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MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

SORRY, NOT SORRY: SPEECH AS ACTION FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKS OF AEMILIA
LANYER AND JOHN MILTON

by

Tiffany Ann Errickson

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

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Thesis Committee:

English

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Abstract

Using the works of Aemilia Lanyer, John Milton, and Lucy Hutchinson, I will be exploring the idea of speech as action in 17th Century England and its connection to agency and community amongst women. These authors chose to show a distinct strength and sense of power in Eve and her descendants; each female subject not only has a voice, but uses it to her benefit. This is an enormous gift from an author, to whom words and language are the fruit of awareness, knowledge and power. Each representation uses their language as both a shield and sword to defend themselves from the rhetorical attacks coming from within the text and by the preconceptions long held by many of the readers. Language was key as women “took a conscious stand in opposition to male defamation and mistreatment of women” (Joan Kelly 7); they directed their ideas against the notions of a defective sex and against the societal shaping of women to fit those ideas. Both women and men could be writers of the *querelle des femmes*, each contributing to the discourse in a way that could oppose the prejudiced and narrowness that misogynistic thought and speech fostered; Aemilia Lanyer and John Milton were two such writers of the *querelle*. Using *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (and the dedication pieces that accompany the poem), *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* and *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*, I am attempting to show how speech can be action, and often the only action afforded to the women Lanyer and Milton write about, to, and for. Both use a combination of well-known figures and archetypal characters to create their stories; this is done in order to invert the language and situations of these stories which were often used as “proof” of women being corrupt by nature.

SORRY, NOT SORRY: SPEECH AS ACTION FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKS OF
AEMILIA LANYER AND JOHN MILTON

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts

by

Tiffany Ann Errickson

Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

2015

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Introduction

At a 2006 luncheon celebrating inspiration, Madeleine Albright addressed those in attendance saying, “There is a special place in hell for women who don’t help other women.” This idea of a community being needed amongst women was the vehicle of feminist thought and language dating back over four centuries; the debate surrounding this became known as the *querelle des femmes*. Language was key as women “took a conscious stand in opposition to male defamation and mistreatment of women” (Joan Kelly 7); they directed their ideas against the notions of a defective sex and against the societal shaping of women to fit those ideas. Both women and men could be writers of the *querelle*, each contributing to the discourse in a way that could oppose the prejudice and narrowness that misogynistic thought and speech fostered. Aemilia Lanyer and John Milton were two such writers of the *querelle*, and they are the focus of my thesis.

Using the works of Aemilia Lanyer and John Milton, I will be exploring the idea of speech as action in seventeenth century England and its connection to women, community, and agency. Using Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (and the dedication pieces that accompany the poem); Milton’s *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle*, *Paradise Lost*, and *Samson Agonistes*, I am attempting to show how speech can be action, and often the only action afforded to the women Lanyer and Milton write about, to, and for. Both use a combination of well-known figures and archetypal characters to create their stories; this is done in order to invert the language and situations of these

stories which were often used as “proof” of women being corrupt by nature. The doctrine of original sin often put the blame on Eve for tempting Adam into sin and has been responsible for centuries of Christian bias against women (Wiley 158); “by [Lanyer and] Milton’s time, the negative view of Eve had extended to all women, who were considered corrupt simply because they were her descendants” (Moore 1). Lanyer and Milton combat this idea by way of giving these characters and figures a voice and a community to find strength amongst; what once connected women as corruption by association is now a strength in the hands of Lanyer and Milton. In chapter one, I show how Lanyer connects the fundamental Christian myths to the women of her time through the dedication poems; she places women at the center of these myths in order to subvert the wholly patriarchal nature of the source. In using a religious source (male) and her own text (female), she goes to battle with misogynist language by using a source regularly cited against women. Even by publishing under her own name, Lanyer is claiming authority as a woman writer and boldly writing herself into the discourses about women’s place and speech. She invites the reader to see and join this community of women, as well as urging them to throw off the language that does only harm to womankind. When looking at Milton, my focus is not so much putting a limiting label on his views of women¹—any label given to his views are likely to be a disservice to the complexity of his female representatives—but on Milton’s women as they exist in conversation with Lanyer’s ideas regarding agency, community, and culpability. His

¹ Critics range from calling his works hostile and overtly misogynistic, to ahead of his time and progressively feminist.

female characters in each piece utilize language as both their sword and their shield, defending themselves from rhetorical—and in the Lady's case, physical —attacks coming from both within the text and by the preconceptions long held by many readers of the seventeenth century. Each woman not only has a voice, but also uses it to her benefit. This is an enormous gift from an author to whom words and language are the fruit of awareness, knowledge, and power. Milton's treatment of the hierarchal chain of command in connection to his portrayal of women allows the reader to see a figure with autonomy, not a "lifeless rib" never to be parted from man's side (x.1153-1154).

My theoretical framework includes not only the work of feminists like Joan Kelly, Cheris Kramarae, Celia Wall and Pat Gannon-Leary, D. Garth Taylor, and Julia Wood, but also speech-act theorists like J.L. Austin, Quentin Skinner, J.G.A. Pocock, and P.F. Strawson. Language is part of the fabric of human lives; verbalizations "act upon people—and so constitute acts of power—in at least two ways: either by informing them and so modifying their perceptions or by defining them and so modifying the ways in which they are perceived by others" (Pocock 30). Modifying perceptions is exactly what Lanyer and Milton are doing in their pieces; each battles against the negative view of legacy and shows how we can see language acting as a legacy within a community of autonomous women. The power of an utterance is the focus of much speech-act theory, but it does not always seem to focus on who is performing the verbalization. Foucault says "what matter who's speaking" (138) and though he is there exploring the function of

the author, I found myself asking the question when exploring speech-acts and female representations within the work itself.

What I am hoping to show is that it matters very much who is speaking—not simply in terms of the author—but in regards to the character doing the communicating. Early feminist theory—the *querelle*—shows how by their pens, women “meant to counteract the psychological consequences of what they felt was a [not so] recent, steady decline in the position of women” (Kelly 6). This early movement continued and more women joined the discourse, resulting in two closely intertwined theories: muted group theory and the spiral of silence. The muted group theory has two goals: “(1) to call attention to the muting of women’s voices and, thus, experiences; and (2) to reform language so that women’s experiences from women’s perspectives are fully represented” (Wood 63). Lanyer and Milton embody this theory by giving female representations a voice to use when they need one most. Muted group theory helps “inform us about how power functions in our talk and writing, and language” (Kramarae 55). By inverting patriarchal sources via the language within them, speech itself becomes an action and that action becomes part of a legacy; both authors allow the legacy of language to remove women’s status as “silenced” (Kramarae 56). This is closely connected to the spiral of silence. Women take back the power of speech in Lanyer and Milton’s writing; their works show how if they do not remove the harmful language from their speech and minds, remaining silent “starts off a spiraling process which increasingly establishes one

opinion as the prevailing [and dominant] one” (Taylor 314). Whether a man or woman is complicit to or an active user of defaming language against women, the spiral of silence (and Lanyer) places them at fault for perpetuating misogynistic thoughts and speech.

While scholarship surrounding Lanyer and Milton has regularly involved either speech-act theory or (some form of) feminist theory, the current literature does not often look at the two in connection with either author. I think the two cannot be separated from one another; language can oppress or liberate depending on what we choose to do with our speech, as both Lanyer and Milton show.

Chapter 1

Challenging Language and Promoting Community

In 1611, one woman attempted to stand among some of history's literary giants. It was the publication year of "the King James Bible, John Donne's *Anatomy of the World*, quartos of three Shakespeare plays, one Jonson play, a reprint of Marlow's *Faustus*, Chapman's translation of Homer, and the first collected edition of Edmund Spenser's *Works*" (Woods xxx-xi). *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum Judaeorum* helped Aemilia Lanyer find her place among these greats, confronting and countering the misogynistic Christian views regarding female identity and agency in the seventeenth century. She fought to be heard through her poetry, her main outlet for speech at the time; Lanyer demonstrates that speech is action--sometimes the only action-- which provided an alternate view on agency and community among women. Lanyer utilized both well-known female figures of society and archetypal female characters, and she contributed to the *querelle des femmes*—first coined by Christine de Pisan (Kelly 4) by placing women at the center of some of the fundamental Christian myths often used against women.

Susanne Woods notes that "women's early claims to authority included authority derived from...a male-authored 'original,' which allowed women to act as translators" (84). The Passion of Christ becomes the backdrop and foreground of Lanyer's work, a religious source that offered her a way into the literary field, as women mainly had freedom to write in only those contexts (Woods xxxi). Lanyer uses it to her advantage; in

manipulating the sources often used as evidence against women and challenging that language in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, her poem becomes a call to arms in the form of female voices, pens and community. In Lanyer's hands, Christ connects with her audience as well as the other female identities in the poem by embodying a feminine role. Eve becomes a figure of knowledge, virtue and motherhood; the Community of Saints is transformed into a community of women and readers. Even by publishing under her own name, she is claiming authority as a woman writer and boldly writing herself into the discourses about women's place and speech. Barbara Lewalski says that "like other early modern women writers, she could do little to change the repressive conditions of her world. But she was able—no small feat—to imagine and represent a better one" (57). In a time in history when women still did not have a distinguished voice in the field of literature or society—at least on one's own—Lanyer's treatment of language shows how speech can be action. Indeed, speech can sometimes be the only action.

Lanyer used her dedications to reach out to those she had hoped would one day be her patronesses, all of whom were prominent women of the time. One can read the patronage poems separately or in conjunction with *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* but either way, Lanyer shows us this community of women and invites the reader to join it by reading her work. The way in which Lanyer crafts the dedications should not be dismissed by critics—like Kimberly Coles—who see the dedications as simply a "rhetorical tactic—one developed in contradistinction to male poets with whom she was in direct financial competition—that amounts to a marketing device" (150). This reading

dismisses the power behind and within the patronage poems. In her eleven dedicatory poems and prose that precede *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*—with even more important women also noted within these poems—she bands together all of womankind under a banner labeled *woman*. She purposely excludes males from these patronage poems, with the slight exception of Lady Katherine’s “most honorable Lord,” Thomas Howard (Lanyer 37. 25) and Mary Sidney’s brother, Sir Philip Sidney, “whose cleere light / Gives light to all that tread true paths of Fame That beeing dead, his fame doth him survive, / Still living in the hearts of worthy men” (Lanyer 28. 138-141). Lanyer chooses to mention these men, yet is strategic in doing so. Because Mary essentially created her brother’s fame, completing his project of translating the Psalms in a way that plays with how “to improve English letters” (Rienstra 112), and ensuring his publication after his death, Lanyer’s praise of Philip can be attributed to Mary. Lanyer is conscious of this attribution when she writes “And farre before him [Mary] is to be esteemd / For virtue, wisdom, learning, dignity” (28. 151-152). Both men are only mentioned in connection to Lady Katherine and Mary Sidney; by excluding men or only speaking of them in conjunction with a woman, Lanyer is setting up a discourse of community and agency that will carry throughout the patronage poems and *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*.

