treatment was a result of the perceived inherently sinful nature of women's bodies and souls through their connection to Eve. I build on Hopkins application of Foucault which shows that early modern women were surveilled differently than men, but I will especially focus on how 'Salve' not only encourages an escape of this surveilling male gaze but also encourages women to apply their unique and spiritual female gaze to biblical texts. Hopkins demonstrates that there was a certain heightened tension surrounding how to correctly punish and later dispose of Queen Mary's body. For the female monarchs who were imprisoned on political grounds, Hopkins explains that there was the additional troubling element of reproduction which could lead to a future heir. This led to an emphasis on policing the body of female political prisoners. Queen Mary had already borne a son, who later became King James I and VI, yet policing Mary's body was still considered necessary as there was still the possibility of James dying before ascending the throne (Hopkins 1996, 21). For Queen Mary there was also a certain attention paid to the religious implications of her punishment. Queen Elizabeth decided to have a relatively small execution rather than a public one, with only 300 spectators present, 'an audience whose role was rather to verify the truth from the event than to learn any lesson from it' (Hopkins 1996, 24). Queen Mary's 'own servants were to be forbidden entry to the hall, on the grounds that they might seek to obtain relics of her' (Hopkins 1996, 24).

In addition to special attention paid to Mary Queen of Scots's body during her punishment and eventual execution, Hopkins also points out the general perception of women as inherently evil beings whose tainted nature can explain wrongful actions. Women often received less severe prison sentences in early modern England compared to men. This was not done as a way to be more gentle towards women, rather it was 'grounded in the contemporary ideologies which saw women as the weaker, less responsible sex, and as being, paradoxically, both innately more prone to evil and so as less blameworthy for it' (Hopkins 1996, 19).

Women as inherently sinful beings is an important cultural belief found in early modern England, which I will continue to explore in the following three sections of this chapter. First I will focus on the female body in early modern England, how men during the period viewed women's bodies and how this compares to how women viewed themselves. I will then briefly look at how Lanyer provides an alternative view on the female body as something to be celebrated rather than condemned. and lastly how this contrasted with. Then I will discuss the *Querelle des Femmes* or 'the woman question' debates in England, and how it relates to Lanyer's *Salve*.

## The female body in early modern England

In order to fully grasp how women's bodies were viewed in this period, one has to be aware of how the body and bodily functions were understood differently than today. As outlined by Michael Schoenfeldt in his 1999 monograph *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton*, humoral theory was an important concept of human anatomy and medicine during the early modern period, where

this particular set of doctrines and beliefs held that physical health and mental disposition were determined by the balance within the body of the four humoral fluids produced by the various stages of digestion — blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. (Schoenfeldt 1999, 2)

Humoral theory is very different from our modern understanding of medicine and human physiology, as humoral theory 'describe[s] not so much the actual workings of the body as the experience of the body' (Schoenfeldt 1999, 3). The experience of the body, and the potential to control and balance these through humoral theory, leads to an understanding of the self and the capacity to control one's desires: 'The Renaissance seems to have imagined selves as differentiated not by their desires, which all more or less share, but by their capacity to control these desires' (Schoenfeldt 1999, 17).

Humoral theory also contributed to the prejudice against women, how their physiology was perceived had an effect on how they were viewed as members of society. Schoenfeldt mentions how 'women were imagined to be inverted men, lacking the natural heat required to push out the analogous of generation [...] [t]hey were also frequently assumed to be physiologically less capable of the regiments of self-discipline than were men' (Schoenfeldt 1999, 36). The Dutch physician Levinus Lemnius (1505-1568) in his *Secret*

*Miracles of Nature*, was one of the men who argued that women lacked in discipline because of their ‘comparative lack of muscle mass’ as well as ‘the phenomena of menstruation’ (Schoenfeldt 1999, 36).

Still, despite Leminus’ description of menstruation being a sign of a lack of discipline, women’s menstrual cycle was at times viewed as a physiological advantage ‘because their monthly menstrual flow functioned as a purge, accomplishing naturally what men would have to achieve through the comparatively invasive technique of blood-letting’ (Schoenfeldt 1999, 37). Most of the theories surrounding women’s bodies were written by men, as women were restricted from education within the medical field. Women turned more often to religious discourse rather than Galenic medicine in order to articulate their inwardness, which Schoenfeldt explains:

[...] may in part derive from the cultural fact that women were often allowed the spiritual literacy deemed necessary to save their souls, but were barred from education in the medical discourse that produced this highly theorized form of physiological interiority. (Schoenfeldt 1999, 37)

However, there was one facet of the medical field where women played a significant role, as women often helped during child labour serving as midwives. Childbirth was more often than not a women-only space, where skilled female midwives were the only licensed medical professionals present, as ‘birthing attendants, senior midwives, deputy midwives and the expectant mother made up the typical group of women that were present for birth’ (Taylor 2017, 6). An exception to this was during the birth of royal children, where male witnesses were required (McGrath 2002, 72).<sup>2</sup> During the reign of King Henry VIII, legislation was passed where from 1511 the licensing of medical professionals was placed in the hands of the Bishop, where ‘the main reason for [these] laws was to expunge all the unlicensed and inexperienced people practicing medicine’ (Taylor 2017, 19-20). Licensed midwives were more common in urban areas such as London, as many rural midwives were ‘far removed from their bishops’ as well as saw the licensing and oath taking system as insignificant to their practice (Taylor 2017, 20). Before a midwife could attempt to obtain a licence she must have ‘had several years of experience under a senior midwife acting as a sort of “apprentice”’

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that male-midwives did not become common practice until the mid-seventeenth century in England when gynaecology and obstetrics became newly evolving fields. Male physicians were only present at birth during emergencies or difficult births, where ‘male physicians were offered access under the strict supervision of the senior midwife and only under the direst of circumstances’ (Taylor 2017, 6).

(Taylor 2017, 21). After gaining sufficient first-hand experience during the apprenticeship ‘she could petition for a license by gathering testimonial certificates. The people who testified on her behalf were neighbors, fellow church goers, medical practitioners, and former female clientele’ (Taylor 2017, 21). These licences, though making it easier to verify legitimately skilled and trained midwives, also served as a way to control the field as well as women’s agency. This is demonstrated by how midwife licences included ‘as much information about the husband as it did the woman applying for the licence’ (Taylor 2017, 7), and by how it was the church that ‘controlled where a woman could practice or if she was even legally allowed to practice at all’ (Taylor 2017, 8).

Despite this, the profession of the midwife still offers an insight into how women’s bodies were viewed in female circles compared to male. Lynette McGrath in her 2002 monograph, *Subjectivity and Women’s Poetry in Early Modern England*, investigates in her second chapter, ‘The Flesh. The Other Body: Women’s physical images’, how women’s bodies were interpreted and examined in early modern England. One of McGrath’s most compelling analyses is when she compares the portrayal of the female body on frontispiece of *De humani corporis fabrica* by Andreas Vesalius from 1543 with the illustration titled ‘The Figure of the Child near its Birth’ from *The Midwives Book* by Jane Sharp, from 1671.



FIGURE 1: Frontispiece, Andreas Vesalius, *De humani corporis fabrica*, 1555. New York, [The Metropolitan Museum of Art](https://www.metmuseum.org).



FIGURE 2: Jane Sharp, page 157 in *The Midwives Book*, 1671. London, [Wellcome Collection](https://www.wellcomecollection.org) ESTC R203554.

The frontispiece in Vesalius, shown in Figure 1, displays a female body being dissected and examined in a lecture hall while surrounded and observed by men from various different angles. In contrast, the frontispiece in Sharp, shown in Figure 2, illustrates a pregnant woman with educational diagrams, the only other person present being her unborn child. Sharp's pregnant woman is also awake and alert, her gaze on the reader, her private parts covered by a flower and the educational diagram of her stomach looks like a flowering plant rather than a dissected body.

This contrasting portrayal of the female body can be explained by the different target audience of the two books. Vesalius's book on human anatomy most likely did not consider women as a part of its audience or readers, as medicine was a field restricted to men. In contrast, Sharp's book on midwifery had women as its target audience as the book's title explicitly points out: *The Midwives Book. Or the whole art of Midwifery Discovered. Directing Childbearing Women how to behave themselves in their {conception, Breeding, Bearing, and Nursing} of Children* (Sharp 1671, 19). In addition, Sharp's female target audience is further emphasised by how Sharp begins her book by writing to 'The midwives of England' where she addresses her 'sisters' (Sharp 1671, 21).

McGrath describes the different effects these two images have. The image in Vesalius' book on human anatomy

further reinforces the oppositional relationship, accepted throughout Western history, between the philosophically and scientifically inquiring masculine mind, represented here by the anatomists, and the female body, regarded as the object of biological and medical investigation. (McGrath 2002, 35)

McGrath suggests that the image is a good representation of how women's bodies appear in both written text and visual representations throughout the early modern period 'as sexual, fragmented, linked with corruption, and also as fascinating though reducible, objects of the male gaze' (McGrath 2002, 35-36). Sharp's image of the female body however, directed at a female audience, demonstrates how women might have viewed their own body as a subject rather than an object. As McGrath points out: 'There are no surrounding voyeurs in the picture. The woman herself is the gazer here, meeting the projected female reader's gaze with mutual, direct and unashamed recognition. She is a subject, not an object' (McGrath 2002, 36).



## Lanyer's *Salve* and the female body

Woman as a subject rather than object is a prominent theme present in Lanyer's collection, where it was written with an audience of female patrons in mind. Lanyer puts labour, or women giving birth, as a central theme of her collection, as she writes in 'To the Vertuous Reader':

evill disposed men, who forgetting they were borne of women, nourished of women, and that if it were not by the means of women, they would be quite extinguished out of the world, and a finall ende of them all, doe like Vipers deface the wombes wherein they were bred, onely to give way and utterance to their want of discretion and goodnesse. (Lanyer 1993, 48)

Lanyer criticises men who speak ill of women, and asserts that these men deface their own origin and birth when doing so. In the process, these men also fail to realise that they themselves are the ones who lack 'discretion and goodnesse'. Lanyer effectively uses a simile here, comparing men to vipers, the disguise the devil took in order to corrupt Eve. Through this simile Lanyer draws attention to how the men who are overly critical of women are often the ones doing the most harm. It also foreshadows some of the themes later addressed in the title poem, where the devil disguised as a viper as well as Adam's failure to decline Eve's apple are blamed for the original sin. Lanyer's use of the verb 'deface' to follow the simile of the vipers is also significant, as it can mean to physically disfigure: 'To mar the face, features, or appearance of; to spoil or ruin the figure, form, or beauty of; to disfigure' (*OED* 'deface', 1.a.). There are also a couple of obsolete definitions of the word which were in use during Lanyer's period, where deface could also mean 'To destroy the reputation or credit of; to discredit, defame' (*OED* 'deface', 4) as well as 'To outshine by contrast, cast in the shade' (*OED* 'deface', 6). These two definitions work on the psychological or spiritual aspects of diminishing women rather than to solely physically injure.

Lanyer here works on both the physical and metaphysical aspects of men criticising women, where all are centred around metaphors of the womb. The word 'womb' can be defined as a uterus as well as the more figurative 'place or medium in which something is originated, produced, or developed; the environment in which a particular activity or process begins; a point of origin and growth' (*OED* 'womb', 3.b.). Lanyer points out the hypocrisy of men defacing women, as they deface their own mothers and thus their own origin and birth in the process. Lanyer's defence of women, where men's criticism of women is reversed and eventually directed toward men themselves, is grounded on metaphors of women's reproductive bodies. Lanyer manages to show the hypocrisy of the existing gender hierarchy

— which some men so desperately wish to uphold through the policing and disciplining of women’s bodies and souls — by alluding to two different origin stories. The first origin story is the story of Adam and Eve, while the second story addresses many women’s ability to carry children. Both of these are the origin stories of the men who seek to diminish the opposite sex.

Lanyer continues to explore women and labour by presenting the connection between the Virgin Mary and Jesus, Mary being the woman who ultimately connects Christ to humanity. Through this physical connection of Mary and Christ, Lanyer also explores how women’s relationship to Christ differs from men in the Bible:

it pleased our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, without the assistance of man, beeing free from originall and all other sinnes, from the time of his conception, till the houre of his death, to be begotten of a woman, borne of a woman, nourished of a woman, obedient to a woman; and that he healed woman, pardoned women, comforted women: yea, even when he was in his greatest agonie and bloody sweat, going to be crucified, and also in the last houre of his death, tooke care to dispose of a woman: after his resurrection, appeared first to a woman, sent a woman to declare his most glorious resurrection to the rest of his disciples. (Lanyer 1993, 49-50)

Jesus was born ‘without the assistance of man’ while being free of original and all sins. Yet, Jesus was still born and nourished by a human, as it was Mary who conceived and carried Christ in her womb. The choice of the noun ‘man’ thus simply does not describe all humans, but is explicitly gendered masculine. Lanyer therefore consciously connects ‘originall and all other sinnes’ with the male gender, thus inverting the paradigm of Eve being responsible for the fall of man which made all women inherently sinful beings. Christ has been connected to women ‘from the time of his conception, till the houre of his death’, where his mother Mary was present at both. Christ was ‘begotten of a woman, borne of a woman, nourished of a woman, obedient to a woman’, all these elements which Lanyer sets out describes Christ’s relationship with his mother Mary.

Lanyer’s choice of the verb ‘begotten’ coupled with the preposition ‘of’ signals that she wants to portray that Mary’s role in the creation of Christ is equivalent to God’s. Begotten can be defined as ‘Of a father or (now less commonly) both parents: to bring (a child) into existence by the process of reproduction; to procreate’ (*OED* ‘beget, 2.a.’), it primarily addresses ‘of a father’ but also includes both parents in procreation. However, when the verb is applied to women and mothers the prepositions ‘upon’ and ‘on’ are more frequently used: ‘With prepositional phrase introduced by on, upon indicating the mother’ (*OED* ‘beget’, 2.a.ii). In addition, begotten also has a theological definition: ‘Of God the

Father, as First Person of the Trinity: to generate (the Son, as Second Person)' (*OED* 'beget', 2.b.i). Lanyer chooses to combine the preposition 'of' with the verb 'begotten', both traditionally associated with the father and God, while also choosing not to use the traditional prepositions 'upon' and 'on' more commonly applied to the verb begotten when describing mothers. Lanyer thus places a greater significance on Mary's role as an active rather than passive role in Christ's creation.

Mary's role is further discussed by Lanyer later in 'Salve', especially in the two subsections 'The sorrow of the virgin Marie' and 'The salutation of the virgin Marie', which I will further investigate later in chapter two of my thesis. Lanyer's emphasis on Mary creates a certain Catholic sentiment to her passion narrative 'Salve', even though the title poem is addressed to a devout puritan — the Countess of Cumberland. In connection to Lanyer's investigation of Mary, it is important to consider how theologians often discussed and interpreted Mary's body — both whether she had a physical reaction while witnessing the her son during the Passion, as well as the disturbing debates surrounding her virginity after giving birth.<sup>3</sup> The theological discussions surrounding the Virgin Mary demonstrate how a woman's body is often the main focus when it comes to controlling and placing women within certain power hierarchies.

McGrath argues that childbirth was one of the few places where early modern women often did not experience any patriarchal surveillance. It was also an event which formed bonds between women independent of men: 'The physical accomplishment of childbirth provided an encouraging ground for establishing bonds among them to some extent outside the control of patriarchal surveillance' (McGrath 2002, 51). However, women's ability to produce children also bound them more to patriarchal structures:

As producers of children, women were, it is true, bound to the patriarchy by their bodies' breeding functions. A woman's limited control over the frequency of her pregnancies extended the implications of marriage formulas which merged a man and a woman into one legally recognized person and one body over which the man claimed complete jurisdiction. (McGrath 2002, 52)

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<sup>3</sup> As outlined by Julia Kristeva in 'Stabat Mater' from 1985: 'There were even some rather tortuous debates over the question whether Mary remained a virgin after giving birth: thus in A.D. 381 the Second Council of Constantinople, under the influence of Arianism, placed greater stress on Mary's role than did official dogma and proclaimed her perpetual virginity, and the council of A.D. 451 declared her Aeiparthenos, forever virgin.' (Kristeva 1985, 137)

In other words, a woman's value within a marriage was often tied to her reproductive organs and her ability to produce an heir for her husband. These ideas of women's bodies and their value were present throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century in England, and these often derive from theological sources such as Aquinas and Augustine:

Aquinas and Augustine accepted the Aristotelian point of view that while the male was ordained to rational and mental activity, the female was dedicated to the bodily role of reproduction. Although Aquinas permitted a rational soul to woman, her body, he argued, was the sole justification for her creation because of its necessary usefulness in the preservation of species. (McGrath 2002, 40)

Women's creation, or women's purpose, is primarily focused on their body rather than their soul, a claim which Lanyer seeks to dispute and challenge in 'Salve'. Lanyer demonstrates an alternative hermeneutics throughout 'Salve', one where the failed sight of men are countered by the enlightened insight of women. This is heightened by Lanyer's deification of the Countess of Cumberland, Margaret Clifford, who she likens to Jesus with his healing abilities, whilst also granting her papal authority by offering her St Peter's Keys: 'These are those Keyes Saint *Peter* did possesse, / Which with a Spirituall power are giv'n to thee, /To heale the soules of those that doe transgresse' (Lanyer 1993, 1369-1371). Lanyer seeks to prove and grant women a more active and intellectual role within society. As McGrath outlines, women were still seen as passive and receptive in her reproductive role, something which, as mentioned earlier, one can see by how the prepositions 'on' and 'upon' are commonly used in conjunction with begotten when applied to women. This passiveness and inability to control the body she is ruled by, demonstrates the need for women to be controlled: 'Her dominance by her body inhibits her moral and mental capabilities[...]; unless closely restrained, women will transform easily to whores' (McGrath 2002, 40). As seen by Lanyer's use of the more active preposition 'of' rather than 'on' and 'upon', I would argue Lanyer tries to dispute the common misconception that women need to be controlled and restrained.

The need to control women's bodies in early modern England can be demonstrated by the amount of censorship found in texts published by midwives. This censorship encompassed several different things: who published and what was published on childbirth and midwifery, and what midwives chose to publish — or more accurately, what midwives knew they were allowed to publish in print. As McGrath points out, 'Many male physicians and one or two women (Jane Sharp and Sarah Ginnor, for example), wrote treaties on the medical aspect of childbirth' (McGrath 2002, 54), yet there were still aspects of women's

bodies that had to be held secret from the general public. The female physician Mary Trye in the postscript her 1675 book *Medicatrix or the Woman-Physician*, encourages women to seek her out directly as not everything is deemed as ‘proper’ or appropriate to be discussed in her book: ‘The Diseases incident to this Sex are many, and not proper here largely to be discoursed on, therefore I purposely omit them, and shall only say they [women] may have effectual Remedies from me in their infirmities’ (Trye in McGrath 2002, 54). The seeking out of midwives outside the public sphere of the printed word creates almost an isolated world where women can meet and congregate without the presence of men. This has two very different effects, as McGrath outlines, one can interpret this as evidence of repression or as an enclave where women are allowed to express a certain amount of agency over their own bodies:

This closed women’s world may be constructed as evidence of restriction and repression, but it may equally evidence a conspiratorial sense of female power and agency, as well as resistance to male appropriation of knowledge of women’s health, especially given increasing influence of male midwives and physicians. (McGrath 2002, 55)

In early modern England, male theologians and physicians believed women were mostly driven by their own bodies, unable to control their own desires, which resulted in a heightened desire to control women’s bodies and souls. One can see this through some of the ways the female body has been understood during the period, as outlined by Schoenfeldt and McGrath, where even certain topics on the female body have been censored by the press — as seen by Trye’s summoning women to seek her out in person. ‘Salve’ seeks to counter many of these ideas of women as passive beings needing to be controlled by men. Lanyer also bases many of her counter arguments towards men’s criticism of women on images of the womb — arguing that it was women who bore these men and are their creators. The female audience of Lanyer’s text is something which I will come back to later in my thesis, but I do believe it is very relevant that Lanyer mostly addresses women in her collection — all poems being dedicated to female patrons. This leads to the question whether Lanyer felt more compelled to express her own opinions around gender — also doing so through a religious lens, the form of close reading and interpretation which was deemed as acceptable for women to perform. In the next section I will look at the woman question debates happening in early modern England, and how some of some of these discussions happened within a religious framework, and how one can place Lanyer’s own writing within these debates and traditions.

