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Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar, eds.
The Norton Anthology of Literature by
Women. New York, W.W. Norton & Co.,
1985.

✓ / St

see his triumphs are?
 prayer, plaint, and praise,
 their height to raise;
 down to thy degree;
 each good soul assays,
 7 to none but thee.
 9
 8 in his reign;
 9 by wrong oppressed;
 crossing God in vain)
 each in peace possessed.
 rrupt his rest,
 ss have been thy foes;
 70 thou with greater blessed;
 e secure to lose.¹
 10
 him thy glories walk;
 where alone they go?
 s on honor talk,²
 75 pphies³ jointly show.
 y party blow,
 men eft⁴ defy.
 ch⁵ is earthly love;
 e only eagles fly.
 80
 11
 ed their states to lay;⁶
 iting on an isle;
 oman to obey;
 ommoved the while;
 exile,
 85 ar held without annoy,⁸
 pired style,
 subjects' joy.

12

Thy utmost⁹ can but offer to her sight
 Her handmaids' task, which most her will endears;¹ 90
 And pray unto thy pains life from that light
 Which lively light some, court and kingdom cheers,²
 What³ wish she may (far past her living peers
 And rival still to Judah's faithful king)⁴
 In more than he and more triumphant years,⁵ 95
 Sing what God doth, and do what men may sing.

1599

1962

9. I.e., Herbert's muse's greatest effort.

1. I.e., simple tokens of loyalty are more endearing to the queen than great works.

2. I.e., that lively light (Elizabeth) which is cheered by court and kingdom. The meaning of

"some" here is not clear; it may be a misprint.

3. Who (i.e., court and kingdom).

4. David; "Judah" is another name for Israel.

5. I.e., in a longer and more triumphant reign.

AMELIA LANIER

1570?-1640?

Known in her own day as a woman "of distinguished . . . learning," Amelia Lanier spent much of her career at court during the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I. Though her origins are obscure—even her parentage is uncertain—it is known that she was married to a royal musician, Alphonso Lanier, and that she bore him a son, Henry, who entered the king's service as a flutist. After her husband's death in 1613, she appears to have been involved with his relatives in various legal squabbles over his estate. Otherwise her history is shadowy, although the historian A. L. Rowse has recently argued that she may well have been the "Dark Lady" of Shakespeare's sonnets, the independent and impetuous mistress to whom the great playwright claimed he was hopelessly enthralled.

Whatever the truth about this poet's life, her verse is striking and accomplished, so much so that Rowse uses its radicalism as a basis for his assertion about her role in Shakespeare's poetry. In particular, her retelling of the biblical story of the "fall" functions as a kind of pioneering vindication of the rights of "Our Mother Eve," who, declares Lanier, gave Adam "What she held most dear"—the apple of knowledge—because she was "simply good." In fact, insists Lanier, Eve's primordial female act of "betrayal" was performed in unconscious innocence, while men are more culpable because they consciously betrayed Jesus Christ to his crucifixion: "If one weak woman simply did offend, / This sin of yours hath no excuse, nor end." Significantly, in sketching out such a feminist version of two of Western culture's major legends, Lanier outlined a pattern of revisionary mythmaking that was to be followed by many female descendants who may never even have read her work.

Spanish Armada, with the aid of the weather.

4. Probably a misprint for "oft." "Rocks": an allusion to David's killing of the Philistine Goliath with a single stone; here they represent cannonballs. The rocks defy or challenge the foemen.

5. In music, a tone or level of dynamics. Here, the subject of the muse's song. Herbert feels she is not qualified to write of war, traditionally a male subject.

6. I.e., kings forced to place their states under Elizabeth's rule; Herbert is somewhat exaggerating Elizabeth's gains in power.