It becomes clear in Lanyer’s writing that there is a call for equality among the high-born women she directly addresses and a general female audience. Her various dedications include such high-born women as the Queen of England, Lady Elizabeth

Grace, Lady Arabella, the Lady Susan of Kent and her daughter, Lady Marie, Lady Anne, and Lady Margaret. Lanyer does not stop at simply addressing the upper class women of the time; she makes a point to title one of the patronage poems “To all vertuous Ladies in generall” (12). These women are those who “hold title to virtue rather than earthly honors” (McBride 75). In reaching out to all women, Lanyer is breaking down class barriers between women, at least in terms of what matters—virtue. Lanyer asserts that “each blessed Lady” has virtue that spends “pretious time to beautiful [their] soules” (12. 1-2). Instead of objectifying and praising physical beauty—as was the norm when praising women—Lanyer chooses to praise their beautiful souls, made beautiful by virtuous living. She calls on all women to “let Virtue be your guide, for she alone/ Can leade you right that you can never fall” (12. 10-11). In personifying virtue as female—“for she alone”—Lanyer plays on the idea of virtue being a part of womankind already and we as females must let her do her job so that we might not fall as Eve fell. Lanyer points out in Lady Anne’s dedication that men and women must remember

...from whence you are descended,
 And leave to all posterities your fame,
 So will your virtues alwaies be commended,
 And every one will reverence your name. (44. 81-84)

We are all Eve’s descendants, both male and female, and remembering where we came from is the way to secure an eternal fame and title. This is how Eve’s descendants can triumph—and how women can be remembered in their own right as womankind and as

people with true agency. We will see Milton play on this same idea of virtue leading to the triumph of Eve's children in *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* (known commonly as *Comus*).

In attributing virtue to all women, Lanyer is effectively attempting to counter some of the most misogynistic thoughts and language of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One important example of such can be found in the case of John Knox; his treatise *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* was written in 1558 and survives among his most famous and controversial works. Knox saw the teaching of scripture alone as sufficient enough proof that no woman should bear rule over men—too bad for him that England was ruled by Queen Mary I at the time. He lumps all women together in a way to address them negatively, unlike Lanyer's community of women, by asserting that it was God who brings "euerie woman in contemplation of her selfe, to the end that euerie one depelie weying, what sentence God had pronounced against the hole race and doughters of Heua" (28). He saw women's connection as something deeply troubling as God spoke against *all* women. Knox calls on Tertullian and his book of *Women's Apparel*, quoting a particularly rancorous opinion as if it were fact:

Dost thou not knowe (saith he) that thou art Heua [Eve]? the sentence of God liueth and is effectuall against this kind, and in this worlde of necessity it is, that the punishment also liue. Thou art the porte and gate of the deuil. Thou art the first

transgressor of goddes law. Thou diddest persuade and easely
 deceiue him whome the deuill durst not assault. For thy merit
 (that is for thy death) it behoued the son of god to suffre the
 death, and doth it yet abide in thy mind to decke the aboute thy
 skin coates? (28)

His argument is that by being Eve's descendants, a woman *is* Eve herself; God's punishment on one became a punishment on all women. Knox's assertion is that every woman harbors and protects the devil, being both "the porte and the gate." This is an interesting line as the devil could be read as either Satan or Eve; Knox must have been aware of the juxtaposition he was creating as he was a skilled rhetorician. He saw women as the descendants of the first transgressor, the one who "easily" deceived Adam, "whome the deuill durst not assault." To Knox, women, not men, were the inheritors of the all that was supposedly wrong with Eve; by this thinking, Knox—like many others—believed that for these transgressions, women were not worthy of anything higher than their "skin coates." They have no agency in Knox's eyes; they deserve none. Throughout *The First Blast of the Trumpet*, Knox calls on the writing and thoughts of classical and patristic sources that lay out his case for a venerable history of opposition to an autonomous woman, particularly one who rules. He cites Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Paul, Chrysostom, and Basilius Magnus as fuel to his assertions against the monstrous regime of women. Knox says though that even without these "moste auncient amongst godlie writers," (22) his claim would be valid: "For as I depend not vpon the

determinations of men, so think I my cause no weaker, albeit their authoritie be denied vnto me. Prouided that god by his will reueled, and manifest worde, stand plain and euident on my side.” (34). Power and agency seems to be intertwined in *The First Blast of the Trumpet*. His argument was sound in his eyes, and many readers’ ears, for not only is it the case that “God by the order of his creation hath spoiled woman of authoritie and dominion, but also that man hath seen, proued and pronounced iust causes why thatit so shuld be” (22). Both God and man have seen why women are not to have power or agency among men, and it shows in his eyes that Knox was not alone in his views.

These are the long-held beliefs that “proved” the subservience of women to men, beliefs that affected women of all social standings. The so-called muted group theory “suggests that an important way that a group maintains its dominance is by stifling and belittling the speech and ideas of those they label as outside the privilege circle” (Kramarae 55). Speech is given power as an action that can build one up or tear them down. Lanyer uses language to give a bit of that power back to women—as well as calling for them to create that power for all women. In “Seizing Discourses and Reinventing Genres,” Barbara Lewalski explains that the strength of Lanyer’s writing is in her “appropriation and rewriting, in strikingly oppositional terms, of some dominant cultural discourses and a considerable part of the available generic repertoire, as she introduces a forceful female authorial voice into the Jacobean cultural scene” (49). Lanyer uses the most common subjects of literary treatment by women in the early

modern period —“A Womans writing of divinest things” (3.4)— to gain access to the literary world (Kimberly Coles 149). This was the main way to gain access to the literary community as a woman writing under her own name—using religion—yet for Lanyer, the religious content of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* seems peripheral to its central intentions. These intentions seem to be to create a voice that could stand amongst and negotiate through the professional literary sphere, which was almost wholly patriarchal at the time (Coles 149). This meant countering the very language that might exclude her from that sphere; speech becomes her action as there is no other alternative.

Whereas Knox uses the idea of inheritance as a weakness of women, Lanyer inverts this idea in both the patronage poems and the main body of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. In her dedication to Ladie Anne, Lanyer asserts

You are the Heire apparant of this Crowne
 Of goodnesse, bountie, grace, love, pietie,
 By birth its yours, then keepe it as your owne,
 Defend it from all base indignities;
 The right your Mother hath to it, is knowne
 Best unto you, who reapt such fruit thereby (44.65-70)

This passage about legacy and fighting to keep it is particularly appropriate to a dedication to Ladie Anne, who—with her mother’s initial aid—was a champion for her right to inherit property as her father’s sole heir (Woods 41). One could look at both the literal interpretation—that this speaks to only Anne’s situation—and the broader

interpretation of community through inheritance in Lanyer's treatment of this stanza. No longer do all women fall under the Knox theory of women's inheritance; goodness, grace, and love were the inheritance of women through a legacy of birthright; this inheritance goes much deeper than the physical in Lanyer's hands. Her appeal to all women and their inherited virtue is only the beginning of her task to show community amongst women. Lanyer shows her skill in audience awareness in appealing directly to the readers she wishes to reach out to; this is shown in her dedication to the Countess Dowager of Cumberland, Ladie Margaret, whom Lanyer asserts as the principal patron of and dedicatee to *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Lanyer says "Therefore /good Madame, to the most perfect eyes of your understanding,/ I deliver the inestimable treasure of all elected soules..." (35. 27-29). Only those with flawed vision will detect flaws in Lanyer's work, yet just as the truly virtuous can see divinity in the humbled Jesus, those eyes of perfect understanding are those which Lanyer seeks out (Kari Boyd McBride 78). She is not simply addressing Ladie Margaret—though it is her dedication—but is rather addressing all women with the most perfect eyes of understanding.

She calls on women to come together in a final dedication entitled to "the Vertuous Reader." Lanyer urges them not to forget "that all women deserve not to be blamed though some forgetting they are women themselves, and in danger to be condemned by the words of their owne mouthes, fall into so great an error, as to speake unadvisedly against the rest of their sexe" (48.11-15). As virtuous women, the reader

must throw away the language used to defame other women—language used by women that merely perpetuates the disparagement of their sex as a whole and “[eclipses] the brightness of their deserved fame” (48.3-4). The rumor mill at Court would have been a large source of this condemnation of other women; the very whisper of scandal was often enough to ruin a woman as surely as if she had been caught in the act (Johanna Rickman 65). In Court, speech became an action and Lanyer is trying to assist her readers to see that they must take the power of this language back. Lanyer points out that this language does not originate from women—though they are guilty of using it. This language comes from “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 wombs wherein they were bred” (48.19-23). She doesn’t mince words when it comes to whom she is writing for. She makes it abundantly clear that this poem was created to combat that evil language that forgets where we have come from and calls on women to join in community. Now this is not to mean that Lanyer was pushing for revolution or anything remotely close; she calls for women to stand together rather than divide themselves and slander other women with the same language that others would gladly use to do the same towards them.

She doesn’t fully exclude men in this dedication however; the “Vertuous Reader” could be male, yet not one that uses hurtful language against women. In this way, she

also excludes women who might not change their ways if they are one guilty of ill speaking. Lanyer calls on the reader to remember that Jesus was one who was

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 bloodie 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 (49-50. 43-50)

Whereas Knox calls for his reader to see women as “weake, fraile, impacient, feble, and foolishe... vnconstant, variable, cruel, and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment” (Knox 22), Lanyer calls on us to remember the best man who was cared for by women and who cared about them. Female community is what raised and nourished Jesus in order to save all mankind; Lanyer reminds the reader that their part has always been bigger than it seems by reminding them of their importance to the greatest man. She goes to battle with misogynist language by using a source regularly cited against women, inverting the source to empower the community she is calling for with that very same language that would defame its members.

Lanyer uses the patronage poems to set up *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and her gendered rhetoric. She has called out to her appropriate readers and excluded those needing exclusion, so she is ready to introduce the rhetoric in her main poem. Not only

does Lanyer petition this community of women in the patronage poems, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* incorporates these prominent women into the actual poem, likening the goddess of the moon to Queen Elizabeth: “Sith Cynthia is ascended to that rest/ of endlesse joy and true Eternitie” (1-2). The moon is about the most feminine symbol one can invoke according to Erich Neumann, who says it is the ruler of “matriarchal consciousness” (102). Lanyer chooses the Queen to represent the Goddess. There is a gentle power behind the moon that controls much of our world and keeps it in constant balance; this is what Lanyer likens to the Queen’s rule, a far cry from the writing of Knox which calls the rule of women “repugnant to nature, contumelie to God... and finallie it is the subuersion of good order” (22). She writes directly to them, such as in her address to Ladie Margaret: “to thee great Countesse now I will applie/ My pen, to write thy never dying fame” (9-10). It is for them that Lanyer writes and whereas Coles sees her use of a pro-feminine expression to be a marketing device (150), it could and should be argued that this is part of her rhetorical skills². If she had simply left this community behind in the patronage poems, then I could probably agree with Coles for it being *just* a marketing device—but this isn’t the case in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. The patronage poems are as much a part of the main work and become as inseparable from *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* as Eve’s Apologie is.