## *Querelles des Femmes* and feminism in in early modern England

The *Querelle des Femmes* debates, also known as the woman question debates, are often defined within the timespan of 1400-1789. As Joan Kelly describes in her article ‘Early Feminist Theory and the Querelle des Femmes, 1400-1789’, the movement is often identified as originating with the French writer Christine de Pisan (1364-1430), who ‘wrote a series of works in which she set herself up as a defender of sex, criticising and rebutting the sharp turn towards misogyny in the attitude and reading of her time’ (Kelly 1982, 9). It is important to recognize that the feminism expressed in the *Querelle* debates is different from our modern feminism, as Kelly writes, since it lacked ‘a vision of a social movement to change events’ (Kelly 1982, 6). Most of this early feminism operated through writing, something which should not be overlooked, as these early female writers created ‘the first feminist theory: a stance, an outlook within which ideas develop, a “theory” in the original sense of the term as a conceptual vision’ (Kelly 1982, 6). Kelly outlines three main positions that summarise the stance of early feminism. The first was that the defences of women ‘and the educational writing related to them are almost all polemical’ (Kelly 1985, 6). This can be supported by the presence of the female English polemic writers such as Rachel Spegth (1597-1630), Batshua Makin (1600-1675), and later Mary Astell (1666-1731), who all contributed to the *Querelle* debates in England. It is important to note that Aemilia Lanyer does not directly fit this description, as instead of writing polemics she wove her defences of women into her poetry. Though, I would argue that her prose text ‘To the Vertuous Reader’ not only acts as an introduction or preface to her poem ‘Salve’ but also as a short polemic in and of itself. Lanyer here addresses and turns many of the misconceptions men have about women, and as addressed in the previous section of this chapter, Lanyer does so by including language of the female body within her arguments.

The second and third positions of early modern feminism I will quote partly in full, as they both address a wish to disrupt gender hierarchies:

2. In their opposition, the early feminists focused on what we would now call gender. [...] They directed their ideas against the notions of a defective sex that flowed from the misogynous side of the debate and against the societal shaping of women to fit those notions.
3. Their understanding of misogyny and gender led many feminists to a universalist outlook that transcended the accepted value systems of the time. Feminists of the *querelle* appreciated how their opponents’ misogyny reflected the social position of their male authors. By exposing ideology and opposing the prejudice and narrowness it fostered, they stood for a truly general conception of humanity.

(Kelly 1982, 6-7)

The second position addresses the creation of a certain 'mould' women are expected to fit into, a mould which ultimately helps to maintain gender hierarchies. 'Salve' addresses these expectations in 'An Incentive against outward beauty unaccompanied with virtue' where the true dangers of beauty and how men often corrupt beautiful women are discussed. However, Lanyer still upholds a certain expectation of her fellow women, putting a great emphasis on virtue. When addressing her patron, Lanyer seeks to flatter whilst also addressing her own inferior rank, and thus she does not fully seek to transcend hierarchies beyond the male female one. That is why the third position of early feminism, posed by Kelly, does not seem to apply to 'Salve', as Lanyer does not seek to 'transcend the accepted value system of the time' by creating 'a truly general conception of humanity'.

Erica Longfellow also points to the frontispiece of Lanyer's collection, where Lanyer upholds a certain class hierarchy by including a sentence detailing that she is the wife of Alfonso Lanyer: 'While Lanyer may make complex use of the interconnections of gender and virtue, her bid for patronage is a fundamentally conservative one. There is no hint that she wishes to destroy a hierarchical system — the dedications, in fact, are a clumsy attempt to inscribe the hierarchy into her book — but rather that she wishes to move up the ladder through her husband's knighthood' (Longfellow 2004, 69). Still, it is important to remember that Lanyer still addresses several elements present in the *Querelle* debates, and that she was to a certain extent addressing and disagreeing with many aspects of gender hierarchies, especially within religion and questions of inheritance.

The fact that Lanyer interacts with the Bible while posing its gender arguments suggests that she is working within the *Querelle* tradition. As Henderson and McManus states in their book *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640*:

Besides the classics, the Bible provided an important source for both attackers and defenders of women in the Renaissance. Of course the Bible is not primarily about women, but the Old and New Testaments contain many generalizations about women as well as a rich vein of examples of both wicked and virtuous women. Attackers could look especially to Proverbs and Ecclesiastes for denunciations of harlots and quarrelsome wives and to Saint Paul for disparagements of marriage and justifications of subservience of women. Defenders could cite the Song of Songs and the proverb of the virtuous wife (Proverbs 31:10-31) as well as scattered praises of women throughout the Bible. (Henderson and McManus 1985, 7)

The fact that Lanyer's polemic is found within a collection of poems is not a new invention. As Henderson and McManus explain, 'many of the questions debated in the pamphlets are persistent topics in the poetry: Are women capable of chastity and fidelity? Are beauty and chastity compatible in women? Is their pride a vice or a virtue? Do they influence men for good or for evil?' (Henderson and McManus 1985, 113). Lanyer writing a female centred passion narrative also suggests that she was writing in a genre which was less likely to be scrutinised, as 'Religion was also the one area in which all literate women could read and study widely without fear of reproach; they could even publish their devotions, confessions, or meditations (as numerous Englishwomen did) without anticipating the disapproval that led [other female polemic writers] to use pseudonyms' (Henderson and McManus 1985, 62-63).

Women were encouraged to be devoted Christians and act out their faith through private devotion. As Femke Molekamp mentions in her monograph *Women and the Bible in Early Modern England*, 'From the earliest days of the publication of the English Bible in print, women have been engaged in interpretive and activist reading, as well as affective, meditative reading of scriptures, and have manifested these modes of reading in religious writing' (Molekamp 2013, 3). Molekamp points out that the first publication of the Geneva Bible in 1576 was especially important to religious women:

The Geneva Bible [...] became one of the most widely circulated books in Elizabeth's reign, due to its appealing combination of affordability, astute biblical scholarship, and many notes, summaries, diagrams, and maps. This Bible, therefore, helped to introduce and sustain a female readership of the Bible in English. (Molekamp 2013, 6)

Considering how important the Geneva Bible was for sustaining a female readership, I will refer to the 1599 Geneva Bible when I look at bible passages. The publication of an affordable Bible led to an increase of households having their own copy of the Bible, bringing the Bible into the domestic sphere: 'As the Geneva Bible promoted domestic reading of the scriptures it gained an important place in the reading life of women' (Molekamp, 2013, 19). The Geneva Bible also 'greatly extended the possibility for the application of private reading practices to the scriptures, not only through its size and lower cost, but also through the abundance of supplementary material it contained, providing guidance to readers' (Molekamp 2013, 34). This guidance, I would argue, in turn also keeps women from doing their own independent interpretations of biblical texts, and as I mention in the introduction to this chapter, some of these notes have misogynistic undertones such as footnote a in Luke 24:1 which calls the women who find Christ's empty tomb for 'poor silly



women' (Geneva Bible 1599). Still, the private reading of the Bible often inspired women to write, where 'Private Bible-reading was sometimes accompanied by rigorous acts of writing, for more literate women. As a type of personal devotion, this was a textual transcription in which the literate reader might annotate the scriptures and printed marginalia as she digested them' (Molekamp 2013, 34).

Like the Geneva Bible, Lanyer's passion narrative 'Salve' contains printed marginalia. However, in contrast to the Geneva Bible, the printed marginalia in Lanyer's 'Salve' does not seek to explain biblical references to its readers. Rather, it works as subheadings or like an index which guides the readers to sections they feel more drawn to. I would argue that Lanyer's collection, and especially her passion narrative, encourages an interpretation of the bible and biblical stories through a female perspective, one where the female biblical figures as well as the female body are celebrated rather than condemned.

## Chapter 2: The Word became Flesh: Lanyer's vision of Mary

In this chapter I will explore why the Virgin Mary is the most important female biblical character in Lanyer's passion narrative, and how Lanyer manages to utilise Marian traditions in order to convey her own female hermeneutics which encourages celebration of the female body and its spiritual significance in Christianity. According to the printed marginalia in Susanne Woods' 1993 edition of *Salve*, there are only two sections dedicated to the Virgin Mary within 'Salve'. However, I believe these sections are particularly important the poems portrayal of female spirituality, as Lanyer here writes from the perspective of the Virgin Mary, representing a contemplative and sorrowful Mary. The two sections only amount to 134 lines in total, 'The sorrow of the virgin Marie' being 31 lines and 'The Salutation of the virgin Marie' being 103 lines — but I argue that these two sections are a crucial part of the poem's portrayal of women and gender hierarchy in the passion narrative.

I will also investigate Lanyer's portrayal of Mary as a reflective figure who was physically and mentally affected by the crucifixion. I will argue that the portrayal of Mary in 'Salve' can be read as a response to the surveillance and objectification of women's bodies — where the poem both reflects its effects on biblical women as well as on English women in the early modern period. Lanyer's portrayal of Mary during the passion narrative in 'Salve' often draws on the fifteenth and sixteenth century *lo spasimo* and *stabat mater dolorosa* Catholic depictions of Mary, and I argue that the poem utilises these traditionally Catholic themes in order to celebrate Mary's emotional and human aspects.

'Salve' reconnects Mary to the corporeal, going against the more textual and spiritually focused Protestant and Post-Tridentine Catholic theology<sup>4</sup>. It is through honouring Mary as a physical being who cries and faints at the sight of her son rather than just traditionally celebrating her exceptional attributes that 'Salve' ultimately reconnects Mary to ordinary women, celebrating women's corporeality during a period where the body was increasingly looked at with scepticism. By drawing on traditions from passion sermons from

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<sup>4</sup> Post-Tridentine: After the Council of Trent (1545-1563), The Council is seen as an important part of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. As Ellington (1995) points out, though the council did not change Catholic teachings, they became more strict about what priests should discuss in their sermons: 'Since one of the most persistent criticisms of Catholic piety, by Catholic humanists as well as by Protestants, had been that it gave undue emphasis to the Virgin and saints, preachers may have felt it necessary to show greater restraint in speaking of Mary' (Ellington 1995, 251).

the mediaeval period, as well as late mediaeval paintings portraying the crucifixion, the poem deliberately puts a greater emphasis on the physical suffering of Mary — portraying the female spiritual and physical experience as an integral part of Christianity. I argue that Lanyer's 'Salve' seeks to demystify women's spiritual experience through Mary and bring in a more physical aspect of worship characteristic of late mediaeval Catholicism.

In order to do this I will first give a brief overview of the portrayal of Mary in 'Salve', where the poem echoes medieval passion sermons with its emphasis on the corporeal, and importantly moves away from the more Protestant textual approach. Then I will explore how Mary has often been celebrated as an ideal image of womanhood, where this ideal of an immaculate woman becomes problematic for women and ultimately reflects the surveillance and discipline of women within society. I will then continue to explore the importance of Mary's body, but now focusing on the beneficial aspects of women being asked to identify with Mary where her body becomes a way to celebrate the spiritual significance of child labour and all women's bodies. Lastly, I will explore how Christ's feminized body is celebrated in 'Salve', where through Mary's conception women are portrayed as physically as well as spiritually connected to Christ.

## The portrayal of Mary in passion narratives and Lanyer's 'Salve'

In order to understand the importance of Mary in Lanyer's 'Salve', I think it is crucial to consider the overall structure of the poem and where the two sections on Mary are placed. This will reveal how Mary is portrayed in 'Salve', as there is a clear emphasis on Mary's presence in the poem. The placements of the two Mary sections also reveals how Lanyer echoes passion narrative traditions, and how she expands on Mary's perspective during the Passion. In addition, it is important to consider how Mary has been portrayed in other passion narratives, as this historical perspective will aid my own analysis of 'Salve' and demonstrate how Lanyer puts a certain emphasis on Mary within her own passion narrative.

I use Susanne Woods' 1993 edition of *Salve*, whose edition is based on a 'photocopy of the Huntington Library copy, HN62139 [... which is] a fine copy with wide margins and is textually complete' (Woods 1993: li). This edition also includes printed marginalia, and as Margaret Simon points out these 'notes in the text's margins have much to contribute to how the volume represents its relationship to a community of female readers and writers, and the ways the earliest women authors and their printers and publishers harnessed the affordances of print to shape their work' (Simon 2018, 126). Rather than following the tradition of printed

marginalia in religious texts that sought to point out figurative language and helping interpret passages, Lanyer's marginalia 'often offers interpretive intercessions that read almost like the titles of a poetic miscellany' (Simon 2018, 134). Lanyer's printed marginalia seems to act like subheadings or like an index that guide the reader through the poem, making it possible for readers to skip to sections they feel drawn to.

Out of these twenty marginal notes, two are dedicated to Mary: 'The sorrow of the virgin Marie' and 'The Salutation of the virgin Marie'. Even though two subheadings within 'Salve' are dedicated to Mary, which is a significant amount considering the fact that there are nineteen in total, these two 'sections' only amount to 134 lines out of the total 1840 lines of the poem. These two sections are placed right after the two headings 'Christ going to death' and 'The teares of the daughters of Jerusalem', and before the headings titled 'Christ's death' and 'To my Ladie of Cumberland'. These placements suggest that 'Salve' depicts Mary as reflecting on her own life and mourning her son's death while Christ is carrying his own cross to Calvary/Golgotha. This can be further supported by how the last stanza in 'The salutations of the virgin Marie' begins with the lines 'Now *Simon of Cyrene* passeth them by / Whom they compel sweet Jesus Crosse to beare / To *Golgotha* [...]' (Lanyer 1993, 1137-1139). Placing Mary's reflections before the arrival to Calvary is a deliberate stylistic and thematic choice made by Lanyer, as similar depictions of an emotional and reflective Mary during the passion can be found in several late mediaeval passion sermons.

Lanyer's depiction of Mary in physical mourning during the passion has a specific affiliation to late mediaeval passion sermons, as 'Salve' depicts and describes Mary's physical relationship to Christ. According to Donna Spivey Ellington, in her article 'Impassioned Mother or Passive Icon: The Virgin's Role in Late Medieval and Early Modern Passion Sermons', it was also especially during passion sermons that late mediaeval preachers 'felt free to elaborate on the Biblical narrative,' where the emphasis on Mary's suffering was included as an attempt 'to depict the suffering of Christ and his mother in a way that would enable the people to appreciate the sacrifice made for them and turn to God in repentance' (Ellington 1995, 231). However, this depiction of a suffering Mary in passion narratives sharply declined after the reformation in the late sixteenth century, as Ellington observes:

Even the mention of her presence and suffering declines sharply in the post-Tridentine period. She is most often silent; and when references are made to her body, it is to say that her pain was entirely internal, scarcely perceptible to those who were present with her, save for silent witness of her tears. (Ellington 1995, 232)

Even though Lanyer is writing in a Post-Tridentine Catholic era, and lives in reformed Protestant England, I would argue her poem 'Salve' echoes late mediaeval depictions of Mary during the passion in order to further enhance her argument about the importance of women's corporeality and the spiritual significance of labour. Lanyer's depiction of Mary's body in 'Salve' also repeats some of the themes found in 'To the Vertuous Reader' and 'Eves Apologie', where Lanyer describes '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' and 'doe like Vipers deface the wombes wherein they were bred' (Lanyer 1993, p 48). It is also repeated later in 'Eve's Apologie' where 'Salve' reminds men 'You came not into the world without our paine' (Lanyer 1993, 827). Lanyer's insistence on female corporeality being interconnected to Christian spirituality, I would argue shows that 'Salve' portrays a certain resistance to the growing distrust of the body in early modern society, and especially women's bodies.

As Ellington observes, in Western Europe women and the feminine have for centuries been associated with the 'bodily or material', whilst the masculine has been associated with the 'mind and the spiritual' (Ellington 1995, 230). The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw a growth of 'more negative interpretations of the body, particularly of women's bodies, by churchmen, artists, and scientists' (Ellington 1995, 230). Ellington points out that these rising negative 'views of the body would then be likely to produce, at least among elite men, a greater suspicion of women' (Ellington 1995, 231). Ellington's examination of the role of the Virgin Mary in passion sermons, where she compares late medieval preachers with Post-Tridentine Catholic preachers, is very important to my own analysis of Lanyer's passion narrative. I apply Ellington's study of Mary's role in passion sermons to my own analysis of Mary's role in 'Salve', where I would argue Lanyer's passion narrative clearly echoes Catholic traditions. This echoing of Catholic traditions of portraying Mary ultimately reveals the importance of female corporeality in 'Salve'. I would argue that Lanyer's use of metaphors and blazons are crucial tools used to construct the passion narrative dedicated to the Countess of Cumberland — a woman who has witness her daughter lose her father's inheritance to male relatives.

The increased desire to achieve a certain distance from the body in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has according to Ellington a certain correlation to an increased desire to control women, as well as the European witch-hunts:

To believe that it is necessary to control and achieve distance from the body can be translated easily into a desire to control women, who like the body will be perceived as unruly, casting an impure shadow over the clarity of rationality and order. Hence, increased suspicion of women in the early modern period; hence the witch craze. (Ellington 1995, 257)

I would argue that focus on the female body within Lanyer's passion narrative 'Salve' is an attempt to give women a certain amount of autonomy of their bodies — where the poem demonstrates that the female body is something to admire and praise rather than surveil and condemn.

In Lanyer's portrayal of Mary one can see a certain resistance to the rising emphasis many humanists put on the textual. 'Salve' highlights that the corporeal is as important as the textual when interpreting the passion. The corporeal is an important element relevant to all human experience, also when it comes to acquiring new knowledge as one needs sight in order to read and interpret. According to the Bible it was Eve's physical desire to eat which gave humans access to knowledge, whilst also leading to the fall of man. As Lanyer argues in her section on Eve, which I will come back to in chapter three, women have a special relationship to knowledge because of their connection to Eve. It was Eve's transgression that drove a lot of the misogynist discourse during the early modern period, where it was argued that women needed to be controlled because of their connection to Eve and thus inherently sinful nature. This belief of women as inherently sinful led to a the monitoring of women's souls where a need to control their bodies was established.

Foucault mentions that the control and monitoring of bodies causes the body to emit certain signs, where the body is expected to follow certain established conventions. Foucault highlights that it is often external pressures that leads to signs being emitted from the body: 'the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs' (Foucault 2020, 25). The body emitting signs is something Lanyer considers when she portrays Mary during the crucifixion, where Mary physically reacts to her son's death whilst also reflecting on her own life. Mary's physical reactions are then interpreted as signs, and how these signs are interpreted depend on the personal beliefs of the person interpreting Mary's body. This can be shown by how differently Catholics and Protestant may interpret Mary's presence during the crucifixion, where one may favour a physical and sorrowful reaction the other prefers a contained and reflective response.

Even though Lanyer seeks to draw attention to Mary and her physical suffering whilst witnessing the passion, the Gospels about the passion hardly mention Mary's presence.

Susanne Woods identifies that Lanyer's passion closely draws on Matthew 26:30-28:10, whilst also borrowing 'freely from other gospels, taking references to women wherever they appear' which includes Mark 14:26-16:11, Luke 22:39-24:12, and John 18:1-20:18 (Woods 1993, xxxvi). However, it is important to note that Mary's presence during the crucifixion is only mentioned in John 19:25-27:

Then stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary *the wife of Clopas*, and Mary Magdalene. And when Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he said unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then said he to the disciple, Behold thy mother: and from that hour, the disciple took her home unto him. (John 19:25-17)

Lanyer does not write about or directly refer to this bible passage in her own passion, she does write about Mary's experience and as reflecting on the crucifixion as well as her own life before 'Simon of Cyrene' (Lanyer 1993, 1137) pass them on the way to Calvary. This further demonstrates that 'Salve' mostly echoes late mediaeval passion narratives, as these passion narrative looked beyond scripture and expanded on Mary's thoughts and reflections during the Passion.

I argue that Lanyer's 'Salve' illustrate the importance of biblical women in the passion narrative in order to make women feel more spiritually connected to Christianity. This is especially done through the exploration of Mary's corporeality, as women can through their physical similarity to Mary — a woman who had the ultimate corporeal connection to Christ—realise that their female bodies are an important spiritual element in Christianity. In other words, 'Salve' wants to draw attention to the signs emitted from the body signs rather than simply looking at textual interpretation. This female corporeal focus will eventually encourage a specific type of textual interpretation influenced by the female gaze, which produces biblical interpretations that are especially insightful.

As previously mentioned, it is clear that Lanyer draws on passion sermons and narratives from the late mediaeval period — drawing on traditions prevalent before the Catholic counter-reformation and The Council of Trent (1545-1563). Before the counter-reformation Catholic preachers often spoke in detail about the reactions and reflections of Mary while she witnessed her son suffering in their passion sermons. After the Council of Trent most Catholic preachers chose to focus on the suffering of Christ, and hardly included any reflections on Mary. This was not only a response to the increasing wariness towards the corporeal, it was also a response to the criticism the Catholic church received during the reformation: 'one of the factors that led to a revised portrait of the virgin at the Cross was the

need to respond to Protestant charges of “excesses” and lack of adherence to Scripture in earlier Catholic piety and preaching’ (Ellington 1995, 251). According to Ellington, ‘one of the most persistent criticism of Catholic piety, by Catholic humanists as well as by Protestants, had been that it gave undue emphasis to the Virgin and saints’ (Ellington 1995, 251) which ultimately resulted in preachers referring less to Mary in their passion sermons, where they now put a greater emphasis on Jesus himself by omitting their reflections on Mary.

