EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES

Judaizing Emilia Lanier: Fruits of the Poisonous Tree

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1. Introduction

Interest in Emilia Lanier (1569-1645) emerged slowly after the re-discovery of her book of poems, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, by John Buxton in 1954. It accelerated rapidly when in 1973 A.L. Rowse associated Lanier with the 'Dark Lady' of William Shakespeare's sonnets; he did not then know about the poetry but had found details of her life in the casebooks of the quack doctor and astrologer, Simon Forman.[1] The last five decades have seen a plethora of publications on her life and work, many devoted to the proto-feminist features of her writing but also in such diverse fields as theology, musicology, and the literary history of early modern England. Among these has been a thread of speculation that the Bassano family of musicians from which Lanier derived on her father's side were Jewish in origin, and latterly both scholarship and popular fiction have blossomed, focused on the possibility that Lanier was of the Jewish faith or had Jewish ancestry.

[1] See John Buxton, *Sir Philip Sidney and the English Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1954), pp. 235-6. Also A.L. Rowse, 'Revealed at last', *The Times*, London, January 29, 1973:12; and *Shakespeare the Man* (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 87-113. On the spelling of Lanier's names, sometimes rendered as Aemilia, Amelia or Emilia and Lanyer or Lanier: we have settled on that used by Lorna Hutson in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

The object of this essay is to re-examine the documentation pertinent to Emilia Lanier's ethnic-cultural milieu, with a view to challenging the claims put forward (some of them frankly racist, or borderline so) about her Jewish origins. Her identification as Shakespeare's 'Dark Lady,' proclaimed as proven by Rowse but fiercely contested by other critics, is not our concern here except to the extent that it can be shown to have fuelled – indeed arguably created – the speculation about her Jewish descent.[2] This whole exercise, while primarily aimed at putting an end once and for all these dubious claims about Lanier's ethnic origins, is also offered as an object lesson in the ease with which misinformation of this sort can root itself as fact – and in the difficulty of eradicating it.

2. Reassessment of Emilia Lanier's Verifiable Biography.

Lanier's verifiable biography is based mainly on the wills of her parents; on the details recorded about her in the diaries (*casebooks*) of Simon Forman; on some few clues deduced from her book of poetry, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*; on a limited number of events involving her husband, Alfonso Lanier, and the later disposition of a lucrative patent he acquired for the weighing of hay and straw; on records relating to Lanier's attempt to set up a school; on the record of her burial; and on some scattered official documentations regarding the Bassano family as of the reigns of King Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth I and James I.[3] From these we know that:

> Emilia Bassano was baptized on January 27, 1569 at St. Botolph's Church, Bishopsgate, daughter of a Venetian musician, Battista (Baptista) Bassano and his common-law English wife, Margaret Johnson.[4] Baptista was hired in 1539

[2] On the resistance to Rowse, see David Bevington, 'A. L. Rowse's Dark Lady', in Marshall Grossman (ed.), *Æmilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre, and the Canon* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), pp. 10-28.

[3] See Susanne Woods, *Lanyer: A Renaissance Woman Poet (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 3-33. A less orthodox review of Lanyer's biography is given by Kevin Gilvary, 'A storm called Emilia: was Aemilia Bassano the Dark lady or even the hidden author?' in *The de Vere Society Newsletter*, January 2020, https://www.deversociety.co.uk.

[4] See David Lasocki and Roger Prior, *The Bassanos: Venetian Musicians and Instrument Makers in England, 1531-1665* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), p. 25; and Woods, *Lanyer*, p. 5. In his will Baptista Bassano bequeathed his property to 'Margaret Bassany alias Johnson my reputed wife, 'reputed probably in the sense of 'known as'. Margaret described herself as Margaret Bassano, wife of Baptista Bassano, and was virtually his sole heiress. It is not significant whether they had formally married or not. Their two daughters were deemed legitimate and legally able to inherit from their parents. Incidentally, it is clear that Lanier's mother was not Jewish and therefore, nominally and according to Jewish Halacha law, Lanier herself was not Jewish. In Halacha laws, *Jewish* status is defined by either being born to a *Jewish* mother

with his four brothers to join the court recorder consort of King Henry VIII.[5] He died when Emilia was seven and sometime thereafter she moved into the household of Susan Bertie, Dowager Countess of Kent (1554-c.1596), daughter of the redoubtable Katherine Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk, by her second marriage to Richard Bertie.[6] The timing and circumstances of this are examined in more detail below, but she presumably left that household before the Countess's second marriage, in 1581, when Lanier was 12 (see p. 18). Before long, possibly after the death of her mother in 1587, the eighteen- or nineteen-year-old Bassano became the mistress of Henry Carey, 1st Lord Hunsdon (1526 –1596), cousin of Queen Elizabeth I, who was over forty years her senior.[7] Hunsdon was, from 1585, Lord Chamberlain to Elizabeth I; from 1594 he was also patron of one of the two leading theatre companies in London, of which William Shakespeare was a leading member. The circumstances surrounding the intimate liaison between Bassano and Hunsdon – how, where and exactly when it all started – are not known. There have, however, been attempts to pierce this darkness, as we shall see (see pp. 26-8).

Bassano eventually became pregnant and Hunsdon married her off to her first cousin once removed, Alfonso Lanier, a court musician. They were wed at St Botolph's Church Aldgate on 18 October 1592. Lanier's son, Henry (presumed by some to be named for his true father), was born the following year; a daughter, named Odyllia, was born in 1598, but died aged ten months and was buried at St Botolph's. The biography of Emilia Lanier after her marriage to Alfonso is characterized by abundant lacunae and profound uncertainties. Between 1597 and 1600 she several times consulted Simon Forman, from

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or by ritual conversion to *Judaism.* These distinctions are, however, deemed irrelevant by those who see a possible Jewish heritage on her father's side.

[5] Their father, Jeronimo Pifero Bassano, a renowned Venetian musician and musical instruments maker, died in Venice a short time later. He had six sons, one of whom stayed in Venice.

[6] See Melissa Franklin-Harkrider, *Women, Reform and Community in Early Modern England: Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Lincolnshire's Godly Aristocracy, 1519-1580* (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008).

[7] This information comes from the casebooks of Simon Forman (specifically Ashmole 226 f. 95v, dated 17 May 1597). These are the only contemporary record of Emilia Lanier being a 'paramour' of Lord Hunsdon. It was first revealed in A.L. Rowse's 1973 publications (see Note 1), which made them the basis for his claim that she was subsequently Shakespeare's mistress. The casebooks can now be accessed online @ Lauren Kassell, Michael Hawkins, Robert Ralley, John Young, Joanne Edge, Janet Yvonne Martin-Portugues, and Natalie Kaoukji (eds.), 'Casebooks', *The Casebooks of Simon Forman and Richard Napier, 1596–1634: a digital edition*, https://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk. For a shrewd analysis of Forman and Lanier, see Pamela Benson, 'Emilia Lanier, *A Critical Introduction to the Casebooks of Simon Forman and Richard Napier, 1596–1634*', https://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk/using-the-casebooks/meet-the-patients/emilia-lanier.

whose casebooks we learn that Hunsdon gave her significant sums of money and dressed her richly. But we also learn that her marriage was not a happy one: 'her husband hath dealt hardly with her, hath spent and consumed her goods. She is now very needy, in debt'.[8]

Thereafter we know virtually nothing until her book of poems, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, was entered in the Stationers' Register at the end of 1610 and was printed by Valentine Sims for the stationer Richard Bonian in 1611. The collection was dedicated to nine royal and noble ladies; it may be inferred from these dedications that Emilia was at some point affiliated with Margaret Clifford (née Russell), Countess of Cumberland and was now specifically seeking her patronage, and also that of her daughter, Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset.[9] The mother was dedicatee of the title poem of the collection, 'Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum', which is printed with various marginal prompts, steering her to key features, most notably in the climactic section, 'The Passion of Christ'.[10] The last poem in Lanier's book is 'The Description of Cooke-ham', a country-house poem eulogizing a royal manor not far from Windsor, which she associates with the Clifford ladies.[11] The other dedications – to the royal ladies, Queen Anna, Princess Elizabeth and Lady Arbella Stuart, and to other notable aristocratic ladies – seem rather more speculative.

It is reasonable to assume from these two poems that Lanier had been close to the Countess in some context. 'Cooke-ham' strongly suggests that she was familiar with the countryside and landscape of the manor, that Lanier conceived the poem while she was residing there, and that the poem was inspired by the Countess: 'Yet you (great Lady) Mistris of that Place / From whose desires did spring this worke of Grace' (lines 11-12). Jessica Malay has convincingly shown, from the Portland papers (five letters written by the Countess of Cumberland, later transcribed by a family member), that Lanier's sojourn with the Countess and her daughter Anne happened during the late summer-early autumn of 1604.[12] Lady Anne would have been fourteen then and probably still receiving an

[8] Quoted from A.L. Rowse, *Simon Forman: Sex and Society in Shakespeare's Age* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1974), p. 100. The online Casebooks do not present the Lanier material in readily quotable form, so with some regret we use Rowse's book here and subsequently.

[9] See Jessica L. Malay, 'Positioning Patronage: Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* and the Countess of Cumberland in Time and Place,' *The Seventeenth Century* 28: 3 (2013), 251–74.

[10] We have used italics (*Salve Deus*) for the whole volume and roman ('Salve Deus') for its title poem. Quotations from Lanier's poetry are from *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, ed. by Susanne Woods (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[11] See Woods, *Lanyer*, pp. 28-9.

[12] See Malay, p. 269, fn. 19.

education; so it is reasonable to speculate that Lanier led her in recreational / educational activities, such as music or languages, in some of which the Countess might have participated. Lanier's competence as an instructor can be inferred from the fact that during 1617-1619 she maintained a school for children of 'diverse persons of worth and understanding'.[13]

In 1604 Alfonso Lanier was granted a patent to charge levies on all loads of hay and straw sold in London and Westminster, helpfully supplementing his earnings as a musician. When he died in 1613 his brother, Clement, agreed with Emilia to petition for a new patent, the proceeds of which they would share; she was to receive £20 pa. During the 1630s we can trace Emilia suing Clement repeatedly for payment of her share. Lanier died at the age of 76 and was buried at St James Clerkenwell on 3 April 1645, described as a 'pensioner', which suggests that she was then in receipt of her share of the proceeds from the patent.[14]

3. The Beginnings of the Lanier Biomythology

It all erupted from a single word in Simon Forman's casebooks (Case 1817), from 3 June 1597 (Ashmole 226, f.110 v, Bodleian Library, Oxford). A. L. Rowse misread Forman's 'braue' [brave, meaning splendid, showy] as 'brown' in his piece in *The Times* of 29 January 1973 announcing his discovery of 'The Dark Lady' of Shakespeare's sonnets. Later that year the misreading was corrected almost simultaneously by two highly reputable scholars. On 10 May Mary Edmond pointed it out (with other mistakes) in a letter to *The Listener*. And the following day *The Times Literary Supplement* carried a letter from Dr Stanley Wells: '… Dr. Rowse has not been meticulously careful… Words are transposed and inaccurately transcribed … The evidence lies in the formation of the letters. What Forman wrote is that Mrs. Lanier was "braue". There is no evidence that Dr. Rowse's Lady was dark' (p. 528). The truth is that Forman offers no physical description of Lanier, except in his entry from 2 September 1597 ('she hath a wart or moulle in the pit of the throat or near yt'), and nothing pertinent to her physiognomy or colouring. And even here, as Pamela Benson points out, 'the imprecision makes it seem that he learned about the "wart or moulle" from the figure [Forman's astrological projection] rather than observation of her person'.[15]

[13] See Woods, *Lanyer*, pp. 31, 32-33, 169 (fn. 74, 75).

[14] See Rowse, *Simon Forman*, pp. 116-7, where he credits Mary Edmond with the information.

[15] Benson, 'Emilia Lanier, *A Critical Introduction*', accessed 6 January 2023.

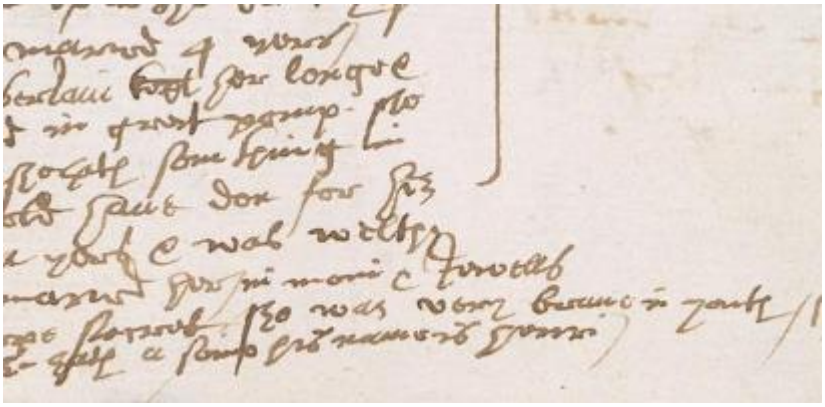

Fig. 1. A section from Simon Forman's Casebooks, dated June 3, 1597. Second line up: 'she was very braue [brave] in youth'. A. L. Rowse misread 'braue' as 'brown'. For further explanation see text. Image from Kassell *et al* (eds), 'Casebooks' (CASE 1807), downloaded from Cambridge Digital Library and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License (CC BY-NC 3.0).

