

The poem "eve's apology in defense of women": in defense of women?

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The poem "Eve's Apology in Defense of Women" by Aemilia Lanyer echoes thoughts on who is actually responsible for bringing sin into this world. However, the poem also depicts women's role and worthiness in the society. Even though Lanyer shows signs of defending women, in this essay, I will discuss how the writer has different approaches towards anti-feminism.

At first instance, the poem represents how Lanyer defends Eve, but clearly afterwards she shows her anti-feminist side. This raises the question of; why is Lanyer showing signs of anti-feminism if according to the title, her purpose was to defend women? The first appearance of anti-feminism in the poem is shown in the 15th/16th sentence, " Let not us women glory in men's fall, Who had power given to overrule us all. " On the one hand Lanyer is trying to shield Eve's deeds by arguing that it was men who were " given power to overrule us all", meaning that it was Adam's job to avoid Eve from eating what was forbidden, but on the other hand Lanyer shows also her anti-feminist side in which she clearly concedes with men's supremacy over women. Another part in the poem in which Lanyer depicts anti-feminism are in sentences 33 to 35: " But surely Adam cannot be excused, Her fault though great, yet he was most to blame, What weakness offered, strength might have refused. " Here men are portrayed as " strong" and women as " weak". Throughout the poem Adam is often narrated as " lord" and " king", which again shows how Lanyer valued men over women. It is safe to say that after having analyzed the poem, the question that was raised initially, changes if we look closer to the poems title.

Therefore, the readers should be aware of that the poem was written in the 17th century. Hence, there was no thing as feminism until the 19th and 20th century, and thus we cannot be sure if Lanyer was really defending women for the sake of feminism or for herself. If we analyze the poems title, we can say that the meaning of " apology" in the 17th century is different than from today's meaning where we today interpret it as " sorry" and in the past as rather as an " excuse" for someone's deeds. The readers' perception of the poem changes with the different tones set by the writer where in the beginning of the poem forgiveness is plead, but later on the poem argumentations ascends for the justification of Lanyer's gender. Can we now ask if we are imprinted with misogynist/anti-feminist thoughts? Are we born with misogynist/anti-feminist thoughts? To look further into these questions, we have to look back into the history of women in the 17th century. Women then encountered all sort of depressions due to the patriarchal society in which women were thought to be less educated and important. We can see that male dominance has been ruling earth for thousands of years. From the Neanderthals to the first societies, men were always seeing stronger and superior to over women. At the time of the Neanderthals, men were supposed to hunt for food and women gathered nearby berries and fruits.

These tasks were divided accordingly to strength and power. Since men are defined biologically stronger, their main job was to either hunt or fight enemies. This idea of superiority has put women in the shadows of men. As the first schools were established in the 17th century, men were more likely to profit from this educations. This resulted in women having less advantage

over men in which they were not able to educate themselves, only those who were from rich families could get education at home. Women's role and activities were most of the part related to the households, where men's role were connected to political activities in the public sphere. This could have been the reason for Lanyer to start writing and proof this stereotype wrong. I think that Lanyer wanted to step out of men's footsteps and be recognizable as a writer during her time.