‘Salve’ challenges this increasing textual emphasis within the church, as it seeks to highlight a more human and physical theology by drawing attention to Mary’s struggles during the passion. Lanyer’s emphasis on Mary is a way to bring attention to the spiritual significance of the female body in Christianity, emphasising that women’s bodies should be celebrated rather than stigmatised. As Victoria Brownlee highlights, ‘Mary, without man, provides the material substance necessary for redemption and, in doing so, is found to mark the maternal body as a site of spiritual significance’ (Brownlee 2015, 1299). Furthermore, it is the female body through Mary who physically gives birth to the textual truth of the New Testament:

Mary’s physical maternity gives way to a spiritual maternity because, in giving birth to God in flesh, her body facilitates spiritual rebirth under the new covenant. Mary’s provision of spiritual nourishment is fulfilled in the provisions of authorial mother within whose work the fleshly birth of Christ becomes a textual rebirth of divine truth. (Brownlee 2015, 1321)

The portrayal of Mary in ‘Salve’ helps to emphasise the importance of women in the biblical narrative, as well as in society as a whole, where ‘Salve’ acts as a polemic in the form of a passion narrative. As Ellington states, ‘[b]ecause the Virgin is a woman whose significance was almost always publicly articulated by men, she can also be a means for identifying changing official attitudes to women in this era’ (Ellington 1995, 231).

Lanyer provides a female perspective on the portrayal of the Virgin Mary, one which focuses on the spirituality of the female body, a radical stance in a time where women’s bodies were looked at with increasing suspicion and as something which needed to be controlled. I therefore argue that Lanyer’s portrayal of Mary in ‘Salve’ contains the foundation of the greater argument which Lanyer makes throughout her collection: that the female body has the potential for supporting spirituality, especially by means of motherhood, something which needs to be celebrated rather than shamed. In the next section I will explore how the Virgin Mary’s presentation in the poem reflects the surveillance and discipline of



women's bodies, whereas in general Mary's body was continuously analysed and monitored by theologians which ultimately influenced how all women's bodies were viewed.

## The influence of the Virgin Mary: Surveillance and discipline of women's bodies

In this section I will explore how Mary in 'Salve' echoes certain traditions, such as the two Catholic traditions *lo spasimo* and *Stabat mater dolorosa*, which I would argue reveals that women's bodies have often been surveilled and disciplined in order to be controlled. The Virgin Mary is a figure who has often been portrayed as the ideal, yet unattainable, manifestation of womanhood. Mary represents this unattainable form of maternity and femininity, whose perfect image can create a problematic ideal for women who were often encouraged to identify themselves with Mary. Therefore, in this section I will explore how Mary as a figure has been identified as an ideal image of womanhood, how this becomes problematic, and finally how the surveillance and discipline of Mary reflects the need to control women in society.

Towards the very beginning of the first section on Mary, Lanyer clearly identifies her as an immaculate woman describing her as 'Most blessed Virgin, in whose faultlesse fruit, / All Nations of the earth must needes rejoyce' (Lanyer 1993, 1025-1026). The metaphor of the 'faultlesse fruit' not only brings up connotations of Eve eating the forbidden fruit, insinuating that Mary is the second Eve, I would argue that the use of the word fruit here can also be a metonymy for both Jesus and the body. According to the *OED*, a now rare definition of fruit often can be associated with biblical phraseology 'Offspring, progeny. Also an embryo, faetus. [...] More fully fruit of the body, fruit of the loins, fruit of the womb' (*OED* 'fruit', 6). The phrase 'faultlesse fruit' can thus symbolise both Christ as a fruit of Mary as well as Mary's own body. This complicates the succeeding line 'All Nations of the earth must needes rejoyce', as it suggests that all nations should rejoyce both the birth of Christ as well as the faultless and immaculate body of Mary.

This praise continues in the next section 'The salutation of the virgin Marie', where Lanyer now reflects on the Annunciation when Gabriel visited Mary, which begins with: 'He thus beganne, Haile *Mary* full of grace' (Lanyer 1993, 1041). In this section, Mary's praiseworthy qualities gets further emphasised, underlining that these will be praised:

What endlesse comfort did these words afford  
To thee that saw'st an Angell in the place

Proclaime thy Virtues worth, and to record  
Thee blessed among women: that thy praise  
Should last so many worlds beyond thy daies.  
(Lanyer 1993, 1044-1048)

‘Thee blessed among women’ is especially telling, as ‘Salve’ identifies that Mary has a special significance to all women. The poem continues to emphasise Mary’s pure nature and virginity throughout the section, ‘When thy pure thoughts could hardly apprehend / This salutation’ (Lanyer 1993, 1057-8), ‘His glorious Angel; who did thee assure / To beare a child, although a Virgin pure’ (Lanyer 1993, 1063-4). This emphasis on Mary as immaculate and pure, born without sin, is an assertion common in the Catholic church, one which is ultimately made in order to further support that Christ was born without sin. Since Mary is a human, and is what binds Christ to humanity, suggesting that Mary was born immaculate and pure without any sin helps to further support Christ’s exceptional existence. However, it does also create an impossible ideal for women, as no ordinary woman is born without sin nor can she become a mother and remain a virgin.

Julia Kristeva explores this problematic concept of Mary as a distinguished human representing an unattainable ideal form of womanhood, where she surveys the effect the Virgin Mary has had on western society’s overall view on motherhood. Julia Kristeva in her 1977 article ‘Stabat Mater’ explores how motherhood and the female corporeal has been understood in the Catholic Church, and how femininity in modern western society often becomes synonymous with motherhood:

we live in a civilization in which the consecrated (religious or secular) representation of femininity is subsumed under maternity. Under close examination, however, this maternity turns out to be an adult (male and female) fantasy of a lost continent: what is involved, moreover, is not so much an idealized primitive mother as an idealization of the unlocalizable relationship between her and us, an idealization of primary narcissis. (Kristeva 1985, 133)

Kristeva points out that femininity and maternity being closely intertwined in modern society stems from the idealisation of the Virgin Mary, an idealisation which can become problematic for women as Mary’s status as the immaculate Virgin Mother is unattainable. Mary’s status as immaculate arose due to how her body is often not read in isolation, but rather as an extension of her son’s body. This is further complicated by how Mary’s corporeality is seen as the crucial link between Christ and humanity, yet the actual ‘humanity of the Virgin mother is not always evident, and we shall see later just how Mary is distinguished from the human race [...]’ (Kristeva, 1985, 134). This tension between Mary

being human yet immaculate, where Mary is the one who connects Christ to humanity yet she is exceptional and born without sin, demonstrates that there has been a certain unease around women's bodies and their sinful nature since the foundation of Christianity. The question of Mary's status as immaculate arose in order to help reaffirm Jesus' status as the Messiah: 'If Mary is prior to Christ, and if he, or at any rather his humanity, originates with her, then must she not too be immaculate? For otherwise a person conceived in sin and carrying sin within herself would have given birth to a God, and how could this be?' (Kristeva 1985, 138). Mary born as immaculate was not the only aspect of Mary that early theologians discussed, her virginal status after giving birth was also debated:

There were even some rather tortuous debates over the question whether Mary remained a virgin after giving birth: thus in A.D. 381 the Second Council of Constantinople, under the influence of Arianism, placed greater stress on Mary's role than did official dogma and proclaimed her perpetual virginity, and the council of A.D. 451 declared her Aeiparthenos, forever virgin. (Kristeva 1985, 137)

Kristeva's article identifies some of the discussions surrounding the body and soul of the Virgin Mary made by early theologians, discussions that reflects an unease around the inherently sinful nature of women's bodies.

This is also addressed in 'Salve', where the Virgin Mary is portrayed as pure and immaculate, where Mary's virtue is emphasised:

When on the knees of thy submissive heart  
Thou humbly didst demand, How that should be?  
Thy virgin thoughts did thinke, none could impart  
This great hap, and blessing unto thee;  
Farre from desire of any man thou art,  
Knowing not one, thou art from all men free:  
(Lanyer 1993, 1073-1078)

The poem continues to emphasise Mary's pure thoughts, 'Thy virgin thoughts did thinke', where Mary's thoughts are personified and connected to the adjective 'virgin' highlighting that Mary's whole being is virginal and immaculate. This stanza also spends some time reminding the reader that Mary 'art from all men free', although this is also stated in order to assert Mary as pure and virginal, I also interpret this as a way for 'Salve' to emphasise that it was a woman who brought Christ to life without the assistance of man. Naomi Miller argues that 'In observing that Mary is "free from all men," being "farre from desire of any man" Lanyer deconstructs the conventional dynamic of heterosexual desire in the service of liberating women to bond with one another in religious devotion instead' (Miller 1998, 159).

I am convinced by Miller's interpretation, and I would argue that it also further reveals that 'Salve' seeks to promote a religious community of women interpreting biblical texts.

Interestingly, the next stanza of the poem also identifies Mary as a forever virgin or *Aeiparthenos*:

That thou a blessed Virgin shoulst remaine,  
Yea that the holy Ghost should come on thee  
A maiden Mother, subject to no paine,  
For highest powre should overshadow thee:  
Could thy faire eyes from teares of joy refraine,  
When God look'd downe upon thy poore degree?  
    Making thee Servant, Mother, Wife, and Nurse  
    To Heavens bright King, that freed us from the curse.  
(Lanyer 1993, 1081-1088)

In Lanyer's poem, Gabriel tells Mary that she 'a blessed Virgin shoulst remaine', and that she will be 'subject to no paine, For highest power should overshadow thee'. Mary is then described as weeping with joy, as she becomes overcome with emotions once she discovers that she is a part of God's plan, where she is now responsible for bearing and nursing the Messiah. I find the final two lines in this stanza particularly revealing, as Lanyer here rhymes the words 'Nurse' with 'curse', suggesting that no one would be freed from the curse of sin without Mary, as there would be no Christ. These lines also connect this freedom from sin's curse directly to the female body, where nursing becomes a healing activity.

The poem's portrayal of Mary during the Annunciation is revealing, as it continues a long tradition of portraying Mary as immaculate and as being a perpetual virgin. Though this in part helps to establish Mary's status as a saint, and as mother of Christ who was born without sin, it also creates a certain divide between Mary and women who are not born immaculate. However, even though Lanyer's 'Salve' portrays Mary as exceptional, I would still argue that 'Salve' seeks to portray that the female body contains a specific religious spirituality which needs to be celebrated. 'Salve' does this through the portrayal of Mary's connection to Christ as well as the portrayal of his body, which I will further investigate later in this chapter.

Theologians not only discussed Mary's body during the Annunciation but also her reactions during the passion, something which Lanyer's 'Salve' also explores. Mary's presence during the passion, and whether or not she physically expresses grief during it, does according to Robert S. Miola participate 'in the larger and deeper controversies about her Immaculate Conception and her status as *κεχαριτωμένη*, either *plena gratia*, or "full of

grace,” as the Catholics would have it, or merely “highly favoured,” according to the Protestant translation’ (Miola 2017, 656). Miola here refers to the translation from the Greek to English in Luke 1:28, a verse which ‘Salve’ refers to at the very beginning of the section ‘The salutation of the virgin Marie’, clearly leaning into the Catholic translation of the word as Lanyer uses ‘Haile *Mary* full of grace’ (Lanyer 1993, 1041).<sup>5</sup> Considering Lanyer is writing from a reformed Protestant England this portrayal of Mary is revealing.

It is important to note that these disputes concerning Mary’s status were not confined to theologians, it also physically affected the overall society where ‘in England, some Protestants prohibited Marian veneration, denied Marian doctrines, suppressed Marian prayers and devotions, cancelled Marian feast days, smashed Marian statues, and defaced Marian images’ (Miola 2017, 657). The fact that ‘Salve’ still explores Catholic images often connected to the veneration of the Virgin Mary, I would argue shows that the poem seeks to highlight and criticise the surveillance and discipline of women’s bodies.

*Stabat mater dolorosa* is another Catholic Marian tradition which is reflected in ‘Salve’. This is a tradition which not only explores Mary’s actions during the crucifixion but also her role in Christ’s sacrifice to redeem all humans from their sins. ‘Salve’ here builds on traditions reaching back to the thirteenth century to a hymn by the ‘Franciscan Jacopone da Todi or Pope Innocent III’ titled ‘*Stabat Mater Dolorosa* (The sorrowful Mother was standing)’ which ‘imagines Mary standing next to the cross, her heart pierced with sorrow, just as Simeon had prophesied’ (Miola 2017, 665). ‘Salve’ depicts a Mary, who when seeing her son ‘Under the burthen of a heavy crosse’ (Lanyer 1993, 1007) becomes ‘All comfortlesse in depth of sorow drowned; / Her griefes extreame, although but new begun’ (Lanyer 1993, 1010-1011), directly asking the reader ‘How could shee choose but thinke her selfe undone, / He dying, with whose glory shee was crowned?’ (Lanyer 1993, 1013-1014).

‘Salve’ depicts a Mary who physically expresses grief, as she is described as ‘undone’ once she witnesses her son struggle whilst carrying the cross to Calvary. As I briefly outlined when I looked at Ellington’s study of medieval passion narratives, this portrayal of an unconfined Mary witnessing Jesus struggle draws on a late medieval tradition which had a far more positive attitude towards corporeal manifestations of spirituality. Gary Kuchar further explores these discussions surrounding a swooning Mary in Catholic circles, where some

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<sup>5</sup> Catholic translation: ‘And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women’ (Luke 1:28, *Douay-Rheims Bible*)

Protestant translation: ‘And the Angel went in unto her, and said, Hail thou *that art* freely beloved: the Lord *is* with thee: blessed *art* thou among women’ (Luke 1:28, *1599 Geneva Bible*)

believed Mary's swoon of compassion (*lo spasimo*) proved that she had an active role in the crucifixion and redemption of mankind, whilst others asserted that Mary did not faint and rather stood firm and dignified which ultimately proved she was conscious of her son's sacrifice:

The question at the center of the *lo spasimo* controversy, which was known in the seventeenth-century England as in most parts of Western Europe, is whether Mary's cooperative role in the sacrifice is reflected by her firm, dignified pose before the crucified Christ or whether her participation in Christ's agony is best figured through her physical collapse. (Kuchar 2008, 126)

'Salve' depicts Mary as kneeling, or perhaps as brought to her knees, while she witnesses her son's 'bleeding body' (Lanyer 1993, 1012):

Her teares did wash away his precious blood,  
That sinners might not tread it under feet  
To worship him, and that it did her good  
Upon her knees, although in open street,  
Knowing he was the Jessie floure and bud,  
That must be gath' red when it smell'd most sweet:  
(Lanyer, 1017-1022)

In this stanza, Mary not only cries and publicly expresses grief 'in open street', but also reflects on the sacrifice of her son. Mary's 'teares' are also here depicted as an important element which 'wash away' the precious blood of Christ in order to prevent it from reaching the feet of 'sinners'. The phrasing in this stanza also heavily lean into the ideas surrounding Mary's participation in Christ's sacrifice. Mary is here depicted as a mother who sacrifices her own son, a son she nurtured whilst also being fully aware of the fact that he 'must be gath' red when it smell'd most sweet'. This sacrificial awareness is another common feature found in late mediaeval passion narratives, where occasionally 'preachers ascribed to the Virgin the duties of a priest offering the sacrificial victim' (Ellington 1995, 234). I would argue that these lines further suggests that 'Salve' echoes Marian traditions found in late medieval passion narratives, and thus continues to highlight the importance of Mary within Christianity.

While Lanyer's 'Salve' stipulates that Mary is immaculate and exceptional the poem also makes sure to humanise Mary. As Kuchar points out, the figure of Mary is an 'impossible ideal of chastity, bodily perfection, and self-sacrifice [...] leading faithful women to strive for a form of being that is, by its very nature, impossible to attain' (Kuchar 2008, 145). However, the Mary found in 'Salve' is also depicted displaying several human qualities

such as her reflective and questioning nature, and most significantly her uncontrolled visceral reactions when she witnesses her son's suffering. In other words, 'Salve' humanises Mary by portraying her as a flawed and emotional mother, a figure that ordinary women can see themselves reflected in. Kuchar sees this humanisation of Mary as a way for Lanyer to argue for an active female participation in early Christianity:

perhaps the best way to read Lanyer's depiction of Mary is as an attempt to imagine a vision of female authority that is configured not as a disembodied ideal, but as a physically real, emotionally expressive, and intellectually engaged exemplum of female spiritual power — one who can be seen as playing an active rather than passive role in the work of redemption. (Kuchar 2008, 146)

I find Kuchar's description of Lanyer's humanised Mary convincing, and I would like to further develop Kuchar's argument as I would argue that this humanised Mary found in 'Salve' is constructed as a direct critique of the male gendered hermeneutics which heavily monitors and seeks to discipline the inherently sinful female body. By including a humanised Mary, the female readers might now more easily identify themselves with Mary, and understand how the female body was instrumental to the salvation of mankind. The humanised Mary in 'Salve' is crucial to what I interpret as the poem's call for an increased amount of gynocentric biblical interpretations. Within these biblical interpretations the female body is celebrated and seen as an important aspect of female spirituality, where this spirituality is represented as an important asset to the Christian faith.

Lastly, the poem's portrayal of a grieving Mary also invites a unique female perspective, that of a grieving mother losing her child. In the first section on Mary, Lanyer writes 'To see his bleeding body, oft shee swooned; How could shee choose but thinke her selfe undone' (1011-1012), an image which Lanyer comes back to towards the end of the second section on Mary with the lines 'How canst thou choose (faire Virgin) then but mourne, / When this sweet of-spring of thy body dies' (1129-1130). The poem here seeks to emphasise the connection between mother and son, attempting to evoke an emotional response from its readers. This effective use of pathos highlights the loss of a son, a loss which readers of 'Salve' might personally relate to. Rather than focusing on the loss of Christ the Messiah, the poem portrays Mary losing a son, an experience related to motherhood which her female readers might relate to:

Instead of asking "who could not be sorrowful?," as the original lyric does, Lanyer asks, "How could a mother choose otherwise than grieve when she loses her son and God?" Lanyer's alteration turns the religious experience of compassion inward for her

audience; that is, if the original invites group solidarity through a universal response, Lanyer's version invites introspection and demands an ethical response from her reader and Mary's viewer. (Herrold 2020, 384)

Again, the poem here seeks to evoke an emotional response from its readers by humanising Mary and her experiences during the crucifixion of her son. The poem continues to emphasise Mary's humanity and how ordinary women can connect and relate to her experiences.

Throughout the two sections on Mary, 'Salve' highlights the surveillance of women and the discipline of their bodies where it ultimately draws attention to the importance of the female body in Christianity. The *lo spasimo* and *stabat mater dolorosa* traditions, where Mary's reactions during the passion were surveilled by theologians, reveal attitudes men and society had towards women's bodies, where towards the end of the sixteenth century Post-Tridentine preachers were less inclined to describe a physically emotional Mary during the crucifixion. The surveillance and discipline of women's bodies was a result of society's perception of women's souls as uncontrolled and sinful in nature. This perception resulted in society's need to control women's bodies. As a result there was a certain uneasiness around women's uncontrolled physical reactions, something which one can see in the Post-Tridentine Catholic and Protestant portrayals of Mary during the passions where she went from physically expressive to introspective and contemplative.

I also see this reflected in Lanyer's own time within politics, where in 1649 after the regicide of King Charles I, women who supported the monarchy were portrayed by the republicans as emotionally and physically unstable. Parliamentarians undermined women's political outcry of the regicide by highlighting 'the figure of the woman prey to violent bodily and emotional reactions to the regicide' (Nevitt 2006, 60) This can be seen in the painting of the regicide from 1649 by John Weesop, shown below as Figure 3, which portrays a woman fainting whilst witnessing the execution of the king, and image which is reminiscent of the painting depicting a fainting Mary during the crucifixion. The Weesop painting depicts the fainting woman in the foreground, where she is supported by two bystanders. The two people who assist the woman are both wearing hats often associated with puritans which suggests that they might be in favour of the regicide. The fainting woman, however, is not depicted wearing this hat, nor is it suggested that she wore one before she fainted. This image of the fainting women thus have political undertones, where the royalist woman is depicted as emotional and unrestrained as she faints and is then caught by the stoic and contained



parliamentarians. The fainting woman in Weesop can be read as a depiction the physical weakness of women.



FIGURE 3: John Weesop *The Execution of Charles I*, 1649. Edinburgh, [Scottish National Portrait Gallery](#).

