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# Paracelsian Medicine and Female Creativity: Aemilia Lanyer's Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum

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[See table of contents](#)

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Article abstract

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## Paracelsian Medicine and Female Creativity: Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*

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*Par l'entremise du paradigme de la médecine alchimique introduit par Paracelse et sa transmission dans la culture anglaise du début du dix-septième siècle, cet article montre comment le recueil de poésie de Aemilia Lanyer, Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum (1611), exalte sa mécène, Lady Margaret Clifford, en tant que guérisseuse ayant régénéré son âme par l'alchimie spirituelle. On y montre comment Layer exploite adroitement les représentations positives de la médecine paracelsienne de la nature féminine par rapport à l'art masculin. Elle défend ainsi sérieusement la cause du potentiel féminin de créativité et construit sa propre persona de créatrice douée, mais socialement compromise, d'une poésie guérisseuse par la grâce spéciale de la nature et les puissances célestes de Dieu.*

The rise of empirical science, culminating in the birth of the Royal Society in 1660, has been closely linked in recent decades to a problematic early modern rhetoric in which rational “masculine” science was represented as having triumphed over chaotic “female” nature, with the “heroic male scientist” waving the flag of truth and progress.<sup>1</sup> According to this gendered logic, nature’s “cabinet” or “closet” could be legitimately prised open by the “art” of the male investigator and her choice “secrets”—frequently imagined as hidden in her bosom or womb—exposed to the prying gaze and dissecting knife of the subjugating scientist.<sup>2</sup> Unsettling images of ravishment, plunder, and enslavement have been particularly associated with key proponents of the new science: while Francis Bacon wrote, for example, of the “womb of nature” containing “many secrets of excellent use,” emphasizing that a man ought not to make a scruple of entering and penetrating into these holes and corners;<sup>3</sup> Hugh Plat declared, “There is no truth in philosophy unless I can lead my friend by the hand . . . into the bedchamber of nature herself.”<sup>4</sup> Underpinned by the ideology of gender

hierarchy, this prejudicial logic could be used—as Louis Montrose has so brilliantly shown—to sanction the domination and exploitation of nature (including that associated with early colonial enterprises),<sup>5</sup> and to reinforce perceptions about the inability of women—aligned with unruly nature—to undertake intellectual and professional activities that required art. It undoubtedly helped to ensure that no female interlopers into the new science and medicine were invited to join those evolving bastions of advancement, the London College of Physicians and the Royal Society.<sup>6</sup>

As Sarah Hutton has demonstrated, however, the picture was rather more complex than this; the metaphors did not always work to denigrate female nature.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Katharine Park has foregrounded how the groundbreaking study by the historian Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, actually illuminated how some of the new Renaissance natural philosophies informed by Hermeticism, “like that of the alchemical medical writer Paracelsus,” were “predicated on antiauthoritarian forms of vitalism that were deeply respectful of the natural order, while others . . . focused on the manipulation of natural species for human benefit and personal power.”<sup>8</sup> The sixteenth-century Swiss-German physician Paracelsus (1493–1541) frequently personified nature in his writings, but he usually did so in order to raise “her” status and rebuke those whom he perceived as arrogant medical men. In a characteristic statement he asserts:

What teacher can be better . . . than nature herself? Nature possesses the knowledge and makes the meaning of all things visible; it is nature that teaches the physician. Since nature alone possesses this knowledge, it must also be nature that compounds the recipe . . . The art of healing comes from nature, not from the physician.<sup>9</sup>

Here, Paracelsus is building on a late medieval alchemical tradition, developed in early modern works such as Pseudo Jeun de Meun’s *The Alchemist’s Answer to Nature* (ca. 1500), which insisted that the alchemist-artist would not flourish if he failed to see himself as nature’s servant.<sup>10</sup> It is intriguing in this context that the first substantial volume of original poems published by an Englishwoman both intervened powerfully in the art and nature debates of Renaissance culture, offering a positive rendition of female-gendered nature, and was infused with the alchemical philosophy so prized by Paracelsus. Significantly, too, that work—Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611)—is markedly proto-feminist.

This essay argues that an important but neglected aspect of Lanyer's feminist poetics is its adoption of an alchemical, Paracelsian paradigm through which to explore women's relation to nature, to the divine, and to the healing arts—both medicine and poetry. I am suggesting that Lanyer understood the privileged position of female nature in the new alchemical medicine so closely associated with Paracelsus at the turn of the seventeenth century, and exploited this in her volume of poetry in order to advance her case for the significant creative potential of her sex—of those women who had undergone inner purification through spiritual alchemy. This was particularly appropriate because Lanyer's patron, Lady Margaret Clifford, had pronounced interests in alchemy and medicine. As I shall show, alchemy was construed in both practical and spiritual terms in the early seventeenth century: through processes of distillation it could produce remedies for the ailing body and healing balm for the soul. Significantly, Lanyer's *Salve Deus* was published in the same year as John Donne's celebration of Elizabeth Drury as a guiding principle for humanity in "The First Anniversary," though Lanyer advances a far more convincing case than Donne for the female regenerate soul through that which he describes in his poem as "true religious Alchymie" (l.182).<sup>11</sup> In fact, *Salve Deus* provides a detailed poetic evocation of how spiritual alchemy imagined achieving the soul's purification, enabling women to progress beyond an erasure of "the staine of Eve" (l.180) alluded to in Donne's poem.

*Salve Deus* comprises nine dedicatory poems to Queen Anne and various aristocratic women, as well as one "To all virtuous Ladies in general"; a prose dedication "To the Ladie Margaret Countesse Dowager of Cumberland"; a prose epistle "To the Virtuous Reader"; a long central poem (1840 lines) meditating on the story of Christ's Passion and the promise of God's saving grace through his resurrection; a valedictory country house poem, "The Description of Cooke-ham"; and a concluding address "To the doubtfull Reader" conveying that Lanyer was "appointed [in a dream] to performe this Worke" (p. 139).<sup>12</sup> This reinforces Lanyer's claim, made at intervals throughout her volume, that she is divinely illumined to write. Many scholars have noted that *Salve Deus* is a powerful eulogy to Margaret Clifford and a quest for patronage, and that it fuses religious devotion with feminism: its multiple dedications invite a community of virtuous women, Brides of Christ, to "feast" on Lanyer's vision of the Passion from a notably female viewpoint.<sup>13</sup>

*Salve Deus* opens with a dedicatory poem to Queen Anne in which Lanyer self-consciously participates in the contemporary art versus nature debates:

And pardon me (faire Queene) though I presume,  
 To doe that which so many better can;  
 Not that I Learning to my selfe assume,  
 Or that I would compare with any man:  
 But as they are Scholers, and by Art do write,  
 So Nature yeelds my Soule a sad delight.

And since all Arts from Nature came,  
 That goodly Creature, Mother of Perfection,  
 Whom *Joves* almighty hand at first did frame,  
 Taking both her and hers in his protection:  
 Why should not She now grace my barren Muse,  
 And in a Woman all defects excuse. (ll. 145–56)

Commenting on this striking passage in her pioneering book, *Redeeming Eve* (1987), Elaine V. Beilin argued that Lanyer wished “to circumvent male thinking”; so, finding that “male Scholers by art do write,” she identified the source of her own work as “Nature”: “Blocked from masculine art,” Lanyer created “a feminine ‘natural’ poetry.”<sup>14</sup> Several scholars have commented on these striking lines in very similar terms.<sup>15</sup> I would like to suggest that, read through the lens of Paracelsian medicine, Lanyer’s representations make a more dynamic case than this for female creative potential. Nature was the powerful creative matrix—the source of all reason as well as art—in Paracelsian philosophy. This is perhaps most graphically illustrated in an engraving by the de Bry workshop: “*Integrae Naturae Speculum Artisue Imago*” (“The Mirror of Nature and the Image of Art,” 1617) [Figure 1]. This intriguing image, which accompanied a philosophical text by the Paracelsian physician Robert Fludd, depicts human artifice as the ape of nature.<sup>16</sup> The ape is restrained by a chain connecting him to the left hand of nature depicted as a voluptuous woman; nature’s right hand is connected by another chain to the hand of God emerging from heavenly clouds. Thus, nature has a direct line to God, while art is but her monkey. Lanyer’s apparently apologetic and modest yet spirited rhetoric, which conforms to the familiar position (woman *is* nature, man the exemplar of art), actually appears

to be harnessing current directions in natural philosophy in order to advance a feminist case for the excellence of the woman writer, especially one who has illumined her soul through inner alchemy—a process that was imagined to sharpen the eye of the mind and heighten fantasy. Furthermore, Paracelsus insisted that traditional female knowledge and skills had much to teach male practitioners of alchemical medicine, potentially affording chemists and healers such as Lady Margaret considerable authority to pursue their art in the early seventeenth century.

