

**Early Modern Women's Dream Visions:
Male Literary Tradition and the Female Authorial Voice**

by

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts**

at

**Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
August 1999**

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who were always there through the long, dark night.

And to Richard Clancey who gave me the gift of literature in the first place.

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ABSTRACT

In the Middle Ages the dream vision was a highly respected literary form, used by the great authors of the time such as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Langland and the *Pearl* Poet. The first chapter is a short examination of medieval dream theory as epitomized by Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, and his early modern descendants such as Thomas Hill and Thomas Nashe, who, while not differing in basic theory, added a specifically gendered understanding to dreams. Modern critics have asserted that the dream vision, though a hallmark of the Middle Ages, had fallen into disfavour by the early modern era, and was used only by minor poets and those who were "deliberately archaizing" (Weidhorn 70). This is not the case, however. Three early modern writers chose to write dream visions with the utmost seriousness, including Aemilia Lanyer, Rachel Speght and Elizabeth Melville.

The second chapter is devoted to Lanyer's dream vision *The Authours Dreame to the Ladie Marie, the Countesse Dowager of Pembroke*. As is common in dream visions, Lanyer relies on literary antecedents to inform her work, particularly, Chaucer's *House of Fame* and Sidney's *To the Angell spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney*. Lanyer uses the dream convention and these literary antecedents to solidify her literary authority and in turn launch a subtle critique against the unfair and exclusionary nature of patronage circles, as defined by Mary Sidney, the premier patron of the arts at the time. Lanyer cannot completely dismiss her patrons, however, and by drawing on the prophetic nature of the dream, imaginatively reconfigures the patronage relationship at the same time she critiques it.

The third chapter focuses on Rachel Speght's *A Dreame*, wherein she draws on two very different types of the literary dream to establish her literary authority. Chaucer's partial translation of the *Romaunt of the Rose* and William Langland's *Piers Plowman* are used as a template to describe her "rapturous encounter with learning" (Lewalski xi) as a romantic, heroic quest and at the same time open up a space for legitimate, non-sexual female desire. In establishing literary authority and a type of female desire that does not challenge the primacy of female chastity, Speght uses her dream vision to critique the way in which Renaissance humanists have failed to put their theories into practice by not granting women equal access to education equal to men's.

In the final chapter I address the way in which Elizabeth Melville seamlessly weaves biblical narrative and ideas into her 'Dantean' journey to hell with Christ as guide. In this dream vision she conflates her own word with God's to establish unassailable religious authority as part of God's elect and in doing so writes her own biblical dream vision. I also explore the possibility that Melville imitates Dante's *Inferno*. Melville draws on the specifically visionary or prophetic elements of biblical dream visions and by doing so literally (and literarily) subverts King James' laws forbidding the Presbyterians' open-air prophecies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis could never have been begun, much less completed, without the continued support of Dr. Christina Luckyj. Her unfailing support, enthusiasm, and professionalism kept me going through various rough patches over the years. Thanks for everything.

Chapter One:
A short history of the dream vision and issues of female authorship

The literary dream vision was a well-used and highly respected genre in the Middle Ages, and can be found, in various forms and addressing various topics, in the works of the great writers of the period such as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Langland, and the *Pearl* poet. Of course, medieval writers neither discovered nor invented the literary dream vision. Dream visions, as a form of prophetic communication with the divine, occur with significant regularity in the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. Likewise, classical authors, particularly Ovid, used the dream vision. Such an extensive and diverse use of this convention indicates that the dream vision as a literary tradition has deep significance and a credibility that transcends time period, religious denomination and socioeconomic categories. Even in the late twentieth century the dream vision is often manifested in Native American literature in the form of vision quests. However, in the early modern era, the time period which will be the focus of this work, the dream vision was used, if at all, primarily by minor poets such as Henry More, Abraham Cowley and William Drummond, though John Donne, one of the foremost Renaissance poets, dabbled with the possibilities inherent in the dream vision. The point is that by the early modern era, the dream vision had fallen out of favour, and it has been a commonly accepted notion in critical circles that those who did write dream vision works during the Renaissance were "deliberately archaizing" (Weidhorn 70), though late in the

seventeenth century John Bunyan would resuscitate it as a highly effective, serious and respected allegorical literary form.

Weidhorn's confident assertion cannot be taken as a universal truism, in spite of the relative lack of dream vision works known in the era. There were (at least) three poets who did use the dream vision trope with the utmost seriousness and whom I would hesitate to call minor; there simply has not been enough critical work done on them yet. The three writers to whom I refer, and who will be the focus of this discussion, are Aemilia Lanyer, Rachel Speght and Elizabeth Melville. Lanyer is gaining recognition and critical attention rapidly, with particular emphasis on her long religious poem *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611), Speght has been the subject of a few critical explorations which have focused primarily on her polemical pamphlet *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (1617), while Elizabeth Melville is quite thoroughly ignored and her dream vision, *Ane Godlie Dreame*, since its inclusion in both Greer's and Travitsky's collections of the late 1980's, has ceased to be anthologized with other early modern women writers' works. The modern exclusion of Melville from critical literary discourse is odd considering that of the three dream visions which I will be discussing, hers is the only one to be reprinted in any great degree, and in fact "continued to be reprinted so late as 1737" (Laing 282). *Ane Godlie Dreame*, first published in 1603, was "long popular among the Scottish Presbyterians" (Laing 281), and may even have "suggested some passages in that inimitable work of fiction the 'Pilgrim's Progress'" (Laing 280). Neither Lanyer nor Speght enjoyed such fame.

Both Lanyer's and Speght's dream visions are relatively short works, used to preface much larger and more "serious" works, the *Salve Deus* and *Mortalities Memorandum* respectively. Melville's vision at first glance appears uncomplicated in conveying her personal experience of religious ecstasy. However, I would argue that none of these works is as casual or immediately accessible as it may seem, and in the cases of Lanyer and Speght, their dream visions occupy a central position in their respective oeuvres. Melville's dream vision, while not as closely or consciously connected to her other works, does inform and is informed by readings of those other works.

Clearly, one might wonder why these women chose to write dream vision poems, considering the unpopularity of the form during the period in which they were writing. This is a question that can only be begun to be answered by addressing what they were probably reading, both about dreams as expressed in the philosophies of the day, and in what forms they came across the dream vision in literature. The theories and literatures that employed the dream as base or frame were of course not mutually exclusive; however, it will be useful to look at the theories apart from the texts and then look at how the theories are manifested in works of literature to try to discover just what made the dream vision so very appealing to Lanyer, Speght and Melville.

As Weidhorn points out,

During the Renaissance there was no major break with the medieval dream tradition, and no remarkable new theory was propounded. The older classifications

continued to be common. The relative predominance of mantic, natural or diabolic dreams was still debated. What characterized the Renaissance in this discipline, as in many others, was an enriching of the available literature of the past. To the old medieval sources such as Aristotle¹ and Macrobius were added new editions and translations of works long out of currency. (33-4)

It is not likely that Lanyer, Speght or Melville read Macrobius but it hardly matters. The theories of the dream vision as propounded in *Macrobius' Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, are essentially, as J. Stephen Russell points out, pervasive: "Later writers might alter the Macrobean categories slightly, but except for such minor alterations and shifts in emphasis, the taxonomy stays intact through Freud..." (62). The result is that during the early modern era "allegorical dream visions show little structural difference from their medieval counterparts, but inspiration takes on more secular connotations" (Parman 72), though of course, particularly in the case of Elizabeth Melville, continues to rely on religious/scriptural theories and events.

Since Macrobius is so central to the theory of dreams through its long development, it is useful to give a detailed summary of that theory. There has been extensive critical work done on Macrobius' ideas, his influence on later writers, and his foreshadowing of modern dream analysis. To begin to

¹Aristotle represents the skeptical point of view in terms of dream vision interpretation: "Generally speaking, seeing that some of the lower animals also dream, dreams cannot be sent by God" (Aristotle in Russell 54). In spite of the presence of such skepticism, judgement tended to land on the side of credulity during the Renaissance.

understand what attracted Lanyer, Speght and Melville to the by then obscure convention of the dream vision, Macrobius' theories must be understood as they were originally worked out and then how they were appropriated by the subsequent authors to who might have been exposed to them. Macrobius is fortunately quite succinct in his categorization of dreams, in a way that he is not about much else. I quote from William Harris Stahl's updated translation of 1990:

All dreams may be classified under five main types: there is the enigmatic dream, in Greek *oneiros*, in Latin *somnium*; second, there is the prophetic vision, in Greek *horama*, in Latin *visio*; third, there is the oracular dream, in Greek *chrematismos*, in Latin *oraculum*; fourth, there is the nightmare, in Greek *enypnion*, in Latin *insomnium*; and last, the apparition, in Greek *phantasma*, which Cicero, when he has occasion to use the word, calls *visum*.

The last two, the nightmare and the apparition, are not worth interpreting since they have no prophetic significance. (87-88)

The first three then, the enigmatic dream, the prophetic vision and the oracular dream are worth interpreting, and if they are worth interpreting then they clearly have some kind of authority for revealing some truth. Macrobius goes on to indicate how it can be determined just what kind of dream one is dealing with:

Nightmares may be caused by mental or physical distress, or anxiety about the future: the patient² experiences in dreams vexations similar to those that disturb him during the day.....

The apparition (*phantasma* or *visum*) comes upon one in the moment between wakefulness and slumber, in the so-called

² Note that even Macrobius is not willing to place dreams completely in the realm of the divine, and admits that sometimes dreams can be a sign of mental illness, and therefore untrustworthy.

"first cloud of sleep." In this drowsy condition he thinks he is still fully awake and imagines he sees specters rushing at him or wandering vaguely about, differing from natural creatures in size and shape, hosts of diverse things, either delightful or disturbing...

We call a dream oracular in which a parent, or a pious or reverend man, or a priest, or even a god clearly reveals what will or will not transpire, and what action to take or to avoid. We call a dream a prophetic vision if it actually comes true... By an enigmatic dream we mean one that conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information being offered, and requires an interpretation for its understanding. (88-90)

Already the distinctions begin to blur: the meaningless apparition strikingly resembles the highly authoritative enigmatic dream -- both are laden with incomprehensible figures who are not clearly human or within the reach of human understanding. To clear things up (though this is not necessarily the result) Macrobius reveals that there are five types of enigmatic dream, including "personal, alien, social, public and universal" (90), which effectively covers everything that could possibly be dreamt about and the ability to differentiate becomes more complicated just as he is attempting to clarify things.

The result is that dream vision interpretation is a dubious and unreliable affair from the beginning. As Russell points out, every "dream vision is, considering symptoms or external indicators, clearly an *insomnium*, a somatic dream in which 'the patient experiences vexations'" (80). This does not prevent Macrobius from insisting that there are real prophetic dreams and that there is a way to identify them. Of central importance is the social and spiritual status of the dreamer him or herself. Macrobius reveals some anxiety concerning this

issue: "It is incorrect to maintain that Scipio was not the proper person to have a dream that was both public and universal..." (91). There is then a proper person, and not everyone is capable of having, much less comprehending, prophetic dreams. Macrobius cites the example of Aeneas, who "though fully instructed by the Delian oracle in choosing the region that was destined by fate for his kingdom, slipped into error by the oversight of one word" (119) -- only the most privileged (by the gods in Macrobius' time), the oracles, were able to correctly interpret the visions revealed to them. Problems of interpretation aside, there is a tremendous amount of authority to be cultivated in the dream vision, particularly in an increasingly literary culture.

Much critical effort has gone into identifying the central elements of the dream vision as it has been manifested in biblical, classical and medieval works. And because these are the sources from which Lanyer, Spengler and Melville all probably drew their inspiration it will be useful to identify the components of the form along with the theories that give rise to and define that form. There are in fact two separate branches of the dream vision used in the Middle Ages which must be examined and identified. The first is the secular dream vision as epitomized by *Le Roman de la Rose*. Constance B. Hieatt asserts that "the earlier portion written by Guillaume de Lorris...comes so close [to being prescriptive] that a discussion of it will serve to describe the entire genre" (15). A condensed version of the primary elements of the secular medieval poetic dream vision as catalogued by Hieatt (15-18) includes the following: an introductory

discussion of the meaning of dreams, often with specific reference to Macrobius, followed by a declaration that “[t]he poem that follows is...what [the poet] saw in a dream. This element is so typical as to be essential: it gives this type of poetry its name” (Heatt 15); the poet wakes up within the dream and discovers it is a lovely May morning; the dreamer meets personifications in the course of the dream who teach or corrupt; the poet begins a quest to achieve a specific goal; the poem ends with the goal being accomplished and the poet waking up. Heatt is much more specific in her categorization of the essential elements of the secular dream vision than I have indicated; however, I mention only a few key elements because secular medieval dream visions are too diverse to be lumped together in the way Heatt suggests. One obvious example of a dream vision that does not fit comfortably into Heatt’s categories is Geoffrey Chaucer’s *House of Fame*.

The other tradition that closely resembles the above is the religious or divine. In the case of biblical dream visions, God directly reveals some information required by the dreamer, something which must be acted upon. This is also often the case with classical visions wherein a figure of authority such as a priest or deceased father (as in the dream of Scipio) reveals what a leader must do to achieve his destined fame. At the same time there is the possibility of direct revelation from the gods (Ovid’s story of Ceyx and Alcyone is a prime example) or what is called the “‘Dantean’ pattern...[which includes] a shamanistic descent to Hell and gradual emergence, a personal journey through madness,

creativity, or depression in search of divine insight" (Parman 65).

In spite of different subject matters, different eras, different religious standpoints, all these dream vision types have some very important elements in common, a fact which illuminates the universality of the convention. The elements of chief concern include a "naive-obtuse-unfit narrator" (Russell 24) who is "troubled, depressed, alienated from the comforts of society" (Russell 116) and in need of some kind of aid, usually enlightenment on how to improve his situation; the dreamer begins a journey of seeking the needed information during which he meets figures (sometimes allegorical, sometimes not), always mentally and/or socially superior to him, whether god or man, who guide him on his way; finally, he must receive the required information so that the dream fits into the definition of prophetic, or as Parman describes it, acts as a "bridge to knowledge...[from which]...he 'wakes up' to true knowledge, or at least, a higher form of knowledge than when he first fell asleep" (64). The notion that the dreamer begins his vision quest in a state of ignorance or distress seems to belie the notion expressed earlier by Macrobius, and accepted by those who drew on his theories, that the worth of the dreamer indicates the meaningfulness (i.e. prophetic value) of the dream. The notion of the privileged, gifted dreamer is also inherent in the biblical dream visions which of course predate Macrobius. As Weidhorn points out, "[t]he Bible...depicts dreams clearly inspired by God or angels; dreams explicitly prophetic; dreams that warn, order, or guide. Indeed God indicated that he would appear to all prophets other than Moses in a vision

or a dream" (14). In fact, it is quite possible the Bible was Macrobius' source wherein can be found "precedent[s] for every one of his categories" (Heatt 51). With the biblical model in mind the contradiction is quickly solved: the dreamer begins his dream in a state of ignorance, ignorance which is most likely similar to many other people's. The difference however is that the recipient of a prophetic dream vision, unlike most others, is worthy of receiving that kind of wisdom, and worthy, no less, of getting it directly from the source of all wisdom, the divine.

These theories are of course only useful if Lanyer, Speght, and Melville actually had some kind of contact with them. The question then is where Renaissance readers and writers, particularly women readers and writers, would have encountered Macrobius' ideas on dreams, and of course, any kind of dream vision whatsoever, if in fact all dream visions have certain constants or markers. In spite of the fact that the dream vision was not frequently or seriously used in the literature of the early modern era there was no shortage of reading materials popular at the time which contained and/or discussed dream visions. As has been mentioned earlier, there were no new theories of dream proposed in the early modern era in England though the issue was still being seriously debated. The pamphlet war, one of the best known characteristics of this era, did not fail to address issues of the meaning and interpretation of dreams. At the centre of the Renaissance discussion of dreams are Thomas Hill and Thomas Nashe. There is no proof that Lanyer, Speght or Melville read either of their pamphlets; however, Lanyer and Speght at least were abreast of the many

controversies being worked out in the abundance of circulating books and treatises and were most likely aware, if only peripherally, of the discussion.

In *The moste pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretacion of Dreames* (1576)

Thomas Hill takes a positive view of dreams, and like Macrobius, propounds the elitist view that only the worthy have dreams with any meaning:

"Dreames...oneleye happen to suche, whose spirites are occupyed with no irracionall imaginations" (Hill 1). Interestingly, Hill also constructs the prophetic aspect of dreams as distinctively feminine: "And yet dreames seene by grave and sober persons, do signifie matters to come, and a spirite undoubtedlie shewinge to them, whiche by her nature is a Prophetesse" (Hill 2). He also cites the Bible as proof of the prophetic, noble nature of dreams because it "bothe allow[s] and witness[s] of Dreames" (3). The correlation between the prophetic dreams of the Bible with a feminine kind of perception helps shed light on why three early modern women would choose to resurrect what was by then a passé literary trope. Such a move aligns them with an authority so great it cannot be questioned -- the word and practice of God. Unfortunately, Macrobius' doubt about the ability to identify which dreams were prophetic and which were not was inherited by his literary and philosophical offspring. There was no consensus on the value of dreams, a fact seen clearly in the work of Hill's peer, Thomas Nashe.

In *The terrors of the night* (1594) Nashe initially appears to take a view of dreams almost diametrically opposed to Hill's. There is evidence that he, unlike

Hill, read the commentary of Macrobius: "Nashe was well acquainted with the works whose authors he spurns. Certainly all were available at that time in England in new editions and translations" (Rupprecht 126). His rejection of Macrobius' theories results in a less optimistic stance on the prophetic possibilities inherent in dreams. Unlike Hill, Nashe does not suggest that dreams are messages sent by God as a sign of one's worthiness; rather, he asserts that dreams and nightmares are used by the devil to torment us: "The Night is the Divells Blacke booke, wherein hee recordeth all our transgressions...The table of our hart is turned to an index of iniquities, and all our thoughts are nothing but texts to condemne us" (1-2). Curiously though, Nashe goes on to assert that "our creator for our punishment hath allotted it him [the devil] as his peculiar segniorie and kingdome" (3). So, Nashe does not differ from Hill (or Macrobius) that much after all -- he believes that dreams are based on the worth of the person, but simply has a less optimistic view of human beings and therefore the dreams they have. Considering that both Nashe's and Hill's views were symptomatic of the era's views on dreams, women's attraction to the convention becomes complicated. Like Hill, Nashe associates dreaming with the feminine, but of course that means associating the feminine with the devil and the wrath of God: "Well have Poets tearmed night the nurse of cares, the mother of despaire, the daughter of hell" (Nashe 2) and "melancholy is the mother of dreames" (Nashe 16). He asserts that such dreams are meaningless and cannot predict the future but "Phisitions by dreames may better discern the distemperature of

their pale clients, than either by urine or ordure" (Nashe 31).

In spite of the apparent differences between Hill's and Nashe's understandings of dreams they are at bottom quite similar and basically fit within the philosophy established by Macrobius, that is, real prophetic dreams come only to the worthy and are sent by God, while nightmares have no prophetic value and are at worst the devil's torture instruments, at best signs of illness. The only point of departure from Macrobius' theories is the explicit association with the feminine these two pamphleteers make. The opposing views Hill and Nashe have on the desirability of this feminized activity, occurrence or type of knowledge, reflects the gender debates that raged (often in the form of pamphlets, a war of which Speght was part) throughout the Renaissance. Within this debate existed the notion that "women were more prone to irrational states accessible in dream" (Luckyj 1). Of course, Hill and Nashe write about real dreams, while Lanyer's and Speght's poems at least "are carefully constructed poems which owe more to medieval male literary models than to the psychic eruptions associated with women in early modern culture"³ (Luckyj 3).

If, as Luckyj asserts, this conscious construction of dream vision literature might have "insulated [them] from cultural censure" (ibid) because of the

³ This assertion is complicated in the cases of Lanyer and Melville however. Lanyer's insistence that the title for *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* came to her in a dream appears meant to be taken seriously. And Melville's *Ane Godlie Dreame* is, I believe, intended to describe an actual dream quest with Christ as guide, a distinction which would be much more important to her than to the secular efforts of Lanyer and Speght.

association with respected literary tradition, there is still the initial issue of them writing at all: “for Renaissance women writers...the issue of chastity was intricately bound up with the problem posed by the (ideological) logic that made silence an equivalent of bodily purity” (Ferguson 97). For all three writers the act of publishing their works could call their authority as writers into question because

print publication was rhetorically scripted as a lower-class⁴ activity, [and] writers of both genders had to counter the force of this stigma. This is not to say, however, that gender was not an issue. In a world in which privilege was attached to coterie circulation and published works were associated with promiscuity, the female writer could become a “fallen” woman in a double sense: branded as a harlot or a member of the non-elite.⁵ (Wall 281)

So, considering the problems of authorship to begin with and the relative unpopularity of the dream vision in the early modern era, Lanyer, Speght and Melville take a fairly substantial risk in choosing to write dream vision poems.