But the damage was already done. Rowse did not retract the claim that Lanier was the 'Dark Lady', which was repeated in similar terms in his book, *Shakespeare the Man*, published later in 1973. The following year, however, he published *Simon Forman: Sex and Society in Shakespeare's Age*, reproducing much of the material from *Shakespeare the Man* but quietly dropping 'brown' for 'brave'. But he now referred repeatedly to the Italian origins of Lanier's father's family: 'Italian lady' (twice on p. 102); 'A recognisable Italianate temperament' (p. 105); 'her Italianate background' (p. 106); 'in this Italianate woman we have the Dark Lady' (p. 117). This was apparently supposed to vouch for her having dark colouring, though not all Italians are in fact dark, and besides it completely overlooks the English heritage on her mother's side, which may equally have influenced her hair and complexion. Another crucial change, however, is that Rowse now recognizes Lanier as the author of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*.[16] She is no longer simply the 'Dark Lady' but also a published poet in her own right. To be sure, Rowse is quite condescending about her poetry ('the verse is accomplished enough', p. 106). But Lanier now had a double claim to the attention of later centuries, and at a time when a wider interest in her 'lost' Renaissance literary sisters was emerging. All of this has sufficed to keep Lanier's supposed identity as Shakespeare's 'Dark Lady' in the popular consciousness and has fed a number of dubious biographical speculations, notably among anti-Stratfordians.[17] It has also generated a sub-genre in the pseudo-biography of Lanier,

[16] He excuses his former ignorance by observing that 'Her book is of the utmost rarity', and credits Roger Prior with having brought it to his attention (p. 105).

[17] Most notable among these is John Hudson's *Shakespeare's Dark Lady: Amelia Bassano Lanier, the Woman Behind Shakespeare's Plays?* **(**Stroud: Amberley, 2014), who invents (*inter alia*) a visit of Lanier, aged 13 to Elsinor in 1582 with Peregrine Willoughby, where she met Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; Lanier

the attempts to identify her in portraits by Nicholas Hilliard and others, all on the basis of her supposed colouring (see Appendix, 'Lanier's recaptured visage').

Contrary to some accounts, Rowse was not the first to suppose that Lanier had Jewish ancestry.[18] In his book on Forman he does talk of 'the hitherto unknown fact of her religious conversion' without, frustratingly, specifying what she has supposedly converted from and to, though he later speaks of 'a few Catholic flecks – a Hail Mary and a tribute to St Peter's power of the keys, appropriate to a Bassano' (pp. 104, 106). So the implication is that she converted from Italian Catholicism to the English Protestantism that characterizes her principal patrons in *Salve Deus*. In his edition of Lanier's poetry Rowse is even more casual about this. He introduces her to us as the 'daughter of one of the Queen's Italian musicians' and later announces that, in the context of the poetry, 'since the time we last heard of her from Forman she has undergone a religious conversion', leaving us to infer what that consisted of.[19] The emphasis on her Italian origins is much lower than in the Forman book, though he does throw in 'Emilia was certainly a good hater *à l'italienne*' (p. 21). He now feels so secure in his identification of her as the 'Dark Lady' that he mainly relies on Shakespeare's sonnets for evidence of 'her dark beauty, her black hair, eyes and all' (p. 25). He discusses the Biblical women, from both Old and New Testaments, invoked in 'The Passion of Christ,' but ascribes no personal significance to any of these – except the passingly brief mention of Mary Magdalene, which he assumes derives from Lanier's wish not to draw attention to her own promiscuous past.

The first person to advance a claim for Lanier's Jewish heritage was actually Roger Prior, a Senior Lecturer at Queen's University, Belfast. Prior had been one of the first to support Rowse's 'Dark Lady' theory, in the face of good deal of scepticism; this appeared in a letter to *The Times* ('Cracking Shakespeare's Passionate Code') on 12 May 1973, the same day that Stanley Wells' letter appeared in the *TLS*.[20] But Prior made no mention there of Lanier's ancestry. It was six years later, in *The Jewish Chronicle*, that he first proposed that the family from which Lanier derived on her father's side were Italian (and specifically Venetian) Jews, originally from the small town of Bassano. In this account

having an affair with Marlowe and getting pregnant by him; Lanier visiting Italy as a grown woman; and Lanier writing the plays of Shakespeare, while employing the actual Shakespeare as a play-broker. Hudson follows Lasocki-Prior in describing Lanier as a Marrano Jew.

[18] See (e.g.) the *Wikipedia* entry on Jeronimo Bassano (accessed 6/9/2022).

[19] A. L. Rowse (ed), *The Poems of Shakespeare's Dark Lady*: *'Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum' by Emilia Lanier* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978), pp. 11, 17.

[20] It seems reasonable to assume that Prior was in contact with Rowse by this date, if indeed he had not already known him at Oxford.

they had long conformed outwardly to the Christian faith, as was required by most places in Europe prepared to accept them, but might have practised – or at least perpetuated knowledge of – their own religion in private. In respect of Lanier herself:

> 'She has recently undergone a violent religious conversion, and there is a long, vigorous poem celebrating Christ's Passion. It includes a few attacks on "wilful Jews", but its title … gives a different perspective. It is *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* — "Hail to God who is King of the Jews." Since Emilia is writing of her own conversion, the title has little point unless she is one of the *Judaei*. The title, she tells us, came to her long ago, in a dream: "it was delivered unto me in sleep many years before I had any intent to write in this manner" and "I gave the very same words I received in sleep as the fittest title I could devise for this book"'.[21]

No concrete evidence is advanced for any of this. It is largely based on inference, on circumstantial possibilities: 'From this town [Bassano] they took their surname, and in doing so they followed the practice of many Italian Jews and of the majority of the Ashkenazi immigrants who comprised the Jewish communities in the smaller towns of North Italy' (p. 2). But Prior does not enquire if the same might also have been true of Christian immigrants. As for Lanier's own conversion (assuming it is not, in fact, a literary fiction), we recall that Rowse had assumed it to be from Catholic to Protestant, not Jew to Christian. And as for the title of the poem, it is based on the Gospel accounts of the mockery of Christ before his crucifixion: 'Hail, King of the Jews' was one of the taunts thrown at him, while 'King of the Jews' was inscribed on the cross.[22] This taunting undoubtedly contributed historically to widespread Christian antisemitism, driven by the belief the Jews collectively killed Christ and were therefore beyond redemption. But many Christians believe that the mockery of Christ (which is mainly ascribed in the Gospels not to the Jews but to the Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus) figures the readiness of all people – Christians included – at times to reject the Son of God. So to see

[21] *The Jewish Chronicle Literary Supplement*, 1 June 1979, 1-2 (p. 2). It was only after the appearance of this piece that Rowse first mentioned the possibility of Lanier being of Jewish heritage. This was in *The Times* (23 April 1980), citing Prior: '[he] puts forward the view that they were Jewish – Italian Jews… several considerations make me think that Mr Prior may well be right'. For the first time he detects supposed Jewish sympathies in 'Salve Deus', briefly suggesting that Lanier 'suspiciously identifies with the Old Testament heroines, Esther, Deborah, Jael: she more than sympathises with them and, though a convert, she is well up in Old Testament history and has a rather odd attitude to the New'.

[22] The Gospels differ somewhat in their accounts of all this, and in the precise wording on the cross (though all include the words I have cited). The general implication of all four is that the chief Jewish priests and elders accused Jesus of claiming to be the King of the Jews and the Roman soldiers who mocked and then crucified him made this their chief taunt.

Lanier's invocation of it as an echo of her own (former) Jewish faith is far from a necessary reading.

Prior concludes the essay with an acknowledgment that it was Mr Chaim Raphael who first suggested to him that the Bassanos were Jewish. Chaim (Rabinovitch) Raphael was a notable Jewish English politician and civil servant (awarded the CBE), as well as author and amateur historian, who died in 1994. We do not know if Raphael had specific grounds for this suggestion, but especially after the Second World War the fact that antisemitism had historically often lain behind the movements of people around Europe must have come readily to mind. It seems reasonably clear, however, that Prior espoused this theory primarily because it reinforced Rowse's earlier claims about Lanier as the 'Dark Lady' of Shakespeare's sonnets, which he had championed so enthusiastically. If Lanier was of 'Italian-Jewish' extraction, there was an even stronger chance that she had the dark eyes, complexion and hair required of the 'Dark Lady' than was afforded by Rowse's belated lame resort of calling her 'Italianate'.

A more unfortunate feature of continuing to champion Rowse in this way was that Prior also accepted his characterization of her as a woman of loose virtue, indeed a whore, as might befit the 'Dark Lady'. This too is based on a highly questionable reading of what Simon Forman's casebooks actually tell us about her.[23] There is no doubt at all that Forman himself exploited his position as an astrologer/physician to prey sexually on his women clients, encouraging the aspirations they laid bare to him and playing on his supposed ability to summon spirits and read the future. He repeatedly traces his efforts to achieve what he euphemistically calls 'halek' with them. Lanier visited him in the hopes of learning whether her husband would find advancement in joining the Earl of Essex's Islands Voyage of 1597. He immediately identified her vulnerability, her husband being away, and discreetly enquired whether he would be a welcome guest:

> He went and supped with her and stayed all night. She was familiar and friendly to him in all things, but only she would not halek. Yet he felt all parts of her willingly and kissed her often, but she would not do in any wise. Whereupon he took some displeasure, and so departed friends … but he never obtained his purpose. She was a whore and dealt evil with him after.[24]

[23] See Benson, 'Emilia Lanier, *A Critical Introduction*', for a more informed and balanced view, cited in Note 7.

[24] Rowse, *Simon Forman*, p. 101.

This is not exactly the behaviour we might expect of a married woman, and of course her past as Hunsdon's mistress was morally questionable. But for all that, 'she would not halek': she drew the line and that was what prompted Forman, in pique, to call her a 'whore'. Rowse mock-gallantly concludes from this that she was a 'questionable Italian lady'.[25]

Prior's brief 1979 essay did not make much of a mark, though a subsequent one, 'Jewish Musicians at the Tudor Court' (1983) most certainly did, fleshing out the initial claim of the Bassanos' Jewish origins, though still on circumstantial grounds; it argued that a high proportion of the musicians recruited by Henry VIII from Italy to perform at court, including the Bassanos, Comys, and Lupos, 'were Jews. Nor were they all Italian, as has always been assumed. It seems likely that some were in fact Spanish or Portuguese. After the expulsion of the Jews from Spain many of them settled in Italy, but again they were forced to leave, and it was not until they reached England that they found a final refuge'.[26] This did not mention Lanier, but the family implications are clear.

Prior built steadily on this foundation over the next decade. In 1987 he published 'More (Moor? Moro?) Light on the Dark Lady'.[27] This picked up on a rediscovered coat of arms of the Bassanos, which depicts silkworm moths and a mulberry tree; noting that 'silkworms feed on mulberry leaves' he stresses that 'it was the Jews who introduced silk-farming into Italy and dominated the industry'. He does not, however, trace any linkage between the Bassanos of the silk industry and those who were musicians. Nevertheless, he argues that the symbolism of the coat of arms would have applied to Emilia Bassano ('the promiscuous daughter of one of the Queen's Italian Jewish musicians'): 'The Italian word for mulberry tree is moro. But moro also means "a Moor, a negro," or as an adjective, "black," having black hair and eyes. A mora is both the mulberry itself – and a negress. So, heraldically, the Bassanos were Moros, or Moors'. He then traces punning on Moor and moro in *The Merchant of Venice, Othello, Titus Andronicus* and Shakespeare's sonnets, finding in it further evidence of Lanier being the 'Dark Lady'. Despite all this, he does recognize that the actual tree depicted on the coat of arms is the *morus alba* or white mulberry, sometimes known as the silkworm mulberry. Its fruit is indeed white, so that all the associations traced between *moro*, blackness and Lanier seem finally beside the point. He followed up, however, with 'A Second Jewish Community in

[25] Ibid, p. 102; cf. Woods, *Lanyer*, pp. 20, 25-27

[26] Roger Prior, 'Jewish Musicians at the Tudor Court', *The Musical Quarterly* 69 (1983), 253-65, (p. 253).

[27] *The Financial Times*, 10 October 1987, p. xvii.

Tudor London', which expanded the circumstantial case for Lanier belonging to a wider Jewish community in London than had previously been supposed.[28]

4. The Biomythology Takes Hold, But Meets Resistance

Rowse's 'rediscovery' of Lanier finally accorded her a place in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Lorna Hutson's piece first appeared in 1993, stating that the 'Bassanos were a family of Italian Jews' and citing Prior's 1983 essay as the source for this claim. This is of some importance, since the *Dictionary* is a recognised work of authority, consulted by scholars worldwide. Hutson's brief biography has been reprinted several times, notably when it went online in 2004 as the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (and became significantly more accessible); the text has not changed, though the list of authorities cited has expanded, notably including Lasocki and Prior's *The Bassanos: Venetian Musicians in England, 1531-1665* (1995).

In this Prior combined the substance of his earlier essays in a collaboration with a musicologist of some note, David Lasocki. The book was quickly accepted as an authoritative work of reference in the history of music and of instrument-making. And Prior's claims about the Jewish origins of Emilia Lanier and her family found an even wider readership on the back of this. He acknowledges that there is no definitive proof that the Bassanos were Jews, no smoking gun, but presses the evidence as far as it will go:

> No single piece of surviving evidence proves conclusively that the Bassanos were Jews or of Jewish origin, yet a wealth of circumstantial evidence strongly suggests so. They were close colleagues of Jews, lived with them, married them and even dreamed about them. Taken as a whole, the Bassanos' behaviour is difficult to explain by any other hypothesis.[29]

Presumably the claim that the Bassanos 'even dreamed about' the Jews refers to Lanier's own claim that the title, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, came to her in a dream – a slightly bizarre inference (see p. 8).