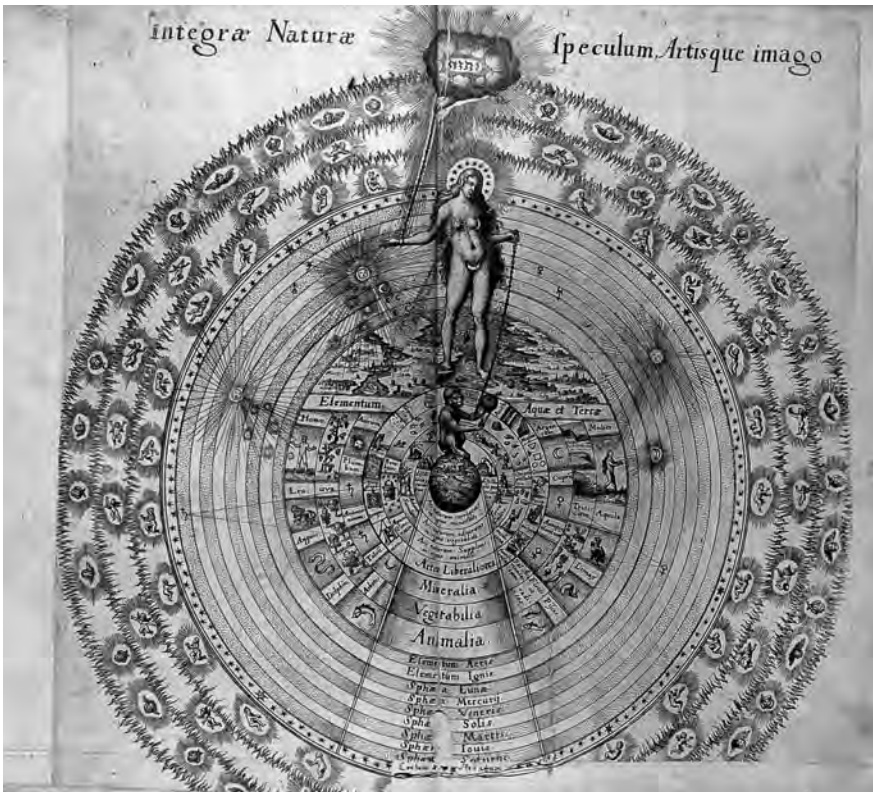


Figure 1: “Integrae Naturae Speculum Artisque Imago” (“The Mirror of Nature and the Image of Art”), in R. Fludd, *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia* (Oppenheim: J.T. de Bry, 1617–18), vol. 1, fol. 4–5.

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## Paracelsus and Hermetic alchemy

It must not surprise the physician that nature is more than his art. For what can equall the forces of nature? Everything that man does and has to do, he should do by the light of nature. For the light of nature is nothing other than reason itself.<sup>17</sup>

Over the past two decades, important revisionist histories of Paracelsus have served to shape this self-proclaimed “apostle, prophet and healer” into an influential “original” thinker; in Charles Webster’s words, he was “one of the main instigators of the great scientific movement that is a defining characteristic of the early modern age.”<sup>18</sup> As Webster demonstrates, Paracelsus’s innovative approach to medicine was born out of Reformation tensions: in fact, he declared traditional Galenic scholastic medicine corrupt and extortionate like Roman Catholicism.<sup>19</sup> His answer was to formulate an alternative medical paradigm that was intensely spiritual and incorporated the belief that only Christian charitable physicians could cure the body’s ills: he maintained that through the medium of the Holy Spirit, Christ was an “active, living force” in the Christian healer.<sup>20</sup> Drawing on alchemical and folkloric sources of ancient wisdom, Paracelsus articulated a system of natural philosophy in which nature (which included man’s inner nature) contained signatures of the divine that could be accessed by the adept through techniques of observation, distillation, and natural magic producing marvellous new cures.<sup>21</sup> Importantly, such knowledge could not be gained through reading books: access to divine secrets involved the intensive study of nature, alchemy (“the art which makes the impure into the pure through fire”), and astral magic.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, because the practice of alchemy was so fundamental to Paracelsian medicine—its prime remedies relied on techniques of distillation—alchemical medicine was virtually synonymous with Paracelsian physic in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Significantly, in *Through Alchemy to Chemistry*, historian of science John Read describes Paracelsus as “the herald of a new era, an era of iatrochemistry, or chemistry applied to medicine.”<sup>23</sup>

Learning through experience and listening to the oral knowledge passed on by “old women” were considered crucial by Paracelsus because, in his view, traditional healers possessed tried and tested empirical wisdom that was superior to the musty book learning prized by university-trained Galenic practitioners.<sup>24</sup>



Paracelsus did, however, draw on more elite sources of knowledge too. In his system of natural philosophy, as in the Neoplatonic Hermeticism propounded and developed by figures such as Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola in the fifteenth-century Florentine academy, the mysteries of the firmament were revealed through an intuitive interaction between the “light of nature” and the “light of man.”<sup>25</sup> According to the *Hermetica*, and the teaching of Ficino and Pico based upon it, the Book of Nature was, in effect, a second work of divine revelation (after Holy Scripture), and the devout Renaissance philosopher was thus duty bound to seek out nature’s treasures which became hidden after man’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden.<sup>26</sup> However, where Paracelsus’s vision differed markedly from that of the academicians (and many of his own later followers) was in his insistence that those of the lowest social status—notably, common folk and women—were capable, through God’s grace, of attaining the highest skill.<sup>27</sup>

The cosmos articulated in the writings of Paracelsus and his followers was intensely integrated and activated through spirit. In keeping with this, the inspired physician’s vocation was to aid the poor and cure the sick and to shun worldliness (he caricatured Galenic physicians as greedy extortionists). Suffering and service mirrored the work of Christ and by these means, and through prayer and meditation, the Paracelsian healer could purify and regenerate his own soul (often construed as inner nature)—a sort of internal alchemy or “bringing to perfection” might be facilitated.<sup>28</sup> These latter aspects of spiritual alchemy are particularly important to an understanding of Lanyer’s poetry.

Paracelsus had many disciples throughout Europe, but the extent of his influence in England is only now being fully recognized. Importantly, the mystical syncretic philosophy nurtured in the Prague of Rudolph II, which embraced an eclectic mix of Platonism, Hermeticism, Cabala, and alchemy, also absorbed Paracelsian medicine. Rudolph’s court seems to have functioned as an important distribution and development centre for these ideas. Hither went Sir Philip Sidney and John Dee from England, Giordano Bruno from Italy, and figures like Johannes Kepler.<sup>29</sup> At home in Mortlake, Dee created his own intellectual centre which boasted a vast library (containing a particularly impressive collection of alchemical treatises), laboratories, and frequent court visitors including Robert Dudley Earl of Leicester, Fulke Greville, Sir Philip Sidney, and Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke—one of the dedicatees of Lanyer’s *Salve Deus*—who constructed her own alchemical laboratory at Wilton. Queen



Elizabeth employed Dee's polymath talents at court, but she had a personal alchemist, too, in Cornelius de Lannoy.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, court propaganda included the fantasy of Elizabeth as both divine alchemist and philosopher's stone: the Phoenix ushering in a new golden age of purified religion. Notably, Lanyer's *Salve Deus* refers to Elizabeth I nostalgically as "the *Phoenix* of her age" ("To the Lady *Elizabeths* Grace," l. 4, p. 11).