However, they were still acting with a substantial amount of literary and textual authority behind them. This authority of course comes from what they read:

Englishwomen's favorite writings and modes of discourse to echo, tease into their texts, or handle revisionistically are

⁴ As Lanyer's marginal position to court society was primarily a result of her lower class status to begin with, publishing poems ostensibly intended to covet royal favour is a highly dubious decision.

⁵ The non-elitist nature of publication would (hopefully) be counter-balanced by the very elite nature of the dream vision.

the Bible, devotional commentaries on it, Ovid (the *Metamorphoses*, *Heroides*, and *Amores* in translation), Virgil's *Aeneid* (mainly the Dido episode in translation)...
(Schleiner 2)

I will argue later that women were also reading medieval texts along with the Scriptures and the classics; however, right now I will address the issue of the Bible's influence on women's writing with specific reference to the dream vision. That the Bible was read by or to most women in the early modern era is not in question; however, the importance of its dreams, visions and dream visions has not been discussed with reference to early modern women's writing.

Within the Bible dreams and/or visions are, with few exceptions, meant to be prophetic, the revelation of the word of God. In the Book of Job, as A.C. Spearing points out, "the supreme significance of dreams is asserted by Elihu" (12), a significance which is pointed out again in II Corinthians 12:1-4, Apocalypse 4:1-2, in the dreams of Pharaoh, Joseph, and Nebuchadnezzar, and in the Book of Ezekiel among others. I do not wish to give an exhaustive analysis of the biblical dream vision, a task too big for this project and one which has been done adequately anyway; I merely wish to correlate what early modern women read to what they wrote. Biblical influence was pervasive in a culture as thoroughly Protestant as early modern England (Scotland in Melville's case) but besides being part of the Renaissance woman's list of necessary readings, how can this influence be explained? The Bible was, after all, often used to keep women in subjection. The prime example of course is the early modern

tendency of misogynist writers to equate women's chastity and overall goodness with silence (a fact attested to by the constant references, in the pamphlet war at least, to St. Paul's admonition to "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection" (1 Timothy 2: 11)). However, the Bible is not uniform in its gender politics. The Book of Numbers reveals God speaking to Aaron and Miriam: "If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream" (Numbers 12:6). It is noteworthy that neither Aaron nor Miriam seems to be included in the prophets of whom God speaks -- as to Moses, God communicates with them "mouth to mouth, and plainly" (Numbers 12: 8). However, if a woman is worthy of hearing the word of God directly, and with specific reference to the issue of prophetic dreams and visions, then she is certainly deserving enough to receive and understand such dreams. And of course, there is Pilate's wife's dream, a dream which both Speght and Lanyer refer to explicitly in their respective oeuvres:

Even as he sat in judgement on Jesus, his wife sent a message to him: Have nothing to do with this just man, for I have learned much about him in a dream today.⁶
(Matthew 27:19)

Women then, even in the Bible, a deeply patriarchal text, are sometimes blessed with the prophetic dream, a fact which alone should establish these

⁶ There are complications inherent in using Pilate's wife's dream as a means of legitimating women's dream visions, which J. Stephen Russell and W. Gardner Campbell point out. These complications will be explored with reference to both Lanyer and Speght in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively.

women's authority to dream/write unequivocally. As with gender politics, the Bible is not uniform in its views on dreams, a fact which could account for Macrobius' initial uncertainty, an uncertainty which was passed down to all dream theorists after him. As Weidhorn points out

The author of Deuteronomy, for instance, commands that if prophets or dreamers follow strange gods, Israel is to destroy such men instead of heeding them. Jeremiah is most outspoken against dreams and often attacks the prophets who tell of false dreams... (25)

The uncertainty here is not about the possibility of real prophetic dreams occurring, but about the interpretation of dreams, and about who is worthy of receiving them, which are concerns that do not disappear, as has been noted. The examples of Miriam and Pilate's wife help account for women's attraction to biblical dream visions, because of the Bible's overall textual authority, and because of the specific examples of women's communication with the divine.

At the same time that biblical dream visions were at least partly accessible to women there was classical literature which could be drawn upon for dream visions. Macrobius himself was of course classical as was Cicero's dream of Scipio upon which he comments. However, I refer specifically to Ovid, who as has already been mentioned, was part of the educated Englishwoman's literary diet. In fact, Ovid (in translation) was one of the most common texts in circulation during the Renaissance: "From about 1575 onward a great variety of books were becoming available to an increasingly greater reading public...[of which] translations of Ovid...[partly] comprised a bookseller's stock" (Krontiris

14). Classical influences may be harder to associate with Melville's *Ane Godlie Dreame* which describes a Christian renunciation and rejection of all that is material and secular. However, Lanyer's and Speght's dream visions are both secular and draw significantly on classical images and figures. These textual references to biblical, classical, and as I shall argue with reference to each author, specific Medieval and perhaps contemporary texts, indicate that these three women writers were fairly well educated. Unfortunately, knowledge of what they were reading is limited to the clues present in their own works, and thus open to conjecture.

The version of Ovid they most likely would have had access to is what is now known as *Shakespeare's Ovid*, which was translated into English in 1567 by Arthur Golding. Not only was Golding's translation widely read but it was used extensively by Shakespeare (Rouse v) with whose work Lanyer⁷ and Speght at least might have had some contact. Golding's translation would have had a double authority in the early modern era, not only as a translation of one of the foremost classical texts but because Golding was a "friend of Sir Philip Sidney" (Rouse vi), one of the most influential literary figures of the time. The story of primary interest concerned with dreams in the *Metamorphoses* is that of Ceyx

⁷ In June 1619 Anne Clifford writes in her diary that "my Coz. Marie read Ovids Metamorphosis to me" (113). That Lanyer had some contact with the Cliffords is attested to in her own works, particularly *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, *To Cooke-ham*, and in her dedications to both Anne and Margaret. The connection to the Cliffords will be expanded upon with reference to Lanyer's possible contact with Chaucer.

and Alcyone, wherein Ceyx goes on an ocean voyage which Alcyone has reason to believe will prove fatal. Ceyx takes the trip anyway and as predicted, perishes. Seeing Alcyone in such an agony of uncertainty concerning the fate of her husband, out of mercy Juno sends Morpheus to reveal to her that her husband has perished -- and Morpheus does so in a dream vision. Significantly, Morpheus appears in both Lanyer's and Speght's visions. That this vision would have been of interest to at least Lanyer and Speght is clear, and for many reasons. To associate one's work with the classics is of course desirable (it was perfectly acceptable in the early modern era to rewrite or borrow from others' stories in a way it is not now), it builds on an already biblically sanctioned tradition of dream visions, it combines the secular and the divine, and perhaps most importantly, it is a woman who receives the dream. If, however, the dream was sent by the gods purely out of pity it undermines the notion that those who dream prophetically are a select group. This divine elitism is an element Renaissance women writers would not want to lose considering the controversy surrounding their authorship. However, Alcyone's begging Ceyx not to go shows that she possesses some level of prescience, or in other words, abilities of prophecy. Thus, her privileged position is not lost.

That the Bible and the classics were well read and influenced, in varying degrees, the works of Lanyer, Speght and Melville can be inferred from their wide readership. However, I am going to argue that an essential part of the Renaissance reading list were the works of Geoffrey Chaucer as they were

presented in Thomas Speght's 1598 edition of *The Workes of our Antient and Learned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer*.⁸ Caroline F. E. Spurgeon's three volume *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion 1357-1900* gives an idea of just how widely read and how influential upon the works of later male authors Chaucer was. However, Spurgeon's tomes were compiled before Renaissance women's texts were being rediscovered and studied in any volume, and except for women bequeathing copies of Chaucer's texts in their wills (for example, in 1509 Margaret, Countess of Richmond leaves her copy of the *Canterbury Tales* to one John Saynt John (Spurgeon 71)), there are no references either to women's reading or writing on Chaucer. This relative lack of evidence does not mean that women were not reading Chaucer, however. In her diary, Lady Anne Clifford notes in April of 1617: "Upon the 26th I spent the evening in working and going down to my Lords Closet where I sat & read much in the Turkish History and Chaucer" (81). In 1649 Clifford goes on to write from Appleby:

if I hade nott exelent Chacor's booke heere to comfortt mee I wer in a pitifull case, having so manny trubles as I have, butt when I rede in thatt I scorene and make litte of tham alle, and a little partt of his devine sperett infusses itt selfe in mee. (Annotations 165)

It is important to note that Lanyer was a close friend of the Cliffords' for a long

⁸ Thomas Speght did publish a 1602 edition of the Works with corrections and several other works added. However, the more readily available 1598 edition will suffice for my discussion because all of Chaucer's dream vision poems appear in this edition.

time, penned *To Cooke-ham* in honour of the ladies, and because of her close relationship with them, most likely read what they read -- the habit of Renaissance women was to read in groups, and often out loud, rather than alone and silently, which was then an almost exclusively male practice.⁹ This is a trend attested to by Anne Clifford's many references to being read to, including Ovid and the Bible. Her apparently solitary perusal of Chaucer is the only instance of its kind in her diary.

That it was Speght's edition that was being read is likely considering that two of "the three editions, then, in which much of the Renaissance read Chaucer" were Speght's (Machan 147). That Rachel Speght read Chaucer is also quite possible considering who the premier editor of the *Works* was -- according to Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, Thomas Speght "may have been a kinsman" to Rachel (xii). When considering the dream visions of Lanyer and Speght it is important to examine some specific texts of Chaucer's. A large number of the Chaucerian texts were dream vision poems: *The Book of the Duchess*,¹⁰ *The Parliament of Fowls*, *The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women*, his partial translation of the *Roman de la Rose*, *The House of Fame*, the

⁹ Louise Schleiner's article "Women's Household Circles as a Gendered Reading Formation" in *Tudor & Stuart Women Writers* explores early modern women's reading practices in detail.

¹⁰ It is significant that the narrator of *The Book of the Duchess* is reading Ovid's story of Ceyx and Alcyone before he falls asleep and has his own dream vision.

spurious *Chaucer's Dreame*,¹¹ *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, and *Troilus and Criseyde* all address dreams in one form or another. The last two are not in fact dream visions though they do contain dreams, and in the case of *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, a meditation on the possible meaning, or lack thereof, inherent in dreams. The sheer volume of dream poems in Chaucer's oeuvre clearly indicates that he was deeply interested in them, a fact confirmed by frequent references to Macrobius in his dream vision texts:

Macrobius' *Commentary* is best known to English readers through the numerous references to it in Chaucer's works, and particularly as the book, called by Chaucer his "olde bok totorn," which he read "the longe day ful faste...and yerne" and which started him on the dream that forms the *Parliament of Fowls*.
(Stahl 52)

So, not only were Lanyer, Speght, and Melville most likely familiar with the biblical and classical antecedents upon which Chaucer drew for his own dream vision poems, Lanyer and Speght at least were probably exposed to a portion of Macrobius' original theories of dream visions, as conveyed by Chaucer.

Just as important as his dream vision texts and the theories which define them is the way in which Chaucer the author was understood in the early modern era. Tim William Machan's article "Speght's *Works* and the Invention of Chaucer" outlines just how much Thomas Speght reconstructed Chaucer to fit specific Renaissance needs and trends. His biography, the "first life of Chaucer

¹¹ It does not matter that this work was not in fact written by Chaucer; it does matter that Renaissance readers *thought* it was written by Chaucer.

in English" (Pearsall 77), went a long way to defining how early modern readers would see Chaucer's authority and thus how his works would be read. Speght was much more interested in honoring what he saw as Chaucer's poetic worth than the truth, and he invents him according to that agenda. First of all, and very importantly, he meddles with class: "Though Speght could not get around the fact that Chaucer was not of the upper class by birth, he did take pains to stress the poet's courtly background and character" (Machan 155). Speght consciously created his Chaucer as "a Renaissance gentleman" (ibid). At the same time Speght asserts that Chaucer is in fact "the father of English poetry" (Machan 148), and because of his large oeuvre (much that was considered Chaucerian at the time was in fact written by imitators of his style), Speght could even claim for Chaucer "the status of the English Virgil or Homer" (Machan 151). However, Chaucer's persona was not as clear cut as Speght would have liked it to be. In spite of Speght's attempts at elevating Chaucer to the highest of literary and cultural positions, Chaucer still occupied a position on the literary margins:

...the Chaucer of the Renaissance is decidedly paradoxical, simultaneously the father that English literary traditions needed to validate themselves but also a figure whose origins in the *medium aevum* necessarily rendered his language and style obscure and rough. (Machan 157)

Chaucer is both the highest of literary authorities and someone from a barbaric age, upon whom one may look back with a sense of superiority. This ambiguous role, I would argue, is a large part of what would attract early modern women writers to his works and his persona. As women writers they too would exist on

the fringes of literary circles of authority, and specifically for Lanyer and Speght, the fact that his position outside the upper class did not undermine his authority, might be particularly appealing. And of course, his dream vision poems are some of the best in literary history.

However, Chaucer is not the only possible medieval literary influence on the works of early modern writers. I am unable to discount other medieval dream vision writers as possible sources for the works of Lanyer, Speght and Melville in the way critics Alice Miskimin and Tim William Machan do. Miskimin claims that “the only medieval English poet still thought worth reading” in the early modern era was Chaucer (30), while Machan states that Chaucer was the only medieval author to be continuously reprinted throughout the Renaissance (154).

However, there is much evidence to suggest otherwise; William Langland's *Piers Plowman* was also an important text circulating in the early modern era, and possibly influenced Rachel Speght at least. In his 1995 critical edition of the B-text, A. V. C. Schmidt notes that *Piers Plowman* was published in 1550 by editor Robert Crowley, for which

he met a receptive audience: the work was reprinted twice in the same year and then again by Owen Rogers in 1561. In these editions *Piers Plowman* became as accessible to the Elizabethan reader as the works of Chaucer. (xx)

Over sixty manuscripts of Langland's work survive and Crowley's B-text

“became known to and influenced English poets like Spenser, Marlowe and

(possibly) Shakespeare” (Schmidt xviii). Crowley, like Speght, wrote his preface

with a specific agenda in mind, that is, to present "*Piers Plowman*...not [as] a literary product but a religious exhortation for the reform of the individual and society" (Johnson 103). Crowley writes:

this writer who in reportynge certaine visions and dreames, that he fayned hym selfe to have dreamed: doeth moste christianlye enstruct the weake, and sharply rebuke the obstinate blynde. There is no maner of vice, that reigneth in anye estate of men; whiche this wryter hath not godly, learnedlye, and wittilye rebuked. (Crowley in Johnson 102)

Speght's religious education and Protestant upbringing make her use of Langland's text a distinct possibility, a fact which I will explore in depth in Chapter 3.

It is feasible that Lanyer and Speght had only indirect contact with Chaucer and Langland. The works of Edmund Spenser were extremely well-read in the early modern era and show signs of being directly influenced by Chaucer and Langland. Johnson notes that Spenser makes at least two explicit references to Langland, one in *The Shepheardes Calender* and the other "in Book I of *The Faerie Queene* [where] we find out that Redcross was found by a 'Plowman in a furrow' and was raised by him 'in ploughman's state to byde' (FQ, I, x.66, 3-6)" (144). Miskimin devotes chapter IX of *The Renaissance Chaucer* to a discussion of the influence of Chaucer's various works on Spenser's. However, as I shall argue with reference to Lanyer and Speght in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively, there is much textual evidence to suggest that they read the works of Chaucer and Langland firsthand.

There is no evidence that Melville read Chaucer or Langland, and initial appearances suggest that her dream vision is not as self-consciously literary as those of Lanyer and Speght. However, Melville's is not totally scriptural, and I will discuss in detail in Chapter 4 the possible influence of Dante's *Inferno*, also widely read and highly influential in the early modern era, on *Ane Godlie Dreame*. Paget Toynbee's two volume *Dante in English Literature* is a compilation, similar to Spurgeon's three volumes on Chaucer, of the many references to Dante in the years 1380 to 1844. Toynbee asserts that "[s]everal English writers of [the sixteenth] century...had some first-hand acquaintance with Dante...Among the most famous of these is Sir Philip Sidney, who several times refers to Dante in his *Apologie for Poetry* (1581)" (xxi). Toynbee cites numerous other early modern writers who allude to Dante and/or his works. Like Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Dante's *Divine Comedy* became popular as a result of its becoming aligned with specific religious and political concerns of the Renaissance. He was, in fact, "claimed as a champion on behalf of the Protestants. This was due to the fact that in certain well-known passages of the *Divina Commedia*, Dante vigorously denounces the corruptions of Rome and of the Church" (xxiii). As will be seen, Melville's seemingly straightforward religious dream vision uses Dante's work, primarily the *Inferno*, with the political connotations that surrounded him in mind.

By aligning themselves with two authors representing a medieval dream

vision tradition,¹² and by extension the dream visions of the Bible and the classical authors, they aid in the creation of a continuous chain of literary greatness and authority, and at the same time, create themselves and their works as part of that chain of authority. This method of establishing literary authority in an environment so inhospitable to women's writings would perhaps be effective in convincing a skeptical male audience to take their work seriously and not immediately denounce it as evidence of female transgression. However, this at the same time puts these female authors, who very consciously constructed themselves as *female authors*,¹³ itself a position of little authority, in an even more dangerously unauthoritative position. In the following chapters I will consider, as an overarching theme, what the implications are of women writers appropriating a genre historically employed almost entirely by men¹⁴ (Chaucer, Ovid, the Bible), and, in the Renaissance, a genre considered archaic.

As may have become apparent already, the dream vision is a highly self-

¹² In spite of the fact that I am referring to individual authors I maintain that they also represent a tradition of imitation for the purpose of establishing one's authority. Chaucer borrowed extensively from Ovid, Boccaccio, Guillaume de Lorris and others, Langland borrowed from the Bible, while numerous other writers borrowed from and imitated Langland, the result being the creation of a whole sub-tradition of plowman tales.

¹³ This is not the case with Melville, and I will discuss the possible advantages and problems this creates in Chapter 4.

¹⁴ Christine de Pizan, a medieval French author, is one well-known exception; however, it is highly unlikely that Lanyer, Speght or Melville were familiar with her, as her work, though translated into English in the sixteenth century, was not widely available.

conscious literary genre. The connection between dream and text is made explicit by Chaucer himself whose dream visions follow a specific pattern wherein the dream vision poem begins with “a preliminary statement suggesting that the poet is, or was, concerned with a particular train of thought [and] is followed by remarks about his reading” (Heatt 85). In the Middle Ages and early modern era, reading had broader connotations than it does in the twentieth century. As Miskimin points out, “[m]any of the old ambiguities of the verb *to read*, Middle English *reden*, still remain alive [in the Renaissance]. It means, in the oldest sense (OE *ræden*, *rēden*) ‘the giving or taking of counsel,’ ‘to have or exercise control,’ with the sense of considering or explaining something mysterious such as a dream or riddle” (29). Further, “virtually all early writers on dreams noted the relations between dreams and literary texts” (Rupprecht 120) - even Nashe admits that “Upon the accidentall occasion of this dreame...was this Pamphlet...speedily...compyled” (48). Thus, dream visions were the most literary of the literary forms which existed *and* they had the authority of the scriptures and antiquity behind them. If a woman wanted to be considered a legitimate, respectable author, proving she was a good reader would be an excellent beginning -- and translating or imitating an ancient and authoritative form like the dream vision would be an intelligent choice. Unfortunately, such a move was not invulnerable, as has been discussed.

In spite of the many obstacles to the establishment of authoritative, literary female voices, women still found room to move within the system that repressed

them. The elitist nature of the dream vision, both the receiving and interpretation thereof, connotes a limited and privileged readership. In the Renaissance however, religion was surprisingly available to women in spite of its restrictions:

From its very beginnings the Reformation incorporated a fundamental contradiction: it granted woman relative autonomy in spiritual matters but simultaneously endorsed her overall subordination to the husband. Through its doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, it recognized women's right to read and interpret the scriptures, and even to disagree with men in their interpretations. *Neither sex nor social rank was to be a barrier in the communication with God.*

(Krontiris 8, my emphasis)

The point is that the Bible, as the ultimate authority, by being available to women of all classes would in some way open up most other books to their examination, criticism and appropriation. Surely, if a woman could interpret the word of God she could handle what any pagan like Ovid or barbarian like Chaucer had to say. Once the opportunities to read and write were opened they could not be closed again.