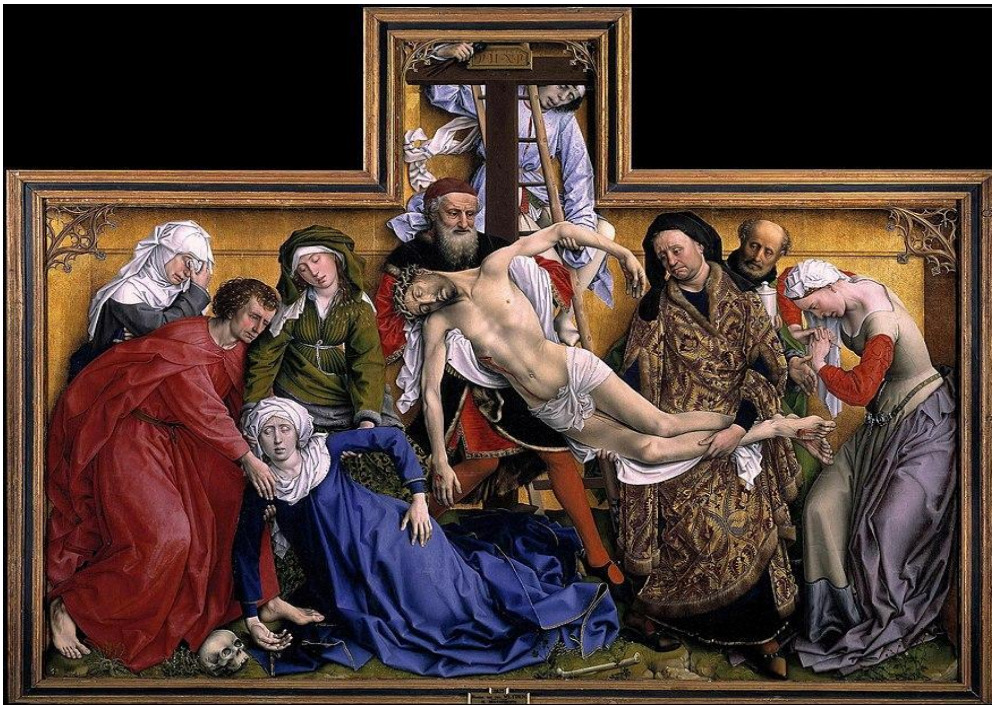


FIGURE 4: Rogier van der Weyden *The Descent from the Cross*, before 1443. Madrid, [Museo Nacional del Prado](#).

In contrast, the van der Weyden painting in Figure 4 depicts a fainting Mary during the crucifixion, where the spiritual significance of the female body is emphasised. Mary and her physical connection to Christ is highlighted, as Mary's fainting is mirroring the collapsing body of her son. In fact, Mary's complexion is depicted as much paler than her son's, suggesting that not a part of Mary died during the crucifixion. Additionally, the two bystanders that help the fainting Mary look empathetic, seemingly understanding her physical

collapse. Rather than depicting the weakness of the female body, the van der Weyden painting portrays the corporeal connection between the female body of the Virgin Mary and her son Jesus Christ.

Lanyer's depiction of Mary's body interrogates the surveillance and discipline of women's bodies, where Mary's expressive compassion in 'Salve' portrays the physical connection between mother and son, as well as the spiritual connection between the female body and Christ. In the next section I will further explore the portrayal of Mary's corporeality in 'Salve', where I will look at how Mary was celebrated by women during childbirth and how this changed after the reformation. I will look at how the poem intertwines the female corporeal with Christ on the cross, ultimately defending the spiritual importance of the female body in Christianity.

## Mary's body and its connection to Lanyer's corporeal spirituality

Lanyer's portrayal of Mary's body and soul in her passion narrative 'Salve' draws attention to the importance of female corporeality and spirituality within Christianity. In 'Salve' Mary's body and soul, though immaculate and exceptional, is humanised and relates to all women in society where women's bodies and its ability to conceive brings them closer to Christ and thus also directly ties women to the salvation of mankind. The punishment of the body and soul is a prevalent theme throughout 'Salve', but I would argue it is especially important in the sections on Mary during Christ's passion, something which I will further explore in this subchapter.

I will do this by first looking at how Mary was portrayed as an important divine figure women could pray to during difficult child labours, and how this changed after the Reformation and after a raise scepticism surrounding corporeality took foot in Europe. I will then explore how the female corporeal continues to be celebrated in 'Salve' where Mary is connected to Christ, and to honour Mary becomes a way to honour Christ as 'To honor Mary is to honor the Word made flesh through her' (Ellington 2001, 219).

In order to fully appreciate how the female body is portrayed in 'Salve' it is important to consider how Foucault argues that the interpretations of the signs emitted from the body are coloured by how one perceives the soul of the individual. In other words, the soul of the supervised individual, which in this case is women, affects how the supervised body is read. Women's souls were seen as inherently sinful because of Eve's transgression and thus women's bodies were also perceived as sinful and potentially dangerous if left uncontrolled.

Crucially, the soul of both the supervisor and the supervised are involved in forming the perception of the supervised individual's soul and body. Foucault draws this important connection in *Discipline and Punish* where while discussing the connection between the body and soul he seeks to demonstrate how the modern judicial system punish the soul rather than a corporeal punishment.

I would argue that Foucault's theories on the punishment and surveillance of the soul being a modern invention does not apply to women, as both their souls and bodies have been surveilled and punished for centuries. Because women's bodies were read through the perceived inherent sinfulness of the female soul, early modern society believed the female body ought to be more disciplined than the male body as this would ultimately control the inherently sinful female soul.

Before I continue to explore how Mary's body is portrayed in Lanyer's 'Salve', I will first outline how Foucault describes the relationship between the soul and the body as this is particularly relevant to my own analysis. Foucault describes how the idea of 'the soul as an illusion, or an ideological effect' is incorrect as that the soul is in fact a real and powerful tool used by those in power in order to control the mind and bodies of other individuals. In other words, the soul is an element which those in power use as a way to justify the need to control the mind and body of others. An example of this would be how women's souls were viewed as more inherently sinful than men's, and that therefore women need to be controlled more than men as women's inherently sinful nature makes them more likely to transgress. Foucault writes that the soul has a reality and is permanently produced 'around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished — and, in a more general way, on those one supervises, trains and correct, over madmen, children at home and at school, the colonized' (Foucault 2020, 29). This soul also establishes a certain form of knowledge which again reinforces the power people hold over the subjected and repressed:

This real, non-corporeal soul is not a substance; it is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power.  
(Foucault 2020, 29)

Theories surrounding the status of women's bodies and minds and how these elements might be controlled are examples of knowledge produced because of the concept of the soul. As Foucault states, the soul essentially becomes a framework or prison for the body: 'The soul is

the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body' (Foucault 2020, 30).

Foucault's theories surrounding the impact of the soul and how it affects the way a person's body is read can be applied to the changing attitudes towards the Virgin Mary's body and how it was interpreted during the English reformation. The changing attitudes towards the importance of Mary's body had a direct impact on early modern women, and especially expecting mothers. According to Mary Fissell, religious reformers were especially wary of the female body 'because the central narrative about reproduction in late Mediaeval England was a sacred one: the story of Mary's miraculous conception of Christ' (Fissell 2004, 14). Fissell continues, explaining how in pre-Reformation England the Virgin Mary was seen as an important figure for expecting mothers, where women were even encouraged to identify with her: 'Women were encouraged to identify with the Virgin Mary while pregnant and used saints' relics and items associated with her to try and ensure a safe delivery. Early sixteenth-century women in labour employed a wide range of sacred objects to help them' (Fissell 2004, 14). The sacredness of the female body stems from the belief that Christ is connected to humans through Mary, where Christ was made from female flesh, ultimately creating a heightened spiritual significance surrounding expecting mothers and birth.

This however changed during the reformation where by the late 1530s reformers started to argue that 'the Virgin contributed nothing but houseroom to her son' (Fissell 2004, 25). Mary's body went from being sacred to being a mere vessel. Fissell continues stating that 'Anabaptists of various kinds had been reformulating ideas about the body of Christ, asserting that Christ did not have a human body, or that his human body came from heaven and was not made from Mary's flesh' (Fissell 2004, 25). Ellington also highlights this important shift, where some reformers even suggested that Christ's love for his mother was not a result of their physical connection as mother and son, but rather a reflection of his love of her exceptional virtue:

By the late sixteenth century, institutional and social pressures worked to modify this concretized participation of Mary in the Church's life. Still the mother of Christ, it was now her spiritual motherhood which many preachers chose to emphasize, some even saying that Jesus loved his mother not because of her physical birth-giving, but because of her spiritual purity and holiness. (Ellington 2001, 247)

Protestant reformers move away from the Catholic veneration of the Virgin Mary affected how early modern women were asked to view their own bodies and souls. After the

reformation, expecting mothers were encouraged to identify with Eve and pray to Christ for help rather than Mary: 'Where pregnant women once identified themselves with the Virgin by going to Mass, praying specifically to her, and wearing relics or sanctified objects related to her, now women were to identify with Eve instead' (Fissell 2004, 46).

This shift in pregnant women being encouraged to identify with Eve rather than Mary is also evidence of a shift in how the female body was interpreted differently by reformers. Women's bodies went from being celebrated for their connection to Mary's female body and the birth of Christ, to now focus on their connection to Eve's transgression which instead highlighted the inherently sinful nature of the female soul and body. After the reformation in England, women suffering during childbirth were now encouraged to identify with Eve rather than Mary. One can see this reflected by looking at some of the prayers written for expecting mothers: 'In [one] prayer, the speaker tells the Lord that she acknowledges that He has 'justly' increased the pain and sorrow with which women bring forth children because of Eve's 'original transgression'' (Fissell 2004, 43).

Pre-Reformation women identifying with Mary while experiencing labour pains is especially important as 'according to late medieval belief Mary did not experience labour pains when she gave birth to Jesus, but suffered cognate pains at his crucifixion, as she, in effect, gave birth to the salvation of mankind' (Fissell 2004, 17 and 21). Women in labour who prayed to the Virgin Mary while experiencing pain thus also celebrated Mary's participation in the salvation of mankind, and therefore also emphasised how the female corporeal had an essential role in the salvation.

The shift from Mary to Eve symbolises a move away from viewing the female reproductive body as something which echoes the divine:

As most Englishmen and women came to think of themselves as Protestant, and no longer remembered their grandmothers and great-grandmother's devotional practices that linked pregnancy with the Virgin Mary, eventually they came to adopt a new view of the female reproductive body that did not echo the divine. (Fissell 2004, 73)

I would argue that Lanyer's 'Salve' seeks to portray the female reproductive body as something which echoes the divine. In 'Salve' Mary is celebrated as mother of Christ, a woman who nurtured and created him. Mary is portrayed as someone who participates in the Passion where she is fully aware of her son's sacrifice, whilst simultaneously also experiencing the physical pains and sorrows which results from witnessing her son suffering. As Brownlee states, Mary's 'significance hinges on her maternal body because, as a woman, she had the biological capacity to facilitate the incarnation' (Brownlee 2015, 1309). In order

to move away from the Catholic devotion of Mary the Protestant reformers had to diminish the maternal body and its spiritual significance.

Lanyer's 'Salve' however seeks to emphasise the importance of Mary and the maternal body, where by 'tying Christ's conception, birth, and sustenance to Mary's maternal body, Lanyer showcases how pregnancy, labor, and breastfeeding are intrinsic to the Bible's ultimate act of salvation' (Brownlee 2015, 1309). In the portrayal of Mary, the distinction between Christ and Mary and their role in the salvation of mankind is often blurred:

What wonder in the world more strange could seeme,  
Than that a Virgin could conceive and beare  
Within her wombe a Sonne, That should redeeme  
All Nations on the earth, and should repaire  
Our old decaies:  
(Lanyer 1993, 1097-1101)

In these lines it is at first clear that it is talking about the Virgin, where it describes Mary as 'conceive and beare' a 'Sonne' within her 'wombe' (from the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14). However in lines 1099 it becomes unclear whether 'that should' refers to the 'Sonne' as the one who 'redeeme[s]' earth and 'repaire /our old decaies' or if it is in fact Mary's wombe that acts as the salvation of mankind. I interpret this blurring as deliberate, where Mary and Christ are both portrayed as actively participating in the ultimate biblical salvation. This participation in the salvation of mankind also creates a certain spirituality connected to the female body and its reproductive abilities. As Brownlee states, 'For [Lanyer] [...] Mary's example transposes childbearing from a curse into a crown for all women, for all time, and becomes central to the formulation of the spiritual motherhood that authorizes their works' (Brownlee 2015, 1321). In other words, not only is childbearing portrayed as a blessing and crown for all women rather than a curse, this spiritual motherhood also enhances the ethos of female religious writers such as Lanyer. The corporeal spirituality which connects women to Mary and the salvation of mankind help emphasise the importance of female biblical interpretations such as Lanyer's passion narrative.

Brownlee continues to highlight how the importance put on Mary's physical maternity ultimately creates spiritual maternity, where the female reproductive body becomes 'fulfilled by spiritual matter':

Mary's physical maternity gives way to a spiritual maternity because, in giving birth to God in flesh, her body facilitates spiritual rebirth under the new covenant. Read typologically, the Marian body, with its womb, birth canal, blood, pain, and breast milk, is always fulfilled by spiritual matter. (Brownlee 2015, 1321)

This spiritual matter which fills the female body is implicitly contrasted to the lack of this corporeal spirituality in men. As Naomi Miller highlights, it is Mary who connects Christ to humanity: ‘Born of a woman and of God, Christ emerges as a figure whose divinity quite evidently comes from his heavenly Father, but whose humanity is directly attributable not to “more faultie Men,” but rather to the woman who is his mother’ (Miller 1998, 159). Again, ‘Salve’ continues to emphasise the corporeality and humanity of the Virgin Mary which connects her to ordinary women and highlights how the female body is filled with spiritual matter. I would argue that it is this portrayal of a female corporeal spirituality which calls for biblical interpretation where the female gaze is rendered as redemptive and visionary.

In ‘Salve’ Mary’s corporeal connection to Christ is also posed as an explanation of Mary’s physical expression of grief:

How canst thou choose (faire Virgin) then but mourne,  
When this sweet of-spring of thy body dies,  
When thy faire eies beholds his bodie torne,  
The peoples fury, hears the womens cries;  
His holy name prophan’d, He made a scorne,  
Abusde with all their hatefull slaunderous lies:  
    Bleeding and fainting in such wondrous sort,  
    As scarce his feeble limbes can him support.  
(Lanyer 1993, 1129-1136)

This stanza emphasises how Mary could not do anything but ‘mourne’ during the crucifixion, as the physical sight of witnessing with her ‘faire eies’ the ‘torne’ body of her son made too much of an impression. Mary could not ‘choose’ anything else but to ‘mourne’; even though she knew her son’s death is instrumental in the salvation of mankind the sight of her son suffering still affects her as a mother. They are physically connected in flesh as mother and son. Mary cannot help but to mourn while she witnesses ‘this sweet of-spring of thy body dies’. Not only does Christ die during the crucifixion, a part of Mary’s body also dies. Witnessing her son being ridiculed where he is ‘made a scorne’ and ‘His Holy name is prophan’d’ also has an affect on Mary. I suggest the last couplet of this stanza continues to blur the depiction of Mary and Christ, as the question of who is ‘Bleeding and fainting’ becomes slightly ambiguous. Though the last line clearly suggests that Christ is bleeding and fainting because his ‘feeble limbes’ can scarcely support him the fact that the following lines is talking about Mary’s reaction to the passion and Christ’s journey to Calvary/Golgotha suggests that Mary might also be bleeding and fainting at the sight of her son’s failing limbs.

Lanyer's 'Salve' seeks to portray the female corporeal as something which echoes the divine. The female corporeal as something which echoes the divine is reflected in pre-Reformation traditions of women who prayed to the Virgin Mary during difficult childbirth, both as a way to ask for a successful birth as well as a way to worship Mary's participation in the salvation of mankind. In 'Salve' the female corporeal is connected to the spiritual through Mary's body, where her body has a physical and spiritual connection to her son Christ. This is done effectively through the blurring of Mary and Christ, where the corporeal connection between mother and son is emphasised, eventually highlighting the spiritual significance of Mary through the corporeal connection to Christ. In the next section I continue to explore the corporeal connection between women and Christ, where the blazon of Christ during the crucifixion is presented to Lanyer's readers as a way to gaze at and participate in biblical interpretation.

### Christ's corporeal connection to women and its spiritual significance

As explored in the last section, I would argue that 'Salve' encourage a positive image of the female corporeal through the figure of the Virgin Mary and her physical connection to Christ. This physical connection between the female reproductive body and the salvation of mankind through Christ suggests that women have a special spirituality within Christianity which needs to be celebrated. Even though 'Salve' recognises the Virgin Mary as born immaculate and perpetual virgin, which creates a certain distance between her and the ordinary woman, I interpret the poem's focus on Mary's humanity and motherly compassion as something that encourages female readers to identify with Mary. Through Mary's conception of Christ the female reproductive body becomes charged with a specific form spirituality which does not affect men, where women have a special connection to Christ and the salvation of mankind through their physical similarities to Mary. This spirituality and its connection to the female corporeal encourages early modern women celebrate rather than shame their own bodies.

Not only is Mary's body depicted as being spiritual through its connection to Christ, but in the poem Christ's body is also rendered as female, as his physical being and humanity is grounded in his mother. In this chapter I will explore how Christ's female body is described as feminine during the crucifixion scene in 'Salve', and how this portrayal of feminized body of Christ is an extension of my previous argument as it enhances the importance of the female corporeal within Christianity. I will then explore how the female readers of 'Salve' are encouraged to gaze at this blazon of Christ on the cross, and lastly how



the depiction of Christ is offered to the female readers as a part of a Holy Communion. The verses in 'Salve' which I will look at for this subchapter are the ones that follows the Mary sections. For my analysis I will focus on the sections titled 'Christ's death', the section which immediately follows 'The salutation of the virgin Marie, and 'A briefe description of his beautie upon the Canticles' which depicts Christ's beauty after his resurrection.

Christ's humanity being connected to Mary's corporeality is in 'Salve' especially highlighted during the crucifixion. Placed within the section titled 'Christ's death', Lanyer presents her readers with a blazon of the crucified Christ:

His joynts dis-joynted, and his legges hang downe,  
His alabaster breast, his bloody side,  
His members torne, and on his head a Crowne  
Of sharpest Thorns, to satisfie for pride:  
Anguish and Paine doe all his Sences drowne,  
While they his holy garments do divide:  
    His bowells drie, his heart full fraught with griefe,  
    Crying to him that yeelds him no reliefe.  
(Lanyer 1993, 1161-1168)

The corporeality and humanity of Christ is here emphasised, where not only are his physical body is affected as his 'joynts' are dis-joynted', his 'members torne', his 'bowells drie', and his 'Sences' are 'drowne[d]' by 'Anguish' and 'Paine'. He is even depicted as 'Crying' for someone to give him 'reliefe', who the 'him' is referring to is unclear though as Susanne Woods' edition of *Salve* suggests that in these lines Christ is calling upon God. I would argue that this line could also echo how women in painful labour called on the Virgin Mary to give them relief, again emphasising the connection between Mary's and Christ's corporeality.

Brownlee even suggests that this stanza mirrors that of Mary giving birth, as his 'legges hang downe' his 'members torne', but significantly in contrast to Mary's painless birth his senses are drowned in 'Anguish' and 'Paine' (Brownlee 2015, 1314-1315).

I am convinced by Brownlee's analysis, where she ultimately argues that 'Salve' here reminds its readers that the basis of salvation, Christ's suffering, is only made 'possible because of the flesh he inherited from a woman "without . . . man," and it is an inheritance that continues in Lanyer's retelling of the Crucifixion to be exclusively female and maternal' (Brownlee 2015, 315). I want to extend this interpretation even further, as I also interpret the last line of Christ crying to God for relief as echoing how some women cried for the Virgin Mary during difficult deliveries.

The depiction of Christ being crucified where his corporeality and humanity is emphasised reminds the readers ‘that the fleshy, material, and incarnate God is the central tenet of Christianity’ (Herrold 2020, 389). In her article ‘The *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* Tradition in Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*’ Megan Herrold continues to explore the importance of the collection’s discussions of materiality, where during the Passion in ‘Salve’ the experiences of Mary and Christ are mirrored:

If Mary’s suffering leaves her tearful, fleshy, and arguably abject, Lanyer insists that her Christ also be tearful, fleshy, and abject. Instead of avoiding discussions of materiality because of the anxieties they may arouse, Lanyer demonstrates the ways in which compassionate materiality might be utilized as the very basis upon which community might be built. (Herrold 2020, 389)

Though I do agree with what Herrold says about compassionate materiality as something which can be utilised for building a community — as I argue that it is this materiality which helps to establish a community of reading women interpreting biblical texts — I am not entirely convinced by Herrold’s view of community. In her article Herrold argues that Lanyer’s Petrarchan blazon in ‘Salve’ blurs the hierarchy between the observer and the observed, an analysis I find convincing as I would argue ‘Salve’ certainly portrays the importance of the female gaze.

