

Love's Imagined Communities

Women's Interiority, Intimacy, and Agency in the Poetry of Katherine Philips and Aemilia

Lanyer

by

Rachel Arone

A Thesis Presented for the B. A. Degree

with Honors in

The Department of English

University of Michigan

Winter of 2020



## Acknowledgements

For helping me to complete this work, I would like to thank all of the mentors who have helped me along the way: my thesis advisor, Professor Valerie Traub, of the English and Women's Studies Departments; Professor Scotti Parrish, director of the English Honors Program Winter 2020 cohort; Professor Cathy Sanok of the English Department, professor of the Fall Honors Colloquium; as well as all of my fellow thesis-writers in the Winter 2020 English Honors cohort. Thank you all so much for your time, careful consideration and sage advice throughout this long process. Without you, this thesis would not exist. I would also like to thank my friends and family for their continuous emotional and moral support during these past months. For all of the times you have allowed me to ramble on about all of my ideas for this project, and all of my hopes and fears and visions, I thank you, thank you, thank you.

## Abstract

This project aims to consider the means by which Katherine Philips and Aemilia Lanyer, two women writing in early modern England between the Reformation and the Interregnum, exercised their subjectivity and agency within real and imagined spaces. Through the historically revisionist lens of Nancy Fraser's counterpublics, this project also aims to complicate ideas of separate spheres and female disempowerment in this early modern period. Analysis of Philips' poems "To My Excellent Lucasia, on our Friendship," "Friendship in Emblem: To my Dearest Lucasia," and "L'amitie: To Mrs. Mary Aubrey" reveals the intimate identifications Philips' speakers formed with one another within the feminine coterie space. Study of Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, particularly the concluding poem "The Description of Cooke-ham," further displays the intimate identifications women form with one another in feminine spaces, which allows them to make assertions against a hegemonic patriarchal public sphere and, further, to imagine feminine community across space and time. This project then applies the relevance of these women's novel subject negotiations and revisionist history to feminist work and continuing solidarity today.

## CONTENTS

Part 1: Introduction	1
Part 2: Brief Historical and Theoretical Frameworks	5
Part 3: Philips, Orinda, Lucasia, Rosania: Identity and Intimacy in Early Modern England	10
Part 4: Lanyer and “The Description of Cooke-ham:” Written Spaces Embodying Female Intimacy and Subjectivity	23
Part 5: Conclusion, Implications: The Early Modern Empowering Woman	36
Works Cited	43

## Part 1: Introduction

In Virginia Woolf's 1929 publication, *A Room of One's Own*, Shakespeare's sister Judith makes her ardent, but fruitless, literary debut. Woolf tells us that this sixteenth-century woman is just as clever, just as skilled with the pen, as her brother; in short, the only thing that differentiates the two writers is their gender, which, Woolf argues, is enough, within their historical context, to grant one centuries of fame and doom the other to strife and a death in obscurity. Judith attempts to sell her plays, just as her brother did, but only ends with rejection, unwanted pregnancy, and suicide. It is this essay that begins the discourse in feminist circles, particularly in recent years, regarding whether women had a Renaissance in the same way that men did. This parable, of course, answers in the negative, and leads to Woolf's now famous assertion that women must have an income and a private room of their own in order to write successfully--conditions which are assumed achievable for women only in modernity. Only under these conditions, Woolf argues, can a woman write free of distractions, on one hand, and be free of masculine influence, on the other. Both of these conditions are due to privacy as Woolf delineates it, and as modernity generally understands it: individualized and architecturally removed from the presence of others, qualities which sequester one within a separate and individual space far from the public eye.

This project reads the early modern women who were able to experience a version of this space, either real or imagined, whose attributes extended beyond this narrow, modern conception of privacy. The two women engaged with in this project gained access to spaces in which they are able to engage with other women, writing with one another at a distance from hegemonic male-dominated public spaces: Katherine Philips, embroiled in the post-Caroline literary culture

of Restoration England, writes among beloved friends Mary Aubrey and Anne Owen within an intimate coterie sphere; Aemilia Lanyer, sponsored by Lady Margaret Clifford, writes at the Cliffords' idyllic countryside manor alongside her and her daughter. I term these spaces feminine and semi-private, since within them women are the primary residents interacting with one another, separately from the mainstream public sphere, but are still connected to public affairs through publication or political affiliation. Especially notable in the writing produced in such environments is the particular type of individuality these women express which runs counter to, or in plurality with, masculinist ideas of individualism which are also arising during this time. More specifically, I argue that the friendship poetry of Katherine Philips, as well as Aemilia Lanyer's "The Description of Cooke-ham," exemplify *intimate mutual identification* among women within feminine semi-private spaces. By this, I mean that the conception of the self as expressed in these poems occurs in tandem with the conception of the intimate other--and thus selfhood comes from love and intimate identification with the other, rather than from the individualist arenas of contention that we more generally see within men's writing of the time. Through intimate identification with one another, facilitated by the semi-privacy of their environment, women gain a sense of union with intimate others relating to themselves. This union, I argue, leads to *self-signification*: the imbuing of the self with the love and significance felt towards the other. Such self-signification is then exhibited through actions and assertions supportive of the female subject and counter to the ideals of the hegemonic masculine sphere. I term these actions and assertions, born through self-signification, as *self-assertions*. Such acts then exhibit the relative authority and agency women gained through these particular selfhoods, within these particular spaces.

My initial chapter analyzes Philips' friendship poetry, and approaches the intimate circle within her coterie, comprising her beloved friends and herself, with the end of exhibiting the selfhood her writings are able to exhibit in their semi-private feminine context. In opposition to the male homoerotic poetry and conduct books analyzed by Daniel Juan Gil, Philips' poems "To My Excellent Lucasia," "Friendship in Emblem," and "L'amitié" exhibit senses of self identified with the beloved and intimate other, thus producing a sense of self as equally loved and valued as the beloved other. Such valuation of the self allows the self to make claims in opposition to a male hegemonic public, producing what I call a "private counterpublic" (following in the tradition of Nancy Fraser's "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually-Existing Democracy") of ideas and discourse oppositional to the majority.

Lanyer, though writing in an earlier time period, focuses on a feminine semi-private space in "The Description of Cooke-ham," which similarly allows for expressions of interiority through the intimate other. In this chapter, I focus on the private thoughts, feelings, and desires of women as they are reflected in the physical space of the manor, which shifts from those ascribed to the patroness to those of the poet-speaker herself. In such a space embodying both feminine semi-privacy and interiority, the poet speaker is able to make a "private counterpublic" claim as well.

Through analysis of select women's writings produced in private feminine spaces, I intend to ultimately bring out how women were able to express a particular kind of selfhood, and authority exhibiting this selfhood, through existing within and writing of these spaces. The historical progress narrative promoted by Woolf, then, is not so linear: particularly in the early modern period, where print is not yet universalized<sup>1</sup>, there are specific spaces in which certain

---

<sup>1</sup> This incipient period of print in early modernity allows for what I consider an "in-betweenness" which is vital to the subject of this thesis. At this point print is robust enough to allow women such as Philips and Lanyer to write

women could independently write their worlds and themselves. I attempt to disrupt teleological assumptions through the structure of this thesis as well, in presenting the poetry of these two women in reverse-chronological order. In this, I aim to make apparent how these spaces which arise between publicity and privacy, rather than presenting evidence of progress regarding feminine autonomy, allow women to gain alternative understandings and articulations of selfhood through intimate affiliations with other women within the space, regardless of the time in which they live.

---

spaces which endure and circulate within publics, and yet still private enough to remain largely unchanged and uncensored by the masculine associations which run society as a whole. For an in-depth exploration of early modern women's "acts of writing and publication" as "means to bridge the chasm between privacy and publicity" and contribute to public discourses, see Amanda P. Hiner's *Women, Publicity and Print Culture in England, 1670-1770* (124).