² We might not even have this conversation about the intentions of her patronage poems if they hadn’t been addressed to only women. Addressing one’s patrons or potential patrons was of course a marketing device that nearly all authors used to sell their works—a bit like nascar drivers wearing their labels—but to dismiss the use of Lanyer’s dedications as pure marketing does her skills a severe disservice.

Within the body of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, the community is called on once more, and she again stresses the connection of this community to virtue rather than “outward Beautie which the world commends” (185). Outward beauty unaccompanied with virtue is advised against, saying that “those faire Virtues which on thee attends/ are alwaies fresh.../They make thy beautie fairer to behold,/ Than was that Queenes for whom proud Troy was sold” (189-192). Whereas outward beauty alone fades, faire virtues are always fresh and make beauty that much fairer. Her allusion to the infamous Helen of Troy and the destruction that followed her beauty is a warning to what can happen if beauty and virtue do not walk hand in hand. Lanyer’s argument continues to say “A mind enrich’d with Virtue, shines more bright,/ addes everlasting Beauty, gives true grace,/ frames an immortall Goddess on the earth” (197-199). “Grace” is a word Lanyer will use as often as “virtue.”

Lanyer is calling for this community of women to shine brightly, and to achieve the true grace within by allowing Virtue to be their guide. Remember that to Lanyer, the virtuous woman is casting off the foul language that could be used to hurt women. Virtue and speech go hand in hand; one must use their language for the good of womankind or forgo virtue. If women merely chase beauty without virtue, “What fruit [could] yeeld that faire forbidden tree,/ But blood, dishonor, infamie, and shame?” (217-218). Those who embrace Virtue will live on, even though they will eventually physically die, as everyone does, “Fame gives her new berth” (200). Lanyer is calling on a legacy of Virtue that she

will trace from mother to daughter back to the original mother, Eve. Danger still lurks though, even virtue in hand,

For greatest perills do attend the faire,
 When men do seeke, attempt, plot and devise,
 How they may overthrow the chastest Dame,
 Whose Beautie is the White whereat they aime (205-208)

When you juxtapose this stanza and the writings of Knox and other anti-female tracks, it sounds quite accusatory towards men's writings and voices against good women. She places the culpability of "fallen" women directly on men, whom she accuses of seeking out and plotting against the "chastest Dame." In Milton's *Comus*, we'll see this exact situation arise as the dastardly Comus tries to take The Lady's virtue; her actions and voice—one and the same in her case—seem to mirror much of what Lanyer argues throughout *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Allusions are once again a key element to Lanyer's rhetoric, calling on her readers—her community of women—to remember those women in history whose beauty led to downfall. Most importantly, she attributes these downfalls to the men connected with them: Helen of Troy is taken "from her lawfull Lord" (210), and Lucrece loses her life "for which prowde Tarquins fact was so abhorr'd" (212). Cleopatra's downfall is not on her shoulders in Lanyer's treatment; the responsibility lies with Anthony, who "wrong'd his wife,/ which could not be decided but by sword" (213-214). She is countering Knox's views of "the imperfections of women, of their natural weaknes, and inordinant appetites" (Knox 24). Lanyer "inverts the

standard, male-authored lists of wicked women” (Boyd Berry 218) in order to offer an alternate view of the faults history has placed firmly on only the women involved in these stories. Without women actively removing that language from their own lives and speech, they are perpetuating the subordinate nature of women’s speech. She is voicing what would eventually become part of the spiral of silence theory, which was developed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. D. Garth Tayler notes that the spiral of silence depends on the propagating influence of the majority opinion, correct or not, as “the tendency of one [individual or group] to speak up and the other to remain silent starts off a spiraling process which increasingly establishes one opinion as the prevailing one” (314). Lanyer is urging her readers to stop the spiral and take control of the language they use and associate with in order to have true agency and virtue.

Directly after and in connection to this inversion of history’s “wicked” women, Lanyer speaks directly to the *Ladie of Cumberland* again and introduces the *Passion of Christ*. Her introduction shows the respect Lanyer has for the *Ladie of Cumberland*: “This Grace great Lady, doth possesse thy Soule/ And make thee pleasing in thy Makers sight” (249-250). The *Ladie* is held up by Lanyer for leaving the Court, “thus free from the force of slanderous talkers (commonly associated with Court life) as well as the perils which the Court could (and, likely in the case of Lanyer, did) hold for beautiful and powerless women” (Berry 218). She returns to the earlier notion of calling on virtuous women to stop using the very dialogues that could be easily thrown back at them in a different scenario—a rhetoric fully male-authored and centered. Lanyer is aware of the

“slanderous tongues (which no doubt would have wagged about the pregnant mistress of Lord Hunsdon)” and seems to seek to sever the countess from such judgments (Berry 218), just as she severs the wicked nature of history’s infamous ladies. She severs the women from the malicious rhetoric like that of Knox, which passes judgment, by instead reminding the reader of Christ’s death. Lanyer forces the reader, by juxtaposing the judgment passed on these women with Christ’s death, to remember that “we by Adams fall” (259-260) were each saved when “His bitter Passion, Agony, and Death,/ Did gaine us Heaven when He did loose his breath” (263-264). Lanyer’s rhetoric calls for the severing of language that would and has been harming to women, and to remember the sacrifice Christ made for *all* mankind. She wants us to remember that this sacrifice was not so that slanderous tongues and crooked views could take away the grace and virtuousness women all possess from that very sacrifice.

Now that Lanyer has begun the Passion and crucifixion, she tries to “shew his Death, by which we doe inherit/ those endlesse Joyes that all our hearts doe fill” (325-326). Lanyer positions Christ and the disciples on the night of the Last Supper and reminds the reader continuously that it is not a woman who gives up or denies Christ: it is men who deny and kill Christ and women who mourn him. It is Saint Peter, who “thought his faith could never fall” (341), that tells Christ and the disciples he would never “part from him who was their sole Delight” (340). Yet the story goes, and Lanyer makes sure the reader remembers, “that before the Cocke did crowe, [Peter] should deny

[Christ] thrice” (345-346). These friends of Christ “could not watch one houre for love of thee/... which on thy Grace depends” (418). Lanyer seems accusatory when discussing the male disciples, pointing out that “although the spirit was willing to obey,/ what great weakenesse in the Flesh was found!” (425-426). Lynette McGrath points out that Christ “is depicted in the position that is usually inscribed, especially in Renaissance love poetry, as female” (343). Lanyer uses this tradition for her own devices; Christ begins to take on the feminine form as Lanyer moves him to Gethsemane, to

That blessed Garden, which did now embrace
 His holy corps, [which] could make no defence
 Against those Vipers, objects of disgrace,
 Which sought that pure eternal Love to quench” (363-366).

The obvious Garden and viper/serpent connection would have been easy for her readers to see and it is building towards “Eve’s Apologie” further along in the poem. This image seems to mimic the vipers that Lanyer saw in Court life; Christ takes on the identity of one like Ladie Cumberland who could really make no defense against those who wanted to disgrace good women—and men. The disciples are painted as the Court of Lanyer’s days; the disciples all assert that they would never give up Christ, yet Peter denies him three times and Judas sells him out for gold, like “a trothlesse traytor, and a mortal foe,/ With fained kindnesse seekes thee to imbrace” (485-486). The fair-weather friends tone to the passages relating to the disciples and Christ’s capture is connected to the Court life that only pretended closeness and friendship, for “though they protest they never will

forsake him,/ They do like men, when dangers overtake them” (631-632). Lanyer places blame on the male disciples who fail him with their speech and from this failure, he is captured and taken to trial. Lanyer continues through the passion by moving to the trial Christ endures, which leads to his crucifixion. Christ is left alone amongst vipers and sharp tongues to be taken to “wicked *Caiphas*³ in the Judgement Hall/ Who studies onely how to doe him wrong” (635-636). Speech is a powerful action within a trial; it is just about the only action available to both the accuser and the accused. Lanyer shows how those

With all reprochfull words about him throng:

False Witnesses are now call'd in apace,

Whose throthlesse tongues must make pale

Death imbrace

The beauty of the World (638-41).

It is language that puts Christ to death; these false witnesses bear testimony against him and these truthless tongues bring about the action of Christ's death. He is silent when asked “what answere he could make against those false accusers in his view” (690-691), and it is by his silence—a truly different action from speech—that allows all mankind to be saved but only through his death. Lanyer spends over one hundred lines on the patriarchal-centered trial before finally arriving at Pontius Pilate's judgement and Eve's Apologie.

³ “high priest of Jerusalem who tried Christ for blasphemy” (Woods 79)

The section of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* named “Eve’s Apologie” is a powerful piece of rhetoric, using multiple female voices to essentially rewrite the Fall of man and offer an alternative to the traditional scapegoating. This section acts as a digression from the trial of Jesus—yet works together with it—and is an apologie in name only. One might assume this section would be through Eve’s voice, as it is her apologie, and it is, but *through* the wife of Pontius Pilate. Lanyer plays with the positive aspect of inheritance and legacy again in this section as she begs Pilate to “heare the words of thy most worthy wife,/ Who sends to thee, to beg her Saviours life” (751-752). Just as in the biblical source, the wife is the voice of reason in the face of a reasonless and “barb’rous crueltie” (753) when she asks Pilate to “Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him” (Matthew 27:19)⁴. This one line is the only mention of Pilate’s wife, and yet Lanyer expands the wife’s voice by having her speak to and for Eve; Eve is present by Pilate’s wife as “Our Mother Eve” (763). Her speech is her action. Pilate’s wife acknowledges the connection women have to Eve by calling her mother and referring often to “we,” “our,” and “us” as she argues for Eve’s innocence; Lanyer once again bands all women under the banner “woman” while speaking for Eve via her descendant. Pilate’s wife speaks for Eve and by proxy, all women, in this digression from the Passion narrative.

⁴ Milton will utilize the concept of knowledge through dreams as well with regards to Eve in *Paradise Lost*.