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[28] Roger Prior, 'A Second Jewish Community in Tudor London', *Jewish Historical Studies* 31 (1988-90), 137-52.

[29] David Lasocki, with Roger Prior, *The Bassanos: Venetian Musicians in England, 1531-1665* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), p. 92.

Prior's claims for the Bassanos' Jewish roots are indivisible from the argument that Lanier was the 'Dark Lady', in support of which he presses new 'evidence' of her dark colouring. He advances the report of a street incident involving three of her cousins.[30] Two of them, Arthur and another, were described by the Sheriff's officers as 'a little black man who was booted' and 'a tall black man'. The three cousins were sons of Emilia's paternal uncle, Anthony Bassano, and his Venetian born wife Elina DeNazzi.[31] It is thus plausible to infer that they would have had darker complexions and hair than the average Englishman of their time; such descriptions were often given of persons of Spanish or Mediterranean origins (and by no means necessarily Jewish). Prior also announces that he now thought it likely 'the Bassanos were Sephardim, not Ashkenazim', as he had suggested in his 1983 article (p. 97, Note 1). This suggests that not only were they Jews of Spanish or Portuguese origin but also presumably of notably dark colouring.

As with Prior's 1979 article, however, none of this takes into account that Lanier's mother was English. Even if Emilia Lanier *were* of Jewish descent on her father's side (which remains merely an unsubstantiated assumption), it tells us nothing about her hair or complexion. Yet the case is advanced with ever-growing confidence: 'Since we now know [sic] that Emilia was not only Italian but from a family of Sephardic Jews who are known to have been dark, she may well have had hair and eyes which were, in an English context, of unusual blackness'.[32] Prior also widened his 'circumstantial evidence' to include readings of Shakespeare's plays, most notably *The Merchant of Venice*, to substantiate what he already found in the 'Dark Lady' sonnets:

> Emilia's Jewish origins extend this unifying pattern and confirm the links between the play and the sonnets. Antonio's heart is also endangered by his young friend and a Jew… There is much in the description of the mistress in these sonnets that recalls Shylock. She is said to be "cruel" and "covetous"; she requires the poet as a "forfeit" and gives a "deep wound" to him and the young man. In Sonnet 150, the poet accuses her of using magic to seduce him, as Jewish women were said to do.[33]

[30] Ibid, pp. 78 and Note 69, 243-4.

[31] See John Izon, 'Italian musicians at the Tudor court', *The Musical Quarterly* 44 (1958), 329-337 (p. 333, Note 6). Lasocki and Prior were aware of Izon's publication, but do not mention it as their source. Anthony and Elina, daughter of Benedetto DeNazzi, were married in Venice August 10 1536. See Eleanor Selfridge-Field, *Venetian instrumentalists in England* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Publishing House, 1979), p. 219; Stefano Pio, *Viol and lute makers of Venice 1490-1630* (Venice: Venice Research, 2012), pp. 132-147.

[32] Lasocki and Prior, p. 117.

[33] Ibid, p. 132.

Sonnet 134 uses the language of usury, so 'we now know [sic] that Shakespeare is consciously playing with the idea of the woman's Jewishness'.[34] This entirely ignores the fact that the mistresses of Elizabethan sonnets were by convention 'cruel' and liable to inflict 'deep wounds,' while by the sixteenth century usury was already so closely identified with Jewish moneylending that it is impossible to say where metaphor begins or literal sense ends. As Susanne Woods argues, Prior 'tried to resurrect Rowse's case, based largely on reading Lanyer into Shakespeare's plays, a technique that amounts to using fiction to establish a fiction'.[35]

Prior not only resurrected Rowse's earlier assumptions: in also imagining Lanier as Jewish, he created the character of an exotically scurrilous, mythical 'Dark Lady' which combines colour, otherness, race and seduction.[36] From Shakespeare's sonnets and elements, in particular, of the two Venetian plays, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, he weaves a patchwork of Jewishness combined with promiscuity, and deep, dark colouring, both physical and psychological.[37] Bastardy (Lanier and her son) and 'villainy' are associated with Moorish origins, and the whole saga is linked to the Bassanos' coat of arms.[38] As we shall see, Prior's concoction – which today we have to call racist – has been widely accepted and inspired a good deal of sheer biofiction.

But Prior's suppositions have been challenged by a number of Italian scholars whose work on the Bassanos is less well-known or referenced in the UK and the US. The works of three such scholars are particularly important: Giulio Ongaro, Alessio Ruffatti and Stefano Pio.[39] Ongaro, for instance, has made clear that the surname Bassano in the 16th century was by no means an indication of Jewish origin, as Prior had suggested:

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Susanne Woods, 'Lanyer: The Dark Lady and the Shades of Fiction', in *Authorizing Early Modern European Women*, ed. by James Fitzmaurice, Naomi J. Miller and Sara Jayne Steen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022), pp. 57-69 (p. 58).

[36] Ibid., p. 59.

[37] Lasocki and Prior, *The Bassanos*, pp. 118-21.

[38] Ibid, pp. 129-137. Lanier might be called a 'bastard' because her father and mother were never formally married, though such 'handfast' relationships were unexceptionable in Elizabethan England; her son, Henry, may have been fathered by Lord Hunsdon (though Hunsdon never acknowledged him as he did other sons born out of wedlock), and so might technically be called illegitimate, even though he was born to married parents. The evidence is consistently construed in the least flattering light.

[39] See Giulio Ongaro, 'New documents on the Bassano family', *Early Music* 20 (1992), 409-413; Alessio Ruffatti, 'Italian Musicians at the Tudor court – Were They Really Jews?', *Jewish Historical Studies* 35 (1996-1998), 1-14, and 'La famiglia Piva-Bassano nei documenti degli Archivi di Bassano del Grappa', *Musica e Storia* VI/2, 1998; Stefano Pio, cited in Note 31.

> The use of a town's name as a surname (which is certainly widespread among Jewish families in modern Italy) is not a clear indication of such origins in the 16th century: a large part of the musicians active in 16th century Venice for which I have references (a total of about 700 occurrence of names…) is named after a town of origin.[40]

In personal communication to Professor Gath, Ongaro adds 'false comparison of early surnames with known Jewish surnames in modern Italy [does not confirm Jewish origin in earlier periods]… in no Venetian documents have I ever found any mention of [the Bassanos'] supposedly Jewish origin'.[41] Alessio Ruffatti has also persuasively argued, based upon the socio-economic history of Bassano del Grappa and Venice at the end of the 15th and first half of the 16th centuries, that the Bassanos were neither Jews nor crypto-Jews. And that their move to England, beginning in the 1530s was most unlikely to have been prompted by discrimination against the Jews. As he shows, in the first decades of the 16th century the situation for the Jews in Venice started gradually to improve.[42] For example, its authorities maintained a severe grip on the Inquisition, restraining it from harassing the Jews, whose presence was felt to be beneficial to the economy.[43] Whenever and wherever Jews were allowed to reside in Italian terrain, in segregated districts and ghettos (in Venice from 1516) the Jews could practice their Judaism unrestrictedly.[44] The well-documented experience of Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal, looking for safe haven, is particularly suggestive. They had to declare on entering Venetian territory their present faith. Those who affirmed their Judaism were directed to the Ghetto Nuovo. The authorities were not interested in their personal histories back to the Iberian Peninsula, whether they had been practicing Jews or Marranos (forced converts who remained crypto-Jewish).[45] Ruffatti emphasizes, however, that both secular and clerical authorities were often distrustful of the sincerity of the 'Neofiti' or 'Conversos', terms broadly embracing Jewish converts. Therefore, all possible state and official records regarding Christians of Jewish heritage were marked for at least two generations of their Jewish roots. Nothing of that sort or any recorded evidence of conversion has been found either in Bassano del Grappa or in Venice for any member of the Venetian or English Bassanos.[46]

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[40] Ongaro, 'New Documents', p. 412, Note 5.

[41] Personal communication, 19 January 2022.

[42] Ruffatti, 'Italian Musicians', 3-4.

[43] Ibid, 5.

[44] Ibid, 6.

[45] Citing Benjamin Ravid, 'The Venetian government and the Jews', in *Jews of Early Modern Venice*, ed. by Robert C. Davis and Benjamin Ravid (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 7-11.

[46] Ibid, pp. 6-8.

The move of the Bassano family at the beginning of the 16th century from Bassano del Grappa to Venice and, some thirty years later, emigration to London can more plausibly be explained by general personal unsafety and by socio-economic circumstances than by antagonism to the Jews. During the war of the League of Cambrai (against Venice during 1508-1510) the Venetian mainland was assaulted and the inhabitants looked for refuge in Venice itself. [47] The wider Veneto region was overpopulated with musicians and musical instrument makers. Regular employment was unstable and very limited, and income rather low. Therefore, many Venetian musicians looked for better life by emigration to other regions in Italy or elsewhere in Europe. Immigration of Jews into England was prohibited since their expulsion in 1290, and the general view of Jews in England was toxic. For crypto-Jews, England was a dangerous place, where their protestations of faith might always potentially be challenged, as was graphically illustrated in the case of Queen Elizabeth's own physician, the Portuguese *converso*, Dr Roderigo Lopes.[48] On the other hand, in the reign of Henry VIII top musicians had very good opportunities to obtain a stable employment with first-rate income.[49] So both in tracing the family's roots and in weighing the economic opportunities available to them, Ruffatti convincingly concludes that the Bassanos were neither Jews nor crypto-Jews.

Stefano Pio makes two important additional contributions to the argument against the Bassano's being Jews. Firstly, building on Ongaro's and Ruffatti's earlier work, he traces the Bassano family tree five generations back from Lanier to the town of Crespano, near Bassano, where the family held land. The documents show that the five generations were: Andrea de Crespano (born ca.1425), father of Baptista Piva, who was father of Jeronimo (Hieronymus. ca. 1460-1539), who in turn was father of Baptista II, father of Emilia Bassano-Lanier. In all the time the family remained in Italy they were publicly Christian, several members being employed by Christian sacred institutions, which was unlikely if they were converted Jews. And there is no documentation of their religious conversion in either Bassano or Venice. This family tree takes us back well before the expulsion of the Sephardic Jews from Spain in 1492 and the forced conversion of the Jews in Portugal in 1497, events which Lasocki and Prior had suggested could have explained the family's move to Italy.

[47] An alliance of four powers, the Pope, Louis XII of France, Emperor Maximilian of the Holy Roman Empire and Ferdinand II of Aragon fought against the Venetian Republic.

[48] Lopes was executed for treason in 1594, accused of trying to poison the Queen. He was almost certainly innocent, but the case was pressed for personal reasons by the Earl of Essex. Lopes was accused of practicing the Jewish faith at his trial, but denied it even at his execution.

[49] Ruffatti, 'Italian Musicians', pp. 9-11.

Pio also verifies that from a musical point of view Jews were only noted at this time for music linked to their religious services, while at the beginning of the 16th century there were no Jewish Venetian musical instrument makers. On the other hand, there was little official antipathy to the Jews, who were broadly tolerated for the contribution they made to the economy: 'the collection of the Holy Office present in the State Archives of Venice [shows] how the proceedings against Jews are few and all well documented. The Protestant heresy, on the other hand, was the most widespread and persecuted crime'.[50]

> This author thinks that, with regard to their [the Bassanos'] religious background, a general reverence to the Lutheran Reform and more specifically to the Anabaptists rather than to the Marranos [Spanish Jews converted to Christianity] is more correct and plausible. The penetration of the new ideas of the Protestant Reform was particularly sustained in Vicenza and its territory during the first part of the 16th century. Vicenza [approx. 60 km west of Venice] is the first city in Italy where the Lutheran creed and the Protestant heresy spread (1518). The economy was so flourishing that it attracted labourers from Lombardy and even from Germany. From Vicenza these ideas spread all over the Venetian territories, including Venice itself. Lutheran and then Calvinist circles proliferated in the city, while the Anabaptist movement spread particularly in the countryside. Following the German peasant revolts of 1525, thousands of defeated rebels from Tirolo - Trentino poured into the foothills, particularly around Bassano area and Crespano, the village of origin of the Bassano family. Initially Venice was tolerant and did not oppose to the rise of these religious movements. Many exponents and intellectuals of the Vicenza nobility adhered to them, joining in circles. [Eventually, people of all conditions] started to refuse the confession, the Eucharist, the Mass and generally the Catholic church and its dogmas.

[50] Since the publication of his book (see Note 31), Pio has expanded his chapter on the Bassanos on Facebook. The following two quotations are taken from it @ https://www.facebook.com/stefano.pio.334/posts/pfbid02NavT321Cq7G4VcnP6VPX6xcdkugmNKqQ8srM7DYRNiM9tndjb645V1vSrpwqNsrrl?__cft__[0]=AZXqjr4XEpceSecPjTZqb3wumwh98b3bXaKeBwMODm8dIzJ_c_p231uTPDq1ZHiitZf-hm9a4ktibP_lVJ2rP86jZF1XcvHLN122e7kGExecWCndkD8s_kBEAnfzmWaseOgynmVAKopdFpVqZpT4x_ZHweKzfkIN6qioqDY7Sq7tXZKpYEySkAH8u3J6xQHI2O4&__tn__=%2CO%2CP-y-R

Pio infers that the Bassanos had probably already adopted some version of the Calvinist creed while they still lived in the region of Venice and that Emilia Bassano-Lanier was brought up in a sincere reform-Calvinist milieu.