The dream vision then would perhaps hold a particular and specific attraction for Renaissance women. As women writers they would have to work much harder at proving their authority as readers and writers, and the dream vision could aid in this. The dream vision at its finest, according to the Bible, Macrobius and contemporaries like Nashe and Hill, is considered prophetic and, as Chedgzoy points out,

...the discourse of prophecy arguably offered women an opportunity 'to represent their own anomalous position in relation to language'. Prophecy, then, foregrounds and

makes explicit the problematic nature of women's place in discourse. (6)

That Lanyer's, Speght's and Melville's dream vision poems articulate this complicated and excluded position Chedgzoy describes I think is not what is in question; their own works and the raging debate on the role, status and identity of women in early modern England, clearly expound this fact. The issue is whether or not the way in which Lanyer, Speght and Melville express their unstable position in the realm of discourse actually jeopardizes that position at the same time it is meant to solidify and establish it.¹⁵

Issues of female authorship arise: how can a piece of literature be "feminine" (Lanyer and Speght create primarily female worlds in their dream vision poems), yet necessarily rely on the authority of the male writers whose works they model their own upon? This question becomes one internal to their poetry as well: what happens to the authority of the female poet/dreamer when in all three works there are male guide figures/dream inducers? Does the attempt to lend their works authority by aligning them with the above mentioned literary forefathers in fact undermine that very authority? Is their appropriation both subversive and conservative at the same time, and what are the implications of the ways in which and the points at which they do not follow the "rules" of the dream vision to the letter? These are questions that I will attempt to answer with

¹⁵ In the case of Lanyer anyway, I would suggest that there is enough textual and biographical evidence to assess how her dream vision poem was received in spite of the lack of external evidence.

specific reference to each of the three texts, rather than generally, because in spite of the similarities between Lanyer's *The Authours Dreame to the Ladie Marie, the Countesse Dowager of Pembroke*, Speght's *A Dreame*, and Melville's *Ane Godlie Dreame*, these are three very different texts. And in the cases of Lanyer and Speght, questions of how their single dream visions relate to their other works will also be explicitly addressed.

Chapter Two:
'For fear to be debar'd': Lanyer's double agenda in *The Authours Dreame to the Ladie Marie, the Countesse Dowager of Pembroke*

Compared to other early modern women writers, like Rachel Speght and Elizabeth Melville, whom I will be discussing in chapters three and four, Aemilia Lanyer (1569-1645) has been the subject of much critical attention, with particular emphasis on her long religious poem *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*. While the work done on the *Salve Deus* has been extensive, the attention paid her other works, included in the same manuscript as the *Salve Deus*, is far from complete. *To Cooke-ham* has received attention as the first country house poem published in English and the eleven dedications that preface the *Salve Deus* are, more often than not, if discussed at all, discussed as a group. However, one of the dedications, *The Authours Dreame to the Ladie Marie, the Countesse Dowager of Pembroke* has not been explored and unpacked in quite the way it deserves, as a text that stands on its own. This dream vision poem, the only one Lanyer wrote, and one of few written in the Renaissance at all, will be the focus of this chapter. Why Lanyer employs this genre for one poem, *this* poem, what literary antecedents and traditions she draws upon, the ways in which she appropriates and manipulates these other works, and to what (desired) effect(s), are among the questions I will attempt to answer. The peculiarity of Lanyer choosing to use the dream vision trope in an era in which, as was pointed out in Chapter one, it was used only by minor poets or those who were deliberately

archaizing, no critics have yet adequately addressed.

To begin to understand what could have motivated Lanyer to write her dream vision it will be useful to look at what critics have suggested thus far as possibilities. The issue of class difference has defined several critics' positions on why Lanyer chose to employ the dream vision form for only one of her many dedications, the one addressed to Mary Sidney. Josephine Roberts claims that

[t]hrough the medium of the dream-vision, Lanyer boldly disregards the barriers of class and rank that would ordinarily separate her from direct association with the Countess and situates herself in close relation to the most distinguished patron of sixteenth-century England. (131)

That class separated Lanyer from Sidney is not at issue. Her lower class status has been well-documented and helps explain why she needed to covet patronage from influential figures like Sidney in the first place. Lanyer was, as Leeds Barroll points out,

a female Londoner, probably a Jew, married to a gentile instrumentalist associated with the production of royal music. That is, she was a Londoner living perhaps in the middle of the income scale of those citizens who owned houses...in the years before her volume of poems was published, Aemilia seems identifiable solely as the wife of the Christian Alfonso Lanyer...with no discernible special wealth. She thus seems, significantly, as far from the nobility of the persons invoked in her volume as from the moon. (29-30)

This class difference would of course require that Lanyer adopt an appropriately humble manner. However, if, as Roberts suggests, Lanyer uses the dream vision specifically because of the enormous class difference, then I believe it

would make much more sense for her to use the same genre in writing to the Queen, who of course, would outrank Mary Sidney. It is just as likely Sidney's particular role as premier female patron of the arts, rather than her class status alone, which inspires Lanyer to write a dream vision dedication. This genre allows Lanyer to inhabit the same literary and class landscape as Mary Sidney in a way she cannot in real life.

Tina Krontiris, along with Barroll, asserts that Lanyer's apparent failure in her bid for patronage from the dedicatees of the *Salve Deus* is the result of not knowing "how exactly to treat the women she addresses" (Krontiris 119), which results in the "strategic error" of not placing the dedicatees in proper order in the text, an error "compounded by the multiple ways in which Lanyer foregrounded the countesses of Cumberland and Dorset throughout the volume" (Barroll 40). Yet Lanyer's experiences in Elizabeth I's court may well have given her a better idea of the etiquette required to address her social superiors than Krontiris and Barroll suggest. If in fact the dedications are in an order unsuitable to the women she addresses then I suggest that it is perhaps a deliberate move by Lanyer. This is related to her decision to use the dream vision in the first place with specific reference to Sidney.

Apart from the class issue there is the question of whether Lanyer was actually sincere. This is, of course, connected to her presentation of the dedications -- if she was not sincere then her disordering makes some sense. There are two camps on the issue of sincerity. On the one hand, Barbara Kiefer

Lewalski sees no ironical or subversive intent in the dedications, nor specifically in *The Authors Dreame*; rather, she sees the whole text as “a defense and celebration of the enduring community of good women that reaches from Eve to contemporary Jacobean princesses” (213), and the dream vision as “serving admirably to mark the Countess’s unique status as a paradigm of female worth” (222).

On the other hand, in “Breaking ‘the rule of *Cortezia*’,” Lisa Schnell asserts that

Lewalski, whose lead most Lanyer critics have followed, simply assumes -- despite a complete absence of evidence other than the volume itself -- that Lanyer’s bid for patronage is entirely straightforward. (81)

Rather, she asserts that Lanyer’s dedication, to Queen Anne at least, “seems calculated to ‘shame’ Anne into an obligation to Lanyer” (Schnell 83). I would suggest that all the dedications are designed to evoke a sense of guilty obligation to Lanyer, and none more subtly and interestingly than *The Authors Dreame to the Ladie Marie*. The result, as Kari Boyd McBride points out in “Remembering Orpheus in the Poems of Aemilia Lanyer,” is that “Lanyer uses these powerful women as a means for constructing her own poetic subjectivity, often at the expense of an individual woman’s virtue or power” (93). Lanyer implies as much herself in her epistle *To the Vertuous Reader*.

And this have I done, to make knowne to the world,
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 own mouthes,

fall into so great an error, as to speake *unadvisedly* against the rest of their sexe. (48 my emphasis)

This passage makes clear that Lanyer's proto-feminist agenda in the *Salve Deus* to exonerate women from the excessive guilt associated with the Fall does not preclude the possibility of criticizing specific women when they are in some kind of error.

Thus, I think the opposing critical trends represented by Lewalski and Schnell are both correct to a point but neither goes far enough. In this chapter I will explore the way in which Lanyer critiques her potential patrons, and the relationships of patronage they represent, and at the same time attempts to honour these women sincerely and to gain entry into the very social circles she subtly castigates. This attempt to balance supplication with criticism is perfectly epitomized in her dream vision. The characteristics peculiar to the dream vision form work very well in conjunction with a complicated double agenda like Lanyer's. As outlined in Chapter 1 the key characteristics of the dream vision include: a possible connection with the divine; a journey of discovery, from ignorance or confusion to understanding; a safe forum for addressing topics too contentious for straightforward narrative (i.e. diffused responsibility when convenient); the profound literariness of dream visions and the authority inherent in that literariness, and in the cases of women's dream visions, the representation of their gender based estrangement from literary circles and discourse. I will address the issue of literariness first because Lanyer's use of

other texts is unusual in many ways, and defines how the other issues ought to be addressed.

The typical dream vision, either classical or medieval, like Chaucer's, is very self-consciously literary and more often than not, begins with a discussion of what the waking narrator is reading, which in turn determines his dream. Along with the literary beginning, explicit references to influential texts pepper the dream visions themselves and the narrator's surrounding commentary. Lanyer's dream vision is unusual in that she is asleep when the poem begins and thus no initial clue is given as to what inspired the vision in the first place:

Me thought I pass'd through th' *Edalyan* Groves,
And askt the Graces, if they could direct
Me to a Lady whome *Minerva* chose,
To love with her in height of all respect. (*Authors Dreame* ll.1-4)

The allegorical personifications, commonplace in this genre, signal that the dream has already begun. However, the poem is not clearly presented as a dream vision until Morpheus enters the picture:

Yet studying, if I were awake, or no,
God *Morphy* came and tooke me by the hand,
And wil'd me not from Slumbers bowre to go,
Till I the summe of all did understand. (*AD* ll.17-20)

Morpheus is almost a staple in classical dream visions, and is also found in the works of Chaucer and Edmund Spenser. In *The Book of the Duchess* Morpheus is present in the narrator's retelling of the story of Ceyx and Alcyone and it is to Morpheus and Juno that he prays to be able to sleep, a wish that is granted. In Book 1, Canto 1 of *The Faerie Queene* Redcross is put to sleep by Morpheus

and subsequently tortured by nightmares. While Lanyer's character does not directly echo either Chaucer's benevolent Morpheus or Spenser's malignant Morpheus, his presence in *The Authours Dreame* serves both to indicate that the dream has begun and to align Lanyer's poem with a long tradition of allegorical dream vision works. The signal that the dream is in action reminds us that, like all engaged in literary dream visions, the narrator is in search of some piece of information. Usually this information is directly related to concerns of the narrator/dreamer's waking life, a connection highlighted by the fact that what the dreamer reads before falling asleep almost always in some way reflects concerns in his waking life (for example, the narrator of *The Book of the Duchess* reads a love story because he is brokenhearted).

The lack of an introductory text to set the tone and content of the ensuing dream seems a curious move on Lanyer's part because establishing authority, specifically literary authority, would be of central importance given her doubly disadvantaged position as both woman and middle class (Wall 281). However, this decision reflects her double agenda. As I shall argue, the texts Lanyer borrows from in constructing her poem are not necessarily used to compliment her prospective patron. *The Authours Dreame* is an extremely literary poem; her explicit references to Mary Sidney's psalms -- "Those holy Sonnets they did all agree,/With this most lovely Lady here to sing" (AD ll.121-2) -- serve both to compliment the Countess on her considerable achievement and to establish Lanyer's authority as excellent reader and therefore writer. Further, the constant

classical references and adept manipulation of classical tropes and rhetoric serve to highlight her level of education. However, there are two other works that Lanyer uses, central to her dream vision, which she does not explicitly cite. These are Geoffrey Chaucer's *House of Fame* and Mary Sidney's *To the Angell spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney*.

While not clearly indicating what may have inspired her narrator's dream vision¹⁶ the second stanza reveals a clear and conscious association between her dream vision and Chaucer's *House of Fame*, a long unfinished dream vision poem that allegorically satirizes the arbitrary bestowal and removal of fame from human lives. Chaucer's Fame is a female personification who presides over a large palace and decides who will gain fame in his lifetime and who is destined to languish in obscurity forever:

But in this lustie and riche place,
That Fames hall called was,
Ful moch prees of folke there nas,
Ne crouding, for to moch prees,
But all on hie above a dees,
Satte in a see Imperiall,
That made was of Rubie royall,
Which that a Carbuncle is ycalled,
I sawe perpetually ystalled,
A feminine creature,
That never formed by nature

¹⁶ I would argue that Lanyer and her narrator are one and the same -- her dedications, addressed to specific people and her references within these dedications to *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* negate the possibility that they are meant to be understood as separate.

Was soch another thing I saie. (*House of Fame* 478, column 1)¹⁷

Chaucer's narrator goes on to describe why Fame is so unusual -- she is tall as the heavens, covered in ears and tongues. After this curious description, we are told that she is surrounded by the Muses:

I heard about her trone ysong,
That all the palais wall rong,
So song the mighty Muse she,
That cleped is Caliope,
And her seven¹⁸ sisterne eke,
That in her faces seemen meke,
And evermore eternally,
They song of Fame. (*HF* 478, column 1)

These passages are strikingly similar to those of Lanyer's describing the yet unnamed Mary Sidney. Compare:

Yet looking backe into my thoughts againe,
The eie of Reason did behold her there
Fast ti'd unto them¹⁹ in a golden Chaîne,
They stood, but she was set in Honors chaire.

And nine faire Virgins sate upon the ground,
With Harps and Vialls in their lilly hands;
Whose harmony had all my sences drown'd,
But that before mine eyes an object stands,

Whose Beauty shin'd like *Titons* cleerest raies,
She blew a brasen Trumpet, which did sound
Through al the world that worthy Ladies praise,

¹⁷ In quoting directly from Speght's 1598 edition of Chaucer's works I have taken the liberty of partially modernizing the spelling, that is of l/j, u/v/w and the long s.

¹⁸ Caliope has eight sisters in most versions.

¹⁹ i.e. the Graces.

And by Eternall Fame I saw her crown'd. (AD II.5-16)

The female object that stands before Lanyer blowing a "brasen trumpet" is meant to be a female version of Chaucer's Aelos, and Lanyer's Sidney character is obviously based on Chaucer's Fame. Sidney inhabits a position similar to Chaucer's Fame,²⁰ chained to the Muses and set firmly in "Honors chaire," which reflects Chaucer's description of Fame as "perpetually ystalled." Considering Sidney's role as the premier influence in patronage circles it makes perfect sense for Lanyer to conflate her with Fame; from Lanyer's marginal position they serve the same function. Yet unlike Chaucer's character, Sidney herself is dependent upon Fame, by whom she is crowned, a detail which serves to remind readers (including Sidney presumably) that while she has the power to bestow or withhold fame she is, unlike her allegorical counterpart, vulnerable, at least to a degree, to Fame's finicky behavior along with other mortals. Lanyer clearly draws her imagery in describing Sidney and the social and literary position she occupies from Chaucer's *House of Fame*, and if one were not aware of the connection, it could easily be assumed that this is complimentary; however, a

²⁰ Chaucer is not the only poet who ever discussed fame of course; in Book III, Canto II of *The Faerie Queene* Spenser displays his familiarity with his medieval predecessor and possibly *The House of Fame*: "Dan Chaucer well of English undefyled,/On Fames eternall beadroll worthie to be fyled" (587). Spenser also writes of a Fame that "with golden wings aloft doth flie,/Above the reach of ruinous decay" in his elegy for Philip Sidney *The Ruines of Time* (II.421-2). However, neither Spenser nor any of his contemporaries or predecessors pen anything as similar to Chaucer's Fame as Lanyer does, suggesting Lanyer drew this image directly from Chaucer, rather than some secondary source.

closer look at Chaucer's character reveals otherwise, casting doubt on the positive view of female patronage relationships propounded by Lewalski. Fame is "Right as her sister dame Fortune" (*HF* 479, column 2), that is, inconstant,²¹ unfair and unreliable:

As thrive I (qd. she) ye shall fayle,
 Good workes shall you not avayle,
 To have of me good Fame as now,
 But wote ye what, I graunt you,
 That ye shall have a shrewd name,
 And wicked loos and worse fame,
 Though ye good loos have well deserved,
 Now goeth your way for you been served:
 And thou Dan Eolus (qd. she)
 Take forth thy trumpe anone let see,
 That is ycleped Sclaunder light,
 And blow her loos, that every wight
 Speake of hem harme and shreudnesse,
 In stede of good and worthinesse,
 For thou shalt trumpe all the contraire,
 Of that they have done well and faire. (*HF* 480, column 1)

Fame does not give everyone the opposite of what they deserve, however. The third group of supplicants deserve and receive good fame:

I graunt (qd. she) for now me list
 That your good workes shall be wist,
 And yet ye shall have better loos,
 Right in dispite of all your foos,
 Than worthy is, and that anone:
 Let now (qd. she) thy trumpe gone,
 Thou Eolus that is so blacke,
 And out thine other trumpe take
 That hight Laude, and blow it so
 That through the world her fame go

²¹ Chaucer reflects in greater depth the commonplace notion of Fortune as an inconstant, fickle woman in *The Book of the Duchess*.

All easely and not too fast,
That it be knowen at last. (*HF* 480, column 1)

The way in which Fame sometimes grants her supplicants what they deserve while others receive the opposite of what they deserve, and others nothing at all, reflects Sidney's own fickleness in granting favour. Margaret P. Hannay cites poet Nicholas Breton as a symptomatic example of this inconstancy in patronage approval (138), noting that "[s]everal other writers had trouble retaining her favour" (139). Lanyer is unquestionably criticizing this woman, so "arrogant to those beneath her" (Hannay ix), but the fact that Fame *sometimes* grants recognition where it is due suggests Lanyer is giving Sidney the opportunity to prove the negative connotations of her alignment with Fame wrong. The point is that Sidney has a choice as to whether she behaves as Fame doing the right thing or Fame doing the wrong thing. Lanyer's decision to borrow only the basic image of Fame without using the specifically negative details (her bizarre appearance and questionable, often cruel, treatment of supplicants) allows Sidney to fill in that blank in whichever way she chooses, suggesting that Lanyer is not as critical as I have been suggesting. However, this apparent refusal to criticize to the extent available in Chaucer's imagery is itself part of the criticism because if Sidney chooses to use her power as Fame incorrectly by not granting Lanyer favour then she will shamefully (to recall Schnell's terminology) prove herself unworthy of her reputation as a lover and patron of true art.

While Lanyer does not explicitly reveal what concerns her, either through

straight narrative or references to another text, her hidden reference to Chaucer makes it clear: fame, or, in her world, the favour of her superiors and entry into their patronage circles. If accurate, Lanyer's extremely uncomplimentary conflation of Chaucer's *Fame* with Mary Sidney reveals a deep ambivalence towards her prospective patron and a desire to criticize the unfair and arbitrary way in which fame and patronage are determined. So, by using one of the dream visions of Chaucer, who was considered one of the few medieval poets worth reading, constructed as England's Homer or Virgil by Thomas Speght, the premier editor of the works at the time, Lanyer asserts her authority, and from that position of literary authority, critiques the patronage circles Mary Sidney represents. This is a complicated move fraught with pitfalls, however. First, because she does not indicate explicitly that she is imitating Chaucer's *House of Fame* she risks the connection being overlooked, and thus having her authority not established after all -- part of authority is letting one's readers know exactly which respectable antecedents one is using. But if readers do make the connection²² -- particularly if Mary Sidney does -- then it will be clear she is disparaging the woman she claims to be deferring to, and that of course, would undermine her authority and destroy her chances of gaining favour. I would

²² Tina Krontiris notes that "To the Vertuous Reader' was removed along with four dedications when the book was reissued in the same year it was published" (120), *The Authors Dreame to the Ladie Marie* being one of the four removed. I would suggest that it is not because of the dream's "feminist content" (ibid) that it was eliminated from later editions but because of its subtle criticism of Mary Sidney and the larger patron/poet relationship she represents.

suggest that Lanyer uses Chaucer's Fame character to aid in her lobby against her frustrating exclusion from Sidney's patronage circles because of her class -- Chaucer's own marginal class status and simultaneous position as the father of English poetry could certainly appeal to Lanyer's own sense of ignored poetic importance -- but she "hides" her reference because she cannot completely reject her prospective patron and the relationship of favour she represents "for a discourse that would privilege the self" as Schnell asserts (79). This is complicated further by the fact that at the same time that Lanyer casts Sidney in the dubious role of Fame, Lanyer herself "functions as Fame, 'mak[ing] knowne to the world' the goodness of women" ("Sacred Celebration" 77), or at least making known what she disapproves of in them. By playing Fame herself Lanyer reminds Sidney of her own status as susceptible to the whims of Fame, and thus almost threatens Sidney -- after all, if Sidney does not behave appropriately in her position then Lanyer has the right and the ability to at least partially undermine that position with her own black trumpet of "sclaunder."

This use of texts both to establish her authority and to criticize the very circles she wants to be included in is also seen in her uncited use of Sidney's poem *To the Angell spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney*. Christina Luckyj discusses this connection in "Authorship and Dream in Early Modern Women's Writing" and notes two connections: between the two poets' constructions of the allegorical character Envy and the extended metaphor of "borrowed light." Sidney writes of her deceased brother as existing in a place

where “never Envie bites” (Sidney ll.63). Lanyer echoes this phrase in *The Authors Dreame* and describes Mary Sidney as also protected from Envy:

Me thought the meager elfe did seeke bie waies
 To come unto her, but it would not be;
 Her venime purifi'd by virtues raies,
 She pin'd and starv'd like an Anotomie. (AD ll.101-04)

It is worthwhile to note that Lanyer genders her Envy specifically female while Sidney's remains gender neutral. Lanyer's decision is not unusual though; in Renaissance emblem books Envy is conventionally female.²³ However, that Lanyer is speaking about a specific kind of envy in a specific context is suggested by the fact that her Envy figure exists amongst a host of various other female allegorical figures, all in some way important to the progress of the dream narrative. The presence of a malevolent, specifically female character²⁴ who “sought to sting, yet could not tuch” (AD ll.100) the as yet unnamed Mary Sidney suggests that this female dream world is threatened, from within and by one of its own. This character might well reflect Lanyer's own jealousy of other women writers who received favour at Sidney's “little court at Wilton” (Hannay 139) while she remained neglected. However, I would suggest this is part of her critique of the patronage relationship as it stands -- not only must a lower class woman

²³ See for example Charles Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes* (1586) or Rosemary Freeman's scholarly study *English Emblem Books* (1966).