Lewalski notes that “the Genesis text had long been pressed to patriarchal interests, so by a neat reversal, Lanyer makes it serve feminist ones” (54). Inversions and replacements are essential to Lanyer’s rhetoric; she takes a source that is well known and quoted against women as a whole and reinterprets it to offer an alternative view of community and agency for women. Lanyer has Eve and the wife stand as the female representatives as Adam and Pilate stand as the male representatives; there is a “forthright demand for gender equality” (Lewalski 54) within this defense of womankind. Pilate’s words and allowance of Christ’s condemnation results in men’s fall, “Who had power given to over-rule us all./ Till now your indiscretion sets us free,/ And makes our former fault much lesse appeare” (760-762). The power that gave men authority over women has been negated by the decision to condemn Christ. This offense is far worse than Eve’s transgression, who “Giving to *Adam* what shee held most deare,/ Was simply good, and had no powre to see” the coming consequences (764-765). She was an innocent by her simple goodness. The wife’s argument is that Pilate and those involved with the death of Christ cannot make the same claim of ignorance or simple goodness. Neither can Adam be excused, for Eve’s “fault, though great, yet hee was most too blame;/ What Weaknesse offerd, Strength might have refusde,/ Being Lord of all the greater was his shame” (778-780). She doesn’t completely remove blame from Eve, but she offers a far less guilty figure in comparison to the men responsible for Christ’s death. Adam falls without being beguiled as Eve is, but “then to lay the fault on Patience

backe,/ That we (poore women) must endure it all” (793-794) is unjust when there was blame for all—but not in equal portions even at the Fall. Lanyer offers Adam as an alternative scapegoat for more of the blame, arguing that even “If Eve did erre, it was for knowledge sake,/ The fruit beeing faire perswaded [Adam] to fall:/ No subtill Serpents falshood did betray him” (797-799). Eve’s only fault is argued to be “onely too much love,/ Which made her giue this present to her Deare” (801-802), but Adam knew the consequences of disobeying straight from God’s own speech—Eve had no such explicit knowledge. According to Janel Mueller, “there is no explicit indication in [the] Scripture that the prohibition [of eating the fruit] was ever transmitted to Eve” (119). How then, can Eve bear the full force of the blame for the fall when her simple goodness allows her to be tricked by the clever Satan? Lanyer takes this digression and brings it back to Pilate and the other men who condemn Christ; their offense is far more wretched as

Her weakenesse did the Serpents word obey,
 But you in malice Gods deare Sonne betray.
 Whom, if uniuistly you condemne to die,
 Her sinne was small, to what you doe commit (815-818).

To Pilate’s wife, there will be no comparison in sin if Pilate goes through with allowing an innocent to die. The reader must remember that this section is still being told through the wife, who has no power or action available other than her speech and language in her message; like Milton will be, Lanyer must be anchored by the biblical source material surrounding events and characters.

Lanyer's inversion of the fall allows her to argue for not just Eve but all women—her readers and hopeful patronesses. As Eve's error “could lay a staine/ Upon our Sexe, and worke so great a fall/.../ What will so fowle a fault amongst you [men] all?” (811-814). She connects all men in a legacy akin to how women have Eve's legacy to endure, arguing for them to “let us have our Libertie againe,/ And challenge to your selves no Sov'raightie” (825-826). Women are not the ones arguing for Christ's death; in Lanyer's narrative, this fault belongs solely to men. Fault is connected to the false notion of male supremacy when Pilate's wife says

Your fault beeing greater, why should you disdaine
Our beeing your equals, free from tyranny?
If one weake woman simply did offend,
This sinne of yours hath no excuse, nor end (829-32).

This is a call for equality amongst both males and females. Lanyer uses the very sources that “prove” men's supremacy to dismantle that proof with language and speech. Language is a power that once took women's power and agency, and she seems to speak in order to return some of it—or at least help her readers reach for it. Lanyer reached out to women as learned creatures, reminding them that “Men will boast of Knowledge,...[though] he tooke/ From *Eves* faire hand, as from a learned Booke” (807-808). She acknowledges that men were given power over women through the fall of Adam and Eve, yet Lanyer “goes on to argue that the Gospel as history shatters that power” (Mueller 119). Lanyer fights for women, as a woman, and through other women

armed with a tiny but powerful book of poetry. Speech is her action, and it becomes a call for revolution in the form of voices, pens, and community among women.

Chapter 2

The Lady's Logos

The old adage is “actions speak louder than words,” but what adage is appropriate when speech is the only action available? There has been much controversy in the critical literature surrounding John Milton’s views regarding women; these critics range from calling his works hostile and overtly misogynistic, or ahead of his time and progressively feministic. Scholars for both sides cite Milton's own words to fuel their point, and yet, just as it does for many women writers and Renaissance theologians, Milton’s attitude towards women and his treatment of the traditional hierarchical chain of command seems to “blur at the boundaries” (Sumers 201). My focus is not so much putting a limiting label on his views of women—as any label given to his views are likely to be a disservice to the complexity of his female representatives—but on Milton’s women as they exist in conversation with Lanyer’s ideas regarding agency, community, and culpability.

Milton uses legacy as a source of strength rather than as a weakness and flaw in a woman’s design, just as Lanyer accomplishes in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum Judaeorum*. In 1634, Milton wrote *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* (often referred to only by its common name of *Comus*), in 1667, he published *Paradise Lost* and in 1671, he published *Samson Agonistes*. His female characters in each piece utilize language as both their sword and their shield, defending themselves from rhetorical—and in the Lady’s

case, physical —attacks coming from both within the text and by the preconceptions long held by many readers of the seventeenth century. Each woman not only has a voice, but also uses it to her benefit. This is an enormous gift from an author to whom words and language are the fruit of awareness, knowledge, and power. Unlike current Milton scholarship that separates speech-act theory and gender theory, I want to look at the two ideas in connection to one another. Speech becomes these women's only course of action, and yet that action is endowed with tremendous significance; through their language, Milton creates powerful role models rather than scapegoats for the world's problems.

While we will see Milton using archetypical, biblical sources for his females in *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*—much like Lanyer—Milton's *Masque* was created and performed with the principal character being modeled off of and acted out by the daughter of the Earl of Bridgewater (David Norbrook 237). Alice was believed to have been joined on stage by her two younger brothers—playing those respected roles—and her tutor, who played the spirit attendant (Ann Baynes Coiro 96). The highly topical nature surrounding Ludlow castle and their family had been the source of much scandal, which Milton seems acutely aware of as he crafted the Lady and the masque itself. In 1631, the Countess's brother-in-law was tried and executed for a series of sexual crimes that became known as the Castlehaven Scandal (Norbrook 237). In the same year, the Earl first heard an appeal for redress in the case of Margery Evans, a young serving maid

who was raped, robbed and wrongfully imprisoned for speaking out against her attackers; in 1632, the Countess believed that a male servant had “bewitched” Lady Alice (John Carey 176). Many critics, Coiro and Norbrook included, allow the historical focus of the masque to overshadow the strength of language Milton courts within the play.

Shullenberger notes that Milton merges the theatrical persona of the Lady and the private person Alice Egerton into one in order to “challenge and mobilize her as an ideal of Puritan womanhood, and active moral agent in the truly Reformed society he never ceased to imagine and to labor for” (33). The masque was to honor the Earl’s new title, and yet it is his daughter, Alice, who becomes the primary role and focus of the actions within it. Milton spotlights Alice as the personification of virtue; her role becomes more crucial to the story than her father’s role and is held up as a model of “judicious self-restraint” and “visionary courage” (Shullenberger 33). Never given a name—the character is only referred to as “the Lady” or “sister”—the audience can see her as a symbol of all women and how they should be; she is a canvas for the reader to paint an image upon. Milton’s “deliberate blurring of the distinction between reality and fantasy allows the masque Lady and the real Lady to be seen as the essence of virtue” (Jeanie Moore 5), and for the reader, the character and Alice become one and the same throughout the masque; the strengths of one are the strengths of both.

The Lady enters the masque alone, without protection, and only her ear is her “best guide now” (170). She can only walk towards “the sound/ Of riot, and ill-managed

merriment” (170-171) in hopes of assistance as she wanders through the “blind mazes of this tangled wood” (180). The significance of her status as a Lady and putting her in a similar predicament as the serving maid alone in the woods—vulnerable to attack—would not have been missed by this particular audience, especially when played by their own daughter. Why a Lady is in the woods by herself is quickly answered: incompetence on her brothers’ part. They left her to rest while they searched for “berries, or such cooling fruit/As the kind hospitable woods provide” (185),

But where they are, and why they came not back,
 Is now the labour of my thoughts; 'tis likeliest
 They had engaged their wand'ring steps too far,
 And envious darkness, e're they could return,
 Had stole them from me (190-194).

It is not by her doing that the Lady has wound up in this woods, headed “to meet the rudeness, and swilled insolence/Of such late wassailers” (177-178). The fault, if anyone’s, seems to be on the shoulders of the brothers more than the Lady’s; Milton sets the male figures that should be accompanying her—the brothers and attendant spirit—as absent figures when they are needed most. This trend continues with both the brothers and attendant throughout the masque, painting the paternally sanctioned authorities as bumbler whereas the Lady becomes a picture of strength.

The Lady has no choice but action and that leads her to following “the tumult of loud mirth” (201), which unbeknownst to her, leads directly to the dastardly Comus. In order to catch the virgin “benighted in these woods” (150), he has already announced that

... to my charms

And to my wily trains, I shall ere long...hurl

My dazzling Spells into the spongy air,

Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion (150-155)

Not by sheer strength will he win her, but by spells, charms and wiles. This makes him no less dangerous than the men Margery Evans was attacked by on the road; if anything, Milton paints Comus as more dangerous for this reason. He is able to mislead the eye and plant falsehoods “under fair pretence of friendly ends,/ And well-placed words of glozing courtesy” (160-161). Speech is seen as a more powerful action than force; it is important to remember that Comus, “a Son/ Much like his Father, but his Mother more” (57-58), receives his powers from his mother Circes—yet we cannot forget that he is of his father as well. Milton shows how spells often come from speech and he has Comus choose to rely on this strength rather than the physical strength that comes from his father; interestingly, speech alone is not enough for Comus as he will need use of a phallic wand to control the Lady. Within Comus’s character, Milton shows how speech is as much action as a physical deed; true power lies within that speech, and it is up to the wielder to decide how it will be utilized. For Comus, it is utilized as a form of manipulation and a

method of corruption, but Milton shows the true power wielded by speech in the Lady.

This is much like Lanyer's argument that language is a force; it can be used for good and ill—especially in regards to women.

In the darkness, the lady walks towards the unknown, fearful yet still moving forward as “a thousand fantasies/ Begin to throng into my memory/ Of calling shapes and beckoning shadows dire/ And airy tongues” (204-207). Rather than surrender to this fear, she draws on the strength of a higher power with her, saying “these thoughts may startle well, but not astound/The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended/By a strong siding champion Conscience” (209-11). She continues on with Conscience, Faith, Hope and “thou unblemished form of Chastity” (214) as her guides. Chastity, at times, seems to be likened to a frame of mind and matter of knowledge rather than as a physical state (Kathleen Wall 57). She speaks of these concepts as entities that the Lady then can “see ye visibly” (215) in a communal way; Hope, Faith, and Chastity walk along her in this unbridled wood with wanton dance and music. These concepts take on feminine traits in the Lady's invocation, acting as her community and strength in the darkness. Whereas Lanyer uses her potential patronesses to show community among women—each embodying these concepts—Milton demonstrates community even when one is physically alone, contributing to the Lady's sense of agency at the moment when it is all she has.