But there were other English alchemical centres: Gresham College in London was one, and Raleigh's Durham House another. Raleigh's "set" included figures such as the "wizard Earl," Henry Percy, ninth earl of Northumberland (whose own library boasted a fine collection of Paracelsian volumes),<sup>31</sup> and the mathematician Thomas Harriot.<sup>32</sup> All these locations were associated with literary visitors including Sidney, Donne, Chapman, and Marlowe.<sup>33</sup> The respected London physicians John Bannister and Thomas Moffett incorporated Paracelsian medicine into their practice and publications. Moffett records in his biography of Philip Sidney: "Led by God, with Dee as teacher ... he [Sidney] learned chemistry, that starry science, rival to nature."<sup>34</sup> George Ripley's famous alchemical poem, *The Compound of Alchymie* (1471), went into print in 1591; then a basic digest of alchemy, *The Mirror of Alchimy*, which incorporated a work supposedly by the Egyptian father of alchemy, Hermes Trismegistus, and another by the medieval alchemist, Roger Bacon, was published in London in 1597.<sup>35</sup>

A decade earlier in 1585, Richard Bostocke had published a comprehensive synthesis of Paracelsian medicine in English.<sup>36</sup> Bostocke's book challenged the status of the learned Galenic medicine taught in the universities and emphasized the centrality of the study of nature in the Paracelsian schema. Furthermore, it promoted an important curative tenet of alchemical medicine that "like cures like," and that Galenic medicine's practice of curing by contraries was ineffective and dangerous: according to Bostocke, it was the "roote" of "disorde and dissention" in the body, producing infirmities (sig. D4r). The latter point became highly significant in the poetic context because poetry was assumed to have affective, healing powers. George Puttenham's *The Art of English Poesy* notably advocates Paracelsian physic, declaring that "the noble poets" sought by their art "to remove or appease, not with any medicament of a contrary temper, as the Galenists use ... but as the Paracelsians, who cure *similia similibus*, making one dolor to expel another."<sup>37</sup> This is a particularly

important lens through which to view Lanyer's *Salve Deus* in which suffering and lamentation are so prominent.

Thus, although alchemical medicine never eclipsed Galenism, with which it co-existed (many practitioners utilized cures from both paradigms) at least from the 1580s, Paracelsian medicine was firmly embedded in London culture and particularly around Elizabeth's court.<sup>38</sup> This is significant because Aemilia Lanyer, as the mistress of Henry Cary, Queen Elizabeth's lord chamberlain, was part of this court milieu in the late 1580s and early 1590s.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, the alchemical vogue of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries manifests itself in some unlikely places. Martin Luther gave his blessing to the art, declaring, "The science of alchemy I like very well ... I like it not only for the profit it brings in melting metals ... I like it also for the sake of the allegory and secret signification, which is exceedingly fine ... even so God, at the day of judgment, will separate all things through fire."<sup>40</sup> Biblical Solomon had long been co-opted by alchemists as a gifted practitioner, and in 1609 Joseph Hall's commentary on the *Song of Songs* interpreted "this whole Pastoral-marriage song" as an alchemical allegory "where the deepest things of God are spoken in riddles."<sup>41</sup> According to Hall, the *Song* is an allegory about the "blackish, and darke of hew" Church or soul, which is rendered white by "Salomons Divine Arts" gleaned from a "profounde" understanding of nature (sig. N2v). The philosopher's stone here is divine wisdom and purification of the soul. The *Song of Solomon* was a popular text in this period, but in the light of this 1609 commentary it is interesting that Lanyer chose to frame her 1611 volume of poetry within its sensual, alchemically-tinged lexicon: in her dedication "To all virtuous Ladies," she urges "Put on your wedding garments every one, / The Bridegroom stayes to entertaine you all" (ll. 8–9, p. 12).

By the early seventeenth century, alchemy had infiltrated popular emblem book culture too. Rudolph II's physician, Michael Maier, travelled widely across Europe (he was in London in the early years of the seventeenth century) preaching his own brand of Paracelsian medicine aimed at unifying and purifying mind-souls as well as bodies.<sup>42</sup> With the help of the de Bry workshop, he produced beautiful alchemical books teaching his methods through visual emblems. All were intended, as he makes clear, to stimulate mental contemplation and produce the type of intellectual memory work that could reunify, purify, and heal the soul.<sup>43</sup> In keeping with Paracelsus's teaching, Maier's emblems stress the importance of hands-on experience, of listening to women

and observing them at work. Woman, as nature, is certainly in charge in his emblem books: in *Atalanta Fugiens* (1618), for example, esoteric advice is rendered in oddly domestic scenes such as women cooking and doing the laundry. Francis McKee explains that, through his commentary on emblem 3, “Maier points to the chemical process of cleaning linen.”<sup>44</sup> Through such means, the chemist learns the essential techniques of his business: calcinations, dissolving, distillation, precipitation, coagulation, hardening, and the other processes. In emblem 43 a goggle-eyed philosopher carrying a candle lamp follows personified nature’s footprints closely through a moonlit landscape seeking to dispel darkness; the epigram urges “Let Nature be your guide, and with your art / Follow her closely.”<sup>45</sup>

### “Kitchin Physic” and Lady Margaret Clifford’s alchemy

Maier’s emblems help us to understand why female domestic knowledge was so crucial to the evolving chemist of former times; it is easy to forget that the technological know-how of chemistry was initially developed in the kitchen, laundry, and brew house close to the sources of fire and water and the equipment essential for making household chemicals (cleaning products, dyes, ink and alcohol), medicines and ointments, as well as cooking, pickling, brining, and washing. As Lynette Hunter has described, virtually everything essential to the early laboratory was readily available in the kitchen or still room of any substantial estate.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, women were the repository of empirical knowledge, transmitted orally from one generation to the next, about the healing properties of plants and other substances.<sup>47</sup> The seminal wisdom of the chemical practitioner was thus linked to the terrain of women; “kitchin physic” and the new medicine were closely aligned. Bathsua Makin, tutor to Elizabeth Stuart, stressed the importance of household chemistry saying that the wife “requires skill in natural philosophy.... She could not look well to the ways of her Household, except she understood Physic and Chirurgery”; Makin herself was reputed to be “a good Chymist.”<sup>48</sup>

As Sarah Hutton has observed, the fact that this brand of chemical medicine was not taught in the universities but had “an extra mural character” facilitated women’s entry into the discussions about it as well as the practice of it.<sup>49</sup> Steven Shapin has argued that it was only in the mid-seventeenth century when

aristocratic men needed a way of legitimating this activity for men that “Ladies’ Chemistry” was seriously denigrated; undoubtedly the negative personifications of female nature alluded to at the opening of this essay were the harbingers of this process.<sup>50</sup> However, prior to this, at the turn of the seventeenth century, the fact that chemistry was fashionable in court circles meant that it was a suitable interest for aristocratic women (those with extensive household facilities) such as Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke (1561–1621), of whom John Aubrey asserts, “Her Honour’s genius lay as much towards chymistrie as poetry.”<sup>51</sup> Her psalm translations also bear witness to the fact that she regarded the intensive study of nature and chemistry in the manner of Paracelsus as a spiritually improving pursuit: Psalm 139 declares, “My God, how I these studies prize, / That doe thy hidden workings show!” (64–65).<sup>52</sup>

Mary Sidney Herbert was mother-in-law to Alethea Talbot and she and her sister Elizabeth Grey, Countess of Kent, were involved in the new experimental science. They both collected and added to the circulating stock of chemical recipes.<sup>53</sup> Lady Grace Mildmay received instruction at home in “phisicke and surgerie,” and Linda Pollock observes that she made “extensive forays into Paracelsian medicine” and “may have been part of the elite circle of alchemists.”<sup>54</sup> Her journal between 1570 and 1617 suggests she carried out a wide range of medical activities—each integral to her religious, charitable duty.<sup>55</sup> It would appear that, for these women, religion, the distilling of mineral and herbal medicines, and charitable healing were thoroughly intertwined, as they were in the alchemical medical model set out by Paracelsus.