However Herrold also radically suggests that ‘Mary and Christ’s suffering at Calvary provides an exemplary model through which observer and observed unify across gender, class, and even racial lines’ (Herrold 2020, 365). I am not convinced by Herrold’s argument of unification across gender, class and racial lines, as I interpret Lanyer’s collection as actually upholding certain hierarchies such as class. I would also argue that *Salve*’s emphasis on the female gaze where women’s unique corporeal spirituality, something which in fact distinguishes them from men, is what ultimately calls for an increase of biblical interpretations by women. In other words, I would not interpret this blurring of observer and observed as a call for a unification across gender and class.

Herrold continues to argue that the collection’s blurring of the subject and object and who is being gazed at erases difference: ‘Instead, this blurring of the boundaries between the subject and object of the gaze actually occludes notions of difference altogether’ (Herrold 2020, 394). Again, I disagree with this, as I argue that the collection actually wants to highlight difference, where women are positively distinguished from men. In fact, as shown in ‘Salve’ through the lines ‘But yet the Weaker thou does seeme to be,’ ‘In Sexe, or Sence, the more his Glory shines’ (Lanyer 1993, 289-91) women are seen as especially equipped to

write about Christ. As Schoenfeldt argues, ‘Women are particularly well-positioned to write of Christ, Lanyer argues, since the weakness and humility their culture demands of them make them apt vessels of his message’ (Schoenfeldt 1997, 213).

When later exploring the blazon of Christ after his resurrection, in the section titled ‘A briefe description of his beautie upon the Canticles’, Herrold continues to suggest that ‘Salve’ does not seek to portray a specifically gendered Christ:

Susanne Woods mentions in her note that line 1314 explicitly references a description of the Bride from the Canticles, suggesting that Lanyer’s Christ is feminized; but I contend that Lanyer means to capture the lack of gender specificity present in the original Canticles. Lanyer’s interest lies not in a specifically gendered Christ but in a gendered way of looking and being looked at. (Herrold 2020, 394)

Though I am convinced by the argument that the poem’s interest lies in ‘gendered way of looking and being looked at’, I disagree with Herrold that Lanyer does not wish to portray a ‘specifically gendered Christ’ as I would argue that this female gendered Christ is what ultimately connects Christ to Mary and ordinary women, which eventually strengthens the poem’s portrayal of a female spirituality and gaze.

In the blazon of Christ after his resurrection, Christ is offered to the readers as a ‘Bridegroom’: ‘This is that Bridegroom that appears so faire, / So sweet, so lovely in his Spouses sight’ (Lanyer 1993, 1305-1306). The ones who witness his beauty are depicted as his ‘Spouses’, and where in the following lines and next stanza his beauty continues to be emphasised and offered to the female readers of ‘Salve’:

Blacke as a Raven in her blackest hew;  
His lips like skarlet threeds, yet much more sweet  
Than is the sweetest hony dropping dew,  
Or hony combes, where all the Bees doe meet;  
Yea, he is constant, and his words are true,  
His cheeks are beds of spices, flowers sweet;  
    His lips, like Lillies, dropping downe pure mirrhe,  
    Whose love, before all worlds we doe preferre.  
(Lanyer 1993, 1313-1320)

This stanza is particularly interesting of the two, as I interpret this as continuing to emphasise the ‘fertile’ nature of Christ’s body. His lips are described as ‘the sweetest hony’ ‘or hony combes’ which attracts all the ‘Bees’, and where additionally his cheeks are described as sweetly flowering, where in the following line a simile effectively describes that his lips are ‘like Lillies’. Christ’s body being described using language which insinuates fertility, where

the blazon of his face includes both the birds and the bees, again alludes to the female reproductive body, again emphasising Mary's importance of giving Christ his human body.

Furthermore, 'Salve' presents this blazon to the female readers which subverts the traditional male writer writing a blazon of a woman's body: 'Lanyer turns the blazon conventions inside out, empowering women [...] as active contemplators rather than passive objects of contemplation' (Miller 1998, 160). Additionally, this use of the blazon and the physical presence of Christ creates a relationship between two subjects rather than a subject and object: 'Unlike the figure of the Petrarchan mistress, Christ is also present to his admirers rather than absent, and thus the poet's expression of loving praise can be predicated on achieved rather than forever deferred union, between two subjects (bride and groom) rather than subject and object' (Miller 1998, 160). The two blazons, one of Christ during the crucifixion and the other after his resurrection, is presented to the Countess of Cumberland who is encouraged to 'view' and gaze at his image:

Which I present (deare Lady) to your view,  
Upon the Crosse depriv'd of life or breath,  
To judge if ever Lover were so true,  
To yield himselfe unto such shamefull death:  
(Lanyer 1993, 1265-1268)

The female readers of 'Salve', the group of female patrons as well as other female readers, are presented with the blazon of Christ and encouraged to gaze upon and interpret or 'judge' 'if ever Lover were so true'.

Julianne Sandberg in her 2017 article 'Book, Body and Bread: Reading Aemilia Lanyer's Eucharist' argues that Lanyer emphasise the textuality of Christ's body rather than his corporeality, and thus incorporate Protestant doctrine through the textual understanding of the Eucharist. I am not entirely convinced by Sandberg's arguments, as I have argued earlier the physical body of Christ is often depicted in 'Salve' where its connection to Mary emphasises a unique female spirituality. However, I do find some of Sandberg's arguments compelling as they explore the importance of female biblical interpretations through a textual Eucharist. According to Sandberg, Lanyer includes a Protestant understanding of the Eucharist as it is portrayed as a metaphor of Christ's body rather than the literal. Eucharist images are spread throughout Lanyer's poem:

In the span of two stanzas, Lanyer provides four distinct descriptions of Christ's body, all of which unequivocally position it as bread to be eaten: "the bread of life Eternal" (1778), "heav'nly Manna" (1783), "wheate of heaven" (1785), and "blessed Angells

bread” (1785). Christ’s “blessed body” (661) and “blessed blood” (1176), which stood at the center of Lanyer’s Passion poem, now turn into bread and wine, the “blessed food” (1781) of this reading feast. (Sandberg 2017, 11)

These descriptions of Christ’s body echo the descriptions of the Protestant Eucharist, as by ‘littering her poem with such rhetoric, Lanyer echoes Protestant prayerbook phrases like “spiritual food,” “blessed body and blood,” “heavenly feast,” and “heavenly table” that characterized the Church of England’s Communion liturgy’ (Sandberg 2017, 11).

One of the most compelling parts of Sandberg’s arguments is how Lanyer uses the metaphors and the language of the Protestant Eucharist in order to situate herself in a more scholarly or priest-like position. Through the Protestant Eucharist Lanyer is permitted to be more intellectually engaged and to interpret the Bible like her male peers, at least in female meditative circles. This is connected to how the Catholic Mass differed from the Protestant Eucharist, where by the late Middle Ages the Mass was seen as more of a spectacle than a communion.<sup>6</sup> The Protestant Eucharist however can be seen as more inclusive when it comes to personal engagement with the ritual among constituents rather than just Church officials:

Contrasting the [Catholic] Mass with the Protestant Eucharist, [in his 2007 monograph *Liturgy and Literature in the Making of Protestant England*] Timothy Rosendale suggests that the Protestant ritual “centered instead on personal engagement and intellectual access to the divine” and “was built on clarity, comprehension, inclusion, and participation”. (Sandberg 2017, 9)

The emphasis on Christ’s body as book, or more specifically text, furthers Lanyer’s project of emphasising female biblical readings and interpretations of Christ, a text that requires meditative reading and attention: ‘If bread and wine are signs of Christ’s body and blood, and not the signified themselves, then these elements become texts that require reading and interpretation’ (Sandberg 2017, 12). Lanyer offers her readers and female patrons her interpretation and reading of Christ’s body, and I would argue Lanyer presents to her readers not only a female interpretation of the passion narrative, but also a female gaze as way of looking at Christianity and Christ, and thus also a way of seeing oneself as a religious woman in early modern England. By presenting her own vision and interpretation, ‘Lanyer authorizes herself as the mediator of the Eucharist, the self-appointed priestess of the ceremony’ (Sandberg 2017, 14).

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<sup>6</sup> See Sarah Beckwith *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (1993), p. 36

I am not entirely convinced by Sandberg's reading where the dominant imagery is the metaphorical Protestant Eucharist, where the spiritual and reflective is divorced from the corporeal. However I do think Sandberg's interpretation of *Salve Deus* as a portrayal of the Protestant Eucharist is helpful in order to portray how Lanyer highlights a female reading gaze and interpretation of the Bible. Yet, in addition to the textuality of Christ and Christ as book argument, I also find a strong emphasis on Christ's corporeality and fleshiness in Lanyer's poem. By making the corporeal as a central feature of her poem, Lanyer continues to emphasise the bond between the Virgin Mary and Christ, and thus also on women's corporeality and its connection to Christianity. In other words, Lanyer makes the argument throughout 'Salve' that it was a woman who gave birth to the Messiah, and thus women's reproductive bodies contain a specific spirituality which is tied to the salvation of mankind.

### Chapter conclusion: to honour the word made through her flesh

In Lanyer's passion narrative 'Salve' the Virgin Mary is arguably one of the most important figures. Through its portrayal of Mary the poem emphasises the unique spiritual and corporeal connection women have with Christ. This is especially interesting considering the rising suspicion of the corporeal in the early modern period, and especially of women's bodies. In this chapter I have demonstrated how Lanyer's 'Salve' portrays the spiritual significance of women's bodies. In 'Salve' women's bodies are portrayed as instrumental to the salvation of mankind through their connection to Mary, an shift as the female body has also been associated with the condemnation of mankind through Eve's transgression.

Drawing on Ellington's (1995) investigation of the presence of Mary within passion narratives, where she compared late medieval sermons to those written in the late sixteenth century after the Council of Trent, I suggest that Lanyer's 'Salve' wishes to put a certain emphasis on Mary's experience during the Passion, ultimately echoing how Mary was portrayed in late medieval sermons. This supports the poem's call to portray the female body in a positive light, as the corporeal was seen as an important element within worship during the medieval period. Mary's presence in the Passion was often highlighted and praised, where she was portrayed as an important figure who had made the Word of God into flesh. Mary's body is depicted as crucial to Christ's connection to humanity, as it is through her flesh that Christ is conceived.

However, as I explored in the section on Mary and the discipline and surveillance of women's bodies, the Virgin Mary's body is not only a site for inspiration and spiritual connection, it also poses some troublesome ideas of the ideal and pure woman. Lanyer's

‘Salve’ not only portrays the spiritual significance of Mary’s body, it also echoes other Catholic traditions such as figuring Mary as born immaculate and perpetual Virgin. As explored by Kristeva (1985) in her article on the Virgin Mary and the effects the Catholic portrayal of Mary has had on western society’s perception of motherhood, Kristeva suggests that Mary’s purity and exceptionality is often the main focus within theology, and that the discussions of her being born immaculate and perpetual virgin whilst also serving as the ideal mother serves as a problematic ideal for ordinary women and mothers who cannot emulate Mary’s pure nature.

However, as Kuchar (2008) suggests when investigating Lanyer’s participation in the *lo spasimo* controversy, ‘Salve’ does portray a human and corporeal Mary who physically reacts and faints whilst witnessing her son’s suffering. Ultimately I would argue that Lanyer’s ‘Salve’ explores the Catholic *stabat mater dolorosa* and *lo spasimo* controversies, traditions which shows how Mary’s female body has been surveilled and disciplined by men. ‘Salve’ seeks to portray a Mary who is ‘blessed [...] among women’, where even though she is portrayed as immaculate she is still connected to ordinary women through the experience of motherhood and child labour.

This connection between Mary and the ordinary woman was diminished after the Reformation in England where women’s bodies were increasingly read through the perception of their inherently sinful souls. The female body during child labour used to be celebrated through prayers made to Mary, where women were encouraged to identify with Mary and her corporeal connection to the salvation of mankind through Jesus. This changed after the Reformation, where women were now encouraged to identify with Eve and reflect upon their inherently sinful bodies and nature as connected to Eve’s transgression, and how this transgression resulted in all women being punished to painful conception and child labour. ‘Salve’, however, seeks to bring back the importance of the female body and its relationship to Christ through Mary. As Herrold (2020) suggests, ‘Salve’ seeks to remind its readers that the fleshy incarnate God is the central tenet of Christianity (Herrold 2020, 389), a corporeal fleshy God which was made possible through Mary. Brownlee (2015) highlights the portrayal of a feminised Christ in ‘Salve’ where Christ’s physical body on the cross and his expression of pain even mirrors that of a woman in labour. Furthermore, I suggest that ‘Salve’ seeks to highlight the feminised Christ through the portrayal of his fertile body, as seen depicted in the blazon of Christ after his resurrection.

The two blazons of Christ in ‘Salve’, one during the crucifixion and the other after his resurrection, encourages the readers to gaze upon and interpret his body. The political

implication of the blazon where there is a subject object divide, as the female body is often objectified by the male gaze in the traditional blazon, is inverted in 'Salve' as the female readers become subjects who gaze at the body of Christ. Furthermore, the body of Christ is not only presented as an important corporeal image which portrays the unique spiritual connection between him and the female body, it is additionally presented as a text which the readers are encouraged to read and interpret.

I would argue that 'Salve' seeks to emphasise a dual portrayal of Christ, where both his corporeal humanity as well as his textual importance as Word made flesh affirms the importance of the female body and its unique spiritual significance within Christianity. This female corporeal spirituality supports a religious community of women who actively participate in biblical interpretations where they apply their unique female gaze and follow their own intellectual desires. In the next chapter I will explore how the poem's emphasis on women's corporeal spirituality encourages its readers to understand their unique female gaze and how their gaze can perform important gynocentric biblical interpretations.



## Chapter 3: Lanyer's female hermeneutics: Paratext and Patronage, and the worship of Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland

Throughout *Salve*, the importance of a female religious community is emphasised, where a distinct female hermeneutics independent from the male gaze is portrayed as the ultimate religious clarity.<sup>7</sup> Lanyer does this by presenting 'women as the only ones to recognize Christ's innocence, remain constant in their devotion, and be moved by compassion' (Guibbory 1998, 198). This chapter will mostly focus on the great importance *Salve* puts on female desire for knowledge and sight. In order to fully comprehend how and why the collection focuses on a positive presentation of female sight I will first briefly outline how this sight was portrayed as threatening in early modern England. I will then explore how Lanyer successfully encourages her female readers to trust their own intellectual desires, more specifically within biblical interpretation, encouraging them to apply the knowledge found within these texts to their own experiences as women. I will do this by first briefly looking at how Eve is portrayed in 'Salve' as the first human who acquired knowledge. This depiction ultimately portrays the hypocrisy of men using knowledge as a weapon against women as it was Eve who first introduced this knowledge to the human race. In the next subsection I will explore how Lanyer praises the Countess of Cumberland, where Lanyer grants the countess priestly gifts and through the portrayal of her fertile faith further connects her to Mary. Through this praise of the countess, I would argue that 'Salve' emphasises the positive influence of female faith and worship in the private sphere. Lastly, I will demonstrate how Lanyer self-fashions an image of herself as a female religious visionary, where both her rhetoric as well as the paratext of *Salve* effectively enhances Lanyer's ethos and thus the collection's message of promoting female biblical interpretations and sight.

### Female sight in early modern England

The rising hostility towards female sight and desire in early modern England can be seen in *The English Gentlewoman* by Richard Brathwaite, a book on social conduct addressed to

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<sup>7</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, by 'hermeneutics' I mean 'The interpretation of scriptural text' (*OED* 'hermeneutics', 1), where in 'Salve' women are encouraged to apply their female gaze and approach their interpretation of scriptural texts with a methodology independent from men.

women. Published in 1631, twenty years after the publication of *Salve*, Braithwaite connects unguided female sight with Eve's transgression. He argues that uncontrolled female sight can have catastrophic consequences:

Eyes are those Windowes by which death enters: your inward house cannot shine, unless these be shut [...] Eve looked on the fruit before shee coveted, coveting shee tasted, tasting she perished. Thus aspiring to the knowledge of good and evill, became to her and her posterity evill. (Braithwaite 1631 in Snook 2005, 124)

Braithwaite depicts women's eyes as windows, where unless they are 'shut' and controlled can potentially incite death. He alludes to Eve's visual desire of the fruit, a visual desire which then led to a desire of knowledge, and consequently to the introduction of evil to all mankind. As Edith Snook points out, Braithwaite ultimately states that 'women's eyes are the root of evil' (Snook 2005, 124). This root of evil and its desire for knowledge is then a potential threat to the social order, and therefore female eyes needs to be disciplined and surveilled by men. Braithwaite's argument also implies that men are more controlled beings, because Adam was not the first to consume the forbidden fruit men are less likely to transgress.

Braithwaite's text on women's eyes implies that women's unguided quest for knowledge can be a threat to society as a whole: 'Because female eyes can incite a wish for knowledge, they are a threat, not only to the woman, but also to men, and so [...] female eyes, reading, and knowledge must be constrained and limited within the social order, for the sake of the chastity and the security of patriarchal history' (Snook 2005, 124-125). Lanyer, however, encourages her readers and the countess to look at the Passion, and to look at the body of Christ — even encouraging them to investigate how the crucifixion occurred due to the failed sight of male biblical figures such as King Herod, Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, and at times even Christ's disciples.

It is also important to note that the larger motif of vision and blindness found throughout Lanyer's poem does not exclusively occur in her passion narrative, as this is a common theme found throughout the passion narrative tradition (Longfellow 2004, 75). Lanyer's concept of true vision draws on the concepts of "the ability of Christ's gaze to recall and to heal" as well as "the Calvinist duty of 'watchfulness', the idea that the believer must be continually conscious of his own tendency to sin' (Longfellow 2004, 75). However, Lanyer's poem does not only draw on these passion narrative traditions, it also participates in traditions found within patronage poetry as a large part of the poem is dedicated to and

celebrates the Countess of Cumberland. Lanyer connects these two traditions in her collection, as *Salve* includes ‘a model of devotional vision that includes the possibility of self-understanding as well as of understanding the divine [...]’, a devotional vision which implies that ‘to know Christ, her patrons must also look to their own virtues, and emulate his generous love’ (Longfellow 2004, 75).

This vision makes *Salve*’s female readers consider the potential influence of the surveilling male gaze, as ‘Lanyer uses this dual model of vision in order to reconsider the implications for women of seeing and being seen by men’ (Longfellow 2004, 75). The exploration of seeing and being seen is apparent in Lanyer’s blazon of Christ’s body in ‘*Salve*’, where ‘Christ’s beauty is associated with the women who behold him [which ultimately blurs] the boundary between subject and object, poet and muse, observer and observed’ (Herrold 2020, 393). I would argue that the inclusion of this dual vision implies that ‘*Salve*’ seeks to question what Foucault calls as the ‘observing hierarchy’, a hierarchy which creates the dynamic of the surveiller and surveilled that uphold the process of the examination which leads to the objectification of individuals. Ultimately, I would argue that Lanyer’s collection seeks to work against the process of objectification. An important aspect of depicting this dual devotional vision is through the portrayal of the main patroness, the Countess of Cumberland, who is asked to look at Lanyer’s image of Christ and additionally to see herself reflected in his image. The countess is here asked to read her own image through Christ, and is thus encouraged to create an image of herself independent from the male gaze. The presentation of this dual devotional vision encourages women to act independently from the surveilling male gaze, and to instead trust their own desires and instincts.

This encouragement is radical, as during Lanyer’s period women were dissuaded from freely pursuing knowledge, where women’s curious nature was even described as potentially threatening. In the New Testament, Paul briefly explores the topic of women’s access to knowledge where he suggests that this needs to be controlled, using Eve’s transgression as evidence:

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. I permit not a woman to teache, neither to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived & was in the transgression. (1 Tim. 2:11-14)

In order for Christian women to conduct their own pursuit of knowledge they first have to invalidate Paul's assessment of Eve: 'If women were to find a place for themselves as speakers and writers, they must first call into question Paul's interpretation of Genesis; they must first overturn his assessment of Eve' (Richey 1997, 106). Lanyer does this in 'Salve', where she convincingly demonstrates the hypocrisy of condemning all women for Eve's actions, comparing Eve's mistake to the multiple failures of the biblical men who sentenced Christ to death. By including a section on Eve in 'Salve', Lanyer continues to emphasise the importance of female sight. When including a section on Eve's transgression Lanyer effectually alludes to chapter three in Genesis, an allusion which reminds the readers that it was Eve's sight and desire for knowledge which first opened the human eye: 'So the woman (seeing that the tree was good for meat, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired, to get knowledge) took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat. Then the eyes of them both were opened' (Gen. 3:6-7).