This is important because it offers a plausible explanation for why Emilia Lanier should have been so closely associated in England with aristocrats noted for their staunch, Calvinist-leaning Protestant faith, from Susan Bertie, Dowager Countess of Kent, to the Countess of Cumberland and her daughter, Lady Anne Clifford.[51] Susanne Woods makes the point succinctly, after reviewing the case for the Bassano's Jewish origins, though she appears not to have known the work of Ongaro, Ruffatti or Pio and reaches this conclusion from the evidence of Lanier's early life and later writings: 'Much has been made of the possible Jewish origins of the Bassanos, although the evidence is highly speculative… and by the time of Aemilia's birth they appear to have been observant Elizabethan Protestants... More likely than a Jewish origin is the possibility that Baptista and Margaret [Lanier's parents] were radical Protestant partisans'.[52] We pursue this further in the next section, an appraisal of Emilia Lanier's own religious convictions.

5. Lanier's Faith: the Contextual Evidence and Her Own Writing.

Lanier tells us herself, in a commendatory poem prefacing *Salve Deus*, that she was brought up and educated in the piously Protestant household of Susan Bertie, the Countess of Kent: 'Come you that were the mistress of my youth, / The noble guide of my ungoverned days'. [53] It was not uncommon for boys of the aristocracy and gentry to be brought up and educated in the household of another noble family, but less so for girls. And Lanier herself was hardly of the landed gentry class. As Lorna Hutson puts it, court musicians like Lanier's father 'were at once household servants and courtiers, suitors for office' (*ODNB*), much lower in the social order though with eyes on advancement, so it was a particular act of charity that Susan Bertie should take her into her household and educate her.

The explanation almost certainly lies in shared religious faith. It would be natural for immigrants to look for the patronage and protection of aristocrats with religious

[51] See Christina Luckyj, 'Not Sparing Kings: Aemilia Lanyer and the Religious Politics of Female Alliance', in *The Politics of Female Alliances in Early Modern England*, ed. by Christina Luckyj and Niamh J. O' Leary (Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), pp. 165-82.

[52] Woods, *Lanyer*, pp. 5-7.

[53] 'To the Lady Susan, Countess Dowager of Kent and daughter to the Duchess of Suffolk', lines 1-2. Lady Susan was a child of the Duchess's second marriage, to her steward, Richard Bertie.

convictions similar to their own, especially in the choppy waters of the English Reformation. The Bassanos may well have sought out Katharine Brandon/Bertie, Dowager Duchess of Suffolk, Susan Bertie's mother, who was notably 'forward' in her Protestant faith. The Duchess had famously fled to the continent with her family from Queen Mary's Roman Catholic England while Susan was still a baby:

> Whose faith did undertake in infancy,
> All dang'rous travels by devouring seas
> To fly to Christ from vain idolatry,
> Not seeking there this worthless world to please,
> By your most famous mother so directed,
> That noble duchess, who lived unsubjected (lines 19-24).

On her return from exile 'the duchess resumed her extensive patronage, which rapidly assumed a puritan cast'.[54] An account of the exile appeared in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, popularly known as *The Book of Martyrs*, setting the seal on her Protestant credentials. The story of their 'calamity' latterly became a popular ballad and the subject of a play by Thomas Drue.

Lanier describes Susan Bertie as 'you that have delighted in God's truth' ('To the Lady Susan', line 3), suggesting that she shared her mother's Protestant piety. Precisely when Lanier was with Susan Bertie is not clear, but not before Bertie herself set up household with her first husband, Reginald Grey, whom she married in 1570, when she was sixteen and Lanier would have been only one year old. Grey was restored as Earl of Kent in 1572, but died the following year. The title passed to his younger brother, and the Dowager Countess probably had to leave the estate. It may well have been then that Queen Elizabeth called her to live at Court, where the countess remained until her second marriage, to Sir John Wingfield, in 1581. It seems most likely that Bassano was placed with Bertie between her two marriages, since she appears to have accompanied her to Court; she fondly remembered how 'great Eliza's favour blest my youth' ('To the Queen's [i.e. Queen Anne's] Most Excellent Majesty', line 110). This is confirmed by Simon Forman: 'She hath been favoured much of her Majesty … hath had great gifts and been made much of'.[55]

[54] Susan Wabuda, *ODNB*, 'Bertie [*née* Willoughby; *other married name* Brandon], Katherine, duchess of Suffolk (1519–1580)'.

[55] Rowse, *Simon Forman*, p. 100.

Bassano may therefore have been with Bertie between the ages of four (1573) and twelve (1581), though it is perhaps most likely to have started around the time Bassano's father died in 1576, when she was seven. It would have been a kindness to her widowed mother to have the expense of the child taken from her. Lanier's precise status in relation to Bertie is never defined, though she calls herself 'your handmaid' (line 4). In this she was invoking the Virgin Mary's words on her Annunciation: 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord' (Luke, 1:38). A handmaid was the lowliest of servants, always on hand to serve her mistress. But of course, Mary was uniquely blessed to be chosen as the mother of Jesus. So Lanier probably implies that she was a servant of sorts (a junior lady's maid?) though one who was accorded a higher status in the house than that implies; she almost certainly received there an unusually thorough humanist education, underscored by Protestant religion, to judge from her poetry, which proves that she read Latin, probably Greek too, and as will be later seen, that she was well versed in the holy scripture, including the Geneva English translation of the Bible.[56] But there is nothing to suggest a continuing relationship between Bassano and Lady Susan in the perhaps thirty years between then and *Salve Deus*, with its dedicatory poem.

Other dedicatees in that volume include, as we have observed, the ladies of the royal household (see p. 4). Another notable dedicatee is Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, the sister of Sir Philip Sidney, member of an impeccably Protestant family and one of few women prior to Lanier who put her own writings (translations, including some of the Psalms) into print. But there can be no doubting that the principal dedicatee – the one from whom she hoped most for patronage – was Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland; she is addressed in an extensive prose dedication and in several marginal addresses in 'Salve Deus', especially its core section, 'The Passion of Christ'. Richard T. Spence describes the countess as 'an exceedingly pious lady, a zealous puritan who helped foster the spread of her beliefs from the earl's Skipton Castle in the West Riding of Yorkshire'.[57] Lanier presumably hoped that the religious tenor of the poetry would meet the countess's approval. And she included Anne Clifford in this aspiration who, by the time *Salve Deus* was published, was a grown woman; Lanier describes her as inheriting her mother's virtues: 'You are the heir apparent of this crown / Of goodness, bounty, grace, love, piety' ('To the Lady Anne, Countess of Dorcet', lines 65-6). She clearly also intended the last poem in the collection, 'The Description of Cooke-ham,' for the attention of both countesses. As mentioned before, 'The Description' – the first country-house poem published in English – relates to an estate where Lanier spent some

[56] Woods, *Lanyer*, pp. 9-10, 14; also Kari Boyd McBride, *Engendering authority in Æmilia Lanyer's Salve Deus Rex Iudæorum*, PhD dissertation, University of Arizona, 1994, pp. 199-200

[57] Richard T. Spence, *ODNB*, 'Clifford [*née* Russell], Margaret, countess of Cumberland (1560–1616).

ten weeks or so in the second half of 1604 with Countess Margaret and Lady Anne.[58] It is meant to remind them of this perhaps brief acquaintance.

Lanier's early circumstances and later bids for patronage place her consistently in 'forward' Protestant circles – either in fact or aspirationally. And this was also true in more personal, family contexts. For example, Lanier's mother, Margaret Johnson, appointed Stephen Vaughan as the executor of her will; Stephen was the brother of Anne Vaughan Lock, an ardent radical English Protestant, a poet and translator into English of several sermons of the French Geneva theologian John Calvin.[59] Vaughan Lock had dedicated her translation of Calvin (1560), together with several sonnets of her own meditating upon Psalms 51, to Katherine Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk. A copy of Emilia's book inscribed 'gift from Alfonso Lanyer' was found in the property of Thomas Jones, Archbishop of Dublin, known for his efforts to banish Catholic priests, for compelling the people to listen to reforming preachers, and for supporting King James's Plantation of Ulster with Protestants from England and Scotland. There is a consistency in all of these associations – great and small – which offers at least *prima facie* evidence of Emilia Lanier's spiritual inclinations, most probably of a Puritan/Calvinist complexion. Other such evidence attesting to the essence of her religious affiliations is outlined by Christina Luckyj.[60]

Much of the scholarship devoted to Lanier's poetry has focused on its 'proto-feminism'. This is not unreasonable, because the title poem of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum,* by far the longest – 230 rhyme royal stanzas – is most unusual in offering a sustained commentary on history and the Bible, while concentrating positively on the role of women – from Eve through to the Virgin Mary – within them. At its heart, in the sequence on 'The Passion of Christ', 'this female supporting cast in the drama of Good Friday is strengthened by a host of other biblical women, from Deborah and Judith to Pilate's wife, in a thoroughly feminized re-reading of the Bible'.[61] This may have been unusual, but the poem remains

[58] See Note 12.

[59] Woods, *Lanyer*, pp. 7-9, 15.

[60] Luckyi, 'Not Sparing Kings', pp.167-8.

[61] Helen Wilcox, 'Lanyer and the Poetry of Land and Devotion' in *Early Modern English Poetry: A Critical Companion*, ed. by Patrick Cheney, Andrew Hadfield and Garrett A. Sullivan Jr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 240-52 (p. 243). See also Achsah Guibbory, 'The Gospel and Aemilia: women and the sacred', in Grossman (ed.), *Æmilia Lanyer*, 191-211, where she argues that Lanier's 'interpretation [of the events surrounding the Crucifixion] is independent of church tradition' (p. 201), but never suggests Jewish heritage as a source of the unconventionality. Among those who have argued that the religious subject of the poem is secondary to its feminist agenda are Suzanne Trill, in 'Feminism versus religion: towards a re-reading of Æmilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*', *Renaissance and Reformation* 25: 4 (2001), 67-80; Lynette McGrath, in *Subjectivity and Women's Poetry in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate,

devoutly religious in character and broadly committed to the familiar biblical narrative.[62] Indeed, as Carol Blessing demonstrates, Lanier's work 'fits firmly within the theological parameters of the Church of England, in which tradition and commentary underpin scripture' and has clear affinities in conception, style and piety with works such as Gervase Markham's *The Tears of the Beloved: or, The Lamentations of St. John* (1600), *The Song of Mary, the Mother of Christ* (anon. 1601) and *Adams Tragedie* (ascribed to John Mabb, 1608), all impeccably Anglican in sentiment.[63]

There is evidence in the licensing of *Salve Deus* that Lanier expected her readership to recognize the volume as essentially religious. Lanier presumably followed the usual practice, taking the volume herself to Richard Mockett, Doctor of Divinity, for a licence; she may well have been asked to discuss its contents with him.[64] Mockett was one of the licensers appointed by the Church who reviewed texts before the Stationers' Company accepted them for publication. And he specialized in reviewing religious works, sometimes controversial ones: the following January, for example, he licensed John Donne's racy satire on the Jesuits, *Ignatius His Conclave*. Lanier's 'feminist' emphasis may have been unusual, but Mockett evidently found the work doctrinally acceptable and saw nothing exceptionable about its self-description as 'this holy work' (the dedication to Queen Anne, stanza 11); it was entered in the Stationers' Register 2 October 1610. For all its other dimensions, matters of mainstream Christian religious creed and faith are central to the poem and deserve to be taken seriously, as they would have been by the licenser.

The strength of Lanier's Christian faith can best be gauged from her poetic engagement in the 'Passion of Christ' section of 'Salve Deus', which 'treats the central moment in Christianity, the "manner of his Passion to unfold"' (*SD* 304) and anchors its narrative in a thicket of details from the Gospels. In fact, the poem alludes extensively to passages from the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament'.[65] As Andrew Fleck

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2002), p. 228; and Kimberley Anne Coles, in *Religion, Reform and Women's Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 149-50.

[62] See Patricia Demers, *Women's Writing in English: Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 148-53, 202-8.

[63] Carol Blessing, '"Most Blessed Daughters of Jerusalem": Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and Elizabethan and Jacobean Bible Commentary', *The Ben Jonson Journal* 15 (2008), 232-47 (p. 233).

[64] See Frank Brownlow, *Shakespeare, Harsnett and the Devils of Denham* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press), pp. 175-7, for Samuel Harnett's account of how licensing of books was usually conducted, face-to-face with the author.

[65] Andrew Fleck, 'To write of Him and Pardon Crave: Negotiating Biblical Authority in Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 47 (2017), 545-60 (p. 548).

points out, Lanier shows her great fluency in and devotion to the fundamentals of Christology and the Scriptures, while her knowledge of the Apocrypha and of annotations from the Geneva Bible confirm a more than common engagement with these subjects, suggesting a committed Christian faith of the Calvinist/Puritan variety.[66] Of course, this in itself does not preclude the possibility of Jewish ancestry on Lanier's part, but it is difficult to reconcile any of it with her being, at heart, of the Jewish faith, as some have claimed (see pp. 8-9).