Few critics seem to have touched on the song the Lady sings to gather strength as well as to search for her brothers; it is a sorely ignored section of the Masque. While most critics, like Kathleen Wall, note that this is the moment Comus *needs* the Lady to be his, they seem to only attribute it to her beauty and chastity; it is much more than that. The song to “sweet Echo” (229) becomes a spell that enchants Comus; it is this song that causes him to wonder if “Can any mortal mixture of Earths mould/ Breath such Divine enchanting ravishment?” (243-244). He is held captive by her, much like Milton will show us again in *Paradise Lost* when Satan first witnesses Eve. The Lady’s voice holds power, and Comus likens her to “something holy” (245) whose “raptures move the vocal air” (245) like a siren. Comus seeing her as a holy thing battles that idea of women’s “moral inferiority” (Moore 5). There is a sense of delicacy and color filling the song, from “Meander’s margent green,/[to] the violet-embroidered vale” (231-232) where the nightingale sings a sad, mournful song (233-234). With romantic mythology, aerial perspectives, and fresh flowering landscapes, the moment of song allows both the Lady and the reader a moment of freedom from the restrained closeness of the mazelike woods. This song Comus hears is the antithesis of the songs he would have known through nightly romps in the woods (Wall 56). This moment of song also breaks the Lady out of her status as the simple, “hapless virgin” (349) that her brother will attribute to her personhood. It isn’t merely her beauty or chastity that is covetable; her voice, her only source of action, holds a power that cannot be denied. It is now that Comus decides, “I’ll

“speak to her/ and she shall be my queen” (263-264), which finally brings him out into the open. Once again, speech is key, not force; Comus positions her not as an inferior, but as an equal and queen he desires. He wants to win her and believes his own speech will be enough to capture her whole being. His speech is not enough however, and he must use a shepherd’s disguise to talk to this “foreign wonder” (264).

The brothers are finally seen as they wander lost in the woods—in no better shape than the Lady really. When the younger brother voices his fears to the elder brother that their sister may “in wild amazement, and affright/ Or while we speak [be] within the direful grasp/Of Savage hunger, or of Savage heat?” (355-7), he is chastised by his brother for implying their sister may be giving into lustful impulses. He reminds his younger brother that “my sister is not so defenceless left/As you imagine, she has a hidden strength/Which you remember not” (413-5). So what is this hidden strength? Well,

Tis chastity, my brother, chastity:
 She that has that, is clad in complete steel,
 And like a quivered Nymph with Arrows keen
Where through the sacred rays of Chastity,
 No savage fierce, Bandit, or mountaineer
 Will dare to soil her Virgin purity (419-26).

The brother likens the Lady’s chastity to armor (steel) and a weapon (arrows), trying to put his brother at ease, for nothing “Hath hurtfull power o’re true virginity” (437). The

brother puts the concept of chastity in the same frame of mind as his sister does, and while the circular logic seems almost naïve on the elder brother's part—that she will remain chaste *because* she is chaste—that naïveté should only be read if chastity and virtue are viewed as only physical states. The brother invokes the huntress Diana, the “Fair silver-shafted Queen for ever chaste/.../ she was queen oth' Woods” (440-445)—who was not always considered physically chaste. Wall points out that many argue “her physical virginity is a patriarchal value” (57). If we look at the Lady's predicament with this in mind —because Milton chooses to place this conversation between the brothers right when Comus is leading the Lady back to his castle under false pretenses—we can see he adds hope to what would have been seen as a potentially hopeless situation. Rather than follow the exclusionary practices towards males, as writers like Lanyer did when trying to better the lives and authority of women, Milton allows their presence in the community and conversation as agents of possible change. The younger brother's language reflects the kind of judgmental and defaming language that Lanyer was calling to be thrown off. The elder brother's speech reflects how self-awareness and self-knowledge are—and should be— intricately connected to chastity and virtuousness. The Lady will need self-awareness and self-knowledge in order to remain herself as she follows Comus back to his castle; she will go to battle with not only her physical chastity, but also with “psychological virginity, which is manifested in a woman's independence, her ability to be one-in-herself” (Wall 57).

Speech as an action—as one’s only action—becomes vital once the Lady enters the castle. When this scene changes from the brothers and spirit attendant, the reader is told that “Comus appears with his rabble, and the Lady set in an enchanted Chair, to whom he offers his Glass, which she puts by, and goes about to rise” (Carey 213). When she finds she cannot move from the chair due to Comus’s magic, the Lady interrupts Comus’s own speech comparing her to “Daphne [who] was/ root-bound” (660-661). Finding her own agency, she states

Fool do not boast,
 Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
 With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
 Thou haste immanacled, while Heav'n sees good (661-4).

Even shackled, the Lady defies Comus, telling him that while her body may be bound, he cannot charm his way into her mind—for it is and will be free as long as heaven sees her good. This goes back again to her brother’s argument that “Vertue may be assail'd, but never hurt,/ Surpriz'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd” (588-590). The Lady continues to battle this perception of women being more vulnerable to temptation (Moore 5).

Comus resumes his speech, asking “Why are you vexed, Lady? why do you frown?/.../ See here be all the pleasures/ That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts” (665-668). He still wants her to choose him and fall to temptation rather than use force—a very big difference from the man who said “what hath night to do with sleep?” (122) and proclaimed he would use his “wily trains” and charms to win over the hapless virgin (150-1). He offers the glass again with promises of restoration, and the Lady fires back

'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
 That thou hast banish't from thy tongue with lies,

Were it a draft for *Juno* when she banquets,
 I would not taste thy treasonous offer; none
 But such as are good men can give good things,
 And that which is not good, is not delicious (690-703).

Disguises and words will have no more effect on the Lady as she can see through his falseness and the evil that lies underneath his temptations. The Lady is stronger now, bound to a chair, than when she was free but lost in the forest; she lashes out at Comus by refusing to drink and fall to “liquorish baits fit to ensnare a brute” (699).

When Comus tries to tempt her one last time, saying “beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,” (738) his flattery mirrors a certain temptation scene between Satan and Eve—which of course, Milton will pen in the later part of his career. His flattery fails, however, in underestimating the Lady’s strength of virtue and chastity in this fallen world. Rather than accept his words, the Lady defiantly pronounces

I had not thought to have unlocked my lips
 In this unhallowed air, but that this Juggler
 Would think to charm my judgement, as mine eyes,
 Otruding false rules pranked in reasons garb (755-8).

That she calls this powerful sorcerer a joke, one who is barely worth her opening her lips to combat with, shows a great strength in post-lapsarian women. She recognizes that he

has been spinning falsehoods under the guise of reason and she will have no more of it. She says that she “[hates] when vice can bolt her arguments,/And virtue has no tongue to check her pride” (759-60). Her virtue has certainly found its tongue, and it will check Comus’s pride while she has a voice in her. She is able to see through Comus’s falsehoods because “only through the fall could Eve attain that which would have saved her: the knowledge of good and evil” (Moore 2). The Lady is of a post-lapsarian world, a world that only has knowledge of good and evil through Eve’s fall. Milton’s *Masque* is interesting in that the Lady is at the same time a prototype for Milton’s Eve—written over thirty years before—and a descendent of Eve in this post-lapsarian world. Her victory would not have come without Eve’s fall in her own temptation scene.

Milton’s gift of powerful speech continues as the Lady says to Comus during her tongue lashing, “Shall I go on?/ Or have I said enough? To him that dares/ Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words” (778-80). The Lady is no meek, weak lady of the court, but an outspoken and intelligent woman with agency. She has “[fashioned] her sense of selfhood” in this ordeal (Shullenberger 41). In this moment, both the Lady and Comus are using speech as their source of action. Comus has been arming “his profane tongue” and yet it proves not to be enough against the Lady’s force. It is after this powerful speech that Comus realizes he cannot convince her, so he must force her to drink from the cup. He acknowledges her strength and fears it, for “she fables not, I feel that I do fear/ Her words set off by some superior power” (799-800). It is her words that

he fears, not her fists. According to Shullenberger, the lady has “[awoken] her own inviolable voice, and discovers in that voice a power to protect herself and to announce her presence to a listening world” (39). The only way Comus sees his victory is through force; he must break her down, saying “I must dissemble,/ And try her yet more strongly. Come, no more,/ This is mere moral babble...” (804-6). At the moment Comus tries force and tries to brush off her voice as mere prattle, the Lady has won—he has not touched the freedom of her mind, as she proclaimed he could not. As he tries to force her to drink, “the brothers rush in with swords drawn, [and] wrest his glass out of his hand” (Carey 222), but the spirit attendant notes that they “let the false enchanter scape” (813). This action is not given through speech, but rather through stage direction; all the brothers had was action instead of speech. The brothers’ timely arrival with the attendant spirit seems a lesser victory to the Lady’s against the dastardly Comus. Milton shows this by juxtaposing her victory to the bungled victory of the brothers—they allow Comus to escape. While her body is still trapped by the enchanted chair—and her brothers cannot aid her again—Milton provides rescue by another powerful female. Sabrina, the fairy godmother-like embodiment, is summoned through song by the attendant spirit, and it is she who helps “ensnared chastity” (908). She provides both the ritual that allows the Lady to emerge whole from the chair and a feminine community to be amongst.

Milton’s Lady is about to leave the masque whole and be returned to her parents along with her brothers due to her command over language and herself. While Milton

was trapped by the Genesis story, “Eve is Eve after all” (Moore 1) and must fall, he can allow triumph as much as Lanyer did through Eve’s descendants—in this case, the Lady. Victory comes from knowledge and speech; speech becomes the Lady’s only course of action and through her language, Milton creates a powerful female role model with awareness and agency. Milton begins to join this community Lanyer was urging for, and he will continue to be part of the community as he goes on to reinvent two of Christian history’s greatest defamed women—Eve and Dalila—through their speech.

Chapter 3

Mother of Legacy and Language

A study of female agency, legacy, and community through speech and language in Milton's female representations would be woefully incomplete without exploring the complexity within his version of Eve in *Paradise Lost*. As discussed in chapter two, the Lady of *Comus* acts as a precursor or prototype for Milton's mother of mankind. The Lady is able to be victorious in her scene of temptation due to the Fall and the knowledge of good and evil that came about from it. Eve may fall, but her children can be victorious. Milton uses both a prelapsarian and postlapsarian Eve to show how language shapes her agency and distances her from "the popular and longstanding tradition of aligning Eve with the serpent" (Miller 25). Much like Lanyer, Milton paints Eve as a figure of knowledge and a positive feminine identity, rather than following those long-held beliefs that "proved" the subservience of women to men via the "serpentine" Eve. Milton joins this community Lanyer was urging for as he reinvents the same archetypal figures and stories often used against women in order to provide an alternate view on agency and community among women. Eve is the beginning of womankind and the beginning of that communal legacy Lanyer repeatedly urges her readers to remember and strengthen in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum Judaeorum*.

