ABSTRACT

KATELYN WITT. “Crosse the posts of every door”: Paratextual Thresholds in Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. (Under the direction of Professor Margaret Simon.)

This paper considers the paratextual elements of Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611), as defined and described by Gerard Genette in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1997). Genette argues that the paratext controls the reader’s interpretation, and Lanyer uses the threshold spaces surrounding her text to influence her readers and gain the social access she was denied in reality. I aim to answer the following questions: What thresholds does Lanyer have the reader cross in order to get to the title poem? How are they functioning as discrete entities? And finally, how do these thresholds reflect or relate to issues of power and access within (or outside of) the text? I discuss Lanyer’s strategic use of such paratextual elements as the title page, dedications, preface to the reader, marginalia, and the postface. While the entire collection challenges the patriarchal social structure and class hierarchies, these paratextual spaces most clearly demonstrate Lanyer’s quest for access and control. Ultimately, I argue that Lanyer’s work highlights the potential of the paratext, as her use of the liminal spaces in and around the work afford her temporary access to the social and literary circles she desires, while also reinforcing her main arguments for female equality.