Perhaps ironically, one feature of the poem which has been found suspect in this regard is Lanier's denunciation of the Jewish leaders who were ultimately responsible for Christ's crucifixion, calling them 'Monsters' (497), 'accursed crew' (513), 'rau'ning wolues' (567), 'Iewish wolues, that did our Sauiour bite' (684), 'The chiefest Hel-hounds of this hatefull crew' (689).[67] Ziva Shamir suspects here 'traces' of auto-Antisemitism (Jewish self-hate), suggesting that it derives from Lanier's pretence to be 'more religious than the Pope', or from a genuine abhorrence of her own Jewish legacy.[68] But this lacks historical perspective. In late Tudor and early Stuart England, the status of the Jews as a formerly 'elect nation' was particularly problematic in a Protestant country which now claimed (or at least sought) such a status for itself. This is well explained in Sharon Achinstein's account of the changing role played by the Jews in different editions of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (popularly known as his *Book of Martyrs*), first published in English in 1563 but running to many editions, and a key document in the self-definition of a Calvinist-inflected English Protestant state.[69] As she writes, in the Reformation 'theology, history, and ambivalent identities of Christians in the modern world intersected. At the centre of this intersection, we find Jews: Jews standing for the Catholic church from which Protestant England sought to separate; Jews standing for that which needed to be removed in the name of purity; Jews' continued existence standing as a challenge to the universal truth of Christian salvational history'.[70]

A far more plausible explanation of Lanier's Judeophobia (especially in the context of the patronage she sought) lies in this history of political-religious conflicts, overshadowed for Elizabethan Protestants by the Catholic persecutions of their faith in the previous reign. The history of these is the central focus of Foxe's great work; he had himself fled

[66] Ibid., 548-9, 551.

[67] See Debora Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 91-92, 112-113.

[68] Ziva Shamir, *A Rose for Æmilia: William Shakespeare and his Jewish Lady Friend* (Heb.) (Safra Publishing House 2018), p. 29. Translations from the Hebrew are by Professor Gath.

[69] Sharon Achinstein, 'John Foxe and the Jews', *Renaissance Quarterly* 54:1 (2001), 86-120 (p. 98).

[70] Ibid, 88.

to the continent during the Marian repression, only returning to England after Elizabeth I ascended the throne. His *Book of Martyrs* offers the most detailed account of the suffering of the Duchess of Suffolk, who also exiled herself on the continent. As we have noted, Lanier received some of her early upbringing with the Duchess's daughter, Susan Bertie, who had shared that exile as a child. So, in recounting the persecution of Christ by the Jews, Lanier implicitly recalls the persecution of the Protestant faithful at the hands of Roman Catholic zealots. This is the likeliest source of the Judeophobia in the poem, often a mark of 'forward' Protestantism at this time.

Such negative feelings are also a way of demarcating the positive object of Lanier's genuine devotion, which is to Christ the redeemer, whom 'wilful Jews to exercise their lust / With whips and taunts against their lord are bent' (lines 939-40). Christ's death and resurrection is the most perfect act of divine grace: 'In humble sort to yield his glorious soul, / By his deserts the foulest sins to clear' (lines 948-9). Elaine Beilin considers the Countess of Cumberland, the poem's dedicatee, 'the pivotal personality in the poem'.[71] The countess's love of God and his creation, her faith, piety, humility and charity, made her an (almost) perfect Christian, a devoted bride of Christ, to inspire and be followed by Lanier herself. It is easy to dismiss this as a naked play for patronage (as indeed it is), but it is of a piece with conventional Renaissance neo-platonic principles, which sought *laudando praecipere*, to teach by praising: to inspire fallible mortals by painting them an enticing picture in words of their (potentially) better selves. Only Christ is perfect; the countess – however devout – is only human, but in Lanier's praise may find inspiration to strive even harder to follow Christ's example, as Lanier in turn will follow hers. And this passes over from *Salve Deus* to 'The Description of Cooke-ham,' the estate which Lanier hails as 'where I first obtained / Grace from that Grace where perfect grace remained' (lines 1-2). Lanier obtained *favour* from Her *Grace*, the Countess, the embodiment of true *virtue*: the practical realities of patronage derive from the compassion of the aristocrat, which in turn derives from divine virtue, the example of Christ.

It is, in that sense, a delicate verbal game of compliment, in which everyone knew the rules – in good part because they mirrored the social rules by which they all lived. Society was strictly hierarchical, with aristocrats very much at the top and Lanier quite a few rungs beneath, arguably lower gentry by virtue of the fact that her musician husband was in minor royal employment, as her father had been (she was, as the title page of *Salve Deus* carefully tells us 'Wife to Captain Alfonso Lanier, Servant to the King's Majesty'). The countess was always the patron, Lanier the faithful client – the only thing unusual in

[71] Elaine V. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 191-3.

their relationship being that they were both women. In this verbal game it is impossible to measure what in modern times we should call sincerity: we never have access to Lanier's private feelings about this relationship. We have instead an extended demonstration of her learning, both classical and biblical, and her verbal skills – accomplishments which might make her fit for employment, or at the least for some small monetary reward. (The same is true, say, of Shakespeare addressing *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* to the Earl of Southampton). Most critically, in this instance, Lanier never puts a foot wrong about the Christian theology of *Salve Deus* – as seen from the perspective of a woman (or perhaps more widely of woman-kind) and of a convinced Protestant. And that includes, as we have argued, the passages where she vilifies the Jews – but also, for that matter, passages where she praises Jewish women, like heroines of the Old Testament or the Daughters of Jerusalem in the New: examples for the faithful to emulate alongside those they are to abhor. These are all foundations of the Christian faith she shares (pre-eminently) with the Countess of Cumberland.

6. The Heresy Takes Hold: Judaizing Emilia Lanier.

As we have seen, Roger Prior's claims about the Jewish origins of the Bassano family had taken firm hold by the late 1990s and, despite the resistance of Susanne Woods, Christina Luckyj and a few others, have continued to be cited – often quite casually – as fact or noteworthy possibility ever since. There have also been instances, however, where the issue has been taken far from casually, but has rather been made central to a scholarly understanding of Lanier's life and significance. We address here two instances of those: Barbara Bowen's essay, 'Aemilia Lanier and the invention of white womanhood' and Ziva Shamir's study, *A Rose for Æmilia: William Shakespeare and His Jewish Lady Friend* (Heb.).[72]

In their Introduction to *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England,* the collection in which Bowen's essay appears, Susan Frye and Karen Robertson outline how she 'explores the complex status of a daughter of a Jew who rewrites Christianity from a female point of view that reveals the extent to which the definition of a collective is predicated on racial exclusion'.[73] Bowen herself couches her

[72] Barbara Bowen, 'Aemilia Lanyer and the Invention of White Womanhood' in *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England*, ed. by Susan Frye and Karen Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 274-303. Professor Shamir's publication details are given in Note 68.

[73] Frye and Robertson, *Maids and Mistresses*, p. 13.

argument in the terms of poststructuralist identity theory, suggesting that 'of Jewish and Italian descent at a time when both were racialized and "race" was being newly mobilized as a political category, Lanyer writes womanhood as womanhood's Other', claiming casually that 'It is now known that Lanyer was the daughter of an Italian Jew' (pp. 275-6). For this claim she cites works by Lasocki, Prior and others who drew on them. But she moves on from this to intuit that Lanier's inner sensibility was, in effect, entirely constructed around a knowledge of her heritage and an appreciation of how this makes her different to – and lesser than – the women whose patronage she courts in *Salve Deus*: 'Without suggesting that Lanyer was in any simple way either "Jewish" or "black" [she cites lines 209-24 on the tragedy that befalls Cleopatra as a result of her adultery with Mark Antony] passages like this one position her in relation to a racialized Jewishness in early modern England' (p. 282). The Countess of Cumberland's Christian chastity stands out in stark contrast to the licentious sexuality of Egypt's ('black') queen, a contrast which (in Bowen's view) 'position[s]' Lanier herself with Cleopatra – though Lanier is not to be thought of '*in any simple way* as "Jewish" or "black"' (our emphasis).

So in what 'unsimple' ways might Lanier be thought to relate to Jewishness or blackness? Bowen speaks of 'the complicated negotiations with Jewishness that are at work in 'Salve Deus', noting that the poem 'does take on the narrative through which Jewish guilt was constructed and, crucially, it interrogates the discourse of race through which, in particular, Jewish "difference" was expressed' (p. 287). She continues: 'Although Lanyer may have represented her own darkness out of a sense that her location on the fringes of the ruling class, her public sexual history and, *especially*, her religious and ethnic heritage could position her as Other, her rhetoric gains power because of its historical situation during the early decades of the racialization of whiteness' (p. 289, our emphasis). Only late in this elaborate framework of 'positioning' and 'construction' does Bowen ask the commonsensical question: 'But could Lanyer have had any sense of herself as a Jew?' (p. 290), to which the answer has to be: hardly. Her own father – the only immediate source of any Jewish heritage – died when she was only seven, and thereafter she was raised by a Christian mother and in the household of Susan Bertie. It is hardly surprising, then, that 'Salve Deus' (in Bowen's own words) 'contains no direct expression of Jewish belief or historical experience that I have been able to identify – it is a work squarely within the tradition of Protestant female piety' (p. 287).

The fact is that Bowen's analysis of 'Salve Deus' accurately identifies Lanier's subject-position within it: she is a woman who has lived for a time within aristocratic society, with Bertie, with Hunsdon, with the Countess of Cumberland; but now she is no more than the wife of 'Captain Lanier', a royal musician, on the very fringes of that society, seeking re-admittance as a client for patronage. Bowen actually has no need to compound

Lanier's subject-position with (supposed) elements of 'Jewishness' and its supposed concomitant 'blackness' but chooses to add them for colour of a sort, in order to locate her in a cultural-historical moment when Europeans (and particularly white European upper-class women) were – she argues – beginning to be defined in contradistinction to Africans or people of Caribbean origin, or Jews.

Bowen dismisses Rowse's identification of Lanier as Shakespeare's mistress in the sonnets: 'Lanyer *is* the dark lady, but not in the sense that A.L. Rowse maintains' (p. 284). But she fails to grasp that Roger Prior's determination to identify the Bassanos – and so Lanier – as Jewish is at heart an effort to keep Rowse's argument alive. Since Forman had not described her as 'brown' it had been necessary to establish her dark colouring by other means, and Jewish heritage filled that bill. But the testimony of Ongaro, Ruffatti and Pio – not to mention the fact of an English mother whose colouring is entirely unknown – makes the whole line of reasoning untenable. Bowen's Jewish Lanier is no more than a rather uncomfortable – and certainly unnecessary – metaphor.

Professor Ziva Shamir's 2018 study, *A Rose for Æmilia*, makes a much more literal and thorough-going argument for Lanier's Jewish heritage, a heritage she is supposed fully to have absorbed by the age of seven. She concludes – unlike Bowen, partly from Lanier's own writing and partly from her supposed influence on other writers – that she was either Jewish, a Jewess disguised as Anglican, or a descendant of *conversos* (or crypto-Jews). A specific focus is on the supposed intimate liaison of Lanier with William Shakespeare, and beyond it the deep influence of her Jewish culture on Shakespeare's sonnets and plays, so pervasive as to call into doubt their originality. Shamir's methodology throughout is highly questionable and often based on demonstrably false assumptions.

For example, she tries to argue that the dedication of the 1609 quarto edition of Shakespeare's sonnets, 'TO. THE. ONLIE. BEGETTER. OF. THESE. INSVING. SONNETS. M^{r}. W.H…', is actually addressed to Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, who of course had taken Lanier as his mistress and who was, from 1594-96, patron of Shakespeare's playing company. This is only made possible by the supposition that Hunsdon was so closely related to the family of the Willoughbys de Eresby (the Duchess of Suffolk's family) that he adopted their name as part of his own – hence 'W.H' is 'Willoughby, Henry'. This in turn is her explanation of how Hunsdon might have met Lanier to begin with, that it would have come about because of close family links between the Duchess's family – to whom we do know that Lanier was attached in childhood – and that of Lord Hunsdon (who was the nephew of Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth I's mother). She supposes that Hunsdon would regularly have visited these relatives (see pp. 29, 30, 33, 34, 36, 51, 53, 55, 58). But a detailed study suggests these two aristocratic families were

not linked genealogically at all. The cause of this muddle might just possibly be explained as follows: Hunsdon's grandson, Henry Carey, 1st Earl of Dover (1580-1666), was in 1653 indicted for counterfeiting coinage and compelled to sell his Hunsdon estate to William Willoughby, 6th Lord Willoughby of Parham (1616-1673).[74] But this was after Lanier's own death in 1645 and the much earlier deaths of Hunsdon and Shakespeare. In fact, the entire scenario of Hunsdon's visits to his supposed Willoughby relatives, during which the young Lanier was driven to become his 'paramour', is a sheer bio-fiction.

Nothing concrete, in fact, suggests any closeness between Willoughbys and Hunsdons such as Shamir supposes. Nevertheless, she glosses over the fact with wordplay on 'Will' and 'Willow', which she argues are allusions to the supposed family, and concurrently an imaginary willow, symbolizing Emilia's unfortunate status as mistress of Hunsdon (erroneously Willoughby). Examples include Ophelia in *Hamlet* ('There is a willow grows aslant a brook', 4.7.137ff) and the 'Willow song' in *Othello*, sung by Desdemona (to, note, an Emilia), with its repeated refrain of 'willow, willow, willow' (4.3.38-54).[75] Shamir links all this to the famous passage in the book of Psalms 137:2 ('By the waters of Babylon …'), where the Jewish exiles hung their harps on willow trees 'symbolizing the tragic life of the heroine who was abandoned, forlorn and wretched like a barren tree that does not give fruits'.[76] So Lanier's supposed Jewish heritage seeps into Shakespeare's verse. Another example is Touchstone's phrase in *As You Like It*, 'The truest poetry is the most feigning' (3.3.15-16), which she claims is similar to expressions scripted by two Medieval Jewish writers (Ibn Ezra poet, Bible commentator and philosopher, and Manoello Giudeo, poet and author). Therefore, according to Shamir, this expression has been conveyed by Lanier to her 'friend' William Shakespeare. This ignores the fact that the relationship between poetry and falsehood had been a common trope from at least the time of Plato and had been rehearsed at length in Shakespeare's time in Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* – a much more likely source.