## Part 2: Brief Historical and Theoretical Frameworks

Before turning to the poems themselves, it is important to discuss the concepts of the “public” and “private” spheres as they are understood within this thesis. Though still often presented as binary and monolithic categories, the nature of these spheres has come into question in recent decades. Katherine Philips and Aemilia Lanyer were composing in spaces, whether coterie or country-house, which existed in between the realms of publicity and privacy; it is crucial, therefore, to engage with these spheres, and their complications, as revisionist histories of the early modern period understand them. Third-wave feminist critic Barbara Arneil indicates this particularly gendered and classed view of public and private as promoting a false binary, founded upon a “false universalism” in the assumption that all women are operating in the domestic space as the wives of free citizens (46). Additionally, she reveals the important fact that multiple identities and resultant power dynamics were operating in domestic spaces during the early modern period, as many households of the middle and upper class were the living and working space of servants and, increasingly, slaves of differential race, class and gender, aside from the “wives of citizens,” white and of privileged class (33). This caveat is hugely important to consider when contemplating the writing of Katherine Philips, the wife of a landed gentleman, and Aemilia Lanyer, the daughter of one of Elizabeth I’s court musicians. It is important to take into account these women’s relative privilege in private and semi-private spaces: though I discuss at length how these spaces enable them to engage in their writing, one must keep in mind that it is also their socioeconomic and sociopolitical *privilege* which allows them to have *access* to these spaces, and thus this kind of writing, in the first place.

Additionally, and perhaps even more pertinent to the writings and my argument as a whole, is Nancy Fraser's proposal of the existence of *subaltern counterpublics*. In "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," Fraser complicates Jurgen Habermas' view of the public arena as a monolithic place of free and equal discourse and thus a "mechanism for...rendering states accountable to (some of) the citizenry" (59). In actuality, this version of the public sphere was constructed as exclusive rather than inclusive, shutting out subjects based upon their class, gender, race, and/or citizenry status. In tandem with this, she challenges the common assumption that everything outside the domestic sphere is unilaterally and singularly "public": she argues that the political realm is distinct from the workplace, which in turn is distinct from the various public sites of discourse between individual citizens. She builds upon these assertions by citing recent revisionist histories as revealing "a variety of ways of accessing public life and a multiplicity of public arenas" in which individuals of minority status entered into public realms of discourse. This leads to her offering a new understanding of "competing counterpublics, including nationalist publics, popular peasant publics, elite women's publics, and working class publics," indicating that "the bourgeois public," though holding considerable sway, "was never *the* public" (61). Counterpublics of particular interest to the present thesis are subaltern counterpublics, which Fraser defines as "the parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (67). Such arenas act as vital "spaces of withdrawal and regroupment" as well as "training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics" in such stratified societies as that which existed in early modern England (68).

Following from these revisionist political histories, in this thesis I aim to indicate the multifaceted, and blurred, nature of public/private categories and, crucially, public/private experience. The “spheres” of existence as they can be perceived in the poetry of Philips and Lanyer are informed by, interactive with, and yet are still at a remove from the traditionally-understood public arena, the male-dominated *forum*. Though not completely comprising a counterpublic as described by Fraser, the spaces in these poems demonstrate early spaces which, if not as directly connected to public counterdiscourses as Fraser’s counterpublic, are certainly not removed from them. Thus I read the spaces extolled in these poems as a kind of *private counterpublic*, an intimate and separate space which, through the process of publication, still contacts and interacts with the public world. These private counterpublics are realms of discourse, just as are the traditional bourgeois public sphere, as well as the more explicitly public counterpublics in Fraser’s study. Yet also, and distinctively due to their private nature, these private counterpublics are realms of intimacy in which understandings of the world, of others, and of oneself come from the common-feeling experienced between its members.

Of particular interest to this study is the late sixteenth and the seventeenth century. This period, from the Reformation through the Interregnum, consists of political and religious instability in England, which results in “complex subject negotiations” experienced by citizens as their identities and affiliations shift and change in the midst of political and religious reformulations (Matchinske 54). The Reformation called to the consciousness of citizens the importance of individual religious affiliations within a shifting social structure. In the mid-sixteenth century, we see shifts of national religion (and persecution) between Catholicism, Protestantism, and its offshoot Anglicanism. Due to the increasing awareness of the distinction between these religious sects, or more precisely of the personal consequences of ascribing to one

faith or another due to shifting national religious identifications, “all persons of faith were also necessarily persons of private conscience” resultant from this period (Orlin 10). The prevailing Protestant identification of England following the Reformation particularly lent itself to personal investigations and readings of the Bible (increasingly disseminated due to the growth of print) which lends itself in turn to the cultivation of a private consciousness. Scholars argue that new architectural developments following the Reformation reflect this new private awareness. Termed the “Great Rebuilding,” beginning in 1570, this period signifies a departure from the medieval great hall in favor of greatly-partitioned dwelling-places, known as country houses or prodigy houses. Rather than a multifunctional and open space like the medieval great hall, the country houses we see arising in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had many separate spaces for separate functions, where one could be alone with oneself, or with others (105). And yet, as will be revealed in the respective sections on Philips and Lanyer, the medieval court as well as the early modern country house contain varying degrees of publicity and privacy within--and without--their walls. Such spatial developments are crucial to my thesis, as my argument hinges on the feminine-inhabited spaces, both written and physical, which Philips and Lanyer each form and inhabit, developing distinct kinds of interiority, relationality and subject positionality counter to the hegemonic public. Their existence in and interactions with these spaces allow for the development of the novel individualities and relationships we can read in the poems below.

Additionally, the architectural separation of spaces is commonly regarded as indicative of the development of spheres of commerce referred retroactively (and reductively) in Enlightenment ideology as “separate spheres.” It is during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that legislation barring women from work almost universally comes into place: for

example, the “Statute of Artificers of 1563 included...compulsory and gender-specific employment--men in husbandry, women in domestic service.” Additionally, “Guild regulations limiting membership and eligibility for women” severely constrain middle- and upper-class women’s access to trades in which they would usually have partaken, primarily alongside their husbands, prior to this legislative movement (Matchinske 4). These legislative acts barring women from public operations begin to gesture towards the “separate spheres” model of gendered hierarchy and disempowerment with which us moderns and postmoderns are familiar. Between “the English Reformation and the Civil War,” the midst of this shift, we see “public invocations of private identity (on stage, in court record, in state policy),” which “indicate a dramatic re-negotiation of and proliferation in places of privacy in early modern culture” regarding individual identity and subjectivity (14). In this piece I similarly develop an understanding of early modern feminine selfhood, exploring how subject negotiations occur for women within and beyond this incipient private sphere. While Matchinske takes as the primary point of her investigation the connection between women’s subjectivity and the developing English state, and while state politics will figure in my analysis somewhat, my primary concern will be with women’s development and expression of selfhood within and among the increasingly separate and gendered communal spaces which form, and to which women are relegated, during this period. In particular, through the poems of Philips and Lanyer, I aim to exhibit the ways in which early modern women act as agents of their own selfhood within specific separate spaces, expressing authority through the particular interiority arising from inhabiting and operating in these spaces.

## Part 3: Philips, Orinda, Lucasia, Rosania: Identity and Intimacy in Early Modern England

The coterie work of commercial writers provides a crucial point of comparison when contemplating the variegated landscape of the counterpublic literary sphere in seventeenth-century England. Groups of writers often congregated during this period, forming literary circles of their own in which they would read each other's writing and aid in honing each other's craft. The vast majority of this coterie interaction occurred through correspondence and manuscript exchange, allowing for the building of a community which did not necessarily require constant physical proximity--good news for those who were unavailable for travel or co-residence outside of the nuclear home, which is the reality for those embroiled in the domestic realm (Gray 47). Katherine Philips, one of the few female poets of whom we have record from this period, was also deeply involved in coterie work. Her circle involved both male and female writers, labeled by Philips as the "Society of Friendship"; of particular interest to this inquiry are the personal poems, letters, and criticism exchanged between Philips and a smaller sphere of intimate female correspondents within "an even more exclusive sphere" of the coterie, comprised of "Lucasia" (Ann Owen) and "Rosania" (Mary Aubrey) (58). These writings, particularly the poems, indicate Philips' conception of friendship as a space and state of unity between women, consisting of "chosen social and familial relations" and thus revealing the "complex circles of social relation created by early modern women" (Andreadis 524). Further, through these connections formed and expressed in writing, we can better understand the ways in which mutual identification between early modern women enacted for them a space in which to define themselves in opposition to the exterior political world, at the same time as such a definition is in terms of such a world.