7. Government. "Waiting on": obeying; also courting.

8. Vexation.

From Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum

[Eve's Apology in Defense of Women]

Now Pontius Pilate is to judge the cause¹
 Of faultless Jesus, who before him stands,
 Who neither hath offended prince, nor laws,
 Although he now be brought in woeful bands.
 "O noble governor, make thou yet a pause,
 Do not in innocent blood imbrue² thy hands;
 But hear the words of thy most worthy wife,³
 Who sends to thee, to beg her Saviour's life.

"Let barbarous cruelty far depart from thee,
 And in true justice take affliction's part;
 Open thine eyes, that thou the truth mayest see.
 Do not the thing that goes against thy heart,
 Condemn not him that must thy Saviour be;
 But view his holy life, his good desert.
 Let not us women glory in men's fall.⁴
 Who had power given to overrule us all.

"Till now your indiscretion sets us free,
 And makes our former fault⁵ much less appear;
 Our mother Eve, who tasted of the tree,
 Giving to Adam what she held most dear,
 Was simply good, and had no power to see;⁶
 The after-coming harm did not appear:
 The subtle serpent that our sex betrayed
 Before our fall so sure a plot had laid

"That undiscerning ignorance perceived
 No guile or craft that was by him intended;
 For had she known of what we were bereaved,⁷
 To his request she had not condescended.
 But she, poor soul, by cunning was deceived;
 No hurt therein her harmless heart intended:
 For she alleged⁸ God's word, which he denies,
 That they should die, but even as gods be wise.

1. Case; Pontius Pilate was the Roman official who authorized Christ's execution.
 2. Stain.
 3. According to Matthew, Pilate's wife wrote a letter to her husband telling him of a dream she had, which warned against harming Jesus.
 4. The fall of both Adam and Christ (perhaps also Pilate).
 5. Eve's tempting of Adam in Eden.
 6. According to the Book of Genesis, Eve, the first woman, enticed her husband Adam at the

best of the serpent to eat of an apple from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. As punishment God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and brought death into the world.
 7. Deprived, specifically of immortal life.
 8. Cited, repeated. The referent of "he" is unclear; it may be either the serpent or Adam. In any case, Eve seems aware that the consequences of her act are mortality, but prefers god-like wisdom to immortal ignorance.

"But surely Adam cannot
 Her fault though great, yet
 What weakness offered, s
 Being lord of all, the grea
 Although the serpent's cr
 God's holy word ought al
 For he was lord and ki
 Before poor Eve had e

"Who being framed¹ by
 The perfectest man that
 And from God's mouth r
 The breach whereof he k
 Yea, having power to rul
 Yet with one apple won t
 Which God had breath
 Bringing us all in dang

"And then to lay the fault
 That we (poor women) r
 We know right well he d
 Being not persuaded the
 If Eve did err, it was fo
 The fruit being fair pers
 No subtle serpent's fal
 If he would eat it, who

"Not Eve, whose fault w
 Which made her give th
 That what she tasted he
 Whereby his knowledge
 He never sought her we
 With those sharp words
 Yet men will boast of
 From Eve's fair hand

"If any evil did in her re
 Being made of him,⁶ he
 If one of many worlds⁷ c
 Upon our sex, and work
 To wretched man by Sa
 What will so foul a fault

9. Enclose, determine.
 1. Here, made or fashioned.
 2. Strict.
 3. I.e., the breath of immortal life.
 4. Prevent.
 5. Experience.
 6. In Genesis, Eve was formed from Adam's r

the cause¹
 him stands,
 nce, nor laws,
 woeful bands.
 yet a pause,
 ue² thy hands;
 st worthy wife,³
 r Saviour's life.

t from thee,
 's part;
 ruth mayest see.
 st thy heart,
 Saviour be;
 esert.
 n's fall.⁴
 ule us all.

s free,
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 e tree,
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"But surely Adam cannot be excused;
 Her fault though great, yet he was most to blame.
 What weakness offered, strength might have refused;
 Being lord of all, the greater was his shame;
 Although the serpent's craft had her abused,
 God's holy word ought all his actions frame;⁹
 For he was lord and king of all the earth,
 Before poor Eve had either life or breath,