Shamir expands on her supposed will/willow connotations in Chapter 3 of *A Rose for Emilia*, entitled 'The riddle of the popular book that appeared in six editions'. This 'book' turns out to be a pamphlet, entitled *Willobie His Avisa*; the given names of its author and the writer of the introduction are most probably pseudonyms. It was published in London

[74] William Willoughby of Parham was the great-great-grandson of the 1st Baron Willoughby of Parham, who was a cousin of Katherine Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk. The Willoughbys of Parham were a cadet branch of the much more venerable Willoughbys de Eresby.

[75] All quotations from Shakespeare are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, Second Edition, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus (W.W. Norton and Company: New York, 2008).

[76] Shamir, p. 37.

in 1594 and has since become a notorious graveyard for literary sleuths determined that it is a *roman à clef* recounting real events of the late Tudor era, which only they can decipher.[77] It tells of an extraordinarily chaste innkeeper's wife, whom several men before her marriage, and five men after it, try in vain to seduce. Shamir's thesis here is that Lanier was the actual author of the pamphlet. Her aim was to 'cleanse herself from the guilt and disgrace which were affixed to the longstanding life of concubinage [with Lord Hunsdon] that was her lot during six-seven years…'.[78] Her key to this decryption is, yet again, word play – here on 'Willowbie, Willowbe, Willowbego,' all variants of the name Willoughby, which Shamir ascribes to Lord Hunsdon.[79] But this hypothesis collapses in its entirety, as we have shown, because Hunsdon was simply not a Willoughby.

Chapter Six in Professor Shamir's *A Rose for Æmilia* is entitled: 'What does Shakespeare share with RaDaK? Post-biblical sources concealed between the text lines'.[80] These supposed 'sources' are from medieval Jewish scholarship and pose for her a conundrum: how would writers like Shakespeare or Ben Jonson have access to such writing? The answer to the puzzle lies in the book's determination to 'Judaize' Emilia Lanier and to assume that she conveyed something of her supposed Jewish learning to both of these playwrights. For Jonson, Shamir explores *The Alchemist*, dissecting a crazed outburst by Doll Common, a common (though resourceful) prostitute in Act 4, Scene 5:

> And so we may arrive by Talmud skill,
> And profane Greek to raise the building up
> Of Helen's house against the Ismaelite,
> King of Togarma and his Habergeons
> Brimstony, blue and fiery; and the force
> Of King Abaddon and the Beast of Cittim [Kittim][81]

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[77] See, for example, Pauline K. Angell, 'Light on the Dark Lady: A Study of Some Elizabethan Libels' *PMLA* 52. (1937), 652–74; Barbara N. De Luna, *Queen Declined: An Interpretation of 'Willobie His Avisa'* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970); Robert R. Prechter Jr., 'On the Authorship of *Willobie His Avisa*', *Brief Chronicles 3* (2011), 135-167.

[78] Shamir, p. 58.

[79] Ibid., 53, 55, 56.

[80] RaDaK is the Hebrew acronym of Rabbi David Kimchi (1160-1235), a Provencal medieval Jewish rabbi, grammarian and biblical commentator.

[81] Lines 25-30: *Togarma* (Genesis 10:3) was a great grandchild of Noah, and the name of a people. *Habergeons* were the armour of the four horsemen of the apocalypse (Revelation 9:17). '*Brimstony … fiery*': cf. Genesis 19:24, 'Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; Revelation 20:10, 'And the Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone'. *Abaddon* (Revelation 9:11), demon of destruction, king of an army of locusts. *Beast of Cittim*: the apocalyptic vision in Daniel 7. Four beasts symbolize four kingdoms. Cittim (Genesis 10:4, a

Which Rabbi David Kimchi, Onkelos,
And Aben−Ezra do interpret Rome (lines 25-32).[82]

From where or from whom had Ben Jonson learned about the three post-biblical sages mentioned in the last two lines, Rabbi David Kimchi, Onkelos, and Aben [Ibn]− Ezra?[83] The riddle is supposedly resolved by Shamir's speculation that both Jonson and Shakespeare looked 'to approach Emilia Bassano [Lanyer], mistress of Henry Carey, 1st Baron Hunsdon. They were happy to include her in their plans, and she contributed clandestinely ideas, plot material and motives to their works' (pp. 84-5). The pair of them were hoping (according to Shamir) to achieve through Emilia the support and patronage of Hunsdon.

We already know from Forman, of course, that Lanier had been Hunsdon's mistress, which lends all this a veneer of plausibility. But it falls apart when we begin to think of any possible time-line. Hunsdon washed his hands of Emilia Bassano when she became pregnant in 1592 and married her off to Alfonso Lanier. There is no evidence, in Forman or anywhere else, that they remained in contact of any sort after that date. By 1592 Shakespeare was barely established as a playwright in London and cannot be located with any specific company or associated with Hunsdon, while for most of 1591 and 1592 Jonson (who by then had no literary career at all) saw service with English forces in the Low Countries.[84] In 1594 Hunsdon became patron of a new acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, of which Shakespeare was a member – so from that date he hardly needed Lanier to act as his intermediary.

Jonson, on the other hand, cannot be associated with writing plays earlier than 1597 – a year after Hunsdon died. Moreover, *The Alchemist* in particular can be dated quite firmly in 1610, some fourteen years after Hunsdon's death.[85] And the mystery of how Jonson came across the names of those Jewish scholars – and indeed the rag-tag of Biblical quotations earlier in the passage – proves to be no mystery at all. The key is Hugh

grandson of Noah, and name of a people) alludes to Assyria or Rome. Quotations from *The Alchemist* are from the edition by Peter Holland and William Sherman in *The Cambridge Ben Jonson*, 7 vols., gen. ed. by David Bevington, Ian Donaldson and Martin Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3: pp. 541-710.

[82] On Kimchi, see Note 70; Onkelos, a Roman national, converted to Judaism, authored the Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch during the early 2nd century. Abraham Ibn Ezra (1092-1164) was a Jewish biblical commentator in Muslim Spain.

[83] Shamir, pp. 83-4.

[84] Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 94-7.

[85] See Holland and Sherman, *The Alchemist*, p. 544.

Broughton, the greatest English Christian Hebraist of his generation.[86] He is mentioned twice in *The Alchemist*, firstly in explaining Doll's 'madness'. Face tells Sir Epicure Mammon:

> She is a most rare scholar,
> And is gone mad with studying Broughton's works.
> If you but name a word touching the Hebrew,
> She falls into her fit and will discourse
> So learnedly of genealogies
> As you would run mad to hear her, sir. (2.3.237-42)

Mammon predictably fails to heed Face's warning, and this is indeed what brings on Doll's 'fit', as the play's con-artists planned all along:

> *Mammon*: Alas, I talked
> Of a fifth monarchy I would erect
> With the philosopher's stone, by chance, and she
> Falls on the other four straight.
> *Face*: Out of Broughton! (4.5.25-8)

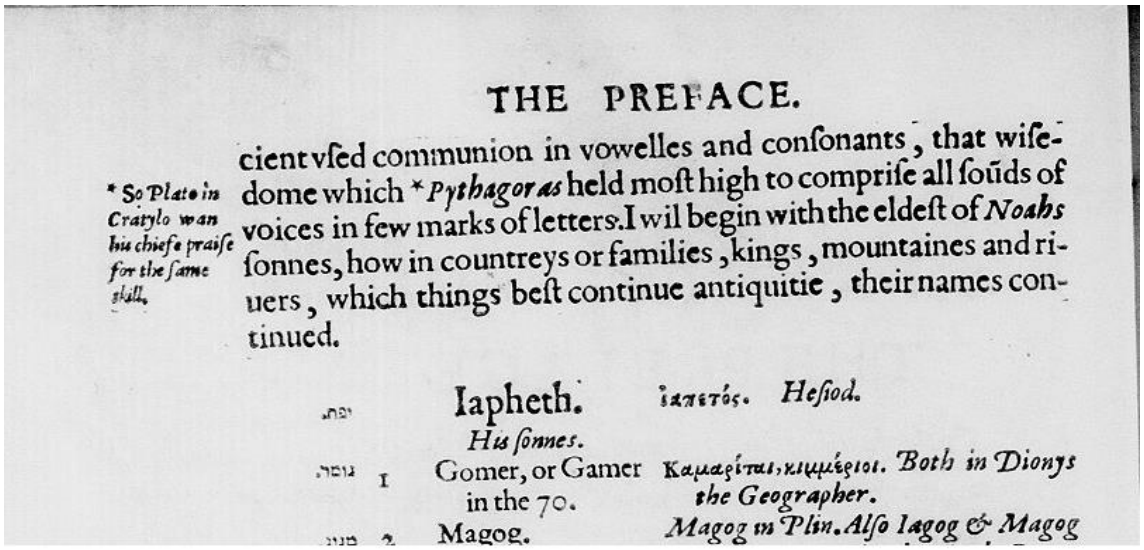
It is of course ludicrous that a common prostitute should be spouting pseudo-scholarly Hebrew gibberish. But there is method in Jonson's madness, since Doll's crazed language sharply satirizes Broughton's use of Hebrew words and Rabbinical terms in his radical theology.[87] As was widely known, Broughton had been excluded from the translation of the King James Authorised Version Bible (to be published the following year) because he channelled his great learning into making supposed literal sense of the genealogies and timelines of the Bible, extrapolating from them the date of Armageddon and the Day of Judgement yet to come. Much of this is now virtually unreadable, but it fuelled the zeal of various Puritan sects of the day, who believed that the End of Days and the Second Coming of Christ were imminent – and that they were God's instruments in preparing for these. These include the Anabaptists in the play itself, Tribulation and Ananias, whose pious cant Jonson satirizes as self-seeking hypocrisy. These threads in the play's satire merge again when Mammon, his dreams of endless wealth and pleasure punctured, is

[86] Broughton (1549-1612) championed the literal truth of biblical chronology and genealogy. See Kirsten Macfarlane, *Biblical Scholarship in an Age of Controversy: The Polemical World of Hugh Broughton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[87] See Andrew Fleck, 'Substance, Satire, and Style: The Language of Reform,' *Reformation* 26:1 (2021), 1-7. Professor Gath is grateful to Professor Fleck for stimulating discussions on the subject of Hugh Broughton and Ben Jonson.

converted and resolves: ‘I will go mount a turnip-cart and preach / The end o’the world within these two months’ (5.5.81-2).

We can even trace where exactly Jonson found the wording for Doll’s ‘fit’ in Broughton. All the Biblical, post-biblical and Rabbinical elements in Doll’s ‘fit’ can clearly be traced at once to his *The Concent of Scripture* of 1590. The first six lines of the fit are quoted almost verbatim from a passage at the very beginning of the ‘Preface’ of one particular edition (see Figures 2 and 3).



THE PREFACE.

cient vſed communion in vowelles and conſonants, that wiſe-
dome which * *Pythagoras* held moſt high to compriſe all ſoũds of
voices in few marks of letters. I wil begin with the eldeſt of *Noahs*
ſonnes, how in countreys or families, kings, mountaines and ri-
uers, which things beſt continue antiquitie, their names con-
tinued.

* So Plato in Cratylo wan his chiefe praiſe for the ſame skill.

Iapheth. ἰαπετός. *Heſiod.*

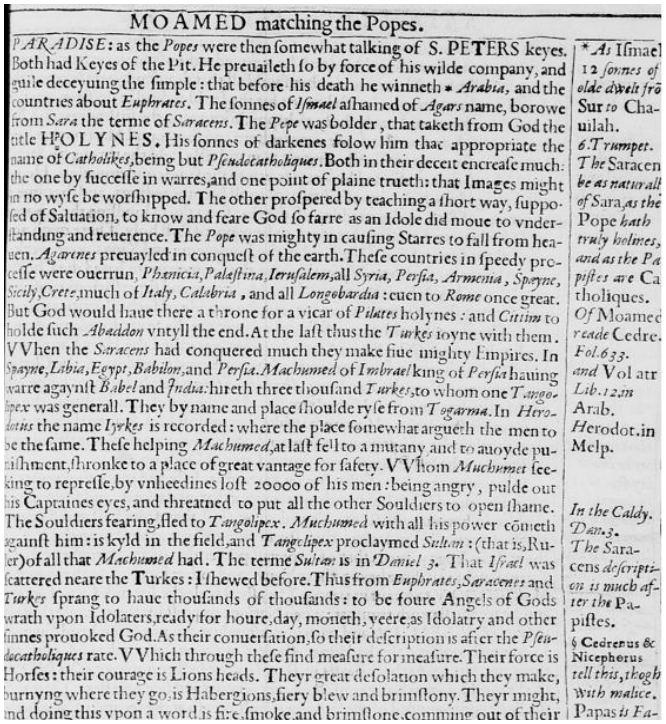
His ſonnes.

Gomer, or Gamer in the 70. Καμαξῖται, κιμμέριοι. *Both in Dionys the Geographer.*

Magog. *Magog in Plin. Alſo Iagog & Magog*

Fig. 2. A section from Broughton’s *A Concent of Scripture* (STC 3851). Ben Jonson cited almost verbatim five lines in *The Alchemist*:

DOLL: *Where, then, a learned linguist*
Shall see the ancient used communion
Of vowels and consonants – …
A wisdom, which Pythagoras held most high –
… To comprise
All sounds of voices, in few marks of letters (4.5.18-23)



MOAMED matching the Popes.