The coterie--the "post-courtly coterie," as Catherine Gray terms it, being the shared writing sphere between Philips and post-Caroline Royalist poets--indicates a space in between the public and private, in which Philips' poems are "not only private expressions of lesbian desire, but formed part of a public, poetic performance, one that circulated in a complex system of compliment, cross-gender identification, and political affiliation" (Gray 45). It also displays the "instability and flexibility of the categories of public and private during the seventeenth century," especially in the Interregnum, during which "categories of public and private are in dispute, as the ideal of a public power invested in the patriarchal icon of the king...gives way to the concept of a sphere of public discourse in which men and women of all classes may jostle to participate" (44). At the same time as they are situated in "the wider public sphere," due to their publication in English and distribution to a wider public, such coterie manuscripts still indicate privacy through their invocation of intimate connections with other coterie members (47). In this the coterie mimics the medieval court culture and space from which it derives. Though the medieval courtyard house, in which court culture promulgated and thrived, centered architecturally around a grand hall where members of the court convened, this space was only open for those within "its self-enclosing walls" (Orlin 106). Even within these walls, the courtyard house's public arena of the grand hall was separated from residential spaces to which a court's members, especially the nobles, would retire (107-8). Philips utilizes the coterie's precedent of communally-oriented politics as well as its articulations of intimacy in order to formulate her own socio-political space through her friendship poetry (composed 1664-1667), predicated upon an understanding of the self in relation to the intimate and/or desired other(s), a conviction which opposes broader, political interpersonal contention (61). In these friendship poems, Philips instead constructs social relations which are founded upon mutual identification

and love among women, writing a courtlike coterie space which appeals to her own ideal image of (feminine) community, a place of retreat as well as of internal exchange: intimate exchanges between women comprise the discrete and discursive world; the political dynamics of the mainstream public are either adapted to intimate individuals' mutual needs, or left out of their relations entirely, and only referenced by the narrator to emphasize the superiority of the intimate sphere to the "factious world" of political men.

Philips' poem "To My Excellent Lucasia, On Our Friendship" provides an ideal point of entry into the matter of intimacy between women, especially as it contains the possibility of separatism from hegemonic masculine publics. As indicated within the title, this poem is one (of many) addressed to Philips' beloved friend Anne Owen. I designate these two categories in particular--*beloved* and *friend*--because they will be, in Philips' "Lucasia" cycle, simultaneously oppositional and twinned, distinct and co-operational. These categories, in short, work together to delineate women's mutual affinities and identifications, producing positive self-identifications, at the same time as they conceal these aspects of women's lives and identities from the public eye, thus maintaining their privacy.

In this poem, the speaker (identifying herself by Philips' pen name, "Orinda"), thematically evokes friendship, and the friendship of this particular woman, as a force capable of giving life to a formerly lifeless form. Prior to this state of friendship, the speaker expresses her belief that she was merely a "carcass" which "breathed, and walked, and slept/So that the world believed/There was a soul" operating this body, whereas, the speaker asserts, there was none--only a soulless shell, acting as if alive (Philips, "To My Excellent Lucasia" 5-7). It was only "art"--pretense--which could produce such emotionless daily motions (9). By contrast, after meeting Lucasia, the speaker gains "a soul," which she identifies as "*our* soul"--i.e. hers and

Lucasia's, one unified life force, which operates through their two bodies (12, 24, emphasis mine). In this sense, her assertion in the first stanza is thrown into new light: "I am not thine, but thee" (4). Here, there is minimal distinction--or, more pointedly, minimal *significance* to any distinction--between the speaker herself and her beloved; the speaker *is* her beloved.

As Andreadis notes, such a conception of unity in same-sex friendship and intimacy is rooted in classical conceptions of same-sex male relationships (i.e. Cicero's *De Amicitia*), which are rediscovered and extolled by various male writers in the late sixteenth century (Andreadis 525). In "Before Intimacy: Modernity and Emotion in the Early Modern Discourse of Sexuality," Daniel Juan Gil indicates a differential early modern conception of same-sex relationships which is connected to yet distinct from classical understandings of the same. Following a Sedgwickian framework of a spectrum between homosociality (social-level relationships between men) and homosexuality, Gil pays attention to "asocial, emotionally defined sexuality" as it arises in men's homoerotic poetry and conduct books, which produces a "brand of sexuality recorded in early modern literature [which] drives people together but without providing the terms for functional social ties between them" (862). This asocial approach to interpersonal interaction, alongside increasingly gendered stratification along public and private lines, as well as the decreasing emphasis placed upon one's social rank in one's self-definition, leads to widespread attempts to define the self in terms of one's emotional connections with others (863-4). His analysis of sixteenth-century conduct manuals reveals the impact of this upon relationships and self-perceptions in turn: understandings of civility adapted from medieval courtly doctrine now applies more generally, and is re-predicated on a humanist belief in "a hypothetically universal core of humanity shared by all" (865). Such a belief enforces extreme self-consciousness in social interaction, a fear of "spectacular violations" of this core, which necessitates (as in

Erasmus) “habits of sensitive observation of and even identification with other human beings” (866, 865). And simultaneously, the courtly origins of this code of conduct stands in paradoxical opposition to an ideal of shared humanity, as medieval courtliness was centered upon essentialized differences (867). The simultaneous linkage and distinction between individuals then opens a more visceral space of reactions to one another which can only be defined in bodily emotional terms, lacking the appropriate social or interior terminology; the dissonance creates painful emotions which draw individuals together even as they repel them from one another. Such a “vocabulary of powerful emotions,” particularly painful emotions, becomes the axis for understanding one’s connections to others and one’s own experiences of the interpersonal world, forming a basis for a modern individuality (880).

As much may be evident in men’s writing surrounding same-sex interpersonal relationships; in women’s writing concerning the same, however, I would propose a similar yet distinct portrait of relationships and identity (especially identity *through* relationships). In Philips’ oeuvre of friendship poetry addressed to other women in her literary coterie, powerful emotional identification with others provides a basis for self-identification. This aligns somewhat with Gil’s analysis, particularly his analysis of conduct manuals; where my analysis of Philips’ poetry differentiates with Gil’s analysis of early modern male homoerotics lies in tracking Philips’ generative, rather than destructive, expression of female-female desire and intimacy. Rather than identification resulting from, and in turn reinforcing, painful or fractious emotions towards the other, Philips’ friendship poems “To My Excellent Lucasia, On Our Friendship,” “Friendship in Emblem, or, The Seal, To My Dearest Lucasia,” and “L’amitie: To Ms. Mary Aubrey,” indicate harmonious mutual identifications, which imbue the self and the other with positive emotional significance. As we see in “To My Excellent Lucasia,” for Philips’ speaker

the ultimate knowledge of oneself lies in, and through, the intimate same-sex other. Instead of merely operating as a body, as a "lifeless form" which the speaker describes at the beginning of the poem as acting, devoid of emotion or significance, for the eyes of "the world," the speaker's soul in unison, or produced through unison, with Lucasia is a feeling thing, an existence with emotional resonance, producing a full life, rather than a mere deathlike existence (Philips, "To My Excellent Lucasia" 5-7). Intimate mutual identification, in short, allows for women to utilize the language and the experience of powerful interpersonal emotions which are, according to Gil, forefront in the early modern mind, in order to articulate richer, more stable self-understandings.

The particular dual existence of love and friendship invoked in "To My Excellent Lucasia" is indicated, with a considerable level of self-awareness, in another poem within Philips' "Lucasia" cycle: "Friendship in Emblem, or, The Seal, to My Dearest Lucasia." This poem situates friendship as a seal, which, according to the endnote in the Loughlin edition, is "a symbolic picture with a motto...and/or explanatory verses" (495n11). The body of the poem constructs an image of friendship as two hearts "joined and growing, both in one" (Philips, "Friendship in Emblem" 3). These hearts also "flame...several ways," indicating the mutual heat and intensity of their passion; however, the speaker additionally qualifies this passion, insisting that it is "noble and divine" (13, 16). In the following stanza specifically, the flame of their passion is compared to the flame of "Moses' bush," in that they are "warmed and enlightened" rather than "consumed" by their passion--so here, again, the speaker is insisting upon an innocence to her relationship with Lucasia, taking on a religious quality to sanctify it from "grossness or mortality" (19, 20, 17). In short, the narrator eschews the notion of physicality, laying claim to a spiritual rather than a physical union--in such a union of hearts, their love is

transcendent of physical form, and thus free from any accusations of indecency which could come from a physical form.