Penny Bayer has amassed extensive evidence that this was certainly the case for Lady Margaret Clifford, Countess Dowager of Cumberland, who, as Aemilia Lanier’s patron, is of especial interest to this study.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Lady Margaret seems to have been famous for her “chymical extractions” and Paracelsian interests.<sup>57</sup> Significantly, her daughter, Anne Clifford, says of her mother in the Great Book of Records of the Cliffords:

She [Margaret Clifford] was a lover of the study and practice of alchemy ... by which she found out excellent medicines ... she delighted in distilling of waters and other chemical extractions, for she had ... knowledge in most kind of minerals, herbs, flowers, and plants ... the infusion she had from above ... both divine and human ... caused her to have ... sweet peace.<sup>58</sup>

A manuscript book that appears to have once belonged to her—*Receipts of Lady Margaret Wife of George, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Cumberland for Elixirs, Tinctures, Electuaries, Cordials, Waters etc.*—contains 140 pages of alchemical receipts together with “Neo-platonic, Paracelsian, and Cabalistic references and material,” including “*Stella Complexionis*, in which the preparation of the [philosopher’s] stone is presented using metaphors of Christ’s passion.”<sup>59</sup> The manuscript is annotated, and seven of the 29 texts recommended are by Paracelsus.<sup>60</sup> Bayer notes that the Appleby Great Picture Triptych, commissioned by Anne to depict her family from the perspective of the female line in 1646, features a particular volume above Margaret Clifford’s head that may correspond to “The Margaret Manuscript”—namely, “a written hand Booke of Alkumiste Abstracions of Distillation & Excellent Medicines.”<sup>61</sup> A significant number of works of alchemy (including George Ripley’s *The Compound of Alchymie*), and of Paracelsian medicine, are listed in “A Catalogue of the Books in the Closet in the Passage room next the Pantry in Skipton Castle” discovered in 1739. Skipton Castle was a Clifford residence and Margaret is thought to have been the most likely collector of these volumes.<sup>62</sup> As additional evidence of Margaret’s Paracelsian interests, Bayer describes a letter written to Lady Margaret by Lord Peregrine Willoughby de Eresby—a man with “close contact with intellectual Paracelsians such as Thomas Muffet”—which praises her as a “noble philosophising lady,” situating Lady Margaret in a line of ancient and contemporary alchemical sages: namely, Hermes, Solomon, Ripley and Kelly.<sup>63</sup> Given these contexts, it is not surprising that Lanyer’s *Salve Deus*, which set out to record the Countess Dowager of Cumberland’s “never dying fame” (“*Salve Deus*,” l. 10, p. 51), celebrates her as a gifted alchemical healer and Hermetic philosopher.

### ***Salve Deus* and spiritual alchemy**

*Hermetic* Phylosophy layes open the most private and abstruse closets of nature, it doth exquisitely search and find out the natures of health and sickness.<sup>64</sup>

In “The Description of Cooke-ham,” the topographical poem that concludes Lanyer’s volume, Lady Margaret is described as a “*Phoenix*” (the philosopher’s stone in alchemy) with a special relationship to “each plant, each floure, each

tree" (l. 33, p. 131). In this accomplished poem we encounter her in relation to an oak tree, "like a comely Cedar," which, notably, "would like a Palme tree spread his arms abroad, / Desirous that you [Margaret] there should make abode" (ll. 57, pp. 61–62). The cedar recalls the building material for the temple of God, while the palm is symbolic of spiritual victory.<sup>65</sup> Embraced by this cedar-like tree, "Ladie Margaret" surveys the pastoral "Prospect" meditating upon both the Bible and the second work of divine revelation in the alchemical-Paracelsian schema, nature:

While you the time in meditation spent,  
 Of their Creators powre, which there you saw,  
 In all his Creatures held a perfit Law;  
 And in their beauties did you plaine descrie,  
 His beauty, wisdome, grace, love, majestie.  
 In these sweet woods how often did you walke,  
 With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;  
 Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,  
 To meditate what you therein did see. (ll. 76–84)

In "The Description of Cooke-ham," Margaret is presented as deeply respectful of the natural order, possessing the heightened powers of vision associated with the gifted Hermetic philosopher, which enable her to "plaine descrie" signatures of the divine in nature. Furthermore, in the central poem describing Christ's Passion, "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," she is eulogized for her "workes of mercy" cherishing the "poore," "sicke and wounded" in Christ's name:

Sometimes imprison'd, naked, poore and bare,  
 Full of diseases, impotent, and lame,  
 Blind, deafe, and dumbe, he comes unto his faire,  
 To see if she yet will remaine the same;  
 Nay sicke and wounded, now thou do'st prepare  
 To cherish him in thy dear Lovers name:  
 Yea thou bestow'st all paines, all cost, all care,  
 That may relieve him, and his health repaire.  
 These works of mercy are so sweete, so deare  
 To him that is the Lord of Life and Love. (ll. 1353–62, p. 109)

In the dedicatory poem “To Ladie *Anne*, Countesse of Dorcet,” Margaret’s daughter, Anne, is urged to follow in her mother’s footsteps, performing good works:

Bind up the broken, stop the wounds that bleeds,  
Succour the poore, comfort the comfortlesse,  
Cherish faire plants.

(“To the Countesse of Dorset,” ll. 76–78, p. 44)

Although charitable activities such as these were not lauded as a route to salvation by Reform Protestantism (faith, alone, could achieve that), they *were* essential to securing God’s favour—together with His gift of heightened healing powers—in the Paracelsian schema. In *Salve Deus*, good works appear essential to (as well as a consequence of) gaining “his kingdome, and his crowne” (l. 23, p. 42).

Throughout Lanyer’s volume of poetry, Lady Margaret is presented as a bodily and spiritual physician with extraordinary powers of perception; these gifts have been earned, the reader learns, through Christ-like suffering, extensive prayer and meditation (on nature and the scriptures), and by the act of healing itself. These were notably the tools and means of spiritual alchemy which was imagined to produce an especially finely honed inner vision capable of divine insights and of repairing the ravages of the Fall in human kind. Lady Margaret has achieved union with Christ; she is the philosopher’s stone—a phoenix. This is the “true religious Alchymie” celebrated in relation to Elizabeth Drury in John Donne’s “The First Anniversary”:

Shee tooke the weaker Sex, she that could drive  
The poysonous tincture, and the staine of *Eve*,  
Out of her thoughts, and deeds; and purifie  
All, by a true religious Alchymie;

(“An Anatomy of the World. The First Anniversary,” ll. 179–82)<sup>66</sup>

However, in Lanyer, through spiritual alchemy godly women can not only divest themselves of “the staine of *Eve*,” they can become especially illumined disciples of Christ in the manner of Lady Margaret. Lady Margaret notably has “Eagles eyes” (l. 25) rivalling those of the “most blessed daughters of Jerusalem”



(l. 985) who gazed directly on Christ, the son/sun. Indeed, especially clear sight and the designation of “phoenix” distinguishes and unites many of the female dedicatees of this volume who appear to be linked in a golden chain of community to the graces, to nature, and to the “sweet unities” of Jesus. Lyndy Abraham’s invaluable dictionary of the early modern alchemical lexicon records that “the high-flying eagle is ... a symbol for the initiate who has spiritualised the earthly serpent ... the power of the instinctive urge in man,”<sup>67</sup> while Paracelsus wrote that “by the aid of Nature and the skill of the Artist himself ... the White Eagle” could be secured.<sup>68</sup> “Eagle eyes” are therefore those that have been purified and divinely illumined through techniques of spiritual alchemy.