In order to emphasise the importance of female sight in Christianity, the poem must present a counterargument to Paul's assessment of Eve's transgression. 'Salve' does this through the inclusion of 'Eves Apologie', something which I will explore further in the next section.

## Then the eyes of them both were opened: Lanyer's vision of Eve and the origin of female knowledge

In this section I will explore how in 'Eves Apologie' Lanyer successfully demonstrates that women are entitled to acquire knowledge independently from male control, and how a positive desire for knowledge fundamentally originates with the female sex. I will do this by first taking a look at how Lanyer compares Eve's failure to those of the biblical men who punished Christ. In her argument, Lanyer effectively uses the sexist claim that women are the weaker sex to her advantage – stipulating that because men are supposed to be superior to women this also implies that the actions of the men who failed Christ are worse than Eve's. I will then briefly look at why Lanyer places Eve's apology in the middle of her passion narrative, and how the ambiguous nature of the speaker of Eve's apology helps to further the collection's call for a female hermeneutics with a special focus on biblical women.

Throughout 'Salve', Lanyer not only offers her own sight and reading of the passion narrative, but also depicts the failed male sight which occurred before the crucifixion, where many biblical men failed to read Christ's body and understand his spiritual significance:

‘Lanyer depicts the crucifixion as the product of failed sight, a tragedy that could have been prevented if the entire cast of masculine characters had read Jesus’s body differently’ (Sandberg 2017, 17). This failed male sight is further explored in ‘Eves Apologie’, where the poem compares Eve’s error of eating the forbidden fruit with that of the biblical men who sentenced Christ. In this section, Lanyer ‘extends this critique of masculine reading by contrasting the limits of Eve’s sight with that of Adam and his male successors’ (Sandberg 2017, 17). More specifically Lanyer ‘credits the Fall of Man, in part, to absent sight, for Eve “had no power to see” (765) the serpent’s deception and the ensuing consequences of her choice’ (Sandberg 2017, 17). The first five lines of this section argue that lack of sight was the actual cause of the original sin, as Eve had ‘no power to see’ (766). In this stanza Pontius Pilate is confronted by his wife, who warns him that what he is about to do is morally reprehensible:

Til now your indiscretion sets us free,  
And make our former fault much lesse appear;  
Our Mother *Eve*, who tasted of the Tree,  
Giving *Adam* what shee held most deare,  
Was simply good, and had no power to see,  
The after-comming harme did not appeare:  
(Lanyer 1993, 761-767)

If Pontius Pilate sentences Jesus then his ‘indiscretion sets [women] free’, as Pilate’s powerful yet wilfully failed sight now makes women’s ‘former fault much lesse appear’. The poem continues, stating that Eve was ‘simply good’ and ‘had no power to see’ or understand the consequences of her actions. Furthermore, this stanza suggests Eve did not want to deceive Adam, but rather that she simply gave him ‘what shee held most deare’. In these lines, Lanyer poses Eve’s gullibility in a positive light where her curious nature not only caused the fall of man, but also led humans to the access of knowledge. As Shannon Miller states, ‘The defense offered is that Eve lacks the capacity to evaluate the consequences of the Fall, implicitly arguing that Eve is too “simple” to resist falling’ (Miller 2008, 63). Achsah Guibbory rightly argues that this depiction of Eve’s credulity further portrays women as inherently more receptive to a belief in and trust of God:

For Eve’s credulity is presented as an innate tendency to believe and trust, that is, a disposition to faith — and thus her simple credulity links her to the receptive, humble faith that the Virgin Mary shows in receiving the visitation from God [...] and to the faith of all the women who believe in Christ and instinctively acknowledge his innocence and divinity. (Guibbory 1998, 200)

Later on the poem skilfully turns the misogynistic ideas and readings of Eve as responsible for the fall of man on its head. ‘Salve’ seeks to highlight that knowledge first found root in Eve as she was the first to discover knowledge when she desired and ate the fruit before Adam. By including a section on Eve, Lanyer demonstrates the hypocrisy of the men who suppress women’s access to knowledge and education, as the knowledge these men praise also stems from the woman they condemn and blame: ‘Yet Men will boast of Knowledge, which he tooke / From *Eves* faire hand, as from a learned Booke’ (Lanyer 1993, 807-808). Lanyer then continues to interpret Eve’s original sin, stating that if Eve was the main perpetrator then implicitly Adam is also to blame as Eve was created from Adam’s rib: ‘If any Evill did in her Remaine, / Beeing made of him, he was the ground of all’ (Lanyer 1993, 809-810). Michael Schoenfeldt points out that in these lines Lanyer creates puns by interacting with their names: ‘the etymology of *Adam* from the word for *earth* and the frequently exploited assonance of *Eve* and *evil* in misogynists discourse’ (Schoenfeldt 1997, 218). Lanyer productively alludes to previous misogynist discourse, and successfully portrays the hypocrisy of condemning the female sex for the original sin when men and women have from their creation been connected as one.

A couple of stanzas later, Lanyer ends her section on Eve by asking for the liberty of all women, and for men to consider how the faults of biblical men compares to Eve’s mistake:

Then let us have our Libertie againe,  
 And challenge to your selves no Sov’raintie;  
 You came not in the world without our paine,  
 Make that a barre against your cruelty;  
 Your fault beeing greater, why should you disdain  
 Our being your equals, free from tyranny?  
     If one weake woman simply did offend,  
     This sinne of yours, hath no excuse, nor end  
 (Lanyer 1993, 825-832)

In this stanza Lanyer uses images from Genesis 3:16, a verse which was often appropriated by misogynists during Lanyer’s period: ‘Unto the woman he said, I will greatly increase thy sorrows, and thy conceptions. In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thy desire shall be subject to thine husband, and he shall rule over thee’ (Gen. 13:6). In order to emphasise the cruelty of the men who blame and condemn women Lanyer alludes to the Genesis chapter where Eve’s body is punished by God, reminding these men that they caused women pain when they were first brought into this world: ‘You came not in the world without paine’

(Lanyer 1993, 827). The stanza continues to emphasise men's cruelty, where it explicitly states that their 'fault' is 'greater' (829) than women's, and even radically asks 'why should you disdain' (829) women 'being your equals, free from tyranny?' (830). Men are in these lines depicted as 'Evill' dictators who blindly ignore their own mistakes and instead surveils their subjects. The last couplet continues to appropriate the image of women as the weaker sex, further suggesting that men's cruelty during the Passion surpasses Eve's mistake: 'If one weake woman simply did offend, / This sinne of yours, hath no excuse'.

The placement of 'Eves Apologie' within 'Salve', as well as the question of who is speaking in this section is also significant as I would argue these elements advance Lanyer's call for a female hermeneutics. As Longfellow states, even though a defence of Eve is not necessarily original, 'the placement of the apology in the midst of Christ's Passion, in the voice of Pilate's wife, is one of the unique elements of the poem, drawing together women's great sin with the sin for which men seem more clearly responsible' (Longfellow 2004, 89). The fact that Lanyer chose to include Pilate's wife is significant, as she is only briefly mentioned in Matthew 27:19: 'when he was set down upon the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream by reason of him' (Matt. 27:19). Guibbory suggests that Pilate's wife presenting Eve's apology is Lanyer's 'most original and startling addition to the narrative of the Crucifixion' (Guibbory 1998, 198), while Richey states that Lanyer includes her in order to enter the gaps 'in New Testament narrative to recover the voices which have been suppressed' (Richey 1997, 120). In other words, Lanyer includes the voice of a female figure in her passion narrative in order to emphasise women's presence during the Passion, and how this presence should ultimately encourage more gynocentric biblical interpretations.

Critics such as Richey and Longfellow suggest that Pilate's wife is the voice of 'Eves Apologie', but I would argue that within this section one starts to question who exactly is speaking as the voice of Pilate's wife becomes blurred with the voice of the default narrator of the poem. It is clear that the section starts with Pilate's wife: 'But heare the words of thy most worthy wife / Who sends to thee, to beg her Saviours life' (Lanyer 1993, 84). However, eventually the word 'our' seems to suggest that the poem might also echo Lanyer's own voice, where the narrator of her poem becomes merged with Pilate's wife. Guibbory briefly explores how this confusion of voice is beneficial to 'Salve' and Lanyer's project of female hermeneutics, where ultimately it presents the image of a female visionary: 'The confusion of voice is significant, for the poet's identification with Pilate's wife — a woman who also had a dream, whose knowledge came from divine illumination — allows her to speak with and

for her' (Guibbory 1998, 199). This blurred voice helps to establish the idea of a female religious visionary, an image which Lanyer later applies to herself, which helps to authorize the claims made about female sight and corporality within 'Salve'.

The fact that 'Eves Apologie' is placed within the passion narrative section of 'Salve' helps to further support Lanyer's claim that women have the right to pursue their own intellectual desires. Lanyer portrays Eve as the first human to acquire knowledge, an ability which she held dear and selflessly shared with Adam. Lanyer continues by appropriating sexist claims of women being the weaker sex and presents a compelling argument where men are more responsible for their own mishaps than women. Thus, the poem argues that the men responsible for the persecution of Christ are more at fault than Eve. Whereas Eve was unaware of what she was doing, as she 'had no power to see' (766), these men chose to be blind and ignored the pleas made to spare Christ. Lanyer's inclusion of 'Eves Apologie' helps to legitimise her call for a greater amount of female biblical interpretation and celebration of female sight, something which I will continue to explore in the next two sections of this chapter.

## The Countess as holder of St Peter's keys: the importance of female worship

Lanyer's portrayal of Margaret Clifford the Countess of Cumberland — the patron to whom the entirety of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* is dedicated — ultimately confirms that the collection celebrates a female centred Christian spirituality where the female body is praised rather than condemned. The poem Lanyer offers to the countess is presented in a way which grants the countess the ability to engage in a specific form of biblical hermeneutics and sight which was traditionally only offered to men. This sight, as I also addressed in chapter two, comes in part with presenting an erotic image of Christ, where Lanyer draws on a medieval tradition of worship where the body is seen as an important element in devotion. Lanyer encourages her readers and the countess to use their unique female sight to read biblical stories, where throughout her book she invites them to read the body of Christ as well as view biblical men and women how they acted during the Passion. By presenting the countess and her female readers with these images, and thus encouraging them to perform their own female driven hermeneutics, Lanyer radically resists English society's rising scepticism towards women's intellectual desires and their ability to acquire knowledge. In this section I will explore how Lanyer praises the Countess of Cumberland, and how this praise not only



elevates the image of the countess but also emphasises the importance of female worship and sight within Christianity.

In 'Salve' Lanyer guides Margaret Clifford the Countess of Cumberland through the passion narrative, where Lanyer praises and encourages her to recognise her own virtues whilst reading the Passion. The Passion of Christ is in Lanyer's poem presented to the countess as scriptural with an alternative focus, one which focuses on the importance of biblical women and how religious women can benefit from the image of Christ during his crucifixion and resurrection. The image of Christ is presented specifically to the countess in lines 1305-1320 as a blazon of Christ's beauty after his resurrection. In this blazon one can see that Lanyer becomes self-conscious about her own abilities as a religious poet when she attempts to express his beauty. This doubt continues after the physical description of Christ, where in the following stanza Lanyer describes a certain anxiety about her own ability to accurately portray his divine beauty to the countess:

Ah! give me leave (good Lady) now to leave  
This task of Beauty which I tooke in hand,  
I cannot wade so deepe, I may deceave  
My selfe, before I can attaine the land;  
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.  
(Lanyer 1993, 1321-1328)

In this stanza Lanyer continues to emphasise the Countess of Cumberland as her superior. The lines 'I cannot wade so deepe, I may deceave / My selfe, before I can attaine the land' assert that Lanyer would not be able to adequately portray Christ's beauty, and the idea that she is successful in her portrayal would demonstrate a lack of self-awareness. The following lines emphasise how these imperfect images of Christ's beauty are offered to the countess to gaze at, where they will now be 'engraved' in the countess' heart which Lanyer depicts as a 'holy shrine'. In this shrine Lanyer's imperfect image of Christ will be elevated through the virtue of the countess, as his image will now be surrounded by her 'divine' 'love' and 'thoughts'. The printed marginalia next to this stanza suggests the start of the section 'To my Ladie of Cumberland', which shows that Lanyer wishes to specifically address the countess in this stanza. I would argue that this stanza is also a clear turn, or volta, in the poem. The poem now moves away from the Passion of Christ to focus on how the Countess of

Cumberland may gaze upon Lanyer's text, allowing the countess to reflect on the importance of female spirituality in private.

By presenting the image of Christ in her book, and additionally encouraging the countess to internalise and store this image, Lanyer celebrates and honours worship in the private sphere — a sphere where women were especially encouraged to practice their piety. The image of Christ continues to be an important element which Lanyer presents to the countess, as in the following stanza Lanyer further explores the image of the countess worshipping Christ in the 'holy shrine' that is her heart:

There may you see him as a God in glory,  
And as a man in miserable case;  
There may you reade his true and perfect storie,  
His bleeding body there you may embrace,  
And kisse his dying cheekes with teares of sorrow,  
With joyfull grieffe, you may intreat for grace;  
    And all your prayers, and your almes-deeds  
    May bring to stop his cruell wounds that bleeds.  
(Lanyer 1993, 1329-1336)

This stanza shows the importance of private prayer and devotion, which consequently celebrates worship in the private sphere. Through reading Lanyer's book and later through private prayer, the countess may now 'see' Christ as 'a God in glory'. Through her private prayers the countess does not only 'reade his true and perfect storie', but she is also able to embrace 'His bleeding body' and 'kisse his dying cheekes'. Through private devotion where the countess can access these images and embrace Christ, Lanyer further suggests that this form of private devotion have potential healing properties: 'And all your prayers [...] / May bring to stop his cruell wounds that bleeds'.

The importance of female worship within the private sphere continues to be a prevalent theme in the section dedicated to the countess. In 'Salve' worship is often connected to the desire for knowledge, where the image and life of Christ is even described as a book which the countess desires to use as a reference for her own life: 'Thy Soule conceaves that he is truly wise: / Nay more, desires that he may be the Booke, / Whereon thine eyes continually may looke' (Lanyer 1993, 1350-1352). Lanyer describes how the countess seeks to follow Christ and how he lived his life, stating that her soul 'conceaves' that Christ is truly wise. The verb 'conceives' being used here could refer to both a physical and metaphysical state of creation — as 'conceives' can both relate to an intellectual state of creation as well as the physical state of creating an offspring. According to the *OED*, the verb

‘conceives’ can be defined as ‘To comprehend with the mind or (in early use) the heart; to understand, apprehend, realize’ (*OED* ‘conceives’, I.2.d.) as well as ‘To be created or formed in the womb; to come into existence as an embryo; to be engendered’ and ‘To engender, beget, or produce (esp. an abstract quality)’ (*OED* ‘conceives’, II.8.a. and II.8.b.). It is significant that the verb ‘conceives’ is used to describe how the countess fundamentally understands the importance of Christ, as this dual meaning of the verb ultimately connects her intellectual understanding of Christ’s wisdom to her female body.

In addition, the use of the word ‘conceives’ in the corporeal sense further connects the countess to the Virgin Mary. The poem has earlier drawn a certain connection between the countess and Mary where both have been described as the spouse of Christ. After the blazon of Christ on the cross, a section titled by the printed marginalia as ‘To my Ladie of Cumberland’ urges the ‘Deere Spouse of Christ’ (Lanyer 1993, 1170) to ‘behold’ the Passion with her ‘eie of Faith’ (1169). In ‘The sorrows of the virgin Marie’ Lanyer previously described Mary as the spouse of Christ in the line ‘Her Sonne, her Husband, Father, Saviour, King’ (Lanyer 1993, 1023). However, the fact that after the crucifixion the line ‘Deere Spouse of Christ’ (1170) comes with the printed marginalia ‘To my Ladie of Cumberland’ suggests that Lanyer addresses both the countess as well as the virgin Mary. I would argue that the use of the word ‘conceives’ further establishes the connection between Mary and the countess. Considering how the verb ‘conceives’ can also signify ‘to comprehend’, I would suggest that the line ‘Thy Soule conceaves that he is truly wise’ (1350) further highlights the connection between the female soul and the understanding, or conception, of Christ’s wisdom. The use of the word ‘soul’ coupled with ‘conceaves’ is also significant, as these three lines here portrays the female soul—which traditionally was portrayed as more inherently sinful than the male—as the more perceptive and compassionate soul.

Through the portrayal of the Countess of Cumberland, the poem emphasises how both the female soul and body can help enrich ones understanding of Christian scripture. The gaze and perception of the countess continues to be described as an important asset to the Christian faith, where ultimately this portrayal further highlights the importance of women participating in the interpretation of Christian texts. Furthermore, I would argue it suggests that the female gaze is essential in order to sufficiently worship Christ. Female forms of worship through private prayer continues to be elevated in the section dedicated to the countess, as her private faith and prayers is even said to open the gates of heaven: ‘Thy faith, thy prayers, and his speciall grace / Doth open Heav’n, where thou behold’st his face’ (Lanyer 1993, 1367-1368). It is the combination of ‘thy faith, thy prayers’ and ‘his special

grace' which opens the gates of heaven, which suggests that these elements in isolation would not be as effective. Moreover, it is through the gates of heaven that the countess is finally able to gaze at or 'behold[...] his face'.

The poem makes a clear distinction between Christ and the countess and of course does not suggest that they are equals, yet it is still implied that the gates of heaven would not be opened without the faith and prayers of the countess. After these lines, the poem continues to describe the importance of Christ's grace coupled with the countess's private prayer, where eventually the countess is even presented with Saint Peter's keys, an important symbol which Christ gave to Saint Peter when he was appointed as head of the twelve apostles and leader of the early church:

These are those Keyes Saint *Peter* did possesse,  
Which with a Spirituall powre are giv'n to thee,  
To heale the soules of those that doe transgresse,  
By thy faire virtues; which, if once they see,  
Unto the like they doe their minds adresse,  
Such as thou art, such they desire to be:  
    If they be blind, thou giv'st to them their sight;  
    If deafe or lame, they heare, and goe upright  
(Lanyer 1993, 1369-1376)

Through her private faith the countess is not only granted the power to open the gates of heaven, but additionally she is described as a healer who can save the souls of sinners and non-believers as she gives them 'sight', make them 'heare' and ultimately 'goe upright'. The countess is in this stanza described as a type of missionary, where in the last two lines the countess seems to even mirror the healing qualities of Christ. The last couplet of this stanza claims that the private prayers of the countess have healing powers — this couplet grants the countess some of the same characteristics as Christ, where she now becomes a kind of female Messiah. Throughout *Salve* the virtues of the countess continues to be praised — where the section titled 'An Incentive against outward beuty unaccompanied with virtue' perhaps contains the most noticeable praise of her virtue. In this stanza however, one can see that these 'transgressors', or sinners, use the virtues of the countess as a reference for their own lives — just as the countess is previously described as doing by using Christ's life as a book 'Whereon [her] eyes continually may looke' (Lanyer 1993, 1352).

The countess is urged to look at the image of Christ described in the poem and to enhance the written physical image with the metaphysical image she imagines in the 'holy shrine' of her heart. Crucially, Snook states that this combined vision eventually leads to a

blurring of the countess and Christ: ‘the poem’s meditation between Christ and the female reader dissipates so that the countess reads and sees Christ directly in herself’ (Snook 2005, 128). The section dedicated to the countess continues to emphasise how her faith has healing properties: ‘Thy faith appli’d unto their soules so pain’d, / Healeth all griefes, and makes them grow so strong, / As no defects can hang upon them long’ (Lanyer 1993: 1382-1384). Even though these lines continue to echo how both Christ and the countess have healing abilities, there is still a clear distinction made about Christ’s healing powers and that of the countess. Christ has the physical ability to heal people’s bodies, whereas for the countess it is her faith that heals souls. The faith of the countess can be ‘appli’d’ as an ointment or salve and act as a comfort which heal the griefs of pained souls. In other words, as Longfellow point out, ‘The hurt and sinful who look upon Margaret Clifford [the Countess of Cumberland] are not only forgiven but healed by the sight of her virtue and generosity’ (Longfellow 2004, 80). Longfellow continues by stating that this portrayal of the countess is ‘an extraordinary rewriting of the nature of Church Authority’, as ‘[...] Margaret Clifford receives the power of Christ to heal and regenerate’ (Longfellow 2004: 80-81). Rather than being granted Christ’s abilities to forgive and punish, the poem seeks to highlight how the countess have been gifted the ability to heal souls. The poem indicates that there is a distinct difference between female and male spirituality, as: ‘Not only can Christ’s authority be conferred upon a woman, but it becomes nurturing rather than dictatorial’ (Longfellow 2004, 81).