PARADISE: as the *Popes* were then ſomewhat talking of S. PETERS keyes. Both had Keyes of the Pit. He preuaileth ſo by force of his wilde company, and guile deceyuing the ſimple: that before his death he winneth * *Arabia*, and the countries about *Euphrates*. The ſonnes of *Iſmael* aſhamed of *Agars* name, borowe from *Sara* the terme of *Saracens*. The *Pope* was bolder, that taketh from God the title HOLYNES. His ſonnes of darkenes folow him that appropriate the name of *Catholikes*, being but *Pſeudocatholiques*. Both in their deceit encreaſe much: the one by ſucceſſe in warres, and one point of plaine trueth: that Images might in no wyſe be worſhipped. The other proſpered by teaching a ſhort way, ſuppoſed of Saluation, to know and feare God ſo farre as an Idole did moue to vnderſtanding and reuerence. The *Pope* was mighty in cauſing Starres to fall from heauen. *Agarenes* preuayled in conqueſt of the earth. Theſe countries in ſpeedy proceſſe were ouerrun, *Phœnicia*, *Paleſtina*, *Ieruſalem*, all *Syria*, *Perſia*, *Armenia*, *Spayne*, *Sicily*, *Crete*, much of *Italy*, *Calabria*, and all *Longobardia*: euen to *Rome* once great. But God would haue there a throne for a vicar of *Pilates* holynes: and *Cittim* to holde ſuch *Abaddon* vntyll the end. At the laſt thus the *Turkes* ioyne with them. VVhen the *Saracens* had conquered much they make fiue mighty Empires. In *Spayne*, *Libia*, *Egypt*, *Babilon*, and *Perſia*. *Machumed* of *Imbrael* king of *Perſia* hauing warre agaynſt *Babel* and *India*: hireth three thouſand *Turkes*, to whom one *Tangolipex* was generall. They by name and place ſhoulde ryſe from *Togarma*. In *Herodotus* the name *Iyrkes* is recorded: where the place ſomewhat argueth the men to be the ſame. Theſe helping *Machumed*, at laſt fell to a mutany and to auoyde puniſhment, ſhronke to a place of great vantage for ſafety. VVhom *Machumet* ſeeking to repreſſe, by vnheedines loſt 20000 of his men: being angry, pulde out his Captaines eyes, and threatned to put all the other Souldiers to open ſhame. The Souldiers fearing, fled to *Tangolipex*. *Machumed* with all his power cõmeth againſt him: is kyld in the field, and *Tangelipex* proclaymed *Sultan*: (that is, Ruler) of all that *Machumed* had. The terme *Sultan* is in *Daniel 3*. That *Iſrael* was ſcattered neare the Turkes: I ſhewed before. Thus from *Euphrates*, *Saracenes* and *Turkes* ſprang to haue thouſands of thouſands: to be foure Angels of Gods wrath vpon Idolaters, ready for houre, day, moneth, yeere, as Idolatry and other ſinnes prouoked God. As their conuerſation, ſo their deſcription is after the *Pſeudocatholiques* rate. VVhich through theſe find meaſure for meaſure. Their force is Horſes: their courage is Lions heads. Theyr great defolation which they make, burnyng where they go, is Habergions, fiery blew and brimſtony. Theyr might, and doing this vpon a word is fire, ſmoke and brimſtone, comming out of their

* *As* Iſmael 12 *ſonnes of* olde *dwelt frõ* Sur *to* Chauilah. 6 *Trumpet.* *The* Saracen *be as naturall of* Sara, *as the* Pope *hath truly holines, and as the Papiſtes are* Catholiques. *Of* Moamed *reade* Cedre. *Fol.633.* *and* Vol atr *Lib.12.in* Arab. Herodot.in Melp.

In the Caldy. Dan.3. *The* Saracens *deſcription is much after the* Papiſtes.

§ Cedrenus & Nicepherus *tell this, though with malice.* Papas *is Fa-*

Fig. 3. *A Concent of Scripture* by Hugh Broughton, (1590) STC 3851, title of page 'MOAMED matching the Popes': Ben Jonson's source for the Biblical and Hebrew elements in *The Alchemist*. The words Cittim, Abaddon, and Togarma from Doll's 'fit' are mid-page, as well as various expressions in the lower two lines (Habergions, fiery blew, etc.). For further explanation see the text.

Doll's (or rather, Jonson's) borrowing from Broughton is clearly announced in the text itself and we have known about his precise source since at least the time of Herford and Simpson's great edition of his works, where any competent scholar could have found it in the annotation to the play.[88] Jonson had no need of Lanier's help to write this passage.

Professor Shamir ends this section of her book with the contention that 'One of the most recognized monologues of Shakespeare (*The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock in Act 3 Scene 1) would not have been created, had not someone, a scion of Israel, whispered in his ear RaDaK's words that are based on Ibn Ezra's exegesis'.[89] This refers, of course, to the

[88] See C.H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson (eds.), *Ben Jonson*, 11 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925-52), 10, p. 105. Jonson's own Hebrew erudition, on show in his *English Grammar*, was probably not very extensive and confined to grammar, perhaps learned in his last year at Westminster School (see Donaldson, *Ben Jonson*, pp. 75, 84-5). We cannot totally preclude the possibility that Jonson was aware of the Hebrew lore in Doll's speech from other sources, but their closeness to the passages in Broughton's *Concent of Scripture* makes it an unnecessary speculation.

[89] Shamir, *Rose for Aemilia*, p. 88. Prior Roger makes a similar remark about the Jewish 'Dark Lady': 'It is likely that Shakespeare gave central dramatic roles to a Venetian Jew and a Venetian Moor partly because

famous ‘Hath not a Jew eyes’ sequence. RaDaK did indeed contest the anti-Jewish sentiments of his time (12th/13th century). Basing his comments upon Ibn Ezra, a Jewish biblical commentator of Muslim Spain, he explained that Jews are human beings; physically they are not different from non-Jews, and thus do not exhibit, for example, horns or a tail. But no one has ever demonstrated a verbal link between RaDaK’s words and Shakespeare’s or any other specific connection; they merely express similar sentiments, at least until Shylock changes the tenor of his comparison of the Jew with the gentile: ‘And if you wrong us shall we not seek revenge?’ (3.1.56). Shakespeare’s recognition of the Jews’ common humanity has a sting in the tail which is most un-RaDaK-like.

It is improbable, therefore, that Shakespeare needed ‘a scion of Israel’ to seek out a rabbinical source for this passage. But if he did, what are the odds that Lanier could have helped him out? The suggestion that she had any kind of Hebrew tutoring as a child, or had some knowledge of Judaic sacred texts beyond those familiar to educated people in the 16th and 17th centuries is unlikely. Shamir claims that Emilia was predisposed by her ‘Jewish’ father to Jewish cultural and religious topics during her childhood:

> The young woman’s [Emilia] command of the literature of the sages [Mishnah and Talmud] and Kabbalah, which is evident from the lines of her poems, leaves no doubt as to the education and information which she absorbed in her father’s home. Her father, who apparently did not forget his scholarship, took care to expand the horizons of his talented daughter, and planted in her a certain affinity for his lost world, a trace of which had seeped into her veins, and remained in her throughout her life, namely *Girsa Deyankuta*.[90]

This is implausible in the extreme. As Ongaro, Ruffatti and especially Stephano Pio have shown, the family has been officially Christian (of whatever denomination) for at least five generations, back before the Jewish expulsions and forced conversions in the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century (see pp. 13-14). Even if we accepted that Emilia’s origin was Jewish (which we categorically deny), the family would necessarily have assimilated and gradually glided into the local Christian population. So it is all but impossible that her father, Baptista, had retained anything substantial from a supposed Jewish heritage, much less that he could instil it into his daughter by her seventh year. By

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he was in love with a woman who was both [Jewish and the Dark Lady] ... maybe we owe to one of their members [the Jewish Bassanos] the creation of Shylock and Othello’ (see Lasocki and Prior, p. 137).

[90] Shamir, p. 97. *Girsa Deyankute* is an Aramaic expression borrowed into Hebrew, meaning ‘installed and memorized in early childhood’.

the same token it is utterly implausible that 'Emilia Bassano, a descendant of a Jewish Venetian family, was brought to the English court and was hence coerced to undergo a religious conversion'.[91]

Let us examine the extensive Biblical quotations, expressions and allusions (Old and New Testament, Apocrypha) in Lanier's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* to see if we can find what Shamir supposes to be 'evident from the lines of her poems'. Is there any evidence of familiarity with the Hebrew language (*Girsa Deyankuta*)? Kari Boyd McBride has convincingly demonstrated that the biblical elements of her poetry were derived from two core sources: English liturgical material of her time and the Geneva Bible.[92] In respect of the liturgical element, she has painstakingly analysed the linguistic foundations of the wording and imagery of Lanier's poems and established that the *Book of Common Prayer*, including its version of the Psalms, were their principal source: '[Lanier's] quotation argues for her regular attendance at public services, precisely what one would expect of a woman fostered in noble households and at the court of Elizabeth'.[93] That version of the Psalms was borrowed from the authorized Bishops' Bible, which was translated from the Latin Vulgate, rather than from the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek – so there is no evidence here of Lanier's first-hand acquaintance with Hebrew. Similarly, it is notable that several passages in 'Salve Deus' which demonstrate a fervent devotion to Christ are derived from poetic imagery in 'The Song of Songs', but are quoted verbatim from the Geneva Bible, 'providing us with a picture of Lanier writing the "Salue Deus" with that version [the Geneva Bible] open beside her for reference'.[94] This removes another plank from the hypothesis that Lanier had any substantial knowledge of Hebrew, as argued in *A Rose for Aemilia*, based upon supposed juggling of the Hebrew text in 'The Song of Songs' and elsewhere.[95] Of course, 'The Song of Songs' is an inherent part of the Jewish Scriptures, *The Tanakh*, as well as in all versions of the Christian Bible. But there is nothing in Lanier's borrowings from it which betrays any interest in or knowledge of the

[91] Shamir, p. 78.

[92] Kari Boyd McBride, *Engendering authority in Aemilia Lanyer's 'Salve deus rex judaeorum'.* PhD dissertation, University of Arizona, 1994, pp. 192-200.

[93] McBride, p. 193. The prayer book in the English language was used in the Anglican Communion after the English Reformation. Lanier's prayer book was probably one of the versions originally edited by Archbishop Cranmer in 1542. The Psalms in the Book of Prayer followed the version in the authorized Bishops' Bible.

[94] See, for example, Song of Songs 5:13 'his lippes like lilies dropping downe pure myrrhe' (Geneva Bible 1560); *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, 'lips, like Lillies, dropping downe pure mirrhe,' line 1319. See McBride, pp. 199-200. Andrew Fleck largely agrees with McBride on Lanier's quotations from the Geneva Bible; see Fleck, 546-7, 551-4.

[95] Shamir, pp. 43, 44.

earlier Hebrew text and its traditions; everything is in accordance with the Christian interpretation of this love poem as an allegory of Christ love for his bride, the Church.[96]

There are similar flaws in Shamir's attempt to argue that the title of *Salve Deus* is based on a Hebrew word play: 'It is possible that the title of Emilia's book, whose Hebrew translation is 'hodu le He ['He' is the fourth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, representing the name of God. The meaning becomes 'Give thanks to G-d'] melekh hayehudim' alludes to the name of her only daughter Odyllia [splitting up the sequence of letters of the Hebrew spelling version of Oddylia, creates in Hebrew 'I give thanks to God']'.[97] As we have seen, there is no evidence in her writings that Lanier had any training in Hebrew; moreover, the woman's name Odillya and its different spelling versions (Oddilia, Odelia, Ottilia etc.) derives from old Germanic and means homeland. It was also found during the Middle Ages as names of legendary female Christian saints.[98] The name was not as unusual as it may now seem, appearing in Elizabethan plays, such as in Anthony Munday's comedy *Fedele and Fortunio*, published in 1584 (Attilia), and in the anonymous melodrama *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall* (Odillia), written before 1600.

In short, Ziva Shamir's attempt to argue for Lanier as a mediator of Hebrew and Jewish lore to Ben Jonson and Shakespeare, always implausible, fails on multiple grounds. The two illustrious bards had no need of help from Emilia Bassano Lanier as their ghost writer and she herself shows no knowledge of Jewish culture beyond what a committed Christian would find in English translations of the Old Testament.[99]

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[96] The common Jewish exegesis of the Song of Songs is that the almighty is symbolized as a bridegroom whose bride is the people of Israel. The Christian interpretation allegorically figures Christ as the bridegroom of his Church (see Beilin, *Redeeming Eve*, p. 199). Susanne Woods suggests that in the allegory of 'Salve Deus' '[Christ is] the Bridegroom of the women for whom Lanier writes' (see *Lanyer*, p. 130 and fn. 13 for multiple examples). See also Ed Simon, who somewhat anticipated Shamir in 'Amelia Lanyer, the First Female Jewish English Poet and Shakespeare's Dark Lady?' in *Tablet* online (22 April 2016: www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/amelia-lanyer-english-poet). The question-mark suggests an element of doubt, but the article enthusiastically identifies Lanier as 'probably' Jewish, as when Simon thinks he detects tell-tale Jewish elements in 'Salve Deus': 'And what would being enrolled in the "eternal book of heaven" be but being inscribed in the Book of Life? And what Zion was Lanyer dreaming of when she wrote "Yay, look how far the east is from the west," eerily similar to the most celebrated line of the medieval Jewish poet Yehuda Halevi who wrote "My heart is in the east, and I am in the uttermost west?"' The symbolism may derive from the Hebrew *Tanakh* but it had been thoroughly Christianised by the Church and it is the latter to which Lanier cleaves.