²⁴ In her dream vision poem Rachel Speght constructs the one character who threatens her idyllic dream scape as specifically gender neutral but as the mouthpiece of misogynist rhetoric designed to hinder her attempts at acquiring an education.

humble herself to be admitted to these circles, she must compete with other talented women writers. Her dream world is unstable and reflects the reality that so troubled and excluded Lanyer.

As women, the allegorical personifications and the narrator must find other ways to increase their worthiness in the eyes of the Sidney/Fame character. This is where Lanyer's image of borrowed light comes in, an image also appropriated from Sidney's dedication to her deceased brother. Luckyj describes Lanyer's use of this idea as an

extended allegory of envy in the form of a conflict between Dictina...and Aurora...which serves to distinguish between a merely imitative, derivative impulse in women's writing...and a creative, active union between male and female authorship, suggested by Aurora's insistence on commanding Apollo and providing her own source of light. (11-12)

As Luckyj points out, Lanyer compliments Sidney by suggesting that she directs "all by her immortall light" (*AD* ll.157). At the same time, however, Lanyer imitates Mary Sidney's assertion that it is Philip Sidney's light that illuminates others. In Sidney's poem she writes:

So dar'd my Muse with thine it selfe combine,
as mortall stuffe with that which is divine,
Thy lightning beames give lustre to the rest. (ll.5-7)

Lanyer's version of this precedes her declaration that it is Sidney herself who does the illuminating:

This nymph, quoth he, great *Pembrooke* hight by name,
Sister to valiant Sidney, whose cleere light
Gives light to all that tread true paths of Fame,

Who in the globe of heav'n doth shine so bright;

That beeing dead, his fame doth him survive,
Still living in the hearts of worthy men; (AD ll.137-42)

The sentence construction is ambiguous at this point. At first glance it appears that Lanyer is referring to Mary Sidney as the one who "gives light to all that tread true paths of fame" but the complicated syntax preceding this line suggests it could also be Philip Sidney. Further, the reference to the one giving light existing in "the globe of heav'n...beeing dead" can only be Sidney because Mary Sidney was still alive when this poem was written, and according to the dream vision, tied to the Muses and set her throne in the Edalyan groves.

The presentation of Mary Sidney as the borrower of her brother's light rather than the source of her own original light is set up even before Lanyer makes specific reference to either Philip or Mary. Her inclusion of Dictina and Phoebus (or Phoebe and Apollo), the classical brother-sister representatives of the sun and moon, hint at this unfavourable construction. Lanyer describes Dictina "[w]hen harkning to the pleasing sound of Fame" (ll.48) as dependent upon Phoebus to achieve that fame:

Shee deckt her selfe with all the borrowed light
That *Phoebus* would afford from his faire face,
And made her Virgins to appeare so bright,
That all the hils and vales received grace. (AD ll.53-6)

The image of borrowed light here foreshadows Lanyer's association of Mary Sidney with her brother's light, an alignment solidified by the fact that both Dictina and Sidney are surrounded by "Virgins." This reasserts Sidney's

precarious position as powerful enough to bestow fame but still vulnerable to its inconsistencies as the recipient of fame, which furthers the alignment of Sidney with her supplicants and therefore Lanyer's critique of her unfairness.

It is Philip Sidney then who sheds the original light and his sister who borrows it -- though she certainly composed works of her own including the above mentioned poem and *The triumph of Death*, her translation of Petrarch, she is best known for her completion of her brother's unfinished translation of the Psalms. In fact, "her identity as 'sister unto Astrophell' gave her a position in literary society not otherwise available to a woman" (Hannay 83) and thus she could be said to have gained her fame from borrowed light in the same way her mythological underlings borrow light from her (for example, Bellona and Dictina), a comparison which discredits the basis of Sidney's literary superiority. So again, Lanyer uses texts, this time Sidney's own text, to simultaneously critique and praise her would-be patron, and to establish her own authority. Unlike her use of Chaucer there would be no possibility of Sidney not realizing where some of her images come from, and how Sidney interpreted it -- as compliment, critique or a combination of the two which I believe was Lanyer's intention -- would have a large influence on the success of Lanyer's patronage bid. As I mentioned with reference to Chaucer this sort of inter-textual referencing was a common device used to establish literary authority. Showing her familiarity with Sidney's work would be a safe bet if her view of Sidney's works, and therefore of her position as the foremost literary patron of the time, were clearly and uniformly

in the name of praise. Further, by suggesting the possibility that Sidney herself has become famous on “borrowed light” rather than just her own, Lanyer potentially both undermines and reasserts her own authority, because of course, by borrowing the works of Chaucer and Sidney she too is “borrowing light,” which in turn suggests she is on equal footing with Sidney, a risky assertion which could completely destroy her credibility. Thus, her attempts at establishing literary authority via traditional means serve potentially to undermine that authority -- and successfully and advisedly critiquing patronage circles is dependent on her being in a position which authorizes her voice. To carefully offset the suggestion that Mary Sidney is neither as good a poet as her brother was nor any better than those that must defer to her in the hopes of gaining her favour, Lanyer asserts she “farre before him is to be esteemd/For virtue, wisdom, learning dignity” (*AD* ll.151-2).

That Lanyer was criticizing the patronage relationship as it was defined in her day, that is, inextricably bound up in class, I think is clear. But that she really wanted that patronage circle's favour is also true, a fact indicated not only in her dream vision but in *The Description of Cooke-ham* when she laments her separation from the Cliffords:

Unconstant Fortune, thou art much to blame,
 Who casts us downe into so lowe a frame:
 Where our great friends we cannot daily see,
 So great a difference is there in degree. (ll.103-6)

In spite of the hidden textual critique of the way in which elite patronage circles

discriminate on the basis of class, *The Authors Dreame* also “depicts the enchantment of women’s community” (Holmes 175) and “[t]he respectable device of the dream, designed to forgive the trespass of fiction, is a mask for ‘The Author’ placing herself in the grandest of authorizing company” (Woods 89). The world that Lanyer describes is beautiful in spite of its fragility and the threats it suffers from Envy and the mysterious chariot “Drawne by foure fierie Dragons, which did bend\Their course where this most noble Lady sate” (*AD* II.28-9) which descends from “the troubled skie” (*AD* II.25). She employs the dream vision trope of the *locus amoenus* or beautiful place wherein an all female community gathers under the direction of the unnamed Mary Sidney character and together they bring Art and Nature into balance in spite of their being perpetually at odds. Lanyer expresses a real desire to be included in this beautiful world and fears waking up:

Thus I in sleep the heavenli’st musicke hard,
That ever earthly eares did entertaine;
And durst not awake, for feare to be debard
Of what my senses sought still to retaine. (*AD* II.129-32)

She does wake up, however. Michael Morgan Holmes asserts that “[t]he events that transpire in ‘The Authors Dreame’ bear out this promise of tranquility and affection among women” (175); but he is too optimistic because first, it is a dream after all, a fact of which we are reminded when Lanyer wakes up quite agitated, and secondly, because she is not actually participating in this imagined world of female artistic interaction. In fact, the only character in the dream vision

who even seems aware of Lanyer's presence, much less interacts with her, is Morpheus. It is true that being led about by a divine male figure like Morpheus was a common characteristic of the dream vision tradition upon which Lanyer drew; however, it is significant that of the many divine figures in the dream (Bellona, Dictina, Aurora, etc), she is dependent upon one of the few male figures present. This simply highlights her exclusion from court favour of which she is so critical, and the associated "estrangement from contemporary literary practice" (Luckyj 5).

Ultimately, the dream vision acts as a metaphor for patronage and Lanyer's inability to completely enter into or to control that set of relationships or her place in them. The fragility of the vision, and Lanyer's inability to hang on to or control that vision, reflects her inability to maintain the privileged position she held when Elizabeth I was queen and Lanyer was the mistress of Henry Cary, Lord Hunsdon. At the same time, this conflation of dream and patronage reminds her superiors that their fame too could be impermanent; in the *Salve Deus* she highlights the brevity of any human prosperity, even that of kings, asserting "their honour's but a dreame" (*SD* II. 900). Further, her rant against Sleep -- the one who granted her this beautiful but intangible vision in the first place -- is, as Lisa Schnell points out, "a virtual anatomy of the abuses of power practiced by the elite on those dependent on them for patronage" (89):

But thou, base cunning thiefe, that robs our sprits
Of halfe that span of life which yeares doth give;
And yet no praise unto thyself it merits,

To make a seeming death in those that live.

Yea wickedly thou doest consent to death,
 Within thy restfull bed to rob our soules;
 In Slumbers bowre thou steal'st away our breath,
 Yet none there is that thy base stealths controules.

If poore and sickly creatures would imbrace thee,
 Or they to whom thou giv'st a taste of pleasure,
 Thou fli'st as if *Acteons* hounds did chase thee,
 Or that to stay with them thou hadst no leasure. (AD II.177-88)

As Schnell points out, we "are never quite allowed to forget that the vision is an illusion" (89) and Lanyer's association of the dream with death shows to what extent she wishes to show how unfair and arbitrary the patronage game is. As a dedication, the *Authors Dreame* is one of many poems designed to introduce the *Salve Deus* at the same time they appeal for patronage to the various ladies. In the *Salve Deus* Lanyer continually reminds us that Christ was of a mean, that is low class, birth but that also "Unto the Meane he makes the Mightie bow" (SD II.123); at the same time she asserts at the end of the dream that her book is worth reading because there is "hony in the meanest flowres" (AD II.196). Kari Boyd McBride notes in "Sacred Celebration: The Patronage Poems" that because "both Lanyer and her book are allied to the humbled Christ"²⁵ (79), Lanyer highlights the possible dangers (as Christian history attests to) of judging

²⁵ This aspect of Lanyer's work has been adequately discussed by other critics so I will forego a detailed discussion of it here. Along with McBride's article see Schnell's "Breaking 'the rule of *Cortezia*'", Wendy Wall's *The Imprint of Gender*, Lewalski's *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, and Keohane's "Aemilia Lanyer's Radical Unfolding of the Passion".

someone based on their class and not on their worth. But this is not all Lanyer is trying to achieve with her dream vision.

It ought to be noted that when this poem was written the meaning of the verb "to dream," as cited in the OED, was coming to commonly mean "to desire" or "to wish" at the same time that it referred to the phenomenon described by Nashe and Hill, that is, a direct communication with either God or devil, or a sign of illness. Lanyer's desire to be included in elite artistic circles requires that she also legitimate the vision -- her ideal female community of equality is not real as she dreams it but by drawing on the positive, divine origin of dreams at the same time that she rails against sleep she shows that she thinks the ideal is at least possible. This dreamt ideal reconfigures the patronage relationship. It is true that the female allegorical figures are initially presented as at odds with each other, envious of one another's favour with the Mary Sidney figure. However, once they begin the task of bringing Art and Nature into balance, they cease bickering and as a unit "will'd they [Art and Nature] should forever dwell,/In perfit unity by this matchlesse Spring" (*AD* ll.89-90). The striving between Art and Nature directly reflects the striving amongst the female characters in Lanyer's dream world, and as Art and Nature are brought into balance the female characters' relationships follow suit:

But here in equall sov'raintie to live,
Equall in state, equall in dignitie.
That unto others they might comfort give,
Rejoycing all with their sweet unities. (*AD* ll.93-6)

After this unification Lanyer asserts that what began as a hierarchy beset by infighting -- "Thus did *Aurora* dimme faire *Phoebus* light,/And was receiv'd in bright *Cynthias* place" (AD II.73-4) -- becomes a paradise of female artistic interaction and equality, a peace allegorically described as their singing Sidney's Psalms with the Lord of unity in mind:

...at last to mind they call

Those rare sweet songs which *Israels* King did frame
 Unto the Father of Eternitie;
 Before his holy wisdom took the name
 Of great *Messias*, Lord of unitie.

These holy Sonnets they did all agree,
 With this most lovely Lady here to sing [.] (AD II.116-22)

Since we are never allowed to forget this utopian vision is a dream, and therefore unreal, the only way left for Lanyer to salvage any authority is to look at it in terms of a wish, a divinely inspired wish. It is true that Lanyer rails against Sleep for giving her a dream that he would not let her keep and that did not reflect a reality in which she could participate. To legitimate her dream Lanyer does one thing uncommon in the dream vision tradition upon which she draws -- she does not use the "out" inherent in dream visions that allows her to discard responsibility by asserting that it was just a dream and not something she thought up on her own: "what my heart desir'd, mine eies had seene" (AD II.174). From this beginning she turns her dream from simple wish fulfillment to a divinely inspired desire. First, in her epistle *To the doubtfull Reader* she claims that the title for *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* "was delivered unto me in sleepe many

yeares before I had any intent to write in this maner" (139), and that once she had written the poem, she recalled her dream and took it as a sign that she "was appointed to performe this Worke" (ibid). Thus, her title, and by extension her major poem and its dedications, are divinely sanctioned. Catherine Keohane asserts that this

recalls the dream *topos* of Scripture in which dreams are given as signs or gifts. Consider the dream given to Joseph telling him not to reject the pregnant Mary, but to name the child Jesus. That dream particularly resonates with Lanyer's here not only in that both deal with names, but also in that both Joseph and Lanyer are positioned as caretakers on earth: Joseph of Jesus, Lanyer of this book -- a book which she casts as Christ. (369)

The religious association of this book with Christ is a phenomenon which has been adequately explored by other critics, as I have noted. For my purposes I will focus on Lanyer's explicit cultivation of biblical dream visions to legitimate women's writing generally, and hers specifically.

As I argued in the section on Lanyer's appropriation of Chaucer's *House of Fame*, her alignment with the secular dream vision tradition can function both to establish and to undermine her authority to write and to critique patronage circles. As a corrective to this shaky position we see Lanyer align herself with biblical dream visions in *To the doubtfull Reader*, but more importantly in the *Salve Deus* in the form of Pilate's wife's dream. The dream of Pilate's wife in the Bible is quite short, and significantly, unheeded:

Also when he was set down upon the judgement seat, his wife sent to him, saying, Have thou nothing

to do with that juste man: for I have suffered many
things this day in a dreame by reason of him.

(Geneva Bible, Matthew 27:19)

From this brief mention -- Pilate's wife is not even named -- Lanyer expands this section in the *Salve Deus* to include *Eve's Apologie*, a move meant to simultaneously exonerate women from the burden of total guilt associated with the Fall: "Her weaknesse did the Serpents words obay;\But you in malice Gods deare Sonne betray" (*SD* ll.815-16), and legitimate women's dream visions and conflate "women's struggle against misogynist traditions with Christ's entrapment by male authorities" (Wall 329). Thus, Pilate's wife shows a prescience in the form of a dream about the worth of Christ that none of the copious male authorities do. This move legitimates any dream by a woman, and recalls Hill's alignment of prophetic dreams with the feminine.

The pitfall of course, is that

if Pilate had heeded his wife's warning and had not turned Jesus over to the Jews, then the Redemptive act, the center of human history, would have been thwarted. This fact alone should call the origin of the dream into question. (Russell 32)

And it certainly did call the origin of her dream into question. In "The Figure of Pilate's Wife in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*," W. Gardner Campbell gives a short history of the understanding and reception of Pilate's wife's dream. There were two traditions, one of which saw her as Russell does, as a possible blocking of the Redemption. In fact, in the York Mystery plays, she is presented as receiving the dream directly from Satan in a last ditch attempt to

block Christ's crucifixion and therefore human salvation. As Campbell points out,

[t]he persistent influence of such a portrait of a weak Procula who becomes the tool of Satan was not, however, limited to the mystery plays, although the continued popularity of such plays well into the Renaissance would easily have kept such a portrait in general circulation. (8)

At the same time, Campbell cites two Renaissance pamphlets -- *The Nobilitie and Excellencie of Womankynde* and *The prayse of all women called Mulierum Pean* – which use Pilate's wife for the purpose of defending women (9). In spite of the damaging view of Pilate's wife put forth by the Mystery play, Lanyer had access to a tradition that legitimated the use of this brief scriptural dream vision. As Campbell points out, the edition of the Bible most likely used by Lanyer (the Geneva Bible of 1560) shows respect for Pilate's wife's vision in a gloss: "This was to the greater condemnation of Pilate, whome neither his owne knowledge colde teache, nor counsel of others, to defende Christs innocencie" (Geneva New Testament 16). She is thus presented as

not so much a wife or woman here as a counselor, one whose urgent advice falls on deaf ears. Gone is any mention of the consequences of blocking Christ's crucifixion. Simply, Christ's death is a crime. (Campbell 10-11)

This is certainly the kind of innocence combined with prophetic foresight that Lanyer worked to establish for Pilate's wife. However, she consciously plays on the connection between her prescience and her gender to present a defense of women from the common accusation that Eve alone brought about banishment from the garden, and establish women's natural association with holiness and

prophecy:

Witnesse thy wife (*O Pilate*) speakes for all;
 Who did but dreame, and yet a message sent,
 That thou should'st have nothing to doe at all
 With that just man. (*SD* ll.834-37)

By establishing the prophetic worth of dream visions and those of women specifically in the *Salve Deus*, Lanyer retroactively asserts the prophetic worth of *The Authours Dreame*. But in that case, what is being prophesied? Her ostensibly divine desire to be part of exclusive literary circles and her critique of those circles is not obviously prophetic. What is she prophesying, or to recall Parman's notion of the dream as a bridge to knowledge, what does she learn? Lanyer learns the name of the mysterious lady and then wakes up, her dream journey apparently occurring solely so Lanyer could discover this one piece of information. That is not all she learns however:

Yet sleeping, [I] praid dull Slumber to unfold
 Her noble name, who was of all admired;
 When presently in drowsie terms he told
 Not onely that, *but more than I desired.*
 (*AD* ll.133-36, my emphasis)

Lanyer reveals only that she learned the lady's name, not what is included in the clause "more than I desired." I would suggest that what she learns but does not necessarily want to know, is the exclusionist and arbitrary nature of patronage relationships. It is worth recalling that though the dream reads as though it is happening currently, there is a difference between the person who authors the poem now and the person who experienced the described events. The narrator

and the writer are still the same person, but the same person at different points in time. So Lanyer learns that worth does not necessarily ensure patronage favour and she writes a poem about it after the fact. Recalling that the dream is a metaphor for her experience inside and outside these circles, just how *The Authours Dreame* is meant to be prophetic, or what it is meant to accomplish in terms of reactions from her potential patrons is still unanswered.

However, the notion of the dream as metaphor for patronage will help answer this question. Lisa Schnell asserts that Lanyer's poem to Queen Anne is "calculated to 'shame' Anne into an obligation" (83), the obligation being patronage of course. As I argued earlier, I believe this is Lanyer's intention in all her patronage poems, and especially in *The Authours Dreame*. The means to this end are the constant reminders that the beautiful world she describes where all talented women end up living together in peace and harmony after having united Art and Nature is a dream, not a reality. By presenting this beautiful unreal world, and at the same time criticizing the patronage relationship as it stands -- one of unfair exclusion -- Lanyer effectively sends a message to Sidney and all those around her that they are not behaving in a way appropriate to their positions of power and the reputations that have been accorded them, a sentiment first established in her conflation of Fame and Sidney. This is the knowledge, more than she asked for. But as a prophetic dreamer she is in a position to do something with this apparently unusable information.

First, she can critique Mary Sidney's neglect of her duties as premier

female patron of the arts. Secondly, when the dream is over, because it is both legitimated by its association with biblical dreams, and because she takes full responsibility as the receiver and conveyer of that dream, she can take it directly to Sidney. She rails against Sleep for giving her a vision that she could neither participate in nor hold on to; but once woken she takes the control that she does not have in the dream state:

But though thou hast depriv'd me of delight,
By stealing from me ere I was aware;
I know I shall enjoy the self same sight,
Thou hast no powre my waking sprites to barre.

For to this Lady now I will reparaire,
Presenting her the fruits of idle houres;
Thogh many Books she writes that are more rare,
Yet there is hony in the meanest flowres. (*AD II.189-96*)

In other words, though excluded from the dream in the same way that she has been excluded from favour she will not passively sit by and let Morpheus or Sidney control her actions. This places an even greater onus on Sidney to help her make her divine dream reality. This is a significant move considering the passivity associated with receiving both divine dreams and favour from patrons. She rejects the passivity but she does not reject the dream (which she has done her utmost to legitimate) nor patronage relationships -- she simply tries to rewrite the conventions and rules.