Shannon Miller notes that "by entering back into a (prelapsarian) garden, [Milton's Eve] can operate outside of the gender hierarchy uttered after the Fall" (24). I'd

like to agree, but challenge that her “operating” must be expanded to include language and speech both prelapsarian and postlapsarian. Eve’s speech is crucial to her autonomy and to her relationship with Adam; her language not only aids her (and him), but it passes on to Eve’s descendants—the Lady and even women writers like Aemilia Lanyer—as a form of legacy, much like the acquisition of the knowledge of good and evil. Milton creates an Eve that seems to be not inherently corrupt, as authors of the anti-feminist traditional discourse of the seventeenth century were oft to do, but as an inherently curious creature searching for answers to questions about her very personhood. While Milton was limited by the story of the Fall—Eve *must* fall eventually—he provides her with language and motivation for that fall throughout the poem that contribute to her agency.

Milton shows her as one who is a part of Adam, “formed flesh of thy flesh” and one whose mind is her own. It is their corporeal forms that separate Adam and Eve as “not equal, as their sex not equal seemed” (iv. 296), not their minds, to which Alastair Fowler notes that “as their sexual differentiation (sex) shows, Adam and Eve are not identical (equal)” (238). This line is often taken to imply Eve’s inequality, but it can be said—with some obviousness of course—that men and women, especially naked as Adam and Eve are, do not look the same. It is not a matter of hierarchy, but Satan’s observation of their physical differences. Adam’s use of the phrase “my other half” refers to Plato’s myth in which the creation of mankind began with a perfect sphere split in two

(Fredson Bowers 265); neither sphere was superior or inferior, but in balance with one another. Milton was not comfortable with the idea of human hierarchy as a “republican who abhorred an aristocratic system that gave authority by happenstance of birth to kings and princes” (Susanne Woods 19). *Paradise Lost* reads as equally uncomfortable with a gendered hierarchy that starts at and is dependent on birth; Milton seems to use Eve to subvert patriarchal assumptions that plagued literary, theological, and social thought since the start of Christianity.

Through Eve’s own recollection of her creation and awareness of existence, she shows a voice with autonomy that is separate from Adam’s own voice and separate from that hierarchy. She is not someone who was born wicked—as the Pauline interpreters go so far to say— but is one with “simplicity and spotless innocence” (iv. 318), who says

from sleep

I first awaked, and found myself reposed

Under a shade of flowers, much wondering where

And what I was, whence thither brought, and how (iv. 449-452).

Milton paints Eve as a curious figure and one with reason to be; Eve wakes alone and without guidance, unsure of where or who she is from the start of her existence. She “thither went/ with unexperienced thought” (iv. 456-457) about the garden in search of answers. She is of a prelinguistic state, yet it proves to be recounted in a measured rhetorically successful manner. Critics have often ignored the fact that Milton allows Eve

to narrate her own story, which results in readings that render Eve a permanent and pathetic victim of patriarchy. Christine Froula asserts that Eve internalizes the voice of patriarchy when she “reproduce[s] the voice’s call ... her speech reproduces the words of the ‘voice’ [of God] and of Adam.” (329). Froula does not acknowledge that this is not a simply regurgitation of their words; but it is Eve’s narration of her story. Adam and the reader *only* know what Eve is telling them in this moment; the preciseness of language is hers to control. In telling her own thoughts during her awakening—not spoken for or talked about—Eve controls the narrative of her story and herself. Critics have compared Eve’s account of staring at her reflection to Narcissus—as an admonishment or warning—but Milton does not simply leave Eve staring at the water out of pure vanity. Eve stares because “it returned as soon with answering looks” (iv. 464) to the multitude of questions she has—namely, who is she? It is when she is searching that God’s voice finds her, enlightening her to the knowledge that “What thou seest,/ What there thou seest fair Creature is thy self” (iv. 477-478), and his voice that beckons her toward Adam, “Whose image thou art” (472). It is her curious, “simply good” nature as Lanyer says (765), that shapes Eve, long before the temptation and Fall and after. This is shown in her storytelling and judgments made after her creation. Eve wants answers, and so she says to Adam, “What could I do,/ But follow strait, invisibly thus led?” (iv. 475-476). She is led on by God’s voice in hopes of learning more about who she is and where she comes from; she makes her first rational choice to follow. This is not an empty-headed decision, nor does it “indicate her subordination to Adam” (Smyth 142); Eve’s telling

acknowledges her free will and choice to follow. Though Eve initially follows the voice, she does not immediately or blindly accept God's words when she spies Adam

fair indeed and tall,

Under a platan, yet methought less faire,

Less winning soft, less amiably mild,

Then that smooth watery image; back I turned (iv. 477-480).

While this moment is usually attributed again to Eve's apparent vanity, the reader should remember that that water's answering looks were what drew her in, not simple beauty. She notes the physical differences between them as Satan does, but whereas Satan sees both man and woman together, Eve's only notion of selfhood and identity is from the water's reflection. Thus when Adam does not mirror her image as the voice promised, the rational Eve turns away to return for more answers. It is only when Adam reaches to her and says "Henceforth an individual solace dear;/ Part of my Soul I seek thee, and thee claim/ My other half" (iv. 486-488). Eve's use of individual—meaning at once inseparable but separate (Fowler 249)—allows her to claim her status as her own, complete person while still being able to be an inseparable part of Adam's identity. Eve is allowed her own voice to tell her thoughts—even Lanyer chooses to speak through Pilate's wife in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum Judaeorum*, instead of solely using Eve's speech—and in this moment, Eve is a creator, far before becoming the "Mother of [the] human race" (iv. 475).

In Milton allowing Eve's creation recollection to be told first—Adam, who was created first, does not tell the reader and Raphael his own story until Book VIII—it disrupts and inverts the gendered hierarchy often cited by this biblical source material. While Eve follows sounds—the murmuring waters of the lake and then God's voice—in search of answers, Adam's narrative will show a comparable, nonhierarchical, moment when he follows the visual, "Straight toward heaven my wondering eyes I turned / And gazed a while the ample Sky" (viii. 257-258). This moment is repeated somewhat differently when Adam is taken to the mountain to learn of mankind's future after the Fall; Adam must be shown by Michael visually while Eve tells him "Whence thou returnst, and whither wentst, I know;/ For God is also in sleep and dreams advise" (xii. 610-611). Both have questions needing answers and they receive those answers in different but not unequal ways. Maura Smyth notes that "Eve may be derived from Adam's bone, but Adam's narrative style is derived from Eve's, suggesting that what is more important in Milton's rendering of humanity's origins is not who was first made but who first recounts her making" (138). Adam's language presents moments of mimicking Eve's authority over language, particularly in narrating his own story of awakening. Adam tells how he rests on "a green shady bank profuse of flowers" (viii. 286) which fuses the place where Eve woke up—"under a shade on flowers" (iv. 451)—with "the green bank" of the lake where she lay back down. Speech is the important act in their narratives—not the physical act of creation. Eve's storytelling shows a confident command of language that is recognized and mirrored by Adam's own speech.

While Milton, like Lanyer, does not remove all culpability for the Fall from Eve, he is able to lessen her offense. Susanne Woods says that “choice depends upon the free flow of ideas and presupposes individual responsibility for pursuing and weighing information” (15). One could argue that Eve does not have knowledgeable choice when she falls prey to the temptation of the serpent and therefore cannot be held as accountable as history might have us believe. The free flow of ideas and information are kept from Eve as she moves closer to the fateful temptation scene. Satan—in toad form—is discovered sitting by Eve’s sleeping ear, whispering “his devilish art” (iv. 801) in hopes of inciting “distempered, discontented thoughts,/ Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires/ Blown up with high conceits engendering pride” (iv. 807-809); he is caught by the angels, but Eve does not receive the proper information or warning that might have helped her avoid the Fall. She recounts her dream to Adam “with startled eye” (v. 26), telling him how a voice she thought was Adam’s led her to the tree. Once again, it is a disembodied voice that has power—a voice that acts—interacting with Eve. Her narrative once again shows a curious creature looking for answers to unarticulated questions, recounting the dream angel’s question “is knowledge so despised?” (v. 60). Though they are the words of the dream, Eve’s choice to use them in her story is telling. She does repent within the narrative, ending her story saying “how glad I waked/ to find this but a dream!” (v. 92-93). Eve can only receive secondhand knowledge and reassurance through Adam, who while being the only one of the two to directly hear God’s directive

against eating from the tree, is no more knowledgeable about the true consequences of violating that ordinance than Eve is. When a more knowledgeable figure comes—Raphael—with the sole purpose of warning them of dangers, Adam is the only one who hears the angels counsel. Eve is reduced to eavesdropping to glean knowledge (ix. 276-7). Alinda Summers says that Eve’s speech and reasoning reflect that of the educated woman, and yet she is not always around for the important exchanges with the angels (207). Eve’s removal from this crucial counsel effectively removes her from the knowledge and language she needs to effectively face Satan’s words at the tree. Milton shows us that Eve is not at fault for trusting the serpent; she is lacking an education of the danger facing them. Language had the power to save mankind from falling if only the presumed hierarchy hadn’t removed Eve from the conversation. Milton flouts the idea of a gendered hierarchy by showing how husband and wife need to be in a free and equal conversation for a true marriage⁵.

Though Adam is generally agreed by critics to be the more rational and reasoning of the two—and therefore superior (Bowers 265)—Eve shows great rationality when in conversation with Adam right before they separate to work on the morning of the Fall. Her speech is her action—her *own* action—and Milton grants her the gift of logic and questions as she continues shaping herself as both Eve and Adam’s wife. Her reasoning is sound for why they should divide their labors in the garden, saying while she enjoys

⁵ This discourse on marriage is continued in both the Divorce Tracts and *De Doctrina Christiana*.

“our pleasant task enjoined” (ix. 207), “till more hands/ Aid us, the work under our labour grows...” (ix. 208). For now, until more humans—their eventual children—can aid them, the work they have must be divided. They cannot complete the work God has tasked them with without dividing themselves to tend to the “wanton growth” (ix. 211), because too often “looks intervene and smiles, or object new/ Casual discourse draw on, which intermits/ Our day’s work brought to little” (ix. 222-225). William Poole says “this at once shows that Eve is still thinking ahead (‘til more hands’), a capacity visible in her very first speech in the epic, and has also learned one new tactic of persuasion—the repetition of an interlocutor’s argument back to them (we call this flattery)” (185).

Milton’s inseparable but separate notion comes back into play in this discourse of efficiency and autonomy. Woods notes that in Milton’s *Tetrachordon*, he “remarkably concedes that the wife may in some marriages have wisdom equal to or greater than her husband’s, and both should in that case yield to a ‘superior and more naturall law’” (19).

When Adam finally warns her of the dangers Raphael has told him about—secondhand regurgitation again—Eve asks “how [then] are we happy, still in fear of harm?/...Frail is our happiness, if this be so, and Eden were no Eden thus exposed” (ix. 326). In questioning happiness, Eve shows she is not as happy as she could be; this is in no small part due to not knowing enough. Fowler makes note that these lines mirror Milton’s own words in *Areopagitica*, where he argued against the censorship of ideas and knowledge.