35

40

"Who being framed¹ by God's eternal hand
 The perfectest man that ever breathed on earth,
 And from God's mouth received that strait² command,
 The breach whereof he knew was present death;
 Yea, having power to rule both sea and land,
 Yet with one apple won to lose that breath³
 Which God had breathéd in his beauteous face,
 Bringing us all in danger and disgrace;

45

"And then to lay the fault on patience's back,
 That we (poor women) must endure it all;
 We know right well he did discretion lack,
 Being not persuaded thereunto at all.
 If Eve did err, it was for knowledge sake;
 The fruit being fair persuaded him to fall.
 No subtle serpent's falsehood did betray him;
 If he would eat it, who had power to stay⁴ him?"

50

55

"Not Eve, whose fault was only too much love,
 Which made her give this present to her dear,
 That what she tasted he likewise might prove,⁵
 Whereby his knowledge might become more clear;
 He never sought her weakness to reprove
 With those sharp words which he of God did hear;
 Yet men will boast of knowledge, which he took
 From Eve's fair hand, as from a learned book.

60

"If any evil did in her remain,
 Being made of him,⁶ he was the ground of all.
 If one of many worlds⁷ could lay a stain
 Upon our sex, and work so great a fall
 To wretched man by Satan's subtle train,⁸
 What will so foul a fault amongst you all?"⁹

65

70

9. Enclose, determine.
 1. Here, made or fashioned.
 2. Strict.
 3. I.e., the breath of immortal life.
 4. Prevent.
 5. Experience.
 6. In Genesis, Eve was formed from Adam's rib.
 7. One woman out of many. "Worlds" probably is meant to suggest great quantities.
 8. Satan's serpentine arguments to Eve. Later tradition identified Satan with the serpent; Genesis makes no such connection.
 9. Implicitly, how great a stigma will your crime cast upon your sex?

Her weakness did the serpent's words obey,
But you in malice God's dear son betray,

"Whom, if unjustly you condemn to die,
Her sin was small to what you do commit.
All mortal sins¹ that do for vengeance cry
Are not to be comparéd unto it; 75
If many worlds would altogether try
By all their sins the wrath of God to get,
This sin of yours surmounts them all as far
As doth the sun another little star.² 80

"Then let us have our liberty again,
And challenge³ to yourselves no sovereignty.
You came not in the world without our pain,
Make that a bar⁴ against your cruelty;
Your fault being greater, why should you disdain 85
Our being your equals, free from tyranny?
If one weak woman simply did offend,
This sin of yours hath no excuse nor end,

"To which, poor souls, we never gave consent.
Witness, thy wife, O Pilate, speaks for all, 90
Who did but dream, and yet a message sent
That thou shouldest have nothing to do at all
With that just man;⁶ which, if thy heart relent,
Why wilt thou be a reprobate with Saul?⁷
To seek the death of him that is so good, 95
For thy soul's health to shed his dearest blood?"

1611

1. Sins punishable by eternal damnation.
2. It was then assumed, on the Ptolemaic model,
that the sun actually was larger than the stars.
3. Claim.
4. Check, prevention.

5. Purpose.
6. Christ.
7. King of Israel who went mad periodically;
"reprobate": morally unprincipled person.

Literary Seventeenth Eighteenth

In her fantasy, *Orlando* (1928) presenting English literary history started life as an Elizabethan, seventeenth century. Her prot the history of English letters, marketplace. Not insignificant English just when the production patron started to give way to t to give way to a large reading women were not exceptional religious calling; some, indeed

What in *A Room of One's Own* importance than the Crusades the middle-class woman began that is usually associated with tions as law, medicine, science ized in ways that would have Atlantic, the religious disputes commercial growth of the eighteenth mented as a central cultural is Puritan settlers, pilgrims search American citizens determined religious, intellectual, and soc tion—Puritanism, empiricism plex impact on women's lives further subjecting them to m providing precedents for ques fined women as the second women's contribution to pro can economies shifted from a spread of education and the ex