

## ABSTRACT

TANELA GEORGE-EAST. Aemilia Lanyer as Coterie Poet: A Re-Visioning of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century English Canon. (Under the direction of Professor Margaret Simon.)

Scholarship surrounding early 17<sup>th</sup> century poet Aemilia Lanyer focuses primarily on the print publication of her singular 1611 work entitled *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Lanyer's decision to print *Salve Deus* in a culture dominated by men's literary production was brave, fortunate, and somewhat unique. As such, her choice and work invite research to determine the degree to which current scholarship adequately describes Lanyer's contribution to the 17<sup>th</sup> century English canon. To evaluate Aemilia Lanyer's current position in our literary history, I investigated information on Lanyer's biography, read scholarship on the manuscript and print culture in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century England, and analyzed the work of Aemilia Lanyer and her contemporaries in context of the common writing strategies and practices of her era.

Aemilia Lanyer was embedded in the writing community that was composing in her day. She had connections, either personal or literary, to writers such as Sir Walter Raleigh, Mary Sidney and her brother Philip Sidney, Margaret and Anne Clifford and others. Additionally, the preponderance of manuscripts that scholars have found that are written by, for or including women in Lanyer's life and society, build up to such levels that it becomes implausible to believe that a woman of Lanyer's connections and abilities wrote only those works she chose to print in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. In studying the texts we know Lanyer wrote, she evidences many of the strategies common to coterie poets and adds her own stylistic choices that make her works unique, powerful and

lovely. Aemilia Lanyer likely produced far more writing than current archival evidence indicates. These particular elements of Lanyer's biography, trends in Jacobean literary culture, and characteristics of her poetry and prose combine to advocate that scholars should identify Aemilia Lanyer as a coterie poet, along with John Donne, Ben Jonson or Samuel Daniel.