This is not the prelinguistic Eve, but an intelligently spoken woman with freewill and agency; Adam’s consent in their separation is confirmation of her autonomy: “Go; for

they stay, not free, absents thee more” (ix. 372). Poole says that “she now possesses a mobility of thought and a depth that is immediately attractive” (185). These powers of reasoning are a gift that will continue through Eve’s children as Lanyer’s idea of legacy in language.

In showing a prelapsarian Eve, Milton has shown the reader a positive image of the mother of mankind; he does not paint her with an inherent defect, but with simple goodness. Unfortunately, as Lanyer says in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum Judaeorum*, goodness is “where most their danger lies;/ for greatest perills do attend the faire,/ when men do seeke, attempt, plot, and devise” (204-206). As noted in chapter two, the temptation scene with Satan mirrors that of Milton's *Masque*, with the deciding difference being that Eve falls. Even with all Milton’s artistic license with the biblical source work, he is still limited by certain aspects; Eve was always going to have to fall. Yes, she falls to the reprehensible plotting of Satan, here disguised as the serpent, but it is not an easy victory or decision as the narrator suggests when he says “Into her heart too easy entrance won” (ix. 734). The difference between the Lady and Eve is that the former can recognize her opponent and use her strength of reason and her goodness to make the correct choice—Eve does not have the ability to see through deceit without knowledge of good and evil (Moore 9). Eve’s failure is her descendants’ victories; her curious nature, however, is not a failure. Satan’s first words as the serpent to Eve acknowledge her curiosity and need to ponder as he says, “Wonder not, sovran Mistress, if perhaps/ Thou

canst, who art sole Wonder” (ix. 532-533). Satan is a flatterer, just as Comus is; Satan calls Eve a “Goddess among Gods” (ix. 546) and Comus says that “Beauty is nature’s brag and must be shown” (745). Force again is not the primary action by the tempters; speech is. Neither seems affected by the flattery, and in fact, Eve is more amazed by the fact the serpent can speak; Alastair Fowler points out that “[Milton’s] Eve, by no means gullible or ignorantly carried away by words, is favorably presented: she shrewdly asks how the serpent came by its voice” (502). The serpent tells her how he came upon a tree and that he ate of the pleasing, sweet fruit which caused a “Strange alteration in me, to degree/ Of Reason in my inward Powers, and Speech/ Wanted not long” (ix. 599-601). He continues to tell Eve “I turned my thoughts, and with capacious mind/ Considered all things visible in Heav'n,/ Or Earth, or Middle, all things fair and good” (ix. 603-605); he is using the same type of narrative discourse that Eve has often employed.

Flattery fails, but what wins her over is when he appeals to the one desire she really has—knowledge—which as Lanyer often says, holds the key to Eve’s and all women’s sense of self and autonomy. Satan is clever in his story, hinting at achieving that which Eve wanted and needed. However, when they arrive at the tree, she doesn’t immediately take the fruit, realizing what tree it is he ate of, saying “Wondrous indeed, if cause of such effects./ But of this Tree we may not taste nor touch;/ God so commanded” (ix. 650-652). Eve might be searching for answers but respects the command she was given through Adam. Satan uses logic and language to his advantage here, and begins a

great piece of rhetoric, where his argument to Eve uses himself—who has supposedly tasted the fruit—as his reasoning for why she should not be afraid of the threat of dying.

Satan questions

How should ye? By the Fruit? It gives you Life
 To Knowledge, By the threatener, look on me,
 Me who have touched and tasted, yet both live,
 And life more perfect have attained...

Shall that be shut to man, which to the beast

Is open? (ix. 686-692)

This reasoning would make sense to one like Eve, who is without knowledge of guile—how *could* she know? She has no knowledge of good and evil to be more wary of this logic. The serpent says it ate and it has not died—though Eve doesn't know what death is either in order to know if he speaks the truth. Satan goes on to tell her not to be deterred from reaching for what could lead to a happier life and how having that knowledge could be helpful: “knowledge of Good and Evil; /Of good, how just? of evil, if what is evil/ Be real, why not known, since easier shunned?” (ix. 697-699). The irony of Satan being the one to say this shouldn't be lost to readers, and it is true; the Lady's victory in temptation only occurs because she is able to know evil to shun it and remain chaste. She eats, but as already said, she was always going to have to eat as the biblical source demands, and then share the fruit with Adam.

This is still not an “easy” win. Otherwise, Eve would have eaten at that moment and not needed to reason with herself after his words; she takes what the serpent has said and considers it to find the logic in his argument. To Eve, it ate and lives, speaks, is not dead and can reason where it could not do so before (ix.764-766). She questions “what forbids he but to know,/ Forbids us good, forbids us to be wise? Such prohibitions bind not” (ix.758-760). For Eve, who has been searching for answers since her existence began, this reasoning would of course tempt her to eat, especially when she questions “For us alone/ Was death invented? or to us denied/ This intellectual food, for beasts reserved?” (ix. 766-768). Adam and Eve have been told they are above every other creature, so why would they be denied something the beasts can have which would allow them to become more? The narrator calls her hand plucking the fruit “rash” (ix. 780), but is it really a rash decision? It seems Eve uses logic and reasoning to the best of her abilities to continue searching for answers no one gives her.

Though Milton is not able to let Eve resist the temptation scene—“Eve is Eve after all,” as Moore says (1)— he gives her the strength of selfhood and language that she needs *after* the fall when she and Adam must face the consequences of what has been done. Like many Renaissance women and reformation theologians, Milton sees both at fault in the Fall (Sumers 210). After their carnal scene of fallen, lustful sex, there is almost an immediate mutual blame session between Eve and Adam. Adam remarks first, saying “O Eve, in evil hour thou didst give ear/To that false Worm” (ix. 1067-8). The

fight between them occurs when “high passions, anger, hate,/Mistrust, suspicion, discord, and shook sore/Their inward State of Mind” (ix. 1123-5). It is in this shaken state that Milton paints Adam in a more unforgiving light as he places the culpability solely on Eve, saying to her “Would thou hadst hearkened to my words, and stayed/With me, as I besought thee.../I know not whence possessed thee” (ix.1134-7). Adam has moved his own blame onto Eve, insinuating that they would not be in this mess if she had simply listened like a good girl earlier. Eve fires back with “hadst thou been there,/ Or here the attempt, thou couldst not have discerned/ Fraud in the Serpent, speaking as he spake” (ix.1148-50). She may be justifying her actions, but she is probably correct in her thinking, at least according to Moore (8), especially when we consider the scene where Uriel is tricked into letting Satan into the garden in the first place. Our narrator explains that good can be deceived as well:

And oft though wisdom wake, suspicion sleeps
 At wisdoms Gate, and to simplicity
 Resigns her charge, while goodness thinks no ill
 Where no ill seems... (686-689)

Milton has lessened the blame theological history has placed upon Eve. If an unfallen angel can be tricked, than how much blame should be placed on Eve or even Adam? Sumers says that Milton’s contemporaries felt that even if Adam had been found first, it was highly likely that he would have been won over—possibly not by the same tricks,

but with tricks nonetheless (208). Neither character had much of a chance without true knowledge.

Eve finally speaks to Adam about her agency, or rather lack of one that led her to leave his side that morning: “Was I to have never parted from thy side?/ As good have grown there still a lifeless rib” (x. 1153-1154). Eve’s argument seems not to be taking away her own blame, but is rather attempting to get Adam to see that he is as culpable. This can be seen when she states: “Hadst thou bin firm and fixed in thy dissent, Neither had I transgressed, nor thou with me” (x. 1160-1). She has admitted that her actions were a disobedience, to Adam and to God, and now Adam has transgressed as well. There is strength in admitting fault and culpability in one’s self—even though she doesn’t take sole blame— and Milton doesn’t show Adam with that ability at this point. Adam has only the ability to spew hate at his wife and—in a rare moment of plural use—all women to come, saying “it shall befall/Him who to worth in Women overtrusting/...And left to herself, if evil thence ensue, She first his weak indulgence will accuse” (x. 1182-6). Adam is the weaker of the two in this accusation-filled argument, forgetting his decision to eat of the fruit himself.

The Son’s arrival on earth to pass judgment upon Adam and Eve brings about Eve’s strength of will and character once more when the Son asks the two of them their account of what happened. Adam once again places the blame on “This woman whom thou mad'st to be my help” (x. 137), and says that “from her hand I could suspect no ill”

(x. 140). This is interestingly a lie to the Son—Adam reacts with horror at when he learns in book nine that Eve has eaten the fruit (Fowler 546) and knows he will be disobeying if he too eats. Adam is ungallantly blathering on, trying to explain himself and remove his share of the blame. When the Son turns to Eve—our loquacious and bold Eve—she says in a movingly simple sentence “The serpent me beguiled and I did eat” (x. 162). She makes no attempt to assuage her guilt in front of the Son with flowery words or lies. Sumers notes that for her part, Eve does not attempt to accuse Adam and speaks the truth to the Son of God (212). She was tricked; she knows that now. Appropriately, it is only because of the Fall she can come to that conclusion.

When the Son leaves, Adam returns to that instable state once again, bemoaning his newly fallen state and crying “Did I request thee, Maker, from my Clay/To mould me man, did I solicit thee/From darkness to promote me...” (x. 743-745). He questions why he was created as man, if only to fall. Milton has Adam lamenting his state for far too long—one hundred and fifty lines to be exact—to call it anything but weak. Most of it reads as a woe-is-me oration, with a heavy emphasis on the “me” aspect; his speech is his true action. While Eve approaches desolate and with soft words to her husband, he spews an extremely misogynist torrid of insults directed at her, beginning with “Out of my sight, thou Serpent, that name best/Befits thee with him leagued, thy self as false/And hateful...” (x. 867-869). Likening Eve—who he has constantly referred to as his one love and other half in the text until now—to the Devil, Milton paints him in a worse light

than Eve. In calling Eve a “Rib crooked by nature” (x. 884-885), Milton mirrors the argument and language—and yet clearly disagreed with it in the light it is presented—of the Renaissance writer Joseph Swetnam and his 1615 pamphlet titled *The Arraignment of Lewd, idle, forward, and unconstant women* [sic]. Much of Adam’s postlapsarian speech is actually taken from the pamphlet, whose author “vowed forever to be an open enemy to women” (Swetnam 1) and would trample them under his and all men’s feet like “venomous Adders, Serpents, and Snakes” (Swetnam 2). By incorporating the linguistic qualities of Swetnam’s anti-feminist track, Milton creates Adam as the father of misogynistic speech itself—the same speech Lanyer argues must be thrown off from the tongues of women and men alike.