In the last two stanzas of "Friendship in Emblem," however, this anti-physicality is complicated by the poem's awareness of its presentation. The emblem has been made through the poem; the reader has glimpsed the intertwined hearts on fire. The narrator asserts that such a seal "needs no motto," yet noting that for "it was thought fit/That 'friendship' only should be writ" as the motto for this love (59-60). In this act, the image delineated in the above stanzas is both literally and figuratively "labelled" as friendship. In response, the narrator indicates that, "as there are degrees of bliss,/So there's no friendship meant by this" (61-2). And yet, she does not eschew the label from the image: though it is insufficient to deem it "only" friendship, her relationship with Lucasia is, on the surface and "to the dull eye," a friendship "only" (59-60). Such a consciousness of duality--platonic presentation versus passionate reality--rings true in terms of the climate in which Philips is writing: in mid-seventeenth century literature, "a public discourse of female same-sex trespass" is more apparent, and simultaneously, an "ethical uncertainty, perceptible as a subtextual uneasiness," is beginning to arise in discourses surrounding female same-sex friendships, as they have already in male ones (Andreadis 530). So such assertions of innocence on the part of Philips' narrator are meant to dispel accusations of indecency leveled towards the writer herself; at the same time, though, the intensity of the relationship is still present--even in a holy fire, the hearts are still aflame. So the duality which exists between surface-level friendship and the deeper indication of a love which cannot be defined solely as friendship allows female intimacy to be expressed and protected in the same breath. As a result, their close relationship becomes an internal, private thing, even in publicized writing.

A private understanding of the self and its intimate relations with others is thus formulated through these selections of Philips' *Lucasia* poems; in further poems, this mode of being is placed in opposition to, or even situated as an imagined alternative to, contemporaneous public structures. This is particularly evident in Philips' "L'amitié: To Mrs Mary Aubrey," which situates the harmonious and generative union expressed in the previous two poems in relation to a fractious and destructive outer world. Like in her "*Lucasia*" poems, Philips indicates her relationship with her beloved friend as one in which two "souls are grown,/By an incomparable mixture, One--" a productive intimate relationship, which produces an entity that transcends physical bonds to produce an emotionally-valORIZED soul in union (Philips, "L'amitié: To Mrs Mary Aubrey" 3-4). In this poem, however, this intimacy, and the privacy and identification which arises from it, is placed in opposition to a "factious world," which rejects such emotional bonds in favor of the "vast ambitions" of individuals in opposition with one another (22, 16). In this, the poem denounces social relations endorsed by a world of "kings, and conquerors" bent on fractious pursuits of political power and greed, and in turn, promotes a new, private manner of relating to others, through which each soul flourishes in their new form in union with one another (20).

The positioning of the public sphere in "L'amitié" can be seen as a description of a "factious world" of political contention, which was a reality for the premodern period and subsequently bleeds into early modern understandings of society and self: the poem's invocation of "kings, and conquerors" in constant states of "envy, pride and faction" with one another indicates a driving trope within premodern and early modern literature and history (22, 20, 18). They engage in factious competition for the desired object/end (in this case, political gain), being drawn to this not only by pride, but by a desire to relate to one another, and to refine themselves

in relation to one another. We see something similar enacted in Gil's analysis of the poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt. In his analysis, it is apparent that Wyatt's poetry exhibits an in-between point of premodern and early modern approaches to relationships which define the self through others. He notes, in Wyatt's "The Long Love that in My Thought Doth Harbour," the male narrator's orientation towards a "lord/vassal bond, with its unconditional internal loyalty and unchecked, outward aggression" imagined towards the end of the poem in response to "the disturbingly inhibited, modern bond proposed by the lady" beloved earlier on in the poem, who invokes him to rein in his passion with reason, and thus suffer in love. At these crossroads of premodernity and modernity, and thus presented with a "double social crisis," the narrator remains in a state of indecision, overwhelmed with a mixture of pleasure and pain (Gil 874). Such positive and negative emotions arising from interpersonal relations and brewing within the (male) subject in literatures of this period, as outlined above, lead to male subjectivities dependent on contentious relationships centered around a common beloved. Derived from Petrarchan ideals, in Wyatt's "Whoso List to Hunt," "the struggle to refine the masculine self to make it worthy of the female beloved is, at the same time, a struggle to triumph over other men at court," indicating a pleasure among men of the same status in dealing and receiving pain in the pursuit of the beloved (875).

The narrator of "L'amitié" takes on an alternative, oppositional approach to intimacy, illustrated in her exalted relationship with her beloved friend. This mutual affection, as the narrator frames it, is founded in a privacy removed from, and antithetical to, an avaricious public world. In the first half of the poem, the narrator asserts that the "well-acquainted minds" of herself and her friend, in union, "are now as near/As love, or vows, or secrets can endear" (Philips, "L'amitié" 5-6). Such an assertion associates intimacy with the interpersonal quality of *vows*, and the private quality of *secrets*; it indicates a privacy existing within an interpersonal

relationship, which, in turn, is associated with the close affinity of *love*. Further, an embodied form of intimacy is utilized to express privacy between these two lover-friends in the ensuing lines: “Thy heart locks up my secrets richly set,/And my breast is thy private cabinet” (9-10). In this expression is evident a recollection to the themes of “To my Excellent Lucasia,” in that the narrator feels a union with the addressee through a sense of mutual spiritual inhabitation, in her *secrets* dwelling in the *heart* of the addressed; additionally, the bodily aspect of such inhabitation is highlighted here, in that the speaker’s *breast* becomes a *private* space for the addressed. Further, the use of *cabinet* specifically denotes a domestic, interior space, as this space is the realm in which the physical furnishing of a cabinet would exist and be utilized; simultaneously, however, *cabinet* is also a political term for the close collaborators and confidants of a leader. In this, the world which this relationship stages is simultaneously private, as it exists between these two women only, and public, in that it comprises a governing body through the body of the beloved.

By using the terms which invoke both intimate experiences and government functions to portray friendship as existing in a space between the public and private, Philips destabilizes the integrity of these categories, producing a new spatial setting which operates on differential terms from those of either of these spheres. In “Katherine Philips and the Space of Friendship,” Susannah B. Mintz claims that the relationship between the poet-speaker and her beloved friend is treated as “sacred and sublime not according to the orthodoxy of a religion written by men but rather by the linguistic maneuver of a specifically female reciprocity,” as is traceable in my line analysis above. Yet she additionally notes how “[L’Amitié] is very much a public, speaking poem, one in which the female voice proclaims early on her ability to name, to define, to categorize, and to create” (70). The intimacy enactable in the private exchanges of secrets and

sentiments between oneself and another, though removed from the masculine hegemonic public, yet provides the basis for claims made counter to the masculine hegemonic public, through its independence as a semi-public sphere in itself. The narrator expresses that, “united thus” with her beloved friend, they dwell separately from the rest of the world--here dubbed the “dull world”--with no issue to incite their “sorrow, anger, or [their] fear” (15, 13). It is here, then, that the speaker begins to express her conviction of the superiority of the private intimate space in opposition to a public, politically-driven space imagined through the referencing of rulers and their *dull world*. She goes on, at the end of the poem, to assert that she and the addressee “have engrost/[that] which they and all the factious world have lost” (21-22).

In the assertions outlined above, there is an implicit assertion of the dominion of intimate mutual identification as possessing not only more than the public sphere, but also retaining something which the public sphere has *lost*, to which it could not hold on: the *sacred union* between individuals, which imbues them with life greater than their own, an intimacy greater than friendship and generative of a harmonious sense of self and other. Relationships between women in the private sphere, especially in “L’amitié” as they are posed in opposition to those between men in the public sphere, consist of a mutual union informed by domestic and personal interiority--women build relationships upon exclusive exchanges of their private, secret lives, and in this exchange their “souls are grown,/By an incomparable mixture, One” (Philips, “L’amitié” 3-4). Their mutual affection is generative, producing greater senses of self and one another, “growing” and strengthening the self and the other in turn. The public political power and gestures of domination exercised by “kings, and conquerors” in the poem is then put in lower esteem than the generative social power of interpersonal intimacy.