But exactly how was inner purification thought to be achieved? It seems that it was possible for Renaissance alchemists to imagine working both the metal of the soul-mind and the minerals in their retorts simultaneously, and this is given interesting visual expression in the engravings accompanying both Heinrich Khunrath’s alchemical text, *Amphitheatrum* (1609), and Maier’s *Tripus aureus* (1618).<sup>69</sup> Like Maier, Khunrath was a physician and Hermeticist and the title-page of his volume proclaims him “a true lover of philosophy and a doctor of both medicines,” while Maier’s is embellished with an illustration featuring manual, laboratory labour on one side and a study inhabited by philosophers and a cleric on the other [Figure 2]. These texts confirm that in the early seventeenth century alchemy could be construed in esoteric and exoteric terms as having both spiritual and material-refining implications, as has been recently demonstrated by Peter Forshaw in an important essay on this period’s “physical-chemistry and theo-alchemy.”<sup>70</sup>

Robert M. Schuler has drawn attention to a fascinating anonymous manuscript found among Sir Hugh Plat’s collected materials which details this “Parallisme” in two columns—one for material alchemy and the adjacent for spiritual alchemy. It concludes, “Change of Qualitie is the sure and safest course to obtayne the perfection of Man and Metall; that is, equal and true temper in both.”<sup>71</sup> The manuscript indicates that the processes of dissolving, cleansing, smelting, distillation, and transmutation observed taking place in the refining apparatuses of chemistry could be projected onto mental processes and vice versa. The “refiner’s fire” (Malachi 3:3), cleansing, purifying, and enlightening, could transmute the dark lead of the soul into translucence, letting in more light. In keeping with this, a letter of 1614 from John Thornborough, Bishop of Bristol, to a Lady Knowles, refers to “Lady Alcumy” in a context that

suggests a divine, meditative distillation process.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, Hugh Plat's manuscript reveals how closely spiritual alchemy could be entwined with orthodox Calvinist beliefs of the type known to have been held by Lady Margaret. As Schuler foregrounds, in this manuscript there is a "strict schematization of alchemical concepts with corresponding Calvinist dogmas": the Calvinist *electus* is one with the alchemical *adeptus*.<sup>73</sup> The outcome of successful "distillation" of the soul was ultimately "renewing grace"—not common to all men, but "proper to the Elect & it is a gift of Gods spirit."<sup>74</sup>

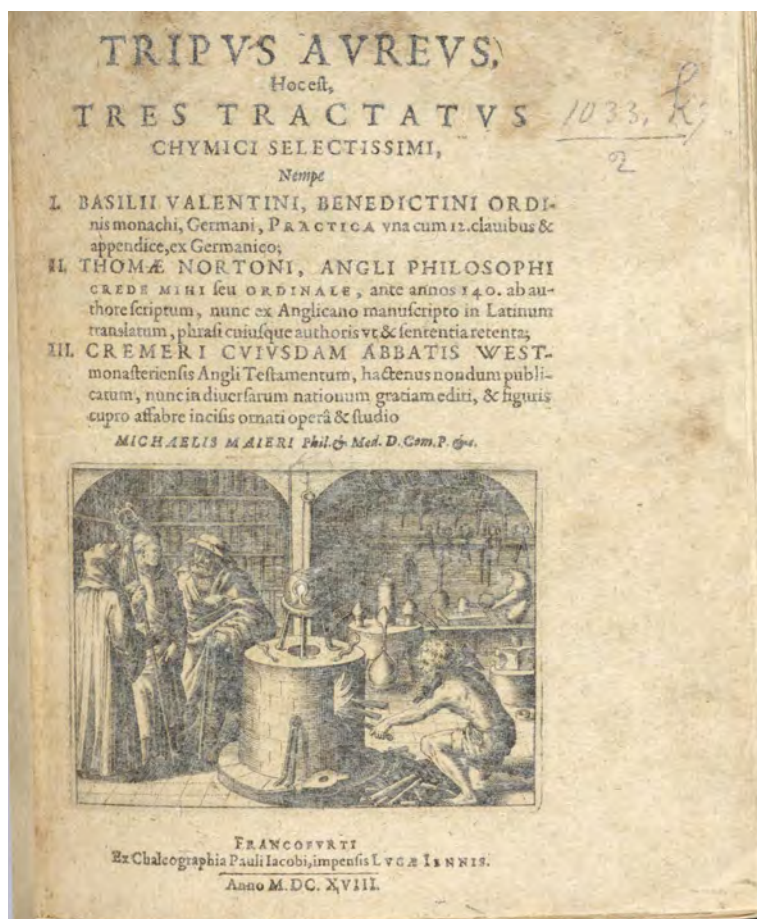


Figure 2: Title-page illustration, esoteric and exoteric alchemy, Michael Maier, *Tripus Aureus* (Frankfurt, 1618) British Library. Shelfmark 1033 K2.

It is, therefore, significant that Lanyer addresses Lady Margaret in these terms:

This Grace great Lady, doth possesse thy Soule,  
 And makes thee pleasing in thy Maker's sight;  
 This Grace doth all imperfect Thoughts controule,  
 Directing thee to serve thy God aright. (ll. 249–52)

It is this “special,” renewing grace that enables Margaret “[to] behold Christ’s face” in nature and which endows her with special “conversion” abilities like Saint Peter (l. 1400). We learn through this poem that Christ makes “his blessed Angels powrefull Spirits” infused with “powerfull Grace” (ll. 90, 291) and unusual healing capacities.<sup>75</sup> In keeping with this, Margaret can drive out evil spirits, restore people to their wits and “recover / ... weake lost sheepe that did so long trangresse” (ll. 1396–97).

The deep contemplation of nature and of Christ’s Passion were considered “virtuous exercises of the minde” (l. 1591) and particularly efficacious in this process of purification of the soul. No wonder, then, that it is the image of the Passion that Lanyer presents centrally to her female readers. In spiritual alchemy, the contemplation of Christ’s “rare parts” is capable of healing the soul by uniting its opposing, warring factions.<sup>76</sup> We should recall here how Bostocke’s synthesis of Paracelsian medicine for an English audience foregrounded the pathology associated with all “*dualitie, discorde, and contrarietie*” (title page); the physician’s task was to join all contrary forces, harmonizing and effecting “*unitie*” in the patient’s body and soul. From this perspective, it is highly significant that the climax of Lanyer’s passion poem and, we should assume, of the reader’s contemplative exercise, is the point where contraries meet as one in the vision of Christ’s Passion. The poem declares:

Loe, here was glorie, miserie, life and death,  
 An union of contraries did accord;  
 Gladness and sadnesse here had one berth,  
 This wonder wrought the Passion of our Lord. (ll. 1257–60)

Through contemplating this, the poem affirms, “we weaklings are restored” (ll. 1736–37).

Paracelsian healers, as Puttenham highlighted in relation to poetry, “cure *similia similibus*”: like cures like and “one short sorrowing” is “the remedy to a long and grievous sorrow.”<sup>77</sup> “Lamenting”—pouring forth “inward sorrows and ... griefs”—enables poetry “to play the physician” and is thus considered by Puttenham to be “a very necessary device of the poet.”<sup>78</sup> *Salve Deus* promotes earthly trials and tribulations (“Crosses and Afflictions,” l. 1339), such as those suffered by Lady Margaret, as spiritually regenerating. By encouraging lamentation in its readers through the contemplation of Christ’s Passion, it is furthermore “playing the physician” and effectively making “one small dolor” the partial remedy, at least, of a longer one; the reader’s soul regeneration is linked to her redemption. John Donne, too, gave powerful poetic expression to the alchemical value of “crosses”:

Materiall Crosses then, good physicke bee,  
 And yet spirituall have chiefe dignity.  
 These for extracted chimique medicine serve,  
 And cure much better, and as well preserve;  
 Then are you your own physicke, or need none,  
 When Still’d, or purg’d by tribulation.

Let crosses, so, take what hid Christ in thee,  
 And be his image, or not his, but hee.