Despite his cruel rebuff, Eve becomes a source of strength for Adam, offering herself up to his mercy. While not able to offer her life like the Son has done—Eve cannot die as an innocent for him anymore—Doerksen says that she is putting herself at risk to endure the harsh words Adam has for her (126). Eve falls in front of him after his spiteful words

Not so repulsed, with tears that ceased not flowing,
 And tresses all disordered, at his feet
 Fell humble, and embracing them, besought
 His peace (x. 910-903).

She is in disarray in both appearance and soul, prostrating herself in front of her husband who has cursed her with the name of serpent. Doerksen says “Eve *appears* weak even as

she is inwardly strong” (126), which the reader can see by the tears that are not for herself but rather for Adam and for the future people of earth. She does not try to profess Adam as innocent for “both have sinned” (x. 930) and yet she makes no move to name-call as Adam resorts to. She calls Adam her “only strength” (x. 921) and yet she proves the stronger of the two when she cries out to heaven, asking “On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,/Me me only just object of his ire” (x. 935-936). This is Eve’s strength shown to us in full light—and it is shown to us in contrast and parallel to Adam’s previous speech. While Adam does have redemptive thoughts for the human race, he doesn’t act on it as Eve does and he does not apply it to the human (Eve) with him—he only has hate for her at that time (Doerksen 126). Through her words and actions—as well as persistence and humility— “soon his heart relented/toward her, his life so late and sole delight,/Now at his feet submissive in distress” (x. 940-2). It should be noted that “in *Paradise Lost*, subordination is not inferiority” (Woods 19), but an uncomfortable byproduct of a hierarchy imposed by God after the Fall. It is Eve’s misery and sacrificial offer that allows Adam to follow her goodness and eventually see how serious his fault truly was (Sumers 212). This peacemaking scene allows for the rift to be healed between the two and makes it possible for them to leave Eden at the end while hand in hand—which in effect, allows the human race to begin and survive.

In the last book of *Paradise Lost*, Eve has been asleep—made to sleep by the angel Michael with promises of good dreams—while Adam goes with the angel to the mountaintop in order to be told essentially the history of the world and what will come to

pass. Adam is given instructions to wake and tell Eve what she needs to know of what Michael has shown him (xii. 594-9). Eve is already awake and not sad as when they left, saying “Whence thou returnst, and whither wentst, I know;/For God is also in sleep, and Dreams advise” (xii. 610-1). She has learned in her sleep what Adam must be shown, mirroring Aemilia Lanyer’s dream learning in *Salve Deus Rex Iudaeorum* (Sumers 207). She is revived now when “wearied I fell asleep” (xii. 614) and Eve tells Adam “thou to me/Art all things under Heav’n, all places thou,/Who for my wilful crime art banished hence” (xii. 617-9). They will be okay as long as they are together. Milton actually gives Eve the power of the last words spoken in the poem—aside from the narrator—for “Adam heard/Well pleased, but answered not” (xii. 624-5). Milton gives the post-lapsarian reader hope as Adam and Eve leave Eden hand in hand, “the world was all before them” (xii. 646)—they are not just leaving paradise, but arriving into the world as well. The vocal strength Eve has shown in Eden will become the beginning of a legacy of language and community, one that will allow women like Lanyer and the Lady to take control of their own agency with a speech that cannot be silenced. There is hope for all women through Eve’s authority over language and herself.

Coda

As noted in previous chapters, Lanyer and Milton become revisionists when looking at defamed archetypal women from history and literature. Just as Milton recreates Eve from the biblical source, he does the same in *Samson Agonistes* in retelling the Judges's story of Samson and Delilah. Milton's transformation of Delilah begins even at her name; the spelling of Milton's version has been noticeably changed to immediately show the reader that this may not be the same character known by the Christians of the time. Dalila is no longer simply the paid harlot that seduces Samson out of his secrets, but rather rewritten as wife to Samson and Philistian matron (Revard, Stella 296). While critics like Thomas Kranidas argue for her intelligence and power with words, he argues she only uses her skills as a temptress and the reader should be as on guard as Samson is at each utterance (128). To read Milton's Dalila only as "specious monster" (230) and "traitress" (725) as Samson proclaims, is to ignore the likely inspiration behind the character—as a powerful Euripidean heroine with a sword and shield of language.

According to Stella Revard, Milton had long been a student of Euripidean drama and the complexity he creates Dalila with closely resembles the women of Euripides's dramas (291). These women tend to be extremely complex, like a noble woman with faults, or wicked wives with virtue and justifiable motivation (Revard 292). These women use their voices and speak up for themselves often during an argument, just as Dalila does when she arrives at the prison Samson is being kept at. Whereas Kranidas

seems to argue that the language used by Dalila has “feminine deviousness [switching] to legalistic and masculine argument—still devious,” (128) the speech pattern fits the Euripidean heroine rather than biblical villain. Milton creates a much more dynamic character than the simple biblical harlot who sold Samson out for gold. While Milton is not taking away the guilt of Dalila—just as he doesn’t with Eve—he forces us to take into consideration the other side, the Philistian side, of the tale as well as the strength she brings to the table (Revard 302). Like the typical Euripidean heroine, Dalila chooses action and then chooses to use her rhetoric to defend herself against her husband Samson.

The poem begins *en media res*, after the actual betrayal and capture of Samson; Milton forces us to listen to the hearsay of Samson and the chorus’s account of who Dalila is before her arrival. Samson calls her various hateful terms such as “fallacious bride,/Unclean, unchaste” (320-1), “my faithless enemy” (380), and “deceitful concubine” (537). This is a step further into the misogynistic language Milton paints Adam as the father of in *Paradise Lost*; it is the very language Lanyer urges her readers to discard from their tongues and pens. Such talk lets us as readers creep back to our biblical knowledge of Dalila. Of course, readers will have a fairly biased picture of her already due to history and the biblical source. Her arrival, however, shows a far more complex creature than simple temptress. Coming to Samson’s prison cell in the first place shows the inner strength of Milton’s Dalila. She is a wife coming to her husband to beg for forgiveness and to make amends, much like Eve coming to Adam after the Fall with

hopes of reconciliation. Revard says that no “deceitful concubine”—if she truly turned him out “despoiled/shaven, and disarmed” (532-4)—would have appeared before Samson a second time (296). There must be more to this woman than we have seen as of now in the story.

Dalila’s autonomy is laid out on the table for us to see thanks to her speech. When she begins speaking to Samson with tears in her eyes, saying “With doubtful feet and wavering resolution/I came, still dreading thy displeasure, Samson,/Which to have merited, without excuse” (732-4), we can see her deliberately playing the role of submissive “Greek” wife, dreading her husband’s displeasure, acknowledging fault and weakness with tears (Revard 297). Playing a role in the beginning does not take away from Dalila’s strength but rather adds to it; she must start off as such, gauging the situation she is walking into—submissiveness is not inferiority, as noted in chapter three. She knows Samson, his strength, and his reputation and thus must tread carefully as the charged betrayer. What she lacks in physical strength to combat Samson, she makes up for in inner strength and intelligence; she goes to battle with her words. When Samson spews at Dalila “Out, out Hyæna; these are thy wonted arts,/And arts of every woman false like thee,” (748-9) she doesn’t cower, but rather is firm in her response:

Yet hear me Samson; not that I endeavour

To lessen or extenuate my offence,

.....

I may, if possible, thy pardon find

The easier towards me, or thy hatred less (766-72).

She will be heard, by both Samson and the reader, and yet she is not trying to have her blame taken away. She asks of the possibility of pardon—or even simply less hatred—from her husband after her side is told and weighed (768). Dalila proclaims a weakness of her sex, but rather like Eve in the post-fall accusation fest with Adam, she also places some of the blame onto Samson for “[making] known...wherein consisted all thy strength and safety” (778-80). When we look at Samson’s account of the betrayal, “Thrice I deluded her, and turned to sport/Her importunity, each time perceiving/How openly, and with what impudence/She purposed to betray me” (396-9), the reader must agree with her reasoning—or at least begin questioning Samson’s account. Why, when Samson says he knew that Dalila was trying to determine his source of strength, would he actually tell her in the end? This larger blame is rightfully on his shoulders by his own admission.

Dalila’s strongest reasoning behind giving up Samson’s secret to his enemies is also where Milton chooses to showcase her strength of speech. Dalila did not betray Samson for gold, but when the princes and magistrates of *her* country—Samson’s enemies—came to solicit her aid, she claims she had no choice but to show loyalty to her people. Kranidas calls Dalila’s speech “Like a lawyer” (129), and that may be true, but is that necessarily bad? Like many Euripidean plays, it is a political drama (Revard 296), and Milton shows Dalila’s struggle between husband and country as a Philistine woman.

Samson is her country's greatest enemy, who had "destroyed such numbers of [her] nation" (856-7), and here is Dalila being pressed to civil duty to betray the person she loves. Her allegiances are split from the beginning, as Milton creates her as Philistian matron rather than concubine (Revard 299). Hearing Dalila's motivation and justification allows the reader to appreciate the strength it took to choose her civil duty and for the public good over her husband; her straining against these two patriarchal authorities actually allows her to ignore weakness and claim "a manlike strength" (Woods 28) in her language.

When Samson mirrors Adam's cruelty towards Eve, Dalila does not prostrate herself in front of him as Eve does (the closest she gets to that are her opening "wavering" lines). She fires back in a stunning display of grandiloquence, beginning with, "I see thou art implacable, more deaf /To prayers.../Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages" (960-3). She drops the role of weak, Greek wife and fully embraces her Euripidean heroine status, asking "Why do I humble thus myself, and suing/For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate?" (965-6). Dalila finally accepts in this moment that she will not lessen Samson's unappeasable rage, so she welcomes it. She shows herself as a powerful force to be remembered, "named among the famousest/Of Women" (982-3) in her country for her deeds—which she notes is all that really matters to her now. She will be known amongst her own community of women. Dalila takes back and reforms the language that is being used to define her against her will—just as Lanyer insisted. They

will tell stories of the strength of the woman who “to save/Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose/Above the faith of wedlock-bands” (984-6). Milton gives us a chance to see the character of Dalila as hero—at least to one county. Dalila leaves the play triumphantly, “hurling a challenge” at Samson (Revard 301); speech is her noteworthy action of the drama.

Dalila enters and exits the drama of her own authority; she has agency on her own that mirrors Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and Milton’s *Comus* and *Paradise Lost*. Powerful females permeate some of Milton’s most famous works, yet there are still scholars that will argue Milton as mere misogynist and nothing more. To do this is to ignore the power he gives these females, and to ignore the emphasis he places on their words. Milton’s ideas about womankind enter into a discourse that Lanyer wrote herself into as a speech-act in itself. Speech is action for the women Lanyer and Milton write to, about, and for. As an author, the gifts of language and knowledge are supremely significant to bestow on a character; they choose female representatives to hold and wield these gifts. Speech can be action, and sometimes it will prove to be the only action available. In the early modern period, men and women alike needed take up the call to action that was stressed by participants in the *querelle des femmes* in order to change the negative perception of women that was long perpetuated by historic, religious, and social language.

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