In these poems of Katherine Philips, the reader can begin to see a formulation of the intimate relations between women in the private sphere as this gendered sphere begins to arise in the early modern period. Further, the reader can see the significance of these relations to early modern subject formation among women in particular, as well as a tentative gesture towards the particular selfhood and the capacity for self-assertion which women gain from interiority in these spaces, in this early period of modernity. The same-sex relations of women in the private sphere grant to them positive, generative senses of the self and the other, substantiating the sense of the self through the other, and vice versa. Even more, this stability in relationships, and in self- and other-understandings, allows for a kind of confidence, self-assurance. This is what allows the narrator, at the end of “L’amitié,” to make the bold, counterpublic assertion that she and her beloved friend are richer in each other and themselves than are the kings and rulers of the masculine public. Self-signified individuality, in tandem with mutually harmonious relationships, is built, and valued, in this intimate semi-private space; in this, they are able to write themselves within an ideal private counterpublic of relationality, to imagine themselves as virtually independent from public hierarchies and forces pursuing hegemonic political power. That public world becomes a “dull world,” a “game” which individuals “play” at rather than an inevitable force of domination (15, 18). In this semi-private space, this private counterpublic, such contentious games do not matter so much in comparison to the unions through which one can better understand one another and oneself in turn. This, then, points us to distinct models of selfhood predicated on these relational vectors: self-signification versus (contentious) individuality. The masculine public sphere is a sphere of contention, both in Philips’ framing in “L’amitié” and Gil’s analysis of male homoerotic writing; competition between men is encouraged and intensified by conflicting emotions towards the other. As exhibited in these

friendship poems, women are able to gain a fuller, more emotionally-significant sense of self through intimacy with other women in spaces, such as the coterie, which allow for intimate, and generative, interactions.

## Part 4: Lanyer and “The Description of Cooke-ham:”

## Written Spaces Embodying Female Intimacy and Subjectivity

The writings of Aemilia Lanyer, composed and published earlier in the century to Philips--post-Reformation but pre-Civil War, in the first half of the seventeenth century--exhibit similar trends to that of Philips: particularly in “The Description of Cooke-ham,” she writes a separate, feminine, semi-autonomous and semi-private space of her patroness’ manor. Lanyer, as “one of the most frequently studied of the numerous female authors from early modern Europe who have been rediscovered by feminist scholars,” stands as an important subject to this study, as she, like Philips, composed much of her written work in feminine spaces. In the course of her career, Lanyer, “a woman who had many contacts with rich and powerful people but few claims to social status herself” as the daughter of a musician (emigrant of Italy, and of Jewish lineage) and the widow of another, in the Tudor court, wrote “several poems addressed to individual noblewomen” (Furey 471). Such poems make up the majority of her only volume of poetry, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, published in 1611, which concludes with “The Description of Cooke-ham.” The eponymous poem of the volume takes as its setting the crucifixion of Christ, which is not an uncommon subject matter for early modern religious literature; what is uncommon, however, is Lanyer’s choice to take up the perspective of the women involved in the event for the duration of her poem. Their stories are told in four books: I. “The Passion of Christ,” II. “Eve’s Apology in Defence of Women,” III. “The Tears of the Daughters of Israel,” and IV. “The Salutation and Sorrow of the Virgin Mary.”

The dedicatory poems to aristocratic women open the volume, including invocations to Queen Anne of Denmark, her contemporary queen of Britain; Princess Elizabeth, the queen’s

daughter; and the Countess Dowager of Pembroke, Mary Sidney, who was a poet in her own right. She continues, in a poetics of praise, for seven additional poems, addressed to several other countesses and other powerful women. Most of these include an implicit desire for patronage, which she did receive from Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland and her daughter, Anne, proprietresses of the Cooke-ham estate. Notable, though, is her inclusion of “To All Vertuous Ladies in General” among these dedicatory poems. As its title implies, this poem addresses all women and invokes them to unite with one another in harmonious and spiritual community. The concluding letter of this section, “To the Vertuous Reader,” perhaps even more subversively addresses the reader *as a woman*, imputing her intention for the volume to be read by “all virtuous Ladies and Gentlewomen of this kingdom; and in commendation of some particular persons of *our own sex*.” In such framing, then, the volume represents a conversation between the female poet and an imagined audience which is also exclusively female (Miller 157).

Through these poems, feminist scholars have noted that Lanyer “impressed upon her readers that the very act of writing is relational,” thus formulating a feminine audience, and forging imagined relationships with women through her written oeuvre (Furey 471). In the wake of this written relationality in her dedicatory section, we see Lanyer, in “To The Vertuous Reader,” making a bold claim against the hegemonic masculine public and in support of feminine community. She bases this claim, as will be further discussed later in this section, upon Judeo-Christian religious tracts: she claims that men, “forgetting they were born of women, nourished of women...do like Vipers deface the wombs wherein they were bred,” and, additionally, “such as these were they that dishonoured Christ his Apostles and Prophets, putting them to shameful deaths.” She then goes on to list women in the Judeo-Christian canon who opposed male authority: Deborah against Sisera, Esther against Haman, Judith against Holophernes. In this enumeration is an

implicit feminine community as well, as these women stand as religious and historical examples of opposition to male power. Such feminine unity is further expounded upon in the poem “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum,” which reveals and justifies a tradition of feminine union in sanctity and direct action against the masculine sphere.

Lanyer’s poem “The Description of Cooke-ham,” written for her patroness Margaret Clifford, at whose manor house she composed the volume containing this poem, exhibits in more depth how such written relationality operates, and specifically, how Lanyer forges a space of, and for, female intimacy and subjecthood through writing this space. Cooke-ham, as a country-house of early modern England, exists as a unique space between private and public, and thus one in which Lanyer can formulate and express such novel forms of relationships and subjectivity. The country house, as noted in the review of Lena Cowen Orlin’s material culture studies in part two, departs from the more open architecture of the premodern courtyard house and produces new spaces of privacy through the increasingly separated rooms and levels of the interior, segmented, “double pile” house (99). However, Orlin also asserts that the space of the country-house did not hold discrete boundaries against the outside world. She notes that these country-houses served as a kind of micro-economy, hosting “estate administrators, domestic servants, stable workers, and gardeners,” among others--beneficiaries such as Lanyer, for example (95-6). So although the architecture itself promotes privacy, the country-house is also intricately communing with the external realm via economic and political exchange. Additionally, Christine Coch discusses how the early modern country-house grounds, the spaces which encompass the majority of “The Description of Cooke-ham,” hold “ambiguous status as an extension of the public dimensions of the household as well as a more intimate sphere apart” from publicity (98). As the cultivation of nature is increasingly regarded as an art through the

practice of gardening, Lanyer “draws attention to the interpretive work that transforms the estate from a mundane borrowed property into a magically responsive haven,” highlighting her hand in creating this space in drawing attention to her writing, at the same time as she shapes its expression, in accordance with her vision, for her readers (106). In this Lanyer “creates an intimate refuge where women read and write for one another, a ‘Paradise’ insulated from the matrimonial and social obligations that disrupt the relationships between them” within the written space of Cooke-ham, enabling a real space to be differentially imagined through writing, writing which is born from the individualized experience of the poet-speaker (107).

In “The Description of Cooke-ham,” one observes the speaker’s intimate mutual identification with her patroness through her understanding and presentation of the manor as a idealistic space catering to its female protectors, which allows them to construct the space in turn, in accordance with their “desires” (12). After her patroness leaves the manor, the poet-speaker indicates her sorrow at this through the environment of the manor as well, embodying her subjective emotions through her surroundings. Her expressed subjectivity also gives her the authority to rail against the oppressive circumstances which implore her beloved other, her patroness, to leave the ideal feminine environment. She concludes by ending with the observation that the act of *writing* this space, and the relational selfhood formed within it, will preserve the female voices and presences (particularly those of the patroness) which were able to exist there. Additionally, the written construction of the space in accordance with a feminine vision and will also allows Lanyer to pursue her own desires in telling her “sacred story of the soul’s delight” in residing there, and in thus having the capacity to pursue this form of self-expression in the first place (6).

Perhaps what stands out most to a reader's initial entry into the poem is its use of parentheses which, quite literally, "bracket" certain sections for the reader. Even in the first line, Lanyer writes "Farewell (sweet Cooke-ham)," keeping the name of her patroness' manor within those brackets (1). This can also be seen in "(sweet place)" and, additionally, "(great Lady)" (7, 11). In these punctuation choices lie a conception of boundedness, separation within these initial namings of the manor: through them, the place is physically separate from the rest of the text at the same time as it is located within it, and *informs* it in turn. The first two instances are especially interesting in evaluating how the space is gendered: the house is referred to as "her" at the same time as it is "princely:" though the manor is situated in a context of masculine political power, the place itself is gendered as feminine (8, 5). The last instance is additionally compelling, though, in that it is in reference to a person, and the author's patroness in particular, rather than a place, and yet is still separated from the rest of the text. The patroness, then, is framed in a similar manner to the place of Cooke-ham: bounded, individual, and holding sway over her surroundings.