(“The Crosse,” ll. 25–30, 35–36)

“Crosses” can restore the image of Christ in believers; they can bring about union with Christ. This is illuminating of the many vignettes in Lanyer’s *Salve Deus* of worthy women being embraced by Christ and receiving him into the “closets” of their bosoms. In these virtuous women, Christ’s image will be, or has been, restored by godly spiritual “exercises.” Notably, in Lanyer’s volume of poetry, which is so attentive to “the antient quarrel being new reviv’d” (“To the Ladie Marie,” l. 83) between nature and art, in spite of allusions to “prying eyes” the only subject gaining entry into nature’s closets and women’s breasts to peer at her “secrets” is Christ. Indeed, Lanyer concludes her dedication “To Ladie Anne” with a particularly meaningful and incisive couplet: “Yet lodge him in the closet of your heart, / Whose worth is more than can be shew’d by Art” (ll. 143–44, p. 47).<sup>79</sup>

One further important area requires amplification: What exactly was the relation of alchemy to creative writing? This was a remarkable phase in the history of poetic theory in which the technique of writing was understood to involve “distillation” and intellectual memory images, and both were essential ingredients of an aesthetics of “chymical making” in which the poet’s heightened imaginative powers rendered him or her especially close to the divine Maker.<sup>80</sup> As Puttenham’s *Art of English Poesy* and Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry* reveal, by the late sixteenth century poetic theory and Hermetic “chymistry” had become thoroughly intertwined.<sup>81</sup> The refining of the poet’s spirits is crucial to the penning of poetry, and Puttenham describes how the “good” poet’s fantasy should be like a clear mirror, well ordered so that it receives the brightest illuminations of “knowledge,” truth (“verity”), and the correct (“due”) proportion of things. Indeed, any occupation necessitating originality—“the inventive part”—requires a particularly well-ordered fantasy and clear inner vision.<sup>82</sup> Edmund Spenser’s “A Hymne in Honour of Love” (1596) dwells on the significance of the “sweet passion” to the creative paradigm—“Such is the power of that sweet passion, / That it all sordid basenesse doth expel” (ll. 190–91)—only “the refynd mynd” can “dwell / In his high thought,” admiring “heavenly light” (ll. 192, 193–94, 196). The poet’s “deepest wit” and “hungrie fantasy” (ll. 197, 198) are illumined by this refinement or inner “passion.”<sup>83</sup> Interestingly, Susanne Woods remarks that Lanyer’s language “occasionally seems to echo” and has “verbal and thematic parallels” with Spenser’s *Four Hymnes*.<sup>84</sup>

The true transforming work of the spiritual alchemist was to reproduce God’s macrocosmic creation in the microcosm of man, extracting the quintessence out of the black metal of the soul, uniting contrary elements and lightening darkness. In this manner the soul could be regenerated, repairing the ravages of man’s fallen condition and enabling enhanced spiritual vision and the writing of inspired poetry. In the Hermetic cosmology of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Christ was “the Sunne”—as in Lanyer’s poem—and the celestial bodies were a link between God and mankind (the doctrine of sympathy and antipathy): they were capable of infusing their powers into terrestrial matter and, via nature, into the human mind of those with a sufficiently purified soul and clear fantasy.<sup>85</sup> In keeping with this, Lanyer insists in her opening poem to Queen Anne, that her “Glasse” (fantasy) must be “chrystill, or more cleare” (l. 40, p. 5) to present virtue; however, she simultaneously invites the Queen to “Looke in this Mirrour of a worthy Mind” (l. 37),

suggesting the translucence of her vision already achieved through spiritual alchemy. Adopting the sensuous language of the *Song of Solomon*, she proceeds to invite a succession of noble ladies and “all virtuous Ladies in generall” to her “feast” of poetry, in order to contemplate her fantasy’s image of Christ’s Passion, facilitating their becoming Brides of Christ and “new regen’rate in a second berth” through his renewing grace (“To all vertuous Ladies,” l. 66, p. 15); she beckons, “Come swifter than the motion of the Sunne, / To be transfigur’d with our loving Lord” (ll. 50–51). Aligning herself with Saint Peter, Lanyer shapes her persona as a healer of souls through her poetry: “as Saint *Peter* gave health to the body, so I deliver you the health of the soule; ... this rich diamond of devotion, this perfect gold growing in the veines of that excellent earth of the most blessed Paradice” (“To the Ladie *Margaret*,” ll. 9–13, p. 34). Far from humbly, she repeatedly claims, “his [God’s] power hath given me powre to write.” An astral influence—“that fattall starre”—has “guided” her “to frame this worke of grace”: “Not of it selfe, but by celestially powres” (“To the Ladie *Katherine*,” ll. 6, 7, 8, p. 36). We should recall how Paracelsus insisted that those of the lowest social status were capable, through God’s grace, of obtaining the highest skill. This might cause us to ponder again Lanyer’s pronouncement in “The Description of Cooke-ham”: “My Wit too weake to conster of the great. / Why not?” (ll. 112–13, p. 135).<sup>86</sup>

Louis Martz’s seminal study of seventeenth-century meditative poetry demonstrated the “discipline” involved in the production of the period’s poetry of religious contemplation, linking it to the devotional exercises promoted by such popular treatises as *The Imitation of Christ* (English trans. 1530) and *Spiritual Combat* by Lorenzo Scupoli (1589).<sup>87</sup> Martz concludes: “Toward the union of ‘the powers of the soul,’ ... by disciplined effort, the meditative poet makes his way, while creation of the poetry plays its part in the struggle.”<sup>88</sup> Martz was concerned to foreground how the act of writing devotional poetry was imagined to be crucial to the meditative poet’s own inner re-making. The contemplation of Christ, and particularly of His suffering at the Passion, was construed as having an actual unifying and transforming effect on the soul, while the poet’s “deepest wit”—his fantasy illumined by divine light—brought him especially close to the divine maker, enabling him to create poetry with the potential to move and transform the souls of readers. It is well known that the poets examined in Martz’s study—Donne, Herbert, Southwell, Vaughan, Crashaw, and Marvell—sometimes employed the images and diction of

alchemy to give graphic expression to the transmutation experiences witnessed in their poetic meditative exercises. Lanyer's poetry participates in this same devotional-intellectual climate, but it harnesses the language and processes of spiritual alchemy in a far more thoroughgoing, less equivocal, and strikingly feminist way. Acknowledging herself as an embodiment of female nature from the outset, her volume of poetry testifies to nature being the mother of invention ("since all Arts from Nature came, / That goodly Creature, Mother of Perfection," l. 152). Lanyer's art celebrates the "virtuous exercises of the minde" (l. 1591)—the deep contemplation of nature and of Christ—which, together with suffering and service, lead to renewing grace in her female subjects and to Christ becoming an active, living force in the Christian healer *and* in the poet. In the manner of the male "Metaphisick" poet alluded to in Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry*, Lanyer has built "upon the depth of Nature" and "disdaining to be tied to any ... subjection" has been "lifted up with the vigor of ... [her] owne invention" growing "in effect another nature, in making things ... better then Nature bringeth forth." Lanyer's female "erected wit" does appear to have conquered her "infected will" in a particularly audacious fashion.<sup>89</sup>

According to Lanyer's poetry, through spiritual alchemy women not only could divest themselves of "the staine of *Eve*," they could become especially illumined disciples of Christ. In *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, Lanyer skilfully exploits the alchemical medical paradigm advocated by Paracelsus, advancing a dynamic case for female creative potential and constructing her own persona as a socially compromised yet gifted distiller of healing poetry through nature's special grace and God's celestial powers.