This knowledge, both of dreams and of patronage circles, sets Lanyer free according to Schnell because "knowledge cancels servitude" (90). In spite of, or maybe because, Lanyer has these insights into the way in which dreams and

patronage function, along with the knowledge that she needs patronage, I would argue that her servitude is cemented rather than dissolved, a fact suggested by Lanyer's "craving pardon for this bold attempt" (AD ll.209), a line which begins her careful re-establishment of the humility topos in the final stanzas of *The*

Authors Dreame:

Yet it is no disparagement to you,
To see your Saviour in a Shepherds weed,
Unworthily presented in your viewe,
Whose worthinesse will grace each line you reade.

Receive him here by my unworthy hand,
And reade his paths of faire humility;
Who though our sinnes in number passe the sand,
They all are purg'd by his Divinity. (AD ll. 217-24)

Her assertion of authority (she does suggest that her book is the "Shepherds weed" in which the countess may find Christ) in these lines is counterbalanced by the fact that in spite of all her criticism of the patronage relationship as it stands in reality, she still has to ask for that patronage favour as a middle class woman on the social and literary fringes, and more importantly, she sees the positive potential in those relationships. Lisa Schnell expresses some disappointment over the fact that Lanyer cannot completely reject the patronage relationship, that she cannot "gloss over the enormous differences that exist between her and her addressees" (95). However, this is to judge an early modern woman on the margins of court and literary societies, someone of no wealth and low class status, by modern desires and standards. Aemilia Lanyer simply could not afford to do what Schnell and other modern feminist literary

critics would have her do. That she found a way to criticize her superiors at the same time she paid them the requisite homage, that she very cleverly appropriated and manipulated for her own ends traditional literary and biblical tropes, and that she wrote some really good poems in their own right, should be more than enough to ensure the full respect of modern literary and historical critics.

Chapter Three:
'The talent, God doth give, must be imploy'd': Rachel Speght's
literary critique of Renaissance humanism's failure with women

Rachel Speght's *Mortalities Memorandum, with A Dreame Prefixed, imaginarie in manner; reall in matter* (1621) are two connected works which have been largely ignored by critics in favour of *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (1617), her polemical response to Joseph Swetnam's misogynist pamphlet *The Araignment of Lewde, idle, froward, and unconstant women* (1615). However, her later works, particularly *A Dreame*, are not without interest either literarily or historically. Rachel Speght's dream vision poem, itself only three hundred lines long, will be the focus of this chapter though I will refer to *A Mouzell for Melastomus* and *Mortalities Memorandum* to help illuminate this unusual and complicated work. As Barbara Kiefer Lewalski points out in her introduction to the 1996 edition of *The Polemics and Poems*, "Speght published under her own name and indeed insisted on her authorial identity" (xv). As with Lanyer, I will begin my discussion of Speght by asking why she decided to write a dream vision at all. The scant work done on her dream vision, an incongruous and potentially radical genre in itself, has been inadequate. Why she chose to preface her longest, and what was presumably intended to be her most important work, *Mortalities Memorandum*, with a dream vision that combines the religious and the secular and addresses a topic at first glance totally unrelated to her meditation on death (i.e. education), has not been addressed. The

incongruity of writing a dream vision in the Renaissance is something which I discussed in Chapter one, and needs to be recalled now. Given Lewalski's observation that Speght was not only not ashamed to be a woman writer, but that she in fact asserts her authorship and authority, makes her decision to write a dream vision initially a puzzle, considering the "out" built into the genre. However, the possibility of deferring responsibility for what one has written inherent in the dream vision trope must be set aside for now in favour of other theories in this case. The clue to what motivated Speght to articulate in an allegorical dream vision the "many obstacles in her pursuit of learning -- her own fears, the dissuasions of others, the distractions of domestic duties...[along with]...her delight in learning" (*Introduction* xiii), when her three other works are so straightforward in form and meaning can only be found in an exploration of the literary influences that serve as a basis for the work.

It is necessary to try to identify these threads in *A Dreame* because it is so much more literary than her other works, and I believe this conspicuous literariness is key to her agenda. As with Lanyer, I will begin by acknowledging what kinds of dream vision and allegorical works were circulating at the time. As has been noted, the two most influential medieval authors in the early modern era were Chaucer and Langland. Information about Speght's life, the circles she moved in, is even scantier than with Lanyer. Thus it is more difficult to deduce what specific authors she had contact with than it was with Lanyer (recall her relationship with the Cliffords and Anne Clifford's documented contact with

Chaucer). The only clear connections in Speght's case are to her father, James Speght, and James and Mary Moundford, the latter being Rachel's godmother. James Speght wrote a few religious tracts and James Moundford kept journals of his contact with his patient, Arbella Stuart. None of their writings, however, give any indication of what they were reading. In spite of this lack of concrete evidence, it is clear, from her writing and (at such a tender age) confident assertion of authority, that Speght was very well educated:

Speght's writings both claim and display a knowledge of Latin and some training in logic and rhetoric -- a classical education very rare for seventeenth century women of any class. (*Introduction* xii)

Not only is Speght well-versed in and comfortable negotiating classical philosophy and rhetoric, she is extremely familiar with biblical exegesis -- a result, most likely, of the fact that her father was a Calvinist minister as well as an author.

As common as dream visions are in biblical and classical texts, Speght's dream vision does not really resemble any of these. In fact, in a move exactly the opposite to one Lanyer makes, Speght not only avoids the biblical dream vision as a means of validating her own, she actively distances herself from the biblical dream vision. In *A Mouzell for Melastomus* she cites Pilate's wife as an example of how women are just as able as men, and in some cases more able than men, to receive the wisdom of God but she does not mention the fact that

Pilate's wife's wisdom came to her in a dream²⁶: "*Pilate* was willed by his wife not to have anie hand in the condemning of CHRIST; and a sinne it was in him, that hee listned not to her" (19). Further, in *Mortalities Memorandum* she ostensibly uses the Bible to undermine the meaningfulness of dreams:

Unto a shadow *Job* doth life compare,
Which when the bodie moves, doth vanish quite,
To vanitie, and likewise to a dreame,
Whereof we have an hundred in one night. (ll.697-700)

It would be premature to assume that this is Speght's definitive view on dreams, however. The *Mortalities* is as much an anthology of commonly held Protestant beliefs about death, the meaning of earthly life and Christ's sacrifice's effect on the meaning and power of these things, as it is an admission of Speght's personal opinion. The fact that she cites this view of dreams when her extensive knowledge of the Bible would enable her to cite many others that assert the validity of dreams, combined with her significant undermining of Pilate's wife's dream, suggests she is trying to distance herself from religious dreams and visions. Yet, the fact that she writes a dream vision which is clearly meant to be taken seriously -- it does, after all, preface the very serious religious poem in which she uses Job to undermine dreams -- suggests a complicated agenda.

²⁶ Recalling that there were two views of Pilate's wife circulating in the early modern era, it is significant that William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, which I will argue later was one of two major literary antecedents of *A Dreame*, propounds the negative view. In the harrowing of hell the devil says "And whan I seigh it was so, slepyng I wente/To warne Pilates wif what done man was Jesus" (*Piers Plowman* Passus XVIII, ll.299-300).

As was noted in Chapter one there is a difference between real dreams and literary dream visions. I argued in Chapter two that Lanyer was trying to suggest that her dream was real, and prophetic in nature. However, with respect to the dream vision poem of Rachel Speght I must agree with Christina Luckyj's assertion that it was "certainly not meant to be taken literally" (16), but the notion that it is "negotiating dilemmas of authorship" (ibid) is not quite right I think. Speght, as has been noted, was surprisingly comfortable with her identity as a woman author, was in fact "not much troubled by the anxieties about authorship and publication common among the upper classes, and especially women" (*Introduction* xviii). Further, "by appealing to unimpeachable religious motives -- the desire to benefit others by leading them to prepare for death" (*Introduction* xvii), Speght effectively transcends gender restraints and manages to use her middle class position to her advantage to defend women in her pamphlet and direct readers towards salvation in her long religious poem.

These two very different concerns -- the eminently secular and deeply religious -- were of course not mutually exclusive. The raging pamphlet war about the worth and role of women, of which Speght was a part, often relied on religious theory to augment a misogynist agenda or a defense of women. I believe that Speght's *A Dreame* is meant to negotiate a space between the religious and the secular and at the same time show that they are inseparable. The main argument of her dream vision is that women cannot be truly worshipful of God, cannot do His will, unless they are properly educated. Women, along

with men, were created to serve God:

Both man and woman of three parts consist,
Which *Paul* doth bodie, soule, and spirit call:
And from the soule three faculties arise,
The mind, the will, the power; then wherefore shall
A woman have her intellect in vaine,
Or not endeavour *Knowledge* to attaine.

The talent, God doth give, must be imploy'd,
His owne with vantage he must have againe:
All parts and faculties were made for use;
The God of *Knowledge* nothing gave in vaine.
(*A Dreame* ll.127-36)

This assertion, supported by the most unquestionable of texts, is in no way more radical than any of her arguments defending women in *A Mouzell for Melastomus*, so why is it presented as a speech made by an allegorical figure named Truth, in a dream vision poem? Arguably, Speght says nothing in this poem that she could not safely say in an essay or a straight polemical poem like *Mortalities Memorandum*.

The answer then may be not so much what she is saying but how she wants to say it, which in turn suggests that she is trying to do something different in terms of authorship and authorial identity than she does in either her pamphlet or her long poetic meditation on death. As Kim Walker points out, of all her works "it is in the prefixed 'Dreame' and Speght's prefatory addresses that we find the most striking claims to learning and to the rights of authorship" (111). She continually establishes her authority to rebut Swetnam and others like him, and instruct Christians on preparation for death, on the basis of her religious and

classical education. I would argue that *A Dreame* is constructed as it is because it is one of the most literary of poetic forms; it is meant to establish her authority as a writer first, polemicist second, an identity all the more respectable because it is multifaceted. Thus, to write a poem that is so self consciously literary and at the same time religious and/or polemical, is to display her talent to such a degree that it serves to make her authority very hard to question. By highlighting that she has adequate religious education and understanding, she can afford to distance herself from biblical dream visions. *A Dreame* is designed to establish her authority as a writer, and as a woman writer, one not restricted to the non-literary realms of the polemical and the religious.

As has been discussed in the previous two chapters, revealing that one is well and diversely educated, a good reader, legitimates the writing of one's own works. Even the unusually confident and comfortable Rachel Speght would need to justify her writing as a woman, would have to work much harder than her male counterparts to prove that she has something to say. Using the Bible to establish literary authority was a common and effective means of doing this. But just as effective in the Renaissance was the employment and imitation of medieval texts. The popularity of Chaucer's works and Langland's *Piers Plowman* in the early modern era provide Speght with an opportunity to affiliate herself with the forefathers of English poetry, in the same way Lanyer aligns herself with Chaucer. Critic Lewalski has pointed out the possible influence of romance narrative, specifically the *Roman de la Rose*, on Speght's dream vision

poem. Her allegorical figures and her narrator's quest certainly resemble those of the *Roman's* lover and the personifications he encounters in the garden of Idleness. Using the *Roman de la Rose* to establish literary authority could be an extremely wise move on Speght's part, considering that its "influence continued into the Renaissance...[and it] was one of the few medieval works of vernacular literature to be printed in both fifteenth- and sixteenth-century editions" (Brownlee and Huot 1). The most likely form in which Speght read the text²⁷ was contained in the works of him whom Thomas Speght constructed as England's Virgil or Homer -- Geoffrey Chaucer.

In the following discussion I will proceed on the assumption that Rachel Speght read the works of Chaucer and Langland firsthand. I will acknowledge, however, that she could have had indirect contact with the basic theories and practices which epitomize the *Romaunt of the Rose* and *Piers Plowman* in Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* and *Faerie Queene*. Johnson notes that Spenser makes at least two specific references to *Piers Plowman*, one in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, the other "in Book I of *The Faerie Queene* [wherein] we find out that Redcross was found by a 'Plowman in a furrow' and was raised by him 'in ploughmans state to byde' (FQ, I, x.66, 3-6)" (144). Chapter IX of

²⁷ It is, of course, impossible to prove that Speght read the works of Chaucer much less his translation of the *Roman de la Rose*; however, the similarities are striking enough to suggest that she had at least indirect contact with the work. Also, there is the possibility that the premier editor of Chaucer's works at the beginning of the seventeenth century was a kinsman of Rachel's (noted in Chapter one), which would increase the possibility of her having read it.

Miskimin's *The Renaissance Chaucer* discusses the relationship between Chaucer's works and Spenser's. Lewalski points out that Book IV, Canto X of the *Faerie Queene* has much in common, structurally and thematically, with the *Romaunt* (Introduction xxviii-xxix). Further, Speght's description of Swetnam as "a full fed beast" (AD 241) echoes the Blattant Beast whom Calidore pursues in Book VI, Canto I of *The Faerie Queene*, and like Redcross in Book I, Canto I, Speght's narrator is put to sleep by Morpheus, though like Lanyer's, Speght's Morpheus is much more benevolent than Spenser's. In spite of these possibilities, I still think it likely that Speght read Chaucer and Langland directly because of the dream frame which is not crucial to *The Faerie Queene* as it is in the *Romaunt* and *Piers Plowman*.

Geoffrey Chaucer's translation of the *Romaunt of the Rose* is incomplete and comprises primarily Guillaume de Lorris' tamer section of the poem:

This version, first printed as Chaucer's in Thynne's 1532 edition,²⁸ contains the work of two or possibly three different authors, responsible for Fragments A (1-1705), B (1706-5810), and C (5811-7692). A and B consist of all of Guillaume's work (1-4432) and Jean's continuation to line 5810; C takes up the translation some 5,000 lines later in Jean's work... None of the three fragments can with certainty be attributed to Chaucer. (Benson 686)

Of course, as was noted in Chapter one with reference to the spurious *Chaucer's Dreame*, it does not matter whether Chaucer was the actual translator; what

²⁸ Thynne's is the text from which Thomas Speght drew all his material; so Benson's statement can also be applied to the 1598 edition of the Works.

matters is that Renaissance readers believed that it was Chaucer's translation, and there is no reason to suggest they doubted this. Whether Rachel Speght read Chaucer's incomplete version or another does not really matter because his is quite faithful to the original French poem as far as he (or whoever) got with it. Further, it is the garden imagery and the attendant personifications in de Lorris' portion which bear the most striking similarities to Speght's *A Dreame*.

Speght's dream vision closely resembles this portion of the *Romaunt of the Rose* in its form, and Speght follows her predecessor fairly closely while manipulating the text for her own ends. She does not engage in as detailed an exploration of the meaning of dreams as Chaucer and de Lorris to begin her work but does give an ambiguous indication of her opinion of them. Once asleep, as the result of Morpheus' intervention, she is soon disturbed

By entertaining a nocturnall guest.
A Dreame which did my minde and sense possesse,
 With more than I by Penne can well expresse.
 (*A Dreame* ll.16-18)

Her opinion is curiously reserved; all we know is that she did not invite the dream, it came to her of its own accord. This is not in any way unusual, however, nor is the fact that she is confused. As has been discussed, dream visions are always centred on a narrator who is confused, naive, in need of some kind of direction or aid. Again, Speght does not vary from her dream vision antecedents: "stranger-like on every thing I gaz'd,/But wanting wisdome was as one amaz'd" (*AD* ll.23-24). Here her malady is defined as ignorance, want of

wisdom: "My grieffe, quoth I, is called *Ignorance*,/Which makes me differ little from a brute" (AD ll.43-44). Again, as is usual in dream vision works, and very similar to the *Romaunt of the Rose*, the confused narrator encounters personifications who lead her to a garden and begin to relieve her of her confusion and pain. This alignment between the *Romaunt's* lover and Speght's narrator²⁹ serves to immediately set her up as a sort of romance heroine, engaging on a journey or adventure of discovery, and in fact, Speght refers to it as such: "The Haven of my voyage is remote,/I have not yet attain'd my journeyes end" (AD ll.31-2). This alone is a significant move considering how naturally passive dream visions tend to be. In fact, as was noted earlier, her receiving of the dream in the first place was passive. Passivity and femininity were of course expected to cohabit in the Renaissance woman; so for Speght to turn an essentially passive literary genre into one of activity is Speght's first significant move away from the works upon which she draws, works which, if they do contain female characters, more often than not make them objects of the central male figure's desire or concern rather than questing heroes. The *Romaunt's* narrator is the active subject of the poem yet he wanders aimlessly until he encounters things of interest to him:

²⁹ As with Lanyer, I would argue that the narrator and Rachel Speght the writer are not meant to be understood as separate. *A Dreame* contains too many autobiographical details to ignore. In fact, to consider the narrator and writer as mutually exclusive is to misunderstand what Speght was trying to accomplish. I will discuss the issue of Speght's role in the poem later with reference to a concern expressed by Elaine Beilin about objectivity and subjectivity.

Alone I went in my playing,
 The small foules song hearkening,
 They payned hem full many a paire,
 To sing on bowes blossomed faire,
 Jolife and gay, full of gladnesse,
 Toward a River gan I me dresse,
 That I heard ren fast by,
 For fairer playen none saw I:
 Then playen me by that Rivere.

(*Romaunt of the Rose* 200, column 1)

In contrast, in spite of her confusion and unhappiness about her lack of knowledge (but maybe because of it) Speght immediately attempts to find a remedy for her condition -- she begins a conscious journey of learning with the help of a team of allegorical female guide figures. By rejecting the normal passivity of the dream vision (that is that it comes to dreamers unbidden and presents them with sights and takes them places over which they have no control) Speght's dream vision becomes quite subversive. Her narrator may have received the dream unasked for but she engages on a specific journey over which she has some control, and she engages with the personifications she meets in a more equal manner than the lover does, and definitely more so than Lanyer.

This reversal of feminine heroism (constancy, passivity, silence) is seen in the way in which Speght reconstructs the personifications of the *Romaunt* according to her own ends. The lover's first encounter with personified characters significantly comes in the form of a series of paintings or images on the garden wall, all female and if not all vicious at least undesirable, including

Hate, Covetise, Avarice, Envie, Sorow, Elde, Pope holy (Hypocrisy), and Povert. The lover's first encounter with an active personification is more attractive but certainly cannot be considered virtuous -- at the gate of the garden he is met by Idlennesse who invites him to enter. Speght either discards all these figures or reconfigures them into virtues, active and specifically feminine. Thought, Experience, Age and Industrie, all teachers and strong defenders of both Speght and women's right to education, act as foils to de Lorris' Idlennesse and Elde. Further, she reconfigures Avarice and Covetise in the context of women's education into virtues because they actively better her and her ability to serve God and thus "'twas a lawfull avarice,/To covet *Knowledge* daily more and more" (AD II.231-2).

This rewriting of female personifications is part of what Barbara Kiefer Lewalski terms Speght's "daring reversal of the usual romance trope, [wherein] this young virgin finds her right place in a garden of learning, not a garden of love" (173) -- Erudition's garden. This exemplifies Speght's rejection of the celebratory idleness of the garden of love, hosted by Idlennesse herself, because hers is a garden of work, of toil, which she is happily led to by Industrie. Nonetheless it is a place of pleasure and relative safety for Speght. The garden and the journey to the garden are peopled by strong, positive female guide figures who encourage her to increase her learning and defend her against the spokesperson of the misogynist elements of Renaissance society who would limit her education:

Disswasion hearing her assigne my helpe,
 (And seeing that consent I did detect)
 Did many remoraes to me propose,
 As dulnesse, and my memories defect;
 The difficultie of attaining lore,
 My time, my sex, with many others more. (AD II.103-8)

The female Desire, Truth and Industrie all come to her immediate defense and with classical and biblical arguments discount *Disswasion's* stance. Christina Luckyj notes that *Disswasion* is "significantly ungendered" (11) but the misogynist rhetoric this figure speaks makes it clear that it (he?) is meant to represent male attempts to limit women's access to education; *Disswasion* might as well be male, and is significantly the only obstacle she encounters within the dream frame itself. She is, of course, called away by the much discussed "some occurrence" (AD II.234), an issue which will be addressed later.

Of greater importance than the protection the narrator receives is the pleasure she experiences in the process and culmination of her journey. Speght describes this "rapturous encounter with learning" (*Introduction xi*), and her entry into the much sought garden, in very sensual terms:

Where being come, *Instructions* pleasant ayre
 Refresht my senses, which were almost dead,
 And fragrant flowers of sage and fruitfull plants,
 Did send sweete savours up into my head;
 And taste of science appetite did move,
 To augment *Theorie* of things above.

There did the harmonie of those sweete birds,
 (Which higher soare with Contemplations wings,
 Then barely with a superficial view,
 Denote the value of created things)
 Yeeld such delight as made me to implore,

That I might reape this pleasure more and more. (*AD* II.187-98)

In spite of Speght's rejection and reconfiguring of the figures and the garden in the *Romaunt of the Rose* her dream vision text shares some very important thematic links with that text: that is, pleasure and desire. In spite of the fact that Speght's is a garden of Erudition which can only be arrived at with the help of Industrie while the lover is welcomed into his garden by Idleness, both have heady, sensual experiences. In fact, though Speght is led to the garden by Industrie it is the female personification of Desire that she "walked wandring with" (*AD* II.199) as she reaps her pleasure more and more.