‘Salve’ continues to emphasise the exceptionality of the Countess of Cumberland and her ability to lead others to Christ — an image which radically portrays her as a priestly figure. The countess is portrayed as a shepherdess, one who leads ‘Those weake lost sheepe that did so long transgresse, / Presenting them unto thy dearest lover;’ (Lanyer 1993, 1397-1398). After being described as a shepherdess, the poem then moves on to show how these ‘lost sheepe’ which she has guided will in return show Christ the extraordinary image of the countess: ‘That when he brings them backe unto his fold, / In their conversion then he may / Thy beauty shining brighter than the Sunne behold’ (1399-1401). The following lines continues to describe this image of the countess presented to Christ, where her beauty and virtue is emphasised:

Thine honour more than ever Monarke gaind,  
 Thy wealth exceeding his that Kingdomes wonne,  
 Thy Love unto his Spouse, thy Faith unfaind,  
 Thy Constancy in what thou hast begun,

Till thou his heavenly Kingdom have obtained;  
Respecting worldly wealth to be but drosse,  
Which, if abuz'd, doth prove the owners losse.  
(Lanyer 1993, 1401-1408)

This praise of the countess not only emphasise her shining beauty which is brighter than the sun, her virtue and unwavering religious devotion, but also states that she recognises that worldly wealth is impure and worthless compared to 'his heavenly Kingdom'. These lines could also serve as a mode of comfort, as the countess is fighting a legal battle with her deceased husband's family over his inheritance. The countess may look upon these lines and be reminded of her own religious wealth and how ultimately 'worldly wealth' can be abused whilst worship and religion lead to access to the heavenly kingdom. It is through her role as a priestly figure, where she leads the lost sheep and applies her faith to grieved souls, that she is granted access to the ultimate form of wealth.

Even though the poem continues to emphasise the virtue of the countess and her beauty, it still seeks to make the difference between the countess and Christ clear. Later in the poem a direct comparison is made between the countess and Christ, where it effectively alludes to the praiseworthiness of the countess in order to further elevate and praise Christ: 'If this faire Earthly starre did shine so bright, / What doth that glorious Sonne that is above? / Who weares th'imperiall crowne of heaven and earth, / And made all Christians blessed in his berth' (Lanyer 1993, 1614-1616). The use of the word 'Sonne' can both signify the words son and sun, but additionally I would argue that it also implies the presence of Christ's mother Mary. Her presence is affirmed in the following line, where the poem reminds the readers that all Christians were blessed 'in his berth', ultimately drawing attention to the spiritual importance of Mary and labour. Though a clear distinction is made between the countess and Christ throughout the poem, where '[Lanyer] appropriates clerical language and suggests that [the countess] wield certain priestly powers' (White 2003, 323) yet Christ is still figured as shining brighter, the poem still continues to extensively allude to the potential power of female spirituality within Christianity. The poem stresses how women are a vital presence in Christianity, where through their virtue and interpreting gaze they can enhance the religion.

Lanyer is aware that portraying the countess as a priestly figure could come across as exaggerated flattery. In order to convince the countess that her portrayal is genuine Lanyer figures herself as a prophet who has been appointed to show the world the admirable qualities of the countess. Lanyer addresses the countess directly — she tries to legitimise her own

project and convince the countess that she is not simply following flattery conventions, but rather that she has been appointed by a higher power to perform this work. The poem does so convincingly by portraying Lanyer as a healer, one who grants the reader the ability to see the exceptional virtue of the countess:

And that you thinke these prayes overmuch,  
Which doe expresse the beautie of your mind;  
Yet pardon me although I give a touch  
Unto their eyes, that else would be so blind,  
    As not to see thy store, and their owne wants,  
    From whose faire seeds of Virtue spring these plants.  
(Lanyer 1993, 1451-1456)

These lines continue to emphasise the importance of sight, and highlight how the virtue of the countess should be watched and emulated by others. Language of sight is found throughout this stanza, where Lanyer is described as giving a healing touch ‘unto their eyes’ as they are ‘blind’ ‘as not to see’ the countess’ potential. The ‘their’ in line 1455 could in addition to the reader signify the male relatives of the countess, who started a legal battle against her in order to withhold her access to her husband’s inheritance. Furthermore, if the implied gender of ‘their’ is male, the poem then presents a powerful gender dichotomy. This dichotomy suggests that the countess has an abundance of unrecognised achievements and potential, whilst the males who underestimate her display several flaws including the lack of sight. Significantly, not only are these men unable to see the potential of the countess, they also lack the ability to see their own ‘wants’ or faults. This argument where males who surround the countess lack the ability to comprehend, further supports the poem’s main message about the importance of female sight.

In addition to the uncertainty surrounding who the ‘their’ in this stanza is referring to, the image in the last line about seeds and plants is also quite ambiguous. Even though it is apparent that ‘the faire seeds of Virtue’ refers to the countess, it is unclear what exactly ‘these plants’ refers to. It could refer to the lines of poetry which Lanyer has composed in ‘Salve’, where her writing is figured as plants which sprung from the virtuous seeds of the countess. More radically, ‘these plants’ could also refer to the spiritual influence of the countess, where the virtue of the countess inspires others to flourish. Again, the poem continues to emphasise the fertile potential of female spirituality. This image of a seed springing into a plant could also allude to the image of the Virgin Mary carrying and nurturing Christ before he is plucked away for the salvation of mankind, an image which Lanyer previously mentioned in her *Passion*: ‘Knowing he was the Jessie floure and bud, / That must be gath’red when it smell’d

most sweet:' (Lanyer 1993, 1021-1022). Even in the praise of the Countess of Cumberland, the poem continues to emphasise the important connection between female corporeality and spirituality.

In order to further enhance the legitimacy of her praise, Lanyer portrays herself as someone who has been appointed by 'th'Eternall powers' (Lanyer 1993, 1458) with the task to praise the countess. Lanyer claims that she was appointed this task when she first came into this world, and that it is her duty to convey the heavenly and regal beauty of the countess:

And knowe, when first into this world I came,  
This charge was giv'n me by th'Eternall powers,  
Th'everlasting Trophie of thy fame,  
To build and decke it with the sweetest flowres  
That virtue yeelds; Then Madame, do not blame  
Me, when I shew the World but what is yours,  
    And decke you with that crowne which is your due,  
    That of Heav'ns beauty Earth may take view.  
(Lanyer 1993, 1457-1464)

This stanza continues to draw on the image of the plants and fertility. The words 'sweetest flowres' is rhymed with 'th'Eternall powers', something which further highlights the fertile religious virtue of the countess. The latter part of this stanza reiterates the idea that the countess has the right to be crowned by the kingdom of heaven, where Lanyer states that she simply wants to 'decke' her with 'that crowne which is [her] due' so that earth can finally see and understand that she is 'Heav'ns beauty'.

In this section I have explored how the poem portrays the countess as exhibiting priestly abilities, where her exemplary virtue has the potential to persuade others to lead a more virtuous life, and how this portrayal further emphasises the importance of female spirituality and sight in Christianity. In the next sections of this chapter I will explore further how Lanyer frames herself as a female religious visionary throughout the poem, and how this is strengthened further through the use of paratext such as printed marginalia and the epilogue 'To the doubtfull Reader'.

## Lanyer's self-fashioning as female religious visionary

Throughout the collection, Lanyer effectively uses several paratextual and rhetorical devices in order to frame herself as an equipped poet and as a religious visionary. Lanyer successfully frames herself as a female religious visionary in order to further reiterate the importance of



sight and female hermeneutics. In this section, I will focus on the ways in which Lanyer places herself within *Salve*, how she addresses her role as poet and how this affects how she addresses her audience. I will do this by analysing how rhetorical devices are used in *Salve* as strategies to further frame Lanyer's role as a female religious visionary. This framing is crucial as it ultimately serves the larger project towards a female gaze where female hermeneutics is viewed as a way to escape male examination and objectification.

I will first continue to explore how Lanyer addresses her female readers within the poem, as it ultimately reveals that she wants to be portrayed as a religious visionary. Through the appropriation of priestly language Lanyer explicitly connects the body of Christ with her poem, where she ultimately becomes a priest-like figure who offers the Eucharist to her readers. In addition, Lanyer also portrays herself as a prophet who has been tasked to portray the holiness of the countess to an audience of readers.

The way Lanyer chooses to actively include her readers in her passion narrative, where they are encouraged to identify with Christ's disciples, helps to establish her own image as a religious authority as she demonstrates knowledge of traditions found within devotional writing. By placing its readers within the passion narrative, *Salve* echoes a long tradition of English and Continental medieval mystical writing where readers were encouraged to identify with the events of the Passion (Snook 2005, 126). Devotional texts addressed to female audiences often encouraged women to identify with the disciples, something 'which allowed them to imagine themselves as participants in apostolic life' (Snook 2005, 126). These devotional texts also encouraged women to see themselves in the position of Mary 'who was commonly figured as "the reader in the text" and whose grief provided a guide to contemplation' (Snook 2005, 126). In Lanyer's passion narrative, the female readers are especially encouraged to see themselves in the position of Mary — the person who conceives and has a bodily connection to Christ. The tradition of asking readers to identify with sympathisers of Christ started to change after the Reformation, where in Protestant passion narratives the readers were more often encouraged to identify with the torturers. Deborah Shuger points out that this trope was especially common in Calvinist passion narratives, where 'the notion that since Christ died for our sins we are all responsible for the crucifixion' is intensified in Calvinist passion narratives as the position of the reader is merged with that of the torturer (Shuger in Snook 2005, 127).

It is significant then that Lanyer echoes the medieval tradition as this continues to suggest that, compared to Lanyer's contemporary Protestant circles, the medieval religious circles were more receptive to women participating in religious discussions. However,

Lanyer echoing conventions commonly found in medieval passion narratives could also simply be a reflection of how by ‘Lanyer’s own time new passion narratives were considerably less common than they had been for medieval Christians’ (Longfellow 2004, 70). However, I would argue that it stems from a certain awareness Lanyer has of the shifting climate where the corporeal and women are viewed with rising scepticism, a trend which Lanyer’s *Salve* tries to work against. Ultimately, how Lanyer addresses her female audience in *Salve*—echoing traditions from medieval passion narrative where readers are encouraged to identify with Mary—enhances Lanyer’s image as a learned authority figure, where she is portrayed as someone who is conscious of religious traditions.

In addition to establishing her own image as religious figure, Lanyer also encourages a specific form of female interiority and reflection, and thus advocates for a community of reading women. By asking her readers to identify with the female figures in the Passion, Lanyer encourages a certain mode of reading which encourages female interiority which ultimately creates a community of women interpreting biblical texts. As I explored in the previous section of this thesis, ‘*Salve*’ highlights how the female gaze, and ultimately female desire, is essential for a satisfactory understanding of biblical texts and Christ. This portrayal, where female sight is viewed as an essential part of Christianity ultimately leads to a celebration of a female hermeneutics and corporeality. Edith Snook rightly points out that ‘*Salve* creates epistemological capacities for the readers where ‘[Lanyer] constructs an enabling view of women’s epistemological capacities, by which they access and possess knowledge through their own desires, rather than through obedience to authority’ (Snook 2005, 129). Snook highlights how Lanyer successfully creates this environment through the way she addresses her readers, asking them to identify with the women at the cross, the women who truly understood and knew the significance of Christ. More radically, Snook argues that the mode of reading where female desire and sight is central not only suggests that women ‘are better able to know Christ than men are’, but that Lanyer also suggests that this female desire and sight should ‘accord women a social role outside the home’ (Snook 2005, 129). I am not entirely convinced by Snook’s argument. The female audience of *Salve* are primarily aristocratic women, a group which may have greater societal power than the average woman in early modern England. In addition, Lanyer is in fact following several common conventions for patronage poetry which suggests that Lanyer’s social project is not as radical as Snook suggests.

Even though Lanyer encourages a community of reading women, it is important to point out that the community of women which Lanyer explicitly addresses all belong to

aristocratic circles. Considering how 'Salve' is dedicated to the Countess of Cumberland — and where in addition the collection *Salve* contains nine other patronage poems all addressed to aristocratic women — it is not so surprising then that the poem encourages a gynocentric religious community. In addition, it is important to point out that Lanyer's choice of only addressing female patrons in her collection is not necessarily a radical decision, nor does it imply that her objective is to convey the strength of an entirely female religious community. In fact, Lanyer exclusively pursuing female patrons simply demonstrates that she wants to come across as a respectable female poet, as any request made towards male patrons would be deemed as improper:

The men who receive dedications from women writers tend to be close relatives or family associates [...] Lanyer had no such powerful men on whom she could call [...] it would have been immodest for her or any other woman of her station to seek patronage from an unknown man. (Longfellow 2004, 63)

Lanyer exclusively addresses upper-class women through her patronage poems, this is likely a reflection of Lanyer respecting the decorum rather than a deliberately radical assembly of women. However, the fact that Lanyer is conservative rather than radical by respecting the patronage conventions does help to further establish Lanyer's ethos as a credible writer within renaissance society. Furthermore, I would argue that Lanyer follows these conventions and uses them as an important tool in order to convince the more conservative readers of *Salve* that her radical suggestion of a female hermeneutics is essential in order to reach a greater understanding of Christianity.

Even though Lanyer only explicitly addresses aristocratic women in *Salve*, I would argue that 'Salve' encourages a broader female hermeneutics through the Countess of Cumberland, which ultimately encourages a broader community of reading women to actively and more vocally participate in their religious communities. As Esther Gilman Richey states, 'In 'Salve' Lanyer gives form to the feminist theory she develops in her opening epistles by illustrating the difference between masculine and feminine ways of reading' (Richey 1997, 119). Through this portrayal of a feminine ways of reading, 'Salve' continues to emphasise the importance of female spirituality in Christianity, a spirituality which is closely connected to female corporeality, proposing a theology which ultimately celebrates rather than shames the female body.

*Salve* encourages a gynocentric religious community, where female readers are encouraged to pursue their own intellectual desires and transcend the rising androcentric hierarchies within the Anglican church. Lanyer again encourages her readers to look at pre-

Reformation traditions where female religious communities were more celebrated. Micheline White briefly outlines how the Reformation led to a more conservative and androcentric church, as when the Reformation leaders ‘revised their understanding of the essence and function of the clergy, they did not significantly revise their views regarding women and the priesthood’, but instead reaffirmed the conservative and orthodox arguments surrounding women in the church:

women could not fill such offices because Christ had chosen men, not women, to be his disciples; because Paul had forbidden women to teach in public religious assemblies; because only men could persuasively serve as "images" of Christ; and because the church had always forbidden women from being priests. (White 2003, 324)

In contrast to the Reformation leaders, *Salve* offers its female readers an arena where they are encouraged to pursue their spiritual interest. As Snook points out, Lanyer uses female sight as an important outlet to transcend church authority where ‘reading [becomes an] activity that enables women to gain wisdom and knowledge — [...] unfettered by dictums that could admit reading into women’s lives only as a preventative occupation and guarantor of chastity’ (Snook 2005, 144). However, as Micheline White writes, ‘Lanyer does not explicitly argue for institutional changes that would allow women to serve as priests within the existing ecclesiastical hierarchy’ (White 2003, 324). Rather, the collection does ‘assert that women served as founders of Christ’s healing church’, and furthermore that Jacobean women such as Lanyer’s readers ‘continue to wield hieratic healing power by fighting sin, feeding the poor, praying, reading and teaching the Bible, and writing religious verse’ (White 2003, 324).

Even though *Salve* does not explicitly argue for institutional change within the priesthood, the collection does in fact challenge the androcentric view of women as non-essential members within church communities. I would argue that Lanyer’s collection, and especially the poem ‘Salve’, radically suggests that women have the ability to enrich these communities by applying their sacred sight. *Salve* does not seek to transcend all hierarchies, yet the poem still encourages women to explore their faith without being influenced by the ‘misreading’ male gaze. This male gaze failed to recognise the truth of Christ’s existence ‘though he said unto them, I am he, / They could not know him, whom their eyes did see’ (Lanyer 1993, 503-504). Where the biblical male figures’ are in the following stanza described as ‘blinde’, ‘dull’, ‘weake!’, ‘stony hearted’ and ‘void of Pitie’ (505-509), the female biblical figures are in contrast portrayed as perceptive to Christ’s mission and compassionate towards his struggle.

As I have explored so far in this section, the way Lanyer address her readers as well as follow established conventions of patronage poetry helps to strengthen her ethos as an accomplished religious poet. This ethos is essential in order to effectively portray the message about the importance of female sight within Christianity. Additionally, this trust which Lanyer establishes with her readers is important in order for her to convincingly establish herself as a religious visionary. By effectively portraying herself as a learned writer, one who echoes conventions found in medieval passion narratives as well as respects patronage conventions, Lanyer's portrayal of herself as a religious visionary becomes much more convincing to her readers, as she has already proved that she respects certain conventions and hierarchies. Thus her claims supporting that she is a religious visionary is now more likely to be taken seriously.

One way Lanyer manages to portray herself as a religious visionary is through how she appropriates the priestly language of the Eucharist found in the book of common prayer. In the patronage poem 'To the Queene's most Excellent Majestie' she presents her collection as a 'Paschal Lambe' (Lanyer 1993, 85) where she urges the queen 'This pretious Passeover feed upon' (Lanyer 1993, 88).<sup>8</sup> This rhetoric is repeated later on in the poem 'To the Ladie *Katherine* Countesse of Suffolke' where Lanyer writes 'This little Booke that I present to you; / On heavenly food let them vouchsafe to feede' (Lanyer 1993, 50-51). Lanyer appropriates language found in texts on the Eucharist in order to enhance the authority of *Salve*, as Lanyer's collection here becomes the body and blood of Christ which she offers to her reader. Lanyer now makes it particularly hard for readers to dismiss the arguments within her collection, as neglecting to accept Lanyer's book almost becomes a declaration that one rejects the Christian faith. As Schoenfeldt succinctly states, 'To ignore Lanyer's book (as these patronesses, and most subsequent literary history, ultimately did) is to follow the spiritually hazardous path of neglecting Christ and refusing the Eucharist' (Schoenfeldt 1997, 212). Furthermore, by appropriating the language of the Eucharist Lanyer continues to emphasise the importance of female corporeality as she connects herself to the Virgin Mary and suggests that she has given birth to her text, where like Christ it can serve as spiritual nourishment: '[...] she too gives birth to that which will provide spiritual nourishment; her poem is frequently termed a sacred "Feast" wherein her readers may "feed upon" the "Paschal Lambe" she has prepared' (Brownlee 2015, 1320).

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<sup>8</sup> The numbers here refer to page number rather than lines. When talking about 'Salve' I refer to line numbers, while when I refer to poems otherwise found within the whole collection *Salve* I refer to page numbers.

In addition, Lanyer enhances the authority of her book, and thus also her authority as a religious visionary, by drawing on the traditional image of Christ's body as scripture. As Molekamp points out, 'the act of "looking" upon the physical figure of the crucified Christ, empowers [Lanyer's] metaphorical presentation of her own book as the Word, to be gazed upon and read in a devotional textual community in which social and religious difference is transcended' (Molekamp 2013, 194). Even though I am convinced by Molekamp's argument about Lanyer presenting her book as the Word, I am not convinced that the book establishes a community 'in which social and religious difference is transcended'. As I have already explored, Lanyer does not seek to transcend social hierarchies or religious difference, as it is made clear that Lanyer does not claim to be equal to her patrons. Instead, Lanyer encourages women to explore their intellectual desires and wishes to inspire a rise in gynocentric religious communities. However, through connecting the traditional metaphor of Christ's body as scripture to her own collection, where in addition Lanyer offers the body of Christ to a community of female readers, Lanyer firmly establishes an image of herself as a religious visionary — one who presents a collection of poetry which is both figured as the Eucharist as well as scripture.

In addition to how Lanyer portrays her collection as the Eucharist and scripture which she offers to her readers, the way Lanyer portrays herself within 'Salve' is another important element which helps to establish her image as a religious visionary. As I briefly mentioned in the section on the Countess of Cumberland, in 'Salve' Lanyer is portrayed as a person who has been charged by 'th'Eternall powres' (1458) to convey the aspirational virtue of the Countess of Cumberland, and to give the critics of the countess the ability to see her admirable qualities: 'give a touch / Unto their eyes, that else would be so blind' (1453-1454). It is clear that in these lines Lanyer does not simply depict herself as a poet writing patronage poetry, but rather that she is a prophet and healer. Especially the line 'This charge was giv'n me by 'th'Eternall powres' (1458) suggests that Lanyer is in fact a prophet who has been 'charged' by God to convey the noble virtue of the countess to all female readers.