### Notes

1. Jonathan Sawday's groundbreaking study of early modern anatomy examines the masculine discourse of seventeenth-century science and the "heroic male scientist"; see *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), especially pp. 230–66, p. 238. This linkage was initially foregrounded in Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (London: Wildwood House, 1980). The heated debates that followed Merchant's study are discussed in Katharine Park, "Women,



- Gender and Utopia: *The Death of Nature* and the Historiography of Early Modern Science,” *Isis* 97, no. 3 (2006), pp. 487–95; and in Carolyn Merchant, “Secrets of Nature: the Bacon Debates Revisited,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69, no. 1 (2008), pp. 147–62. On the relation between gender, truth-telling, and science see Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century London* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. xxvi and 87–91.
2. See Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, especially pp. 240, 248; and Katharine Park, *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation and the Origins of Human Dissection* (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, MIT Press, 2006).
  3. Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Ellis, and Douglas Heath, 14 vols. (London: Longman & Co., 1857–74) vol. 4, Aphorism 109, p. 100; and *De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum*, in *Works*, vol. 4, p. 296.
  4. Hugh Plat, British Library, Sloane MS 2172, fol.18v. On Plat’s notebooks and the language of science see Deborah E. Harkness, *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 224–25.
  5. See Louis Montrose, “The Work of Gender in the Discourse of Discovery,” *Representations* 35 (Winter 1991), pp. 1–41.
  6. On the increasing marginalization of women practitioners of chemistry and medicine in the seventeenth century see Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton, eds., *Women, Science and Medicine 1500–1700: Mothers and Sisters of the Royal Society* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), especially Lynette Hunter, “Sisters of the Royal Society: The Circle of Katherine Jones, Lady Ranelagh,” pp. 178–97, and Frances Harris, “Living in the Neighbourhood of Science,” pp. 198–217; see also, Elizabeth Fissell, “Introduction: Women, Health, and Healing in Early Modern Europe,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 82, no. 1 (2008), pp. 1–17; and William Kerwin, “Where Have you Gone Margaret Kennix?” in *Women Healers and Physicians: Climbing a Long Hill*, ed. Lillian R. Furst (Kentucky: The University of Kentucky, 1997), pp. 93–113, p. 97.
  7. Sarah Hutton argues this point in relation to Bacon; see “The Riddle of the Sphinx” in *Women, Science and Medicine*, pp. 7–28.
  8. Park, “Women, Gender and Utopia,” p. 492.
  9. Jolande Jacobi, ed., *Paracelsus: Selected Writings*, Bollingen Series XXVIII (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 50.

10. Pseudo Jean de Meun, *The Alchymyst's Answer to Nature*, cited in Robert M. Schuler, ed., *Alchemical Poetry 1575–1700* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995), p. 123; this work underwent multiple editions between 1547 and 1618. On the relation of nature to art in alchemy and medicine in this period, see Ian Maclean, *Logic, Signs and Nature in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 246.
11. John Donne, "The First Anniversary," in *The Poems of John Donne*, ed. Herbert Grierson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 236. All citations are to this edition.
12. Susanne Woods, ed., *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (Oxford University Press, 1993); Woods edits the Huntington Library Copy HN 62139. All citations are to this edition, with line and/or page numbers given in parentheses in the main text.
13. See, for example, Woods, "Introduction," in *Poems*, pp. xxx–xl; Lynette McGrath, "Let us have our libertie againe, Aemilia Lanyer's Seventeenth-Century Feminist Voice," *Women's Studies* 20, no. 3 (1992), pp. 331–48, p. 341; the scholars referenced in notes 14 and 15 below endorse this view of the poem. John Garrison suggests, rather differently, that the "polyvocality" he locates in this work "generates a more forceful argument through a cumulative voice addressing all men"; see "Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and the Production of Possibility," *Studies in Philology* 109, no. 3 (2012), pp. 290–310, p. 304.
14. Elaine V. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 207, 185.
15. See, for example, Barbara K. Lewalski, "Of God and Good Women: The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer," in *Silent But for the Word*, ed. Margaret Patterson Hannay (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985), pp. 203–24, p. 208; Kim Walker, *Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (London: Prentice Hall, 1996), p. 117; Barbara Lewalski, "Writing Women and Reading the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (Winter 1991), pp. 792–821, p. 804; Lewalski describes Lanyer as an author who formulates "the wrongs and complaints of many women," rewriting discourses that diminish women (p. 795).
16. Engraving by J. T. de Bry, in Robert Fludd, *Ultriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia* (Oppenheim, 1617–18), vol. 1, fol. 4–5. Wellcome Library: EPB 2324/ D.
17. Jacobi, pp. 50, 104.

18. Important revisionist histories include Charles Webster, *Paracelsus, Medicine, Magic and Mission at the End of Time* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 1; Ole Peter Grell, ed., *Paracelsus: The Man and His Reputation, His Ideas and their Transformation* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Gerhild Scholz Williams and Charles D. Gunnoe, eds., *Paracelsian Moments: Science, Medicine, and Astrology in Early Modern Europe* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2002).
19. See Charles Webster, "Paracelsus: Medicine as Popular Protest," in *Medicine and the Reformation*, ed. Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 64–74, p. 64.
20. Webster, "Paracelsus," p. 64.
21. For comprehensive explanations of the alchemical-Paracelsian medical paradigm see Webster, "Paracelsus," pp. 64–74; Walter Pagel, *From Paracelsus to Van Helmont: Studies in Renaissance Medicine and Science* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1986); Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550–1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially pp. 34, 39, 95–103; and Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England: Bodies, Plagues and Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 18–49, especially 27–28.
22. Jacobi, p. 143.
23. John Read, *Through Alchemy to Chemistry: A Procession of Ideas and Personalities* (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1961), p. 24. See also, Walter Pagel, *From Paracelsus to van Helmont: Studies in Renaissance Medicine and Science* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1986); Maclean, pp. 75, 246.
24. Jacobi, p. 57.
25. Jacobi, pp. 43–44.
26. See, for example, Brian B. Copenhaver, ed., *Hermetica: the Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 13–14, 69. On the *Hermetica* and the Florentine and French academies see Frances Yates, *The French Academies in the Sixteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 1.
27. Webster, "Paracelsus," p. 71.
28. Grell, *Paracelsus*, p. 9.
29. Lyndy Abraham, ed., *Arthur Dee, Fasciculus chemicus*, trans. Elias Ashmole (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1997), Introduction, p. xxviii; R. J. W. Evans, *Rudolf II and His World: A Study in Intellectual History 1576–1612* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 196–242; Margaret Healy, *Shakespeare, Alchemy and*

- the Creative Imagination: The Sonnets and "A Lover's Complaint"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 24–52.
30. See Peter French, *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus* (London: Routledge, 1984), especially p. 60; Lyndy Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), p. 4.
  31. A 1698 catalogue (the "Catalogus Petworthianae") of the Percys' impressive library collection in the late seventeenth century can be consulted at the West Sussex Record Office in Chichester. It lists Marsilio Ficino's *Plato (Platonis Opera Omnia)* and *Le Pimandre de Mercure Trismegiste* (Bordeaux, 1579); and among the alchemical collection are numerous works by Paracelsus in the original Swiss-German, and by Oswald Croll, George Ripley, and Heinrich Khunrath.
  32. See Charles Nicholl, *Chemical Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1980), p. 17.
  33. Abraham, *Marvell*, pp. 2–3. Indeed, Ben Jonson's extensive knowledge of the subject (as displayed in his plays and court masques) suggests that he may have been a visitor too. To deride and mock the type of alchemy practised by covetous and foolish types (Geber's "cooks") was common among alchemists themselves.
  34. Thomas Moffett, *Nobilis or A View of the Life and Death of a Sidney*, trans. and ed., Virgil B. Heltzel and Hoyt H. Hudson (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1940), p. 75.
  35. See Stanton J. Linden, ed., *The Mirror of Alchimy Composed by the Thrice-Famous and Learned Fryer, Roger Bachon* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992); Nicholl, pp. 23–24; E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957); pp. 61–64.
  36. Richard Bostocke, *The difference between the auncient phisicke, first taught by the godly forefathers...and the latter phisicke proceeding from idolaters, ethnicks, and heathen: as Gallen...Aristotle* (London, 1585). All citations are to this edition.
  37. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn, eds., *The Art of English Poesy by George Puttenham: A Critical Edition* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 136–37. All citations are to this edition.
  38. Charles Webster, "Alchemical and Paracelsian Medicine," in *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Charles Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 321–34, especially p. 330.
  39. See Susanne Woods, *Lanyer: A Renaissance Woman Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 16.
  40. *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, trans. William Hazlitt (London: G. Bell, 1902), DCCC.V.