To articulate and assert the validity of female desire is a deeply subversive act and to do so with any hope of being considered legitimate, alignment with a text as well-known and discussed as the *Romaunt* could be a wise move. At the same time, however, an alignment with a text propounding questionable, even disturbing, constructions of femininity, a text that is all about excessive sexual desire (according to anti-Rose writers like Christine de Pizan), could cause Speght serious problems of authority in spite of the fact that she inverts and challenges much of what she borrows. In spite of her reconstruction of the *Romaunt's* tropes according to her own ends the association between her avowedly non-sexual, industrious, godly desire for an education, the construction of a female character or author with any desire at all, and desire as strong as Speght's, could be a dangerous move, especially because it results in action, literally in the form of writing an allegorical romantic quest. Speght's terms

("lawfull avarice", to "covet *Knowledge*") and the romantic antecedents she uses threaten to undermine her project at the same time they serve to heighten her literary authority. However, the tropes inherent in romantic quest narrative, epitomized in the *Romaunt*, are not the only literary and philosophical sources she employs in *A Dreame*, and any negative connotations she picks up there are counterbalanced by her use of what early modern readers considered the most Protestant of medieval texts.

William Langland's *Piers Plowman* also plays a central role in Speght's dream vision poem and serves to act as a check against the potentially negative connotations of modeling one's text about female intellectual desire on one concerned with male sexual longing. As has been noted, Speght distances herself from the biblical dream vision and relies on more literary and contemporary examples of the genre. Her alignment of her own dream vision with that of *Piers Plowman*, however, ensures that she does not move too far away from religious authority. It also ensures that the notion of taking a quest in search of knowledge, spurred by desire, has connotations other than the problematic ones usually associated with the romance convention. Given Speght's relatively good education, along with the popularity of Crowley's 1550 text (reprinted by Owen Rogers in 1561), it is certainly possible that Speght read *Piers Plowman*. Even if she did not read the text itself it is equally possible that she had indirect contact with the ideas that the Plowman came to represent outside the original text. The preponderance of imitative plowman tales

(including *The Ploughman's Tale* incorrectly attributed to Chaucer) make it extremely likely that Speght had some contact with the Plowman in one form or another. What most of these texts have in common is that Piers or the Plowman acts as "the voice of reason, moral and religious enlightenment, and social concern" (Brewer 9), which Speght herself certainly attempts in all her works whether demolishing the arguments of a misogynist like Joseph Swetnam or instructing on preparation for death, as in the *Mortalities Memorandum*. For the purpose of this discussion I will proceed on the assumption that it was *Piers Plowman* with which she had contact and used for her own purposes.

The most obvious indication that Speght is modeling her dream vision in part on Langland's text is what also suggests she uses the *Romaunt* -- the preponderance of allegorical personifications and the notion of a quest. However, Speght's more clearly resembles *Piers* in that like Langland's narrator, Speght's is on a specific, conscious journey rather than wandering aimlessly like the lover. Further, they both seek knowledge in one form or another, and knowledge connected with issues of the divine and its manifestations in real life. Like Speght, Langland's narrator meets personifications along the way in his search for Piers and the meaning of Do-well, Do-better and Do-best, and they often have names which anticipate those used by Speght. Truth (there are in fact two Truth characters in *Piers*, a male in *Passus I* and a female in *Passus XVIII*), Thought, and Knowledge are used by Speght while in Langland's work we see Truth, Thought, Intelligence and a host of others that all reflect Knowledge,

which is the ultimate crowning of all Speght's work in Erudition's garden. As she does with the *Romaunt*, Speght also rewrites Langland's construction of Avarice and Covetousness which, though male in Langland's text, are still entirely negative. As well, in her defense against Disswasion, Industrie reassures Speght using language specifically associated with plowing or farming, for example: "with my sickle I will cut away/All obstacles, that in [your] way can grow" (AD II.121-2). Speght also writes of reaping the pleasures to be had in Erudition's garden (AD II.198), a passage quoted at length above.

The most important thematic link connecting Speght's *A Dreame* and *Piers Plowman* is the notion of the "true pilgrimage [which is] a quest for truth and pictures the human condition as suspended not between heaven and hell but between truth and falsehood" (Johnson 100). Speght's quest for Knowledge, as directed by the numerous personifications she meets during the course of her journey, reflects Langland's narrator's search for St. Truth: Reson admonishes his listeners in the field, "Seketh Seynt Truthe, for he may save yow alle" (*Piers Plowman* Passus V, ll.57). The figure of St. Truth is not meant to be a male version of the female Truth who is described in Passus XVIII, however, who appears in the narrative solely for the scene describing the harrowing of hell. Rather, St. Truth is as much the goal of Langland's narrator's pilgrimage as Knowledge is of Speght's, and their respective journeys for Knowledge and Truth are similar in a few key ways. Both dreamers meet Thought along the way who in turn directs them to other personifications, Thought acknowledging in both

texts that he/she is inadequate -- Speght's Thought refers her to Experience (ll.77-8), while Langland's Thought advises the narrator, Will, to seek out Wit (Intelligence) (Passus VIII, ll.112-13). Along with describing Knowledge and Truth respectively as divine personifications (Langland's is given the title of saint but in the context he is meant to be understood as God, while Speght describes Knowledge alternately as the "mother of faith, hope, and love" (ll.219) and a god (ll.136)), both also describe these personifications as intimately related to plants. In his description of the coming of Anti-Christ Langland describes Truth's crop being cut down: "Antecrist cam thanne, and al the crop of truth/Torned it [tid] up-so-doun, and overtilte the roote" (Passus XX, l.53-4). Speght does not see the deity and the plant as separate, and her conflation of the two and more optimistic echo of this imagery reflect her understanding of knowledge, "of which there is two sorts," (ll.93) -- hers is good, to be found only in Erudition's garden:

If thou didst know the pleasure of the place,
Where *Knowledge* growes, and where thou mayst it gaine;
Or rather knew the vertue of the plant,
Thou would'st not grudge at any cost, or paine,
Thou canst bestow, to purchase for thy cure
This plant, by which of helpe thou shalt be sure. (ll.169-74)

The plant of Knowledge cannot be cut down because it is the plant of good knowledge only, and thus indestructible.

Speght's distinction between good and bad knowledge reflects Langland's extended debate on the worth of education. Langland's "poet-dreamer's" recurrent doubts as to the legitimacy of writing the poem as well as about the

value of intellectual learning in general" (Johnson 125) results in constant vacillations between asserting that the poet would do better to spend his time saying his Psalter (Passus XII, ll.16-17) and that learning increases one's love of God. Speght does not suffer from Langland's narrator's doubts about the value of education, and propounds the latter, more positive view expressed in *Piers Plowman*, that "yet is clergie to be comende, and kynde wit bothe,/And namely clergie for Cristes love, that of clergie is roote" (Passus XII, ll.70-71). The notion that education can help humans to serve God is the basis of Speght's entire argument in claiming women's right to a complete education, and she sees only the positive possibilities in education: "Who wanteth *Knowledge* is a Scripture foole,/Against the *Ignorant* the Prophets pray" (ll.211-12). Speght's lack of doubt on this issue is what leads to her breaking from Langland in one very crucial way in spite of the very important similarities and the authority she could reap in those similarities. The obvious question is, given her interest in aligning her dream vision with Langland's, why does she chose to have her narrator quest after Knowledge while Langland's quests after Truth? Truth is one of the personifications in Speght's dream vision, and while a major character in the narrative -- she helps Speght find Erudition's garden where Knowledge will be found, and undercuts Disswasion's misogynist rhetoric which threatens to discourage Speght from her quest -- she is not the ultimate goal. The answer must be Speght's adamant belief in the worth of education -- for women as much as men -- to serve God correctly. This choice also of course recalls the biblical

topos of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which by her manipulations, like covetousness and avarice, is rewritten and validated in a very specific context. For Speght, Good and Evil come on two different trees -- the first is Knowledge, the second, Ignorance, the latter of which she asserts at the beginning of the poem is what makes her "differ little from a brute" (ll.44).

Speght's attraction to the *Romaunt* can be explained, in spite of the aforementioned possible complications, by her wish to establish literary authority separate from or alongside religious or philosophical authority, both of which she very effectively achieves in *A Mouzell for Melastomus* and *Mortalities Memorandum*. By aligning her text with perhaps the most respected medieval text that addresses issues of religion yet is also very literary in nature, *Piers Plowman*, Speght manages to doubly assert her literary authority and nullify the problems that might accompany her use of the *Romaunt*. Yet, why should she have not used biblical dream visions to assert her religious standpoint and the validity of her dreams? What about *Piers Plowman* makes it a better choice than the book of books, the Bible? The answer, I think, is that not only did she want to establish herself as a diverse and eclectic reader in order to establish her right to write creatively as well as polemically, she was a woman of her time, and Robert Crowley, the editor of the edition of *Piers Plowman* she would most likely have read, worked to correlate the text to current times. In the early modern era *Piers Plowman* was considered *the* "classical English satire and appeal for religious reform" (King 346). Barbara A. Johnson asserts that

Piers Plowman established itself in the consciousness of the Renaissance for one reason: it was seen as part of the development that connected the fourteenth-century Lollard movement with the emergence of an English Protestant church under Henry VIII. (99)

Speght's interest here then is twofold -- apart from religious authority, she invoked religious reform, which was not necessarily present in the Bible. Any remaining question as to why she chose not to use biblical authority exclusively in this case should be soon answered. Speght is not only trying to establish literary and religious authority, she is constructing a very subtle and very specific critique.

The question is then, what is Speght attempting to critique? The possible presence of a religious critique in a poem meant to establish literary authority and talk about women's education is initially unclear; however, the answer lies in Speght's humanist Protestantism. Recalling Johnson's assertion that *Piers Plowman* describes "true pilgrimage" as the differentiation "between truth and falsehood" (100), which I think applies to *A Dreame* as well, Speght's text describes "a quest for individual reformation" (ibid). Susan Parman notes that, among other things, the Renaissance was marked by its own special brand of humanism:

"Humanism" means human-centered, with humans rather than God as the center of interpretation. In the Renaissance, this meant two things. On the one hand, Renaissance humanism celebrated the special creative powers of the individual -- a continuation of the belief in an occult soul, except that the divine was becoming secularized. On the other hand, humanism implies a commitment to realism

rather than idealism. (80)

This “secularization of the divine” (ibid), or I would argue, unwillingness to separate the two, is at the heart of Speght’s dream vision. Her attempt to establish both literary (i.e. secular) and religious authority at once reflects the topic of her critique, and is the lynchpin in understanding how a defense of women’s education and a legitimation of female intellectual desire, all in the form of a dream vision, are part of a larger religious critique.

Elaine Beilin correctly asserts that “in her ‘Dream’, Speght urges the use of women’s education for the common good, recording along the way how humanism has failed learned women” (“Writing Public Poetry” 251), and as Lewalski points out about *A Mouzell for Melastomus*, but which is also true of *A Dreame*, Speght attempts to “make the prevailing Protestant discourse yield a more expansive and equitable concept of gender” (157). The problem is that the theory and practice of Renaissance humanism often did not coalesce. As Tina Krontiris points out:

From its very beginnings the Reformation incorporated a fundamental contradiction: it granted woman relative autonomy in spiritual matters but simultaneously endorsed her overall subordination to the husband. (8)

It was a basic humanist belief that “texts are evidence provided by God to support their understanding of the right way to salvation” (Johnson 109), and access to texts, of course, was provided via some kind of education no matter how rudimentary. Yet, many misogynist participants in the pamphlet war’s

discussion of women's roles, sought to limit what women should read and why.

Juan Louis Vives' famous *Instruction of a Christian woman* (1540) posits that a woman should learn not for the sake of learning or because she wants to, but "for herself alone and her young children, or her sisters in our Lord" (170).

Further, a woman ought to always be under supervision: "the woman ought not to follow her own judgement, lest when she hath but a light entering in learning, she should take false for true" (171). Richard Mulcaster, a notable Protestant humanist, best exemplifies the way in which humanism fails women in the early modern era. He asserts in *Positions* that girls should be trained (i.e. educated) because, among other reasons, "we are charged in conscience not to leave them lame in that which is for them...[and because] God by nature would never have given them to remain idle or to small purpose" (179), the latter sentiment Speght expresses herself in *A Dreame*: "The talent, God doth give, must be imploy'd" (ll.133). However, Mulcaster also supports the imposition of a limit on that educational training: "[b]ut now having granted them the benefit and society of *our* education, we must assign the end" (179, my emphasis). The way in which the theoretical equality of men's and women's access to education and therefore God is not practiced by the humanists of Speght's day is the target of her critique in *A Dreame*.

While her own writings stand as challenges to these gender based restrictions by their very existence, not to mention their display of her sharp mind and reasoning skills, *A Dreame* is a direct confrontation and critique of these

issues. I noted earlier that Speght consciously draws away from the biblical dream vision in order to place a literary emphasis rather than, or as much as, a religious one on her work. There is another possibility, however. Having cited Paul's argument about the three faculties of the soul, the mind, the will and the power, and asserting that "[t]he talent, God doth give, must be employ'd" (ll.133), she goes on to back this up with examples of educated women. This would not be an unusual move except that none of the women is Christian. Cleobulina, Demophila, Telesilla, Cornelia, Hypatia, Aspatia and Areta are all examples of women who represent "the core of humanist intellectual endeavors -- poetry, eloquence, astronomy, rhetoric, and art" ("Writing Public Poetry" 270), and they are all pre-Christian. In fact, Hypatia "refused to convert to Christianity...[and]... met her death at the hands of the Christian Clergy" (*Polemics and Poems* 54.n)! This is an extremely subversive and critical moment in the text because it clearly shows that not only are Renaissance Protestant humanists not living up to their ideals but that even pagans realized these ideals better than those who persecuted them. Yet Speght appears to capitulate to the demands of female domestic duties and/or the imposition expressed by Mulcaster that women's education be kept in check when she writes near the end of the dream vision poem,

This counsell I did willingly obey,
Till some occurrence called me away.

And made me rest content with what I had,
Which was but little, as effect doth show;

And quenched hope for gaining any more,
 For I my time must other-ways bestow.
 I therefore to that place return'd againe,
 From whence I came, and where I must remaine.
 (AD II.233-40)

However, she writes the text from "where [she] must remaine," thus challenging this proscriptive construction of female duty. This passage, placed following her critical listing of all notably non-Christian women as the ideal of Protestant humanist learning, the assertion that "[w]ho wanteth *Knowledge* is a Scripture foole,/Against the *Ignorant* the Prophets pray" (AD II.211-12), all combine to form a serious critical attack on the very system that allowed for her education, as incomplete as she evidently feels it is, in the first place. The writing of the text, while seeming to articulate in the end a submission to these inequitable practices, in fact undermines those practices and shows that women will not be so easily barred from the sweetness of learning once they have gained even limited entry.

Speght's dream vision is a subtle yet firm critique of the way in which Renaissance humanism has failed women, as both Lewalski and Beilin note. Yet both have problems with Speght's perceived conservatism. Lewalski laments that Speght "typically draws back, making herself the defender not of all women but of all good women" (163). However, Speght was more concerned with being taken seriously than with being radical; in fact, the radical pamphleteers such as Ester Sowernam and Constantia Munda who also wrote defenses of women against Swetnam's attack arguably end up reinforcing

negative stereotypes about women, particularly the notion that they are by nature shrewish and hysterical -- a reinforcement which Swetnam builds directly into his narrative by asserting that if they launch a counterattack women "prove [them]selves guilty of these monstrous accusations which are here following" (191), particularly that they are shrewish because they "cannot otherwise ease [their] curst heart[s] but by [their] unhappy tongue[s]" (ibid). As a humanist, dedicated to realism rather than idealism as Parman notes, Speght would of course not make any strident feminist claim about the goodness of all women, just as she would not make similar sweeping judgements about men. Further, to establish polemical and philosophical authority it is in her best interest -- and in the best interest of women in general -- to show that she is eminently rational, an example of a learned woman who puts her knowledge to good use, whether illuminating Swetnam's faulty reasoning or instructing Christians on preparation for death, which in turn legitimates the education of women.

Beilin's concern about the effectiveness of Speght's dream vision is that it is "a device that objectifies her experience by placing it in an essentially literary rather than a personal context" (*Redeeming Eve* 112). I would argue, however, that Speght's decision to write a polemical, critical text in the most literary of genres is what in fact gains her the most personal authority. A. C. Spearing points out that

the dream-framework inevitably brings the poet into his poem, not merely as the reteller of a story which has its origins elsewhere, but as the person who

experiences the whole substance of the poem. As Susanne Langer has put it, 'The most noteworthy formal characteristic of the dream is that the dreamer is always at the center of it.' (5)

A Dreame may be allegorical but it is laden with biographical details proving that Speght does not differentiate between the fictional and the personal in the way Beilin suggests, the most notable examples being the news of her mother's death and her review of her participation in the Swetnam pamphlet war:

But by the way I saw a full fed Beast,
Which roared like some monster, or a Devill,
And on *Eves* sex he foamed filthie froth,
As if he had the falling evill;
To whom I went to free them from mishaps,
And with a *Mouzel* sought to binde his chaps. (*AD* II.241-46)

Not only does Speght conflate the personal and the literary and by doing so thus authorize both, her explicit reference to her own previous work reasserts her identity as author because the dream vision form "announces and celebrates its fictionality, thereby attaining a higher "rhetorical" truth" (Russell 81).

At the same time that Speght celebrates the fictionality of her dream vision, and uses it as the basis of her literary authority, it is also a crucial aspect of her critique of the way humanism has failed her as a woman. Specifically, the nature of the dream vision, that is, that it must invariably end because it is a dream, is what Speght critiques, and thus the dream vision is a metaphor for her educational experience, just as Lanyer's dream vision is a metaphor for patronage relationships. The "beautiful place" that is Erudition's garden is one that is open to women for a limited time only and Speght's criticism of this is

reinforced by the very nature of her text which is what establishes her authority to say these things in the first place. The fictionality then is in no way a rejection of her responsibility, though dream visions often function as such, especially when used for a text that is in any way subversive or contentious, as Speght's certainly is. Rather, she celebrates, or at least asserts, *A Dreame's* rhetorical truth in the same way she celebrates its fictionality. On the title page she declares that her dream vision is "imaginarie in manner; *reall in matter*," and near the end of the poem that "when I wak't, I found my dreame was true;/For Death has ta'ne my mothers breath away" (*AD* ll.283). The second line seems to indicate that she is referring solely to the death of her mother; however, the syntax of the first line indicates that she means the whole dream is true -- not necessarily that she really dreamt it but that everything she expresses in her dream is valid, including her rapturous experience of becoming educated, her critique of humanism's inadequacy with respect to women, her participation in the Swetnam debate, and her mother's death.

Because Speght takes full responsibility for, indeed pride in, her dream vision in a way that even Lanyer could not manage, she earns not only literary authority but the experience and the learning to write *Mortalities Memorandum* which it must be recalled is the work *A Dreame* is meant to introduce. Spearing notes that "dream poems which act as prologues to some other narrative, serv[e] to explain and justify its existence" (187), and in fact Speght segues directly into her long religious poem:

The roote is kil'd, how can the boughs but fade?
 But sith that *Death* this cruell deed hath done,
 I'le blaze the nature of this mortall foe,
 And shew how it to tyranize begun.
 The sequell then with judgement view aright,
 The profit may and will the paines requite. (*AD* II.295-300)

By unabashedly asserting her literary authority in the dream, by constructing her pamphlet as having been written during the dream, and by asserting that she has learned something during her dream (recall Parman's notion of the dream as a bridge to knowledge), she establishes in advance her authority and ability to write a deeply religious poem like the *Mortalities*. Thus all her works become an interdependent series of works which serve to prop each other up, and thus prop Rachel Speght up as a rational, religious, learned, and literary woman -- a living counter example to Joseph Swetnam's misogynist rhetoric and a living reproof of early modern Protestant humanism's failure to treat women the way its philosophies dictate. And at the centre is *A Dreame*, without which the other works would not be connected, and thus so powerful.

Chapter Four:
Ane Political Divine:
The prophetic subversiveness of Elizabeth Melville's *Ane Godlie Dreame*

Scottish poet Elizabeth Melville's *Ane Godlie Dreame* (1603), of the three dream vision poems I discuss, has received the least modern critical attention. While sections of books are devoted to her (for example, Beilin's *Redeeming Eve*, Dunnigan in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*) and her work is sometimes anthologized along with other early modern women's writings (see Greer and Travitsky), no full length articles much less any books have been devoted to this misunderstood work. The strikingly androgynous narrator of her dream vision may be a serious disappointment to modern feminist critics trying to discover a strong proto-feminist strain in Renaissance literature, which may explain why after Travitsky and Greer editors have tended not to include Melville at all. Further, her unabashedly religious narrative may not seem literary enough for other critics of the early modern era. While a religious statement of personal pilgrimage and spiritual enlightenment appears to be the sole focus of *Ane Godlie Dreame*, to think that is all Melville is doing is to ignore textual evidence, both in her dream vision and in her other works which include a sonnet, a ballad and eight letters to her friend John Livingstone, along with historical evidence, which suggest that Melville was as political as she was devout. In this chapter I will focus on the way in which Melville uses "the opportunity for personal biblical exegesis" available to her as a Calvinist (Greer 32) to create a subjective

speaking voice which allows her to transcend gender and class restraints in order to assert her status as one of God's elect and simultaneously subvert and criticize the contemporaneous political and religious repression of the Calvinists.