[97] Shamir, p. 32.

[98] See Elizabeth Withycombe, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947).

[99] We do not suggest that it is impossible that Lanier knew Shakespeare and/or Jonson, since they moved to a degree in similar circles. Jonson, for example, had also published with Richard Bonian, the publisher

7. Conclusions

Barbara Bowen and Ziva Shamir show in different ways the scholarly dangers attendant on an uncritical acceptance of the myth of Lanier's Jewish ethnicity and/or faith. Both are misguided, building complex structures of supposition on foundations which are nothing but sand. Mainstream work on Lanier has, for the most part, played down possible Jewish connections, but they never completely disappear. To take two examples from 2020: Emily Buffey speaks of Lanier's father as 'a musician of Venetian, possibly exiled Jewish, descent'; and Megan Herrold mentions Lanier's 'possibly Jewish heritage' in an essay which focuses on the Christian tradition of her poetry.[100] But these are not the only legacy of the myth of Lanier's Jewishness. It has also become a commonplace of her role in popular fiction, and here the full virulence of Prior's model of the Jewish whore of a Dark Lady is alive and well. It is a theme noted in studies by Emily Buffey and Susanne Woods. Buffey cites Christopher Rush's novel *Will*, in which Lanier is described as 'the Jewish-Italian whore' and Charlene Bell's *Dark Lady: A Novel of Emilia Bassano Lanier*, where we find '"You black Jewess she-devil!" he spluttered'.[101] Woods adds to these, but prefaces her remarks with a key observation: 'There is a shade of fiction pretending to be fact that is an inevitable prelude to any fictionalizing of Lanyer: A. L. Rowse's belief that she was "the Dark Lady" of Shakespeare's sonnets' (p. 57). Mary Sharratt's *The Dark Lady's Mask* clearly subscribes to this; Woods wryly observes that she 'makes good use of what we know about Aemilia in creating her own definitely dark, definitely Jewish, Emilia …' (60), while in *The Heavens* Sandra Newman's 'Emilia is … very much Rowse's Emilia minus the problems. She is dark, Italian-Jewish …' (62). Grace Tiffany, however, adds a postmodern twist: 'Tiffany picks up on one possible (even probable)

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of *Salve Deus*. And Lanier's 'The Description of Cooke-ham' and Jonson's 'To Penshurst' were the first two country house poems in English (there are Latin precedents in Horace and Martial), perhaps written within a year or so of each other, which may suggest that one influenced the other. Jonson is usually credited with being first, but the evidence is against this. 'Cooke-ham' must have been written by the time *Salve Deus* was entered in the Stationers' Register in October 1610; Jonson's latest biographer dates 'To Penshurst' in 'the late summer of 1611' (Donaldson, *Ben Jonson*, p. 287). Jonson could, of course, just have read *Salve Deus*.

[100] See Emily Buffey, 'The Mask of Shakespeare's "Dark Lady": Fictional Representations of Aemilia Lanyer in the Twenty-First Century Historical Novel', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 21.2 (2020): 1-29 (p. 11); Megan Herrold, 'Compassionate Petrarchanism: The *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* Tradition in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*', *Studies in Philology* 117.2 (2020), 365-96 (p. 366).

[101] In 'Mask of Shakespeare's "Dark Lady"', Buffey cites Christopher Rush, *Will* (London: Beautiful Books, 2007), p. 304; Charlene Bell, *Dark Lady: A Novel of Emilia Bassano Lanier* (Tempe, AZ: She Writes Press, 2017), p. 292.

fact: that Lanyer may have been as pale as her mother. From this Emilia decides to create her own fiction: a dark lady, Italian-Jewish, who speaks little English… in order to meet the erotic fantasies of the men around her' (63).[102] Tiffany, in effect, deconstructs the post-Rowse myth of Lanier, turning it on its head in order to explain its potency – its capacity for fulfilling men's (and, in some cases, women's) erotic fantasies. That is why it appears to be a genie that will be extraordinarily difficult to put back in its bottle.

Fictional Laniers have also appeared on the stage. Morgan Lloyd Malcolm's *Emilia* was commissioned for Shakespeare's Globe, where it played in August 2018 with an all-female cast. Casting was also colour-blind and all three actors who played Lanier at different ages were of Afro-Caribbean origin, a pattern followed in subsequent stagings. The play is unabashedly feminist, and while it alludes to the Bassanos' alien origins, the emphasis is heavily on the struggle of women in patriarchal societies, then and now. Lauren Gunderson's *The Book of Will* (2017) focuses on the drama of publishing the Shakespeare Folio of 1623, the first collection of most of his plays. Lanier has only a small role, but it is as Lady Aemilia Lanyer – a wealthy English aristocrat, certainly not Jewish, but with fond memories of her time as Will's 'Dark Lady', an identification – but not a characterisation – she shares with Lloyd Malcolm's Emilia. And since Gunderson is now the most-performed living playwright in the USA the conviction that Lanier was indeed the 'Dark Lady' is probably beyond suppression.

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The present essay is restricted to a single aspect of Emilia Bassano Lanier's life and work, her alleged Jewish origin. We have examined this topic from many possible angles: correcting false notions in whatever is claimed to be her mainstream biography, examining her creed, deliberating whatever is known about her appearance (see the Appendix), reviewing little known Italian and Jewish historical sources and contesting her seeming proficiency in Hebrew and Judaic sources. We have (we think) refuted beyond reasonable doubt the claims that Lanier was Jewish or of Jewish ancestry, which all ultimately stem from Roger Prior's now refuted conjectures – originally in support of A.L. Rowse's equally unsubstantiated assertion that Lanier was the Dark Lady of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. In US law 'fruit of the poisonous tree' is a legal metaphor used to describe evidence that is obtained from an illegal original source. It also seems a

[102] In 'Lanyer: The Dark Lady' Woods cites Mary Sharratt, *The Dark Lady's Mask: A Novel of Shakespeare's Muse* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2016); Sandra Newman, *The Heavens* (London: Granta Books, 2020); Grace Tiffany, *Paint: A Novel About Shakespeare's Dark Lady* (Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2013).

suitable metaphor to describe the subsequent flow of misinformation about Lanier's ethnic origins and religious faith.

Appendix: Lanier's recaptured visage

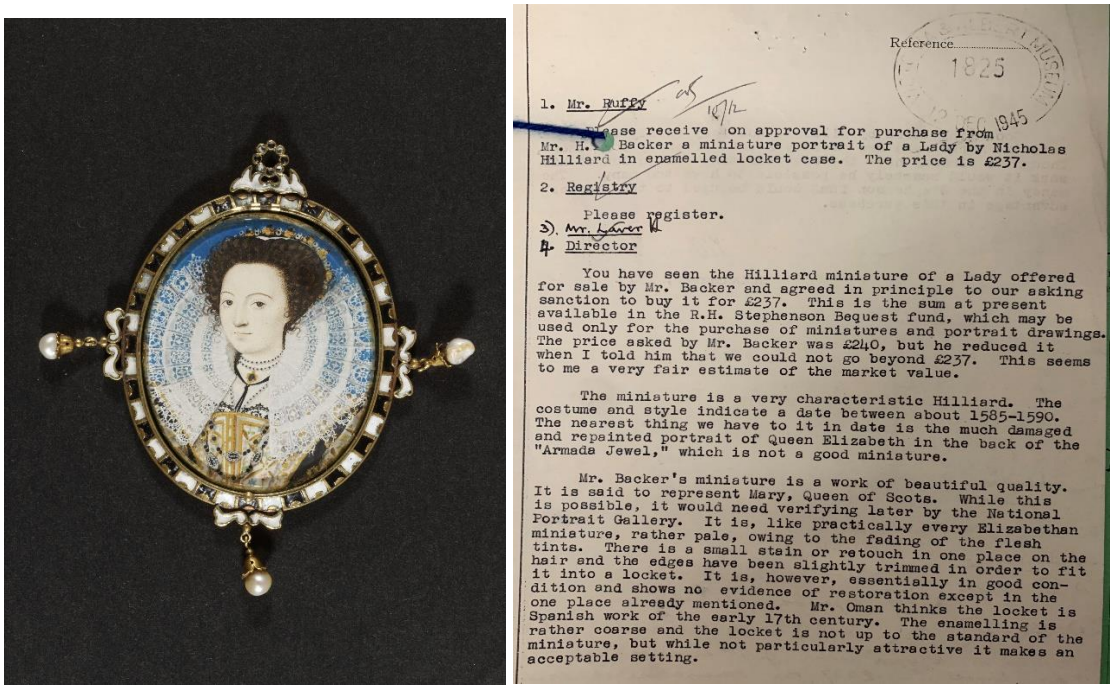
Several of the portraits by Nicholas Hilliard now owned by the Victoria and Albert Museum are of anonymous individuals. John Hudson has claimed that one of them, (P.8 1945), a miniature of an unknown woman ca. 1590, portrays Emilia Lanier.[103] And in 2003 the actor and playwright George Antony Haygarth conjectured that another of these miniatures might represent Lanier: 'An unknown woman, aged 26', also at the V and A (P.134-1910). However, there is neither external evidence nor any particular features of either miniature that could distinguish them from any other gentlewomen of the late Elizabethan era. A third portrait, an unknown 'woman in black' discussed by Susanne Woods, is in the collection of descendants of Henry Carey, and resides in their private apartment at Berkeley Castle. A painting of Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, is publicly displayed in Berkeley's picture gallery. Both these pictures are dated 1592 and are attributed to the artist Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger and may be linked. However, here too, there are several obstacles to determining with sufficient reliability the identity of this woman and the suggestion that the 'woman in black' is Emilia Lanier is far from proven.[104]

Both women in Hilliard's portraits seem to have dark hair and greenish-hazel-brown eyes and thus, in 16th century London, might have been considered Italian or Spanish – or indeed Jewish. On the other hand, the 'woman in black' has a fair complexion, reddish-brown hair and green eyes and would have been easily categorized as English or Scottish. As we know from modern genetics, eye and hair colours are polygenic traits. They are not transmitted genetically according to a simple Mendelian model, with brown being dominant and blue being recessive. As far as one can assess after more than 400 years, the eye-colourings in the three portraits are all between greenish-hazel-brown and green – the colours with the highest prevalence in Europe – so this proves nothing.

[103] Hudson, *Shakespeare's Dark Lady*, pp. 299-300, Note 14.

[104] See Woods, *Lanyer*, pp. 17-18, 168. and Note 41; and 'Lanyer: The Dark Lady', p. 59. Woods may, in fact, be ironic in putting forward this blond Lanier, making the case that all attempts to find visual representations of her are arbitrary and based on no real foundations. Hunsdon never lived in Berkeley Castle. His granddaughter, Elizabeth, married Sir Thomas Berkeley (heir to the 7th Baron Berkeley) only months before Hunsdon died, so the disposition of these portraits is something of a mystery.

It will be apparent, however, that the first two identifications follow the assumptions of Lasocki and Prior about both Lanier's Jewish heritage and her identification as Shakespeare's 'Dark Lady' (see pp. 11-12). These, as we have noted, completely ignore the fact that Lanier's mother was English – a factor which weighs heavily in Susanne Woods' alternative choice of the blond 'woman in black'. The first two identifications were also offered either in ignorance of or despite the growing evidence from Italian scholars that the Bassanos were neither Jewish nor of Hispanic origin. Those who champion either of the Hilliard portraits as images of Lanier are simply perpetuating a myth, one enthusiastically espoused latterly by Ziva Shamir, who speaks of Lanier's 'dark, exotic, Hispanic looking face,' and 'Semitic facial features'.[105] There is, in fact, no surviving evidence at all of Lanier's facial features and appearance (apart from the mole on her neck).



Reference
1925
1945

1. Mr. Ruffy

Please receive on approval for purchase from Mr. H. Backer a miniature portrait of a Lady by Nicholas Hilliard in enamelled locket case. The price is £237.

2. Registry

Please register.

3). Mr. Laver

4. Director

You have seen the Hilliard miniature of a Lady offered for sale by Mr. Backer and agreed in principle to our asking sanction to buy it for £237. This is the sum at present available in the R.H. Stephenson Bequest fund, which may be used only for the purchase of miniatures and portrait drawings. The price asked by Mr. Backer was £240, but he reduced it when I told him that we could not go beyond £237. This seems to me a very fair estimate of the market value.

The miniature is a very characteristic Hilliard. The costume and style indicate a date between about 1585-1590. The nearest thing we have to it in date is the much damaged and repainted portrait of Queen Elizabeth in the back of the "Armada Jewel," which is not a good miniature.

Mr. Backer's miniature is a work of beautiful quality. It is said to represent Mary, Queen of Scots. While this is possible, it would need verifying later by the National Portrait Gallery. It is, like practically every Elizabethan miniature, rather pale, owing to the fading of the flesh tints. There is a small stain or retouch in one place on the hair and the edges have been slightly trimmed in order to fit it into a locket. It is, however, essentially in good condition and shows no evidence of restoration except in the one place already mentioned. Mr. Oman thinks the locket is Spanish work of the early 17th century. The enamelling is rather coarse and the locket is not up to the standard of the miniature, but while not particularly attractive it makes an acceptable setting.

Fig. 4. Hilliard miniature portrait of an unknown woman, ca. 1590, at the Victoria and Albert, accession number P.8 1945. Left. Watercolour on vellum. Right. Document of purchase from a Mr. Backer, indicating that the miniature was formerly 'said to represent Mary, Queen of Scots'; such identifications are often quite fanciful. For further explanation see text. Courtesy V&A Museum.

[105] Shamir, pp. 17, 28, 43, 47, 54, 89.