41. Joseph Hall, *An Open and Plaine Paraphrase, upon the Song of Songs, which is Salomens* (London, 1609), sig. N2v; all citations are to this edition.
42. See Hildemarie Streich, "Introduction," in Michael Maier's *Atalanta Fugiens: An Edition of the Fugues, Emblems and Epigrams*, trans. and ed. Joscelyn Godwin (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1989), pp. 1–85.
43. For an extended discussion of Maier's alchemical emblems, see Margaret Healy, *Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination*, pp. 39–48.
44. Francis McKee, "The Paracelsian Kitchen," in Grell, *Paracelsus*, p. 205.
45. Maier, *Atalanta Fugiens*, p. 189.
46. Hunter, "Sisters of the Royal Society," pp. 182–83.
47. Hilary Rose, Foreword, *Women, Science and Medicine*, pp. xii–xiii.
48. Bathsua Makin, *An Essay to Revive the Antient* (1673), cited in Margaret Hannay, "'How I these studies prize': The Countess of Pembroke and Elizabethan Science," in *Women, Science and Medicine*, pp. 108–21, p. 111.
49. Sarah Hutton, "Anne Conway, Margaret Cavendish and Seventeenth-Century Scientific Thought," in *Women, Science and Medicine*, pp. 218–34, p. 232. In "Sisters of the Royal Society" in the same volume, Lynette Hunter points out how something happened to impede the chemical practices of aristocratic women in the 1650s: "Ladies' Chemistry" starts being undermined by its former male supporters (p. 188).
50. Steven Shapin, "'A Scholar and a Gentleman': The Problematic Identity of the Scientific Practitioner in Early Modern England," *History of Science* 29 (1991), pp. 278–327.
51. John Aubrey, *Aubrey's Natural History of Wiltshire*, cited in Hannay, "'How I these studies prize,'" p. 111.
52. Cited in Hannay, "'How I these studies prize,'" p. 119.
53. See Hunter, "Women and Domestic Medicine," pp. 90–95; Elizabeth Grey, *A Choice Manual of Rare and Select Secrets* (London, 1653); Alethea Talbot, *Natura Exenterata or Nature Unbowelled* (London, 1655).
54. Linda Pollock, *With Faith and Physic: The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman Lady Grace Mildmay 1552–1620* (London: Collins and Brown, 1993), pp. 66, 146.
55. See Kerwin, pp. 93–113, especially p. 111.
56. Penny Bayer, "From Kitchen Hearth to Learned Paracelsianism: Women and Alchemy in the Renaissance," in *Mystical Metal of Gold: Essays on Alchemy and Renaissance Culture*, ed. Stanton J. Linden (New York: AMS Studies in the Renaissance, 2007), pp. 365–86. See also Jayne Archer, "Women and Alchemy

- in Early Modern England” (PhD dissertation, Newnham College, University of Cambridge, 1999).
57. Penny Bayer, “Lady Margaret Clifford’s Alchemical Receipt Book and the John Dee Circle,” *Ambix* 52, no. 3 (November 2005), pp. 271–84, p. 274.
  58. *Historical Memoirs of the House of Russell*, cited in Beilin, p. 192. See also Hannay, “How I these studies prize,” p. 110.
  59. Bayer, “From Kitchen Hearth,” pp. 379–80. See the description of “The Margaret Manuscript” held in the Cumbria Record Office (MS WD/Hoth/A988/5) and described in Bayer, “Lady Margaret,” pp. 271–84. Bayer hypothesizes that this manuscript may have been produced partly with the help of Christopher Taylour, alchemist, who was associated with the Dee-Kelley circle at Mortlake.
  60. Bayer, “From Kitchen Hearth,” p. 380.
  61. Bayer, “Lady Margaret,” p. 377; see also Bayer, “From Kitchen Hearth,” pp. 365–86; and Archer, ch. 2.
  62. Bayer, “From Kitchen Hearth,” p. 379. Richard T. Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford: Countess of Pembroke, Dorset and Montgomery, 1590–1676* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing 1997), pp. 257–60.
  63. Bayer, “From Kitchen Hearth,” p. 378.
  64. Henry Nollius, *Hermetical Physick*, trans. Henry Vaughan, in *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 549.
  65. Beilin, p. 204.
  66. John Donne, “The First Anniversary,” in *Works*, p. 236.
  67. Lyndy Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 65.
  68. Cited in Abraham, *Dictionary*, p. 64.
  69. Heinrich Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae* (Hanau, 1609); Michael Maier, *Tripus Aureus* (Frankfurt, 1618).
  70. Peter Forshaw, “Subliming Spirits: Physical-Chemistry and Theo-Alchemy in the Works of Heinrich Khunrath (1560–1605),” in *Mystical Metal of Gold*, pp. 255–75.
  71. Robert M. Schuler, “Some Spiritual Alchemies of Seventeenth-Century England,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41, no. 2 (April–June, 1980), pp. 293–318, 304–06.
  72. John Thornborough, Bishop of Bristol, *Letter to Lady Knowles*, MS Sloane 1799, fols. 74–104, British Library, London.
  73. Schuler, “Spiritual Alchemies,” p. 306.
  74. Schuler, “Spiritual Alchemies,” p. 305.

75. Micheline White has convincingly argued that Lanyer depicts “women as the true disciples and founders of Christ’s healing Church, and she positions Jacobean women as the spiritual heirs of these female disciples”; see “A Woman with Saint Peter’s Keys?: Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611) and the Priestly Gifts of Women,” *Criticism* 45, no. 3 (2003), pp. 323–41, p. 323.
76. See Streich, “Introduction,” in *Atalanta Fugiens*, pp. 14–15; Titus Burckhardt, *Alchemy* (Dorset: Element books, 1967), p. 149.
77. Puttenham, pp. 136–37.
78. Puttenham, p. 135.
79. See, for example, “To the Ladie *Lucie*,” l. 21, p. 33; prying eyes in “To the Ladie *Susan*,” ll. 17–18; and “To the Ladie *Anne*,” ll. 143–44, pp. 18 and 47.
80. The renowned humanist Scaliger spoke of the poet as an *alter deus* (*Poetice*, 1561); see Alistair Fowler, *Triumphal Forms: Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. xi. See Healy, *Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination*, especially pp. 52–56.
81. For a detailed account of this, see Healy, *Shakespeare, Alchemy and the Creative Imagination*, pp. 52–56, 157–94.
82. Puttenham, p. 110.
83. Edmund Spenser, “An Hymne in Honour of Love,” in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William A. Oram, Einar Bjorvand, Ronald Bond, Thomas H. Cain, Alexander Dunlop, and Richard Schell (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 691–705.
84. Susanne Woods, “Narrative Poetry,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 222–34, p. 227.
85. See Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love*, trans. and ed. Sears Jayne (Dallas, Texas: Spring Publications Inc., 1988), pp. 41–48; Katharine S. Park, “The Imagination in Renaissance Psychology” (MPhil thesis, Warburg Institute, University of London, 1974), p. 103.
86. Lanyer’s parentage and marriage situated her in the servant class: both her father and husband were court musicians; see Woods, “Introduction,” *The Poems*, p. xv. Danielle Clarke astutely conjectures that the poem’s “radical revision of scripture” may be a strategy to “negotiate questions of social power”; Lanyer’s feminism is “shot through with class considerations and complicated by the attempt of the poet to articulate herself in the context of a social dependence.” See Clarke’s *The Politics of Early Modern Women’s Writing* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited,



2001), pp. 161, 162. I have suggested that Lanyer's appropriation of the discourse of spiritual alchemy facilitated the "articulation" of her "self" as a woman of inferior social status who is—nonwithstanding—divinely inspired to write poetry. This adds an additional inflection to lines such as "although we are but borne of earth / We may behold the Heavens," in "The Description of Cooke-ham," ll. 113–14.

87. Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* (1954; Massachusetts: Yale University Press, 1962).
88. Martz, p. 321.
89. Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G. Gregory Smith, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1904), vol. 1, pp. 156, 157.