The majority of the first half of the poem focuses primarily on the patroness, through whose personhood and subjective viewpoint the speaker as well as the reader experiences the environment of Cooke-ham. The description of Cooke-ham is itself interestingly framed as catering to the patroness' specific desires: the trees "shade the bright sun from [her] brighter eyes," the birds sing "to entertain [her]" (26, 30). Even more, the landscape is framed to take these specific actions explicitly for the patroness herself. For her, "trees with leaves, with fruits, with flowers clad/Embraced each other, seeming to be glad/Turning themselves to beauteous Canopies," taking form and constructing themselves to "shade her eyes" (23-5). However it may

be, the poem's speaker views the physical environment of Cooke-ham as catering to the patroness' subjectivity, in attending to her internal desires.

The above foregrounds the poem for the first half; the second half indicates the patroness' departure from this space, and the poet-speaker's anguished reaction. And it is significant to note that all of this reflection on the patroness through her subjective surroundings comes from the poet-speaker herself: her patroness' subjectivity is framed by the speaker, through the speaker's description of the actions of the patroness' surroundings. This is particularly important when we see the second half of the poem, where the poet-speaker speaks to the *change* that *she herself* perceives to come over the place after her patroness has left her. She describes how "the trees that were so glorious in [their] view,/Forsook flowers and fruit" which they had grown, according to the poet-speaker, for the patron herself (133-4). This is in the speaker's perception, but it also indicates a similar move to the framed relationship between the environment and the patroness: the environment is catering to, and thus reflecting, what the speaker is experiencing *on the interior*. She repeatedly expresses her sorrow at her patroness departing, after providing this space for her and supporting her within it. Even towards the beginning of the poem, the poet speaker laments that her "sad eyes" will never again "behold" this place, due to her patroness never again being there (9). In other words, she is interpreting her surroundings by way of her interior feelings and experiences; in the action of writing, then, she is *constructing* this same space based upon that same interiority. We could see how this work was at first done by the patroness herself, and then transmitted to the poet-speaker through their intimacy: the shift is notably preceded by the patroness' "taking [her] by the hand" and "repeat[ing to her] the pleasures which had passed" at the manor, before taking her leave "with a chaste, yet loving kiss" to a tree, which the speaker later kisses in turn (162-3, 165). Through such a private sharing

of experience and familiarity, then, the poet-speaker regards the patroness as another self, as in Philips, and novelly *takes up* the patroness' interiority as it is embodied in the landscape after her departure from it. Throughout the poem, then, the poet-speaker's thoughts and feelings are expressed in the space, determining the space, and are transmitted through her written description of the space.

Cooke-ham was the real-life manor of the Cliffords where Margaret Clifford and her daughter, Anne, lived, and where Margaret supported Lanyer as she wrote; in "The Description of Cooke-ham," it is also the imagined space made through Lanyer's interior experience, projected outward to determine the landscape itself. Such an imagined space, built on personal perceptions, also reflects the poet-speaker's intimate feelings towards her patroness. The space, then, is feminine, informed as such both through the poet-speaker's interiority and her expression of it in relation to her patroness.

There are no male figures directly referenced at all in the poem, aside from biblical figures such as Christ and David; and even then, they are only referenced in the poem to imbue the space with further significance through holy presence (72, 77). However, there is perhaps an indirect reference to the world of men through a conceit in the middle of the poem. After mourning Fortune's decision to take her patroness, her beloved friend, away from her, the poet-speaker laments how

Many are placed in those orbs of state,  
Partners in honor, so ordained by Fate,  
Nearer in show, yet farther off in love,  
In which, the lowest always are above.  
But whither am I carried in conceit,  
My wit too weak to conster of the great. (108-113)

In the above conceit, the poet-speaker is lamenting the contradictory fact that those *partners in honor* who, *ordained by Fate* and placed within the same *orbs of state*, are nonetheless *farther*

*off in love* yet permitted to be *Nearer* to one another than other more deserving partners--say, one intimate friend to another. This is what compels me to believe that this conceit is referring to the institution of political marriage, even heteronormative marriage in general, in opposition to the homosocial bonds shared between friends. As opposed to intimate friendships at least, marriages are not necessarily founded on love, especially in this period and within Lanyer's sphere: among the aristocratic early moderns, it is still more common to marry for political alliance or economic expedience than for love alone. This analogy is particularly sound when taking into account biographical details: Margaret Clifford's husband, the Count of Cumberland, was unfaithful to her during his lifetime. In this, then, the poet-speaker implies that he was *lowest* morally in their relationship, but yet, in the unjust social reality, he was consistently considered as *above* his wife in their relationship, politically, solely by virtue of his gender. Such gendered hypocrisy as it is ingrained in the contemporary sociopolitical structure is also revealed in Margaret's long legal battle to ensure her inheritance would be passed down to her daughter, Anne. Such an inheritance would have happened automatically, immediately supported by the law, had Anne been a son rather than a daughter. In the last two lines, the poet-speaker even makes sarcastic reference to the male assumption that her *wit* is *too weak* in the masculine eye for her to assert such things--yet she does anyways, even stating in the next line, a flippant "Why not?" (114). In this conceit, then, the poet-speaker rails against the social norms which unconditionally support patriarchally-structured marriages in general, even when those marriages are less loving and supportive than intimate relationships between friends, such as that exhibited in the body of the poem.

This is the poet-speaker's counterpublic self-assertion in this poem: a critique of the male-centric political world, based upon her personal experiences and her intimate relationships

with women within a constructed, private counterpublic community of feminine interiority. Such expressions of intimate identification with other women, and assertions of self through externalized expressions of interior experience, as well as of opinions counter to political and social norms, are possible through the contexts in which poets such as Lanyer and Philips are writing: the separate, private, feminine spaces which enable feminine communities and authorities to be imagined, and expressed, through the act of writing. Building upon Constance Furey's central claim that Lanyer's work "serves both as a forum for discussing and as a means of enacting relationships," one can see that Lanyer's act of writing while in attendance at Cookeham, a real-life space of feminine social unity and authority, informs her act of writing Cookeham itself, which maintains this female-centric community, enacts it, and imagines it as a space independent from male hegemony, no matter what the reality may be (472). The female readership's relation to the space expressed in, and constructed by, the writing is key here. By writing or reading such a work which emulates such unity, women are able to imagine themselves as members of a broad association of women across space, across time. *Writing* relationality, then, and selfhood through relationality, makes these things plausible in reality, and, perhaps more potently, makes them an imagined and imaginable reality in the mind.

It is thus that "The Description of Cookeham" concludes Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Arguably, due to its placement immediately following the titular poem, it serves as an epilogue of sorts to the same as it concerns feminine community. As briefly mentioned at the beginning of this section, "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum" presents a reading of the Crucifixion which reveals and advocates for the existence of feminine communities within the Christian mythos. Following from Naomi Miller's "(M)other Tongues: Maternity and Subjectivity," which

notes the titular poem's presentation of female selfhood as founded in a distinctly feminine spiritual community, Cooke-ham, as epilogue, is then readable as "a female Eden" (149).

Lanyer's poet-speaker initially references Cooke-ham at the beginning of "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," addressing the Countess and offering an apology for not immediately writing "those praiseful lines of that delightful place," describing it in Edenic terms: labeling it "Paradise... With pleasant groves, hills, walks and stately trees" (18, 21-2). We see such idealizing pastoral and Edenic descriptions repeated in "The Description of Cooke-ham" itself as well, as it contains "beauteous Canopies...crystal streams...little birds...gentle winds"--nature in its ideal, experienced and constructed by the women living within it (25, 27, 29, 39). Cooke-ham then presents a paradise of feminine sociality and subjectivity which remains untarnished by male presence; and, much like the Biblical Eden, Cooke-ham is a paradise which falls, due to the intrusion of the external, patriarchal reality of inheritance. But as we see at the conclusion of the poem, this space, and the women who populate it, are not so mutable--they are immortalized through Lanyer's act of writing. Writing the space of Cooke-ham preserves the space in which feminine community, and the forms of self-expression which arise from it, exist; this preserved communal space and its resultant expressions thus endure through the imagination of the (female) readership. Additionally the poem acts as a record, as proof that such a space, such a reality, as Lanyer presents it, can, and *did*, exist.