Not only did the Bible allow for personal biblical exegesis as Germaine Greer asserts, there was an "explicitly visionary element in Scripture" (Spearing 12), which many dream vision poets exploited. For a woman like Melville "famous for her piety" according to her long time friend John Livingstone (Laing 281), this visionary element would be particularly attractive. Though a dream vision, one of the most literary of literary forms, *Ane Godlie Dreame* initially appears to abandon the literary element almost completely in favour of the religious. Recalling some of the hallmarks of literary dream visions (which Lanyer and Speght also employed and altered according to their own respective agendas), it is notable how Melville manipulates them in order to firmly establish religious authority above all else. A summary of key characteristics will be useful at this point: dream visions often begin with the narrator reading something before falling asleep, which in turns defines the dream; the narrator is distressed, confused and alienated from society yet worthy of receiving a dream vision and thus in some way set apart; once asleep the narrator is led to understanding by a guide figure morally and socially superior to him/her; the narrator wakes up and writes the dream vision from his/her position of increased knowledge. Some of these characteristics are found more commonly in literary than biblical dream visions and vice versa.

Melville's narrator begins the poem in the usual way -- as one in "sum perplexitie" (*Ane Godlie Dreame* ll.98), in need of help, and in this case, it is specifically religious or spiritual help she requires:

Upon ane day as I did mourne full soir,
 With sindrie things quhairwith my saull was greifit,
 My grief increasit, and grew moir and moir,
 My comfort fled, and could not be releifit.
 (*Ane Godlie Dreame* ll.1-4)

She goes on to reveal that it is the state of the world and fear for her soul that cause her such sorrow:

The wretchit ward did sa molest my mynde,
 I thocht upon this fals and iron age;
 And how our harts war sa to vice inclynde,
 That Sathan seimit maist feirfulle to rage.
 Nathing in earth my sorrow could asswage!
 I felt my sin maist stranglie to increse;
 I grefit my Spreit, that wont to be my pledge;
 My saull was drownit into maist deip distres. (*AGD* ll.9-16)

Given that her distress concerns the state of the world, and not just her position in it, it makes sense that she would require an answer that, if found in a book, could probably only be found in the Bible -- this is a spiritual crisis after all. She does not turn to her Bible however; instead, she begins a prayer of lamentation to God wherein she despairingly queries "O Lord! how lang is it thy will/That thy puir Sancts sall be afflictit still?" (*AGD* ll.28-9). The prayer continues (ll.28-72) until Melville falls asleep and begins to dream.

As has been noted, in the Bible dreams are not uniformly considered a means of direct prophetic communication with God. Sometimes, dreams are

considered unreliable, even meaningless, as in Zechariah: "dreamers have tolde a vaine thing" (Zech 10:2),³⁰ or else they are downright dangerous: "[b]ut that prophet, or the dreamer of dreames he shal be slaine, because he hath spoken to turne you away from the Lord your God" (Deut 13: 5). More common, however, is the notion that dreams are a sign of God's favour (I Kings 3:5-15), that dreams are revelation, as in Joseph being told by God in a dream to wed Mary, that her child was God's and to name him Jesus (Matt 1:20-24), and in Numbers: "[i]f there be a Prophet of the Lord among you, I will be knowen to him by a vision, and wil speake unto him by dreame" (12:6). The notion of being spoken to by God in a dream permeates the Bible and is the basis of Melville's own dream vision poem. No text inspires her dream -- pure religious fervor and crisis bring it about. This is an important first step in legitimating her dream vision because of the tendency, both in the Bible and other cultural documents, to dismiss as meaningless dreams which result from bodily or earthly occurrences or states.

Melville makes sure that her dream vision cannot be discarded in this way. Not only is her dream explicitly constructed as not the result of something she has read, she asserts twice that she goes to sleep on an empty stomach. Before even beginning the lamentation that leads to the dream the narrator says "I could not eit nor drink" (AGD II.6), a fact she makes a point of reasserting right

³⁰ All biblical quotations come from the Geneva Bible which was the most widely read edition during the early modern era.

before she falls asleep:

Befoir the Lord, quhen I had thus complainit,
 My mynde grew calme, my heart was at great rest;
 Thocht I was faint from fuid yet I refrainit,
 And went to bed, becaus I thought it best:
 With heaviness my spreit was sa apprest
 I fell on sleip. (AGD ll.73-8)

In Isaiah is reflected an opinion which carries through to later dream theory, that is, that the state of the belly determines the dream: "an hungrie man dreameth, and beholde, he eateth" (29:8), an idea echoed by Macrobius who includes nightmares, which have no prophetic meaning, as brought about by "overindulg[ence] in eating or drinking...[or] hunger or thirst and [which causes the dreamer] to dream that he is craving and searching for food or drink or has found it" (88). This theory becomes more specific in the hands of medieval dream vision writers and theorists who assert that only one who "hadn't eaten that night and would thus have no pollutants in his stomach" could have meaningful dreams (Russell 44). Those who assert that dreams are "bot phantasye" (ll.1), as does the anonymous author of *Lichtoun's Dreame*, a sixteenth-century Scottish poem, also insist that "gentill Aill is oft the causse of Dremes" (ll.90). What this all comes down to is bodily versus spiritual experience: "[i]n the Classical-Christian synthesis, the 'knowing' of the body produced trivial and insubstantial dreams, whereas the 'knowing' of the soul produced divine dreams" (Parman 82). By reminding her readers that her stomach is empty Melville not only asserts that she is free of pollutants which

could conceivably bring about apparitions or nightmares, which are meaningless according to Macrobius and his philosophical offspring, but also lays claim to a spiritual openness or hunger which mirrors yet transcends that of the body, a hunger which makes her worthy of receiving a prophetic dream vision from God. As has been seen with reference to Lanyer and Speght, and as Macrobius makes clear in his commentary on Scipio's dream, those who are worthy of receiving dream visions are an elite group.

Elitism is central to Melville's creation of her narrator and to the overall legitimacy of the dream. Elaine Beilin correctly claims that "[s]ignificantly for women's poetry, [Melville] does not hesitate to establish her persona at the center of the poem, whether as poet, Christian pilgrim, recipient of God's grace, exemplum or teacher" (107). Unlike the dream visions of Lanyer and Speght wherein I argued that the abundance of autobiographical details indicated that the narrator and the author were intended to be understood as one and the same, there are no obvious details in *Ane Godlie Dreame* which indicate that the narrator is Melville, and by extension but more importantly, that the narrator is female. In fact, the narrator seems to transcend gender completely. Often in early modern religious works by women the notion of the speaker as the bride of Christ is exploited and the relationship to Christ made explicitly sexual. This is not the case in *Ane Godlie Dreame*. The narrator describes her guide figure when he first appears as "Ane Angell bright, with visage schyning cleir,/With Luifing luiks, and with ane smyling cheir" (ll.92-3), which is really quite subdued

compared to Lanyer's description of Christ in *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*

wherein she blazons Christ in very sensual terms:

This is that Bridegroom that appears so faire,
 So sweet, so lovely in his Spouses sight,
 That unto Snowe we may his face compare,
 His cheekes like skarlet, and his eyes so bright
 As purest Doves that in rivers are,
 Washed with milke, to give the more delight;
 His head is likened to the finest gold,
 His curled lockes so beauteous to behold;

Blacke as a Raven in her blackest hew;
 His lips like skarlet threeds, yet much more sweet
 Than is the sweetest hony dropping dew,
 Or hony combes, where all the Bees doe meet;
 Yea, he is constant, and his words are true,
 His cheekes are beds of spices, flowers sweet;
 His lips, like Lillies, dropping downe pure mirrhe,
 Whose love, before all worlds we doe preferre. (SD II.1305-20)

In spite of the abundance of moments in which Melville's narrator is described as holding fast to Christ, these moments are decidedly non-sexual, partly because of the lack of description of his beauty, but also because there is no reference at all to her gender. Christ often tells her to hold him fast but it is in a loving fatherly way rather than a sexual way:

Hald fast thy grip, on mee cast all thy cair,
 Assay thy strength, thou sall not fecht in vaine;
 I tauld thee first, that thou sould suffer paine,
 The neirer heaven, the harder is the way. (II.186-9)

As a Calvinist Melville was permitted and encouraged to engage in personal biblical exegesis regardless of gender so her literary transcendence of gender makes sense. As well, the notion of the spirit versus the flesh permeated

Protestantism, an idea which Melville touches on in her vision when she writes "Allace! said I, howbeit my flesh be waik,/My spreit is strang and willing for to flie" (ll.153-4). Transcending gender is a logical step in the attempt to separate the spirit from the flesh, which is essential to establishing authority as a truly religious dreamer, especially in this context.

Melville goes beyond simply transcending gender, however. There are moments in which she actively distances herself from the feminine. In the midst of the journey to hell Melville becomes quite fearful, at which point Jesus exhorts her to "play the man" (ll.275), suggesting the only way she will survive the ordeal is to abandon all her feminine fear. The whole notion of going on a pilgrimage (or a romantic journey in more secular terms) has traditionally been constructed as a masculine endeavor in biblical, classical, medieval (*Piers Plowman* for example) and Renaissance texts like the *Faerie Queene*, though there are of course exceptions, the most famous perhaps being Chaucer's *Wife of Bath*. As well, in the last section of the poem, after Melville has interpreted her dream, she encourages her fellows to be vigilant in their Christian endeavors, and the language she employs is that of combat:

The King of kings, gif he be on our syde,
 Wee neid nocht feir quhat dar agains us stand;
 Into the feild may wee nocht baldlie byde,
 Quhen hee sall help us, with his michtie hand,
 Quha sits alone, and reules baith sea and land,
 Quha with his breath doth mak the hilles to shaik?--
 The hostes of Heaven ar armit at his command
 To fecht the feild, quhen wee appeir maist waik.

Pluck up your heart, ye are nocht left alone,
 The Lambe of God sall leid yow in the way;
 The Lord of Hostes that rings on royall throne,
 Against your foes your baner will display.
 The Angels bright sall stand in gude array
 To hald yow up, ye neid not fear to fall;
 Your enemies sall flie, and be your pray,
 Ye sall triumphe, and they sall perish all. (AGD ll.441-56)

Her final note is that her peers must "be valiant men of weir" (ll.465). This distancing from the feminine and alignment with the masculine is seen as well in Melville's letters to her friend and fellow Presbyterian, John Livingstone. The letters, of which only eight survive, were written during the late 1620's and early 1630's, but much of the language is similar to that found in the sonnet, the ballad, and *Ane Godlie Dreame*. Melville tells Livingstone to keep the faith because "[t]he battell is bot short, your Captaine [i.e. Christ] fechts for you, therefor the victory is certain" (*Letters from Lady Culross* 362).

Melville's preaching style of writing reflects her faith's openness to religious interpretation by women; but as a woman, particularly as a member of the upper class, there are certain physical restraints put on her, of which only the letters make any mention. Like Dorothy Osborne in her letters to William Temple, Melville implores Livingstone to visit her rather than suggesting she visit him; her letters seem always to be written "in haist," presumably because she writes them during pauses in her domestic duties; and her long preaching paragraphs are interestingly peppered with comments which indicate it is her gender which keeps her homebound and thus unable to preach alongside her

male peers: “[t]he communioun is not far from us heir, but I long to com thair iff the Lord will permit” (*Letters from Lady Culross* 357). Clearly, the religious faith that allows her to pen a poem as comfortably authoritative as *Ane Godlie Dreame* cannot erase the reality that in the early modern era women were confined to home as private beings:

...the roles (*officia*) of man and wife are different...
 Man, more robust and audacious, is better suited
 for a peripatetic, outdoor, *public*, acquisitive role;
 woman, more timid, possessing judgement and
 physical force in lesser measure, is naturally the
 custodian of children, household goods...[the]
 woman’s [is a] *private* existence... (Maclean 57)

She clearly associates herself with the male preachers like Livingstone in spirit even if she cannot in real life, a fact shown in the way she asks in the sixth letter to be remembered to several male peers and their wives, of which only the men are referred to by name: “[r]emember me hartly to Mr Robert Cunningame, to Mr Josiah Welshe, to Mr George Dunbar, to Mr Edward Bryce, and to all the rest of the pastours, and all their gude wyves” (365). This association with her male counterparts, as disappointing as it may be to feminist critics, is what allows Melville to establish such a strong subject position both in her literature and her letters. The effect this had on others is very important. In his dedication to Melville, Alexander Hume appeals to her as “a Ladie chosen of God to bee one of his saints” (3) quite unlike male poets who appeal to their patron (seen commonly in dedications by men to Mary Sidney), as a kind of Petrarchan mistress. By establishing a literary and religious persona that spreads into the

real world, Melville ensures that she is never seen as an object. She is revered for her piety and not for her beauty, which in a Calvinist context would have a greater impact considering the traditional disparaging of the flesh as an impediment to the spirit.

Melville's ability to gain respect as a woman without the associated misogynist Petrarchan associations as a result of this transcendence of gender is what allows her to become, as Sarah Dunnigan asserts, "representative of the religious soul" (32). Melville frequently vacillates between singular and plural pronouns, relating her own personal journey to hell with Christ as guide while making pleas for and preaching to God's "paur Sancts" (ll.29), or asking the Lord to "send us sum releif" (ll.83). The point of establishing a strong persona at the centre of the poem is to assert her position as one of the elite few who are deserving of receiving a dream vision from God; yet, if she is representative of the religious soul then, while that is still elite -- not everyone has a religious soul after all -- she is still part of a group. At the same time that Dunnigan claims that Melville's narrator in *Ane Godlie Dreame* is a sort of religious everyman, she also asserts that she "belongs to the religious elite" (32). Dunnigan is correct in both assertions but does not explain how these seemingly paradoxical facts coexist. As an androgynous narrator, vacillating between speaking for herself and speaking for all, Melville certainly is an everyman; but she is only an everyman for God's elect, that is, the Presbyterians (or all Protestants) of which she was one. However, I think Melville was more interested in establishing her own

personal elitist voice than in acting as a spokesperson for her religious brethren, although as has been shown, the two are not mutually exclusive. Melville works very hard to show that her pain, her crisis of faith, and thus her resulting piety, are all on a level above most others'. She asserts that "Nothing in earth my sorrow could assuage" (ll.13), and her pain is so great that "In companie I na wayes could remaine,/Bot fled resort, and so alone did go" (ll.19-20). Her pain is so great that not even her Calvinist peers are capable of understanding or helping. Only God, whom she encounters in her dream, is capable of doing so -- her pain is superior and requires the aid of the highest possible source.

A similar elevation and thus elitism is present in the letters as well. In two instances in which people Melville is associated with die, neither of whom are directly related to Melville, she asserts that her pain is the greatest, thus bringing about the greatest succor. Of her parish pastor she insists that his death is "a sor strok to this congregatioun, and chiefly to me...Nixt his awin familie, I have the greattest los" (358). She makes a similar claim with reference to the death of one Marie Preston, who "[n]ane, except hir husband and children, will have moir missing of hir" (363). This persistence in displaying her status as one part of the elect and in displaying her own religious elite position within that group of elect may make it seem like the lady is protesting too much. However, because the authority of her dream vision rests on the elite status of the dreamer and writer, and because she publishes it, Melville cannot afford to let her narrator appear commonplace at any point. Melville's knowledgeable and authoritative biblical

exegesis divorced from misogynist stereotypes would go a long way to undermining the early modern notion that women who published were “harlot[s] or...member[s] of the nonelite” (Wall 281).

The Bible is rife with prophetic dream visions sent by God to those worthy of receiving them. This elite group of dreamers receive the teachings of God in one of the most direct ways possible: “in dreames and visions of the night, when slepe falleth upon men, and they slepe upon their beddes, Then he openeth the eares of men, even by their corrections, which he had sealed” (Job 33:15-16). Of course, one must first be asleep in order to dream, yet it appears as though Melville considers sleep an act of laziness or neglect rather than a site of prophetic or divine interaction. In the midst of her supplicatory prayer to God before she falls asleep herself, Melville boldly accuses the Lord of literally sleeping on the job: “Thy sillie Sancts are tossit to and fro,/Awalk, O Lord! quhy sleipest thou sa lang?” (AGD II.33-4). Immediately falling asleep is fitting retribution for daring to chastise one’s Lord. At the same time, however, her dream vision, in which she is guided by the son of God himself, and which she works so hard at legitimating by reminding readers that she is dreaming on an empty stomach and not as the result of something she reads, takes her into the same realm where she imagines God is, that of sleep. Thus, sleep becomes a place of divine interaction, or a sort of higher consciousness, which allows her to interact directly with God in a way she cannot while she is awake. She is corrected for her presumption in chiding God but the fact that he brings her into

this divine realm at the same time showing her error, shows that she is still in his favour, and he proceeds to take her on a journey through hell to help her to understand how her faith can survive in the "wretchit warld" outside the dream.

The dream theories as represented in the Bible that I have been applying to Melville's poem are not explicitly referred to in her poem though they are certainly echoed. Melville uses other biblical quotations and ideas in the same quiet way in *Ane Godlie Dreame*, a move which stands in stark contrast to Lanyer's and Speght's explicit referencing of every biblical dream or quote they use. Once God has revealed his identity to her in the dream he asserts that "I am the way, I am the treuth and lyfe" (ll.129) which directly quotes Jesus' assertion in John 14:6, which is followed by an assertion of the saved's elite position: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (ibid). Once the dream is over and the narrator has woken, she interprets her dream. Part of that interpretation includes a reference to Psalm 126:

Your God is trew, your bluid is to him deir,
Feir nocht the way, sence Christ is your convoy,
Quhen clouds ar past the weather will grow cleir,
Ye saw in teares, bot ye sall reap in joy. (AGD ll.429-32)

This use of the Psalms nicely reflects Melville's willingness and ability to use scripture for her own agenda, which she is encouraged to do by her Calvinist peers, a group which "permitted Melville a voice by which to preach and write" (Dunnigan 31). The quotation from Psalms -- "Thei that sowe in teares, shal reape in joye" (Ps 126:5) is in the Old Testament, and therefore pre-Christian so

her conflation of this with Christ's salvation of humanity is interesting. Further, this very short Psalm (only six verses long) begins with an allusion to dreams: "When the Lord breghe againe the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dreame. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with joye" (Ps 126:1-2). Finally, the narrator's exhortation to be "valiant men of weir" (ll.465) like herself, reflects the description of David in 1 Samuel 16:18 who can "playe [the harpe], and is strong, valiant and a man of warre and wise in matters, and a comely persone, and the Lord is with him," a description which highlights Melville's own position as a soldier of Christ and a poetry/song maker. As Laing points out, "Dr. Armstrong, in his Essays, has alluded to the 'Godly Dream' in such a manner as if he recollected having heard it sung by peasants to some plaintive air" (281), an allusion which can only confirm both her religious and her poetic authority.

Melville's use of biblical dream visions as the basis for her own and her "silent" use of quotations for her own ends are not the only ways in which the Bible informs *Ane Godlie Dreame*, however. Sarah M. Dunnigan notes that

Melville's conceit of the Christian pilgrimage is derived from biblical metaphors, such as the 'path of life' from Ps. 16:11. She powerfully aligns the state of melancholy ...with the associated notion of literal and emotional exile. The dispossessed 'strangers and exiles' of Hebrews 11:13 appear, almost *verbatim*, in the exhortation: 'Lyke pilgrims puir, and strangers in exyle,/Throw fair and foull, your

journey ye mon tak' (ll.355-6).³¹ (33)

Dunnigan also points out that Melville makes direct references to Matt 26:41, Matt 18:3 and Mark 10:14-15. There are perhaps many other biblical allusions that neither Dunnigan nor I have identified. In any case, the result, as Dunnigan points out, is that Melville's dream vision poem becomes a "seamless allusive weave...[which] reveals not simply her 'godliness'...but a writerly sensitivity to the innate poetic inflexions of Scripture" (ibid).