The two last stanzas of 'Salve' are especially important to Lanyer's self-fashioning as religious visionary, as it not only emphasises her humility but it also continues to suggest that her writing has been dictated by a celestial power. The second-to-last stanza in the poem emphasises the virtue of the countess, as well as Lanyer's own inability to do them justice within her writing:

Loe Madame, here you take a view of those,

Whose worthy steps you doe desire to tread,  
Deckt in those colours which our Saviour chose;  
The purest colours both of White and Red,  
Their freshest beauties would I faine disclose,  
By which our Saviour most was honoured:  
    But my weake Muse desireth now to rest,  
    Folding up all their Beauties in your breast.  
(Lanyer 1993, 1825-1832)

In this stanza Lanyer continues to suggest that her own text does not do justice to the true image of Christ and other biblical martyrs, nor does it do justice to the honourable virtue and character of the countess. Yet, the poem still has to conclude as Lanyer's 'weake Muse desireth now to rest', and so as an alternative her muse folds all their 'Beauties' and gifts them to the countess for her to continue to gaze at in private. In this stanza, Lanyer not only encourages the countess to gaze at these honourable figures, but also suggests in the following line 'whose worthy steps you desire to tread' (1826) that the countess even seeks to continue their honourable work. These lines affirm the importance of female sight and hermeneutics, where the countess is encouraged to gaze at *Salve* and continue to interpret biblical texts and images guided by her own desires.

In the following, and last, stanza of *Salve* Lanyer continues to stress the importance of the countess, 'Whose excellence hath rais'd my sprites to write / Of what my thoughts could hardly apprehend;' (1833-1834), where the countess is even described as 'the Articke Starre that guides my hand, / All what I am, I rest at your command' (1839-1840). In these two final lines of *Salve*, the metaphor where the countess is described as the arctic star suggests that the countess can be likened to a cosmic power, one which inspired Lanyer to write her passion narrative. This image of the countess as a higher power who guides and inspires Lanyer to write not only affirms the image of the countess as an important religious guide, but it also strengthens the overall ethos of Lanyer's collection as she suggests to her readers that she has been called by a higher power to write.

Aemilia Lanyer follows several established religious and flattery conventions, and through this already established ethos manages to portray herself as a female religious visionary. Lanyer appropriates language of the Eucharist, and like a priest offers the body of her text to her readers, suggesting that if they reject it they are also rejecting the body of Christ and thus their Christian faith. In addition, Lanyer highlights how she has been 'charged' by 'th'Eternall powres' to write 'Salve', suggesting that she has been appointed by God to convey the contents of 'Salve' to an audience of readers. In the next section I will

explore how the paratext of Lanyer's collection helps to further establish Lanyer's image as a religious visionary.

## Paratextuality in *Salve*: how Lanyer frames her collection

The image of Lanyer as a female religious visionary is not only created through how she addresses her readers and the countess, as I would argue that the collection's paratextuality significantly strengthens Lanyer's image. Before I continue to explore how and which devices are used to frame Lanyer's role as a female religious visionary, I will first define some terms within paratextuality. In the foreword to *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* by Gerard Genette, Richard Macksey concisely summarise Genette's definition of the term paratextuality as:

comprising those liminal devices and conventions, both within the book (*peritext*) and outside it (*epitext*), that mediate the book to the reader: titles and subtitles, pseudonyms, forewords, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, intertitles, notes, epilogues, and afterwords. (Macksey in Genette 1997, xviii)

Macksey later stipulate how important it is for readers to understand paratext and how it can affect their reading experience, as: 'by recognising the complex conventions of "the book" we are thus invited to understand how we unwittingly are manipulated by its paratextual elements' (Macksey in Genette 1997: xxi). Genette himself states that paratext is that which is outside the main text. In other words, the paratext is a text which does not have a purpose of its own, it is only there to serve the main text: 'the paratext in all its forms is a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that constitutes its *raison d'être*. This something is the text' (Genette 1997, 12).

As mentioned in Macksey's summary of the term paratextuality, there is a clear distinction made between *peritext* which refers to that which is found within a book, and *epitext* which refers to records external to the book. It is also important to mention that there is a significant lack of epitext — 'messages that [...] are located outside the book, generally with the cover of the media (interviews, conversations) or under cover of private communications (letters, diaries, and others)' (Genette 1997, 5) — as there are limited existing records on and from Lanyer herself. However, I will briefly look at the existing records which discuss the publishing of *Salve*.



To limit my scope, I will focus on two types of peritext: the epilogue, or as Genette terms ‘postface’, titled ‘To the doubtfull Reader’, as well as a an analysis of the use of printed marginalia. In the first chapter of this thesis, I briefly looked at the effects of the preface ‘To the Vertuous Reader’, where I argued that Lanyer makes it clear to her readers that women play an integral part to Christianity and how female spirituality and corporeality should be celebrated rather than shunned. In this section of my thesis which is specifically dedicated to the paratext in *Salve*, my main focus will be on the postface and printed marginalia as I would argue these two paratextual elements are the most instrumental for Lanyer to establish an image as a female religious visionary.

I will now briefly look at one epitext, a record from the Stationers’ Register which mentions Lanyer’s poetry collection, as this record potentially reveals how Lanyer’s collection was viewed by her publisher. On October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1610, Lanyer’s publisher Richard Bonian entered *Salve* in the Stationers’ Register: ‘[Richard Bonyon:] Entred for his Copeye under th[e] [h]andes of Doctor MOKETT and Th’wardens, A booke called, *Salve DEUS Rex Judaeorum*’ (entry SRO5787 in McCarthy 2020, 107).<sup>9</sup> The mention of a ‘Doctor MOKETT’ in this record suggests that Bonian had applied for and was granted an ecclesiastical license for *Salve*. Erin McCarthy identifies ‘Doctor MOKETT’ as Richard Mokett, a man who ‘had served as Chaplain of George Abbot, Bishop of London’, and had licensed several books for the Stationer’s company between March 1610 to June 1614, where he primarily licensed sermons and other religious works (McCarthy 2020, 107-108). An ecclesiastical license was common practice for published works with religious contents, and the fact that Lanyer’s *Salve* was granted a license ‘suggest that the book’s retelling of biblical history was not thought to be controversial or dangerous’ (McCarthy 2020, 107). McCarthy’s observation reinforces that Lanyer does in fact echo religious traditions, and how the collection manages to seamlessly merge these traditions with the more radical promotion of a female led biblical interpretations.

In addition to the epitext on the publishing of *Salve*, the inclusion of printed marginalia is an important peritext which suggest that the collection wanted to be portrayed as a religious work. Printed marginalia was a common editorial practice found in religious works published during Lanyer’s time, it was not however common in non-religious literary texts. As Margaret Simon states in her ‘Glossing Authorship: Printed Marginalia in Aemilia

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Entry: SRO5787,’ Stationers’ Register Online, accessed October 25, 2023, <https://stationersregister.online/entry/SRO5787>

Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, printed marginalia was an important 'a navigational aid in early devotional texts' (Simon 2018, 125). However, in contrast to devotional texts, 'literary texts, particularly lyric poetry, were usually entirely devoid of printed marginal notes' (Simon 2018, 136). It is significant then that Lanyer chose to include printed marginalia throughout *Salve*, as it implies that she wanted her collection to be perceived in a certain way.

It is interesting to note, however, that Lanyer's printed marginalia differs from those found in other religious texts, as the printed marginalia found throughout these religious works usually contained explanations of religious references. In contrast, Lanyer's printed marginalia simply serves as headings, or rather as an index which indicates to certain parts of the poem. Thus, the readers of *Salve* might use this index and refer to specific sections depending on where they desire to look. This seems to be a deliberate choice from Lanyer's part. As one can see from the extensive religious references found throughout *Salve* 'it is clear that Lanyer is familiar with the scriptures from which her dedications and title poem draw', but rather than explicitly explaining these references 'her readers then must deduce for themselves' (Simon 2018, 129).

Throughout *Salve* a community of reading women is encouraged to interpret the text and to perform their own interpretation, independent from any external gaze. As Simon rightly states: 'The margins gather Christ within a transhistorical group of faithful and, Lanyer emphasizes, virtuous women, reintroducing the feminine and communal nature of the text [...]' (Simon 2018, 128). The printed marginalia found throughout *Salve* serves as an important peritext which enhances Lanyer's ethos as a female religious visionary, and in addition serves as an important index that further encourages the female readers to perform their own hermeneutics.

The way the poem presents the countess to the readers is also present in the printed marginalia, where it is made clear that the countess follows throughout the entire passion narrative. Margaret Simon states that the printed marginalia in Lanyer's poetry is used as a way to 'help keep secular patronage and female authorship in view even in the margins of sacred verse' (Simon 2018, 136). The inclusion of printed marginalia then suggests that Lanyer seeks to include the countess on a journey along her text, where the countess is accompanying Christ and other biblical figures such as Mary during the passion narrative: 'The countess is invoked so many times, not necessarily because other unnamed addressees intervene, as has been suggested, but so that she can be represented along the way, travelling with Christ down the margins of his narrative' (Simon 2018, 128). Of the nineteen headings

in the printed marginalia, the Countess of Cumberland is mentioned six times where these are spread throughout the entire collection. This is especially significant, as essentially Lanyer further establishes the countess as a biblical figure by having her accompany Christ: '[...] allowing her to be patron and apostle, her name standing in for the Gospel references that populate the margins of so many religious texts' (Simon 2018, 129).

Another important peritext which helps to further support Lanyer's ethos as religious visionary is the epilogue 'To the doubtfull Reader', or what Genette terms as the 'postface'. It is interesting that Lanyer includes a postface explaining why she has titled the collection *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, as it shows that she anticipates that there will be some scepticism surrounding the title of her text. Genette points out that 'Given the postface's location and type of discourse, it can hope to fulfil only a curative, or corrective, function' where ultimately most authors see the preface as 'preferable to [the postface as the] final corrective [...] [as the] preface has the virtue of at least being monitory and preventive' (Genette 1997, 239). Rather than stating the title choice in the preface 'To the Vertuous Reader', Lanyer places her argument as a final conclusion at the very end of her collection. I would argue that this is consciously done by Lanyer, as throughout the poem Lanyer manages to quietly yet convincingly portray herself as a religious visionary, and the postface is included only to serve as a final attempt to convince her remaining doubters. The inclusion of a postface further suggests that Lanyer did not want her image as a religious visionary to be the main focus of the collection. Instead, as I have argued throughout my thesis, Lanyer seeks to draw attention to the image of a religious community of women which encourages female sight and desire, and pursual of gynocentric biblical interpretations.

Lanyer's self-fashioning as a female religious visionary is established simply to enhance the credibility of her arguments for this female hermeneutics project. In the first part of the postface, Lanyer continues to appeal to her readers where she addresses these 'Gentle' yet doubtful readers directly:

Gentle Reader, if thou desire to be resolved, why I give this Title, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, know for certaine; that it was delivered unto me in sleepe many yeares before I had any intent to write in this maner, and was quite out of my memory, untill I had written the Passion of Christ, when immediately it came into my remembrance, what I had dreamed long before; (Lanyer 1993, 139)

Here Lanyer explains to the reader that the title was 'delivered' unto her in her sleep, where it was not until after she had written the 'Passion of Christ' — which she was appointed by higher powers write — that she remembered her dream. By connecting the Passion of Christ

with the message she was delivered in her sleep, Lanyer further frames herself as a religious visionary where her own visions are portrayed as being interconnected with the Passion. The fact that the postface addresses the general reader rather than a specific person is also significant. This mode of address suggests that even though large parts of the collection are dedicated to noble women, it is also cognisant of and compassionate towards a general reader.

In the second part of the postface, Lanyer further argues that her dream was an important sign: ‘and thinking it a significant token, that I was appointed to performe this Worke, I gave the very same words I received in sleepe as the fittest Title I could devise for this Booke’ (Lanyer 1993, 139). Most notably, Lanyer explicitly states that she believes her dream showed that she ‘was appointed to performe this Worke’. The use of the word ‘Worke’ makes Lanyer’s statement ambiguous, as in addition to signifying her poetry collection, the ‘Worke’ Lanyer performs could also signify her role as a female visionary who gives religious guidance to women. Victoria Brownlee interprets the postface as a way for Lanyer to figure herself as a second Mary, where:

like Christ’s mother, who was informed of her motherhood in a visit from the angel Gabriel, and following the convention of the annunciation to the barren wives of the Old Testament, she received news of her divine nomination to deliver a sacred body of text into the world; in a dream, she was “appointed to performe this Worke”. (Brownlee 2015, 1320)

Here Brownlee convincingly demonstrates how Lanyer not only further establish herself as a female visionary, but also connects herself with Mary, something which Lanyer has encouraged her female readers to do themselves whilst reading her passion narrative.

*Salve*’s paratextual elements frames the collection, and demonstrates how Lanyer wished to portray her collection as a devotional work that women could refer to whenever they desired to gaze upon the Passion of Christ. Through the inclusion of printed marginalia Lanyer continues to encourage her readers to pursue their own intellectual desires, as the marginalia in the collection simply functions as an index which readers can use in order to go to sections they feel drawn to. In addition, the postface ‘To the doubtfull Reader’ is not only included to help persuade those who still doubt Lanyer’s title choice, it also serves as a way for Lanyer to continue to frame herself as a religious visionary and prophet.

## Chapter conclusion: *Salve*'s call for female sight and hermeneutics

Throughout the collection Lanyer puts a great emphasis on images of female sight. This sight is presented as an important element, especially in biblical interpretations, where women can now escape the surveilling male gaze and pursue their own intellectual desires.

Lanyer does this effectively, especially in 'Salve', where she first interrogates the Apostle Paul's assessment of Eve and demonstrates the cruelty and hypocrisy of men who condemn all women for Eve's transgression. In her section on Eve female sight is also posed as an important element which resulted in the introduction of knowledge to the human race. The importance of female sight continues to be an important theme in Lanyer's portrayal of the Countess of Cumberland, where her sight and private devotion is described as having healing properties, where additionally the countess is depicted as having priestly gifts and St Peter's Keys. Through the praise of the countess, Lanyer starts to emphasise the potential fertile nature of a female hermeneutics, where she continues to encourage her female readers to use their unique female gaze and participate in biblical interpretations.

In order to convince her readers about this progressive call for more gynocentric biblical interpretations, Lanyer renders herself as a female religious visionary and prophet where her collection is delivered to her readers as a 'sacred body of text'. The paratextual elements in *Salve* enhances Lanyer's image as a religious visionary who encourages women to follow their spiritual and intellectual desires. Additionally, the printed marginalia acts like an 'index' that support women's ability to refer to elements of the text which they might feel more drawn to. The inclusion of the postface 'To the doubtfull Reader' further enhances the image of Lanyer as a prophet who has been called to deliver the text into the world. Through the investigation of Eve, the portrayal of the Countess of Cumberland, as well as Lanyer's self-fashioning of herself as a religious visionary, *Salve* as a collection draws attention to the importance of female figures and women's sight in the Bible, where 'Salve' encourages women to look at the Passion of Christ and apply their female gaze to create their own interpretations.

In this chapter I especially drew on Edith Snook's theories of female desire and how Lanyer presents images to her readers while encouraging them to follow their own intellectual desires. I connected Snook's theories of desire to the depiction of fertility and how this is connected to the women in 'Salve'. I suggest that the poem continues to emphasise the importance of female corporeality and how this is interconnected to female spirituality. This can be seen through the continued connections made between the female

body of the Virgin Mary and its connection to Christ. This can be shown by how the poem portrays the faith of the countess as fertile seeds of virtue which not only inspires Lanyer to write, but also encourages others to follow her example and become pious Christians.

Additionally, the way Lanyer portrays herself and her collection continues to draw on this image of female corporeality as an essential part of Christianity, where Lanyer suggests that she has been called to present this body of text to her female readers.

## Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have explored how Foucault's theories of discipline and surveillance can be applied to *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* by Aemilia Lanyer from 1611, where I specially focused on Lanyer's passion narrative 'Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum'. While applying Foucault's theories of surveillance and discipline to Lanyer's text it becomes clear that these concepts affect women differently than men. As one can see from some of the historical context which I outlined in this thesis, women's bodies have been watched, surveilled and disciplined from long before the industrial revolution.

This is reflected in Lanyer's poem where the Virgin Mary and Eve are important biblical women whom Lanyer rewrites from a female perspective. The role and importance of these two biblical women was extensively discussed by many theologians before and after the Reformation, where the severity of the judgement of these two women ultimately reflected on how all women were viewed in society overall. This can be seen in how women's bodies were viewed in a different light before the Reformation, when the Virgin Mary was a celebrated figure with whom women were encouraged to identify and pray to during child labour. That changed after the Reformation when women were now encouraged to identify with Eve, and rather than celebrating their spiritual bodies through their connection to Mary women were now asked to see themselves reflected in Eve and their inherently sinful nature they allegedly shared with her.

As I have examined throughout my thesis, I argue that Lanyer's passion narrative 'Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum' interrogates the surveillance and discipline of women's bodies through the lens of Christianity. I argue that the poem does this effectively by emphasising the important role of the Virgin Mary in the salvation of mankind, a portrayal which ultimately suggests that women's bodies contain a specific and unique spirituality through their corporeal connection to Mary and thus also Christ.

This corporeal spirituality is further explored within the poem where the faith and sight of devout Christian women such as Margaret Clifford the Countess of Cumberland is portrayed as echoing the healing powers of Christ. 'Salve' continues to highlight the importance of women reading and interpreting the bible independent from the surveilling male gaze, as the poem continues to identify the failure of male sight of biblical figures such as Pontius Pilate during the passion whilst emphasising the reflective and compassionate nature of the Virgin Mary and Eve. The paratextual elements within *Salve*, such as the postface 'To the doubtfull Reader' and the printed marginalia found within 'Salve', continues

to emphasise the importance of a female led hermeneutics, where Lanyer also highlights her own credibility as a female religious visionary. Aemilia Lanyer composed a female-centred passion narrative dedicated to the Countess of Cumberland, one which asserts the importance of the female corporeal in the Bible through the Virgin Mary and her participation in the salvation of mankind through her physical connection to Christ, a gynocentric passion narrative which I would argue ultimately resists the discipline and objectification of women's bodies.

Even though Aemilia Lanyer's poetics have garnered more attention over the past decades, it still does not compare to the vast amount of scholarship found on her male contemporaries such as John Donne, George Herbert and John Milton. As mentioned by Suzanne Trill (2001) and Kate Narveson (2002), it is important to consider the theological references found in early modern women's writing within a theological perspective, as is often done for male authors such as Milton and Donne, rather than as merely a performative tool that reflects the society these women are living in. As I have shown in chapter 2, Lanyer echoes several theological traditions found within passion narratives, especially surrounding the portrayal of the Virgin Mary, and it is clear that Lanyer knows which scriptures to interact with in order to convey the importance of female biblical interpretations. Reading female early modern poets such as Lanyer and interpreting their work is important in order to fully grasp the period as a whole, as it can reveal how women might have viewed themselves in a way differently than how men viewed them.

Applying Foucault's theories of discipline and surveillance to Lanyer's poetics also launched a historical approach, where Foucault's theories surrounding the objectifying gaze of surveillance needed to be supplemented by considering the historical period while interpreting Lanyer's poetry. This has revealed that the portrayal of biblical women such as Mary not only reflected on how women viewed their own bodies, but also seeped into religious poetry where female poets such as Lanyer are able to reread and interpret the Bible. The fact that early modern women were encouraged to participate in religion and contemplative reading suggests that religious writing is one genre where women might feel more entitled to express themselves. This could be interesting for further study, where a close reading of other religious poems by women, such as Lucy Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder* (1679), focusing on Foucault's theories of surveillance and how their poetry may or may not reflect Lanyer's celebration of female corporeality and spirituality within Christianity.

It would also be interesting to investigate how Lanyer's portrayal of the surveillance of women's bodies compares to the male authors such as George Herbert and John Milton.



An analysis of how Milton portrays Eve in *Paradise Lost* (1667) and Mary in *Paradise Regained* (1671) compared to Lanyer's portrayal would be interesting, as it could reveal how a male poet portrays these important female biblical figures similar or differently to a female poet such as Lanyer. It would also be interesting to explore how the conflicts of the English civil war, the regicide of Charles I in 1649 and the eventual restoration of the monarchy in 1660 may have had an effect on how biblical figures such as Mary and Eve in poetry.

Through studying Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* it becomes clear that it is important to consider early modern women's literature as it can reveal how women during this period saw themselves reflected in Christianity and society as a whole. It reveals how women's literature can be a valuable sphere where women could escape the objectifying and surveilling male gaze prevalent throughout society, where the female readers are now instead encouraged to follow their own instinct and gaze to independently pursue intellectual activities.

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