Feminine community is further strengthened within *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* as a whole through invocations of feminine inheritance. As discussed above, Margaret Clifford's departure of Cooke-ham is attributed to her attempt to secure her daughter's inheritance within a patrilineal system of primogeniture. In light of this, there is a notable focus upon *matrilineal* inheritances throughout the volume's poetry. In "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," Miller argues that

Lanyer's focus on "Eve, the mother of all humankind," and "Mary, the mother of 'Our Lord,'" constructs a narrative of "feminine power," identifying women as "the shaping forces of society at large" in having maternal authority over every human that comes into existence (161, 149). Further, she notes in "The Description of Cooke-ham" the emphasis on the Countess' "use of the estate as a site for the transmission of knowledge from mother to daughter," indicating a matrilineal inheritance between mother and daughter, one based in interiority rather than in material possessions. This exchange then "simultaneously embraces Lanyer and empowers her to assert her own subjectivity in discursive terms," as we see in the body of the poem as it is explored above (161). Cooke-ham, then, is a site of a particular kind of community, predicated on forms of transmission which would occur in traditional family structures; in these constructed feminine "families," however, what is imparted is, rather than material wealth, the wealth of knowledge and empowerment which allows Lanyer to write in and of this space.

The inheritances between women which are present in *Salve Deus* can be read as traditionally vertical, from parents to progeny, as in the knowledge exchange between Margaret Clifford and her daughter. They can also be read as lateral, between subjects who are perhaps in the same generation or not related through blood; such is the case in the exchange of subjectivity and self-assertion from Margaret Clifford to Lanyer's poet-speaker. I propose that such matrilineal systems of relational inheritance and exchange, as Miller posits them, can be expanded upon, in noting the ability of written relationality to transcend space and time in considering such exchanges. In *Salve Deus*, Lanyer writes relationships with the Queen and Countesses with whom she has never physically interacted; even if they never respond, her address to them, and their imagined readership of these addresses, exists through her writing. Thus she writes lateral relationships which transcend physical and social spaces. She also writes

*vertical* relationships through her references to women in the Biblical tradition. These relations, though, she applies not so much to herself personally as to womanhood at large. Through Eve, and Mary, and all the religious historical women enumerated throughout her work, she produces a revisionist history which reads a feminine tradition of devotion into Judeo-Christian religiosity, and which, most importantly, identifies the subjugated contemporary female subject with the subjugated historical one. Thus, by empowering the historical subject, she empowers the contemporary subject as well. These identifications with other women, on the basis of their shared marginalized gender, across space and time is enabled through the immortalizing act of writing, and enables the existence of written relationships, and imagined communities, which transcend space and time to bolster contemporary feminine communities and subjectivities.

To go back to the Edenic quality of Cooke-ham, in light of the written forms of relation exemplified in the volume: the Biblical fall springs from the forbidden consumption of fruit from the Tree of Knowledge; prior to the fall of Cooke-ham as Lanyer frames it, the poet-speaker also takes something from a revered tree: a kiss. That kiss was placed there by her patroness, prior to her departure, as noted in my larger analysis of the poem: as I argued above, this is indicative of Lanyer's poet-speaker "taking up" the subjectivity of her patroness after her departure. After the Biblical fall, there is the resultant discontinuance of the Edenic space, a discontinuance which is final and lamented. In the fall of Cooke-ham's Eden, however, we see a *transfer* occur between Clifford and Lanyer's poet-speaker, and Lanyer goes on to embody, and write, the Edenic space in Clifford's absence. Rather than being lost, then, the paradise of Cooke-ham, and the relationships and self-expressions which are enabled there, are preserved, through an expression of love from one member of the feminine community to another. Though the real-life Paradise is lost, its written version, with all of its associations, is retained.



#### Part 4: Conclusion, Implications: The Early Modern Empowering Woman

The early modern period is one during which many categories are in flux: privacy and publicity, but also gender, selfhood, relationality, and writing itself. Such a period--particularly in between the Reformation and the Interregnum, wherein England and its citizens were experiencing all of these fluctuations as amplified by religious and political upheaval--offers to those living within it many unstable categories. Unstable categories are easy to further destabilize; in the midst of change, individuals can produce their own, self-determined definitions for things. Categories in flux allow for definitions in-between, or outside of, traditional binaries and boundaries.

As explored at length above, privacy and publicity being in flux in the late sixteenth and through the seventeenth century opened up "in-between" spaces for some women to produce literature among, and for, other women. These feminine communities allowed their female participants to enact, through writing, intimate relationships with one another, mutual identifications through intimacy, and newfound significances and assertions of the self through identification. Such a selfhood as it is expressed in poetry during this time offers an alternative to the masculine political and contentious individuality which predominates in other realms. Though this alternative selfhood is expressed in a microcosmic manner--since it is evinced specifically in these separate and intimate settings of feminine community--it has macrocosmic implications, especially in the fact of these poems' publication. In short, the poetry we see here portrays intimate feminine communities, reflecting the communities in which they were composed; the written and published status of these poems, though, separates these communities

from their place and time, and allows us to understand them as entities providing the conditions for constructing novel, and counterpublic, understandings of the self and the other.

Here it is important to further delineate the nature of these spaces as these women were writing within them. First off, these spaces, as implied above, are not large by any means: both Philips and Lanyer were writing with only two other women at a time, at most. This fact emphasizes the exclusivity of these spaces. With Philips emulating court culture within her Society of Friendship, and Lanyer receiving patronage from a noblewoman at her manor-house, both of these women are writing within privileged spaces, to which they are enabled access due to their privilege. The exclusivity of these spaces, in turn, enables their separation, and autonomy, from a hegemonically masculine public, allowing for new articulations of social relationships between women as well as subject articulations by women themselves.

It is also vital to return attention to these women's nature of *existing* within these spaces. Philips' space, her Society, is almost exclusively a written and imagined one, maintained more so through correspondence and exchanges of work than through physical presence. Lanyer's space of Cooke-ham, though written and imagined through "The Description of Cooke-ham," is also a real and physical one. Such differences between the spaces reflect upon the poems which depict and sculpt the distinct spaces for the reader. In the selected poems of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, one gains a sense of possibility and real-world application through the written space created there: a space such as Cooke-ham *did* exist, *can* exist, *will* exist. Philips, however, in her poems describing spaces of ideal female intimacy and co-existence, seems to desire to keep that space as covert as possible, accessible to the reader's interaction only as a bystander, who cannot ever truly enter or intrude into this particular written world. Similarly to Lanyer's written community,

too, Philips' writing of feminine union preserves this solidarity for posterity against the wear of time.

Both the concealed, closed-off intimate relationality exhibited by Philips and the enactable, based-in-reality communal space exhibited by Lanyer are valuable to note in the field today. For Philips, I would promote the solidarity and support she displays between women apart from a public attempting to oppress them, rather than the exclusionary gestures exhibited in her written space which are vestiges of court culture and not productive for any inclusive (read: valid) feminism today. This solidarity and support runs strong and deep enough to oppose weathering oppositional forces. From Philips' friendship poetics we can observe how to unite with and provide support to one another through the love and mutual investment we offer to one another in the midst of oppressive social contexts. As for Lanyer, I believe her approach offers to us real-world applications which are also crucial to ameliorative action today. Her community-making through writing affords the mutual support and strength exhibited in Philips, but expands that project, transcending spatial and temporal restrictions, producing a revisionist history which uncovers, amplifies, and harmonizes the voices of the silenced.

Through this thesis, in addition to my task of analyzing the spaces, relationships and agency these women produced through their writing, I also intend as a meta-project to continue this work exemplified by her in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Katherine Philips and Aemilia Lanyer are not household names--they do not appear nearly as often in anthologies as male counterparts such as Ben Jonson and Edmund Spenser. Until recent decades, their work had no substantial readership, even in academia. So the spaces both physical and written, the relationships, the subjectivities built by these women have been shaded over by the blanket narrative of the very hegemonic public which silenced them. This narrative persists, especially

when looking back on these earlier iterations of Western society. When imagining history, we assume, or perhaps project, victimhood on women as a whole. By calling back to these works, by reading them and entering into their imagined communities, we can cultivate the empowerment they provide for ourselves and for others. Because even in our modern society, even among modern women, gender essentialism still prevails.