This sensitivity to the poetic aspects of the Bible is certainly part of what may have motivated Melville to use the Bible so extensively but it does not explain why she chose to do so in the form of this "seamless allusive weave." Both Lanyer and Speght refer extensively to scripture but not in such an undifferentiated or "silent" way. Both almost always indicate from whence they are quoting; it is possible that Melville does not do so because she assumes, probably rightly so, that her readers would not need the references, and they would be able to immediately identify the passages to which she alludes. However, Melville's decision not to indicate when she is quoting scripture cannot be attributed completely to her readers' presumed familiarity with the Bible -- Lanyer and Speght could probably have made a similar assumption. Though Lanyer and Speght write dream visions and religious meditations, they do not

³¹ She refers to life as "our painfull pilgramage" (ll.32), herself as "Ane pilgrime pur" (ll.108), not to mention the fact that the whole dream vision is in effect a pilgrimage to hell with Christ as guide.

write them as one and the same; though *The Authors Dreame* and *A Dreame* are prefaces to religious works they are meant to be understood as separate. This distinction, which Speght is especially clear about, serves to ensure that no one will incorrectly assume they are proud enough to claim that they have dream visions on the level of those in the Bible. Unlike Lanyer and Speght, Melville purposely does not separate her dream from her religious exegesis, and does not differentiate between her own speech and God's, whether from the Bible or in the dream itself, because she does not mean them to be seen as separate. Her word is God's word, and vice versa. In the dream Christ warns Melville to be brave: "Fainte not for feir, for cowarts ar debard" (ll.218), which Melville repeats herself after she has woken, and which she uses as a sign of her divine authority: "Wee mon be stout, for cowards are debarde" (ll.339). She does the same thing with Christ's assertion that "The neirer heaven, the harder is the way" (ll.189) when she is interpreting her dream at line 392. These specific examples reflect the overall tendency in *Ane Godlie Dreame*. This extremely bold assertion of religious authority is not without precedent. Books of the New Testament often incorporate sections of the Old Testament without explicitly acknowledging them. Further, Dunnigan notes that "the Angel's words to John in Revelation [were], 'Write what you see in a book'" (31); Melville does so, like any other receiver of a divine dream directly from God. Thus she more than aligns her dream vision with those of the Bible, she actually writes her own biblical dream vision.

Such an assertion of religious authority, specifically written religious authority, automatically brings along with it literary authority, though the poem is excellent without this built-in literary authority -- it is well written, laden with striking images (her own and others'), and relates a traditional narrative in a very compelling manner. Dunnigan points out Melville's adept manipulation of biblical literary inflexion, and Russell describes the biblical dream vision as "a device of literary realism" (29). Of course, literariness is built into all aspects of scripture. The notion of the Word, along with the Angel in Revelation's counsel to write one's dreams in books, automatically ensures a certain interdependence between the written and the divine, a connection asserted in a gloss in the Geneva Bible, the most widely read edition in the early modern era: "He knewe that God was the autor of the dreame, but he understood not the meaning" (Gen 37:11). As I discussed in previous chapters, being a good writer is necessarily bound up with being a good reader. The dreamer from Genesis is not a good enough reader -- he is worthy of receiving a dream from God but is unable to interpret it. Melville sets herself apart, and establishes both her religious and literary authority even more by showing that not only is she worthy of receiving a dream authored by God, she is capable of explaining it via the written word, which in turn further conflates her words with those of God. Having woken up, Melville writes

This is ane Dreame, and yit I thocht it best
 To wryte the same, and keip it still in mynde;
 Becaus I knew, thair was na earthlie rest

Preparit for us, that hes our hearts inclynde
 To seik the Lord, we mon be purgde and fynde:
 Our drois is greit, the fyre mon try us sair;
 Bot yit our God is mercifull and kynde,
 Hee sall remaine and help us ever mair. (AGD II.329-36)

This tone of confident instruction or preaching continues as Melville goes on to reveal what each point in her journey to hell means and how her peers may ensure their status as members of God's elect, which occupies the final one hundred and fifty lines of the poem, a significant portion which is as important as what she dreams in the first place. Melville thus constructs herself as an excellent reader of God's word in any form, and this reading ability legitimates her authority to write her own vision and conflate it with God's.

This is not the only way in which her dream is literary, however. Melville uses what Susan Parman calls the "Dantean' pattern...meaning a shamanistic descent to Hell and gradual emergence, a personal journey through madness, creativity, or depression in search of divine insight" (65). The narrator's personal journey is through depression brought about by a crisis of faith, and her journey reveals to her the difference between God's elect and the Papists and the way to keep religious faith in this "fals and iron age." The basic format of Melville's *Ane Godlie Dreame* and Dante's *Inferno* in the *Divine Comedy* bear some striking resemblances. Both are dream visions and like Melville, Dante asserts that his has some kind of prophetic value, that "dreams reveal the truth" (*Inferno* C.26, ll.7). Dante's wandering through valley (Canto 4) and desert (Canto 14) anticipates Melville's description of being led on a spiritual journey described in

physical terms:

Sumtyme we clam on craigie montanes hie,
And sumtymes on uglie brayes of sand;

.....
Throw greit deserts wee wanderit on our way. (AGD ll.169-74)

Both narrators are led through their journey to hell by a figure who is some way superior to them and who is able protect their charges and explain much of what is seen in the journey. Specifically, the way in which Melville often clutches or is embraced by Christ whilst traversing the most frightening or challenging portions of the journey reflects the relationship between Dante and Virgil. Both are specifically non-sexual though a sexualized relationship between Christian and Christ was a common trope in early modern women's religious writings, as has been noted. Melville's relationship with Christ in the dream is filial, just like the relationship between Dante and Virgil: "then sped my master down...bearing me on his breast, not as a comrade, but as his own son" (*Inferno* C.23, ll.49-51).

Just as important as the relationship between guide and pilgrim is the similarity of Dante's and Melville's respective descriptions of hell. Melville writes:

I lukit down, and saw ane pit most black,
Most full of smock, and flaming fyre most fell;
That uglie sicht maid mee to flie aback,
I feirit to heir so many shout and yell. (ll.256-9)

Melville's suspension above the hell pit mirrors Dante's in Canto 20:

I was now well placed, as regards the pit,
its bottom being disclosed right under me,
to observe the tears of anguish drenching it. (*Inferno* C.20, ll.4-6)

Other passages in *Ane Godlie Dreame* which reflect Dante's much longer poetic

journey to hell include the following: "This Pit is Hell, quhairthrow thou now mon go,/Thair is thy way that leids thee to the land" (ll.273-4), and her response to Christ's words echoes Dante's obedience to Virgil:

"I am content to do thy haill command," --
Said I againe, and did him fast imbrace:
Then lovinglie he held mee be the hand,
And in wee went into that feirfull place. (*AGD* ll.289-92)

As well, both poets describe in harrowing terms the cries of the damned, and the effects of that on them. Melville writes:

Into that Pit, quhen I did enter in,
I saw ane sicht quhilk maid my heart agast;
Puir damnit saullis, tormentit sair for sin,
In flaming fyre, war frying wonder fast;
And uglie spreits; and as we throcht them past,
My heart grew faint, and I begouth to tyre. (*AGD* ll.305-10)

Dante is notably more compassionate than Melville in his response to the cries of the damned being tortured:

There sighs, sobs and loud lamentations rolled
resounding 'neath the starless firmament,
so that at first my tears ran uncontrolled.
Uncouth tongues, horrible utterances were blent
with words of woe, accents of anger. (*Inferno* C.3, ll.22-6)

Unlike Dante, Melville does not recognize or identify any of the individual souls she witnesses in hell; but this difference reflects her specific agenda. Melville is more interested in establishing her own particular favour with God and that of the Presbyterians generally than the demerits of those out of God's favour, who in her eyes would matter not at all.

In his critical study *Dante in English Literature* Paget Toynbee cites

Melville's dream vision poem only to discount it, saying "[t]here are lines in this poem which recall passages of the *Divina Commedia*, but it is probable that, as in other similar cases, the resemblances are merely accidental" (xxiii n.). On what basis Toynbee assumes that the similarities must be accidental is not clear, and I think, unscholarly. As a well-educated, upper-class, literary woman (according to Hume who appeals to her as patron in much the same way English poets referred to Mary Sidney), it is certainly possible that Melville read Dante, and her attraction would make perfect sense because as Toynbee himself points out,

At the Reformation curiously enough Dante was claimed as a champion on behalf of the Protestants. This was due to the fact that in certain well-known passages of the *Divina Commedia*, Dante vigorously denounces the corruptions of Rome and of the Church; hence he is frequently quoted by English reformers in the next century as 'an Italian writer against the Pope.' (xxiii)

Toynbee is one of few critics to do extensive work on a reception history of Dante in early modern England (or Scotland); however, it is known that "[t]he first English *Inferno* appeared only in 1782, the entire *Divine Comedy* in 1802" (De Sua vii), though French translations appeared in 1500, 1550 and 1596, along with Italian translations in 1529 and 1547 (Friederich 564-5). Thomas Nelson Page asserts that the works of Dante influenced several major English writers including "Chaucer, whose impress on English Poetry may be likened to Dante's on him,...Spenser adopted and adapted to his purpose and time a great part of his moral from Dante...Shakespeare, like Molière, took his own wherever he

found it" (143-4). Not only did Dante influence English poetry but also the Scottish tradition of dream vision poetry. Melville was one of many medieval and early modern Scots poets, including Dunbar and Douglas, but most notably Sir David Lyndsay in *The Dreme* (Toynbee 26-8), deeply influenced by Dante.

In a dream vision poem ostensibly meant to establish Melville's religious authority and her own position as a mouthpiece of the word of God, the presence of a political element initially seems incongruous. In fact, the lines which reflect the anti-Papist attitude that Dante represented to her generation of Protestants is extremely jarring, not just for its obvious bias, but because it is the only part of the poem that definitively dates the poem; otherwise it could be a timeless representation of the soul's spiritual journey. Having looked down into the hell pit above which Christ has her suspended, Melville's narrator asks

Is this, said I, the Papists purging place,
 Quhair they affirme that sillie saulles do dwell,
 To purge their sin, before they rest in peace? (AGD II.261-63)

Christ's reply, considering that Melville works very hard to make sure that her words and Christ's words are essentially the same, may be taken as her opinion as well:

The braine of man maist warlie did invent
 That purging place, hee answerit mee againe;
 For greuines, together they consent
 To say, that saulles in torment mon remaine,
 Till gold and gudes releif them of thair paine:
 O spytfull spreits that did the same begin:
 O blindit beists! your thochts ar all in vaine,
 My blude alone did saif thy saull from sin. (II.264-72)

The context in which *Ane Godlie Dreame* was written and published helps illuminate what exactly these lines are doing in an otherwise purely religious/literary poem. Though Melville writes a primarily scripturally based vision she was most likely aware of the literary antecedents as well. In his dedication to her prefacing his *Hymnes and Sacred Songs* poet Alexander Hume appeals to Melville not only for her piety but because "I know ye delite in poesie yourself" (4). Besides the abundance of medieval English dream visions, there was a tradition of Scottish dream vision poetry spanning the Middle Ages which Spearing notes (including Dunbar, Skelton and Douglas) all the way to the early modern era, including David Lyndsay. Lyndsay is of particular interest not only because he wrote only forty years before Melville but because he used the dream vision trope in a specifically political as well as in a literary way.

Lyndsay's *The Dreame* is an allegorical vision in which he critiques the political and social upheaval occurring in Scotland in the early Renaissance:

The falt is nocht, I dar weill tak on hand,
 Nother in to the peple nor the land.
 As for the land, it lakis na uther thing
 Bot labour and the pepyllis governyng. (ll.38-41)

I am not suggesting that Melville draws directly on Lyndsay's *A Dreame*, which hers does not resemble closely at all. I am trying to suggest that Melville's decision to use her religious vision for political reasons was not incongruous, but was rather part of a long line of Scottish dream vision texts.

How Melville's religious concerns relate to a literary/political tradition she

may be drawing on can only be truly understood by taking into account the specific historical context in which Melville wrote *Ane Godlie Dreame* and her sonnet to James Welch. Germaine Greer points out that in 1603

Presbyterian ministers were pleading with [King] James to repeal the laws forbidding 'prophesyings', when, on special days of fasting, prayer, open-air preaching and feasting, 'all pairts' of the congregation were encouraged to interpret biblical texts. (32)

Clearly, the political and the religious were inextricably connected in this context and thus in Melville's poems. The issue of the existence of purgatory is a religious one for Melville as a Presbyterian and her publication of her opinion on the matter a political decision. Dream visions, particularly biblical dream visions, are essentially prophetic, and prophesyings were something King James was trying to repress. Melville's insistence that she had an empty stomach when the dream took place, her seamless incorporation of the Bible and the *Inferno*, and the possibility that *Ane Godlie Dreame* was sung out loud, all reflect the "open-air" aspect of prophesying. Thus, Melville's dream is absolutely not a backing away from what she tries to achieve in religious, literary or political terms -- in fact, her conflation of the three serves to subvert her political/religious adversaries, as epitomized by King James, and solidify her authority to criticize him and those he represents in the first place. Her assertion of her own and her brethren's elite position as God's elect allows her to criticize him and literally subvert his decree by writing and publishing a poem that directly challenges the laws her peers were trying to get repealed.

This subversive and bold rebellion against King James' laws is seen again in her sonnet addressed to James Welch who was imprisoned in the Castle of Blackness in 1605 with other Presbyterian ministers "on the charge of high treason, but in reality for thwarting King James in his notions of the royal prerogative" (Laing 280). The language of the sonnet is similar to that of the dream vision, and focuses on encouraging Welch to "disdain this earthly drosse" (Sonnet II.3). Further, like *Ane Godlie Dreame* it is not immediately obvious that the sonnet is a political as well as a religious work. The earthly dross could refer to King James and those associated with him specifically, just as could her "wretchit world" at the beginning of *Ane Godlie Dreame*, but just as likely is meant to represent all those who try to repress the Presbyterians' perceived right to worship in their own way, including the above mentioned prophesyings. Thus, Melville's ardent assertion of her position as the elect of the elect, established by her narrator's transcendence of gender, her seamless weaving of biblical texts and Dantean ideas and images, and her publishing of this prophetic vision, all serve to establish the difference between the non-elect and elect (i.e. Catholics and Protestants). Thus her political subversion is done with the encouragement of God, and her biblical, literary and political authority become unassailable.

While Melville's *Ane Godlie Dreame* differs significantly from the dream visions of Aemilia Lanyer and Rachel Speght in that it does not directly address issues specific to the lives of early modern women, it is equally fascinating and deserving of critical attention. Her strong subjective voice, provided by her

religious affiliations, which she uses for religious ends but also to establish her personal authority, ensures that she stands apart from other Renaissance women writers, though perhaps not in the way modern feminist critics would like her to stand apart. However, her decision not to address women's issues in her text paradoxically results in the establishment of a stronger subject position and greater respect from her male counterparts than Lanyer and Speght may have enjoyed. Thus Elizabeth Melville indirectly legitimates women's voices by refusing to address the issue of gender.

CONCLUSION

Having examined in detail three early modern dream visions, all used with utmost seriousness, and all addressing important socio-political concerns of the times, I think it is safe to say that Weidhorn's assertion that in the seventeenth century only minor poets or those purposely archaizing used the genre is incorrect. Lanyer, Speght and Melville all use the dream vision form in serious attempts at establishing their own literary authority and the associated right to engage in their own personal form of social and political criticism. Drawing on the literariness inherent in the convention, and their culture's respect for the classical, biblical and medieval representatives of that form -- particularly, Chaucer, Langland, the Bible and possibly Dante -- Lanyer, Speght and Melville align themselves with a long tradition of important dream vision literature, displaying an ability and willingness to insert themselves into practices and assertions of authority usually reserved for male writers. None transgress their prescribed gender roles to a degree that would undermine that authority though Lanyer and Speght at least walk a fine line.

Significant for the study of women's literature is the fact that all three writers display a literary agenda that often transcends, but does not completely reject, personal concerns. Much of early modern women's writing is approached in purely autobiographical terms -- which may be part of why there has been no serious engagement with these women's dream vision texts. To approach the writings, especially the dream vision poems, of Lanyer, Speght and Melville, as

literature not just social/historical documents, is to show some respect and recognition for what these women were trying to achieve. They were all interested in being taken seriously as writers and as women, not as writers or women. All also use the authority inherent in the very literary, and possibly prophetic, dream vision to assert that their class, whether middle-class like Lanyer and Speght or upper class like Melville, is secondary to their literary voice.

Aside from these basic similarities, the dream visions of Aemilia Lanyer, Rachel Speght and Elizabeth Melville differ in many fundamental ways -- in fact, they act as testaments to the diversity and flexibility of this ancient genre, and to the diversity and flexibility of female authorial voices. Lanyer's establishment of literary authority via her borrowing of Chaucer's *House of Fame* and Mary Sidney's *To the Angell spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney* plays on the prophetic element inherent in the dream vision (she relies heavily on Pilate's wife's dream) without ever committing to it as ardently as Melville in order to critique her would-be patrons and the unfair relationship they represent. By suggesting the prophetic nature of the dream she is able to assert that her desire for a more equitable practice of the patron-poet relationship is legitimate and possible, and at the same time criticize those patrons by making the dream's brevity and unreality an unflattering metaphor for the reality of patronage relationships. Lanyer's dream vision is intimately connected to her other works, primarily her long religious poem *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* and its elevation of

Christ and exculpation of women from the burden of total guilt associated with the Fall. The literariness of the dream vision legitimates that of the *Salve Deus* while the rewriting of the Bible in favour of essential female innocence in the *Salve Deus* heightens Lanyer's critique of contemporary women's treatment of one another in *The Authours Dreame*. Lanyer frees woman of the guilt of Christ's death yet by conflating her book with Christ places her prospective female patrons in a position in which they must accept her book or find themselves back in a position of guiltily rejecting someone because of their class -- just as Jesus was rejected in part because of his class.

Rachel Speght, unlike Lanyer and Melville, purposely distances herself from biblical dream visions in writing her literary dream vision. This is a surprising move, considering the deeply religious nature of the poem *A Dreame* prefaces, that is, *Mortalities Memorandum*, yet it reflects her very specific agenda. Speght's dream vision is her reaction against the way in which Renaissance humanists have failed to put into satisfactory practice their theory of women's essential right to education. It is not religious authority she needs so much as that of the literary and intellectual -- she must prove that she is learned enough to critique her humanist counterparts in the first place, and show that even with a limited education, she is living proof of women's natural ability to think and write on the same terms as men. Like Lanyer's *The Authours Dreame*, Speght's *A Dreame* prefaces another, much longer, religious poem. Like Lanyer's poems, Speght's are interdependent in that the authority of one

increases that of the other. Yet Speght's agenda is much different from Lanyer's. While Lanyer wants to coerce her prospective patrons into an obligation to her, Speght chooses rather to let her intelligence and ability to employ any number of genres and topics successfully drive home her criticism. Her refusal to align her dream vision with the biblical and her decision to align it with, but manipulate to her own ends, two very different literary traditions -- the romance quest and the religious quest/critique of the *Romaunt of the Rose* and *Piers Plowman* respectively -- serve to assert her learnedness and her thoughtfulness.

Elizabeth Melville is very different from both Lanyer and Speght in that her primary purpose is to establish religious rather than literary authority (though her poem's religious authority lends it literary authority by its conflation with the Word); but like Lanyer and Speght she has a double agenda, a socio-political statement to make. Melville's literal and literary subversion of King James' laws against her and her Calvinist brethren's practice of prophesying is a much more dangerous act than either Lanyer's or Speght's criticisms. Lanyer could conceivably have been permanently blackballed in patronage circles while Speght might have been the target of more misogynist pamphleteers -- what contemporary reaction was to their dream visions cannot with any accuracy be assessed. However, Melville very easily could have been imprisoned for her dream vision, just as her close friend John Welch was, among others, in the *Castle of Blackness* for challenging the king's royal prerogative.

Melville's poem also stands apart from Lanyer's and Speght's because of her narrator's transcendence of gender. At the heart of both Lanyer's and Speght's socio-political critiques is the issue of being a woman, and the complications inherent in that when trying to negotiate a position in literary discourse. Melville, on the other hand, manages to make the issue of gender moot by creating a notably androgynous narrator and describing a journey and experience that is not specifically feminine. I believe the success of her specific critique of James' anti-Calvinist laws rests on this; yet, this may be why modern critics have paid Melville so little attention. Ironically, it is this refusal to address issues of gender that allows Melville to so strongly assert both her religious and literary authority, of which Lanyer and Speght were more careful, making sure they established both but not in one poem. This carefulness on the parts of Lanyer and Speght could arguably be a result of their middle class status -- they would be more vulnerable to the censure (and lack of patronage support) that might result from such proud assertions of religiosity.

Though careful, Lanyer and Speght never use the available "out" in dream visions. In fact, all three are remarkable not only for their excellent works but because all make strong claims to authorship and propound various socio-political changes, and none of them ever try to defer responsibility for their words and ideas in the way many of their male literary predecessors did. This, along with the diverse and complex ways in which Lanyer, Speght and Melville use the dream vision, suggests the presence of serious female literature, comparable in

scope if not in length, to the major male writers of the early modern era like Spenser, Shakespeare and Sidney. The complexity and literariness of these works suggests that the Renaissance canon needs to be reassessed in order to include authors like Lanyer, Speght and Melville. Once this happens, the scope of criticism I hope will be broadened to include more Renaissance women writers, so that criticism is not focused primarily on the fact that they were *women* writers but that they were women *writers*.

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