In popular books on gender, even in textbooks still taught in classrooms (my own high school in a liberal state, for example)<sup>2</sup>, we see that gender-based oppression is not only a premodern phenomenon, no less than gender-based empowerment is a modern phenomenon. Especially in recent years, voices of opposition to essentialism have resulted in rising gender anxieties, leading to elaborate “gender reveal parties” involving pink or blue balloons, references to sex hormones to explain stereotypically gendered feminine or masculine behavior, and continued calls (whether explicit or implicit, whether outside of, or pervasively and perversely *within*, the feminist community) for those assigned female or male at birth to fulfill roles referred to as “traditional” for their gender (Rennon and Alsop 6-7). I am sure the reader is familiar with psychological, sociological, or anthropological tracts, whether popular or scholarly, which emphasize or take for granted “greater aggression and competitiveness in men and greater nurturing qualities in women,” which “picked out are supposed to causally explain and, sometimes, to justify the differing social positions that men and women typically occupy” (16, in review of scholarship from the past two decades).

In these I am particularly interested in the terminology of tradition, of the dominant masculine narrative of history that pushes women’s voices and novel gender negotiations to the

---

<sup>2</sup> I can still remember a passage in my AP Psychology textbook which describes sex hormones “flooding the brain” of a fetus, which “genders” it male or female. Yes, a psychology text designated for instruction, in our *modern era*, truly stated that brains, those bundles of water and fat, have a gender because hormones.

sidelines. The alt-right, a particularly loud player in our modern discourse, cites the “tradwife” as the only legitimate expression of womanhood, because she exemplifies a dominant Western historical narrative of women, voiceless, fulfilling this one role, and only this role, in society. However, as we have discovered through the recovery of women’s writing, their texts and testaments, some women exercised their voices in a way that the masculine narrative cannot erase, even if suppressed for centuries. Because in publication, especially its in-between space privacy and publicity into which women enter, their words, though they can be hidden, cannot die. These texts most pertinently exhibit how, contrary to modern assumptions, women’s gender negotiations have always been in flux, and have always pursued gender-based empowerment, in opposition to accepting disempowering and essentializing public narratives as the truth. It is in this that I believe we can learn and benefit from these women’s written communities today. In continuing the traditions of mutual solidarity and community-building exhibited at length in the works above, we can more effectively empower ourselves and others subjected to the overarching and masculine-centered essentialist narrative, asserting that this kind of person is *this* way, that kind of person *that* way, and that this is how things have always been and how they will always be. We need to know better than this, as did Philips and Lanyer.

The subject-formulating and subject-asserting gestures exhibited by the poetry read in this thesis are necessarily antithetical to a gender essentialism, ever rampant in our modern period, which justifies the historical relegation of women to a subordinate social position. I hope the analysis above makes this crucial point clear to the reader. Their mutual identifications, selfhoods and self-assertions, and the cultivation of spaces in which these features may thrive uninhibited, exhibit the creativity of gendered self-definitions which women have pursued always, and especially within disempowered social contexts. In this, we see how women have,

can, will, imagine and write and create social contexts in which they can truly form and express their subjecthood. On the other hand, though these spaces are *possible* during these disempowering periods, still the mainstream public narrative of gender is the one that prevails. Though spaces promoting feminine subjectivity and autonomy certainly exist in the early modern era, as revealed through the texts of Philips and Lanyer, the prevailing gender narrative all comes down to which narrative has more historical force behind it. Historical inequality builds upon historical inequality, until, as touched upon in the paragraph above, the dominant historical narrative promulgated by the disempowering public becomes tradition, which, through predicative thinking, becomes naturalized, “second nature.” It is important to me, then, to highlight the fact that another major driving factor of this thesis is the wish to show not only how gender is social even in historical realms, but how gendered oppression (and agency) is social as well. Though the hegemonic public realm makes gendered agency difficult (very, very difficult), we still see that subjugation is not universal, subjugation is not inevitable.

One more thing I hope the reader takes away from this thesis: I take the above readings of women’s written spaces, and the subjectivity and community that result from them, as evidence of a much earlier start to the “women’s movement” than we moderns have conceptualized. Though not as unified or universalized as the feminist movements in the nineteenth, twentieth, twenty-first centuries, these early modern feminine communities exhibit crucial features which empower marginalized groups. As touched upon in my earlier reading of Fraser, separate counterpublic spaces are spaces in which members of marginalized groups can find solidarity in one another, and in this strengthen each other and themselves. She references the “late-twentieth century U. S. feminist subaltern counterpublic, with its variegated array of journals, bookstores, publishing companies...conventions, festivals, and local meeting places” (Fraser 67). Though on

a much smaller physical scale, I believe that the feminine communities of Lanyer and Philips exemplify a feminist subaltern counterpublic in the same vein: like the feminist movement referenced by Fraser, the women in these early modern communities, whether written or real, cultivate distinct spaces in which to convene and identify with one another, thus strengthening their self-concepts and their voices.

Amid threats to our unique existences in the world, whether these threats come from the alt-right or from within the feminist community itself, we must bear in mind the lessons of our predecessors, the early modern women who set pen to page. The very act of reading and repeating their words combats a master narrative which attempts to nullify the existence of women like them. Historical narratives which promote gender inequality and essential difference as tradition do not account for the individuals who did act and live in opposition to their oppressive regimes. By reading, identifying with, and continuing discourses surrounding these works, we can promote a revisionist historical reading of gender which reveals the agency of gender-based self-definitions throughout time. Read this thesis, then, as a call for a more serious consideration of the early modern woman. In the spaces they carved out within their social contexts, early modern women empowered themselves and one another. They can, and will, empower us in our own period of flux. But in order for them to do so, we must read them without condescension, without the preconceived notions borne upon us throughout our lives and our schooling. Shakespeare's sisters endured much throughout their lives, there's no doubt. But their voices survived them, and they have much to share with us. After all this time, let us listen.

## Works Cited

- Andreadis, Harriette. "Re-Configuring Early Modern Friendship: Katherine Philips and Homoerotic Desire." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2006, pp. 523–542. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/3844519](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3844519).
- Arneil, Barbara. "Women as Wives, Servants and Slaves: Rethinking the Public/Private Divide." *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne De Science Politique*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2001, pp. 29–54. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/3232542](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3232542).
- Coch, Christine. "An Arbor of One's Own? Aemilia Lanyer and the Early Modern Garden." *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance Et Réforme*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2004, pp. 97–118. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/43445755](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43445755).
- Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text*, no. 25/26, 1990, pp. 56–80. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/466240](http://www.jstor.org/stable/466240).
- Furey, Constance. "The Selfe Undone: Individualism and Relationality in John Donne and Aemilia Lanyer." *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 99, no. 4, 2006, pp. 469–486. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/4125267](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4125267).
- Gil, Daniel Juan. "Before Intimacy: Modernity and Emotion in the Early Modern Discourse of Sexuality." *ELH*, vol. 69, no. 4, 2002, pp. 861–887. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/30032048](http://www.jstor.org/stable/30032048).
- Grossman, Marshall, ed. *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre, and the Canon*. University Press of Kentucky, 1998. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lib/umichigan/detail.action?docID=1914921>.

Hiner, Amanda P. *Women, Publicity, and Print Culture in England, 1670-1770*. Washington University in St. Louis, Ann Arbor, 1998. *ProQuest*,

<https://proxy.lib.umich.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/304453395?accountid=14667>.

Lennon, Kathleen and Rachel Alsop. *Gender Theory in Troubled Times*. Polity, 2020.

Matchinske, Megan. *Writing, Gender and State in Early Modern England: Identity Formation and the Female Subject*. Cambridge University Press, 1998. *EBSCOhost*,

[search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=55239&site=ehost-live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=55239&site=ehost-live&scope=site)

Mintz, Susannah B. "Katherine Philips and the Space of Friendship." *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1998, pp. 62–78. *JSTOR*,

[www.jstor.org/stable/43293661](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43293661).

Orlin, Lena Cowen. *Locating Privacy in Tudor London*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Orvis, David L. and Ryan Singh Paul. *The Noble Flame of Katherine Philips: A Poetics of Culture, Politics, and Friendship*. Duquesne University Press, 2015. *Project MUSE*,

[muse.jhu.edu/book/43398](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/43398).

Pacheco, Anita. *A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*. Blackwell, 2002.